

CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY

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T. B. Maston—As I Knew Him

By Joe E. Trull, Editor

The first time I met Thomas Buford Maston is a commentary on his life. I was a new student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, working after classes as a janitor. That day I was emptying trash behind the theology building as the ethics teacher was leaving the building. He noticed me and walked over. Welcoming me to SWBTS, he spent a good five minutes asking questions about my life. I never forgot that encounter.

Four years later as I began doctoral studies in Christian ethics, Dr. Maston asked me to be his grader and teaching fellow—neither of us knew it would be his final two years of teaching at SWBTS. During that time he was both a mentor and a father-figure. To know the man was to experience his gentle spirit, compassionate love, and courageous witness. Many described Maston as “the most Christ-like person I have ever met.” I concur.

The Mastons came to SWBTS in 1920, planning to be missionaries, but the birth of an invalid son confirmed a call to a ministry of teaching. The Mastons cared for their greatly disabled child in their home, though it meant arising every night to meet his needs. Yet Maston referred to Tom Mc as “the greatest blessing of my life.” Maston’s prayer in late life was that Tom Mc would precede him in death so that “Mommy”¹ would not carry that burden alone. In the year T. B. Maston turned 90, Tom Mc died—Dr. Maston then died a few months later in 1988.

First and foremost the ethicist lived what he taught. He was the epitome of Luke’s five-word biography of Jesus—“he went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). He taught with a characteristic twinkle in his eye, often adding a wink to make a point, and always with an urgency in his voice.

Once when a student couple died in a train-car accident on the way to their church field, Maston put aside his notes for the hour and discussed the age-old question of God, evil, and human suffering. The discussion was worth a seminary degree!

Once in a seminar he asked this question: “If you knew

that Jesus Christ would be in Ft. Worth this weekend, where would you go to find him? (Pause) You would find Jesus somewhere with someone whom nobody noticed, who needed him!”

Dr. Maston had a special relationship with his students, especially the forty-nine who majored in Christian ethics. He once showed me a hand-written copy of their names on a pad he kept in his vest pocket—“I pray for you fellows every day,” he told me. The Mastons practiced hospitality toward this group by hosting a dinner each year for them and their spouses. To be in the Maston home on the northeast corner of the campus was a treat—you were part of the family, and Tom Mc with his guttural sounds of pleasure enjoyed it also.

Dr. Maston wrote a response to everyone who wrote to him, even his critics. I treasure the special correspondence he sent to me—words of gratitude for assistance during an illness in 1962, complements of my teaching and grading, and even a positive note about my church newsletter columns in 1979.

The abrupt closure of his teaching ministry in 1963 adds another insight. Unlike his ethics contemporary Henlee Barnette, Maston was no social activist. Nevertheless, when a serious question of Christian ethics arose, he did not keep silence. A new student center was being built, the entrance highlighted by an extravagant chandelier imported from Europe (the quoted cost was equal to hundreds of thousands of dollars in today’s currency). Though the president insisted “it was a gift,” Maston felt deeply such opulence was a contradiction to Baptist life, the simple lifestyle of Jesus, and the ethical teachings of the New Testament. In 1963, to teach beyond age 65 required executive approval. Maston was not invited to continue.

Ironically, Maston then focused on writing, producing 20 of his 29 books (and countless articles) from 1964-1987.²

Renowned broadcast journalist Bill Moyers, who studied under Maston, comments: “When I’m asked to define Christian ethics, my best answer is Tom Maston. What the
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EthixBytes

A Collection of Quotes Comments, Statistics, and News Items

“Where you live in the world should not determine whether you live.”

*U2 rock superstar **Bono** at a Dallas rally about poverty and AIDS in Africa, 5/05/06.*

“Exxon Mobil Corporation reported a \$69.7 million compensation package and \$98 million pension payout to former CEO and chairman Lee R. Raymond, to which Mel Fugate of SMU’s School of Business asked, ‘Is this more evidence of big oil taking an enormous windfall and retaining all the riches?’”

AP Business Report, 4/16/06.

“Their companies didn’t even grow as fast as the economy, yet they have this mountainous compensation. . . . We’re lost in an ethical morass here.”

***John Bogle**, 76-year-old founder of the Vanguard Group Inc. commenting on the salaries of CEOs.*

“Taxpayers with incomes greater than \$1 million per year receive tax cuts of \$42,000, while families with incomes of \$50,000 per year would average a \$46 tax cut.”

*A joint study by the **Urban Institute** and the **Brookings Institution** of the bill that extended tax cuts worth \$70 billion over five years.*

“Our commitment to Jesus Christ compels us to solve the global warming crisis.”

***New York Times Ad** by 86 prominent evangelical leaders, including 39 Christian college presidents, in response to a letter from 22 Religious Right leaders (James Dobson, Richard Land, et. al.) requesting the NAE not to take an official stand on the issue.*

“In a society that thrives on lies and deceit, an honest person is considered to be a radical.”

*Author **George Orwell**.*

“The SBC is rank with nepotism, cronyism, favoritism and a network of political spoils distribution that would make Old Warren [U.S. President Harding] blush with shame.”

***Benjamin Cole** (Parkview BC, Arlington, TX), one of a group of young conservative SBC pastors employing blogs to question SBC leadership.*

“Baptists need no ‘spiritual masters’—either from the right or left—to tell them what to believe in their churches or universities.”

***Bill Underwood**, incoming president of Mercer University in response to a Stanley Hauerwas statement that ‘the right reading of the Scripture depends on having spiritual masters who can help the whole Church stand under the authority of God’s Word.’*

“Evidence continues to emerge of widespread torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment of detainees held in U.S. custody in Afghanistan, Guantanamo Bay, Iraq, and other locations.”

***Amnesty International** report to the U.N. Committee Against Torture (May 4, 2006).*

“I have a commitment to worship the Prince of Peace, not the prince of pre-emptive war.”

***President Jimmy Carter**, Washington Post interview, 11/04/05.*

“I have never seen people enjoying their husband’s deaths so much. And by the way, how do you know their husbands weren’t planning to divorce these harpies?”

***Ann Coulter**, criticizing a group of activist 9/11 widows in her new book “Godless.”*

“She’s not a social or political commentator. She’s a drag queen impersonating a fascist.”

*Time magazine blogger **Andrew Sullivan** on Ann Coulter, June 8.*

“In my more than three decades in government, I have never seen anything approaching the degree to which information flow from scientists to the public has been screened and controlled as it is now.”

***James E. Hansen**, director, NASA Goddard Institute, 2005.*

“So the man who in 1995 maintained that the way to treat drug users was to ‘send them up the river’ gets the chance to benefit from a public program he never would have supported for others.”

***The Palm Beach Post**, commenting on the April 28 sentencing of **Rush Limbaugh** to supervision that requires him to pass a drug test each month for 18 months and payment of \$30,000 court costs for dragging out the investigation. ■*

F. F. V. – Friends of Foy Valentine

During the reception following Foy's memorial service, two of his closest friends, Ross Coggins and Bob Mitchell, spoke to the family and to the editor of *Christian Ethics Today* about a vision they shared.

"Foy loved the Journal and more than anything else these last few years, he wanted to find a way to endow it so it would always be published. We need to find a way to allow folks to give significant memorial gifts to fulfill Foy's dream."

Ross and Bob both knew the Journal had been blessed with dedicated readers who voluntarily and regularly gave financial support for its continuance. Foy insisted from the beginning that the Journal would *always be sent out without charge* to anyone requesting it, "as money and energy permit," Foy liked to add.

For ten years now, CET has not missed an issue. A few times it was close, but always God laid the need on a reader's heart. Not a few times, Foy himself sensed the urgency and gave sacrificially to keep the Journal solvent.

Today over 4400 persons receive CET, and hundreds more read it in churches, school libraries, and from the desks of scores of teachers, ministers, and laypersons. In addition, for the last two years the editor has visited eleven Christian campuses, speaking to classes and distributing the Journal, often signing up 50-100 students who now receive the Journal.

Friends of Foy Valentine Committee

During the past few months several of Foy's friends have conversed, met, and planned to envision a way to fulfill Foy's final wish—the Friends of Foy Valentine Committee (F.F.V.). This group has agreed to encourage CET readers and friends to give a Memorial Gift to honor Foy's dream, setting a goal of \$500,000 to endow a significant part of the annual budget, now at \$80,000. Each has agreed to be available to discuss with you any of the details of this endowment or of the CET enterprise. At present they include:

Darold Morgan, Co-Chair West	David Sapp, Co-Chair East
Patsy Ayres	Jimmy and Linda Allen
Doug Dillard	President Jimmy Carter and Rosalynn
Buckner Fanning	Ross Coggins James Dunn
Bob Feather	Millard Fuller Bill Moyers
Bob Mitchell	John Seigenthaler, Sr.
Herbert Reynolds	

Initial Gifts

The F.F.V. Committee was elated to learn that before any contacts had been made, 63 memorial gifts (unsolicited) totaling \$121,715 have been given. One of these gifts was for \$100,000 from long-time friend Harold Simmons, who first knew Foy as his pastor when he was

in high school at Golden, Texas, and Foy was attending seminary. Eight persons have given \$1000 or more; one has given \$5000.

The committee feels with this initial response, many more who loved Foy and believe in the ministry of the Journal will want to be a part of this effort. We thank those who have already given and encourage you to consider joining this group:

Jimmy and Linda Allen, Sarah F. Anders, Patsy and Bob Ayres, Truett Baker, L. B. Berry, Florence Box, Paul Brewer, Judy Brooks, James Carter, Barbara Chafin, Ross Coggins, Robert and Margaret Cooper, H. E. Coty, James Crouch, Mary Ann Davis, Phoebe Delamarter, Juanice DuBose, T. W. and Sue Downing, Sarah and James Logan, Donald Dunlap, James Dunn, Roland Foster, V. C. Garrett, Jr., Duane Geiss, Edwin S. Gaustad, Glenn Gring, Marvin Harris, Virginia Hendricks, Wayne Hodge, Martha King, Neal Knighton, Matthew Krauss, James Miller, Bob Mitchell, Mary Kay Mitchell, Mrs. Kenneth Moss, Bill Moyers, Charles Murphy, J. Kent Newsome, Oz Osborn, Alton Patton, Samuel and Annie Pearis, Janet Purvis, Herbert Reynolds, Mary Rickenbaker, Bettina Sanderford, Frank G. Schwall, Jr., John Scott, Robert Scrutchins, H. N. Shannon, James Shields, Harold Simmons, Harold Simmons Foundation, Jay Skaggs, Jerry P. Smith, Joe and Audra Trull, William Turner, Penny Whorton Wells, D.D. Westbrook, Elizabeth Woolverton, and James Wray.

Each issue of the Journal will carry a "Progress Report." Pray with us that this campaign will both honor Foy Valentine and undergird his last and best dream of a Journal that would "inform, inspire, and unify a lively company of individuals and organizations interested in working for personal morality and public righteousness."

Note: Please remember the Memorial Fund Gift is in addition to your regular annual contribution, which supports the basic budget for each issue. ■

FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON MINISTERIAL ETHICS*

McAfee School of Theology of Mercer University

October 12-13, 2006

Thursday Noon – Friday Noon

Keynote Speaker: Tony Campolo

Thursday at 7 PM and Friday at 11 AM (Chapel)

Other speakers include Larry McSwain (McAfee), David Sapp (Second Ponce de Leon BC, Atlanta), Michael Thurman (Dexter Ave. King Memorial BC, Montgomery), Julie Pennington-Russell (Calvary BC, Waco), and Joe E. Trull

For Information Call 1-888-471-9922 or (678) 547-6474

*This conference is made possible by a grant from the CIOS/piper Foundation Waco, Texas, and is identical to the conference held last February at Truett Seminary.

Pastoral Ethics: Be Nice!

By Philip D. Wise, Senior Pastor
Second Baptist Church, Lubbock, TX

Note: This speech was delivered on February 13, 2006, at the First Annual Conference of the CET Foundation on “How To Be A Good Minister,” at Truett Seminary Baylor, Waco, TX.

In his book *Prayers Plainly Spoken*, Texas native Stanley Hauerwas explains in the preface that his father, a bricklayer by trade, was the “designated pray-er” in his family. “At Thanksgivings, Christmases, Easters, wedding anniversaries and all other occasions when that large crew of five other uncles and their families would gather at my grandparents’ house, at that moment just before we ate, my father would be asked to pray.” Hauerwas was proud of his father because he was “the chosen one” in the family. His father “had the gift.” However, Stanley became extremely uncomfortable with the idea that the gift was genetic. He did not feel comfortable praying in public because “it always felt phony to me.”¹

Reading his book, which is composed of prayers offered by him at the beginning of his classes in Christian ethics at Duke Divinity School, is a refreshing exercise. I liked it because the prayers are “plainly spoken.” I identify with Hauerwas’ reluctance to do something that makes you appear better or more religious than you are. That expresses how I feel this afternoon talking to you about “Pastoral Ethics.”

So let me begin with what Hauerwas calls some “plain talking.” The fact that I accepted the invitation to speak on “Pastoral Ethics” does not mean that I consider myself an expert on the subject or that I am presenting myself or my own pastoral behavior and practices as a norm for others. I accepted the invitation because I believe that an emphasis on pastoral ethics may be the most widely ignored and the most badly needed emphasis in Christian churches and seminaries. It would be easy to document the mistakes, sins, and failures of ministers that I have known since I began preaching over forty years ago. It would be even easier to confess my own mistakes, sins, and failures.

Instead, what I would like to do is to offer some guidelines that I have found to be helpful in the practice of ministry. I’m convinced that the reason why so many ministers find themselves in some ethical maelstrom is because they have not fixed any parameters for their ministries and their personal lives. I’m not suggesting that the solution to ministerial misconduct is some form of legalistic rule-making.

I am suggesting that if you have no target, you can’t be sure where to aim.

The obvious place to start in developing appropriate parameters for ministerial conduct is with the example of Jesus. For most Christian ministers the reason they are in the ministry is because they have felt a call from God. That call is the call to follow Christ and to do so within the life and ministry of the Christian church. Of course some people go into the ministry for the wrong reasons—to help others, to be successful, to follow in their father’s or mother’s footsteps, because they are naturally religious, or because they think it would be nice to work in a Christian environment.

In my own experience, the one parameter which has kept me within the boundaries of Christian conduct has been my desire to be like Jesus. I find it very difficult to be dishonest, unkind, or unchristian when I am focused on Jesus Christ and what he would want me to do. As resistant as I am to pious pleading, I do honestly believe that most ministers who dishonor their calling do so because they have taken their eyes off Jesus Christ. I know for certain that when I have acted in ways that were less than Christian, that was always the reason. As a result, I keep two verses of scripture in my desk drawer so that I have to see them quite regularly. The first is John 1:43, “Finding Philip, he said to him, ‘Follow me.’” The second is 2 Chronicles 20:12, “God, we do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”

The second parameter that can keep ministers within the confines of ethical behavior is the desire to keep your integrity intact. Most folks assume that this is a simple matter for ministers. It isn’t. There are tremendous pressures on ministers to conform to society, the ethos of their community or the opinions of their parishioners. This pressure takes many forms. Most ministers want to be liked. Most ministers want to avoid controversy. Most ministers want to stay employed. As a result most ministers will compromise their own beliefs and values in order to “fit in” and not “rock the boat.” When a minister gives in to these pressures, he or she becomes a shill for their

country, their community, or their church instead of being a representative of Jesus Christ. I agree with Martin Luther King, Jr., who said, "I still believe that standing up for the truth of God is the greatest thing in the world. This is the end of life. The end of life is not to be happy. The end of life is not to achieve pleasure and avoid pain. The end of life is to do the will of God, come what may."²

The one lesson that I endeavored to teach my children most diligently concerned personal integrity. What I told them over and over till they were tired of hearing it was, "No one can take your integrity from you. You have to give it away." Unfortunately, many ministers have done just that. They have sold the pearl of great price for a bowl of porridge. They may be popular, they may be successful, they may be helpful to others, but if they have not maintained their own integrity, they have betrayed their calling. I think Glenna Holloway captured the danger in her poem "Easy Grace."

We come to church today a bit unsure
Of what we can expect. We may endure
A tirade just to satisfy the lure
Of judging this new preacher and his views.
We've heard conflicting comments from the pews.
How strict is he about the marriage vow?
What leeway in belief does he allow?
We're in no mood for hell or tithing now.
His predecessors leaned on faith, not facts.
The congregation never could relax.
A minister must learn to understand
His role is just to raise a gracious hand
In formal blessing, not to reprimand.
Well, this one's robe fits right, he looks devout.
We'll see what he thinks Sunday's all about.
The anthem sounds angelic to the ear.
His prayer is brief enough to calm our fear.
With luck, he'll stick to what we want to hear.³

A third parameter that should set the boundaries for any minister who wishes to act ethically is so basic that I'm embarrassed to mention it, but it is so important, and increasingly so rare, that I must. Ministers should be nice. By that I mean they should be kind, humble, and thoughtful. In short, they should apply the Golden Rule in their relationships with others. That doesn't seem too much to ask of any Christian—especially one who claims to have been called into Christ's service. And yet, Christian ministers can be some of the most selfish, self-centered, crass, prideful people in the world. It is no accident that ministers are rarely presented in a good light on television or in the movies.

How do you explain this kind of unchristlike behavior by ministers? For some, it seems to grow out of the privileged position that ministers enjoy. People make allowances for ministers because they respect their calling and want to honor people they consider "God's servants." This leads to special treatment of ministers by others—discounts on merchandise, offers of free vacations and trips,

special treatment by politicians and law enforcement officers, acceptance of bizarre behavior that would not be tolerated in others. It's the same kind of treatment that athletes, entertainers, and politicians often enjoy. I believe that many ministers come to believe that this treatment is intended for them personally rather than offered to them because of their high calling. In other words, they begin to believe they deserve special treatment.

For others, it's a matter of believing their own headlines. They've been successful in the ministry—their churches have grown, their sermons have been praised, they have been recognized by their peers, the media and by their parishioners. Instead of giving credit to God for their success, they begin to give the credit to themselves. I can't tell you how rare it is to meet a widely known pastor who is genuinely humble.

My friend, Dr. Fisher Humphreys, who teaches theology at Beeson Divinity School, shared with me an experience he once had with Stanley Hauerwas. Here's the way he recounts it:

In the early 1990s Bill Hull invited Stanley Hauerwas to speak at the annual workshop for Samford faculty held each August. Somehow I was asked to pick him up at the airport, and as we drove to campus he said something like this about his Methodist church: "God is nice—that's all the theology we Methodists have. You be nice—that's all the ethics we Methodists have." And I replied something like this: "Stanley, I'm a Southern Baptist, and nice would be progress for us."⁴

The temptation of hubris is enormous, but it is not the only temptation that a minister faces. Having given you my three guidelines for pastoral ethics—follow Christ, keep your integrity, be nice, I want to talk about some specific pastoral situations that I've faced in my ministry that have tested those guidelines.

When I was visiting in view of a call to my first pastorate in Selma, Alabama, I met with the deacons of the church. I didn't realize then what I know now—they wanted to feel me out on touchy subjects. The touchiest in Selma, Alabama was race. One of the deacons said, "Now, preacher, you don't need to worry about 'colored people' coming to church. We have a committee that stays out on the porch before church to keep any troublemakers out."

What would you have said in response? It's hard to imagine that kind of prejudice in our world, but it wasn't unusual in 1978 in the Black Belt of Alabama. There weren't a handful of Alabama Baptist churches that were integrated in 1978. I really wanted that church, but I knew that if I didn't take a stand that day, I wouldn't be able to say anything about race later. What I said was, "Gentlemen, if I come here anyone who comes here to worship will be welcome. If there are troublemakers in worship, I'll take care of it. That's my job." There was a long silence and then one of the deacons spoke up. He said, "Preacher, I think we can live with that." And that settled it. It didn't settle their racial prejudices, it didn't settle the inequities

that existed between whites and blacks, it didn't settle the bitter feelings that some of each race felt towards the other race. What I learned that day was that every battle is not Armageddon, but some battles are worth fighting. My own advice, which I have not always followed, is to make sure that the cross you're crucified on is a big one. For me, racism has always been a non-negotiable issue.

In my second church, in Montgomery, Alabama, I learned an important lesson from a deacon. He was a kind and generous man, soft-spoken and a serious Christian. I had been called by an African-American pastor about holding an inter-racial revival at our church. No white Baptist church in the association would agree to have the meeting on a Wednesday night. It was a problem because we would have to cancel all of our regular activities for this event, which we had not planned. I wasn't sure I wanted to do it, so I called our deacon chair to discuss it. It would be controversial for some in our congregation and city. I explained the situation to the chairman, and yes, believe it or not, his name is Bubber. I'll never forget what Bubber asked me. He said, "Philip, what's the right thing to do?" It had never occurred to me to ask that question—at least not as the first question. We had the revival despite a phoned bomb threat that I received. Bubber's question has remained a fixture in my own pastoral decision making.

In another church, I accepted a counseling appointment with a young woman I'd never met. When she came in for our session, she explained that she worked for one of our doctors. She had found some compromising photographs of the doctor on a get-a-way with another of his employees. He was an active member of the church with a wife and several children. Her dilemma was whether to continue working for this doctor whom she had revered as a fine Christian. I tried to give her good counsel. I hope I did, but she left me with an ethical concern. What should I do with this information? I hadn't seen the photographs. Should I keep this man from leadership in the church? Should I confront him even though I had promised her I wouldn't bring her into it? What I did was keep the man from becoming a deacon at the next election. I monitored his behavior. Interestingly, he became less involved in the church and leadership was no longer an issue. Sometimes, waiting is a good option.

My whole ministry has been lived out in the shadow of the Baptist denominational controversy. I had decided in college that I was not a fundamentalist, even though I had grown up in a fundamentalist environment. When the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) began to move in a fundamentalist direction, I knew that I had to resist. I spent a lot of time and energy helping organize the opposition to what is now called "the conservative resurgence" in the SBC. I saw unbelievably evil things done to good people in the name of Jesus Christ. Many non-fundamentalist pastors chose to stay out of the controversy. They saw the same things I was seeing but justified remaining neutral by saying, "If I get involved, it will split my church and hurt

my ministry." Quite honestly, I was deeply disappointed in those fellow ministers. In my mind they had compromised their beliefs in order to make life easier for themselves.

In the Twenty-First Century it seems that every Christian denomination or association is undergoing controversy of one sort or another. Pastors in this new century will have to make decisions about what really matters, what they truly believe and whether those beliefs are worth sacrifice and conflict.

Frankly, I have suffered very little for being true to my beliefs. Although I opposed the fundamentalist movement in the SBC, I don't believe I suffered spiritual damage as a result. The reason in part was that I refused to treat the fundamentalists the way they treated their opponents. One of the ministers on our church staff said to me after I had tried to explain the controversy to our congregation, "You're too nice to them." I considered that a high compliment.

Many of my fundamentalist seminary classmates went on to take leadership roles in the new SBC. I decided to cast my lot with the fledgling Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, which was more in line with my own theology. As for those ministers who refused to become involved in the denominational controversy, the result was predictable. For the most part those ministers avoided the controversy in their churches and ministry. However, I'm convinced that their success was purchased at a price to their souls and their personal integrity. From my perspective, that was a price that was too high to pay.

When I had been at one church for less than six months, an employee came to me with an accusation about a sexual affair between one of the ministers and another employee. Several months before, the accuser had followed them to a hotel and observed their rendezvous. There was no other evidence to confirm his charges. He dropped this hot potato in my lap saying, "It's up to you to deal with it." This situation was complicated by the fact that this minister had a popular following in the church and had an aggressive personality. What would you have done?

What I did was talk with a trusted older colleague. Unbelievably, he knew about the affair. I asked him if he would agree to meet with me and the minister. He agreed. We met at my house where I confronted the minister with the charge. He admitted to the indiscretion, but insisted that it was a one-time sin and that there was no ongoing relationship. He pleaded for forgiveness. He had an unblemished record in ministry and a fine family. What was I to do? Having prayed for guidance, I told him that he would have to leave the church, but I would give him time to do that gracefully. If there were any evidence of misbehavior in the interim, he would be publicly fired. After a few months, he found another position and left with dignity. Many in the church criticized me for "forcing him out." They had surmised that he left under pressure, but they didn't know why. I never told them. I believe that I saved that man's marriage and ministry. I hope I did the right thing. Sometimes you can't be sure you did.

My predecessor was a popular pastor. He'd had a successful ministry everywhere he'd been. He left the church I served under some unfair pressure by critics, but when he was called to another church those criticisms were soon forgotten. Because we were friends, I was surprised when he accepted invitations to return to my church to do weddings and funerals. He continued to visit many of my church members and regularly contacted others. It made it difficult for me to become the pastor of the church. To complicate matters, another former pastor lived in the town and expected to participate in most funerals, to be asked to preach in my absence, and to be consulted about church decisions. This was all new territory for me. To be honest, I was disappointed and even angered by the behavior of my predecessors. What would you have done?

What I did was determine to honor those predecessors no matter what. I refused to criticize them when I was encouraged to do so by others. I swallowed my pride and gave them the lead roll in funerals and special events. How did it turn out? With one of them, it went well. He was genuinely thankful for the treatment I gave him—especially when he was subsequently fired from his church. The other former pastor was constantly thanking me for the respect I showed to him, but he never blessed my ministry and played a large part in my leaving that church. There are no *quid pro quo* guarantees when you make the decision to treat people with respect, but I always knew that Bubber had it right when he asked, "What's the right thing to do?"

I've made a list of other ethical issues that I've faced over the years. This list is not exhaustive, but it does give some indication of the challenges that every experienced pastor has faced. These include counseling with a sexual abuser, keeping the secrets of counselees, deciding how to deal with homosexual staff members and troublesome ministerial spouses, working in the seamy world of local politics, knowing what people contribute to the church while trying to treat everyone the same, receiving threats from large contributors if I didn't do what they wanted, deciding what kind of car you should drive and where you

should live, protecting your children from mistreatment by church members and others, dealing with alcoholics and drug addicts and deciding about my own personal behavior. These issues caused me to lose a lot of sleep and hampered my ability to do other parts of my job. These kinds of issues can be debilitating.

Whenever I felt particularly stressed by such ethical dilemmas I survived by reminding myself of a truth that every young pastor should internalize, "If you die on Friday, they'll still have church on Sunday."

These issues give you some idea of the moral challenges presented to ministers. I never knew when I was called to be a pastor as a teenager that I would have to deal with such issues. I thought my biggest challenges would be preaching sermons and helping people with their spiritual lives. I couldn't have been more wrong. Some of the decisions that I made were difficult to make and cost me personally. I have been comforted through the years by two framed quotes that I have kept on the bookshelves in my offices. One is from Bill Clinton's grandfather. It reads, "It never hurt a really good man to take a few unfair lick-ins." The other is attributed to the Seventeenth-Century English poet John Dryden, "I am wounded, but I am not slain. I shall lay me down and bleed awhile, then I will rise and fight again."

The seminarians here today will have challenges that I have never faced. You will have to make ethical decisions that will shape your life, the churches you serve and the lives of others. My word to you is a simple word: Follow Christ, keep your integrity, be nice. ■

- 1 Stanley Hauerwas, *Prayers Plainly Spoken* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1999), 11-14.
- 2 Martin Luther King, Jr., "Paul's Letter to American Christians," a speech delivered on Nov. 4, 1956.
- 3 Glenna Holloway, "Easy Grace" in *The Christian Century* (July 5-12, 1995), 679.
- 4 E-mail from Dr. Fisher Humphreys, February 10, 2006.



Christianity and the Evolution Controversy

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

Edward Osborne Wilson may well be Alabama's most distinguished living scientist. A biology teacher at Harvard University since 1956, he quickly ascended to the highest ranks of that prestigious faculty where he continues to serve as University Research Professor. The author of more than twenty books and the recipient of more than thirty honorary degrees, Wilson has received almost every scholarly award, recognition, and membership that the academy can bestow. A world-famous entomologist, the acknowledged father of biodiversity, a leading conservationist and environmental activist, he overcame the partial loss of both sight and hearing in his youth to become what *Time* magazine hailed as one of the twenty-five most influential people in America.

The native son returned home a few days ago and time spent together reminded me of the many things we share in common. Both of us were born on the south side of Birmingham only a few months apart. Both of us were raised as Southern Baptists by families with deep roots in that denomination. We both attended the University of Alabama at the same time where we both majored in biology. But then our paths diverged significantly even though we both went on to pursue an academic career. For Wilson, science provided the impetus to abandon his childhood faith¹ whereas, for me, it offered a challenge to mature my very similar childhood faith. Now, a half-century later, we find ourselves at opposite ends of the theological spectrum in our understanding of both natural and supernatural reality.

The two of us would agree that these differences frame one of the most pivotal debates of our time, that between science and religion over the issue of Darwinian evolution. On every hand, media reports on the culture wars have us girding for a fight to the finish between scientism and creationism. Just as the Scopes Trial of 1925 publicly embarrassed Evangelical Protestantism for decades,² so we are in danger of exposing the Christian faith to unnecessary ridicule unless we learn how to contribute with intelligence and insight to what has become an increasingly acrimonious discussion. Since Wilson is an attractive, articulate, and aggressive advocate of the secular alternative, let us choose him as our dialogue partner in shaping a strategy for dealing with this bitterly contested agenda.

I.

We begin with a summary of Wilson's views on science and religion. To him, all reality is ultimately

physical, with living matter in the domain of biology subject to the laws of chemistry and physics. This means that human nature is the result of material processes, even in the formation of our religious sentiments and moral instincts. In other words, we are "self-assembled"³ rather than God-assembled. The more science discovers about how genetics really work, the less we need theological explanations of our origins rooted in ancient scripture and church doctrine. Therefore, science and religion should not be viewed as coexisting in separate spheres, the former to explain the physical and the latter to explain the spiritual. Rather, modern science is now ready to replace religion as the unified source of all knowledge.⁴ Such views are often referred to as scientific naturalism or secular humanism.

But if God is not the ultimate cause of the human condition, then how did we become what we are today? The answer is self-evident to Wilson: by genetic evolution. Which is why he has become such a vigorous defender of Darwinism which teaches that we evolved by an autonomous process of development determined, not by divine purpose, but by random mutations resulting from natural selection over millions of years. This means that humanity is neither the center nor the crown of creation but is only one of many species in the biosphere, all of them interdependent on the others. The notion that God fashioned us in his image is a prehistoric self-image of humanity that must be discarded because of the firmly established fact of evolution accepted unanimously by the world's leading biologists.⁵

So certain is Wilson of the sweeping significance of Darwinism for both science and religion that he is dismayed by recent polls showing that half of Americans do not believe in evolution by natural selection or any other means. Instead, many campaign vigorously on behalf of theories such as Intelligent Design for which, as Wilson sees it, "there is no evidence, no theory, and no criteria for proof that even marginally might pass for science."⁶ To counterattack this foolishness, he recently edited the four key books of Charles Darwin for republication in a single volume to which he contributed a general introduction and an afterword contending for their enduring relevance despite the continuing attacks of religion.⁷ Driving this unabashed advocacy of evolution is a passionate conviction that scientific humanism is "the only worldview compatible with science's growing knowledge of the real

world and the laws of nature.”⁸

Lest all of this sound like hostility toward religion by its cultured despisers, Wilson is quick to concede that faith once played an important role in human history. It gave us an inspiring religious epic, sponsored the arts, and fostered altruism by codifying our highest values as moral imperatives. Indeed, science was not ready to replace religion as the ultimate arbiter of reality until its methodology was established by the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. But now that science has grasped the controlling clue of evolution by natural selection, it is time for religion to retire and give it full sway to secularize the human story. After all, what science claims that evolution was able to achieve by blind chance is every bit as amazing as what religion claims that God was able to achieve by divine creation.

I have sought in as few words as possible to present a fair and balanced summary of the views of a leading scientist in order to illustrate the depth of the challenge that religion faces in the contentious debate over evolution. But before we respond it may be well to let Wilson speak for himself.

I had been raised a Southern Baptist, laid backward under the water on the sturdy arm of a pastor, been born again. I knew the healing power of redemption. Faith, hope, and charity were in my bones, and with millions of others I knew that my savior Jesus Christ would grant me eternal life. . . . But now at college . . . I chose to doubt. . . . most of all [because] Baptist theology made no provision for *evolution*. The biblical authors had missed the most important revelation of all! Could it be that they were really privy to the thoughts of God? Might the pastors of my childhood, good and loving men though they were, be mistaken? It was all too much, and freedom was ever so sweet. I drifted away from the church, not definitively agnostic or atheistic, just Baptist no more.⁹

II.

The logic of Wilson is clear and, on his premises, compelling. He wants us to make a choice, as did he, between science and religion. Nor does he leave any doubt which, in his view, is the better option. If we wish to cling to religion as a relic of the past for purposes of social acceptance, he will understand our decision but regard it as riddled with contradictions. As well as anyone, Wilson forces us to face the gut issue in the evolution debate: are science and religion finally incompatible? His answer is an unequivocal “yes” while mine is a “not necessarily so.” There is opportunity here to deal only with three central presuppositions underlying his verdict, all of which, in my view, seriously misrepresent the Christian faith. To rethink these basic assumptions could open the door to more fruitful avenues of dialogue between long-time adversaries.

The first is Wilson’s formulation of the fundamental issue as a choice between the transcendentalism of religion

and the empiricism of science. He uses these categories to contrast the two worldviews as belonging to opposing camps. Those in the former are idealists while those in the latter are realists. The former reason deductively from general principles while the latter reason inductively from specific facts. The former are supernaturalists who want to escape from this world while the latter are naturalists who want to care for this world. In religion, the chain of causation begins with *ought* and runs downward to make absolute claims based on commandments, while in science the chain of causation begins with *is* and runs upward to make relative choices based on innate feelings and historical experience. For the former, reality is ultimately spiritual while, for the latter, it is ultimately physical. So understood by Wilson, the stakes could not be higher: “The choice between transcendentalism and empiricism will be the coming century’s version of the struggle for men’s souls.”¹⁰

While some of these distinctions may be valid in other religions, they hardly capture the uniqueness of Christianity. Jesus ministered to a people looking for their cherished hope of the Kingdom of God to come “top-down” in supernatural fashion from the heavens, but he taught that it would come mysteriously “from below” like the seed growing under their feet (Mk 4:1-34). The only way it could be observed was inductively, not in external signs and wonders but in the quality of relationships between his followers (Lk 17:20-21). By the time that the Gospel of John was written, Wilson’s split between transcendentalism and empiricism had been overcome in the affirmation that the eternal Logos was embodied in a flesh-and-blood life that entered fully into the particularity of human existence (Jn 1:14). As First John put it, the most transcendent realities in life were heard with our ears, seen with our eyes, and handled with our hands (1 Jn 1:1), which is about as empirical a claim as a first century writer could make! No wonder William Temple called Christianity “the most materialistic of all great religions.”¹¹ So I would counter that the Christian doctrine of incarnation overcomes the necessary dualism between spirit and matter central to Wilson’s understanding.

The second move that Wilson makes is to create an unbridgeable gap between body and soul, the former in the domain of science and the latter in the domain of religion. Thus if religious experiences as subjective as affection or mysticism can be given a biological explanation rooted in genetic history or brain circuitry, then science is entitled to claim them as its own. We have long known the impact of hormones such as testosterone on personality traits, but researchers are now suggesting that neurotransmitters such as dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin are responsible for some of our deepest emotional attitudes.¹² Obviously Wilson thinks that it is only a matter of time until science discovers a physical rather than a metaphysical explanation for everything that we feel, including even the religious impulse itself.¹³

Would such an achievement give science an unqualified victory over religion, confirming the old retort that it's not God but our glands that prompt us to be pious? Consider for a moment the ancient biblical understanding of the self as a unity comprising both body and soul rather than a duality setting the two in opposition as does Wilson. According to the creation account (Gen 2:7), we are not, as the Greeks supposed, an inward spiritual soul trapped in an outward physical body. Rather, we are, in the totality of our being, an indivisible body-soul so that all of our sensations, volitions, and cognitions belong to the whole.¹⁴ In that case it would be normal for the body to reflect the life of the spirit and, conversely, for the spirit to reflect the life of the body. Of course Wilson might reject this ancient Hebrew psychology as nothing more than "Iron Age folk knowledge,"¹⁵ but this wholistic understanding of the physical and spiritual aspects of life as profoundly integrating and reciprocating may point to what psychosomatic medicine is just beginning to teach us. I would be neither surprised nor dismayed if one day science were able to show us that everything we experience in our spirit is implanted in our body and religion were able to show us that everything we experience in our body is implanted in our spirit.

A third dichotomy undergirding Wilson's position is his characterization of religion as static and of science as dynamic. As regards the former, its foundations are frozen in a collection of ancient scriptures that cannot be revised, replaced, or enlarged. The interpretation of these writings long ago hardened into dogma that must be accepted as taught by church authorities. The end result, especially for Baptists, is a fundamentalism that absolutizes the convictions of a few charismatic leaders on threat of exclusion: agree or get out! By contrast, science is a venture of unending discovery. Its every hypothesis must be rigorously tested and immediately discarded if not verified by objective research. This difference was evident in the long journey of Darwin himself. At the outset, he was "quite orthodox," often quoting the Bible to settle points of morality. But gradually he shed his blind faith which, as Wilson puts it, "gave him the intellectual fearlessness to explore human evolution wherever logic and evidence took him."¹⁶

The problem is that this depiction misses the whole point of biblical religion. As regards creation, it began in Genesis as a gradual sequence in six stages and continued throughout the Old Testament as an unending struggle against chaos, causing Jesus to say, "My Father is working still, and I also am working" (Jn 5:17). That work will not be finished until the creation is "set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom 8:21). Indeed, the whole goal of biblical history is "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev 21:1) where the order and harmony of the physical realm will be in every way equal to that of the spiritual realm. As regards adherence to brittle dogma, there is no way to

understand the prophets of the Old Testament, the Jesus of the gospels, or the Paul of the epistles without viewing them as radical reformers intent on shattering the religious status quo. As regards Baptist fundamentalism, it is a pity that the young Wilson left the Baptist fold before learning that our movement emerged out of the left wing of the Reformation as a cry for freedom from the strictures of the established church.

In seeking to overcome these three dualities in Wilson's argument, I am not attempting to correct his scientific views, which I am hardly competent to do, but rather to offer him a different understanding of religion which lies at the heart of biblical faith. Without these corrections the debate is over before it begins. I have no interest in defending the kind of religion that he attacks. But if Wilson is open to consider the perspectives advanced here, the evidence for which is far more extensive than I could mention, then he might realize that there is a valid understanding of religion that is empirical, wholistic, and dynamic in nature, which religion would not only permit but encourage the full exercise of his scientific genius. As matters now stand, Wilson has framed the issues in such a way that to be a good believer is, in the nature of the case, to be a bad scientist, which I am very sure is not the true scandal of the gospel.

III.

Now that we have looked at *how* Wilson and I differ in a few crucial areas, it is time to ask *why* this should be the case. Wilson is a brilliant thinker with remarkably broad interests who has doubtless read more about religion than I have about science. And yet I cannot recognize my religion in what he has to say about Christianity in general or Baptists in particular. A primary reason, I think, is because the sample he selects for study in the two areas are not comparable. As regards science, he limits himself to those biologists, like himself, who are "statured by the peer review and publication of substantial personal research on the subject in leading journals of science . . ."¹⁷ I would guess that there are several hundred thousand scientists in this country teaching in high schools, colleges, and universities or working in business, industry, and government, but that no more than 5,000 of them meet Wilson's definition of "statured." In other words, when he describes science, he is basing his observations on the views of a tightly controlled group of the brightest and best scholars in that discipline.

But when he talks about religion, no such selectivity is at work. While I would not say that he picks the worst possible examples of religious life, his highly generalized descriptions are typical of grass-roots folk religion that might fairly be called "lowest common denominator." In other words, when discussing science he talks about its *providers* but when discussing religion he talks about its *consumers*. But what if we leveled the playing field? There are more than 300,000 Christian clergy in America, some 5,000 of whom may meet Wilson's test of being "stat-

ured,” most of them teaching in universities or theological schools. If Wilson limited his sample of theologians to that highly elitist group, as he does with scientists, a very different picture of religion would emerge, one far more compatible with science than his writings suggest.

Let me illustrate by choosing an example dear to Wilson’s heart. One of the things that repulses him the most about religion is its destructive side, its tendency to demonize those who differ and resort to aggression in the name of God. Again and again he laments the union of religion and tribalism that gives birth to bigotry and violence. Indeed, he is not sure that a rapprochement between science and religion is either possible or desirable because “there is something deep in religious belief that divides people and amplifies societal conflict.”¹⁸ As best I can tell, that sweeping generalization does not describe a single member of the American Academy of Religion, the closest counterpart to Wilson’s “statured” scientists. Instead, the leaders of religion are united in condemning and combating every form of religious aggression, as Wilson could easily verify by stepping next door to observe the work of the Harvard Divinity School faculty.¹⁹

The point, of course, is that any great human endeavor can easily be hijacked, especially a voluntary movement like religion in a country where freedom of belief is so jealously guarded. I deplore the corruption of religion every bit as much as Wilson does and have spent as many years as he has seeking to expose those who would manipulate it for unworthy purposes. But it does not help to be told that the problem is with my religion rather than with those false shepherds who break in to fleece the sheep (Ezek 34:1-16; Jn 10:7-18). After all, science can be hijacked as well. Scientists split the atom to unleash nuclear energy, but I do not condemn them for incinerating whole cities. Scientists developed the chemicals and pesticides needed by modern industry and agriculture, but I do not blame them for poisoning so many of our waterways. Some scientists compromised their objectivity in accepting lavish funding for their research from major pharmaceutical companies, but I do not stereotype all scientists as pawns of big business. There will always be charlatans in the laboratory as well as in the pulpit, as the recent scandal over cloning in South Korea illustrates. The need is not for science and religion to find fault with each other but for both to do everything possible to keep their respective houses in order so as to offer their best for the benefit of the other.

To that end, what can we do to make our church a more welcoming place for scientists? We can begin by cultivating a faith unafraid of fact; a faith willing to think, to question, even to doubt; a faith that does not have all of the answers but is trying to ask the right questions. We can recover a robust doctrine of creation that celebrates each new discovery of its wondrous workings and mandates its perpetual care as a fit habitat for all that lives

upon it. We can rid our relationships of any hint of smug self-satisfaction that assumes that we are always right and that those who differ are enemies worthy of our contempt. We can call forth our best minds to be trained as learned interpreters of both science and religion, knowing that the issues which they pose are not well handled by intellectual laggards. In short, we can *take science seriously*, paying attention to its findings, cheering its discoveries, supporting its progress.

This being a Baptist sermon nearing its end, Wilson would know only too well what comes next: the invitation.²⁰ Nor do we need to be diffident about appealing for decision. One thing that Wilson carried over into science from religion was its evangelistic fervor. Whenever I read his books or hear him speak I am keenly aware that he is trying to convert me to his position. It will not embarrass him to learn that I would like to have him on my side just as much as he would like to have me on his side. His rejection of the religion of his youth does not make him my enemy or even my adversary. Rather, he is to me a lovely and lovable human being with an incredible capacity to appreciate the creativity lurking in life all about us. I cannot think of anyone with whom I would rather stand in these pews and sing a grand old hymn of the faith or chat with after a church dinner about how to live authentically in our crazy kind of world.

But has Wilson strayed so far from the fold that there is no longer any point of contact from which to urge a reconsideration of his avowed secularism? I think not. After more than sixty years he still cannot forget his adolescent flirtation with faith but recounts it in his most recent writings.²¹ As I read between the lines it is hard not to sense a stifled yearning for grace. For example, he tells how, in January, 1984, he was invited by “an old friend with similar Southern Baptist background” to attend a service at Harvard conducted by Martin Luther King, Sr. When the father of the slain civil rights leader finished his homily, “subterranean feelings surfaced without warning” as a choir of black Harvard students surprised me by singing a medley of old-time gospel hymns, with a professionalism equaling anything I ever heard in the churches of my youth. To my even greater surprise, I wept quietly as I listened. My people, I thought. My people. And what else lay hidden deep within my soul?²²

In our Scripture Lesson this morning (Col 1:15-20), Paul addresses a young church struggling with science and religion: how to relate the world around them to the faith within them. His response was that Christ reconciles the realms of creation and redemption. He is both the creator who gave life to all things (v. 16) and the created who made the invisible God visible here on earth (v. 15). To say that “all things” were created *in* him, *through* him, and *for* him was Paul’s way of claiming that Christ gives meaning to our involvement with everything that is. Because of this, in Christ “all things cohere” (v. 17) or, to use Wilson’s word, find their “consilience.” When

neither religion nor science triumphs but Christ is made “preeminent” (v. 18), we may embrace the whole of reality, whether physical or spiritual, and discover the kind of life that is supremely worth living. ■

- 1 Wilson recounts his spiritual odyssey in the memoir *Naturalist* (Washington: Island Press, 1994), 33-46. He made a profession of faith at age fourteen in the First Baptist Church, Pensacola, Florida, and was baptized in February, 1944, by its pastor, Dr. Wallace Rogers, who became a friend of mine many years later during his ministry in Charleston, South Carolina.
- 2 On the sensationalistic “monkey trial” pitting William Jennings Bryan against Clarence Darrow see Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America’s Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion* (New York: BasicBooks, 1997).
- 3 Edward O. Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 297.
- 4 The claim that biology has replaced theology as the queen of the disciplines is the central thesis of Wilson’s major work on *Consilience*, which term means for him the “interlocking of causal explanation across disciplines” (325). For a comprehensive critique of this program which probes many areas into which I cannot enter here see Wendell Berry, *Life Is a Miracle: An Essay Against Modern Superstition* (Washington: Counterpoint, 2000).
- 5 For a convenient summary of Wilson’s views on Darwinism see his “Intelligent Evolution,” *Harvard Magazine*, November-December, 2005, 29-33.
- 6 Wilson, “Intelligent Evolution,” 31.
- 7 Edward O. Wilson, ed., *From So Simple a Beginning: The Four Great Books of Charles Darwin* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005). The article cited in note 5 is a reprint of the essays by Wilson for this volume. The four books of Darwin included here are *Voyage of the Beagle* (1845), *On the Origin of Species* (1859), *The Descent of Man* (1871), and *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872).
- 8 Wilson, “Intelligent Evolution,” 33.
- 9 Wilson, *Consilience*, 6.
- 10 Wilson, *Consilience*, 240.
- 11 William Temple, *Readings in St. John’s Gospel* (London: Macmillan, 1959), xx.
- 12 For recent popular reports see Lauren Slater, “True Love,” *National Geographic*, February, 2006, 32-49; Lori Gottlieb, “How Do I Love Thee?,” *Atlantic Monthly*, March 2006, 58-70.
- 13 For an evolutionary approach to religion see Paul Bloom, “Is God an Accident?,” *Atlantic Monthly*, December, 2005, 105-12.
- 14 A detailed exposition of Hebrew anthropology was worked out by Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, I-II (London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, 1926), 99-181.

- 15 Wilson, *Consilience*, 269.
- 16 Wilson, “Intelligent Evolution,” 33.
- 17 Wilson, “Intelligent Evolution,” 31.
- 18 Wilson, “Intelligent Evolution,” 33.
- 19 The most historic building of the Harvard Divinity School is Divinity Hall where Ralph Waldo Emerson delivered his famous 1838 commencement address. Interestingly enough, it is surrounded by buildings well known to Wilson: the Museum of Comparative Zoology, the Bauer Center for Genomics Research, the University Herbaria, and the Biological Laboratories of the Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology.
- 20 Wilson begins the chapter of his memoir on childhood religion with a vivid description of “the Invitation” to which he responded in January, 1944. See *Naturalist*, 33-36.
- 21 Typical is the way that he inserted this theme into the opening pages of *Consilience*, 5-6. Wilson wanted to title his next book *The Creation: Letter to a Southern Baptist Pastor* but finally decided on *The Creation: A Meeting of Science and Religion*, due out by W. W. Norton in September, 2006.
- 22 Wilson, *Naturalist*, 45-46. I hope that it will not be viewed as special pleading for me to wonder if more than brain circuitry was the cause of those tears.

T. B. Maston—As I Knew Him

(continued from page 2)

Old Testament prophets taught, he lived. He showed us that the theatre of Christian ethics is not the pulpit, the classroom or the counselor’s corner but all of life. . . . Dr. Maston’s message has gone far beyond the notes that we took.”³

Another letter I treasure is more recent—one Bill Moyers wrote in response to my role as editor: “You are doing the Lord’s work. I value every edition of the paper. Dr. Maston would be proud of you.” A high compliment indeed. ■

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- 1 Maston wrote a beautiful 14-page tribute to “Mommie,” his wife Essie Mae, in April, 1980.
 - 2 Maston wrote in long-hand to the end, a secretary transferring his notes to typed copy, which makes this feat even more astounding.
 - 3 William M. Pinson, Jr., ed. *An Approach to Christian Ethics: The Life, Contribution, and Thought of T. B. Maston* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1979), 94. See also William M. Tillman, Jr., ed., *Perspectives on Applied Christianity: Essays in Honor of T. B. Maston*, (Macon, GA: Mercer Univ. Press, 1986).

Darwinian Evolution: Science or Religion?

A Response to Carolyn Dipboye

By Derrel Watkins, Prof. Of Social Work, Emeritus (Ret.)
Fort Worth, TX

For over thirty years I have taught what I call “applied ethics” in theological seminaries and universities. I question conspiracy theories, but as a social scientist I recognize that a group think mentality in a particular population may often appear to be a conspiracy. I think that is what has happened in the “Darwinian Evolution vs Intelligent Design” debate.

The article by Carolyn Dipboye, “Intelligent Design: Science or Religion,” (*Christian Ethics Today*, Winter, 2006, 15-16) raises some questions that I feel need some elaboration. While the article contained some very good information and I respect Dr. Dipboye’s scholarly work, I feel the same question could be asked of contemporary scientists, “Darwinian Evolution: Science or Religion?”

It is my opinion that evolution is a fact of life and should be studied by honest scientists from every vantage point. The origins of life, however, must come under the scrutiny of philosophy and theology. The theories of the origin of the universe espoused by secular philosophies of science and biblical theologies alike are based on presuppositions that cannot be proven by science. Therefore, both groups must exercise a good deal of faith in order to embrace their particular beliefs.

Dr. Dipboye states that “Rather than exhibiting a fearful, protectionist mentality that seeks to put a lid on the questions that may be pursued and the answers that may be gained, we should model a faith so secure that it does not merely allow but actually encourages science’s pursuit of the mysteries of the universe.” Amen! But, that must work both ways if we are to be honest. At the present time it is

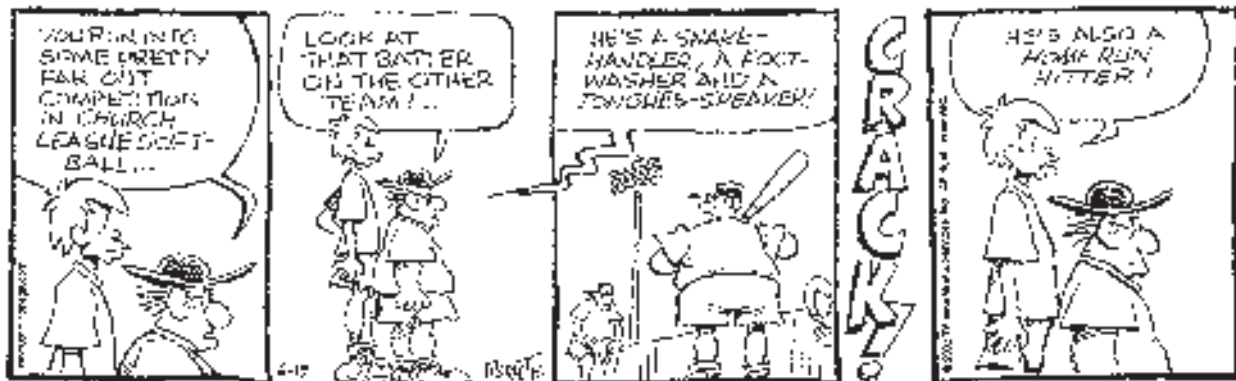
not the “Intelligent Design (ID)” scientists who are unwilling to examine with scientific objectivity the pursuit of the mysteries of the universe, it is the scientific community who is unwilling to examine anything that does not comply with religious adherence to their presuppositions.

Recently, the Board of Education in Ohio, in response to strong lobbying efforts by some scientists, banned a unit of study in science classes. The unit dared to recount the history of changes of Darwinian theories and examine the scientific conclusions that have radically changed over the history of the teaching of evolution in public school classrooms. There was no mention of ID or creation science in the unit. The fact that the unit dared examine the claims of Darwinian evolution was assumed to be drawn from ID literature.

I would say that rather than “exhibiting a fearful, protectionist mentality that seeks to put a lid on the questions that may be pursued and the answers that may be gained,” scientists should examine the hypothesis of any alternative presuppositions, including creation science and ID, and apply the same test to them that are applied to all scientifically examined phenomenon.

As a social scientist I say it can be done and indeed should be done. Open the belly of the feared “Trojan horse.” See what is inside. If your science is what it should be it can readily dismiss any fallacies that may be found.

It seems to me that we are back to an ethical issue: Is the science that refuses to allow units in science classes in public schools to even discuss alternative presuppositions adopting an outdated modernist deontological ethic, or



will contemporary science come into the postmodern world and take an honest look at truth claims regardless of origin? An ethic of responsibility would suggest that if it is to be true to its own claims, science must be open to looking for truth from any source.

I would agree with Dr. Dipboye's conclusions IF middle schools and high schools were allowed to study theology at the same level they study science; if somewhere in their required curriculum they were allowed to examine the claims made by science without being required to accept the atheistic or agnostic assumptions generally presented in science text books.

I do not want religion taught as science, but neither do I want science taught as religion. At the present time evolution is generally taught as a pseudo-religion. Unquestioned adherence to a set of unproven hypothesis has all the earmarks of religion. Scientists admit that they take those presuppositions by faith. For that reason I advocate that middle schools and high schools be allowed to at least recount the unanswered questions and the radically changing foundations of Darwinian evolutionary theory. Since evolution is the dominant scientific hypothesis, I feel it should be taught with integrity to every student, even those in private and church-sponsored schools. ■

A Response to Derrel Watkins

By Carolyn Dipboye

Thank you for your response. I, too, have little appreciation for *group think* and its propensity for building hedges beyond which creative thinking and investigation may not go. If I regarded such dogmatism as the basis for scientists' and educators' reluctance to grant intelligent design the status of scientific theory, I would take issue as well. I do not judge that to be the case.

The article to which you respond was originally presented to the Oak Ridge [Tennessee] Forum on Religion and Science, organized four years ago to provide a meeting place for area scientists, scholars, laity, and clergy. As we who have been involved have worked to learn something of one another's language, methodology, and conclusions, I have encountered the scientific community, not as fearful, but positively gleeful at the prospect of wrestling with challenges. As one person put it, "Scientists love nothing more than to prove one another wrong!" Or as another observed, science is not about the task of "circling the wagons. As a matter of fact, there is no surer way of getting a free ticket to Stockholm [to receive a Nobel Prize]" than to successfully poke a hole in the accepted science of the day. That glee comes to an end when religion seeks to impose

its answers and methodologies upon science. And that, it seems to me is the crux of the problem.

I readily affirm those for whom intelligent design (ID) is a statement of faith in God as creator of a purposeful universe. I also understand that those who know far more of the complexities of the universe than I may view those complexities through the eyes of faith, interpreting them as pointers to the God in whom they believe. Religious faith rightly addresses questions of origin, but as I indicated in my article, faith's questions reflect upon purpose and meaning—questions of "who" and "why" rather than "how." Institutions or persons of faith act inappropriately when they seek to render their faith statements as conclusions of science or their view of God as the presupposition from which science proceeds.

The Ohio Board of Education decision to which you refer demonstrates the problem well. On February 14, 2006, the Ohio Board of Education voted to remove the "Critical Analysis of Evolution" lesson plan from the state's model K-12 science curriculum and deleted from its standards for science education the requirement that students be informed concerning "how scientists continue to investigate and critically analyze aspects of evolutionary theory." When viewed in isolation, the decision may seem to smack of a cave-in to vested interests. The tortured path by which that decision was reached, however, speaks volumes.

The science standards were hammered out in a politically charged atmosphere with the American Family Association of Ohio [www.sciohio.org], the Intelligent Design Network (headquartered in an equally embroidered Kansas) [www.intelligentdesignnetwork.org] and the Discovery Institute of Seattle [www.discovery.org] as prominent players. The standards presented to the Ohio Board of Education by the standards committee (teachers, scientists and others selected by the Ohio Department of Education) received high marks for their handling of science, particularly in light of the fact that the 1996 standards had not even included the word "evolution."

The controversial provision calling for the inclusion of "evidence against evolution" was added by the Board of Education after the committee had completed its work. Responding to criticism of the change, the board added a disclaimer assuring critics that the benchmark did "not mandate the teaching or testing of intelligent design."

Admittedly, the model lesson plan prepared to accompany the disputed benchmark did not use the words "intelligent design." Its structure and content, however, were largely lifted from *Icons of Evolution*, authored by leading ID proponent Jonathan Wells. The plan's bibliography, originally presented to the board by the Discovery Institute's Center for Renewal of Science and Culture Director Stephen Meyer and Senior Fellow Jonathan Wells, was briefly celebrated on the institute's web site as featuring "intelligent design scientists." Some of the lesson plan's most glaring scientific errors were remedied and its bibliography modified prior to approval by a seriously

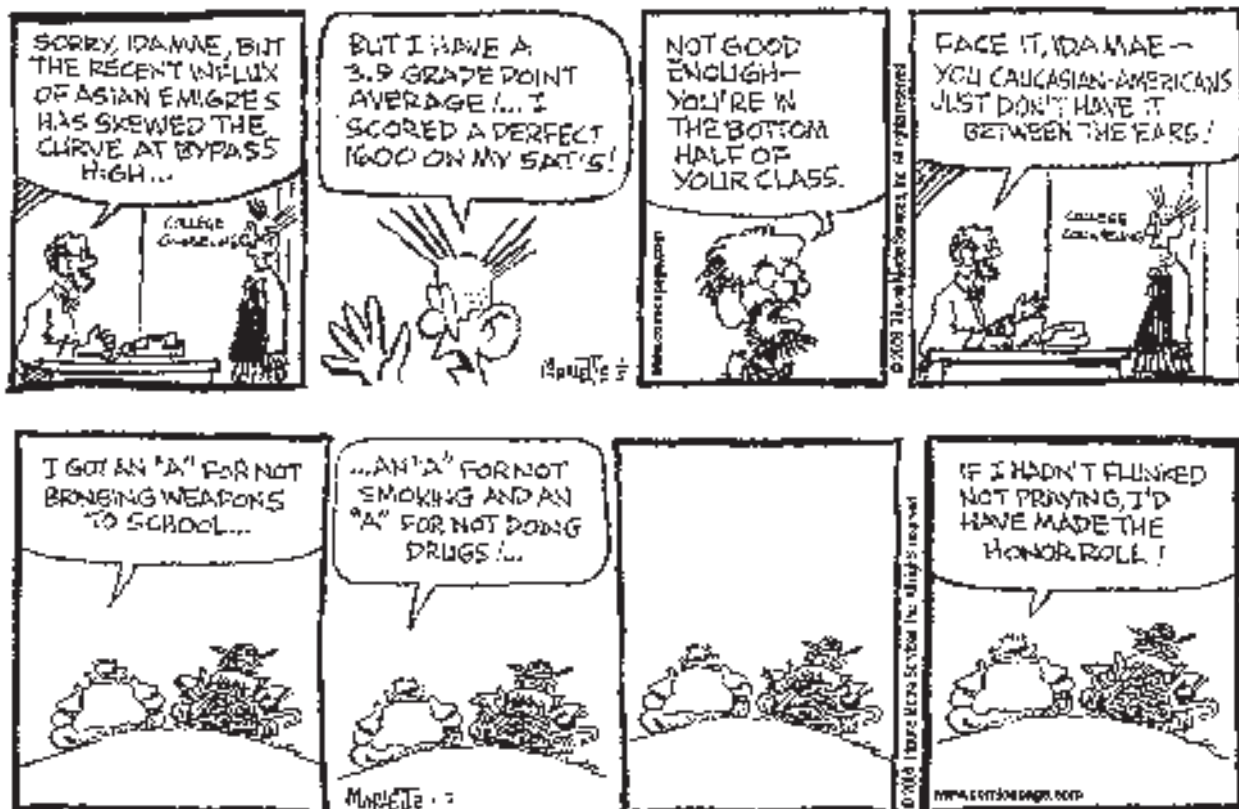
divided board. Yet a number of issues remained—e.g., the inclusion of scientists who disputed the portrayal of their work as a critique of evolution, the favoring of ID and “theistic philosophy” web sites, and the unsubstantiated challenges to various aspects of evolution.

Several factors finally came together prompting the Ohio Board of Education to vote 11-4 in February 2006 to remove the disputed benchmark and lesson plan. Strongly worded condemnations from the National Academy of Sciences, the Ohio Academy of Sciences, Ohio Citizens for Science, and the Inter-University Council of Ohio distinguished between an appropriate appreciation for religious faith and treating religion as science. Negative sentiments were accentuated by the revelation of three significant pieces of information—(1) the Ohio Department of Education had strongly opposed the board’s inclusion of the disputed benchmark; (2) the 55 member advisory and writing committee responsible for the lesson plan had included only 3 scientists, two of whom were creationists; and (3) a large majority of the committee that had originally drawn up the standards issued a stinging rebuke. The final and decisive factor was Judge John Jones’ December 2005 decision in *Kitzmiller v. Dover*, which concluded that Dover’s ID policy violated the Establishment clause of the Constitution. “We have addressed the seminal question of whether ID is science. We have concluded that it is not, and moreover that ID cannot uncouple itself from its creationist, and thus religious, antecedents.”

Although the words “intelligent design” did not appear in the Ohio documents, a brief overview of the principal players and evolution of the debate leave little doubt about its decisive role. Even if one drops reference to a designer in an effort to separate the issue from its religious connotations, serious questions remain. The terminology may shift to terms deemed more appropriate to science, e.g., “critical evaluation of evolution” or “evidences against evolution;” or “micro-evolution” vs. “macro-evolution.” The issues raised, however, are not subject to special treatment. They must be submitted to the rigors of scientific research, and repeatedly the verdict comes back that the challenges do not hold up under scrutiny. If critics of various aspects of evolution desire their conclusions to be included in science education classes, it is only appropriate that they must first make their case within the discipline of science.

“Fairness” is not the issue because we have nothing approaching a serious division within the scientific community. The issue is rather how we should deal with material that is at worst inappropriate to science or demonstrably wrong or at best judged as having yet to make its case.

I do agree with you and with those voicing opposition to the disputed benchmark who have repeatedly observed that the issue does not center on an inherent conflict between science and religion. “Teaching the controversy” has its place within a humanities class dedicated to the history of science or comparative religions, and such classes should be included in the curriculum. ■



W. T. Conner—As I Knew Him

By Darold Morgan, Executive Director of the SBC Annuity Board (ret.)
Richardson, TX

Walter Thomas Conner (1877-1952) is still recognized as one of Baptist's truly great theologians. He began his teaching career in 1910 as Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary moved to Fort Worth from Waco, where it had been a part of Baylor University under B.H. Carroll's powerful leadership. His last year of teaching was in 1949 when a debilitating stroke ended his extraordinary ministry of lecturing and writing and preaching—a ministry which shaped literally thousands of preachers, missionaries, and teachers around the world. He died in 1952.

I had the unique privilege of being in his last group of doctoral students and can recall to this day the shock that followed the announcement of his stroke in the spring of 1949, which ended his active involvement at Southwestern.

Our class was just days away from completing our last required doctoral seminar when this tragedy occurred. Several of us in that group experienced the peculiar frustration of having our doctoral orals and dissertation literally thrown to the winds because our major professor was unable ever to help us again. The seminary leadership did rally to assist us in this demanding part of our degree work, but it was hectic in those first difficult weeks following Dr. Conner's illness.

Interesting enough, that last seminar he led was on "Great Devotional Literature," the only time he ever taught that course. In his final years of teaching he had an increasing interest in the mystical side of the Christian faith. Preeminently a systematic theologian, some of us can recall in those last months of this seminar that he expressed repeatedly some remarkable insights of an intense devotion personally to Jesus as Lord and Savior. For these months we studied some of the masterpieces of Christian devotional material. My assignment was William Law's *A Serious Call to A Holy and Devout Life*. Frankly, I was unaware of this book, but I soon learned why it was so influential upon John Wesley.

What a joy even today to recall listening both to the other students in the seminar and to Dr. Conner as he made such insightful comments on the material. There were papers on Augustine's *Confessions*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Thomas Kelly's *Testament of Devotion*, Thomas a' Kempis *Imitation of Christ*, John Woolman, and other works. This was in such contrast from the obviously practical approach he had made for years in his crowded and mandated classes in Systematic Theology. But it does con-

stitute a beautiful memory about a side to Dr. Conner not many were privileged to experience.

Dr. Conner lived for three years after his stroke. An unusual report circulated around the campus one day that he had repeatedly asked Mrs. Conner the sad question, "Why did God leave me like this?" He was limited to a wheelchair and his bed, and his last years were grim indeed. One day in response to that frequently voiced question, she responded somewhat testily, "Perhaps He left you this way so you could catch up on your praying. You always said before that you didn't have time to pray as you wanted to because you were so busy." Later as she checked on him in the late night hours, she could tell he was awake despite his eyes being closed. His lips were moving in prayer, and often she saw tears on his face as he was in prayer and worship. In the morning hours sometimes he would mention the extraordinary prayer encounters he had experienced in the night.

When I think of Dr. Conner, I recall a tall, gangly, thin man teaching in the large basement classroom of Cowden Hall, long before that array of new buildings graced the campus at Southwestern. We first-year preachers were required to take his year-long courses in theology. Our texts were his famous books *Revelation and God* and *The Gospel of Redemption*. These were revisions of his older text *A System of Christian Doctrine*. As I began my seminary years, World War II was ending and suddenly large numbers of students began showing up on campus. Many were older men, fresh from military service, whose main concerns were evangelism and missions, not systematic theology! The classes were crowded, and Cowden Hall was not air-conditioned.

Conner's approach was the lecture method—period! There were times for questions, but these times were rare. When questions were raised, it confirmed that mature students could ask some very immature questions. He was usually patient with this problem, but there were times when his patience wore thin.

The overflow of new students whose priorities were not learning systematic theology was the setting for one his memorable "Connerisms."—"There is enough ignorance in the Southern Baptist Convention to ignorance the world." This oft-quoted remark, which I first heard in 1945, has been confirmed again and again in the recent SBC conflicts.

Much of his teaching career dovetailed with the exceed-

ingly bitter conflicts of the seminary with the pastor of Fort Worth's First Baptist Church, J. Frank Norris. This original fundamentalist had an almost visceral hatred of L.R. Scarborough, Southwestern's gifted president, and George W. Truett, the long-time chairman of the seminary trustees and the famed pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas. To recall these sad days is to remind us all that conflicts about seminary education among Baptists is perennial!

But Dr. Conner kept to the course of trying to mold the hearts and minds of the students in his classes. "Young men," he would say to every class (no issue then of ordaining women), "test everything you believe by one question—where does it put Jesus Christ!" One of his finer books, *The Faith of the New Testament*, was the text of one of his most interesting classes on New Testament Theology and points to this cardinal truth in his approach. I also recall a colleague mentioning repeatedly the skills Dr. Conner had in New Testament Greek. His little known commentary on John confirms this skill.

Over these fifty plus years in my own pilgrimage since those distant days at Southwestern, I have heard preachers and teachers and others in numberless settings of seminaries, conventions, and worship services. But I have never been as moved as I was so many times in Dr. Conner's classes. There were moments when his eloquence was so overpowering, his logic so forceful, his devotion to Christ so apparent that the force of those moments are still alive and dynamic in me. Although his lectures and prayers were usually monotone, when he shifted gears into the excitement of a particular truth, he was for me beyond Moses and Elijah.

I also treasure the elective courses and the doctoral seminars where even deeper truths were plumbed. Spending an entire semester under his tutelage on specific doctrines was a lifelong privilege of inestimable influence. The topics included the Atonement, the Doctrine of God, the Holy Spirit, and numerous other theological treasures. His last book, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (1949, and out of print for many years) is still brimming with valuable insights, particularly in light of the current Pentecostal resurgence.

An evaluation of Conner's theology is found in several excellent volumes. James Leo Garrett (also in Conner's last group of doctoral students and one of the genuine scholars of our day) wrote his doctoral dissertation on *The Theology of W.T. Conner*. Dr. Garrett has condensed this in his chapter on Conner in *Baptist Theologians*, a superb collection edited by Timothy George and David Dockery. (Broadman Press, 1990) Stewart Newman's biography of his Southwestern colleague, *W.T. Conner, Theologian of the Southwest*, is mandatory reading both as to the details of Conner's long life as well as a very helpful insight into his theological development.

I am suggesting that it is meritorious and worthwhile

to study both the life and teachings of Dr. Conner. We need his balance, as we sense the increasing furor of fundamentalism, so strangely similar to Frank Norris' views in the 1920s and the 1930s. Dr. Conner's conclusions are biblically true to the very core of things.

Plain spoken, direct, and easy to read, Conner's approach theologically is so refreshing in these days of theological confusion. His conclusions are biblically sound to the core. Connor himself would probably be surprised at the emergence of a hyper-Calvinism in some SBC seminary circles. Though he was a "mild" Calvinist, Dr. Conner struck a balance between election and predestination—his assertions about evangelism and the Baptist missionary impetus are strikingly appropriate for our day.

Though he was cognizant of the emerging neo-orthodox movement, led by Barth, Bruner, Bultmann and others (a movement that dovetailed in time with his teaching career), he deliberately chose to approach what he considered to be the heart of New Testament Christianity quite uncritically. Perhaps this was a limitation in his teaching, for his final group of graduate students had to dive into these deep waters alone. Newman suggests in his biography that this was a deliberate choice on Conner's part because the territory where he lived and taught was the American Southwest! Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Chicago, Oxford, and Germany seemed far from the area where his students lived and ministered—pragmatism ruled the day. One can only conjecture what he would say in light of the current ebb tide of post-modernism!

Today, more than a half-century after his life in a time when Conner has been relegated to dusty library shelves, could it be that echoes of this plain and unvarnished teacher call us back to basic truths we need? Today dispensational millennialism is popular and a strident creedalism has become mandatory in many Baptist educational institutions, could it be that an Arkansas-born, Texas-raised, old-time Baptist theologian, one deeply influenced by masters like A.H. Strong and E.Y. Mullins, has a word for our ears to hear? My how we need his refreshing ideas on the inspiration of the Scriptures!

In the sequence of classes and the flow of his writings, Dr. Conner had a distinct apologetic—his defense of the Faith! To his credit, he confronted the dangerous teachings of J. Frank Norris, the Scofield Reference Bible, and its child, dispensationalism. Likewise, he was unapologetic when confronting Christian Science, Mormonism, Jehovah Witnesses, Roman Catholicism, and Pentecostalism. Yet, he was never just a negative critic. At the center of all his writings, there was an intense love and devotion to Jesus as Lord and Savior.

W. T. Conner blended a brilliant mind with a down-to-earth approach, replete with humor and gratitude to God. I think I am one to whom another oft-quoted Connerism applies: "Education is the process of getting abstract ideas into concrete heads." ■

What Mega-Churches Can Learn From Catholics

By Aaron James and Brad Kallenberg
University of Dayton

Mega-churches are not very popular among academics, even Christian ones. At a recent conference of theologians and ethicists, my colleague and I found ourselves on the defensive. According to the bulk of the seminar participants, the failure of mega-churches to form faithful disciples was a foregone conclusion.

This perspective was very troubling to us. Since we could vouch for the genuine and sincere faith of our academic peers, we could not simply dismiss their complaints as spiritually vacuous. At the same time, we could not deny that God's Spirit was genuinely present in our mega-church congregation. Formerly-unchurched persons are coming to faith in Christ and being baptized. Yet there was a ring of truth to their charges. As mega-churches grow like wild fire, many pastors rue the accompanying phenomena of church-hopping and passive spectatorship. Surprisingly, the providential fact that we teach at a Catholic university has helped us see this conflict through new eyes.

For Catholic believers, *everything* is formative because everything is capable of either facilitating or hindering God's redemptive presence. If our Catholic brothers and sisters have a point, perhaps some aspects of mega-church worship that we have typically championed under the name of evangelism ought to be evaluated in the name of discipleship. If everything is formative, we ought to be asking whether everything is contributing toward the formation of Christ-followers. We suggest that at least two things are being overlooked.

Consider first mega-church architecture. Despite the popular belief that mega-churches are marked by robust congregational singing, mega-church architecture may accidentally train us *not* to sing.

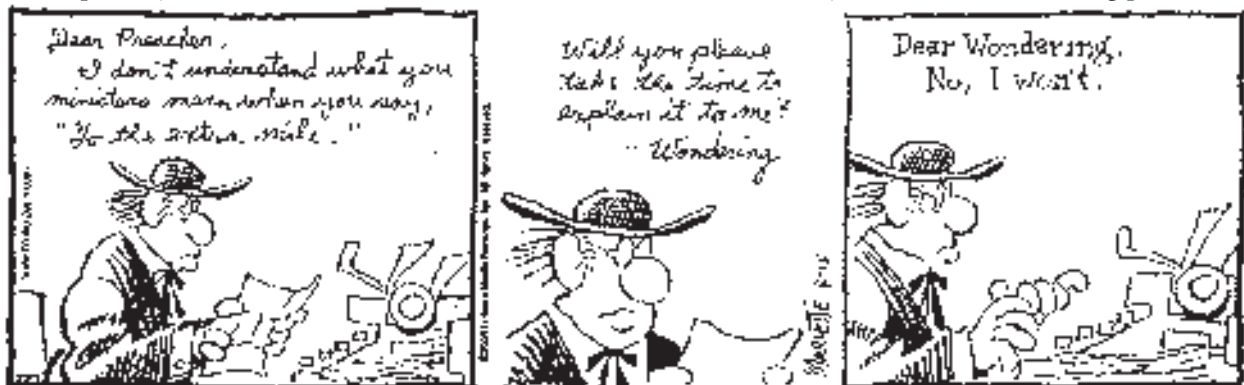
During one of our recent worship services, the sound system temporarily failed while the audience of 1,200

was singing. In the split second before everyone fell silent, we were struck by the lack of volume coming from the chairs. The silence that followed was stunning. Why did the crowd fail to fill up the silence? Perhaps they fell silent waiting for directions. Perhaps they didn't know the music. Perhaps they weren't singing to begin with. Whatever the reason, the architecture made things worse.

Some architecture accidentally undermines Christian worship. The acoustics of many mega-church buildings are intentionally designed to maximize the clarity and volume of the public address system. One architectural assumption seems to be that the on-stage performers are of central importance. The performers must be clear enough and loud enough to override the inevitable errant notes and hesitancy of people who are struggling to learn a new tune by ear.

A second architectural assumption seems to be that, acoustically, the building structure must *swallow* all the ambient noise that a crowd of 1,000 (or 2,000 or 4,000) generates, so that everyone (including the television re-broadcast audience) can listen to the musicians and the pastor without distraction.

The impact of this architecture on corporate worship is in some cases crippling: the interior architecture ends up forming attenders to be little more than polite spectators. When the sound went out in our mega-church that Sunday morning, the silence emanating from the stage was taken as just one more cue to which attenders in the padded seats must politely respond in kind. Not that the acoustical vacuum could have been overcome had the crowd wanted to do so. But the real point is this: it didn't dawn on them to try, because the architecture had been forming us, over many Sundays, toward the assumption that we the audience are auxiliary to the real action taking place on stage.



Consider, as a second example of accidental formation, the role of the calendar. Early Christians recognized and celebrated many festivals and feasts, even those that did not conveniently fall on the weekend. They not only celebrated Easter and Christmas, they also commemorated important leaders, such as Philip (May 3; see Acts 8), and celebrated significant events, such as Pentecost (May 15; Acts 2). Even weekends were different: Sunday displaced Saturday as the week's highpoint, set aside for remembering the resurrection of the Lord.

Those early Christians organized a whole calendar of feasts and festivals, but not because they had a stubborn impulse to supplant the freedom of grace with rites and rituals. Rather, it was precisely because grace was poured out on every instant of time that Christians thought every day, as well as the ebb and flow between religious seasons, was worth observing. They believed that time itself found its rhythm in the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus. So every opportunity was taken to extend that new order through the joyful celebration of holidays, or more literally, "holy days."

In our contemporary urgency to evangelize the non-churched, mega-churches haven't simply neglected the ancient church calendar, they may be unwittingly "kow-towing" to the secular calendar. This past year, Pentecost fell on the same Sunday as Mother's Day. Millions of flowers were given to mothers exiting mega-churches after hearing sermons on Proverbs 31. Meanwhile, the epoch-making outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the first disciples escaped everybody's attention. The irony, of course, is that in the name of being seeker-friendly, we may be in danger of accidentally forming Christians to mark time by the tick-tock of Hallmark.

Some may be surprised to learn that the earliest Christians treated Easter as a *season* rather than a single day. We don't mean the 40 days of fasting (called "Lent") that leads up to Easter Sunday. We mean the 50 days *after*.

A week or so after Easter, one of our Catholic colleagues robustly proclaimed "Happy Easter!" To my rebuff that she was about a week late, she exclaimed: "Don't you know? *Fifty days of boundless Easter joy!*"

Fifty? Fifty! Of course—all the way until Pentecost. My first thought was, "Wow! How wonderful!" My second thought: "Why didn't *we* think of this?"

Does it matter that Easter is fifty days rather than one? Yes; Easter is a season rather than an event. When we learn to live seasonally, we learn to persevere from one day to the next, despite temporary droughts, rather than hop from one event to the next, or worse, from one church to the next. Maybe we shouldn't be patting ourselves on the back for shunning the liturgical calendar.

We genuinely believe that many mega-churches rightly take seriously the call to go and make disciples. If we in mega-churches are to form faithful disciples, we must begin talking about the process of accidental formation that is happening right under our noses. ■

Movie Reviews

(continued from page 31)

in the local Baptist Church on the day when Rose Mary's son joins the church. (You know it is a Baptist Church because the ritual is by immersion, and the pastor intones the Trinitarian baptismal formula.) Rosa Lee thanks the Lord for His blessings and tender mercies.

The setting for the film is the wide-open blacklands of central Texas during the fall and winter months. The cotton fields are bare, and the terrain is chilly and bleak. All you can see is level land to a distant horizon, topped by a cloudless blue sky, with straight furrows stretching away in the distance. Every time a road is shown, it is a country crossroads, as Mac decides which turn he should take in his broken-down pickup truck.

Sledge's life story was gritty and realistic. At the peak of his career, he had succumbed to the temptations of fame and fortune. As a consequence, his first wife, also a country musical artist, left him and took their daughter with her. He became alienated from both of them for years. Now, he realizes it is time to make amends. His ex-wife is unresponsive to his overtures. In a touching scene, he manages to reconnect with his daughter anyway. She's now a young woman on the verge of her own rebelliousness. Tragedy ensues when, shortly afterwards, the young woman loses her life in a car accident while running away with an older man.

The climax of the movie comes about in a magic moment as Mac and Rosa Lee are weeding their tiny garden behind the motel. Mac has a rare introspective moment, and he begins to review his life's losses to Rosa Lee. "I prayed last night to know why I lived and she died. But I got no answer to my prayer. I still don't know why she died and I lived. I don't know the answers to nothing. Not a blessed thing. . . . My daughter killed in an automobile accident. Why? You see I don't trust happiness. I never did, and I never will."

The scene is a gem of understatement. It was shot in one take, uncut, at medium long range. Duvall even spoke with his back to the camera. Director Beresford allowed no schmaltz, no ham, no close-ups. At its conclusion, Rosa Lee makes no overt response except to turn away stoically; but you can sense that his deep pain is killing her, too. Despite all his disappointments, grief, and smoldering anger, he stays with Rosa Lee. In the final scene, he is in the driveway with his stepson, in his jeans and cowboy boots, playing a game of touch football.

Tender Mercies is itself the story of a country music song with a rural Gospel twist. It shows, but it does not preach. Duvall does not identify himself personally with this kind of religious expression, but in his work he has always paid homage to the dignity and worth of faith, including the simple faith of common folks with real human faults. ■

Coming Home Disillusioned

By Christopher H. Sheppard
Special to The Seattle Times

Three years ago, I was a Marine Corps captain on the Iraqi/Kuwaiti border, participating in the invasion of Iraq. Awestruck, I heard our howitzers thunder and watched artillery rockets rise into the night sky and streak toward Iraq—their light bathing the desert moonscape like giant arc welders.

As I watched the Iraq war begin, I completely trusted the Bush administration. I thought we were going to prove all of the left-wing antiwar protesters and dissenters wrong. I thought we were going to make America safer. Regrettably, I acknowledge that it was I who was wrong.

I believed the Bush administration when it said Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. I believed its assertion that Iraq was trying to buy yellowcake uranium from Africa and refine it into weapons-grade uranium for a nuclear bomb. I believed its claim Iraq had vast quantities of biological and chemical agents. After years of thorough inspections, all of these claims have been disproved.

I believed the administration when it claimed there was overwhelming evidence Iraq was in cahoots with al-Qaida. In January 2004, then-Secretary of State Colin Powell admitted that there was no concrete evidence linking Saddam Hussein and al-Qaida.

I believed the administration when it grandly proclaimed we were going to bring a stable, Western-style liberal democracy to Iraq, complete with religious tolerance and the rule of law. We never had enough troops in Iraq to restore civil order and the rule of law. The Iraqi elections have produced a ruling majority of Shiite fundamentalists and marginalized the seething Sunni minority. Iraq dangerously teeters on the brink of civil war. We have emboldened Iran and destabilized the entire Middle East.

I believed the administration when it claimed the war could be done quickly and cheaply. It said the war would cost only between \$50 billion and \$60 billion. It said that Iraqi oil revenue would fund the country's reconstruction. I believed President Bush when he landed on the USS Lincoln and said "major combat operations have ended."

The war has cost the American taxpayers \$250 billion and counting. The vast majority—94 percent—of the more than 2,300 United States service members killed in Iraq have occurred since Bush's "Top Gun" proclamation. The cost in men and materiel has been far beyond what we were led to believe.

I volunteered to go back to Iraq for the fall and winter of 2004-2005. I went back out of frustration and guilt; frustration from watching Iraq unravel on the news and guilt that I wasn't there trying to stop it. Many fine Marines from my reserve battalion felt the same and volunteered to go back. I buried my mounting suspicions and mustered enough trust and faith in my civilian leadership to go back.

I returned disillusioned by what I saw. I participated in the second battle of Fallujah in November 2004. We crushed the insurgents in the city, but we only ended up scattering them throughout the province. The dumb ones stayed and died. The smart ones left town before the battle, to garner more recruits and fight another day. We were simply the "little Dutch boy" with our finger in the dike. In retrospect, we never had enough troops to firmly control the region; we had just enough to maintain a tenuous equilibrium.

I now know I wrongfully placed my faith and trust in a presidential administration hopelessly mired in incompetence, hubris, and a lack of accountability. It planned a war based on false intelligence and unrealistic assumptions. It has strategically surrendered the condition of victory in Iraq to people who do not share our vision, values, or interests. The Bush administration has proven successful at only one thing in Iraq—painting us into a corner with no feasible exit.

I will never trust any of them again. ■

Christopher H. Sheppard is a former Marine captain who served two tours of duty in Iraq as a combat engineer. He currently is finishing his master's degree in mass communication and lives in Marysville, WA.

Preachers and War

By Don Wilkey, Pastor

First Baptist Church, Onalaska, TX

Celebrities often comment on U. S. foreign policy, especially in regard to the war with Iraq. Everyone has the freedom to “speak out” in our democracy. However, many of us might be surprised to learn that throughout our history, prominent ministers have been as outspoken as present-day Hollywood personalities.

The nation has a rich history of ministers who have gone to the public airways in time of war, either as hawks or doves. Until recently, the hawk model has been the most common response.

German churches offered their church bells to be melted down into cannon balls for use in World War I. They no doubt had gleaned the idea from southern Protestant churches, who did the same during the Civil War. Cautious pacifism has always seemed to be a stance more equated with cowardice than with Christian ethics. Most recently, the splinter group who left the Baptist General Convention of Texas equated being a pacifist with being a pagan.¹

In the 1930s, Arkansas passion play founder and preacher Gerald Smith formed a political party with Father Charles Coughlin, who was a Catholic priest. Smith, Coughlin and others of like mind formed the organization seeking to keep the nation out of World War II. Gerald taught followers the fascist salute, while Coughlin got on the radio to proclaim national problems were caused by American Jews.² Both had a national following and some historians credit them with founding the modern Religious Right.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt grew weary of dealing with Coughlin and a Lutheran preacher known as Gerald Winrod. Winrod ran for national office from Kansas and was known as the “Jayhawk Nazi.” You could guess what Winrod’s politics were. His radio broadcasts seemed to undermine the war effort in the U.S.³

The Roosevelt administration eventually brought criminal charges against the Kansan, saying he was a threat to national security. FDR tried to get the Vatican to deal with Coughlin, who was reported to have received funds from the Third Reich.

Viet Nam-era folks might recall seeing a few ministers holding posters against the war. The war also had ministerial backing. Fundamentalist leader Carl McIntire, who was defrocked by the Presbyterians, often held rallies in support of the war.⁴ Colonel R. B. Thieme, head of a

national tape ministry, often preached wearing a military uniform. Thieme, who uttered profanities from the pulpit, once told his listeners it was their “God given right to kill Gooks.” A modern Religious Right preacher, Rick Scarborough, seems to be following their example.

Televangelists Jack Van Impe and John Hagee have packed their TV programs with charts on the end of the world, laced with biblical predictions regarding the region of the Iraq conflict. Popular black preacher T. D. Jakes was recently pictured preaching in military camouflaged fatigues, with a downed helicopter for his backdrop.

President Bush’s own denomination, the Methodists, have had an ethics leader who pastors in Washington D.C., come out publicly against the Iraq war. Rev. James Forbes of Riverside Church in New York City, allowed anti-war demonstrators to use his church for a rally. I was in the audience when Forbes declared that real regenerated people are not for the war with Iraq. In Baptist lingo, that means you are not saved if you are for the war.

Meanwhile, Southern Baptist’s national ethics organization head endorsed the conflict, saying it falls under the category of a “just war.”⁵ The SBC passed a unanimous resolution at a national meeting endorsing the war. In contrast, President Jimmy Carter wrote in the New York Times that the war did not fit the qualifications of a “just war.”

Religious-right writer Gary North has called attention to the split between the neo-conservatives and the religious Reconstructionists. Although ultra-conservatives, R. J. Rushdoony and North differ with the new political hawks; they are not supporters of Israel. North claims U.S. foreign policy is influenced too much by pro-Israel proponents, based on a faulty eschatology.⁶ These two have opposed the Gulf and Iraq wars on the grounds the conflicts aid the Jews in Israel. North states that both he and the founder of Reconstructionism are anti-Zionists. Of added interest is North’s statement that he and Rushdoony do not believe the U.S. has fought a legitimate war since 1783. Thus, all wars since then were unjust, including the Civil War. Rushdoony once wrote that the real glory days for the nation were found in the antebellum South. The publication also claimed the “Christian South” fought against a “Universalist North” and lost the Civil War because they did not remain faithful to God, who surely favored their viewpoint.

Many would be astounded to find that the hardcore element in the Reconstructionist movement believes World War II was not a legitimate ethical effort on the part of the nation. Recently the John Birch Society magazine, a favorite among that crowd, suggested President Bush had a hidden agenda in Iraq. He was secretly clearing the way for the United Nations to control the world.

In the early 1900s, national preachers Harry Fosdick and George Truett used their pulpits to support the U. S. entering World War I. Though these men were miles apart in their theology, they both later regretted allowing themselves to be drawn into promoting America's participation in the war. Their note of caution appears to go unheeded by the current generation of ministers.

Billy Graham, as an international evangelist, has tried to steer clear of partisan politics or the public endorsement of politicians or their views. However, he has spoken forcefully on moral issues, such as the Salt II treaty. This approach has enhanced his worldwide ministry and often given him a platform to speak a prophetic word in many nations.

Preaching is often equated with "thus saith the Lord." Yet too often, personal opinions and political viewpoints seem to get mixed up with divine mandates.

In the Old Testament and in many nations today, ministers are exempt from military service. However, this exemption does not imply their role was to remain home to determine national policy or organize political movements. The "word of the Lord" is best heard from the lips of a prophet who cannot be accused of partisan politics. ■

- 1 Gary Ledbetter, "Pacifism and Moral High Ground," *Southern Baptist Texan*, Feb. 17, 2003, 4.
- 2 Gustavus Myers, *A History of Bigotry in the United States* (New York: Random House, 1943), 432, 444.
- 3 John Roy Carlson, *Undercover* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1943), 165-166, 169, 172.
- 4 *Current Biography*, 1971, 248.
- 5 Tammi Ledbetter (ed.), "Culture Watch," *Southern Baptist Texas*, Feb. 17, 2003, 12.
- 6 Gary North, "Neoconservatism vs. Christian Reconstructionism," *Chalcedon*, Nov/Dec 2005, 13-14.

Selling Spirituality

(continued from page 29)

point of resistance to the forces of 'The Market,' which now functions with a God-like authority in most arenas of human life.

The book draws on insights from social and cultural theory, the history of psychology, and the study of Asian philosophies, postcolonial theory and, as an integrating discipline, the politics of knowledge. The authors are well qualified for their work: Carrette has a background in religious studies from a sociology of knowledge perspective and King is a scholar of Indian philosophy and religion. They bring the perspective of academics in philosophy and cultural theory rather than religious practitioners or theologians, although it is evident that they have a clear perspective on, and respect for, religious faith.

The scholarship behind the book is carefully researched and well documented. Yet Carrette and King wear their scholarship lightly—there is lack of jargon and a clear style that make the book easily accessible to the general reader. They offer a cogent analysis of the co-option of religious metaphors and language by the forces of 'the market' and neo-liberal theory that are now dominant and are seen as the only models capable of delivering effective outcomes in many different areas of social life. Their thesis is that this drains religion (of any authentic tradition) of its essential vitality and integrity.

However, the seduction and co-option of religion and its repackaging as a product in the consumer marketplace is not an irresistible process. They argue in their conclusion that we "must find alternative models of 'spirituality' that pay attention to the politics of knowledge, community and questions of social justice".

I started reading the book when I was working as a consultant in the world of business and large organizations. I was also managing 'spiritual care' professionals in a large Australian welfare organization. Carrette and King's analysis of the dynamics of the spirituality movement were uncomfortably close to the mark! Now I am working again as a pastor in a local church context and their comments are even more timely. They make the point near the end of their analysis that "(t)he very conceptual spaces of contemporary life have been ideologically soaked in the language and ideology of the market" (170).

This is not just a book for those involved in 'marketplace spirituality' but for anyone who is trying to think and act from a position of faith within this 'ideologically soaked' environment. ■

This review first appeared in Soundings, a publication of the Centre for Christian Ethics, Morling College, Sydney, Australia, Editor Rod Benson.

Are You Heading Toward Meltdown?

By Patti Cappa, Executive Director
Marble Retreat, Marble, CO

Yes—even Christian leaders have meltdowns! They lose their firm grasp on why they are doing what they are doing, why they are where they are! This is often the case for those who come to Marble Retreat. Christian men and women forget they are human. They expect too much from themselves, their spouses, and their families. Many succumb to the subtle trap of perfectionism. They preach a gospel of grace and live a life of works.

Don't we all love the idea of a perfect minister and minister's wife; a perfect family, an ideal lay leader—in short, the perfect Christian? This is such a set up! We find there is no one to whom we can admit our doubts, failures, our sense of weariness, and the emptiness inside. We become actors playing a part that becomes too heavy to bear. We ignore the truth that life, with all its imperfections, happens to Christians just like it happens to anyone else.

At Marble Retreat we encourage people to *allow themselves to be human*, to lament over sins, to cry out with joy over accomplishments, to express sorrow in suffering—to *be authentic human beings*. Amid the majesty of the Elk Mountains, the swoosh of the Crystal River a mile below, and the sound of the breeze that we hear coming minutes before we feel it, we ask our guests to go through the pages of their own books. A maximum of eight guests for each

two-week period find here a safe place to *be who they really are*. Hurting individuals—from pulpit to pew—come “in the eye of a storm” or to prevent a brewing crisis. We offer compassionate, confidential Christ-centered counseling to those who experience burnout, depression, relational conflict, midlife crisis, an emotional or physical affair; and/or struggle with sexual addiction or pornography.

One participant expressed his gratitude in the following way: “As you know, we scarred people still have a lot of ministry ahead of us. You have kept us in the race, helping us to finish our courses well and serve Him as faithfully as we can. How many hundreds of thousands of people your work touches as, week by week, we go down from this mountain into the trenches! You will go with us there. Picture God's work through your lives as spreading waves of grace and truth, reaching across the states and into the lives of still more hurting people, most of whom you will never meet this side of heaven.” ■

Founded by Dr. Louis and Melissa McBurney in 1974 for clergy-care, Marble Retreat is now under the direction of Dr. Steve Cappa, Clinical Director, and Patti Cappa, Executive Director. Marble Retreat has recently enlarged its ministry to include all those in Christian service and fellowship. For more information call (888) 216-2725 or visit www.marbleretreat.org.



News Coverage In Texas Is Good, But . . .

By Britt Towery, Baptist Missionary (ret.)
Brownwood, TX

The first time I wrote a letter to a sitting American President was when I lived in Taiwan. I have no idea now what prompted me to write President Lyndon B. Johnson. But the reply I got was from his Press Secretary, Bill Moyers.

That reply may have been a standard letter sent to everybody who wrote the president. But to get any kind of reply encouraged me to think we might mean more to them than just another vote.

Bill Moyers, Press Secretary to President Johnson, newspaper editor, broadcast journalist, and presently President of the Schumann Center for Media and Democracy, said the following in one of his recent speeches:

Look back at the bulk of legislation passed by Congress in the past decade: an energy bill which gave oil companies huge tax breaks at the same time that Exxon Mobil just posted \$36.13 billion in profits in 2005 and our gasoline and home heating bills are at an all-time high; a bankruptcy "reform" bill written by credit card companies to make it harder for poor debtors to escape the burdens of divorce or medical catastrophe; the deregulation of the banking, securities and insurance sectors which led to rampant corporate malfeasance and greed and the destruction of the retirement plans of millions of small investors; the deregulation of the telecommunications sector which led to cable industry price gouging and an undermining of news coverage; protection for rampant overpricing of pharmaceutical drugs; and the blocking of even the mildest attempt to prevent American corporations from dodging an estimated \$50 billion in annual taxes by opening a PO Box in an off-shore tax haven like Bermuda or the Cayman Islands.

That is one long litany of what our elected government servants have been doing to us. This news has been in our papers, but how many of us really take notice or want something better? But more important is the context in which it was written. The United States is facing some real problems to which there are no easy answers.

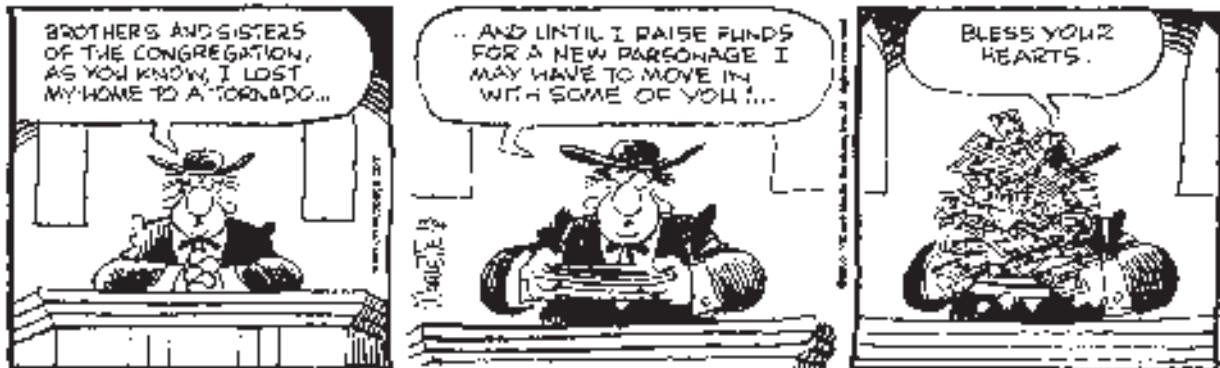
To find an answer, first know what the problem is. It is not a Republican or Democrat problem. It is a constitutional problem. Much of what Moyers' is writing about stems from misuse of the constitutional powers of both the president and Congress. The U.S. President is not a king, nor a dictator. He cannot have his every whim. Congress' duty is to maintain oversight on the Executive and Judicial branches of government. There has been absolutely no oversight by Congress the past six years.

Had there been proper oversight, Iraq would not have been invaded; Iran and other countries would not have been labeled evil; the world would not hate our government as much as they do today.

Our one-party state needs more Independents to run for office. I did not vote in the Primary Elections because I just might sign on for an Independent this year. The one who once had a country band and likes huge cigars. A friend up in Washington state sent me an e-mail after Tuesday's Primary that sums up the feelings of many patriotic Americans fed up with corruption and arrogance in the White House and Congress.

She wrote: "Can you believe DeLay got the GOP nomination? Those people down there in Houston just not read, or is the news coverage that bad in Texas?"

The news coverage in Texas is pretty good. Just not many people are reading the papers or even using the common sense God gave a goat! ■



Book Reviews

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

Changing the Face of Hunger

Q&A With Sam Hodges

Dallas Morning News

Tony Hall's new book, *Changing the Face of Hunger*, (W Publishing Group, \$21.99) achieves the rare, perhaps unprecedented, feat of drawing blurbs from liberal comedian Al Franken and conservative columnist Cal Thomas.

"Tony Hall is a hero to the widest spectrum of Americans and citizens of the world, because of who he is, and what he's done for the poor," Mr. Franken writes.

As a longtime Democratic congressman from Ohio, Mr. Hall made world hunger and poverty his focus, once fasting for 22 days to protest the dismantling of a House hunger committee. Mr. Hall continued to press for hunger relief in his just-completed term as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture.

Changing the Face of Hunger describes how Mr. Hall's born-again Christianity has informed his work, and prompted him to form close friendships and working relationships with Republicans such as U.S. Rep. Frank Wolf of Virginia.

Three times nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, Mr. Hall expects soon to be back in the fray, working for a nongovernmental relief organization. For now, he's on a book tour. He was in Dallas last month, doing broadcast interviews and speaking at Criswell College. That's where Staff Writer Sam Hodges caught up with him. Here are excerpts from their conversation.

In a highly partisan era, you have managed to make

friends across party and ideological lines. How?

I learned, through association with a couple of Republican congressmen and a couple of Democratic congressmen. We would get together to pray. When you pray together and read the Scriptures and talk about your life, then over time you begin to trust each other. We decided to focus on those things that we agreed on, like family values, abortion, human rights, hunger, and poverty. It worked fine. We passed a lot of legislation.

What should be done in Sudan's Darfur region, where civil war has left at least 100,000 civilians dead and driven nearly 2 million into refugee camps?

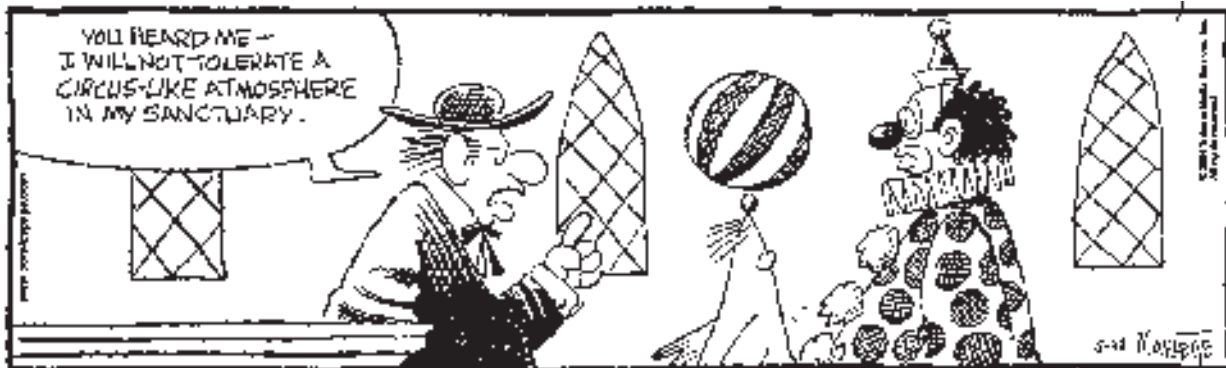
I've been there. The women can't go outside the camps at night or they get raped. If the men go outside, they're killed. These are people who were farmers and also pastoralists [tenders of grazing animals]. They want to go back and plant and get their livestock, if it still exists, but they can't because of the civil war, the corruption, the power, the people who control the guns.

It's a security problem, No. 1. And until it gets secure, nothing's going to happen there. It'd be great if the United Nations could go in there, if they [the Sudanese] would let us. It would be even better if the African nations handled the problem themselves and put their own troops in there, in a large way.

Of the international programs aimed at fighting poverty, which work best?

School feeding is a very good one. When we have school feedings, we get the kids back in school. They're learning, and they get lots of calories and nutrition they could never get at home. Some of these kids are lucky to get a meal every one or two days.

Immunization programs are very important. In sub-



Saharan Africa, they don't have enough water, so digging wells is very important.

Another program that really works is teaching mothers how to read and write. They get very smart right away. They learn about nutrition, about breast-feeding, about boiling water. The kids are healthier, the country prospers and the population goes down.

Why does the population go down?

The mothers see children as their social security. They know some of them are going to die, but they know some will live, so they have eight children and hope that some will be around to take care of them when they're old. But if you teach mothers to read and write, their kids are healthier, and they don't feel they have to have as many.

Is there one national success story you'd point to in Africa?

I can point to a lot of projects that are successful. And I can point to some countries that are doing better than others, like Ghana, Uganda and South Africa. But then I can point to countries that are in trouble, like Zimbabwe. This guy—[President Robert] Mugabe—he kicks all the farmers off and turns the farms over to his family. The first thing the family members do, they dig out the irrigation pipelines and sell them. That's why half the farms don't work. A country that used to feed all of southern Africa now has to be fed.

How has President Bush done on fighting world poverty?

I've served under five presidents. He's the best. That always surprises people. But by far, he has given more food aid, more HIV aid and more development assistance, especially to Africa. He doesn't get any credit for this. He should.

You come at hunger work from an evangelical Christian perspective, correct?

Yeah. I didn't grow up with it. I came to faith very late in life. I was about 37. I didn't come from a family that knew anything about it, or talked about it. None of my friends were believers. I had to go to the Congress of the United States to become a believer. It was in my first term.

How did it happen? Did somebody witness to you?

I had had pretty good success in my life, but I was getting tired of my ambition, my selfishness, my pride. I heard a couple of speakers. Chuck Colson was one of them. Then I went on a search. I searched about a year and a half, then I went to Congress. A freshman in Congress befriended me—a friend from here in Texas [the late Democrat] Marvin Leath. He helped me a lot.

Is there one verse or story in the Bible that most speaks to you about hunger relief?

There are a couple of verses in Proverbs that I really like. In Chapter 14, God says if you are gracious to the poor "you honor me." And he says almost the same thing in Chapter 19, but in a different way. He says if you take care of the poor "you lend to me." That's pretty amazing.

Why have Democrats struggled with the evangelical Christian vote, and how can they do better?

They've always believed that you shouldn't have to talk about your faith. They've felt your actions speak to what kind of person you are. But they're finding out that the Republican Party has been pretty smart in the way that they've captured that [evangelical] vote. I've talked to Democrats, worked with them, told them, "You've got to start talking about ...[your faith], 'cause people want to know."

People say to me all the time, "How can you be a Democrat and be a Christian?" I don't try to get in an argument, but I might say something funny like, "When Jesus came into Jerusalem, did he come in on an elephant or a donkey?" ■

This article was first published in the Dallas Morning News and is reprinted with permission.

Our Endangered Values

Jimmy Carter, *Our Endangered Values: America's Moral Crisis*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005).

Reviewed by James M. Dunn, Professor of Christianity and Public Policy

Wake Forest University Divinity School

"Miz Lillian," President Carter's mother dutifully but cordially met a reporter at her front door. Jimmy was running for President, telling Americans, "I'll never lie to you."

The reporter, some sort of Yankee, tested mother Carter's patience. "Hasn't Jimmy Carter ever lied," he asked.

Oh, maybe little white lies," Mrs. Carter responded.

"What's a white lie?" he pushed.

"Oh, you know," she said, "like the one I told when I greeted you just now: 'It's so good to see you.'"

"Jimmy Carter telling the truth" might suffice for a review of this book. That says it.

Yet, facts, the truth, unknown or at least undigested by most folks, shock and surprise when set out so simply, clearly, and matter-of-factly. With calm courage Jimmy Carter surveys the damage done by political and religious fundamentalism.

Why is Mr. Carter's detailed indictment so hard for many Americans to believe? Several factors obtain. The electorate is invincibly, dumbfoundingly ignorant! When it comes to elementary civics, government, politics, economics, world affairs, and even geography, "we the people" know more about The Simpsons and American Idol than we know about our civic duties. (Really, check it out) Then, the reports of national media are watered down and

colored by the corporate owners of those outlets.

There is no Walter Cronkite anymore. Both political parties are so dependent upon campaign contributions of the rich and powerful, so besieged by lobbyists (more than 80 for every member of Congress), it's hard to govern. Finally, the fact that one party rules all three branches of government has occasioned remarkable abuse—ignoring time limits on votes, failing to have hearings on proposed legislation, banning the minority in conference committees. *etc. ad nauseam.*

Whatever has endangered our values, it is high time that every American who can read, read Jimmy Carter telling the truth. If one cannot read, have it read to him or her.

Wise man, Garry Wills, is right in his assessment of Carter's perspective. He says, "Carter is an old fashioned Baptist, the kind that follows the lead of the great Baptist Roger Williams—that is, he is the firmest of believers in the separation of church and state." Wills goes on, however, to escape the pitfalls of unbelieving secularism and fanatical fundamentalism, in interpreting Jimmy Carter. "None of us," Wills says in the *New York Review of Books*, "professes a separation of morality and politics." Wills and Carter affirm that believers "derive many if not most of their moral insights from their beliefs, they must mingle religion and politics, without equating the two."

Exactly right—mingle without merging!

This veteran participant observer of religion and politics is struck with the accuracy of Mr. Carter's analyses.

He begins with an affirmation of his own life-shaping faith (16-29). It is biblical in the best sense: it relies on biblical authority, is formed by an experience of God's grace, knows the leadership of the Holy Spirit, is tested by the fellowship of believers, cares about sharing the good news, and practices a stewardship of influence and resources.

Here is a brilliant, worldly man who is not simply on some spiritual "head trip." He makes it clear that current fundamentalism is an alternative set of beliefs to biblical Christianity. The dead letter of the law distances fundamentalism from vital faith. Carter observes that fundamentalists often have some sort of sex problem or collective insecurity that calls forth a focus on abortion, pornography, homosexuality, and other remotely related issues (65-68).

He sets out a compelling case against capital punishment. "Since you have violated 'thou shalt not kill,' I'll just kill you" (79-85).

His eloquent appeal for human rights is frightening in his descriptions of bloody abuses around the world (116-133). He points out the absurdity of a failed but budget-busting "Star Wars" missile defense.

He graphically pictures a "war on terror" that has become history's greatest terror producing war. He goes on to make a strong case for universal health care, the environment (164-177), gun control, and checks on ram-

pant militarism. Boldly he clocks some of the most irresponsible, counterproductive, and incompetent acts of the present administration. Hear him. He has been there.

The frequent and insightful stories and illustrations from Mr. Carter's own experience are a treasure. The reader is fortunate, indeed, to have this eye-witness-account. Jimmy Carter's words have added weight because of his meaningful, giving life.

Carter's book incarnates the very name of this journal: *Christian Ethics Today*. What a survey! I always say: "I'm a Jimmy Carter, Bill Moyers, Barbara Jordan Baptist." How about you? ■

Ethics at Work

Alice Darnell Lattal and Ralph W. Clark, Performance Management Pub. Atlanta, GA, 2005. \$21.95.

Reviewed by Russell Justice,
Nashville, TN

The concept that business is an open forum for amoral activity—as long as the job gets done—is a flawed, self-serving, and dangerous rationale. In fact, the very idea of "business" ethics is misleading. In *Ethics at Work*, authors Lattal and Clark, challenge us with the notions that:

- We must be willing to forgo financial rewards if the time should ever arrive when we must choose between doing what is right and doing what is wrong.
- Financial success in business is a wonderful thing, but it can be achieved at too high a price.
- A single pragmatic, economic focus can leave many important, even critical values-related questions unresolved.
- Being moral is of greater value than being profitable.

With the many corporate infractions publicly played out in the media, the ethics of work life—an entity that influences most of us on a daily basis—is a timely subject. The authors combine their extensive expertise in the fields of applied behavioral analysis and philosophy to create an effective model for achievement based on ethical commitment. They take on a host of challenging issues relevant to work—not shying away from controversial or difficult subjects such as the pressure to get results, the barrage of conflicting messages, and the cultural differences we confront in the global economy.

Drs. Lattal and Clark take a stand for right and wrong in a world that is drifting toward more and more ambiguity. They present a compelling case for the necessity of having and living by ethical standards that comfortably align with the cornerstone Christian ethics of the Ten Commandments. In their discussion, they show compassion for our human-ness while challenging us to step up in our personal ethics and our leadership to bring

about more ethical workplaces.

The authors point out that many of our commonly held beliefs are contradicted by research. Studies refute the perception that character is a have or have not proposition. In fact, significant changes can be made in how individuals behave and in their interpretations of what they have done. When ethical behaviors are specifically detailed, openly discussed, accurately measured, and consistently reinforced, individuals report a newfound value for ethical change. This tells us that if someone's behavior is altered for a period of time and the person is recognized in meaningful and positive ways for making the change, then the person's *beliefs* will also transform to support the new ways of acting.

These findings carry a powerful warning for those who limit themselves and their understanding of others with prejudicial views: We reduce a person's potential and deprive the workplace of valuable contributions when we use labels. Labels indicate a static, unalterable way of being that is ultimately false. Organizations are comprised of people who can and do change, but to change and to change for the better are two different things. This book provides tangible means for directing not only change, but change that results in improvement.

Ethics at Work provides the specific steps and models for making ethical behavior a reality. People learn to make ethical choices by using the system detailed by the authors. Just a few of their "nuts and bolts" steps for producing real change include the following:

- Clearly articulate behaviors that are ethically acceptable and unacceptable.
- Use case studies to demonstrate ethical choices; to provide practice in making ethical decisions and to increase ethical sensitivity.
- Build into employee development processes an assessment of ethical conduct associated with achieving objectives.
- Make discussing in detail "how we did it" a part of the review and celebration of every major achievement.

Lattal and Clark also tell the reader in unequivocal terms that if a manager achieves results using primarily aversive control techniques, that manager is cheating the company, missing limitless opportunities, and behaving unethically, or at least amorally. An effective and ethical management system can be so rewarding that there is no need for aversive practices such as threats of negative repercussions. Such a system sets up a workplace from which positive reinforcement flows, whether or not a specific individual is present to praise or recognize performance. This type of work setting promotes a passion for continual improvement, the pleasure of cooperative teams, and the freedom to generate and express ideas.

Moments of reflection (during which we examine our personal conduct) are not optional for anyone, especially those with positions of authority. Many good people in the corporate landscape have gotten caught up in a

"situational analysis" of the moment, and in retrospect, have done things they never would have done in another setting. The time has come for business leaders to realize that a moral focus will not put them in jeopardy of bankruptcy, but will instead offer the rewards of peace of mind, freedom from regret, and avoidance of shame. Ethical organizations enjoy the benefits of a good reputation, loyal employees, high morale, easier recruitment, repeat customers, goodwill in the community, and workplaces that operate more efficiently and effectively. They avoid bad publicity, fines, and legal expenses. How results are achieved is just as important as the results themselves.

In summary, this book doesn't stop at inspiring readers to value personal ethics; it provides a framework and tools to help organizations and individuals more closely match their intentions with actions. For Christians, *Ethics at Work* provides useful information to help them align their daily actions with Jesus' example of living according to "It is written." Saturated with important points, gems, key ideas, and good suggestions, this book demonstrates that winning goes beyond reaching objectives in one's business. Winning includes practicing moral integrity in every aspect of one's life. ■

Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion

Jeremy Carrette and Richard King, Routledge, 2005.

By Jim Barr, Pastor
Canberra Baptist Church, Sydney, Australia

Is the widespread talk about spirituality a new expression of the religious spirit to be embraced and applauded? Is the growth of 'spiritual' programs and language in the fields of business, education and social work a new opportunity for people of faith to engage with the contemporary world? What tools and resources do we need to analyze the trends and answer these important questions?

In *Selling Spirituality*, authors Carrette and King engage the phenomenon of spirituality in contemporary society and its relationship with capitalism as a formative power in the modern world. The book follows the development of the concept of spirituality and explores the interaction of capitalism with religious traditions of both East and West. Its basic theme is that religion is increasingly becoming a product to be packaged and sold, rather than an authentic expression of the religious traditions.

The book shows how spirituality has become an important consumer category in capitalism and the threat this poses to traditional religious faiths. It also points to how the articulation of spiritual perspectives can be a vital

(continued on page 23)

Christian Ethics and the Movies

By David A. Thomas,¹ Associate Professor of Rhetoric, Emeritus
University of Richmond

Movies are social texts. Most mainstream movies are strictly for entertainment. The largest audience demographic is teenaged boys. However, some movies make serious statements. Often, such movies come from independent studios.

This year's Oscar nominations for Best Picture, for example, included *Crash*, *Good Night and Good Luck*, *Capote*, *Munich*, and *Walk the Line*. Other prominent movies that made numerous "Top Ten" lists included *Brokeback Mountain*, *Cache*, *The Constant Gardener*, *Downfall*, *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*, *A History of Violence*, *Hustle and Flow*, *In My Country*, *Junebug*, *King Kong*, *Kinsey*, *Millions*, *Murderball*, *The Narnia Chronicles*, *North Country*, *Paradise Now*, *Sideways*, *The Squid and the Whale*, *Transamerica*, and *Syriana*.

Those twenty-five movies made noteworthy ethical impressions. Any of them could stand alone as the focus for a meaningful commentary in this journal. There are some "biopics" about characters like Edward R. Murrow and Truman Capote. The others are serious dramas that challenge prevailing social attitudes and mores, like *Brokeback Mountain* and *The Constant Gardener*. Most of them are rated "R" and cannot be shown in local churches because of graphic sex scenes, violence, language and "mature themes." Paradoxically, these are the ones we should be discussing there.

This column is the first in a series. In future issues, I will analyze some of these movies, and others like them, from a Christian ethical standpoint.

Narrative Rhetoric: My Frame of Reference

Perhaps I am an unusual professor of rhetoric in terms of my interests.

I began my college teaching career in the traditional way. Since I majored in speech and English, and I was a member of the Hardin-Simmons debate team, later on I became a debate coach. Debate takes its academic discipline from a combination of classical rhetoric and legal argumentation. I spent about twenty-five years of my college teaching career coaching debate in a highly competitive arena. Half of my book publications are on the subject of debate.

Although I grew up in a rural Texas hamlet and my family raised me in the local Southern Baptist Church, I became an intellectual skeptic, an agnostic, from about age 25 to that fateful year of 1986 when everything changed for me. Then, in midlife, I found myself spiritually unsat-

isfied. My immersion in traditional argumentation became less and less adequate for coping with my inner problems. During my midlife spiritual renewal, I came to realize that my deep adult resistance to the notion of a personal God had always been rooted in my resentments towards my father, who was an alcoholic.

I made a radical shift in my rhetorical perspective, a shift that coincided with my spiritual turning point. Providentially, as I believe, I discovered a new book by Walter Fisher titled *Human Communication as Narration*.² Dr. Fisher's theories literally turned my life around. That was the year, coincidentally, when I moved from the University of Houston to a new position at the University of Richmond. What must also be said is that narrative rhetoric not only gave me a new lease on a scholarly career, it also gave me a new perspective for understanding my own life.

Dr. Fisher's book is a scholarly treatment and extension of two major theoreticians. Fisher interpreted Kenneth Burke's theory of literary dramatism and Alisdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*³ (a monograph about moral philosophy), and applied them to rhetoric. It introduced me to the idea that the heart of rhetoric is narrative, not rationality. From 1986 forward, all of my teaching and scholarly writing revolved around Fisher's narrative paradigm.

At Richmond, I proceeded to reinvent myself. I literally changed my scholarly worldview. Starting over did not especially help my career, but it helped my sanity. The first thing I tried to do at Richmond was to make a serious study of preaching, based on the notion that preaching is based on narrative more than on logic. I team-taught a course in narrative rhetoric and narrative theology with my Richmond colleague, Dr. Robison James. Also, David Farmer, the editor of *Pulpit Digest*, gave me a regular column, *Rhetoric and Homiletic*, which I wrote for two years.

Finally, it struck me like a lightning bolt that the hundreds of movies I had been attending during the mid-1990s as an escape from my personal problems were all case studies in narrative. So I created and taught a course in Rhetoric and Film that turned out to be my career defining class. Religious rhetoric and the movies, together combined to define my scholarship and also my life as I live it, to the present day.

Here is what you need to know about narrative rhetoric. Compare these precepts with traditional ways of thinking and communicating.

1. Traditionally, rhetoric is taught as predominantly

rational. In contrast, narrative theory says that people are story-telling beings. We think and communicate in stories. The world is a set of stories we choose for the re-creation of truth and for happiness.

2. Traditionally, the content of rhetoric is viewed as persuasive advocacy and arguments. Narratives, not arguments, constitute our basic beliefs. We live and die by them. For instance, consider the Gospel. It is nothing if not a story. Conversely, certain other stories constitute our deepest psychological shadows. Consider Hitler's rhetoric, or Al-Qaeda's.

3. Traditionally, the truth of rhetoric is tested by evidence and logic. Narratively, the two basic principles we use for evaluating whether stories are true are these: (a) True stories tell the *whole* story, and (b) they are *consistent* with other stories we believe to be true. Also, the truth of a story hinges on the character of the narrator. Fiction, drama, and poetry are thus eligible to convey truth, and they are also subject to ethical tests.

Now, I am embarking on a new writing project for this journal. My column will be about *Christian Ethics and the Movies*. My hope is to use some of the movies mentioned in the first paragraph above, and others like them, to illuminate some vital ethical issues. Movies shape public attitudes, as well as reflect them. Let's look at them together. ■

- 1 David A. Thomas now resides in Sarasota, FL. He may be reached at davidthomas1572@comcast.net.
- 2 Walter R. Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action* (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1987).
- 3 Alisdair MacIntyre *After Virtue* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

Tender Mercies (1983)

Tender Mercies remains one of the best Christian conversion movies. Made on a low budget in defiance of Hollywood wisdom, the movie featured a signature acting performance by Robert Duvall. Horton Foote's screenplay also was an Oscar winner that year. Combine that film with *The Apostle* (1994), and Duvall has earned his spot as my favorite actor. In addition, the Academy nominated

Bruce Beresford as Best Director and the movie as Best Picture.

Not bad for a movie that almost did not get made. Bruce Beresford was not the first choice to direct the film. Any film project based on an explicit Christian theme was poison in Hollywood in those days. No A-list director would have anything to do with it. The film was produced mainly because of Duvall's faith in the screenplay by Horton Foote. In 1962, Duvall had made his screen debut in *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Horton Foote also won an Oscar for adapting the screenplay. Duvall had Foote's respect as an actor and made sure that Duvall had roles in other projects of his.

Tender Mercies is a story about a has-been, broken-down country-and-western singer named Mac Sledge. He is an alcoholic. As the movie opens, Sledge is drunk and passed-out in a rural motel near Waxahachie, Texas. The next morning, Sledge's drinking buddy has vanished, leaving him with the unpaid bill, which he cannot cover. Embarrassed, he reports to the office manager and offers to work off his debt.

Tess Harper, a local Texas stage actress making her movie debut, plays Rosa Lee, a single mom with a young son. Rosa Lee is the owner and operator of the small motel. She is lonely but pragmatic. She made a deal with Sledge to allow him to do enough handyman chores to pay off his debt, provided he would agree not to drink on the job.

An unusual love story ensued between the two. Sledge came to terms with his failings as a person. He accepted the fact that he would never be a big celebrity in the C&W world again. Willing to start over to rebuild a new and more modest life, he stayed on at the motel as an employee. One day he shyly proposed, "You wouldn't think about marrying me, would you?" Rosa Lee responded matter-of-factly, "Yes, I would."

A touching feature of the movie is its original C&W sound track. One of the songs received an Oscar nomination. Duvall sang all of his own songs and actually wrote every one of them, except for *On the Wings of a Dove*.

The power of the movie does not come just from their cautious midlife romance. Rather, it is the portrayal of Mac Sledge's spiritual journey from the depths to a redemptive transformation. The movie depicts it as a surprise baptism

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CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY

A Journal of Christian Ethics

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

MISSION

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

PURPOSES

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

Christian Ethics Today was born in the mind and heart of Foy Valentine in 1995, as an integral part of his dream for a Center for Christian Ethics. In his words, the purpose of the Journal was "to inform, inspire, and unify a lively company of individuals and organizations interested in working for personal morality and public righteousness."

When the Center was transferred to Baylor University in June 2000, the disbanding Board voted to continue the publication of *Christian Ethics Today*, appointing a new editor and a new Board. The Journal will continue to be published five times annually.

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