

CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS VOLUME 7, NUMBER 3 AGGREGATE ISSUE 34 JUNE 2001

*"The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord'.
"Isaiah 40:3; John 1:23*

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We've Got Mail

Letters From Our Readers

“CET is first-rate and I appreciate your commitment and diligence.”

Herb Reynolds, Waco, TX

“The Journal continues to be something I sit down and read through at once. Thanks to you and your good Board.”

Sarah F. Anders, Pineville, LA

“Enclosed is a small token of the appreciation that my wife, Jane, and I have for your publication. Please use it to keep up the good work. . . . our Sunday School class at FBC Hamilton is planning a series of lessons based on selected articles from CET. You are effective here.”

Jim Crouch, Hamilton, TX

“I think you are doing a great job with the magazine. I enjoy every issue and pass it on to others when I am through. . . . I am enclosing a check. Keep up the good work, knowing a lot of us really appreciate what you are doing and are praying for you.”

Charles E. Myers, Ridgeland, MS

“Thank you for sending the back issues. . . . I have already begun working my way through them. . . . saving some for my two young sons (ages 3 and 10 months) in hope that one day they will serve as a stimulus for dialogue/teaching. My fear is that they will not be exposed to these concepts in the historical Baptist church, which from my perspective, is near extinction.”

Kevin Heifner, Little Rock, AR

“Please give my regards and appreciation to Foy Valentine and Hal Haralson. This publication has been stimulating and comforting to one who served 35 years on the staff of the FMB when Baptists were truly Baptists.”

Edna Frances Dawkins, Richmond, VA

“Thanks for the excellent publication. I hope that it will continue to grow and expand; you are providing something unique and badly needed. Thanks!”

Dorothy Diddie, Waco, TX

“I greatly appreciate and heartily support CET. So many good things come out of Texas these days! I am grateful for those who stand tall for true biblical truth as Baptists at their best have represented it. For years I have admired and believed in your predecessor.”

Nolan Howington, Nashville, TN

“My father, Kenneth Chafin, passed away on January 3, 2001. I was searching through CET’s Index [Issue 31] today looking at some of my father’s writings that have been published. I’m interested in ordering these back issues.” [We were happy to provide these for Troy and for his mother.]

Troy Chafin, Austin, TX

“Congratulations and prayers on becoming editor of CET. I read every word of it when it comes to our house. Thank you! Right now. . . . I am editing the history of South Main as a part of our 100th anniversary which comes up in 2003.” [Yvonne also sent her significant book, *The Stained Glass House: A Handbook for Minister’s Wives*, a resource every clergy wife should read.]

Yvonne Garrett, Houston, TX

“I have received CET from the first edition. I greatly admire the work of Foy Valentine and his courage to initiate such a project.”

Ernest Atkinson, Tyler, TX

“My wife and I thoroughly enjoy CET and eagerly await each issue. This is a very worthwhile publication and I wish every Baptist could or would read it.”

John Casey, Heflin, AL

“Thank you for taking over the editorship. . . . Foy Valentine did a marvelous job and the quality continues under your leadership. For those of us who are “pre-1979 Baptists,” the Journal provides some contact with those who are of like mind and spirit. May our tribe increase and never decrease!”

Isaac B. McDonald, Elizabethtown, KY

“Thanks for your refreshing and enlightening Journal. I look forward to the coming of each issue. I have encouraged several friends to get their names on your mailing list.”

George A. Haile, Baton Rouge, LA

“I also want to express my appreciation for the continued high quality of the journal. I find that each issue of the magazine is worthwhile to read from Kudzu to the reprint of the great commencement address at the University of Texas by Bill Moyers.”

Pope A. Duncun, Chancellor Stetson University

“I appreciate the fact that you have continued to include a variety of articles on different topics in each issue and the format that make this journal so distinctive today. Each issue continues to educate and stimulate thought in areas of

Editor: Joe E. Trull

Publisher: Christian Ethics Today Foundation, 101 Mt. View Rd; Wimberley, TX 78676 (512)847-8721 Fax (512) 847-8171.

CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY is produced in the U.S.A. and is published bi-monthly, mailed from Dallas, Texas, where third-class postage is paid. The articles published in the CET express the views of the authors and not necessarily the viewpoint of the Journal or the Editor.

Send corrections and change of address to P.O. Box 26, Wimberley, TX 78676 or www.ChristianEthicsToday.com/Subscriptions

concern important in society.”

Ralph H. Ramsey, III, Lubbock, TX

“Thank you for your comments about contributions . . . I do value the articles . . . Stimulating thoughts trigger new avenues. Keep sending the good viewpoints. Frankly, they help me keep my balance in spite of fundamentalists.”

Bill Chafin, Amarillo, TX

P.S. Every letter we have received has included a contribution, for which we are grateful. The phone just rang—a strong supporter from Houston called to encourage and to let me know he was sending \$1000 now and more later. Tomorrow is Easter. Hallelujah!

JT

The Most Influential Christian Ethics Book I Have Read

“I’d have to give first place to *The Politics of Jesus* by John Howard Yoder. This was the book that first told me just what it meant to follow Jesus as Lord. I read it at 19 and became a pacifist and was convinced that following Jesus meant (among other things) adopting a simple lifestyle, living a life of free servanthood, and working with active non-violence for justice in the world. The book also introduced me to the meaning of the “Powers and Authorities” in Paul and the “jubilee” theme that Jesus takes from Leviticus and Isaiah—which have become central for my ethics. Other influential books include: James McClendon’s *Ethics*, Bonhoeffer’s *The Cost of Discipleship*, Martin Luther King, Jr.’s *Strength to Love*, Ron Sider’s *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, T. B. Maston’s *Biblical Ethics* [and several more].”

**Michael L. Westmoreland-White,
Research Associate, Fuller Seminary.**

“*Progress and Poverty* (1879) by Henry George inspired the American Populist Movement, the Progressive Movement, the Social Gospel Movement by George’s personal friend Walter Rauschenbusch, and most of the progressive leaders of the 20th century. By the end of WW I, it became the second best-selling non-fiction book (second only to the Bible) in the history of the world, and it has been translated into more than 30 languages. *Time Magazine*’s two top men of the century, Einstein and Roosevelt, both endorsed it. It’s greatness lies in its clear simple explanation of how poverty, social problems, and maldistribution of wealth are caused by political and economic institutions (rulers, powers and principalities)—not by the Creator. George charged it is blasphemy to blame these on the Creator when the earth’s bountiful resources are sufficient to support all of God’s children. The book endorses both free enterprise and socialism—each in its proper time and place. The Robert Schalkenbach Foundation was formed (Schalkenbach.org) to perpetuate the book’s ideas.”

Charles Reed, Waco, TX

Note: Readers are invited to submit their own paragraph statement for publication.



Herschel Hobbs on Baptist Freedom

By Jeffrey R. Zurheide
Pastor of First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City

Note: This address was the Herschel H. and Frances J. Hobbs Lectureship delivered at Oklahoma Baptist University on November 29, 2000.

President Brister, members of the faculty and student body, other guests and friends, it is my privilege this morning to both stand before you in this gorgeously renovated chapel and to offer yet one more lecture in a long and prestigious series of talks known as “The Herschel H. and Frances J. Hobbs Lectureship in Baptist Faith and Heritage.” I’m humbled as I scan the list of luminaries you’ve hosted over the decades, Hobbs himself, of course, being one of them.

Yesterday, November the 28th, 2000, marked the fifth anniversary of Herschel Hobbs’ death. And as this was brought to my attention by one of our church members, I began to reflect upon his faith and message and legacy, and decided to try to imagine what Herschel Hobbs would say to us if he were alive today. I have watched a video of him speaking about the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message. I listened to audio tapes of his sermons, read several of his books, and spoke to the dozens of folks who are still very much a part of the First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City who knew him well. No, I can’t pretend to know the man intimately, but I have come to understand just a few of his priorities, for he tended, like any truly effective teacher/preacher, to repeat the most salient, important points over and over again. He reinforced these beliefs; he articulated and rearticulated these priorities. At times he almost seemed to breathe them. And even though several in our denomination have made some rather unfortunate remarks over the last few months about Dr. Hobbs being “naïve” as he led the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message Committee, and that he was “duped” by proponents of neo-orthodoxy, I consider him to be one of the most important Baptist statesmen of the 20th century. We would do well, today, in light of the revisions made to the Baptist Faith and Message last June, and the resulting soul searching that many of us have done, and continue to do, to heed Herschel Hobbs’ wise counsel.

In 1 Samuel 28, a desperate and despairing King Saul visits the infamous witch of Endor. He needs direction. He can no longer hear God’s voice. He is adrift in a sea of doubts and conflict. So, he directs her to raise up for him the late, great prophet Samuel. It is a strange, if not fantastic, request. But she does so, and as the old prophet ascends up into view, the first thing he says is (and I paraphrase), “Why have you disturbed me?” It’s a good question. I can only imagine that some of you students have asked your roommates that same question, perhaps on an early Saturday morning. “Why have you disturbed me? I was planning to sleep in.”

Well, if Dr. Herschel Hobbs could be raised to speak with us this morning, what might he speak about today? What

might be his first words? Perhaps, “What on earth was the search committee of First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City thinking when they called a Yankee to fill my pulpit?” That might be his first comment. But I believe his second word would be: “Freedom. You Baptists must continue to protect your precious Baptist freedoms.”

Oh, Herschel spoke and wrote extensively about what he believed was the Baptists’ greatest contribution to Christendom. No, not salvation by grace. No, not baptism by immersion. No, not eating every time we attend some event at the church house. Baptists’ most unique contribution to Jesus’ church universal, Herschel Hobbs believed, was/is “soul competency,” or “the competency of the soul in matters of religion.” He writes in *The Baptist Faith and Message*, “They (that is, Baptists) insist on the lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of the scriptures. But they also insist that every man [every person] shall be free to decide for himself [herself] in matters of religion.”¹ Yes, Baptists have been some of the greatest champions in history of soul freedom; of an individual’s right to become a Baptist, a Lutheran, a Roman Catholic, a Muslim, a Jew, a Jehovah’s Witness, or an atheist. Hobbs believed that this most basic of human rights is grounded in our being image bearers of God (Genesis 1), and in Paul’s declaration in 1 Corinthians 4: “It is the Lord who judges me.” He says in essence, “Human beings can judge me, human courts can judge me, but when it all comes down to it, I must answer to God.” We might also conclude that such thinking is the foundation of personal integrity, but suffice it to say that this text supports “the competency of the soul.”

Church historian Bill Leonard writes: “Soul competency means that Baptists are willing to trust the competency of the individual soul in matters of religion. Each individual is competent to relate directly to God for salvation. Each individual is competent to interpret Scripture according to the dictates of conscience and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Each individual is free to live out Christian faith without coercion or interference from the state.”²

Notice the repetition of the words “each individual.” That may sound excessively individualistic to some of us. “What of the church?” you might ask. “What of Christian community?” Well, Hobbs would certainly want to move us in that direction. In his book, *You Are Chosen*, he writes of another “competency,” yet this time it’s plural. I quote, “The decisions of the local congregation on ecclesiastical [that is, “church”] matters are the ‘consensus of the competent.’”³ Expounding on the thought of E. Y. Mullins, Hobbs believed

that the democratic proceedings of the local Baptist church's business meetings were/are supernatural. You might respond, "Well, all I heard was a lot of fightin' and fussin'." Ah, but if we believe in the competency of the individual soul (under the guidance of the Holy Spirit), and that through that same Spirit consensus can be reached (sometimes rather miraculously), then we can trust that the corporate decisions of the local Baptist congregation are beyond human – they're Spirit led *and* Spirit inspired.

I think if Herschel were with us this morning, he would indeed tell us, "Protect these key Baptist freedoms – the freedom of the individual competent soul, and the freedom of the local Baptist competent church community. The spirit is at work in you, individually and collectively." This is the bedrock of Dr. Hobbs' faith and message. If we miss him here or minimize his thinking on this point, we misrepresent him.

Another freedom I believe Herschel Hobbs would address, if we could somehow raise him this morning, is the freedom to minister; to do ministry in Jesus' name. He would term this freedom, the priesthood of all believers.

Hobbs begins to unpack this principle by first relating it to the competency of the soul. The two are intimately related in his thinking. The priesthood of the believer is based upon all of us having direct access to God. In other words no intermediary, except for Jesus, is required. But then he quickly moves on to relate the priesthood to ministry. Priests enjoyed the privilege of direct access to God during biblical times, but their chief responsibility was ministry on behalf of others. So Hobbs writes not only of the privilege of the priesthood of the believer, but also of the responsibilities of this priesthood. We are called to pray; to come boldly unto the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16). We are directed to confess our own sins to one another and to God, and pray for one another "that we may be healed" (James 5:16). We are also encouraged to minister to one another's needs as "burden bearers" (Galatians 6:2).

So, who are the ministers in the local church? The pastor only, or the ministerial staff? We don't believe that, but we and other denominations still use the label "minister" for pastor. If this causes lay people to think even for a moment that they are "junior ministers" at best, or "second class ministers" at worst, we should jettison the title. We're *all* ministers. The church of Jesus Christ would make little progress at all if we left ministry up to the seminary trained "professionals." All Christians, as a priesthood of believers, are entrusted with continuing Jesus' ministry on earth. As Carlyle Marney wrote years ago in his book, *Priests to Each*

Other: "Our answer is not a 'servanthood of the laity' as a nice addition to round out a hired professional staff; instead, what we are trying to say here is that the lay people must become *the ministry of the church in the world*. It is yours! This forces us to redefine everything! It is not that you as laypersons are to pitch in and help out; it's that you are the only hope we have"⁴

Yes, there is a great deal of overlap between the doctrine of Soul Competency and the doctrine of The Priesthood of the Believer. But the way I have come to distinguish the two is characterizing one under the rubric "being" and the other under "doing." Soul Competency has to do with the ontological reality that we have been created free to decide for ourselves on spiritual matters. That's who we are as human beings. The Priesthood of the Believer relates more to doing ministry as a "kingdom of priests" in Jesus Christ. The former has to do with our identity: we have competent souls. The latter explores what we do with such God given competency: we serve.

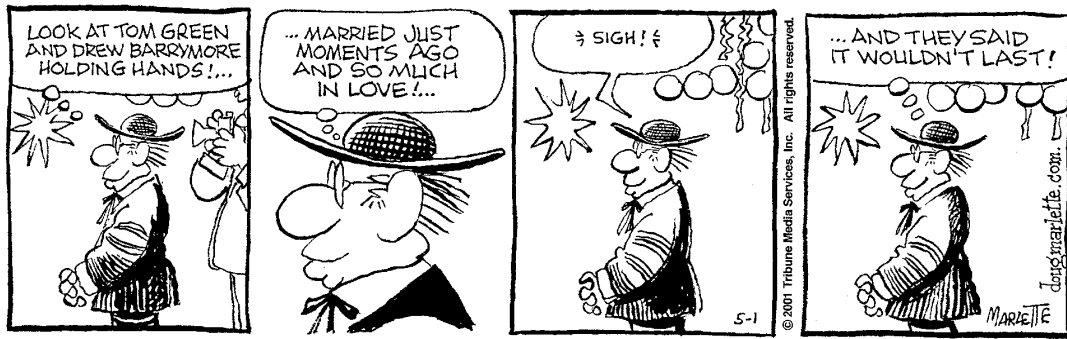
Dr. Hobbs would cry "freedom," alright, if we were only able to raise him. Freedom to relate to God, freedom to minister, but also, freedom from the state—religious liberty.

he 1963 Baptist Faith and Message reads: "Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends."⁵

What a temptation it is for the church to tap into governmental power to achieve its ends. It seems like a ready resource. "Why not make Christianity 'happen'? Why not legislate the Gospel and the dynamics of the Kingdom of God?" Because if we resort to anything but "spiritual means" (as the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message puts it), we essentially label as "ineffective" the power and work of the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Hobbs well points out the sad history of the early American colonists who fled England to escape religious persecution. Once they secured spiritual freedom for themselves, they went on to set up their own state church (particularly in Massachusetts and Virginia), and thus persecuted any and all who dissented.⁶

Of course, Roger Williams was a bright spot on that early American religious terrain. Believing that religion should not and could not be coerced, he formed a radically different community based upon the principle of Soul Competency and *complete* religious freedom. At Providence (Rhode



Island), Williams welcomed persons of every conceivable stripe, including both the religious and the nonreligious, believing that the Gospel is most potent and effective when it is free from state interference and control. William Estep states that Rhode Island became a haven of refuge for a miscellaneous collection of the persecuted. This colony thus became the prototype of the new nation born on the shores of the New World.⁷

Allow me to bring to your attention a contemporary perspective. In his extremely insightful book, *In the Name of Jesus*, Henri Nouwen states the following about the allure of secular power.

“What makes the temptation of power so seemingly irresistible? Maybe it is that power offers an easy substitute for the hard task of love. It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people, easier to own life than to love life. Jesus asks, “Do you love me?” We ask, “Can we sit at your right hand and your left hand in your Kingdom?”⁸

It is much more difficult and arduous to witness to people in word and deed and leave the results up to the Holy Spirit than it is to legislate religion. But, as I read the New Testament, those are the only approved resources that we have at our disposal. Let us resist the temptation of using political means toward spiritual ends.

Those are just three of the freedoms I believe Herschel Hobbs would extol if he could somehow be with us today. But then (I can only imagine) I would also be tempted to respond to *him* in the form of a request. “Dr. Hobbs, answer me just one question, please, sir. Do you feel the Southern Baptist Convention, as it approaches a new millennium, is embracing or shying away from these time-honored Baptist Freedoms?” I wonder how he’d characterize the state of our Baptist union (or lack thereof)? He might repeat the words of warning he offered here at OBU back in 1980, just 20 years ago. He stated, and some of you may remember this—he stated:

“[W]e must exercise constant vigilance in warding off the threats to religious freedom, both within our denomination and outside it, including the current drift toward creedalism. We must not take this freedom for granted.... The storm clouds of creedalism hover over our denomination. Well-intentioned people in contending for faith in the Scriptures may discover that the good for which they strive may become the enemy of the best, namely, the competency of the soul in religion. Black thunderclouds of governmental interference in religion look dark on the horizon. It could be that a storm of struggle and sacrifice, even death, for this precious principle lies ahead. Will we be as willing to bear the burden as were our forefathers? In the answer to this question may be at stake the ideal of a free church in a free state, yea, the bequeathing of our faith and heritage to those who come after us.”⁹

Are Baptists remaining free?

When I was a chaplain doing some further CPE training at a Veteran’s Administration Psychiatric Hospital years ago, one of my responsibilities was to visit a locked ward, which housed about thirty residents suffering from various organic brain injuries. The reason it was locked had more to do with

them wandering off than it did with them being somehow dangerous to visit. And I’ll never forget one gentleman on the unit. He was almost always restrained, or to use his word, “tied” to his chair. (Word had it that he was a kind of Houdini; an escape artist in his own right.) Well, every time I’d come by to visit the common room of that hapless community, this chair-fast patient would rather consistently and continually request: “Untie me; untie me.” Each time I’d explain the reasons I could not comply. “Didn’t have the permission to do so; didn’t have the authority,” and other lame explanations. “Untie me; untie me.” Well, one morning, much to my astonishment, he was unrestrained. He sat in his chair, looked up at me, and greeted me with his characteristic words, “Untie me.”

I responded, “You are untied.”

“I am?” he asked with glee.

“Yes,” I assured him.

Can you guess what he did? He stood up, made one lap around the room, sat back in his chair, looked me in the eye, and requested, “Untie me.”

Through the liberating work of Jesus Christ, we Baptists have believed from our humble beginnings that we have been “untied.” We have been freed from the ceremonial laws of Judaism, freed from that old “You have to measure up,” works mentality, freed from human hierarchies and creedal submission, freed from the authoritarianism of the state. Freed, truly freed, untied.

But some seem to feel the need for constraint and control in the name of doctrinal accountability. Yes, that is a temptation in this wildly spinning world of ours. “Things have become too lax. There is too much freedom,” some indicate. But let’s remember our roots. Baptists have always been a dissenting people; deeply ambivalent regarding any form of control from without the church or from *within* the church. We’ve been untied, students, faculty, and friends. Let’s stay untied. We’re free. Please, please, don’t ever let anyone take your Baptist freedoms away from you. Herschel Hobbs cried freedom his whole life long. Let us take up that same mantle so that (to use his words) we might “bequeath our faith and heritage to those who come after us.” ■

ENDNOTES

¹ Herschel H. Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville: Convention Press), 9.

² Bill J. Leonard, *Foundations of Baptist Heritage: “Priesthood of All Believers”* (Nashville: Southern Baptist Historical Society).

³ Herschel H. Hobbs, *You Are Chosen* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers), 4.

⁴ Carlyle Marney, *Priests to Each Other* (Valley Forge: Judson Press), 14.

⁵ Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 139.

⁶ Hobbs, *You Are Chosen*, 16.

⁷ William R. Estep, Jr. *Foundations of Baptist Heritage: “Religious Freedom”* (Nashville: Southern Baptist Historical Society).

⁸ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus* (New York: Crossroad), 59.

⁹ Herschel H. Hobbs, *Fibers of Our Faith*, Dick Allen Rader, ed., (Franklin, TN: Providence House Publishers), 24.

What About Huldah This Mother's Day?

By Kathryn H. Hamrick

Managing Director MetLife Financial Services, Shelby, NC

[Reprinted by permission from *Baptists Today*, May, 2000.]

Hopefully, some Baptist preachers will read this column before conjuring up their Mother's Day sermons. Although not a seminarian, I have absorbed 50-plus Mother's Day sermons and suspect that Modern Hermeneutics has had more to teach about postmillennialism than about motherhood.

Yet in my dictionary, "postmillennialism" is sandwiched between "postmenopausal" and "postnasal drip." How apropos! I can't speak for you, but I can envision in this juxtaposition the rich outline of a three-point sermon.

You would think that even without hermeneutics or dictionaries, preachers would be able to get a better handle on motherhood, a subject whose ties to apple pie and the American flag are legendary. Yet come Mother's Day, the tendency is to retreat to tradition and trot out a sugar stick.

I reckon there is safety in predictability. And some things are predictable.

For example, conservative preachers hand out an orchid to the oldest mother and then open their pulpit Bible to Ephesians KJV. Same chapter, same verse as last year.

Broadman Hymnal churches pass out carnations to the mothers with the most children, then ask the congregation to open their pew Bibles to Proverbs 31. If they have graduated to the 1991 *Baptist Hymnal* the congregation will also sing "God Give Us Christian Homes." Moderate churches ask all the mothers to stand, and also all the aunts, sisters, cousins and other married and unmarried persons (including males) who have ever nurtured someone. Then they read the *Cotton Patch* take on Ruth.

Give us a break! The Bible has a lot more to offer women than a verse in Ephesians, a chapter in Proverbs and just one woman in the Old Testament.

We would welcome a sermon on one of the hundreds of female Bible characters, especially some whose stories we rarely hear. Like Esther and Hannah, Dorcas and Priscilla.

And what about Huldah? I was well past 40 when a woman preacher at the small Methodist church up the street let the cat out of the bag about Huldah.

As for the Proverbs 31 woman, if you hold her out as our Mother's Day role model, expect to lose 92% of us. By verse 17 "Supermom" will kick in. Behind our smiles we're composing Monday's "to do" list: balance the bank statement, plant petunias, volunteer at school, backup the computer, get the tires rotated, plan the family vacation, and make phone calls for the Chamber.

Thank goodness a friend helped me take the Proverbs 31 woman off the pedestal. She asked if I knew why "her children rise up and call her blessed." It is, she said, because they don't know her name.

If you don't think that will preach, ask your wife. There is a sermon here, one that most women need to hear—and badly.

Indeed motherhood should lend itself to powerful preaching. So what about lobbing a well prepared three-pointer our way? Speak to us about courage, wisdom, and hope. Preach to us on priorities, purpose, and possibilities.

Tell us of forgiveness—and a Christian approach to revenge?

Use humor. It is one of mother's chief survival tools. A sermon such as "What to do when the epidural wears off" would hit the nail on the head.

Let me conclude by confessing that it is not ladylike to pick sermons apart. It may not even be Christian. Nor is it wise to find fault with the annual, lovingly prepared sermon on motherhood. Especially since for the rest of the ecclesiastical year motherhood does not seem to appear on the theological radar screen.

But in addition to casting pearls of wisdom about the traditional roles that can bring such joy, there is a nagging question that just won't go away. What about Huldah? ■



Still a Baptist Woman

By Gladys S. Lewis, Professor of English
University of Central Oklahoma

Note: This address was delivered at the “Gathering for Connection and Collegiality” at the Oklahoma Conference on Baptist Women meeting at the First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City on March 2, 2001.

The planners for this Oklahoma Conference on Baptist Women invited me to be the banquet speaker and address the subject, “Why I am still a Baptist.” They said, “We want you to tell your story.” I will give you three reasons and tell you three stories to satisfy that assignment.

I am a Baptist because of **my captivity, my exodus, and my pilgrimage**. My **captivity status** helps me **understand being human** and **defines me**; my **exodus experience** helps me **recognize the divine** and **shapes me**; and my **pilgrimage formation** helps me synthesize the **human and the divine** and **identifies me**. Being Baptist puts those interpretative strategies in my power because of basic Baptist adherence to **soul liberty and soul competency in the captivity, individual freedom in Bible study and prayer in the exodus, and priesthood of the believer and church autonomy in the pilgrimage**. Because we connect with each other most thoroughly through our stories, I will tell you a story about each of those areas and explain it through my assimilation of its meaning in my life in the three areas I will address and interpret as I tell you why I am still a Baptist.

Captivity

Captivity is our basic human orientation. It describes our natural condition and provides a way to understand and define our life condition. The Old Testament overflows with allusions to being carried away captive, taking captives, and becoming captives. Bondage is a principal preoccupation. The overarching captivity analogy in accounts of the literal physical bondage of Israel in Egypt grants a bedrock for understanding Old and New Testament worlds. We are also captive in other ways. Paul writes about captivity: “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Romans 7:23). In spite of all the varieties of bondage, there is a positive side to captivity, which elevates our dismal condition. We meet it first in Isaiah 61:1 and again in the experience of Jesus when he goes to the synagogue and reads from the scroll (Luke 4:18) after his captivity shattering encounter with Satan on temptation mount: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek (poor); he has sent me to bind up (heal) the brokenhearted, to proclaim (preach) liberty to the captives, (and recovering sight to the blind), and the opening of the prison (set at liberty) to them that are bound (bruised).” We are not just a herd of cattle in a pen. We are individuals so worthy of saving that a living God engages Himself in our redemption.

That kind of importance defines us spiritually. That kind of individual worth also defines us culturally, a nation of individualists from our beginning. The first prolonged collision the New England colonists suffered with the Indians occurred in the spring of 1675. King Philip’s War, as the two year guerrilla battles were known, ended a half century of cordial co-existence between the English settlers and the Algonquin tribes of southern New England. Metacomet, the Wampanoag chief, dubbed Philip by the colonists, hated the colonists and resented their high-handed ways and incursion on tribal lands.

In February 1676, a group of Narragansetts raided Lancaster, Massachusetts, a frontier community with about fifty families. Many were killed and others taken captive for ransom. Among the captives was Mary White Rowlandson (c. 1635-c.1678), a daughter of one of the town’s founders and wife of its clergyman. Eleven weeks later, just before the war ended, she was ransomed and reunited with her husband and two remaining children after twenty stages of flight, or “removes,” as the Indians moved through Massachusetts into Vermont, New Hampshire, and back. During those weeks, she endured unimaginable suffering.

A couple of years later, Rowlandson recorded her “narrative of her captivity,” and it became immensely popular because it served her readers on so many literary, spiritual, and psychological levels. It was a lay sermon by a woman, a spiritual autobiography, and an amazing adventure tale. Her narrative does what captivity tales always do. The captive defines self in contrast to the captivity culture, and, if redeemed, returns to the prior community to share what was learned. We receive rich imagery from the Puritans in the concept of a mission into the wilderness and identity with the land. The promised land which the Israelites in exile sought, by transference in the Puritan colonial’s mind, became the New Israel in the New World. The Bible re-enforced their experience of boundaries, wilderness, land, captivity, exile, and return. Mary Rowlandson’s captivity narrative birthed a principal literary genre in American writing which comes straight from a Biblical model. But captivity is far more than a literary genre which serves as a communication device. Captivity provides a metaphoric construct for our individual and group experience in that we learn from our suffering, or we are destroyed by it.

And there is more. Culturally, women have been captives of patriarchal institutions. Captivity is not new to our horizons. We have a grammar of captivity in our past, our present, and our future. The Fundamentalists and their overt

program of exclusion is debilitating and embarrassing, but it is not new. In many ways, it is more honest in the present than that captivity we have known in the past. But we can turn all of it to our advantage. We will never be free from the captivity which surrounds and threatens, but we can make it more negotiable, more pragmatically useful if we learn from marginal experience and teach our communities.

Current rules and dicta don't affect us as Baptists moving in **soul liberty and soul competency**. A conscience free Baptist can survive the wilderness captivity. I am still Baptist because **soul competency** allows me to work out my own faith positions when life gives me conditions not covered by doctrine. We are all Catholics pragmatically. We want someone to make the rules, tell us how to live in them, bless us when we succeed, and correct us with assignments for extra credit when we fail. In Baptist circles right now, we call that Fundamentalism, but it is a Catholic position by ecclesiology, and it is Fascist politically. The trouble with that kind of rigidity comes when life dishes up a serving of something without rules for solutions. I live on a plane daily where nothing of faith markers has been mapped. **Soul liberty and competency** allow me to be my own cartographer without losing my way on the journey. **I learn from my captivity** about my **humanity**. Engagement with my soul in the experience **defines my humanity**.

Exodus

My **exodus experience** helps me **recognize the divine** and **shapes me**. When God set Israel free, the people needed forty years to become free before they could go on into their promise. In the "removes," or stages, of the exodus, they learned of God's reality and presence to take the form He intended for them. Usually, we read the exodus from the point of view of Moses, or the people, or the text writers. In Isaiah 51 and 52, we have God's account: "Hearken unto me, my people . . . for a law shall proceed from me . . . The captive exile hastens that he may be loosed . . . But I am the Lord thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared . . . And I have put my words in your mouth, and I have covered you in the shadow of my hand, that I may . . . say . . . You are my people. . . I have taken out of your hand the cup of trembling . . . you shall no more drink it again . . . Shake yourself from the dust . . . loose yourself from the bands of your neck . . . Break forth into joy . . . for the Lord has comforted his people."

The New Testament position on our exile condition as Gentiles outside grace beckons us from Ephesians 2:12 and 19: "Remember," Paul says, ". . . at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God . . . Now . . . you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." My **exodus experience helps me recognize the divine and it shapes me**.

For many years, our family went to Copper Mountain, Colorado, to ski during the interim between Christmas and New Year's when the Physician's Winter Retreat, sponsored by the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, features a continuing medical education forum. In 1993, my

surgeon husband, Wilbur, and I arrived two days before Christmas with our children: Karen and her husband, Howard; David, his wife, Sadako, and baby, Jason; Leanne and her husband, Carey; and Cristen. Wilbur, an excellent skier, was coming down B slope at Copper Mountain, on Monday, December 27, a bit after 12:30 p.m., with Leanne, Carey, and David. The day was somewhat snowy and overcast, so there were no shadows to indicate ridges or other elevations in the terrain or flags to alert skiers. Leanne, in front of the pack, went right and took off her skis to go in to lunch. Wilbur followed her, but turned to the left. Just a few steps from the door to the inn was a drainage ditch with a colvert into it, making a slight elevation which did not create a shadow. Because it was not flagged, Wilbur did not note its presence. He was not going fast, because he was headed toward a snow bank to remove his skis. As he skied over the area, the tips of his skis caught in the elevation and he fell full-face forward into the ground. The impact caused a ring fracture of his first cervical vertebra and shattered the second one. His injury was the kind often associated with those which divers receive. (It is exactly the injury of actor, Christopher Reeve.) Because that area of the spinal cord services autonomic systems of the body, such as breathing, he was immediately without the ability to breathe. Carey saw the entire scenario, and rushed to him, calling for help. David, last in the group, came just after the fall, hurried to help with resuscitation, but watched in panic as he saw his father turning blue. Leanne ran to Wilbur, and he mouthed, "Get help! Get help!" Attending our same conference were a cardiologist and his physician assistant wife who immediately began CPR. The ski patrol came quickly with oxygen and carried Wilbur to the nearby clinic. After emergency attention, he was evacuated to Denver to St. Anthony Central, a trauma center, placed on a ventilator, and diagnosed as quadriplegic: paralyzed from the neck down. His condition was so grave that he was not expected to live through the night. However, when his vital signs and mental condition improved by Tuesday morning, his orthopedist, neurologist, and general surgeon operated.

After his surgeries and several interchanges between his mouthed questions and our carefully explained narratives, he knew exactly his condition and what we faced. Wilbur is a ventilator-dependent quadriplegic, a bleak, grim, dismal reality. We have learned our exodus expulsion was not at the Red Sea; it was at the base of a ski slope in the Colorado Rockies. At that instant around noon, December 27, 1993, our lives were shot into another orbit forever as long as we live—an existence of exodus where we live on a plane somewhere between life and death, neither totally one or the other. Not a day goes by when he does not face death in life, nor I face life in death. We are neither where we were, nor where we are going on the existence level we have been awarded where we try to marshal our exodus. We go to sleep and wake with Death's arm about our shoulders. We fight on two fronts; his is despair and mine is cynicism. His comes from living on the brink of death. Mine comes from facing the threats to our survival each day, knowing as soon as I solve one set of problems, another will take its place. We have two sides of the same problem: time. He cannot do one

thing, and is oppressed by time. I must do everything and am oppressed by time.

So we beg for manna to have nourishment for our paralyzed wanderings. Food comes with prayer and Bible study, but not the kind of devotional exercise I had known in the past. Set apart rituals of spiritual enhancement require time, and I have none. None. For many months, I existed on 1-3 hours of sleep in 24 as I cared for Wilbur, kept my job, and supervised closing his office, managing caregivers, and struggling with financial survival at the hands of people who should have been helping us.

In learning from the exodus, we discover we all have different experiences of grace. One of my grace gifts came the day I realized I could be a spiritual person on the hoof. I could “read” the Bible in my mind and hear God’s voice. I could “speak” my thoughts and ideas to him at red lights, and it counted as prayer. My discipline with language helps me at this point. I have so many words in me, good investments I have made of great artists. At any given moment, I can “read” Shakespeare’s sonnets, Fitzgerald’s *Great Gatsby*, God’s New Testament, or my husband’s love letters, none of which any of them will ever write again. I love words. I can roll around in them, pull them over my head as a blanket, and be renewed. When I am locked in linguistic combat with a laboratory, I “read” Shakespeare’s, “A man can smile and smile and be a villain;” when I recall the days of our other life, I “read” Fitzgerald’s benediction on *Gatsby* that he drove on to that vision not knowing his dream was behind him; when I think of what I face each day, I “read” Jesus in the gospels, “Take up my yoke and learn of me;” when I finally reach the end of my day, I “read” Wilbur’s “To my loving wife.” In the process, I have read through a window on all of life experience, and I pray, “Thank you.”

What do we learn in our captivity margins of exile and exodus? Wilbur is a captive of his poor, diminished, suffering, petrified body. And so am I. The alienated American cultural subject is the soul we recognize as our own in our particular captivities. Anthropologist Victor Turner’s work in studies of people in liminal landscapes examines what happens to groups and individuals with a retreat or forced exile into the marginal, into an existence where the boundary is removed, the exile position. We should feel at home as Baptists in our culture if we understand the secular expression to be a fruition of an ancient correlation between Old Israel and New Israel as our founders compared themselves. We go into the wilderness for testing and growth. We must look to this current alienation as opportunity for expansion of self, group, and context. When colonial captives were redeemed from captivity, they returned with stories of lessons learned which would benefit the group. **Our task** as human beings and Baptist women? **Learn our stories** well and teach them ethically as we **learn** in the exodus how the **divine and human interact to shape** us.

Baptists are uniquely equipped to deal with the marginal experience and proving of exodus living because of our historic emphasis on **Bible study and prayer**. Two weeks ago, I read again Ralph Waldo Emerson’s essay, “Self-Reliance,” because I had assigned it to a class. I have read

that essay a dozen times, but his comments on prayer grasped my mind as never before. He said, “Prayer looks abroad and asks for some foreign addition to come through some foreign virtue, and loses itself in endless mazes of natural and supernatural . . . Prayer that craves a particular commodity—anything less than all good, is vicious. Prayer is the contemplation of the facts of life from the highest point of view. It is the soliloquy of a beholding and jubilant soul. It is the spirit of God, pronouncing His works good. But prayer as a means to effect a private end, is theft and meanness. . . . As soon as [we] are at one with God, [we] will not beg. [We] will see prayer in all action. . . .” An exodus lesson? Prayer is not selfish, not an insurance policy for what we want.

Wilbur suffers especially at night when real darkness joins the other shadows on life. He wrestles with Jacob’s night angel. And so do I. Because I have wrestled with the angel, I have had to learn how to re-negotiate previous patterns, because I can’t walk the same way. We do get the blessing, Wilbur and I, but blessings come at a price. We are crippled. Coming to grips with the disintegration of my life as the wife of my husband and the shift in my position in my family with my husband’s injury sabotages these ridiculous rules which say I must wait on my husband for direction and authority. My husband is paralyzed and ventilator-dependent. I am our wage-earner, business manager, and lynch pin. What nonsense to pose as weak and dependent. I wrestle with the angel in an ambiguous stranglehold. Jacob never saw the angel’s face; we have never seen our angel’s face, but we know him. Wilbur wrestles with the Angel of Death; I wrestle with the Angel of Life—and they are both God. We are equally blessed, but we remain horribly wounded. And I am independently wounded with my own pain.

I am woman; I love God; He loves me. In the words of C.S. Lewis, my “pain is his mega-phone.” I will not let others define me as an intrusion before that which I know exists between myself and the one I worship and move in day by day. I . . . will . . . not. That was a struggle I faced long before the arrival of the current set of silly sibilant sayings some sources set before us as sacred. The contemporary crowd of creed makers is a bunch of children piping in the market, to use Jesus’ words about immaturity in serious spiritual issues. Baptist women have a history of facing sophisticated obstacles. This current language is helpful, in fact. We shrug, smile, and re-engage in lives where that mind-set has absolutely no connection and certainly no collegiality.

In our **exodus**, I have gained a new attitude and understanding about **Bible study**. I am glad I spent all those years on the six point record system and study courses and Bible study in Sunday School. But in my current exodus, I am reading the Bible by the way I live. Remember the Vacation Bible School memorization programs? My two are: “Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee” and the watchword: “I will do the best I can with what I have for Jesus’ sake today.” The two go together and must be present for us to survive in the exodus. From my wilderness vantage, I have noticed people do two things with Bible study. They make it a substitute for practical ministry or a substitute for belief. What else can be deduced when people drive miles to a Bible study but won’t go across the street to

help someone? What else can be deduced when so much language extols its precise merits but not a word offers its spirit?

The Bible is a collection of narratives of violence: murder, betrayal, brokenness; in our connections with it through the collegiality of our own brokenness, we find meaning for our narratives—inspiration from the violence done to us AND those which we perpetrate on others. To make it a totem, an object of worship, or a lucky charm violates its spirit and diminishes its force for healing. It is a road map for our journey, a diary for our reflection, and a compass for our direction: a text with many voices, many narrators, many themes, many interpretations.

We learn a great deal by reading the Bible about Jesus which affirms us spiritually and culturally. Especially as women. Especially Jesus and non-Jewish women. He first announced his ministry to one: the woman at the well. Jesus never got entangled with doctrine; he lived it, and while living it, told stories and took care of people. I think this is the edge women have with Jesus. He announced He was the Messiah to a non-Jewish woman—that event came out in a practical ministry setting and conversation—he wanted a drink of water. Of course, the emphasis we get is on his knowing she was a woman with a bad reputation and being kind to her anyway—chalk one up for male rhetoric.

The Syro-Phoenician woman helped Jesus clarify his ministry by using his language against him. Does the jingoism and ethnic chauvinism of Jesus in that passage bother you? After he had fed the multitudes, she came asking him to heal her daughter. He said, “I can’t take the children’s bread and throw it before dogs.” He called her a dog, and I don’t think it was because she was not cute. She said, “Dogs eat crumbs under the children’s table. I would take those.” Jesus checks himself. I am helped enormously by thinking of Jesus as a teacher. I think Jesus had just re-stated the syllabus to 15 freshmen and this Syro-Phoenician woman graduate student walked up with a real question, and Jesus responded in a tone he wanted to use for the freshmen. But she, knowing how to use language and metaphor, turned it on him. Submissiveness? Bah! Balderdash! My **exodus experience helps me recognize the divine and it shapes me.**

Pilgrimage

My pilgrimage formation helps me synthesize the **human and the divine and identifies me.** My pilgrimage comes from my salvation story which rises from my being my own priest in spiritual matters. The altar stone in our cherished belief in **the priesthood of the believer** as Baptists is John 3:16: “For God so loved the world [in its captivity, its exodus, and its pilgrimage] He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever [every single individual] believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

My salvation story and my service stories all have Baptist bindings. As a 17 year-old, I converted to Christianity at the Exchange Avenue Baptist Church in south Oklahoma City in one of those youth-led revivals when OBU student at the time, Milton Ferguson, former President of Midwestern Seminary before the purge, was the preacher. Very soon afterward, I became a mission volunteer and prepared myself

as a nurse. I met Wilbur. We fell in love. (I did. He sort of eased into it, but I knew I had him. I could tell by the little things.) We finished our education, had two babies, spent two terms on the mission field at the Baptist Hospital in Asuncion, Paraguay, had two more babies there, and had to leave because of political shifts in the government which surfaced in the Public Health Ministry, the license granting authority for us.

We have lived in the Oklahoma City area since 1970. Wilbur developed a prominent private surgical practice, was one of the seven original founders of the Baptist Medical-Dental Fellowship, and gave of his total means in service to others from the Grace Rescue Mission clinic locally to mission hospitals in South America and East Asia. I moved into a role I call my professional Baptist era, and gave my time, energy, and talent to Baptist churches, Woman’s Missionary Union, and Southern Baptist Convention boards. We went all over the world in service capacities through medicine and Baptists. I was on the Committee on Order of Business the year the Fundamentalist takeover occurred. I sat in meetings and listened and knew my days as a woman Baptist in the circles I had been traveling in had ended. By that time, I also knew that volunteerism, satisfying as it was, could not substitute for professional engagement in a work.

So I returned to study, earned a Master of Arts in English and Creative Writing, and found my niche in academia. I went on to earn a Ph. D. in American and British Literature and have been an English Professor at the University of Central Oklahoma since 1990. All of that had finished, and I had been at my post two years when our accident happened. My work forms a backdrop for our lives and provides the financial means I must have to care for Wilbur as well as maintain my own sense of reality and contribution beyond myself.

“**T**ell Your Story.” “Why are you still a Baptist?” I am still a Baptist because that is who I am. I was a Baptist long before the current epidemic of theological soul eating bacteria infected us. Baptist is my name. My life orientation and soul habits have always emanated from that name which identifies me. I suppose I could move into another room in the Father’s house and live in the Presbyterian room or the Methodist room or some other. But I am more comfortable with the furniture in the Baptist room. I became a Baptist by choice, and I remain one by choice. That is not to say I have not considered rearranging the furniture or engaging in some more radical activity within those walls, but Baptist I remain, because those parameters help me define my faith system in the most practical manner. In response to being my own priest in salvation matters and being in a church that is autonomous under the will and direction of God, I move forward in my pilgrimage and sharpen my identity.

I was born and given a name. When I converted, I chose a name. When I married, I took another name. All of those names constitute who I am. I will not change; I cannot change. We have Baptist connections, Wilbur and I, and we continue to enjoy a sustaining collegiality with people who share our history.

I am my own agent in salvation matters because we cling to our belief in the **priesthood of the believer.** I work it out

with God who has provided the way through Christ. We must not allow current language of disenfranchisement rob us of our history of the struggle—the good old days were good because we had years of experience in subversive success. We knew how to work within the system to make our contributions, fuel our personal sense of mission. When women began to move out of those parameters, you will recall that we were met with resistance. We should do now what we did then: continue to respond to the free moving Spirit in our hearts, talents, and sensitivity to God’s claim on our gifts to respond to Him in soul liberty.

I am still a Baptist, because I am part of an **autonomous church**. The emphasis and the New Testament imagery of church always fixes on individuals and their metaphoric analogy as body and body parts to underscore the necessity of cooperative action in our individual reality. Under God, we are free gifted individuals voluntarily participating in the Body of Christ, his church, to do his will and honor him. Romans 12:4-5 (“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”) and 1 Corinthians 10:17 sketch this portrait for us (“For we being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.”). But this community of service never supplants individual worth before God. Galatians 3:26 stresses that fact: (“For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”) An individual moves out of captivity, through exile, into pilgrimage as an individual. A church is a group of freed, experienced exiles, helping other strangers bring order to their pilgrimages.

A major problem exists with the current SBC regime’s dictating to churches and getting away with it. I am not shocked by the patriarchy in recent SBC resolutions. But I am surprised that Southern Baptist churches have gone along with the trickle down theology that becomes polarizing in the congregational context. Some of our shameful present comes from religious people’s basic insecurity with women, because

they are insecure about their own identity and cast that doubt in religious robes. It has always been that way.

My generation was taught Roger Williams was the great pioneer in soul liberty—the first Baptist—founder of Rhode Island, the historians tell us. And he was, but he was taught by a woman, Anne Hutchinson, who challenged the group control of the early Puritan ministers over individual Biblical interpretation. So Mistress Hutchinson held weekly Bible studies in her home and re-taught the Bible lessons from the Sunday sermons. Roger Williams was a member of her Monday School Class. I did not learn that in a church or seminary context. I had to go to one of those secular humanist institutions and get a degree in Early American literature to get the skinny on Mistress Anne. Her story parallels the demonizing of Woman’s Missionary Union promoted by, of all groups, the Foreign Mission Board, now the International Mission Board. Her movement, the Antinomian Crisis, meaning against authority, or freedom within authority is WMU’s history. They give us credit for being witches, but not for being principal actors and causative agents in the creation of church history. My **pilgrimage formation** helps me synthesize the **human and the divine** and **identifies me**.

I am a Baptist because of **my captivity, my exodus, and my pilgrimage**. My **captivity status** helps me **understand being human** and **defines me**; my **exodus experience** helps me **recognize the divine** and **shapes me**; and my **pilgrimage formation** helps me synthesize the **human and the divine** and **identifies me**. Being Baptist grants me those interpretative strategies because of basic Baptist adherence to **soul liberty and soul competency in the captivity; individual freedom in Bible study and prayer in the exodus, and priesthood of the believer and church autonomy in the pilgrimage**. Because we connect with each other most thoroughly through our stories, I have told you mine, proclaiming as I do, I am still a Baptist woman. ■



Can You Believe in Inerrancy AND Equality?

By Dan Gentry Kent, Professor of Old Testament, retired
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[This article was first published in *Pricilla Papers* and is reprinted here by permission.]

One's first reaction to the title question might be, "Of course you can, because I do!" but that hardly explores the important issues involved. The question arises because some who believe in a subordinate position for women in church, home, and world accuse biblical egalitarians of such things as "not believing the Bible," or at least not being fully committed to it.

A letter to the editor appeared in the *Baptist Standard*, the newspaper of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. It spoke of "those who hold the Scripture inerrant and its principles binding (such as the husband being head of the wife as Christ is head of the church)."¹ The implication is that it is impossible to harmonize the doctrine of inerrancy and a belief in gender equality.

Apples and Oranges

Actually, the letter quoted and the title of this article deal with two completely different issues, and we need to be careful not to confuse them.

Inerrancy is a doctrinal position, a conviction regarding the nature of the Bible. A belief in the equality of male and female, on the other hand, is a matter of the interpretation of the Bible, hermeneutics: "The place of women in the Bible is an interpretive, hermeneutical question. It is not an inerrancy question."²

What is Inerrancy?

Inerrancy is a somewhat difficult concept, easier to claim and/or defend than to define. People have taken three approaches in dealing with the difficulty posed by the frequently used term.

1. *There are broad, general definitions.* Inerrancy has been called "a metaphor for the determination to trust God's Word completely."³ That certainly qualifies as a broad, general definition. Thus, inerrancy can be applied to the Bible in the sense of its being an authentic, dependable record of God's self-disclosure. This seems to be what many lay people mean who use the term. To them "I believe in inerrancy" means "I believe the Bible." Clark Pinnock said this of Bernhard Ramm: "For him inerrancy always meant something quite simple. It signaled one's commitment to trust the Bible and to take it seriously."⁴

2. *There are more specific, detailed definitions.* David Dockery is a Southern Baptist leader with unquestioned conservative credentials. He has a fine basic definition: "The Bible in its original autographs, properly interpreted, will be found to be truthful and faithful in all that it affirms

concerning all areas of life, faith, and practice."⁵

This definition is attractive for several reasons. It is a positive statement. It says that the Bible *has* to be properly interpreted. It argues that the Bible is true in what it affirms, in what it teaches, not merely in what it records or reports. Dockery calls this critical inerrancy, not naive inerrancy (see below).

3. *Still, a more precise, technical definition is sought by many people.* In fact, Dockery himself has a longer and much more involved definition.⁶ The most famous such definition is of course that of the Chicago Council on Biblical Inerrancy in 1978.⁷ It is certainly not simple. There is a preface, a five-part summary, and then nineteen explanatory or qualifying articles, plus four pages of exposition.

Why Inerrancy?

On the popular level then, "inerrancy" seems to indicate a belief in the Bible, acceptance of the Bible, and submission to the authority of the Bible.

Some, however, want more. Some people seem to want to retreat into the redoubt of inerrancy in an attempt to insure that their interpretations of Scripture will be mandatory: *I believe the Bible, and therefore the way I choose to interpret it must obviously be correct.*

When I was a seminary student—back during the Jurassic Period of the 1950s—the question then was, Is the Bible inspired? When I was a graduate teaching fellow, I had a student ask me, "Do you believe that the Bible is inspired?" That was what counted at that time. That category was sufficient. That was the issue, the question. It was enough.

But it turned out not to be enough. Not everyone who believes that the Bible is inspired comes up with the same interpretations. So some have felt that more strict categories are necessary. The new watchword became *verbal inspiration*, having to do not merely with broad concepts but with words. However, predictably, that too turned out not to be enough. Then, as I remember it, we moved on to *plenary verbal inspiration*.⁸ But that was still not enough. Everyone who agreed to the category of plenary verbal inspiration did not come up with the same interpretation, the correct interpretation, in other words, *my* interpretation. Then people began to call the Bible "infallible." There was the same eventual result. So, relatively recently, the category of inerrancy was developed.⁹ Now the question is, Do you believe that the Bible is inerrant? Do you believe in inerrancy?

I personally think that this rather long-running struggle has been an attempt to insure that everyone will interpret the Bible the same way.¹⁰ However, it has not been successful, and it never will be successful. People equally committed to inerrancy will still interpret the Scriptures differently. Here is a relevant example: There are inerrantists who believe in the ordination of women, and there are inerrantists who oppose the ordination of women.¹¹ The crucial issue is obviously not inerrancy, but interpretation. David Dockery has agreed that "an affirmation of biblical inerrancy does not in itself guarantee orthodoxy."¹²

Here is another example of the distinction between inerrancy and interpretation. One of the founding fathers of the doctrine of inerrancy was B. B. Warfield of Princeton Seminary. He has been correctly called "a champion of biblical authority and inerrancy."¹³ However, Warfield said that inerrancy is "not essential to Christianity. It is not the essence of Christianity."¹⁴ Warfield was a postmillennialist—an inerrantist, but a postmillennialist. He also believed in theistic evolution. This is the "champion of biblical authority and inerrancy." The fact that he believed in inerrancy had a lot to do with what he believed about the Bible, but not a lot to do with how he interpreted and applied it. People equally committed to inerrancy will still interpret the Scriptures differently.

Varieties of Inerrancy

I once heard Gabriel Fackre name three different types of inerrantists. David Dockery, on the other hand, has identified nine different types.¹⁵ They represent different views on what it means to say that the Bible is trustworthy and authoritative. Dockery has given examples of each type.¹⁶

1. *Naïve inerrancy* (mechanical dictation). In this view, God actually dictated the Bible to the human writers. There was "little or no involvement of the human writers in the process."¹⁷ According to this view, there are passages that indicate the Spirit of God told the author precisely what to write; these "are regarded as typical of the entire Bible. The strength of this position is that it gives proper credit to God as the author of the Bible. However, it seemingly ignores style differences, as well as historical and cultural contexts."¹⁸

2. *Absolute inerrancy*. This position "allows for more human involvement."¹⁹ The Bible is accurate and true in all matters, and the writers intended to give a considerable amount of data on such matters as history, science, and geography. This view tries to avoid mechanical dictation, but it affirms instead a verbal-plenary view of inspiration instead. It tries to affirm that the Bible is the written Word of God but also to account for human authorship. Sometimes, however, this view also seems to fail to take seriously the human aspect of Scripture and its historical contexts.²⁰

3. *Critical or balanced inerrancy*.²¹ The Bible is true in all that it affirms, to the degree of precision intended by the biblical author. This view does not try to harmonize every detail of Scripture. It realizes that the authors had different purposes—Matthew and Luke, for example, or the authors of

Kings and Chronicles. This view uses, cautiously, critical methodologies such as form criticism and redaction criticism. This position usually regards scientific matters as phenomenal—spoken of in popular language which describes things as they appear, without overly precise or technical language. Historical matters are faithful representations of the way the events described took place. However, this was accuracy in general, not precise, terms.²² This is Dockery's personal position.²³

4. *Limited inerrancy*.²⁴ The Bible is inerrant in all matters of salvation and ethics. The old Baptist phrase which I grew up on was "matters of faith and practice." Divine inspiration did not raise the writers to an intellectual level above that of their contemporaries. It did not give them scientific knowledge unavailable to the people of their day. Therefore, it is possible that the Bible may contain "errors" of science or history in the sense that it expresses the common understandings of that ancient day.²⁵ The problem with this view is that it makes the human writer responsible for recent developments in scientific and historical methods. However, the point of the view is that the Bible is fully truthful and inerrant in matters for which it was given.²⁶

5. *Qualified inerrancy*. "This position is . . . similar to the one identified above, except in matters of philosophical starting points. The previous position is more closely identified with empiricism, while this one begins with a strong viewpoint of faith." It is qualified inerrancy in that "inerrancy can be maintained if we qualify it as a faith statement." We are looking through the eyes of faith. "It is possible that errors could be identified through an inductive study, but beginning with the presupposition of faith, a position of inerrancy . . . can be maintained in a 'qualified' sense." This position is obviously somewhat difficult to articulate.²⁷

6. *Nuanced inerrancy (or focused inerrancy)*. This view says that "how one understands inerrancy depends on the type of biblical literature under consideration."²⁸

It is quite acceptable to talk about the Bible as mechanically dictated at certain points like the Ten Commandments, places where human authorship seemingly does not enter in. It is acceptable to talk about verbal inspiration in epistolary or historical literature. In matters where the human author has greater freedom for creativity such as poetry, proverbs or stories, we must allow for a dynamic inspiration. In other words, one position of inspiration . . . is not adequate to deal with the various types of literature represented in the Bible.²⁹

This position takes seriously the human authorship of Scripture. It maintains divine inspiration throughout. However, its obvious difficulty is in correctly identifying the genre that the author uses to communicate the message.³⁰ We would identify this view with John Goldingay.

7. *Functional inerrancy*. This popular position "maintains that the Bible inerrantly accomplishes its purpose. It sees the purpose of scripture as one of function." We read the Bible to learn how to be rightly related to the Lord in salvation. We read it to learn how to grow in godliness.³¹

One scholar observed that "Jesus never turned to holy scriptures for history or geography but rather for a religious insight into the meaning of life and mission."³² If I read Augustine correctly—perhaps a big *if*—this was his position.³³ E. Y. Mullins, Southern Baptists' greatest theologian, could perhaps be classified under this category. He spoke of an infallibility of purpose rather than a verbal infallibility (inerrancy).³⁴ (Dockery, however, associates Mullins with the limited view.) This position generally refuses to relate inerrancy to matters of factuality. The Bible is inerrant in that "it is faithful in revealing God and bringing people into fellowship with him."³⁵

I came across this illustration, which I think will help clarify this view:

Suppose you and I were lost in the wilderness. We have no food, and snow will be coming soon. We stumble into a cabin. While wondering what to do, we notice a faded old map on the table. It is torn and dirty, and part of it seems to be missing, but it shows a path from the cabin to a main road where we could find help. You ask, "I wonder if this map is correct? Will it lead us to safety?" We will not know until we follow it. As we follow the map, we discover that indeed it does bring us to safety and help. We know that whether it is faded or holey, it is reliable because it has led us and others to safety.

The Bible has been that kind of map for many persons for centuries. It does not have to be a perfect map to guide us in our spiritual pilgrimage.

Does one variation affect the whole? A small difference between one book and another does not change the central truth being proclaimed. To change the author of one of the biblical books, or to discover mistakes in quotations, chronology, history or the scientific view of the writer does not affect the fundamental theological truths they are addressing.³⁶

8. **Errant yet authoritative.** Inerrancy is irrelevant. This view neither affirms nor denies a position. It rather considers the whole argument irrelevant, distracting, and concerned with theological minutia that inhibits serious biblical research. This view charges that the debate creates disunity among those who have the main things in common. The major charge against this view is that it fails to see that issues relating to the nature of the Bible and biblical authority are foundational in our faith.³⁷

9. **Biblical authority.** This last view does not see the Bible as inerrant, nor as a revelation from God. Rather, the Bible "is a pointer to a personal encounter with God. Questions of truth or falsity are of little concern." This view assumes that the Bible contains errors because it was written by sinful humans. But "the presence of errors in no way militates against the functional purpose or authority of the Bible when God is encountered through reading it." This view obviously has been influenced by Neo-Orthodoxy. It includes an existential or encounter view of truth. It obviously recognizes the situation of the human author, but it does not recognize the divine character of the Scriptures.³⁸

Dockery concluded his immensely helpful article by suggesting that we can learn from several, if not all, of these

positions. The late Fuller president David Allan Hubbard went much further in stating the obvious: "To recruit students or rally support or withhold fellowship over a definition of biblical inerrancy or the appropriateness of using the term seems futile, if not wicked."³⁹

Another Kettle of Fish

Hermeneutics, on the other hand, involves the principles by which we understand and apply the Bible, whichever one of the many doctrinal positions about the nature of the Bible we may hold. The principles and practice of interpretation are the same, whatever doctrinal stance one may take.

Here, of course, is where equality arises. Egalitarianism is the conviction that, when taken as a whole and when properly interpreted, the Bible teaches the equality of female and male in the world, the church, and the home.

Does Galatians 3:28 state a universal theological principle ("there is no longer male and female," NRSV), while 1 Timothy 2:12 ("I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent") is an accommodating response to a specific congregational problem? The answer is one of hermeneutics, not inerrancy.

Does not Genesis 1:28 ("God blessed *them*, and God said to *them*, . . . [H]ave dominion," [emphasis added]) lay down a basic principle of equality, in light of which any subsequent passages seeming to give woman a subordinate place need to be understood? The answer is one of hermeneutics, not inerrancy.

Does not Ephesians 5:21 ("Be subject to one another . . .") dictate that the statements that follow must be seen in light of mutual submission? Again, hermeneutics, not inerrancy. They are two different though related matters.

Yes, it is possible to hold to inerrancy and equality—and I do. ■

Endnotes

¹Miller McClure, "Then get out," *Baptist Standard* 111:47 (December 1, 1999): 4.

²Gary Burge, quoted in "Submission Rejected," *Christianity Today* (December 6, 1999): 27.

³Clark H. Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), 225.

⁴Clark H. Pinnock, "Bernard Ramm: Postfundamentalist Coming to Terms with Modernity," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 17:4 (Winter 1990): 24.

⁵"David Dockery, "Can Baptists Affirm the Reliability and Authority of the Bible?" *SBC Today* (March 1985), 16.

⁶"When all the facts are known, the Bible (in its autographs) properly interpreted in light of which culture and communication means had developed by the time of its composition will be known to be completely true (and therefore not false) in all that it affirms, to the degree of precision intended by the author, in all matters relating to God and his creation (including history, geography, science, and other disciplines addressed in Scripture)." Quoted by Wayne Ward, review of *Authority and Interpretation: A Baptist Perspective*, ed. Duane A. Garrett and Richard R. Melick, Jr., in *Criswell Theological Review* 3:1 (Fall 1988): 226.

⁷"The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21:4 (December 1978): 289-96.

⁸. "Plenary" means "fully, thoroughly, completely." A plenary session is a session where everyone attends. This is the view that every word is fully (hence "plenary") inspired, so therefore the whole Bible is inspired.

⁹. "The term has been used sparingly in Protestant circles until the present time," William L. Hendricks, in personal conversation (February 4, 2000).

¹⁰. It is an attempt at "'nailing down' a concept of religious authority that cannot be challenged or evaded." W. R. Estep, unpublished paper, "The Nature and Use of the Bible in Baptist Confessions of Faith," 1.

¹¹. See Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: A Guide for the Study of Female Roles in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985) and James Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1981).

¹². Dockery, 16.

¹³. James T. Draper, *Authority: The Critical Issue for Southern Baptists* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Revell, 1984), 65.

¹⁴. Clark H. Pinnock, "What is Evangelicalism?" tape cassette TC 5872, library, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

¹⁵. David Dockery, "Variations on Inerrancy," *SBC Today* (May 1986): 10-11.

¹⁶. In a student forum at Southwestern Seminary on January 23, 1991, Dockery identified the absolute and critical categories with the Chicago statement, articles 12 and 13.

¹⁷. William H. Stephens, "Inerrancy: more than just a preacher's battle," *Baptist Standard* (February 19, 1992): 16.

¹⁸. Dockery, "Variations," 10.

¹⁹. Stephens, 16.

²⁰. Example: Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976).

²¹. In a student forum at Southwestern Seminary, Dockery said that the critical and limited expressions wrestle with the problem of the divine-human authorship of Scripture.

²². Examples: Roger Nicole and J. Ramsey Michaels, *Inerrancy and Common Sense* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1980); D. A. Carson and John Woodbridge, *Scripture and Truth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983).

²³. Stan Norman, "Dr. David S. Dockery," *The Student Forum* 9:2 (January 1991): 2.

²⁴. In the student forum, Dockery associated this position with E. Y. Mullins.

²⁵. We do exactly the same thing: We say that the sun rose (wrong!), we say that the sun did not shine all day (error!), we talk about heavy clouds, and we still speak of the four corners of the earth--all wrong but still commonly expressed.

On the question of defining "error" in Scripture, see David Hubbard, "The Current Tensions: Is There a Way Out?" in *Biblical Authority*, ed. Jack Rogers (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1977), 168. This is an excellent article, and is highly recommended.

²⁶. Example: I. Howard Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982).

²⁷. Dockery, "Variations," 10. Example: Donald Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, I (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979).

²⁸. Grant Lovejoy and Steve Lemke, *A Manual for Biblical Hermeneutics* (Fort Worth: Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993), 21.

²⁹. Dockery, "Variations," 10.

³⁰. Examples: Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle* and perhaps also Donald Bloesch, according to a review by David Dockery, *Criswell Theological Review* 1:2 (Spring 1987), 441.

³¹. Dockery, "Variations," 10. Also Hendricks: "Biblical inerrancy means that the Bible is adequate to do what it claims in itself that it is intended to do."

³². Carroll Stuhlmueller, *New Paths through the Old Testament* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 87.

³³. Jack Rogers, *The Door Interviews*, ed. Mike Yackonelli (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1989), 172-73.

³⁴. W. Boyd Hunt, "Southern Baptists and Systematic Theology," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 1:2 (April 1959): 47 (see also page 46).

³⁵. Dockery, "Variations," 10. Examples: G. C. Berkouwer, *Holy Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975); Jack Rogers and Donald McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979); Ray Summers, "How God Said It--Part II," *Baptist Standard* (February 4, 1970), 12-13. Perhaps also Pinnock and Bloesch, see Dockery review.

³⁶. William Powell Tuck, "Was Jesus an Inerrantist?" *SBC Today* (March 1985), 18.

³⁷. Hubbard, 151-181.

³⁸. Dockery, "Variations," 11. Example: William Countryman, *Biblical Authority or Biblical Tyranny?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).

³⁹. Hubbard, 178.

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Public Executions, Then and Now

By Dwight A. Moody, Dean of the Chapel
Georgetown College, Georgetown, KY

Rome is a little community situated on Route 81 a few miles southwest of Owensboro. It was home to my father Tom Moody when he began his student career at Daviess County High School.

No single day of school however was as memorable, as unusual as August 14, 1936.

Long before sunrise Tom and older brother Bill rolled out of bed, dressed, and ate the breakfast prepared unusually early by their mother, Mabel Moody. The boys took up a familiar position by the side of the road and thumbed a ride into town. There were plenty of cars, even at that hour of the day, bringing the curious from places like Rumsey, Guffie, Panther, and Calhoun.

The attraction that day was at the corner of Second and St. Ann, within site of the county jail. A platform had been constructed to accommodate the public hanging of a 23-year old black man named Rainey Bethea. He had been convicted of the rape and murder of an elderly white woman by the name of Eliza Edwards.

Tom remembers few details; it was a balmy day; not much was said; many pictures were taken; it was over quickly. He and Bill stood less than 100 feet from the dangling rope, surrounded by a crowd he recalls as twice the official count of 10,000. They stayed until the coroner pronounced the young man dead and was removed from the end of a rope.

It was the last public hanging on American soil, at least of the official kind. Unofficially, similar events continued as vigilante justice, commonly called lynchings.

All of this comes to mind as I listen to the debate over the execution of Timothy McVeigh. He is the man who planted the bomb that blew up the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. That was April 19, 1995; hard to believe it has been that long.

One hundred sixty eight people died in that blast; many more were injured. McVeigh was found guilty of the deed and sentenced to death by lethal injection on May 16th in Terre Haute, Indiana.

The families of some victims of that tragedy want to watch the execution. Motives are mixed, I assume, as they are

about most things: curiosity, justice, revenge, closure; perhaps a little of that common desire to be present when historic things happen: inaugurations and shuttle landings, for instance.

In some ways, an execution is like a demolition; as when thousands of people lined the three rivers of Pittsburgh to witness the recent implosion of their historic stadium. Are souvenirs in order? Pictures? Autographs? What about journal entries? And "I was there" columns for local newspapers? If some want to see the event, will not many want to read about it?

The execution of Timothy McVeigh will be filmed and observed on closed circuit television. More than 200 people will be allowed in a special Oklahoma prison room to watch the big-screen event.

Federal law prohibits recording an execution. There will be no videotape of this death. The transmission will be encrypted to prevent hackers from intercepting it, making a copy, and providing it to the highest bidder.

Imagine how the various channels would cover the broadcast of this event? CSPAN? Good Morning America? Biography Channel? Pay Per View? Wouldn't this be the ultimate in reality television?

Remember how many times the Rodney King videotape was broadcast? What about the assassination of President Kennedy?

Perhaps the execution of Timothy McVeigh is a matter of public access, like the ballots in Florida. Perhaps the public's right to know (and see) overrides somebody's right to privacy. Could a newspaper or television station pursue legal means to secure access for live or delayed broadcast?

In a deep sense, all Americans were victims of this massacre; the perpetrator was attacking, not specific people in Oklahoma, but all Americans and the government that represents us.

I think about all this; also about another man, convicted of a crime; whose execution on the outskirts of an ancient walled city was a matter of public observation; whose death has been a source of curiosity, controversy, and conviction for two thousand years. ■



Headcoverings and Women's Roles in the Church: A New Reading of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

By Laurie C. Hurshman and Christopher R. Smith

Editor's Note: This article is based on research done by Laurie Hurshman in her senior year at Williams College (Massachusetts) with the aid of her advisor, Dr. Chris Smith, Pastor of FBC, Williamstown, MA, who also utilized the research for a sermon; the two of them developed this biblical study for CET.

Both sides in the current debate over the role of women in the church appeal to the Bible to support their positions. Those who feel that there should be no restrictions on women's ministries appeal to examples found throughout the Scriptures of women serving faithfully and effectively as prophets, judges, apostles, teachers, and in countless other roles of leadership and service. Those who believe that some roles must be reserved for men typically appeal, on the other hand, to three passages found in Paul's writings: 1 Corinthians, 11:2-16, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, and 1 Timothy 2:8-15. Even if one agrees with a restrictive reading of these passages, however, one must also acknowledge that they each present numerous textual, translational, and interpretive problems. All those who turn to the Bible for ethical guidance should therefore be concerned with the solution of these problems, so that the Bible's teaching might be more clearly understood and the entire church might benefit.

This article is an attempt to solve one specific problem: the proper translation of the word *exousia* in 1 Corinthians 11:10 ("for this reason the woman ought to have *exousia* over her head, because of the angels"). The translation of this word has been given much attention, since it is crucial for understanding the passage (11:2-16). Based on the way Paul uses this and related terms (*exesti*, *exousiazerein*) consistently throughout his epistle (6:12, 7:4, 7:37, 8:9, 9:4-6, 9:12, 10:23) it should mean something like "freedom of choice." The statement should thus be translated, "Therefore a woman ought to have freedom over her head," or, more loosely, in context, "a woman ought to be free to wear a veil or not, as she wishes."

The problem is that the argument of the passage to this point, would lead us to expect Paul to say just the opposite. Paul writes, "any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head" (v. 5); "if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair" (v. 6); "a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man" (v. 7). And so, as Kendrick observes, "We expect Paul to say in verse 10, 'For this reason she ought to have her head covered.'"¹ Fee notes similarly, "What one expects next is for Paul to say that the woman therefore should be covered . . . [T]he sense of the argument seems to call for it." Instead, Paul makes a statement that, Fee continues, is "best" translated, "For this reason the woman ought to have the freedom over her head to do as she wishes."²

In other words, the immediate context (the argument in

11:2-16) suggests we should understand *exousia* in one way, while the overall context (the whole epistle) leads us to understand it in another. We might also add that the larger overall context, that is, the extant body of Paul's writings, would also lead us to expect him to insist on "freedom of choice." The same apostle who wrote that "the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17) and that "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but a new creation" (Galatians 6:15) would not have cared about insignia in the form of head coverings, either. His rule in this case, as in others, would certainly have been, "Let each be fully convinced in her own mind" (Romans 14:5).

Nevertheless, translators and commentators alike have looked for a way in which the sentence can be made to conform to expectations that arise from the immediate context. This is usually done by translating *exousia* effectively as "headcovering," in one guise or another ("sign of authority," etc.). We propose a different approach. We will make it our expectation that the argument in the immediate context will conform to this sentence. Paul's statement, after all, begins with "for this reason;" it should therefore express the logical result of what has preceded. If we cannot see how its face-value meaning can do this, should we not try to re-read the argument it is culminating, with new eyes?

This investigation will first demonstrate that the attempts made to date to find in *exousia* a meaning such as "headcovering" are unsatisfactory. We will then offer a re-reading of the argument, based on the premise that Paul means what he says in verse 10. It is our conviction that this new reading will solve satisfactorily the puzzle of how to translate the verse in a way that makes sense both in its immediate context and in the context of the entire epistle and the rest of Paul's writings.

The first problem for those who would translate *exousia* as "headcovering" in 1 Corinthians 11:10 is to provide a reason for what would be an abrupt deviation in terminology. As Robertson and Plummer wrote in 1914, "The difficulty is to see why the Apostle has expressed himself in this extraordinary manner."³ The difficulty remains to this day. Paul uses a very specific vocabulary to speak about headcovering in this passage: to this point he has used *katakalyptein* four times in a short space to describe a person who has his or her head covered (vv. 5, 6a, 6b, 7); he uses the term again shortly afterwards (v. 13). Why, then, if the conclusion of his argument is that a woman should cover her

head, does he not say "for this reason ought the woman *katakalyptesthai*"? The substitution of any other term can only confuse those who have been following his argument to this point. But even if this question could be resolved (and no commentator has even tentatively offered a reason for the change in terminology), there would remain the problem of how *exousia* itself could denote a headcovering. On this issue, at least, there have been some specific proposals.

Many interpreters have posited that Paul's use of *exousia* here is a figure of speech, in which one word or phrase is substituted for another of which it is an attribute or with which it is closely associated (e.g. as when the word "Washington" is used to mean "the United States government"). The suggestion is that women may have worn headcoverings as a sign that they were under authority, and thus the headcovering itself could have been referred to as an *exousia*. Most major English translations, in fact, reflect such an understanding, specifying that a woman should have a "sign of authority" (RSV., NIV, NLT) or "symbol of authority" (NASB, NKJV, NRSV, NCV) on her head. Two versions offer even more explicit statements: "a woman should wear a covering on her head as a sign that she is under man's authority" (TLB); "a woman should have a covering on her head to show that she is under her husband's authority" (TEV).

Despite this reading's widespread acceptance—indeed, it is the only interpretation most of those who read the Bible in English are ever likely to encounter—it is highly dubious. We may note at the outset Perriman's telling observation that an explanation of a woman's headcovering as a sign of submission to male authority runs afoul of the very context this interpretation has been created to accommodate: "we would . . . have to suppose, if we are to be consistent, that the man's obligation *not* to cover his head (v. 7) signifies, conversely, his exemption from divine authority."⁴

Beyond this, there is little evidence that Corinthian women really did wear headcoverings in order to signify such submission. Morna Hooker cites one contemporaneous example of veils as signs of female submission: "According to Jewish custom, a bride went bare-headed until her marriage as a symbol of her freedom; when married, she wore a veil as a sign that she was under the authority of her husband."⁵ But could Paul really have expected the mixed congregation in Corinth to have caught such an oblique reference to a "Jewish custom"? Indeed, would the apostle who preached freedom from the law really have tried to enforce a mere custom on Gentiles?

But even if women in the Corinthian church did wear veils as signs of submission, and even if some reason could be found why Paul should substitute a figure of speech for the clear term *katakalyptein* here just as his argument reaches its climax, we would nevertheless have to insist that what he meant by *exousia* would still have been incomprehensible to his readers. Paul would suddenly have been using the word to mean "authority submitted to," rather than "authority exercised."⁶ This would have been exactly opposite to the sense in which Paul had used the word to this point in the Epistle. Paul could not possibly have expected the Corinthians to have followed him as he made this switch. As

Hooker observes tellingly, "*Exousia* is being given a very strange meaning, since the head-covering is not being understood as a symbol of authority but, quite the reverse, as a symbol of subjection."⁷ Even Robertson and Plummer, who favor this interpretation, ask, "why does St. Paul say 'authority' when he means 'subjection'? . . . Is it likely that St. Paul would say the exact opposite of what he means?"⁸

For this reason, some have suggested that what Paul intends here is that a woman ought to wear a headcovering to signify the authority she herself exercises. The CEV translation follows this interpretation: "a woman ought to wear something on her head, as a sign of her authority." But what is this authority that a woman exercises?

Some have suggested that her "womanly dignity," preserved in public by a veil, constituted a form of authority. Ramsey explains that in Oriental society, a veiled woman "can go anywhere in security and profound respect," but her "authority and dignity vanish along with the all-covering veil that she discards." He adds, "That is the Oriental view, which Paul learned in Tarsus."⁹ One must ask once again, however, why Paul would have wanted to enforce this Oriental perspective in the Corinthian church. The question is especially pertinent because Paul, in order to get the Corinthians not to insist on their own rights, has just used himself as an example of willingness to abandon one's own cultural practices (9:19-23).

Aline Rouselle articulates the veil = dignity = authority position slightly differently:

When Paul (1 Corinthians 11:10) urged all Christian women to wear veils, his purpose was to signify that, regardless of their status under other laws, they were untouchable for Christian men. Just as male slaves took the liberty of wearing the toga or pallium, symbols of free status, Christian women, regardless of status, wore veils and even dressed as matrons. Although the veil was a symbol of subjection, it was also a badge of honor, of sexual reserve, and hence of mastery of the self.¹⁰

Rouselle's reading of the situation in Corinth is actually the opposite of the one we will discuss immediately below; she holds that to declare their Christian freedom, the Corinthian women were removing their veils, not donning them, and that in "urging" them to wear veils, Paul was confirming, not contradicting, their practices. Rouselle's reading does seem to find contextual support in Paul's assertion that it is "dishonorable" for a woman to pray or prophesy with her head unveiled. Even so, why should the mandate for female headcovering then apply only to these activities? Should women not assert their "sexual reserve" in public at all times? What seems to be in view is rather some specific worship practice. We will therefore turn to those interpreters who hold that the veil-as-*exousia* actually proclaims the woman's right to pray and prophesy in the assembly.

The interpretation that the woman who prays or prophesies in the assembly covers her head in order to symbolize and declare her authority to do so has much to commend it. This type of symbolism is universal: judges don robes in order to sit on the bench and priests wear stoles when

presiding at the Eucharistic table. We do have some evidence of headcoverings themselves symbolizing religious authority in the ancient world. Witherington, for example, describes statues and altarpieces which depict a man or woman with covered head, offering a sacrifice while the rest of the worshippers are bare-headed.¹¹

Nevertheless, even this interpretation is not ultimately convincing. Elsewhere in this epistle, while Paul disallows asceticism and spiritual daredevilry that go under the name *exousia* (sexual abstinence in marriage, temple prostitution, eating in idol-temples), he also acknowledges several legitimate manifestations of *exousia* (conjugal rights, payment for ministry, self-control during engagement). But in none of these cases does he insist that a badge of spiritual authority accompany its exercise. Indeed, while the Corinthians seem to have prided themselves on the possession of such a "badge" (the sacraments), Paul takes pains to warn them against misplaced confidence by demonstrating that the Israelites in the wilderness, who had a "baptism" and "Lord's supper" of their own, nevertheless fell through disobedience (10:1-13). It would be totally incongruous, therefore, for him to insist shortly afterwards that a woman should wear a badge of her *exousia*. Indeed, it would reconstitute the false confidence in insignia that Paul has just worked so hard to undercut. Simply stated, the apostle who elsewhere disallowed circumcision, dietary laws, and sabbath observance as spiritual status symbols would not have created such a symbol himself in the form of women's headcovering.

In short, *exousia* does not appear to be a figure of speech for "veil." But it has also been suggested that Paul might have used the word to mean "veil" for another reason. Kittel noted in 1920 that an Aramaic word for "veil" or "head ornament" shares the root SH-L-T with the Aramaic verb for having power or dominion, and he suggested that "either by a mistranslation or by a popular etymology" Paul used the word *exousia*, which would translate the latter, for the former.¹² While some have taken up Kittel's suggestion, the "main difficulty," as Fitzmyer notes, "is that the Greeks of Corinth would never have understood what Paul meant."¹³ We must once again ask why Paul would have substituted a term guaranteed to be misunderstood in place of *katakalyptein*, which he uses consistently before and afterwards. As Hooker argues convincingly, "Paul would surely not have made his argument depend upon a pun which was incomprehensible to his Greek readers."¹⁴

All of these considerations are leading the critical consensus to embrace a straightforward translation of 1 Corinthians 11:10 as, "a woman ought to have freedom over her head to do as she wishes." Kendrick, in a recent article on "Translating 1 Corinthians 11:10," settles on this rendering, suggested by Fee, after surveying and discussing the existing interpretations.¹⁵ The NRSV offers as a marginal reading, "A woman ought to have freedom of choice regarding her head." This indeed seems to be what the verse says. But what does it mean?

As Fee observes, "The problem is to find an adequate sense for it in the context."¹⁶ He suggests that in these words to the Corinthians, Paul is perhaps "affirming their own

position, that in these matters they do indeed have *exousia* " (that is, women are technically free to dispense with headcoverings), but asserting that "nonetheless, in light of the preceding argument . . . they should exercise that authority in the proper way—by maintaining the custom of being 'covered.'"¹⁷ This would be analogous to Paul's acknowledgement that the Corinthians do have the *exousia* to eat in idol-temples (8:4-6) and his consequent insistence that they nevertheless should not (8:7-13).

There is an important difference, however. In the case of idol-temples, and in every other case where Paul counsels not making use of one's *exousia*, he always gives a clear reason, following the principle that "all things are lawful, but all things do not edify." That is, the non-exercise of one's rights is always shown in some way to build up another. The Corinthians are to stay out of idol-temples so as not to cause a brother or sister to fall. Married couples may abstain from sex for a time in order to devote themselves to prayer. It is better for engaged couples to marry than to burn. And Paul's willingness not to be paid for his apostolic labors made possible his pioneering ministry in Corinth. What is missing in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, by contrast, is any explanation of how a woman's non-exercise of her right to pray or prophesy with uncovered head would "build up" another. Paul does not even offer edification as a general rationale for headcoverings, without offering a specific explanation. His silence on this subject is sufficient grounds for us to reject the idea that while he appears to insist on freedom of choice for women, he is tacitly hoping they will cover their heads nevertheless.

This must conclude our survey of the attempts that have been made to date to find an "adequate sense" for verse 10 in the context of 11:2-16, as that context has generally been understood. We may allow Kistemaker's recent commentary to summarize the results: "Scholars must conclude that a satisfactory explanation is not available."¹⁸ Hays, in an even more recent commentary, offers a similar judgment: this "sentence . . . has remained almost completely bewildering to subsequent interpreters."¹⁹ The way, therefore, is certainly open for us to seek a new understanding of the context, within which it will be clear what Paul intended to say with these words, as we have now come to translate them.

We have made it our expectation that the argument in the immediate context (11:2-16) will conform to the face-value meaning of verse 10. We may begin developing a new understanding of this surrounding argument with the reasonable premise that Paul found it necessary to tell the Corinthians "a woman ought to have freedom of choice regarding her head" because women did not enjoy this freedom in their assembly. That is, it seems likely, (now that we have ruled out other translations of this phrase) that Corinthian women were going bare-headed in that city's Christian assemblies in deference to an agreed-upon custom, even if they would have preferred personally to wear veils.

We may observe further that in verses 4-7, Paul not only says twice that it is disgraceful for a woman to pray or prophesy with an uncovered head, he also says twice that it is disgraceful for a man to cover his head when praying or prophesying. It is reasonable to infer from this, at least

provisionally, that the Corinthian custom was not only for women to go bare-headed, but for men to wear headcoverings. This would have been a unique local arrangement, perhaps adopted in an attempt to regularize (with theological rationale) the varying Roman, Greek, Jewish, and mystery-religion practices the worshipers would previously have been accustomed to.

Much of the scholarly discussion of this passage has proceeded from the assumption that Paul wanted the Corinthians to conform to a particular, preexisting cultural norm; the debate has been whether this was a Jewish, Greek, or Roman one. Oster has insisted that a Roman custom is in view, Hooker argues for a Jewish one, while Ramsey believes that Paul is transmitting the "Oriental" custom.²⁰ Our study contends that it was the Corinthians who were insisting on conformity to a locally-devised practice, while Paul was characteristically insisting on freedom. Paul seems to imply that their practice is locally-devised when he says at the end of this section, "we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God" (v. 16).

But why would the Corinthians have settled upon covered heads for men and bare heads for women? That the rule refers to their gatherings for worship is clear from the references to praying, prophesying, and "keeping the traditions" (11:23, the communal observance of the Lord's Supper).

The inferences we have made so far receive support from the good sense we are able to make of verses 2-9. In these verses, Paul would actually be granting the Corinthian premise we have just posited—that worship attire should reflect creation order—but he would be doing so in order to demonstrate its shortcomings. This is a typical way for him to proceed in this epistle. In 15:12-19, he tentatively allows that "there is no resurrection of the dead, as some of you say," but only to demonstrate that this leads to an unacceptable conclusion: "your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (v. 17). In the same way, Paul would be showing that the Corinthians' premise here—worship attire should reflect creation order—leads to unacceptable conclusions, and should therefore be abandoned.

Paul's first argument is that if they are really trying to reflect creation order, they're doing it backwards. Since "man is not from woman, but woman is out of man, and man was not created because of woman, but woman because of man" (vv. 8-9), if creation order really does need to be reflected in worship attire, then men should go bareheaded, and women should wear veils. We can see, in this context, that "head" should actually be understood as "source" or "origin" in each one of its three occurrences in verse 3. Indeed, the reading we are developing makes good sense of the order of phrases in that verse. Paul would say "Christ is the source of every man" first in order to restore to Christ the glory that would have been denied him if the Corinthians' guiding principle had indeed been, "woman is the source of every man." This would have been Paul's first priority in such a situation. He would say next "man is the source of woman" because he would be on his way to showing the Corinthians they are doing things backwards. And he would conclude with "God is the source of Christ" because his argument itself will culminate with the assertion that "all things are from God" (v.

12).

We may therefore translate verses 4-5a, "Every man who prays or prophesies with something on his head dishonors his source [Christ, by denying that He is Creator], and every woman who prays or prophesies with an unveiled head dishonors her source [man, by denying that she is from him and for him]."

"Source," we see, refers to the one for whose sake another is brought into being (v. 9, NRSV: "neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man"). This is the idea when Paul speaks here of man as the "image and glory of God" and woman as the "glory of man" (v. 7). As Schlier puts it, "the origin and *raison d'être* of woman are to be found in man."²¹ God, who for His part is the one "for whom and through whom all things exist" (Heb 2:10), having seen that it was not good for the man to be alone, created a helper appropriate for him (Gen 2:18).

In other words, if we are to insist on creation history, man was created for God, while woman was created for man, and therefore relates to God second-hand, as one created for one who was created for God. Thus, if anyone is to wear a head-covering in worship to express a more distant relation to God, it should be the woman. We shall see shortly, however, that this is not Paul's own conviction; it is merely the conclusion unacceptable to the Corinthians to which, their own logic leads.

Paul's second argument in verses 2-9 is that they are being inconsistent. He seems to appeal to another worship practice they have already rejected, that of women shaving their heads. He says in verse 5b that a woman going unveiled "is one and the same with she who has a shaved head." As W. J. Martin argues, the "use of the definite article in . . . 'the shorn woman' would seem to point to the existence of a specific class to whom this designation could be applied."²² Martin adds that female head-shaving as a religious rite was "well attested" among the Greeks: "The Vestal virgins and all Greek girls did it on reaching puberty. The earliest form of the custom appears to have been the vow or dedication of hair to a river."²³ Whatever the particular practice in view here, it is clear from Paul's taunting "why not go all the way?" rhetoric that the Corinthians did not approve; Paul is teasingly inviting them to explain how this would not bring the woman even closer to God than merely going unveiled.

By the time we reach verse 10, these two interwoven arguments have concluded. Paul hopes the Corinthians have recognized by this point that if they really want to express creation order in worship attire, if they've got the creation story right, they must permit female head-shaving, and if they've got it wrong, they must do exactly the opposite of what they have been doing. Since neither would be acceptable, the conclusion is that they should not forbid women to wear veils: "for this reason a woman ought to have *exousia* over her head". This explains perfectly why he doesn't instead use the term *katakalyptesthai* in some expression such as, "For this reason a woman ought not to be forbidden to veil her head." Even though this would be a more consistent use of vocabulary from the immediate context, the use of *exousia* enables Paul to situate the argument here within the theological development of the

entire epistle, in which he has already used this term many times.

That Paul really cared nothing for worship attire as an expression of creation order is clear from his immediately following comments. Verses 11-12 may be translated, "In any case, in the Lord, woman is not without man, nor is man without woman; for just as the woman was from the man, so also man is through woman, and all things are from God." Paul is insisting here that the Corinthians lift relations between the sexes off the creation plane and onto that of the "new creation," where, "in the Lord," there is "neither male nor female." He transcends the concern for "who is the source of whom" with a vision of mutual derivation (woman from man and man from woman), with all things finding their source in God. This vision of mutuality and equality is Paul's own. Clearly, in this vision, there is no place for a community custom discouraging women from wearing veils and expecting men to cover their heads, on the grounds that one is closer to God. (Nor, may we add, with reference to our own day, is there any place for limiting the use of certain God-given gifts and talents to only one sex.)

Paul concludes this part of his epistle with two arguments. He returns to his rhetorical stance at the beginning of the passage, once again assuming the Corinthian position only in order to discredit it. Witherington describes his likely motivation well: "Paul . . . is pulling out all the stops in his closing arguments (vv. 13f.) to forestall objections on any other possible grounds."²⁴

Paul begins with an appeal to their own judgment ("judge for yourselves," v. 13), as he does elsewhere in the epistle at the close of other arguments (10:15; 14:37). Specifically, he asks them to tell him whether the pride and comfort women naturally take in having long hair (and men's natural squeamishness about this) does not indicate that women are "meant" to have their heads covered. Clearly Paul has returned to his rhetorical stance at the beginning of the argument: the Corinthians are taking the stance that women should wear veils, and Paul is trying to show them how awkward this is.

Next, with their unique local custom squarely in view, Paul then informs them "Nobody else is doing this." The Corinthians seem to have been particularly sensitive to the possibility that they might stand out as different from the other churches. Paul needs to reassure them constantly that he isn't treating them differently (4:17; 7:17; 14:33; 16:1). Here he is able to find, in their immature conformity, one more reason for them to abandon a practice that told the wrong story about God every time they met for worship.

To summarize, we have seen that there are no valid reasons to translate the word *exousia* as "veil" in 1 Corinthians 11:10. Instead, that verse should be translated, "a woman ought to have freedom over her head." This reading does not make sense in the context as it has customarily been understood, since the consensus interpretation finds in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 an argument that women should wear veils. However, it is quite reasonable to reconstruct the historical context for this passage. Here the Corinthian

community was actively discouraging women from wearing veils, on the grounds that "woman is the head (source) of every man." Paul's comments can then be understood as spoken initially from their perspective; he is assuming the Corinthians' premises only to demonstrate their inconsistency with both the biblical creation narrative and their own rejection of female head-shaving. Once he has accomplished this, Paul is free to state his own conviction, which is consistent with the grace-laden themes of his entire theology: "a woman ought to be free to wear a veil or not, as she wishes." As those who seek our ethical guidance from this epistle and the rest of the Scriptures, we should trace out these same themes as we seek to answer the question of God's intentions for the role and ministry of women. ■

ENDNOTES

¹ W. Gerald Kendrick, "Authority, Women and Angels: Translating 1 Corinthians 11:10," *Bible Translator* 46 (1995), 340.

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³ Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 2nd ed., ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1914), 232.

⁴ A.C. Perriman, "The Head of a Woman: The Meaning of KEPHALE in 1 Cor. 11:3," *Journal of Theological Studies* 45 (1994), 620.

⁵ Morna Hooker, "Authority on Her Head: An Examination of I Cor. XI.10," *New Testament Studies* 10 (1963/64), 413.

⁶ Kendrick, 338.

⁷ Hooker, 413.

⁸ Robertson and Plummer, 232.

⁹ William M. Ramsey, *The Cities of St. Paul: Their Influence on His Life and Thought. The Cities of Eastern Asia Minor*. (London 1907; reprint Grand Rapids: Baker, 1949), 204-205.

¹⁰ Aline Rouselle, "Body Politics in Ancient Rome," in *A History of Women*, Georges Duby and Michelle Perot, gen. eds., vol. 1, *From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints*, ed. Pauline Schmitt Pantel, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 315.

¹¹ Witherington, 233.

¹² *Arbeiten für Religionsgeschichte des Urchristentums*, Band 1, Heft 3 (Leipzig, 1920), 17-30, quoted in Hooker, 413.

¹³ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "A Feature of Qumrân Angelology and the Angels of I Cor. XI.10," *New Testament Studies* 4 (1957/58), 53.

¹⁴ Hooker, 413.

¹⁵ Fee, 520; Kendrick, 336-342.

¹⁶ Fee, 520.

¹⁷ Fee, 521.

¹⁸ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 377.

¹⁹ Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville: John Knox, 1997), 187-88.

²⁰ R. E. Oster, "When Men Wore Veils to Worship: The Historical Context of 1 Corinthians 11.4," *New Testament Studies* 34 (1988), 505.

²¹ Heinrich Schlier, *kephale*, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 3:679.

²² W.J. Martin, "1 Cor. 11:2-16: An Interpretation," *Apostolic History and the Gospel* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1970), 234.

²³ Martin, 234.

²⁴ Witherington, 235.

A Near Death Experience

By Hal Haralson
Attorney in Austin, Texas

Old Red is still alive after 30 years of driving to and from deer leases. I stay off the highways with her now. Mostly I fire her up on Sunday evening and take the trash down.

Old Red, for those of you who have not read the original story, is a '67 Ford pick-up. I paid \$1,200.00 for it in 1971. It was worth every penny.

Me and Old Red almost parted company this time.

I was cruising down Highway 71 between Llano and Brady, about six miles west of Pontotoc.

It's hard to describe the elation that comes from being alone on the way to the deer lease. A whole weekend with no cares. Sitting around the campfire with my friends. Hunting with my sons. I'm singing as I roll along. (Old Red doesn't have a radio.)

Then, Old Red quits. Nothing I can do will get her to start. It's about 8:00 p.m. and it's cold. I'm sitting on the edge of a two-lane highway. Trucks come by and shake Old Red as they pass.

No one will come for me. Judy assumes I'm on the deer lease. My hunting buddies don't know I'm coming.

I spent the night near Pontotoc. It froze that night. Fortunately, I had my hunting gear with me. I rolled up in my bedroll and got some sleep. I was alright except for the 4 or 5 times I had to take a nature break.

I was on one of those "grooved highway" areas so every car that passed made a roar as it hit the grooves. I could imagine an 18-wheeler plowing into the rear of Old Red because he didn't see us in time.

Finally, dawn broke. With it came a strange sound. Like someone beating a drum. I had to roll the window down to see. Frost covered all of Old Red's windows.

One glance solved the mystery of the drums. I was across the ditch from a farm house. About a dozen Emus looked across the fence at me omitting booming sounds because they didn't know what it was they were looking at.

I hitch-hiked back to Llano (40 miles) and found a wrecker who went out past Pontotoc and hauled me in. He charged me \$90.00. I think he knew he had a city slicker and took advantage of the situation.

It was the fuel pump. I had to wait until they could find one. '67 Fords are not the standard pick-up for 1999. I spent the night in the Badu house, a bed and breakfast that may have been a brothel at one time.

On the deer lease (24 hours later), Old Red performed brilliantly all over the lease and most of the way home.

She quit again about 5 miles from Austin. I walked in the rain until a car made a u-turn and stopped. I couldn't imagine who it could be.

It was Judy, my wife. She was going the opposite direction and saw me.

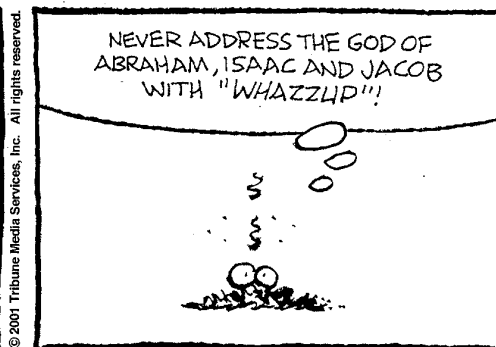
I got another wrecker the next day and had additional repairs. Old Red has run well for the past year. We don't get on the highway very much. I just don't feel I can rely on Old Red to get me there.

I've learned a lot about God from Old Red.

I've had several "near death" experiences and wonder why God doesn't give up on me. But he doesn't.

Another breakdown. Another fuel pump. Another chance to carry out the task I'm given.

The tasks are smaller. I am slower. God's grace covers it all. ■



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Challenge for Today's Fathers

By Richard D. Kahoe

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My Father's Day thoughts this year were influenced by the fact that this was my first Father's Day to be a grandfather. I feel I have tried to be a better father than my own was, and am sure my son will try to be a better father than I was. (My son will undoubtedly have the easier task).

If every generation of fathers strives to be better, fatherhood should soon reach some level of perfection. Right? Not necessarily. In the fast-paced twentieth and twenty-first centuries, each generation sees the failures of their own fathers in the light of new realities. Every father seems to run one or two generations behind the needs of his particular time. Resolutions to be better fathers largely reflect the need to be more up-to-date.

My thinking tied in with the sermon topic I planned for June. As part of a series on prayer, based on the Old Testament Psalms, I was scheduled to deal with the Psalm laments that cry for deliverance from one's enemies. Earlier, reflecting on this group of Psalms, I wrote a psalm-like "Lament over Modern Enemies." Our twentieth-century was not quite so brutish as Old Testament times, when personal and national enemies often preoccupied the minds of Psalm-writers. My "Lament" focused on more currently-relevant modern enemies:

"O Lord, . . . my enemies are not like those of old. They seek not to trap me in the harrier's snare, nor savage my mortal flesh like a pouncing lion. . . . My enemies . . . would destroy the province of the heart; they reduce the life of spirit like blighted corn. . . . Deliver us from the oppression of bigots, who value people by the color of their skins. We fear not them who march under an infidel flag, God, But judge legalists who fly the banner of the cross Yet lay leaden burdens on other believers. Save us, O Lord, from shrill defenders of abortion Who value license over life. Spare us, too, from strident abortion opponents Who profess to value life but feel no pity For a woman trapped by more than her own sin." I went on against warmongers, arms merchants, rapists of the environment, and "ideological propagandas masquerading as truth."

As I prepared a sermon on the Psalm laments over enemies, I found that one of that group, Psalm 64, is

surprisingly modern and psychological. It seemed to anticipate my 1994 "Lament Over Modern Enemies."

I won't lay out the sermon that I eventually wrote on Psalm 64, but I realized that the Psalm lament illustrates the changing role of fathers. Fathers (and other males) have traditionally filled the role of warrior-defending the cave, the village, city, or nation against mortal enemies. Most of the Old Testament laments against enemies, emphasized the threat of those who would destroy both body and soul. Psalm 64 and the realities of twenty-first century life stress modern threats that do not directly attack the body, but threaten the soul and spirit.

Even now, most fathers would fight a physical threat to his household (as infrequent as those mortal enemies may be). Yet-lagging behind by a generation or two, as I suggested in the beginning-they may overlook the cultural and psychological enemies that threaten their children.

Fathers today, to keep pace with changing times, should address any number of threats to the human spirit. Extremes of both the right and the left diminish quality of human life-whether the issue be gun control, militarism, environmentalism, or right-to life/choice. (My earlier psalm lamented both extremes on the abortion issue).

Ironically, the testosterone-fueled defense against the wolf at the door or the hoard of Huns at the city gate is now often counter-productive. Our biological territorial defenses fuel road rage, neighbor rage (from a recent TV special), and workplace or school shootings. It even feeds into harassment against underdogs that so often leads to workplace and school shootings. Today's fathers need to harness their animal instincts and lead family, community, and national movements toward greater civility, greater tolerance of those with different skin colors, languages, cultures, or religions.

Fathers, mothers and other adults, lay and clergy, political and community leaders in the twenty-first century-in the spirit of Psalm 64-may utter our prayer laments a new set of enemies. Likewise, we need to muster all our wisdom and political acumen to battle those ideological and cultural enemies. ■



What Cell Phones Say

By Douglas Groothuis,
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More and more, our culture is shaped by its vast array of technologies. These devices—including televisions, CDs, cars, and computers—usually become taken for granted and then recede into the background of our lives. Yet God calls us to “Test everything. Avoid every form of evil. Hold on to the good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). This includes doctrine, but it also includes practices of our everyday life. As salt and light in the world (Matthew 5:13), we must not conform to the pattern of worldliness (Romans 12:2; 1 John 2:15-17).

One of these fairly new technological devices, the cell phone, is no longer merely an expensive novelty, but has become part of mainstream culture. Cell phones have brought new ways of relating to others. Twenty years ago, few people talked on the phone in their car, anymore than they washed their dishes there. Today, using car phones is routine.

On the good side, cell phones can add safety and convenience to our lives, if used wisely. They offer ready access to help for those who have to drive long distances or who encounter emergencies. They offer a valuable service to those in some careers, such as real estate agents and doctors. Parents can use them to stay in touch better with their children.

Nothing is inherently wrong with a cell phone. Yet, like every form of technology that becomes part of everyday life, it shapes us and the whole society—for good or ill. And the technology can be abused. People phone as they walk, bicycle, and shop; some even call from rest rooms.

Cell phones ring during sermons, weddings, and even funerals. Worse yet, people answer them. Chatting on the phone while driving is potentially dangerous and annoying to other drivers. Intentionally or not, cell phone users can be rude to others who are made in God’s image (James 3:9).

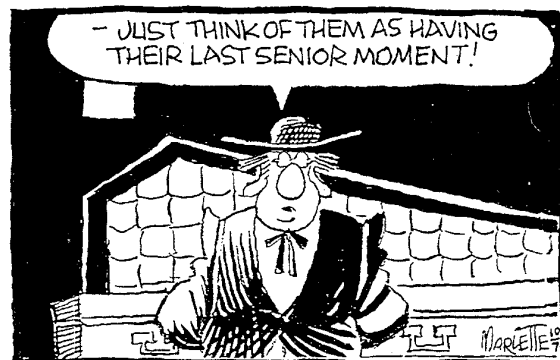
I know of a pastor who wears a cell phone while leading worship. This communicates that his connection with those who might phone him is as important as his connection with

God and the congregation. Yet in worship, our attention should be directed beyond ourselves and toward God. Our connection with others during worship is not through speaking with them, but through spiritual unity in worshipping God together. There is a time to hang up the phone and to look up instead. Worship should be free from distractions (1 Corinthians 14:40). A cell phone can only be a distraction during worship, no matter who wears it.

Making the cell phone an item of clothing (the modern version of the six-shooter) means we prize instant communication with others. We deem ourselves so important to potential callers that we must always be near our phone. This technology encourages us to regard whoever calls us as more significant than the people near us. In line at a supermarket, a man ahead of me was talking loudly on his cell phone. He ignored the checker and had no sense that he was broadcasting a trivial conversation to everyone within earshot. Once I was talking with a pastor about his ill wife when his cell phone rang . . . cutting us off in mid-sentence.

Putting our cell phone above all else disrupts situations and depersonalizes and dishonors those around us. In places such as classrooms, sanctuaries, weddings, funerals, prayer meetings, libraries, and restaurants, cell phones should be left behind or made inconspicuous. Otherwise, we will be tempted to be occupied more with ourselves and distant others than with the people with whom we are meeting. Remaining connected to our cell phone whenever we go is rude. God summons us to bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which includes kindness and goodness—the opposite of rudeness and incivility (Galatians 5:22).

Not everyone needs a cell phone, and these phones should not be everywhere. They should never become a technology of rudeness, but should be used only when mobile communication is called for. And please don’t bring one to a class I am teaching or to a service in which I am preaching! ■



Do Health Care Corporations Have A Conscience?

By John M. Swomley, Professor Emeritus of Social Ethics
St. Paul School of Theology

“Since when does a corporation—a pharmacy, an insurance provider, a research group—have a conscience?” This is a question raised in reaction to a bill introduced recently in the Kansas Legislature on behalf of the Kansas Catholic Conference. The answer may have wide-ranging effects, but not for the activities of corporations like Exxon or Boise-Cascade who claim to be acting out of conscience in reducing pollution or lumbering responsibly. The Kansas bill and nearly identical bills elsewhere are putting a new twist on the meaning of *conscience*, not in the field of the environment, but in the field of health care.

To declare that a corporation or legal entity can claim “rights of conscience” identical to an individual’s claim of conscientious objection to certain types of health care, is to blur a crucial meaning and destroy an important legal distinction.

That is what is at stake in the Kansas bill introduced not on behalf of a minority group like the Mennonites or Quakers claiming conscientious objection to war, but by the politically powerful Catholic Conference in Kansas claiming the right of not only individuals but of corporate groups to refuse to engage in any activity forbidden by the Vatican, even when it is legal and customary for all patients.

The bill’s claim on behalf of conscience is appealing. Webster’s Dictionary defines “conscience” as “the moral judgment that prohibits or opposes the violation of a previously recognized ethical principle.” Colliers Encyclopedia defines it as “the human being’s direct or deliberate conviction of right and wrong. In resistance to his strong impulses and desires, conscience is the force that makes him recognize what he ought to do and bids him do it.”

Individuals, however, are involved in a family, perhaps a religious group, and certainly a civil society. So conscience is formed, not innate. Instead of an intuition everyone has at birth, it is formed by training and experience, as well as the use of reason. For example, a child whose parents are members of the Society of Friends (Quakers) or some other religious group may be inclined to view war differently from a child reared in a military family.

In early American history, it was assumed by such advocates of obedience to conscience as Roger Williams, John Locke, and James Madison, that each person has freedom of conscience. Locke wrote, “Nobody is obliged . . . to yield obedience unto the admonitions or injunctions of another, further than he himself is persuaded. Everyone in that has the supreme and absolute authority of judging for himself.”¹

In recent history both Congress and the Supreme Court prior to World War II recognized the right of individuals, on

the basis of conscience, not to participate in war or training for war. However, the conscription law adopted by Congress prior to World War II refused to grant conscientious objection to a collective group, such as a peace church, or to any and all members of a denomination that opposed war, nor to an individual simply on the basis of a moral statement. Conscience was personal and applied to individuals.

Another approach to conscience is based on adherence to natural law. Pope John Paul II said, “There exists a moral law ascribed in our humanity, which we can come to know by reflecting on our own nature and our actions and which lays certain obligations upon us because we recognize them as universally true and binding.”

The origin of this idea is in the Greek philosophy of Stoicism. Everything perceived to be “natural” is good. Questions arise, however, as to what behavior is “natural.” The Apostle Paul, who lived in the Greek world, accepted the idea. In First Corinthians 11:14-15, he wrote: “Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is degrading to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory?”

Equally questionable is the basis for Pope John Paul II’s refusal to recognize the equality of women. He wrote, “A woman is by nature fitted for home work . . . not suited for certain occupations.” He wrote that paid work outside the home is the abandonment of the role of motherhood, which includes “taking care of her children” and “is wrong from the point of view of the family when it contradicts or hinders these primary goals of the mission of a mother.”²

When John Paul II met with a group of U.S. bishops at the Vatican June 27, 1998, he told them, “The notion of freedom and personal autonomy is superficially attractive, endorsed by individuals, the media and the courts. . . . Yet it ultimately destroys the personal good of individuals and the common good of society.” Then he said, “The nobility of men and women lies not simply in the capacity to choose but to choose wisely,” which means “witnessing to the moral laws inscribed in the human heart.” Then the Pope said, “As bishops you have to teach that freedom of conscience is never freedom from the truth but always and only freedom in the truth The Church is preserved in the truth and it is her duty to give utterance to and authoritatively to teach the truth . . . and to declare and confirm by her authority those principles of the moral order which have their origin in human nature itself.”

One priest who has left the Roman Catholic church wrote that there is no such thing as natural law. He said, “If there is any law in nature, humans have been interfering with it since they reached consciousness and awareness. . . . The sexual organs are the seat of immense pleasure and also an

instrument of showing affection and love. To say that they have only the function of reproduction seems to contradict nature.”³

He continues: “Declaring it wrong to interfere with the normal flow of semen trying to reach the ovum would make it wrong to fly, dam rivers, send water to houses, . . . take medicine, wear glasses, wear clothes, . . . Is a condom that much different from a dam?”

The rigidity of Catholic natural law was illustrated by a Roman Catholic *Question and Answer* column: “Question: My wife is sterile but wants her ‘marital rights.’ I have a contagious venereal disease. May I wear a prophylactic sheath? Answer: No. Even though she could not conceive and you would infect her, contraceptive intercourse is an intrinsically evil act.”⁴

It is precisely questions on sexual reproduction and other issues in health care that are raised in the proposal now before the Kansas Legislature and faced in other states. The proposed bill begins with the following: “This Act may be known and cited as the Health Care Providers’ Rights of Conscience Act. . . . It is the purpose of this act to protect as a basic civil right the right of all individuals and entities to decline to counsel, advise, pay for, provide, perform, assist, refer for or participate in providing or performing health care services that violate their religious or moral convictions.”

“Health care services” are defined as “any phase of patient medical care treatment or procedure, including the following: therapy, diagnosis or prognosis, research, instruction, prescribing or administering any device, drug or medication, surgery or any other treatment rendered by health care providers or health care institution.”

Such “health care services may include abortion, artificial insemination, assisted reproduction, artificial birth control, cloning, human stem cell and fetal experimentation, physician-assisted suicide, and euthanasia.” This is the Vatican agenda, but some items such as cloning, stem cell, and fetal experimentation have no relevance to physicians, nurses, pharmacists and most health-care individuals.

The bill is clearly designed to prevent normal medical services to women. For example, emergency contraception to a woman who has been raped would be denied, along with diagnosis and treatment if the rapist had AIDS. A woman would be denied an abortion if she has an ectopic pregnancy, uterine cancer, or if her life were threatened by a dead fetus lodged crosswise in her uterus. It would even prohibit referral to another physician or hospital.

A pharmacist under this proposed law could refuse to fill certain prescriptions.⁵ The bill would enable any pharmacy or pharmacist to refuse to fill such prescriptions or even sell condoms if that pharmacy chose not to do so.

That would be comparable to a landlord or real-estate agency refusing to rent to financially qualified people for reasons of their own, such as discrimination against African Americans or Hispanic or Asian Americans.

In other words, this whole idea of legitimizing medical discrimination, under the guise of conscience, is really a weapon against people, chiefly women, who do not share the views of a politically powerful religious organization.

The bill would give rights of conscience to “any entity or

employer that pays for any health care service or product, including HMOs. . . . and insurance companies.” If corporations are said by this law to have a conscience, who decides for the corporation? Can the Chief Executive Officer decide for the shareholders and employees, or should there be a vote? Since this is an anti-contraceptives bill, does it mean that a corporation may require its workers not to use contraception, or have a child by artificial insemination?

How does the state determine what is sincere conscientious objection? The conscription law adopted by the Congress just prior to World War II refused to grant conscientious objection to a man on the basis that he belonged to a particular peace church or denomination, and the law insisted that a draft board make that judgment based on a specific written testimony by the draftee, including his previous record in harmony with his belief in nonviolence.

Will a simple declaration by an individual suffice to prevent him/her from having to do any of the types of health care named in the proposed law? It is well known that those anti-abortionists who bomb clinics and shoot doctors claim that their conscience made them do it.

Can a corporation such as an HMO, insurance company, pharmacy, or hospital merely make a similar claim? Their reasons for doing so could relate more to making a profit, if an HMO refuses to pay for services such as artificial insemination or treatment of a Parkinson’s patient whose doctor wanted treatment with the cells resulting from human stem-cell research. The bottom line may be money, not appropriate health care.

Any state which adopts a so-called “conscience clause” law applying to a corporation ought to require “conscience testing” not only of the CEO, but of every employee or shareholder. How would any legislation prevent coercion by church or hospital or other authority that leads physicians or health care workers to conform to a conscience they didn’t declare?

Would some say, “I opposed abortions but know that the use of effective contraception is the best way to minimize it”? Would a physician with a family history of Parkinson’s disease have to declare a conscience against all stem-cell research and treatment? Why is the phrase “artificial birth control” in this bill, when only one denomination provides another method, one that is least effective in preventing pregnancy, the so-called “natural family planning” method.

A careful analysis of the rationale for “conscience clause” legislation makes it obvious that corporations do not have consciences, but may welcome the legislation to protect themselves from the consequences of denial of otherwise expected and legal medical and health care services. Couldn’t a couple decide to sue their HMO or insurance provider if it refused to pay for emergency contraception for a wife who had been raped or who contracted AIDS as a result?

The proposed legislation may be seen as an effort to accommodate the beliefs or decrees of a religious organization, but it results in the denial of legal and customary health care to the public. The following excerpts from the testimony of Sharon Lockhart of the Kansas chapter of the National Organization of Women present another view:

“Nurses, physicians, other health care workers,

pharmacists, and related others receive licenses from the state permitting them to earn money providing services and dealing in substances that are forbidden to others to work at or deal in for profit without licenses. As such, these individuals not only are specially privileged by the public, but also public funds are spent in training and regulating these professions with the appropriate expectation that in return these individuals have been granted their licenses not only for their own well-being and profit, but also to serve the public trust. By refusing to provide legal services or products that others are not permitted to provide, these individuals violate the public trust. In essence, the monopolistic privileges granted to these persons as a group would permit the effective censoring of these legal services or products from the public if sufficient numbers of licensees refused to provide what they alone are licensed to provide. This kind of *de facto* censoring already can be seen in those areas in which there are no pharmacists who will provide certain drugs or a shortage of medical personnel and facilities to provide certain kinds of services.”⁶

At first glance the proposal by the state Catholic Conference seems to be directed against Jewish, Protestant and secular health care providers because it forbids what it calls discrimination defined as an attempt to prevent state licensing or to prevent affiliation or merger with any health care institution or corporation that “declines to participate in a health care service contrary to the health care institution’s religious or moral convictions.” It is of course directed against such opposition when it authorizes lawsuits against proponents of such mergers, but it has additional implications.

It is clearly using the “conscience clause” not only to make it difficult for any woman to receive certain kinds of health care, but also to force Catholic women to accept the Vatican’s program against contraception and abortion. An overwhelming majority of Catholic laity reject the papal position on contraceptives and other issues. Public opinion polls reveal that 83% of Catholics believe that if a Catholic hospital receives government or public funds, it should be required to allow its doctors to provide any legal, medically

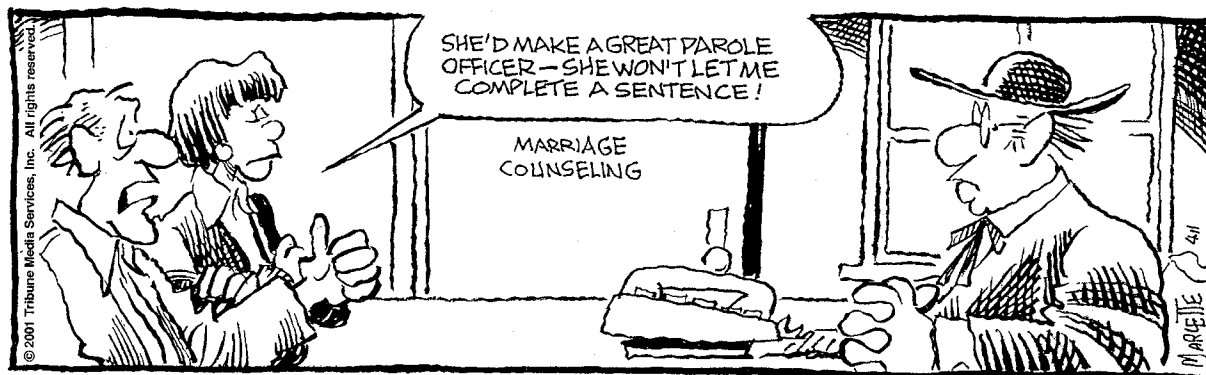
sound advice they believe is needed. One study indicates 96% of all Catholic women who have engaged in sex relations have used modern contraceptive methods, and 87% of Catholics believe that Catholics should make up their own minds about using birth control. Another poll found that 83% of women believe that insurance plans that cover prescription drugs should be required to cover birth control. Americans should not confuse public opinion with the position of the Vatican or its agents, the U.S. bishops.

Throughout history any individual or a group that sought legal approval of a right of conscience was in fact a small minority of an essentially powerless political group. One can again make a comparison with the small minority of conscientious objectors prior to the Civil War and both world wars. Their appeal was in their moral strength based on a willingness to suffer for their convictions, with no expectation of government or societal support. It was an appeal that impressed people like James Madison, Abraham Lincoln, Eleanor Roosevelt, and many members of Congress. Nevertheless, there were some objectors who went to prison for their convictions.

Those who today seek such a “conscience clause” to censor or omit certain types of medical care are the powerful. Although not a majority, they are the leaders of the most politically powerful religious denomination in the United States. What they seek is not relief from persecution or prison, but power over the medical providers in an effort to legislate their religious agenda at the expense of a majority of American women, as well as women in their own denomination. ■

Endnotes

- ¹ John Locke, “Letter Concerning Tolerance.”
- ² *Laborem Exensens*, September 14, 1981, 91.
- ³ John Sheehy, *The Church’s History of Injustice and Why This Priest Left*, Lanham, MD: University of America Press, 1999, 60-61.
- ⁴ Lawrence Lader, *Politics, Power, and The Church*, New York: Macmillan, 1987, 77.
- ⁵ This has already occurred in a decision by Walmart not to provide the drug RU486.
- ⁶ Sharon Lockhart, “Testimony Before Federal and State Committees,” Kansas House of Representatives, March 6, 2001.



An Hour Before Daylight: Memories of a Rural Boyhood

Jimmy Carter, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001

Book Review by Darold H. Morgan,

President Emeritus of the Annuity Board of the SBC

Indisputably, President Jimmy Carter is the most respected living former president of the United States, as well as the most famous Baptist Sunday School teacher in the world. Much of that esteem has come from his highly publicized work with Habitat for Humanity and through the Carter Center on the campus of Emory University in Atlanta, where he and his wife work ceaselessly to help in problem areas around the world. Add to these well-known facts their beautiful loyalty to a little Baptist Church in Plains, Georgia, and you have reasons for lauding both President and Mrs. Carter as exemplary citizens.

In this recently published book, which in reality is an autobiography of childhood days on a farm in rural Georgia, we have an enhancing and thoroughly captivating insight into who Jimmy Carter really is. It makes for genuinely fascinating reading. Publicity about this book may be correct when the inference is made that it has the potential of becoming a classic!

The book is exceptionally important because the reader can glean quickly where some of President Carter's deeply held convictions originate. One of the lasting impressions of this book has to be the extraordinary memories President Carter has of his boyhood, and one of the most vivid of these is the living conditions of both whites and blacks on the Carter farms in southwest Georgia. Could it be that one of the reasons why the Carters devote so much time, energy, and influence in building homes for poor people through Habitat for Humanity comes from observing first hand, as a little boy, the shacks tenant farmers and sharecroppers lived in during the dark days of the Great Depression?

All the way through these childhood memories is the immeasurably rich and deep respect that President Carter had for his father, a successful farmer and merchant, whose planning and organization of his work through the demands of those hardscrabble depression years marked him as an exceptional person. Time and again, his father's strict segregationist philosophy, typical to life and culture in that part of the country, comes through in the book. Yet it is always coupled with an unusual and surprising respect for his tenants and sharecroppers. It was also balanced by the independence of his wife, the President's mother, who as a nurse and also as a very obvious individualist, cared for all levels of people in the community, regardless of race or economic status. Her encouragement of her son to read constantly had a significant impact on his broadening horizons, even in one of the most isolated parts of the nation.

Who would have thought that from a part of the nation where segregation was ingrained so completely, that a leader would arise with convictions about racial equality so deep, that one of the hallmarks of his presidential administration would be racial justice. Especially moving in the book are the accounts marked by graphic details and crisp writing skills, of his childhood friendships with black young men. Carter recounts how African-Americans made him a part of their family life in his impressionable teen years.

Another powerful truth about Carter's commitment to social justice begins to appear during these childhood years. Imagine growing up in a home without electricity, water, or indoor plumbing. Yet much of the housework and the farming was done by blacks who lived nearby. Salaries were miniscule and benefits were non-existent. Job security was totally absent. At the depths of the depression, President Roosevelt and his vaunted New Deal began slowly to bring recovery despite widespread opposition by farmers to government quotas and bureaucratic supervision.

Young Carter saw the transformation created by federal programs out of Washington: rural electrification, paved roads, some gradual increases in prices for cotton and peanuts, retirement income for older people, and educational grants for neighborhood schools. State and federal government agencies actually did make a difference in the quality of life in rural Georgia. Carter documents, with great sadness, how many farmers resisted some of the controversial practices of farm quotas and the killing of surplus livestock.

One must realize that President Carter indeed was a product of his times and culture. Gradually, young Jimmy began to experience the liberation of broadening horizons. An excellent set of teachers in the local schools, the moral tone of a community dominated by strong clergy (both black and white), and the encouragement of strong-willed parents—all combined to bring to this gawky, undersized, often-barefoot kid a vision of life beyond a farm and a rural Georgia village. One of the strongest characters to emerge in the entire book is the local African Methodist Episcopal Bishop, whose moral dominance in the community paints a portrait of beauty and depth.

Jimmy Carter's childhood was marked by deep love and esteem, by old fashioned hard work on a farm where the work was never complete, and by a set of values which formed the foundation for his character. These beginnings prepared him superbly for a career that gained him international respect and fruitfulness. You will be glad you read this book! ■

*“Whatsoever things are . . . lovely . . . think on these things.”
Philippians 4:8*

A Walk in the Woods

By Foy Valentine, Founding Editor

Today I took a walk in the woods.

It was a splendid tonic.

I drove sixty miles to my boyhood home in East Texas, parked the car near a clump of tickle-tongue trees, and moseyed down the long country lane from where our barn used to be to our patch of woods. Those woods are situated in the northwest corner of the property my parents bought for \$100 per acre about 80 years ago. That price included the two-story, four bedroom house where I was born, a big barn, an ample shed for a car, a wagon, tools and farm implements, a henhouse, a smokehouse, a cistern, a well, and several remarkably fine neighbors.

But woods themselves on this pleasant early spring day, were the locus of my ecstasy. There were black jack oaks, post oaks, pin oaks, elms, persimmons, cedars, hickories, ash, and a big thicket of huckleberries. The land itself was partly sandy knolls and partly flat little glades given to retaining rainfall and domiciling crawfish.

The best thing about this walk in the woods was not the walk, of course, but rather:

- sitting a spell on a fallen log encrusted with old shelf lichen, inhabited desultorily by some unaggressive, big wood ants, mutilated by woodpeckers in search of luscious grubs, and still partially clad by decaying slabs of bark ready, in the fullness of time, to fall to the ground at the slightest provocation of a scampering squirrel or a raucous bluejay;
- kneeling on a bed of dry leaves to brush away the winter’s accumulated detritus to find nestled under the protecting cover a marvelous little sprig of fern sending out tentative but hopeful little fronds in search of sunlight to activate its astoundingly complex and, to me, miraculous chlorophyll;
- stopping dead-still to marvel at the cottontail rabbit brought to a timorous freeze by my long, low whistle, an un-rabbitlike sound that required it to be still and take inventory of this unexpected presence with this unnatural sound;
- looking up to see a lone buzzard leisurely riding the thermals that neither he nor I could see but that we both could accept with such wonder and gratitude as either of us could muster;
- walking up on some scattered bones, bleached white as cotton by winter wind and summer sun, the final resting place of some cow who had bellied down in the grass never again to summon the strength to get up, on her hind legs first and then on her front legs, for a continuation of her lifelong quest for more grass to put away in one of her many-chambered stomachs before regurgitating it as a cud on which she might placidly chew, as such ruminants are wont to do; or it could have been a small horse unable for that last time to get up, first on its front legs and then on its hind legs, as such creatures do who neither part the hoof nor chew the cud—there was no skull to enable me to make a positive identification of this corpus delicti; but pondered long there in sober reflection on the fleeting nature of life for all creatures great and small which, as James says, is “a vapor that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14);
- spying a not unfriendly brown thrush which, although it is rather secretive by nature, in this instance hopped around in a bush apparently oblivious to my intrusion about which it, at the moment, seemed to be perfectly unconcerned;
- marveling at a squirrel’s nest situated precariously on a smallish limb far up in a great old post oak tree which, in the south side of the main trunk, boasted a smoothly worn hole about as big as a hen egg, a hole which no doubt had been stocked by the resident fox squirrel with a goodly supply of acorns;
- a mysterious small patch of recently excavated holes whose builders and makers I could not identify but who, I mused, might be foxes, armadillos, civet cats, or some critter totally unknown to me when I first started walking those woods 75 years ago;
- a patch of second-growth timber, several acres in all, which brought vivid recollections of the winter when my father decided to clear that land with a sharp double-bit axe, which clearing he did single-handedly, and which virgin land he then broke with two mules and turning plow before planting a crop of corn and then in due time gathering in the new produce, but this new-ground has now, after sixty-five or seventy years, reverted to its original status without so much as a remaining furrow to mark my father’s prodigious labors—which must be something of a parable of all human endeavors from the hanging gardens of Semiramis to the Colossus of Rhodes; and
- coming up on an old snake skin shed when some fearsome, though non-poisonous, black racer had come to its seasonal change of clothing, a mute reminder that the cycles of nature, ordained by the Creator, are moving right along, thank you, no matter who is in the State House, the White House, or the Glass House on the East River and totally oblivious to genomes, space stations, spy planes, or Wall Street gyrations. Hm-m-m-m.

In due time I ambled back to my car by the tickle-tongue trees and relished a peaceful drive back home, braking the journey only briefly for a Dairy Queen Blizzard dutifully held upside down by the pleasant young woman who had created this luscious concoction before she passed it to me for appropriate disposition, a fitting finale for a wonderful walk in the woods. ■

Reflections on Holy Weeks!

By *Jerry L. Barnes*
Minister, Missionary, Educator

Who would have thought that God
would have come to such a non-descript
village as Bethlehem to clothe Himself
in the flesh of the Christ Child!

And, who would have thought that God
would have used an old man like Simeon,
or an old woman like Anna, to remind
an old nation like Israel that God's grace
was inclusive of all peoples and not
exclusive of anyone.

(Which is Luke's way of saying:
In the darkness, the light of God's revelation
goes on shining forever for Gentiles
like you and me!)

Who would have thought that God
would have walked through the tortured
centuries up every road that led to a
new Golgotha offering nothing . . .
but His forgiving love!

And, who would have thought a part-time teacher,
a part-time healer, a part-time story teller, and a
part-time miracle worker would have evoked
such bitter hostility from so many who were so
religiously righteous.

Which is a poet's way of saying: It was not the
splintered vocation that sent Him to the cross. It
was His refusal to be what so many wanted Him to be!
It was His prophetic courage: in cleansing the Temple,
forgiving prodigal sons and adulterous daughters,
commending tax collectors and Good Samaritans!
But it was more than that!

This Son of Man/ this Suffering Servant of God,
with prophetic courage,
enraged the narrow-minded Scribes and Pharisees
with His caustic criticism of their
"choking down gnats and swallowing camels!"
Then, too, what He said and did
threatened the pompous High Priest and Sadducees
with eminent insurrection because
they cared more for their political well-being
than the kingdom of God!

Their plot to crucify Jesus
was clinched with Caiaphas' chilling words:
"it is better that one man die than the whole nation perish"
What a tragic irony!
That One so profoundly innocent would die on a Roman
cross
at the hands of those who were so . . .
thoroughly evil!

Who would have thought that such evidence
would have brought Him to Golgotha!
But there He was hanging on the cross:
Betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, sentenced to death by
Pilate, abandoned by disciples, crucified by Roman soldiers,
surrounded by a fickle crowd, and only supported by
His mother, one disciple, and a few faithful women.

There in the dreadful darkness of Black Friday, He cried,
"Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are
doing!"
At the last He uttered one word, *tetelestai!* (It is finished)
Then He died!
In the darkness, the women waited . . .

And, who would have thought, on the third day
the few women
who were last to pay vigil at the cross,
were the first to find an empty tomb!
Ah . . . the blessed women!
They spread the Good News to other disciples,
"He is not here. He has risen!"
And other disciples to the world . . .

Somberly reflecting on the Galilean Prophet's life,
would any pensive poet not shudder to think:
If Jesus had not been raised from the dead
by the power of God,
we would not be celebrating either
Christmas or Easter!

A final reflection:
What God accomplished through His forgiving love
and triumph over death, has transformed
Black Friday into Good Friday
and the third day into Resurrection Sunday

CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY

A Journal of Christian Ethics

“We need now to recover the prophethood of all believers, matching our zeal for the priesthood of all believers with a passion for the prophethood of all believers.”
Foy Valentine, Founding Editor

----- PURPOSES -----

- Strengthen and support the cause of Christian ethics.
- Champion moral values without which civilization itself could not survive.
- Interpret and apply Christian experience, biblical truth, theological insights, historical perspectives, and current research to contemporary moral issues
- Maintain an independent prophetic voice for truth and righteousness.
- Address the ethical dimension of public policy issues.
- Utilize the contributions of responsible stewards who designate resources to further the cause of Christian ethics.

Christian Ethics Today was born in the mind and heart of Foy Valentine, as an integral part of his dream for a Center for Christian Ethics. In his words, the purpose of the Journal was “to inform, inspire, and unify a lively company of individuals and organizations interested in working for personal morality and public righteousness.”

During its first five years, the Journal established a life of its own, addressing a variety of subjects relating to Christian social concerns. Creating a rare combination of substantive material, provocative commentary, titillating dialogue, whimsical stories, and reprints of classical expositions, the Journal developed a large and growing list of readers. When the Center was transferred to Baylor University in June 2000, with the calling of a permanent Director, the disbanding Board voted to continue the publication of Christian Ethics Today, appointing a new editor and a new Board.

The Journal will continue to be published six times per year. The purpose envisioned by the founding editor remains: To “clarify, communicate, cultivate, and champion those basic ethical values without which neither the churches or civilization itself could survive: wisdom, courage, temperance, justice, righteousness, peace, faith, hope, love, and freedom.”

From the beginning *Christian Ethics Today* has been sent without charge to anyone requesting it, six times per year, “as money and energy permit.” A new editor brings added energy to the mission. But more than ever before, your financial support is “greatly needed, urgently solicited, and genuinely appreciated.” The Christian Ethics Today Foundation is a non-profit organization and has received a 501 (c) (3) status from the Internal Revenue Service.

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