

# CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY

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## In Celebration of Fire

*By Foy Valentine*

Fire was thought by ancient Greeks to have been brought to earth by Prometheus who had lighted a torch at the sun's chariot. In Rome the Vestal Virgins tended the sacred fire kept perpetually burning on the altar of the goddess Vesta. Earlier and more primitive people give evidence of having employed and treasured fire. No fireless tribe of humans has ever been found.

I have just survived a winter ice storm in which fire took on new charm, new magic, and new wonder.

Due to an utterly uncharacteristic attack of foresight, I had used one pleasant fall day, months ago, to lay by me in store a full cord of seasoned wood. Well. The thing that actually triggered this alleged foresight was a little ad, semi-literate, in the newspaper offering a full cord of wood for the decidedly reasonable price of \$75, with an extra charge of \$30 if they delivered it and stacked it. If you don't know, then let me tell you something. That is a very un-New Millenniumish price. So I called and took the woman up on the offer. She said yes, they would deliver the wood the next day. The next day I waited expectantly until it was pitch dark when I reluctantly gave them up, with not a few pejorative thoughts about the promise breakers. After a few days, however, my pejoratives cooled, somewhat. I would have called somebody else, but all of their prices were much too high for my emphatically plebeian inclinations. So I called my original firewood mongerer, she of the broken promises, and inquired as to what had happened. It seems that a few days before when they had finally got the trailer loaded with the wood, it was dark and that since their old truck didn't have any lights, they couldn't see to make the delivery. Okay, I allowed. Could they deliver it tomorrow? Yes.

So they came the next afternoon, about six of them in the odometer-challenged old pickup, pulling a long, ramshackled trailer loaded down with my wood. As they stacked this wood, it was plain to see that this was no ordinary load of wood. Believe me. There was pecan, mulberry, mesquite, hickory, elm, hackberry, pine, a little oak, and—hold tight—a gen-

erous sprinkling of bois d'arc. A little of it was the specified and requisite 24 inches long. But most of it varied—free range, as they say—between 10 inches and 30 inches in length. No matter. At least not much matter. The fire hardly knows the difference anyway.

So, as I was saying when you interrupted.

There was this ice storm.

Now picture this. A blue norther has blown in. Nothing more substantial than a barbed wire fence has hindered it on its blustery journey between here and the North Pole. As the man said to Admiral Byrd at the North Pole in a howling blizzard, “Man, I bet it's cold in Amarillo today.” Snow and ice cover the ground.

And now picture this. A fine stack of this aforementioned wood has been laid in my fine stone fireplace in my very pleasant study. The kindling has cooperatively caught the proffered spark. In short order, the fire and the wood have enthusiastically embraced each other. In one of humanity's splendidest wonders, it has become a roaring fire.

And me? I have backed up to this thing of beauty, this joy forever, this splendid fire. And I am toasting my backside in a glorious ritual as old as humanity, although I can personally vouch for only 76 years of this glorious serendipity. Delicious. Wonderful. Fantastic.

Only reluctantly do I turn myself, not unlike a marshmallow held on a long fork over the fire and rotated just before it swells and bursts into flame.

In due time the fire burns down. Coals are formed and tumble in on each other. The andirons and the grate are white hot. I draw up my easy chair and prop my feet up on the foot-high hearth, in a position calculated to toast them just right without harming my shoe soles. It is pure ecstasy.

“Paradise enow,” as old Omar Khayaam was wont to say.

Drop by some winter day and join me for a visit by the fire. Proud to have you.

We can just sit a spell and stare at the fire. ■

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## Kruschwitz Is Coming

**D**r. Robert Kruschwitz will be the first director of the Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University.

He will assume his new duties on June 1. Kruschwitz, 46, has served since 1979 on the faculty of Georgetown College, where he is professor and chair of the philosophy department, and was elected five terms as faculty chair. He was chosen to lead in establishing Georgetown's overseas program at Oxford. A native of Kentucky, this is not Kruschwitz's first residence in Texas. After studying at Samford University and Georgetown College, he earned his Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Texas at Austin and then taught briefly at Baylor.

The Center for Christian Ethics, chartered in 1990 and related to Baylor University since 1997, publishes *Christian Ethics Today*. The future course for this journal is now under review by Kruschwitz and the Center's Board of Directors. With the hiring of Kruschwitz, the Center is establishing its new offices on the campus of Baylor University.

"The goal is to bring together Christian lay people, ministers, and scholars, to engage the moral dimensions of today's culture," said Kruschwitz. "Our headquarters at Baylor—with its George W. Truett Theological Seminary, J. M. Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies, Center for Christian Education, and Institute for Faith and Learning—and other excellent programs, offers a wonderful opportunity to network with Baptists and other Christians around the globe."

Kruschwitz is planning a new quarterly magazine of Christian ethics for a wide Christian audience, complementing its articles with book reviews, interviews, and resources for witness in the public arena—including sermons, lessons, and art. "Each thematic issue—whether it addresses the death penalty, abortion, forgiveness, or the ethical resources for Christians in the Bible—will be a resource for individuals, small groups, and church classes," according to Kruschwitz, "helping Christians grow as disciples with 'salty' influence in their communities and its society.

"In everything our objective is to work from a rich Baptist perspective that is deeply rooted in the Bible, exploring the

abundant models of witness throughout Christian history, and committed to a free church in a free society."

The Center will host a range of conferences for laity and ministers, for students and professional people; and will move into electronic as well as print publishing of resources related to Christian ethics. Kruschwitz is eager for the Center to sponsor grants both for research and for developing effective ethics programs in churches and ethics initiatives around the world.

Kruschwitz is a founding member of the Society of Christian Philosophers (1982) and the Baptist Association of Philosophy Teachers (1988), which he serves as Secretary-Treasurer. For his leadership in integrating Christian faith with teaching and research, Georgetown College presented to him the inaugural George Walker Redding Faculty Award for Outstanding Christian Service in 1997. His publications in the journals *Faith and Philosophy*, *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, *Faculty Dialogue*, and *The Thomist* have addressed issues in Christian ethics. He is co-editor of *The Virtues*, a pioneering anthology of recent essays in character ethics.

**F**aith Baptist Church in Georgetown has been the church home for 21 years for Kruschwitz and his wife, Vicki. He is church moderator, Sunday School teacher, choir member, and chair of the administrative committee; he was on two pastor search committees and has chaired the deacons. He chaired the Resolutions Committee of the Kentucky Baptist Convention this year. Vicki is a choir member and has led the nominating committee and the missions committee. Her business career has been in procurement and global transportation at IBM and Lexmark International, Inc.

"I am looking forward to connecting most of my passions and interests in this new role," Kruschwitz noted. He paints watercolors, hikes in the Rocky Mountains, studies historical architecture, sings in several choral music groups, and enjoys landscape photography. "I am still searching for a way to connect the mountain hiking part!" ■

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# Letters to the Editor

"I would like to commend you all on the excellent job you continue to do over the years. I thoroughly enjoy the articles and personally derive both spiritual and mental insights each time I am blessed with receiving a new issue...."

*Prisoner, Texas*

"...Absolutely my most favorite publication that comes to our home. Thank you for sending it....Your account of Blaise Pascal's personal experience with God made me weep for joy."

*Musician, Hawaii*

"When *Christian Ethics Today* arrives, I always feel I have received a gift in the mail. Thank you for such an enlightening and uplifting publication."

*Journalist, Texas*

"Not a week passes that I don't see someone who reads *Christian Ethics Today* or someone who has heard about it and wants to read it."

*Medical Doctor, Texas*

"I continue to be both amazed and delighted at your publication....You have blessed my life...."

*Layperson, Texas*

"Thank you...for the consistently excellent job you are doing with *Christian Ethics Today*...[Others] have gone out of their way to tell us how much they appreciate your publication...."

*CEO, Georgia*

"Thanks for your insight, courage, and leadership. Keep publishing your much-needed *Christian Ethics Today*."

*Former Seminary President, Colorado*

"...A joy to read. Thank you."

*Pastor, Missouri*

"...Refreshing...I look forward to every issue. My heart is filled, my spirits lifted, and my mind...informed....Please don't stop."

*Pastor, Florida*

"...A masterpiece."

*Lawyer, Texas*

"The last issue was the very best one ever. I could not put it down until I had read it from cover to cover."

*Denominational Leader, Texas*

"I've been an eager reader...since its inception....Thank you

for the discipline your journal affords me."

*Churchman, Mississippi*

"Each time your journal comes I read it through."

*Teacher, Oklahoma*

"The journal has a unique appeal, not only to academics, but to pastors and lay people. I hope it can maintain that appeal."

*Retired University Administrator, Florida*

"Hooray for Don Quixote! Splendid....Chafin's poems are great."

*Pastor, Washington, D.C.*

"I was *impressed* with your last issue....Really excellent....Congratulations."

*Layperson, Texas*

"...A breath of wholesome commentary for today's troubled world."

*Minister, Missouri*

"Thanks....I enjoy and appreciate each issue....It is the best of its kind."

*Minister, North Carolina*

"You keep my Credo [a discipleship pledge touching belief and action] alive."

*Church Executive, Rhode Island*

"Great. This is one magazine I read from cover to cover."

*United States Ambassador*

"If I had been in the congregation when Dr. Hull delivered the second part of his sermon on "The Clinton-Lewinsky Morality Play", I would have been forced to restrain the volcanic rush of tears that burst from my eyes as I sat alone, on one more home-bound...Sunday....This 'Morality Play' should be assigned for slow reading—alone—where social convention...would not keep one from falling on her knees in abject humility and adoration of this one solitary Lamb of God....Thank you so much for...*Christian Ethics Today*."

*Musician, Texas*

"I really enjoy the publication....The writers are about the only people I find who express so eloquently my opinion on most of the topics they write about. I particularly enjoy the articles by Hal Haralson....Keep up the great job you are doing."

*Businessman, Texas*

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# The Scholar's Vocation: The Search for the True; the Search for the Good

By Robert N. Bellah

[Dr. Robert N. Bellah is Elliott professor emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley where he taught sociology 1967-1997. Born in Altus, Oklahoma and graduated from Harvard, he has played a major role in the development of sociology and social ethics for half a century. I am indebted first to Baylor University's Graduate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Larry Lyon, for giving me his permission to print this address prepared for Scholars' Day at Baylor and subsequently printed in Baylor's publication *Collegium* and second to Dr. Bellah himself who gave me his personal permission to use here the original manuscript of that address with such revisions as he chose to make. As the editors of *Collegium* said, Dr. Bellah's "influence moved beyond the discipline of sociology when, in 1975, his book, *The Broken Covenant*, analyzed the political and social upheavals of the 1960s and how they affected our historic understanding of religious meaning and national destiny. In 1984 his role on the public stage grew even larger with *Habits of the Heart* and later, in 1992, *The Good Society*, best sellers by Bellah and junior colleagues that initiated a continuing debate on the limits of individualism and moral responsibility to the community and society." This is good medicine. And strong. Take it. Editor.]

It is a great pleasure to be with you and to take part in your celebration of scholarship, though as those of you who know my work will expect, my celebration will be contentious, but that, too, is a legitimate part of scholarship. As a Christian I sometimes feel that I am living in the belly of the beast at Berkeley. In any case what I will say today comes out of a lifetime spent at secular universities and so may not apply to you at Baylor. Yet we live in the same society and are subject to the same academic pressures, so there will probably be some relevance after all.

As I sat down to write this talk I realized that the very title I gave to Larry Lyon, "The Scholar's Vocation: The Search for the True; the Search for the Good," is an illustration of the problem I want to address. I should rather have suggested a much shorter title, but one that expresses the burden of my argument, namely, "The True Scholar." For when we say of someone that he or she is a true scholar, or a true scientist, we mean not only that he or she is knowledgeable or skillful, though we do mean that, but that the person has qualities of character, of stance toward the world, that I think are clearly

normative or ethical, not merely cognitive. In our common use, then, though not in our reigning philosophies, the true and the good are not two different things, but aspects of one thing. Everything I want to say this afternoon is an effort to make that common sense perception more conscious and defensible in the argument about what scholarship in its multiple meanings, including teaching, is all about. Let me turn to that cantankerous but very intelligent philosopher, Alasdair MacIntyre, to open my argument. He writes:

What contemporary universities have characteristically lost, both in their practice and in their theorizing, is an adequate grasp of the relationship between the intellectual and the moral virtues....For while the university thinks of itself as a place of enquiry, it happily rejects the thought that such enquiry should be envisaged as having any one overall *telos* or good and that that good might itself be adequately intelligible only as an ordered part of *the* human good. What goods enquiry is to serve and how they are to be envisaged is instead to depend upon the choices and preferences of the enquirers and of those who supply their material resources. [I shall return to that.] For academic freedom on a liberal view of it requires that rival beliefs about the human good, including denials that there is such a good, should be encouraged to coexist in a university which is itself to be uncommitted. [Here I would differ to some degree with MacIntyre in that I think one of our problems is that arguments about the human good are not encouraged at all in the contemporary university.] What enquiry needs from those who practice it is not moral character, but verbal, mathematical and problem-solving skills. A few qualities of character are of course highly valued: industriousness, a show of deference to one's professional superiors and to the academic system, cheerful collegiality, and sufficient minimal honesty to ensure reliability in reporting research findings. For these are qualities of character functionally necessary, if skills are to be successfully put to work. [Here I would note that even the most value-free conception of scholarship nonetheless requires some virtues,



however limited, and implies others, not so limited.] But there is no overall end to be served by those qualities or those skills, no agreed or pre-supposed ultimate good in view. What is the outcome?

It is fragmentation, so that by and large what goes on in one area of enquiry has little or no connection with what goes on in other areas. ("The Mission of a Dominican House of Studies in Contemporary North America," unpublished ms., 1991)

Here I would point out that the fragmentation that MacIntyre accurately points out is perhaps the result not so much of the lack of a notion of the human good as by the presence of a kind of notion of the human good that is left undiscussed. I will be returning to this matter.

A major source of our problem (or what I think is our problem—I don't expect that all of you will agree) is the iron curtain drawn by Immanuel Kant between the cognitive and the ethical, between, in his terms, pure reason and practical reason. According to Kant, and we are all of us in the university more or less Kantian in this regard, there is an unbridgeable gap between the two realms so that we cannot get to one from the other but each requires a beginning from scratch on its own terms. As a result, our modern quasi-Kantian university has decided to commit itself to cognitive inquiry and push ethical inquiry to the margins, a sub-field in philosophy or something we'll let the professional schools worry about. I will be arguing that the quasi-Kantian university carries a much more substantive ethical message than it admits to, but before going into that I want to explore alternative possibilities.

While for Plato the Good, the True, and the Beautiful have an ultimate unity, for Aristotle there is a clear distinction between the intellectual and the moral virtues, and it was Aristotle more than Plato who influenced the subsequent tradition in the West. So, long before Kant, we have a problem with how the two sets of virtues are to be related. But for Aristotle, unlike Kant, there is a relationship, one set forth in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, though sufficiently unclearly that it continues to be debated by scholars. While from one point of view wisdom, *sophia*, is the highest virtue (and I would

remind you that wisdom is not to be equated with scientific knowledge in the post-Kantian view), from another point of view the governing virtue is *phronesis*, inadequately translated as prudence or practical reason, not to be equated with Kant's practical reason. Let me translate *phronesis* as judgment, remembering that this is judgment in a very high sense of the term. One could say, pushing Aristotle just a bit, that judgment is the most theoretical of the practical virtues and the most practical of the theoretical virtues: in other words it is the place they come together. Judgment in this use of the term involves a sense of proportion, of larger meaning, of what a situation requires, at once cognitively and ethically.

When we say that an action or a person is "truly human" we are using *phronesis*, judgment. We are saying simultaneously that this action or person is such as humans can be and such as they ought to be. We are not saying that this is what human beings on average are, but we are also not saying that this is what human beings in some ideal and unrealizable sense ought to be. Similarly when we call something inhuman, like ethnic cleansing, we are saying that it falls below not only the level of what humans ought to do, but what we expect human beings to do. I would also argue that in describing an event like the massacre at Srebrenica *without* using the term "inhuman" or one of its synonyms would be mistaken. It would not only be an inaccurate description of what happened, but it would give a wrong moral evaluation of what happened, for it would not be neutral at all. It would imply, whether intentionally or not, that this action was not only normal but acceptable.

I would argue that, and not only in the humanities and the social sciences, we use judgment in this sense all the time, and could not conduct the scholarly enterprise without it. Thus we rely not only, as MacIntyre claimed, on the "functional virtues" supportive of a limited view of scholarship, but as a matter of empirical fact on judgment, which, as I am using it, is one of the highest virtues. But MacIntyre's criticism is correct insofar as we do not take responsibility for what we are doing, we claim to be devoted to pure cognitive inquiry without any other intent, and we argue that the only normative basis for our inquiry is freedom, not taking conscious responsibility for the fact that, as I would argue, freedom without judgment would self-destruct.



Let me illustrate my point with a natural scientist. I would say that E. O. Wilson is a true scholar, a true scientist. By which I don't mean that he agrees with me, because he certainly doesn't. There is nothing I detest so much in our current intellectual life as sociobiology (well, we will see that there is one thing that I detest even more). Nor is it just that I admire Wilson's forthright stand in favor of environmentalism, with which I do agree, though that is part of it. What I admire about Wilson that leads me to call him a true scholar or scientist is the passion with which he pursues his work and his conviction (mistaken in my view, at least if we think of his overall theory and not of his many superb studies) that he is contributing to the human good. I also admire his recent attempt in *Consilience* (Knopf, 1998) to overcome fragmentation in our cultural life, when so many refuse even to see the problem, even if I don't believe he has chosen the right way to do so. Nor do I think I am alone in my admiration for him. I think Wilson's stature in the scholarly world is related to this assessment of him as a person, though it is also enhanced, alas, because his views contribute to certain reigning paradigms in our culture. I celebrate Wilson because he is a mind to be reckoned with and worth reckoning with at every level. And he is far from alone in the American academy. So, though I intend to be as critical as MacIntyre in these remarks, I do hope to be somewhat more benignly critical, and to insist that in spite of many disturbing tendencies in theory and practice, all is not wrong and indeed a lot is as it should be.

Let me address where I do think we have gone wrong. In *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* MacIntyre describes three notions of what the university is today, which I will call, adapting his terminology, traditional, positivist, and postmodernist. Traditional is of course where we came from, the tradition of liberal education with its strong ties to the classics and in America to theology. It has been gradually displaced from the last decades of the nineteenth century by the positivist model of untrammelled inquiry, embracing subjects never included in the older curriculum (it is worth remembering that the great achievements of early modern science took place almost entirely outside the university) and throwing off the narrow conception of what a classical and Christian education ought to be, but also, in part inadvertently, throwing out any defensible notion of *phronesis* or judgment that might have

held the enterprise together in the face of positivism's penchant for fragmentation. Quite recently, postmodernism has arisen in part as a criticism of what it believes is the false cognitive neutrality of the positivist university and has argued, not without evidence, that the university exists only to support existing structures of power, particularly in the areas of class, race, and gender. But postmodernism rejects tradition as much as positivism as just one more form of power play and so is unable to bring back any notion of judgment as a governing virtue. Indeed the very idea of a governing virtue would be abhorrent to our postmodernist friends, even though, I would argue, they can no more do without it in practice than can the positivists.

But changes in the university, and therefore necessarily in scholarship, over the last one hundred years are not due only to changing intellectual understandings: they are also due to changes in the relation of the university to society. For one thing the university has never been a place devoted solely to the formation of character or to pure inquiry. The university has always been, in America as elsewhere, an avenue of social mobility. One's life chances are enhanced by attaining a university degree—about that there is plenty of empirical evidence as far back as one can go. Mobility aspirations have long placed pressures on universities but for a long time they were gentle pressures. By and large the university's authority to tell upwardly mobile young men, and later young women, what they needed to know was not basically challenged. And the liberal arts as a central core of the curriculum continued to draw most students even after the positivist model of the university had gained dominance. But in recent decades and in part because a much higher percentage of the relevant population goes to college but perhaps even more due to changes in our environing culture, students have begun more and more to tell us what they want to know, with drastic consequences for the curriculum, and so for hiring, and so for scholarship, that I will describe in a moment. In a world of consumers, consumer students now make decisions, for better or for worse, that were once made by faculty.

But consumer students are not the only pressures that universities have faced. Universities, and so scholarship, have been seen as serving external purposes, above all for the state and for the economy. The most influential outside purpose



deriving from the state by far has been the pressure to contribute to war efforts. The university was mobilized, if briefly, during World War I; more totally during World War II; but even more significantly, for the long twilight period of the Cold War lasting until just about a decade ago. During these years universities grew accustomed to large government research grants, not only in the natural sciences, but in the humanities and social sciences as well, for things like area studies. Since the end of the Cold War the external purpose that the university is supposed to serve above all has been the economy, though economic usefulness has been a university purpose to some degree at least since the founding of land-grant colleges in the nineteenth century. I have written of these pressures in the current issue of *Academe* so I won't do more than mention them here.

I think it might be helpful to look at some evidence of changes in the university relative to my theme. My theme, as I said at the beginning, is the true scholar, and the true scholar, I will argue, requires, at least in the long run, a true university, or at least something like one. I have suggested that the very notion of a true university depends on the survival of what MacIntyre means by traditional inquiry, one in which the link between the intellectual and the moral virtues is not entirely broken, one in which something like judgment has at least a degree of influence. Now it is clear what area in the current understanding of the university is closest to this understanding, even though it is at the moment rent by civil war, namely, the humanities. So let us look at the fate of the humanities in recent decades.

Fortunately I have a recent survey of trends in the humanities that appeared in *Harvard Magazine* (Vol. 100, No. 5, May-June, 1998, pp. 48-55, 111.) last year. It was written by James Engell and Anthony Dangerfield and is entitled "The Market-Model University: Humanities in the Age of Money." (Sometimes there's a lot in a title.) I cannot give you all their findings but let me convey some of the most important ones:

Humanities represent a sharply declining proportion of all undergraduate degrees. Between 1970 and 1994, the number of B.A.s conferred in the United States rose 39 percent. Among all bachelors degrees in higher education, three

majors increased five- to ten-fold: computer and information sciences, protective services, and transportation and material moving. Two majors, already large, tripled: health professions and public administration. Already popular, business administration doubled. In 1971, 78% more degrees were granted in business than in English. By 1994 business enjoyed a [400%] advantage over English and remained the largest major. English, foreign languages, philosophy and religion [as well as history, all suffered absolute declines].

They then point out that:

Measured by faculty salaries—a clear sign of prestige and clout—the humanities fare dismally. On average humanists receive the lowest faculty salaries by thousands or tens of thousands of dollars; the gap affects the whole teaching population, regardless of rank.

Humanists teaching loads are highest, with the least amount of release and research time, yet they're now expected, far more than three decades ago, to publish in order to secure professorial posts.

Humanists are also more than others, increasingly compelled to settle for adjunct, part-time, non-tenured appointments that pay less, have little or no job security, and carry reduced benefits or none. (p. 50)

There's even more, but I don't want to be too depressing. Perhaps none of this has happened at Baylor but there is a useful inset in the article about my own alma mater: it shows that the same trends have occurred at Harvard: fewer majors, lower salaries, higher teaching loads in the humanities, even if, compared to many schools the humanities are not too badly off. But it would seem that few schools have entirely escaped these trends.





Having observed that by all measures “the humanities’ vital signs are poor,” our authors seek an explanation and find it in what they call the Age of Money:

When we termed the last 30 years the Age of Money, we were in part referring to the dollar influx of research grants, higher tuitions, and grander capital improvements. But there’s another, more symbolic, aspect to the Age of Money, and one not less powerful for being more symbolic. The mere concept of money turns out to be the secret key to “prestige,” influence, and power in the American academic world.

They argue that there are “Three Criteria for the power of money in Academia, whose rule is remarkably potent, uniform, and verifiable. Academic fields that offer one (or more) of the Three Criteria thrive; any field lacking all three languishes.” And this by any measure you would want to take. “In the Age of Money,” they continue, “the royal road to success is to offer at least one of the following:

**A Promise of Money.** The field is popularly linked (even if erroneously) to improved chances of securing an occupation or profession that promises above average lifetime earnings.

**A Knowledge of Money.** The field itself studies money, whether practically or more theoretically, i.e. Fiscal, business, financial, or economic matters and markets.

**A Source of Money.** The field receives significant external money, i.e., research contracts, federal grants or finding support, or corporate underwriting. P. 52)

If this picture of the contemporary university is true, and it would be hard to argue that it does not contain at least some truth, then our life together in the university is governed, again to the extent that this description is true, by neither the intellectual nor the moral virtues but by a vice: namely cupidity, acquisitiveness, or just plain avarice, the same vice that dominates our society as a whole in the Age of Money. To the extent that this is true, and I think it is not the whole truth, it has come about, I believe, more through default than intention: it is the result of many small decisions made by administrators and faculty concerned to keep their institutions afloat in a changing society. Yet to the extent that we are dominated by one of the classic vices rather than the intellectual and moral virtues, we have ceased to be a true university and therefore it is increasingly difficult for us to be true scholars.

I am sorry to bring up these sordid realities at a moment when we are celebrating scholarship, but if we are to celebrate true scholarship then we must not hide from reality, but celebrate it in the teeth of reality. And so I must pursue my critical inquiry at least one step further and discuss the emergence of a master-theory in the social sciences that mirrors changes in the

general society—namely what is called rational choice or rational actor theory, which as you might have guessed, is the one theory I detest even more than sociobiology.

In America, and to some extent in the world, we seem to have returned in the last thirty years to something like the last decades of the nineteenth century, that is, laissez faire, unconstrained, capitalism. And just as the strident capitalism of the late nineteenth century was mirrored by the theory of social Darwinism, so the rise of neo-laissez faire capitalism in the last thirty years is mirrored by the rise of rational choice theory—more subtle, more technically sophisticated than social Darwinism, but, I would argue, an offspring of the same lineage which ultimately goes back to utilitarianism, the commonsense philosophy of the Anglo-American world at least since the eighteenth century.

Rational choice theory, which as we will see in a moment, was not originally received with open arms in economics, is now taken as common sense there and has spread out into many neighboring disciplines: political science, sociology, law, even religious studies, where it enjoys quite a vogue. Now you may ask what’s wrong with that? Isn’t it perfectly appropriate that a new theory should rise and have widespread currency in the university? I will argue in response that this theory is not only too uncomfortably close to general trends in our society, such as what has happened in the humanities in the last thirty years, but also what has happened to medicine, the family, religion, etc., but also that the theory is itself an apologia for just the dominant vice I described as taking over society and with it our universities. If the theory were true, however, we would just have to admit not only that acquisitiveness is the fundamental human motive, but that, as it was put in the 1980s, “greed is good.” If rational choice theory is true, then we were mistaken all these years, in all the religions and philosophies of mankind, in thinking cupidity a vice—no, rather it is our chief virtue. The full implications of that we are only beginning to learn in our society and our universities today.

Yet I think a powerful argument can be mounted against rational choice theory as an adequate explanation of the human condition, and that consequently all is not lost in the defense of the intellectual and moral virtues. Before suggesting that counterargument, however, I want to talk a bit about the history of rational choice theory, because the history of something often tells us a great deal about it. I learned about this history only recently from a graduate student in the history of science at Berkeley, S. M. Amadae, who is completing a brilliant and illuminating dissertation on the history of rational choice theory, “Rational Choice Theory in Economic, Political and Policy Science, 1944-1975: A New Chapter in Economic and Political Liberalism.” Surprisingly, this is the first attempt to write the history of this influential movement.

Do you know what institution is primarily responsible for the emergence of rational choice theory after World War II? Take a guess. I’ll give you a hint—it’s not a university. No, it’s the RAND Corporation. I’m sure we have all heard of the RAND Corporation, but I wonder how many of you, like me, never knew exactly what it was or when it began. It began in

1946 and its most significant founder was Donald Douglas, of the Douglas Aircraft Company (thus its Santa Monica location), with the initial infusion of ten million dollars from the United States Air Force. It was an effort to maintain the collaboration of scientists, scholars, and the military after the end of World War II in a quasi-governmental, quasi-private institution. I can't go into the whole history of RAND but it became closely associated with the Ford Foundation in the 1950s, and involved the participation of virtually every major contributor, in no matter what field, to the emergence of rational choice theory. To quote Amadae directly:

Locating the development of the conceptual apparatus for rational choice theory within the national security environment counters a basic myth frequently perpetuated about the origin of rational choice theory.

The myth, she says, consists of two parts: 1) that the idea of the rational actor in the rational choice sense was always at the heart of economics, and 2) that rational choice theory involves the export of economic models to other disciplines. The recognition of the importance of RAND, however, allows for a correct understanding. She writes:

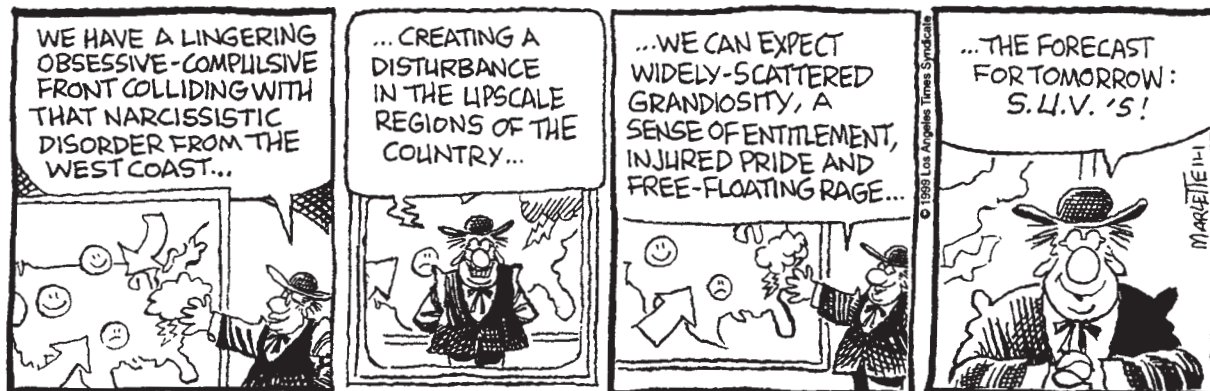
This lineage [that is the origin of rational choice theory in RAND] reveals two crucial facts which are otherwise hopelessly obscured. The conceptual framework for rational choice theory was developed to solve strategic, military problems and not problems of economic modeling. Furthermore, this idea set was developed to inform policy decisions, not merely retrospectively to analyze behavior as the social sciences often claim of their own methodology. Thus, the first strategic "rational actor" as conceptualized in game theory and the decision sciences was a nation-state locked in the icy and treacherous grip of the cold war. The theory of rational action had interlocking descriptive, normative, and prescriptive components, and was developed to inform action respecting nuclear strategy and complex questions of weapons procurement.

Indeed the first real classic of rational choice theory in economics was Kenneth Arrow's *Social Choice and Individual Values*, published in 1951 but written largely in 1948 when Arrow was at RAND where he had been, according to Amadae, "assigned the task of deriving a single mathematical function which would predict the collective political outcomes for the entire Soviet Union."

I don't want to dispute at all that rational choice theory had become by the 1980s central in economics, nor that in recent years economic rational choice theory has had an enormous influence, particularly through the University of Chicago Economics Department, on many other fields, including my own, partly because of the direct personal relationship between the economist Gary Becker and the sociologist James Coleman at Chicago. I want to set the record straight on the origin of rational choice theory, however, by showing that it did not originate in disinterested theorizing in some university ivory tower but in the very practically oriented RAND Corporation and that it had, in that context, as Amadae puts it "interlocking descriptive, normative, and prescriptive components." Probably the single most important theoretical source of rational choice theory was Von Neumann and Morgenstern's *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*, published in 1944, a book which was regarded as unimportant to mainstream economists until Arrow's work had finally been absorbed by them.

Whatever one thinks of game theory, rational choice theory as developed at RAND was prescriptive, and it did indeed determine action. Its first great empirical test came when one of its primary devotees, not a professor but a former president of the Ford Motor Company and then Secretary of Defense, Robert MacNamara (and I won't develop the chain which links MacNamara to RAND but it is a tight one), had a chance to use it as the basis of decision making in the Vietnam War. I think it is safe to say that that test was not a success. And the reason was that the North Vietnamese would not behave as rational actors are supposed to behave because they had absolute value commitments, or ideological zealotry, or whatever you want to call it, which simply was not explicable in rational actor terms.

I want to suggest two things from this example. One is that rational choice theory is wrong, not because much human action cannot be explained in such terms—much human action can indeed be explained in such terms—but because all



human action cannot be explained in such terms. For a theory that claims to be total, the existence of such exceptions is fatal, particularly when the decisions the theory cannot explain turn out not to be minor cases of unexplained variance, but decisions critical to the understanding of human action.

Let me give you an example of the flaws of rational choice theory from my own experience. An early review of *Habits of the Heart* published, interestingly enough, in the *Wall Street Journal*, was by William Riker of the University of Rochester. Riker said, in effect, what are the authors of *Habits* talking about? We have traffic lights, the credit system works, who needs community? That response remained to a degree mysterious to me until I finally learned of Riker's position as the leading American exponent of rational choice theory in Political Science.

You may think I have gone a long way round given the topic of my address this afternoon, but I haven't. I hope to have shown, and could show in much greater detail if there were time, that a theory, born not in the university but in the intense engagement of the Cold War and as a tool for the prosecution of that war, is now ensconced in the university and taught to students as scientific truth. When Gary Becker writes *A Treatise on the Family* to show that choices involving marriage and family are explicable in terms of each individual maximizing his or her competitive, strategic self-interest, is that a treatise about the True or the Good. Or, indeed, is it about virtue or vice? Is there any way of teaching that as though it had no practical intent? Even a student who says, "Well, I'm not really like that," will conclude that "if other people are, then I had better behave in strategic terms or I will be taken advantage of." Gary Becker's wife, as we know, turned out to be one of his best students. In their divorce decree she asked for a declaration that if he won the Nobel Prize she would get half of the stipend. He, thinking that a very unlikely possibility, agreed. She won.

I haven't left much time for my counter-argument, but I can think of no better place to begin than the recent book of the Dutch primatologist, Frans de Waal, *Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals* (Harvard, 1996). De Waal argues that strategic action for the individual's benefit as the sole or main explanation of action is not true even in the animal realm. He shows that the presence of generosity to the point of self-sacrifice, is documented for higher mammals, including not only our nearest primate relatives, but whales and dolphins as well. According to de Waal, not only sympathy and nurturing, but even a sense of justice, are things we share with higher mammals, are part of our nature. Indeed if that were not the case we would not be social—here de Waal rediscovers one of the deepest truths of sociology, namely Durkheim's argument for the fundamentally normative nature of social existence. As de Waal puts it:

If group life is based on a social contract, it is drawn up and signed not by individual parties, but by Mother Nature....Even in our species, which prides itself on free will, we may find an

occasional hermit who has opted for reclusion; yet we never encounter someone who has consciously decided to become social. One cannot decide to become what one already is. (p. 170)

I think the empirical evidence for the fundamentally social, and therefore normative, character of human life is overwhelming and that it is only the ideological blinders of our current cultural mood that leads so many people, including academics, to overlook it. I don't expect to make any converts with these brief assertions and I am fully aware of the convoluted explanations of ethical and unselfish behavior which the rational choice school can supply. I merely want to assert that those of us who would defend the intellectual and moral virtues, and judgment as the virtue where they come together, and true scholarship and a true university which is dependent on that virtue, have a lot of evidence going for us, not only in the social sciences but also in biology, not to speak of the humanities.

Let me conclude by recounting an exchange between one of my ablest recent students and myself. He wrote, quoting a well-known French sociologist, that all human action is motivated by a competitive struggle to increase some form of capital. I said to him, "Is that true of you? Are you just out to increase your capital? How could I ever trust you if that were true?" I don't say there was an instant conversion, but my reaction had a very sobering effect on him. It began by his saying, "I never thought of applying this theory to myself." Well theories do apply to ourselves and they have tests that are both empirical and ethical, and often it is impossible to tell where the cognitive leaves off and the ethical begins. Scholars live in a world, and the world we live in right now is dominated, as Engell and Dangerfield point out, by money. If we believe that the struggle for strategic advantage is the truth about human beings then we should realize that we are not just teaching a scientific truth, we are preaching a gospel. We have been there before in our intellectual history and we decided that it was wrong; but a lot of things we imagined had gone away have returned in recent years. And if we don't think that the struggle for strategic advantage is the whole truth about human beings then in our scholarship and our teaching what we say will be at the same time scientific and ethical. Put differently, that would be to begin consciously to accept that our work is governed by the virtue of judgment, at least in aspiration. That alone would be an enormous contribution in our present situation.

The postmodern view that the regime of knowledge and the regime of power are the same is false, like all such absolute theories, but like many false theories it has a grain of truth: knowledge of the true and the good is always involved with power. To be true scholars we must realize that we will be engaging not with ivory tower abstractions alone but with the real world and with real consequences. The best work being done at Berkeley and at Baylor, and at many other universities today, is, I believe, an expression of that realization. ■

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# The Elbert Factor

By Hal Haralson

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

There are people and places that have played a significant part of my life's journey.

This is about one such place and two of those people.

About half-way between Olney and Throckmorton is the town of Elbert, Texas.

It has a post office, a general store, and a Baptist church. Its population is about 20. About the size of Bethlehem.

I was a ministerial student at Hardin-Simmons University in 1956. We held weekend youth revivals in the rural churches of West Texas.

The preacher got to pick his "team." I always chose Juanelle Johnson. She was an excellent piano player and singer. She was beautiful, vivacious, and a great help when it came time for "fellowship" following the services. She became my very dear friend. Following graduation, Juanelle married Ken Wright, who became pastor of The First Presbyterian Church of Golden, Colorado. Juanelle grew up in Elbert, Texas.

Browning Ware, is six years older than I. He was my boyhood hero. He was tall, athletic, and a gifted preacher. My mother told me more than once to "be like Browning." My mother and his mother were sisters. Browning and I are first cousins.

I was on the staff at Hardin-Simmons University when I experienced my first serious bout with depression. I had returned there after one year in the seminary and two years in the Army.

A call came from a church with a history of putting young ministers through the seminary while living on the church field.

The call was accepted and my wife and daughter and I moved into the parsonage of the First Baptist Church of Elbert, Texas.

I preached on Sunday. The depression returned. I resigned on Wednesday night. That three-day pastorate may be the shortest on record.

Judy and Jill (our three-year-old daughter) lived on in the Elbert parsonage for six weeks. The people at Elbert didn't understand what was going on. No matter. They just wrapped their arms of love around us and held on tight.

We then moved to San Antonio where I was treated for depression. There was a suicide attempt, 3 months in the State Hospital, and 13 shock treatments.

When I was released I went to Littlefield, Texas where Judy and Jill had been staying with her parents. Brad was born 5 days later.

I decided to leave the ministry and wrote the First Baptist Church of Loraine, Texas, where I had been ordained and asked them to revoke my ordination.

"We've never done that. We don't know what to do," came back their reply.

"You are Baptists; vote on it." They did, and I became a layman.

I then spent six years in the business world before selling my business interest. Depression had come and gone over these years and I was diagnosed a manic depressive.

Since I had the money to do just about anything I wanted to do, I looked for a profession where my mental illness would not be a handicap. I decided to become a lawyer.

At age 33, with children aged 1, 5, and 10, we moved to Austin and I entered the University of Texas School of Law.

I was an "old man" of 37 when I graduated. No one wanted to hire me, so I hung out a shingle, beginning 29 years of law practice as a general practitioner in solo practice.

We became members of the First Baptist Church of Austin and the church ordained me as a Deacon. My pastor was Browning Ware.

The last trip my mother made before her death was to see her favorite nephew, Browning Ware, ordain her oldest son a Deacon.

Browning pastored First Baptist Church in Austin for 21 years. During those years, he continued to be my friend and confidant. One of those years, I served with him as chairman of the Deacons.

It was during this time that Browning and his wife Corinne divorced. The love of the people of First Baptist Church for their pastor was such that he remained as pastor for many years.

Then, several years later, Browning told me he had met someone he thought he might marry.

"Tell me about her," I said. "She's about our age. Her husband died several years ago. She lives in Golden, Colorado. Her name is Juanelle Johnson Wright."

Incredible! My friend of over 30 years would be my pastor's wife.

Judy and I were invited to the wedding, to be held in the church where Juanelle grew up, the First Baptist Church of Elbert, Texas.

We spent the night before the wedding in Abilene. Judy asked me if I felt anxious about returning to Elbert.

"Not a bit," I replied. I woke up during the night with red welts all over my body. I had hives. The only time before or since. Maybe I was just a little anxious.

We figured out while driving to Elbert the next day that it had been 25 years that very week, since I was pastor at Elbert for three days.

Time has passed since my last trip to Elbert. Browning has retired, and he and Juanelle now live in Georgetown, Texas.

Judy and I will celebrate 43 years of marriage this year. She has been a psychotherapist in private practice for 20 years and I'm still a country lawyer. ■



# Confessions of a Lapsed Luddite

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 Luddites, as many will know, were a small group of English craftsmen in the early 19th century who were alarmed because the introduction of technology into the English cloth industry meant that their jobs were under threat. They reacted violently, seeking to destroy the machines that undermined their ways of making a living. They failed, of course, and the march of new technology went inexorably on.

I have never been a real Luddite. True, for many years I resisted the lure of the computer, despite the pitying glances of many of my friends. I was a bit of an outcast because I had no e-mail address. But, finally, some months ago, I succumbed and bought a computer. Now I have an e-mail address and use a computer for my writing (which really gives me, in that respect, little more than my old word processor gave me.) But I like e-mail. It keeps me in touch with a lot of people with whom it would otherwise have been difficult to maintain connections. I have never been seriously tempted to launch a violent physical attack on machines, factories, or laboratories—all bastions of the new technology—though I have occasionally thought of taking an axe to my television set, especially when all I can get is Jerry Springer, Ricki Lake, or Montel Williams.

I haven't lost, however, a nagging distrust of uncritical enthusiasm for any and all technological advance. The current convenient axiom in some scientific circles—"if it can be done, do it"—does not sit comfortably with me. I am old fashioned enough to believe that, perhaps, there are some things we can do which, morally, we ought not to do. The problem is that computers and technology are amoral. They

are inanimate machines, however much they may mimic human behavior. They have no moral or ethical sense. Whatever morality is programmed into our technology is put there by human beings. And I am haunted by my Biblical—and experiential—understanding that all human beings, whether they be computer programmers, scientists, technicians, or writers for ethical journals are sinful beings. Whatever moral knowledge they feed into their machines arises out of their own moral sensibility, and that sensibility is always and everywhere suspect.

I want here to consider only one small part of the technological revolution—perhaps what some would consider a minor one. I have recently been concerned about the widespread use of video and computer games. A perceptive book has come to my attention. John Naisbitt, a presidential advisor to Kennedy and Johnson, is the author of a best-selling book, "High Tech, High Touch." His analysis of contemporary society is a sobering and thoughtful argument, and one of his most devastating sections describes the effect that inter-active and computer games are having on children.

The reach of these electronic games is staggering, with an audience affecting far more people than cinema or books. About 65% of American homes, according to Naisbitt, now possess such games, and nearly half of the players are under 18. Even more alarming is the fact that American children apparently possess an appetite for the most violent of these games, and this kind of game accounts for 70% of the market. Is it surprising that some of these games are being widely promoted with slogans such as "more fun than killing your neighbor's cat"?

Here, I must acknowledge my debt to Melanie Phillips, a columnist for the *London Times*, who has researched these areas thoroughly. Children, quite obviously, are attracted to





such games. Many of these games are advertised in a way deliberately targeting children. In 1998 an advertisement in a children's magazine for a game called "Vigilance" encouraged players aged 13-plus to put your "violent nature to good use." The ad was illustrated by a picture of a boy's jeans-clad legs, the barrel of a shotgun at his side, and two dead classmates at his feet. The latest games feature rape, torture, and mass killing. By the time the players reach the highest level of the game, "Carmeggadan," they will have run over and "killed" 30,000 pedestrians.

Violence in popular culture is nothing new. We live in a gun-obsessed society. But these games are something else. They affect children differently. They provide them with the sensation of being active killers, and these sensations are becoming increasingly real, through the advances of technology. Soon the players will literally feel the backfire of a gun, the impact of a blow, or the dripping of a victim's blood.

They will hear the screams of pain and terror as the child "kills" hundreds of people. Some games are being designed to toy with children's sanity, aiming to induce paranoia and deliberately confusing the child about what is real and what is not.

The effect of such games is not only dramatic but addictive. Naisbitt quotes one authoritative source who says that one in four children who play becomes addicted. Very young children who can't tell reality from fantasy become easily hooked. Unlike television such games engage children's entire attention as they are taken on an emotional roller coaster that rewards them for killing people. Respected psychologists say that extended computer use is altering the physiology of children's brains, causing rising attention deficit disorders and depression. It is rearranging the ways their brains work and changing the emotional life of the child player.

Concrete evidence exists that virtual simulation reality is usefully employed to treat phobic or traumatized patients by desensitizing them and reprogramming their reactions. We know, therefore, that this technique can change people's real lives. Why are we reluctant to admit that this same technique can change individuals for the worse as well as for the better? The fact is that children over a period of time can be programmed to be callous killers.

Not surprisingly, the military establishment has been quick to take advantage of the technological opportunities. Soldiers are now being trained through electronic war games that provide high tech simulation and conditioning. Laser engagement systems in which blank shots trigger laser pulses on soldier's vests have spawned children's games such as "Laser Tag" whose sales in the United States reached 245 million dollars in 1998.

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Its derivative in ordinary action terms, "Paint Ball," provides interested individuals with the concrete opportunity to stalk and kill other individuals, without, of course, any actual physical damage. Is it surprising that that activity was reportedly used by the schoolboy killers at Columbine High School in Colorado to refine their skills for their later tragic attack? After the previous attack in Paducah, Kentucky, it was revealed that the 14-year-old killer had fired with deadly accuracy because he had had hours of practice on video games that had encouraged him to develop his skills to shoot people.

The close, though perhaps unintended, links between the military and the computer games industry, dubbed by Naisbitt the "military-Nintendo complex," are reflected in the fact that children are being induced to buy games for "the smell of napalm" or "the beautiful sound of your arsenal blowing away tanks." It is not surprising that modern war, projected to us on our television screens, has devised euphemisms for its

most destructive actions. "Euphemisms" are polite words for unpleasant actions. Thus, we are told of "collateral damage," which means that innocent civilians have been killed, or "smart bombs," which are weapons presumably intended to reach their planned targets. What results is that play is becoming like war, and war is becoming like play. The harsh realities are neatly wrapped up in verbiage.

I am not one of those who posit a simple one-dimensional solution to our problems. After the recent terrible incidents of school violence in the United States, there were those who rushed forward with a single cause behind the violence. Some blamed everything on lax gun laws. Others picked out the movies or television as the culprits. Yet others singled in on what I have been discussing in this article—violent computer games. The answer, of course, does not lie in one single area. We face a larger cultural crisis. In an atmosphere dominated overwhelmingly by materialism and hedonism, these outbreaks of violence are not surprising. Indeed, they are predictable.

If a culture has lost its way, morally, and has opted to discard or ignore the ethical and moral wisdom accumulated across the centuries, who can predict what terrible results will come? In a culture which exalts monetary gain above all other goals and pursues a consistent "feel-good" ethic in personal behavior, the tragic results are inevitable. The decision to throw away or ignore the ethical and moral wisdom of centuries can have only one result—chaos.

I call attention here to only one aspect of that moral stupidity. Obviously, our education system has great problems. There are those who tell us that the answer is a "computer in every class room." I do not oppose that idea. But the notion that putting machines into the hands of our children will

automatically solve our problems is fatuous. True education is not simply a matter of being able, by the push of a button, to assemble all the facts. It was Walker Percy, the American novelist, who observed that if we persist in believing that education consists of the simple assemblage of facts, “we will rear a generation of moral idiots.” True education teaches people how to use facts and leads them on into the higher realm of ideas, concepts, and dreams. It can enable us, and our children, to unravel many of the mysteries of ordinary human existence, but it will also confront us with the stubborn arenas of ultimate mystery—the questions which our computers can never answer, such as the meaning of life and existence.

I inwardly cringe when I stand at the check-out counter of my supermarket. Behind the counter is a young girl who can manipulate adeptly the keys of her machine, tabbing up my purchases accurately (I hope)—but who gazes at me with heavily made-up, glazed eyes that clearly indicate a lack of knowledge, interest, or concern about such things as truth, beauty, or love—or even my existence, as a customer, as also a human being.

What seems to be missing from many in today’s world is a sense of perspective. Human beings have created our machines. Now, the question is, “Who is the ultimate master?” Machines are created to be used, not to dominate our existence. I know from experience that I can tap the right keys on my computer and call up an almost inexhaustible wealth of useful information. I also know that I can tap other keys and conjure up on my monitor screen the most depraved and utterly evil images of a sinful humanity. That is not the fault of my computer. I have pressed the keys, and other human beings have fed into the network the filth and dregs of their twisted and money-obsessed minds. In a real sense now, this is still the same old story: the powerful forces of evil are at work in the world.

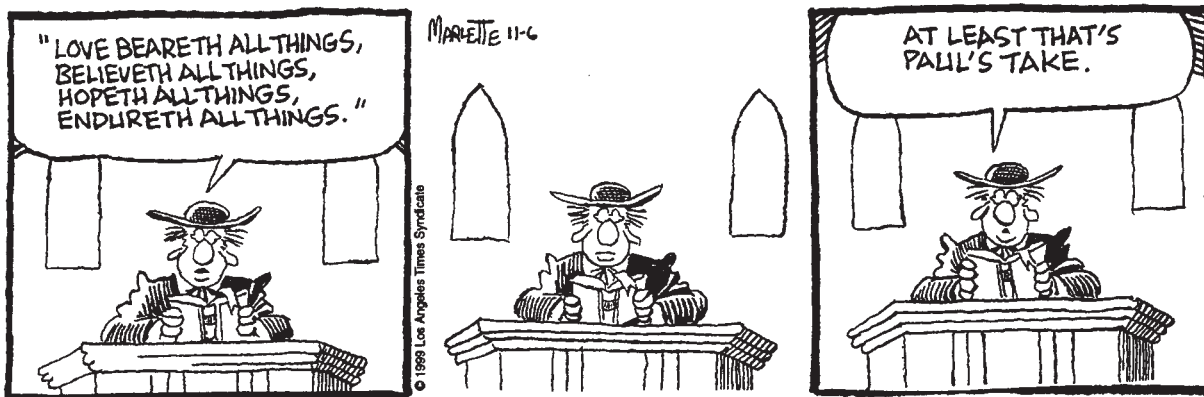
My wanderings in this article have led me far beyond my initial concern with the problem of violent computer games. My concern in that area remains the same, but the problem is far more extensive than that. I have classed myself as a “lapsed Luddite.” I am not a Luddite in the sense that I do not share the illusion of the simple nineteenth-century workmen that

they could solve their problem by violently destroying the mechanical weaving looms that threatened their livelihood. But I share with them a deeper and instinctive fear, never verbally expressed, or, perhaps, even realized, by them. Despite all its benefits, the machine can be ultimately an enemy of humanity. That is not the fault of the machine. It is our own responsibility.

I take my stand firmly on the proposition that there are some things, technically possible, which morally should not be done. Whether these things are actually done rests on the judgment of human beings, and the validity of that judgment depends on the individual’s moral sensitivity.

And I would also remind us that machines are not infallible. We are sometimes so obsessed with the machine that we give it a status it does not deserve. A somewhat ludicrous observation comes to mind. Part of the planned celebrations for Millennium Eve here in London, where I am writing, was the inauguration of the “Millennium Wheel”—a giant ferris wheel, the largest in the world—located on the banks of Thames near the Houses of Parliament. It was due to begin turning at midnight on New Year’s Eve and opened with much ceremony by the British Prime Minister. Despite all the publicity build-up, it didn’t open. All because of a “computer error.” It has eventually begun to turn, after a month of readjustments. A more serious example is that of a terrible train accident near Paddington Station in central London just before Christmas. Several people were killed and many injured. The cause, despite intense investigation, is not yet clear, but the strong suspicion is that it was due to “computer error” in the signal system. Machines are always and everywhere susceptible to mechanical error. We cannot trust our future to them.

Thinking men and women, rightly concerned about the amoral age in which we are fast becoming involved, should take a lesson from popular culture. The adequate image of the computer is not the lovable, somewhat inefficient robots who were the companions of Luke Skywalker in “Star Wars”, but the cool, inhuman, and unfeeling voice of Hal, the computer run amok in Stanley Kubrick’s epic film, “2001.” One image lulls us into complacency; the other is a salient warning. ■



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# A Woman Who Waited for the Lord God

*By Ralph Wood*

[This is a eulogy written by Ralph Wood for his mother, Eunice Walker Wood, December 22, 1908-April 11, 1993. Dr. Wood is University Professor at Baylor.]

Out of the depths I cry to thee, O Lord!  
Lord, hear my voice!  
Let thy ears be attentive to the voice of my  
supplications!

If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities,  
Lord, who could stand?  
But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou  
mayest be feared.

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in  
his word I hope; my soul waits for the  
Lord, more than watchmen for the morn-  
ing, more than watchmen for the morning.

O Israel, hope in the Lord!  
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,  
and with him is plenteous redemption.  
*(Psalm 130)*

Eunice Walker Wood was a woman who waited for the Lord God, who cried out of the depths to Him, who received his plenteous redemption. From childhood to old age, she found her hope in the Christ who does not mark our iniquities, but who judges us with a love so steadfast that nothing, not even death, can separate us from it.

Early in her life Eunice Wood was singled out for a special destiny, even a holy calling. Ten-year old Eunice was attending the one-room, one-teacher Walker School hidden deep in the worn-out cotton fields of East Texas. Sarah Huggins, the teacher, asked Eunice to stay after books one day. Miss Huggins made a life-turning remark to her pupil: "Eunice," she said, "you are a good girl who earns good marks and who would make a good teacher." From that moment, Eunice confessed, she knew that she was called to make something good of her life—not to get pregnant, not to quit school, not to repeat the dreary pattern followed by many other farm girls. Eunice knew that she must be willing to wait for the better things that God wanted for her, even when there was little hope for better things.

The Walkers were sharecroppers. They moved from one small Cass County community to another in search of a more prosperous life: from Zion Hill to Lewis to O'Farrell, back to Zion Hill, thence to New Colony and Lanier and Almira.

Eunice faithfully attended the rural schools in all of these places. But they stayed in session only six months of the year, and they extended through only the seventh grade. How could she hope to become a teacher when her schooling was so limited?

A perceptive aunt spotted Eunice's talent. She urged her niece to get an education, if only to provide for her parents when they grew old. Otherwise, the aunt said, they will be sent to the County Farm—to the poor house—to live with the other indigents. Thus did her aunt and uncle, Emma and Willard Walker, invite Eunice to live with them and their twin daughters, Irene and Alene, in the county seat town of Linden and to attend the Linden High School. There Eunice received three indispensable years of education. They enabled her to enter the sub-college at Commerce, to earn her high school degree, and thus to be issued a temporary teaching certificate.

As a raw youth of 18 Eunice began to realize her dream of becoming a teacher. Yet she never had the money to live in the dormitory as a long term student at East Texas State Teachers College. Instead, she earned her degrees by attending summer sessions, at least a dozen of them, after teaching all year at rural schools in places like Almira and Bear Creek. Her grades were always excellent. In fact, someone teased her future husband, who was also teaching at Almira, that he was preparing to marry a woman who had never made a B. "So what," Cecil Wood replied, "neither have I!"

Early in life Eunice had heard the summons to excellence from her own parents. Her father, Jim Walker, wanted to be a preacher or a teacher rather than a farmer. Alas, he had little formal education. As a man who loved books and numbers far more than cotton and money, he raised little of the former and earned little of the latter. Instead, he spent much of his time reading the Bible. Often he would have his four daughters read it responsively with him. And then he would end with prayer. Though he was a passive man who let the world roll over him, Jim Walker made one firm act of protest against the hard life of an itinerant farmer: he refused to teach his daughters how to plow.

Virtually blind from a childhood illness, Eunice's mother Maudie Lummus Walker was never sent to school. But she would ask her four daughters to read the Bible to her. She committed many Scripture verses to memory, and she could quote and comment wisely upon them even in her old age. Despite her near blindness, Maudie became an accomplished seamstress. Having learned by her mother's example, Eunice spent most of her last years sewing. Perhaps Eunice was also remembering her own mother when, as an English teacher, she required her students to recite Milton's sonnet on his blind-

ness. She was especially moved by Milton's declaration that "They also serve who only stand and wait."

It was not only at home but also at the Zion Hill Baptist Church that Eunice learned what it means to wait expectantly for the Lord God and to serve Him in both life and death. Preachers named Hamilton and Chambers and Hollingsworth proclaimed to her the Gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone. She heard and heeded this Word, and she was baptized in a nearby creek called Jim's Bayou. Eunice lived out her Christian faith in deeds far more than words. She knew that she was not saved by her good works, but she knew most certainly that she was saved *for* good works.

Eunice was a mere teenager when she volunteered to nurse her Walker grandparents on their deathbeds during two terribly hot Augusts in 1924 and 1925. Three years later, as an unmarried schoolteacher barely twenty years old, she moved her parents into her house at Almira, stretching her slender salary to cover their rent and groceries. Decades later she was to show the same care for her dying mother-in-law, Donie Wood, and for her widowed sister Keron when her life took a downward turn. The countless Gospel songs and sermons that Eunice had heard in her youth thus bore rich fruit in her maturity. They taught her that to wait for the Lord God is to live generously: not to save but to lose her life, not to gain it but to give it gladly away for Christ and his Gospel.

Even in her marriage Eunice knew what it meant to wait. She ended an initial engagement in order to spend her life with a fiery fellow-teacher named Cecil Wood. His spirit was as wild and willful as hers was gentle and gracious. Thus did they complement each other's gifts, as couples often do. To the surprise of almost everyone, Eunice even took up horseback-riding in her fifties to accommodate her husband's love of the outdoor life. Yet photographs reveal that she made a rather unconvincing equestrian. Cecil and Eunice found their true common life, instead, as a splendid team of teachers who shaped their students ever so greatly for the good.

From 1947 until 1959, Eunice Wood was the sole English teacher for grades 7 through 12 at the tiny Kildare School eight miles southeast of Linden. Beyond her teaching duties, she also made annual trips with the senior class, got out the school yearbook, and directed the annual queen's coronation:

a pomp-filled pageant that enabled country folk to strut like royalty for an evening. During these dozen years her life was deeply intertwined with students named Holland and Heard, Dooley and Cromer, Wiggins and Whatley, Echols and Rosser and Mott.

These Kildare youths were tough. To the end of her life Eunice vividly recalled the day when the school principal attempted to call down a ruffian who had been misbehaving. This young thug grabbed the man by his shirt collar and twisted it tightly. Getting right in the terrified principal's face, he declared: "Don't you ever again raise your voice to me, cowboy!" The poor man resigned after one year at Kildare, as did many others. Eunice Wood never faced such threats. Even the students who despised her strict discipline respected her sterling integrity. They knew that she stood for excellence and uprightness. One of them conveyed this truth to me only recently. Eunice had reprimanded him for his bad conduct. Walking off nonchalantly as if nothing serious had happened, he looked back to discover that his teacher was weeping. Now a 60-year old man, he confessed that this event was a major turning point in his life. There he saw that he had injured an innocent soul, that he had breached a moral boundary, and that he would never violate such sacred limits again.

Eunice Wood inspired a similar reverence in her son. His mother was a woman of such steadfast character, such moral and spiritual excellence, that he sought to honor her in his own living. It was sheer respect for his mother and father—not any dubious goodness of his own—that enabled him to avoid many of the troubles that plague young people. His parents taught him the Good News that we are not our own maker, that we have been bought at the high cost of the Cross, that we are both created and redeemed to live in gratitude to God and in service of others. The son thus gladly confesses that his calling to Christian ministry was enabled to no small extent by his mother's gracious life.

It was a calling to style no less than to substance. Eunice Wood would never let her son say "had took" or "it don't" or "we was." For while she taught Longfellow and Dickens and Edna St. Vincent Millay, her first love was for English grammar. Even in her addled state during her last weeks, you could





not pass her muster if you said that you were going to *lay* down. *Chickens* lay eggs, she liked to say, but *people* lie down for a nap today, even as they lay down for one yesterday. It pained her that even college professors can be heard to say, “Just between you and I.” Eunice knew that to honor Him who is the Word made flesh is to use English words rightly and well.

Her pilgrim journey through the highways and hedges of the world took a stark turn when she lost her dear Cecil to a sudden stroke in 1960. When her mother died the following year, Eunice faced the darkest days of her life. Widowed and alone at age 53, she cried with the Psalmist “out of the depths.” She pled for God to give her a new life, a real reason to live. The Lord heard her supplication. He gave her a plentiful redemption—not in some surprising new place, but in a renewed conviction that she belonged exactly where she was: in the classroom and in the church. Her students were her lifeline.

After forty years of teaching English, Eunice Wood answered yet another call. She went back to school to learn the so-called new math and to prepare for teaching algebra and geometry at the recently consolidated Linden-Kildare High School. The last half-dozen years in the math classroom were among the happiest of her career. Her algebra students won academic prizes—and not only because she was a good teacher, but also because she did not suffer fools gladly. One day she spied a distracted student staring out the window. Eunice announced to the class that one thing only would justify such gazing through the glass: only if there were pink elephants turning backward somersaults on the lawn. She also liked to joke with her geometry students that if ( $r^2$  then surely cornbread are round.

Eunice’s generosity was manifest yet again when W. A. Parker, her school superintendent, called her out of retirement. He asked her to teach a final term in the local Negro school after integration had been mandated by the federal courts. Mr. Parker knew that Eunice Wood was no racist, that she would treat her black students fairly, and that she would thus work at a school which other white teachers had declined to enter. It was one of the most difficult years of her life. Yet she refused to believe that true education is “For Whites Only,” as the courthouse restrooms and drinking fountains once said.

When she quit the classroom for the final time in 1974, Eunice confessed that there was one thing she never missed: the burdensome task of grading exams. Her dozen years of retirement in Linden were happy days indeed. She was able to

spend time with her dear sisters Jewel and Keron and Oleta, as well as her dear sisters-in-law Nora Dudley and Polly Schiemann. And how dearly she loved her Linden friends who belonged to her Sunday School class, who shared her taste for fried catfish, and who joined her in playing “42”—the Texas domino game whose pleasures the great world has yet to learn.

The winding road of Eunice Wood’s life rounded its last bend in 1985. Leaving behind her home of 41 years plus a lifetime accumulation of friends, she moved a thousand miles away to North Carolina. Though she could have pitied herself at so great a loss, she did not. She was willing to walk with patience and cheer this final lap of her life. In Winston-Salem she made many new friends but no enemies at all. She drew close to her family, especially her grandchildren. And she taught us all the meaning of prayer. At the end, when her hands were finally stilled from sewing and her eyes too blind to read, she kept alive the most important thing: she held us up hourly to the mercy of God.

Eunice Wood was prepared to meet the Author and Finisher of her faith. Though she did not want to die alone, she had no fear of death. She had put her trust in the Christ who has robbed death of its sting and the grave of its victory. This deep belief made her a teacher to the very end. Her last lesson was perhaps the best of all: she taught us how to grow old generously and how to die graciously. The way she ended her life summed up the whole of it. Its meaning is figured nicely in the last stanza of her favorite poem:

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

**A**bout the roads that diverge into final destinies, Eunice Wood knew even more than Robert Frost. She lived and died in the hope, not that she would sigh away the ages in a vague “somewhere,” but that she would forever sing the wondrous Story and shout the victory of God’s glory. She began her journey to this Paradise of praise and thanksgiving 84 years ago in the piney woods of East Texas. There the paths of her life soon diverged. God called her to wait for Him, to take the road less traveled, to follow the Way that makes all the difference. Her earthly pilgrimage ended at the hour of Christ’s own triumph, at the dawning of Easter 1993, when she crossed over death’s deep river into Campground. Now her travelling days are over. Now she’s Home. Amen. ■



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# No Frozen Images

*(Exodus 20:4)*

*By Jimmy R. Allen*

[Dr. Jimmy Allen is Chaplain at the Big Canoe resort community in the Georgia mountains north of Atlanta.]

No Graven Images!

The words seem relics of ancient days.  
What meaning for men rocketing through space  
Unraveling life's mysteries?

Who now carves statues calling them gods?  
Shades of worn out traditions and ancient rituals!

Yet the Ten Words received in the Darkness by Moses  
Reflect revelation of what God wants  
And the way life works.

No graven image.

These words are not about wood and stone but about

Mindset and imagination.  
Don't let an image of God freeze in place.  
Make room for it to grow.

So much greater than our minds can contain  
God grants us glimpses of Himself.  
Freezing that glimpse into place distorts and twists  
perception.

No frozen images!

Boldly shattering shackles of yesterday's idea,  
God eludes traps in our tunnels of thought.  
As we conform our insights to logical ways,  
God laughs and shows another side of Himself.

No frozen images!

Sensing Him through our pain  
Fine tunes our radar, shriveling or  
expanding our souls.  
Sharing our pain frees Him to share His  
Pain with us  
And we learn to call it Grace.

No Frozen Images!

Discovering the backside of God on mountain tops  
Creates both despair and delight  
Yearning to see His face produces not maps but  
His presence as guide.

By refusing to create Frozen Images, we find  
Ourselves on Mounts of Transfiguration. ■

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# Violence: Competition or Cooperation

By John Swomley

[Dr. John Swomley is professor emeritus of Social Ethics at St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri. He is a frequent contributor to this journal.]

We live in a very violent world. There are wars, murders, rapes and other forms of violence reported every day in our newspapers. What is the origin of such human violence?

And why does the reaction to violence seem to be inconsistent? Some religious leaders who speak of life as sacred neither respect their adversaries nor serve as models of nonviolence. From the Pope on over to Pat Robertson and James Dobson, life in the womb is sacred but the life of the pregnant woman is not. During the second World War and the Cold War, none of the above leaders of religious groups and few others who speak of the sanctity of life opposed war or the development of nuclear and other weapons that could be used to destroy hundreds of thousands of non-combatants, innocent men, women, and children.

There are various theories about the origin of violence, though apparently some of us have never even wondered how humans became as violent as we are. One theory about the origin of violence relies on the Genesis account that God created a perfect world and that violence was caused by human sin.

A book, *The Fall to Violence*, by a very able theologian, Marjorie H. Suchocki, states: "A tendency toward aggression is built into human nature, so that if this tendency is a cause of sin, then the creator of human nature would be implicated in the fact of human sin. Hence the only creaturely basis of sin that could save the Creator from implication was human freedom, for which each human was solely responsible."

The traditional religious view that there was a Garden of Eden where all life lived harmoniously is questioned by some. Those who believe in a supernatural Creator who created all animal, marine, and insect life must realize that many living creatures have to live by feeding on other life and therefore have to kill. This is not only true of lions and tigers but beetles that kill trees and other insects that kill vegetation or attack human beings.

There are other reasons for rejecting violence as human rebellion against God. A second is that God did not create a perfect world, but one in which natural disasters such as droughts, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, and tidal waves, sometimes destroy the lives of thousands of humans and animals.

A third reason is, according to the biblical record, that God sometimes sanctions human violence.

What is the evidence in the biblical record? The Exodus

account of the Ten Commandments for example, contains strong words against creating images, worshipping them, and not keeping the Sabbath, among other kinds of reprehensible behavior. But the commandment against killing is listed sixth. Thereafter is a list of people to be put to death, such as those who curse father or mother. These acts of violent capital punishment commanded by God were understood as punishment for rebellion against God and hence the violence of punishment as such was not rebellion.

The biblical God, not only commands his followers sometimes to go to war but on rare occasions even orders violence such as in Isaiah 13: "Every one that is found shall be thrust through...their wives be ravished...and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb..." And in Hosea 13:16: "their infants shall be dashed in pieces and their women with child shall be ripped up."

Another theory about the origin of violence appears in Henry Bailey Stevens book, *The Recovery of Culture*. Based upon evolution, his book asserts that plants or vegetation preceded by millions of years any form of fish or animal life; that man's family, the primates, lived off the fruit and nut trees long before agriculture came into being. His thesis is that the ancestors of humans and that the early humans themselves show no evidence of war so long as they were essentially living without killing animals for food.

He wrote: "When the excavations of prehistoric cities get down to levels over four thousand years old, they no longer find the warlike weapons, the signs of a soldier class and the elaborate preparations for defense which characterize recent times. Even tribes involved with hunting and fishing, who were at war with the animal kingdom, appear to have been as free from human conflict as are the Eskimos today." Stevens theory was that, once tribes began killing animals (perhaps because of the encroachment of an Ice Age) they also began to kill people in other tribes.

Still another theory of evolution related to the origin of human violence is that of Darwin, whose "survival of the fittest" idea has been misinterpreted by T. H. Huxley and others. Huxley interpreted Darwin as telling us that "the weakest and stupidest went to the wall, while the toughest and shrewdest, those who were best fitted to cope with their circumstances, but not the best in another way, survived. Life was a continuous free fight and beyond the limited and temporary relations of the family, the Hobbesian war of each against all was the normal state of existence."

Actually, Darwin in *The Descent of Man* did not emphasize a struggle for existence between separate individuals, but

insisted that it was not the physically strongest nor, the most cunning who survive, but those whose struggle is replaced by cooperation. “Those communities,” he wrote, “which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members would flourish best and rear the greatest number of offspring.”

One of the most influential books on evolution thus far written is *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* by Peter Kropotkin, a Russian naturalist. He does not discuss the origin of violence but minimizes it as a factor in evolution. He provides numerous instances of insect and animal life that survive because they are sociable, living in families or colonies. For example:

The flat lands of the four great continents are still covered with countless colonies of mice, ground squirrels, marmots and other rodents....The coasts of the ocean are enlivened by flocks of seals...; its waters by shoals of sociable cetaceans; and even in the depths of the great plateau of Central Asia we find herds of wild horses, wild donkeys, wild camels sometimes numbering hundreds of thousands of individuals... How trifling, in comparison with them, are the numbers of the carnivores! And how false, therefore, is the view of those who speak of the animal world as if nothing were to be seen in it but lions and hyenas plunging their bleeding teeth into the flesh of their victims.

Kropotkin maintains that competition within or between species “is always injurious to the species.” He wrote, “Better conditions are created by the elimination of competition by means of mutual aid and mutual support. The ants combine in nests and nations; they pile up their stores, they rear their cattle—and thus avoid competition.”

Kropotkin's book is not only a great classic but makes the case, with many illustrations, that cooperation rather than competition is the key factor in evolution and in survival.

Recently a new theory of the origin of human violence has been published by two men who have spent years in Africa, South America and elsewhere observing animals and humans. The book, *Demonic Males, Apes and the Origin of Human Violence*, by Richard Wrangham, professor of anthropology at Harvard University, and Dale Peterson, another expert on primates, asserts that “chimpanzees and humans are each others' closest relatives”. They think DNA analysis places humans as an offshoot of the chimpanzees along with another of the great ape group, the bonobos. The authors observed sporadic violence against others of the chimpanzee species and their raids against members of neighboring groups, and noted similar human practices, declaring these acts of violence within species are “startling exceptions to the normal rule for animals.” This suggests that “intergroup aggression in our two species has a common origin...and that chimpanzee-like violence preceded and paved the way for human war,

making modern humans the dazed survivors of a continuous, five-million-year habit of lethal aggression.”

To test this thesis the authors visited the Yamamamo in southern Venezuela and northern Brazil, the largest tribe on earth that has not been destroyed or integrated into the rest of the world. They live in separate villages scattered so that no common hierarchies have developed. For various reasons they engage in raids against an enemy village. These raids are described in detail and closely resemble the chimpanzee raids.

The authors note that “Among chimpanzees, every adult male is dominant to every adult female.” However, another species called *bonobos* resemble chimpanzees and have “ancestral relationships with chimpanzees and gorillas.” But “Bonobos differ from chimpanzees in that they are somewhat smaller and the sexes are co-dominant,” that is, “the top female and top male are equal.” The authors observe that “Female power is the secret to male gentleness among bonobos.” It is “cooperation among females that kept the male in his place.”

The bonobos use sex in much the same way as humans, and not just for reproduction. “In other words, just as people use sex as a way for deepening relationships, comforting each other and testing each other, not to mention having fun or getting pleasure, so do bonobos.”

Generally speaking bonobos do not raid other bonobo communities. When two groups meet, even while looking for food, they do not fight but watch each other over a sort of demilitarized zone. Then a female crosses the neutral zone and has sex with a female from the other group. Then the two parties eat and rest together as if they were members of a single community.

In other words, bonobos rarely engage in any personal violence or aggression, yet they evolved, it is claimed, “from a chimpanzee-like ancestor.” The authors explain this in the following ways: “Bonobos can afford to live in larger, more stable parties than chimpanzees because they live in a world without gorillas”—a factor of their development south of the Zaire River.

Although they will eat meat, they do not hunt, but forage in groups. Their food supply is “chiefly protein-rich buds and stem bases of young herbs” and nuts and fruit. “Party stability produced female power. They form alliances that effectively protect them against male aggression.”

While the authors trace human violence to our presumed chimpanzee heritage of aggression and male dominance, they indicate that human societies can, like the bonobos, avoid violence, as some modern human communities do.

There is much more to be explored in speculating about the origin of violence. But one thing seems to be certain: there are more non-carnivorous animals than there are those that hunt and kill. Fertility may be one factor. But fertility among humans doesn't provide stability in highly populated areas. If humans do not eliminate weapons of destruction, solve the over-population problem, and build a cooperative world com-

(continued on page 26)

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# Blinded by Might

By Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson  
“Can the Religious Right Save America?”  
Zondervan Publishing House  
Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1999

*A Book Review*

*By Darold H. Morgan*

Just the mention of these authors should come as a shock to the readers of *Christian Ethics Today*. These authors are former insiders in both the Moral Majority movement of Jerry Falwell and the Religious Right; Christian Coalition as well. For years they epitomized the essence the hard-line Religious Right in America with their highly publicized agenda on abortion, homosexuality, unqualified support for Ronald Reagan and the Republican Party, the school prayer issues, and the voucher approach to the public education problems. And this book shows that their positions on these flammable questions have altered little despite their very public breach with Falwell, James Dobson, and others still active in the Religious Right movement.

Having said that, I need to go on to say that their book is worth reading for the following reasons:

1. These authors are by virtue of their past identifications able to say some entirely believable things about Falwell and his fellow “true believers” that need to be said. Falwell’s critics can level the same charges but they are discredited in many circles because of their previously declared opposition. Thomas and Dodson are still part of the Moral Majority fraternity because of their years of service and leadership. Now comes their book of cataloging the failure of these positions. They have not penned their opinions from a vitriolic point of view. Rather these chapters come across as a series of quite sad and disillusioned conclusions because of Falwell and his cohorts having fallen into the ancient heresy related to the illusions of power.
2. The strength of this book is the repeated statement that it is only in the power of the Christian gospel, applied to the human heart, that transformation of people can take place. Legislation and manipulation of political position and power cannot change lives. The preeminent task of the Church is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Religious Right people have made a fatal mistake in making political power take precedence over the spiritual power latent in the Christian gospel. A refreshing chapter in the book is authored by Ed Dobson, now a pastor in Michigan, whose pilgrimage has been from the pinnacles of power in Falwell’s Lynchburg’s environs to a pastorate where the priorities center in Biblical preaching and ministry.
3. This volume is a vivid study from a very unusual angle of the entrapments of political power. One will recall for a long time how Reagan embraced and used Falwell. Phone calls from the Oval Office to a pastor’s office have a mesmerizing effect. Secular politics and power-hungry preachers produce a predestined dominance of the secular. The result is an unholy alliance, regardless of how sincere the announced motivations for moral renewal may be. That these authors have been severely chastised and ostracized by the current Religious Right leaders is a given. Basically, this is the primary reason for looking at this book because the only path to moral renewal comes from the spiritual sources of the Christian gospel, not from political might!
4. This book reveals the flawed thinking of some very angry religious leaders. The anger certainly comes in part from the massive array of moral problems in contemporary American life. But classic fundamentalism tied in with the current American political system) with each side attempting to milk influence and legislation from the other to stem the tide simply will not get the job done.
5. The book is not just an account of the rapid decline of the Moral Majority and the Religious Right in American life. These painful revelations which confirm the obvious fact that Falwell and Dobson and others have feet of clay makes for interesting journalism. Pettiness, judgmentalism, questionable motives, poor decisions, and jealousy all come to light. Yet despite these sad events, the authors still encourage Christian citizenship and political involvement.

Now after having listed some of the reasons for reading this controversial book, let me say that the lasting impressions from these authors is that they are basically unchanged in their positions from their earliest days in this movement. They have analyzed the perils and poisons of power, but they are just as convinced as ever (especially Thomas) about their opposition to the Democratic Party, the abortion issue, the gay and lesbian struggles, and what they see as the dead-end stance of most moderate and liberal theologians.

In spite of all of this ambivalence, go ahead and read the book. Make it the basis of some needed discussions on these subjects. It will not be dull! ■

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# More Than Houses

By Millard Fuller

*A Book Review*

By Dennis Bender

[Dennis Bender is Director of Communications for Habitat for Humanity International, Americus, Georgia]

Since 1976, Habitat for Humanity International and its many local affiliates have worked long and hard to tackle one of the world's greatest problems—poverty housing and homelessness.

The success of their efforts is being told through the words and the lives of hundreds of thousands of people touched by this worldwide Christian housing ministry.

*More than Houses*, the new book by Habitat for Humanity president Millard Fuller, shares the personal stories of lives and neighborhoods being transformed by the organization he and his wife Linda founded 23 years ago. Through the most basic of human needs—a simple, decent affordable place in which to live—Habitat helps people with little or no hope develop a bright, new future.

Fuller tells the true stories of children who gained identity, confidence, and academic success after moving into the “houses that love built.” Of families made stronger and healthier and of prison inmates who are now giving back to their communities. Of entire neighborhoods united by hard work and mutual respect. Of denominational, political, and racial barriers falling with every swing of the hammer. Of the giving hearts of young people engaged in the quest to end poverty housing and of amazing spiritual transformations.

*More than Houses* chronicles the transformation of lives, communities and families—one person, one home at a time. These heartwarming revelations stand as a testament of love in

action and the fulfillment of the hopes of Habitat supporters around the world—to build more than houses.

“What Habitat does is much more than just sheltering people,” Fuller said. “It’s what it does for people on the inside. It’s that intangible quality of hope. Many people without decent housing consider themselves life’s losers. A Habitat house is the first victory they may have ever had. And it changes them.”

The book, released in August by Word Publishing, is available from many retail booksellers or from Habitat for Humanity International’s order department by calling (800) 422-5914.

It is the seventh book written by Fuller. Among his previous titles is *Theology of the Hammer*, the compelling, ecumenical explanation of how Habitat brings together a wide diversity of people, churches, and other organizations to build houses for people of all races, religions, and backgrounds and in the process to establish viable and dynamic communities. Other books by Fuller include *A Simple, Decent Place to Live*, *The Excitement Is Building*, co-authored with his wife Linda, *Love in the Mortar Joints*, *No More Shacks!* and *Bokotola*.

Habitat for Humanity International is a nonprofit, ecumenical Christian housing ministry. Habitat seeks to eliminate poverty housing and homelessness from the world, and to make decent shelter a matter of conscience and action. Habitat invites people from all walks of life to work together in partnership to help build houses with families in need. Habitat has built more than 80,000 houses around the world, providing some 400,000 people in more than 2,000 communities with safe, decent, affordable shelter. ■





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# Past Imperfect, Future Perfect: Tenses of Declension

By Gladys S. Lewis

[Dr. Gladys S. Lewis is Professor of English at the University of Central Oklahoma.]

I am a guardian of the meaning of life: a professor of British and American literature. My concentration areas are 16th-19th century texts. By professional involvement, I am “expert” in the writings of Queen Katherine Parr (last wife of Henry VIII), John Bunyan, Charles Dickens, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Oh, yes. I am a closet Tele-tubby for Ernest Hemingway.

Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and 37 other novels, grants me identity as a scholar. I have published one academic book on her anti-slavery masterpiece, and am at work on another. She has always intrigued me as a subject because of her powerful book which served as a catalyst for the American public’s moral sensibility in the mid-1800s to hasten the destruction of slavery. Even Abraham Lincoln said, when he met her at the White House, “So this is the little woman who made the big war” (Fields 269).

Although I am a woman of the new millennium, I am also close to Stowe’s Victorian values: she was an activist for the underling; an ardent (even crusading) Christian, and a devoted churchwoman, wife, mother. Her life as daughter of the famous Lyman Beecher of the last century, sister to seven preacher brothers (the most famous being Henry Ward Beecher), and wife to a Hebrew scholar and preacher, Calvin E. Stowe, immerses me in reveries of what her life must have been like. As a female, she must have felt she could not respond to a call to preach, as her brothers did. Her father, who expected his sons to be preachers, recognized her abilities and once remarked that his young Harriet was a genius and he would “give a hundred dollars if she had been a boy” because she “would do more than any of them” (Wilson 21). Undaunted, she once wrote in a letter to her brother, George, “It is as much my vocation to preach on paper as it is that of my brothers to preach *viva voce*” (20 February 1830?, Acquisitions, Stowe Day Foundation). She out-preached all the men in her life, with the two-edged dimension of her powerful storyteller-preacher voice and by so doing called a nation to repentance. Feminist scholarship has restored Stowe to the American literary canon. Feminist insights are extremely important now, but those issues were not the reasons for Stowe’s spectacular public reception at the publication of her great book. She was writing to an audience which held the Bible as the authority for life, appealing for the sanctity of the family which was being destroyed in the cruel practices of slavery. She spoke in a Bible-based rhetoric, a

persuasive style, which was used by the culture and resonated with morality and emotion understood by her audience.

I have a great deal of patience with those who do not appreciate the biblical sub-text of our literature, because we live in a time when people neither know nor venerate it. However, our rhetoric, our way of talking about ourselves, is unchanged. We still cite our authority (if not the Bible, then the stock market or the Middle East oil cartel, or Madison Avenue ads, or movies, or pop music), list our litany of complaints of how we have declined, and sound a note of hope. We hear every day from multiple settings variations on the words of Thomas Paine, “We have within us the power to begin anew.” (Still wincing, I recall a seminar setting when I used the reference to jeremiad rhetoric in our culture and a professional colleague turned on me, saying, “I resent that! I am an agnostic.” Staring, I could only think, “What does that have to do with it?” Dating to that time, I began to think (“the silkworms were eating,” to use a Hemingway phrase) about rhetoric itself, or our manner of speech, as authority. We respond to a cultural way speech is articulated which grants persuasive power to the speaker.

In the process of my book research on the authority of rhetoric in our culture, again relying on Stowe as a beginning point of reference, I spent three weeks in the Van Pelt Library at the University of Pennsylvania during June of 1999. Because The Library Company of Philadelphia, begun by Benjamin Franklin and the oldest in the nation, is in the same city, I went there one day to investigate holdings and view original documents. As I searched, I suddenly catapulted from my late 20th-century rhetorical stance back to mid-19th-century. The agent was not Mrs. Stowe, but rather her husband, Professor Stowe.

Calvin Stowe was a remarkable man for his time. I’ve never been able to decide if he could withstand the public furor generated by the Beechers and the high energy level of his wife because of being a stereotypically withdrawn academic, or if he simply was secure in himself and so non-threatened he just relaxed and enjoyed all of it. I rather think it is the latter. Supportive of his wife’s public ventures in a day when men were supposed to keep their wives subdued and private, she, in turn, honored him and leaned on his advice. He seemed to unfold in her expansiveness, chuckling when she engaged in some of her high jinks with, “Isn’t Wife a piece of work?”

Professor Stowe was invited to go to Prussia specifically to study that country’s educational system in 1836, shortly after he and Harriet were married. He returned with elaborate studies of education in Prussia, Russia, and other European coun-

tries, and made reports on it, most notably to the Ohio General Assembly and the Governor of Ohio. I had often wanted to read the report. At The Library Company, I saw a copy noted in the catalog. I also requested another writing effort, his introduction to John Gillies's biography of the great revivalist (with the Wesley's), George Whitfield, published in 1859. I read the educational report and was drawn into both his writing and the similarities between the Prussian system then and ours now.

But Professor Stowe came alive to me most vividly that afternoon through the power of the rhetorical style of language in the Whitfield biography introduction, and our minds touched across death and the years. I began with a smug smile as I read his review of the decline of England, primarily because of the way he judged some of the writers whom I personally admire. Then, I sat straighter as his words caught me with their crisp allusions: "We come to the time of the Georges with little improvement. The nation seemed to sink lower and lower. Even vice seemed to lose the life and vigor which had before given it a show of respectability. It was, as a whole, an age of imbecility and worthlessness . . . a stagnant pool of lifeless corruption." He went on to review the religious problems of 18th-century England, and, as a proponent of the positive contributions of the Puritans to American culture, I nodded when he wrote, "The ejection of the Puritans, by long continued and relentless persecution, had been the curse, and had well-nigh proved the utter ruin of the people, like the ejection of the Huguenots from France." He warmed more to his subject when he added, "But God had thought of mercy toward the noble old British nation . . . [It was] still to be the defense of the Protestant faith, the nursery of civil and religious freedom, and the instructress of the world, not to be left a hopeless moral waste. It was to be saved, and saved in God's own way, by the foolishness of preaching. The wickedness brought in by the throne, was to be met and counteracted by the pulpit."

Thoroughly hooked, I followed his account of the events of the Wesleyan revivals in general and Whitfield, in particular, as he added that "this revival of religion breathed a new spirit into all the departments of life and gave the first start to the great activity which followed." He skillfully made a transition from specific preachers to preachers as a group, saying, "The preachers of the gospel on earth must be men" as opposed to angels. He explained in a gentle, non-chauvinistic tone, using the word "men" in the earlier generic sense of mankind, "Men must be guided to salvation by men, not angels."

Then, back he went to six specific kinds of men "God needs as preachers," and dealt with each at length. First, God needs "Pious men," and he elaborated on the spiritual characteristics the preacher of the gospel must have. Next, God needs as preachers "Educated men" converted "by the foolishness of preaching but not foolish preaching," and he credits a Dr. South for the phrasing. God must have "Brave men," those with courage, who are "self-collected, simple-hearted, kind, gentle, unmoved." The fourth kind are "Prudent men," those who have common sense and think about what they do. He writes, "God looks on with most surprising indifference when

his own people bring themselves into difficulties by their own follies." Then, God needs "Working men" who are not lazy, who perform with diligence their tasks as preachers. My favorite category is his last one, "Gentlemen." Says the Professor, "Civility is like sunshine: it costs nothing, and it makes everything around us bright and pleasant. A minister has no right to be a clown: and in the literal, as well as the spiritual sense, should they who bear the vessels of the Lord have clean hands. Paul, with all his ardor and zeal, his invincible hardihood, his indomitable courage, his ceaseless enterprise, was always perfectly gentlemanly.... polite and courteous before King Agrippa and the procurator Festus." I can sense his pause, then, "And who can imitate Christ without being in all respects the gentleman!—without actually being that which the finished gentleman labors to appear to be? Roughness and vulgarity find no countenance in the Bible. Among the great variety of characters described in the Old Testament and the New, I remember but one clown among them all, the notorious Nabal: and he is most pointedly condemned, and his own wife testifies of him that he was a fool, and the Scripture shows us that he was a glutton and a drunkard."

Rhetorically, he and I returned to an earlier position as he took me to the specific with lessons for the group, a fine Puritan tradition. Whitfield had all these characteristics in his life, and, in addition, what all ministers must have to lesser or greater degree: "a voice of most wonderful compass and thrilling tone;" "person and manners in the highest degree attractive;" "skill and tact in rhetorical action that was perfectly marvelous;" and "amazing power of emotion exciting corresponding emotion in others." Then, he turned to all believers. "The style or type of religion necessary for an effective preacher, essential to real success in actually winning souls, is unquestionably the devotional. What, after all, is religion? What gives to religious institutions their power? What is the great characteristic of the scriptures, which most distinguishes them from other books? What is it that we all think of, and desire and long for, when religion is most necessary to us? When our earthly hopes are stricken down—when we are in trouble, in bereavement or approaching the confinements of the grave—what then, is the great element in religion which we most need and must have? Obviously it is the devotional element—that which brings the spirit into contact with the Maker, and raises it above the power of earth by giving it a taste of heaven. It is this that we desire when religion becomes a matter of urgent necessity with us. It is this, and little besides this, which we bring to the notice of others, when we find them in want of the consolations of religion. It is this which is really the power of religion—which has sustained martyrs in dungeons, on the rack, and at the stake—it is this that now gives peace and joy in the midst of sorrow to thousands of afflicted souls—and makes an unbelieving world feel that religion is a mighty element in the human soul, the philosophy of which is, to the faithless mind, an inexplicable mystery.

"Devotion is the fruit of faith, and again faith flows from devotion. They act and react on each other. It is devotion, the

fruit of faith—the legitimate offspring of faith and love—which brings us directly into contact with God; devotion is the natural expression, the development of our faith in and our love towards him. He is the Father of all created beings; but there is a special tenderness in his paternal relations with those who draw near him in prayer, and who have in their hearts that spirit of adoption whereby they cry continually, 'Abba, Father!'

"The longer I live, the less confidence I have in any form of religion which does not produce and cherish very much of the devotional element; and the more respect I have for the Christian who prays deeply, feelingly, and often, and in his life lives habitually as he prays, however little he may have of what the world calls talent or greatness. In religion, goodness is greatness; and without goodness, human greatness in the sight of God is but meanness and rebellion .... How eminently devotional was the earthly career of Christ!...In the time of the church's need, God has always raised up men, and himself qualified them for the peculiar services required...*Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest.*"

I sat long over the musty smell of the book and the clarity of the words to indulge myself in thought and reflection. In an afternoon when I was attempting to study what my generation credits as authority on the piggy-back of speech style and on a Bible no longer recognized, Professor Stowe gave me a refreshing trip to my roots in faith and literature. The bondage of the Stowes's world was real and palpable, all the way from slavery of race to serfdom of gender. Our current confinements are more sophisticated and complex with a societal nod to shared authority, but no less threatening. My academic task is to work at understanding and projecting how we do what we do linguistically. But my interlude with Professor Stowe called me to a spiritual past that offers in its same commitment to the Word a key to all present and future texts. Although nostalgia tricks us with recollections of a perfect past, we know it was imperfect. Victorian America was an industrial-agricultural-domestic slaveholding quagmire. And while we expect the future to be imperfect, we hope and strive to make it perfect. But for all the failures between beginning and end, my afternoon with Preacher-Professor Stowe reminded me that the cure for all our declensions lies in the present tense orientation of being worthy laborers in the Lord's harvest wherever we find our fields. ■

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## Violence: Competition or Cooperation

(continued from page 21)

munity, our destiny on earth may be increasingly troubled.

By contrast, the ants have demonstrated a different kind of community. Here is what Kropotkin had to say about ants:

The ants and termites have renounced the "Hobbesian war" and they are the better for it. Their wonderful nests, their buildings, superior in relative size to those of man; their paved roads and overground vaulted galleries; their spacious halls and granaries; their cornfields; harvesting and "malting" of grain; their rational methods of nursing their eggs and larvae and of building special nests for rearing the aphids—the cows of the ants—and, finally, their courage, pluck, and superior intelligence—all of these are the natural outcome of the mutual aid which they practice at every stage of their busy and laborious lives.

Even an ancient book, the Bible, in Proverbs 6:6 says, "Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways and be wise. Without having any chief officer or ruler, she prepares her food in summer and gathers her sustenance in harvest."

In line with such admonitions, humans are challenged to learn how to treat the world as one human community, even if we never learn for sure how we became so violent. ■

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Hobbes developed a political theory based on the idea that man in a state of nature must face competition from every quarter and therefore "in civil states there is always a war of every one against everyone."

<sup>2</sup>The chimpanzees and the homomid line (humans) appear to have been separate for perhaps four to five million years.

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# Watching the World Go By

## Fixing Our Failures

*By Ralph Lynn*

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

A ninety-year old professional student of history, I have been thinking of what may be the two chief failures of Western Civilization in the hundred years just past.

Our grossly obscene wars and murderous dictatorships do not seem to me to be our most significant failures. Rather, they are, at least in some part, explicable in terms of our chief failures.

One of these failures is so obvious that it probably needs only a reminder: we have treated non-Western people superciliously, patronizingly, haughtily. We have looked down our noses at them.

Not just Americans but Europeans in general were brought up to use the equivalent of calling brown people “greasers,” black people, “niggers,” and to repeat the contemptuous, dismissive statement: “You don’t have a Chinaman’s chance.”

Even the missionaries we sent to the “heathens” seldom quite accepted their converts as equals.

Some of our wars and much of the terrorism we now suffer are the fruits of this basic failure.

Our other chief failure has been and still is our refusal to adapt our government services to the needs of our people as they have tried to cope with the results of our change from the agricultural-farm village society to the great cities of the industrial-urban world.

The traditional “watch-dog” state designed only to protect citizens from each other and from foreign invaders was—in any informed retrospect—obviously inadequate in an urban world of citizens without the ancient, built-in social security of every family’s having a cow, some chickens, a vegetable garden, a pig or two, and neighbors to help a sick farmer “make his crop.”

The problem: we have only to live and do what comes naturally in our free society to change the realities of existence but it is nearly impossible to change what is in our heads.

Bismarck, Prime Minister of the new 1871 German nation, was the first statesman to understand and to react at all sensibly to this strange new world.

From his observation of the struggles of the British and French industrial workers to gain basic human rights and because he wanted to maintain autocratic rule in Germany, Bismarck introduced in the 1880s the prototype of the mod-

ern welfare state which all developed countries have subsequently found unavoidable.

Quite cynically, Bismarck remarked that he had “bought off a democratic revolution with fifty cents a day.” Perhaps it is not totally inaccurate to say that in so doing, he unwittingly sowed the noxious seeds of Hitler’s Fascism.

In Great Britain the business community and the aristocracy quite intelligently, although cynically and reluctantly, introduced the necessary changes just soon enough to avoid bloody revolution.

In France, the fading secular and religious aristocracies made common cause with the business community against any notion of adapting government services to the needs of great urban populations.

The result: one violent revolution after another.

In these bloody battles, the propertied classes invariably crushed the urban workers suffering from the out-moded “watch-dog” state.

The last of these struggles took place in 1871 when France became a republic for the third time. Once more, the new provisional government, dominated by the propertied classes, refused to make the changes the urban masses had to have.

Not surprisingly, the people of Paris formed their own municipal government, seceded from France, and began, most gingerly, to make some of the changes long denied. Once more, the propertied classes made bloody war against the people of Paris.

The result: by 1940 the masses of French urban workers did not care whether they continued to be governed by the old regime or by the Germans.

In tragically backward Russia, no effective leadership for change emerged. The result was the chaos of World War I followed by the Communist dictatorship which made a mockery of the democratic developments of Western Europe.

In the United States, our adaptation to reality had to await the shock of the Great Depression. Then, in a peaceful, quite conservative revolution, the Democrats with Franklin D. Roosevelt at the helm built upon and enlarged the kinds of wise changes already begun by the unfairly maligned Herbert Hoover.

The question for the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Will our minds be supple enough to change soon enough to remain the healthy society of our past? ■



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# A Perspective on Man and a Century

By James A. Langley

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

## I

Humankind by reason lifted  
To new heights of hope untrammelled,  
Throwing all, dreamers had gambled  
Science would prove how man was gifted,

And usher in a brave new day  
Of peace and progress non-pareil,  
Sparing the race the scourge of hell  
By ceaseless wars and evil's play.

They knew not the greatness of man  
Is deep-joined with his misery,  
His genius and philosophy  
Marred by hubris and selfish plan.

Prospects had never seemed more bright  
For bettering the lot of all,  
Breaking down each dividing wall,  
Hailing the dawn of endless light.

## II

Instead the new age would witness  
Death stalking the world grim visaged,  
Civilization near pillaged,  
Man shown greater but also less.

Devastating successive wars  
Brought the killing fields from the Somme<sup>1</sup>  
To Hiroshima, Vietnam—  
The victories less man's than Mars'.

The depth of the abyss came not  
From clashes on land, sea or air;  
Sheer malevolence was laid bare  
By genocide, a hell-hatched plot:

Blind hatred of others by birth,  
Race or religion, with fiendish  
Scheming, ruthlessness and relish,  
Damning their total human worth.

## III

Infamous names! Hitler, Stalin,  
Lenin, Mao Tse-tung, Mobutu,  
Pol Pot, Idi Amin—fat'd due:  
O how are the mighty fallen!

The long, dark annals of man show  
No like age of such terror, grief  
And ruin. Yet 'tis also chief  
Of all spans changing status quo.

Down with tyrants! Up with freedom!  
Ran the cry, with liberating  
Power, tho' misrule unbending  
Still grips millions, spurs martyrdom.

Valor will we long remember  
By the Marne and in Flanders fields;  
Who can measure the bloody yields,  
Fame more than a dying ember?

Stalingrad, Alamein, Midway,  
Normandy—bat'les that turned the tide  
For forces of 'freedom' allied,  
And raised strong hopes for a new day.

In the Great War's train came the rise—  
And fire-fall of Nazism's far-flung  
Sway, like a Gotterdammerung<sup>2</sup>  
With vict'ry in Cold War disguise.

Since Bolsheviks seized the Tower,  
Tyranny worse than the Czars' reigned  
In Russia; higher Force ordained  
The Soviets' fall from power.

## IV

Titanic's voyage, glorious  
Epic feat to show man master  
of Neptune's realm—its disaster  
Made ship, and pride, notorious.

Yet here too heroism would shine  
Thro' some, as with the Dorchester,<sup>3</sup>  
And send signals by this gesture

That men may rise to the sublime.

The dustbowl, earthquakes, storms and floods  
Ravaged the earth, scarred survivors;  
Galveston, 'Frisco, sent tremors  
Long and deep, touching human moods.

The Great Depression wrenched masses  
So deeply they would not forget;  
A new wave of wealth rose and set  
Highs, wider dividing classes.

Assassinations—Ferdinand's,<sup>4</sup>  
Of President Kennedy, King,  
And great statesman Rabin, would bring  
Reactions across many lands.

## V

With science's sev'n-league boots, time-space  
Became more friendly, the whole world  
A village; medicine unfurled  
New flags of health and healing grace.

Scientists thro' fusion and fission  
Found secrets of atoms, unleashed  
Powers of Armageddon—or peace,  
Raised the question of man's mission.

Sputnik gallvanized the space race,  
'Til man's 'one giant leap' to the moon;  
Probes unmanned brought many a boon,  
Tho' of like-being signs no trace.

Computers' modest beginnings  
Hardly showed mega-quantum strides  
In micro chips now used as guides,  
For all things the underpinnings.

Linked to the world by web world wide,  
Information ever-flowing,  
Instant, pervasive, all-knowing—<sup>5</sup>  
Wise, then good, oth'wise a fool's guide.

## VI

"Greatest woman since Joan of Arc,"  
This was Mark Twain's unique tribute  
To Helen Keller, deaf, blind, mute,  
Who inspired transcending world spark.

How indebted humanity  
Is to selfless Marie Curie's<sup>6</sup>  
Epoch making discoveries  
For diagnostic clarity

And much more; Einstein's formulas  
And theories, herculean  
Break-throughs for all empyrean  
Science, atomic avatars.

The Wrights' machines, Lindbergh flying  
The Atlantic, Bartok's dances,  
Yeats' and Eliot's insights, fancies,  
Salk's cure for crippling and dying;

Gandhi richly earned the title<sup>7</sup>  
Accorded him; the strength, vision  
And courage of Cady Stanton,  
Anthony, later won their bat'le<sup>8</sup>

Fermi's mind, the gift of Anne Frank,  
Stravinsky's fire, Picasso's art,  
Mother Teresa's loving heart,  
These such are they we have to thank.

Hemingway's skill with a story,  
But Mann the loftier writer;  
Solzhenitsyn, the grand fighter  
For truth, deserves higher glory.

Courageous Mandela and King,  
Prophets of justice, the caring  
Of Schweitzer, Bonhoeffer's daring,  
Gave hope and grace authentic ring.

Nixon who resigned as Pres'dent,  
Charged with grave abuse of power,  
Will be known too for a dower  
Of foreign actions prescience.

Wilson, Franklin Roos'velt, loom tall,  
Yet Churchill, resolved, defiant,  
Sounding 'the lion's roar,' triumphant  
'Gainst monstrous evil, stands o'er all.

## VII

Era images still remain—<sup>9</sup>  
The Hindenburg crashing in flames,  
Montana, Gretsky, winning games,  
Truman, victor, mocks Dewey's claim.

Darker images sear from far-Apocalyptic mushroom  
cloud, Wretched souls beyond trapped and cowed:  
Auschwitz, Katyn<sup>9</sup> and Babi Yar.<sup>10</sup>

Children's bloated bellies, spindly limbs,  
Mocked by first world's surfeit of fat,  
And weak policies that stand pat—  
Dark blight on an age—its victims.

'Stars-stripes' on Iwo Jima raised,  
Marchers attacked in quest of right,  
'Challenger' explodes soon in flight,  
Raoul Wallenberg justly praised.<sup>11</sup>

### VIII

Simpson case, pros'cutorial,  
Police and judicial wreck;  
Lindbergh kidnapping trial trek  
Played to media carnival.

*Brown-Board* wrought justice long deferred;  
The High Court in *Roe versus Wade*  
Broke new judicial ground, made  
Strong controversy undeterred.

### IX

Billy Graham preached to large throngs,  
Christianity grew world wide,  
Tho' some saw its weight at ebb-tide;  
Late gain to Muslim faith belongs.

Religion's Grand Inquisitors  
Undermined the freedom of soul,  
Long the free church's cherished goal,  
Of true faith made themselves gov'rnors.

Rome's Vatican Two gave promise  
Of deep reforms in 'Peter's seat';  
John Paul Second held them discreet,  
Leaves a record *sui generis*.

### X

Garlands many to wide acclaim,  
Yet few so enduring and bold  
As Ruth's heroics, Jesse's gold,<sup>12</sup>  
Or Bobby Jones' grand slamming fame.

Nurmi,<sup>13</sup> Nicklaus, define merit,  
Pele, legend in his own time;  
None is like Jordan in his prime,  
The Armstrongs' triumphs of spirit.<sup>14</sup>

Nolan Ryan's pitching prowess,  
Ripken's endurance, McGwire's clout,  
Aaron's record—the lure about  
Their game with such will not grow less.<sup>15</sup>

### XI

Movie fame has gone with the wind:  
Garbo, Gable, Taylor, Monroe,  
Fade; only affairs soul-size go

On and enduringly contend.

Films, television, internet  
May entertain, inform, inspire;  
But where's the light and where the fire  
If 'wasteland' grows, virulence set?

### XII

Symbols of hope, faith and courage  
Abound: democracy's wide rise,  
Life span grows, apartheid's demise,  
Berlin Wall's fall, Beijing's rampage.<sup>16</sup>

Amundsen first at the South Pole,  
Hillary, Tenzing climb Ev'rest,  
Piccard—altitude, ocean test  
Pioneer, pushing mankind's goal.

Lend-lease aid and the Marshall Plan,  
Debts of poorer nations forgiv'n,  
The hurting helped, many have striv'n;  
Chapters of man's concern for man.

Women's and civil rights at last  
Gained thro' hard struggle over wrong,  
Shame and prejudice ages-long;  
Human rights key the future's cast.

### XIII

If it was 'the American  
Century,'<sup>17</sup> America still  
Confronted much to test her will  
For good, where'er her writ still ran.

The mind of man so rich in gifts  
Wrought works of genius, brilliant, deft,  
Still at century's end has left  
Mankind plagued by ominous rifts.

If man would conquer his heart's flaw,  
By Divine grace he must recov'r  
Selflessness with greatness, discov'r  
His brother in love, God in awe. ■

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### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The British alone suffered 60,000 casualties (killed and wounded) on the first day of the Battle of the Somme "without gaining a single yard." (William Manchester, *The Last Lion: Winston Spencer Churchill—Alone, 1932-1940*, 47)

<sup>2</sup> The finale of Wagner's magnum opus, *The Ring of the Nibelung*, of which the central motif is the mythical figure Wotan's love of power. Hitler, as William L. Shirer

noted in *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (p. 101), “worshiped Wagner”. He was a close friend of the Wagner family and frequented performances of Wagner at Bayreuth. *Gotterdammerung* (Twilight of the Gods), the last opera Hitler ever attended, which he saw shortly after the fall of France (Robert Payne, *The Life and Death of Adolf Hitler*, 351), climaxes with Valhalla—the castle built to consolidate Wotan’s rule—crashing in flames and total catastrophe. Shirer adds: “It is not at all surprising that Hitler tried to emulate Wotan when in 1945 he willed the destruction of Germany so that it might go down in flames with him” (Op. cit., 102).

<sup>3</sup> In World War II in the North Atlantic, four chaplains (Protestant, Catholic and Jewish) aboard the torpedoed troopship USS *Dorchester* (February 3, 1943) gave their life jackets to servicemen who had none, and went down with the ship, survivors said, with their arms linked and heads bowed in prayer.

<sup>4</sup> The assassination of Austrian crown prince Archduke Ferdinand (and his wife Countess Sophie) in Sarajevo, June 28, 1914, was the immediate and ostensible cause of World War I.

<sup>5</sup> Joel Achenbach (*The Washington Post*, March 12, 1999) referred to the late 20th century as “The Too-Much-Information Age”—commenting that “today’s data glut jams libraries and lives, but is anyone getting any wiser?” Librarian of Congress, James Billington, calls it “the Tower of Babel syndrome.”

<sup>6</sup> Marie Curie and her husband Pierre Curie jointly discovered polonium and radium in 1898. Pierre was killed in a street accident in 1906; Mme. Curie continued her scientific work well into the 20th century, and was the first person to be awarded two Nobel Prizes (in Physics—shared with her husband and A.H. Becquerel, 1903, and in Chemistry, 1911). The Curies refused to patent their processes or otherwise profit from the commercial exploitation of radium.

<sup>7</sup> Mahatma means ‘great soul’. Indian spiritual and political leader, Gandhi was the catalyst for his nation’s independence from British rule. His insistence on non-violence powerfully influenced the Civil Rights Movement in America. Eschewing material possessions, he strove to improve the lot of the poor, and for the abolition of untouchability—the lowest caste.

<sup>8</sup> The decades of labors for women’s rights in the 19th century by Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) and Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) finally led to the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (1920), guaranteeing women’s suffrage.

<sup>9</sup> During World War II some 4,250 Polish officers were executed in a forest near the Russian village of Katyn. Though the Soviets tried to blame the Germans for the atrocity, in 1989 Soviet scholars revealed that Stalin had ordered the massacre.

<sup>10</sup> Babi Yar, a ravine near Kiev, where Nazis machine-gunned about 35,000 Jews on September 29-30, 1941,

by 1943 had become a mass grave for more than 100,000 persons, mostly Jews.

<sup>11</sup> Swedish diplomat and businessman assigned to Sweden’s legation in Budapest, Wallenberg helped save approximately 100,000 Jews from the Holocaust. He issued Swedish passports to some 20,000 Jews, and sheltered others in places he bought or rented. Wallenberg survived a Nazi attempt on his life, but in 1945 the Soviets imprisoned him, possibly because of work he was doing for the U.S. secret service. In 1957 the Soviet government announced that he had died of a heart attack in a Moscow prison in 1947, though he was reported seen at later dates. (Columbia Encyclopedia, Fifth Edition)

<sup>12</sup> African-American Jesse Owens upset Nazi Aryan racial theories in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, breaking two world track records, equaling another, and shared in winning a relay race, as Hitler looked on but left before medal presentations.

<sup>13</sup> Paavo Nurmi, Finnish track star, set 20 world running records, and won nine Olympic gold medals and three gold medals in team events between 1920 and 1932.

<sup>14</sup> Astronaut Neil Armstrong was the first man on the moon. American Lance Armstrong battled back over cancer to win the grueling Tour de France in 1999.

<sup>15</sup> Nolan Ryan holds major league baseball’s all-time strikeout record—5,714. Cal Ripken, Jr. played in 2,632 consecutive games (Lou Gehrig had held the record at 2,130), and is the only short-stop in major league history to have more than 2,800 hits, 350 home runs and 1,500 RBI. Mark McGwire’s 70 home runs is the single season record, and his 180 homers in three consecutive seasons is the best in history. Henry (Hank) Aaron holds the career record for homers at 755 (eclipsing Ruth’s 714), for RBI—2,297, and total bases—6,856.

<sup>16</sup> The tragic crushing by Chinese army forces of pro-democracy demonstrations in April, 1989, in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square, and the killing of hundreds of students, highlights the regime’s determination to prevent the rise of political freedom, but also the extraordinary courage of the demonstrators, exemplified in particular by a lone unarmed man standing down a column of tanks, an image sent round the world.

<sup>17</sup> A phrase coined by Henry Luce, head of Time, Inc., in a famously triumphalist editorial in *Life* magazine.



# THE CENTER FOR CHRISTIAN ETHICS AT BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

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

## CHRONOLOGY

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

## TRUSTEES

Sarah Frances Anders  
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Leonard Holloway  
W. David Sapp  
Donald D. 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.

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