

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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Changing Of The Guard

In 1995, *Christian Ethics Today* was launched by Dr. Foy D. Valentine, who wrote, “The journal means to offer readers a few cups of cold water in Jesus’ name.” Foy did just that for 28 issues after which, in August of 2000, he turned the journal over to his friend, Dr. Joe E. Trull.

It was the journal’s first changing of the guard.

Over the past 11 years, Joe (whose position has been fatuously described as “part-time”), has edited an astonishing 52 issues of the journal. During Joe’s editorship the number of subscribers has tripled, and Joe has led the journal to sponsor several highly visible and very successful conferences.

It is beyond my powers of expression adequately either to describe all that Joe has accomplished or to express the gratitude which our Board of Directors feels for Joe and his wife Audra and their contribution to all our lives through their work with the journal. I am confident that thousands of the journal’s readers share the gratitude we feel for the Trulls.

As we know from the mail we receive, many readers have come to love and appreciate the journal and what Joe has done with it. This led me to think that many of you would welcome an article from Joe about his tenure as editor, so I asked him to write such an article. He agreed, and you can see the article below.

The journal is now experiencing another changing of the guard. This issue is the last which Joe will edit. His successor is Dr. Patrick R. Anderson, and the next issue of the journal that you receive will have been edited by Patrick. As Patrick begins his tenure, the offices of the journal are being moved from Texas to North Carolina.

We on the Board of the journal wish Joe well as he makes a serious effort to retire. And we wish Patrick well as he undertakes the task that has been done so splendidly by his two predecessors, of giving readers “a few cups of cold water in Jesus’ name.”

---Fisher Humphreys, Chair Board of Directors, *Christian Ethics Today*

Finally, My Sisters and Brothers . . .

Last words are never easy. The apostle Paul always closed each of his thirteen letters with a personal word.

I have done it before—at churches where I was pastor and at schools where I was teacher. And now here, on the printed page (with Fisher’s prodding) I will try again. This time, however, I feel a bit like Mark Twain, when he read his own obituary—except I do have the last word!

I vividly remember the call from Foy Valentine, just over a decade ago. I had just finished my second sabbatical at New Orleans Seminary, expecting to teach Christian ethics there for many years. However, the new president had another plan.¹

Like Elijah, I was sitting under my juniper tree bemoaning my fate when the phone rang. I was familiar with CET, having provided a few articles for Foy. Also in recent years I had written other articles, a few books, and assisted editing our seminary journal. A meeting with the CET Board convinced me that this unexpected detour was indeed the plan and purpose of God.

Foy began the Journal in 1995, with a few hundred friends as subscribers, a few hundred dollars of seed money, and the strong conviction that now, more than ever, Baptists needed a prophetic voice for Christian ethics that could “recover the prophethood of all believers, matching our zeal for the priesthood of all believers.”

His original plan envisioned a Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor, directed by a person who would teach Christian ethics at Truett, edit this new journal, and conduct conferences. Unfortunately, this ideal plan was thwarted.² Being a pragmatist, Foy accepted this limitation in order to establish the Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor.³

Immediately Foy established a new entity—the Christian Ethics Today Foundation—for the purpose of continuing the Journal Foy had already begun in 1995. For four years, almost single-handedly, with no computers—not even typing skills—Foy wielded his classic blue-green-ink fountain pen at his desk at his home, enlisting, writing, editing, and assembling six issues of CET annually (he did find assistance from Marilyn at the Texas CLC, as well as three local friends to do layout, printing, publishing, and mailing). In a few years his mailing list grew from a few hundred to almost two-thousand!

From Day One, as is stated on the back page of every issue, the purpose of the Journal has been to “inform, inspire, and unify a lively company of individuals and organizations interested in working for personal morality and public righteousness.” And (Foy added with deep conviction), the journal will be “sent without charge to anyone requesting it, as money and energy permit.”

For the past decade the journal has been my pulpit and the readers my congregation. What a lively group we have! Letters, phone calls, and meeting subscribers in person at conventions, conferences, and church gatherings has enriched my life.

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EthixBytes

A Collection of Quotes Comments, Statistics, and News Items

“Nothing contributes so much to social stability as an occasional scream of anguish from the well-to-do.”

John Kenneth Galbraith.

“I have tried to live a life I hope is unintelligible if the God we Christians worship does not exist. . . . wherever Christians exist they are constituted by words and actions that should—but may not—make their lives difficult.”

Stanley Hauerwas, who *William Cavanaugh* describes as “the one pacifist you would most want on your side in a bar fight.” (*Christian Century*, 8/24/10).

“A Baptist minister from Oregon who was killed in Afghanistan is the first Army chaplain to die in combat since Vietnam.” (*Sojourners*, 9/3/10)

“Democracy didn’t bring us anything. Democracy brought us a can of Coke and a beer.”

Haitham Farhan, a disillusioned Baghdad shop owner (*N.Y. Times*).

“If one of the court’s conservatives leaves and is replaced by a liberal, the Second Amendment could revert to what it was for more than two centuries: a right that belongs to states, not individuals.”

Adam Cohen, on the Supreme Court’s ruling that Americans in all 50 states have a constitutional right to own firearms for self-defense (*Time.com*, June 29).

“The fact that anybody can now say anything publicly does not mean that anything anybody says is worth hearing.”

Jon Meacham, *Newsweek* Editor.

“When the Deepwater Horizon drilling platform set off the worst oil spill in American history it was flying the flag of the Marshall Islands—reg-

istering there significantly reduced Transocean’s American taxes, who for the same reason moved corporate headquarters from Houston to the Cayman Islands in 1999 and then to Switzerland in 2008.”

Dallas Morning News, (7/4/10).

“Only when Christian faith in God is lost do people feel compelled to make use of all means—even criminal—to force the victory of their cause . . . [even] torture.”

Pastor/martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his classic work *Ethics*.

“The United States Constitution is a secular document. It makes no mention of God, a Creator or a Supreme Being of any sort. It doesn’t mention the Bible. Nor is it true that our legal system is founded on the Ten Commandments. To the contrary, our laws don’t prohibit blasphemy, coveting, lying, adultery or failing to honor our parents.”

William D. Underwood, Pres. of Mercer Univ. in response to Sarah Palin’s assertion on Fox News that policy makers should return to what our founders meant, laws based on the Bible and the Ten Commandments.

“The simple fact is this: all the Bush tax cuts were unaffordable. They were an irresponsible act of hubris enacted during an economic boom.”

Fareed Zakaria, *Newsweek* (8/9/10).

“Our government declares war promiscuously—on drugs, poverty, cancer, environmental problems, etc.—but never when actually going to war.”

George Will (*Newsweek*, 7/5/10).

“A study by Stanford found that 37% of charter schools produce academic results THAT ARE WORSE THAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS, while only 17%

perform significantly better.” (*Newsweek*, 6/21/10).

“It seems to me that . . . female subordination functions as a sixth point of TULIP for New Calvinists. John Piper, R. Albert Mohler Jr. and Mark Driscoll, . . . all promote Christian patriarchy.”

Prof. Jenell Williams Paris, *Messiah College* (PA).

“Simple justice demands that women should have equal rights with men in mission meetings and in the conduct of their work.”

Lottie Moon, SBC missionary to China (1873-1912) in a letter to the mission board that forbid her to teach men, plant churches, or evangelize, which she did anyway.

“25% of U.S. adults attributed Proverbs 31:8 about caring for the poor to either Obama or the Dalai Lama.” **Sojourners** (2/10).

“Detainees in Iraqi prisons and jails often go years without trial, face widespread torture and abuse, and have little access to their families or legal help, even as the U.S. military hands over all prison responsibilities to Iraqi authorities.”

(Amnesty International), 9/13/10).

“Life is not about waiting for the storms to pass. . . it’s about learning how to dance in the rain.” ■

Glenn Beck Calls America Back—To a Generic God

By Robert Parham, Executive Director Baptist Center for Ethics

Fox News host Glenn Beck muddled biblical references with fragments of American history, recreating a pottage of civil religion that says America has a divine destiny and claiming that a national revival is beginning.

At the very beginning of the “Restoring Honor” Rally at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., on Saturday [8/28/10], Beck proclaimed, “Something beyond imagination is happening. Something that is beyond man is happening. America today begins to turn back to God.”

Forty-seven years ago to the date, Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous “I Have a Dream Speech,” as historical note that Beck and others played off.

“The story of America is the story of human kind. Five thousand years ago . . . God’s chosen people were led out of bondage. . . . Man first began to recognize God and God’s law. The chosen people listened to the Lord. At the same time those things were happening, on this side on this land another group of people were gathered here. And they too were listening to God,” said Beck.

As he spoke, two Native Americans appeared behind him to stand next to a rabbi. They were followed by a white preacher.

Facing these three individuals with arms outstretched, Beck said, “God’s chosen people, the Native Americans and the pilgrims.”

Beck claimed, “When people came together of different faiths . . . the first thing they did was to pray together.”

Some two hours later, during his lengthy, disjointed speech, Beck said, “This day is a day that we can start the heart of America again. And it has nothing to do with politics. It has everything to do with God . . . turning our faith back to the values and

principles that made us great.”

Warning that Americans were at a crossroad and had to decide what they believed, Beck said, “Abraham Lincoln found God in the stars of Gettysburg. He was baptized and gave the second inaugural. He looked to God and set men free. America awakened again.”

He soon segued to Moses.

“Moses freed them. Then they forget. They wander until they remember that God is the answer. He always has been. And then they begin to trust,” said Beck.

“Have trust in the Lord. And recognize that Moses and Abraham Lincoln and George Washington were men. They were just like you. Man makes a difference. What is it that these men have that you don’t? The answer is nothing. They relied on God. America is great because America is good. We as individuals must be good so America can be great. America is at a crossroads. . . . Look to God,” pled the TV talk-show host.

He told the audience of religious and Tea Party conservatives: “If you find out who God truly is, I warn you, I warn you, if you know who he is, it will be the biggest blessing in your life. But it will also be the biggest curse in your life.”

Saying that America needed to go to “God’s boot camp,” Beck said, “We must insist that our churches stand for things that we know are true because they are universal and endless in nature.”

Having recalled earlier how disciples had fallen asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane before Jesus’ arrest, Beck returned to that theme of slumber. He said that the nation and its churches had fallen asleep.

Beck said that 240 years ago, America had the “black-robed regiment,” preachers who opposed the

British and were among the first killed by the British.

“The black-robed regiment is back again today,” said Beck.

On cue, 240 men and women marched up and stood behind him. Obediently with arms linked on the front row were Southern Baptist Convention official Richard Land and fundamentalist pastor John Hagee. Religious-right mythmaker David Barton stood next to Sarah Palin.

“America, it is time to start the heart of this nation again. And put it where it belongs. Our heart with God,” proclaimed Beck.

Claiming these clergy represented the thousands of clergy in the audience who represented 180 million people, Beck said, “We can disagree on politics. We can disagree on so much. These men and women don’t agree on fundamentals. They don’t agree on everything that every church teaches. What they do agree on is that God is the answer.”

He called for a group of bagpipers to play “Amazing Grace.”

Mixing Christian faith with military images, the rally included video clips of soldiers, flags and eagles. The Bible was also read.

C.L. Jackson, pastor of Houston’s Pleasant Grove Missionary Baptist Church, prayed for the “ministry of Glenn Beck.”

The crowd—as viewed on Beck’s own streaming video broadcast—had very, very few people of color.

The white audience listened at one point as two African-American men read different passages from the Bible and two African-American women sang solos with recorded tracks.

Another African-American woman, Alveda King, a niece of Martin Luther King Jr., gave a sermon, referencing “Uncle Martin,” failing public education, the “womb war” and hope that prayer would

one day be welcomed back in public schools.

No amount of Bible reading, sermons masquerading as prayers and Christian hymns can cover up Beck's civil religion that slides back and forth between the Bible and nationalism, between authentic faith and patriotic religion.

He treats the "American scripture"—such as the Gettysburg Address—as if it bears the same revelatory weight as Christian Scripture.

What is important to Beck is belief in God—God generically—not a specific understanding of God revealed in the biblical witness, but God who appears in nature and from which one draws universal truths.

Not surprisingly, Beck only uses the Bible to point toward the idea of a God-generic. He does not listen to the God of the Bible who calls for the practice of social justice, the pursuit of peacemaking, the protection of the poor in the formation of community. Beck has little room for God's warning about national idolatry and rejection of fabricated religion.

For Beck, God-generic is a unifying theme and religion is a unifying force for what appears to be his revivalist agenda for Americanism—blended nationalism and individualism. ■

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Finally My Sisters and Brothers...

(continued from page 2)

During these years we have been able to add a few items: EthixBytes, Movie Reviews, Letters to Authors and Responses, and occasional Poetry. Also we have sponsored conferences at Truett Seminary (twice), McAfee/Mercer, Baptist University of the Americas, and Gambrell St. BC (across from Southwestern Seminary), as well as a "Minister and Politics" conference in D.C.

Promoting CET at annual CBF meetings, the Texas Baptist Convention, and numerous colleges: Judson, Samford, Ouachita Baptist, Oklahoma Baptist, Mary-Hardin Baylor, Wayland, East Texas Baptist, Baylor/Truett, as well as at numerous churches was among the most enjoyable of my tasks.

I think now of the scene near the end of the novel *Lonesome Dove*—as Gus is dying, he looks up to his lifetime friend and says, "It's been quite a ride, Woodrow." Yes it has!

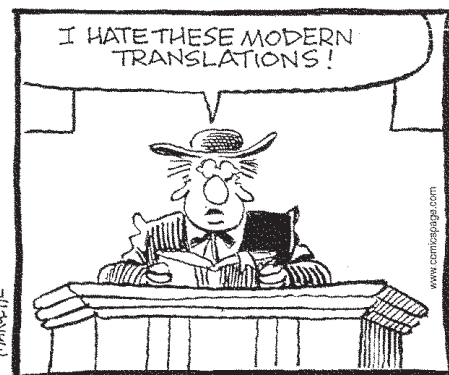
And now Pat Anderson begins his tenure as editor. Patrick has been on the Board of Directors from the beginning. He believes that CET is an important force for God and for godliness, and he will be a good steward of the journal and its values.

Foy Valentine had a heart that beat incessantly for the cause of Christian ethics and a soul that dreamed of ways

that vision could be realized. His heart may be still; but his dream lives on. ■

---J.E.T.

- 1 For the full story read the Introduction (and especially p. xviii) in Audra and Joe Trull, *Putting Women In Their Place* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2003).
- 2 Difficulties included the desire of the Baylor president to have a small, European-type seminary in which Christian ethics was taught as part of theology, and the concern of some trustees that CET was too radical.
- 3 Ironically, the Baylor President first offered the position to a Roman Catholic ethicist, then to a Lutheran ethicist, but fortunately a Baptist with a PhD from the Univ. of Texas accepted the position and is now ably directing the Center, producing a journal, and teaching philosophy.



God With Us

By Foy Valentine, Founding Editor

Lovely things are things that are delightful for their charm, for their beauty, for their harmony, for their grace.

Christmas is lovely in a thousand ways and for a thousand reasons.

There is great charm about it, marvelous beauty, fantastic harmony, amazing grace.

When we think of Christmas, we think of family, carols, treats, food, gifts, celebrations, candy, fruit, nuts, decorated evergreen trees, lights, fellowship, friends, reunions, candles, fruitcake, firecrackers, music, angels, and many, many more.

Sometimes we think of poetry. There may very possibly be a lot more bad poetry in this world than there is good poetry, of course. Some of it is obtuse, some is abstruse, some is banal, some is maudlin, some is doggerel, and much of it deserves to be folded, spindled, and mutilated.

Some poetry, however, is wonderful and some of it is truly sublime. It weaves a spell. It soothes the savage beast, calms frayed nerves, inspires the imagination, and stirs the noblest of human emotions.

One of the memorable poems that I have been especially blessed by every Christmas for more than sixty years is a beautiful piece, the author of which I have never known though I have searched far and wide, but whose graphic images I have remembered with deep gratitude across the decades.

That night when in Judean skies
The mystic star dispensed its light,
A blind man moved in his sleep
And dreamed that he had sight.

That night when shepherds heard the song
Of hosts angelic choring near,
A deaf man stirred in slumber's spell
And dreamed that he could hear.

That night when o'er the newborn babe
The tender Mary rose to lean,
A loathsome leper smiled in sleep
And dreamed that he was clean.

That night when to the mother's breast
The little king was held secure,
A harlot slept a happy sleep
And dreamed that she was pure.

That night when in the cattle stall
Slept child and mother cheek by jowl,
A cripple turned his twisted limbs
And dreamed that he was whole.

That night when in the manger lay
The sanctified who came to save,
A man moved in the sleep of death
And dreamed there was no grave.

The poet here captures some of the wonder and beauty of Christmas in plain and simple words. There are vivid images pointing toward the grace of God, speaking of divine mercy that stoops to lift us out of the miry pit, providing insights as to how God sustains us and keeps us from falling, and flashing beautiful glimpses of the mercies of God who provides us an ark that bouys us up and bears us safely through the wild waters and daunting floods of life.

Because Jesus has come and just as the prophet Joel, speaking for God, foresaw, "It shall come to pass . . . that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions" (Joel 2:28). And as Isaiah exulted, "They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not be faint" (40:31).

Throughout this blessed and truly lovely season, then, let us be still and know that God is with us.

Let us rejoice that in Jesus Christ we have come to know that God

knows our frame, remembers that we are dust, and is touched with feeling of our infirmities.

Let us wait on the Lord so that in the fullness of time our hurts get healed, our brokenness gets fixed, our dreams get fulfilled, and our prayers get answered.

Let us lay aside the stress that so easily besets us, the cares that so persistently plague us, and the sins that so tenaciously dog our feet.

In so doing, we may see the star in the sky, hear the song in the air, and be aware of the messengers of the Lord, angels from God, who bring us glad tidings of great joy.

Please do not let all of this religious business turn you aside or turn you off. I want now to try to make the point that God is concerned not just with religion but also, and especially, with life.

In Nanjing, China, one time I visited the Christian seminary there. Finding the famous Chinese Christian artist, He Qi (the head of the seminary's art department) in his working studio, I was warmly welcomed. He was surrounded by pictures finished and unfinished and was visibly pleased at the interest I showed in his works in progress.

There were angels, shepherds, sheep beside still waters, and decidedly religious pictures of Jesus. Looking up, however, I saw on one of his walls a stunningly impressive and strikingly beautiful oil painting of the Dalai Lama's Podala Palace in Lahsa, Tibet. "How did this painting come about?" I asked. "Oh, that," he replied. "That is a painting I made while studying art in Tibet." Obviously a little ashamed of having painted such a thing that he imagined I would find much too secular, he was astounded that I should like it as much as I obviously did. When I continued to admire it, he pointed out

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Showing Friendship and Respect to Muslims

By Steve Blow, Columnist Dallas, TX

A prominent Dallas pastor denounces Islam as an “evil, evil religion.” A pastor in Florida does him one better and roils the world with plans for a Quran burning.

But another conservative, evangelical minister in our area takes a very different approach to Muslims—friendship and respect.

“I’ll be candid with you,” the Rev. Bob Roberts Jr. told me last week. “If I hadn’t worked around the world, if I didn’t know Muslims, if all I had to go by was what I saw in the papers and on television, I might be scared to death, too.”

But Roberts’ mission-minded ministry has taken him into Muslim countries. He has studied Islam. His NorthWood Church in Keller, Texas has met and worshipped with local Muslims.

“Muslims and Middle Eastern people are some of the most gracious and kind people. We just don’t know them,” he said.

“Yes, there are radicals. There are terrorists. They have their full-blown nut cases, just like we do. But the vast majority of the people are just like any other people on the face of the earth.”

Contrary to the dire e-mails that circulate so widely, Roberts, 52, sees nothing inherently evil or dangerous in Islam. But he sees tremendous peril in the growing hostility toward Islam.

“Direct vilification of another religion will destroy us,” he said. “It’s a horrible approach.”

Now, don’t assume Roberts is a loosey-goosey “Kumbaya” kind of Christian. His traditional Baptist roots run deep—a preacher’s son, Baylor University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

In fact, it’s his very traditional theology that drives much of his attitude toward Muslims.

“I’m a passionate believer in what’s called the Great Commission,” he said, referring to Jesus’ instruction to carry the gospel to all people.

“If I want someone to hear the good news of Jesus Christ, I’m not going to go to that person and start by insulting his culture, insulting his practices, insulting his views of God,” Roberts said.

On the contrary, he said, you earn the right to share your faith in building genuine friendships first. And you maintain those friendships even if beliefs remain unchanged, he said.

“Even if you never become a Christian, you and I need to be friends because we are in this world together,” he said. “There is a common good that we should all work for.”

Earlier this year, Roberts arranged for members of his church to worship and have dialogue with members of a Jewish temple in Dallas and a Muslim

mosque in Irving.

They have since cooperated on other projects, including women’s cooking classes and some home makeovers for families in need.

An even more ambitious effort is set for November, when NorthWood Church will host the Global Faith Forum, bringing important religious leaders from around the world to talk about their faiths.

“Instead of talking *about* each other, we’re going to talk *to* each other,” Roberts said.

But don’t call it an “interfaith” event. Roberts said that term often means focusing only on shared beliefs and staying mum over differences.

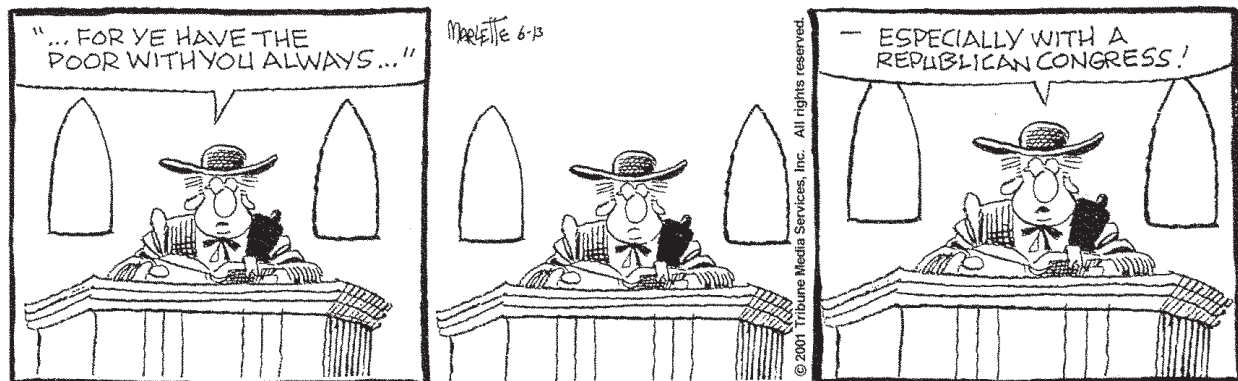
He prefers to talk about “multi-faith” gatherings, meaning everyone is encouraged to talk freely and plainly about their beliefs—differences and all.

Roberts believes such honest, loving conversation is the key to creating a world of religious freedom and peace.

“I tell my Muslim friends that I hope to baptize them one day. They love it,” he said.

“They tell me I would make a great imam.” ■

This column first appeared in the Dallas Morning News (9/12/10) and is reprinted by permission.



Consumer-Driven Religion

G. Jeffrey MacDonald, Minister United Church of Christ

The pastoral vocation is to help people grow spiritually, resist their lowest impulses and adopt higher, more compassionate ways. But churchgoers increasingly want pastors to soothe and entertain them. It's apparent in the theater-style seating and giant projection screens in churches and in mission trips that involve more sightseeing than listening to the local people.

As a result, pastors are constantly forced to choose, as they work through congregants' daily wish lists in their e-mail and voice mail, between paths of personal integrity and those that portend greater job security. As religion becomes a consumer experience, the clergy become more unhappy and unhealthy.

The trend toward consumer-driven religion has been gaining momentum for half a century. Consider that in 1955 only 15 percent of Americans said they no longer adhered to the faith of their childhood, according to a Gallup poll. By 2008, 44 percent had switched their religious affiliation at least once, or dropped it altogether, the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life found. Americans now sample, dabble and move on when a religious leader fails to satisfy for any reason.

In this transformation, clergy have seen their job descriptions rewritten. They're no longer expected to offer

moral counsel in pastoral care sessions or deliver sermons that make the comfortable uneasy. Church leaders who continue such ministerial traditions pay dearly. A few years ago, thousands of parishioners quit Woodland Hills Church in St. Paul, Minn., and Community Church of Joy in Glendale, Ariz., when their respective preachers refused to bless the congregations' preferred political agendas and consumerist lifestyles.

I have faced similar pressures myself. In the early 2000s, the advisory committee of my small congregation in Massachusetts told me to keep my sermons to 10 minutes, tell funny stories and leave people feeling great about themselves. The unspoken message in such instructions is clear: Give us the comforting, amusing fare we want or we'll get our spiritual leadership from someone else.

Congregations that make such demands seem not to realize that most clergy don't sign up to be soothsayers or entertainers. Pastors believe they're called to shape lives for the better, and that involves helping people learn to do what's right in life, even when what's right is also difficult.

When they're being true to their calling, pastors urge Christians to do the hard work of reconciliation with one another before receiving communion. They lead people to share in the

suffering of others, including people they would rather ignore, by experiencing tough circumstances—say, in a shelter, a prison or a nursing home—and seeking relief together with those in need. At their courageous best, clergy lead where people aren't asking to go, because that's how the range of issues that concern them expands and how a holy community gets formed.

Ministry is a profession in which the greatest rewards include meaningfulness and integrity. When those fade under pressure from churchgoers who don't want to be challenged or edified, pastors become candidates for stress and depression.

Clergy need parishioners who understand that the church exists, as it always has, to save souls by elevating people's values and desires. They need churchgoers to ask for personal challenges, in areas like daily devotions and outreach ministries.

When such an ethic takes root, as it has in generations past, then pastors will cease to feel like the spiritual equivalents of concierges. They'll again know joy in ministering among people who share their sense of purpose. ■

*This article is adapted from articles written by this journalist and author, whose latest book is *Thieves In The Temple: The Christian Church and the Selling of the American Soul*.*



An Argument for Fasting on Thanksgiving

By Tripp York, Instructor of Religious Studies Western Kentucky University

Considering that virtually none of the standard fare surrounding Thanksgiving contains an ounce of authenticity, historical accuracy, or cross-cultural perception, why is it so apparently ingrained? Is it necessary to the American psyche to perpetually exploit and debase its victims in order to justify its history?

Michael Dorris

Of all the holidays that both the United States and the church celebrate, perhaps none is quite so mired in confusion as Thanksgiving. Our history books paint us pictures of pilgrims and ‘Indians’ (this is, still, not India) surrounding a large picnic table sharing the goods that both brought to the meal. Of course, most of us are by now aware of the fictitious nature surrounding many of the myths of Thanksgiving. One of the most self-serving myths suggests that the English and Natives were great friends. It was only a mere generation after the so-called first Thanksgiving of 1621 that the vast majority of Natives in the New England area had either fled to Canada, been sold into slavery, or massacred by the English.

To even refer to this autumn meal as the first Thanksgiving is anachronistic. The history of Thanksgiving is quite muddled and only becomes solidified as a national holy day centuries after 1621. First, President George Washington proclaimed a Thanksgiving in December 1777 in order to pay homage to their victory over the British at Saratoga. President John Adams declared Thanksgivings in 1798 and 1799, while Thomas Jefferson spent his tenure as President without declaring a day set aside for giving thanks. President James Madison not only set apart a day for thanksgiving at the close of the War of 1812, but declared the holiday twice in the year 1815. These days of commemoration had nothing to do

with ‘Indians and Pilgrims,’ nor were they even celebrated in November.

Thanksgiving does not become a fixed national holiday to be annually celebrated in November until President Abraham Lincoln established it in 1863. Even then, it undergoes another shift when President Franklin Roosevelt, in 1939, moved Thanksgiving up a week in order to bolster a depressed economy.¹

This brief venture into the history of Thanksgiving is not, however, the aim of this chapter. What I am more concerned about is what it is that Christians are celebrating when we recognize Thanksgiving as a holy day. Though it has become, harmless enough, a time set aside for families to get together in order to eat a lot of food, watch a lot of football, and give a lot of thanks, we must ask the question: What is it that Christians are being grateful for?

Prior to the European invasion of the Americas, conservative estimates suggest that there were 30 to 50 million Natives occupying what is now known as the United States (some estimates go beyond 100 million). There are now only 2 million or so Natives in the United States. Where did they go? As the comedian Chris Rock so eloquently put it on one of his comedy tours: “Everybody wants to save the trees. The trees? I see trees everywhere! When’s the last time you saw two Indians?” It would be funny, if it were not so true.

There are several reasons for the almost complete annihilation of the various tribes of Native Americans. The most brutal include the conquering of Natives via violence, starvation, and plagues—all of which were introduced by the Europeans. King James praised God for sending the plagues amongst the savages, and what God failed to do the U.S. Calvary took it upon themselves to accomplish when

they introduced smallpox to Natives and relegated the remaining to reservations incapable of nurturing life.² I daresay no one has suffered as much at the hands of the ‘white man’ (and woman) than Native Americans, yet each year we continue celebrating Thanksgiving as if God blessed us for coming over and introducing so much misery and oppression to its native people.

When the Wampanoags were asked by the Massachusetts Department of Commerce in 1970 to select a speaker to mark the 350th celebration of the pilgrims landing they chose the late Frank James. Though his name was anglicized, he forever remained a Native American (he was known as Wampsutta by his own people). Due to concern by the white people in charge of the ceremony, James was asked to present a copy of his speech before he was allowed to read it. What follows below is a partial glimpse of his speech:

“It is with mixed emotion that I stand here to share my thoughts. . . . It is with a heavy heart that I look back upon what happened to my people. Even before the Pilgrims landed it was common practice for explorers to capture Indians, take them to Europe and sell them as slaves for 220 shillings apiece. The Pilgrims had hardly explored the shores of Cape Cod for four days before they had robbed the graves of my ancestors and stolen their corn and beans. . . . Massasoit, the great Sachem of the Wampanoag, knew these facts, yet he and his people welcomed and befriended the settlers of the Plymouth Plantation. . . . This action by Massasoit was perhaps our biggest mistake. We, the Wampanoag, welcomed you, the white man, with open arms, little knowing that it was the beginning of the end; that before 50 years were to pass, the Wampanoag would no longer be a free people.

What happened in those short 50 years? What has happened in the last 300 years? History gives us facts and there were atrocities; there were broken promises—and most of these centered around land ownership. . . . We forfeited our country. Our lands have fallen into the hands of the aggressor. We have allowed the white man to keep us on our knees. What has happened cannot be changed, but today we must work towards a more humane America, a more Indian America where people and nature once again are important.”³

Though there was nothing in his speech that was false, he was not allowed to present it. Truth was not a welcomed component of the white people’s celebration of the European invasion. What they would remember would be what they wanted to remember. Even if it was nothing but lies.

Even when it does not benefit us, perhaps *especially* when it does not benefit us, Christians are to be truth-

tellers. Our settlement in this country was only possible due to the enslavement and massacring of its natives. We all have blood on our hands. This does not mean, however, that we are to live lives of perpetual guilt because of our heritage, but it does require that we live lives that enact justice, that attempt to find solidarity toward those we have for so long wronged. I am not entirely sure what such justice would look like. I imagine we would need to leave that up to the Native Americans. What I do know, or at least think I know, is that our celebration of Thanksgiving Day must take a different shape. Christians only have one true thanksgiving celebration and that is the Eucharist.

The Eucharist means thanksgiving, and it is in our feeding on the broken body of Jesus that should enable us to better understand those bodies that were broken in order for us to be where we are today. This is not to equate the sacrifice of Jesus with the sacrifice of natives; rather, because we

feed on a broken savior, we have the resources to better name those who have been, likewise, broken.

I think that the most interesting, the most counter-cultural, the most subversive thing a Christian could do on Thanksgiving would be to fast. After fasting as a means of protesting the lies that have become a part of the mythos of the birth of this nation, we could cap the day off by celebrating the Eucharist. Perhaps then we might find a way to truthfully move forward in regards to our past with our native brothers and sisters. ■

- 1 For a more thorough account of the development of this holiday see James M. Loewen’s *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* (NY: New York Press, 1995), 67-89.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 77.
- 3 Frank James, “Frank James’ Speech” (NY: Council of Interracial Books for Children *Bulletin* 10, No. 6, 1979), 13.



The Religion of LOST and American Religious Culture

By Benjamin E. Zeller

This spring the television series LOST, which achieved cult status over its six seasons, came to an end. A tale of the survivors of an airplane crash on a mysterious tropical island, the series wove together stories of the survivors' pasts and presents. It also slowly introduced the inhabitants of the island and what fans of the show call the island's "mythos"—the supernaturalistic elements and features of this sacred space.

LOST's flirtations with religion followed an intriguing pattern of bricolage that mirrors contemporary developments in American religion. Not content to remain within the bounds of any singular religious approach, the writers combined elements of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Egyptian religions, and New Age spirituality. The great mystery during much of the series, the enigmatic "Dharma Initiative"—a name derived from Indian religious traditions—curiously used Taoist symbols as part of its icon. Meanwhile a group of the island's original residents lived in an Egyptian-style temple, led by a Japanese master named Dogen, a reference to a Zen philosopher. Among the survivors, the Catholic Mr. Eko carried a large stick with scriptural references, and sometimes functioned as an unordained priest. The island itself became a sacred space of healing, miracles, and conflicts, set apart and forbidden by the mysterious Jacob, a two thousand year old guardian. Meanwhile characters with names like Lock, Hume, and Rousseau served to advance the plot of the series.

Despite these many references to religions and philosophies—and the previous summary barely scratches the surface—seldom did the writers delve too deeply into the meanings of such references. Besides some Buddhist-sounding platitudes, the character Dogen did not actually espouse the real

Dogen's philosophy, nor did LOST's John Locke represent John Locke's. The Dharma initiative was not particularly influenced by any Buddhist, Hindu, or even New Age notion of the dharma, and Mr. Eko's Catholic vocation was completely divorced from the liturgical and sacramental reality of Catholic life. Religious elements in LOST generally appeared shorn of their cultural, historical, and theological moorings.

Yet LOST's flirtations with religion should not be read as a failing of the writers. Rather, LOST represents a broader trend in contemporary American culture. The recent 2009 Pew Forum poll—which received treatment in *Sightings*—reveals Americans' propensity for engaging in similar religious bricolage. Thirteen percent of American Christians have visited psychics, twenty-three percent believe in spiritual energy in trees, and twenty-two percent accept reincarnation. A decade ago in his study of American Baby Boomers, Wade Clark Roof found the same phenomenon. And Catherine Albanese has traced this pattern of religious combinativeness back to the colonial era. Religious bricolage is not a new phenomenon, though LOST made it explicit on national airwaves.

As viewers of the final episode of LOST discovered, the show's writers even offered a vision of the afterlife. As the character Christian Shepherd (yes, that's his name) explained, people create their own gathering places in the afterlife where they reunite with loved ones, before "leaving" to journey on. Reminiscent of both the Buddhist bardo and the Christian limbo, LOST's afterlife had the added New Age element of envisioning the afterlife as a positive realm created by the power of the mind.

The LOST survivors met in the afterlife in an interfaith chapel replete

with sacred objects and symbols from a variety of world religions. Such a place, and the metaphysical belief in the power of the mind to construct reality, is an apt metaphor for LOST's engagement with religion and philosophy. Rather than focus on single world-view, its writers created a patchwork. Such an approach may sometimes lead scholars of religion to scratch their heads, but it also speaks to a continuing proclivity for combinativeness in American religious culture. ■

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God With Us

(continued from page 6)

that he had just nailed it to the wall and that he wanted to take it down and give it to me. "Oh, no," I protested, "I could not think of your giving it to me. I will be very pleased to pay you for it." Then I proceeded to write him a check for the equivalent of four months of his salary. (He was at my hotel cashing that check by the time I could get back there myself.)

What He Qi discounted because he deemed it not religious enough, I admired and now treasure because it represents his God-given talent, his God-honoring discipline, and his God-ordained commitment to be faithful to his calling. Now I pray that he is growing in grace and a knowledge that God, who chose not to stay in heaven but to come down to be with us on earth, draws no hard and fast line between the sacred and the secular.

According to my lights, this is a big part of what the incarnation is all about.

Merry Christmas. ■

Does This Still Happen?

By Catherine Clark Kroeger, Executive Director PASCH Cape Cod, MA

There is a joke in evangelical churches that it is easier to gain forgiveness after murdering one's mate, than it is if the partner divorces his or her marital partner. Increasingly, this scenario is no longer a joke and the issues are more complex.

*Peace and Safety in the Christian Home*¹ gets many appeals for help, but one was unusual. Could we find a safe house for a woman who was suffering from severe depression triggered by intense abuse from her church? The population of her tiny New England town refused to speak to her (except to condemn her) for having sought a divorce from her adulterous and abusive husband. I will call the woman Rosemary (not her real name).

Over the twenty-three years of her marriage, the police had paid scores of visits to her home, always bringing at least two cruisers to control the violence, sometimes using mace and clubs to subdue the offender. After committing repeated assaults, her husband was adjudicated a "felon for life". This classification meant he was no longer permitted to vote, to possess firearms, or to leave the country.

However, the pastor of her church continually badgered her to reconcile with her husband, and she was publicly condemned by the church leadership as having adopted action that was "unbiblical". Ostensibly the husband had been "converted," but his behavior did not change. None of his misconduct could be considered grounds for divorce because, the pastor said, all was now "under the blood." This "conversion" did not prevent the abusive blows from continuing to fall, nor the marriage vows from being violated.

After her action, a lay leader from a neighboring church struck up a friendship with her, only to be warned that he must forfeit his position as an officer in the congregation if he con-

tinued to associate with her. Able to bear no more of the recriminations, and being at the point of suicide, she sought a church meeting to lay out the circumstances of her action. The church council simply refused to look at the thick pile of police reports, the court documents, or a physician's report of the permanent disability resulting from the repeated injuries that she had sustained.

Nor would the council heed poignant letters written by the victim's sister and her twenty-year-old daughter. The church council sat stony-faced as the daughter read a poignant declaration that declared in part:

"You have heard only one side of the story and you have based your opinions and your advice on that. Well here is my side of the story.

"There are worse things than divorce—being beaten and having your children around to watch it, for one. You did not live my life. You did not grow up in my home—in the abuse, the mess, the disappointment, the brokenness, that I did. Do not sit there and tell me that God frowns upon divorce. . . . that it is not godly for a man to leave his wife.

"It is not godly for a man to beat his wife either, or to walk into church the next morning acting as though it never happened. If you think that my parents are better off sticking together and fighting through this, I am sorry, but you are ignorant and wrongly mistaken. No more!

"For years, my mom has tried to make it work. But these last attacks have left her out of work and unable to support herself aside from the unemployment compensation she can receive from the state.

"And nothing personal against the church, but I just think they're all a bunch of hypocrites there . . . to call yourselves Christians but yet turn right around and condemn and judge

my mother for her decision to once and for all get herself out of the situation and get a divorce. The Bible says you have to take the stick out of your own eye before condemning that in others. Only God can judge us, so I find it funny that the Church seems so set on running my mom down and sticking their noses in her business to other churches. She is trying to heal and move on with her life, and I would greatly appreciate you letting her do so."²

A sympathetic neighboring pastor who had attended the unfortunate church session wrote in protest:

"Our concern to preserve the bonds of marriage and to discourage divorce does not mean that we should force the issue, when there are biblical grounds for divorce and any reconciliation could amount to a death sentence. I believe that you mean well, but I can't tell you how disappointed I am at the way that this has been handled. It all seems to play into the typical media caricature of evangelicals. None of you were willing to speak to those who witnessed what took place over the course of the marriage."³

Overcrowded shelters told Rosemary that they did not have enough space for victims fleeing abusive partners and could not accommodate a victim of church abuse. And so it was that we invited her to stay with us for a while so that she could be among Christians who would love and support her.

My strongest image is of her sitting on the back porch steps, devouring a Bible study about God's love and support of the abused and oppressed. These were indeed words of life, and ones that she was anxious to read and share. In her eagerness to develop new patterns, she even assisted at a booth for abused women at the local county fair. She joyfully attended a missions

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The Persistence of Patriarchy

By Ann Eggebroten, California State University Northridge, CA

Today I am attending a mega-church—Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California—where God is male, all the pastors, deacons, and elders are male, and women are taught to live in submission to men. My husband, visiting Phoenix for a week, texts me that a woman is preaching in the Episcopal church he found near his motel.

These two different worlds exist side by side: congregations where men and women are equal partners in service of Jesus Christ, and others where gender hierarchy is taught as God's will and the only truly biblical option. On Sunday morning we all drive past one flavor of gender teaching to worship in another. And those in egalitarian churches often have no idea of the wide reach of "complementarianism"—the term, so much nicer-sounding than "hierarchy," used these days by neo-patriarchalists to describe their view of men's and women's different roles.

In Sun Valley, the sermon by Pastor John MacArthur, comparing the accounts of walking on water in different gospels, is excellent: I guess that's how megachurches get started. After church, in the crowded visitors' room, I'm welcomed by a friendly woman about my age, a physical therapist with a degree from the college where I teach religion.

I ask her, "Is women's submission to their husbands stressed in this church?"

"Yes, it is," she says. "A ship can have only one captain. But it's not enslavement." She tells me she's fortunate that her husband is "not the domineering type. We take a difficult issue to God in prayer. I rarely have to let him decide."

I'm thinking about women who are advised not to leave abusive marriages, but I don't bring this up. At least things aren't as extreme as they

sound on the church Web site. There, I had listened to Anna Sanders lecture women on how to live in submission to their husbands. "We need to beat down our desire to be right and have our own way," she had said, citing John Piper, Nancy Leigh DeMoss, and Martha Peace—all authors published in the last decade. "It's his way, his rights, his expectations, and his plans....Be a helper."

I'm stunned to find that the 300-student Master's Seminary on the church campus enrolls only men. Even in the Catholic Church, women can study in seminaries to become lay ministers doing religious education or hospital or prison ministry.

After my chat with the physical therapist, a couple in their 30s, who converted from Judaism to Christianity 12 years ago, urges me to visit again. I ask my submission question.

The husband speaks at length about how well it works. "A tie goes to the runner," he says. "What does that mean?" his wife asks. He tries to explain, but neither she nor I gets it. He continues to discuss being the head of his wife: "It's not supposed to be noticeable that I'm in that position."

It's time to get out of here, I tell myself. I'm feeling tense, as if I might cry or launch into a diatribe. I walk the acres back to my parked car.

The words of Sara VanScoy come to mind: "I'm tired of being a second-class citizen." A medical doctor and psychiatrist who served 11 years in the Air Force, she earned a master's degree in divinity summa cum laude at Bethel Seminary in Jonesboro, Arkansas, in May 2009. Though praised by her professors for her gifted preaching and teaching, she has not been hired "by any church anywhere" to pastor in either a lead or associate role.

She worships in the Southern Baptist church where she grew up

in Jonesboro, but she can't be hired there. In 2000, the Southern Baptist Convention changed its statement of faith to say that "the office of pastor is limited to men." (Two years earlier, they had amended the statement to say that, although a wife is "in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him," she is "to submit herself graciously" to him, because she has "the God-given responsibility" to be her husband's "helper.")

"It's sad, really, that the only place in my entire life that I have experienced gender discrimination is the church," VanScoy emailed me. "Certainly God never intended to gift a woman to do something she was not intended to do."

Much of the debate hinges on Genesis 3:16, God's words to Eve: "And he shall rule over you." Hebrew scholar Phyllis Trible translates the line as "he will rule"—not a command or an entitlement, but God's view ahead into a future where men will dominate women. As *The New Oxford Annotated Bible's* notes put it, "The man's rule over the woman here is a tragic reflection of the disintegration of original connectedness between them."

But traditionalists claim that male rule is God's will; such neo-patriarchalism promotes injustice in home, church, and society. It gives men too much power, exposing them to temptation, and has often contributed to domestic violence.

"I was married to a conservative Christian husband and we had five children," writes a young mother in Austin, Texas, who suffered emotional and physical abuse before finally leaving the marriage. Now she has earned a master's degree in social work and wants to help others: "I would like to do anything I could to educate women in these fundamentalist Christian groups (mine was [based on the teaching of] Bill Gothard) to get out with

the sanity that they have left!"

Here's the question: Is God permanently committed to the kinds of social hierarchy that existed in the first and second millennium B.C.E. and continued until recently, when education and voting were opened to women? Or does the vision of Paul in Galatians 3:28—"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus"—take precedence?

In the 1970s, evangelical men and women scoured "problem passages," examining the meaning of Greek words and the authorship and audience of Paul's letters. With books such as *All We're Meant To Be* by Letha Dawson Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty (1974) and *Women, Men, and the Bible* by Virginia Ramey Mollenkott (1977), biblical feminism changed from an oxymoron to an accepted term in many evangelical churches.

In others, however, it became a demon to be fought. By 1987 the "Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood" appeared, to counteract the impact of the Evangelical Women's Caucus and newly founded Christians for Biblical Equality.

The assertion is that men and women are "equal in being though unequal in role." *Discovering Biblical Equality* co-editor Rebecca Merrill Groothuis does an excellent job of presenting the logical fallacy of this claim: Different but equal sounds

good, says Groothuis, but how can it be "logically possible for the same person to be at once spiritually and ontologically equal and permanently, comprehensively, and necessarily subordinate?"

Believers in gender hierarchy point to verses such as "it is shameful for a woman to speak in church" (1 Cor 14:35) and "Let a woman learn in silence with full submission" (1 Tim 2:11). Various evangelical feminists approach the Corinthians passage in different ways: 1) Paul is speaking to a unique situation in Corinth that doesn't apply to now, 2) women in the audience should not whisper and disrupt worship—but they can preach, 3) Paul is quoting others with whom he disagrees here, and 4) verses 34-35 began as someone's marginal comment, later copied right into the text.

To conclude that women should be silent and not hold office in the church, you have to overlook Paul's requirement that "any woman who prays or prophesies" must have her head covered (11:5). You also have to get around Paul's praise of Phoebe as "a deacon" (Rom 16:1) and his greeting to Junia as "prominent among the apostles" (16:7). Then you must ignore evidence that the "pastoral epistles" (1 and 2 Tim and Titus) were written in honor of Paul long after he died and reflect a second-century debate over women's roles in the church—whether to conform to social customs for the sake of winning converts, or to advocate radical social

equality (and often celibacy) in the last days before the Second Coming.

Then there's that word "helper." In Fuller Theological Seminary's bookstore, I picked up a book called *Created to be His Help Meet*. There's no mention of the Hebrew word *ezer*, the word translated as "help," in the whole book. In this and other complementarian books, it's understood to mean "subordinate helper"—but, in the Bible, God is described as our *ezer* some 16 times, including Psalm 12:12: "My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

So what is the will of God for women today: silence or preaching, subjection or mutual submission? Many Christians in all denominations, including evangelicals aren't even asking this question any more—yet the neo-patriarchal movement remains widespread.

"Hallowed be thy name," we say, but injustice carried out in the name of God, supposedly on the basis of the Bible, turns others away from this God.

"For freedom Christ has set us free," wrote Paul to the Galatians. "Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." ■

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Jesus and the Evolution of the Species

By Stanley Knick, Ph.D. University of North Carolina at Pembroke

This is not about whether you believe in God or whether you believe in evolution. It is not about whether you believe that Jesus is the Son of God. If you believe in God, fine. If not, fine. If you believe evolution is real, fine. If not, fine. This is not about what you believe, or what I believe. It is about the idea of Jesus, and the idea of evolution, and what these two ideas might have to say about each other and about us.

I was raised in the fundamental Baptist tradition. Both of my grandfathers were preachers. I have four uncles and a cousin who are preachers. As a boy I went to church every time the doors opened. It was assumed that every child in the family would grow up as a Christian. Any debate about the fundamentalist belief system was disallowed.

One of the principal elements of that system was that the Bible had to be taken literally. The meaning of each word, and the interpretation of each passage, had been handed down in the oral tradition of my family. At that time, none of them had been a special student of Hebrew or Greek, nor of the many translations and manuscripts that went into the making of the King James Version. I was simply taught what my elders had been taught. Everything that was necessary to know was already known.

One interpretation given to us very early was that it was impossible to believe in Jesus and, at the same time, “believe in evolution.” The two were mutually exclusive ways of viewing the world. Anyone who “believed in evolution”—which meant, following the popular misconception, that humans had descended from monkeys—could not really believe in Jesus. If anyone thought he could hold such a dichotomy in his mind, he must be fooling himself about his relationship with Jesus. Such a person was lumped with

heathens, modernists, liberals, college professors, and all other reprobates.

At the same time, there was in America the widespread notion that anyone who accepted the theory of evolution surely could not take the Bible very seriously. The creation of the world in Genesis could only be a pleasant story, not greatly different from the origin myths of so-called “primitive” people. Similarly, most of the Bible was little more than an oral tradition of the Hebrews, without application to the scientific world.

From within, each of these two is a comfortable worldview. Everything is laid out clearly in both. In the language of an anthropologist (which is what I grew up to be), each is a culture that serves its people effectively. Despite the apparent differences, there are also obvious similarities. Each is a system of learned and shared ideas that functions well, is adaptable to local environments, and is durable. Each has inherent value.

In anthropological terms, the central hero of fundamentalist culture is Jesus. He entered the human realm from the metaphysical plane, bringing salvation from a sinful life. Lesser cultural heroes—prophets who foretold His mission, and apostles who spread the news of His first and second advents—became His agents of enlightenment among the humans.

His message seems reasonable, one that most humans can appreciate on some level. Its explicit theme is Love, something all humans want. The idea of Jesus calls humans to change from their selfish ways, to allow God’s Love to rule their lives. The idea of Jesus is itself a metaphor for the most unselfish kind of Love.

The symbolism in scriptures is plain. Jesus assumed human form, endured temptation, suffered and died, was resurrected, and ascended back from whence He had come.

He transformed Himself in order to change the world, and especially the human beings. His essence—His blood—changes human beings one individual at a time, and consequently changes whole communities. The human assignment is to convert—literally to change.

But does Jesus have anything to say about the idea of evolution? If we strip evolution of all the baggage added to it by detractors and adherents, it is a very simple philosophical idea: Things Change. This seems a reasonable enough notion—change is something all humans do. Whatever works best in any given situation or environment has an improved likelihood of surviving. Occasionally accidents shake things up for a while, but generally speaking life tends to move toward some kind of balance. Things can get out of balance for a time, and some enigmatic forms can arise and persist, but things in general swing toward some new kind of balance eventually. Whatever works is passed along in the essence—the genes—of individual members of each group, and this changes whole communities.

The idea of evolution does not necessarily assume any particular First Cause for things. Evolution also does not necessarily assume a need for random causes—it allows for them, because often things seem to happen randomly, but it doesn’t demand randomness because change can be caused by all sorts of things (genetic drift, sexual selection, etc.).

Evolution does not hold that humans evolved from monkeys, as it has been accused of doing. Monkeys and humans, and most all species, have been changing through time. The idea of evolution merely tries to embrace all the known scientific evidence in an effort to understand the process of change. In a way, the idea of evolution is itself a metaphor for a very compre-

hensive kind of change.

Fossils found all over the world are the nuts and bolts of the evidence. The idea of evolution is a way to explain them. Evolution is neither “Just a Theory” (as some detractors say), nor is it an “Explanation of Everything” (as some adherents say). Evolution is a process, an apparently on-going body of changes. Almost anyone who has been alive for very long will attest that, surely enough, things do seem to change. But does evolution have anything to say about the idea of Jesus?

One of Christianity’s heroes is Moses. He is credited in fundamentalist culture with having written the first five books of the Bible. (Most progressive scholars now think that several writers are responsible, but for this discussion I prefer to lump them together as the idea of Moses—the frequently accepted, if possible nominal, author.) Seen in this light, Moses is the human delivery agent for the Genesis account of the beginning of the universe. Moses is also seen as God’s delivery agent for the children of Israel, and he has also been described as a human “type” of Jesus, the deliverer of humanity. Moses is very much in God’s delivery business—his account is basic to the creation beliefs of traditional Judaism and Islam as well.

In Archbishop Ussher’s widely debated chronology of the Old Testament, Moses lived around 2500 years after the creation, and 1500 years before Jesus. It is from Moses’

Genesis account that we learn the order of earthly creation: first, the “heavens,” then earth itself; then water and air (vapor); dry land; plant life (grass, herbs and then trees); and animal life (aquatic animals and airborne animals, then land animals and eventually humans.).

Isn’t it interesting that a similar order of developing biological life—the earth, then water and air; plants before animals, aquatic creatures before land creatures; humans later on; basically, moving from simpler forms to more complex ones—is what is reflected in the fossil record? Could the fossil record be a message from God?

Moses gave exhaustive details of the things he saw first hand—daily journeys of the children of Israel, ordinances from God, the land and people of the time. He gave less detail of what happened in the centuries of history before his time: the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. He gave even less detail (with the notable exception of the Noah story) of what happened in more distant history—the centuries between Seth (son of Adam) and Abraham. Much of this Seth-to-Abraham period he described only in a catalog of names (the “begats”).

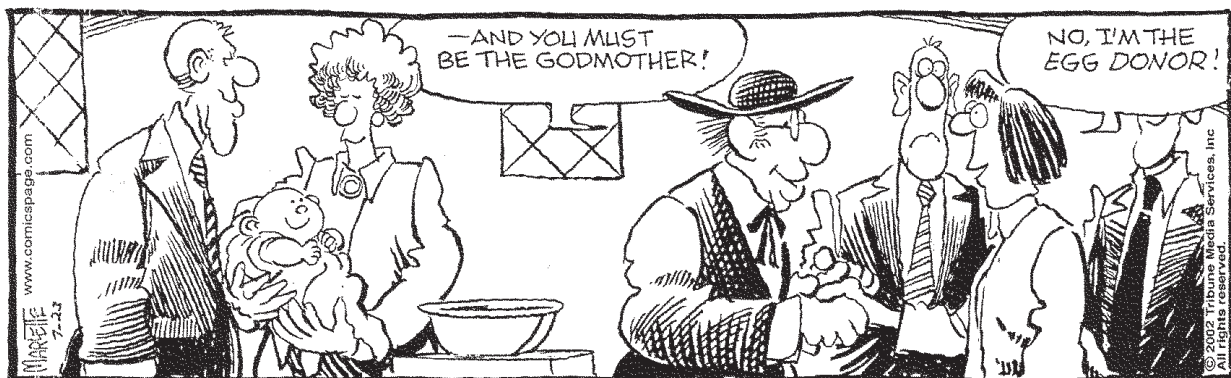
Moses employed the ideas available at his time to describe creation. He gave almost no details about the process of creation. He merely wrote that God spoke, and things got underway—not much about what God did

or didn’t do in the creative act; not much about how God did or didn’t do all that creating..

Fifteen centuries after Moses another hero of Christianity was also inspired to write about creation. John used the ideas available in his day, and added to the Moses account the perspective that God’s Son, Jesus, had been involved in creation: “All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made” (Jn 1:2). John’s contemporary, Paul, echoed the same perspective: “For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible” (Col 1:16).

Moses didn’t explicitly write about Jesus, because Jesus hadn’t been explicitly manifested to the human beings yet. Jesus was an idea not yet expressly available. But John knew Jesus personally and saw Him as God in human form. In John’s account of creation, Jesus became the central character.

So it is with human beings. Seeking to understand things, we write using the ideas available to us. We can do no more. Moses could not have written of the creation as John did, because Jesus had not been explicitly revealed yet. It could be said that Moses saw “through a glass darkly” what John came to see “face to face” as more information was revealed (1 Cor 13:12) the apostles taught that Christ had been there all along, even before Moses. Perhaps Moses simply had not been shown that part of the “mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 13:11).



As it turns out, the proponents of evolution teach that the fossils were there all along, too. These thousands of pieces of evidence—the bones of ancient animals and the components of ancient plants—had been preserved in stone for thousands (millions) of years. They were there in the Middle East at the time of Moses and at the time of John, but the fossil part of the universe hadn't been revealed yet. The plants and animals those fossils represent had lived and died, and had been changed into fossils by natural processes, but they remained invisible for all practical purposes in the days of Moses and John.

Some detractors of evolution have attempted to disallow those ancient species. But what if each of those animals and plants was part of God's creation? What if the extinct species which anthropologists call Australopithecines and the early forms of our own genus (*Homo*) were just as much a part of God's creation as the woolly mammoth and the modern lion? If there were such a thing as a Creator (and I believe there is), and if the universe by definition includes everything, wouldn't that mean that everything in the universe is part of the Creator's creation, even those troublesome fossils? Even troublesome ideas?

Humans, even extraordinary ones like Moses and John, don't see and know everything in the universe. Omniscience is not in the human prerogative. We try to understand only as we have light to see. Early church fathers thought the earth was flat, at the center of the solar system. The church was a strong champion of the flat-world idea. But that doesn't mean that the church fathers did not genuinely have the essence of the idea of God in their hearts, even though they were mistaken about some details.

Eventually the evidence that contradicts the flat-world idea became so extensive that even the church fathers admitted a round and moveable earth into their philosophy. This did not, as many had feared it might, reduce the wonder and majesty—the power

and glory inherent in the idea of God. God was still God! The earth was just round instead of flat.

In fact, it revealed a way of seeing God as even more powerful, one who could set celestial and earthly processes in motion just by willing it.

What if the Creator were also powerful enough to have set the process of biological evolution in motion? What if He were awesome enough to give it a special touch occasionally, whenever it needed correction to move toward the kind of balance He wants to see? What if He were wise enough to reveal His great mystery in a gradual-but-sometimes-punctuated manner, so that in our human frailty we could come to understand it more and more as time proceeds?

Among the other glorious things involved in the idea of Jesus, what if He could also be seen as a metaphor for evolution itself? What if, by His very nature—the birth into human form, the life among the people, the sacrifice, death, resurrection and transformation back to “the heavenlies”—what if the whole sublime idea of Jesus in itself suggests that humans change, that humans evolve? This is surely not all there is to the idea of Jesus, but what if it was a part of the picture?

And what if it works the other way round as well? What if among all the other things that evolution is, evolution can be seen as a metaphor for Jesus? What if, by its very nature, its subtle, dramatic, apparently inexorable way of changing things, the whole elaborate idea of evolution in itself suggests that spiritual change is also part of the human condition? This is surely not all there is to the idea of evolution, but what if it was part of the picture?

In a world divided on philosophical, theological and scientific notions, what if it was possible to reconcile these disparate ideas about the universe? What if such reconciliation were part of the Good News?

And what if the idea of Jesus and the idea of evolution say something about each other, after all? Perhaps what these two ideas say about each other is that they say something about

us, the human beings.

Some may say, “This idea of Jesus is too complicated.” Others may say, “This idea of Jesus is too simplified.” Some may say, “This idea of evolution is too complicated.” Others may say, “This idea of evolution is too simplified.”

We humans want to understand things. As a way toward understanding, we divide things into categories using the ideas available to us. Sometimes, it is the ideas and categories we use which become the greatest impediments to our understanding. Moses had his ideas and categories. John and Paul had theirs. We have ours.

I believe that God created the universe using the mechanisms we call “natural processes” (which are really God's processes, since He created them, too). If we believe there is such a thing as gravity or such a thing as climate change then we can believe that these biological processes, too, are God's processes, God's creations. Why should it be so hard to believe that biological change over time is also God's process—God's creation? God is the source, the “author and finisher,” of all life, and He used and is still using the processes of change to achieve His plan and purpose: biological change as well as spiritual change.

To me, this means that God is even smarter and more powerful than I imagined as a child. God did not lie when He spoke through Moses about His creation of the universe. God loves us, and wants us to love Him and each other. But He does not ask us to stop using our minds, to stop inquiring and learning about His universe and all the diversity He created in it.

Moses told the story of creation using the ideas and concepts available to him. We can use the ideas and concepts available to us in our time to tell the story of God's wonderful creation. This does not reduce God. It magnifies His Holy Name. ■

Dr. Knick is Director of the Native American Resource Center at UNC-Pembroke. This article is adapted from The Huffington Post (July 12, 2010).

Kingdom Theology Makes A Comeback

By David Gushee, McAfee School of Theology Atlanta, GA

The past decade or so has witnessed a surge of Christian theological work that features the kingdom of God as its central theme. This is certainly not the only current trend in theology or ethics. On the right, a revived neo-Calvinism holds sway in many quarters. Meanwhile, many younger scholars (among them many Baptists) are attracted to the narrative theology and character ethics most associated with Duke Divinity School's Stanley Hauerwas and Notre Dame's Alasdair MacIntyre.

But it is hard to avoid noticing the spread of kingdom theology. I have seen it again this summer in working through texts by Baptist pastor-theologian Greg Boyd (*Myth of a Christian Nation*), young neo-monastic Shane Claiborne (*Jesus for President*), and theologian-ethicist Obery Hendricks, Jr. (*The Politics of Jesus*).

These voices lean to the "left" side of the social/ethical spectrum, but kingdom theology is not prevalent only there. In reading a new unpublished work by the promising young Christian leader Gabe Lyons (educated at Liberty University, co-author with David Kinnaman of the very important book *Unchristian* I notice that his own constructive theological proposal also revolves around the kingdom of God. And of course Glen Stassen and I helped further the trend a bit in 2003 when we published *Kingdom Ethics*.

These books offer accounts of the kingdom of God that vary in some ways, but in most respects hold together as a single narrative. It goes something like this: The Bible proclaims that God is the sovereign king—of creation, of Israel, of the world. But his kinship has been rejected by sinful humanity, bringing dire consequences not just in individual life but in every sector of human experience. The Old Testament promises that God will one

day act to reclaim his kingship and renew the world.

Jesus came proclaiming the good news that the kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom was central to his entire ministry—affecting not just his preaching, but everything he did. For Jesus, the kingdom is the reclaiming of God's world in its entirety. The kingdom happens when God's will is done "on Earth as it is in heaven." Jesus came to embody God's reign and to create a community that would make as its mission the continued embodiment of God's reign until Christ returns.

Kingdom theology has been stimulated and supported by brilliant work in biblical studies to situate Jesus within his actual first-century Jewish context. These scholars help us understand him as a genuinely Jewish figure working with the materials of the Jewish tradition and in a context of fierce Roman oppression and grotesque economic and social injustices.

Reconnecting to Hebraic (rather than Greek or Gnostic) thought categories has begun to pull Christian thought back from its tendency toward disembodiment and various other kinds of destructive dualisms.

This means that kingdom theology is social and this-worldly rather than privatized and otherworldly. Jesus came to offer not primarily a path to personal salvation, but a way of living that can contribute to a renewed world. The message of personal salvation is not absent from kingdom theology, but it recedes to become a component of a broader proclamation.

And people "get saved" not just for their own sake, but mainly so they can get to work on their part of God's kingdom project.

Kingdom theology is eschatological rather than static. Its particular version of eschatology is generally an

"inaugurated" kind as in, "Jesus came to inaugurate the reign of God, but it will not be fully consummated until he returns again." It does not throw eschatological hope entirely off to the future. Inaugurated eschatology makes us pay attention to what is going on right now in this world and leads to a deep hunger for our world's total reclamation. It is most appealing to those most dissatisfied with our broken world.

Kingdom theology often leads to a reconceived theology of the church, which is treated as both more and less important than we often understand it. It's more important in that the church is to be a place where God's reign is made visible right now. It's less important in that the church does not exist as an end in itself, but as a means to a greater end. It's no longer about buildings, budgets and baptisms.

Kingdom theology was birthed through a fresh focus on Jesus and tends to encourage an ongoing focus on him. And that focus is not just on Jesus as my personal Savior or best friend, but as the one who embodied and inaugurated God's kingdom and who is even now gathering around him a community who will give their very lives for the reign of God. ■

Ten Commandments Cost Haskell County

By Bruce Prescott, Executive Director, Mainstream Oklahoma Baptists

News reports are indicating that an agreement has been reached to settle the legal costs for the lawsuit that required Haskell County in Oklahoma to remove a Ten Commandments monument from the lawn of its county courthouse. Sadly, the residents of that county will be paying \$199,000 plus interest over the next 10 years for the mistake of believing people like David Barton.

For more than two decades, David Barton has been deceiving many honest but naïve Christians with a revisionist history about our system of government that promotes the mythology of Christian nationalism. The meticulous research in Chris Rodda's "Liars for Jesus" demonstrates that Barton's work is not simply the result of a pious but simpleminded Christian who cannot fathom the legal differences between the Mayflower Compact (1620) and the Constitution of the United States (1789).

Her research reveals a pattern by Barton of deliberately distorting documentary evidence to leave an impression that the U.S. Constitution assigned the same legal authority to the Christian faith as did the Mayflower Compact.

The poor residents of Haskell County swallowed Barton's mythology hook, line and sinker. They erected a monument on their courthouse lawn with the Ten Commandments on one side and the Mayflower Compact on the other.

At the dedication and at rallies to support the monument after its constitutionality was challenged, both county commissioners and citizens proudly proclaimed that the monument demonstrated their belief in Christian nationalism. One commissioner—at the microphone on the podium—spoke to a crowd and said "a bulldozer would have to run over him" to remove it. (He later denied

this under oath, but I was there and heard it with my own ears.)

Ironically, the citizen who proposed erecting the monument, some of the commissioners and many of the citizens of Haskell County are Baptists. If they knew their Baptist history, they would have known that the Massachusetts Bay Colony banished Baptists from the colony, arrested them for holding unauthorized worship services in private homes, and flogged Obadiah Holmes for refusing to pay a fine for unauthorized preaching.

Frankly, that was mild compared to what the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay did to Quakers. Four Quakers were hanged for violating their ban against Quakers.

If those Baptists in Haskell County knew their Baptist history, they also would have known that the Baptists who fought in the Revolutionary War—and there were many—were fighting to put an end to the religious persecution they were facing in the colonies. In Massachusetts, just a decade before the revolution, both private property and church property were being confiscated for colonists' refusal to pay taxes to support the Congregational church.

Between 1772 and 1776, the jails in Anglican Virginia were full of Baptist preachers who were arrested for preaching the gospel without a license—and they couldn't get a license because they were Baptists.

That's why, for Baptists, the Revolutionary War was a war for religious liberty. And that's why Baptists would not rest until the Constitution of this new nation explicitly guaranteed that every citizen would have an equal right to liberty of conscience.

John Leland, the leader of Baptists in Virginia, told George Washington that liberty of conscience was "dearer to us than property or life," and

he meant it. For the Baptists of that time, liberty of conscience meant that church and state would be separate, that no one could be forced to pay taxes to support religion, that no one could be coerced into participating in a religious exercise against their will, and that everyone would have freedom of religion and freedom from religion.

Instead of reading Baptist history, the Baptists and most of the other residents of Haskell County have been reading or listening to Barton, TV evangelists and other talk-radio hosts who take the Massachusetts Bay Colony as their model for a Christian America.

That's why they believe the Supreme Court provoked the wrath of God when it prohibited government agents from forcing school children to participate in acts of worship—the daily recital of officially approved prayers. That's why they think separation of church and state is a communist idea found only in the constitution of the Soviet Union.

Their understanding of the U.S. Constitution is that it created two classes of citizens: first-class citizens, people of the majority faith who are free to impose their religious values on society by legislation; and second-class citizens, people of minority faiths who are tolerated only so long as they remain invisible and stay away from the public square.

The poor residents of Haskell County now have 10 long years to pay for their collective failure to learn the real intentions of our country's Founding Fathers. The truth is, our nation's Founding Fathers were revolting against the basis upon which all governments had been founded until 1776—and the foundation they were rebelling against was a religious foundation.

The Declaration of Independence
(continued on page 27)

Better Than Walking On Water

Related by Martin E. Marty in Context (July, 2010).

Now here's Tony Campolo, a Jesus-man if we ever saw one, in a 1996 broadcast, describing what we can do since we can't walk on water:

"We can't duplicate the power of Jesus. We can't walk on water. I don't have the ability to raise the dead, neither do you. But we do have the opportunity to express the love of Jesus. When it comes to the bottom line, Jesus was more committed to expressing love than showing off his power."

"I was in Haiti and, walking to the entrance of my hotel, was intercepted by three girls. The oldest could not have been more than 15. The one in the middle said, 'Mister, for \$10 I'll do anything you want me to do. I'll do it all night long. Do you know what I mean?' I did know what she meant. I turned to the next one and I said, 'What about you, could I have you for \$10?' She said yes. I asked the same of

the third girl. She tried to mask her contempt for me with a smile, but it's hard to look sexy when you're 15 and hungry.

I said, 'I'm in room 210, you be up there in just 10 minutes, I have \$30 and I'm going to pay for all three of you to be with me all night long.' I rushed up to the room, called down to the concierge desk and said, 'I want every Disney video that you've got in stock.' I called down to the restaurant and said, 'Do you still make banana splits, because I want banana splits with extra ice cream, extra everything.'

The little girls arrived and the ice cream and the videos arrived. We sat at the edge of the bed and watched the videos and laughed until about one in the morning. That's when the last one fell asleep across the bed. As I saw those little girls stretched out asleep on the bed, I thought to

myself, tomorrow they will be back on the streets, selling their little bodies. Nothing's changed. I didn't know enough Creole to tell them about God's love, but the word of the Spirit said this: for one night, for one night, you can be little girls again.

Now, you may be thinking, 'You're not going to compare that with Jesus walking on water.' No. But if Jesus were to make a decision as to which is the greater work, walking on water or giving one night of childhood back to three little girls who had it robbed from them, which do you think Jesus would consider the greater?" ■

*Tony Campolo serves as a Board Member of CET. He also is founder of Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education (EAPE), a widely used speaker, and author of 34 books, including his recent **Red Letter Christians** (Regal, 2008) utilized in our last conference.*



Rethinking “Dominion” in Genesis 1:27-28

By Lee Canipe, Pastor Murfreesboro Baptist Church, NC¹

What did God mean when, in Genesis 1:27-28, God commanded humans to subdue the earth and have dominion over Creation? What are the implications of these commandments on the way that Christians understand their proper relationship to the environment? For almost a year now, these questions have troubled me—and in order to explain the reason why they have troubled me, I will need to share a brief story.

My third child, a son, was born in April of 2007. Only days after we brought him home from the hospital, my wife and I watched Al Gore’s global warming documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*. It was, to say the least, a troubling experience for both of us. We found Gore’s arguments to be very persuasive.

For those of you who are not familiar with either the documentary or the substance of Gore’s advocacy, let me summarize it in a few words: Human activity, particularly our ever-increasing consumption of carbon-producing fuel, has caused a dramatic rise in the average temperature of our planet—a development which threatens to upset the delicate natural balances that sustain fragile ecosystems around the world. Global temperatures naturally rise and fall over the course of hundreds and thousands of years.

The earth’s history, for example, is marked by numerous periods of extended colder temperatures; we call these periods, “ice ages.” Likewise, there have been numerous periods of extended warmer temperatures. These fluctuations are normal. They are also *gradual*. The changes that Gore describes have been occurring over the course not of centuries, but of *decades*. The potential consequences of this rapid and unprecedented global warming are not limited to the extinction of a few exotic plant species in

a rain forest somewhere but, rather, could disrupt the lives of millions of people driven from their homes by drought, famine, or rising water levels. As I said, my wife and I found Gore’s argument to be persuasive, frightening, and—perhaps most importantly—*sobering*. We had just brought a new life into a world that was being dangerously degraded before our eyes and could, potentially, be largely uninhabitable by the time our newborn son reached our age. It seemed not only indecent but *immoral* to dump the consequences of our careless consumption in the lap of our baby boy and millions of other children like him. To use the kind of biblical language I am accustomed to using in the church, what Al Gore was describing in his documentary was a matter of *stewardship*—or, to be more precise, a matter of *poor* stewardship. God had given men and women the responsibility of taking care of the environment for the next generation—that’s what stewards do: they’re *caretakers*—and we had failed to exercise that responsibility faithfully. It was, indeed, a sobering conclusion.

I assumed that the weight of Christian tradition would be solidly behind the idea that our natural environment was a good to be preserved and conserved by responsible men and women acting on God’s behalf as caretakers of Creation. That assumption, however, turned out to be wrong. There was, and continues to be, in the Christian tradition a strong proprietary understanding of how humans are to relate to nature. Lynn White, a professor of history at UCLA, neatly summarized this perspective in an essay—now regarded, at least among environmentally-conscious Christians, as a ground-breaking piece of scholarship—for the journal *Science* in 1967. White argued that, unlike the more nature-friendly religions of Asia and

Western pagan traditions, Christianity “not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that man exploit nature for his own needs.”²

According to this perspective, humans could and *should* use whatever resources they extracted from the planet as they saw fit. It was a God-given prerogative. Until the late 1700s, the practical effects of this attitude on the environment were minimal. With the coming of the Industrial Revolution and the discovery that carbon-based natural resources—first wood, then fossil fuels—could power great engines of production and development, the full implications of this proprietary perspective were soon illustrated by the landscapes ravaged by coal miners and the rivers polluted by toxic waste. White grimly concluded that “we shall continue to have a worsening ecological crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man.”³

From whence did this destructive “Christian axiom” arise? Ironically, it came from the Creation story itself, as found in the first chapter of Genesis in the Old Testament. For our purposes, the relevant verses from chapter one are verses 26-28: “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth’” (NRV).

In these verses, God not only creates the first humans as male and female, but also prescribes a specific way in which they are to relate to the earth—“to subdue the earth and exercise dominion over it.” The Hebrew word translated here as “subdue” is *kabash*, and it signifies the action of conquering or, perhaps more polite-

ly, taming, as a farmer might tame a wild field in order to make it suitable for cultivating crops. Individuals whose actions may be described with the word *kabash* act to establish their physical authority over someone or something else. The practice of caretaking, then, whether it be for one's own property or on behalf of another's, necessarily involves an element of *kabash*. Caretakers who have no practical authority over the object of their care will most likely be ineffective caretakers.

Dominion, however, is a more problematic word for Christians who understand themselves as caretakers (or stewards) of God's creation. After all, *dominion* comes from the same root as *dominate* and connotes the kind of arbitrary and absolute power typically associated with monarchs. Moreover, it suggests that the proprietary understanding of the relationship toward creation that so concerned Lynn White—i.e., that nature exists for the sole purpose of serving the needs of humanity—may have a firmer foundation in the biblical text than the more eco-friendly perspectives on environmental stewardship can claim. So, what sort of dominion does God call His creatures to exercise over creation? A more thorough study of the Hebrew word translated as *dominion* may be helpful in providing an answer.

Several possible meanings fit comfortably within the confines of the Hebrew word *radab*. Most literally, it means "to rule" in the sense of treading down, subjugating, or prevailing against. *Radab* appears nine times in the Old Testament, almost always in reference to military action or political authority. When the Israelite army is described in Judges 5:13 as "marching down"—or, *radab*—"for the Lord against the mighty" enemy, for example, one can hear the noisy tromp of heavily armored soldiers on the move. The scope of Solomon's kingdom, we are told in 1 Kings 4:24, is such that "he had dominion"—or *radab*—"over all the region west of the Euphrates

from Tipshah to Gaza, over all the kings west of the Euphrates; and he had peace on all sides." The peace that Solomon enjoys, however, is a direct result of the military conquests achieved by his father David. *Radab* frequently carries with it, then, a sense indeed of domination imposed by a show of brute force over an enemy.

Nevertheless, as Hebrew scholar Robert Chisholm observes about Genesis 1:28, "the earth is not cast in the role of an enemy or opponent of humankind."⁴ He proposes instead this nuanced addition to the generally understood meaning of *radab*: "to harness the potential of, to use for one's benefit."⁵ When used in this sense, Chisholm explains, the verb does not mean "ruin" or "destroy," but neither does it suggest any kind of especially delicate treatment, as though one were handling something fragile.

Chisholm contends, "The context of rulership militates against abuse of the earth being in view, but it also prohibits putting the earth on a par with humankind, God's designated king over the created order. The point seems to be that the earth is at humankind's disposal. In the ancient Near Eastern context of the passage, harnessing the earth's potential would include, among other things, mining its riches, cultivating its fields, using its trees for lumber, and domesticating its animals so they might be used in service of humankind. As modern science has developed, we have discovered new ways to carry out this mandate as God's vice-regents over the created order. In short, the earth exists as humankind's dominion and for his benefit."⁶

This interpretation of *radab*, in short, reflects precisely the kind of proprietary, anthropocentric idea of dominion that White found so troublesome forty years ago. This notion that God handed the earth and its resources over for men and women to consume as they pleased has helped to justify a good deal of environmental mischief in the name of Christian stewardship.

Criticizing what he considered to

be the unfairly restrictive regulation of public land by the federal government, for example, James Watt (President Reagan's controversial Secretary of the Interior) leaned heavily upon the same kind of nuanced understanding of Genesis 1:28 that informed Chisholm's exegesis. "The laws which should have made us better stewards, in fact, made us careless landlords," Watt wrote in 1982. "Instead of protecting resources, we have neglected them. Instead of using resources to build a strong nation . . . we have deprived America of the raw materials it needs."⁷ Watt's solution to this problem of needlessly excessive conservation—make more national park land available for the development and extraction of natural resources. After all, he pointed out, "the earth is ours."⁸

Such an interpretation of *radab*, of course, not only places creation at the arbitrary disposal of God's creatures. It also implies that men and women live most consistently with God's intentions when they act as consumers. To be truly human in the way God created us to be, in other words, is to consume often and abundantly. This conclusion may resonate with the values of a modern capitalist economy, but it is strikingly out of tune with such Christian virtues as charity, self-control, and patience. Nevertheless, the careful reader of Scripture must somehow account for the word *radab*. To ignore it simply because it is problematic would be an injustice to the text. So, if we reject the dominion-as-exploitation reading of *radab*, what can we offer as a more faithful alternative?

The word must be understood in the context of the entire command that God gives to the first couple in Genesis 1:27-28. Verse 27 tells us that God creates humans God's image and according to God's likeness. Here, I believe, lies the key to understanding the divine imperative in a way that both preserves the integrity of the text and establishes a true caretaker role for humanity toward creation. God does indeed call men and women to exer-

cise *radah*, or dominion, over creation. But the real question is: What *sort* of dominion? According to verse 27, the answer is clear: a dominion that is in the image, or likeness, of God. Humans, in other words, are to rule over creation in a way that is consistent with the way God rules. And how does God rule?

Consider Psalm 72:8, the only time, significantly enough, that *radah* is used in the Old Testament to describe God or God's activity: "May God have dominion"—or, *radah*—"from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." The psalmist then proceeds to describe the nature of God's rule: "For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight" (72:12-14). When used in connection with God, the potentially violent connotations of *radah* suggest instead a more generous sort of kingship. God, the psalmist writes, does not exploit or dominate or consume recklessly. God does not use His power to hurt, but rather to heal. God values what cannot be replaced. God works to preserve life, not to destroy it.

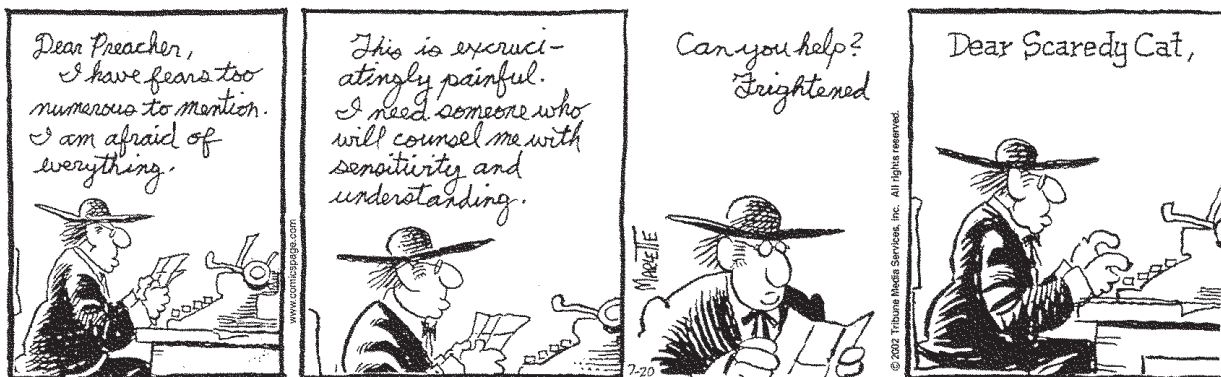
Created in God's image and accord-

ing to God's likeness, then, humans are to exercise *radah*—or, dominion—over creation as *God* would exercise *radah*. The late Old Testament scholar Gerhard von Rad underscores this implicit connection between the image of God and the command to rule. "Just as powerful earthly kings, to indicate their claim to dominion, erect an image of themselves in the provinces of their empire where they do not personally appear," von Rad writes, "so man is placed above the earth in God's image as God's sovereign emblem. He is really only God's representative, summoned to maintain and enforce God's claim to dominion over the earth." That, ultimately, is the divine imperative of Genesis 1:27-28, and it contains within it the seeds of a coherent Christian theology of stewardship toward the environment. After all, stewardship is the act of caring for someone else's property in a manner consistent with the way he or she would care for it.

We began with a story. Let us conclude with one. As those who have sounded the alarms of global warming remind us, the consequences of poor stewardship can be disastrous and, literally, life-threatening. In the parable of the unfaithful steward from the gospel of Matthew, however, Jesus reminds us that poor stewardship of

what God has placed in our care can carry consequences that are even more far-reaching. "Blessed is the servant whom his master will find at work when he arrives. Truly I tell you, he will put that one in charge of all his possessions. But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour when he does not know. He will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt 24:48-51). ■

- 1 Dr. Canipe is also an Adjunct Professor at Chowan University.
- 2 Lynn White, Jr., "The Historic Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science*, 10 March 1967: 1205.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 1207.
- 4 Robert Chisholm, *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 46.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 *Ibid.*, 46-47.
- 7 James Watt, "Ours Is the Earth," *Saturday Evening Post*, January/February 1982, 104.
- 8 *Ibid.*



A Theologian's "Gossipy" Memoir

By Sam Hodges, Reporter Dallas Morning News

Stanley Hauerwas doesn't cuss as much as he once did, but for a world-class theologian he's still earthy, even as he explains the divine.

Consider his rapid-fire, response to a request that he summarize his many books on Christian faith: "Jesus is Lord, and everything else is bull----."

Hauerwas, 70, has spent his adult life on such campuses as Yale, Notre Dame and Duke, where he still teaches in the divinity school. But he grew up in Dallas' blue-collar Pleasant Grove area, son of a bricklayer, in a small house with a privy out back.

His new book, *Hannah's Child*, tells his story, including intellectual adventures, interdepartmental battles, a tragic first marriage, and what it was like to be named America's best theologian by *Time* magazine, in 2001.

But the early part of the book is about growing up in Pleasant Grove. Throughout the memoir, Hauerwas returns to the values he learned going with his parents to nearby Pleasant Mound Methodist Church and spending his summers helping his father lay brick.

"It never came up whether we were happy or not," he said. "We worked. We did what we thought we were supposed to do."

Hauerwas' book was called "gossipy yet very moving," by *New York Times* "Beliefs" columnist Mark Oppenheimer and got a rave review from *The Christian Century* magazine. That review begins by asking, "Why would anyone want to read a theologian's memoir?"

Hauerwas isn't just any theologian. Along with the recognition from *Time*, he was invited to the University of St. Andrews in Scotland to give one of the Gifford Lectures in Natural Theology. Other Gifford lectures have included William James and Albert Schweitzer.

Prolific and provocative, with a

prose style far clearer than that of most academics, Hauerwas is now the subject of dissertations and books. There's a 752-page *The Hauerwas Reader* collecting many of his essays. His book *Resident Aliens*, written with United Methodist Bishop Will Willimon, has sold 100,000 copies.

"He's one of the two or three major [theological] figures of his generation," said Robin Lovin, a professor of ethics at Perkins School of Theology. "People will be reading Hauerwas 50 years from now."

Hauerwas is known as a great character among theologians. Trim, bald and bearded, he still has something of a Texas twang and laughs explosively at his own jokes. His passions include baseball, Mexican food and the novels of Anthony Trollope. He has wryly described himself as a "high church Mennonite" and as "ecclesiastically homeless," but these days attends an Episcopal church.

One early article about him dwelled on his profanity, causing him to pare back.

"I just got tired of being identified with that," he said. "I quit using [strong expletive] and [stronger expletive], but I'm a Texan and I'm a bricklayer. I've got other words."

In his theology, Hauerwas takes a strong point of view, trying to jolt complacent Christians into recognizing what he thinks are the true demands of Christianity, including pacifism. Challenging "the accommodated character of the church to the American project" is one of his key themes.

The book includes one simple, declarative sentence after another, in a style Hauerwas describes as "a cross between Mickey Spillane and Ernest Hemingway."

But he had to be talked into writing a memoir.

"I resisted it for some time, think-

ing that it was an exercise in narcissism," he said. "It turned out I was just narcissistic enough to do it."

Hauerwas was an only child, born to older parents. When he was 6, his mother told him she had prayed to give birth and promised that the child would be God's servant. She'd been inspired by the Bible story of Hannah, who offered her son, Samuel, for the work of God.

So, Hauerwas called his memoir *Hannah's Child*, and he believes that hearing his mother's story so young really did set his direction. "I might [otherwise] be laying brick around Dallas somewhere," he said.

But Hauerwas also makes clear that the summers he spent helping his father lay brick were a major influence. He keeps in his Duke office his father's trowel, level and brick hammers. And he credits his scholarly productivity to the work ethic he learned tossing bricks to his dad.

Hauerwas also writes of being slow to learn to read but catching fire with youth novels about baseball, which led him to history and then books on faith.

At Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas, under a professor from Dallas named John Score, Hauerwas began to read philosophy and theology.

"I remember one time I had a book of [H. Richard] Niebuhr's on the meaning of revelation, and I couldn't understand a word of it," said Joe Wilson, a retired United Methodist bishop and Hauerwas' fraternity brother.

"I thought I might impress ol' Stanley by giving him that book. He read it overnight and said, 'That's the best book I've ever read'. He was a brilliant young man, and he certainly continued on that track."

Hauerwas would go on to divin-
(continued on page 27)

Christian Ethics and the Movies

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

"It is better to watch a good movie again than a bad movie once." DAT

Space Exploration *Apollo 13* (1995)

In 1995, the Academy Awards nominated *Apollo 13* for nine Oscars, including Best Picture. It actually won two, for Best Editing and Best Sound. Ron Howard was not even nominated for Best Director. I am among those who believe that the Academy made a major oversight when it passed over Howard and his milestone movie, *Apollo 13*. Instead, that year, *Braveheart* won Best Picture, and Mel Gibson won Best Director. *Apollo 13* broke new ground for technological achievements, including actual weightlessness in the space flight scenes. It was Ron Howard's greatest directing achievement up to that point.

The story of *Apollo 13* was based on an actual event that took place in the U. S. space program in April, 1970. Astronaut Jim Lovell detailed the botched (some thought a *jinxed*) mission in his book, *Lost Moon: The Perilous Voyage of Apollo 13*.

The movie takes the viewer into the crew's experiences during their near-fatal space flight. The suspenseful adventure story concerns the ground team's efforts to bring the

disabled space capsule safely back to earth after allowing it to complete an orbit around the moon. It had originally been scheduled as a moon landing flight. The circumstances required them to abort the moon landing, since it became paramount to re-engineer the return of the manned flight crew safely to earth again.

The movie is noted for its special effects, particularly the realistic weightlessness of the trio of pilots throughout the duration of their flight. The reason it seemed so authentic is because the actors were really weightless while filming those scenes. Howard took the actors for over 500 parabolic arc flights in NASA's KC-135 airplane, nicknamed "The Vomit Comet." Each of the arcs produced a maximum window of 23 seconds' worth of zero gravity. (All of these flights were completed in 13 days.)

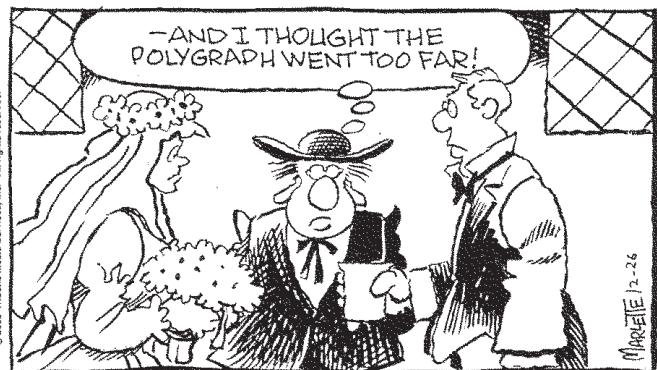
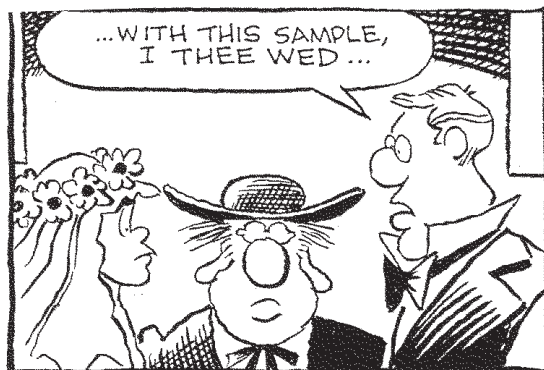
Although all eyes are focused on the astronauts, space flights are actually controlled by the crew on the ground. Astronauts are essentially technicians who follow their checklists. They do not improvise. Whenever something unexpected occurs, the engineers and scientists maintain total control, not the pilot. *Apollo 13*, therefore, recounts the story of how the Flight Control Officer, Gene Kranz, kept his cool and led his ground control team

to solve a series of seemingly engineering insurmountable problems on board the spacecraft brought Lovell and his flight crew back to earth safely.

In a way, although Tom Hanks is the marquee star of the movie, Ed Harris (playing Gene Kranz) is the real hero of the story. Indeed, Harris was one of the Oscar nominees.

To illustrate, here's an excerpt from Kranz's dialogue in the script that shows why he was the true hero in the *Apollo 13* story. In the midst of the initial chaos in the Johnson Flight Center, when all the indicator dials on board the craft were plummeting, and the computers were printing out impossible readings, Kranz quieted his assistants and calmly said, "I want everybody to alert your support teams. Wake up anybody you need. Get them in here. Let's work the problem, people. Let's not make things worse by guessing."

Later, he declared, "We never lost an American in space. We're sure as hell not gonna lose one on my watch. Failure is not an option." Here's a final example, as the minutes ticked away during the final descent of the capsule, someone said, "This could be the worst disaster NASA's ever experienced." With near-serene determination, Kranz replied, "With all due respect, sir, I believe this is going to be our finest hour."



The Social Text. The movie used the archetypal image of light and dark as the symbol for the straightforward problem-solving techniques used by the NASA team. Gene Kranz & Company did not yield to their fears and frustrations. At no point did Kranz or any of his team leaders lapse into anger, blaming, or name calling, even when the Apollo craft swung into a communication dead zone and complete darkness in its orbit behind the moon. There were several minutes of blackout with the capsule as it orbited, hidden from earth, with its power shut down to conserve its ebbing batteries.

According to the movie, the entire ground team was costumed in white lab jackets, or white shirts and ties. Kranz himself always wore an ornate white vest which his wife had made for him as a gift. Every time the story called for quiet, concentrated reasoning, the screen showed the scientists and technicians huddling together, clothed if not haloed in pure, bright lights. Kranz himself was the image of Sir Lancelot, the White Knight.

Coincidentally, Oliver Stone's *Nixon* was also released that same year of 1995. The light-dark symbols could not have contrasted more between the two movies. According to Stone's treatment of Nixon's downfall, at the end of his tragic failed Presidency, Nixon was captured by his own mental dark side. Most of *Nixon's* scenes happened at night. *Nixon*, therefore, was lit in relative gloom rather than in bright daylight. Nixon's countenance, also, was always blackened by his chronic five-o'clock shadow, further accented by the dark circles under his eyes. His chronic state of mind was reflected by his frowning, and by the deep furrows etched in his brow.

Looking further into Oliver Stone's biopic, Nixon's typical responses to the series of frequent crises during his presidency's latter stages was *always* an eruption of anger, cursing, and emotional acting-out. *Nixon's* final scene showed the doomed President sitting alone in his study, awkwardly erasing that famous incriminating tape's

crucial 18 minutes, while taking deep swigs of whiskey.

How different could two opposite problem-solving approaches be, than to contrast the shadowy Nixon with the bright, optimistic, clear thinking Gene Kranz?

Apollo 13 is an inspiring true story. It is rich with some basic spiritual archetypes, centered on the full moon. The plot follows the monomythic quest formula. Like the ancient mariners who set off on voyages into unknown seas, *Apollo 13's* narrative recounts a launch into the depths of space. The astronauts are Everymen, but they have the advantage of being watched over and protected by their guardian angels, the ground controllers.

A key sub-plot in the narrative concerns the vital components of leadership and teamwork. Recall that the original designated Apollo 13 pilot, Ken Mattingly (played by Gary Sinise) became ill at the last moment and had to give up his place on the flight to a substitute, Jack Swigert (Kevin Bacon). Rather than scrub the flight, the decision was made simply to replace Mattingly by plugging in Capt. Swigert into Mattingly's slot. They seemingly took the risk in order to give Jim Lovell his last shot at making a moon walk.

When the accident occurred aloft, this *ad hoc* trio of astronauts felt much tension, as they worked together on board, though they had never trained together as a unit. The astronauts sorely tested the vital component of trust. Their working relationship was exacerbated by the fact that Swigert, a bachelor playboy, had a reputation of being a volatile hothead and a dangerous "cowboy" as a pilot.

Again, when the on-board accident occurred. Mattingly, the original member of the astronauts who had been passed over, was quickly called back to the job. They needed him to join in efforts to diagnose the on-board situation and to improvise quick fixes, using whatever limited materials were available in the capsule. Mattingly unselfishly went back into

the flight simulator and tirelessly ran through repeated stress trials with the other engineers. His unsung real-life drama was added to the race against time, as he ran through tedious bench tests, even as the trapped astronauts were sweating out certain death in their disabled space capsule in the event that NASA failed to invent a solution to their unprecedented dilemma.

Current Status of the Space Program. The current year, 2010, is a major transition point in the U. S. space program. The shuttle program is finally being retired. The future of the space program is in transition to some planned new projects that will not come to fruition for several years. America's space exploration has been an offshoot of the military's rocket weapons development, particularly since the 1960s when the USSR's Sputnik shook up our post-WWII complacency. JFK pledged to regain the "space lead," and put a man on the moon within a decade. NASA is primarily a peacetime application of rocket technology.

Notable achievements have been the Apollo series of moonshots, the Hubble telescope, and the shuttle system. Several disasters have marred the history of the program, including the tragic *Challenger* explosion in 1986 (the year after the movie *Apollo 13*), and the breakup of the *Columbia* on reentry in 2003.

The total cost of the peacetime space program over the past fifty years has approached \$200 billion. Whether the economic and scientific benefits gained have been worth the investment is an open question.² Meanwhile, there is little question that the space exploration story line has inspired the world's imagination. It is become deeply etched into our nation's mythic consciousness. ■

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2 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space_Shuttle_program

The Ten Commandments...

(continued from page 19)

was addressed to an English king and his loyal subjects—people who believed that sovereignty was bestowed by divine right of birth and that the king was the vicar of Christ responsible for the souls of all his subjects. The Founding Fathers boldly asserted that the time when kings and tyrannical governments could lay claim to divine authority in both worldly and spiritual matters was passed. They were declaring that, in America, government was going to be based upon the consent of the governed.

Once the revolution was won, they created a Constitution that explicitly prohibited any religious test to hold public office, that separated church and state by explicitly prohibiting the establishment of religion, and that secured liberty of conscience by explicitly prohibiting restrictions on the free exercise of religion in the nongovernmental public domain. In doing this, the Founding Fathers themselves were accused of being “atheists” and “anarchists.” They established the first “secular government” in the history of the world.

This nation was the first nation in world history that was not founded on religious authority. It was founded on the consent of the governed. We have a government that is of the people, by the people and for the people, because every person in our society—no matter what their faith or lack of it—has an equal right to justice and liberty.

These are the real ideals upon which our nation was founded. That is why the Bill of Rights, not the Ten Commandments, is the most appropriate monument that could be erected on the courthouse lawn. ■

This article first appeared on the author's blog at Mainstream Baptist.

Does This Still Happen?

(continued from page 12)

night at the local Baptist church, and there she met others who had experienced similar trauma.

Because both of the churches in her own community who had been so cruel and judgmental were Southern Baptist congregations, I put in a call to the office of *Christian Ethics Today*. The kind editor gave Rosemary at least half an hour of his time assuring her that there were other voices within the Southern Baptist fold who understood and supported her. This was followed with contact information for a northern New England Baptist church (CBF).

Incredibly, the sequel is that Rosemary has now formed a team and is planning a conference on Christian approaches to domestic abuse. As she seeks her own healing, it may well come as God uses her to bring healing to other abused women. ■

- 1 *Peace and Safety in the Christian Home (PASCH)* is a network of Christians seeking to address the manifold aspects of domestic abuse from a biblical perspective. We strive to be faithful to the wounded and faithful to the Word. Our web-site is www.peaceandsafety.com.
- 2 Used with permission of Rosemary's daughter.
- 3 Used with permission of the writer.

A Theologian's "Gossipy" Memoir

(continued from page 24)

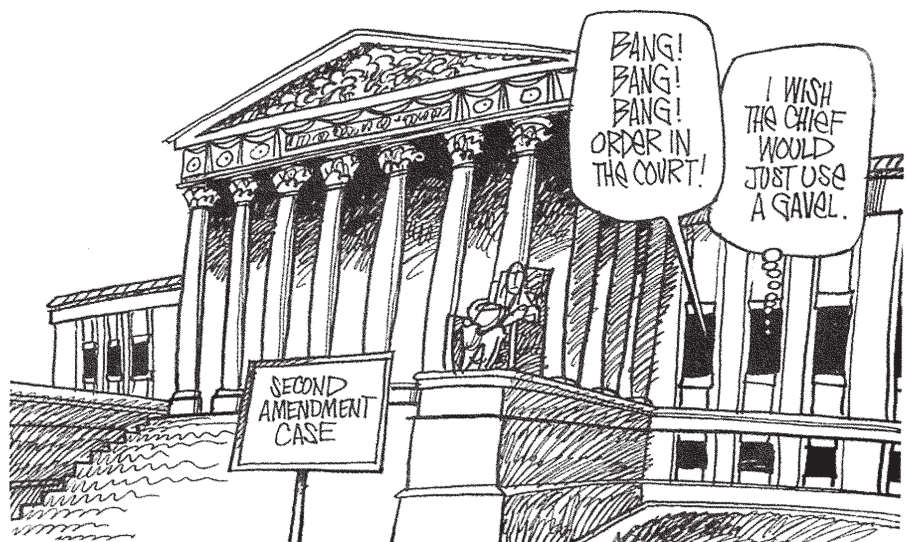
ity school at Yale University, where he embraced the theology of Karl Barth. After getting his Ph.D., he began his long career of teaching and writing, with stops at Augustana College, Notre Dame (where he was a rare Protestant teaching theology) and Duke.

Both parents having died, Hauerwas doesn't get to Dallas much. But he was here this spring to speak at the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation.

Hauerwas recalls the experience as wonderful, but it didn't keep him from showing a little Pleasant Grove edge.

He told members of the wealthy, Uptown parish: “This is the section of town I never came to except to lay brick.” ■

This article was first published in the Dallas Morning News (8/30/10) and is reprinted by permission.



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

Reviewed by Darold Morgan Richardson, TX

Choose Love Not Power

Tony Campolo
Ventura, CA: Regal, 2009.

Tony Campolo, one of America's best known evangelical authors, has brilliantly updated an earlier book on *The Theology of Power*. The central theme of this very readable, generously illustrated volume is Campolo's unequivocal call to Christians "to follow Jesus' example and combat societal struggle with sacrificial love." No one will debate the seemingly endless list of these societal struggles, but there is indeed a debate about the most effective approach—Power or Love!

During his multiple years as a professor of Sociology, combined with a traditional commitment to biblical truth, Campolo wades into some of society's most volatile and debatable issues with a solid Christian perspective keyed to the concept of sacrificial love. Interestingly, this approach engenders sadly some major conflicts and antagonisms—often from unexpected sources of devout Christians. But the open-minded Christian needs urgently to think upon these issues related to this intriguing title—Love not Power!

A major strength of this book is the incessant and honest call to Christian servant hood and sacrificial love, a call emulating the example of Jesus in spite of the complexity of these ancient/modern issues. And many of these

are flammable—i.e. the submission of women, homophobia, abortion, racial conflicts, an ever-increasing pluralistic society!

His chapters on the family should be required reading. One will quickly discover some very helpful material about "God's self limitation of power" which will engender for the Calvinists among us some heated debate about divine sovereignty. This is a wide-ranging book on multiple ethical and theological concerns, brought together with depth and spiritual insight about a genuine sacrificial Christian love. Campolo will make one think and probe these contemporary challenges. And some readers might even be converted to his premises. Some will not. But read the book anyway. ■

Bonhoeffer—Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy

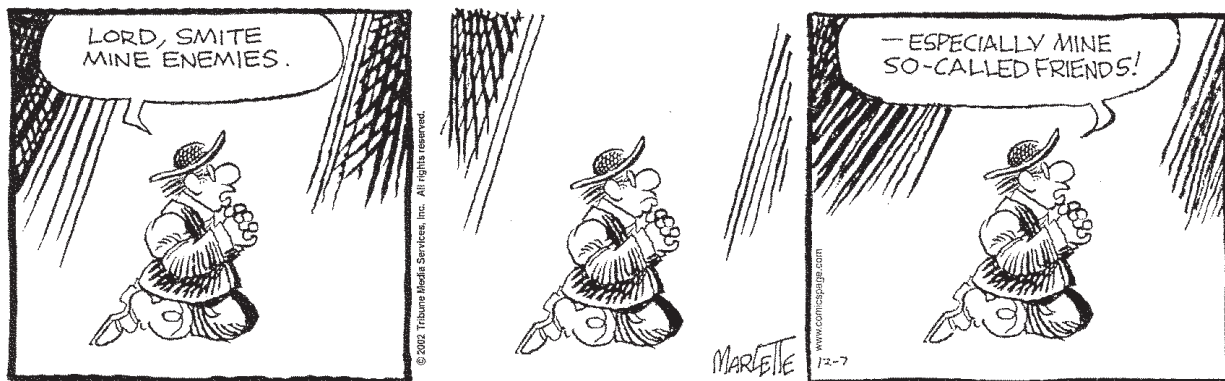
Eric Metaxas
Thomas Nelson, 2010.

For any student of Christian theology and ethics, as well as any scholar interested in an unusual approach to Hitler's Germany, here is must reading! Dietrich Bonhoeffer was tragically martyred in the final days of the Third Reich because of his involvement in the failed schemes of the German opposition to kill Hitler. We know Bonhoeffer today because of his writings which are modern clas-

sics both in theology and devotional content. He was a brilliant and gifted pastor and author who saw early in Hitler's rise to power the import of his horrendous anti-Semitism as well as the staggering hypocrisy of the state Lutheran Church and its accommodation of national Socialism.

The author's approach is simple—"Here is a life worth examining." And Bonhoeffer comes alive in this book! The author brings some incredible skills in research which fleshes out Bonhoeffer—his remarkable family, his education, his love of Germany and its remarkable heritage and history (complete with its fatal mistakes), his transformation from a historic German rationalism to a tempered and balanced and neo-conservative Barthian. He uses extensively Bonhoeffer's correspondence, sometimes to an extreme, but it constitutes an astonishing insight into the man's life and values.

Living less than forty years this pastor/theologian packs into his limited time an astounding array of accomplishments, friendships, experiences, travels, controversies—all in one of modern history's most agonizing set of years. Born before "The Guns of August," Bonhoeffer grew to maturity in a family of wealth and prestige during the trying years following the Treaty of Versailles and the rise and growth of Communism on the European continent—a set of major



influences in German politics. Then comes the rise of Hitler and his evil beyond evil, nurtured in the political and financial pressures of those difficult times, coupled with the hypocritical failure of a majority of German Christians. The author moves head on into these horrendous times with Bonhoeffer leading in the famed Confessional Church movement.

The author deftly weaves this mesmerizing account of Bonhoeffer's life against these horrific events, his service as a pastor in Spain and London, his year at Union Seminary in New York City, his friendship with Karl Barth, Martin Niemöller and many, many others, his astonishingly supportive family, the inexorable move toward involvement in the secretive efforts to rid Germany of Adolf Hitler—a move which led to spirited debate about the ethics involved which must be understood over and against the convoluted morality of those incredible times. All of this leading to a vivid, yet understated account of those many months of imprisonment and eventual death, days before the Americans reached his prison camp!

Bonhoeffer had a genius for friendship everywhere he went. The overly-generous use of correspondence testifies to this. His ability to think through major issues in basic Christian theology is obvious in his writings. Had he lived it is apparent he would have made major contributions to the neo-orthodoxy movement. He maintained a warm and rich devotional life that he was able to share with many even to the end of his life. The author shares so beautifully the developing romantic ties with his wife-to-be, a sharing that adds only to the sorrow and grief of this brief life.

If you enjoy biographical reading, this book has your name on it. If you want to know what many Christians went through in the horrors of World War II, here is fresh and penetrating material for you. Then go back to Bonhoeffer's writings, and they will come alive in a startling new way. ■

7 Deadly Social Sins

Politics *without* Principle

Wealth *without* Work

Commerce *without* Morality

Pleasure *without* Conscience

Education *without* Character

Science *without* Humanity

Worship *without* Sacrifice

Gandhi

Christian Ethics Today

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Christian Ethics Today

A Journal of Christian Ethics

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

PURPOSES

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

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

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

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