

# CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY

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

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# Listening to the Angels

By Joe E. Trull, Editor

On a dark, cold winter night above Shepherd's Field just north of Bethlehem, a chorus of angels sang the first Christmas cantata: "Glory to God on high, and on earth peace among those with whom God is pleased" (Luke 2:14).

Every Christmas we too sing the message. We too pray for peace, work for peace, and believe that "peace on earth" is possible.

We are not naïve. Evil is ever present—we know that! Yes, there will always be "wars and rumors of wars"—Jesus warned of that (Mt. 24:6). Yet we still believe the ancient chorus of the angels, that peace on earth—not in heaven, but on *earth*—is possible. The shepherds hurried to see the Messiah, the One Isaiah had foretold to be the "Prince of Peace" (9:6). They believed the angels. Do we?

Two millenniums later, after a century of two world wars and countless conflicts, we still cling to that hope—the hope that peace is still a possibility in our war-weary world.

But today we are not so sure. September 11 brought to our doorstep the recurring reality of violence and war. Perhaps we in America were deluded, thinking the battlefields would never come to our shores. Now that has all changed.

Does this make the angel's message seem unbelievable? Is peace, real peace, just a utopian pipe dream?

We concur with the dictum of a previous Pope, "*Si quieres paz, lucha por la justicia*—If you want peace, work for justice." The "War Against Terrorism" is a quest for justice.

Realistically, this war could be a "never-ending story." Terrorism, like death and taxes, seems to be endemic. If so, does the rustle of angel wings and the promise of "peace on earth" seem more like an illusion than a certainty?

A series of articles in this Christmas issue seeks to pose some answers:

Tony Campolo recently returned from Northern Ireland, where he has been working for peace. His insider's look at the present discord, based on centuries of conflict between Protestants and Catholics, helps us understand the nature of hatred and violence, as well as the basis for future hope in that land and ours.

In his usual thorough and insightful style, Samford the-

ologian William Hull provides a better understanding of how the September 11 event relates to a larger global and cultural conflict—you won't read a better summation of Islam and its disdain with Western civilization than in his adapted sermon, "Religion and the World Crisis."

Of the immediate responses to the terrorist attacks of September 11, none seemed better than the brief but challenging call to Christians by ethicist Gilbert Meilaender.

After the attacks, ministers and talk-show hosts were deluged with the theodicy question, "Why did God allow this evil?" When *Christian Century* editor James Wall penned a review of an episode from television's *The West Wing* last June, he never imagined the relevance of "Quarreling With God" for our present dilemma.

I have read many articles and essays on the biblical and historical traditions of Christians in response to war and violence. Inside is one by Baptist ethicist David Gushee—I would call it a classic. Be sure to read it.

As I write this piece, Robin Wainwright of the Holy Land Trust USA reports that at least 22 people from Bethlehem have died in the past ten days. If the story is accurate, the current cycle began on October 18<sup>th</sup> with the killings of three young men on Israel's "wanted" list. However, the stories of the 19 others who died are more disturbing—one in particular. According to Wainwright, on October 20, 17 year old Johnny Thaljah, an Orthodox Christian, was walking across Manger Square at noon, after worshipping with his family at Nativity Church. He was carrying his cousin's baby when shot by a sniper from a faraway hill—he gently lay the baby down on the stones and then fell over dead.

The first words of the angel to the shepherds was, "Fear not!" As Americans buy gas masks and take double doses of Cipro, perhaps we too need the message of the angels. We too need reminding our ultimate hope is not in B-1 Bombers or bio-tech suits—it is in the kingdom of God.

This Christmas, listen to the angels. That's why Jesus came—to help us find peace with God, to work for peace on earth, and to live in hope. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Mt. 5:9). ■

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# Hope for Peace in Northern Ireland

By Tony Campolo  
Eastern College, St. Davids, PA

**Editor's Note:** Originally scheduled for the October issue, this article was postponed to be part of the December emphasis. On October 23, 2001, the IRA began destroying its vast military arsenal, in effect declaring its war to evict Britain from Northern Ireland is over, which British Prime Minister Tony Blair hailed as a breakthrough which will put the long-troubled peace process back on track. Tony Campolo's hope is not in vain.

It is easy to become discouraged over the prospects of peace in Northern Ireland in light of the recent resignation of David Trimble, the Nobel Prize winner and voice for moderation in the peace talks. He resigned as Premier of the government at the Stormont, the seat of indigenous government in Northern Ireland, because of the failure of Sinn Fein to get the IRA to keep its promise to disarm. This was one of the conditions that was written into the Good Friday Peace Accord drawn up between the warring parties under the guiding hand of President Bill Clinton. Just prior to Trimble's resignation an election in the United Kingdom increased the representation both in Westminster and at Stormont of those who represented the political right who are opposed to the Peace Accord. Collectively, these events have created a sense of gloom for those who want peace in that troubled part of the world.

I witnessed first hand the intensity of opposition that the right wing of Protestantism is exercising in Northern Ireland in a personal confrontation with Ian Paisley, the notorious member of the British Parliament who represents a section of Northern Ireland where Protestant antagonism toward Catholics is most evident. I had been invited to speak at a Prayer Breakfast at the initiation of peace talks at the Stormont. Attending that meeting would be representatives from the ruling body of the Irish Republic, representatives from the government in Westminster, various mayors and legislators from Northern Ireland, and an array of church leaders, both Catholic and Protestant.

The night before the prayer meeting, I stayed at a hotel

just across the road from the magnificent Stormont building. I awoke early in the morning and decided to walk to the prayer meeting. On the way, Ian Paisley, along with some 20-30 young followers, intercepted me. The man is huge and his voice is thunderous. He frightened me as he waved his finger in my face and screamed, "I know who you are! I know who you are! And I know the evil that you are doing!" I was threatened by his ongoing rhetoric against me and against the whole peace process. My only response was, "Reverend Paisley would it be such a bad thing if you came in and joined us and prayed for peace?" He shouted back at me, "I will come into the prayer meeting on the condition that you say these three things: First, that the Pope is the Anti-Christ; second, that the role of Mary in the Catholic Church is idolatry; and third, that the Mass is a pagan celebration." Needless to say, saying such things would hardly contribute to the process of peacemaking between Protestants and Catholics. The only answer I could come up with was, "To tell the truth, Mr. Paisley, I was planning to talk about Jesus."

I encountered still another cause for discouragement when I spoke at a Summer Youth Festival sponsored by the Church of Ireland called "Summer Madness." This annual gathering of young people is marked by enthusiasm for Christ and commitment to the work of the church. Young people come from both North and South Ireland to attend this get-together marked by evangelistic preaching coupled with a strong emphasis on social justice. The conference was held at the same time that the infamous "marches" are held in Portadown, and is within walking distance of that epicenter



of Protestant belligerence against Catholics. The newspapers that week gave front page reports of the buildup by the Orangemen and told of resistance forming in the Catholic community through which these extremist Protestants had planned to march on Sunday.

Saturday night, prior to the march, I was scheduled to deliver an address at the plenary session of the festival. There were 3000 young people there longing and praying for peace and reconciliation across religious lines. In the midst of my message to them I gave a call for them to join me the next morning and to march on to Portadown and sit in the road on which the Orangemen would march in their efforts to denigrate their Catholic countrymen. I told these young people that 3000 of us sitting in the road could put an end to the march and make a statement to the rest of the world that the youth of the Church of Ireland wanted to see an end to the marches and wanted peace to reign. The response was negative. "We couldn't do that," they responded. "You don't understand our situation. Praying to end the march is acceptable, but passive resistance is not. There would be implications in such action which would only make matters worse."

Perhaps they were right. I tried to understand their point of view. I suppose that somebody coming in from another societal system with a different set of values cannot get an easy handle on a foreign existential situation. Nevertheless, I felt that their unwillingness to stand up against evil with passive resistance allowed a golden opportunity to stand for Christ to pass. "Praying is not enough!" I told them. But, praying was as far as they would go.

Yet, in spite of political setbacks, angry rhetoric from both the extreme right and the extreme left, and the unwillingness of church people to be pro-active in stopping such offenses as the Protestant marches through Catholic communities, I believe that peace is an inevitability in war torn Ulster. The evidence is everywhere.

The first time I went to Belfast it was an armed camp. The hotel I stayed in was encircled with barbed wire. There were checkpoints every few miles at which young British soldiers with machine guns would stop cars, interrogate the passengers, and search for weapons. Observation towers where soldiers could peer down on citizens and television cameras that observed pedestrians seemed omnipresent. The situation today is very different. The barbed wire is gone. The soldiers are gone. And if you walk around downtown Belfast you would have no idea of how bad things were just ten years ago.

I was first invited to participate in the peace process by the YMCA of Belfast. I was asked to conduct five evangelistic

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rallies that would cross the religious lines. Both Protestants and Catholics were invited to attend the meetings. Two were held in the Catholic section of the city, two in the Protestant section of the city, and one in the center of Belfast. Tickets were sold for these events and each of them was a sellout. Protestant and Catholic young people rallied together under the banner of Christ. I called people to give themselves to Christ with the full awareness that to do so was to be committed to reconciliation across religious lines. The messages were greeted with enthusiasm and when I gave the invitation for commitment to Christ each night, more than one-tenth of the audience came forward. It was an amazing thing to see Catholic and Protestant young people overcome their differences in a common allegiance to Jesus.

Another experience in reconciliation was at a conference led by a Pentecostal congregation called The City Church. It was held in the south of Ireland, but brought together a couple of thousand Protestants and Catholics who

had in common a pentecostal experience. There was good evidence that in Pentecostalism these brothers and sisters had found a common spirit that bound them together. I learned that in Ireland both the Catholic church and the Protestant churches were suspicious of Pentecostalism and treated Pentecostalism as a third religious movement in their country. They were probably right because those who attended the conference let it be known that their Christianity transcended all sectarianism, and that they were finding in the Pentecostal experience a new form of Christianity that cast aside the old forms. Pentecostalism is growing quickly and is creating a religious alternative to the religious dichotomy that has raised such havoc in Ulster.

Next was a series of church meetings in which I used my preaching opportunity to introduce the vision of Millard Fuller's Habitat for Humanity. Scores of people responded and it wasn't long before a Habitat chapter was established in Belfast. What proved most encouraging was that the Habitat movement brought together Catholics and Protestants. They built a series of houses that were next door to each other, and both Protestants and Catholics moved into those houses to live side by side as a testimony to the unity that Christ can bring. If you know anything about Belfast, you know how religiously segregated residential living is. For Habitat houses to defy that segregation proved to be a true sign of the coming Kingdom of God.

A young man by the name of Gareth Higgins is one of the young politicians who is bringing new life to the peace process. Gareth had worked as a missionary in a ministry

program I helped to establish in Camden, New Jersey, where his commitment to social justice was enhanced. When he returned to his homeland in Northern Ireland he became a strong advocate for reconciliation. In his efforts, he asked me if I would speak at a rally that would bring Catholics and Protestants together in an outdoor display of Christian unity. He envisioned several thousand young people marching down the main thoroughfares of Belfast declaring their oneness in Christ. In reality, I was sure that Gareth's efforts to bring large numbers of Catholics and Protestants together for such a march and rally would never materialize, but I decided to go out of obligation to a young man who had worked so hard in our ministry programs here in the United States. I was wrong!

The march, which was initiated at the City Hall, drew at least 2000 young people. The group was about evenly divided between Catholics and Protestants. Marching through the heart of Belfast, they sang hymns of praise declaring the oneness that they had in Jesus. People lined the streets and cheered. The march ended in the parking lot outside the Waterfront Auditorium where they sang hymns and gave me a chance to speak. The euphoria was incredible, but in the midst of our outdoor rally we were reminded of the stark

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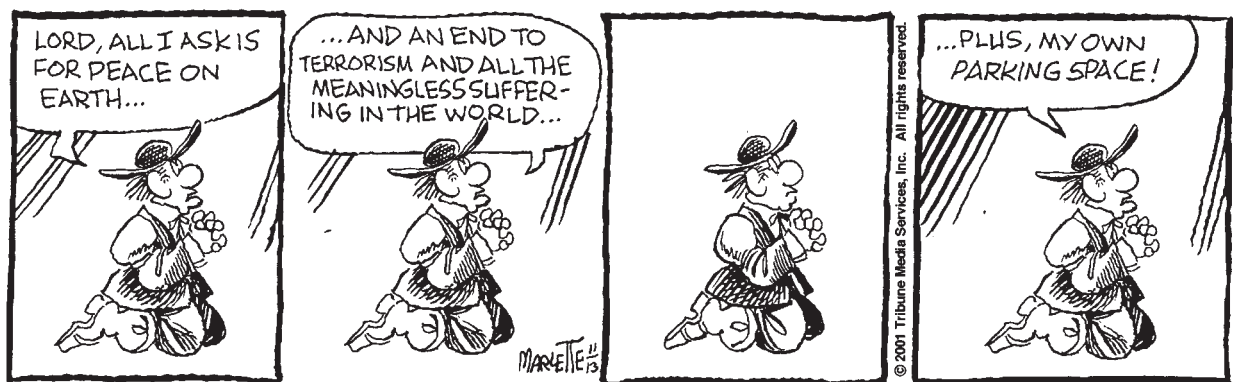
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realities of the city when a group of Orangemen marched past us disrupting our meeting with the beating of their drums. After the Orangemen passed, we continued on and I had the opportunity to call young people to activism for peace.

Gareth Higgins is committed to utilizing the political process to achieve reconciliation in Ulster. If you knew him, as I do, you would be convinced that he has a future in politics. Perhaps one day he will be able to accomplish what David Trimble tried to do. Perhaps one day he will be one of the key leaders of this troubled part of the world.

In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, hundreds of thousands of Orangemen came to the City Hall in Belfast, lined up and signed in their own blood a covenant

in which they committed themselves never to yield to Catholic rule in their land. A few weeks later, hundreds of thousands of Catholics came and signed in their blood another covenant in which they swore never to give up the struggle against what they perceived to be Protestant tyranny. But now, a new generation is rising up and in biblical terminology is writing a new covenant. If you could talk to these young people, you would be convinced that there is nothing in the world that can stop these stouthearted men and women in their quest for peace. ■



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# Religion And The World Crisis

By William E. Hull, Research Professor  
Samford University, Birmingham, AL

**Editor's Note:** The article is an expanded study version of a sermon preached at the Mountain Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama, September 30, 2001.

In recent years we have witnessed a remarkable upsurge of freedom in our world. The Berlin Wall came tumbling down and with it the collapse of Soviet Communism. Nelson Mandela was released from prison, breaking the iron grip of apartheid in South Africa. With a couple of symbolic handshakes, first by Begin and Sadat, then by Rabin and Arafat, it seemed that intractable hostilities between Jews and Arabs might finally abate. As the half-century Cold War began to thaw, America relished the prospect of a "peace dividend" that would usher in a new era of unrivaled prosperity.

But before these millennial expectations could be fulfilled, an ominous new threat arose which foreshadows a civilizational clash of global proportions.<sup>1</sup> Each of its three defining moments launched a decade: First was the 1979-80 hostage crisis in Iran which all of our diplomatic and military might proved impotent to solve. Then came the 1990-91 Gulf War which, despite the success of Operation Desert Storm, left Saddam Hussein as entrenched as ever in Iraq. And now we reel from the terrorist attack of 2001 upon our own citadels of commerce and government, which we seemed helpless to anticipate or prevent. In all three instances, a fanatic fringe of Islam with roots in the Middle East has been able to hold hostage our long-deferred dream of universal peace.

My purpose today is not to second-guess our national leaders by proposing a political solution to the current crisis. Nor do I claim any special competence in the military or diplomatic aspects of the confrontation. Rather, my aim is to help us interpret what Jesus called "the signs of the times" (Luke 12:56), to discover the claims of God which this momentous crisis lays upon our lives. I hope to do that by probing the Muslim faith embraced by the overwhelming majority of the populace in the Middle East.

Unfortunately, the Islamic world has long been a mystery to Americans, especially as regards its 1,379 year history. Since this is the dimension most neglected in the media analyses, let us begin with a swift sketch of how the past has profoundly shaped the problems which we now confront in the present.

## I. The Islamic Crisis in Historical Perspective

The founding of Islam is dated to the life of its supreme prophet Mohammed (born c. A.D. 570) who, in the month of Ramadan, 610, experienced a "Night of Power"

when he began to hear the voice of the Angel Gabriel revealing to him the Koran, God's eternal and infallible word. In 622, Mohammed made his fateful migration (*Hegira*) from Mecca to Medina, thus marking the start of the Muslim calendar. In the next ten years, before his sudden death in 632, he virtually completed his mission of unifying the diverse tribes of the vast Arabian peninsula under a theocracy governed by the one and only God, Allah. During the following century his movement spread like a devouring fire to the East and the West. Turned back in Europe at Tours, 135 miles southwest of Paris, by Charles Martel in 732, Islam's expansive force was spent only after it had sunk deep roots in Africa and Asia and become the last great empire of the ancient world.<sup>2</sup> The magnitude of medieval Islam has seldom received its rightful place in world history. George Sarton, the Harvard historian of science, has written that in the tenth century, "The main task of mankind was accomplished by Moslems. The greatest philosopher . . . mathematicians . . . geographer and encyclopedist" were all Moslem.<sup>3</sup> From Islam came the rediscovery of Aristotle and the first scientific astronomy and medicine since the Greeks. By the time Columbus discovered America, this desert faith was not only the largest religion in the world but, in some respects, its most universal. For as the Arab empire decolonized itself, vast stretches of the world's great sunbelt were left "permanently caught in the light but unbreakable net of a common Islamic culture."<sup>4</sup>

The centuries following this Golden Age were unkind to Islam, leaving it intellectually stagnant, politically impotent, and economically exhausted at the opening of the twentieth century. Perhaps its low point came in 1924 when the caliphate, or dynastic rulership, was abolished by Kemal Ataturk in connection with the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire. This move was part of a herculean effort to modernize the fossilized civilization of Islam, an effort which has deeply divided the Arab world ever since.

When enormous wealth suddenly became available with the discovery of vast oil reserves, an aristocratic elite set out to transplant Western technology to the Arabian peninsula. But with that Westernization came a set of cultural values repugnant to the traditional Islamic faith, which was growing from 300 million at mid-century to one billion 300 million adherents today. A look at the map will show that its area of dominant influence now stretches from the western shores of

North Africa to the eastern islands of Indonesia, a sweep which surpasses the size attained at the apex of its medieval glory.

This background prepares us to grapple with our first key insight: the crisis in the Middle East, at its deeper level, is the manifestation of a head-on collision between the modernizing power of Western consumerism and the tenacious conservatism of Islamic culture.<sup>5</sup> The United States has exacerbated this conflict by playing into the hands of those political leaders who would exploit an extremist Islamic fundamentalism for their own ends. As James Schlesinger shrewdly observed: "To move out of its isolationism, American society historically has required a crusade, and crusaders need to focus on infidels and rascals. . . . The great American presupposition is that other societies want to be like us. If they're not acting like us, it must be because of some Lucifer-like figure."<sup>6</sup> Believe me, Islamic militants can play the demonizing game as well as we can, making our presidents look as menacing as their ayatollahs.

The problem here is that, ever since the Middle Ages, the Arab World has been dominated by the West. We travel as tourists to glimpse the monuments of the Crusades, but Arabs live with these galling reminders of their subservience on a daily basis. In their eyes, every time the United States mobilizes the Western world to intervene with massive military force, it is but the latest in a series of "crusades" against the Arab world. Moreover, they interpret this intervention as support for the oil sheiks who have invested untold billions of petrodollars in the West even as the Middle East, for all of its vast resources, sinks into economic squalor. On this understanding, the Ayatollah Khomeini or Saddam Hussein or Osama bin Laden wins even if he loses because he is fighting a Holy War (*Jihad*) for Islamic self-determination, while the West is fighting only to protect an oil supply that feeds the voracious appetite of its insatiable consumerism.

Seen in the context of the centuries, therefore, George Bush and Osama bin Laden are but human symbols of vast historical forces locked in mortal combat. That is why it is foolish to suppose that this crisis will vanish if only our latest antagonist is assassinated. We know that bin Laden is but one of many political leaders shrewdly exploiting the implacable opposition of Islam to Western modernization. If we were to silence his voice today, other spokesmen would be drawn into the powerful political void which has existed in Islam since the abolition of empire and caliphate.<sup>7</sup>

Once the problem is defined in this fashion, many Americans are left wondering why the Middle East should get so upset over the imposition of something as wonderful as "Western Civilization." Does not this legacy bring with it all of the benefits of the scientific revolution? The great Islamist scholar Bernard Lewis answers plainly: "For vast numbers of Middle Easterners, Western-style economic methods brought poverty, Western-style political institutions brought tyranny, even Western-style warfare brought defeat."<sup>8</sup> But that still does not bring us to the heart of the problem, which is: How could admittedly profound cultural

differences cause these two civilizations to engage in such violent conflict? In particular, how could their religion condone the indiscriminate slaughter of innocent civilians? How could the Islamic concept of *Jihad*, meaning "struggle" or "exertion," which Mohammed interpreted as the individual's lifelong struggle to resist temptation, be used to justify random acts of mass terror?

Before we fly into a rage of religious judgmentalism in answering such questions, let us remember a few sobering facts. The Jewish and Christian scriptures of the Old Testament contain numerous references to "holy wars" which include the idea of *herem*, a Hebrew word meaning "anathema" or "separated," according to which the enemies of Israel were to be utterly destroyed without mercy (Deuteronomy 7:1-2; 20:16-18), including men, women, children, infants, and animals (1 Samuel 15:3). Even those Israelite towns that compromised the faith were to be torched "as a whole burnt offering to the Lord" that would become "a heap forever" never to be rebuilt (Deuteronomy 13:12-18).

This kind of extreme militancy has surfaced repeatedly in both Jewish and Christian history, notably in the medieval Crusades (1096-1396) which provided papal armies with abundant opportunities to ravage and plunder Muslim lands.<sup>10</sup> Thus when bin Laden ignited anti-American passions in 1998 by issuing a *fatwa*, or religious ruling, declaring it to be "the individual duty" of every Muslim "to kill Americans and their Allies—civilians and military . . . in any country in which it is possible,"<sup>11</sup> he was merely borrowing an old religious idea from some of his Abrahamic cousins.

In the light of this historical background, we now see that our challenge is much larger than capturing Osama bin Laden and destroying his terrorist network. However these problems are resolved, we will still be left with the bitter confrontation between Western modernism and Islamic traditionalism. Therefore, let us now evaluate these two warring options to see if we can discover a way beyond the impasse that so deeply divides them.

## II. A Critique of Islamic Traditionalism and Western Modernism

Turning first to the situation in Islam, the reactionary mentality prevalent among its masses throws into bold relief the dangers inherent in all forms of religious fanaticism. Here is a militant religious movement offering authoritarian opinions based on a literalistic interpretation of one ancient book to which zealous followers give unquestioning obedience. Quite simply, it is old-fashioned religious fundamentalism raised to the level of national and international policy. The problem is not that Muslims have no right to their convictions, or that they are not entitled to base them on the Koran, or that they are wrong to urge them on others. The problem, rather, is that their views are both determined and delivered with finality, that there is no room for alternative viewpoints, that self-criticism has been overwhelmed by certainty. In a word, the root problem is that of religious absolutism, treating our understandings which are human and

therefore contingent as God's decrees which are divine and therefore categorical.

To cite the most current example: in Afghanistan, the ruling regime in Kabul is called "Taliban," a Persian word meaning "students," so called because they emerged in late 1994 out of traditional Islamic schools located in the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan, a lawless region ruled by tribal chiefs and smugglers of arms and hashish. After gaining popular notoriety fighting Soviet infidels in the 1980s, these untried and narrowly trained "students" seized control of Afghanistan in 1997 from the feuding warlords who had plunged the country into civil war. Immediately they imposed a rigidly puritanical version of Islamic law by issuing a litany of repressive edicts not found in the Koran, the first of which ended all education for females from kindergarten up. A woman was not to step outside the home and would receive 100 lashes if seen with a man not her relative. Banned were music, dancing, television, Internet, Western hairstyles, and photographs of any living thing. All of this from "students" of a school whose faculty of religious scholars (*ulema*) teach nothing from the modern era but only Islamic tradition that is memorized, not discussed.<sup>12</sup>

The tragic consequences of this mindset unfolding in the Middle East should warn us against some of the same symptoms that have emerged in American life. The "noise level" is rising in many pulpits as popular preachers bellow and scream with a stridency that says unmistakably, "Don't talk back, I have declared the last word, take it or leave it!" A new zealotism among the masses welcomes this bombast as a way of verbalizing gut feelings of anger and frustration over the course of human events. One veteran participant in Baptist life remarked after attending a highly publicized showcase of such preaching, "Anybody who brought his mind to this meeting wouldn't know what to do with it." Whenever we allow others to do our thinking for us just because they rant and rave while waving a Bible in the air, we are starting down the same dangerous road that Islamic fundamentalists are now walking.

A particular problem with the religious totalitarianism in Islam is that it is fused to the political ideal of a theocratic civilization. Throughout its history, Islam has steadfastly advocated the union, rather than the separation, of church and state. That is why ayatollahs can issue edicts touching on every aspect of private and public life, from decisions of national diplomacy down to minute details of manners and morals. Again, the issue is not whether God's will embraces the totality of life, or whether clerics may hold an opinion as to what God's will might be on any particular point. The issue, rather, is whether expertise in the Koran, or in any other scripture, confers an omnicompetence—or indeed, any special competence at all!—in areas not directly related to religion. Do religious leaders have a monopoly on the full

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range of human wisdom, or does God guide others into secular callings where they may become far more expert in the affairs of statecraft than scriptural specialists ever could?

To be sure, it would simplify things if we could put all of the problems of life into one basket and hand them over to a prophet for solution. But God does not offer any such shortcuts to building a better world. If politicians could find all the answers by becoming experts in Scripture and theology, they would line up to enroll in the nearest seminary. But our most sensitive and spiritually committed public officials have learned, on the contrary, that true faith, far from conferring easy answers

to complex problems, may actually intensify the difficulty of finding a just but workable solution. Issues of governance need to be discussed on the basis of input from a wide range of viewpoints, with differing conclusions likely from equally sincere and dedicated Christians. To determine public policy by single issue crusades which equate one position with the will of God for American life is to drift toward the very disaster which is unfolding in Islam.

To reject Islamic fundamentalism, however, does not mean that we are to embrace the Westernized modernism that is championed as its alternative. For even in the West we are beginning to realize that this way of life is not an unmixed blessing. The scientific method has brought a vast increase in knowledge but with it a positivism that questions the reality of anything transcendent. Technology has brought a cornucopia of prosperity but with it an insatiable materialism shot through with competitive selfishness. Psychology has brought an introspective individualism but with it a narcissistic infatuation that shreds the fabric of community and leaves an aching loneliness in its place. Too often, the controlling ideology of modernism has brought with it a secularism of spirit, a relativism of values, a reductionism of purpose calculated to erode the religious foundations of Western civilization.

If we in America are having second thoughts about our consumerist culture, imagine what millions of Middle Eastern peasants are thinking who cannot come to America to discover our better side. They see only what we export: our movies, our television, our magazines, our celebrities. What if you were a foreigner being fed a steady diet of dubbed reruns of "Dallas" and "Dynasty" as a showcase of American culture? There one sees all of our insatiable greed, imbued with the hubris and macho for which we are hated, treating the most sacred expressions of sex as a casual conquest for nothing more than momentary pleasure. No wonder the mullahs sound credible when they insist that the struggle is not between Islam and Christianity but between believers and infidels!

In this anguished moment of human history, therefore,



we must transcend the temptation to embrace either extreme that has polarized our two cultures almost to the breaking point. On the one hand, we could be driven by our shame over Western decadence to conclude that Islam is right and so try to become as fanatic, legalistic, and absolutist about our religion as their most reactionary followers are about theirs. On the other hand, we could be stampeded, not by remorse but by anger, to conclude that we are right and that Osama bin Laden and his ilk should be bombed back into the Stone Age from whence they so recently emerged, after which we can get back to the main business of making as much money as possible.

Clearly we need to reject both of these extremes and search, instead, for a way to unite the passion for material progress in the West with the passion for spiritual stability in Islam.<sup>13</sup> The deepest lesson of the present crisis is that both antagonists stand judged, Islam for its effort to turn back the clock and so have no future, the West for its effort to abandon all spiritual foundations and so have no past. Finally, it is theologically illegitimate to choose between the Western drive to have dominion over the secular and the Islamic drive to have dominion over the sacred because God is our creator as well as our redeemer who calls us to honor both the physical and the spiritual, to love both the earthly and the heavenly—which is exactly what he did when “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14).

### III. The Challenge of the Present Crisis

Now that we have some sense of the issues involved, how shall we respond to the present crisis? There are clearly two stages in this response. The first is to root out and remove the threat of terrorism wherever it may lurk. In this regard, let us give our duly constituted public officials all of the loyal support that conscience will permit as they execute what Paul called “God’s wrath on the wrongdoers” (Romans 13:4). But once that effort succeeds, we must be ready to wage peace just as aggressively as we have waged war. Indeed, a long-range strategy for making peace should be integral to our short-range strategy for making war. In formulating these plans, I have three suggestions to offer regarding our responsibilities as global Christians, plus a concluding remark regarding our role as American citizens.

First, let us categorically reject the use of violence to fight “holy wars” in the name of God. In all three Abrahamic faiths—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—a small but noisy minority of fundamentalists use a simplistic and literalistic understanding of Scriptural inerrancy to sanction the kind of slaughter which long ago accompanied the Israelite conquest of Palestine. It is just here that the disputed principle of using Christ as the criterion of biblical interpretation is so crucial.<sup>14</sup> Measured by the ministry of Jesus, and by the example of his first followers, the use of indiscriminate violence to fight “holy wars” has absolutely no place in the will of God for his people. We as Christians cannot invite Judaism and Islam to join us in that understanding unless we first put our own house in order.

Second, let us strengthen rather than weaken the wall of separation between church and state. In Baptist history this relationship was needed because we were a despised minority persecuted by the magistrates on behalf of an established church. But in the present crisis it is needed so that Christianity will be clearly perceived by all, not as an American religion or even a Western religion, but as a global religion not beholden to any country or culture. This does not mean that we cannot voluntarily cooperate with various governmental entities on matters of mutual concern. What it does mean is that preachers and politicians alike should recognize the enormous value of protecting the complete freedom of Christianity to function in the present crisis as a universal faith unencumbered by entangling alliances with any nation-state. Both Judaism and Islam find it extremely difficult to adopt this stance because of theocratic assumptions in their traditions, which make it all the more important for American Christianity to provide an unambiguous example of how it may be done.

Third, let us concentrate in this crisis on the commonalities that Christianity shares with Judaism and Islam rather than on the differences that divide us. To be sure, there is a time and place to emphasize the distinctives of our faith, even the ways in which we may consider it superior to other options. But now we need to explore the extent to which we can present a united front against extremist partisans in all three movements who would sanction lawless violence as a legitimate response to one’s enemies. The central point to be considered in such trilateral conversations is surely the monotheism which is at the core of the Abrahamic religions. For if there really is only one God, as all three faiths emphatically affirm, then this universal deity must be the God of us all, friend and foe alike. Finally there is no place for tribalism, or even for nationalism, in religion if God is truly one, and the three great monotheistic religions need to learn how to say that loud and clear with one voice.

The consensus of the commentators is that the twenty-first century did not begin at 12:01 a.m. on January 1, 2000 in Times Square, but at 8:45 a.m. on September 11, 2001 in the World Trade Center. In this new era when things will never be the same again, we now live in an interconnected, interdependent world threatened by powerful forces that transcend the national borders behind which we once felt secure. One of the most destructive of those forces is an intractable intolerance posing as religious fervor which enjoys more popular support than it deserves because of a seething resentment by the masses against Western imperialism. If the twentieth century taught us anything, it is that once ideological hatred is deified, its fury knows no bounds.

To rid the world of that hydra-headed monster, America will need not only its military might but a new mindset. Before September 11, all that we could talk about was how to cut taxes, reduce government spending, and prop up an economy that was in danger of falling below the double-digit yields to which we had become accustomed. In the recent presidential campaign, for example, our global responsibility

as a nation was hardly discussed by either candidate because the polls showed that voters couldn't care less. If September 11 taught us anything, it is that the richest nation in the world cannot spend all of its time and energy becoming even richer and let the rest of the world go to hell in a handbasket. If we try that approach long enough, the embittered whom we ignore will bring their hell to our shores in a suicidal frenzy of wanton destruction.

So we are tutored by tragedy in the lessons of *noblesse oblige*, that privilege imposes obligations. The time has come to set aside our consuming greed for extravagance and relearn the disciplines of compassion for those homeless and starving millions living on the outer edge of human subsistence. It will not be easy to show the world that we care for others as much as we care for ourselves. Indeed, it may prove easier to win the war against terrorism than to win the peace against that desperation which makes it possible. But we do not have to look far to find models of selfless global commitment that is the overriding imperative of our present crisis. They are called missionaries. The church has been sending them out for twenty centuries as agents of a universal faith intent on uniting the entire human race in a fellowship of life and love.

While we need Christian missionaries as never before to help overcome the cleavages caused by our religious animosities, we also need missionaries of the American way of life at its best: travelers, entrepreneurs, teachers, social workers, agriculturalists, engineers, and a host of others willing to go and give, willing to listen and learn, willing to save and share that a broken world might be rebuilt on the basis of mutual tolerance and respect. The task will not be easy nor will it be brief. There is little hope of changing the entrenched attitudes of those long infested with the virus of violence, but we can begin to lay the foundations of a new world order in which the moderating forces of justice and compassion in all of our religions can gain the upper hand. My hope is that we as a nation will not gain the whole world only to lose our soul. Rather, I pray that we give our soul to the whole world and thereby gain the chance to live in peace with all humanity. ■

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<sup>1</sup> The thesis that geopolitics is entering a new phase in which conflict will be primarily cultural rather than national was advanced by Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, Summer, 1993, 22-49; subsequently expanded into a book, *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996). On the discussion generated see *The Clash of Civilizations? The Debate. A Foreign Affairs Reader* (New York: Foreign Affairs, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> For a picturesque account of this conquest, with a map showing its extent, see Thomas J. Abercrombie, "The Sword

and the Sermon," *National Geographic*, July, 1972, 3-44.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in *Time*, April 16, 1965, 73.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Brown, "Understanding Islam," *The New York Review of Books*, February 22, 1979, 30.

<sup>5</sup> For a comprehensive study see Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York: Times Books, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> *Time*, September 3, 1990, 40.

<sup>7</sup> Note the summary of a paper by Muzammil Siddiqi on "Transnational Organizations in the Muslim World" in *Harvard Seminar on Muslim-Jewish-Christian Faith Communities as Transnational Actors for Peace and Justice: Report and Interpretation*, edited by Joseph Gremillion (Washington: Interreligious Peace Colloquium, 1979), 10-15.

<sup>8</sup> Bernard Lewis, "Western Civilization: A View From the East," The Jefferson Lecture for 1990, cited in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 9, 1990, A4.

<sup>9</sup> For a convenient summary see Roland deVaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 258-267.

<sup>10</sup> For a general summary of Christian relations with Islam in the Middle Ages see Jeremy Johns, "Christianity and Islam," *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, edited by John McManners (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 163-195. His conclusion: "Yet, the dominant reaction of Western Christendom towards Islam remained violently xenophobic. The majority view was that Muslims were subhuman brutes, diabolically inspired, and unworthy of the rights and considerations due to mankind" (193).

<sup>11</sup> Cited in *U. S. News & World Report*, September 24, 2001, 56.

<sup>12</sup> Information in this illustration is drawn from Daniel Del Castillo, "Pakistan's Islamic Colleges Provide the Taliban's Spiritual Fire," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 28, 2001, A19, A21.

<sup>13</sup> I have been influenced in such a quest by trilateral conversations involving Christian, Jewish, and Muslim economic and religious leaders at a symposium sponsored by The Interreligious Peace Colloquium, Lisbon, Portugal, November 7-11, 1977. For proceedings of the conference see Joseph Gremillion and William Ryan, editors, *World Faiths and the New World Order: A Muslim-Jewish-Christian Search Begins* (Washington: Interreligious Peace Colloquium, 1978). The key paper contributing to this sermon was by Professor Robert Bellah who used the concepts of a "second naivete" and of a "dialectic or return" to discuss how we might move beyond both modern ideology and uncritical religious traditionalism.

<sup>14</sup> The Baptist Faith and Message statement of 1963 contained the statement, "The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ" (Article I on The Scriptures). This statement was removed in the 2000 revision.

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# After September 11<sup>©</sup>

*By Gilbert Milaender*

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In the terrible terrorist attacks of September 11, thousands of our fellow citizens were buried under the rubble. The rest of us have been buried under the rubble of words that followed. It is hard to criticize such words; all of us utter trivial platitudes in moments when events simply exceed our capacity for reflection and insight. Some words are always appropriate—prayers, for example, for those who have suffered most directly from the attacks. But I confess that, apart from such prayers, I have not been much helped by most of the Christian talk I have heard. Much of it, indeed, has seemed strangely irrelevant, as if we have lost the capacity to bring our theological talk into any serious relation with the world we inhabit. This seeming irrelevance may—as I hope—reflect nothing more than my own narrow range of experience, but there are things Christians ought to say that I myself have not much heard. Each of these points is complicated and arguable. I do not attempt to sort out all their complications here, and I may not have articulated them in the best possible way, but I would be helped by hearing them discussed.

First, Christians should care about justice. In our eagerness to understand what might have motivated Islamic terrorists, in our quite proper desire to remind ourselves that vengeance has been taken out of our private hands (because reserved for God!), we dare not lose the language of justice. What we have experienced is not a tragedy; it is different from the devastation brought by earthquake or flood. When innocent people are killed—and killed deliberately, as is the point of terrorism—those who are guilty ought to be punished. And civil authorities exist by God's providential ordering both to protect their citizens against such attacks in the future and to serve as the agent of God's punitive justice.

We know, of course, that the terrorist networks which threaten us have their own litanies of injustice to recite, going back at least to the destruction of the Ottoman Empire. Some of these complaints are, no doubt, more well grounded than others, but we need not sort them out here. Rather, we must say that to understand all is not to forgive all—only to understand. And what we understand is just this: that terrorists, consumed by sorrow and hatred, do evil and bring guilt upon themselves.

Perhaps, even though the lines of descent are more complicated than we can trace, we ourselves bear some responsibility for the hatred that consumes them. Then we must

make our confession of sin and resolve to do better. But we might usefully return at this time to Reinhold Niebuhr to be reminded that the “equality of sin” we all share does not efface the “inequality of guilt” that also exists. Terrorists have done terribly evil deeds—and will do more if they are not stopped. That guilt must be punished, those possible future deeds thwarted, and civil government exists as God's servant to carry out such tasks. Perhaps we should even learn again not simply to recoil when Calvin says that the magistrate who refuses to bloody his sword dishonors God. In short, unless and until Christians can bring their talk of “reconciliation” and “forgiveness” into some coherent relation with the equally theological language of “justice,” that theological talk will be largely idle.

Second, we need to acknowledge that we stand in relationships of special moral responsibility to certain people, such as our fellow citizens. For Christians our final loyalty can never be to any earthly community, and we know that the very greatness of a nation such as ours can all too easily evoke an idolatrous love. Indeed, what we share with Christians scattered throughout the world, even in states hostile to ours, is ultimately more significant than what we share as Americans. Ultimately. But, again, if we are unable to bring those theological truths into any living relationship with bonds of great penultimate importance, our talk is largely idle.

Indeed, if we can find no way to speak of and acknowledge the special ties we have to those who share with us a particular way of life in our communities and nation, then our talk becomes more Gnostic than Christian. In the days immediately following September 11 there has, of course, been much talk that affirms these particular bonds, but I have in mind specifically Christian talk. We are good at “embracing the whole human family,” but we seem less able to connect that (important) affirmation with the truth that God places us in particular communities to which we have special obligations.

It is inevitable at a time such as this that we should hear much talk about America's greatness. And America is in many respects a very great nation. But America has our loyalty as citizens not because it is great, but because it is the place—and the people—given us. Precisely that is our protection against an idolatrous loyalty. But we cannot have that protection if we are merely citizens of the world or members

of the human family—as if we had no location in space and time. Once we have recognized the special obligations that bind us we can go on to remind ourselves that the terrorists have sinned not just against Americans but against humanity. We should hold them responsible on both counts.

Third, Christians need to talk seriously about Islam, for, at least in my judgment, this is a moment in which Islam is being tested. The Christian talk I have heard—and, again, perhaps my range of listening is too narrow—has been almost exclusively concerned to make certain that we not stereotype Arabs, and that we not imagine that these terrorists are genuine representatives of Islamic teaching. Fair enough. That should be said, and I do not think we are in any danger of not having it said—at least among the Christians to whom I have been listening.

But we also stand at the point where Samuel Huntington's "coming clash of civilizations" seems to have arrived with a bang. However many qualifications must also be made, this clash is in many respects between Islamic countries and the Christian West. If our desire to be politically correct is so intense that we cannot say this, think what we really say by our silence. We deny that centuries of Christian faith have had any shaping, transformative impact on the West. We say that our faith is largely irrelevant to the culture it has inhabited for two millennia. Not just words, but the faith itself then seems idle. The influence of Christianity upon our civilization has not always been benign, of course. It has sometimes been bad. But Christian believers have developed a considerable capacity for self-criticism, for criticism of the very communities they love most, and our civilization has been shaped in large measure by that capacity.

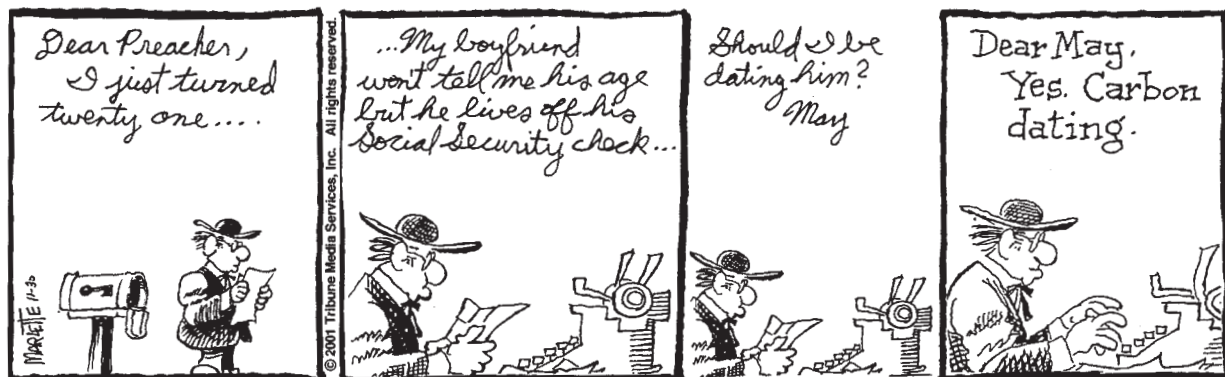
Two great civilizations, each formed to a considerable degree by religious belief, now confront each other, and Islam's capacity for such self-criticism, its standing as a great "world religion," is being tested. In order to help us make the distinctions we must make between these terrorists and Islam at its best, we need to hear from Islamic leaders sincere condemnation of the attacks. Not ambiguous comments

designed to ward off military reprisal, and not condemnations which—in the same breath—condemn Israel. We cannot do this for them; they must do it themselves.

Finally, we need to remind ourselves that it is not within our power to make ourselves, our nation or those we love most "secure." Perhaps we have sometimes forgotten that simple truth of the faith, forgotten how fragile and delicate a flower is our life and our civilization. If so, the terrorist attacks have been a terrible way of reminding us of truths we should have known.

On October 22, 1939, at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin in Oxford, C.S. Lewis preached at evensong. To anxious undergraduates, many of whom would soon face death, and all of whom must have wondered what they were doing studying mathematics or metaphysics at a time when their nation was in mortal peril, Lewis said: "If we had foolish unchristian hopes about human culture, they are now shattered. If we thought we were building up a heaven on earth, if we looked for something that would turn the present world from a place of pilgrimage into a permanent city satisfying the soul of man, we are disillusioned, and not a moment too soon." The threat of war and the possibility of imminent death only magnify what is the permanent condition of human life, and great though the beauty and joy of life often is, there is no security to be found here.

Every time we have some national "tragedy" such as a school shooting we trot out the therapists and counselors who advise us on how to help our children feel secure—so that, I guess, even as children they may live a contented, bourgeois existence. Perhaps Christians need to say something different to their children. "My child, the world is always a dangerous and threatening place where death surrounds us. When I brought you for baptism I acknowledged that I could not possibly guarantee your future. I handed you over to the God who loves you and with whom you are safe in both life and death. There is no security to be found elsewhere, certainly not from me or those like me. Live with courage, therefore, and, if it must be, do not be afraid to die in service of what is good and just." ■



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# Quarreling With God

By James M. Wall, Senior Contributing Editor  
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**Editor's Note:** This episode of *The West Wing* was re-run on September 19, 2001. Reprinted by permission from the June 6-13, 2001, issue of *The Christian Century*. Subscriptions: \$42/yr. (36 issues), from P.O. Box 378, Mt. Morris, IL 61054. 1-800-208-4097.

God so barely is taken seriously on television that it came as a shock when President Josiah Bartlet on *The West Wing* orders his Secret Service detail to block all entrances to the National Cathedral so that he might have a little one-on-one with the Lord. The president wants to talk about divine justice following the funeral of his longtime friend and personal assistant. Mrs. Landingham, killed when her car was hit by a drunken driver.

The day has not gone well for Bartlet. The American embassy in Haiti is under siege. The country is about to learn that their president has multiple sclerosis, a fact he kept from voters at election time; his party doesn't want him to run for reelection; and his enemies are calling for a special prosecutor to see if he violated any laws by keeping his illness from the public. Then, just when he needs her the most, Mrs. Landingham is taken from him.

In a flashback to 1960, we see the emerging relationship between Bartlet, the prep school student, and Landingham, the school's administrative assistant. She recognizes his promise and sees through his defensive shield and his effort to avoid confrontation with his father, the headmaster, who, as she later tells him, "is a prick."

This season's final episode of *The West Wing*, titled "Two Cathedrals," considers God's role in human affairs. A typical television script touches lightly on conventional emotions, just enough to hold a viewer's attention between ads, but not so much that any serious thought is required. When religion shows up, it's usually in the form of sweet angels answering distress calls or seasonal programs that offer either bland portrayals of piety or literal stories of a bearded young Jesus on a walkabout in a first-century desert.

*The West Wing*, which for two seasons has insightfully examined the personal and political lives of staff members working for a liberal Democratic president, is different. The program is a joy to watch, a reminder of what television might be had it not descended into the "vast wasteland" of exploitative mediocrity.

With the cathedral doors closed to all, Bartlet (played by Martin Sheen) begins an angry confrontation by addressing God as "you son of a bitch," followed by a sarcastic "gratias tibi ago, domine" ("Thank you, Lord"). Speaking in a mixture of English and Latin, he offers a checklist of the Job-like

woes that have struck him.

There are no subtitles for the Latin, but Michael Myer has offered this translation on a Web site:

Haec credam a deo pio, a deo justo, a deo scito? ("Am I to believe these things from a righteous god, a just god, a wise god?"). Cruciatu in cruce ("To hell with your punishments?" [literally, "Put/send punishments onto a cross"]). Tuus in terra servus, nuntius fui; officum perfeci ("I was your servant, your messenger on the earth; I did my duty"). Cruciatu in cruce (with a dismissive wave of the hand)—eas in cruce ("To hell with your punishments? And to hell with you?" [literally, "May you go to a cross"]).

Bartlet, a strong Catholic and a graduate of Notre Dame, has revealed his religious side before. Once, while interviewing a person seeking asylum from the People's Republic of China who claimed to have suffered religious persecution, Bartlet led his visitor into a discussion of Judges 12, looking for the correct pronunciation of "shibboleth." When his visitor passes the test, the president knows at least that his visitor has a grasp of the Bible.

In the cathedral episode's concluding moments, Bartlet, briefly forgetting that Landingham is dead, shouts for her to come close a door, which has blown open in a storm. Evoked in memory, she comes into his thoughts, and her voice rebukes him for his faulty theological reasoning: "God doesn't make cars crash and you know it. Stop using me as an excuse."

With Dire Straits' song "Brothers in Arms" playing on the soundtrack, the president, his courage restored, is driven through the storm to a State Department auditorium where he confronts the media. Asked if he will run for reelection, he smiles slightly, and shoves his hands into his pocket—body language which, we have learned earlier from Landingham, means that he has made up his mind to do the right thing. But we will have to wait until next season to see what it is.

Mrs. Landingham won't be back as his secretary, but look for her to return as his conscience, the voice of the one friend who knew him well enough to know that his anger with God is really unresolved anger toward his father. She will also be around to remind him of words he used in the cathedral, a quotation from Graham Greene: "You can't conceive, nor can I, the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God." ■

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# The Christian Tradition on War and Peace: Reflections on the Current Crisis

*By David Gushee, Union University*

The shocking and horrifying terrorist attacks of September 11, and current US mobilization for what appears to be an imminent military response, raise the perennial issue of the Christian stance on issues of war and peace. This is not only a fascinating historical moment, and a tragic human moment, but an instructive ethical moment—an opportunity to think deeply, to think christianly, about the most pressing issue of our day.

We need to think deeply, and christianly, about two things: the shape of Christian moral convictions about warfighting and peace-making, and the methodological issue of how we decide what those convictions will be. So this article is an exercise not just in articulating Christian moral norms, but also being self-conscious in reflecting on the methodology by which we arrive at such norms.

## The Scriptures

Nearly every branch of the Christian family tree claims that the Bible is somehow significant for shaping how Christian people are to live and think. Evangelical Christianity is distinctive, however, in claiming that the Bible is the single authoritative source for Christian faith and practice. Let us attempt to be true to this methodological distinctive by exploring the Scriptures as they stand before moving to moral traditions about war that the church later developed.

God's written Word does not speak with the simplicity and obvious clarity on the issue of war that it does on, say, the issue of adultery or honoring father and mother. At the root of our challenge as people who take biblical authority seriously is the undeniable complexity of the biblical witness on this issue.

The Old Testament witness begins with the story of God's creation of the world and of humanity. Made in the image of God, placed in a creation declared good by its Creator, the primeval man and woman enjoyed harmony at every level—with God, with each other, and with all other creatures.

The turning of Adam and Eve away from obedience toward disobedience, their foolish decision to reject God's will, introduces sin into God's good creation and destroys the primordial harmony. Now alienation characterizes relationships between people and God and among people. Among the most distressing and disastrous effects of the introduction of sin into the world is the resort to violence, beginning with Cain's fratricidal murder of his brother Abel and moving to a broader reality of violence, mayhem, and murder as charac-

teristic of the human condition. God meets human violence with revulsion, outrage, and divine judgment in the form of the Flood: "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them" (Gen. 6:13a). After the Flood, God makes a covenant with Noah that includes provisions demanding reverence for life and a "reckoning" from any human being who spills the blood of another (Gen. 9:5).

God's calling of Abraham begins the long journey of redemptive history with the people who will come to be called the Jews. The patriarchal narratives involving Abraham and his kinfolk are largely free of warfighting, with an exception depicting Abraham as a defensive warrior in Gen. 14 (rallying troops to rescue Lot and his family and goods from invaders who had snatched them).

God's liberation of the Hebrew slaves in Exodus is by no means free of death, and yet is distinctive in that the Hebrews themselves do not lift a finger or a sword in their own behalf. Israel always remembered and celebrated that it was God alone who rescued them from the Egyptians: "Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians" (Ex. 14:31a). Yahweh is the warrior.

The height of military violence in the Old Testament is reached in the accounts of the conquest of the Promised Land. These stories, told in the book of Joshua, depict a divinely ordained destruction of Canaanite towns and "everything that breathed" (Joshua 10:40), in most cases including not only warriors but women, children, and animals. This holy war motif would have fateful echoes in the long history of the people of God, both Jewish and Christian.

Once established in the Land, warfighting does not end. In fact, the entire book of Judges tells numerous tales of defensive military actions required by threats from Philistines and others. The united monarchy under David and Solomon, and then the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah, also saw plenty of war as well, sometimes with each other. The texts at times celebrate the prowess of Israel's warriors, but yet reveal an ambivalence about violence and its costs. The later Old Testament tells the sad story of first Israel's and then Judah's vicious destruction at the hands of foreign enemies, as well as the sometimes violent persecutions wreaked upon Jews in the Babylonian and Persian diaspora, as in the books of Daniel and Esther. The prophetic writings mix sometimes violent warnings of coming divine judgment with the dream of a restored Israel, a messianic future, an eschatological age in

which peace at last prevails and spears are beaten into pruning hooks—even the animals live in peace.

The New Testament depicts Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of all strands of the Old Testament and as the long-awaited messianic king. And yet despite echoes in the birth narratives of the theme of a militantly kingly messiah (Lk. 1:46-55), Jesus explicitly rejects recourse to violence, despite opportunities and invitations to take that path. When quoting Old Testament texts and prophecies, he consistently omits references to vengeance and war (Lk. 4:18-19; cf. Isa. 61:2). He proclaims peacemakers blessed sons and daughters of God. He teaches practices of peacemaking such as seeking reconciliation with those one is estranged from, and surprising oppressors with potentially transformative initiatives (go the second mile, turn the other cheek—Mt. 5:21-48). He enjoins the love of enemies and prayer for persecutors. He weeps over Jerusalem and laments that she did not know the things that make for peace. He comes not as a rebel ready to kill for a cause but as a suffering servant ready to die for one. He proclaims God's kingly rule but exercises it via powerlessness on the Cross, where he is mocked for his trust in God. The rightness (and righteousness) of his path is vindicated by the Resurrection after the savage but salvific indignity of the Cross.

The rest of the New Testament documents the spread of the Jesus-movement, empowered by God's Spirit. Clear echoes of Jesus' teaching on love, suffering, sacrifice, peacemaking resound throughout New Testament books (cf. Rom. 12:14-21). This group is courageous, committed, zealous, and nonviolent—they are victimized by the violence of others, but teach and practice patience under persecution. They respect legitimate government authority (Rom. 13) but are also wounded and eventually deeply aggrieved by the violent misuse of Roman power (cf. Rev.). The New Testament ends with a vision of a cataclysmic day of reckoning for Christ's enemies but that vision itself ends with perfect peace, with all tears wiped away at last.

### The Traditions

Scripture's witness on this issue is so multifaceted and complex that it has perhaps inevitably produced multiple traditions. Varying theological and ethical traditions in Christian thought—at least, those that fall within orthodox boundaries—are best understood as responses to and developments of diverse strands within Scripture.

Christians tend, unconsciously or consciously, to read the diverse biblical witness as a whole, or on particular issues, through the refracting lens of tradition.

There is a critical methodological point to be made here. Unless we take the Catholic view that church tradition carries biblical-level authority because its correctness is guaranteed and its content God-breathed as Scripture is, then these tradi-

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## *Jesus explicitly rejects recourse to violence, despite opportunities and invitations to take that path.*

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tions do not carry any intrinsic authority. They may prove to have great value, but they can never be viewed as the final court of appeal in an evangelical theology or ethic. And we must be acutely aware of the dangers or errors that are always possible when dealing with traditions. Jesus juxtaposed the commands of God with human traditions (Mk. 7). We dare not confuse them either.

As we then go ahead and survey the Christian tradition pantry on war and peace, seeing what's in there, we find five options. Each has at various points and in various contexts been employed by Christians. Most presentations name two of these traditions. I think there are five. Let's survey them briefly.

### Pacifism

Pacifism is, essentially, the refusal to participate in and/or support war. Christian pacifists almost invariably ground their position primarily in the life and message of Jesus. Jesus taught enemy-love and nonresistance, or nonviolent resistance, to evil. How can his followers then kill or support killing? At a deeper theological level, Christian pacifists such as J. H. Yoder argue that the Christian narrative of Cross/Resurrection reveals that the real power in the universe is found in redemptive suffering rather than redemptive violence. We resort to force because we yearn to make history come out right; but, it is argued, Jesus already demonstrated that the way you make history come out right is through laying down your life rather than taking the lives of others. A new kind of power is visible in the universe, revealing that all other kinds of power are ultimately illusory.

Besides being grounded in Jesus' teaching and this understanding of the Cross, Christian pacifism ultimately has an ecclesiological foundation as well. Christians, as was so often argued in the early church, are citizens of heaven and of the church; not citizens of this earthly realm and its various governments. As resident aliens, the best service we can render Rome or Washington, whether they appreciate it or not, is our prayers, our life of love, and our nonviolent witness.

Three variations or issues within pacifism are worth noting briefly:

A. Some pacifist Christians have seen no legitimate role for force or violence by states; others, including most of the leading pacifist voices in the Christian tradition, have seen a carefully constrained role for the state related to coercion and violence but have simply said that the Christian cannot participate due to his or her identity as a Christ-follower.

B. Some pacifists have interpreted Jesus as requiring nonresistance to evil. But others, looking at Jesus' whole life, including the Cross itself, view him as offering nonviolent resistance to evil. He did battle, he waged war against evil, one might say, but he did not resort to evil to wage war against evil. "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil

with good.” (Rom. 12:21).

C. A final, rather practical variation under wartime conditions has been the distinction between not participating in any war-related activities vs. refusing to participate only in frontline soldiering and killing. Differences over this issue help to explain the varying ways pacifists have responded to military drafts and wars in the past.

It is common for non-pacifists to express a grudging respect for pacifists, but then to ignore and reject their views. Pacifists ask for more than that. They say, show us, from Scripture, how you can claim that Jesus is Lord and yet not follow his teachings or the example of the early church, which was overwhelmingly convinced that participation in war is simply incompatible with fidelity to Jesus Christ.

### Just War Theory/Tradition

Just War Theory (JWT) is the view that some wars are just, or at least justifiable, and that justifiable wars merit full Christian support and participation.

JWT has classical origins. Rudiments of this tradition can be found in Plato and Aristotle. The Roman Stoics developed a natural-law version of just war theory. Cicero’s formulations were influential as a code of conduct for the Roman Empire.

In its origins, JWT is essentially an argument from reason. Reason shows that war is an evil, but also that sometimes self-defense is required. Criteria are needed for determining when war is necessary, how it should be fought, and in what spirit. Just war theory, or theories, address such concerns.

Christian just war theory takes over classical approaches but adds several distinctive notes. The role of government in promoting order, advancing justice, and protecting the innocent is emphasized, grounded especially in Romans 13. The norm of peace, and the understanding of war as an evil, though at times a necessary one, takes root in the broad biblical narrative outlined earlier. The mournful spirit about war, rather than any celebration of war, is grounded in that same norm as well as in a sense of the sacredness of human life and the tragedy of killing.

JWT emerges after the official christianization of the Roman Empire as an ethic for Christian political leaders and those advising them. It is an effort to synthesize the full range of biblical materials with reason and the best of pre-Christian philosophy. What results is an approach that makes room for war, but not much; there is a strong presumption against war, and the burden of proof is on the prospective war-maker to demonstrate why this or that war is necessary. It also is an approach that places Christian clergy and theologians in the powerful position of critically assessing both the decision to wage war and how war is waged. It was not designed to be a blank check for any government.

The criteria for just war theory vary with different authors, but there is much internal discussion about these

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within the tradition. A basic summary would include the following (from *Challenge of Peace*):

**Jus ad Bellum** (just entry into war)

- a. Just cause: to protect innocent life, secure basic human rights, restore secure peace.
- b. Competent authority: war must be declared/waged by legitimate governmental authority.
- c. Comparative justice: our cause must be just, and it must be worth killing for.
- d. Right intention: pursuit of peace and reconciliation, not vengeance, territory, or pride.
- e. Probability of success: Victory must be

possible—if not, is it worth the bloodshed?

f. Proportionality: the costs incurred must be proportionate to the good expected.

g. Last resort: all peaceful alternatives must have been exhausted.

**Jus in bello** (just conduct of war)

a. Proportionality: continuing evaluation of costs and good of war.

b. Noncombatant immunity/discrimination: civilian populations may not be intentionally targeted or harmed; relates to treatment of prisoners of war as well.

JWT has played a unique role in the development of international law and codes of military conduct. It is one of the most visible legacies of the Christian moral tradition to the life of nations in the 21st century.

Pacifism can be critiqued for ignoring the full range of biblical texts outside of the Gospel accounts. It can also be critiqued for not taking seriously the continuing reality of sin. It may fail the test of reason related to how earthly power works and how the vicious and evil respond to vulnerability and nonresistance. It may be seen as demonstrating an indifference to the needs of the innocent neighbor.

However, JWT is not immune to criticism. It can be challenged for not paying enough attention to Jesus and his way, or for paying attention but finding ways to bracket off Jesus’ teachings by confining them to interpersonal relations, the future eschatological age, or the lofty heights of unrealizable high ideals. JWT is open to the challenge that in its deep desire to avoid victimization and loss of realism it may miss the redemptive possibilities that await Christians prepared to consider daring and creative alternatives to “reasonable” ways of thinking in a perverse world.

JWT also represents a shift in positioning for the church. When we assess government policy options and at times endorse war, we normally do so from a stance of being deeply invested in the well-being of our nation-state. We want history to come out right, from our own national perspective, and we are willing to endorse bloodshed to do it. It is hard to take this approach and end up retaining much of that flavor of being “resident aliens.” Instead we are fully invested national citizens and this poses the potential of threatening the integri-



ty of our primary allegiance to Jesus Christ.

Historically, it is simply a fact that JWT has proven easily manipulable. During WWI and WWII, for example, culturally Christian nations on all sides (and most of their clergy and theologians) viewed their nations' cause as just. The unleashed passions of national loyalty and aggrieved anger make rational JWT analysis extremely difficult. J.H. Yoder is right to say that most Christians actually operate out of an implicit third option—national interest wars—that is, we support and fight whatever wars our government chooses to fight, finding in JWT the convenient conceptual grounds needed, or not bothering with the theory at all.

One final practical critique—the rules and spirit proposed by JWT have been regularly ignored since at least WWII. JWT would clearly have ruled out not only the bombing of London and the starvation of Russian POWs, but also the firebombing of Dresden and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. One could add the Cold War targeting of atomic weapons at hundreds of civilian population centers. If they had even once been unleashed, the effect of even one nuclear weapon over, say, New York, would dwarf what happened September 11.

### Crusade

A third historic Christian option is the crusade, which can be defined as a war for what is deemed a transcendent or holy cause. Whereas pacifism and just war theory each retain ecclesiastical sponsors and widespread respect today, no such status exists for the crusade. For Christians, the moral repute of this position was shattered by the Crusades themselves, as well as by the wars of religion.

Grounded especially in a peculiar convergence of tendencies in Joshua and Revelation, the crusade ethic slips the constraints against violence offered by both pacifism and just war. In the crusade ethic, the cause is literally holy; it has a transcendent validation (it goes beyond mere politics and interest). This transcendent validation is known not by reason but by revelation, often mediated through a prophet or religious leader. The adversary has no rights, and restraint is no virtue because the enemy is not just our enemy, but God's enemy. The criterion of last resort does not apply and the war

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## *How do we obey Jesus by taking initiatives that bring the potential for peace?*

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need not be winnable—to fall in a holy cause is a moral victory, the surest path to heaven and blessedness (see Yoder, *Just and Unjust Wars*).

Going through this list we come face to face with the very jihad-mentality that appears to have motivated the attack on our nation on September 11. For the Muslim tradition, like the Christian, has the holy war in its ancient pantry. The tragic reality is that some in the Muslim world have

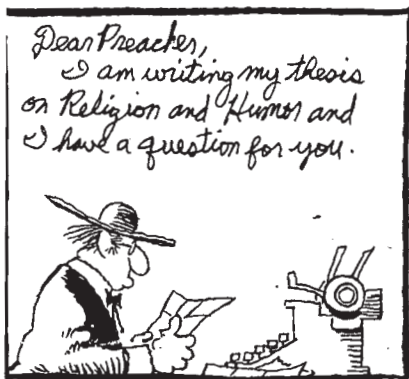
pulled jihad out of the pantry and are now teaching and practicing it.

But we need to be aware that crusade or holy war tendencies are not entirely absent from our own Christian and American vocabulary even today. The language of crusade was characteristic of US rhetoric during WWII, the Cold War, and the war against Saddam Hussein. President Bush's first rhetorical forays in the current conflict had crusade-like overtones: "we will rid the world of evildoers." Perhaps it is hard to gear up to kill people without investing our cause with holiness and theirs with evil. Crusade thinking must be viewed as a perennial and dangerous temptation rather than an ancient vestige of the Christian past.

### Just Peacemaking Theory

Just Peacemaking Theory (JPT) is an approach to war focusing on developing creative and concrete initiatives that can reduce international or civil tensions and move the nations toward justice, reconciliation, and a secure peace. I find it a very helpful complement to just war theory. The two positions together best approximate my own view.

Pioneered by Glen Stassen of Fuller Seminary, and now embraced by a significant number of ethicists and political scientists, JPT was born out of an impatience with both the practical and the biblical limits or blind spots of the other views we have been considering. Both JWT and pacifism ask the question, "Is it okay to make war?" JPT attempts to shift the question to "how do we obey Jesus by taking initiatives that bring the potential for peace?" JPT is in one sense an expansion of the last resort criterion of JWT. It keeps JWT honest by considering quite seriously the possibilities for peace before war is waged. JPT is activist, politically engaged, and realistic about international conflict and the implications



both of war and tyranny or injustice. It refuses to bracket the actual teachings of Jesus and believes they do have application to public life.

JPT is not pacifism. It does not reject the possibility that violence might be necessary under grave circumstances in a fallen world. But it understands the Christian's primary obligation to be serving as an ongoing witness for creative peacemaking even while accepting the legitimacy of just war theory when peacemaking has failed.

The ten practices of just peacemaking can be summarized as follows (adapted from Stassen, *Just Peacemaking*, Pilgrim 1998):

1. Nonviolent direct action: including boycotts, marches, strikes, public disclosure, and other strategies to achieve change without resort to violence.
2. Independent initiatives: these decrease threat perception and distrust, are independent of the slow process of negotiation, and often lead to reciprocation and an accelerating "peace race."
3. Cooperative conflict resolution: the shared enterprise of becoming partners in problem-solving in order to devise mutually beneficial outcomes.
4. Acknowledgment of responsibility: practicing empathy, repentance, and forgiveness in addressing past grievances, including one's own responsibility for problems.
5. Democratization: encouraging democratization of states and the legal/political order that goes with democracy, which reduces the threat of war.
6. Economic development: fostering just and sustainable economic development addresses the cause of many wars and conflicts at their roots.
7. Working with emerging cooperative forces: the international system offers several features that enhance the possibility of just peacemaking, including a decline in the utility of war, the rise of the trading state, and the ascendancy of liberal democracy.
8. International efforts: collective international efforts for peace and human rights, including but not limited to the United Nations, need to be strengthened.
9. Reduction of offensive weapons and arms trade: the massive arms bazaar that characterizes world trade must be restrained, especially the trade in offensive weapons.
10. Grassroots peacemaking groups: citizens organized in

grassroots groups and voluntary associations independent of government organizations are an important factor in peacemaking and should be encouraged.

### Applications to the Current Crisis

Much of moral decision making hinges on the perception of the situation we face. Ordinary Christians often lack the information to arrive at a fully informed independent judgment on major public events. We must rely on government information as it is doled out to us, and the research of a free press that, nonetheless, operates under its own constraints. This is called the problem of information integrity and it is a critical one in wartime.

We are being told that the heinous acts of terror visited upon us on September 11 were the work of a shadowy international consortium of Islamic fundamentalist terrorists, under the leadership of Osama bin Laden. Evidence about this group, as reported in the press, reveals it to be deeply invested in a holy war mentality and strategy, and it is capable of perpetrating further acts of war in our nation and around the world. If this is the case, then it appears clear that direct negotiation or any kind of peacemaking with this particular group is impossible.

A classic pacifist will review this evidence with sorrow. But he will reject Christian participation in a military response to this unique kind of enemy. He might be willing to offer guarded support for government efforts but will refrain from direct participation. Pacifists will say that Christians simply are to engage in a different battle, with different weapons, for the cause of he who alone is Lord, Jesus Christ. In this stance the pacifist will be deeply unpopular. He or she always is.

Christian just war theorists will run this conflict through the JWT grid. Doing so yields the judgment that the cause is both just and comparatively just: worth both killing and dying for. JWT will likely push for a clear declaration of war from Congress to meet the competent authority test. They will remind government and American citizens that the goal of a just war is not vengeance but the restoration of a secure peace. They will exhort government to be proportionate in its use of force and to minimize civilian casualties. They will try to tamp down any Crusade language and mentality. But they will urge Christians to support and if necessary participate in



this fully legitimate war, though not to celebrate war in any way.

Those tempted to the crusade position will see this conflict as a clear-cut struggle of good against evil. They might suggest expanding the war to other nations that harbor similarly anti-American sentiments. Their rhetoric and policy advocacy will tend to be unrestrained.

Just Peacemaking theorists will look at the roots of Islamic fundamentalism, the hatred of the United States, and the politics of the Muslim world, and will seek long-term initiatives that address problems in each of these areas. They will press for the advance of democracy and religious liberty in the Muslim world, economic development and strides toward justice in the most impoverished and unjust Muslim nations, and the strengthening of civil society in those nations.

JPT will look for ways to take initiatives to reduce hostility and the tensions that have existed in the entire middle-eastern region. They might support a US-Islamic world summit intended to be a forum for a genuine exchange of views. They will urge the US government to be open to criticisms related to our foreign policies and acknowledge legitimate grievances from the past. They will also urge the government to consult as broadly as possible, including with the United Nations, both to attain international support for what we do and also to check our perceptions against those of other nations.

They will not rule out the legitimacy of war in this case; at least, I do not rule it out. If we are really dealing with an international Islamic jihad conspiracy there does not appear to be any other option but to attempt to destroy it. But they will urge that any war be conducted strictly according to JWT criteria and remind government leaders that how the war is conducted will have everything to do with whether a secure peace can ultimately be maintained. And they will focus on the ongoing diplomatic, political, and economic initiatives that are as likely to allow us to get on airplanes in peace again as finding Osama bin Laden will be.

### Conclusion

I believe it was Tertullian who called the church “the soul of society.” In a violent and miserable world, we are the stewards of the very words of life, of the hope of the world. We are also that community that at its best catches a glimpse of the ebb and flow of human events from a God’s-eye perspective. We have the biblical and spiritual resources to see the whole, not just the current moment and not just our nation. We are a priestly people, interceding before God for the whole world, even terrorists; and a prophetic people, courageously speaking truth where truth needs speaking.

This imposes upon us as American Christians an awesome responsibility—and opportunity. If our response to this grievous evil can, despite everything, retain a christlike beauty and dignity, forbearance and mercy, courage and creativity, love and justice, then we will really serve as the soul of a deeply wounded and grieving nation. May it be so. ■

## Miss Lillian Sees Leprosy for the First Time

When I nursed in a clinic  
near Bombay,  
a small girl, shielding  
all her leprous sores,  
crept inside the door.  
I moved away,  
But then the doctor called,  
“You take this case!”  
First I found a mask,  
and put it on,  
quickly gave the child  
a shot and then, not well,  
I slipped away to be alone  
and scrubbed my entire body red and raw.

I faced her treatment every week with  
dread and loathing  
—of the chore, not the child.  
As time passed, I was less afraid and managed not to  
turn my face away.  
Her spirit bloomed as sores began to fade.  
She’d raise her anxious  
searching eyes to mine  
to show she trusted me.  
We’d smile and say  
a few Marathi words,  
and then reach and  
hold each other’s hands.  
And then love grew between  
us, so that, later  
when I kissed her lips  
I didn’t feel unclean. ■

Jimmy Carter

President Carter’s mother, Lillian, served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in India from 1967-1969. Copied from *Peace Corps The Great Adventure*, Washington, D.C., 5.

# Starting Over

By Hal Haralson  
Attorney in Austin, Texas

Judy decided early in life that God was calling her to be a pastor's wife. This, among other things, qualified me to be her husband and we were married in 1956.

She loved her role as pastor's wife because it gave her an opportunity to listen to people and help them with their problems. She was the kind of person people were drawn to and felt safe with.

When I left the ministry ten years later, this created a vacuum for Judy. It was not filled until, at age 40, she entered graduate school at the University of Texas.

Judy was so excited about her new career it effected the whole family. We were all proud of her determination to develop a career of her own.

In a "tongue and cheek" ceremony she asked me and the three children to come into the kitchen.

"You see that big white thing? It's called a refrigerator. For the next three years I'm going back to school. If you want something to eat during that time, look in the refrigerator. If you find something to eat, you can have it. If you don't, figure out how to do without it."

We discovered we didn't have to have home-cooked meals every day.

Monday was going to be the first day of school. Judy was nervous.

"Honey, would you mind riding with me over to Travis High School where I catch the shuttle bus?"

I assured her that I would be glad to do this. It was almost ten miles from our house west of Austin and I could understand her anxiety.

The trip was made and Judy relaxed. She felt more secure after a practice run.

Monday morning, I left for the law office and Judy got in her little Volkswagen and headed for the parking lot at Travis

High School where she would catch an orange and white shuttle bus to the University of Texas. She had a 10:00 a.m. appointment with Dr. Earl Koile, her major professor.

About 9:00, Cornelia buzzed me and said Judy was on the line.

She sounded rather subdued. "Honey, could you call Earl Koile's office and tell them I won't be there?"

"Of course, anything you want me to tell them?"

"Just tell them I had transportation problems."

"Where are you?" I inquired.

"Well, a funny thing happened on the way to the University of Texas. I pulled into the parking lot and went to the corner where all these kids were standing. This orange and white bus pulled up and we all got on."

"When we got to I-35, it turned south. I was a little concerned since the University of Texas campus is north, but I figured we were going out to Ben White Boulevard to pick up some students at IRS."

"We passed Ben White Boulevard and kept going. I reached up and tapped the little girl in front of me on the shoulder."

"Could you tell me where we are going?"

"Sure, we're going to San Marcos . . . Southwest Texas University."

"You're in San Marcos?" (40 miles south of Austin)

"Yes." I could tell she was almost in tears.

"Is there a bus back to Austin?"

"About two o'clock. I've got plenty to read."

And so began three years of graduate study. A 3.9 grade average and twenty years of practice as a psychotherapist followed.

Don't give up if you catch the wrong bus! ■



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# Shame and Guilt In Religious Fundamentalism

By Timothy L. Boschen,  
Charlottesville, Va.

There have been various fundamentalist movements in American Protestantism in the 20th century. Baptists north and south, Presbyterians, and Lutherans have all been stung by fundamentalist controversies. In some cases, the conflict appeared to begin with the issue of biblical infallibility or inerrancy. It then became apparent to the leaders of the fundamentalist parties that seminaries would have to be brought in line with a more conservative fundamentalist orthodoxy. While the purging of academic institutions and denominational agencies happened with varying intensity, it was apparent to the leadership that a rigid purification of perceived liberalism was necessary. What drives the need for rule-bound rigidity, purification, and the all-sufficiency of a perceived source of orthodox authority (in these cases an inerrant application of the Holy Bible)? Is it possible that at least a part of the answer lay in the shame-bound behavior of fundamentalist believers and leaders?

Religious fundamentalists bear a burden of unhealthy guilt that we can call shame and the ways they conduct themselves in their religious world is directly related to their shame. That is, there is a direct link between the ethical behavior of religious fundamentalists and the shame they carry.

For our purposes, *fundamentalism* may be defined as a religious movement that seeks to militantly defend orthodoxy against the incursions of modernity. These intrusions may be about shifting interpretations of holy writings, changing ethical values in the native culture, or the complicated anxiety that accompanies intense and rapid social change. Those defining both orthodoxy and what is considered modern threats are almost always males. Fundamentalist leaders work to be in positions of leadership in large influential churches, denominational agencies, and publishing arms. In effect, these leaders position themselves so that they can determine orthodoxy by governing information flow. These same leaders then defend these accepted beliefs by attacking those outside the doctrinal box they construct. This is contemporary patriarchal fundamentalism.

In terms of shame, it is imperative for this article that the reader understand that guilt and shame are not the same thing though they may be said to have the same emotional origin. That is, shame is an unhealthy form of guilt that is toxic to the selfhood of its victim.

Gershin notes, "*Shame* is an inner sense of being completely diminished or insufficient as a person. It is the self

judging the self. A moment of shame may be humiliation so painful or an indignity so profound that one feels one has been robbed of her or his dignity or exposed as basically inadequate, bad, or worthy of rejection. A pervasive sense of shame is the ongoing premise that one is fundamentally bad, inadequate, defective, unworthy, or not valid as a human being."<sup>1</sup>

Guilt is not synonymous with shame. "*Guilt* is the developmentally more mature, though painful feeling of regret one has about behavior that has violated a personal value."<sup>2</sup> Kaufman observed, "*Guilt* is immorality shame."<sup>3</sup> That is, it is a violation of the internal moral code a person has developed.

Guilt is a self-generated feeling of disgust with one's actions. Shame is an other-generated sense of disgust with one's self as a person of worth. It is more often assigned to the victim by parents and the victim's family of origin. If you ever heard a parent say something like, "why can't you be like your brother," or "I can't believe you are so stupid," then you have known shame. Let these kinds of statements be made over the maturing years of a child, and the adult-child becomes what we can call shame-based. That is, shame becomes the central organizing principle around which the victim's life spins. His or her life is taken up in proving self-worth, that is, disproving the notion that he or she is inherently flawed and diminished, a self-concept learned first at home.

In addition to the home, what are some of the sources of shame? The culture can be a source of shame for persons. If one asked African-Americans if they ever felt a sense of shame at the hands of whites, the answer might be "Yes." Part of the Rev. Jesse Jackson's campaign among black teens in the 1980s, for example, was to get them to affirm that they were "somebody." He knew that racial oppression produced shame, a powerful source of diminished self-esteem among the young.

The church also has been a source of shame for Christians. When you hear sermons repeatedly calling you an evil sinner, when you hear often that you are dirty and unworthy, you can feel spiritually unclean.

In the Baptist tradition, the use of the invitation as a time of public rededication may encourage shame-based Christians to make repeated public penance. As Lewis Smedes suggests, these are persons burdened by a Divine Voice that pronounces them flawed because they have not executed their duty to be perfect. That same Voice then

declares them failures.<sup>4</sup>

Guilt is not their issue. It is shame. These people need deliverance from self-loathing, not forgiveness for sins. The very institution that was founded on the grace of God in Christ, the church, can enhance and empower this inner critic of shame.

Persons disagreeing with a stated doctrine of the church can be made to feel shameful. This shaming is designed to prevent the threat that the questioner represents. Bringing the wayward parishioner back into line doctrinally becomes a most important task of the church.

One writer suggests that a shame-bound family is a group of people who feel alone together.<sup>5</sup> It may also be said that a shame-bound church is one in which the members feel alone together. Church members judge each other on a “goodness vs. badness scale.” In this system, the preservation of one’s personal “goodness” is foundational to one’s acceptance by other church members and guarantee of membership in the inner circle.

However, to be a member of the inner circle requires a member to stick to goodness as defined by the group; members become preoccupied with maintaining the goodness factor. They have little time for fellowship and authentic expressions of affection.

Grace, the unconditional love of others as God loves us, is not the operative ethic. Preserving one’s personal goodness is. Close relationships with fellow Christians is subordinated to preserving the appearance of goodness, even when there may be personal feelings of little goodness or none.

Shame-bound systems follow certain rules.<sup>6</sup> These are also true of shame-based persons, marriages, families, churches, synagogues and temples.

**1. Always give the impression of being in control of one’s life at all times.** This is the cardinal rule of all shame-bound relational groups. All other rules flow from this one and help it remain in place.

Since shame-bound persons come from families-of-origin in which their worth is always questioned and diminished, one way an adult-child learns to cope with these subsequent feelings of inferiority is to always appear to be powerful and in control of his life, proving his worth in his world. A fundamentalist pastor may feel a compelling need to be powerful and controlling, in order to feel adequate.

**2. The second rule of shame-bound fundamentalism is that one must always be right and do the right thing according to the laws of the group, especially the leadership.** This means that the individual strives for a kind of spiritual perfection to maintain this sense of personal power and control from within the group.

Apart from the parent organization, there is no awareness of increased self-worth, but only deep questioning. These persons become strong competitors because they have to

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*Fundamentalism  
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prove their inherent value to others. They must look better than others.

They become the hard-working church members who can be used up and burnt out by controlling leaders. Their personal worth depends on their winning and being perceived by others as high-achieving winners. “The family that overtly emphasizes this rule is the family that embodies all of the stereotyped values held up by popular culture. They are intelligent, high achievers, dressed in accordance with the latest trends, probably athletic, socially gracious, and winners in all externally definable ways.”<sup>7</sup>

Mistakes in shame-bound fundamentalist circles cannot be tolerated because a single mistake, a single violation of the religious rules, calls the entire system into

question. The rules are rigid and intensely enforced by the group. Violators may not be formerly excommunicated but they may be shunned by other members until their discomfort forces them to leave. The personal, family, or church image—what the rest of the world sees—is what is paramount.

The religious fundamentalist has an image of power and control that must be maintained and enhanced because his sense of shame is driving him. He believes that something is wrong with him, perhaps on a deep spiritual level no one else sees, and he must protect his public image of self-control and power in order to protect his fragile private view of self.

**3. The third rule of shame-bound fundamentalist religious groups is blaming others.** If something does not happen the way you planned, blame someone else. Blame helps one maintain the illusion of control and helps the system remain pure. Blame transfers your personal sins to another thereby helping the blamer feel free from his own anxieties.

Blame also keeps the rules rigidly in place. By blaming, one declares that she did not break the rules, another did. In this way, the rules become more important than relationships. Rules are thereby elevated to the level of love and mercy in terms of importance in a person’s life of faith. Blame and trust are mutually exclusive because responsibility and forgiveness are not part of the blame equation.

Religious fundamentalists exhibit blaming behavior when they label others “liberals,” when they keep the focus of the group on what they oppose, and when they make new rules to which all must agree.

Keeping the blame as generic as possible removes the necessity for explanation. Therefore, blame “all those liberal seminary professors” for what is wrong in the world and in our churches. If they had done their job, none of this would be happening.

In American Protestant circles, whether the target is women, blacks, the Masons, the Disney Corporation or other sub-groups within a person’s own denomination, the tactic is

to get and keep power by having your followers focused on some target to blame for the ills of society.

**4. The fourth directive of shame-bound religion is denial.** The person controlled by shame must deny certain feelings, especially the negative and vulnerable ones like anxiety, fear, loneliness, grief, rejection, neediness, and caring. Power can never be exercised by those who manifest these weaker emotions, so the thinking goes. In the shame-controlled family, group, or church, remaining task-focused can keep dangerous inner realities hidden.

Shame-driven persons may be the hard workers of the community or church. Leaders will use persons like this until they become so fatigued that they withdraw from the group. The fundamentalist pastor himself can hide what he believes are the weaker emotions by appearing powerful, in control, and hard working.

Blaming and denial go together to form a tight net of dishonesty and deception. The quest for perfection is spiritually and physically fatiguing. Perfection is a terrible burden to carry when there is no grace to lighten the load; it is a complete waste of energy and an impossible task.

**5. The fifth rule is unreliability.** Do not expect the shame-filled fundamentalist to be consistent or reliable, even in his or her own family. It may have been an emotionally abusive mother or an alcoholic father that taught him early in life that no one can be trusted. The only person you can completely trust is yourself.

This is why the rules become so significant in shame-bound fundamentalist circles. Living up to the letter of the law provides you with further proof that your trust is best placed in self rather than others.

**6. The rule of unreliability leads to the sixth rule, incompleteness.** Resolving personal, emotional, or church conflicts is not important. Disagreements can continue without resolution. Shame bound families and churches chronically fight, never resolve conflicts, and are never whole. Even God is reliable only if you follow the rules and work your way into His good mercies.

**7. The seventh rule is “Do not talk.”** Never discuss the disrespect, shame, abuse, and compulsive behavior you feel. This directive is designed to foster the image of self-control and power. However, since it is only a pseudo-image that covers the sense of unworthiness the fundamentalist feels, this rule is sometimes accompanied by feelings of hopelessness. You cannot talk about what is really felt because it would bring past shame into the open. You cannot discuss church conflicts and the divisions they caused because you might discover you were wrong and that would add to your shame. The rule of “no talk” reinforces this pseudo-control.

Religious fundamentalists regard the rule of “no talk” as very important because it involves the transfer of informa-

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*...a shame-bound family is a group of people who feel alone together...a shame-bound church is one in which the members feel alone together.*

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tion, and therefore, power. Whatever was done, was acted upon because it “preserved the integrity of the scriptures” or “defended orthodoxy from liberalism.” In this way everything from slander to misuse of funds is justified as honorable. Should these behaviors be made public, they would have to be discounted or rationalized.

**8. The eighth rule then becomes to disguise the shame.** In order to cover the secrets one must hide the shame. Shame-bound behavior can be minimized in different ways. Abuse, over eating, and other addictive behaviors are convenient cover-ups. Murdering an abortion physician is defended as “preserving the lives of the unborn.” Destroying the professional lives

of seminary teachers is justified as the “guarding of orthodoxy.” The appearance of control and power is maintained, therefore, at the expense of victims.

Religious fundamentalists are shame-bound persons in shame-based systems. They are guided by a set of rules generally designed by those in positions of power, who require conformity in order to be acceptable.

Jesus said, “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbor as yourself.*” A person from a shame-based system will have trouble following this basic command.

Frequently in fundamentalist circles, the inner emotional needs of shame-filled persons displace love. The fundamentalist needs to appear good in order to feel worthy. When a person is trying to work out his worthiness by following the dictates of another, he can hardly be expected to love others as himself.

For the shame-bound believer, the biblical statement, “We are saved by grace through faith,” becomes, “I am saved by earned worthiness through my works. Let me prove to you how good I am and thereby show you how much Jesus lives in me.” ■

<sup>1</sup> Kaufman, Gershen, *Shame: the Power of Caring* (Rochester: Schenkman Books, 1992), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Kaufman, *The Psychology of Shame* (New York: Springer Publishing Co., 1996), 26.

<sup>3</sup> Fossum Merle A. and Marilyn J. Mason, *Facing Shame: Families in Recovery* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 19.

<sup>4</sup> Smedes, Lewis B., *Shame and Grace: Healing the Shame We Don't Deserve* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 78.

<sup>5</sup> Fossum and Mason, 19.

<sup>6</sup> These rules were developed by Merle Fossum and Marilyn Mason to describe *shame-bound family systems*. They also apply to other social systems including marriages and religious congregations.

<sup>7</sup> Fossum and Mason, 93.

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# A Kinder, Gentler Hauerwas?

*Book Review by Jeph Holloway,*  
Associate Professor of Religion and Philosophy  
East Texas Baptist University

A fruitful way of reading Stanley Hauerwas' latest rendering, *A Better Hope*,<sup>1</sup> is to read it as a statement concerning the present state of the discipline of Christian Ethics—as an analysis of the discipline's dominant character and an account of what it would mean if it embraced its genuinely theological dimensions. In other words, *A Better Hope* gives clear indication of what Hauerwas thinks is wrong with how Christian Ethics is usually “done,” and what it would take for it to be done rightly.

To be fair, Hauerwas would want the “what it would take for it to be done rightly” aspect to bear the emphasis. He confesses himself, though, that the reader will not find here a “kinder, gentler Hauerwas . . . . *A Better Hope* is not without polemics” (10). Hauerwas is still “mad as hell,” particularly with Christians (including himself) who, for the sake of a voice in the public arena, make common cause with those features of our present context that are actually enemies of the faith: capitalism, democracy, and postmodernity. But his overarching concern is to provide for both the church and the world a better hope, by once again reminding the church of its distinctive calling. Embracing this distinctive calling requires reliance on the truth that Christians have available “resources for resisting the powers that threaten our lives as Christians” (10).

Unfortunately, the way Christian Ethics is often pursued, these resources are usually neglected, if not considered an outright impediment to effectiveness. Hauerwas argues throughout *A Better Hope* and in a variety of ways that Christian Ethics generally suffers from three interrelated errors. The first error is that “the subject of Christian Ethics in America has always been America” (23-24). Likewise, many Christians in general think that the fundamental task of the church is “to make America work” (33). One great problem with this, of course, is that with the close identification of American Christianity with America the church in America has lost “our ability to survive as church” (33). It is no wonder, Hauerwas suggests, that a church that is concerned so much with America has lost in numbers, influence, and status when such a church “would have nothing distinctive to say . . . about the challenges facing this society” (25). Certainly “it is by no means clear why you need to go to church when such churches only reinforce what you already know from participation in a democratic society” (26).

But why does Hauerwas believe that participation in a democratic society means Christians “would have nothing

distinctive to say as Christians?” Because it is often assumed that “if Christians are to speak in the ‘public’ arena they must do so using a ‘third language’ that avoids the ‘particularities’ of the faith” (11). “Some mediating language is required and assumed to be justified in the name of a common morality or by natural law reasoning” (26). But the use of this “third language” (commonly assumed to sound much like John Rawls), for the sake of making America work, leaves the distinctive contribution of Christians outside the conversation. This indicates the second error challenged by Hauerwas: the abstraction of Christian Ethics from theology.

The impact of the Americo-centric character of Christian Ethics as a discipline is seen most clearly in the work of graduate schools in America that train ethicists. In moving from a seminary context to a graduate school environment, the focus is less on *Christian* Ethics than it is on *Religious* Ethics. In such an environment the major influence on such studies is philosophy, not theology, a move made necessary by the assumption “that the subject of study and/or action is America” (61). What troubles Hauerwas, it seems, is that because the subject of the study of Christian Ethics has been America, Christian ethicists have been eager to substitute the particular language of identifiable religious traditions with the allegedly neutral language of philosophy. In doing this they reveal the belief that the “questions of God’s creative and redemptive purposes” (64) have no bearing on the moral and social issues of our day.

Of course, not all Christian ethicists have followed this track. Hauerwas mentions those whose work in the field clearly locates them within particular ecclesial contexts—John Howard Yoder, Vernard Eller, George Forell, and Richard Mouw to name a few (59). What these writers have in common is the conviction that they are concerned to address not first America, but the church. This raises the third error that exorcises Hauerwas: the independence of Christian Ethics from the church. With reference to the two major luminaries of 20th Century Christian Ethics, Hauerwas says that the church has only an ambiguous presence in the work of H. Richard Niebuhr and “is almost non-existent in Reinhold Niebuhr’s corpus” (62). The irony is that with this loss of the church, the practices of which “make ethical reflection intelligible for Christians,” it is more, “rather than less, difficult for Christians to engage other traditions” for the sake of public significance (62). This is so, says Hauerwas, because “unless



we are willing to take the particularity of our convictions seriously, we have no way to even know what it means to claim them as true or false" (62).

The independence of the field of Christian Ethics from the church is seen in more than just the move from the seminary to graduate schools for the study of Religious Ethics. It is also seen in that Christian Ethics in particular and American Christianity in general, has little appreciation for the close relationship between worship, evangelism, and ethics. Hauerwas, indeed, cites Donald Saliers as one whose "focus on worship becomes a way to explore how the *and* might be eliminated between theology and evangelism or theology and ethics" (156). Clearly, though, the convention in both ethical training and church practice is to see sharp lines of distinction between tasks that only find their unity in the life of the church. For Hauerwas, though, the concern is for the peculiar practices of the church and its peculiarly theological language about the Trinity (which "requires at the least that we learn to say together the Apostle's Creed" [160]), to enable the church to recover its life in worship. When such occurs then those sharp lines of distinction are blurred and the tasks of worship/evangelism/ethics converge in the lives of a people shaped by love for God which, according to Augustine, is the only place where true justice is found and a true politic enabled (157).

Hauerwas is persuaded that when the church recovers this life it enjoys the resources necessary to withstand the corrupting powers that presently confront it—capitalism, democracy, and postmodernity. While Hauerwas' arguments are more nuanced and interwoven, we might say that attention to the life of worship in the communion of saints provides an identity and an arena for commitment that subverts

the focus of capitalism on short-term commitments, ceaseless innovation, and self-gratification (47-51). The relocation of ethical and political discourse within the particularities of theology challenges the basic premise of western liberalism that matters of faith are private and restricted to "internal" matters of religion (109-16). The affirmation of life in the church is affirmation of a fellowship and friendship that spans the generations, in other words, one that takes history seriously (173-87). What better resource would we want for combating the nihilism and hopelessness of a postmodernity that agonizes over the denial of history, a denial that leaves as the only remaining comfort "the shopping mall" (39).

Long-time readers of Hauerwas will not find much that is new in *A Better Hope*. This does not bother Hauerwas who says of these essays, "If they repeat arguments I have made elsewhere, [they] do so because, given the entrenchment of the position against which I am arguing, I can only say again what I have said before in the hope of establishing new habits that can help us forget what I hope we can learn to leave behind" (17). Those who hear in Hauerwas a voice of theological integrity and challenge to the church to embrace its identity as an *altera civitas* will be grateful for the continuing dialogue Hauerwas provides with the great variety of voices he engages. Those not persuaded of his analysis will perhaps echo one of the strongest advocates of capitalism, democracy, and late-modernity, otherwise known as postmodernity: "Well, there he goes again." ■

<sup>1</sup>Hauerwas, Stanley, *A Better Hope: Resources for a Church Confronting Capitalism, Democracy, and Postmodernity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2000).



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# The Last Days

Charles Marsh, New York: Basic Books, 2001.

*Book Review by Darold H. Morgan*

Charles Marsh is a professor of religion at the University of Virginia. He is also the only child of a well-known Baptist preacher who pastored the largest and most influential church in Laurel, Mississippi, when the Civil Rights movement in the Sixties hit that part of the nation with an intensity of unparalleled proportions. Marsh writes with keen insight and perception. His account turns out to be a volume of rare value, which documents the struggles and conflicts of many people who are caught up in a drama of profound paradox between “Old South” racism and a basic Christian resolve somehow to “do the right thing.”

It is an intensely personal account, which does not descend into a maudlin self-sympathy. The result is a genuinely moving account from an extraordinary perspective of a pastor’s effort to practice genuine Christian ethics in an area and time when racism was so deeply engrained that the biblical issues were all but muted and misunderstood. A product of his times and culture, Marsh’s father grappled honestly but inadequately with these incredible pressures. And obviously, he was far from being alone in that quandary.

Laurel, Mississippi was and is at the center of the Old South. In Marsh’s childhood it was also the home base of the head of the KKK, which at this time was orchestrating a widespread campaign of intimidation, terror, and murder. Marsh’s vibrant honesty about the efforts of his father to maintain his church’s unity in this unexpected vortex and to lead in helping his members take something of a Christian stand on Civil Rights is apparent. That there was an abundance of moral hesitancy and a tendency to defend the status quo in the name of religion and history is also beyond debate.

Interwoven in this story from the pastor’s son are the deeply personal reflections of the family life from both his father and his mother. A by-product of these insertions is the setting: a view of the cultural patterns in the Old South during those years. If there is a weakness in the book, as one considers the original intent, it may be found in learning more about a budding teenager than one may want to know. Yet one must quickly add that the intensity and interest never flags as the young man slowly matures in this southern culture, replete with obvious racial patterns.

Life in the Old South was turned upside down by the Brown vs. the Board of Education ruling in 1954, when the U.S. Supreme Court officially ended segregation in America’s public schools. The Southern Baptist Convention in its subsequent gathering overwhelmingly approved this action.

Despite these decisions, one of the most vicious reactions in American history followed, particularly in Mississippi. There was a revival of the KKK as well as a kindred movement known as the White Citizen’s Council. These two somehow combined to bring about a horrific time of terror throughout Mississippi, which in turn brought a concentrated reaction by civil rights leaders from all over the nation. Both in Mississippi and Alabama dark days followed, with confrontation, police brutality, the destruction of Black churches, marches, the burning of crosses, and murder. Not only was equality of public school education in the forefront, but also the issue of voting rights.

This book directs its major message around one pastor and one church. That the author’s father was not and could not be prophetic in this era is apparent. That his father was extremely sensitive, concerned, caring, and perceptive about the issues is equally obvious. Writing decades after the events, the author easily could have been extremely vindictive and critical, but he did not even hint at such an attitude. He is evenly factual throughout the entire book. The love and respect this son had then and now for his parents is one of the healthiest conclusions about this good and readable volume.

Marsh’s account of his father’s involvement with one of the convicted Klan murderers is graphic and insightful. His description of those now forgotten trials of the Klan leaders, when the FBI’s use of irrefutable evidence as to their guilt forced the Mississippi judiciary to face the truth, is a classic memory. Perhaps the single most moving incident of the pastor’s personal ethical crisis in those days comes in a sad but scorching dialogue he had with one of Laurel’s most respected Black pastors.

This book is important not only because it is a personal account of a gifted young man’s spiritual pilgrimage, but also because it recaptures urgently important events from one of America’s severest moral and civil crises. We are reminded of the painful human price some very good people had to pay to achieve justice. Learning needed lessons in Christian ethics often comes at a high price, but sooner or later it has to be paid.

This is a book you should read. Not only will you enjoy the writing style, but also the stories contained in these pages. *The Last Days* will cause all of us to remember those times and the difference they have made in American life and values. An obvious conclusion lurks in the shadows—many of the lessons of the sixties concerning racial equality still need to be taught. ■

*"Whatever things are lovely . . . think on these things" Philippians 4:8*

## Sounds of the Seasons

*By Foy Valentine, Founding Editor*

The sounds of Christmas started early this year.

Bent on evoking the warm fuzzies of the Christmas season, advertisers have sought to ensnare us with snatches of "White Christmas," "Rudolph," "Sleigh Bells," "Joy to the World," and "Silent Night" and then lead us, like lambs to the slaughter, to buy their pricey baubles. This clever ploy, however, has led me not to succumb to their blandishments but to conjure up a flood of happy recollections of the sounds of the season.

I have been remembering the crackling and gently hissing sounds of the burning Yule logs, the fine kitchen sounds of my Mother's busy activity in preparing the feasts of the holiday season, the lowing of the cattle coming in from the pasture for the night and the barn's welcome protection from the whistling "Blue Northers," the chunking sound of a wheelbarrow full of firewood being piled on the porch to keep the fire going through the long winter nights, the welcome noisiness of visiting kinfolks and exuberant children and good neighbors dropping by to share a mess of fresh pork ribs or a jar of homemade preserves or just to sit a spell and rock and visit, and, of course, the old Christmas songs sung together in church, the same year after year in a truly authentic liturgy. Memories of these sounds of the season are special. Very special.

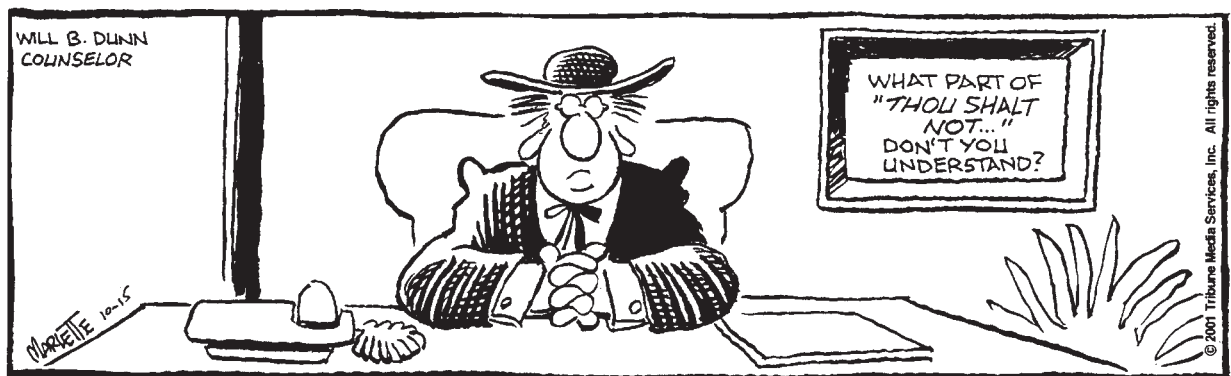
Move with me now to a more generic consideration of sounds.

I was actually launched into this line of thought by one of nature's most wonderful symphonies.

A big V-shaped flock of Canadian geese had just flown over our house, honking with such unfettered abandon as to wake the dead. Why such noisy chattering I do not know. I wish I did. Nature does not customarily waste such a pre-

cious commodity as the breath of life, so there was to be a reason for this glorious conversation of these marvelous birds. Maybe it is just because they are gregarious and crave conversation. Flying at speeds of up to sixty miles per hour at altitudes of up to three thousand feet, these great snow white geese can travel several hundred miles a day, honking all the way. Their migration over the house where I now live, has reminded me of a hundred such soundings, by night and by day, remembered from my childhood where we lived directly under a major flyway of migratory fowl. What a splendid *déjà vu*. Lovely, indeed.

A grocery store serendipity a few days ago turned my motor over in a most delightful way. A one-year old seductress absolutely captivated me with her remarkably humanoid verbalizations. The encounter was on this wise. Her mother had stopped the big grocery cart in which this happy little person was ensconced. She had rather short reddish hair and unbelievably bright blue eyes. Her mother was occupied with putting away her credit cards and rumbling around in her purse for her keys. I stooped down to look directly into this little girl's eyes and then spoke sincerely and pleasantly to her. She smiled broadly baring two glistening front teeth extremely well lubricated with her very own saliva and broke into an astounding utterance of pre-speech, one of the most amazing phenomena of human development. Speech as such had not yet come to this little person, but it was obviously not far away. Hers was a first draft of words just about to form and erupt. After this pleasant outburst succeeded almost immediately by yet another ecstatic communication with a passing grandfatherly type of old man, she clammed up and again smiled sweetly as her mother wheeled her away to their car. She is gone but the melody



of her speech lingers on, a lovely sound if ever I heard one.

One of the most memorable sounds of my entire lifetime came to me not long ago in the high mountains of the Sangre de Cristo range in northern New Mexico. Our Number One daughter had insisted on taking me as her guest for a jeep-enabled jouncing high country safari. In due time we drove quietly up on a great herd of cow elks, grazing with their nursing young calves close beside them, an elk nursery we later came to understand. When the herd, at least a hundred of them we reckoned, became suspicious of us, they started moving away, quite slowly at first; but then they broke into a trot and then into a dead run. Coming to a formidable barbed wire fence, the cows jumped it with unseemly grace, hardly slowing down.

The calves, however, had to stop and crawl under the fence or between the wires, in the process becoming separated from their mothers. The cows, gregarious by nature, reconnoitered behind the first nearby knoll which was covered by a dense growth of fir and young blue spruce trees, well hidden from us. As we waited to watch the last few straggling calves negotiate their passage through the fence, we began to hear the cows calling.

Now a bull elk bugles or trumpets with a decidedly masculine tone; but elk cows have a much more lady-like voice, not unlike the guttural whimper of a hungry puppy. Imagine a hundred elk cows gently calling, each with her

own distinctive small female bugle voice which her own calf could recognize. We listened in profound wonder. It was a symphony of such wild and natural beauty as human ears could ever hope to hear. Finally the last stray calf was united with its mother and the symphony ended. It was a once-in-a-lifetime audience that can only be remembered as truly blessed.

Then there are the recollected sounds of huge bullfrogs croaking their wonderful love songs and perhaps declaring their territoriality from the banks of the nearby tank when I was growing up; the whippoorwill's beautifully unique "chip-flew-out-of-the-white-oak" call on an early summer evening as the night was settling in; the hoot owl's gentle invitation to camaraderie extended to one of his own kind from the upper limbs of a great old post oak near my upstairs bedroom windows in the still of the night; and the Bob White's crisp, bold call to another of his species responding from some unseen fence post some distance away.

Join me, then, in celebrating sounds in general and the blessed sounds of the Christmas season in particular. Sound is the gift of God; and hearing has to be one of God's most marvelous contributions to our human happiness and well being. Among all our Christmas gifts this season, I hope we can join in breathing a prayer of thanksgiving for all the sounds that signal God's great grace.

Merry Christmas. ■

## Hal Haralson's *GENTLE MERCIES* Available To Our Readers

In response to the offer and appeal made in the October issue ("An Open Letter To Our Readers"), we are so grateful for 42 readers who have contributed \$5210 to support the Journal. Two supporters each sent \$1000. One from Abilene wrote, "I wish a number of our readers would give \$1000 annually to endowment." Her gift raises our beginning endowment to \$26,000. The other from Navasota wrote, "We have been enjoying and sharing your publication for years. I am afraid that I have been remiss in not sending a gift along."

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