

# 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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**Many Thanks For Helping Keep Christian Ethics Today in Print**

# What Lies Within: Post-Truth Evangelical Christianity

by Bruce Gourley

During the American Civil War, one Southern Baptist, speaking for many white Christians of the South, wrote that abolitionism was “the final antichrist.”

The gist of the statement, that black persons were inherently inferior to whites by decree of God, and that equality and freedom for all persons stood opposite the life and teachings of Christ, was daily “news” in the collective dozens, if not hundreds, of Christian newspapers in the antebellum and Civil War South.

This “news,” however, was entirely false. The Bible does not indicate that black persons are inferior to white persons, nor did Christ advocate for human inequality or slavery. Rather, Jesus, a first-century Jew, was most likely dark-skinned.

Yet so committed were many white Southerners to fake news that authorities in many of the region’s states literally banished the truth about slavery. They confiscated and destroyed abolitionist literature. They ostracized anti-slavery southerners, driving many into exile. White southern evangelicals, meanwhile, did not want to publicly admit the brutality of slavery, especially the routine raping of enslaved black women by white men. Instead, they bragged of enslavement as the happy lot of black persons.

When slavery finally came to an end with the military defeat of the South, many white southerners embraced yet another lie by claiming that the Civil War was not about slavery – even though the leaders and constitutions of the Confederate states had clearly identified the enslavement of black persons as the reason for secession and the foundation of the Confederacy.

Denying historical truth, many white southerners thereafter lived

lives grounded in a post-war, mythical story of a righteous Confederate States of America. From generation to generation, many history textbooks parroted the white supremacist lies. Conversely, voices of truth from black southerners were forcefully suppressed.

A native of the South, I was raised to believe the region’s racist lies. Despite forced desegregation, my white culture remained no less certain of its racial superiority. But at the age of 17, a five-second, off-hand remark

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by a friend shook the make-believe world in which I unknowingly lived. Upon learning that I was a Southern Baptist, he responded, “Oh, the denomination that was founded to keep blacks in slavery.”

Absolutely stunned, I feebly replied, “No, that’s not true.”

In reality, I had no idea whether it was true or not. I merely wanted it not to be true. As a Christian taught to seek the truth, I did just that, soon learning that my friend was right. I also discovered that few Southern Baptists had any interest in the truth about their denominational origins.

This was my introduction to a world of existential false narratives. At the time, I did not fully realize the power of cultural fables. Nor did I yet grasp the many other ways in which Christian communities often fail to tell the truth, whether willfully or unknowingly.

To be certain, the generations-old fake news and falsified history prevalent in much of the white South past and present is nothing new. In civilizations and nations, ancient to modern, systemic lies have served to reinforce what political elites, the wealthy, the socially privileged, the culturally dominant, or the discontented public want to believe.

Shakespeare, a great student and writer of the human condition, explored the dangers of imagined realities, or “false gazing,” in *Othello*. Craftily using words, performances and images to obscure the truth, Shakespeare crafted the character Iago with devastating effect to trick others into believing a false narrative.

By the time of Shakespeare, one of humanity’s most influential advances, Gutenberg’s printing press, had blurred the lines between fiction and truth through an unprecedented proliferation of written words. The Protestant Reformation, initiated in 1517, was possible because of the Gutenberg-enabled flow of information.

Doing the world a great service by challenging a powerful, controlling and often abusive religious hierarchy, the Reformation nonetheless evidenced a dark side. In an emotional contest of words, purveyors of competing narratives feverishly published booklets and pamphlets. Clashing claims of religious truth on the printed page magnified conflicts between

reformers, traditionalists, counter reformers and dissenters. Widespread tragedy ensued, too often in the form of death through execution or warfare.

One of numerous conflicts between Catholics and Protestants in the resulting free-for-all, the Thirty Years War of the 17th century alone resulted in some eight million casualties in Europe. In 17th century America, minority religious dissenters and dominant establishment churches utilized the press in a contest between freedom for all and discrimination in the name of religion. The dominant churches especially punished Baptists and Quakers, sometimes to the point of death. Undaunted, Baptists utilized the press effectively, ultimately playing a pivotal role in securing freedom of conscience, church-state separation and religious liberty for all in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Race, however, remained a great dividing line in America, and a bitter point of disagreement among Christians. A battle of printed words between abolitionist, progressive Christian evangelicals in the North and pro-slavery white, conservative Christian evangelicals of the South intensified the 19th century conflict over slavery. Thereafter progressive and conservative expressions of evangelicalism remained locked in theological, cultural and social conflict.

Twentieth century radio and television further elevated the struggle over information. Television images of white brutality against black persons helped propel Civil Rights victories in the 1960s. But in the marketplace contest for audiences' ears and eyes, professional journalism gradually lost ground to far-right radio hosts and television programming broadcasting false narratives attractive to yet defiant white Christians.

The late 20th-century invention of the Internet completed the revolution, giving everyone his or her own personal digital publishing platform paired with free, global distribution.

Enabled by the Internet, conservative and liberal ideological echo chambers proliferated in the early 21st century, the former resonating with many evangelicals South and North, the latter with progressive evangelicals. Empowered in dark corners and alleyways of the online world, racists and white supremacists emerged with renewed prominence as hate crimes rose dramatically during the presidency of Barack Obama, the nation's first black president. Among more highly educated Christians, progressive evangelicals enjoyed greater prominence even as their public influence waned in the broader evangelical world.

By the second decade of the 21st century "evangelical," a term typically equated with Republican Party-

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*Then came 2016, the year in which false narratives and fake news played a critical role in electing a presidential candidate who campaigned on ... false narratives and fake news.*

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oriented white Christians, often associated with racism, and never truly embraced by black Christians, by-and-large became shorthand for conservative Christianity. A growing stream of progressive Christians drifted away from the term altogether, convinced that it publicly conveyed an ideology at odds with the person of Christ himself.

Then came 2016, the year in which false narratives and fake news played a critical role in electing a presidential candidate who campaigned on ... false narratives and fake news. From his long-voiced racist lie about Barack Obama being born in Kenya, to his designation by fact-checking organizations as far and away the greatest liar

of any presidential candidate they had ever examined, Donald Trump routinely and brashly flaunted his disdain for the truth.

Many evangelicals, for years absorbing fake news about Obama from conservative Fox News, far-right radio talk shows and extremist conspiratorial websites, were convinced that Obama was a foreigner and a Muslim. In reality, President Obama was an American Christian evidencing exemplary personal religious, moral and family values. Against the backdrop of evangelicals' captivity to false narratives about President Obama, in September 2015, presidential candidate Ben Carson declared that "I cannot advocate any Muslim candidate for president."

The anti-Constitutional comment reflected post 9/11 fears about terrorism and served as a backhand swipe at Obama for refusing to use the phrase "Islamic terrorism" when discussing terrorist acts committed by Muslim extremists. In the minds of many evangelicals, Obama's reticence only fueled their belief that the president himself was a Muslim. Robert Jeffress, evangelical pastor of the influential First Baptist Church of Dallas and a long-time critic of Obama, praised Carson, who is black.

"To say that a candidate's faith doesn't make any difference is absolutely ridiculous," pronounced Jeffress. "I mean, our faith gives us our worldview," the pastor added. "It's the essence of who we are."

Few black Christians, however, supported Carson. Rather, they typically viewed him in the tradition of a subservient black person who curried favor with dominant whites in order to achieve individual success, in the process ignoring white lies about and suppression of the black community. Ben Carson eventually faded from contention in the presidential contest.

Meanwhile, Donald Trump gained steam by systematically denigrating his Republican opponents on the one

hand, and speaking to the racially-charged fears of white America on the other.

As late as the spring of 2016, evangelicals remained largely ambivalent about Trump. The New York billionaire was vulgar, sexually predatorily and – in his own estimation – had no sins of which he needed to ask God for forgiveness.

Nonetheless, two prominent evangelicals openly and enthusiastically sided with him. In January 2016, Jerry Falwell Jr., president of the evangelical Liberty University, endorsed Trump. Falwell's early support of the New York billionaire strained credulity. "In my opinion," Falwell declared, "Donald Trump lives a life of loving and helping others as Jesus taught in the great commandment."

The surprising and controversial endorsement angered many of his university's students. Although typically conservative in politics, Liberty students largely reflected the anti-racist views of their millennial peers throughout America. In the estimation of many, Trump was far from Christ-like.

"Donald Trump does not represent our values and we want nothing to do with him," a public statement from a group of university students noted later in the year. "... He has made his name by maligning others and bragging about his sins. Not only is Donald Trump a bad candidate for president, he is actively promoting the very things that we as Christians ought to oppose."

Christ-like or anti-Christ? Other than Falwell, few evangelicals ventured to bestow the qualities of Jesus upon Trump. For his part, the billionaire's limited personal interest in Christianity seemed to be summed up in his affinity for the non-Christ-like and controversial "prosperity gospel" pioneered by Norman Vincent Peale.

Even so, the Republican candidate courted evangelicals with promises of political favoritism. Robert Jeffress,

abandoning earlier assertions that a presidential candidate's faith mattered, spoke for a growing majority of evangelicals in the summer of 2016 who were desperate for a return to political power. Refuting Falwell's assertion that Trump reflected the teachings of Jesus, Jeffress declared: "You know, I was debating an evangelical professor on NPR, and this professor said, 'Pastor, don't you want a candidate who embodies the teaching of Jesus and would govern this country according to the principles found in the Sermon on the Mount? I said, 'Heck no.' I would run from that candidate as far as possible, because the Sermon on the Mount was not given as a governing principle for this nation.'"

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Declaring that he sought a "strongman" as president, Jeffress said, "I want the meanest, toughest, son of a you-know-what I can find — and I believe that's biblical." Embracing Trump for the same reason that many Liberty students rejected him, Jeffress welcomed a bully, anti-Christ figure as the savior of American evangelical Christianity.

Rather than offending, Trump's campaign messaging of religious, racial and ethnic hatred spoke to the anger and prejudices of evangelicals fearful of Islamic terrorism, biased against black persons, and spiteful of Mexican immigrants utilizing government welfare. The candidate's promises to discriminate against Muslims, reticence to criticize white suprema-

cists while condoning violence against African Americans at campaign rallies, and pledge to build a "great wall" to block illegal Mexican immigrants from gaining access to America routinely brought cheers from his supporters. Christian white supremacist groups praised Trump. Tellingly, most evangelicals made light of the endorsements.

Anti-democratic Russian President Vladimir Putin, like Trump a strongman figure, also praised the Republican candidate. Putin ordered his country's intelligence agencies to digitally hack the election process in favor of Trump, and against opponent Hillary Clinton. Trump publicly cheered Putin's efforts to damage Clinton, encouraging the Russians to do even more damage to the Democrat candidate.

Evangelicals, historically at odds with Russian ideology, shrugged at Trump's love affair with Putin and seemingly welcomed Russia's efforts to help elect Trump. After all, Putin had enacted anti-gay legislation and restricted independent media in Russia, policies America's evangelicals believed Trump would pursue in America if he were elected president.

Economically, many middle-class evangelicals suffering from years of economic inequality wanted to believe Trump's promise to "make America great again," a reference widely understood as returning America to a 1950s nostalgic time of white prosperity and privilege. A great majority of economists, however, insisted that Trump's economic plan would richly benefit large corporations and wealthy Americans, do little for the middle class, harm the poor, and plunge America into much greater debt.

At the same time, evangelicals also applauded many of the candidate's most obvious lies. The more Trump parroted lies about Obama, Clinton, the Constitution, religion, welfare, the press, the Iraq war, unemployment statistics, immigrants, inner city

crime, his tax returns and much more, the more evangelicals gravitated to him. In addition, evangelicals voiced no discernible concern about Trump's own history of employing illegal immigrants, outsourcing American jobs to foreign countries, or his track record of some 4,000 or so lawsuits resulting from his shoddy, illegal or otherwise unethical business practices.

When journalists pointed out the falseness of Trump's statements, evangelicals, preconditioned to false narratives, found comfort in their world of fake news that embraced self-serving lies as desired truth. Even warnings from conservative dissenters did little to persuade the growing chorus of evangelicals praising Trump in late summer and fall.

Although Hillary Clinton retained an advantage over Trump in almost all polls, fake news undermined reality. The polls ultimately proved unable to quantify the surging influence of far-right lies. As predicted, Clinton easily won the national popular vote. But in stunning fashion Trump triumphed in the electoral college.

Fake news had won. Who was most to blame was hard to tell, for Trump's campaign strategy had consisted of simply and effectively parroting the false narratives of his most rabid supporters.

The origin of the "fake news wasn't from Trump so much. It was from the people who hated Hillary Clinton," reflected Brooke Binkowski, managing editor of Snopes.com, the grandfather of fact-checking websites. Speaking to how years of fake news swayed the 2016 presidential election results, John Ziegler, a conservative talk radio host, lamented, "Over the years, we've definitely brainwashed the core of our audience to distrust anything that they disagree with. And now it's gone too far."

Fittingly, the Oxford Dictionary named "post-truth" the "word of the year" for 2016. "Post-truth," according to Oxford, is an adjective defined

as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief." Use of the term rose some 2,000 percent from 2015 to 2016.

It is most commonly associated with "post-truth politics." In other words, 2016 was the year of crowd-sourced lies, false narratives that especially resonated with evangelical Christians who no longer valued reality or truth that ran counter to their personal beliefs. Safely ensconced within their alternative world, they condemned or ignored truths reported by the "mainstream media."

"Making everyone equal as an information source doesn't work very well in practice," Snopes.com founder

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*As during the antebellum and Civil War-era, embedded in the center of today's world of self-serving false narratives and fake news are evangelical Christians.*

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David Mikkelson reflected in hindsight.

More than any other medium, the Internet enabled the current manifestation of false narratives and fake news. Thanks to the Internet, the lies spread faster than ever, enabled by unethical entrepreneurs who financially profit from the selling of lies.

"It used to be," lamented Kim LaCapria of Snopes.com, "that if you got too far away from the mainstream, you were shunned for being a little nutty. Now there is so much nutty going around that it's socially acceptable to embrace wild accusations. No one is embarrassed by anything anymore."

Why is this? Speaking of online social media, Ziegler observed that

"We now live in this fragmented media world where you can block people you disagree with. You can only be exposed to stories that make you feel good about what you want to believe."

As during the antebellum and Civil War-era, embedded in the center of today's world of self-serving false narratives and fake news are evangelical Christians. But unlike the early-to-mid-19th century in which evangelicals were fairly evenly split ideologically regarding black slavery, today's evangelicals are far more likely to side with false narratives and fake news than the truth, in part evidenced by more than 80 percent of evangelical voters casting ballots for the largely fact-devoid Trump.

With Trump now in the White House, evangelical Christians are closing ranks even more tightly around their strongman. In the estimation of some observers, so few are the evangelicals who remain committed to a world of truth that American evangelicalism may have finally destroyed itself.

Christian dissenters across the ideological spectrum lament the separation of truth from evangelicalism.

More educated and focused primarily on Jesus' teachings to love neighbors as oneself, progressive and liberal Christians are struggling to counter a Trumpian world of false narratives and fake news. Some conservative Christians are also struggling in their dissent against pervasive lies, magnified many-fold by Trump, that foster racial and ethnic hatred. Russell Moore, executive director of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention and for years a conservative voice for racial and ethnic equality, consistently warned Southern Baptists about embracing Donald Trump. During the presidential primary season, Moore criticized the Republican candidate for fostering racism, nativism and bigotry. Now,

many Southern Baptists, turning blind eyes to Trump's dark side, are demanding Moore's ouster. Dissent against the anti-Christ strongman is viewed as unChristian. In a world of false narratives and fake news, ethical voices like that of Moore are no longer welcome in much of Southern Baptist life.

More than anyone else in America, black persons understand the dynamics of cultural lies. Responding to the racial overtones of Trump's campaign, some 90 percent of black voters cast ballots against the bombastic Republican in the general election. Many black Christians perceive the election of Trump as merely the latest incarnation of hundreds of years of white supremacist politics, not coincidentally following the two terms of America's first black president.

Rev. James C. Perkins, president of the black Progressive National Baptist Convention and pastor of Detroit's Greater Christ Baptist Church is deeply disappointed at white evangelical support of Donald Trump. Lamenting that white evangelical leaders ignored "justice and character," he asserts that "the white church has to do some self-

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examination to see whether they are in line with the Gospel or just pushing a civil religion."

Other minority Christian groups also voted overwhelmingly against Trump. Evangelical Kathy Khang, a Chicago-area Asian American Christian writer, questions the future viability of evangelicalism. Her reaction to Trump's election "was one of disappointment and honestly deep concern for myself and my family and my friends. It left me wondering if it's worth continuing to call myself an evangelical, because white evangelicals have shown their support for him."

Liberal Christian leader Lisa Sharon Harper sums up the pressing problem of evangelicalism in the age of Trump: "The white church demonstrated on November 8<sup>th</sup> that it is more white than Christian, and has a [greater] commitment to white supremacy than it does to Christ."

Freedom and equality for all persons, although reflecting the life, teachings and spirit of Christ, yet remain abhorrent to many evangelicals, who for generations have fled from the biblical Jesus in order to protect their own selfish interests.

From the perspective of progressive and liberal Christians, the fake news and false narratives that empower much of evangelism past and present remain a blight upon Christianity and, perhaps more than at any time since the Civil War, a national, existential peril. America will soon discover just how deep and wide runs this clear and present danger. ■

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Thank You

# A Story Every Baptist Should Know: A Convention Lost and a Fellowship Born

By Jonathan Siktberg

Baptists under the age of 30 are not known for their interest in Southern Baptist history. Nor do they know why the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship came about. If you ask, “What are the main differences between moderates and fundamentalists?” or even, “What are the core tenets of the Baptist denomination?” the odds are my generation will disappoint you. Few of my Baptist peers can answer these basic questions, and neither could I—at least not until I set foot on the campus of Baylor University three years ago. Sure, I vaguely remembered my grandfather, Dr. Bill Sherman, preaching on the controversy, and I noticed my parents always chose the CBF envelope instead of the SBC one for their missions giving; I was mostly ignorant, however, of the events behind that choice of envelopes.

That all changed my freshman year when I picked up the autobiography of my great uncle, Dr. Cecil Sherman, entitled *By My Own Reckoning*. The first half of the book is an entertaining account of Uncle Cecil’s life and ministry. The second half is a comprehensive overview of the 1980s SBC controversy. The story fascinated me. I was taken by the courage of the “moderate” resistance and the creation of a new Baptist fellowship.

How is it possible that my generation of Baptists does not know what happened? In a time when Christians are faced a wide variety political and ethical issues, we should heed the lessons that can be learned from the SBC controversy. To my generation of Baptists, I write this paper in hopes that it might help us understand the controversy that rocked our denomi-

nation. As Baptists, this story is one we should never forget, for it has shaped our past, informs our present, and will affect our future. Here’s what happened:

It began in 1979 when two fundamentalists, Judge Paul Pressler from Houston and Paige Patterson from Dallas, began plotting to take over the Southern Baptist Convention (*Reckoning*, 133). At the time, the SBC was thriving. Five of the six

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largest seminaries in the US were Southern Baptist, and Baptists had recently passed Methodists to become the largest Protestant denomination in the United States (132). Missions, the production of literature for churches, and education of young ministers comprised the core of the SBC, consuming ninety percent of the Convention’s money (132). The Convention was diverse. No specific instruction about theology was given to churches, and each congregation was free to interpret the Bible as it saw fit (133). As Uncle Cecil wrote, “The differences were tolerated; little mention was made of them. The focus of the convention was missions, not theology” (133).

The 1979 SBC annual meeting changed all of that. Pressler and Patterson led a fundamentalist group which based its theology largely on the absolute inerrancy of scripture (133). Still, Uncle Cecil noted, “As time passed, it became obvious that there was more to their agenda” (140). This group of men (and they were all men) designed a strategy to change the SBC to serve their political agenda and inerrantist theology. They did so by harnessing the power of the president, who had the authority to appoint anyone to the Committee on Committees, which in turn controlled all the institutions of the Convention (133). By winning the presidency, they could stack the various boards and committees of the SBC with other inerrantists and radically change the SBC and its institutions. At the 1979 meeting, the fundamentalists accused others of not believing the Bible because they would not call it “inerrant” (133). According to Uncle Cecil, the fundamentalists were “organized and militant” (135). The meeting suddenly seemed more like a political convention than a religious gathering (135). Pressler and Patterson succeeded in electing their candidate, Adrian Rogers, to the presidency on the first ballot with just a little more than 50 percent of the vote (135). The SBC was under attack.

One might ask: Why is this so important? What are the major differences between moderates and fundamentalists? Uncle Cecil identified six:

1. The Bible: Moderates describe the Bible as trustworthy and reliable. Fundamentalists claim the Bible is literally inerrant, leaving no room for the

human element of scripture or for widely acknowledged errors when the Bible speaks of science and history. Moderates believe that the Bible is without error for the purposes for which it was written—theology—but that it is not a perfect book of history or science, nor does it claim to be (138-140).

2. Women in church leadership: Moderates welcome women in church leadership roles.

Fundamentalists reject women in any religious leadership role (140-142).

3. Pastors: Moderates see the pastor as the servant of the church, whereas fundamentalists see the pastor as the ruler of the church (142).

4. Missions: Moderates support missions on a broad front, including evangelism, medical missions, education, disaster relief, and service to the poor. Fundamentalists want missionaries to be strictly evangelists and church starters (144).

5. Separation of church and state: Moderates believe in religious liberty and the separation of church and state. Fundamentalists believe it is their duty to use government to reestablish their Christian values. Such an approach is of Puritan, not Baptist, nature (144-146).

6. Denomination: Moderates believe in the historical Baptist value of autonomy of the local church. Fundamentalists believe the denomination should establish “theological checkpoints” to ensure everyone agrees on the same theology (146-147).

These differences were significant enough for Uncle Cecil and others to resist the Pressler—Patterson political machine.

In June 1980, Pressler made a speech at Old Forrest Road Baptist

Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, where he bragged that his party was “going for the jugular” of the SBC (135-136). Uncle Cecil said Pressler’s speech in Virginia “gave me a road map” (149). He soon recognized the fundamentalists’ strategy to control the boards and committees through the presidency and that the fundamentalists were organized where the moderates were not. If they waited much longer, the fundamentalists would soon control the SBC. So Uncle Cecil assembled a group of moderates, sometimes called the “Gatlinburg Gang,” in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, in 1980 (150). This group of 17 pastors, which also included my grandfather, set out to “turn the Convention around” (153).

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(Unfortunately, each year since the 1979 Convention, a fundamentalist has been elected president of the SBC.)

The moderates ran candidates against the fundamentalists but always came up just short—receiving 39% of the presidential vote in 1981, 43% in 1982, 45% in 1985, 46% in 1986, 40% in 1987, 48% in 1988, 43% in 1989, and 42% in 1990 (*Struggle for the Soul of the SBC*, xi-xvi). I will not tell the sto-

ries of each convention in this paper, but *By My Own Reckoning* tells each one. At the 1985 meeting, a Peace Committee was created supposedly to reconcile the two sides (*Reckoning*, 180). However, by that time the fundamentalists had already taken control. Uncle Cecil, a member of the Peace Committee, lamented, “I had no idea our mission (to make peace) was impossible from the start” (179). Uncle Cecil and other moderate leaders offered several practical solutions but soon found that the fundamentalists did not seek peace (201). Instead, they wanted to buy time to eliminate moderates from Southern Baptist life forever (179).

The fundamentalists began to press the six seminary presidents to affirm their inerrancy theology or lose their jobs. When the seminary presidents wrote the Glorieta Statement in October of 1986 to save their jobs, it became clear that the Peace Committee was a façade (207). The Glorieta Statement affirmed the absolute inerrancy of scripture (207). Calling it “shameful,” Uncle Cecil resigned from the Peace Committee, and other moderates followed him (207-209).

After the Peace Committee report was released in 1987, the fundamentalists continued their theological genocide. According to Walter Shurden, it soon became required for SBC personnel to comply with the Glorieta Statement and the Peace Committee Report (*Going for the Jugular*, 278). In 1998, the Convention altered the 1963 *Baptist Faith and Message* with the approval of a “Family Article” that said, “a wife is to submit herself graciously” to her husband without requiring the same of the husband (1998 *SBC Annual*, 78). Such misogyny remains ingrained in the SBC today. The 1998 amendment fueled the idea of a new revision to the *Baptist Faith and Message* because fundamentalists were not satisfied with the 1963 version with

respect to its statements on scripture (*What Happened to the Southern Baptist Convention?*, 120). In addition, fundamentalists longed for a single document they could use to control all SBC employees and missionaries. With a revised fundamentalist confession, now a creed, they could ensure that all SBC agencies followed fundamentalist principles.

These events culminated in the SBC's adoption of the 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message*, which put the tragedy of Southern Baptist fundamentalism in plain sight. Although it claims to be a confession, according to Walter Shurden, it is "an enforced creed that tramples on soul freedom and priesthood of the believer" (*Struggle*, 7). By eliminating important parts of the 1963 Preamble and calling itself an "instrument of doctrinal accountability," the 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message* abolished the historic Baptist principles of the authority of scripture and priesthood of the believer. It also destroys those freedoms that have united Baptists across centuries: religious freedom, individual freedom, freedom to interpret the Bible, and freedom of the local church.

The 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message* exposes the SBC's shift away from mainline Baptist views on education, missions, and women. The fundamentalists used the 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message* to take over the six SBC seminaries. Any faculty member or seminary president who refused to sign it was eventually fired or forced to resign. Since then, the SBC has "gutted serious theological education" in the seminaries, according to Uncle Cecil (*Struggle*, 41). In addition, the document was used to catalyze a shift away from cooperative missions to missions focused on evangelism censored by the SBC. The International Mission Board (IMB) began requiring all missionaries to sign an affirmation of the *Message* soon after its adoption. Seventy-seven missionaries refused and were, in their

turn, fired or forced to resign by the IMB (*Fundamentalism*, 74). Finally, it demotes wives to servants of their husbands and restricts women from leadership roles in the church. After the 2000 *Baptist Faith and Message*, the North American Mission Board stopped endorsing ordained women (*Stand With Christ*, 6). Because of fundamentalists, it would be virtually impossible for a female missionary like Lottie Moon to serve today. Ironically, the IMB still has the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering every year.

The 77 missionaries, the seminary presidents, and all the other SBC employees who refused to sign the 2000 document took a stand for Baptists. In Shurden's words, they refused to become the "theological

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***The 77 missionaries, the seminary presidents, and all the other SBC employees who refused to sign the 2000 document took a stand for Baptists.***

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clones" of the fundamentalists (*Stand With Christ*, 6). Fortunately, there was hope on the horizon for moderates—a new Baptist group called the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

After the 1990 SBC annual meeting in New Orleans, moderate leaders agreed the SBC was lost and decided to hold a public meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, to discuss the way forward (*Reckoning*, 217). Originally expecting 200 people to attend, Uncle Cecil and others were astounded when 3,100 Baptists showed up (217). Talk began of starting a new fellowship that would uphold Baptist principles. An Interim Steering Committee was formed to explore the idea (218). The following year, Uncle Cecil and Walter Shurden published the

"Address to the Public," explaining the reasons for starting a new fellowship (220). In May of 1991, 6,000 Baptists came to Atlanta to review the committee's work (221). The proposal was approved, and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was born (221).

In December of 1991, Uncle Cecil accepted an invitation from the CBF coordinating council to serve as the first executive coordinator of CBF (223). Over the next five years, he worked tirelessly with others to build CBF from the ground up.

CBF's first focus was always missions (225). One of the first ministries of the CBF was to help save a Baptist seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland. In December of 1991, the SBC suddenly abandoned the seminary because it thought there was liberalism there (225). With the help of moderate churches across the US, CBF stepped in two months later and sent the seminary a check for \$241,000 to help it keep its doors open (225). By September of 1992, CBF was already employing more than 20 missionaries around the world (226). The Fellowship received a giant boost in February of 1993 when Keith Parks joined the team as Global Missions coordinator after leaving the presidency of the Foreign Mission Board of the SBC (228). With an experienced professional like Parks leading missions, CBF's ministries flourished over the next few years. By 1995, CBF employed over 100 missionaries around the globe (232).

During those early years, building the fellowship of churches was one of Uncle Cecil's primary goals. He traveled across the country to meet with congregations and tell the CBF story. It was a slow but rewarding process. In 1991, CBF received \$700,000 from 391 churches (231). Those numbers grew to \$3.8 million from 841 churches in 1992, \$6.6 million from 1,210 churches in 1993, \$10.9 million from 1,377 churches in

1994, and \$12.3 million from 1,450 churches in 1995 (232).

Another priority in the early CBF days was supporting the education of young Baptist ministers. The fundamentalists had ruined the six SBC seminaries, but much to their consternation they never got Baylor. Thanks to the strong moderate Texas Baptists and shrewd administrators at Baylor, fundamentalists never took over the Baptist General Convention of Texas or the largest Baptist university in the world. Baylor recognized the need for serious graduate theological education and began plans to start George W. Truett Theological Seminary in March of 1991. CBF shared this commitment to theological education; so during the early years of the CBF, five percent of all undesignated money given to the Fellowship went to Truett, and another five percent went to the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (220). Today, CBF continues to support these seminaries and others, providing scholarships for students at 15 theological institutions.

So, 27 years after the end of the controversy, where do we stand? The SBC is as fundamentalist as ever, but poor stewardship has weakened its ministries over the last two decades. Just last year, the IMB forced 983 missionaries to resign or retire so that it could balance its budget (*Christianity Today*). Still, the SBC controls the six oldest Baptist seminaries which are now completely fundamentalist. The CBF has united moderates across the country and reached out around the globe in missions. The Fellowship has grown steadily over the years, especially at the state and local level. Still, CBF faces its fair share of challenges; but there is reason to believe that CBF's next quarter-century will be even better than its first.

I hope this account helps Baptists

of my generation understand what happened to the SBC and why moderates took a stand. For a more detailed account of the controversy, I recommend *By My Own Reckoning* by Cecil Sherman, *The Battle for Baptist Integrity* by John F. Baugh, or *The Struggle for the Soul of the SBC* by Walter B. Shurden.

To my generation of Baptists: We did not live through this controversy, but if we forget what happened, we risk falling into the same traps that ruined the SBC. If you believe in equality for women or in serious Bible scholarship, I encourage you to join a moderate Baptist church. If you value the Baptist traditions of cooperative missions, religious liberty, congregational authority, and priesthood

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***If you believe in equality for women or in serious Bible scholarship, I encourage you to join a moderate Baptist church. If you value the Baptist traditions of cooperative missions, religious liberty, congregational authority, and priesthood of the believer, I urge you to choose that CBF envelope for your giving.***

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of the believer, I urge you to choose that CBF envelope for your giving. Our generation of Christians will no doubt face numerous trials, tribulations and political attacks from both the far-right and the far-left. But like those who came before us, we must persevere through the challenges and preserve the core pillars of the Baptist faith for the next generation. ■

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# Two Pictures of My Father

By Thomas H. Graves

Until the end of his life, my father, Allen Graves, kept two pictures hanging on the wall of his home office, one of himself with Virginia Governor John Battle and the other of himself with Martin Luther King, Jr. Battle was a genteel and sophisticated man, but an ardent segregationist nonetheless, while King was the key leader of the civil rights movement in our nation. Why did my father keep both of those pictures, and no others, placed together where he would see them every day?

My father's story begins in 1915 in Rector, Arkansas, where he was born, the third child of five born to Henry and Joyce Graves. Two years later in 1917 the family moved to Herrin, Illinois. Herrin is located in southern Illinois near the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Southern Illinois really is southern. When I was a child and we would travel from Louisville, Kentucky, to Herrin, we would travel to the south as much as to the west. My mother grew up in that same region in the town of Eldorado and no one would ever guess from her slow southern drawl that she came from Illinois.

More than geography, my father's early life was shaped by the poverty of the region and the scarce resources of his family. They lived on a 40-acre farm while my grandfather worked in a deep pit coal mine located on land adjacent to their property. In the 1920s, work was not always available in the mines due to sporadic unionization battles as well as an economic slowdown preceding the Great Depression. The family had a secondhand Model T then a Ford truck; but before long, they had to give them up because they could not afford the upkeep. The family was

so embarrassed to have to ride their horse-drawn buggy that they walked as often as possible to school, to church, and to town.

In 1922, events in Herrin took a frightful turn for the worse giving the county where they lived the dreadful nickname of "Bloody Williamson". The United Mine Workers went on strike that year and one of the mine operators near Herrin attempted to keep his strip mine operating by using nonunion labor. The mine owner claimed his workers were members of a steam shovelers union, but it was all a sham. Anticipating problems, the owner of the mine hired armed guards to protect the mine and its equipment. In a confrontation on June 21, the guards killed three coal miners who were protesting the use of nonunion labor or "scabs." The next day, union miners from all over southern Illinois showed up and confronted the scabs that had been brought in from Chicago. The nonunion laborers were given a brief head start before the armed and angry mob of union men started firing. In what came to be known as the Herrin Massacre, 20 men were killed that day and many others wounded as the scabs were chased through the countryside with several of them being corralled in the Herrin Cemetery where they were brutally executed.<sup>1</sup> Part of the gunfight that day occurred on the Graves' farm. I've heard my grandmother describe being in the fields with her sons Harold and Allen when men ran through the property with guns blazing. In my grandmother's version of the story, she throws her body on top of her two sons to protect them from the bullets. My uncle Harold tells the story differently when he says that grandma took off running toward the

house and shouted back to the boys, "Run like hell boys, run like hell."

When the shooting stopped, my father, who was seven-years-old at the time, discovered the body of a dead miner and one who had been terribly hurt. Feeling that no one would dare shoot at a seven-year-old boy, my dad was sent to bring the doctor and an ambulance to pick up the dead body and to care for the wounded man now hiding in their barn. Charges were brought and trials were held, but no one was ever found guilty for the events of that murderous day.

"Bloody Williamson" earned its nickname for other reasons as well. It was during the time of prohibition that gang warfare broke out in the county as persons tried to control bootlegging operations in the region. In particular, the Birger Gang so terrorized the area that the National Guard was brought in to keep the peace. My uncle describes being at the town library one afternoon when a gunfight broke out in the street. Peering through the library window he looked on as five men were shot dead.

Even the KKK was involved in some of the unrest in an interesting way. There was clan activity in Williamson County as early as the 1870's. By the 1920's, the clan exerted a strong influence on the churches in the area and were very public in announcing their presence. It was not uncommon for Klansmen to appear fully robed at a church service and present a financial gift to the pastor thanking the church for their help in trying to clean up the town of its German and Italian bootleggers. The truth was, the head of the Klan at that time was simply trying to get rid of the competition, for he was one of the biggest bootleg-

gers in southern Illinois. It wasn't easy growing up in Herrin, IL during the 1920's.

In 1925 the depression began for Williamson County as the mines began to close. After that date, my grandfather did not have any steady employment. The family lived on what they were able to raise on the farm or earn from part-time jobs. My uncle Harold, at the age of 14, started playing for a dance band on Friday and Saturday nights. It was often the only income they had during those years. The family would preserve by canning much of the produce from their farm in order to sell it to others. Each family member worked at whatever they could find, but these were very lean times.

In the midst of the murder, mayhem and poverty that characterized the region at that time, my grandparents still placed a great deal of importance on their children's education. There was a county school within a mile of the Graves' home, but it was a one-room schoolhouse with only one teacher who taught every grade. That was where my father began his schooling in 1921. The city schools in Herrin were a great deal better with much larger facilities, teachers for each grade, and course offerings that were unavailable in the county system. My grandfather appeared before the city school board and pleaded for his children to be allowed to attend, agreeing to pay whatever tuition they would require when he was able. The board voted to permit the Graves children into the city schools and I'm told no one ever tried to collect what was owed. The children thrived in the city schools and especially enjoyed the music that was offered. In fact, both my dad and his older brother attended college at Southern Illinois University on a partial music scholarship. The oldest of the children, Thelma, after finishing high school, attended a secretarial school and then went to work in Houston, Texas, at a job arranged

by her uncle. Her income provided help for the younger children— especially her sister Rachel. Of the four younger children, every one of them not only completed college, but each went on to receive a doctorate. One became a seminary president, another a seminary dean, another an editor for Scott Foresman publishers, with the youngest becoming a psychiatrist. It really is an amazing story of an impoverished family somehow finding its way to success. It was never easy for the family, especially following the mine accident in December 1931 that resulted in my grandfather's losing his right leg. A few months later, the family was forced to sell the farm and move to the city of Herrin. In a conversation not long before he died, my grandfather said that one of the happiest days of his life was when he knew his boys could finish college. They were able to do that because of the union insurance he received from the mining accident.

Following graduation from Southern Illinois University in 1935, my father was married and entered Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky where he received a Master of Divinity degree and later his PhD. Upon completion of his seminary work in 1941, my parents moved to Nashville, Tennessee, where dad worked for the Baptist Sunday School Board. In 1943, the family moved to Fort Pierce, Florida, where dad served as pastor of First Baptist Church. While in Florida, my father invited Douglas Southall Freeman to speak at his church for an engagement of several days. In the early 1930s Freeman had written his four-volume biography of Robert E. Lee for which he received a Pulitzer Prize. Freeman was also a very involved Baptist layman and a person of deep piety. He had a chapel built in his home in Richmond and was often asked to speak or preach in Baptist churches. I can remember from my childhood

the Lee biography placed prominently on our bookshelf. I have never heard my parents speak of the contacts that brought them from Florida to Virginia in 1945, but it is reasonable to conclude that Freeman was consulted, if he did not play a major role in that transition himself.

My father became pastor of the First Baptist Church of Charlottesville, a church with a very proud history. John A. Broadus, one of the most influential persons in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Baptist life, had been a pastor there. Lottie Moon, probably the best known name in Southern Baptist life, had been a member there. The founder of the Vacation Bible School movement, Virginia Hawes, had been a member. First Baptist not only had a proud history, it was a vibrant and thriving church with Sunday attendance in excess of 1000 persons. The church building in those years was located in town at the corner of Second and East Jefferson Streets, adjacent to what was then the town library as well as a downtown park featuring a large equestrian statue of Robert E. Lee. The church structure burned down in 1977 and the congregation moved to its current location on Park Street. In fact, the home where our family lived is located adjacent to the parking lot that serves the new building.

In writing a history of the church, Neil Benfer described postwar Charlottesville in idyllic terms—"a pleasant, well-balanced university community, a crossroads of tourism, the county seat of historic Albemarle County, and above all else, a nice place to live."<sup>2</sup> He described the years of 1945 to 1950 as "the best years" for the church, the city and the nation. It was a time of "collective self-glory," wrote Benfer, as a consequence of wartime achievement, recently acquired worldwide power, amazing advances in technology, "and every reason to anticipate continuing prosperity."<sup>3</sup> Across the nation the postwar

years witnessed not only a great population growth, but a surge in church membership particularly among Southern Baptists. During the tenure of Allen Graves, church membership at Charlottesville exceeded 2600 with an average of 150 new members being added each year, half of those being new converts. The church buildings were dramatically overcrowded, which was one reason the decision was made to establish a mission congregation in Charlottesville, Belmont Baptist Church. To start the new congregation, over 300 members of First Baptist were commissioned and blessed to leave the mother church. In just a few years, that new congregation almost tripled in size. Also, in the late 1940s, a relationship was begun supporting a Spanish Baptist mission in Santa Fe, New Mexico. These were truly good times for the church. Years later, when the cramped facilities caught fire and burned, I can remember my dad joking that he bet the pastor lit the match. Another historical note of those years was that one of the church members, John S. Battle, was elected governor of Virginia.

John Stuart Battle was born in New Bern, NC, in 1890, the son of Henry Wilson Battle, a Baptist minister, and the grandson of Cullen Andrews Battle of Alabama, an avid supporter of secession and a brigadier general in the Confederate army. Living at home with John Battle until his death in 1905, Cullen Battle had a profound influence on his grandson. As John Battle stated, "I've been brought up on the War between the States."<sup>4</sup> In keeping with his family background and the traditions of his time, Battle adopted a paternalistic attitude toward African-Americans. He never questioned at any time in his life the rightness of racial segregation, but would picture himself as having a benevolent feeling toward African-Americans as long as they remained in their allotted place. Legally, he was happy to grant African-Americans their limited rights

if they did nothing to challenge the status quo. There were certainly many other southern politicians who took a much more extreme stance.

Not long after the birth of his son, Battle's father was called to churches in Petersburg, Virginia, and then to Charlottesville, where he pastored High St. Baptist Church. John Battle was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Virginia, earning his law degree in 1913. In 1918, he married Janie Lipscomb and soon established a successful law practice in Charlottesville. That practice eventually grew into one of the largest firms in the United States, McGuire Woods, which was formally known as McGuire Woods Battle and Booth. He was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates in 1929 and, in 1933, he was elected to the state Senate. Re-elected to four terms in the Senate, Battle never faced any election year opposition. His legislative years were quite successful, compiling a notable record while serving as the chair of the powerful Finance Committee. Those who knew him described him as a great storyteller who enjoyed his whiskey and who was one of the best poker players in the Senate. Battle was a loyal Democrat aligned with the Byrd organization, which controlled Virginia politics during this era. With some encouragement from Sen. Harry Byrd, Battle declared his candidacy for governor and surprisingly found that he was facing three other candidates in the Democratic primary. Battle received only 43% of the vote, but that was enough in the four-man race to assure him of the Democratic nomination. He automatically won the fall election. My father offered the invocation at John Battle's inauguration in January 1950.

Battle's term as governor, 1950-1954, could be described as the Indian summer of the Byrd Organization, a political machine led by former Governor and US Senator Harry F. Byrd, Sr. During the heyday

of the organization, no candidate stood a chance at a statewide office without Byrd's approval. Byrd followed a conservative fiscal policy of low taxes and limited government, which resulted in restricted funding for education and social welfare. Byrd instituted a pay-as-you-go policy meaning that state funds were not to be spent until the taxes and fees were in hand. The success of the Byrd machine depended upon low voter turnout, which was helped dramatically by the poll tax—a fee charged for the privilege of voting. The machine could assure that the tax would be paid for "reliable" voters, sometimes years in advance. The story has often been told that when the poll tax was challenged as discriminatory and racially biased, a Byrd operative could respond: "That is absolutely untrue; we don't want poor whites voting either." There were some political races during this time where Byrd candidates won with as little as 15% of the potentially eligible citizens voting. One observer concluded, "Byrd's political power was based on the ability of the appointed and elected officials to restrict the number of voters, and ensure those few voters were supporters of the Byrd Organization."<sup>5</sup> From 1930 through the 1960s the Byrd organization effectively selected every Virginia governor. John Battle was one of the very few supported by the Byrd machine who was willing to take some very limited and cautious steps on racial issues. But in 1956, even those small steps toward sanity were swept aside when Byrd devised his segregationist "massive resistance" program in defiance of school integration.

John Battle was a dignified and sophisticated individual who was blessed with the ability to relate easily to others. He enjoyed very good relationships with members of the General Assembly during his time as governor. That enabled him to establish his most significant politi-

cal achievement—a program of state funding for local school construction, the first such program in the history of the state. One clear benefit of this increased spending for education was to help preserve Virginia's segregated school system, which was based on the racial doctrine of separate but equal.

Three racial issues became very prominent during Battle's term as governor. First, in 1949, even African-American young men from Martinsville were given a harsh death sentence for the rape of a white woman. Under Virginia law, only African-American men faced execution for the rape of a white woman. Pleas for leniency and executive clemency were received from all over the world for this well-publicized case. Battle did grant stays of execution while the verdict was appealed, but when those appeals were exhausted, he refused to intervene and the Martinsville Seven were executed in 1951.

Second, Battle came to national prominence at the 1952 Democratic National Convention. Four years earlier in 1948 the Democratic convention adopted a civil rights plank in their platform that led to a walkout of many of the southern delegates. These Dixiecrats were led by Strom Thurmond of South Carolina who ran for president that year on a third-party ticket. Now, four years later, there were some Democrats who demanded that the southern delegations sign a loyalty oath to the party, pledging to have the Democratic candidate listed on their state's ballot. Battle addressed the convention and the national television audience in a very congenial and soft-spoken manner, stating that Virginia law and Virginia's honor required that the Democratic nominees chosen at this convention would be placed on the state's ballot. But he went on to insist it was not necessary to force delegates to sign some loyalty oath.

That should not be required for the state of Virginia or any other southern state for that matter. Battle's calm and polished appeal resolved the issue without any imposition of an oath or the expulsion of any delegation.

Third, during Battle's term as governor the first challenges were made to Virginia's pattern of racial segregation. The NAACP launched a campaign calling for the desegregation of the state park system. Battle responded by threatening to close all state parks if they were ever forced to integrate. More importantly, in 1951 African-American students at Moton High School in Farmville, Virginia, went on strike insisting that the all-white county school board must provide improved accommodations for their segregated school if it is to be truly separate and equal. The county's school for African-Americans had no gymnasium, no cafeteria, no lockers, and no auditorium with fixed seating. Built to accommodate 180 students, it was overwhelmed by the 450 students attending. The school board attempted to handle the overflow by building plywood buildings covered with tarpaper and heated only with potbelly stoves. The tarpaper shacks of Moton High School became the symbol of all that was wrong with separate but equal facilities.<sup>6</sup> The cause that began with a student strike in 1951 became a major part of the Brown versus Board of Education case that was argued before the United States Supreme Court in 1954. That unanimous decision concluded that public schools in this nation must be integrated because it is obvious that separate is inherently not equal. As the case was winding its way toward the Supreme Court, while Battle was concerned that an adverse decision could force the integration of Virginia's public schools, he made no preparations for such an eventuality. He discouraged any legislation as premature and refused to give his support to a study group desiring to

craft a response to an adverse Supreme Court ruling. A Roanoke newspaper editorialized, "Virginia has taken an ostrich-like approach to the problem of school segregation."<sup>7</sup> As a result of Battle's inaction, it was left to other persons with far more extreme attitudes to form Virginia's response.

After his term was completed, Battle returned to the national limelight in 1957 when President Eisenhower appointed him to the newly-formed United States Commission on Civil Rights. While many scoffed at the idea of naming a segregationist to such a panel, Eisenhower insisted that all types of thinking should be represented on the commission and he eagerly sought a traditional and respected southern voice. Eisenhower's strategy appeared to pay off in one of the most publicized meetings of the commission. Having received complaints from persons in Alabama and Mississippi that they had been prevented from registering to vote because of their race, the commission authorized an investigation of the issue and requested voting records from some Alabama county registrars. The Attorney General of Alabama refused to cooperate with the commission and a circuit court judge named George Wallace angrily challenged the committee saying, "I will jail any Civil Rights Commission agent who attempts to get the records."<sup>8</sup>

The commission's hearings in Montgomery, Alabama, in December 1958 were televised nationally. Testimony from numerous African-American witnesses described the blatant racial discrimination encountered by decorated war veterans, college graduates, doctors and professors. Deeply impressed with the testimony and greatly distressed by the refusal of Alabama officials to cooperate, Battle responded to the recalcitrant officials from his unique position as a segregationist on the Civil Rights Commission. He began by speaking of his grandfather from Alabama

who fought in the Civil War, stating, “None of you white citizens and officials of Alabama believe more strongly than I do in the segregation of the races as the right and proper way of life in the South.”<sup>9</sup> But he went on to insist that officials in the state were committing a grave error when they tried to hide their refusal to register obviously qualified persons. He warned the officials that if they did not cooperate, congress might well consider more punitive civil rights legislation that could affect not only Alabama but all southern states. He pleaded with state officials to “reevaluate the situation and see if there is not some way you, in fairness to your convictions, may cooperate a little bit more fully with this commission and not have it said by our enemies in Congress that the people of Alabama were not willing to explain their conduct when requested to do so.”<sup>10</sup>

Battle’s appeal initially received very good responses from newspapers both in Alabama and elsewhere. Not all evaluations in the South were positive however and within a few weeks a great deal of public criticism came Battle’s way. He commented, “I have been called everything from a turncoat and SOB to a second Robert E Lee.”<sup>11</sup> Within two weeks of his statement, Battle began to backtrack on his remarks. For John Battle, the appeal he made at the hearings in Montgomery was as far as he would ever go on the racial issue. He was the only member of the commission to vote against a motion asking the Attorney General of the United States to take action against Alabama officials. In the end, Battle resigned from the commission and strongly criticized its final report, which called for federal voting registrars to assure equal voting rights for all Americans. He strongly affirmed that all properly qualified citizens should have the right to vote, but insisted that current laws were sufficient to protect that right. The appointment of federal

referees to assist African-Americans in voting, Battle argued, was “nothing but the resurrection of Reconstruction era laws, which we had hoped in the South had been forever buried.”<sup>12</sup> The implementation of such a plan would doom the segregationist strategies of the Byrd machine in Virginia.

Clearly the foremost issue facing Virginia in the years following Battle’s term as governor was the court order desegregating public schools. In fashioning the state’s response to the Supreme Court decision of 1954, Harry Byrd insisted on a strategy of massive resistance “that required the governor to close schools under court order to desegregate and to deny state funds to any that chose to reopen on an integrated basis.”<sup>13</sup> It is important to mention that Douglas Southall Freeman was editor of a Richmond newspaper, which was the largest and loudest supporter of the massive resistance strategy. There were calls for Battle to speak up as a former governor in an attempt to soften this extreme tactic; but he remained silent. In a letter to Sen. Byrd, Battle assured his mentor, “I have never at any time, either publicly or in private conversation, expressed the slightest disagreement with the present Virginia policy.”<sup>14</sup> Battle’s personal commitment to Byrd and Battle’s belief in racial segregation were the determining factors of his political life and racial beliefs. He was a sophisticated and personable individual, a person of genteel prejudice, but undoubtedly a segregationist to the very core of his being. Why would his picture be always hanging in my dad’s office?

The family has no documentation to determine my father’s view on racial issues during his years in Virginia. As an active participant in Virginia Baptist life, Dad was outspoken as a conservative advocate, best known for his opposition to Baptist churches receiving members who had not been baptized by immersion.<sup>15</sup> It is a fair assumption that

my father’s position on racial issues would be very much in keeping with most other Virginia Baptists of that time. In his survey of Virginia Baptist racial attitudes, Mark Newman described the 1940s as a time when the Baptist General Association “called for Blacks to be given equal opportunities within segregation.”<sup>16</sup> The General Association in the 1930s created a Committee on Interracial Relationships, which reported frequently to the annual meetings. In 1947, the committee’s report affirmed the “Charter of Principles in Race Relations” that had recently been adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention. It urged Baptists to “reject prejudice, protest racial injustice, supporting equality before the law, and promote equal opportunities within segregation.”<sup>17</sup> In 1948, the Interracial Committee presented a motion on race relations that included a confessional paragraph stating: “We confess that we are prejudiced on this question. . . . We believe that most Baptists are likewise prejudiced. We confess that we are fearful, that we are afraid . . . to follow the way of Christ. We confess to God our sins in this matter and plead to God to make us more willing to be Christlike in our relation to all races.”<sup>18</sup> The messengers voted to delete the entire confessional section. Reuben Alley, editor of the Virginia Baptist paper, the *Religious Herald*, endorsed the deletion when he wrote, “In vain we have tried to understand in what way such resolutions contribute to the improvement of relations between the races.”<sup>19</sup> Newman summarized the stance of most Virginia Baptists in the 1940s by writing, “As moderate segregationists, the majority of Baptists were prepared only to concede that blacks should be accorded economic opportunities, justice in the courts, and equal, but segregated education, accommodations, and transportation.”<sup>20</sup>

With the Supreme Court’s deci-

sion in 1954, the racial issue became unavoidable for the American church. The Southern Baptist Convention, the Presbyterian Church in the US, the Methodists, and the Episcopalians all endorsed the Supreme Court decision. Initially Reuben Alley voiced his support of the Southern Baptist Convention's resolution affirming the Brown decision, but the negative response he received was so overwhelming he completely reversed his position. He argued, "... the majority of Baptists were segregationists, the convention's racial pronouncement caused distress, and segregation was a political question, outside the bounds of the SBC's authority. ... The Southern Baptist Convention is not a proper platform for pronouncements on political issues."<sup>21</sup> To defend the correctness of the 1954 Supreme Court decision was a risky thing for Virginia Baptist pastors. My dear friend, Henry Langford, was forced to resign his pastorate in Chatham, Virginia, simply because he wrote a letter to the local newspaper calling for obedience to the law of the land. He wrote, "By becoming excited we only make bad matters worse. ... It is a real problem, but not one that we can't overcome if we love justice, righteousness and truth more than we hate another race."<sup>22</sup> Most Virginia Baptist pastors, regardless of their private opinions, refused to take a public stand against segregation out of fear of dissension within their congregation and the loss of their pastorates. These years were not the proudest of times in Virginia Baptist life. If Allen Graves was quiet on the race issue during his Charlottesville years, he was certainly joined by the vast majority of his pastoral colleagues.

There is only one story I am aware of linking my father to the race issue while in Charlottesville. I was born on October 11, 1947, at the University of Virginia Hospital. My mother often told the story of how Dad went to a UVA football game while she was

in labor. Actually, I was born at two AM on a Saturday morning and much later that afternoon dad was seated in Scott Stadium as UVA beat Harvard 47-0. You have to ask: What was Dad doing at a football game when his sixth child had been born just 12 hours earlier? It wasn't until years later I learned the true story of that day from my sister, Jenny, who sent me a story from a Harvard publication about that game.<sup>23</sup> The Harvard team had an African-American player, Chester Pierce, who was the first African-American to play in a college football game in the south at an all-white university. Most integrated college football teams agreed not to bring their African-American players when traveling in the south. But the face of American sports changed in the spring of 1947 when the Brooklyn Dodgers added Jackie Robinson to their roster. When the Harvard coach insisted on bringing all of his players to Charlottesville, there were attempts to call off the game, but the UVA players themselves voted unanimously to play. Most of the players were from the north and many were World War II veterans who honored the sacrifices made by African-American soldiers. The UVA team captain was a close friend with one of the Harvard players. The team was determined to play regardless of the pressures to cancel the game and a great deal of pre-game publicity. The UVA president, Colgate Darden, appealed to UVA fans the night before the game not to shame the school by causing any disruptive incident. In fact, that historic game was played without any incident as my dad sat in the stands. Chester Pierce, by the way, went on to a very distinguished career as Professor of psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School.

In 1950, our family moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma and then in 1955 my father made the last move of his career becoming the dean of the School of Christian Education at

the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. With the move to Louisville, there was an important transition in the life of the entire Graves family. The inevitable conforming strictures of church life for both a pastor and the pastor's family were no longer present in an academic community. In addition, the new church home that the children found was affirming, progressive, and focused on building bridges, not walls. The whole city seemed to have a more progressive focus during the 1960s with vigorous campaigns for open housing, fair employment, and affordable housing. The seminary itself was integrated with both African and African-American students. In the 60s, Mom and Dad moved their membership to a different church than that of the children, joining a struggling inner-city congregation with ministries focused on nearby government housing for the elderly and poor and a diverse interracial population of corporate executives, street people and impoverished children. I have never witnessed a more diverse congregation in my life as when a high level bank official serving communion patiently dealt with several children who mistook it for refreshment time. Because of his administrative position at the seminary, my dad found himself participating in integrated and ecumenical meetings as never before. He helped to structure a consortium of Louisville schools that included a Catholic college, a Catholic seminary, a Presbyterian seminary, and a large urban university. He represented the seminary at numerous meetings of their accrediting agency that brought him into contact with various denominations and races. He was also appointed in 1958 as the seminary's representative to meetings of the Baptist World Alliance, placing his work in a global perspective. The context of his work had changed dramatically and, as a result, his per-

spective on racial issues took him far beyond his earlier parochial views. For example, in attending a conference that included seminary officials from across the south, my father was surprised to learn, after stepping off his train early that morning, that Dr. Charles Body, president of an African-American seminary in Nashville, had spent the night in the lobby of the train station since no downtown hotel would let him register. That encounter made a deep impression on my father. Chuck Body and Dad became good friends and I was very fortunate to share that friendship during my college days in Nashville.

In 1961, Martin Luther King, Jr., had not delivered his "I Have a Dream Speech," had not won the Nobel Peace Prize, had not led the march from Selma to Montgomery, and had not written *Letters from the Birmingham Jail* and *Why We Can't Wait*. The Civil Rights Bill of 1964 had not been written and Bull Connor had not unleashed his dogs and fire hoses on African-American children in Birmingham. In 1961, King was a much-maligned civil rights leader ridiculed by many as a communist agitator. My father chaired the seminary's Lectures Committee which extended an invitation to King to speak at Southern Seminary in April of 1961. This would be the only time King was ever invited to a Southern Baptist institution. My father served as host for that visit, picking King up at the airport, getting him to his room for the night, and escorting him to his various meetings the day of the lecture. King had breakfast that morning with my dad and John Claypool, a Baptist pastor who was heavily involved in Louisville's open housing campaign. King also spoke to Christian ethics classes that day, but most importantly he delivered his address to a packed chapel service at the seminary. King's address was entitled "The Church on the Frontier of Racial Tension." He

began his speech by talking of the fall of the British Empire and the end of colonialism. Then he argued that our American society is in a similar time of transition and the Church has a very important role to play, "Since the Church has a moral responsibility of being the moral guardian of society, then it cannot evade its responsibility in this very tense period of transition."<sup>24</sup> King challenged the seminary community to take a stand wherever there is injustice in the society. He argued, "So often in the Church we've had a high blood pressure of creeds and an anemia of deeds."<sup>25</sup> King envisioned a church in the forefront of the civil rights movement leading in the battle for integration, economic justice, and nonviolence. Dad was very pleased with the events of the day describing King's visit as having a very wholesome impact on the seminary community.

It appeared to any observer that the day could not have gone any better, but behind the scenes it was a very different story. There were faculty members who saw King's visit as a serious threat to the seminary's financial support from the Southern Baptist Convention. One faculty member suggested that my father should be fired for putting the seminary in jeopardy. The president of the seminary thought it was unwise to have King on campus. In fact, he left town the day of King's lecture, going with his wife on a long drive in the Indiana countryside, assuring that there would be no pictures of him and King. There were however pictures of King and the members of the Lectures Committee. Those pictures did receive a great deal of publicity in Louisville and beyond. One of the pictures was used in a scandal sheet distributed widely in Southern Baptist circles, attacking my dad and the seminary. Each of the seminary trustees received a copy of that picture and many raised objections. The response from Southern Baptists was predict-

able and sad. My father had been a popular speaker at Baptist meetings throughout the south, but he had every one of his scheduled appearances canceled, even by persons he considered his close friends.

I was 13 in the spring of 1961 and my memories of King's visit have to do with two telephone calls to our house. One was from King, who was simply calling to say he was ready to be picked up. The other call came one evening a few days later. I have never been able to get the sound of the man's voice out of my mind as he said, "You Graveses better get off the N---- branch or we are going to chop you off." That was frightening. I went immediately to the living room where my father was reading the afternoon paper. When I told him what I just heard, his response was amazing. He didn't say a word, but just picked the paper back up and kept reading. I remember my dad's response as much as I remember the phone call. It seemed that dad wasn't worried about it, so I didn't need to worry about it either. He was either really dumb or really smart. I choose smart.

It is interesting that years later the entire seminary community came to express a great deal of pride in King's visit. For example, the seminary president, never divulging his opposition or absence from campus that day, wrote in his autobiography: "I thought it was appropriate for the seminarians to hear such a prominent person who rooted his position in the Bible."<sup>26</sup>

That picture of my dad with Martin Luther King in 1961 hung on the wall of my dad's study alongside a picture of dad and Governor Battle taken in 1950. Why did my father keep those two pictures side-by-side all those years? It could be that those were two of the most famous people he had met in his life. But there were pictures of Dad with other famous people, like Robert Kennedy, and he never hung those pictures. Maybe one represent-

ed my father's life as a pastor and the other my father's life as an academic. It could be they were just good photographs of my father that he especially liked. Maybe it was a way for my dad to illustrate that friendship need not be limited by race or viewpoint. It could have meant any one of those things or perhaps all of those things, but I think there was something deeper at stake in my father's desire to look at those pictures day after day.

Remember where my father came from. He grew up with robed Klansmen attending his church. He grew up very well-acquainted with bloody violence. In his own ministry, he served segregated churches and never openly questioned that. He deeply admired men like Douglas Southall Freeman without ever questioning their undeniable racism. As we all are, my dad was a product of his culture and of his time. John Battle was a very good reminder of my father's earlier life. Without denying where he came from, Dad was able to move beyond that. My father demonstrated a dramatic social conversion, becoming a courageous advocate for racial equality. Like most conversions with which he was acquainted, this occurred in part with the encouragement of Baptist preachers like Chuck Body. And this change was enabled by a struggling inner-city church that proclaimed the wideness of God's love every time they opened their doors. If John Battle represented where my father had been, Martin Luther King, Jr., surely represented where my father hoped to go. What better gift could a father leave for his children than to model an openness to face the future with hope and a willingness to accept

and even encourage change?

Tom Brokaw wrote of "*The Greatest Generation*." That phrase is usually meant to describe people of my father's generation who survived the Great Depression, fought in World War II, and built the world's richest and most powerful nation in the postwar years. Perhaps their greatest contribution to American life is not just endurance, military victory and economic success. Perhaps their greatest contribution was their willingness to accept and foster dramatic changes in their personal and public lives, enabling our nation to move ever closer in fulfilling its promises of equal justice for all. ■

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*Tom Graves is retired president and President Emeritus of the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond.*

# Faith and the Trump White House

By Melissa Rogers

During his inaugural weekend, President Trump participated in an inaugural prayer service at National Cathedral. As early as this week, he and his administration will begin to make decisions regarding religion's role in American public life.

Fortunately, we have an excellent, time-tested guide for such decision-making—the First Amendment and other constitutional principles. The first sixteen words of the First Amendment state that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” According to *Article VI*, public officials “shall be bound by oath or affirmation” to support the Constitution, “but no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.”

These guarantees mean that the government cannot disqualify aspiring officeholders due to their religious beliefs and affiliations, or lack thereof. Our government must safeguard the inalienable and equal right of Americans to practice their faith, both individually and communally. At the same time, the state itself must refrain from promoting or denigrating religion generally, and it cannot endorse or prefer one faith over another.

In addition to protecting fundamental human rights, these and related principles have helped us to become a nation with remarkable religious vitality and diversity as well as healthy cooperation across faiths and beliefs. These principles have obvious importance for law and policy. They also provide guidance for governmental engagement with religious communities. Here are a few ways in which these principles should be applied.

First, President Trump and his

administration should recognize that there are no second-class faiths under our Constitution. Both policymaking and engagement must be consistent with this bedrock principle. A good first step in this area would be for the Trump administration to invite members of all faiths—including Methodists, Muslims and Mormons—to the conversation table. Like other communities—veterans, business, labor, and civil rights groups, for example—religious communities care deeply about a broad array of public issues, and the First Amendment certainly protects the right to express those views. Welcoming all people of faith to the discussion from the outset would help to honor the spirit of the Constitution as well as President Trump's desire to “bind the wounds of division” and serve as “president for all Americans.”

Second, the administration should respect religion's independence from the state. As Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King said, the church “*is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state.*” Further, it should acknowledge that religious communities that have serious differences with the administration on some issues can be powerful allies on others, and that even communities that disagree with the administration on most issues deserve a respectful hearing. Engagement with religious communities should aim to identify and advance common ground and commit to respectful, ongoing dialogue where there are differences.

Third, the government's focus should be on promoting the common good, not theology, whether in general or in particular. The U.S. Government's role is not to advance faith; that is the job of religious individuals and institutions themselves.

Likewise, while there is often overlap in the missions of religion and the United States government, it should be acknowledged that that overlap is never complete. For example, as James Madison recognized, it is beyond the government's ken to say what is true or false as a theological matter; no “civil magistrate” is “a competent judge of religious truth.” Similarly, the government should remember that establishments of religion not only harm the consciences of those who don't embrace the favored faith; they also undermine the religion that the state endorses by sapping its independence and vitality.

Fourth, when policymaking involves the clash of fundamental human rights, it is particularly important to hear from all sides before making a decision. Currently, the most prominent clashes in this area pit religious freedom against reproductive rights or LGBT equality. These clashes have become increasingly bitter and polarized in recent years. All too often, we have failed to recognize that there are people of good will on different sides. The Trump administration should begin its work by reaching out to people of good will with differing perspectives on these issues.

Like other presidents, President Trump has promised to “preserve, protect and defend the Constitution.” Relying on principles like these will help him fulfill that pledge and build greater unity among the American people. ■

*From March 11, 2013-January 20, 2017, Melissa Rogers served as special assistant to President Obama and executive director of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships. This piece is reprinted with permission from the Brookings Institution, where it was originally published on the FixGov blog.*

# Religious Liberty on the Political Horizon

By Holly Hollman

What does the election of Donald J. Trump mean for religious liberty? As with many important issues, President Trump has no significant record or concrete positions on the topic. Specific church-state issues rarely arose during the presidential campaign, and the Baptist Joint Committee has found nothing prior to his candidacy to indicate that he has given much thought to the matter. It is not clear what he thinks or intends to do.

That said, we have plenty of work ahead. All presidents exercise leadership in ways that impact the status of our First Freedom. Specifically, we can expect the president's influence through policy initiatives, both in the executive branch and working with Congress; through appointments, particularly judicial appointments; and through statements that inevitably will shape the public's understanding. **Here's what we know:**

## POLICY

Trump has not asserted a defined vision of religious freedom that would lead to particular commitment to the separation of church and state. During the campaign, he made only a few statements about positions in this area.

He embraced the Republican platform plank that seeks to repeal the so-called "Johnson Amendment," which refers to an IRS rule that prevents candidate endorsements by any nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. The vast majority of churches enjoy that most favorable tax treatment and are therefore covered by that category.

Trump claimed the rule threatens religious freedom and that repeal would benefit Christianity and other religions; but repealing that rule jeopardizes an important

protection for both politics and religion. Furthermore, while politicians may understandably want endorsements from churches and the implied religious approval of their agendas, changing the rule is unpopular with the vast majority of those who would be affected by the change.

Trump supports school vouchers, which divert public education dollars from public schools to private schools, including religious ones. That is problematic for religious liberty. The sole education policy experience of his

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*Trump has not asserted a defined vision of religious freedom that would lead to particular commitment to the separation of church and state.*

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nominee for secretary of education, Betsy DeVos, is aggressive support for the privatization of education. DeVos and her family have been staunch supporters and financiers of voucher efforts and charter schools, seeking minimal public oversight of them.

Trump has said he would sign the First Amendment Defense Act, though it is unclear what version of that act may be introduced in the new Congress. FADA is one of several pieces of legislation introduced last Congress that purports to resolve some conflicts between LGBT protections and the rights of organizations and individuals with religious beliefs against same-sex marriage. He has not fully articulated a position on these conflicts that dominate many

religious liberty debates, nor has he commented on the status and meaning of the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) and similar enactments at the state level. The BJC is suspicious of all attempts to amend and upset the delicate balance embodied in the federal RFRA, one way or another.

## VICE PRESIDENT AND PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENTS

While Donald Trump does not have much of a record on religious liberty, Vice President Mike Pence does. As a former member of Congress and governor of Indiana, Pence is closely aligned with a political agenda often associated with the "Christian right." He is a strong supporter of school vouchers and is perhaps best known outside of Indiana for signing an aggressive and ill-timed version of a state RFRA.

Trump appointments throughout the executive branch will certainly affect religious liberty, based on each official's views and commitment to strong constitutional values. His nominees for attorney general, secretary of state and secretary of education all had to answer questions related to religious liberty during their confirmation hearings. There has been no word yet on whom he will name to head the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships and what direction that office may take under his presidency. He also has an opportunity to name an ambassador for international religious freedom (a post currently held by Rabbi David Saperstein).

Most significantly, he will appoint federal judges, including the next member of the U.S. Supreme Court to replace the late Justice Antonin

Scalia. President-elect Trump has said that he wants to appoint justices and judges in the mold of Justice Scalia, which is not reassuring for religious liberty advocates. Scalia is known in religious liberty circles as the author of the decision that eviscerated the Free Exercise Clause (*Employment Division v. Smith*) and for having a weak view of the Establishment Clause that would allow government to favor religion (at least monotheism).

#### **PUBLIC STATEMENTS**

As a candidate, Donald Trump made vague references to attacks on religious freedom and said he would be a champion for Christians. He referred to the potential of our country if we worked together “as one people, under one God, saluting one flag.” He asserted that when he is president everyone will say “Merry Christmas.” He offered little explanation for these statements, leaving speculation that they were simply an appeal to religious voters from the “Christian right.” Such statements, however, can erode the public’s understanding of religious freedom. Most worrisome are some of Trump’s statements regarding Muslims, particularly those about potential bans and registries. Whether these particular policies or others are actually pursued, rhetoric singling out for detrimental

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*We need a greater understanding and appreciation of what the American tradition of religious liberty has meant for our country and the world, and we need leaders who will carefully tend to that legacy.*

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treatment a group of people based on religion harms religious liberty.

As BJC supporters and allies know, Donald Trump becomes president at a time when the meaning of religious liberty is being debated in challenging contexts. Reckless, ill-informed and careless statements can harm understanding and undercut support for religious freedom. We need a greater understanding and appreciation of what the American tradition of religious liberty has meant for our country and the world, and we need leaders who will carefully tend to that legacy.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Putting aside where the blame lies, the presidential election has left our

country deeply divided. A great deal of work is needed across a number of important issues. Religious liberty is a treasured American ideal with a long history of bipartisan support, at least with regard to the major principles. Our first priority is working to ensure understanding and support for those core principles.

As Baptists and Americans, we recognize that all have the right to religious liberty, and we owe that freedom to our forebears who fought for the separation of church and state. We believe that strong protections for free exercise and no establishment are essential, and our mission will continue to guide our work and direct our activities, just as it has through presidential transitions over the past eight decades. As always, the BJC is watching closely, working with allies and listening to concerns to find common ground. With your continued support, we will engage the new administration and Congress in various ways and continue to lift our voice for religious liberty for all. ■

*Holly Hollman is General Counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee on Religious Freedom. This article first appeared in the January 19, 2017 issue of and is reprinted with permission.*

#### **What is the Johnson Amendment? Why does it matter?**

In 1954 then Senator Lyndon Johnson introduced and passed this Amendment to the Tax Code which said that non-profits (including churches) could not benefit from their tax exempt status and at the same time speak in favor of or in opposition to political candidates.

If the Johnson Amendment were to be abolished, as President Trump promises, churches would be allowed to use their budgets to support campaigning — and citizens would get a tax deduction for contributing to the church. And, since nonprofits like churches aren’t required to make the same public disclosures as PACs, political funding could become even less transparent if campaign funding were funneled through churches.

***“Politicizing churches does them no favors. The promised repeal is an attack on the integrity of both our charitable organizations and campaign finance system. Inviting churches to intervene in campaigns with tax-deductible offerings would fundamentally change our houses of worship. It would usher our partisan divisions into the pews and harm the church’s ability to provide refuge. To change the law would hinder the church’s prophetic witness, threatening to turn pulpit prophets into political puppets.”*** Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty

**Editor's Note:** The following stories were written by persons affiliated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Arkansas for CBFAR's series "Our Stories About Race." They are distributed through CBFAR's e-news communication and may be found on the website at [www.cbfar.org](http://www.cbfar.org). They are reprinted here with permission.

## My Story

By Pat Griffen

Clinical Psychologist

New Millennium Church, Little Rock

I made the decision to become a clinical psychologist in the ninth grade while enrolled in a course entitled, "Personal Problems." This would be equivalent to a contemporary high school psychology course. In the small town of Malvern, AR, there were no psychologists and, at that time, we did not even have a mental health center. It was not until my freshman year in college that I met my first psychologists, my professors at Ouachita Baptist University. It is uncommon for a 14-year old to make a career decision that remains unwavering throughout the course of her education; however, such was my journey.

I was in graduate school before meeting my first African American psychologist, Dr. Robert L. Williams, a native of Little Rock, Arkansas. At that time, Dr. Williams was a psychology professor at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. I was unwavering in my decision and knew that I would have to prepare myself academically to compete for graduate school, because I had decided to obtain a PhD in clinical psychology.

My family has always encouraged the pursuit of higher education. I am a third generation college graduate. My maternal grandfather and his two siblings graduated from Arkansas Baptist College. During that time, this was their only option for college. My mother completed an associate's degree from Arkansas Baptist College and later completed her bachelor's degree from Arkansas Mechanical and Normal College in Pine Bluff, now UAPB. Several other family members graduated from college. The importance of competing academically was part of my DNA.

I graduated *magna cum laude* from Ouachita Baptist University and was ranked fifth in a class of 205. My professors were very supportive of my plans to pursue graduate studies in clinical psychology and wrote glowing letters of recommendation. With my academic

record, letters of recommendation and other relevant support, there was never a doubt that I would be accepted into graduate school and would have to make a decision as to my school choice. At graduation, I had not been accepted and had a collection of rejection letters. Little did I realize that this was a time when graduate schools were not affirming of diversity and had closed doors of opportunity for students of color to pursue a PhD in clinical psychology.

I shall never forget how encouraging Dr. Weldon Vogt, my major advisor, was and how he actively researched other possibilities. He made a personal visit to my home in Malvern with names of other schools to consider. He was accompanied by his lovely wife who was our Baptist Young Women's advisor. Dr. Vogt was relentless in this pursuit on my behalf and encouraged me to apply to the University of Arkansas. Of course, my plans were to get out of Arkansas, especially since my parents had insisted that I remain in the state for undergraduate studies. Reluctantly I applied and was accepted.

After arriving on campus, I learned about the work of the Association of Black Psychologists, an organization that broke away from the American Psychological Association due to discriminatory and oppressive practices toward psychologists and students of color. One of their initiatives was to challenge universities to diversify their enrollment and open the door for students of color to pursue graduate studies in psychology.

The drafter of this Ten Point Program was Dr. Robert L. Williams, originally of Little Rock. I am quite sure that Dr. Vogt never met Dr. Williams. However, I am deeply and eternally grateful for the combined efforts of a white psychology professor at Ouachita Baptist University and a black psychology professor at Washington University who collectively worked to open the door for me to pursue a fulfilling career in psychology. Both were working against institutional racism from different perspectives with a mutual goal in mind. How different my life would have been without the combined social justice advocacy of these two great psychologists. It is only through a multiracial, collaborative effort that racism and systemic oppression can be eradicated. ■

## Lessons From My Laundry Class

By Joyce Williams

Retired public school educator, administrator, principal  
& consultant

New Millennium Church, Little Rock

My high school laundry class is one of the lenses through which I came to learn and understand the way things were and still are concerning race. When I am leisurely living my daily life, a few images dart across my mind that remind me of times past and the similarity of experiences then and relationship to what is happening in the present. I could share at least one story about race every day for the rest of my life and not run out. The reality of living in this country has helped me understand that its systems were designed and established to promote unjust, disparate treatment for some and the plan is working well.

I attended Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. It was built in 1929 as the Negro School of Industrial Arts chiefly funded by Julius Rosewald, president of Sears, Roebuck and Company. Other funds came from various sources as all available Little Rock building funds were used to build Little Rock High School which is now Central High School. The main purpose of Dunbar High School was to teach labor force skills. It was not intended to be an academic school, but rather one that supported and prepared Blacks (Negroes) for servitude. The curriculum reflected this intent.

In 1949, my laundry class was held in the basement of Dunbar High School. The room had a concrete floor, several huge tub-like washing machines, dryers that were like industrial cylinders, many ironing boards and irons. Our teacher, Mrs. Jackson, had an office on the west side of the classroom and where she kept records of the incoming and outgoing laundry items. The classroom was not the usual design for a classroom, but more like a work training setting. Big bundles of clothes from white families in the city of Little Rock were brought

into the classroom on a regular basis. Our job, with instruction, was to learn to wash, dry, fold, iron and package the laundry for delivery back to the families that were supplying the items for our education and training.

My classmates and I received instruction daily about how to perform this operation. I have to admit that I was purposely a slow learner. Something about the class did not excite me enough to work for a good grade. I did not understand how to iron so that I did not leave burn marks on the clothing, especially the men's shirts. Maybe it was because I did not agree with the reality of the injustice. Scorched and burned pieces caused much harm and earned me many Ds as my class grades.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, I was not a much better student in the home economics cooking or sewing classes either. Many teachers were serious about teaching academics despite the intended purpose of the school, with a limited budget, used books, equipment, furniture and other materials from Central. They also valued the students as people, and lived in the same community. Most did an exceptional job of teaching under the circumstances.

Many of the students I knew personally left Little Rock after graduating from high school, made valuable contributions to the communities where they chose to live and were very successful. When the systems established by those who govern our national empire begin to work equally for all, there is an immediate movement to make changes. Our national and local educational systems are going through such a change now so that those deemed more worthy will get the greatest benefit. The eyes of the blind have yet to be opened.

From the laundry class I learned to be true to my inner center and not indulge in deception and dishonesty. I gained an awareness level that remains heightened, a gift of discernment and strength to develop a victorious spirit. These gifts have served me well.

And, by the way, I still lack good laundry, cooking and sewing skills. ■

## A Brief Friendship

Ray Higgins

Coordinator, CBF Arkansas

Second Baptist Church, Little Rock

In February 1948, my father was in his last semester of law school at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville when the university admitted Silas Hunt as a student in the law school. As I understand the history, Mr. Hunt was the first African American to be admitted to a graduate or professional program in an all-white university in the South.

Through my growing-up years, Dad would tell my brother and me about this significant experience in his life. He told us how he and a couple of other law students made an intentional decision to befriend Mr. Hunt. He told us that university officials had a wooden cubicle built in the back corner of the classroom. It contained a desk for Mr. Hunt with walls high enough so that he could not see out and the other students could not see in. University officials got word that a major magazine was coming to the campus to write a story and take pictures. They had the cubicle dismantled.

After that development, Mr. Hunt began receiving one-on-one instruction from the law professors in the basement of the law school. White students asked to be included in these class sessions with Mr. Hunt.

Dad had been the president of the Baptist Student Union and was an active member of the Baptist church down the street from the campus. He invited Mr. Hunt to attend the BSU with him, where he was well-received by fellow students. Dad also invited Mr. Hunt to attend the Baptist church with him. One day, a leader at the church told Dad that if he continued to bring his friend with him to church, the deacons would kick him out. To which my Dad said he responded, "I can't think of a better reason to be kicked out of the church."

In spite of all of the challenges my Dad faced to get into and graduate from law school, he knew that Mr. Hunt faced not only more and harder obstacles; Mr. Hunt faced personal prejudice, racism and systemic injus-

tice daily. An Arkansan born in Ashdown, Mr. Hunt had served overseas for almost two years during World War II, suffered serious wounds in the Battle of the Bulge, and was left injured on the battlefield for two days. He returned to college in Pine Bluff while recovering from his wounds, graduated, and entered the law school in Fayetteville.

Dad graduated in the spring of 1948 and traveled to Washington, Alaska and Oklahoma, trying to start a career, before taking a job with the Corps of Engineers in Murfreesboro, Arkansas, and then working as an attorney for oil companies in Tulsa, Dallas, Denver and El Dorado.

By the middle of the summer of 1948, after his first semester, Mr. Hunt had to withdraw from school and subsequently died in April 1949 from his war-related disabilities.

My father's brief friendship with Silas Hunt empowered him to find his own way through the prejudices and racism that he had grown up with in his family, in Baptist churches, and in communities. This friendship convicted him to become an active advocate for the Civil Rights movement. It also inspired him to stand with his pastor and fellow church leaders when pastor Dr. Don Harbuck led First Baptist Church to build relationships with African Americans, their churches and communities, in El Dorado, and to open the church's doors and membership.

This friendship was in his mind when he wrote a letter to the editor of the *Arkansas Gazette* mourning the assassination of Dr. King. A few days after Dad's letter was published, a white adult male called our home to label Dad a "communist" for supporting Dr. King. I know this friendship was beating in Dad's heart as he shared this story with our mother and with his two sons during our formative years.

And, it was Silas Hunt's young courage and determination in the face of undeserved obstacles and unconscionable injustices that made this brief friendship and its legacy possible. ■

## My Story: Law and Order, Justice and Grace

Wendell Griffen

Circuit Judge, Pastor, Professor, Consultant, Author  
New Millennium Church, Little Rock

I was born September 23, 1952 in the Cora Donnell Hospital at Prescott, Arkansas, the first child born to black laborers who lived between the towns of Delight and Antoine in Pike County. My black parents were laborers, literate, law-abiding, faithful, and loving souls. My father, like each of his brothers, served honorably in the U.S. military.

My mother lost her father as a child, and her mother supported their family by washing clothes for white families. Somehow, Grandma Bell managed to do enough laundry, by hand, to feed her family and send her youngest daughter to attend high school at the Rosston Training School in Nevada County. Mother finished high school there.

I grew up in Pike County watching a yellow school bus pass by our house on Highway 26 between Delight and Antoine. The bus was occupied by white children who attended Delight High School, located less than three miles from our house.

On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court of the United States issued a unanimous ruling that declared racial segregation in public education a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment guarantee of equal protection of the law. That ruling has personal meaning to me.

My sister was born in December 1954. Our brother was born in January 1957. Although our parents were industrious, literate, law-abiding, faithful, and loving souls, their children and the children of their black relatives and neighbors in Pike County were not allowed to attend Delight High School until September 1965, a full decade after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

Instead, black children in my community attended the two-room Rosenwald Elementary School beside Harrison Chapel Baptist Church less than a mile from our house (from grades 1 thru 8). At Rosenwald, we were issued school books that had been used by white children. Sometime the restroom worked. When it didn't, we used an outdoor toilet located behind the school and a short walk from the cemetery where black residents of our community were buried.

Even so, each day we recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Each day, we were obliged to follow the Golden Rule. And each day, we recited the school motto: *Let us do our best now, for we pass this way but once.*

During my ninth grade year, I rode a yellow school bus to Okolona, in Clark County, where I attended Simmons High School, the school for black students in Okolona. I did not

receive textbooks for my classes in algebra and biology.

Black children in my community began attending Delight High School in September 1965, the year I entered the tenth grade. That was the first time I saw an algebra book, the first time I attended a school with a library, and the first time I attended a school where the restrooms consistently worked.

My personal, moral, political, and social history afford me a unique insight into the term "law and order." For as long as I have been alive, and for generations before I was born, "law" has operated to establish and maintain an "order" that is unfair, deliberate, systemic, punitive, and, therefore, corrupt, detestable, evil, indefensible, unpardonable, and wicked.

I saw "good" white people accept the benefits of that "order" for themselves, their white neighbors, and their white children, and then blame black people for being poor, less educated, and angry about it.

I saw "good" white people denounce Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as a "rabble rouser," "outside agitator," and as "un-American" because he had the courage to declare the "law and order" regime of my childhood sinful.

I saw "good" white people applaud after people who challenged the "order" imposed by that system of "law" were jailed, beaten, bombed, fired from jobs, denied jobs, refused loans, and even murdered.

I saw "good" white people embrace the "law and order" rhetoric of Justice Jim Johnson, Governors Ross Barnett, George Wallace, Lester Maddox, and Orval Faubus, and presidential candidates Barry Goldwater (1964), Richard Nixon and George Wallace (1968), Ronald Reagan (1980), George H.W. Bush (1988), Bill Clinton (1992 and 1996), George W. Bush (2000), and Donald Trump (2016).

I owe my education to black laborer parents and other relatives who encouraged me to read, think, and question despite what "good" white people failed to do and didn't want done. I owe my education to black teachers who did their best to instruct us despite being denied needed resources.

Despite all the injustices I have mentioned – and others that are unmentionable – I believe in divine love, faith, justice, grace, and hope. I owe my faith in divine love, faith, justice, hope, and grace on black faithful parents and other elders who were honest and righteously outraged about the wickedness of our situation, and honest about the complicity and duplicity of "good" white people concerning it. Yet, they insisted that I believe in love, live by faith, strive for justice for all persons, and meet every situation fueled by a grace-inspired resurrection hope, despite the daily and constant drama and trauma that define being black in this society.

*Let us do our best now, for we pass this way but once.*

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

## The Fierce Urgency of Prophetic Hope

by Wendell L. Griffen 176 pp. Judson Press.  
\$19.99 ISBN: 9780817017866

Reviewed by Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins III

Fifty years ago, Martin Luther King, Jr., called for a radical revolution of values in America. From the pulpit of Riverside Church in New York City, King prophetically declared, “*When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.*”

Now, a half century after King’s call to redeem the soul of this nation, Little Rock, Arkansas, pastor, judge and law professor Wendell L. Griffen sounds the trumpet again. Griffen calls prophets to action and America to repentance as new and equally sinister siblings (sexism, classism, technocentrism and xenophobia) have raised their ugly heads. They have joined their toxic triplets in making the United States of America an even more dysfunctional and divided country than it was in 1967.

Through powerful sermons and insightful lectures, Griffen preaches and presents the case that repentance is necessary because America’s largest religious sect, white evangelicalism, has become a “rebellious house” similar to impudent and stubborn Israel of old. White evangelicals in this country have not only forgotten how to love God with all of their hearts, souls and minds, but they have neglected to love their black and brown neighbors, their religiously different neighbors, their lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender neighbors, their poor, immigrant, women, or otherwise vulnerable,

neighbors and their environmentally-exploited neighbors as themselves.

Rev. Griffen maintains that, in addition to being vacuously self-centered, coveting access to power and popularity over liberty and equality, 81 percent of white conservative evangelical Christians endorsed and voted for Donald J. Trump, a misogynist and xenophobic populist who is the scariest racial demagogue in a generation and who does not embody the Christian values they claim they and their churches stand for. These white conservative evangelical Christians are, in Griffen’s assessment, an unjust people, guilty of two crimes: They don’t love God and they don’t love people. Having been blind to or having rejected the love ethic of Jesus, they embraced and then enthroned President Donald J. Trump as the head of this “rebellious house”.

In the aftermath of the 2016 elections, these are especially dreadful, dangerous and distressing days for many people. People wonder about whether or not they will be able to hold on to or afford health insurance under a Trump administration. People live in fear of imminent deportation as their immigration status is debated or denied. Workers wonder if their strides towards finally possibly making a minimum wage will be canceled out, sending them back to square one. Women fear that America will throw them back to days of old where their bodies were routinely objectified and commodified. Same-sex couples who had previously united in covenants of civil and holy matrimony, fear that people who know nothing about who they are nor are aware of the depth of love they have for their each other will be dismissed and maligned.

It is in this setting of domestic dis-

may and despair that Griffen calls forth men and women who answer to the name of Jesus to prophesy deliverance. Believing that a majority of white evangelical clergy in this country have been co-opted and serve as counselors and cheerleaders for the principalities and powers, Griffen summons clergy and lay people to become prophets of God’s love, justice and truth. Because America’s house is on fire, this summons is urgent. Since white evangelicals practice Christian quietism by not naming damnable situations for what they are and exercise political pietism by siding up with the rich and powerful and never demanding justice for the oppressed, a follower of Jesus must respond with prophetic hope.

Griffen not only encourages his readers to nurture prophetic consciousness, he also demonstrates it through the artful presentation of several powerful and poignant sermons and addresses. In one of these, Griffen quotes Augustine of Hippo saying, “Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are.” It is in this sense that Griffen’s messages are fiercely and prophetically hopeful.

As a preacher, Griffen is an astute exegete who delves into biblical texts showing clearly their intersection with our current social challenges. He moves gracefully between biblical perspective and social analysis. He moves the reader beyond piety and privatization of faith and calls followers of Jesus to deeper and more transformative perceptions of redemption and restoration. As a judge, Wendell Griffen speaks hard truths about how the Constitution is so often sliced and diced and repackaged into poisonous

polices that undercut life, liberty and justice.

Having propelled Donald Trump into office, the religious right will almost certainly demand of him a reassessment and reinterpretation of religious freedom at both the national and state levels, reinterpretations that favor and privilege Christians at the expense and detriment of all other faiths or non-faiths. Religious freedom has also been important for religious and spiritual progressives. While situating himself as being more aligned with this segment of the religious spectrum, Judge Griffen appears to be wary of those Christians on the right or on the left who do not correlate religious freedom to matters of justice and equality or who fail to situate their religious liberty viewpoint in the love ethic of Jesus. Griffen's chapter "Religious Equality, and the Gospel of Jesus: Circle, Collision, or Coexistence" is both an excellent primer for those who are new to this discussion and an important resource for this debate in the days ahead.

Rev. Griffen is one of only a paucity of black Baptist preacher/pastors who has actively led his congregation to intentionally confront phobias and prejudices about human sexuality. Through prayer and study, his church decided to become "inclusive,

welcoming and progressive followers of Jesus Christ" and thereby open its hearts and arms to all persons regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity. Griffen has personally demonstrated audacious hope, shameless hope and resurrection hope. Griffen's chapter titled, "Finding Love Songs in Our Faith Book" describes the congregation's journey and includes a compelling sermon that should propel readers on their own paths that towards inclusive justice.

Each chapter of *The Fierce Urgency of Prophetic Hope* is followed by a series of two to four discussion and reflection questions helping the reader or study group to go deeper into their own journeys toward liberation and justice. This book is timely. Its message is urgent. It will inspire you toward hope and to being an agent of hope in hard times. It belongs on the bookshelves of prophets, prophets in training, pastors, congregational leaders, religious educators, activists, advocates and other faithful persons.

The book includes an insightful foreword by Allan Boesak and an afterword by Emile Townes. I conclude with just a snippet from each of them:

*"Reading this book, I had the constant feeling of gratitude wash over*

*me: The prophets have not all gone. Some of us may have gotten lost; we may have been cowed by the power of empire or lured by the temptations of empire. Some of us may not have been able, unlike the midwives of Exodus 1, to overcome our fear of the empire with our love for the Lord, our trust of the Lord, and our commitment to following Jesus. But not all of us have gone. Read this book and be convinced, convicted, and inspired."* – Allan Aubrey Boesak

*"As Rev. Griffen reminds us, we must stop being too meek and mild with our love, for love is not about being nice; love is not about being tolerant; love is not about our hormones running amok; love is not all emotion. Love is forged out of the biblical call to dig deep into our innards and find the spaces of compassion sequestered there, to pull them out into our social and political lives, and to create a society that values the great diversity of people that shapes us into a nation and helps us to be good global citizens."* – Emilie M. Townes ■

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## **The God Particle: God-talk in a "Big Bang" World,**

by R Kirby Godsey, Mercer University Press, 2016, 100pp.

*Reviewed by Morris Murray, Jr.*

**T***aco Bell* may be the best location in which to read this book, metaphorically speaking, for it is there that "thinking outside the box" is advertised. After all, many of the cardinal convictions of historic mainstream, orthodox, conservative evangelical thinking are clearly and eerily missing from these pages. Godsey writes, for example, as "a thoroughgoing uni-

versalist" (p. 73) who believes "that every life will be redeemed" (p. 88), that "there is no hell except the ones we create" (p. 88), and "that transcendent love is not to be captured finally within anyone's religion" (p. 82). Even God is viewed more as "the transcendent mystery" (p. 4) than a person which "means that the traditional way of conceiving of God no longer works" (p. 25). In fact, Godsey maintains that "every speaking of God is a myth" (p. 33) and that "God is not a separate being up there – wherever "up there" is. God is right here within us and among us" and "should not be

conceived as a divine object" (p. 45). If you are still conscious, you might be persuaded to continue exploring his ideations "outside the box." If so, welcome to *Taco Bell*.

Then again, you may think you are in a Christian Science *Reading Room* when wading through these pages, due to the metaphysical interpretations of both God and man. The personhood of both are seemingly sacrificed on the altar of New Thought<sup>1</sup> principles.

Even the name of the book tends to represent a challenge. Godsey's adoption of it is derived from Leon

Lederman, who coined it in conjunction with the Higgs boson achievement announced on July 4, 2012, and has nothing to do with God or a particle. Although he clarifies the essence of these terms and the elementary discovery they represent, his subtitle could, perhaps preferably, be the main title: *God-Talk In a "Big Bang" World* – for this is an essential transformation of thought in the making for many, if not most, readers.

This is not a theological book interpreted through the lenses of science or ontology (that branch of philosophy which concerns itself with reality). It is not a science book infiltrated with theological doctrines or ontological meanderings. It is not an ontological book hampered with the burdens of scientific hypotheses and speculations or theologically man-made prisons of belief systems. In some sense, which cannot be sensed without reading this book, it is an attempt to marry all three into such a state of interrelatedness that one cannot benefit from one without the supportive insights and possibilities of the others. Without alert consciousness of the three-fold interactive nature of this book, the periodic temptation to sling it against

the wall may become a reality. After all, when reading some isolated scientific or theological or ontological perspective without keeping in mind that the author's intended meaning is found in the merger of all three perspectives, it would be easy to "STOP in the name of - whatever." Its message simply cannot be appreciatively measured apart from this interwoven dynamic.

Despite these caveats, I really enjoyed reading this book. Advances in how we may best understand our world and universe, the divine and the human, myths and rituals, the interplay between science and religion, our oneness with a vast universe, the nature and character of our lives, and the mysteries of the *eternal* and the *temporal* all offer contemplative "creative inter- dependent" thinking in ways that aim toward his ultimate goal for writing: "the conversations and the discussions that might be engendered among people who embody very different experiences and perspectives" (p. xiii).

So, my pitch is simple: Read it, but read it wisely. Read it as one who is at least attempting to "think outside the box" of linear, non-systemic thinking.

You may even find yourself *wishing* or *hoping* that what you are reading is true – or at least possible, even if the concepts entertained therein stretch you in ways in which you have never been stretched before. ■

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1 A 19<sup>th</sup> century religio-philosophical point of view which recognizes the reality of God in individuals; that only Ideals are realities and internal forces are primary causes; that mind is primary and matter is secondary; that humans are spiritual citizens of a divine universe; that metaphysical concepts are paramount; and the immanence of God and the divine within humanity (notes from M. Thomas Starkes' class, *Religious Sects in America*).

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## **The Variety of Values: Essays on Morality, Meaning, & Love**

by Susan Wolf, Oxford University Press, 2015, 260pp.

*Reviewed by Morris Murray, Jr.*

The ethical essays embedded in this volume fall within the rather large field of *philosophy*, i.e., a study of various attempts, based on reason and reflective understanding, to see the world as a whole and *the search for meaning* those attempts pursue. Philosophy involves interpreting and understanding human beings and the world in which they function from the standpoints of (1) what is real (metaphysics), (2) what is knowledgeable (epistemology), (3) what is logical

(correct and incorrect reasoning), (4) what is ethical (the ultimate good, conduct in terms of good and bad), (5) what is aesthetic (beauty), and (6) what is socio-political (angles as to how societal norms, activities and customs influence politics and vice-versa). This broad and rather generalized orientation (i.e., the essence of philosophy) seeks to accomplish that feat by using data from every available source. As just noted, one of the specific areas of philosophical study or inquiry is that of *ethics* (that branch of philosophy concerned with moral conduct, goodness, duty and development). The present volume represents efforts in that regard.

Although one not familiar with

the nature of philosophical inquiry may find this volume somewhat challenging, perplexing and perhaps even circular or overlapping, the more philosophically informed reader will welcome these ideations with stimulating reflection, appreciation and appropriate integration for a well-ordered life. After all, the varying perspectives in Wolf's mix on moral and non-moral (such as, humor, athleticism, musical abilities) values unavoidably impact how we view the meaningfulness of life, love and duty (the fourfold major themes or divisions within this book).

The first theme or division (MORAL AND NONMORAL VALUES) opens with her first writing ("Moral

Saints”) [ch. 2] in which she objects to deontological (dutifulness/moral obligations) ethics on the grounds that sainthood (“always as morally good as possible”) makes one avoid some desirable activities because they are in conflict with the domination of moral analysis and adherence. Moral sainthood, therefore, is undesirable, impractical and dull. It also creates the potential for a rational saint who has selfish desires but does not act on them, or a loving saint who is altruistic.

In chapter 3, she objects to the equality of all people in terms of well-being and respect and advocates a moderate impartiality on the basis of friendship and love. In chapter 4, she notes that everyone has personal points of view of equal significance. If there were no moral deliberations, people would act rationally anyway. After all, non-moral values do not fit into a single viewpoint. In chapter 5, she votes against the welfare theory of value (“good for someone or something”) on the grounds that objective goodness is too vague, and how to conceptualize welfare is contradictory or puzzling. She maintains that things we love can be of value even if we or others do not benefit from them. The use of examples to support her pivotal points is masterful.

The second theme or division (MEANING IN LIFE) opens with chapter 6 in which she squabbles over whether or not *life* in general or just individual *lives* are meaningful. To value something besides yourself is imperative, she insists, since each person is simply a speck in a vast universe. So, pursue active involvement in something with positive values, even if they are not moral. Why does she so differentiate as if there are no recognizable interactions? Strange. Self-interest (“the advancement of one’s own good with meaningful activity for the good life”) is confronted in chapter 7: Some meaningful activity may have

worthiness within itself, even to the extent that one’s own self-interest is decentralized. Her vague process of construction and deconstruction in this regard seems necessarily bent by excessive analysis and resulting paralysis. In chapter 8, her wrestling, and sometimes seemingly ambivalent wandering, with Williams’s impartial morality (meaningless is lifelessness, even with morality itself) is conclusively inconclusive: In other words, the preservation of morality for the sake of meaningfulness is compromised by a dichotomy between subjective and objective aspects of meaningfulness.

The third theme (LOVE) is explored in chapter 9 by taking another cue from Williams: His di-lemma of saving only one of two lives (that of his wife and not that of another) is defended on the basis that a normally moral person cannot be thinking about what is morally justifiable *all the time*. In other words, some situations fall outside the boundaries of moral justification. In chapter 10, by taking her cue from Murdoch’s *The Philadelphia Story* (“The best love is an attentive love” which sees reality and loves without hesitation or reservation), she transforms its moral-less basis for viewing virtue into one embracing knowledge and attentive care for the one who is loved. In this way, “love of reality is central to morality” (p. 177). The importance she places upon love (chapter 11) is phenomenal. It stems from her self-confessed “reactive and critical personality” (p. 181) in her quest for life’s core value which she maintains is love – love which gives a unique motivational reason to live as a force for good to others apart from any self-interests. This is a refreshingly attractive perspective in which and from which “love makes the world go round.” This is the most worthwhile chapter in the book. Many Christian parallels could have been noted here.

The fourth theme (THE

CONCEPT OF DUTY) is examined in chapter 12 from the standpoint that morality may be a burden. After all, all things that are valuable and desirable are not equally moral when it comes to dutifulness. She suggests finding a balance between taking duty “too seriously” or “too lightly” for the sake of “greater moral importance” (p. 214). In chapter 13, practical deliberations about morality should be based on how the core of morality is understood. Large scale cooperativeness and egalitarianism could together determine appropriate rules.

Chapter 14 highlights how moral obligations arise from social requirements, with various groups having different requirements, thus complicating the model. She advocates the social command theory which opens the door for moral obligations which are acceptable to those who believe in God and those who do not. Again, finding a balance between moral obligations and social commands must be more than theoretical. However, in my opinion, the ever-increasing multi-culturalism that is taking place within this nation indicates that social requirements may forever be difficult to isolate on a scale large enough to accommodate her orientation.

If you prefer concrete thinking with specific answers, definitive pronouncements, and dogmatic conclusions, you should probably stay miles away from this book – with the exception of chapter 11 which, again, is saturated with Christian aspects of love (although no scriptural references are pinpointed). On the other hand, if you prefer to *seek* rather than *find* (a charge often brought against philosophers); if analysis, probing the intricacies of moral choices from a wide range of value-ideations and intrigue are for you, then look no further than *The Variety of Values* by Susan Wolf. ■

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# Christian Ethics Today

A Journal of Christian Ethics

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

## MISSION

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

## PURPOSES

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

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

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

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

The Christian Ethics Today Foundation is a non-profit organization and has received a 501 (c) (3) status from the Internal Revenue Service. Gifts are tax deductible.

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