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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**

ARTICLES

ESSAYS FROM EXPERIENCE

VERSE

BOOK REVIEW

EDITOR'S COLUMN

Sociological Sources of Agnosticism

By Tony Campolo, PhD Eastern University

There is a field of study within the discipline of sociology that fails to get the attention that it deserves. It is called the sociology of knowledge. Its students examine the reasons why people believe or disbelieve what they do. Those who are versed in the literature of this specialty often refer to a book by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, entitled *The Social Construction of Reality*.[1] Because these two writers explain, in very lucid fashion, how social environments provide us with our perspectives of the world, they make the case that what we believe about what is real and what is not real in terms of our religious beliefs are convictions that have been established sociologically. None of us possesses the kind of objectivity that we would like to think we do, and as our cross-cultural understanding of the world expands, we likely realize that had we been born at a different time and in a different place, what we believe to be true or not true, especially about God, would be different.

Many sociologists argue that faith is a communal product. It is created and maintained in the context of a community of fellow believers, which sociologists like Berger and Luckmann refer to as a "plausibility structure." What outsiders might view as unreasonable becomes readily plausible, given the ongoing and strong support of other members of the group. The more intimate the group, and the more intensely its shared beliefs are held, the more those beliefs become unquestioned by members of the group.

Not too long ago, I saw a demonstration of this on a television documentary produced by a newspaper reporter. This reporter had decided to do a series of articles on an intense Pentecostal group living in the back hills of West Virginia, whose members were into snake handling. These zealous believers take literally what is recorded in Mark 16:17-18, where Jesus told His disciples that signs of their faith would be that they would be able to "cast out demons" and "speak in new tongues." Of special importance for them was that Jesus went on to say, "They will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them." Thus, among these unusual believers was a pervasive belief that snake handling was a way of validating their faith.

This reporter, in order to have authenticity in what he wrote, chose to live among these snake handlers and become a participatory observer in their worship services. The faith of these snake handling Christians was so intense and convincing, however, that after a period of a few weeks, he became caught up in their "plausibility structure." In a striking conclusion to his television documentary, I watched as the reporter himself was "handling" rattlesnakes. He had, if only temporarily, become enmeshed in their intensive fellowship and taken on their beliefs. What was real to them had become real to him.

The more intimate the group, and the more intensely its shared beliefs are held, the more those beliefs become unquestioned by members of the group.

When I describe this sort of thing to my atheist or agnostic friends, they usually smile and say, "See! Religious belief is nothing more than a socially constructed reality," and they discount it as lacking validity. What they fail to acknowledge, however, is that their own lack of belief is also socially constructed and could likewise be discounted.

Let me tell you about a young graduate student who was once a "true Christian believer," but who, over a period of several months, separated herself from the community of fellow believers that maintained the plausibility structure that had once made believing in God a viable reality. The social consciousness of this one-time committed Christian gradually eroded. It wasn't long before she took on the consciousness of the secularized society in which she had chosen to do her thinking. Soon she was convinced that God was irrelevant to her everyday life, and then into believing that God did not exist. In this case, it was crucial that the other members of her family join her in her skepticism and be for her a plausibility structure that supported her unbelief.

It is so easy for intelligent, well-read people, such as this young woman, to believe that they have become what Karl Mannheim, one of the leaders in the field of the Sociology of Knowledge, would have called "the detached intelligentsia"[2] In other words, that such unbelievers come to think of themselves as having risen above the "unsophisticated masses" and negatively judge how social forces exercised within a faith community made those seemingly naïve people into believers in religious convictions that they themselves had discarded. However, these same seemingly objective observers of the belief systems of others fail to recognize that social forces operative in the dominant secular society had become the plausibility structure that makes God irrelevant to what goes on in everyday lives. It was the plausibility structure of the dominant secular, and often sophisticated associations, that nurtured for them a kind of agnosticism or atheism. George Santayana, one-time professor of philosophy at Harvard University, once said, "They do not really reject God. They simply bid Him a fond farewell."

I had watched the young woman to whom I referred at an earlier time in her life when she was part of an intensive church youth group when she was a "true believer," drift away from her church. As she disconnected from regular involvement with Christians who shared her beliefs, I watched her faith erode. She said that church didn't do anything for her. She explained that as she listened to sermons, it was "déjà vu," that she had heard it all before. When asked about church, she let it be known that, when it came to church, she had "been there and done that." This graduate student failed to see that being removed from the plausibility structure wherein her faith might have been regularly reinforced, reaffirmed, and revitalized made it almost inevitable that secular sociological forces would make her, eventually, into an unbeliever. She could not understand that, within this new state of social consciousness, she would have a hard time thinking that she ever did believe "that religious stuff" in the first place.

Again, let me say that being a believer is highly contingent upon being part of a subculture that upholds belief in God and enables the individual to stand against the onslaught of the world view being propagated by the dominant culture. It can be said that in a secular society, true believers in God are countercultural persons, while those secularized agnostics who live around them are actually the conformists.

Most of us have either read about or heard about those Pew Foundation studies which reported that Millennials[3] are spiritual, but not religious. They seem willing to accept the postmodern tendency to believe that there are truths and realities that transcend the categories of logical empiricism. Some even may acknowledge that there are spiritual forces at work in the universe that could be called God. Those Millennials with whom I have had the most frequent encounters may even call themselves Christians, and affirm that Jesus is a living reality in the world today. Some call themselves part of the Red Letter Christians movement[4], and affirm the words of Jesus, highlighted in red letters in many Bibles. But then, many of these same Millennials castigate the Church for not living up to Christ's teachings. They drop out of church, saying, "Jesus is great, but the Church sucks." These young people fail to realize that faith in Jesus is a communal thing. Their attitude makes me unbearably sad, because I know that without the revitalization of faith commitments that comes from what the Greek New Testament called *koinonia*,[5] these disengaged young people will soon be answering that question about religious affiliation asked in another Pew Foundation study with the word, "None."

Jesus certainly had His own problems with organized religion. Nevertheless, He was a faithful attendee of services at the synagogue in whatever town He happened to be on the Sabbath (Mark 4:14-16). Certainly the writer of the book of Hebrews understood the necessity of church gatherings when he instructed Christians not to forsake gathering themselves together for worship and spiritual edification (Hebrews 10:25). The Apostle Paul clearly told the Corinthian church that no single member of Christ's body can ever say to the rest of the body, "I have no need of you" (1 Corinthians 12:14-23).

Any reader of Emile Durkheim's sociological classic, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, knows how important liturgy is. Durkheim makes the point that collective rituals build into the participants a strong sense of solidarity and regenerate their commitments to what they believe. Collective rituals, says Durkheim, keep alive for religious people that which must never be forgotten.

Centuries before Durkheim wrote his classic work, Jesus instituted a ritual when He gathered together with His disciples in what is referred to by Christians as an "upper room." He broke bread with them and offered them wine. He told His disciples that regularly they should get together to eat the bread that represented His body, and drink the wine that represented His blood, in order to remember Him. Paul reminded the Corinthian church that, as often as they came together and ate the bread and drank the wine in this manner, they would remember Christ's death until He returned (1 Corinthians 11:26). By implication, I am proposing that when persons *stop* regularly coming together for Holy Communion, they eventually will stop believing what is core to Christian faith, namely, the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross for our salvation.

In conclusion, what I have been trying to say is that only those who ignore the insights from the Sociology of Knowledge fail to see that belief *as well as unbelief* is a social construct, and that for those who want to go on believing in God and in His Son's gift on the cross, being in regular Christian fellowship is vital. And for cultured unbelievers, I say, "be not proud and think that your unbelief is of your own making." ■

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Jimmy Carter and the demise of progressive evangelicalism

By Randall Balmer

Jimmy Carter rode to the White House in 1976 on the twin currents of his reputation as a "New South" governor and a resurgence of progressive evangelicalism in the early 1970s. Progressive evangelicalism, which traces its lineage to 19th-century evangelicals and to the commands of Jesus to care for "the least of these," represented a very different version of evangelical activism from that of the religious right.

In the wake of the Second Great Awakening in the decades surrounding the turn of the 19th century, evangelicals in the antebellum period unleashed their moral energies to reform society according to the norms of godliness. They enlisted in peace movements, criticized capitalism, and sought to eradicate slavery. They supported prison reform to rehabilitate criminals and public education as a way for children of the less affluent to improve their lot. They supported equal rights for women, including voting rights.

To a remarkable degree, the evangelical agenda of social reform endured into the early decades of the 20th century, when its program expanded to include, in addition to women's rights, the rights of workers to organize. William Jennings Bryan, the three-time Democratic nominee for president, is most often remembered for his less-than-stellar performance at the Scopes trial of 1925, but a more accurate portrayal of Bryan would place him squarely in the tradition of progressive evangelicalism.

Evangelicals, obsessed as they were with dispensational premillennialism in the early decades of the 20th century—Jesus will return at any moment—drifted toward political indifference. During the Cold War, they joined many other Americans in the crusade against godless communism.

Progressive evangelicalism, however, mounted a comeback in the early 1970s amid the final years of the Vietnam War and the corruptions surrounding the Nixon administration. A few evangelicals gravitated to the forlorn 1972 presidential campaign of George McGovern, the Democratic senator from South Dakota, opponent of the Vietnam War and former Methodist seminary student. I recall skipping my own chapel at Trinity College in Deerfield to attend McGovern's address in Edman Chapel at Wheaton College on October 11, 1972. But Wheaton students greeted McGovern with jeers and catcalls, an indication that progressive evangelicalism was hardly hegemonic among evangelicals. Several Wheaton students hoisted a huge "Nixon" banner and paraded around the chapel.

The year following McGovern's defeat, however, Ronald J. Sider gathered 55 evangelicals at the YMCA in Chicago over Thanksgiving weekend. The document coming out of that meeting, the Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern, condemned militarism, persistent racism and the yawning gap between rich and poor. At the behest of Nancy A. Hardesty of Trinity College, the declaration also included a statement on women's rights. "We acknowledge that we have encouraged men to prideful domination and women to irresponsible passivity," the declaration read. "So we call both men and women to mutual submission and active discipleship." In 1977, Sider published *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, one of the most popular evangelical books of the decade. Enter Jimmy Carter. In his inaugural address as governor of Georgia in 1971, Carter said, "The time for racial discrimination is over." As governor, he reformed the state penal system and ratcheted up support for public education. An evangelical himself, Carter campaigned for president on themes consistent with progressive evangelicalism: military restraint, a less imperial foreign policy, human rights, racial reconciliation, affordable healthcare, and equal rights for women.

Carter's ability to pursue those goals was hampered by a stubbornly sour economy, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the taking of American hostages in Iran. However, he managed to renegotiate the Panama Canal treaties and shift American foreign policy away from reflexive Cold War dualism toward an emphasis on human rights, thereby securing the release of political prisoners. He advanced the cause of peace in the Middle East far beyond that of his predecessors (or successors), and he appointed more women and minorities to office than any previous president.

At the same time that Carter was pressing an agenda informed by, and consistent with, progressive evangelicalism, however, other evangelicals were organizing against him. Politically conservative evangelicals, who had tilted toward the Republican Party in the 1950s and 1960s, had been thrown off-balance by the Watergate scandal and the corruptions of the Nixon administration. With the approach of the 1980 election, however, they had regained their footing and began organizing, paradoxically, to defeat Carter, their fellow evangelical.

Why? The simplest explanation is that politics trumped piety. Despite their evangelical affiliations, leaders of the Religious Right were eager to restore evangelical voters, after a dalliance with Carter and progressive evangelicalism, to the familiar precincts of the Republican Party and a notably more conservative political agenda. And they were prepared to go to extraordinary ends to do so, including an embrace of Ronald Reagan, a divorced man with episodic church attendance, and blaming Carter—inaccurately—for rescinding the tax-exempt status of Bob Jones University and various "segregation academies."

The 1980 presidential election represented a turning point in U.S. political history. The Reagan landslide heralded not only the Republican capture of the White House and a Republican Senate, but Carter's defeat also signaled the eclipse of progressive evangelicalism in favor of a political agenda virtually indistinguishable from the Republican Party itself. ■

Our weekly feature Then and Now *harnesses the expertise of American religious historians who care about the cities of God and the cities of humans. It's edited by Edward J. Blum and Kate Bowler.*

The Birth of Baptist (Anti)Environmentalism: Reagan, the Religious Right and Government Regulation

By Aaron Weaver

Following World War II, the United States experienced fundamental social and economic changes. Historian Adam Rome has described this post-war period as a time of mass consumption, affluence, modernization, suburbanization and scientific discovery.[1] Over time, Americans became aware of the environmental consequences of unrestricted growth and unregulated industrial expansion. Out of this new awareness, a popular concern for a clean and well-balanced environment emerged and began to form throughout the 1960s into a broad, inclusive grassroots reform movement. This environmental movement expressed concern for a wide range of quality-of-life issues from pollution to the use of pesticides to global population to ecological preservation. [2]

The first Earth Day celebration on April 22, 1970, served as the coming out party for this new environmental movement, putting environmentalism front-and-center in American society in a very visible way. With over 20 million participants, Earth Day displayed the popularity of many environmental concerns from clear air to clean water. As the nation was caught in cultural turmoil over civil rights and the Vietnam war, environmentalism provided bipartisan issues to which both Democrats and Republicans could support to some extent. [3]

During the late 1960s and immediately following Earth Day 1970, Christian denominations and ecumenical bodies began to address environmental issues. The American Lutheran Church adopted a statement in 1970 that chronicled the most urgent environmental problems and called on Christians to be responsible stewards of God's creation. Other mainline Protestant denominations, including the United Methodist Church, Episcopal Church and Disciples of Christ, passed resolutions affirming many of the goals of the environmental movement. Prominent ecumenical partnerships such as the National Association of Evangelicals and the National Council of Churches approved resolutions urging ecological concern and action.[4] Several denominations, such as the United Church of Christ, went a step further and developed environmental advocacy programs.[5]

During this period, an emerging Christian environmentalism began to take shape within the Southern Baptist Convention, the nation's largest Protestant denomination. Disasters such as the Santa Barbara oil spill in 1969 caught the attention of the nation as well as some Southern Baptists. National catastrophes, environmental protests and celebrations like Earth Day inspired Southern Baptists to confront the pollution crisis. Denominational publications began to highlight pollution as a problem of moral significance. Southern Baptists also adopted environmental statements at both the national and state levels, including a pollution resolution two months after the first Earth Day that called on churches to help "remedy…environmental mismanagement" and urged Christians to practice environmental stewardship and "work with government and businesses to solve the pollution problem."[6]

Throughout the 1970s, the SBC's ethics agency hosted environment-themed conferences and promoted education advocacy and activism through lectures, articles in denominational publications and the development and distribution of resource papers and pamphlets on environmental issues to thousands of pastors and laity. In Texas, Southern Baptists actively pursued pollution control legislation — becoming in 1967 one of the first Christian groups to do so. Although these Southern Baptists in the Lone Star State called on individual Christians and churches to change their lifestyle choices, they consistently emphasized that government played the most important role in solving the pollution crisis. Texas Baptists adopted a report that declared, "Only through government can much be done to regulate and control the principal polluters of our air and water."[7]

Government regulation was central to the environmentalism of Southern Baptists during the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s as the SBC dealt with the pollution crisis, population issues and grappled with several nationwide energy crises. The resolutions of other state conventions echoed that of Southern Baptists in Texas who insisted that only government could control pollution. [8]

This defining conviction of early Southern Baptist environmentalism was also seen in the SBC's 1977 resolution calling on government leaders to develop an equitable national evergy policy and again in 1979 when Southern Baptists turned to the federal government to ensure the development of "safe, clean and renewable energy forms." [9] Even as government distrust was building in the nation, Southern Baptists continued to place an enormous amount of faith in the federal government and its ability to "fix" environmental problems under both Republican and Democratic presidents.

Far different from the 1970s, which was regarded as the "environmental decade," the 1980s were characterized by open hostility toward environmentalism and the modern environmental movement. Newly-elected President Ronald Reagan was viewed as the driving force behind an emerging anti-environmentalism movement. On the campaign trail, Reagan vilified environmentalists as extremists and refused to meet the leaders of environmental groups.[10] Upon taking office, Reagan immediately challenged the environmental movement through executive orders, speeches, press releases and cabinet appointments.[11] Historian Mark Dowie has described Reagan as a "counterrevolutionary" who was "determined from the outset to turn Americans away from environmentalism."[12] In fact, one of Reagan's first acts as president was to have the solar panels that President Jimmy Carter had installed removed from the roof of the White House.[13]

Pursuing a domestic agenda based on tax reforms and deep budget cuts, Reagan launched what has been referred to as a "conservative assault on government regulations." This assault especially targeted environmental regulations.[14] Central to Regan's political philosophy was the view of government as the problem rather than a solution to the nation's challenges. And, consequently, he attributed the nation's economic struggles to excessive government regulations.[15] An important component of Reagan's anti-regulation campaign was the selection of industry leaders hostile to popular environmentalism to high positions in his administration, such as property rights advocate James Watt as Secretary of the Interior. These appointments assisted the emergence of an anti-environmental movement, a movement which, according to historian Katrina Lacher, enjoyed "remarkable cohesion" during Reagan's presidency. Lacher noted that "The conjoined rise of Ronald Reagan and the antienvironmental movement are attributable to the resurgence of [social and religious] conservatism in the United States in the late 20th century."[16]

This resurgence of religious conservatism, as seen in the rise of the Religious Right and, more specifically, the mobilization of the Jerry Falwell-led Moral Majority, was instrumental in securing Reagan's defeat of President Jimmy Carter in the 1980 election. In recent years, several scholars have noted that this politically-organized resurgence of Christian conservatives was motivated by opposition to government regulation. Historian Randall Balmer has argued that the Religious Right was not founded as a response to *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark Supreme Court ruling on abortion rights. Rather, what most motivated Falwell and other key Religious Right leaders were the efforts of the federal government in the mid-1970s to regulate private Christian schools that had racially discriminatory policies. Paul Weyrich, who is regarded as one of the founders of the Religious Right and the person credited for luring influential pastors such as Jerry Falwell into the political arena, has stated that what launched the Religious Right was "Jimmy Carter's intervention against the Christian schools." [17]

The origins of the Religious Right then are appropriately traced back to serious concern over the expanding role of government. In his book *American Evangelicals*, historian Barry Hankins noted that many evangelicals and fundamentalists viewed the government's attempt to regulate church-related schools as "an attack on their ability to live their lives in accordance with their own private religious views."[18] Intrusive government regulation was deemed the problem. It should then come as no surprise that conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists who supported the Religious Right also embraced the anti-regulation campaign of Ronald Reagan.

Southern Baptist conservatives were key leaders in the Religious Right. Charles Stanley, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, was one of the founders of the Moral Majority alongside Falwell. Other notable Southern Baptist conservative leaders including Bailey Smith, Jimmy Draper, Adrian Rogers, Paige Patterson and Paul Pressler served on the boards of other Religious Right organizations.[19]

While Southern Baptist conservatives were becoming politically active as part of the Religious Right and Reagan Revolution, they launched a movement to take control of the institutions and agencies of their denomination.[20] Controversy consumed the Southern Baptist Convention throughout the 1980s as conservative leaders pursued their strategy. While the SBC confronted numerous environmental issues from 1967-1979, little attention was given to any environmental issue during the 1980s. As a denomination, the SBC mentioned the environment just once during this decade of in-fighting. Coming in the form of a resolution, this singular example of environmental concern revealed the political divide within the SBC, including drastically different views regarding the appropriate role of government in American society.

At the 1983 annual meeting of the SBC in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, messenger William Wallace Finlator introduced a resolution titled "On the Care of Our Environment." Finlator was a prominent Southern Baptist pastor and longtime progressive social activist from North Carolina, who was well-known for his participation in worker's rights and civil rights marches.[21]

Finlator's resolution began in typical fashion for an environmental statement, affirming "God is Creator… and has placed us here as responsible stewards" and that abuse of the Earth "through reckless greed is a sin against our Creator." The resolution called on Southern Baptists to commit their lives to a "deeper reverence for the earth and to a more sparing use of its limiting resources." The resolution urged industry and commerce leaders to "impose upon themselves rigorous and verifiable standards of protection and preservation of land, air and water." Government officials were asked to "faithfully and fearfully

enforce all legislation enacted, or to be enacted, for the protection of the natural environment." The proposed resolution concluded with a request that the United States join "the family of nations in solemn compact to protect, preserve and share the resources of the oceans and seas."[22]

This seemingly harmless resolution proved to be quite controversial. J. Thurmond George, a conservative pastor from California, moved that the word "reverence" be replaced with "regard." George's successful amendment signaled that conservatives felt that "reverence" for the Earth implied nature worship. This would become more apparent in the late 1980s when Southern Baptist conservatives began to express fears about the influence of the "New Age Movement" and warn against worshipping nature.

Albert Lee Smith, a prominent leader in the SBC's conservative movement, also moved to make changes to Finlator's resolution. Smith had represented the 6th district of Alabama in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1981 to 1983. He was elected to Congress as a Moral Majority candidate. In the 1980 Republican primary, Jerry Falwell's organization helped Smith to defeat longtime Congressman John Buchanan Jr., who was a moderate Southern Baptist pastor.

Smith requested that the messengers remove the resolution's final two paragraphs referencing the role of the government in protecting the environment. After debate on the convention floor, Smith's motion to amend passed. The final adopted resolution, however, now concluded with a charge to businesses and corporations to "impose upon themselves" standards to protect the environment.[23]

This amendment clearly displayed the anti-regulation ideology of conservative leaders. Whereas Southern Baptists had—in their first 15 years of environmental engagement—urged the federal government to take action, the new conservative leadership took a drastically different approach. A strong role for the government in ensuring environmental protection was replaced with no role for the government.

Seven years passed before Southern Baptists returned to the subject of the environment. During the summer of 1990, the now conservative-controlled convention adopted a resolution titled "On Environmental Stewardship," just two months after the 20th anniversary celebration of the first Earth Day. The 1990 resolution called on Southern Baptists to be "better stewards" and warned that Christians are forbidden from worshipping creation." Like the 1983 resolution, this one did not urge any type of government action or regulation and only asked individuals and churches to make "an environmentally responsible ethic" part of their lifestyle and evangelistic witness.[24]

Less than a year after adopting this resolution, the SBC's ethics agency hosted a conference on environmental issues with the theme "Finding a Biblical Balance Between Idolatry and Irresponsibility." At the conference, SBC ethics chief Richard Land stressed that Southern Baptists had a responsibility to teach biblical stewardship to their children in order to "inoculate our young people against the false, anti-biblical teaching which so heavily suffuses so much of the modern, secular environmentalist movement."[25] Like the 1983 and 1990 resolutions, there were no calls for government action at the conference. Environmental legislation was not a subject of discussion.[26]

Scholars have noted that while the 1990s marked the flowering of evangelical environmentalism, the decade also marked the emergence of a new distinct environmentalism, best described as Christian anti-environmentalism. Proponents of Christian anti-environmentalism like the conservative-led SBC were fundamentally opposed to the environmental movement's goals. The single defining characteristic of these anti-environmentalists was their loud and consistent opposition to almost all environmental regulations in the post-World War II era.

According to historian Kenneth Larsen, what had previously been "relatively infrequent and unorganized criticisms of environmentalism within conservative evangelicalism coalesced into a concerted, organized effort to counter the evangelical environmental movement."[27] Scholar Richard Wright has argued that this Christian anti-environmentalism developed into a movement with a distinct political agenda to "restrict the regulatory powers of government."[28] Wright noted that Christian anti-environmentalists pursued this agenda through attacking the credibility of the claims of prominent scientists and depicting environmentalists as New Age earth-worshippers. According to Wright, these two strategies were "red-herrings" which masqued the political anti-regulation motivations of these Christian anti-environmentalists.[29]

During the mid-to-late 1990s, free market economist Calvin Beisner established himself as the most prominent and influential Christian anti-environmentalist.[30] In many of his writings, Beisner has stressed the instrumentality of nature and its value only in serving the needs of humanity. Arguing against environmental regulations, Beisner has stated that "Humility applied to environmental stewardship should lead us, in light of the vast complexity of human society and the earth's ecosystems, to hesitate considerably at the notion that we know enough about them to manage them."[31]

In April 2000, just a few days before the 30th Earth Day anniversary, Beisner and a group of Religious Right leaders including D. James Kennedy released a statement called the Cornwall Declaration championing a free-market philosophy of environmental deregulation and formed an organization to counter the message and advocacy of Christian environmental groups such as the Evangelical Environmental Network and the Eco-Justice Working Group of the National Council of Churches.[32] The SBC's Richard Land signed the Cornwall Declaration and participated in the Washington D.C. news conference. This event and declaration marked the beginning of the SBC's relationship with Calvin Beisner.

In February 2006, an alliance of evangelical leaders calling themselves the Evangelical Climate Initiative released a declaration calling for Christian concern and government action around the problem of climate change.[33] Responding to the declaration, Southern Baptists adopted a resolution titled "On Environmentalism and Evangelicals." This was the SBC's first environmental resolution in 16 years. The resolution warned that environmentalism was "threatening to become a wedge issue to divide the evangelical community and further distract its members from the priority of the Great Commission" and made the news-grabbing assertion that "the scientific community is divided on the effects of humankind's impact on the environment."[34]

Calvin Beisner also responded to the Evangelical Climate Initiative with a 12,000-word point-by-point rebuttal that was endorsed by more than 100 conservative evangelical leaders including numerous Southern Baptist academics. Beisner's statement refuted the most basic claims of the environmental movement with regard to climate change. It concluded that global warming would have "moderate and mixed — not only harmful but also helpful" consequences in the foreseeable future. Human emissions of greenhouses gases were, according to the statement, only "a minor and insignificant" contributor to global warming. The Southern Baptist-backed statement argued forcefully that government regulation of these emissions would "cause greater harm than good to humanity" — hurting the poor in developed and especially developing nations.[35]

From this statement, Beisner's organization formed a task force to propose public policy recommendations and selected SBC policy expert Barrett Duke to serve as co-chair.[36] In June 2007, just a month after the SBC's ethics agency helped launch this environmental policy task force, Southern Baptist messengers meeting in San Antonio, Texas adopted a resolution on global warming. The resolution rejected and depicted as "dangerous" government regulations mandating limits on carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions.[37]

Nine months after the SBC adopted its global warming resolution, Jonathan Merritt, a 25-year-old seminary student and son of a former SBC president, spearheaded the release of a declaration on climate change. This statement, which received the signatures of several dozen well-known Southern Baptists, echoed much of the Evangelical Climate Initiative and chided the SBC's previous environmental engagement as being "too timid" and faulted this past engagement for "failing to produce a unified moral voice." Unlike the Evangelical Climate Initiative, this declaration made no specific public policy recommendations. However, it did commend government action — a position that stood in stark contrast to the SBC's previous positions since 1983.[38]

The declaration received widespread media coverage. This media attention infuriated denominational leaders, especially the SBC's ethics agency. Almost immediately, Baptist Press, the denomination's public relations entity, published an article titled, "Seminary student's climate change project is not SBC's." Richard Land offered his rationale for not signing the declaration, emphasizing that it would be "misleading and unethical of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission to promote a position at variance with the convention's expressly stated position." Over the following week, Baptist Press published an additional 13 stories that criticized the declaration. In response to this reaction, Daniel Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary where Merritt was a student, stated, "Some Christians have a problem separating conservative theology from conservative politics. The two are not always the same."[39]

Shortly after the declaration made headlines, the SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission along with the Cornwall Alliance and several Religious Right groups unveiled an environmental campaign. This campaign sought the signatures of one-million Christians who endorsed a "biblical" view of the environment that dismissed concerns about climate change. The SBC's ethics agency also joined up with Beisner's Cornwall Alliance to release a 22-page document with a detailed set of public policy recommendations aimed at rolling back existing environmental regulations. This "Stewardship Agenda" stressed: "Environmental policies should harness human creative potential by expanding political and economic freedom, instead of imposing draconian restructions or seeking to reduce the 'human burden' on the natural world." The agenda characterized government-imposed environmental regulations as "antithetical to the principles of stewardship and counterproductive to the environment."[40] The SBC promptly acted on this agenda a few weeks later when its ethics agency sent out an "action alert" to Southern Baptists urging readers to contact their senators to oppose the Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act of 2007, a bipartisan bill which sought to combat climate change through the regulation of corporate emissions.[41] This campaign and "stewardship agenda" focused on opposition to regulation model what Southern Baptist anti-environmentalism has continued to look like in recent years.

As this paper has detailed, in the late 1960s Southern Baptist leaders began to align themselves with the modern environmental movement and embrace an environmentalism that urged government regulation and preached a stewardship ethic focused on sacrificial living and the divine responsibility to care for God's creation through conservation and preservation practices. This envi-

ronmentalism was abandoned with the conservative takeover within the denomination — a "conservative resurgence" that coincided with similar transformations in American culture and politics, specifically the rise of the Religious Right and the Reagan Revolution.

The pace of change within the SBC throughout the 1990s was incredibly rapid as the new leadership demanded that the denomination affirm a particular conservative political and theological orthodoxy. This rapid change of pace is clearly reflected in the SBC's embrace of a distinctly different environmentalism, more properly described and understood as anti-environmentalism as it was opposed to the aims of the mainstream environmental movement. In partnership with well-known Christian anti-environmentalist Calvin Beisner, the SBC continued to utilize the language of stewardship but redefined stewardship to be extremely anthropocentric and focused on economic development. Echoing former President Ronald Reagan, the SBC has deemed government regulations as dangerous and has contended that an economy largely free of environmental regulations is a prerequisite to "sound ecological stewardship."

The anti-regulation ideology that drove the Reagan Revolution and inspired the formation of the Religious Right also fueled the anti-environmentalism of the new Southern Baptist leadership. Perhaps this story of the birthing of Baptist (Anti)Environmentalism should lead to a new understanding of the Southern Baptist "takeover" or "conservative resurgence." In my view, this case study of Baptist (Anti)environmentalism necessitates that this denominational controversy be viewed as being much more than a theological battle or as a battle over a particular moral issue or combination of issues including women's rights, abortion, school prayer and race. Instead, the famed "Battle for the Bible" should be interpreted as a theological and political battle deeply rooted in drastically different convictions about the appropriate role of government in a nation experiencing profound social and economic changes. ■

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Developing a Moral Vision for Climate Change: Overview of the Planet

By Ingrid Lilly

Genesis 1:21-25 And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day. And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good. (KJV)

Pope Francis recently proclaimed, "Safeguard Creation, because if we destroy Creation, Creation will destroy us! Never forget this!" The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the American Association for the Advancement of Science and an overwhelming majority of scientific societies strongly warn of the human causes of climate change. The near universal scientific consensus is that our activity endangers the stability of the planet's future.

Last Monday, the Environmental Protection Agency announced its most aggressive plan ever to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the United States: 30 percent by 2030. Cutting the poisonous greenhouse gas is the first of three objectives outlined in President Obama's Climate Action Plan (CAP) and forms part of what Obama calls "a moral obligation to leave our children a planet that's not polluted."

Political talk of moral obligation almost always invokes future children; it is not politically controversial to hope that our children and grandchildren will live on a safe planet. But the moral dimensions of climate change are far more complex and granular: food shortages here, extreme weather events there, floods that displace people in coastal regions, melting polar icecaps causing increased extinctions, the vulnerability of the global poor.

A moral vision able to see these granular risks comes, I would argue, not from time (Obama's "future children" or the Pope's "Creation will destroy us") but from space.

Since 1946, the modern world has been able to view images of the earth-from-space. Some four millennia earlier, Hebrew scribes penned *Genesis* 1's creation account of the whole known world. Ancient and modern, these are two portrayals of the earth, one to begin the Scriptures and one iconic of the modern space age, both spatial lenses offering moral vision about climate change.

Overview: *Genesis* 1

Genesis 1 is like an earth-from-space image. The poem puts the whole world in one frame, starting off in mystery (formless voids, windswept chaos) and introducing a powerful voice with a benevolent arrangement of animate and inanimate beings. The moon feels like it has an organic, silvery skin, and all of the creeping and swarming things brim in fecundity.

Despite the mystery and virility, *Genesis* 1 is really about order. Chaos is untangled into light and darkness, inchoate ground is divided into water and land, and a firmament is erected to hold the rainstorms above at safe distance from the ground water below. Most of the language is about separating and dividing, like the task of one doing laundry.

Order governs the six-day work week as well. Days forge perfect parallels between habitats and creatures. It takes three days to create earth's spaces and three days to fill them with correlating animate and inanimate creatures. For example, on the second day, God creates the dome of heaven in the midst of the waters (vv. 6-8), and then, on the fifth day, he fills the sky and the water with birds and fish (vv. 20-23). Every day fits the scheme. And poetic repetition of phrases like, "It was good," infuse *Genesis* 1's spatial proportion with a moral aesthetic.

Genesis 1 insists that the meaningful contours of the world are basic: sea, sky, and land. Land is where land animals roam. The sky is where birds soar. The oceans are where fish obey God's command to 'be fruitful and multiply' (v. 22). The spatial proportion of the world allows earth's diversity to flourish. Everything needs its place.

Overview: "The Blue Marble"

In 1972, astronauts on the Apollo 17 took an earth-from-space photograph. Called the Blue Marble, it is the most shared and widely seen image in all of modern history by some counts. The NASA caption for the image was straight-forward, descriptive and comprehensive: "This translunar photograph extends from the Mediterranean Sea to the Antarctica south polar ice cap... Note the heavy cloud cover in the Southern Hemisphere..."

If you look in the right places, overview images of the earth abound these days. One of my favorites is NASA's "Images of Change" which shows the effects of climate events on granular regions, like Hurricane Katrina's impact on New Orleans and Typhoon Haiyan's on a river system in the Philippines.

But the Blue Marble photograph

resembles *Genesis* 1 by putting the entire earth in one frame. The light is separated from the darkness, as the glowing earth floats in the black ocean of the universe.

Two moral issues attend the Blue Marble image. The first is marvelous, and the second is pretty eerie. The astronauts and first people to view the image all report feelings of awe:

"It was profound."

"Such a different perspective."

"The focus had been 'we're going to the stars, we're going to the other planets,' and suddenly we look back at ourselves."

"A new kind of self awareness."

"Looking back at the Earth... may have been the most important reason we went."

"You're overwhelmed... it's this dynamic alive place that you see glowing all the time."

"Realizing your interconnectedness with that beautiful blue ball."

These descriptions of viewing the earth-from-space have implications for our moral vision of the planet: overwhelmed, self-aware, interconnected. God reports a similar sense of awe every day of *Genesis* 1 when he utters, "It was good." These are expressions of a cognitive shift that can unleash a moral desire to see to it that "it was and will stay -- good."

But the beauty and awe of the overview can also dull our moral attentiveness. Two days prior to the NASA photo shoot, a cyclone killed 80 people and 150 cattle in Tamil Nadu, India. The deathly cyclone can be seen swirling in the photograph, described above as 'the heavy cloud cover in the Southern Hemisphere." That cyclone swirl is how the Blue Marble got its name.

Seen from above, the earth-from-space conceals what I have been calling the granularity of the planet's climates. What *Genesis* 1 kept at level of sky, sea, land, and what the Blue Marble obscures in its gorgeous swirling surface are the countless habitats on the earth and the different risks posed to each of them.

"Just as no country is immune from the impacts of climate change, no country can meet this challenge alone" (CAP). There are rumblings that China will follow the U.S. in capping emissions. Right now, the United Nations are meeting in Bonn, Germany for twelve days of climate talks. Indeed, the contours of climate risk do not correlate with national boundaries. The contours of climate risk run along ridges, rivers, coastlines, and watersheds. We need to see our spaces anew.

If we could zoom in on *Genesis* 1, perhaps we could extend its vision of the morality of the spatial: Sea is for fish and sky is for birds and coral reefs are for urchins. Deep sea trenches are for bioluminescent fish. Arctic ice sheets are for polar bears. Rain forests are for rare spiders.

Bible Study Questions

1. What moral vision can be fostered by an overview of the earth?
2. Why are so many people only interested in *Genesis* 1 as a temporal story (e.g., 7-day creation)?
3. In addition to the Blue Marble and NASA's "Images of Change," what other images offer compelling visions of climate change? ■

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For Further Reading:

1. "Overview," 20-minute film by the Planetary Collective about astronauts viewing the earth-from-space.

2. "On the Pulse of Morning," a poem relevant to climate change by Maya Angelou

William P. Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation: The Bible, Science, and the Ecology of Wonder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)

Colossians 1:15-20 tells us that all things are made by God, sustained through God, exist for God. Christ redeems and reconciles all things ... and we get to play a part in that. Christ's reconciliation is carried out, in part, by the way we live our lives right where we are. God has put each of us, as part of his church on earth, in a particular place. We are to minister not just to the people of that place, but to the place itself.

Maya Angelou, interview with Kelly B. Trujillo, Relevant Magazine, April 22, 1913

The Real Origins of the Religious Right

By Randall Balmer

They'll tell you it was abortion.

Sorry, the historical record's clear: It was segregation.

One of the most durable myths in recent history is that the religious right, the coalition of conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists, emerged as a political movement in response to the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling legalizing abortion. The tale goes something like this: Evangelicals, who had been politically quiescent for decades, were so morally outraged by *Roe* that they resolved to organize in order to overturn it.

This myth of origins is oft repeated by the movement's leaders. In his 2005 book, Jerry Falwell, the firebrand fundamentalist preacher, recounts his distress upon reading about the ruling in the Jan. 23, 1973, edition of the *Lynchburg News*: "I sat there staring at the *Roe v. Wade* story," Falwell writes, "growing more and more fearful of the consequences of the Supreme Court's act and wondering why so few voices had been raised against it." Evangelicals, he decided, needed to organize.

Some of these anti-*Roe* crusaders even went so far as to call themselves "new abolitionists," invoking their antebellum predecessors who had fought to eradicate slavery.

But the abortion myth quickly collapses under historical scrutiny. In fact, it wasn't until 1979—a full six years after *Roe*—that evangelical leaders, at the behest of conservative activist Paul Weyrich, seized on abortion not for moral reasons, but as a rallying-cry to deny President Jimmy Carter a second term. Why? Because the anti-abortion crusade was more palatable than the religious right's real motive: protecting segregated schools. So much for the new abolitionism.

Today, evangelicals make up the backbone of the pro-life movement, but it hasn't always been so. Both before and for several years after *Roe*, evangelicals were overwhelmingly indifferent to the subject, which they considered a "Catholic issue." In 1968, for instance, a symposium sponsored by the Christian Medical Society and *Christianity Today*, the flagship magazine of evangelicalism, refused to characterize abortion as sinful, citing "individual health, family welfare, and social responsibility" as justifications for ending a pregnancy. In 1971, delegates to the Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis, Missouri, passed a resolution encouraging "Southern Baptists to work for legislation that will allow the possibility of abortion under such conditions as rape, incest, clear evidence of severe fetal deformity, and carefully ascertained evidence of the likelihood of damage to the emotional, mental, and physical health of the mother."

The convention, hardly a redoubt of liberal values, reaffirmed that position in 1974, one year after *Roe*, and again in 1976.

When the *Roe* decision was handed down, W. A. Criswell, the Southern Baptist Convention's former president and pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas—also one of the most famous fundamentalists of the 20th century—was pleased: "I have always felt that it was only after a child was born and had a life separate from its mother that it became an individual person," he said, "and it has always, therefore, seemed to me that what is best for the mother and for the future should be allowed."

Although a few evangelical voices, including *Christianity Today* magazine, mildly criticized the ruling, the overwhelming response was silence, even approval. Baptists, in particular, applauded the decision as an appropriate articulation of the division between church and state, between personal morality and state regulation of individual behavior. "Religious liberty, human equality and justice are advanced by the Supreme Court abortion decision," wrote W. Barry Garrett of *Baptist Press*.

In May 1969, a group of African-American parents in Holmes County, Mississippi, sued the Treasury Department to prevent three new whites-only K-12 private academies from securing full tax-exempt status, arguing that their discriminatory policies prevented them from being considered "charitable" institutions. The schools had been founded in the mid-1960s in response to the desegregation of public schools set in motion by the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954. In 1969, the first year of desegregation, the number of white students enrolled in public schools in Holmes County dropped from 771 to 28; the following year, that number fell to zero.

In *Green v. Kennedy* (David Kennedy was secretary of the treasury at the time), decided in January 1970, the plaintiffs won a preliminary injunction, which denied the "segregation academies" tax-exempt status until further review. In the meantime, the government was solidifying its position on such schools. Later that year, President Richard Nixon ordered the Internal Revenue Service to enact a new policy denying tax exemptions to all segregated schools in the United States. Under the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which forbade racial segregation and discrimination, discriminatory schools were not—by definition—"charitable" educational organizations, and therefore they had no claims to tax-exempt status; similarly, donations to such organizations would no longer qualify as tax-deductible contributions.

On June 30, 1971, the United States District Court for the District of Columbia issued its ruling in the case, now *Green v. Connally* (John Connally had replaced David Kennedy as sec-

retary of the Treasury). The decision upheld the new IRS policy: "Under the Internal Revenue Code, properly construed, racially discriminatory private schools are not entitled to the Federal tax exemption provided for charitable, educational institutions, and persons making gifts to such schools are not entitled to the deductions provided in case of gifts to charitable, educational institutions."

Paul Weyrich, the late religious conservative political activist and co-founder of the Heritage Foundation, saw his opening.

In the decades following World War II, evangelicals, especially white evangelicals in the North, had drifted toward the Republican Party—inclined in that direction by general Cold War anxieties, vestigial suspicions of Catholicism and well-known evangelist Billy Graham's very public friendship with Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon. Despite these predilections, though, evangelicals had largely stayed out of the political arena, at least in any organized way. If he could change that, Weyrich reasoned, their large numbers would constitute a formidable voting bloc—one that he could easily marshal behind conservative causes.

"The new political philosophy must be defined by us [conservatives] in moral terms, packaged in non-religious language, and propagated throughout the country by our new coalition," Weyrich wrote in the mid-1970s. "When political power is achieved, the moral majority will have the opportunity to re-create this great nation." Weyrich believed that the political possibilities of such a coalition were unlimited. "The leadership, moral philosophy, and workable vehicle are at hand just waiting to be blended and activated," he wrote. "If the moral majority acts, results could well exceed our wildest dreams."

But this hypothetical "moral majority" needed a catalyst—a standard around which to rally. For nearly two decades, Weyrich, by his own account, had been trying out different issues, hoping one might pique evangelical interest: pornography, prayer in schools, the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution, even abortion. "I was trying to get these people interested in those issues and I utterly failed," Weyrich recalled at a conference in 1990.

The *Green v. Connally* ruling provided a necessary first step: It captured the attention of evangelical leaders**,** especially as the IRS began sending questionnaires to church-related "segregation academies," including Falwell's own Lynchburg Christian School, inquiring about their racial policies. Falwell was furious. "In some states," he famously complained, "It's easier to open a massage parlor than a Christian school."

One such school, Bob Jones University—a fundamentalist college in Greenville, South Carolina—was especially obdurate. The IRS had sent its first letter to Bob Jones University in November 1970 to ascertain whether or not it discriminated on the basis of race. The school responded defiantly: It did not admit African Americans.

Although Bob Jones Jr., the school's founder, argued that racial segregation was mandated by the Bible, Falwell and Weyrich quickly sought to shift the grounds of the debate, framing their opposition in terms of religious freedom rather than in defense of racial segregation. For decades, evangelical leaders had boasted that because their educational institutions accepted no federal money (except for, of course, not having to pay taxes) the government could not tell them how to run their shops—whom to hire or not, whom to admit or reject. The Civil Rights Act, however, changed that calculus.

Bob Jones University did, in fact, try to placate the IRS—in its own way. Following initial inquiries into the school's racial policies, Bob Jones admitted one African-American, a worker in its radio station, as a part-time student; he dropped out a month later. In 1975, again in an attempt to forestall IRS action, the school admitted blacks to the student body, but, out of fears of miscegenation, refused to admit *unmarried* African-Americans. The school also stipulated that any students who engaged in interracial dating, or who were even associated with organizations that advocated interracial dating, would be expelled.

The IRS was not placated. On January 19, 1976, after years of warnings—integrate or pay taxes—the agency rescinded the school's tax exemption.

For many evangelical leaders, who had been following the issue since *Green v. Connally*, Bob Jones University was the final straw. As Elmer L. Rumminger, longtime administrator at Bob Jones University, told me in an interview, the IRS actions against his school "alerted the Christian school community about what could happen with government interference" in the affairs of evangelical institutions. "That was really the major issue that got us all involved."

Weyrich saw that he had the beginnings of a conservative political movement, which is why, several years into President Jimmy Carter's term, he and other leaders of the nascent religious right blamed the Democratic president for the IRS actions against segregated schools—even though the policy was mandated by Nixon, and Bob Jones University had lost its tax exemption a year and a day before Carter was inaugurated as president. Falwell, Weyrich and others were undeterred by the niceties of facts. In their determination to elect a conservative, they would do anything to deny a Democrat, even a fellow evangelical like Carter, another term in the White House.

But Falwell and Weyrich, having tapped into the ire of evangelical leaders, were also savvy enough to recognize that organizing grassroots evangelicals to defend racial discrimination would be a challenge. It had worked to rally the leaders, but they needed a different issue if they wanted to mobilize evangelical voters on a large scale.

By the late 1970s, many Americans—not just Roman Catholics—were beginning to feel uneasy about the spike in legal abortions following the 1973 *Roe* decision. The 1978 Senate races demonstrated to Weyrich and others that abortion might motivate conservatives where it hadn't in the past. That year in Minnesota, pro-life Republicans captured both Senate seats (one for the unexpired term of Hubert Humphrey) as well as the governor's mansion. In Iowa, Sen. Dick Clark, the Democratic incumbent, was thought to be a shoo-in: Every poll heading into the election showed him ahead by at least 10 percentage points. On the final weekend of the campaign, however, pro-life activists, primarily Roman Catholics, leafleted church parking lots (as they did in Minnesota), and on Election Day Clark lost to his Republican pro-life challenger.

In the course of my research into Falwell's archives at Liberty University and Weyrich's papers at the University of Wyoming, it became very clear that the 1978 election represented a formative step toward galvanizing everyday evangelical voters. Correspondence between Weyrich and evangelical leaders fairly crackles with excitement. In a letter to fellow conservative Daniel B. Hales, Weyrich characterized the triumph of pro-life candidates as "true cause for celebration," and Robert Billings, a cobelligerent, predicted that opposition to abortion would "pull together many of our 'fringe' Christian friends." *Roe v. Wade* had been law for more than five years.

Weyrich, Falwell and leaders of the emerging religious right enlisted an unlikely ally in their quest to advance abortion as a political issue: Francis A. Schaeffer—a goateed, knickers-wearing theologian who was warning about the eclipse of Christian values and the advance of something he called "secular humanism." Schaeffer, considered by many the intellectual godfather of the religious right, was not known for his political activism, but by the late 1970s he decided that legalized abortion would lead inevitably to infanticide and euthanasia, and he was eager to sound the alarm. Schaeffer teamed with a pediatric surgeon, C. Everett Koop, to produce a series of films entitled *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* In the early months of 1979, Schaeffer and Koop, targeting an evangelical audience, toured the country with these films, which depicted the scourge of abortion in graphic terms—most memorably with a scene of plastic baby dolls strewn along the shores of the Dead Sea. Schaeffer and Koop argued that any society that countenanced abortion was captive to "secular humanism" and therefore caught in a vortex of moral decay.

Between Weyrich's machinations and Schaeffer's jeremiad, evangelicals were slowly coming around on the abortion issue. At the conclusion of the film tour in March 1979, Schaeffer reported that Protestants, especially evangelicals, "have been so sluggish on this issue of human life, and *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* is causing real waves, among church people and governmental people too."

By 1980, even though Carter had sought, both as governor of Georgia and as president, to reduce the incidence of abortion, his refusal to seek a constitutional amendment outlawing it was viewed by politically conservative evangelicals as an unpardonable sin. Never mind the fact that his Republican opponent that year, Ronald Reagan, had signed into law, as governor of California in 1967, the most liberal abortion bill in the country. When Reagan addressed a rally of 10,000 evangelicals at Reunion Arena in Dallas in August 1980, he excoriated the "unconstitutional regulatory agenda" directed by the IRS "against independent schools," but he made no mention of abortion. Nevertheless, leaders of the religious right hammered away at the issue, persuading many evangelicals to make support for a constitutional amendment outlawing abortion a litmus test for their votes.

Carter lost the 1980 election for a variety of reasons, not merely the opposition of the religious right. He faced a spirited challenge from within his own party; Edward M. Kennedy's failed quest for the Democratic nomination undermined Carter's support among liberals. And because Election Day fell on the anniversary of the Iran Hostage Crisis, the media played up the story, highlighting Carter's inability to secure the hostages' freedom. The electorate, once enamored of Carter's evangelical probity, had tired of a sour economy, chronic energy shortages and the Soviet Union's renewed imperial ambitions.

After the election results came in, Falwell, never shy to claim credit, was fond of quoting a Harris poll that suggested Carter would have won the popular vote by a margin of 1 percent had it not been for the machinations of the religious right. "I knew that we would have some impact on the national elections," Falwell said, "but I had no idea that it would be this great."

Given Carter's political troubles, the defection of evangelicals may or may not have been decisive. But it is certainly true that evangelicals, having helped propel Carter to the White House four years earlier, turned dramatically against him, their fellow evangelical, during the course of his presidency. And the catalyst for their political activism was not, as often claimed, opposition to abortion. Although abortion had emerged as a rallying cry by 1980, the real roots of the religious right lie not the defense of a fetus but in the defense of racial segregation.

The Bob Jones University case merits a postscript. When the school's appeal finally reached the Supreme Court in 1982, the Reagan administration announced that it planned to argue in defense of Bob Jones University and its racial policies. A public outcry forced the administration to reconsider; Reagan backpedaled by saying that the legislature should determine such matters, not the courts. The Supreme Court's decision in the case, handed down on May 24, 1983, ruled against Bob Jones University in an 8-to-1 decision. Three years later Reagan elevated the sole dissenter, William Rehnquist, to chief justice of the Supreme Court. ■

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A Short History of Christian Matchmaking

By Paul Putz

In 1904, *The New York Times* picked up an unusual story from Omaha. A wealthy Nebraska rancher named James Snell had requested the help of Omaha Pastor Charles W. Savidge in finding a spouse. In exchange, Snell offered to finance a matchmaking agency that would be run and owned by the Rev. Savidge. According to the story, Savidge—a back-to-the-Bible revivalist and pastor of an independent holiness church—turned the offer down. Still, the details made for sensational type, and newspapers across the country printed the dispatch.

Despite rejecting Snell's offer, Savidge received hundreds of letters expressing romantic interest in the wealthy rancher. Suddenly realizing the potential demand for a matchmaking agency, Savidge reconsidered. News of this development apparently spread across the Atlantic, leading London's *St James Gazette* to report that Savidge "is thinking of inaugurating a matrimonial bureau for Christian men and women." Eight years later, the minister did launch a matchmaking service, complete with an office in downtown Omaha and a secretary. The oddity of having a preacher playing the role of Cupid made the rounds in newspapers for decades, with stories on Savidge's matrimonial bureau and on-demand wedding services appearing in print from Spokane to New York. "I just simply bring the man who wants a wife and the woman who wants a husband together," Savidge told the *Boston Globe*. "God and nature do the rest."

A century after Savidge's enterprise, faith-based matchmaking services are thriving—but online, where nearly a quarter of all couples now find each other. From Muslima.com to the Jewish dating site, J-Date, nearly all religious traditions have online dating sites marketed specifically to them. Sites for evangelical Protestants offer perhaps the greatest market for growth. With a large pool of adherents, combined with the common belief that one must not be "unequally yoked," evangelicals provide a ready-made market for matchmaking entrepreneurs.

Currently the name most closely associated with Christian online dating is ChristianMingle.com. Launched by the Jewish founders of J-Date, it is one of the 20-plus niche dating sites operated under the Spark Networks umbrella. Similar to its competitors like ChristianCafe.com, ChristianSingles.com, and EquallyYoked.com, it appeals largely to conservative evangelicals.

Modern matchmaking services like Christian Mingle have the potential to be more than a punch line: They can also play a role in ensuring that conservative evangelicals marry within the faith, raise children in the faith, and maintain prominence on the national stage for generations to come.

One need only browse through the site's endorsement section to see its audience: Its proponents include Southern Baptist pastors, Concerned Women for America, and individuals connected to the evangelical mega-churches Willow Creek and Saddleback Church.

Christian Mingle has gained prominence by saturating television airwaves with testimonials promising to help "find God's match for you." Its ubiquitous presence on television makes the brand an easy punch line. "I have already found God's match for me," James Napoli wrote in a satirical open letter for the *Huffington Post* last year, "and it is pizza." Likewise, in early 2012 "The Colbert Report" devoted a segment to lampooning Christian Mingle. "It's a great site to find other singles who like long walks on the beach … where Jesus is carrying them," the host said.

Products which cater to the conservative Christian subculture are generally not promoted to a wide mainstream audience, which helps to explain why Colbert's audience would have been amused by the Christian matchmaking site. There is also a sense of novelty in going national with a faith-based dating marketing campaign. That sense of novelty pervaded the responses to Charles Savidge's bureau as well, but there are key differences between the two. Savidge's enterprise, existing at a time of white, Protestant hegemony, was an interesting historical footnote without much of a lasting impact. Modern matchmaking services like Christian Mingle have the potential to be more than a punch line: They can also play a role in ensuring that conservative evangelicals marry within the faith, raise children in the faith, and maintain prominence on the national stage for generations to come.

THE HISTORY OF MATCHMAKING as a mass-marketed commercial enterprise stretches at least as far back as the late 19th century. The earliest matchmaking bureaus advertised their services in newspaper personals sections. They developed a reputation for fraud because they often exaggerated and embellished the number of single, wealthy clients on their rolls. As a result, few Americans held commercialized matchmaking bureaus in high esteem. And most Americans simply did not need additional matchmaking help—friends and family played the part just fine.

With many romantic relationships in the early 20th century occurring under the watchful eye of family members, friends, and church leaders, marriages tended to be religiously and racially homogenous. Before the 1960s, fewer than 20 percent of all marriages were interfaith marriages, while interracial marriages were even more miniscule, making up less than three percent of marriages. Yet, changes were under way by the early 1900s. New freedoms arising from improvements in transportation and communication allowed many young men and women to expand their social circles. Progressive Era reformers and radicals (studied by scholars like Christiana Simmons and Clare Virginia Eby) supported companionate marriage ideals that, theoretically at least, enhanced the autonomy of each individual in the marriage relationship. Regardless of how much Progressive Era notions of companionate marriage changed mainstream marriage power dynamics, there certainly was a shift in American conceptions of marriage. As historian Nancy Cott put it her book *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation*, "Where mid-nineteenth-century judges and other public spokesmen had hardly been able to speak of marriage without mentioning Christian morality, mid-twentieth-century discourse saw the hallmarks of the institution in liberty and privacy, consent and freedom."

The changes in marriage were readily apparent in the 1960s. From the introduction of the birth control pill in 1960, to anti-miscegenation laws being declared unconstitutional in 1967, to California enacting the nation's first "no fault" divorce law in 1969, the liberalization and individualization of love and marriage accelerated. In the following decades, Americans increasingly viewed marriage primarily as an expression of romantic love between two individuals, love that could cross boundaries of religion, race, and sex. Journalist Naomi Schaefer Riley points out in her 2013 book *Til Faith Do Us Part: How Interfaith Marriage is Transforming America,* "[O]ur cultural messages today seem to reinforce the idea that marriage is a purely individual choice."

The romanticized individualization of the marriage relationship has also led to dramatic changes in how Americans find their future spouses. Compared to the early 1900s, the role of the family has decreased, now playing a part in only 10 percent of all matches. In its place, friends and college became more important. And, since the 1990s, the Internet has risen as the prime matchmaking power.

Evangelicals—a small core of them at least—were early adopters of the online dating trend, and Clark Sloan was one of the pioneers. Out of a job in the early 1990s, Sloan drew entrepreneurial inspiration from an ink-and-paper Christian singles periodical published by his father. "Classified ads back then didn't seem to work very well," Sloan recalled. "I thought, 'why not take this into the computer stage?'" The ensuing company, Christian Computer Match, utilized a computer program created by Sloan to match people based on answers to a 50-question application. Sloan advertised his new service in the handful of Christian singles newspapers still in circulation. By 1994, he claimed to have 8,000 members in his database, which, as far as he knew, was the only Christian-oriented computer-matching program on the market.

"If you are not creating families, there's nothing to focus on," he recalled telling them, "and in 20 years you're going to have a problem."

His program, already technologically advanced for its time, was a natural fit for the transition to the Internet. He made the move online in 1995 when he started the Single Christian Network at singleC.com, which launched around the same time as the first widely used, mainstream personals site, Match.com. Sloan's website caught the eye of Sam Moorcroft, who cited singleC.com as one of the websites that inspired him to launch his own Christian matchmaking site, ChristianCafe.com, in 1999 (singleC.com is now a site affiliated with ChristianCafe.com).

By 2001, evangelical involvement in the online matchmaking trend was prominent enough to receive notice from *Christianity Today*. Just a year earlier, Neil Clark Warren had launched eHarmony, which at first catered to conservative Christians. Early marketing claimed that the site was "based on the Christian principles of Focus on the Family author Dr. Neil Clark Warren." By 2005, however, Warren decided that the conservative Christian niche market was not good for developing the brand. "We're trying to reach the whole world—people of all spiritual orientations, all political philosophies, all racial backgrounds," Warren told *USA Today* in 2005. "And if indeed, we have Focus on the Family on the top of our books, it is a killer." Warren further eschewed his conservative Christian credentials in response to a lawsuit complaining that eHarmony did not provide services for LGBT couples. The company launched a separate site for gay and lesbian couples, finally merging it with eHarmony in 2010.

THAT WARREN HAD TO renounce his conservative Christian connections in order to reach a mainstream audience was a telling sign of the limits of conservative evangelical leverage in American culture. On the other hand, the success Spark Networks has achieved by catering its Christian Mingle brand

to the same audience that Warren disavowed shows that evangelicals are still a numerical force worth reaching out to. Indeed, it is possible that dating sites like Christian Mingle—conservative Christian cul-de-sacs—may turn out to be one key to the continued influence of evangelicalism in the United States. After all, dating sites are increasingly a portal from which new Christian families can begin their existence. Sam Moorcroft emphasized this fact when he pitched a partnership with Focus on the Family for his site. "If you are not creating families, there's nothing to focus on," he recalled telling them, "and in 20 years you're going to have a problem."

Evangelical marriages provide a conducive setting for children to accept and remain followers of their parents' faith. It's a pressing concern: The religious retention rate for evangelicals has been dropping since the 1990s, according to David Campbell and Robert Putnam in *American Grace: How Religion Unites and Divides Us.* They also suggest "the most important factor predicting religious retention" is whether or not a person's family was religiously homogenous and observant. Meanwhile, the rate of interfaith marriage has more than doubled since the 1950s, accounting today for 45 percent of all marriages. That trend, according to Riley, has had the unintended consequence of eroding the strength of some faith traditions, partly because "interfaith families are less likely to raise their children religiously."

Given the reality of our increasingly online, increasingly digital world, Christian niche dating sites serve as an easily identifiable online companion to more traditional offline means used by evangelicals to find a spouse. They allow evangelicals to adopt the broader cultural turn towards individualism in the selection of romantic partners while still remaining true to conservative evangelical insistence on intra-faith marriage. "We want Christians to marry Christians," Moorcroft said. "We don't want Christians to marry nominal Christians or nonbelievers at all."

And once their customers are married, Christian dating sites claim to provide help on another account: They supposedly facilitate more compatible matches, which, according to ChristianCafe.com's Fred Moesker, will help "to decrease divorce rates." Moesker's claim may seem dubious, but it does have at least the modest support of initial research from John T. Cacioppo and others for the National Academy of the Sciences. They conducted a recent study showing that marriages that began online were slightly less likely to end in divorce and were "associated with slightly higher marital satisfaction" than marriages that began offline. Of course, not all evangelicals view Christian online dating in a positive light. In 2011, *Christianity Today* ran an opinion roundtable with the headline, "Is Online Dating for Christians?" Answers ranged from "With Gusto!" to "With Caution" to "No; Trust God." More recently, Jonathan Merritt, a senior columnist at Religion News Service, wondered if online dating websites actually served to undermine Christian values, concerns that were echoed from another corner of the evangelical world by the Gospel Coalition. For wary evangelicals, the turn to online matchmaking could carry the potential for further detachment from involvement in local church bodies at a time when more and more Americans are willing to shun affiliation with formal religious organizations.

That evangelicals would take opposing positions on an issue is no surprise; evangelicals have been a fluid and difficult-to-define group throughout their history, so making predictions for their future is tenuous at best. But while the scope and extent to which Christian online dating services affect evangelicals and American culture remains to be seen, we do know that more Americans are finding their spouses online and that Christian matchmaking services are growing. Christian Mingle's membership rolls, for example, now total 13 million people, 4 million of whom have joined in the past year.*

We also know that the combination of happy marriages (which online matchmaking sites claim to provide) and religiously homogenous marriages have led to higher rates of religious retention for children in the past. For evangelical supporters, these developments may suggest that sites like Christian Mingle and ChristianCafe.com, even if they appear to be just another expression of the oft-derided "Christian bubble," have the potential to be key players in the continuing effort to "make disciples of all nations"—starting with the United States and with each evangelical family that is created online. ■

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Apologies to *Sarah Bessey* whose blog post, "I am damaged Goods," was published in our Spring 2013 issue without prior permission. We regret our oversight and again refer readers to Sarah's writings at *A Deeper Story* and at *SheLoves Magazine.*

Dr. William E. Hull: A Different Kind of Saint

A Memorial Sermon on 16 December 2013
Mountain Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham, AL
Walter B. Shurden

"In his holy flirtation with the world," said Buechner, "God occasionally drops a handkerchief. These handkerchiefs are called saints" (*Wishful Thinking*, 83). Bill Hull was a different kind of saint. The challenges he leaves us are not simply about private devotions and public worship, about prayer and scripture reading and Christian generosity, traits of conventional spirituality. All of those were natural parts of his spirituality, as natural to him as breathing. But they are not the cardinal characteristics of his peculiar kind of sainthood.

So here at the beginning rather than the end, I give you my summary statement: **there was a Quality to the man**. The word is **Quality**, with a capital **Q**. Other synonyms come begging to be used. They are words such as Excellence, Distinction, Class, Eminence, and Superiority. But the best word, from my angle of observation, is **Quality. It was the Quality of the man that made him a different kind of saint.**

Six years ago Kay and I were in Birmingham for a Baptist meeting and we spent the night with Bill and Wylodine. The next morning Wylodine prepared us a super breakfast, and we enjoyed ourselves around the table. After breakfast, when Wylodine and Kay had gone to their rooms, I saw Bill pick up a dish towel, folding it carefully so that the sides were completely even. And he began to clean that kitchen counter. He cleaned that kitchen counter like I had never seen a counter cleaned before in all my life. Methodically, meticulously, he hygienically scoured and mastered that counter. He had a strategy: he went from back to front, from end to end, into crevices and corners, around faucets, carefully vacuuming every millimeter of that counter. A soiled spot, unnoticeable to most human eyes, or an innocent little crumb did not have the slightest chance of survival.

And when he finished, that counter looked just like every sentence he ever constructed, polished, shiny, not a word out of place. That counter looked just like every tie he ever tied on himself, in a perfectly balanced Windsor knot. That counter looked like the Sermon on the Mount that he so exquisitely outlined and every sermon he organized so symetrically. That counter looked like every biblical text he ever exegeted, every committee report he ever wrote, every speech he ever made. He cleaned that counter exactly like he compiled that three ring notebook after he was stricken with ALS. It was entitled "End of Life Agenda," and it covered everything that he, Wylodine, David and Susan needed to know about his dying, his death, and the aftermath of it all.

Ours is an era where people know more and more about less and less. But one of the questions that will always remain for many of us about Bill Hull was: Exactly where did Hull's expertise lay? He seemed to do everything so well. Is there a plural to expertise? Expertises, maybe?

He could be unrivaled teacher, insightful theologian, profound biblical interpreter and incomparable preacher of the gospel---all of us knew he could do those ministries in spades. But if you turned your head, he would become a sociologist whose footnotes indicated that he had read the literature, a historian with an imaginative and nuanced interpretation, a student of leadership who sounded as though he should be teaching the course, a pastoral strategist who somehow saw far and deep and around corners, an institutional mapmaker who sensed the change that should transform structures and policies. Some of us wondered what he could not do. My bet is that when he died he knew as much about ALS as any non-medical person in this country.

So what kind of different saint was he?

Part of his peculiar saintliness was that he was himself. If I asked you whom did Bill Hull preach like? Whom did Bill Hull teach like? Most of you would be stumped. Because Bill Hull preached like Bill Hull. Others of us have tried to imitate him, but he was the original. If you tried to imitate him, you ended up being a stereotype or at worse a caricature. He was just that unrepeatable. He did not have to find out what others thought. He did not dress his soul in others piety. He had his own spirituality, and it never dawned on him that it should be like somebody else's.

I have a file folder on my computer designated "Hull." I made that file long before Bill got sick. The historian in me wanted an oral history of him. So I sent him "20 Questions." He answered those twenty questions for me just as he cleaned that counter that morning after breakfast.

In one of the questions I asked him who had influenced him in his ministerial career. He gave me four names: Louie Newton, Duke McCall, George Buttrick and John Claypool. But Bill Hull was not like any of them and they were not like him. He lived his own life. If the primal freedom is the freedom to be the self and if being one's self under God is a part of saintliness, his legacy, his different kind of saintliness, is that he was unsparingly himself. So far as I know, he never went on a journey in search of himself. He knew who he was. He was Bill Hull.

Another part of his peculiar saintliness was, of course, his brilliance. It is a shame that we do not

more often associate the mind with sainthood. Saints, we say, are the martyrs and the mystics, people who die heroic deaths and pray long prayers. But I would like to lift up "smarts" and intelligence as characteristics of some of the greatest of all the saints. After all, we call them "Saint" Augustine and "Saint" Thomas and "Saint" Hildegaard. **I measure my words when I tell you that in the last fifty years there has not been a smarter minister of the gospel among white Baptists of the South than Bill Hull.**

One of those rare ten talent persons about whom the Bible speaks, Bill Hull would have knocked the top out of any profession he had chosen. But he chose and he was chosen for the Christian ministry. Within that broad calling of ministry, he superbly served as teacher, preacher, theologian, administrator, and pastor. What is not reflected in those specific roles, however, is the enormous contribution he made in each of those roles as a denominational leader among the Baptist people.

Wherever he served…Southern Seminary, First Baptist Shreveport, Samford…he led the Baptist people. Dr. Hull really could not help being a leader. He stood on a higher hill than the rest. He saw more. He not only saw a bigger picture than others, he also saw connections, intersections, and nuances that others did not see.

But here is yet another part of his different kind of saintliness. **Bill Hull was not simply smarter than most of us; he worked harder than most of us.** Part of his genius, often hidden to his listening and reading public, was that he knew how to work, and he worked hard. He was often the first one at the building and the last one to leave. For all of his brilliance, Bill Hull did not just wake up one morning and bam! produce those quality sermons and quality lectures. You don't become a person of quality by simply being born smart. Sure, much of it was genes, but much of it was grit. It took work and desire and dedication to churn out the quantity and quality of work he produced. After all, the man wrote five books while dying with Lou Gehrig's disease!

And he absolutely loved the work God gave him! I got the feeling that he worked his whole life in the Toy Department. He loved what he did.

Some will be surprised when I say that Bill Hull would have been a good monk, if Baptists had monks. You know what monks do. They worship. They sing. By the way, he loved music. When a youngster, he studied violin for twelve years and became the concert master of the Alabama State Student orchestra. And monks study. And monks work. I believe he would have been right at home, if they had given him a classroom or a pulpit as an outlet for all that work and study.

Another aspect of Dr. Hull's distinctive sainthood was that he had deep roots and wide wings. He was unapologetically rooted denominationally but decidedly ecumenical in attitude and actions. His little booklet, *The Meaning of the Baptist Experience*, is the best book on the Baptist vision of the Christian faith that I have ever read. Yet he was never threatened by the best of world scholarship that came from widely divergent sources. He embraced all Christians, indeed, all of humanity.

Another part of his peculiar sainthood was the major theme of his life, and that theme was *Reconciliation*. When I asked him in my "20 Questions" to identify the pivotal points in his spiritual journey, this is how he answered: *In the first quarter century of my life, I lived deeply across the entire spectrum of Baptist culture from the simplistic fundamentalism of my grandparents' church to the theological sophistication of Southern Seminary. I loved the entire venture and thus developed a deep passion to reconcile rather than to alienate these contrasting groups within the wider denominational family.*

Bill Hull wanted to reconcile everything; he did not want to live dualistically, dividing life into "them" and "us."

He wanted to reconcile theological education with practical ministry, the campus with the congregation, churchmanship with scholarship, preaching with teaching, profound research with practical wisdom, specialists with generalists, left with right, moderates with fundamentalists.

This penchant for "bringing together" was not born of cowardice or of hugging the middle of the road where the yellow line is. Not a few times he found himself in boiling hot water because of stands he took, making enemies he did not intend and certainly did not want.

And this obsession with reconciliation was not born of secular wisdom but of biblical conviction. He spelled it out in his 1981 book, recently revised. The title should be noted: *Beyond the Barriers: A Study of Reconciliation for the Contemporary Church.*

With one foot neck-deep in the best of New Testament scholarship and one foot resolutely set in the Christian pulpit, he gives a sterling exposition of Ephesians 2:11-22, one that will make a preacher want to preach like Chrysostom and, if you are not careful, get run out of town like Roger Williams.

Tell me if you can, what greater legacy can a Christian minister leave in our polarized age than a passion for breaking down these earthly walls we build.

An unusual kind of saint: he was himself, he was intelligent, he was a worker bee, he was rooted but expansive, and his theme was reconciliation. I must speak briefly of one more characteristics of his atypical sainthood. Actually this is not atypical of saints in general but it is grossly overlooked in Bill Hull.

Dr. Hull was a spirit person. I have noted with interest the public statements that have circulated about his death. Most have headlines such as "Scholar, author dies at 83." One can never nit-pick that description, because he was a Baptist scholar of the first rank.

I quibble because Bill Hull was more than head. And if you missed that, you missed something very important about him. What birthed his scholarship, his writings, his sermons, and his entire life was a calling, a calling that he experienced his second year of college. It was a calling that took him away from the study of medicine toward the ministry.

His salvation experience, so he told me in my "20 Questions," was a natural unfolding of a life nurtured and marinated in the faith. But "*My call to ministry,"* he said*, "was like that of the `twice born,' a total surprise both to me and to everyone else, representing a complete break with my vocational aspirations."* He says in his helpful autobiographical sermon, "This is My Story," that "entering the ministry was for me a leap in the dark . . . and yet it was the most certain thing I have ever done, a resolve from which I have never wavered."

William Stafford's poem reminds me of Bill Hull.

The Way It Is

There's a thread you follow.
It goes among things that change.
But it doesn't change.
People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.
While you hold it you can't get lost.
Tragedies happen; people get hurt or die;
and you suffer and get old.
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.
You don't ever let go of the thread.

The thread never changed for Bill Hull. It was a spiritual calling to do good in life in the name of Jesus Christ. As far as I can read his life, he never let go of that thread.

We err when we equate holiness and sanctity with moral perfection, flawless personalities or world denying asceticism. Bill Hull was none of those. He was a man of QUALITY, a different kind of saint.

There is an old Jewish Hasidic teaching that says: "There are three ascending levels of how one mourns: With tears--- that is the lowest. With silence---that is higher. And with a song---that is the highest."

Let us sing. ■

Ethics Bytes:
Conventional pollutants from existing conventional coal plants to create electricity contribute to asthma, other ling diseases, and heart attacks…*joint study by the Harvard School of Public Health and Syracuse University Center for Health and the Global Environment.*

***Ethics Bytes*…blasts from the past:**
"What the Moral Majority is calling for, perhaps unknowingly, is a restoration of civil religion…which may be defined as the state's use of religion for its own political ends….The establishment of morals derives from inner conviction and obedience rather than a mere outward conformity. Consequently, Falwell's alternative to the current moral decadence of America is more consistent with the morality of civil religion than the morality of the Christian faith."

—Wheaton theology professor, Robert Webber in his 1984 book, The Moral Majority: Right or Wrong?

"Morality can be defined as the rightness or wrongness of human actions…Moralism means something else. It is not morality because it assumes the validity of one judgmental answer to every moral question…"

—St. Olaf College professor Erlings Jorstad in his 1981 book The Politics of Moralism,

Ethics Bytes
"We also need to…have international law that would prevent the continued abuse of girls in early child marriage and international trade in human beings is horrendous.
"[In Atlanta Georgia] we have more than 200 girls every month, little girls, who are sold into slavery, primarily because Atlanta has the largest airport on Earth, and also because we have a lot of passengers coming in from the southern hemisphere, where girls can be bought for slavery and prostitution for about $1000. And so prostitution goes on."

Former President Jimmy Carter Interview with Elizabeth Willoughby May 28, 2014 on looktothestars.org

Bill Hull's Twenty Questions

BY Walter B. Shurden

1. In your sermon, "This is My Story," you paint the picture of a rather financially deprived childhood. Am I reading too much into your comments when I say that you were "financially deprived?"

My father lost everything in the Depression, forcing us to move to a chicken farm where my mother toiled as housekeeper and cook for the bachelor owner to keep a roof over our head. The family did not really recover financially until after World War II. However, our financial deprivations were never discussed with me as a child, even though I seldom got what I wanted for Christmas. Instead, we majored on enjoyable relationships with family and friends, most of them as hard-up as we were; thus I never felt financially deprived because I had never known what it was like to have plenty.

2. You describe your salvation experience almost in Bushnellian terms: You grew up as a Christian and never knew yourself otherwise. Is this the case? Is there a pivotal religious experience in your life? Your calling account sounds very experiential.

Experientially, my spiritual pilgrimage is like an ellipse with two foci. To borrow from William James, my conversion was that of the "once born" which unfolded as naturally as other aspects of growing up. My call to ministry, however, was like that of the "twice born," a total surprise both to me and to everyone else, representing a complete break with my vocational aspirations to that point, which had been defined in terms of a medical career.

3. Can you still play the violin? Has music been a big part of your life?

I studied violin for 12 years and got so good that I was chosen as concert master of the Alabama State Student Orchestra. At that level, I either had to practice several hours a day or fail to continue to grow musically. Thus, in college I shifted to choral directing which led naturally to conducting the BSU choir and then on to youth revival music leadership. I have not played the violin seriously during my adult years but music has always been extremely important to me.

4. Can you say more about your call to preach than what you wrote in "This is My Story?" pp. 10-11. Had you been thinking of the ministry? Was there any particular person that made the difference for you?

As implied above, my call to ministry was entirely a matter of divine initiative. I had never had any relatives in the ministry, had never been talked to by anyone about becoming a minister, and had not thought of entering the ministry. As Paul put it in Galatians 1:12, "I did not receive my ministry from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ." Indirectly, I was influenced by the youth revival movement coming out of Baylor after World War II, particularly Charles Wellborn and Howard Butt, although I never had any direct contact with either of them about entering the ministry.

5. After I joined the faculty at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, I heard a professor say that if one were not one-eyed one should not be a theological professor at SBTS. He meant, I think, that one had to focus on a single discipline in a very academic way. You were never one-eyed. You preached, you taught, you administered. Could this explain your return to the pastorate, that you were three-eyed?

The scientific revolution has carried specialization to an extreme, causing us to lose some of the synthesizing strengths of the Middle Ages. I loved New Testament as a scholarly discipline and, with the example of Robertson and Davis before me, could have studied it as a one-eyed professor for the rest of my life. However, I soon saw that the specialists did not know how to integrate the knowledge of theology with the practice of ministry (a phrase coined by Krister Stendahl to describe the purpose of the D.Min. Program). Therefore, I always balanced the two whether working in a seminary, a church, or a university. Some people work well approaching their vocation as a one-eyed person. I chose to be three-eyed because the need was greater. At Southern, faculty were losing focus on how to build authentic communities of faith, partly because of the stress on specialization in the academic guilds, while at Shreveport, pastors were in danger of losing the intellectual moorings of their ministry, putting out stuff that would be an embarrassment to any thinking layperson. While I did "return to the pastorate" in 1975, that did not change my determination to maintain a healthy dialectic between head and heart throughout my entire ministry.

6. If you had your life to do over again, what vocational part of it, if any, would you change? I guess I wonder where you received the most satisfaction in your ministry. Let me force you to rank these three: Southern Seminary, Shreveport, Samford. I do not assume that your ranking diminishes any of the three, because I know how much you have enjoyed each. However, if I put a gun to your head and said, "choose," what would you say?

All of my life I have been asked whether I enjoyed preaching, teaching, or administering the most. Each has assets and liabilities not shared with the others. For example, at Southern I loved to work daily with a cadre of sharp doctoral students, all of us having access to a major research library. In Shreveport, however, I loved the interaction with every age group, with whole family units, and with the entire city as a civic advocate on behalf of the Christian faith. At Samford, I loved getting outside the inbred ministerial hothouse and seeking to apply the Christian faith to life as it is actually lived by lawyers, school teachers, nurses, pharmacists, and all the rest. In terms of administration in all three places, those sheltered from the complex tasks of strategizing, decision making, and consensus building among diverse groups simply miss a huge part of what life is really like and, to be honest, become epistemologically naive. So if you put a gun to my head and said "choose," I would reply that if you threatened my chance to grow in all these areas, you might as well just pull the trigger and end it all because I do not want to be a one-sided person. (Even a violin has four strings!)

7. Another way to get at the previous question is to ask: Where have you felt most at home: in the classroom, the pulpit, or the administrative office?

None of my family or friends had ever been a classroom professor, a congregational pastor, or an educational administrator; thus I had to learn all three jobs on my own largely by trial and error. At first I did not feel "at home" in any of these roles but I determined to stay with the job until I felt completely at home, which eventually became the case in all three areas. So my answer would have to be developmental. I did not feel at home in any of these roles at first but eventually felt at home in all of these roles when I had mastered them. Once I felt I had gone as far as I could in one of these roles, I became restless to try another, feeling that endless repetition is not the best way to grow. I suppose I am like Margaret Mead who confessed to her biographer that she was guilty of the sin of gluttony because she was always hungry for new experiences!

8. You say in "This is My Story" that you "have experienced a full measure of setbacks and defeats." Where, specifically have you experienced such? I don't know of anyone who knows you who thinks you have experienced setbacks and defeats!

At Southern, as dean and provost, I was never able to get the faculty to truly integrate their scholarship with the most pressing needs of the churches, thereby avoiding the disasters that fell upon them following my departure. In Shreveport, I was not able to get the city to outgrow its ingrown provincialisms and cross artificial barriers constructed by race, class, and culture. At Samford and in higher education generally, I was never able to build a consensus about how to apply the Christian faith to higher education, thereby sparing us the kind of debacles we have seen in recent years at Baylor. Denominationally, of course, I was never able to build a viable middle ground between fundamentalism on the right and fundamentalism on the left. Incidentally, many of these failures were a matter of timing. In my senior years, a host of folks from Southern, Shreveport, and Samford have insisted on telling me that I was right about some important issues that those views could not be implemented because I was "ahead of my time." In other words, many of the "setbacks and defeats" of the past have become the advances and victories of the present. I believe that the essential stance of a Christian is to live ahead of his or her time, but that is hardly a way to seek success.

9. Critique your preaching for me.

Almost all of my preaching has been an effort to mediate the best insights of serious Christian scholarship to laypersons not satisfied with simplistic and even anti-intellectual, mindless sermonizing from the pulpit. In Shreveport, for example, First Baptist was clearly the last stop for thoughtful Baptists on the way to Presbyterian or Episcopal churches. In a sense, I tried to make the gospel creditable to thinking people of whatever faith or of no faith who were put off by the mindlessness that is epidemic in many pulpits. I knew that my preaching would be appreciated best by a minority, but I quickly realized that Christianity must speak persuasively not only to the majority who follow but to the minority who lead.

10. You said, "I have sought to base my ministry on the primary of preaching" (17, *Harbingers*). Did you do that even when you were a seminary professor?

At Southern, I am sure that I used much of my preaching, particularly chapel appearances on campus, as an outlet to share insights from my New Testament studies in popular fashion. However, I itinerated across the land almost every Sunday trying to set an example in a multitude of churches as to what could happen if preaching were taken seriously. I would have to say that the seminary culture I knew did not magnify the primacy of preaching because of its preoccupation with disciplinary skills. When I became a pastor responsible for building an energized community of faith, I quickly realized that bland preaching set the tone for a bland week.

11. Bill, what are the three most formative and shaping influences on your life? What are the pivotal points in your journey?

(1) In the first quarter century of my life, I lived deeply across the entire

spectrum of Baptist culture from the simplistic fundamentalism of my grandparents' church to the theological sophistication of Southern Seminary. I loved the entire venture and thus developed a deep passion to reconcile rather than to alienate these contrasting groups within the wider denominational family.

(2) Shortly thereafter, Louie Newton taught me, and by example showed me, how the minister is to be a man of public affairs who takes the faith into every corner of society where it can shape the very ethos in which people live and work.

(3) My two sabbaticals at Goettingen and Harvard taught me not to chase after what other denominations might offer but rather to try to do for Baptists what the best representatives of other traditions have done for their part of the Christian family. Stated differently, the pivotal points in my journey were the moves from Birmingham to Louisville, Louisville to Shreveport, and Shreveport back to Birmingham. It was not the geographical transfer that was important, since I could have reinvented myself by staying in one place. Rather, each of these moves presented fresh challenges and demanded new learning experiences.

12. Like the previous question, name the four most influential people in your life, apart from Wylodine and the children and grands.

Most influential in my ministerial life have been Duke McCall, John Claypool, Louie Newton, and George Buttrick.

13. A bit different from the former question, tell us who shaped you theologically and ministerially and spiritually. Where did you go to feed your own soul?

Theologically I was shaped by Theron Price who gave me a grander concept of living in the sweep of Christian history. Ministerially, I was shaped by those listed in the previous question. Spiritually, I never had one mentor but rather was nourished by a number of group relationships such as kindred spirits in the pastorate that I came to know through the Metropolitan Pastor's Conference. Much of my spiritual nourishment has come through reading and reflection.

14. What is the most important idea in your life? Grace? Calling? Stewardship? As the Christian Century once asked. "What idea has used you?"

In a word, my controlling idea is Reconciliation. I seek to overcome that polarization by which we keep apart those realities that belong together. Fear and anger almost always lurk where alienation is allowed to flourish. I deplore the ideological rigidity that has rent both our denomination and our country into competing groups. I realize that since both ideas and people differ greatly, some type of uniformity is both impossible and undesirable; but I am always striving to achieve balanced complementarity even when it involves holding in tension a great deal of diversity.

15. You are hard to pigeonhole. Your theology strikes me as basically conservative or middle of the road. I know that you have offended fundamentalists in some areas, especially in your view of the Bible, but you are a rather orthodox person, are you not? Where are you progressive? Are you more liberal than you have said? Have you kept silent at points so as not "to offend" a weaker brother or sister?

In the Deere Lectures at Golden Gate Seminary around 1980, I argued that one must be simultaneously both conservative and liberal as the "not destroy/but fulfill" dialectic of Matthew 5:17-18 makes so clear. In four presentations I argued that this was the overwhelming testimony of the Christian faith biblically, historically, theologically, and practically. The Bible is central to me, and there is no way to make a 2000-year-old book central without being basically "conservative." And yet the central message of Scripture is that God is continually in the business of transforming human life, which is an essentially liberal idea. I have not deliberately tried to keep my liberalism in the closet, which is one reason why my ministry has often been controversial. However, I would have to say that I have found it as hard to commend conservatism to liberals as I have to commend liberalism to conservatives. I can live with the idea of being labeled as "orthodox," but do not prefer that word since I find that, for most people, orthodoxy harbors more conservatism than liberalism and therefore is somewhat unbalanced. I do try not to "offend" a weaker brother or sister, but I try to do so by "speaking the truth in love," making sure that I am offering them as much love as I am truth.

16. Tell me about Wylodine.

The question is not out-of-bounds, but my ability to frame an adequate response is. Like me, she came out of a background that was economically, culturally, intellectually, and even religiously deprived. Thus we grew together as we were offered far more opportunities in all of these areas than any of our parents had ever known. Her faith is fed primarily by relationships, which offered a good balance when I was working in highly academic settings where faith was shaped primarily by ideas. Her capacity to love is limitless; thus I have spent our entire life together trying to catch up in that area but am certainly not there yet!

17. Tell me about Wylodine's influence on your ministry.

When I was involved primarily in graduate theological education, my work was so technical that her influence was minimal. When I moved into administration, however, and had to deal with many confidential matters involving persons, she was always a trusted confidante. Her greatest influence was probably in the pastoral ministry where she exercised an enormous influence partly because we both worked in the same context. As a shrewd judge of human nature, she knew who could be trusted, knew how to tell me when a sermon was a dud, and knew how to cheer me up when I was unfairly criticized.

18. What moves you to tears?

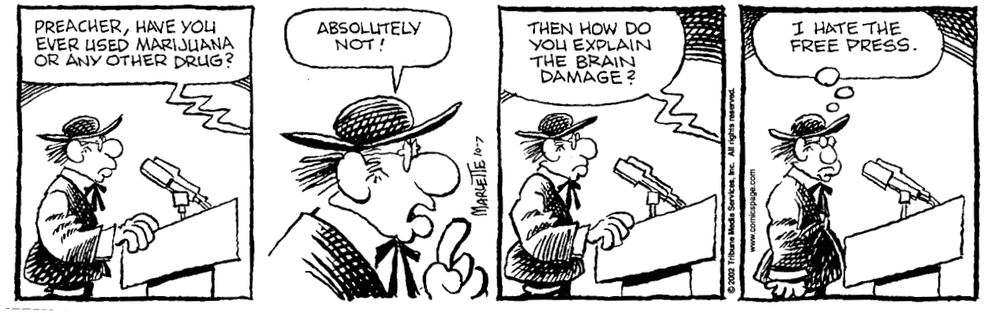
Tears may flow from either joy or sorrow, in my case almost always from the former rather than the latter. I do not find it helpful to cry because of anger, frustration, or defeat. Rather, the eyes begin to glisten when I see ordinary people do acts of simple kindness and display incredible generosity without thought of recompense. Just now, for example, tears of joy can come as our children outperform even our highest expectations of them.

19. Over the years, what has kept you up at night and robbed you of sleep? Or do you simply sleep through the storms?

I have always slept well and have seldom used the midnight hours to rehash the work of the day. Probably the nearest that I have been robbed of sleep is when struggling over a major career decision. Both Wylodine and I get very deeply rooted where we are and form so many loving relationships that it is heartbreaking even to contemplate the move to another place, such as moving from Southern to Shreveport or from Shreveport to Samford. Those struggles were always more intense than any of the controversies in which I was involved.

20. Would you rather prepare a sermon for a congregation or a theological paper for professors?

By now you know that I cannot choose between these options but rather would strive for a balance between them. When I go for a long stretch only preparing sermons, I have to stop and do something rigorously critical to keep another part of my mind alive. Likewise, when all I do is theological research, I hunger to say something that makes greater use of the imagination and more skillful use of symbolic language. I would soon become cognitively impaired if I did not do both with some regularity. That is why, throughout my ministry, I have always insisted in having one foot planted in academia and the other in the church. For me this is as essential as using right brain/left brain, or as breathing in/breathing out, or as the two sides of a single piece of paper. Right now, for example, I have just finished preparing the sermon to be preached at Mountain Brook Baptist Church, which I greatly enjoyed doing; but the next day I started writing a technical paper on Southern Seminary at its Sesquicentennial and relish that work just as much. ■



Ethics Bytes:
44% of Americans have a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in "the church or organized religion" today, just below the low points Gallup has found in recent years, including 45% in 2002 and 46% in 2007. This follows a long-term decline in Americans' confidence in religion since the 1970s.

Notes from My File Cabinet: Wisdom from J.M. Dawson

By James Dunn

It was in a comfortable fireplace room in the Stagecoach Inn, Salado, Texas, that 92-year-old J.M. Dawson set out his "Seven Tests of Social Religion." The audience consisted of several of us doctoral students of ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary on a retreat sponsored by the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission. The date was December 6, 1970.

Dawson was best known in Baptist life as the first executive of the Baptist Joint Committee, serving from 1946 through 1953. The annual recognition given by the Baptist Joint Committee is named in his honor. Dawson was also known as one of the founders of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State. Less known was his role as the publicity director of the Southern Baptist Convention's "75 Million Campaign" during the depths of the Great Depression.

The Southern Baptist Convention was in desperate straits for money during the Great Depression. They formally turned to seven leaders for rescue:

S.P. Brooks, President of Baylor University
F.L. Groner, executive secretary of the Baptist General Convention of Texas
George W. Truett, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas
B. H. Carroll, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
E.C. Routh, editor of the Baptist Standard
J.M. Dawson, publicity chair and spokesman of the Campaign.

Dawson's own church, First Baptist Church of Waco, Texas, gave over $214,000 which was the second largest amount of any church in the SBC. I leave it to an enterprising reader to calculate what that amounts to in 2014 dollars.

The long-term result of the "75 Million Campaign," however, was the Cooperative Program which became the financial plan of the Southern Baptist Convention, the lifeblood of the SBC and the glue that held it together.

While cleaning out some files in my Wake Forest University office, I came across the document Dr. Dawson shared with us that day at the Stagecoach Inn. It is timeless. Here it is -- exactly as he presented it:

SEVEN TESTS OF SOCIAL RELIGION
J.M. Dawson
December 6, 1970

Remarks made to Th.D. students in social ethics from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary at the Christian Life Commission retreat.

1. Christian Ethics must be construed as an effort at righteous religion.
2. It must be useful, not just discussion and dialogue, study and analysis, but practical help.
3. It must be in harmony with Jesus' emphasis upon sharing whatever you have, whatever you know, whatever you see, whatever is righteous, religious, and good.
4. It must express fullness, all-outness. It is not languid, feeble, or weak. It is heroic, vigorous, virile, full of life. Both institutionally and individually, social religion represents life to the utmost, involving all of one's abilities. It is never ephemeral or superficial. It is not a fad. It is, rather, the essence of Christianity as it is described in the final test for the Christian as outlined in Matthew 25.
5. It denies dominant self-interest. What it does for humanity is the final test. "I shudder when I contemplate my own sons…their successes."
6. Christian ethics must be just. It's a cruel hoax to construe justice in penal terms. Justice is the golden rule. The golden rule is the quintessence of justice.
7. It must answer human need. Wealth is rapacious. "I don't think there's a multi-millionaire in the world who wouldn't like to control the whole thing." ■

James Dunn is retired executive of the Baptist Joint Committee, Wake Forest University School of Divinity professor, and sponsor along with his wife of the James and Marilyn Dunn Chair of Baptist Studies at Wake Forest.

Verse

Wondering How Jesus Felt Or Jesus Wept

"Forgive those who disagree with us,"
The pious Christian leader prayed.
Presuming in the theological fuss
The other faction surely strayed--
Cocksure the Christ who'd died was on his side.
Perhaps the Christ just sighed,
Perhaps he cried,
Perhaps he cried.

By Richard D. Kahoe, Woodward, Oklahoma

They Did Not Know

They did not know
Right from wrong
When they first reached
For the proffered fruit,
But they blinked with its
Strange taste and
Knew it then.

As consciousness startled
Their now troubled eyes,
And placed their nakedness
In that particular garden,
Their silent dream broke
Into mirrored shards,
And the wonder of self
Buckled their knees.

By James R. Wade, a member of First Baptist Church, Arlington, Texas

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

Sessions with Revelation: The Last Days of Evil

by David Sapp (Macon, GA Smyth & Helwys, 2014

Reviewed by Bo Prosser

The newest in the Sessions series (published by Smyth and Helwys) takes us into the complexities of the Book of Revelation. In full disclosure, I am also an author in the Sessions series, *Sessions with Philippians*. That being said, this series has become a quite popular and practical Bible Study curriculum.

This is another informative and interactive study delivered from Series Editor, Michael McCullar of Johns Creek Baptist Church in Atlanta, and author and retired pastor, David Sapp. The book is not intended to be the "end all" scholarly word on Revelation. Instead, the author writes to instruct and to stimulate a curiosity about the Revelation that will lead to consistent study. These sessions unpacking Revelation bring a similar flavor of previous "Sessions" books, helping students engage in meaningful scholarship that leads to purposeful discipleship.

I have loved the Book of Revelation since my seminary days. For decades, the imagery and language have drawn me in as student, teacher, and preacher of the texts. This new contribution quickly engages the reader with a quick overview of the writing, authorship, date, and styles of writings found in the text. The author then moves into the 10 sessions examining the basic themes of Revelation. Each chapter is followed up with a set of discussion questions to facilitate personal reflection or small group interactions. An extensive bibliography follows the conclusion of the study, leading the learner to many of the classic texts for further reading.

At once Sapp acknowledges that many a believer has struggled with this writing. He points out that we struggle so because of our inadequate knowledge of the Old Testament, especially the prophets. He goes on to point out that our struggles may also be because Revelation is a work of art, a work written in dangerous times, and an intimate letter to seven particular churches. Even so, despite the struggles, the book of Revelation is as relevant to our churches today as it was to the churches of John of Patmos. This revelation of John has the power to change lives.

My opinion is that as small groups of Christians study this work together, pray over it together, and engage one another in conversation, individual and corporate relationships will be transformed. Having taught through this Revelation several times in my ministry, I can testify that the study is indeed difficult. Teacher and student can get lost in the seven churches, the seven seals, the seven trumpets and the seven bowls. In the battle for good and evil, the entanglements of code words, prayers, warnings, and drama might leave one frustrated enough to avoid a study all together. (This has been the case for many a Christian through the years.) The author has done an excellent job distilling the basic truths of a complicated set of scenarios.

Each chapter first gives pertinent insights into the complications of the text. Then, participants are invited into relevant reflection and discussions about THEIR personal context, THEIR personal faith, THEIR personal discipleship. Ultimately, this book (as in the book of Revelation) ends with a reassurance that a new creation is on the way. The Risen Christ will bring glory.

21st century believers and first century believers both crave the same thing -- a blessing of grace and hope. Seven weeks in study of this book will lead participants to stronger confidence in the Risen Christ. Seven weeks in this study will offer to each of us a deeper blessing of grace. Whether one does this study for individual reflection or in a group interaction, the assurances will resound and the faithful will be affirmed. Until then, let us continue to pray, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus." ■

Generous Justice

by Timothy Keller
(New York: Riverhead Books, 2010, $15pb)

Reviewed by Darold Morgan

Any book that can wisely and effectively call Christians to a Biblical basis for justice and mercy is a welcome addition for concerned Christians in this roiling world. *Generous Justice* in our age is an imperative of unchallenged proportions. Sadly, many secularists in current society (and their number is legion) equate the Bible as the source of multiple prejudices and regressions rather than the ultimate source of generous justice.

Timothy Keller has wisely chosen this title for his brief book which is a superb study of the Biblical basis, promoting a life of justice, mercy, and compassion in a secular age. Those qualities emanate from a genuine experience with the grace of God in Jesus Christ, according to Keller. With the author's recognized and competent abilities in Biblical foundations, coupled with contemporary applications and quotations, this prolific writer and preacher has produced another volume of value and usefulness.

The "Notes" section is one of the exceptional contributions to Christian Ethics which is so needed in the local church.

Keller defines justice by quoting Micah 6:8, *"And what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."* Then comes the major applications of this ideal in a world of racism, prejudice, poverty, politics, cultural and religious clashes. He expands these principles grounded in the Old Testament and in the words of Jesus with vigorous interpretations of familiar Biblical material which yield in turn insights which are brimming with current considerations. Keller has genuine skills for the way he uses quotations from the unusual and interesting sources such as Jonathan Edwards, Walter Rauchenbush, Christopher Hitchens, Gustavo Gutierrez, Anders Nygren, John Newton, C.S. Lewis, and many more.

The issues of Justice have long been ignored or minimized in local churches for a variety of reasons. Keller's book wisely and Biblically calls the church back to a major theme, repeated often in both Testaments. Today it would include concern for the poor, balanced approaches to discrimination and conflicts against women, wages, extreme politics, confusion about immigration policies, diversity in marriage values…the list is long and complex.

But the call to Generous Justice grounded in personal experience with the Grace of God, grounded in the Bible, is an ideal found in this good volume. ■

If I Had Lunch With C.S. Lewis: Exploring the Ideas of C.S. Lewis on the Meaning of Life

(Carol Stream, IL, Tyndale House Publishers, 2014, $17.99hb)
By Alister McGrath

Reviewed by Darold Morgan

A major interpreter of C.S. Lewis, Alister McGrath, has given us in this brief book a remarkable approach to Lewis' major ideas about the Christian life. This volume makes for interesting reading. Its format is unique and of genuine value in the current realm of apologetics, especially regarding a rational defense of Christian truth in an age of dominant secularism. McGrath, well-known for his recent biography of Lewis as a world class theologian, has given us intelligent and live ammunition in the intriguing conflict with current atheism. In fact, Lewis' famous move from atheism to theism is one theme the author pursues with verve and wisdom, resulting in explicating ideas of relevance for students today.

McGrath also elaborates helpfully on Lewis' use of imagination, not only in his writings, but as a creative way to understand theology which is sometimes difficult for some readers to grasp. He makes this rather nebulous concept of imaginative ideas understandable in some of Lewis' books. What a way to approach Lewis's Narnia novels, books which amaze us all in their increasing popularity among children. When one adds up the sheer genius of Lewis, plus the influence of friends in Oxford, the raw suffering emerging from his wife's lost battle with cancer, the war years compassing both conflagrations in Britain, one concludes that these events have colored these writings which have helped multitudes to a stronger and more balanced faith in God.

Using this imaginative approach of "Lunch with Lewis," McGrath brings Lewis out the past with the rush of events of our day. The probing and insistent questions about faith, hope, heaven, suffering, and science permeate the book. This technique is arresting, informative, and genuinely helpful today as so many make technology the source of answers to large questions. One's own Christian experience finds both a strong intellectual surge combined with the essentials of faith and commitment emerging from these pages.

Whether or not one is a Lewis d'evotee, here is an engaging, distinctly original book that will leave the reader exceptionally glad to have read and digested it. ■

Remember Those Who Are In Prison

By Patrick Anderson

America's addiction to locking people in prison for interminable periods of time began in the 1970s. Prior to that time, a relatively small number of criminal offenders were incarcerated. Today, America's mass incarceration of large numbers of poor persons is a scandal, disproportionately affecting black and Latino young men. This outrage is the result of a badly conceived "war on drugs," mandatory sentences and "three-strikes laws", and other "get tough on crime" policies stemming from a politically manufactured fear of crime.

The politicization of crime has occurred largely with the quiet complicity of some white Christians and the active support of others, especially the Religious Right. The expansion of criminal justice "solutions" through harsh punishments is evidenced by Al Mohler's recent call for Christians to support the expanded use of executions. The death penalty is not the only draconian social policy advocated by many Christians. For instance, predominantly white Christians have called for harsh laws against abortion and have demonstrated a paucity of redemptive efforts for prisoners. Some have exported their advocacy of death for homosexuals to Uganda and elsewhere.

The significant efforts of churches to minister to offenders and their families are found largely among African-American Christians. Perhaps this is because black folks bear the brunt of the crime policies of recent decades. For sure, the redemptive theology found in many urban black churches is steeped in Bible texts that point toward liberation, release to the captives, reconciliation, and redemption. The Bible speaks strongly to the oppressed, and oppression is the experience of many families in African-American churches who have been on the receiving end of criminal justice practices.

How has so much of the rest of the Church lost sight of the plight of prisoners? From whence comes the overemphasis on primitive law codes which predate Jesus? Why the manic support for "10 Commandments" displays in the public square and the neglect of Christian passages in the Bible? The Bible calls us toward redemption and away from retribution.

The *Hebrews* writer stated, "Remember those who are in prison as though you were there with them." Well that writer understood the pathos of imprisonment, and readers from Israelite or Christian heritage, people of the *Book*, have resonated with those words through the ages. "Remember them….as though you were there with them."

We remember the prisoners of the Old Testament such as Joseph who was cast into a dry well by his 10 older brothers and later sold into slavery. This same Joseph was also falsely accused by Potipher's wife and locked up in the state prison; Joseph who turned the tables on those same brothers by locking them up before the great reconciliation. It was an early example of what goes around comes around.

In the Bible we see blinded Samson chained to a grinding mill at Gaza, pushing the wheels, dreaming of a day of revenge. We celebrate his growing hair, his prayer of destruction for his tormentors.

Remember the beaten Jeremiah chained by the chief officer of the temple for unpopular prophecies, then later confined to a community-based correctional facility, a courtyard prison where he transacted a real estate deal. Think of Jeremiah, locked in an underground cell beneath the court secretary's house for "a long time," begging Zedekiah to return him to the courtyard prison because the conditions underground were so terrible. He was served a loaf of bread a day and finally cast into a dry well where he sank to his armpits in the mud where he would have died had not Ebedmelech rescued him, and then had him transferred back to that courtyard prison.

We remember Zedekiah, blinded after watching his sons killed before his eyes, and then locked up for the rest of his life by Nebuchadnezzar. Think of Jehoiakim, a prisoner of Evilmerodach for 38 years before being released to the king's table for the rest of his life.

Remember Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego) thrown into a furnace for refusing to deny the Living God to worship an idol of gold.

Who can forget Daniel, cast into a pit of lions by Darius who, after his release saw his own accusers cast into that same pit? Remember Micaiah thrown into prison by Ahab and given only bread to eat, and Manasseh imprisoned by the Assyrians.

The readers of *Hebrews* are told, "Remember those who are in prison as though you were there with them!" But *Hebrews* is a New Testament book, and the readers are New Testament readers. Our story is found more in the New Testament where everybody did time. If you were a New Testament Christian and did not spend some time in prison, your orthodoxy was in question. And if somehow you escaped imprisonment, the *Hebrews* writer cajoles, "Remember them….." And, who could forget?

Do you not see John the Baptist locked up by Herod as he awaited decapitation? Can you not share his longing for companionship as he receives his disciples as visitors, and sends a plaintiff message to Jesus, the One who proclaimed "release to the captives!" saying, "Are you the one?"

Or think of Jesus, arrested in the Garden, then subjected to enhanced interrogation all night, beaten, kept unjustly while Barabbas was released, and who was finally put to death.

Remember Peter, jailed along with John in the temple jail, beaten and then released; Peter, locked up by Herod after James had been executed, chained to guards in the Tower of Antonia from which he escaped.

And, Paul. Who can forget Paul "a prisoner of the Gospel"? This Paul himself had imprisoned many believers before his Damascus Road experience. Remember Paul in stocks beside Silas in the jail at Philippi, suffering the effects of the "many stripes" put on them by whips; Paul, kept in chains in the Tower of Antonia and later locked up in Caesarea's praetorium of Herod for two years. Remember how he was interviewed first by Felix and Drusilla, then Agrippa and Bernice, and finally by Herod himself? Think of Paul being transported as a prisoner by ship to Rome, cast overboard and shipwrecked. See him under house arrest for two years, and finally confined in the Mamertine Prison, the lower dungeon of Tertullian where prisoners condemned to death were kept in their final days. See Paul the prisoner writing letters, counseling, witnessing to guards and fellow prisoners, asking his friends for help, and keeping the faith.

Finally, do not forget John, a prisoner on Patmos, where he experienced the most wonderful Revelation. The Bible starts and ends with prisoners. Yes, let us remember those who are in prison, today as well as then.

But, some may reply, "But those prisoners we remember in the Bible were <u>good</u> people. They were not like the evil-doers of our modern age. Surely, it is not the same injunction for us as it was for the present day readers of *Hebrews*."

Have you forgotten that the first family in the Bible suffered a most heinous murder, that Cain smashed his brother's skull and left Abel to bleed to death on the ground? And, arguably the two greatest men in the Old Testament, Moses and David, were both murderers.

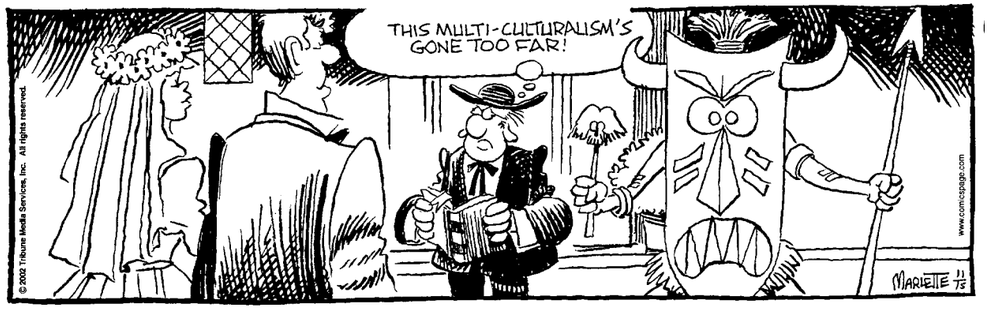
Moses killed a cop! If any one of us were to intervene with deadly violence in police action, no matter what that action may be, we would face certain prosecution, imprisonment, maybe even death. Moses knew he had done wrong, regardless of his noble motivation. He fled to avoid prosecution. Forty years later, as God was talking to him from a burning bush trying to convince him to go back down to Egypt, Moses was no doubt thinking in the vein of the Country and Western singer and songwriter R. Dean Taylor, "Egypt? Egypt wants me! Lord I can't go back there! I'm a wanted man!"

David, a man after God's own heart, first used his considerable power to take the wife of his military leader to his bed, and then, upon her pregnancy, David put in motion a dastardly plan to have the husband Uriah the Hittite abandoned on the battle field to be killed. It was murder, in any code of law.

Remember criminals like the thief on the cross, or Onesimus and his victim Philemon, and also Barabbas. Think of Jesus the lawbreaker, brushing up against the legal system of his day, breaking the Sabbath, socializing with white collar criminals like Zacchaeus, associating with law violators of many kinds.

The words of the *Hebrews* writer still ring in our ears, do they not? "Remember those who are in prison as though you were there with them."

The only difference between Bible times and now is that we have so many more people to remember, so many more people who are locked up. ■



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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

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

PURPOSES

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

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

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

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