

CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS VOLUME 10, NUMBER 5 AGGREGATE ISSUE 52 CHRISTMAS 2004



FIRST COMING

By Madeleine L'Engle

*He did not wait till the world was ready,
till men and nations were at peace.
He came when the Heavens were unsteady,
and prisoners cried out for release.*

*He did not wait for the perfect time.
He came when the need was deep and great.
He dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine. He did not wait*

*till hearts were pure. In joy he came
to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame
he came, and his Light would not go out.*

*He came to a world which did not mesh,
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh
the Maker of the stars was born.*

*We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!*

Joe E. and Audra E. Trull, *Editing*

James Kim, *Postel Tech* Randy Shebek, *Design*
Ray Waugh, *Website/Lists* Suzanne Verret, *Etheridge Printing*

"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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EthixBytes

A Collection of Quotes Comments, Statistics, and News Items

“Happiness is nothing more than good health and a bad memory.”
Albert Schweitzer

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“A friendly discussion is as stimulating as the sparks that fly when iron strikes iron.”
Proverbs 27:17, LBT.

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“You can safely assume that you’ve created God in your own image when it turns out that God hates all the people you do.”
Ann Lamott in Bird by Bird.

◆◆◆
“Holy war is an oxymoron. There are no wars in my name . . . only peace.—God”
Bumper Stickers in the Chicago Tribune, Sept. 29.

◆◆◆
“The conventional liberal political wisdom that people who are conservative on abortion are conservative on everything else is just wrong. Christians who are economic populists, peacemaking internationalists, and committed feminists can also be ‘pro-life.’ The roots of this conviction are deeply biblical and, for many, consistent with a commitment to nonviolence as a gospel way of life.”
Jim Wallis in Sojourners, June.

◆◆◆
“We do evil in the name of some overriding good—usually, paradoxically, the conquest of evil.”
Nel Noddings, Women and Evil

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“The Federal Communications Commission fined Fox Broadcasting \$1.2 million for showing [nudity and sexual activity] in ‘Married by America’ intended to pander and titillate the audience.”
Wire Reports on October 12, 2004

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“The weird and the stupid and the untrue are becoming our popular culture. That’s the triumph of idiot culture. Truth is no longer the bottom line. The bottom line is the bottom line.”
Watergate reporter Carl Bernstein in a lecture at the University of Texas (11/11/04).

◆◆◆
“Since their own churches are marked by widespread divorce, child abuse, substance abuse, greed, infidelity, hypocrisy, abortion and homosexuality, they know that the church lacks a transforming power about which they preach weekly. They see larger social forces overwhelming the church and contend that only a theocratic government is powerful enough to bring about moral revival.”
Robert Parham on “Why are so many white, evangelical Christian clergy expressing such hyper-statements about the 2004 election?” in EthicsDaily.com.

“There is no one explanation . . . the values divide is a complex layering of conflicting views about faith, leadership, individualism, American exceptionalism, suburbia, Wal-Mart, decorum, economic opportunity, natural law, manliness, bourgeois virtues and a zillion other issues.”
David Broder, NY Times, on media explanations for the 2004 election.

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“The way the question was set up, moral values was sure to be ranked disproportionately high. Why? Because it was a multiple-choice question and moral values cover a group of issues, while all the other choices were individual issues. Look at the choices: Education (4%), Taxes (5%), Health care (8%), Iraq (15%), Terrorism (19%), and Economy and Jobs (20%), and Moral Values (23%).”
Charles Kauthammer, The Washington Post.

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“Moral values can mean different things to different voters, but typically when ordinary people think of morality, they think of traditional sexual morality . . . They don’t think of social justice.”
John Green, University of Akron expert on religion and politics.

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“A post-election poll conducted by Zogby International a few days later confirmed that when a list of specific issues was asked, the results were quite different. When asked ‘which moral issue most influenced your vote,’ 42% chose war in Iraq while 13% said abortion and 9% said same-sex marriage. The ‘most urgent moral problem in American culture’ resulted in 33% selecting ‘greed and materialism,’ 31% ‘poverty and economic justice,’ 16% abortion and 12% same-sex marriage.”
Jim Wallis, Sojourners Online.

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“People are tired of everything being based upon the bottom line, where companies are getting richer and everyone else is losing out.”
Marcus Courtney, organizer of the Seattle-based Washington Alliance of Technology Workers.

◆◆◆
“Within the past two years, the U.S. has launched a preemptive war, in flagrant disregard of ‘Just War’ criteria, on Iraq. This military action has killed at least 10,000 Iraqis, the great majority of them civilian noncombatants. This is more than three times the number killed in the tragic attacks of September 11, 2001.” ■
Richard B. Hays, An Open Letter to United Methodists in The Christian Century, August 24, 2004.

We've Got Mail

Letters From Our Readers

"Thank you for sending me Ministerial Ethics. It brought back happy memories of our conference with the chaplains. All of us in the Chaplain Service need to be your 'students.'"

Maj. Gen. Charles C. Baldwin, Chief of Chaplains, USAF, Washington, DC.

"I got to this site as I was doing a search for a quote. I saw that the name was www.ChristianEthicsToday.com and I decided to look around, expecting closed-minded, dogmatic, bigoted teaching that would make me roll my eyes and say, 'This is why I stopped going to church.' I just wanted you to know that I was relieved, and—I hate to say it—touched by this site. I've been trying to reconcile my logical thoughts with my Christian beliefs, and some of the things said here have helped me put into words what I've been trying to say. So thank you!"

Sonya Sowerby, Vanderbilt University.

"I hear via the grapevine that you had a great time at McAfee School of Theology and that you really promoted the journal. Keep up the good work."

Tony Campolo, Eastern College, St. Davids PA.

"I want our students to be engaged in careful thinking in the discipline of ethics. Many of our issues in Eastern Europe are very different from those faced in the USA. Your journal provides a model for careful thought based upon biblical and Christian truth. . . . I will copy articles for my classes; some I will translate into Croatian."

Dr. Tom Sibley, Institute for Biblical Studies, Zagreb, Croatia. (We are sending our last set of CET to his school library, four textbooks, and future copies thru a USA friend.)

"CET is one of the few magazines that this 82 year old disenfranchised Southern Baptist can read without anger and skepticism."

Earl Kelly, Executive Director Emeritus, MBCB, Jackson, MS

"Thank you for your visit—I enjoyed the fellowship and the students appreciated your dialogue also. May your ministry be blessed."

Dr. Harvey Solganick, LeTourneau University, Longview, TX.

"Thank you for coming to Longview . . . I appreciate your commitment to equipping thousands of ministers in Christian ethics."

Pastor Tim Watson, FBC, Longview, TX

"Enclosed find my check for [significant gift] in honor of the Lord and all my advocates in selling my house! Not only am I able to contribute this to all who write and publish the greatest Baptist publication in America, but I now have money for eye and teeth care!"

J. Lillian Brown, Austin, TX.

"You are doing a great job! You have my prayers and support."

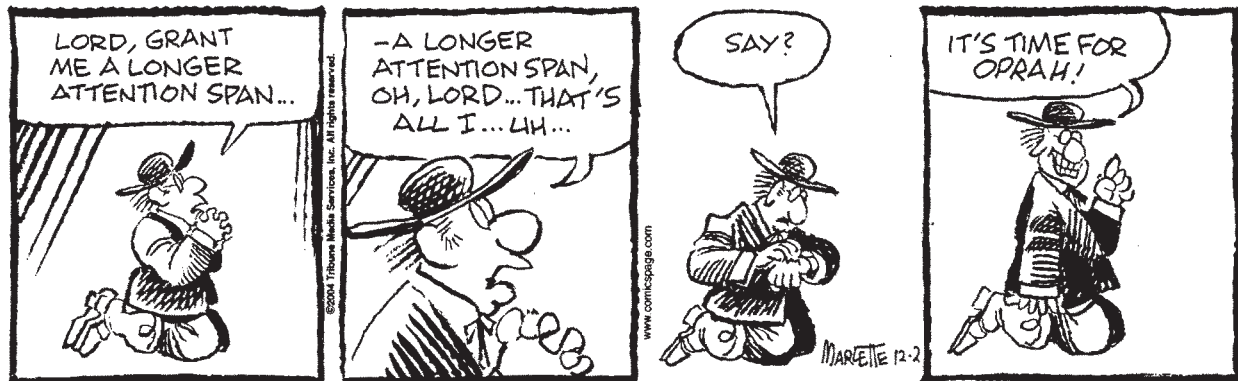
Buckner Fanning, San Antonio, TX

"I have so much love, respect and appreciation for Foy Valentine and I certainly want to encourage the continuation of the wonderful publication he started in 1995."

Millard Fuller, Habitat for Humanity, Americus, GA.

"Dr. Maston would be proud of this great publication, and maybe he does have an insight into what's going on here."

Preston Taylor, Mirando City, TX.



“Thank you for the stimulating articles and your faithfulness to principles of religious liberty.”

Pastor Doyle Sager, FBC, Jefferson City, MO.

“Thanks for all you guys do. Foy was my pastor when I surrendered to preach—a truly great Christian leader.”

Price Mathieson, Abilene, TX.

“Thank you so much for the fine work you are doing as editor of this timely and needed journal [and for] Ministerial Ethics. Dr. Maston would be proud of you and James Carter.”

Barbara Chafin, Bellaire, TX.

“The Lord has guided me to [the Journal] and your books on ethics. Thank you for the blessings that God gives me through your teachings.”

Pastor Orlando Garzon-Mejia, San Diego, CA.

“CET is a marvelous Journal and it really lifts my spirits to know that there are some people who know what Christianity is all about. Especially that such people know how to apply Christianity to the human condition.”

Cliff Fields, Houston, TX.

“Thank you for including me among your readers. . . . Dr. Humphreys has been a good friend of mine for many years.”

N. S. Xavier, M.D., Birmingham, AL.

“I’ll tell friends about CET. If you want to send me a few copies, I will put them on our ‘Share A Book’ table at church. We need more Ethics in our SBC family.”

G. Avery Lee, Pastor Emeritus, St. Charles Ave. BC, New Orleans, LA.

“I do enjoy CET and appreciate what it and you mean to Baptist causes.”

Clyde Glazener (former third-baseman at OBU), Gambrell St. BC, Ft. Worth, TX.

“I and our Christian Life Committee appreciate your good work and enjoy your publication.”

Brenda Denton, FBC, Asheville, NC.

“I heard about your Journal through my ethics teacher, Dr. Jeph Holloway.”

David Calavan, East Texas Baptist University.

“For many years I have enjoyed (as a Roman Catholic) reading the varied articles in CET. My wife and I both appreciate the enlightenment.”

Capt. F. Winter Trapolin, USN (Ret.), New Orleans, LA.

“I admire the courage you’ve shown in your selection of articles, and your respectful responses to negative reactions. I’m still a little surprised when someone objects to your publication of differing viewpoints.”

John R. Scott, Dallas, TX.

NOTE: During the past year we have received about 10-12 letters of concern (a personal response was sent to each one) from readers who were upset over certain articles/poetry that seemed to them to be too political, too anti-war, or even anti-Bush. Most were too long for publication, but below is a summary of the questions and the responses of the editor:

“Thank you for your letter of concern. We are always interested in the responses of our readers. One purpose of the Journal is to encourage thought and intelligent discussion about issues, especially where there are honest differences of opinion. Let me respond:

To Tom: I have no idea of the political affiliation of our authors—I can guess that some are Republicans (like columnist Jeff Jacoby and John Hancock CEO D’Alessandro) and some Democrats (like former Clinton speechwriter Robert Maddox), but each is expressing not so much his politics, but his convictions on ethical questions. The point of Robert Maddox’ essay, it seems to me, is that no President, politician, or even a minister should claim Divine sanction for his decisions, as if he alone has the ear of God and he alone is doing the will of God.

To John: Sorry, but I did not title the article “To the President From a Father: Shame on Us”—authors title their essays. The D’Alessandro article to me is a “confession” that both this business leader and the President are spared the greatest agony of war—that of having children who serve in Iraq. Indeed, our Congress of over 500 members has only two or three with a child or grandchild in Iraq!

To Robert: Of course we do not endorse any candidate or party. However, our role is to address public policy issues such as the war, economics, gender issues, media honesty, church and state, and same-sex marriage—all of which were covered in the summer issue. Our goal on all issues is not to be balanced (as one for and one against same-sex marriage for example), but to publish articles that honestly and accurately address moral issues from a biblical and Christian ethical point of view.

To Everyone: Thanks for your letters—they encourage us and help us improve. ■

Christmas: The Whole Story

By J. Daniel Day, Pastor

First Baptist Church, Raleigh, NC

Holidays, as you know, come with expectations attached. Some folks might not be able to imagine a Fourth of July without fireworks, nor Easter without lilies. For myself, I can imagine Thanksgiving without pumpkin pie, even though I can't imagine who'd want to go there. But what I cannot imagine is having Christmas without hearing the Christmas story.

So, whatever else has claimed my December days and nights, when Christmas Eve comes, my steps turn toward the church house, and there I will gladly sit, early or late, waiting for that one thing most of all—for them to read to me the Christmas story.

Turns out, however, that this story is multi-layered. There's the one I want to hear, the "Precious Moments" version that Luke tells, the one about the innkeeper and the manger and the angels and shepherds, the one I memorized as a child, and the one that really still sounds right. But, then there's the Christmas story that Matthew tells, the "R" rated one about a paranoid Herod visited by curious wise men, about Rachel's moaning for her lost children, and Joseph hightailing it to Egypt to save the child from the slaughter of the innocents. And there's even the one that John tells, the philosophical one that doesn't have one sheep or camel or even a Mary and Joseph anywhere in sight, the version about the Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us, full of grace and truth. So, there's really a harvest of stories to be heard, not just one.

And any part of the story is powerful. Take the Emmanuel part. It's a fusion of the earthiness of the "Precious Moments" story with the profundity of the philosopher's story. It's the astonishing assertion that the God who flung galaxies into space and caused the morning stars to sing together, that the Incomprehensible One of the Eternity and of Time, has actually taken on a baby's flesh and can be seen in a diaper down in Bethlehem's barn. The Emmanuel part says we live on a visited planet, that God has become small and available to all. God with us!

My own children were born near Christmas time many years ago, premature twin sons. They were too tiny, too weak to come home when their mother did. Thus she and I spent exhausting hospital days monitoring their every ounce and anxious hospital nights monitoring their every breath. On one of the scariest of those nights I left the hospital corridors and wandered off in tearful desolation onto the parking lot. In a far and abandoned corner the light was dim, a perfect

match for my mood, and there I stood in silence until the winter winds had chilled me through and through. I looked up into the sky, forlorn, and was greeted by a waiting star, brighter than any I've ever seen since. And with the star there was this silent, absurd Christmas-born message: Emmanuel, God with us! It was enough, enough for that night, for that crisis. And so it has been for every dark night since. No wonder we come to Christmas Eve, cradling our broken dreams and empty hearts, wanting to hear this part of the story again and again and again. We are not alone. God walks with us. In the shabbiest of places, in the grandest halls, God is with us. Emmanuel! That's the stuff of salvation.

I wish I could stop right here, because that's all the Christmas story I really want to hear. But the story also includes a Messiah part. This comes from Matthew's "R" rated tale of a tyrant issuing death edicts and sending families into political exile. The Messiah part comes with every prophet's wail for a better world. It comes with Mary's Magnificat, with her song about God "scattering the proud, and bringing down the powerful from their thrones and lifting up the lowly," from her confidence that this baby of hers will be the means by which God finally will "fill the hungry with good things and send away empty." And with this you've left the Disney Channel and turned to HBO Late Night. You are hearing about hard-ball politics and the clash of principalities and powers and how the kingdoms of this world, be they Protestant or American or Muslim or communist or capitalist, how the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, the Messiah.

I haven't always heard this part of the story. I have sung the carols about "peace on earth, good will to men," without understanding the oppression and ugliness that first created this cry for a shalom-bringing messiah. With delight I have sung: "He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness" and never once thought it might have something to do with me or my lifestyle or my politics or my nation. But then I began to awaken and saw cities burn as the price of poverty and racism. I drove through a January snowstorm for the funeral of a classmate killed in a war nobody had the guts to stop. I watched the politics of lying rend the fabric of public trust. I witnessed my Baptist family cannibalize itself. "And in despair," like the poet Longfellow, "I bowed my head: 'There is no peace on earth,' I said. 'For hate is strong and mocks the

song of peace on earth, good will to men.”

So, for decades it seems, when I hear the bells on Christmas Day, there is this aching, tragic emptiness stalking all my Christmas gaiety, a haunting question: When, O when, you celebrators, when will you hear the Messiah part of the story? When will the ways of peace fascinate as much as the violence of war? How long must the Prince of Peace wait for His followers to form ranks? How long, O God, will you let this travesty stand? Or is all this Messiah part just a peasant’s pipe dream?

You see, I think I know something about the Emmanuel part of the story, and I think I am beginning to understand something of the Messiah part of the story. But the combination of the two, the inward and the outward, the fusion of the spiritual and the material . . . to make of it one story, one song, this is the challenge Longfellow and every listening Christian faces each Christmas. How, indeed, do we get from the blood-soaked sands of Baghdad to the beloved community where black and white, and fundamentalist and moderate, and Arab and Jew and you and I can live as brothers and sisters in peace.

Thirty years ago Eric Hoffer wrote in *Reflections on the Human Condition*: “Everywhere we look at present we see something new trying to be born. A pregnant, swollen world is writhing in labor, and everywhere untrained quacks are officiating as obstetricians. These quacks say that the only way the new can be born is by Caesarean operation. They lust to rip the belly of the world open.”

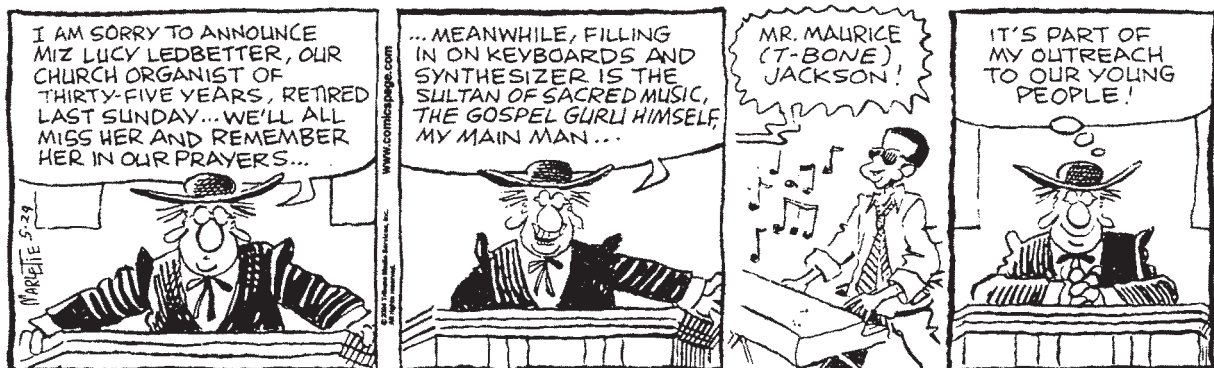
I have a horror of being among the knife-wielding quacks at work in this tender moment of history. And when I look for guidance as to how to proceed wisely, should it surprise me that Mary herself shows a way? The words of the Magnificat reveal Mary knew very well the Messiah part of the story, the prophet’s passion for a world reborn in equity and justice. But I notice that her response was not to grasp an

instrument of power, or cudgel of authority. She rips open nothing. She does the far more difficult thing. She surrenders herself, surrenders herself to the quiet, birthing power of God. Hers is the ultimate passivity through which the Lasting Hope is born. She really, truly lets Emmanuel enter in.

And do not you and I also have deep places within where something holy might be born? Most surely, there are depths within me that I have never yet opened to the touch of God, tender places, hurting places, noisy places. They are the places where my prejudices and hate, my bitter memories and selfishness fester and grow. Yes, I also have deep places within where something holier might be born. George McDonald asked the question, “Shall I be born of God, or of mere man? Be made like Christ, or on some other plan?”

And maybe this begins to explain to me why I seek the church on Christmas Eve, why I can’t imagine not hearing the story. I really do want to surrender like Mary to really, truly let Emmanuel enter in. Not just into me and for me, not just to reassure me that my sons will be well . . . but enter the world through me so that *all* the sons and daughters of earth will be well, so that they will no more hurt or destroy in all the holy mountains of Afghanistan or the Twin Towers of Manhattan, that they will study war no more and learn what makes for peace.

So, I’ll make my way to the meetinghouse next Wednesday night. I will slip into a pew and listen. I’ll wait for them to read for me the whole story of Christmas, Emmanuel and Messiah parts. And then I hope they’ll give me a candle to hold and a handful of silence to stare into its flame. And then I will pray: “Lord, I need Mary’s ferocious hope, I need her glad surrender. I need you! O come, O come, Emmanuel!” And you know what? I think he will come! As surely and as mysteriously as he came long ago, he *will* come and something holy will be born. ■



Chicken-Fried Democrat

By Mark W. Clark, Citizen, Freelance Writer
Irving, TX

MMMMM....Chicken-Fried Steak. One of the great comfort foods in the South. My bride and I spent the better part of our courtship cuddled around plates of one of Texas' finest, yet least understood delicacies.

You take a tough old piece of steak that would by all respectable chefs be discarded anywhere above the Mason-Dixon line and beat it senseless with a mallet. It's called "tenderizing." Get the grease hot, up to maybe 340 degrees or so, dredge that worthless lump of rump in liberal amounts of salt, pepper and flour, then deep-fry the life back into it. Mash potatoes, gravy (white, not brown) and whatever over-cooked vegetables you want to lay along side (something green is best, according to Mama). That'll cure post-election depression like nothing else, and don't forget the ice tea.

This year, as in many others, I took my place in line, pulled the "left" lever knowing full well that a Democrat vote in Texas is about as worthless as that aforementioned piece of nearly discarded meat. It's easy to second-guess yourself when you live in a state surrounded by those who choose the obvious rib eye or T-bone, without checking out some of the lesser-explored parts of the cow.

So, we lost. But do you really lose when you do what you believe is right?

I still believe in patriotism. Patriotism doesn't mean you support everything your government, or president, does. That's nationalism, and Albert Einstein said it best: "Nationalism is an infantile disease, the measles of mankind." It's no more unpatriotic to say "wrong war, wrong place, wrong time" now than in the days of Viet Nam. The brave soldiers in Nam and Iraq are not maligned in the process. Many have fought and died for the right to make that statement, the right to disagree.

I still believe it to be just as noble a cause to help those who are already out here in the world as it is to protect the unborn. It is the height of hypocrisy to condemn embryonic stem-cell research while endorsing the culling out (i.e., destroying) of hundreds of thousands of viable embryos in the name of in vitro fertilization, a cause most right-to-lifers would get high behind. It's also inconsistent to march in the picket lines of pro-life while marching off our children to an unjust, ill-conceived war.

I still believe in helping those less fortunate, and yes, even at my great expense. I don't think Jesus, also my chosen spiritual leader, ever implied anything conservative about compassion. I don't think he said to give the wealthiest the most advantages and they will make sure there are enough jobs for the slaves. No, you can't be liberal enough with compassion. I think Jesus said

it best that it was more blessed to give than to receive. For the record, Jesus was non-partisan. Someone please inform "W."

I still believe in an America that is a racially mixed uber-melting pot where diversity of color is craved, not merely tolerated. I find it ironic that a growing number of affluent African-Americans are shifting to the right, distancing themselves from the Democratic principals that brought about civil rights and eventually their current prosperity.

I still believe in a separate co-existence of church and state. This doesn't outlaw religion as many of the Falwellians would have you believe. This means church and state are like oil and water. They can co-exist, even in the same container, but they cannot be mixed or both become unusable. This means you can pray at will even on public property, you just can't make *me* pray *your* prayer on *my* time. Christian thought has been mandated before. It was called the Crusades.

I still believe that you can live in fearful times without being *fearful*, the crowning platform of this election's winner. The terrorists used airline tickets and box cutters, for crying out loud! You can't be a good person and hope to think like the evil-minded and counteract every twisted plot. Likewise, you can't chase the wrong enemy for your own agenda. If you voted for "W," you have to honestly ask yourself if you did so because you were afraid not to.

In the 48-hour post-election letdown, I'm not angry. Disappointed? Sure, and even a bit incredulous that I stand with a very small number of my ilk in this grand state. Surprised? You bet, that so much of America has "drunk the Kool-Aid," of fear and admiration for an emperor with no clothes. However, one thing's for sure. The pendulum never stops. I held my nose for 12 years once; I can hold it for another four.

So, get out the mallet and pound on me till I'm too tender to be tough or bitter. Dip me in heaping amounts of the pure flour of democracy, season me to taste the wisdom gained from loss, and lower me gently into the hot boiling oil of a rocky journey over the next four years. We honorably fought and lost a tough battle for democracy, but we haven't lost the war for freedom and justice and an equitable political system. That's the real war on terror—a war that continues to prevent us from achieving the America our forefathers visualized so brilliantly.

Perhaps it's as hard for most Texans to identify with Democratic philosophy as it is for Northerners to recognize the divine anti-depressant powers of the Chicken-Fried Steak. "That don't make it" any less delicious. If there's room, I'll have the peach cobbler! ■

The Year 1904

The year is 1904 – one hundred years ago. What a difference a century makes! Here are some of the U. S. statistics for 1904:

The average wage in the U.S. was 22 cents an hour.

The average U.S. worker made between \$200 and \$400 per year.

A competent accountant could expect to earn \$2000 per year, a dentist \$2,500 per year, a veterinarian between \$1,500 and \$4,000 per year, and a mechanical engineer about \$5,000 per year.

More than 95 percent of all births in the U.S. took place at home.

Ninety percent of all U. S. physicians had no college education. Instead, they attended medical schools, many of which were condemned in the press and by the government as “substandard.”

The average life expectancy in the U.S. was 47 years.

Only 14 percent of the homes in the U.S. had a bathtub.

Only 8 percent of the homes had a telephone.

A three-minute call from Denver to New York City cost eleven dollars.

There were only 8,000 cars in the U.S., and only 144 miles of paved roads.

The maximum speed limit in most cities was 10 mph.

Alabama, Mississippi, Iowa, and Tennessee were each more heavily populated than California.

With a mere 1.4 million residents, California was only the 21st most populous state in the Union.

The tallest structure in the world was the Eiffel Tower.

Sugar cost four cents a pound.

Eggs were fourteen cents a dozen.

Coffee was fifteen cents a pound.

Most women only washed their hair once a month, and used borax or egg yolks for shampoo.

Canada passed a law prohibiting poor people from entering the country for any reason.

The five leading causes of death in the U.S. were:

1. Pneumonia and influenza
2. Tuberculosis
3. Diarrhea
4. Heart disease
5. Stroke

The American flag had 45 stars. Arizona, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Hawaii, and Alaska hadn't been admitted to the Union yet.

The population of Las Vegas, Nevada, was 30!

Crossword puzzles, canned beer, and iced tea hadn't been invented.

There was no Mother's Day or Father's Day.

Two of 10 U. S. adults couldn't read or write.

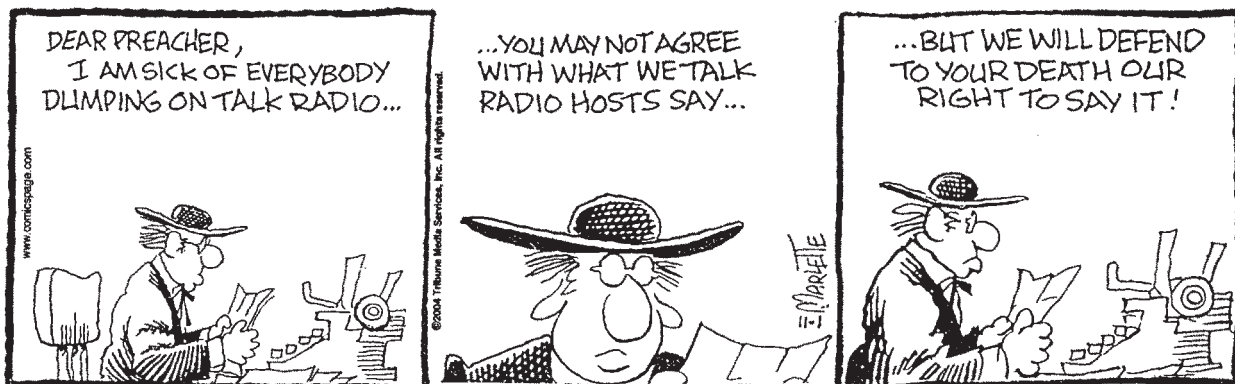
Only 6 percent of all Americans had graduated high school.

Marijuana, heroin, and morphine were all available over the counter at corner drugstores. According to one pharmacist, “Heroin clears the complexion, gives buoyancy to the mind, regulates the stomach and bowels, and is, in fact, a perfect guardian of health.”

Eighteen percent of households in the U.S. had at least one full-time servant or domestic.

There were only about 230 reported murders in the entire U. S.

Try to imagine what it may be like in another 100 years . . . it staggers the mind. ■



Henlee Barnette Remembered

By Bob Allen, Managing Editor
EthicsDaily.com

LOUISVILLE, KY.—Colleagues, students, family and friends remembered Baptist ethics pioneer Henlee Barnette as an “unashamed Baptist radical” at a funeral service in Louisville, Ky.

Barnette, 93, died last week [Oct. 20]. He taught Christian ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1951 to 1977 and wrote several books, but he was better known for controversial stands for civil rights and against the Vietnam War.

Bill Leonard, dean of Wake Forest Divinity School, remembered his former colleague as a “curmudgeon, prophet, father, eccentric” in a eulogy Monday at Crescent Hill Baptist Church.

“Humanly speaking, Henlee Barnett was what Jesus would have been like if he had lived 93 years,” Leonard said. “We’re not talking about deity here,” he quickly added, which he said Barnette would readily acknowledge.

Like Jesus, Leonard said, Barnette was “eccentric to a fault” and was a “teacher/learner” to the end of his life. He was “ever exposing self-righteousness and theological hubris,” not even sparing his own academia—he referred to the faculty’s yearly procession in academic regalia “a peacock’s parade.” He also “was oh so full of grace,” Leonard said, particularly for people who live “in the margins.”

Wayne Ward, a former colleague of Barnette at Southern Seminary and fellow member of Crescent Hill Baptist Church, described Barnette jotting his “credo” in a pew Bible that still sits somewhere in a rack near the rear of the sanctuary: “Remember you show your love of this divine word not by the words you say about it but by living it day by day.”

Mary Frances Owens, widow of longtime Southern Seminary Old Testament professor J.J. Owens, read a verse of Scripture she said applied aptly to Barnette: Micah 6:8, “What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice and to

love mercy and to walk humbly with your God?”

Paul Simmons, former ethics professor at Southern Seminary, described Barnette as “my mentor, my colleague and my friend.” He lauded Barnette’s “obligation for those who were less advantaged, “reading from Matthew 25, one of Barnette’s favorite passages, about the “incognito Christ,” where Jesus taught he is present in the hungry and thirsty, the naked, the sick and the imprisoned.

Noting his father’s famous meticulous filing system, Barnette’s son Jim read both humorous and poignant excerpts from Barnette’s “in case of my death file.”

Barnette wrote that his preference would be to be buried like his grandfather, in a simple coffin without embalming, but given modern funeral practices he opted for a Louisville funeral home, noting that since they’ve been doing it 50 years “they must be experts.”

Other notations revealed that Barnette’s wish was that he would die at home—which was granted—and that he would never become a “useless old man.”

Terry Brown, who met Barnette as a middle school student of Barnette’s wife, described him as “a-least-of-these kind of man” and a “man of integrity.”

Brown, an African American, recalled Barnette’s standard reply to people who complained that his role in inviting Martin Luther King to speak at Southern Seminary in 1961 cost the school hundreds of thousands of dollars in contributions. “Money well spent,” he said. ■

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Jesus And Swords

By Norman A. Bert, PhD

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Note: In addition to teaching specialties in playwriting and dramatic analysis, Dr. Bert has a primary interest in the interface of theatre and Christianity, holds a BD degree from the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, and teaches adults at Second Baptist in Lubbock.

In spite of Jesus' clear teachings throughout his ministry, as represented in every strand of the NT witness, many Christians—and especially those in American evangelical churches—refuse to accept that he was a pacifist who taught against the use of force and violence. One of the proof-texts used to support the idea that Jesus advocated the bearing and use of weapons is Luke 22:35-38. In this passage, immediately before leaving the upper room to go to Gethsemane, Jesus said, "The one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one." When the disciples point out that they possess, amongst them, a total of two swords, Jesus replies, "It is enough."

Although Luke's account appears to portray Jesus advocating situational ethics and, in particular, the use of force, a closer analysis shows Jesus consistently teaching against violence while showing his followers how to respond to threats.

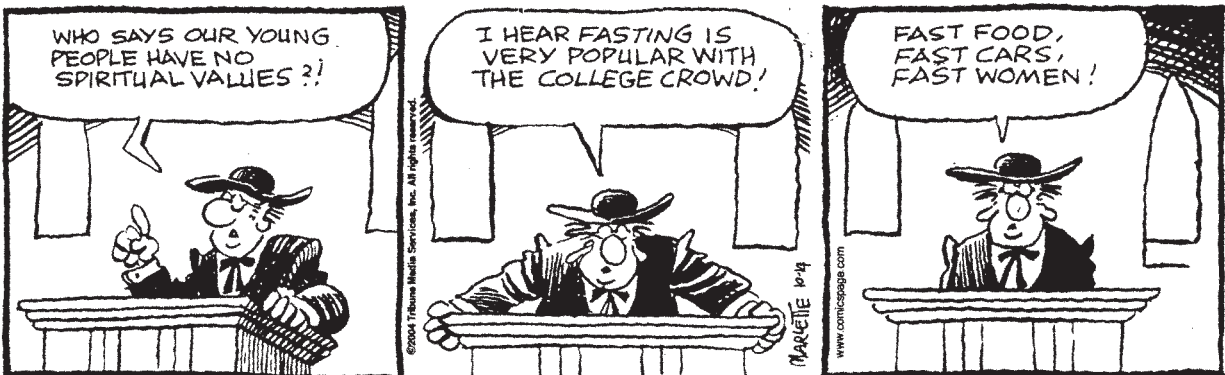
To understand this passage clearly, we must first look at Luke 22:47-53, the report of Jesus' arrest in the garden, the incident during which the disciples used the weapons in question. The report of this incident is included in all of the synoptic Gospels (Mt 26:47-56; Mk 14:43-50), as well as in John 18:3-11. All accounts agree that during the arrest, one of the disciples drew a sword and sliced off the ear of a slave of the high priest. John's account further identifies the assailant as Peter. Matthew, Luke, and John all report that Jesus intervened to stop the attack, in the process teaching against use of violence by his followers. Only Luke, the one evangelist who reports the arming incident at the Last Supper, portrays Jesus as healing the slave's ear. Luke clearly

sets up the two stories as a connected pair.

Why would Jesus, contrary to everything else the Gospels say about him—indeed contrary to all the NT witnesses about him—command his disciples to take up arms, only to forbid the use of force as soon as the weapons were put into play? Did he have a momentary lapse of conviction? Or was the command to purchase weapons just hyperbole intended to clarify for the disciples the danger that lay ahead? The simplest and most probable explanation is that Luke's pair of stories about swords on the eve of the crucifixion is intended to teach that Christians under threat should respond with gospel testimony, not with force.

In the first story (Lk 22:35-38), anticipating the attack that he and the disciples would soon experience, Jesus uses the word "sword" to mean the word of testimony, not an actual weapon. To paraphrase him, he says, "Go to all extents to prepare yourselves to bear witness to the coming of the Kingdom. Your witness will even be more important than being clothed." In typical fashion, however, the disciples miss the point and take him literally; they show him that they possess two weapons. Jesus, weary of trying to get through to his thickheaded disciples, gives up with words that mean, "Let's just drop it." In other words, "it is enough" refers to the line of argument, not to the supply of weapons.

The evangelist shapes the sequel (Lk 22:47-53) in such a way as to make the point clear to his readers. In doing so, he adds an important nuance to the story as told by the other three evangelists. During the arrest in the garden, one of the disciples puts one of the swords to its intended use and cuts



off a man's ear—the one organ that equips the victim to hear the word of testimony. Rather than simply teach about non-violence (as in Matthew) or underline the divine necessity of his own death (as in John), Jesus heals the ear, thus equipping the slave anew to hear the gospel. Luke thereby turns the negative message of Matthew and John—don't use force and don't get in the way of God's will—into a positive lesson: when under threat, preach the gospel of the kingdom.

How likely would it be that Luke—or Jesus—would use “sword” symbolically in this way, and what confidence might Luke have that his readers would understand the symbolism? As it turns out, there's every reason to believe that “sword” was frequently used in this manner in the NT community and every reason to argue that later Christians who took Luke 22:35-38 as a call to bear arms have been just as thick-headed as Jesus' disciples before the resurrection.

The first biblical use of “sword” to indicate the word of God occurs in Isaiah 49:2—“He made my mouth like a sharp sword.” The early church seized on this metaphor and used it in no fewer than three strands of the NT. To begin with, in Ephesians 6:17, Paul frankly equates the term “sword of the Spirit” with the word of God. The writer to the Hebrews uses the symbol in a comparative simile: God's word is sharper than a sword (Heb 4:12). And John the Revelator makes the same point imaginatively when he portrays the sword of the triumphant Christ issuing from Jesus' mouth (1:16; 19:15). Thus, Luke could expect that his readers, unlike the slow-witted disciples, would get the point (no pun intended) and would realize that, on the eve of his death, Jesus continued to advocate non-violence and to urge his followers to speak the gospel truth as their main strategy when under attack.

Furthermore, Jesus himself, according to Matthew's witness, made this connection between testimony and swords earlier in his ministry: In Matthew 10:34, Jesus says, “I have come to bring a sword.” This is a “Q saying” that appears in Luke (12:51-53) and Matthew, but not in Mark or John. In Luke's version the saying makes no references to weaponry, nor does it deal with witness or preaching. In Matthew's Gospel, however, the saying occurs in the middle of a passage about acknowledging Jesus and spreading the word of the Kingdom through prophecy. Here again, when Jesus associates himself with swords, he draws an immediate connection between swords and the word of testimony.

What then do we conclude? Faithful followers of Jesus Christ anticipate conflict including conflict that will maim or kill them. But following the teachings of their Lord as well as his example, faithful Christians eschew the use of violence and instead go on the attack wielding the sword of the spirit, the word of testimony. ■

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Practical Ethics of Care Giving: A Joban Model

J. Randall O'Brien, Chair

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The face of the young boy caught my attention. It seemed painfully out of place among the other pictures on the obituary page. His was the face of an angel, I thought. So peaceful. So innocent. So beautiful. Eleven years young. Gone. Beneath the haunting picture appeared tearful words wept “In Memoriam” from the family of the departed child:

Please don't ask us if we're over it yet. We'll never be over it. Please don't tell us he's in a better place. He isn't here with us. Please don't say at least he isn't suffering. I haven't understood why he had to suffer at all. Please, please don't tell us you know how we feel, unless you have lost a child. Please don't ask us if we feel better. Bereavement isn't a condition that clears up. Please don't tell us at least you had him for 11 years. What year would you choose for your child to die? Please don't tell us God never gives us more than we can bear. Please just say you are sorry. Please just say you remember Ryan. Please just let us talk about him. Please mention Ryan's name. Please just let us cry. Our hearts are broken. Our home is empty. Son, we love and miss you so much. Only God knows.

Love, Mom, Dad, Sister, and all your animals.

What is wrong with this “pastoral theology?” Absolutely nothing! Christian care giving is a delicate art, which may be learned. Equal parts of sensitivity and wisdom are required. By examining the Book of Job, as well as literature on stages of grief, and faith development, we discover invaluable guidance for pastoral care to hurting people.

Job is the story of every person. God had one Son without sin, but never one without suffering. Sooner or later we all suffer. How are we to think when a crisis strikes? Why do the innocent suffer? How are we to talk to God when we don't have all the answers? What do we say to a friend devastated by tragedy?

Remember that Job suffers innocently. If we miss that truth, we miss the main plot of the book. Job is described by the LORD as “blameless.” Job is God's favorite. Yet, death, disease, and destruction visit his household. How will Job respond? Will his relationship to God be affected? If so, how?

Remember Job's comforters: Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. They do some things right and many things wrong, incurring the wrath of God. We can learn from their example, good and bad.

Remember that the LORD speaks from the whirlwind at the close of the book. God's speech in Job is Jehovah's longest in the Bible. Ultimate lessons for living and ministering in times of crisis await us at the book's end.

When bad things happen to good people inevitably some well-meaning caregiver asserts that, “we should not ask the LORD ‘why?’” Such counsel, however well-intended, is neither healthy nor biblically sound. Jeremiah asked, ‘Why?’; Habakkuk asked, ‘Why?’ So did the Psalmist. Job asked ‘Why?’ five times in one chapter alone. Even Jesus cried out from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” These saints and our Savior did not question God due to a lack of an intimate relationship with their Father in heaven. On the contrary, it was precisely because they had such an intensely intimate relationship with God that each felt the freedom to express his true feelings. “Judge a man by his questions rather than by his answers,” Voltaire pleaded. It is okay to ask God hard questions during times of deep anguish.

Stages of Faith

James Fowler's work in faith development (*Stages of Faith*) introduces six stages of faith in human development. Besides the first two, which pertain to infants and children and the last, which is exceedingly rare and characteristic of sainthood, three basic adult stages of faith remain. These are stages three, four, and five, representing, respectively, a conventional or non-questioning relational stance, a reflective or questioning phase, and a conjunctive approach. What this means is that a non-questioning period in life is common. In this phase we are obedient, devotional, and naive, with authority external to ourselves. One in this stage of life would neither challenge nor question God, nor appreciate others doing so. Job's friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar (and later, Elihu), rested securely in this outlook.

On the other hand, the reflective stage of faith is a critical, examining, questioning phase of maturation. This relational posture is also quite natural, although not all reach it. Searching and doubting are characteristic of this season of life. Authority is internal. That is, one in this stage of faith is given to critical reflection, insisting on the right to think freely and boldly for one's self, in a world that is no longer black and white, but rather quite complex. One in this developmental phase would feel the freedom to question God and extend the same permission to others. This is the dominant stage of faith for Job.

The conjunctive stage of faith represents a “joining together” of the first two stages. A wedding of “head and heart” materializes. One in this relational stage desires “to make sense of it all,” even though she is quite alive to para-

dox, contradiction, and uncertainty. The drive to resubmit, “to come home,” leads this person to make a life commitment amidst unresolved mysteries or complexities. Job comes to this point in the end.

We might think of the Prodigal Son as another example of one traveling through these three seasons of life. In the beginning he is devotional and adoring of his father. Then he goes his own way, intent upon being his own person, doing things his way, while learning for himself. Later, he comes home to his father, ready to resubmit. The younger boy’s journey correlates with Fowler’s stages of faith: non-questioning, questioning, return. Similarly, Piaget, in *The Moral Judgment of the Child*, argues that life’s journey winds through the following stages of development: (1) We play by the rules, (2) We make up our own rules, (3) We return to the rules.

Regardless how we label these differing relational approaches, Job moves through each successively. At the outset, in the first two chapters, he steadfastly refuses to question God exclaiming, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb and naked I shall return; the LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” However, beginning with chapter three, Job becomes angry, verbalizing his rage bitterly. “Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth.” Repeatedly he demands answers from God. “Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire?” Yet, in chapter 42 Job resubmits while confessing, “I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me . . . I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee . . . therefore I . . . repent in dust and ashes.”

What Fowler’s research and the biblical text of Job teach us, among other things, is that it is natural to go through different stages of faith in times of deep grief and sustained periods of suffering. God created us that way. We may not wish to question God at all; on the other hand, we may want to scream out for answers. We may go through mood swings and variant relational periods, but such is the essence of being human. In time, hopefully we will renew our commitment to God even though we may not have all the answers we seek. In the meantime, why *not* think our thoughts and feel our feelings, even express our deepest doubts, since God gives us permission and since He knows our thoughts anyway?

Stages of Grief

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross’s work in the area of death and dying (*On Death and Dying*) merits mention here. Her research on the grieving process has identified five stages of grief: (1) Denial, (2) Anger, (3) Bargaining, (4) Depression, (5) Acceptance. These stages, she discovered, are normal responses to loss. Their presence is unmistakable in the life and words of Job. Initially, Job did not question God because, it could be argued, he was in shock or denial over the deaths of his ten children (followed by the loss of his empire and his health). Soon, however, his anger and depres-

sion surface in his harsh questioning of God, coupled with perhaps a few bargaining attempts. Finally, Job accepts his terrible fortune and becomes as C. S. Lewis might put it, a “rebel who lays down his arms.”

Kubler-Ross and the Joban text show us that grief-work is not a singular emotional state. Rather one who suffers loss will experience a range of emotions. “Every one can master a grief but he that has it,” Shakespeare observed in *Much Ado About Nothing*. It is therefore unrealistic to expect a sufferer to maintain any one particular emotional, spiritual, psychological, intellectual, theological, or relational response. The Christian caregiver should grant to the grieving person the grace to speak honestly to God and to others. The grace to express anger, doubt, fear, loneliness, unbelief, and betrayal is a therapeutic gift. Honest, intimate communication characterizes healthy relationships. Jesus cried, “My God, my God why have you forsaken me?” Does God ever forsake us? No. Do we sometimes feel forsaken? Yes. Is it okay to verbalize our harshest words? If it were not okay, could Jesus be considered sinless?

One of our most important lessons learned from Job, Fowler, and Kubler-Ross is that in natural human development and in serious grief-work, it is normal and acceptable to come to a time when hard questions are asked, when anger is expressed, when our deepest thoughts and emotions are allowed to surface. Those among us who are most in touch with our humanity and spirituality will embrace this grace and grant it to others.

Lessons for Living

What other lessons for living might be gleaned from the story of Job? First, we must never make the mistake of implying that if the faith of the one suffering were great enough, then the suffering would be removed by God. The LORD pronounced Job blameless, announcing, “there is none like him on the earth,” yet Job suffered horribly. Paul prayed three times to be healed, but God replied, “My grace is sufficient for you.” Facing the cross Jesus prayed, “Father if it be Thy will, let this cup pass from my lips.” Yet, he went to the cross. Was the faith of Job, Paul, and Jesus deficient?

Second, unlike Job’s friends, we must never assume that one is guilty of some secret sin and therefore deserves the tragedy at hand. One of the lessons Job affords is that we do *not* always get what we deserve. Bad things *do* happen to good people. The tendency to blame the victim is an unconscious attempt to control God. “As long as I am good, God will provide me an asylum from evil. Since she is in this predicament, she must have done something to deserve it.” The roll call of martyred prophets and apostles might have something to say about that sort of theology. Yet, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar all claimed that we reap what we sow: the righteous are rewarded, while sinners suffer. But is that always the case in this life? Jesus taught that our Father in heaven, “makes the sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” The Christian caregiver should be less concerned about determining guilt, and

more concerned about dispensing grace.

Third, loved ones who are hurting want our presence, not our preaching. As long as Job's friends sat with him and said nothing they were wonderful comforters. What a beautiful example of tender pastoral care they provide at first:

Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place. . . . They made an appointment together to come to console with him and comfort him. And when they saw him from afar, they did not recognize him; and they raised their voices and wept; and they rent their robes and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great. (Job 2:11-13)

Now *that* is the way to minister! Then, alas, the three friends open their mouths and trade grace for disgrace. Proclaims Eliphaz, "As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same." Exclaims Bildad, "If your children have sinned against him (God), he has delivered them into the power of their transgression." Pronounces Zophar, "Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves." Woe is me! When Job needed salve, the friends gave sermons, and bad ones at that. Job needed grace; he got gobbledygook. Grace is always sufficient.

Fourth, God yearns for honest, open, intimate expression of our genuine thoughts, feelings, questions, and doubts; therefore, no person may stand between God and another human being to block such sacred, intimate conversation. Repeatedly Job poured out his heart to God, albeit in seemingly blasphemous words, and repeatedly his friends berated him for his "heresy." Yet the ability to talk to God outrageously may, in the end, lead us into true prayer. For the LORD roars to Eliphaz, "My wrath is kindled against you and your two friends; for you have not spoken of me (or "to me") what is right, as my servant Job has." The friends spoke well of God; Job raved shockingly to God. That is the difference between a religion and a relationship. Guess which the LORD prefers?

Fifth, Job is the only one growing in the book. The friends, who refuse to question or even to allow it, fail to understand that doubt may not be the antithesis of faith; it may be the cutting edge of faith. Job's honest communica-

tion with God, however challenging, brings him into a deeper relationship with the LORD. He testifies, "I had heard of thee with the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee." Job grew. He never knew all of the story. None of us do. Thus the question becomes, "How are we going to talk about God and to God when we don't know the whole story?" Apparently, honesty is still the best policy.

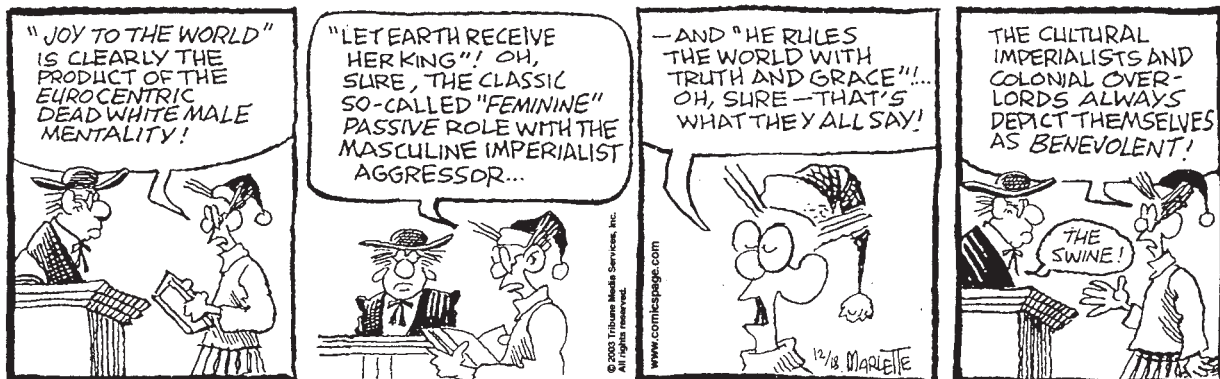
The friends, smugly uttering their plastic platitudes, canned cliches, and syrupy, superficial spiritual-speak, meet with severe reprimand from the LORD. Instead of the usual one bull or goat acceptable for unintentional sin, the miserable comforters are commanded by God to sacrifice *fourteen* animals, and *then* to ask Job to pray for them! "For I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly," the stunned friends hear God thunder. They have valued religion over relationships. Big mistake.

Sixth, when the LORD at last answers Job out of the whirlwind, the mystery of innocent suffering remains unexplained. "The riddles of God are more satisfying than the solutions of man," wrote Chesterton. In essence the LORD says, "My answer is there *is* no answer. Not in this life. The problem of innocent suffering is a mystery." What Churchill once said of Russia could be cited in this matter of innocent suffering—"It is a mystery, inside a riddle, wrapped up in an enigma." Questioning is permissible, but mystery prevails. At the end of the day, "the just shall live by faith."

Seventh, the LORD assures Job that He is far wiser than we are, that the universe plays out by intelligent design, and that God is in ultimate control of the world, including chaos and evil, which are limited and temporal. Furthermore, despite Job's cynicism (articulated acidly centuries later by H. G. Wells: "Our God is an ever-absent help in time of need"), He (God) is, in fact, present not absent. He shows up. He speaks.

Conclusion

Countless other truths can be mined from the Book of Job. To do so and publish them in this context, however, would be to tempt the reader/caregiver to cite, even preach our catchy conclusions to the hurting, rather than minister to them through prayer, presence, and listening. In the end, Job never says, "I see it all." He says, "My eye sees thee." And that's enough. ■



“Decoding” the Bible

By John Scott, Dallas, Texas

“Men stumble over the truth from time to time, but most pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing happened.” Winston Churchill.

“The obscure we see eventually. The completely obvious, it seems, takes longer.” Edward R. Murrow.

The phenomenal popularity of *The Da Vinci Code* and the record-breaking sales of the *Left Behind* series has led some in the news media to say that decoding the Bible has become a “fad.” But it’s no fad. We Christians have been trying to decode the Bible for centuries.

Some of our efforts to decode the Bible remind me of a humorous story about an obnoxious military officer. Still swaggering from his recent promotion to the rank of captain, he was addressing his troops. A private ran up to him with a message from headquarters. The captain, assuming it was another letter of congratulations, told the private to read it out loud. “But sir,” the private said, “You may wish to read this one privately.” “I gave you an order, son,” the captain barked, “Read it!” So the private read it, loud enough for all to hear.

The message read: “Captain, You are proving to be the most incompetent officer that has ever served in the U.S. army. If you do not shape up within a week’s time, I shall remove you from command and reduce you in rank.” Signed: Colonel Smith.

Immediately, the Captain said, “Good job, private. Now go and have that message decoded.”

Unfortunately, some of our efforts to find “hidden” meanings in the Bible have been like that—vain attempts to avoid the obvious.

For example, Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: “But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Mt. 5:15). Hoping to “decode” that passage, I looked it up in some Bible commentaries.

No luck. The commentaries just pointed out that Jesus made that statement to explain a line in the Lord’s Prayer: “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us” (Mt. 5:12).

What a scary thought.

An even more disturbing passage many have tried to “decode” is the one where Jesus described the final judgment. He said we’re all going to be divided into two groups: those who helped others in need, and those who didn’t. And he specifically talked about *worldly* help—for those who need food, water, clothes, and shelter, and those who are sick, lonely, or in prison. Jesus indicated that those who engage in that kind of worldly charity are going to receive a heavenly

reward. And those who don’t, won’t (Mt. 25:31-46).

I started attending a Baptist church nine months before I was born. I’ve since heard thousands of sermons. But I have never heard a sermon based on that warning. One preacher mentioned it, but only to say we shouldn’t take it literally. But that same preacher insisted in another sermon that we should take the Genesis account of creation literally. I wondered: “Why would he take Genesis at its word, and not take Jesus at his word? Even if he’s right about the creation, that won’t matter at the judgment. But if he’s wrong about charity, that might be the only thing that does matter at the judgment.”

I’ve heard hundreds of sermons saying that salvation is ours for the asking if we only profess a belief in certain facts about Jesus, and call him Lord. But Jesus said: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but only he who actually does the will of My Father who is in heaven” (Mt. 7:21). And, “The gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few” (Mt. 7:14). The Christian martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer warned about a “comfortable Christianity” and placing our hopes on a belief in “cheap grace.”

It’s true that Paul said salvation comes through faith, and not from works (Eph. 2:8, 9). But he never said that salvation requires no works. We can’t do enough works to save ourselves, so there can be no salvation without God’s grace. But saying works are not *enough*, is not the same as saying works are not *necessary*. So it seems we have stretched Paul’s words beyond what he actually said, and then acted as if they trumped what Jesus said. That would appall Paul himself.

The important question is: What did Paul mean by *faith*? Or, more accurately: What did he mean by the word later translated into English as “faith”?

I’m just a layman, but I have read how many scholars have answered that question. I have found that Protestant and Catholic scholars, all across the fundamentalist-to-liberal spectrum, agree on this: a saving faith is not just intellectual assent to teachings *about* Jesus; it’s a lifetime commitment to obey the teachings *of* Jesus.

Billy Graham called faith a “total commitment” and said, “There is a vast difference between intellectual belief and the total conversion that saves the soul.”¹ Dr. Foy Valentine,

founding editor of *Christian Ethics Today*, put it like this: "Saving faith is absolute commitment to go with God with no exceptions listed at the bottom of the covenant in fine print."²

Søren Kierkegaard said, "The misfortune of Christendom is that it has encouraged people in the notion that by knowing the facts about Christ's life . . . they have faith."³ Dr. Valentine likewise observed, "No greater trouble has ever beset the church of Jesus Christ than that which issues from an arbitrary division of word and deed, an unwarranted fragmentation of evangelism and ethics, a false dichotomy of faith and works. In God's plan these are never divided; they are always united. . . . They are two sides of the same coin. One cannot exist without the other."⁴

It's like placing your "faith" in a heart surgeon. That doesn't just mean you're giving intellectual assent to the proposition that the surgeon is licensed to practice medicine. It means to make a commitment to trust your life to the surgeon, by doing what he tells you to do and by trusting him to do what he says he will do.

That kind of faith in God will result in obedience. That will include good works. So those works are evidence of one's salvation. And Jesus said the final judgment will be based on that evidence, or the lack of it.

Nevertheless, surveys show that most people who call themselves Christians practice *no* charity, at least not the type of worldly charity Jesus described. Actually, it's worse than that. Even if you limit the count to Christians who are active in church, most of them are not active in charity.

Apparently, most of us don't even like to *read* about the importance of worldly charity. Walk into any Christian bookstore and you will see hundreds of books on what God can do for us. In fact, you will see one little book that advocates a *blatantly selfish prayer that has become a runaway best seller*. But you will not find a single book on what Jesus warned we must do for others. Not one. Go ahead; try it and you will see I am not exaggerating.

It seems we want to hear God's promises, but refuse to heed His warnings. Some people would rather argue about how God inspired the scriptures than to spend that time doing what the scriptures say we should be doing for the poor and disadvantaged.

If you have the courage, carefully read the passage we've been discussing (Mt. 25:31-46). Notice how the people react to what they hear. They are *surprised*. For those who practiced worldly charity, it's a glorious surprise. For everyone else, the news couldn't be worse.

Now ask yourself: Why are they surprised? Could it be they "decoded" what Jesus said, instead of just accepting it at face value? ■

¹ Billy Graham, *Peace With God* (Word, 1984), 113.

² Foy Valentine, *What Do You Do After You Say Amen?* (Word, 1980), 39.

³ *Selected Readings From Søren Kierkegaard*, edited by Robert van de Weyer (New York: Fleming H. Revell), 52.

⁴ Valentine, 20.



Ethical Issues in Human Resource Management

By *Burton H. Patterson*,
Southlake, TX

A large area of human relations management is concerned with various ethical issues, both on the part of upper-level management in its business decisions and lower-level management in the treatment of individual employees. Philosophic decisions on the relocation of areas of production or entire plants can have a major impact on the company but also can be devastating to individual employees and the communities in which they live. Management decisions must be made honestly taking all factors into consideration, including social responsibility as well as stockholder concerns. On a lower level, supervisors must, if they are to retain any *esprit de corps* within their unit of the organization, treat those they supervise fairly in matters of promotion and compensation.

Below are three situations that illustrate a few of the ethical challenges that may arise in human resource management. Each is analyzed as to the appropriate ethical response to each situation, including suggested methods of approach that would be appropriate for the Christian businessperson.

Initially it is appropriate to define the term “ethics” as used in this paper. The American Heritage Dictionary defines “ethics” as: (1) A set of principles of right conduct. A theory or a system of moral values. (2) The study of the general nature of morals and of the specific moral choices to be made by a person; moral philosophy. (3) The rules or standards governing the conduct of a person or the members of a profession.¹

In secular human resource management, generally ethics is treated as being relative, i.e. whether an action is moral or immoral, or right or wrong depends on the prevailing view of the particular individual human resource manager. Such view is certainly molded by the culture. A human resource manager may well consider decisions to be ethical if all consequences are considered in the light of business needs balanced with consequences to all concerned, including the employees.

In making decisions the human resource manager should consider alternative solutions to the needs of the business as well as the effects the decisions will have on the lives of the employees. Frequently a human resource manager will be given instructions from higher level management to take action which will be oppressive to the employees and the manager must either present arguments to higher management for alternate solutions which will have less impact on the employee morale or determine the best method for implementing the instructions which have been given.

Is not “ethics” a set of principles ordained by God for the governance of the affairs of his creation? If so should not that set of principles be applicable to business affairs the same as to all other human affairs.² This is the position reached by Dr. Leon McBeth in a message in which after he quoted from the 1963 version of the Baptist Faith and Message: “Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth and brotherly love.” He concludes that Christian ethics are relevant to the workaday world.³

A similar comment was made by Dr. Joe Coleman: “Jesus Christ came into this kind of world and when he came, he came to penetrate society. . . . We are to permeate and penetrate society. This says to me this morning that the ethical approach to my profession is that I as a child of God must penetrate the society in which I live and enlighten it. . . .”⁴

The Bible is the basis for determining a Christian way of life. A Christian must walk with the ethical conduct taught in scripture. Jesus taught honesty. Thus a Christian businessperson must be honest. Honesty is not the best policy—it is the only policy—there are no options. Jesus taught his followers how to handle conflict with truthfulness and integrity. Following his example, the Christian businessperson must love even those who would take advantage or even sabotage a business.

Business ought to conform to the best ethical practices, not just for a religious reason or for principles of human dignity, but also to keep from violating federal laws. Though the laws may not be known, they would not be violated if the business were operated by ethical principles. Experience has shown that in the long term business profits will be greater for businesses that practice good ethical behavior than those which do not.⁵

As an interesting contrast, at least one leading cleric does not believe the flip side to be true. Eric Kemp, Bishop of Chichester at Canterbury, noted that while ethical management in the business world was not necessarily alien to the world of the church, it really did not work in a church setting. His reasoning was that secular business viewed humans in terms of their market value and treated them ethically solely for business purposes which was too ruthless for church management.⁶

One of the most challenging aspects of human relations management is to maintain objectivity in hiring, promotion, and compensation. For example, a male supervisor must refrain from promoting or increasing the compensation of an

attractive woman who pays undue attention to him, but who consistently is late in arriving for her job and whose work is second rate.

It is both reasonable and logical to assume that compensation should track performance and that ethical considerations would not be a factor in performance analysis. Sometimes it is difficult for a supervisor, who rationally accepts this premise, to follow it, and sometimes it is difficult to persuade an employee of its rationality. The supervisor who either recommends or has the authority to adjust compensation may be persuaded by other factors to downplay the performance of an employee's production. Likewise, an employee who will be negatively impacted by measuring employee output may have a hard time understanding why lower production should produce lower income when the hours spent on the job are the same as others with higher production and higher income.

Employee evaluation generally will consist of multiple factors including such items as punctuality, attitude, appropriate apparel, personal grooming (particularly in a position where clients are involved), language, neatness, congeniality, and performance output, among other things. The evaluation process will be considerably different between service and production personnel and between general employees and professional employees. The ethical challenge arises when, after all the factors have been considered, the decision is made on a factor or factors other than those by which all the employees have been evaluated.

Three actual cases from my experiences over a quarter of a century illustrate ethics in the workplace. Biblical principals will be applied to determine the appropriate ethical conduct by management. A Christian human relations manager might well find himself in the position of Dr. David Allen, the first African-American on the Harvard Medical School faculty who, when mediating some racial tensions, said under his breath, "I wish Jesus were here today because he could resolve this problem." and a still small voice inside him said, "I am here, only now I live in you."⁷

Case Number One:

After many years of teaching in a school of business, managing several businesses, and being the senior partner in a tax law firm, I accepted representation of a large corporation in an *ad valorem* tax litigation against the taxing authority of a Western state. In the representation the company furnished an office and a secretary in their executive office building. All of their records were immediately available in that building and it made more sense to work there. The secretary who was assigned was an exceptionally attractive blond. If you lined her up with any ten secretaries in the company, you would think that she was hired because of her looks rather than her skills. However, she turned out to be an absolutely top quality secretary. Her typing skills were marvelous. She typed over sixty words per minute taking dictation from a dictaphone. Her spelling was perfect. Her work product was immaculate. It would have been difficult to find any fault with her production as a secretary.

Looking at her other work habits, however, revealed substantial flaws. As a single woman she liked to frequent bars every evening, drink until late at night, and often arrived at the office one to two hours late with a slight hangover. Her appearance was generally mediocre, but her good looks overcame her lack of skill in dress and make-up. She was surly with other employees and had a general bad attitude about doing anything requested of her other than the secretarial functions in her job description. Her work ethic was poor; when she completed her work she would read a novel rather than see if there was additional work in the office that she could do.

What do you do with such a secretary? Even when she arrived at 10:00 a.m., she was able to complete by 3:00 p.m. all of the work assigned to her for the day, and the work was done so well that there was little room for criticism.

The ethical considerations for the human relations manager in dealing with an employee like this one are enormous. The human relations manager is faced with the challenge of an employee who by any number of factors should be reprimanded or terminated, but who was one of those rare individuals who could accomplish in five hours what few other secretaries could do in eight hours.

As her immediate supervisor I was asked to prepare periodic job reviews and make recommendations on retention, advancement, and compensation. Both in my law office and in my major business, flex time had been used to permit employees to arrive and depart when they wanted to so long as they put in their eight hours, or if they accomplished their assigned tasks to management's satisfaction.

Of more importance than punctuality was this secretary's general attitude toward other employees and about her work. Great looks alone do not make up for a churlish attitude, but frankly I did not particularly want to lose a secretary whose work was so excellent.

In preparing to write this article I interviewed five individuals whose opinion I highly respected and got their opinions on the three cases. Very frankly I was surprised by their comments.

The first interview was with a former seminary professor and a former pastor of several large Southern Baptist churches. He looked at the situation from the institutional side and what was best for the business before giving consideration to the human side—what the action would mean in the life of the individual. During the interview he related a situation at the seminary when he was teaching there. The President, when dealing with a difficult situation, had prayer with the errant faculty member, and then fired him.

A second interview with a former pastor of several large Southern Baptist churches and former president of a Baptist seminary produced similar results. He considered the three cases from the viewpoint of the institution and not the individual.

An interview with two former Deans from Southern Baptist theological seminaries yielded unanticipated results when one of the men flatly stated that in making the tough

decisions required to keep an institution functioning smoothly, it was nearly impossible to apply ethical considerations, i.e. the functioning of the school outweighed any attempt at reclamation of the individual. The other former dean was less harsh and in the first case suggested doing everything possible to salvage the individual in counseling and aiding her in relocation, but like his cohort would put the organization's overall good above that of the individual. One conclusion from these interviews was that these men "had been there and done that" and spoke from their practical experience.

The final interview was with a retired president of a Baptist seminary in another country, who earned a PhD in Ethics from Baylor. He used a slightly different ethical approach and recognized that being honest in employee treatment, with the business owners in mind, could conflict with what might be best for the employee. However, like the others interviewed, ultimately he would put the best interests of the business ahead of the best interests of the employee.

These interviews can be contrasted with the view of Henry Krabbendam, who suggests ethical businessmen "must meet the requirements of a biblical motivation, a biblical standard, a biblical goal, a biblical decision-making process and a biblical prospect."⁸ He sets the standard as Christian love that impacted greatly on how employees should be treated. He also suggested motivation, when thought of in terms of service and self-sacrifice, as a key factor in impacting employee relations. In the decision making process he looked to the book of James and stated "To make decisions and settle issues, therefore, that are ethical in nature, James invites us to assess a situation and search out possible implications with sanctified sense, determine how it looks in the light of the law of love, and apply the Decalogue thus formulating in a sense a brand-new case law."⁹

In the first case should the human relations manager attempt to salvage a person that was headed in a direction that ultimately would lead to her ruin? Phrased in such a way the obvious answer is "yes."

As a secondary challenge, would it be ethically proper for the human relations manager to ask a lawyer, engaged solely to handle specific litigation, to utilize his time (which the company was compensating at \$150 per hour) for what easily could prove to be countless hours of counseling? Leaving aside the lawyer's ethical challenge of charging the company for work that was unassigned and not within the scope of the engagement, what ethical obligations should a company owe to society, in consideration of doing business in society, to provide growth and on occasion rehabilitation for one of society's members?

Should the basic principal of Christian ethics, to imitate God,¹⁰ be applicable to the business world?¹¹ Certainly every businessperson is not going to accept "ethical behavior" as necessarily originating out of a religious context, and it is difficult for Christian ethicists to ignore ethical systems that are not based on the Christian religion. The moral teachings of the Decalogue,¹² excluding those pertaining to God, to a

great extent are found in the Hammurabi Code¹³ and a number of other preserved ancient laws.¹⁴ Can it be said, in twenty-first century America, that religion and ethics are inseparable? In other words, are ethics exclusively theocentric? For many human relations managers the answer would be no, but since the presupposition of this article is yes, then the question must be asked, "How should this potential executive secretary be treated?" Guidance from the Old Testament indicates that workers (slaves) were to be treated with generosity.¹⁵ Application of this principle to the secretary in question would require something in addition to a reprimand or termination.

Should Christian ethical teachings extend into economic relations only as far as they are workable? This is the view of one author who he states the presumption that "every human being is made in the image of God and therefore possesses incalculable worth and dignity."¹⁶ Thus every individual is a repository of certain inalienable rights. It is the belief that the supreme purpose of human existence is neither to accumulate money, nor to provide goods and services for society, but to glorify God.

The same author states "the vast structures of industry and commerce are means to the end of enabling people to live for God's glory."¹⁷ However, Chewing has an interesting twist in application for he concludes that the ethical manager must consider the profits for which the owners operate the business. If the profit side of the business is ignored the business possibly can fail, which hurts both the investors and the employees. After noting the Christian businessman is confronted with the inescapable conflict between his responsibility to the investors of the business and in the implementation of biblical principles, he gives a scriptural solution: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives generously to all."¹⁸

The human relations director in the first case has several avenues of approach. Initially a decision must be made whether the employee is marginal and should be terminated or alternatively effort should be made to salvage the individual as an employee. Assuming the decision is to retain the employee, if possible, the first and most obvious initial approach would be counseling. Since she nearly always completed her work before the end of the workday, there would be time to counsel with her without interfering with her production.

The counseling could cover the challenges she presented to the company, the potential she could have with the company, and the errors of her ways, indicate the ultimate results both in her private life and in her employment for a continuation of her lifestyle. If counseling failed to have the desired effect the next step probably would be to issue a written warning in accordance with the company's policy as printed in the procedures manual and furnish her with a copy of the procedure so she would be fully informed about the next step and then give her ample opportunity for correction. Ultimately, however, if her attitude and work ethic did not change, for the good of the business she most probably should be terminated.

If termination is justified, is it the ethical thing to do? And if she is terminated, what Christian ethical obligations does the employer have toward her? How far should the Christian employer go in trying to salvage a young lady? Does the morale of her fellow employees justify her termination? Certainly her work product was as good, if not better than her fellow employees. The interviews with the five individuals cited above, together with the textual material from Vernon Grounds would answer yes—it is ethical, within the Christian framework, to terminate after appropriate counseling and opportunity for change. But at the very least an offer should be made to provide counseling about her life goals and her employment goals, as well as help in locating new employment.

Case Number Two:

Our company was low bidder for the remediation of biomedical waste at a large county hospital forty miles from the home office. This necessitated putting in a medical waste transfer facility and assigning five employees to work in it three days a week. The five employees drove to the location in one automobile and the company compensated the driver for mileage. Three of the employees were male and two were female.

One of the female employees made an oral complaint to a human relations specialist, claiming sexual harassment. All five employees had been with the company very long, and our company knew very little about any of them. From a legal standpoint the company's action was clear. Company policy dictated that an independent firm that investigated sexual harassment complaints be engaged immediately, and the employee making the accusation be transferred to another work area. An investigation and report indicated the accuser's charges were not corroborated by any of the other four employees. The investigator's opinion was that the charges were an attempt to get the company to pay the accuser mileage to drive her car to work.

Obviously under these circumstances it would be inappropriate to terminate the accused. What action, however, should be taken against the accuser, whose charges had cost the company several thousand dollars in investigator's fees? Texas is an "at will" employment state in which an employer can terminate an employee at any time without reason or cause.

Even in the face of the report, the accuser held to her story that she had been sexually harassed. The investigator's fees came from the company's human relations department budget. The director of the department was furious and desired to terminate the accuser immediately. He was unhappy about having to scale back other planned activities to stay within budget and was concerned that this employee could find other areas in which to be disruptive.

From the beginning the company was owned and directed by Christians. It had been their policy to hire, for executive positions and supervisors, only practicing Christians. The human relations director (also an active church member) desired to terminate the accuser.

The initial reaction from the owners was that the money for the investigator had been spent and firing the employee would not bring it back. They were not so much concerned for the accuser as they were for the morale of other employees. Could the five of them still work together after what had happened? Would the accused attempt any type of retaliation if the accuser was transferred back to her old position? While worrying about these issues, the management team seemed to miss a valuable opportunity.

T. B. Maston, the renowned Baptist ethicist, suggested that morals are the basis of ethics and biblical teachings, particularly the Ten Commandments, comprise moral authority dictated by God.¹⁹ Maston states that judgment and punishment are part of the moral law; justice does not offend the law, and thus does not offend human ethical behavior. Using this reasoning the owners certainly should have supported the desire of the human relations director to terminate the accuser.

However, Dr. Maston went further. He put great emphasis on the principle to "love your neighbor as yourself" and the new commandment of Jesus, "that you love one another."²⁰ An ethical conclusion might be that the ethical employer would not take action that would unnecessarily harm employees. This principle applies to many areas of the workplace, including a safe work environment, never asking an employee to do anything illegal, providing a living wage with medical benefits, and other similar considerations. What is the employer to do, however, when the reverse situation is thrust upon him? In this second case the employee caused harm to the employer through added worry and a substantial expenditure of time and expense.

Two authors posed several cases that were somewhat analogous with Case Two. Their work was considerably more philosophy than practical, but in discussing the moral behavior of the employee, they stated:

In fact, rules belong to the 'surface' of morality; the essence of morality consists of deeper values, such as the intrinsic worth and dignity of all human beings and rights and justice. If a person accepts those deeper values then that person demonstrates respect for moral rules. This management means that the person recognizes a good reason is needed to justify breaking a moral rule. Achieving ethical improvement in the workplace requires, among needed changes, increasing respect for moral rules.²¹

Their approach would suggest informing an employee that his or her conduct was not acceptable and then sanction the employee as an example to others.

In regard to this second case, the business owners strongly suggested to the human relations director that he give appropriate counsel to the accuser and if satisfied with her response to the counseling, to retain her as an employee. This appears to be a just and ethical way to deal with this case.

Case Three.

The company employed about thirty drivers for its "front-end" loader trucks (trucks with forks on the front that

lift dumpsters over the truck cab and empty them into a hopper behind the driver's head). The trucks have internal compactors and when full will weigh close to thirty tons. The fuel cost for pushing an empty front-end loader down the street is about one-fifth of the cost of pushing a full one down the street. Thus routes are designed to begin at the furthest point from the landfill and work toward the landfill. Part of the driver's duty is to make certain that the fewest miles are driven when fully loaded.

For years the drivers, like all other employees in the refuse division, were paid on an hourly basis. The hourly rate was quite high, intentionally set to combat a specific challenge. It is difficult to maneuver a large truck in a congested apartment complex parking lot without doing damage. The solution was to double their pay, with the absolute warning that they would be terminated if they had even one accident. The accidents ceased overnight. The drivers became very careful because they liked the higher pay.

A new Chief Operations Officer, who had an MBA and many new ideas, made a study of the comparative costs for each dumpster lift. He discovered that some of the drivers were on the clock for over ten hours, while other drivers (due to various skills), could run their route in six hours. Thus the company was paying a premium to inefficient drivers.

The proposed solution was to put the drivers back on minimum wage and provide them additional compensation for each dumpster they picked up. The slow drivers rebelled and the speedy drivers thought it was a great idea. The end result was that the faster drivers requested additional dumpsters be added to their routes, which reduced the number of routes by 20%. Since front-end loader garbage trucks each cost about \$150,000, the reduction in the number of needed trucks resulted in a significant savings.

What was the ethical challenge here? Most of the slower drivers were older and had relied on their overtime income to keep children in college, make payments on a home, or meet other basic needs. By moving them to a different pay schedule, which management felt was fair to the company, the driver's were impacted significantly.

One corporate ethics text described the owners' ethical dilemma: "To separate from 'personal ethics' any autonomous area of 'business life' where God does not rule

would be unthinkable in biblical theology."²² The authors of this text offered corporate management some basic principles: 1. God's law demands justice and truth; 2. There is an interrelatedness of all things—nothing is isolated from its effects on others; and 3. A believer must inject biblical ethics into corporate decision-making.

Case three happened at a point in the company history when it was not struggling financially. If the situation had occurred early in the company history, when it was burdened by significant debt payments, there probably would have been little sympathy for the older drivers and their loss of income.

Christian ethical principles that apply to the ethical treatment of the older drivers are found in Stephen Mott's biblical ethics textbook:²³

Our ethical behavior is to correspond to what God has enabled us to be by adoption and grace based on God's historical, once-for-all act in Christ's death and resurrection. Be (imperative) what you are (indicative) in Christ; thus we are given an 'indicative and imperative' ethical appeal. We could call it 'grace and ethics.'²⁴

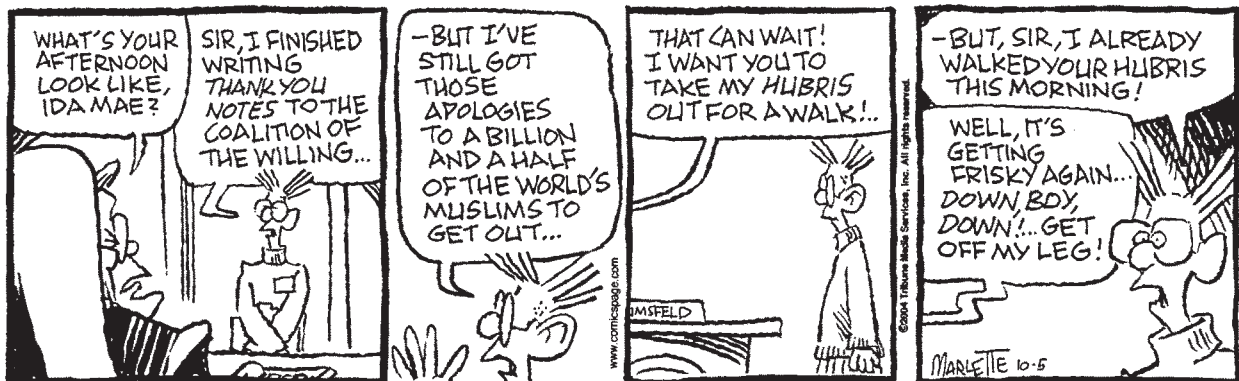
One basic plank of Christian ethics is that Love transcends Justice. Justice can be an instrument of love. Justice functions to ensure that in our common life we are *for* our fellow human beings, which is, indeed, the meaning of love. (54).

Wherever there is basic human need, we are obliged to help to the extent of our ability and opportunity. (77).

We are not faced with a dualistic ethic: there is not one ethical standard for private and intimate life and a different one for commercial and political life. The same criteria of judgment apply to both situations, but the latter is more complex. (184).

Case three presents a classic case of conflict between doing what is best for the company, which would reduce the pay of the older drivers in accordance with their production, or doing what is best for the drivers by permitting them to maintain the same income for the same work they had been doing for years. An analysis of the problem might indicate different outcomes, depending on the person having to make the decision.

A supervisor with a duty to the company most probably



would have to make a different decision than an owner of the company, whose bottom line was going to be reduced by the decision. Ethical choices in business are complex and difficult.

A large part of human resource management of necessity deals with many competing ethical values—fairness, honesty, industry, profitability, and social responsibility. A business organization committed to ethical leadership will show moral responsibility in all of these areas. ■

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- ¹ *American Heritage Talking Dictionary* (Electronic Edition, The Learning Company, Inc., 1997).
 - ² George W. Forell and William H. Lazareth, *Corporate Ethics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 37. “To separate from ‘personal ethics’ any autonomous area of ‘business life’ where God does not rule would be unthinkable in biblical theology.”
 - ³ Leon McBeth, *Christianity and the Workaday World: Messages from the Tenth Annual Christian Life Workshop* (Fort Worth: Baptist General Convention of Texas, 1966), 9.
 - ⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.
 - ⁵ Donald G. Jones, *Doing Ethics in Business: New Ventures in Management Development* (Cambridge: Oelgeschlager, Gunn & Hain, 1982).
 - ⁶ Robin Gill, *Moral Leadership in a Postmodern Age* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 110.
 - ⁷ Robert Wuthnow, *God and Mammon in America* (New York: MacMillan, 1994), 100.
 - ⁸ Richard C. Chewing, ed. *Biblical Principles and Business* (Colorado Springs, Navpress, 1989), 105–106.
 - ⁹ *Ibid.*, 113.
 - ¹⁰ J. Douglas, *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1982.
 - ¹¹ An equivalent statement appears in Stephen Charles Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 23. “Every system of ethics must have some ultimate basis of goodness and obligation; God is the basis of Christian ethics.”
 - ¹² James Muilenburg, *Biblical Faith and Ethics* (New York: Harper, 1961), 15.
 - ¹³ James B. Pritchard, ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 163–180.
 - ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 159–222.
 - ¹⁵ See Deuteronomy 15:12 ff.
 - ¹⁶ Chewing, 119.
 - ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 126.
 - ¹⁸ James 1:5 paraphrased.
 - ¹⁹ T. B. Maston, *Biblical Ethics* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1979), 19–20.
 - ²⁰ John 13:34, KJV.
 - ²¹ Ralph W. Clark and Alice Darnell Lattal, *Work Place Ethics: Winning the Integrity Revolution* (Lanham, Mass.: Littlefield Adams Publishers, 1993), 32.
 - ²² George W. Forell & William H. Lazareth, *Corporate Ethics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 37.
 - ²³ Stephen Charles Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*.

Outdated Morals?

By Martin E. Marty

“The Fourth Commandment says, ‘Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall do no work.’ . . .

It’s simply breaking God’s law to be open on Sundays. . . . I don’t work on Sunday because God says not to in His Word.” So spake John Cully, owner of one of the largest independent Christian bookstores in the country. He gave voice to what, a half century ago, almost 100 percent of Protestant church people on the “values and morals” front insisted was God’s law for themselves, the nation, all Christians.

Jamie Dean in *World* (November 13) fair-mindedly reports on the conscience-struggles of evangelical business owners and their employees over Sabbath observance in “Day of Retain.” In contrast to Mr. Cully, owners of the Family Christian Bookstore (FCB), a chain of 326 stores, recently decided to open on Sundays, causing their store managers to regularly miss church.

How does FCB legitimate this choice to violate the Commandment? FCB’s CEO Dan Browne called it a “ministry decision.” Reminded that Hobby Lobby and Chick-Fil-A keep the Sabbath on good evangelical grounds, Browne responded, “No one’s going to go to hell for not eating a chicken sandwich,” implying that not being able to buy a religious book on Sunday might mean going to hell. The Berean Christian Stores chain is also now open on Sunday. Its VP, Greg Moore, gave his “higher critical” defense: “There is more value in saving a lost soul than adhering to an Old Testament custom that later became a commandment.”

Is there any outrage against this latest assault on God’s Law? Pollsters found that 80 percent of FCB constituents shop on Sunday. Jamie Dean checked inventories of the FCB stores for books “specifically about the Sabbath,” a topic regularly addressed by Catholic and mainstream Protestant spiritual literature. How many titles did he find? “Zero.”

Is this how values and morals change: when enough people engage in a new practice, the fight over the divine origin of “custom” or “Commandment” slips from view? Surveys show that something like this also happens on conservative Protestant fronts. Thus, calling divorce a sin and preaching against it, as evangelicals once did—now it is a “tragedy” that is ministered to in “pastoral care”—and, increasingly, preaching against gambling is largely off the

(continued on page 29)

The Haystack Prayer Meeting

By Hal Haralson, Austin, TX

There were no caves to explore where I grew up. The sandy Texas plain north of Loraine was typical of West Texas.

There is only one “mountain” rising above that plain. Lone Wolf Mountain proudly bore the title of “the highest peak in Mitchell County.”

Visible for miles, it rose to a majestic 800 feet above sea level. The air was no thinner on its peak than on the sandy soil below.

Sand—lots of sand—produced tumble weeds, cat-claw bushes, mesquite trees, and wild plum thickets.

There was a huge plum thicket on the dry creek in our pasture. The tart wild plums produced some of the best jelly I have ever tasted. Neighbors came to our farm to gather wild plums on the “halves:” a bucket for them and a bucket for us. Ours was left on the porch. No signs posted. No instructions. It was the unspoken courtesy of West Texas.

The plum thicket covered nearly an acre on the creek. Under the matted limbs were trails carved by small animals. Secret places never exposed to the sun. “West Texas caves.”

Our neighbors’ daughter was six and I was seven. There were no boys in her family, no girls in mine. In one of those “caves” we explored the mystery of what makes boys different from girls. The game was called “doctor.” We took turns being the examining physician.

We both emerged with childhood curiosity satisfied. We might have sung with Peggy Lee, “Is That All There Is?” Wiser, we both went home.

She “confessed” to her mother, who cried in anger on our front porch as she told my mother of the secret tryst, and of her daughter’s contaminated innocence and admitted guilt.

I heard the car drive off.

Mother entered my room. “Come with me Hal Holmes.”

Whenever she used both of my names, I knew I was in trouble.

We went past the windmill, past the barn to the haystack. Mother dropped to her knees in the hay and pointed for me to do the same.

She prayed and confessed *my* “sin” to God. She told God how disappointed she was in me; how she had prayed while pregnant with me as she had walked the dusty road; how in the pasture she had dedicated to God the child she carried. She asked God for forgiveness for herself as a mother for failing to raise her son as God would have him to be.

She left me at the haystack.

Deep in the recesses of my seven-year-old mind I vowed never to disappoint her—or God—again.

I did not understand the impact of this experience until sixty years later. Why then? Maybe it was the cool mountain air of Taos, New Mexico. Perhaps it was the beauty of the 200-year-old Mable Dodge Luhan Conference Center where I was participating in a writing conference led by Paula D’Arcy. Conceivably it was a combination of these physical stimuli coupled with the words of this inspirational woman. Paula honestly and openly shared her remembrance of the death of her husband and two-year-old daughter Sarah. The tragedy had occurred twenty years before when a drunken driver going 90 miles per hour struck their car. Her pain became her gift . . . her journal, published as *Song for Sarah*, sold 250,000 copies in the first six months.

My recent read of Parker Palmer’s book *Let Your life Speak*, which suggests that *many of us lead desperate lives trying to be who we think others want us to be*, helped to prompt my insight. The intermingling of the words of Palmer and D’Arcy produced a personal revelation as clear as if my soul



had received a CAT scan. I had not recognized this truth before: *after making that haystack vow I had spent the next twenty years living so that I would not disappoint anyone.* By trying to please everyone else I had denied the existence of my true self. The refusal to acknowledge this led to deep depression.

There was only one escape from this painful journey. End it!

SAN ANTONIO STATE HOSPITAL ADMISSION SHEET

Date: Dec. 16, 1962 White male, Age 27.

Name: Hal Holmes Haralson

Reason for admission: "Failed suicide attempt"

After three sessions the psychiatrist showed me the way out: "Hal, if you don't leave the ministry, I'm of the opinion that you will take your life or spend it in a mental institution."

I knew that neither of those endings was what God wanted for me. I made the decision that I had avoided for years. I left the ministry. I wrote to the church in Loraine, Texas, that had ordained me a Baptist minister—"I want my ordination revoked."

They wrote back: "We don't know how to do that . . . we've never done it before."

I responded: "You're Baptist, *vote* on it." They did!

I had been diagnosed as being bipolar. I began a new journey—a *lifetime* managing bipolar illness—thirty years medicated with lithium. In Taos, for the first time in 68 years, I saw the relevance of the "haystack prayer meeting." It was the fulcrum on which the rest of my life had balanced. But ultimately my "mental illness" became my gift. Like Paula D'Arcy, I shared my story with others.

After leaving the hospital I spent six years in the world of commerce. Then I sold my business interests. I struggled with my bipolar illness.

I was thirty-three. What could I do the rest of my life? I was free to do anything that I wanted. I needed a profession where my particular form of mental illness would not be a handicap.

I decided to become a lawyer. In 30 years of law practice no one ever noticed the difference.

I left the ministry to become a minister. My new "ministry" was telling my story.

My journey is described in the poem that I wrote following the insight I gained from Father Keith Hosey, the only Catholic priest that I know. God used this Catholic priest to hear the confession of a former Baptist preacher:

CONTEMPLATION

I sought God as a child.

"Now I lay me down to sleep."

Simple trust.

I found Him there . . .

But sought Him more.

I sought God as a youth.

Frantic searching.

Fearful surrender.

I found Him there . . .

But sought Him more.

I sought God in His Word.

Instruction. Forgiveness.

Comfort. Guidance.

I found Him there . . .

But sought Him more.

I sought God in others.

Shared love. Pain.

Searching. Joy.

I found Him there . . .

But sought Him more.

I sought God in worship.

Broken bread. Spoken Word.

Songs of praise.

I found Him there . . .

But sought Him more.

I sought God within.

"You're home, My child."

"My home," He said.

"You've found the door

I thank God for my journey, for loving me enough to give His Son that I might have eternal life. I thank God for allowing me to find Judy Christian, my wife, who has shared this journey for forty-eight years. And I even thank God for my mother's prayer at the haystack.

As I write this the words of two hymns that I sang as a child come to mind. The first is *Rescue the Perishing*. One of the verses says: "Down in the human heart, Crushed by the tempter, Feelings lie buried that Grace can restore."

The other, *It Is Well With My Soul*: "When peace like a river attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll, Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say: It is well, it is well with my soul."

Amen. ■

Book Review

Choosing the Good: Christian Ethics in a Complex World

Dennis P. Hollinger, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002, \$21.99.

Reviewed by William M. Tillman, Jr.

T. B. Maston Professor of Christian Ethics, Logsdon School of Theology
Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, TX

“Of making many books, there is no end,” says the Teacher of Ecclesiastes (12:12b). Certainly with regard to areas such as biblical studies the Teacher is exactly on target. With regard to texts related to Christian ethics, however, the Teacher is not so accurate as such get written and published only every so often.

Hollinger’s book is one of those few and most recent given to the treatment of an overview of Christian ethics. The book’s uniqueness becomes more noticeable as the reader realizes Hollinger has attempted to develop a perspective, a framework for understanding and working in Christian ethics, without a major portion of the book given to a reflection on social issues. A traditional, practically expected, approach is to develop foundational ideas then work through issues of human sexuality, race relations, economics, public policy, and so forth. Thus, a commendation comes from this reviewer for Hollinger to attempt a relatively unusual approach.

Perhaps Hollinger’s background shaped this development. Currently, he is President and Professor of Christian Ethics at Evangelical School of Theology in Myerstown, Pennsylvania. Prior to this role he was Vice Provost and College Pastor and Professor of Christian Ethics at Messiah College in Grantham, Pennsylvania. Apparently a giftedness and skill in the realm of organization and attempting to deal with the core dynamics of a matter move throughout Hollinger’s approach to theology and life.

Hollinger is also a Fellow for The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity in Bannockburn, Illinois. Though he has done extensive work in bioethics, Hollinger correctly reminds us, with *Choosing the Good*, that Christian ethics is not primarily a search for dealing with faddish social issues. Rather, one should be working with a framework, a paradigm of decision-making, which can encompass any social issue.

Still, each chapter of the text begins with a case study or a lengthy statement. These introductions set the context for the chapter’s development. One potential shortfall, however, is that cases can mislead the reader. Cases may have benefit as

they assist a decision maker toward developing inductive reasoning or making analogies to real life with a case. Cases can also be too simplistic so as to do no more than establish the case maker’s point—which may not be on target.

Choosing the Good is divided into four major parts: (1) The Foundations of Christian Ethics; (2) The Contexts of Christian Ethics; (3) Making Ethical Decisions; (4) Applying Christian Ethics in Culture and Society.

Part 1 looks at foundational ethical theories. Hollinger delineates much of the basic information needed for the reader or student to understand the nature of ethics and especially the interface of Christian ethics and pastoral care, along with public policy.

A hint of overgeneralization begins to appear through this section, however, which marks Hollinger’s material, especially as a critique deals with ideas with which he either is unfamiliar or unappreciative. His observations regarding character and virtue ethics develop from a straw-figure image of these areas. Interestingly, chapter 3, “A Christian Worldview: Foundation for Ethics,” is an overview of primarily Old Testament theology.

Part 2 explores the contexts in which ethical commitments and judgments emerge. The two chapters in this section treat modernity and postmodernity, intriguing contemporary concepts. Hollinger makes note of contemporary society continuing to operate in modernity, a point not made enough among academics. His chapter on postmodernity needs some deeper analysis.

Part 3 considers some of the historical figures who can provide guidance for contemporary decision makers. The three chapters in this part probably should have been arranged sooner in the book. Chapter six, “Three Motifs for Making Ethical Decisions,” puts forward models for decision-making. Rather than being an analytical treatment, though, Hollinger provides a description of Edward LeRoy Long, Jr.’s works, *A Survey of Christian Ethics* and *A Survey of Recent Christian Ethics*. Frankly, without Long, Hollinger would not have had a chapter.

One can deduct, though, from Hollinger's review of Long's prescriptive motif, that Hollinger's filter for decision making is a modified prescriptivism. The paradigm becomes the overruling methodology for Hollinger, in spite of his recommendations otherwise. In other words, the approach does not allow an interface of the various elements articulated to be part of a holistic decision-making.

Chapter seven, "The Bible in Ethical Decisions," comes strangely late in the organization of the book. Hollinger's conclusion to the chapter is a good statement for the place of biblical ethics for the Christian. The chapter preceding the conclusion is not convincing in that regard, however. Some of that explanation comes with chapter eight, "Empirical Judgments in Ethical Decisions," demonstrating that for all their reference to Scripture, contemporary Christians remain essentially enculturated rationalists in their approach to decision-making.

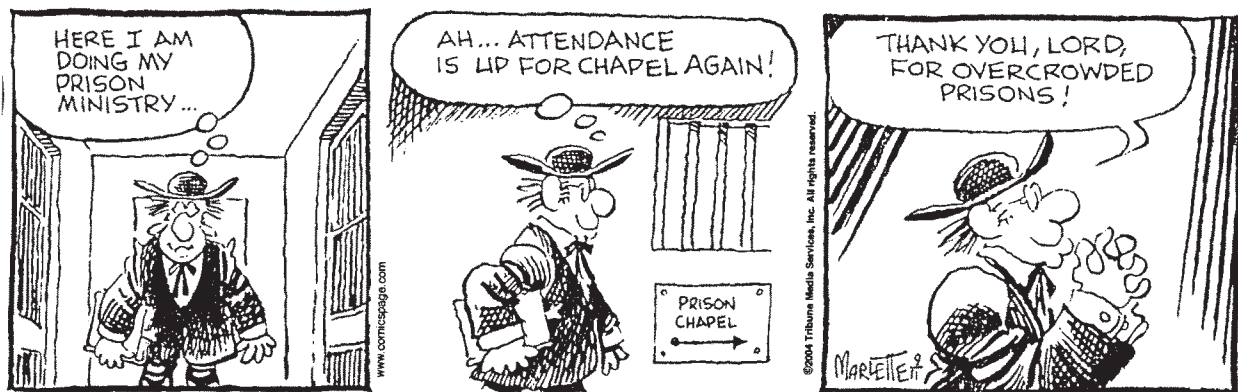
Part 4 considers the relationship of faith and culture. Hollinger uses H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* for this delineation. Unfortunately, Hollinger misread Niebuhr regarding the church of the center and the closely organized motif of Christ above culture in synthesis. Niebuhr should have been edited more closely, but contemporary readers should be able to make the analysis.

Part 4 ends with perhaps Hollinger's most creative chapters of all. Hollinger's assessment in chapter eleven,

"Pluralism and Christian Ethics," is a realistic one; that is, what is the cultural context, particularly in America, for the implementation of Christian ethics? How does that set the agenda for strategy and tactics? Thus, chapter twelve develops "Models of Christian Influence." Nine approaches explore remedial to preventative actions and personal to structural actions.

In his final conclusion, Hollinger concedes "the moral task before the Christian church today is immense. . . . But God has called us, as he called Esther long ago in Persia, to be a divine presence 'for such a time as this.'" The author's advice is sound, though as he says, "As we seek to think, live, and apply our Christian moral commitments to a complex world, we must do so with both assurance and humility. . . let us choose the good. Above all, let us choose God, the source of the good and the foundation of all that we are and do" (272).

There are some gaps in Hollinger's work. The Christian ethics educator who uses *Choose the Good* should be broadly and deeply prepared in order to be able to translate at points, as well as go beyond Hollinger. However, he has done the hard work of putting forward some reflection that can move the discipline a bit. Maybe the book is one that is primarily valuable to Hollinger in his own classroom work; but the text can help any of us in the important work of engaging Christian ethics in the classroom and beyond. ■



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

The Last Rose Of Summer

By Foy Valentine, Founding Editor

Dallas, TX

Just outside my study window a rose is blooming. It is a very special rose, the last rose of summer.

The rose is gorgeously red, exquisitely formed, deliciously fragrant, proudly and maybe even defiantly alone in my small rose garden, and a little bigger than it could be expected to be this late in the season, as if to show the world that it can thumb its nose at the approaching winter with its blue northers, its killing frosts, its dreadful ice storms, and its hard freezes.

I salute this last rose of summer—smartly, respectfully, admiringly.

It calls to mind the Russian folk tale (which I think I remember from Anton Chekov) of a man who had fallen off a high cliff but who had managed to grab hold of a small bush on his downward plunge. The bush itself was clinging precariously to life in a tiny crevice and was itself slowly turning loose of its hold. Facing certain death in a matter of minutes, the man saw a beautiful flower blooming at the side of the bush and could not resist the urge to put out his tongue to taste its single drop of precious nectar. What comes later will just have to come. For now, *carpe diem*, seize the day, savor the moment. Revel in this rose.

This last rose of summer also calls to mind Robert Browning’s immortal Rabbi Ben Ezra:

Grow old along with me.

The best is yet to be.

The last of life for which the first was made.

Youth shows but half.

Trust God, see all, nor be afraid.

This last rose of summer has called to mind again the

story told by my good friend, Brooks Hays, said to be the best raconteur on the Washington scene since Abraham Lincoln. Brooks had just written a good book called *This World A Christian’s Workshop*.

Someone asked his father in northwestern Arkansas, “Mr. Hays have you read Brook’s last book? To which the elderly father replied, “I hope so.” Who knows when the last book will have been written? Who knows when the last farewell will have been spoken? Who knows when the last cup of cold water will have been given? Some day the last rose will bloom.

This last rose of summer reminds me, too, of a wonderful old gospel song which my deacon Daddy, the song leader in our Pleasant Union Baptist Church where I grew up, used to sing, as my Aunt Ruby Johnson played the piano, “Work for the Night Is Coming.” The last verse of this timely admonition to redeem the time is lodged warmly and redemptively in my mind,

Work for the night is coming,

Under the sunset skies;

While their bright tints are glowing,

Work for daylight flies.

Work till the last beam fadeth,

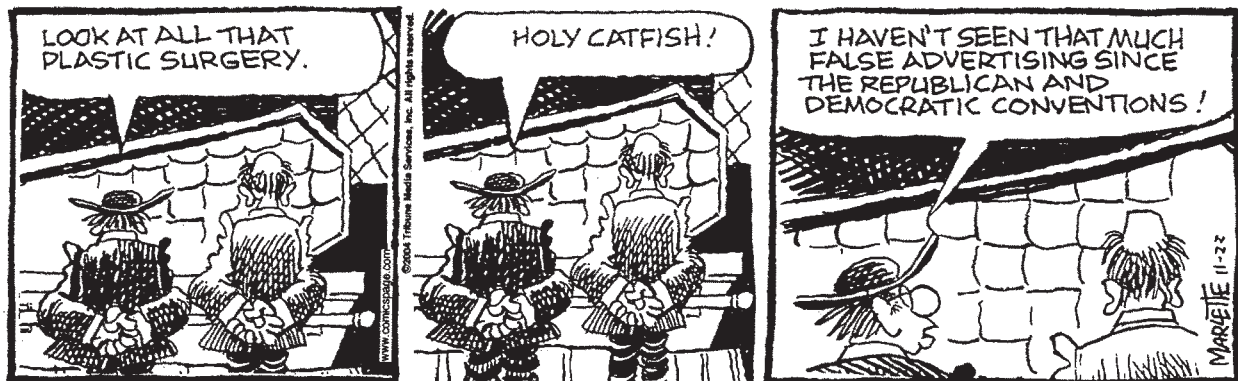
Fadeth to shine no more;

Work while the night is darkening,

When man’s work is o’er.

Yes. Everybody stand back. Let this beautiful blossom do its thing.

The last rose of summer could possibly make a wave of melancholy wash over me. Instead, it is flooding me with



good memories of its predecessors which all summer long have graced and fragranced and blessed our house. There have been, occasionally big white ones, stunningly attractive yellow ones, traffic stopping pink ones, a new and inordinately prolific old-fashioned red one, and two kinds of orange red ones, one of which is so fragrant that its pervasive presence permeates any room where it is placed. Remembering all these beauties pushes aside any sadness that might attend my contemplation of what will very soon be happening to the specimen at hand. True enough, it is what Oliver Wendell Holmes called the last leaf upon the tree; but it is holding on, hanging in there, and bearing its own very special witness to anyone with eyes to see.

But now let's face it. I am 81. Going on 82. Morbidity is not my stock-in-trade. I am not dwelling on my own imminent demise. I am basically prepared to meet God. Not quite ready for the face-to-face encounter, you understand, but not facing the experience with grave misgivings, either. Like this rose on which I am presently focused, whose petals will soon shatter, my days are also numbered. Come to think of it, they always have been. That sooner or later I too shall be the last rose of summer is a sobering reminder that I do not have the leisure of eternity to get done the things I need to do. Time has been God's gift to me, as has been life itself. So, I am constrained to make the most of it, make things right wherever I can, get my house in order, burnish my relationships with God and others, fresh every morning—and smell the roses. And this last rose of summer calls to mind the prospects and hopes that attend nature's cycles ordained by God, ordered by the Almighty in his grand scheme of things. This rose will shatter in a week or so, the first killing frost will nip the tender stem, and the leaves will yellow and fall. The sturdy rose bush itself will stand, however, and the elaborate root system will stay firmly in the ground, alive and well under whatever ice and snow may come. Then on February 14 next year I will prune the bush rather severely.

A couple of weeks later new buds will swell, new growth

will emerge, a tender stem will start pushing upward, then a tiny rose bud will develop at the end of the stem, in a few more days the bud will grow enough for the red color to be seen about to break through, and then one bright, sunny spring morning I will once again look out this window to see the first rose of a new season. Bright red, exquisitely formed, inordinately fragrant, proudly alone in my small rose garden, and a little bigger than it might reasonably be expected to be, as if to demonstrate to the world that, after all, as Robert Browning put it, "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world."

God willing. ■

Outdated Morals?

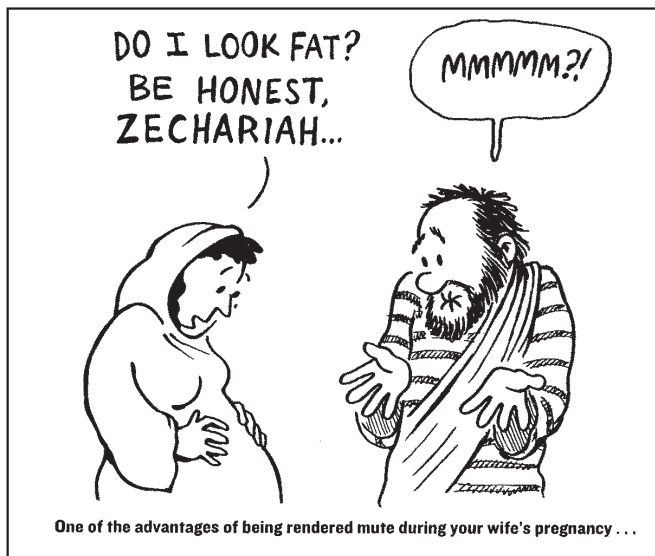
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evangelical screen. Birth control was preached and editorialized against decades ago, and the "born-again" now take it for granted.

What's next? Women identifying themselves as Protestant obtain 37.4 percent of abortions in the U.S. Catholic women? 31.3 percent, slightly above the general public average. Jewish women? 1.3 percent. As of now, nearly one-fifth of all abortions are performed on women who identify themselves as born-again/evangelical.

If the "born again" number grows, will anti-abortion continue to hold the place it now does on the "values and morals" front? Or will it too fade? ■

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CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY

A Journal of Christian Ethics

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

MISSION

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

PURPOSES

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

Christian Ethics Today was born in the mind and heart of Foy Valentine 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.

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

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