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

Baptist Ministers and Taxes—W.W.J.D.? *Joe E. Trull*

Carter: America's Best Former President *Tom Teepen*

An Analysis of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 *Russell H. Dilday*

The Time Harvey Leach Got Sick *Hal Haralson*

THREE VIEWPOINTS ON CLONING AND BIOETHICS

A Matter of Life and Death: The Biotech Revolution *David P. Gushee*

The Stem Cell Research and Cloning Controversy *John M. Swomley*

Conception Is Not Cloning *Wilton H. Bunch*

Space Available *Lawrence Webb*

Is Homophobia the Same As Racism/Sexism? *George Yancey*

BOOK REVIEWS:

The War Against America's Public Schools *Frosty Troy*

Cotton Patch for the Kingdom *Robert Parham*

Confronting the Controversies *Jack Glasgow*

Ich Glaube än Gott *Foy Valentine*

KUDZU Cartoons *Doug Marlette*

Baptist Ministers and Taxes—W.W.J.D.?

By Joe E. Trull, Editor

A Baptist minister is making news. At issue is the “parsonage allowance” for clergy, which is sheltered from federal income tax. Pastor Rick Warren of the 18,000 member Saddleback Community Church in California is depicted as a hero by most religious newspapers for “fighting for an important constitutional principle that keeps the state from harassing churches” (*Christianity Today*, May 21, 2002, 37).

In no way do I diminish the importance of the housing allowance for ministers and the larger constitutional question of whether this involves Congress in “an establishment of religion.” J. Brent Walker of the Baptist Joint Committee adequately explores this issue (*Report from the Capitol*, April 17, 2002, 3).

Totally overlooked by every article I have read is an equally important question—what this case may say about the lifestyle of ministers.

As a Baptist pastor for 30 years, a teacher of Christian ethics since 1985, and co-author of *Ministerial Ethics*, the question of the minister and money has been a pertinent topic. A basic ethical dilemma is the genuine desire of ministers to live a Christian lifestyle in an affluent society that idolizes material success!

One of my hottest class discussions arose when a student asked, “A minister in my city drives a Porche—anything wrong with that?” We had just noted the simple lifestyle of Jesus, who “had nowhere to lay his head” (Mt. 8:20) and possessed only five articles of clothing when he died (John 19:23). To the question “What Would Jesus Do?” was the reply, “What Should I Do?” A few Tony Campolo quotes added fuel to the fiery interchange.

Most students defended the minister who owned a \$75,000 car, stating members of his congregation were quite wealthy and he was only living at their level. Another student noted the pastor didn’t buy the car, but it was a gift from the church. As it turned out, two Baptist ministers in this large southern city owned Porches!

About this same time, the well-known pastor (former SBC President) of a mega-church in Texas was investigated for failing to pay property taxes on his expensive home. The discovery came when the Sunday Supplement featured his home in an article, “Homes of the Rich and Famous.” When

Tax Authorities read the story, they realized property taxes had never been paid on this property.

Investigation revealed the church bought the home for the pastor, giving a percentage of the value to the pastor each year. Taxes should have been paid for several years since the minister presently owned 95% of the manse. To add to the irony of a minister owning one of the more affluent homes in this city, church attorneys sought to evade some of the taxes because of the statute of limitations!

Which brings me back to the present story of the California pastor, whom I admire as a preacher and a church leader. The details of the case reveal in 1995 Pastor Warren deducted \$79,999 for actual housing costs—the IRS challenged the deduction, claiming the “fair market value” (rental per year) would allow only \$59,479. The concerns I raise, which most publications seem to have overlooked, are these:

1. The tax break for ministers (also for military officers) is a privilege, not a right. Ministers should be grateful for this deduction and also understand the government that provided it, has the right to interpret and even remove it.
2. The housing allowance originated when most churches owned parsonages. Ministers then would have difficulty, especially with their meager salaries, paying additional taxes on this church owned property.
3. This tax law allows ministers to exclude what for most is about 25% of their taxable income; thus most ministers pay income taxes on the remaining 75%. The law was not intended to allow or encourage ministers to claim most of their income as non-taxable (Warren claimed 80% in 1995—100% earlier).
4. Most significantly for Christian ministers, how can our lifestyle in affluent America reflect the example of Jesus. If I live in a luxurious home that only the upper 5% in America can afford, and I work to avoid paying taxes on my six figure salary, what does that say about my values? What does this also say to the majority of ministers who make less than adequate salaries and do pay their fair share of taxes?

(continued on page 22)

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Carter: America's Best Former President

By Tom Teepen, Columnist
Cox Newspapers Atlanta, GA

Former President Jimmy Carter threw himself a little media party recently in Atlanta to mark the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Carter Center there.

Created to provide a discreet bolt hole where edgy disputants could work out their conflicts, a la Carter's famous success with Israel and Egypt at Camp David, the center instead has sprawled into a multi-tasking good-deeds machine.

Its health component is on the verge of eliminating the cruelly debilitating Guinea worm and river blindness diseases that are banes of many poor countries. Carter teams are the gold standard for certifying elections in iffy circumstances as honest and fair—or for blowing the whistle when some nation tried to pull a fast one.

The center also sustains the human rights and human development themes of the Carter presidency. And pursues the mental health concerns Rosalynn Carter brought to the White House.

In short, here's more evidence in support of the proposition—by now so widely accepted as to be a cliché—that Jimmy Carter is our greatest ex-president ever. (Who's second? Probably John Quincy Adams, with his distinguished post presidential career in Congress.)

Some of the praise for Carter's post presidency is at the expense of the reputation of his presidency, by way implied—and sometimes gloatingly explicit—in contrast with its supposed failure. Indeed, his own party sometimes steps around the Carter presidency as if it were something untoward on the sidewalk.

That's another cliché and long overdue for rethinking.

In addition to the Camp David Accords, Carter negotiated the SALT II arms treaty with the Soviets. He initiated diplomatic relations with China, consolidating Richard Nixon's breakthrough. His emphasis on human rights brought a literally refreshing purpose to U.S. foreign policy, especially effective in democratizing Latin American politics.

In a Herculean political labor, Carter wrestled the essential Panama Canal Treaty into place, resolving an issue that was building toward a major crisis in U.S. Latin relations.

A better than average politician—after all, he was elected state senator, governor and president—Carter was nonetheless, and unfortunately, sometimes a better engineer.

More successful at federal deregulation than any other president—in energy, communications, and transportation—his very success put him athwart his party's liberal wing. Ted Kennedy became a particular pain in the neck because of Carter's apostasies.

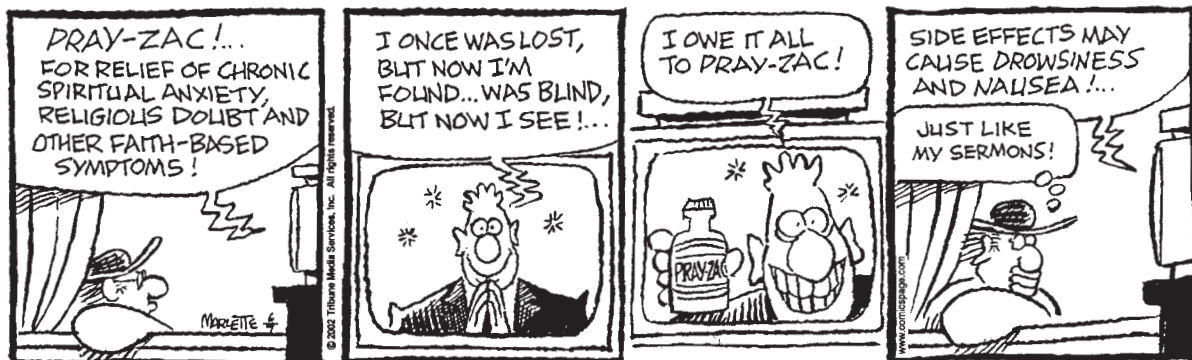
And when polling showed the public suffering the civil blues—a “malaise,” as he described it—Carter had the singularly bad idea of saying so, making matters arguably worse.

Carter, too, may have been our unluckiest president. There was no way to foresee or prevent the fall of the shah of Iran and the resulting capture of U.S. Embassy personnel as hostages. Ditto the Arab oil boycott.

Carter at least got the hostages out alive when that was touch and go, and the energy policy he put into place was the beginning of the end of the boycott.

A great ex-president, Carter was not a great president, but he was a good one. There are worse parlays. ■

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An Analysis of The Baptist Faith and Message 2000

By Russell H. Dilday

Retired Distinguished Professor of Homiletics, Truett Seminary and
Special Assistant to the President Baylor University
Former President Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Editor's Note: Adapted from a chapter in the forthcoming book, *Stand With Christ: Why Missionaries Can't Sign the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002) 800-747-3016.

The 293 “delegates” who gathered in Augusta, Georgia in May, 1845, to form the Southern Baptist Convention, made it clear that their new organization was focused on missions and education, not on doctrinal uniformity. Most delegates would probably have agreed on the basic principles expressed in the New Hampshire Confession of Faith (written 12 years earlier), yet they refused to adopt it, stating: “We have constructed for our basis no new creed, acting in this matter upon a Baptist aversion for all creeds except the Bible.” (W.W. Barnes, *The Southern Baptist Convention*, 118)

For 80 years, this non-creedal stance prevailed. No official convention confession of faith was officially adopted until 1925, when to settle a controversy, the Southern Baptist Convention reluctantly adopted *The Baptist Faith and Message*, prepared by a committee chaired by E. Y. Mullins. Basing it largely on The New Hampshire Confession of 1833, the framers carefully pointed out that the statement was merely a “confession” of what most messengers at that annual meeting understood to be the general beliefs of Baptists. The preamble made clear that this “confession” was not intended to be a creed, nor was it to be used to enforce conformity of belief: “Confessions are only guides in interpretation, having no authority over the conscience . . . they are not to be used to hamper freedom of thought or investigation in other realms of life” (Quoted by Jesse C. Fletcher, *The Southern Baptist Convention*, 143).

The 1925 *Baptist Faith and Message* was approved by a vast majority of the messengers, but as historian W.W. Barnes reported, “It was received by the churches with a loud outburst of silence.” Southern Baptists largely ignored it because they rightly understood it to be a non-binding expression of one group of messengers meeting in one session of one annual convention. It might be useful as a consensus statement of widely held convictions, but it had no authority whatsoever.

Thirty-eight years later, it was adopted again after minor editorial revisions. *The Baptist Faith and Message 1963* (as it was called) was adopted by the Convention, but it was still circulated as an incomplete and fallible consensus of opinion. “They are statements of religious convictions, drawn from the Scriptures, and are not to be used to hamper freedom of thought or investigation in other realms of life” (*Baptist Faith*

and Message 1963, Preamble).

Until recently, the one confession of faith adopted in 1925 and slightly updated in 1963 was deemed sufficient. However, in the two decades from 1970-1990, a radical shift took place. In the late 1970s, a well-organized, well-financed cadre of ultra-conservatives launched a crusade to win control of the Southern Baptist Convention. Their secular political strategy worked. By the 1990s the fundamentalist organizers had put themselves into positions of leadership and control of convention decision-making. During the past ten years, these new SBC leaders have radically changed the denomination's institutions and agencies, and they are now solidifying their political successes by rewriting the convention's history from their perspective and by revising the convention's faith statement to reflect their narrow ultra-conservative beliefs.

In 1998 and again in 2000, high profile personalities in the “take-over” party of the convention engineered significant revisions in the Southern Baptist Convention's confession of faith, which had served the convention well for 153 years. This revised statement of faith, called *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 (BFM2000)*, is being used as an official creed to enforce loyalty to the party in power. To refuse is to risk isolation or even expulsion from the denominational circle.

POSITIVE FACTORS IN THE 2000 REVISION

Admittedly, there are some positive elements in *BFM2000* that should be acknowledged.

1. To the surprise of many, the committee did not insert the controversial language of “inerrancy” into the section on Scripture, which would have further divided the constituency. It does seem curious, however, that since so much of the twenty-year controversy centered on enforcing the use of the term “inerrant” to describe the nature of the Bible, it was now apparently deemed unnecessary.

2. Neither did the revisers insert more restrictive views of dispensational eschatology, as some had feared. During the fundamentalist attack on the convention, seminary professors who did not affirm dispensational eschatology were criticized as liberals and were cited as examples of why the take-over was necessary. But, again, this was now not consid-

ered important enough to include. (It is telling, however, to notice that many of the recent faculty additions at Southwestern Seminary, including the new provost, are graduates of Dallas Theological Seminary, a recognized center of dispensational interpretation.)

3. At the last minute, following growing criticism of its deletion in their first draft, the committee did strengthen the document by reinserting a statement that Baptists honor the principles of soul competency and the priesthood of believers. However, critics point out that their substitution of the plural form “believers” distorts the true meaning of the “priesthood of each believer” (see “Troubling Factors” number 2 below).

4. The new document does address specific issues that the revisers consider to be of contemporary concern such as sexual immorality, adultery, homosexuality, pornography, and abortion (Section XV). However, the inclusion of such current specifics to the exclusion of others can also be seen as a weakness (see number 9 below).

5. It defines the new version of the SBC more specifically. If there remains any ambiguity about the future direction of the SBC under its current hard-line leadership, this document unflinchingly clears the air.

6. Some editorial changes (i.e. gender-inclusive language) improve the form of the statement.

TROUBLING FACTORS IN BFM 2000

1. The deletion of the Christocentric criterion for interpretation of Scripture.

BFM1963 reads, “The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ.” *BFM2000* substituted, “All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is himself the focus of divine revelation.”

BFM2000 also deleted from *BFM1963*, “Baptists are a people who profess a living faith. This faith is rooted and grounded in Jesus Christ who is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. Therefore, the sole authority for faith and practice among Baptists is Jesus Christ whose will is revealed in the Holy Scriptures.”

This revision discards a very important hermeneutical principle. Baptists (and most evangelicals) have valued what is called the “theological principal” of biblical interpretation. This principle teaches that the Bible is a book of faith, not just history or philosophy. Therefore, the Bible cannot be fully understood from the outside by grammar, logic, rhetoric, and history alone. It must be understood from its center—Jesus Christ. This biblical center yields itself best to those who have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ and whose interpretations are enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

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This “theological principle,” expressed in the Christocentric language of *BFM1963* declares that the guiding key to biblical interpretation is the Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him as a criterion, or standard, we understand the Bible to be unified, self-consistent, and coherent. Jesus said, “The Scriptures . . . bear witness to me” (John 5:39). Therefore, we are to interpret the Old Testament and the rest of the Bible in the light of the life and teachings of Jesus in the New Testament, illuminated by our own direct experience with the living Christ. Martin Luther was right in insisting that the Bible must always be understood from its center, its heart, its Christ.

“All our talk about God must be anchored in what we know of him in Christ; otherwise, we shall arrive at an unworthy view of God. Why do we say of our God that he is love and not hate? Because of what we see in Christ. . . . if we

do not begin from the holy love of God made known to us in Christ, we shall find ourselves in difficulties when we come to fill out our understanding of God” (Allen Sell, quoted by Roger Olsen, “Theology for the Rest of Us,” *Christianity Today*, April 22, 2002, 68-69).

The choice to delete this Christological principal of biblical interpretation is, to many, the most serious flaw in *BFM2000*. It appears to elevate the Bible above Jesus and ignores the fact that He is not only “the focus of divine revelation” but is also Lord of the Bible. Critics say: “I’ll bow down to King Jesus, but I will never bow down to King James. This amounts to nothing less than idolatry. It is pure bibliolatry.”

The revisers defended their deletion in their press release of June 5, 2000: “This statement (Jesus is the criterion) was controversial because some have used it to drive a wedge between the incarnate word and the written word and to deny the truthfulness of certain passages” (*ABP*, June 5, 2000). Ken Hemphill explained the deletion of the Christocentric criterion, calling it “a loophole to avoid the plain teaching of certain biblical texts which persists among moderates . . . it is used by some unprincipled Baptist scholars to ignore difficult texts which they did not believe to reflect the character of Jesus” (*Baptist Standard*, February 26, 2001, 3).

But surely this crucial Christological principle treasured by Baptists and other evangelical conservatives over the years should not be abandoned just because some misguided interpreters are said to have abused it. Reflecting on this change, an editorial in *Christianity Today* claimed the revised confession “is poorer without the rich Christocentric language of the earlier statement. Jesus Christ is surely the center of Scripture as well as its Lord. One can affirm this while also

welcoming the clear affirmation of the Bible as God's infallible, revealed word" (*Christianity Today*, August 7, 2000, 36).

2. The diminishing of soul competency and the priesthood of the believer.

"Soul competency" is the view that the redemptive and revelatory work of Jesus Christ allows an individual believer to go directly to God through Christ without any human mediator. "The priesthood of the believer" is the view that through Christ each believer—both clergy and laity—is a priest, responsible to God for interpreting and following the Bible and for interceding on behalf of others. Both E.Y. Mullins and Herschel Hobbs named "soul competency" the most distinctive doctrine among Baptists. But Southern Seminary President Al Mohler, a major voice, if not the primary composer on the revision committee, has recently denounced these two historic Baptist convictions—especially as a previous Southern Seminary President, E.Y. Mullins, espoused them.

In his Founder's Day address at the seminary, March 30, 2000, Mohler said that Mullin's emphasis on soul competency has "infected" the SBC with an "autonomous individualism" that undermines biblical authority to this day. He accused President Mullins of steering the SBC off course by making personal Christian experience more important than biblical authority. He warned that soul competency "serves as an acid dissolving religious authority, congregationalism, confessionalism, and mutual theological accountability" (*Southern Seminary Magazine*, June, 2000).

An even stronger condemnation of these two distinctive Baptist doctrines appeared in the Winter 1999 issue of the seminary's theological journal written by Sean Michael Lucas, associate director Southern seminary's Center for the Study of the SBC:

For over 70 years, Southern Baptists have harvested the shallow discipleship and vapid theology that resulted from sowing Mullins' theological seeds of experience. It is time to return to the founders of the SBC trained in the hardy doctrinal tradition of the Princeton theology.

Following this line of thought, *BFM2000* at first deleted the following references to these doctrines in *BFM1963*:

Baptists emphasize the soul's competency before God, freedom of religion, and the priesthood of the believer. However, this emphasis should not be interpreted to mean that there is an absence of certain definite doctrines that Baptists believe, cherish, and with which they have been and are now closely identified.

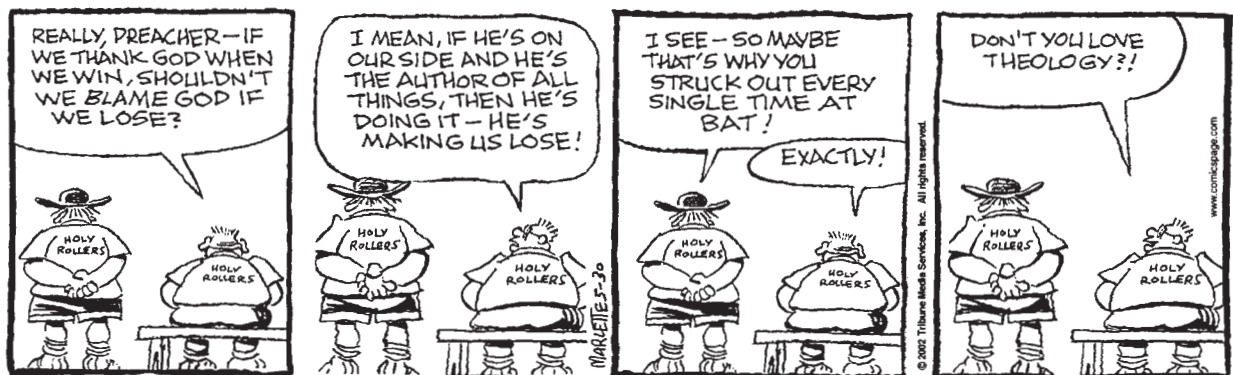
But when they saw this deletion, many Baptists raised an outcry of disapproval. So, less than an hour before the report was brought to the convention for approval, the following was grudgingly reinserted: "*We honor the principles of soul competency and the priesthood of believers, affirming together both our liberty in Christ and our accountability to each other under the Word of God.*"

This last-minute reversal was at first welcomed by critics, but they soon discovered that the reinserted wording had been subtly changed. The committee substituted the plural "priesthood of believers" in the place of the singular form in *BFM1963*, "priesthood of the believer." In so doing, the revisers again expressed their mistrust of personal, individual experience, focusing instead on accountability to an approved denominational belief system. This in essence rejects the historic Baptist doctrine of the priesthood of each individual believer (singular), replacing it with a more Reformed doctrine of the priesthood of believers (plural). Al Mohler defended the reinterpretation: "It is dangerous to say the priesthood of the believer. It is not just that we stand alone; it is that we stand together—and we stand together under the authority of God's word" (*Baptist Standard* July 17, 2000).

Other defenders of the revised plural form say the singular wording of *BFM1963* leads to "a kind of private interpretation which, while adhering to an ambiguously crafted 'criterion' of Jesus Christ, eviscerates the biblical doctrines" (*Biblical Recorder*, July 29, 2000, p.3).

But one Baptist editor countered:

While I am content to stand before God under the authority of Scripture, I can do so whether I'm alone or in a crowd of all 15.8 million Southern Baptists. While I appreciate the committee's efforts to at least partially restore a pair of key Baptist



doctrines, I am confident it is not dangerous to be a lone priest/believer in the presence of Almighty God through the power of his Holy Spirit. (*Baptist Standard*, July 17, 2000).

3. The trend toward creedalism.

BFM2000 deleted the following passage from *BFM1963* that the 1963 framers hoped would protect the confession from becoming a creed that enforces doctrinal uniformity: “Such statements have never been regarded as complete, infallible statements of faith, nor as official creeds carrying mandatory authority” (Preamble).

Furthermore, the revisers inserted in *BFM2000* language never before used in a Southern Baptist Confession of Faith: “Baptist churches, associations, and general bodies have adopted confessions of faith as a witness to the world, and as *instruments of doctrinal accountability*. We are not embarrassed to state before the world that these are doctrines we hold precious and as *essential to the Baptist tradition of faith and practice*” (Introduction, *BFM2000*).

Jim Dennison, the pastor of Park Cities Baptist Church, Dallas, proclaimed, “For the first time, the denominational faith statement is intended to be an ‘**instrument of doctrinal accountability**.’ For whom? By whom? . . . And for the first time, this faith statement is said to be ‘**essential to the Baptist tradition of faith and practice**.’ Essential for what? For whom? Simply put, a document which elevates such a human statement of faith to this level of authority cannot be understood to be Baptist” (Sermon, July 15, 2000).

Already *BFM2000* is being used improperly to restrict representation on SBC committees and boards, and to measure the orthodoxy of associations and local churches. Already, home and foreign missionaries are being pressured to endorse the new statement or face uncertain consequences. Already, SBC representatives are trying to enforce state conventions to comply with the new directions of the SBC by pressuring the states to adopt *BFM2000*.

It is no surprise then to see this creedal coercion now being aimed at local autonomous congregations. Headlines are being made in Florida and North Carolina where Baptist associations are threatening local churches with dismissal if they do not endorse the *BFM2000*. This should raise the hackles of every true Baptist!

Two related questions arise from the concern over creedalism: (1) “Should seminary professors be required to sign this and any future revised doctrinal statements?” Seminaries accredited by the Association of Theological Schools are expected to have a statement of faith as an objective standard by which they evaluate the teaching of professors. The institution’s faith statement serves to protect professors from unfounded accusations of heresy. Before the political take-over of the convention, all six of the SBC seminaries had adopted *BFM1963* as their doctrinal guideline. (The *Abstract of Principles* was an additional statement of faith at Southern Seminary.)

Now, after 153 years of satisfactory reliance on it as a guideline, two quick revisions have been made in *BFM1963*. Should current teachers who were contracted to teach under the 1963 guidelines be forced to comply with the 1998 and now the 2000 revisions? It would seem unethical, if not illegal, to breach a contract and require such compliance. While new teachers employed after the revisions were made could legitimately fall under the new guidelines, those already contracted should be “grandfathered” and allowed to continue under *BFM1963*.

(2) Should those who are being forced to affirm the new doctrinal statement do so “as a matter of conscience” or instead, as in the past, should they be asked “to teach in accordance with the statement?”

Traditionally, SBC seminary faculty members were expected to “teach in accordance with and not contrary to the statement of faith.” This language was used intentionally instead of more restrictive words requiring teachers to “endorse the statement as their personal belief and commitment.” The latter wording would, of course, make the faith statement a creed, violating individual conscience.

As it was under the original wording, professors might have certain disagreements with the statement, but they could agree nevertheless to teach in accordance with it. Of course, if the gap between a teacher’s conscience and the adopted faith statement became so great that the teacher could not in good faith and honesty continue to teach in accordance with the statement, then the teacher would be expected to leave, or disciplinary action could be taken.

Al Mohler recently shifted from the historical position at Southern Seminary and now requires his teachers to, “hold these convictions as personal beliefs and commitments, not merely as contractual obligations for teaching” (Advertisement in *Christianity Today*).

4. The diminishing of the doctrine of the autonomy of the local church under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Other critics see in the *BFM2000* an apparent weakening of the historic conviction that each local Baptist congregation is autonomous under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, and free from denominational control. From their beginning, Baptists have resisted any kind of convention hierarchy that would mandate decrees from a central denominational office. They have fiercely defended the right of each congregation to make its own decisions as they believe God leads them—even if others think they are wrong. But *BFM2000* signals a trend toward more authoritarian control over local congregations. As an example, along with the deletions discussed above, revisers also deleted from *BFM1963* this phrase: “*The church is an autonomous body.*”

In place of the separate declaration of the principle of autonomy, one word was inserted in the existing article on the church, giving it what critics believe is a less important emphasis: “*A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus is an autonomous local congregation.*”

Also, *BFM2000* limits whom a local church can call as its

pastor. This is seen as a direct intervention in the church's freedom to choose its own leaders, another violation of local church autonomy.

5. The trend toward Calvinism and a mistrust of personal Christian experience.

Features appear in **BFM2000** that give for the first time a distinct Calvinistic slant to the statement. Al Mohler, a leading shaper of **BFM2000**, claims to be a Calvinist. It is easy to suspect that some of the changes are intended to redirect SBC theology toward what Mohler calls "the Calvinism of the original founders of Southern Seminary," in contrast to the more balanced position of later Baptist theologians (i.e., E.Y. Mullins and W. T. Conner).

When Mohler was asked in a Texas meeting in September, 2000, if he were a "five-point Calvinist," he replied, "I will fly my colors boldly. If you ask me if I'm a Calvinist, I'm going to have to answer yes, but that is not the first, second, third, or even fourth term I would use." He continued by explaining that his beliefs are better described as "in the Reformed tradition." He continued, "Every Baptist has to believe in predestination. There's not a person in this room who doesn't believe in limited atonement as opposed to universalism. . . . The difference is in how it is limited."

In the same meeting, Paige Patterson said he and Mohler hold opposing views on the doctrines of election and predestination and he finds no biblical basis for the Calvinist opinion Mohler embraces. Patterson added, however, Calvinists strongly affirm the authority of the Bible, and that's a greater point of agreement than the two points of disagreement. "I'd rather have Dr. Mohler hanging around my seminary than someone who had doubts about the Scriptures" (*Baptist Standard Internet News*, November 12, 2000, 4).

Another evidence of this Calvinist tone is the mistrust of personal experience as expressed in several of the revisions of **BFM2000** (i.e. the removal of Jesus as the criterion of interpretation, diminishing of soul competency and priesthood of the believer, greater emphasis on creedalism and weakening of local autonomy, narrower expression of God's fore-knowledge). Strict Calvinism minimizes individual Christian experience, making the essence of Christianity a set of unrevisable doctrinal propositions rather than a direct experience of grace or an encounter with the living Christ.

In a conference at Southern Seminary in February 2001, Al Mohler attempted to simplify the divisions in the SBC by characterizing the two opposing camps as the "truth party" vs. the "liberty party." The first (his party) emphasizes the authority and inerrancy of Scripture while the second (those who opposed the take-over) emphasizes personal autonomy. His analysis echoes the Calvinistic preference for doctrinal

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propositions and its mistrust of personal Christian experience (*Baptist Press*, March 22, 2001).

Mohler's Calvinist convictions shed light on his disparaging of E.Y. Mullins' emphasis on Christian experience. Mohler blames Mullins' emphasis on Christian experience for contributing to the "present state of theological 'anemia'" among Southern Baptists: "Mullins set the stage for doctrinal ambiguity and theological minimalism. He was near the liberals in his approach" ("Introduction," *The Axioms of Religion*, Broadman & Holman, 1997).

To suggest that E.Y. Mullins was a liberal who put personal experience above biblical authority, or that he made experience the central organizing principle of his theology is either a serious misreading or an intentional distortion of Mullins' view.

While rightly giving great importance to each believer's personal encounter with Christ as a powerful apologetic tool, and while identifying a personal relationship with the living Christ rather than a list of propositional truths as the essence of faith, Mullins made it clear that experience must always be judged by the authority of the Bible. Christian experience must never be used to test the Scriptures; the experience of the Christian can at best only confirm them.

Experience would ever go astray without the ever-present corrective influence of the Scriptures, but the authority of the Scriptures would never become for us a vital and transforming reality apart from the working of God's redeeming grace among us (*Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression*, 27).

For Baptists there is one authoritative source of religious truth and knowledge. It is to that source they look to in all matters relating to doctrine, to policy, to ordinances, to worship, and to Christian living. That source is the Bible (Cited in *The Doctrine of Biblical Authority*, Dilday, 110).

This Calvinistic mistrust of experience may have been one motive for minimizing and rejecting the emphasis on soul competency and the priesthood of the believer in **BFM2000**.

A second evidence of the document's Calvinist drift is the inclusion for the first time in an SBC statement of faith a stricter definition of God's foreknowledge. In the section on God, the revisers of **BFM2000** added: "God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures."

Also, in the sub-section on God the Father, the revised

statement adds, “all knowing” to the other attributes. Many, probably most, Baptists believe God could control everything and everybody, but instead chooses to be in charge rather than in control of everything, as strict Calvinists propose. The Bible teaches that while God is all knowing, He often chooses to limit Himself in His relationship with the world.

The SBC has historically drawn from the best of both Calvinist and Arminian theology, benefiting from a continuing dialogue between proponents of both views. But these new additions tend to shut down any healthy theological discussion of God’s knowledge and human free will by an arbitrary vote of the Convention. This led the editor of *Christianity Today* to warn: “Shutting down the debate by convention fiat runs a serious risk. The ongoing debate gives teachers a chance to make their theology more fully biblical while remaining true to the tradition” (August 7, 2000, 37).

Many Baptists believe a confession of faith is more useful if it deals with central core doctrines, leaving believers free to differ over secondary details, including some features of Calvinist theology. We should follow the dictum, “In essentials—unity; in non-essentials—liberty; in all things—charity.”

6. The trend shifting Baptist identity from its Anabaptist, free-church tradition to a Reformed evangelical identity.

Some see the document’s changes as a watering down of historic Baptist distinctives in order to identify more closely with evangelical reformed theologians, “embracing their schools, and promoting their books” (Wayne Ward, *Western Recorder*, February 12, 1999). In order to join this circle, Baptists must de-emphasize such beliefs as the individual soul’s direct access to God, freedom from political or religious coercion in all matters of faith, a free church in a free state, and the supremacy of Scripture over all creeds, councils, conventions, or religious authorities.

This shift obscures the rich heritage Baptists draw from their English Separatists, Anabaptist, and free-church roots and link it instead with the American evangelical movement. Unlike Baptists, the Evangelical churches often “claim descent from one of the Protestant reformers, require adherence to a particular creed, or worst of all, seek political power to establish their church as a national church. This is not the

Baptist way” (Wayne Ward, cited above).

Also cited as evidence is its defense by Southern Seminary staff member Sean Michael Lucas: “it is time to return to the founders of the SBC trained in the hardy doctrinal tradition of the Princeton Theology” (*Southern Seminary Theological Journal*, Winter, 1999).

7. The narrow interpretation of the role of women in marriage.

Revisers included in *BFM2000* the earlier amendment on the family adopted by the SBC in 1998. This amendment has received strong criticism focused mainly on two concerns.

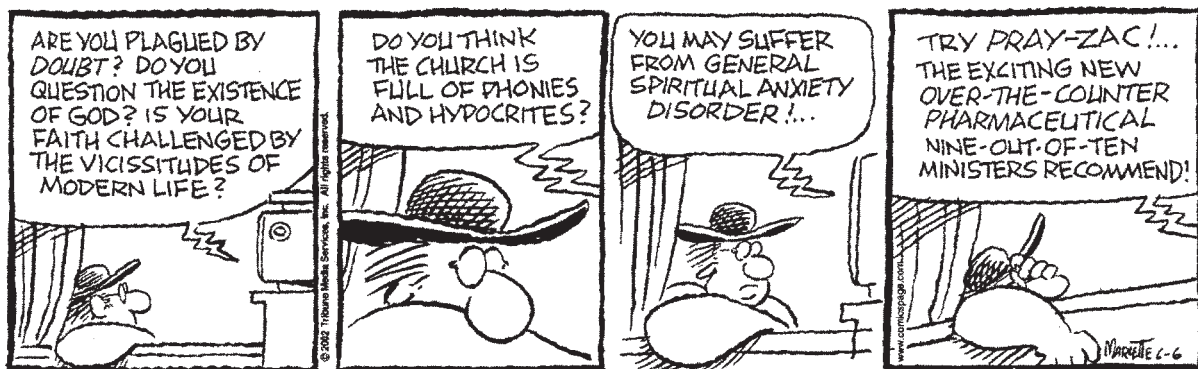
The first is balance. The newly added statement on the family is longer and more detailed than the sections on God, Jesus Christ, The Holy Spirit, or the Scriptures. *The Baptist Faith and Message* is intended to be a simple, condensed summary of core Biblical doctrines, leaving individuals free to apply and draw out the significance of these basic truths into more specific applications as cultural changes require. In the view of some, the new article is an over-statement giving unbalanced emphasis to one area above others of greater significance.

The second criticism is that the new statement is based on deficient biblical interpretation, adding some words not in the Scriptures, and selectively omitting other biblical teachings on the same subject. For example, the amendment does not make clear that the primary passage used (Ephesians 5:21-33) begins with the statement “Submit yourselves to one another.” While it refers to the husband’s responsibility to love his wife, the amendment does not explain that the word for ‘love’ (agape) means an unselfish submission to another. Properly understood then, the passage also calls for equal, if not greater submission of husband to wife.

As it stands, the revision is a faulty, one-sided expression of male authority in marriage that is not biblical.

8. The narrow interpretation of the role of women in the church.

BFM2000 introduces a more restrictive view of the role of women in the church. In section VI on The Church, after weakening the statement on local church autonomy, the revision adds, “While both men and women are gifted for service



in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.” This is the first time a Southern Baptist statement of faith has expressed such a restrictive interpretation of the Scriptures—an interpretation on which Baptists have always felt free to differ. Defending the new statement, the committee claims, “The Bible is clear in presenting the office of pastor as restricted to men. There is no biblical precedent for a woman in the pastorate, and the Bible teaches that women should not teach in authority over men.” (*Baptist Standard Internet Report*, November 11, 2000, 2).

Paige Patterson dismissed those who disagree by saying, “The problem is they have to argue with God, not with us.” Such language gives the impression that his is the only orthodox interpretation of the biblical passages. It arrogantly dismisses the viewpoints of other equally conservative, pious, informed interpreters who have an equally high view of biblical authority.

For example, other conservatives believe 1 Tim.2:21 (usually translated “I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent”) is not prohibiting all women from teaching men, but is merely forbidding a wife from publicly rebuking her husband in the worship service of the church. They believe the passage is intended to protect the marriage relationship, not to limit a woman’s leadership role in the church.

Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 14:34 (“The women should keep silence in the churches”), the word “keep silence” in this verse means “keep silent in this one instance.” In verse 30, the same word is used for men who are to keep silent when another is speaking. Some conservatives believe the passage means wives are not to interrupt or correct their husbands publicly in church. Paul is preserving the marriage relationship, not restricting women from participating in worship leadership. After all, Paul acknowledges that women are to “pray and prophesy” in church (1 Cor. 11:2-9). When they do, they should wear proper apparel and appropriate hairstyles. Surely these interpretations by conservatives should not be condemned, but rather acknowledged as possibilities.

A recent article in *Christianity Today* (September 4, 2000, 105) reminds the revisers of *BFM1963* that many denominations (Church of the Nazarene, Assembly of God, Church of God, Evangelical Free Church, The Salvation Army, and The Wesleyan Church) who are considered theological conservatives, share a long heritage of women pastors and preachers. These Christians base their view on what they consider to be a careful exegesis of the Scriptures. The article also notes that conservative television teacher, James Dobson, is happy to claim that his grandmother was the “primary pastor” of a local church. Dobson’s *Focus on the Family* allows

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women ministers.

The revisers are wrong; there is no “clear” statement in the Scriptures prohibiting women from serving in any church leadership position. Therefore, in the light of various interpretations by conservative scholars, the authors of *BFM2000* should in all humility admit that their view is not the only legitimate one.

An editor of *Christianity Today* writes that this view restricting the role of women in the church is closer to the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic doctrines on the priesthood. He then warns: “Elevating this matter to the level of confessional status seems to us an unnecessary departure from the historic Baptist traditions: no previous Baptist confession has spoken to this matter directly” (August 7, 2000).

Curiously, there is no parallel prohibition in *BFM2000* against the ordination of women to be deacons, although the New Testament names the diaconate along with the pastorate as a leadership position in the local church.

9. The “Pandora’s Box” concern: repeated future revisions to include favorite opinions.

Another source of dismay has been labeled “the Pandora’s box” concern. Those who believe *BFM1963* did not need to change, worry about the recent trend of more frequent revisions, tightening up the confession of faith every few years by adding details. Believing “Pandora’s Box” has been opened, they wonder, “What’s next?”

Given the legalistic tendency of ultra-conservatives to impose narrow doctrinal interpretations, some fear there is a danger, even a likelihood, that other hard-line opinions will soon be added as future SBC committees keep tinkering with the statement. Remember, one of the new SBC leaders who had a major influence in the revision once said, “If we say ‘pickles have souls’ then the seminaries must teach that ‘pickles have souls’” (*Fort Worth Star Telegram*, October, 1998).

10. The false accusation of neo-orthodoxy.

BFM2000 dropped the term “record of revelation” from Section I on the Scriptures, explaining that the term is an example of “fuzzy, neo-orthodox-sounding language.” By this act, the revisers mean that those who call the Bible a “record” of revelation are thereby diminishing its authority. While it is true that the Bible is a revelation from God, it is also true that it is a record of God’s revelation. This is a valid evangelical and Baptist idea—not a liberal term belonging exclusively to the neo-orthodox movement.

Those who oppose the new *BFM2000* defend the phrase “record of revelation.” They note that revelation first came

through God's mighty acts and words in the history of Israel and through the incarnation and ministry of Jesus Christ, God's supreme revelation of Himself to humanity. The Bible shares in that revelation, but it is first of all, an inspired record of these divine revelatory acts. The phrase "record of revelation" is theologically accurate.

11. The trend toward including a catalogue of specific sins.

As stated above, a confession of faith is intended to be a condensed summary of core biblical doctrines, leaving individuals free to apply and draw out the significance and specific applications as cultural changes require. This is why the *BFM1963* was reluctant to list specific sins to be opposed, focusing instead on general concepts such as greed, selfishness, and vice. To list, as the revised statement does, a specific catalogue of contemporary sins believers should avoid will soon encourage additional revisions from others who want their favorite sins included also—*peccatum de jour—ad infinitum, ad nauseum*. Critics of *BFM2000* see this as a weakness.

Southern Baptists at their best have been and always will be what John Newport called, "constructive conservatives" in theology. However, it is easy for this constructive form of conservatism to degenerate into rigid extremism. We should heed J.I. Packer in *Power Religion*, who warns of an evangelical drift into "Carnal Conservatism" whose characteristics are telling:

1. Authoritarian styles of leadership
2. The use of secular political strategies to organize and take control
3. Fanning emotional fears by supposed conspiracy theories
4. Government entanglements that reduce the church to nothing more than another special interest-group
5. The use of peer pressure to enforce conformity, ganging up, ostracizing, withholding rewards from those who refuse to go along
6. The total defeat of those who disagree (which the book calls an ugly denominational version of ethnic cleansing)

Several years ago, Al Mohler expressed similar concerns about the future of the SBC. Although recently he has been less than irenic both in his rewriting and defense of *BFM2000*, his earlier plea is noteworthy:

The future shape of the Convention must avoid the twin dangers of obscurantist, angry, and separatist fundamentalism on the right and revisionist compromise on the left. In between lies the evangelical option—an irenic, bold, and convictional posture which combines concern for orthodox doctrine with a spirit of engagement with the larger world and a missionary mandate (*Christianity Today*, September 4, 2000, 105).

To these words, most Baptists would say, "Amen." ■

Ich Glaube än Gott

(continued from page 31)

to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

When the storms of life are raging, God stands by his own.

When the challenging opportunities of a lifetime are presented, God moves to make his strength perfect in our weakness.

I believe in God.

But what is it to believe?

Here is where the water hits the wheel. Defining the word, believe, may very well take a lifetime of intellectual and spiritual struggle. The German word is *Glaube*. The Hebrew word is *aman*. The Greek word is *pisteuo*. The Spanish word is *creer*.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the best dictionary in the English language, our word believe is an ancient compounding of the verb "be" and the noun "life." Thus, believe means to be in life committed. The Christian believer is one who has consciously and positively, intentionally and wholeheartedly, decided to follow Jesus. No turning back. For the believer, there are no exceptions listed in fine print at the bottom of the contract. Jesus Christ is Lord. Period. Paragraph.

So, with Karl Barth, "*Ich Glaube än Gott*."

I believe in God. ■

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU

In March a letter was sent to over 2800 subscribers from our Board Chairman Patrick Anderson, asking our readers to support the Journal financially. In April and May, 280 readers responded with contributions totaling \$19,387. Many were first-time supporters. These gifts financed the April and June issues, and the mailing costs of August. We are deeply grateful for your support.

The Journal is sent free of charge to any who request it. Your gift provides the Journal for you and other readers. If you have not contributed to the Journal this year, now would be a good time to assist our work. Thanks for your generosity.

SPECIAL "FIRST YEARS" ISSUE

In August a Special "First Years" Edition of *Christian Ethics Today* will be sent to our subscribers. Since most of our readers did not receive the Journal in 1995-1997, we felt each of you would appreciate having one of the very first editions compiled by Foy Valentine in the beginning years of CET.

The Time Harvey Leach Got Sick

By Hal Haralson, Attorney
Austin, Texas

Loraine, Texas is a small (pop. 700) farming community in West Texas. It was small fifty years ago when Harvey Leach got sick.

I don't know what he had. What illness, that is.

That's not what impressed me. It was the action of the people of Loraine that made an indelible impression on this ten-year-old boy.

Poppa took me with him and we rode our Ford tractor twelve miles to get to Mr. Leach's farm. We lived eight and a-half miles north of town and he lived four miles south.

I could not believe what I saw. I didn't know there were that many tractors in the world

It was like the scene from the movie "Witness," when all the Quaker farmers arrived for a barn raising.

It was one of those times in the cycle of planting cotton that required plowing, or losing a crop.

The farmers adjusted their "sweeps" to the width of Mr. Leach's row. The tractors fanned out to different fields and

went to work. Small dust devils followed the tractors all over the farm.

The wives were there and had platters of home grown food laid out at noon and all the men drove their tractors in and feasted on this smorgasbord of local dishes.

By the time the sun had gone down, the Leach farm was ready for the coming season. Every inch was plowed.

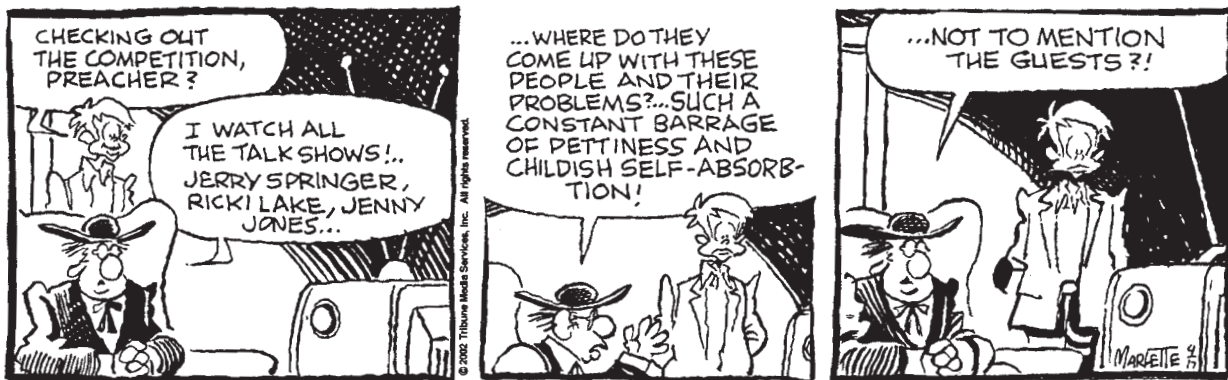
I've never forgotten that day. Harvey Leach got well. But when he needed help, his neighbors all halted work on their own farms and came to his rescue.

That was another time.

It still exists in the small rural communities of our State. Something similar to this happened following September 11.

There are still times when the misfortune of our neighbors calls forth the compassion in us all.

Judy reminded me that this was different from the Quaker happening after the barn was raised. The Quakers danced. Baptists would never do that. ■



A Matter of Life and Death: The Biotech Revolution

By David P. Gushee, *Graves Associate Professor of Moral Philosophy*
Union University, Jackson, TN

Editor's Note: This article first appeared in the October 1, 2001 issue of *Christianity Today* and is reprinted with the permission of the author.

On June 26, 2000, scientists Francis Collins and J. Craig Venter joined Bill Clinton at the White House for the stunning announcement that researchers had mapped 90 percent of the genes on the human genome, which contains codes for all inherited characteristics. The President declared, "Today, we are learning the language in which God created life."

Humanity will spend much of the 21st century attempting to speak that language. A fast-developing biotech vocabulary—genetic therapy, stem cells, reproductive cloning, and so on—strains the ability of even the most thoughtful to keep up. Human life may soon be changed dramatically, and Christians must participate in the international conversation about these changes before they become irreversible.

The Christian faith has the potential to serve not just the church but the world by penetrating the fog of current events to discern their deeper meaning—and to offer clear-headed analysis amid growing confusion.

OPPOSING FORCES

Long-established forces threaten to crowd out the voice of faith:

Market forces. The sprawling biotech industry, already doing \$80 billion in business in the United States alone, would not be awash in money were there not a demand for its innovations. These products and services include stem cells, gene therapies and enhancements, and, one day, perhaps soon, clones. Biotech firms promise what people want—health, pain relief, reproduction, longevity, and success.

Thus far they do so with little public regulation or control, one of the most troubling features of our new era—unlike the nuclear weapons challenge posed last century, harrowing as that was. Then government policy threatened humanity; today, corporate interests do.

Moral fragmentation. A morally fragmented nation may lack the basic requisites for a conversation—a shared framework of meaning, a minimal level of trust, and an agreed-upon vocabulary. But by failing to converse and arrive at a national (much less international) decision about the biotech revolution, we default to existing powers and interests and likely stumble into disaster.

"Our society currently lives from moral fragments and community fragments only, both of which are being destroyed faster than they are being replenished," writes ethicist Larry L. Rasmussen.

Worldview dynamics. This leads us to a still deeper reality: beneath both economic practice and moral fragmentation lies the foundation of worldview. Among those who press most aggressively for unrestrained development of biotech advances—including nonscientists—worldviews and philosophies such as naturalism, atheism, utilitarianism, and scientific utopianism reign. Much of our culture's elite lives without a working hypothesis of God. Assuming we dwell alone in the universe, they believe we must simply keep improving life until the next comet hits.

Libertarian ideology—which stresses individualism, privacy, moral relativism, unlimited choice-making, and autonomy—folds neatly into these godless worldviews. It holds that no one should deny himself anything that will bring self-realization and is not immediately harmful to another.

Hence a powerful contingent argues for the largely unrestrained pursuit of biotechnology as a matter of personal (including reproductive) liberty. This quest is driven by a utopian dream: overcoming our species' limits through human power and scientific progress

Some suggest triumphantly that our species is about to evolve right past *homo sapiens* to what *New Republic* senior editor Gregg Easterbrook calls *homo geneticus*. Generations will look back on our time as "the point in history when human beings gained the power to seize control of their own evolutionary destiny."

Leaving the limits of nature and the past behind, we will remake ourselves. Still, as bioethicist Audrey Chapman has written, the nations are not sure they ought to heed this siren song. They seem to be pausing at the brink, waiting to hear from the church or any other voice on why they should not plunge into the remaking of humanity.

THE CHALLENGE TO CHRISTIANS

Tell us why we should not proceed to remake humanity now that we are developing the power to do so—this is the challenge presented to Christians (and other religious groups). When the

U.S. National Bioethics Advisory Commission formulated guidance to the President on human cloning in 1997, for example, it sought the testimony of a variety of religious thinkers.

To offer answers, we must consider some difficult theological conundrums. After we identify a few of them, we will sketch an initial response—exhaustive neither in scope nor argument—to specific biotech challenges.

Is God responsible for these technological advances? A vibrant theology of divine sovereignty would have to answer “yes,” at least in some sense. If so, then why worry? Because our affirmation of God’s sovereignty comes with the equally biblical assertion that human beings have the freedom to make good or bad decisions.

God did indeed make us with the intelligence to develop these technologies, but we are responsible for what we do with that intelligence. We may stumble into areas beyond our appropriate range; this was the primordial sin, after all. But it is also possible that God is at work in some of these biotechnological advances.

Are suffering, finitude, and death revocable by human effort? Human sin introduced suffering and death into a previously unmarred creation. The reversal of sin’s effects marked the kingdom-inaugurating ministry of Jesus Christ, but until he returns the creation will continue to “groan” (Ro. 8:18ff)—illness, death, and finitude will remain a reality.

Indeed, both Scripture and history show that utopian visions of the elimination of suffering tend toward disaster, either through tyranny or as the unforeseen consequence of well-intended schemes. One of the best things biblical faith contributes to the biotech discussion is a well-considered understanding of human weakness, finitude, and sin, and the double-edged potential of many human endeavors.

THE DOMINION MANDATE

And yet does God not mandate human efforts to mitigate the effects of sin? Along with Christ’s kingdom mandate to heal and restore, in creation God called humanity to exercise dominion over (Gen. 1:28) and preserve/protect (Gen. 2:15) the Earth. After the Fall, the dominion/protection (stewardship) mandate was not removed, but extended to more difficult conditions.

God calls us to “sustain, restore, and improve” our fallen world, according to ethicist James C. Peterson. While the term “created co-creators” overstates our status, we are called to mitigate the Fall’s effects and thus improve human and planetary life. It would be disobedient to resist human progress toward these ends, but the issue becomes complex when innovations risk bringing more harm than benefit—and when they risk transgressing divinely established boundaries.

To what extent does God intend to “fix the world,” as opposed to redeeming a people for eternity from within a broken world?

To what extent does God work through the agency of government to restrain sin and prevent disaster?

Lutheran theologian Philip Hefner has argued that a dubious “fix-it” mentality lies behind much of the biotech revolution. And yet a healthy theology of God’s sovereignty as Creator and Redeemer drives us to reclaim “every square inch” of creation, as Dutch Calvinist Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) once famously said. Likewise, a kingdom approach emphasizes Jesus’ mission as reclaiming a rebellious and suffering world for its rightful King.

More pessimistic theologies allow for much less actual transformation before Christ returns. Our bioethical dilemmas underscore both the possibilities and the limits of transformation in this world, and perhaps keeping both in tension is the best way forward.

Are genetic anomalies, and the diseases they cause, God’s will? Some argue that interventions such as gene therapies constitute an attempt to thwart God’s will. Yet, only if we think of cancer, crib death, car accidents, tornadoes, and nearsightedness as God’s will in some nonbiblical, fatalistic sense, ought we also understand genetic anomalies such as cystic fibrosis or spina bifida this way. We should instead see these inherited diseases as legacies the Fall and hence worthy subjects of our best efforts to safely mitigate them.

What is normatively human? Has God established a fixed human nature (the imago dei) that we are not permitted to alter or transcend? While humanity is made in the image of God, strikingly diverse Christian interpretations of the *imago dei* abound. It may be that Christians can ascribe no single meaning to it, but at minimum the *imago dei* means that humans were designed to resemble God in ways that other creatures do not—this includes our intelligence, moral agency, and our ability to form interdependent relationships in community.

Human life merits a special imputed respect, even sacred value, on the basis of this design as well as God’s unique declaration of our status. Also, by sharing this status, all humans partake of a fundamental equality. But given that much about us is far from Godlike, in the biotech era we must find the balance between reaching our potential and respecting our limits—both of which are fundamental to human life.

To what extent does God work through the agency of government to restrain sin and prevent disaster? Reflection on the biotech challenge helps to settle the question of whether Christians should remain politically engaged despite the many disappointments we have with government. God created the State to advance the common good (Ro. 13:1-7), and at times it is the only human power capable of restraining threatening forces.

We cannot withdraw from political engagement, especially in times like these.

At least three pressing issues demand an immediate Christian response: stem-cell research, human cloning, and genetic therapy.

STEMMING LIFE

The effort to use stem cells obtained from adult neural cells, bone marrow, live birth umbilical cord and placental blood, and other sources raises no moral problems. The potential health benefits of stem cells remain unclear (despite dramatic claims in the media), but there is no reason to limit research as long as the source of such cells is morally licit. Indeed, Christians should support initiatives such as Rep. Chris Smith's (R-N.J.) proposal to establish a national stem-cell donor bank involving only these nonembryonic cell sources. Such a donor bank would make stem cell research a public initiative with near-universal support—and would greatly expand the availability of such cells.

The use of embryonic stem cells from elective abortion, or, more importantly, from the “leftovers” from in vitro fertilization (IVF), has heated up the debate. Both concern the moral status of embryonic life, and thus this issue intertwines with the moral struggle over abortion. The biotech community and its allies have pressed hard for the right to use embryonic stem cells freely and for an end to the ban on federal funding of such research.

In one sense, the moral issues are similar whether we are considering aborted fetuses or “surplus” IVF embryos. Both are (or were) among that class of human beings rightly called the unborn, or those in the process of being born—human beings valued by God whose lives began at conception.

Research using aborted fetuses entangles the researcher in a prior wrong. A researcher can be guilty of complicity even if he had no role in the original wrong and his own motives were beyond reproach. Complicity can be avoided. For example, the medical community rightly rejected any use of knowledge gained from the Nazis' horrific experiments on concentration camp prisoners.

As for the more than 100,000 unused frozen embryos in the United States alone, the moral problem remains the manipulation and ultimate destruction of a human life at its earliest and most defenseless stage.

A prior problem exists, of course: the routine practice of producing excess embryos. This is a fine example of the law of unintended consequences. Twenty years ago, at the dawn of the assisted reproduction industry (today still largely unregulated), no one imagined that at the turn of the millennium, a city's worth of embryos would await an uncertain future in icy limbo.

A fresh moral evaluation of the assisted reproduction industry is past due. Before President Bush's decision in August to limit federally funded stem-cell research to existing stem-cell lines, biotech industry, political, and media voices pressed hard for the legitimization of research using IVF leftovers. “Respectable” opinion continues to assert that blocking stem-cell research using IVF leftovers is foolish and extremist. But the Roman Catholic Church and hard-line proliferers aren't the only ones to raise their voices in protest.

Ethicist Amy Laura Hall of Duke University notes that feminist scholars such as herself believe this practice raises

troubling questions about exploitative “harvesting” of the female body.

Further, due to its Nazi past, Germany is moving much more carefully in this area than the United States. If international opinion matters, we should listen to its misgivings as part of our decision-making. And, as Hall rightly notes, our suddenly deep concern about suffering people is disturbingly selective. “This is not, ultimately, about the alleviation of suffering in general; it is about the alleviation of our own fear of suffering.”

Of all potential sources of stem cells, producing embryos for experimentation and research via cloning techniques—known as *therapeutic cloning*—is the most troubling. Yet private research firms have begun doing precisely this. Therapeutic cloning is odious because (a) it could surreptitiously lead to morally dubious reproductive cloning, and (b) it intentionally manufactures human life with the certainty of its destruction.

Many leaders here and abroad are pressing for therapeutic cloning; the Christian community must reject it. As a matter of public policy, Christians and others who value embryonic and fetal life have a right and obligation to press for the exemption of embryonic stem cells from research efforts. President Bush's stance, while demonstrating laudable respect for the value of embryonic life, in this sense did not go far enough.

This is especially true in light of the apparent promise of other sources of stem cells and other paths to the goals of regenerative medicine. Discovery of treatments for such diseases as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's would be a tremendous accomplishment, but deeper biblical values proscribe us from pursuing those ends at the expense of developing human life—especially when alternative sources are viable.

DRAWING THE LINE AT DOLLY

A fascinating thing happened during the debate that broke out after Dolly the cloned sheep made her appearance—large sectors of society said, “This crosses a line; this must not happen.”

This does not mean that powerful voices are not continuing to make their best case for cloning (extracting the nucleus of an adult cell and inserting it into an egg cell that has been stripped of its own nucleus, then stimulating it to begin cell division). Nor does it mean that research has halted; no one knows how many private laboratories have ignored the moral, physiological, and legal risks in attempts to clone humans. But it may mean that the human family will rouse itself to actually draw a line before cloning becomes a *fait accompli*.

University of Chicago medical ethics professor Leon Kass, whom Bush named as head of his new bioethics commission, summarizes the overwhelming case against cloning in four points: unethical experimentation; threat to human identity and individuality; turning procreation into manufacturing; and despotism over children in the perversion of parenthood.

1. *Cloning is a form of experimentation on a nonconsenting subject.* Attempts on animals reveal extremely

high failure rates, resulting in many disabilities and deformities. No ethical scientist would attempt human cloning at current odds.

2. *Cloning threatens human identity and individuality by permitting the intentional genetic replication of a person whose life is already in process.* The clone, says Kass, “will not be fully a surprise to the world; people are always likely to compare his doings in life with those of his alter ego.”
3. *Cloning turns procreating into manufacturing by enabling the advance selection of a total genetic blueprint.* Things are *made*, but people are *begotten*. In cloning, that boundary line is erased (although a form of baby manufacturing has been underway since in vitro fertilization began, Kass rightly notes).
4. *Cloning is an act of despotism that perverts parenthood by turning children into genetically engineered possessions intended to fulfill parental wants.* Some argue that many children are already brought into the world for reasons other than the sheer desire to welcome new life. But we must reject treating children, however they are born, as commodities or as instruments to other ends.

A number of other arguments have emerged: Cloning would mark the first instance of humans reproducing through asexual replication, radically altering the nature of procreation and eliminating dual genetic origin in the cloned. Notre Dame law professor Kathleen Kaveny has shown how dramatically cloning would confuse family lines and relations.

If made available solely by the market based on ability to pay, cloning would contribute to distributive injustice. It would weaken marriage and the relationships between men and women by further eroding the link connecting marriage, sex, and childbearing—likely extending the practice of assisted reproduction among homosexuals. Kass has made the point that it could deepen the misery of children after divorce—if, for example, Mom had to look at the clone of the now-despised Dad all day long.

Cloning would contribute to our epidemic narcissism by enabling self-creation without any involvement of another person. The potential for multiple self-cloning could create a household freak show. It could bring more children into the world who lack the benefit of two parents. The sly might try to clone others without their consent; or, conversely, famous people and corporate interests might market highly desired genotypes to those seeking (in vain) to guarantee successful offspring.

Finally, cloning does not meet any legitimate human need. Many kinds of reproductive technology exist for the infertile. Misguided efforts to bring back a dead child through cloning would mark a sad attempt to salve a grief that cannot be salvaged, and at the cost of exploiting another human being through her very creation.

Human cloning should be banned. We need both federal laws and international agreements. The United States

has lagged behind irresponsibly; while anti-cloning legislation had passed the House, at press time, the United States had only a temporary ban on federal funding and threats from the Food and Drug Administration to prosecute private firms that attempt cloning.

TINKERING WITH GENES

Genetic therapy may be the most morally difficult of the three areas considered here. A distinction between somatic interventions (repairing a defect in the genes of a living person) and germline interventions (altering reproductive DNA inheritable by future generations) has been recognized in this field since the 1980s, with ethicists saying yes to the first and no to the second. But recently questions have been raised about this distinction’s scientific accuracy and moral relevance.

An American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) study group has suggested abandoning the terminology and instead distinguishing only between inheritable and noninheritable genetic modifications.

In *Genetic Turning Points: The Ethics of Human Genetic Intervention*, geneticist/ethicist Peterson argues that *all* genetic intervention should be evaluated based on four criteria: safety; improvement for the recipient; maintaining an open, and not foreclosed, future for the recipient; and just resource allocation. While the stakes of germline intervention (or inheritable modifications) are certainly higher than for somatic intervention, Peterson argues that either could meet these criteria if the science develops adequately. He further asserts that we might have a moral obligation to pass on to progeny the healthiest possible genetic legacy.

Several points argue in favor of germline therapy: some maladies might be cured, it may be the only way to attack some diseases, and prevention costs less than cures. If, for example, the gene for Tay-Sachs or Huntington’s disease could be eliminated from the reproductive DNA of all those who carry it, the disease itself could presumably be wiped out. Why just offer somatic interventions to millions of sufferers if we can eliminate the disease altogether?

Among concerns, one is simply scientific. If, as Francis Collins (director of the National Human Genome Research Institute) argues, the role of genes is complicated and undeterministic—genes interact unpredictably with each other, with other cellular actors, environment, and free will—then the supposed promise of some germline interventions may be vastly overstated. At present, at least, we may simply be in over our heads and end up doing more harm than good.

The AAAS report states flatly that inheritable modifications cannot now be carried out safely on human beings.

Furthermore, germline intervention would affect not just one person but all offspring; more broadly, it would affect the gene pool of the human race. Another concern is distributive justice—unless everyone gets access to germline therapies, such exclusivity could worsen our

already unjust allocation of health-care resources.

Some fear, further, that the effort to eradicate genetic diseases will contribute to the social stigmatization of those who have them.

Finally, we will not be able to draw a firm line against morally odious genetic *enhancements* if we permit germline therapy. Genetic enhancement suggests outrageous possibilities. We rightly scorn the prospect of a society in which people with means purchase prepackaged genetic endowments of athletic, artistic, intellectual, or physical prowess for themselves or their children (if this ever really proves possible).

It is easy to envision a split between what Princeton University molecular biologist Lee M. Silver creatively labels the GenRich and the Naturals—those who would be able to buy genetic excellence and those who would not.

A tragically ironic misunderstanding of human satisfaction lies behind such a possibility; not giftedness alone, but a blend of natural endowment, discovery, and hard work makes excellence satisfying. Undoubtedly, however, a market would grow instead for engineered excellence, even if it were a black market. Recently *Sports Illustrated* suggested the drive for athletic success will make genetically engineered athletes inevitable.

The implications of genetic enhancement for human reproduction, family life, childhood, and society as a whole are indeed chilling. Ethicists address this issue in various ways. In *From Chance to Choice: Genetics and Justice* (Cambridge, 2000), by Allen Buchanan, et al., the authors flatly propose that the purchase of what I am calling “excellence enhancements” should be prohibited by law.

They argue, however, for a consensus on a small core of very basic human capabilities, and for access by all citizens in all health plans to the genetic therapies that could help obtain them. In a sense, this is the model that already prevails in health care (though it is deeply corrupted by unequal access). It would simply be extended to genetic medicine.

At a theological level, John Feinburg argues for drawing a distinction between conditions traceable to the Fall of humanity and its consequences, and those that are not: genetic interventions would be permissible for the former,

and only for the latter if motives were morally correct. But who will decide that?

While the current state of science on inheritable modifications demands at least a moratorium on any application of them, research should continue. Making fundamental distinctions between narcissistic excellence enhancements and genuine health care, perhaps one day we will be able to eliminate genetic maladies through rigorously tested therapies available to all.

A BIOETHICAL DECALOGUE

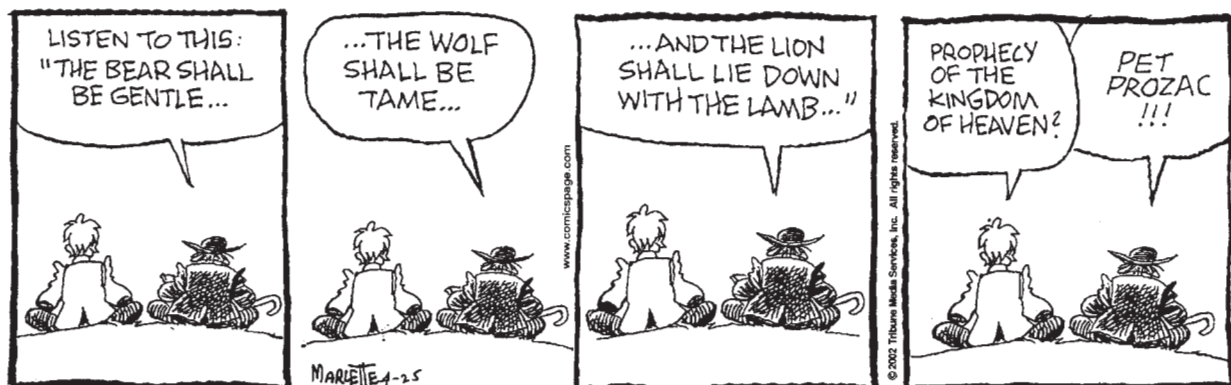
I have argued that the world, especially the biotech industry, presents this challenge to the church: *Tell us why we should not proceed to remake humanity now that we are developing the power to do so.*

Our answer should be this: You rightly perceive a mandate to understand and alleviate illness and the suffering it brings. We will support this effort, but within the boundaries of human well being under the sovereignty of God. These boundaries include limits on the means we may use to achieve the goals.

Human beings may not be manufactured, engineered, or destroyed; we may not experiment on or otherwise use the vulnerable without their consent; we may not set aside the essential structures of the created physical and social order; we may not casually alter or enhance the nature of the person (and other forms of life); we may not restrict the legitimate benefits of innovations to the privileged but instead must serve the common good; and the biotech community may not make decisions without the participation and consent of society.

In turn, we will pledge to protect biotech efforts from the attacks of those who do not understand them, and will do everything we can to nurture a culture in which innovations will honor human dignity.

Bioethicist Chapman asks, “Will society have the wisdom, the powers of discernment, and the appropriate commitments to apply its new knowledge and capabilities for ethical ends?” May God graciously guide our steps, that the answer to that question will reflect wise exercise of our dominion. ■



The Stem Cell Research and Cloning Controversy

By John M. Swomley, Professor Emeritus of Social Ethics

St. Paul School of Theology

The present controversy over stem cell research and cloning has occurred because Pope John Paul II has decreed that human life begins at conception instead of the biblical view that human life begins at birth. This is the basis for opposition to various forms of contraceptives, to abortion, and to stem cell research.

However, the Vatican does not object to stem cells derived from miscarried embryos or from umbilical cords. It also does not object to skin stem cells derived from the foreskins after circumcision.

In order to understand stem cells we must note the following: At conception, when egg and sperm meet, a *zygote* is formed. Approximately four days after that, during which the cell divides again and again, a *blastocyst* develops. The *blastocyst* has an outer layer of cells which will form the placenta and other supporting tissue needed for fetal development in the uterus. The inner cell mass, from which stem cells come, will form virtually all of the tissues in the human body. In normal fetal development the *blastocyst* becomes an embryo. If, however, the inner cells of a *blastocyst* are removed from the outer layer of cells, they are not embryos and if placed in a woman's uterus would not develop into a fetus. If removed for research, they nevertheless undergo further specialization into stem cells that have a particular function, such as blood stem cells, which reside in the bone marrow of every person and also circulate in smaller numbers in the bloodstream. If the inner cells are not removed until the formation of the embryo they are called embryonic stem cells.

Stem cells undergo further specialization that have the potential for cell therapies to deal with various diseases and disorders. Scientists also hope to learn from stem cell research about abnormal cell specialization and cell division, the causes of such medical problems as cancer and birth defects.

There are other reasons why stem cell research is essential. Science has made great progress with organ transplants such as liver and kidney. However, ten patients die daily waiting for organs. Also, the problem of matching transplants to recipients rather than having them rejected could be solved by stem cell research.

Stem cells can potentially be used for any purpose; for example, injecting one into a heart muscle that has been damaged. Research is needed not only to learn how stem cells can help speed the treatment of individuals but for the actual regeneration of a species.

Research can help with respect to blood supplies both in ordinary times and in times of crisis. Instead of storage facili-

ties of blood by blood types (such as Type O), we could rely on stem cells to produce blood when there are major casualties from war, natural disasters, epidemics, or biochemical accidents.

The chief source of stem cells for research today is excess or extra embryos received from *in vitro* fertilization or from terminated pregnancies. In each such case the only creative use of such embryos or fetuses is for research or actual life-saving use. Certainly the destruction of unused or unneeded embryos is not "pro-life." In a TV interview, Senator Orrin Hatch (one of the most anti-abortion Senators) said that support for stem cell research was "the most pro-life position [because] it could save millions of lives."

Another public opponent of abortion, former Senator Connie Mack, said, "I believe life begins at conception . . . but it depends on how one defines conception. Initially we said that conception . . . took place in the uterus. We're talking [now] about embryos that in fact have been created in petri dishes" (Frances Kissling in *Conscience* Summer, 2001).

Paul D. Simmons, while Professor of Christian Ethics at Southern Baptist Theological School, Louisville, provided another reason against the Vatican idea that a person or human being exists at conception. He wrote, "The fallacy of believing a *zygote* is a person is also seen when the argument is reduced *ad absurdum*: Every body cell of a person contains one's DNA or genetic code. That is why theoretically, at least, persons may be cloned or duplicated. If one uses the genetic definition of 'person' one would have to regard every cell as a human being, since each cell has the potential for becoming another person through cloning."

Simmons went on to say, "A fertilized ovum (*zygote*) . . . is a cluster of cells, but hardly complex enough to qualify as a 'person.' A person or human being has capacities of reflective choice, relational response, social experience, moral perception and self awareness." (Paul Simmons, "The Fetus as Person," cited in Doerr and Prescott, *Abortion Rights and Fetal Personhood*, 18)

Dr. Charles Gardner, an embryologist and specialist in cell biology, wrote, "The biological argument that a human being is created at fertilization . . . comes as a surprise to most embryologists . . . for it contradicts all that they have learned in the past few decades. . . . in humans when two sibling embryos combine into one . . . the resulting person may be completely normal. If the two original embryos were determined to become particular individuals, such a thing could not happen. The embryos would recognize themselves to be

different . . . and would not unite. But here the cells seem unaware of any distinction between themselves . . . The only explanation is that the individual is not fixed or determined at this early stage.” (Charles Gardner, “Is an Embryo a Person,” *Nation*, Nov. 13, 1989).

In therapeutic cloning, a cell would be taken from the patient. The cell’s nucleus containing its DNA would be put into a woman’s egg from which its own nucleus had been removed. The cell in effect is a substitute for the sperm. Hence the egg, believing it has been fertilized, would in another four or five days develop into a *blastocyst* from which stem cells can be removed. These could provide treatments for patients, for example, who need an exact organ match, so as to prevent rejection by the patient.

Or the resulting stem cells could be cultured to grow into self-sustaining colonies and treated or turned into different types of tissues such as heart cells or nerve cells. At this early stage little is known about which technology should be used to get thousands of unfertilized eggs, for women who use *in vitro* fertilization generally do not produce more than ten to fifteen eggs.

Reproductive cloning, which I believe should be opposed, is intended to produce a similar human being to the one from whom stem cells are taken. It is done for such purposes as vanity, or to replace a child or friend who has died, or to prefer one sex over another, or to try to develop another Einstein. Actually, there is no assurance that such effort at replacement would be successful, since even if DNA were the same, we are all more than biological entities. Each of us is shaped by educational, cultural, and other environments, so that no Einstein or any other genius could be replicated simply by identical cell development or cloning.

Reproductive cloning is creating embryos from adult cells, but in therapeutic cloning the fertilized eggs, instead of being inserted in a womb to develop into a fetus, would be kept in lab dishes and used to generate stem cells.

There are several reasons for opposing legislation that would ban therapeutic cloning. One is that it will retard or adversely affect advanced scientific research in the United States designed to prevent disease and disability.

A second reason is that if prohibited here it would simply force those who want to engage in such research to go to other countries where the Vatican or other religious fundamental-

ists cannot ban certain forms of science, as the Pope did to the discoveries of Galileo and Copernicus.

A third byproduct of such banning or outlawing of scientific research might leave the U.S. unprotected from certain diseases, epidemics, and other calamities at a time when such scientific results would be most needed.

Another reason to permit and encourage stem cell research is its impact on *in vitro* fertilization, which the Vatican also wants to outlaw. If *in vitro* fertilization is curtailed or ended, will excess human embryos be immediately destroyed, since they could not be used to produce stem cells?

Human embryos have a high imperfection ratio, and both in nature and in clinics, up to eight or more embryos are created for each successful pregnancy. At present, surplus embryos are usually stored in freezers. Is their destruction more ethical than their use to enhance life for those who suffer? The Vatican’s position and its influence on politicians would say, “Yes, because pro-life is inconsistently pro-death at this point.”

The chief countries overseas that permit therapeutic cloning and stem cell research are Britain and Sweden. In Britain there is a Human Fertilization and Embryology Authority that licenses both fertility clinics and research institutions that study human embryos. Since 1991, a total of 294,584 embryos have been destroyed, and 53,497 have been used for research purposes. (*New York Times*, August 14, 2001)

Portugal, Italy, Greece, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg have no laws on the subject and Spain and Finland allow research under certain conditions. Israel has produced insulin from stem cell research that could lead to treatment for one form of diabetes that could be used to help more than one million Americans with that type of diabetes (*New York Times*, August 2, 2001).

Therefore, if the religious right and a President who campaigned as a “compassionate conservative” have their way, research and success in dealing with disease will continue in other countries and may eventually benefit some Americans. Others who have Parkinson’s disease, Alzheimer’s disease, and numerous other maladies may not be so fortunate. They will not benefit from the pro-life campaign of the Vatican and others who influence the White House, because for them “pro-life” applies only to contraception and abortion. ■



Conception Is Not Cloning: But That Doesn't Necessarily Make It Right

By Wilton H. Bunch, MD, PhD

Beeson Divinity School

It is hard to pick up a newspaper without reading some new development in cloning. Although many articles contain considerable “spin” and “hype,” there is no question that scientific progress is being made every day. This causes great concern among evangelical Christians who, very rightly, oppose human cloning. Although nearly all scientists are interested in producing stem cells (therapeutic cloning) as opposed to persons (reproductive cloning) there are enough publicity seekers who think they will win a Nobel Prize for being first, that worry is an appropriate response.

The evangelical response to cloning has been to chant, “Cloning is wrong because life begins at conception.” The two statements may be true, but linking them as cause and effect is a political as well as a biological mistake. To continue to use this as the sole reason for opposing cloning is to guarantee that the objectors will be isolated and marginalized by much of thinking society.

Cloning and conception are two very different biological processes and should not be confused. To understand the difference between conception and cloning it is necessary to attempt a brief review of basic biology. After recognizing the distinction, we can consider the significance of each.

After the sperm are deposited in the vagina they begin the trip through the uterus to contact the ova. During this journey that few will complete, their surface is changed by enzymes produced in the estrogen primed uterus and entry to the oviduct. This results in a change in the plasma membrane of the sperm so that it is able to bind to and penetrate the outer zone of the ova. It is important that this transformation of the sperm occur close to the place where fertilization is to take place since after this change the sperm have a very short life.

The fusion of the sperm and the ova is a complicated process involving specialized molecules that aid the process and others that hinder it. Thus, this is not just a mechanical event, but a biochemically sophisticated one. Once it has occurred, the formerly highly motile sperm becomes immobile and is passively moved into the cytoplasm of the ova. There is a sudden release of calcium and many additional enzyme systems are activated.

There are two more important events that must occur before cell division can occur. First, the outer membrane of the ova must resist attachment and penetration of any additional sperm. Should additional sperm enter the egg there

would be too many Y chromosomes. Secondly, the ovum does not complete its reduction of chromosomes from the normal 46 to 23 (so that the resultant child will have the normal number, half from each parent) until the sperm has penetrated the cell wall. This must take place so that there are not too many X chromosomes. Once this has occurred the genetic material of the egg and the sperm can fuse. Shortly afterward the cell, now called a zygote, divides into two and further division continues.

This is a very simplified account. If even this description of conception makes the readers eyes glaze over, it should at least give pause to say with the Psalmist, “we are wonderfully made.”

In contrast, cloning, an asexual form of reproduction, is a conceptually very simple, though technologically complicated procedure. Most of the genetic material of an egg is removed and the remaining genetic material inactivated. A cell nucleus from an adult cell is placed into the cytoplasm of the egg and this new combination activated to begin cell division. In mice, sheep, cows and most recently cats, this is placed in a uterus and occasionally a fully developed fetus results.

In contrast to the complicated biochemical events that guide and control conception, the removal of the genetic material from the egg is by mechanical suction. In monkeys that have been totally resistant to cloning efforts, just the removal of the genetic material is so damaging that it cannot be replaced and obtain a zygote.

I do not believe the difference could be more stark. Conception and cloning are two very different biological processes to start the process of cell division. To use one to judge the other is simplistic.

The issues of cloning and stem cells are closely interrelated. The interest in cloning received a substantial boost after President Bush announced that the government would fund research using the existing stem cell lines, but not the creation of additional lines from zygotes. The scientific community soon decided that there were not enough cell lines available, hence cloning became imperative.

With much fanfare, a Massachusetts company announced in January that they had cloned human cells; however, these cells did not survive more than a few hours and only divided twice. Most scientists think that this did not represent the

new genetic activity and protein production characteristic of cloned cells, but only residual energy from material not removed from the egg. Thus, as of this writing, there is no evidence that human cells have been cloned.

Does this mean that we can become complacent or that we must accept cloning? I do not think that it does, even for an instant. What it does mean is that we must develop arguments that are consistent with and understanding of the reality of the biology. There are a number of objections that need to be heard.

First, there has been an inordinate amount of favorable publicity; grossly overstating what has been achieved. Patients and families are convinced that the cure for their personal disease is just around the corner. Scientists do not know how to make pancreatic islet cells to produce insulin. They do not know how to make kidney cells. They do not know how to make nerve cells. Even if any of these are possible, it will be years from now. Much of the blame for the unrealistic expectations rests with the press, but the scientists have also contributed. If there is to be government funding, they want it to be as generous as possible in order to maintain their laboratories. They do not speak as disinterested observers. It is appropriate to make this point.

Secondly, stem cells have been placed in human beings for the treatment of Parkinson's Disease. None of the patients who had stem cells deposited into their brains had improvement in their symptoms and 15% were made worse because the cells secreted too much of the desired protein. This result, although described in the most prestigious medical journal, has been ignored in the discussion. It is appropriate for those concerned about cloning to point out that the results of cell therapy in humans has been a failure.

Thirdly, there is the problem of tissue incompatibility. It is well known that if patients receive a kidney, liver, or heart transplant, they must take drugs to inhibit the immune response. This is a protective response of the body that recognizes the transplanted organ as "not me" and tries to remove it. This same response would be present for any cells or organs that resulted from cloning unless it was from the individual. That would be so expensive it is not seriously contemplated. It is appropriate for those concerned about cloning to point out that this limitation must be considered.

Fourth, the process of cloning causes genetic damage to all the subsequent cells. In animals, most clones die in the womb and those that survive to birth usually have defects of the heart, lungs, kidneys, brains or the immune system. A leading expert has said that he doubts that there are any normal clones. Although this is usually discussed in terms of potential reproductive cloning, it also applies to cloning to produce stem cells. These cells will also have genetic damage and any tissues developed from them will be abnormal. It is

Conception and cloning are two very different biological processes to start the process of cell division.

appropriate for those concerned about cloning to remind the nation that the much-discussed benefits would include damaged genetic material.

Cloning has a very low level of efficiency; many eggs are required for a single success. This fact leads to the exploitation of women to obtain sufficient cell lines. The women donors must be injected with drugs so that they will superovulate and an invasive procedure is necessary to remove the eggs. This process is not without risks. Advertisements in many college newspapers offer \$2,500 to \$4,000 for donors, thus targeting low income and potentially

naive women. It is appropriate to ask if this is just.

Finally, there are alternatives. A company in New Jersey reports that they have cultured stem cells from the placenta. Although this has not yet had scientific peer review, it raises hopes that the use of human embryos or cloning could become obsolete. Adults also have stem cells and these are harvested, grown, and given back to patients with various blood diseases. These stem cells then produce red blood cells, the several kinds of white blood cells and platelets. Researchers in Minnesota have found that these same cells in the bone marrow can be transformed into bone, cartilage, fat, and skeletal muscle cells.

When considering the alternatives one might wonder why so much attention has been given to embryonic stem cells and so little to the adult variety. At least part of the answer is that most of the work has come from the same laboratories that investigated in-vitro fertilization, therefore they were technically skilled in dealing with eggs, sperm and zygotes. The old saying, "When you have a hammer, everything looks like a nail," has truth in scientific research as well as other aspects of life.

These facts argue strongly against cloning, but a story may make the issues even clearer. Mary Shelly provided an illustration nearly 200 years ago when she penned the story "Frankenstein." In this story of technology run amuck, Victor Frankenstein is a dedicated scientist who nearly destroys his own health in his devotion to producing life. Taking parts from dead humans he succeeds in creating a life form that has many human characteristics, but it is not human. This process anticipated cloning, which takes parts from humans for creation of a new being. The Monster, as this new being is called in the story, was originally innocent, wanting only to be treated as "other" human beings but was rejected because of his appearance. Although he could feel, breath, and think, his origin made him count for less in human eyes. In response, he became a murderer.

Toward the end of the story the Monster says to Victor Frankenstein, "Remember that I have power, . . . I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master." Such an end was never remotely contemplated as Victor Frankenstein was

working in his laboratory. He pursued his scientific studies with such diligence that he had no time or energy to think of the consequences. Today, much thought and work are being directed to the biology of cloning, yet it appears that little thought has been given to the potential consequences.

Victor Frankenstein's sin was not in pursuing knowledge, perhaps not even in implementing what he had learned. Instead, he proved unable, or unwilling, to take responsibility for his actions and their consequences. Only after the Monster was attempting to force him to create another creature as a mate did Frankenstein begin to question the morality of what he had done.

This story is valuable to us because it reminds us that we must be cautious and wise in our use of technology. We cannot afford to merely go into the future without thinking of what the future might be. Paul reminded the church at Corinth, and us, that not everything that is lawful or permissible is beneficial (1Cor 6:12). Just because we have the technical ability to accomplish cloning does not mean that we should do it.

There is nothing intrinsic in Christianity that should make us "anti-science." We want science and technology to promote life, health, and general well being. What should concern us is whether the secular society possesses the moral underpinnings to consider the consequences of progress and to debate the responsibilities that progress brings. This is a role for the Church. For the sake of humanity, the Church cannot afford to withdraw from this activity. This is a much more difficult role for Christians than merely chanting, "Life begins at conception," but that should not deter us from this task. ■

Note: I am pleased to acknowledge the lively discussion and thoughtful papers of the students in my class, "Genetics, Ethics, and Theology" for many of the ideas in this essay.

Baptist Ministers and Taxes—W.W.J.D.?

(continued from page 2)

"You cannot serve God and wealth," warned Jesus (Mt. 6:24). Paul added, "Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due" (13:7). Paul's words included both sales tax and the hated tribute tax. Even to a pagan government the Christian citizen had a responsibility.

Now please don't argue. I have heard all of the rationalizations and explanations from students, but I am not convinced. I believe deeply that the clergy too often is corrupted by our culture, rather than challenging its secular values. In all the talk about "culture wars," I seldom hear modern prophets identify as the enemy our American quest for material success and its corollaries—greed, consumerism, and power.

Tony Campolo put it this way recently: "I don't know how your theology works, but if Jesus has a choice between stained glass windows and feeding starving kids in Haiti, I have a feeling he'd choose the starving kids." Maybe W.W.J.D. is not just for teenagers. ■

Space Available

*By Lawrence Webb, Emeritus Professor of Journalism
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College dorm rooms often have assorted placards and signs, a mixture of the serious and frivolous. A suite I shared at Hardin-Simmons University long ago with two other freshmen had a religious message next to a sign, which had been filched from a parking lot. A fellow student came to our room, looked around, and read the two signs aloud as if there were one:

"Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.
Park here."

Similar incongruities sprouted on billboards and marquees after September 11th.

A hamburger chain had a facsimile of the American flag just below the company name. Under the flag were these words: "Satisfy your craving. Bacon, Mushroom Melt."

Wow! Show you are a loyal American by eating a Whopper with bacon, mushrooms, and cheese.

That same company had another sign at Christmas. The flag was still there, but with this statement: "Jesus is the Reason for the Season."

A respectful reminder: there is no direct connection between patriotism and Jesus and eating burgers.

A gas station had these two statements that read like one: "God Bless the U.S.A. Cigarettes as Low as 99 Cents a Pack."

This is not the first time commercialism has been wrapped in Old Glory. For years, car dealerships have been festooned with flags by the dozen. While it is certainly appropriate for a merchant to express loyalty to country, there is no obvious connection between patriotism and eating a hamburger or smoking a cigarette or buying a car. The car dealership with the flags may be sending a mixed signal, since so many cars sold in this country were manufactured overseas.

Yet another message appeared on a sign in front of a small shopping center. A couple of merchants had their advertisements in the lower strips, but not all the slots were rented. To encourage others to advertise, the ad agency put a message below the religio-patriotic message. When the messages were read in continuous flow, the effect was as follows:

"In God We Trust.
United We Stand.
Space Available."

With this sign, I saw a positive reminder: As we declare, "In God We Trust," we should leave space for all who care to join us. Not all Americans trust in God. Among those who do trust in God, there are many different apprehensions of God. While sincere believers cannot endorse competing understandings of God, we must endorse our fellow human beings who follow

other paths. We must insist that they be able to take advantage of "Space Available" with the same freedom we enjoy in our space.

Current suspicion of all things Arabic and all things Islamic recalls a similar attitude toward German-Americans in World War One and toward Japanese-Americans in World War Two.

In the First World War, everything German was suspect. For example, in Wisconsin and other states with large German-American settlements, many school systems stopped teaching German as a foreign language. People of German ancestry were pressured to buy war bonds and make large contributions to the Red Cross to prove their patriotism, under the threat of being tarred and feathered if they refused. Lutheran congregations, which historically had conducted services in German, were forced to forsake their heart language and have their services in English.

In World War Two, some 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry (including seventy thousand U.S. citizens) were rounded up and forced to live in barbed wire and machine gun-enforced camps. Their only crime was their Japanese heritage.

In the wake of September 11, life-long Americans lost their jobs and felt other discrimination because they were Arabic or were thought to be Arabic. Some even lost their lives as overzealous Americans were offended by their clothing or skin color.

Osama bin Laden, the presumed mastermind of the attack, is an Arab and a Muslim. Thus, we condemn all Arabs and all Muslims. We need to remind ourselves that not all Arabs are Muslims and not all Muslims are Arabs. We also need to remember violent Muslims are no more representatives of all Muslims than murderous church members represent all Christians. The analogy has often been made that it would be as logical to identify all professing Christians with Timothy McVeigh, who was executed for the Oklahoma City bombing, as to identify all Muslims and Arabs with those who destroyed the Twin Towers.

"In God We Trust. United We Stand."

Those are wonderful words. But our unity has always been unity amid diversity. Under the Stars and Stripes, Americans of all stripes have insisted on defining patriotism and unity on their own terms.

Within a week's time, in the aftermath of September 11, I received the same email message from two different people,

halfway across the continent from each other. The bottom line was, "You are entitled to freedom of speech as long as your speech agrees with mine and you say nothing critical about our country." The article concluded with this bit of in-your-face advice:

"Our First Amendment gives every citizen the right to express his opinion about our government, culture, or society, and we will allow you every opportunity to do so. But once you are done complaining. . . I highly encourage you to take advantage of one other great American freedom, the right to leave . . ."

That ultimatum raises several questions:

Who are the "we" who say, "we will allow you every opportunity" to express your opinion? No group has the right to tell you, in the words of the old song, "Hit the road, Jack, and don't you come back no more!"

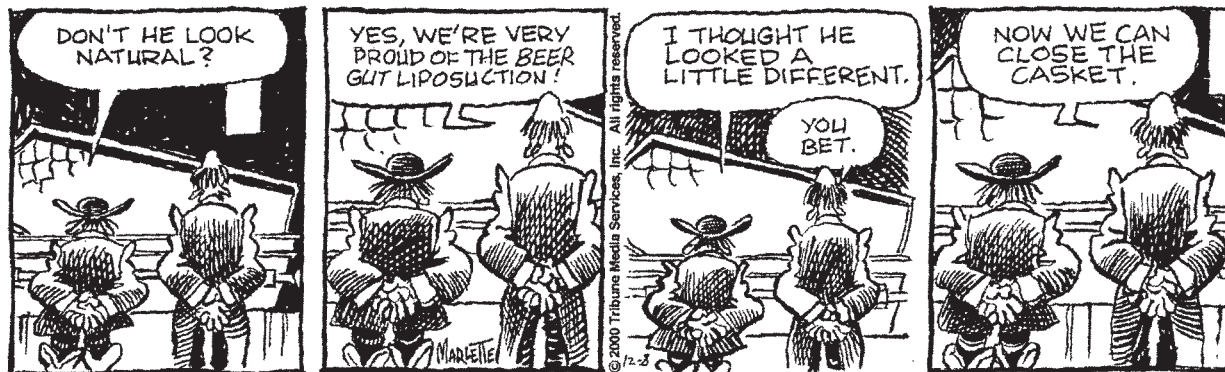
Why should you be invited to leave this country because you express displeasure with aspects of government? Why is it unpatriotic to criticize our government leaders? "My country, right or wrong" is an unthinking slogan. "Love it or leave it" is arrogant.

Where is a person supposed to go? The first advice may be, "Go to the devil." A second suggestion will probably be the country currently considered the worst place on earth—Germany or Japan in World War Two, the Soviet Union in the Cold War, Afghanistan in the war on terrorism.

As Americans, most of us stand united in love for our country, though not always in how we express that love. Sometimes deep affection leads to a lover's quarrel.

Another sign from my college in Abilene, Texas: One of the janitors on campus had this message on his pickup: "You are welcome to Abilene, but come in quiet." Those who equate disagreement with disloyalty are often noisy as they tell others to be quiet. If we seek to silence those who disagree with us when we are in the majority, we should realize this is a two-edged sword that can cut against us when our viewpoint is not in the ascendancy.

The Golden Rule applies here: "Grant unto others the same freedom of expression you would want granted unto you." Love for our country, respect for one another, and especially our love for God, should enable us to hang out the "Space Available" sign, welcoming those with whom we disagree. ■



Is Homophobia The Same As Racism/Sexism?

By *George Yancey, Assistant Professor*
The University of North Texas

Editor's Note: Adapted from a speech delivered at the North Texas Chapter of Christians for Biblical Equality on February 24, 2001.

If there is only one thing that you remember from this morning's talk it is this: it is a mistake to see the varieties of discrimination in our society, whether it is sexism, racism, class distinctions, or homophobia, as identical. By seeing them as identical we create problems. In the world of academia there is a big push to see all discrimination problems as exactly the same. Intellectually that does not make sense.

For example, at the University of Texas at Austin, I had a roommate who took a race relations class. He was white. For some reason the professor brought in a young gay male who stated that he knew what it was like to be black because he was homosexual. I assume that he would probably argue that he knows what it is like to be a woman as well. That is problematic for me because I do not think he knows what it is like to be an African-American or a woman. Likewise, I do not know what it is like to be gay. It is easy to think that racism is just like sexism, homophobia, and classism. That is an easy way to think about the problems of discrimination. Then we do not have to think about the distinctions in those persons due to whatever unique characteristics he/she possesses. In academia people are taking the easy way out. What is easy politically can be intellectually dishonest.

Here is a story to show how people use this intellectual comparison to say things that make no sense whatsoever. I am studying multiracial churches. There is a church in Chicago that is 40% white, 30% black, and 30% Hispanic. These people have figured out something about racial issues. Now I do not know what their position is on gender, but when it comes to racial issues, they are doing more than most of us. How many of us are in churches that are as racially diverse? One day a group of protesters appeared, because they were going to have a speaker who was going to talk about homosexuality as being sinful. The protesters chanted, "Racist, Sexist, Anti-Gay, Born-again Bigots go away." I wonder how many of those protesters have organizations that are 40% white, 30% black and 30% Hispanic, and if so, are these the organizations where they develop their friendships and social networks. Perhaps this church can be critiqued for other reasons, but racism was not one of them. The protesters had the mindset that if you are homophobic you are racist, sexist, and other generalizations. That is just intellectually simplistic. Life does not work that way.

I want to challenge you today, and hopefully give you some resources, so that when you encounter this mindset, you can begin to think more carefully about the unique problems

a person may face. This is much better than assuming, "I am a woman, I know what a black person faces" or "I am an African-American so I know what a woman faces." The main thing I want to address deals with the gay rights movement that promotes the notion that homophobia is the same as racism and sexism.

I would argue that racism and sexism are much closer to each other than to homophobia. But even then, it is a mistake to think that sexism is identical to racism.

There has been the assumption that if we deal with sexism, then we automatically deal with racism and vice versa. What I will do today is give you two examples to show that this is not the case. If we make the assumption that "I understand sexism thus I understand racism," or vice versa, then we wind up thinking that we are ministering to someone, when in fact we are not meeting their needs.

For example, look at the issue of sexual harassment, an issue that men of color do not necessarily understand any better than white men do. As a man, I can intellectually understand the problems of sexual harassment and I can try to empathize. But I cannot fully comprehend what sexual harassment means to women because sexuality means something different to men than it does for women.

Once in a class we were trying to define sexual harassment. One student asked, "What is the big deal?" To him, if a female superior wanted to pat him on the butt, what is the problem? He missed the whole point. The point is that sexual harassment is not just an uncomfortable feeling, it is also a threat. It is a threat to one's sexuality much more so for a woman than it is for a man. There are cases where men are sexually harassed, but it occurs more often to women than it does to men.

On average men are physically larger than women, and so for women there is a physical threat. Men also tend to have more social power. The way men express their sexuality is often more intimidating. Women tend to express their sexuality in ways that are not threatening to men, whereas if a man is not careful the way he expresses his sexuality is very threatening to women. So you can have a workplace where men and women are both expressing their sexuality, but women are intimidated because of this difference.

There is no evidence that men of color are any more sensitive to the issues of sexual harassment than white men. In fact, I have been doing research which assesses certain gender attitudes of men of different races. What I find is that on some gender attitudes whites are more progressive, and on others

that are less progressive. But there is no general trend that shows that men of color, because they understand racism, understand sexism better than white men.

We all know some of the problems that President Clinton has had with women in the workplace. There was also a black congressman a few years ago named Mel Reynolds who had the same problem. In fact he went to jail, as the women he was involved with were sixteen years old. This black congressman probably understood racism, but obviously did not understand the sexual dynamics of the workplace or else he would not have made that mistake.

Just because a man understands racism does not mean that he understands sexism. It is a mistake to think that if we deal with racism, we also have dealt with sexism. The reverse is true as well. Just because we deal with sexism does not mean we have dealt with racism.

How many of you know that if you are walking down the street and a car is driving past you at 30 miles per hour, as the people in the car lock their door you can hear the doors locking? I know that because I hear it all the time. I hear car doors locking. I hear it a little less now. I have a few gray hairs so people are probably thinking; "He is probably not that dangerous. He probably cannot run that fast and chase us down now." Often when I was five years younger I heard car doors lock as I was walking.

One time when I was teaching at the University of Texas at San Antonio I was walking by a car dressed like a student—not in gangster colors. I looked young enough to be a student. Yet car doors were locking. I remember stopping at a store and walking towards it. I heard car doors lock. I looked around and there was an old guy in a car. I kept on walking and the car doors unlocked. So we know why the car doors locked—because I was there.

I have asked this question to students in my race relations class (I tend to have racially diverse classes): How many people have heard car doors lock as you pass? With one exception all the people who raise their hands are black males. The only exception is that once a Puerto Rican woman raised her hand as well. I have yet to have a white person raise his or her hand.

Am I making too much of this? Should I not acknowledge that those people are bigots and not let it bother me? I should just move on with my life. Yet African-Americans understand that this practice is connected to a larger issue in our society. We have heard of racial profiling. The fear that people have of African-Americans is greater than the fear they have of European-Americans and this prompts police officers to stop blacks more often than they stop whites. I believe that the Rodney King beating happened to some extent because he was a black male and there was an increased fear of a black male. Black men notice that sometimes when we go into elevators, white women hold their purses tighter. We note that sometimes people look at us nervously. There is a fear directed at us that is related to some of the problems we face. For example, black males serve longer prison sentences and are greater victims of police brutality.

I do not think that white women really understand this. I love my wife, Sherelyn. We have been together almost six years. I have heard from her some of her issues of gender. None of them make me think that any of her issues include people fearing her. People fear me. They fear me without even knowing me. That is something I have to overcome. Just because you understand sexism does not mean that you understand racism. Women and people of color have different issues.

Having laid this groundwork I want to now focus on the issue of homosexuality. I did not want to bring up this issue until we understood the general principle. That principle is that we have to be very careful about grouping different issues together, as if they are the same. But this tendency is really obvious when we come to homosexuality.

I would argue that there are three reasons why homophobia is different from racism and sexism. These three reasons include ways in which racism and sexism have commonalities.

The first reason is physical sight. I am sure when some of you met me, one of the things that probably came to your mind was, "He is black." Automatically you know that I am an African-American. In other words, if I want to hide the fact that I am an African-American from you then I have done a poor job. Now there are other things in your mind as well, such as, "He is tall" or "He is a man." Likewise, I look at you and to some degree I think, "You are white," or "You are a woman."

Race is an important factor. I have no choice about being black. Whenever you meet me, whatever preconceptions you have about blacks, I have to deal with them. It is obviously not the same with homosexuality. If a person is gay or lesbian, you can meet them, you can work with them, you can go to school with them, and yet not know they are homosexual. It is their choice to tell you or not.

Some activists say that this is part of the problem—that homosexuals have to deny their sexuality. Well I guess I am not that sympathetic since as a Christian there are times when I cannot be as forthcoming with my spirituality. For example, I have to be careful in a public school setting or in academia. Sometimes you just cannot say what you want to say. As far as being black or a woman, you have no choice. People are going to react to you and you have got to deal with their attitudes.

Now I can choose to hide things from you that might devalue your opinion of me. I am a fan of the San Diego Chargers. I don't have to share that with you. I can simply watch them lose again and no one has to know that I support a team that went 1-15 last year! This is much different from being devalued because you are black. If I do not want to be teased for being a fan of the worst football team in America I can hide that fact. But there is no hiding my heritage—it is in my skin.

I face stereotypes people hold because I am an African-American. People will cling to stereotypes even when it works against them. When I was in graduate school I played intramural basketball for the Baptist Student Union. We were

decent as a team. I had a roommate who played high school basketball and another player who was really good. Most of the other players did not have a great deal of experience, but they had athletic ability. One day we played an all-black team. I watched them warm-up. I thought that they were good, but I felt we could beat them.

When the game began, they immediately overpowered us. I could not figure out why until I noticed that the players who did not have much experience were not playing well. They were not used to playing against blacks. They were intimidated by the fact that we were playing a black team, even though that team was not very good. I called a timeout and told the team, "Look I know they are black but they are not that good." It did not work. They beat us anyway.

My teammates stereotypical view of blacks hurt us. If we had not believed that all blacks are better basketball players, we probably would have won that game. We act on stereotypes even when they work against us.

Why would you not want to work with a woman if she is the best person for the job? We sometimes stereotype women as inept workers, even when it injures the woman and hurts the person stereotyping.

If you are a woman or a person of color you will face stereotypes because you cannot hide your race or gender. If you are gay or lesbian then you can hide that fact. People do stereotype gays and lesbians, but they have the freedom to hide that fact. If I face teasing and stereotyping because I support the Chargers I can hide that fact. So if you are a person of color or a woman you know that you have to face racism and sexism. You have no choice.

A second way in which racism and sexism is different from homophobia is earning power. In general, a woman makes about 80-90 percent of what a man makes according to the latest statistics. In general, an African-American makes 75 cents for every dollar a European-American makes. For Hispanic-Americans it is a bit higher. On average women and people of color make less money than whites and males. For gays and lesbians this is reverse. On the average, homosexual persons make more money than heterosexuals do. Most, if not all, of the studies on this topic confirm that fact.

When the first movement toward gay rights developed, one issue talked about was whether there should be affirmative action for gays and lesbians. The homosexual lobby has pulled back from this issue because how can you argue for affirmative action when your group is making more money than the average?

If we ever get to the point where women make as much money as men, then affirmative action for women will no longer make much sense. The same is true for racial minorities. There is no affirmative action for Jewish-Americans because they are better educated than most Americans and make as much or more money than most other ethnic groups. So when we talk about economic inequality, we are focusing on race and gender.

We know how important economics is. It determines so

much of your life and your opportunities. Obviously we can make a strong argument on behalf of economic equality for women and people of color, for there is systematic economic discrimination against them unknown for gays and lesbians.

I am not implying that individual discrimination does not exist. Of course there are individual cases of discrimination against men and whites. If we do not recognize this, people will begin to discount our attempts to deal with systematic discrimination. Yet, on average in our society you are better off being a man than you are being white. Yes, there are times when gays and lesbians face individual economic discrimination.

But systematically they are not worse off than blacks or women; rather they fair better economically than heterosexuals. This is very important because as terrible as stereotyping and social stigma may be, money is still a powerful force that helps to determine acceptance in our society. As Christians we do not want to be overly materialistic, but it is because of inadequate distribution of resources that we have ghettos, poverty, and single mothers struggling to survive.

We must recognize that poverty is connected to gender and race. This is an important distinction when we contrast racism and sexism with homophobia. There is an economic component that is missing when we discuss issues of sexual preference. There may be individual problems that gays and lesbians face, but they do not face the economic realities that racial minorities and women do.

There is a third way in which homophobia is different from race and gender. The first two are ways are non-controversial. People may argue with my interpretation, but not with the facts. Racial minorities and women clearly are noticeable in a way that gays and lesbians are not. And gays and lesbians are not economically inferior to heterosexuals, women, or people of color.

A third comparison is admittedly controversial, for many people will disagree with my contention. The third way I believe that being a woman or a person of color is different from a homosexual orientation is this: race and gender are innate, while homosexuality has some degree of volition involved.

Notice that I said "some degree of volition." I am not of the school that homosexuality is a pure choice. I do not believe that it is easy to leave the homosexual lifestyle. I recognize that it is difficult to leave the homosexual lifestyle. Sometimes Christians make the mistake of believing that choosing to be gay is like choosing to have spinach instead of broccoli or of seeing one movie instead of another. Clearly that is not true.

However, some argue that gayness is as innate as being black. I do not believe that either. I basically believe that there is a genetic component, but not a determinant to being gay. I think that some individuals are more predisposed to homosexuality than others. I see homosexual acts as sins just as anger is sin. Some people will never lose their temper. Others often blow up in anger. They likely have a stronger genetic predisposition to anger than others do. Does this relieve them of the responsibility of controlling their temper? No, but we cannot

expect them to act like those without this predisposition.

I recommend a book by Jeffery Satinover.¹ Some of what I will present comes from his work, although many of these ideas I have discovered elsewhere. Satinover proposes that there is a genetic component to homosexuality, but that genetics is not a determinant. He points out many people have left that lifestyle and are living in a healthy marriage.

It is not impossible to leave that lifestyle. Many have done so. He also makes an interesting analogy between homosexuality and alcoholism. We know that there is a genetic component to alcoholism, but we do not say to alcoholics, "You are born this way so let us make it easier for you to imbibe more drinks." No, rather we try to help such people overcome their "sickness," out of compassion for them. We want them to return to normalcy by overcoming their condition.

One of the problems I have with the argument that homosexuality is determined by genetics is this: I know that as a sociologist sexual attraction is to some degree shaped by society. In certain societies women who are considered attractive are very skinny. In other societies women who are considered attractive are what we would call overweight. Why would there be such a variation between societies? We can argue that the attraction that men have toward women is natural, but then why is there not an ideal type of women that men in all societies find attractive?

I would argue that society to some degree helps to determine what we think is attractive. This is why many sociologists rightly criticize the images of women that we often hold. A few years ago the ideal fashion models were what I would call anorexic. You put a piece of string with some hair on it and that was the model in demand.

What does this mean? Is it a big a leap to think that if we are influenced by social norms as to who heterosexuals find physically attractive, we are also led to believe that some people of the same sex are also attractive. It amazes me that some of the same sociologists who rightly point out how society influences our desires for the opposite sex, also argue that biology completely determines whether we are attracted to the same sex.

A second problem I have with the argument that homosexuality is totally innate is the evidence that is provided by people who were once gay and then become heterosexual. Likewise the notion of bisexuality does not seem to fit with the

idea that homosexuality is innate and cannot be changed. There are gays who now are living a heterosexual lifestyle with a wife and children. They are no longer gay. This does seem impossible if homosexuality is innate.

Everything I know about those who make that transformation, suggests to me that it is a very difficult one. Yet the fact that such a transformation can and does happen suggests that there is a cultural and volitional component to homosexuality.

I am born with the characteristics that society uses to determine that I am black. I cannot change those characteristics no matter how hard I try. I will always be black. I have never met an "ex-black." Thus I cannot become "white" in the way that a homosexual might be able to become heterosexual. Likewise a woman can only "become" a man after rather extensive surgery and drugs. She cannot become a man through therapy and non-intrusive measures. It is not something she can do on her own. She is truly born a woman and that designation is innate. I have yet to hear a good genetic determinist argument explaining how people can be bisexual.

Finally, notice that since I have not used a scriptural argument, you may assume a naturalistic framework (because if the Bible is incorrect then we are left with an evolutionary presupposition). This is important because often Christians are debating with people who operate out of a materialistic worldview. The theory of evolution assumes that we are able to pass our genes on to the next generation. For example, long ago a man who was fast and strong would be able to kill the animals needed to feed his family and thus his family would survive as well as his genes. This would make his offspring bigger, stronger, and faster. This is a major premise of evolution and of the notion of a natural selection.

The question I propose is this: how can homosexuality be a quality that aids the survival of the human race in an evolutionary sense? By their own definition, homosexuals are unable to pass their genes on to their kids. There are some that become gay after having kids, and there are medical procedures now where you can have children without heterosexual sex, but these occurrences are uncommon. The vast majority of gays and lesbians have no biological children.

So logically what should happen over time, if homosexuality is based upon genetics, is the loss of the homosexual gene. Under an evolutionary framework gays would be a smaller and smaller population until they were non-existent. The persis-



tence of gays indicates that there must be social conditions and volitional choices that people are making that enables this population to remain in human societies.

The best argument I have heard came from a lesbian friend of mine in graduate school. She argued that societies often become overpopulated and this overpopulation threatens the existence of the society. Thus, having a certain number of homosexuals in the society helped to stave off the extinction of that society. I did not buy this argument. That may help a culture to survive, but that theory does not explain how an individual could pass on his or her genes. If homosexuality is entirely genetically based, then in a few generations we will not have people who are genetically gay.

The belief that homosexuality is not entirely genetic does not mean we should not have sympathy and to be sensitive to gays. It also does not mean that we should just look at gays and ask them to just “snap out” of their gayness. Homosexuality does not work that way. Yet, the notion that one is “born gay” does not hold up to real scrutiny.

Unfortunately much of the scientific work in “gay studies” is not open to divergent views. Arguments like mine do not often get published. If homosexuality is not purely innate, then it must also be a lifestyle. This means that there is an element of volition in the orientation. It means that there is a morality issue in homosexual behavior that is not present for women and minorities. It is not sinful to be a woman or black. But I believe that the scriptures teach that homosexual acts are sinful. So we have to take this into consideration when we compare homophobia to racism and sexism.

Thus, we are compelled to make these distinctions between homophobia and racism and sexism. We do not make these distinctions to be overly judgmental, but rather to be sensitive that there are different needs and challenges in homosexuality. For example, I believe that we must work on the issue of acceptance, as well as oppose homosexual actions. One of the reasons people become homosexuals is because they have faced a lack of acceptance in their lives. Thus we need to ask how we can accept gays and lesbians as persons, even if we disagree with their lifestyle.

Yes, there are problems within the church on understanding and loving the homosexual. One of the best experiences I have had was with a church in Austin, Texas. This congregation repented of the sins they had committed against gays and lesbians—the sin of rejecting them as persons and treating their sin as if it were the worst sin of all.

We do not do gays and lesbians a favor when we blur the lines between homophobia and racism and sexism. We also lose our focus on what racism and sexism really is. Let us not think that because we face discrimination, we know what it is like to face other types of discrimination. Let us also be honest and not let others distort the real issues by blurring the lines between race, gender, and homosexuality. ■

¹ Satinover, Jeffery. *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Co., 1996).

The War Against America's Public Schools: Privatizing Schools, Commercializing Education

Gerald W. Bracey, (Allyn and Bacon), 213 pp. \$24—To
Order Call 800/666-9433

Book Review By Frosty Troy
Editor of *The Oklahoma Observer*

There's nothing polite about Gerald Bracey's detailed description of the impact of vouchers, charters, and the profit-making education industry on K-12 public schools.

The Stanford-educated research psychologist's book offers an eye-opening account of the motives, the money, and the questionable legal and ethical maneuverings behind the push to privatize and commercialize public education.

From the outset, Bracey admits public schools need reform.

“Too many schools still bore too many kids,” he says. But, he adds, “the real agenda of many enemies of public schools” is to dismantle, not reform the current system.

“Getting the government out of schools is part of the conservative agenda.” Bracey says.

He chastises political and religious conservatives, and some in higher education for “distorted” testing data that label public schools as “failing.”

It's one way, he says, to grab educational dollars for charters, vouchers, for-profit alternatives, and even academic research.

Such misinterpretation of data is rampant, says Bracey, citing scores on the SATs, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) as ripe for misuse.

Blasting U.S. 12th graders for a low worldwide ranking in science is absurd, Bracey says, because of the vast international differences in curriculum and student participation. Top-ranked Scandinavian students study three times as much physics as their U.S. counterparts and most countries picked the cream of their student crop for two out of three TIMSS tests.

The United States was only one of five countries with a representative sample for all exams. Bracey likens the TIMSS rankings to comparing “apples to aardvarks.”

His chapter on: *Charter schools, publicly funded but free of bureaucracy,*” tells of wasted money, little accountability, and not much innovation.

Bracey cites a common scenario: “The visionary opens a

charter without the practical management skills to operate it, burns out, and turns the school over to a private, for-profit school-management firm.”

These firms, he says, are famous for canned curriculum and low teacher salaries.

Faced with weak, short-staffed oversight agencies, school districts have granted charters while paying little attention to evaluation, says Bracey. A UCLA study found schools lost charters for financial irregularities, not for failure to meet academic goals.

And, he adds, when successful practices do emerge they rarely spread to public schools, as they should in theory, because there’s seldom a mechanism for sharing information.

Although most for-profit education firms have failed to emerge from the red, there’s great moneymaking potential, says Bracey, especially with the ongoing effort to erode confidence in public schools.

Since our schools impart a common idea of good citizenship, he’s concerned that for-profit schools, lacking public scrutiny of curriculum and finances, might pose “a threat to democracy.”

Bracey has no faith that the private sector will treat education any differently than manufacturing where, he says, “neglect of standards and quality in favor of profits is the order of the day.”

Voucher-programs have faced voter opposition, court challenges and heated debate at the federal level. Now some are steering clear of the “voucher” name tag, but no matter what it’s called, the program still drains money and students from public schools.

They call them “opportunity scholarships” and other misnomers—principally because poll after poll reveals that as many as 70% of Americans oppose using public money for private schools.

Like charters, voucher programs have largely avoided evaluation, adds Bracey. “It is more than a bit ironic that choice advocates, claiming the public schools need to be more accountable, have thus far largely succeeded in avoiding accountability for their own endeavors.”

Dense with facts and figures about all the minor players and issues in the privatizing/charter debate, Bracey’s newest work is a great handbook for besieged public school educators and advocates.

He doesn’t pretend to offer solutions for needed reform—just a warning that public schools are in danger and much too precious to let go without a fight. ■

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Cotton Patch for the Kingdom: Clarence Jordan’s Demonstration Plot at Koinonia Farm

By Ann Louise Coble

Book Review by Robert Parham
Executive Director Baptist Center for Ethics

Every good Baptist needs to read *Cotton Patch for the Kingdom*, the newest book about Clarence Jordan and Koinonia Farm.

It’s a painful reminder of the racial meanness that oozed from Baptist churches, and a hopeful witness of what God can do with a transformed life.

Some 33 years ago, Jordan died in his study where he was translating John 8. He was only 58. Yet Koinonia Farm still thrives and Jordan’s writings still feed hungry souls.

When Millard Fuller, founder and president of Habitat for Humanity, asked Jordan’s wife, Florence, for suggestions about what passages he should read at the funeral, she said, “read any of it, Millard. He loved it all.”

Indeed Jordan loved the Bible. He loved it enough to live it in an interracial, agrarian community and to translate most of the New Testament into Southern English.

The book’s author, Ann Louise Coble, retells Jordan’s story and underscores the idea that the community was really “a demonstration plot for the kingdom of God.”

Coble, a professor of Christian education and religion at Westminster College, leans on Dallas Lee’s *The Cotton Patch Evidence*, Henlee Barnette’s *Clarence Jordan: Turning Dreams into Deeds* and Joel Snider’s *The Cotton Patch Gospel*. She also relies on Jordan’s own published and unpublished writings.

Cotton Patch for the Kingdom is an easy, memorable read that weaves the KKK, Hutterites, Martin Luther King, Dorothy Dan and Jimmy Carter into the narrative. It looks critically at the issue of biblical translation and discloses Jordan’s own “battle fatigue.”

Coble points out that Jordan sought to build a biblical society, not a utopian one. “Jordan was keenly aware of the sinfulness of human nature, and he did not expect Koinonia Farm to be a perfect community,” she writes.

Pastors and Sunday School teachers will find enough striking stories, remarkable quotes and good theology to justify the book’s modest expense.

But don't stop with ordering this book. Order all of Jordan's books.

As a long-time Sunday School teacher, I vouch for his versions of the New Testament as study tools and know their teaching value. In fact, I think a Baptist church media center can only be considered first-rate if it has Jordan's New Testament works. ■

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Confronting the Controversies: A Christian Looks at the Tough Issues

By Adam Hamilton

*Book Review By Jack Glasgow, Pastor
Zebulon Baptist Church, North Carolina*

Open conversation on the crucial ethical issues of our day is infrequent. There is certainly no shortage of highly charged rhetoric of opinion. But, a willingness to look at both sides of complex issues that are the lightning rods of our religious, political and social debate is rare.

Adam Hamilton's work, *Confronting the Controversies: A Christian Looks at the Tough Issues*, is that rare attempt to address serious ethical issues in open fashion. The book is based on sermons Hamilton preached as pastor of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas.

In the past decade he has led the church in a period of phenomenal growth from mission status to a weekly attendance of more than 6,000. One might argue that a successful tenure of some length provides a stable platform for a pastor to preach on such controversial issues.

Sermons on church/state separation, creationism/evolution, the death penalty, euthanasia, prayer in public schools, abortion and homosexuality are the basis for each chapter. Each chapter is ordered as follows: a prayer, Scripture texts, analysis of the issue, conclusion and effective follow-up questions for thought and discussion.

The author does well to present both sides of an issue, necessary historical analysis, and to state his opinion clearly without regarding his view as the only acceptable Christian position.

Hamilton's aim is fourfold: to help Christians learn how to do Christian ethics, to provide a healthy model for ethical dialog that respects other opinions, to teach both Christians and non-Christians how the Christian faith relates to contemporary issues and to meet the goals of any sermon—evangelize, encourage discipleship, challenge prophetically and extend pastoral care.

His method of ethical analysis employs John Wesley's "Quadrilateral" of four tools: Scripture, tradition, experience and reason. Hamilton stays true to both his aims and method. The result is an excellent example of how to address the issues of our day in an effective, consistent and honest fashion.

What are Hamilton's conclusions on these matters of debate? While advocating strong Christian participation in the affairs of government, he is equally clear that the church "should not try to use the government to promote our faith," nor expect the state to do the work of the church.

He speaks out against the death penalty, saying, "through the death penalty we, the society and state, usurp God's authority, power, and time line and as Christians we contradict the gospel we proclaim." He does admit that his position has evolved and he fairly represents Old Testament evidence for the death penalty.

The book provides compelling ethical arguments against any forms of active euthanasia and against state-sponsored prayer in schools. A loving pastoral heart is apparent in Hamilton's treatment of abortion and homosexuality. He clearly struggles with the issues and extends grace and compassion without reservation to all, yet maintains an ethical position true to his biblical convictions that these practices are outside God's intentions for our lives.

Who will profit from *Confronting the Controversies*? Pastors will profit from reading sermons of ethical conviction that state positions in a truly Christian manner. The book's plain language and the questions posed after each chapter make the book ideal for individual or small group study. ■

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CET COMPUTER CRASH— NEED YOUR HELP

The day I returned from a Mission Trip to Argentina in April, my Hard Drive burned out. We lost all email addresses, some future articles, and many files and records. We do have hard copies of some, but many will need retyping or replacing. If you sent anything in 2002, please send it again for it is hard to recall everything we had on our computer. Fortunately our mailing list is kept in another location.

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

Ich Glaube an Gott

By Foy Valentine, Founding Editor

When Adolph Hitler's Nazi juggernaut was at the point of overrunning Bonn, Karl Barth made a big decision. Rather than bow the knee to the Nazi evil, Karl Barth chose to flee. Leaving his prestigious teaching post at the world-class University of Bonn, he made his way across the southern border of Germany to his native Switzerland where he enlisted as a private in the Swiss army and served until the war was finally over. Then he returned to his teaching post at the University of Bonn. The University buildings together with the quintessentially civilized city of Bonn had been bombed into smithereens by the conquering Allied Forces. Classes began in the rubble amidst the dust and noise, the hammering and screeching of heavy machinery, and all the commotion of massive reconstruction. Barth's first words to his first class in his first lecture on theology were, "Ich Glaube an Gott"—I believe in God.

What better way to begin again?

What better Christian testimony?

What better theology?

What better ethics?

What seems to me to be Karl Barth's Germanic circumlocutions in his portentous writings can be, at the very best, daunting. After being translated by scholars into English, they then need to be translated into my native East Texas language by non-academics who are able to communicate ideas without obfuscation, profundity without pedantry. These people must never, ever have studied German grammar, German verb forms, or German philosophers.

Still, Karl Barth is a great theologian whose contributions to the Christian cause must not be denied or denigrated or diminished. His memorable manifesto, "I believe in God," deserves to be immortalized, emblazoned on every believer's soul, highlighted in every Christian's everyday life, and used as a daily credo by the people of God everywhere.

Job said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him."

Paul said, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

When the man whose son was grievously afflicted came to Jesus for deliverance, the Lord told him that all things are possible to those who believe, the father then cried out, "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief."

And Karl Barth just said, "I believe in God."

So what to do?

What to do when your Mother has just breathed her last breath and her pulse has stilled? "I believe in God."

What to do when the Medical Doctor says soberly, "I am sorry to have to tell you that the cancer has metastasized?" "I believe in God."

What to do when you drive around the corner and see that your house has burned, along with everything in it, to the ground? "I believe in God."

What to do when the phone rings at 1 o'clock in the morning and the voice from the Emergency Room at the hospital says, "Your son has been in a very bad automobile accident. You should come as quickly as possible?" "I believe in God."

What to do when the broker says that your retirement savings, painfully accumulated for all your working life have been wiped out? "I believe in God."

What to do when your spouse who decades ago stood with you happily and pledged, "Till death do us part," comes in one morning to say, "I am filing for divorce?" "I believe in God."

What to do when the child development specialist says, "This child can never see, or walk, or talk, or even hold a rattle?" "I believe in God."

What to do when the work Supervisor says, "I'm sorry, but your position has been eliminated and you have until 5 o'clock this afternoon to clear out your desk?" "I believe in God."

On the other hand, consider the other side of this coin.

What to do when a much hoped for position opens and you get the word that you have been chosen to fill it? "I believe in God."

What to do when the editor himself calls to say they like your manuscript very much, will publish it next Spring, and want a contract signed for your next two books? "I believe in God."

What to do when the incredibly wonderful young woman who has been the focus of your life for more than two years finally says "Yes?" "I believe in God."

What to do when a long and stressful pregnancy is succeeded by a very difficult delivery, but then the Medical Doctor emerges into the waiting room all bathed in smiles to announce, "You have a fine, healthy, beautiful baby girl?" "I believe in God."

Yes. In the bad times and in the good times, there is solid reason for the believer to affirm faith in God, to declare confidence in God, to confess dependence on God, to acknowledge reliance on God, to rest securely in the solid insight of Micah 6:8 that what the Lord requires of us is to do justice,

(continued on page 11)

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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