

Christian Ethics Today

A Journal of Christian Ethics Volume 21, Number 3 Aggregate Issue 90 Summer 2013

"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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KUDZU by Doug Marlette

Baptist Life in Jamaica and Religious Freedom

By Devon Dick

Two hundred years ago, Baptists here in the parish of St. Ann and country of Jamaica would be meeting in secret and underground and under the threat of persecution, not in the public and not at a luxurious hotel. Not far from here, Christopher Columbus, the explorer, landed in 1494 and said, "The most beautiful place I have ever set eyes". Columbus ushered Christianity into Jamaica, along with the dominance of a State Church which lasted for centuries. This is parish where the Spanish were indifferent to the religious beliefs of Tainos and Africans and suppressed their beliefs, an example to be followed by the English after they arrived in 1655. During those formative years, religious freedom meant freedom for the State Church of Rome, England and Scotland only.

This parish is also where our forebears emerged and bloomed through the three Baptist Free Villages, Wilberforce, Buxton and Stepney. Free Villages allowed persons freed from slavery to have a church in which to freely worship. Not far from here, Seville, the first capital of Jamaica, is where four civilizations met and formed a melting pot for Tainos, Spanish, Africans and English persons, a microcosm of Jamaica as a Creole society. In 1962, when Jamaica gained political Independence from Britain, the majority populace of African descent took as its motto, "Out of Many One People." Thus, our multi-racial roots and a commitment to tolerance of various races, beliefs and practices were acknowledged. However, an entrenched acceptance of the *status quo* and the economic dominance of minorities and colonial mentality persists. The motto is seen on the Coat of Arms. The crest shows a Jamaican crocodile mounted on the Royal Helmet of the British Monarchy!

The disestablishment of the Church of England took place in 1870, allowing (theoretically) for all denominations to be treated equally and to experience religious freedom. However, the colonial legacy of dominance of the Anglican Church was maintained until Jamaica's political independence.

What is religious freedom?

Religious freedom allows an individual or community, in public, personally or privately, to declare religious belief, teaching, practice,

Religious freedom requires responsible actions for the common good.

worship, and observance without hindrance or persecution. It also includes the freedom to seek to convert others to one's belief and also includes the freedom to change religion or not to follow any religion. While many countries have accepted the idea of religious freedom, some still exhibit punitive taxation, political discrimination and state preference for a dominant expression. Religious freedom does not mean a free-for-all where anyone or any group can engage in illegal practices or have so called religious observances that harm people. Religious freedom requires responsible actions for the common good.

In Jamaica, Christians are able to preach, pray and worship freely and to provide instructions to their members and provide religious education in schools they operate. We are free to regularly host evangelistic efforts to convert others to our religious beliefs and practices. We also engage in prison, police and army chaplaincies.

It has been argued by Daniel

Thwaites, Rhodes scholar and *Gleaner* columnist, that the religious freedom for Jamaicans can be traced to events in England in the 17th century.¹ The *Toleration Act of 1689* was an Act of the Parliament in England, which allowed freedom of worship to nonconformists such as Baptists and Congregationalists but not to Roman Catholics, non-trinitarians and atheists.² This act extended religious freedom to only a select few.

Religious freedom for the Christian faith in general can be traced to an earlier period under Constantine. In 313, the Edict of Milan announced "that it was proper that the Christians and all others should have liberty to follow that mode of religion which to each of them appeared best," thereby granting tolerance to all religions, including Christianity.³ Furthermore, the genesis of Anabaptists in 1525 had the distinctive of religious liberty to heretics and atheists alike.⁴ Cawley Bolt, Baptist historian, commented on one of the early Baptist confessions (1612?), stating that a magistrate should not meddle in religion but "leave the Christian free."⁵ Baptists have agitated for religious freedom believing that religious freedom is an inalienable right given to every human being by God.

Role of Jamaican Baptists in Religious Freedom

African-American Baptist missionary, George Liele, arrived in Jamaica in 1783 and soon baptized 500 enslaved persons and established schools for their education. As the work grew, Liele and another pioneer, Moses Baker, sought help from the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS). They sent John Rowe in 1814, soon followed by William Knibb, James Phillippo, and others. These missionaries facilitated the development of the Baptist work among the enslaved.

Their narrow focus was to save the soul, while ignoring the conditions of slavery. However, the saved enslaved read the Bible and came to a different interpretation. One such enslaved person was Baptist deacon, Sam Sharpe, who claimed that slavery was inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible. Hence in 1831, he organized enslaved persons and agitated for them to be treated and paid as workers. Because the leaders were Baptists, the resulting conflict was called the “Baptist War.” This resistance was believed to be the catalyst that led to the Act of Emancipation.

Under the Emancipation Act, the enslaved were to serve a period of six years apprenticeship effective in 1834. The apprentices believed that the houses they lived in and plots of land they cultivated were theirs. However, when apprenticeship ended in 1838, the emancipated Africans were required by the planters to pay rent or move from houses they had built and plots they had cultivated. It was, therefore, left to the missionaries and the Africans to seek alternative economic solutions. The Baptist missionaries built 22 Free Villages,⁶ the first one in 1838 by Phillippo. These consisted of houses, churches and schools. The early Baptists facilitated a reasonable standard of living, stable family life and a place to worship.⁷

Native Baptists broke away from the English Baptist-dominated church around 1837. New congregations were formed which became the nucleus of the Jamaica Native Baptist Missionary Society (JNBMS) founded around 1839/40. By 1841, they had 13,687 members.⁸ One reason for the establishment of JNBMS was to redress the exclusion and prejudice by English Baptist missionaries of persons of African descent who wanted to become pastors. They challenged the colonizers’ interpretation of the Bible. They were engaging in what would now be called a hermeneutic of suspicion.⁹ They advocated that they were free to have their own interpretation of the Bible. Native Baptists were incorporated into the English Baptist-

dominated Jamaica Baptist Union by 1883¹⁰ and are no longer in existence as most of the leaders were killed.

Native Baptist leaders Paul Bogle and George William Gordon, now recognized as national heroes, were in the forefront in agitating on behalf of persons who were experiencing economic woes and an oppressive justice system. In October 1865, Bogle and his followers marched to the Morant Bay Courthouse to protest continued injustices. They were fired upon and the ensuing melee and subsequent actions led to the deaths of 18 persons of the ruling class and thousands of peasants. This watershed event known as “the 1865 Native Baptist War” was followed by better governance and the disestablishment of the Anglican Church.

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Nonconformists were compelled, by taxation, to pay heavily for the support of the Anglican Church.¹¹ Gordon argued, as a member of the Assembly, that the Church of England in Jamaica should be disestablished as had previously been done in Australia and Canada. Phillippo, on conscientious convictions, also petitioned for the separation of Church and State and in 1870 the Church of England was disestablished as the State Church. This meant the discontinuance of the annual subvention from general revenue to the Anglicans for church expenses, including paying organists.¹² Disestablishment was a victory for Baptists as it upheld the principle of freedom of religion, and rejected the notion of offering financial incentives to a preferred group.

Baptists in Jamaica have other sig-

nificant accomplishments. In 1843, Baptists were the first to establish theological education which also had a teacher training component.¹³ Baptists created an educational system of a better standard than public education, used more indigenous material and allowed greater access for the disadvantaged. By 2013, Baptists owned or leased 154 schools, or 10% of the schools in Jamaica. They have three high schools, 85 early childhood institutions and 66 all age (6-15 years old) and primary (6-12 year olds) schools.

In 1999, the Jamaica Baptist Union had dental clinics and medical clinics operated by 17 churches in nine of the 14 parishes.¹⁴ There are 300 Baptist churches and many of them are used as shelters during natural disasters. They also offer counseling to persons who are troubled and those are starting a new life in Jesus.

Jamaican Baptists played a role in religious freedom through its advocacy for full freedom and the right for all denominations to be treated fairly and equally. Because of the role of Baptists in the struggle against slavery and for the development of Jamaica, post-emancipation, the Christian faith gained acceptance. According to census figures even as late as 1943, 90% of the population was affiliated to the Church.¹⁵ The Baptists, local and foreign, played a significant role in the acceptance of Christianity as the religion of choice. But that did not happen without difficulty.

Persecution, the Price of Religious Freedom

In the 19th century, dissenters in Jamaica were persecuted for praying. Dissenters would include Independents, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Quakers, Methodists, Moravians and Baptists.¹⁶ On January 5, 1830, John Dyer of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) wrote to Sir George Murray, secretary of state to Colonies, saying, “One of my people is now in jail, for praying after eight o’clock.”¹⁷ In the early 1830s, for a sectarian preacher to be granted a preaching license, he would

have to register a certificate with the Bishop's Court.¹⁸

After the Sam Sharpe protest of 1831, there was a religious clash between the dissenters and the Colonial Church Union whose aim was to "give triumph to true religion" through the destruction of worship places of dissenting missionaries.¹⁹ The ultimate aim was to "Leave not a Place of Worship except the Established Churches of England and Scotland standing."²⁰ Dissenters in general and Baptist missionaries in particular were harassed and persecuted.

Furthermore, enslaved persons were persecuted for praying. For instance, Old Virgil, a Baptist leader of Windsor Lodge, was executed without trial in 1832. Clarke related the event:

He inquired of Captain Hylton if he was to be hanged for praying to God? The savage man, full of enmity to religion, answered "Yes." Then said the old

Christian, "Hang me up at once, that I may go to my Father."²¹

Prayer was an integral aspect of the religious life of persons of African origin but they engaged in prayer at their peril. The slave owners could enslave the body but could not quench or stop prayer from flowing freely to God. Public praying was also used as an act of defiance against the laws designed to prevent religious freedom.

These acts of denying religious freedom to the enslaved were not random acts of social deviants but were legal stipulations. Liele himself was imprisoned on a charge of sedition for a sermon he preached from Romans 10:1²² which stated, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." This Biblical reference seemed innocuous, but not to the authorities.

Obstacles were placed in the way of the enslaved receiving the gospel when in 1802 a bill was passed to prevent persons who were not qualified by law from preaching.²³ Son of a Baptist missionary, George

Henderson said, "The Slave Law passed in 1810 had prohibited any further teaching or preaching by men of the African race."²⁴ Furthermore, the Consolidated Slave Law of 1816 meant that "for the crime of worshipping God without their masters' permission, they were ever liable for punishment."²⁵

The dominant missionary Christian expression despised dissenters and persecuted the growing minority religious in the late 19th century.²⁶ Jews were perceived as "descended from the crucifiers of the blessed Jesus."²⁷ Indian indentured workers commenced arriving in Jamaica in 1845 and brought with them their religious faith of Hinduism. The Chinese migrated to Jamaica in 1854²⁸ bringing with them their Buddhist and

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Confucian beliefs.²⁹ Non-Christian religions were soon outlawed and Hindus and Muslims had to congregate in secret.³⁰

A Threat to Religious Freedom: Cooptation of the Church

Powerful interests whether pre-emption or post-emption tended to try and influence the content of preaching as a subtle way to control the thoughts and actions of citizens. In addition, Christians in general and Baptists in particular have too often been timid and mild.

For instance, in 1968, preachers were warned to be careful about what they said in their sermons in the aftermath of the Walter Rodney Riots in America on October 16,

1968.³¹ Guyanese-born Rodney (1942-80) was a Black Power advocate and Marxist lecturer at University of the West Indies Mona who was later declared *persona non grata* by Jamaica. His banishment from Jamaica, because of his advocacy for the working poor, caused riots which claimed the lives of several people. Following a meeting with the prime minister, Anglican Church and Methodist leaders, a circular was published which stated: "In the present state of security on the country, clergymen should not say anything against the government which would tend to inflame".³² This is a clear restriction of religious freedom under the guise of protecting national security, and is a throwback to the 1830s. In 1832, Moravians asked rhetorically, "Do we, indeed, preach that a slave cannot serve his earthly and his heavenly master at the same time?" and then they added, "Far be this from us."³³ These ideas are reinforced faithfully by inculcating the apostolic precept from 1 Pet. 9:8 which states, "Servants be obedient to your masters . . ."³⁴ The Moravians preached that the slave owners wanted the enslaved to be submissive, hard-working and honest. This was the approach of missionaries in general at that time and was a weakness of the traditional churches.

The Church, as the collective prophetic Christian presence, has been largely silent in the last couple of decades. The Jamaica Council of Churches (JCC) was established in 1941 with 10 denominations of which Baptists were a leading member. Statements published by JCC have been mild. Baptist scholar, Neville Callam, writing in *Voicing Concern*, quotes a selection of JCC statements from 1941-2003. The issues most frequently mentioned were governance (mainly electoral matters), crime and violence; and gambling. It is understandable that crime and violence would receive such attention because Jamaica has a very high murder rate. However, Jamaica's income disparity is among the highest in the world, with high unemployment rates and

low minimum wages that call out for prophetic pronouncements. Jamaica is burdened with business-inhibiting corruption and bureaucracy. Apparently the JCC has muzzled itself, based on the policy shift in 1999 enunciated by a former general secretary of the JCC, Norman Mills, who said, "The JCC took a decision that, instead of making frequent public statements on developments of public interest, it would, from time to time, seek opportunity for direct dialogue with the parties concerned."³⁵ This statement appears to assume that public statements and dialogue are mutually exclusive. Perhaps, the reason for the pull-back from frequent public statements is due to the harsh criticisms leveled at the JCC of being politically biased.

Jamaican Christians have used their privileged and dominant status to propagate the gospel; but the church has also abused its influential position by standing silent in the face of societal and legal discrimination against African religious expressions. It has been illegal from the 19th century to practice Obeah and to consult with practitioners of Obeah and Voodoo.³⁶ It is a threat to religious freedom to criminalize those who believe, practice or promote Obeah,³⁷ and the Church's failure to agitate against Obeah law shows a weak commitment to religious freedom, especially practices in which no one is harmed.

Other African religious expressions such as Pocomania, Zion Revival and Kumina are not seen as genuine religious expressions but are tolerated for cultural and entertainment value. Even with the advent in the 1970s of religious education in schools as a subject, rather than Bible knowledge, these African religious expressions are not taught in an objective manner and would not be received in the schools and public functions as part of an ecumenical religious group. Up until 1998, Mormonism had a rough passage getting acceptance in Parliament. These are examples of the lack of full religious freedom.

Public Religious Observances: Threats and Opportunities

The most public worship experience for Church and State is the National Prayer Breakfast which started in the wake of the violent General Election of 1980 which saw approximately 800 Jamaicans killed in a year of political campaigning. The first prayer breakfast preacher was Burchell Taylor, one of the vice presidents of the Baptist World Alliance. At the 1986 National Prayer Breakfast, the Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Church, made his most famous national statement: "No more snap elections, no more boycotts." This was in response to the prime minister's calling a snap elections in 1983 and the opposition leader's boycotting the general elections.

At the 1997 National Prayer

"The Slave Law passed in 1810 had prohibited any further teaching or preaching by men of the African race. Furthermore, the Consolidated Slave Law of 1816 meant that "for the crime of worshipping God without their masters' permission, they were ever liable for punishment."

Breakfast, Dr. Sam Vassell passionately bemoaned the economic inequities which caused him to be unable to own a home. In 2007, Karl Johnson, General Secretary of the JBU, highlighted the high crime rate in the country. These and other sermons have caused some powerful persons to be perturbed. There has always been pressure to preach what the powerful want to hear rather than speaking truth to power. Coaching of preachers could become a threat to religious freedom and since the National Prayer Breakfast is fully sponsored by a private sector company, it might intimi-

date organizers to select preachers who are safe and preachers might be scared to tackle the improper economic practices of the business community. It would be in poor taste to bite the hand that feeds the preacher.

Evidence of this is that, in 1987, on the 25th anniversary of a cigarette company, Carreras Ltd., there was a thanksgiving church service at the St. James Cathedral in Spanish Town. Anglican Bishop, Neville DeSouza was the preacher and said "Cigarette smoking is not the fault of those who make cigarettes, for people smoke to reduce certain anxieties in themselves."³⁸

In addition, some churches behave with a sense of entitlement which is a legacy of the state church. Some religious groups revel in the preference shown by the state without any consciousness of the lurking threats and those who are excluded. Sometimes governments disburse benefits to a church group that is considered the flavor of the month with the governing party. It is possible that the request for tax waivers and the granting of these by government could compromise the church's speaking without fear and favor. These are real and imminent threats to religious freedom.

There is a Charter of Rights which legally offers every Jamaican religious freedom. There are many provisions in Jamaica's Charter of Fundamental Rights 2011 which, among other things, guarantees:

religious freedom such as any person who is arrested or detained shall have a right to communicate with and be visited by a religious counselor of his or her choice; Everybody shall have the right to freedom of religion and to manifest and propagate his religion in teaching, practice, worship and observance. Every religious body or denomination has the right to provide religious instruction for persons of that body or denomination, in the course of any education provided by that body or denomination.

No person shall be forced in an educational institution to receive religious instruction other than his or her own or to take part or attend religious ceremony. Persons are entitled to freedom of thought, conscience, belief, and observance of religious doctrines and freedom from discrimination based on the ground of religion (www.moj.gov.jm).

In the 21st century, Jamaica has no documentation of religious detainees or prisoners and no reports of forced conversion from one religion to another. Myth has it that Jamaica has more churches per square mile than any other country and, as of 1999, had 547 denominations listed with the Registrar of Companies and 68 denominations incorporated by an Act of Parliament.³⁹ There is freedom to start churches and denominations and Jamaicans freely use this opportunity.

Praying in the public space is a feature of Jamaican life. It is common to pray at the start of cabinet and government meetings, political gatherings and campaigns, before school and examinations starts, and in the middle of the day. Since the 1970s, Jamaicans have had Midday Meditations on RJR, Jamaica's largest radio station. Thwaites relates this story:

"I have more than once attempted to begin a meeting in Jamaica by slapping the desk and saying, "OK, everybody's here. Let's go!" when a more experienced colleague or comrade will sternly remind me that "We ALWAYS begin wid prыз!"⁴⁰

Prayer permeates the air of Jamaica with uninhibited frequency. In addition, every significant celebration opens the week with a church service such as Education Week, Maritime Week, and almost every business organization starts with a church service.

The beginning of various gatherings with prayer is a legacy of

Christendom that has gone hand-in-hand with colonial expansionism and the role of the Church played in the missionary enterprise. The blessing of every activity is reminiscent of every colonial expansion seeking the blessing of God and the Pope dividing the world among European nations in the 15th century and present-day army chaplains praying for victory for an army. At times prayer to the Christian God is said in public space without regard to other persons of differing religious faith. But there are Christians who do not use prayer to monopolize gatherings for its own end, but to facilitate a relationship and dependence upon God and as a manifestation of religious freedom.

At a forum with Police Commissioner, Rear Admiral Hardley Lewin,

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a policeman pointed out that a detectives' examination originally scheduled to be held on a Saturday had been rescheduled to facilitate Saturday worshippers. Lewin added that it would not be fair to anyone whose sub officer was habitually assigning him or her to duties on their day of worship.⁴¹ The Court has also made it clear that there is a place for religious observance in the conduct of work and some educational institutions have made concessions for classes and examinations based on religious preferences. In 2009, Patrick Allen became the first Seventh Day Adventist pastor to be offered the

position as a head of state and he does not perform duties on his day of worship. There is respect for persons' religious peculiarities.

Then there were allegations against the Church of restricting religious expression. The *Gleaner* extracts from the *US International Religious Freedom Report for 2012* issued in 2013 states "In Jamaica, the State Department says there were reports of societal discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice, stating that Rastafarians alleged the overwhelmingly Christian population discriminated against them, although there were signs of increasing acceptance. Rastafarians said that elements of their religion, such as wearing dreadlocks and smoking marijuana, presented barriers to their ability to find employment and achieve professional status in the official economy."⁴²

There is growing acceptance of Rastafarianism especially with the popularity of reggae icon Bob Marley, the most famous Rastafarian. Furthermore, students can wear dreadlocks to school on the grounds of religion. Indeed there is growing acceptance of Rastafarianism which is a strength of religious freedom.

As church historian Dale Bisnauth observed, all major religions of the world are found in the Caribbean, and there exists a remarkable degree of mutual tolerance. This tolerance is discernible and applicable to Jamaica.

Secularism is a belief which rejects religion and religious considerations and religious explanations. The goal is a separation of state and church, not in the classic sense of not favoring one belief system over another, but that there would be no religious activity in public schools or any state institutions. The rise of secularism has made some atheists and agnostics bold in declaring their beliefs and freely expressing themselves. The push for acceptance of homosexuality is led mainly by secularists. However, there are some Church leaders who perceive the promoters of homosexuality as a threat to religious freedom. Clergyman Bruce Fletcher believes

that the homosexual agenda wants criticism of the lifestyle as a hate crime and punishable thereby reducing “religious freedom and freedom of speech.”⁴³ However, as of now there is no restriction on criticism of homosexuality.

CONCLUSION

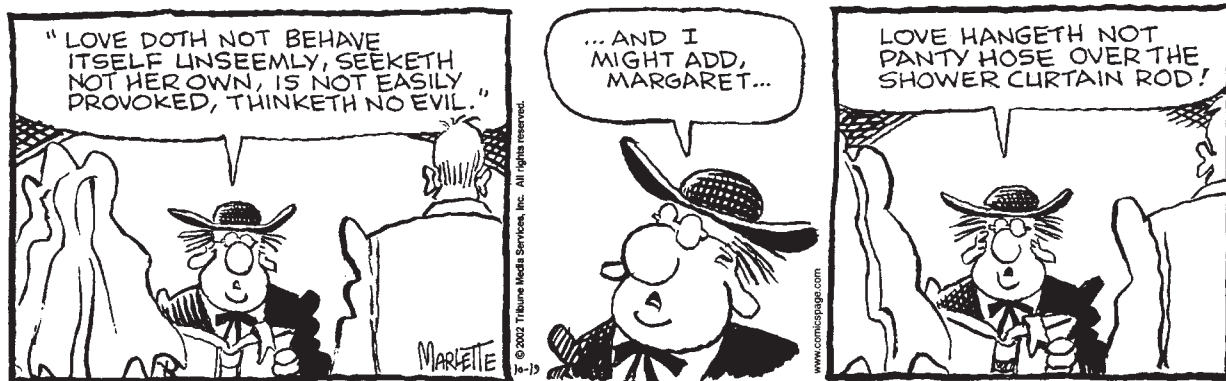
Christianity has a historic privileged position in society and has no legal fetters to restrict her ministry. There was greater overt risk in being a Christian in the time before the 19th century than now. Baptists in particular and Christians in general should be in the forefront of fighting for the maintenance of religious freedom for all based on being persecuted in the past. As guardians of religious freedom and being committed to religious freedom it means engaging in a prophetic witness of agitating for the equality of all and justice for all. ■

Devon Dick is an evangelist, pastor, and journalist in Jamaica. This essay was presented as a Baptist World Alliance Religious Freedom Commission Lecture in Ocho Rios, Jamaica in July, 2013.

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An Advisor's Perspective on Prophets and Profits

By Gary Moore

It first happened to me around 1980. An affluent Jewish widow rejected my recommendation that she invest in a triple A-rated bond that would pay 14% tax-free. She essentially helped me to understand that despite the financial benefit to her, Moses had climbed Mt. Sinai to see things from a higher perspective than those in the valley who were preoccupied with their own lives. Now she was concerned the bond would finance a power plant that might not be safe for those around the plant.

I had attended a Christian church most Sundays during my youth and was the president of my church at the time. But I had never been encouraged to think about connecting my faith and investments. Still, the client's ethic intrigued me, particularly when the power plant grew troubled. When reviewing the Jewish scriptures, I discovered just how seriously Moses had taken the concept of what we call social responsibility. He actually made it a capital offense to habitually ignore how one's wealth was affecting others (see the *Bible, Book of Exodus*, Chapter 21, Verse 28). He also said the owners of wealth have responsibilities for the environment, to provide affordable credit, to avoid speculation in real estate, and so on. There were few ancient asset classes to which he didn't apply his ethic.

At the peak of concerns about junk bonds and junk CD's during the late-80s, I contemplated seminary to study such matters. I discovered the seminaries of my major denomination no longer taught anything about the ethics of personal finance or political-economy, even though those were favorite topics of the prophets who followed Moses. I realized lack of training, as well as general ignorance of modern finance on the part of most clergy who rarely make enough to have substantial personal

investments, was a major reason the only thing I had heard about money in church was that I should give some to my church. So rather than attend seminary, I wrote a book about investing with a religious ethic for my denomination. After a commercial printer published it, *Christianity Today* called it the first modern book on the subject.

I also became an independent planner and founded The Financial Seminary to build bridges between the financial and moral communities.

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I've since had many opportunities to learn that investors have many moral concerns, even if few are mentioned to advisors and most advisors don't ask. Only a month ago, the head of a Christian family foundation rejected my recommendation to invest in a healthcare reit (real estate investment trust). Even though the reit promised much-needed income and capital gains, she was concerned that abortions might be performed in the facilities. Her concern made my job slightly more difficult but I quickly found another reit for her. And I had to admire the way she lived her beliefs. That made both of us happy.

Such experiences have often caused me to wonder how often prospects and clients question our ethics, even when they make money. More advi-

sors should do so. The latest Edelman public relations survey said that five years after the financial crisis that ignited the Great Recession, people still trust the financial services profession least of the 18 professions surveyed. A friend who's a nationally syndicated advocate for small business has long believed Wall Street has become the enemy of small business. Last month, a report of research by two German economists even said capitalism may be making us "evil." Finally, Pope Francis gave a speech recently in which he said the fact that money that has been disconnected from traditional ethics is causing many of the world's problems.

Pragmatically, none of that is helping our business, or the American economy as trust is the lubricant of capitalism. That lubricant nearly dried up during the Great Recession and retail investors are still skeptical of the stock market. Wall Street might re-lubricate the wheels of industry, as well as quiet squeaky wheels in Washington, if we look harder at the varied ethics of investors. I've grown to believe there are three broad bands on the moral spectrum through which advisors might see most investors.

We might call the first, and smallest, group the "communitarians." As demonstrated by my examples, they are often affluent and educated women who are deeply committed to religions and philosophies developed in the Middle and Far East. In America, that primarily means older expressions of Christianity, such as Roman Catholicism, Calvinism (primarily Presbyterians), Methodism and the Mennonites, but also Judaism and Islam. Regardless of sect, these investors essentially agree with Gandhi who taught the holistic perspective that, "One man cannot do right in one department of life whilst he is

occupied in doing wrong in any other department. Life is one indivisible whole." It simply troubles the hearts and minds of these investors when we counsel to invest in the tobacco industry, in which I grew up, while giving a portion of the profits to the American Cancer Society.

While we might not agree, advisors should at least respect that there have long been money managers who appeal to such investors, as well as provide affirmation of their perspective. For example, I was a friend of Sir John Templeton, the "dean of global investing." I've written three books about Sir John and served on the board of his foundation. John studied economics at Yale before becoming a Rhodes Scholar in England. So he was quite conscious that Europeans had helped to finance America's railroads and canals when America was a developing nation. So he thought it was time for affluent North Americans to help other nations, which his mutual fund company helped investors do.

John was deeply committed to philanthropy, which he termed "the best investment anyone can make." Yet he also understood the tens of billions his mutual fund company prudently and ethically invested in lesser-developed nations could do far more good. I agreed. Americans are the most charitable people on earth, giving about \$300 billion last year. America gave about \$50 billion in official foreign aid. Yet Bain & Co has estimated there is \$600 trillion of investment capital circulating our world each day, and there will be \$900 trillion by the end of this decade. Total American charity and foreign aid are therefore less than one-tenth of one percent of global capital.

John was a Calvinist, once known as Puritans. So he had made it policy to avoid investments in the so-called "sin stocks" of primarily alcohol, tobacco and gambling companies. He believed patience was a virtue so he held his stocks five years on average, five times longer than the average mutual fund manager does today. Being a true investor, he actually cared how CEOs

manage companies. He famously once sold a stock before leaving a CEOs office as the CEO offered John a morning drink. None of that prudence and ethic prevented John from producing legendary returns. In fact, he believed and taught the paradox that applying ancient spiritual and ethical principles to modern investing was responsible for not only his remarkable returns, but his favorable reputation and considerable joy in life.

During recent decades, Judeo-Christians -- like Methodist minister Luther Tyson who founded the Pax World fund and the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR), a coalition of primarily Roman Catholic investors who steward over \$100 billion -- have advanced the concept of "socially, or sustainably, responsible investing" (SRI). It's often estimated that 11 percent of professionally managed money integrates some traditional ethic. Yet the even smaller number of Muslims in America may actually be the most holistic of investors. Professor Seyyed Nasr, who served on the board of the Templeton Foundation when I did, wrote in *The Heart of Islam*:

"The area known as economics was never isolated by itself in Islamic society. It was always combined with ethics. That is why the very acceptance of economics as an independent domain, not to speak of as the dominating factor in life according to the prevailing paradigms of the modern world [ie, Western-style capitalism], is devastating to the Islamic view of human life."

In short, not only might SRI investors be pursuing a more prudent, ethical and trust-worthy marketplace, they might be pursuing more world peace.

The second smallest group might be called "individualists." Many follow a new morality termed Objectivism, a philosophy founded by Ayn Rand during the 1960s specifically for Western-style capitalism. Rand literally mentored Alan Greenspan and later

greatly influenced Michael Milken, Ted Turner and many other leaders of Washington, Wall Street and corporate America. *The Economist* has even said her philosophy was the foundation of Reaganomics. The Library of Congress has therefore named her book *Atlas Shrugged* the second most influential in America, after the Bible. I actually believe it's *the* most influential when it comes to business and investing.

Rand wanted to be remembered as the greatest enemy of traditional religion in history. She even wrote to a friend that she would establish "a new faith" for Judeo-Christians who found their faiths to be irrelevant in our capitalist culture. Many business elites believe that. When a local paper did a feature on my Financial Seminary, it also interviewed a disciple of Rand who taught business ethics at Duke. Though the business school at Duke is named for J.B. Fuqua of Fuqua Industries, with whom I served on the board of a major Christian ministry, the professor argued that traditional "religion is incompatible with the profit motive."

Advisors should understand that Christians wear crosses to signify societies are "more abundant," in the words of Jesus, when we sacrifice half the road to others, or love our neighbors as ourselves. But Rand wore the dollar sign to signify her belief in "the virtue of selfishness," the title of one of her books. It explained that "it is only in emergency situations," such as shipwrecks, that we have any responsibilities for those in need. In short, she did not exactly advance the ancient notion of social responsibility. Advisors should also be aware that Nobel-economist Milton Friedman famously and pointedly taught that making money is the only social responsibility of business.

Ironically, Rand's selfishness may have prompted her to let others assume the risks of capitalism. Despite being called "the goddess of capitalism," Rand was much like many Americans since the onset of the Great Recession in that she invested only in

government-guaranteed CD's, even though she detested government nearly as much as traditional religion. Despite Rand's separating her beliefs from her money, Objectivists may still be the most passionate about their beliefs. And advisors will not endear themselves by suggesting investors are their "brother's keeper."

The largest group of American investors, and therefore the one most advisors might best understand, might be termed "the compartmentalized." They usually practice the communal ethic in their philanthropy but the individualist ethic in their investing. Here you might think of Ken Lay, the CEO of Enron. He gave a lot of money to charity and was even on the board of the ministry with J.B. Fuqua and myself. But the implosion of Enron hurt a lot of investors, employees and others who had no idea what Enron was. So he will not be remembered as personification of the Judeo-Christian ethic. Still, Ken has a lot of company in American religion.

Peter Drucker, an acquaintance who taught theology before becoming a renowned management expert, wrote that business ethics no longer resemble the traditional Judeo-Christian ethic of treating all humankind with equal love. Religious sociologist George Barna has estimated that fewer than 10 percent of American Christians actually integrate their faith with any daily activity. I believe even fewer investors do. A primary reason is that Andrew Carnegie's famous *Gospel of Wealth* essentially taught God is not concerned with how we create wealth as long as we give it away before we die. That is, God is concerned with philanthropy but not economics, an unspoken sermon we get from most clergy each Sunday. Professor Doug Meeks, author of *God The Economist*, has therefore written that Carnegie is actually America's "most influential theologian" (emphasis mine)."

The separation of faith and daily activities, and particularly economic activities, is what we call secularism, which many confuse with atheism. This functional atheism is most prevalent in America among younger expressions of Christianity that have grown in number and affluence since Carnegie preached his gospel. Most adherents are loosely termed "evangelicals." Many unquestioningly embrace Western-style capitalism to the point of practicing "prosperity gospel." Ironically, they usually seek prosperity so they can practice more charity and propagate their new economic version of Christianity. Prosperity gospel has therefore swept Latin America, Africa and most other places evangelicals have targeted.

When clients seek to manage money with fear and greed while preaching faith and charity, advisors can become confused, especially those advisors who know what Jesus taught about money. So can advisors who know something about politics and marvel that clients who detest government often insist on government-guaranteed investments. So considerable nuance is necessary. Most of those so-called evangelicals are indeed socially and politically conservative. But most are also unwitting economic liberals, from a theological perspective, as they mix biblical thought about charity with Rand's new thought about economics and politics.

I detailed that phenomenon in a September 2010 article for *Christianity Today*. You can find that article on its website by researching her name. The article noted the most visible evangelical financial celebrities have actually *resisted* the SRI movement during recent decades, and still do today. Advisors should understand that not only do those celebrities have little, if any, experience in investing, most have little or no theological training. So they often assume, and teach millions, that SRI is a "new

age" movement that must cost investors money. By essentially preferring higher return to higher ethics, they unwittingly second Rand's notion that the moral purpose of our lives is to make as much money as possible, even if to simply give it away as Carnegie taught.

Still, advisors should be aware that the odd combination of polarized beliefs, often called "syncretism" by theologians, may be changing, albeit very slowly. A small but growing number of conservative Christian advisors have developed "biblically responsible investing," or BRI. It's a politically conservative version of SRI that emphasizes sexual morality while diminishing concerns about the environment, armaments, and most corporate governance issues. Yet I expect it will be years before most advisors are asked about BRI. By definition, political conservatives are slow to embrace social movements. But the moral movements for abolition, women's suffrage, and civil rights may suggest BRI's time is coming. I'd guess that will require leaders of "Bible-believing" Christians to see that socially responsible wealth creation has long been a more recommended route on the Judeo-Christian map to the promised land than has charity. Until that day, advisors will need to nuance the various moral directions that investors are currently wandering in the financial desert... and we should help all investors stay up to date on tax laws and charitable giving techniques to help solve our world's problems. ■

*Gary Moore has a degree in political science and was a senior vice president with Paine Webber before founding The Financial Seminary (www.financialseminary.org). His latest book that might interest advisors and investors is *Faithful Finances 101* from the Templeton Foundation Press. He can be reached at Garmoco@hotmail.com.*

Lament from a White Father

By Jim Wallis

It's time for white people — especially white parents — to listen, to learn, and to speak out on the terribly painful loss of Trayvon Martin.

If my white 14-year-old son Luke had walked out that same night, in that same neighborhood, just to get a snack he would have come back to his dad unharmed — and would still be with me and Joy today. Everyone, being honest with ourselves, knows that is true. But when black 17-year-old Trayvon Martin went out that night, just to get a snack, he ended up dead — and is no longer with his dad and mom. Try to imagine how that feels, as his parents.

It was a political, legal, and moral mistake to not put race at the center of this trial because it was at the center from the beginning of this terrible case. Many are now saying, “There was a trial; the results must be accepted.” How well the case against George Zimmerman was prosecuted, how fair the tactics of the defense were, the size and selection of the jury, how narrowly their instructions were given — all will be the subject of legal discussions for a very long time.

But while the legal verdicts of this trial must be accepted, the larger social meaning of court cases and verdicts must be dealt with, especially as they impact the moral quality of our society.

This is not just about verdicts but also about values.

And the impact of race in and on this case, this trial, and the response to it around the country must now all be centrally addressed.

There is no doubt that this whole tragedy began with the racial profiling of Trayvon Martin. In George Zimmerman's comments, rationales, and actions, the identity of Trayvon as a young black man was absolutely central. Both sides in the courtroom admitted that.

And when the defense put up as a witness a white woman who had been robbed by a black man as central to why Zimmerman picked out Trayvon Martin to follow and stalk — it really said it all. Was she robbed by Trayvon Martin? No. So why should he be suspect because of another black robber? That is racial profiling. Period.

As the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr. said in his most famous “I Have a Dream” speech, whose 50th anniversary is coming up this August 24th:

“I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”

King's dream failed on February 26, 2012, in Sanford, Fla., when George Zimmerman decided to follow Trayvon Martin because of the color of his skin. This led to a confrontation in which a child was killed by an adult who got away with it, because of the way Florida laws were written and interpreted.

What exactly happened between Zimmerman and Martin will never be known, because the boy is dead and the adult did not have to testify and be cross-examined. How a black boy responded to a strange man who was following him, and what the stranger did with that, is a story we can never really know. But regardless of the verdict that rests on narrow definitions of self-defense and reasonable doubt, it is absolutely clear that racial profiling was present in this whole incident.

And racial profiling is a sin in the eyes of God. It should also be a crime in the eyes of our society, and the laws we enact to protect each other and our common good.

White parents should ask black parents what they were talking about with their children this weekend. It is a long-standing conversation between

black dads and moms, especially with their boys, about how to carefully behave in the presence of police officers with guns. Now they must add any stranger who *might* have a gun and *could* claim they were fearful of a black man and had to shoot. The spread of legalized carried-and-concealed weapons and the generous self-defense laws that accompany the guns will lead to the death of more black men in particular.

Death is horrible enough. But systematic injustice — one that allows white boys to assume success, yet leads black boys to cower from the very institutions created to protect our own wellbeing — is a travesty. Listen to the stories from Saturday and Sunday nights, of 12-year-old black boys who asked to sleep in bed with their parents because they were afraid. If black youth in America can't rely on the police, the law, or their own neighborhood for protection — where can they go?

This is one of those painful moments which reveal an utterly segregated society, in reality and perception alike. White people have almost no idea of what black people are thinking and feeling — even the parents of their children's friends from school or sports teams who are black. Trust me: most white people over this past weekend, whether conservatives or liberals, had almost no idea of what was happening in virtually every black family in America.

Finally, there is a religious message here for all Christians. If there ever was a time that demonstrated why racially and culturally diverse congregations are needed — that time is now. The body of Christ is meant, instructed, and commanded by Christ to be racially inclusive. If white Christians stay in our mostly-white churches and talk mostly to each other

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White Noise: Christian Whispers and Shouts on the Trayvon Martin Case

by Elizabeth Drescher

"I don't want to say this in a public forum," began the first email message in response to my blog post yesterday on my own hesitation to attend church—to participate in "the most segregated hour in America"—on a day when I suspected there would be little real engagement with the issues underlying the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the killing of Trayvon Martin. The writer went on to describe her progressive, white, suburban church's response—or lack thereof—to the verdict. "I almost burst into tears at the 'white noise' of the liturgy," she wrote.

Through the day, I would receive 43 such emails,* another four of them this morning, most beginning with some version of the confession that what the writer was about to share was not something that she or he could say on Facebook or Twitter, where congregants, clergy, or colleagues might read it. They came from laypeople (29) and clergy (18); from seminary and university professors (five) and seminarians (12).** Most of the writers (41) were white, but African American (four), Latina/o (one), and Asian (one) correspondents from mostly white churches also contacted me—they, too, expressing a reluctance to speak publicly about how the Martin case was addressed in their churches.

"I could almost feel the physical strain of members of my almost all white congregation—we're the only black family—trying not to look at me and my daughters as the pastor talked about 'who is my neighbor' in the sermon without saying anything about the young man killed on the side of the road in Florida," a former student from Ohio told me. But, he explained, he didn't want to make his teenaged daughters feel any more

awkward or uncomfortable than he worried they already did. "I didn't want to make a thing out of it," he said, "but I was hurt by it."

A seminarian who is interning at a church in Michigan asked her supervising rector if she should add something to the Prayers of the People about the killing of Trayvon Martin and the trial verdict. "Only if you want an empty collection plate," the rector responded.

Several laypeople talked about wanting to discuss how their churches might respond to the case in the wider community, but they had no idea how to broach the subject in the congregation or with their clergy. "I've only been here for a few months," one person wrote. "I'm not sure it's my place to say what we should be doing as a community."

Another wrote, "I was so angry after the sermon today. It was so abstract—nothing to do with anything in the real world, least of all the Trayvon Martin case. But," she continued, "I'm just getting to know the new rector, and I don't want to stand out as a complainer at this point. I'm disappointed with myself, but I didn't feel like I should say anything."

Still another confessed, "I don't go all that often, but I did want to be there today. I guess I just expected that something would be said to acknowledge the whole situation and help me sort through it. There was nothing besides 'love thy neighbor' fluff. But I only go maybe once a month or so. Who am I to complain?"

The tone of the comments I received through the day highlighted this silence from the pulpit and from parishioners themselves, and the "white noise" humming over it, so consistently that by evening I was

still mulling the Parable of the Good Samaritan. A comment a friend had posted on Facebook on the Saturday the verdict was announced turned over and over in my head. Then, having noted the gospel reading set in the Common Lectionary, I'd tweeted, "Hey preachers: Luke 10:25-37 for tomorrow. Time to change it up."

My friend Matt responded, drawing on a teaching of David Steindl-Rast, that one of the ways in which the Good Samaritan story addressed the idea of social privilege was in the inability or unwillingness of the legal expert quizzing Jesus to so much as say "Samaritan."

"When Jesus asked 'who was a neighbor to the beaten man?,'" Matt wrote, "the only answer the lawyer could give was 'the one who showed him mercy.' He could not even name the Samaritan. At this moment, what are we unable to even name that gets to the core of the matter?"

Certainly, the bigger answer to Matt's question includes things like "white privilege" and "racism," things like "justice" and "equity." But it also struck me that there was a simpler silence that brought these more complex concepts to a human level: the silence in many churches around the very name of the teenager who was killed in Florida, Trayvon Martin—the slain young man who calls into question all of our theological musings about what it means to treat someone as a "neighbor."

As a starting point, I thought, we at least need to be saying and hearing that name in our churches, holding the reality of the lost human life it stands for in our hearts. In my multi-tasking way, I was thinking about this while also scanning Twitter where, on most Sunday evenings, a wide selection of the day's sermons begin pop-

ping up from around the U.S. and across the globe. One after another, I clicked through them—16 in total before I lost patience, at which point I tweeted:

If you preached a sermon today w/out saying the name Trayvon Martin, you need to rethink your vocation. Just sayin...

Almost immediately, a flurry of clergy began complaining on Twitter and Facebook that I'd been unfair, insulting, judgmental, arrogant, unkind, thoughtless, and more. I hadn't, I was told, considered congregational contexts and sensitivities, the difficulty of changing up sermons on the fly in light of the responsibilities of a clergyperson on Sunday, the need for time to reflect before speaking, and so on. Perhaps most, I was taken to task for calling into question people's vocations.

Now, with good reason, clergy can be a defensive lot when called to task, fairly or otherwise. For one thing, most clergy I know are called to task quite often by various parishioners on issues ranging from drone strikes, to the offertory hymn, to the brand of tissue in the loo. Most are overworked, and underpaid, and pretty much all of them, like teachers and nurses, are undervalued in the culture. Many people inside the church and out assume that, outside of presiding and preaching at Sunday services, a clergyperson's day consists mainly of reflecting on scripture, taking tea with the odd ailing shut-in, and organizing Bible-themed games for the youth group. This could hardly be further from the truth in all but the very rarest of cases. But the result of the skewed perception means that many clergy live in a sour spot between the assumption that they do only what is seen in public and complaints about their performance therein.

So, it seems easy to understand the touchiness of many clergypeople when anyone pokes around at vocations they commit to against very great, often very daily, pressures to do otherwise. I get it. And, I'll grant that my words were strong. Perhaps

I might, as one commentator suggested, have asked how clergy had approached discussing the verdict in their congregations. If not in the sermon, I might have queried, why not? How otherwise was the topic explored?

I might have done that. But the truth is that I don't expect the ensuing conversation would have been especially meaningful. I don't think this moment in the moral history of the country calls for genteel reflection. And, I can't imagine very many congregational contexts in the American Church in which a note from the pulpit that the nation is (once again) struggling with matters of race, legal equity, and social justice would not be appropriate—even though I know there are many such contexts in which such a note would be disturbing, provocative, and otherwise unwelcome.

To wit, several clergy contacted me after having tried their best to at least nod to the Martin case only to be rebuffed by congregants.

A Roman Catholic priest who serves an affluent, white congregation in the San Francisco Bay area, for instance, added two sentences to his seven-minute homily on the Parable of the Good Samaritan: *"Maybe we think this difficulty with understanding who is our neighbor and how we should respond to them is a feature of ancient tribal rivalries that we don't suffer from in our modern age. But we only have to look at the headlines to see that when people who don't look like us walk through neighborhoods like ours, we often have a hard time truly seeing them as 'neighbors.'"*

There was no mention of Trayvon Martin or his killer; no labored reflection or confused, unfocused reactions. There was only a note "at the intersection of Word and community" as both exist in the much wider world to which said community is obligated.

When the priest offered a communion wafer to a congregant who is a significant donor to the church, he reported, the man met "the Body of Christ" with "Keep your opinions to yourself."

Another followed a similar path in amending the sermon with a sentence or two. She was scolded by the largest donor to the church, "It sounded like Cornell West up there!"

Other clergy have apparently had that sort of experience enough in the past to know better than to try. "I preached about immigration last year in what I thought was the most temperate of ways and about poverty, which I'd think Christians would be concerned about regardless of political leaning," said a minister from a church in Colorado. "Both sermons were cited in my annual review as evidence of my preaching being 'too political' and 'not spiritual enough.' I give up," she wrote.

I'd be inclined to give up, too, I suppose. Indeed, I've walked away from this post several times today because, like most people, I find arguing disheartening and exhausting. Even when I feel like I'm right, I don't like having the smug, self-righteous tone that the privileged position of having a public voice can provoke in me when I'm pissed off and called out by people I respect and admire. The whole of it just sucks. None of it feels good.

In the end, however, we just can't give up. Too much is at stake.

We are in the process of losing the Church, giving up on the vision of a Kingdom of love and justice that Jesus invited us to join in creating. You may well think the growing population of the unaffiliated—Nones—are uncommitted, narcissistic, vapid bores. (I could write a book about how you're wrong about that...) But we have to contend with the fact that the majority of Nones are being formed in our churches. They're hearing our sermons, sitting through our liturgies, seeing us act in the world on the basis of the beliefs we profess. And we are again and again found wanting, particularly at moments when the larger culture (from which the Church is not excused) is focused on events like the announcement of the verdict in the Trayvon Martin murder trial -- particularly when the voices of people with

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I Am Damaged Goods

By Sarah Bessey

I was 19 years old and crazy in love with Jesus when that preacher told an auditorium I was “damaged goods” because of my sexual past. He was making every effort to encourage this crowd of young adults to “stay pure for marriage.” He was passionate, yes, well-intentioned, and he was a good speaker, very convincing indeed.

And he stood up there and shamed me, over and over and over again.

Oh, he didn't call me up to the front and name me. But he stood up there and talked about me with such *disgust*, like I couldn't be in that real-life crowd of young people worshipping in that church. I felt spotlighted and singled out amongst the holy; surely my red face announced my guilt to everyone.

He passed around a cup of water and asked us all to spit into it. Some boys horked and honked their worst into that cup while everyone laughed. Then he held up that cup of cloudy saliva from the crowd and asked, “Who wants to drink this?!”

And everyone in the crowd made barfing noises; *no way, gross!*

“This is what you are like if you have sex before marriage,” he said seriously. “You are asking your future husband or wife to drink this cup.”

Over the years, the messages melded together into the common refrain: “Sarah, your virginity was a gift and you gave it away. You threw away your virtue for a moment of pleasure. You have twisted God's ideal of sex and love and marriage. You will never be free of your former partners. The boys of your past will haunt your marriage like soul-ties. Your virginity belonged to your future husband. You stole from him. If – if! – you ever get married, you'll have tremendous baggage to overcome in your marriage as you've ruined everything. No one honorable or godly wants to marry

you. You are damaged goods, Sarah.”

If true love waits, I heard, then I have been disqualified from true love.

In the face of our sexually dysfunctional culture, the Church longs to stand as an outpost of God's ways of love and marriage, purity and wholeness.

And yet we twist that until **we treat someone like me – and, according to this research, 80 per cent of you are like me – as if our value and worth were tied up in our virginity.**

We, the majority non-virgins in the myopic purity conversations, feel like the dirty little secret, the not-as-goods, the easily judged example. In this clouded swirl of shame, our sexual choices are the barometer of our righteousness and worth. We can't let anyone know. So we keep it quiet, lest anyone discover we were not virgins on some mythic wedding night. We don't want to be the object of disgust or pity or gossip or judgment. And in the silence, our shame – and the lies of the enemy – grow.

And so here, now, I'll stand up and say it, the way I wish someone had said it to me 15 years ago when I was sitting in that packed auditorium with my heart racing, wrists aching, eyes stinging, drowning and silenced by the imposition of shame masquerading as ashes of repentance:

“So, you had sex before you were married. **It's okay.** Really. It's okay.”

There is no shame in Christ's love. Let him without sin cast the first stone. You are more than your virginity – or lack thereof – and more than your sexual past.

Your marriage is not doomed because you said yes to the boys you loved as a young woman.

Your husband won't hold it against you; he's not that weak and ego-driven. Choose a man marked by grace.

It's likely you would make differ-

ent choices, if you knew then what you know now. But darling, don't make it more than it is, and don't make it less than it is. Let it be true, and don't let anyone silence you or the redeeming work of Christ in your life out of shame.

Now, in Christ, you're clear -- like Canadian mountain water, rushing and alive, quenching and bracing -- in your wholeness.

Virginity isn't a guarantee of healthy sexuality or marriage. **You don't have to consign your sexuality to the box marked “Wrong.”** Your very normal and healthy desires aren't a switch to be flipped. Morality tales and false identities aren't the stuff of a real marriage. Purity isn't judged by outward appearances and technicalities. The sheep and the goats are not divided on the basis of their virginity. (Besides, this focus is weird and over-realized; it's the flip side of the culture's coin which values women only for their sexuality. It's also damaging, not only for you, but for the virgins in the room, too. Really, there's a lot of baggage from this whole purity movement heading out into the world.)

For I am convinced, right along with the Apostle Paul, that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any other power, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.* Not even “neither virginity nor promiscuity” and all points between can separate you from this love. You are loved – without condition – beyond your wildest dreams already.

I would say: Sarah, your worth isn't determined by your virginity. What a lie.

No matter what that preacher said that day, no matter how many

purity balls are thrown with sparkling upper-middle-class extravagance; no matter the purity rings and the purity pledges; no matter the judgmental Gospel-negating rhetoric used with the best of intentions; no matter the “how close is too close?” serious conversations of boundary-marking young Christians; no matter the circumstances of your story, **you are not disqualified** from life or from joy or from marriage or from your calling or from a healthy and wonderful lifetime of sex because you had – and, heaven forbid, *enjoyed* – sex before you were married.

“Darling, young one burning with shame and hiding in the silence, listen now: Don’t believe that lie. You never were, you never will be, damaged goods.” ■

**Apostle Paul quote from Romans 8:38-39*

Sarah Bessey is a writer and a blogger. She lives in Abbotsford, British Columbia with her husband, Brian, and their three teens, Anne, Joseph, and Evelyn. Her first book, Jesus Feminist: An Invitation to the Kingdom of God Waiting on the Other Side of our Church’s Gender Debates will be published by Howard Books (an imprint of Simon & Schuster) in 2013. Sarah is an editor at A Deeper Story, and a contributor at SheLoves Magazine.

Lament from a White Father

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we will never understand how our black brothers and sisters are feeling after a terrible weekend like this one. It was the conversation of every black church in America on this Sunday, but very few white Christians heard that discussion or felt that pain.

White Christians cannot and must not leave the sole responsibility of telling the truth about America, how it has failed Trayvon Martin and so many black Americans, solely to their African American brothers and sisters in Christ. It’s time for white Christians to listen to their black brothers and sisters, to learn their stories, and to speak out for racial justice and reconciliation. The country needs multi-racial communities of faith to show us how to live together. ■

Jim Wallis is president of Sojourners. His book, On God’s Side: What Religion Forgets and Politics Hasn’t Learned About Serving the Common Good. This essay first appeared on Sojo.net on July 15, 2013 and is reprinted here with permission.

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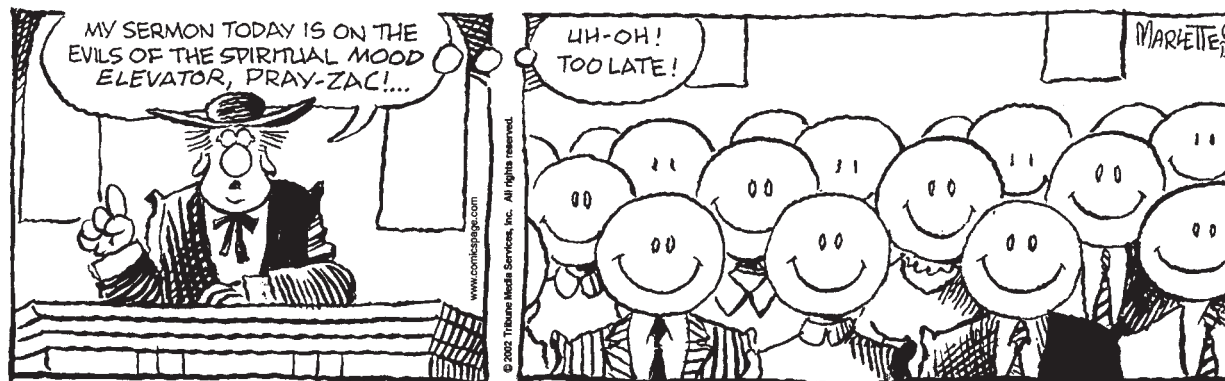
a claim to some measure of moral and social insight are needed most. Again, I just don’t know of many contexts in which saying something about that wouldn’t be appropriate.

Finally, I know that the strong words and feelings in this conversation have clearly been difficult to work through. But, however imperfect our words might be—mine especially, perhaps—however uncomfortable the feelings they provoke, they are better than white noise humming over so many of our churches, making so many of us—laypeople and clergy alike—feel that we cannot speak, that we cannot risk speaking, that the context won’t tolerate it.

At times like these, those of us with the privilege of any kind of pulpit or public platform simply must speak. Trust me, if we don’t get it exactly right, someone will let us know. In which case, we’ll still be in conversation. ■

**I’ve adapted quotes from these emails to protect the anonymity of the correspondents.*

***The numbers add to more than 47 because of overlap across categories. That is, some of the seminary professors are also clergy as are some of the seminarians.*



The Damaging Effects of Shame-Based Sex Education: Lessons from Elizabeth Smart

by Kristen Howerton

A couple of months ago, several Christian bloggers created a conversation about the potentially harmful aspects of idolizing virginity and purity. While I think that abstinence is a great goal for kids (and one I will encourage for my own), I also believe that it is vitally important that we not use shame in an attempt to scare our children into complying with our own sexual ethics. While I think it's great to explain the benefits of abstinence, I do believe that Christians have begun to rely too heavily on a shame-based rhetoric that motivates teens into compliance for fear of being "dirty" or undesirable.

The reality is that many kids will become sexually active in their teen years — according to research, 80 percent of them. It's imperative that, while highlighting the benefits of abstinence, we also educate on sexuality and birth control and abuse and consent. It's also imperative that we teach our kids, and our girls specifically, that **THEIR IDENTITY AND WORTH IS NOT TIED TO THEIR VIRGINITY**. This is a dangerous message and is very psychologically damaging. I cannot tell you how many women I have counseled who became sexually active in their teen years and consequently felt like they were damaged goods. And for women who were sexually abused, the broken sense of self is compounded even more by hearing over and over that "purity" is the marker of a girl's worth.

Recently, Elizabeth Smart, who was kidnapped, raped and held captive for nearly a year, spoke about the way these messages discouraged her from running from her captors. She spoke from her own experience at a recent forum on human trafficking at Johns Hopkins University. She describes the feelings of shame she felt after her rape: "I'll never forget how I felt lying there on the ground. I felt like my soul had

human anymore. How could anyone ever love me or care for me after this? I felt like life had no more meaning to it." And that was only the beginning. She further explained how she had no concept that sex could occur outside of marriage:

"I was raised in a religious household where I was taught that sex only happened between a married man and a woman. After that rape, I felt so dirty ... can you imagine going back into a society where you are no longer of value? Where you are no longer as good as anybody else?"

Raised in a religious household, Elizabeth recounted a school teacher who urged students against premarital sex and compared women who had sex before their wedding nights to chewing gum:

I thought, "Oh my gosh, I'm that chewed up piece of gum, nobody re-chews a piece of gum. You throw it away. And that's how easy it is to feel like you no longer have worth, you no longer have value. Why would it even be worth screaming out? Why would it even make a difference if you are rescued? Your life still has no value." Elizabeth went on to advise that we focus on teaching children that they have inherent value. "The best thing we can do is educate young people — as young as we can reach them," she said. "Survivors of rape need permission to fight back," and that requires them "to know they are of value."

While most teens will not be faced with an abduction situation, Elizabeth's experience is a startling example of the way this kind of religious rhetoric significantly alters a young woman's confidence and self-worth. We cannot continue to send the message to our young girls that being sexually active is some kind of black stain on their personhood. We do not need to make teenagers feel worthless when they have sex

when they are assaulted against their will. As Carolyn Custis James said: ...a message of purity and abstinence, as important as this is for young women (young men too) comes too late for huge numbers of young American girls, including those in church pews. It is utterly devastating to the one-in-four girls who is sexually abused before she reaches her 18th birthday. We live in a world where by the age of 18 an estimated 70 percent of girls have had sex at least once and not always by choice, where globally countless women and girls are in the grips of sex traffickers, where an appalling 48 women are raped every hour in the Congo, where within our own borders sexual freedom has opened the door for young women to be as sexually promiscuous as men, and where some girls with the very best of intentions succumb to temptation. I grieve all of this, but do not for a second imagine that any of this means a woman has less to offer a husband or that in any sense it diminishes her worth.

No woman *ever* is a chewed-up piece of gum. No woman is a cup of spit. No woman is a used car or a dirty rag or a used-up piece of duct tape or a plucked rose or a licked cupcake -- *no matter what she's done*.

Didn't Jesus come to tell us that?

We can do better. ■

Kristen Howerton, mom of four children, has been blogging at Rage Against the Minivan as a coping skill since 2004. She is an adjunct professor in the psychology department at Vanguard University, teaching diversity, counseling skills and addictive behaviors. She writes an advice column for the local family magazine OCFamily and contributes to The Huffington Post. Her Twitter address is @kristenhowerton.

This article first appeared at RedLetterChristians.org June 10, 2013 and is reprinted with permission.

British Missions and Climate Change

By BMS Staff

If I knew the world would end tomorrow, I would plant a tree.” Martin Luther is supposed to have said that, which is probably why it gets rolled out so often by evangelical climate campaigners. You can’t argue with Luther.

When “hippies,” “New Agers” and “liberals” get behind “progressive” issues like creation care, the church seems to shrug and sigh, “So what?” When Bible-believing, Protestant heroes seem to do it, well, it seems like people are more likely to take notice.

That’s why it’s important for Bible-believing, adult-baptizing, church-planting, Christ-proclaiming, evangelizing mission societies to do the same. It means something.

British Missionary Society (BMS) World Mission is one of those mission societies. It was founded in 1792 by William Carey. And, if you know about the history of missions, you’ll know that name means something, too.

BMS works in about 40 countries – mostly through churches and Christian umbrella bodies – in partnership with local Christians; its highest goal is making disciples of Jesus Christ.

We also working hard to fight climate change. The reasons are many, but they’re not complicated.

The world’s poor who we are called

to serve are the ones who will suffer first and most from climate change.

The more flooding that happens, the worse the droughts, the lower the yields of crops, the less chance there is of “the least of these,” identified in Matthew 25, experiencing the fullness of life that is promised in the Bible.

Creation care is a justice issue as much as it is an issue of stewardship, and the reason it concerns BMS is the same reason that poverty, illiteracy and a lack of access to life-saving medical care are concerns.

And we’ve started small. Over the last few years, we have installed solar panels on the roof of our building, we’ve produced resources for churches to engage with creation care as a theological and missional issue, and we’ve started offsetting all our travel.

As you can imagine, a mission agency working all over the world clocks up a lot of travel. And we are not about to stop sending workers to China or Afghanistan because airplane fuel is damaging to the environment. But we have decided to offset it.

For every mile of travel – by air, land or sea – an appropriate amount of money (calculated by a gold-standard offsetting company) was donated to our partners, Climate Stewards, and to a fund that supports creation-care work around the world.

Through this fund, BMS has deliv-

ered about \$20,000 to fund carbon-busting reforestation projects in Ghana. BMS has also:

- Planted trees and installed solar panels for a mission hospital in Chad
- Funded ecologically friendly ovens and environmental education in Peru
- Supported sustainable reforestation in Nepal
- Provided sustainable electricity in Thailand

Every one of these projects has been undertaken in partnership with local communities, often of Christians, who take ownership of the project and who are the people it will ultimately benefit.

You don’t have to agree with Luther or with the theology of Tom Wright (that teaches that creation matters because it is creation that will be made new at the resurrection) to see this work as important and necessary.

All over the world, BMS workers are seeing that sustainable, pollution-reducing ways of living are improving the lives of those who most need Christ’s mercy and love.

On the ground, these choices are far from simple. What BMS is doing is just a drop in the rising ocean.

But, like planting a tree at the end of the world or preaching the gospel in a resistant land, with God there is always hope. ■



Poverty, Sex, and the Gospels

By Charles J. Reid, Jr.

During Jesus' earthly ministry, what troubled him most about what he saw? To listen to the religious right, you'd think it was loose sexual mores.

But would this really be Jesus' emphasis? For sure, no one can plausibly imagine the Jesus of the Gospels recommending casual sexual liaisons. That's not Jesus. But what really moved Jesus to speak against the injustice of his age was poverty. According to the Gospel of Luke, the first words out of his mouth, when he stood to deliver his Sermon on the Mount, were: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God." (Luke 6: 20). And in the next verse he added: "Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied." (Luke 6: 21). And then he condemned the rich and the well-fed: "But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger." (Luke 6: 24-25).

This refrain is repeated throughout the Gospels. Jesus stresses that we must not give heed to material possessions. "A man's life," Jesus taught, "does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (Luke 12: 15). We should not store up earthly treasure, "for where your treasure, there will be your heart also" (Matthew 6: 21). Money oppresses. It crushes the spirit. We must not be in thrall to it, but rather "consider the lillies of the field, how they grow. They neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Matthew 7: 28-29).

We do not own wealth, Jesus reminds us. Rather, wealth owns us. "No one can serve two masters," he declared. "For either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and

Mammon" (Matthew 6: 24). We should rather place all of our trust in God. When Jesus sent his disciples on mission, he instructed them not to carry money (Matthew 10: 7-10), although quite practically he advised them that they should earn their keep ("the laborer deserves his wages," Luke 10: 7).

Jesus doubted that those attached to wealth could ever be saved. When the rich young man approached him and assured him that he knew the mandates of the Law and kept

"The Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, those texts which were intended to summarize the core principles of Jesus' earthly ministry, contain no mention of sexual sins."

them, Jesus told him that there was yet one thing he should do: "One thing still you lack. Sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Luke 18: 22). Did Jesus mean this literally, in every case? Probably not, because in the very next chapter the Gospel writer recites the story of Zacchaeus, a tax collector but a righteous man who gave half of his belongings to the poor (Luke 19: 8). What Jesus found pleasing in Zacchaeus was his priorities -- first he generously met the needs of others, and only then looked after his own.

Yet this other-centeredness was very difficult for a rich person to accomplish. "Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How hard it will be for those who have

riches to enter the Kingdom of God'" (Mark 10: 23). "It is easier," Jesus emphasized, "for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God" (Matthew 19: 24). Most people, Jesus well understood, were not like Zacchaeus.

In contrast to this elaborate and repeated teaching, we find nothing comparable when we look at what Jesus said about sexual transgressions. The Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, those texts which were intended to summarize the core principles of Jesus' earthly ministry, contain no mention of sexual sins.

To be sure, in other texts, Jesus does condemn fornication and adultery (Mark 7: 21) as sins arising from an unclean heart. He understood adultery as prohibited by divine command (Matthew 19: 18). His strongest statements on adultery, however, are found in his teaching on marriage and divorce. In Matthew, Jesus states: "Whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery" (Matthew 19: 9). And in Mark, Jesus informs his audience that those who divorce their spouses in order to marry another commit adultery (Mark 10: 11-12).

In these passages, it is the betrayal, the abandonment of one spouse by the other, that is denounced. Interestingly, a close reading of the passages suggests that Jesus did not prohibit the innocent party from remarriage, only the one who sought an easy escape from marriage for the arms of another partner. The prophet Malachi comes to mind: "Let none be faithless to the wife of his youth" (Malachi 2: 15).

Where Jesus does address sexual offenses, repeatedly and strongly, is the passages on forgiveness. Nowhere is Jesus quicker to show mercy than

when confronted with a sexual sinner. In Luke 7: 37-41, a woman who has committed many sexual sins washed and anointed Jesus' feet. Turning to the hypocrites seated next to him, Jesus praised her repentance, her hospitality, her quiet sincerity, and forgave her sins. In John 8: 1-11, Jesus faced down a mob looking to stone a woman caught in adultery. He silently knelt down and wrote in the sand, and one-by-one, the unruly mob of moralizers slunk away. And then there is one of the most astonishing stories in the whole of the Gospels, Jesus at Jacob's well. It was there that he spoke with a Samaritan woman who had been married five times but was now living with a man not her husband. Yet it was to her that he promised the gift of living water. (John 4: 7-30).

Much of the Catholic right wing, at least here in America, has lost sight of the core of the Gospel message. Consider the recent book by George Weigel, *Evangelical Catholicism: Deep Reform in the 21st*

Century Church (2013). In a book that purports to recommend a viable future path for the Catholic Church, just look at what is missing from the index: There is no entry for "poor." No entry for "forgiveness." There is no entry for "money" or "economy." There isn't even an entry for "love." Poverty is mentioned, but only in the context of the vows taken by monks and nuns.

What, then, is Weigel's prescription for reform? The ever-tighter policing of doctrine and dogma. One particularly outrageous example occurs at pp. 184-186, where Weigel scolds the Vatican for going soft on Catholic nuns! When it came time to really crack down, the Vatican "surrendered," and "went into full retreat." What was really needed, Weigel thundered, was more "orthodoxy and orthopraxis." Yep, that'll win 'em over, an even harsher crack-down on nuns! This book cannot be taken seriously and for the good of the Church one hopes it never will be.

Pope Francis, on the other hand, so far at least seems to be getting the priorities right. The Church is meant to be poor. It must live and breathe with the poor, just as Jesus did. It must take risks in the name of social justice, even if it stirs up "right-wing funk" (Charles J. Reid, Jr., "Right-wing Funk," *ReligiousLeftLaw.com*, July 23, 2013).

This is the spirit of real reform in the Catholic Church. It is the imitation of Christ. And it seems that Pope Francis' willingness to take account of human needs first, his evident desire to walk humbly with God, his desire to preach through action that are the secrets of the surprisingly extended honeymoon he has so far enjoyed. ■

Dr. Charles J. Reid, Jr. is Professor of Law at University of St. Thomas (MN). This essay was first posted on Huffington Post on 07/26/2013 and is reprinted here with permission of the author.



"Worldwide, women between 15 and 44 are more likely to be injured or die from male violence than from traffic accidents, cancer, malaria, and the effects of war combined. This sustained brutality would be impossible without a culture that enables it: a value system in which women are currency, and sex is something that men get – or take – from them."

—Ariel Levy in "Trial By Twitter," *The New Yorker* August 5, 2013 p. 45

Operators of Elevators

By David D'Amico

I live now in the second floor of a condo in Louisville and use an elevator daily. When I lived in New York, I learned that elevators are part of the landscape. Few buildings do not have elevators. In multistory buildings most of the elevators are automatic, as in the three skyscrapers where we lived when we ministered at the UN. However there are some public and private buildings with elevators that still require operators. In some of the private buildings the elevators are so old that unless an operator manages them, the public may be endangered.

In two specific public buildings I recall now, the United Nations and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I have observed operators. I assume they work there for security reasons.

I was shocked when I moved from a suburban life setting into an urban life setting upon becoming director of the Metropolitan New York Baptist Association during the 1980s. The building was vintage 1920s or 1930s and had an antiquated elevator that required an operator.

During my tenure, there were two unforgettable operators. One was David and the other was Furman.

David, from Nigeria, served as

operator and supposedly as a custodian also. He wore a suit and was very friendly to visitors because he was an “insider.” He had been a foreign student who attended church and was working while finishing his schooling. The interesting part of David’s work was that he did not do much custodial work because, as he told me once, he was “a prince” from Nigeria, and princes do not clean bathrooms.

Furman, an African-American man who probably had been employed part time because he was in need of a job, was somewhat more “New York” and not as kind to the public as one would wish in a religiously oriented organization. However, in those days during the 1980s when New York was suffering from many problems with unemployed and needy people who would come to the building seeking assistance, he was the right person to manage access to the building.

In the elevators in the buildings where we lived, striking a conversation with certain people was easy. Parents of small children did not mind my talking to the children and telling them they were cute, smart, etc. I was cautious with young

adults because, depending on their mood and nationality, they wished to remain silent. I spoke Spanish to some of those I could theorize that spoke the language.

I developed a unique “elevator etiquette” to adjust to the unwritten New York culture for elevators. It is a no-no in New York to speak to others in an elevator. Thus, the saying: “You know you are a New Yorker when you disdain the tourist who speaks in an elevator ride.” I did not pay any attention to that unwritten rule. I spoke to the elevator operators at the UN because many of them were foreign born, older persons, and had a boring job. When I asked them about how long they worked there, some of them told me they had worked for more than 20 years. I assume they had a secure and pleasant job for their needs.

In life, one goes daily up and down — not only in elevators but also in mood, perceptions, expectations, and desires. The angels in Jacob’s ladder did not have an elevator. ■

David D’Amico is a retired seminary professor and retired CBF missionary to the United Nations.



Count the Cost?

By Joe LaGuardia

“Count the cost!” the Preacher Man said, shaking a worn cowhide Bible over his head. “Count the cost, and follow Jesus with your whole life. Pick up your cross because God don’t want any lukewarm Christians.”

He said it over and over again. It was a sermon I had heard more than a dozen times, about once a year if my calculations are correct.

You know the sermon. It’s the one about Jesus calling us to carry the cross and follow him, to consider the builder who couldn’t finish his grand tower and the king who had to figure out whether he could rush headlong into battle (*Luke 14:28-32*).¹

“You don’t want to be like that builder,” the Preacher Man quipped in his deep baritone. “You can’t start this life with Jesus and give up half way; you’ll look ridiculous. Or what about the king—you want to wage war against the devil and lose because you only got half of a hound in the dog fight?”

When I was listening this time around, something struck me as funny: Preacher Man skipped the things Jesus said before and after those two parables. He skipped the part when Jesus said that we have to hate family (v. 26), and he didn’t go far enough to read Jesus’ challenge to give up our possessions (v. 33). So, like any other good inquiring Baptist, I went home to research it for myself. Of course, that meant actually reading the Bible.

When I turned to the New Testament, it took me a few minutes to find what the Preacher Man was talking about because I realized a little late that the parables are only in one gospel instead of all four. The first parable was just as the Preacher Man had said: It was of a calculating builder who certainly needed to estimate the cost of a building so large he was afraid the neighbors might start

complaining.² The second parable told of a cautious king who tinkered with his little toy soldiers—each one representing a thousand—and realized that his 10 pieces were no match for his opponent’s 20. The king figured that the assassin’s blade wasn’t sharp enough to do its job³ and decided to send a delegation with terms of surrender instead.

I agree with the king: A peaceful tyranny is much better than a fool’s errand ending in disgrace. After all, the king, like the builder, had to consider maintaining his honor, not to mention the national security of his entire empire.⁴

Accompanying the parables were those two other verses the Preacher Man failed to include in his sermon: the one about hating your family and the other related to giving up possessions. They both seemed about as out of place as a big-mouth bass in saltwater. So I can see why Preacher Man might not include them in his sermon. Also, the call to give up possessions seemed outdated anyhow, and what good protestant with a Puritan work ethic would want to promote that?

Furthermore, if Jesus really wanted us to give up our family and possessions, then why go through the trouble of counting the cost in the first place? I mean, that’s what the Preacher Man kept saying--“Count the cost, count the cost!” But by counting the cost, the builder and the king were trying really hard not to lose their possessions after all was said and done.

It doesn’t seem that Jesus was telling his disciples to count the cost and imitate the builder and the king. I reckon he was telling them to do quite the opposite -- to sell the whole farm instead, tractor and all: “For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the

cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it?”

The question was not an invitation; it was an accusation. Jesus knew well enough that we would all say “yes” to that question, that all of us would be tempted to save face and consider whether a decision would preserve our honor or not. He knew we would also say “yes” along with the king or the builder if we were in those situations. Who wouldn’t play it safe when you have neighbors asking questions or if an enemy were breathing down your neck with tanks against your puny pitchforks?

No. When Jesus said we have to hate family, bear a cross, and give up possessions (as shameful as those acts were in his day and age), he wasn’t leaving much room for counting. He didn’t have patience for folks who wanted to figure out if this whole discipleship endeavor helped the bottom line. There’s a sense of urgency. We don’t have time to sit up late at night and see how much money we have under our mattress any more than we have time to ask how much honor is at stake if we follow a peasant born in a back-alley manger. Jesus was asking us to risk everything and just get on with the business of following him.

His was a call to rush headlong, like Don Quixote, into battle against what others perceive as foolhardy adventures.⁵ We can’t afford to “count the cost.”

After all, saying “yes” to a secure bottom line is about as good as saying “no” to a Christ who risks his own life at the snap of a finger. It’s the snap of a finger and the hedging of all bets—the selling of the farm—that become the measures of true discipleship. ■

1 On theories that Jesus’ parables in *Luke 14:28-32* encouraged
(continued on page 23)

To Tell the Truth or the Pesky Problem of Prevarication

By Steve deClaissé-Walford

When my mother thought someone was lying, she would rarely call that person a liar. Instead, she would usually say that they were “economic with the truth!”

In *Ephesians* 4:25-5:2 Paul offers several pieces of advice to new Christians, one of which is, “Stop being economic with the truth.”

Lying appears to have been intrinsic to ancient culture. “When telling a lie will be profitable, let it be told” said Darius the Great. “One may lie who knows how to do it in a suitable time,” asserted Plato. And Maximus Tyrius, the second century AD orator remarks, “Sometimes truth is hurtful, and lying is profitable to men.”

It is against this ancient economic-with-the-truth social backdrop that Paul tells newcomers to the faith that honesty is intrinsic to Christianity; that it is in fact fundamental to their belief that Christians be relied on to tell the truth.

It would be nice if we could say things have changed. But here we are 20 centuries after Paul, and things are no better in terms of honesty. Deception is as common today as in Paul’s time, perhaps even more so. Indeed today, in many walks of life, economy with the truth – lying – is part of the way things work. Lying is so common and has become such a part of our daily discourse, that people often feel the need to give each other advance warning when they’re telling the truth. They begin their sentences with, “To tell the truth . . .” or, “To be perfectly honest. . .”

What a pretty pass our society has come to.

Why *do* people lie?

Usually, it’s to avoid being seen as failing in some way. People lie to protect themselves from being perceived as something less than the public

image they present; to tell people what they want to hear; or to avoid confrontation or argument. People lie to gain advantage in social, political or business dealings, and to deflect responsibility for failure. Sometimes people lie because they think a greater good can come out of it. For example, people lie on their résumés because they really do think they’re the best person for the job. And sometimes people lie not so much to deceive others as to deceive themselves. Regardless of reasons, when people lie they take a huge risk; they risk one part of themselves – their credibility – to save some other part of themselves: their egos, their sense of confidence, their self-image.

Sadly, it’s not just among individuals that lying prevails. Corporations large and small have adopted the principle of Darius, Plato, and Maximus Tyrius: If a lie is profitable, tell it! Consider the claims made about products corporations want us to buy. We are encouraged to believe that a particular cell phone will help us to be happy; that a particular car is a remedy for all that ails us; that eating at a certain restaurant is always a party, a festive affair; that our vacations will be problem-free, thrill-filled, exciting adventures peopled by smiling companions; and that banking at a particular institution is a worry-free, hassle-free, beautiful experience of friendliness and service.

Yeah, right.

Of course, this isn’t called lying but advertising; not falsehood, but marketing and promotion, not prevarication, but product enhancement. Although it is common knowledge that most advertising is supposed to be taken with a pinch of salt, let’s face it – as a society, we’re practically pickled in brine!

What shall we do?

One of the characteristics of being a Christian is to live in the secular world while maintaining a healthy skepticism toward it. We must not be led astray by the daily bombardment of alternate truths and alternate realities – which is to say, falsehood and deception. How do we set ourselves apart? We set ourselves apart by remaining true to our Christian identity of otherness within the community. We must not use the methods of secularism to promote who we are or what we are. We must not falsely advertise ourselves, or use hyperbole. We must not be economic with the truth, but instead be profligate, spendthrift, and even prodigal with it.

How do we begin this process?

We start with being honest with ourselves; for the way we deal with ourselves is usually the way we shall deal with others. In “Hamlet,” Shakespeare pens these words of advice from a father to a son: “This above all: To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.”

This is what Paul means when he writes, “Therefore be imitators of God.” God is true to God’s self. It cannot be any other way. As beings in the image of God, we too must be true to ourselves.

In a world full of deception, a bright, shining light can be brought by a people and community that deal honestly in all their functions. George Berkley wrote, “Truth is the cry of all, the game of few.” So it is.

But wouldn’t it be good to make that a lie. ■

Steve deClaissé-Walford, CCPS, is an Adjunct Faculty member at Mercer University

Morality Tale...The Dangers of Smoking

By Patrick Davis Taylor

In 1980 there was an alien named Ted. He had four friends who all smoked. One day, Jack, one of his friends, was driving and he looked down to light his cigarette and he ran a red light. He got into a head-on collision and died in the hospital a day later. And one day his second friend, Dave, was smoking in his garage and he dropped his lighter and it set his garage on fire and

his house burnt down and he got trapped and he died in the house. His third friend, Charlie, smoked a lot and he got lung cancer and he was in the hospital a month and he died in the hospital on July 29. His fourth friend had a stroke and he died in his bedroom on June 15. Ted decided to stop smoking because he did not want to die like all his other friends and he recovered and he never had

a smoke again and he was happy he did not die. ■

Davis Taylor is nine years old and wrote this story after a conversation with his grandfather, the editor of this journal, about why people smoke and if they do why don't they quit and why doesn't Obama talk to the people who make and sell cigarettes.

Count the Cost?

(continued from page 21)

his audience to count the cost before committing their lives to him, see, for example, John Martin Creed, *The Gospel According to St. Luke* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1969), 193; Sharon H. Ringe, *Luke WBC* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 202); and Albert E. Barnett, *Understanding the Parables of Our Lord* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1960), 129.

2 I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGCT (Grand Rapids:

Eerdmans Press, 1978), 593; Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Press, 2000), 139

3 This is a parable in Gospel of Thomas 98 that echoes Luke 14:31-32. See Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*. 2d rev. ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972), 198

4 For a discussion on the notions of ancient honor and shame and how they played a part in public scrutiny and reputation, see Richard L. Rohrbaugh, "The Pre-Industrial City in Luke-Acts: Urban Social Relations," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*:

Models of Interpretation, ed. Jerome Neyrey (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1991), 125-150. The Greek word for "ridicule" (NRSV) as it applied to the Builder (v. 29) is *empaizo*, which means to mock or shame in public derision.

5 Contra J. Stanley Glen, *The Parables of Conflict in Luke* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 129.

Joe LaGuardias Senior Pastor at Trinity Baptist Church in Conyers, GA and is a DMin graduate of McAfee School of Theology.



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

Peace Warrior: A Memoir from the Front

by Daniel Buttry (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2012, paperback, 283 pages, \$25.00)

Reviewed by Charles Kiker

Daniel Buttry is a self-described but well-described peace warrior. A warrior is willing to lay down his life for a person or a cause. Dan Buttry has the heart of a warrior; he has laid down his life for the cause of peace. But there was a time when he was more interested in being a “war warrior” than a “peace warrior.”

Buttry grew up in a military home, the son of an Air Force chaplain. As a student at an evangelical Christian college, he was a hawk concerning the war in Vietnam. He argued within his circle of Christian friends that the war was a classic Christian just war fought for a just cause by a just authority using just means. Then a co-ed in his circle of friends asked him the simple question, “What would Jesus say?” As a debater he could have argued circles around his questioner on this topic. But ultimately the question disarmed him. He went to his Book—the New Testament—to see what Jesus would say, not just about the Vietnam War, but about all violent conflict. And he became a pacifist and declared himself a conscientious objector. The

simple question, “What would Jesus say?” became a beacon for Buttry throughout his ministry.

His “baptism of fire” came in his first church out of seminary, Dorchester Temple Baptist Church, an urban Boston church. It was a declining church of mostly older white parishioners in a neighborhood on the boundary between “Black Boston” and “White Boston.” Under his leadership in his nine years as pastor there, the church became a lighthouse for peace in a troubled neighborhood.

His experience as pastor at Dorchester became a kind of template for his first book, *Bringing Your Church Back to Life: Beyond Survival Mentality* (Judson Press: 1988). I read this book as pastor of a struggling rural church; I was extremely impressed, and corresponded with him. I suggested that the title and subtitle should have been reversed, giving first priority to “beyond survival mentality.” He agreed, and still agrees. But authors know that sometimes editors overrule! In hindsight, I wish I had used the “beyond survival mentality” book for a group study in the inner city, changing neighborhood church where I was a pastor working for peace and racial justice.

Buttry reflects on how his bent toward activism sometimes becomes

a stumbling block in his devotional life. Many of us who are activists can profit by reading how he deals with that temptation.

Peace Warrior chronicles the front lines on which Buttry has waged his war for peace: from the inner cities of this country to trouble spots around the globe. This is an instructive book. It is also a good read. I recommend it to all peace lovers who would be peacemakers, and to all who long to do justice. ■

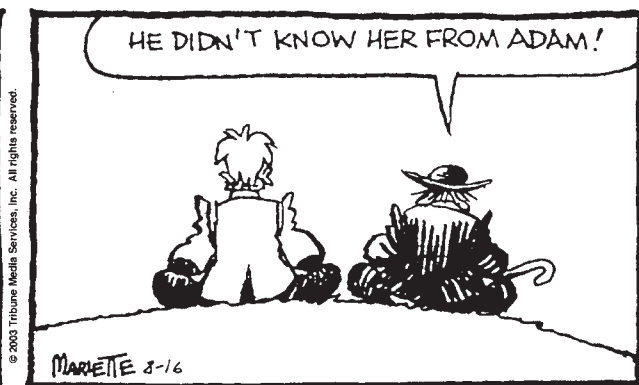
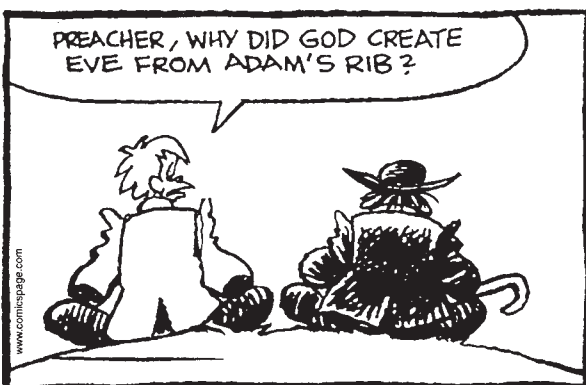
Dr. Charles Kiker is a retired American Baptist Minister who currently resides in his childhood home town of Tulia, Texas. He has recently published his autobiography: Haunted by the Holy Ghost: Memoirs of a Reluctant Prophet. Authorhouse: 2013.

An Experiment in Christian Internationalism: A History of the European Baptist Theological Seminary,

Carol Woodfin. Macon, GA: Baptist Heritage and History Society. 2013. 422 pages. \$45.00. ISBN:978-1-57843-111-3.

Reviewed by Earl Martin

Author Carol Woodfin gives an engaging chronicle regarding how the history of the European Baptist Theological Seminary evolved as “an experiment in Christian inter-



nationalism.” The quotation is from the inaugural address of George W. Sadler, the beginning interim president of the seminary at Rüsclhikon, Switzerland. The book recounts in detail the painful failures and joyful successes of the experiment over more than 60 years. It is a noteworthy story marking the school’s progress through alternating periods of turmoil and approbation.

The author’s qualifications arise from having become well-acquainted with the school at Rüsclhikon as a young girl during the six years her father served on the faculty. Later, for seven years she served with the European Baptist Press Service and was enrolled as a seminary student, eventually earning the Certificate in Theology. She holds a doctorate in European History.

The book presents a broad sweep of the pursuit of theological education for European Baptists after WWII through succeeding decades until the present. The Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, USA, established the school in Switzerland in 1949. The idea for a Baptist theological institution for Baptists on the European continent had been germinating for several decades. By mid-century, Southern Baptists embarked on a virtually unilateral venture. At first, many European Baptists looked askance at the American initiative. Nevertheless, the undertaking proceeded with determination. It provided a remarkable opportunity to bring unity among

Baptists from a war-torn continent. Eventually many European Baptist leaders enthusiastically joined the endeavor. During succeeding decades the seminary endured a tumultuous career. The story fluctuates through a series of crises caused by inadequate funding, frequent administrative change and persistent contentions between faculty, administration and trustees. The account carefully delineates the sudden traumatic defunding of the seminary by Southern Baptists in 1991. In due course the ownership of the seminary was passed on to European Baptists. In the fourth decade of its history, it became necessary for the campus to move to Prague. There it grew in new directions.

Notwithstanding all obstacles, the experiment proved to become a success story in multiple dimensions. In 2002 the International Baptist Theological Seminary became fully accredited by the Czech Ministry of Education. The school’s rector, Keith Jones, is quoted, “This latest development places IBTS at the forefront of theological education within Europe and the Middle East.” p349

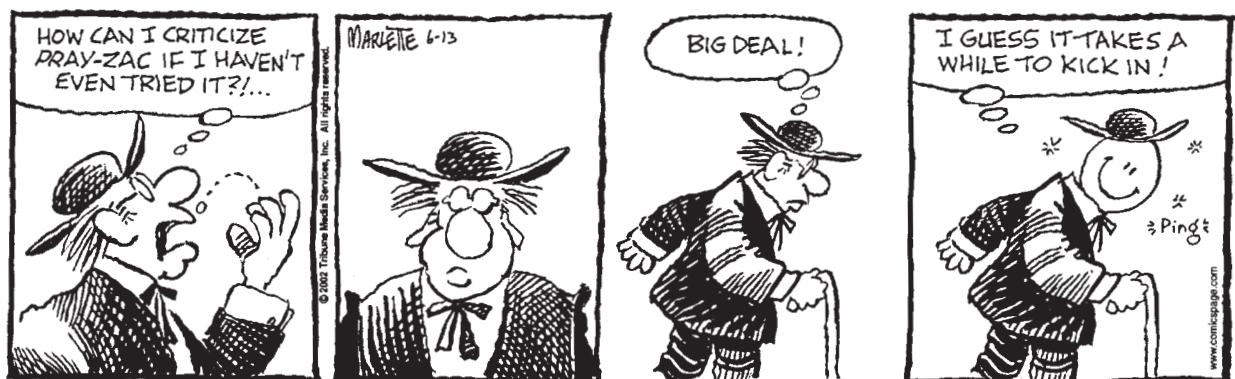
Around 2009, a severe financial crisis in Europe drastically affected the Czech economy. The high cost of operating the seminary, the difficulties of the Baptist constituency to support the school, and the changing needs for theological education at the graduate level brought about the unavoidable decision to move once again. The campus will transfer to its third location in the Netherlands sometime

in the middle of this second decade of the 21st century. IBTS will share resources with the Baptist Seminary of the Netherlands and will offer doctoral degrees in conjunction with the Free University of Amsterdam.

An Experiment in Christian Internationalism is well-written and thoroughly researched. Two preliminary sections, “Sources and Usage” and “Acknowledgements” reveal an extensive bibliography. They include an impressive collection of personal interviews, correspondence and conversations. Every chapter closes with copious endnotes. Personal stories of human interest along with humorous anecdotes engage the reader. The author has produced a coherent account of the seminary’s complex and agonizing evolution through varied mutations. She has demonstrated a high level of objectivity giving all sides a fair hearing. In the closing chapters, the reader might wish for a reduction of tangential references to conferences, volunteers, campus guests, and peripheral activities not germane to the thesis of the book.

Carol Woodfin has produced a superb piece of Baptist history. It is a worthy read, not only for religious educators, church historians and mission specialists, but also for pastors, lay Baptists and all Christians who care about the challenge of intercultural leadership-training for the church of the 21st century. ■

Earl Martin (retired professor of the Rüsclhikon Seminary)



Emancipation Proclamation

By James A. Langley

The arc of justice, oft-deferred and slowly,
Through burning generations and crushing weight,
At long last was bending toward the weak and lowly,
Passing indifferent centuries to a fateful date.

By the infamously radical Dred Scott decision,
The highest court disserved the Constitution,
And widened the implacable division
Wracking the nation by 'the peculiar institution'.

The self-taught rail splitter, early impressed with the shame
Of human bondage, cruelties beyond the pale,
Destined to strike a light for freedom's flame,
Made a way whereby all human worth may prevail.

Standing with fervent abolitionists on grounds
Of the moral, social and political wrongs
Innate in slavery, for Lincoln then-present bounds
Of its practice the Constitution prolonged.

Could the conundrum be met by colonization,
Or failing that, could emancipation
Be effected by some sweeping combination
Of touted plans, including compensation?

Unwavering faith in the President
And the Union, evident by many clad in blue,
Was a spirit not widely held, not set in flint,
In the Congress, the press, society, even the Cabinet's few.

No accepted plan had emerged to end the outrage;
Evolving, Lincoln became convinced that slavery
Was more than vast injustice and shameful bondage;
Rebellion's engine, it stole manpower and disarmed bravery.

The war's outcome in question, secession still a cherished star,
Until this bulwark that propped it up was removed;
Mr. Lincoln was resolved to bring slavery to the bar,
Its legal standing he had the pow'r to be disproved.

Would the Cabinet support so radical a move
To free the slaves by decree; given the crucible
Of an all-consuming civil conflict, would it prove
By Congress and the rebellion unenforceable?

Seward's concern that absent a favorable shift
In the war, the proclamation would be viewed
As a desperation move, leaving the nation adrift,
Led to delay until battle hopes were renewed.

Bloody Antietam was the catalyst which opened the way,
Still fraught with perils that threatened the grand plan,
A high order of courage essential to assay
Secession states' slaves to be freed by demand.

Not deterred by predictions of calamity
Should the uneducated and unwashed gain liberty,
Grave risks were trumped by great humanity,
Setting the course for a more just society.

One need not be a devotee of mysticism
To imagine certain spirits hovering near,
Providing the present leaders a hallowed prism,
Inspiring courage to master besetting fear.

Was not Frederick Douglass there, realizing his dream,
Wilberforce and Harriet Beecher Stowe in spirit,
With William Lloyd Garrison leading a faithful stream,
Courageous forerunners in deeds complicit?

The Union, first and foremost, his aim to save;
"If I could save the Union," Lincoln asserted
To Horace Greeley, "without freeing any slave
I would do it," unmoved though controverted.

More consequential than aim is the deed,
The deed---aims may rise and fall, a deed stands,
This shining deed endures, the slaves were freed,
The chains that bound them he forever disbands.

The rhetoric is plain, the words take no winging,
It meets what legality requires,
Emancipation would be a flowing fount of singing,
Freedom may fulfill what the heart aspires.

The writ ran that slaves in the rebellious states,
On the first day of A.D. eighteen sixty-three,
Appealing to God and mankind for their just fates,
Are then, and henceforward, and forever free.

A war measure, the Proclamation prevailed
Only where the Union military gained
Its victories, there was slavery curtailed;
Freed slaves joined Union forces, a right zealously claimed.

The long march to freedom takes many a turn,
A march that is marked as far from steady or sure,
For justice, sans arms and noblesse oblige, is easy to spurn,
Still this Decree ever soars in moral grandeur. ■

I Have a Dream

By Diane Owen Jordan

I have a dream – a dream that God has given;
A dream of hope where all the world is free,
Where every child can share the blessed vision
And taste the fruits of life abundantly.
I have a dream! Oh ring the bells of freedom!
God gave a dream of hope and liberty.

I have a dream; that we shall keep before us
The call of Christ, who daily leads us on;
Who bids us come to join the mighty chorus –
His song of joy, proclaiming fear is gone!
I have a dream – a dream where God restores us,
Where love shall reign, and hearts be joined as one.

I have a dream – a vision of the nations
Where racial strife shall end and hatreds cease;
Where ancient foes become a new creation,
And those in pain and bondage find release!
I have a dream! O join in celebration!
Instead of war, I see a world at peace.

You have a dream! O God, help us listen
That we may learn what you would have us do.
We pray for strength; we need your grace and wisdom.
May we commit ourselves to live for You!
You have a dream, and as we sense your Vision,
Help us, O God, to make your dream come true! ■

Tune: *Be Still My Soul (Finlandia)*

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Let Justice Roll...

By Patrick Anderson, editor

A major shift in America's approach to crime is becoming possible, a shift that would open the door for meaningful action on the part of churches and individuals to address the staggering damage inflicted by the policies currently in place. Foremost among the damages inflicted on so many for so long are, first, the racial impact of tactics by police and, second, the damage caused by long prison sentences. The first has infuriated and marginalized an entire generation of Americans of color, and the second has resulted in the incarceration of a vast proportion of a generation of minority citizens.

In our recent book, *The Decision-making Process: An Introduction to Criminal Justice*, Risdon Slate and I emphasize that no understanding of American criminal justice is possible without the analysis of the decisions made by flesh and blood agents of criminal justice. Those decisions determine the content of the criminal laws, the nature and extent of violations of those laws, and society's reactions to the breaking of laws especially embodied by police and prosecutors.

For decades, really since President Lyndon Johnson's "War on Crime" address to the Congress in 1965 which was intended to stimulate a more rational and just approach to crime, political approaches to crime have been overly harsh, unduly dependent on incarceration, and incredibly selective. Throughout the last third of the 20th Century, "get tough on crime" has been the

mantra. Toughness has been defined as "lock'em up and throw away the key!" embodied in mandatory sentencing statutes, and "unleash the police!" embodied in stop-and-frisk policies.

Throughout those years, criminologists like me have predicted a coming reckoning of those policies, especially as they focused on enforcement of marijuana and other drug laws. We anticipated the day that the chickens would come home to roost. For one thing, the 800% increase in America's prison population since we "got tough" was unsustainable. Sooner or later, we reasoned, at that rate of growth we would need to put a fence down the Mississippi River and put the prisoners on one side and everyone else on the other. Or, the building and maintenance of the prison industry would bankrupt us all. Prisons, once built, would always be full and would never close. The imprisonment strategy preempted any alternative approach.

In addition, we believed the aggressive patrol techniques favored by the "get tough on crime" crowd, with the attendant profiling and disproportionate targeting of poor, black and brown citizens, would ultimately bring about a sharp reaction from Americans who value the Bill of Rights and restraint of governmental actions. The undeniable racial disparities in the stop-and-frisk techniques, along with a host of other practices, surely would arouse the revolutionary *zeitgeist* of our Founders, we thought.

I must say that throughout my

career, with each book written and lecture given, I did not always believe the era would ever end. Each class of students listened intently to my analyses and looked at the data so obvious to all. But the political climate in the United States, and the rhetoric of crime fighting so poisoned the discourse, that I could see little chance for meaningful policy change.

Now, in two fell swoops, change seems almost within reach. The first was Attorney General Eric Holder's recent announcement that the mandatory minimum sentences so central to the policies of "get tough on crime" would no longer be invoked in federal drug prosecutions. The second was Judge Shira A. Scheindlin's ruling that New York City's stop-and-frisk practices violated the U.S. Constitution. Suddenly, criminal justice professionals, politicians, pundits, and professors are speaking sense to folly. It is permissible to offer alternatives to draconian sentencing laws as well as heavy-handed, intrusive invasions of privacy and dignity.

Hopefully we can begin the end of the criminalization of mental illness, substance abuse, and adolescent misconduct. Maybe we can use the community assets already in place, such as churches, to bring peace and good behavior in our most difficult communities. It is possible. Christian justice reformers of 150 years ago, such as John Augustus and John Howard, paved the way in their generation. Now is the time for 21st Century followers of Jesus to bring justice to the captives in this generation. ■

The SBC's Senseless Decision Making

...SBC leaders themselves seem baffled by their denominational decline and can't imagine why everyone would not want to be just like them. So they are attempting to avoid a split over Calvinism.

A report from an advisory committee called for "unity" based on the odd idea that it is OK to believe "more" than what's found in the convention's doctrinal statement but not "less." Logically, if one dares to think about it, that means their minimums of faith are the most important ones.

Therefore, for example, a fellow Baptist who believes a woman can be called to pastoral ministry (something SBC Executive Committee President

Frank Page once defended as biblical in his doctoral dissertation) does not meet the minimal requirements of Southern Baptists. Sorry about that.

However, if a fellow Baptist believes that God died for a predetermined few, rather than for the whole world (as John 3: 16 claims and Page argued in his book, *Trouble with the TULIP*), that is an acceptable "more" belief that allows for inclusion within the Southern Baptist fold. That's a minor doctrinal difference compared to the role of women in church leadership, you see.

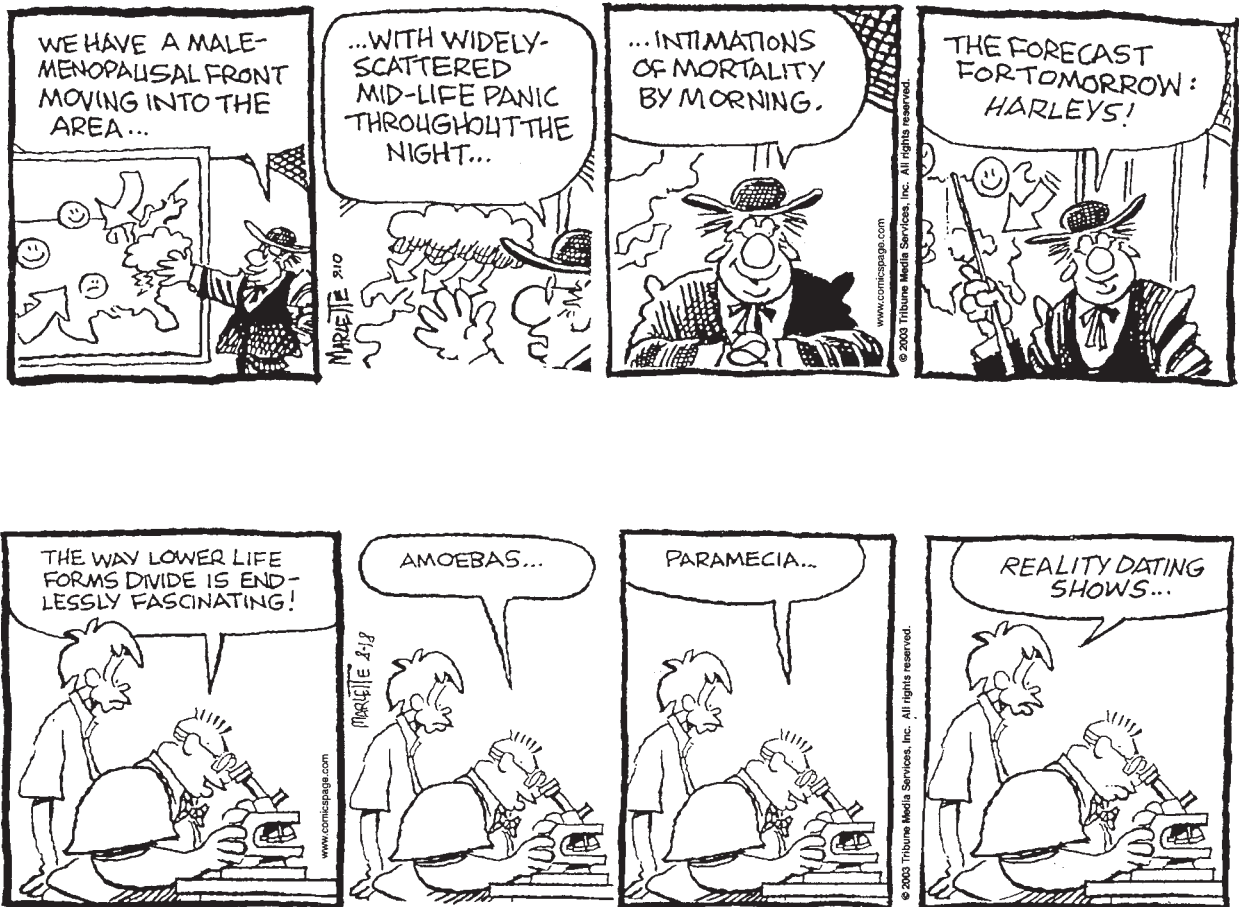
Are we making sense here? I'm trying hard.

So if I were interested in being a

Southern Baptist again, and I'm not, I could embrace the belief that one of my two daughters is destined for Heaven while the other is destined for Hell (regardless of the spiritual nurture we provide or her own response to Jesus). But I cannot believe that one of them might receive a divine calling to pastoral ministry.

When you think about it, that's how Southern Baptists believe now — "more" or "less." ■

This is an excerpt taken from John Pierce's article in the August 2013 issue of Baptists Today. "Trying to make sense out of SBC decision making" and is published here with permission.



Leaders lead. *By Keith Herron*

Leaders lead by example.

Leaders don't ask others to do what they are not already doing.
Leaders set the pace of expectation and performance.
Leaders set the standard by which the group's success is achieved.

Leaders lead by honesty.

Leaders determine for themselves they will tell the truth.
Leaders understand that secrets are often embedded in the life of the group.
Leaders recognize that dishonesty is a habit that eventually overshadows the clarity of truth and becomes a threat of disease to the health of the group.

Leaders lead by trust.

Leaders cannot lead in a group where trust is not shared as an extension of healthy relationships with one another.
Leaders must accept the trust offered them knowing it is an extension of our trust with God.
Leaders must extend trust to those with whom they work as an extension of their desire for the group to experience healthy vitality.

Leaders lead by outward example.

Leaders recognize it's what they do and not what they say that really matters in the end.
Leaders act on the basis of their deepest convictions.
Leaders act sacrificially for the overall health of the group.

Leaders lead by integrity.

Leaders recognize that without integrity their efforts are neutralized or wasted.
Leaders offer themselves as faithful models that can be followed by others who are seeking the path for themselves.
Leaders understand that secrets diminish the group's health.

Leaders lead by inward self-understanding.

Leaders differentiate the outward image presented through their actions from the inward essence of their true self.
Leaders see themselves honestly, recognizing that health of self emanates from within.
Leaders accept their dark selves and seek to resolve those conflicts in healthy ways.

Leaders lead by ethical moral authority.

Leaders do not demand perfection of themselves or others but recognize imperfection as a sign of our mutual humanity.
Leaders recognize the source of their power resides in their ability to live ethically according to the way of Christ.
Leaders seek to resolve their errors with others and with God.

Leaders lead by living against the grain of lesser ways of being.

Leaders are willing to choose the harder path if that's the necessary path that leads to success.
Leaders refuse to take shortcuts that threaten the group's health or success.
Leaders ask others to follow them.

Leaders lead by humility.

Leaders recognize the truth, ‘but by the grace of God go I.’
Leaders know others have paved the way before them and made their success possible.
Leaders seek to elevate others to achieve success.

Leaders lead by owning their power.

Leaders know they have power to lead.
Leaders accept that power and vow to wield it with wisdom and kindness.
Leaders seek to serve through their power and recognize their power is a sacred trust.

Leaders lead by seeing what others cannot see.

Leaders are visionary and give thoughtful anticipation to the future.
Leaders lead by looking, thinking, dreaming, planning, building consensus, sharing, and working.
Leaders dream about how the future *could be* and don’t stay mired in the puny limitations of *what is*.

Leaders lead by courage.

Leaders accept that their role of leadership will be challenged.
Leaders step forward into the heart of the group’s need.
Leaders accept responsibility and don’t dump it upon others.

Leaders lead by submitting to the paradox of following.

Leaders know there is a larger wisdom at work in their efforts by allowing God room to work.
Leaders know they cannot do everything alone and allow faith to guide and direct others who share the vision.
Leaders are willing to be clay in the potter’s hand.

Leaders lead by understanding that the smallest things are essential to the largest things.

Leaders recognize the wisdom of the ancient Hebrew saying that, “it’s the little foxes that spoil the vineyard.”
Leaders know that it’s the little details that determine success or failure.
Leaders are willing to give attention to the small details “as unto the Lord,” understanding that everything they do is a reflection of their relationship to God. ■

Leaders lead.

Keith Herron is pastor of Holmeswood Baptist Church in Kansas City, Missouri.

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—Foy Valentine, Founding Editor

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

PURPOSES

- 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

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

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