

# 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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To Readers of *Christian Ethics Today*:

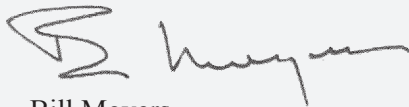
I haven't missed an edition of this publication since Foy Valentine sent me a free copy of the first issue (quickly followed up, of course, by a bill for the full amount of a year's subscription! The man knew how the world works).

During a time when everything that's tied down is coming loose, Foy, then Joe Trull, and now Pat Anderson have kept a community of kindred spirits in touch with each other and with first principles of our faith and heritage as we negotiate the confounding issues of life today. Reading the articles and essays — all of them aiming for illumination rather than indoctrination — I am back in T.B. Maston's class at Southwestern Seminary, when that gentle and wise scholar of ethics helped us to see that race, economics, inequality and social justice were as relevant to our calling as Hebrew, Greek, and church history.

I became a life subscriber to *Christian Ethics Today* because I relish the information and ideas in it, value the community that has grown up around it, and respect its editorial integrity. Any publication that attempts to keep an honest conversation open and going requires financial support without strings. That's where you, dear reader, come in, and it's why I am reaching out to you. *Christian Ethics Today* can only survive with your support. It's that simple.

Look upon these pages as you would a campfire, around which we gather to share our life experiences — the stories, ideals, and hopes unique to our understanding of faith. Then imagine what we lose if the fire goes out.

Be generous, please.



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# Christian Zionism and the Many Descendants of Abraham

By David P. Gushee and Glen H. Stassen

The United Nations has recently been embroiled in debates regarding Palestinian leaders' unilateral declaration of a State of Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders. They have asked the United Nations to recognize their new state.

The present Netanyahu government of Israel is, of course, totally opposed to this course of action on the part of the Palestinians. The United States government, bound by very close ties to the Israeli government, shares this opposition. Both nations tell the Palestinians that the proper path to a state is through negotiations leading to an agreement that can settle all outstanding territorial and political issues. Palestinian leaders respond that they continue to support negotiations but that they can no longer pin all of their hopes on them.

The Palestinians know that progress on that elusive peace agreement has been nonexistent for years. Of course, both sides blame each other for that lack of progress. But meanwhile, on a visit to the Occupied Territories this summer along with 50 students from Fuller Seminary who were studying "just peacemaking" (see <http://just-peacemaking.blogspot.com/p/just-peacemaking.html>), we were shown repeatedly how Israeli settlements (actually, planned cities and towns on occupied Palestinian land) are eating away at the territory that would belong to any viable Palestinian state. The Palestinians are convinced that the Netanyahu government in Israel is pursuing a strategy of delaying negotiations while creating facts on the ground that will make a Palestinian state impossible. A visitor to the increasingly encircled and truncated Palestinian territories can see these facts on the ground with his own eyes if he is willing to look. The Palestinian leadership believes that they had better declare statehood now before the

territory for such a state completely disappears. This high-stakes showdown at the UN has uncertain consequences in the aftermath.

Officially, Israel long ago entered into negotiations with Palestinian leaders directed toward a two-state solution. Unofficially, it appears that the current government in Israel is renouncing this path. Ideological rather than pragmatic factors are clearly contributing to this unofficial but visible renunciation. The most important ideological factor is the belief that Israel is entitled to the entirety of the land and that Palestinians have no

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legitimate claim on any part of it.

This belief is one form of what goes by the name "Zionism." When religiously motivated this is an especially powerful belief, because Israel's "title" to every square inch of the land is believed to be granted by God in the Bible. Our Fuller group was told in Israel that the number of religious Jewish Zionists in Israel is today growing appreciably, and that many are to be found in the settlements on Palestinian land. Of course, these Jewish Zionists do not accept that space as "Palestinian land". It is hard to see how they will ever voluntarily leave their homes, even if Israel signs a peace agreement. In short: Israel has created the conditions for a civil war if those settlements are left in place.

Our essay is not about religious

Jewish Zionism and its destructive effects on Israeli policy. It is about the *Christian* version of the same belief. This Christian version of Zionism matters deeply, not just because theology intrinsically matters, but because it is overwhelmingly clear that American evangelical-fundamentalist Christian Zionism affects US policy toward Israel and the Palestinians in distressing ways. It is one reason why the United States stands almost alone in the world community in supporting Israeli policies which our international friends generally find intolerable if not immoral and illegal.

The prevailing version of American Christian Zionism underwrites theft of Palestinian land and enables oppression of Palestinian people. Christian Zionism helps create the conditions for an explosion of violence, and pushes American policy in a destructive direction that violates our nation's commitment to universal human rights. In all of these, American Christian Zionism as it currently stands is sinful and produces sin. We write as evangelical Christians committed lifelong to Israel's security, and we are seriously worried about "Christian" support for policies that violate biblical warnings about injustice and may lead to serious harm or even destruction of Israel.

As evangelicals ourselves, we share the values of biblical authority, but the interpretation of Scripture followed by Christian Zionists is misleading and mistaken in several important ways.

## **A Question of A Promised Land for Many People**

Both now and in the past, whenever Christian Zionism emerges, it emanates from a fundamentalist Christian reading of the Hebrew Bible, or what Christians call the Old Testament. The love of the Bible takes Christians

into the pages of the Old Testament where we cannot help but discover the centrality of a Promised Land for the Jewish people. The trajectory of the canonical Old Testament moves inexorably both toward and away from the Promised Land. We read the patriarchal narratives in which a people and land are promised despite humble origins; enslavement in Egypt; the miraculous Exodus and grim wilderness wanderings under Moses; the conquest of the Promised Land; the establishment, split, and eventual conquest of Israel as a political entity; the Babylonian exile and dispersion of the Jewish people; and a partial return to the land, at which point the Old Testament historical narrative ends.

Our Christian love for and identification with “the Holy Land” can and often does deepen through reading of the New Testament as well. The four Gospels, in particular, detail the journeys of Jesus through (Roman-subjugated) Israel, and many millions of Christians have cut their spiritual teeth on those stories. We have come to know and love Nazareth and Bethlehem, Capernaum and Cana and of course Jerusalem, because those are the places that Jesus walked. Having just visited Israel this summer, we can attest to the continuing power of these places to connect spiritually with Christians in surprisingly profound ways. Both of us found ourselves deeply affected, for example, by standing on the shore of the Sea of Galilee where tradition holds that Jesus reinstated Peter after his denials. The intense spiritual impact of “walking where Jesus walked” continues to draw millions of Christians to Holy Land tours. Even in our jaded age, there is still power in spiritual pilgrimage to Holy Land—the Holy Land.

As devoted Christians, we share this love of the sacred lands of the biblical tradition with all who hold such love. We think that love of the Holy Land is far better than indifference to it. And both of us, as students of the long and terrible history of Christian

anti-Semitism, which culminated in the horrors of the Holocaust, far prefer a strong sense of Christian kinship with the Jewish people and their historic homeland than the centuries-long Christian pattern of theological disdain and even hatred that so long predominated. The question then becomes not whether to love “Israel”—understood as the People and the Land—but how best to do so.

Contemporary Christian Zionism is well-intentioned but needs correction at some very important points. This requires some careful biblical and theological work within the basic framework of evangelical Christianity. This means that the relevant scriptural texts need to be studied in detail, and that Christian theology needs to do its proper work

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with those texts.

For example, Christian Zionists who move from a generalized love of Israel to a specific claim that the contemporary state of Israel has *divine title* to the entire Holy Land, need to take more seriously the complexity of what the Bible actually says about God’s promises to Abraham.

Genesis 15:18 reads: “*On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates.’*” The next verse goes on to name the various peoples to whom the land belonged at the time.

The territory denoted by the space between these two rivers includes modern-day Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, half of Iraq, half of Egypt, parts of Turkey and Saudi Arabia, the mod-

ern state of Israel, as well as the occupied Palestinian territories.

A literal reading of the text that assumes that the descendants of Abram are only the Jewish people faces a problem here. Either God is not very good at keeping his promises, or God’s plan is for contemporary Israel ultimately to conquer all of these other countries and occupy their land. That would result in an Israel ruled by its 90% majority Arabs, or an Israel attempting to subjugate that 90% by force.

But the promise looks very different if we take seriously *all* of the offspring of Abraham. Genesis 15:4-5 has God taking Abram outside and telling him that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars of the heavens. Genesis 17:4, probably the pivotal text, has God saying to Abraham: “*This is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations.*” Many nations, a multitude of nations; many offspring, many kings—read Genesis 17 again and see the plural nouns here.

Close readers of Scripture will know that in fact Abraham did become the father of many nations. With Sarah he became the father of Isaac and the ancestor of all in his line, via Jacob and Esau. With Hagar he became the father of Ishmael and all in his line. And with the long-forgotten Keturah (Gen. 25:1) he became the father of Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. The Old Testament clearly positions Abraham as the father/ancestor of not only the Jewish people but of a vast number of other peoples, all scattered through the territories promised in Genesis 15. Abraham becomes the father of dozens of peoples, exactly as the Bible says! It is certainly true that the Old Testament primarily tells the story of the line of Isaac and therefore of what became the Jewish people, but that cannot cancel the significance of the promises to Abraham and the many peoples credited to him in Genesis.

The New Testament makes an important move here as well. In Romans 4, Paul says that by faith

non-Jews become Abraham's descendants too: "*The purpose was to make him the ancestor of all who believe*" (Rom 4:11). Europeans and Asians, Africans and Latin Americans, any who believe in Jesus enter the line of Abraham. This is why it is correct to say that (at least) Jews, Christians, and Muslims are all descendants of Abraham, all part of the Abrahamic family tree, some by birth, some by lineage, some by faith.

Christian Zionists state that God promises the land of Canaan specifically to the Jewish people. They cite Genesis 17:8: "*I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding.*" This interpretation would require restricting the "offspring" in question to Abraham's offspring through Sarah via Isaac and then on to Jacob and excluding Esau. But the promise to possess the land includes the offspring of Isaac, and the offspring of Isaac includes Esau, with his five Edomite sons and their offspring, as Genesis 36 states, and that includes multitudes of Canaanites, not only Jews. Christian Zionists assume that we know what Genesis 17 means territorially with the term "Canaan" and that it corresponds with the Zionist's version of the proper boundaries of the modern state of Israel.

Later in the Old Testament book of Joshua the twelve tribes of Israel "conquer" the "Promised Land." It is striking that the Scriptures acknowledge the ongoing presence of non-Hebrews in the land. Texts like this recur: "*But the people of Judah could not drive out the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so the Jebusites live with the people of Judah in Jerusalem to this day*" (Josh 15:63; compare Josh 13:13, 16:10, 17:12-13, 19:47).

Christians, even those who know their Bibles well, tend to think of the book of Joshua as containing the (bloody) fulfillment of the promise of the whole Land to Israel—the entire land is conquered by war, and then divided up among the tribes. A close reading shows that the Hebrew tribes

shared the land for centuries with other groups, and that even when tribes were assigned certain portions of land, they did not necessarily control every square inch of it. The point is obvious later when it comes to the challenge posed by the Philistines. It is not an overstatement to say that the Israelite/Hebrew/Jewish people never had exclusive possession of the Holy Land, regardless of whatever divine promises they or we believe that they received.

### **God's Condition to Do Justice**

Let us now assume that God indeed promised the offspring of Abraham and Sarah via Isaac and Jacob a portion of the land between the Nile and the Euphrates. Let us even assume that this promise was intended by God to extend even to our own

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day and beyond. And let us further assume that in the dark shadow of the Holocaust it was an act of divine grace for a substantial portion of the surviving remnant of the Jewish people to have a modern-day homeland in the contemporary state of Israel. These are substantial assumptions that could be challenged for many reasons, but let's accept them for the sake of this discussion.

We must next consider another strand of relevant biblical teaching; the prophets. Much later in Israel's history, long after Israel had established substantial political kingdoms, the prophets warned repeatedly that God's covenant with Israel has a dimension of conditionality to it. Whether preaching in the northern kingdom of Israel prior to the Assyrian

conquest, or the southern kingdom of Judah prior to the Babylonian conquest and exile, Israel's prophets repeatedly warned that *God's covenant promise of the land was conditional on her moral performance*. In particular, the prophets warned that, in keeping with the stipulations of the Law, Israel would be judged by her treatment of the aliens in the land, of the poor, the widows, and the orphans.

The 7th/6th century BC prophet Jeremiah sounded such themes consistently. We see it in Jeremiah 6:6-8: "*This city must be punished; it is filled with oppression... Violence and destruction resound in her... Take warning, O Jerusalem, or I will turn away from you and make your land desolate so no one can live in it.*" Jeremiah 7 is a hugely important passage, in which the prophet warns the complacent worshippers at the seemingly impregnable Temple that it and they would be ruined if they did not "*amend your ways and your doings, and let me dwell with you in this place*" (Jer 7:3). Jeremiah warned: "*Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely... then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are safe!'—only to go on doing all these abominations?*" (7:9-10). And the climax: "*I will cast you out of my sight, just as I cast out all your kinfolk, all the offspring of Ephraim*" (7:15).

Old Testament scholars have long recognized that a powerful, important, and dynamic tension exists in the OT between themes of a conditional and unconditional covenant between God and Israel. God has chosen Israel and made binding promises to her; and yet God has warned Israel that her persistent violation of her part of that covenant could trigger God's judgment, including war and exile. And anyone who reads the Old Testament knows that war and exile came to Israel, that it was prophesied in advance as divine judgment, and described in retrospect in the same way.

At a theological level, even if one accepts a) a divine promise of land to the Jewish people as recorded in Scripture, b) a belief that this prom-



ise extends even to this day, and c) the modern state of Israel is, in part, God's gracious fulfillment of this promise, one must also say d) the Bible, in the prophetic writings, also teaches that persistent injustice on the part of Israel has evoked, and still can bring, God's judgment, which can extend even to war and exile. Israel's remaining in the land depends on Israel's doing justice *now* to Palestinians and making peace with its Arab neighbors that surround Israel. Indeed, Jesus, as prophet and Savior, also prophesied that Jerusalem would be destroyed because they did not know the practices that make for peace (Lk 19:41-44). And Jerusalem was destroyed, 40 years later. A proper reading of Scripture causes us to fear that it could happen again. It causes us to want to do all we can to prevent that from happening. The actions of Christian Zionists actually make it more likely to happen!

### **The Holy Land is on the Precipice of War**

Any visitor to this tortured Holy Land who avoids a sanitized Christian tour and actually visits with Palestinians, actually stands in the shadow of the Separation Wall, actually sees what military occupation looks and feels like, cannot but tremble at these biblical words of warning.

We are not Old Testament prophets, nor do we pretend to see the future. But we have seen enough to claim that the occupation practices of the modern state of Israel are a direct violation of the most basic biblical moral principles. It is immoral to steal anything, including people's land, homes, and vineyards. It is immoral to dehumanize people, as occurs daily at Israeli checkpoints. It is immoral to choke people's freedom and deprive them of their dignity. And it is foolish, a violation of every lesson of history, to think that through sheer intimidation and superior military power a people can be subjugated indefinitely without rising up in resistance or attracting more powerful allies who will do so

on their behalf. God gave humanity a recognition of justice and a nearly endless capacity to resist injustice. It is wired into our nature, and the Palestinian people and the neighboring countries have this recognition of injustice just like everyone else does.

Someday someone or some nation inflamed with resentment at the seemingly eternal Israeli subjugation of the Palestinian people will "*make your land desolate so no one can live in it*" (Jeremiah 6:8). That sounds like a nuclear bomb. Have you heard of Mahmoud Ahmedinijad? While in the Middle East we heard from Palestinian leaders a current commitment to pursue their cause nonviolently. We applaud that commitment. We see it as an extraordinary one under the circumstances. We fear that it cannot last forever, for

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no people will allow themselves to be ground into the dust indefinitely. How do Christian Zionists work to end their suffering and bring justice to them?

We will leave it to God to sort out with the Jewish people of the modern state of Israel the very complex terms of His covenant with them. But we cannot remain silent about the vast array of American Christians who support the most repressive and unjust Israeli policies in the name of Holy Land and a Holy God. Those

Christians bear grave responsibility for aiding and abetting obvious sin, and if Israel once again sees war, we suggest that Christian Zionists will bear part of the responsibility. Christians are called to be peacemakers (Mt 5:9), but by offering uncritical support of current Israeli policies Christian Zionists actively inflame the Middle East *toward* war—in the name of God. This is appalling; it is intolerable; it must stop!

There is a better way, a more biblical way, to love Israel. Love Israel enough to oppose rather than support actions that violate God's clearly revealed moral will. At the same time love the Palestinians, some of whom are also our Christian sisters and brothers. When you visit Israel, visit with Palestinian Christians and ask them what they want us, their fellow Christians, to support. They surely need our love. And we are commanded to love them, too. ■

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### **ETHIXBYTES:**

*Three apples changed the world: Eve's, Newton's, and Steve Jobs!*

**anonymous caller to NPR**

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# Church and State in an Eastern Orthodox Context

By Otniel Bunaciu

Recently I was sitting in an open-air hotel rooftop restaurant in Istanbul, sipping strong Turkish coffee and enjoying the subtle taste of a rose-flavored Turkish delight. I looked out at the spectacular views of the Bosphorus Sea on one side and the Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque on the other side of our hotel. For a few moments, I was overwhelmed by the views and I began to reflect on the historical and theological tributaries that have flowed through this great city in the last two thousand years. This reflection was not totally spontaneous. The editor of this journal, my friend Pat Anderson, had given me the assignment of writing an essay about church and state relationships in my home country, Romania. So, as reflection precedes writing, I reflected.

This great city was once the capital of all Christendom after the emperor Constantine who established Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire. He called the city he founded the “second Rome”. Then, when Rome fell to the barbarian invaders, Constantinople grew in power, influence and grandeur.

One problem with reading history back from the comfort of a rooftop café is the danger of finding what one already assumes, what one involuntarily hopes for or, even more dangerously, what one wants to find. We are limited by our own understandings of history, our own prejudices, and the conclusions we have already made. But this is Byzantium and having been raised in a country with a similar culture, I read history that way normally, rarely disappointed by unexpected findings.

However, I also know from personal experiences in this culture that, for a Baptist believer, looking backward at history too often becomes a basis for exclusion, rejection or even persecution. Baptists in Romania were persecuted by another

Christian denomination (the Romanian Orthodox Church) before the Communists took to persecuting them. For years the Orthodox Church persecuted Baptists especially for the very fact that they “did not belong.” That is, it was assumed that Baptists were not attached to the roots of being Romanian. Ironically, the Patriarchate of Romania was established in 1925, several years after the Baptist Union of Romania was. Go figure.

It is here, however, in Byzantium that the idea of a “symphony” between Church and State was born and embodied in politics, society and cul-

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ture. This complex relationship is not the same as the “two swords” idea developed in the West where Church and State were at times in competition for which institution should rule the world. It was assumed that the Church was supposed to lead the spiritual realm and the Emperor the temporal one. In Byzantium, the two powers were supposed to “sing together” from the same music sheet. This arrangement seemed to work well as long as the two singers sang in harmony.

After its tragic fall to the expanding Turkish ambitions, the demise of what was called “the empire of the romans” took its course. The envious Western powers diverted some of the crusades to try and control Constantinople. These Western powers had played a

role in weakening the Byzantines with the hope that they might be able to take it under their control. Although, after the fall of the second Rome, all was lost for Christendom in that part of the world, the Empire had created such a successful social and political paradigm that even the infidel conquerors decided to try and maintain parts of it.

For a number of years, Christian and Jewish professionals, administrators, and businessmen were retained by the Sultan and encouraged to maintain the old imperial ways under the new rulers. The growing Turkish Empire had adopted many of the practices of the Byzantines which subsequently became part of their culture. Nicolae Iorga, a Romanian historian, proposed in an essay before the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that the idea of Byzantium as a world with a specific social, political, cultural and artistic aspiration was perpetuated even after its fall (*Bizantî după Bizantî - Byzantium after Byzantium*). This effort took place in the lands influenced by the Byzantine Empire of which Romania was one. The name itself points to that aspiration.

One might ask what this has to do with Eastern Europe today and especially with a Baptist understanding of the relationship between church and state in countries where Orthodoxy is the dominant Christian religion (and more specifically with Romania). If Iorga was right, in some measure it would be fair to say that in trying to understand the relationship between church and state one should look back also at the Byzantine heritage which was not entirely erased but taken on and included in new ways of cultural, social and political existence.

Baptists in Romania live in a country which is shaped by its Orthodox roots and by the social and political expectations these generate. For example, although the association of nation

and church (philetism) is officially condemned in Orthodox theology, in fact, in Romania, someone who is not Orthodox does not meet an established cultural and social expectation. Such a person finds himself or herself on the fringe of a society unwilling to accept such non-Romanian or “foreign” values. Being Orthodox is still largely thought of as being equivalent to being Romanian. However, by being Orthodox it is not necessarily understood that one lives a committed Christian life, but rather that one belongs to a Church in which he or she was baptized as an infant.

This entrenched expectation that one must be an Orthodox to be a Romanian has caused difficulties for Baptists. Baptists were persecuted long before Communism because they were seen as foreign implants in a society where the national identity was closely linked to the Orthodox Church. Today’s Romania is a relatively new country, transformed by the overthrow of the dictator Ceausescu and the fall of the Soviet Union. Yet one region of Romania, Transylvania, was different in many ways as it had a history of a multicultural and multi-denominational existence even during the time of Communism and the dominance of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

One of the first laws (*The Patent of Toleration known as the Edict of Torda* issued in 1568) was followed whereby some religious tolerance was granted, although the law was not complete and it did not seem to change things that much. Unfortunately, even in Transylvania, this generous approach to multi-denominationalism tended to exist in practice along ethnic lines. For example, the Orthodox Romanians, Jews and Muslims were only tolerated. The other denominations received some guaranteed rights, but Lutherans tended to be German while the Catholic, Reformed and Unitarians were Hungarian.

One of the questions for Baptist identity in this part of the world today is whether the idea of a separation of church and state can be lived out in

a culture where church-state separation does not exist in the same way as in the Western countries. How can Baptists be counter-cultural in Romania today?

Because of our long association with Baptists in the West and especially with the Southern Baptists in the United States, the Romanian Baptists tend to look for models and inspiration there. In the United States, church and state separation seems to be accepted, at least in theory and law. But in Romania, the law recognizes only the *autonomy* and *freedom* of the churches.

In practice, from a Romanian or Eastern perspective, there seem to be many examples where the separation of church and state in the United States appears to be worked out in what looks like very partisan ways.

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*It would have been unimaginable for a church in Romania to display a national flag.*

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For example, some church groups in the United States appear to associate themselves with certain issues that become political triggers, and sometimes lead churches to a direct party-based political involvement.

I vividly remember my surprise when I first visited a Baptist church in the United States and saw the national flag displayed at the front of the church. For one having been raised in a Communist country, it would have been unimaginable for a church in Romania to display a national flag which included the symbols of Communism.

I remember wondering how does one understand the claim that “*our citizenship is in heaven*” from the perspective of such a close association of Baptists or Christians with a national identity. This practice is only to the advantage of the majority but against the position of any minority. Since

in our country Baptists are a minority, such an association always worked against Baptists who were seen as aliens or as foreign implants in our culture.

I also often wondered how the separation of church and state is to be understood when some churches are positioning themselves so close to the political playing field. My concern is that Baptists are in danger of losing their options for prophetic political involvement which is perhaps closer to what the Scriptures demand of believers.

In recent years, after the fall of Communism, the issue of the separation of church and state has become of greater interest in Romania largely because the new laws offer not only religious freedom, but also the possibility for churches to receive funding for their projects and activities from the national budget. The Romanian Baptist Union stated in their bylaws that they will not accept money for salaries for the people they employed in churches, a decision which was made only by the Baptists and the Seventh Day Adventists. All the other recognized denominations decided to accept money from the government for the salaries of pastors and other employees.

The most recent discussion in the Baptist Union of Romania was centered around the issue of whether we Baptists should receive government assistance only for social and educational programs (something that was accepted from the beginning by almost everybody), or whether we should also accept funding for building projects. Those who wanted to accept the funds argued that since this was an allocation from the national budget to which Baptist believers contribute as tax payers, this is in fact a *right* and not a benefit. Those who did not want to accept the funds argued that the government will exert more financial control when the money is accepted. In short, if you take the money you are subject to governmental control or interference.

That argument was countered when



the first group said that through more than 50 years of Communism the government did not offer *any* financial support to the churches and yet it *totally* controlled the churches anyway, even their finances! After a vote in the Baptist Union Council the first opinion won; that those churches willing to accept government money for building projects may do so.

But an uneasiness remains between people supporting the two views. The ruling was in effect to leave it to the local churches to decide whether or not they want to accept government funds when available. The remaining uneasiness also points to the difficulty that Romanian Baptists seem to have in deciding what the autonomy of the local church should look like.

As any other Baptist believers, the Romanian Baptists are trying to live out their witness in relationship to a changing world. Coming out of many years of imposed isolation during the Communist regime, they now face the dilemma of how to live in times of freedom. A fresh understanding of engaging the world based on the teaching of the Scriptures calls us to be witnesses by being both a light of hope for the darkness and taste-giving salt at the same time.

After leaving my Turkish rooftop café, I am continuing this reflection in Herrnhut, Germany. The rolling hills surrounding the village and the extensive agricultural fields that create the horizon of the small “Brudern Gemeinde” are peaceful and tranquil, a natural setting for a community of faith not interested in ruling the world, but in living Christ’s command to become His followers. Hundreds of years ago, a group of persecuted Bohemian Brethren found refuge on the lands of Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf after Jan Hus was executed. They fled a world which was persecuting them for their faith and decided to create their own community. The Herrnhuters were one of the several similar movements which flourished in Western Europe at the time of the Reformation. Anabaptists were later also counted among such

radical groups. They proposed a different model of church and state relationship – total separation -- which was such a challenge for that world that the resulting persecution unleashed against them was fierce and devastating.

Baptists seem to have adopted a more moderate approach by proposing not isolation from the world, but engagement based on freedom of expression. This is expressed as a desire for religious freedom. Baptists want freedom from persecution but also freedom to preach the Gospel and to contribute with their witness to the life of the communities where they belong. As our world is changing, new challenges emerge beyond that of Baptists living in an Orthodox country. Emigration led to a multi-culturalism which was not previously experienced, especially

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in the growing urban hubs. This in turn has led to the challenge of having different cultures and religions living alongside each other. Today, we have Muslims, Mormons, and others of greatly diverse beliefs, while even within the Christian denominations we have increased diversity with Seventh Day Adventists as well as ethnically-based churches. The first Chinese Baptist Church was opened in Bucharest several years ago, for instance.

The apparent threat that this brings to the exclusive claims of the Gospel can be considered as a danger or it can be turned into an opportunity

to witness cross-culturally even from our own local context. The creativity and commitment that such an effort demands are the price which those who want to be part of shaping this new world need to be willing to pay.

The story of Romeo and Juliet may symbolically express the dilemma of living as a Baptist in an Orthodox Country. Romeo could have been a Byzantine. His name Romaios betrays that. He wanted to bridge the gap and the differences between his world and that of his Juliet in order to create a common future with the western girl that he loved. Their effort ended up in tragedy in spite of their desire and commitment.

As Romanian Baptists continue to seek and find inspiration for their context by looking to their western brethren they should remain mindful that part of their identity is shaped by the Byzantine past and current Orthodox culture of their country. The Gospel has the power to go beyond culture and is capable of reshaping it. Therefore, this should not be seen as a disadvantage or a discouragement, but as an opportunity for Baptists in Romania to engage creatively and contribute to both worlds from their own walk with God as Baptist believers and disciples of Jesus Christ. ■

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# Hate-Speech as Scapegoating and as the Enactment of Prejudice-Laced Ideologies

By Peter Zvagulis

In April 1994, the commander of UNAMIR forces in Rwanda, Canadian General Romeo Dallaire, sent an urgent fax to the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York, requesting permission for military intervention. He exposed the violent plans of the Hutu extremist elite and warned his superior Kofi Anan that, unless immediate actions were taken, a massacre of horrifying dimensions was unavoidable. Permission was denied. It was five days before the outset of the genocide, which in three months claimed close to one million lives, causing a Christian missionary witnessing the events to exclaim: "There are no devils left in hell, they are all in Rwanda!"<sup>1</sup>

At the very same time the Bosnian war was raging in Europe. The world media were getting accustomed to the dreadful term *ethnic cleansing*. What Rwanda and Bosnia have in common is that in each of them the mass violence was preceded by organized and sustained campaigns of hate-speech against the *other* group. Both happened on a large nation-wide scale. The real content of the hate speech was scapegoating, blaming the other group for the problems plaguing the society and promoting the illusion that everything would be great again if the that group could be eliminated. The content of hate speech is always scapegoating in the form of words, hateful words. The implicit logic of the hate-speech can be summarized in a short sentence aimed at the perceived enemy: "The world would be a much better place without you!" It is a very destructive logic -- a wish to annihilate the other.

In 1994, when all this was happening, I was working as a journalist in Munich and covering international stories. The incoming reports about

mass atrocities in Rwanda and Bosnia made me cry out loud at my news desk. I knew people from both countries and for a while I could not believe that this was really happening. The endless stream of gruesome reports and the feeling of helplessness even made me consider quitting journalism. Instead I grew in the belief that, with my stories reaching many people, I had a responsibility to contribute to preventing such collective madness from recurring. My idealistic hope was that telling the story alone

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would stop people from participating in corporately organized violence. I soon realized that it is more complicated than that, and that there is a powerful evil process which needs to be unveiled and exposed.

Today, as a journalism professor I have tried to instill in my students the destructive aspects of hate speech. When those students return to their home countries they are better equipped to recognize the harmful effects of hate speech, but they feel helpless in addressing the issue. I have received emails from some of my international students, from Bosnia to Belarus to Turkmenistan, saying that the prevalence of hate speech can

silence the voices of reason, even their own.

We know that in personal relations words can both comfort and hurt us. On a corporate large-scale level, words have an even greater impact on people's lives. Words carry a message that can help the society to cooperate, be inclusive, loving and fair or they can be divisive, and push the society toward unfairness, self-centeredness and violence. Media may contribute to diversity of opinions in the sense that no one is left voiceless, or it can work as a coercive force imposing one dominant message and silencing the dissenting voices.

The latter is true in the case of hate speech as it represents a perspective which is not interested in the opinion of others and, if sustained for a prolonged period of time, develops into a closed ideological system which tends to subvert the meaning of good and evil. When society's character is subverted and becomes vicious and evil, law-obeying citizens are coerced into accepting evil as good and some good deeds as evil. The Weimar Republic of the 1920s and 1930s, with the subsequent rise of Nazis to power, is a classic and extreme example of such a development. Rwanda of 1994 is another one.

I am writing from a European perspective where ethnic tensions and hate-speech associated with it are still a very relevant issue. For instance Brussels, the capital city of the European Union, although peaceful and civil, is the scene of bitter rivalry for ethno-linguistic dominance between the Flames and Walloons. The reader however may wonder: Does hate speech have any relevance within the American context? The attitude behind hate speech and its incompatibility with moral character

and Christian ethics make it relevant.

As humans, we know that we can get angry. As Christians, we know that what we do with our anger is important. Do we reconcile with our sister/brother as commanded in Matthew 5:24? Or do we allow the anger to develop into hatred, disregarding the warning in Matthew 5:22? It is all about relationships. It is about relating toward others either in a loving and respectful manner or allowing hatred and arrogance to subvert one's character. If we make such a mistake as individuals, we are likely to reconsider our attitude, repent and ask for forgiveness. But what can we do if this happens on a large-scale corporate level where our personal awareness of a nation-wide *faux pas* is not sufficient? Unfortunately, hate-speech is always a corporate scapegoating when it is delivered to an audience of some size. If it becomes a permanent corporate practice, it may develop into prejudice-laced ideology as has happened in the extreme examples cited above.

Scapegoating reflects a selfish attitude, disregard for others and a refusal to sincerely contribute to solving the problem. When this happens on a large scale, it may take the form of corporate greed, financial and political irresponsibility, collapse of the banking system and international financial crisis. It all involves scapegoating and it does affect our lives.

Scapegoating, in its popular understanding, is a form of blaming someone else for one's own shortcomings or for one's own feeling of frustrations. Instead of confronting one's own problem honestly, the scapegoat is targeted, the subject engages in an illusion of fixing the problem. This illusory pseudo-cure is a well-known phenomenon in social psychology and many influential authors such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Erich Fromm, Elias Canetti, Gordon Allport, and René Girard have discussed various aspects of it from very different perspectives. However, all of them have pointed to the fact that scapegoating is caused by a strong increase of collective frustration. This situation also invites manip-

ulation and attracts opportunistic would-be leaders.

When frustration, because of accumulating economic, political, and other problems happens on a nationwide scale and lasts for a prolonged period of time, it develops into social tension and may become psychologically intolerable, starting to negatively affect human relationships on various levels. It becomes what Hobbes described as "war of all against all." The corporate identity becomes weaker. The feeling of an approaching crisis quickly moves toward a widespread panic affecting people's behavior in the workplace, the family, and the marketplace.

When problems are large-scale, people do not look for solutions, as solutions seem beyond their reach; they look for who they can blame.

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*Instead of confronting  
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Opportunistic politicians can then pose as competent leaders and as "saviors" promising a quick fix. For those, the speediest pseudo-solution is scapegoating -- i.e. finding someone to blame for the complex set of problems. The easiest way to manipulate large groups of people is exaggerate and abuse popular stereotypes about some group of people. Through use of hate speech, those stereotypes become collective prejudice the target of which becomes the enemy. Politicians with extremist leanings often rely on this method to rally support and to quickly gain power.

The problems with scapegoating are three-fold. First, scapegoating is illusion and provides people with false information. It is a lie. It prevents people from addressing the real problem, thus making the situation worse. Second, scapegoating establishes a vicious pattern of social

regulation and corrupts the corporate character. Society allows its vision and its perception of reality to be distorted. Misinterpretation of reality leads to erroneous judgment and incompetent decisions which, in turn, lead to conflict with others. Scapegoating quickly becomes addictive to society. Under the influence of a vicious and misguided practice of scapegoating, society's character becomes self-centered and closed to other perspectives, resulting in an aggressive reaction toward anything that disturbs its illusory picture of the world.

Finally and most importantly, scapegoating has a moral aspect, especially from the point of view of Christian ethics. Hate speech, as distortion of reality and a lie, is also false testimony. When scapegoating leads to extreme self-centeredness society views others as less valuable and inferior, thus contradicting God's intent of creating all humans in His image (Genesis 1:26). This attitude negates God's love commandments and diminishes the prophetic role of the believer. If we would allow moral dualism to govern our lives, it would mean disregarding Jesus' moral teaching in Matthew 6:24 saying that no one can serve two masters. Looking for guidance in this difficult situation, we realize that we have to make a choice between the good and evil and ask along with John Howard Yoder: "If not Jesus, then what?"<sup>2</sup>

But can we really do anything about hate speech as a large-scale scapegoating process with its impact far beyond our individual reach? I think we can. Not as lone individuals but as a community of peacemakers inspired by Jesus' moral teachings we can contribute to building a society which does not accept hate speech as part of public discourse and does not support politicians who use scapegoating for their power goals. Hate speech, be it a single false statement or part of an elaborate ideological system, is a lie and as such can be exposed and demystified.

The dynamics of hate speech, scapegoating and manipulation of collective emotions through media, are more complex than is possible to discuss in



one article. However, there are three main criteria by which even implicit forms of hate speech and subtle forms of manipulation can be detected and exposed. They are dehumanization, demonization, and attempts to create siege mentality.

Hate speech is always an affront to the human dignity of the scapegoat group because it attempts to dehumanize the image of its victim, portraying the members of the scapegoated group as less human or less civilized than the main group. Hate speech focuses on the negative characteristics of the scapegoat group, exaggerating them and portraying the victim as the cause of own frustration, are the main symptoms of demonization. Allegations against “them” and constantly thinking of how “they” harm and dominate us and try to spoil “our” good image abroad, conspiring with “accomplices” in our midst (usually meaning the defenders of human dignity and equality of rights) would signal attempts to manipulate public opinion and to create a siege mentality. This indicates a desire to resort to scapegoating instead of solving problems and engaging in dialogue.

While there are real threats in the world -- terrorism, economic injustice, violence, hunger, racism, war, organized crime to name a few -- which need to be addressed in a coordinated and competent way, using

those threats as a pretext to develop scapegoating-based ideologies and policies cannot be regarded as a legitimate and honest way of relating to the world and to ourselves. The character of the society in which we live matters as it gives moral context to our collective and individual actions. The best way for society to maintain a healthy corporate character is to look in a mir-

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*Hate speech, be it a single false statement or part of an elaborate ideological system, is a lie and as such can be exposed and demystified.*

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ror which, on a nation-wide scale is the function of media. Hate speech as scapegoating and as promoter of prejudice stands in the way and obfuscates the clear vision.

Hate speech is not all-powerful and can be successfully countered. The chances for extremist leaders (or would-be leaders) to manipulate the public mind appear only when the society fails to maintain a healthy civic climate. It happens when hate speech has not been detected for an extended period of time, is not confronted by

strong moral voices, and is accepted by society as a normal part of public discourse. Detecting it and publicly exposing the abuse and the motivation behind it removes a lot of its mystical emotional appeal.

I look at the world with hope as I see many Christians who are peacemakers. Christians who are aware of the evil of hate speech and know how to detect it can help the society look into the mirror to see its true corporate face. Individually, perhaps we can only be lone dissenters, but as a community we can become a prophetic conscience of our societies – helping the societies in which we live develop character. We can help end the illusion and herald the beginning of the march in the right direction, the spread of the Kingdom of God into the hearts of people. The beginning may not be easy, especially in contexts that experience a preponderance of hate speech, but we are encouraged to do so by Jesus’ own words in Matthew 5:9: “Blessed are the peacemakers.” ■

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<sup>1</sup>Gibbs, Nancy, “Why? The Killing Fields of Rwanda,” *Time* (May 16, 1994).

<sup>2</sup>Yoder, John H., *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Carlisle, UK, The Paternoster Press, 1972), 19.





# Our Dark Night of the Soul

By Lisa Sharon Harper

They say at some point in their lives great leaders experience a “dark night of the soul,” or a period in life when our feet, knees, and face scrape and stick to the proverbial bottom. It is a time when even one’s soul feels forsaken. Ultimately, the dark night is not about the suffering that is inflicted from outside oneself, even though that could trigger it. It is about the existential suffering rooted from within. St. John of the Cross, the 16th century Carmelite priest, described it as a confrontation, or a healing and process of purification of what lies within on the journey toward union with God.

“Whenever you face trials of any kind,” explains the apostle James, “consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.” (James 1:2-4)

Evangelical leadership guru, Dr. J. Robert Clinton, says the dark night is a key experience God initiates in the lives of leaders for the building of faith and strength of character. Many have waxed poetic about whether President Obama has experienced his own dark night. Others have wondered if perhaps the events of the last two years, might be moving his soul toward the blessed struggle. But these reflections are not about our president: They are about us -- they are about our nation.

We are a nation woven together by eclectic threads of common faith in the truth that all people are created equal. Again and again, our darkest hours have come when elements within our own national body have tested this faith. They espoused and lived according to one basic lie: People are not equal; some are inherently worth more than others. In America’s darkest hours, social movements rose up

and called us to face down the lies and embrace God’s truth.

Abolitionists called Americans to understand that no matter how dependent our economy is on the free labor of other human beings, slaves are human beings -- walking images of God in our midst -- and they should be free.

Suffragists called us to see that the world would not end if the traditional order of society were reformed to acknowledge women’s spiritual need for, and equal right to, self-sovereignty -- a right most powerfully demonstrated in the right to vote.

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*In America’s darkest hours, social movements rose up and called us to face down the lies and embrace God’s truth.*

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Labor unionists reminded us of the spiritual truth that profits are not more important than people. Working people to the bone over 12-hour days, for pennies on the dollar, under oppressive work conditions, exploits the image of God in our midst. In fact, work was given to us in the Garden of Eden (paradise). It should bless humanity -- not curse it.

And, finally, civil rights workers called America back to the root of the root: Some of us are not more valuable than others. We are all made in the image of God and, as such we are all worthy of equal protection under the law.

All of these American movements were spearheaded by people of faith. Their faith in God -- in the truth of scripture, and in the example of Jesus’ life -- led them to do as Nehemiah

did; to lament the lies distorting our national body, to take responsibility for our complicity in them, and to forsake them.

What is the lie today? How’s this? “Some people have to be sacrificed on the altar of economic health.” Sounds reasonable, huh? In the midst of dire times, dire measures must be taken to get our economic health back on track. Yes, this does sound reasonable, but it’s a lie.

Dire times do warrant dire measures; but here’s the trillion dollar question: Will we cut, cap, and balance our investment in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, which will make up more than 50 percent of our nation’s deficit by the year 2019? Or, will we cut food stamps from the hands of the vulnerable, cap protections against toxins in our water supplies, and allow imbalance that favors the super-rich to go unchecked in our tax structure?

I believe God is leading our generation into its own dark night. We have a choice. We can pretend all is well, and continue to look lies in the face and call them truth. Or we can do as Nehemiah did; lament the lie, and then forsake it. ■

*Lisa Sharon Harper is director of mobilizing at Sojourners and author of Evangelical Does Not Equal Republican...or Democrat. Source: Sojourners 08.11.11 SojoMail@sojo.net*

# Men Behaving Badly

By Jim Wallis

It's a consistent storyline in the media, involving powerful men in politics, sports, business, and religion: Men behave with utter disregard for the dignity and humanity of women -- using and abusing them at will, and acting as if they believe that they are entitled to do so. These men seem to think that the ordinary rules of decent behavior do not apply to them. We have a never-ending cavalcade of disgusting stories about men cheating on their wives and abandoning old wives for new ones; engaging in serial philandering as a way of life; sexually harassing and assaulting women; and even committing rape. But when all is said and done, the perpetrators are still playing basketball, football, and golf; they are still holding or running for political office; and they are still at the helm of the institutions of the economy and even the church.

Arnold Schwarzenegger, Donald Trump, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the (now former) chief of the International Monetary Fund, John Edwards, and Anthony Weiner have all been in the media lately for sins and crimes past, present, and accused. The stories have recently come out about a long-time affair Schwarzenegger had with a member of his house staff, Trump's long and blatant history of sexism, John Edward's indictment for campaign finance law violations in covering up an affair, Anthony Weiner's tweeting lewd photos of himself, and, most gravely serious of all, Strauss-Kahn's alleged sexual assault against a hotel maid.

As the secret stories are revealed, the media exhibits great interest and perverse excitement. The pain and suffering of the women involved, and the invisible hurt of the children, are brushed aside. Instead, the women are often subtly, and sometimes directly, blamed. And sometimes, in all-male circles, there is a wink and a nod, and,

most disgustingly, even a little envy of the powerful men who get to break all the rules when it comes to women. The primary outcry is from other women who, in the name of equality and dignity, lament this continual pattern of abuse.

What often has been missing from this too-often repeated narrative is the condemnation of these behaviors and attitudes by other men -- especially men who are in positions of power, authority, and influence. While the primary blame lies with the perpetrators, we should look next at the good men who say nothing. It's time for good men to hold accountable those who abuse women. Those who abuse, assault, and rape are not real men. They distort and destroy any sense of healthy manhood. It's time to tell our sons that they must never act like these abusers and perpetrators, and to make sure to raise our own sons to love, respect, and be faithful to women.

While many have provided ugly self-caricatures of the moral corruption of men in power, Donald Trump sums it up well. For example, the "Trump Rule," according to a book by a Miss USA pageant contestant, required that all contestants parade in front of Trump, the co-owner of the pageant, so that he could separate out those he found attractive. Trump once said this about his own daughter, Ivanka: "She does have a very nice figure ... if [she] weren't my daughter, perhaps I'd be dating her." And as if to demonstrate how oblivious to criticism (and good taste) he really is, Trump once told *Esquire* magazine, "You know, it doesn't really matter what [the media] write as long as you've got a young and beautiful piece of [expletive]."

For me, men who treat women this way serve only one useful function: They serve as anti-role models for my two sons. They exemplify what I hope my boys will never become. So here is

my little contribution to condemning men who need to be condemned for behaving badly: When TV shows with these unrepentant men come on, we will change the channel. When movies come out with them on the big screen, we will stay home. When sports games are played with them as stars, we won't be buying tickets. When another media story erupts because of more bad behavior, my boys will be told that men who abuse women are not real men. They might still have money and power, but their abuse of women diminishes their humanity.

Women are already speaking out, and now it's time for more men to also say that this bad behavior is not acceptable. More men must condemn men who treat women badly, not only as immoral and sometimes criminal, but also as the worst examples of what and who we are supposed to be. These men have given their humanity over to their animal impulses. I hope all of these recent revelations are lessons to politicians everywhere: Your sin will find you out.

We should publicly point out their bad and unacceptable behavior and punish their acts as an example to others. We need to establish as a firm principle: The abuse of women by men will not be tolerated. And the voices of more men need to join the chorus to make that perfectly clear. ■

*Jim Wallis is editor-in-chief of Sojourners where this essay was first published in August 2011, and this essay is published with permission.*

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# He Ate the Chocolate: A Brief Reflection on Forgiveness and Repentance

Tee S. Gatewood, III

Louis Zamperini, along with his B-24 pilot Phil and tail gunner Mac, were shot down over the Pacific Ocean during World War II. The three men managed to survive the crash and get into the life raft. The survival rations in the raft included several thick Ration-D chocolate bars along with a few pints of water. On the first night adrift, while his fellow survivors slept, Mac, the tail gunner, ate the chocolate, all of it. Of course, in the morning when the terrible selfish act was discovered, Louie and Phil were furious. It would be 46 days before the raft was discovered adrift in the Pacific by Japanese sailors.

For weeks, Mac was overcome with guilt and self-hate. He had eaten the chocolate, but it ended up eating him up. Imagine being confined to a small life raft in the middle of the ocean with the two persons you had sinned so egregiously against, with no place to escape, no way to avoid the constant knowledge of your terrible act against the men in the raft with you. At first, he avoided the topic. Then he quit talking. The guilt was so intense that Mac ended up dying of despair and self-disgust. Because he was not forgiven, he simply could not face Louie and Phil, or the endless ocean, or himself.

Neither Louis nor Phil, the son of a Methodist pastor, extended to Mac the grace that would free him to confess and live. Even after the other two tried to encourage Mac to hold on, he could not. Mac did not know what to do with his guilt. He could not wish it away nor could he rationalize his actions, or explain the problem away. More pointedly, Phil and Louie did not take the initiative of grace and forgive Mac.

In their failure to move beyond resentment we see the opposite of what God does for us. In Christ, God

comes to the broken and guilty world to forgive so that repentance might follow.

For Christians there are radical ethical consequences to being forgiven. We are called to turn the other cheek, bear unjust suffering in the way of Jesus, bless instead of curse, bear each other's burdens, and go the extra mile. There are also radical ethical and existential consequences when we fail to extend the grace that would free others to repent and live, when we fail to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.

The story does not end there on the life raft. The rest of Louis Zamperini's story is told in the best-selling book, *Unbroken*, written by Laura Hillenbrand. It is the biographical tale of this Olympian and World War II hero. After surviving for weeks as a castaway in the Pacific Ocean, Zamperini endured years of imprisonment and torture at the hands of the Japanese. But, in the end, the broken hero returns to Japan to forgive his enemies.

Writing to his former torturer, Zamperini explained his return in this way, "Under your discipline, my rights, not only as a prisoner of war but also as a human being, were stripped from me. It was a struggle to maintain enough dignity and hope to live until the war's end. The post-war nightmares caused my life to crumble, but thanks to a confrontation with God through the evangelist Billy Graham, I committed my life to Christ. Love replaces the hate I had for you. Christ said, 'Forgive your enemies and pray for them.'"

Within this gospel-shaped narrative is an anti-gospel story that highlights the power of forgiveness. This anti-gospel story unfolded when Mac sinned and was neither forgiven nor offered grace.

The gospel story is found in the life-changing grace experienced by Louis who learned to offer grace and forgiveness. I cannot help but think of this story each time I pray the Lord's prayer, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

*Tee Gatewood, Ph.D. is pastor of Arbordale Presbyterian Church in Banner Elk, NC*

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## ETHIXBYTES:

*A deficit is what you have when you do not have as much as you had when you had nothing.*

**Gerald Lieberman**

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*I will accept that corporations are people when Texas executes one.*

**Anonymous**

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*"We cannot separate action for justice from the proclamation of the Word of God."*

**Fr. Pedro Arrupe SJ**

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# One Flesh, One Purpose, One Rank

by Mimi Haddad

Summer is the season of weddings. Many of us have had the pleasure of celebrating with family and friends as they join their lives together. Though we have all enjoyed countless weddings over the years, there always seems to be that one moment in the ceremony where we are hit by the immensity of the occasion—when the two become one flesh! As bride and groom are joined as one, before God and their community, we experience an ecstasy we've encountered before—in the early chapters of Genesis.

Standing amid the countless wonders of Eden, Adam's aloneness is the only "not good" in a perfect world. Among the many astonishing animals, Adam cannot find a suitable companion. What is missing? Adam needs a creature like himself, made of his substance—a woman. Notice he recognizes her immediately. *"At last! This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh"* (Gen. 2:23). Adam declares their shared origins with these words, "I will call you woman because you came from my body."

Scripture emphasizes not their differences, but their likeness to each other! They share a metaphysical substance because they are both created in God's image. They also share a physical being, because Eve comes from Adam's body. In this oneness, they are then given a common commission—to exercise authority together in caring for and being fruitful in the world (Gen. 1:27-31). Their shared ontology (being) reveals a shared teleology (purpose). Rank, authority, and hierarchy are unnecessary for those who share the same substance and purpose.

Notice that the apostle Paul makes a similar point when addressing ministry within the body of Christ. Those who share in a spiritual rebirth are inaugurated as equal members of Christ's body—the church. Through Christ, God is building a New Covenant peo-

ple, with Jesus as head, and you and me as joint heirs. Slaves, Gentiles, and women serve equally with free people, Jews, and men in the purposes for which God has called and gifted them, because they too are born of the same Spirit. Rank, authority, and hierarchy are unnecessary among those born of the same substance—the Spirit.

Likewise, in his teaching on marriage, Paul calls upon husbands to love their wives as they love their own bodies. They share the same substance! Ten times Paul asks husbands to love their wives, encouraging the tender empathy distinctive of a one-flesh relation-

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*Those who share in a spiritual rebirth are inaugurated as equal members of Christ's body—the church.*

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ship. Just as all Christians submit to one another (Eph. 5:21) because they are born of the same Spirit, husbands and wives submit to one another as one flesh. Husbands are to nurture and love their wives, because her body is his, and his body is hers (a point Paul also stresses in 1 Cor. 7:3-7).

Oneness of substance leads naturally to mutuality, love, and a shared purpose, underscored in the early chapters of Genesis and in Paul's teachings on redeemed relationships among Christians. While some wish to ascribe authority and rule to male headship in marriage, to do so misses Paul's point, beginning with Ephesians 5:21. Just as Christ is head of the church, husbands also have an opportunity to imitate Christ, who came not to rule, but to serve, and lay down his life in his love for others.

In Christ, husbands now exult with Adam, *"This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh!"* Authority, rank, and hierarchy are not only unnecessary among those who are born of the Spirit, but they are also inconsistent with the very nature of a one-flesh union. ■

*Mimi Haddad is the president of Christians for Biblical Equality. This is an excerpt of an article of the same title that appeared in the most recent issue of CBE's Mutuality magazine and is published with permission.*

## ETHIXBYTE:

*"I think that Christianity has two emphases. One is a social emphasis to impart the values of the kingdom of God in society - to relieve the sufferings of the poor, to stand up for the oppressed, to be a voice for those who have no voice. The other emphasis is to bring people into a personal, transforming relationship with Christ, where they feel the joy and the love of God in their lives."*

**Tony Campolo**



# To Pray or Not to Pray? Civil Religion and the 9/11 Memorial Service

by Rick Elgendy

Recently, as the nation marked the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the September 11 attacks, our collective media gaze focused on lower Manhattan, where the memorial service and dedication led by Mayor Michael Bloomberg had already provoked controversy. Though the focal point of these events was undoubtedly—and rightfully—on remembering those lost, that controversy was a revealing glimpse of contemporary American religion.

Bloomberg, concerned to avoid religious entanglements in a government observance, had not invited any clergy to participate; nor had he included prayer in the schedule of the service. This move, predictably, provoked protest from religious conservatives. Chief among these: Jay Sekulow, Chief Counsel for the American Center for Law and Justice, who entreated Bloomberg to reverse his decision, since “invocations are the quintessential American form of solemnizing events.” Sekulow, whose organization advocates for an understanding of religious liberty wherein religion dwells comfortably in the public square, insisted that his argument had little to do with either partisanship or proselytizing. Instead, worried that “[t]o exclude prayer from any events remembering 9/11 only serves to diminish the purpose of the event,” he engaged in an all-out public relations campaign, including a letter-writing drive, a talk-radio tour, and a debate with David Silverman, president of American Atheists. Bloomberg did not relent, but that was not the end of the story.

The service itself featured, in addition to Bloomberg and the reading of the names of the victims, readings from President Obama, George W. Bush, and Rudy Giuliani. President Obama read Psalm 46 in its entirety. President Bush quoted a letter from

Abraham Lincoln, which closed with its own prayer. Giuliani, hardly a darling of religious conservatives, read the well-known opening of Ecclesiastes 3 after a preamble in which he claimed that “[t]he perspective that we need, and have needed...are best expressed by the words of God,” and followed his reading with a benediction: “God bless every soul that we lost. God bless the family members who have to endure that loss, and God guide us to our reunion in Heaven, and God bless the United States of America.” It turned out that no clergy were necessary: The politicians, whether spontaneously or in response to political pressure, brought religion into the service on their own.

Sekulow’s telling response came on Monday’s edition of his daily radio program, aimed at political advocacy. After assuring his listeners that he continues to disagree with most of President Obama’s policy agenda, he gave Obama credit for reading scripture: “[W]hether in his heart of hearts he believes it or not, he said it, and that’s important,” Sekulow responded to one caller. His co-host (and son) Jordan Sekulow then opined, “They’re not theologians, they’re not pastors, [but they were trying to] make the event solemn, and that’s what we do in America. Americans pray at memorial services. We pray in bad times; we pray in good times. We pray when we remember those we lost, and events like this.”

With the exception of the occasion, this exchange might be so commonplace as to go without comment from most corners. But the banality only obscures the *strangeness* of it all: that Christians who take themselves to be highly traditional, faithful, religious believers, unapologetic followers of Jesus Christ, yearn to hear a politician read a Psalm to them in public—

whether earnestly or not!—and shift their use of “we” between reference to “Christians” and to “Americans,” without a thought about the difference. These are the defining features of American “civil religion”: a “God” stripped of most visible, traditional particulars, inserted into a new set of symbols—the flag, the government, a blessing of an American nation—and guaranteeing the basic rightness of the American cause, whatever that may be. This “God” is called upon to solemnize public events by invoking the felt memory of particular religious traditions with all its connotations of “divinity,” but is shorn of any particularity except the American kind. That many evangelicals have adopted the promotion of civil religion as a Christian calling is one of the most important and most perplexing cultural issues of our day.

Yet, civil religion is not a strictly evangelical phenomenon. Its presence in American politics harkens back at least to the mention of “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God” in the Declaration of Independence. It certainly predates the modern religious right and represents the uneasy compromise between religious liberty as free exercise, seemingly calling for some public acknowledgement of America’s many religious citizens, and as disestablishment, requiring those acknowledgements to be vaguely generic and non-exclusive. On a smaller scale, it is not unusual for many Americans who have never darkened the doors of a church on an ordinary Sunday to seek ceremonies offering religious articulation of life’s major milestones and events: birth, adulthood, marriage, illness, death, etc. For Christians (for whom I can speak), who understand themselves as called to mourn with those who mourn and rejoice with those who

rejoice, these moments might provide welcome occasions for hospitality.

But there is a darker side to civil religion: if the “we” in Jordan Sekulow’s comment that refers to “Americans” is normative for all, rather than merely descriptive of many, then that “we” leaves out many others who exert their right *not* to freely exercise a religion or to exercise a religion incompatible with the civil religion. The impetus to identify with civil religion easily becomes uncivil, for example, in fights about whether or not mosques are welcome in local communities, or about the placement of the Ten Commandments in front of courthouses. The connec-

tion between specifically Christian discipleship and these types of endeavors, which are usually presented as defenses of religious liberty against creeping secularism, is rarely made explicit, likely because it is tenuous, at best.

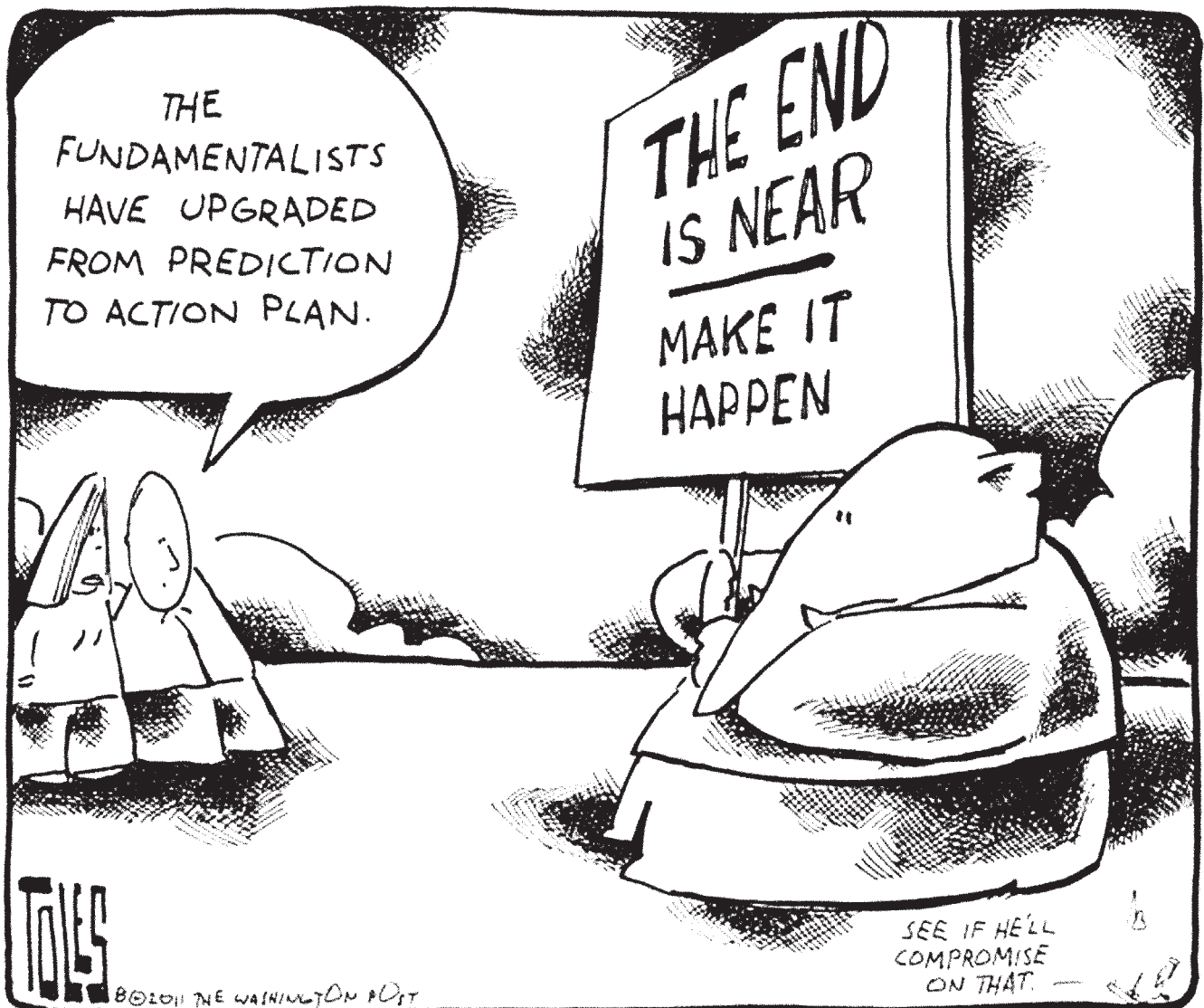
In the meantime, perhaps some of those in attendance or viewing at home derived a modicum of comfort from hearing President Obama read Psalm 46, or from Giuliani’s closing words; few would begrudge them that. But we would also do well to treat our civil religion, the cloak of divinity that politics wears uneasily and often dishonestly, as an object of suspicion as

much as an American tradition. ■

### References

Jay Sekulow’s Letter to Mayor Michael Bloomberg can be found here: <http://c0391070.cdn2.cloudfiles.rackspacecloud.com/pdf/bloomberg-letter-9-11-prayer.pdf>  
“Jay Sekulow Live” from 9/12/11: <http://aclj.org/RadioPlayer/tenth-anniversary-of-9-11/player>

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# How Do You Love Those Who Don't Love You?

by Bob Mulkey

I was teaching a small group of teenagers on a Sunday night. We looked at Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount about loving your enemies. When it came to the prayer time, I asked them to name something they needed from God. A boy said, "I need strength to love people who don't love me."

A couple of Sundays later, I mentioned his statement in a sermon. A woman in her eighties responded by asking me, "When are you going to tell us how to love people who don't love us?" Jesus said we are to love as God loves.

'You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matthew 5: 43-48 NRSV).

What I am learning about how to love those who don't love me is that I can't do it by being determined to be more loving. I read the words of Jesus or hear a good sermon, and I say, "I am going to be more loving. Yes, I am!" That determination lasts for a few hours until somebody crosses me. Then my temper flares and I am the same old angry, unloving person I was before I made my resolution.

If I am going to love someone who doesn't love me, I need to do two things.

1. I need to change my judgment about the person.

2. I need to feel loved, because I cannot give what I don't have.

Those are the two essentials for loving your enemy. The first one is about the way you think. The second is about the way you feel. Underlying everything I am about to say is the assumption that I am responsible for my thinking and my feelings. If I tell myself that another person is making me angry, I am giving him or her complete control and making it impossible for me to love that person.

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*What I am learning about how to love those who don't love me is that I can't do it by being determined to be more loving.*

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## **Change your judgment.**

Our judgments are based on experience. If in the past I have experienced pain from an angry attack, my natural response to anger from another person is to protect myself. Based on my judgment of what happens when angry words are spoken, the impulse for fight or flight kicks in. In order to protect myself, either I attack with a fury that matches that of the other person, or I run.

How can I change the way I respond when someone attacks me verbally? I can do so only by changing my judgment of the person who is attacking me. Greg Baer, the author of *Real Love*, has given me a metaphor that I have found extremely helpful. (I recommend his *Essentials of Real Love* DVD set and *The Real Love Bible*

*Workbook* available at [reallove.com](http://reallove.com).) Imagine, he says, that you and I are sitting outside by a swimming pool on a beautiful sunny day. We are at a table enjoying lunch and conversation, when somebody in the pool starts splashing you. There are chairs between you and the pool, so you can't see the person who is doing all the splashing.

At first, there is just a small amount of water, then more and more until your legs are getting wet. You decide you are going to go tell this idiot to stop splashing water on you. But when you get up and look over at him, you see that he is thrashing about wildly in the water because he is drowning. Immediately your judgment about him changes from thinking he is a stupid troublemaker to knowing that he is in trouble.

When your judgment changes, your feelings go from anger to compassion instantly and, instead of yelling at him, you look for a way to help him. The person who is attacking you is just trying to keep from drowning emotionally. He or she is thrashing about, trying to stay afloat emotionally and "splashing you." When we see them as drowning persons, our judgment about their behavior changes.

As I think about the actions and the teachings of Jesus, I can see him helping people to change their judgment about those whom they have seen as dangerous and unlovable. His story of the Samaritan who stopped to help a man beaten and robbed and left for dead, is clearly calculated to help an expert in the Hebrew scriptures see a Samaritan "enemy" as a person who knew how to be a neighbor to a man in need of his help.

His public statement that a Roman centurion's faith was greater than any he had seen in Israel was intended to help his students change their judgment about Gentiles. His words to

those who brought to him for condemnation a woman caught in adultery, “Let the one who is without sin be the first to hit her with a stone,” were surely intended to change their judgment of a sinner.

As followers of Jesus, we have instinctively seen how important it is for us to change our judgments of people with statements like these:

- “All people are made in God’s image.”
- “There, but for the grace of God, go I.”
- “Every person is a person for whom Christ died.”
- “The ground is level at the foot of the cross.”

We also change our judgments by coming to know people as individuals instead of continuing to label them as part of a stereotyped group.

I had never talked to a Muslim until I met Ashiq Kermalli in 2004. He is the first Muslim in Florida to complete Clinical Pastoral Education and become a licensed hospital chaplain. Ashiq is a staff chaplain at Orlando Regional Medical Center. Since coming to know him, I have invited him to speak about his faith to First Baptist Church of DeLand and to two different peer learning groups. This fall, he will speak to New Hope Baptist Church. He helps me understand the Shia approach to the Muslim faith. He changes my judgment about Muslims. An imam, a leader in his mosque, and a family man who loves his wife and children, Ashiq is a kind and caring man whom I am glad to have as a friend.

How do you love those who don’t love you? The first step is to become a more caring person by changing your judgment about others. The second step is just as important as the first.

### **Take responsibility for learning how to feel loved so that you have love to give.**

What enables us to have love in us? Nobody has ever said it better than John in his first letter; “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of

God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:7-8 NRSV).

Love comes from God, but where does John start? He starts with “Let us love one another.” We all need to have God’s love flow to us through other people who care about our real happiness. The kind of love we all need in order to live is not the conditional kind: “I love you because of what you do for me. You make me feel good with your good looks. You make me proud with your good grades. You make me feel secure by always telling me what I want to hear about myself.”

We need the kind of love that says, “I care about your happiness without expecting anything in return.” God is the source of that kind of unconditional love (*agape* in Greek). John says God is that kind of love.

If I am going to love my enemy, the person who doesn’t like me and even attacks me, I am going to need a big supply of unconditional, *agape* love. If I soak up God’s love from my worship of God, my reading of the Bible and praying, and most important, from other people, then I have unconditional love to give. “Unconditional love” means that I care about the happiness of those who do nothing for me, or perhaps even hate me. Where does it come from? John clearly says it comes from God who is the source of unconditional love.

Still there is the question: How do I take responsibility to get that supply of love so that I can love even those who don’t love me? I find the answer to that question also in the First Letter of John.

This is the message that we have heard from him and announce to you: “God is light and there is no darkness in him at all.” If we claim, “We have fellowship with him,” and live in the darkness, we are lying and do not act truthfully. But if we live in the light in the same way as he is in the light, we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from every sin. If we claim, “We don’t have any

sin,” we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from everything we’ve done wrong. (1 John 1:5-10 Common English Bible)

The way to feel loved is to tell the truth about yourself, the truth about your failures and your faults. When you take the risk to tell the truth – not all the failures of your life all at once – just the plain truth about why you are late to an appointment or how you took out your unhappiness on a store clerk or made an unloving remark to your spouse, you will find listeners who will accept you with your flaws and enable you to feel loved.

I think that is what John means when he says, “If we live in the light in the same way as he is in the light, we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from every sin.” When you don’t blame others and just tell the truth about yourself, “you live in the light.” You find people who see you and accept you as you really are. God’s forgiveness and love flows into you through them.

How do you take responsibility for feeling loved? You don’t buy it by getting people to think you are wonderful. You don’t put your best foot forward all the time and impress people. You live in the light. You tell the truth and find people in your life through whom the unconditional love of God will flow into you. Then you can give it to people all around, even to those who don’t love you.

God’s love flows through many human channels, and when you change your judgment about the actions of others and tell the truth about your sins, you become another channel through which it flows. God’s love can even flow through you to people who don’t love you. ■

*Bob Mulkey is pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Port Orange, Florida.*



# Sacred Objects of a Worshipping Community

By Doran C. McCarty

My former pastor, Elwyn Hays, related an incident that happened to him in his first pastorate after he married. Elwyn, and his wife Sarah, spent a Saturday afternoon caring for all the things that had accumulated in closets and corners of the church. There was an old doily on the communion table. It had seen its best years and now was faded and mildewed. Sunday morning Elwyn went to the church early. Soon he called home and said, "Sarah, where's the doily?" Sarah answered, "You don't want to know." "Sarah, where's the doily?" "You don't want to know." Finally Sarah gave in and told Elwyn where to find it. The doily was in its place by the time worship started. It was a doily that was made by a (now) elderly church member and had graced the communion table for decades. It had become one of the sacred objects of the church, and by not discarding that object, Elwyn no doubt dodged a bullet.

Recently a minister had to leave his church after he moved the American flag from the pulpit area. He failed to recognize a sacred object of the church.

A criticism is that sacred objects are not logical. A dirty doily should be replaced, or repaired, or cleaned for instance. Rudolph Otto, in his book, *The Idea of the Holy*, starts by saying the non-rational in religion is important. Mircea Eliade adds to Otto's idea of the holy in his book *The Sacred and the Profane*. Applying Eliade's language, the pastor who ignores the sacred objects of church members profanes the sacred. And trouble is the result.

I am sure that many feel there should be no such sacred objects. The Old Testament had its sacred objects such as the ark of the covenant in the Temple. It was so sacred that only priests were supposed to touch it. When God called Moses to lead his people out of Egypt, he told Moses that he was standing on

holy ground. People today understand that the sanctuary is "holy ground." In some churches, the cemetery may be "holy ground."

The Temple itself was a sacred object. Remember Paul was accused of bringing an uncircumcised Gentile into the Temple, thereby profaning the Temple. This is not just an anachronistic value system. Today's churches have sacred objects also. Attending to and accepting the sacred objects may enhance (or prolong!) a pastor's ministry.

What are these sacred objects? Every church is different. If the previous pas-

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*Attending to and  
accepting the sacred  
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tor ran off with a deacon's wife, or stole money from the church, the members realize they must be careful that their next pastor will care for those particular sacred objects. That is easy. But other of the church's sacred objects are people also. I remember a church which had an organist who had become disabled. However, she was still revered by many in the church and her phone conversations with certain church members often determined church actions. When a new pastor criticized her for the calls, he was in deep trouble. He failed to recognize one of the sacred objects of the church, the organist.

A minister had been pastor of a church for nearly two decades. He had been a financial wizard for the church. He was a well-known, respected leader in the community. He was beloved by his church. He retired in the commu-

nity. His successor was unhappy with the former pastor's communication with church members and expressed it often. The new pastor failed to realize that the former pastor was one of the sacred objects of the church. Disaster resulted.

After a church called a new pastor, the deacons were confronted with the demands that a certain staff member be fired. He had been their minister of music for nearly twenty years. His children had married some of the deacons' children. Since the new pastor was their new leader, they acquiesced. Then the pastor wanted them to fire two more church staff. The deacons' response was that they would rather lose the pastor and keep the rest of the staff. Among other mistakes, the new pastor failed to recognize that some of the staff were sacred objects of the church.

I know of a church which called a pastor who announced to the church that he was firing the deacons. He demanded that the church buy a piece of property at the edge of town so they could build a new building. He said that they were to follow his leadership because he was head of the church. He ignored the sacred objects of the church and he lost a large part of the membership.

I held a conference in a small church that would seat no more than 100. There were two organs in the church, one on the right side of the pulpit and the other on the left. When I inquired why there were two organs, the pastor told me that the "Smiths" had given one and the "Jones" the other. The logic of whether they needed two organs was not an issue. Both were "sacred objects."

A new kind of pastor has appeared in the past decade among Baptist churches. Their style of leadership is authoritarian. Often these pastors are unable to comprehend what is happening to them when they begin to make changes  
*(continued on page 29)*

**Tributes** *He has shown you... what is good; and what does the Lord require of you?...to act justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8*

## **Life With "Papo"** *By Babs Baugh*

Some of you may have known my dad, John Baugh from Houston. Perhaps you were even his good friend. He had a lot of good friends, and he tried to live faithfully the meaning of his favorite Bible verse: "He has shown you...what is good; and what does the Lord require of you?...to act justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8

I have a perspective of him that only a daughter would know. When a man becomes a grandfather for the first time his name changes forever. Thus, in 1965, John Baugh became "Papo" (with a long "o"), for his family. You can't talk about John without talking about Eula Mae. The two were inseparable. It was very clear to me that my dad loved our Heavenly Father with all his heart --- and my mom was a close second. I followed her...at all times. This gave me great security and comfort.

I taught my dad his first lesson in "Ethics for Fathers" when I was about two. My dad went to work at 4 AM almost every day. He came home at 8 PM, had dinner, and woke me up to play with me for an hour or so. Then he would put me back to bed and pat me on the back until I fell asleep. One evening when he was particularly tired, he patted my back and then got a stuffed bunny and laid it on my back where his hand had been so he could get some much needed sleep. Of course I didn't fall for that trick at all! I climbed out of bed, stormed into my parents' room and got in bed with mother so he would have to sleep in my room! It was a valuable lesson in honesty and integrity, I thought.

Actually, he had learned that lesson many years earlier. At the age of 14, he had a little fruit stand. This

was followed many years later with A&P Food stores during the Great Depression. When he was the assistant manager at a Houston store, he walked for several miles to take a package of strawberries to a customer who had left them on the counter. Another lady lost the diamond out of her ring. When he found it and took it directly to her, she was overcome with gratitude. Stories like this of the kind young man at the A & P spread and increased their business.

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*He walked for several miles to take a package of strawberries to a customer who had left them on the counter.*

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All was not easy with A & P policies. My dad worked and worked tirelessly at convincing the headquarters office to put in air-conditioning in his store. They finally relented but still thought it a waste of money. He invited a group of people from the headquarters to come to Houston and visit the stores. They were from New England and it was August in Texas! He drove them to several unair-conditioned stores prior to welcoming them into his air-conditioned store. With sweat pouring from their bodies, they congratulated him on having such a brilliant idea!

One of his qualities that people rarely saw was how he handled things that didn't go well. Most people thought that everything John Baugh touched turned to gold. But that wasn't true at all. He just never whined over prob-

lems. He would try to solve the problem first. If unable to do so, he would then change the course. That is actually how Sysco began.

When my dad was passed over for a promotion at A&P, he decided that he should try to go out on his own. His reasoning was that if his own business failed, he was still young enough to get another job. So began the start of a wonderful life for me and for my parents. During the week, Mother would answer the phone, keep the books, make appointments, etc. Papo would make deliveries in the morning and sales calls in the afternoon. During the Christmas Season, I would go along with him on sales calls and take a poinsettia to each of the dieticians who were our clients. They were not only our clients, but soon felt that they were part of our family.

Working in the summer at Zero Foods, I learned about work ethic... about doing your best and respecting everyone you met. As the "boss's" daughter, I was expected to arrive earlier than anyone else, stay later and turn out all my work on a timely basis. After all, that's what the "boss" did. I also learned about humility. John Baugh never had his own parking space - not even during the later years at Sysco. We all parked in the order we arrived. My most boring summer was prior to the development of our copiers and word processors. Over 2000 clients received an individually typed letter.

Papo taught us all that a sense of humor was essential in running a business, having friends and learning to not take yourself too seriously. Zero Foods was a Houston-based food distribution business that extended to San Antonio on the west and Beaumont on the east. There was

a wealthy Houstonian who had built the huge Shamrock Hotel. We were delighted when they became customers, but quickly realized that they didn't pay invoices in a timely manner.

My dad wore his nice suit to the Shamrock. He went to Mr. McCarthy's office and asked to speak to him. The secretary explained that Mr. McCarthy would not be available to meet with him that day. So Papo just sat down and politely said that he would just wait there until Mr. McCarthy returned. Finally, the hotel giant came out of his office and invited John to join him. Papo asked for payment of what was owed to Zero Foods Company. McCarthy explained that they paid their bills in alphabetical order to which Papo quickly replied, "And we had a meeting just this morning and changed our name to "Aardvark Foods"! Mr. McCarthy laughed loudly and directed the bookkeeper to pay the bill!

I saw him practice self-discipline on a daily basis. He never had the opportunity to graduate from college, but most of his best friends, like Herbert Reynolds and Daniel Vestal, had their PhD's. Always thinking that vocabulary was one of the major components of education, he used that little calendar, "A Word a Day," and tried to learn a new word every day. I know many people who have tried to do that...but he actually used all those words in sentences. Therefore, when he wrote letters to some of our mutual friends, they would call me, read the letter to me, and ask me what it said. I never knew!

All these attributes collectively helped make him a person whose integrity and honesty were never questioned. The formation of Sysco took place at the Exchange in New York. The plan was to have a simultaneous merger of nine privately owned companies. Each of these companies would receive different numbers of shares in the new company based on their individual worth. For example, some companies had much larger facilities than others, more

trucks than others, different kinds of inventories, etc. All the lawyers and accountants gathered together with the nine presidents in one room to make the decisions of "who got what".

But at the very beginning of the meeting, the president from upstate New York stood and said, "I trust Johnny Baugh to tell me what my company is worth." And one at a time, the other presidents agreed. All the lawyers and accountants left the room sadly while Papo figured the number of shares each company would receive. The caveat was that each company would escrow 10% of its shares for one year. The goal was to increase sales by 15%. Each company that met that goal got the escrowed shares; if a company did not meet the goal, the shares were divided among

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*All these attributes collectively helped make him a person whose integrity and honesty were never questioned.*

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the other companies. Everyone met his goal! And, I doubt that any other Fortune 500 company ever started with such trust in a single person by all of the various partners.

As Sysco grew and flourished, the people at Sysco decided to honor dad and mother by providing 10 scholarships annually to children of Sysco employees. These scholarships would be to the universities of their choice. The competition for these scholarships was judged by an outside agency so that no particular person would be able to influence the judges. One day, a young African-American woman came to the office and asked to speak with Papo. When she entered his office, she said that she wanted to meet the man for whom the scholarship was named because she was so amazed that she

had been given one of the scholarships. "You see", she said, "my father is not very important at Sysco. He is only a truck driver." Papo's reply to her was priceless; "Young lady, your father is the most important person at Sysco because he is the person that our customers see. He is the face of Sysco." The young lady left the office with tears of joy and ran home to tell her father how important he was.

Life with Papo continues to be a joy-filled journey as my daughters, Jackie and Julie, and I try to continue his concern in areas such as religious liberty for all, equal rights for all women, Christian ethics applied to every issue and problem we face, and the sharing of the love and grace of God for every person on this earth. And the words of the prophet, Micah, still ring in our memories; "What does the Lord require of you?... to act justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." That was my dad. ■

#### ETHIXBYTE:

*"When people say, 'the world changed on Sept. 11, 2001,' we have to say 'No, the world changed on 33 A.D.' The question is how to narrate what happened on Sept. 11 in light of what happened in 33 A.D."*  
**Stanley Hauerwas, professor of theological ethics at Duke Divinity School, quoted in Sojourners**

# Ross Coggins: Significant Contributions in Multiple Careers

By James A. Langley

Ross Coggins, noted for his ethical stands, and service through government agencies for the poor and suffering, died from prostate cancer August 1 at his home in Annapolis, MD. He was 83.

A native of Texas, he was a graduate of Baylor University and Southwestern Seminary. He and his wife, the former Doris Lengefeld who survives Ross, had been SBC missionaries in Indonesia. During that time he wrote the hymn, still widely sung, "Send Me, O Lord, Send Me."

Ross worked with Foy Valentine on the Christian Life Commission of the SBC, wrote the book, *To Change the World*. His articles appeared in the CLC newsletter and other publications. He was a frequent speaker in churches and on college campuses.

The impression grew with him that

he could best serve the Kingdom in a secular position. Coggins was tapped to be the Southeast Regional Director of VISTA, the domestic Peace Corps, and recently commented that that ministry, supervising dedicated and courageous volunteers at the height of the Civil Rights Movement (he himself participated in a march with Martin Luther King, Jr.) was one of the highlights of a lifetime.

Ross was appointed to the U.S. Agency for International Development, and in time became that agency's representative to the UN Agencies for Food and Agriculture, administering aid to the most vulnerable on four continents and the Caribbean Region

For a time he directed a ministry to internationals. Former First Lady Rosalyn Carter was on its board. In retirement, he served

with Catholic Relief Services as administrator for some \$500 million in aid to the poor and hurting.

A lover of classical poetry, he committed much to memory, and was a poet in his own right, with some poems published. He had a special gift and flair for the humorous, and turned humor to the service of Christ and the Kingdom

Some of Coggins' writings have appeared in *Christian Ethics Today*. Out of appreciation for Foy Valentine, Coggins helped launch the drive for an endowment fund for the *CET*.

Ross served notably in a number of roles: Husband-Father, Missionary, Preacher, Prophet, Author-Poet, Good Samaritan, and Exemplar of the Faith. I was his friend and admirer, one of a great many. ■

## ...excerpts from "The Development Set"

by Ross Coggins

Our thoughts are deep and our vision global;  
Although we move with the better classes  
Our thoughts are always with the masses.

We discuss malnutrition over steaks  
And plan hunger talks during coffee breaks.  
Whether Asian floods or African drought,  
We face each issue with open mouth.

We bring in consultants whose circumlocution  
Raises difficulties for every solution --  
Thus guaranteeing continued good eating  
By showing the need for another meeting.

Or say, "That's fine in practice, but don't you see:  
It doesn't work out in theory!"  
Few may find this incomprehensible,  
But most will admire you as deep and sensible.

Development set homes are extremely chic,  
Full of carvings, curios, and draped with batik.  
Eye-level photographs subtly assure  
That your host is at home with the great and the poor.

Enough of these verses - on with the mission!  
Our task is as broad as the human condition!  
Just pray god the biblical promise is true:  
The poor ye shall always have with you. ■



## Book Reviews

“Of making many books there is no end. . .” Ecclesiastes 12:12 NRSV

### The God Who Will Not Go Away: Is the new Atheism Running on Empty?

Alister McGrath, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 2010

Reviewed by Darold H. Morgan

This reviewer cannot overstate the importance of pastors and church teachers today knowing the pernicious influence of the current waive of atheistic authors, now known as “the new Atheism”. Much of their influence is with the younger generation of students. McGrath’s small paperback book deserves careful reading in the light of this development. He writes with academic clarity, balanced with a disarming and charming wit, resulting in a delightful reading experience about a most serious subject. Frankly, it is Christian Apologetics at its best!

McGrath is a professor at Oxford University, formerly an atheist who has made his way back to a positive and creative theism. He possesses the academic background which commands both respect and a sense of authority. Uniquely in this book, he hits head-on what he calls “the fundamentalism of atheism,” stemming from these writings of “the Four Horsemen of the New Atheism”...ie, Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Daniel Dennett... authors whose books collectively have sold millions of copies. Reference is made to some of the debates he has had with two of these men.

McGrath writes with a solid biblical and philosophical approach combined with helpful statements about religion and violence, ultimately coming back always to the concepts of truth... philosophically, theologically, and even scientifically. He is dealing with brilliant authors whose contention for theism comes from elevating science and reason as the hallmarks of truth.,

relegating any religious experiences to the outer banks of superstition and fairy tales. He particularly singles out Dawkins for his peculiar degree of atheistic fundamentalism for he is the one who labels Mother Teresa as a “fraud.” By using the designation as “Brights,” rather than atheists, who shows in part some of the major academic and personal reasons for multitudes in this timeframe eagerly turning to atheism!

One of the by-products of reading a book like this is to encourage debate and conversation on this hugely important issue. Science is indeed the great success story of the last century...and continuing story indeed. Though these other authors have firmly declared that their writing would eventually wipe out current religion, McGrath points to the astonishing gains of religion worldwide. With this is the rise of gifted thinkers who are writing with brilliance in our times, defending especially the Christian faith. And they are successfully getting many to an open-mindedness about truth, something urgently needed with the constant presence of religious fundamentalism.

Get this book. Read it carefully. Share it with some new and younger Christians. Concentrate on the student generation with these positions. Rejoice that we have scholars like McGrath and others who are writing forcefully and convincingly on this vitally important topic. The bottom line is the intellectual confirmation once more of our Christian faith in this age of a blatant secularism and sadly, religious fundamentalism. ■

### A Review of Martha Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*

(Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2011).

Reviewed by Guy Sayles

First Baptist Church of Asheville

“What are people actually able to do and be? What real opportunities are available to them?” Answering these questions is the purpose of Martha Nussbaum’s *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*. Growing out of her work on economic and human development, *Creating Capabilities* is a brief but compelling statement of the necessary conditions to liberate, nurture, and protect human flourishing.

Nussbaum teaches in the Philosophy Department, the Law School, and the Divinity School at the University of Chicago. She is a remarkably prolific and profoundly insightful writer. Readers of this journal might be particularly interested in her work on the freedom of religion, *Liberty of Conscience: In Defense of America’s Tradition of Religious Equality* (2008).

Along with Amartya Sen, Nussbaum has provided much of the theoretical underpinning and practical guidance for the approach to economic and human development known variously as the “Human Development Approach,” the “Capability Approach,” and the “Capabilities Approach.” *Creating Capabilities* is Nussbaum’s thoughtful and accessible summary of her contributions to this development framework which addresses the reality that “all over the world, people are struggling for lives that are worthy of their human dignity” (p. 1).

Recognition of human dignity, a passion for freedom, and a belief in individual possibility are at the heart of the Capabilities Approach. For Nussbaum, “capabilities” are both “abilities” which individuals have and the freedom and opportunities to choose their expression. Such freedom and opportunity depend on a wise and just arrangement of the political, social, and economic environment (p. 20). Because there is always a dynamic interplay between individuals and their environments, Nussbaum calls for societies to work for the training and development of individual “traits and abilities” (or “internal capabilities”) and also to create and maintain conditions in which an individual may choose to use them (p. 21). When both internal capabilities and external conditions for human development exist, people are able to grow in what she calls “combined capabilities”—“combined” in the sense that individual growth and expression are joined to an environment which supports dignity, freedom, and flourishing.

Nussbaum knows that “a society might do quite well at producing internal capabilities but might cut off the avenues through which people actually have the opportunity to function in accordance with those capabilities” (p. 21). She offers these compelling examples:

Many societies educate people so that they are capable of free speech on political matters—internally—but then deny them free expression in practice through repression of speech. Many people who are internally free to exercise a religion do not have the opportunity to do so in the sense of combined capability, because religious free exercise is not protected by the government” (pp. 21-22).

She advocates, therefore, that societies arrange living conditions so that *all* people, regardless of class or status, “get above a certain threshold of combined capability” (p. 24). Some people—the disabled and disadvantaged, for example—“need more help

to get above the threshold” and a just and free society provides such help” (p. 24).

At the core of her work is this list of ten capabilities which Nussbaum believes societies must foster for genuine economic and human development:

1. *Life*. Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one’s life is so reduced as to be not worth living.

2. *Bodily Health*. Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.

3. *Bodily Integrity*. Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.

4. *Senses, Imagination, and Thought*. Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason—and to do these things in a “truly human” way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education . . . . Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one’s own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one’s mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid non-beneficial pain.

5. *Emotions*. Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one’s emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development.)

6. *Practical Reason*. Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the

planning of one’s life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience and religious observance.

7. *Affiliation*. (A) Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other humans, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech). (B) Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of non-discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin.

8. *Other Species*. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.

9. *Play*. Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.

10. *Control over one’s environment*. (A) *Political*. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one’s life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association. (B) *Material*. Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. In work, being able to work as a human, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers (pp. 33-34).

Nussbaum envisions societies which have an unswerving commitment to the nurturing of human beings so that they realize and express such capabilities and which have an unwavering dedication to the creation and maintenance of the cultural, political and economic conditions in human life can develop fully and freely. It is a bright and hopeful vision, one which people of faith can share and support. ■

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## **Bill Moyers Journal: The Conversation Continues**

The New Press, 2011  
Reviewed by James Dunn

The “Select Bibliography” lists 167 books by the 50 interviewees in Bill Moyers Journal and that’s just the narrowed-down, short list. It is not the volume so much as the variety that makes *The Conversation Continues* so valuable and so much fun. Each visit with Bill Moyers sits on its own bottom and averages less than 10 pages. Hence, we enjoy accessible reading. The interviews are timely; all are conducted between 2007 and 2011.

The greatest value of the interviews comes in their being personally done by Moyers, someone who listens. He is smarter than most of us. No doubt about that. But his respectful listening, his sharp questioning, his incredible reading (everything relevant), his almost super-human hours of editing make him the best interviewer of our time. This makes the book under consideration a container of message pills: concentrated, condensed wisdom.

The views expressed in the book are wide ranging, complex, and pertinent. Moyers humbly protests that he is “just a journalist,” a claim belied by the fact that he has all the awards a journalist can accrue. He exposes himself as a renaissance man. He parses all the difficult challenges of our times and when necessary he preaches a little. Studs Terkel said that Moyers “always offers the gift of thoughtfulness and of hope.” That’s preaching.

He is uncommonly patient with those who think they have lost their religion. Often, they have only graduated from pat beliefs or put aside a burden of beliefs that they never should have taken up. Many persons have mistaken credal conformity or the acceptance of a long list of theological propositions for vital Christianity. His “grownup” faith is fleshed out in real world ethics, experiential religion, and

intensely personal theological understanding.

His faith is, indeed, grownup and his wisdom lies in discernment. He knows the difference for instance between: hope and optimism, despair and pessimism, peace and the absence of war, ignorance and stupidity, compassion and political correctness, political rhetoric sound policy.

When other professional talkers try to get “both sides”, he knows that there are often more than two sides. With fairness he goes, instead, for truth. He eschews the foolish pursuit of objectivity since it is unobtainable. One can hear him without being battered by “he said/she said” argument or endless contradictions. Bill does not worry about “giving the devil his due.” Fox News does that.

The 40 plus interviews are heavy, dense with politics, religion, economics, science, poetry, racial justice, nature. Distinctive individual gifts shine: Jon Stewart’s sterling satire; Howard Zinn’s shining history; Andrew Bacevich’s valuable conservatism; Robert Bly’s rich big-heartedness; Jeremy Scahill’s terrifying stories about our mercenaries; Jane Goodall’s incredible discoveries. Humor and warmth, however, relieve the gravity of argument and poetry comes along often enough to keep you human.

Over and over the conversations become intimate. Who could there be that does not trust Bill Moyers? Often the talk focuses on finding personal answers, sometimes it is confessional. The subjects are conscience, courage, community, justice, fairness, wisdom, morality, mortality, and a state of grace.

A marvelous interview with Bill by Robin Lindley of the History Channel can be found at <http://hnn.us/articles/8-22-11/bill-moyers-and-robin-lindley-talk-about-america.html>. In that interview Moyers graciously points up the 50 year partnership with his producer wife, Judith, in their teamwork through their company, Public Affairs Television. He also acknowledges the contribution of his seminary training, especially the life

and work of his ethics professor, T. B. Maston.

WARNING: You may be troubled by Moyers courageous critique of our own country in its current crisis. Good! We suffer from corporate greed and concentrated economic power. The facts are that there is a vast chasm of inequality, the rich are getting richer and the poor poorer. Politicians and their bank rollers have rewritten the rules of politics to benefit the people at the top.

Mr. Moyers next television series, it has just been announced, will be about the history of the progressive movement in the United States. The failures of our economic system, our political apparatus, and those who should be leading morally have been a great burden for many including Bill Moyers. Once again, he will be speaking the truth to power. The story is not a pretty one. We need to hear it.

The powerful message will be heard again in this land by the prophet Bill Moyers. ■

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*James M. Dunn is Resident Professor of Christianity and Public Policy at Wake Forest University’s School of Divinity.*

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## **Taking Out the Trash in Tulia, Texas**

By Alan Bean, DeSoto, TX: Advanced Concept Design Books, 2010.

Reviewed by Larry McSwain

This is a difficult book to read. It is difficult not because of the vocabulary, the writing style, nor overblown conceptualization. Its content is shocking, earthy, and so realistic as to surprise most *Christian Ethics Today* readers. It is difficult to accept the reality of the story told here, but it is a story that can be repeated across communities of the nation, large and small.

Alan Bean collected dozens of vignettes of events surrounding the arrest for drug dealing of 19 black residents of Tulia, Texas in 1999. There were 132 indictments in the Texas



panhandle generated by the testimony of an undercover policeman named Tom Coleman. Some in the community were incredulous that there could be that many drug dealers in the relatively small, poor black community of Tulia. The saga of the surprise arrests in the early morning that brought defendants to the cour house in various stages of undress soon moved to the courtroom where incompetent defense attorneys, suspect legal procedures, and dominant white juries assured the conviction and excessive sentencing for each.

The characters of the book could be taken out of a Flannery O'Connor short story. Joe Moore is an older black man is a hog farmer who is a key leader in the community arrested with the group and sentenced to 90 years in prison. Gary Gardner, an overweight, arthritic "redneck" wheat farmer with an uncontrollable foul mouth is a long-time advocate of civil rights, offended by the treatment of blacks in Tulia; and he enters the fray for justice. Alan Bean is a central character in the book: a Canadian with a Ph.D. in church history, married into the Kiker clan of Tulia, a guitarist and composer of folk music. He becomes a central opponent of the criminal justice process at great personal sacrifice for himself and his family.

In response to the multiple convictions with little due process for the black residents of Tulia, Bean and his family, Gardner, Charles and Patricia Kiker and leaders of the black community form Friends of Justice to take up the cause for black defendants labeled "scumbags" in the local press. The knowledge of networking skills of this leadership group of Friends of Justice soon has locals organized for protests at the state capital in Austin, rawing the national press and civil justice organizations to Swisher County to challenge the veracity of Tom Coleman and the justice process. After years of effort, the details of which require reading the book, Coleman's credibility is challenged, convictions are overturned, and the Texas justice system pays heavy judgments to the defendants and their attorneys.

This is a book worth reading for its analyses on multiple levels of insight. It is a remarkable analysis of the social changes affecting American agriculture with the consequences of growing racial polarization in small towns. Its anthropological insights into the black culture of a small community and the interactions between black and white neighbors are on the level of classic studies such as *Street Corner Society*. The impact of a few dissenters to the dominant ethos with all of the conflict it generates in the community is a study in community change and the power of a determined few. The role of small town newspapers is analyzed historically in both positive and negative ways. The attention of national media in bringing pressure on local entities is a case study in the importance of outside resources in creating change. And finally, the role of a few families with deep community roots who choose to live against the grain of the community's values and the costs paid for their stubbornness is worthy of study by those who would be prophets of change in their own hometowns. ■

*Larry L. McSwain is a professor at McAfee School of Theology at Mercer University*

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## **LOTTIE MOON: A Southern Baptist Missionary to China in History and Legend**

by Regina D. Sullivan, LSU Press, 2011

*Reviewed by Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler*

When I first heard of the publication of Sullivan's book, I thought, "Oh, no. We don't need another book about Lottie Moon. Everybody knows her story." Then, as our 21-year-old grandson, a college junior, prepared to go to China for 3 months of study, I told him to be sure to look up "Lottie Moon places." He looked at me and said, "Who's Lottie Moon?" That prompted me to get to the book store to buy the new book and read it.

Sullivan captured my attention from the beginning. A fourth of

the book gives extensive notes, bibliography and other information, indicating that many sources had been considered, that the book was not just a recapitulation of a well-known story. When I had finished, I had a new picture of Lottie Moon.

In the first chapter I gained a new, larger picture of Lottie Moon, her family, her growing up years. Born in 1840, she lived a typical wealthy southern family life. Her sister, Orianna, was the first woman in Virginia to become a medical doctor. Her sister, Edmonia, became a missionary to China, before Lottie. Lottie became a school teacher.

By 1870, Lottie was ready to realize her dream of having a career in religion. Baptist women had begun a missions organization, "Woman's Mission to Woman." Southern Baptist leaders began to recognize that women wanted to be more involved. Henry Tupper at the foreign mission board was concerned that if women were not included in the board's work they would form their own organization. Through all of this, Lottie remained determined, and in September 1873 she sailed for China.

As the story unfolded, I saw the true leader of the "women's movement." Without flaunting herself, Lottie led in many ways. She spoke to women and men in public gatherings. She lived alone. She began a church. She planned to marry one of her college professors, then a professor at Southern seminary, but declared, "I had a choice - God and love, and I chose God."

As a former leader of Woman's Missionary Union, I am pleased with the emphasis placed on the origin of this organization, and the relationship between Lottie and WMU. There is no doubt that WMU is a missions group, and that Lottie Moon had a personal relationship with these early women, a relationship that continues today. I am grateful for the "Lottie Moon Tours" that WMU conducted in the late 1980s, which gave many people a first-hand view of Lottie's work in China.

I recommend this new book on Lottie Moon. It is an easy read, even though it covers a hard period of Baptist, women, and foreign mission



formation. Lottie Moon is so much more than a mission offering label. She is missions personified. ■

*Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler is the former leader of the WMU, moderator of the CBE, and is a member of the board of Christian Ethics Today*

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## *A Book for Children*

### ***A Storm Called Katrina***

*Reviewed by Karen Metcalf Eickhoff*

Finding a book that speaks to the seriousness of a natural disaster the size of Hurricane Katrina and that relates appropriately to the emotional development and awareness of a young child is difficult. I believe the book, *A Storm Called Katrina* by Myron Uhlberg attempts this very well. On the morning of August 29, 2005, a hurricane named Katrina stormed onto the Gulf Coast of the United States and became one of the deadliest natural disasters in US history. Myron Uhlberg's *A Storm Called Katrina* depicts a young African American family's experience in a neighborhood of New Orleans days following the hurricane's landfall.

This story is told through the eyes and thoughts of ten-year-old Louis Daniel who hopes to someday play the cornet just like the famous Louis Daniel Armstrong. His family is forced to leave their home after Hurricane Katrina has passed due to rising flood waters. They must leave immediately and are not able to gather any possessions. Louis is the exception as he grabs his beloved cornet off the table. His family manages to find a floating porch to transport them toward downtown. Louis and his parents find their way to the Superdome. Their experience within the Superdome is not glossed over, nor is it too intense for the young grade school child. However, I recommend that adults read the book first and draw their own conclusions concerning the appropriateness of the book for the intended children.

Uhlberg uses careful language and simple sentence structure to portray a very catastrophic event in our current history. I believe the message is real and

appropriate for young children. The way in which Louis' mother refers to him as "Baby" before the Hurricane and how Louis reacts that he is not "a baby" is very relatable to other ten year olds. So too is the comfort Louis finds in his mother's tight embrace and gentle reference to him as "her baby" after disaster strikes and they cling to a floating porch. The portrayal of this family's sudden exodus from their home due to a broken levee, their passage through the water to dry land, and the eventual arrival at the Superdome with all of its unsanitary and compromising conditions is handled with sensitivity and truth. The perceptive way in which the author brings the cornet into play as Louis tries to find his father among the Superdome chaos is simple and skillfully presented. Another element of the disaster that is real to the young reader is the discovery of a dog rescued or surviving the flooding waters.

The artwork is captivating and almost more revealing than the words. Fear, confusion, chaos and human tragedy are softly but realistically presented, making this book appropriate for older preschool and up. A non-reader will be able to understand as much as the reading individual. The illustrations are rendered in oil on prepared wood panels and are incredibly beautiful with a dark slant of blues and greens visually expressing the mood and seriousness of the disaster. Concluding pages are helpful as the author provides sources or a bibliography of books and websites from which one can obtain more information about Hurricane Katrina's impact.

The Katrina story needs to be told and our children will benefit from the reminder of Louis Daniel's family experience. While there are many moral and ethical issues in connection with the Katrina hurricane devastation that are difficult to share with preschool and grade school children, this book presents several accounts without overwhelming the reader with fear, grief, greed, or injustice. ■

*Karen Eickhoff is Minister for Childhood Education at Trinity Baptist Church, Raleigh, NC.*

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## **Sacred Objects of a Worshipping Community**

*(continued from page 21)*

to the church's "sacred objects."

Theologically the church belongs to God. Members of a local church are the stewards of God's church. The reality is that these members are the ones who have invested themselves and their money in the church. While we might debate whether they own the church -- its buildings, its rituals and heritage -- they are the stewards. The church has become a sacred place to them. They had their earliest experiences with Christ in those places. They find God each Sunday in their worship in that place.

When I visited the Holy Land, a part of the tour was to visit an "upper room." Whether it was the actual place of the "Last Supper," they did not know. It probably was not. However, they said the room had been furnished like the original upper room would have been. Later I realized that perhaps the most important article was not there. There was no towel like Jesus used to wash the disciples' feet. It was the powerful symbol of Jesus serving. He used a towel. A sacred object for sure.

My question for a pastor is, "Where's the towel?" I believe that an important aspect of the ministry of a pastor is to use the towel rather than be the "boss" of the church. When I was head of the Northeastern Baptist School of Ministry, during the graduation ceremony, the Director handed the graduate a diploma, and I handed the graduate a towel.

A pastor needs to attend the "sacred objects" of the church. Those objects may not be his or her own "sacred objects," but they are meaningful to the congregation, and special care should be taken to identify those objects and respect them. Often they are the signs of God's presence to the congregation in their worship. And with the congregation, the pastor needs to use the towel, not a whip. ■

## Peace Sign

*By Oda Lisa*

Only one God,  
One straight line drawn,  
In the fullness of time.

Enlightened lifelines  
Father, Son, Spirit,  
Their light comes to a point.

Christ, His only son,  
Reigns on, right,  
Will descend to meet us.

Vertices of the Trinity  
Creates perfect symmetry,  
Heaven beams upon us.

The Holy Spirit  
Mirrors Christ's alignment,  
Left to give comforting guidance.

Encircled in purity,  
Being Love, eternally,  
This is our symbol of complete Peace.

*"If this is going to be a Christian nation that doesn't help the poor, either we have to pretend that Jesus was just as selfish as we are, or we've got to acknowledge that He commanded us to love the poor and serve the needy without condition and then admit that we just don't want to do it."*

—Stephen Colbert

# Seeking the Supernatural

*Al Staggs*

Ordinary daily tasks bind me  
In ways that keep my eyes on the ground.  
Little duties, needful chores  
All conspire to cloud my mind  
Which seeks daily an encounter,  
A whisper of the eternal, the supernatural,  
That quality that is transcendent above and beyond  
This earthly existence which sees, speaks and hears  
But does not experience the life of the soul.

My search urges me to turn off the radio, the television,  
To turn away from the computer, the phones  
And attempt to hear something beneath and beyond  
The sounds of my culture.

Surely we are more than mere flesh and blood  
With minds programmed by the daily demands of duty.  
Part of me resists placing myself in the quiet place of solitude  
For there I may discover my loneliness-  
Yet, I may catch a whisper of that part of my existence  
Which is tied to the eternal,  
Those thoughts and feelings for which there are no explanations.

Will my life be ruled by the clock and the calendar, the taskmaster of chronos time?  
How can one tap into the timeless?  
How can one understand that we are more than bodies and minds  
In servitude to all that occurs between our waking and our sleeping?

Let us not be required to experience the yearned for connection just prior to our last breath. May there be numerous experiences of last breaths so that we can comprehend our most sacred journey. ■



We will send you a copy of Al Staggs' new book,  
**What Would Bonhoeffer Say?**  
for contributions of \$50 or more.

We also have copies of

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

Foy Valentine's **Whatever Things are Beautiful**

Calvin Miller's **The Philippian Fragment**

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# Christian Ethics Today

A Journal of Christian Ethics

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

## MISSION

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

## PURPOSES

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

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

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

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

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