

# 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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# The Vicar of Bray On a Cruise Ship?

By Joe E. Trull, Editor

Years ago I first read the following satirical English verse about a minister who adjusts his faith to political demands. Symon Symonds, the vicar of the English village of Bray, served under Henry VIII, Edward VI, Bloody Mary, and Elizabeth. During those years he was twice a Catholic and twice a Protestant.

*In good King Charles' golden days, when loyalty no harm meant,  
A zealous high churchman was I, and so I gained preferment.  
To teach my flock, I never missed  
Kings are by God appointed  
And damned be he who dare resist or touch the Lord's anointed.*

*When royal James usurped the throne, and popery came in fashion,  
The penal laws I hooted down, and read the Declaration.  
The Church of Rome, I found, did fit  
Full well my constitution  
And I had been a Jesuit, but for the Revolution.*

*When William was our King declared, to ease the nation's grievance,  
With this new wind about I steered, and swore to him allegiance.  
Old principles I did revoke  
Set conscience at a distance,  
Passive obedience was a joke, a jest was non-resistance.*

*When Royal Anne became our queen, the Church of England's glory,  
Another face of things was seen, and I became a Tory.  
Occasional conformists base  
I blamed their moderation;  
And thought the Church in danger was from such prevarication.*

*When George in pudding time came o'er, and moderate men looked  
big, sir  
My principles I changed once more, and I became a Whig, sir.  
And thus preferment I procured  
From our new Faith's Defender,  
And almost every day abjured the Pope and the Pretender.*

*The illustrious house of Hanover and Protestant succession  
To these I do allegiance swear—while they can hold possession.*

*For in my faith and loyalty  
I never more will falter,  
And George my lawful king shall be—until the times do alter.*

## Chorus

*And this be law, I shall maintain  
Until my dying day, sir  
That whatsoever king may reign,  
Still I'll be the Vicar of Bray, sir.*

Asked about his switches, the Vicar said: “If I changed my religion, I am sure I kept true to my principle, which is to live and die the Vicar of Bray.”

Recently the wife of a former student called. She was crying. The short version of her story is this: Invited to be part of the first group to receive a new degree in “Women’s Ministries” at one of our SBC seminaries, Penny was preparing for ministry.

Last summer the couple was invited to be Chaplains aboard a cruise ship—“a time of ministry I shall never forget.” When Penny returned to seminary studies, her women’s ministry professor talked to her privately.

The gist of the conversation was this: “To be a Chaplain on a Cruise Ship is like being a Pastor—that is for men only. You must never do that again! In addition, you could not have picked a worse time for our seminary (the SBC BFM 2000 statement was imminent, with her husband’s name attached). Therefore, you must not discuss this matter, in class or outside, with anyone.”

Feeling sad, rejected, lonely, and confused, Penny sought counsel. She discovered how recent SBC decisions about women were being applied. Determined to do God’s will, regardless of the personal cost, Penny decided to share her story (“Woman Overboard,” *Mutuality*, Fall, 2001) and to pursue her call to ministry wherever that call leads.

Although you won’t meet the Vicar of Bray on your Cruise Ship, you might just see Chaplain Penny with a Bible in hand and a love for ministry in her heart. ■ JET

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**Editor:** Joe E. Trull

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# We've Got Mail

*Letters from our Readers*

“Thanks for the Journals and the publication *Broken Trust*. I remember with great joy your presentation on a code of ethics for the Chaplain Service. . . We have sent a lot of chaplains overseas in support of Enduring Freedom. Many wonderful things are happening as the power of the Gospel and the love of Christ are taken to the ‘front lines.’”

**Brig. Gen. Charles Baldwin,  
Deputy Chief of the Chaplain Service, USAF**

“Foy: Your *Cars, Cars, Cars* is a masterpiece [which] brought back many memories. . . [as well as] the articles from Charles Wellborn and Ralph Lynn. Both of them had seminal influence on me as a Baylor student. I never knew anyone could preach like Wellborn . . . [and] Dr. Lynn used to say mass education was like casting real pearls before real swine.”

**Robert L. Maddox, Bethesda, MD**

“I’ve just finished reading the August issue of CET—excellent!”

**Bill Pinson, Dallas, TX**

“Each edition of C.E.T. arrives at our home like a voice from a conscience that must not be hushed. Thank you for your efforts to keep your unhindered voice speaking freely to a manipulated society.”

**Frances and Joe Wray, Georgetown, SC**

“I wish I were able to give in proportion to the blessing that I receive from your publication . . . However it is with joy I send this.”

**Isaac McDonald, Elizabethtown, KY**

“Your most recent issue of C.E.T. was especially fine, both your lead article and the several items related to 9/11. . . Recently I came across the phrase ‘Christian Ethics Today’ in Dr. John Newport’s classic, *Life’s Ultimate Questions* (p. 487).”

**David M. Smith, Houston, TX**

“Hull’s *Left Behind* was one of the first things I read—it is indeed a masterful piece . . . also Sider’s *Bush Tax Proposal* essay resonated with my intention to respond to my hide-bound Southern Baptist/Republican congressman. So I just wrote the letter and sent along a copy of Sider’s essay.”

**Richard Kahoe, Woodward, OK**

“I enjoyed Hal Haralson’s book, *Gentle Mercies*, so much. I have loaned it out and have a waiting list of people wanting to read it. I am enclosing a gift . . . Supporting *Christian Ethics Today* is one of the most worthwhile things I do.”

**Truett Baker, Branson, MO**

“As a director of Mainstream Alabama Baptists . . . I was asked to write an article on publications where a person could go for the ‘truth’ without relying on the Baptist Press. . . . *Christian Ethics Today* is in the ‘must read’ category. . . an example of the value I place on this publication.”

**John S. Casey, Heflin, AL**

“The Riley article on the prayer of Jabez was simply outstanding. A quick scan told me it was junk [after a friend gave a copy] . . . The Riley article nailed it.”

**Steve Unger, Quantico, VA**

“There is a lot of good Christian literature out there, but I dare say none of it contains the cross section of interest that this journal does for us mainstream Baptists in helping us see the world and ourselves.”

**Ralph H. Ramsey, III, Lubbock, TX**

“[The article] by Ralph Wood of Baylor may be the most needed and most lacking theme on ‘Christian Spirituality’ that can be found today.”

**Preston Taylor, Sanderson, TX**

“I really appreciate the magazine. . . I’m a labor lawyer, an officer of the Kentucky AFL-CIO, and a Baptist SS teacher and deacon.”

**Chris Sanders, Frankfort, KY**

“Your Journal is the only publication that goes from the serious to the humorous and still holds our attention.”

**Ida Underwood, San Antonio, TX**

“Continue to feed us spiritually, ethically, and intellectually.”

**Flynn Harrell, Colombia, SC**

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# The Tears of God

By Jimmy Allen, Former President of the SBC  
Big Canoe, Georgia

**Editor's Note:** This sermon was preached on October 28, 2001, at Parkway Hills Baptist Church in Plano, Texas, in a worship service in which the Editor baptized two of his grandchildren, Heather Burns and Eric David Beal, thanks to the hospitality of Pastor Sam Dennis.

*"Jesus began to weep."* John 11:35

*"As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it."* Luke 19:41

Jesus didn't cry much. We have one picture of him in the prophet's writing that the Messiah would be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. There we see him as a sad figure, a person who moves with gravity and with sadness and sorrow in his life.

However, when we read through the New Testament, we discover only two passages in which the Bible says that Jesus shed tears. He may have shed tears at other times, of course. But the Bible only records these two times when Jesus wept—once at the grave of Lazarus (John 10:35) and once during the triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19:41).

I want us to look at these two passages because I would like for us to see and sense the tears of God, and perhaps also to see the ways that God is crying again in our day.

The tears of Jesus at the grave of Lazarus were tears of sadness—sadness Jesus felt over the pain that sin had created in the world. Jesus came to the home of Mary and Martha after Lazarus died. Often he had been a guest in their house. The two women were friends that he loved deeply and profoundly.

Earlier he had received word that Lazarus was sick, but he waited three days. His disciples asked, "Why are you waiting? You could stop all of this grief if you would go to Bethany." But Jesus tarried for three days. Then he came to where Lazarus had been buried. Both sisters made the accusation: "If you had really cared couldn't you have stopped all of this? If you had really cared enough to come, you could have kept him from dying." In both conversations, Jesus talks about the glory of God, but he also comes to weep with those who sorrow as they go through their grief.

I want you to see that God allows sorrow in his world because he cannot step in to stop every pain that comes to us. If he did, he would be fiddling with the creation that he came to redeem. There is a moral basis for God's creation. When we fall away from God's intention for us, when we refuse to be what God wants us to be, when we want to make ourselves gods, not allowing the Creator to be in control, then pain and sorrow and death enter into our world.

So we live under the conditions of a world that has been damaged from the beginning. We are born into this world

with an inclination to rebel. And we pay the price of our behavior as sin piles upon sin and creates suffering and finally creates death. And people who are innocent are victimized. Thus we live in a world where sorrow stalks our streets and enters our lives. Grief comes and we deal with it, and then a cry is heard, "Why don't you stop all of this? Why can't you keep this from happening?"

The interesting fact about God's tears is that God will not interfere to keep bad things from happening, for that is part of the warp and woof of life. Our capacity for pain, for instance, is really the first alert system for keeping us healthy. The pain possibility is necessary for us to have health. Sorrow and sadness is the other side of gladness and joy. We all live our lives, stumbling from one step of sorrow on into a great moment of incite and joy. So God does not interfere just in order to keep us comfortable and happy. He allows life to happen, but he moves in beside us. God's love makes him vulnerable to our pain.

I have Jack Hafford to thank for this insight about our crushing pains. Back when I was young, I was preaching in a youth revival. I was about to be ordained at Monger Place Baptist Church. Earl Anderson was the pastor. My Dad had been a member there before he started preaching. So I went over to visit with him about the ordaining council.

Earl Anderson said to a seventeen year-old preacher, "You won't do your most significant preaching until you have been through Gethsemane." I knew what Gethsemane was—it was the garden where Jesus suffered, wept, and sweat great drops of blood. It was the place where the grapes were pressed into wine. In the process of pressing, the pressure came from every side. But I didn't have any idea what he was talking about. I knew in my mind where Gethsemane was, but I didn't know what it was!

Days passed. God blessed my journey. So many good things happened and I found myself thinking, "God was smart to have chosen me to be his instrument." But then things began to unfold and not work right in my life. I then discovered Gethsemane.

When the pressure built to the breaking point, when I found myself facing things I couldn't control, when AIDS invaded my family, when churches refused to let my grandbaby come to Sunday School—suddenly I was walking through the valley of the shadow of death. One after another

er these things came into our lives. I was in Gethsemane!

I discovered that the things I had said glibly about God, I didn't really know. Finally I got to the point that the things I knew about God, I couldn't even say well. You discover things about God in Gethsemane that you can't find in any other place.

Jack Hafford was speaking about that when he said, "Moses came to the burning bush to turn aside and the first thing God told him was, 'Take off your shoes, you are on holy ground' (Exod. 3:5). Jack began to describe the shoes that Moses took off. Out there on the back side of the wilderness, the sands were burning hot and the stones were sharp. Moses was wearing thick shepherd's sandals to protect his feet.

I had always thought the command from God was for respect—because Moses was on ground occupied by God, he should remove his shoes. But I came to realize that God was saying, "Moses, you are already standing on holy ground, so take off your sandals, feel the heat and the pain—this is part of your conversation with God."

As Moses stood there in the hurting of that moment, he entered in the pain of God, and he began in that pain to hear God say, "I heard the voice of my people calling out of their sorrow and hurt, and my heart is hurting for them. I want you to go for me."

I connected with that thought you see, because I discovered that in the very moment when you are in the deepest part of the pain that comes into your life, you are at the moment when God can self-disclose, when God can reveal the kind of pain that is entering into his heart. When "God so loved the world that he gave" means that God who is bigger than our minds can comprehend, who is greater than we can put into any kind of proposition that we can debate, who is beyond all things, that God is absorbing into himself our pain because he loves. In every bit of the suffering you are going through, God is feeling your sorrow. God is responding to your Gethsemane.

If God is doing that with me, the amazing part of God's grace is that he is doing that for every one of the billion people that we have in the world. Can you imagine the pain God is going through? That is the vulnerability of God—God is feeling that kind of pain. No wonder God is crying over his world. No wonder God is sobbing today!

God is experiencing the pain of the starving children in Africa and Iraq and Afghanistan and South Dallas. He is feeling that kind of pain. He also feels the pain that you go through in the emptiness of your life—even surrounded by so much opulence and affluence, deep inside you are so hungry and dissatisfied, hurting because things don't work well in your family anymore. Your best plans have gone awry. The economic pressures may be bearing down on you as your business faces downsizing. In the process of that pain, know that God is feeling that pain, also.

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*In every bit of the suffering you are going through, God is feeling your sorrow.*

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Why doesn't God stop all of your misery? Because it is part of the warp and woof of life. It is part of the way in which we will come one day to a time of no more pain and no more tears. But now we live in the vale of tears.

God's Son knew as he walked toward Lazarus grave that in a few moments he was going to take away the reason for this pain. Jesus was going to turn their pain and grief from the death of their brother

into transformation and triumph, for he was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. He knew that.

But what was he doing during those three days before he came to Bethany? The Bible doesn't tell us, but I know what he was doing. Jesus operated on the same level of access to God that you and I have. If he didn't operate that way, he would not be God incarnate. So he had to empty himself, he had to live in relation to God as I do. The difference is that I am damaged and I am desensitized. I don't understand what I'm dealing with. But Jesus wasn't damaged by sin—he was exactly what God willed all of us to be. Jesus was totally in tune with the Father. But that does not mean he knew everything that he wanted to know.

So for three days Jesus was saying to the Father, "What are we going to do about Lazarus? What is going to happen to Lazarus? How can we help Lazarus?" And after three days he says to his disciples, "Come on, we are going to where Lazarus is. He is asleep." The disciples replied, "Well, if he is asleep, he is okay and will get well!" "No," replied Jesus, "he is dead."

When they arrive at the grave, Jesus prays, "Father, I ask you out loud to give me this power, because all of these people need to know where the power is coming from. I know what you are going to do." You see, during those three days while praying for Lazarus, God gave Jesus the answer, "You are going to raise up Lazarus from death."

This is the important fact in this scene. When Jesus came and saw their hurting, when he saw their sorrow and their sadness, knowing within the hour he was going to raise Lazarus from death, JESUS WEPT! He cried! He grieved with them!

Why? Because he loved them. He saw their hurt and felt their pain. This means that the God of all the universe, who controls it all, who knows how the whole story is going to end, who knows what heaven is (not just what he thinks it will be like)—that God comes to me in my limited understanding, while I am hurting and asking what can be done. That God comes to me and cares so much for me that he cries with me, like you would with a child who brings a broken toy. For you know there are ways to replace the toy, but the child doesn't know that. Because it is a crisis for the child, it becomes one for you.

God is weeping today because people are hurting today. He alone knows how to help you in your hurt.

God is weeping today because of suffering caused by sin



and rebellion. This passage (John 10:35) says Jesus “groaned within himself.” This is not a word about sorrow. It is a word about anger. The word means that Jesus was indignant—he was really angry!

Why? Not at Mary, as she cries. Not at Martha, as she questions his tardiness. But Jesus was angry at Satan—the evil one who makes people hurt like this. He was angry at sin and the hatred and hostility that it produces. He was upset at the superficial ways some people were grieving. Jesus was angry over disbelief and destruction. He was angry at death itself. So, Jesus stood and groaned. In the tears of God, there is anger!

Some of us are experiencing a new kind of pain. Newscasters have recently discovered a new kind of tension, the syndrome of anticipatory fear—fear over what might happen! Pastors could have taught them something about this fear long ago.

Most of the fears we have are unnamed. We don't know what they are, and they frighten us. If we can see a fear and describe it, we can deal with it. If not, we don't know how to deal with it.

The pains that are coming from the terrorist's attacks and the anthrax attacks and the fear of other terrorist activities are disabling. Leaders tell us to live our lives in normal ways, to return to business as usual, then we see officials closing buildings and disappearing from dangerous locations. The fact is, nobody can simply return to normal activities—we are living in that kind of fear and pain.

Christians, however, have a resource. If you really believe that God controls life, your life. If God is really on the throne. Then do you think God is going to be surprised by anything that happens to you? God is adequate for anything that comes into your life.

Dr. T. B. Maston used to say, “Christians ought to be the ones who have the greatest amount of peace about this world because we can get along without it.” Jesus comes to give us a sense of peace because he is capable of helping us get along without it!

Jesus weeps over people's pain, but he is in charge. And he calls forth Lazarus out of the tomb and says, “Loose him and let him go—let him do all that God intended for him to do.”

The other record of Jesus weeping occurs during the great celebration—Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-44). Jesus came down toward Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives to the East. Crowds lined the way, shouting praise and adulation. In a few days, he would be crucified, but none in the crowd knew that. In the midst of that celebration, Jesus stops the parade and looks out over the city, the capital of the nation of Israel, and he cries! Tears fill his eyes because he sees religious institutions that have missed their purpose. Israel's religious leaders had lost their mission.

I think God is crying today, shedding tears over religious organizations that are so involved in their own affairs, so wrapped up in themselves, so worked up over their doctrinal statements, so protective of their positions of power, so busy negotiating their positions of leadership, that they have totally forgotten their purpose—their mission.

Israel's mission was to be a kingdom of priests. Every Israelite was to be a person who could talk to God about people and talk to people about God. That was their mission. But what were they doing? Hatching a plot to kill Jesus, the Son of God, whom they saw as a threat to their power. That's what Jesus saw, and he wept.

Jesus said, “Because you have missed the visitation, the moment for which you were made—because you have missed the moment, you have missed the mission and my heart is hurting. I'm weeping because it is all going to come apart. You missed it!”

How did they miss it? Well, they just didn't notice what was happening in their world. They just didn't see God in their very presence. They missed God's greatest revelation.

Alice Gahana was one of my most interesting encounters. Her husband was a rabbi in Houston. She had been a sur-



vivor of two different consecration camps during the Holocaust. She was also an artist. I sat with her in San Antonio by the river talking about her experiences and I asked her, "Alice, of all the things you went through, what do you remember most?" She replied, "The empty windows."

When I asked her to explain, she told this story. "I grew up in central Europe, in a little village where I lived all my life. When I was nine years old, the soldiers came to get us. They told us to pack our suitcases and come down to the village square. I walked that morning, carrying my suitcase, down our cobble-stoned street—the street that I had walked all my life, by houses in which lived people I had known all my life.

The soldiers were going to take us to a concentration camp. We did not know what was awaiting us. But as I walked down the street, I noticed the windows were empty. No one came to the windows.

My friends and neighbors knew what was happening, they knew—but they were afraid. Nobody came to the windows to see what was happening to me." I asked Alice to draw for me a picture of that morning, and she drew a picture of three empty windows. It is a reminder of what breaks the heart of God.

The tears of God are falling today because we are not even going to the windows to see the people who are hurting today. We don't want to know. And God cries. If we are one of those walking down the street, we may feel bewildered or forsaken by others, but we can know that God never leaves us.

Remember Heather Whitestone? The Miss America who had the disability of deafness? Remember what she did for her talent competition? She danced. The deaf woman danced. Do you know how she did it? She took a special hearing machine that she could put to her ear, played it very loud, and memorized the music—every beat. When the time came for her to dance the ballet, she moved precisely and beautifully to the rhythm of the music she couldn't hear. But she had heard it before, and she remembered!

Sometimes I have walked through grief when the silence was so deafening, I heard nothing—nothing but the faint voice of God. But that was the music I remembered. A music I could still hear—a music I could dance to. And I kept on dancing and dancing and dancing until I found myself in the rhythm of God.

God is crying today. He wants you to sense his grief, but also he wants you to dance in rhythm to his music. The Bible says, "In the last days he will wipe the tears from our eyes." But do you know what you can do? You can wipe some of the tears from the eyes of God. For every time you hand your life to him, as he weeps with you—every time you do the deed he wants you to do, every time you touch a life, every time you share the message of Jesus, you wipe away some of the tears from the eyes of God. ■

## Vows of Cohabitation

**A recent report showed that more Americans are living together than ever before. Cohabitation is up and morality is down. When people get married, they make vows to each other. It clarifies the nature of the relationship. There ought to be similar vows for people who choose to live together. Here's what we suggest:**

"I John, take you Mary, to be my cohabitant, to have sex with, and to share bills with.

I'll be around while things are good, but I probably won't be if things get tough. As the saying goes, 'When the going gets tough, seek greener pastures.' After all, the grass frequently IS greener on the other side of the fence.

If you should get a cold, I'll run to the drugstore for some medicine—but if you get sick to the point where you take more than a day or two off work, don't count on me.

And forsaking many others, I will be more or less faithful to you for as long as it feels good to me.

If you should ever catch me screwing around on you, remember it doesn't necessarily mean that I no longer care for you. I will still probably want to share bed and bills with you.

So help me!" ■

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### FINANCIAL SUMMARY FOR 2001

#### INCOME 2001:

Balance On Dec. 31, 2000: \$14,893

#### Contributions 2001:

1 Special Gift: \$25,000

194 Contributors: \$26,578

Total 2001 Contributions: \$51,578

Total Assets For 2001: \$66,471

#### EXPENDITURES 2001:

Total Costs for Six Issues: \$61,484

BALANCE On Dec. 31, 2001: \$ 4,987

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# Roots of Violence

By Henlee Barnette, Emeritus Professor  
Southern Baptist Seminary and  
Clinical Professor (ret.), University of Louisville School of Medicine

Violence is primarily anthropological, a problem within persons. And we have largely focused on the problem without, rather than the one within. Thousands are chopping off the limbs of this evil tree while only a few are striking at its roots.

## Theological Roots

Violence has theological roots. The Bible has a realistic view of human nature. The Judeo-Christian faith is the only major religion that teaches that we are sinful in nature from birth (Ps. 51:5). We are all sinners saved by grace. Even after conversion, Luther declared that we are *simul justus et peccator*. That is to say, “justified sinners.” We have a dark side, a heart of darkness. In the beginning of holy history Cain killed his brother Abel out of jealousy (Gen. 4:8). Fratricidal warfare has persisted to this day. Jeremiah noted: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt, who can understand it?” (17:9)

Jesus saw the evil in people. He struck at the root of murder when he stated that it related to anger in the heart (Matt. 5:21). He internalized morality, laid the axe at the root of the tree and dealt with the violence within the heart. Augustine, in the midst of a violent time as Roman civilization was disintegrating, wrote his magnum opus, *The City of God*, in which he declares that Rome’s problems did not lie in events taking place around them, but in the human heart. And that when the heart turns from God, evil things happen.

In his great work *Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoyevsky has one of his characters, Smerdyakov, confess to his half-brother Ivan, a philosophical atheist, that he has murdered and robbed his father. Smerdyakov declared, “If there is no everlasting God, there is no such thing as virtue, and there is no need of it.” (Part III, Book XI, 325) In other words, if there is no God anything goes.

The gas chambers of Auschwitz were the results of the denial of “the everlasting God” and the belief in a one-dimensional homo sapien. Terrorists that murder, steal, and destroy, sometimes do so in the name of God. Terrorists who destroyed the Trade Towers in New York and the Pentagon did so believing they would go immediately to Paradise.

## Ideological Roots

Violence and rage have ideological roots. Racist groups in America that advocate violence have an ideology grounded in religion. One group calls itself the Christian Identity movement. Its religio-ideology holds that whites (Celtic Anglo-

Saxons) are God’s chosen people. The “Phinehas Priesthood” is the terrorist arm of Christian Identity. In the Bible Phinehas is the grandson of Aaron. He became the hero of the people of Israel by stopping a plague in the nation in BC 1452 (Num. 25:7-13). Phinehas also killed an Israelite and his pagan wife because he did not believe in racial intermarriage. Eventually he won the perpetual high priesthood.

Today members of the “Phinehas Priesthood” see themselves as soldiers of God to save America from Satan and a “one-world government.” Hence, they justify their terrorism because it is warfare against evil. The action of modern Phinehas types is taken for the glory of God (*The Christian Century*, Sept. 8-15, 1999, 842).

Christian leaders must find new ways to counter hate groups such as Christian Identity, the KKK, Neo-Nazi cells, and other terrorists. Coalitions can be formed by ministerial associations to counteract their propaganda. The media must be used to inform citizens of their hateful ideologies. Community education is imperative.

## Psychological Roots

Depth psychology reveals that within all human beings lurks potential evil. A hidden violence exists within ourselves and others no matter how pious we may be. Sometimes we are startled to discover these demons within. A college classmate who was interned in a concentration camp, denied to a starving child that he had any bread on him. When he was freed, he wrote an article entitled “Hunger Makes Devils of Us All.”

As human beings we are plagued with inner contradictions in both thought and action. For example, we have a private language and a public one, an inner one and outer one, a spoken and a non-spoken one. Our inner language betrays our embarrassing hidden violence. As psychologist Carl Rogers observes, there is within us a lack of congruence of “self with self.” (*On Becoming A Person*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961, 340)

Paul the Apostle describes the inner conflict that results in undesired behavior. He confessed: “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.” (Rom. 7:15-20) A civil war raged within him. Paul’s experience finds an echo in all of us. Only by the grace of God we can be delivered from this dilemma. (7:25)

The latent violence in us all can emerge in the hysteria of mob psychology. Near a church a black man murdered a wealthy farmer. When the authorities arrived at the killer’s



home, they found him sitting on the porch with the dead man's head nearby. He was arrested and on the way to jail, a mob took the prisoner and lynched him. Members of the mob cut off his fingers and toes for souvenirs. I was shocked to see a church member pictured in the photo of the lynched man. I am not sure that he participated in the lynching, but he was present.

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*Depth psychology  
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potential evil.*

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### **Reduction of Violence**

Many cures for contemporary violence are offered, from the ridiculous to the sublime. Some argue that posting the Ten Commandments in the public schools would have saved them from the violence and crimes of youth.

Since we cannot completely eliminate violence, our efforts should be toward reducing it in individuals and society. This will not be easy, for a whole generation has become psychically numb to the images of violence. The major theme projected by the mass media, especially movies and television, is increasingly the acting out of violence as a normal way of life.

We do not have a pharmaceutical substance that quells our violence, nor have we identified an evil gene we can eliminate. Let us therefore focus on more realistic and concrete possibilities.

**The Individual.** How do we handle our own anger? First, we become aware that anger and fear are what Gaylin calls "emergency emotions." To control these emotions we have mechanisms of control. Healthy persons, says Gaylin, have "a large repertoire of defenses" against his or her own anger (Willard Gaylin, *The Rage Within: Anger in Modern Life*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 96).

Here are a few we may use: 1) deny that you are angry; 2) use catharsis as a means of eliminating pent-up anger. (personally, I write articles, letters and notes for publication or just file them away); 3) disguise our anger by clothing it in passive aggressive behavior; 4) project or dissipate our anger; 5) try Paul's principle: "Don't let the sun go down on your wrath;" and 6) give some charity five dollars every time you explode with anger.

Let me add a few more: 7) Be calm. My longtime friend Clarence Jordan, founder of Koinonia Farm, and I were making a film of the old Haymarket in downtown Louisville in the early 1940's. I lived on the same block near Stoney's Night Club. Over a period of two years numerous crimes had been committed there, including two homicides—front page stories in the newspaper. When the manager of Stoney's saw us across the street taking pictures, he was furious. He came toward us shaking his fist and pouring forth profanity. Clarence remained calm and greeted the man with soft-spoken words: "Friend, this is a free country is it not?" The man was astounded, turned around, and headed back across the street muttering, "To hell with it!" I learned existentially what the Bible means, "A soft answer turneth away wrath." (Prov. 15:1)

8) Be courteous. Avoid name-calling; treat others with the same treatment that you receive from Christ. Recognize that the enemy is a person made in the image of God and one for whom Christ died. 9) Be in control of yourself by being filled with the Spirit. If one is filled with the Spirit, he or she displays love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Gal. 5:22). Program your anger toward reconciliation, not destruction.

**Parental Responsibilities.** Some of our major moral problems are rooted in dysfunctional families. As the basic unit of society, the family provides children with basic character formation. In the home children develop a sense of right and wrong, respect for others, a sense of responsibility, and regard for others. Hence, it is imperative that we find ways to strengthen the spiritual and moral foundations of the family.

Helping fragmented and broken families is one of society's greatest challenges. Half the marriages in America end in divorce. Ironically, divorce between religious couples is slightly higher than of the non-religious. Baptists presently have the highest divorce rate of any religious group—twenty-nine percent of Baptists are now or have been divorced. The only Christian group with a higher rate is among non-denominational churches, who have a 34 percent divorce rate. Lutheran and Catholics have the lowest percentage of divorced persons at 21 percent. Atheists and agnostics are below the national average at 21 percent. Mormons, known for their emphasis on family values, fare no better than the national norm of 24 percent. (*Baptists Today*, Feb. 2000, 8).

America has the highest divorce rate among western industrial nations. Children who are victims of divorce are more pathological than children from families that remain together. Violence in children often has its roots in broken homes.

Every child needs a family of two parents, a father and a mother. Statistics show that families with two parents function better. Children need parents as role models of love and care, parents who will teach them by example values of civility and good manners. My son and his family from Alabama visited me in Louisville one Thanksgiving. My grandchildren, ages five and seven, surprised me and others by their behavior. They wanted to leave the table before others. So when they had finished they came to the head of the table where I always sit and asked, "Granddaddy, may I be excused?" Back of that simple act was years of teaching and example.

Children thrive on four things: attention, affection, affirmation, and acceptance. They crave affection and loving care; they desire recognition, affirmation, encouragement, and support; they must be accepted as a whole with their foibles and failures, their weaknesses as well as their strengths. This is the sort of nurture children need in their

struggle toward maturity. It is their fundamental right.

Spiritual nurture is absolutely essential in a child's life. Children deserve to be brought up in the nurture and discipline of the Lord. Fathers must take the lead in matters spiritual. Joshua set the example when the decision had to be made whether to serve the true God or the false gods of the past. "As for me and my house" declared Joshua, "we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15) But in our time fathers have largely turned this task over to mothers. Greg Walcott, the veteran movie and TV star, once told me that he played the role of priest in his home. Then I understood why he and his family were different from the typical Hollywood family.

Some mothers also desert their responsibility of raising their offspring. The ostrich hatches its young without incubation, depositing her eggs in the sand to be hatched by the sun's heat. Here her function as a mother ends. Like the ostrich, some mothers drop their responsibility for their children at birth. Or like the cowbird that does not build a nest but lays her eggs in the nest of other birds, some mothers want others to raise their children.

**The Role of the Church and Violence.** The church has a vital role in the reduction of violence in our society, especially in the family. By strengthening the spiritual and moral foundations of the home, the church improves the quality of family life. Because the church touches the life of every member of the family, it has a unique opportunity to assist parents and children struggling with anger, conflict, and abuse.

One place for the church to begin is to teach the Christian meaning of marriage: its purpose, permanence, and the procreation and care of children. Millions of women

and children are battered every year in the United States. It is estimated that a woman is attacked every five seconds. Churches can provide trained staff to minister to the abused, to provide a "safe place" of shelter for those seeking to escape a dangerous situation, and to cooperate with social services in a community.

Sometimes it takes years for women to escape from a bad relationship. The church can facilitate that transition to freedom. Churches may form a coalition with the Salvation Army and others who provide shelters for the abused. Pastors now have access to an enormous amount of resources provided for victims of violence. Education of the laity allows members to get involved.

Churches must awaken to the seriousness of our violent culture and take the action necessary to make a difference. Murdered Archbishop Romero of El Salvador wrote:

A church that doesn't provoke any crisis,  
a gospel that doesn't unsettle,  
a word that doesn't get under anyone's skin,  
a word of God that doesn't touch the real sin of the  
society in which it is being proclaimed—  
What gospel is this?  
Very nice, pious considerations,  
that don't bother anyone,  
that is the way many would like preaching to be.  
Those preachers who avoid every thorny matter  
so as not to be harassed,  
so as not to have conflicts and difficulties,  
do not light up the world they live in.

Archbishop Oscar Romero in *The Violence of Love*. ■



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# A Conversation Between James Madison and George W. Bush

By Paul Simmons, *Clinical Professor*  
School of Medicine, University of Louisville

**Editor's Note:** This "debate" was originally carried by NPR on March 20, 2001. Dr. Simmons is also Adjunct Professor in the Department of Philosophy and for many years was Professor of Christian Ethics at Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville.

**Introduction:** In a scene reminiscent of Marley's after-life conversation with Scrooge, an apparition of James Madison appeared to George W. Bush shortly after Bush established the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. The Presidential directive to staff was "to coordinate a national effort to expand opportunities for faith-based and other community organizations." If anything would bring Madison back from the dead it would be such an announcement. Madison was an ardent defender of separation and dealt with proposals during his administration that have great similarity to what are now called "faith-based initiatives." Bush seems eager to set aside traditional barriers that have protected religion from government, and prevented government from taxing the citizenry to support religion. In their conversation, President Bush was the first to speak:

**GWB:** "My goodness! It's James Madison? What are you doing here? And why did you wear that God-awful powdered wig? Don't you know you are in Texas country? where are your jeans and cowboy boots? Don't you know wigs just don't fly?"

**JM:** "Speaking of what doesn't fly, have you considered what harms you are doing with these faith-based initiatives you are trying to sell?"

**GWB:** "Sell is hardly the right word, Jim. Look at this check-book! I am buying, not selling. There are votes at stake and we need new coalitions to get things done in this country."

**JM:** "A point well taken, George, votes are more expensive these days and coalitions never came easy. Recall that I had to make friends with some back-country folks like Baptists and Methodists in Virginia to get religion disestablished and the First Amendment through the Continental Congress."

**GWB:** "Well, you have not seen anything, Jim. What you did in Virginia needs to be undone. You built a wall to separate church and state, we want to build a bridge to unite them. That disestablishment stuff was just bad religion. You Deists never got the message that this is a godly nation and the government needs to be friendly, not indifferent, to clergy types and their social programs."

**JM:** "Speaking of friendly, you have really cozied up to this radical bunch on the hard right. It is disturbing that you could be on such 'buddy-buddy' terms with people who do

not support everyone's First Amendment rights. They seem only to want rights for those who think as they do."

**GWB:** "You must be kidding, Madison. The religious right loves the First Amendment. They know the Puritans and the Pilgrims and the Baptists all came over here to secure freedom of religion. They were tired of unfriendly governments that gave them the dickens and taxed them like everything. They knew how important it was to control government policy and turn it into a partnership for benevolence. Religion is the best thing we have going for us."

**JM:** "Easy there, George, this sounds like an identity problem. Are you the President or the Pope? Are we talking politics or religion? Is your task to defend the Constitution and strengthen the social contract or to promote religion and make government largesse available to churches?"

**GWB:** "Jim, government has to be all things to all people, especially religious people who are doing so much good for the homeless and the addicts and the illiterate. We don't need government messing up people's lives; we just ought to fund the faith groups and let them get on with the business of converting the lost and ne'er do wells so they will be productive citizens."

**JM:** "I see, so you want to turn all welfare efforts over to religious groups with social programs. Have I got it right?"

**GWB:** "Right, Jim. Don't you see the point?"

**JM:** "I'm afraid I do, George, but I would like to be wrong."

**GWB:** "Well its like this, Jim. When Government spends money, it messes people up. They become dependent on government programs. But Government doesn't change the heart. With a little federal money, faith groups can change this nation."

**JM:** "My soul and body, George, have you never read the First Amendment and why it was so important? Have you read no books on history? Have you not sworn to uphold the Constitution?"

**GWB:** "Well, I sure have! I read books by Marvin Olasky, and he says just what I think. You can't take God out of government and that we need to be compassionate conservatives. And I was converted on the spot."

**JM:** "I never heard of Olasky up here, George. But besides his book, have you read anything that would give you historical perspectives on the relation of church and state and the

struggle for religious liberty in this country? Don't you know about the Inquisition, or the Act of Conformity, or the Hundred Years War or the Thirty Years War? Have you ever read about Roger Williams or the Quakers and their struggles for freedom in America? What about my 'Memorial and Remonstrance' or the 'Federalist Papers'?"

**GWB:** "Look, Jim, who has time to read all that stuff? I've been too busy getting elected and beating these anti-religious, immoral Democrats. I've also made some big money, which is something you never did. Wealthy people should run this country. They know how to get things done. I prefer them to that intellectual crowd you ran around with. What did they ever do for America?"

**JM:** "George, you took an oath to uphold the Constitution. You can't uphold it if you don't understand it. You must know the reasons for the liberties the First Amendment is designed to protect. Religion is not always friendly to freedom, especially when it means opposition to the dogmas of the church or the ability to control people."

**GWB:** "Religions controlling people? You must be kidding, Jim. Religion sets people free. Americans hate the wall you and Jefferson built between church and state. I am here to tear it down. It's Deists like you and secular humanists that keep people from being good. I made a promise to Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and Marvin Olasky that I would do all in my power to make this country holy again. And the faith-based initiatives are just the beginning. Just think what I'll be able to do by the second term."

**JM:** "Yes, I noticed your meeting with the National Council of Catholic Bishops on your anti-abortion agenda. You were recorded saying that faith-based initiatives money would help their efforts to overturn *Roe v. Wade*."

**GWB:** "That's right, Jim, I did. We can't allow women to go around terminating pregnancies just because they have a problem pregnancy. Killing innocent babies has got to stop."

**JM:** "But George, my impression is that you like killing. Texas leads all other states in executions. Its numbers add up to almost as many as the next five states combined." As Governor, you did nothing to stop or slow down using the death penalty."

**GWB:** "True. We Texans give the kind of compassion we get. We'll be friendly to the friendly, but if you step out of line, we know how to handle that. Lethal injections and the electric chair were meant to be used. We intend to protect the public interest. Babies are innocent, but these dudes are guilty as sin."

**JM:** "So that's the difference. Apparently women are sinners, too, and that is why their rights are less important than those of a fetus? And no matter what the findings about race-biased death penalty decisions and the facts about over-zealous prosecutors and witnesses with conflicts of interest, you are still enthusiastic about the death penalty?"

**GWB:** "Yes, Jim, that goes with being a Texan like me. I believe the guilty should get it in the neck."

**JM:** "W., let me see if I have this right. You want to bring every conception to term but once they are born, all bets are off!"

**GWB:** "No, that's why we need more faith-based initiatives. Religion will bring 'em in and keep 'em in. We need to pour more money into social programs headed up by good people of faith so our entire country becomes a nation of believers and people able to pay their taxes and stay out of trouble."

**JM:** "George, don't you know that you are turning faith groups into government agencies? It disturbs me greatly that you want to fund religious programs that have a thin veneer of social service. You seem not to be bothered by the practice of saying prayers and delivering sermons by people funded by government. My own conviction is that faith is a matter of voluntarism and persuasion. An atheist coerced is still of the same opinion."

**GWB:** "But, Jim, we are not funding religious worship or evangelism. We are only funding the social service. But even if they get mixed up, those in the programs need a good strong sermon. After all, you had some good things to say about freedom of expression and speech for the religious. They need more money to reach more people."

**JM:** "Yes, I strongly support the freedoms of religious groups to be religious. But I heard the same arguments you are making from the Episcopalians and the Baptists, George. They wanted money for charitable work. I rejected all their appeals. Government coercion is out of place in religion. Faith operates by friendly persuasion, but government uses the cudgel. Government that is voluntary is a contradiction in terms and religion that is coercive has lost its essence."

**GWB:** "Jim, there's nothing wrong with loving service, no matter who does it. Government ought to use effective programs wherever it finds them and not worry about entanglement with religion and all those other little nit-picky things liberals keep talking about."

**JM:** "I think I'm getting the picture, George. It's okay with you if Baptists insult the Jews, Muslims, and atheists as long as they are expressing their own faith. And it's okay for religious groups to compete for federal funds as long as the funds hold out?"

**GWB:** "That's right. Why should religious groups be denied government funds? We live in a free country where everyone should have equal access to tax revenues. After all, it is their money."

**JM:** "Competition among religious groups for federal money sounds horrific, George! There are few things worse than religious groups fighting over the same turf. The more religious groups get, the more they want. And they want no regulations on what they can do or say. In other words, they keep on accumulating but never diminish the vast sums of property and wealth they accumulate."

**GWB:** "You just don't get it, Jim. You lived so long ago you just can't understand the modern situation. We have forever banished the problem of religious persecution. Each group can speak its own mind. Jews can be Jews, Muslims Muslims, and Baptists Baptists, bless their hearts."

**JM:** "I noticed those evangelical prayers at your inauguration, George. Did it not occur to you that a lot of Americans belong to minority religions, but when they came to your



Inauguration they were forced to listen to sectarian prayers?"

**GWB:** "Why should that bother me? Evangelicals are my people and they have a friend in the White House. When the Muslims elect a president (over my dead body!) they can have prayers by the Imam. And if an atheist is ever elected (God forbid!), he can have an atheist prayer (whatever that is). It's a free country, Jim."

**JM:** "And a country concerned about civility, right George? We won a great victory when we separated institutional religion from government intrusion or entanglement, in my judgment. The reason we have had both vitality in religion and a strong central government is that we set religions free to pursue their own mission without government control or support. When we start setting religious groups against one another, we will be in for some rough times. Have you considered the religious wars in India, Indonesia, and Africa?"

**GWB:** "Jim, those wars are caused by a bunch of foreign fanatics. They are haters not lovers. That's why they can't get along."

**JM:** "Do you really think that competition for advantage has nothing to do with religious wars, George? Doesn't each group want the government to give it favorite treatment or special status?"

**GWB:** "But that will never happen here, Jim. We have solved all those problems because we have enough money to go around."

**JM:** "So money is the solution to all social ills? Have you never heard of the War on Poverty? And do you intend to fund the Wiccans and the Satanists, the Nation of Islam and the Mormons, the Scientologists and the Unification Church? I know your initiatives make Sun Myung Moon happy. Are all religions going to be treated equally?"

**GWB:** "Well now, just a minute, Jim, I never said that. After all, there have to be some limits and some tests if they are to

get government money. They've got to be lovers and not haters, really good people who embrace family values and traditional notions of government. I think I have been pretty clear about that."

**JM:** "Yes. But from what I hear, your friends like Dobson, Falwell, and Robertson have developed some severe reservations about your faith-based initiatives. And there are over 800 religious groups that have signed petitions in opposition. Apparently there are more than a few kinks to be worked out."

**GWB:** "That's true. There are some things I had not thought about. I never expected Pat and Jerry to back off and be so critical. We have some work to do to smooth out the wrinkles."

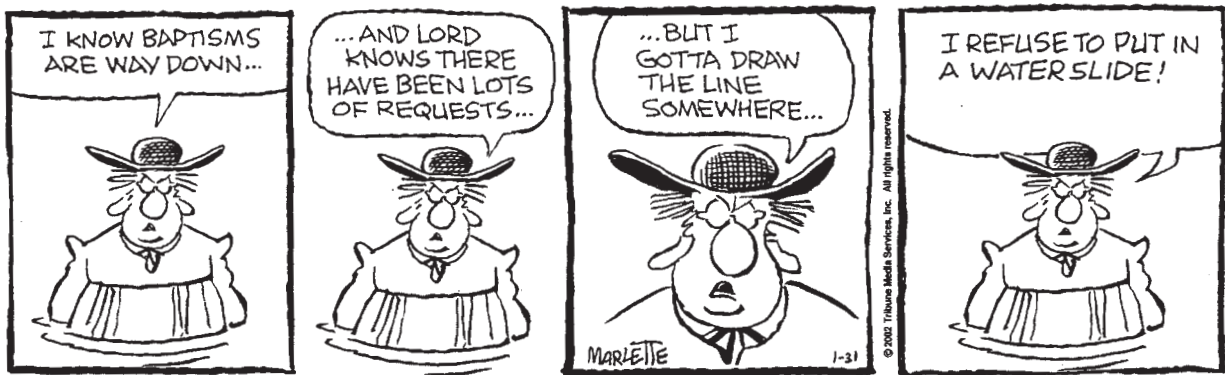
**JM:** "George, does that mean you are backing down and re-evaluating this whole scheme as perhaps a little misguided and premature?"

**GWB:** "Not on your life! I know what's good for this country. And once I make up my mind, I will not change it. The Devil is in the details, I'm sorry DiIulio has bailed out. But we will get God's man in that office to work it out."

**JM:** "You say a 'man' in the office? Why not a woman? Aren't women known to be compassionate about children and those in need?"

**GWB:** "The problem is simple, Jim. Women are too compassionate. The first priority is to get a tough-minded conservative like me in there who can think more objectively than women. Second, women might be soft on abortion and I want to be sure that we overturn Roe v. Wade and get the women back into the house where they belong. Don't you worry, Jim, we are here to get the job done."

**JM:** "To be candid, George, I fear the worst. I really hate to go back and tell Jefferson about our conversation." ■



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# Amos Never Worked For Enron

*By Dwight A. Moody, Dean of the Chapel*  
Georgetown College, Georgetown, KY  
2002 ©

Where is Amos when we need him?

He started out in the Tekoa countryside but was last seen in Bethel. That was before they kicked him out, sent him packing, closed down his operations. He ran afoul of the authorities.

Amos was shaking his verbal finger in the face of the king, his judges, and all the national administrators: "Ah, you that turn justice to wormwood, and bring righteousness to the ground!"

Not that these important people were unbelievers. Bethel was the site of "the king's sanctuary," probably something like a chapel at Camp David. It was a place where powerful people could worship without risking public confrontation with a man like Amos.

For good reason: Amos made it hard for the rich, the famous and the powerful to sleep well at night. He put their feet to the fire, so to speak.

Here is what happened: Amaziah was the pastor at the king's sanctuary in Bethel. He told the king of the harsh criticisms of Amos; he then said to Amos: "Preacher, get out of here! Go back home and earn your living there. Never again preach in Bethel because this is the king's sanctuary, it is a temple of the kingdom."

We don't know what happened to Amos, but we do know that he recorded some of his convictions in a very small book. Small books are popular these days. Most of them, however, are like cotton candy.

Small books like the one Amos wrote don't make it to the New York Times "Best Seller" list. They don't make it to other lists either, like the reading list of the executives of Enron or the politicians in Washington, especially those in the White House.

If they had read this little book, would we have laws that allow multi-billion dollar corporations to make millions in profits but not pay a penny in taxes?

Would wealthy executives be given millions in bonus pay while the pension plan of thousands of employees is left bankrupt?

Would the Attorney General remove himself from the investigation citing "conflict of interest"?

You can find the little book of Amos in what Jews call the Book of the Twelve and Christians call the Minor Prophets (near the end of the Old Testament).

The Book of Amos is minor in the same way that the Gettysburg Address is minor; both are relatively short. Both are major in the same sort of way, however; they present a transforming and compelling vision of human society where peace and prosperity are rooted in ethics and equality. "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream," Amos said.

We need a man like Amos, a straight-talking, truth-telling, no-holds-barred man like Amos, who understands right from wrong and is not afraid to say so.

Preachers everywhere shy away from the Amos model of pastoral work. After all, he irritated the most powerful man in his congregation and ended up out in the streets.

No doubt these Enron executives in Houston are church members. Many of them probably serve as deacons, teachers, elders, and (of course) finance chair. They probably heard sermons on gambling, smoking, drinking and adultery, with an occasional word on homosexuality thrown in for good measure.

What they needed was a strong dose of preacher Amos. What they needed were clear answers to simple questions.

Does God want corporate executives to make \$300 million while the workers make \$30 thousand? Is it right for corporate executives to sell their falling stocks while preventing employees from selling theirs? Should companies be allowed to deduct executive bonuses from their taxes? What good is an Attorney General who is so beholden to cooperate executives that he is not able to investigate their illegal and unethical behavior?

Where is Amos when we need him?

But Amos lived a long time ago, had a very short career, and ended up dismissed from his preaching post. His detractors will say he never understood the complicated issues of supply and demand, management and labor, capital and resources.

All Amos understood was right and wrong, and that rarely makes it to the top of the list. ■

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# Faith and Higher Education

*By Fisher Humphreys, Professor of Theology*  
Beeson School of Divinity, Samford University

**Editor's Note:** Though delivered to professional educators attending a luncheon sponsored by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in Atlanta on June 29, 2001, this address inspires all who teach at any level and all those who learn from teachers. Dr. Humphreys welcomes responses and comments on this article by email at: [fhhumphr@samford.edu](mailto:fhhumphr@samford.edu).

About three years ago my friend Gary Furr and I met with Gary Parker to discuss the fact that some of the most devoted supporters of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship are persons involved in higher education. We met at a restaurant in Anniston, Alabama, and that may have suggested to us that a good way for the CBF to express its appreciation for persons in higher education was to sponsor a meal for them during the General Assembly. So here we are today, having this good lunch together, the third in a series. I remember with appreciation the very thoughtful address by Jeff Rogers at our first lunch, and though I could not be present last year in Orlando I have read with profit Dwight Moody's provocative address "On Being a Baptist School."

For some reason I have always associated Baptists with eating. I appreciate the story of the kindergarten teacher who asked her children to bring symbols of their religious faith for "show-and-tell" time. One child said, "I am a Muslim and this is my prayer mat." A second said, "I am Jewish and this is my Star of David." A third said, "I am Catholic and this is my rosary." And a fourth said, "I am a Baptist and this is my casserole dish."

One of my Presbyterian friends told me that he thinks that Baptists believe in the three biblical ordinances: baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the coffee break.

My favorite is the church bulletin that contained the following announcement: "The cost of attending the Conference on Prayer and Fasting includes meals."

I am glad that we educators have this time together, and I am deeply honored to have been invited to speak to you. In this address I want to describe some relationships between two sets of commitments that we all share. They are our commitments to Christian faith and to higher education.

The relationships between the two sets of commitments have been the subject of several public conversations. I will briefly mention three of these in order to distinguish my subject from them.

The first is an ongoing conversation about the question: What is a Christian college or university? Is it a college founded by Christians, or financed by a denomination, or owned by trustees who have been elected by an ecclesial body? Is it a university whose faculty, as the primary bearers of its institutional culture, create a Christian ethos in the institution? This seems to me to be a very important conver-

sation; it is certainly one from which I have learned a great deal.

A second ongoing conversation concerns the secularization of Christian colleges and universities. I suppose that everyone agrees that something that may be called secularization has happened to many colleges. Still, I have misgivings about some of the things being said in this conversation. On one occasion James Burtchaeff offered as evidence for secularization the fact that some Catholic colleges and universities allow non-Catholic professors to teach religion courses. His example caused me to doubt the secularization hypothesis, because I have taught religion at two Catholic institutions, Loyola University in New Orleans and Spring Hill College in Mobile, and I feel confident that my teaching did not carry forward the secularization of those institutions.

There is a third public conversation, one in which the connection between our Christian faith and our various disciplines is discussed. This conversation, sponsored in large measure by the Education Commission and more recently by the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools, has helped professors to integrate faith and learning and to see the importance of a Christian worldview.

These three conversations have been helpful to me, and perhaps to you also. Today I want to direct your attention to two other issues that, like these, concern relationships between Christian faith and higher education.

## How We Think about Our Students

The first concerns students. Given that we are Christians, how should we think about our students? We may begin by observing that our Christian faith teaches us that all persons have been created by God, in God's image, a little lower than God, and are loved by God.

This is, I think, the highest possible estimate of our students, and it is a fundamental and indispensable estimate. As professors we will be attentive to estimates such as, for example, whether or not students are academically gifted, but we will not allow that to blind us to the Christian estimate of students.

Because our students bear the image of God we respect them, we appreciate them, and we take an interest in them. We appreciate them as persons before we know anything about their academic work, and we appreciate them as stu-

dents when their work is good work. We also challenge our students. We believe because they are in God's image, they need to outgrow thoughtlessness, carelessness, laziness, ignorance, and prejudice, and we who are professors can help them to do that.

Respecting students is not a substitute for teaching them; in fact, teaching them is an ideal way to show respect for them. Last week my friend Philip Wise told me a story about a mother who asked her first grader how he was enjoying school. He replied, "Oh, I love school. It's great!" Then, after a brief hesitation, he added, "Well, except for one thing. . . I don't really like it when Mrs. Decker tries to teach us stuff."

I believe that all human beings have a deep need to be respected and to be appreciated, and for someone to take a genuine interest in them, and for someone to challenge them appropriately. It is within our power as professors to help meet those needs for our students.

Various things can prevent us from giving our students the respect they need. To the extent that we are still scrambling to get this for ourselves, we are hardly in a position to give it to others. Another barrier is that students act in ways that seem to forfeit our respect.

Sometimes some of them don't study, or they plagiarize, or they are chronically late with work, or they are contemptuous of any learning that will not equip them to make money. How can we maintain our interest in students whose lives are superficial and irresponsible?

One thing that helps us is to remember that much of their behavior arises from fear or from ignorance. They are frightened by the challenge of learning and of entering into adulthood, and they know not what they do.

Another thing that helps us is our faith. We trust the Christian doctrine that tells us that, whatever this student has done or failed to do, she is loved by God. In the plainest possible words, we intend to treat our students as Rabbi Jesus treated his disciples.

Caroline and I have two adult children. When they were very young I noticed something anomalous. Before they had become responsible for their actions we had to begin to treat them as responsible in order to enable them to become responsible. Our treating them as responsible helped them to behave responsibly.

So it is, I think, with our students, whatever their ages. As we treat them with respect and appreciation and as we take an interest in them and challenge them, we help them to behave as persons worthy of that treatment.

The alternatives to respecting our students are to treat them with indifference or with contempt. Such treatment is a factual error—no human being is contemptible—it is a moral failure, and it jeopardizes our work as teachers, because only the most superficial learning will take place

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*Respecting students is not a substitute for teaching them; in fact, teaching them is an ideal way to show respect for them.*

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when students feel that their professors are indifferent to them or contemptuous of them.

One of the most spiritually helpful questions we Christians can ask ourselves is this: "Upon what person or group do I feel entitled to look with contempt?" We professors must struggle with the temptation to look with contempt or indifference on students who do poor academic work, or who do not seem capable of good work, or who hold views that are politically or religiously or morally reactionary. We will become better teachers when we know clearly which groups we feel entitled to look upon with

contempt.

In the Christian tradition there is a name for treating people with respect. It is an old-fashioned word, but retrieving it can help us to integrate our commitments to Christian faith and to higher education.

The word is humility. Humility is not contempt for oneself but respect for others as well as for oneself. It is the recognition that the lives of others are as important as my own. Humility is also respect for God, accepting that God is the only divine being and that we are human beings.

Roberta Bondi says that among the desert mothers and fathers humility was understood as "the master virtue that includes all the others." She tells the story of Abba Macarius who, when returning to his cell from a swamp, was attacked by the devil. The devil struck at him several times with a scythe but was unable to hurt him. The Abba was puzzled and asked the devil why he could not hurt Macarius. The devil replied, "Your humility. Because of that I can do nothing against you." Respect for persons is a good defense against evil.

Humility is an appropriate response to reality. Other people do matter, and God alone is God.

Humility also is a quality that is essential for a decent life. It is indecent not to let God be God and not to respect the lives of others.

Humility is indispensable to authentic community. We may have superficial community simply by being in proximity to others. We find that in classrooms in which students are not meaningfully engaged in the learning process.

We may have more meaningful community by sharing in common tasks to which we are all committed. We find that in classrooms in which students study the subject matter with a view to making good grades and getting well-paying jobs.

But community in the full sense comes only when we respect one another. We find that in classrooms in which professors respect students and students respect one another.

Humility provides freedom from tedious, humorless efforts to justify our own existence. A humble person recognizes that the justification for her existence was given to her along with her existence. It is a gift of God's grace.



How do we express humility, respect for students? There can be no comprehensive list, I think.

- We express respect for students by being responsible in our teaching
- By not imagining that friendship with students is a substitute for academic rigor
- By teaching that is informed and passionate
- By beginning and ending our classes on time
- By learning students' names
- By never talking down to students
- By taking their questions seriously even when they are not very good questions
- By preparing syllabuses and study guides with care
- By writing thoughtful, sincere comments on students' papers
- By testing and grading fairly
- By giving special attention to those who find it difficult to keep up
- By continuing to challenge as well as to affirm all of our students.

Perhaps most important of all, we express respect by listening attentively to our students. The important thing is that we be guided not only by the expectations of the academy but also by what our Christian faith teaches us about the meaning of persons.

### How We Think about Our Teaching

The second issue is how as Christians we are to think about the work of teaching itself. How are we to understand what we are doing when we help students to gain knowledge, to develop skills, and to express their creativity?

First, we recognize that teaching is an intervention. Though it is neither intrusive nor manipulative, it does affect students. After they have been in our classes they will never be quite the same persons they were before.

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*For every student who undergoes a conversion in our classes, there are dozens, whose response to us and our teaching is less apparent but no less real.*

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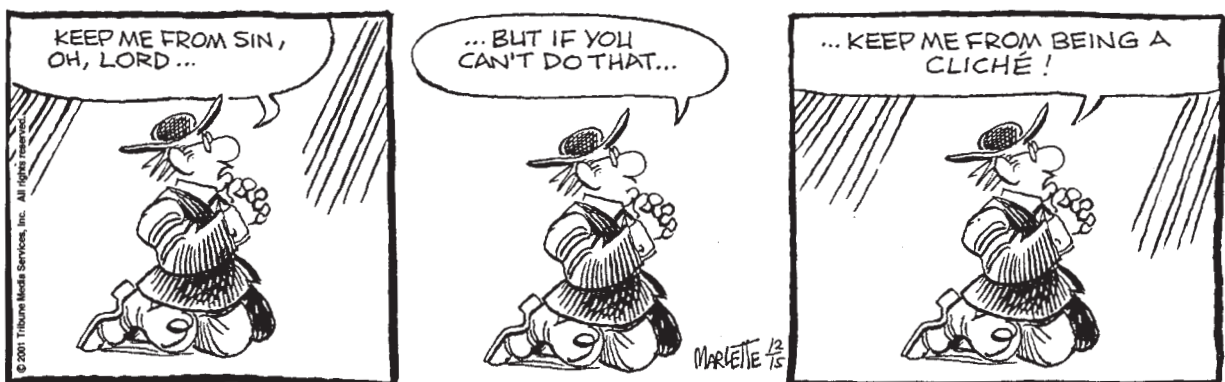
There is a tendency, when professors' influence upon students is discussed, to attend to the large and dramatic effects that professors make upon some students. We could call this the "Tuesdays with Morrie" effect. Its importance is easy to notice because students remember it and talk about it.

But for every student who undergoes a conversion in our classes, there are dozens, perhaps hundreds, whose response to us and our teaching is less apparent but no less real. Our attitudes, our manner, our priorities, our integrity, our commitments, our example all shape the lives of the students in our classes. And students are formed by our faith: faith that life is worth living, faith that life is morally serious, faith that persons are more precious than institutions, faith that rules exist for the welfare of persons not the other way

round, faith that it is possible to be aware of the tragedy of human life and still to live a happy life, and faith that there is enough love for everyone. From us students can learn to avoid the cynicism and the bitterness that characterize so much of our culture.

In short, the education of students is effectively the formation of persons. I agree with Parker Palmer that "education is spiritual formation." Chaucer's Oxford clerk recognized the formative character of his work: "The thought of moral virtue filled his speech / And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach." There can be no higher estimate of teaching than that it contributes the formation of persons.

I can understand that some professors are reluctant to speak of their work in these terms, thinking them to be grandiose or unrealistic. They might assume that the spiritual and moral formation of persons is done only by religious professionals and only in explicitly religious settings such as worship services. But the Christian faith is incarnational. It teaches us that "the world is charged with the grandeur of God," the whole world. God is present in classrooms as well



as in churches. People's lives are shaped by lectures as well as by sermons.

This does not mean that we must speak about religion in our classes. Sometimes it is appropriate to do that, sometimes not. One of the wonderful parts of our legacy as Baptists is our recognition that all Christians are called to give verbal witness to their faith. The flip side of that wonderful legacy is that we may assume that, unless we give a verbal witness, we have not behaved as Christians.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Our formative work in students' lives takes place whenever we are teaching about anything that is, to use St. Paul's language, honorable, just, pure, commendable, and excellent (Phil. 4:8). When we speak the truth in love, our students' lives will be shaped Christianly.

I realize that it is easier to see this with some subjects than with others. It is obvious that we are contributing to the formation of a person's life when we encourage her creativity, as in a class in creative writing, and it is obvious that a class on Dante is formative as well as informative.

But is this the case of all subjects? To take the hard case, is it true when we teach a subject in which our primary objectives are for students to gain knowledge and skills that equip them to earn a living? Can learning how to be an accountant be a matter of personal formation?

I believe it is. Being an accountant is honorable work. It is a good thing to be able to support yourself in our world. To do accounting well you must discipline yourself, and you must think carefully. Accounting can contribute to justice by telling the truth about corporations. It is a collegial activity, bringing people to work together in a way that contributes to

community. It is indispensable for the operation of large corporations, and on a planet with six billion people corporations can make important contributions to the commonweal.

Someone may object that accounting is such ordinary work. Indeed it is. But the Christian faith calls us to love the ordinary, to carry out ordinary work responsibly, to feel fulfilled when we do this, and not always to be scrambling desperately for something extraordinary. To use the language of St. Paul again, we are to be people who do what their hands find to do, who do it with all their might, who do it as unto the Lord, and having done it, who learn to be content.

When we go to our classes filled with anxiety, our students are apt to interpret this as disapproval. When we go contentedly, our students will see that it is possible to be educated and contented.

### Conclusion

At the end of the second century of the common era the bishop of Lyons, St. Irenaeus, wrote these words: *Gloria dei homo vivens*, the glory of God is a human being who is fully alive. That is what God wants, human beings who are fully alive. Life is God's good gift to us, but to become fully alive we must learn to embrace the gift of life with gratitude, and we must give ourselves to it with trust and abandon. In the journey toward living life to its fullest professors become splendid guides when they recognize that they are shaping lives and when they treat students with respect and appreciation, taking an interest in them and challenging them to live their lives to the fullest. ■



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# The Culture of Death

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

In their November 15, 2000 meeting, the U.S. Catholic Bishops denounced the Supreme Court decisions on abortion and announced a program of education and public policy advocacy to oppose what they call “a culture of death.” They recommitted themselves to “building a culture of life.” In their statement they referred only to legal abortion as a culture of death and laws against it as promoting a culture of life.

This requires a more comprehensive ethical analysis not only of “the culture of death” but of the meaning of a “culture of life.” Is it true that the leaders of one church are the champions of a culture of life while others, including major Protestant and Jewish groups, are endorsing a culture of death?

Our analysis goes beyond the obvious conflict between preserving the life and health of the woman and giving priority to life in the womb.

In actuality the culture of death includes, since the 1980s, almost fifty million people infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. The World Watch Institute reported the “number of deaths from AIDS in 1999” at 2.6 million and “pushed the cumulative death toll to 16 million, nearly as many people as live in New York City.” The same report said that about 12.2 million African women are infected compared with 10.1 million men.” It noted that because of unprotected sex “most of these women will unknowingly pass the virus to their babies, adding to the half-million children born infected each year in Africa.”

This culture of death is, at least in part, the responsibility of the U.S. Congress, which yearly responds to the Catholic Bishops campaign against U.S. funding of overseas family planning services, including contraceptives.

Outside Africa, the scourge of AIDS hits hardest in Central America, the Caribbean, and Southeast Asia. In Haiti, for example, six percent of adults are infected. Since the Bishops are primarily concerned about Vatican restrictions against contraceptives and abortion, their political agenda against the use of condoms condemns millions of people around the world.

In some areas where Vatican influence is virtually nonexistent, the “culture of death” has been changed. For example, in

the Indian state of Tamil Nadus a mass-media campaign promoting safe sex cut the rate of casual sex among factory workers in half between 1996 and 1998, while condom use rose from 17 to 50 percent.<sup>1</sup>

It is not just adults who are affected by this culture of death. “In nine African nations U.N. AIDS found that one-fifth to one-third of the children are likely to be orphaned by AIDS over the next decade. By 2010 Africa could be home to 40 million AIDS orphans.”<sup>2</sup>

As another result of the Vatican objection to worldwide family planning, the World Health Organization estimates that 585,000 women die each year during pregnancy and childbirth. “The death toll,” according to World Watch, “underestimates the magnitude of the problem. For every maternal death as many as thirty women sustain crippling and life-long health problems related to pregnancy.”<sup>3</sup> Many of these deaths and life-long health problems could have been prevented by access to family planning services and safe, legal abortions. A culture of death also includes wars produced by over-population in some areas of the world. In 1995 there were 1,800,000 refugees living outside the borders of Rwanda and close to one million Rwandans had been slaughtered in internal warfare. The British medical journal, *The Lancet*, said Rwanda had the world’s highest fertility rate and “the fact that any country could now be in intensely Catholic Rwanda’s predicament is an indication of the world’s and especially the Holy See’s reluctance to face the issues of population control.”

A more personal illustration of the culture of death relates to suicides among gay and lesbian youth in the United States. According to a 1989 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services report, suicide is the leading cause of death among gay and lesbian youth. Estimates indicate that they are five times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers. The stigma caused by sectarian religious condemnation of homosexuality cannot be measured, but about 30% of the more than 5,000 annual suicides committed by gay and lesbian youth are those trying to deal with issues of sexual orientation.

Pressures on gay and lesbian youth are strong. In families unable to reconcile their child’s sexual identity with their reli-

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*“In nine African nations one-fifth to one-third of the children are likely to be orphaned by AIDS over the next decade. By 2010 Africa could be home to 40 million AIDS orphans.”*

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gious values, the loss of family support is such a heavy blow that many youth flee to large cities to find friends who accept them. Part of the culture of rejection that may lead to suicide is in the schools. Name-calling as well as physical assault and the failure of school officials to provide protection from harassment and violence are all part of a culture of rejection that may lead to death.

The Vatican must share in these problems not only because of its hard condemnation of homosexuality but because it banned a nun and priest engaged in pastoral work with homosexuals from such work and silenced any comments or protests from them.

The solution to the culture of death is not to be achieved by laws such as those proposed by the Bishops against abortion in the United States. The Catholic Bishops want to reverse the Supreme Court's legal decisions and even get a Constitutional amendment that would prevent doctors and clinics from ever providing safe abortions. They and some of the laws they propose identify abortions with infanticide. That is because they assert that a live human being or person exists at conception, even though a majority miscarry. Yet even unwanted infants are abandoned at birth and left to die. The sectarian religious idea that all abortions are wrong simply means that the culture of death concentrates on the woman whose life or health is threatened by pregnancy.

A culture of life is not achieved by passing laws against unwanted diseases such as AIDS or unwanted pregnancies. Ethical measures that prevent disease or unwanted pregnancy begin with causation rather than results. When I was teaching biomedical ethics in a theological school, I asked students, "If there were no unwanted pregnancies, would there be a significant abortion problem?" They generally concluded that the real problem is unwanted pregnancies. However, the anti-abortion movement will not deal with unwanted pregnancies by advocat-

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ing sex education in the schools or contraceptive birth control or economic measures to minimize abortions for working mothers or those with low income. They simply want to pass laws against abortion.

If the United States had declared yellow fever to be illegal and had ignored the mosquitoes that were causing it, the U.S. would have made the same mistake as the Catholic Bishops: neglecting the cause and concentrating on the result. In short, the anti-abortion emphasis concentrates on the result instead of the cause and does not face the total problems of the culture of death to which it actually contributes.

One of the major causes of unwanted pregnancy is the unavailability of contraceptives or failed contraceptives. Today almost half of the women seeking abortions do so because of a failed contraceptive.<sup>4</sup> The failure rate of barrier methods is in the ten to eighteen percent range; of birth control pills, one to four percent; of Norplant .04 percent; and of natural family planning, the only Vatican-approved method, twenty to thirty-five percent.

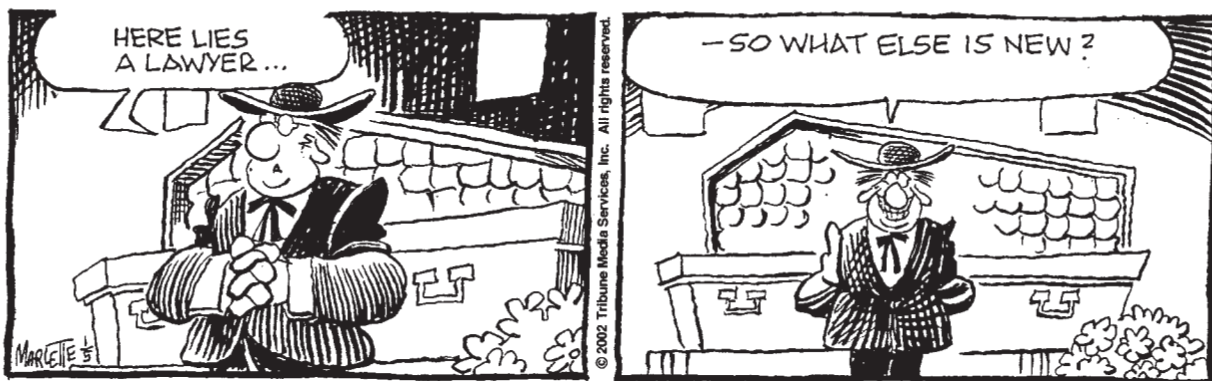
A culture of life, contrary to the culture of death resulting from the Bishops' policies, respects existing human persons, including women whose lives or health are threatened by pregnancy. It respects the lives of men, women and children by preventing AIDS and other diseases through contraceptives. It respects homosexuals and other minorities and protects them from stigmatization and harassment. And it provides adequate family incomes for every family. ■

<sup>1</sup> World Watch Institute, *Vital Signs*, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> World Watch Institute, *Vital Signs*, 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Swomley, John M., *Abortion Factbook, Readings, Trends, and State and Local Data to 1988* (S.K. Henshaw and J. Van Vort, eds., 1992), 5.





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# Effective Preaching: An Ethical Obligation

By Elizabeth J. Morgan, Retired Professor of English,  
Richardson, Texas

**Editor's Note:** A Ph.D. graduate in Rhetoric from Texas Woman's University, Dr. Morgan has taught English at TWU and the University of Texas at Arlington. Her doctoral dissertation focused on the rhetoric of sermons.

Both clergy and laity have recognized for several decades a decline in effective preaching. The complaints range from dissatisfaction to downright scorn and boycott. In December, 1979, *Time* magazine offered a disturbing indictment of the American pulpit when it raised the question, "American Preaching: A Dying Art?"<sup>1</sup> Fred Buechner, a Presbyterian preacher and novelist from Milwaukee, was quoted in the *Dallas Times Herald* (1983) as saying, "Sermons are like dirty jokes. Even the best ones are hard to remember."<sup>2</sup> Jesuit theologian Walter J. Burghardt admitted that "the long-suffering laity are intolerant of the trivia we dish out, the constipation of thought amid a diarrhea of words...and are puzzled by our ability to declaim about the divine without a shred of feeling or emotion."<sup>3</sup> Donald McLeod (1978) of Princeton defended preaching only mildly when he described it as "the era of the average but in the pulpit fortunately that average is higher."<sup>4</sup>

The above complaints go back some twenty years. If these few examples are less than convincing about the mediocrity of modern preaching, talk with a recent pulpit search committee. "Where are the good preachers?" they ask. In a 1993 survey, George Barna found that only 44 percent of congregations rated preaching as excellent, whereas 81 percent of pastors rated their sermons as good or excellent.<sup>5</sup>

Let it not be suggested, however, that ministers are unaware of preaching weaknesses. Many pastors do prepare and want to preach well. One of their greatest frustrations is the feeling that they have not communicated the blessed Word. They have been taught structural organization, hermeneutic accuracy, biblical exegesis, exposition, relevance, application, appropriate delivery, and above all, doctrinal purity. Yet the problem with preaching today is not so much in the transmission of heresy or drivel but in no inspiring transmission at all.

Never have words been challenged to do so much. A generation of people conditioned to receive messages through both eye and ear seat themselves in pews before a preacher who is expected to communicate the most abstract of truths by mere language. Does this not suggest a rather complex problem in the pulpit?

Not to be ignored is the reality that problems in the pulpit emerged on the heels of the post-war language crisis in the public schools. Several decades have now passed since it was declared that Johnny could not read.

Many pulpits today host post-war generation pastors. If Pastor Johnny has a reading deficiency, his sermon preparation will be impacted.

Poor reading ability limits a preacher's hermeneutic capacity because he may not assimilate biblical resources, much less organize them into accurate, appealing discourse. Likewise, he may also fail to understand, evaluate, and select discriminantly from theological scholarship, to say nothing of other forms of literature. His inadequate vocabulary does not facilitate accurate communication coinciding with reality. Consequently, he has difficulty delivering truth and recognizing deception.

Unfortunately, in addition to reading problems, the English language in the United States now publicly displays a spate of vulgarity and obscenity. John the minister preaches to audiences who are drowned in gutter language, tiresome clichés, and materialistic jargon, not to mention the "ya' know" syndrome and the teenage infection of "like" before every other phrase.

Linguists struggle to account for the decline in language purity and effectiveness, which cannot be attributed solely to a reading handicap. A likely consensus purports a close relationship between language and moral decline. John Milton, whose thoughts are classic, said that "when the language in common use in any country becomes irregular and depraved, it is followed by their degradation. For what do terms used without skill and meaning, which are at once corrupt and misapplied, denote but a people listless, supine, and ripe for servitude?"<sup>6</sup>

If sermons are to address this moral reality, preachers must fortify themselves with competence in language and hence in the capacity to know and express biblical truth. Those who train preachers today are realizing that facility with language not only finds roots in the principles of classical rhetoric but also prognosticates a capacity to persuade effectively. Having access to the rhetorical *logos*, i.e. the reasoned word, enables oratorical excellence available as never before since the Incarnation. Yet discovering truth does not assure that one can communicate it, just as merely owning a computer does not assure that one can use it effectively.

## Experimental Approaches

To explain this dearth of pulpit power is to provoke controversy, especially among homilists. Analyses are myriad-

without consensus, as are experimental techniques.

On the one hand, there are those who view the sermon as a form of holy entertainment. "The least I can do," said one pastor, "is not to bore people." So these preachers snap a microphone to their lapels and pace back and forth like nervous sheep dogs. Some wear white suits and some have opted for casual attire sans coat and tie. It is the informal style in both looks and words which conceives of sermons as friendly conversations with the man on the street. But alas, as the Englishman A.G. Moore said, "It is a priest's duty to feed the sheep rather than amuse the goats."<sup>7</sup> And as John Milton lamented, "The hungry sheep look up and are not fed."<sup>8</sup>

Then there is the teaching approach. Without a doubt, a sermon should instruct with biblical truth. Nothing is more indefensible than poor content in a sermon. So the congregation receives outlines with the "worship guide," or perhaps on a screen dangling over the choir. Subsequently, the people are commanded to write down certain words and phrases. At least this approach addresses the problem of a congregation conditioned to audio-visual communication. With children the method doubtless succeeds somewhat and will even possibly remedy some of the biblical illiteracy among adults. Another Barna survey shows that laity are abysmally ignorant of the basics of the Bible. Most of them cannot name half of the Ten Commandments, nor do they know that it was Jesus who preached the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>9</sup> Surely the teaching approach is not without merit, for any transmission of thought or feeling in a sermon still depends largely on words. So what is the real problem?

### The Place of Passion

If hearers are to be energized to experience any significant maturing, the speaker will involve not only the mind but also the emotions of the hearers. The element of passion engages the hearer in the depth of his/her finest being. Rightly used, it penetrates the soul of both speaker and hearer with supernatural power. It persuades, it moves, it transforms, it endures!

Unfortunately, the mere mention of impassioned preaching suggests a scene of manipulation and mindless hoopla, such as is observed in many television personalities. The fear of emotional affectation has so tyrannized conscientious

preachers that sermons have become commonplace, or at best, amusing. The cold sermon of mere fact, albeit sacred truth, may account in part for the popularity of emotion-charged "religious" rock music in worship services. *Emotion will not be ignored!* It is one fundamental element in our spiritual being.

But neither prosaic sermons nor hot music speaks to those who have walked the briny path of a disappointing marriage, a lost job, a cancer diagnosis, a son off to Kosovo, or an addicted child. Robert Schuller says that the most important principle that he learned in seminary was, "Speak to broken hearts." The preacher who isolates himself from his people and refuses to walk with them in their sorrows or their joys cannot identify with their feelings. The late Kenneth Burke, a foremost twentieth century rhetorician, proposes "identification" as a hallmark of persuasion. It involves knowing the mind and feeling the feelings of those whom one wishes to influence

Those who would drain emotion from preaching today betray themselves as shamelessly unmoved by the ghastly bombardments of violence flashed before public eyes in the news media, not to mention movies, novels, and television spectacles. A people so conditioned, even hardened, will not be moved by pretty or cute sermons divorced from concrete reality. Jonathan Edwards, John Donne, Lancelot Andrewes, and others have been castigated for their vivid sermons on hell. History has distorted their images by largely ignoring their sermons on love and forgiveness. Yet they lived in times of brutal war, public executions, and grisly martyrdom. Those rugged times had possibly calloused their hearers to the extent that a lesser approach would have instigated no persuasion at all. The fires of hell had to burn at their feet if they were to respond. Even Jesus did not minimize the fire of hell when he spoke of the rich man's anguish in the flame.

Of course, emotion as a tool of persuasion is not confined to fear of hell. Yet if people were confronted more realistically in the pulpit with the horrible consequences of drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and foolishly illicit sex, their behavior might alter more positively. Or if youth could face realistically the joys of a pure marriage, a sterling character with self-respect, a habit of honesty and responsibility, and a loving Savior who offers them purpose in an abundant life, they might find the



Christian life more imperative. Jesus used poignant parables to illustrate virtuous behavior, such as the Prodigal Son, and the Lost Sheep. "He spoke with compassion." The Apostle Paul summarized it well when he wrote, "though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am sounding brass and tinkling symbol."

Thus the use of heart appeal is as old as preaching itself. In every era when memorable sermons flourish, dynamic preachers implement passionate persuasion. Richard Weaver observes that "man is not a depersonalized thinking machine. His feeling is the activity in him most closely related to what used to be called the soul. To appeal to his feeling therefore is not necessarily an insult; it can be a way to honor him, by recognizing him in the fullness of his being."<sup>10</sup>

### Ethical Persuasion

Ethical treatment of emotion distinguishes between exploitative manipulation and legitimate persuasion. The Apostle Paul warned against the "meaningless talk" of sophists in 1 Timothy 1:6. Sophistry relies on manipulation through exaggeration and distortion of fact, and it appeals to personal gain through spectacular promises; it encourages imagination over reality; it over-magnifies fear, sentimentality, anger, and false optimism. The Jonestown Massacre affords one of the most extreme examples of manipulation. Words did not coincide with reality, and tragedy resulted. Irresponsible use of passion is like fire in the hands of an arsonist.

Although the Apostle Paul disdained corrupt sophistry, he used legitimate classical rhetoric when he made his appeal before King Agrippa. He established goodwill with a sincere compliment, addressing the King with his title. He further established his own credibility by noting his Jewish heritage and the authenticity of his hope. And his enthusiasm was so electrifying that he was accused of madness.

An ethical passion energizes words and stimulates images that actualize reality, that make abstract truth concrete and thus motivate healthy moral response. The ethicist does not take advantage of the hearers' senses by distortion and histrionics, but neither are the senses ignored. Making the delicate choice of passionate words is precisely the juncture where the speaker's integrity must prevail.

Even the ancient classicists recognized the speaker's good moral character (*ethos*) as requisite to persuasion. By "good" was meant honesty, common sense, and goodwill. Aristotle also included purity, specifically sexual purity. On the human level, to be credible, a speaker must be respectable both morally and intellectually.

The above qualities, along with the more specific ones mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:5, "love which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith," provide a hospitable atmosphere for the Holy Spirit to operate. For indeed, the Spirit offers the essential dynamic of divine sup-

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*To be credible, a speaker must be respectable both morally and intellectually.*

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plement to human *ethos* and *pathos* that gives persuasiveness to words. A studied language skill does not impede divine power, but rather releases it.

As has been stated, truth alone does not always persuade. If it did, the world might have been Christianized long ago with the mere reading of the Holy Scriptures. Preachers could be mere pulpit disc jockeys playing God's records. The divine Spirit of the Godhead functions as the ultimate Healer of men's bodies, yet few theologians reject medical assistance as mere human

artifice in treating physical disease.

The pulpit bears inescapable responsibility to look seriously at its weaknesses and to implement techniques for revived influence. The expertise can be acquired, but it is not mere mechanical contrivance nor holy magic. True, John Bunyan and D.L. Moody are cited as uneducated heroes with obvious power to move people. To be sure, God endowed them despite their deficiencies. Some people who have never studied music are gifted at playing the piano, but who knows how much more skillfully they could have played were they formally trained?

A healthy, impassioned persuasion not only differentiates the sermon from other genres but also makes considerable difference in a sermon's effectiveness. As Mark Twain said, it is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug. Given an awareness of this potential for sacred oratory, the scholars of the pulpit will cultivate their competency beyond the "era of the average" and master the art of ethical impassioned persuasion. ■

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<sup>1</sup> *Time*, 31 December 1979: 54-67.

<sup>2</sup> Fred Buechner, quoted by Bruce Buursma, "Sermons Turning Off Church Flocks," *Dallas Times Herald*, 31 May 8, 1983:8.

<sup>3</sup> Burghardt, *Dallas Times Herald*, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Donald McLeod, *Christian Century*, 95 (Feb. 1-8), 1978: 98.

<sup>5</sup> George Barna, *Today's Pastors* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), 51-71.

<sup>6</sup> *The Prose Works of John Milton*, vol. 1 (London, 1806), xi-xii.

<sup>7</sup> A.G. Moore in Charles L. Morgan, *Reflections in a Mirror*, Second Series (Toronto: Macmillan, 1947), I.

<sup>8</sup> John Milton, "Lycidas," in *Complete Poems and Major Prose* ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Odyssey Press, 1957), 123.

<sup>9</sup> Barna, 48.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Weaver, *Language is Sermonic* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1970), 224.

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# Giving The Bride Away

*By Hal Haralson, Attorney*  
Austin, Texas

Judy returned from a week-long Faith at Work conference in Jackson, Mississippi. Her head was in the clouds. She was on the phone to people in her “family” and talked about them constantly.

She encouraged me to go to the next one, and I found myself liking the idea.

Stoney Point, New York, is a long way from Texas. I didn’t know there was any other town or city in the State of New York except New York City.

We landed there and I took a Greyhound bus for about two hours to the village of Stoney Point.

The retreat center was operated by the Catholic Church and was right on the edge of town.

The first night the leader divided us into families. I was with seven other people. We only knew each other’s first names. That’s all.

The games we were assigned rewarded us for working together and soon we began relying on each other and competing with other “families.”

The second night we sat up until 2:00 a.m. talking about ourselves and sharing information with each other. It was the beginning of a “bonding” process that made our family really close.

I soon found out there was another Texan in my group. Her name was Marianne Brown from Katy, Texas.

Marianne was shy and didn’t talk much. I found out she was a music teacher in an elementary public school.

I also learned that she had a PhD in music from the University of Texas.

“Why,” I asked, “aren’t you teaching on the college level?”

“I tried that. I really didn’t enjoy what I was doing. I want to teach little kids.”

“I had a hard time getting in at the elementary level. They thought I was too educated. Eventually, they realized I was sincere and let me in.”

I told Marianne about my years in the ministry, my mental illness, the suicide attempt, and the state hospital.

She was particularly interested in our marriage and Judy’s willingness to stay with me during these times.

We were friends by the time the week was over and pleased to discover that we had the same flight from New York City to Houston.

Marianne told me her first husband had been killed in a U-2 plane over Cuba.

After the passage of time, she remarried. She and her husband were on a retreat at Laity Lodge, the H.E. Butt retreat center near Leaky, Texas. He had a heart attack and died in her arms on the couch at Laity Lodge.

Marianne had leaned heavily on her friends in the church and the strength she found in prayer and reading God’s word.

There was joy in her music. Particularly in her participation in the choir in her church in Katy.

“Therein lies the problem. There is a man in the choir who has shown more than a casual interest in me. The attraction is mutual. I’m afraid he’s going to ask me to marry him.”

“What should I do? I can’t stand the thought of three deceased husbands. He doesn’t know what he’s letting himself in for.”

It was time to catch my plane to Austin. “Let’s keep in touch.”

Marianne Brown was probably history. There was little I could do but pray for her.

Little did I know.

Two weeks later I got a call from Marianne. “Hal, I’ve got to talk to you. Can I come to Austin?”

“Of course. When?”

“Tomorrow.” There was a sense of urgency in her voice.

She caught a cab to my office on South Lamar and was waiting in the outer office when I finished with my last client.

She told me later she was afraid. She had never been in a lawyer’s office before.

We had lunch and spent two hours in a park. Marianne talking, Hal listening.

Her friend had proposed. He wanted to marry her. The same questions. No answers.

“Two husbands dead . . . what about a third? I’m scared, but I think I love him. I think I want to do it.”

We parted with me assuring Marianne of my prayers and support. I felt honored that she would come all the way to Austin to talk to me.

There was silence for about a month. Then the call came. She was so excited she could hardly talk.

“He proposed. I accepted. We’re going to get married. I have a request.”

I was prepared to say “No, I don’t perform marriage ceremonies anymore.” But that was not the question.

“Hal, will you give me away at the wedding?”

“Of course,” I said and put the date on my calendar.

It was a joyous event. I was honored to give my friend to her husband in marriage.

Twenty-four years later, I saw Marianne at a writer’s conference at Laity Lodge.

The third husband was safe and sound. God had blessed this union.

We had a joyful reunion.

There are times when it is better to respond by listening than by giving answers. It worked well this time. ■



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# The Truth About Malarkey

Dee Ann Miller, Bloomington, IN: 1stbooks.com, 2000.  
\$12.95 (\$3.95 e-book) at [www.1stbooks.com](http://www.1stbooks.com)

*Book Review by Karl Harmon, Pastor*  
First Baptist, Wellington, KS

**Editor's Note:** Dee Ann Miller is best known through her first book and personal story, *How Little We Knew*. Widely used as a speaker and advocate for survivors of clergy sexual abuse, her work and ministry is represented at her web site at: [www.advocateweb.org/malarkey](http://www.advocateweb.org/malarkey). She credits Karl Harmon as the man who most inspired this book, "being one of several pastors who suffered major losses trying to get congregations or institutions to face the truth."

*The Truth about Malarkey* presents a sobering and realistic narrative of a topic in American church life more taboo now than the topic death was in the U.S. in past years, namely clergy sexual abuse and clergy domestic violence. Author Dee Miller's novel portrays a scenario based on a combination of numerous real life experiences known to her and some of us who lived through such traumatic events.

Dee Miller, psychiatric nurse and much sought after consultant in this hush-hush subject of clergy sexual misconduct and domestic violence in clergy homes, recently received the Elaine V. Shaw Advocacy Award from Associates in Education and Prevention in Pastoral Practice for her work in this area. Located in North Kingston, Rhode Island, AEPPP is an inter-religious, educational and healing ministry which exists to prevent sexual and domestic violence and to promote ethical conduct within communities of faith.

Here's a book about a clergy whistle-blower! From the outset make no mistake. We clergy whistle-blowers don't blow our own horns. God forbid!! Memories of such remarkably sad experiences constrict lung capacity to a point even breathing is often uncomfortable. Not to mention writing a book review about such a repugnant matter.

Perhaps few people find themselves in an agonizing whistle-blower situation which requires listening to victims multiple accounts of clergy sexual exploitation. Victims share their stories out of great embarrassment, out of justified anger and grief to a trusted minister, that a member of the clergy violated his or her body. And more importantly violated trust. This harassment represents professional misconduct on the part of a person in ministerial authority.

One woman shared her anger with me because her teen daughter told her years earlier her daughter's youth pastor fondled her. The daughter seethed for years because her mom refused to report the incidents due to her husband's failing heart condition. The youth pastor remained an active part of the church after his retirement from youth ministry.

Eventually the youth pastor/perpetrator touched this woman inappropriately on numerous occasions. At the time I heard her story police were already conducting an investigation on him because of a report about his abusive activities on

a mentally challenged single woman member of our church. After I heard the mom's story I understood better why families with young girls were leaving the church.

No one wanted to deal with unwelcomed advances to their wives and daughters by this retired clergyman. No one wanted to talk about a well respected former youth pastor and one time pastor of a church in the community who touched young girls and women inappropriately. They all kept silent. He had a wonderful smile! Departing church members spoke bitterly about the retired minister but made no allegations. I was pretty confused by their seeking other churches. Now it all made more sense to me. Consequently police charges were filed against the minister with my consent and encouragement. It was heartbreaking! But somehow integrity must rule when eyewitness allegations are made, regardless of personal or professional cost to me and another staff member.

Based on the information received, one must decide upon responsible action. No other course of action will bring healing and restoration to victims, congregations and denominations. No other course of action will be in keeping with our Lord's commands to protect the weak and set at liberty the captives.

Dee Miller stands as personal witness to the deliberate collusion and disseminated confusion perpetrated at all levels of church life in order to conceal sexual misdeeds of clergypersons. Additionally, very sad legal and ecclesiastical documents provide even more background evidence to support her eye opening saga.

*The Truth about Malarkey* is not mere fantasy. Her novel must be taken seriously. Quite often truth must be told straight forward with no room for confusion or misinterpretation in order to avoid a greater damage of living by lies. Miller chose to use story form to communicate the intricate webs formed to cover up and to expose clergy sexual abuse today. Moreover, a subplot presents clues to a subsequent startling revelation regarding clergy spousal abuse, giving Miller's work a cutting edge place which denominational leaders especially need to read.

*The Truth about Malarkey* may be difficult to receive,

upsetting, and tough to swallow. However, if we hope to be people of integrity we must enable ourselves to see the dynamics of sexual misconduct and domestic violence.

Perhaps the greatest value in Miller's novel is that it allows us to walk in the shoes of victims of clergy sexual misconduct. Regardless of whether the victims were either direct victims violated by a perpetrator or secondary victims whose own uncompromising principles insist on high moral action and standards among clergy persons, her clear writing style allows us to walk miles in their shoes. Now is the time for such an illumination into the human emotions, thoughts, and behavior of church members, sexually abused victims, secondary victims, church staff clergy, and denominational clergy.

*The Truth about Malarkey* carries us on a faith journey, from the moment of discovery by a young minister of sexual misconduct by his church's former minister, to subsequent events: the denial of church members, the collaboration to keep secret the former minister's sexual exploitation, a church split, and finally, the healing of the sexually violated woman. Her healing offers hope to all the perpetrator's other victims.

Church leaders and denominational officials ignore, discount, cover up, or shift responsibility on the issue of clergy sexual abuse, to the peril of their own integrity. As advocates of the well being of congregants and of the importance of justice established on loving righteousness, we must be people of truth.

In his book *Healthy Congregations a Systems Approach*, Peter Steinke identifies clergy sexual abuse under the category, "People of the Lie." Steinke asserts that the manifestation of evil he encounters most frequently in the church is that sly, kind, and subtle manipulation of people, a winsome seductiveness and shrewd innocence. He charges that this cunning side of evil is even assisted, enabled, and welcomed in the church. The environment of the congregation itself encourages and cooperates.

Following these assertions, Steinke proceeds to illustrate the deceitfulness of evil by his conversation with the wife of a pastor who sexually seduced a half-dozen women in his church. Steinke quotes the wife's description of her husband: "He was a master, a fantastic deceiver."

The wife concluded their conversation with several point-

ed questions: Why are people so eager to be mystified? Why does it seem easier to get fooled, sucked in, and enchanted in the church more than elsewhere? Why is there such gullibility? Why are people who are fraudulent and self-serving mistaken for being spiritual and committed?

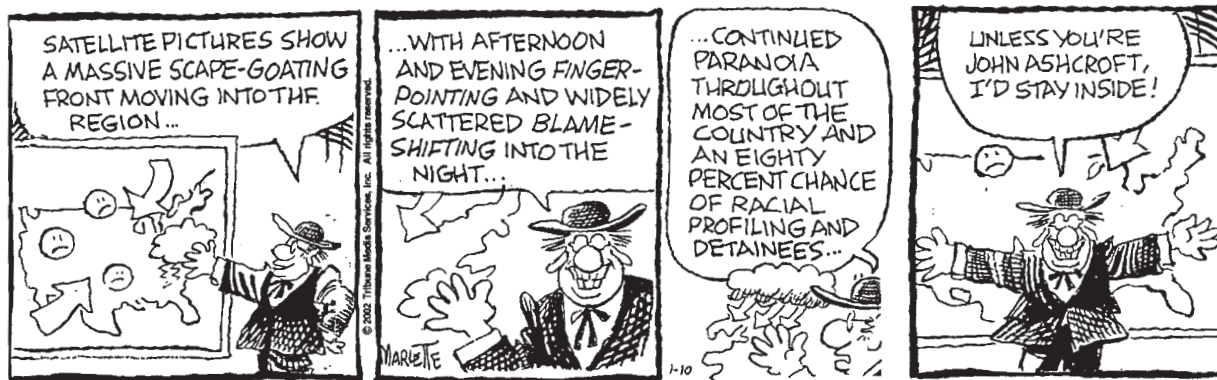
Steinke's answer is that we seem utterly prone to be deceived by wolves in sheep's clothing. For those Christians who seek integrity in the church the question naturally arises, what are we to do?

Richard Neuhaus warns against the danger of giving evil dynamics a kind of legitimacy in the life of the church and denomination. He writes: "Some evils are not to be worked out and some conflicts are not to be managed—they are simply not to be admitted into the community life at all." There should be a restraint of evil forces. No stronger statement can be made to contemporary church leaders toward dealing with clergy sexual abusers.

Steinke continues in the same vein by reiterating Scott Peck's view that "evil people tend to gravitate toward piety" and "one of the places evil people are most likely to be found is within the church."

Congregations, pastors, denominational leaders are far too willing to accommodate, wink at, and shift blame from "people of the lie" to vulnerable, hurting, and unsuspecting victims of clergy sexual abuse. Or, religious leaders add insult to the victims' wound by purchasing their silence through monetary means. Steinke concludes this section by saying we must balance being innocent as doves with being wise as serpents.

As a conclusion, I introduce you to the narrator of *Truth about Malarkey*, adorable Grandma Cora. She is a very likeable person with a delightful Texas accent who expresses her feelings about events and persons in her church in "down home" language. At the same time she shows appropriate outrage, while raising challenging theological questions. Grandma Cora "possesses some important values . . . strong faith in God and the goodness of people, connection and community, right moral action, courage, common sense, a sense of humor, safety, and appreciation for history as a gift to others." All these traits mix together in her words and actions as a role model for our responses to sexual misconduct by ministers. We need to take Grandma Cora very seriously. ■



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# Making Sense Of The Revelation: A Clear Message Of Hope

William L. Turner, Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2000.

*Book Review by Jack Glaze, ret.*

Missionary and Professor in Argentina, Mississippi College, NOBTS

Another book on Revelation? Another “dooms day” spectacular targeting a sincere but gullible religious market? Is there a need for another book on Revelation? Author William Turner thinks so, and after reading his book, many others will agree. He recognizes that some today consider eschatology to be irrelevant, and in his preface indicates that new study on the theme “may appear to be an elitist refuge in a world of breakneck change, constant transition, and continuing human struggle.”

“However,” he continues, “I beg to differ.” The “recovery of hope” perhaps will be “one of the major human quests of the new millennium.” Consequently, the book of Revelation is of vital importance, for it is “preeminently a treatise on Christian hope” addressed “to churches under attack.”

Turner indicates that the book is not intended to be a scholarly commentary, nor does he treat every detail and verse; however, he recommends its reading “with a copy of the biblical text in hand.” It is evident that he, as a competent biblical scholar and pastor, has a comprehensive understanding of Revelation, including its geographical, historical, cultural, and literary components. Additionally, he is familiar with the varied interpretive approaches to this “mysterious book” (pp. 120-123); he is clear, consistent, and honest in his approach and interpretation.

He suggests two ways for understanding the book: 1) as a blueprint of the world to come; a prewritten history, “like a novel, each chapter building with an unfolding plot,” or 2) as an apocalyptic writing whose purpose was to encourage first century Christians under attack. He chose the latter approach: the key to the interpretation of the book is not the millennium (20:2-7), for “no single symbol does justice to the whole message. The many symbols here are like the facets of a single diamond, each one highlighting the main idea—the triumph of God and the defeat of evil.”

Since “all the previous numbers have been symbolic up to now,” he continues, “why change with this one?” Turner

is consistent in his interpretation of the symbols, codes, and numbers. Consequently, he writes, “So, if I have to pick a millennial camp, I choose to be amillennialist . . . no literal, historical, thousand-year period.”

However, it is evident to this reviewer, he has not been limited by the assertion: his exegetical skills, historical research, and cultural understanding of the period have enabled him to identify eternal biblical principles and to apply them effectively for contemporary society (future contributions, not future predictions). For example, for today he sees the “cruel reality of the intensification of the diabolical; the dishonest overselling of ‘fair-weather religion’, and the judgment on Babylon (Rome), past and future.” Adherents from all millennial camps could profit from his insights. The book, 136 pages, contains sixteen well organized and illustrated sermons (some pastors may be tempted to “share” these with their congregations, especially the illustrations). Included are: an Introduction (1:1-9); an analysis of the central message to each of seven churches in Asia Minor (2-3);

overviews of chapters 4-5, 6-8, 11-12; and treatments of 13:1-10, 14:1-13/19:1-10, 19:11-12, 20:1-10, and 21:1-8/22:1-7. As for the internal relationship of the chapters, Turner does not believe they are rigidly interconnected; rather, they are “like an anthology, or a collection of different stories and visions on the same theme;” however, he does assert that “some chapters are connected” (not specified other than those evidenced in the chapter divisions).

There is consistency in his interpretive methodology. Turner contends that an understanding of the book is found in “the text itself;” he continues, “Any message for our new century and beyond must be rooted in this context. Without it, plunging into such a strange and elusive text would be like a high-wire act without a safety net.” (Chapter 1, “Unlocking The Mystery”)

Turner indicates that the young churches were facing a time of cruel and bloody persecution. The Roman political requirement of emperor worship had been in effect for some 100 years; however, under Domitian

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(AD 81-96) it became more serious and developed religious overtones. Roman citizens were required once a year to go to one of Caesar's temples, burn incense, and say "Caesar is Lord." Refusal resulted in punishment and even death. Additionally, Domitian wanted to be called "our Lord and god." Because Christians would not worship the Emperor, they were considered to be "unpatriotic and subversive" and suffered severely between 90-96. During this period, John, in prison, probably wrote to the churches employing symbolic language, much of which is also found in various Old Testament writings. The writing "is dramatic, larger than life, and exaggerated. It is full of vivid symbols, code name, numbers, and animals . . . However," Turner writes, "I believe apocalyptic writing would have been very clear to the people of the seven churches of Asia who had it read to them."

The book is well written and easy to read. The literary references and illustrations include the broad spectrum of literary classics from the Church Fathers to modern authors, and include historical, social, and ethical implications. It can be understood by nontechnical readers and also can be beneficial to those active in scholarly circles.

From his perspective, Turner, in the estimation of the reviewer, made "sense" from Revelation in general, and in particular from the texts chosen for exposition. He presents a clear message of hope: "hurting people want relief, and if not now, when? Pastor John's response was, 'Soon! So hang on (and) be faithful!'"

The only suggestion, and minor at that, would have been the inclusion of the internal threat of Gnosticism faced by the young churches as well as the external political threat of Rome. However, Turner understood well the nature of the cosmic battle of evil vs. good depicted in Revelation, both politically and religiously; the nature of the apocalyptic, both Jewish and Christian; the use of Jewish historical typology, and he was not bound by a rigid amillennial preterist interpretation of the book ["preterist" from Latin *praeteritum*, "referring to the past," or an interpretation totally in the context of John's age—first proposed by a Roman Catholic theologian Luis de Alcazar (1554-1613) to counter the Reformation attack on the Papacy as the Antichrist]. The book is highly recommended and helpful for all seeking to understand Revelation regardless of their theological persuasion. ■





# Practice What You Preach: Virtue, Ethics, and Power in the Lives of Pastoral Ministers and Their Congregations

James F. Kennan, S. J. and Joseph Kotva, Jr. eds., Franklin, Wisconsin: Sheed and Ward, 1999. 337 pp. \$19.95

*Book Review by James E. Carter, ret.*

Director, Church-Minister Relations, Louisiana Baptist Convention

“In many ways, theologians who ask whether church leaders and members treat one another ethically often feel like people asking a terribly rude question” is the opening sentence in a book of essays on ministerial ethics. But it is a question that must be asked.

After years of relative silence, ministerial ethics has become a topic of discussion, interest, and study. That disciplined, ethical study is needed in church policy and proceedings is seen by at least three examples according to the editors of this book. These examples are clergy sexual abuse and the attempts at cover-ups, the salaries of those in pastoral ministries, and the role of women in church leadership. These and other related topics demonstrate how disciplined ethical study is an important resource for church life.

The editors of the book are a Roman Catholic seminary professor and a Mennonite pastor. Sheed and Ward, a Roman Catholic press, published the volume. Twenty-two persons contributed to the study. The contributors are both male and female, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant. Both the inclusiveness of Christian traditions and the broadness of the ethical issues involved are indicated by the choice of contributors. The contributors are about equally divided between Roman Catholics and others, Protestant with one exception, with the edge going toward the Protestant writers. The division between male and female contributors is again somewhat equally divided, with the male contributors outnumbering the female. Practically all of the contributors are seminary teachers in the field of Christian ethics or moral

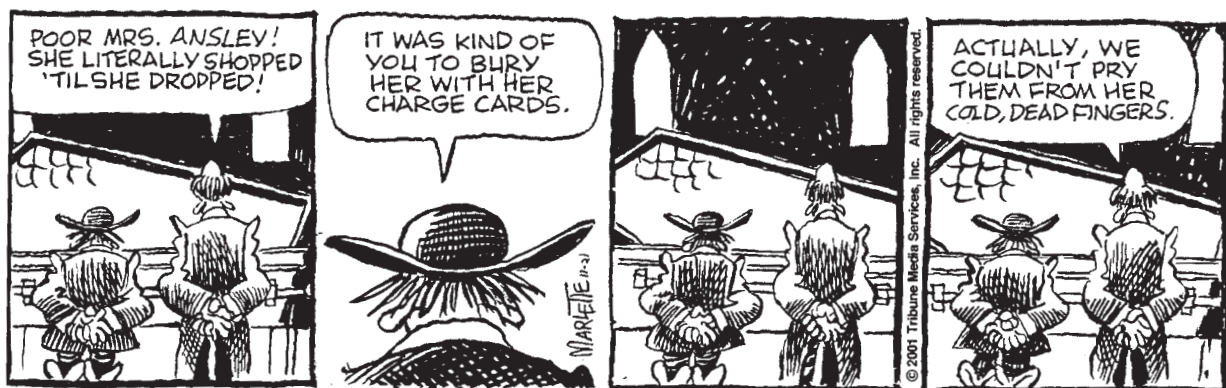
theology. A pastor and a counselor round out the field of writers.

The case study method is followed in the book. Each essay begins with a case study followed by a discussion of the ethical principles based on virtue ethics that apply to the case. A variety of concerns are addressed, many of them dealing with sensitive issues such as questions relating to women, Hispanics, African Americans, and homosexuals in church leadership. Each group of people is addressed with sensitivity. The key question revolves around how Christians treat one another; the groups are never stereotyped as “them.” Different types of church governance are also recognized in the discussions.

As the subtitle indicates, the book is concerned with virtue or character ethics. The writers focus on the ethics of *being* over the ethics of *doing*—the ethics of *character* over the ethics of *action*—the basic assumption is that what one “is” guides what one “does.” While each writer is concerned with character, some approach virtue from an Aristotelian perspective, others a Thomistic one, and others from a Calvinistic standpoint.

The editors ask the readers to keep three sets of questions in mind as the essays are read and the issues addressed: Do you agree with the way the author describes a particular virtue? Are these the virtues you would have invoked to address the case? Do you rank the virtues in the same order or do you give greater priority to one over another?

The book is divided into two parts: Pastoral Ministers



and Power, and Congregations and Power. Each part is divided into two sections: Part One—The Way Churches Train Their Pastors and The Way Pastors Live; Part Two—The Way Communities Worship and The Way Communities Behave. Each section contains from two to three chapters. The editors wrote an introduction to the book, “Why a Course on Virtue Ethics in Church Ministry?”, as well as an introduction to each of the two sections. The introductions are done well.

The essays range in subject from ministerial selection and the candidacy process to ministerial collegiality. They deal with such issues as self-understanding, relationships, power, and justice.

The book does not purport to deal with the total range of ministerial ethics. The editors state, “[T]his book is not meant to cover every issue in ministerial ethics. Rather, it seeks to break open a variety of cases that concern the way pastors lead and congregations live. It attempts to offer a first word, not a last word.” In this aim, it fulfills its purpose.

As with all books with multiple authorship, some of the chapters are stronger and of more help than others. Each is about the same length. Each chapter follows the same format of case studies and discussions of the issue based on that particular case study with an emphasis on the ethical virtues involved.

One of the strengths of the book is also its greatest weakness: the inclusiveness of authorship and the broadness of the topics discussed. Since it is weighted toward Roman Catholic

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readers, other Christians may not find some of the issues or arguments of great value, although the principles can be applied to other religious traditions. The book is not an apology for Roman Catholicism and is very well balanced between Catholic and Protestant perspectives.

Persons familiar with the field of Christian ethics will recognize many of the authors. Those who are familiar with ministerial ethics will quickly recognize some names of persons who have already written in the field. Although the writers approach the issues from a pastoral perspective,

more pastors or persons with more of a pastoral perspective contributing to it would have strengthened the book. The Mennonite pastor who is a co-editor of the book is the only pastor who contributed to this treatment of ministerial ethics.

While it is not the last word on ministerial ethics—and does not attempt to be, both by design and by the selection of topics—it is a helpful addition in a field often neglected. The book does introduce some common themes and some significant issues related to contemporary ethical thought—gender equality, sexuality issues, and power policies, for instance. It probably would not serve as a basic text for a course in ministerial ethics, but it would be a good supplementary text. Ministers, those who work and have an interest in Christian ethics, and those who are involved in ministerial ethics especially, will find the book profitable. ■



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

# Fishing

*By Foy Valentine, Founding Editor*

Unlike the avid fisherman who was dressing to go to church on Sunday morning and while absent-mindedly tightening his necktie with the necessary tugs suddenly fancied that he had a fine fish on his hook and jerked so hard that he choked himself to death, I myself have never been caught-up in fishing.

Nevertheless, fishing pleasures me.

While I can take it or leave it, I'd really rather take it.

For instance, just this morning, quite early, I had an inordinately pleasant dream that I had gone fishing. The lake was calm. A light wind from the south was at my back as I ambled around a little bay looking for a likely place to try my luck. The early morning sun was at my back and a few fleecy clouds floated desultorily overhead. A particularly attractive patch of water caught my fancy and I put down my beat-up old tackle box with a fine feeling that this might very well be their address. A medium-sized lure was chosen and snapped into place. My first cast was a little short; and the second was pulled off unsatisfactorily to the left. The third try was on target, at least close enough for government work. The lure had sunk well out of sight when something hit it like a ton of bricks, in the most gloriously thrilling experience a fisherman can be convulsed with. I set the hook and, nostrils flared, started reeling in my unknown quarry. The lake bank at that point was not satisfactory for landing a fish so I sidled my way to the right about 30 or 40 feet while slowly taking up as much slack as I dared without breaking the line or losing the fish. When it had tired a little, I backed up until I caught a glimpse of the beauty and was able then to drag him up on the grass. Boy and man—I've fished a long time, but never have I seen such a member of the finny tribe as this. It was nearly two feet long, full bodied, astoundingly active, and beautiful to behold. Its coloring was yellowish brown with a white underside, mottled like a baby cat, and a snow-white tail section. It was like no other fish I have ever seen. I will never know its true pedigree, however, for at that moment I woke up, much too exhilarated to go back to sleep. The dream was wonderfully vivid, in gorgeous technicolor, and its images are indelibly fixed in my mind.

In my day I've caught my share of catfish and perch (not to mention crawfish, heavy-bodied and deep-voiced bull frogs, and an occasional cottonmouth moccasin giggered at night with a steel gig and a good flashlight) from the tank below our barn at my boyhood home. With catalpa worms for bait, I've hauled many a channel catfish into a boat over East Texas lakes. Trolling about 30 feet deep in Coal Lake not far from Mt. McKinley in Alaska, where fish and wildlife authorities assured us there were no fish whatsoever, I've caught mar-

velous salmon-fleshed rainbow trout, one whopper 22 1/2 inches long!

But the mountain streams and small lakes of the Sangre de Cristo range in northern New Mexico have brought me more sheer delight than all my other fishing experiences put together. There have been rainbow trout, fat native brook trout, native cutthroat trout, an occasional German Brown trout, and now and then a rare Rio Grande trout, gloriously and uniquely red-bellied and splendidly delicious when fried to perfection. The rushing mountain streams are best for me; but at 9,000 to 10,000 feet altitude, there are so many trees and bushes at the edge of the water and over the water that fly fishing can be done only with great difficulty. Salmon eggs and worms are better for me; and the streams provide a good trout hole about every 30 yards or so. High mountain lakes provide a diversion and offer the added incentive of breathtakingly beautiful mountain scenery that is second to none in all the world. And the fish hooked there are almost invariably jumpers, adding immeasurably to the sport.

Of course, there is a bit of a downside to fishing. Under certain circumstances including appropriate climatic conditions, a fish out of the water will stink. Also when you are unhooking them they can fin you without a qualm leaving a painful infection that can persist for days. Then I am loath to recall how many hooks I have lodged in my poor clothes, not to mention my poor body—fingers, hands, legs, and once a hapless ear. Hanging your hook in a tree limb over the water can be an exasperating experience, especially when you have just missed a big one after a vigorous strike. Preparing the gear is nearly always aggravating, particularly when you know you left it in tip-top shape and a raucous young grandson has come along and trashed it to the max. Furthermore, the flesh of a fish may well be the most expensive meat you can ever expect to eat.

Still . . . still, a body keeps going fishing.

Especially when under some weight like Peter who, after the Lord's crucifixion, simply allowed to his fellow disciples, "I'm going fishing" (John 21:3). Or like one of the greatest Christian statesmen of the last century, Dr. J.M. Dawson, who was told by his medical doctor, "You can maintain your present schedule and die within a couple of years or you can take off one day a week and go fishing and expect to live another 20 years." Dr. Dawson took the good doctor's good advice and lived well into his nineties, having fished up to the very end.

Please excuse me now.

I simply have to go.

Fishing. ■

# CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY

## A Journal of Christian Ethics

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

### MISSION

The Christian Ethics Today Foundation publishes *Christian Ethics Today* in order to provide laypersons, educators, and ministers with a resource for understanding and responding in a faithful Christian manner to moral and ethical issues that are of concern to contemporary Christians, to the church, and to society.

### PURPOSES

- Maintain an independent prophetic voice for Christian social ethics
- Interpret and apply Christian experience, biblical truth, theological insights, historical understanding, and current research to contemporary moral issues
- Support Christian ecumenism by seeking contributors and readers from various denominations and churches
- Work from the deep, broad center of the Christian church
- Address readers at the personal and emotional as well as the intellectual level by including in the Journal narratives, poetry, and cartoons as well as essays
- Strengthen and support the cause of Christian ethics

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

When the Center was transferred to Baylor University in June 2000, with the calling of a permanent Director, the disbanding Board voted to continue the publication of *Christian Ethics Today*, appointing a new editor and a new Board. The Journal will continue to be published six times per year.

From the beginning *Christian Ethics Today* has been sent without charge to anyone requesting it, six times per year, "as money and energy permit." More than ever before, your financial support is "greatly needed, urgently solicited, and genuinely appreciated."

The Christian Ethics Today Foundation is a non-profit organization and has received a 501 (c) (3) status from the Internal Revenue Service.

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Joe E. Trull, Editor  
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Wimberley, TX 78676-5850

Phone: (512) 847-8721  
Fax (512) 847-8171  
email [jtrull@wimberley-tx.com](mailto:jtrull@wimberley-tx.com)

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