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A Good Word for Creativity

By Foy Valentine

J. R. R. Tolkien was sitting in his study at Oxford correcting a student's thesis. The year was 1926. For some reason, the student had turned in a blank page. When Tolkien came to it, he picked up his pen and wrote on the page, "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit," thus launching one of the more remarkable literary careers of our time. On being asked why he did it, Tolkien replied, "It popped into my head."

No amount of technology can pop something into your head.

No machine can produce a single truly creative act. No matter how advanced or intricate or complex our computers, we remember that they are really nothing more than adding machines, state-of-the-art adding machines to be sure but adding machines just the same, jazzed up abacuses. They can print out only those choices that some intelligent creator has programmed in. Dot-dash, plus-minus, yes-no, black-white, whatever.

In creativity, there is joy and excitement, promise and prospect. In the process of the original creation, the Creator kept making things about which he kept joyously saying, "It is good."

Parents marvel in awe and wonder as they hold their new baby, a creature made in their own image, after their own likeness—the fingers, the toes, the eyes, the flailing arms, the kicking legs, the voice, especially the voice, "Heaven help us; there is that VOICE already in the wee, small hours of the night. What on earth have we created?"

The preacher feels splendidly emptied at the end of a Spirit-blessed sermon.

The author feels gloriously peaceful when the article or book or poem is finally finished and put to bed.

The gardener finds deep pleasure in her orderly rows, her growing radishes, her tasseling corn, her ripening tomatoes.

The artist is wonderfully released from the compulsion that has been driving him, when the last brush stroke is made on the painting.

The musician rests in peace when the concert has gone flawlessly and the last curtain call has been acknowledged.

The cook savors with great satisfaction a meal remembered, course by course, that turns out just exactly right.

Creativity is God-like.

Stiflers of creativity, however, abound on every hand. They are nay-sayers, joy-killers, status quo defenders. Truth is they are anti-Christ.

Materialism leads the pack. The heavy hand of mammon presses down hard on the free spirit of creativity; but authentic faith points the way to deliverance. Creativity beckons for us to cut the umbilical cord that ties us to business as usual and bids us ride light in the saddle, living up to our high calling as God's Exodus people on our way to the City of God.

Conservatism also hath its terrors. The inclination to conserve the creativities of the past can become such a compelling obsession that nothing new can ever pop into our heads. One of the tragedies of fundamentalism, religious or political or social, is that it is a joyless, argumentative, dogmatic, quarrelsome, fighting neurosis that squelches freedom and quenches creativity. The Devil of fundamentalism scowls and frowns and complains and opposes and bickers and moans and maneuvers and manipulates and schemes and plots but seems incapable of achieving the freedom to enjoy a hearty laugh. Revealed religion, we bear in mind, calls for creativity as well as conservation.

Hedonism comes to mind. The search for new nerve endings to stimulate is an ultimately futile exercise. Chasing after the bright elusive butterfly of pleasure is a sorry summum bonum for creatures made in the image and after the likeness of the great God Almighty. Limits to appetite are found all too quickly when the creative impulse is turned inward to sensate pleasure. An antidote is self-giving love.

Creativity can, indeed, be stifled. Poverty, too much work, not enough work, injustice, harassment, crowding, noise, loneliness, sickness, hunger, and frustration can all contribute to the smothering of our creative impulses. Both the individual and society have a stake in resisting these stiflers. By resisting we can provide creativity a chance to help us to mount up with wings as eagles, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint.

A small note is support of common sense might not be out of place. By creativity I do not mean to champion the bizarre, a Martha Stewart kind of creativity with elegant dining table centerpieces made out of dried horse apples and corn cobs sprayed with purple paint, garnished with liver loaf and sprinkled with nutmeg. No. To be creative is not to be off the wall but to be out of the box. For God's sake.

Creativity is God-like.

I wanted to say it.

Besides, it popped into my head. ■

Editor: Foy Valentine

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A Gift from Maggie

By Roger Lovette

[Dr. Roger Lovette is Pastor of the Baptist Church of the Covenant in Birmingham, Alabama. He is a frequent contributor to *Christian Ethics Today*.]

She called yesterday. “Reverend,” she began, “I have my Christmas list.” And what a list it was. It went on and on. A bed. Sheets. Pillow cases. A comforter and some towels. She also mentioned a heater, groceries and money, of course. She was still not through asking. She wanted fruit—a special kind of fruit. No apples—but oranges, lots of oranges. She mentioned she needed some pecans. Finishing up she mentioned she needed a pot to cook her greens in. After a while I stopped her. “Whoa,” I said. “This is not Wal-Mart. I can’t get you all that stuff. Your list is too long.” There was a long silence at the other end of the telephone. “Reverend,” she said, “I’m not trying to get out of line and I appreciate all you have done for me, but I do need some things.” “I know that,” I replied, “but I just can’t get all these things.”

She came into my life about five years ago. Just walked up one day after church and said she was hungry. She stuttered so hard that it was difficult to understand her. I would say, “Now start all over again.” And she would try—but it was hard. She wanted some “Church’s Fried Chicken.” I told her we were making sandwiches for hungry people in our church kitchen and I would get her a sandwich. She, of course, wanted to know what kind of sandwich. I gritted my teeth and told her, “If you’re hungry it really won’t matter.”

That was the beginning. About a year later, after she trusted me and the stuttering had almost vanished, she said, “Reverend, could we go out sometimes?” There was a huge smile on her face. “You mean, and get a meal?” “Yes, that’s what I mean. Get a meal.” I told her we would go out for Christmas.

And that was the beginning of a friendship between a Pastor and a woman who was almost homeless. That first meal she kept saying, over and over, “Reverend, this is the best restaurant in this town, ain’t it?” And sitting there with the plastic poinsettias on the table and a sagging artificial tree in the window, I nodded in agreement. In many ways it really did seem to be the best restaurant in Birmingham. The food tasted wonderful. Everything glistened. After lunch I gave her a card with some money in it. Everybody needs a little money to buy whatever he or she wishes to buy at Christmastime. I also gave her a fruit basket. My wife had gotten her a sweater, a scarf and some gloves.

That woman gave me more than I gave her. As she sat in that restaurant opening her presents she laughed and laughed.

It was the laughter of joy and utter delight. She told me what she would buy with the money. She scratched through the fruit basket and smiled at everything in there. She held up the sweater and there were tears in her eyes. All she said was, “Uhhhhmmmm ... Uhhhhmmmm.”

In this five years I have learned a lot about Maggie (not her real name). I have learned a lot about poverty and living on the raw edge. I have learned a lot about how a dysfunctional family can cripple one for life. But I have learned much more than this. Maggie has taught me about the dignity especially of those who have little or nothing. I have learned the hard way there is a pride deep down in us all that should never be violated. She has taught me that even if you are hungry it really does matter what you eat. Even the very poor have opinions and choices and expectations. I have learned the hard way not to be conned and taken advantage of simply because it makes the do-gooder in me feel better. I have learned that one can reach across the awesome barriers of class and race and circumstance and appreciate the gifts of God inherent in each one of us. Probably what I have learned the most is that helping is never easy. That crossing those awful chasms of poverty and pain is anything but easy. One does not return from these experiences without being changed, without grieving for the poor of the world, without wondering how very many there are out there who have no place to lay their heads and no one to affirm or love them.

Soon I will put money in a Christmas card as usual. I will obey her orders when it comes to what goes in the fruit basket. I will purchase a small fruit cake—which is her favorite. I will twist my wife’s arm and she will get Maggie a present or two. And Maggie and I will meet at the entrance of the church at the appointed hour. She has never been late yet nor failed to show. She will be dressed in her finery. And we will go out to eat our Christmas dinner. I don’t know about Maggie. But I do know about me. Wherever we go it really will be the finest restaurant in Birmingham. Some time after the meal is over the presents will be unwrapped. We will go our separate ways. She to the streets and me back to the safety of the church. As the traffic blares in downtown Birmingham and cars dash by, the strangest thing will happen. It surprises me year after year. I am always caught off guard. Over the noise of people and cars, I think I hear an angel sing. And Christmas will have come once more to me. Maggie, you see, gives me a Christmas present and she probably doesn’t even know it. On the other hand, maybe she does. Maybe she does. ■

Remember Lot's Wife

By Sally Baehni Burgess

[Sally Baehni Burgess is the Associate Pastor of the Broadway Baptist Church in Kansas City.]

What images come to mind when you hear the word compassion? Do you think of righteousness, strength, power, and justice? Or do you think of sentimentality, softness, maybe flabby convictions? Does the word compassion stir up the image of a winner, someone who comes out on top in the end? Or does the word conjure up the image of a loser, someone who feels too much, isn't rational enough, wears her bleeding heart on her sleeve?

The image that usually comes to mind for me is Jesus weeping over Jerusalem, and I hear the words God said to Moses, "I AM Yahweh, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness..."¹ And just as I'm about to settle down into this image of compassion, I hear this little voice coming from somewhere deep down in that "bad neighborhood"² part of my mind saying, "Oh yeah? Well, what about Lot's wife? And what about Job's wife? And Miriam? And Eve?"

Seems like I'm always running smack dab into these Old Testament women who are getting kicked out of paradise, contracting serious skin disorders, or turning into salt licks.

Now some might view this as an obstacle. But I see it as good sermon fodder. How come compassion and grace don't seem to abound for these women? What would we hear if we listened with compassion to their stories?

Last fall when I was on my old Seminary campus to hear Phyllis Tribble's lecture series, I mentioned to Dr. Graves, my former preaching professor, that I was thinking about preaching a sermon on Lot's wife.

"Oh," he said. "That's an easy 3 point sermon. You don't even need a poem at the end because it rhymes."

I waited.

Dr. Graves cleared his throat: "Lot's wife in three points. She halted; she faulted; she salted."

The crowd that had gathered around us in the lunch room laughed.

"Good one, Dr. Graves," I said. "Only, I'm not sure she faulted, at least not any more or less than Lot did."

"I'm not either," he said. "But that's about what her story has been reduced to."

And he's right, because Lot's wife is one of the losers in the Bible. But Phyllis Tribble said: If we want to hear the loser's stories we just have to listen; we have to look and listen with compassion for the voices in scripture that have been silenced.

So I want to focus on the story of Lot's wife because I want to invite you to begin listening with compassion for the losers' voices in Scripture. It's a discipline I've been practicing, and I

want you to practice it with me now because listening for "the view from below"³ in Scripture helps tune our ears to the voiceless ones in our communities, in our churches, in our city, our country, in the world.

In our story from Genesis, Chapter 19, Lot's wife is one of the losers along with the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Verse 19 says: "But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt." The comment at the bottom of my NIV Study Bible says: "Her disobedient hesitation became proverbial in later generations. Even today grotesque salt formations near the southern end of the Dead Sea are reminders of her folly."⁴

Poor Mrs. Lot. She never says a word through the entire story. And yet, she is defined as foolish, disobedient, double-minded—even greedy—generation after generation after generation. It makes me curious. How do they know so much about her, about her motives when she never says a word.

As the story begins, her husband brings home these alien travelers (who actually are angels; the Lots don't know it but we do because the narrator lets us in on that little secret). Lot didn't call before he came home with guests. He didn't give Mrs. Lot any warning that he was bringing two rough looking strangers home to spend the night. She didn't have a chance to pick up the toys, do up the dishes, make up the guest room. No, he just appeared at the door at the end of the day and said, "Honey, I'm home. And, uh, I brought a couple of aliens home with me for dinner. Uh, they'll be spending the night, too."

What does she say, what does she feel? We don't know. She is silent.

Verse 3 says "He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast...." Yeah, right! He's been hanging out at the city gate all day. When did *he* have time to cook a meal? My guess is that unless Lot was the first liberated man in the Bible, *he* instructed his wife to prepare a meal and *she* did so—silently.

Well, then this horrible scene erupts outside of their house. A gang of men surround the house and taunt Lot and his family, "Send out those aliens, those foreigners. Send them out so that we can have a little fun with them, show them where they stand, run them out of town, or kill them." The verse says "send them out so that we can know them," and it is translated "so that we can have sex with them."

Because of that some want to stop listening here. It's too uncomfortable so they quickly and easily dismiss the "sin of Sodom" as homosexuality. Something *we* wouldn't do. But there are at least two very serious problems with that interpretation. One is it assumes that having a same sex orientation automatically means someone will engage in a violent gang rape. That tells me we haven't been listening—we haven't been listening to the reports of the war crimes, the gang rapes, that

have been perpetrated in Bosnia by soldiers against women *and men*; we haven't been listening, we don't want to hear the reports about these same kinds of crimes being committed against inmates by other inmates in our own American prison systems. Rape isn't about homosexuality or heterosexuality. It's not about a sexual relationship at all. It's about power and humiliation and abuse. But we haven't been listening; we haven't wanted to hear.

The second problem is this interpretation doesn't take seriously what the Bible says the sin was in Sodom and Gomorrah. It lets those of us who are heterosexual off the hook; but we are not off the hook. Isaiah names the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah as mistreatment of the alien, abuse of the outcast, and lack of justice for the powerless, for those with no voice. We must allow the scripture to confront us about those parts of ourselves that commit the same sin as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah: *We* lack hospitality; and we lack compassion for the "aliens" in our midst, for the ones who are different from us.

There is an inherent fear of the foreigner that we humans feel. You can see the evidence of our fear if you listen to the things we humans say. Remember how we were so sure, at first, that an Arab terrorist had bombed the federal building in Oklahoma? Remember the disbelief expressed in Israel recently when they learned that Prime Minister Rabin was assassinated by a Jew? "Jews don't do this to Jews," they said. "We would expect this from a foreigner but not from a Jew."

We're not that different from the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. This hospitality thing, this welcoming the stranger in our midst, hearing the voice of the voiceless is hard stuff for us, too. We don't do it very well either.

Last May my husband and I visited his sister, Mary, in Ohio. While we were there, one of my husband's nieces came through with some of her friends. Anna is an art major at Kansas University. She and her friends had been traveling around the country visiting some of the nations art museums.

I've known Anna since she was little and I've always liked her. She's very creative, very intelligent. And so when she turned sixteen and dyed half of her hair orange and the other half purple, I didn't think too much about it. That was just Anna. I knew her. She was all right. But when she arrived at

Mary's and her *friends* got out of the van with their hair sticking up in these spiked things, and their leather jackets and chains, I said to Mary, "They look really scary. Do you think they're trying to make a statement? Do you think they'll hurt us?"

Mary said, "I don't know. Why don't we go in and make a pot of coffee? We'll sit and talk, find out who they are."

Ah, Mary! Hospitality—the compassionate way!⁵

Holding a cup of boiling hot coffee in my hand I felt a little more secure. We talked; we asked questions about their travels, about their plans for the future. We listened to their dreams about the places they wanted to go, the art businesses they wanted to open. They really loosened up, and so did we.

And then I noticed that their "chains" were actually pieces of jewelry they had designed and made themselves. Now it's not like any jewelry I would wear; but then I'm 40.

The scene at the van saying goodbye was a whole lot more fun than saying hello had been. There were hugs all around.

After they left, Mary kidded me about my fears: "Sally, when you were in high school didn't you have really long hair and hang out with kids who wore a lot of beads and macrame and bell bottoms?"

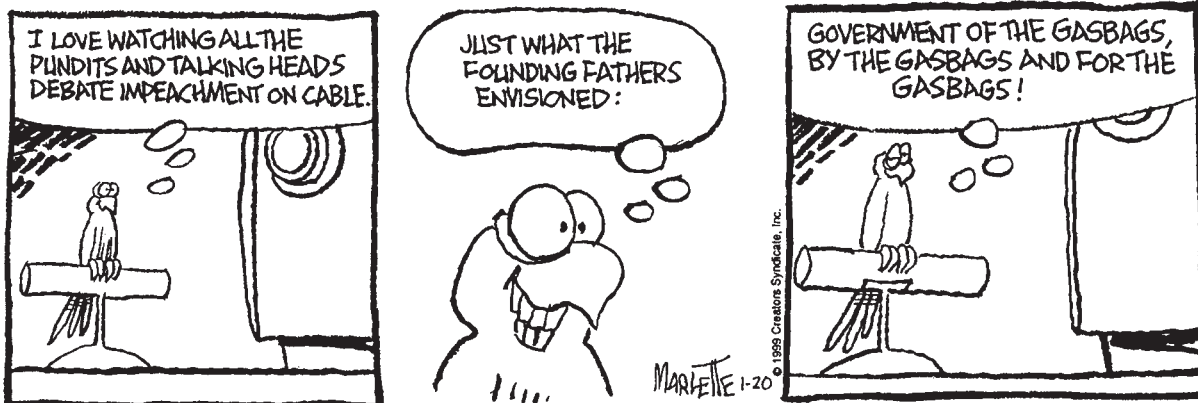
I didn't say a word. I was silent.

Hospitality, that's what Lot offered the strangers. He was so earnestly hospitable he was even willing to sacrifice his daughters for the strangers' safety. "Here are my daughters," he says to the angry mob in verse 6. "Do what you like with them."

Thank heaven the angels were more liberated than Lot. Thank heaven that daughters, women, were not aliens to the messengers of God. And Lot's wife? What did she feel when she saw her husband's lack of compassion for his own daughters? What must she have felt when she saw the messengers of God value her daughters, save them from their own father? There is only silence.

When the angels finally tell Lot and his family to flee, Lot hesitates a couple of times, bargains some with the angels, even changes the arrangements. His wife hesitates one time and yet "her disobedient hesitation becomes proverbial"; she turns into a pillar of salt. And we assume this means she was punished for her disobedience; that the God who had been so patient with Lot, lost patience with her.

Well, there's another interpretation. It's called a midrash. A



midrash is a story (sometimes a very old story passed down to us by our Hebrew ancestors) told by those who study the Old Testament stories and wonder about what has been left out, about the silent parts. So they add an explanation, a midrash to help us listen.

Why did Lot's wife turn around and look? Was it disobedient hesitation? Maybe. Was it greed? Was she foolishly longing after all the material things she had to leave behind in order to flee? Maybe. And why did she turn into a pillar of salt? Was it punishment?

Well, the midrash says "she turned around out of compassion for those who had been left behind, and the pillar of salt was from her tears."⁶

Compassion can be costly; compassion can seem like folly. The cross seems like foolishness to some. And yet, the Apostle Paul writes: "...the foolishness of God is wiser than [human] wisdom...."⁷

Let me close with a story about an ordinary, foolish—somewhat costly—compassionate act that Anne Lamott writes about in her book, *Operating Instructions: A Journal of My Son's First Year*. Lamott is the single parent of a newborn baby. The baby's father has chosen to be out of the picture so she's on her own with a few good friends. Well, the baby is colicky and has been ever since he came home from the hospital six weeks ago. No one—not the baby; not the mom—is getting any sleep, and Lamott has finally reached that "zombie point" where you're so exhausted you're not sure if you're going to cry or kill something.

Then something truly amazing happened.

A man from church showed up at our front door, smiling and waving to me and Sam, and I went to let him in. He is a white man named Gordon, fiftyish, married to our associate pastor, and after exchanging pleasantries he said, "Margaret and I wanted to do something for you and the baby. So what I want to ask is, what if a fairy appeared on your doorstep and said that he or she would do any favor for you at all, anything you wanted around the house that you felt too exhausted to do by yourself and too ashamed to ask anyone else to help you with?"

"I can't even say," I said. "It's too horrible."

But he finally convinced me to tell him, and I said it would be to clean the bathroom, and he ended up spending an hour scrubbing the bathtub and toilet and sink with Ajax and lots of hot water. I sat on the couch while he worked, watching TV, feeling vaguely guilty and nursing Sam to sleep. But it made me feel sure of Christ again, of that kind of love. This, a man scrubbing a new mother's bathtub, is what Jesus means to me. As Bill Rankin, my priest friend, once said, spare me the earnest Christians.⁸

Spare me the earnest Christians; give me the compassionate ones.

May God grant each one of us the grace and the strength to follow the compassionate way, to see the view from below, to listen to the voices of the voiceless, and in doing so to experience new life, new joy, healing and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. ■

¹ From Exodus 34:6.

² In her book, *Operating Instructions: A Journal of My Son's First Year*, Anne Lamott writes: "My mind is a bad neighborhood that I try not to go into alone." It's a metaphor I connect with not only because I, too, have a family of Greek "furies" living in my head ready to pounce and beat the stuffing out of me at the least little mistake. But also because the questions I ask lead me into unconventional thoughts that have gotten me in trouble more than once with conventional thinkers.

³ I first heard this expression in Fr. Richard Rohr's articles and tapes. I have since heard it in various forms from other feminist and liberationist theologians.

⁴ From *The NIV Study Bible*, page 34

⁵ For a marvelous description of "the compassionate way" read *Compassion: A Reflection o the Christian Life* by Henri J. Nouwen, Donald P. McNeill, and Douglas A. Morrison.

⁶ I read this midrash in the introduction to a book titled *But God Remembered: Stories of Women from Creation to the Promised Land* by Sandy Sasso.

⁷ 1 Corinthians 1:25.

⁸ Lamott, Anne. *Operating Instructions: A Journal of My Son's First Year*, page 70.



“Big” Government: A Frankenstein Monster?

By Charles Wellborn

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

The specter of “big” government is constantly conjured up today by influential elements of the American polity. Government is depicted as a Frankenstein monster, completely out of control. “Big” government has become a “red flag” phrase, painting a fearsome picture of an almost diabolical American government involved in a gigantic conspiracy designed to eliminate the basic rights and freedoms of all Americans. For some, the valid issues involved in any new piece of legislative action are immaterial. It can be opposed on the simplistic grounds that it is another manifestation of “big” government.

A few extreme political paranoids have barricaded themselves in mountain fortresses, awaiting with fanatic certitude that day when the United States government will make its move, acting, some of them say, as the agent of Satan in the final Armageddon.

Most Americans, of course, do not go to that extreme. But many of us, bombarded daily by rabble-rousing radio talk shows (which show scant regard for the truth), some sections of the media, and the inflammatory rhetoric of many politicians are susceptible to the nightmare of “big” government. Without ever actually having read George Orwell’s prophetic tract, *1984*, many seize upon his terminology and talk of “Big Brother,” a secret government listening in on our every thought and steadily moving toward control of our every action. Had they actually read Orwell’s book, they would realize the vast gap between his vision of the future and anything that could possibly occur in democratic America, barring some gigantic national catastrophe.

Frankly, I sometimes feel that I am wandering in Alice’s wonderland. Recently, at a very ordinary suburban dinner party, I listened with amazement as a seemingly sane, well-educated, successful business man told his dinner companions that, when the United Nations was founded in 1946, it was part of an international conspiracy by certain powerful, unnamed plotters to establish a totalitarian world government. I bit my tongue, partly out of polite respect to my hosts, but largely because I long ago concluded that facts and reason mean nothing to someone with a fanatical, irrational obsession.

Does a concerned Christian citizen have anything to say about the problem of “big” government? I think so. And I believe also that to speak out as a Christian is a part of our moral responsibility.

Christians live in two worlds. Jesus recognized this when he counseled, “Render unto Caesar those things which are Caesar’s, and unto God those things which are God’s.” Some people have understood that to mean that there is a firm wall between secular and sacred responsibility. Not so. As citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, we are constrained to abide by the moral teachings of Jesus, as best we can. Those same moral injunctions apply in the secular realm, and we are obligated to apply them to the concrete situations of government and politics.

The 19th century American evangelist, Dwight L. Moody, once preached a sermon in Chicago in the course of which he launched a vigorous attack on corruption in municipal government. Afterwards, an angry woman from the congregation approached Moody, asking accusingly, “Mr. Moody, are you not a citizen of heaven?” To which the evangelist replied, “Yes, madam, I am a citizen of heaven, but right now I vote in Cook County, Illinois.”

Moody understood the double obligation of the Christian to live out his faith in both the sacred and secular realms. As a Biblical Christian believer, I also am constrained to try to act out that double imperative. I must apply Christian perspectives to problems like that of “big” government.

Let me make some initial disclaimers. I do not for one moment believe in unlimited power for the Federal government or for any other agency of government, state or local. I heartily support the manifold limits upon government written into the Constitution and the Bill of Rights by the Founding Fathers. I am deeply concerned about any attempt to undermine those limitations.

I believe also that purely local problems should be handled by local governments, so that law-making and regulation remain as close to the people as possible. One must, however, carefully distinguish between “local” problems and those which inevitably impinge upon people far beyond the local limits. Environmental pollution, for instance, seriously threatening to us all, is not a “local” problem.

One other disclaimer. I recognize the obvious difficulties and defects in the American democratic system. We ought to work to correct and reform those shortcomings. But I also recall the oft-quoted words: “Democracy is about the worst system of government one can imagine—until you compare it with the alternatives.”

What does the Christian faith have to say about “big” government? For one thing, our faith says a vigorous “yes” to the basic individual rights enshrined in the Constitutional Bill of Rights.

Freedom of religion, separation of church and state, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly—there can be no compromise on these issues. Given the manifest concern of Jesus for the worth and value of every human individual, the Christian has a clear mandate to help safeguard the liberties which make life for each person worthwhile. It amazes me that many of those who so vociferously declaim against “big” government’s supposed infringements on their own liberties are at the same time, paradoxically, in the forefront of those who seek to erode the rights of those who disagree with them. Continued efforts to blur the demarcation between church and state are a case in point. So, too, is the organized effort to attach a constitutional amendment which would declare our multi-faith nation a “Christian” state, whatever that term may mean in that context.

The French philosopher, Voltaire, was not himself an orthodox Christian, but he surely spoke words which Christians can affirm when he said, “I do not agree with a word you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.” Those sentiments are not only American and democratic. They are consonant with Christian insights in every sense. If someone wants to enlist me in a campaign against “big” government, they should show me a case in which government is fundamentally intruding upon and unreasonably limiting these basic rights. In that case, I would be ready to add my voice to theirs.

I would suggest a second Christian perspective which is important in the area of politics and government. Though the Constitutional documents do not speak in theological terms, they clearly demonstrate that the Founding Fathers were well aware of the Biblical doctrine that all human beings are sinners. They devised a political system, unique in its day, which set out a division of powers among the three branches of government—executive, legislative, and judicial—and a complicated system of checks and balances between and among those branches. The system is an explicit recognition of the fact that no individual or group can ever be trusted with unlimited power. Plato’s myth of a Utopia ruled by incorruptible philosopher-kings is just that—a myth. There are no incorruptibles.

Even the unhappy American dilemma of the President’s

impeachment is, in its own way, a practical example of the workings of the system of checks and balances. The impeachment process was written into the Constitution to underline the fact that no person, however high an office he or she may hold, is immune from the possibility of being held to account, even possibly removed from office.

Thus far, my attempt to apply Christian perspectives to the problem of “big” government has emphasized important limits on government: civil rights, separation of powers, checks and balances. I hold these limitations to be of vital importance, and I recommend that my friends on the Radical Right reflect seriously and gratefully on these protections of their liberty.

I also have, however, some positive words to say about “big” government. The simplest thing is that, given the size, geographically and population-wise, of the United States, no alternative to “big” government actually exists. Ours is an incredibly complex society—economically, socially, and in every other respect. What happens on the Wall Street stock market, for instance, affects millions of people everywhere. The television news has recently reported the devaluation of the Brazilian currency. The shock waves of that development have reverberated in national economies around the world. As in the case of last year’s collapse of the East Asian financial structures, the jobs, livelihood, and savings of millions of ordinary people are threatened. There are urgent calls for concerted international action to avert a crisis. No “little” government could possibly act effectively in such a situation.

Of course, as I have already said, many local problems are best handled by local agencies or, perhaps, in some cases, by no governmental action at all. But these difficulties fade into relative insignificance beside the manifold inter-relationships of an intricately interdependent society with both national and international ramifications.

To look at the current human situation and the society in which we all operate is to become increasingly aware of a pervasive factor: the relative helplessness or powerlessness of the individual. That helplessness is not a result of government interference, but a function of the complex and impersonal forces which impinge upon every citizen’s personhood and independence.

I can call up only representative examples here, and I con-



tinue to choose them from the economic realm. My personal financial situation is in many important ways out of my control. True, many individuals can prepare themselves for a job or profession, work hard, and perhaps progress toward a decent salary. It is still possible for a few individual entrepreneurs, blessed with talent and a considerable amount of luck, to become millionaires. In the larger sense, however, we are all at the mercy of a complex world-wide macroeconomic system. National and international economic booms, recessions and depressions arrive, and we have not the slightest influence over them. The Japanese economy falters and workers in Peoria lose their jobs. The dollar or the pound or the yen fluctuates and our stock market investments, if we are able to afford any, fluctuate in responding but unpredictable rhythms.

It is no wonder that economics has long been dubbed the “dismal science.” It seeks to chart a dangerous minefield. Some of my more radical friends argue for a stringent “laissez-faire” government policy in this area. (I have an intelligent friend who strongly resents the right of the Federal Reserve Bank to control base interest rates.) These people seem to believe in some sort of “Unseen Hand” which will work everything out happily and fairly if the government simply keeps its hands off the nation’s and the world’s economy. I see little evidence of the working of that “Unseen Hand,” and taking into account the inherent greed and sinfulness of humanity, I have little confidence in it. One thing of which I am certain: that “Unseen Hand,” if it exists, is not God’s hand. Given the widespread poverty and suffering of millions of our fellow humans, it is much more likely to be a satanic hand.

I am no economist, and I cannot presume to prescribe detailed economic policies for the nation. But I do reflect the situation of the average citizen when I say that, by and large, when it comes to the larger economic situation, I am powerless and helpless. The increasing inter-relationship of national and international economics only underlines my helplessness. The economic world is more and more controlled and influenced by giant multi-national corporations, transcending national boundaries. Mergers and take-overs, one corporation with another, are in every day’s financial headlines. I, as an individual, have absolutely no control or influence over these developments. Even one of the most successful modern entrepreneurs and currency speculators, George Soros, has recently written of his growing fears of what the almost totally unregulated international currency market can do to the average American.

I have said that I, as an individual, am helpless and powerless. But those are relative terms. I am not nearly so helpless as many millions of my fellow citizens. I am a retired university professor. I have a reasonable retirement pension, Social

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Security (a “big” government policy), medical insurance, and some savings. My situation is relatively secure. But I am disturbed by the fact that millions of my fellow Americans, not to mention untold multitudes in the rest of the world, do not have these things.

As a Christian, I feel shame that in the most prosperous country in the modern world—a country in the midst of the most prolonged period of economic prosperity in living memory—there are still millions of human beings who do not enjoy a half-decent standard of living. In an era of unprecedented prosperity, the gap between rich and poor has been growing steadily larger.

My more conservative friends will tell me that those powerless people have themselves to blame. They are lazy, unambitious, immoral. As a firm believer in the universality of human sin I have to agree that that is probably true of a good many of them, though their problem is no different, in basic ways, from mine, for we are all sinners.

But I also know that many of these unfortunates suffer from factors over which they have no control. They are the tragically disadvantaged in our world. Their fate was to be born in certain situations: race, gender, family poverty, environment, mental or physical disability, over which they had no control. They started the race of life fifty or a hundred yards behind the starting line, and it ill-behooves those of us who have been more fortunate to condemn them because they have never caught up.

All of this is to say that in our complex world, I see a democratic government as the prime protector of the powerless and the helpless in our society. My modest charitable contributions will, I hope, help, but I know they are minor in the total context. What the powerless and the helpless in our society need is not only Christian charity, admirable as that is, but concrete legal action to help reshape the total picture toward an appropriate focus on “justice for all.”

Here, I think, we need to learn some history lessons. When the Radical Right declaims against “big” government, they need to remember our past. If it had not been for the actions of a big federal government, human slavery might have continued to exist in this country for decades. If it had not been for big government intervention, there would never have been a federal banking system and, in the 1930’s hundreds of local banks would have gone bankrupt and the savings of millions decimated. It was big government that intervened to stop the building of ever more vast trusts and cartels, designed to exploit American consumers. Had not a visionary American president with a big government behind him—sometimes using less-than-orthodox methods—understood the ultimate threat of

Hitler, Western Europe, and perhaps the world, might now be dominated by Nazi tyranny. Children, aged 8 and 10, might now still be working in mines and factories, laborers might still be slaving at starvation wages 60 or 70 hours per week, and men and women might still be doing their daily work in criminally unsafe conditions had it not been for big government intervention. Black people in America might still be denied entrance to restaurants, theaters, universities, and hotels unless big government had stepped in. These are some incontrovertible lessons of history.

Of course, none of these processes was perfect. The government has not always been on the side of the powerless. There are many legitimate grounds of criticism of various government actions, and I join in those criticisms. The government is a giant bureaucracy, and there are inherent weaknesses in any bureaucracy, even that of a multinational private corporation. Waste and inefficiency are often rife. Indeed, if you want an example of bureaucratic corruption, take a look at many a local school board. But my overall summary view is that, again and again, democratic government has proved itself the prime defense of the helpless and the powerless.

What does all of this mean for the Christian, striving conscientiously to be a good citizen in today's America? I think it means a great deal. No serious reader of the Scriptures can doubt the compassion and concern of God, particularly through, his Son, Jesus Christ, for the poor, the weak, and the powerless in every society. We tap ancient Hebrew wisdom when we take note of the words of the Psalmist, "Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy" (Ps. 82:3). We need to hear that most forthright and fiery of Old Testament prophets, Amos, calling down terrible judgment upon the society of his day. Why? Hear Amos thunder, "Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and you take from him burdens of wheat: you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink wine of them" (Amos 5:11).

No one can misunderstand the importance of the words of Jesus, "Insomuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me." The cup of cold water which we give to a thirsty human being is a concrete response to the Master's command. But if all we do is give a cup of water, that man or woman will be thirsty again in a few hours time. To do justice and seek righteousness is to do whatever we can, with the tools at our command, not just to feed and clothe the poor, but to change social structures and conditions. The poor will go on being poor, and the oppressed will go on being oppressed, unless we act to provide a level playing field and a genuine equality of opportunity. In this complex world it is the government which offers the best means to achieve those ends.

I am not a Utopian. I do not envision a human world without pain, suffering, poverty, or injustice. Neither am I an idealist when it comes to government. Government is an all-too-human institution, subject to all the limitations which that description implies. I foresee no perfect political party, no perfect president, no perfect Congress, or no perfect Supreme Court. Those options are not on offer. But these realistic recognitions do not absolve me from my Christian responsibilities. The scabs and sores of our society need healing. I am constrained by my faith to give my cup of cold water, again and again, but my Christian responsibilities reach beyond that. I must do what I can, and wherever I can, to make the overall situation a little bit better.

When I—a relatively powerless individual in a complex world—look at my options, one thing seems clear. My most effective avenue of action is the exercise of my rights and privileges as a citizen. I can, along with others, make my voice heard in a free, democratic, representative government—one with built-in protections for individual rights and prescribed processes to guard against the usurpation of power by any individual or group.

It is in this sense that with all reasonable reservations and disclaimers, I say my modest "hurrah" for "big" government. ■



Child Abuse in Children's Sports

By Blake W. Bursleson

[Dr. Blake Bursleson teaches in the Department of Religion at Baylor University.]

It seems almost un-American to attach the word "abuse" to sports. In a day when many American children eat too much junk food, watch too much TV, and don't exercise enough, sports serve as an important tool of childhood physical, social, and moral development. Both of our children, ages ten and thirteen, are involved in competitive sports on a near year-round basis. Sports organizations exist, however, outside of the legal and moral frameworks which operate in other spheres of public life. The result of this moral isolation, which evolved for historical reasons based on the supposed "purity" of sports, is that many abuses involving children in sports go undetected or unchallenged.

Elite Child Athletes and Regulation

In October 1998, a seventeen-year-old gymnast Dominique Moceanu, a 1996 Olympic gold medalist, ran away from her Houston home. Her lawyer filed suit in a Texas district court asking for a divorce from her parents. This lawsuit was later settled out of court with an agreement that gave Dominique the independence she sought. Dominique shares at least one thing in common with other children who are world class athletes: she is the primary breadwinner for her family. Dominique's trust fund, previously controlled and apparently squandered by her parents, was worth millions.¹

The potential for the abuse of child performers in the sports industry is not new. The most blatant abuses of this century have come from the former Soviet-bloc countries and from present-day China. The paralysis of Chinese gymnast Sang Lan in July of 1998 brought world attention to the plight of the elite child athlete. The seventeen-year-old gymnast botched a landing in a practice vault in the Goodwill Games in New York and will never walk again. Interviews with her parents afterwards revealed that they had only seen their daughter three times in the last six years. At age eleven, Sang Lan had been picked for the national team training in Beijing, seven hundred and forty miles away from her parents' home. Her father upon re-evaluation said, "How can we ever make it up to her? She was separated from her mother and father at such a young age, with no parental love."²

The exploitation of children in high stakes performance sports is predictable. Historically, wherever adults have benefited from the performance of children, there have been those who have taken advantage of this situation. The passage of

laws in this country related to child labor, which included the entertainment industry in the 1950s, serves as reminder that children need protection from not only unscrupulous individuals but also from industries which, sometimes unwittingly, allow for systemic abuse. No doubt many supervisors who managed fourteen-year-old children workers in mines or factories, were model citizens. No doubt many of the movie directors who rehearsed eight-year-old actors and actresses for eight or more hours a day were moral people. It was not so much the adults but the system which needed changing. In due time it was.

Jay Coakley, sociology professor at the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs, makes the ironic observation that "child labor laws were initially passed in this country to free children of the control of adults concerned with things other than the growth and development of young people: we developed a set of laws designed to give children free time. That opened up the door for them to play sports and now, sports have become so work-like that we need laws to protect children from adults who have taken control over children's 'free' time...."³ The national governing bodies of professional and high performance sports are increasingly passing legislation to regulate the activities of their child athletes. For example, following the problems of pro tennis player Jennifer Capriati who was arrested for shoplifting, the Women's Tennis Association and the International Tennis Federation raised the age at which a player could compete in professional tournaments. In 1990 the National Collegiate Athletics Association set a limit of twenty hours per week of practice time of student-athletes. The International Gymnastics Federation raised the minimum age for senior competition from fourteen to fifteen for the Atlanta Olympics and then to sixteen following those games. Some national government bodies have understood that the problem is not a few immoral coaches but rather the system itself.

The Trickle-Down Effect

While the potential for the abuse of children is greater in the high performance sports with their visible awards of money and prestige, children face abuse at other levels of sport as well. Children and youth sports have changed in recent years to such an extent that more regulation and oversight is justifiable. Coakley observes the following changes:

1. "There are many adults now whose livelihoods, careers and reputations depend on the performances of

child athletes associated with their camps, academies, schools or training programs.”⁴ A few years ago the only adults who earned their income this way were middle school and high school coaches who also had major teaching responsibilities. Inter-varsity scholastic athletics, however, is highly regulated with numerous checks and balances, such as Texas’ “No Pass-No Play” rules. Today with the proliferation of sports leagues outside of the schools individuals can now make a living as coaches or organizers of leagues. For example, in many major metropolises the coaches of select soccer or baseball leagues for children are paid. Parents of ten-year-olds will sometimes pay a fee of more than \$1,000 per season to these select sports clubs. Individuals, who coach two or three of these select teams may earn enough money so that they do not have to have another job. Organizations that offer professional, expert coaching at the youth levels are found in many sports including gymnastics, track and field, basketball, soccer, football, boxing, golf, tennis, and hockey. When the performance of children determines how successful an adult is viewed in his or her career, the potential for abuse is heightened.

2. Some parents are quitting jobs or working only part-time in order to manage their child’s athletic career.⁵ Coakley points out that “when [this] occurs, it puts a whole lot of pressure on a 13-year-old” since “the livelihood of the family now depends on that athlete’s performance—and not just the performance in a particular event, but the commitment to the sport for the next 10-15 years!”⁶

3. Children are making “uninformed choices about their sport participation and sport lives.”⁷ I have heard parents of child athletes, some as young as seven, say that it is their child’s decision to practice and compete at an intense and highly competitive level. “This is what she wants to do; it’s her decision.” While it would obviously be wrong to make a child compete in any sport against her will, it does not follow that it is right to allow a child to practice and compete at an elite level just because the child indicates a desire to do so. Should children be allowed to make decisions to dedicate themselves in an exclusive way to any particular endeavor? Should a child be allowed to make a commitment for the next ten years of his or her life? A child who is allowed to set the maximum limit of participation in a sport is subject to misuse by a sport which is continually hyped up by the media, parents, friends, and coaches. Coakley asks, “Is it the job of [adults] to help kids set limits and to raise questions about these uninformed decisions they have made?”⁸

4. Finally, the corporate sponsorship of sports has pro-

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liferated at all levels, including those for children. Coakley writes, “Whenever I see coaches and corporations getting together to deal with things that affect the lives of children, I always wonder about what the outcome will be and whether it will reflect the interests and needs of those children or of the corporations.”⁹

Forms of Abuse

These changes in the children’s sports scene have increased the likelihood for abuse to occur. The most typical forms of abuse are: overtraining (the frequency and intensity of preparation) and overscheduling (the frequency of competitive performance). These abuses lead to physical and emotional problems for child athletes.

In the 1980s physicians became alarmed at the increase in overtraining injuries being reported. Since young athletes’ bodies are still growing, they are more vulnerable to repetitive motions in activities such as pitching, catching, kicking, jumping, etc. Until recent times, children did not receive overuse injuries. Dr. Lyle J. Micheli, president of the American College of Sports Medicine, reported, “A stress fracture, which is well-known in adults, was unheard of in children. Now we see a lot of them. Overuse injuries is a new story for kids. It’s a problem.”¹⁰ Since the mid-1990s issues related to female child athletes have surfaced. The term “female-athlete triad” was coined to refer to the problems of disordered eating, menstrual dysfunction, and osteoporosis. Dr. Ian Tofler, Department of Psychiatry at Louisiana State University, writes, “In the general population, the prevalence of eating disorders is about 1 percent. ...Among female athletes...the prevalence...is reported to be between 14 percent and 62 percent.”¹¹ Overtraining may place inappropriate physical demands on children which may have long-term health consequences.

It is becoming clear that overscheduling is not only a problem for child athletes but for children in general. University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research published the 1997 time diaries of 3,586 children nationwide, ages twelve and under. “Involvement in sports...rose almost 40% from 1981 to 1997: boys now spend an average of four hours a week playing sports; girls log half that time.”¹² Children’s leisure time dropped from forty percent of the day in 1981 to twenty five percent in 1997.¹³ While sport is a form of play, the seriousness with which it is played at certain levels, makes it more like work. The fact is that today many children’s sports leagues are not leisure activities. The overscheduling of competitive games may lead to burn out or to certain stress-related psychological or physiological disorders.

Child Sexual Abuse in Sports

Another concern which has surfaced is the issue of sexual abuse and harassment in the coach-athlete relationship. Two cases have gained some national attention in recent years. In 1995, an ethics and eligibility committee of USA Volleyball heard testimony from three former players of Rick Butler, a USA Volleyball juniors coach who owns the prestigious Sports Performance Volleyball club in Chicago. The committee concluded that Butler had had sex with the three players, two when they were sixteen and one when she was seventeen. In publishing their decision, the committee said, "The act by a coach of having sexual intercourse with a junior volleyball player entrusted to his care constitutes such immorality, lack of judgment, and unacceptable behavior as to cause the United States Volleyball Association, at minimum, public embarrassment and ridicule by its merely having taking place."¹⁴ In 1998, two former soccer players at the University of North Carolina filed suit against their coach Anson Dorrance for sexual harassment. Dorrance is considered one of the greatest NCAA coaches of all time. His women's soccer teams won fifteen national championships in the first nineteen years of the program's existence. The players allege that the coach made "uninvited sexual advances" and "inappropriate and uninvited physical contact."¹⁵

How prevalent is sexual abuse in children's sports? Statistics on child sexual abuse are difficult to come by because of the sensitivities involved. What should be obvious, however, is that there is the potential for sexual abuse in the sporting arena due to the structurally dependent status of the athletes. Sociologist Celia Brackenridge points out several things to consider. The first concerns the power differential between the coach and the athlete. Brackenridge writes "sport coaches have available all the sources of personal power identified in French and Raven's classic taxonomy viz.: reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, expert power, and charismatic or referent power."¹⁶ Second, "the development of gender consciousness has come late, if at all, to most women's voluntary sport organizations which have styled themselves on pre-existing organizational structures for men and whose central identity has been as sport organizations for women rather than women's organizations for sport."¹⁷ Because of this fact, little attention

has been given to issues of sex abuse, and especially child sexual abuse, by coaches. Abuses have been ignored in the push toward developing successful women's programs. Third, coaches, by the nature of the relationship, are given power over the bodies of their athletes. Obviously, much of this relates to training and performance. Yet this can and does extend beyond the immediate sporting environment. The coach, in many instances, instructs the girl what clothes to wear (to practice, to performance, on road trips, to school, etc.), what and when to eat, how much to weigh, when to go to bed, etc. The point is that coaches have power, often in subtle ways over their athlete's personal lives. Thus, the numerous structural dependencies of the child athlete within sports' organizations contribute to the potential for child sexual abuse.

Some Rules of Thumb for Parents

As the adult protectors of children, parents have at least three obligations regarding their child's participation in sport. **First, protect your child's time.** Abraham Joshua Heschel writes:

Technical civilization is man's conquest of space. It is a triumph achieved by sacrificing an essential ingredient of existence, namely, time. In technical civilization, we expend time to gain space. To enhance our power in the world of space is our main objective. Yet to have more does not mean to be more. The power we attain in the world of space terminates abruptly at the borderline of time. But time is the heart of existence.¹⁸

Children in America today, affected by the same time crunch as their parents, are made to "sacrifice time" in order to achieve something, to make something of themselves. Their goals are to be accepted into a college of their choice, make first chair in the band, start on the football team, be elected class secretary. Not only is this high speed chase to "enhance our power in the world of space" unhealthy physically and emotionally, it is also unhealthy spiritually. Heschel reminds us that the biblical commandment to honor the Sabbath is a commitment to time over space, a commitment to being rather than becoming. Should Christian parents expect their children to grow spiritu-



ally when their time is never guarded or made sacred? Children know what their parents consider the priority by how they are allowed to schedule their time. Does basketball practice always take precedence over youth Bible study? Is the child allowed to quit a sport in order to have more free time? Is the child allowed to be late for Sunday School but not late for baseball practice? Is rest and quietude only a means to an end, as in getting ready for the big game? It may be helpful for Christian parents to question themselves occasionally regarding their child's schedule. Without daily and weekly Sabbaths, children like adults cannot grow spiritually.

Second, protect your child against adults who do not put your child's development first. Children and youth sports leagues are not always organized in ways that indicate that the organizers understand children's developmental needs. Organizational rules are often designed to insure fair competition between teams and have little to do with the protection of the child from abusive situations. Some youth leagues even use professional sports models for their own. This is inappropriate. Organizational rules should also protect the rights of children.

Further, like in any profession, there are good coaches and bad coaches. Coaches, as teachers of children, should be held to moral standards. It is the responsibility of parents to know how the coach treats their children. Parents should especially be aware of coaches who only measure their success according to the won-loss record. An anonymous author once wrote: "One hundred years from now, it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove...But that the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child." This is the kind of attitude parents should expect of their children's coaches.

Third, protect your child against your own tendencies of achievement by proxy. Let's face it. Parents have an innate tendency to live through their children and to take personal pride in their achievements. Parents who were once athletes and now have children who are athletes, tend to have large emotional investments in how their sons or daughters perform athletically. While parental support and encouragement is important for any childhood endeavor, there is a limit to how much should be invested. The following are symptoms that indicate a parent may have invested too much in the child's performance: (1) You become angry or depressed over your child's performance. Remember, it is hard enough for your child to deal with his or her own dejection over poor play much less your emotional baggage. (2) You never miss your child's game for any reason. Missing your child's game occasionally can let the child know that sports is not everything. (3) You continually compare how your child is doing to how

you did at the same stage of your athletic career. The child senses that the family honor is now at stake in the athletic performance. (4) You have planned and envisioned your child's athletic career several years down the road. The child now feels pressure to live up to your possibly inflated expectations.

Parents should remember that the most important role they play for their children who are athletes is not that of a fan or coach or manager but that of father or mother. A parent who becomes the child's best fan, or expert and demanding coach, or highly organized and proficient sports manager may lose the most important and treasured position of all—that of father or mother. After all, what does it profit a man if he gain an athlete, and lose his own son or daughter? ■

¹ Jodie Morse, "Vaulting into Discord," *Time*, 2 November 1998, 80.

² John Leicester, "Gymnast's parents filled with grief," *Waco Tribune-Herald*, 25 January 1998, p. 1C.

³ Jay Coakley, "Ethics in coaching: child development or child abuse?" *Coaching Volleyball* (December/January 1994): 19.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ quoted in Diana Lundin's, "Overtraining Child Athletes," *Waco Tribune-Herald*, 17 September 1989, p. 12A.

¹¹ Ian Tofler, "Physical and Emotional Problems of Elite Female Gymnasts," *New England Journal of Medicine* 336, no. 2 (1997): 281.

¹² Nayda Labi, "Burning Out at Nine?" *Time*, 23 November 1998, 86.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Don Patterson, "Under Fire: Three former players have accused highly-successful juniors coach Rick Butler of having sex with them while they were minors," *Volleyball*, April 1996, 26.

¹⁵ S.L. Price, "Anson Dorrance: The legendary soccer coach says he knows what makes female athletes tick. Now some of them are suing him," *Sports Illustrated*, 7 December 1998, 91.

¹⁶ Celia H. Brackenridge, "Fair Play or Fair Game? Child Sexual Abuse in Sport Organizations," *International Review of Sociology of Sport* 29 (1994): 292.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 289.

¹⁸ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951), 3.

The Will That Couldn't Be Probated

By Hal Haralson

[Hal Haralson practices law and religion in Austin, Texas and is a regular contributor to *Christian Ethics Today*.]

As Judy and I walked out the door of First Baptist Church, Austin, I heard someone call my name.

"Hal, I need to talk to you."

I turned to see Louise Denham, wife of Dr. Bill Denham, who was then pastor of the church.

She approached and pulled me over to the side. "Can you probate Ramsey's will?"

"Of course," I replied, and we made an appointment for the next Tuesday.

On the way home, we talked about Louise and Ramsey Yelvington, her first husband.

Ramsey Yelvington was a well-known drama teacher and playwright at Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos. He was a friend and contemporary of J. Frank Dobie.

I thought I recalled that it had been several years since his death but didn't give that any more thought.

Priscilla Denham, Bill's first wife, died while he was pastor of First Baptist Church Austin. Bill told us in a small group how he waited an appropriate length of time after his wife's death and then made a list of three women he thought he might be interested in.

First was a high school girlfriend. He called her and found she had been married 40 years and had 8 grandchildren.

Second on the list was Louise Ramsey, the widow of Ramsey Yelvington.

He never got around to calling the third one.

On Tuesday, Louise sat down in my office and began talking, something she was good at.

"How long," I asked, "since Ramsey's death?"

"Seven years," was her reply.

I didn't tell her but normally we probate wills a little sooner than that. I figured I could find a way around this problem.

"Did you bring the will?"

"Yes," she said as she pulled it out of her purse.

The "will" was a piece of motel stationery that had typed on it, "I leave everything I have to my wife Louise." It was dated and signed "Ramsey Yelvington." No witnesses.

There is in Texas a valid handwritten will. It's known as a

holographic will. It must be totally in the handwriting of the testator (the one making the will) and may not have any type-written statements on it. This is because you couldn't tell whether someone else had added something after the will was written.

This "will" missed every qualification for a will I had ever heard of.

I told Louise I would set a hearing to admit the will to probate in San Marcos and get back to her.

The "will" lay on my desk for two weeks. I didn't know what to do with it. (That's called procrastination.)

Finally, I set the hearing and got Louise and her daughter in the office. We went over a long list of questions I planned to ask them in order to "prove up" the will.

The day of the hearing came. We were seated at a large table when the Judge came in. He was a large man, about 50 years old, wearing cowboy boots and a black robe.

He looked at the file and read the will. Then he looked at me.

"Mr. Haralson, you may proceed."

I had just started my first question when the Judge held up his hand.

"Just a minute, Mr. Haralson."

I had that feeling in my viscera that a body gets when a Judge interferes with what a lawyer is planning to do. Could I have messed up this quickly?

The Judge looked at Louise. "Is this your husband's will?"

"Yes, it is," she responded.

The Judge turned to me and stated emphatically, "Ramsay Yelvington is the only man who ever gave me the lead in a play. The will is approved."

As I drove back to Austin, I realized there was a lesson in this experience. Act like you know what you are doing and proceed. You never know what the other side is planning. Things might work out for the good.

Or, as an old country lawyer said when asked if he had ever attempted something when it was likely he would not succeed, "Sure, I've put a saddle on a duck and ridden him down the street and called him a horse lots of times."

Try something. And act like you expect it to succeed. Sometimes it works. ■

Community: The Goal of Family Ministry

By Diana R. Garland

[Dr. Diana Garland is Director of the Baylor Center for Family and Community Ministries at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. This article is excerpted from her forthcoming book, *Family Ministry*, to be published by InterVarsity Press.]

A family's most immediate social ecology is the community. If "home" is the first layer of habitat for a family, then "community" is the next layer. The people in our community know us. They are people we can borrow from or who will take care of a child in an emergency, the persons from whom we can obtain news and gossip so that we know the significant and not so significant information that gives shape to our lives, the persons who can help us find a new medical specialist or someone to work on our car. The community also consists of organizations that care for us and know us, as well as those to which we contribute. These are represented by the bank teller who remembers our name, the church where we have served and been served through the years, the children who were members of the scout troop one's spouse led.

Community includes the physical environment that also, by being familiar, communicates a sense of belonging. The smells of the river or the factory or the pine trees down the street are, like the smell of Grandma's house, part of the canvas of daily experience so familiar that it is hardly noticed until we are absent. We know the streets and do not need a map to find our way around. We sit in the same pew on Sunday and look at the same stained glass windows from the same angle, and can predict who else will sit where. We know where to find tomato sauce in the grocery store without having to consult the store directory.

We hardly think about or recognize community until it is changed, or we leave. Upon return after a long absence, the sights, smells, and greetings from familiar people may flood us with emotion. All these point to the familiar niche that community is. It consists of people, organizations, and physical environment that keep us from depending solely on the persons within our family to meet all our personal, social, physical, and spiritual needs, and who communicate, "This is your place; you belong here."

The African proverb "It takes a village to raise a child" became a political slogan pointing to the importance of community for children, but it does not quite go far enough. All persons, both children and adults, need com-

munity. Because children are dependent on others for their survival, their vulnerability in the absence of community is more apparent. As James Garbarino has pointed out, children are like the canaries miners used to take with them into mine shafts. Canaries are particularly sensitive to poisonous gasses, and if they succumbed, the miners knew the environment was dangerous (Garbarino, 1995). Like canaries in mine shafts without adequate fresh air, children "succumb" without adequate communities of nurture and support. Adults, too, however, need to live in community. Some seem to need community more than others, but even self-sufficient adults seek the company of others and need a community when they become ill, injured, or threatened.

Anyone who has moved from one community to another can testify to the vulnerability that families experience when stripped of their community. The simplest activities require greater effort; a trip to a grocery store or a laundry may require thirty minutes of preparation time spent with the telephone yellow pages in one hand and a city map in the other. It takes twice as long to find needed items in a strange grocery store. The very simple forms of mutual aid that typify functional communities are missing. There is no known neighbor who can watch one child while the other is taken to the emergency room for stitches. And which doctor is "good"? Informal sources of communication do not exist; and often, what a family needs to know about its immediate social environment, like who the best doctors are, is only available through informal channels.

After 27 years of living in Kentucky, we moved to Texas last year. Normally, I pride myself on being resourceful and competent as co-manager of our household. Suddenly, however, formerly rather mindless and insignificant tasks required a lot of thought, and threatened to overwhelm me with a sense of being alone and vulnerable in a new place I did not know or understand. When we were preparing to leave on a trip, there were no neighbors I knew to ask to pick up our mail and keep an eye on things while we were gone. I cleaned out the refrigerator before we left, but there was no one to whom I could give the half carton of eggs, the piece of cheese, and the fruit, so I had to throw them away. I didn't know any teenagers in the neighborhood whom I could ask to cut the grass and water the potted plants. These are very small issues, I thought to myself. What if I was ill and needed help in caring for a toddler, or my husband was in an

automobile accident and I needed transportation to the hospital? Who could I call on to help me?

Connections with others shape and reinforce a person's sense of competence and mastery. Not only does the experience of moving to a new community describe loneliness; it also describes a sense of vulnerability to being unable to handle everyday life stressors with competence. In situations of difficulty, a community can provide a family with social support and tangible aid.

A community also provides opportunities for a family to serve others. Serving others contributes to a sense of competence. Families are strengthened through their efforts to make the world a better place, and the community is their most immediate world. Those efforts include everything from participating in the community's recycling program, tending the home and yard to make the community more attractive, providing leadership in community organizations, and helping others with social support and tangible assistance—even if it is only sharing leftover groceries before a trip.

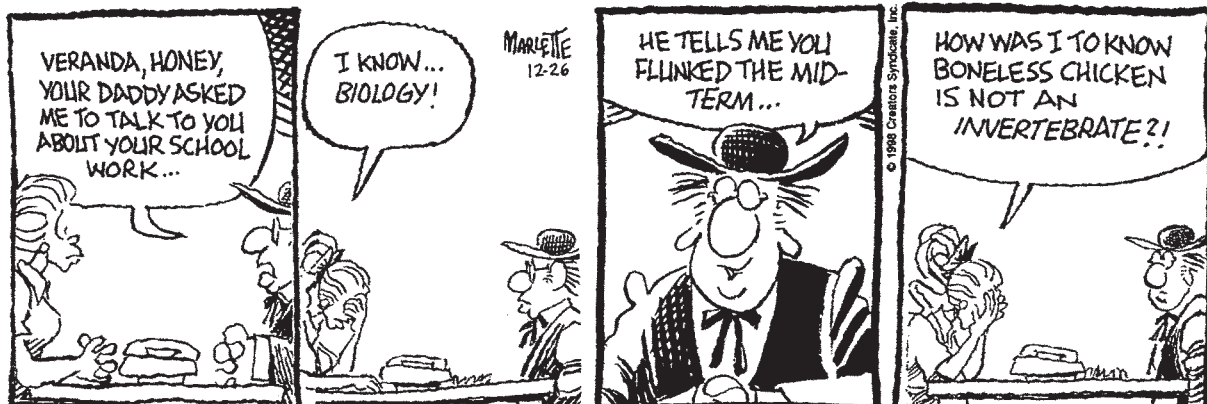
The personal sense of security derived from social connections not only helps us to manage life stresses but also, when needed, to muster the courage to make changes. A community provides models of others who have dealt with similar circumstances. It helps a family to have community connections with others who have cared for an older family member with Alzheimer's disease or an adult child with AIDS. A family with newborn twins may discover other parents of twins in the community happy to pass down strollers, other baby equipment, and helpful advice. Years ago, when our toddler son was discovered to have serious allergies to wheat gluten and dairy products, I was at a loss. There are few typical toddler-type foods that do not contain one or the other. A close friend at church, however, knew someone who had a child with the same allergies. She put us in touch with one another, and soon I had tapped into a whole network of parents who had helpful advice and recipes for home-baked toddler biscuits and other foods that did not contain wheat or dairy products.

Communities Are Not Always Geographically Defined

Historically, communities have been defined geographically as the social and physical surrounds of the family household. The concept of "neighborhood" conveys that sense of geographic community. The neighborhood included the other households and social institutions with which the family shared a particular geographic location. Indeed, neighborhoods still do function as communities, in some places more than others. Neighbors still help one another with care of their physical property and can often be called upon in an emergency.

With the move of work and schooling out of the household and the consequent daily travel of family members out of the immediate physical neighborhood, however, community has taken on more of a social/functional definition than a geographic definition. Magnet schools pull children from all over a region, replacing neighborhood schools. Children no longer walk to school through a familiar neighborhood of people who at least know them by sight. Now they ride school busses to regional schools located sometimes miles from home territory and far from easy involvement of parents and others in their community. Regional shopping malls have supplanted small local businesses. Lower prices and much larger selections in mega-stores inadvertently have led to end the community relationships that existed in neighborhood shops frequented by the same customers. Bank machines operated from a central location have replaced neighborhood banks. Regional sports leagues have displaced informal sandlot neighborhood play. Adults, like children going to regional schools, travel far from their neighborhood for the day's work and play.

One can imagine a time-exposed aerial photograph of a family's daily movements which would provide a map of the family's community—to various places of employment and schooling, to shopping centers and grocery stores, to visit friends and family in other neighborhoods, to a fast food restaurant for a family meal, to soccer prac-



tice or ballet lessons or the pediatrician. A family's automobile is the family encapsulated, moving from one node of community to another, often through "foreign" (not-part-of-the-family's-community) territory. The streets of the neighborhood used to be the place where neighbors met neighbors and community developed and functioned. Now streets are passageways that connect geographically separated nodes of community life, but they themselves are not locations of community.

As a consequence of all these changes, the neighborhood and the community have become separate entities. Particularly for middle class families, their community is often flung over a much larger region. Before the advent of the automobile, the symbols of community might have been the front porch swing, the unlatched kitchen screen door open to a neighbor stopping in for a cup of coffee or to borrow an egg, the drug store soda counter on the corner where people gathered "just to talk," the park bench. By contrast, today's symbol of community might be the mini-van, transporting the family to the various places where the family receives community services and makes its own investment in the community.

This is particularly true of families with school-age children who require parental transportation in order to play with friends, play sports, take music lessons, and so on. During this period in our own children's lives, many mornings I felt like we were going on a trip rather than just living the day. Indeed, each day was a trip. Bags had to be packed for school for children and for work for parents, for the gym for a parent getting some exercise on lunch hour, for soccer clothes for the child with practice after school, for the other child's violin lesson. Many families leave the household not to return for ten or more hours. The automobile becomes the place where clothes are changed, meals are eaten, and important family conversations are held. In many families of school-age children, it seems a far distant past when the family was rooted in the household, when children and parents came home to eat lunch together, when children played across the back yards of the neighborhood rather than at appointed times at a regional soccer center, when birthday parties were held on the family picnic table rather than at the man's pizza and game center.

Families in which all members drive themselves, however, often do not have this connection in the family vehicle. Instead, family life is a set of community nodes with no connection to one another. Adult family members may meet one another for lunch or dinner, and the restaurant table (or the church supper) replaces the kitchen table as hub of family life. Many middle-class families take two or

Families are strengthened through their efforts to make the world a better place, and the community is their most immediate world.

three cars to church and other activities, meeting and leaving one another there rather than coming and going together.

At the same time, perhaps this mobility and scattered community points to the much greater significance of place given the family home today. "Cocooning," or staying in the home with videos to watch and a pizza delivered, has become the recreation of choice for many families tired from all the running to connect the dots of their scattered lives.

This "cocooning" has also moved community into a new dimension without geography—that of "cyberspace." Instead of gathering on the street corner or park benches or barber shop, Internet

"buddies" gather in "chat rooms" via the world wide web, without ever leaving home. There they write messages back and forth to one another. This kind of community seems one-dimensional and impoverished when compared to a community where people see each other and touch one another, where babies are bounced on knees and arms are thrown around one another's shoulders. On the other hand, many persons who otherwise feel isolated and alone in their geographic communities seems to find significant support and connection via the electronic community. Persons struggling with debilitating and rare physical illnesses can converse with others in the same struggle who live half-way around the world. A young man for the first time confronting issues of homosexual orientation in his life can talk with others dealing with the same issues in the safety and seeming anonymity of e-mail and on-line conversations.

It should also be noted that families living in poverty, who do not own an automobile, much less one for every family member's use, often live in more geographically constrained communities. The vitality and support of the walking community is very important for the health and well-being of these families (Vosler, 1996).

Family Members Do Not Share the Same Communities

The last vestige of neighborhood as community has been rapidly fading since women began joining the workforce. The demise of neighborhood as community began, however, when work first began being separated from home, and men packed lunch boxes and left home not to return for most of each day. They began developing collegial relationships in the workplace—away from the neighborhood—and neighboring decreased. Those women who were still working in the home became the primary contact point for the family with its neighborhood/community. They still prepared lunch for children coming home from school; they served as volunteers in school and church and civic organizations; they visited

with and cared for neighbors. Men increasingly relied on women to be the community connection for the family.

As women joined the workplace, however, the final reliable community contact began to fray. In the thirty years from 1960 to 1990, the proportion of families in which men are the sole breadwinners declined from 42% to 15% (Wilkie, 1991). Schools began serving lunches at school. Those women still working at home found themselves in empty neighborhoods, except for senior adults and latchkey children who returned at the end of the school day. Women in the workforce also developed friendships through their places of employment, the places where they spent much more of their time than the neighborhood.

The friendships adults formed in the workplace are individual friendships, however, not family friendships. Work colleagues may have never seen a person's home or know who else lives there. One research study found that only about 25% of community relationships of one spouse are included in the community of the partner (Milardo, 1989).

Therefore, it is not simply that the changing ecology of family life has flung community more widely; it has endangered the very existence of community for many families. The most vulnerable families are those for whom mobility has meant moving from one location to another. Rodney Clapp (Clapp, 1993) has suggested that the image of family life, particularly in the American suburbs, which is where our society tends to think of family life, is no longer the sturdy, intricately rooted tree. Instead, it is a hydroponic plant that floats on the water's surface and easily adapts when moved from one tank to another. Trees contribute to and are nourished by their environment; they cannot be uprooted without serious damage both to the tree and to the ecological niche from which it is removed. Hydroponic plants, on the other hand, can be moved with little effect either way. Rootless suburban families attempt to substitute for community with several single-purpose pseudo-communities. Pseudo-communities are voluntary associations formed around shared interests—children's sporting leagues, self-help groups, Bible study.

These pseudo-communities are often engaged in by individual family members, not by the family as a whole. Each family member has his or her own set of outside relationships. These relationships are more tenuous and less supportive of the family as a group. As Clapp says, "If I play racquetball with you once a week or sit in your reading group once a month, what business is it of yours if I cheat on my wife?" (Clapp, 1993, p. 50). Pseudo-communities bring together those who are socially, economically, or culturally similar. Their chief purpose is to enjoy being with those who share common life-styles (Brueggemann, 1996). Self-help groups such as twelve-step programs or weight-monitoring groups are "pseudo-communities" because they are based on one-dimensional commonality rather than the multi-salient relationships that characterize a community.

Families are not hydroponic. They function best when they are deeply rooted and nurtured as families and not just as collections of individuals. We need the community to know us as a family. That is why marriages are public events; there is wisdom in publicly acknowledging the creation of a family as an entity. Betty Carter, a prominent family therapist, has argued that we are experiencing a massive collapse in America of community. "The current red herring—that divorce and any family structure that diverges from the traditional breadwinner male/homemaker female is causing social breakdown—is exactly backward. It is social breakdown—disappearance of community—that is undermining even strong and devoted families" (Carter, 1995 pp. 33, 35). We have lost the informal sharing of work, recreation, resources, and help in times of need. We have also lost the spiritual sense of belonging to something larger than our own small, separate family unit.

Carter has admonished family therapists to broaden their assessment of families to include their connections to the community. Part of a good assessment should be asking the questions: Is this family contributing anything beyond their own circle? Do they belong somewhere, besides sitting around their own dinner table (Carter, 1995)? It is not just that families need communities; communities also need families to nurture and socialize their



members for effective community participation.

Communities are Not Always Supportive

Of course, just as families do not always function in the most optimal ways but may become stuck in less creative and even harmful patterns of relationships, so do communities. Communities may isolate and shun rather than support families, communicating to a family a sense of not belonging rather than a sense of place. A community may add to rather than share in the burden a family is trying to bear. One of the most significant ways churches can minister with families is to develop strong, functional communities. Even the best of communities, however, are not perfect. And all communities have significant costs as well as benefits for their members.

Just as families are nurtured and stressed by their community environments, so communities are nurtured and stressed by the larger society which is their environment. An inner-city slum is often a dysfunctional community because of social forces far beyond the members and physical resources of the community. Suburbs, city communities, rural towns and villages all are influenced by larger factors such as government policies, the practices of national and international corporations, and the pollution of water and air by communities far distant from them.

The Costs of Community: Are They Worth It?

Stephanie Coontz describes her experience of parenting during a visit with Hawaiian-Filipino friends on the island of Lanai:

My child was still in diapers, and I greatly appreciated the fact that nearly every community function, from weddings to baptisms to New Year's Eve parties, was open to children. I could sit and socialize and keep an eye on my toddler, and I assumed that was what all the other parents were doing. Soon, however, I noticed that I was the only person jumping up to change a diaper, pick my son up when he fell, wipe his nose, dry his eyes, or ply him with goodies. Belatedly, I realized why: The other parents were not keeping an eye on their kids. Instead, each adult kept an eye on the floor around his or her chair. Any child who moved into that section of the floor and needed disciplining, feeding, comforting, or changing was promptly accommodated; no parent felt compelled to check that his or her own

Families need to be rooted in a community, whether that community is a geographic neighborhood or network of physical nodes scattered geographically.

child was being similarly cared for (Coontz, 1992, p. 2 10).

To mainland Americans used to hearing almost total responsibility for their own members, this picture seems almost idyllic. But this reliance on the community does not come without a price. It means trusting others with our precious children, and that may mean knowing that others will not respond in just the way we would. How would the author have felt if someone else had disciplined her child more harshly than she considered acceptable? Reliance on community also means caring for other people's children. It means more responsibility for others, and less for ourselves, more freedom from having to do it all ourselves, but

also less control. There are good reasons that Americans have embraced family autonomy and responsibility. There is much greater choice and freedom, although the cost is lessened support and nurture from the community.

The swapping of services and tangible resources carries obligations. Accepting help carries with it the expectation that the help will sooner or later be reciprocated, one way or another. Perhaps this obligation is that from which the middle class has sought freedom through its financial resources. For this reason, many families would much prefer purchasing the help they need—a carry-out meal during family illness, for example, rather than a covered dish dinner from a Sunday School class.

Obligations may even become codified into unwritten principles of etiquette. The covered dish dinner obligates the recipient to, at the very least, write a thank-you note and participate in similar care for others in time of need. In some communities, if the recipient is able to do so, the baking dish in which food has been offered in a time of crisis is returned "full" to its owner. That is, the recipient of the initial care prepares food to return in the dish as a way of saying "thank you."

The costs of living in community create costs that are easily overlooked by persons weary of having to bear life burdens virtually alone. Most families with children today are adult-deprived; there do not ever seem to be enough hands and hours to do the chores of household management, caregiving to dependent members, and nurture of shared life. Yankelovich has suggested that our society seems to work on a "lurch and learn" principle. We have lurched from work embedded in community relationships to individual hedonism, only to learn that it resulted in isolation and the loss of community (Yankelovich, 1996). Before lurching back toward embracing more community, its costs must also be recognized. Community does not mean simply being supported in times of stress and crisis; it also means supporting others. It means not only receiv-

ing welcome support and advice; it also means being the recipient of unwelcome advice and meddling on the part of well-meaning, or not so well-meaning, community members. One young mother described her despair at the constant stream of family members and friends to the hospital where her child was critically ill. "I just needed some time to be alone with my husband," she said. When neighbors share, items shared are sometimes damaged or not returned at all. That is the cost of community. In some ways, communities are like children; they disrupt, stress, and bring high price tags that are often not considered beforehand. On the other hand, they can bring a sense of fulfillment, rootedness, and even joy.

Implications for Ministry

Congregations can be a significant extrafamilial physical and social environment for families. The church as a physical environment can be an extension of the home, a place where families eat and play and talk and worship and serve others together in a context which supports and values their commitments to each other. It can also be a place where family members can gain privacy from one another and can find peer groups and friends who give balance to family life.

Congregations can help families cope effectively with life stressors, helping them to discern what is reasonable and not reasonable to expect of themselves, providing a community where they can talk with and receive mutual support from other families dealing with similar stressors, being the community which together takes on those social and cultural systems that are creating distress for families.

Families need to be rooted in a community, whether that community is a geographic neighborhood or network of physical nodes scattered geographically. Congregations can serve as significant community "nodes" where families can be nurtured and can contribute as families, not simply as individuals. ■

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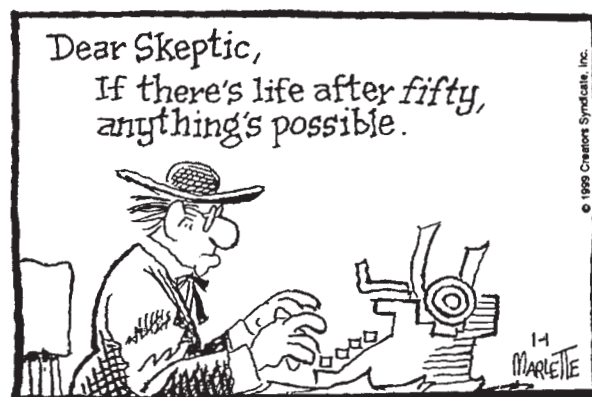
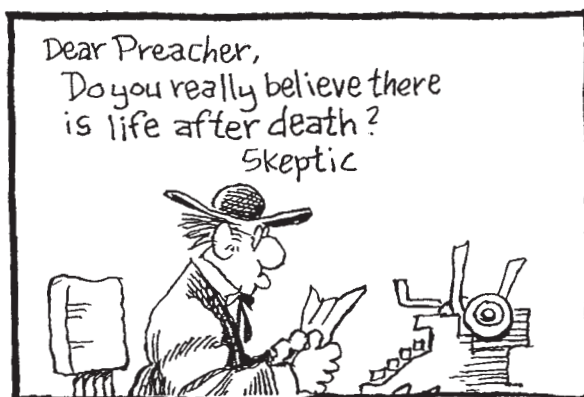
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"Hand in Hand: Family, Church, Community" is the title of the Inaugural Conference of the Baylor Center for Family and Community Ministries being held on the Baylor campus in Waco, Texas, May 20-21, 1999, sponsored jointly by the Baylor Social Work School, Buckner Baptist Benevolences, and the George W. Truett Theological Seminary. Call (254) 710-3550 for details.



Social Security: Examining Some Deceptions

By John M. Swomley

[Dr. John Swomley is professor emeritus of social ethics at St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City. He is a frequent contributor to *Christian Ethics Today*.]

The modern American system of Social Security has no biblical parallel yet it is clearly a social expression of love of neighbor that ensures self-respect rather than dependence on charity. It provides a mechanism whereby employers and workers while they are employed contribute to an insurance fund that provides an income when they are no longer able to work. In addition to the Jewish-Christian concern for neighbors and strangers, there are strong Bible statements against those who seek riches at the expense of the poor.

Our Social Security system is today under attack by some politicians and those who would privatize it for personal or corporate gain.

The various scare attacks on Social Security which began in the early 1990s are now being fueled by manufactured crises and downright deception. The deception and the crises predicted in the daily press and other media should be examined in the light of the recent past and current statistics.

Deception One: Social Security benefits contribute to the national debt. This is false because the Social Security “Trust funds” have in the past and the present generated a surplus of receipts over expenditures. They continue to do so up to the present time. For example, in the three years prior to 1995, “Trust funds” generated a surplus of receipts over expenditures of between \$46.2 billion and \$53.5 billion per year. (Olenick, *New York Times*, Feb. 8, 1995)

It is important to note that every yearly surplus has become a part of the general federal budget instead of being kept in a separate trust fund.

This surplus, which continues to be generated by Social Security taxes (FICA), brings in “nearly \$100 billion a year more...than the system needs to fund current benefits.” (J.A. Heaster, Business Section, *Kansas City Star*, Nov. 8, 1998). Actually, at the end of fiscal year 1998, both President Clinton and Congress hailed the budget and treasury surplus which came “from excess Social Security receipts and unspent revenue from tax collections dedicated to other specific activities such as highway construction, air transportation improvements, and unemployment insurance coverage.” (Business section, *Kansas City Star*, November 4, 1998)

The American people were duped by political speeches into believing that the budget surplus would “save Social Security.” But the Social Security tax surplus was again put into the government’s general budget, and Social Security was given another

IOU claim on the Treasury, which will probably never be paid into future Social Security needs.

Deception Two: The Social Security Trust Fund will become insolvent or bankrupt within the next 30 years as “baby boomers” enter the system, or earlier according to those who want to end the system or privatize it. This is false for two reasons: 1) the U.S. Treasury debt to Social Security in 1995 totaled about \$400 billion, (Heaster, *Kansas City Star*, March 4, 1995) and Social Security taxes continue to bring in nearly \$100 billion a year.

Business Week’s ad in the *N.Y. Times* of November 21, 1998 commented: “Conventional wisdom says that Social Security will go bankrupt in 30 years under the weight of 78 million retired baby boomers. But Social Security actuaries use an average economic growth rate of 1.7% over the next three decades to reach that conclusion.” However, assume that the “annual growth rate is half a percentage point faster (2.2%) over the next 30 years” and that “the federal tax bite stays the same....This math generates an additional \$5 trillion in 1998 dollars in cumulative revenues—a huge sum available for seventy-something boomers.” Actually, “the U.S. has been growing at a 2.5% rate in the 90s.”

The growth rate of 1.7% is unrealistic because it is lower than even the 1.9% growth during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Deception Three: Propaganda by advocates of privatization of Social Security claims that it would enable individuals to invest their Social Security funds in stocks at a greater return on their money.

According to a *New York Times* editorial of November 9, 1998, “Privatization advocates would have individuals own stocks through accounts like 401k plans offered by many companies. Such plans are very attractive to Wall Street but the fees Wall Street would collect would come out of profits available to pay beneficiaries. Will the government...be willing to guarantee that Social Security recipients would not suffer if stocks fall drastically? If so, would that create an incentive for those managing the funds to use risky strategies? If not, the idea of a safety net begins to fade.”

Business Week’s ad in the *N.Y. Times* of November 21, 1998 also commented, “Privatization doesn’t work...without faster growth. And with faster growth it isn’t needed. Stocks have been rising at double-digit rates because the economy has been booming, but with growth at 1.7%, returns in the stock market wouldn’t be much higher than the yields on government bonds. Certainly not enough to throw out the Security system as we now know it.”

Deception Four: Advocates of privatization assume that Social Security is merely a retirement fund. Actually, it is an important insurance fund. About 15 percent of Social Security payments go not to retirees, but to people who become disabled. Another 15 percent goes to survivors' benefits. About 200,000 workers die each year. Social Security protects 98 percent of all widowed spouses and dependent children to age 18. No privatization program would provide such protection. If it is argued that most people would not need such insurance, that is belied by the almost universal use of fire insurance by property owners, most of whom hope never to have their property burn. Insurance is for the unexpected disasters.

Privatization unrealistically depends on healthy workers who will invest well at or before age 25, who do not become disabled or die before age 65, and who never have to dig into savings for emergencies.

Deception Five: Advocates of privatization do not mention the risk of recession or else assume that retirees will not have to retire during a recession when stock prices may be very low so as to provide little sustained income.

According to Peter Lynch of Fidelity Investments, "We've had nine recessions since World War II...there's no doubt a severe recession can bring stocks to grief...Recessions don't telegraph their arrival. In most cases stocks have already fallen by the time the trouble starts." (*Fidelity Focus*, Fall, 1998, pp. 14, 15)

Deception Six: Advocates of privatization claim that as the baby boom generation reaches retirement age a heavier tax will fall on young workers. In addition to the refutation of this under Deception 2 and 3, this is false because it presupposes that we will keep the present unjust taxation of lower income workers.

"Most people earn salaries well below \$60,000 and pay Social Security tax of 7.65 percent of their full salary. But this tax cuts off on salaries above \$61,200, so that the maximum tax remains \$4,681.80.

"If your pay is \$100,000 you pay only 4.7 percent; if it is more than \$200,000, your rate goes down to 2.3 percent. A chief executive officer who is paid a million a year, as many are, pays a tiny one half of one percent: \$4,681 divided by \$1 million. (Olenick, *N.Y. Times*, February 8, 1995)

In other words the present tax is hard on lower income workers and provides "an outrageous loophole" for the wealthy. Olenick estimates the increase in Social Security revenue, if this were closed, at more than \$100 billion. (Ibid.)

Deception Seven: The motive for pessimistic reports about the future of Social Security's predicted future insolvency is concealed under the idea of "reform." The real reason for such reports is to attempt to prepare the public, including retirees, for the privatization of pensions, requiring workers to put a percentage of their earnings into private savings plans. This provides bankers and other financiers with a large and ready pool of cash. It is, in effect, compelling the poor to underwrite the wealthy through a proposed scheme of investment in stocks.

Deception Eight: Social Security misleads people into not saving. This, too, is false. The *Los Angeles Times* of February 8, 1995 said the maximum payment to someone retiring at age 65

that year was \$1,199 per month. Even if that has increased somewhat since then, it is hardly enough for a person with medical, housing, food, transportation and other costs. Most people know in advance that they will need more income than is to be provided by Social Security when they retire and if able to do so, save accordingly.

The Congress in 1994 started taxing Social Security benefits (up to 50 percent) if their adjusted gross income (including interest and dividends from savings) is between \$25,000 and \$34,000 for single taxpayers and \$32,000 and \$44,000 for couples filing jointly. If their incomes are over \$14,000 (single) or \$44,000 (couple) the taxes are on 85% of their Social Security benefits. In other words, the government is saying, "If you save too much we will take at least part of it away." It is not the Social Security system that discourages savings, but Congressionally generated taxes on the income brought about by savings.

The \$292 to \$300 billion a year paid to Social Security recipients greatly aide the economy, not only because of its consumer purchasing power, but because each dollar in benefits generates up to four dollars of economic activity. Moreover, if working children had to pay out of pocket for their parents' medical bills or other expenses, it would be a greater burden on them than the present Social Security tax spread over many years.

Finally, it is to be remembered that members of Congress who attack the Social Security system are hypocritical in that they themselves participate in a pension system that provides far more when they retire than any Social Security recipient receives and on average more than private sector employees can expect to get. "For example, members retiring at age 60 with 30 years of service would get \$99,175 a year; in the private sector it would be \$56,220. Frequently they are also employed by private interests at much higher salaries as lobbyists" when they leave Congress. (*Wall Street Journal*, January 26, 1995)

Former House Speaker Thomas Foley, who received a salary of \$171,000 as Speaker, after leaving office received a pension of about \$124,000 a year and also was a lobbyist paid by a law firm. Some Senators get a "pension of \$78,000" or more. Because benefits grow with length of service, the system discourages term limits and reduces a concern for such limits. (Ibid.)

For all federal employees, unfunded pension liabilities were \$870 billion in 1995 and if military retirees are included, the money promised, but not then available was \$1,495,000,000,000 in 1995. Yet this, unlike the well-funded Social Security system, is never publicly discussed.

The Social Security system should not only be maintained, but should be separated from the general federal budget into a trust fund, as originally intended when legislated by Congress. It is an essential safety net for most American families. It also helps sustain the total American economy in the periodic recession and depression years in which stocks and other private investments fall in value. It is therefore an important ethical contribution to our complex society as well as to millions of our fellow citizens. ■

The Apostle

By James A. Langley

[Dr. James A. Langley is Executive Director Emeritus of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention.]

Made bold by sense of Divine will
And fired by a raging passion,
Whatever wind blows, good or ill,
Determined God's world to fashion;
With zeal aflame in heart and mind
To rid the world of the godless kind,
"Stone those who see Truth a new way,
Death to heretics without say!"
Fanatical for sacred writ,
Nor deterred by piety or wit,
The Law! the Law must be obeyed,
Line on line, precept on precept
'Til all of Moses' words are kept,
Lest Sinai's light should be betrayed.
So on my holy mission bent,
Stephen's death condign punishment.
Damascus-bound, burning with malice
To seize the Nazarene's disciples,
Cleanse the land, waste the church, sans scruples,
Make them drink their own blood-chalice.

Suddenly a dazzling bright'ning
From heav'n shone, thus to earth I fell;
A voice like thunder and lightning
Bared my soul, which no tongue can tell;
That voice—such voice that wakes the dead—
Men round me saw none, heard with dread;
My name! He called me by my name!
Yet my name brought not pride but shame.
Could this be Him on the tree slain
At whose death the day turned to night,
With rock-riven, grave-op'ning fright?
The same! now risen and exalted,
He it was I had persecuted
When Stephen midst the stones had lain!
Light brighter than the zenith sun,
Brightest when the day is half-won,
Blinded my eyes, and made me see
That those I hurt are one with Thee.

He sends me, now a man in Christ:
"To Jew and Gentile bear my Word,
Righteousness by faith, beyond price,
Grace gift to all who make me Lord." ■

Perils and Pitfalls of Leadership in Multicultural Societies

By Nelson O. Hayashida

[Dr. Nelson O. Hayashida is Academic Dean of Baptist Convention College in Soweto, South Africa and is professor of Systematic Theology, Phenomenology of Religion, and Missiology.]

Introduction: The Christian Heritage and Challenge of Multiculturalism

The Heritage

When Christianity received its seal from heaven with its Pentecostal baptism,¹ it is recorded that:

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" (Acts 2:5-11).

The way, the truth and the life (Christianity) was founded by Jesus Christ in the center of class, race, and religious antagonisms and stresses. Not overpowered, intimidated or controlled by any, he dealt alike with Roman, Syro-Phoenician, Greek, Samaritan and Jew. Can one deny that the entire religious, political, and social structure of Jewish civilization was bedrocked on the idea of race? But in spite of that Jewish ethnocentrism, God was seeking to bring the peoples of the world together with the one God for all people idea by laying a spiritual and moral foundation. Upon the authority of his Son, Jesus Christ, "the Fatherhood of God" and "the Brotherhood of man" were established. The aim was to "break down the middle wall of partition" (Ephesians 2:14-18) between Jew and Gentile, High Priest and commoner, woman and man, slave and free. In Christ.

Standing in the Areopagus, Paul declared to the Athenians that "God has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26).

The Challenge

The nations of the world today are compelled to come to terms—politically, socially and religiously—with cultural diversity. And Christianity, as in the days of Paul, must allow the authentic Christ to find a place in the constellation of "rulers...authorities...powers...and...spiritual forces" (Ephesians 6-12).

In Latin America the craze is, as in Africa, Europe and parts of Asia, "futbol" (soccer). On South African television in April this year I saw the Moroka Swallows play Hellenic and witnessed multicultural harmony in competitive form. There were white, colored and black players on the same sides on the futbol field.

Multiculturalism, though, is more pervasive than skin color. The names of the white players betrayed British, Dutch, French and German ancestry. I'm sure many were of mixed white ancestry. The names of the so-called colored players betrayed white-black mixtures with perhaps even more distant Malay or San intrusions. The black players revealed names that were Zulu, Sotho, Xhosa, Tswana, for example, but many were, I'm sure, mixtures of these. On that futbol field, then, playing solidly for the Swallows or Hellenic, were, in microcosm, the multicultural, pluralistic makeup of South Africa—South Africans all!

Arguably, 1994 symbolically represents, for the first time, the spiritual birth of South Africa as a nation, for the liberated nation now has a chance to find its soul, together, multiculturally, unitedly and not dividedly, respecting for the first time (at least legally and theoretically), not only one's own but the other person's race, language, culture, and religion.

We need not decry pluralism. We only decry that form of multiculturalism that divides us and allows privilege and inequality to dictate our destiny²

Unity in diversity, unity without uniformity—can it be achieved? Among Christians? In the nation?³

Multiculturalism that keeps us distant and uncommunicative at spiritual, social, and psychological levels—can it be ejected? From the church? From the state?⁴

The Purpose of the Paper

The multicultural realities of South Africa echo the multicultural realities of the rest of the world. Christian leadership in the context of ethnic diversity presents varied perils and pitfalls. Following, I will attempt to define and describe some of these perils and pitfalls as they relate to both multiculturalism and leadership, both in South Africa and elsewhere.

The Peril and Pitfall of Ethnocentrism

Multiculturalism and diversity issues⁵ call for each cultural group to reconstruct their own, perhaps un-processed and un-analyzed, experience. Could the failure properly to analyse one's own psycho-social history obstruct renewal, healing, reconciliation, and transformation? Indeed, is truth-finding the road to reconciliation, to borrow South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission endeavors, and will reconciliation be the precondition for healthy paradigms for multicultural transformation?

I would like to contend that one of the perils of leadership in a multicultural society is the tendency to ethnic pride, no matter what color or ethno-linguistic identity it stems from. Ethnic pride that leads to dominance leads to superimposition of the elevated group's values and worldviews. One of the challenges, then, of church and state, is to create and sustain multicultural habits of dialogue that lead to understanding, and understanding to healing and change, in the sense of true partnerships of faith and destiny, with each ethnic group learning to become "subjects" in the process and not "objects" of it. A dialogical pattern of equanimity is necessary. This can and should be the pattern and hope among denominations in South Africa and elsewhere.

That is, instead of being an object of analysis, an object of often misleading statistics, and an object of emotionally distant scrutinisation, shouldn't we instead seek the process of "dialogue-seeking-understanding-to-lead-to-change" in which each cultural group has the opportunity to participate, not as an object, but as a "subject," a subject of self-analysis, a subject seeking identity, a subject seeking healing and wholeness, a subject able to see flaws and corrosive tendencies from within its own cultural ranks, a subject being equipped to carve its own destiny, a "shared destiny" however, which is not in a vacuum or without the collaboration and participation of others, but *in conjunction with and in the macrocosm of the larger, multicultural whole*, a subject learning to make unique and vital contributions to the socio-political, religious and ethnic diversity in the communities of our shared world, a "subject" of worth and dignity able to inform and be informed?⁶

The Peril and Pitfall of Spiritualisation

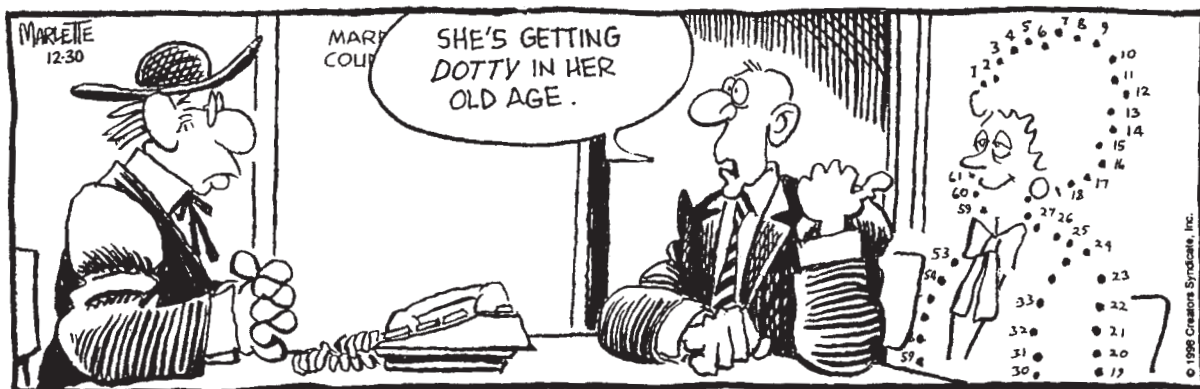
One of the reasons why theologies of liberation and theologies of hope came into being was because Christianity coming out of the West often "spiritualised" the Gospel, totally ignoring in some cases the humanitarian plight of poor people. Salvation must be holistic. Redeeming one's humanity and dignity (mind, body, spirit) is the transforming miracle of salvation—it affects every area of life on earth (Matthew 6:9-13).

The pitfall in failing to come to terms with leadership in a multicultural society is to continue to see salvation, and the whole mission of the church in a "spiritualised" way. This way does not easily connect with the rest of life. The tangible Gospel is paradigmatic of salvation and hence must *manifest* tangibility. Is not salvation like the hum of an engine—exuding power and potential? That humming engine, however, if left in an idle state, makes a sham of its power and potential. A vehicle with that humming engine is to *move* to reach *objectives*. Likewise, salvation that hums with power must move to reach *objectives*—the healing and wholeness (salvation) of persons (mind, body, spirit). Women and men, as psycho-social beings, are found feeding on their personal and social evils and psycho-social pains, fears, and sufferings (mind, body, spirit). Salvation, as liberation, seeks to make changes. It seeks to make its case for God's will and good pleasure to be done "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6-10) in terms of mind, body and spirit.

Justice and equality must be part of the leadership task of the salvation-rich church as it intersects with both clerical and municipal orders, constantly participating with religio-governmental authorities to create and recreate righteousness in the land. If the gap between the haves and have nots widens in any country, the psycho-social gulf between cultures and subcultures will necessarily intensify,

We ought not, therefore, to spiritualise our humanity away. We are redeemed in our humanity, not from it (Genesis 1:26-31, Romans 8:8-11). Perilous theology produces behavioral pitfalls.

In Jesus Christ, God's Son, the full potential of humanity was evident (Matthew 4:1; 27:30-31, 50; Mark 10:13-16; 14:35-36; Luke 22:15, 44, 51; John 1:14; 11:35). If then, as we are exhorted in scripture, we are to become like Jesus, we must



become *more fully human*. I like what Albert Nolan has said:

When one allows Jesus to speak for himself and when one tries to understand him without any preconceived ideas and within the context of his own times, what begins to emerge is a man of extraordinary independence, immense courage and unparalleled authenticity....To deprive this man of his humanity is to deprive him of his Greatness.⁸

In this vein, Rahner writes that Christology is the beginning and the end of Anthropology.⁹

When the Jewish Jesus conversed with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:4ff), he breeched customary behavior in three ways: He addressed a woman in public, he interacted with a prostitute, and he associated with a Samaritan. Was it Jesus' authentic humanity that compelled him to disregard what would have been normal behavior for him in terms of his gender, his religion, and his nationality? As I see it, he was able to rise above his culture for the simple reason that holiness was made concrete in the magnitude of his humanness. To be saved is to exude tangibility, to become truly human, as Jesus was.

The Peril and Pitfall of the Popularity Contest

The Corinthian city was, in the time of Paul's missionary journeys, a mosaic of cultures and religious persuasions. That human mosaic was, in good measure, brought into the Corinthian church. It so happened that Paul's leadership was put into question, his authority frequently disputed. In this setting Paul takes the role of chief exponent for his own right to leadership (selfhood):

We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way; in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report, genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich, having nothing, and yet possessing everything (11 Corinthians 6:3-11).

Paul was no stranger to popularity contests (1 Corinthians 1:11ff). He vigorously defended himself, and others for that matter, for the right to become common soldiers or captains in God's advance in salvation history. He admitted he was not usually the most articulate, nor the most handsome, nor the

most professional,¹⁰ nor the one with the most imposing figure, nor the most righteous. But he was intransigent in his opposition to popularity contests as the *modus operandi* to leadership.¹¹ We can surmise from Paul's writings that while the flamboyant personality is often put in the forefront of leadership, God uses commonness and weakness to accomplish his purposes. That weakness transfigures into divine strength when God's chosen has survived the crucible of "hardships and distresses."¹²

Modern leadership qualifications subvert biblical principles when prophetic character is sacrificed for mold-fitting, flag-carrying denominational loyalism. Jesus was against fanatical loyalism as he was against religious snobbery and social intolerance.¹³ In the context of Jewish society, his world view and behavior were deemed dangerous and blasphemous. They were not. The perception was not the reality. What was under attack, actually, was an institutional religious order truncated at its spiritual roots. Anti-establishment views are seldom stepping-stones to establishment advancement.

How many prophetic leaders do we marginalize or crucify today for similar reasons?

Leadership finds its scriptural mark in the person who has endured the trials and tribulations victoriously, and who has demonstrated a mature wisdom, resiliency, and commanding character transformations as a result. The challenge in becoming a *leader* in a multicultural setting where one reckons with one's own identity (ethnic, spiritual, social) but respects others' identity (ethnic, spiritual, social) with "understanding, patience and kindness" (II Corinthians 6:6) is for us today strikingly reminiscent of Paul's own challenge among the ancient Corinthians.

The Peril and Pitfall of Cowardice

There were cowards before him, and after him, but the cowardice of Pontius Pilate (Matthew 27:11-26; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:38-19:15) uniquely haunts our memory of him.

Courage of one's convictions. Martin Luther King, Jr. had it. Simon Peter had it, lost it, and then regained it (Matthew 26:30-38; John 18:15-27). J.J. Doke had it. So did Mahatma Gandhi.

There existed a special relationship between J. J. Doke, the pastor of the Central Baptist Church in Johannesburg (1908-1913), and Mahatma Gandhi, who was practicing law in Johannesburg. As an advocate of Indian rights, Gandhi was often maligned by the government authorities, even by Indian extremists. Beaten nearly to death once by Indian extremists, Gandhi was provided refuge in the Doke home where he was nurtured back to health. When Doke met an untimely death while traveling in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in 1913, M. K. Gandhi offered a tribute to J. J. Doke at the latter's memorial service in Johannesburg. Echoing the sentiments of the oppressed Indian people of South Africa, Gandhi proclaimed, "Mr. Doke was not modernized and civilized Christianity. He practiced the original."¹⁴ The courage required for Rev. Doke

to fully embrace an Indian “radical” in this period of South Africa’s history is monumental. Doke appears to have been a leader of unquestioned integrity and driven by a deep commitment to freedom of conscience. As if speaking directly to that Doke-Ghandi trust, C.W. Brister states, “it takes courage to care, as well as to share one’s suffering with another. Courage is that quality which keeps one going in the face of danger or discouragement.”¹⁵

Leaders in our world who compromise their convictions have not only compromised their integrity but the biblical witness of Jesus Christ himself.

Final Observations

I live in Roodeport in greater Johannesburg. I remember the first time I encountered a black mother walking with her very small daughter. As I was jogging past them, I smiled and said “Hello.” It brought no response from them except perhaps a slight facial acknowledgment from the mother. Another day, jogging again, I approached them and said “Hello.” The mother said “Hello” with a little smile. The little girl only stared with astonishment. By about the third or fourth encounter, the five-year-old girl was recognizing me and smiling shyly at me, this strange man who greets them with “Hello.” Now, every time we pass on the street there are warm smiles and greetings.

Raging rivers separate cultures and people groups. Christians ought to build bridges over the rivers that separate the plural cultures of our societies. Cultural differences constitute a great chasm; they in part create the rivers. This chasm is characterized by doubt, fear, misunderstanding, ignorance, even hatred.¹⁶

Why build bridges to other cultures? The Gospel mandates it. Our lives are enriched by it. We learn about our humanity through it. In fact, 27 Even when it is for the first time we must experience our common, human family.

“Love thy neighbor as thyself” (Romans 13:9) the Bible demands. Historically, we have defined too narrowly who our neighbor is. Does not the Bible which mandates, also define?

Let us call our leaders to be bridge builders. Let us raise up leaders with deep spiritual maturity, who have been tried through hardships, tested and proven strong in the Lord, who may not win popularity contests but upon whose lives the hand of God is resting. After all, it is God’s hand that counts. ■

*We have no choice
but to build bridges if
we want communica-
tion, peace, and sta-
bility in South Africa,
in the world.*

2:6, 11), is birthed. Their unity in diversity is experienced neither through ritual nor culture but in preaching and hearing of the gospel together. (Acts 2:14-26). Wilbert R. Shenk, “The Mission Dynamic,” *Mission in Bold Humility*, (Edited by Willem Saayman and Klippiess Kritzingler) Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996, 88.

² One of our students at the Baptist Convention College, K. Rapelego, stated in an essay (17/4/98): “As blacks today in South Africa, we are weak because we are dependent on white folks. We are never taught on how to dig our own well and live an independent life. There is a saying in our

Tswana language... ‘A remedy of a black person is a white person.’ Of which this shows how weak and poor we are.”

³ The complexity of resolving the tensions in a multicultural society is expressed in the following way: “A society is ‘modern’ in as far as it constantly but vainly tries to ‘embrace’ the ‘unembraceable,’ to replace diversity with uniformity and ambivalence with coherent and transparent order—and while trying to do this turns out unstoppably more divisions, diversity and ambivalence than it has managed to get rid of.” Bauman Zygmunt, *Postmodern Ethics* Oxford & Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993), 5.

⁴ Pieterse contends that in the post-apartheid era of South Africa’s history where many cleavages along, ethnic, religious, racial, gender, class, sexual orientation, etc. lines will continue to tug and tear at the garment of “national unity,” what is needed is to individually and collectively weave a resilient tapestry of “communities of difference,” which capture diversity in multiple dimensions without any assurance that the final pattern will be pleasant or aesthetic. Such weaving calls for honesty, bold action, and sincere acceptance of difference. Edgar Pieterse, “Reflections on Postmodernism and Faith in a South African Context” in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, (March 1996), 63.

⁵ Many of these issues are bound up in the fact that, “in principle, each nation is a plurality, a mosaic of cultures if not a plurality of languages and genealogies (between groups, cultures, sexes, powers) but is one of hierarchy and asymmetry.” Kathibib Abdelkefir, “A Colonial Labyrinth” in *Yale French Studies*, No. 83 (1988), 10. Leadership perils in the modern world cannot be isolated completely from diversity issues, for the challenge of Christian leadership is wedded to the challenge of multiculturalism.

⁶ In speaking about a unique theological education experiment called the Umlazi initiative being held in Kwa-Zulu by the University of Durban-Westville, a summation is made which is appropriate for this discussion on multiculturalism: “If the white church in South Africa is to reverse its rapid marginalisation vis-a-vis the larger society, white students and teachers need to be made aware of how black religion bisects and influences the secular community, in ways that mitigate against the sharp dichotomy between secular and sacred which generally

Endnotes

¹ According to Shenk, at Pentecost the Holy Spirit inaugurated a new *Koinonia*. At Babel, humankind’s rebellion resulted in a judgment of the confusion of languages. The Holy Spirit reversed Babel at Pentecost. An altogether new people, arising from the nations, whose multiple linguistic distinctiveness is the channel for each to hear of “the mighty acts of God” (Acts

characterizes the white church.” Bongani Mazibuko and Jack Johnson-Hill, “The Umlazi Project as a Case Study in Liberating Theological Education,” in *Journal of Constructive Theology*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (July 1997), 55.

⁷ This “motion to reach objectives” is to be seen as one motion, a synchronised humming and movement, movement that reaches objectives along the way, conversion (motion) that leads to change (objectives), whereby change (objectives) fulfills and authenticates the conversion (motion), without which, in my way of looking at it, conversion (motion) would not be conversion (motion) at all (Luke 19:1-10).

⁸ Albert Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity* (CapeTown: David Philip, 1986), 117.

⁹ Karl Rahner, *Schriften zur Theologie*, Vol. IV (1960), 151.

¹⁰ Nouwen advocates a movement from professionalism to spirituality. The ambition to find one’s professional identity should be rooted in the minister’s shift from self-affirmation to self-denial, and from self-denial to contemplation, resulting in a leader who is a faithful witness of the gospel. See his discussion in Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Creative Ministry* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1971), 64. In this sense, Jesus was not a professional. He was, of all persons, the most authentic human being alive, therefore He was the most divine.

¹¹ Means would say the influence and command in church leadership is rooted in the power of personal spiritual authenticity. In that sense spiritual leadership is not artifice at its center, but in the validation of biblical truth in the leader’s life. James E. Means, *Leadership in Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 109.

¹² In the New Testament churches, character, conduct, and

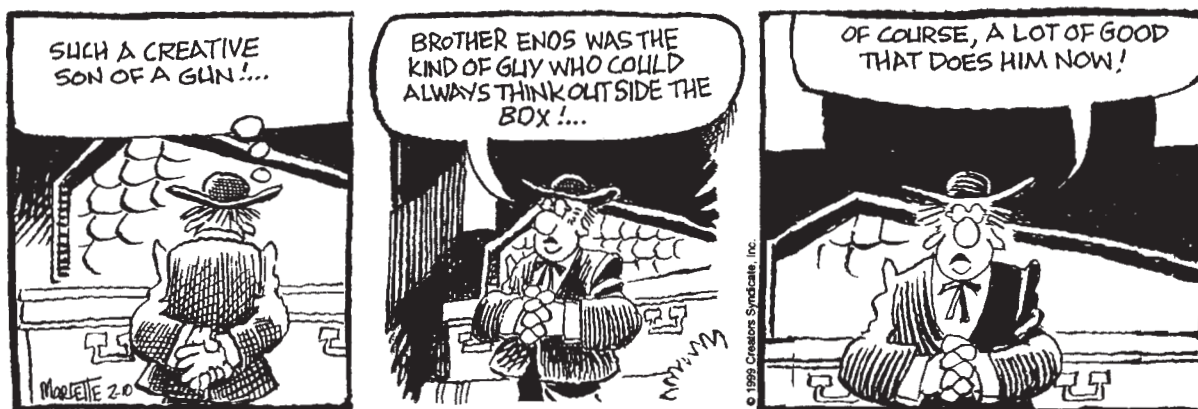
commitment were the hallmarks of leadership. These biblical qualifications were prerequisite to leadership. Today, personal charisma is the criterion for leadership—not the godly person but the gifted one, not spirituality but personality. See the discussion in Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Integrity Crisis* (Nashville: Oliver-Nelson Books, 1991), 11-8f.

¹³ In the case South Africa’s past, Oosthuizen suggests that pseudo-theological rationalizations were used to argue the case for segregated churches within the milieu of segregated political structures. G.C. Oosthuizen, “Christianity’s Impact on Race Relations in South Africa,” in *Christianity in Africa*. (Edited by Martin Prozesky) Bergville: Southern Book Publishers, 1990:115. When anti-social behavior (multicultural intolerance) mutates into political and religious “orthodoxy,” prophetic leaders of protest are often put away or silenced.

¹⁴ John N. Jonsson, “Freedom of Conscience and Social Justice: Baptists and the Demand of True Religion” in *Review and Expositor*, Vol. 89, No. 1, (Winter 1992), 28-30.

¹⁵ C. W. Brister, *Pastoral Care in the Church* New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 104-105.

¹⁶ See J. Nathan Corbitt, “Building Bridges of Multi-Cultural Communication,” in *AfriCom*, Nairobi, Kenya, Vol. 10, No. 1 (March 1998), 18-27. Surely as people made in God’s image, we can all agree with Hesselgrave that the biblical writers and astute communicators of every kind see the need to look below the surface for a kind of spiritual or psychic unity which transcends our outward and social differences. These universals or deeper similarities are essential to coexistence yet so seemingly elusive. David J. Hesselgrave, *Counseling Cross-Culturally* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 148.



Life at a Small Undergraduate Church-connected Liberal Arts College

By Charles D. Gielker

[Dr. Charles Gielker is now in his thirtieth year of teaching physics to young people at William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri. In the process of seeking a new faculty member for their department of physics, he developed the following document to share with prospective employees his personal view of what it is like to teach in a small Baptist-related liberal arts college. The statement so beautifully encapsulates the kind of profound sense of Christian calling, the high quality of Christian dedication, and the faithful pursuit of professional excellence that often characterizes our school teachers, private and public, that I secured his permission to share this brief piece with readers of *Christian Ethics Today*. Dr. Gielker and I first became friends as fellow members of the Immanuel Baptist Church in Nashville while he was earning his Ph.D. degree in Physics at Vanderbilt University. We salute him, and a host of others like him, for showing us all what Christian vocation is all about.]

Teaching and Courseload

You will be expected to teach three classes of 4-semester-hours' credit each semester. Generally, these will be three different courses, at different levels from first-year to senior, and will require three separate preparations.

There are no graduate assistants or TAs. You will be responsible for all classroom activities, and for constructing, administering, grading, and reviewing three or four exams in each course each semester. You will also be responsible for lab sections in most courses, although an upper-division major student may be available to assist during labs.

Because class size is small (25 or less), you will be expected to learn the names of your students and in some cases provide for their special needs, e.g. learning disabilities, make-ups due to absences for official college activities, etc.

Ancillary Duties

After the first year, you will be assigned ten to fifteen student advisees. You will typically meet with them individually two or three times each semester to help them plan their course schedules and resolve problems.

Also after the first year, you will be expected to volunteer for service on various faculty committees, which may meet several times during each semester.

You will be expected to attend faculty meetings and forums, which occur approximately once each week.

To help assure a continuing supply of majors, you may be requested to assist in recruiting students, e.g. by writing letters to or calling prospective majors for your department.

Research and Professional

Department budgets are small and for "instructional purposes." Research expenditures must come from other sources, e.g. gifts designated by alumni or successful grant applications.

There can be a relatively high risk of professional isolation. In a small department (2 or 3 faculty) there are few colleagues to talk to. Professional meeting attendance is problematical: during the school year because of the need to provide for your classes while you are absent and, even in the summer (assuming you are not teaching summer session), because the funds available from the college for "professional development" are seldom enough to cover more than half of the actual expenses.

Life Style Expectations

Teaching in such an environment has never been and cannot be reduced to a 9-to-5, 40-hour-per-week "job." It is truly a "vocation:" it will demand everything you can give.

Faculty are expected to exhibit an exemplary life-style. If you are the cigarette-smoking, beer-drinking, loose-living type, you would likely feel terribly out of place in a setting where you are expected to be an active member of a local church and to attend chapel once a week on campus. (If these expectations strike you as strange, it might help to do a little research on Baptists.)

Compensation(s)

Monetary compensation, though much less than you would make in industry or at a large university, will be competitive with that of comparable small private undergraduate colleges. The benefit package is excellent, the cost of living is lower than in most other parts of the U.S., and the Midwest is a wonderful place to raise a family.

The greatest return on investing your life in such a setting is undoubtedly the satisfaction of seeing that you have made a difference in the lives of your students. I am completing my 30th year of teaching physics at William Jewell and my colleague Dr. Philpot has taught in the department for 36 years. Our students have gone forth to get PhD's from Cal Tech to Cambridge and we know where most of them are and what they are doing today. The shared joy of their success is more than any amount of money could buy. ■

Clio and Cyclone

By Ralph Lynn

[Dr. Ralph Lynn is Professor of History Emeritus at Baylor University and is a regular contributor to *Christian Ethics Today*.]

Clio is the Greek Muse of history.

Cyclone is my wife's cat.

And Cyclone is so much like people—or the other way about—that I could hardly teach history without him as a foil.

Cyclone, you understand, is something of an institution.

He has been tyrant in residence at our house for nearly fifteen years.

He has so impressed his personality upon successive generations of students that the children of visiting former students now ask for Cyclone by the time the first greetings are finished.

Cyclone is like most people in that he has no perspective.

I am morally certain that, if one were to ask him, Cyclone would argue that all cats have always eaten Puss 'n' Boots out of cans.

Without doubt, he would assume that all cats have at least two grown people to wait on them hand and foot.

He would have no appreciation of the trouble his ancestors, and mine, went through to make his luxurious life possible.

And like the students who are astounded that the people of yesterday had neither anesthetics nor beauty parlors, Cyclone judges the whole world, past and present, by his own experiences.

Again, like people, Cyclone is purely selfish.

He walks over me and my wife, literally as well as figuratively, just as though we were part of the floor or the furniture.

He has not thought, I am certain, of the welfare of other cats.

Despite the fact that he was born with a silver can opener in his mouth, he would oppose any war on poverty among cats on the grounds that if he—a plain old black cat—could manage for his present affluence, then just any self-respecting, sober, industrious, one hundred percent American cat could do the same.

Like most people, Cyclone is a creature of habit.

Recently, he has had the habit of sleeping on the five inch wide sill of a high window.

Naturally he falls asleep and falls out, amid a wild flailing of feet and tail, to land dazed and incredulous on the floor.

On the floor, he sways and stares groggily for a minute before returning, by way of a footstool and the sewing machine, to his precarious perch on the window sill.

He repeats this mad maneuver with a blind, irrational obstinacy matched only by the resolute refusal of human beings to learn from experience.

In sympathy with the dumb thing, I custom built for him a large tray in his corner of the window sill. But, since it was new and unfamiliar, he lies down outside it—preferring, like human beings, to stay with his habit even though it kills him.

Again, like people, Cyclone is provincial.

If he could speak English, there is no doubt that he would make it clear that he seriously regards his small neighborhood as God's country.

Like primitive man, stranger and enemy are synonymous terms to Cyclone. With admirable impartiality, he drives both cats and dogs from his yard.

It is a rare guest he honors with his company.

Once more, like people, Cyclone is the personally undeserving beneficiary of modern sanitary, dietary, dental, and medical care.

Like his human contemporaries, he has lived far beyond the hitherto accepted life span. And, again like many of his human contemporaries, this elderly animal still has young ideas.

Not far away, he has a lady friend to whom he pays dignified daily calls. In less dignified fashion, he still regards the bathtub as his private motordrome around which he furiously chases his tail whenever he finds the sliding doors open.

Often I tell him how worthless he really is and that I regret every penny of the hundred dollars per pound I have invested in him.

But he knows that I have long since surrendered to him and that I am only trying in vain to keep my self-respect. He is entirely undisturbed even when I tell him that I fear he is immortal.

When he turns those great black eyes up at me, I wonder uneasily how much he understands—and I wonder if the Muse of history should not be represented by a large black cat. ■

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

TRUSTEES

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Donald E. Schmeltekopf
Foy Valentine

SUPPORT

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

CONTRIBUTIONS ARE

- Greatly needed
- Urgently solicited
- Genuinely appreciated

OBJECTIVES

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

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

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

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

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

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