

# Christian Ethics Today

A Journal of Christian Ethics Volume 21, Number 4 Aggregate Issue 91 Fall 2013

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

## ESSAYS ON FINANCIAL MATTERS

- Neither A Borrower Nor a Lender Be?** *Luke Bretherton*..... 3
- Predatory Lending** *Stephen Reeves and Steve Wells*..... 8
- The Budget and Your Neighbor** *Lisa Sharon Harper*..... 9

## ESSAYS ON WAR AND PEACE

- God, Jesus, Pacifists** *Jimmy Doyle*..... 10
- Combat Conflict...Battlefield Euthanasia** *Daniel J. Hurst*..... 12
- Response to "Battlefield Euthanasia"** *Steven P. Unger*..... 17

## ESSAYS ON PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Forgiveness** *Fisher Humphreys*..... 18
- A Letter to My Granddaughter** *Tony Campolo*..... 24
- Keep Herod in Christmas** *Brett Younger*..... 26
- T.B. Maston Foundation Ethics Award** *Joe E. Trull*..... 2
- My Mandela Pilgrimage** *Patrick Anderson*..... 28

## BOOK REVIEWS

- Haunted by the Holy Ghost** *Reviewed by Walter B. Shurden*..... 29
- The Better Angels of Our Nature** *Reviewed by Fisher Humphreys*..... 30
- Every Good Endeavor** *Reviewed by Darold Morgan*..... 31

## Do you enjoy Christian Ethics Today?

In 2013, *Christian Ethics Today* reached 8000+ readers across the country and in several other countries.

We mail out over 6500 copies and email links to the electronic edition to many others. The readership has certainly grown and will continue to grow... with your help.

Since *Christian Ethics Today* Foundation's inception, several key donors have made this possible, some of whom have passed on. Foundations such as the Baugh Foundation, churches like Northminster Baptist Church, and individuals such as the Holloways and Ayers have provided continuous faithful support.

If you enjoy receiving *Christian Ethics Today*... here are some Ways to help *Christian Ethics Today*... Recently some of our readers have set up regular monthly contributions to *Christian Ethics Today*, ranging from \$25 to \$250 per month. Can you help us too?

We are asking that at this time, if you are able, that you take a moment to set up a monthly contribution through our PayPal account. Go to [www.christianethicstoday.com](http://www.christianethicstoday.com) and click on the donation tab which connects you to our PayPal processing.

Of course you do not have to use the PayPal process. You can set up a monthly gift through your bank or credit card account. Any amount would help us keep up this important work. *Christian Ethics Today* is also available online. Each edition can be sent to you by email as soon as it is completed. By receiving the Journal electronically:

- We will save money in printing and postage
- We will make less impact on the environment by using renewable energy
- You can forward an issue or article to anyone you wish
- You can add anyone you wish to our email list and share the journal
- You can print off entire issues or chosen articles

Please go online to [www.christianethicstoday.com](http://www.christianethicstoday.com) and send us a message stating your desire to change your subscription method to the email process. We will delete your hard copy from our mailing list and communicate only electronically with you. Be sure to provide your email address. And follow up with us if you do not hear from us quickly.

Thank you for your obvious concern for the ethical issues of our day, and for your interest in various viewpoints which help us all understand and respond in a faithful Christian manner to the moral and ethical issues that are of concern to contemporary Christians, to the church, and to society.

As promised from the initial issue of the journal, we will continue to produce and send *Christian Ethics Today* to anyone who requests it "as money and energy permit." Our energy is high; please help us with the money.

### Thank You

Patrick Anderson, *editor*

Amy Anderson Taylor, *managing editor*

*Board of Directors:* Aubrey Ducker (chair), Patricia Ayers, Larry Baker, Babs Baugh, Tony Capolo, Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, Carolyn Dipboye, Wendell Griffin, Fisher Humphreys, Darold Morgan, Kelly Reese, David Sapp

### Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

# Neither a Borrower nor a Lender Be?<sup>1</sup> Scripture, Usury and the Call for Responsible Lending

By Luke Bretherton

The Bible has a great deal to say about the power of money. In particular, it is quite specific about how we should treat debt and lending. A primary narrative template for understanding salvation is given in the book of Exodus. The central dramatic act of this story is liberation from debt slavery in Egypt. The Canonical structure of Genesis and Exodus in the ordering of Scripture makes this point. The book of Genesis closes with the story of Joseph. At the end of this story, although saved from famine, the Israelites, along with everyone else in Egypt, are reduced to debt slavery.<sup>2</sup> This is a 'voluntary' process entered into in order to receive the grain from Pharaoh's stores that the people had given to Pharaoh for safe keeping in the first place.<sup>3</sup> After several rounds of expropriation the people finally come before Joseph and say: 'There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands. ... Buy us and our land in exchange for food. We with our land will become slaves to Pharaoh.'<sup>4</sup> The first chapter of Exodus opens with a new Pharaoh who takes advantage of the Israelites debt slavery to exploit them. So the Israelites were not prisoners of war or chattel slaves; they were debt slaves undertaking *corvée* labour on behalf of the ruling elite.<sup>5</sup> It is this condition that the Israelites are redeemed from. As David Baker notes, the verb 'go' in ancient Hebrew is used for both the exodus and for the seventh-year release of debt slaves.<sup>6</sup> The linkage between liberation from Egypt and debt slavery is made explicit in Leviticus 25:35-46. In this text, the prohibitions against usury and limits placed on debt slavery through the institution of jubilee are grounded in the relationship established between

God and the people through the act of liberation from Egypt.

In the Gospels, Exodus is one of the key framing narratives that shapes the presentation of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. And the notion of redemption or Jesus paying with his life in order to liberate humans from our debt of sin is a *leitmotif* in the New Testament (Mark 10:45; Romans 6:21-23; Colossians 3:5-6). Indeed, the declaration of Jubilee – that is, the release from debt slavery – forms the basis of how Luke frames Jesus' announcement of his purpose and mission:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour* (Luke 4:18-19).<sup>7</sup>

And what Luke then depicts in Act 2 as a direct fruit of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the enactment of the Jubilee community where no one has debts because:

*All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need* (Acts 2.44-45).

So at heart of the story of salvation we find the power of money and liberation from debt is a central concern. The admonition that we cannot serve both God and Mammon (Matt 6:19-24) is not a trivial matter: The central drama of salvation history is an act of liberation from debt slavery.<sup>8</sup> To put the pursuit of money before the welfare of people, and to use money to re-enslave and exploit people, especially the poor and

vulnerable, is to turn your back on God's salvation and deny in practice the revelation given in Scripture of who God is. Whereas to use money to serve the common good, and in particular to relieve the poor, is a mark of salvation. Here the parables of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) and of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-20) are instructive. In these parables the wealthy who hoard their riches, using them for their own aggrandisement and benefit instead of giving and lending to others in need are condemned as not only foolish but damned.<sup>9</sup>

This brings us to the specific biblical teaching on when and how we should lend each other money. Indicative of the direct teaching on lending money is the following from Exodus 22:25:

If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them.

Not lending at interest is directly equated with righteousness, as is set out in Psalm 15:

O Lord, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill? Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right, and speak the truth from their heart; ... who stand by their oath even to their hurt; who do not lend money at interest, and do not take a bribe against the innocent.

Whether these stand as condemnations of interest *per se*, or more specifically excessive or extortionate interest is a matter of dispute. The Hebrew word used in Exodus and Psalm 15 is *neshek*, which is probably derived from the proto-semitic root of *ntk* or *nsk* meaning 'bite.'<sup>10</sup> In the Old Testament at least usury can be

used as a synonym for charging any kind of interest and is condemned as immoral in relation to those subject to covenantal obligations.

In the law given to the Israelites, central to the faithful witness of the people of God is that they do not make each other debt slaves and exploit each other in pursuit of money. Neither land (the basis of the covenant) nor the people (who were saved to serve God) are to be exploited for personal profit. Rather they are to be good neighbours to each other and good stewards of the land. The proper ordering of lending and borrowing directly effects the right ordering of communal relations. This is because the proper relationship between the land and the people is at stake. The land and fellow Israelites were non-fungible goods given by God as gifts for the flourishing of all. Possession of land did not entitle the holder to exclusive use. Human ownership and use of created goods was limited because God is the ultimate owner: humans are simply stewards of what they have received from God.<sup>11</sup> To convert land or people into fungible goods of no greater value than anything else is not only to instrumentalize them for one's own benefit, and so place one's own welfare above the good of all, but to usurp God's title. In modern parlance, we call such a process 'commodification': the treating of that which is not for sale as a commodity to be bought and sold. The extensive manumission laws of Exodus, Deuteronomy and Leviticus relate to debt slavery and are measures to keep in check such a process of commodification of land and people.<sup>12</sup> For example, in Leviticus, the Israelite who cannot pay back his loan cannot be made a debt-slave but remains free, and instead becomes a hireling of the creditor until he can amortize his debt.<sup>13</sup>

Treatment of the poor is a touchstone that marks whether relations of faithful, mutual responsibility that encompass the whole people are adhered to or not. The turning of people and land into property capable

of being traded within a monetary economy is a direct threat to the proper ordering of economic, social and political relations and the concreteness of all the people to participate in the covenantal order as those of equal value. The key issue at stake here is not usury per se (as will be seen, there is no absolute prohibition on usury in Scripture), but the nature of the relationship between the lender and the borrower as fellow members of the people of God. Both land and people belonged to God and were not to be expropriated for personal gain or monetized as commodities to be bought and sold. The Jubilee legislation served as a limit that disrupts any

---

*As can be seen central to the faithful witness of the people of God, in both Old and New Testaments, is that they do not actively make each other debt slaves and exploit each other in pursuit of money.*

---

justification to permanently expropriate land through debt.<sup>14</sup> The land was to be used to provide the means of life, not converted through exploitation or monopolisation into a means for either the death or the enslavement of one's neighbour. As Albino Barrera puts it:

YHWH as landowner affords sanctuary and provides sustenance to all sojourners who have been welcomed to reside in God's domain. Naturally by extension, guest and tenants who have been received to dwell on the land are expected to mutually respect each other and treat one another justly, if only because they are each equally under the landowner's charge as his guests and tenants.<sup>15</sup>

Legislation concerning the lending

of money frames it as a good thing to do as a response to someone in need.<sup>16</sup> But on no account should another's misfortune be turned into an opportunity for personal gain. In Nehemiah we are given a picture where the rich and powerful Israelites have become like Pharaoh and are exploiting a famine to make others debt slaves (Neh 5.3-5). Nehemiah calls the 'nobles and officials' to repentance and in particular to stop charging interest on what they are lending and make restitution (Neh 5:10). The text is a depiction of what judgment, repentance and a return to faithfulness involves. In the New Testament, the story of Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus, a tax collector and probable moneylender, directly echoes Nehemiah. The sign of Zacchaeus' repentance and that he really changed his ways is that he pays back 'four times' the money he extorted (Luke 19).

As can be seen central to the faithful witness of the people of God, in both Old and New Testaments, is that they do not actively make each other debt slaves and exploit each other in pursuit of money.<sup>17</sup> However, there is no absolute condemnation of usury in Scripture. While neither the misfortune of the poor and landless is to be exploited for personal gain, nor the lending of money or goods to one's kin to be treated as an occasion for profit, usury is licit when it comes to 'foreigners' (Deut 15:3, 23.20; Lev 25:39-54). The distinction between the prohibition of usury in relation to those subject to the laws of Israel and its *licitness* when it comes to foreigners has long troubled Christian interpreters. A common way of reconciling the seeming contradiction is through some kind of contextualisation that thereby relativises the distinction. The suggestion is that because Israel was a peasant economy most loans were distress or consumption loans rather than loans for investment. By contrast, loans to foreigners were commercial loans relating to trade. However, this solely economic explanation is too reductive.

John Calvin, who is often associated

with the economic contextualisation of the usury prohibitions in Scripture, is in fact closer to the mark when he states:

Looking at the political law, no wonder God permitted his people to exact fenory [excessive charging of interest] from foreigners: because otherwise mutual reciprocity would not have obtained, without which one side must needs be injured. God commands his people not to practise fenory, and therefore by this law lays the obligation on the Jews alone, not on foreign peoples. Therefore, in order that analogous conditions may prevail, he concedes the same liberty to his people that the Gentiles were arrogating to themselves, because precisely this moderation is tolerable, where the position of both parties is the same and equal.<sup>18</sup>

Calvin brings to the fore the issue of power and how the equal and fraternal relations of mutuality which were possible in relations between the Israelites could not be expected between the Israelites and foreigners due to the asymmetry of power.

The Deuteronomic double standard on usury suggests that, unlike in relation to murder or lying, there is no absolute moral prohibition against charging interest. Although, as Calvin perceived:

Usury has almost always these two inseparable accompaniments, *viz.* tyrannical cruelty and the art of deception. Elsewhere, the Holy Spirit, in praising the saintly, God-fearing man who has abstained from usury, likewise shows that it is very unusual to see a worthy man who is at the same time a usurer.<sup>19</sup>

One analogy for usury that helps us understand the ambiguity of Scripture in relation to usury is to compare it to a drug. Like a drug such as heroin, usury is both a poison and a remedy simultaneously.<sup>20</sup>

Its ambiguity and double-edged nature, rendered explicit in the Deuteronomic double standard, is what makes the treatment of usury such a contested and confusing field of endeavour. To offer credit at interest is to serve an essential need in the monetary economy. As the history of capitalism suggests, profiting from interest-based credit and the levels of exchange it facilitates is a potent driver in the creation of monetary wealth, technical innovation and the provision of welfare.

The effect of usury is to draw people into relationship with each other who ordinarily might have nothing in common or who are deeply suspicious of each other and have no shared life. At a concrete level, one fruit of modern economic globalisation is just such an increase in trade between enemies. However, as well as enabling exchange, credit also gives enormous power to the creditor, in some cases, it is a power to rival that of a king or an emperor, and its effects can be hugely destructive on social and political relations. The immiserating impact of debt repayments, whether on a personal level or among developing countries, are instances of this destruction. Myriad personal testimonies recount how the burden of debt leads to family breakdown, depression and, in some cases, suicide. Such is the destructive power of usury that Ambrose sees it as a form of warfare that was nevertheless lawful in relation to an enemy. As he puts it: 'wherever there is the right of war, there is also the right of usury.'<sup>21</sup>

#### **Responses to Scripture**

So Scripture has much to say about responsible lending and sees how we treat each other through lending and borrowing as a key mark of faithful witness. This may seem surprising to us, but the prohibition against usury was consistently upheld by the church as a vital sign of faithful witness right up to the modern period. Such was its importance that the prohibition of usury and the proper treatment of the poor in money matters was a central concern of the

church councils. Incorporated into deciding matters of belief and practice were condemnations of usury. For example, the Council of Nicea (AD325), from which we derive the Nicene Creed, has a direct condemnation of usury (canon 17) by clergy.<sup>22</sup> This was then extended to lay people at the Council of Clichy (AD626). And the prohibition of usury was part of Canon law from around 1140 onwards.

#### **a) Patristic**

For the earliest theologians, charging interest on a loan to someone in need was incompatible with Christian love. For example, Augustine held that we meet Christ in the poor man and should respond as Christ responds to our poverty with generosity and love and not as an opportunity for profit. For Ambrose, loaning a poor person money in their hour of need and then charging interest on the loan is like offering medicine that turns out to be poison. As Ambrose puts it, the poor man 'begs for liberty, and you impose slavery.' For all the Patristic writers, money, like all property, was given not for private enrichment but to be used in such a way as to benefit the common good, of which alleviating poverty was a central part. Even where limited interest was allowed by civil law, John Chrysostom encouraged those who heard his sermons to go beyond the law and act according to the order of love established by Christ.<sup>23</sup>

#### **b) Scholastic**

The medieval Scholastic theologians continued and developed the Patristic reflections on lending money. Aquinas and others were not against profit per se (as is sometime asserted), but 'filthy lucre': that is, unlawful and unjust profit. Specifically in relation to the lending of money, there were wide ranging and quite complex discussions about different kinds of loans and when interest could or could not be charged. Much of this was in response to the development of banking and trade from the twelfth century onwards. There emerged up to the Reformation a growing con-

sensus that distinguished legitimate interest and usury. Legitimate interest related broadly speaking to questions of i) *indemnity* (where a payment was delayed, a charge was incurred as a form of compensation, analogous to a modern credit card arrangement); ii) *risk* (where there was a danger of losing one's capital a charge could be made as a form of insurance against loss); iii) what was called *lucrum cessans* (interest could be charged where greater profit could have been earned with the money using it for something else, so the interest was a form of recompense); and iv) *remuneration* (a charge could be made for the work in managing a loan).<sup>24</sup>

Usury became the illegitimate and/or excessive charging of interest on a loan. Another specific terms for this was 'fenory' (from the Latin *foenus*) or in English 'ocker' (from the German *wocker*). Trading agreements and loan contracts where both parties were expected to gain were one thing; lending at usury, where only the usurer could profit, was quite another. Even where a charge was deemed licit, the ideal for many Scholastic theologians was that such a charge be measured or moderate. For example, the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) condemned those who were 'heavy and excessive' in what they charged. As one Elizabethan memorandum from the Public Records Office puts it: 'Usury and trewe interest be thinges as contrary as falsehood is to truth.'<sup>25</sup> Although, as with distinguishing truth from lies, it was not always clear-cut in practice!

For many of the Scholastics, charging interest on a loan was unnatural or against natural law because it went against the true end or use of money, which was as a medium of exchange. Unlike a cow or a fruit tree, left on its own money could not grow or bear fruit; rather it was sterile. As the parable of the talents makes clear, if one puts a bag of gold in the ground it will not grow but will stay the same. Likewise, give a bag of gold to someone and, unlike a house, an iPod or a pig which is affected or changed by

time and use, they can give exactly the same thing back. Thus to seek interest was to make money an end in itself rather than a means to an end and this was to make money act against its own nature (this was an argument originally put forward by Aristotle).

Beyond acting unnaturally, the excessive or illegitimate charging of interest was a mortal sin that led directly to hell. For example, Dante puts the usurer below the blasphemer and sodomite in the third ring of the seventh circle of hell (*Inferno* canto 17). Anselm saw usury as stealing from God because if money was sterile, then what was really being sold was not money but time and this did

---

*This may seem surprising to us, but the prohibition against usury was consistently upheld by the church as a vital sign of faithful witness right up to the modern period.*

---

not belong to humans but to God and could not be turned into a commodity because God had given time freely to everyone. So serious a sin was usury that the known usurer, like the heretic, could not be buried in sacred ground and the priest who did so was to be de-frocked. As with Zacchaeus, the only way to demonstrate real repentance was to make restitution of ill-gotten gains.

Anselm is particularly interesting because he developed one of the most important theologies of salvation: that of the substitutionary atonement in his work *Curs Deus Homo*. The forgiveness of debts without a charge is the central image of his theology of salvation. Contrary to many readings of his theology, salvation was not a kind of accounting process where Christ's life was counted as an equivalent exchange for human sin. Instead

of Christ's death marking a demand of divine retribution or satisfaction it represents a divine act of grace that refused to hold our debt of sin against us.<sup>26</sup> So again, release from debts and not demanding like for like continued to be a profound analogy for the gift of salvation.

### c) Reformers

Eric Kerridge argues: 'The Reformation made no real or substantial change to fundamental Christian teaching about usury, not to any of the Christian attitudes to it, remedies for it, or laws against it.'<sup>27</sup> However, there is a somewhat heated discussion between scholars on whether such an argument is right. The key point of contention is whether there is an intrinsic relationship between Protestantism and Capitalism – a debate that need not concern us here. What can be said is that Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and the other Reformers all condemned biting usury or fenory. What the Reformers, and Calvin in particular, were responding to was the need to distinguish between commercial agreements freely entered into between equals (where there is in effect a symmetry of power) and loans made to the poor in times of emergency or great need (where there is an asymmetry of power). In the latter case, consent may have been given, but it could hardly be said to be given freely. Here the Reformers were directly echoing Scholastic concerns which themselves drew on Aristotle. The key analogy in these discussions was that of a ship's captain who has to throw his cargo overboard in a storm in order to save his life and his ship. While an act of free will, it could hardly be said to be voluntary in any straightforward sense. At best such action was forced by need and involved a 'mixed will.' Likewise, the one who agrees to pay interest by dint of necessity or at a time of distress acts under duress.<sup>28</sup> In such cases, lending at interest was an act of coercion and unjust.<sup>29</sup>

Distinguishing between commercial loans and usury was vital in contexts such as Geneva, Zurich and

then Amsterdam and London where banking was crucial to the economic survival of Protestantism itself. The Reformers were not always that successful in making this distinction. However, they were clear that, as Calvin puts it: 'Usuries [i.e. the charging of interest in general and not fenory or biting usury] are not nowadays unlawful, unless and in so far as repugnant to equity and brotherly association.'<sup>30</sup> While Calvin does struggle to harmonise the different Scriptural texts when commenting upon them, the following comments can be taken an indicative of his advice in practice:

I would never advise any man to put his money out to interest, if he can employ it any ways else. Yet when a man's whole estate doth lie in ready money, he may well contract with such and such persons, that upon such and such terms it may be lawful for him to receive benefit and profit thereby. But he must be very careful, that you do not let loose the reins to demand, and take excessive gains, as is the custom and practice of too, too many, nor should he grieve all grinds the face of that poor man with whom he has contracted, nor endamage the publick interest by his own private benefit. Wherefore upon the whole, I dare not approve of any interest, till I do first know how, and upon what terms, articles and conditions, and with what persons you do transact herein.<sup>31</sup>

Such was his concern that he supported the introduction of a cap on interest rates in Geneva as did Bullinger in Zurich and for Luther anything beyond 20% was 'overmuch.'<sup>32</sup>

### Conclusion

This paper began with a quotation from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and asked the question whether we should 'neither a borrower nor a lender be'? The rest of the quote, often cited

out of context, advocates absolute independence and not risking the vulnerability and tensions involved in borrowing: 'This above all: to thine own self be true.' This is not the Christian way. To be a lender and borrower are good things. To be a lender and a borrower is to be situated within economic relations of inter-dependence, cooperation and mutual responsibility that reflect the God-given pattern of life set out in Scripture. To lend and borrow is to be drawn into real relationships that demand we negotiate a common life in which my flourishing is dependent on the flourishing of others. They are real relationships because, in a sinful world, they make explicit issues of power, risk and conflicts of interest that have to be addressed if we are to be real neighbours rather than a crowd of competitive individuals with no real connection or common life. Of course, and herein lies the irony we discovered in the recent economic crisis, the idea that we can be a crowd of competitive individuals is a utopian fantasy that does not connect with the reality of borrowing and lending where relations of interdependence and mutual responsibility are inherent in the action of borrowing and lending. If one part of the body suffers, or if only the interests of the few are attended to, eventually all suffer as the system collapses. Maintaining economic relations so that they reflect the reality of inter-dependence and mutual responsibility requires limits to ensure that the vulnerabilities involved in being a lender or a borrower do not become occasions for exploitation, oppression and abuse. But it seems many of our politicians and business leaders are still keen on putting their faith in a fantasy rather than reality. While clear in their condemnation of usury and consistent with Scripture the Patristic, Scholastic and Reformation writers were not naïve. Aquinas speaks for most in the Christian tradition when he says:

Human laws allow some sins

to go unpunished on account of the condition of imperfect men, wherefore much that is useful would be prevented should all sins be punished particularly by specific penalties. Therefore human law tolerates some usuries, not because considering them to be in accordance with justice, but lest many people's useful activities be interfered with.<sup>33</sup>

The questions confronting the church, past and present, is how to prevent unjust and extortionate interest rates, encourage responsible lending and, as Christians, point to a deeper reality and truer foundation for human life, one based on loving kindness and generosity not maximisation of profit and the private pursuit of selfish interests. We need to locate thinking about constructive responses to usury and debt as anti-idolatry measures that enable us to proper order our loves and desires in relation to God and neighbor. As indicated by the inclusion of anti-usury measures in the early church councils, the questions addressed here are ones central to the very fabric of what Christians confess and how we are called on in Scripture to live out that confession. They demand our fullest attention if we are not to discover ourselves to be 'white washed sepulchers.' ■

NOTE: All references and footnotes may be found in the electronic version at [www.christianethicstoday.com](http://www.christianethicstoday.com)

*Luke Bretherton is Associate Professor of Theological Ethics and Senior Fellow of the Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke University. His last book 'Christianity and Contemporary Politics: The Conditions and Possibilities of Faithful Witness' (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) won the 2013 Michael Ramsey Prize for Theological Writing. This essay was first published in: Crunch Time: A Call to Action, ed., Angus Ritchie (London: Contextual Theology Centre, 2010) and was adapted and used with permission of the author.*

# Predatory Lending: National Problem, Local Action

By Stephen Reeves & Steve Wells

Across Texas and in cities and states across America, people are crossing political, ideological and religious lines to combat an egregious example of a predatory business model. In Houston, faith-based and secular advocacy groups have come together to call for a local ordinance addressing the issue. Payday and auto title lenders exploit loopholes and evade state usury laws to charge fellow citizens fees and interest rates that have long been regarded as immoral. We are talking about effective interest rates that often exceed 600% annually. Lenders should lift up borrowers, not drive them into a debt from which they often cannot recover. A business that makes the vast majority of its profits by exploiting and expanding the misery of others is predatory, plain and simple.

Marketed as a quick solution for emergency situations, payday and auto title loans have proven to be far more dangerous products than advertised. A recent survey conducted by the Pew Charitable Trusts reveals that borrowers are using these loans to cover basic needs, not unexpected emergencies. An analysis of over 15 million transactions nationwide by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau found that the payday industry generates 75% of its fees from the 48% of borrowers who take out 11 or more loans a year. This industry does not thrive off of people who need the occasional emergency loan, but from chronic borrowers stuck in a cycle of debt created by these very loans with their excessive rates and fees. According to data collected by the state of Texas, every week 140 cars are repossessed by auto title lenders in Houston. Any Houstonian knows what a devastating blow it is for a struggling family to lose their car.

This industry has spread like a virus since finding the latest lucrative loophole in state law. There are

now nearly 3,500 storefront locations across Texas and over 550 in Houston. Because of our lax regulations, many of the largest lenders in the country are headquartered in Texas. What happens in Houston has impact statewide, and what happens in Texas will be felt across the country. We need to join other Texas cities in creating a united front by passing the model ordinance. Doing otherwise leaves Houstonians more vulnerable and weakens the hand of lawmakers and others, such as people of faith, who are fighting for statewide reform.

In 2013, after industry members contributed millions to campaigns and to contracts for 89 lobbyists in Austin, the legislature failed to enact reforms. The recently established Consumer Financial Protection Bureau has yet to establish national standards. The time is right for Houston to act. The city can and should stand arm-in-arm with the many other cities in Texas currently using their municipal authority to combat this excessive practice. Houstonians deserve at minimum the same protections as citizens in Dallas, Austin, San Antonio, El Paso, Denton and elsewhere. Mayor Parker did the right thing when she came out in support of the model ordinance and it is time for city council members to pass these strong provisions as soon as possible.

City ordinances in place elsewhere have proven themselves effective. Lenders have changed their practices and collected fewer fees. They cut into the debt trap, not by reducing the amount of fees or interest lenders can charge, but simply by requiring that each time a payment is made it must contain 25% of the principal borrowed. This corrects the current system by preventing lenders from endlessly collecting fees without reducing what borrowers owe. Local ordinances also attempt to require some

basic underwriting standards such as limiting loan size based on a borrower's income. Currently, lenders make almost no assessment of a borrower's ability to repay.

Faith leaders ministering to Houstonians have seen firsthand the impact of these products. Members of Houston congregations and those who come to houses of worship for help have become trapped in the cycle of debt. Every month, benevolence funds are given to folks to help cover basic needs while their budgets are wrecked paying fees on payday or auto title loans. It is disconcerting to watch charitable dollars being used to subsidize this industry. Many congregations offer financial literacy programs in their congregations and communities. Some are even exploring partnerships with credit unions and other strategies to offer alternative loan products with fair rates. Responsible citizens cannot allow such blatant exploitation of those who find themselves in a desperate situation to continue.

Fortunately, Houston is a booming metropolis with the best economy in the country. Laws and regulations are structured to ensure that businesses thrive. We must act to give our families that same chance. The debt cycle hurts every other legitimate business in Houston as it drains financial resources from our fellow citizens. We are pleased Mayor Parker has come out publicly for a strong ordinance and it is time for city council members to join the fight and do the right thing. ■

*This essay is adapted from a letter to Houston City Council members signed by local faith leaders. Stephen Reeves is associate coordinator of partnerships and advocacy of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship; Steve Wells is senior pastor of South Main Baptist Church in Houston, Texas. Houston passed the ordinance supported by this essay.*

# The Budget and Your Neighbor

by Lisa Sharon Harper

Gov. John R. Kasich (R-Ohio) did a shocking thing recently. He broke with his political allies and decided to expand Medicaid to 275,000 poor people in his state through the Affordable Care Act. Then he called a spade a spade, saying: "I'm concerned about the fact there seems to be a war on the poor."

Kasich's statement came just two days ago. And today, 47 million low-income Americans will see their food stamps benefits decrease as stimulus funding ends. In light of this newly named "war on the poor," I've been reflecting on Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan, and the man's question to Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" What an intriguing question.

Of course one of the most incredible things about this story is that Jesus never answers the lawyer's question. Rather, he tells a story about a man beaten by robbers on a dangerous road. He was stripped naked left lying there, clinging to life. Both a priest and Levite pass him by, but a Samaritan went out of his way, broke his usual routine, used up his own gas (or at least his donkey's energy) to bring the man to an inn. And he took care of him overnight at the inn, offering the innkeeper what would today be about \$330.

And then Jesus flips the script! The lawyer asked who exactly is my neighbor? Who do I have to love? And conversely who can I cross off my need-to-love list?

Jesus doesn't answer the question. Jesus returns his question with a question: "Who was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

Nowadays we hardly have a concept of what it means to be a neighbor anymore.

We live in a hyper-individualized, digital world where we have the ability to completely surround ourselves

only with the people we choose to let into our lives. On Facebook, we accept the friends we want and ignore those we don't; on Twitter we choose who we follow and block those we don't want following us; on Instagram and Pinterest we can surf people's pictures and pins for hours without them knowing. We can feel close to them, but not actually *be close* to them. It's possible to never leave our rooms and feel like we're interacting with thousands of neighbors!

But what did Jesus mean when he said "Be a neighbor"?

Some scholars believe the man who was robbed was probably Jewish. The Jews and Samaritans were serious ethnic enemies. It's likely that this Jewish man was on this dangerous road to avoid going through Samaria.

So, it's significant that the one who ended up *being* a neighbor is the Samaritan. What Jesus is saying is: "Oh, lawyer, you're trying to ex-people off of your 'need-to-love' list, but I'm telling you to love like the Samaritan loved — love without placing limits on those you need to love, and then you will inherit eternal life."

Love without limits is what holiness looks like.

What would it look like to love like the Samaritan loved — without limits? What would it look like for us to extend our love beyond the screens of our laptops, iPads, and iPhone receivers to really *love* the people who live right next door to us?

Now, what about the neighbor we'll never know? The one across the tracks, the other side of the highway, the other side of town?

How do we *love* the people we don't know? Well, first we can get to know their stories.

Here's mine:

There was a point in the middle of The Great Recession when I didn't

know where my next meal was going to come from.

I was the founder and executive director of an anti-poverty Christian group in New York City, called NY Faith & Justice. Two years into our awesome adventure, just as we were receiving new interest from foundations, the bottom fell out of the economy. Suddenly, our money dried up. Several of us worked for little to no pay, including myself, for about a year. I relied on speaking honoraria to make ends meet; sometimes they didn't. Sometimes I was able to fall back on the kindness of my parents, who helped me get through that year. When they weren't able to help, I scrimped and looked for coins in pants pockets and jars. And when that didn't work, I prayed.

One day, in the middle of praying, I remembered my sister. I called her and asked if I could come over to eat dinner with her and her family of four that night. She was struggling, too, but she said, "Sure! Come over!" I've never been so thankful for a meal. As I traveled home, all I could think was: "What about the millions of people across the country who don't have family or friends they can fall back on?" What if I had no personal safety net?

Poverty is merciless. It hears cries for mercy and laughs in your face. People in poverty have *no* out. If they are hungry, then they stay hungry. If they are hungry long enough, then they starve or get sick. When they get sick, they wait it out and hope it goes away because they have inadequate or no health care. If it doesn't go away — like cancer or diabetes or Lupus or asthma or a simple tooth infection — it gets worse. If it gets bad enough, they die. That's poverty. Now, consider this:

According to a recent U.S. Census *(continued on page 17)*

## God, Jesus, Pacifists, Pansies, & A Girl from Pakistan: Thoughts on Mark Driscoll's Latest Article

By Jimmy Doyle

Mark Driscoll's article, "*Is God a Pacifist?*", has spurred a lot of online discussion and debate—and rightly so, because his article raises (and glosses over) several complex and difficult topics.

In my own understanding of Jesus' teachings, his life, and the practices of the early church, I lean heavily towards pacifism. However, I know that if my family were threatened with violence, my response could be anything but peaceful or lacking in violence. Beyond this inner and (thankfully) theoretical struggle of "what would I do?" my initial thoughts after reading Driscoll's post were these (though not in the order I felt them):

First, on the violence of God, Driscoll is right that in the scriptures God acts violently and brutally at times, both with surges of emotional anger and calculated judgment. This happens in the Hebrew scriptures beginning with the Flood, follows on occasion throughout various passages, and is predicted in New Testament texts as something that is to be expected in the future. Part of this prediction of judgment is recorded in the Gospels as even being voiced by Jesus himself, multiple times. To deny this is to deny the reality of what is in the Bible, and any approach that would knowingly do so must admit this, in my opinion. Too often we ignore images of God in the scripture that make us uncomfortable. Sometimes, if we are honest, the descriptions of God in the Bible *embarrass us*. This is true of Mark Driscoll, who doesn't like a pacifist Jesus who says "turn the other cheek" and practices it, and it is true for those of us who would rather not deal with God's messengers stomping on winepresses full of

people (Revelation 14:19-20). So, we construct images of God that suit us better, that we can put on the altars of our agendas, and declare: "*This is the God of the Bible!*", rather than honestly wrestling with these passages and with a God who just doesn't seem to fit into our narrowly framed boxes.

Second, Jesus is our example and model.

Driscoll is wrong in his attempt to associate our behavior or use of violence with God's actions as a just judge, divine creator, and parent

---

***There is nothing in the life or the teachings of Jesus that would advocate violence from one person to another.***

---

of us all. Rather, as human beings, the example for us is Jesus, who fills out and completes what faithful human existence looks like. God-in-humanity is our goal rather than God-as-deity. What Jesus gives us is a blueprint for how the *imago Dei*, the image of God, is to be fulfilled *in human existence* -- and without a doubt *Christ's model* is not one of violence, but one of suffering and serving for all, even enemies. There is nothing in the life or the teachings of Jesus that would advocate violence from one person to another. I don't know how the following words could be interpreted (even if taken as hyperbole) as anything other than what we generally understand to be pacifism:

But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those

who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

"If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6.27–36 ESV).

Jesus goes on in that passage to say, "*Why do you call me 'Lord' and not do what I say?*" and so he seems to want his followers to take these instructions seriously. The issue isn't the clarity of Jesus' statements on this. The issue is my own inability or unwillingness to live creatively and responsively in submission to it. Significantly, rather than grounding his teaching for human morals/ethics/faithfulness/identity in the violent aspects of God, Jesus grounds them in God's mercy. Being "sons of God" in the previous passage is about

being *merciful* like the Father. It is seemingly at the opposite end of the spectrum from Driscoll's approach.

In addition, the early Church far and away followed this Christ-taught model of pacifism rather than violence, even at times suffering great harm and death at the hands of both government and local citizenry without violent response or defense.

Third, Driscoll is right: Jesus is not a pansy. But Driscoll is wrong about what a "pansy" is. The notion that pacifism is something for "pansies" or "weaklings" belies a basic ignorance about the reality of what the practice of pacifism has meant and looked like historically. It certainly mis-portrays the Savior who willingly accepted and did not violently respond to the torture and death he received at the hands of (and *for the sake of*) his enemies. Anyone who would label those who have consistently *chosen non-violence* in the face of great violence, suffering, and death in such derogatory ways simply doesn't know what they are talking about. How does one say such things about Gandhi, Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King, Jr., or the millions of martyrs throughout history? In the early Christian tradition, those who responded to violence with non-violence (even when facing the most horrible atrocities) were considered heroes.

Fourth, some of the most tenacious fighters are pacifists

Driscoll is wrong (or at least confused) in his basic notion that pacifists are not fighters. Pacifism is not passivism. Pacifists are often determined and tireless fighters, but their weapons are not those of violence and their concern is not limited to a notion of victory that can happen only at a *destructive cost* to the personhood, dignity, or existence of those who would be their enemies. Pacifists like Gandhi and King understood that those who opposed them were also trapped and enslaved

in systems blind to human-value, and that oppressors need to be set free just as the oppressed do. "Winning" or "victory" in this scenario doesn't demolish or destroy the enemy, but sets out to liberate enemies by turning them into friends and to non-violently resisting (and hopefully transforming) *the systems* that enslave. For Dr. King, the method for this was clearly based upon Christ's call to love one another and to love one's enemies:

After contemplation, I conclude that this award which I receive on behalf of that movement is a profound recognition that nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral question of our time – the need for man to overcome oppression and violence with-

---

***Anyone who would label those who have consistently chosen non-violence in the face of great violence, suffering, and death in such derogatory ways simply doesn't know what they are talking about.***

---

out resorting to violence and oppression. Civilization and violence are antithetical concepts. Negroes of the United States, following the people of India, have demonstrated that nonviolence is not sterile passivity, but a powerful moral force which makes for social transformation. Sooner or later all the people of the world will have to discover a way to live together in peace, and thereby transform this pending cosmic elegy into a creative

psalm of brotherhood. If this is to be achieved, man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.

As an example of this mentality, Driscoll's post likewise brought to mind Jon Stewart's recent interview on the Daily Show with the young Pakistani woman, Malala Yousafzai, who was shot in the face after standing up to the Taliban for the rights of girls and women to be educated (something she continues to do). In the interview, she stated regarding Taliban threats:

...I started thinking about that, and I used to think that the Talib would come, and he would just kill me. But then I said, if he comes, 'What would you do, Malala?' Then I would reply to myself, 'Malala, just take a shoe and hit him.' [she smiles and the audience laughs]. But then I said, 'If you hit a Talib with your shoe, then there would be no difference between you and the Talib. You must not treat others that much with cruelty, and that much harshly. You must fight others, but through peace and through dialogue and through education.' Then I said I'll tell him how important education is, and that I even want education for your children, as well. And then I'll tell him, 'That's what I want to tell you. Now do what you want.'"

As I said earlier: I dare Driscoll to call this young lady a "pansy". She's a pacifist, she's a fighter, and she has the scars to prove it. ■

This essay was published in [www.redletterchristians.org](http://www.redletterchristians.org) and is reprinted with permission.

# Combat Conflict: Is Battlefield Euthanasia Mercy or Murder?

By Daniel J. Hurst

## Introduction

Under the auspices of compassion and autonomy, many are calling for the widespread legalization and social acceptance of euthanasia. In countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg, euthanasia has already been decriminalized with more countries sure to follow suit. As physicians, politicians, and bioethicists debate the moral and legal intricacies of such a practice, the church also must have a voice on the issue and provide sound ethical guidance to undergird the discussion.

*Euthanasia*<sup>1</sup>, though admittedly difficult to define as the term stands for a wide variety of practices, for the purposes of this essay will be defined as follows: the act or practice of killing or permitting the death of an individual in a relatively painless manner for reasons of mercy. This practice takes on many different forms and occurs in wide-ranging contexts in our world today; one such context is the wartime battlefield. Because of our national state of affairs, we have in the past decade been more acutely aware of cases of active euthanasia -- euthanasia entailing the use of lethal substances or force to kill -- occur on the battle-grounds of Iraq and Afghanistan.

While military law is clear -- killing a soldier who has left the fight is considered a criminal act and subject to court-martial -- here are still unanswered ethical questions involved and many who contend that delivering a *coup de grace* (death blow delivered intentionally to end the suffering of an injured combatant) to the wounded soldier is the humane course of action.

Strikingly, military medical ethics seems to be absent from much of the conversation and literature of bioethics today. Nonetheless, killing an incapacitated combatant,

friend or foe, or an injured civilian non-combatant in a wartime theatre spurs a host of ethical and legal questions which must be addressed. The aim of this essay is to explore the unique roles of military physicians and soldiers as they relate to battlefield euthanasia and to answer the question as to whether military mercy-killing<sup>2</sup> is ever morally permissible. The analysis of this essay will be carried out as follows: Initially we will set out with a discussion of the ethics of killing; second, differing ethical systems will be examined for their treatment of euthanasia; lastly, we will conclude with a biblical examination of the topic which will be aided by Christian theology and philosophy.

## Ethics of Killing

The sixth commandment Yahweh gave Moses on Mount Sinai was the charge *"You shall not murder."*<sup>3</sup> Many have hastily concluded that Yahweh categorically pronounced all killing to be a sinful, prohibited act. However, to lump all killing into that class would be rash indeed. To elucidate this claim we must look at pertinent sections of Scripture to see precisely what the Lord did and did not condemn.

In various places in the Old Testament canon we read of the Lord telling Israel to go to battle against a rival nation. This is exemplified by Yahweh's command in Deuteronomy 20:

*But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the LORD your God has commanded, that they may*

*not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the LORD your God (16-18).*

Though this is a difficult passage and presents several tough questions, what can be assured is that Yahweh is displaying his saving mercy on Israel by showing judgment upon other nations that utterly defile his name.<sup>4</sup> This should not be misconstrued as Yahweh committing indiscriminate ethnic cleansing in which, as Oxford biologist and noted atheist Richard Dawkins declares, "bloodthirsty massacres" were carried out with "xenophobic relish."<sup>5</sup> Rather, what is in view here is a holy God pronouncing judgment on a civilization that is beyond repentance. If this seems too harsh for today's audiences, then it is not because the Lord erred in how he dealt with sin, but is because we have too low a view on how an all-holy God views our transgression; simply, we do not view sin the way God does. Ultimately what we see in this passage, and similar ones, is that divinely-sanctioned acts of war are not sinful and thus do not constitute the sin of murder of Exodus 20.

In addition to divinely-sanctioned killing, sections of the Pentateuch also speak of willful and premeditated killing as always being subject to capital punishment (Lev. 24:17; Num. 35:16-21). Thus, we can rightly conclude that these are instances of murder and fall under the ban of Exodus 20:13.<sup>6</sup> Contrasted with this is the act of accidental manslaughter in which the manslayer was clearly immune from the punishment imposed for willful killing.<sup>7</sup>

From the foregoing it is clear that the Bible does not simply lump together all instances of killing into one homogenous category of murder. As theologian Millard Erickson con-

cludes, "While the taking of life per se was bad (cf. Gen. 9:6), there was condemnable killing (murder), excusable killing, and even mandatory killing."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> With some of the stipulations and ethical guidelines for what constitutes a just killing in view, we will now turn our attention to address the more specific question of mercy-killing and whether or not it is ever morally permissible.

## Case Studies

In order to further draw out the moral implications of military mercy-killings, actual scenarios must be cited and interacted with. There are numerous examples of mercy-killing from both ancient and modern times that would be applicable for this study. However, only three will be examined in the context of this essay. These real-world examples will serve a dual purpose: 1) to provide the reader with a better idea of the state of affairs surrounding many acts of mercy-killing and, 2) they will be beneficial in our analysis as we examine differing ethical systems in the subsequent section.

Thebez, ca. 12th c. In Judges 9, when Abimilech was engaged in war against the town of Thebez, a "certain woman threw an upper millstone on Abimilech's head and crushed his skull" (9:53). Not dying initially from the blow, he then said to his armor-bearer, *"Draw your sword and kill me, lest they say of me, 'A woman killed him'"* (9:54b). His armor-bearer complied and he was slain.<sup>9</sup>

Palestine, 1799. When his forces reached Jaffa, Napoleon, worried that the Turks would catch his army, consulted with Dr. René-Nicolas Desgenettes.<sup>10</sup> According to Desgenettes, Napoleon said, "If I were in your place, I should put an end to the sufferings of our plague patients and, at the same time, to the danger they represent for us, by giving them opium." Desgenettes, however, disagreed, relating to Bonaparte that his duty was to preserve life. Bonaparte countered and argued that his chief duty was to preserve the army: "I shall

not try to overcome your scruples, but I believe I shall find people who will appreciate my intentions more than you do."<sup>11</sup>

Helmand Province, Afghanistan, 2008. In October 2008 while serving as an infantry officer for the Canadian Army in Afghanistan, Captain Robert Semrau allegedly came upon a gravely wounded insurgent and fired two shots from his rifle into the man.<sup>12</sup> Semrau received a general court-martial for his actions which led to the man's death. Tried by military court in 2010, he was subsequently found not guilty of murder. However, Semrau was found guilty of disgraceful conduct, released from the military, and had his rank reduced to a second lieutenant. The court did not sentence him to any jail time.

---

*What are we to do with wounded soldiers one cannot care for and one cannot abandon? Are there ever any instances when it may be permissible to let them die or kill them?*

---

## Euthanasia and Differing Ethical Systems

These stories test our moral constitution and cause a stir of emotions within us. Compassion is felt not just for the one who is the object of the action but also for the agent by which the act is performed. Each story is unique in its situation and in what it presents. Crucial questions are raised when considering the pertinent issue of battlefield euthanasia, such as: What are we to do with wounded soldiers one cannot care for and one cannot abandon? Are there ever any instances when it may be permissible to let them die or kill them? Is there ever sufficient cause, aside from tactical grounds, to kill a combatant or civilian that poses no immediate

threat to life?<sup>13</sup> These questions and similar ones will be addressed as we examine how different ethical systems treat the issue of euthanasia.

## Utilitarianism and Euthanasia

Despite the fact that the US and allied nations have sought to preserve life in situations when the enemy is no longer a threat, many see this as paradoxical to the very notion of war. Opponents of the United States' stance cite numerous reasons for not conserving enemy life. Indeed, the very concept of preservation in the midst of carnage can be puzzling. Doing your all to save an injured enemy's life once he becomes inoperative, despite the fact that he was immediately beforehand determined to take yours, presents a remarkable contrast. Further, the adversaries we have encountered in Iraq and Afghanistan and numerous other theatres do not abide by the same Rules of Engagement (ROE) that our military does. Their use of inhumane tactics, disregard for the value of life, and scorn of international law makes it difficult to have compassion on insurgents and terrorists.

Further, medical and tactical reasons to kill an enemy who has laid down arms do exist. Though there is no single brand of utilitarianism and therefore some difference in approaches to euthanasia, classic utilitarianism makes the claim that an act is just and therefore morally right if it maximizes the overall level of happiness or good. Thus, utilitarianism locates morality in the consequences of an act.

Applying this ethical system to euthanasia raises many considerations. First, how does one put a value on the amount of good one has gained or lost by killing a wounded combatant? There is always the consequence of prematurely killing an injured soldier who is actually not gravely wounded and thus causing greater harm. Further, what does killing a soldier do for the morale of his fellow comrades? The camaraderie behind the concept of "leave no man behind" is completely abandoned in preference for one's

own advantage.

Napoleon's consequentialist ethical framework seems precisely to have been the impetus to poison, by some accounts, some 50 of his French soldiers sick with the bubonic plague in order to speed the army's flight from the ensuing Turks.<sup>14</sup>

In the utilitarian ethic, the argument could be made that it does not make sense to use valuable resources to keep one's enemy (or even a friendly) alive unless they possess strategic value—i.e. extracting information, POW exchange, etc. Moreover, these valuable medical resources may be needed in the future for one's own forces that can be saved; why squander them on enemy personnel or friendlies that are dire conditions? Logically, war strains medical supplies, thus, the triaging of medical supplies must be taken into view when making decisions.

A further consideration is that military units must weigh the consequences of keeping survivors who can compromise their mission and give away positions to other able-bodied insurgents. One must explore the aspects of military necessity, patriotic duty, and the effects this may have on the morale of the remaining troops. However, in a utilitarian system it does seem that euthanasia would be tolerated, for the function of the injured as able-bodied soldiers is no longer valid. If no greater good is served by keeping them alive then the alternative -- termination of life, as in the French Army -- comes into view.

### Deontology and Euthanasia

"Consequences play an important part in moral decisions, and not least for the Christian," noted Christian philosopher Arthur Holmes.<sup>15</sup> Christians ought to be concerned with doing good to others as Jesus himself iterates in the oft-quoted golden rule, "*And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them*" (Luke 6:31). Yet, as Holmes also states, Christian ethical theory needs a deontological element, an emphasis on moral obligation that is not sim-

ply a function of desires or circumstances.<sup>16</sup> Deontology in general will be discussed in this section and will be followed with an in-depth biblical approach to mercy-killing.

Deontology is an approach to ethics that is based upon duties or obligations. Thus, in a deontological framework where one would see that right action corresponds to one's duty, an argument could be made that there is a connection between a citizen's duty to serve his/her country and the state's obligation to provide appropriate medical care for the service member. This link, as political scientist and philosopher Michael Gross has set forth, can be traced to military necessity.<sup>17</sup> Gross also contends that the goal of military medicine is not to save lives, *per se*, but to salvage the lives of wounded combatants so they can swiftly return to the fight. This rationale can be seen in the Army Medical Department's (AMEDD) mission statement:

The mission of the AMEDD is to conserve the fighting strength... Combat health support maximizes the system's ability to maintain presence with the supported soldier, return injured, sick, and wounded soldiers to duty, and to clear the battlefield of soldiers who cannot return to duty.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, it does seem clear that Gross is correct in asserting that military medical ethics does not peak to saving the lives of soldiers as an end in itself, but of salvaging their lives so they can return to the fight.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, because current law dictates that wounded soldiers be treated, a deontological ethical system would reject euthanasia. The First Geneva Convention of 1949 clearly and succinctly stipulates that the killing of enemy combatants who are rendered *hors de combat* (literally "outside the fight") is strictly prohibited. As chapter 2, article 12 states:

Members of the armed forces ... who are wounded or sick, shall be respected and protected in all circumstances. They shall be treated humanely and cared

for by the Party to the conflict in whose power they may be.... Any attempts upon their lives, or violence to their persons, shall be strictly prohibited...; they shall not willfully be left without medical assistance and care, nor shall conditions exposing them to contagion or infection be created. Only urgent medical reasons will authorize priority in the order of treatment to be administered....The Party to the conflict which is compelled to abandon wounded or sick to the enemy shall, as far as military considerations permit, leave with them a part of its medical personnel and material to assist in their care.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, the Convention emphasized the sanctity of human life and the importance of preserving the life of those who have laid down arms or are no longer able to fight. The United States, being among the signatories of this treaty, is bound by international law to both uphold it and ensure its adherence by those who serve in its armed forces. To emphasize the point more, the ROE card issued to every member in Iraq of the Coalition Forces Land Component Command stated, "Do not engage anyone who has surrendered or is out of battle due to sickness or wounds".<sup>21</sup> Before an accused charged with a combat-related mercy-killing can claim justification as a defense he would have to demonstrate that he was acting pursuant to a legal duty -- either by statute, regulation or order. There are no statutes, regulations, or orders that authorize the killing of a gravely wounded combatant, no longer a threat, by U.S. Armed Forces.<sup>22</sup> The US military and its allied nations have stated clearly that there are severe consequences for those who do not abide by these statutes.

Eighteenth century German philosopher Immanuel Kant is often regarded as the most important deontologist for a number of reasons. Kant wrote extensively on the issue of suicide and though military mercy-killings do not

constitute this act, insight can still be gathered. For Kant, suicide was a paradigmatic example of an action that violates moral responsibility; it violated the moral law. When applying Kant's notion of the categorical imperative that one ought to "act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law,"<sup>23</sup> we see that in a Kantian worldview mercy-killing would not be acceptable as the universality of killing all wounded soldiers would be too far-reaching and such an indiscriminate action would not be allowed. For Kant, issues of the suffering of the patient or treatment cost are not morally relevant; the act itself is in view and the consequences are inconsequential. Indeed, Kant believed that the proper end of rational beings requires self-preservation. Suicide, and by extension mercy-killing, would therefore be inconsistent with the fundamental value of human life.<sup>24</sup>

### A Biblical Approach to Mercy-Killing

Now that we have discussed some of the ethics of killing in general, cited multiple accounts of mercy-killing, and reviewed the responses of differing ethical systems, we now focus our attention on a biblical approach to the issue.

The case of battlefield euthanasia seen in Judges 9 is the only case present in the Bible.<sup>25</sup> There is no further commentary on the event in Scripture. It is neither evaluated for its praiseworthiness nor condemned as abominable; it is simply reported. "Yet", as Millard Erickson writes, "it appears that fear of disgrace rather than of suffering motivated the act".<sup>26</sup> Thus, it is difficult to derive any moral precedence from the instance. While it stands that the Bible does not explicitly address mercy-killings, there are several theological principles that shed light on this ethical dilemma. Let us now look at some of these principles and their application to our current conversation.

Since battlefield euthanasia is a

form of killing, it is morally suspect, and the burden of proof falls on those who would allow it, for killing must remain the exception and not the norm.<sup>27</sup> Why is this the case? In most situations humans have a *prima facie* right not to be killed; that is, upon initial examination this matter appears to be self-evident.<sup>28</sup> Life is endowed by the Creator and is not a matter of utilitarian value. In the sight of God, all life is of value and inherently sacred simply on account of its existence. Grounds for the sanctity of human life can be made from several viewpoints, including religious, which is where our discussion now leads.

Primarily, the religious argument from the Christian perspective is grounded in the belief that all humanity is created in the *imago Dei* and has been endowed with intrinsic value that is independent of utility or function. Euthanasia cheapens the value and respect society has for life. Prohibitions against killings occur in the Bible, most notably in the Ten Commandments, as aforementioned. While this does not necessarily require that life always be preserved, it does exclude the possibility of acting to terminate life arbitrarily.<sup>29</sup> German theologian-pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer defined arbitrary killing as the act in which innocent life is deliberately destroyed in any context in which it does not engage in a conscious attack upon another's life and cannot be convicted of a capital offense.<sup>30</sup> By his definition, Bonhoeffer concludes that the killing of an enemy who is acting as a combatant is not arbitrary:

For even if he is not personally guilty, he is nevertheless consciously participating in the attack of his people against the life of my people and he must share in bearing the consequences of the collective guilt.<sup>31</sup>

Bonhoeffer further concludes that it would indeed be an arbitrary act to kill defenseless prisoners or wounded soldiers, friend or foe, for a tactical advantage when they can no longer render themselves a threat to life.<sup>32</sup>

"The sparing of life," he contends, "has an incomparably higher claim than killing can have."<sup>33</sup> The taking of the life of another must never be simply one tactical possibility amongst others, no matter how well-founded and seemingly advantageous.<sup>34</sup>

Frequently paired with the principle of sanctity of life is that of the sovereignty of God. This reminds us that God is the Creator, giver and sustainer of life, and deduces that only he has the right to bring life to an end and any act to the contrary would be self-deification, usurping a right that properly belongs to God.<sup>35</sup> However, many will argue their case for euthanasia based upon autonomy and suffering, both of which deserve a closer examination.

The case for euthanasia based on personal autonomy might be explained as: "This is my body and I have complete control over how I use or abuse it. Further, if humans are endowed with the right to life, then it stands to reason that they also have the right to die." There are many issues that arise when one takes this stance. Possession of this so-called right is often invoked for those with terminal illness who desire to end their lives either by suicide or euthanasia. This may also include declining life-sustaining or life-prolonging treatment in favor of a certain and swifter death. A necessary moral distinction must be drawn between killing and letting-die. In the situation of a wounded combatant on the battlefield who cannot be transported and is not likely to survive his wounds, killing him in order to end his suffering or letting him die on his own are dissimilar. Though the outcomes may be the same, the manners of arrival are disparate.<sup>36</sup> Captain Semrau of the Canadian Army blurred these lines when he chose to end the life of a gravely wounded insurgent who no longer posed a threat to coalition forces.

From a Christian worldview, life is not a right in the sense that it is not a moral or legal entitlement. The

Creator does not owe life to his creatures and it would be morally just for him to withdraw it at any time. The creation story of Adam in Genesis 2 recounts the way that God “formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature” (2:7b). Likewise, David expresses the realization that our lives are upheld by the Lord when he writes, “My times are in your hand” (Ps 31:15). What can be seen is that in a Christian framework we are dependent beings and can claim no such “right to life” from God. Writing on the subject of rights-based suicide and euthanasia, noted Christian bioethicist Gilbert Meilaender has stated the following:

What should be clear, though, is that Christians do not approach this issue by first thinking in terms of a “right to life” or a “right to die with dignity.” This is to say, we do not start with the language of independence. Within the story of my life I have the relative freedom of a creature, but it is not simply “my” life to do with as I please. I am free to end it, of course, but not free to do so without risking something as important to my nature as freedom: namely, the sense of myself as one who always exists in relation to God.<sup>37</sup>

God is creator and euthanasia expresses a desire to be both free and unaccountable—a desire to be more like Creator than creature.<sup>38</sup>

Further, many will maintain that the humane action is to eliminate suffering at any cost. As the beatitude states, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Matt. 5:7). However, serious flaws exist with this line of reasoning when attempting to apply Jesus’ words to instances of euthanasia. It must be stated that anyone with an ounce of compassion sympathizes with those who have to endure incessant suffering and pain. Certainly their best interest is what is driving this discussion and is a prima-

ry consideration; many other factors, however, must be considered.

A view of human dignity and the value of human life which stems from the belief that all persons are created in the image of their Creator must underpin any discussion of killing. This must be forefront to the conversation because many times the key arguments favoring euthanasia are emotive—sympathies are aroused by an appeal to suffering and pain. I am not suggesting that suffering and pain should not be alleviated when ethically possible, but pain is not the ultimate tragedy.

It would serve us well to have a biblical framework of suffering and realize that it may be part of God’s divine plan for his creatures to suffer. Indeed the advocacy of mercy-killing disregards this biblical perspective

---

*It would serve us well to have a biblical framework of suffering and realize that it may be part of God’s divine plan for his creatures to suffer.*

---

on suffering. In the account of Paul’s conversion on the Damascus Road after he has his eyesight taken from him and is led to Damascus, Jesus appears to Ananias, a disciple, and tells him to go visit Paul for, “I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name” (Acts 9:16). Astoundingly, we read of Paul’s joyful response to his suffering all throughout his epistles, most notably in Philippians when he writes from his incarcerated state, “I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ” (1:12-13). Moreover, a few verses later he boldly claims that “it has been granted to you that for the sake

of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have” (1:29-30). Therefore, cessation of pain may in fact, in some instances, cause greater harm than good. On the concept of the cessation of pain not being the ultimate goal, Erickson has the following to say:

If the only consequence of euthanasia were the cessation of pain and the cessation of pain were the ultimate good, then euthanasia would be good. However, Scripture suggests that physical comfort is not to be the primary goal of man. As being created in the image of God, man’s ultimate goal concerns his relationship to his Creator.<sup>39</sup>

### Conclusion

Christian theologian and ethicist David VanDrunen rightly surmises that the modern emphasis upon individual rights “has produced considerable social pressure to recognize a right to die and right to receive help in dying for the purpose of escaping end-of-life suffering and attaining an elusive death with dignity.”<sup>40</sup> Despite the sympathy that Christians often feel toward such demands when contemplating the genuine misery that many people experience in their final days, the theological and ethical truths of Christianity highlight the incompatibility of mercy-killing with Christian faith and life.<sup>41</sup>

This essay has set forth the argument that killing is not always a necessary evil. The Bible, as demonstrated above, does give exceptions to the sixth commandment—self-defense, justifiable warfare, and so on. Thus, killing is at times an appropriate action. We are not told if this list is exhaustive and all-inclusive and, thus, it would seem wise to limit the exceptions to those clearly revealed and allow the principle to stand otherwise.<sup>42</sup> ■

*Daniel J. Hurst is a chaplain in the United States Air Force.*

## Response to “Battlefield Euthanasia”

By Steven P. Unger

To be blunt, once you get past the attention-getting title, there was not much there of value. The author seems to be very legalistic, clinically detached, enjoys showing how widely read he is, sees the world in black and white, and has never been on a battlefield.

While possible to deconstruct every paragraph, I will only pull two threads of the essay to unravel it all. Page one contains the statement:

“The aim of this essay is to explore the unique roles of military physicians and soldiers as it concerns battlefield euthanasia and to answer the question as to whether military mercy-killing is *ever* morally permissible.” (Emphasis mine) (The author says “no.”)

Page eight contains this gem:

“A view of human dignity and the value of human life which stems from the belief that all persons are created in the image of their Creator must underpin any discussion of killing. This must be forefront to the conversation because many times the key arguments favoring euthanasia are emotive—sympathies are aroused by an appeal to suffering and pain. I am not suggesting that suffering and pain should not be alleviated when ethically possible, but pain is not the ultimate tragedy. It would serve us well to have a biblical framework of suffering and realize *that it may be part of God’s divine plan for his creatures to suffer*” (Emphasis mine) (The author assures us this is the case. It worked for Paul!)

After reading this I was forced to recall a day in Afghanistan when four of our Marines burned to death in a Humvee after driving past a command detonated Improvised Explosive

Device (IED). Had I been in their place I would have preferred a quicker death. I also recall the Vietnam era riverine Sailor that I befriended in my enlisted career. Badly wounded when his boat hit a submerged mine, he hid in the brush with this pistol in his mouth while the Viet-Cong searched for him. He was determined to take his own life before a ruthless enemy discovered him and subjected him to a slow death. He credited God for the miracle that he was not captured. Who feels free to judge him for his choice of suicide over capture and torture?

To compare the kind of suffering that real warriors have witnessed—sometimes so horrible that we never tell even the deceased’s loved ones about it—to the redemptive suffering the Lord subjected Paul to, is both infuriating and insulting to God. Rationalizing that inhumane suffering might be “part of God’s plan” was the logic of the torturers during the Spanish Inquisition.

Warriors would never make that association and those who espouse ethics outside the ivory tower shouldn’t either. ■

*Steven P. Unger is a Chaplain in the U.S. Marine Corps*

### The Budget and Your Neighbor

(continued from page 9)

Bureau [report](#), in 1959 the white poverty level was at 18 percent. That’s high. At the same time, 55 percent of black people were living below the poverty line. When 55 percent of any population is living in poverty, we’ve got to recognize — people are getting beat up on the road here. So in 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson declared an “unconditional war on poverty.” Congress passed a series of laws that created many of the anti-poverty programs we know today:

- Food Stamps (now the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)
- Head Start
- Medicare
- Medicaid

Ten years later the poverty rate for black people in the U.S. had fallen to 30 percent. What’s more, the white poverty level dropped more than half from 18 percent in 1959 to 8.6 percent in 1974.

We know how to cut poverty. We’ve done it before. We can do it again. What we lack is the will.

Gov. Kasich is right. There *is* a war on the poor. The same anti-poverty programs that President Johnson championed are under attack and on their way to being funded at lower levels as a share of GDP than *before* 1964.

Jesus looked at the lawyer and said “Go and do like the Samaritan did.” *Be* a neighbor. What kind of society do we want to be? Do we want to be the kind that leaves 55 percent of its population beat up on the road? Or will we *be* a neighbor to all? ■

*Lisa Sharon Harper is Director of Mobilizing for Sojourners.*

# Forgiveness

By Fisher Humphreys

## Introduction

Forgiveness is a response you can make when someone wrongs and hurts you. You may have been hurt by an individual; sometimes it is a group who hurt you. It may be someone in your family, or a friend. It may be someone you work with, or someone you work for, or someone who works for you.

People hurt you for different reasons. We will set aside for the moment the special situation in which people hurt you because you hurt them first. There are at least four other situations in which people can hurt you.

Sometimes people deliberately hurt you. Even though you have done nothing to harm them, they do something just because it will hurt you. Let us call that malicious behavior.

Sometimes people want to do something and they know that, if they do it, you will be hurt, but they don't care. They're quite willing for you to be hurt if that's what it takes to get what they want. Let's call this selfish behavior.

Sometimes people want to do something and they don't realize that, if they do it, they will hurt you. However, it was their responsibility to be aware of the consequences of their actions, so, when they proceed with it and hurt you, they should have known better. Let's call this irresponsible behavior.

Sometimes people want to do something and there is no way for them to know that, if they do it, they will hurt you. Let's call this innocent behavior.

What these malicious, selfish, irresponsible, and innocent behaviors all have in common is that they all cause you pain that you do not deserve.

You know, of course, that you are not perfect, but you also know that noth-

ing you have done warrants this. In short, your pain is unfair, unjust.

How do you respond to being hurt deeply and unfairly? We know that Jesus has told us that we should forgive those who hurt us. But what does that mean?

Forgiveness means suffering in a special sense. In order to forgive, you have to accept two kinds of pain. First comes the pain of being hurt by someone. That is a kind of pain that all of us experience, and there is no way to avoid it all.

There is another kind of pain also. When you're treated unfairly,

---

*Here then is our definition: Forgiveness is accepting the pain caused by people who hurt you and also accepting the anger you naturally feel because you have been hurt, in such a way as to end their destructive power in your life and in the lives of others.*

---

you become angry. No one has to teach you to do this. It is a natural response.

And, when you are angry because you have been hurt, you want to retaliate. This also is a natural behavior, and many things in our world re-enforce it.

Moreover, I think (and this is controversial) that you are entitled to want to retaliate. It's only fair. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. That balances the scales. That's justice.

But it's not forgiveness. In forgiveness you voluntarily embrace the pain of your own anger rather than expressing your anger by retaliat-

ing. You could say that you neutralize your anger. You don't repress or deny it. You live into it, and you live through it, in such a way as to drain the poison from it.

Here then is our definition: Forgiveness is accepting the pain caused by people who hurt you and also accepting the anger you naturally feel because you have been hurt, in such a way as to end their destructive power in your life and in the lives of others.

Now, this is not fair. You didn't hurt the other person. The other person hurt you. You shouldn't have to suffer. The person who hurt you should have to do that.

But in the real world of moral and interpersonal relationships, it is the injured party alone who can forgive, and that means that it is the injured person who must suffer if forgiveness is to occur.

## Forgiveness in Public Life

In working out this definition, I have described forgiveness as a more or less private matter between two individuals. Often it is that, but sometimes forgiveness has a public aspect as well as a private one. Here are five stories, one from each of the past five decades, in which forgiveness played a public and even a political role.

Simon Wiesenthal (1908-2005) is best remembered as a Nazi hunter, but he also was author of an important book entitled *The Sunflower* which was first published in France in 1969. In it he tells about an experience he had while a prisoner in a Nazi death camp in Austria in 1943. He was called to the bedside of a dying SS officer, Karl Seidl, who asked Wiesenthal, as a Jew, to give Seidl forgiveness for terrible things he had done to Jews. For example, on one occasion he and his soldiers

set fire to a house filled with more than 150 Jews and then machine-gunned them to death when they ran from the house to escape the fire. Wiesenthal responded to Seidl's request with silence and walked out of the hospital room. He closes the first half of the book with the question, "You, who have just read this sad and tragic episode in my life, can mentally change places with me and ask yourself the crucial question, 'What would I have done?'" The second half of the book contains brief essays by more than 50 respondents including writers, political leaders, and theologians. Twelve said he should have forgiven the Nazi; sixteen said he was right not to forgive; the others didn't answer the question. As much as any book I know, *The Sunflower* helps us grasp how radical the idea of forgiveness is.

Our nation went through great trauma concerning the event known as Watergate. Many Americans were distressed that President Nixon may have participated in, or at least known about, illegal activities during the run-up to the election of 1972. Nixon was forced to resign from office, and his vice-president, Gerald Ford, became president. On a Sunday afternoon in 1974, after having attended church, Gerald Ford signed a document which provided full pardon for any crimes which Nixon may have committed while he held the office of president. Ford said that his objective was to put the "long national nightmare" of Watergate behind us. He succeeded. Stories about Watergate disappeared from the news media, and the nation was able to move on to other matters. Not everyone approved of what Ford had done. Some who believed that Nixon was guilty felt that he should not have been pardoned.

In 1981 Pope John Paul II was shot by a young Turkish citizen named M. A. Agca. The Pope almost died; indeed, he was given the last rites. In 1984 he paid a visit to Agca in his prison cell in Rome. Afterwards the press asked him what he had said to

Agca, and he said that he told him that he had forgiven him. This event led to a vigorous public debate about whether or not it was appropriate for him to do this. The concern was that, in offering forgiveness, he might effectively be underwriting further violence.

Nelson Mandela of South Africa practiced personal forgiveness. After being released from prison in 1990, he paid a visit to India where he has many admirers. On one occasion an Indian official said to him, *I pray for your health, Mr. Mandela*. He replied, *Thank you. Please pray for the health of Mr. de Klerk*. After he was elected president of South Africa in 1994, Mandela created a role for forgiveness in the public life of his nation. He established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission whose chair was the Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The Commission was empowered by law to grant amnesty to persons who committed politically motivated crimes during the period of apartheid, provided they acknowledged their guilt. Altogether more than 800 persons from all parties, including Mandela's own African National Party, were granted amnesty, and thousands of others had the charges against them withdrawn. Tutu has written a wonderful book about the work of the commission entitled *No Future without Forgiveness*. He believes that, given the history of violence during apartheid, South Africa, for all its wealth and power, had no hope for the future unless it forgave its citizens. He thinks that, without amnesty, South Africa would have spiraled down into endless acts of retaliation that would destroy the nation.

In October 2006 a gunman named Charles Carl Roberts IV took some Amish schoolchildren as hostages in their one-room schoolhouse in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He killed five girls and then committed suicide. The Amish as a community expressed their forgiveness of Roberts and visited his family members to comfort them and assure them that they were

still welcome in the community. The Amish tore down that schoolhouse and built another one which they named the New Hope School. The actions of the Amish provoked a public discussion about the appropriateness of forgiveness.

Forgiveness studies are now being conducted in several American universities, with many millions of dollars in grants awarded to fund the studies. An International Forgiveness Institute located at the University of Wisconsin-Madison serves as a clearing house for much of this work (see <[www.forgiveness-institute.org](http://www.forgiveness-institute.org)>).

Some marriage and family therapists now explain forgiveness to their clients as one of the ways couples can deal with their conflicts in general and with marital infidelity in particular.

Of course, leaders in many religions speak about forgiveness. One of the most effective public spokespersons for forgiveness today is the Dalai Lama. In a 2004 book entitled *The Wisdom of Forgiveness* he wrote of forgiveness:

It's one of the most important things. It can change one's life. To reduce hatred and other destructive emotions, you must develop their opposites -- compassion and forgiveness. If you have strong compassion, strong respect for others, then forgiveness is much easier. . . . I pay special attention to the Chinese--especially those doing terrible things to the Tibetans.

Forgiveness is possible and needed between nations and other large groups of people as well as between individuals. It also is important for personal health, both emotional and physical. It is something a society can do for itself.

## Jesus and Forgiveness

Now I want to try to summarize some of the things that Jesus said and did about forgiveness. I am aware that forgiveness plays an important role in other religions, and of course I appreciate that, but I am not qualified to speak about other religions. I

think that the teachings of Jesus and the church are important to us all.

Jesus clearly and forcefully taught that God forgives sins. He did this, for example, in a story known as the parable of the Prodigal Son. When the dissolute son returned to his father's house, hoping to be taken in as a servant and given a servant's food, the father ran to him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, and commanded his servants to give him a ring and good clothes to wear, and arranged for a banquet to be held in celebration of his return. He said, "This son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" (Luke 15:11-32). Without ever using the word *forgiveness*, Jesus gave us a memorable story about love and acceptance and forgiveness. It is an intensely human story, but it also is a story about God, for the father in that story is, of course, the one whom Jesus called *Abba*. Jesus believed that God is like a parent who forgives an erring child.

Jesus taught the same thing in a parable about two men who went to the Temple to pray (Luke 18:9-14). One, a devoutly religious man, gave thanks to God that he had been able to keep God's law faithfully, more faithfully than most people, including the other man who was praying beside him. That man, who disobeyed God's law continually, prayed, "God have mercy on me, a sinner." Jesus' first listeners must have been stunned when Jesus said that it was the immoral man, not the religious one, who received the forgiveness of God. Then as now, forgiveness can be offensive to people who try to live upright lives.

Jesus not only told stories about forgiveness. He practiced it. In one of the most memorable sentences ever uttered, Jesus prayed for those who were responsible for crucifying him: "*Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing*" (Luke 23:34). We can only imagine what it cost Jesus to pray for his enemies at that moment.

Jesus taught his followers to do the

same thing (Matt. 5:44). Jesus set aside Moses' principle of "*An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth*" and commanded his followers not to retaliate against those who hurt them (Matt. 5:38). When the apostle Peter asked Jesus if he should forgive an enemy as often as seven times, Jesus replied that he should forgive seventy times seven times, that is, always. He then told a parable about a servant who, after his master had forgiven him a very large debt, turned around and refused to forgive others who were in debt to him for small amounts. The master punished that servant severely. Jesus concluded: "*So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart*" (Matt. 18:23-35).

Because Christians pray the Lord's Prayer so frequently, it is easy to overlook the fact that in the prayer we ask God to forgive us *as we forgive* others. When Jesus first taught the prayer to his disciples, in order to insure that the disciples did not miss this point, he added: "*If you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses*" (Matt. 6:9-15).

I suspect that Jesus' first followers understood that Jesus' message about forgiveness was counter-cultural and radical. What he said about God's forgiveness is radical because he said it reaches not just to people who attempt to live good lives but to those who behave immorally. What he said about our forgiveness of others is radical because he said there can be no limit to it. We are to forgive everyone who ever hurts us, without exception.

### **Forgiving Those Who Never Hurt Us Directly**

Now I want to address four controversial issues that arise concerning forgiveness. The first concerns whether we can forgive those who never hurt us directly. The second concerns the relationship between forgiveness and reconciliation. The third concerns forgiveness and punishment. The fourth concerns abuse.

It is possible, I think, to forgive people whom we have never known, but it is complicated.

We are not just individuals. All of us also are members of communities ranging from our immediate families to our nations. Indeed, we are all members of the human race.

We identify with our communities, so that the pain they experience becomes our pain. If you attack America, you hurt me because I am an American and I love America. The same is true if you attack my family, or the Christian church.

Because I am hurt, I feel anger and want to retaliate. I must do the work of forgiveness in order to move beyond my anger and desire for revenge.

I can always forgive on behalf of myself. Some people, however, are authorized to offer forgiveness on behalf of their societies. For example, when Gerald Ford provided the pardon for Richard Nixon, he did so on behalf of the entire nation as represented by the federal government. No citizens other than Gerald Ford had the authority to do that. Part of the dilemma Simon Wiesenthal felt had to do with whether he had the authority to offer the Nazi officer forgiveness on behalf of all Jews.

### **Forgiveness and Reconciliation**

The second controversial issues concerns forgiveness and reconciliation. The two are closely related, but they are not identical. Forgiveness is something you do in your own heart, and, with the Lord's help, you can do it no matter what the other person does.

Reconciliation, however, is not something you can do on your own; it always takes two people. If the person who hurt you realizes that he or she has wronged you and asks for your forgiveness, then the two of you can be reconciled. The wronged person who has truly forgiven a wrongdoer will always welcome the prospect of authentic reconciliation. If you say, "I forgave them but I don't ever want to see them again," your understanding of forgiveness is defective.

Sometimes we need to forgive people to whom we know we'll never be reconciled. For example, sometimes we need to forgive parents who hurt us when we were too young to defend ourselves, and by the time we are old enough to deal with the hurt they inflicted on us, they have died. We can never be reconciled to them in this world, but we can forgive them, and we need to do that because forgiveness is something we do for ourselves, not just for others.

Often we are hurt by people who will never admit that they were wrong and therefore will never be open to authentic reconciliation, though they may want us to pretend that they did not do anything wrong. We need to forgive them even though genuine reconciliation is not possible. Furthermore, we may continue to relate to them as if they had not hurt us or wronged us. This can feel like hypocritical behavior, but that is not necessarily the case. In some circumstances we may need to confront them, but in others living as if we haven't been hurt is necessary in order to achieve a measure of social harmony, and it is behavior that is made possible because you have forgiven the one who hurt you. I think this is what lies behind the proverb, *If you want people to like you, you must forgive them when they wrong you* (Prov. 17:9).

Even when we forgive and are reconciled to someone, this may not lead to a full restoration of the relationship we once had. For example, when a wife leaves her abusive husband and marries someone else, she may be reconciled to her first husband, but their marriage is a thing of the past.

### **Forgiveness and Punishment**

The third controversial issue is whether, when we forgive, we should always forego punishment.

So long as punishment is understood as retaliation or vengeance, then, as we have seen, it is incompatible with forgiveness. But punishment can be distinguished from retaliation. Leonard Hodgson, an Anglican

theologian, said that punishment is a community's dissociating itself from the conduct of one of its members. Understood in this sense, it is possible both to forgive a person for an act and to punish him or her for it.

Since a community is involved, punishment can't ordinarily happen between two individuals. A teacher who punishes a student is doing so on behalf of the school. A federal judge who sentences a criminal to prison is doing so on behalf of the nation.

Where the community involved is just two individuals (as, for example, in a marriage) I think that individuals should forego punishment in all cases where the wrongdoer expresses regret, and probably in most other cases as well. This is because the community has already been put at risk by the person who hurt you, so that, if you attempt to punish that person, it is probable that you will be retaliating instead.

All punishment is retributive, in the sense that it is deserved. If it is not deserved, it is not punishment but simple violence.

But punishment serves other purposes in addition to retribution. Punishment can provide protection for society. All society, and small communities such as classrooms, need protection.

Punishment of one wrong-doer may deter others from similar wrongdoing.

Punishment can provide correction for wrong-doers. Correction, or rehabilitation, can occur when children are punished by their parents or teachers, and it can happen when society imprisons criminals.

Punishment can provide an opportunity for a wrong-doer to make restitution for the harm he has caused. Making restitution is in some ways an ideal form of punishment because it not only allows the community to dissociate itself from its member's conduct but also begins to restore the loss suffered by those who were hurt by the member. Therefore nothing about forgiveness excludes the possibility of the wrongdoer making

restitution or reparations. Restitution is not retaliation because it is not revenge taken in anger. Those who make decisions about restitution, like those who make decisions about every form of punishment, are right to take into account the well-being of the wrongdoer.

### **Forgiveness and Abuse**

The fourth controversial issue is abuse. I have been treating being hurt as a single, discrete event, and, of course, there are many such events in our lives. However, there is also another way of being hurt which is not a single, discrete event but a continuing process, a pattern of being hurt; we call this *abuse*.

Many conscientious Christians feel that Jesus' command to forgive is also a command to accept whatever abuse comes their way. Some Christians find support for this idea in these words of Jesus:

*You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile* (Matt. 5:38-42).

It is certainly possible to understand Jesus' words to mean that his followers should make no effort to avoid whatever abuse they are given but simply to accept it. However, that is not how I understand them. I believe that this is one of those passages in which we need to factor Jesus' historical context into our interpretation of his words.

Jesus and his fellow Jews lived in a political situation in which they were unable to get out of harm's way. Israel was occupied by a Roman army, and there was nothing the Jews could do to avoid being abused by the Roman soldiers. Jesus' instructions to turn the other cheek and to go the second mile are the best way to deal with a situation in which abuse is inescapable. This has been borne out when it

has been put into practice by people such as Gandhi in India, Dr. Martin Luther King in the United States, and Nelson Mandela in South Africa.

But often we find ourselves in a situation in which we can escape abuse, and in that situation the appropriate thing almost always is to get out of harm's way. If a friend is abusing you, break off the relationship. If an employer is abusing you, change jobs. If a spouse is abusing you, move out.

There may be occasions when you are able to avoid abuse but you decide not to take yourself out of harm's way; but these are, I believe, very rare, and you need to be very clear in your own mind about why they are exceptional enough that you will choose to continue to accept abuse.

But, as I say, the usual thing is for us to get out of harm's way. Moreover, sometimes there is a moral imperative to get out of harm's way. The moral imperative arises from the need to pursue justice. For example, the boss who abuses you may be, and probably is, abusing others as well. In the interests of justice you may need to confront the boss even though that makes it certain that you will be fired. You do this for the benefit of others who work for the same boss. Jesus' call to forgive is sometimes accompanied with a call to confront injustice as well.

### Receiving Forgiveness, Feeling Forgiven, and Forgiving Yourself

Now I want to look more closely at forgiveness and our feelings.

Emotionally, there are two mistakes we can make about forgiveness. One is to presume upon God's forgiveness: *Dieu me pardonnera; c'est son metier*, God will forgive me -- that's God's job (Heinrich Heine). This is a mistake. It is never appropriate to take anyone's forgiveness for granted. Remembering the costliness of divine forgiveness helps us to do avoid doing that. For us Christians, Holy Communion is a constant reminder of the costliness of God's forgiveness of us.

The other problem is to fail to internalize the fact that we are forgiven. We do this whenever we carry around permanent feelings of guilt and shame. Many Christians need to feel God's forgiveness more deeply than they do. Only by accepting that God has fully forgiven us does it become possible for us to live the life to which we are called, a life characterized by joy and gratitude.

The Bible does not speak about self-forgiveness, so some Christians are understandably uneasy with this concept. One way to address their concern is to think of self-forgiveness as another way of saying that we need to internalize the forgiveness that God has given us in Christ. It is one thing formally to receive God's forgiveness; all Christians have done that, and all practicing Christians are

---

*Emotionally, there are two mistakes we can make about forgiveness. One is to presume upon God's forgiveness: Dieu me pardonnera; c'est son metier, God will forgive me -- that's God's job (Heinrich Heine).*

---

continuing to do that. It is another thing altogether to internalize the fact that we have been forgiven, that is, to feel it so deeply in our souls that it begins to heal us.

Many other Christians feel comfortable with the idea of self-forgiveness, and there are two justifications for this that can claim some biblical authority.

First, the Bible says that Christians are called to live a certain kind of life, and this life is, among other things, a life of happiness and of peace. Clearly it is not possible to live a life of happiness and peace if you are continually overwhelmed with shame and constantly condemning yourself.

Therefore forgiving yourself is necessary for you to live as Christ calls us to live.

Second, many biblical passages teach that those whom God has forgiven are to experience forgiveness so deeply that it transforms their lives. The story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) is a good example of this. When the writers of the New Testament spoke of how God's forgiveness transforms lives, they were saying the same thing that is said today when people speak of forgiving ourselves.

Why do we tend not to forgive ourselves but rather to become obsessed with our shame? Perhaps the origins lie deep in our psyches. What is clear is that failure to forgive yourself is failure to live life as God intends you to live it. Refusing to forgive yourself is not good for you just as refusing to forgive others is not good for you. Frequently obsessive shame can become a habit for us. We can become accustomed to being harder on ourselves than we would be if we took seriously the biblical message.

### Resources for Forgiveness

Because genuine forgiveness is difficult, we need to draw on all the available resources in order to do it.

One thing that helps is simply to decide whether you really believe in forgiveness. Not everyone appreciates forgiveness; powerful influences in our culture support our instinct for revenge. We have to choose whether we think they are right or not. Because the natural response when we are hurt is to retaliate, forgiveness has to be intentionally chosen.

Another thing that helps is to belong to a community that supports you as you attempt to forgive. The community may be as informal as having friends who believe in forgiveness, who admire those who do it, and who support your commitment to do it. Or it may be as formal as a religious community which calls you to forgive your enemies and in whose common life you find the strength to forgive. The church is a community that should help us forgive. So

is Alcoholics Anonymous. There are others.

A third thing that can help you to forgive is to attempt to understand the person who hurt you. Maybe you can see why he acted the way he did. Maybe he has been hurt himself. Maybe he was having a lot of problems at the time. You don't excuse him, but you do try to understand him, to see his humanity. As long as you yield to the understandable impulse to demonize him, you won't have any incentive to forgive him; you don't have to forgive the devil. In order to forgive, it helps to realize the humanity of the other person.

Fourth, it helps to think about the future. Think about what will happen if you don't forgive and what will happen if you do.

If you don't forgive, you'll continue to live with your anger, rage, and resentment which will hurt you. It may make you physically ill; you can get hypertension, ulcers, headaches, skin lesions, and insomnia from bottling up your anger and carrying your resentment with you all the time. I was speaking about forgiveness to a group of adults at St. Mary's-on-the-Highlands Episcopal Church in Birmingham, and a doctor who is engaged in cancer research at UAB Medical School told us that she thinks that carrying around rage and resentment contributes to cancer. It certainly will make you unhappy not to forgive.

And it will affect not just you, but others as well. Gandhi said that if the world lives by the principle of *an eye for an eye*, it will become a world full of blind people. We all pass along to others the hurts we have experienced.

On the other hand, if you forgive you will neutralize the pain that is destructive of your happiness and health. Then you can begin to experience healing. In this sense, forgiveness is something you need to do for yourself.

Also, if you forgive, there may be a chance for you and the person who hurt you to become friends again

instead of enemies. That doesn't happen every time, but at least there is a chance. In any case, you can do your part to make it happen.

Finally, in order to forgive, it also helps to think about God. In one way or another we have all hurt God, directly, by not respecting God as God, and indirectly, by hurting human beings whom God loves. Nevertheless, God has forgiven us, and forgiveness was costly for God just as it is for us. There's always a price to be paid.

### Steps toward Forgiveness

Forgiveness is difficult. Fortunately, there are some small, practical steps that will move you toward the great task of forgiveness. I will mention six of these.

First, you can name the person or group who hurt you, and you can name what that person did that was unfair and caused you pain. You cannot begin to forgive until you acknowledge honestly that you have enemies who have hurt you.

In the deep South, this can be difficult to do, because we Southerners like to imagine that we don't have an enemy in the world. But we do have enemies and, if we are going to forgive them, we must begin by naming them and by naming the ways they have hurt us. We can't forgive generically.

Second, you can live in such a way as to do your enemies no harm. You can refuse to be rude to them. You can refuse to believe the worse things about them. You can refuse to talk about them. Talking about our enemies is one of the principal ways we retaliate; another way is to withdraw and to be cool toward the offender.

Third, you can refuse to stoke the fires of your anger. Don't mentally replay the events in which you were mistreated and hurt; don't mull them over; don't nurse your anger. If you find that you cannot stop thinking about those events and about the people who hurt you, talk to a counselor or at least to a wise friend who will understand you and help you

move beyond being obsessed with those things.

Fourth, you can ask God to help you to forgive those who hurt you.

Fifth, you can begin to pray for your enemies. At first you may want to pray that God will punish them, but that isn't what you ought to end up praying. Instead, you must pray for God to bless them. This is a small step you can take, but it is an important one. And, when you do, you will slowly find it possible to pray sincerely that God will bless them. That's the sure sign that you are on the way to forgiving them.

Sixth and finally, you can be patient. Sometimes it takes a long time to forgive. It can be a slow process. But it's worth waiting for and praying for. Sometimes we revert, so we need patience.

### Conclusion

Because we live in a world in which others sometimes wrong and hurt us, forgiveness is indispensable for a good life for ourselves as individuals and as communities. We must learn to forgive if we are to survive and flourish. Forgiveness is something you do for yourself. And not just for yourself. What Bishop Tutu said about South Africa is true of the entire human race: We have no future without forgiveness. I believe that what he wrote about South Africa is true of all nations and all persons: "Our experiment [in forgiveness] is going to succeed because God wants us to succeed, not for our glory and aggrandizement but for the sake of God's world. God wants to show that there is life after conflict and repression -- that because of forgiveness there is a future." ■

*Fisher Humphreys is a member of the Board of Directors of Christian Ethics Today and is a retired professor at Samford University.*

# A Letter to My Granddaughter: Growing Up as a Christian

By Tony Campolo

Dear Miranda,

I grew up believing the things that an Evangelical Christian is supposed to believe: the Apostles' Creed, the infallibility of Scripture and that salvation is a gift of God through the work that Jesus did for us on the cross.

The importance of being a Christian didn't dawn on me until I began to ask two ultimately important questions about my life. First of all, I wanted to know how I could become a fully actualized human being. I began to ask that question when I was in graduate school and was dealing with students who were very steeped in a secular mindset. While they affirmed nothing of religion, they did, as humanists, want to know how to become self-actualized human beings in the sense that Abraham Maslow had suggested.

Secondly, I wanted to know what to do with my life. I was desirous of figuring out how I could best invest my time and energies for the work of Christ and His Kingdom. The first time it dawned on me that there was a difference between existing and living, I was 12 years old. With my school class, I was taken to New York City. When we all traveled to the top of the Empire State Building, I looked over the city and took in the experience of the magnificence of Manhattan that lay before me, I experienced what some would call a deep moment, and as I stared through the fog into the scene that lay before me, I was thrust into a state of awe and reverence. In that moment, I was fully alive.

If I were to live a million years, that moment would still be part of who I am. Even now, I can call it to memory. From that moment on, I wondered how I could have more times like that. Beyond that realization was the sense that my life had been the meaningless passage of time between all too few moments of *real aliveness*.

It wasn't until my college years that

I came to understand what hindered me from being fully alive in what would have to be called "the now." Gradually I came to grasp the relevancy of the Gospel to this existential longing. I came to see that to be fully alive required intense spiritual energy – and that there were two things that dissipated that energy and kept me from full awareness of the moment. Those two things were guilt and anxiety. Guilt siphoned off my energy because I was haunted by things in my past; things that I did that I should not have done and, perhaps more importantly, things that I didn't do that I should have done.

Anxiety also drained away much spiritual energy by having me worried about the future. Would I make the right choices? Would I be at the right place at the right time to seize life's opportunities in an optimum fashion? Did I have the intelligence and skills to measure up to the challenges that life would bring my way?

As I struggled with these concerns, I found exceptional help in Scripture. Fortunately, I had been socialized in an environment wherein Scripture had become part of my DNA. This included experiences in Sunday school (I never missed a Sunday for 15 years), daily vacation Bible school, being dragged to hear endless numbers of what my mother called "Bible-Believing Preachers," summer Bible conferences, and most of all—*Bible Buzzards*.

Bible Buzzards was a gathering of young people who got together every Saturday night to study Scripture. We were together for two or three hours and the teacher, who was a layman who had the vocation of an accountant, was steeped in the Bible and made it come alive to us. I regret that my own children and grandchildren never had the opportunity to be raised in that kind of biblically-saturated

environment. I fear that, as they ask the same questions that I asked myself as I was coming of age, they will not be able to reach into a biblical treasure chest and take out "some things old and some things new."

About the past: I recall from Scripture that the God who is the ground of all being forgives and forgets. The dark things of my past, the Bible taught me, were forgiven and forgotten. They were buried in the deepest sea and remembered no more. The Scriptures taught me that though my sins be as scarlet, on Judgment Day I would be presented to God as one who is "white as snow." Through faith in Christ, I was able to lay aside the dark burdens of the past that "so easily beset me." As recorded in Philippians 3, I forgot those things which were behind and would press on to the goal of becoming fully alive, even as Jesus Christ was fully alive.

Scripture also enabled me to handle my anxieties about the future. I learned from the Bible not to fret about the future, and that God would not judge me on what I might accomplish in the days that lie ahead. I learned the word "grace" from the Bible, which meant that it would not be through any "good works" that I had done that would earn my salvation, but it would be simply because of God's grace—God's unmerited favor towards me that would make me acceptable to God on that final day before the Judgment Seat.

Now, in my waning years, even the ultimate cause of anxiety—which is the fear of death—is a sting that has been removed by the One who assures me that He is the Resurrection and the Life and that believing in Him, though I die, yet shall I live. I may not know what the future holds, but I know who holds my future.

Growing in freedom from the fears of the past and anxieties about the

future, I am more and more gaining energy to focus on what lies before me in the here and now. *Carpe diem* is now my *raison d'être*. More and more, I am growing to be aware of the sacredness of what was once ordinary, and the preciousness that I experience in the existential now. There are times when I feel a mystical sense not only of the sacredness of other people, but of all of nature. As Jesus commands, The lilies of the field and the birds of the air become increasingly sacramental as I am freed from guilt and anxiety to focus on what confronts me in the present. In short, I am free to experience God's creation in ways that feed my soul.

My emotions about nature nurture within me commitments to rescue the environment from the groanings of nature that have been caused by humanity's ignoring of its sacredness. To harm the environment has a quality that is close to blasphemy. For the awareness of the sacredness of nature makes me cognizant of how sinful it is to hurt it in any way.

Most important is this—with the freedom I have in Christ, I am able to *connect* with others in an awesome mystical manner. This is hard to express. It has been called by some the *mysterium tremendum*. I am talking about encounters in which I no longer look *at* the other person—as though through a glass darkly—but increasingly am able, through the power of the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit, to see *into* the eyes of the other and to reach into the inner recesses of that person's being—and to know the other as "also I am known."

Then it happens! I feel Jesus coming at me through that other person. In this spiritually charged encounter I sense a meeting with the living Lord and the other becomes sacramental.

Encountering Jesus in the other, regardless of whether that person is white, a person of color, heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, transgendered, Christian, Jew, Muslim, or even secular humanist—is what has made me into a social activist. I am coming to realize that in every person Jesus waits

to be discovered, and that whatever is happening to that other person is happening to the Jesus I love. If the other person is hungry or naked or sick or an undocumented immigrant or in prison, increasingly I can sense the presence of Jesus in that person, and that person's oppression becomes intolerable. I must address it. If I see the other as a victim of racism or sexism or homophobia or poverty, I experience a compulsion to respond and cry out for justice. If the violence expressed toward the "sacred other" via capital punishment or war is something that I experience, I feel a need to cry out, "Stop! In the name of Jesus! Stop!" Sin has gradually come to be redefined for me. It is no longer simply the violation of some transcendental-ly-ordained rule or regulation. Sin, for me, is whatever diminishes the humanity—or the sacredness—of the other person.

Living with this kind of hyper-awareness of the world around me, and the people in that world, and the pain of other people, is exhausting. I cannot do that all the time. It would deplete my spiritual dynamism. That is why I have to stop and set aside time for renewal and regeneration. This is what drives me to embrace spiritual disciplines. I won't begin to describe them here and now, but I feel I must explain one of them. It is *centering prayer*.

Each morning I try to awake before I have to get up and spend time lying flat on my back in bed. During this time, I try to empty myself of everything except for Jesus. I try to drive out "the animals"—the animals being the hundred-and-one things that come into my consciousness the minute I wake up—the worries about the things I have to do that day and the concerns about the things left undone from the day before. I have to go to what the ancient Celtic Christians called "the thin place."

In the 40th chapter of Isaiah, we read that those who wait upon the Lord will be renewed. The emphasis on *waiting* is an emphasis that I place on that verse. If I wait in quietude

for the Spirit of God to flow into me, I sense myself being empowered. It's not long before I can, in the words of Isaiah 41:31, mount up like an eagle and fly. Afterwards, I can still run with my commitment to live life fully, but eventually I become exhausted and as I walk—or better described, I stagger—I know it's time to go once again "into the closet" where I can meet God in secret, so that God can reward me with His spiritual energy in a way that will be visible to all of those who come to know me. As I have already said, in giving myself to others in the deep sense that Christ calls me to encounter, I become spiritually exhausted, but then joy cometh in the morning—when in stillness and quietude I go to that "thin place" and wait patiently for the Lord and for the renewal that God can give me.

You have probably figured out by now that in my strivings to become fully human I have discovered my mission for life. Ironically, it was not in trying to "find myself" as a self-actualized human being, but rather in losing myself in the sacredness of others that I began to find myself—myself being my mission. The growing awareness of the sacred, waiting to be met in "the other" is what humanizes me and provides me with a calling to change the world. I am, every day, endeavoring to struggle against the principalities and powers and the rulers of this age that have diminished the possibilities for humanness in others. This is a calling that challenges me to work towards changing the structures of society in order that God's will might be done on earth as it is in heaven.

I long for the day when all people shall be fully alive and the kingdoms of this world will have become the Kingdom of our God. I long for the day when God reigns in love and justice forever and ever.

I hope this hasn't left you too confused as to who I am and what I am about, but I am old and getting older and I don't know if I will get to write much more in the future, so I did the best I could in a little more than 18 minutes. ■

# Keep Herod in Christmas

By Brett Younger

Twenty-seven Christmases ago I was the new pastor of a Baptist church in Indiana. I decided we would have a Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion service—the first ever. I wanted everything to be perfect. It almost was. Snow fell that afternoon. A junior in high school, Melody, played “What Child Is This” on the flute. Three generations—a grandmother, her daughter, and granddaughter—lit the Advent candles. We sang the carols “O Come, All Ye Faithful,” “Away in a Manger,” and “O Little Town of Bethlehem.” We read the story—Mary, Joseph, the baby, and the manger. I remember thinking: This is a Hallmark card of a worship service. *This is as picture-perfect a Christmas moment as any church has ever known.*

That’s when Danny’s beeper went off. Danny was a member of the volunteer fire department. When his beeper sounded—as it often did—Danny ran out of the sanctuary. We had gotten used to it, but it was still disconcerting. Then we started singing “Silent Night.” As we got to “Wondrous Star, lend thy light,” Danny ran back in and shouted that church member Bob’s mother’s house was on fire. Bob’s family ran after Danny. Danny’s wife got up and left. Everyone had to choose between listening to the preacher’s sermon or slipping out one by one and going to a big fire. By the time I got Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, the crowd—and I use that term loosely—was made up of those who were waiting for a ride home and those who had fallen asleep. That’s not how Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion services are supposed to turn out. Tragedies should wait until January, because they don’t fit our ideas about Christmas.

That’s why King Herod doesn’t fit the Christmas story. The horrify-

ing sequence of events in Matthew’s Gospel doesn’t feel like it belongs in the Christmas story. The most difficult part to cast in the Christmas pageant is King Herod. Walmart sells a variety of plastic Nativity scenes for the yard, but there are no glow-in-the-dark King Herods. No Christmas card has this verse from Matthew on the front: “A voice was heard in Ramah, / wailing and loud lamentation” (Matthew 2:18). This part of the story may not seem to fit, but we need to hear it. Like a lot of stories, we have to hear the whole story or we get the story wrong.

Every true story admits that even in the midst of blinking decorations and flickering candles, darkness threatens the light. Ignoring the darkness is ignoring reality. We leave King Herod out of the Christmas story because we think we’re supposed to keep the hardships of the real world away from Christmas. Matthew says that Christmas came in the days of King Herod. King Herod was like Joseph Stalin. He executed his favorite wife, his brother-in-law, and three of his sons because he thought they wanted his crown.

We usually imagine angels speaking in soft, reassuring tones. The angel in Joseph’s dream shouted: “Wake up! Hurry! Run!” They escaped to Egypt. They were far from home, but the baby was safe.

Tragically, not everyone was safe. Herod’s order was the death of every boy in Bethlehem two years old and younger. Matthew can’t find words terrifying enough to describe the horror, so he borrows words from the prophet Jeremiah: “wailing and loud lamentation, / Rachel weeping for her children; / she refused to be consoled, because they are no more” (v. 18).

The first Christmas was soldiers with swords in the streets; mothers clutching their babies, hiding in the

closet, trying not to breathe too loudly, and begging their infants not to cry. There aren’t many questions more impossible to answer than, “Why couldn’t the angel have warned them too?” Even the birth of the new King didn’t stop the suffering.

It’s not surprising that we skip this part of the story. It’s easy to understand why there’s no carol in our hymnal about the slaughter of the innocents. Perhaps there should be, because we need to understand that Christmas is God’s response to our sorrows.

My second Christmas as pastor of Central Baptist Church, I got a phone call from the county hospital on December 23. The night before, an unwed teenager had given birth to a stillborn baby. The social worker wanted me to lead a graveside service the next morning. She explained that they would normally have the service a day later or at least in the afternoon, but she “didn’t want the girl to associate this experience with Christmas.” The teenager had visited our church a few times. Marilyn (not her real name) was fifteen and had been raped by her grandfather. Christmas Eve was miserable. The snow had been on the ground for more than a week. It had rained and so the snow wasn’t pretty. The temperature was in the twenties. It was threatening to rain again. Marilyn’s older sister brought her straight from the hospital. Their parents didn’t come; they blamed Marilyn for what had happened.

There were six of us there: Marilyn, her sister, the funeral director, two women from our church, and me. I knew what I had been told: “We don’t want her to associate this experience with Christmas.” I kept thinking about the story that Matthew tells. Christmas is mothers crying because their children have died: “wailing and loud lamentation . . . [refusing] to be

*(continued on page 28)*

# T. B. Maston Foundation Ethics Award Acceptance Speech

By Joe E. Trull

On March 13, 2013, at 7:06 P.M., white smoke billowed from the chimney atop the Sistine Chapel in Vatican City in Rome, Italy. Shortly thereafter a French cardinal in ornate and ancient vestments announced from the balcony overlooking St. Peter’s Square: “Habemus Papam!”—“We have a pope!”

The next person to stand on that balcony was an humble Jesuit priest, Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, Argentina. In silence he viewed an unforgettable site—thousands of onlookers—some shouting, some praying, some kneeling, some crying. In Italian, Spanish, French, German, English and scores of other languages they declared their exuberance.

Not long after that event (and here the analogy definitely ends), my telephone rang and the voice I heard was not that of a Vatican cardinal, but that of a Baptist deacon and son of Maston Th.D. graduate, Jase Jones, our foundation chair person Bill Jones. Although he did not speak in Latin, for me the words he uttered were just as startling as the ones shouted from that balcony in Rome.

“The Award Committee has met and will nominate you to the board to be the T. B. Maston Foundation Ethics Award recipient for 2013!”

Silence! Like the new pope, I also could not speak.

“Are you there?” I heard Bill ask.

“Yes, but just barely,” I replied.

Since that moment, I have tried to grasp the meaning of this honor, for it is indeed humbling and overwhelming in light of those who have received this award in days past.

Some are no longer with us -- Jase Jones, Foy Valentine, Millard and Linda Fuller, Phil Strickland, and Leon McBeth.

Many are still among us -- Russell Dilday, Sarah Frances Anders, William Shaw, Chet Edwards. And some are

here tonight -- Jimmy Allen, James Dunn, Weston Ware, and Patsy Ayres. And also what a joy to have these Maston grads present!

To be included with such a group as this, each of whom has made unparalleled contributions to the kingdom of God, to Baptist life, and to churches all over the globe, is a joy unparalleled.

And indeed, I owe so much to Dr. Maston -- his life, his teachings, and his writings -- more than I could express in words.

I would simply add that he was a surrogate father for me, from the first day I met him, as he stopped to walk over to a new student who was emptying trash cans behind the faculty building, to my very last days at Southwestern as I served as his grader and teaching assistant during his last two years on the faculty (1962-1963). Dr. Maston was born in the same year as my father, and, in many ways, he was the Christian father I never had.

What words best describe my response to this honor: “Humbled”—yes. “Appreciative”—certainly. And “Gratitude”—immense gratitude.

But it is gratitude not primarily for the award, although that is undoubtedly a part, but most of all, gratitude for the JOURNEY. And I am grateful to God, who made the journey possible, who guided my life and brought so many wonderful people at just the right time into my journey.

This past year, as I finally adjusted to full retirement, I began a new project—writing a memoir. Originally the motivation was to let my grandkids (and their children) learn a little about what life was like in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, especially my life, as some day far in the future they might develop an interest in ancient history.

However, to my own amazement, the process of remembering my pilgrimage from my own “far country” through many wilderness wanderings

has blessed me in ways I never dreamed.

I have re-discovered so many people in my past—relatives, friends, classmates, companions in kingdom work—so many who have meant so much and who made a major difference in my life. Many of you are in the group. You made a difference.

In the process of writing this memoir I have re-affirmed that God’s work is so often best seen in hindsight:

1. When I was almost 12, a close friend on our baseball team stood in my driveway and quoted John 3:16 and asked me if I believed that. My response was, “I don’t understand.” You see, I had never been to church or read the Bible.” Yet, a seed was planted in my heart by H.C. Owenby that began to grow.

2. A year later, a layman-deacon named L.D. Jones offered to take three Trull kids to Sunday School and church. In that church I learned about Jesus and found my Christian family, who loved, prayed, and supported me during my teens, through my years at Oklahoma Baptist University, and on into adulthood.

3. In high school, the “first time ever I saw her face,” I knew Audra was the companion God intended for my life—she has been a vital part of all I have done. I cannot overstate that truth!

4. At Southwestern, I was taught and nurtured by many. But one became my mentor: a teacher of Christian ethics who introduced me not only to a subject, but to a way of life. As I listened, learned, and during his last two years when I worked closely with Dr. Maston as his grader and fellow, I was indelibly changed.

Of his many virtues, the one I remember best was Dr. Maston’s commitment to the will of God—he lived it, he wrote a book about it, he exemplified it, especially in his family with his handicapped son Thom Mac. He

*(continued on page 31)*

# My Mandela Pilgrimage

By Patrick Anderson

Several years ago I traveled to South Africa. In preparation for my trip I picked up a few books to read including Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*, which I read on the long plane ride from Atlanta to Johannesburg. Of course, Mandela was not a total stranger to my brain, but while reading that remarkable book I became a Mandela disciple, and during that trip and since, I have read much of his writings and a great deal about the man himself.

Since I had a couple of day's lay-over on my Africa trip and I was alone, I spent a night near the Soweto Township in Johannesburg and hired a driver to take me on a tour. I visited Mandela's home. I stood in the front doorway and looked into the tiny living room where a wall had been built the length of the house just inside to block the snipers' bullets which sometimes were fired into the front window. I walked through the small house and got a sense of how he and Winnie lived there. I saw mementoes given to him through the years, including the World Championship Boxing Belt from Sugar Ray Leonard and letters from school children and dignitaries from around the world. He was loved by many in his life, and inspired some remarkable people.

I walked down the street and

around the corner to where his friend, Desmond Tutu lived, surprised by the close proximity. I tried to imagine life in that small tight-knit community, and remembered the stormy, violent history of that place during Apartheid. My driver-guide tolerated my mulling and questioning. I did not want to leave the place.

Later, I took a plane to Cape Town, and then rode the ferry across to Robben Island where Mandela spent 27 long years in prison under a life sentence. I stood outside the cell he lived in and tried to put myself into that stark setting, sleeping on the thin mat, feeling the cold air, imagining the sounds of that despairing place. I sat on the ground in the courtyard where he and the other prisoners spent many hours each day in silent, tedious work, where they somehow managed to smuggle messages to each other and to people on the outside from that place. I walked in the lime quarry where he and the other prisoners toiled in the hot sun, in a pit so blindingly bright that some were actually blinded.

I thought of how during all the years he spent in that terrible place, I had lived in comfort and oblivious peace in America, enjoying the benefits of freedom, food, education, good health. Somehow, I felt ashamed

of myself wishing that somehow my life had been more focused and meaningful while Mandela had exhibited such strength and fortitude in his discomforts.

On the ferry back to the mainland, I thought about how Mandela, just like Paul and Silas long before, refused a secret, private release from prison, demanding instead to be released as publicly as he had been incarcerated. His election as President of South Africa, his appointment of his jailer to his cabinet, and his insistence for a full disclosure kind of reconciliation...all of those actions he took without any rancor, with no hatred or retaliatory impulse...humbled me, and made me both melancholy and thrilled at the display of the human spirit at its best.

Since that pilgrimage, I have thought much about Nelson Mandela, finding in him an inspiration and role model for my own life. Now that he "belongs to the ages," as President Obama stated, take some time to stop and reflect on Mandela's life, seeing it as a Christ-like example to us all, far from perfect, very human and full of struggle and hardship. His spirit lives on, and in my own heart I make a new commitment to justice, compassion, and strong living. ■

why this child is a holy child.

When we remember the story, we need to remember all of the story. God comes to the worst places and the most painful circumstances to share our suffering, to care for us in the midst of tragedy. Christ has come to bear our sorrows. We have not been left alone.

This holy season is the promise that God's joy is deeper than our sadness,

that ultimately life is more powerful than death, and that the light shines even in the darkness. ■

*Brett Younger is a professor at McAfee School of Theology at Mercer University. This essay was posted on [www.ministrymatters.com](http://www.ministrymatters.com) on November 30th, 2013 and is reprinted with permission.*

## Keep Herod in Christmas

(continued from page 26)

consoled, because they are no more." If we have to stand at a graveside on Christmas Eve, we need to remember the hope that comes with Christmas.

The part of this story that we're used to leaving out—the sadness, suffering, and death—is most important. It's the hard part that explains

## Book Reviews

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

### Haunted by the Holy Ghost: Memoirs of a Reluctant Prophet

by Charles Kiker (Bloomington, Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2013. 226 pages.)

Reviewed by Walter B. Shurden

Charles Kiker may not be your vintage household Baptist name. But for those of you who read this important journal, believe me when I tell you that he is the kind of fellow with whom most of you will gladly identify, if not admire. This entertaining, at times humorous, memoir is the story of a guy who took a serious liking to Jesus in his younger days and for the rest of his days, by his own testimony, has been *Haunted by the Holy Ghost*. This "Holy Ghost haunting" unfolded in a challenging life of Christian ministry rather than in religious emotionalism. The *haunting* led to justice-making, mercy-giving, truth-seeking, and risk-taking.

Here are some of the facts. Charles Kiker is a farmer who became a preacher, a Methodist who became a Baptist and a Methodist again (and for good reason), a Swisher County, Texas boy who, proud of his conservative roots, grew strong ethical liberal wings, a high school graduate who resisted the idea of college but later received a Ph.D. in Old Testament, a professor who became a pastor, a pastor who questioned the status quo, a husband who married Patricia, his childhood sweetheart, and a father who is obviously a committed family man.

Grady Nutt often said that one needed to learn to love Jesus without knocking John the Baptist. He meant, of course, that we need to embrace our future without amputating our past. Charles Kiker began and has ended up in Swisher County, TX. He grew up with an

ice box, a crank telephone, kerosene lamps, an out-house, hordes of family members moving in and out of his uninsulated home, and a little Methodist church that had preaching once a month. He learned to milk when he was five years old, and the chickens on the family farm constituted his first preaching audience. Unspoiled by the luxuries of life in his upbringing, he never expected to be treated as an honored guest who deserved privileges as a gospel minister. Theologically and ethically, Kiker moved far beyond his Swisher County upbringing, but he never lost his love for the region that birthed and nurtured him. That in itself is no mean moral and ethical accomplishment.

A good student even in elementary school, Kiker once made a "C" in Art. Color blind and not well physically coordinated, he said that he often colored outside the lines. Those two traits---color blindness and coloring outside the lines---got him in trouble down through the years.

Kiker thought he would be a farmer all of his life, but deep in his soul was a quiet haunting by the Holy Ghost that he should be a preacher. Having grown up as a Methodist, he enrolled in Asbury College in Wilmore, KY. But there he encountered among the students a strong dose of the teaching of sinless perfection as well as Wesleyan holiness on the faculty. Charles and Patricia joined a Baptist church.

Moving back to Texas, Kiker enrolled at Wayland Baptist College where he studied with a religion department faculty that stretched his mind and his Swisher County, TX soul. Wanting more education and receiving a scholarship from Southern Seminary, he and Patricia struck out for Louisville where he received both the M. Div. and Ph.D. I will let you read the book to discover what

followed in their lives of ministry, but I do want to leave you with some practical, ethical, and theological gems that you will find in the book:

"Professional, paid ministry is hazardous to one's spiritual integrity."

Kiker exhorts us to be as theologically open minded as Peter was after his rooftop dream:

". . . in every nation anyone who fears [God] and does what is right is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:35).

"Once a pastor loses favor with a major segment of a church with congregational polity, his days are numbered."

"Worship of Mammon is probably the besetting sin in the church, followed closely by identification of the national interest with the will of God."

"It was incomprehensible to me how people who claimed to take seriously the Good News could perpetuate religious apartheid to the degree that Sunday morning at eleven o'clock was the most segregated hour of the week."

"Struggling churches, wherever they may be are prone to become fixated on keeping the doors open to the detriment of living out reasons why the doors should stay open."

"Jesus attracted as much criticism as praise by his healing miracles."

The real value of this book for most of us is that it does not come from religious celebrity mouthing theological triumphalism. It comes from an ordinary couple, Charles and Patricia Kiker, who tried to do ministry by taking seriously what Jesus took seriously. Many ordinary Baptist ministers in their 60s and 70s will identify with much in this book. But I think that young ministers

in their 20s and 30s and 40s may benefit from this book the most. They will discover a couple who, though encountering disillusionment in the church and churchly institutions, kept returning to one type of Christian ministry or another. And they kept coming back because they were *haunted by the Holy Ghost*. ■

## The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined

By Steven Pinker (New York: The Viking Press, 2011, hardcover, 802 pages, \$40.00; paperback, 832 pages, \$20.00)

Reviewed by Fisher Humphreys

It is conventional to think that the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the most violent in human history. Steven Pinker argues that this is mistaken and that the truth is rather that human violence against other human beings has declined exponentially across human history and is continuing to decline.

Pinker defends this counter-intuitive thesis with a vast amount of information drawn from several sciences and other sources, with the result that his book is huge; I estimate it exceeds 350,000 words. A dependable assessment of many of the details of his argument would require specialized scientific knowledge that I don't have, but I will stick my neck out and say that I think he is probably right.

He describes six transitions which have moved the human race away from violence.

The first is what he calls the Pacification Process. It occurred about 5000 years ago when human beings ceased to be nomadic hunter-gatherers and settled into agricultural civilizations. With this transition a war of all against all gave way to societies whose governments established a monopoly on legitimate violence. He calls such governments *Leviathan* and estimates that the Pacification Process resulted in a five-fold reduction of homicide.

The second transition, which Pinker calls the Civilizing Process,

has occurred at different times in different parts of the world. In Europe it took place across about 500 years from the late medieval period until the early twentieth century, when the patchwork of feudal territories were consolidated into large kingdoms. He estimates that homicide rates dropped ten-fold to fifty-fold during this era.

In Europe the third transition, the Humanitarian Revolution, began in the early modern period with the Enlightenment and the birth of modern science. During this era for the first time there was organized opposition to socially sanctioned forms of violence such as despotism, slavery, dueling, judicial torture, superstitious killing, and sadistic punishment.

The fourth transition, which Pinker calls the Long Peace, began at the end of World War II. During this period, for the first time, the great powers stopped waging war against each other.

The fifth transition began when the Cold War ended in 1989. Organized conflicts of all kinds, including civil wars, genocides, terrorist attacks, and repression by autocratic governments, declined during this period. Pinker calls this the New Peace.

The sixth transition, the Rights Revolution, may be dated from 1948 when the United Nations adopted its Universal Declaration of Human Rights. During this period a growing revulsion toward violence against ethnic minorities, women, children, homosexuals, and animals developed.

Pinker devotes a chapter to each of these transitions, and he then devotes a chapter to describing five inner demons which lead us to violence and a chapter to describing four better angels which lead us away from violence. He describes the demons and angels in evolutionary terms and also in terms of cognitive science including the structure of human brains.

Pinker rejects as unscientific what he calls a hydraulic theory of violence, that human beings harbor an inner drive toward aggression which builds up inside and must be periodically discharged. Aggression is rather the output of five psychological systems,

the inner demons. Some violence is predatory, undertaken as a practical means to an end. Some is the product of an urge for dominance, authority, or prestige. Some is undertaken for revenge. Some is sadistic, taking pleasure in another's pain. And some is ideological, usually involving a vision of a utopia that is esteemed so highly that unlimited violence is justified in order to achieve it.

The first of "the better angels of our nature" (the phrase is Abraham Lincoln's) is empathy, a sympathetic concern for the pain of others. The second is self-control, and the third is a moral sense (he is talking here about a psychological fact, not a philosophical idea). The last is reason. Pinker acknowledges that empathy is often weak and is often restricted to members of one's own group. He also acknowledges that each of the other three angels can be co-opted for violent ends. A self-controlled believer in the superiority of his race can conduct a carefully reasoned campaign of violence against persons of another race. But Pinker's assessment is that overall these four better angels have led our race to become less and less violent.

In the concluding chapter Pinker reviews five historical forces that have driven the multiple declines in violence. The first is Leviathan, any state with a monopoly on legitimate violence. The second is "gentle commerce," a positive-sum game in which all sides benefit from non-violent exchanges. The third is feminization, a process in which cultures increasingly respect women's interests and values: "Violence is largely a male pastime," he says. The fourth is a circle of sympathy which expands until people feel concern not only for themselves or their own families or clans, but for all human beings and even for animals. The last is an escalator of reason which displays for human beings the futility of cycles of violence.

Pinker, who teaches psychology at Harvard, is an atheist who thinks religion has contributed enormously to violence and only rarely to the decline of violence. Consistent with his athe-

ism he offers interpretations such as, for example, that Martin Luther King, Jr., was not really inspired by mainstream Christian theology, which he rejected, but by Gandhi, secular Western philosophy, and renegade humanistic theologians. I find this interpretation implausible and baffling.

Nevertheless, this is a fine book on an important topic. It has led me to revisit an issue which I had not thought about for a long time. Throughout my adult life I have believed that we Christians are not so much optimists who believe in an inevitable progress which has been built into the historical process but rather persons of hope who believe in a God who guides the world toward the peaceable Kingdom of God where lions lie down with lambs and humans beat their swords into plowshares.

Pinker's book makes me wonder if this contrast is entirely justified. Might God be guiding the world toward the peaceable Kingdom not only by intervening through Israel and Jesus and the church which carries Jesus' message of love and joy and hope, by also by means of factors which God built into human beings from the creation, factors which Pinker calls *better angels*? If this seems implausible to you—as it did to me for many years—then you might want to read *The Better Angels of Our Nature* before you make a decision about it. ■

## Every Good Endeavor

by Timothy Keller, New York: Dutton 2012 \$26.95 hb

Reviewed by Darold Morgan

Hopefully, most readers of Christian Ethics Today are acquainted with the writings of Timothy Keller. His extraordinary ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan currently averages more than 5000 in attendance each Sunday – plus hundreds of new churches begun all over the land. Many of his sermons are in print, all coupled with an excellent sales record,

listing him as one of the New York Times' best-selling authors.

This book adroitly touches an area of life where most of those involved are still heavily engaged in the work-a-day world. He describes our work, our career commitment, our awareness of some of the major issues confronting Christians in an insecure job market where ethical challenges and issues seem to multiple almost daily. Most of the setting, of course, is the New York job market, often with new Christians facing the raw and wild impact of an agen gone wild simply for profit... regardless of the risks or consequences.

Keller deals primarily with laity in this timely volume, though the basic guidelines are genuinely helpful to those in full-time ministry as well. That there are massive and major problems in the complicated areas where people make living, Keller shows some very meaningful insights as a pastor who counsels people in the high pressure circles of New York City. While never violating the confessional, this pastor constantly points to the urgently needed Christian values' foundation as a major step toward the process of Christian wholeness in one's vocation. What a whirlwind in clashing values occurred in recent years as millions have lost their jobs, as globalization has become an unalterable fact. The search for job security and fulfillment is not far for untold numbers of a living nightmare.

The ethical issues tied into one's work particularly as a Christian, are massive to say the least. How do we genuinely Christian in the arena of fraud, deceit, or where profit is the only measure of success are themes deftly probed in this volume. The financial shadows of 2008-09, the on-going radical rates of unemployment, plus the personal agony of real people caught up in the maelstrom reminds us all of the importance of this Christian overview of work in the twenty-first century.

This is serious reading embracing a solid biblical base that is stimulating and helpful. Young adults, middle-aged folks as well, and even older persons looking back on a completed

career will profit from Keller's delightful expositions of Genesis, Esther, Paul's writings, and more, substantiating his call to an immediate biblical application of these values, regardless of where we work.

What emerges also from this book is a concept of a local church-support system for "Faith and Work", an urgently needed and practical technique to help new and old Christians apply biblical principles. Keller's associate in his church is superbly articulate about this local church approach that can readily be replicated anywhere in America. One will come away from this reading experience with a solid appreciation for the biblical treasures this tome relates to one's daily work. ■

## T.B. Maston Foundation

(continued from page 27)

taught it, once telling our introduction class to close our text and just listen as he talked about the will of God. The evening before a student and his wife were both killed in a train accident as they headed toward their church in Maypearl. This student sat next to me in ethics and was a missionary candidate!

So, like you, I AM a part of all that I have met, and a big part of those influences is undoubtedly the man whose name graces this award.

In February 1968, shortly before his assassination, Martin Luther King Jr. returned home to Montgomery, Alabama, where his career in the struggle for freedom and equality had begun. Addressing a mass meeting, he fell into reverie and memories of Birmingham and the battle with Police Chief Bull Connor: I quote: "And then ol' Bull would say as we kept moving, 'Turn on the fire hoses,' and they did turn 'em on. But what they didn't know was that we had a fire that no water could put out."

That's also what T. B. Maston gave to us, his students—a fire that no water could put out! ■

Joe E. Trull is retired editor of *Christian Ethics Today*.

# Christian Ethics Today

A Journal of Christian Ethics

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

## MISSION

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

## PURPOSES

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

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

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

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

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

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Aubrey H. Ducker, Jr. Chair

Patricia Ayres  
Larry Baker  
Babs Baugh  
Tony Campolo

Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler  
Carolyn Dipboye  
Wendell Griffen  
Fisher Humphreys

Darold Morgan  
Kelly Reese  
David Sapp

**Contributions** should be made out to the Christian Ethics Today Foundation and mailed to the address below. Your comments and inquiries are always welcome. Articles in the Journal (except those copyrighted) may be reproduced if you indicate the source and date of publication. Manuscripts that fulfill the purposes of *Christian Ethics Today* may be submitted to the editor for publication consideration and addressed to:

## OUR ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBERS

Pat Anderson  
P.O. Box 1238  
Banner Elk, NC 28604

Office: (828) 387-2267  
Cell (863) 207-2050

VISIT US ON OUR WEB SITE: [www.ChristianEthicsToday.com](http://www.ChristianEthicsToday.com)