

# Christian Ethics Today

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

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# The KKK In 2016?

By Patrick Anderson, editor

The trash in history's dustbin seems never to be discarded. The rubbish pile just gets higher and higher, spilling over from one generation to the next. Where is history's waste management system when we need it?

The Ku Klux Klan has been around for 150 years. Established by white Christians in the South immediately after the Civil War, the focus was on resisting all efforts by the federal government to provide rights and equality to freedmen. Viewing the distinction of the races as ordained by God, swearing loyalty to Christianity and "Christian morals," the Klan was devoted to white supremacy and black servitude. Membership grew to four million in the early 20th century, then declined in membership but remained a factor in southern culture, gaining new prominence during the Civil Rights era of the 1960s. Now, the fourth generation of Klanspersons has raised its ugly hooded head.

I thought they had been safely placed in history's trash bin. In recent years, I have treated the occasional notice of KKK activities as anomalies – evidences of the diehard antics of holdovers from bygone days, irrelevant to modern American life. But, no.

When I was a track athlete at Furman University in the 1960s, my teammates and I drove through Alabama and Georgia one night on a return trip from a track meet in Montgomery, Alabama. As always in our low-budget travel arrangements, six of us were packed into a sedan. Cruising down a country road late at night we drove up on a KKK rally in a large field. Cars and trucks were parked along the road as robed and hooded parking attendants directed traffic. Hundreds of people milled around while a Klansman stood on a hay wagon with a megaphone and preached his version of Christian

white supremacy. A huge cross was afire.

I had recently purchased an eight millimeter film camera with a zoom lens, a technological marvel in its day. The sight of the rally was exciting, scary, thrilling and appalling to us. We pulled into the parking area, jumped out of the car, and made our way toward the action. I started filming, zooming in on everything. I filmed young children, women and men in full KKK regalia marching

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around the burning cross. I heard the background sound of the preacher. It was wild and I was caught up in my through-the-lens view. The men marched around in single file, forming a circle. As I filmed and zoomed, it took a few minutes for me to realize that the circle they were making was around me.

As the circle drew tighter, I finally lowered my camera and stood in the middle of the angry-looking bunch of hooded white guys, some with faces covered, others not. As they closed in on me, a leader said, "You can't take pictures here!" I nervously replied, "I didn't know." From the crowd I heard someone say, "Smash that camera!" Another said, "Let me have that boy, Sam!" Yet others murmured threatening things.

I focused on the one I thought was the leader. "Please don't smash my camera," I said. "I just bought it. I'm just a college boy returning from a track meet." I opened the back of the camera and several men directed their flashlights on the inner workings of the camera. One of them said, "Let's see them pictures," as though I were going to pass out eight-by-ten glossies. "There!" I said, "You have exposed the film. It is no good now. You don't have to smash my camera. You've ruined the film!"

I snapped the camera shut and, inexplicably, the head man instructed me to leave, which I did, escorted by two burly Klansmen. I joined my teammates who had long ago escaped to the car, faithfully waiting to see what became of me. I jumped in the car and off we went, laughing and joking as scared white boys from college would do. Only a portion of the film was exposed. I still have some grainy footage of the burning cross in a hayfield surrounded by robed KKK.

When our track team reunited recently, that story was remembered and recounted over and over, passing down from generation-to-generation a relic of a bygone era. Otherwise, I have given only occasional thought to that night.

Then, in 1981, Carolyn and I and our three children drove through rural Louisiana toward Baton Rouge on our way to my new post on the faculty at Louisiana State University. In the morning hours, on a country road, we drove past a large field and saw the smoking embers of a large cross that had been burned the night before. We could tell by the tire ruts and trampled ground that a lot of cars, trucks and people had recently been in that field for a public event and cross burning. It was a good time to talk with the kids about the KKK, but even then I could not help but

consider this an example of a dying, atavistic throwback to an earlier time in human development.

Last summer, my grandson Davis and I took a jeep ride through the mountain roads of western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee. Neither of us thought to take our cellphones and, of course, my old jeep is not equipped with GPS, something on which I have become far too dependent. We became thoroughly lost and disoriented in the late afternoon. We took it as an adventure, although both of us kept a wary eye on the gas gauge since neither of us had any money and I had not bothered to bring my wallet and credit cards. Davis scrambled through the ashtray and other likely spots and found about two dollars in change.

To add to our thinly-veiled anxiety, we noticed confederate flags unfurled on poles in front of ramshackle houses, signs with confederate insignia near mailboxes, trucks with flag stickers, an occasional confederate flag stuck in the back of a pickup truck, motorcycles with confederate insignia attached. Davis and I talked about all those sights and wondered about what people were thinking, hoping to find a way home sooner rather than later.

And now, in 2016, the KKK is back in the news. At political rallies, we see them pushing and shoving and yelling, directing their invective at persons of color or persons identified as having contrary opinions. The images appear on television, ugly images, hateful and frightening images.

Sometimes news commentators such as Rachel Maddow juxtapose images of Hitler and the Brown Shirts, or Mussolini and his militia guardians, enabling dictators to be propelled into public office through the use of strong arms and the clubs of bigots. The unmistakable conclusion is that the same could happen in America.

I confess to taking all this too lightly. My experiences described above are, after all, the experiences of a white person. My African American sisters and brothers, friends and colleagues, have an entirely different and more visceral experience. Scholars like historian Bruce Gourley have written much about how white Christians, clergy and laity, empowered the KKK during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Churches and denominations in the South allowed the KKK to lay their robes at the altar on Sunday mornings after Saturday night's lynchings, bombings, beatings and other atrocities, much as Saul permitted the mob to lay their robes at his feet as they stoned Stephen to death. Nary an old-line Baptist church in the South existed without deacons and other leaders attached to the Klan.

The radical Christian Right has terroristic tendencies, much like radical Islamic followers. Florida historian James M. Denham has written much about the bombings of African Americans by radical Christian terrorists, the KKK, not so long ago. In Denham's book on the history of Florida sheriffs, he found that every sheriff prior to 1950 was in the Klan. His study ended with that year, and

he cannot authoritatively speak to the status of sheriffs after 1950, although we are left to wonder, especially knowing Lake County's infamous Sheriff Willis McCall.

Near my ancestral home, Cedar Key, Florida, the massacre in 1923 at a black township called Rosewood is rarely talked about. But the smell of dynamite and smoke and the eviscerated bodies of black people is still fresh in the nostrils of many living people. White folks are shocked to learn of such things, or they deny them, with public schools seldom teaching about such elements of our shared history.

Today, the KKK and other white supremacists support the same Republican Party, especially Donald Trump. American politicians, aspirants for highest office, use one group of terrorists (KKK and other Christian white supremacists) to demonize another group of terrorists (radical Islam); but they do not stop there. They speak ill of black people, liberals, gays, democrats, immigrants, refugees, labor unions, socialists and more. We all lose and everyone is endangered. But this loss is more than the mere loss of political advantage; we lose the soul of society, the truth of the Gospel, and our basic humanity.

It is embarrassing and shameful that dangerous hate groups under the banner of Jesus, have emerged so publicly and forcefully in 2016. Will we never put the KKK into history's trash compactor? Does this strain of America persist forever? ■

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Dear Friends of CET,

*Thank you for continuing to publish the CET journal. I confess I can't read the journal from cover to cover right away, but eventually get around to reading each article in the journal. I just read the article by K. Jason Coker, "The Theo-politics of Near-Far" which I appreciated. I enjoyed his comparison of the biblical division between Jews and Gentiles to what we are struggling with in our modern culture with homosexuality. Please keep up the good work and continue to send me CET in hard copy.*

Respectfully,  
Jack Mullinax  
Coppell, TX

# Naming the Unmentionable: The Scourge of White Christian Supremacy

by Bruce Gourley for *Christian Ethics Today* March 2016

In March of this year Republican candidate Donald Trump, channeling the fears of many white Christian Americans, repeatedly insisted that “Islam hates us.”

Similar thoughts probably crossed the minds of a group of “20 and odd” persons stepping off a boat at Jamestown, Virginia in late August of the year 1619.

Kidnapped from their homes far away, imprisoned in a Portugese ship upon the high seas and then kidnapped yet again, this time by English sailors manning a more powerful vessel, the unwilling immigrants that day gazed upon a strange land. If they could have known where they were—they did not—and formed thoughts in the language of the place strange to them, the scenes before their eyes and the painful sensations of their shackled bodies may well have led them to think, “Christians hate us.”

History changed that late summer day in 1619 when those African Muslims stepped onto the soil of the New World. For a few bushels of food the governor and a leading merchant of the Christian colony of Jamestown purchased the twenty-something Muslims, quickly putting them to work in nearby tobacco fields. Toiling away against their will, the immigrants’ stolen labor enriched the colony’s white Christian elites, men who congratulated themselves for both the profits they reaped and their faithfulness to the colony’s charter of “propagating the Christian Religion” to people living “in Darkness and miserable Ignorance of the true Knowledge and Worship of God.” The kingdom of the white Christian God now extended over Africans as well as Native Americans.

Thus begins the story of white Christian supremacy and African

Muslim slavery in colonial America. Although some of the earliest Muslim slaves were allowed to earn their freedom after a certain number of years of forced labor, the colony’s elites soon realized the financial advantages of perpetual servitude. Before the end of the century, lifetime enslavement of African Muslims was standard practice throughout the New World.

Alongside the doctrine of black

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## *Alongside the doctrine of black slavery, Christian elites preached white solidarity.*

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slavery, Christian elites preached white solidarity. By virtue of the paleness of their skin, whites were the chosen ones, reaping the benefits of race-based freedom. Enslavers controlled the bodies of the enslaved, bodies routinely beaten in order to generate ever more profit, raped for sexual pleasure, and marched in leg irons hundreds of miles distant to clear and work new lands for the further enrichment of the master’s wealth. Few were the fortunate free Africans who escaped enslavers’ terrorism. Living in a netherworld were the growing number of offspring from interracial unions, both enslaved and free.

Some one hundred years following the firm establishment of white Christian supremacy and African Muslim slavery, the Declaration of Independence and American Revolution proved unable to alter the course of racial history. Paying lip service to the equality of all men, the nation’s founders nonetheless caved in to the demands of Southern

elites. Black slavery continued, protected by an amendment to the Consitution (the Second) designed to allow enslavers to raise militias to quash slave rebellions. Even so, from the 1780s forward northern whites from Christian convictions increasingly repudiated the enslavement of blacks. Although outlawed in the North in the early eighteenth century, most white citizens remained white supremacists and slavery yet enriched northern elites as southern, slave-produced cotton fueled northern industry. White Christian elites of the South, meanwhile, theologized black slavery, preached white solidarity and co-opted poor whites, reaping enormous financial profits as inequality soared. All the while they denied they were racists, pointing instead to their faithfulness to the Bible and to God’s will for the Christianizing enslavement of black persons.

It took some 700,000 American deaths in a four-year civil war to bring an end to America’s slave economy and establish freedom for all persons. White Christian supremacy, however, emerged undaunted. No apologies from former southern enslavers were offered to formerly enslaved blacks, no efforts made to recompense the South’s laboring class for the several trillion dollars of work stolen from them, no offers extended to help freedmen obtain education and land.

Instead, many southern whites displayed contempt for and hatred of their former slaves and determined to thwart northern efforts to force racial equality upon the South. In 1866 a white Christian organization, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), emerged to insure the continued subjugation of black persons that had begun in 1619. Initiates were required to swear loyalty to Christianity and Christian moral-

ity. Devoted to white supremacy, the terrorist organization conducted a massive campaign of violence and murder throughout the South, killing at will African Americans who dared exert freedom and whites who advocated racial equality.

Although the KKK under pressure from northern forces went underground in the 1870s, the North proved unable to overcome the militant white supremacy represented by the Klan. Northern efforts to force whites to accept black freedom ended in failure. Soon, Jim Crow laws institutionalized regional apartheid through fear and terrorism. White Christian supremacists revised southern antebellum history, fabricating memories of an antebellum Old South where happy, content black slaves willfully toiled in cotton fields for lenient white masters who extolled the best of Christian morality and virtues.

Victorious over blacks and history, elite white Christian supremacists rebirthed the KKK in 1915 as a second-generation terrorist organization tasked with keeping blacks in servitude and poverty, opposing immigrants (especially Roman Catholics and Jews), and thwarting a newly-ascendent labor movement. In the decades following the Klan perpetrated thousands of terrorist acts in the name of Christianity, preaching white racial solidarity and further stoking among common whites a hatred of black persons. Many white Christians of the 1930s and 1940s expressed approval of Adolph Hitler and his white supremacist German Christian nationalist movement, the Nazi Party.

Although the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s finally achieved legal victory over white supremacist laws in America, the racist and hate-filled spirit of the Klan remained embedded in the minds of many white southerners, evidenced in forcefully segregated churches, anti-black private and home school movements, as well as racist policies embodied in financial and social institutions.

In the 1970s the modern Religious Right emerged not in reaction to *Roe v. Wade*, but rather from white supremacist outrage over efforts by the International Revenue Service

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to punish fundamentalist Bob Jones University for the school’s racially discriminatory policies. Ronald Reagan, sensing political opportunity, dog-whistled to racists with rants about mythological “welfare queens” who lived lives of luxury off of government welfare. White Christian evangelicals flocked to the familiar tune, twice

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## *Shamefully, within white evangelical Christendom, human equality modeled by Jesus and voiced by the the Apostle Paul (Romans 2:11, Galatians 3:28) remains anathema for many.*

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electing Reagan president and all the while denying they were racists. Reagan promised law and order. Black incarceration soared under presidents Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

Yet for racists, the unfathomable

happened in 2008 with the election of an African American as president of the United States. White supremacists were livid that someone of an inferior race had become the nation’s leader. From hatred the Tea Party emerged. Proclaimed as a movement against Wall Street elites but in reality bathed in the ideology of white supremacy, Tea Party rallies routinely featured openly racist, hate-filled, anti-Obama signs. The number of hate groups in America, KKK and otherwise, soared. Embracing the anger, many conservative white lawmakers in Washington, D.C. vowed to resist Obama’s governance at all costs.

As Tea Party fervor sent increasingly angry and strident white Christian supremacists to Congress, racist lawmakers and presidential contenders hearkened back to Jim Crow laws in devising schemes to keep African Americans from the voting booth. Today, their anger routinely spills over into rants against homosexuals, Mexican immigrants, Syrian refugees and Muslims.

To be certain, threads of modern reality are woven into today’s white supremacist narrative. America is on the cusp of becoming a white minority nation. Inequality—driven, according to many economists, by powerful and elite corporatists manipulating government and law to enrich themselves at the expense of their poverty-paid laborers, the rapid ascendancy of automated technology, and the outsourcing of many American jobs to countries dominated by low wages—is shrinking the middle class and placing the once-vibrant “American Dream” further and further out of the reach of ordinary white persons (a dream most African Americans have yet to achieve). The cost of higher education, by far the best road out of poverty, is beyond the reach of those who need it most. America, in too many ways, is a nation in crisis.

Hovering over this existential national crisis, however, are some four centuries of unremitting and widespread racial and ethnic hatred empowered by white Christian suprem-

acist ideology. We as a nation have yet to truly embrace the fact that all humans share some 99% of the same DNA. Hewing to the artificial construct of race oppresses minorities and perverts majorities. Fearing rather than celebrating differences in ethnicity, religion and gender yet prevents the fulfillment of the nation's founding vision of human equality.

Shamefully, within white evangelical Christendom, human equality modeled by Jesus and voiced by the the Apostle Paul (Romans 2:11, Galatians 3:28) remains anathema for many.

And so today's KKK and white supremacist allies remain all too vocal and influential in this year's election year discourse, channeling hatred and vitriol against persons of color and ethnicity. It comes as no historical surprise that an aged white supporter at a Donald Trump rally this spring, in the midst of the removal of a black protestor by Trump's security forces, punched the African American and afterward declared that "we might have to kill" the man if he returned.

I hope to be alive when America finally escapes her historical burden

of racial and ethnic hatred, but I have my doubts. We must do our best to overcome our nation's original sin, but salvation from the evils of white supremacy will likely fall to more diverse and tolerant younger and future generations who gaze upon our diseased land with new eyes and refuse to be enslaved to the spirit of hate. ■

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## Losing Faith (In Christianity and Democratic Capitalism)

By Gary Moore

"I am for the free market. Even though it doesn't work too well, *nothing else works at all. But I have serious reservations about capitalism as a system because it idolizes economics as the be-all and end-all of life... I believe it is socially and morally unforgivable when managers reap huge profits for themselves but fire workers. As societies we will pay a heavy price for the contempt this generates.*" Peter Drucker *Managing in the Next Society* (2002)

The media recently shared the results of a new Pew survey of religion. It said Americans who claim "none" as their religious affiliation are now among the largest and fastest growing segments of American faith. A little later, *The Wall Street Journal* featured a story headlined, "A Fading Faith in Capitalism." I believe there are connections.

*Our Spiritual and Financial Crisis*  
The *Journal* story detailed a new global survey that said only 14% of Americans now believe "the next generation will be richer, safer and healthier than the last." America was the least hopeful nation surveyed. The article concluded that while "life is getting better in the U.S., 55% of Americans believe the rich get richer and the poor get poorer under capitalism. Sixty-five percent agree that most big businesses have dodged taxes, damaged the environment or bought special favors from politicians... *To restore confidence, the same rules need to apply to everyone*" (emphasis mine).

The *Journal* is hardly alone when saying our children's future is threatened by selfishness on the part of today's corporate elite, not to mention our political elite. Ominously, Morgan Stanley has just judged the US the most economically unequal country in the developed world

with the exceptions of the struggling "PIGS," meaning Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain. On the other hand, a special report in *The Economist* recently called the Scandinavian countries the new economic lights of the world as they are more equal and more dynamic, even though they are more heavily taxed.

There's an old saying that we don't see reality as it is but as we are. So

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**While "life is getting better in the U.S., 55% of Americans believe the rich get richer and the poor get poorer under capitalism.**

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most Americans I talk to assume that because they have little wealth and Washington is indebted, America must be "broke." That's anything but true. Our corporations and the wealthy, which are discussed later, have enormous assets. Yet, due to our misperceptions, tolerated, if not generated, by leaders who most benefit, many ordinary Americans have supported policies that are likely against their own moral and financial interests in the name of "growth." But as has been said, growth at any price is precisely the philosophy of the cancer cell.

In *The Economist* magazine's recently featured story entitled, "Reinventing the company" said: "After a century of utter dominance, the public company is showing signs of wear. One reason is that managers tend to put their own interests first. The shareholder revolution of the 1980s was supposed to solve this by incentivizing managers to think like

owners; but it backfired. Loaded up with stock options, managers acted like hired guns instead, massaging the share price so to boost their incomes."

A few days later, he *Christian Science Monitor* stated that a new study entitled 'A Tale of Two Cities.' found "100 *Fortune* 500 CEOs have retirement assets worth \$4.9 billion collectively, roughly equal to the amount saved by 50 million US families. *The strategies used to achieve the massive nest eggs are unavailable to the average worker... Bloomberg Business* found that, in addition to the tax-deferred retirement plans, around 30% of *Fortune* 1000 companies offer additional executive retirement plans as an incentive" (emphasis mine).

Finally, a recent extensive survey by the Public Religion Research Institute said 93% of Democrats and 88% of Republicans said our government tends "very" or "somewhat well" to the interests of the wealthy. Ninety percent of Democrats and 86% of Republicans said it did the same thing for corporations. In short, we aren't so far from the oligarchy of Rome that Jesus encountered. But rather than opt for the political or military solutions the zealots advocated, he taught his moral solution. It took a while but Rome eventually saw the light.

On the other hand, Professor Seyyed Nasr of Georgetown College, whose son Vali advised President "W" about Islamic affairs, has written 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 mention as the dominating factor in life according to the prevailing paradigms of the modern world [capitalism?], is devastating to the Islamic view of human life."

It was probably 20 years ago now that a special report in *The Economist* featured two crusaders and the headline, “Not again for God’s sake.” It concluded that it might take Islam, presumably peaceful Islam, to re-moralize the economies of the West.

*So Where Are Our Churches?*

A few mainline and Catholic institutions have long integrated the Judeo-Christian ethic with their wealth management. But that message has rarely made it to local levels where it might affect our stewardship. The Rev. Dr. Meir Tamari has therefore written:

“I think that what happened in the 19th century was that religious leadership simply abandoned the field of economic morality to the secular world. Religion thus became irrelevant to many people. We helped create a split personality among business leaders. They could be pious people. They could go to church or synagogue but religion made no demands on them in the marketplace. This separation of personality, I think, is a major tragedy for religion and for businesspeople.”

I’ve grown to believe that is the root of the articles above. The mentioned articles appeared around the time my church launched its annual “stewardship” drive. If you’ll forgive the self-reference, I believe this example is important. In ancient times, stewardship was a holistic philosophy of morally managing *all* of God’s wealth, whether individually with our personal resources of time, talent and treasure, or corporately in our political-economy. But today, stewardship is usually just an annual pledge card drive, detested by clergy and laity alike. Few business leaders need Bible verses to understand that the bills have to be paid; so most catch up on their sleep during such campaigns. But Americans still gave about \$350 billion to charity last year, much of it to religion. Yet Bain & Co, with which Mitt Romney was affiliated, has estimated there is \$600 trillion of permanent capital flowing around our world each day. Bain estimated

that will grow to \$900 trillion by the end of this decade.

Jacob Needleman has written in *Money and the Meaning of Life* that all money is now a purely secular force void of any spiritual aspiration, thereby becoming a fire raging out of control. It surely depresses our spirits. For example, our \$18 trillion federal debt is a huge number that depresses millions as few leaders put our challenges into the context of our blessings. But President W’s administration concluded: “The size of the net foreign debt is relatively small compared with the total stock of U.S. assets. In 2007, it amounted to seven

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***In short, we aren’t so far from the oligarchy of Rome that Jesus encountered.***

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percent of total assets,” of around \$120 trillion. Donald Trump has estimated for the Discovery Channel that our assets are more than twice that. Those are economic blessings that would lift the spirits and hopes of millions of Americans, if someone would only help us count them. The

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***“I believe in God, family and McDonalds. But when I go to work on Monday, all that reverses.”***

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*Ray Kroc, founder of McDonalds*

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church should. We would be more relevant to our money culture. And the Bible still says judgement on a nation begins in the house of the Lord. If we’re focused exclusively on our finances, can we expect our nation to do differently?

Our Gospel reading on a recent

Sunday was from the 12th chapter of the Book of Mark, verses 30-44. The first part is the little-discussed passage where Jesus condemns leaders of the temple for their religious dress and rituals while devouring the houses of widows. That’s crucial Gospel today. Many of the worst financial frauds are conducted in churches or by those who are most obvious about their faith. I’ve personally known three “Christians” who have gone to jail for Ponzi schemes. I even served on the board of a major ministry with Ken Lay, the CEO of Enron, perhaps history’s most notorious corporate implosion. Worse, church leaders unwittingly help to create businesspeople in the schizophrenic mold of Ray Kroc, the founder of McDonalds. He once confessed: “I believe in God, family and McDonalds. But when I go to work on Monday, all that reverses.” He also said that if one of his competitors were drowning, he’d run a hose down his throat and turn on the water. But his wife gave their fortune to charity. Still, we might note that Jesus said we must love God and *neighbor* as self before going to work. Even the mafia focuses on their families and organizations at work.

But after the reading of the passage from Mark, the pastor ignored that portion of the reading as he focused on the second part of the reading, which better served the short-term financial interests of the church. It was the much-discussed passage about the generosity of the widow who gave her last two mites in the temple. Some businesspeople probably left thinking Jesus would look fondly on our generosity, regardless of how we got the money. Yet Jesus condemned that compartmentalized worldview in the Sermon on the Mount. He said that if we come to the altar with our offerings and remember a neighbor has something against us, we must go and make peace with that neighbor before completing the offering. His priorities were clear.

The *Matthew Henry Bible Commentary* also says the widow actually dropped her coins in the

poor box. Church leaders often confuse such compassion with our paying the church’s bills. The Empty Tomb ministry has detailed for years that our churches pass on a very tiny percentage of our national income to the poor. In fact, studies say that when giving to pay our churches’ bills is removed from “charitable donations,” by which we usually just mean tax-deductions, charitable giving virtually disappears among many Christians. The church seems to have increasingly shifted such “social responsibilities,” as we would call them today, to governments. But true Christianity is always about balancing personal responsibility with social responsibility, particularly for the poor. A church that can’t get that straight about money won’t help Wall Street, corporate America and Washington, or even Main Street, to get it straight. Even personal responsibility can then become a euphemism for taking care of number one.

Many businesspeople are critical of the clergy for the Sunday-Monday divide. Even Professor Laura Nash of Harvard has written:

“The church’s often-dismissive response to the layperson’s optimistic desire to integrate faith and career cannot be justified. In fact, this attitude may be the largest act of self-marginalization that mainstream churches have ever engaged in.”

It can also be argued that newer expressions of our faith, which often have little understanding of the developments in economic theology that built a moral framework for primitive capitalism, have ironically marginalized our faith with so-called “prosperity theology,” in which we seek first the money and trust the kingdom will be added unto us.

*Following Capitalism to Elitism*

Yet we businesspeople should also understand that our clergy are human and may simply be giving us what we want. That has been a primary temptation of people and priest since Aaron, the patriarch of the clergy, told Moses at the base of Sinai that he had let the people worship the golden

bull simply as they had wanted to (Exodus 32:19-25). The prophet creatively explained to the priest that true religion is about having people internalize what they need rather than what they want. Moses crushed the bull and made the people drink it. It’s safe to assume Moses had Aaron drink his share.

But memories are short. Martin Luther’s famous 95 Theses, written 500 years ago, were actually about the self-serving financial theology and practices of the medieval church. Luther also taught “the priesthood of all believers,” saying there’s nothing more holy about the clergy tending

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***While Carnegie was a great philanthropist, his company could be ruthless with employees, even killing several during a strike.***

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a church than a person attending a business. But the monastery became the world rather than the world becoming the monastery. Professor Justo Gonzalez has written in *Faith and Wealth*:

“When the Protestant Reformation did away with monasticism, rejecting what it took to be an attempt to gain heaven by works, it also did away with monasticism’s reminder to the entire church of the need for obedience in economic matters.”

The Sunday-Monday divide widened with Andrew Carnegie. In his book, *God the Economist*, Professor Doug Meeks calls Carnegie America’s “most influential theologian.” That’s as the businessman convinced us that God is interested only in our charity on Sunday, not how we co-create and manage the Creator’s wealth from Monday to Saturday, and now even Sunday. While Carnegie was a great philanthropist, his company could be ruthless with employees, even killing

several during a strike. That prompted President Theodore Roosevelt to say he’d “tried hard to like Carnegie but it’s difficult to like a man who makes a god of mere money-making.”

Carnegie may have even inspired B.C. Forbes, the founder of *Forbes* magazine, now famous for the annual list of the 400 richest Americans, to write:

“Too few millionaires who aspire to win fame as philanthropists begin at home, among their own workers. To grind employees and then donate a million dollars to perpetuate his name is not a particularly laudable record for any man to live or leave behind him. Of course, it is more spectacular, it makes more of a splash to do the grandiose act in sight of all men, where it will be read and talked of. But it is a rather pitiable form of philanthropy.”

Despite his generous giving, Carnegie’s legacy as a moral steward was forever tarnished by his economic morality.

Today, even the most popular “Bible-believing” Christian financial advisors essentially teach Carnegie’s liberal stewardship philosophy when counseling generous giving while actually discouraging ethics when investing. Dave Ramsey’s website, *Sound Mind Investing*, and Ron Blue & Co are examples. None seem to have read Jesus’ condemnation of the Pharisees who tithed the herbs of the garden while ignoring economic justice, perhaps best defined by the section of Exodus 21 that my study Bible headlines, “The Responsibility of Owners.” It essentially says the habitual failure to manage potentially harmful bulls, ironically the symbol of Wall Street, in a socially responsible fashion means our wealth will be destroyed and we may be put to death (verses 28-32).

We should also understand that the inability of most church leaders to speak with businesspeople about moral wealth creation is largely a result of democratic capitalism itself. In a democracy, the people rule. Capitalism teaches “the customer is

always right,” a phrase that cannot be found in the Bible. Our colleges departmentalize our educations. That serves capitalism’s “specialization of labor” but creates less than holistic thinking and living. That’s particularly a problem with graduate level education, affecting our cultural elites. For example, our clergy often go to seminary as they are even less gifted and interested in business than those seeking MBA’s are gifted and interested in theology. So as Professor Nash of Harvard says, Christian businesspeople who want to integrate faith and career have to create their own theologies as they go along, resulting in the confused moral populism so evident in today’s politics.

When idealistically exploring seminary 30 years ago to study the moral management of wealth, I learned most seminaries considered the multitude of teachings of the Bible and church tradition concerning wealth management to be the third rail of religion. Most church leaders, and stewardship leaders in particular, unwittingly create the false compartmentalization that there is “God’s money” and “our money.” They often feel that if they touch “our money,” they die. But again, most laity have been quite happy with that arrangement throughout history. Even Martin Luther quickly learned people love the idea that all it takes to enter heaven is to give a few coins to the church. And church leaders condemned him as he’d “touched the crown of the pope and the bellies of the monks.” Luther was concerned about the finances of ordinary people, not religious royalty.

If the love of money remains the root of considerable mischief, the veins that move it up into branches of society are our major financial organizations. The most respected of Wall Street understand that. John Bogle, the founder of the Vanguard mutual funds, began his recent book *Enough* with this quote: “The people who created this country built a moral structure around money. The Puritan legacy inhib-

ited luxury and self-indulgence. For centuries, it remained industrious, ambitious and frugal. Over the past thirty years, much of that has been shredded... The country’s moral guardians are forever looking out for Hollywood and reality TV. But the most rampant decadence today is financial decadence, the trampling of decent norms about how to use and harness money.”

My mentor, the legendary mutual fund manager and philanthropist Sir John Templeton, taught us, “The concept that you have a spiritual life and a business life is false. The two go hand-in-hand.” John added: “My

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***While Carnegie was a great philanthropist, his company could be ruthless with employees, even killing several during a strike.***

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advice to a school of business management is to teach the business manager to give unlimited love and he or she will be more successful.” Much like Warren Buffett, John also said inherited wealth does little for chil-

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***John Templeton, taught us, “The concept that you have a spiritual life and a business life is false. The two go hand-in-hand.”***

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dren and therefore advocated a 95% estate tax so the wealthy would leave their money to charity.

*Rediscovering the Road to Wholeness, or Holiness*

If the Bible and Lincoln were correct, our financially divided economy,

politics and culture will not stand unless church leaders reunite them with a holistic understanding of moral wealth management and help our cultural elites remember it. Most likely, those church leaders will be businesspeople, as least during this generation. It is simply more realistic to expect businesspeople who go to church on Sunday to learn stewardship theology than for clergy who are in church all week to learn economics and business. When Professor Robert Wuthnow, a sociologist at Princeton, conducted a major stewardship study, his book *God and Mammon in America* concluded: “When we asked pastors to talk to us about stewardship, we encouraged them to tell us how they understood it in the broadest possible terms. Repeatedly, however, we found the church was their only frame of reference. They immediately talked about serving the church, doing church work, and giving money to the church.”

In his book, *The Crisis in the Churches: Spiritual Malaise, Fiscal Woe*, Wuthnow proposed a solution when he added:

“The steady drop in donations, volunteering and personal involvement is a direct result of a spiritual crisis—a crisis caused in large part due to the clergy’s failure to address the vital relationships between faith and money. The solution is not to simply talk more about the financial needs of the church. Thirty percent said they’d actually give less money if churches talked more about finances than they do now. The answer is to talk about the broader relationships between faith, work, money, giving, the poor and economic justice.”

There have been other prophets who have foreseen our moral and spiritual crisis. And no, I’m not talking about Karl Marx. Yet I’m reading an increasing number of economists who fear that Marx, despite all his error, may have been far too prophetic when he said wealth would grow unsustainably concentrated in capitalist societies. Despite common

perceptions, Marx was also Jewish and Lutheran at one point. He most likely understood Moses had divided the Promised Land equally among his people (Numbers 26:52-56) and then demanded it be redistributed each 50th, or Jubilee, year. That way, God’s people could grow wealthier during their lifetimes, but wealth would never grow overly concentrated in the long run. In that and many other ways, Moses balanced opportunity and justice for a dynamic but egalitarian culture, an ethic that became embedded in Judeo-Christian DNA. That ethic was evident from the Jewish prophets to the early Christian church as described in the Book of Acts to Colonial America where businesspeople were ejected from churches for earning more than five percent profit margins.

Yet that DNA has been corrupted by the morally unbridled spirit of capitalism. When economies were shaped by Judeo-Christian morality, it was more, if not perfectly, egalitarian. But now, even some quite respected and politically conservative Christian business leaders are concerned that, after declining until the 80s, the percentage of wealth going to and held by the so-called one percent has risen to the level it was in 1929. And B.C. Forbes also observed, “The 1929 breakdown was at its roots, a moral breakdown. We were not living right. We had become extravagant. We had become intoxicated by the alluring notion that the royal road to riches did not lie through sweat but speculation. We discarded and scorned old-fashioned virtues.”

Perhaps such cycles are inevitable. The Bible describes them and John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, said true Christianity couldn’t help but prosper a nation by checking excessive materialism and thereby encouraging thrift, prudence, patience and ethics, but added that same prosperity would then destroy Christianity, which of course would then destroy prosperity. Perhaps post-Christian America has entered the

later stages of that ancient cycle. But some hopeful prophets have told us it need not repeat, assuming we are humble enough to listen.

For example, legendary management consultant Peter Drucker wrote: “Ethics in the Judeo-Christian tradition, is the affirmation that all men and all women are alike creatures. There is only one ethics, one set of rules of morality, one code, that of individual behavior in which *the same rules apply to everyone alike*. And this fundamental axiom, business denies. Business ethics, in other words, is not ethics at all, as the term has commonly been used by Western phi-

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***In short, the true divide in today’s world may not be between left and right but between up and down, or those who practice the egalitarian ethic of Moses and Jesus and those who practice the elitist ethic of Rand and Friedman.***

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losophers and theologians. *Business ethics assumes that, for some reason, the ordinary rules of ethics do not apply to*

*business*” (emphasis mine). As Peter once taught theology, he understood the phrase “nothing personal it’s just business” is not in the Bible.

Dr. Drucker humbly insisted we call him Peter, reflecting his egalitarian ethic in our time when “Ph.D.” seems to stand for “pile it higher and deeper.” He was famous for teaching that no CEO should earn more than 20 times that of the average employee. But CEO pay is now 10 times what Peter thought it should be. As Peter had a biblical sense of selfish human nature, he knew that would happen. So 20 years ago, he left us a quite prophetic vision entitled *Post-Capitalist Society*. He explained we now live in a “society of organizations” where CEO’s are taking care of their organizations rather than society.

This very article is a wonderful example of how that has even infiltrated the church. Two prominent Christian media organizations offered to publish the rough draft of this essay. Though we never charge for our articles and they reach quite different readerships, both wanted exclusivity. I declined, as granting it would benefit their organizations but possibly deny many in society what they need to read. That’s why I submitted this article to my friend, Patrick Anderson, at *Christian Ethics Today*, since they claim no exclusive ownership of the content of the journal.

Chapter five of Peter’s book is entitled, “The Responsibility-based Organization.” It argues the self-centered organizations of today would fade away as the rest of us grow weary of our cultural elites taking care of themselves rather than the needs of society, meaning us. But Peter primarily dismissed the most influential teaching of Nobel economist Milton Friedman that “the only social responsibility of a business is to make money for shareholders,” a new-age moral philosophy that has shaped the priorities of countless CEOs. It did for CEOs what Ayn Rand’s teaching that the moral purpose of our lives is to make money for ourselves did for

too many boomers on Wall Street and Main Street, as well as in Washington. Rand dismissed charity and taught the world's saviors are actually CEO-types. In short, the true divide in today's world may not be between left and right but between up and down, or those who practice the egalitarian ethic of Moses and Jesus and those who practice the elitist ethic of Rand and Friedman.

#### *Where Your Treasure Is*

Jesus said our hearts will always be where our treasure is. That's actually quite different than where our tithes and offerings are. He knew that if we invest in *Playboy* while complaining about the consequences of the sexual revolution, our hearts will actually be in our promiscuous culture. So the good news is that a recent *Wall Street Journal* contained a quite hopeful story detailing how major Wall Street investment firms are rapidly catching Peter's vision. It said, "Wall Street has jumped in with sustainable investing divisions that create products for key demographics, like millennials, who are eager to align their values with their investments."

Sustainable investing is much the same as socially responsible investing, values-based investing, Biblically responsible investing, ethical-investing, and so on. Such investing considers things like CEO compensation, reducing products that are harmful for the public, building opportunities for the needy, environmentalism, and so on. The head of Morgan Stanley's division explained one in six dollars, up from one in nine only a few years ago, is now managed by integrating

values as "sustainable investments tend to be less volatile and perform better than their traditional cousins." Such investing is growing considerably faster than investing in general.

It would be a case of God working in quite strange ways for Wall Street firms to be the veins that pump the good side of the money coin into our society. But if Peter were still alive, I expect he would tell us our grandchildren will be better off if we all help the Street. The clergy might find a layperson or two who better understand and can teach the true meaning of stewardship. Those teaching business and journalism might better help graduate students understand what Robert Bartley, the legendary editor of

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***Such investing considers things like CEO compensation, reducing products that are harmful for the public, building opportunities for the needy, environmentalism, and so on.***

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*The Wall Street Journal*, meant when he wrote, "Rather than denigrating Christianity and religion in general, socially conscious elites ought to be asking what the religious impulse might teach us." Finally, all Christian stewards might again look beyond our

own financial interests and see how our investing as well as our charity is shaping our world.

But let's do so with grace and love, not legalism and conflict. America doesn't need a theocracy. It needs more professing Christians to become practicing Christians with all God's resources. But money seems to bring out the best and worst in all of us. Even Billy Graham has confessed the worst sermon of his life was about why there would be pink Cadillacs in heaven. But we might humbly forgive him that bit of other-worldly prosperity gospel as he has also said, and lived, that if we can only get our money right, odds are good the rest of our lives will eventually fall in line. Yes, the moral use of all money can be the root of much good.

*Gary Moore has a degree in political science and has served on the board of Jack Kemp and Bill Bennett's Empower America. He was a senior vice president of Paine Webber before considering seminary during the savings and loan and junk bond crisis of the late-eighties. After discovering seminaries rarely teach anything about the morality of wealth creation and management anymore, he became an independent financial advisor, authored several books on the subject and founded The Financial Seminary ([www.financialseminary.org](http://www.financialseminary.org).) One of his books is about his friend Sir John Templeton. Gary then wrote Faithful Finances 101 and Spiritual Investments at the request of John to be published by the Templeton Foundation Press. ■*

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*Editors and Staff of Christian Ethics Today,*

*Keep up the good work. The Lord is certainly using your abilities and helping the rest of us to act on our faith.*

*Cheers,  
Dean Fitzgerald, MD  
McKinney, TX*

## Poverty in Paradise II: I'm Perfectly Different

*By Angela Fields*

I am a person who is called to nurture the community. To clarify what I mean by community, community denotes neighbors or people and places God puts in your path. Community could also be people and places you may never see but the hardship therein pierces your heart.

As I venture deep into socially excluded communities to support and encourage families, I discover that we are rapidly moving toward a society that celebrates intolerance, violence and unforgiveness. I constantly interact with adults who are suffering from the lasting effects of poor family support and adverse upbringings. Adults, ideally, are the positive role models of emotional and social management through behavior and the verbal and emotional support they offer children. However, severely broken people are modeling life for our children.

Frederick Douglass once said, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken {adults}." But the reverse is happening. We are attempting to change behaviors after they are already established. As a result, communities are deteriorating quickly. Suicides, risqué behaviors, maladaptive behaviors such as sex, fighting and other aggressive behaviors, and drug use are destroying children and families.

I have also observed that self-conscious emotions such as pride, humiliation and shame, along with problems of self-worth, lead to aggression, anger, dissociative rage and violence.<sup>1</sup> As such, homicide and suicide are interchangeable as the number two and three leading causes of death among adolescents.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, I realize there is a disconnect between loving and respecting oneself and valuing the life and liberty of others. On the epithelial level, it appears that there is a general lack of respect for oneself and others. At the core, however, there is a lack of

love and emotional maturity.

The children's book *I'm Perfectly Different* is for children ages four to nine to create a space to discuss positive social and emotional development. *I'm Perfectly Different* promotes constructive thinking and behavior among young people through the use of storytelling. However, I learned that more is needed to reinforce the message. Poverty and broken spirits leave both children and adults emotionally vulnerable. Community factors, such as residential instability, crowded housing, lack of positive relationships, and views that violence is acceptable behavior<sup>3</sup> amplify the brokenness.

I often ruminate on 1 Peter 5 where Peter writes about being shepherds of God's flock, watching over them and being examples. Who are more God's flock than the children? What happens to the flock if the shepherds, or parents, lack the ability to lead them? As we are fortifying children with positive social and emotional measures, we also have to build families using the same measures.

I am in a unique position to assist both children and families. Therefore, I have a responsibility to the entire flock, i.e. children and families. My findings are that there is not a powerful discourse on the benefits of building social and emotional maturity among children, families and communities. It is beneficial to explore a wraparound model for social and emotional development to include families.

There is no other way to receive clarity about what it means to live life than to enter into healthy relationships with one another. How we relate to each other is the basis of community.<sup>4</sup> Social and emotional competence is profoundly interrelated with the health of our communities.

"Social and emotional competence is the ability to understand, manage, and

express the social/emotional aspects of one's life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to complex demands of growth and development."<sup>5</sup>

Studies have shown that parents admit to having little information on social and emotional development, even though they admit their actions greatly influence their children's development.<sup>6</sup> Churches, community organizations and other charitable groups offering life enrichment classes should take social and emotional learning into account. Parents and children who receive comparable social and emotional development services contribute to changing volatile environment by modeling healthy interactions, behaviors and experiences. Moreover, using interpenetration<sup>7</sup> and self-efficacy<sup>8</sup> methods are key.

The *I'm Perfectly Different* curriculum teaches love, self-realization and coping strategies. The pedagogy of love helps children and families by interjecting new measures of love. One vitally important function of love is compassion or empathy. Empathy is a way to strengthen social bonds by connecting to another person – "knowing what another person is feeling, feeling what another person is feeling, and responding compassionately to another's distress."<sup>9</sup>

I recognize that love and compassion flow out of our beliefs, thinking and values – the totality of who we are.<sup>10</sup> It is what you see, hear and are taught. This is why I could not negate God in my teachings. There is no greater example of love and compassion known to humanity. The Bible not only contains examples of authentic love and compassion, but it contains the love that will feed individuals after classes are done.

Self-realization dovetails the peda-

gogy of love. Self-realization introduces the value aspect – value of one’s own life as well as the lives of others. Valuing one’s self and others increases the perception of community value because we are now viewing our neighbors through the lens of ‘as worthy as the self’.

“A holistic view of the human experience holds thought and emotion together. Therefore, emotion becomes vital in what we do, how we think, and how we understand.”<sup>11</sup> Coping measures center on expressing emotions adaptively versus maladaptively.

Additionally, when serving children and families, it is important to know 1) how emotions are influenced by culture and 2) the prevailing emotion held within the community. Both the understanding and expression of emotion are influenced by culture. Cultures vary in terms of what one is expected to feel, and when, where, and with whom one may express different feelings.<sup>12</sup>

Understanding the community emotion helps to modify discussion for maximum permeation. For instance, if apathy is the emotion most commonly felt within the community, you will interject hope. If the community is angry, you overcome anger with acknowledgement and love.

Building communities is my life’s

work. I am fully committed to doing my part to heal the land. It is imperative for communities to increase prevention strategies to curtail violence. I realize that there is not one cause of communal violence; however, communities can see great reductions in violence by helping parents build healthy relationships with their children, establishing healthy problem solving skills, relationships and experiences. Healthy social and emotional development helps the family become self-confident, able to handle stress, empathetic toward others and less likely to become violent. ■

*Angela Fields is a writer and aspiring pastor who holds a Masters of Divinity from James and Carolyn McAfee School of Theology, Mercer University. Angela has a passion for nurturing the spiritual, social and emotional well-being of the community. Angela loves seafood, retail shopping and a great pair of pumps.*

1 Julian Walker & Victoria Knauer, “Humiliation, Self-Esteem and Violence,” *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology*; 724.

2 <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/adolescent-health.htm>

3 C. David-Ferdon & TR Simon, “Preventing Youth Violence: Opportunities for Action,” National

Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014; p16.

4 Raymond Gaita, “Love and teaching: renewing a common world,” *Oxford Review of Education*, 2012; p.761

5 Curtis Schnorr, *Habits of Mind across the Curriculum: Practical and Creative Strategies for Teachers*, (Virginia: ASCD, 2009) p77.

6 Teresa Odle, “Emotional Development,” 2013, from education.com

7 Interpenetration - Using more than one discipline to help someone experience, express and manage emotions as well as the ability to establish positive and rewarding relationships with others.

8 Self-efficacy – reflects confidence in the ability to exert control over one’s own motivation, behavior, and social environment

9 RW Levenson and AM Ruef, “Empathy: a physiological substrate,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1992; p 234.

10 Matthew Elliott, “The emotional core of love; the centrality of emotion in Christian psychology and ethics,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 2012; p 111

11 Ibid.

12 Carolyn Saarni, “The Development of Emotional Competence,” (New York: Guilford Press; 1999) p 213.

## Jefferson Said More Than He Meant

By David Jordan

Jefferson said more than he meant.

Inspired words pushing

Boundaries of self-evident truth

Expanding

Beyond small-mindedness

Eclipsing the glittering prose

“All Men Created Equal”

It was more than he meant.

An idea

Exploding

Past former lines of demarcation

Imaginations swelling

Over oceans that no longer constrain

A freedom bequeathed and bloodied

And moving forward

An arc of history

Bending toward justice.

Subversive

Increasingly self-evident

God’s Truth

Marching on.

Yes. Jefferson said more

Than he meant ...

Or ever, even imagined. ■

*Dr. David Jordan is Teaching Pastor, Providence Baptist Church Charlotte, North Carolina*

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## A Rare Day

By Marion D. Aldridge

“What is so rare as a day in June?”  
James Russell Lowell

June 1, 1974, was my first day on the job, and I was grossly under-qualified for the task I had been called to do. My title was family minister. I was 27 years-old and had been married for a year-and-a-half. Sally was expecting our first child, but that didn't qualify me. I was ordained, but had not yet attended seminary. That happens in Baptist life. It doesn't always work out well. I had worked for a fine ministry to teenagers called Young Life, and had experienced success in that role. The senior pastor of the church thought those skills might transfer successfully to working with young adults. My assignment was to provide ministry to the young families becoming a part of our congregation. I was in over my head.

That first day, I was the “pastor on call.”

First Baptist Church of Columbia, South Carolina, claims a long history as a distinguished and venerable downtown congregation, the spiritual home of many of the state's prominent citizens, including governors, senators and, maybe more importantly, head football coaches at the University of South Carolina. The Greek revival sanctuary, built in 1856,

was located strategically in the center of a busy inner city. The pastor's secretary joked that someone would probably come across the street from the courthouse wanting to get married that day. Before noon, it happened. An interracial couple, gripping their marriage certificate tightly, wanted to be wed — right now, this morning.

I had never officiated at a wedding and was clueless about the process. While I had attended weddings, including my own, I had no idea where the words of the marriage ceremony came from. Caddy-corner to the First Baptist Church, on a different corner than the Richland County Courthouse, was a Christian bookstore. The church secretary entertained the couple while I went across the street and bought a worship handbook to guide me through the progression of a wedding.

A different issue: Our 4000-member church may have had African Americans attend worship services occasionally, but the balcony that had been built before the Civil War to give slaves a place to sit was a reminder of our heritage. This congregation had never been a center for progressive Christianity. Certainly, interracial marriages were unknown in our congregation.

Furthermore, other aspects of First

Baptist Church's history were hard to ignore. Our sanctuary was the location where the secession papers had been signed in 1861, the goal being to remove South Carolina from the Union. In fact, it was a matter of some congregational pride that the small antique desk on which the secession documents had been signed still held a place of prominence in the church's beautiful chapel. Sitting right in front of the pulpit, it served as a kind of altar.

On this occasion, I decided the setting could give this young couple a story to tell their grandkids someday. As this man and woman made their vows before God, they spoke the words across the historic table.

It seemed fitting. Maybe a few deceased Confederates were uncomfortable in their graves that fine June morning, but their time was past. This was a new day, and it belonged to the newlyweds.

Baptist churches like to talk about the redemption of human souls, but on that day, I think maybe an old table was somehow redeemed. ■

*Marion Aldridge is a writer, former SC-CBF leader, and currently interim pastor at Trinity Baptist Church, Hanover, N.H.*

## Aphorisms

**If God wanted us to vote, he would have given us candidates.**

-Jay Leno-

**The problem with political jokes is they get elected.**

-Henry Cate, VII-

**We hang the petty thieves and appoint the great ones to public office.**

-Aesop-

**If we got one-tenth of what was promised to us in these State of the Union speeches, there wouldn't be any inducement to go to heaven.**

-Will Rogers-

**Politicians are the same all over. They promise to build a bridge even where there is no river.**

-Nikita Khrushchev-

**When I was a boy I was told that anybody could become President; I'm beginning to believe it.**

-Clarence Darrow-

**Why pay money to have your family tree traced; go into politics and your opponents will do it for you.**

-Author unknown-

**Politicians are people who, when they see light at the end of the tunnel, go out and buy some more tunnel.**

-John Quinton-

**Politics is the gentle art of getting votes from the poor and campaign funds from the rich, by promising to protect each from the other.**

-Oscar Ameringer-

**I offer my opponents a bargain: if they will stop telling lies about us, I will stop telling the truth about them.**

-Adlai Stevenson, campaign speech, 1952-

**A politician is a fellow who will lay down your life for his country.**

-Tex Guinan-

**I have come to the conclusion that politics is too serious a matter to be left to the politicians.**

-Charles de Gaulle-

**Instead of giving a politician the keys to the city, it might be better to change the locks.**

-Doug Larson-

**There ought to be one day—just one—when there is open season on senators.**

-Will Rogers-

To: Christian Ethics Today

*I always appreciate your issues of Christian Ethics Today. I particularly valued this latest issue - from cover to cover...I greatly appreciate the quality & faithfulness of your publication!*

*James C. Miller  
Bristol, RI*

Please note this change of address. I don't want to miss a single issue.

*Sara Robertson  
Lombard, IL*

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

## The Road to Character

by David Brooks,  
Random House, 2015

Reviewed by Walter B. Shurden

One of the most anticipated few moments of the week for my wife and me is the segment on PBS on Friday evenings that features Mark Shields and David Brooks. Shields is one of our favorite Democrats, Brooks one of our favorite Republicans. They model civility in public discourse without sacrificing distinctive points of view. And while cheering for Shields, we are almost always challenged and often sobered by Brooks.

This book, for me, proves why David Brooks is one of the nation’s most respected, somewhat conservative, public intellectuals. Brooks, a Jew, writes a book about ethics with amazing sensitivity to and knowledge of the religious, the irreligious, the once-religious, the rationalist, the mystic, the Protestant, the Catholic and the Jew. I promise: you will envy the man’s intellectual breadth and depth.

Brooks wrote, so he says, in apparently self-denigrating language, “to save my own soul.” And he gives evidence of this purpose in quasi-autobiographical sentences throughout the book. One wonders if he actually succeeded in having his soul saved. Indeed, there has been public speculation that Brooks has considered converting to Christianity. See, for example, the online article of April 15, 2015 by Mark Stricherz titled *Is the New York Times’ David Brooks Converting to Christianity?*

I have no idea if his soul was saved or if he is converting to Christianity. I do know that he writes as one who has experienced the untamable grace of life and the overflowing life of gratitude that follows on the heels of that grace. Christians have no monopoly

here, however. Many Jews, Abraham Heschel being exhibit A, have written movingly of a radical grace that drives to glad service.

Brooks assumes with amazing ease the mantles of several professionals: historian, philosopher, theologian, ethicist, cultural critic, biographer, and especially preacher. He may be appalled at my saying so, but he preaches some superb sermons. See for example his “sermons” on vocation (24-25); on whatever happened

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**Brooks, a Jew, writes a book about ethics with amazing sensitivity to and knowledge of the religious, the irreligious, the once-religious, the rationalist, the mystic, the Protestant, the Catholic and the Jew.**

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to individual sin (53-56); on moderation (69-71); on the arduous path of religion (88-89); on what suffering can do for us (94-96); on what to do in a time of trauma (100-101); on the value of institutions (115-117); on how change comes (147-149); on what love does (170-171); on the fear of missing out (192-193); on getting more than you deserve (206-207); and on the humility code (261-267). Honestly, this is one of the most provocative books for preachers that I have read in a long, long time. But it is also as far from a book on preaching as any that I have read in a long, long time. His “preaching” revolves primarily around what the older theologians called “anthropology” or “human nature.”

The book is a hundred times more exciting than the flat, tasteless title suggests. *The Road to Character!* Ugh! Had I been his editor, I would have called it *The Crooked Timber Tradition: How Character is Created by Going Down before Coming Up*. *The Crooked Timber Tradition*, argues Brooks, is that understanding of human nature that says that we are all *crooked* — self-centered to the core; we have “bugs in our souls” (244). Our personal character, if fashioned at all, is constructed from *crooked timber*. Brooks becomes biblical and unabashedly and fortunately calls this *crooked timber* by its first name: SIN.

As *crooked timber*, none of us ever becomes absolutely straight. We can become straighter, however. To become *straighter*, we need “redemptive assistance from outside — from family, friends, ancestors, rules, traditions, institutions, exemplars and, for believers, God” (12). And that redemption launches us into a life-long struggle to become better people. The struggle, while unending and without terminus, is never a solitary journey.

Brooks believes that this moral realism, this *crooked timber tradition*, has been left behind in contemporary American culture. The loss occurred not in the pummeled 1960s, but earlier, in the late 30s and 40s. We have, he says, “lost the understanding of how character is built” (15). We have even lost the moral language to describe the “experience.” Brooks contends, rightly I think, that we now live in “The Big Me Culture,” having moved from a culture of self-effacement to a culture of self-promotion. Using a vivid football metaphor, Brooks says we have moved from a Johnny Unitas to a Joe Namath culture. Every football fan in the room will understand that contrast!

To show how character is built and how this *crooked timber tradition* is lived out, Brooks writes eight gorgeous biographical chapters. His choice of people is as diverse as it is inspiring and informative. Many of these eight chapters are biographies of people that you have long wanted to know more about but never got around to. They are: Frances Perkins, Dwight Eisenhower, Dorothy Day, George C. Marshall, A. Philip Randolph, George Eliot, Augustine, and Samuel Johnson. My favorite, and I think Brooks’ as well, is his chapter on Augustine. But his chapters on Perkins and Day are also brilliant. Apart from Brooks’ ethical summons to a higher life based on these lives, the lives themselves are worthy of study.

If you go looking for stories of transformative Christian experiences in all of these biographies, you will be let down. What you have are alternative “roads to character,” but they are all built out of the *crooked timber tradition*. Brooks says each had to “go down” into the valley of humility in order to come up “for grace to flood in” (13). While not precisely the same, this process of going down and coming up is a kind of secular-spiritual version of what some Christians have referred to for a long time as the conviction-confession-repentance-redemption road to salvation. People coming up and out of this ethical syndrome do not appear either healed or perfect; “they come out different” (14).

Aside from his thesis on how our culture has changed and how personal character is formed, I discovered three delightful collaterals. (You may find more.) First, my guess is that Brooks will get lots of press from his “Introduction” where he discusses the difference between our résumé virtues and our eulogy virtues, from what we put on our personal bios and what will be said about us at our funerals. In like manner, he identifies the two oppos-

ing sides of our nature as described in the two contrasting accounts of creation in the early chapters of Genesis. These he calls Adam I and Adam II. Adam I is our external, résumé side that ambitiously seeks to conquer the world. Adam II is our internal, eulogy side that “wants to obey a calling to serve the world” (xii). Of course, the 270 pages that follow the “Introduction,” are a deep, deep wish from Brooks that we nurture Adam II and be done with Adam I.

The sentences that leap out at the reader, begging to be placed on the signature portion of one’s emails, are a second delight. They come from both Brooks and the many people he quotes:

“I was born with a natural disposition toward shallowness” (xiv). (Which, of course, Brooks wasn’t.) Adam II people do not drop “little hints of their own distinctiveness and accomplishments” (xvii).

Solzhenitsyn: “The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either — but right through every human heart” (xvii).

Nietzsche: “He who has a *why* to live for can bear almost any *how*” (23).  
“A person who embraces a calling doesn’t take a direct route to self-fulfillment” (46).  
“The true self is what you have built from your nature, not just what your nature started out with” (68).

Dorothy Day: “The hunger of my ears can be as severe as someone else’s stomach hunger; the joy of hearing those expressions of gratitude” (92). Ear hunger!  
“People we call deep have almost always endured a season of suffering” (93).  
Day: “My great luck was to have

[the Lord] on my mind for so long in my life” (104).  
“All love is narrowing” (175).  
“If you organize your life around your own wants, other people become objects for the satisfaction of your own desires” (192).  
“When unattached to the right ends, communities can be more barbarous than individuals” (196).  
“The existence of more and more self-help books is proof that they rarely work” (199).

Jennifer Herdt: “God wants to give us a gift, and we want to buy it.”  
“You become what you love” (207).

Samuel Johnson: “No place affords a more striking conviction of the vanity of human hopes than a public library” (225).  
“Many try to avoid sorrow by living timid lives” (226).

My third delightful collateral: From Brooks’ literary references, you can make a long list of books to read.

Baltasar Gracian, *The Art of Worldly Wisdom* (45).  
Harry Clor, *On Moderation* (70).  
Joseph Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man* (88).  
Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness* (98).  
George Santayana, *The Last Puritan* (139).  
George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (154).  
Jennifer Herdt, *Putting on Virtue* (204).

If you read and profit from *Christian Ethics Today*, you will do what I have done with this book. You will underline some of almost every page and you will talk back to Brooks in the margins. If you read it, it may help, in Brooks’ language, to “save your soul.” ■

Walter “Buddy” Shurden is Minister at Large, Mercer University.

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## Face in the Mirror

by J. T. Collins

Reviewed by Dee Ann Miller

**F**ace in the Mirror isn't just a book about a lesbian woman coming out. It's about her inward spiritual journey, discovering herself while looking into the "glass darkly."

Personally, I was mesmerized with Collin's account, more so having known her as a child while serving in the same Southern Baptist Mission alongside her dear parents in Malawi. My suspicions had long ago been confirmed about the reasons for "my niece" withdrawing for a considerable time to find a place of emotional safety. Yet reading her first-person account was like finding a lost letter from the past. It was great to have some of the blanks filled in—not just about what occurred since the time I last saw her, going off to college. Most insightful were the revelations of painful, confusing events in her childhood, even before we'd met.

This book isn't only for gay and lesbians or those who love them. It's

for anyone who has ever struggled personally with a system that does not welcome new information and quickly demonizes those who come as whistle-blowers, challenging the *status quo*. It's for those who have broken out of old belief systems, whether staying or leaving such a system.

While the author doesn't reference I Corinthians 13:12, I thought of that verse constantly while making my way eagerly to the end. As a believer in progressive revelation, I have long understood all of that verse to apply to our life *before* death. If we dare to peer into the mirror with a desire to see ourselves and others more clearly, the glass will become less and less "darkly."

That peering, at best, is a collective viewing. When we look together into the same mirror, what we see in others becomes clearer as we stand beside the person we may have previously seen as "the identified problem." How cruel it is, especially as a child, to be left alone in this arduous task, as J. T. and many other gay and lesbian individuals have been! Yet Collins gives us hope by showing that, even in virtual isolation, it's possible to gain insight.

In time, especially as we are able to find others to mutually self-disclose, that mirror seems to shine itself. And that's exactly what J. T. Collins has demonstrated for all of us. She has come full circle back into the arms of a host of people in the community of faith who have had the courage to look anew at who she is and what she represents.

Obviously, her story is far from finished. Now reconnected, I personally look forward to seeing it further unfold as she continues to polish that mirror before a great cloud of witnesses. What a gift to each of us if we only have the courage to join her in seeking truth! ■

*Dee Ann Miller is a writer, first published in 1970 in Home Life Magazine. Since 1993, she's specialized in collusion with gender-based violence and abuse in the faith community. (see [www.takecourage.org](http://www.takecourage.org)) Currently, she and her husband Ron, a retired American Baptist minister, are seeking input for a new project from male pastors who have addressed gender-based violence from the pulpit.*

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## Film Review

### The World's Most Enlightening Region

A documentary by N. S. Xavier, M.D.

Reviewed by Ira Blanchard

**I**n our nation where distrust and suspicion, if not outright paranoia, of one's fellow citizen who practices a different religion from one's own, are chronicled daily in the news, be aware of a great exception in the world. There is an actual functioning geographical region where members of different religions -- Hinduism, Judaism and Christianity for 2000 years and Islam from the 7<sup>th</sup> century-- have lived in mutual acceptance and respect as this film documents. You see there is hope and a pathway to community harmony for us all!

While attending the Parliament of the World's Religions in Salt Lake City, Utah in October 2015, I watched Dr. Xavier's presentation of the documentary and how it moved the audience. Xavier has been practicing psychiatry in Birmingham, Alabama since 1979. He has authored three books respectively: 1) *The Two Faces of Religion* about the influence of healthy versus unhealthy religion; 2) *The Holy Region* about the unique religious harmony in a region in Kerala along the southwestern coast of India where the film focuses; 3) *Fulfillment Using Real Conscience* about fulfilling human needs utilizing one's real conscience in making choices. He brings together these themes in a beautiful, concise and very artistic way in this film. His writings have received endorsements of Nobel Peace laureates, professors/educators, religious leaders, psychiatrists and other mental health professionals.

Xavier grew up in Kerala not too far from the location of the film. There was an ancient port, Muziris, (around present day Kodungallur) in that region, which was a center for international trade in the first three centuries of the Christian era. It was famous for selling spices especially black pepper. The film attests to the

unique interfaith harmony in the region and the peaceful transformation of more or less extremism within each religion. The message is one of hope in action and peace realized; a society stronger by its embraced pluralistic inclusiveness contrary to estranged exclusiveness symptomatic of religious isolation, avoidance and fear.

Xavier chronologically traces the arrival of Jews prior to the time of Jesus, likely avoiding persecution and finding a favorable place to settle. Many believe that Apostle Thomas, a disciple of Jesus, speaking Aramiac, came to this region because he had heard of Jewish people here who also knew Aramiac. After the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, ten thousand Jews reportedly migrated to this region of Kerala. The film offers evidence of Thomas' mystic tendencies and how his followers blended Indian philosophy and culture with Christianity resulting in an atmosphere of inclusiveness. This integration was so thorough that the Portuguese Catholics, who arrived in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, were unsuccessful at segregating Christians from their non-Christian neighbors. Muslims had been present in this area since the inception of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century as commercial activities had motivated their arrival. Their reputation was one of peaceful coexistence.

This region had its center of education, which modeled an inclusive influence among the people and a dynasty of kings, who ruled for 800 years, which was unique in history for supporting Hindus, Jews, Christians and Muslims. The building, used as the first mosque on the Indian subcontinent, was given by one of those kings. Thirteen centuries later, when the President of India, a Muslim, visited the mosque the local Muslim leaders of the worship center arranged for a Hindu descendant of the ancient King to also receive the President, celebrating the centuries of gratitude and harmony.

The film reviews the contributions of seven religious mystics including Apostle Thomas—six who have been identified as mystics and Thomas, who Xavier

argues was quite possibly a mystic. The six include three Hindus, two Muslims and one Jew. Such a variety and concentration of mystics in a small region is also impressive. These mystics promoted a spirituality characterized by inclusiveness, goodness, happiness, peace, love and harmony. Xavier notes that such spirituality nurtures conscience.

Conscience uses the guidance of reason and the "Golden Rule". The symbol of a heart is used for the "inner voice" of conscience. This is in contrast to the "superego" or the "inner parrot" symbolized by a parrot. The superego or inner parrot consists of unquestioned social influences from childhood and later without using reason or the sense of fairness. Extremism results when a person lives by a superego significantly deviating from conscience.

The narrator presents a connection of religious mystical spirituality with conscience to modern scientific—and yet mystical—worldviews held by six Nobel Prize winning scientists, including Albert Einstein. Interestingly, Leo Tolstoy learned the concept of nonviolence from a book which promoted conscience and was influential in this region from the first century A.D. While the four religions existed in harmony, each of them faced more or less extremism from within. These extremisms were peacefully resolved by leaders stimulating people's consciences. Like the ocean tides which have ebbed and flowed along the Kerala coastline this film presents the formation and transformation of extremism and the underlying superego and conscience.

Applying psychiatric insights to his historical review of regional events enriched by many interviews and enchanting festival scenes, Xavier gives an inviting narrative of harmonious religious pluralism. You don't have to go to the region to be enlightened and inspired by *The World's Most Enlightening Region*. Just go to [www.nsxavier.com](http://www.nsxavier.com) and save the air fare! ■

Rev. Ira Blanchard, M. Div., LPC

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Dear Pat,

*I enjoy the journal so much. I read every word and am very thankful that we have such a publication. Keep up the good work.*

Anne Green  
Dahlonega, GA

# Do Christian Refugees Matter More?

By Lauren Turek

Shortly after the terrorist attacks in Paris in mid-November, Texas senator and Republican presidential candidate Ted Cruz set off a flurry of controversy when he announced that he believed the federal government should bar Muslim refugees fleeing violence and civil war in Syria from resettling in the United States. He stated on Fox News, "... on the other hand, *Christians* who are being targeted for genocide, for persecution, *Christians* who are being beheaded or crucified, we should be providing safe haven to them."

After President Obama described these sentiments as "shameful" and "un-American," Cruz doubled down, arguing that by virtue of their minority status and Christian faith, Syrian Christians face exceptional persecution from ISIS and pose no security threat to the United States. Cruz claimed that Muslims fleeing ISIS violence do not face "genocide" and pose a security risk. Thus, he argued, they should be resettled elsewhere in the Middle East.

This story faded quickly from the news cycle. But Cruz is a leading contender for the Republican nomination, one who holds great appeal for many evangelical voters. Meanwhile, negotiators face great challenges in implementing a truce in Syria and reducing the flow of refugees. So we should continue to reflect on the questions Cruz's statements raise.

Christians do face particular persecution in Syria, yet so do Yazidis, Shiite Muslims, and other religious minorities. How should religion and religious persecution factor into U.S. foreign relations and refugee policies?

For American evangelicals, concern about the suffering church abroad is nothing new. In the years following World War II, as the ideological rift between the United States and the "godless" Soviet Union hardened

into the Cold War, evangelicals testified in Congress and founded advocacy organizations to help combat religious persecution behind the iron curtain. Some Christians who had fled communism and settled in the United States formed activist groups such as Jesus to the Communist World and Religion in Communist-Dominated Areas. These groups released a steady flow of public reports to raise awareness about the abuses Christians faced in China and the Soviet bloc. The religion news media, including Religion News Service, the *Christian Century*, and *Christianity Today*, reported on religious persecution regularly.

By the 1970s and 1980s, this activism began to have some effect on U.S. foreign policymaking. The passage of Senator Henry Jackson's and Representative Charles Vanick's amendment to the 1974 Trade Act, which limited trade with communist countries that persecuted Jews and other religious groups, inspired politically conservative evangelical activists. They called on Congress to use similar economic and diplomatic pressure to compel Soviet bloc countries to release religious prisoners and ease restrictions on religious practice. These groups brought sustained public attention to religious persecution cases in the Soviet Union, such as the Siberian Seven and the jailed Baptist preacher Georgi Vins. This publicity led policymakers to address the cases in diplomatic exchanges and to intercede on behalf of individual prisoners when possible.

Although at times these interventions helped persecuted Christians escape from their home countries, evangelical activists generally focused on compelling governments to respect religious freedom (in part so that foreign evangelicals could evangelize safely). This broad goal remained in force even after the collapse

of Soviet communism, as persecution against Christians persisted throughout the world.

During the Clinton administration, evangelicals lobbied for the passage of the International Religious Freedom Act, which created mechanisms to monitor and sanction nations that persecuted religious groups. Evangelicals expressed support for all persecuted religious minorities. But like Cruz, they focused their attention almost entirely on protecting their co-religionists.

If evangelicals believe the United States has a moral obligation to support religious freedom worldwide, then why this narrow lens? In a situation like Syria, plagued by civil war and lacking a functional government with which policymakers can negotiate, how can the United States best protect those fleeing oppression—religious or otherwise? Should American policymakers elevate religious persecution, or the persecution of one specific faith community, above other human rights and freedoms in their calculus of foreign relations? What does limiting sanctuary to one religion convey to the world about American values? Such questions command our continued reflection. ■

*Lauren Turek teaches modern United States history and American foreign relations at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. She earned her PhD from the University of Virginia, and she has published her research on religion in American politics and foreign policy in *Diplomatic History* and the *Journal of American Studies*.*

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# Holocaust Image

By James A. Langley



## I

I cannot forget a certain marked child.  
My mind keeps faithfully raising on its  
Screen the image of a boy long lost.  
I know him not as one knows a neighbor,  
A friend, or even shadowy stranger,  
Who in a brief interlude intersects  
Our lives. Yet his face and boyish figure  
Haunt me, they haunt me and will still haunt me  
Until this life is done, perhaps beyond.

## II

The boy is one of millions of Jews forced  
From their homes; rumors are rife: are they now  
Headed for pleasant prospects as some are  
Desperate to believe—or certain death?  
Though mortal danger awaited the Jews,  
Deception enhanced their masters' control.  
The boy wears a cap—it sets him apart;  
In happier circumstances an artist  
Might well paint him, using the simple but  
Distinctive title: 'Boy wearing a cap'.  
It's not now the depth of winter, yet there  
Is evidently a chill in the air;

People are bundled; the boy wears a coat,  
Knee-length socks and—is he wearing a tie?  
The light strikes his cap and the head of the  
Woman—his mother?—beside him; the two  
Are in the forefront of the photo, so  
Symbolic of the Jews' travail it is  
A source book's sole scene under 'Holocaust'.<sup>1</sup>  
The boy's cap, coat and socks appear to trace  
Him from a home above average means;  
Coming dire tests would be the more drastic.

### III

He should be playing, as children the world  
Round are wont to do, first tries at soccer,  
Other games with friends, or with that childlike  
Gift of invention, playing some game alone,  
Imagining in him a star is born.  
School, a field trip, are his normal places  
If the boy were treated as a human;  
He's a mere lad, but is not too young for  
Home chores, for early signs of giftedness,  
With promise in art, music, speech or science  
That may in time astound and bless the world,  
And at eventide happily gathered  
With his family for strength and blessing.

### IV

In an instant it is clear to all who  
See him that none of the accustomed passages  
Of childhood and youth will henceforth be his.  
What's this! Appallingly his arms are raised—  
Universal sign of no resistance to powers that be,  
What shame on the all-powerful police state  
To coerce a small boy into submission  
As if he were a threat to the Third Reich!—  
In obvious obedience to shouts  
And commands of brutes driving and herding  
A mélange of Jews: men, women, aged,  
Infirm, babes-in-arms, youth, children like the  
Boy so deeply printed in my mind's eye,  
These are judged as a plague, *Untermenschen*,<sup>2</sup>  
Root of all evils afflicting the Nazi state.  
Any trying to escape risk instant death;

They are corralled like brigands, thus the guards  
Are armed and ready; in time the exhausted,  
Sick and feeble will be shot where they fall.

### V

Likely the boy's mother is beside him,  
She too is raising a hand, her head is turned  
Toward a guard whose rifle is pointed  
At the boy; fear appears to trump anger.  
David's fight with Goliath was easy  
By this struggle; David could draw upon  
The whole-hearted support of his fellow  
Israelites—the defeat of a mighty  
Armed warrior of the feared Philistines  
Would resound far and wide to their glory;  
Among Gentiles this small boy found no friend,  
Only silence, or abetment for their  
Tormentors, and his people were utterly  
Distraught, thus of little comfort to him;  
He was where brutality and terror  
Ruled from the Fuehrer to his least minions.  
Questions of Jews' will to resist evil  
Are cheap criticism from secure havens.  
The uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto,  
Sustained for *thirty-three days* with small arms  
Against hopeless odds, shows profound courage;<sup>3</sup>  
Resistance to terror often mirrors  
The best opportunity for success.  
Stopping tyranny early demands great  
Vigilance but little blood; full grown, the  
Cost of its overthrow is measureless.

### VI

Sinister portent of a growing menace,  
The infamous Nuremberg Laws fell on  
All German Jews like a scourge, constricting  
Their livelihoods and lives still more and more,  
Dehumanizing, spirit-debasing,  
Sapping their wills and hope near to breaking:  
Nearly all professions were forbidden Jews,  
Severe curbs on education, food, clothing,  
With access to theaters, concert halls, parks  
Denied them, forced to wear a yellow star,

Faith-practice restricted, fraught with peril;  
Even Jewish holders of the coveted Iron Cross  
From the Great War found it availed them nothing,  
They were often vilified and attacked,  
Emigration more stymied and costly,  
Suicides rose sharply as hope was waning;  
Jews, Jews married to Gentiles, those with partial  
Jewish lineage, were caught in a grim vise  
Ever tightening, taking freedom and life.  
Then came an explosion heard round the world.

## VII

*Kristallnacht*, 'night of broken glass,' surpassed  
All previous pogroms in Jews beaten,  
Seized and sent to concentration camps, and  
The number of Jews killed, their synagogues  
Desecrated and burned, businesses and  
Homes robbed and ravaged while police stood by,  
The Nazis spread terror and havoc, death  
And destruction, across the whole nation.  
Wanton as it was, this massive pogrom  
Was unleashed by Nazi leaders using  
The *cause célèbre* of a minor official's  
Stark assassination in the German  
Embassy in Paris by a young Jew  
Over Nazi treatment of his family.  
Outrage was piled on outrage when insurance  
Payments were confiscated by the state,  
And a billion-marks-fine levied on *Jews!*  
Appalled as were many in other nations,  
Outrage evoked by these atrocities  
Was soon muted; no nation raised its  
Immigration quotas for beleaguered Jews;  
Hitler surely observed that concern for  
The Jews did not rise to action  
In America, as elsewhere, and believed  
He could get away with mass murder;  
*Kristallnacht*, ominous cataract of mayhem,  
Was prelude to the Nazis' genocide of Jews.

## VIII

The dreaded knock often came in the middle of the  
Night—nefarious deeds bear not the light—

The sickening scene was repeated countless times  
In the land of Goethe, Bach, Beethoven  
And Handel, later all across Europe.  
(To counter resistance, Hitler ordered the notorious  
'Nacht und Nebel,' the Night and Fog Decree—  
Prisoners disappearing without a trace.)<sup>4</sup>  
Nazi toughs have summarily ousted  
These decent folk from their loved and last refuge,  
Their homes violated, they are forced out  
Carrying the clothes on their backs, a few  
Cherished photos and other treasures,  
Some food, clothing, items thrown in a suitcase,  
And little else; they have reason for panic.

## IX

Where is the boy's father? Had he a store  
Boycotted into ruin, and now scrounging  
To meet his family's necessities?  
Was he a teacher forced into factory work?  
A lawyer trying to help fellow Jews  
When the dreaded SS struck his own home?  
Did the husband-father arrive to find  
His family gone, his home ransacked and empty,  
The neighbors missing, the eerie silence  
Broken only by a dog's forlorn wail?  
No chance to escape, would he be taken  
To a different ghetto, and like many,  
Never to see his family again?  
He would need the tongue of Jeremiah  
His heart-rending anguish truly to share.

## X

The boy, perhaps eight, fights to hold back tears;  
The wonder, if his father is missing  
At their time of grave peril, and his  
Whole world is collapsing, is that this lad  
Has not yielded to despair, though his eyes  
Reveal a wrenching fear, not of nature's  
Rampaging fury all people rightly dread,  
Nor of bodily pain, common to young and old,  
But fear of cruelty unlimited, the *sine qua non*  
Of tyrants, which the Creator intended  
None should have to fear, now all too real for him;

Far worse—horrendous treatment—was coming that  
Would burn Dante's *Inferno* into their lives.

XI

The non-descript crowd reaches a railway  
Siding, abandoned by all to a bitter fate  
(Swedish envoy Raoul Wallenberg later saved tens of  
Thousands of Jews in Hungary from death trains),  
Able-bodied, old and young, the sick and infirm, were  
Shoved into freight cars, commonly called 'Forty and  
Eights' because they were made to carry forty men  
Or eight horses or cattle; but to save on transport,  
Often far more than forty were packed in,  
Leaving little but standing room, the door slammed  
Shut and locked. With no food or water save  
What they had brought, and suffering stifling heat,  
Or frigid winter days and nights, with no sanitation,  
And the stench of human wastes, for days and nights  
That must have seemed interminable, they  
Endured claustrophobic conditions locked  
In clattering, or idle, rail cars, desperately  
Thirsty and hungry, the sick untended,  
Bound they knew not where, with despair  
Mounting. It is not surprising that  
Some did not survive this hellish ordeal.

XII

Yet leaving a transport brought no relief;  
Inhumanity continued full bore  
In the ghettos which were designed to inflict  
Suffering, and to exacerbate many  
Of the most destructive human instincts.  
The boy in the iconic photo may have been  
Ghettoized while the killing apparatus underwent  
Experimentation and expansion, as Auschwitz-  
Birkenau, Treblinka, Sobibor and other death  
Factories began to implement the planned genocide.  
Under the Nazis, ghetto life was barbaric at best:  
Even swine are fattened for killing, but here it was  
Slow death by starvation, many wracked by disease  
Without drugs, and forced labor took a harsh toll;  
They commonly felt abandoned by man and God,  
Helpless, their cries unheard, their souls

Cauterized by anguish too deep for tears,  
Their lives ever wretched by over-crowding,  
Hunger, and death-lists that pitted Jew against Jew;  
Prisoned, trapped, and marked for the impending  
Diabolical 'Final Solution'—  
They were in the Nazi 'kingdom of death'.<sup>5</sup>

XIII

If Auschwitz became the destination  
Of mother and son of this Holocaust  
Image, with customary cruelty and indifference  
A Death's Head SS officer likely separated them,  
While inmates played incongruous tunes from  
*The Merry Widow* and *Tales of Hoffman*,<sup>6</sup>  
Sending the mother for forced labor, and  
The boy, probably judged unfit for work,  
Would be sent directly to the gas chamber;  
If the mother too was sent for gassing  
She was made to strip, head shaved (a Jewess'  
Hair had worth—to these ghouls *she* was worthless),  
Forced with others by police with whips, clubs  
Or guns to their last breathing place on earth,  
With a final deception of 'showers'  
Quickly turned to deadly cyanide fumes.  
Death was not so quick: the ghastly, screaming,  
Futile struggle with several thousand of the  
Damned to breathe, and claw their way out,  
Variously took ten to thirty minutes—  
Then deathly silence. Lackeys removed rings,  
Searched body cavities for precious stones,  
And yanked gold from the teeth of corpses<sup>7</sup>  
Before the bodies were hauled to ovens.

XIV

While the 'Image's' boyish picture has been seen  
By millions, no name has yet come to light;  
Holocaust authorities believe him to be Polish,  
Unknown by name yet known the world over.  
Might the capped boy have opened new vistas  
In astronomy, enriched our music heritage,  
Gifted humanity with inspired writing,  
Or merely been a person decent, honest and  
Caring, on whom the whole world depends?<sup>8</sup>

XV

Never are humans so vile as when they  
Treat a little one cruelly; surely those who  
Knowingly mistreat a defenseless child  
Face a judgment beyond imagining;  
Better for such persons not to be born.  
Rachel is still weeping for her children,  
And not Rachel alone, the anguish weighs  
On the hearts of all who know that the boy  
With the cap, with hands raised, is our brother  
And our son. How much I owe him and all  
Whom he represents only God can say.  
Where did I fail him and millions like him?  
Silence in the face of hate gives free rein  
To evil men and makes us complicit;  
Widespread indignation wields great power;  
In failure to advocate asylum for Jews,  
Was not my silence touched with damnation?  
At the Great Assize, what will I say when  
The Judge of All asks what I did to succor them?

XVI

A thousand years will not suffice to right  
The horrendous crimes against a people  
Essentially because of their Abrahamic lineage.  
The crimes are not against the Jews (and Gypsies,  
Poles, Slavs, Jehovah's Witnesses) only;  
They strike at the human race, bound as one  
As surely as the same blood runs through all men.  
Where any are treated inhumanely,  
And injustice blights body, mind and spirit,  
In the name of a holy and just God  
Let us overcome evil with good, and undermine  
Oppression, striving to bring life and freedom.  
A new holocaust can be prevented—  
Seeing all bearing the divine image,  
And treating all with dignity and worth;  
No one can speak and act for the whole world,  
But we are responsible for showing  
The reconciling way in our own world. ■

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1 In the 1994 *World Book Encyclopedia* (and one of only two Holocaust photos in the 2001 edition). Both editions cite it as a photo in the Jerusalem Yad Vashem Archives.

2 Subhumans, as Nazis considered Jews and Slavic peoples, who in Hitler's view had no right to live, except as slaves of the master race.

3 Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel, *Himmler* (New York: Paperback Library, Inc., 1968), 151.

4 Under this decree, suspected saboteurs and others would vanish without a trace into the night and fog. Himmler instructed the Gestapo: "An effective and lasting deterrent can be achieved only by the death penalty or by taking measures which will leave the family and the population uncertain as to the fate of the offender."

To this day it is not known how many thousands disappeared as a result of this draconian decree, which Hitler issued on December 7, 1941. ([www.TheHistoryPlace.com](http://www.TheHistoryPlace.com)—WW II in Europe)

5 Apt phrase of Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975). Chapter Seven title: "The Annihilation Camps: Kingdom of Death".

6 William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1960), 970.

7 Jews had been encouraged to bring all their valuables with them for the promised "resettlement." The valuables confiscated from the dead were sent to the Reichsbank, where by a secret agreement between Himmler and the bank's president, Dr. Walther Funk, they were deposited in an account for the SS. (*Ibid.*, 973)

8 A wider assumption on a popular Russian saying: "No village can exist without one righteous person—or a town, or a nation."

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*Thanks for Christian Ethics Today.*

*I always look forward to the interesting assortment of articles. It is an encouraging periodical.*

*Roy Ann & Howard Carney  
Upper Marlboro, MD*

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*Dear Pat Anderson,*

*Christian Ethics Today has been a breath of fresh air to me for several years...  
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*Jerry Brown  
Rio Rancho, NM*



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# Christian Ethics Today

A Journal of Christian Ethics

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

## MISSION

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

## PURPOSES

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

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

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

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