

CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY

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Etica y Misiones

By Joe E. Trull, Editor

Ethics and missions. How do they relate?

In April Audra and I visited Argentina, joining our close friends Jack and Jean Glaze. The two served as missionaries in Buenos Aires for 25 years, Jack as professor and president at the seminary, as both of them witnessed and worked establishing churches in the country.

Almost 80 now, Jack is remarkably healthy and sharp as ever, the epitome of an earnest biblical scholar and a warm-hearted evangelist.

Second only to ethics has been my love and commitment to missions. Every church I pastored strongly supported mission work. Each year I have joined congregates and students in mission trips. For eight years I served as a trustee of the Foreign Mission Board of the SBC (now the International Mission Board) visiting over twenty countries and working with scores of missionaries.

My trip to Argentina has confirmed recent concerns about some major changes in SBC mission strategy. My thoughts here are not meant in any way to hinder the work of our missionaries—with few exceptions, they continue in faithful service, often under difficult restrictions.

As a pastor, former trustee, and a Christian deeply committed to missions, I am distressed at several changes in mission strategy—especially its questionable theological premise and some disastrous ethical consequences of that basis.

After numerous conversations with missionaries and IMB staff, I have reached these conclusions which my trip verified: 1. The IMB now focuses *exclusively on church planting and evangelism*. I have no quarrel with either strategy. But I am troubled to see our IMB abdicate medical missions, abandon theological education, and relinquish social ministries that have opened so many doors in cultures resistant to Christian witness.

All missionaries are now required to be “church planters”—seminary teachers, doctors and nurses, and social workers, if they continue as SBC missionaries, must change their missionary calling or resign! No more do they heal the sick in the hospital at Bangalore, India, or teach the 200 students at the International Seminary in Buenos Aires.

This is not new. It is the same battle Baptists fought 50 years ago, when narrow Fundamentalism opposed social

ethics and social ministry. The rationale then was the fear of Liberalism and the “Social Gospel.” It took awhile, but even the most conservative came to realize the gospel is social, and teaching, healing, and ministering in Jesus’ name is the heart and soul of mission work.

2. Today, however, *the mission strategy of the IMB is based on a flawed theological understanding of “end times.”* The present leader of the IMB seems to be driven by his understanding of the Second Coming, based on one verse in Mark: “And the good news must be proclaimed to all nations” (13:10). Each year while teaching at NOBTS, I heard the IMB President preach in chapel—always he referred to this verse.

To be certain, I have discussed this issue with missionaries and administrators closest to Dr. Rankin. I am now convinced that he genuinely believes the role of the IMB is to take the gospel to every nation as quickly as possible, in order that Jesus may return! This view seems to resemble a form of dispensational theology that discredits ethics and social ministry.

This interpretation raises many serious questions about missionology. What does it mean to “proclaim the good news to all nations?” Does one gospel sermon to a “people group” or one church planted in an area remove a hindrance to Jesus’ return? Is the purpose of mission work to “speed-up” the Second Coming?

3. On the practical side, *decades of successful mission programs have been terminated.* The IMB has closed hospitals around the world and sent medical missionaries home. Our only school for training ministers in the Caribbean (where I have taught four times) is no more. The influential and growing seminary in Buenos Aires, filled to capacity with over 200 students, no longer has missionary teachers or economic support. (In Argentina’s present economic crisis, students cannot even afford books!) A media ministry that reached millions in gated high rise apartments, was eliminated. The list is endless.

I have no doubt the IMB President is sincere in his belief—but I believe he is sincerely wrong! I know the spin. “We are shifting these institutions to the nationals,” Dr. Rankin told me personally. In most countries, however, the
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EthixBytes

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

“People in the pews share the responsibility for the craziness we see in church today. We would have fewer con artists and unrepentant adulterers in our pulpits—or on Christian television—if church folks weren’t supporting them. What we need to do is change the channel, vote with our feet, and send our money elsewhere.” Editor Lee Grady in *Charisma* magazine.

“Military action, as envisioned by President Bush against Hussein’s Iraqi regime, would be justified under ‘Just War’ ethical standards.” Richard Land, SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission President. Baptist Press, 9/10/02.

“The burden of proof is high for anyone who would claim to act preemptively—Just War theory is a paradigm to make resorting to war law-governed and debatable in a public setting. . . . use of force must be the last resort. You never initiate an attack. It is a defensive theory.” David Gushee, Baptist ethicist at Union University.

“Enron paid no income taxes in four of the past five years, using almost 900 subsidiaries in tax-haven countries and other techniques . . . It was also eligible for \$382 million in tax refunds from the Treasury Department.” David Johnston in the *N.Y. Times*.

“I just want you to know that you are not going to church with a crook.” Bernie Ebbers, Worldcom’s founder and former CEO to his Baptist church in Mississippi, who responded with a standing ovation.

“This was a pure case of theft, of inside stealing, again from their own investors.” Congressman Billy Tauzin (R., La.), responding to Worldcom’s accounting irregularities amounting to “\$3.85 Billion [and] Ebbers over \$400 Million in loans at a favorable 2.15 percent interest rate” (EthicsDaily.com, July 19).

“American executives who want to evade U.S. taxes on U.S. income by moving their mailbox to an island and holding beach-side board meetings are entitled to a tan, not a tax break.” U.S. Rep. Lloyd Doggett, D-Austin, TX.

“For all the right-wing howling about liberal media, and although there is at least a decent muster of liberal columnists, most newspaper editorial policies are conservative. Talk radio is essentially one long, coast-to-coast din of right-wing rants. Television commentary is mostly of the ‘yes, but . . .’ and ‘on the other hand’ sort, but of the commentators with strong slants, again most lean right.” Columnist Tom Teepen, Atlanta

“Therefore, I believe today that I am acting in the sense of the Almighty Creator: By warding off the Jews, I am fighting for the Lord’s work.” Adolf Hitler in *Mein Kampf*

“Men who cohabit with the women they eventually marry are more reluctant to marry and, then, are less committed to their marriages.” Center for Marital and Family Studies, University of Denver (*USA Today*, July 8).

“One average American uses 17 gallons of water daily in the shower. South African women together walk the equivalent of a round trip to the moon 16 times a day to get water.” *Sojourners Magazine*, July, 2002.

“Our ears have been thoroughly trained to associate the word ‘Palestinian’ or ‘Arab’ with the word ‘terrorist.’ We never hear that 726,000 Palestinians lost their homes and ancestral lands when the nation of Israel was founded in 1948, or that Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is patently illegal and that the U.N. has multiple resolutions demanding they withdraw, or that the U.S. subsidizes Israel to the tune of \$10 million daily—30% of our foreign aid budget.” Ken Sehested, *Baptist Peacemaker*

“A popular Middle Eastern joke insists President Bush’s recent speech on a Palestinian state was delayed for a few days, waiting for a translation from the original Hebrew.” James M. Wall, *The Christian Century*, July 17, 2002. ■

Iraq: Don't Go There

By George Hunsinger, Professor of Systematic Theology
Princeton Theological Seminary

“Wars are not won on the defensive,” asserts Vice President Dick Cheney. “We must take the battle to the enemy and, where necessary, preempt grave threats to our country before they materialize.” For the Bush administration, this policy appears to include a preemptive strike against Iraq, which is viewed as another installment in its war against terrorism.

A war of preemption, advocates maintain, will bring about a highly desired “regime change” in Iraq, install a democratic government there and free the Iraqi people. By just war standards, however, a preemptive attack against Iraq must be condemned.

According to just war theory, three criteria determine whether going to war is justifiable: the cause must be just, the chances of success must be reasonable, and the authority to wage war must be competent. None of these conditions can be met by the preemptive strike planned against Iraq. It is not likely that the main criteria for justifiable conduct in war—providing immunity for noncombatants and using means proportional to the ends—can be met either. Let’s look at each of these principles in light of the proposed attack against Iraq.

Just cause? Having a sufficient cause is the most important condition justifying war. Historically this has involved (a) self-defense (b) against an act of aggression and (c) used as a last resort. Initiating an act of war violates this requirement, since the only sufficient reason for warfare is self-defense against physical aggression.

The right to preempt an anticipated attack can be extrapolated from the self-defense principle if preemptive strikes meet a high standard of justification: the attack being prevented must be imminent, not merely conjectured or vaguely feared in the long run. Everything depends, therefore, on whether Iraq plans to launch an attack against the U.S. in the near future.

Two questions are relevant: Does Hussein actually possess weapons of mass destruction? And if so, do they pose a clear and imminent danger to the U.S. or its allies? The answer to both these questions seems to be no. No evidence has been produced that Iraq is manufacturing weapons of mass destruction. According to experts, both the capacity to manufacture them and the capability of delivering them are lacking. This assessment has been confirmed by sources as diverse as Former Defense Secretary William S. Cohen, current Secretary of State Colin Powell, and former UN arms inspector Scott Ritter.

As a result of the gulf war, Iraq had virtually all of its major weapons programs destroyed—including its nuclear weapons capability, as reported by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Even if Hussein does retain some minimal capability in weapons of mass destruction, mere possession, by just war criteria, is not enough. Iraq has obvious incentives not to implicate itself in using such a capability against the U.S.—unless Iraq itself should be attacked first in an unprovoked war of preemption. In that case, Saddam Hussein would have nothing to lose by unleashing, in desperation, anything he may have.

Reasonable chance of success? The just war theory requires stringently weighing in advance the consequences of a military campaign, even though this requirement by itself is not decisive. Any one who has read Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* or who remembers the Vietnam War should know that when success is made to sound too easy, skepticism is the order of the day. Precious human lives and scarce economic resources are at stake.

Would “liberating” Iraq really be a “cakewalk,” as Ken Adelman, former U.S. arms control director, has claimed? Or is Immanuel Wallerstein of Yale University correct when he warns that Iraq could become another Vietnam: “Just as in Vietnam, the war will drag on and will cost many U.S. lives. And the political effects will be so negative for the U.S. that eventually Bush (or his successor) will pull out. A renewed and amplified Vietnam syndrome will be the result at home.”

According to some estimates, as many as 250,000 U.S. troops will be needed. While other estimates are lower, one Pentagon study has projected an “acceptable” death rate of 20,000-30,000 U.S. soldiers. (The number of “acceptable” Iraqi deaths has apparently not been calculated.) The Iraqi army, estimated at 500,000 troops, will be defending their homeland against a foreign invader who has been bombing them for years. Dissident military analyst Carlton Meyer says: “Ideally, the campaign can be won by sending in 50,000 troops charging in from the air and sea . . . However, they could get bogged down if the Iraqis fight in the cities and mine the roads. In every military operation there are a hundred things that can go wrong; if you can anticipate half of them, you’re a genius.”

Arab leaders have warned that a U.S. war against Iraq could destabilize the entire region. Iraq itself threatens to collapse into anarchy. A puppet regime is far more likely to result than a democracy, and even that will be difficult to

achieve. Senior U.S. military officials reportedly have serious doubts about whether defeating Iraq would be worth the high military and diplomatic cost. A unilateral war against Iraq would be widely perceived as an American bid for colonial occupation in the Middle East. An occupation of oil-rich Iraq, says Meyer, "will not be about freedom, democracy, or security; just money and power."

Legitimate authority? It is doubtful that the U.S. possesses legitimate authority to launch a preemptive war alone against Iraq. "Unilateral action by the United States to overthrow the government of another sovereign nation," writes Hastings law professor George Bisharat, "would constitute a grave breach of international law. Yet that is what the administration proposes to do."

Almost no other country supports a U.S. invasion of Iraq. No Arab state supports it, nor does most of Europe, Russia, Turkey, Pakistan and Iran. Israel and Great Britain are the two notable exceptions, although Tony Blair has pledged that no attack on Iraq will be permitted without UN assent. Whether he will stand by this pledge, however, is by no means clear.

Article 51 of the UN Charter allows for international attacks only if there are no alternatives, and if there is immediate danger with no time for deliberation. The U.S. will almost certainly disregard the UN, since it expects its planned invasion will be opposed. Our country will then look less like the honest international broker it claims to be and increasingly like a rogue state.

On the domestic front there are also doubts about legitimate authority. Recently, Senator Robert C. Byrd (d., W.Va.) urged the Senate to play a central role in determining whether our nation should invade Iraq. According to the Constitution, he insisted, it is the role of the Congress to declare war. "I am determined to do everything in my power to prevent this country from becoming involved in another Vietnam nightmare," he declared. "This determination begins with Congress being fully and sufficiently informed on the undertakings of our government, especially if it involves the commitment to military action."

Proportionality and noncombatant immunity? The principles of proportionality and noncombatant immunity concern how much force is morally appropriate and who are legitimate targets of war. They distinguish the legitimate conduct of war from acts of murder. Too often our country fails to honor these principles.

According to military analyst William Arkin, the Pentagon fails to take civilian casualties with sufficient seriousness. Having surveyed recent U.S. military engagements in the gulf war, the Balkans, and Afghanistan, Arkin concludes that though some progress has been made, U.S. efforts are just not good enough. "The U.S. military can assert all it wants that it takes 'all' measures to minimize civilian harm. But until it is willing to actually study why civilians die in conflict, it is an assertion that has little credibility."

The planned U.S. preemptive strike will take place

against the background of comprehensive UN sanctions that have already wreaked havoc on civilians. They have devastated the weakest and most vulnerable members of Iraqi society: the poor, the elderly, the sick, the newborn, and the young. According to UN reports, over 1 million civilians, the vast majority of whom are children and the elderly, have died since 1990 because of this suffocating blockade. UNICEF officials estimate that in 2000 more than 5,000 children were dying each month primarily because of the sanctions.

From this perspective, the planned invasion will be a continuation of outrages begun by other means. Cluster bombs, like those used in Afghanistan, and other ghastly weapons dropped from 15,000 feet are sure to produce massive civilian casualties. Earlier this year, in a change of official policy, our government even announced a possible "first-use" strategy of "low yield" nuclear weapons. Richard Perle, chairman of the Defense Policy Board that advises the defense secretary, has said: "No strategist would reject, in principle, using nuclear weapons against Iraq."

George Kennan observed years ago that just war principles mean little without a commitment to keep civilian casualties to the absolute minimum, "even at the cost of military victory." The just war tradition requires that "victory" alone cannot be the overriding goal. ■

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A \$15,000 Challenge

A few months ago one of our strongest supporters issued a challenge to our Board of Directors. For every \$1000 gift we could raise, this person would match that \$1000, up to a maximum of \$15,000—a total gift of \$30,000 for the financial support of *Christian Ethics Today*. This equals about one-half of our annual budget.

Thus far 9 persons have pledged to give \$1000 each. One contributor, a college professor, is giving \$85 per month to fulfill his pledge. I was humbled by his pledge, because I know it is for him a very sacrificial gift.

We believe among our readers there are many who could give such a donation, especially since it will be doubled by this matching gift. Contact the editor if you wish to help us reach this challenge. And to all of you who support the Journal, regardless of what you give, your financial support is deeply appreciated.

Ethics of the War on Terrorism

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

Most American Christians have not examined the war against terrorism from the standpoint of Christian ethics. The major religious organizations have either automatically supported whatever the President has proposed or have remained silent about its implications.

The American Catholic Bishops as a body announced publicly their vote (267 to 4) to support the war against Afghanistan. "Most of the heads of the other monotheistic religions in the U.S. from Billy Graham on down," according to *The Jesus Journal*, did not mince words "about their desire to give spiritual and conscience comfort to the American war effort." There is no indication that President Bush, who claims membership in the United Methodist Church, consulted Methodist leaders, or that they approached him.

Without raising the long-debated issue of whether Christians should be pacifists, it seems to me there are several ethical issues involved in the wars already undertaken or proposed by the President. The first is President Bush's declaration of war against an entire nation for harboring one man, Osama bin Laden, and his agents.

Is it ethical to kill, wound and deprive many thousands of civilians of their homes in order to locate or kill one or more criminals when those civilians or their nation have not declared war or acted against the United States? The Bush Administration may not have recognized this as a problem, because throughout the war, Americans received no independent report of the civilian casualties as Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, accompanied by men in uniform, briefed the press and the American people.

However, *XTRA*, the magazine of the media watch group Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), provided early information about casualties. It reported that there may be

over 3,000 civilian deaths and that "both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have voiced strong concern about the loss of civilian lives and separately called for a moratorium on the use of cluster bombs."

Agence France Presse noted that refugees from Kandahar "spoke of tremendous civilian casualties when wave after wave of American bombers" targeted the city. It reported that "two months of relentless bombardment have reduced the city of Kandahar to a ghost town," with no water or electricity and scarce food, "housing only the famished who were too poor to leave" (Dec. 6, 2001).

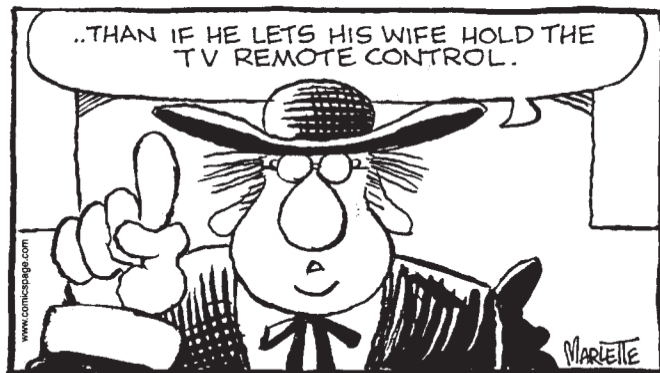
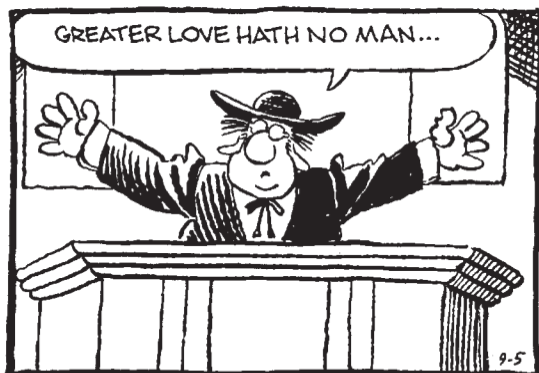
The ethical question here is not whether one man should be crucified for an entire people, but whether an entire people should be forced to suffer for one man whom they did not elect or choose as their leader.

The second ethical question is what gives the United States or any nation the right to make war on nations that have not attacked it or harbored someone like bin Laden? In early June President Bush told graduating West Point cadets America must "be ready for pre-emptive action" against evil nations. "We are in a conflict between good and evil and America will call evil by its name."

If all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, how can one evil person or nation call others evil?

None of the nations Bush called "evil" have attacked the U.S. or other nations in recent years. Even if we examine the total record of these nations for years, all of the so-called evil nations together have not been in as many wars or killed as many people as has the United States in World War II, the Korean War, the Gulf War, and wars in Latin America. None of those nations have been accused of harboring terrorists or exporting terrorism.

Even if some nations are adjudged to be evil, why should



they be accused by only one nation instead of the United Nations or an international court of law? In other words, there are no objective standards of good and evil, and no neutral or world body to serve as judge. If all nations or many of them have sinned, what gives one nation with the world's greatest military and economic power the sole right to judge evil in less influential nations?

The third ethical question is how do economic factors rather than discussions of evil determine or contribute to incentives for war? A number of sources reveal the connection between oil and Afghanistan, and oil in Iraq, and war. Various publications in other countries allege that oil is a major factor in the war against Afghanistan. A French book about John O'Neill entitled *Bin Laden; The Forbidden Truth*, soon to be published in the U.S. states that O'Neill was the chief FBI investigator of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and other bombings of U.S. property in the Middle East; and that shortly before 9/11/01 he left the FBI protesting that Bush-related groups and oil agencies had interfered with his investigation.

Other publications such as one from Pakistan and the Asia Times in Hong Kong have raised questions about reported work on an oil pipeline in the Caspian region before 9/11/01. An article by the widely respected Israeli writer Uri Averney, a former member of the Israeli Knesset, in the Israeli journal *Ma'areztz* in February noted, "If one looks at the map for the big American bases created for the war [against Afghanistan], one is struck by the fact that they are identical to the route of the projected oil pipeline to the Indian Ocean." That pipeline was planned by a Texas oil company prior to the September attacks.

It may be too early to assess the impact of economic factors relating to the Afghan or projected Iraq war, but Christians would be naïve to dismiss the possibility that there may be multiple reasons for a powerful nation to wage war against lesser powers.

Another ethical question is related to the fact that the U.S. Constitution specifically states that Congress alone is granted authority to declare war. Yet news reports indicate that some leading Democratic Party members of Congress have already endorsed the Bush decision to invade Iraq. Aren't the American people entitled to a full debate in Congress before making future wars?

For example, the *Covert Action Quarterly*, founded more than 22 years ago by former U.S. intelligence agents to document U.S. intelligence activities at home and abroad, contains in its Spring issue a well-documented account of "U.S. designs on Iraq." It begins with a statement that "In January 2001, outgoing Secretary of Defense William Cohen advised the incoming [Bush] Administration that 'Saddam Hussein's forces are in a state where he cannot pose a threat to his neighbors . . .'" and Scott Ritter, outspoken former U.S. Marine and U.N. weapons inspector, has reiterated this assessment."

Then followed a six-page discussion on Israel and U.S.

allegations about Iraq's program designed to demonstrate that Iraq is a serious military threat. It was Israel and not Iraq that introduced nuclear and chemical weapons into the region, whereas Iraq's Hussein had "advanced an alternative: the transformation of the entire Middle East into a nuclear, chemical and biological weapons free zone." Also, Iraq signed a Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The U.N. Security Council, following the Gulf War, imposed sanctions on Iraq; but today only the U.S. and Britain favor continuing sanctions. They continue because U.N. rules require unanimity among the Security Council's permanent members.

The article in *Covert Action Quarterly* said it is a mistake for opponents of war against Iraq to focus solely on sanctions and their human cost; we must know that a lot more is at stake. For example, "there are more than seventy oilfields in Iraq, only fifteen of which have been developed."

Another ethical question relates to the pattern of expansion of U.S. military power after such wars. Professor Bruce Cumings of the University of Chicago noted that the Pentagon has announced "a new commitment to bases in Central Asia, an air base near Bishtek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, that would hold up to 3,000 troops; massive upgrading of existing military bases in Uzbekistan . . . and Pakistan . . . creation and expansion of remaining military bases in Afghanistan" and other "airfields in locations on the perimeter of Afghanistan."

This appears to be a pattern, since the Pentagon maintains bases and troops in various previously-conquered nations such as Germany, Japan, Okinawa, South Korea, the Kuwait vicinity, and various other places in the Mid-East, all of which Cumings calls a "garrison state." (*The Nation*, March 4, 2002). Is it ethical for the U.S. to maintain such an effort at world control or containment as one war after another is fought?

There is also, perhaps most important, the problem of nuclear war. The Bush Administration has not only begun drafting a first or preemptive-strike policy, but Vice-President Cheney spoke of using nuclear weapons against "unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction" who "can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide them to their terrorist allies" (*USA Today*, June 11, 2002). That would not only be in violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, but would induce the spread of nuclear weapons.

The whole pattern of first-strike authority and of "evil states" declared on no other authority than that of President Bush may present other ethical questions. But one question is clear.

Will any nation which automatically claims the right to invade, bomb, and destroy other nations imply that because a majority of that nation are Christian that it is operating under Christian values? In the mind of Muslims or Hindus or those of other religions, will they assume this is the way Christians operate? Certainly many Americans already identify some nations with a majority of Muslims as representing Muslim values. ■

Just Peacemaking Initiatives Can Prevent Terrorism

By Glen Stassen, *Lewis Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics*
Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA

A year after the September 11 terrorist attacks, the United States is still in what could be called a war of spirituality. The government has shifted \$40 billion to military spending. This doesn't include special appropriations for the war on Afghanistan, special appropriations for Homeland Security, and appropriations to the Department of Energy to develop new, usable nuclear weapons and to prepare to resume nuclear bomb testing in violation of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Money has been shifted away from programs for education, colleges, the needy, health insurance for children, and other human needs. State budgets are in deficit, so states are making more severe cuts in education and health care.

Fear is in the back of many people's minds, and the administration is raising momentum toward war with Iraq. The government has shifted its Middle East policy, siding more with Ariel Sharon's military actions to suppress Palestinians and less with Palestinians' demand for dignity, justice and a viable state. Other nations express anxiety at U.S. unilateralism and withdrawal from treaties.

Is it time to discuss initiatives that can decrease the resentment and anger driving people to terrorism? Is it time to turn to just peacemaking theory for help in suggesting preventive initiatives?

One reality is the unrivaled military power of the United States. The U.S. military budget is larger than the next eight nations combined. The combination of overwhelming military and economic power weakens the ability of other nations to provide checks and balances against U.S. actions.

Furthermore, the spirituality of nationalism that has resulted from 9/11 polarizes the national spirit and disinclines many from questioning the drift, in a way analogous to the polarization in Israel after repeated terrorist attacks.

Just war theory or pacifism understood simply as the restraint of war is not likely to provide satisfactory answers. What alternatives does just peacemaking theory raise for Christians to discuss, support and advocate?

Nonviolent Direct Action

Arab and Muslim anger over injustice toward Palestinians—perceived as supported by the U.S. government—is the greatest source of widespread resentment, and a major factor in causing terrorism.

More Palestinian leaders—like Sami Awad of Bethlehem, who spoke recently at Fuller Seminary—could

call for nonviolent direct action instead of terrorism. Israel could choose one city where nonviolent direct action is being organized, such as Bethlehem, and reward it with the self-rule the Oslo Accords promised. It could then expand self-rule, step by step, wherever nonviolent action has some advocates.

Israel and Palestine have begun taking exactly these initiatives, but it is crucial to keep the process going. Presently it is blocked by hawks in the Israeli government, so the United States needs to push firmly.

Independent Initiatives or Trust-Building Measures

What independent initiative could be taken now? Arafat did call effectively for a halt to terrorist attacks on December 15, 2001, and violence dropped to 20 percent of the previous level for almost two months. Sharon, however, did not reciprocate, but instead attacked in retaliation against the remaining terrorism. The United States could press Arafat to take this initiative again and this time ask firmly for Israeli reciprocation.

Palestinians say more Palestinian land keeps being occupied by settlers, more Palestinian orchards and homes keep being bulldozed, and more Israeli bypass roads carve up Palestinian land so that they can hardly travel.

The settlements are lavishly subsidized by the Israeli government, so that land and utilities are free. Realism says peace will not come until these settlements are reversed. Polls show most Israelis know that and would support it.

But realism also says Ariel Sharon will not relinquish the settlements: His nickname is "bulldozer," he himself is responsible for the settlement policy, and his political power depends on parties of the right committed to the settlement policy. This is a vicious cycle of distrust.

The United States gives Israel several billion dollars each year. It should earmark a portion of the aid for buying settlers' homes at something like twice their value, contingent on the settlers returning to Israel and investing the money in housing there, so Israel does benefit from the investment. Not all settlers would sell, but polls indicate most would.

Palestinians would finally see the momentum shift toward reducing settlements rather than proliferating them. With such progress, why push terrorism? Politicians need political support before they take initiatives. Here is a role for faith-based groups who want to push for specific and feasible peacemaking initiatives.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is instructive for relations with Iraq—another major source of anger against the United States. The United States and United Nations have demanded unhindered inspections for possible weapons of mass destruction, and ongoing monitoring thereafter.

Achieving that requires affirmation of the Iraqi government's interest in its own survival. The Clinton administration, however, stated that even if inspections were allowed, it would still seek to topple Saddam Hussein. And the United States blocked talks about easing economic sanctions. That removed Hussein's incentive to allow inspections in hopes of a happier future.

The Bush administration has intensified the counter-productive demand, insisting on regime change and vetoing talks regardless of Iraq's request to talk about resuming inspections. Conflict resolution says the United States should offer peace if Iraq allows unhindered inspections and ongoing monitoring afterward.

Sustainable Economic Development, Human Rights and Democracy

Poverty—with little hope for improvement—and dictatorial governments—with little hope for peaceful change—are major causes of resentment and anger in countries that produce terrorists. President Bush has advocated a \$5 billion increase in economic aid worldwide. That increase is a step in the right direction, and it needs to be implemented in Afghanistan yesterday.

The United States is presently the lowest per capita of the 20 richest nations in giving economic aid. The United States should encourage the pro-democracy forces in Indonesia, Pakistan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt rather than the pro-military and pro-authoritarianism forces.

Effectively combating terrorism requires more than its military repression. Police action, yes. Preventive action, definitely yes. ■

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Hearing

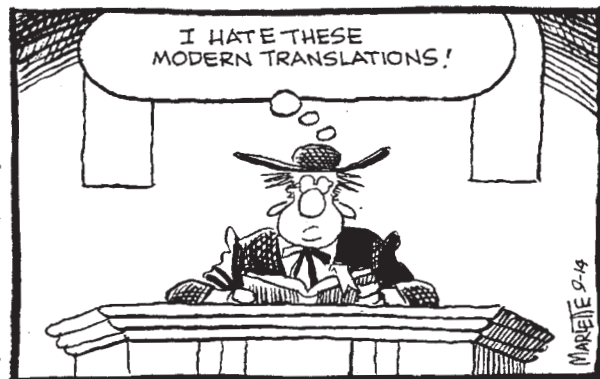
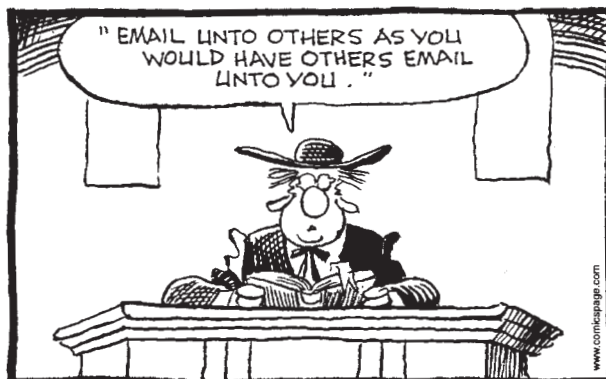
By Al Staggs

Did you hear
can you hear
The low, gentle voice of truth?
Is there a moment,
A time in your busy deeds
To listen to what is not seen
In the landscape
Where your life is lived?

Who put you here
And what forces are at work
To keep you functioning
As a mindless doer
Of empty tasks that
Only steal from the
Essence of who you really are
And what you are called to complete.

Hell is a treadmill of distractions
that speak when speech is not called for,
that sing when there is nothing to sing about,
that laugh when seriousness is called for,
that refuse to think when analysis is required.

Hell is trivia
made central to life
when ultimate things are secondary,
tertiary
and
unnecessary. ■



Ethics East of Eden

By Foy Valentine, *Founding Editor*

Editor's Note: This address was delivered at the Texas Baptists Committed Meeting on June 28, 2002, in Ft. Worth, Texas.

When Cain killed Abel, the Genesis account says that on leaving Eden, he “went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden” (Gen. 4:16).

Humanity is everlastingly going “out from the presence of the Lord.”

We are everlastingly choosing to dwell “in the land of Nod.”

We are everlastingly wandering around, like a drunk with one foot in a bucket, “east of Eden.”

Although we know we are supposed to love God with our whole hearts and our neighbors as ourselves, we keep wallowing in the scandal of Enron, we keep waking up in the morning to some new debacle like the WorldCom moral meltdown, we keep using the Arthur Andersen recipe to cook the books, we keep sliding down the slippery slope of the pedophile priests and the crime-coddling bishops of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, we keep reeling under the devastating blows of terrorism, violence, adultery, child abuse, and greed, we keep tolerating perverted justice, bought elections, and rejection of campaign financing in the political arena, and we keep sheltering and blessing “all the little foxes” that gnaw our vines with their tender grapes (cf. Song of Solomon 2:15).

Instead of coming to authentic repentance for our sins, we turn our major attention interminably to building bigger barns, bigger temples and bigger cathedrals, to what the author of Hebrews (whoever she was) called “forms and fasts and divers washings,” to good, safe matters like measuring the temple, counting the commandments, naming the apostles, and, yes, mounting new crusades to talk about family, or to talk about spirituality, or to talk about evangelism or to talk about missions, elaborating on the obvious, and pontificating about the aorist tense of Greek verbs.

East of Eden, indeed.

Believers really are seeking “a city whose builder and maker is God,” and we realize that any ethics that ever gets done has to get done “east of Eden.”

So, let's try to get the cart and the horse in proper juxtaposition.

What on earth is ethics?

The word itself is not a biblical word.

I was a grown man in graduate school before I learned it.

It is still not a word that trips easily off the tongue of every glib religion huckster on the mass media circuit.

The *Oxford English Dictionary*, the best in our language, tells us that “Ethics” comes from the Greek word *ethikos* which itself comes from *ethos* meaning character. Ethics is defined as “manners . . . Relating to morals . . . Concerned with principles of human duty . . . by which a person is guided . . . Rules of conduct . . . The whole field of moral science . . .”

The Greek word *ethikos* was translated into Latin as *moralis* from which we get our English word *morals*, meaning customs, manners, habits, disposition, manner of life, conduct, character. The dictionary says that “morals” pertains to “the distinction between right and wrong, or good and evil, in relation to the actions . . . of responsible beings; the word “ethical” means “Relating to the . . . distinction between right and wrong; moral sense, the power of apprehending the difference between right and wrong . . . Treating or concerned with virtue and vice, or the rules of right conduct . . .”

Now, in addition to this pedantic effrontery, what else is ethics?

Ethics is somebody you are. It has to do with character, integrity, honor, duty, honesty, kindness, responsibility, sacrifice, involvement, engagement, and good works—personal and corporate.

Ethics is something you do, like Isaiah who under God's command walked “naked and barefoot” for three years “as a sign and portent” against Egypt and Ethiopia, unworthy allies in whom Israel had bullheadedly misplaced their trust. Ethics is something you do, like Virgil's Aeneas who, obeying a divine mandate to found what was to become the seat of the Roman Empire, resolutely turned his back on the good life and the faithful love he had found in Northern Africa during the long layover when his storm-ravaged ships were being repaired, and steadfastly returned to the mission to which his deity had called him. “Navigate,” Jove had commanded; and the man navigated. Honor called and he did it. Ethics is, indeed, something you do. James says, “To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

Ethics is something you don't do, like Joseph when Potiphar's horny young wife, lusting after this attractive young immigrant, lured him to her bedroom and then tore his shirt off before he broke loose and ran like crazy to avoid her ill-advised passion. Ethics is something we don't do when we obey the commandments, “Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt

not covet; and thou shalt not bear false witness.”

And ethics is something you say. All the things that ever get done in the world, good or bad, Charles Rann Kennedy says in *The Terrible Meek*, are done by words. There is great power in words. When right words are harnessed to the plow of ethics, great teaching and preaching and writing can come to life and change the world. The contemplative life alone won't get it. Silence may very well be golden; but words fitly spoken and properly harnessed to worthy ethics causes are priceless, more precious than diamonds and rubies.

Ethics is all of this, and more, much, much more.

And yet . . . Yet, like a defective gene, neglect of ethics keeps rearing its ugly head with every succeeding generation.

Just when it appeared that Christendom in general and Baptists in particular were ready to take a giant step forward in Christian ethics 100 years ago, and particularly 50 years ago, the cause of Christian ethics surged mightily, but then fell back, gasping for breath like fish in a basket.

Walter Rauschenbusch flamed across the horizon with his detractors bellowing hot Irish epithets against him every step of the way but without quenching his prophetic fire. Giants emerged to preach and teach and write in an explosion of commitment to doing the gospel. Clarence Jordan started Koinonia Farm and Henlee Barnett put ethics on the map in Louisville

And T. B. Maston rose like Venus on a summer evening to champion the cause of Christian ethics for some forty years of profoundly important ethics leadership that influenced literally millions. Spawning an impressive array of students, men and women whom God had called and whom he had encouraged and inspired and nurtured and enabled, truly impressive strides were made. Second and third generations of competent and committed Christian ethicists have been in turn aided and abetted by the Maston heritage.

Nowhere, however, are ethicists now finding much of a hearing or much of a platform on which they are affirmed and encouraged to stand. The climate that allowed Rauschenbusch to teach and publish and prophesy in public changed. The support that in the fullness of time made a place for Maston to flourish, faded and withered. The denominational base that blessed the burgeoning work of the Christian Life Commissions crumbled. In three or four short decades much of these foundations had been eroded by what Patrick Moynihan called “benign neglect” at the hands of the principalities and powers who are ever ready and mostly eager to leave ethics till the last and then leave it out.

We owe our blind spots about ethics, I reckon, to several sources.

Ethics is nearly always controversial; and any time institutionalism confronts controversy, the establishment runs like a scalded dog. Bishops and administrators have never welcomed ethics-focused boat rockers, status-quo disturbing prophets; and the hoi polloi can nearly always be roused to throw the boat rockers overboard and to stone the prophets.

Theologians, philosophers of religion, religion writers,

and CEO-style pastors, in little churches as well as in big ones, are nearly always more comfortable in safe cubicles or secluded studies with unlisted telephone numbers, far behind the frontline fighting where a body can get hurt.

Great religion popularizers like John Bunyan generally much prefer to have their redoubtable heroes like Pilgrim spend their time arguing fine points of theology, focused mainly on what Bunyan called Beulah Land (cf. Isa. 62:4), rather than getting them embroiled in the excruciatingly hard decisions that cling to social ethics: male chauvinism, slavery, military violence, terrorism, racism, dysfunctional families, systemic poverty, citizenship, public affairs, church-state separation, alcohol consumption, cigarette smoking, gambling, pornography, corporate greed, world hunger, and the like.

Today's influential contemporary church music, anthems as well as choruses, generally does not have enough ethics in it to help a horse. They are all too often musical monstrosities, theological travesties, and ethical cop-outs. Who will move to set us on track?

Preaching from today's pulpits mostly eschews ethics like the plague, pussyfoots around prophethood, and recoils from relevance as if it were the sin against the Holy Ghost.

In spite of the fact, then, that in the fullness of time these Christian ethicists are sometimes lifted at high tide to powerful witness and great Kingdom effectiveness, Jeremiah is still our man, the weeping prophet. Ethicists do well to weep.

Still, as Martin Luther put it, the right Man is on our side. Though all the ethics we do must be done “east of Eden,” the people of God have no choice but to make the most of it. We have to heed the advice of the angel Raphael, in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, who said to Adam, restless in his situation in the Garden of Eden, “Dream not of other worlds” (Book VIII, Line 175).

Now, if there is any meat in this coconut, I'm fixing to come to it.

Specifically, the people of God need to preach and practice an authentic evangelism. One that insists on genuine repentance (the keynote of the New Testament) and true faith in God issuing in a commitment to live under the Lordship of Christ in every area and relationship of life, before the baptismal waters are ever troubled.

The people of God need to help our pastors and teachers to understand that we simply will not tolerate the proclamation of a partial gospel that has been shorn of the moral imperative. Ethical conviction has to begin in the house of the Lord if we are to see better days.

The people of God need to communicate with our song leaders that we need and indeed require songs that do not ignore the ethical demands of the Christian faith. That we simply will not stand still for either ditties or anthems that signal bad music, bad grammar, bad theology, and bad ethics.

The people of God need to discipline ourselves to preach, teach, and write ethics so as to communicate the full gospel

that reaches out with relevance to touch the needy world. Not a truncated, abbreviated, watered down, emasculated gospel that concerns itself only with the winning of Greek souls followed up by a painfully monotonous droning to read the Bible more, pray more, “go to church” more, and most especially give more.

The people of God need to embrace the insight that church is not steeples and stained glass but God’s kind of folks doing God’s kinds of things here and now, no matter that it is our lot to live “east of Eden.”

The people of God need to demonstrate daily that by the grace of God changed people can change the world; that changed people do change the world.

The people of God need to bless and not curse our fellow Christians who heed God’s call to work in the business world. Or to involve themselves in the political arena, or to toil in one of the professions, or to commit themselves to homemaking, or to serve God by milking cows, growing vegetables, repairing plumbing, or typing letters. For ethics has to do with being the church in the world, with being the salt of the earth, with being the light of the world, and with being leaven for the lump—“east of Eden.”

The people of God need to pray that the Lord of the harvest will call forth ethics laborers who will stand up and speak out like Tony Campolo, who will take up the heavy cross of teaching Christian ethics like T. B. Maston, who will write and talk and agitate publicly like Bill Moyers whose disciplined mind and compassionate heart have been long employed to keep holding the world’s feet to the fire, who will act in the public square like Millard Fuller with his burning vision of Habitat for Humanity, who will champion such specific causes as religious liberty and separation of church and state like James Dunn, and who will not rest in retirement but like Jimmy Carter will press for justice, relieve the oppressed, heal the sick, and take good tidings to the poor.

Karl Barth sings my song when he calls the church today to “Look and see whether she is not now really compromising herself with the Devil, to whom no ally is dearer than a Church so absorbed in caring for her good reputation and clean garments that she keep eternal silence, is eternally meditating, eternally discussing, eternally neutral; a Church is so troubled about the transcendence of the Kingdom of God—a thing which isn’t really so easy to menace!—that she has become a dumb dog” (*The Church and the Political Problems of Our Day*, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 21)

Although we live “east of Eden” may God help us to do ethics “while it is day, ere the night cometh.” ■

The Tree of Double Knowledge

R. Elliot Ayres

Evil Empire

Desert Storm

Politically Correct

September Eleventh

Community Standards...

Double words. Makes sense.

Provoke response. Create tension.

Explains position. Argues point.

Finds consensus. Sometimes safe.

Overcomes enemies. Wastes time.

Boggles minds. Stops progress.

Hurts children. Breaks hearts.

Grieves God. Destroys Faith.

Fights evil. Builds support.

Let’s try. Single words.

Love.

Joy.

Peace.

Patience.

Kindness.

Goodness.

Faithfulness.

Gentleness.

Self-control.

Plant yourself fully in the grace of a loving God.
Become part of the redemptive community of humanity.

The Neighbors

By H. Leon Slaughter, President and Manager
Legacy Publications, P.O. Box 725, Edgewood, TX 75117

Editor's Note: Be sure to read Slaughter's story, which has an O'Henry ending that will surprise you! His unique company publishes Family Life Stories at (903) 896-1034.

Down a little narrow country dirt road, and across a creek, three miles from the small town of Edgewood was where we lived. That road was either dusty or muddy depending on the weather. Two or three times every year we had a big rain; the creek got up and flooded the roads and bridges. Then the only way we could get to town was horseback or in a wagon with the end gate out so the wagon bed wouldn't float off like a boat.

In the spring of 1932 we lived in a different kind of world. Ours was a typical East Texas family farm. At that time almost everyone in this area except a few merchants and professional people, earned their living from the soil on their farm, plowed and cultivated with horse or mule drawn equipment. If anyone today lived as everyone in the rural areas lived then, they would be considered living in very deprived and almost impossible conditions. Things like electricity, indoor plumbing, refrigeration, hot and cold running water could only be dreamed about. TV and air conditioning had not even been invented. My parents got their first radio after I finished high school.

We did have a car and a telephone, both of which were somewhat rare. The car was a Willis-Overland Daddy bought new just before the great depression hit in 1929. By 1932 we couldn't drive it much even though gasoline was only fifteen cents a gallon. Most of the time we didn't have fifteen cents.

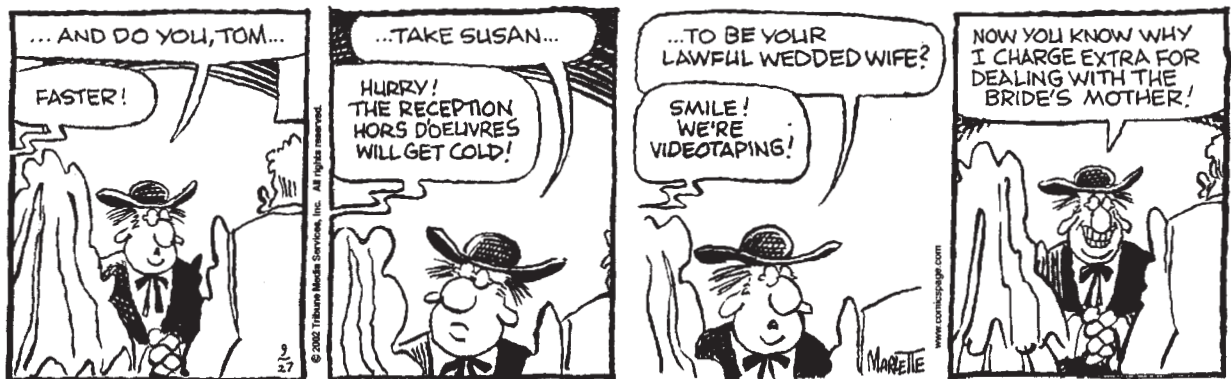
The telephone was a box about 16" x 30" fastened to the wall with a mouthpiece out the middle, a receiver on a hook on the left side and a small crank on the right. When we called someone we would pick up the receiver and turn the

crank. We were on a party line with six or seven of our neighbors. When one phone on the line rang, all others on the line rang. Each one on the line was assigned a different kind of ring. Our ring was four longs, our neighbor's was three longs and another's was two longs and a short. If we called someone on another line, we rang one long and central operator would connect us. You talk about personal service, we had it. Those two ladies who ran the central switchboard knew where everyone in the surrounding area was all the time.

But, you know what? We were happy. My parents never made a great thing about telling me and my brother and sister we were loved, but we knew it. I don't remember ever being punished very much, however, always in my mind, the worst thing that could happen to me would be for me to disappoint my parents. We never had much money, but we ate good. Almost everything we ate was produced there on the farm.

All of our neighbors were wonderful people. We all helped each other. Daddy had a complete set of all kinds of tools in a blacksmith and carpenter shop as well as a lot of things in the barn. We never locked anything and never missed anything. We only had one key, the key to the car, and we left it in the car. We were afraid if we took it out we might lose it.

Our closest neighbor's house, the Valentines, was only about two hundred yards from ours across a field with a well-worn path in between. They were like part of our family. The Valentines were all hard working, honest, caring Christians and Baptist. We were Methodist, but that difference was never a problem. Every summer their church had a revival



and we went with them to their church. Then when we had our revival, they went to our church with us. Mrs. Josie (Valentine) was like our second Mom. Jim was one year younger and one year behind me all through school. We hunted, fished, worked, played, and grew up together. He came to A & M one year behind me, graduated, and after a Masters Degree in Agronomy, distinguished himself as a soils scientist. He had a little brother who sometimes got in our way when Jim and I wanted to do our things. I will tell you more about him later.

In that spring of 1932 I became very sick at school. They called home and Daddy came in the car and took me to our family doctor, Dr. B. B. Brandon. He diagnosed my problem as diphtheria, which he said was a very dangerous disease. It has since been almost eliminated in this country by vaccination. He gave me a shot of something. Following the doctor's orders, Daddy took me home and put me to bed.

Then it started raining, and it rained, and rained hard, and then rained some more. I was getting worse, having a hard time breathing. In the middle of that night Mama thought I was going to die. I could hardly breathe, and they couldn't take me to the doctor because the creek was up. Daddy called Dr. Brandon to see what could be done. Yes, Dr. Brandon made house calls, lots of them, when he could, but he couldn't get there that night because the creek was up. He told Daddy if he couldn't get to me soon I might not live till morning. He said he would drive his car down to the creek and someone should cross the creek in a wagon and bring him on over to the house.

Late that night when Daddy called the doctor, all the phones on our party line rang. Everyone who was awake and heard that ring in the middle of that dark, rainy night knew something was wrong and went to his phone to hear what it was.

When Mr. Valentine heard Daddy talking to Dr. Brandon, he said, "Leslie, you stay there and take care of that boy. I'll go get the doc."

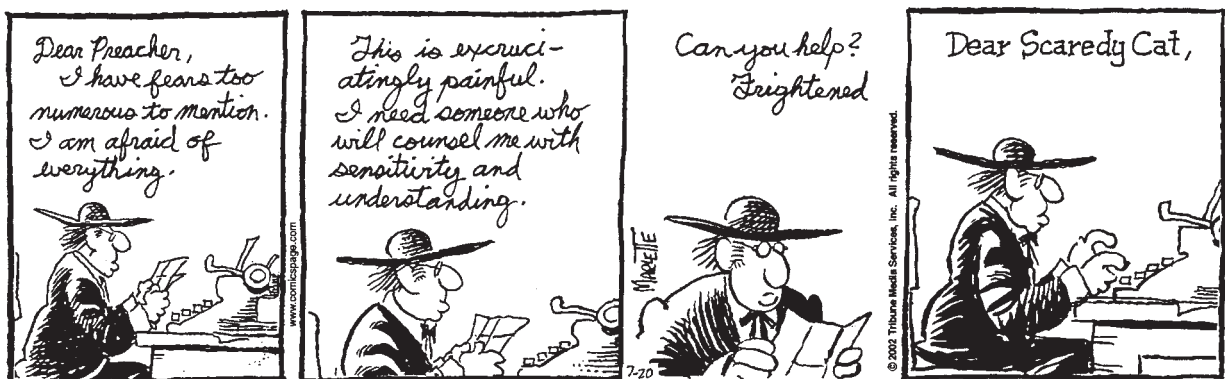
Hardy Valentine was not what could be called a careless

risk taker or even very brave. But I am sure he never thought about his fears or emotions when he lit his kerosene lantern, put on his rain slicker, and started toward his barn. Out there that dark raining night he woke up Pete and Red, his mules, and by the light of his lantern, harnessed and hitched them to the wagon. After taking out the end gate he started Pete and Red down that dark road toward the creek. Most of the time he could not see the road but his mules could. The road leading up to the bridge on each side of the creek was lower than the bridge. The wagon was in water for about one hundred yards, with a bridge somewhere in there that he couldn't see. It was a dark night, raining, and that bridge with no banisters was partly covered with water. He said he depended on those mules and God to take him across. Then he came back across that water and a bridge he thought the mules could find to bring the doctor that saved my life. Those two mules and God took him across four times that night. Yes, count 'em. Can you believe a doctor making a house call in the middle of a dark rainy night in a wagon?

Since that night seventy years ago I have lived a lot, seen a lot, and done a lot, some of what I hope made life a little better for others. I also have a fantastic bunch of children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and a lot of friends I care about.

Oh yes! That little brother of Jim's that kept getting in our way. He became Dr. Foy Valentine, one of the great leaders and writers in the Southern Baptist Convention. All of his contributions to Christianity would fill a whole "nother" book. After retiring from there several years ago, he established Christian Ethics Today Foundation and was editor of its publication, *Christian Ethics Today* until he retired again a couple of years ago.

The Valentine family, Hardy, Josie, Jim, and Foy has influenced my life more than they ever knew and more than I am able to tell them. As Christians we have been told to love our neighbors as ourselves and our neighbors are all mankind. A good place to start might be the neighbors close by. ■



A Trilogy On Practicing Your Religion

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

A Bible, a Guitar, and a Two-Pound Coffee Can[©]

“Are you aware,” the stranger said from the far end of the telephone line, “that your second-grade son is giving away his coin collection?” “No,” I responded, but not in surprise. He, like many second-born sons, was a most generous person; a giver, as they say, sent as balance for the many takers in life.

“He gave an un-circulated set of silver coins to my daughter today; I thought you would like to know.”

I thanked her and promised to pursue the matter at the appropriate time.

But it is hard to tell when such a time might be; time to explore with a child the tendencies of his own soul; time to explain to a little boy how his innocent behaviors signify who he is and who he might become.

It was a long time before a similar signal in my sixth-grade life helped me understand my own second-born self, who I was and who I had become.

Like other American boys, I spent a part of my childhood picking up and delivering papers to porches and people all over town. And collecting, of course: twenty cents if paid by the week, eighty-five, if by the month. The former often brought a nickel tip, the latter an extra fifteen cents; and with one hundred eighteen customers, a good day at the end of the month produced pockets full of change, enough to pay the bill and buy a Cherry Coke with a small bag of Spanish peanuts. In such a happy and prosperous condition, I often took a stool in Wallace’s Drug Store and read the escapades of the mighty men of valor: Spiderman, Superman, Green Lantern, and of course, Thor.

Each Saturday, in pursuit of money and memories, I circumvented the town square: Corn-Austin (men’s clothing), Ward-Elkins (appliances), A. B. Beale Hardware, the Bank of Murray, and around the corner, the shoe repair shop run by Mr. Jones. I knew my people and they knew me.

But one day, the sights and sounds of someone new caught my attention. Across the street and opposite the shops, on the grassy lawn of the Court House square, a man stood. He held a Bible high above his head and called for sinners to repent. He bent down, picked up a guitar and strummed an old gospel tune; and then sang it, in a strange and haunting sort of way.

Not more than twenty people were drawn to this

unscheduled service of preaching, singing, and exhortation; myself among them. I edged between cars and upon the curb, crossed my legs in a space close enough to hear but far enough to stay unseen.

I was accustomed to gospel, scripture and the evangelist’s plea; but this take-it-to-the-people in a public place stirred my imagination. He preached a little and sang a little; then picked up a can that once held two pounds of Maxwell House Coffee.

“There,” he said, as he sat it under a tree, closer to me than I had wanted it to be; “In a few minutes, we will be moving on down to the road. Please help us with an offering, if you will. God bless you.”

He started to sing. A quarter clanked loudly in the empty can—a nickel here, a dime there, perhaps a dollar or two. It had the makings of an offering as thin as the congregation that had gathered in this makeshift, open-air sanctuary, but not enough, even I surmised, to buy a meal and fill a tank.

It was years before I understood any part of what happened next. Before generosity, spontaneity and a deep-seated sympathy for itinerant preachers had taken root in my spirit, and then become matters of introspection. Before parents, teachers and pastors of all sorts had shed light on the signals of my own soul.

In less time than it takes to relate this childhood episode, I jumped to my feet, walked to the tree, and emptied into that can every dime, quarter, and fifty cent piece, every bit of money that had collected in both pockets of my pants. I turned and walked away, forgetting the sermon, the song, and the familiar blessing spoken somewhere at my back, remembering these many years, only the clanking sound of a coffee can filling up with coins. ■

Three Places to Post the Ten Commandments[©]

“We post the Ten Commandments in our school,” said the principal to a church full of people, “as part of a historical display.” Vigorous applause swept through the gathering as he turned to me and said, “We have good lawyers.”

I doubt that, I said silently to myself, thinking no lawyer could be good who advises a client to violate federal law.

My baccalaureate address, square in the middle of “Ten Commandment Country,” had spoken to the issue of church

and state, religion and politics, the Christian faith, and American law.

"Sometimes," I said, "we think judges trample our rights and distort the law when they tell us that certain prayers, readings, and displays violate the 'free exercise of religion.' But protecting the rights of minorities is an important element of the American way."

It did not connect well with the people, although they were exceedingly polite and gracious at the reception that followed.

I understand why people of faith want to hang the Ten Commandments, and it is a good reason.

The moral climate in our nation is depressing: child abuse at church, corporate greed on Wall Street, steroids at the ballpark, drugs in the mountains, violence at the polls, profanity on the television, and oral sex at middle school parties. What to do?

Posting the Ten Commandments is a protest against this erosion of self discipline and social decency. It is a symbolic act, declaring a desire to stem the tide of immorality that seems to overwhelm the righteous spirit of the American people. I have much sympathy with such sentiments.

There are ways, however, to display the Commandments that do not violate the law, and yet still generate real potential for social and spiritual change. In fact, the Bible itself, while silent about courthouses and schoolhouses, names three places where the commandments ought to be—three places out of the reach of any district magistrate or federal judge.

"Write them on the door post of your house and on your gates," God said to the people, according to Deuteronomy chapter six.

Jewish people obey this directive by attaching a small metal container, called a *mezuzah*, to the door jam of their home, touching it each time they enter or exit. This highlights the private residence, as opposed to public buildings, as the prime location for hanging the Commandments.

Scripture on the wall at home is not a bad idea. A wonderful adaptation of the ancient door post tradition is the high school fad in some parts of the nation of hanging a Ten Commandments card on the school locker, a practice known as "Hang Ten."

Second, the Bible also tells us to "bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead."

In other words, carry the Commandments with you in some form or fashion. Many Jewish people fulfill this regulation with small leather boxes that they attach by leather straps to their heads and arms when they pray. They are called phylacteries; which are not to be confused with something very different but with an equally odd name, prophylactics (otherwise known as condoms, whose wholesale distribution to young people is another sorry sign of moral confusion).

At the baccalaureate, I urged the students to treasure the small, orange book handed to them by the Gideons as they entered the church. It was a copy of the New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs; and although these texts do not contain the Ten Commandments, they do have enough good stuff to inspire the students to lives of service to God and the community.

It was from these small, orange books that we read together of the third place to post the Commandments of God: "I will hide the word in my heart that I might not sin against God."

The human memory is, of course, the most important place where the commandments of God need to be placed; and not only the commandments, but also the promises and the prayers, the stories and the assurances. For it is from the memory that these precious words can be drawn when, far from the school house, the court house, and even the church house, we find ourselves, like Martin Burnham in a Philippine jungle, in desperate need of a word from the Lord. ■

What Some People Think About What I Write[©]

For more than four years I have been preparing commentaries on religion in American life: first for the radio, now for the newspapers.

This week, reaction to these columns went off the charts. First, I discovered that I had made the 2001 annual report



of the Catholic League of America. This New York based watchdog group monitors and records all episodes of what they consider defamation of the Roman Catholic Church.

I am cited by name and date for my article last summer entitled, "If I Could Pick the Pope." That piece was designed as a tongue-in-cheek probing of several critical issues in contemporary Catholic life (such as the internationalization of the papacy, the role of women in the church, and the legitimacy of celibacy).

This article produced a firestorm of controversy in Nicholasville, Kentucky, led by a local priest, who accused me of ridiculing the Church. For four weeks, letters to the editor appeared in the Jessamine County Journal. Neither my many commentaries commending the Pope and his Church nor my written apology seemed to have affected the local Catholic population and the Catholic League of America.

Also, last week I wrote a piece for the Lexington Herald Leader, taking issue with a local Baptist minister and his public comments at a Fourth of July rally. It was entitled "Minister's Comments Un-American and Un-Christian." My email box has been full of energized reaction, evenly split between attackers and defenders.

One wrote: "I would be ashamed to . . . take issue with a fellow minister who is 'defending the faith' and preaching out against the sins of our day. Why not visit us and hear a message that is not watered down or politically correct."

I still think the minister needs either to apologize or issue a statement of clarification (if he thinks he has been misunderstood).

Earlier this year, I wrote a column entitled "Where is Amos When We Need him?" It was a critique of the Enron scandal and a reminder that the ancient Hebrew prophet Amos became famous for challenging the injustice inherent in the social and economic structures of his day.

More than one businessman "went ballistic," as they say, going so far as to call for my dismissal at the College. One prominent Lexington entrepreneur accused me of "shameless self-promotion" and said: "You don't have enough experience with the corporate culture to make the kind of comments that you did. And if you did have any experience you could not possibly make those comments knowingly."

Six months after the column, we are reeling from the worst series of corporate misconduct in the last half-century, a danger to America more serious than any attack by foreign terrorists. My original column now sounds rather bland; the angry protests thoroughly silenced.

One of my first commentaries for the newspapers dealt with the phenomenal success of the "Left Behind" series of supposedly Bible-based novels: bad theology and bad literature, I called it. An editor (who, I think, still publishes the column) wrote back a long critique: "I am a Christian," she contended, "and these novels are winning people to Jesus. How can you complain about them?"

I wrote back: "Does being a Christian give you license to publish a second-rate newspaper? Are we Christians going to

defend the lack of excellence by an appeal to evangelism? I also have a friend who was converted through the book series, and I praise God; but that does not justify poor writing and poor thinking. It only demonstrates that God can use anything to turn a life around."

Two years ago I wrote to defend the nomination of John Ashcroft, but suggested he needed better instruction on the separation of church and state. A publisher in Western Kentucky responded angrily: "Take me off of your distribution list; I do not want to read anything else you write. If this is typical of what they teach at Georgetown College, I am glad I sent my children elsewhere."

Now after some two years with Ashcroft at the helm of the Justice Department, I confess I am more troubled by his confidence in bigger government bureaucracy and a corresponding disregard for civil liberties.

I am not surprised by these reactions, nor am I troubled by them. Religion has a strong emotional and intellectual hold on most of us. But religion is also an exceedingly powerful social force in American culture. Like other centers of power (i.e., education, media, military, business and government) religion stands in constant need of strong and sustained critique—for its own good and for the common good. ■

"Time-Warp On My August Issue?"

Several of you contacted us about our last issue—**S**ome described it as a "time-warp!" Actually, we advised our readers (see p. 11 of June issue) that in August we would be mailing a "First-Years Edition." As most of our readers were not receiving the Journal in 1995-1996, when Foy Valentine birthed Christian Ethics Today, we felt sending 3000 of the first few editions (which we had on-hand) would be of interest. (It also was cost effective, saving the Journal about \$5000.)

Thus far many have thanked us for articles they never would have read otherwise—in fact, Tony Cartledge (Editor of the Biblical Recorder) noted a vignette from Kirby Godsey's article (March, 1996) "was just what I needed for my most recent editorial."

I Am Your Public School: Embracing All Of God's Children

By Frosty Troy, Editor
The Oklahoma Observer

I am your public school, a 200 year-old experiment giving America the strongest economy in world history. We are 88,000 buildings in more than 15,000 districts. And we are as diverse as this great country.

This fall I embrace more than 46 million children; for most of them, I am their only hope for future success.

When the buses roll up, my doors are flung open to children of all shapes, sizes, levels of ability, some in wheel chairs, geniuses and the retarded, average and the developmentally disabled. They speak more than 100 languages, including Mong—the Cambodian highland children who came here with no written alphabet.

I represent “home schooling” at its best for I am the “home school” of 10 million latchkey children.

Some of you would judge me by test scores but I would remind you that a test only measures one dimension of a student's development—only in that subject on that day depending on whether the student tests well.

Although my SAT math and science test scores are at a 33 year high, and my ACT scores are up for 11 consecutive years, I remind you that those tests don't include foreign language, music, art, drama and other vital extracurriculars.

If some of the children fail, it isn't for lack of trying by the faculty and staff—among the most dedicated and least paid among the industrial democracies of the world.

My dirty little secret is that many of the 11% of children who drop out are the products of sorry parenting—parents who send me children who are undisciplined, unwanted, unwashed, unloved; some strung out on drugs and alcohol; some abused and neglected; and few who have ever been taken to a church, synagogue, or mosque.

The miracle is that my doors are open to all of them and many are reached—not by textbooks alone but by teachers who know there is more to a child's life than rote learning.

For thousands of kids, the only hug they ever get they get in school.

It is painful to be accused of failing African American children. That's a calumny. Our greatest hurdle is that half of African American children are born to single moms, creating a whole new set of problems for the schools.

My plea for more early childhood education goes unheeded, yet there are hundreds of millions of dollars for more tests.

I grieve when I hear critics say I am “secular” because no specific beliefs are taught in this pluralistic system. But when it comes to doing God's work—we're on duty every day.

Last year more than 30% of the students got their only hot meal in our cafeterias. Thousands of poor children find decent clothing and underwear in the school clothing closet filled by faculty, staff, and PTA moms.

Teachers spend nearly \$600 of their own money for things like workbooks and pencils for needy children.

Role modeling, not mantras and Hail Marys, come from a teaching profession that provides more Sunday school teachers than any other profession or occupation in America.

Aren't feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and nurturing the little ones spiritual injunctions in all the great religions of the world?

No school prayer? I wish you could hear the thousands of reverent, whispered entreaties sent heavenward from students and faculty every day. God's presence is palpable.

One of the prayers I overhear most often is, “Please God, give me the patience to get through just one more day with these kids!”

Some would mock our athletic programs, yet for many of the boys, coaches are often their only male role models. Teamwork and sportsmanship are enduring principles that millions of our graduates have translated into successful careers and successful families.

Some say I should prepare more students for college, as though college is for everyone. We are the only education system that educates the student to the level of his or her ability—doctor, mechanic, engineer, nurse, computer manager, or carpenter.

America is third in the world in college graduation rates—nearly 25% with a four-year degree or more.

Who says there are no heroes today? Did you see the biographies of those rescuers who died in the World Trade Center tragedy? Firemen, policemen, union members, emergency workers—90% of them public school graduates.

I am passionately committed to the belief that God gives children different gifts, and we alone address all children whatever their gifts. We play no favorites, taking all of God's children.

My most precious possession is more than five million

special education youngsters—we alone address their needs. If your heart ever needs a lift, visit with a Downs Syndrome child happily employed, thanks to public education.

I suffer the slings and arrows from those who stress my shortcomings in order to defund public education. Yet my students outscore students in the average charter school.

Repeated studies show that when students are matched in family structure, family income and family education attainment, public school students do as well or better than parochial school students.

Defaming public education in order to promote vouchers for religious schools is an egregious miscarriage of education's mission. I am held accountable by my school board—every dollar spent. Vouchers require zero accountability.

Yes, my corridors have known random acts of violence, yet the FBI says a child is safer in my arms at school than in his or her own home.

Thanks to the vision of our forebears. America had a 100-year head start on every other nation in creating universal free public education. Today, with all its flaws, it is the finest system in the industrial world.

I leave no child behind but some of you would dim my lights, leaving in the shadows the poor, the halt, the blind, the lame and the special education student.

You would use public school dollars to construct new forms of theocratic education, yet the U.S. General Accounting Office national survey showed that one-third of my buildings are dangerous and unsafe—yet no help is forthcoming.

Do as you will, but for me, I will stand proudly in my neighborhood. America's last egalitarian institution, my arms embracing the finest educators, administrators, and support personnel in the world—dedicated to helping our children realize the American dream. ■

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Name That God

By *Martin E. Marty, Contributing Editor*
The Christian Century

Before the recent fight over the words “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance, Americans were in conflict over mounting the Ten Commandments in publicly owned places. The God of the pledge and the commandments, advocates argue, is a generic, one-size-fits-all God, in God-blessed America.

Some citizens know that one cannot simply get away with such assertions or evasions. For example, Commandment One is specific in its claim that God must be Number One. The commandments are not simple moral injunctions; they

are theological claims which begin, in Exodus 20, with the assertion that “I the Lord your God am a jealous God.” Lots of luck to those Americans who don't have this God well figured out. We are “under a jealous God,” so we have to get this God right.

One of the most serious recent efforts to venture into defining God generically is by Rabbi Marc Howard Wilson of Congregation Beth Israel in Greenville, South Carolina. His column appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* June 28. Wilson is modest and does not give us a conclusive statement. No, his is only a “threshold” definition of “God.” He asks, can not Christians, Jews, Muslims—he does not mention the many others—agree on God? Here is Wilson's threshold consensus: “*God, as I see it/him/her, should be understood as the sum total of all the forces of creativity and moral good in the universe. Certainly this is a definition to which every honorable person—monotheist, polytheist, pantheist, deist, even atheist—can subscribe. We each give that God different names.*”

I am ready to bet that 80 percent of citizens, honorable or not, cannot subscribe to that. Remember, definitions are also “over against.” Those who proclaim God as “it” cannot see God as “him” or—try this on millions—as “her.” God has gotta be this or that.

And what are those who want to think of God as “the sum total of all the forces of creativity and moral good in the universe” to do with this passage from Isaiah 45, taken from the rabbi's Holy Book, as from mine: “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, *and create evil*. I the Lord do all these things.” (Italics mine, and probably also the Lord's.) To me that is the scariest verse in the scripture, but it's there. And because it's there, tens of millions of Bible believers can't go along with the idea of God as the force only “of creativity and moral good.” The God of the Bible also destroys.

And what about that “forces” business in the rabbi's definition? The idea of God as a force does not show up in the 15 fat volumes of the *Encyclopedia of Religion*. It comes from pop culture, where the Force may be with you. It lives in New Age culture, among devotees who shun a personal God, and who might substitute the exclusive God-as-I for the rabbi's “it/him/her.”

Recently I've had reason to quote George Santayana, to the effect that “any attempt to speak without speaking any particular language is not more hopeless than the attempt to have a religion that shall be no religion in particular.” He went on to say that “every living and healthy religion has a marked idiosyncrasy. Its power consists in its special and surprising message and the bias which that revelation gives to life.”

Does Rabbi Wilson escape idiosyncrasy and bias? Try his generous and well-intended definition of God on most Americans, and you will find that it, like every other such attempt at generic definition, is more particular and sectarian than are the messy creeds of the “world religions.” ■

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A Lesson In School Vouchers

By Tom Teepen, *Syndicated Columnist*
Cox Newspapers, Atlanta, GA

Ok, school vouchers are constitutional but so is pounding your toes with a hammer. Neither is a great idea.

Vouchers have been pitched by their fans as a surefire way to educate kids who some public schools—and it is important to emphasize, only some—are failing to teach, but note of the several pilot programs so far has delivered.

That won't stop the folks pushing the program. The game here is political, not educational.

Remember, vouchers got their first big push in the Republican Party, now the main engine of the voucher train, as a way to reward and hold blue-collar Catholics, traditionally Democratic, who had gone for Ronald Reagan and fundamentalist Protestants who at the time were becoming—and have since been regularized as—foot soldiers of the GOP.

That vouchers would be a boon to common, if no longer public, education was a late rationale for them.

Vouchers were and remain a second-hand way to bootleg big hunks to tax money to parochial schools and Christian academies where preacher-driven parents can hide their children from such secular horrors as evolution.

To justify vouchers, supporters have put it about that public schools are failing. Some are, mainly those charged with teaching the children who come to classes least prepared to learn, from backgrounds impoverished not only

economically. Most public schools are teaching their students well.

Vouchers' largely conservative backers have a point when they argue that competition can help sharpen education methods, but competition is not only possible within public systems. It is darn near amuck in some—with magnet schools, charter schools, loosey-goosey alternative schools and straight-laced traditional models. Uniforms, no uniforms. Even, now, in some places, single-sex schools.

The public is sensibly not ga-ga about vouchers. There have been 23 state and local referenda on voucher proposals. Every one failed.

No matter. Ironically, it is voters and taxpayers who are now unlikely to get much choice in the matter. With the constitutionality issue settled, strong political forces are ready to storm school boards and state legislatures to create voucher systems.

What impends is a potentially huge new entitlement.

The beneficiaries of vouchers—private-school parents—will join ideological activists in pushing for vouchers. Wherever vouchers are adopted, the system is bound to attract more families with its subsidies. Indeed, that's the very idea.

Additionally, more proprietors—whether religious or commercial—will be attracted into the scrum, widening the constituency that is ready to demand subsidy increases once the schools begin to jack up their tuitions, as vouchers will encourage them to do.

With every new turn of the spiral, public schools will be left with fewer resources, fewer top-notch teachers, fewer able students and more of the students who are hardest to teach and least attractive to admission officers and with the students whose parents can't make up the shortfall between the voucher subsidy and private school tuition.

This, we are assured, will be really good for education. ■



Standing Firm for Freedom: The Baptist Heritage of Religious Liberty

By Steven R. Harmon, Assistant Professor of Christian Theology,
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Editor's Note: This sermon was delivered at the annual meeting of the Baptist History and Heritage Society, Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tennessee, June 22, 2002. Reprinted by permission from *Baptist History and Heritage* 37, no. 3 (Summer/Fall 2002): 89ff.

“Freedom” is probably the word we use most frequently to describe the American experience. As Americans we enjoy freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, the freedom to earn a living of our own devising. But long before “freedom” became a characteristically American word, it was a thoroughly Christian word. The earliest Christians often described their experience of God’s salvation in Christ as a passage from slavery to freedom.

Salvation as freedom from slavery is an idea that runs throughout the New Testament, but it’s especially prominent in the letters of Paul, in particular Paul’s letter to the Christians of the region of Galatia in Asia Minor. In fact, Galatians has sometimes been called the “Magna Charta” of Christian freedom.¹ What Paul has to say in Galatians about Christian freedom has significant implications for how we live as Christian citizens, especially Baptist Christian citizens, in a free country.

Hear now the word of the Lord through the apostle Paul in Galatians 5:1-15: “*For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. Once again I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law. You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love. You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth? Such persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough. I am confident about you in the Lord that you will not think otherwise. But whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty. But my friends, why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves! For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ If, however, you*

bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.”²

We learn from Paul that *freedom is basic to the Christian experience*. It is “*for freedom*” that Christ has set us free, Paul writes in verse 1. That idea was so important for Paul that his language sounds almost redundant: Christ sets us free so that we can be free. Why does Paul put things quite that way? Why not simply say, “Christ has set us free?” Why the extra emphasis—“*for freedom* Christ has set us free”? It may be that Paul understood freedom not only as something characteristically Christian but also as something characteristically human. To be human is to be created in the image of God. To be made in the image of God means many things, but one very important part of what it means to be created in the image of God is to be free. Freedom is in the first place one of God’s own attributes. God is free to create or not to create; God is free to create any kind of universe God chooses; God is free to save or not to save. The free God created us in God’s image as creatures endowed with freedom—freedom to choose good or evil, right or wrong, light or darkness, life or death, heaven or hell.

But the first human beings chose evil rather than good, and every single one of us after them has chosen evil rather than good, with the result that all of us became slaves—slaves to sin, in bondage to the evil we choose. Apart from Christ, our freedom to choose good is limited—we’re still able to do good and beautiful things, but we frequently find it far easier to do what is wrong than to do what is right. What Christ does in setting us free is to restore the freedom of the image of God. We’re still capable of doing evil—if we weren’t, we wouldn’t be truly free. But now through Christ we’re free to live as God created us to live, because Christ through the Holy Spirit gives us the power to live righteously, to live a life that reflects the very character of God. It is *for freedom* that Christ has set us free.

Freedom is basic to the Christian experience in general, but it is basic to the Baptist Christian experience in particular. The earliest Baptists were people who found themselves spiritually enslaved by a government that required them to worship a certain way. In 1609 a small band of persecuted dissenters

from the official state church in England found refuge and freedom in the Netherlands. In Amsterdam they formed the first Baptist congregation of which we have record. John Smyth, one of the co-founders of that first Baptist church, wrote a confession of faith for his congregation with these words about religious freedom: “[T]he magistrate is not by virtue of his office to meddle with religion, or matters of conscience, to force or compel men to this or that form of religion, or doctrine, but to leave Christian religion free, to every man’s conscience, and to handle only civil transgressions”³

Some of these Amsterdam Baptists became convinced that despite the risks, they should take their faith back to their homeland, and so in 1612 a group led by Thomas Helwys established the first Baptist church on English soil in Spitalfields. But soon they suffered severe persecution. Helwys himself was thrown into Newgate Prison in 1613 by order of King James I, perhaps for daring to write this: “The King is a mortall man and not God, therefore hath no power over y immortall soules of his subjects to make lawes and ordinances for them and to set spirituall Lords over them.”⁴ Three years later Helwys died in prison, and for years thereafter the early English Baptists suffered greatly for their faith in a “Christian” nation with a state-supported church.

Eventually some of these Baptists made their way to the American colonies, where they not only found freedom for their faith but also made significant contributions to the American approach to religious freedom. It was pressure from Baptists that led James Madison to push for the amendments to the Constitution known as the Bill of Rights, including the First Amendment mandating that “*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.*”⁵ Religious freedom, guaranteed by the separation of church and state, is a distinctively Baptist contribution to the freedoms we enjoy today as American citizens. We of all people ought to understand that freedom is right at the very core of the Christian experience.

We learn from Paul not only that freedom is basic to the Christian experience, but also that freedom is a precious commodity and must be zealously guarded. Paul continues in verse 1, “Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” Paul was writing to a group of Christians who were tempted to give up their birthright of freedom in Christ. Through Paul’s ministry they had learned that Christ had set them free from having to do certain things or perform certain rituals or follow certain customs in order to be rightly related to God. But now another group of Christians had tried to tell them that simple faith in Christ wasn’t enough; they contended that those who wanted to join the people of God must first become Jews—obey the Jewish law and, if they were male, become circumcised. But Paul used pretty strong language (for a minister!) in opposing this threat to freedom in Christ: “I wish that those who unsettle you would castrate themselves!”

Today, as in Paul’s day, threats to religious freedom abound. I’m not suggesting that we should imitate Paul in

telling those who threaten religious liberty what they ought to do to themselves, but I am saying that religious freedom is such a dearly precious gift that it is worth every effort it takes to preserve it.

If you saw Stephen Spielberg’s film *Saving Private Ryan*, you were reminded just how costly it was to secure the freedom the Western world enjoys today. It was similarly costly for the early Baptists who endured imprisonment and torture and even died martyr’s deaths for their insistence that people be free to worship according to the dictates of their consciences, or even not to worship at all. Thomas Helwys died in prison in 1616 partly for insisting, “*Let them be heretickes, Turcks [that is, Muslims], Jewes, or whatsoever it apperteynes not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure.*”⁶ Freedom is a precious thing, and we who are heirs to the Baptist tradition of religious freedom ought to guard it zealously.

Freedom is basic to the Christian experience. Freedom is precious, and ought to be zealously guarded. We also learn from Paul that *freedom is best guarded when we focus on others rather than ourselves*. In verse 13 he writes, “do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another.” The paradox of our freedom is that we are most free when we abandon our slavery to self for a voluntary slavery to others. Paul goes on to support this idea by echoing Jesus’ summary of the whole Old Testament law as loving God with everything that we are and loving neighbor just as much as we care for our own selves.

We can understand freedom in one of two ways. We can see freedom as freedom *from* others, or we can see freedom as freedom *for* others. We can see freedom as freedom for *me*, freedom for me to do whatever *I* want. Or we can see freedom as freedom for *us*, freedom for *all* of us. We understand freedom rightly when we see *our* freedom as inextricably linked to the freedom of *others*. Gospel freedom is not freedom for self, but rather freedom for self in relation to others.

Let me illustrate the difference between these two understandings of freedom in terms of two very different approaches to religious freedom that existed in Colonial New England. One approach was that of the Puritans who founded the Massachusetts Bay colony. In the words of Baptist church historian Leon McBeth, these colonists were “*militant Puritans, filled with godly zeal and rigid intolerance for any who differed from their theocratic concepts. They succeeded in establishing the Congregational Church as the state-sponsored religion of most of New England. This alliance of church and state called for religious conformity as a prerequisite to good citizenship. This meant the harsh persecution of all who dared to differ from the official religion.*”

Ironically these Puritan Congregationalists had fled England because they themselves had been persecuted for differing from the official state religion. They wanted freedom for themselves, but they didn’t want to extend that freedom to others.

One of those others was Roger Williams. In 1636 Roger Williams was banished from the Massachusetts colony for

dissenting from the state church and questioning the authority of the state government in religious matters. Williams and several of his friends bought land from native Americans—which I should point out was a remarkable thing: while other colonies were established on land seized from native Americans, Williams believed the land belonged rightfully to them and should be purchased from them. On this land they founded the colony of Providence, which later became the state of Rhode Island.

In Providence Williams founded the first Baptist church in America. As one of the earliest Baptists in America, Roger Williams helped shape the concept of religious liberty for all that is so much a part of our American freedoms today. In Providence he established a secular state, a state separate from church, in which Catholics, Muslims, Jews, and even atheists had the same freedoms as Baptists and other Protestants. Roger Williams understood religious freedom as freedom for others.⁸

When we fail to guard religious freedom as freedom *for others*, the result is what Paul suggests in verse 15: we bite and devour one another, and are in danger of consuming one another. When freedom is nothing more than freedom for self, we become a nation of special interest groups at war with one another, with each side trying to win freedom only to do what it wants and sometimes to have others to do what it wants.

This is a special temptation for Baptists at the beginning of the twenty-first century. When we were a persecuted minority, we took great pains to secure freedom not only for us but also for others with whom we disagreed. Now that in many parts of the country Baptists comprise a majority of the population, we're tempted to use our freedom selfishly and even to use the authority of the state to impose our faith and morality on others. We need to remind ourselves of Jesus' teaching: "*In everything do to others as you would have them do to you.*"⁹

Once upon a time in our part of America, we took it for granted that most people believed as we believe and prayed to God in the name of Jesus just like we do. We routinely solemnized all kinds of public events, including high school football games, by pausing for prayer. It never occurred to us that there might be religious minorities in our midst, religious minorities like we once were, who might feel that prayer at state-sponsored events put the government's stamp of approval on one particular form of religion. But today we live in a multi-cultural society of multiple religious traditions. We need to remember to do unto others as we would have them do unto us if we were in their shoes.

A couple of years ago I shared some of these ideas about Baptists and religious freedom during a Baptist Heritage Sunday service at a church in North Carolina. After the service a woman lingered until most of the congregation had left and introduced herself to me. She began, "I'd like to talk to you about something you said in your sermon." Uh-oh, I thought to myself. "I'm a public school teacher here," she

said. Now she's about to let me have it, I thought. But she continued, "For years we've been starting our parent-teacher association meetings with prayer, and no one thought anything about it. But recently we've had several families from Asian countries move into our area, and it occurred to me that they might not feel comfortable with Christian prayers; maybe they'd want us to use some prayers from their own religions, too. I just think the best thing we could do is not to pray at all in our meetings!" She understood well the traditional Baptist approach to religious freedom as freedom for others.

Freedom is the essence of what it means to be a Christian, especially the essence of what it means to be a Baptist Christian in America. It's a precious, painfully costly thing we ought to make every effort to guard. We do that most effectively when we focus on guarding the freedoms of others rather than just our own freedoms. Will you join our Baptist fathers and mothers in the faith in standing firm for religious freedom? May God make that so, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. ■

¹ Noted in, e.g., the introduction to Galatians in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha, Revised Standard Version*, ed. Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 1410. The remark that Galatians is "the Magna Charta of Christian freedom" or "the Magna Charta of Christian liberty" is frequently repeated in commentaries and published sermons on Galatians, but without attribution.

² This and all other quotations of Scripture are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible.

³ *Propositions and Conclusions Concerning True Christian Religion*, § 84, in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed., ed. William L. Lumpkin (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1969), 140. This confession was actually published by members of Smyth's party after his death in 1612, but Smyth personally authored the first draft (Lumpkin, 123-24).

⁴ W. T. Whitley, *A History of British Baptists* (London: 1923), 33, quoted in Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, rev. ed. (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1963), 489.

⁵ See H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 281-83.

⁶ Thomas Helwys, *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity* (London: 1612), 69, quoted in McBeth, 86.

⁷ McBeth, 124.

⁸ Biographical information on Williams based on McBeth, 124-36.

⁹ Matthew 7:12.

Peaceful Patriotism

By Larry L. McSwain, *Interim Pastor*
Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church, Jacksonville, FL

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it.” (Mt. 10:42, NAS)

Paradox (a contradictory truth) is one of the most difficult aspects of the Christian faith to understand. It is paradoxical for Jesus to talk about swords in the kingdom of God. After all, peace is what Jesus was about. He taught us to love one another, to love our enemies, and to give support to both the kingdoms of the earth and the kingdom of God. In Matthew 10 he is saying he did not come to bring peace, but a sword. Now how can Christians support peace and bear swords?

It is important first to understand who bears the swords. Jesus is not admonishing his followers to take up swords and set out to destroy their enemies. Rather, he is suggesting that when the demands of faith he makes are placed upon us, other people may react with violence. The faithful follower must be prepared to endure the sword of violence and opposition. That becomes clear in verse 38, “The one who does not take up a cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.” After all, his destiny was to become the recipient of the violence of the cross.

Second, it is clear from reading the parallel passage of this text in Luke that the focus is on the effect of devoted discipleship. Luke says, “Do you suppose I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division” (Lk. 12:51). The word refers to the cutting up into parts what once was a whole. He is saying people who follow him may experience the division of their families, their friendship networks, even their social order. Faith has a way of dividing us into followers and resisters, obedient and disobedient, lovers of peace and lovers of violence. And these distinctions may divide even those we cherish. These divisions apply also to our common life as citizens of a nation.

He made this clear when a Roman coin was presented to him and he was asked whether we should pay taxes. “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mt. 22:15-22).

A part of the human family to which we belong is the family of a nation. As Christians, we live in two worlds, the world of America and the world of the Kingdom of God. This Thursday, July 4, 2002, America will celebrate Independence Day with an exuberance we have not experienced together since our bicentennial as a nation in 1976. The attack upon our nation last fall has brought an expression of our patriotism as a nation that I have never seen before in my lifetime. Never have I seen so many flags, so many advertisements, and so many expressions of unity for our nation as I have seen in the last 10 months. We truly are a united people in many ways. We are united against the terror that gripped our lives on September 11. We are united in our efforts to try to prevent such an occurrence from happening again. We are united in support for our President and our national leaders. We are united in maintaining America as a free people. But there is a greater call than unity for the people of God. It is a call to stand for the things of peace, even in the face of the division that may be created by adherence to that truth. The New Testament sets forth two very clear understandings of how we are to be a nation of peaceful patriots.

We are Called to Support our Nation

The Apostle Paul set forth the first responsibility of the Christian citizen in Romans 13. Paul says the government is a creation of God. Thus, as good citizens we are to support it, pray for its leaders and live in such a way as not to become the object of its wrath, for the government has the sword. The government uses the force of the sword to maintain justice and sometimes peace. And then he added the most important support we can give is to pay our taxes.

I have long wanted to write a book on what I would call “bumper sticker theology.” I saw a bumper sticker recently that said, “If 10 percent is enough for God, it ought to be enough for the government.” Yet, the same people who would say this want the government to do more and more. They want our government to maintain the strongest military on the earth, to provide security for our citizens in the face of internal terror, to provide the best schools and care for the elderly. Christians are wise enough to know if you want your government to do certain things, you will also want to pay for them!

One of the great ironies in my mind is how many people who scream the loudest for America are most critical when it

comes to paying taxes for her support and defending all her ideals. I do not know how many radio commentators I have heard speak loudly about the sanctity of our Constitution. They want the freedom of their speech to declare their ideas. Yet, in the same breath they criticize the speech of those with whom they disagree. If you truly want “free speech” you have to grant it to all citizens, even those most outlandish in their speech.

One of the greatest ideals we have is the separation of church and state. Yet, many of the most religious among us want the nation, the government, to be the source of faith for our nation. We rewrite history to make our founders leaders in the formation of a Christian nation. They did not form a “Christian” nation. They formed a nation in which the free expression of Christian faith would be possible. But so would the free expression of Deism, the free expression of agnosticism, the free expression of atheism, the free expression of “no faith.” It is embodied in our ideals. When we try to rewrite history, we are not giving support to those ideals. What the founders most wanted was a government that was neither captive of the church nor an agent of the church.

If we are called to support the nation, and we are, we must also recognize the words of Romans 13 are addressed to Christians of every nation. Paul was writing in a context of support for the all-encompassing government of Rome in his time. We now have hundreds of nations of the world and every Christian citizen of each of those governments is given the same admonition. If I am a true follower of Jesus Christ and obey Romans 13, I would have to give support to the Chinese government if I were a citizen of that nation. Likewise, for a citizen of Sri Lanka, India, Israel, or the “not yet” state of Palestine, or any other nation of the world.

Because I am a Christian American does not mean my nation is better than someone else’s nation. It means every nation, including America, stands under the judgment of God and ought to give obedience first and foremost to God’s kingdom. Not to my party, not to my President, not to my nation, but to God’s kingdom is the first priority.

We are Called to Criticize our Nation

We are patriotic. But we are patriotic with limits. The call of followers of the Prince of Peace is to be a people committed to being a nation that honors God. A nation that honors God is a nation committed to principles of righteousness for all people, fairness in our dealings with all citizens, and peacemakers in a world of violence. The worst fate that could befall America in a time of terror is that we ourselves would become so consumed with hostility toward those who harm us that we ourselves become terrorists. We are the mightiest military power in the world today. The easiest path we could take would be to interpret this teaching of Jesus as justification for taking a sword to the enemies of our nation in acts of retribution that would do little but bring more violence to our world.

A nation is not a person. A nation is a collection of persons who follow those chosen to lead them. Sometimes those

leaders are self-appointed dictators, as was the case in the great nation of Rome in the time of the New Testament. The writer of the Book of Revelation was clear that the nation of which he was a part had become a great Beast. In the 13th chapter of Revelation, the divine Seer records a vision of a great Beast (who symbolized the Roman Empire): “*And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. If anyone has an ear, let him hear. If anyone is destined for captivity to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed*” (Rev. 13:8-10).

This beast is one to which the Christian shall not bow down. What the writer is describing is an unjust government that chooses violence as its means of rule. But the author is saying those who are followers of Jesus must not become a part of this violence, for such violence will breed violence.

This is the most difficult part of “peaceful patriotism” for the true Christian. The highest patriotism is that loyalty and support which calls forth from the nation its best policies, its highest ideals, and its dedication to the kingdom principals of peace. That means the true patriot may be critical of the government he or she loves, not for the sake of criticism, but for the sake of the soul and heart of the nation itself.

Many of us are deeply concerned about two actions of our court system this week. Frankly, I disagree with the decision of the Ninth Circuit court judge to rule the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag unconstitutional on the grounds it contains the words “under God.” But I have heard more false history, more craziness and stupidity in response to that decision than anything I have heard in a long time. The Pledge of Allegiance is not in the Constitution. The Bill of Rights is, but Francis Bellamy wrote the Pledge of Allegiance in August, 1892. Francis Bellamy was a Baptist minister whose Baptist church dismissed him for his fiery sermons in support of Christian socialism. He wrote the pledge as chairman of a committee of state superintendents of education in the National Education Association to be quoted by school children on Columbus Day, 1892. He even omitted the words “*with equality*” from the original version because of the opposition to equality for women and African Americans.¹

I went to school for six years and recited daily the pledge without the words “under God” prior to Congressional action adding them in 1954. And our nation won World War I and World War II without those words in the pledge. Now, I am glad they are there and I am going to continue saying them. But our destiny as a nation does not depend on whether we ascribe to a civil religion such as the Pledge of Allegiance. Civil religion is so broad and so thin it encompasses everyone and offends no one. That is not Christian faith and that is not being a Christian nation. Civil religion is a unifying aspect of our life as a people, but it is not the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

There is a more critical decision made this week, the approval of school vouchers by the U.S. Supreme Court. This decision reverses decades of separation between the sup-

port for public education and support for religious education. In the Cleveland case, over 90 percent of the students are in religious schools. Over \$3½ million are used to pay for taxicabs for the students to ride to school.

I believe the long-term impact of this decision will have three effects. First, it will greatly weaken public schools, including the best ones, by draining state and national resources from the public to the private arena. Either budget deficits will abound or public reaction to this decision will change. Second, it will secularize religious schools whose students participate. The government has every right to impose its policies and procedures in exchange for support. Would it not be ironic that the very schools providing distinctive education lost it for a pot of tax dollars? Finally, this decision will provide millions of tax source dollars for schools whose primary mission is to teach a particular religious perspective. We will see an explosion of all kinds of new religious schools taking advantage of this new situation.

So, I am going to celebrate this July 4. I am going to celebrate the good things about America. I am also going to recommit myself to being a citizen first of the kingdom of God and then doing what I can to make America reflect the highest values—values of a kingdom in which its citizens bring division, not by yielding the sword, but by making peace in all their relationships. ■

¹ Baer, John W. *The Pledge of Allegiance, A Centennial History, 1892-1992* (Annapolis, Md.: Free State Press, Inc., 1992).

Etica y Misiones

(continued from page 2)

national convention cannot absorb the costs. Schools and hospitals close. Empty buildings are sold. The IMB is abandoning the very work thousands of missionaries spent a lifetime nurturing to maturity.

In the front yard of a mission house where the Glazes lived in Buenos Aires stands a majestic pecan tree, planted fifty years ago from one Mississippi pecan. Today it produces hundreds of nuts to the delight of students, faculty, and missionaries. The tree symbolizes the work of missions worldwide. To plant is basic. To water, cultivate, prune, and protect from disease is also important.

If all we do in world missions is plant seeds, the harvest will never come. But if we follow the example of Jesus, we will preach, teach, heal and be the love of God in word and deed. Ethics and missions, like faith and works, belong together. ■

A Ketchup Bottle and Saint Paul: The Moral Value of Humor

By Adam C. English, Doctoral Candidate
Baylor University

Recently I shared lunch with three Christian friends at a local grease pit. Somehow during the course of consuming our burgers and fries, we found ourselves knee-deep in a debate about homosexuality. We had no idea how we had gotten into it or how we could get out of it, but it was becoming less and less conducive for happy burger digestion. Fortunately, I was finished with my meal and had focused my attention on listening to Steve. I was also unconsciously toying with the plastic ketchup bottle. *Nota bene*: boys are born with an excessive amount of nervous energy. They like to jiggle their legs, tap their fingers, fidget, and fiddle with things.

As Steve was passionately making the point that the sexual organs of men and women were designed to fit together in a way that cannot be reproduced in same-sex partnerships, I accidentally squeezed the bottle such that a tiny bubble of ketchup burst out and sprinkled us all. For a split second we just sat there looking at each other, the three of them in a state of disbelief and I in a state of mortification. Then we all broke into a fit of laughter. Steve's point was lost, the spell of the debate was broken, and all was washed away (except the ketchup) in our laughter.

A similar moment of unexpected humor occurred on a somber Wednesday evening Bible study meeting in the bleak midwinter a year or two ago. We were discussing that stubborn passage out of 1 Timothy 2, where Paul is exhorting Timothy not to allow women to teach or to have authority over men. After Pastor Julie had read the passage, there followed a thick silence. As she looked from face to face, you could tell that everyone was working desperately to generate a cultural, theological, or historical justification for these hard words as well as an acceptable application of the passage in today's world. Finally, one of the more "mature" females in that intimate circle of folding chairs straightened up and said, "Well, I never did like St. Paul very much."

It is often said that we take ourselves too seriously. Not even the Bible takes us as seriously as we take ourselves. Why else does Acts 20 record an incident in which a man named Eutychus dozes off during one of Paul's exceptionally long and boring sermons and falls out of a third story window to his death? That's either morbid or its funny! Of course, in the end Eutychus got his life back. He wasn't totally dead . . . only *mostly dead*. As Billy Crystal says in *The Princess Bride*, "I've seen worse."

The lesson of laughter is not a new one. All the great Christian thinkers learned it long before we came on the scene with our scowls and our textbook cases. Once, while reflecting on some vexing problem with Schleiermacher's theology, Karl Barth wrote, "The only certain consolation which remains for me is to rejoice that in the kingdom of heaven I will be able to discuss all these questions with Schleiermacher extensively . . . [and] we will both laugh very heartily at ourselves."

Humor is not only valuable in moral and theological debates; it also comes in handy when trying to spice up a dull church service. A few years ago I served as a youth minister in a small church outside of Fort Worth. One of my responsibilities was to give the announcements every Sunday morning during the first five minutes of worship. Announcements were always a drag, especially in this small country church. Nobody paid a lick of attention to them. So to generate some interest, I began telling a joke each week along with announcements. It was a hit. Soon people were coming up to me with their favorite joke or telling me how much my jokes lifted their spirits.

But, when I would try to vary my routine by not telling a knee-slapper with the announcements, I would encounter stiff resistance. The old men would grab me by the arm and say, "Where was your joke today?" like they were third-grade bullies shaking down the school runt for lunch-money. I am still unsure if they accosted me because they liked my jokes that much or if they just liked routine that much.

My point is that people resonate not only with what touches their souls, but also with what tickles their funny bone. I have a hunch that humor plays a more important role in the life of the church and in moral debates than we give it credit for. If nothing else, it can at least keep us from strangling each other!

Christian ethics is not just about coming to logical conclusions, winning arguments, and passing legislation. It is fundamentally about how we live with one another, how we relate to one another, and how we treat people. It must somehow account for and involve the whole person, from the mind to the body to the tears—and to the giggles. ■

The Fishing Trip

By Hal Haralson and David Haralson

"I would like to become a writer. How do I begin?"

The young woman who stood before me appeared to be 16 or 17 years of age. She was very serious about becoming a writer.

I told her I wanted her to do something for me. "Select an event that made you very happy, or very sad. Take a word picture of that event, write it down and show it to me."

"Don't worry about writing for publication. That may happen or it may not. A wonderful teacher named David Redding told me to 'write from the lump in my throat.' The important thing is that you capture the event so it can be passed on to others."

My first story was written almost 30 years ago. It is about a trip taken into the Colorado Mountains with my ten-year-old son, Brad. This story was published in the June 1996 issue of *Christian Ethics Today*.

I ended the story by stating, "I learned something from this trip about being alone with my son, about doing something special with only one of them."

David, my other son, was five years of age at that time. He was promised a trip of his own when he became 10.

I never wrote about that trip. I wondered what he would remember if he wrote about it thirty years later.

I was overwhelmed at his insight, at the detail, about what was important.

I think you will be moved, as I was.

David's Story at Age 34

I was going to be 10 years old. While this does not seem to be such a big deal as I near my 35th birthday, it meant the world to me then. Jews have a *bar mitzvah*; we had our tenth birthday. For years I had heard the story of my older brother and father hiking and fly fishing in the Colorado mountains on his tenth birthday. They explored an abandoned mining town and mine, fished remote streams, and trudged through powder snow. Though we shared many weekend fishing trips together, the three of us, I still carried envy in my heart for their time alone. It would soon be my turn.

As a boy I lived to fish. This love has only slipped to the background because I now live to be a good husband and father. So it was not surprising that I chose a bass fishing trip for my special birthday. I don't know why Sam Rayburn Reservoir was chosen. It certainly did not reflect any allegiance to the long deceased Speaker of the House from our great state of Texas, as I had never even heard of him by that age. Most likely it was the hottest body of water in the fishing lore of the day. Whatever the reason, the site was picked, the guide contacted, and the trip was on.

As a boy on the verge of puberty, I had few distractions to

impede the exhilaration of anticipating our arrival. Those who have been on similar outdoor excursions know that the planning is half the fun. Maps are bought, articles are read, old gear is pulled out and cleaned, new gear is purchased. All of this adds to the sense of heightened expectation. Our approaching moment involved several hours drive in the family's silver Honda Accord from the hill country of Austin to the piney woods of East Texas.

I had never seen trees so big. The best one can hope for in my home environment are the seven-foot scrub cedars and an occasional twenty-foot oak. These pines were over fifty feet tall and towered over my barely five foot frame. I followed every crossroad and small town on the map with bated breath. As we crossed the first bridge and I looked across the expanse of water, visions of Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior flashed before my eyes. This was a far cry from our weekend outings on Onion Creek.

We met our guide the first morning and set off in his rig across the glassy water. The sun rose in radiant splendor while I tried my first topwater lure. Visions of the elusive five-pound bass filled my head as I made the first cast. We caught a few fish and my father and I were introduced to a new way of fishing. Neither of us had used a rubber worm with great effectiveness, but our guide was a good teacher. I tried one later that morning near a weed bed off the shoreline. My line landed on the opposite side and had not fully reached the bottom when it caught and raced from my reel. By the none-to-familiar high-pitched squeal of the drag on my Zebco, I knew I had hooked my big one. But the moment was short lived when the line snapped and he swam to freedom. Words cannot convey my heartbroken spirit, but Dad's words of encouragement eased the pain. There was nothing to do but fish on.

We stayed the night in the single-room lodge with a double bed, my dad on one side and me on the other. I missed home and the comfort of my mother's presence. But I was on the road to manhood, and mother's apron strings were beginning to unravel. It was just us men.

The next day we went to the other side of the lake and plugged around a stump field with the "bone colored shad" topwaters our guide said would be so effective. His advice proved invaluable as we reeled in one keeper after another. I was in ecstasy. Then my trance was broken when I retrieved my lure to find a three-foot alligator gar swimming close

behind. My heart skipped a beat as I yelled in surprise. He was there one moment and gone the next, just another memory for my burgeoning account.

The pinnacle event occurred late that day as I followed the screeches of the birds overhead to witness a bald eagle plummet to the water and snatch a fish in his talons. I held my breath as he soared heavenward only to be bombed by a pair of osprey in hot pursuit. One bird continued the attack and the eagle dropped the fish to turn and defend himself. The other swooped and caught the flailing fish as it rocketed toward the earth. The eagle had nothing, the osprey's had their meal, and I had the story of a lifetime.

We ended the trip with over forty legal bass. My father still has the pictures of us next to the lodge in front of our quarry. There are also some shots of me with rod in hand concentrating intently on my line. I don't know who came away richer. My father got to take his last son on the momentous tenth birthday trip. I got to spend my passage to manhood with the man I love most. It was the last time I remember using my old Zebco. Soon after, Dad purchased my first Ambassador bait-caster and I have never looked back. But the birthday tradition lives on.

My daughter turned ten over a year ago, and with my urging her mother planned a Victorian Tea Party hosted by her and my mother complete with self-adorned bonnets and gowns. I was touched to see them share that experience as my little girl made her step to womanhood. But in the back of my mind, I eagerly anticipate the day my two younger boys and I begin to plan the trips for their tenth birthdays.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. The commandments that I give to you today are to be upon your hearts. *Impress them upon your children.* Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Dt 6:5-7, NIV). My father loves the Lord, as do I, and he witnessed to me through the time we spent that birthday. I pray that I will be able to show my sons that same love.

David Haralson, 2002

It is obvious that the passage of years does not reduce the significance of this trip taken. Both father and son share the memory of the trip to Lake Sam Rayburn. David writes well about this special time. ■



BOOK REVIEWS

Riding the Wind of God

Bruce McIver (Smith & Helwys, Macon, GA), 2002, \$27.

Reviewed By Darold H. Morgan.

President Emeritus of the Annuity Board of the SBC

The interestingly, understated sub-title of this book is *A Personal History of the Youth Revival Movement*. Don't let this deter you from reading this genuinely exciting history, for there is far more to it than one might think.

For anyone that is interested in spiritual renewal, this is your book. Additionally, for anyone who knows Baptist church life in the 1945-1960 timeframe when Southern Baptists were growing like wildfire, this delightful and powerful story is for you.

Rarely does this reviewer read a book through in one setting, but this he did because it is beautifully written, skillfully crafted, and humorously presented. It depicts people, places, and principles that must not be forgotten.

To those who knew Bruce McIver, the book brings into focus a whole host of strong memories that come together with a profound realization that his last dream is more than adequately accomplished. With gentle pathos we realize that he is not around to hear our laughter, our comments of deep appreciation, or our pointed criticisms of why he said it in a certain way.

God called Bruce to heaven just a few weeks short of completing the manuscript. Despite months of serious illness, he determined that the finishing touches to the book would be realized because the story of this heaven-sent Youth Revival Movement must be told.

McIver's book makes us aware that immense gains for the kingdom of God were accomplished through a series of revivals—gains that are still bearing rich fruit. With all that has happened to the Baptist Zion in the last quarter of a century, it is invigorating to read (with an overwhelming gratitude) what God did through a group of college students in Texas and beyond, as World War II wound down and the roaring fifties gained momentum.

Baylor University, the Texas Baptist Student Union, W. F. Howard, Jess Moody, Charles Welborn, Howard Butt Jr., Bill Cody, Ralph Langley, and a gangly young preacher from North Carolina named Bruce McIver—plus many other people and institutions—come together in this fascinating story of revival. The movement captured thousands of young people for the kingdom of God, and it led also to a bumper crop of new pastors, missionaries, church staff members, and an

infusion of new lay leaders in churches of all denominations. The revival movement also produced a wonderful new generation of business leaders committed to Christian ethics.

One of the finest quotes in the book is voiced by Kenneth Scott Latourette, the famed church historian from Yale University. He concluded that the Youth Revival Movement, which began at Baylor in 1945, was as vital and far-reaching as any revival movement in recent history.

The strength of McIver's book is apparent. Not only is it well-written, reflecting careful research, it is also simply hilarious. It is as honest and forthright as truth itself.

Let me select two main lessons among many that could be emphasized. One is the extraordinary place of prayer as key to the actual success of this spiritual awakening. That prayer is of primary importance in awakenings in Christianity is beyond doubt. Here we have a fresh confirmation of that principle. The story of the prayer meetings on the campus of Baylor University seems like pages out of the Book of Acts.

Another lesson points to the ethical commitments of this rowdy, talented group of men and women who were used so uniquely of the Lord in this Youth Revival Movement. W. F. Howard, leader of the Texas Baptist Student Union, not only brought his organizational skills to this fledgling group, but Howard set high ethical standards for participants to follow. These revival novices not only understood the meaning of an ethical lifestyle, but also they exemplified high moral standards. (Sadly today the ministry of too many good men and women has been ruined due to a lack of basic Christian ethics.)

Because of McIver's untimely death in December, 2001, John Pierce wrote the last chapter. Though the *Baptist Today* editor's style is different from McIver's, his documentation of the power of the revival beyond the Southwest is superb.

Bruce McIver's history of the Youth Revival Movement deserves a wide reading, not just by Baptists, but by Christians everywhere. Get a copy of this book. Put one in your church library. Share the book with any who needs to be reminded that spiritual renewal can come in unexpected ways. To read the book is to hope that God will bring the winds of true revival our way once again—hopefully soon! ■

The Gospel With Extra Salt: Friends of Tony Campolo Celebrate His Passions for Ministry

Edited by Joseph B. Modica (Judson Press, Valley Forge, PA) 2000.

*Reviewed by John C. Howell, Professor of Christian Ethics, Ret.
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary*

My first exposure to Tony Campolo was when he lectured at William Jewell College many years ago. As professor of Christian Ethics and academic dean at Midwestern Seminary, I encouraged the missions and special lectures committee of the faculty to invite him to our seminary for lectures. They tried for a couple of years without success, so we never got to present him to the faculty and students as an outstanding Christian who would challenge, confront, and encourage our fellowship. I later made regular use of his book *A Reasonable Faith* in my basic ethics course when we studied Christian witnessing in the secular culture.

Consequently I willingly accepted the invitation to review this book, which is a collection of essays on various topics by individuals who had studied with, worked with, or been influenced by Campolo. It was written in honor of his 65th birthday in 2000. Since it is a set of seven distinct topics, it is impossible in this brief review to adequately discuss the many issues raised in these germinal essays. However, throughout the collection, one dominant theme emerges—it is for Christian communities to follow the example of this mentor by challenging contemporary theological or sociological approaches to significant problems in our society.

In the first essay, David A Fraser wrestles with the difficult task of trying to define what a “biblical family” looks like. He rightly recognizes the complexity of binding various biblical perspectives on marriage and family life into a form that can be legitimately called the biblical family. Old and New Testaments portray a wide range of family styles, some acceptable and some not. Fraser adapts a framework from Charles Kraft which identifies three approaches to family life: the biblical ideal, the less than ideal but not sinful, and the sinful.

An illustration of the biblical ideal is Paul’s discussion of marriage relations in Ephesians 5:25-33, where Genesis 2:24 is used to give ultimate parameters to marriage just as Jesus used it to “relativize Mosaic divorce legislation” (p. 16). Wherever marriage is found, it is designed to serve as a symbol of Jesus’ relationship to the church. Fraser draws upon Walter Frobisch’s three ways of describing the relationship of this cultural ideal to practical life. “Leaving father and mother” is called wedlock, becoming “one flesh” is sexual union, and love (cleave) is the personal element that enriches both sex and love. His overview of the legal connotations of these

three elements is helpful in seeking to form a personal understanding of biblical approaches to marriage and family.

A definite position in the essay is Fraser’s judgement that homosexual behavior and cohabitation are definitely in the category of the sinful. After surveying implications of Old and New Testament approaches to this subject, he concludes that the Christian faith cannot legitimate homosexual unions. “Without attempting to be exhaustive, we can come to a clear conclusion that homosexual conduct is consistently considered by both Testaments and by Jewish and Christian exegesis alike to be unacceptable sexual behavior and therefore is to be banned” (p. 27).

“Will Our Daughters Have Faith?” by Roberta Hestenes addresses the hot-potato issue of gender issues in denominations and local churches. She reflects on the changing place of women in the contemporary business world and laments the fact that Christian communities have not been willing to grant the same equality of personhood and vocational opportunities for women in ministry. As a result, she suggests, many women simply adapt to the prevailing culture in their churches, others are hurt, saddened or angry that their gifts are not being used, and some just drop out of the church altogether.

Hestenes believes that “at a deep psychological level, the image of the patriarchal, traditional family shapes our understanding of biblical metaphors about the church as family or the household of God” (p. 44). As long as women are helping males, they are more acceptable in vocational ministry. When they become senior ministers in a church, the role of being leaders conflicts with the family model and becomes uncomfortable. Thus few women become senior pastors.

Since some denominations, such as the Southern Baptist Convention, are opposed to women pastors based on their understanding of biblical teachings, Hestenes defends her approach as biblically and theologically sound. She acknowledges the reality and significance of male/female differences but declares that “these differences are no reason to deny the created worth, salvation, giftedness, and ministries of women alongside men” (p. 37). (I, too, have argued for such equality in my book, *Equality and Submission in Marriage*, Broadman, 1979).

Gretchen G. Hull considers “Inclusive Language and the Means of Grace” in her essay on the development and

importance of translating Hebrew and Greek manuscripts in language more gender specific than gender generic. She agrees that texts should be gender specific when either he or she is specified but that the masculine translation should not be used by itself when the original language forms include both men and women. Gender accuracy involves “careful wording that indicates all human beings if the intent is to include women as well as men but that is unmistakably gender specific when only one sex is meant” (p. 54).

Hull addresses the use of inclusive language within the context of the Christian community in order to emphasize the inclusion of women as well as men in the acceptance and companionship of the gospel community. “What a joy for the individual woman as well as for the individual man to have this need met now by being warmly welcomed into the priesthood of all believers” (p. 59).

While she gives attention to Paul’s declaration that Jesus was made in the likeness of humankind (*anthropon*) in Philippians 2:7-8, she does not discuss gender issues related to how God is portrayed in the Bible other than as male. This issue is a red-flag issue for many believers in the argument against inclusive language translations. She has addressed the overall theme appropriately and helpfully in her defense of greater inclusiveness in language use in scriptural translations.

Duffy Robbins’ critique of “North American Youth Ministry” highlights the need for youth ministry to grapple more consciously with developing greater spirituality than measuring its success by a quick emotional fix. Believing that “we have become all heart and no head,” he argues for greater emphasis on *why* rather than *how* in doing youth ministry.

“Why Would Anybody Ever Want to Be an Evangelical?” is an address by Ronald J. Sider delivered to a secular audience at a college-wide conference on spirituality. He describes himself as the “token evangelical” on the program!

After briefly describing what evangelicals are not, he discusses significant issues in Christian faith that conflict with contemporary scientific theories. Much of the essay is given to historical approaches to belief in the resurrection of Jesus and the Christian declaration that Jesus is the only way to fellowship with the Father God. Such faith gives assurance that

death is not to be feared. “Christians believe that death is not a terrifying passage into nothingness but rather a transition into a glorious eternity in the presence of the Living Lord Jesus” (p. 87).

Sides’ closing discussion relates the power of the gospel to help deal with three major social issues of our time: our environmental crisis, our inner cities, and concepts of family and feminism. Cooperative ministry between churches and local governments can bring greater success in rescuing persons caught in the vortex of these problems than can government by itself. “Why would anyone want to be an evangelical? First, because biblical faith is true. And second, because it works. . . . I dare you to try it” (p. 193).

Bryan A. Stephenson, an attorney and law professor, raises disturbing and heart-challenging questions about the practice of capital punishment when the major victims of such legal “justice” are the poor and racial or ethnic minorities. In the last year of the twentieth century, declares Stephenson, “the world’s ‘leading democracy’ executed close to one hundred of its residents. All of the executed were poor and a disproportionately high number were racial minorities with crime victims who were white” (p. 98). Making “the promise, the hope, and glory of Christ real in the lives of desperately alienated people” is our mission and our calling (p. 105).

Jim Wallis makes a strong case for “faith-based organizations” in his essay, “From Protest to Covenant.” His major emphasis is on the imperative for Christian intervention and ministry on behalf of the poor in our nation. He declares that “overcoming poverty must become a nonpartisan issue and a bipartisan cause” with faith-based organizations “taking the lead in taking action on the issue” (p. 116). This must be done while “vigorously protecting First Amendment rights of religious freedom” (p. 113).

This collection of essays provides a stimulating introduction to ways in which Christians in our land can truly implement the gospel “with extra salt.” Statistical data, biblical interpretations, and potential agendas for action are valuable resources for preaching and church planning, inspired by a man whose life has embodied what his friends write in his honor. ■



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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