

Christian Ethics Today

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

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Five Years Later and Counting

By Joe E. Trull, Editor

“The decision to invade Iraq was the right decision in regards to my Presidency. It is the right decision now, and will forever be the right decision.” President George W. Bush, March 18, 2008.

On March 19, 2003, the bombs started falling in Iraq. Now, five years later, Iraqis’ lives are still dictated by fear and violence. Almost from day one the war has been the focus of worldwide controversy. At the outset, what seemed to be a real hope that Iraq would finally be free of a ruthless dictator and a democratic state would emerge has become a nightmare with no end in sight and no assurance of a real democracy.

That promise of peace was soon buried under the rubble of mistakes, missteps, and miscalculations. Add to that looting, bribery and fraud, and the dissolution of the Iraqi army, the early proclamation of “Mission Accomplished” was followed by years of insurgency, Abu Ghraib, and continued fighting between Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds.

Multiple investigations, including one from the Pentagon in early March, have debunked all notions about weapons of mass destruction and any link between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein’s regime—in fact, Saddam was at war with al-Qaeda in 2003. Yet politicians and ignorant citizens continue to use these two falsehoods to justify this war.

But rehashing the past will not

solve the problem. What matters are the facts on the ground today. Yet those facts are muddled, suggesting neither victory nor defeat. Yes, one dictator is dead, but the daily lives of Iraqi citizens are now dictated by new fears—terrorist bombs, kidnappings, sectarian violence, poverty, and an uncertain future.

On Monday of this anniversary week the International Committee of the Red Cross in a 15 page report warned that “Iraq faces a humanitarian crisis, with millions lacking adequate clean water, sanitation, and health care. . . . the humanitarian situation in most of the country remains among the most critical in the world.”

One can argue that the surge of U.S. troops has brought levels of violence and casualties down. However, life in Baghdad and other major cities continues to explode with more violence, as it did during the anniversary week visit of Vice President Dick Cheney.

So, how do we assess the progress of the war after five years? In Iraq on March 17, Mr. Cheney described it “a difficult, challenging, but nonetheless successful endeavor” and “well worth the effort.” Mark Davis, a well-known Dallas radio commentator applauded the war, noting the “amazingly low human cost of our attempt to bring democracy to Iraq.”

The cost is certainly borne by more than the 4000 dead and their families! But that is not the only cost. Due to advances in body armor, soldiers are surviving what in the past would have been fatal injuries, resulting in devastating extremity injuries and a shockingly high number of soldiers returning home with their arms and legs amputated. Thus far nearly 30,000 U.S. troops have been wounded, many with serious brain or spinal injuries requiring a lifetime of care. In addition, 30% of U.S. troops develop

serious mental health problems within months of returning stateside, and more than 58,000 troops are on disability for hearing or vision loss.

So when we honor the sacrifice of our military, let’s be accurate—let us not forget the 150,000 (and counting) brave soldiers and their families who are still paying this “human cost.” Space does not allow counting the economic, political, and moral costs.

But is V.P. Cheney’s “worth the effort” assessment accurate? Michael O’Hanlon of the Brookings Institute, has devised a list of benchmarks by which to objectively judge progress. O’Hanlon’s list indicates progress in only 5 of 11 key areas. On the list devised by the Iraqi government and endorsed by the White House in 2007, only 3 of 18 goals have been met.

As security improves, thousands of displaced Iraqis will try to return home, only to find they have no place to live and no jobs—one-third of Iraqis are unemployed. Though oil production is slightly up, households still receive only 64% of the energy they need.

Although most are glad Saddam Hussein and his tyrannical regime are gone, the international trust and cooperation the White House squandered to accomplish that goal will take years to rebuild.

Five years after shock and awe, we are still counting—counting the costs in lost lives, disabled soldiers, disrupted families, corrupted officials, broken alliances, a weakened military, economic indebtedness, and the loss of a moral high ground we once held.

The supporters of the war cannot tell us with any clarity why we are there, and they cannot define what conditions are necessary to get us out, except for vague statements about achieving “victory.” In this fifth anniversary of the Iraq war and the presidential election year, Americans deserve better. ■

J.E.T.

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EthixBytes

A Collection of Quotes Comments, Statistics, and News Items

“Let facts be submitted to a candid world.”

*Legend over the old **Houston Post** building.*

“There is no such thing as a free war.”
*Nobel prize winning economist **Joseph Stiglitz** in his new book **The Three Trillion Dollar War**, who estimates the Iraq War will cost Americans between \$3 trillion and \$5 trillion and has taken the lives of 3973 U.S. troops and left 29,300 wounded.*

“The courts will decide . . . what the framers meant in the Second Amendment. Whether there was an absolute right to own firearms or whether the framers only intended for that right to be exercised in the context of a militia. Every constitutional right is subject to reasonable regulation.”

*Interim Attorney General **Peter Nickles**, in response to Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchinson’s (R-TX) attempt to pressure the U.S. Supreme Court to declare the District of Columbia’s ban on handguns unconstitutional.*

“No one goes directly from the Bible to the ballot box.”

*The late conservative evangelical leader, **Carl F. H. Henry**.*

“From 1998 to 2000, with a Democratic president and Republican Congress, earmarks rose from \$13.2 billion to \$17.7 billion. From 2001 to 2006, with a Republican president in office, they exploded to \$29 billion. In 2007, with Congress in Democratic hands, earmarks fell to the 1998 level of \$13.2 billion, a 54% drop.”

*Response to **Dallas Morning News Editorial** on earmarks (2/21/08).*

“Earmarks represent the triumph of seniority over merit, secrecy over transparency, and the victory of special interests over the national interest.”

***Rep. Jeb Hensarling (R-Dallas)**, one of 18 out of over 500 in Congress who refused to ask for pork barrel projects.*

“Show me a 50-foot wall and I’ll show you a 51-foot ladder.”

***Gov. Janet Napolitano (AZ)**.*

“It will be extremely unlikely that many of us will be virtuous if we live in a vicious society. We need to be concerned, therefore, with the health of our society as well as the health of our souls.”

***Robert N. Bellah (Daedalus, Fall 2007)**.*

“In the U.S., prostitution is only very rarely just another career choice. Studies suggest that up to two-thirds of prostitutes have been sexually abused as girls, a majority have drug dependencies or mental illnesses, one-third have been threatened with death by pimps, and almost half have attempted suicide.”

***Nicholas Kristof, N.Y. Times**.*

“In 1974, the U.S. median black income was 63% of that of whites. In 2004 a typical black family income was only 58% of a typical white family’s.”

***Brookings Institute Report**.*

“Ecclesiastical crime in 1800 amounted to \$100,000; in 1900 \$300,000; in 1970, \$5,000,000; in 2000, \$16,000,000.000; and in 2008 will rise to \$25,000,000,000.”

***International Bulletin of Missionary Research (1/08)**.*

“For the first time, more than one in every 100 Americans is behind bars, more than any country in the world—more than China, which has a far greater population and eight times that of Germany.”

***Pew Center on the States (2/28/08)**.*

“44 percent of American adults are not in the religious tradition of their upbringing or have moved out of the religious orbit altogether. [Often] the temptation is to move from pew to pew until we find one that no longer demands what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called *The Cost of Discipleship*.”

Dallas Morning News editorial in response to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life study.

“If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. We need to go far, quickly!”

***Vice President Al Gore**, in his Nobel Peace Prize lecture.*

“They’ve been overparented, over-indulged and over protected. They haven’t experienced that much failure, frustration, pain. We were so obsessed with protecting and promoting their self-esteem that they crumble like cookies when they discover the world doesn’t revolve around them.”

***Columnist Cheryl Hall** on Millennials (born 1981 to present).*

“Evidence of global warming is substantial and the threat is too grave to wait for perfect knowledge about whether, or how much, people contribute to the trend. . . Our cautious response to these issues in the face of mounting evidence may be seen by the world as uncaring, reckless and ill-informed. We can do better.”

***A Southern Baptist Declaration on the Environment and Climate Change**, signed by the president of the SBC and a group of leaders.*

“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, and shouts to us in our pain—it is God’s megaphone to a deaf world.” ■

C. S. Lewis

Prophet and Pastor

To his former professor, congregant, and friend, Jeremiah Wright has been both

By Martin E. Marty, Chicago, IL

Through the decades, the Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr. has called me teacher., reminding me of the years when he earned a master's degree in theology and ministry at the University of Chicago—and friend. My wife and I and our guests have worshiped at Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, where he recently completed a 36-year ministry..

Images of Wright's strident sermons, and his anger at the treatment of black people in the United States, appear constantly on the Internet and cable television, part of the latest controversy in our political-campaign season. His critics call Wright anti-American. Critics of his critics charge that the clips we hear and see have been taken out of context. But it is not the context of particular sermons that the public needs, as that of Trinity church, and, above all, its pastor.

In the early 1960s, at a time when many young people were being radicalized by the Vietnam War, Wright left college and volunteered to join the United States Marine Corps. After three years as a marine, he chose to serve three more as a naval medical technician, during which time he received several White House commendations. He came to Chicago to study not long after Martin Luther King Jr.'s murder in 1968, the U.S.

bombing campaign in Cambodia in 1969, and the shooting of students at Kent State University in 1970.

Wright, like the gifted cohort of his fellow black students, was not content to blend into the academic woodwork. Then the associate dean of the Divinity School, I was informally delegated to talk to the black caucus. We learned that what Wright and his peers wanted was the intense academic and practical preparation for vocations that would make a difference, whether they chose to pursue a Ph.D. or the pastorate. Chicago's Divinity School focuses on what it calls "public ministry," which includes both conventional pastoral roles and carrying the message and work of the church to the public arena. Wright has since picked up numerous honorary doctorates, and served as an adjunct faculty member at several seminaries. But after divinity school, he accepted a call to serve then-struggling Trinity.

Trinity focuses on biblical teaching and preaching. It is a church where music stuns and uplifts, a church given to hospitality and promoting physical and spiritual healing, devoted to education, active in Chicago life, and one that keeps the world church in mind, with a special accent on African Christianity. The four S's charged against Wright—segregation,

separatism, sectarianism, and superiority—don't stand up, as countless visitors can attest. I wish those whose vision has been distorted by sermon clips could have experienced what we and our white guests did when we worshiped there: feeling instantly at home.

Yes, while Trinity is "unapologetically Christian," as the second clause in its motto affirms, it is also, as the other clause announces, "unashamedly black." From its beginning, the church has made strenuous efforts to help black Christians overcome the shame they had so long been conditioned to experience. That its members and pastor are, in their own term, "Africentric" should not be more offensive than that synagogues should be "Judeocentric" or that Chicago's Irish parishes be "Celtic-centric." Wright and colleagues insist that no hierarchy of races is involved. People do not leave Trinity ready to beat up on white people; they are charged to make peace.

To the 10,000 members of Trinity, Jeremiah Wright was, until just a few months ago, "Pastor Wright." Metaphorically, pastor means shepherd. Like members of all congregations, the Trinity flock welcomes strong leadership for organization, prayer, and preaching. One-on-one



ministry is not easy with thousands in the flock and when the pastor has national responsibilities, but the forms of worship make each participant feel recognized. Responding to the pastoral call to stand and be honored on Mother's Day, for instance, grandmothers, single mothers, stepmothers, foster mothers, gay-and-lesbian couples, all mothers stood when we visited. Wright asked how many believed that they were alive because of the church's health fairs. The members of the large pastoral staff know many hundreds of names, while hundreds of lay people share the ministry.

Now, for the hard business: the sermons, which have been mercilessly chipped into for wearying television clips. While Wright's sermons were pastoral—my wife and I have always been awed to hear the Christian Gospel parsed for our personal lives—they were also prophetic. At the university, we used to remark, half lightheartedly, that this Jeremiah was trying to live up to his namesake, the seventh-century B.C. prophet. Though Jeremiah of old did not "curse" his people of Israel, Wright, as a biblical scholar, could point out that the prophets Hosea and Micah did. But the Book of Jeremiah, written by numbers of authors, is so full of blasts and quasi curses—what biblical scholars call "imprecatory topoi"—that New England preachers invented a sermonic form called "the jeremiad," a style revived in some Wrightian shouts.

In the end, however, Jeremiah was the prophet of hope, and that note of

hope is what attracts the multiclass membership at Trinity and significant television audiences. Both Jeremiahs gave the people work to do: to advance the missions of social justice and mercy that improve the lot of the suffering. For a sample, read Jeremiah 29, where the prophet's letter to the exiles in Babylon exhorts them to settle down and "seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile." Or listen to many a Jeremiah Wright sermon.

One may properly ask whether or how Jeremiah Wright—or anyone else—experiences a prophetic call. Back when American radicals wanted to be called prophets, I heard Saul Bellow say (and, I think, later saw it in writing): "Being a prophet is nice work if you can get it, but sooner or later you have to mention God." Wright mentioned God sooner. My wife and I recall but a single overtly political pitch. Wright wanted 2,000 letters of protest sent to the Chicago mayor's office about a public-library policy. Of course, if we had gone more often, in times of profound tumult, we would have heard much more. The United Church of Christ is a denomination that has taken raps for being liberal—for example for its 50th anniversary "God is still speaking" campaign and its pledge to be open and affirming to all, including gay people. In its lineage are Jonathan Edwards and Reinhold and Richard Niebuhr, America's three most-noted theologians; the Rev. King was much at home there.

Friendship develops through many

gestures and shared delights (in the Marty case, stops for sinfully rich barbecue after evening services), and people across the economic spectrum can attest to the generosity of the Wright family.

It would be unfair to Wright to gloss over his abrasive—to say the least—edges, so, in the "Nobody's Perfect" column, I'll register some criticisms. To me, Trinity's honoring of Minister Louis Farrakhan was abhorrent and indefensible, and Wright's fantasies about the U.S. government's role in spreading AIDS distracting and harmful. He, himself, is also aware of the now-standard charge by some African-American clergy who say he is a victim of cultural lag, overinfluenced by the terrible racial situation when he was formed.

Having said that, and reserving the right to offer more criticisms, I've been too impressed by the way Wright preaches the Christian Gospel to break with him. Those who were part of his ministry for years—school superintendents, nurses, legislators, teachers, laborers, the unemployed, the previously shunned and shames, the anxious—are not going to turn their backs on their pastor and prophet. ■

Martin E. Marty is a professor emeritus at the University of Chicago Divinity School and a panelist for On Faith, of Washingtonpost.com. His most recent book is The Christian World: A Global History (Modern Library, 2008).



When the War Is Over: A Teachable Moment

By David P. Gushee, McAfee School of Theology Mercer University, GA

This month the President will receive reports from commanders in the field about whether the troop surge in Iraq is accomplishing its goals. Until now, he has resisted calls to reconsider his strategy or to begin a withdrawal, despite eroding public support for the war.

Such deep public distress about the war makes this teachable moment for all of us, as Christians and as Americans. It's not enough to find a way out of this war honorably and soon. We have an opportunity to learn some deeper lessons so that we won't repeat our mistakes.

For evangelicals, one of the groups that strongly supported the war initially, one lesson is clear: We must become more discerning when our nation's leaders advocate a military solution. We have biblical resources for doing so, if we will draw upon them.

In Fall 2002 and Winter 2003, before the United States invasion, most evangelical Christians and their leaders joined other Americans in supporting the President, who argued that Saddam Hussein posed such a danger to America that war was necessary to dislodge him. Of course, it is the most natural thing in the world for loyal citizens to support their leaders and rally around the flag when war is imminent.

Furthermore, many Christians believe it's not just natural, but also biblical. Many a war has been supported based on a reading of Romans 13 that says God-appointed government leaders are authorized to use the "sword" of state violence. For believers who understand the passage this way, it means that we should trust and obey our leaders when they give the word.

Other Strands

But the events of the last several years can help us recognize that this strand of the biblical witness must be

interwoven with other, equally important strands. Here are some of them:

- An appropriately pessimistic understanding of human nature ("there is none righteous, no, not one") can remind us that government leaders are not infallible in their reading of data, not necessarily beyond reproach in their motivations, and not always fully truthful in their public statements. So we must evaluate the claims of any government (in any nation, led by any person, of any party or political ideology) with a critical eye.
- Scripture repeatedly condemns governments and government leaders for unjust or unwise actions, especially in resorting to violence. Pharaoh, Ahab, and Herod come to mind. If it could happen in biblical times, it can happen now.
- The life and teachings of Jesus establish nonviolent resolution of conflicts as the norm—with war as the exception. We can all agree that Jesus taught peace, blessed peacemakers, and was a man of peace himself. Certainly, the early church abhorred violence, and its members believed they were being faithful to their Lord in doing so.

For me, the next time I am asked to support a war, my default setting will be no rather than yes. As a follower of Christ, I will have to be persuaded that the particular confluence of circumstances is so grave as to require a military solution. Before Christians sign off on another war, we must do our best to figure out whether the government has done everything possible to make peace. And there are lots of good, creative options. Glen Stassen's just-peacemaking approach, which includes measures such as nonviolent action and independent initiatives to reduce threats, provides helpful, practical options. (See *Just Peacemaking:*

Ten Practices for Abolishing War.)

In addition, we need to carefully rethink just-war theory. At its best, this post-biblical resource establishes rigorous criteria that help Christians apply critical thinking to any claim that it is time to go to war: just cause, competent authority, last resort, right intention, proportionality, and other tests.

But sometimes just-war theory produces predetermined results depending on the prior loyalty of the person employing the theory. If we cannot reform how we use just-war theory, then we ought to abandon it and come up with something better.

When the Iraq war is over, we will need a time of national (and Christian) mourning and repentance. Whatever one thinks of the origins of the war, or what to do now, its cost in blood and treasure for both Iraq and the United States has been profound. We have seen (once again) the limits of what war can accomplish. Perhaps our sorrow can lead to a renewed commitment to the things that make for peace. ■

This article first appeared in the September, 2007 issue of Christianity Today.

The Bible Speaks to Tax Policy

By Susan Pace Hamill, Professor of Law, University of Alabama

Americans are, or at least claim to be, a Christian people. Almost 80 percent of us, including President Bush, practice Christianity in some form. Bush has openly stated that Jesus is his favorite philosopher and that “we ought to love our neighbor like we love our self, as manifested in public policy.” Yet the president is leading our tax policy far from God’s moral compass.

Here is a view of tax policy from the standpoint of Judeo-Christian ethics:

The book of Genesis, which teaches that God creates each person in God’s image, links a proper relationship with God to a proper relationship with all other human beings. The broad moral principles of justice in the Bible evaluate whether a community’s laws and social structures treat all human beings as bearers of the image of God. These biblical principles forbid oppression and require that all persons enjoy a reasonable opportunity to reach their divinely created potential to carry out God’s work on earth.

The biblical principle of reasonable opportunity is derived from the specific laws mandated by the Old Testament requiring gleaning rights, release of servants, debt forgiveness and land-tenure rights. The teachings of Jesus Christ raise these moral laws to higher and broader levels of social justice. Interpreted in the context of the 21st-century United States, this principle requires much more than minimum subsistence. It also requires that every citizen have access to an adequate education and job training as well as decent health care and housing.

Compulsory taxation is the only way our country can obtain a level of revenues that meets the biblical mandate of reasonable opportunity. This is because most of us will never voluntarily contribute our fair share, given our inescapable greedy tendencies resulting from the fall of humankind.

Those who believe that voluntary charitable giving can be a substitute for adequate tax revenues deny the effects of the fall and our dependence on God’s grace to help us fight the sin of greed. Although giving to charity is important from a biblical view, an A+ in charity does not turn an F in justice to a C in social morality.

The Bible also morally evaluates how we allocate the burden for paying taxes. The book of Genesis, revealing God as the sole creator and ultimate owner of all the earth’s wealth and resources—with human beings serving as God’s stewards—along with Jesus’ “render unto Caesar” remark in the Gospel of Matthew, establishes that tax burdens are consistent with the generally recognized and respected right to private property. In balancing the indisputable right to enjoy private property with the also indisputable moral responsibilities owed to God and the community, a Judeo-Christian view of taxation requires that those enjoying greater levels of income and wealth make significant economic sacrifices.

We cannot evaluate tax burdens by simply comparing the dollar amount of taxes paid by each taxpayer. The focus must be on comparing proportional tax burdens relative to income and wealth. Regressive models impose tax burdens that are proportionally larger for those with low levels of income. Flat models impose roughly the same proportional tax burden on the middle classes and the wealthy. Progressive models require the upper-middle classes and the wealthy to bear greater proportional tax burdens.

The Judeo-Christian standard of justice, which forbids oppression, condemns taxing those below the poverty line or regressively burdening the lower-middle classes. The general Judeo-Christian teaching that wealth should be held with a light grip—com-

bined with moral principles running throughout the Bible, particularly the Gospel of Luke—impose greater obligations on those blessed with greater amounts of wealth. This approach deems flat models to be immoral, and therefore requires some form of progressive taxation. Well-designed flat models do not oppressively burden those who are truly too poor to pay the tax. Nevertheless, by heavily favoring those already enjoying the greatest share of God’s resources, they unacceptably emphasize preserving excess wealth and ignore the biblical message, “To whom much is given, much is required.”

A Judeo-Christian moral evaluation of tax policy in no way resembles secular approaches that assume that human effort can produce utopian justice. A Christian worldview recognizes that God’s intended standards of justice will not fully materialize until Jesus comes again and completes his work. Judeo-Christian teachings do not support socialist-leaning tax policy that seeks equality of results under a steeply progressive structure reaching confiscatory levels.

On balance, Judeo-Christian ethics require that tax burdens be allocated under a moderately progressive model. When morally debating the specific level of tax revenues and the precise degree of progressivity, we must always first ask whether the wealthier and more powerful of the community are paying their fair share. This is because those enjoying higher levels of income and wealth will be tempted by greed to fight for the smallest tax burden possible without considering the moral obligations of their faith.

President Bush’s tax policy raises red flags to those who hold Judeo-Christian values. During his first term Bush made the moderately progressive federal income tax structure significantly less progressive by securing

tax cuts that principally benefit the wealthiest Americans. In addition to increasing the proportional tax burden borne by the middle classes, his first-term tax cuts contributed heavily to the gigantic federal deficit that threatens the nation's long-term stability.

Bush continues to push tax policy that overwhelmingly benefits the wealthiest Americans. This includes plans to maintain or possibly increase the tax cuts and to eliminate the estate tax, while attempting to reduce the deficit by cutting spending programs that help the neediest as well as middle-class Americans enjoy a reasonable opportunity to reach their divinely created potential.

The most appalling feature of Bush's tax agenda is his utter lack of Judeo-Christian—based moral reflection. There is no evidence that he has ever rigorously considered whether the wealthiest Americans are paying their fair share of the tax burden. Instead he resorts to unreliable claims that tax cuts will foster economic growth—claims that camouflage the true values driving his tax policy.

A careful look at Bush's tax policy reveals values reflecting objectivist ethics—a form of atheism that worships the free market and the right of individuals to personally benefit from their efforts above all other concerns. For a

Christian this is disgraceful conduct.

The absence of Judeo-Christian values in tax-policy discussions is a sign that genuine faith is in deep trouble. Christianity in particular has become a low-sacrifice operation. Jesus Christ did not preach a low-sacrifice gospel. Real faith results in a transformed life characterized by a high degree of sacrificial discipleship. Real believers endure great personal sacrifice to bring God's kingdom on earth closer to God's kingdom in heaven even while knowing that their sacrifice cannot completely restore the fallen world.

Too many Christians, including Bush, have limited their faith-based public policy concerns to a handful of controversial issues. Although these issues may have theological significance, they involve little or no personal sacrifice. Fighting for the right to display the Ten Commandments in the public square while ignoring Judeo-Christian standards of justice amounts to idolatry. Other low-sacrifice decoy issues are gay marriage, stem cell research and euthanasia.

The narrowing of the abortion issue to its legal aspect is an especially hypocritical example of a low-sacrifice position masquerading as faith-based ethics. The moral issue of abortion cannot be separated from the high

sacrifice entailed by a Judeo-Christian-guided tax policy. Embracing the dignity of life requires adequate tax revenues to ensure that all persons, especially children, have a reasonable opportunity to reach their divinely created potential.

When large numbers of people and their political and spiritual leaders use low-sacrifice issues to cover up injustice, the consequences are likely to be disastrous. The message of the Bible is that a nation that pursues the atheistic values of objectivist ethics will decline and ultimately fail.

As a Christian, President Bush has a moral obligation to insist that the nation's tax policy embrace every person as divinely created in God's image. The moral conversation surrounding tax policy must start to reflect the kind of sacrifice called for by Judeo-Christian values if we are to have a chance of overcoming the forces of greed. ■

Note: This essay is based on the author's article "An Evaluation of Federal Tax Policy Based on Judeo-Christian Ethics," published in the Winter 2006 issue of the Virginia Tax Review (see www.law.ua.edu/susanhamill) and was motivated in part by her post-graduate studies at Beeson Divinity School.



Salaries and Sanctification

By Don Wilkey, Pastor, First Baptist Church Onalaska, TX

Using the analogy of baseball, I note with interest the salary difference between a weak hitter and a high dollar free agent. Great hitters hit in the range from an average of .290 to .300 and up. They bring many bidders for their services when their contracts expire. The weaker hitters hit around .240 to .250. I realize that the batting average is not the only credential used in judging baseball players, however the numbers speak for themselves. Hitters with the larger averages are now able to merit multi-year contracts guaranteeing them millions of dollars a year. Below average hitters usually make around \$500,000 a year. Thus this difference between the pay scale of baseball players is that “better” hitters make about eight to ten times as much as the weaker hitters.

To put the numbers in perspective, this means a hitter who makes ten times what the weaker player makes is actually getting around 5% more hits per year than his competition. That is what the numbers seem to say. The same is true of pitchers who have multi-million dollar contract, but have won only a few more games than lesser paid hurlers.

To make a secular comparison, think of a backhoe operator. If his fellow employee, who was a better operator at the end of the week, dug a ditch only 5% further than his efforts and was rewarded with ten times the salary, there would be a discussion with the company over this issue. If a roofer was able to perform at the rate of laying 4% more shingles a week than his fellow laborer and received ten times the compensation, there would be an interesting meeting taking place with the financial secretary.

To continue the baseball analogy, I have a church member whose grandson plays Triple-A baseball, occasionally getting moved up to the “big show”. I was surprised to learn how low was his

minor-league pay—not even \$30,000 a season. We now live in a culture that justifies huge salaries that continue to grow for high-level performance, yet offers much less to employees who are not far below that production. We tend to believe that those who are able to achieve exorbitant salaries are deserving of such reward, and the surplus will somehow “trickle down” to the rest of us.

In 2004 the average salary for top CEOs was \$11.8 million, 431 times that of the average worker. In 1980 it was 42 times more. In 2004 top executives got an average raise of 15%, while workers got 2.9%. The president of Morgan Stanley quit after five weeks making \$32 million, which amounts to over \$26,000 an hour, if he worked eighty work weeks. The CEOs of the struggling auto industry received increases up to 72% in a recent year.¹

Bernie Ebbers, whom I knew personally, “earned” \$475 million for his term as leader of his company. Ken Lay got only \$325 million for his services. Both Ebbers and Lay were charged for fraud—Ebbers was convicted and Lay died before his day in court. The new CEO of Crispy Kreme Donuts cut a deal to earn \$760 an hour to keep him interested in the job.² The nation’s top 400 tax payers reported an income of nearly \$70 billion in 2003. The accumulation of wealth in the U. S. seems to be solely in possession of those at the top of the pyramid, and not trickling down to the lower tiers of society.³

Not only have incomes increased, tax breaks have also been an added blessing to the more fortunate. Enron paid no income taxes for four of five years, finding tax havens in distant places. It was also eligible for \$382 million in tax refunds from the Treasury Department.⁴ States like Alabama have defeated proposals to more equally share the tax burden, because a higher percent of income from the poor is

going for taxes in that state.

Meanwhile, the top CEOs earn 1,000 times the salary of an average worker. Over the past 20 years, the income of the top 1% rose 157%.⁵ “From 1979 to 2001, the after-tax income of the top 1% of the U. S. households soared 139% while the income of the middle fifth rose only 17% and the income of the poorest fifth rose only 9%. Last year American CEOs earned 262 times the average wage of the worker—up tenfold from 1970.”⁶

Corporate welfare makes so-called welfare Cadillac queens insignificant by comparison. Archer Daniels of Midland, Texas received a \$3.2 billion grant to help one year, while ship owners are offered outdated subsidies to the tune of \$1.3 billion. Food companies like McDonalds, Tysons, and Pillsbury have received millions to advertise their products around the globe; all at tax payer expense to the tune of \$6.2 billion a year. One estimate claimed that in a five year period, corporate welfare cost the nation \$338 billion.⁷

Jobs have continued to be farmed out to third-world bidders. Immigration problems in the nation have caused union leaders to decry the cheap labor that has flooded the marketplace, much of it illegal. Toy companies, like Mattel, spend 30 times more on advertising than they do to pay workers in China to make their product.⁸ One of the most alarming comparisons is the price of goods produced in El Salvador in comparison to what corporations charge U. S. consumers. A Nike hockey jersey, that retails in the U. S. for \$140, cost a mere 29 cents to produce. Meanwhile the head of Nike has amassed a personal fortune of over \$5 billion.⁹

According to the Madison Capital Times, Wal-Mart packs its stores with Chinese-made goods and sells them at cut-rate prices to run mainstream

stores out of business, a practice that has caused many cities in the nation to zone Wal-Mart out of the community. The Wal-Mart chain has the practice of hiring a large number of local employees and, by over-hiring part-time help, does not have to pay full-time benefits. According to a University of California Berkley study, Wal-Mart employees cost California tax payers over \$86 million a year in public relief programs for their employees without benefits.¹⁰

Editor Frosty Troy claims that 82 of the top 275 companies paid no federal income taxes from 2001-2003. Not only did these organizations get tax breaks, they were due rebate checks from the U. S. Treasury of over \$12.6 billion.¹¹ Profit margins for Exxon were the largest ever by a corporation recorded in history. Of worthy note is the fact that the federal government still gives grants to Exxon to do business. It appears modern politicians are much more interested in going after families who are ripping-off the local state welfare coffers, than adjusting the tax-breaks of these corporations.

Where did all this inequity come from? How did we reach the point where we believe that the chosen few were much more deserving than the ones who labored below them?

In the Old Testament the economic life of the nation was based on religious principles revealed in Scripture and proclaimed by Israel's religious leaders. When I was younger, I remember the disclosure of the enormous wealth of Oral Roberts and his family. It was a public scandal. Such vast fortunes no longer raise concern, even in the Christian community. Most mega-churches keep salaries and benefits a secret and allow little congregational participation in the budget process. Large financial compensations are often seen as just one of the perks for being a "good CEO."

Robert Wuehnow in his book, *The Restructuring of American Religion*, claims that early in religious television, Jim Bakker, Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, Rex Humbard and Jimmy Swaggart raked in over \$194 million a year for their budgets. Much of these receipts went toward keeping the programs on the air. This is no longer the case.

Rev. Ike, an early radio evangelist, used to tell his listeners that if they thought money was evil they should send it to him because he didn't. He said it was the biblical idea that the "lack," not the "love" of money was the root of all evil and money could solve their problems. He reminded his

followers, "You'd be surprised at how well you could praise God in the back seat of a Rolls Royce!"

Trinity Broadcast Network leaders, Jan and Paul Crouch, purchased a \$5 million home in California primarily because of the need the dogs had for a larger yard.¹² The Lakewood church in Houston, run typically by one family, takes in over \$54 million a year in revenues. Its pastor lives in a \$2.3 million home. It projects its revenues to increase to \$77 million.¹³ TV preacher Joyce Meyer is seeking to catch up with Lakewood church. Her home and furnishings certainly surpass the Lakewood version. Joyce employs her own hairdresser and her home is furnished with lavish collectables. Her family all receive nice expensive cars to go along with the \$10 million jet Joyce keeps for travel as she shares her prosperity gospel.¹⁴ Reports claim that TBN, which frequently pleads for more sacrificial giving from its faithful, has assets of over \$538 million.¹⁵

The apparent conclusion seems to be that the larger the church, the less it gives to outside causes and the more it hordes for its own. Most churches in Baptist life follow the ideal of giving at least 10% of their income to mission projects. An Arkansas version was recently highlighted because its pastor



was nominated to serve as president of the Southern Baptist Convention. His church gave away only a small portion of one per cent to the mission causes of the convention. A recent president of the SBC was pastor of a church which took in over \$29 million and gave away just over 1% to missions.¹⁶

The internet source *Inplainsite* claims the Crouch family of TBN own several homes and ranches across the land. Meyer has a \$23,000 antique commode in her palace. Pat Robertson lives on the top of a Virginia mountain. Benny Hinn, the faith healer, generates by estimates, a billion dollars a year in his endeavors. The frequently divorced Robert Tilton, at one time took in over \$80 million a year.¹⁷

I recall an interesting story about Tilton, who is still actively soliciting funds. The TV evangelist was found to contract a mail drop in Tulsa for collected gifts from his audience, in contrast to his claim that he prayed personally over each offering received.

Amos the prophet condemned pride and greed in the public life of Israel (8:4-6). The Hebrew prophet graphically noted his listeners literally swallowed up the needy. The poor could be purchased for a pair of shoes. The true prophets of Israel always demanded that the people of faith pay

a fair and just wage. Lou Dobbs, the CNN journalist, claims a similar economic injustice is a growing problem in American society.

Where is Amos when you need him? ■

¹Frosty Troy, "Welcome to America, Inc.," *Oklahoma Observer*, Nov. 10, 2005, 5.

²"The New Way On CEO Pay", *Newsweek*, Feb. 7, 2005 42.

³Frosty Troy, "So Much Money, So Few Hands", *Oklahoma Observer*, Nov. 10, 2004 7.

⁴"EthixBytes," *Christian Ethics Today*, October, 2002, 3.

⁵"EthixBytes," *Christian Ethics Today*, February, 2003, 3.

⁶James Kurth, *Dallas Morning News*, November 15, 2006.

⁷www.commoncause.org

⁸Charles Kernaghan, "Foreign Sweat Shops Run by U. S. Firms," *Oklahoma Observer*.

⁹*Mother Jones*, July/August 2003, 70-73.

¹⁰*Christian Ethics Today*, Summer, 2005, 18.

¹¹Frosty Troy, "No Tax Corporations", *Oklahoma Observer*, November 25, 2004, 1.

¹²TV Preachers Jan and Paul Crouch", *Church and State*, January, 2002, 20.

¹³John Roper, "Big Budget Supports the Higher Calling", *Houston Chronical*, July 24, 2005, D5.

¹⁴"Christian Coalition Ally Meyer Lives Opulent Lifestyle, Newspaper Says", *Church and State*, January, 2004, 6.

¹⁵"TV Preacher Uses Ministry Assets for High Living", *Church and State*, November, 2004, 20.

¹⁶David Currie, "Perspective", *Texas Baptist Committed*, 5.

¹⁷www.inplainsite.org 6/26/2005.

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COMING THIS FALL

T. B. Maston's *Why Live the Christian Life*

Save Our Planet

By Randy Marshall, Pastor First Baptist Church, Dickinson, TX DMin Student, Houston Graduate School of Theology.

“Save our planet.” The small phrase printed on a neatly folded placard on the bathroom counter loomed large as my sleepy eyes prepared for the new day. Life can be funny. One minute I am out of town spending a few days at a medium-priced hotel. The next I am invited to be an active participant in a noble process that could make a global difference beyond my wildest imagination. The full message read:

SAVE OUR PLANET

Dear Guest,

Every day millions of gallons of water are used to wash towels that have only been used once.

You make the choice:

A towel on the rack means “I will use again.”

A towel on the floor means “Please replace.”

Thank you for helping us conserve the Earth’s vital resources.

I had no idea that such a small act could make such a cosmic difference. It must be true. There it was, written in green and white prominently placed on the countertop beside my complimentary soap. Though reusing that damp towel was not as appealing as the dry one located next to it, my sacrificial act was contributing to something much larger. I was saving the cosmos, while at the same time saving housekeeping some work.

Wanting to go the extra mile, I thought, “Why not just eliminate the towel altogether?” Why not use the hair dryer located on the hotel wall? Maybe someone could invent a body dryer. That would really save the planet, right? Wrong. Apparently, electricity is one of the biggest producers of carbon emissions.

According to the British organization, *Carbon Footprint*, carbon emissions lead to global warming, which could apparently destroy the planet. Don’t worry though, the environmental organization can help you

deal with nasty planet-destroying carbons. By utilizing their website you can determine the size of your carbon footprint. A carbon footprint is an indication of how big a mess you are making of planet earth. The bigger your footprint, the more responsible you are for cleaning up your residue.

On the website, you can do three things. First, calculate the size of your footprint by answering several questions relating to your lifestyle. Second, find ways to reduce the size of your footprint. Third, buy carbon footing offsets. An offset is a compensation to help other parts of the world to make up for your big carbon foot. It seems that if everyone in the world would just do their part, the planet could truly be saved. *Carbon Footprint* has generously offered to receive your payment online.¹

Let’s face it—it’s easy to relegate the “save the planet” mantra to the overly-concerned conservationists, the indomitable alarmists, and the impressionable populace. We read placards, listen to politicians, and watch documentaries with the same level of interest that we give to airline stewardesses describing what to do in case of an emergency. We give a polite nod of acknowledgment and go back to the routine that we call life. The fact is, if we set aside the hype, look past the political rhetoric, and simply consider the facts, our planet is undergoing some tremendous stresses. Some are under reported, some are over reported, some have minimal effects, and some are potentially catastrophic. Nevertheless, like any critical issue, Christians need an appropriate response.

The word “ecology” comes from two words: *eco*, from the Greek word *oikos*, meaning “house” and *ology* from the Greek *logia*, which means “study.” The word ecology then is literally, “the study of the house.” As responsible

Christians, our “theology”, the study of God, must address our “ecology”, the study of the house.

When it comes to an ecological understanding of our world, we need to apply the theological worldview of Psalm 24: “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it” (v. 1). The ecological debate takes on a new meaning when we consider that this eco-house is God’s house. The earth is the Lord’s. Everything and everyone in it belongs to God (Job 41:11; Ps 50:10, 12).

The book of Genesis gives us a compelling ecological picture. With a word, God called the world into being. He formed light, air, water, land, fish, animals, everything that we call earth. Each day, with his same miraculous voice, God would proclaim, “And it was good.” On the sixth day, God created what he considered the pinnacle of creation—humankind. Following that day, God concluded: “Behold, it was very good.” The earth: birds, bugs, bears, fawn, flora, flesh, rainforests, redbuds, and robins were all created and are all under the watchful care of a loving God.

Ecology is not the dream child of some political candidate or naturalistic nut, but rather from God—a house that the Creator remarkably built and continues to shape. The beginning of our ethical response to environmental issues is not by addressing the hot topic of the day. Rather, we begin with a careful reading and thoughtful study of God’s Word. As with all ethical dilemmas, the Scripture is our guide to interpreting the world around us.

It is important to note that not everyone holds a Christian view of ecology. Worldviews on the issue are wide and diverse. If we are not careful, our biblical understanding can be contorted by warped worldly images. Norman Geisler points out that there are at least two other major worldviews

regarding the environment that stand in opposition to a Christian viewpoint. The first of these is materialism. The materialist would say that all of the discussion being expressed today about global warming, diminishing rain forests, and extinction of species is pointless. One humanistic assumption is that energy is unlimited. "Energy in some form will always be available for our use. We may run out of certain forms, at least for a time, but human ingenuity will always create new forms to supply human needs."² The humanist would say, "We can do whatever we want to our planet because humans will always find a solution."

On the other extreme of the spectrum are the pantheists who virtually worship nature. "They oppose drilling for oil offshore, building dams, using insecticides . . . and any other human interventions that disturb the natural environment."³ This worldview teaches that everything in nature is alive and part of a soul or life-force that becomes one great living organism.

Neither materialism nor pantheism is a Christian worldview. The Christian response to ecological issues should not be contingent on the superiority of man or the frailty of earth. Rather the Christian must humbly and honestly look at issues and respond with the desire to please the Creator. The house that God built is distinctly God's house. The ethical response of Christians should be based upon this basic premise.

So, our role is not to save the planet. We do not have that kind of power or authority. Our spiritual role entails being good stewards in overseeing our corner of the world, fulfilling our role as described in Genesis 1:28. Good stewardship is doing little things like adjusting the thermostat, filling the dishwasher with a full load, buying a smaller car, purchasing energy-saving bulbs, installing another layer of insulation in the attic, purchasing a high efficiency showerhead, watering the lawn instead of the sidewalk, recycling, and a host of other acts that just make

good sense. We must pay attention to the things that we do every day, both large and small.

Yes, attempt the big things as well. Be informed of the critical ecological issues of our world. Broaden your support of legislation that is fair and balanced in protecting the environment while still allowing sensible progress. Share your thoughts and actions with others. Being eco-friendly may seem overwhelming at times, and even hopelessly pointless. Nevertheless, keep striving. Be a positive, well-informed voice in your community. Faithfully seek and follow God's leading knowing that in doing so, the owner of the house is well-pleased. ■

¹Carbonfootprint.com.

²Geisler, Norman L. *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House), 295.

³Ibid, 294.



James K. Polk: Our Worst President?

By Britt Towery, *Missionary to China (ret.)* San Angelo, TX

Some wars fall between the cracks. That appears to be what happened with Polk's War. James K. Polk was our eleventh president. He is often listed as the worst president we've ever had.

Polk's War was actually the Mexican War of 1846-48. Before and during that war, most Americans including congress were not in favor of a war with Mexico.

The war was launched on questionable pretexts. Why invade a smaller, poorer neighbor just for land? Mexico's border with the Republic of Texas was the Nueces River near Corpus Christi. New Mexico, Arizona, California along with other territory belonged to Mexico, having won them from Spain some 25 years earlier.

There were debates in Congress that the invasion of Mexico was unconstitutional. America had never invaded others (except the American Indians). A young congressman, Abraham Lincoln, began his move into the national limelight as an avowed opponent to the war.

Polk saw America as having a manifest destiny to control the entire continent. The great American attitude of "can do" was increasing in strength. Arrogance was never been in short supply in our brief history.

President James K. Polk sent troops to Corpus Christi to move the border to the Rio Grande. This was not something the Mexicans wanted. They responded with some strength and were not the push-over Polk and the war hawks thought they would be.

For such a strong nation to invade a weak and poor neighbor was not popular. Mexico had only been free of Spain for some 25 years. They were pretty well vanquished after their revolution and the war with Texas.

Polk sent down to Cuba for General Santa Anna to come out of retirement and help his cause in Mexico. (The same Santa Anna, who ten years earlier, lost Texas to Sam Houston.) Santa Anna went to Mexico, but instead of helping the USA, he made himself president of Mexico again (I think for the fourth time). He led his troops to push the Americans out of Mexico, but to no avail.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Feb. 2, 1848, ended the war and Polk paid \$15 million to Mexico for California and other territories. The Rio Grande became the new border with Mexico.

Joe Wheelan's book, *Invading Mexico*, tells the story of many of the

war's overlooked events. For example, five New York newspapers, wanting to cover the war with the least expense, organized the Associate Press as a joint venture. It was our first war with war correspondents.

Along with press coverage, there was a peace movement against the war. Before it was over Polk was being called all sorts of names. Throughout the remainder of the 19th century most books on Polk were negative. The only promise he kept was to serve only one term. The country was glad he didn't run again. He was, to that date, America's worst president.

The view of Polk changed somewhat in the twentieth century as America began to become more imperialistic. Polk began to be viewed in a better light as we invaded Cuba and the Philippines and stole them from the Spain. Both these invasions were blamed on the Spanish, who were growing weak and wanted no war.

Wheelan's book sees Polk as the worst president our nation has ever had. My "gut" reaction is Polk does not even come close to being the most inept, worst president to ever live in the White House. ■



Women In Christian Ministry

By Fisher Humphreys, Beeson Divinity School, Birmingham, AL

Note: This article is reprinted from Chapter 12 of *Putting Women In Their Place* (Eds. Audra E. and Joe E. Trull, Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2003) and is available from the publisher or through Christian Ethics Today.

Our new pastor is Sarah Jackson Shelton. This past Sunday our church called her to be our servant-leader. Her husband is an accountant here in Birmingham, and they have two young sons. Sarah's father is one of the great pastors in Alabama Baptist life, now retired. Sarah holds the M. Div. degree from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. We were not surprised when someone told us that she had won an award for outstanding preaching while she was in seminary—she is a wonderful preacher. She is a wonderful pastor, too, a wise and compassionate person who relates beautifully to all the different kinds of people in our diverse little congregation. We learned these things about her during a twelve-month period when she served as our interim pastor.

Apparently Sarah is one of the first woman to serve as pastor of a church affiliated with the Alabama Baptist State Convention. We love the Convention and its agencies such as Samford University, where I teach, and we hope the Convention will continue to accept us as members, though we expect that some people will be troubled by our having a woman as our pastor.

I suppose some people will assume that we called Sarah Shelton in order to be politically correct. Two things occur to me about that. One is that among Baptists, calling a woman as our pastor is politically incorrect, not politically correct.

The other is that the phrase “politically correct” suggests that one of three things is the case: Either we didn't understand the motives that led us to

do what we did, or we did what we did out of a desperate need to conform to some group's expectations for us, or we're claiming we did what we did for one reason when we know we actually did it for another reason. In other words political correctness is either stupidity, or weakness, or deceit. I don't think Christians should use the phrase “politically correct.” It is too laden with contempt.

We called Sarah Shelton as our pastor because we believe she has the gifts, the training, the experience, and the spirit that we need in our pastor at this time in our church's life. We believe she will be a wonderful pastor. We are grateful to God that Sarah is coming to lead us.

Still, I understand that many Christians are uncomfortable with the idea of women serving as ministers. Their view is well represented in the 2000 edition of *The Baptist Faith and Message* which says: “While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.” I think it is understandable that many Christians hold this view and think it is the biblical view.

Though I respect the sincerity, intelligence, and good will of such persons, I do not agree with them. My purpose in this chapter is to provide a biblical argument for the church's acceptance of women serving in Christian ministry. It is the argument that has convinced me, and I hope it may be of interest to others.

There are six steps in the argument. First, I call attention to the patriarchy that characterized the world described in the Bible. Second, I identify a few women leaders in the Old and New Testaments. Third, I describe Jesus' unconventional attitude toward women. Fourth, I review two New Testament themes that support women in ministry. Fifth, I offer a theology of

ordination. Finally, I respond to one of the passages that prohibit women from playing certain roles in the church.

Patriarchy and the Bible

The world described in the Bible was patriarchal. This is hardly surprising; apparently the entire ancient world was patriarchal. Patriarchy is a form of social organization in which fathers are the supreme authorities in their families, clans, or tribes. In a patriarchy, men possess cultural hegemony or dominance and use their dominance to exclude women from sharing in aspects of communal life. Women are expected to be submissive to men in something like the way in which, in our society today, young children are expected to be submissive to their parents.

The patriarchy of the ancient world is reflected in many ways in our Holy Scriptures. This is one of the evidences that our Bible was written by human beings. We Christians have never claimed that the Bible was written in heaven. We believe that it is God's Word just as much as if it had been written in heaven. But we believe that God in infinite wisdom arranged for the Word to be mediated to us through human authors; one result of this is that the patriarchal context within which the authors lived is reflected in the Bible.

But that is not all; the Bible contains passages that describe women acting as leaders in ways that challenged patriarchal assumptions.

Women Leaders in the Bible

An early example is Sarah. Her story is as much an adventure as is that of her husband, Abraham, and of course, she is as much a parent of the chosen people as is her husband.

Her name means “princess,” and Sarah was treasured by her husband as a princess. But for many years she had great sadness in her life, for she had no children. She was elderly when she was told that she would have a child, and she thought that was laughable; in fact,

it made her laugh. When the child was born he was named, quite appropriately, Isaac, which means “laughter.”

Another woman who broke free of ancient society’s restrictions on women was Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron. It was Miriam who arranged for the infant Moses to be cared for by his mother after he was taken into the household of Pharaoh. During the great events of the Exodus, Miriam became, along with Moses and Aaron, a religious and political leader. Centuries later, God said this to Israel: “I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam” (Mic 6:4).

During the period after the death of Moses and Aaron and Miriam, when Israel was moving back into the Holy Land, the nation was led by people whom we call judges. These leaders were not only judges as we know them today, people with legal responsibilities, but were also charismatic military leaders. One of them was a woman named Deborah. Her general was named Barak, and Barak refused to go into battle unless Deborah accompanied him. Deborah led a coalition of Israelites into battle against Sisera, a leader of Canaanite forces, on the plain of Esdraelon. This was a strategic battle in Israel’s control of central and northern Palestine. In addition to her work as a judge, Deborah was also a prophet (Josh 4:4).

Another woman who protected her people was Queen Esther. She was the wife of Xerxes, a king of Persia in the fifth century before Christ. Esther was Jewish, and, when she learned that the king’s chief lieutenant Haman intended to kill all of the Jews in Persia she intervened (at great personal risk) with Xerxes and succeeded in saving the Jews who were in Persia from extermination.

Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, and Esther played important roles in the story of salvation history that is recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures. Though these Scriptures were written in a patriarchal world, they tell about women who were called by God to act

in ways that went beyond the restrictions placed on them by their society.

The same is true in the New Testament. Scattered throughout the New Testament are accounts of women exercising leadership roles and carrying out ministries in the early church. That this would happen was predicted by Peter in his great evangelistic sermon at Pentecost: “Your sons and daughters will prophesy. . . . On my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit” (Acts 2:17. Peter was quoting the prophet Joel).

In the New Testament era the Christian faith was more like a movement than an organization. Though there is a great deal that we do not know about the organizational structure of the churches of the New Testament era, it seems probable that the various churches were organized in different ways, with different officers and different functions for the various offices. As one scholar has expressed it, “There is no such thing as *the* New Testament church order.”¹

One thing we do know is this: There were women ministers in some of the New Testament churches. In Acts 18:26 we read about a couple, Priscilla and Aquila, who were teachers, and one of their students was a man. In Acts 21:8-9 we read about four unnamed women who were prophets. In Romans 16:1 we read about a woman named Phoebe who was a deacon in her church. In Philippians 4:2-3 we read about two women, Syntyche and Euodia, whom Paul describes as co-workers who have “struggled beside me in the work of the gospel.” In 2 Timothy 1:5 we read about Lois and Eunice who taught the Scriptures to young Timothy. And in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 we read that women prayed and prophesied during church services; as we would say today, they led the worship services.

In summary, given the patriarchy of the ancient world, it is not surprising that men occupy the center stage in the biblical narratives. What is surprising is that several biblical passages record the fact that women exercised leadership roles in Israel and in the

churches of the New Testament era.

Jesus’ Attitude toward Women

To that surprising fact we now add another, namely, that Jesus held an unconventional attitude toward women, an attitude evident in the ways he related to them and spoke about them. I will review some of the examples of this that have been studied by Evelyn and Frank Stagg.²

In Mark 12:41-44 we read that Jesus praised a widow’s small offering. Ironically, it was a gift she would have given in one of the outer courts of the Temple, since women were not allowed to enter the inner courts.

According to John 4, Jesus engaged in a long conversation with a woman at a well in Samaria. They talked about theology, about Jesus’ mission, and about her life. She accepted Jesus’ message, and through her witness other Samaritans also accepted that message.

In Luke 10:38-42 we read a story about Jesus and the sisters Mary and Martha. Jesus allowed Mary to “hear his word,” that is, to be a disciple, a learner of his teaching. This was in violation of the social custom that only men may become disciples of the rabbis. As the Staggs point out, “A rabbi did not instruct a woman in the Torah.”³ Today we are so accustomed to higher education being available for women as well as for men that we find it difficult to grasp the radical implications of Jesus’ act. Some of us have been helped by a short story written by Isaac Singer entitled “Yentl,” which was made into a movie by Barbra Streisand. Certainly Jesus’ contemporaries would have understood that he was doing something unconventional when he welcomed Mary as a learner, a disciple.

In Luke 8:1-3 we read that a large group of women not only benefited from Jesus’ teaching but also supported him financially and accompanied him and the Twelve on evangelistic trips.

In summary, Jesus took an unconventional attitude toward women. He treated them with the same respect that he accorded to men. He expressed appreciation for their achievements. He assumed that they had the same

intellectual and spiritual abilities that men do. His attitude toward women was a challenge to the assumptions of the patriarchal society in which he lived.

Two New Testament Teachings that Support Women in Ministry

Two important New Testament teachings are supportive of women serving as ministers in the church. One is the teaching about the priesthood of all believers, and the other is the teaching about spiritual gifts.

In the Old Testament era, priests were an elite of male descendants of Levi and later of Aaron. Two Old Testament passages, Exodus 19 and Isaiah 61, contain promises about a coming time when all of God's people will be priests. In 1 Peter 2 we read that these promises have been fulfilled in the Christian church. That Christians generally believed this truth is confirmed by five brief references to believers as priests scattered throughout the book of Revelation.

What are the biblical meanings of priesthood? What did the Hebrew priests do that other Jews did not do? There were three closely related activities: Priests led worship, they offered sacrifices, and they offered prayers on behalf of others.

We have seen that in 1 Corinthians 11 Paul spoke of women as engaged in worship leadership. That was priestly work.

From the beginning the followers of Jesus did not offer animal sacrifices. Christians were, until the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, the only group known to us in the Roman world who did not do so, and their rationale for not doing so was extraordinary: They believed that the death of Jesus was a final sacrifice that rendered all animal sacrifices superfluous.

The sacrifices that Christians offered were spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet 2:5). One spiritual sacrifice was worship itself; two others were giving money to the poor and performing acts of compassion. All three of these spiritual sacrifices are mentioned in Hebrews 13:15-16: "Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise

to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God."

In Romans 12:1 Paul advised his readers to give their lives to God as living sacrifices. Offering a spiritual sacrifice is priestly work, and God calls women as well as men to that act of devotion.

Finally, the Hebrew priests offered prayers on behalf of people. This too is an activity for women as well as for men, as 1 Corinthians 11 makes clear.

In other words, all Christian churches have women priests, that is, women members who as priests are called to the priestly work of worship, sacrifice, and prayer.

The second New Testament teaching concerns spiritual gifts; the most important passages are Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12-14, Ephesians 4:7-16, and 1 Peter 4:10-11. Paul says explicitly that all Christians are given spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:6-7; Eph 4:6). God gives spiritual gifts to women and expects them to use their gifts in the life and ministry of the church.

The New Testament teachings about priesthood and spiritual gifts constitute a challenge to the patriarchal assumptions of the ancient world and a call to the church to welcome the ministries of women. Christian women who minister are putting into practice the unconventional attitude that Jesus took toward women, and they are following the examples of the women in the New Testament churches who were teachers, prophets, deacons, worship leaders, and co-workers with the apostles.

The Meaning of Ordination

Two other questions need to be answered: What is the meaning of ordination? and, What are we to make of the New Testament passages in which women are prohibited from playing certain roles in the life of the church?

The New Testament does not contain a doctrine of ordination. Churches in the New Testament era occasionally laid hands on individual members, and sometimes this was done as members began a new phase of ministry.⁴

Across the centuries the church has

continued this practice and has understood its meaning in three different ways. The Roman Catholic Church has understood ordination as conferring upon a man an indelible grace that authorizes him to conduct the Mass. Magisterial reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin understood ordination to confer upon a man the authority to proclaim the Word of God.

These understandings of ordination are not appropriate for Baptists because Baptists believe that churches are authorized by Christ to celebrate the Lord's Supper whether or not an ordained person is present, and they believe that all Christians are responsible to give a witness to God's Word.

A third understanding of ordination is that it is a church's confirmation that it concurs with a person that she or he has been called by God to perform some ministry, and a church's blessing on the individual as he or she begins that ministry. Ordination is not a conferral of authority over others, but rather a confirmation and a blessing. This is the only understanding of ordination that is appropriate for Baptists. When it is embraced, it puts to rest the objections about ordination conferring upon women an authority over men.

Passages Prohibiting Women from Playing Certain Roles in the Church

The most compelling biblical argument against women serving as ministers is, of course, the presence in the New Testament of passages in which women are prohibited from playing certain roles in the church. I believe that 1 Timothy 2 is the most forceful of these passages, so I shall give attention to it; what I say about it may be said about other similar passages.

Here is the difficult passage: "I desire, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument; also that the women should dress themselves modestly and decently in suitable clothing, not with their hair braided, or with gold, pearls, or expensive clothes, but with good works, as is proper for women who profess reverence for God. Let a woman learn in silence with

full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty" (1 Tim 2:8-15).⁵

I will make two simple points about this passage. First, if we apply this passage to the church today, then women should not serve as ministers in churches. I think it is important to acknowledge this fact.

Second, I think that the principal question to be answered about the passage is this: Is this prohibition a universal principle applicable to all times and places, or is it rather a rule intended only for and appropriate only to the particular time and place addressed by the author?

All Christians believe that the Bible contains principles that apply to all times and places. An example is "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart" (Matt 22:37). This teaching is universal in its application rather than culture-specific.

On the other hand, all Christians recognize that the Bible contains teachings that do not apply to all times and places. It is customary to describe these teachings as culturally conditioned, but I do not think this is a good way to put it, for this reason: Since we use language when we make statements, and since language is the central component in culture, all statements are culturally conditioned. I prefer to say that teachings that do not apply in all times and places are "culture-specific," by which I mean that they are applicable to a particular culture but not to all cultures.

First Timothy 2 contains some teachings that, most Christians agree, are culture-specific. For example, it says that women should not braid their hair or wear gold or pearls. Most Christians today regard these things as inappropriate in Paul's world but as acceptable in today's world. The spirit behind them is presumably that

Christians should be modest in their appearance.

Is the same thing true of Paul's instructions that women are not to teach or have authority over men? Are these instructions, like those about pearls and braided hair, culture-specific? Or are they universal?

I think they are culture-specific, and I think that the universal principle that underlies them is something like this: Christians should not behave in ways that cause profound offense to the gospel and thus prevent the church from carrying out its mission to the world. In the patriarchal world of the biblical era, it would have been deeply offensive for women to teach and to exercise authority over men.

What about today? I think that there may be some societies today in which women's exercise of authority over men is so deeply offensive that the gospel cannot be heard when preached by churches in which women do these things.

But in most societies today, particularly in technologically developed societies, the opposite is the case. In our culture the freedom and dignity of women are everywhere affirmed. In American society, where women are bankers, military officers, physicians, and engineers, it is deeply offensive to many people that women are excluded from leadership in churches.

If the universal principle that underlies 1 Timothy 2 is that church members should not give such profound offense to a society that the gospel cannot be heard, then in America today churches should welcome women as ministers. Why? Because in our society it is as scandalous for the church to refuse to welcome women into ministry as it would have been in the ancient world for the church to have welcomed women into all forms of ministry.

The issue concerning 1 Timothy 2 is not whether we believe the Bible but how we interpret it.

God is sovereign, which means, among other things, that God is free to arrange the church's life in any way God likes; God is free to call men into

ministry and not women, and God is free to call both women and men into ministry. Our responsibility as members of the church is not to choose a practice that we happen to like, but to seek God's will and then to attempt to do it.

I believe that it is God's will for women to serve as ministers of the church in developed societies today. In these societies women leaders do not give grave offense to the gospel, and the work of the church will prosper if the church adopts Jesus' attitudes toward women and follows the example of the women prophets and deacons and worship leaders whose ministries are named in the New Testament.

St. Irenaeus has written, *Glorio dei homo vivens*—"the glory of God is a human being who is fully alive."⁶ It is God's will is for all people to experience wholeness and fullness of life. One of the most egregious contributors to human impoverishment and alienation is the systemic, invidious diminishment of women in patriarchies. I believe that the diminishment of women is weakening, and I believe that the future for women is a bright one, because I believe that God intends for women to experience life in all its fullness. Therefore I believe that we Christians may hope for a better future and that we may move into the future with joy and confidence in God. ■

¹Eduard Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1959), 13.

²Evelyn and Frank Stagg, *Woman in the World of Jesus* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), chapters 4 and 5.

³*Ibid.*, 118.

⁴See, for examples, Acts 6:6, 13:3, 1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6.

⁵For a more intensive study of this passage, see Chapter Eight in *Putting Women in their Place*.

⁶Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4, 20, 6, in Henry Bettenson, ed., *The Early Christian Fathers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 104.

And Hagar Went Back: Responding to Abuse

By Catherine Clark Kroeger, Brewster, MA

What a disappointment it is when we try so very hard to help a woman who has decided to leave an abusive situation! We scurry around to locate food, clothing, toiletries, toys for the children, furniture and bedding, a place to stay. We approach the deacons for emergency funding. We befriend her and pray for her. We watch the children, drive the survivor to get food stamps and a restraining order—and then suddenly she returns to her abuser! All of our work has been for nothing, or so it seems. We can end up feeling downright foolish about the whole effort. How can we demonstrate a gracious attitude if the victim approaches us again for help?

In point of fact, this experience is a very common one. Most women who decide to leave their abusers return approximately seven times before they make the final break. There are many reasons why women go back to the situations from which we have tried to rescue them. The victim may feel that she has no other option for surviving financially; she may fear that her abuser will kill her unless she returns. The offender may have told the woman that she is totally inadequate to cope without him—and she has bought into his lie. She may fear the rejection of her family or her friends at church. She may cling to her marriage vows and refuse to break the binding promise that she made at the altar. Her pastor may demand that she return. She may have been told that the Bible requires her to remain in the marriage even when her life is at stake—or even that she may win the abuser to Christ if she continues to submit to his abuse. There are some forty other reasons that women return, among them being quite simply that she still loves the perpetrator.

But how can we ever get anybody at our church to help any other women if it turns out to be simply wasted effort?

Again, the scriptures can help us. We read of Hagar, the Egyptian slave who escaped from the abuse that she was suffering at the hands of Sarah, wife of Abraham. How tragic that he, the father of our faith, had allowed his wife to mistreat the slave girl whom he himself had impregnated! It may be helpful to remember that even some very pious people have condoned appalling abuse of family members—and Abraham is no exception.

As Hagar fled into the desert, she sank down at a well, homeless and friendless. It was at that point she discovered that she was not after all alone. There God began to speak to her; and in that moment of fleeing from abuse, she came to know the Friend who would always be with her in love and support. There she received a name for her unborn child (Ishmael, meaning “God shall hear”), and there she gave the Lord a Name “the God who Sees.” Actually, she is the only person in all of Bible history who gives God a name, though others experienced the revelation of a divine name. She had discovered that God both hears and sees abused women.

Hagar was given a mighty promise—that she should be the mother of a mighty nation, whose people should be as many as the sands of the desert. And she was promised that her unborn son should be a “wild ass of a man.” This seems a dubious title for an unborn child. Nevertheless both in biblical times and in present day Israel, the wild ass cannot be harnessed or subjected to human domination. Job declared “the wild ass can no man tame.” (Job 39:9-12) Thus Hagar was promised a son who would be freer than free, unshackled by slavery or oppression.

And then God SENT HER BACK to the home where she had been abused! In the end, she would go forth from that home with her young son,

freed from her concubinage, slavery and oppression, but there were at that crucial moment some pressing necessities. There was a need for shelter and food and care during her impending delivery. We can only hope that Abraham was deeply concerned for the mother of his soon-to-be-born child and that she was received back by Sarah with a more gracious attitude. Return does not seem a good option, but in the harsh realities of desert existence, it was the least undesirable option.

It was in that first departure from abuse that she found God for herself in a personal relationship. She did not return as the same person who had fled. She knew not only the God who had listened to her plight, but she knew herself as heir of a divine promise. She returned with a new understanding, a different person with a different perspective.

The escape, the encounter, and the returns were all part of her spiritual progress. How important it is to understand that God deals with people in circumstances that do not always meet with our personal convenience or preconceived notions. We cannot tell what may have happened within the soul of the person whom we consider to have behaved with such ingratitude when we tried so hard to help.

Although we may be disappointed when a survivor returns to an environment that does not seem safe, she can return with a new awareness of Christian concern, of God’s care for her, of love and prayer support. She can know what the scriptures teach about God’s condemnation of physical, emotional, sexual, and mental abuse. She can go back with the awareness that she did not cause the abuse, cannot control it and cannot cure it. She can go back with prayer support in place.

A woman can learn that she can call upon us again, that we respect her right

to make her own choice—even though it is one that fills us with concern. She can understand the importance of making a safety plan in case she needs to leave again in a hurry. She can learn how to contact a local shelter, how to keep important documents where she can retrieve them quickly (drivers license, green card, prescriptions, birth certificates for the children). She can figure out through what door or window she might escape, how she can obtain transportation, and to whom she can turn for safety. She can contact PASCH to request prayer support (webmaster@peaceandsafety.com) for “God shall hear.”

Hagar’s experience did not end with her return to the home of Sarah and Abraham. At the insistence of his wife, Abraham sends out his former concubine, now a freed woman, along with her young son. And so she is evicted into the wilderness, this time with the care of a child who rapidly succumbs to the heat of the sun and the lack of water. Nothing is left to her but the wailing of her grief—and it is just then that God hears again and intervenes.

Hagar is about to take another major step in personal and spiritual growth. At first reading, God’s com-

mand does not seem particularly sympathetic: “Stand up and take your child by the hand.” If Hagar had previously been sent back to receive care that she needed, she must now learn to care for herself and her child. Feeling helpless or sorry for herself is no longer a viable option.

The first lesson will be survival in the desert. The Bible tells us that “God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water that she had not seen before.” (Gen 21:19) She hurries to bring water to revive her child, and together they embark upon a life of freedom and fulfillment. She has come to a place of independence, already filling the role of decision maker as she sends to Egypt for a bride for her son.

And what does this story from scripture suggest to us who seek to minister to women that later return to their abusive situation? That the time during which we render them service may afford them an opportunity to meet God in a new way. That window of respite from abuse may constitute an important spiritual milestone. A person who again seeks help should not be condemned for changing her mind but challenged to grow both in her understanding of her situation

and of God’s continuing love and care. The church can demonstrate its concern with all the material assistance that is necessary, but the greatest gift is made to the victim’s soul. We may find that the community shelter is far more effective than we in providing for some of her needs, but the people of God excel in prayer support, loving fellowship, and spiritual guidance. As the scripture exhorts us, “Share the sorrow of those being mistreated, as though you feel their pain in your own bodies” (Heb 13:3) and “Never get tired of doing good” (2 Thess 3:13). ■

Note: Catherine Clark Kroeger is the founder of **Peace and Safety in the Christian Home (PASCH)** www.peaceandsafety.com, 1095 Stony Brook Road, Bewster, MA 02631, a Christian network addressing varied aspects of domestic abuse, which also publishes a monthly newsletter **Pasch**, from which this article came (Feb. 2008). Dr. Kroeger is more widely known as the founder and long-time director of **Christians for Biblical Equality**, and co-author (with her husband Richard) of the classic text, *I Suffer Not a Woman* (Baker, 1992).



Privileged Communication and Abuse Reporting: From the Navy to the Local Church

By Commander Charles P. McGathy, Chaplain U.S. Navy (Retired) Madison, NC

I was a Navy chaplain for 22 years. In order to become a chaplain I had to receive an endorsement from a bona fide faith group. There are many faith groups recognized by the Department of Defense and represented in the military chaplaincies. During my career I was endorsed by two of these: first I was endorsed by the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and then, when it became possible, I was endorsed by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

When I entered the Navy in 1984 I encountered clergy from a number of different backgrounds including those from denominations that have a hierarchical structure, such as Lutherans and Roman Catholics. These chaplains did not receive their ordination from a local assembly of believers, but from their Church. They were assigned or appointed in consultation with a bishop to the flock they were to shepherd. They needed to go through their respective bishops for assignment including their entry into the military. I learned from numerous conversations that many of them thought that the Free Church tradition of local churches extending a “call” for a pastor rather confusing and lacking security (and of course they were correct). Additionally, they did not look primarily to the local body of believers as a governing authority. A church council provided support and advice, but the larger Church usually had final say in decisions.

My Baptist prejudices aside, I will openly admit that their systems of doing church worked pretty well for them. They thought the Baptist way of doing church rather messy. My Lutheran and Catholic clergy friends have not been tempted to adopt the whims and uncertainties of congregational polity—at least I am not aware of it.

Now while I will agree that there are indeed strengths and weaknesses inherit in any system, I still treasure my heritage as a Baptist. I would hate to give up the Baptist principles that make us unique as a people even if that creates a potential for ecclesiastical chaos. Nevertheless, it is necessary to examine how we relate to civic authorities from time to time in order to help them understand who we are. One of those areas needs to be in explaining what we mean by privileged communication.

Clergy from churches of hierarchical structure are guided by church law that sets out and defines what may and may not be done in a religious organization. In the Roman Catholic Church, for example, church law is established in the Vatican in Rome. It is the same for every Roman Catholic Church everywhere. Roman Catholic Church law establishes the absolute confidentiality of the confessional. The principle behind this law assures that people can go to their priest in confession of sin with the absolute confidence that it will go no further. Because they can confide in a trusted clergy they can move toward reconciliation and repentance. Therefore even a crime confessed in confidence to a priest is kept privileged.

The principle of separation of church and state allows for this practice to continue in this country, though there are tensions especially about confessed crimes of abuse (child, spousal, and elderly). Strict laws have been passed requiring counseling professionals who must maintain confidentiality to make exceptions if they become aware of abuse, especially child abuse.¹

Many lawmakers feel that clergy should be included in this law. The laws of many states are not specific on this point, opening up possibilities for lawsuits against pastors and churches who do not report abuse because they

are holding to a high standard of privileged communication.²

When I retired from the Navy I expected that I could continue to practice counseling in a manner that was consistent with my convictions and ministerial code of ethics. The difference however, is a matter of governing authority. Whereas Navy and Department of Defense regulations specifically protected privileged clergy/penitent communication, as a civilian pastor there is less specific protection for me and my counselees. In fact after looking at the laws concerning abuse reporting from several states I was amazed and a bit concerned. The wording of statutes often did not specifically protect penitent communications in cases of suspected abuse.

Thomas F. Taylor in his book *Seven Deadly Lawsuits: How Ministers Can Avoid Litigation and Regulation* warns: “States differ on the extent to which a given state’s child abuse reporting laws apply to ministers.” In other words in those states it could mean that a pastor while not required to testify against a counselee may be required to report the same person for abuse following a counseling session. Thomas asks the question, “Must ministers report child abuse in every state?” In answer he summarizes that there are four kinds of abuse (child and in some cases elderly) reporting statutes which “in some way require ministers to report such abuse.”

1. Some states require that any person—including clergy—who learns of suspected child abuse must report.
2. Some states statutes specify clergy must report.
3. Some state statutes imply that clergy must report suspected child abuse.
4. Some state child-abuse reporting statutes exclude clergy from the list of personnel who must report.³

This raises the question then, how can free and open communication

between counselee and clergy be preserved? How can an individual struggling with the sin of abuse discuss incidents that can lead to repentance and seeking competent help for the abused and for the abuser? In fact, it is possible under the provisions of the law in many states for an ordained clergy who learns of child abuse and does not report it to later face charges. There are three typical defenses when this occurs.⁴

The first defense is based upon the fact that the law in that particular state did not require reporting of abuse because of the definition of the abusing party. This is actually a glitch in the law, a loop hole if you will. For example some states define child abuse as a wrongful act done against a child "by as parent or guardian." Consequently, if the abuse is done by someone else, say a step-brother or youth-group leader then the minister is not compelled to report. I find this defense totally insufficient. If the only reason not to report is because one can technically get away with it, then the clergy in question have no business shepherding God's children.

A second possible defense a minister might use for not reporting abuse could be that clergy/penitent communication is specially protected in the state where the parties reside. That legal exception for clergy does not exist in every state. In North Carolina, where I live, the law reads, "Every person or institution with cause to suspect that a child is abused, neglected, or dependent, or that a child has died as a result of maltreatment, must report that child's situation. . . ."⁵ Thus there is not a statute in my state specifically exempting clergy when it comes to child abuse. Other states have similar laws leaving open the question of reporting requirements for clergy.

The last and I think best defense is the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. Separation of church and state implications prevent the state from interfering with the free exercise of religion. This defense, however, will not hold unless it can be shown that the religious requirements and description of practices of

the church provide for privileged communication. This has proven to be a successful defense for those clergy who are abiding by church law.⁶ Where there is no church ordinance or written expectation of absolutely confidential counseling the clergy are in an unclear area of unwritten expectation. Thus it is incumbent upon the minister in a free church who believes that the expectation of his or her congregation is that the confessional between pastor and penitent should remain sacred and absolutely confidential for the greater good of redemption, must insure that there is written evidence supporting that. This must be done through the church's constitution and by laws and under girded in the pastor's job description. Furthermore it should only be afforded to ordained clergy and no other persons within the church in order to highlight the special relationship that occurs in the confessional.

I have never had to carry the weight of keeping child abuse a secret. Either I was able to persuade the counselee to seek help or the abuse was already in the discovery phase and being handled by nonreligious agencies. I have had to encounter spousal abuse and grieve as it went unreported. An abused wife refused to turn in her husband in fear that he would lose his career as field grade officer. That was a burden I had to carry and it was hard. Even so I allowed a wounded, confused, and endangered woman to exit my office most likely to face escalating abuse in order to protect her right of privileged communication. Perhaps I was some help in defining the issues and showing her that she had options. That day, however, was not the day she was ready to take action.

On the other hand I have also been able to save lives. On one occasion a violent Marine confessed to me, because he felt safe within privileged communication, that he planned to murder his wife. I kept him talking long enough to convince him that what he really needed to do was seek help for his feelings of rage. I breathed a sigh of relief when he gave me permission to take his story beyond the confessional.

I got help for him and her. No one died that day.

These recollections illustrate both the burden and the need of privileged communication with clergy. Privileged communication is a necessary safety valve that often saves lives. If people feel safe enough a pastor can assist them to seek the help they so desperately need. No one loves children more than me. I have five of my own. I would be the first to scream if anyone harmed them or did not protect them when they could. Thank God for laws that protect the innocent from abuse. Clergy, however, fill a special role and that role must be protected by insuring privileged communication without exceptions. ■

Editor's Postscript: As a teacher of Ministerial Ethics and co-author of a text on that subject in which this topic is discussed (*Ministerial Ethics 2nd Ed.*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004, 104-106), I must respectfully disagree with the writer's conclusion, although I appreciate his intent in this dilemma. I often noted to students that confidentiality in counseling is never an absolute and must always be guided by trustworthiness, justice, and prudence. Students were encouraged to share with counselees that confidentiality would be maintained except in matters where the counselee discloses harm intended on oneself or others (suicide/murder), or in cases where the law and concern for victims require disclosure.

¹Thomas F. Taylor, *Seven Deadly Lawsuits: How Ministers Can Avoid Litigation and Regulation*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 56.

²Ibid., 75.

³Ibid., 67.

⁴Ibid., 70.

⁵North Carolina General Statute 7a543.

⁶Norman Abrams, *Addressing the Tension Between the Clergy-Communication Privilege and Duty to Report Child Abuse in State Statutes*, (Boston: Boston College Law Review, PG1127), available from http://www.bc.edu/schools/law/lawreviews/meta-elements/journals/bclaw/44_4/08_TXT.htm; accessed on 24 June 2007.

Fortified Churches: Relics of Faith and Fear

By Patrick Anderson, Cedar Key, FL

Recently Bill Leonard and I traveled with our friend, Otniel (Oti) Bunaciu, in Romania and drove north of Bucharest into the Transylvania Mountains. For two days we drove to hard places to see six of the 40 or so fortified churches dating from the 12th, 13th, and 14th centuries. For nearly 900 years these large church structures, surrounded by walls and other fortifications, were central features in remote villages as well as the central town of Sighisoara. The importation of Saxons in the 12th century by King Geza II was designed to defend his crown, as well as to bring Saxon civilization into the ancient area, although the region had consistent inhabitation since about 2000bc.

The Saxons also brought craftsmanship and superior organization and agricultural techniques to the area and enjoyed a very prosperous, but troubled, few hundred years. The occasional invasions of Turks led to the fortification of the churches. Now, centuries later, it is stunning to see the walled church grounds, ancient church buildings with worn furnishings, artwork, and statuary of worship. Amazingly the Romanian government has not classified the churches as national historical monuments and many are in very poor repair. This will not remain the case forever I am sure, because this is a relatively untouched tourist's and historian's dream. The fortified church in the center of the town of Sighisoara is well-known and oft-visited. Sighisoara is the second most important city in the area and sits on the main highway and rail line. But most of the other fortified churches languish in isolated villages, off the beaten path.

Oti, Bill, and I drove the hard trails to get to some of them. One, the Duetschweisskirch, was initially built by a Szekler community. The Saxons added to the barn-like structure in the

13th century and fortified the grounds with additions and renovations in the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries. As I stood in the main tower, I could see for miles and miles in every direction. I could only imagine the terror which must have struck the people as they watched the Turks approach. I could almost see and hear the panic and rush toward the church and hear the bell of alarm ringing. I could imagine children running from their homes carrying whatever few precious possessions the family valued, while fathers and mothers drove the cattle, sheep, chickens, and pigs inside the walls.

The hooks still show where large cured hams were hung from the ceiling in the main tower to be safely rationed and to be available for sustenance. Large rooms were dedicated to hold all the food the villagers could muster. Groups of people took up their assigned tasks, protecting children, passing the ammunition, filling containers with water, boiling oil. When under siege, the people huddled inside the fortified church and watched helplessly as the invaders looted and sacked their homes, living off of the crops and shelters left behind, minding their time for attack until after they had taken and used anything they wanted from the abandoned villages and farms. Terrified villagers manned the archers' windows and reinforced the gate, watching helplessly the desecration of their homes while the necessary rage built within them for the fight which was sure to come in due course.

I can only imagine the scene in the churches as priests prayed, babies cried, and mothers fretted while the men shouted threats and abuse at the invaders, threw stones from the walls to repel the forward observers, poured pots of boiling oil on any Turks who tried the gate, and archers loosed their arrows from the narrow parapets at any who encroached the field of fire.

Patience must have been hard to maintain in the context of such tension and fear. "Pray to God, but fight for our lives!" they must have shouted. Sleep must have come fitfully if at all throughout the weeks of siege.

We also visited the Biserica Fortificata Biertan in the small village of Homorod. Oti asked around and found the caretaker, a man of Saxon descent in his 80s, Mr. Thome. Bill and I sat with the man and his wife in their home, drinking the offered homemade plum brandy on this cold and snowy day. Oti retrieved the car to carry the elderly caretaker the short distance to open the fortified church. He used a large key, and the door creaked open revealing the quiet and overgrown courtyard. Few visitors have had this experience. The man spoke German and, of course, Romanian.

He was proud of his German-Saxon heritage, but told us only seven Saxons remain in the town, and about thirty Romanians and about 1200 Gypsies. His body sagged as he made that final revelation. His entire world had collapsed around him, it seemed. He told us of Turk invasions, Romanian invasions, Hungarian invasions, the Lutheran Reformation, the Nazi invasions, the Russian invasions, and finally the Gypsy invasions. He covered 9 centuries of history as if he had personally experienced each event and they all had occurred last week.

The caretaker also showed us a plaque on the church wall which listed the WWII dead. He said the Nazi army came into the region in June of 1944 and rounded up all of the males over the age of 14 and took them to the Russian front. By September, they were all dead. He sadly pointed to the names of his father and uncle. He said he had hidden in the woods with his mother and sister while the roundup took place, avoiding conscription. Then, after the war, the Russians came.

Since the people were German speaking and had served (albeit unwillingly) with Hitler, they took many of the men off to suffer in gulags. But mostly his attention was focused on the gypsies, who were pressing in all around his tranquil village right now.

When told we were involved a social ministry to provide hope and opportunities for Gypsies (Project Ruth), he said in German, "It is a waste of your time. You cannot do any good. I am not a racist, but God save America and all civilized countries from the Gypsies!"

We also visited a village called Viskry, far off of the paved roads in the mountains where two valleys converge. Here the caretaker, an elderly woman also in her 80s, welcomed us. We were tired and the day was late, but again we walked the grounds and sat in the church as the woman described her childhood and the traditions of the church. We wondered at the richness of the whole scene.

The church is stunning—the faded artwork on the furniture and walls, the statutes, the pulpit—incredible, but in a deteriorating condition. The kind lady explained to us where each family sat during worship—where single men sat and where the widows sat, according to their age, next to a painting of angels. The nearer to the painting the widows sat the closer to the end they were assumed to be. She demonstrated how one was never to turn one's back on the altar, how women were never to expose an ankle while stepping over or around a bench. She showed us a string that ran from the pipe organist's bench to a small bell near the billows which alerted the pumper to pump the bags to fill the pipes for music at the assigned time in the worship service.

All of the churches were Catholic when construction began in the 1200s and 1300s, but most became Lutheran in the 16th Century, standing as the far easternmost reach of the Reformation. The cataclysmic changes within and among congregations as they wrestled with the transition from Roman Catholic to Lutheran Protestant is dif-

ficult to imagine, given the strong ties to tradition among the early Saxons. They continue to retain their traditional German identity. The few parishioners who attend the churches when sporadic services are held hold firmly to practices which were first established centuries ago. And, they are dying.

The churches were built from faith, deeply held faith by the first generations of transplanted Saxons who traveled by ox carts across the rivers and mountains into this region, many dying from disease and deprivation along the way. The priests helped them keep faith alive, strong faith demonstrated by the central position the strongly built churches hold in the communities.

The people who previously inhabited the area were "others," technologically deficient in agricultural methods and considered inferior by the Saxons. Saxons never fully integrated into the pre-existing culture, choosing an insular neo-Saxon society instead. Later, as the invaders from the East came, the people looked to the church for salvation, not eternal salvation but immediate, physical salvation. They fled to the churches from fear of these violent others. Over time they fortified the churches, made them stronger citadels against the outsiders, constructed concentric walls, and created strategically placed defensive posts. They turned the centers of worship into places of refuge.

The fortified churches stand today as mute reminders that they survived all challenges, but they also stand today as irrelevant monuments with crumbling walls and silent sanctuaries. During many tranquil decades over several centuries, villagers worshipped each Sunday, married and buried, baptized and chastised, and continued to thrive as the socially and culturally dominant group.

These fortified church buildings have survived. But the parishioners have fared poorly over the years, since they were constantly under attack by invading Muslim hordes for reasons of conquest, by Roman Catholics and

Romanian Orthodox for ecclesiastical conquest, by Romanians and Germans and Russians for political domination, by an exodus of young generations for economic reasons, and now by the gypsies. Their faith sustains the shrinking few that remain, as they sit in bitter resignation to forces beyond their control. Fear is seen in their eyes, always present. Regret is not far from their lips, paralyzing them from meaningful worship and service, isolating them from this world, and hardly preparing them for the next.

It would be easy to interpret the fortified churches of Transylvania as a metaphor for today's fearful church, where the faithful are inspired to build houses of worship, and then are tempted to fortify them against the "others" who surround and frighten us. That image is not far from our minds when we see ourselves in retreat from "invaders" who have lifestyles, political persuasions, social standards, and cultural practices different from the faithful.

Perhaps that metaphor is unfair. Perhaps I am not sufficiently respectful of the many families who worshipped and served God year after year, decade after decade, century after century, in churches far removed from civil or military authorities upon which to rely in times of mortal danger.

I have experienced no threat, real or imagined, comparable to what those saints of old experienced. I sit safely in a free and safe environment. But still there is a lesson here. When we use the church as a fort to which to run for protection in times of fear, rather than as a place of faith from which to embrace the "others," we also risk becoming relics of a bygone era, with no relevance now or ever. ■

CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND THE MOVIES

Reviewed By David A. Thomas, Assoc. Prof. of Rhetoric, Emeritus, University of Richmond¹

Health Care: *Away from Her* (2006)

Fiona: *I think all we can aspire to in this situation is a little bit of grace.*

Julie Christie stars in a moving independent film about the effects of her character's Alzheimer's Disease and its effects on her husband. The movie is a little gem, with an intelligent script and a talented cast. The story is set in a beautiful Canadian landscape.

Julie Christie plays Fiona Anderson, married to a retired college professor, Grant Anderson (Canadian actor Gordon Pinsent). They live in a lovely bucolic country home which she inherited from her grandparents. She enjoys cross country skiing.

As the story opens, Fiona is showing signs of her deteriorating memory. Her kitchen cabinet drawers are labeled to help her remember their contents. She seems befuddled by the pot she is holding, and finally stows it in the freezer. In another scene, she struggles for the word for "wine" as she pours for her guests.

Grant resists acknowledging the realities of her disease to the point of denial. Clearly, he is devoted to Fiona and cannot stand the thought of her having to go into an Alzheimer's facility. But inevitably, she must, leaving him to fend for himself on the farm. He visits her as often as he can. Fiona seems much more resigned to the process than he. "My, you're persistent," she tells him when she sees him entering the door with flowers or books.

The plot is complicated by two poignant, thought typical, factors. First, as her mind deteriorates, she loses short term memory much faster than her older memories. An infidelity he had with a student twenty years earlier looms ever more vividly in her association with him than their happier times since then. Second, in the Alzheimer's

wards, she bonds with Aubrey, a fellow Alzheimer's patient, arousing Grant's resentment and jealousy.

As time progresses, Grant comes to accept Fiona's illness and what he sees as her infatuation with another man. When Aubrey's wife, Marian (Olympia Dukakis), takes Aubrey home because she cannot afford to commit him to the extended care ward (apparently such facilities are not a part of Canada's free universal health care system), Grant meets with Marian to see what can be done, at least to take Aubrey to visit Fiona. As the situation continues to progress, Grant and Marian turn more to each other for support, then for intimacy.

All of these sad issues are superlatively acted. Julie Christie has won a Best Actress Oscar previously (remember *Dr. Zhivago*), and she has been involved in several other Oscar productions in her career. Olivia Dukakis is also a former Oscar winner. Gordon Pinsent, the 75-year old Canadian lead actor, won the Toronto Film Festival Best Actor award for this movie. Perhaps most surprising turn in the movie's artistic excellence is that the writer/director, Sarah Polley, is only twenty-eight years old. She has a long track record in writing, directing, producing, and acting in independent movies and Canadian TV, with an emphasis on social action.

Significance of *Away From Her*.

The movie compresses the action into what seems to be about a year or two. In reality, Alzheimer's Disease (AD) often runs a course of a decade or more. AD is a fatal and progressive disease of the brain. *Away from Her* is a clear example of what it is like to be a victim, and to be a caregiver. (Two other popular movies about the disease are *Iris* and *The Notebook*.) Demographically, AD is a significant and increasing disease. Five million Americans suffer from

Alzheimer's, and as the population ages, the extent of the disease accelerates. Medication may help ease the symptoms but its causes are unknown and there is no known cure. There will be 12-15 million victims by the year 2050, if statistical projections hold true.

Churches have a role to play in spiritual and social support for the victims and their families. Studies have shown that caregivers suffer from anxieties and other psychological symptoms.

Church attendance can help to both the victims and the families. There are different suggestions for helping roles at different stages of the disease. Many churches offer online resources for ministers. An excellent example is the Association of Brethren Caregivers, who provide useful suggestions for dealing with victims and their families in the early stage, middle stage, and late stage AD, along with appropriate Scriptures and hymns for comfort.² ■

¹David A. Thomas retired in 2004 and now resides in Sarasota, Florida. He invites your comments at davidthomas1572@comcast.net.

²<http://www.brethren.org/abc/disabilities/alzheimers.html>

Book Reviews

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

Not Exactly Job

Nathan Brown, Norman, OK: Mongrel Empire Press, 2007.

Reviewed by Al Staggs,

Sante Fe, NM

As I read Nathan Brown's compelling poetry, *Not Exactly Job*, I was reminded of a statement made by Rabbi Irving Greenberg, "Let us offer, then, as a working principle the following: No statement, theological or otherwise, should be made that would not be credible in the presence of burning children." Nathan's treatment of Job's friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, demonstrates the hazards of providing easy answers to human suffering. And yet so much of what one hears in the stuff of popular devotional books, as well as in Sunday School lessons and sermons, are attempts at "answers" to the tragedies of human existence. I must confess that I had many answers after I completed my degree from Southwestern Seminary in 1974. During the intervening thirty-plus years, my own trials as well as the adversities of my parishioners and hospital patients, have left me with far more unanswerable questions than answers to the vicissitudes of life. Much of contemporary post-Holocaust theology, particularly the writings of Elie Wiesel, have shown that sometimes it is the questions, as

opposed to quick answers, that can be more instructive and lead us to new plateaus of faith.

As Nathan points out, many sufferers do not experience a good end to their travails, hence his title *Not Exactly Job*. The account of Job's latter days indicates that he was completely vindicated and that those days were spent in prosperity and happiness, as if the agony of his former life was made right. This reminds one of the tendency, during the Easter season, for churches to speed hurriedly past Passion Sunday and Good Friday and run hastily to the Resurrection without taking into account the ongoing identification that Jesus STILL has with the suffering of this world through his experience of the cross.

I found Nathan's treatment of Eliphaz the Temanite to be particularly relevant to our "age of Empire." Eliphaz's statement to Job that "He thwarts the plans of the crafty, so that their hands achieve no success" makes one wonder what God thinks about our present Romanesque empire, an imperial empire whose power is predicated on military might and characterized by extreme affluence in the face of widespread world poverty. Such a question indicates that perhaps, like Eliphaz, our spiritual answers have precious little to do with the reality of global suffering and our complicity,

as a nation, in what is happening to this world.

Nathan's candor and honesty regarding his own encounters with adversity is refreshing. His protests are reminiscent of Job, Jonah, Jeremiah, Elijah and of Jesus himself who cried out from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" How tempting it must have been to some biblical scribe to delete such troubling statements and protests at some point. The author's questions and protests afford readers a certain permission to voice their own feelings in the face of trials. Nathan's honesty in dealing with adversity indicates that any relationship that has worth and true intimacy must be a relationship in which feelings can be aired without the fear of retribution. Do not our protests and groaning to God become a form of prayer and give indication that in our relationship to God we are allowed to question and complain, with the knowledge that our negative expressions will not change our relationship as God's beloved children?

The author's tribute to his father, Lavonn Brown, at the beginning of the text, provides a profoundly moving foundation upon which Nathan can voice his protests and questions. In this tribute Nathan says of his father, "Dad has fielded every blunt question I've asked and every pro-



fane poem I've written over the years with grace, openness, and wisdom." Certainly God, as a good parent, can hear our questions and our cries of anger and protest with grace, openness, and wisdom. ■

Editor's Note: Lavonn Brown was pastor for many years of the First Baptist Church of Norman, Oklahoma, and also served as an early leader in the foundational years of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

A Stupid, Unjust, and Criminal War: Iraq 2001-2007

Andrew M. Greeley

Reviewed by Martin E. Marty

Chicago, IL

A *Stupid, Unjust, and Criminal War* by priest, sociologist, novelist, and columnist Andrew Greeley is a collection of 121 columns dating back to 2001, in their original form. As the title suggests, the columns are not long on nuance. They have going for them guts, consistency, a readiness to use the language of the prophets and the Church, prescience, and not a little hold on truth in reporting. Columnists who once supported the war and others who were critical all along can profitably compare notes with Greeley.

The Chicago priest, who has a passion for Catholicism, is dispassionate enough to have a lover's quarrel with the Church, and is impassioned about bringing church teaching on wisdom

(as opposed to "stupidity"), just war theory (as opposed to "unjustness"), and law-abidingness (as opposed to "criminality") to bear on events of this long, long war. He celebrates what the popes of these years, Vatican spokespersons, and many bishops have had to say for peace and against capital punishment, nuclear armament, war-making in general, and this war in particular. At the same time he mourns that so little of what they said reached the Catholic faithful. And he is scornful of most religious leaders who were cowed into silence for fear of sounding unpatriotic when they might have been helpfully vocal in criticism of governmental and military policy. In a world where many were snookered into blandness or silence, he remains unsnookered.

The Martyrs compare opinions as we read four daily papers. We come to most agreement on wartime issues when we read Greeley's syndicated columns in the *Chicago Sun-Times*. From before the first gun was fired, he stopped just short of charging that we were being led into the war by leaders who, too often, wanted war but didn't count the cost. Now uncontroversial are his once contentious early comments on how unprepared the U.S. administration and military were before they invaded Iraq.

Greeley is no pacifist, and recognizes, for example, the "necessity" of World War II and the valor of those who supported the Allied cause. He is not naïve about the scope of the threat of militant Muslims and terrorists, but was suspicious of those Americans

who immediately after 9/11 labeled all forms of action and reaction a "War" on terror.

I do not picture that most readers will read this book, either because they do not welcome priestly comment and criticism or because they have been reading the columns all along, usually affirming them, and don't need a repeat. Nor can I quote enough from these pages to document how true to conditions and prospects Greeley has been. Instead I want to pass on something that crossed my mind while reading him, as follows: Pastors, priests, professors, nuns, teachers, editorialists, and other leaders were consistently told back during the Vietnam War that they lacked expertise to analyze what only some military and governmental leaders, setting out to monopolize comment, knew enough about. We hear the same now on issues dealing with the environment, the global economy, and more. It becomes clear once again that biblically informed, theologically inspired criticism and proposals can come from highly fallible people who, like everyone else, do not "know enough," but who do "know enough" from another angle, to make their own contributions to conversations that remain urgent. Folks like Greeley have the satisfaction of seeing that their prophecies have been confirmed, but take small comfort in that. ■

This article originally appeared in Sightings (1/21/08), a publication of the Martin Marty Center of the University of Chicago Divinity School.



Beyond the White House

Jimmy Carter, New York: Simon & Shuster, 2007. \$26.

Reviewed by Darold Morgan,
Richardson, TX

One of the best-known Baptists in the world has written another book, and the scope of it is all but breath-taking! Jimmy Carter writes persuasively about what he and his wife, Rosalyn, and their colleagues have done though the Carter Center since his defeat as he sought in 1980 a second term as U.S. President. A major question surfaces early in reading the book—how on earth could one couple travel and accomplish as much as they have? No wonder Carter was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006! He genuinely deserved this prestigious honor, and this book forcefully confirms the reason for it.

Both of the Carters talk frankly about the massive let-down after losing the presidential election to Ronald Reagan, complicated by the abysmal state of business affairs on their Georgia farms, and by the peculiar demands of what to do in Plains in a forced retirement mode. By the time one finishes reading the book, there is a beautiful agreement with Carter's evaluation of these years: "By far, my best years are these I am enjoying now, since Rosalyn and I left the White House."

Carter, as usual writes with skill and interest, highlighting both successes and failures in this multi-faceted array of projects the book outlines. There is an aura of unselfishness as the Carters move around the world, monitoring elections, being deeply involved in seemingly endless projects of disease-control, eliciting massive financial support from major companies world-wide, and badgering reluctant leaders in dozens of countries for better understanding of the issues. Whenever bluntness and stubbornness are required to further the announced project, Carter exhibits the required consistency that most of the time engineers the necessary breakthrough. Of course, there are

hints of bureaucrats, at home and abroad, who were deeply offended by the Carter approach to these problems. Included in this are major political and military leaders again in the U.S. as well as in countries where elections were anything but democratically carried out.

The use of the word, breath-taking, is deliberate. The Carters formed the Carter Center, which in reality is his presidential library, located in Atlanta. It has an exciting partnership with nearby Emory University. From the outset Carter viewed through this connection developing a concept of mediation, locally and world-wide, where "we might study and teach how to resolve or prevent conflict" (4). Twenty-five years later these countries have been influenced by this concept—Guyana, East Timor, Haiti, Mali, Burkina-Faso, Ethiopia, Niger, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Ghana, China, Indonesia—plus many other countries in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Add to this the Atlanta Project, Habitat for Humanity. Special attention needs again to be directed toward the Carters' work in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

One of the most moving segments in the book relates to the exciting and often successful ventures in some African countries as literally the two were "Fighting Diseases." Enlisting skilled and competent associates through the Center, they often cajoled African political leaders to cooperate. Encouraging major drug companies to give massive amounts of urgently needed medicines, visiting personally dozens of areas where need defies description, both of the Carters demonstrate a blending of compassion, determination, stubbornness that is almost unequalled in international life today.

Forget your political commitments as you start this book. Let it speak for itself as you see what two people can do with commitment and concern. The Carters come through these pages as devout Christians who

are trying to make a difference in a world clouded by untold numbers of people impaled by dread diseases—a world where too many countries are also crippled by corrupt government. The Carters tell how they were able to break that cycle, bringing healing to the sick and changing nations! ■

Baptists and Religious Liberty

William M. Pinson, Jr., Dallas: BaptistWay Press, 2007.

Reviewed by Darold Morgan

Baptists everywhere are acquainted with the heralded 'Study Course' programming in the local church. Until recently this was the periodic study of Baptist doctrine, history, and Christian Ethics in the local church, using material generally formulated by the denominational agencies. Immense amount of teaching and training came from this source. Pinson's book is a good example of what a local Baptist church could use with profitability today! Bill Pinson is recognized far and wide from his collegiate and seminary teaching and writing as a genuine authority in the field of Church and State and Religious Liberty. Here is a book that merits immediate and serious study in most local Baptist churches, as well as other denominational churches.

Simply stated, we must not forget how religious liberty came about. It did not just happen. There are names and documents and events that this book reminds us of which testify forcefully to the evolvment of this basic Christian and American belief that has blessed beyond measure our beloved land. One of the reasons for its greatness stems from this sacred posture. How it came about is found in these pages. We must not forget these sources.

Pinson puts into focus in his historical segments names that are in the Baptist pantheon of greatness: John Smyth, Thomas Helwys, Roger Williams, John Clarke, Obadiah Holmes, Isaac Backus, John Leland,

and of course, George W. Truett.

One of the values of Pinson's book is his treatment of some of the surging current issues which have forced the foundations of Religious Liberty into retreat and negativism. These pages deserve careful study and wide publicity. The quotation from Herschel H. Hobbs is exceptionally timely: "If eternal vigilance is the price of freedom, it is especially true of religious liberty." (126) The author closes with a simple eloquence about this necessary defense of the American treasure. ■

On Two Wings

Michael Novak, San Francisco:

Encounter Books, 2002, \$24.

Reviewed by Darold Morgan

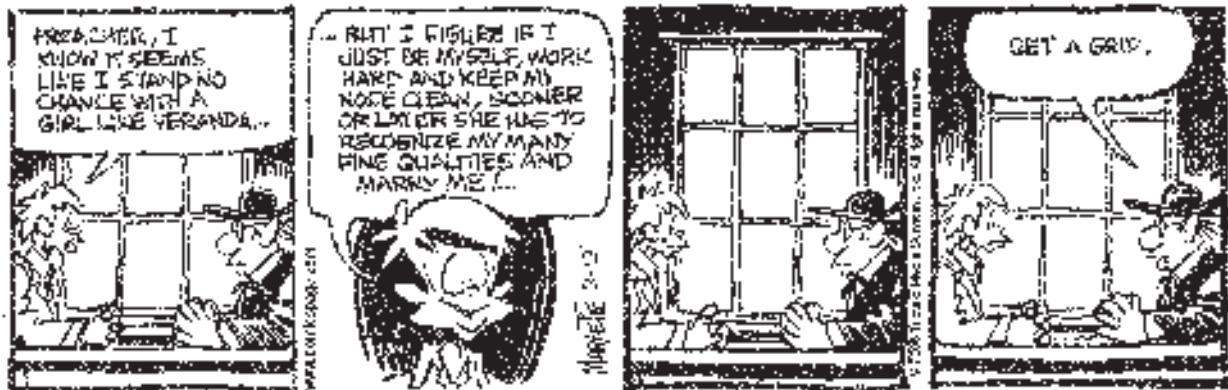
The strength of this book is in the massive number of quotations,

documentary evidence, anecdotal references from the era of America's founding, confirming the importance of religion in these vital years. The potential weakness of the book comes as modern exponents of the concept that America was a Christian nation in these founding years will singularly use this evidence to trumpet the call to return to these roots. No one will challenge the need for a return to religion values in our beloved land, but one does need to have a true historical perspective in this effort.

That said, we are grateful for the author's research of multiple sources of statesmen, preachers, educators, and author's whose insights about America's beginnings are genuinely helpful. His bibliography and appendixes are worth the price of the book. The key value comes from the numerous quotations from these sources

in this historical timeframe. There are familiar and unfamiliar quotes from many: John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, George Mason, the Federalist Papers, James Madison, John Leland, Benjamin Franklin, William Blackstone, John Witherspoon, etc. His multiple references to Alexis de Toqueville are very helpful.

It is at this point that Novak's book dovetails with Pinson's *Baptists and Religious Liberty* because of his use of many of same sources. Taken together as primary references, they constitute a solid basis for the historic position of Church/State truths. Whatever it takes, not only in local churches, but in collegiate and graduate studies, the time has come for a refreshing restatement and study of this massively important theme in both American history and life—Religious Liberty! ■



When Love and Justice Dance Together

By Laura M. Rector

Love smiled at Justice.
Justice nodded back.
He reached for her hand,
Whispering, "May I have this dance?"

Slowly, shyly, her arms encircled his.
Father watched and smiled,
Gently, Justice kissed Love's lips,
Moaning, she caressed his cheek.

Nodding knowingly, Father said,
"Children, go out."
Together, they ran
Across the fields of time.

Justice watched the harvest at work.
Love walked behind, dropping barley
As a young woman gleaned.
Justice smiled and joined her.

Laughing, Love ran ahead.
She stopped at a wounded child,
Stooped down and whispered comfort,
Until Justice cared for the young one's
safety.

They chased each other through the fields
Until the world grew suddenly dark.
Love tripped. "Where is Justice?" she
screamed.
Looking back, no sign of her companion.

"Justice!" she cried, running through
concentration camps,
Or tripping over babies washed along the
shore.
She wretched over fallen soldiers,
And screamed as one child shot another.

"Justice! Justice! Justice!" his name echoed
Across the fields of time.

"Love!" he screamed,
But suffering drowned out their words.

A cascade of tears flowed down Love's
cheeks.
Justice pounded his fist in the air.
Gently, Father whispered, "Silence!"
The world stilled.

Father led Justice through the fields
Stopping at Calgary's hill.
Quietly, he lifted Love
Placing her beside Justice.

As nails pounded into flesh,
As screams of agony went forth from a
cross,
Justice looked at Love,
And Love looked back.

Justice reached for her hand.
"I am not Justice without you," he said,
Softly touching Love's cheek.
"I was so scared with you gone," she
answered.

Justice held Love,
Slowly beginning an eternal dance,
As Love clung to him,
And two souls meshed into one.

"We are better together,"
Justice whispered.
"I know," Love softly replied.
Father nodded, as the two-in-one danced. ■

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Laura Rector is a PhD student at Fuller
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Awaiting Answers

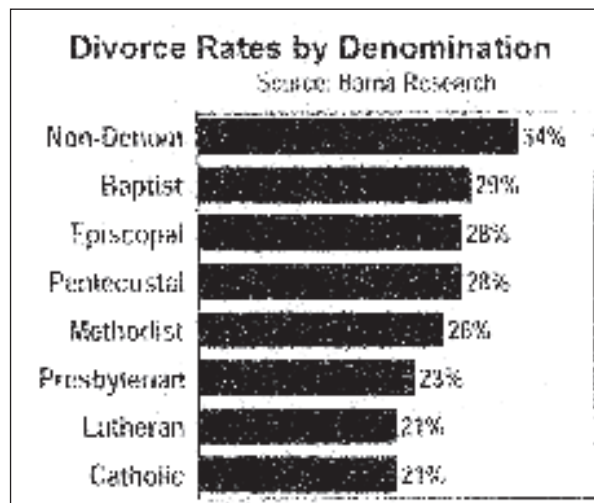
By Al Staggs, Chaplain and Performing Artist, Santa Fe, NM

Why the refugees in Darfur
must barely cling to life,
and why the dispossessed in Iraq
must live as if there is no life,
cannot be answered or explained
in any satisfactory manner.

Why the older woman who
was once so full of life and dignity
is now only a shell of her former self,
and why those whose lives are lived
in suffering and anguish because of the
diseases that attack their bodies
must continue to breathe their painful breaths,
I cannot say.

There is meaning . . . there must be . . .
though the meaning and the answers
cannot be provided by any
theological statement that I can find.

The meaning and the answers
must wait in agonizing and prolonged suspension
for another day and another life
when all must be made clear.
The whys remain as we
hold on tenaciously, precariously
to our eternal hope. ■



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A Journal of Christian Ethics

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—Foy Valentine, Founding Editor

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

PURPOSES

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- 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
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