

# CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY

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

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# Pledge Controversy and Civil Religion

*Guest Editorial By J. Brent Walker, Executive Director*  
Baptist Joint Committee, Washington, D.C.

The United States Supreme Court is being asked to decide whether teacher-led recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools violates the First Amendment's Establishment Clause.

The Court should rule that it does not. Here's why.

First, the Pledge of Allegiance is not a religious exercise. Clearly, any attempt by the government to demand or even urge participation in a prayer or act of worship would violate the Establishment Clause—particularly in the public schools. But, ours is a secular pledge, which, when taken as a whole, is intended to inspire patriotism. It does not have the purpose or primary effect of advancing religion. At most, it is an acknowledgement of this nation's religious roots and the fact that we continue to be a "very religious people," to use Justice William O. Douglas' phrase.

Second, this reference to America's religious character is non-sectarian. A pledge to "One nation, under Jesus," or "under Buddha" would be difficult to defend. True, the word "God" implies a certain monotheism, and the phrase "under God" is not a perfectly nuanced reflection of this nation's religious pluralism. But, as my former colleague, Buzz Thomas, has said, this is a Pledge—not an essay. It's hard to come up with a more inclusive phrase than this one.

Third, students cannot be compelled to recite the Pledge—with or without the words "under God." The Supreme Court ruled eleven years before "under God" was added in 1954 that students have the right to forgo pledging allegiance to the flag. *West Virginia vs. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943). Students who object to reciting the Pledge cannot be compelled to say it or disciplined for not participating.

Finally, a practical reason. If the Court strikes the words "under God" from the Pledge, there would be an immediate groundswell to amend the Constitution. Although constitutional amendments are difficult to adopt, this one would most likely pass and, in the process, open the door to more far-reaching Establishment Clause mischief.

Having said all this, what is legal and constitutional is not always helpful or wise. For theological and policy reasons, I would be happier if the words "under God" were not included.

Civil religion in its various forms has long been a pervasive part of American political culture. According to sociologist

Robert Bellah, "civil religion is about those public rituals that express the nexus of the political order to divine reality." In its most benign forms, civil religion serves as a unifying, cultural balm that reminds us of our religious roots as a nation. But it can easily and often morph into an idolatry of nationalism, or, at the very least, result in the trivialization of religion.

Simply stated, civil religion is not the same as heartfelt, vital religion. Ceremonial religion is not life-altering, world-changing religion, "Ceremonial deism," as it is sometimes called, is a pale substitute for authentic faith in a personal God whom we call "Abba Father."

Indeed, one of the traditional arguments in favor of the constitutionality of this and other forms of ceremonial deism (such as "In God We Trust" on coins) is that, through long use and rote repetition, the words have lost any religious import they might have had. In short, what is commonplace becomes mundane.

As my friend, Derek Davis, of the J.M. Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies, has written:

The God of American civil religion is a God stripped of his real essence and instead becomes a God used to advance national interests, be it anti-communism in the 1950s when the phrase "under God" was added to the pledge, or in the 2000s, as the God of the bumper sticker "God Bless America" whom America calls upon to fight the war on terrorism. God becomes a watered down deity, a supreme power called upon only to bolster patriotic sentiment and advance national goals.

The vitality of religion in America is thus diminished—not enhanced—when we conflate our penultimate allegiance to Caesar with our ultimate allegiance to God.

This explains why the Baptist Joint Committee—along with many other religious organizations—declined to file a friend-of-the-court brief in this case. The Court can only rule on the legal issue, and our concerns are more theological, political and practical. However, we will continue to speak out publicly about how this issue is something of a tempest in a teapot and about the dangers that attend a pervasive civil religion. ■

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**Editor:** Joe E. Trull

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# EthixBytes

## A Collection of Quotes Comments, Statistics, and News Items

“Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried; grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel.”

*Hamlet by William Shakespeare.*

“Some call me socially dangerous! When did Christianity stop being socially dangerous? When Christianity stops being socially dangerous, it stops being Christianity.”

*Tony Campolo.*

“I think it is a mistake to fixate on symbols of the decline of Christian cultural influence rather than the deeper realities these symbols help illuminate . . . . A granite Decalogue monument is a symbol; a million kids victimized by divorce each year is a reality.”

*David P. Gushee, Union University.*

“The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the Roman people as equally true; by the philosopher as equally false; and by the magistrate as equally useful.”

*Historian Daniel J. Boorstin observing American support for civil religion.*

“Year by year the tax burden shifts from corporations to individuals: corporate income taxes as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product were 1965: 4.1%, 2000: 2.5%, 2002: 1.5%.”

*Sojourners quoting Robert S. McIntyre, Citizens for Tax Justice.*

“Corporate ethics depend on the ethics of the individual. When a corporation claims to value a code of ethics but rewards those who ignore that code, it’s time to leave.”

*Enron Whistleblower Sharon Watkins at Samford University.*

“By no stretch of the imagination was it an honest mistake. Dick Cheney’s claim that Iraq was reconstituting its nuclear weapons program [was] the mushroom cloud that scared Congress into ceding its power to wage war.”

*CIA analyst Ray McGovern in Sojourners.*

“We had difficulty prying it out of the Pentagon.”

*Stanford University Professor Barton Bernstein’s confirmation of 10 U.S. airmen prisoners killed in the atomic bomb detonation over Hiroshima, which killed 140,000, including thousands of forced labor Koreans and many Americans of Japanese descent trapped there when the war began.*

“President Bush’s Council on Economic Advisors predicted Monday [2/9/04] the economy would create 2.6 million new jobs in 2004. Last year’s report predicted 1.7 million jobs, but instead the nation lost 53,000 jobs. In the last three years, 2.2 million jobs have disappeared.”

“We’re spending \$900,000 a minute more than we are taking in. It’s utterly ridiculous.”

*Sen. Kent Conrad (ND), ranking Democrat on the Senate Budget Committee.*

“We’ve gone from a war on poverty to a war on the poor.”

*Episcopal Bishop John Chane, on federal policies favoring the wealthy and corporations.*

“Due to state budget cuts, Texas is dead last among states in the percentage of children who have health insurance [and it] reduced services for 158,000 frail, elderly, and disabled Texans [and] cut \$41.2 million from the mental health budget. No state can be great if it casts aside its weakest members.”

*Texas Comptroller Carole Strayhorn*

“Muckraking lingers on today, but alas, a good deal of it consists of raking personal and sexual scandal in high and celebrated places. Surely, if democracy is to be served, we have to get back to putting the rake where the important dirt lies, in the fleecing of the public and the abuse of its faith in good government.”

*Bill Moyers, Schumann Center for Media and Democracy Speech, Nov. 8, 2003.*

“Well, my analysis was wrong, and I’m sorry. I am much more skeptical of the Bush administration now than I was at the time.”

*Fox News Bill O’Reilly to Charles Gibson about his statement before the war that if no WMD were found, he would apologize to the nation.*

“How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?”  
*John Kerry to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1971.*

“Since 1950, 10,667 children have been allegedly victimized by 4,392 priests, according to two long-awaited studies, and even these numbers represent an undercount.” ■

*The New York Times, Feb. 27, 2004.*

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# Conservatism and Liberalism in Religion and Politics

*Richard D. Kahoe, Psychologist in Private Practice*  
Woodward, OK

Several letters abstracted in the October 2003 *Christian Ethics Today* objected to sentiments that run counter to contemporary conservative political ideology. The editor cited the late Baptist ethicist T. B. Maston: “You can be a theological conservative without being politically conservative. I am theologically conservative, but liberal in my application of the gospel to life.”<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Maston’s assertion is consistent with research I did and published in the early 1970s. I took my departure from a book-length British study, *The Psychology of Conservatism*.<sup>2</sup> My research used three different forms or dimensions of conservatism: religious, social-political, and racial (prejudice). In brief, there was a modest but statistically significant correlation between religious and political conservatism. This supports Dr. Maston’s belief that people can be conservative (or liberal) in theology, but that may or may not carry over into the political arena. However, many do follow “lock-step.” At the same time, religious and racial conservatism had no relationship. Being religiously conservative did not at all predict how one would come down on religious prejudice and stereotyping.<sup>3</sup>

Note that my research is over 25-years old, and also that it was conducted among students at a Southern Baptist College. Social-psychological relationships may vary across time and culture. I would guess that at the start of the 21st century, Southern Baptists show much more “lock-step” between their religious and political conservatism that they did then.

In principle, a Christian might consider “conservatism” to be positive. The essential nature of conservatism is to preserve or “conserve” values from the past. Clearly our religious foundations, from the Ten Commandments to the Sermon on the Mount, incorporate values that should be conserved. At the same time, the “liberal” tradition also is inherently positive. I’ll quote a dictionary definition, to avoid appearance of bias. Liberal means “favoring reform or progress, as in religion, education, etc.; specifically favoring political reforms tending toward democracy and personal freedom for the individual.”<sup>4</sup>

Lest those “liberal” features scare some, note how they fit with traditional Baptist values: priesthood of the believer, local church autonomy, servant-ministry (rather than autocratic leadership), and the dignity of the individual. Without such progressive thought John Smythe, Thomas Helwys, Roger Williams, and other Baptist founders would never have broken with the establishments of their days. In editor Trull’s response re Maston, he also suggested, “a strong case can be made that Jesus was considered a ‘liberal’ by the religious and political leaders of his day.” While Jesus “conserved” the “law and the prophets,” he rejected petty legalism and fulfilled the tradition-

al laws with principled, “heart” faith. The later features are hallmarks of the liberal tradition. Conservatism and liberalism in a culture or society work together in a process analogous to homeostasis in biological systems. Conservatism preserves what is eternal; liberalism pushes for change to fit new situations and new understandings. Both are essential to a viable faith community, political system, or culture.

But, what makes some people conservatives and others liberals? It may help to understand that tradition is comfortable, comforting, and “at ease in Zion.” Liberalism—breaking tradition, going with the unknown—is not for the faint-hearted. So basic human temperament (one’s tolerance for anxiety, for example) inclines each of us to a degree of conservatism or liberalism. Psychological studies of the spectrum of “authoritarianism, dogmatism, conservatism”—from the Second World War Nazi experience forward—have generally focused on Freudian dynamics.

To over-simplify, punitive, rigid, and/or inconsistent parenting tends to make children anxious, and inclined to seek comfort in the familiar—in “conservatism,” in a word. Many contemporary psychologists think family dynamics have been over-rated, but surely there is some truth in this explanation. Simple learning also may tilt a person one way or another. A charismatic conservative or liberal teacher can push a student one way or the other.

Formal education also promotes liberal values. My conservatism research found that increased education was associated with increasingly liberal religious values. Interestingly, I also found that early religious conservatism actually promoted more subsequent years of higher education. (Both findings were “statistically significant,” by conventional standards—that is, not just “chance” values). My guess is that religious conservatism in my college freshmen served as a defense against anxiety. And anxiety (if not too strong) can be a positive drive or “motivator” for increasing one’s education.

Even social/economic events influence personal values. A classic research study in psychology of religion studied rates of joining conservative and liberal churches in different economic eras. With both a national sample and a metropolitan-area sample, times of economic prosperity were associated with higher rates of joining liberal churches. In times of economic recession/ distress, conservative churches drew more people.<sup>5</sup>

I may see this influence in my home state, Oklahoma, from the perspective of having returned after 35 years. When I graduated from a Baptist college in the state, Oklahoma’s governors had all been Democrats. The young state, economically and educationally struggling, found hope in Democrat ideals. Then

the state encountered an oil-fueled economic boom—followed by a catastrophic bust. Conservative (Republican) ideals became appealing. When I returned to the state after a 35 year absence, I joined a church that, in my youth, was as far from the religious-political right as any Baptist church in our part of the state. From that church, in the earlier era, came Charles Wade, the strong “Moderate” executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, also son of the pastor. By the early 1990s the church had become saturated in the values of the SBC “conservative resurgence.” Some time in those 35 years the oil boom and bust in our area had strong religious-political impact.

In general, both liberal and conservative ideologies can become distorted. As a captive audience in a dental chair I recently heard a fill-in for Rush Limbaugh, parading a litany of: “you might be a leftist if . . .” Each example offered a presumed inconsistency. For example: “. . . if you want to outlaw smoking but make marijuana legal.” While caricatures of both of those ideas may be embraced by non-conservatives, I don’t hear any individual “liberal” promoting both in the same breath.

Of course, one can envision a principled, consistent liberal position that would advance both. Perhaps “individuals should have the freedom to use either tobacco or marijuana. But the state has an obligation to control both habits so that innocent people are not injured by their consequences. For example, the public should not have to suffer second-hand smoke, pick up the tab for lung cancer brought on by cigarette use, or absorb the cost of accidents caused (in part) by diminished judgment from use of marijuana.”

I will leave it to my readers to produce a conservative rationale for simultaneously encouraging uncontrolled public smoking but outlawing marijuana altogether. (Frankly, I myself cannot generate one). But allow me to use another conservative position that occasionally rears its head in our part of the world—opposition to the legislated use of helmets for motorcyclists. A responsible, principled conservative position could argue for such freedom to expose one’s skull to deadly injury, so long as the class of helmetless-cyclists supported an insurance program that would relieve society of its expense for such behavior. Privately-paid insurance would provide for living expenses for widows and children of disabled cyclists arising from their death or disability by cycle wrecks. It would also pay funeral expenses, and disability benefits for survivors, to take the place of Social Security disability and other public programs that now must provide medical care, rehabilitation, and lifelong care accruing from such wrecks. With such qualifications, the freedoms promoted by today’s brand of conservatism can be defended.

Now you may note that the “conservatism” that I critique promotes individual rights—not wholly distinct from “individual rights” in our dictionary definition of liberalism. When you read the popular literature of today’s conservative, you will occasionally find an admission that what goes under the guise of conservatism nowadays is closely akin to “libertarianism.” Certainly that philosophy is implied in many contemporary

conservative issues—anti gun-control, anti-environmentalism, etc.

If the Limbaugh fill-ins I overheard had been studious enough, and not just “knee-jerk superficial,” they might have found actual inconsistencies in liberalism, just as we find them in conservatism. Several years ago a liberal newspaper columnist reported on a convention of “liberals” (the exact issues are not relevant here) at a public hotel. An opposed group of “conservatives” printed up a sheet of opposing arguments, and tried to distribute the information to people coming to the meeting. Organizers of the liberal conclave immediately sought to confiscate and destroy all printed opposition. The implied message: we believe in free expression, so long as it doesn’t disagree with us. Similarly, liberal university campus and public school leaders promote open expression of ideas—except that conservative Christian voices are sometimes systematically squelched.

This raises questions for all of us. Let’s examine our positions.

- If they are not consistent, can we defend the inconsistencies?
- Are we going along with liberal or conservative messages and issues just because we are emotionally bonded to the voices we hear?
- Does our affection for charismatic religious figures incline us to adopt their political values, without reflection?
- When we favor conservative views, is it for our own security (or even crass benefit), or for the greater good of humanity?
- Do we dare to risk our security for the sake of non-traditional values, as Jesus and Roger Williams did?
- Do our political values square with principles voiced in the Sermon on the Mount?

And we might wonder, when Christian conservatives argue positions on contemporary social issues, why do they so often quote the Old Testament rather than Jesus’ glosses on legalistic, pharisaical versions of Old Testament laws?

Finally, I know the editor of *Christian Ethics Today* well enough to believe that he would welcome any well-reasoned, principled truly “conservative” position related to the Christian life, ethics, and our shared concern for “widows, orphans, and the strangers in your land”—important issues for Old Testament prophets, as well as for Jesus. ■

<sup>1</sup> “We’ve Got Mail,” *Christian Ethics Today*, October, 2003, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, G. D. *The Psychology of Conservatism*. (New York: Academic Press, 1973).

<sup>3</sup> Kahoe, R. D. “Religious conservatism in a quasi-longitudinal perspective,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, vol. 5, no.1, 1977, 40-47.

<sup>4</sup> *Webster’s Deluxe Unabridged Dictionary* (2nd Ed.). (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979).

<sup>5</sup> Sales, S. M. “Economic threat as a determinant of conversion rates in authoritarian and nonauthoritarian churches.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 23, 1972, 420-428.



# U. S. Policy and North Korea's Nuclear Program

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

North Korea observed an important anniversary on July 27, a date that ended the killing of American, Korean, and Chinese soldiers and divided the peninsula in two parts. The conflict was begun by Gen. Douglas MacArthur before Congress had declared war.

The date North Korea recently celebrated refers not to the end of that conflict, but to an armistice signed that day by both sides. That truce, signed by Gen. Mark Clark for the United States, provided for a Peace Conference, which occurred in April, 1954 in Geneva. When the Chinese leader Zhou Enlai arrived, he held out his hand to John Foster Dulles, who refused to take it and turned away. Dulles and the South Korean, Syngman Rhee, refused to discuss peace, and the Chinese leader proposed that the conference adjourn and set a date for a new meeting. The Canadian delegate reported that the American "simply waved his hand in opposition," and the motion did not pass.

Ever since then the United States has pursued a two-Korea policy, with the U. S. in command of 37,000 American troops and the South Korean army as well. North Korea, whose official name is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), has reported that there have always been political parties in South Korea that have sought withdrawal of U. S. troops. They have also cited the U. S. assassination of the leader of the Korean Independence Party and subsequent assassinations in the South since then. This writer has no way of verifying these and subsequent accusations, but he is aware that many in both the North and South want a unified Korea free from foreign forces. For example, on July 14, 1972, both North and South jointly agreed that peaceful unification without interference would be their goal, and on July 23, 1973, President Kim Il-Sung of North Korea proposed a North-South confederation under the name of the

Confederal Republic of Koryo.<sup>1</sup>

However, the United States interest was in keeping the country divided. When in the 1990s North Korea began to develop a nuclear energy policy, with indications it might have the capacity to develop a nuclear weapon, relations reached a crisis stage. President Clinton actually threatened possible use of U. S. nuclear power. The insistence of Jimmy Carter that the President visit Pyongyang fortunately averted the crisis. In 1994 an Agreed Framework was concluded in which assistance with North Korea's energy needs was promised by the U. S.

George Soros (one of the world's wealthiest men), founder of the Open Society Institute and chairman of Soros Fund Management, has written about the current situation, "Bush precipitated the current crisis with North Korea." In an article in the June issue of *The American Prospect*, he differs with the corporate media, which presents only "the official view." His position, as follows, is one that this writer has long accepted.

"North Korea's nuclear program had been more or less contained in 1994 by the Agreed Framework concluded by the Clinton Administration. In the meantime President Kim Dae Jong of South Korea had engaged in a sunshine policy and it began to bear fruit. There was progress in removing land mines along the border, and a direct train connection was about to be opened. The North Korea leadership seemed to become increasingly aware that it needed economic reforms."

"When Kim Dae Jong came to Washington as the first foreign head of state to visit President Bush, he wanted to enlist the President's support for the sunshine policy. But Bush rebuffed him rather brusquely and publicly. Bush disapproved of what he regarded as the appeasement of North Korea, and he was eager to establish a discontinuity



with the Clinton Administration. He also needed North Korea out in the cold in order to justify the first phase of the National Missile Defense program, the initial linchpin in the Bush strategy of asserting U. S. supremacy.”

“Then came the ‘axis of evil’ speech, and when North Korea surprised the Bush Administration by admitting its uranium enrichment program (strictly speaking not in violation of the Agreed Framework because that covered only plutonium), Bush cut off their supply of fuel oil. North Korea responded with various provocations.”

“As this magazine goes to press, North Korea could soon start producing a nuclear bomb a month. In mid-April it backed off from its demand for bilateral talks with the United States and agreed to three-way talks with the United States and China, but a serious rift between the United States and South Korea remains. South Koreans now regard the United States as being as much of an aggressor as North Korea and this renders our own position very different.”

Any attempt to understand the crisis with North Korea must begin with the 1994 Agreed Framework, under which the U.S. was to provide “formal assurances” not to threaten North Korea with nuclear weapons. The following is a summary of an article by Kevin Kim, “Understanding North Korea” (*In These Times*, March 7, 2003), which cites Bush’s refusal to give such assurances, along with the Bush doctrine that sanctions the use of nuclear weapons. Also the Administration plans to create nukes primed for ‘deeply buried targets’ like those in North Korea. Charles Armstrong, a North Korea expert at Columbia University’s East Asian Institute, is quoted as saying, “The Framework lays out a very rapid timetable of movement toward normalization that hasn’t happened.”

Kim reports that “two [U. S.] promised 1,000-megawatt lightwater reactors—which are impractical for making bombs but remain vital to the North’s energy needs—will miss their 2003 target date by seven years. The [promised] heavy fuel oil shipments meant to replace electricity from the frozen Yongbon reactors have been frequently delayed, and the North Koreans say the oil is barely usable.”

Kim quotes Bruce Cumings, a Korea expert at the University of Chicago, who said, “The Bush Administration has botched our relations with North Korea terribly. It caused Pyongyang to repudiate the 1994 Agreement. It left Clinton’s missile deal sitting on the table. It’s been led by the most partisan foreign policy of an Administration in my memory—viewing the Framework not as a solemn agreement between two nations, but something Clinton did that they could repudiate.”

Kim said further, “The announcement of the Bush doctrine of pre-emptive attacks last fall only confirmed Pyongyang’s worst fears,” and quoted Armstrong, “That was what caused the final realization in North Korea that it could well be an American target.”

These warnings of the disastrous nature of Bush’s policy toward North Korea have only become more frightening

since his first pre-emptive actions in bombing Afghanistan and invading Iraq. What actually does his Administration have in mind for North Korea? A proposal now under consideration in Washington would involve 4,000 daily air strikes over 30 to 60 days, plus the deployment of two U. S. Army divisions to bolster South Korean forces now under the command of U. S. officers in the South, a call-up of National Guard and Reserve units, and the use of cruise missiles.<sup>2</sup>

This proposal made by James Woolsey, a former CIA director who is also now the senior advisor to Donald Rumsfeld, has been endorsed by a retired Air Force general, Thomas McInerney. They are quoted as writing, “The world has weeks to months, at most, to deal with this issue, not months to years.”<sup>3</sup>

The propaganda for this has already begun. Former Defense Secretary William Perry told the *Washington Post*, “The nuclear program underway in North Korea poses an imminent danger of nuclear weapons being detonated on American cities.” There is no clear evidence that North Korea can do this, even if the cities are in Alaska or Hawaii.

What are the arguments against such military action by the United States? One is that the bombing of any nuclear facility “could spew radiation across East Asia and around the world.”<sup>4</sup> Another is the Pentagon’s estimate that such a war would generate 52,000 U. S. and 90,000 South Korean casualties within 90 days.<sup>5</sup>

There are other dangers. What would the people and governments of other nations think of yet another action by the world’s super-power, this one predicted to destroy a small nation with hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths, and doing it without being attacked.

The very idea that the White House would be willing to destroy many thousands of civilians should be abhorrent to Americans or people everywhere.

Bush would like to get North Korea to destroy its nuclear weapons and program. What stands in the way of this is that North Korea knows Bush’s record of lying and has real doubt when he said, “The United States had no intention of invading North Korea.”

He did not rule out bombing. And on October 19 a banner headline in the *Kansas City Star* read, “Pentagon’s Plans include Stealth Bombers in Guam.” Those bombers, now based in Missouri, would be much closer to North Korea. It is not surprising that North Korea wanted a non-aggression pact. But Bush rejected it.

The October 20 *New York Times* said Bush told reporters that a non-aggression pact could legally bind the U.S. “never to attempt an Iraq-like pre-emptive strike against the North’s burgeoning number of nuclear facilities.”

Moreover, as the *Nation* magazine noted, “North Korea has witnessed regime change in Iraq and shows every sign of believing that a growing nuclear arsenal is its best means of heading off the same fate for itself.”<sup>6</sup>

If we recall Bush’s West Point speech June 2, 2002, he said, “America has, and intends to keep, military strengths beyond challenge, thereby making the destabilizing arms races of

other eras pointless, and limiting rivalries to trade and other pursuits of peace.” The first part of this boast is continuing, but the reference to “pursuits of peace” was shattered by Bush’s war against Iraq, that is now a “political disaster... writ large in the decline of U. S. reputation and power among the nations of the world, almost all of whom opposed the war and are now perfectly ready to watch on the sidelines as the U.S. sinks in the Iraq bog.”<sup>7</sup>

So now Bush must ask the help of China, Russia, South Korea and others to persuade North Korea to stop its weapons production.

At last a writer with impeccable credentials tells the real problem with the Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea) and why Bush refuses negotiations. Leon V. Sigal, Director of the Northeast Asia Cooperative Security Project at the Social Science Research Council in New York, in the November/December issue of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, states that in talks with six nation’s delegates (China, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Russia and the U. S.) the DPRK stated: “We can dismantle our nuclear program if the United States makes a switchover in its hostile policy towards us and does not pose any threat to us.”

North Korea was even willing to give up its demand for a non-aggression pact as a first step. Instead it proposed a combination that included diplomatic recognition by the U. S. and Japan and the fulfillment of the 1994 Agreed Framework. It continued its demand for a non-aggression treaty and for direct negotiation with the U. S. The U. S. delegate refused to negotiate, although the other nations “have tried to coax the U.S. into negotiating with North Korea.”

The author of the article (Sigal), instead of listing the Bush Administration lies, then calls them “inexactitudes.”

This article in the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* (known for its “Doomsday Clock” which may vary slightly, but which hovers ominously since its beginning within five minutes of the midnight of world nuclear disaster), is seven pages long—too long to summarize here. However, it concludes with this official statement from the Foreign Minister of North Korea: “The DPRK clarified more than once that if the United States has a willingness to drop its hostile policy toward the DPRK, it will have a dialogue with the United States to clear the United States of its worries over its security.”

The author adds these words: “The United States needs to show it is willing to negotiate step-by-step and this time to keep any promises it makes.” ■

<sup>1</sup> Harold Sunoo, *20<sup>th</sup> Century Korea*, chapter 20.

<sup>2</sup> *In These Times*, September 28, 2003, and *The Progressive*, October 2003.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, *In These Times*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *The Progressive*, 26.

<sup>6</sup> *Nation*, August 18/25. 2003.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

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## Who Has Weapons of Mass Destruction— And Why?

By Charles J. Barton, Ph.D., Ret. Chemist  
Oak Ridge, TN

**Note:** The author worked in research for 30 years at the Oak Ridge National Laboratories. This article was submitted by Dr. Barton’s pastor and recommended by Donald B. Trauger (author of *Horsepower to Nuclear Power*) as “appropriate and timely for our readers.”

The question “Who has weapons of mass destruction?” (commonly referred to as WMDs) has been of global concern at least since the 1940s. The three principal types appear to be nuclear bombs, poisonous gases, and biological agents such as anthrax and smallpox. The question whether Iraq had weapons of the latter two types and an interest in obtaining nuclear bombs, the stated reason for the pre-emptive strike against that nation, is still under investigation. The much more important question, in this writer’s opinion, “Did Saddam Hussein have the means to use WMDs against our country?” seems to have been overlooked by the Bush administration and our news media.

I will confine my discussion to nuclear bombs because the identity of nations possessing them is fairly clear and efforts of countries such as Iran and North Korea to obtain them is a matter of current concern. The report that Saddam Hussein was trying to obtain uranium from Africa proved to be bogus. Even if it had been true, it should have been put in the “so-what” category. Oak Ridge, Tennessee, owes its existence primarily to the need for facilities to enrich uranium from the 0.7 percent level of the naturally occurring element to the 90 plus level of bomb grade material. Even if Iraq had possessed the technology to accomplish this formidable task, which seems unlikely, it is a time-consuming operation.

The U. S., with the support from our British ally, developed the atomic bomb because we were afraid that Germany might do so. Russia soon achieved that capability and the two nations then embarked on programs to see who could produce the greatest number and the most powerful bombs. More about that later.

A cursory view of some nations known to possess atomic bombs provides probable causes for their expenditure for that purpose. Western European countries were afraid of Russia, as we were. India and Pakistan are afraid of each other. Israel was afraid of its Arab neighbors. A report that they have 300 bombs has neither been confirmed nor denied, to the best of my knowledge. The above information



is illustrative of the extent of global proliferation of atomic bombs that has occurred in spite of President Carter's efforts to reduce the likelihood of the proliferation of atomic bombs. His policy resulted in the elimination of the U. S. ability to reprocess used fuel from nuclear power reactors and made disposal of our nuclear wastes more costly than that of France, Great Britain, and Japan which have the reprocessing capability.

In thinking about the U. S. supply of nuclear bombs, I was reminded of Jesus Christ's question: "Why do you look at the speck of dust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" (Mt. 7:3). The plank in this instance is of tremendous proportions. Our government announced last year, somewhat proudly I thought, that an agreement had been reached with Russia to reduce our inventory of atomic bombs to 2000, plus or minus a couple of hundred.

Please not that most of our bombs, as well as Russia's, are the so-called hydrogen bombs which are tremendously more powerful than the two bombs exploded in Japan. Also, please note that we have the capability of delivering said bombs to targets in Russia and elsewhere around the globe. Only once (to my knowledge) during the 1963 Cuban missile crisis, has the possibility of launching atomic bombs been seriously considered. A half dozen bombs would pulverize most countries. The specter of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the recognition of "mutually assured destruction" has deterred bomb use.

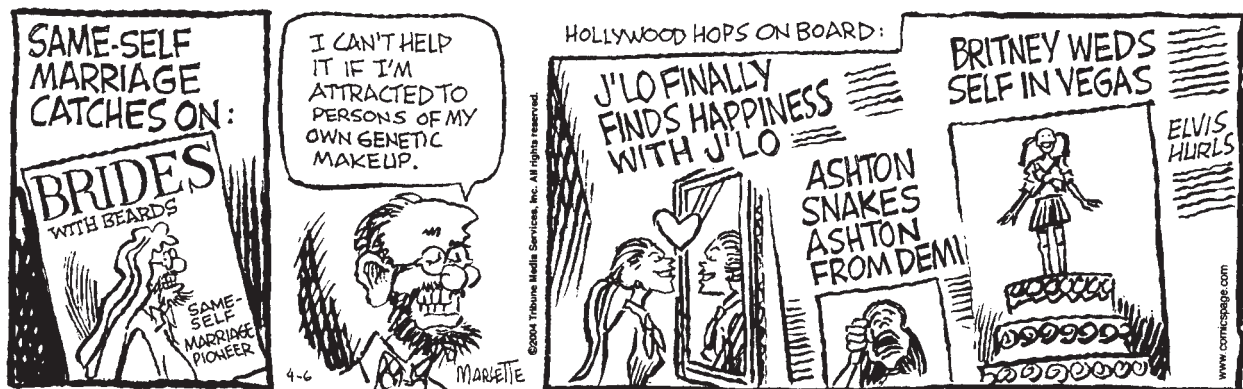
Therefore, I am raising the question: "Why do we maintain this huge number of bombs that we are unlikely to use?" Of whom are we afraid? Could not some of the money that we spend for bomb maintenance be better used to build good will in our relations with other nations around the world?

I found an example of this type of activity in Harry

Emerson Fosdick's book, *The Challenge of the Present Crisis*, published in 1917. He wrote: "What now is our surest reliance in America against any unresolvable misunderstanding with China? It lies in the \$50,000,000 which out of sheer good will our government returned to China when the Boxer indemnity was paid. Hundreds of Chinese students supported by the interest of that fund are studying in America now and in every intelligent Chinese mind there is a settled predisposition to trust America." Memory of this attitude has unfortunately escaped from the minds of both Chinese and American citizens, but it demonstrates the possibility of developing international good will.

In the years since World War I, many avenues for producing good will among needy countries have been developed. There is no doubt in my mind that funneling a fraction of the money that we are spending on maintenance of nuclear bombs into such use could go a long way toward improving the American image throughout the world. Also, there would be the possibility of turning our swords into plowshares by using the enriched uranium and plutonium recovered by disassembling our nuclear bombs to generate electricity in nuclear power plants.

In an earlier article titled "Nuclear War: Perspectives from the Psalms" (*Baptist Peacemaker*, October 1983), I raised the question: "What can the individuals do in regard to nuclear war?" I urged communication of any disagreement that we have with government policies to our elected representatives and banding together with likeminded people to make our opposition more effective. That suggestion seems appropriate in our present situation. I believe that we should put our trust in God as the psalmist and many others have advocated rather than in our military might and nuclear bombs. I will continue to pray for recognition of that need. ■



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# Thomas Jefferson and the “Wall Of Separation” Metaphor

By Derek H. Davis, Director

J. M. Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies, Baylor University

**Note:** This article was originally published in the *Journal of Church and State* (Winter, 2003) and is reprinted by permission.

**I**ncreasingly the separation of church and state in America is maligned and belittled. Many commentators, authors, and political figures advance the theory that the separation doctrine is a myth, that there never have been any limitations on the forces of faith winning political power and directing the course of the nation's destiny along religious lines. At a time when the 9/11/01 tragedy should alert all Americans to the dangers of the radical mix of politics and faith, the crusade to strengthen the formal bonds between church and state in the United States seems to be winning converts at an alarming rate.

One of the most popular strategies adopted by many anti-separationists is to discredit or redefine the meaning of the “wall of separation” metaphor made famous by President Thomas Jefferson in the early nineteenth century. Jefferson used the controversial

Increasingly the separation of church and state in America is maligned and belittled. metaphor in responding to the Danbury Baptist Association, a Baptist religious society in Connecticut that mailed a letter to him in 1801, congratulating him on his recent election to office and praising him for his views on religious liberty. While the letter from the Danbury Baptists has long since faded into oblivion, its response from Jefferson, written to describe his understanding of the meaning of the religion clauses of the First Amendment, has in many ways since become a pillar of American public policy regarding the relationship between church and state. Jefferson's letter, dated January 1, 1802, contained this sentence:

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legislative powers of government reach action only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, *thus building a wall of separation between church and State.*

In the 1947 case of *Everson v. Board of Education*, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black retrieved Jefferson's letter from relative obscurity, discovering in it a summation of the purpose of the Establishment Clause: “In the words of

Jefferson, the clause against establishment was intended to erect a ‘wall of separation’ between church and State.” “That wall,” he added, “must be kept high and impregnable.” The case signaled the Supreme Court's belief that the opening words of the First Amendment (“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . .”) requires nothing less than the separation of church and state. Indeed, most of the Supreme Court's church-state decisions in the last fifty years, with occasional exceptions, have been grounded in a fundamental commitment to the *Everson* standard and the “wall of separation” approach. In recent decades, however, the separation principle has come under considerable attack by religious conservatives as well as many political figures, scholars, and judges. They seek to “set straight” the historical record in order to let the American people know that the Jeffersonian version of the separation of church and state is a myth, and that the Founding Fathers wanted the federal government to be influenced by religious, mostly Christian, ideals, the main limitation being that the government could not set up a national church. A major part of these critics' relentless strategy to discredit the principle of church-state separation is to trivialize Jefferson's letter—to create the illusion that the letter was a hastily written thank-you note to the Danbury Baptist Association without any serious “separationist” overtones.

## I

**R**eligious Right author David Barton, for example, perhaps the most outspoken of the “wall of separation” critics, devoted an entire book, *The Myth of Separation*, to proving his claim that church-state separation is “absurd” and was a principle completely foreign to the Founding Fathers. In discussing Jefferson's letter, he claims that Jefferson's “wall of separation” was meant to be “one-directional,” protecting only the church from interference by the state but never shielding the state from the influence of the church. He states: “In Jefferson's full letter, he said separation of church and state means the government will not run the church, but we will use Christian principles with government.” Focus on the Family president James Dobson makes basically the same claim: “The principle of separation of church and state is found only in one of Jefferson's letters,

and referred, not to the exclusion of religious people from government, but to the protection of religion from governmental interference.” He adds that Jefferson’s letter “has been twisted in its meaning and given the weight of constitutional law.”

Pat Robertson, presidential candidate in 1988 and founder of the Christian Coalition, calls Jefferson’s letter an “angry note” in which he “mentioned in passing that the First Amendment Establishment Clause had built a ‘wall of separation between church and state.’” The implication is that Jefferson was angry at the Founding Fathers for writing a First Amendment that separated church and state, something he could do little about since he was in France at the time the First Amendment was drafted, proposed, debated, and ratified (1789-91). Materials distributed by Robertson’s Christian Coalition make the identical claim. Many Coalition pamphlets flatly state that Jefferson said in his letter to the Danbury Baptists that the United States government should be based on Christian principles and that the wall of separation meant only that the government should not interfere with churches, and not the other way around.

Among more scholarly critics, Robert L. Cord, in his book, *Separation of Church and State*, calls the view of Justice Black—that “The First Amendment has erected a wall between church and state” and that it “must be kept high and impregnable”—mere “lines of fiction.” Moreover, a figure no less than the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, William A. Rehnquist, holds similar views. For Rehnquist, Black’s use of Jefferson’s metaphor is a serious distortion of the true purpose of the Founding Fathers. The “wall” is, says Rehnquist, a “faulty” premise upon which *Everson* and a host of succeeding cases have been wrongly decided. In his dissent in *Wallace v. Jaffree*, a 1985 case which disallowed a moment of silence for “prayer or meditation” in Alabama’s public schools, Rehnquist expressed his regret that the Establishment Clause had been “expressly freighted with Jefferson’s misleading metaphor for nearly forty years.” Rehnquist argued for a purpose in the religion clauses “far different” from the highly simplified “wall of separation between church and state.” The purpose of the Establishment Clause, he argued, was more limited than what the Supreme Court had traditionally held:

It forbade establishment of a national religion, and forbade preference among religious sects or denominations. . . . The Establishment Clause did not require government neutrality between religion nor did it prohibit the federal government from providing nondiscriminatory aid to religion. There is simply no historical foundation for the proposition that the Framers intended to build the “wall of separation” that was constitutionalized in *Everson*.

Rehnquist then concluded: “The ‘wall of separation between church and state’ is a metaphor based on bad history, a metaphor which has proved useless as a guide to judging. It should be frankly and explicitly abandoned.”

More recently, two scholars have published books that criticize the almost canonical status the metaphor has

achieved, especially before the U. S. Supreme Court. Along these lines, Daniel Dreisbach, in his book, *Thomas Jefferson and the Wall of Separation between Church and State*, is critical of the judiciary for making the metaphor a virtual rule of constitutional law. Dreisbach’s basic argument is that the metaphor fails to distinguish between the concepts of “separation” and “nonestablishment.” By this, he means that Jefferson, in adopting the metaphor, intentionally reconceptualized the meaning of the Establishment Clause, which supposedly only prohibits a national church and the federal government from preferring some religions over others (non-preferentialism) while not imposing any restraints on religion’s ability to influence civil matters. Jefferson’s “reconceptualization” was to place a “wall” between the federal government and religion so that the interferences or influences that either might impose on the other are limited. Dreisbach, while not labeling it as such, is making here the “one-directional wall” argument, which holds that Congress intended to limit government’s involvement in religion but not religion’s involvement in government. The problem with this argument is that the Founding Fathers’ intent on this issue is fraught with ambiguities. Jefferson was clearly siding with a large body of founding era leaders who understood “nonestablishment” in much broader terms than nonpreferentialism. They understood the Establishment Clause in more “separationist” terms, imposing limits on governmental interference with religion as well as limiting religion’s ability to direct the course of governmental matters. This ambiguity is reflected even in the eleven drafts of the religion clauses that were considered by the First Congress; these drafts are roughly equally divided between language that adopts non-preferentialism on the one hand and separationism on the other. The final wording is arguably a compromise between the two. Dreisbach is surely correct in saying that metaphors can be overstated, misused, and made poor substitutes for legal principle. But metaphors are powerful language and will always capture the hearts and imaginations of human beings, even Supreme Court justices. But it works both ways. I would argue that a near majority of the current Supreme Court justices have rejected the “wall” metaphor and are now unwittingly at work to adopt a new metaphor—“equal treatment”—which enshrines nonpreferentialism, permits a host of religious activities in the public realm in the name of “free exercise,” and effectively displaces most of what Dreisbach laments.

Philip Hamburger, in his book, *Separation of Church and State*, deals not strictly with Jefferson’s metaphor, but the use of the term “separation” in the history of American political discourse. He contends that separation was not a part of the intent of the Founding Fathers and was only popularized in the nineteenth century as a part of nativist, anti-Catholic bigotry and during the twentieth century as a tool of secularists who sought to eliminate religion from public life. Like Dreisbach, he is critical of what he perceives to be the gradual development of a gross misunderstanding of Jefferson’s metaphor, caused mainly by a gullible judiciary.

What should we make of this barrage of criticism? Could Barton, Dobson, Robertson, Cord, Rehnquist, Dreisbach, and Hamburger be right about the Supreme Court badly bungling the meaning of Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptist Association? Were Jefferson's views on the separation of church and state far less stringent, considerably less separationist, than the Supreme Court thought (unanimously) in *Everson*? These critics have good reason to attack Jefferson's letter, of course. Destroy Jefferson as a strong separationist, and destroy in the process a major plank in the foundation upon which the *Everson* Court relied in articulating the view that the First Amendment has erected a "high and impregnable" wall between church and state. With that step achieved, the door would be opened wide for a closer union of church and state in America, a union that would allow for prayer and other religious activities in the public schools; government financial aid to churches, religious schools, and other religious organizations; and the placement of crosses and other religious symbols on public property. In short, government restraints on sponsorship and support of religion and religious institutions would be removed. There is indeed much at stake.

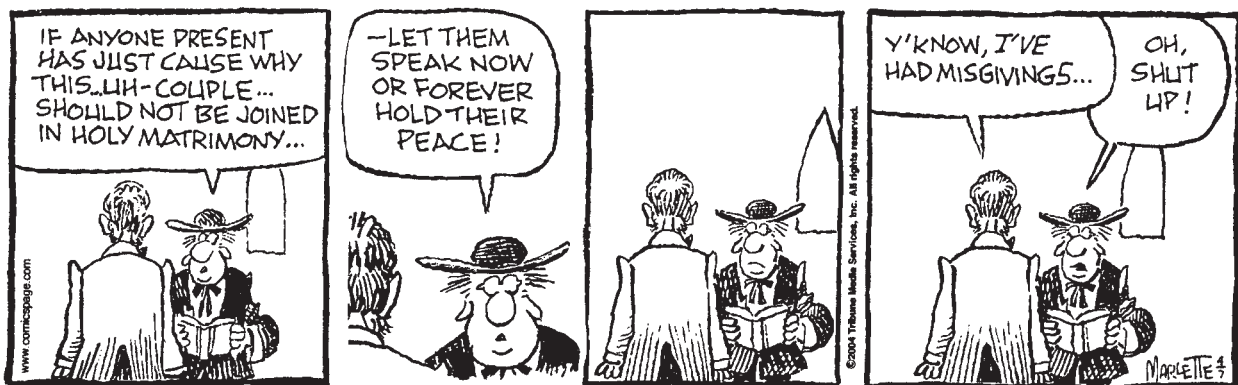
## II

Let us take a closer look at Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptists and the context in which it was written. When examined in its proper light, it is readily seen that its anti-separationist critics offer strained, if not outright false, interpretations of Jefferson's letter. The letter was actually a carefully crafted document which Jefferson hoped would become a widely distributed statement regarding his view of the purpose of the First Amendment's religion clauses.

It is important first to understand the context in which the letter from the Danbury Baptist Association was written. Why did the Danbury Baptists write a letter to Jefferson and what did it say? The letter was written in connection with what became known as the Baptist Petition Movement in Connecticut. This movement, which began in 1800 and lasted about fifteen years, was an organized effort by Connecticut Baptist leaders to arouse the conscience of the Congregational majority in Connecticut to end its status as the state's official religion, with all of its attendant privileges. These efforts, as well as those of other minority faith groups,

ultimately proved to be successful when in 1817, the Connecticut legislature disestablished the Congregational Church. But as the nineteenth century opened, Baptists, due to their rapidly increasing numbers, were only beginning to wage their campaign to end all Congregational privileges. The main Congregational advantage they wished to end was the receipt of a special religious tax paid by all Connecticut citizens. Baptists could route their tax to their own Baptist church, but they first had to obtain, fill out, and properly file an exemption certificate. As Baptists were a harassed minority, some communities made it difficult for them to receive these exemptions. Many Baptists, therefore, chose to stay at home rather than endure the paperwork hassle. But on a larger scale, it was the inequality of being required to file for exemption at all—a policy of discrimination, they argued—that justified an end to the Congregational establishment. Why not make religion self-sustaining, they contended, since all religions would fare better if they were voluntarily supported by their membership and did not receive government dollars. One Baptist petition in 1803 stated the argument this way: "That all mankind are entitled to equal rights and privileges, esp., the rights of conscience . . . and that all human laws which obliged a man to worship in any lawfully prescribed mode, time, or place or which compel him to pay taxes or in any way to assist in the support of a religious teacher unless on his voluntary contract, are unjust and oppressive."

The Danbury Baptist Association, a leader in the Baptist Petition Movement, thought it would be a good idea to develop friendly relations with the new Republican president, Thomas Jefferson. The president was, of course, well known for his unorthodox religious opinions as well as for his liberal views on religious liberty and the separation of church and state. That Jefferson had helped to separate church and state in Virginia had been considered a prime argument either for or against his election. He was not popular with the Federalist majority in Connecticut, witness what one journalist wrote in the *Connecticut Covenant* on September 18, 1800: "Consider the effects which the election of any man avowing the principles of Mr. Jefferson would have upon our citizens. The effects would be to destroy religion, introduce immorality, and loosen all the





bonds of society.” Already anticipating that convincing the Federalist majority in Connecticut to remove the state’s establishment laws might fail, the Danbury Association opined that the only possibility of eventually achieving their goal might be to side with the Jeffersonians to eventually drive the Federalists out of power. The Danbury Baptists’ letter to Jefferson was written in this spirit; it was a gracious statement of appreciation for like mindedness on a burning issue, but it was also a well planned act of political strategy.

What did the letter say? Following appropriate salutations to the president, the Baptists offered this statement of their belief concerning religious liberty:

Our sentiments are uniformly on the side of religious liberty—That *religion* is at all times and places a matter between God and individuals—That no man ought to suffer in name, person, or effects on account of his religious opinions—That the legitimate power of civil government extends no further than to punish the man who *works ill to his neighbour*.

The Baptists went on to voice their disagreement with the state of affairs in Connecticut—that a Congregational establishment meant that “what religious privileges we enjoy . . . we enjoy as *favors granted* and not as *inalienable rights*; and these *favors* we receive at the expense of such degrading acknowledgments, as are inconsistent with the rights of freemen.” They then expressed the hope that the very presence of Jefferson in the White House might have a positive effect toward a change of the law in their state:

Sir, we are sensible that . . . the national government cannot destroy the laws of each state; but our hopes are strong, that the sentiments of our beloved President which have had such genial effect already, like the radiant beams of the sun, will shine and prevail thro’ all these states and all the world, till Hierarchy and tyranny be destroyed from the earth.

These statements make it clear that the Danbury Baptists thought they had in Jefferson a cohort, one whose views on religious liberty paralleled their own. They saw in Jefferson one who opposed governments being founded upon religion, opposed the advancement by law of one form of Christianity, and opposed government granting privileges to some but not others based on religious identification.

Jefferson’s written response was not requested or expected; that it arrived a little more than two months later was likely a surprise to the Danbury Baptists. And Jefferson probably would not have written the letter had he disagreed with the views of the Danbury Baptists. He wrote the letter specifically to offer his views on the meaning of the religion clauses, pleased that he had an appreciative audience. Contrary to what Pat Robertson would have us believe, he was not “angry” about the separation principle enshrined in the religion clauses; he wrote rather to advocate such a position. And had Jefferson believed in a “one-directional” wall, one only protecting religion from government and not government from religion, as critics claim, he would hardly have written a letter stating his agreement with the Baptist’s view

on religious liberty, since the *raison d’être* of the Danbury Baptist Association was its vigorous opposition to religion (Congregationalism) directing the course of state affairs in Connecticut.

As already noted, many anti-separationists assert that Jefferson’s letter was issued hastily, mostly out of politeness, with little attention to substance, and certainly not to express strong separationist sentiments. The facts, however, quickly dispel this interpretation. The evidence suggests that Jefferson took extreme care to craft his reply. After preparing the letter, Jefferson asked his attorney general, Levi Lincoln, to carefully review it. In an attached note to Lincoln, Jefferson wrote,

“Averse to receive addresses (letters), yet unable to prevent them, I have generally endeavored to . . . [make] them the occasion, by way of answer, of sowing useful truths and principles among the people, which might germinate and become rooted among their political tenets. . . . The Baptist address . . . furnished an occasion, too, which I have long wished to find, of saying why I do not proclaim fastings and thanksgivings, as my predecessors did.”

There are other indications that Jefferson gave close attention to the wording of his letter. Jefferson wanted to use the letter to explain his opposition to proclaiming national days of fasting and thanksgiving. His attorney general, however, persuaded him to say nothing about the subject. Jefferson’s original draft contained this sentence: “Congress thus inhibited from acts respecting religion, and the Executive authorized only to execute their acts, I have refrained from prescribing even occasional performances of devotion.” Attorney General Lincoln, persuaded that the sentence would hurt the president politically in New England, advised Jefferson to remove it. Jefferson agreed, but noted in the margin of his draft, “This paragraph was omitted on the suggestion that it might give uneasiness to some of our republican friends in the eastern states where the proclamation of thanksgivings etc. by their Executive is . . . [a] habit and is respected.”

These facts plainly indicate the considerable precision exercised by Jefferson in framing his reply. Moreover, the length of the letter (three paragraphs, 259 words) also defies that it was a mere gesture of good will. The letter was carefully drawn, and intended to be a policy statement, a status which it undoubtedly has achieved in our own time.

The charge that Jefferson’s “wall of separation between church and state” was one-directional only, that is, that the “wall” was to protect the church from government but not the government from the church, is insupportable not only on the basis of what the Danbury letter actually says, but also on the basis of Jefferson’s views on church-state relations as developed and expounded over the course of his political career. Jefferson was a thoroughgoing separationist, perhaps surpassed only by his close friend and fellow Virginian, James Madison. Jefferson was the author of Virginia’s Statute for Religious Freedom, enacted into law in 1786 after seven

years of protracted debate among Virginia legislators. The statute ended once and for all the practice of state-supported religion in Virginia. The “one-directional” wall theory precludes a ban on government subsidization of religion, which is what the Virginia Statute undoubtedly achieved. Jefferson was undoubtedly “two-directional” in his view that government should have no role in advancing or promoting religious ideas. In his words, “truth is great and will prevail if left to herself.” Moreover, “the opinions of men are not the object of civil government, nor under its jurisdiction.” These statements were made in 1779, twenty-three years before he wrote the letter to the Danbury Baptist Association, but his views did not change once in office. Contrary to his predecessors, George Washington and John Adams, he opposed presidential proclamations for prayer, fasting, and thanksgiving. On the matter of official prayers, he believed that it was best left in the hands of the people, “where the Constitution had deposited it.”

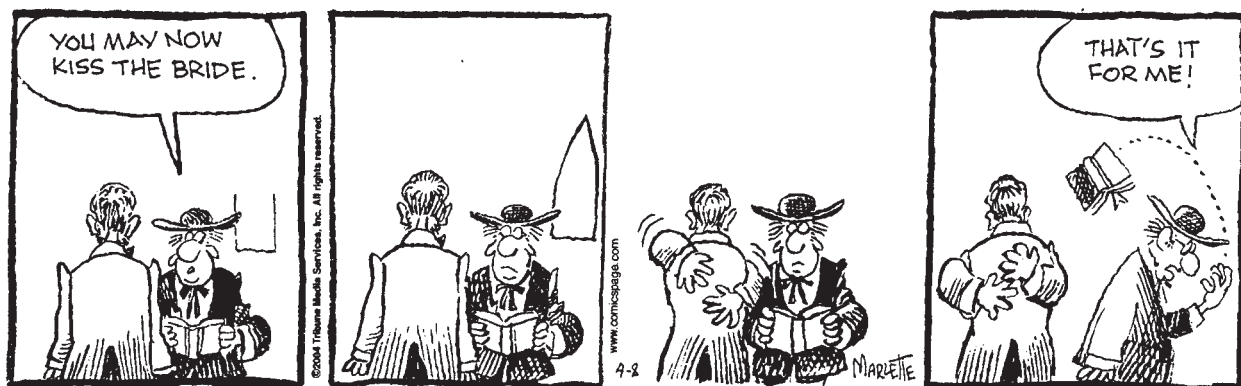
### III

As strong a separationist as Jefferson was, he occasionally lowered the “wall” if there were extenuating circumstances. For example, he approved treaties with Indian tribes that underwrote the “propagation of the Gospel among the Heathen.” In all probability, however, he justified this action on the view that Indian tribes were foreign nations, and the First Amendment was therefore inapplicable. As we examine Jefferson’s full record, it is apparent that he believed that religion and government both benefit if they maintain a healthy distance from each other. He believed that religion almost always exists in greater purity without the support of government, that only voluntary faith is authentic, and that government nurture destroys true religion.

Most critics of the separation of church and state fail to acknowledge that the “wall of separation” metaphor did not actually originate with Thomas Jefferson. It was first used in America by America’s earliest and most ardent advocate of the separation of church and state, Roger Williams. In 1644, responding to a critic’s charges concerning his views, Williams wrote that the Bible taught there to be “hedge or

wall of separation between the garden of the church and the wilderness of the world.” Williams, like Jefferson later, believed that a clear boundary between the institutions of government and religion is good for both. The Supreme Court, then, in unanimously embracing the “wall of separation” metaphor in the 1947 *Everson* case, was not only saluting the views of Thomas Jefferson regarding the separation of church and state, but was actually affirming a notion that had been a bedrock principle in American thought for more than three hundred years. The Court, in fact, later bracketed Williams and Jefferson with Madison as the figures whose views were most reflected in the First Amendment: The “belief in liberty of religious opinion” espoused by Williams, Jefferson, and Madison, wrote Justice Tom Clark in *Abington v. Schempp* (1963), “came to be incorporated in the Federal Constitution.”

The meaning of the religion clauses should not, of course, be determined by resorting exclusively to the views of Thomas Jefferson, or even the views of Jefferson as supplemented by Williams and Madison. There were a variety of views in early America regarding the principles that should govern the relationship between religion and government, just as there is a wide range of views today. We should always give close attention to the original intentions of America’s earliest thinkers, but we should not approach their intent as being so fixed as to prevent some measure of freedom to later constitutional interpreters. Nevertheless, to the extent that we rely on founders such as Thomas Jefferson to determine the meaning of the religion clauses, it is important that we examine their writings in their proper historical context, free from reckless distortions intended to advance a partisan view. A fair examination of Thomas Jefferson’s 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association clearly shows that Jefferson understood the religion clauses to mitigate against religious institutions being government’s guiding force or the beneficiaries of government benefits. His “wall of separation between church and state” would be a permanent barrier to such practices. ■



# Hope and Healing in the Land of Oz

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

**Note:** As Father's Day approaches, this unique story of reconciliation and restoration by one father may inspire us all to be ministers of "hope and healing" in our own families.

For six years HBO broadcast a dark and gritty series about inmate life in a prison named Oswald—Oz, for short. I took notice, but not quite the liking I took to some films on the same theme.

"Shawshank Redemption" (with its subtitle, "Hope Can Set You Free") is a favorite everywhere. It seems to be playing every day on some cable channel.

"O Brother Where Art Thou?" took the country by storm. A few weeks ago, *Time* magazine reported the death of James Carter, who in 1959 at age 33 was recorded leading a Mississippi chain gang chant, "Po' Lazarus." It opens the sound track which won the Grammy Award in 2001.

Then came "Chicago." It is a lively, humorous movie about prosecutors, reporters and a jail house mama.

I liked it especially because its principle players—Chicago show girls during the roaring '20s—remind me of the encounter my son had while on the run from the FBI. He had robbed a bank in Lexington. While sitting on a park bench in Covington seven days later considering which of two local banks to rob, he befriended an elderly woman. He offered her a cigarette and brought her a cup of coffee. They sat on the bench, a 23-year-old male with mental, emotional, and moral issues and a 100-year-old woman who was also a stage performer in Chicago during that same rowdy decade. Like Maud Muller in Whittier's famous poem, she wondered aloud what might have been and urged the young man to flee the city before something bad happened.

Alas for the man. He didn't flee and bad stuff did happen. After he was caught, convicted, and sentenced to seven plus

years in prison, Isaac put marker to poster board and drew his recollection of this encounter. It was one of the first in his growing portfolio and he called it simply, "The Oracle."

It will be on display, along with 14 other pieces, during the month of February in the small gallery in the Learning Resource Center on the campus of Georgetown College. We have borrowed these pieces from those who have purchased them, gathering them from places like Nashville, Raleigh, Chicago, Louisville, Owensboro, Frankfort and Lexington. Another 20 pieces will be available for purchase.

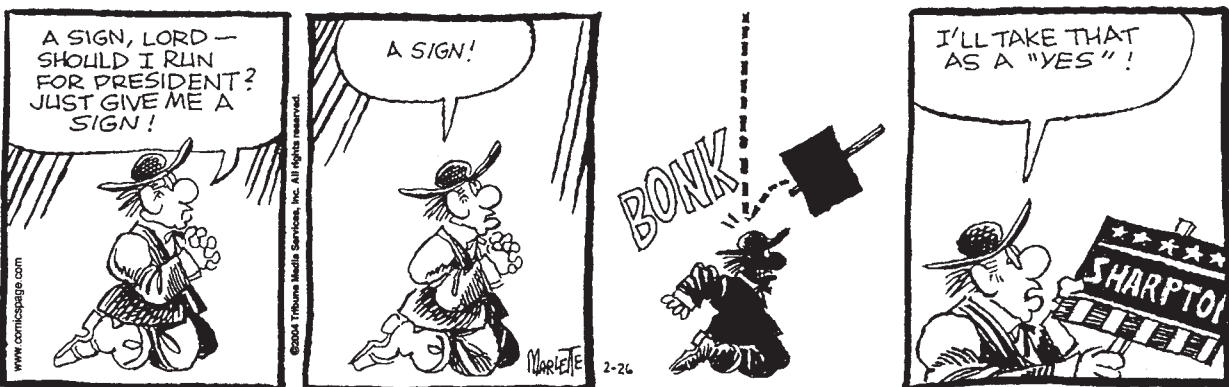
On Tuesday morning, February 3rd, I will speak in the College chapel about my son's journey toward hope and healing.

His story is a sad and surprising tale of self discovery. It narrates the transformation of a prison cell into an art studio, but also of a lost and lonely soul into a purpose-driven man whose future is as bright as the sunrise he never sees.

Along the way Isaac has tamed the demons which had dominated his life and trimmed his six-foot-two-inch frame into a splendid mixture of muscle and imagination. I am reminded of what philosopher Camus once wrote: "In the midst of winter I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer."

Isaac has produced scores of pieces using whatever media he can get his hands on: pen, pencil, paint, chalk, even crayon; on paper, canvas, and even brown wrapping paper.

One piece we treasure is a prison-issued envelope, complete with official return stamp in the top, left-hand corner. Instead of an address, Isaac filled the white space with a



whimsical caravan of characters riding unicycles along the bars of a musical composition. It will be part of the Georgetown exhibition.

With his art, Isaac has introduced us to a string of cell-mates: Joe, Charlie, "Swamp Thang" (whose story I will tell in the public address), and his fast friend, Woodstock, whom we have never met, save in these two dozen portraits of various shapes and colors.

He talks now of his release in 2007 when he will join seven hundred thousand others leaving behind the bars and looking to relocate on the outside.

We encourage his talk of attending an art school on the east coast. From the sale of his art work we pay his bills and buy his supplies. The rest we place in a tuition account-in a bank!

I am his father and my role is to keep hope alive.

One source of my strength is expressed in the words of an old gospel song, "Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter, feelings lie buried that grace can restore. Touched by a loving hand, wakened by kindness, cords that are broken will vibrate once more. Rescue the perishing, care for the dying: Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save." ■

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## Breaking the Da Vinci Code

**D**an Brown wrote a book and for weeks it has been at the top of the New York Times bestseller list. I understand why: I could not put it down.

If you like architecture, history, and religion mixed into a crime story, this book is for you. But if you demand historical accuracy, be careful.

The basic premise of the book is what Brown calls "the greatest cover-up in human history." Jesus was not celibate: he married Mary Magdalene, who was with child at the time of the crucifixion. Mary escaped to France, gave birth to a daughter named Sarah, and lived under the protection of the Jewish community. The remains of Mary Magdalene are stored in the Holy Grail, hidden somewhere in England.

All of this seems preposterous. No historian or theologian of any reputation puts any stock in such a flight of fancy. But on a corollary theme, there is much truth: namely, that Roman and Christian authorities of the fourth and fifth centuries suppressed minority traditions and assigned to them the word "heresy." It was, in part, an effort to centralize power for political effect for both church and state.

As regards other elements of this best-selling who-done-it, I am in the dark: Masons, Knights Templar, Priory of Sion, Opus Dei; to say nothing of cryptology, religious symbolism in medieval art, and the Louvre in Paris.

Seems the company of the curious is a large crowd

indeed. Book clubs and research groups have sprung up to look into these things.

Two new movies are likely to do the same.

"The Gospel of John" opened January 23. It follows word for word the biblical text—not the Greek, of course, but *Today's English Version*.

This modern text is more widely known as the Good News Bible. (It is the work of Robert G. Bratcher, a 1941 graduate of Georgetown College. He spent a career as translator for the American Bible Society.)

"The Passion of Christ" hit the big screens on February 26. Mel Gibson is the writer, director, and producer of this movie. He weaves material from a medieval mystic into the biblical narrative of the last 12 hours of Jesus' life.

The Gibson movie has received much more attention than the Bratcher movie. Many Catholic and Evangelical leaders have attended preview showings and have come away with glowing endorsements.

Others are not so sure.

Passion plays have a long history of anti-Jewish bias. For centuries, the worst time to be a Jew in a Christian community was during Holy Week, when passion plays incited the religious fervor of the people. Too often this fervor was directed against the Jews who were called "Christ Killers." About a decade ago, the Vatican released new guidelines on passion plays including a prohibition on assigning blame for the death of Jesus.

But once again, works of art will force the reading and viewing public to seek the truth, to sort the facts from the fictions presented to us by books and films.

Even NBC news is getting into the groove, with a documentary exploring the question, Who killed Jesus?

There are, of course, four answers to such a question. Jewish and Roman authorities plotted against Jesus; Roman soldiers did the nasty deed of arresting, taunting, scourging, and crucifying. But neither of these is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

The classical answer of Christian theology is simple: we killed Jesus. Jesus died because of our sin; he died for our sin. His blood is upon our hands.

But there is (as C. S. Lewis said about Narnia) a deeper magic. Here I quote Jesus himself: "Nobody takes my life; I lay it down" (Jn. 10:18).

Jesus foresaw his death. Jesus moved toward the conflict that precipitated his death. Jesus embraced his death as fulfilling his mission in the world. Jesus accepted responsibility for his crucifixion.

But public discussion on these matters is a good thing as is artistic expression of them. A large part of the freedom of religion is the liberty to explore these things in the public arena without interference from any media, political, or religious authority. ■

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# The Church and the Aged: A Covenant of Caring

By Jason Patrick, Ph. D. Candidate, Religion  
Baylor University

Bioethics might sound like an area of study that has little relevance to the local church. After all, issues concerning genetic engineering and environmental legislation might find interest in the Sunday School classes of affluent churches filled with professionals, but do these issues ever cross the minds of the majority of Christians? Over the past several decades, however, bioethics has begun to address issues that receive a great deal of attention in all churches. Abortion, euthanasia, and the AIDS crisis have nearly made “bioethics” a household word. Another issue has surfaced in quite a different way that extends the relevancy of bioethics even further. The Greek word *bios* means “life.” Whereas, life has previously been defined as biological vitality, a new awareness of aspects of life has shifted the focus away from quantitative to qualitative qualifications of life.

This transition allows life to be viewed more holistically. Life is no longer solely determined by a functioning heart and brain activity, both biological elements, but also by emotional, spiritual, and other aspects of life. These aspects are no longer viewed as secondary elements belonging to the primacy of the physically functioning body. These aspects together form what we call the *human life*.<sup>1</sup>

The transition toward viewing human life holistically informs the church’s ethic toward the aging. The aging, viewed strictly through a lens of biological vitality, become failures to those who value human life in a utilitarian sense. The church’s elderly are found in nursing homes where they are rarely visited and also alone in the pews on Sunday morning, while other pews are filled with families. The family members of the elderly have either died, moved far away, or simply avoid their matriarchs and patriarchs.

If the value of human life is not based solely upon physical health and biological vitality, the church must radically re-examine its treatment of aged members. The church is in dire need of a new bioethic for and toward the elderly. Melvin Kimble acknowledges this need through his examination of paradigm shifts in the field of gerontology. First, he notes that “agedness” was given a biomedical definition based solely upon the physical health of the individual. Second, a psycho-social tendency attached itself to the biomedical stage. The psycho-social stage of gerontology did not replace the biomedical but, instead, associated certain psychological and societal aspects that were a part of the decline of physical health. Kimble now recognizes and calls for a “hermeneutical paradigm” in which both young and old engage one another in seeking the purposes of survival.<sup>2</sup>

To better understand the lives of the elderly, I offer two descriptions of individuals that represent the most common manner in which the church overlooks its aged members.

Rayford is 83 years old. His health is poor. As he describes it, “I can’t get no circulation.” This might be an apt diagnosis. Rayford’s hands are purple. After sitting in the church pew for an hour, it takes him several minutes to be able to stand and walk because his legs have become numb. He smiles and laughs as younger members of the church greet him and visit with him, but during the week Rayford spends most of his time alone in his home. He leaves his house every morning and drives across town to visit his wife, Mamie, in the nursing home. Mamie has Alzheimers, rarely remembers Rayford, and has begun to lose the mental capacity for her motor skills. In his most honest moments, Rayford admits that he wishes that God would just go ahead and take him and Mamie both right now.

Eighty-nine year old Dolores, coincidentally, lives in the room next door to Mamie. She is a member of the same church as Rayford and Mamie. Dolores has been in the nursing home for 6 months. She is beginning to suffer a great deal of short term memory loss. She knows the few friends and family members that choose to visit her, but within an hour she has forgotten their visit. She spends a lot of time talking of going back to her home, but those who visit her know this will never happen. She also wishes more of her friends would visit her, and she makes excuses for why they cannot come: “They’re too old to drive. This place would depress them. They don’t want to see me like this, and I can’t blame them.” Dolores asks her pastor if she’ll ever get to come back to church, and the best answer he can manage is, “maybe.”

William May remarks that the American culture is an “oddity” for treating the elderly and the dying as synonymous.<sup>3</sup> The elderly are treated as a social pariah. Rather than being seen as a part of the family or a vital part of a circle of friends, they are put in a room in the midst of a long hallway surrounded by people in their condition, better conditions, and worse conditions.

What causes younger people to treat the aged as outsiders? Monica Furlong suggests that younger people are made uncomfortable by the emotions of the elderly as they reflect upon a life that nears its end.<sup>4</sup> Rather than working through the discomfort with the possibility of gaining insight into the meaning of life from one near the end of life, younger people flee from the inconvenience of an encounter with the elderly.

David Maitland recognizes a complicated element in the outsidership of the elderly. They are outsiders, but they were previously the insiders. The social system that now excludes them once brought about their own self-fulfillment.<sup>5</sup> This ironic characteristic causes younger people to silence the voice of the aged, and with feelings of guilt or obligation, the elderly often remain willingly silent.

Logistically, the number of elderly in proportion to younger people will continue to increase. The possibilities of children providing care for their parents will decrease, thus pushing the elderly further to the outside. Nursing homes already represent the exclusion of the aged from the rest of society. America's nursing homes are a "national disgrace because they are overwhelmed, understaffed, and heavily criticized for the level of care they provide."<sup>6</sup> Nursing home overpopulation and diminished care will continue to increase and thus depersonalize the aged even more unless something happens to change current trends. John Lindquist suggests that the church as well as other communities of faith are one possible remedy to the present and worsening tragedy.<sup>7</sup> If the church does possess the ability to better this situation of the elderly, what can it do? Perhaps a good place to begin to is to explore what the church's scriptures communicate to us about the elderly.

### The Bible and the Aged

In the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, old age is a blessing. To die "full of years" is the fondest wish of biblical characters.<sup>8</sup> Zechariah 8:4-5 shares a vision of the new kingdom of God in which those of old age sit on the streets of the New Jerusalem. They carry canes, but the youthful children play around them. The elderly are respected members of this new society. Interestingly, in such prophetic passages the benefits of old age are never "explained;" they are "assumed."<sup>9</sup> The prophets share other such concerns for the elderly. Isaiah 46:4 reads, "To your old age I am the one who will look after you; to gray hair, I will carry you, I myself have created you and will lift you up; I myself will carry you and deliver you."<sup>10</sup>

The most venerated role posited to the elderly can be found in the book of Proverbs. Old age and wisdom are synonymous. Proverbs 22:17-24:22 contains a vast collection of sayings that instruct the young to obey their elders and to always deal wisely with the elderly. Negatively the same assertion is made in Proverbs 30:17, where the young are scolded for their foolishness if they do not "heed the education of the elderly."<sup>11</sup>

J. Gordon Harris comments on two Hebrew words found throughout the Old Testament that define the relationship children should have with their parents, youth with the aged. *Kibbud* describes the duty a child has to act as the "body servant" in taking care of the parents' needs, and the child is to have no aim of attaining a reward. The other word, *mora'*, insists that the child never attempt to take their parents' place nor act in a contradictory manner toward their parents. Although both these words function in the relationship between parent and child, their implications for wider com-

munity relationships between younger persons and the elderly is inherent within the passages. Ancient Israel was not composed of individual families so much as a community of which families were a part—the community had grandfathers just as much as a family has a grandfather.

The book of Deuteronomy illustrates that Israel's reverent treatment for the elderly was much more than custom; it was covenant. Deuteronomy 10:18; 14:29; and 24:17 all demand that the elderly be cared for, and such covenant prescriptions are manifest in the care that is needed by and given to Naomi in the book of Ruth. As a widow with no sons, Naomi has no care-giver, but she is not pushed to the outside. Through her daughter-in-law Ruth's remarriage to Boaz, Naomi too is blessed.<sup>12</sup>

The biblical evidences for a high regard for the aged extends into the New Testament. 1 Timothy 5:3-8 explains both the precarious condition of widows in the community of faith, and the church's responsibility to care for them. Harris argues that the New Testament represents a benchmark in the entire corpus of Hellenistic literature: "Old age is glorified. Children existed to care for the psychological and physical needs of aging parents" as they themselves become aging parents.<sup>13</sup>

As the New Testament undergoes further interpretation in the early church, the Apostolic Fathers viewed God's intention for human life as continuing to an age of "ripeness." Here life does not end but enters a "consummation of new life with God."<sup>14</sup> The earthly life reaches this "ripeness" through living a life of significance and contribution to the wider society. However, the New Testament also raises another issue pertaining to a bioethical view of the elderly. William May states that the New Testament ethic exemplifies the "moral responsibility of the subordinate."<sup>15</sup> The younger people have power and, therefore, a responsibility for the aged. However, the elderly also have responsibilities to younger persons. By giving subordinate persons ethical responsibilities, Jesus' teachings raise the downtrodden, such as the elderly, to a position of power. They too have the privilege and responsibility of making decisions. This insight into the reciprocity of ethics between the young and the old yields greater understanding to the relationship between ministry and the elderly. The elderly are not only to be ministered unto, but they are also to remain active ministers.

### The Elderly and the Ministry of the Church

David Oliver writes that the Church should not think primarily of ministry for or to the elderly but ministry with the elderly and even ministry from the elderly.<sup>16</sup> Oliver does underscore some practical elements of reciprocal ministry available to both younger and older persons in the Christian community—phone calls and visitations are modes of ministry that will always bring mutual benefit to both the elderly and younger persons.

As younger people in the church seek to fulfill the ministry of acknowledging and giving thanks for the continuing "livelihood" of the elderly, they must be aware of both the

duty and boundaries of that ministry. Jeffrey Watson points out that the church has primarily failed by treating the aged apathetically through avoiding them. However, Watson also underscores another danger present in those Christians who do seek to minister to the elderly.<sup>17</sup> Often times, younger people feign a sympathy with the elderly. Sympathy for the elderly from the young borders on sentimentality. Watson encourages empathy, an attitude that seeks to enter into the experience of the elderly while simultaneously admitting the limitations of “second-hand” experience.<sup>18</sup>

As younger persons enter into an empathetic ministry to the aged, older persons might be able to regain awareness of their vitality and the meaning their lives have for the wider community. In fact, many of the elderly who suffer the worst pains of aging often request assisted suicide, not because of the physical pain they are enduring but the emotional anguish.<sup>19</sup> The emotional pains of old age often consist of depression and the guilt of being a burden on family and friends. Many of the elderly who have made requests for assisted suicide have later experienced a ministry that addresses the underlying causes for their feelings of depression and guilt. These ministries emphasize the continued value and need of the elderly for the community of faith.

However, for younger people to be effective ministers to the elderly, the issues that have caused younger people to treat their elders as outsiders must be addressed. Ben Johnson rightly states that younger people fail in ministering to the elderly because of fear.<sup>20</sup> The elderly are understood as those who are dying or at least nearer to death than younger people; and when younger people spend time with older people, youth is confronted with the reality that they too will face death. For younger people to be effective ministers they must address their own inadequacies, thus realizing the inevitability of death, and finding from the elderly inestimable wisdom concerning that reality. Another word of caution given by Oliver is that communities of faith should not become too narrow in having specific ministries to the elderly.<sup>21</sup> The elderly are still a part of the community of faith and are, therefore, always a part of the ministerial vision of the church as is everyone in the community regardless of age. Oliver's point further stresses that ministry in the church cannot be only *to* the elderly, but that there is a ministry to be received *from* the elderly.

Tim Stafford remarks that “if the paths to heaven and hell diverge visibly on earth, they begin to split in the nursing home.”<sup>22</sup> Stafford's comment distinguishes between the elderly who have retained their identity as ministers despite the challenges of old age and those who have grown bitter and despondent because of their old age. In this latter category, Stafford is certainly not including the aged who express bitterness and despondency because of severe mental deterioration. In seeking to be empathetic with the elderly, younger persons do not cast aside the hope that they might receive from the elderly the ministry of wisdom gained through life experience. Kimble describes this aspect of growing old as an “achievement” that lends a “transcendent element,” commu-

nicating the meaning of life to younger generations.<sup>23</sup> The ministry younger persons receive from the elderly puts aspects of life into a perspective that might otherwise be unimaginable. Orlo Strunk describes old age as the period of life when an appreciation for smaller things is absolutely sincere: “Instead of pretending like the pretty bird outside the window matters, the pretty bird really does add something to the meaning of life!”<sup>24</sup>

Ann Belford Ulanov articulates the journey experienced by the elderly, and, thus, why older persons are able to be such effective ministers.

Aging brings home to us what we have done or failed to do with our lives, our creativity or our waste, our openness to zealous hiding from what really matters. Precisely at this point, age cracks us open, sometimes for the first time, makes us aware of the center, makes us look for it in relation to it. Aging does not mark an end but rather a beginning of making sense of end questions, so that life can have an end in every sense of the word.<sup>25</sup>

Growing old with dignity and humility is in and of itself a powerful ministry. Stafford remembers this ministry in his grandfather: After suffering a severe stroke, “grandfather” still made it to church. He was not able to sing the hymns as he once had. His words often sounded like “gibberish.” Though his words were no longer eloquent, his face continued to carry both eloquence and love.<sup>26</sup>

A Christian bioethic toward the aging must first recognize the manner in which the church has excluded its older members. A bioethical response acknowledges the continued vitality of the elderly in at least two ways. First, physical livelihood has decreased, and the majority of time this leads to some measure of emotional distress. Second, the vitality of the elderly continues as a gift to younger persons. The church must value and embrace the gifts older persons can offer to the wider community.

The theological insights of the elderly might be the church's most insightful experiences of God. Contrary to popular thought, we do not learn and then live. We learn while living. A “well-spring of theology awaits the younger generation of the church.”<sup>27</sup> These theologians and saints can be found wheeling themselves down the halls of nursing homes or on Sunday morning sitting alone in a pew that used to be shared with a spouse and children. They have much to offer to the community of faith, and the community of faith must adhere to its covenant to care for them. ■

<sup>1</sup> Daniel McGee, lecture, Baylor University, 10 September 2002. The focus of the lecture was the transition from compartmentalizing aspects of life to the holistic treatment of the human person.

<sup>2</sup> Melvin A. Kimble, “Beyond the Biomedical Paradigm: Generating a Spiritual Vision of Aging,” in *Journal of Religion Gerontology* 12, no. 1 (2001): 32-3.

<sup>3</sup> William F. May, “A Clue to the American Character: Who Cares for the Aged?” in *Christianity Today* 28 (5 October 1984): 39.

- <sup>4</sup> Monica Furlong, "A Spirituality for the Aging?" *Reflections on Aging and Spiritual Growth*, Andrew Weaver, Harold Koenig, and Phyllis Roe, eds. (Nashville: Abingdon: 1998), 43-4.
- <sup>5</sup> David J. Maitland, *Aging as Counterculture* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1991), 143.
- <sup>6</sup> John H. Lindquist, "Prognosis for the Future: Looking at the Past," in *Journal of Religion and Aging* 3 (Fall-Winter 1986): 116.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.
- <sup>8</sup> Tim Stafford, "The Old Age Heresy," in *Christianity Today* 35 (16 September 1991): 31.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup> Translation from J. Gordon Harris, *Biblical Perspectives on Aging: God and the Elderly* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 115.
- <sup>11</sup> Translation Harris, 35.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.
- <sup>14</sup> Catherine Gunsalus-Gonzalez, "An Historical Perspective on the Church and the Elderly," *Gerontology in Theological Education*, Barbara Payne and Earl D. C. Brewer, eds. (New York: The Haworth Press, 1989), 64.
- <sup>15</sup> May, 41. May's discussion relies heavily on John Yoder's treatment of Jesus' ethics.
- <sup>16</sup> David B. Oliver, "Reflections on the Role of the Church, Synagogue or Parish in Developing Effective Ministries with Older Persons," in *Journal of Religious Gerontology* 12, no. 2 (2001): 38.
- <sup>17</sup> Jeffrey A. Watson, *The Courage to Care* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1972), 170.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>19</sup> Gary Thomas, "Deadly Compassion," in *Christianity Today* 41 (16 June 1997): 16.
- <sup>20</sup> Ben C. Johnson, "Spirituality and the Later Years," *Gerontology in Theological Education*, Barbara Payne and Earl D. C. Brewer, eds. (New York: The Haworth Press, 1989), 138.
- <sup>21</sup> Oliver, 38.
- <sup>22</sup> Stafford, 31.
- <sup>23</sup> Kimble, 36.
- <sup>24</sup> Orlo C. Strunk, "Positive Spins on Bad Ideas," *Reflections on Aging and Spiritual Growth*, Andrew Weaver, Harold Koenig, and Phyllis Rose, eds. (Nashville Abingdon, 1998), 99-100.
- <sup>25</sup> Ann Belford Ulanov, "Aging: On the Way to One's End," *Ministry with the Aging*, W. Clements, ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 122.
- <sup>26</sup> Stafford, 31.
- <sup>27</sup> William L. Hendricks, *A Theology for the Aging* (Nashville: Broadman, 1986), 253.

## The Ethics of Spanking: A Continuing Debate

By R. Hal Ritter, Jr., Ph.D.

Licensed Professional Counselor, Waco, TX

With the increasing awareness today of child abuse, the ethical dimension of spanking often enters the conversation. Children learn by example, and when spanking is used as an option for problem solving, then children learn that the use of violence is one way to solve problems. But the issue of spanking, or corporal punishment, is very complicated because many parents do not associate spanking with violence. Many parents believe that spanking is a way of modeling firm limits and consequences.

Theologically, the Bible is often quoted as the source for the necessity of spanking. Proverbs 22:15 (RSV) says, "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him [her]." And Proverbs 23:13-14 (RSV) says, "Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you beat him [her] with a rod, he [she] will not die. If you beat him [her] with a rod you will save his [her] life from Sheol." These verses feel more awkward when the female pronoun is added to them. Somehow, it seems more appropriate to "beat" a boy than to "beat" a girl. However, the use of the word "child" in verse 23:13 makes it clear that both male and female are intended.

In the New Testament, there is no reference to spanking. The ethics of Jesus for Christians is that we are to live and teach love and peace. We are to love others and be peacemakers. Some take these verses as the total renunciation of violence, while others see limitations in this world to these values being totally actualized.

In Ephesians 6:1-2a, 4 (RSV), the Apostle Paul makes a brief reference to parenting: "Children [boys and girls] obey your parents [father and mother] in the Lord, for this right. Honor your father and mother. . . . Fathers [mothers], do not provoke your children [boys and girls] to anger." There is a difference between "children obey your parents" and "honor your father and mother." When children are young, obedience is taught and encouraged. As children transition during adolescence toward adulthood, they make the often confusing journey toward honoring father and mother. As adolescents move into young adulthood, parents struggle with how to stop treating them as children who must give obedience, and how to welcome them as adults who are respected in their own right as persons. However, these same young adults are also struggling with what it means to honor father and mother, without rejecting them outright.



### What Do Parents Want?

Ultimately, what is the goal of parenting? Oftentimes, parents do not take a long-term view of how they want their children to be as adults. They may vaguely think that they want adults who are Christians, who are honest and who are compassionate. But how are these values taught to children? The oft-quoted proverb says, “Values are caught more than taught.” In other words, parents do a lot of teaching in the way they behave toward one another, toward their children, and toward those in the community around them. Hopefully, the values being taught are clear and healthy and do not represent an attitude which says, “Do as I say, not as I do.”

In other words, when a parent spanks a child, is this action teaching a lesson that says that hitting is an acceptable method of problem-solving with other people? Most parents will answer that spanking and hitting are not the same thing, and this is probably the correct response. Hitting is an aggressive behavior intended to inflict hurt and pain on another person. Spanking, on the other hand, is a disciplinary action intended to teach appropriate behavior. However, this definition of spanking must be carefully understood in order to be meaningful.

Before using spanking as a disciplinary action, it is important for parents to discuss spanking as a teaching method. What is being taught? Are honor and respect being taught? Is obedience being taught? In the emotion of the moment of spanking, does the child understand the parental motive of instruction, or does the child merely experience his or her own powerlessness in the presence of the parental anger and outrage? These are serious questions that deserve serious answers.

Most parents will answer that the parental intent is to teach “appropriate behavior.” However, this part of the definition is often ignored in the carrying out of the spanking. Somehow, parents assume *too easily* that children will connect the correct behavior with the spanking. Certainly, spanking does stop whatever behavior is currently being manifested. But what children actually *learn* in this case is that in order to avoid pain and hurt, they must not engage in the undesirable behavior—at least not while the parents are in view.

Spanking does stop the behavior, but it does not teach an acceptable alternative. Spanking does not teach the child the correct behavioral response to whatever is the current situation. The additional point that is often missing with spanking is the parental *care and nurture and training* in what *is* the desired behavior. Children are not little adults, and much of their learning is trial and error. They learn at a very early age what “No” means, and they hear “No” much more often than they hear “Yes.” Children continue doing what they are doing until they cross a limit and are told to “Stop.” At the moment of “Stop,” the parental responsibility becomes that of teacher, to make sure the child understands the limit and also understands the alternative, desired behavior.

Does this all mean that parents are to explain everything to children? Not necessarily. Children do not need everything explained to them in adult detail. Since they are not adults, they will not understand lengthy explanations. On the other hand, children are due the respect of some explanation that helps them know why the current behavior is unacceptable, and what behavior is appropriate instead. And additionally, they may need some personal training in how to exhibit the preferred behavior.

A child running into the street must be stopped and protected. However, just stopping the behavior and putting the child back into the yard does not teach an alternative behavior. The child must be taught the dangers of the street as well as the proper way to cross the street and when crossing the street is appropriate. Otherwise, the child will be confused, because the child will see others crossing the street and will wonder why he or she is forbidden from doing the same thing.

### What's A Parent To Do?

Hopefully, parents have some understanding of why they parent as they do and why they spank. Most parents do parenting the same way they were parented as children. If their parents yelled a lot, they may yell at their own children. If their parents spanked, they may spank their own children. Parents often say, “I got spanked, and I didn’t turn out so bad,” as if the spanking is what made them fully functioning adults. While there may also have been a lot of *time and love* that went into the parenting they received, spanking may seem to be the only real source of discipline and teaching that they remember.

What parents generally want their children to learn is self-discipline, self-regulation, and self-control. Galatians 5:22 reads that the fruit of the Spirit includes self-control. The emphasis of this two-word phrase is often on the word “control.” If a child—or any person—acts in an inappropriate or undesirable way, people often say that the person needs to learn to “control” themselves. In this way, the term self-control is understood as a behavior, that is, the person needs to “behave” themselves. Thus, what parents want for their child is for the child to learn the proper behavior for different circumstances of life.

However, self-control also functions on another level, namely, that of the “self.” The person who behaves appropriately is in control of their personhood, their sense of self. When the *self* is out of control, the behavior is often disoriented and out of control: “As a person thinks in one’s heart, so one is.” If the child is in control of the emerging sense of *person* within, then the behavior will be controlled. When the person, the self—the emerging identity for this situation—is out of control, illogical and irrational behavior often follows. Thus, what parents may actually want for their children is a clear sense of self, of personhood, that values and clarifies decisions, and makes decisions that bring appropriate behavior to the situation at hand.

When children see that parents respond irrationally to

the various situations of life, they often fail to understand what appropriate behavior is, and what it is that is being expected of them. The biblical call to peace and love is not some romantic, illogical, sappy view of life. It is a call to love God and to be at peace with God, and to love others and be at peace with others. This call to love and peace is based in one's love of self and being at peace with one's self. It is a call to serious character formation within one's own relationship with God in Christ. And it includes the sacred parental responsibility of helping to shape the character and behavior of the children entrusted to parents, by God.

Jesus says that we can find a speck in someone else's eye when we, in fact, have a log in our own eye. Parents sometimes pick apart the various specks of a child's behavior, while having a woodpile full of logs in their own life. Parents want perfect children, and yet, no one is able to model what that perfection is. The only model is Jesus' call to love God and be at peace with one another.

The family is a laboratory of life, and children spend about eighteen years in that laboratory, watching, observing, experiencing and learning. It is here that they learn valuable life lessons that will guide their future decision making for all of life. When they marry, they will behave and act as a husband or a wife based upon what they observed and learned at home as they watched their parents for eighteen years. In other words, they will be a spouse to their spouse, the way they saw their parents be a spouse to one another. And when they have children, they will parent their children the way they were parented. If they learned love and peaceful correction, then they will parent with love and peaceful correction. If they learned anger and violence, then they will parent with anger and violence.

So, what are parents teaching their children? Hopefully, they are teaching Christian values and personal character formation. Law and grace. Limits and love. Discipline without anger. While spanking generally makes the parent feel better, the real question is, *does* the child learn? The answer, of course, is yes, the child does learn. But, more specifically, *what* does the child learn? These are important questions for anyone who is engaged in the sacred honor and responsibility of nurturing and guiding and leading the precious children who God has entrusted to families, to parents, the very children who are being formed as the future of the kingdom of God. ■

## THE PASSION OF CHRIST

Wearying are all these depictions  
Of the suffering of our Lord  
Whose dying and death  
Are "performed" in so many plays,  
Cantatas and now by one big film.

All this is so tiring to my senses  
And sensibilities-  
These "performances" miss the point.  
That is, that Jesus is being oppressed,  
Tortured and murdered every single day  
In the lives of millions upon millions  
Of the naked, sick, the hungry and thirsty  
Of our world.

Did he not tell us ever so plainly  
That he was embodied in all those  
Who suffer in our time.  
While the Church has "performed" its  
Ritual of remembrance of the 'Passion of Christ'  
Throughout her history,  
Innumerable souls have tasted real torture  
And very real death.

Have we in the Church, perhaps, been  
more concerned  
With our dramatic "performance"  
Than with the plight of those  
Whom Jesus said he was to be?

Oberammergau's power of performance  
Continued to flourish during the Nazi regime,  
When Jews were being dragged away  
By the millions to death camps.

Let us weep for Jesus, yes,  
But let us also weep for those  
Who are being crucified this very day.

*Al Staggs*

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# The D'Arcy Oak

By Hal Haralson, Attorney

Austin, Texas

I cut the walking trail below our house west of Austin, Texas, with a chain saw 25 years ago. It moves under six varieties of oaks, native elms, and far too many cedars. I walk around the trail four times each morning. It takes an hour.

Recently I discovered a huge Spanish oak about 50 yards off the trail. The woods are so thick that I had not noticed it before. The tree rises 70 feet above the forest floor. Spanish oaks usually have multiple trunks. This one had four. Its branches shaded an area over 100 feet in diameter.

There were cedars that would have to be cut. Stumps and dead branches would have to be removed. When this was done there would be an area where one could sit and pray/meditate/write or read. Even the cars at the house could not be heard. It would be a place of solitude.

As I cleared the area I realized that another huge trunk had been ripped from the oak years ago—probably during a rainstorm. The trunk was lodged between two other trunks 30 feet above the ground. It was huge! The branches extended to the ground some 40 feet from the main trunk.

I started to cut out the dead trunk and use it for firewood. I could see the scar 30 feet up where it had been ripped from the tree. Suddenly I realized that this is an illustration of life. The massive tree had endured the tearing away of one of its trunks. Life continued in spite of the loss.

I left the tree as I had found it. I named it the D'Arcy Oak.

Several years ago I attended a conference for writers at Laity Lodge. This Texas hill country retreat was built 50 years ago by Mr. and Mrs. Howard Butt, Sr., and has been directed all these years by Howard and Barbara Dan Butt. Modern pilgrims have shared the beauty of this canyon all those years.

The facilities are elegant. The canyon is so remote that one has to drive up the bed of the Frio River to get to the lodge. It is a place of healing.

The leader of the writers' conference was a woman in her mid forties. Her name is Paula D'Arcy. She is the author of several books and is much in demand as a conference leader.

Paula shared her story with us. With an honesty and openness that was astonishing, she took us with her on her journey:

In 1975, Paula, who is a psychotherapist by profession, was living in Boston, Massachusetts, with her husband and two-year-old daughter Sarah. Psychotherapist, yes, but Paula is also a writer. She said, "I cannot remember when I did not write."

It was natural to keep a journal beginning with the birth

of Sarah. It was full of joy as Paula chronicled Sarah's first steps and the delight this young mother shared with each new discovery of her child.

Mom, Dad, and little Sarah went to visit family over the weekend. The trip from Boston took about two hours by car. The D'Arcys had decided to extend the visit a bit and return on Monday morning. Paula turned to say something to Sarah who was in the car seat directly behind her.

"The last thing I remember was seeing a white blur." They had been hit head-on by a drunk driver doing 90 miles per hour.

When Paula regained consciousness she was in the hospital. "Where is my husband? How is Sarah?"

There was no way to break the news gently. Paula's husband and child had been killed instantly.

The journal of joy becomes a journal of pain and loss. Like the great trunk ripped from the tree, Paula's life was scarred. Her life was changed forever.

Paula was three months pregnant. With life inside her and death all around her, she plunged into grief, despair, and depression. She questioned why God would allow this tragedy to happen. Where was God at that moment?

Anger toward God became evident as Paula continued to write in her journal.

Beth was born and somehow life continued.

Paula told us that through an incredible set of events a copy of her journal was placed in the hands of Dr. Norman Vincent Peale. The great preacher urged her to publish it. "This account of your journey from joy to death and grief and back to life will bless the lives of many people."

It took her a year to decide to do this. "The experience was so personal. I was not sure I wanted to share it with anyone."

After months of indecision Paula decided to submit the journal to publishers.

Nine publishing houses wrote letters of rejection. Paula read a letter from the vice president of one well-known publishing house: "Your story has touched my heart. However, I am afraid it is too personal, too painful for our readers. They will not subject themselves to this much pain and sorrow. Thank you for giving us the opportunity of examining your work. Your manuscript is enclosed."

A small publishing house accepted the journal. *Song for Sarah* sold over 600,000 copies in the first six months and it was translated into eight languages.

Subsequently, Paula received a one-sentence letter from

that vice president of the publishing house who had sent the cited rejection notice. His message: "So, I was wrong."

A senior editor of *Reader's Digest* walked through his living room. His teenaged daughter was reading a book (that, in itself, was amazing). She was sobbing as she read. He wanted to see what could cause such a reaction in his daughter. *Song for Sarah* became the *Reader's Digest* book of the month.

I was overwhelmed as Paula continued to share her journey with us.

After moving from Boston to Kerrville, Texas, she continued to write. Next came *The Gift of the Red Bird*.

The jacket of her following book, *A New Set of Eyes*, states: "The unique spiritual vision she articulated in *Gift of the Red Bird* established her as one of the most sought-after retreat masters and spiritual directors in the country."

The decision to tell her story—to share the experience that was uniquely hers—would change the lives of thousands of readers and listeners.

Your own experience—be it painful or joyous—can be the gift you have to give to others. The decision whether to share that gift is yours. You can keep it, shelter it from the eyes of the world, or hold it up for others to see.

If you choose to share your story your life will never be the same, for doing so brings with it the joy of seeing others encouraged by your experience. There will be readers and listeners who will draw strength from your sharing. It will give them hope.

The late Bill Cody told me that while he was director of Laity Lodge, he asked a young woman to share her story with about 50 people on a weekend retreat. She was the translator for Paul Tournier.

"She stood and opened her mouth to speak, but tears came to her eyes and nothing was said. Then she began to sob and tears rolled down her cheeks. Finally, she returned to her seat. She never said a word."

Later that day a wealthy businessman came to Cody and said: "I have a fear of being asked to speak in public. I just can't do it. I know how difficult it was for her. If following Christ means that much to her I want Him in my life."

When you tell your story there always seems to be someone who hears and identifies with your experience.

Don Anderson asked me to speak at Manor Baptist Church in San Antonio, Texas, in 1964. This was about a year after my suicide attempt. I spoke about the difficulty that I had had making the decision to leave the ministry after ten years of preaching. The fear of what others would think and how I would support my family was more than I could face. The only way out was to end my life.

I told of the three months in the San Antonio State Hospital, where I underwent 13 shock treatments, and was diagnosed as either being bipolar or manic-depressive.

I revealed how, with the support of Judy, who was then my wife of seven years (now 48 years), my family, and friends at Trinity Baptist Church, I had begun life again.

There was a man in the auditorium who cried nearly all the way through my story. He left before I finished. That afternoon, in a phone call to me he said, "I've got to talk to you."

We met and I listened as he told me that he had been a Baptist preacher for ten years. That very morning he had been on his way to a building where he had loosened a window on the 20th floor the day before. He was so depressed that he had been on his way to end his life.

"I have prayed and prayed but God seemed not to hear. He did not seem to be aware of my pain. I drove past Manor Baptist Church and had this urge to go in. I had never seen this church before. As you spoke, the similarity to my own experience left no doubt that God was answering my prayer."

This man continued in the ministry and I see him each year—for 35 years now at a place that is common to our journeys.

I realized that day that my ministry was the telling of my story. I had left the ministry to become a minister. Henry Nouwen called us the "wound healers" in his book by the same name.

As I walk past the D'Arcy Oak each morning, I am reminded that what seems to be the end can be the beginning.

Telling your story can make it so. ■





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## Book Reviews

### **Bulls, Bears and Golden Calves: Applying Christian Ethics in Economics**

John E. Stapleford, InterVarsity Press, 2002.

*Reviewed by Darold Morgan,*  
Richardson, TX

Don't let this colorful title confuse you! Here is a well-written, excellently researched book which vividly reminds the ethically-minded Christian that it is past time to consider one of today's major ethical arenas.

Consider that there are three billion people in the world who live on \$2 a day or less. Consider the incredible wealth and lifestyle of America's superrich. Consider the horrific examples of greed and lawlessness in some of America's corporate boardrooms. Consider the staggering growth of legalized gambling in our country. Consider the expansion of pornography, particularly its impact on America's younger generations. Consider the impending global crisis in environmental issues.

Then ask the question, "Where do we find the insight to confront these issues?" All serious-minded Christians constantly need refresher courses for rethinking these ever-present problems, which carry overtones of modern relativism.

Stapleford is the Professor of Economic Development at Eastern College (PA). The book is written primarily as a text for a course he teaches. Nevertheless, this is a book appropriate for study by all Christians. The author writes from a refreshing Christian perspective, and he writes in a style easy to read.

This text is grounded solidly in biblical principles. A number of the problems he discusses are not specifically addressed in the Bible, but one of the author's strengths is to develop a Christian rationale for contemporary issues, based on biblical principles. An example of this skill is found in his forceful chapter on "False Hope . . . The Boom in Legalized Gambling."

Each chapter begins with a helpful synopsis. Ethical issues are thoroughly interpreted through biblical understandings, which are logically and theologically sound. Nowhere in the book does the reader sense a legalistic attitude or a fundamentalist bias.

One of the results of reading this text is the awareness of complexity and enormity of these ethical issues. But there is also a dominant conviction that Christian values provide the best resource for achieving a solution to these ethical dilemmas.

Too many universities and seminaries are minimizing the importance of Christian ethics in modern life. A college text on economic ethics written from a Christian perspective is encouraging. To apply biblical values to contemporary economic life is not easy. Nevertheless, the author reminds all that the biblical values are relevant and discernable. And they are foundational for a good life in society.

Thus, modern Christians simply must face economic ethical issues. They will not go away. And with each day, they become more complex and volatile.

Certainly no one book on this subject will suffice. Yet here is a volume that is excellently written, cleverly titled, interestingly outlined, and quite obviously practical. Marked by a genuine compassion for those who suffer from economic disadvantage and injustice, John Stapleford offers a guide for those seeking to formulate a truly Christian world-view. ■

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### **Ministerial Ethics: Moral Formation for Church Leaders 2d Ed**

Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter, Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2004, \$20.

*Reviewed by Tarris D. Rosell*

Associate Professor of Pastoral Care and Practice of Ministry  
Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, KS

A decade after Ministerial Ethics first appeared as a publication of Broadman & Holman, Baker Academic has rendered this second and revised edition of Trull and Carter's popular text.

First edition readers will note the addition of a whole new chapter devoted to a thorough discussion of clergy sexual abuse. This is a sensitive response to recent revelations of an

endemic problem within the Church. The authors “hope this addition will help counteract the disturbing incidences of ministers crossing into the ‘forbidden zone’, as well as guide churches in prevention and response strategies.”

Updated anecdotal and illustrative material reflects current or recent events, such as the Enron debacle and other scandals in 2003 involving high profile preachers’ plagiarism. Statistics too have been updated via reference to newer studies from the Alban Institute and other research entities. The newest versions of various codes of ethics for ministers are included here in a significantly expanded collection of appendices, which already in the 1993 edition was an extensive and helpful resource.

The current emphasis on seminary education as “formation” for ministry is reflected in the second edition of *Ministerial Ethics*, which also incorporates this language in a new subtitle: *Moral Formation for Church Leaders* (previously subtitled, *Being a Good Minister in a Not-So-Good World*). For good reasons, I have adopted this revision as a required textbook for my new seminary course in pastoral ministry ethics.

Chapters 3-6 frame ministerial ethics contextually, i.e., within relevant contexts of life: personal, congregational, collegial, and communal. This structure is mirrored also in a very practical Ministerial Code of Ethics Worksheet, which my students will utilize in one course assignment.

While I will have seminarians reading Trull and Carter, it will be an exercise that is both appreciative and critical. The co-authors strive for ecumenism, yet I fear their Southern Baptist cultural roots remain a bit too evident to suit some readers. The stories regaled, the institutions and church leaders referenced, and the nomenclature utilized may appear provincial to Northern non-initiates. As was evident in the first edition of *Ministerial Ethics*, I do appreciate the ongoing effort to be ethnic and gender inclusive in this second edition, with only a few inconsistencies in that regard.

A downside is one seen, unfortunately, in many monographs intended for clergy audiences. These authors likewise tend to leave in the manuscript too many “good quotes” derived from a thorough review of relevant literature. (The latter quality is much appreciated, of course.) More analysis and synthesis of quoted material, along with less quoting generally, would be a qualitative improvement. Some quotations, such as that of Tim LaHaye regarding “forces that can lead to sexual sin,” beg critique if used at all.

This is a ministerial ethics grounded in biblical ethics, which I commend and other readers surely will also. Granted, the authors’ use of scripture in some instances may exasperate biblical hermeneuts who take up this text and read. For example, the “argument from silence” fallacy is evident in Carter’s buttressing of a moral integrity proposition via reference to John 4:27. From that retrospective account of Jesus speaking to a Samaritan woman at the village well, a claim is made regarding the disciples’ unquestioning acceptance of Jesus’ moral integrity: “The disciples had such trust in Jesus, such confidence in his personal integrity, that no one questioned his relationship with the woman.” On these

grounds (the disciples’ interrogative silence), I have heard other interpreters draw exactly the opposite conclusion as well.

There are just two explicit references to homosexuality. In one, “homosexual liaisons” are listed alongside voyeurism, exhibitionism, incest, child molestation, and rape as examples of sexual misconduct. The only other mention of homosexuality is in regard to an alleged case of child molestation (“homosexual advances”) by a young male minister. This apparent inattention to one of the major sexual ethics issues facing the Church will irk conservatives, while more liberal Christians will be put off both by the presumptive association of homosexuality with sexual abuse and an insufficient acknowledgment of diverse beliefs among Christians on matters of sexual behavior. Given bitter contention within the Church regarding sexual difference, it is understandable that the topic would be minimized here; yet, that is perhaps also why we ought not to avoid it in an ethics text for ministers.

Besides (most of) the new chapter on clergy sexual abuse, that which is most appealing to me and appears most ethically compelling is chapter 2. This is Trull’s work, primarily, and is intended as a theoretical basis for the practical material that follows. Here, one finds both analysis and synthesis of numerous moral theories. Too many ethics texts ride one theoretical bandwagon or another (character, virtue, or narrative ethics; principlism, absolutism, consequentialism, etc.). *Ministerial Ethics* avoids a tendency that becomes the myopic advocate’s shortcoming for whatever inevitably gets left out.

Two other pitfalls averted here are temptations to synthesize all theories into an incoherent mishmash or to summarize without establishing any clear theoretical grounding for particular ethics situations depicted later. Sufficiently clear connections have not always been made to those subsequent case situations, yet the theoretical preliminaries are not at fault. The framework needed for practical pastoral ethics builds on the work of several predecessors. Trull’s creative synthesis is rather reminiscent of H. Richard Niebuhr’s *cathekontic* ethics in *The Responsible Self*. Niebuhr acknowledged every moral agent’s utilization of both deontological and teleological sources for making more or less “fitting” responses. Likewise, Trull’s construct takes into account both moral character/virtues and moral conduct/values. Niebuhr perceived the “triadic form” of moral life; and Trull too notes a third dimension added to the two traditional moral types. This triad is completed by moral integrity/vision, what Niebuhr might have termed moral discernment (or Aristotle’s *phronesis*/prudence). It is the capacity to see what is ethically fitting in any given situation, with reference typically both to deontological and teleological sources for deciding and acting.

The triadic theoretical construct of chapter 2 lends itself to graphic illustration, which unfortunately is missing. Given all that is not missing, however, *Ministerial Ethics* in its revised edition promises to be a usable seminary textbook and a useful reference tool for ministers. ■

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## The Da Vinci Code— quest for a relevant Christianity?

Dan Brown, New York, Doubleday, 2003.

Reviewed by Steven R. Harmon, Associate Professor  
Campbell University Divinity School, NC

**Note:** This article was first published in the *Biblical Recorder* (NC) and is printed with permission.

Every Christmas season for the past several years, inquiring minds have been treated to television documentaries and news magazine cover stories summarizing the latest scholarly perspectives on Jesus Christ and the birth of Christianity. Those I've viewed and read during the past couple of Christmases suggest that, on the whole, journalists are doing a better and better job of investigating biblical and historical scholarship and reporting its various viewpoints fairly. Such stories frequently leave viewers and readers, however, with the impression that the Christ of traditional Christian faith diverges significantly from the Jesus being discovered by contemporary scholarship and may even have been a conspiratorial fabrication.

This impression was intensified for some during Christmas 2003 by the coincidence of a best-selling novel and a couple of non-fiction books written by scholars of religion for general audiences, each of which suggests in some manner that the traditional understanding of the place of what came to be known as "orthodoxy" and "heresy" in the early development of Christian thought is a distortion at best and a cover-up at worst.

Dan Brown's novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, supports the idea that traditional Christianity has for almost two millennia suppressed an original Christianity that valued the feminine and was more affirming of human sexuality (and in which, by the way, Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married and produced offspring).

Elaine Pagels' book *Beyond Belief* relates Pagels' own dis-

covery of a relevant Christianity not in the historic church's canon of Scripture and ancient confessions of faith but rather in the Gnostic version of Christianity reflected in such documents as the *Gospel of Thomas*. Bart Ehrman provides a more evenhanded treatment of the theological diversity that characterized early Christianity prior to the triumph of what we now know as "orthodoxy" in the fourth century in his book *Lost Christianities: The Battle for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew*. The title lends itself to the common notion that the canon and orthodoxy were imposed by an elite hierarchy and that Christianity is the poorer for what it lost in the process.

As a theologian with a keen interest in the doctrinal developments of the first few centuries of the church, I welcome this popular curiosity about ancient Christianity beyond the pages of the New Testament. Most Christians, especially Protestants, would profit from a deeper understanding of the early doctrinal controversies that continue to shape our present faith and practice. Non-Christians as well would learn much about the essence of Christian faith by reading about the conflicts of this formative period of Christian thought.

On the other hand, there is something that troubles me about this current interest in ancient alternative versions of Christianity. I am concerned that those who are looking for a more relevant version of Christianity—one that is less patriarchal and more inclusive of women, that is less hierarchical and more egalitarian, and that is less other-worldly and more affirming of the material order and human sexuality—will not find what they are looking for in the Gnostic gospels or other "lost scriptures." A revival of Gnostic Christianity would have to be selective in what it retrieves from the Gnostic gospels in order to be inclusive of women, for Saying 114 of the *Gospel of Thomas* states, "Simon Peter said to them, 'Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life.' Jesus said, 'I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.'"

Ancient Christian Gnosticism was anything but egalitarian, for it admitted to its circle only a select group of elites who were deemed intellectually capable of receiving the



secret *gnosis*, “knowledge,” that granted salvation. Far from affirming the material world and our fleshly human nature, Gnosticism attributed the creation of the material order to a lesser, evil deity and pronounced creation “bad.” Such a theology has no proper place for the aesthetic, the sensual, or ecological concern. It moves God farther from us rather than nearer to us. Concerning the tragedy of human suffering, it can only deny that God has any relationship to this experience. It was with good reason that this sort of Christianity was “lost.” The triumph of Gnosticism would have rendered Christianity irrelevant to a post-Auschwitz and post-9/11 world.

Those seeking a relevant Christianity will find it in a rediscovery of the faith expressed in rich detail in the church’s canonical Scriptures, summarized in ancient confessions of faith such as the Apostles’ Creed and Nicene Creed, and clarified in the ancient ecumenical councils defining the triune nature of God and the relationship between the divine, and human natures of the person of Christ. This traditional faith of the church tells the thrilling story of the relational God who creates humanity in God’s image as social beings, who pronounces creation “good,” who does not stand distant from the world but in the Incarnation entered into it and embraced it, who does not shun the material but sanctifies it so that material things like water and bread and the fruit of the vine become tangible expressions of the presence of God, who does not abhor human flesh but assumed our humanity, and who is not impassive but shares our sufferings. That is good news indeed, and it is just as relevant today as it was at the time it triumphed over less relevant versions of Christian faith.

Go ahead and read the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Truth*—but read also Athanasius and Augustine and the Bible they taught (links to the Gnostic gospels and other “lost scriptures” as well as the writings of the church fathers are easily accessed on the web site of the North American Patristics Society, [www.patristics.org](http://www.patristics.org)). Go ahead and read *The Da Vinci Code* and Pagels and Ehrman—but read also Robert Wilken’s book *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*, which does an excellent job of helping the lay reader understand the genius of classical Christian doctrine and why it succeeded in transforming the world of late antiquity. I’m hopeful that those who do so will find that the fulfillment of their quest for a more relevant Christianity will be, in the words of T. S. Eliot, “to arrive where we started/And know the place for the first time.” ■

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#### *Ministerial Ethics: Moral Formation for Church Leaders*

Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter  
Baker Academic, 2004.

A core text for ministers and church leaders to understand and apply Christian ethical obligations in the performance of ministry and the work of the church. Author Lewis Smedes deems it “required reading for every minister.”

The Minister’s Vocation: Career or Profession?  
The Minister’s Moral Choices: Endowed or Acquired?  
The Minister’s Personal Life: Incidental or Intentional?  
The Minister’s Congregation: Friend or Foe?  
The Minister’s Colleagues: Cooperation or Competition?  
The Minister’s Community: Threat or Opportunity?  
A Major Ethical Issue: Clergy Sexual Abuse  
A Ministerial Code of Ethics: Help or Hindrance?  
Appendices: Codes of Ethics

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#### a rhythm for my life

Kenneth L. Chafin  
Greystone Press, 2003 [greystonepr@att.net](mailto:greystonepr@att.net)

After a highly visible profile as a Baptist pastor, Director of Evangelism (SBC), professor at two seminaries, and Dean of the Billy Graham Schools of Evangelism, skilled communicator Ken Chafin spent the last ten years of his life writing poetry. Named for his signature poem, the anthology offers a collection of the poetry of a husband and father who loved the country, nature, and the porch swing on the family farm (his picture on the swing concludes the book). Primarily written through the decade of the 1990s, the poems reveal the priorities and values Chafin embraced. Poems reflect his rural childhood, his frustrations with denominational conflicts, observations on his colleagues, and most poignant—those written in response to the death of a fellow professor. His most famous poem, “Ode to an Alzheimer Patient,” was first published in *Christian Ethics Today* (July, 1997) and has been reprinted and quoted widely.

Write to the address on the back cover to request your copy, which will be sent postage paid. Both are great gift books for your friends or your pastor.



# The Ethics of Evangelism

By Paul Griffin Jones, II, Executive Director  
Mississippi Religious Leadership Conference

The last earthly words of the Lord were the command to his disciples to take the message of redemption to all the world. Thus, evangelism has been the compelling imperative that has driven the work of the church and dictated its message and mission. Yet, much of Christian history has witnessed the alienation of people from the church because of evangelistic methods that do not reflect an understanding of the biblical ethic.

Much of the history of the church is the history of human attempts to develop strategies for world evangelism and plans for personal witness. The crusades by the western Church reflected the misguided notion that people, even entire nations, could be coerced at the threat of death to accept the Christian faith. Each “great awakening” during the past three centuries dwindled when conformity to one standard of theological and ecclesiastical “correctness” was imposed on evangelistic zeal.

During the last half of the twentieth century, a call for a new awakening motivated the Christian community to a new examination of its purpose and to the development of new methods and tools. The emphasis has been on producing and packaging new models of training with the disciples of each new “method” declaring that theirs is the most acceptable. The emphasis has been on marketing a product and the production of evangelistic materials has become a profitable new business.

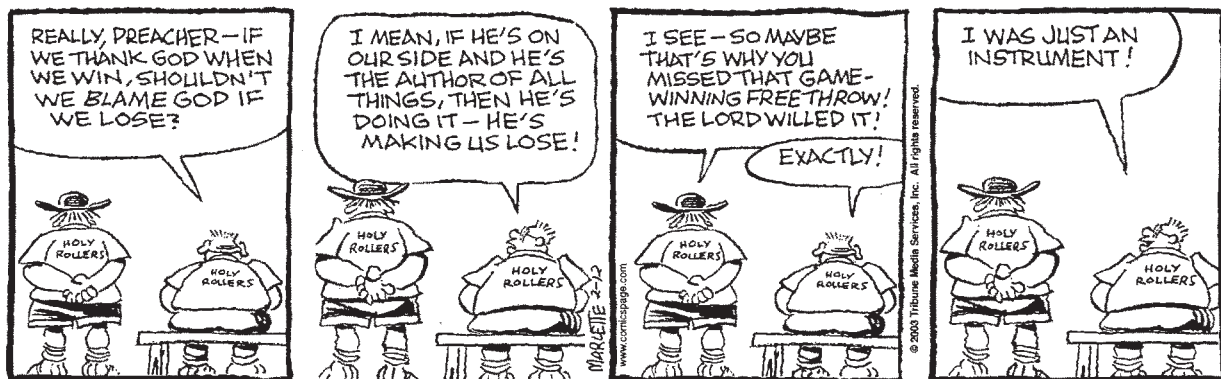
In the midst of a new awareness of our evangelistic purpose, is it time to examine the ethics of our humanly defined methods and message? The ethics of evangelism demands an examination of the intention, the recipient, the content, the presentation, and the invitation of evangelism. Evangelism will always be ethical or it will not be evangelistic.

For some the intention of evangelism has not been to restore the lost but to build personal reputations. Too often reports of evangelistic activities focus on the communicator with numbers being touted as evidence of God’s special anointing on a particular person or group. Brochures and advertisements pander “souls saved” as apparent justification for continued support. Many have forgotten that ego has no role in Christian witness.

Moreover, there is a threat that the recent emphasis on rebaptism has degenerated into mere spiritual “scalp hunting.” When people are led to doubt their conversion experience instead of reexamining the act of grace in their lives, the doctrine of eternal security is blatantly challenged. Once a believer has accepted the notion that a person cannot be secure in his/her salvation, guilt and doubt will plague a believer throughout life. Since baptism does not save, why is there the emphasis by some on rebaptism? Surely the Holy Spirit can confront and call out those whose faith is not authentic without challenging the security of whole bodies of believers.

Christian ethics also demands a reexamination of the attitude of the witness to the recipients. People are lost, but they are not worthless. The redemption of humanity was the purpose of the cross. In the New Testament, the word lost is used of those who do not know Christ. In Luke 15, the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son all signify something of value worth recovering. Christ taught us to love people in the context of their sin. Humanity is estranged from God by sin, but God’s activity of redemption in Christ makes it clear that all persons are the focus of salvation.

A theological or evangelistic system that dismisses some of God’s creation because of their race, gender, ethnic, or



national background cannot surely be rooted in scripture. The unwillingness of many to take the gospel to people whose lives have been wrecked by certain “types” of sin reflects an unethical response predicated upon fear, hate, and prejudice. People apart from Christ are lost (Luke 15), under sin (Romans 3:9) and condemnation (John 3:18), but they are the ones for whom Christ died. They are the creation to be restored, not trash to be rejected.

The content of evangelism must likewise be ethically developed and ethically presented. The Bible clearly sets forth the parameters of salvation. Redemption must be understood biblically without added social and religious demands. Adding additional requirements or expectations such as baptism for salvation deny the fullness of God’s work in Christ. The content of evangelism must be biblical truth and not personal preferences.

Moreover, the presentation of the gospel must be in a form to which a person can freely respond and must never involve emotional, intellectual, or physical manipulation. Decisions made in retreat settings by youth or adults after hours or days of physical deprivation and emotional bombardment deny the free will of the individual and the work of the Holy Spirit. Preaching that employs histrionics, personal evangelism that intentionally harangues, and a witness that intentionally manipulates a person into a decision cannot reflect the purpose and the practices of the Lord.

Finally, the invitation to repentance must reflect the convicting work of the Spirit of God and not the convincing words of an evangelist. In many evangelistic activities, the pleading preacher has replaced the leading of the Spirit. When the message has been clearly proclaimed, why is there need for cajoling pleas and homiletical pressure? If we really believe that through the Holy Spirit, Christ will draw all unto himself, then the invitation is in the hands of God and not the mouth of ministers. Is it possible that a prolonged invitation can sometimes be an indication that we are attempting to do what the Holy Spirit is not doing at that time? If it is really true that “whosoever will may come,” then perhaps the invitation is the time to give whosoever that freedom and privilege uncoerced.

True evangelism is ethical just as true ethics is evangelistic. To make known the eternal plan of God is the high privilege given to us all. To attempt evangelism in any manner but the most ethical is an affront to the gospel and a diluting of the fullness of the message of redemption. Ethical evangelism protects the integrity of the method, the messenger, and the message. ■

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

## Funny How Time Gets Away

*By Foy Valentine, Founding Editor  
Dallas, TX*

Sometimes time drags.

The teenager waiting for his driver’s license perceives time as his mortal enemy. The excited young child finds Christmas so long in coming that even the sun must be standing still in the heavens. The still classroom-bound young adult ready to go out and conquer the world, full of vinegar and spizzarink-tum (if you were from Van Zandt County in rural East Texas, you wouldn’t have to wonder about the meaning of that impressive word), it seems that tomorrow will never come. Shakespeare got the point when he had the weary Macbeth say to Seyton, the officer attending him, “Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, creeps in this petty pace from day to day to the last syllable of recorded time.”

Yes; sometimes time drags.

Then again time flies.

This is one of those times for me.

For the seventeenth time since moving into the house where I now live, I am observing from my study’s west-facing picture window the apparent movement of the sun from its setting place about 40 degrees south of due west to the end of its seasonal journey about 40 degrees north of due west. The very middle of this six-months’ journey is called, as we have been told, the vernal equinox. Easter has been rather arbitrarily set as the first Sunday after the first full moon following this vernal equinox. Our central Christian holiday is thus seen to be determined by the tilting of the earth on its axis so that the setting sun seems to move south to north and then back north to south, south to north, north to south with the changing seasons. Whereas that movement used to seem to me to drag along in agonizingly slow motion, it is now in a runaway mode, zip, zip, running north like a scalded dog as the days get longer and then turning around to tear back south with the days getting shorter and shorter. As I say, zip, zip. Slam bam, thank you ma’am.

A thousand years ago Omar Khayyam wrote, “The Bird of Time has but a little to flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.”

And Willie Nelson has plaintively sung, “Ain’t it funny how time gets away.”

Of course he doesn’t mean funny “ha ha” or funny peculiar. He means funny sobering, funny inexplicable, funny profound.

My old-man thoughts, prodded to the surface by this

azimuthal movement, or rather this *appearance* of the seasonal movement of the sun, now turn naturally to time itself. Relativists have proposed that time is merely a fourth dimension of space; but this gets a little heavy for me. My *Encyclopedia Britannica* allows “that time is fundamental and there is nothing similar or simpler to compare it with.” Right on.

Philosophical ponderings about such things tend to lead me off into water that is too deep. There comes to mind the classic definition that such philosophizing is like a blind man in a dark room searching for a black cat that is not there. So, I am inclined to take time for granted, glancing desultorily at my watch now and then and then consulting the calendar from time to time only to forget forthwith both the time and the date so as to miss important obligations, appointments, and opportunities. Could it be sure proof that I have passed my allotted fourscore years?

As only the fool says in his heart that there is no God (Psalm 14:1), so I feel that we need not foolishly posit the opinion that there is no such thing as time. Yet, who of us has not sung these mysterious words in *When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder*: “When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound and time shall be no more”? The songwriter clearly knew Revelation 10:6 where the angel standing astraddle of the land and the sea raises his right hand and swears by God “that there should be time no longer.” The phrase can be translated in different ways; but we can nevertheless be reminded that eternity is defined as infinite time, unmeasurable time, endless time.

In my lifetime thus far, if I have figured this out with reasonable accuracy, my heart has beat already about 2,943,360,000 times. (If you want to know, I arrived at this numerical oddity by multiplying my average heartbeat rate of about 70 per minute times the 60 minutes in an hour times the 24 hours in a day times the 365 days in a year times my 80 years which I have lived thus far. Presto. About three billion beats.) No machine ever conceived by human minds or built by human hands comes anywhere near the efficiency or the longevity of this fantastic little pump, the human heart, about the size of a smallish grapefruit. But with its beats we number our days.

When there are no more beats left, there are no more days. Time’s up.

I have been contemplating our creaturely existence “when time shall be no more.”

This is a profundity with which nearly everybody seems to have wrestled: Solomon, Socrates, Newton, Einstein, and Thomas Wolfe with his *Of Time and the River*—and more recently Hawkings, Pogo, Charlie Brown, and uncounted farmers, shepherds, disconsolate teenagers, long-haul truck drivers, and anxious, sleep-deprived mothers and fathers around the world distraught about their children.

Swimming in such deep waters may have some aerobic benefit for many, but I am personally more inclined to *floating*.

My friend Kenneth Chafin, redeeming the time, caught this floating concept in a moving piece he called “A Rhythm for My Life.” I think he may have had some premonition of his approaching promotion to a better world. At least he had a finely mature awareness of the fleeting nature of time and the transience of the things of this world when he prayed to God

Help me to find a rhythm for my life  
in keeping with my strength, my gifts,  
my opportunities, my commitments,  
and thy larger purpose.

Let there be a celebration of life,  
the building of relationships,  
and the nurturing of others.

Let there be unhurried strolls in the woods,  
quiet mornings spent on the pond,  
poking around country roads,  
Afternoon naps in the porch swing,  
leisurely meals with friends,  
chickadees fed and zinnias grown.

Let there come to me a quietness of soul,  
a relaxed body, an alert mind,  
a gentle touch, an inner peace,  
an integrity of being.

It’s time to do it.

As Snuffy Smith was wont to say, “Time’s a-wastin’.” ■



# 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

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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.

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- 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 in 1995, 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, 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 bi-monthly.

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Joe E. Trull, Editor  
101 Mount View  
Wimberley, TX 78676-5850

**Phone:** (512) 847-8721  
**Fax:** (512) 847-8171  
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CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY  
Post Office Box 26  
Wimberley, Texas 78676

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