

# CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY

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# From A First-Born A Mother's Day Tribute

*By Joe E. Trull*

First-born she was from a clan of twelve,  
emerging from a Bowl of Dust  
on rural Indian plains  
once trod by proud nations now dispersed.

Second-mother she was to the  
brood of chicks her mother bore.  
Yet from that furrowed farm she gazed beyond  
the fields of grain toward a  
better land.

And in that fearsome world of lights and  
sounds,  
a world where milk-maids seldom trod,  
she built a life,  
and met a man,  
and soon her own first-born was cradled in  
her arms.

While singing lullabies to her child  
she promised him a better life—  
he too would find a better land.

Yet strange to her this first-born child  
claimed to hear another voice—  
claimed to see another city distant in the skies.

And so in time he left her land on a quest  
to find a place for him long-planned  
by distant urges she had scarcely felt.

“Oh me,” she cried  
as she watched him go,  
wondering if this Don Quixote knew his way.

He was sure; she was not!

Three decades now have passed.  
On her back she lies—  
A place she always dreaded.  
Totally dependent on others—  
to feed her  
bathe her  
tend her every need.

“Oh me” she uttered with her eyes,  
words her numb lips could not frame.

Her first-born came to tend her needs—  
the end was near.  
He held the dropper to her lips,  
What little liquid she could take  
was measured in centimeters.

Almost choking,  
again she looked into her first-born's eyes  
and without words she spoke  
her common commentary,  
“Oh me,”

He saw it,  
this so wise preacher-son of hers  
who wondered in his weaker moments  
why the God he worshipped  
would not stop the pain—hers or his.

He knew her thoughts  
and shared her sense of helplessness.

As he bent down to turn her body,  
she shook her head in disbelief.

This Pioneer woman who always had control,  
Who shared the burden of her mother's load,  
Who stood so strong and tall beside her  
husband's bed,  
Who reared her three through desperate times.

She would allow no such dependency!

“Mother,” he said,  
“for nine long months you carried me  
inside your womb,  
and for years beyond my birth  
you held me in your arms.”

This first-born by her bed continued,  
“So let me now carry you,  
lift and turn you in your bed  
to ease the pain.”

Just for a moment  
her eyes agreed  
as her lips pursed again those words,  
“Oh me.”

The body once strong and straight  
now lean and limp  
was oh so hard to grasp,  
and harder still to turn to ease the pain.

He lost his grip—  
the sagging flesh fell back to bed.  
“Damn” he uttered  
under his breath.

She also heard  
this expletive her ears could not believe  
from this the preacher's lips.

She laughed!  
Not audibly, but obviously—  
With her eyes,  
Her face,  
And with that twisted smile.

She laughed!  
And he did too.  
Together they shared a final smile  
that to this day  
brings joy and solace to a first-born's heart.

A stronger arm soon lifted her  
and did not let her go.  
Beyond the bed,  
beyond the antiseptic halls,  
beyond the pain and failing flesh,  
beyond the springtime thunderheads  
rushing toward Texas.

Nevermore would she need to say,  
“Oh me.”

For now she smiles and laughs  
with others who have learned  
with her  
that dependency can be liberating. ■

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# Democracy at the Crossroads: We Have Work To Do

By Bill Moyers, *Public Affairs Television*,

**Editor's Note:** This address is the Harry Middleton Lecture delivered at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas, on January 4, 2002, reprinted by permission from the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum website at [www.lbjlib.utexas.edu](http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu).

Thank you for those generous words, Larry, and thanks to all of you for such a warm welcome. Once again Judith and I are indebted to Mrs. Johnson, for her impact on our lives. It was the job you gave me at KTBC in 1954 that enabled us to transfer to the University of Texas and to be married here in Austin 47 years ago last month. The small apartment where we lived on 18th street is gone, but not the memories of Lady Bird's kindness to us then and down through the years. The friendship we have shared with her has been a lodestar in our journey. Now, thanks to Mrs. Johnson, we are back in Austin for this lecture series she established in Harry's name.

It's an opportunity we welcome—Judith and I—to express our affection for Harry and Miriam, our admiration for what they have meant to this community and this university, and our appreciation for Harry's contributions to the presidency and the study of history. Over the years he has earned the esteem of scholars and laity alike—including both admirers and critics of LBJ—by assuring that this library would be no mere museum, shrine, or hall of mirrors, but a lively vibrant laboratory for scrutinizing the workings of democracy, warts and all. Those of us who served in the Johnson Administration are indebted to Harry for enabling us to put our lives in perspective; for his conviction that what we did in our time isn't done yet; that our vanities, vices and virtues, our visions and vulnerabilities, our aspirations, compromises, accomplishments and defeats, the laughter we shared as well as the tears we shed—that all this should not perish with our individual memories but be available to anyone trying to understand, through the experience of the past, the possibilities and limitations of politics and governance. Harry understood early on that history is always an unsatisfied search for the truth, but that its frequent course corrections—it's interim reports—could be instructive if the keepers of the record are credible. You have shown us, Harry, that by respecting the textured layers of experience—the restless kaleidoscope of reality—a man can serve not two but three masters—the past, present, and future. We thank you for making this library an institution that can be trusted.

Now that legacy passes to another, and the powers that be have chosen well. Judith and I are fortunate to have had Betty Sue Flowers as a colleague on some of our most successful

projects. She advised on *Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth*, and in collaboration with Jackie Kennedy Onassis, edited our best-selling book based on that series. She edited two of our later books—*World of Ideas*, also a best seller, and the companion book to our series on *Genesis*. Her long association with the university—as student, professor, and administrator—fostered a far-ranging intellect that joins the perceptions of poetry to questions of justice and power, in ways that I believe would have intrigued and impressed even LBJ. What Harry nurtured over the past generation here will flourish in the next with Dr. Flowers.

So for many reasons—most of all for the extended family represented in this company—I am grateful to be the Middleton Lecturer this evening.

Harry asked me to talk about faith. It was four years ago that he asked me, just after I had delivered the eulogy down in San Marcos for my beloved friend, Bill Crook. Bill and I had followed parallel paths—from small Baptist churches in small Texas towns to universities here to graduate school in Scotland and on to theological degrees from the same seminary—before succumbing to the siren of politics and the persuasion of Lyndon Johnson, who hitched both of us to his star then rising in the national firmament. At Bill's funeral I talked about the twists and turns of our journey, the long conversation we had conducted about religion, how both of us had wound up in the brotherhood of skeptical mystics in the church of unholy gropers, and over the years we reported to one another the experiences, revelations, and intimations for which our upbringing and theological training had not prepared us, and for which Southern Baptists would surely have excommunicated us if we had not already walked the plank voluntarily.

Harry heard me speak of such things at Bill's funeral, and soon thereafter sent me a note. He said the service had caused him to meditate on the celebration of faith despite its vicissitudes, and he wondered exactly where, after all these years, I had come out. I responded with a simple, handwritten note of scriptural plagiarism: "Dear Harry, I believe, help thou my unbelief."

I thought that would be the end of it. But some weeks later he wrote again. Reminding me that Mrs. Johnson had

endowed this lectureship in his name, he asked if I would come before his retirement and talk about faith: what it means, what it gives, what it takes. He referred in the letter to “The eternal tension between the determined and hopeful, and the courageous obstinacy of Carl Sagan, who went to his death spurning faith because it isn’t knowledge.” then, said Harry, “I don’t think I’m alone in struggling with these notions. I believe there is a broad shared yearning to experience a thoughtful exploration. Would you come and lead it?”

I wasn’t eager, frankly, to take on such a public and formal task, but neither did I want to disappoint my good friend, Harry. But then the light bulb went on. No one expected that Lady Bird would ever let Harry retire. I could agree to deliver the lecture, on the condition that it happen just prior to his retirement, and be confident the coin would never have to be spent. So the deal was struck: Harry retires, I speak. And there the matter rested for four safe years. You can imagine my shock when a year ago the devil called to collect his due. He would retire at the end of the year, Harry said, with finality, and he expected me to make good on my promise. I tried to beg off, but Harry persisted. He also threatened that if I didn’t come, his last act in office would be to release to the public my White House files that he had been keeping locked in his desk. So here I am, with two days to spare.

But this is not the speech Harry wanted. It is not the speech I intended. I had all but completed that speech the weekend before September 11<sup>th</sup>, the last weekend before the world changed.

I know that’s a cliché—to say the world’s been changed by what happened that bright beautiful morning. I’ve said it enough times myself for it to sound like a cliché. But clichés mean what they say and truisms are true. This one is true: the world has changed. Things even sound different now. Peter Gomes reminded us recently, words spoken for thousands of years sound suddenly as if they were written last week. Just try the most familiar of all Psalms, repeated so often it had begun to sound like a cliché: “The Lord is my Shepherd . . . Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” Those words sound so different today.

Our gross national psychology is different, too. One GNP—the Gross National Product—measures the state of our economy; the gross national psychology measures the state of our mind. It’s where terrorists like to pillage. They’re not after our land, our territory, our material possessions. Sure, they aim to annihilate the targets they strike, but their real aim is to possess our psyche, deprive survivors of our peace of mind, of trust and hope and resolve—to keep us from ever again believing in a decent, safe, and just world, or working to bring it about. This is their real target: to turn each and every imagination into a private Afghanistan, where they can rule by fear.

Our daughter and son-in-law live in New Jersey, just across the river from lower Manhattan. This summer they adopted a baby boy. On September 11<sup>th</sup> our son-in-law passed through the shadow of the World Trade Center to his office two blocks up the street. He was there when the fire and smoke erupted. He saw the falling bodies, saw the people jumping to their deaths, saw the towers fold to earth. His own building was evacuated and for long awful moments he couldn’t reach his wife, our daughter, to say he was okay. Even then he couldn’t get home, back across the Hudson, until the next morning. It took him several days fully to recover. Now, matter-of-factly, our daughter tells us how she often lies awake at night, wondering where and when it might happen again, going to the computer at three in the morning—her child asleep in the next room—to check out what she can about bio-terrorism, germ warfare, anthrax. Terrorists do that; beyond the carnage of the sneak attack they create another kind of havoc by invading and despoiling a new mother’s deepest space, holding her imagination hostage to the most dreadful possibilities.

None of us are spared. The building where Judith and I produce our television programs is just over a mile from Ground Zero. It was evacuated immediately after the disaster, although we remained with a handful of colleagues to help keep the station on the air. The next day, just as we ended a live broadcast for PBS, security officers swept through and ordered everyone out; there was a bomb scare at the Empire State Building up the street. As we were making our way down the stairs I took Judith’s arm and was suddenly struck by the thought: is this the last time I’ll touch her?



Could our marriage of almost fifty years end here, on this dim, bare staircase? I shoved the thought forcibly from my mind, like a bouncer removing a rude intruder; by sheer force of will I drove it out of my mind. But in the early light of morning, it crept back—the specter of death on those stairs.

Terrifying images, uninvited thoughts: the legacy of terrorists.

I've tried to find the wisdom in this. But wisdom is a very elusive thing. We have the experience but not always the wisdom. Wisdom comes, if at all, slowly, painfully, and only after deep reflection. I'll be honest with you. I haven't been ready for reflection. I have wanted to stay busy, on the go—on the run, perhaps, from the reality that just a few subway stops south of where I get off at Penn Station, almost four thousand people died in a matter of minutes. One minute they're taking off their coats, sipping their coffee, adjusting the picture of a child or sweetheart in the frame on their desk, booting up their computer—and in the next, it's all over for them. No chance to say goodbye. No chance to know why.

For weeks the New York Times has been publishing short compelling profiles of the dead and missing. I've been reading and keeping them. Not out of some macabre desire to hold on to death, but to see if I might recognize a face, a name, some old acquaintance, a former colleague, even a stranger I might have seen occasionally on the subway. That was my original purpose. But as the file has grown I realize what an amazing montage of life emerges from those profiles of the dead. They have become a composite portrait of the America those terrorists wanted to shatter. I read them now, to be reminded of the rough, great, bewildering but exhilarating society of human aspirations we call democracy; I read them to be reminded of the people with whom I share it.

Luis Bautista was one. It was his birthday, and he had the day off from Windows On The World, the restaurant high atop the World Trade Center. But Luis needed money for the tuition he would soon be paying to attend New York's College of Criminal Justice, and back home in Peru his family depended on the money he had been sending since he arrived in New York two years ago speaking only Spanish. So on the eleventh of September Luis Bautista was putting in overtime. He was 24.

William Steckman was 56. For thirty-five of those years he tended NBC's transmitter at One World Trade Center, working the night shift because it let him spend time during the day with his five children and to fix things up around the house. His shift ended every morning at six, but this morning his boss asked him to stay on to help install some new equipment, and William Steckman said sure.

Elizabeth Holmes lived in Harlem with her son and jogged every morning around Central Park where Judith and I go walking, and I have been wondering if we crossed paths some morning. I figure we were kindred souls. She too was a Baptist and sang in the choir at the Canaan Baptist Church.

I thought of Elizabeth Holmes last week, as I put the lights on our tree. Her fiancé was going to give her a ring this Christmas.

Linda Luzzicone and Ralph Gerhardt were planning their wedding, too. They had both sets of parents come to New York in August to meet for the first time and talk about their plans. They had discovered each other in nearby cubicles on the 104<sup>th</sup> floor of One World Trade Center and fell in love. That's where they were working when the terrorists struck.

Mon Jahn-bul-lie came here from Albania. His name was hard to pronounce so his friends called him by the Cajun "Jambalay," and he grew to like it. He lived with his three sons in the Bronx and was supposed to have retired when he turned 65 last year, but he was so attached to the building and so enjoyed the company of the other janitors that he often showed up an hour before work just to shoot the bull. That's where he was when the terrorists struck.

Fred Scheffold liked his job, too—Chief of the 12<sup>th</sup> battalion of Fire Fighters. He loved going into fires and he loved his men. But he never told his daughters in the suburbs about the bad stuff that happened in the fires he had fought over the years. He didn't want to worry them. This morning, his shift had just ended and he was starting home when the alarm rang. He jumped into the truck with the others and at One World Trade Center he pushed through the crowds to the staircase heading for the top. The last time anyone saw him he was heading for the top. While hundreds poured past him going down through the flames and smoke, Fred Scheffold just kept going up.

I can't get these people out of my mind.

And I can't get out of my mind the reason they died. These were calculated deeds deliberately conceived, meticulously planned, and methodically executed by people who were willing to give their lives in the belief they were pleasing God.

The social philosopher Eric Hoffer wrote about such people in a book I first read almost fifty years ago. He called them true believers—people whose inner rage seeks refuge and validating rebirth—a religious conversion, if you will, within a charismatic movement. Once they marched for Hitler; now they march for God. The journalist Christopher Hitchens calls them "Fascists with an Islamic face."

Indeed, you don't have to believe terrorism is a true reflection of Islam—and I don't—to take Osama bin Laden at his word when he describes his followers as "vanguard Muslims . . . the forefront of Islam." This son of a wealthy Saudi Arabian, this trust fund baby should know. Somehow to the young Muslim men who flocked to his banner, bin Laden became the new Saladin—the Muslim hero who led the Islamic resistance to the Christian crusaders a thousand years ago. A decade ago the Russians who invaded Afghanistan were seen by these Muslims as westerners whose presence on Muslim soil was a heresy and corruption of Islam. Because bin Laden and his followers were the enemy of our enemy—the Soviet Union—we gave them weapons and called them

freedom fighters. But then, during the Gulf War, when his own government of Saudi Arabia allowed American troops to be stationed on Saudi soil near the holy shrines of Mecca and Medina, bin Laden formed his al Qaeda movement and declared war on the United States.

His kind despise America for our support of Israel, for our emancipated women, for our scientific inquiry, and for our refusal to place the sword of the state at the disposal of the clergy. Bin Laden told the journalist Robert Fisk: "We believe that God used our holy war in Afghanistan to destroy the Russian army and the Soviet Union—and now we ask God to use us one more time, to do the same to America, to make it a shadow of itself."

Their goal is the sterile and bleak theocracy—the kind they created in Afghanistan. There, under the Taliban's ministry for the promotion of virtue and vice, no one could eat pork or lobster; watch movies or look at photographs; own VCR's, TV's, and satellite dishes; use a computer; fly a kite or play chess; keep pet pigeons or sewing catalogs; clap at sporting events; sing or dance; or enjoy any activity that propagates sex or is full of women." (Time, Dec. 3, 2001).

Even before, the Taliban women there had a hard time. The warlords who now make up the Northern Alliance—our allies—permitted their young undisciplined soldiers, and mullahs, to rape at will; the women of Afghanistan came to call it "lying down" because that was the best way to cope—just lie down quietly and let it happen. But then came the Taliban and life worsened. Religious police patrolled the streets and beat women with steel cables for infractions like wearing white socks, or shoes that clicked; or makeup; or showing their ankles; or leaving home unaccompanied by a close male relative. Paradise regained, in a totalitarian ideology that turns faith into something so "extreme, radical, and megalomaniac as to justify conquest, intolerance, and cruelty." God hijacked.

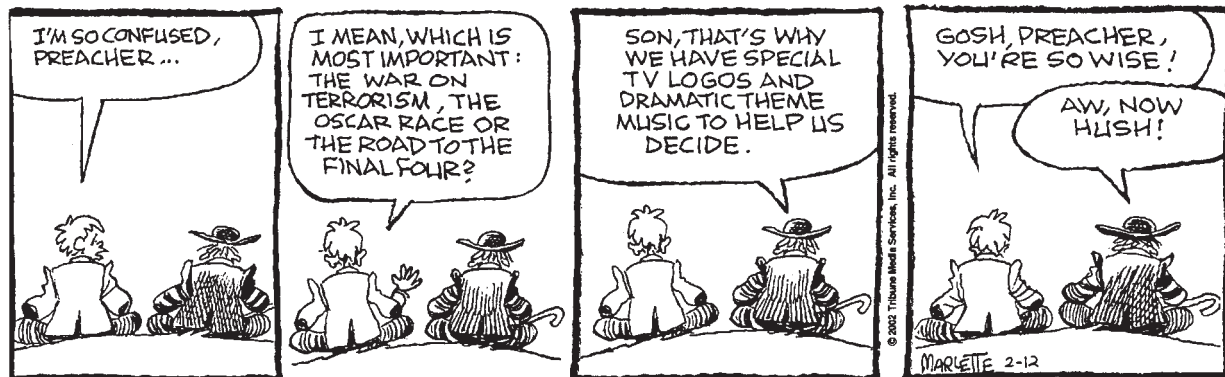
This is not of course the whole of Islam, only an extremist minority. But because Islam is a world religion, with a billion followers spread around across the earth, the militancy is potentially a global phenomenon. Even here in America some of its adherents have been heard to argue that they cannot accept the legitimacy of the existing American order because "It is against the ordainments of Allah" (City Journal).

Fortunately, that too, is a minority view. All of us know Muslims in this country who live both as committed believers and patriotic Americans—who even see Islam reaffirming the values of freedom, tolerance, and democracy. In the long run it is Muslims who pray to a god of love instead of a god of hate who will make the difference in the struggle with terrorism. Our own Mohammed Ali put it this way recently: "I am a Muslim. I am an American. If the culprits are Muslim, they have twisted the teachings of Islam . . . God is not behind assassins."

He's right. No one with a deep spiritual life would commit such monstrous crimes. People do such things who believe that their faith must reign supreme and all others negated. This, in Thomas Friedman's words, is bin Ladenism. This is the tyranny over the human mind against which Thomas Jefferson swore eternal hostility.

Now we must now reaffirm that vow, because we have some work to do on the home front. We have our own version of theocrats in people like Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell. They took bin Laden's line—that what happened on 9/11 was God's judgment on a decadent America. On Robertson's television program Falwell said, "We probably got what we deserved." and Robertson replied: "Jerry, that's my feeling." And what is the sin for which God condoned terrorism to punish America—why, the sin of the Bill of Rights. The sin of tolerating people Falwell and Robertson and bin Laden don't like—feminists, gays, lesbians, rationalists, humanists, liberal judges, pro-choicers, the ACLU, People for the American Way. "Yes," said Falwell, "(They) helped this to happen." So it was that people like Luis Bautista, William Steckman, Elizabeth Holmes, Linda Luzzacone, and Fred Scheffold had to die to propitiate a wrathful God.

Repugnant? Of course, but under that Bill of Rights they so detest they are entitled to their repugnant opinions. But such rights cannot mask their repulsiveness as human beings—piously spreading their virus of holy hate from the safety of plush studios and stately pulpits where they are isolated from the consequences of their malevolence. Let God do the dirty work—while they rake in the takings of bigotry and bile. We must say to these people—over and over again—what Mohammed Ali said to bin Laden: God is not an assassin.



It's an old and enduring riddle—how faith, “The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”—becomes a toxic chemical compound capable of changing plowshares into swords.

Of all that I've read since 9/11, nothing is more chilling than the handwritten document found in one of the terrorists' suitcases left behind when it didn't make it onto the flight. It's a cross between a chilling spiritual exhortation and an operational mission checklist. Written in Arabic, its first four pages recite some basic Islamic history about fighting infidels. Then, it offers the suicide bombers the promise of eternal life—“Keep a very open mind, keep a very open heart of what you are about to face, you will be entering Paradise”—and it goes on to give some practical advice as they board the plane. “Make sure you are clean, your clothes are clean, including your shoes.”

But what brought me up with a start were the prayers and exhortations in it. Listen to this one: “O God, Open all doors to me. O God, who answers prayers and answers those who ask you, I am asking for your help. I am asking you for your forgiveness. I am asking you to lighten my way. I am asking you to lift the burden I feel. O God, you who open all doors, please open all doors to me, open all venues for me, open all avenues for me. God, I trust in you. God I lay myself in your hands.”

That's the prayer of a suicide bomber.

But that's my prayer, too. I've prayed it over and again—almost the same words and certainly the same supplication. And the question persists: How is it the God of comfort, peace and hope to whom so many pray, becomes to some the God of cruelty, oppression, vengeance and death?

We southerners know about this. Our history is haunted by the violent intimidation and terror—the night-riding, cross-burning and mob assaults—perpetrated by Klansmen who claimed to be deeply religious Christians dedicated to the preservation of the Anglo-Saxon white race. Not only did they rage in God's name against blacks but against Catholics, Jews, foreigners and all kinds of sinners. Two years ago, when I gave the commencement here at the university, I met with some student leaders who couldn't believe it when I told them that the very year I graduated here, a spokesman for the Ku Klux Klan was widely quoted as saying: “The KKK is the only white Christian Protestant one hundred percent American organization in the country today.” Another from his brotherhood also made news about that time when he said, “We are gonna' stay white, we are gonna' keep the niggers black, and we are gonna' do it with the help of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.” They hijacked Jesus . . . dressed him a white robe and hood . . . put a noose in his hand and murder in his heart.

Even people of moderation speak of “Our God” in exclusivist terms as if God deals only with them. In an interview I did with her on PBS, the scholar of religion Elaine Pagels said, “There's practically no religion I know of that sees other people in a way that affirms the other's choice.” We were

recently reminded of this by the two-God policy of Billy Graham's son, Franklin, himself an evangelist. “The God of Islam is not the same God,” said the Reverend Franklin Graham. “It's a different God, and I believe it is a very evil and wicked religion.”

That's not an uncommon opinion. Remember what happened in South Carolina a couple of years ago, when it was proposed that the Ten Commandments be posted in the public schools? When someone asked what Buddhists and Muslim students might think about this, one public official shouted: “Screw the Buddhists. Kill the Muslims.” And when recently for the first time a Hindu was invited to give the invocation at the U.S. House of Representatives, one prominent conservative organization denounced it as a move toward “ethical chaos”—as if the House of Representatives needed outside help to achieve ethical chaos.

We have work to do.

You know that I come out of that big tent of tradition called Baptists. At last count, there were more than two dozen varieties of us in America. Bill Clinton is a Baptist; so is Pat Robertson. Jesse Jackson is a Baptist; so is Jesse Helms. Trent Lott is a Baptist; so is Al Gore. Newt Gingrich and Richard Gephardt. No wonder Baptists have been compared to jalapeno peppers—one or two make for a tasty dish but a whole bunch of them together in one place brings tears to your eyes.

Twenty years ago I covered the first convention of the Moral Majority, held right here in Texas, in Dallas. With a major presidential candidate sitting on the dais, our cameras captured the president of the Southern Baptist Convention as he declared that God does not hear the prayers of a Jew. Since then his crowd has taken control of the Southern Baptist Convention—the country's largest Protestant denomination—and turned their pews into precincts of right-wing politics. Recently they published a prayer guide calling on Christians to pray for the nine hundred million Hindus who “worship gods which are not God.”

Now it's natural for religions to want others to see the truth as it does, but when a Hindu engineer asked me if Southern Baptists speak for all Baptists, I told him they don't even speak for all Southern Baptists. We Baptists differ profoundly in how we read the Bible, how we read history, and—surprise, surprise—how we read election results. My father was a Baptist deacon who thought for himself. He was certain that Cain and Abel were the first Baptists, since they had introduced fratricide into the Bible.

But think about it. The first murder rose out of a religious act. Adam and Eve have two sons—the first parents to cope with what it means to “raise Cain.” Both brothers are rivals for God's favor, so both bring God an offering. Cain is a farmer and offers the first fruits of the soil. Abel is a shepherd and offers the first lamb from the flock. Two generous gifts.

But in the story God plays favorites with his faith-based charity. God chooses Abel's offering over Cain's, and the elevation of the younger leads to the humiliation of the elder.

Cain is so jealous he strikes out at his brother—his brother—and kills him. Once this pattern is established, it's played out in the story of Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, and down through the centuries in generation after generation of conflict between Muslims and Jews, Jews and Christians, Muslims and Christians, until the red thread of religiously spilled blood runs like a fault line through the story of faith.

Religion has a healing side, yes, but it also has a killing side. And virtually every armed conflict occurring on the planet today is explicitly driven by religious motives or by memory traces of persisting religious conflict. So in Afghanistan Sunni Moslems war with Shiite Moslems. In Algeria the defenders of orthodoxy cut professors' throats for teaching male and female students in the same classroom. In Israel Muslim suicide bombers kill busloads of Jews and a fanatical Jewish doctor with a machine gun mows down praying Muslims in a mosque. The young orthodox Jew who assassinated Yitzhak Rabin looks into the camera and declares, "Everything I did, I did for the glory of God." Timothy McVeigh blows up the federal building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people partly to seek revenge for the death of David Koresh and his cult. Groups calling themselves the Christian Patriot League collect arsenals, and at a political convention, in so-called "Christian booths" in the exhibit hall, I could buy an apron with two pockets—one for the Bible and one for a gun.

Two weeks ago someone belonging to the self-proclaimed Army of God sent FedEx packages containing a powdery substance to women's health clinics. The Army of God, no less. Driving in my car in New Jersey before the holidays, I was manipulating the dial on the radio when I came upon a choir singing boldly: "Onward Christian soldiers, Marching as to war/With the cross of Jesus, Going on before/ Christ the royal master, Leads against the foe/Forward into battle, See his banner go." Now, I've heard that hymn all my life. But this time it made my skin crawl. I turned off the radio and drove in silence, but in my head I could hear the sad wise voice of the Quaker William Penn: "To be furious in religion is to be furiously irreligious."

That evening, I completed reading Paul Woodruff's new book, *Reverence: Renewing A Forgotten Virtue*. Paul Woodruff—who teaches philosophy here at the university—writes that "religious wars are endemic to our time, which is a time with little care for reverence . . . if a religious group thinks it speaks and acts as God commands in all this, this is a failure of reverence. A group like that may turn violent and feel they are doing so in good faith. Nothing is more dangerous than that feeling. War is nothing new, and neither are killer strains of religion, pathogens that take hold of a people and send them into paroxysms of violence. War and religion will always be with us; we can't expect to shake them off. But we can ask what it is in religion that might keep the dogs of war on a leash and what it is that whips them into a frenzy and lets them loose. It is reverence that moderates war in all times and cultures, irreverence that urges it on to brutality.

The voices that call in the name of God for aggressive war have lost sight of human limitations. They have lost reverence, even when they serve a religious vision."

We must change our metaphors. Through both politics and faith we must seek new metaphors, because we are entering a new religious landscape in this country, and the old metaphors are like road signs pointing in the wrong direction.

For most of our history our religious discourse was dominated by white male Protestants of a culturally conservative European heritage—people like me. Dissenting visions of America, alternative visions of faith—rarely reached the mainstream. The late cartoonist Jeff McNally summed it up with two weirdoes in a California diner. One weirdo says to the other, "Have you ever delved into the mysteries of Eastern religion?" And the second weirdo answers, "Yes, I was once a Methodist in Philadelphia."

Once upon a time that was about the extent of our exposure to the varieties of religious experience. No longer. Open the encyclopedia of American religion and you will see listed more than two thousand one hundred religions in this country. America has become the most religiously diverse country in the world, and it began on our watch—on July 4, 1965, when we went to the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor where LBJ signed the new Immigration Act. For forty years only a trickle of foreigners had been allowed to come in. Seventy percent of all immigrant slots were allotted to natives of just three countries—the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Germany—and those went largely unused. When President Johnson signed that bill, he put people of all nations on an equal footing and ushered in an era of mass immigration which is dramatically changing the profile of America. In the four decades since, people from all over the world have been coming by the millions, bringing their gods with them. Some Americans don't like this—people like Patrick Buchanan—but it's a fact on the ground, not a theory to refute. As Diana Eck reports in her superb new book on religious pluralism, "Buddhists have come from India, East Africa, and Trinidad; Muslims from Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Middle East and Nigeria; Sikhs and Jains from India; and Zoroastrians from both India and Iran. Immigrants from Haiti and Cuba have brought Afro-Caribbean traditions, blending both African and Catholic symbols and images. New Jewish immigrants have come from Russia and the Ukraine. The face of American Christianity has been changed with large Latino, Filipino, and Vietnamese Catholic communities; Chinese, Haitian, and Brazilian Pentecostals; Korean Presbyterians, Indian Mar Thomas, and Egyptian Copts."

Travel the country that Diana Eck has visited, and you will find Muslims worshipping in mosques from Toledo to Phoenix, as well as in a U-Haul dealership in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, a gymnasium in Oklahoma City, a former mattress showroom in Northridge, California. Large Hindu temples in Pittsburgh, Albany, and California's Silicon Valley, as well as a former YMCA in New Jersey, a warehouse in



Queens, and an old Methodist church in Minneapolis. Now there's a significant example. Judith and I go often to Minneapolis and St. Paul, where our grandchildren live. For a long time the Twin Cities were one-third Lutheran. Now they are home to more than 80,000 Asians and Pacific Islanders, including 14,000 Hmong, 10,000 Vietnamese, 8,000 Lao Buddhists and 7,000 Cambodians. More than three hundred temples make Los Angeles one of the most complex Buddhist centers in the world. A Buddhist American died on the Challenger. Hindu Americans are managers at large corporations. The U.S. Navy has commissioned its first Muslim chaplain. And at a New Jersey mall recently I bought a pair of shoes from a Hindu salesman.

If only LBJ could see us now. He would say that none of us—hard-core fundamentalist, Unitarian rationalist, or principled atheist—can escape the profound challenges to democracy wrought by these changes. Just as he had to wrestle with race as the dominant issue of his time, so we must wrestle now with religious diversity. If he were here now, I believe Lyndon Johnson would challenge the LBJ Library and the LBJ School of Public Affairs to do everything they can to help America figure out how all these many faiths and beliefs can engage without going for each other's throat, politicizing God, or polarizing the country. There are big questions to address. What do we mean when we invoke the first words of the Constitution—"We, the People"? What do we mean by "We"? When we read on our currency, "In God We Trust," whose God do we mean?

Harry asked me to speak on faith: what it means, what it takes, what it gives. By now you must be shaking your head, Harry, because this really isn't the speech on piety or pilgrimage that you asked of me four years ago. It isn't the speech I had almost completed on that weekend before September 11<sup>th</sup>. I haven't done justice, and can't do justice tonight, to what faith means, takes, and gives. Except to offer you the insight of the writer and poet Kathleen Norris, who said: "We are all God's children now," and in the next breath prayed, "God help us because we are!" Because in a pluralist world what faith requires is humility. And whether my neighbor believes there are 20 gods or no god; what matters to me is whether my neighbor has faith in democracy.

Credos have made a slaughterhouse of faith, while democracy spares us from the orthodoxy of the sword. Trust in God,

sure, but count on democracy to save us from those who would save us against our will. The only antidote to bad theology, you see, is good democracy. And that's the main thing I want to leave you with tonight.

**I** believe democracy is at a crossroads. The playwright Tony Kushner wrote more than a decade ago of "Moments in history when the fabric of everyday life unravels, and there is this unstable dynamism that allows for incredible social change in short periods of time. People and the world they are living in can be utterly transformed, either for the good or the bad."

Isn't this just such a moment? As we have been visited with tragedy, we are also presented with an extraordinary opportunity to define in deep and enduring ways our faith in democracy, and then to live that faith every day—personally, practically, and politically—as if everything depends on it. Because it does.

We must win this struggle with terrorism. I don't doubt that bin Laden is a man likely to keep on killing until he himself is killed. But other bin Ladens will spring up behind him; mass terrorism is a syndrome of this modern world, and there are always people who find violence a simulation of religious transcendence. So President Bush got it right—this is going to be a long struggle. But while we wage that struggle we mustn't forget the kind of country we want to be. And no one must be permitted to hijack democracy in the name of fighting terrorism.

Some hopeful things have happened. Americans have pulled together in ways I can't remember since World War Two. In real and instinctive ways we have all felt touched—singled by the fires that brought down those buildings, even those of us who did not directly lose a loved one. Those planes the terrorists turned into missiles cut through a complete cross-section of America—stockbrokers and dishwashers, bankers and secretaries, lawyers and window washers, Hollywood producers and new immigrants, Republicans, Democrats, Liberals, Libertarians, Conservatives. We have been reminded by this catastrophe of a basic truth at the heart of our democracy: no matter our wealth or status or faith, we are all equal before the law, in the voting booth, and when death rains down from the sky.

We have also been reminded of the value of public ser-



vice. Those firefighters and policemen and Port Authority workers and emergency rescue workers and the teachers who led children from their schools through smoke and dust and debris. And the postal worker who waited impatiently in line for his Cipro because he wanted to get back to work—these public servants are today's heroes. Public employees all, most of them drawing a modest middle-class income for difficult and dangerous work. They have caught our imagination not only for their heroic deeds but because we know so many people like this, people we took for granted. For once our TV screens have been filled with the modest declarations of average Americans coming to each other's help. And we have been reminded of how much, in a democracy, we need each other.

**B**ut not all the signs have been encouraging. We have also been reminded of America's double standard, of the rot that has been growing in the soul of democracy. We saw it revealed as the wartime profiteers crawled out of their lairs on K Street in the nation's capital to cash in on the tragedy. While in New York we were still attending memorial services for the dead—while everywhere American cheeks were stained with tears—while the President called every day for patriotism, prayers, and piety, the predators were pulling off their own sneak attacks on democracy.

Within 24 hours of the attacks, the biggest energy companies—companies with record profits—tried to sneak themselves huge new subsidies by attaching them to a defense bill. A defense bill! Here our soldiers, sailors, and airmen were about to put themselves in harm's way in a strange and hostile land against a fanatical foe, and what were these corporations doing? They were hijacking the defense bill and turning a public tragedy into a feast of private greed.

But that was just the beginning. Eleven days after the attacks Congress rushed through a fifteen billion dollar bailout of the airline industry. While no one can doubt it was critical to compensate the companies for the losses they suffered, the bailout had literally no provisions for the workers. Surely fairness and justice call for relief that extends unemployment insurance to more workers, raising the average benefit level, and providing more weeks of eligibility so workers have time to find a job. But the only people who got bailed out here were the shareholders. When it was proposed to provide unemployment and some health benefits to laid-off airline workers, the Republican majority leader in the house—Texas' own Dick Arme—said that wouldn't be commensurate with the American spirit. I'm not making this up. He really said it!

Compare what happened some years ago when taxpayers bailed out Chrysler. The government set up a finance board to monitor it. Lee Iacocca agreed to work for one dollar a

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*While you're standing  
at attention with  
your hand over your  
heart, pledging  
allegiance to the flag,  
they're picking  
your pocket.*

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year. Doug Fraser of the UAW went on the board as well as a consumer representative, and there were strict requirements to pay the money back over time. None of these standards were followed in the airline bailout. So the bailout contained no provisions for workers—and once the airlines got their money they proceeded to layoff 140,000 employees. No, Arme was right: It wouldn't have been commensurate with the American spirit to accord to the public—the taxpayers—the protection the industry had bought for itself from a House Majority on the take.

In the weeks after the tragedy we heard repeated calls for Churchillian courage. The President asked for sacrifice. So how did America's most powerful and privileged corporations assure that future generations would look back and say, "This was their finest hour?" That's easy. Give us back the three-martini lunch, at taxpayer expense. Give coal producers more freedom to pollute. Cut the Capital Gains Tax on the wealthy. And eliminate the Alternative Minimum Tax. That was the tax enacted fifteen years ago to make sure the country's most profitable companies pay something to keep public services running, like ordinary citizens are obliged to do every week.

Until then, many of those wealthy corporate citizens had escaped the income tax altogether through various shelters and loopholes. Understandably, they have been trying ever since to rid themselves of the requirement. So they seized this moment to propose that the best way to fight terrorism is to relieve themselves of any obligation to pay their fair share of fighting it. We saw what Mr. Arme and his merry band thought commensurate with the American spirit. Mr. Arme and his band of true believers went along with them. They voted not only to repeal the Alternative Minimum Tax, but also to refund to corporations every cent they had already paid in the fifteen years since it was enacted. Sixteen of our biggest corporations would have been the top beneficiaries of the rebate. Ford Motor Company—\$1.4 billion. General Electric—671 million. Even the incompetently led and ethically challenged but politically connected Enron would have gotten a quarter of a million dollars!

I'm sure it won't surprise this audience that these corporations had been the most lavish contributors to the politicians who do their bidding. Enron gave \$2.4 million in campaign contributions in 2000. General Electric contributed \$1 million. Ford \$750,000. And the list goes on, commensurate with the American spirit.

If I sound a little bitter about this, I am. Whose side are these people on, anyway? As my friend and fellow journalist Bill Greider recently reminded us, in frightening times these big companies turn like all of us to their government for security. But the rest of the time they will abandon the

national interest if it serves their interest to do so.

Listen to these words: “There’s no mindset that puts this country first. The United States does not have an automatic call on our resources.” Those are the words, according to Bill Greider, of a Colgate-Palmolive executive. They have become the motto and mantra of one multinational corporation after another.

Consider the example of Citibank, bailed out more than once when it was on the brink of failure. The former CEO of Citibank used to complain mightily about regulations imposed by our government to protect consumers, and he often threatened to move his headquarters overseas. “The United States is the wrong country for an international bank to be based,” said its CEO. Wealthy autocrats have been known to find Citibank a useful channel for laundering their money. And get this: last year the right wing Heritage Foundation in Washington teamed up with deep pocket bankers to stop the United States from cracking down on terrorist money havens.

I’m not making this up—it’s all on the record. Early last year thirty industrial nations were ready to tighten the rules on offshore financial centers whose banks have the potential to hide and help launder billions of dollars for drug cartels, global crime syndicates, and groups like bin Laden’s al Qaeda organization. Not all offshore money is linked to crime or terrorism; much of it comes from wealthy people who are hiding money to avoid taxation. And right wingers believe in nothing if not avoiding taxation—let those firefighters and police and teachers with their middle incomes pay for the war on terrorism. So these right wingers and the banking lobby went to work to prevent the American government from joining in the crackdown on dirty money. Closing down tax havens, they said, would in effect lead to higher taxes on poor folks trying to hide their income overseas.

The president of the powerful Heritage Foundation spent an hour with Treasury Secretary O’Neill and Texas bankers pulled their strings at the White House—and presto, the Bush Administration pulled out of the global campaign to crack down on dirty money—until the September terrorist attacks made them look like co-conspirators.

How about that for patriotism? Better terrorists get their dirty money than tax cheaters be prevented from evading national laws and pay their fair share of the public sector. And this from people who wrap themselves in the flag and sing America the Beautiful with tears in their eyes.

Bitter, yes. It’s not just religious true believers who threaten our democracy. It’s true believers in the god of the market who would leave us to the ruthless amorality of unfettered corporate capitalism where even the law of the jungle breaks down. And they’re counting on your patriotism to distract you from their plunder. While you’re standing at attention with your hand over your heart, pledging allegiance to the flag, they’re picking your pocket.

I know, I know, we’re not supposed to be raising such criticism right now. This is an emergency, remember. But what if this emergency does last a long time? What happens to

democracy? Was it cancelled on September 11<sup>th</sup>—not to be restored until the President and Dick Cheney and John Ashcroft give us the all clear? I don’t think so. But democracy won’t survive if citizens turn into lemmings. Yes, the President is our Commander-in-Chief and in hunting down and bringing to justice the terrorists who are trying to destroy us, we are all the President’s men. But we are citizens too. And citizens are no one’s minions. There is a fight going on against terrorists around the world—people who hate democracy. But there’s a fight going on here, too, and those of us who love democracy must join that fight to stop powerful interests from setting us back a hundred years—back to when the poor, old, and sick were on their own—back to when minorities were at the mercy of a capricious state—back to when the sheriff, police, and military were free from public scrutiny—back to when huge corporations had the country in their pockets. It took muckraking journalists and progressive crusaders and outraged citizens to defend democracy as everybody’s business. And if any administration wants to go there—wants to turn democracy upside down—it’s every patriot’s duty to join the loyal opposition.

“Is this a private fight,” asked the Irishman, “Or can anyone get in it?” The answer is—it’s our fight. Democracy is our fight. Come on in—keep the faith.

I began this talk with the names of a few of the people who died in the attacks—Bautista—Steckman—Holmes—Luzzicone—Jahn-bul-lie—Scheffold. I did so because I never want to forget the humanity behind the horror. I never want to forget the email sent by a doomed employee in the World Trade Center who just before his life ended wrote: “Thank you for being such a great friend.” I don’t want to forget the man and woman holding hands as they leapt together to their deaths. Or those firemen who just kept going up. I never want to forget that the very worst of which human beings are capable can bring out the very best. I want to remember that the kingdom of the human heart is large, containing not only hate but also courage. And I want to remember that I am a survivor.

What does that mean? Listen to Michael Berenbaum, who worked for years with the survivors of the Holocaust: *“The question is what to do with the very fact of survival. Over time survivors will be able to answer that question not by a statement about the past but by what they do with the future. Because they have faced death, many will have learned what is more important: life itself, love, family, community. The simple things we have all taken for granted will bear witness to their reality. The survivors will not be defined by the lives they have led until now but by the lives that they will lead from now on. For the experience of near death to have ultimate meaning, it must take shape in how one rebuilds from the ashes. Such for the individual, so, too, for the nation.”*

We’re survivors, you and I. And we have work to do. ■

# Base Economics

(Inspired by Enron and the plethora of TV Preachers)

By Al Staggs, Chaplain and Performing Artist  
Bedford, Texas

A lot of talk bout God these days on the television  
and from the groups who want to put prayer  
in the school and the commandments in the courthouse.  
So much loud talk comin'  
from these well-dressed 'profits' in the  
glamour of their well-endowed sanctuaries  
and greatly subsidized ministries.  
I hear what you say, 'profit' and  
yet I can't seem to take my eyes off the  
accoutrements of your success  
that do so impress me.  
My, how God has blessed you!  
It's good of you, dear 'profit' to  
stand up for all that is right and true  
and to help us know that our once Christian nation  
is being destroyed by the promiscuity of all the sexual  
marketing of Hollywood and the morality of our former  
President.  
And we do know  
and we do all feel the tug of our culture's  
infatuation with all that is not pure.

Oh, but there is another kind of lust that  
has taken hold not only of our nation's soul,  
it has also snared those who pose as  
proclaimers of God's truth  
yet the Truth has escaped these  
impressive, well-dressed, well-heeled  
manipulators of the pocketbooks and the minds  
of poor vulnerable souls.

Put down that Bible 'profit'  
for you do not know what it says  
to our day and time.  
For robbery and greed are killing the spirit  
of God's children.  
The devil of greed has taken hostage the  
soul of this nation  
and not only are you, dear 'profit'  
not exempt  
you are leading the devil's charge.  
So why don't you talk about this insidious  
cancer of avarice from your lofty,  
well-endowed pulpit of power?  
It's not prudent is it 'profit'?  
So you can yell all you want about the lewdness of this  
sick society  
and you can raise your hands and praise your idolatrous  
image of God all you want  
but it is all just empty chatter with absolutely no biblical basis.  
You are nothing but parodies of truth  
and if all we knew bout Jesus  
was what we saw in the manipulative affectations  
of your garish shows  
some of us could never believe in any so-called savior  
who was born in a lowly stable to parents of poverty.

You wealthy overfed 'profits' of a false messiah  
it is you, most of all  
who need to be reached by the very word  
you speak to us. ■



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# What On Earth Are You Doing Practicing Law?

By Hal Haralson, Attorney  
Austin, Texas

We were in a Family Law Seminar discussing cases we were currently working on. I'm considered an "old-timer" in this group because of having handled family law cases for thirty years.

One of the attorneys who had been around almost that long turned to me and said, "Hal, I haven't seen you in court lately. In fact, I rarely see you in court. How do you manage that?"

I responded. "I'll share something with you that I discovered many years ago. Lawyers are very protective of their turf. They rarely go to another attorney's office. They consider themselves in the position of strength when they are behind their desk and the other attorney is in the client's seat."

"We like to communicate by letter. Our words present a superior and aggressive attitude on our client's behalf. Of course, we send a copy of the letter to our clients. The other attorney responds in an equally combative tone and the matter escalates."

I continued. "We do this because we have been taught to 'win' for our client. That means the other side 'loses'. I'll tell you how I've settled hundreds of cases and been in court (trial) only four times in thirty years."

I then told this story. "The client across from me was angry. At 55 years of age, his marriage of 35 years was breaking up. He was a religious man, going to the seminary at this stage in life."

"As I wrote down the details of his heated conflict, it was obvious this case could very easily wind up in court. The small town (pop. 10,000) where he lived was about 100 miles from Austin."

"I called his wife's attorney the next day and told him I was representing Mr. Jones. 'Do you have some time on Thursday or Friday? I would like to drive to Brady and visit with you about the case.'"

"We worked out a convenient time and I arrived at his office and he invited me to have a seat. As we made small talk, I looked at the pictures on the wall. There was a picture of twin girls about 13 years of age in basketball uniforms."

"I asked if these were his daughters. He told me about the girls and the championship team they played on. I told him that my wife and I had been involved in women's basketball for many years at the University of Texas."

"Our conversation was non-threatening. We had a common interest. We knew each other. We settled our case."

"That," I told my fellow attorney at the seminar, "is how I stay out of court."

1. Offer to meet the other attorney on his turf.
2. Talk with the attorney about him or herself. Find out where his or her interests lie and get the attorney to talk about herself or himself.
3. When you both have relaxed, talk about the case and agree that it is in everyone's best interest to stay out of court.

Why:

1. If you go to court you hand over the right of decision to a judge. In settlement, your client remains in control because he or she must agree or there is no settlement.
2. It costs five times as much if the case goes to trial.
3. A trial will completely destroy any relationship that continues to exist between the spouses. Settlement allows the best course for the children and for their parents to have mutual participation in the recovery of the children from the divorce.

It's that simple. Defuse the adversarial relationship with the other attorney and make settlement your goal.

I've never understood why most attorneys I know enjoy the combat of court.

A young graduate student from the University of Texas called to ask me if I would take the Myers/Briggs personality inventory. She was doing her paper on personality types in the legal profession.

I told her I would be glad to do this if she would come by afterward and let me know her findings.

About six months later, she called and said she had finished her paper. I invited her to come to the office. She sat down and looked at me and asked, "What on earth are you doing practicing law?"

"What do you mean?" I replied.

"Your personality inventory shows you should be a priest or minister, but never a lawyer."

I laughed and told her the story she did not know about how I came to be an attorney. I had spent 10 years in the ministry before going to law school.

She was much closer to the truth than she realized.

This difference has given me a great advantage in dealing with my fellow attorneys over the years.

Most clients want settlement without combat. The attorney has to make that his or her goal if that is to happen. ■

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# On Servant Leadership and Gracious Submissiveness

By James W. Wray, Attorney

Corpus Christi, TX

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**Introduction:** *An Old Deacon (OD) and Old Lawyer (OL) are old friends who meet occasionally to discuss current events over coffee. They have learned to disagree without being disagreeable, which is fortunate because sometimes it seems they would rather argue on credit than agree for cash. Today the subject is a newspaper clipping the Old Deacon puts on the table:*

## TEXAS BAPTISTS: WIVES DON'T HAVE TO SUBMIT

El Paso—*Texas Southern Baptists on Tuesday repudiated the denomination's call for women to "submit graciously" to their husbands. . . "The Bible doesn't teach that the husband is the general and the wife is a private, but yet that's how it gets interpreted," said the Rev. Charles Wade, the executive director of the Texas Group.*

**OD:** Why are Texas Baptists being so contrary? All that the Southern Baptists did in 1998 when they added Section Eighteen on "The Family" to the Baptist Faith and Message is to quote from Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians.

**OL:** I see you came prepared. Is that Section Eighteen sticking out of your Bible and does it happen to be marking the fifth chapter of Ephesians?

**OD:** Right. And here is the meat of it: "Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church . . .

The husband and the wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation."

And here is Ephesians 5:20-25: "*Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it. . .*"

If anything, Paul puts it in stronger language! Nothing

about "servant leadership" or "gracious submission." He said that wives should "*submit yourself unto your own husbands. . . For the husband is the head of the wife.*" Nothing could be plainer.

**OL:** I think you have put your finger on something important—Paul very clearly recognizes the wife's subservient role in the marriage. But, Paul does not describe a harsh or unloving relationship. Every time he describes the husband's dominance or the wife's subservience he qualifies it with a reference to Christ and His church: "*Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.*"

Does it seem to you that Paul is trying to take away the harshness of the dominant/submissive character otherwise given to marriage by this passage?

**OD:** I agree that a marriage with a "boss" husband and a "servant" wife, with those qualifications, is likely, nevertheless, to be a pretty compatible relationship.

**OL:** I'd like to come back to that, but, first, let me show you two sentences in Section Eighteen that *seem* to be in conflict: "The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to his people."

**OD:** That comes right out of the Bible.

**OL:** The first sentence stating "husband and wife are of equal worth before God" does: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:27).

But the second sentence, "The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people" is not a direct quote from any scripture cited by Section Eighteen. It must be inferred from Paul's reference to "God and his people" and "Christ and His church."

**OD:** Where do you see a conflict?

**OL:** On the one hand, husband and wife are equal before God, but on the other, the husband is likened unto Christ and the wife unto the church, which is not an equal relationship.

The drafters of Section Eighteen struggled with the fact that man and woman are equal before God, yet are, in marriage, unequal, *as they interpret Paul's teaching.* Do you think

that a husband can be dominant—have the last word, so to speak, and the wife required to submit, however gracefully—and there still be true equality between them?

**OD:** But what else can Paul mean: “the husband is the head of the wife?”

**OL:** Oh, I agree, Paul states *that* as a fact—and *it was a fact*. Roman law was not even equivocal: in Rome, the husband was absolute ruler of the household. There, is the key to this dilemma.

**OD:** Now, you are going to tell me that “Truth is relative.” Times have changed, therefore old “truths” do not hold. I won’t buy that.

**OL:** And I won’t try to sell it to you. Times change, but truth does not change. Let’s start with things that do not change. Both having been made in the image of God, man and woman are equal before God. That, you just read from Section Eighteen.

But men and women were not *treated* equally. Until recent times, women have never been treated as equal to men in biblical narrative, custom, or law. Women have been accorded certain rights, but they were not treated as equals. Consider, for example, the Old Testament rules relating to kinship and marriage. Polygamy and the superior rights of the male are seen throughout the Old Testament.

But, on the best authority, such rules were not the will of God. You remember, some Pharisees thought they had asked Jesus a question to which there was no “right” answer: “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?”

Jesus answered: “Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning made them male and female . . . So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate”

Then, the Pharisees asked, “Why did Moses authorize divorce?” Jesus replied, “It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.” (Mt. 19:4-8).

In Jesus’ time on this earth, Roman law regulated the relationship between family members. Roman marriage was monogamous but divorce was easy and Roman law was very hard on wives. The male head of the family had, literally, the power of life and death over the members of his household—his wife, his children, servants, and slaves.

A striking example: a husband might decide that, in the interest of preserving the inheritance of his children (it being very important to pass on to the children sufficient means to maintain their social standing) he could not afford more heirs. If, nevertheless, his wife became pregnant, he had the power to order that the child, when born, be “exposed.” This meant being put out at the gate of his dwelling to die or to be claimed by anyone who passed by.

**OD:** So, your point is that when Paul said, “Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands . . . For the husband is the head of the wife . . .” he was merely stating the status of the parties as established by law?

**OL:** Exactly! But, then, he qualified the harshness of the law, thereby putting the relationship on an entirely different

plane: “Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, *as to the Lord*. For the husband is head of the wife, *even as Christ is head of the church . . .*” (Eph. 5:22-23).

Paul’s Ephesian Christians would have understood that; for them, the wife *really had no alternative*. To submit was an act of love. The husband’s leadership was to be loving, not authoritarian.

**OD:** So, Paul was writing to couples who were *equal* in the sight of God, but *unequal* in Roman law. He told them they could have a Christian marriage even though the law decreed otherwise.

**OL:** Now, follow that thought to its logical conclusion: would Paul, who qualified the harshness of Roman marriage so beautifully, who said that Christians should be *mutually* submissive and that man and woman were equal before God, seek to impose male dominance on Christians who live, today, in a society where the laws declare the equality of the sexes? Section Eighteen is an anachronism.

**OD:** But what does that do to the principle of marriage as a model “of the way God relates to His people?” God has not changed since Roman times. If wives should submit to their husbands *as the church submits to Christ*, surely that means that the husband is leader in the marriage.

**OL:** Paul’s “Christ and church” analogy related to the dominant/subservient relationship of husband and wife that was mandated by Roman law. But how far did Paul, the theologian, intend that analogy to apply? Paul was logical in his teachings. He knew that equating the relationship of God to His people with that of husband to wife, was not infinitely valid.

How *does* God relate to His people? He relates as the Divine to the human, the Perfect to the imperfect, the Creator to the created, the Saviour to the redeemed. Can this analogy be extended to the marriage relationship in first century Rome or at any other time? Did Paul intend to carry the analogy to that extreme? Surely not!

But there are other qualities of God’s relationship to his people and of Christ’s to his church. Christ relates to his church with love, faithfulness, and understanding. That is the comparison between Christ and the church and husband and wife that applied in Rome and, of course, still applies today.

**OD:** (After some thought.) I agree that no sensible understanding of Paul’s teaching about marriage would conclude that he intended that the husband’s role in marriage would be *Godlike*. But is that a fair reading of Section Eighteen? The Southern Baptists who wrote Section Eighteen about “The Family” were concerned because marriage and the family are in a terrible shape today. You know that it was better when we were boys, when everyone knew that father was the boss. People *stayed* married in those days.

**OL:** I agree that Section Eighteen puts the best face possible on the contradiction it tries to justify: “*husband and wife, equal before God, but unequal in marriage.*”

And, yes, families are in trouble. Our generation, the ones who went through the depression and World War II are about the last generation to feel a general sense of security in

marriage. What went wrong? People have been looking for the answer to that question as long as I can remember. Isn't it simplistic to think that the decline of the husband's authority is the cause of decline in the strength of marriages? Isn't it equally, or even more logical, to look for the answer in the decline of love and commitment by marriage partners, which, as we have noted, were qualities of a Christian marriage very important to the Apostle.

The drive toward equality of the sexes, in custom and the law, is not merely a perverse result of the agitation of "uppity women;" it owes much to elementary principles of justice. When I began the practice of law the wife needed her husband's consent to sell her own separate property, property she brought into the marriage or that she inherited. The *legal* domination of the wife by the husband has been done away with primarily because it was not fair and men and women knew it.

You and I were taught that the husband is the "head of the house," but in my observation, the marriages that are strong and successful, are those of shared responsibility and decisions. In your marriage, how often does it come down to "Who's boss?" when important decisions have to be made?

**OD:** You're right about that. I seldom make important decisions, even in business matters, which is my role in the marriage, unless I at least discuss it with my wife. Thank God we've had a partnership, not a "Roman" marriage.

**OL:** Today, most husbands are not the *sole* breadwinners and *most* wives are not relegated solely to the domestic role. That did not come about because husbands ceased to be "servant leaders" and wives were no longer "graciously submissive." Rather it resulted from a great change in the way people live. Machines, from the typewriter to the dishwasher, have served to make it possible for the mother of small children to be gainfully employed outside the home. It is possible to have a Christian family where both husband and wife work. Do these marriages benefit from an unequal relationship between husband and wife?

A more disturbing trend is the large number of single mothers. Getting men to take responsibility for their children is the problem. Tell me we need more responsible and more loving husbands, and I agree. But we don't need better "top sergeants."

**OD:** "Top sergeants!" You are not being fair to Section Eighteen. Anachronistic it may be, but it does not describe a harsh domestic dictatorship. The husband is to "provide for, to protect and to lead" his family. Is that a "put down" of the wife?

**OL:** Well, consider this: a mother leaves her job to take a child to the doctor, reads a Bible story to that child at bedtime while dirty dishes are in the sink, or she may even be the one who keeps the family check book. Do you think that she has something to do with *providing for, protecting and leading* that family? It is not that a husband provider, protector and leader is bad, *but that wives perform those same functions.*

Section Eighteen falls into the Orwellian fallacy. The pigs, you recall, ruled the barnyard with the slogan, "All ani-

mals are equal, but pigs are *more equal* than others."

**OD:** Let's be practical. When there are differences of opinion, somebody must have the last word. Of course, people need to be considerate of the opinions of others, particularly to a marriage partner. But, when there is a difference concerning things that really matter, and a decision must be made, somebody must have the last word. Paul says it is the husband!

**OL:** Nowhere in America would you be more likely to find agreement with that sentiment than in the city where this amendment to the BF&M was adopted, Salt Lake City. Have you heard the radio spot the Mormons have been playing for a number of years about the wife smoking?

**OD:** You mean the one where the stern-sounding husband says, "My wife smokes. I don't permit it in the house. It's not good for my five beautiful children?"

**OL:** I see you remember it as vividly as I do. That is the first requirement of a good commercial, that people remember it. Well, the wife acknowledges that smoking "is a habit" and one of the children chimes in, "My mom smokes. I wish she didn't."

**OD:** I used to smoke cigars, and my wife made me smoke outside. Said it ruined the curtains.

**OL:** I'll say this much for the Mormons, they do not sugar-coat it. The husband's tone and words could have been spoken by Brigham Young himself. And the issue, whether a parent should smoke in a confined space with children present, genuinely concerns the health of the children. But the entire spirit of that brief little domestic drama is very disturbing to me. This is a marriage that is likely to cause much more serious damage to those five beautiful children than even the risk of lung cancer.

Why does the wife insist on smoking when she realizes it is just a habit and damaging to her and annoying to those who are closest to her? She *has* consented to smoke outside. *What resentment does she exhale with every puff?* Does she insist on smoking because it is one "habit" in which she can assert herself—defy her husband? What is the message that the children get, that their father loves their mother and them, or that he is determined to dominate? Perhaps the former, certainly the latter.

I will guarantee you one thing: *if marriage becomes a question of who will have the last word, the answer is likely to be the judge in the divorce proceedings.* In every phase of a marriage relationship, the marriage partners need to work things out as to who will yield, and the yielding should be willing, not grudging, to find an answer both can live with. In a good marriage, it is not always the husband who has the final word, even on matters where he feels strongly. Submitting, one to the other, as the Bible says, is much the better solution. I say it is the only solution.

**OD:** Actually, I can't recall an argument with my wife, I mean *disagreement*, that I thought could be settled by insisting I had the *right* to the last word.

**OL:** Recently I had dinner with a young married couple where the husband just happens to be the sole breadwinner and the wife stays home with young children. As the rest of us



were visiting around the table I noticed that the husband was at the kitchen sink doing the dishes.

To the wife and the mother of the dishwasher I said, "One of you trained that boy right." The wife said, "But I cut the grass this afternoon." Now there is a good marriage, where each is a "servant leader" and a "gracious submitter."

The assignment of roles as "leader" and "follower" to husband and wife offends most people. As Charles Wade says in that newspaper article "The Bible doesn't teach that the husband is the general and the wife is the private, yet that is the way it gets interpreted."

**OD:** You make a good case for the proposition that Paul's teaching must be understood in the context of his time. That is what still bothers me: "the context of his time." We believe the Bible is true and that its truth is for all time. What Paul wrote, he was inspired to write. It would make it so much simpler if he had just said, "The law of marriage is wrong—husband and wife are equal before God and should be equal in their relationship."

**OL:** I agree that would have made it simpler. Paul was not a rebel against the Romans, not against their rule or against their law, and this period was in a time when many Jews were rebelling and preaching rebellion. Why was he not a rebel? I can only conclude it was because it was not his mission to rebel. Unjust as it was in some respects, Roman rule was beneficial to Paul's purpose.

Rome ruled every country whose shores were washed by the Mediterranean, and beyond that, into Europe and the British Isles. This was advantageous for Paul in his mission. First, he could go where he wanted and be protected by Roman law. Second, the Romans were very tolerant of religious beliefs and practices in conquered countries. They had many gods, mostly adopted from the Greeks, and the Romans permitted conquered peoples to worship their own deities. There was, of course, a limit to Roman tolerance; there were episodes of persecution of Jews, and later Christians, because their worship of One God was a challenge to the primacy of the Roman Emperor. But for most of his ministry, Paul was protected by Roman law. He did not preach resistance to Roman law.

Neither did Jesus. He gave us the most memorable lesson

in respect for civil authority when the Pharisees, who never seemed to know when they were overmatched, asked Him if it were permitted to pay taxes to Rome. As you recall, He asked to see a Roman coin. "Whose image is on the coin?" Jesus asked. When told it was Caesar's image, Jesus said "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is God's."

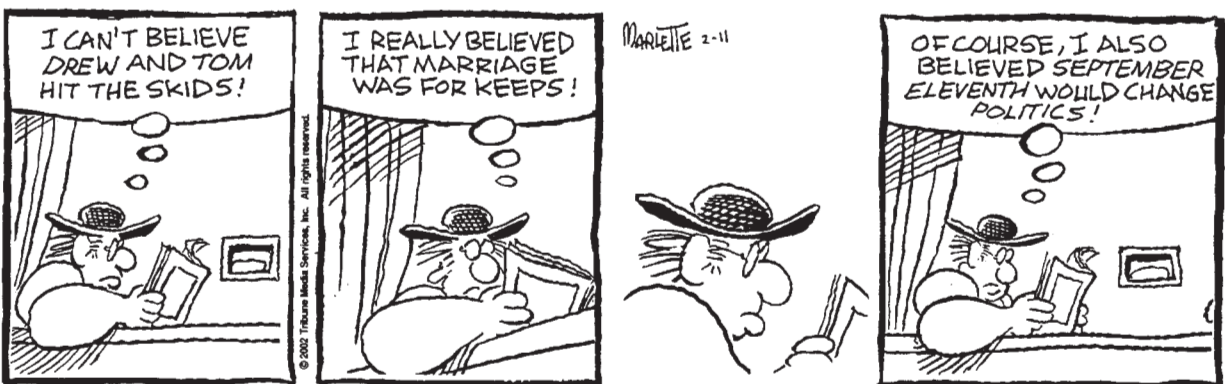
Jesus' message was the most revolutionary ever brought to this world, but he was not a reformer in the sense of proposing one law or opposing another. In this respect, Paul, was like Jesus.

**OD:** You know, you have shed light on something that has always bothered me: why did Paul never speak out against slavery? I can remember when I was a boy some preachers would cite the Bible to justify discrimination against African-Americans. Paul admonished servants to obey their masters, and most of those servants were actually slaves.

**OL:** The most dramatic illustration of that is the beautiful Epistle to Philemon. Philemon was a Greek who had become a Christian through Paul's preaching. While he was a prisoner in Rome, Paul was served in his prison by one Onesimus, another of Paul's converts. It happened that Onesimus was a slave who had escaped from his master, Philemon. Paul now sent Onesimus back to Philemon with this letter in hand. Not a sermon, but a note written to one man, not to a church; an appeal, man to man, heart to heart. Think of this: Onesimus is an escaped slave who probably stole from his master and he is returning to a master who has the power to have him put to death without ceremony. The letter he brings asks that Onesimus be permitted to return to serve Paul in his confinement. How does Paul argue Onesimus' case? Does he say, "Slavery is wrong and you have no right to hold him, therefore free him?" Not at all.

Here is Paul's plea: "Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for awhile, so that you might have him back forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother—especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord" (Phil. 15-16).

What happened to Onesimus when he handed that letter to Philemon? Can you imagine anything other than that he was sent back to Paul? The spiritual quality of Paul's appeal to



Philemon is immense, but no condemnation of involuntary servitude, only an appeal to love between brothers in Christ.

When we read Paul on marriage, as on the subject of slavery, we should keep always in mind that Paul was a teacher of spiritual truths, not a legal reformer.

**OD:** I admit you make a strong case. I might even say you make a convincing case. But you admit that marriage as described in “The Family” is not a harsh tyranny, and has worked for a lot of us in our generation. Why should Texas Baptists cause a split, which is painful to all of us, and puts the Cooperative Program at risk?

**OL:** Of course that bothers me. Most Baptists are reluctant to take up issues that are divisive. But the same is not true of those who have dominated the Southern Baptist Convention for many years. They promote their beliefs and, no doubt, think they are right, without much obvious concern for the affect on Baptist unity.

In 2000 the Southern Baptist Convention revised the Baptist Faith and Message again, this time declaring that, in the Church, “the office of pastor is limited to men.” The Associated Press on June 15, 2000, reported on this action: “Approval of the men-only pastor clause will probably drive out more congregations,” said the Rev. Daniel Vestal, of Atlanta, coordinator for a group of 2000 theologically moderate congregations. The newly elected president of the Southern Baptists, James G. Merritt, a 47-year-old conservative from Snellville, Ga., responded to the idea of churches leaving by saying: ‘I don’t fear a split. I don’t even fear a splinter.’”

Two thousand congregations who *might* not agree, and

not to be dignified as even a *splinter*? As one who heard J. Frank Norris preach, I assure you that one scripture fundamentalists follow sparingly is: “*A soft answer turneth away wrath.*”

**OD:** Still, I fear that this issue might cause divisions in our own church.

**OL:** I wish I could allay that fear, which I share. I do not fall out with those who agree with Section Eighteen. But, they should not impose it on other Baptists. Baptists who declare that the Holy Bible, alone, is God’s message, must be very cautious when they attempt to put that message *into their own words*, and then insist that their interpretation is authoritative. Section Eighteen is a violation of the Baptist Faith and Message, which recognizes Soul Competency. Inevitably, one day it will be seen as such.

In fact, even before they got away from Salt Lake City I saw a report in a newspaper of an interview with Mrs. Paige Patterson, wife of the president who had presided over that convention. She was interviewed by a reporter who asked her if she was willing to be “graciously submissive” to her husband’s leadership. Of course, she said she was willing. The reporter asked what she would do if her husband as leader made a decision she thought was not according to Bible teachings. “Then, I would do what I thought was right,” she replied.

Soul Competency triumphed over Section Eighteen!

Mrs. Patterson’s reply was not much different in its meaning from the epistle Martin Luther nailed to the church wall. You remember what *that* started. ■



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# EthixBytes

(A Collection of Quotes, Comments, Statistics, and News Items)

“On September 11 we lost, and lost forever, our sense of invulnerability and invincibility. Hard as that may be, let us not grieve their passing; they were illusions.” William Sloan Coffin in the N.Y. Times [the activist minister who inspired ‘Rev. Sloan’ in *Doonesbury*].

“For black people, terrorism in this country began long before Sept. 11, 2001.” Retired Black Minister Jesse Truvillion.

“The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty and we must rise high with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.” Abraham Lincoln’s second inaugural address, December 1, 1862.

“We who allow ourselves to become engaged in war, need this testimony of the absolutist [pacifism] against us lest we accept the warfare of the world as normative, lest we become callous to the horror of war, and lest we forget the ambiguity of our own actions and motives and the risk we run of achieving no permanent good from the momentary anarchy in which we are involved.” Reinhold Niebuhr in a 1940 essay.

“Pagan converts to the early church did not absorb Christian teaching intellectually and then decide to become Christians. They were attracted to what they saw of the faith and practices of the early Christian communities.” George Lindbeck in *The Christian Century*.

“In the new code of laws . . . I desire you would remember the ladies, and be more favorable to them. . . . Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of husbands.” Abigail Adams in David McCullough’s biography *John Adams*.

“Seventy-nine percent of Muslims in this country say that U.S. foreign policy led to the September 11 terrorist attacks, and 67 percent say that changing policy in the Middle East is the best way to wage war against terrorism, according to a poll released December 19 in Washington.” *The Christian Century*

“The war against terrorism is a brilliant construct. It may not have been started by George W. Bush, but it certainly works to his advantage. . . . What makes this war so superior, in political terms, is its vagueness. Since the terrorist, by defini-

tion, can be anyone—the man in the next apartment, the person lurking on the subway platform—we can never be sure who the enemy is. More important, we can never know when we’ve won. As a result, this war has the capacity to go on forever. It will be called off only when those in charge choose to do so. And why would they?”

Toronto Star columnist Thomas Walkom.

“It might sound absolutely insane coming from me, but what the world needs is a good shot of morality.”

Reformed shock-rocker Alice Cooper

“There are at least as many sheep outside the fold as there are wolves within.” Augustine

“The state must not claim the right to take human life away, which belongs only to the Almighty.” Russian President Vladimir Putin in a speech opposing the restoration of executions in Russia.

“A leader is a fellow who refuses to be crazy the way everybody else is crazy and tries to be crazy in his own crazy way.”

Peter Maurin in *The Catholic Worker*

“The church now finds itself increasingly two steps removed from persons shaped by the contemporary culture. The church no longer shares a common language with these persons, and it finds itself living with forms that for the most part have either been marginalized or privatized in meaning.” Craig Van Gelder in *Missiology*

“As of June 30, 2000, the population of federal, state, and local prisons or jails was 1,931,859, a three percent increase over 1999. The U.S. has 25 percent of the world’s prisoners, but only five percent of the world’s population.”

National Prison Project

“The problems the [Enron] scandal reveals are systemic. The individuals involved may have been uniquely greedy and unethical, but they were empowered by a system that exalted greed as it diminished ethics and accountability.”

Marjorie Kelley, publisher of *Business Ethics* magazine.

“All wars are civil wars, because all men are brothers. . . . Each one owes infinitely more to the human race than to the particular country in which he was born.” Francois Fenelon

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# Church And State: “Once More Unto The Breach”

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We do not know how old the problem of church and state is. Perhaps primitive societies had to reconcile the authority of shamans and chiefs. In its contemporary form the problem dates at least from late medieval or early modern times. Dante has the Lombard spirit Marco say:

Rome, which produced the good world, used to have  
Two suns, which made people see one road and the  
Other—the world’s road and the road of God.  
One has stifled the other, for sword  
And shepherd’s crook are one now, and they go  
Badly with each other, as by force they must—  
Because, thus joined, neither fears the other.<sup>1</sup>

American colonial and early federal history illustrates the damage done to both church and state when the two were too closely intertwined. Some Colonies had firmly established churches. Even as States, some continued to have an official religion. The Salem witch trials were the work of a government in thrall to the religion of the day.<sup>2</sup> The church’s ability to turn to the government for enforcement of its views did the church no great service.

On the other hand the lethargy (and worse) of Church of England clergy in America may be attributed in part to their subsistence on government.<sup>3</sup> The corruption of the church by state sponsorship likewise earned the state no credit from today’s perspective.

Whatever the problems were at the state level, the formation of “a more perfect Union”<sup>4</sup> insulated the federal government from religion. First the Constitution stipulated that “no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office of public Trust under the United States.”<sup>5</sup> The only official qualifications for the presidency are that the President must have been born a citizen of the US at least 35 years before taking office and have been a resident of the US for 14 years.<sup>6</sup>

Despite this official limit on eligibility many informal qualifications are required. As late as today, no woman has ever been nominated for the presidency by one of the two major parties. Neither has an observant Jew. For decades

prior to 1960 political science college textbooks pointed out that a Catholic could not be elected President. John F. Kennedy changed that. From a religious perspective his was a curious campaign. A practicing Catholic promised not to let his religion interfere with his official choices and his opponent, a nominal Quaker, like most politicians of the era, bragged on his war record.

Religion remains an important consideration in presidential politics. Professor John M. Swomley expressed concern in this journal<sup>7</sup> about President Bush’s appointments of Roman Catholics, raising the possibility of a theocracy. From a contrasting point of view during the presidential election campaign in 2000 candidate Bush was subjected to severe partisan attacks for being embraced at Bob Jones University and for his appeal to fundamentalist Protestant Christians. How can a poor politician win?

Aside from religion in presidential politics, the relationship between church and state remains a thorny affair. The First Congress proposed a constitutional amendment to create some distance between the national government and religion. The First Amendment of the Bill of Rights starts:

Congress shall make no law respecting  
an establishment of religion, or pro-  
hibiting the free exercise thereof. . . .<sup>8</sup>

This wonderful provision, to which we owe so much that we cherish in both the secular and spiritual aspects of our lives, has a curious history. It has been transformed into the concept of “separation of church and state” and saddled with the unfortunate metaphor of “a wall of separation between church and state.”<sup>9</sup> And it has evolved from a limitation on the central government to a bewildering variety of constraints on state and local governments.

## **The “Wall” Is a Membrane.**

The “wall” suggests two worlds, as isolated from each other as East and West Berlin during the Cold War. Imagining such a wall one may see two spheres, politics and religion, neither of which may impinge on the other. Such separation is

impossible because both church and state necessarily deal with human relations, the one telling us the right way to act, the other commanding how we must act. The “wall” is a permeable membrane filtering out some gross intrusions. It limits government actions more than it does religious ones, but both state and church are constrained.

Churches are constrained because our freedom of religion does not cover human sacrifice, immoral or criminal acts, polygamy,<sup>10</sup> some forms of snake handling,<sup>11</sup> and the ceremonial use of peyote<sup>12</sup> among other prohibited activities. The state is allowed to breach the “wall” to prohibit much of what might be sanctioned or even required by religion.

Governments are constrained because they may not designate an official church or impose narrow sectarian discipline on the general public in accordance with a particular religion. American government, however, may codify ancient religious commandments without treading on the principle of non-establishment. The Torah tells us not to murder or steal. The religious origin of those commandments does not prevent government from enacting them in an attempt to limit murder and theft.

The two religious clauses of the First Amendment do not limit the fundamental democratic rights embodied in the rest of the Amendment. The freedoms of speech, press, and assembly are available to people with a religious agenda. Religious people have the same right to petition the government—that is, to lobby—that everyone else has. American governments may be prohibited from granting some of these petitions, but the faithful may ask.

Why is this first provision of our Bill of Rights so often controversial? One reason is that it touches very sensitive, very personal beliefs. Different people with equally fervent beliefs may disagree with each other. People who are very sure that they know “the truth” find tolerance of and compromise with error very difficult. Try to get a friend to agree with you that  $2 + 2 = 3.9$ . No matter how many 9’s you add to the right of the decimal point your friends will insist that only precisely 4 is the correct answer.

### **Allowing “Free Exercise” and Prohibiting “Establishment” Conflict**

**A**nother reason for controversy over the religious prohibitions in the First Amendment is that the two provisions necessarily conflict with each other.<sup>13</sup> Two examples illustrate the contradictions. If the state taxes religious institutions and property it interferes with “free exercise” of religion. If it bestows tax exemptions on religions it “establishes” them.<sup>14</sup> Government cannot always honor both provisions at the same time.

Likewise when the government conscripts people for the military and removes them from their congregations, pastors, and religious teachers, it may be making a law prohibiting the conscripts from exercising their freedom of religion. If, to remedy this violation of the Constitution the government then provides chaplains and places of worship, it finds itself establishing religion.

This brings us to the controversies over various forms of religion in government facilities such as parks and schools. Many people are galled that secular interests are allowed the use of public places, but religious ones are banned. Some of these people understand very well that religion is a unique and precious part of their lives, but in order to gain access to public facilities, they ask that it be treated like the Future Farmers of America, Young Republicans, or a chess club. But religion is not like secular institutions. Both in our lives and in constitutional law religion is very special.<sup>15</sup> It does not require and may not have the state’s imprimatur.

The step from a government seal of approval to other and obnoxious forms of political involvement in religion might be too tempting to resist. Americans avoid the second step by prohibiting the first.

Christians, especially, might be expected to appreciate this effort to insulate religion from politics. Jesus said: “And when ye pray, ye shall not be like the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee.”<sup>16</sup>

We can understand why so many politicians are eager to be seen praying in public and why they wish to be identified with public prayers in school and elsewhere, but understanding why so many Christians seem favorably impressed is more difficult.

The New York Regents prayer was a particularly bland and innocuous prayer: “Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers and our Country.”<sup>17</sup>

Although this is not even a Christian prayer in that it does not invoke the name of Jesus, it assumes a universal acceptance of one concept of the nature of God and one name for God without allowing for other concepts and names. It is a blatant form of the imprimatur of the State of New York.

The decision of the United States Supreme Court<sup>18</sup> banning the New York school prayer does not and could not “take God out of the public schools.” God by any name needs no green light from anyone to be in a classroom, to attend graduation ceremonies,<sup>19</sup> to go to football games in Texas,<sup>20</sup> or to be in public places. Banning the New York Regents prayer does not and could not prohibit students and teachers from praying.

Public school prayers, however, must be personal and private. They cannot be official or sanctioned prayers. They cannot be identified as school policy. Under the court decisions in the New York and Texas cases students never need worry if their prayers are acceptable to their teachers and classmates. Nor need they worry if skipping prayers might meet with disapproval by their teachers, principals, or peers.

By banning official or sanctioned prayers the law enhances the freedom of religion of dissenters and protects

the sanctity of personal prayers. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries dissenting Europeans had to flee their homes and native lands. In the New World they found a sanctuary for their religious beliefs but as the new dominant force some of them did not tolerate freedom for minority religions. They sometimes established their own religion to the exclusion of others. Therein lies the telling difference between their way and our way under the First Amendment.

### **The First Amendment Now Limits State and Local Governments**

Historians and legal scholars may debate the intentions of the people who added the Bill of Rights to the Constitution but taken by itself the First Amendment is clearly a limitation on the national Congress without reference to state and local government. The history of how it came to limit all American governments is long and tortuous. We may summarize it briefly.

In 1833 the United States Supreme Court held that the Fifth Amendment required only the national government to provide due process of law.<sup>21</sup> If a state or local government denied a person due process the issue did not create a federal case. The matter had to be resolved at the state level. This precedent remains in effect today only in a technical sense. During the late nineteenth century and through the mid twentieth century the Supreme Court whittled away the ability of state governments to deny any person due process and equal protection of the laws. More and more the states were held to the same standard as the national government so that today many Americans feel fully protected by the Bill of Rights although some of it may not apply to the states.

This change in the reach of the Bill of Rights has resulted from the Fourteenth Amendment that says, in part: "No State shall. . . deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."<sup>22</sup>

At first the Supreme Court held that these requirements dealt only with natural persons, particularly the former slaves for whom it was written. The states still had a virtually free hand for regulating such businesses as slaughterhouses.<sup>23</sup> Later, however, a strange thing happened. The due process clause began to provide a substantive protection for businesses generally—that is, the states were forbidden under the Fourteenth Amendment to impose a variety of regulations regardless of the process involved. Railroads especially gained some protection from populist restrictions that state legislatures sought to impose.<sup>24</sup>

Thus business interests, not religions, acquired a stake in the Fourteenth Amendment. Corporations rather than individual citizens gave the Amendment its teeth. Only in the twentieth century were the provisions of the Amendment interpreted to protect civil liberties. The process of binding the states by First Amendment requirements started not with religion but with freedom of the press and of speech.<sup>25</sup>

The legal stage was thus set by the mid-twentieth century to prohibit state and local governments from restricting free-

dom of religion and from establishing religion. The variety of specific issues to be construed as covered by the First and Fourteenth Amendments is staggering. Complaints both by cranks and by people with a legitimate grievance (as though we could always tell them apart) kept percolating up through the courts.

Activities that have been challenged, in addition to those already mentioned, include teaching evolution,<sup>26</sup> abortion, ritual animal slaughter, Ku Klux Klan cross burning on public property, religious dress while teaching in public schools, conscientious objection to military service or saluting the flag, provision of public services or supplies to church schools, income tax exemption for the cost of private schools, released time for religious instruction, religious displays on municipal ground, proselytizing with loud sound systems in residential neighborhoods, Seventh Day Adventist observance of Saturday as the Sabbath, compulsory schooling of Old Order Amish children, various Sunday blue laws, refusing conventional medical treatment for children, and the sale of contraceptives and alcohol. All of these issues require resolution on a case by case basis. The Constitution and applicable laws may be changed, but in the meantime judges get to decide and we do not fight holy wars against each other.

### **Where Does This Leave Us?**

Two things will change in the evolution of public policy regarding church and state. The specifics of a great variety of controversies will change. People dissatisfied with the latest judicial interpretations of the Constitution and statutes will seek to reopen the question on the basis of slightly different circumstances. The arena in which decisions are made will change. Membership on the Supreme Court will change, maybe some Justices will change their views, and the national environment or ambiance will change.

Thus even matters which seem settled today may be brought back to a boil and new conditions will introduce new issues. What can we do to ease the controversies? Perhaps nothing, but maybe both sides of the forthcoming disputes can moderate their positions. A sort of rule of reason or of reasonableness would help matters.

For example, when the Roman Catholic Church prescribed fasting on Fridays it did so as a discipline for its members and did not seek to impose the rule on others. Baptists who used to invoke the government on behalf of prohibition now are mostly satisfied to abstain from drinking without preventing Episcopalians from falling into sin. The Puritans who once imposed draconian restrictions on the way people behaved on Sundays are now generally content to live and let live, merely disapproving the frivolous behavior of others. Catholics who lobbied for laws against the sale of contraceptives have moved to more important matters for state intervention. Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem may demonstrate to outlaw public transport on the Sabbath, but in America they leave such sacrilege in private hands. Some Muslims in foreign lands may abuse women for violating the dress code; American Muslims tolerate the wayward ways of non-

Muslim women.

The faithful of small minority religions are generally content to adhere to their own observances without invoking government support to impose their views or God's on others. Believers from larger denominations have more political clout. If, when they are tempted to enlist government on their side, they would be as self-restrained as less popular religions, many of the problems of church and state would evaporate.

Likewise the secular humanists, agnostics, and atheists could be more modest about picking their public fights. Much of what they might object to as purists is not worth litigating. The national motto on our currency, the invocation of God at the opening of Supreme Court sessions, the flagrant use of chaplains in legislatures, Congress, prisons, and the military—these seem to us to be peripheral matters that do not seriously challenge the rights and way of life of non-believers.<sup>27</sup>

The memorial service held in Yankee Stadium for the victims of the attack on the World Trade Center provided a wonderful example of the rule of reason. The program showcased a wide range of religious leaders—bishops of various Christian denominations, Protestant clergy, rabbis across a broad spectrum of Jewish theology, Muslims with different perspectives, and others. Pop culture stars presided and performed. The State of New York was represented by the Governor, the City by its Mayor. All, secular and religious, were enthusiastically cheered at all the appropriate applause lines whether in a speech or a prayer.

It was altogether quite presumptuous for the faithful who participated in the Yankee Stadium memorial service to assume that this was a proper occasion to give testimony to their religious beliefs—altogether presumptuous and very wonderful. Clerics and laity whose predecessors recently regarded ecumenism as heresy simply joined each other in a healing moment. Surely the large crowd included non-believers who in other situations would oppose such a civic religious ceremony, but they too must have cheered and applauded the prayers, held hands and swayed, hugged and cried, along with their neighbors in the stadium.

Let us, therefore, in all circumstances, be alert to the fundamentals of our freedom to worship or not as we choose and let us be vigilant in guarding against the misuse of government even on our own behalf. With no hard wall between church and state let both serve our secular and spiritual interests as best they can. The faithful among us can work to make government more humane and closer to fulfilling God's purposes. The dissenters among us can work to make government more humane and leave it to God to do God's work. ■

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<sup>1</sup> Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: II Purgatory*, canto 16, trans. into blank verse by Louis Biancolli (NY: Washington Square Press, 1966), 66.

<sup>2</sup> See Stanton D. Krauss, "Criminal Law: An Inquiry into the Right of Criminal Juries to Determine the Law in Colonial

America," 89 *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 111, 214 n. 364.

<sup>3</sup> See James Madison, "Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments," *James Madison: Writings*, ed. by Jack M. Rakobe, Library of America, 29, 32 (1999).

<sup>4</sup> Preamble, Constitution of the US.

<sup>5</sup> Article VI, Constitution of the US.

<sup>6</sup> Article II, §1, Constitution of the US.

<sup>7</sup> John M. Swomley, "The Threat of Theocracy," *Christian Ethics Today*, 7 (October, 2001), 20.

<sup>8</sup> First Amendment, Constitution of the US.

<sup>9</sup> Mr. Justice Black in *Everson v. Board of Education*, 330 US 1 (1947).

<sup>10</sup> The first major Supreme Court decision regarding freedom of religion involved polygamy in the Territory of Utah. *Reynolds v. US*, 98 US 145 (1979).

<sup>11</sup> *McDaniel v. Paty*, 435 US 618, 634 (1978).

<sup>12</sup> *Employment Division v. Smith*, 494 US 872 (1990).

<sup>13</sup> See *Walz v. Tax Commission*, 397 US 664 (1970). In trying to reconcile the two religious clauses the Supreme Court noted that both "are cast in absolute terms. . . either of which, if expanded to a logical extreme, would tend to clash with the other."

<sup>14</sup> In *Murray v. Goldstein* 385 US 816 (1966) the Supreme Court allowed a lower court decision upholding a tax exemption to stand.

<sup>15</sup> "It is neither sacrilegious nor antireligious to say that each separate government in this country should stay out of the business or writing or sanctioning official prayers and leave that purely religious function to the people themselves and to those the people choose to look to for religious guidance." *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 US 421, 434 (1962)

<sup>16</sup> Matthew 6:5-6. Revised Standard (1901).

<sup>17</sup> *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 US 421, 422 (1962).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*,

<sup>19</sup> *Adler v. Duval County School Board*, 250 F. 3d 1330 (11<sup>th</sup> Cir., en banc, 2001). The Circuit Court majority treated the case as a free speech case that did not involve religion as claimed by the plaintiffs.

<sup>20</sup> *Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe*, 530 US 290 (2000).

<sup>21</sup> *Barron v. Baltimore*, 7 Pet. 243 (1833).

<sup>22</sup> Fourteenth Amendment, §1, Constitution of the US.

<sup>23</sup> *Slaughter-House Cases*, 16 Wall. 36 (1873).

<sup>24</sup> *Delaware v. Van Arsdale*, 475 US 673, 698 n. 8 (1986), Justice Stevens dissenting.

<sup>25</sup> *Gitlow v. New York*, 268 US 652 (1925). Gitlow lost his case because he abused the right of free speech. *Near v. Minnesota*, 283 US 697 (1931). A Minnesota gag law violated freedom of the press.

<sup>26</sup> The court cases and citations for this and other issues mentioned in this paragraph are available from Mary Vance at [mvance@vlpplaw.com](mailto:mvance@vlpplaw.com) or Ann Piccard at [piccard@law.stetson.edu](mailto:piccard@law.stetson.edu)

<sup>27</sup> *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 US 431 (1962).

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# Answering The Call To Community Ministry

*By Ben MacConnell, Recruitment Director*  
Direct Action & Research Training (DART) Center

The story is often told of three stonemasons who were asked what they were doing. One said he was cutting stones. The second said he was making a wall. The third said he was building a cathedral. In the same way, one person may say, "I'm putting in my time," another, "I'm doing my job," while another performing the same work may say, "I'm serving God." The difference lies in understanding why we do what we do.

On a small farm in Indiana, Cliff Kindy convicted me for life, and he had the audacity to smile his whole way through it. Cliff and his family decided several years prior to our meeting to live out their biblical calling by becoming self-sufficient organic farmers and committing his vocation to justice issues. I could not stand for it.

I pestered him with all kinds of logistical questions about his chosen lifestyle. "What are you going to do about retirement? Did you ever consider that someday you'll have a drought and your kids won't eat? Did you ever think of that? Huh, Cliff, did you ever think of that?" He smiled his way through the interrogation, and answered with Christ-centered patience.

At one point he bent down, picked at some tall grass, and said, "I know I could have done something else with my life. But somewhere along the way, I figured out that it's hard to make money without killing someone or something, somehow. So, I decided to take a profession that fostered life and justice." As I said, Cliff drove me crazy.

A few weeks before, I sat surrounded by old textbooks and career planning guides discussing my future with my college career advisor. Like a doctor telling me I had six months to live, he gravely laid my options out for me. He explained that my grades were good enough for law school. "But, you know, people are making *a lot* of money these days in prison work. It's a booming industry. You have got the right degree, and within six years as a guard, I promise you'll find yourself in a deputy warden position," he said.

Now after answering my own call over the last six years to work towards God's vision for justice and community on earth, I find myself in the position to hire folks to help out. I dream of Cliff—the greatest career counselor in the world—taking recent college graduates out to his farm to discuss the virtues of a meaningful vocation. But he and the farm are nowhere to be found among the hundreds of thousands of books, magazines, leaflets, and websites committed to helping

young college and seminary students with their career search.

This spring, in Atlanta, I survey the room while a recruiter from a chemical company announces to 150 upcoming college graduates the inordinately high salary and benefit packages his company offers. I am waiting my turn. I am waiting to recruit the next generation of peacemakers, community ministers, change agents—a generation of people committed to something higher, more beautiful than money and stock options. I look for people who are called, not asked to take the job. I am looking for the spirit of Martin Luther King and Mother Theresa. I am confident we will prevail.

I am armed with flyers, clipboards, and a passionate speech about God's vision for justice and a message of Christ's mercy and hope. After my brief announcement, I watch in dismay as the room empties. I can't believe what I am seeing. People file past my table—past a promise for a meaningful career—and they drop off their resumes at the glossy banner-covered tables of chemical, sales, technology, and engineering companies.

Yes, I know they pay more, but it's also incredibly mundane work. Isn't it? Will they ever get the opportunity to see a person's face when they finally recognize their ability to change the problems affecting their church and neighborhood? Will they help close a crack house, make sure a kid can read after kindergarten, or ensure people receive a living wage?

In January, colleagues of mine in the faith-based organizing field realized we are not alone in our search for passionate, thoughtful people committed to community ministries. Interfaith Funders released a comprehensive report on the field of faith-based community organizing. After surveying the staff from 100 faith-based local community projects, they found: "The factor most consistently cited by respondents as limiting the growth of their work is the recruitment of talented organizers." (a full report is available on the internet at: <http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/papers2001/faith/faith.htm>).

Ironically, respondents say it's not so much the money. The money could be better they say, but today we are paying more money than they have ever paid before. Yet, ten or twenty years ago we did not have such a hard time finding people.

I wonder to myself if this will become a crisis. If all these organizations built with love and passion will wither away like an old garden untended. I think about all the professions



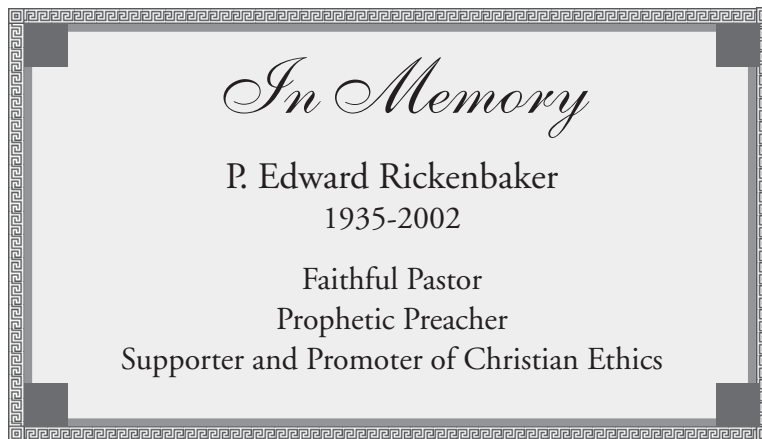
we prepare our children for—doctors, lawyers, engineers, biotechnologists, and computer analysts. The thousands of institutions of higher learning we created—our seminaries, universities, colleges, and technical schools. The hundreds of thousands of young adults who are let loose every year with a cap, gown, and a piece of paper that says they have finally arrived. “This is your ticket to life,” we say from the podium, “go and get it!”

I wonder if they will remember the modern day prophets who stood for the poor and oppressed—Rosa Parks, Clarence Jordan, James Farmer, and countless others. As I consider these things and the impact it will have on the future of social change, I am reminded by the words of the prophet, Ezekiel: “And I sought for anyone among them who would repair the wall and stand in the breach before me on behalf of

the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.” (Ezek. 22: 30)

Surely, we can find someone. Can't we?

P.S. In the summer of 2002, we will be launching the DART Organizers Institute—the first ever, paid field school for faith-based, community organizers. We plan to hire twenty Organizer Trainees, who will receive instruction from seasoned organizers, and will be given the opportunity to work with churches on a multiple set of urban justice issues affecting low-income communities like inequitable education, police misconduct, environmental justice, immigration reform, and others. Upon completion from the Organizers Institute, graduates will be placed in permanent fulltime community organizing ministries. For more information and to apply or to refer candidates, please contact me at: (816) 931-2520 or check out: [www.thedartcenter.org](http://www.thedartcenter.org). ■



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# The Red Mass

By John M. Swomley, Professor Emeritus of Social Ethics

St. Paul School of Theology

The Red Mass, a colorful religious ceremony of the Catholic Church, is celebrated in the United States before members of the Supreme Court, members of Congress, and other high government officials. It also occurs at state capitals and other metropolitan centers. It is not only the occasion of the sectarian cultural event involving the legal profession, but has become the only institution in which one church has an exclusive opportunity to influence judges and other government officials.

The term “Red Mass” traditionally refers to the color of the vestments worn by the bishops who speak at the event, but also to the robes of the judges who attend. The origin of the Red Mass is not precisely dated, but it first occurred in France during the Inquisition, probably during the reign of Pope Gregory IX or one of his successors, Pope Innocent IV (1243-1254). It was a religious ceremony of the state when the Inquisition was in full swing and when the state customarily used torture. Innocent IV subsequently permitted some forms of torture not as brutal or deadly as those of the courts.

It is also likely that a Red Mass occurred in England during the reign of Edward I (1274-1307) to inaugurate the opening of the judicial year, though some claim it was first celebrated there in 1310 at Westminster Abbey. In both France and England it was a ceremony that marked the union of church and state. The Mass was brought to the United States in 1928 by Catholic officials and subsequently organized through an association of Roman Catholic lawyers into a nationwide cultural and promotional event for Vatican policy.

Although the Red Mass in America is a religious ceremony, the celebrant (usually a bishop or a cardinal) uses his address to promote the political agenda of the Vatican. His audience consists of many of the members of the judiciary, Congress and, on the state level, judges and legislators, along with members of the legal profession, all of whom are invited. Some do not attend.

One of the early celebrants of the Red Mass in America was Bishop John Wright, later Cardinal Wright. He delivered many Red Mass sermons in which he spoke against that “totalitarian secularism and practical atheism which rule out all idea of the sovereignty of God.” (“Sermon of 1959,” in *The Christian and the Law: Selected Red Mass Sermons*, Fides Pub., Notre Dame, IN.) In 1950 Wright entitled his Red Mass sermon “The Common Good” and asserted that “upright men find themselves unable to meet with one another on questions of either public or personal good” and

referred to “the present polarized condition of society” that can only be rectified “in the super-natural order which God has revealed” (Ibid.).

During the years 1944-1952, I was in Washington coordinating the campaign against permanent peacetime military conscription. It began with the Society of Friends, Mennonites, Church of the Brethren, Methodists, peace organizations, other Protestant groups, and soon included farm, labor, and educational groups. Then the Catholics came on board. It was the most united religious activity in American history. Bishop Wright, with whom I was in telephone communication, not only knew about this “common good,” but cooperated. I phoned him in February, 1952, and asked him to persuade Roman Catholic Congressmen from Massachusetts to vote against peacetime conscription. He did, and all but one opposed it.

Wright never acknowledged that the religious groups prevailed for the common good, though it was later acknowledged by the armed forces, who came to pride themselves as an all-volunteer force. Wright continued to speak against secularism and the secular state.

The Red Mass continued to be used by the U.S. Catholic Bishops to oppose separation of church and state. At the October 1, 1989, annual Red Mass in Washington, Philadelphia Archbishop Anthony Bevilacqua said, according to the *Washington Times*, that conflicts between church and state have excluded religion from public life. He said, “The time has come to restore the vital relationship between religion and law, church and society.” His claim of an exclusion of religion from public life was untrue.

The Catholic hierarchy had been successful in having only anti-abortion judges appointed during the Reagan and Bush years. Time magazine reported that “in response to concerns of the Vatican, the Reagan Administration agreed to alter its foreign aid program to comply with the Church’s teaching on birth control.” In 1984 the U.S. withdrew funding for the International Planned Parenthood and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

There have been many more Vatican successes since then. The Red Mass, which now has spread into Florida, Alabama, and most other states, has taken its message to judges, legislators, lawyers, and others, insisting that the Vatican agenda become the law of the land. It has even spread into counties, cities, law schools, and universities such as Pat Robertson’s Regent University Law School.

Efforts have been made to get Protestants to collaborate with and sponsor the Roman Catholic Red Mass. For example, the Greater Jasper Ministerial Association in Alabama held its fifth Annual Red Mass service October 1, 2001, at the First United Methodist Church.

In other words, presumably under the guise of ecumenism, papal theology and the Vatican political agenda are presented to all who attend in spite of the fact the pro-choice, tax support of public schools only, and other positions of some major Protestant churches are not permitted in Roman Catholic churches.

The most recent Red Mass in Washington on October 28, 2001, featured Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, who dealt with a number of topics, one of which was to speak of the U.S. Armed Forces as “accomplishing their difficult task of punishing the guilty, of destroying the evil that threatens the free world and of restoring justice and peace to this critical moment in the history of humanity.” He also asked that “all our courts . . . might always be touched by that love and respect for the dignity of every person—we believe from the moment of conception to the moment God calls us home. . . .”

In an internal pastoral letter in 1975, the U.S. Catholic bishops outlined an ambitious plan for controlling judicial appointments and influencing Congress and other national and state political offices. In his book, *Catholic Bishops in American Politics*, Catholic writer Timothy A. Byrne called the bishops’ plan the “most focused and aggressive political leadership” ever exerted by the American Catholic hierarchy. That plan called for involving twenty major Catholic organizations such as Knights of Columbus, the Catholic Press Association, the Catholic Physicians Guild, and the Catholic Lawyers Association to establish structures “to activate support for political programs.”

Catholic lawyers and judges have been organized in the St. Thomas More Society, which now includes national, county, and state societies. It has among its functions the promotion of the Red Mass and the influencing of judicial appointments. There is an underlying assumption that law and morality began with the Roman Catholic Church and divine revelation.

Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia is undoubtedly the More Society’s best-known spokesman. He not only attends national and some state Red Mass celebrations, but speaks on occasion to those lawyers who meet after the Mass. In a formal address to a Catholic audience in Fort Wayne, Indiana, on October 14, 2001, following a Red Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Scalia was reported by *The National Catholic Register* as saying, “We attorneys and intellectuals who don’t like to be regarded as unsophisticated can have no greater [role] model than St. Thomas More.”

Speaking of the beheaded advisor to King Henry VIII, the Register indicated that “the saint died because he refused to recognize a king’s authority as being higher than the Pope’s, and his conviction was rejected by society, friends, and ‘even his wife,’ Scalia said” (National Catholic Register, November 4, 2001). Scalia, in effect, was promoting the idea that papal policy is superior to the U.S. Constitution and secular government.

What actually happened during the reign of Henry VIII was an Act of Parliament in 1534, known as the Act of Succession, that forbade all payments by the government to the Pope, and ruled that all bishops were to be elected rather than appointed by the Pope. The recognition of papal authority was done away (Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1943, 404).

Henry and each of his successors were declared the only supreme head in earth of the Church of England. This “was not understood by either the King or Parliament as conferring on the King spiritual leadership such as ordination, the administration of the sacraments and the like, but in all else it practically put the King in the place of the Pope” (Ibid.). The Lutheran Reformation had already taken place, and in 1535 John Calvin was safely in Protestant Basel. So it was not just England that rejected papal authority.

Although there were various Protestant revolts against the Papacy, the one of England was less a doctrinal revolt than a question of supremacy. Sir Thomas More was willing to accept the Act of Succession but unwilling to take the oath of supremacy to the King. He saw this as a matter of conscience.



He was convicted of treason on the basis of perjured evidence and executed.

What Scalia did not mention in his commendation of More is that England's rejection of the papal authority was timely, since Pope Paul III in July, 1542, "reorganized the Inquisition largely on the Spanish model, on a universal scale, though of course its actual establishment took place only where it had the support of friendly civil authorities" (Ibid.). So England was spared.

One St. Thomas More Society in an official statement says, "The duty of a Catholic lawyer is to remain faithful to Jesus Christ, His Church *and its teaching at all times* [emphasis added] despite the personal consequences" (Mission statement of the St. Thomas More Society of Orange County, California).

If this reflects the position of all Thomas More Societies or is the model for its various members, it is essential to note the 1995 Encyclical of Pope John Paul II, known as *Evangelium Vitae*. In that encyclical, the Pope specifically called abortion "contrary to the Law of God" and said, "It is never licit to obey it or . . . vote for it." Since there is no statement against abortion in the Bible, the "Law of God" is proclaimed by the Pope and therefore binding on those who place loyalty to the Pope ahead of secular law and democratic judgment. The Pope specifically wrote, "Democracy cannot be idolized to the point of making it a substitute for morality."

What this may mean is that Thomas More Societies are expected to place papal teaching or mandates ahead of secular or constitutional government. The mission statement of one county Society also expects its members to participate in monthly meetings and "encourage interfaith understanding," as well as "to attend and support the Red Mass" (Ibid.).

It is obvious that the purpose of the Red Mass and the St. Thomas More Society is not only to promote the Red Mass as a Catholic cultural event in the United States, but also make papal decisions influence the law of the land. The chief resistance to such influence comes from progressive Catholics who oppose patriarchal rule and support women's rights. Most Protestant denominations are silent under the influence of the ecumenical discussions instituted by the Vatican.

In the case of the Southern Baptist Convention, there is political acceptance of rightwing Catholic politics and patriarchy. The relatively few humanists and atheists are also silent. So far as this author knows, no other analysis of the Red Mass has appeared in any major periodical. ■

## Turtles Do

(continued from page 31)

Dr. W.T. Conner, "It's better not to know so much than to know so much that isn't so."

If I see "intelligent design" in the marvels of the human eye and accept the possibility that God used billions of years of natural selection to perfect this incredibly complex and altogether marvelous work, then who is the atheistic naturalist to put me down and gainsay what I see or who is the Creationist to put me down or gainsay my willing acceptance of the idea that God's method of creation could be the method of natural selection?

Many, many books have been written about all of this. Even more articles have flooded learned journals about it, especially in recent years. The Public Broadcasting System recently presented a seven-part series entitled "Evolution" with a final section on "What about God?" Furthermore, the New York Review of Books recently carried a long two-part essay, "Saving Us from Darwin," by Frederick Crews, a literary scholar from the University of California at Berkeley, in which he intemperately attacks Christians and Christianity while haughtily displaying an indefensible bias toward a Godless creation and a Godless world-view. The Christian Century responded by carrying a substantive article by Boston College professor Stephen J. Pope on "Christ and Darwin" in which he countered much of the PBS material and refuted the Crews essay's "emotionally driven materialistic ideology to steamroll distinctions, to propound grossly inaccurate historical generalizations, to mistake nuance and subtlety for evasion and rationalization, to introduce ad hominem accusations in place of reasoned arguments, to equate Sunday School catechism with systematic theology, and to beguile people into thinking they face a forced choice between two simplistically formulated and mutually exclusive options—Christ or Darwin."

I think it would be better if the whole lot would bask in the winter sunshine "while it is day, ere the night cometh."

Turtles do.

Now, if I've disturbed you a little, I'm glad.

I'm too old to mess around with things that aren't controversial. ■

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# A Fine Balance

Robinton Mistry, New York: Vintage, 1995. \$15.

*Book Review By Darold H. Morgan*

President Emeritus of the Annuity Board of the SBC

At the request of the editor here is a review of a novel, spotlighted on the Oprah TV show, a first for the Christian Ethics Journal. A good place to begin is to compliment Oprah Winfrey and her phenomenally successful Book Club, an outgrowth of her television program. Any encouragement to read in this age is welcomed when much of television has all but eliminated reading for many. Then comes this extraordinary list of books which are recommended by Oprah's Book Club. Great numbers of folks all around the country are responding and reading. By no means are all of these recommendations suitable for church libraries, but most of them are and some merit serious consideration by serious readers.

Mistry's novel of life in India is one such book. It is an intriguing story, primarily of four diverse characters caught up in the churning events in India in the 1970s when colonialism was ending and the internecine religious wars were producing repercussions felt far and wide. News headlines today constantly call attention to events involving India and Pakistan. India is heralded as the world's largest democracy, but in the shadows of this part of the world are reconfiguring influences which mandate serious understanding.

So any effort to move to a more precise understanding about India, especially by Westerners, is a step in the right direction if for no other reason than the demographer's conclusion that in our lifetime India in all likelihood will become the most populous nation on earth. Add to that the obvious fact that there has been a migration of great numbers of both Indians and Pakistanis to America, both for education and employment. Practically every center of higher education in the United States has surprising numbers of these enterprising students who have brought with them their culture and religion which clamor for understanding.

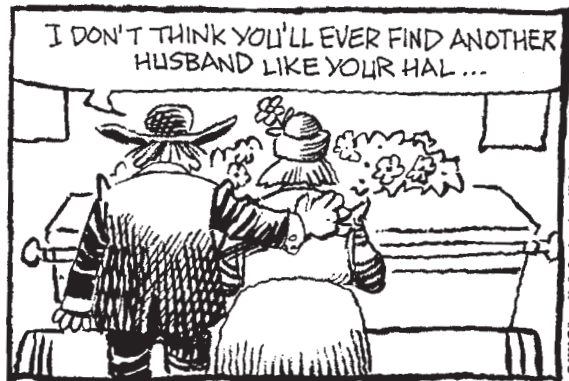
Uniquely, reading this novel will assist the perceptive Christian who is aware that the missionary imperative is now on our doorstep and not ten thousand miles away.

The novel is in its structure, plot, and characterizations far from the usual western "happy-ending" format. The problems of these four primary figures in the story carry the weight of the centuries of Indian culture, religion, and conflicts. There are contradictions too deep to overcome. The poverty is too grinding. The caste distinctions are so massive that even the author, who is deeply grounded in these forms, must wrestle agonizingly with the demands. The strength of Mistry's writing is in its sheer realism, combined with a powerful, exciting, and painful story which balances realism and tragedy with memorable effect.

There are ethical issues of massive proportions both in the time and locale of the story, issues which are alive and provocative now. One of these is the religious conflict. Hinduism and Islam are still at dagger points in this part of the world. There has been a most interesting revival of both faiths, particularly in what many are calling "a fundamentalistic interpretation." Seeing this conflict from the poverty-stricken side of Indian life is a very brutal way of reacting to this challenge.

The position of women is another major ethical issue in the book. A key figure in the story is the widow who has to face almost daily the pressures of her life in this culture. That the novel notes some progress toward a more equitable life for women is encouraging, but there is a long, arduous and torturous path ahead.

The unusual Indian caste system is an almost undecipherable problem for the American mind. In the novel, there



is encouragement, as the key issue in the story is the effort of the Untouchables to seek a better way of life. One of the unwritten conclusions of the book is a lesson for Westerners—we must try to understand better the religions and cultures of India.

With an unusual subtlety, Mistry brushes his writing with an introduction to the inevitable clashes of western values with an Asiatic culture. How this all will turn out is yet to be decided.

Among our readers are perhaps some who relegate fiction below their list of preferred reading. Here is a fictional story which merits serious consideration, perhaps to the level of required reading. ■

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## A New Religious America: How a “Christian Country” Has Now Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation

Diana L. Eck, San Francisco: Harper, 2001. 386 pp. \$27.

*Book Review by Larry L. McSwain, Interim Pastor  
Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida*

The publication of the most definitive book on religious pluralism in America just before the violence of September 11, 2001, could hardly be more timely. In this exceptional work by Diana L. Eck, Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard University and Director of the Pluralism Project at Harvard, the demographic and religious changes brought about by the increased immigration since changes in Federal laws in 1965 are traced with clarity and impact.

The first chapter is an overview of the religious impact of explosive immigration from previously limited ethnic and cultural groups in the American context. The result is an Asian population growth of 43 percent and Hispanic growth of 38.8 percent in the decade of the nineties bringing a multi-ethnic diversity unknown in any previous history of the country. The emergence of new religious practices have sprung up both within the traditional Christian denominational milieu and externally in the forms of new communities of Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh and Indian practitioners. The conclusion is that “The United States has become the most religiously diverse nation on earth” (p. 4). Thus, one no longer can speak of Herberg’s *Protestant, Catholic and Jew* of the 1950’s, but rather of “Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh” as well as vibrant Native American religiosity.

What Eck is able to do is document the extent of this change with multiple descriptions of the variety of new centers of worship across the whole of the American landscape.

From Cleveland’s new massive Islamic Center at the central exchange of expressways of its southern suburbs to Buddhist temples in neighborhoods of Los Angeles as well as growing non-Christian communities in Nashville and Oklahoma City, the change is pervasive and inclusive of all regions of the country.

The book is a helpful historical analysis as the development of each of the major faith traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam are documented. More lively, however, are the extensive description of personal participation in the worship, educational and community development activities of many individual communities of new faiths in multiple communities of the nation. Researchers in the Pluralism Project have put faces, names and places to the descriptions of religious pluralism and one can learn much about the practices of many faith groups in these pages.

Of more concern to the Christian ethicist are the multiple issues arising from this new reality for traditional, majority church leaders. How does this new pluralism impact the historic practice of separation of church and state when the issues are no longer whether Christianity will find public expression in governmental entities, but whether Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh, Wiccan, Native American, and other representative will have equal place in the public square—military chaplains, prison worship expression, prayers in the Congress, and public recognition of religious symbols? The cries for religious expression in the public schools make the question of which religion a monumental one in many communities.

Of equal significance is how the *E Pluribus Unum* of American civil religion can be lived out. In contrast to historic patterns of exclusion or assimilation, Eck argues strongly for pluralism as the “oneness shaped by the encounter of the many, the engagement of the many.”

Her pluralism applies as well to her approach to interaction among the religious. A devout Methodist from Montana, she is clear in her own Christian heritage and convictions. However, they stand in dialogue with and not against religious pluralism. Her scathing analysis of official Southern Baptist efforts at evangelism of non-Christians as misguided and misinformed will not be appreciated by many evangelicals. However, her approach is a challenge for evangelicals to think carefully about their strategies of witness and conversation. Surely such efforts must be informed by knowledge from the “inside” of such groups. This is a challenge for all Christians to seek to understand their non-Christian neighbors.

Less apparent in the book is the importance for Christian leaders to understand the impact of ethnicity in their own communities of faith. With growing Asian, Hispanic, and Middle Eastern Christian congregations, an understanding of the impact of culture in reshaping religious practice is insight needed by all concerned about a church of all peoples. ■

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

## Turtles Do

*By Foy Valentine, Founding Editor*

A certain reptilian somnolence engulfs me, body and soul, in the warm sunshine of a mid-winter afternoon. My study is on the west side of our house; and a wall of glass, twelve feet by eight feet, provides the greatest possible exposure to the output of the sun, the smallish nuclear furnace which sustains all the life there is on this third rock out from the fire. Delicious. Simply delicious.

Turtles, which crave this very same warmth, will crowd themselves onto a floating log and there, side by side, soak up this wonderful sunshine. They are responding to the same prurient yearning for warmth and light that compels me to keep returning to this marvelous place in my study. For all the tea in China, however, I wouldn't tump myself off into the cold water like the turtles do when startled. I just want to be left alone on my special log, soaking up the sunshine.

Are we kin to turtles? Why are our nervous systems extraordinarily similar to those of frogs? Why do placental creatures like female humans have 28-day cycles of ovulation, corresponding precisely to the waxing and waning of the moon, the moon with its magic light, the moon with its magic spells, the moon with its magic tides? Why must a human being stay very, very close to the norm of 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit in body temperature in order to stay alive? Why must we humans adhere very closely to our natural circadian rhythms of 24 hours, the time it takes our globe to rotate, or be seriously maladjusted and ultimately unable to function? Why have the human genome projects determined that human beings and chimpanzees have some 98 percent of the very same DNA? Why, indeed? Hm-m-m-m-m-m.

In recent times considerable amounts of energy, time, and money have been expended in pressing for what is generally called Creationism on the one hand or what is generally called Darwinian evolution on the other hand. Creationism has many faces and a wide variety of followers but may be generally understood to mean a world-view based on a literal interpretation of the method thought to have been used by God to create the world and all that is in it, the universe and all that is in it. Creationists and Intelligent Design adherents distinguish themselves from atheistic rationalists who pooh-pooh the notion of “intelligent design” and are adamant in refusing to allow God a place in their scheme of things. They want natural selection without God to be the explanation of creation and are just as rigid and pridefully arrogant in pressing for their “without God” beliefs as Creationists and Intelligent Design people can be in pressing for their “with God” doctrines.

Well, I just don't think I have a dog in this fight. I think I choose not to get caught up in this either-or debate where each side despises the other, denigrates the other, castigates the other, and treats the other with vitriolic contempt if not genuine hatred.

Come, let us reason together.

If God chose to use the slow method of evolution for the creating of the world and the universe, I cannot understand why it should confound the Creationists or the Intelligent Design people. Is God's arm shortened so that He can not reach across eons of time and infinite space? Is His work schedule strictured so that He is required to behave Himself according to our puny definitions and formulations and charts and diagrams and calendars? Are we to think that He must have acted in creation so as to protect the empires or enterprises or theses of either naturalistic rationalists or rationalistic supernaturalists whose special turfs both seem quite prepared to fight and die for?

I think not!

Must God Almighty's “day” mentioned in Genesis be defined by our dime store watches?

Give me a break.

If God chose to use natural selection as one of His tools in His work of creation, what atheist can prove scientifically that He did not do so? Who knows what the finger of God stirring around in the primordial ooze could have started?

It is a faith-based conviction for me that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; and I don't care a fig if He used natural selection across eons of time to do it. It is an anti-faith-based conviction for the no-God naturalist that God did not do it. I like my faith better than his anti-faith. He likes his anti-faith better than my faith. I like my acceptance of Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God . . .” better than his plaintive “In the beginning . . .”

Why fuss about it? We are disagreed. It is neither productive nor profitable for us to keep beating this horse.

When God said, “Let there be light,” it is unlikely that He said it in English with an East Texas accent as I would. Most scientific theorists now seem to be inclined to think that time and space and the universe and all that is in it started with a “Big Bang” some 15 billion years ago. Exactly *how* God did this, I have to tell you I just do not know; and exactly *how* He struck the match that kindled the fire in the sun and started the light to burning, I do not know. But I am remembering the wise words of my old theology professor,

*(continued on page 28)*

# 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.

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