

CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS VOLUME 11, NUMBER 5 AGGREGATE ISSUE 57 CHRISTMAS 2005

A DIALOGUE WITH THE SHEPHERD Reflections on Psalm 23

By Jerry Barnes

I tentatively, pleadingly, hopefully
called to the Shepherd,
"Come, walk with me
for I am weary and wounded.
I have lost my way
in this stygian darkness..."

Come! Come!
please come ...
guide me ... comfort me ...
take my hand and walk with me
through this desolating
darkness to light!"

The Shepherd seemed
unable to hear
above the bleating sounds
of so many who safely lay
in the shelter of the fold.

Then I cried more loudly,
"Come! Please come..."

for my sickness
is a sickness unto death!"

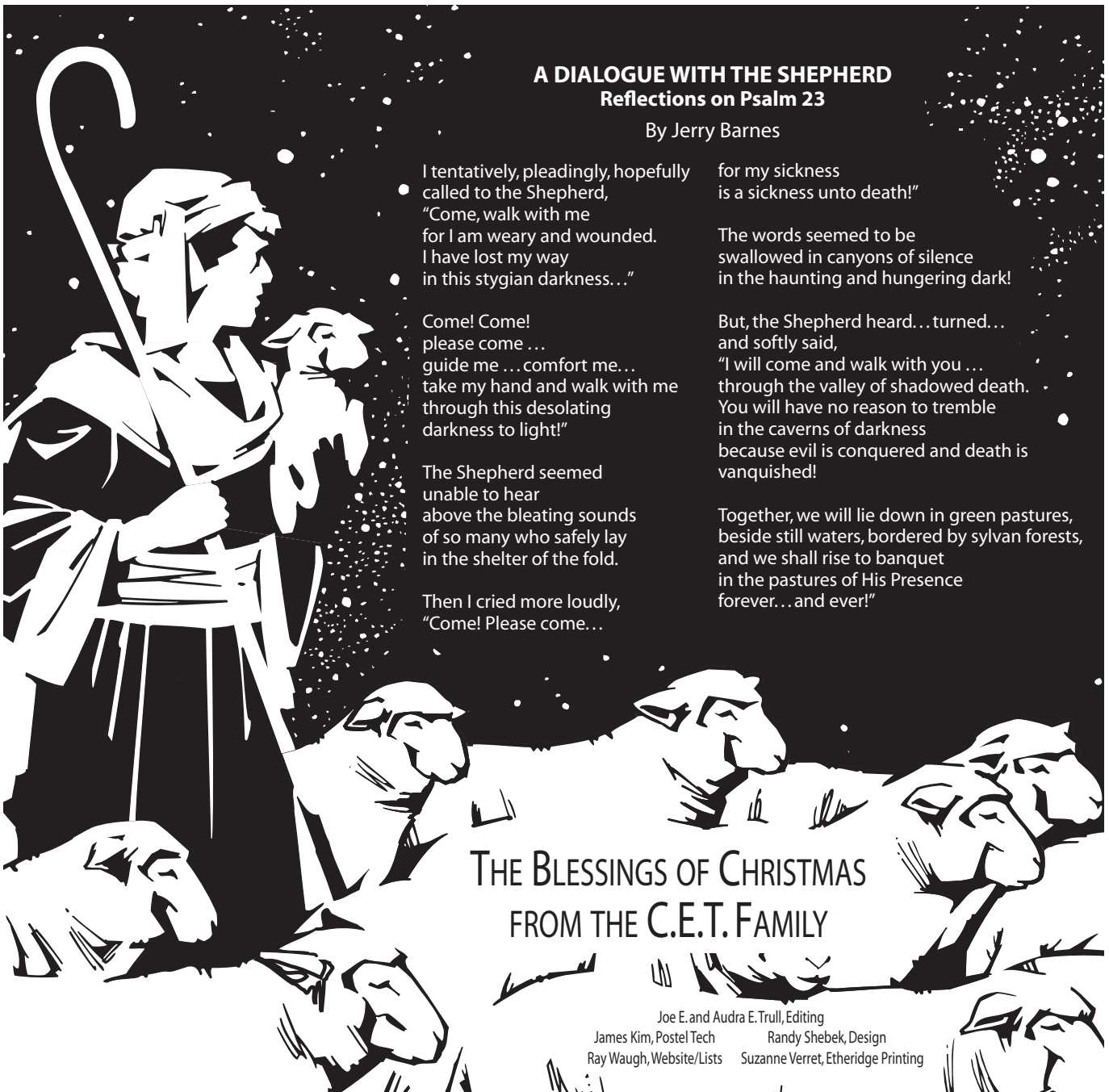
The words seemed to be
swallowed in canyons of silence
in the haunting and hungering dark!

But, the Shepherd heard... turned...
and softly said,
"I will come and walk with you ...
through the valley of shadowed death.
You will have no reason to tremble
in the caverns of darkness
because evil is conquered and death is
vanquished!

Together, we will lie down in green pastures,
beside still waters, bordered by sylvan forests,
and we shall rise to banquet
in the pastures of His Presence
forever... and ever!"

THE BLESSINGS OF CHRISTMAS FROM THE C.E.T. FAMILY

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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

EthixBytes

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ACCIDENTAL OR PROVIDENTIAL?

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Editor: Joe E. Trull

Publisher: Christian Ethics Today Foundation, 101 Mt. View Rd.; Wimberley, TX 78676. (512) 847-8721; FAX (512) 847-8171.

CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY is produced in the U.S.A. and is published bi-monthly, mailed from Dallas, Texas, where third-class postage is paid. Articles published in CET express the views of the authors and not necessarily the viewpoint of the Journal or the Editor. Send corrections and change of addresses to P.O. Box 26, Wimberley, Texas, 78676.

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A Collection of Quotes Comments, Statistics, and News Items

“All men’s miseries derive from not being able to sit quietly in a room alone.”

Blaise Pascal, *seventeenth-century French philosopher and mathematician.*

“The test of our progress is not whether we add to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”

President Franklin Roosevelt, *Second Inaugural Address.*

“These profits are far beyond that which these corporations would normally earn.”

Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-S.D., *in response to Exxon Mobil’s record third-quarter revenues of \$100,720,000,000 and record profit of \$9.92 billion, up 75% from last year.*

“In my administration, we will ask not only what is legal but what is right, not what the lawyers allow but what the public deserves.”

President George W. Bush *in a campaign speech in 1999.*

“That would basically allow the CIA to engage in torture.”

Sen. John McCain, *in reaction to the Bush administration’s proposal to exempt covert agents from the Senate-approved ban on torturing detainees in U.S. custody.*

“In the last five years there has been a profound and radical change in the basic policies and moral values of our country. The insistence by our government that the CIA or others have a right to torture prisoners is one indication of a radical departure from past policies.”

President Jimmy Carter, *interviewed on NBC Today in relation to his new book, Our Endangered Values: America’s Moral Crisis.*

“Sometimes it takes a natural disaster to expose a social disaster.”

Jim Wallis, *editor of Sojourners.*

“The World Bank defines ‘absolute poverty’ as living on less than \$1 per day. That encompasses 1.3 billion people—or about 22% of the world’s population.”

Baptist Message, *9/22/05.*

“We should do for ourselves collectively through our government the things the market system does not do at all or as well.”

Abraham Lincoln *in the Christian Century, 8/9/05.*

“I believe in an America where the separation of church

and state is absolute. Where no Catholic prelate would tell the President, should he be Catholic, how to act. And no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote. Where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference. I believe in an America where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from the Pope, the National Council of Churches, or any other ecclesiastical body.”

President John F. Kennedy *to Houston clergy before his election, Faith and Values, 10/30/05.*

“We found numerous problems . . . neither the DOD nor Congress can reliably know how much the war is costing and details on how appropriated funds are being spent.”

Conclusions in a 70-page report (May, 2005) of the Government Accountability Office of \$191 billion spent waging war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“When the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the state of Texas could display the Ten Commandments on its capitol grounds, it actually was ruling on a version of the text which includes 11 commandments—or 12 if you are Jewish . . . a compromise version to maintain the support of Jews and Christians from various traditions, who don’t divide the commandments the same way.”

Newsweek, *7/11/05.*

“The largest federal study of the nation’s sexual practices has revealed that more than half of American teens age 15 to 19 have engaged in oral sex, men age 30 to 44 have had a median of 6 to 8 sexual partners in their lifetimes; about 4 percent of men and women described themselves as homosexual, and among both men and women age 15 to 44, about two-thirds have had only one sexual partner in the past year.”

National Center for Health Statistics *reported in the Los Angeles Times, 9/16/05.*

“One of the most famous 19th century revivalists, Charles Finney, developed the idea of the ‘altar call’ in order to sign up his converts for the abolition movement.”

Jim Wallis, *Sojourners editorial, 10/05.*

“I’ve never as a grown-up visited a cemetery without realizing how brief the time we’re here, or how much we crowd into it. I think I do more meditation in a cemetery than a church.”

Bill Moyers, *during a wreath-laying ceremony at President Johnson’s grave. ■*

In Remembrance of John

William E. Hull, Research Professor
Samford University, Birmingham, AL

Note: This Memorial Service sermon was preached at the Crescent Hill Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky, on September 24, 2005.

In the majestic prologue to the Gospel of John, eternity is described as entering into time with this simple statement: “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John” (1:6). Today we are gathered to celebrate the life of another “man sent from God, whose name was John,” not John the Baptist but John Claypool. Having cherished him as the dearest of friends for more than fifty years, I offer four reflections on how the divine strategy of sending a forerunner to prepare us for Christ was repeated in his ministry.

The Gospel as Radical Grace

For at least a century after the Civil War, the South was a failure-obsessed culture bent on redeeming itself by the most compulsive religious exertions. Words such as “decision, commitment, and faith” were all given urgency by the necessity of proving one’s worth to stand before God. Fear, and even a hint of terror, lurked around the edges of these negotiations, fueled in some cases by “hell-fire-and-damnation” preaching that left no doubt as to the tragic consequences of failing to do the right thing.

John was born into a family and a denomination that took this enterprise with the utmost seriousness. His Claypool forebears in Franklin County, Kentucky, were religious to the core and this awesome earnestness was polished to a high gloss by the Buchanans on the maternal side of his family. John entered the ministry during the religious revival of the 1950s which filled Baptist churches with folks who loved to sing “Amazing Grace” but, just in case that was not enough, were also determined to demonstrate their piety by building the biggest sanctuary in town.

John soon realized, however, as Samuel Rutherford once put it, that “grace grows best in winter.” Irony lurked everywhere behind the facade of ecclesiastical success. Despite a great show of sanctimoniousness, the southern church was hopelessly racist, unready even a century after Emancipation for the desegregation that was inevitable following the massive social upheavals prompted by World War II. Instead of bonding together to lead their troubled congregations through the rigors of the civil rights movement, ministers were busy knifing each other in the back over slogans such as “liberal” vs. “conservative” designed

to prove who among them might be the most orthodox.

The deeper John plumbed the dark places of the human heart, the more he discovered, not freedom, but fear: Christians captive to tradition, cankered by resentment, afraid to die but even more afraid to live. In response, he began to redesign the popular understanding of grace by viewing life itself as God’s good gift, by emphasizing that what we *become* is based on what we already *are*, that our being *in* God is antecedent to our doing *for* God. Grace was reinterpreted, not as a reward for frenetic activism, but as that vast benevolence that bears us up when, in moments of impotence, hands fall helpless to our side. Bearing witness to the centrality of grace explains why John made the Parable of the Prodigal Son a favorite preaching text in those early years of fashioning his gospel.

Preaching as Vicarious Confession

The great problem with John’s view of grace is that it tempts the recipient to become soft on sin. A guilt-ridden southern culture had long welcomed the gospel of grace in its more sentimental form. Witness the host of rededications at the annual revival meeting, some of them repeats from the previous year. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in *The Cost of Discipleship*, reminded us how easily cheap grace could become the mortal enemy of costly grace: forgiveness without repentance, baptism without discipline, communion without confession, absolution without sacrifice.

John addressed this problem with a remarkably effective strategy. Instead of using his sermons to preach against sin in judgmental finger-pointing fashion, he chose to use his sermons to confess his own sins. He talked with disarming candor about his doubts from childhood through college and how he was still plagued by questions that had no easy answers. He dissected the anatomy of his own heart, showing how he had often acted in ways that seemed religious when what he really wanted was the approval of others, particularly his mother. With a prim and proper Baptist background, he had no scandalous transgressions to confess, such as were often heard in “rescue mission” testimonials, but he held up his own inner life to us as a mirror reflecting the more subtle sins of pride, ambition, complacency, and condescension.

Centuries ago, Protestantism recoiled against the Catholic confessional because it had taken on an almost magical quality in the Middle Ages and was burdened by the deplorable practice of indulgences. Evangelicals retained their equivalent of the confessional during the revivalistic era when sinners were invited to the mourners' bench but, by the post-war period, this practice had virtually disappeared. As churches became larger and members more sophisticated, the central spiritual discipline of confession dropped almost completely out of Baptist life. Some pastors tried to sound the note in their public prayers, but such utterances were necessarily vague and general at best.

In this culture of deception, where our brokenness was ignored by the simple subterfuge of silence, John began to plead with his congregation to "come clean" with those innermost secrets seldom admitted even to themselves, much less to God. And because his language was autobiographical, it offered each hearer an invitation to join him on the journey of spiritual honesty. By initiating this conversation, John modeled for his members how to practice the forgotten discipline of confession so prominent in the Psalms. To be precise, John's preaching was "vicarious confession," that is, when his parishioners did not know how to acknowledge their own waywardness, John did it for them by acknowledging his waywardness, thereby showing them how to become "honest to God."

Let me mention three important implications of this strategy for you to ponder at another time. First, John made it legitimate for Christians to question, to doubt, even to argue with God. As one of his mentors, Carlyle Marney, put it, God can take care of himself even when we come at him in a religious rage. Second, John did not approach his hearers "from above," talking down to them from that pedestal on which the South likes to place its preachers. Rather, he approached them "from below," talking up to them out of the abyss of a broken and a contrite heart. Third, this meant that his sermons were dialogical rather than confrontational. As Vance Havner liked to put it, John did not preach as a critic with microscope looking for faults but as a beggar with basket looking for bread.

Ministry as Wounded Healing

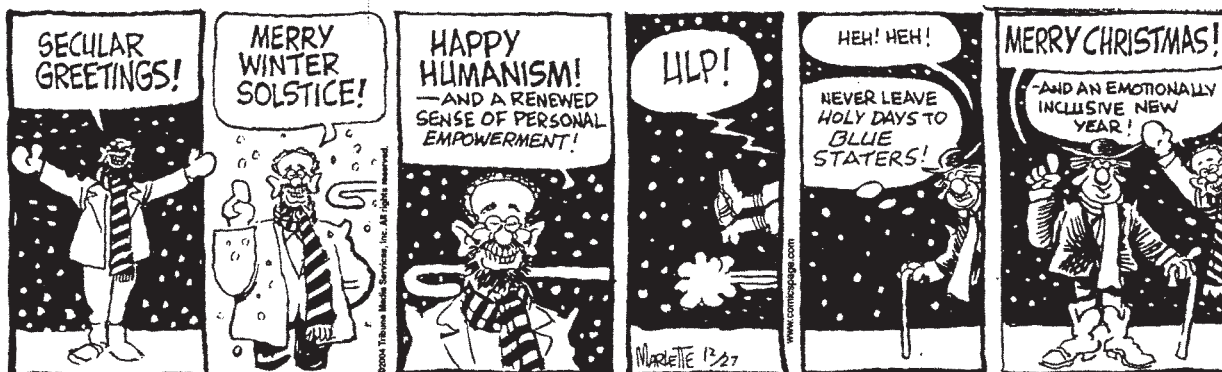
John's transparent honesty in the pulpit prepared him

to deal with three great crises in his own life, all of them sources of unspeakable grief because they dealt with the reality of death: the death of his daughter, the death of his marriage, and the death of his denomination. All three tragedies engulfed him in little more than a decade, from the early seventies to the early eighties, and it was in the darkness of these three events that his identity was most deeply forged.

John's two children were just younger than ours but near enough in age to enjoy many outings together, thus we were very close not only as ministerial colleagues but as families. I still remember the hot day in July when John called with the diagnosis of Laura Lue's life-threatening leukemia. I was standing at the back door of our home and the news struck me so forcefully that I had to sit down on steps leading to the basement. The family soon asked me to serve as its pastor during this time of darkness which eventually included conducting her funeral from this pulpit and placing her lifeless body in the ground on a cold and dreary day.

In the months after the dread diagnosis, John and I spent many days together when he had been up all night in a futile effort to relieve the pain that racked her body. I stood in the wings to preach for him on those Sundays when the whole week had denied him a moment for preparation and had exhausted his strength past the point of a public appearance. Finally, Wyldine and I were in the Claypool home on that January afternoon when the footfalls were hushed and the last cry ended as a great silence descended because she was gone, almost exactly when the doctors had predicted eighteen months earlier. At first, her medications had made Laura Lue look robust and rosy cheeked and, because her struggle was saturated with the prayers of a concerned congregation, it was hard not to hope that the prognosis would prove to be a horrible mistake, but it was not to be.

This devastating loss took a heavy toll on John's innermost family circle, leading eventually to the loss of his marriage in addition to that of his daughter. The ties of thirty years are severed only by an amputation that leaves the heart unspeakably shattered, thus John was beginning to collect more and more scar tissue on his soul that would never go away. But his personal response to domestic tragedy was consistent with his preaching to others. Spending



a year's residency in Clinical Pastoral Education at the Southern Baptist Hospital in New Orleans was his way of understanding the outward by going more deeply inward, of seeing renewal in order to discern the future shape of his obedience, and of moving beyond blame to a life of continued growth.

When faced with frustrations that cannot be resolved, many ministers seek therapy by throwing themselves into their work with fresh determination. But at the height of his pastoral and pulpit powers, John found his context for ministry coming apart even as his marriage unraveled. An absolutist temperament called fundamentalism was gaining momentum by feeding on the fears of the Old South over the growing power of a New South, by riding the coattails of a momentous shift in southern political loyalties, and by exploiting the rising popularity of the electronic church.

Not only John, but a host of younger ministers who so admired his leadership, suddenly found themselves disenfranchised in a denomination determined to reinvent itself in forms that were alien to the best of its heritage. This prompted his turn toward the great Anglican tradition which John had long admired because of its robust ecclesiology, its sacramental love of mystery, and its attractiveness to a thoughtful constituency, a move made easier by the Episcopal roots of the new love of his life, Ann, who became his enthusiastic partner in ministry.

In all three of these crises, John faced the challenge posed by his emphasis on grace, namely, is the heavenly Father a fickle giver? God had given John a darling daughter, then suddenly snatched her away in childhood. He had given him a lengthy marriage, but now all that remained were its ashes. He had given him the goodly heritage of rootage in a denomination that was no longer welcoming of his ministry. John could hardly ignore these losses, or hide them like skeletons in a closet. Nor could he pretend that he was able in his own strength to overcome them for, indeed, all three problems proved intractable in the face of his best efforts. So, in the last great move of his ministry, John refused to allow these experiences to defeat him but instead utilized them to contribute to his enhanced effectiveness as a "wounded healer."

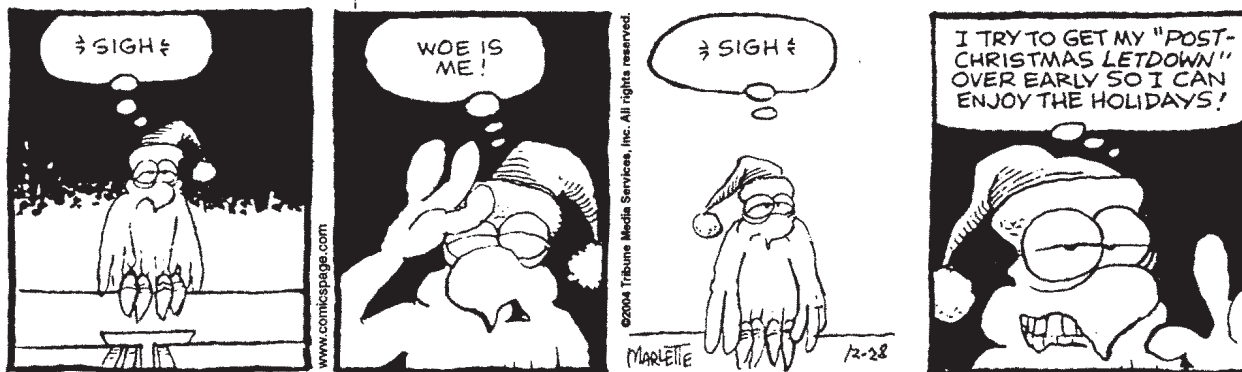
The phrase is from a book by Henri Nouwen, but the image is from the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. The reality which it describes speaks powerfully to our success-

crazed culture in which winning is everything and losing is nothing. William James once said that the fear of failure is the American idea of hell, a message that is encoded on our brains hundreds of times every day. But the one whom we are gathered to remember taught us the value of being vulnerable. By fulfilling his calling without a trace of ministerial macho, he incarnated for us that ministry of negation that was the hallmark of his ancient namesake who insisted that "he was *not* the light" (John 1:8) but had come to bear broken but faithful witness to the light (John 1:20-23).

Life as Sovereign Victory

John and I arrived in Birmingham within weeks of each other in 1987, which permitted me to participate at close range in his climactic ministry at Saint Luke's Episcopal Church. At his retirement dinner in 2000, which overflowed one of the biggest ballrooms in town, a grateful parish lavished affection on a beloved rector whom they had been skittish about calling because all of his previous pastorates were Baptist. I reminded them on that occasion that we Baptists had birthed and bred John, had taught him the Bible in our Sunday School and public speaking in our Training Union, had given him a good liberal arts and theological education in our schools, then had nurtured his ministerial skills in our rural, village, and city churches. I ended my summation of our denominational investment in him by saying, "When we Baptists gave you John, we gave you the best we had to offer," a claim which they affirmed with a sustained round of applause.

But then, in retirement, the Episcopalians gave John back to us. Due to restrictive policies governing his pension plan, John could receive very limited earnings from sources within his denomination, thus his primary arena of vocational service became a teaching ministry at Mercer's McAfee School of Theology where he was able, not only to renew his Baptist roots, but to roam freely in other rooms of the great household of faith. Thus did his ministry come full circle with much lost but even more gained, with much taken but even more given, with much dead but even more alive. That is the central witness that sustains us as we salute the end of his earthly pilgrimage. John bet everything on the sovereignty of life over anything that would seek to destroy it. And in one voice our hearts cry out, "Dear John, you were right. Thank God, you were right!" ■



Another Korean War?

By Jinyul Ryu, PhD
Sungkyul University, Korea

North Korea has kept a strained relationship with the United States ever since the 1953 truce. Now war clouds once again hang over the Korean Peninsula. As war seems to loom large, Korea cannot stand aloof from the war of “shock and awe” against Iraq, while seeking a peaceful solution to the current nuclear standoff.

Like Americans, Koreans are peace-loving people. Korea, together with the Mongolian Army, has once attempted to invade Japan and to expand its northern territory into Manchuria. However, the country long ago learned the principles of peaceful coexistence through compromise and cooperation rather than hostility.

As all human cultures and thought systems are developed in the dynamic relation to their environments, so this Korean spirit has grown in the context of the Korean Peninsula, which is geo-politically located between China, Russia, and Japan. The significance of location was emphasized much more in the previous century than in this time of advanced communication and transportation. All of Korea’s neighboring countries have coveted the peninsula and have wanted to place it under their influence. Korea was a crucial element for Japan to advance into the Asian continent and for Russia to secure an ice-free port positioned toward the Pacific Ocean.

In the conflicting situation between these nation’s interests, Korea, having not much room to maneuver, has sought to survive through compromise and cooperation with foreign forces. Despite such struggles, the peninsula was colonized by Japan for 36 years, and was divided into South Korea and North Korea immediately following its liberation on August 15, 1945. If we Koreans had had the right of choice, that is, if the division of Korea had not been decided by the leaders of America, England, and Russia at the Yalta Conference (February, 1945), certainly we would not have experienced such tragedies as resulted from the separation.

Divided into the democratic South and communist North, the Korean War saw its beginnings as Koreans began fighting against one another, stimulated by the then Russian expansionism. The war claimed countless young Koreans and foreign soldiers from fifteen nations including America, and many civilians died as well. Koreans admit that what we are now is due to their brave sacrifice, and so appreciate it highly.

However, the tragedy of the war itself left nothing positive, only ill effects. We Koreans are still under the aftermath of the war, as Americans are in some ways affected by the after effects of the U.S. Civil War. The peninsula became even more firmly divided and there are more than one million families with relatives living in both sides, yearning for a reunification. Now, 50 years have passed since the conclusion of the war. The then-young Koreans are getting older, and many of them are no longer with us. Though a handful of them are fortunate enough to have their long awaited meeting with family, it can’t compensate them for the pains of their division.

If another war breaks out under the current situation, will it be the will of God, who intends to build his kingdom of peace and righteousness? Can it be a war that we can justify? Would the looming war falsify the empirically proven fact that there are no winners, only losers in war?

Justified War in Korea

War with North Korea would be justified if North Korea were to seriously disturb the order of peaceful coexistence in Northeastern Asia, catering only to its own interest at the expense of bordering countries, and if its intent to use weapons of mass destruction is demonstrated in a clear as day manner.

China, Russia, and Japan are the neighboring nations of Korea. Although each has had internal conflicts and changes of political systems, they have remained sovereign nations. If the North were ever to attack any of these, it will certainly be the cause of a just war. However, it is not likely that such an impoverished nation has the capability and intention to do so. With a bankrupt economy, weakened morale, and worn-out conventional weapons, it couldn’t win any war against its neighbors equipped with up-to-date systems of weaponry. What then can the North break? It is the temporal peace and stability between the two Koreas. These two currently seem to enjoy at least limited communications during a nuclear-generated tension. The South and the international communities all attempt to engage the North and lure it out of its isolation. However, efforts are way short of leveling the vale of deep distrust between the two, which has been in place since their separation.

North Korea needs to abandon the red menace and its

vain ambitions in order to avoid falling into deeper mire. Its leaders must realize what is really going on in the world and become aware of what a responsible country of the global village should do. Both Koreas are called to talk seriously about their future, to bring about some creative ideas, and to act step by step on what they believe best for the cause of their reunification. Only then can we expect any recognition and help from other countries.

A war may be called just if it brings about much more good than evil with a minimum of civilian casualties. If the economic principle – maximum profit by minimum investment – is applied to a war and actualized, we can hardly deny its necessity and usefulness. We can have patience with today's pain if it results in tomorrow's prosperity. Could the winning of a war set a new stage for Korean peace? Can a pre-emptive, surgical strike on nuclear sites contribute to the peace and prosperity of the peninsula? Or would it lead to another all-out war in Korea?

Even in less tense situations, the North used to threaten the South saying, "Seoul will be a sea of flames if America and its puppet-South Korea attack our country." From this, the propensity is clear that a cornered North Korea, if attacked, would rave against its enemies, using all available weapons and military personnel.

A war usually stems from human psyche tarnished by egocentric temper and superiority complex. The ill result is a war, which demonstrates these dispositions in very destructive ways rather than sublimating them. As these become root elements in distorted human relations, so the collective egoism and excessive pride of a nation easily cause conflicts among the countries of the world. It is not being asserted that America will declare war against the North out of such attitude or of avarice-driven imperialism. Rather it is suggested that America fights not out of choice but of necessity. However, we can't expect something desirable from a war if it is carried out to satisfy these abnormal desires, considering that even a war of sacred intention rarely yields good fruits.

If a nation that produces and exports illegal drugs, or an organization that perpetuates ideas which dehumanize people are also objects of just war, we may then justify a war against the North. The suspicion that North Korea infringes upon human rights and breaks international fidelity keeps many nations from investing in and helping the hapless kingdom. However, such behavior is not exclusive in its ability to produce evil effects upon our society. Drug-exporting countries poison human souls. Dehumanizing culture and mechanizing thought eclipse the bright side of the world. High divorce rate and mammonism destroy family and human relation little by little from within.

If the unpredictability of the North is just one of these evil-bearing elements, and if the difference between its acts and the actions of others is merely of degree and not of quality, how could it be correct to label a war against North Korea just, while not using weapons against others? What would be the rationale for the military threat?

It seems that the North acts on the instinct of self-defense in developing nuclear weaponry. If this is the case, its behavior can't be an excuse for waging war against it. All living things have the right to protect themselves from anything that threatens their existence. With the collapse of communism and the old Russia, which had been the major supporter of North Korea, America became the sole superpower and has recently designated the North as one of the "axis of evil." In this circumstance, it is quite plausible for the nation to feel isolated and threatened. Thus its leaders want to have more powerful weapons as a self-protecting policy. Certainly they would think that their country is entitled to develop such a weapon because of the threat of the U.S.

What is wrong with this? All nations do so in their own interest of safety, and many other countries already have more than enough weapons of mass destruction. The problem is how they are used. If the North appears to be in the business of getting something by intimidating the South or Japan with nuclear weaponry, or if it exports plutonium to rogue states or terrorist groups designing mass bloodshed, these would be cause for a just war. A war may be inevitable provided that a nation uses its weapons to destroy the system of the world that orients toward a peaceful symbiosis based on the international laws and mutualism.

Now some Americans believe that they are engaging against Iraq in order to eradicate the root of terrorists, to preserve fragile world peace, and to keep their great country safe. America may attack Iraq or North Korea, following its own line of conduct, despite the current worldwide antiwar movement. In doing this, Washington may be more interested in satisfying its own needs under the cloak of peace and justice. They might be doing so even more confidently in the belief that God entrusts it to them, and therefore they identify the Christian truths with the American values. Is God on their side? Is every individual or nation not under God's judgment? Is it a war between good and evil? What do they assume that eliminating the evil of the world is their job? Who has given America the right to launch preventive strikes on evildoers?

Biblical View of War

Although the Old Testament reports numerous war stories and contains statements that support armed conflict, it does not regard war as a better option or even recommend it as a solution to conflicts. Rather, we find many passages in the OT, which put emphasis on peace (Isa 2:4). Moreover, there are problems in using all the war-related passages applied to Israel in our situation.

In a fundamental sense, war and violence are condemned. For example, King David fought many wars and was victorious in most of them. But his plan to build God's temple was rejected by God himself because of his war-career. In the OT, war was discouraged or even stopped by some prophets. God punished foreign countries because of their war crimes against Israel and others. If war was

indispensable, it had to be carried out in reasonable ways. Soldiers were not allowed to use weapons cruelly or excessively. They were ordered to stop once they had achieved their objectives.

In the New Testament, Jesus accepted war as part of this world when he mentioned the omens of the end time (Mt 24:6). Soldiers who became Christians were not condemned. The apostle Paul and other writers like to use military terms and metaphors to describe the Christian life, and Christians were called soldiers who had to fight the good fight. Nevertheless, this fight does not mean violent war in today's sense. It is a Christian struggle against evil with spiritual weapons, not with physical ones:

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph 6:11-12).

The NT too contains many statements that emphasize peace. In his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus makes clear that his followers should seek to live in a nonviolent manner:

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God (Mt 5:9); you have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.' But I tell you: Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also . . . You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Mt 5:38-44).

In the letter to Romans, Paul the apostle made a similar statement:

Do not repay anyone evil for evil . . . If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone . . . Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath . . . Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom 12:17-21).

All these passages seem to suggest that true peace in the world and the cause of God are not advanced through the use of physical force. Historically, there were many more wars that left only a series of other sufferings than wars that gave rise to peace. Considering all these aspects together, can we still contend that war is an inevitable choice in some cases? It is a necessary evil?

Theological and Historical Views of War

The believers of the early church felt a tension between what they believed about war and what the emperor required of them, or between the church's teaching and the nation's demand. This incompatibility between the command of love taught by Jesus and the need to kill the enemy in a war made the followers of Christ perplexed. In this situation, most of them favored nonresistance and nonviolence, found strong support from their Lord and the Scripture, and became quite reluctant to join armed forces. When they had to serve in the military and the gov-

ernment, they wanted to perform alternative services such as police and fire fighting, rather than engage in killing other soldiers. Church leaders such as Origen encouraged them to pray to fight against the evil force that caused conflict and killing. They preferred Jesus' command to love the enemy to the emperor's command to kill the enemy.

This pacifism of the early church remained a dominant view until around A.D. 170. However, it was diluted with military triumphalism as more and more people became Christians and the Roman world was Christianized. There was growing pressure for the believers to serve in the army, and in addition, the northern barbarian faction threatened to destroy Pax Romana. In response to this brewing tension, Augustine formulated the just war theory. A war, he claimed, can be just if it is carried out to secure peace and justice only with love for the enemy in mind. The enemy's will was to be respected and no massacre, looting, or burning was ever allowed. Under his influence, the medieval church undertook a holy war (the Crusade) to free the holy land from pagan control. The church even glorified war and warriors, and taught that showing mercy to the enemy of God's kingdom was wrong. Its liturgy included the blessing of battle standards and weapons. Knights were consecrated in a sacred manner and became privileged leaders of the people.

With the advance of weapons, however, large-scale warfare and mass destruction became possible. Both rationalists and Christian humanists began criticizing the traditional view of war, and worked toward peace and harmony, encouraging international cooperation and humanitarian endeavors. Unfortunately, their struggle failed most severely in the two World Wars of the last century. Initially, Christians believed that the Wars were just in that they aimed at freeing people from unjust systems. However, history may be showing that the result was quite the opposite. Unwanted tragic events and circumstances have resulted in many parts of the world. Numerous civilians, including children and women, died in the conflicts. After seeing the Holocaust and the reactionary damage of the atomic bombs, people's disappointment and weariness reached their peak. The dire consequences of the wars crushed people's dreams to build a peaceful world, and made them seek to secure peace not by appealing to weapons but by establishing an international peacekeeping organization such as the United Nations. But in preventing war and keeping harmony, such endeavors have not been as effective as expected. There have been numerous regional conflicts, including the Korean War, even after such international systems and laws were installed.

As Christians, we hope and pray that there will never again be another war in Korea. Both North Korea and the United States play a crucial role in our future, and they are the partners we hope to get along with. However, the recent escalation of an already volatile Korean situation worries many Koreans who tasted the bitterness of the Korean War.

Is a Holy War Moral?

Are America and North Korea on a collision course? On what basis can another war on the Korean peninsula be justified? Americans may call it a “just war” or even a “crusade,” But does this mean that God has given them the authority and power to preserve the peace and order of the world, and that they are always doing God’s will, and that the dualistic classification of all things as good or evil is a divine imperative? Yes, another Korean war can be a conflict between good and evil. Nevertheless, would it be moral?

At least in a historical sense, the identification of holy war (religiously motivated) with just war (morally justified) finds little support, and is thus rejected. The Crusades were a failure since they failed to achieve the supposed holy goal. A number of young lives from both sides were sacrificed for nothing because the wars were not holy or moral. If they were, why did they not win the war against evil?

We may conclude that war is a moral option or even the only option we have if we exhaust all the available alternatives to war. Some oppose this idea, saying that war is always a failure no matter what the circumstances are. However, sometimes war could be moral. A war against insane dictators like Hitler is one clear example. Such wars can have positive effects on enhancing human welfare and making the world a better place to live. The reality, however, is that few wars have achieved this end.

We thus need to give peace and diplomatic endeavor many chances before we even think of resorting to a military solution. North Korean leaders want direct talks and a non-aggression treaty with America, probably because they know they are next in line after Iraq. In dealing with Pyongyang, Washington can be confident and flexible, for America is the only remaining superpower that has the means to handle the “hermit kingdom” and to make a “win-win” formula possible. Of course, America’s offer to have multilateral talks is more effective and binding than the bilateral meeting preferred by the North. Perhaps Washington could adopt both approaches to come up with a creative solution, without caving into blackmail or rewarding the North’s belligerent behavior.

Looking anxiously at Iraq’s unfolding story, Kim Jong II may find himself forced to choose between war and peace. His real interest, as he plays “hide and seek” or word games with America and South Korea, seems to be getting as much hard currency as he can, rather than posing an actual threat to his enemies. If this is his real motive, we need to rethink the “evil for evil” policy. A Christian way to deal with evil should be different from Talio’s law,

which regulates the retaliation manner of “eye for eye” (cf. Lev 24:20, Mt 5:38).

We know that George W. Bush cannot give the North infinite opportunities for disarming the nation of nuclear weaponry. However, as a Christian leader he can try to find peaceful alternatives to war. We Koreans eagerly want to see North Korea achieve a soft-landing. In retrospect, Korea was victimized by the ideological conflict of the neighboring superpowers after World War Two. Why should we see this happen again to us? If any force, including the two Koreas and America, should make our country plunge into another fratricidal war and infringe on our precious freedom and rights, we will and should resist such a force with all available effort, for this would be evil.

What if all the non-military ways such as sunshine policy, UN resolution, humanitarian aid, and diplomatic endeavor fail to deter North Korea from its abortive nuclear program? Only then can we invoke economic or military sanctions against it. These would be unbearable for the North, and it would weaken its already ailing economy so decisively that its leaders would be forced to choose between military confrontation and whole compliance with international treaty. Surely North Korea will realize how miserable its situation is, and throw open its doors to the outer world if it is genuinely concerned for its people and future.

It would be hard to accept that Pyongyang is truly unreasonable and oblivious enough to resort to war. Its leaders are well aware of the fact that they can’t avoid the least wanted outcome, complete destruction and obliteration of their nation, if they were to wage war against South Korea and its allies. We need realism here. They have to come to their senses. North Korea cannot and should not wage such a reckless war. It would not dare to do such an evil thing. Thus we had better wait and see with endurance and confidence, doing our best to bring forth the stability of northeastern Asia. But if they should test our capability and readiness, challenge our peace-loving and reasonable stance, and make the first military move, then we certainly would together defend our countries and eventually free North Korea from misery.

It is the belief of this writer, in this sense, that we do not need a pre-emptive strike on the alleged nuclear complex in Yongbyun. Such a strike would hardly meet the traditional Christian criteria of a just war because of the unpredictability of war and the certainty of mass destruction. Our war must be a legitimate self-defense to be moral. It is unjust to attack a country on the basis of the presumption that it might strike another nation in the foreseeable future. ■

An Email From Iraq

Editor's Note: The writer is my former student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He was serving as Youth Minister at FBC Guntersville, Alabama, when his National Guard Unit was activated for duty in Iraq. This recent email was shared by a relative, who is a member of that church.

Hey gang, how is everything on that side of the world?

I hope things are going great. I just got finished with my 10am service and it was awesome. We have a great praise band led by a Major General and they do a great job. This morning I spoke on prayer and boy, do we need that right now.

This last week has been very difficult. Monday two soldiers in my unit were killed. These guys were so young, only 20 & 25. They have only been in Iraq four weeks. I was out at the TMEP (Theatre Mortuary Evacuation Point) for two nights waiting for the "angels" (that is what Marines call their fallen) to arrive. While I was there they brought two other "angels" in from another unit.

As I was helping the mortuary affairs soldiers log in their personal effects, I noticed the picture one was carrying. It was a picture of his two young girls. I broke down, because they looked like my Calynn & Campbell.

Early Thursday morning I did the RAMP (a short service by the chaplain consisting of scripture & prayer, before the "angels" are sent back to the states). The two were escorted home by their best friend, whom the family had requested. As I sat and talked to the friend about his responsibilities and duties as an escort, I thanked God that this wasn't me. This young man has to escort his two best friends bodies home, bury them, and then come back

to the fight. What a heavy burden.

This is the price of freedom! I never really understood that until I came over here. I have already seen things I prayed I never would have to see. I pray God will give me the strength to make it through this war. I have to, because the soldiers look to their Chaplain during these times and I have to stay strong. It is just so hard, because we are human too.

I read Psalm 91 every day and encourage my soldiers to do so as well. It has become known as the soldier's prayer. We need your prayers now more than ever. With the election coming up, we have been told to expect more violence. I know you are praying, because I get your emails. They are so encouraging. I told Lisa that I look forward to them. It is how I make it day by day. Yesterday I got a package from Lisa. It contained a video that she had made of the kids. She also videoed some of the kids at church. It was great. I sat there and watched it three times, wishing I could be there, but knowing that God has me here for a reason.

Well I guess I better close for now. I have just went under 100 days until I get to come home for R & R. I love each one of you and thank you for the prayers. See you in January. ■

Love Greg [Chaplain (Major) Gregory J Long]



Caesar Est Kurios

By Al Staggs, *Chaplain and Performing Artist*
Albuquerque, NM

In this season of remembrance
Of Jesus who was born in Bethlehem
Sons and daughters of Rome
Are being sacrificed to Caesar

To give their lives and futures
For the purposes of the Empire
And to lay waste a land and a people
Already ravaged by poverty.

And all the while the citizens of Rome
Are participating in their annual orgy,
Their liturgy of lights
And their offering of lavish gifts
To bolster the economy of the Empire.

A graven, obscene service of sacrifice it is
Co-opting the meaning of the message of this Jesus
This Prince of Peace
To increase the wealth and power of the Empire
On the backs of those
Who now have no place in the inn
Who are themselves now running from Caesar.

The citizens of Rome are impressive
In their demonstration of homage
To the life of this Jesus
But the place of highest devotion
Has been supplanted by Caesar.

So in this year
In this our land of the Empire
Our gifts, our children and our allegiance to Jesus
Are being sacrificed on the altar of the state
Where Caesar, not Jesus, is Lord. ■

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Mega-Church Burnout

By Clint Rainey, Journalism Student
University of Texas, Austin

“Our studies consistently show that churches base their sense of success on indicators such as attendance, congregant satisfaction, dollars raised and built-out square footage. None of those factors relates to the kind of radical shift in thinking and behavior that Jesus Christ died on the cross to facilitate.”
Pollster George Barna

Forgive the irreverence, but there’s irony in the fact that my 10-year stint inside a local megachurch began in the same decade as the fall of the ‘90s lip-sync imposter band Milli Vanilli.

In a decade—the time it took the country to totally forget those dance-pop boys—my church developed religious Beatlemania and went from a small community of several hundred members to a behemoth megachurch of nearly 10,000.

My generation, the offspring of the megachurch’s most loyal fans, isn’t quite so gripped.

I understand that this thriving model comes from the baby boomers’ rejection of hellfire-preaching ministers who so beleaguered the idea of church that fleeing churchgoers brought their children to megachurches in hopes of saving them from what theirs had become. But we were saved only to be part of a new problem: a church philosophy massive and impersonal in every way.

As megachurches go, ours is the quintessence: a skate park, a sports league with enrollment exceeding the city YMCA’s, a cafe and a game room outfitted with a half-dozen Xboxes. When baptisms take place during the service in the nearby “baptismal sanctuary,” the word “LIVE” appears in the corner of our auditorium’s three Jumbotrons as the event is telecast to us.

All of this, we’ve been reminded interminably, is to “attract seekers.” I’ve grown very disenchanted with this concept. Attract seekers to what? A sanctuary worthy of Broadway production? An auditorium mimicking a convention center? A complex of expensive buildings?

Thumbing through the biblical church model in Acts, I can’t find anything about seeker-friendly buildings. What’s there is a lot about seeker-friendly Christians.

Big numbers and a big building aren’t wrong on their face, but they often accompany bad motives. Case in point: The newest monster of megachurch monsters, Houston’s Lakewood Church, shelled out \$75 million to renovate the NBA arena of the Compaq Center. Lakewood credits much of its success to Pastor Joel Osteen’s New York Times best seller on Christian “self-discovery.”

While many Christian bookstores consider the book a hodgepodge of biblical shallowness and have pulled it, Lakewood is in no hurry to denounce—or even clarify—its pastor’s work after seeing how the feel-good message attracts surface-level seekers. Is it just coincidence that spectators once cheered the Go-Gos and the Rockets in this same building?

Evangelicals should want to attract seekers; that’s what evangelicals do. But most megachurches do this in an impersonal way. Jaded by this philosophy, my generation has seen how being a mile wide and an inch deep allots, unsurprisingly, a whole mile for approximately an inch’s worth of deepness. As my church has grown, so has the frequency of cell phone interruptions and families sneaking out early under cover of the dark movie theater environment.

These churches attract middle-age adults like iron filings. If they can be spiritually filled there, then bully for them. But my generation isn’t in such awe.

Amid a culture inundated with bigness and cellular technology, iPods and TiVo, the technologized megachurch is no longer impressive. In fact, many young Christians come to church to get asylum from this worldliness. Infinitely more than the megachurch’s “stuff,” my generation wants religion. We want everything our parents didn’t, and that seems increasingly to be summed up in the word “meaning.”

Studies say our generation is the most conservative in decades on issues of religion, suggesting we’re averse to the risks that churches with a flashy, pop-culture bent take to appeal, ironically, to us.

So when we grow up, we’ll likely look for religion elsewhere. This leaves the surface-level seekers who are looking to plumb new spiritual depths for the first time, but for whom the church instead wastes time crafting pop culture analogies and brewing espressos, as the meat-and-potatoes churchgoers. They’ll come on Sundays in search of significance and find it in the same place they do the other six days: in “stuff,” in “things.”

(continued on page 16)

Politics and Religion in America

How Did We Get Where We Are?

By R. Hal Ritter, Jr., Licensed Professional Counselor

Waco, TX

What Ronald Reagan did for politics—individual values over social values, evangelical Christianity has done for religion—individual morals over social conscience.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, social concerns were a very present feature in the national consciousness and in public discourse. The writings of Reinhold Niehbur provided careful analyses of how apparently successful societal concerns can be grounded in very dark motives. His writings made public the notions of “institutional evil,” evil that exists in the very systems and processes of public and corporate life.

The struggle for authentic faith was a struggle to “make a difference” in the face of overwhelming forces. For Niehbur, the Christian is called to love, and he argued that love, under the conditions of finitude and brokenness, means striving for justice for those who are victimized by the larger systems of power. Love is justice under the conditions of finitude.

The title of Niehbur’s book, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, conveys a sense of this dilemma. Man—people—struggle to be Christian and do the right thing, even as they live in a society that is immoral and provocative. Thus, the moral person will seek to challenge the structures of the immoral society and bring changes that will empower and encourage those who are disenfranchised and marginalized by racism, materialism, capitalism, ignorance and poverty.

The 1960s and 1970s provided an ongoing public discourse about social change and the need for justice for all people. Examples of this discourse included civil rights, the war on poverty, voting rights, the women’s movement—including an equal rights amendment to the Constitution, although it never did receive enough votes to pass—and war and peace, ending the war in Vietnam. The national conversation remained oriented to society and social change. During this time, Christian ethics also addressed these issues, and Christians were challenged to get involved and think about the laws and issues that shaped the larger society and the world.

Inflation was at 14% per annum, and the American Embassy in Iran was under siege by radical students. Jimmy Carter was President, and for many people his servant leadership style was not robust enough for the political

climate in which he served. When Ronald Reagan became president, the nation seemed to want to go another direction.

Almost single handedly, Ronald Reagan was able to transform the national dialogue from social issues to individual rights. The first politician to really tap into the reservoir of feelings in the religious right, Reagan was able to talk about personal values rather than social change. Many in the religious right believed that social change was carried out by a bunch of wild eyed liberals who completely disregarded the importance of individual change. So, when Reagan began to speak to personal values, he quickly resonated with many of the religious right’s concerns including personal morality, anti-abortion views and pro-business for all to get ahead.

An example of the shift is in tax policy. With social change during the previous decades, taxes were raised in order to provide the resources necessary for the changes to be initiated and sustained. As taxes increased, many believed their taxes were being wasted on unnecessary government programs providing hand outs for people whose hearts and minds needed to be changed first.

Thus, with his individual rights perspective, Reagan shifted the national dialogue away from big government and onto individual responsibility. The following years showed many social programs, initiated in the Lyndon Johnson administration, being reduced or eliminated. By the time of the 2000 election, George W. Bush pushed this individual agenda even further by promoting more tax cuts, individual savings for retirement, opposition to abortion and opposition to gay marriage. Each of these issues, in some way, represented a step toward providing the American people some personal benefit, on an individual level, while reducing or eliminating a sense of concern for the larger welfare of the society.

In these years, there was a clear shift from societal values such as education, civil rights, war and peace, poverty and health care to individuals being promised that they can keep more of their own paycheck. No longer is tax money viewed as a way of improving the social conditions for many Americans, but it is now viewed as wasted money that individuals should keep and use as they see fit. In its

primary form, it is an appeal to basic greed.

During this same time, churches went through a similar shift in their understanding of values. No longer are prophets and preachers speaking out against an unjust war in Iraq that is killing thousands of non combatant civilians. But rather, the evangelical voices are promoting the view that the war in Iraq is righteous and just, and meets all of the criteria of St. Augustine's just war theory. In education, the No Child Left Behind legislation has not been funded adequately, and yet, President Bush claims to be the "Education President" who is reinventing the educational process for children. And while fewer and fewer Americans are covered by minimal or adequate health insurance, the actual costs for even limited health care continue to increase faster than inflation.

A very complicated issue, that continues to empower the religious right, is the discussion regarding what is called, "family values." For traditional marriages, rates are declining as more heterosexual couples are choosing to simply cohabit, while the one group that wants to get married, the homosexuals, cannot. However, the real threat to America and American family values is not from homosexuals who want to live in committed, monogamous relationships, but, rather, it is the increased rate of heterosexual cohabitation, along with the high rate of divorce and the increased number of children being reared in single parent households. Like the issue of war and peace, the preaching from the pulpit no longer challenges the immorality of divorce, partially because many in congregational leadership have themselves been divorced.

The voices for social change in churches have been nearly silenced, as sermons have returned to individual issues and salvation and character. In the 1980s, Stanley Hauerwas, an ethicist at Notre Dame and now at Duke University, began writing about ethics as personal character. No longer was ethics about society and change, as it was for Niehbur. Now, ethics is about individual character formation, personal virtues. Social ethics is no longer about society, but about individual Christians and their dealings within the community of faith.

In this regard, political discourse and religious discourse have both migrated from the themes of social change to

the themes of individual rights and responsibilities. Lower the taxes; reduce the government. Grow your life in the church; let the church be the sphere for ethics.

One of Hauerwas' books, *A Community of Character*, says that the ethical question for decision making is how the decision reflects the character of the church of which one is a part. As the church makes various decisions, the question is, "What kind of people will we be for the decisions that we make?" It is not about changing society, but it is about minding our own character and identity. The primary society, of which the Christian is concerned, is the church community.

This shift of the national and religious conversation from society and social issues to the individual and personal responsibility is an important corrective. But it is not the final resting place. Like Hegel's historical dialectic, a new synthesis can emerge which says that both are needed for society to be for all people. The church cannot remake the state in Christ's image—a "Christian nation," but the church cannot withdraw from the world as an alternative society where people only care for one another.

Orlando Costas wrote a book in the 1970s titled, *Church Growth: A Shattering Critique from the Third World*. In that text, Costas says that the church grows in numbers through evangelism, baptisms and even financially, and it grows in discipleship by education. But Costas then says the church also grows incarnationally, that is, in how it incarnates itself and becomes the body of Christ in the community where it lives. As an intentional community, the church establishes itself as a community of concern for others. How does the community view the church? What kind of reputation does the church have? How do those outside the church view the church? Is it viewed as a place for people? Is it viewed as elitist? Is the church for the down and out, or only for the up and out? For Costas, how the church incarnates itself is a critical measure of whether, or how, it is growing.

To only grow numerically, by gathering in individuals without also incarnating itself in the community, is a superficial view of growth based in social Darwinism. Seduced by the capitalist view of bigger and better, the lack of incarnation makes the church look more like a commer-



cial enterprise than the body of Christ in the world. And viewed from the perspective of American pragmatism, if the church is growing in numbers and getting bigger, then God must be the force behind it. Numerous evangelicals, as well as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the Mormons, have used this logic of pragmatism—bigger is God at work.

Somehow, the voices of Niehbur and Hauerwas and Costas all have something to say to who the church is today. The church is a community of character and Christian nurture, in an immoral society that needs to be challenged and changed, and change comes through incarnational growth and putting down roots and presence in the communities where the character of the church is the body of Christ in the world. The world may not accept the church or its message, but the world cannot ignore the church which constantly challenges the decisions of a society that directly affect the lives of all of its citizens.

For the Christian, it is a dialectical relationship that Paul Tillich viewed as “individualization and participation.” These two dialectical points are constantly at work in the life of the Christian, and in the incarnated life of the church in the world. Each church community, made up of individual Christians, confronts the realities of power and evil, as well as personal integrity and identity. It is the life of Christ that confronts the attitudes and structures that seek to prevent, seduce and thwart the Word being made flesh.

In Romans 8, the Apostle Paul says that the power of the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is now at work “in your mortal bodies.” The life and power of God, in the world both in individual Christians as well as in churches, stand in the dialectal relationship of individualization and participation. It is a vision that the church can claim from Jesus as it seeks to bring the body of Christ into the twenty first century, and into a post modern world that often ignores the voices of the church as largely irrelevant.

Who are these people? Who are these Christians? Who are these followers of the Way? And what is their agenda? Why are they turning the world upside down? ■

Mega-Church Burnout

(continued from page 13)

In Europe, mass religious apostasy left its churches people free, but the American megachurch could bring this irony: We, unlike the Europeans, have people in our big, empty churches. ■

Solstice

(continued from page 29)

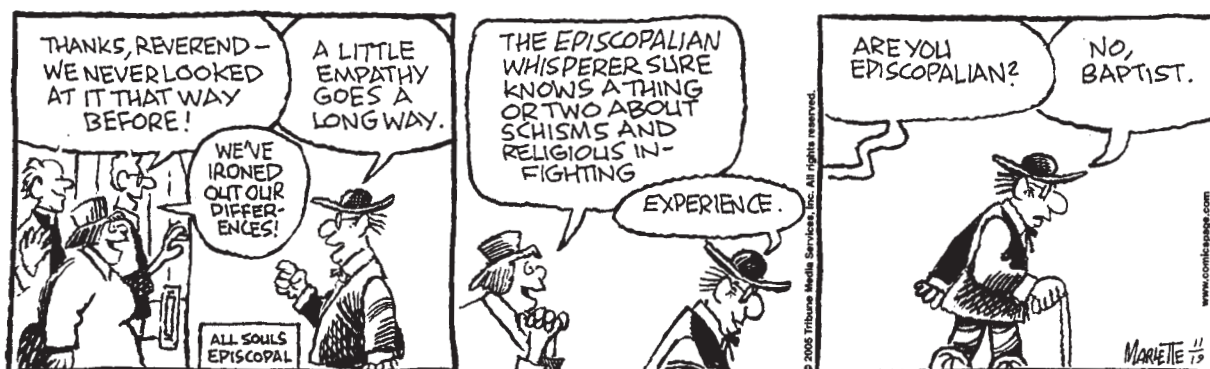
about the solstices. Still, without benefit of a graduate degree in astronomy, we can celebrate the handiwork of God in fixing the solstices as he has done; and we can celebrate the hard work of scientists in trying to help us understand the general workings of the system.

At this special season, then, consider a couple of closing thoughts.

Celebrate the solstice. It's Creator has given humanity a fantastic gift. To this gift we have attached all manner of accouterments and appendages which we do not necessarily have to reject or even complain about and, indeed, to which we may rightly say a joyous YES: Christmas trees, colored lights, fruitcakes, fireworks, roast turkeys and figgy puddings, peppermint candy, roaring fires, and Santa's ubiquitous Ho-Ho-Hos.

Focus on the incarnation of God in Christ Jesus. In Christ Jesus, God means to be reconciling the world to himself. Dayspring from on high has visited us. Humanity itself has been touched with a miracle. It is the miracle of redemption, of new heavens and a new earth. So, at this solstice season, “Remember Jesus Christ” and mind him.

Merry Christmas. ■



Samuel's Gift: A Christmas Story

By Hal Haralson, Austin, TX

The old man with a white beard sat out on a rock and looked at the children around his feet. His story began:

"My name is Samuel. I was born many years ago when my father and his two brothers raised sheep on this hillside. I had four cousins who helped with the sheep. When I was a boy, I could not walk. I was born with a withered leg.

One day my father brought me a crutch. It was made from the fork of a tree limb. I could raise myself and follow my cousins as they tended the flock of sheep. I was always behind because I could not go as fast as they could. So it became my job to watch after the sheep when they bedded down at night.

There was a full moon that night as I sat on a rock watching the sheep. My father and the others were sleeping near the campfire. It was cold. We had blankets made from the wool of the sheep we raised.

The tinkle of the bell was less frequent now. That meant that the old ewe who was the flock leader was settling down for the night.

A baby lamb—only one day old—was going 'Baa-Baa.' It had lost its mother. The sound stopped as it found her and nuzzled the soft nipple and felt the warm milk in its mouth. Its tail—almost twelve inches long—wiggled, signaling, 'All is well.'

A strange looking lamb nuzzled its mother. He had the skin of a dead lamb on his body. His mother had died giving birth to this orphan lamb. A ewe whose baby died in childbirth accepted the orphan lamb with the skin her dead lamb draped across the back of the orphan lamb.

During the night a bright star appeared. My father and uncles were awakened by a voice. An angel said: 'Tonight there is born in the city of Bethlehem a Savior which is Christ the Lord.'

The shepherds said one to another, 'Let us go into the city of Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass which the Lord has made known to us.'

'But who will take care of the sheep?' 'Leave Samuel, he can't keep up with us anyway.'

As the glow of the sun began to lighten the sky, I heard the voices of my uncles and cousins returning from Bethlehem.

The shepherds were excited. They had found a baby in a manger in Bethlehem. He was tucked in a bed of straw with his mother who was peacefully allowing him to nurse.

'Go home, Samuel, you have been up all night with the sheep.'

I pulled up on my crutch and started for home. The star was still there and I followed it instead of going home.

Just as I turned a corner I was amazed to see three large animals in front of a barn. They were camels. I watched as three men dressed in colorful robes and headbands dismounted and went into the barn. Each placed a beautifully wrapped gift in front of the feed trough where the baby lay.

I waited and then hobbled through the door being very quiet. I got to where I could see the baby and his mother. It was just as my cousins had described it.

These fancy dressed men presented their gifts to the Christ Child and turned to leave. I wanted so badly to have a gift to give to him. Then I said to myself, 'I do have a gift. I will give him my most precious possession.'

I dropped to my knees and placed my crutch beside the manger bed. My heart was filled with joy. I stayed and looked at the sweet baby for a long time.

Finally I turned and began to crawl away from the baby. Something happened! Something very wonderful!

My leg—the one that had been twisted since I was born—was straight like my other leg. Slowly I rose to my feet and took a step. Then I took another one.

I was walking for the first time in my life." ■

© 2005 This Christmas story is original with the author; any similarity to others is coincidental.

Communism, Capitalism, and Christian Community

*James P. Danaher, Professor of Philosophy and Department Head
Nyack College, Nyack, NY*

In heaven there will be no partition of goods. Greed and self-interest will be no more, and true community will prevail. In David Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, he says that in such a paradise every virtue will flourish except justice and respect for individual property.

It seems evident, that, in such a happy state, every other social virtue would flourish, and receive tenfold increase; but the cautious, jealous virtue of justice, would never once have been dreamt of. For what purpose make a partition of goods, where every one has already more than enough?¹

Hume points out that in both circumstances of great abundance and great privation, property rights are none existent. When there is great abundance, if someone should take the apple from my hand, I simply pick another. Likewise, when there is great scarcity, the fact that the apple is in my hand does not stop another from taking it from me in order to survive. It is only in this middle realm between heaven and hell where money and private property have any meaning.

Communism (as a practice of economic sharing within a community) is certainly the ideal for Christians. It is that heavenly state toward which we aspire. Of course, we find ourselves in a state very different from that. True, some Christians have tried to produce such communities in this here and now. First-century Christians, as well as some saints in later ages, chose to live, not in this middle realm, but as close as possible to God's kingdom. In the book of Acts we are told that the early Christians "had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need (Acts 2:45)." It seems that shortly after believers were filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the early Christians practiced a form of communism. They seem to have taken Jesus' command literally when he said, "go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor" (Mt 19:21). But was this "communism" the biblical prescription for all Christians to follow?

Some have tried to argue that market capitalism and private property have always been the scriptural ideal. They argue that it was a mistake for the early church to practice communism and that such a practice led to an economic disaster in Jerusalem. Paul does mention sending money back to Jerusalem for the poor (Acts 24:17).

The argument is that the reason there were poor in Jerusalem was because of their less than prudent practice of communism. Such an interpretation is hard to accept, however, given the fact that the mention of this common life comes immediately after, and seemingly as a consequence of, being filled with the Holy Spirit.

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions were his own, but they shared everything they had (Acts 4:31-32).

Even if it were true that their communism was less than prudent it does seem to be something that was led by the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the Holy Spirit's leading which caused them to proclaim "the word of God boldly" may not have been prudent either. It led to some of them being martyred. Certainly prudence was not what motivated them to follow the Holy Spirit's leading. Rather their natural inclination of placing self-interest above the interest of others seems to have been overcome by a love for their brethren and a desire to live as close as possible to the kingdom of God.

The President of the college where I teach commented some time ago that the reason we are into diversity is not because it is an "in thing." The reason for being into diversity is because someday we will sit down at the marriage supper of the lamb, and at that feast there will be people of every race, ethnic group, and intelligence level. That will be the nature of kingdom-living, and therefore we should now want to live as close to that as possible. The same is true concerning private property, and this seems to have been what motivated the early Christians to have all things in common. They sought to live as close to God's kingdom as possible. Of course, such a saintly ideal is highly impractical and most of us cannot imagine how such a prescription could be applied apart from small groups of monastics or other Christian sects.

If we live in the larger world, how can we disregard our own private interest in order to live on such a common level? Indeed, it may not be possible. Given the reality of a capitalist economic system and the dominant place it now occupies in the world, we may be forced to participate in it in spite of its inherently evil traits. What we cannot do, however, is applaud such a system and claim that it is compatible with the ideals of Christianity. Capitalism

is rooted in greed and self-interest, which are antithetical to the Christian ideal of community. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith says, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love."²

Capitalism tells us that if we have a need, we do not have to put our hope in the benevolence of others. Instead, we can trust that human greed and self-interest will rush to meet our need at a substantial profit to the one who supplies that need. Rather than having our needs met through the love of others, the market quite neatly meets our needs out of self-love. Christian love for ones neighbor is certainly not as dependable as the love of self upon which market principles are based.

In the market, if the price of an item increases, our greed drives us to enter the market and supply the public with that item for which they are willing to pay such a high price (the law of supply). Likewise, as the price decreases, it is again self-interest that causes us to enter the market, this time as a greedy purchaser eager to take advantage of the lower price (the law of demand). The same greed and self-interest that lies behind these laws of the market also cause competition in order that ever better products are offered for cheaper prices. It is a rather nifty system, and as recent history bears out, it seems to have fared better than communism, which placed its ill-fated hope in human benevolence. What it is not, however, is the Christian ideal.

Of course, many have tried to make it the Christian ideal. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*,³ Max Weber says that the protestant work ethic was what gave rise to capitalism since the protestant work ethic stressed hard work and the avoidance of worldly goods. If one works hard and spends little on worldly goods, surplus or capital naturally begins to accumulate. Thus, capital is not merely a sign of wealth and power but a sign of godliness as well. This unholy union of Protestantism and capital allows the capitalist to see herself as holy as well as rich and powerful. Furthermore, if wealth is a sign of godliness, poverty must be the result of sin, particularly the sin of

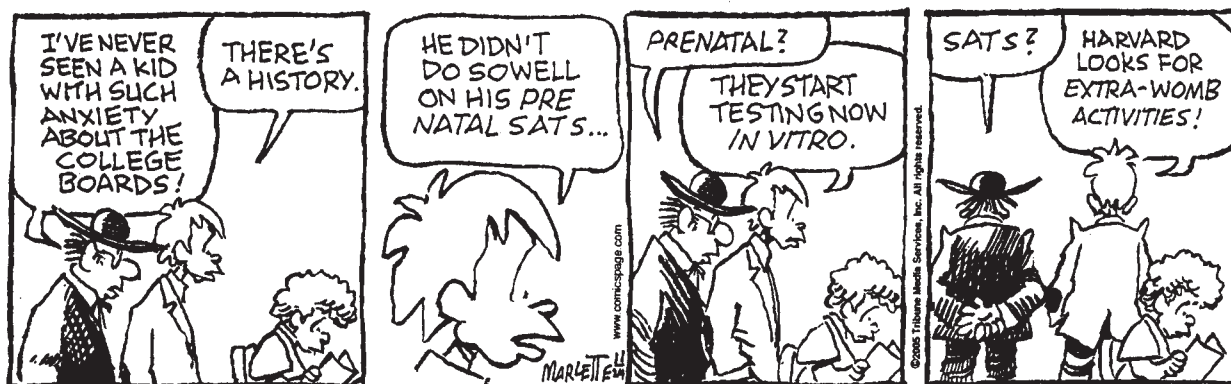
either not working hard enough or loving worldly goods too much. I recall a very well-known Christian minister saying on the radio that "the worst message the poor in this country ever got was that poverty was not their fault." He went on to say, "poverty is the fault of the poor." Of course, that is like blaming slavery on the slave. Children are born into poverty just as slaves were born into slavery. More importantly, however, such a position undermines the Christian ideal of disregarding our self-interest and giving to the poor (Mt. 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 18:22).

The point of Christian conversion and transformation is to make us into a people who are full of love and compassion for other sinners because we have experienced love and compassion in the midst of our sin, whatever it might be. We lose our love and compassion when we no longer see ourselves as sinners and begin to call our sin, virtue.

That was the sin of the religious people in Jesus' day. They thought that they were good people, and that God loved them, not because of his mercy, but because of their sinlessness. Their sin was a lack of love and compassion for others who they saw as sinners and very different from themselves. The Gospel is all about the forgiveness of sins, but we must not call our sin, virtue. We cannot, like those religious people, see our lack of love and compassion as the product of our righteousness. Many of us do just that.

It is very easy to fall into a religious mode if we make the protestant work ethic a central part of our Christianity. Such an ethic can cause us to think that we have a right to our enormous surplus, and that those in need are in such a position because of their sin. Thus, we become a people who are quick to religiously point out the sins of others but fail to see our own lack of love and compassion as sin. Like those religious people in Jesus day, we think our sin is in fact virtue, and so we respond with pride rather than contrition.

Certainly there are good arguments to defend capitalism and its principles, just as there are good arguments to defend a woman's legal right to abortion. It is certainly possible to argue for a woman's right to abortion on the basis of political equality and the fact that it is unjust to have laws that are not universal but only apply to one segment of the population. That is certainly a defensible



argument, but it would be absurd to argue that political equality was a Christian ideal more important than the life of another.

Abortion, in most cases, is motivated by self-interest, and self-interest runs contrary to the ultimate ideal of Christian morality. It is self-interest that keeps us from the ultimate Christian ideal that we see in the Mother Teresas of the world. This is the real sin that keeps us from the fullness of life that God has for us, and this is what lies at the base of both abortion and capitalism. Certainly arguments can be made to defend both, but we cannot pretend that such arguments are based upon the ideals of the Christian saint.

Surely, an amount of self-interest is necessary for survival and basic well-being. The hero and the saint, however, come to represent the ideal for the human condition through a disregard for self. It is their concern for others above themselves that makes them the hero or saint. Of course, such people are not very practical. It was certainly not practical for the Christians martyrs of the early church to do what they did, but we continue to see their action as heroic and saintly. By contrast, however, many who admired those early Christian martyrs scoff at the communism of the early Christians. It would seem that the only reason for distinguishing between martyrdom and communism is that martyrdom is not a real possibility that we might face, while a lack of regard for our own private property is something we face daily.

Clearly, the Christian ideal is to live as close as possible to God's kingdom now. This is the manner of the saint, who lives out the Christian ideal with a general disregard for her own private interest and property in spite of how impractical that may be. But what are the rest of us to do, if we fall short of that ideal, but still aspire to the Christian life? Indeed, for most of us, the Christian ideal might be an impossible one. The good news, however, is that the Christian life is all about repentance and forgiveness.

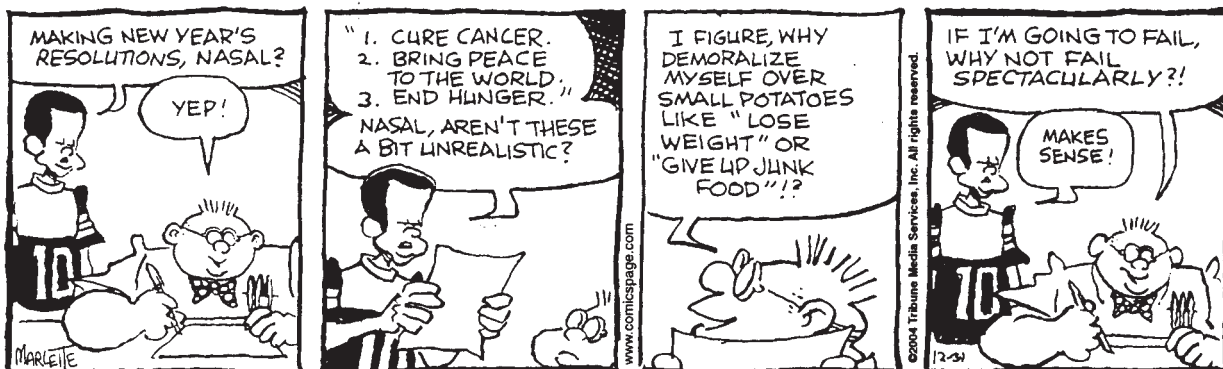
The situation seems analogous to a Christian position on violence and war. We live in a world where violence and war may at times be necessary in order to keep our wives from being raped or our children killed, but violence and war are nevertheless moral evils that we cannot glorify or praise as somehow Christian. Violence and war, although

inescapable at times, must be something that Christians treat with contrition and repentance. Repentance and forgiveness are keys to the Christian life. God's forgiveness is readily available to those who repent, but repentance is required. The religious people in Jesus day saw no need for repentance, and we fall into a similar situation when we think that there is no need to treat our violence with contrition, since it was for what we consider a good cause. Equally, we find ourselves in a similar situation when we think that putting self-interest above the interest of others does not require a similar contrition.

Jesus' teachings from the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere should make us aware that we are in an almost constant need for forgiveness and therefore repentance. Our sin is that we are not following Jesus as we ought. Sin is not a problem since Christianity is all about the forgiveness of sin, but we must acknowledge our sin and not call it virtue.

We do just that when we praise our present socio-economic system and claim that such a system based on greed and self-interest is Christian. The fact that most find such a system unavoidable does not make it anymore compatible with the Gospel, and our response to it should be one of contrition. We live in a world where self-interest is the guiding principle and we may have to tolerate that and even conduct ourselves at times according to it. What we cannot do, however, is praise it. Of course, we often do just that. Instead of responding in humility and contrition for our failure to live in the fullness of what Jesus calls us to, we point out how impractical communism is and applaud capitalism for its efficiency. We excuse our sin and claim that it is no sin at all but rather a virtue. ■

- 1 Hume, David. *An Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*. Ed. Ralph Cohen. *The Essential Works of David Hume*. New York: Bantam Books, 1965, p. 190.
- 2 Smith, Adam. *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of The Wealth of Nations*. (New York: The Modern Library 1937), p. 14.
- 3 Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Trans. Talcott Parsons. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.



I Learned My Ethics in Sunday School

By Norman A. Bert, Ph.D., Professor

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I grew up in the 1940s and 1950s in a Brethren In Christ congregation in southern California. As part of the Mennonite family, Brethren In Christ churches were clearly *out* of the main stream of American culture. We were few in number, puritan in our ethic, austere in our life style, and “plain” in our attire. I didn’t much like my minority, sub-culture identity. I felt *different* in the worst sense—weak and foolish. I felt like I didn’t belong. But everything I learned from my parents, my church, and my Sunday school told me this narrow way of life was the right way.

Now, as a liberal, democratic Christian, I feel like I’m in the minority again. I feel side-lined, un-empowered, depressed. I’m fighting major temptations—the undertow pulling me toward the depths of atrophying depression, or again, the lure of immersing myself in enjoyable pastimes while telling myself the big battles don’t matter so much after all. At other moments, the opposite temptation reaches out for me, the Siren call to lay aside my true values, only temporarily of course, in order to adopt the methods of power—falsehood and violence—and thereby wreak some kind of victory: Isn’t a pyrrhic victory preferable to principled defeat? Nor do I slog through this Slough of Despond alone. Through the mists, beneath the taunts and boasts of victorious conservatives, I hear similar whimpers from other lost pilgrims who share my religious and political viewpoints.

It’s a shock to be back in the minority. The shock sends me back to my roots. I’m thinking a lot these days about what I learned as a child in Sunday School. If there’s anything the Brethren In Christ were *not*, it was liberal or radical. But as I think about it, the lessons I learned in my conservative Sunday School classes can sustain me as I reach for progressive ideals. Here are ethical precepts I learned in my youth that are helping me now.

Fearlessly speak the truth to Power. Almost every story I learned in Sunday school involved some biblical hero speaking out against the powers that be. Moses, Elijah, Daniel and the other prophets in the First Testament; in the New Testament John the Baptist, Peter and James, Stephen and Paul, and of course Jesus—all of these fearlessly challenged the actions and policies of the ruling authorities, sometimes with success, sometimes not, frequently at great personal cost, but always with God’s

blessing. In maturity, I began to realize the centrality of the spoken word in the old stories as well as in the important actions of subsequent heroes such as the Anabaptists, the Quakers, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and others. These people opposed hostile authorities with their voices and backed up their words, not with violence but with symbolic actions and their willingness to suffer. They were, in other words, witnesses or, in New Testament Greek, *marturoi*—martyrs. And far from being cheap talk or empty rhetoric, the oral and written testimonies of these prophets established the freedoms we most value today. In the present situation, when conservative forces vaunt their power and threaten to drag America back into a medieval theocracy that masks the demonic domination of the power elite, now I remember that I must speak. I must not permit my apathy or my fears or my sense of futility to silence me. I must find a voice. I must speak the word of truth to the Powers. Now I remember that the *word* is sharper and more powerful than any sword.

Always tell the truth. As with all middle-class kids in the ‘40s and ‘50s, I had honesty drummed into me. The lessons started with the Ninth Commandment, “Thou shalt not bear false witness,” and the proverb “Honesty is the best policy.” They continued with the story of Ananias and Sapphira who were struck dead for lying about money, the stories of George Washington and the cherry tree, Honest Abe, and many more. As I grew up, I discovered that truth can be elusive, that there are many shadings between the poles of honesty and falsehood. I became disillusioned, even cynical as I watched icon after icon—businessmen, physicians, clergymen, Presidents—lie, cheat, cover up, “misinform.” Over the last decade I watched as one President was impeached for a fib about an affair while his successor was reelected after leading the country into a military morass on the basis of massive falsifications perpetrated all the way up to the world’s highest court. But I may have learned the most important lesson about honesty in Quaker meeting: Never, never lie to yourself; when you do, you weaken your ability to hear God’s voice. In Quaker meeting, I sit in silence, expecting to hear the voice of God. I’m still not sure I can distinguish between my own inclinations and the divine word, but I know that if I don’t strictly practice complete honesty—with others, but especially with myself—I’ll never

be able to tell the difference. My conscience is the voice of God, and if I corrupt it with lies, I'm lost. So I seek, with all the honesty I can muster, to face my own shortcomings, my own mixed motives. And it's devilishly hard to be honest with myself while lying to others. I remember that the Bible characterizes Satan as the father of lies; that memory clarifies for me the lineage of those who deal in falsehood.

Connect with tradition and seek out its best principles. As a child, I learned that my tradition began with the biblical community—the people of the First Century and New Testaments. I learned that this tradition had been communicated to me by “peculiar” people—the pacifist plain people like the Mennonites, the River Brethren, and American frontier revivalists. Later in life I learned that, while some of my ancestors had been Anabaptists and therefore harassed as heretics, others had been Waldensians, another persecuted sect. I realize now that by birth and by choice I am attached to traditions of heresy and dissent—traditions which, while rejected and attacked at their beginnings have since been recognized as important forerunners of Protestantism and religious liberty. Connecting with these traditions gives me a sense of who I am, what I need to do, and what kind of response to expect from those who are orthodox, normal, and in the majority.

Identify and emulate heroes. In my childhood, the heroes most consistently held up for my admiration were the Bible figures—people like David, Ruth, Peter, Paul and Jesus. These heroes were as real and important to me as George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. I learned to admire my heroes' strengths and to avoid their sins and mistakes. Later I added others to this pantheon—Anabaptist leaders and martyrs like Menno Simons and Conrad Grebel, Quaker seers and abolitionists like George Fox and John Woolman, and American prophets and martyrs like Susan B. Anthony and Martin Luther King, Jr. I also learned that most of the great religious and humanitarian heroes were in the minority and many were considered foolish, wrong, even evil. Now they are revered. They began as little people, common people, and they ended up making a huge difference. Remembering these heroes inspires me and reminds me that the road traveled by pilgrims is rarely smooth, crowded, or easy.

Don't be co-opted by the current communities of power. While still a child I realized that, although my parents voted, many of my ancestors and others in the church did not. In the traditions of my church, the political process belonged to The World, a system hostile to God's church. I didn't know anyone who actively participated in politics, and it came as a shock to me when one of our church members got himself elected as mayor. Somehow, participating in politics seemed wrong. As an adult, I've dabbled in party politics, but these activities have always reaffirmed for me that, as institutions, political parties seek power for their own self-preservation and

self-aggrandizement. Those who serve these parties all-too-frequently end up sacrificing their values for those of the parties. Remembering the ambiguous lessons of my youth about politics clarifies for me that, even while I work within a party, I must remember that my true allegiances lie outside and above these power structures. Means to ends, parties and political factions must never become ends in themselves.

Embrace minority status. The Brethren in Christ, who numbered only about 10,000 in the middle of the twentieth century, rejected the idea that their tiny numbers indicated weakness or error. In Sunday school, church, and my home I learned that, in terms of morality and religion, very few ever “got it right.” The Hebrew prophets, Jesus, the Twelve Disciples, and the early Christians were all rejected by the majority. Later on, I learned that the concept of the righteous remnant held a respected place in Christian theological discourse. I came to realize that “the majority rules” has never applied to morality. Of course, along with minority status came negative labels created by the majority in order to denigrate the un-empowered. But names intended to belittle minority groups—“Christian,” “Anabaptist,” “Methodist,” “Quaker”—have become badges of honor and respect. These days I'm remembering not to be surprised when I'm at odds with “the main stream” who claim to be the true Christians, the real Americans, *the* advocates of values, the moral majority. I remember that the Romans called the early Christians atheists and persecuted them for being impious, creators of chaos, traitors against the state, outlaws, criminals. I remember Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount: “The gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Mt 7:13, 14).

Stay on guard for attacks; develop an ear for falsehoods. The words of one of the hymns we sang summed up the suspicion we Brethren in Christ held toward the surrounding culture:

Are there no foes for me to face?
Must I not stem the flood?
Is this vile world a friend to grace,
to help me on to God? (Isaac Watts)

As a child, I knew that the answer to the first two rhetorical questions in these lines was “yes!” and the answer to the final one was “no!” The hymn and the viewpoint it reinforced taught us that, not only was the surrounding culture hostile to God's way and God's people, but it also possessed a mesmerizing ability to cloak its hostility and seduce us. It became incumbent on us, then, to stay alert to goings-on in the world around us so that we would not be sucked in. In later years I learned more about systemic evil from people as varied as Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder, Marxist playwright Bertolt Brecht, and American auteur Michael Moore. Now thinking back to the teachings of my youth reminds me that I have a

spiritual duty to read the newspaper daily while praying for vision to see clearly through the smoke screens put up by the hostile forces that govern “this vile world” in which I live.

Hold authorities in respect but also in suspicion.

Sunday school taught me paradoxical lessons about authority. On the one hand, I learned that I should respect and obey our governmental leaders; as Paul’s letter to the Romans said, “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for . . . those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. . . . For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad” (13:1, 3). On the other hand, I knew that in story after biblical story, governmental powers had indeed terrorized good people. These powers enslaved the Hebrews, killed the prophets, persecuted the church, and even killed Paul himself. And most centrally, religious leaders had forged an alliance with political powers to crucify Jesus. As I grew older, the civil rights struggles and the Vietnam War controversy brought this biblical paradox into my immediate world. I even witnessed Billy Graham, an icon of my youth, blessing the most pernicious of our politicians and supporting their policies. Now, as I again watch the same alliance of religious and political leaders that killed Jesus and the prophets, I remember the lessons of my youth: While I am called upon to respect and pray for those in positions of authority, I must always remember that they are politicians, and as such they tend always to value their own power and success over truth, goodness, and the Higher Law.

Respect the Law. I learned—primarily though the example of my family—to obey the laws. I don’t remember my parents ever getting so much as a traffic ticket. I do remember my uncle, in charge of the family business, firmly rejecting the accountant’s advice to use some questionable practices in order to save on taxes. Yet I also learned that, when laws violate one’s conscience—when they conflict with the Higher Law—they should be disobeyed. Amongst my heroes was Ernest Swalm, a Canadian Brethren in Christ bishop who, as a young man during the first World War, went to prison rather than violate his pacifist beliefs. As I grew older, I came to understand that this selective obedience to the law carried a social responsibility; it wasn’t just a matter of keeping one’s own conscience clean. It became clear to me that, when one must practice civil disobedience, one should do it publicly, as a witness, and one should be prepared to accept the penalties that come as a consequence. Now I am shocked at the scoff-law attitudes of fellow Christians who joke about breaking traffic laws. Conversely, I respect people who openly violate laws they believe to be unjust. Today I respect laws that provide safety and support for all, and I deplore laws made to sustain the powerful at the expense of the poor.

Refuse to use bad means to attain good ends. As a child, I learned that it’s never right to do wrong. I learned that good ends don’t justify bad means because, as far as *my* action is concerned, it’s all *about* the means. I learned that

we have no control over the future results of our actions, but we do have everything to say about our present behaviors. *Right* action is better than *effective* action. The future, the outcomes—these are in God’s hands. In particular I have learned that I must refuse to use the weapons of power—specifically falsehood and violence. These weapons always corrupt the ones who wield them. What good is it to fight the forces of evil if, in the process, we become evil ourselves? Or as one of our memory verses put it, “For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?” (Lk 9:25)

Look beyond defeats. As a measure of the importance assigned to good means, I was taught actually to value apparent defeats. This lesson was communicated to me through teachings such as Jesus’ words, “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (Jn 12:24). The lesson was also imbedded in dozens of Biblical stories—Lot and Abraham, Samson and the Philistines, Joseph and his brothers, Paul and the Philippians, Stephen the martyr, and above all the crucifixion of Jesus. As an adult, I learned from John Howard Yoder that the one way in which God’s people are called to imitate Jesus is taking up our crosses and following him. Now I remind myself that it’s not about winning battles; it’s about winning the war. In the war for goodness, defeats inevitably lead to victories. I remember to reject despair over apparent failures. I remember to commit to hope.

Keep spiritual values elevated over material ones. The second-hardest lesson my early training tried to instill in me was subordinating material values to spiritual ones. The teachings, based solidly on the New Testament, were clear. Jesus said, “You cannot serve God and mammon,” and even as a child I knew that “mammon” was more than money, that “mammon” summarized the whole system of accumulating, enjoying, and hanging on to “stuff.” I understood the temptations of possessions and the threat that possessions posed to keeping spiritual values in their proper, superior place. But deeply committed as my family and teachers were to these New Testament principles, they were also middle-class businessmen with incredible work ethics who spent most of their time and energies accumulating money—money to provide security for the family, money to further the work of the church, money as a measure of personal worth. These ambiguities created in me a deep suspicion of the acquisitive principle that drives American life. The vast majority of Americans respond deeply when politicians join hands with mammon: “Are you better off than you were four years ago?” Americans’ worship of mammon has driven tax cut after tax cut until the poor have been squeezed out of the meager sustenance a more responsible government once provided. Of all the vaunted “values” of conservatism, the king virtue—the one that rules all others, the one for which all other values, if push came to shove, would finally be sacrificed—is the virtue of accumulating and hanging on to wealth. The

inalienable right to the pursuit of happiness has become the absolute right to serve mammon. But I hear Jesus' voice, and I determine anew to keep my priorities straight, to resist the constant voices assuring me that I *deserve* to pamper myself. I resolve anew to question politicians when they appeal to my most selfish instincts. I resolve to hold the needs of the poor over my own desires for stuff.

Love your enemies. But of all the lessons my early teachers attempted to instill in me, by far the hardest to absorb was Jesus' teaching that his followers should love their enemies. It helped a bit to understand that "love" didn't mean "like"; loving my enemies wasn't a matter of feeling affection for them. But it didn't help to understand that loving my enemies meant seeking their welfare, having their best interests at heart. Hard or not, the teaching was clear: If I was going to consider myself a Christian, I had to love my enemies. As I matured, I noticed that others also found it hard to obey Jesus' Law of Love. People tried all sorts of intellectual gymnastics to weasel out from its implications. They usually managed to convince themselves that they could somehow love their enemies while denigrating them and then slaughtering them. They convinced themselves, but much as I wanted to agree, they never quite convinced me. Young or mature, I just could never quite adopt the casuistry involved in reaching that conclusion. Perhaps the most help I've found in my attempts to obey the Law of Love is Quaker founder George Fox's counsel to "seek out and answer to that of God in every person." I try to do this, to find the best in all people, including my enemies, and to reinforce it. Loving my enemies is still a struggle; it's just so satisfying to indulge myself in really deep hatred. But I remind myself that stimulating hatred is the tool of power, the tool of conservatism, the tool of Satan, and I turn away from it, turn my face to Jesus, and determine anew to love my enemies.

Practice radical democracy. As a school child in America in the '40s and '50s, I learned that God created all men equal, and I understood that "men" in this sense included women as well. As I passed from adolescence to young adulthood in the early '60s, I watched as the implications of democracy drove the civil rights movement. I noticed that, in order to enfranchise the un-empowered,

it became necessary to curtail what the powerful had previously considered to be their own rights. This observation fit with what I was noticing about the Bible—that both Testaments favored the poor and weak over the rich and powerful. Jesus' teachings—"Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled . . . But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation" (Lk 6:21, 24)—put him in the center of the biblical tradition and also made him one of the foundations of modern democracy. Nowadays I remember that, in order to be both a true Christian and also a real American, I must favor the needs of the weak and poor over the prerogatives of the powerful and rich. And in an America that parades its morality and values, I realize that how we handle power, how we stand on the side of the weak, the poor, the downtrodden, the powerless, the disenfranchised—this is far more important than sexual mores and Puritanical life-styles. I remind myself that at the Last Judgment, conservative goats who cut taxes by diminishing the health and education benefits of the poor are going to end up in "the fire prepared for the devil and his angels," no matter how loudly they bleat about their moral purity (Mt 25:31-46).

These lessons that I learned in my youth come back to me now. They are minority values, underdog viewpoints, principles of the righteous remnant. They're also family values—not the neo-cons' so-called family values, those ersatz throw-backs to nostalgic beliefs that never really existed at any time or place but that appeal to the masses who, having lost their way, are willing to hitch a ride with any grinning motorist that stops to give them a lift. No, these are real family values. I learned them from my family gathered around the family altar, around the table at the family Christmas dinner, on the beach during family outings, in the family pew on Sunday morning. These values have the power to create a family from the human masses shredded by the divisive policies of conservatism. These days these family values, these radical lessons I learned in Sunday school, lift me out of my despair. They keep me from passive aggression. They energize my soul, channel my anger, strengthen my resolve. They remind me who I am, where I came from, where I'm going. I won't forget them again. ■



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Lessons from a Hurricane

By Dee Miller, Psychosocial Nurse and Writer,
Council Bluffs, Iowa

As I watched the bumper-to-bumper traffic streaming out of the city of New Orleans just two weeks ago, my identification with the occupants of those vehicles was incredibly strong! I knew that scene well. I understand being vulnerable in a hurricane differently than most people who watched the story unfold.

I was in Hurricane Camille in 1969, living in New Orleans with my husband, who was a student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. The horrors of 1969 were especially surreal for us, as we drove in the standstill traffic for hours. We weren't just waiting for a hurricane. Our first baby was due to arrive that very week!

"Ladies and gentlemen, the city of New Orleans is in grave danger," the mayor said in his most solemn tone on Sunday morning, the day before Camille hit. I can still quote those words verbatim after thirty-six years. Hurricanes make lasting impressions on all witnesses, much more so on the most vulnerable. The Category Five hurricane was predicted to be heading straight at New Orleans. Other students who had survived Betsy, the much weaker yet still deadly hurricane that hit New Orleans in 1965, were especially terrified. "Get out of here now!" they urged us. We didn't think about staying behind, never dreaming that New Orleans would end up being much safer than Hattiesburg, Mississippi, where we were headed to stay with friends. Camille would change course before we got to our destination!

By nightfall, we would know that we had driven straight into its path, in spite of following all warnings! We would experience the helplessness and sheer terror of 150-mile per hour winds swirling around us, knocking out transformers, and breaking huge trees like pick-up sticks, dropping them onto houses in the middle of a dark night. Yet, in the midst of it, in that very vulnerable condition, I also found that it was possible for me to experience a sense of release that one can only have by accepting that there is nothing more that I can do except to pray for strength, while waiting to see what forces may come to intervene.

Ten days later, with my beautiful new daughter in my arms, I stood in the hospital corridor, visiting with another new mother who had lost all material treasures. Yet she and her family of four were safe. Despite the fact that

she'd just been told that insurance was worthless in that situation, because the damage had come primarily from water instead of wind, she smiled. The real treasures were safe—no lives had been lost in our families. Yet hundreds were still waiting to be found—many alive, many dead, and some in the process of dying—as emergency personnel struggled to get to them. All while we remained safe, rejoicing at our own survival. Together we marveled at the lessons of the hurricane.

I know the poverty of New Orleans better than most middle-class people who have been awakened to the chronic problems of that city. Ron was pastor of a church in the most poverty-stricken area (Desire) while I worked in public health nursing in the area ranking second (Irish Channel). We know the desperation and just how hard it was for people to get out. Yet, we do not pretend to know what it was really like to be *both* poor and in the middle of a hurricane.

Perhaps that is why I could hardly contain myself when, two days after Katrina hit, I heard a well-educated man whom I thought I knew well, making ignorant statements. "What right do these people have to be demanding that the government hurry down and get them out of that mess? They were told to evacuate! Besides, here they are (as if he was talking about ALL survivors) shooting people and grabbing anything they can find. I know what it's like to be in a flood. Our entire basement was under water a few years ago. Remember that flood we had here? *We* picked ourselves up, called our insurance agent, took what they would give us, and didn't ask anybody else for anything! *We* went on with our lives. After all, when you build a house, everyone knows that the first thing you do is get insurance. What's the matter with *these* people? No way should anybody in that area be allowed to rebuild there. It's stupid!!"

Was this part of the thinking, I immediately wondered, that was making the response so slow at all levels?

Whew! My blood pressure was probably at stroke level as he fired away this strange response to his wife, who told him that I had survived Camille. It seemed to me he was telling our family that we had been stupid to have lived in New Orleans thirty-six years ago. He never asked, and I never told him why we were there. He wasn't interested in my story. Just as with the survivors of Katrina, this man

in his upper-class home had no interest in the human element of surviving.

Fortunately for me, I was in a hurry. I didn't need to get into high-gear with this guy. It would be counter-productive because I learned long ago, "it's futile to argue with an incorrect sign post."

This man, a former insurance executive, was in no mood to comprehend much of anything. He needed to hear that most people in New Orleans don't own homes, nor cars, nor funds to leave the city. In fact, many of the teens I knew in 1969 were as afraid to ride in a car as many people today are to ride in an airplane! I gave them their first ride in ANY vehicle to downtown New Orleans, from their homes only five miles away! I doubt things have changed much today.

I was so mad that I couldn't think clearly. Yet I did have the satisfaction of seeing this man speechless when I said that most Homeowners Insurance Policies do not cover hurricanes. "Why?" he asked. "Because flood insurance is hard to come by, and the damage is more than likely to be from water, rather than wind," was my answer. I could tell from his wide-open mouth that he got that one!

Shaking my head in disbelief and grateful that I had another appointment, I left him with these words: "If the survivors all had your coping skills (I should have also said 'resources'), then we could all think the way you do!"

I walked away, realizing that collusion looks strangely the same, no matter what the circumstances. It's really not about the survivors at all, and survivors waste a lot of emotional energy believing that set minds can easily be changed to understand that neither the disaster nor the collusion is the fault of survivors. It's all about the DIM thinking (Denial, Ignorance, and Minimization) of the "listener," whether the disaster is a hurricane, an accident, cancer, assault or sexual or physical abuse.

It happens because it is much easier to blame the innocent and deny the responsibility of people in the systems of power, than to respond to the enemy with appropriate aggression. It is a form of self-righteousness that keeps us from knowing "this could be me."

Fortunately, not everyone is as prejudiced against hurricane victims as this guy. Yet we are all prone to sometimes collude, when we do not want to face the reality of situations that seem foreign to our imagination. Knowing this fact doesn't make it easier for the victims of collusion. It serves to remind us, however, that no one group of victims has a monopoly on the re-victimization that collusion brings. Overcoming our own collusion with evil, whether that evil comes from forces of nature, or from people, or systems, it is the job of every thinking person who wants to be compassionate. ■

Note: Dee Miller also specializes as an advocate for survivors of violence, especially as it pertains to clergy, and may be contacted at write-on@radiks.net or www.takecourage.org.

Book Reviews

"Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed."
Francis Bacon (d. 1626).

A Pilgrimage of Faith: My Story

Henlee Hulix Barnette, Macon: Mercer University Press, 2004, \$28 online.

*Reviewed by Larry L. McSwain,
Professor of Ethics and Leadership,*

McAfee School of Theology, Atlanta, GA.

Henlee Barnette was one of the most influential of Southern Baptist's Christian ethicists of the twentieth century in his work as college and seminary professor, author of substantive works in the field, activist in a variety of ethical causes, and human being whose very life became a testimony of his faith. In this autobiography completed only a few months before his death at the age of 93 on October 20, 2004, he tells with modesty the story of his varied experiences and activities.

Barnette was a product of Southern mountain culture, raised in poverty and impressed throughout his life with a demanding work ethic that began in his teenage years working in a cotton mill for subsistence wages. Never losing his touch with the common person, he prided himself on his ability to relate to the disposed, the poor and the outcasts. Converted in the North Kannapolis Baptist Church in Kannapolis, North Carolina, at the age of nineteen, he returned to high school, graduated from Wake Forest College and Southern Seminary, and engaged in sabbatical study at Harvard University.

His family itself is such an integral part of his story as he describes the pain of the death of his first wife, Charlotte; the happy marriage to his student Helen; the birth of four children; and the vortex of issues that swirled within his times. It is ironic that on the day he died, his youngest, James, now University Minister and professor of religion at Samford University told the story of his older brothers in worship at McAfee School of Theology. John's choice to voluntarily serve in the Air Force with duty in Vietnam at the same time Wayne chose to move to Sweden to avoid the draft thrust the family into the national media limelight. Henlee and Helen supported the decisions of both, though his personal stance was one of outspoken criticism of military involvement in Vietnam.

This story focuses on civil rights, his friendship with Clarence Jordan, his travels to the Soviet Union, his perceptive writings on communism, his invitation to Martin

Luther King to speak in chapel at Southern in 1961, his writing of the classic text *Introducing Christian Ethics* (still in print though published in 1961), and his pioneering work on ecology and medical ethics. After retirement from the seminary, he served at the University of Louisville Medical School where he enlarged his influence in medical ethical issues.

Originally written for his children, the book is clearly written and lacks the format of a formal scholarly work, much to the reader's advantage. The pathos of his grief at the loss of two wives, the struggles to support his four children, the internal politics of his work as Acting Dean of the seminary during its most difficult crisis, and his humor in responding to multiple critics make it a delightful book to read. More importantly, the book chronicles the steadfast commitment to the ethics cause of an icon known by too few of the present generation. No one who reads this compelling book need ever feel distant from the man whose life touched so many in the classroom, the inner city of Louisville, and the national arena of Christian ethicists. ■

Editor's Note: CET Foundation is pleased to publish *Homely Joys: Prayers, Poems, and Barbs* by Jim and Henlee Barnette, offered as a gift to our supporters who contribute \$50 or more.

Fundamentalism

Fisher Humphries and Philip Wise, Macon, GA:
Smyth & Helwys, 2005.

Reviewed by Darold Morgan, Richardson, TX

Here is a small book, which deals wisely, compassionately, and forcefully with one of the most insidious and widespread issues of our day—worldwide Fundamentalism! Not only will this infectious disease of most religions refuse to go away, it is increasing with a ferocity that is incredibly difficult to deal with. People around the world and from practically every religious persuasion and cultural perspective need with a severe urgency to develop insights into this surprising phenomenon. This book is brimming with practical insights.

The authors write with a non-technical approach, making the study easy to understand. The gist of the book is presented with genuine warmth, free from judgmentalism that is refreshing and somewhat surprising when you consider the themes that are involved. Additionally, they help the serious student with an array of resources in their footnotes. American Christianity is the target of this writing, with a specific focus on Baptist practice and tradition in particular. A major strength is seen early as the authors differentiate between the “fundamentals” of the Christian faith and “Fundamentalism,” whose authoritarian style is

based on faulty foundations. This extremely important distinction comes in a brief review of the history of these divergent movements, which have colored much of current American religious life.

We have a welcomed emphasis on the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Both in historical settings as well as contemporary usage, the authors do us a great service with these truths. The key doctrines are the inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures, the deity of Jesus Christ as it relates to His death and resurrection and return which, of course, form the basis both for the forgiveness of sins and the assurance of eternal life. There is a substantive list of what Christianity has affirmed through the centuries. (p. 96)

One has to take seriously some of the on-going challenges to New Testament Christianity, challenges of great import to the Fundamentalists—biblical criticism, evolution, and liberal theology among others. The authors deal bluntly with these issues, which often shift in their priorities, especially as these relate to their emphasis on their belief in the inerrancy of Bible's original manuscripts. The comments of the authors on inerrancy makes this part of their book quite valuable and helpful. How often in the SBC takeover did one hear this subject trumpeted as the touchstone of basic doctrine! For many of us the best way to affirm the truthfulness of the biblical message is the way the church has always done it, namely to affirm that the Bible as we now have it—texts and translations—is the Word of God and as such is the authority by which the church is to order its life and faith. (p. 47)

Perhaps the severest indictment of Fundamentalism comes in their chapter on the attitudes of the proponents of this position. There are multiple victims literally around the world who have experienced the suspicion, fear, anger, and separatism of Fundamentalism. Authoritarianism in the name of doctrinal disputes have often degenerated into personal vendettas. There is a lengthy quote from President Jimmy Carter (pp. 63-64), which speaks to Christian love and forgiveness as the basic antidote to this savagery in the name of religion.

For progressive Baptists there is exceptional value in the chapter on “Fundamentalism and Southern Baptists.” Since 1979 Southern Baptists have experienced trauma, tragedy, divisiveness as new leadership, often elected questionably, has taken the historic SBC in obvious directions away from its time-honored heritage. Political maneuverings, selective use of traditions, a heavy-handed control of all agencies, directives to churches, reservations about the time-honored views on separation church and state, and an emerging creedalism which sadly forced a number of missionaries into resignations and early retirements—are some of the results apparent in the SBC since that date.

Can progressive Baptists relate to Fundamentalism? Surely all sides in this on-going conflict should be concerned about the unity and harmony of the churches as collectively we face an increasingly hostile world both

at home and abroad. All Christians need to find some distinct middle ground. Kindness, forgiveness, healing, dialogue, and above all, brotherly love need to mark Christians everywhere, regardless of denominations and theological stances.

The concluding chapter deals with "A Better Way." All of us must resist secularism as well as seeking balanced responses to the problems of biblical criticism and liberal theology. The authors' evaluations about these demanding and provocative positions merit reflection and debate. The two theologians close their book with a restatement about the importance of "the Fundamentals of the Faith," instead of a rigid, unyielding Fundamentalism. Their final word is worth quoting: "We believe trust in God is the most wonderful thing that can happen to a person, and Jesus has made this good news a living reality in our experience, and our trust in God is nurtured and challenged in the fellowship of the Christian Church. The Church possesses a confident hope that the future belongs to God just as the past and present do" (p. 98). ■

Rediscovering the Lord's Prayer

Art Simon, Augsburg Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2004.

Reviewed by Darold Morgan, Richardson, TX.

Here is a surprising, delightful, helpful book on prayer. Perhaps surprising is the appropriate word because Art Simon is much better known as the founder of "Bread for the World," one of the more effective and practical movements in our time, centered on effectively doing something about the grinding problems of world hunger and poverty.

What you have in this small and readable book is a blending of a solid theology of prayer based on the Model Prayer, and a range of illustrations and applications from Simon's variegated and interesting life and times. Each

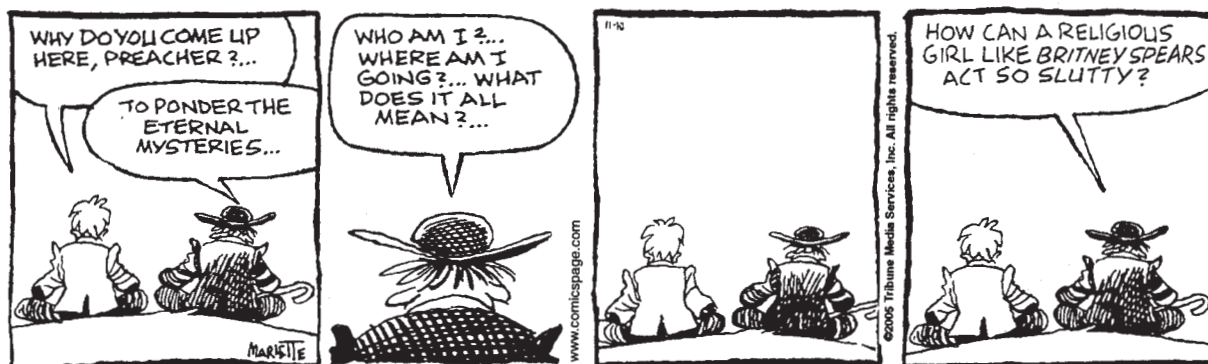
of these excerpts from his life, travels, and encounters are timely and memorable.

Always appropriate is the conclusion that "we cannot know enough about prayer." Though innumerable books have been written about Jesus' teaching on prayer, centered in "The Lord's Prayer," every new insight or repetition of old truths is welcomed and warmly appreciated. A distinctive of this book is the powerful way Simon weaves into every chapter on these familiar passages about prayer, the subtle yet directly personal concerns of people in our world who are poor and hungry. Christian people must get involved in this massive area of need, and genuine prayer is one of the most obvious ways to motivate the believer into this undebatable imperative.

Simon's background as a seminary-trained Lutheran pastor surfaces constantly in his solid treatment, phrase-by-phrase, of The Lord's Prayer. The book is further strengthened by a wide-range of quotations from sources both ancient and modern. Among these are references from Martin Luther, C. S. Lewis, Rick Warren, Frederick Buechner, N. T. Wright, and many others. Numerous resources in the chapter notes will intrigue any serious student of prayer.

It is apparent that close to the surface of these helpful comments about a more effective prayer life for the follower of Jesus is the connection between prayer and a sensitive conscience to the ever-growing needs of suffering people. "It's the aspect of God's providential care that lays obligations on us, as parents, citizens, employers, employees, governmental offices and the like, to work for the common good and the care of the earth" (p. 47). Knowing of Simon's deep dedication to his "Bread for the World" commitment, one can readily sense this connection of action and prayer.

Yet the real delight of this book centers ultimately in a fresh and vigorous understanding of prayer as Jesus intended it to be—his major lesson on this theme to his disciples. This book merits a wide audience. ■



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

Solstice

By Foy Valentine, Founding Editor
12527 Matisse Lane, Dallas, TX 75230

Like Jerome Kern's ole man river that "jus' keeps on rol'in' along," old man sun just keeps on running its successive journeys across the sky, east to west, day in and day out, from winter through spring to summer and then through fall and back again to winter, so on and so forth.

Now, in this circadian rhythm there is, as we all have been taught, a winter solstice and a summer solstice with points in between which observers of such natural phenomena have named the vernal equinox and the autumnal equinox, spring and fall. Of all these observable events, none is quite as portentous as the winter solstice. Which at last gets me somewhat closer to a point which is loosely lodged in my little mind. We're not there yet, to be sure, but we're moving on.

Solstice means literally sun standstill. It is a stage in the sun's apparent movement in which the days in the winter stop getting shorter and begin again to get longer and conversely, of course, in which the nights stop getting longer and begin again to start getting shorter. The winter solstice is reached each year in the northern hemisphere about December 22, while the summer solstice occurs about June 22.

All around the world ancient observers marked the solstices carefully and with astounding accuracy. Anasazi, Olmecs, Mayans, Aztecs, Incas, Babylonians, Chinese, Greeks, Persians, and Romans all seem to have found special ways to mark the winter solstice with celebrations.

The early inhabitants of the smallish island that was to become known as England seem to have been particularly cognizant of the winter solstice. Far more than their southern European neighbors in Greece, Italy, and Spain, those early Anglos focused on December 25 as a time for special celebration. The long winter nights were beginning to be gradually shortened and the days began to grow gradually a little longer. Darkness began to be overcome by light. Cold began to give way to the sun's welcome warmth. Accordingly the solstice was celebrated with bonfires, merrymaking, feasts, and non-lite versions of mead. The festivities were apparently not unlike those of other cultures around the world.

As Christianity spread, the formerly pagan celebrations related to the winter solstice came to be gradually appropriated as a natural occasion for celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. Within a few hundred years after his advent,

there was absolutely no consensus as to the actual date of Jesus' birth. Wide, and often wild, speculations about the date went on for many decades. Finally, however, the rather arbitrary date of December 25 came to be generally accepted as a good time to mark the anniversary of his birth.

Because it was tied so closely to the time of the winter solstice, there was general satisfaction about the timing; and the old customs and policies and practices gradually segued into today's Christmas celebrations.

Our Christian beliefs related to Mary and Joseph, the incarnation, the actual birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night, the guiding star and the visit of the wise men with their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh for the new born baby Jesus were all melded into the winter solstice celebrations which were already in place. Old pagan festivities marked by feasting, lighted candles, the giving of gifts, singing, decorated evergreen trees, yule logs, and rejoicing were all assimilated into our Christian celebrations related to the birth of Jesus Christ.

Why not?

Our great and good God who kindled the fire in the sun, who tilted the earth on its axis, who started it to spinning, and who ordained its orbit around the sun is the same great and good God whose redeeming grace in the fullness of time manifested itself in the incarnation, a baby in a manger.

In celebrating Christmas, there is a good reason to be still a while and ponder the wonders related to the natural phenomenon of the winter solstice. Christians can not only affirm but also celebrate the astronomy, mathematics, science, and all the impressive learning that explains the solstices. The Encyclopedia Britannica elucidates the matter: "Each solstice is upon the ecliptic midway between the equinoxes and therefore 90 degrees from each" and my Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary Tenth Edition further obfuscates the subject by defining solstice as "either of the points on the ecliptic at which its distance from the celestial equator is greatest and which is reached by the sun each year about June 22nd and December 22nd."

Well, DUH. I really didn't want to know that much
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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

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

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 five times each year.

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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