

Christian Ethics Today

A Journal of Christian Ethics Volume 34, Number 3 Aggregate Issue 133 Summer 2024

Special Supplement:

**Howard Thurman,
A Towering Christian Theologian and Preacher**

- 2 **Does Ethics Matter Today?** *By Patrick Anderson, editor*
- 3 **Reflections on the Life and Thought of Howard Thurman** *By Lewis Brogdon, Guest Co-Editor*
- 6 **Thurman's Rigorous Ethic of Reverence for Each Person** *By David Sawyer*
- 9 **Standing on the Giant Shoulders of Howard Thurmond** *By Chris Caldwell*
- 11 **The Hell that Dogs the Footsteps of the Poor: Howard Thurman's Conceptual Notion of Fear in Jesus and the Disinherited** *By Darvin Adams*
- 19 **Reflections on Jesus and the Inherited** *By Carol Harston*
- 21 **Warning Flags, Parallels to Not Be Missed** *By John D. Pierce*
- 23 **Sentencing Donald Trump** *By Wendell Griffen*
- 25 **Job's Choir: Essays From the Intersection of Grief and Hope** *Reviewed by Walter B. Shurden*
- 27 **On Transgenderism** *By Ryon Price*
- 31 **Incoming...From Our Mailbag**

Does Ethics Matter Today?

By Patrick Anderson, editor

Recently, while our managing editor, Amy, was promoting *Christian Ethics Today* at the iconic Wild Goose Festival in North Carolina, a woman asked her, “Isn’t ‘ethics’ an outmoded term? Do we really need ethics any longer?” Amy reported that she did not know how to answer the question and asked what I would have said. “Nothing,” probably, I said, equally as off guard as she. Does ethics (*ethikos* in Greek) matter today? How else would one express a standard of conduct and moral behavior?

The shortest and best answer is, of course, moral standards and values do matter. A longer response points to how, for many people, the valuation of ethical behavior has eroded in the contemporary social, political, and religious environment. This is not a new phenomenon; each generation has grappled with issues of moral judgement. And in each instance we find voices calling God’s people to wake up and deal with them. From ancient times to the present, voices of prophets have sought to awaken people from the swampy wilderness of ethic-less moral standards.

One such person was Howard Thurmond, a powerful advocate for ethical values... *Christian* ethical values...in his generation and still. Seventy-five years ago in 1949 he first published his seminal book, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (1949). The theological and social impact of that book was dramatic for Black theologians and social reformers such as Martin Luther King, Jr. in the 1960s and 1970s.

I was an undergraduate, seminary, and graduate student during some of MLK’s years, but I do not recall knowing about Thurmond or his book. Apart from academic settings, I became acquainted with a few of the writings of Langston Hughes, W.E B. DuBois, James Baldwin, Malcolm X, and Frederick Douglass. I read and was greatly impacted by George Jackson’s *Soledad Brother* and Eldridge Cleaver’s *Soul on Ice*.

But I missed Howard Thurmond completely. My education had been sadly neglected. Therefore, when Dr. Lewis Brogdon and I first began to talk about the importance of Howard Thurmond, he agreed to help

recruit a diverse and highly qualified group of writers to introduce Thurmond to readers of *Christian Ethics Today* who, like me, may have overlooked the man and his writings.

So, Dr. Brogdon and four other writers have written articles which are included in a “Special Supplement” to this issue of the journal. We offer these articles in tribute of a great man, Howard Thurmond, and with the hope that his example will inspire us and his writings will inform us.

In addition, another group of highly qualified writers have shared insights for some of the ethical issues facing our present generation...you and me. John Pierce calls us to recognize the warning flags flying

This is not a new phenomenon; each generation has grappled with issues of moral judgement. And in each instance we find voices calling God’s people to wake up and deal with them. From ancient times to the present, voices of prophets have sought to awaken people from the swampy wilderness of ethic-less moral standards.

all around us today; Judge Wendell Griffen gives us a first-hand reflection on the up-coming sentencing of Donald Trump; Walter Shurden reviews Chuck Poole’s latest book, *Job’s Choir: Essays From the Intersection of Grief and Hope*; and Pastor Ryon Price shares his very timely and inspiring sermon, *On Transgenderism*.

Yes, ethics matters today as much as ever. You will find stimulating and informative information in this edition of *Christian Ethics Today*. ■

Reflections on the Life and Thought of Howard Thurman

By Lewis Brogdon

Howard Thurman (1900-1981) was one of the most influential religious figures of the 20th century. His influence transcended the field of religion, making significant investments into the lives of some of the leading figures of the 20th century. Ironically, despite the influence that Howard Thurman had on figures like Martin Luther King, Jr., Vernon Jordan, Arthur Ashe, Maya Angelou, Jesse Jackson, and Alice Walker, he has somehow remained relatively unknown. So, I would like to introduce this towering figure to the *Christian Ethics Today* family of readers as a supplement to the insightful essays in this special edition of the journal.

Howard Thurman was born and raised in a segregated community in Daytona, Florida. His mother, Alice, and his grandmother raised him after his father, Solomon, died when he was only seven. Thurman spent his early years at Mt. Bethel Baptist Church and graduated from Morehouse College in Atlanta GA. Afterward, he attended Rochester Theological Seminary, graduating in 1926 with a Bachelor of Divinity. Howard Thurman served both the church and the academy, teaching at prestigious institutions like Morehouse College, Howard University and Boston University. Along with Albert Frisk, he established *The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples* in San Francisco—the first intentionally multicultural church in the United States. Along with an impressive academic track record, he has also received multiple awards and been recognized for notable accomplishments. Thurman was the first dean of the Andrew Rankin Chapel at Howard University. He traveled to India and met Mohandas Gandhi while serving on behalf of the World Student Christian Federation as the chair of the Delegation of Friendship. In 1953, he became the dean of Daniel L. Marsh Chapel and was the first fulltime African American professor at Boston University. In that same year, he was recognized by *TIME* magazine as one of the 12 best preachers of the 20th century.

However, Howard Thurman may be best recognized for his books—particularly *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Thurman’s ideas as expressed in his writings display not only his genius and theological acumen, they reflect a mind regarded by many as ahead of his time.

He frequently commented in his writings and sermons that he had never heard a sermon on what the religion of Jesus had to say to those whose backs were against the wall. During his time in India, he was challenged—or rather his fidelity to the religion of Jesus was challenged—because African Americans were practicing the religion of their oppressors. In this stirring confrontation the trajectory of his thought began. In his autobiography *With Head and Heart*, he reflected on the challenge which led him to believe the religion of Jesus in its true genius offered a promising way to work through the conflicts of a disordered world and projected a creative solution to the pressing problem of

He frequently commented in his writings and sermons that he had never heard a sermon on what the religion of Jesus had to say to those whose backs were against the wall.

survival for minorities (Thurman 1979, 218). Although this response might have seemed adequate, Thurman pursued this theme in later lectures and the book *Jesus and the Disinherited* was thus sparked.

In a similar way, he questioned “the apparent inability, the demonstrable failure of Christianity to deal effectively with a system of social and economic injustice with which it existed side by side throughout the Western world” (Thurman 1979 218-19). His critics in India suggested that his fidelity to the religion of his oppressors was a betrayal of all the darker peoples of the earth (Thurman 1976, 15). In his book, *Deep River and the Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death*, he echoed a similar sentiment that “many all over the world feel Christianity is weakest when it is brought face to face with the color bar” (Thurman 1975, 46). While he did not attempt to defend the ways in which white Americans corrupted and distorted the religion of Jesus, he was deeply committed “to preserve at all costs, the inspirations and strengths of the religion of Jesus” (Thurman 1979, 219). As such, there is much

import in the religion of Jesus to those whose backs are against the wall.

He employed what I like to describe as a redemptive hermeneutic that allowed him to see beyond religion's distortion at the hands of those who practice it. He was able to do this because this practice was passed down to him from his African ancestors in America. A clear example of this comes from his book *Deep River*. Thurman clearly stated that the slaves redeemed the religion that the slave master had profaned (Thurman 1975, 36). Therefore, in a similar way, he sought to redeem the true genius of the religion of Jesus from those who had grossly misrepresented the faith. He saw that there was more to Christianity than the lies and violence practiced by so many white sisters and brothers in Christian churches, an insight he recognized in the religion of enslaved Africans. I think this aspect of his thought has great value for the challenges we face today as Christianity continues to be distorted. Like Thurman, we must call out these distortions but also nurture and give voice to the true genius and deeper value of the gospel.

Another substantial contribution made by Thurman was his emphasis on love for all people regardless of race, religion or social status. He refused to let go of the universal and expansive vision of God and the human family. Love was no cheap word for one raised in the segregated South where "lynchings, burnings, unspeakable cruelties, were the fundamentals of existence for Black people" (Thurman 1976, 36). It was reasonable for him to reject his white Christian counterparts for the evils that they continually perpetuated against those whose backs were against the wall. So, when he called for people to respond to one another in love and not out of hatred or bitterness that destroys the soul, one can see just how radical a claim this really was. It is specifically at this juncture that the true genius and depth of Thurman are most evident because he truly offered a kind of vision that redeemed the corrupted Christianity of white segregationists. He refused to submit the Christian ethos to fear, deception and hatred. In a segregated society that undermined the existence of Blacks on every hand, he encouraged them to embrace not only oneself in love but also one's neighbor. Fear, deception and hatred only destroy one's personhood, robbing them of the integrity that rightfully belongs to them because they are God's children.

There were also prophetic dimensions to his thought. He had a vision of a better tomorrow that he laid before America in writings like *The Luminous Darkness*. Thurman explored the anatomy of segregation and the hope before them if they responded with

courage and love. He thought that it was only a matter of time before the walls of segregation were removed and thus it was imperative for both Black and white Americans to learn how to live with one another. Only together could the damage of segregation be healed and the root of this evil, which existed in the heart and mind, be eradicated.

In a similar article entitled "*The Will to Segregation*," he reminded both Black and white Americans that segregation is a mutual threat to oneself and to a democratic society and that it was fundamentally important to relax the will to segregation in order that a sound basis of hope might be attained (Thurman 1998, 216). This sinful impulse to categorize, differentiate and separate ourselves from "others" is at the heart of America's flawed social program of segregation. But, like prophets of old, Thurman called out the evils of the day and called the people to a better vision of God's world; his words were ignored. Americans in general did not listen to him, but someone did. Thurman had a profound influence on Dr.

He employed what I like to describe as a redemptive hermeneutic that allowed him to see beyond religion's distortion at the hands of those who practice it.

Martin Luther King, Jr., who reportedly carried a copy of *Jesus and the Disinherited* with him during the Civil Rights Movement and wrote in his final book, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community*, that we must learn to live together as brothers and sisters or perish together as fools. There are echoes of Thurman's ideas in King's writings and speeches. I often wonder what kind of country we would be today had people listened to Thurman and King.

Howard Thurman was one of the most significant intellectuals of the 20th century. Every pastor and church leader should have a few copies of Thurman's writings in their libraries so they can mine the depths of his thought. His ideas are as insightful today as they were in times past. However, his insistence on a dogged love for all persons in a society that systematically oppressed him and his people, was truly one of his greatest contributions to the Church and Christian theology. He modeled *agape* love and used it to inform his life and work. His writings redeemed the religion of Jesus from fear, deception and hatred. May we take up this same work in 2024 and beyond. ■

Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart: The Autobiography of Howard Thurman*, (New York: Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich, 1979).

Howard Thurman, *Jesus and The Disinherited*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976).

Howard Thurman, *Deep River and the Negro Spiritual Speak of Life and Death*, (Indiana:

Friends United Press, 1975).

Howard Thurman, *The Luminous Darkness* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, (1965).

Howard Thurman, *A Strange New Freedom: The Best*

of Howard Thurman on Religious Experience and Public Life. Eds. Walter Earl Fluker and Catherine Tumber. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998).

Lewis Brogdon (Ph.D.) is the Executive Director of the Institute for Black Church Studies and Associate Professor of Preaching and Black Church Studies at the Baptist Seminary of Kentucky in Lexington and Louisville Kentucky.

Stanley Hauerwas:

The basis for the ethics of the *Sermon on the Mount* is not what works but rather the way God is. Cheek-turning is not advocated as what works (it usually doesn't), but is advocated because this is the way God is - God is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish.

This is not a stratagem for getting what we want, but the only manner of life available, now that, in Jesus, we have seen what God wants. We seek reconciliation with the neighbor, not because we feel so much better afterward, but because reconciliation is what God is doing in the world through Christ.

Reflections on Jesus and the Disinherited

By David Sawyer

In 1968, at the peak of the civil rights campaign and in the heat of the protests against the war in Vietnam, Dr. Albert Curry Winn, President of the Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, decided that his white, tending-toward liberal, students needed to “learn how to pray.” So, he convinced America’s most illustrious expert on spirituality, Howard Thurman, at that point in his retirement doing guest professorships around the country, to spend a semester in Louisville as Visiting Professor of Spiritual Disciplines.

And that’s how I had the blessing of studying with Thurman in my senior year of seminary. In his class on Spiritual Disciplines, I absorbed his practice of and recommended techniques for meditation. I was in awe of each of his Friday Chapel sermons. Volunteering to assist him in planning a student retreat, I got to sit in his office and interact with him. He was warm, personable, funny, and laser sharp in his focus. I felt the deep wisdom and power of his inner life and his loving passion for the spiritual life of our seminary.

Those experiences of his mystical sensibility have shaped my life of communion with the Holy ever since. I have continued with mixed results to practice meditation and spiritual growth for myself, and I also taught it also for my congregations, my students, and for ministerial colleagues. The most enduring effort at Thurman-inspired, life-long practice of prayer and spirituality is a group of men, all of us now retired Presbyterian ministers, who have been meeting monthly for retreat for 40 years.

This reflection on Thurman’s *Jesus and the Disinherited* coincides with what I consider to be a capstone of my ministerial and teaching career. I’m teaching a course at Simmons College of Kentucky, Louisville’s HBCU, titled “Howard Thurman, The Inner Quest and the Pursuit of Justice.” This group of senior religious-studies majors have studied Jesus and the Disinherited in other classes but this is their first deep dive into not only that book, but Thurman’s spirituality, his life and times, his theology, and his impact on Black life in the 20th century.

So out of that pedagogical crucible, I would like to offer a few thoughts to Christian ethicists today about Jesus and the Disinherited. Remember, the book was the product of over fifteen years of thinking, writing, teaching, preaching, and writing about the topic. In

just over a hundred pages, Thurman presented a carefully and compact case for an ethical living for people “with their backs against the wall.” I find his argument persuasive for anyone, oppressed or privileged, searching for a way to live with integrity in the 21st century. I present here my inevitably white distillation of what I call his revolutionary ethic.

A lifetime of reflecting on the story, the message, and the person of Jesus led Thurman to a radical understanding of Jesus. Thurman realized that in his historical context, Jesus was a poor Jew of Judea in a time when his country was completely under the oppressing thumb of the Roman Empire. Yet, Thurman called him “so perfect a flower from the brooding spirit of God in

This message of Jesus, in fact, has resonated with troubled souls, oppressed women and men, and also privileged women and men over time. It is truly a liberating theology.

the soul of Israel” (p. 60). He imagined Jesus reflecting deeply on the prophetic genius of his Jewish tradition and bringing to his people a radical ethic of love in the face of the three “Hounds of Hell” in Jewish life: fear, deception, and hatred. Simply stated Jesus’ ethic was to “fear no man,” “let your yes be yes and your no be no,” and “love your enemies.” His reason for advocating such an extreme perspective was to encourage a life of complete integrity, when that’s all people with their backs against the wall have. His message was consistently to live your life for and with God, and trust God’s care, truth and love. To live otherwise is to allow the corruption of the oppressors to destroy the soul, the “core” of human life (p. 76).

This message of Jesus, in fact, has resonated with troubled souls, oppressed women and men, and also privileged women and men over time. It is truly a liberating theology. However, the adoption of a dominance system in Western Christianity based on power and guarantees of doctrinal purity instead of inner integrity and purity of love, has muted that message

for those of us who have accepted the ways of comfort and wealth. I remember as a child reading the stories of Jesus and recognizing the disconnect between his actual life circumstances and the assumption of easy advantages of class and race. I knew instinctively that the interpretations given to me in my Sunday School classes were not fully in line what I read in the Bible. But I did not have the courage to challenge them. I could not accept the simple ethic of Jesus. I did not challenge them until much later in my life. Today, Thurman gives me that courage.

A reader of *Jesus and the Disinherited* in the 21st century has to ask how the rigor, the stark essence, of Thurman's ethic are possible. Studying and teaching about Thurman afresh this year, I understand that following such an ethic is possible only if accompanied by two foundations of Thurman's life and work. One is a deep spiritual maturity through study, prayer and meditation so that when turbulence comes it can be met with what the Buddhists call "equanimity" and the twelve-step method calls "serenity." I understand those words to describe an inner ability to respond to each difficulty with the double awareness that one belongs to the universe and that "this, too, shall pass." So, Thurman could say at the end of his *Autobiography*:

The older I have grown, the more it is clear that what I needed to hold me to my path was the sure knowledge that I was committed to a single journey with but a single goal—a way toward life... What I did with my life had to be secure in the inclusive sense that only the word "total" can signify. (WHAH, p 266)

The second foundation for living out his ethic is the persistent belief that every human being is a beloved child of God, including oneself. In *The Luminous Darkness* (1965) Thurman updated his thoughts about segregation in America. In the Foreword he wrote:

The fact that the first twenty-three years of my life were spent in Florida and in Georgia has left its scars deep in my spirit and has rendered me terribly sensitive to the churning abyss separating white from black. Living outside of the region, I am aware of the national span of racial prejudice and the virus of segregation that undermines the vitality of American life. Nevertheless, a strange necessity has been laid upon me to devote my life to the central concern that transcends the walls that divide and would achieve in literal fact what is experienced as literal truth: human life is one and all [humans] are members of one another. And this insight

is spiritual and it is the hard core of religious experience." (TLD, p x)

Thurman inspires me to believe that with devotion to a spiritual discipline that leads to equanimity, and with a "hard core" conviction that the primary task of life is building relationships of respect and acceptance with other people, one can live with integrity and love.

There are many possible applications in these reflections on Thurman. Here is the one at the top of my mind in this season of a United States presidential election in 2024. Following Thurman's thought, I believe the current progressive response to Donald Trump's MAGA campaign is wrong. It is too small a thing to counter his super-nationalist, white-supremacist, pseudo-evangelical movement characterized by hate, grievance, and revenge with "save our democracy." Democracy is a relatively recent experiment in government, and it will always need attention and refinement. But it is not an ultimate commitment. Thurman prompts us to ask what is the deeper, last-

I knew instinctively that the interpretations given to me in my Sunday School classes were not fully in line what I read in the Bible. But I did not have the courage to challenge them. I could not accept the simple ethic of Jesus. I did not challenge them until much later in my life. Today, Thurman gives me that courage.

ing commitment to ordering human society that needs to be promoted at this moment? At base I think it needs to be organizing our society around the values of accepting, respecting, and honoring every human and expecting citizens to treat each other as equally valuable without regard to age, gender, skin-color, language, culture, or ability. Thurman, who referred to the value of each individual as "personality," summarizes his argument in *Jesus and the Disinherited* this way:

The concept of reference for personality, then, is applicable between persons from whom, in the initial instance the heavy weight of status has been sloughed off. Then what? Each person meets the other where he (or she) is and there treats (each) as if he (or she) were where (they)

ought to be. Here we emerge into an area where love operates, revealing a universal characteristic unbounded by special or limited circumstances. (p. 94)

In my experience as a consultant to churches in conflict, I often suggested a simple seven-word phrase to counter behavior of anger, grievance, and revenge, “We don’t treat each other that way.” It is an ethical response that I believe is in the spirit of Thurman’s “reverence for personality.” What would happen if progressives of all stripes called out the former president and his acolytes without hate or judgement, offering some kind of respectful reminder of the boundaries of decency and respect due to each person in this country? That is bigger than democracy. It is bigger than even Christianity. It is the heart and soul

of what Thurman called “the hard core of religious experience.” ■

REFERENCES

- Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1976, pages cited in parentheses.
Thurman, *The Luminous Darkness: A Personal Interpretation of the Anatomy of Segregation and the Ground of Hope*, Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1965, cited as TLD.
Thurman, *With Head and Heart: the Autobiography of Howard Thurman*, New York: Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich, 1979, cited as WHAH.

David R. Sawyer (Ph.D.) is retired Professor of Church Leadership and Administration at Louisville Seminary and former Adjunct Professor of Religious Studies at Simmons College of Kentucky.

Christian Ethics Today is grateful to the Eula Mae and John Baugh Foundation for its generous gift of support which enables us to send the journal freely to anyone wishing to read it and to match all gifts from readers. Please join us in supporting this work.

We are happy to add your friends and family members to our mailing list.

Please Share ***Christian Ethics Today***

Standing on the Giant Shoulders of Howard Thurmond

By Chris Caldwell

“He (Howard Thurmond) was 100 years ahead of his time, 50 years ago, so he is still 50 years ahead of you and me.” Robert A. Hill, Boston University Dean of Marsh Chapel, 2010.

Howard Thurman is justifiably, but I would argue insufficiently, valued as a man whose thinking was ahead of its time. Many do of course know that key parts of what Dr. King said in the 1960s are rooted in what Thurman wrote in the 1940s. Some know that before King famously visited Mahatma Gandhi in 1959, Thurman led a delegation that met with Gandhi in 1935. Thurman was a giant on whose shoulders King stood and, as a result, our nation moved forward.

For this, Thurman has rightfully received the credit due him. But consider all the other ways Thurman was ahead of his time, and consider all the intellectual movements that could have taken place sooner had theologians and biblical scholars focused on the themes in Thurman’s thought that preceded some of our most important advances in theology and biblical interpretation.

Consider these concepts that Thurman put forward ahead of their time in his seminal book, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, published in 1949.

First, before Paulo Freire and Gustavo Gutierrez challenged theology to focus on centuries of Latin American oppression, Thurman wrote:

*I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of times that I have heard a sermon on the meaning of religion, of Christianity, to the man who stands with his back against the wall. It is urgent that my meaning be crystal clear. The masses of men live with their backs constantly against the wall. They are the poor, the disinherited, the dispossessed. What does our religion say to them? The issue is not what it counsels them to do for others whose need may be greater, but what religion offers to meet their own needs. The search for an answer to this question is perhaps the most important religious quest of modern life (*Disinherited*, p.3).*

Twenty-two years before Gutierrez’s *A Theology of*

Liberation was published, Thurman was summarizing the heart of the book.

Second, the 1980s saw a new quest for the historical Jesus in *The Jesus Seminar*. Two of the most important works that grew out of this movement were *Jesus Within Judaism*, by E.P. Sanders, and *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, by John Dominic Crossan. Both challenged scholars to take more seriously the influence of Jesus’ first century Jewish context and the way this context was shaped by Roman domination.

A few years later, sociological biblical interpretation looked more closely at how the dynamics and

But consider all the other ways Thurman was ahead of his time, and consider all the intellectual movements that could have taken place sooner had theologians and biblical scholars focused on the themes in Thurman’s thought

struggles of the ordinary people of Jesus’ day shaped the New Testament. But four decades earlier, Thurman wrote:

*Of course, it may be argued that the fact that Jesus was a Jew is merely coincidental, that God could have expressed himself as easily and effectively in a Roman. True, but the fact is he did not. And it is with that fact that we must deal. The second important fact for our consideration is that Jesus was a poor Jew . . . [and] a member of a minority group in the midst of a larger dominant and controlling group. In 63 BC Palestine fell into the hands of the Romans. After this date the gruesome details of loss of status were etched line by line in the sensitive soul of Israel (*Disinherited*, pp. 7-8).*

Third, consider how Thurman argued points that

would not yet be at the heart of biblical interpretation for another 40 years. Phyllis Tribble's *Texts of Terror* and Stephen Moore's *Literary Criticism and the Gospels* made the case for reading against the grain of the text and considering how hegemonic forces control the norms of interpretation.

Arguably, Thurman's grandmother, forbidden to learn to read as an enslaved person, came to this conclusion 100 years earlier. She passed this concept on to Thurman when she forbade him to read to her from the writings of Paul because she had so frequently heard preachers use them to justify her slavery.

Taking this cue from her, (his grandmother) Thurman goes on to distinguish between the worldviews of Jesus and Paul, as he argues Paul's Roman citizenship contributed to some of his least liberative statements (*Disinherited*, pp. 20-25).

Fourth and finally, the likes of Stanley Fish and Stanley Hauerwas focused on the importance of heeding how our communities affect our interpretations and our theologies. Literary theorists moved from formalism's "the reader," to the "implied reader," and finally to the social locations of real present-day readers.

Thus, over a couple decades, scholars came to see the benefit of trading in neutral, presumably unbiased interpretations, in favor of varied and competing interpretations from those openly allowing their histories and contexts to influence their biblical interpretation. Who knew we could learn so much by reading from our own perspectives and with our communities in mind?

Well, Howard Thurman knew it in the 1940s. Again and again in *The Disinherited* he connects the history of American Blacks, along with their present condition, to the history and conditions Jesus experienced as an oppressed member of a minority group.

Thurman, of course, did not reach such intellectual heights without guides up that mountain. He too "stood on the shoulders of giants"—a phrase I have heard much more often in Black space, with its honoring of ancestors, than I have in white space that honors all things new. DuBois and so many others provided key footholds for him and, to mix my metaphor, in them he drew from roots deep within the Black intel-

lectual tradition. But had King not popularized his ideas, he could easily have lived and died in the obscurity that has been the fate of so many Black theologians, even as he brought forth and applied the best of the African American intellectual tradition.

There is a clever scene in the movie, *The Bourne Identity*. Jason Bourne lays out an elaborate plan with his girlfriend for her to assist his gaining access to a piece of vital information in a hotel office. Having laid out literally every step she should take to set him up to steal the document, he is surprised to see her return only moments later. She reports she already has the document; when a dumbfounded Bourne asks how she attained it, she replies, "I asked them for it." "Oh," he says, "good thinking."

The guild of white scholars, across a span of decades and generations, has broadened and thereby deepened biblical and theological conversations. We have learned from non-white and non-western scholars who pried their way into the room, and whose insights are now foundational to much of the best and most useful

Taking this cue from her, (his grandmother) Thurman goes on to distinguish between the worldviews of Jesus and Paul, as he argues Paul's Roman citizenship contributed to some of his least liberative statements

theological and biblical scholarship. But imagine how much more quickly we could have arrived at this destination, had the white scholars of the 1940s and beyond simply taken more seriously Thurman's works—and indeed the works of so many other Black intellectuals—at the time when they were written. ■

Chris Caldwell is on the faculty of the prominent HBCU, Simmons College of Kentucky and directs its Office of Church Engagement.

The Hell that Dogs the Footsteps of the Poor: Howard Thurman's Conceptual Notion of Fear in Jesus and the Disinherited

By Darvin Adams

Fear is one of the persistent hounds of hell that dog the footsteps of the poor, the dispossessed, the disinherited. There is nothing new or recent about fear—it is doubtless as old as the life of man on the planet. Fears are of many kinds—fear of objects, fear of people, fear of the future, fear of nature, fear of the unknown, fear of old age, fear of disease, and fear of life itself. Then there is fear which has to do with aspects of experience and detailed states of mind. Our homes, institutions, prisons, churches, are crowded with people who are hounded by day and harrowed by night because of some fear that lurks ready to spring into action as soon as one is alone, or as soon as the lights go out, or as soon as one's social defenses are temporarily removed.¹

Introduction

With the biblical understanding that God did not give believers the spirit of fear (2 Tim 1:7), it must be stated that there is still much to be contemplated theologically and otherwise when it comes to describing the oppressive conditions of present-day humanity. The poor, the migrants and the homeless included. Unfortunately, as we celebrate the 75th anniversary of Howard Thurman's first publishing of his theological masterpiece, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (1949), the United States of America is still ghastly choked by the internalized fears associated with capitalistic, social, political, economic, educational and religious unrest. Even among the people of Christian faith or people who attend church on Sunday mornings, there exist a penetrating fear that causes God's people to be confused and mystified in the visual materialization of their worst nightmares—nightmares that normally take place inside the denominational church body. The fear that results from these horrifying nightmares also takes place in the public/secular square. Theologically, Martin Luther King, Jr., is still correct in his ascertaining of capitalism, racism and militarism² being the headliners of the human oppression now in the United States and the world abroad. Sadly, the demonic out-

reaches of political power continue to actively hide out in white nationalism, white supremacy, terrorist bullying by larger countries, and the global threat of nuclear destruction.

But that is not the end of the national and world nightmares of human fear. It is actually just the beginning. While a number of good Christian folk are sleeping through the televised revolution and participating in the demonic outreaches, the blatant practice of sin and evil includes people being terrifyingly gripped with fears of more homelessness and poverty, fears of

*The poor, the migrants and the homeless included. Unfortunately, as we celebrate the 75th anniversary of Howard Thurman's first publishing of his theological masterpiece, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (1949), the United States of America is still ghastly choked by the internalized fears*

early and untimely death, fears of race wars, fears of dictatorial leadership in the White House, fears of a growing systemic evil and other forms of capitalistic idolatry that are committed to destroying innocent people, fears of public school buildings dictating the building of new prisons, fears of new age segregation and contemporary outreaches of Jim Crow, fears of unnecessary violence being done to people of color, fears of newly-created examples of capital punishment, fears of the free world becoming an incarcerated world, and fears of empirical church nepotism, global warming, rising costs and low-paying jobs. Here, these ever-present fears that “beset the vast poor, the economically and socially insecure, is still a different breed.”³ Our current fears represent a different breed of fear that a lot of people are afraid to address publicly and discuss privately.

In the nuanced mind of Thurman:

The fear of poverty is a complex and pervasive issue that affects millions of people worldwide. It is a fear that is difficult to pinpoint, yet it is always present, like the fog in San Francisco or London. It is a mood that is distilled from the acrid conflict between the weak and the strong, between those who control the environment and those who are controlled by it. The fear of poverty is a fear of the unknown, a fear of the future, and a fear of the present. It is a fear that is rooted deep in the heart of the relations between the poor and the rich, the haves and the have-nots. It is a fear that is both personal and societal, and it is a fear that must be addressed if we are to create a more just and equitable world.⁴

Thurman's conceptual notion of the fear of poverty is engulfed by images of the social, political, economic, and geographical nuance. Just as Dr. King presents injustice as a systemic evil that is anywhere and everywhere, Thurman presents the spread of fear in the forms of climate, fog, mood, conflict, roots and environment. He also illumines the fact that fear is both a national and international phenomenon. Lastly and most telling, Thurman introduces the spread of fear as one that torments the economically-deprived, start fights while creating conflicts between the like-minded, and creates opportunities for unnecessary suffering (evil) to take place. These acts of confusion are designed to increase the quality of life gap between the stronger haves and the weaker have-nots.

Thurman then describes the actual fears of poverty as founded in people's fear of violence:

In a society in which certain people or groups—by virtue of economic, social, or political power—have dead-weight advantages over others who are essentially without that kind of power, those who are thus disadvantaged know that they cannot fight back effectively, that they cannot protect themselves, and that they cannot demand protection from their persecutors. Any slight conflict, any alleged insult, any vague whim, any unrelated frustration, may bring down upon the head of the defenseless the full weight of naked physical violence. Even in such a circumstance it is not the fear of death that is most often at work; it is the deep humiliation arising from dying without benefit of cause or purpose. No high end is served. There is no trumpet blast to stir the blood and to anesthetize the agony. Here, there is no going down

to the grave with a shout; it is merely being killed or being beaten in utter wrath or indifferent sadism, without the dignity of being on the receiving end of a premeditated act hammered out in the white heat of a transcendent moral passion. The whole experience attacks the fundamental sense of self-respect and personal dignity, without which a man is no man.⁵

The exploratory way that Thurman conceptualizes the notion of human fear in the late 1940s is theologically telling on many fronts. He first examines the fear that a sizable number of human beings have in the sphere of power. In presenting fear as one that comes from the lack of social, political and economic power, Thurman describes the innocent fearful as those who are powerless, helpless, unprotected and disadvantaged. Here, Thurman understands how easy it is for the powerless to be overpowered to the points of violence and death. He sees how the fear of violence and death disallows people from respecting and loving themselves in the face of internalizing such perils as

In viewing hatred as a form of fear, Thurman is convinced that only through self-love and love of one another can God's justice prevail in the face of structural evil.

dishonor, indecency, insignificance, worthlessness. For Thurman, the painful truth of dying without physically being able to do something about it is the oppressive embodiment of *being* powerless. To some degree, Thurman conceives the evil of suffering due to fear as something in which our Creator God does intervene.

A Theological Overview

In my PhD dissertation entitled '*Cause De Spirit Spoke to Me: Conversations on Black Liberation Theology Amidst Economic Deprivation*⁶, *Jesus and the Disinherited* concluded my study on theology and racism in the United States. At its core, Thurman's *magnum opus* demonstrates how the gospel of Jesus Christ may be interpreted as a blueprint of resistance for the oppressed. For Thurman, Jesus is a partner in the growing pain of the poor and the example of his life offers a solution to ones experiencing of racism and poverty. According to Thurman, hatred does not empower people; it decays and disengages them from living a fruitful life. In viewing hatred as a form of fear, Thurman is convinced that only through self-love

and love of one another can God's justice prevail in the face of structural evil. As Black people continue to struggle with issues of poverty, racism and spiritual disengagement, Thurman presents a theological construction of Jesus' love and communal empowerment. Following in the theoretical lineage of W. E. B. Du Bois' opinion that the racism (or the color line) is the preeminent issue of the 20th century, I am certain that economic/material poverty is the foremost issue of the 21st century. Jointly, poverty and racism are systemically locked arm-in-arm for the purpose of scaring innocent people.

While Thurman understands how racism affects Black people in the United States, his competing vision of love is found in the life of Jesus Christ, the savior of the world. For Thurman, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is sufficient to deal with the hatred of racism. This is because Jesus himself embodies the disinherited for us and with us. His suffering, bleeding and dying showed Jesus as one who was born in solidarity with the disinherited (Luke 1). Hence, "disinherited" was Jesus' identity as well. The earthly Jesus took on the responsibility of being disinherited; and by his suffering, bleeding, dying and resurrection, he conquered oppression and made a way for other oppressed people to do the same. For Thurman, embodying the love of Jesus is the appropriate response to the experience of dehumanization and racism. Concomitantly, the disinherited are those who have been victimized by the perils of racism and poverty. Thurman, the Christian theologian, believes the transcendent greatness of Jesus' earthly ministry is redemptive enough to combat and respond to the idolatry of both issues.

If there were ever a group of people that needed the Holy Spirit to pray for them with groans too deep to expressed in words, it would be the African slaves. Set up by their own ancestors and kidnapped by white colonizers, African slaves were forced to come to a place they did not want to be. And for Black people, in critique of how African slaves were unjustly uprooted from their native land, Howard Thurman poses the question: What might have happened if Jesus, so perfect a flower from the brooding spirit of God in the soul of Israel, had been permitted to remain where his roots would have been fed by the distilled elements accumulated from Israel's wrestling with God?⁷ With a theological brilliance foreign to the late 1940s context, Thurman uses analytical language to speak specifically to Jesus' socioeconomic context—his primary identification with the disinherited. He states that "Jesus was a poor Jew."⁸

What this means is that:

...the economic predicament with which he was

identified in birth placed him initially with the great mass of men on earth. If we dare take the position that in Jesus, there was at work some racial destiny. It would be safe to say that in his poverty he was more truly Son of man than he would have been if the incident of family or birth had made him a rich son of Israel. It is not a point to be labored; for again and again men have transcended circumstance of birth and training; but it is an observation not without merit.⁹

Allow me to put it another way. Thurman intentionally depicts Jesus as a poor member of an ethnic minority living in a colony of the Roman empire, who spoke directly to the oppressed. This theological Jesus preached against the temptations of fear, deception and hatred with a message of the dignity and worth of all people. Most of all, he preached love. "Love of the enemy means that a fundamental attack must first be made on the enemy status,"¹⁰ Here, Thurman believed that "The privileged and the underprivileged" must

***Allow me to put it another way.
Thurman intentionally depicts Jesus as
a poor member of an ethnic minority
living in a colony of the Roman empire,
who spoke directly to the oppressed.***

meet in places without hierarchy in order to overcome it. "The experience of the common worship of God is such a moment."¹¹ While I could not find any specific quotes by Thurman on the poverty of Black people in the United States and Africa, he argues in *Jesus and the Disinherited* that Jesus himself was a member of an oppressed minority and that his teachings are fundamentally about empowering the oppressed and marginalized. Even as the teachings of Jesus Christ are designed to encourage and inspire the disinherited, Thurman's conceptual notion of fear comes with thick descriptions that convey the message of a visible nightmare that is saturated in human tragedy and a conscientious hope in God.

Thurman uses these words to conceptualize the anticipation of violence as the creator of fear:

The threat of violence within a framework of well-nigh limitless power is a weapon by which the weak are held in check. Artificial limitations are placed upon them, restricting freedom of movement, of employment, and of participation in the common life. These limitations are given

formal or informal expression in general or specific policies of separateness or segregation. These policies tend to freeze the social status of the insecure. The threat of violence may be implemented not only by constituted authority but also by anyone acting in behalf of the established order. Every member of the controllers' group is in a sense a special deputy, authorised by the mores to enforce the pattern. This fact tends to create fear, which works on behalf of the proscriptions and guarantees them. The anticipation of possible violence makes it very difficult for any escape from the pattern to be effective.¹²

Perhaps Thurman's conception of human fear includes the presumed notion that fear is designed to make weak people a weaker people and poor people a poorer people. In Thurman's descriptive analysis, we see hints of the oppressors' strategy in how they use the violent element of fear to disengage and take back the biblical and constitutional rights of various groups of people. Thurman helps us to see how the anticipation of violence is always preceded by the dreaded threat of a deep-seated fear that was already present. For many people, the fear of violence was always there.

Components of Thurman's Far-Reaching Spirituality in the Midst of Fear

Gene Zubovich's article "Revisiting the Legacy of Howard Thurman, the Mystic of the Civil Rights Movement," presents Thurman as a prominent African American theologian, educator and civil rights leader. However, in viewing numerous documentaries, movies, plays and culturally-centered depictions of the Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 1960s, I never saw Thurman's body and face or heard his voice in real time or in a Black actor's portrayal of him. As one of the first Black theologians who traveled in India to see Mahatma Gandhi and be in conversation with him about the applicable tenets of nonviolent civil disobedience, one would think that Thurman's presence would be consistent with that of Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Abernathy, Andrew Young, Jesse Jackson, John Lewis, Bayard Rustin, Roy Wilkins and others. After all, Thurman was born during the last single year of the 19th century (1899), some 34 years after the end of the Civil War. In addition to being the first African American dean of chapel at a traditionally white American university (Boston University), Thurman had a profound influence on King's faith and activism. He was one of the first pastors to inspire King to

merge Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolent resistance with the civil rights movement. It goes without saying that Thurman's concepts about nonviolence and Jesus are peppered throughout King's writings. But I never saw Howard Thurman's body physically marching in the streets or participating in nonviolent sit-ins or other types of peaceful demonstrations. Why is that? Was Thurman so filled with the very notions of fear he conceptualized theologically that he was not willing to put his body in harm's way for the sacrificial cause of the greater Movement? Maybe. Maybe not.

Even though Thurman did not engage in the dramatic public activism that some other leaders did, the fact remains that he played a significant role in shaping the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Instead of thinking that Thurman was fearful in his lack of physical activism, I would argue that Thurman's spirituality was greater than his fear of putting himself in harm's way. That is not to say I do not believe that he did not have some type of working fear in place. Because I am sure Thurman did, given the dangerous racial climates of the 1950s and 1960s. But as a Black liberation theo-

His teachings emphasized the latent spiritual power within most socially oppressed individuals. What this means is that Thurman's theological legacy extended beyond visible activism or just one form of protest and resistance.

logian, I am led to believe that Thurman's spiritual resolve sustained him during those very difficult times.

Let's explore why I say that. Thurman's experiences in India shaped his understanding of the latent spiritual power within oppressed communities. Thurman was certain that the first step toward social change was transforming one's individual internal spirit. In other words, his contemplative approach emphasized inner transformation and the authenticity of personal experience. Rather than front-line protesting, Thurman focused on nurturing the spiritual essence of the Movement. Here, with *Jesus and the Disinherited* in full view, it is important to note that Thurman was committed to his own spiritual disciplines and foundations. His teachings emphasized the latent spiritual power within most socially oppressed individuals. What this means is that Thurman's theological legacy extended beyond visible activism or just one form of protest and resistance.

While critics and pundits labeled him a “backbencher” due to his lack of front-line protesting, Thurman’s impact extended far beyond public demonstrations. His role was not that of a street marcher. But rather, Thurman’s role was that of an inspirational figure, providing the philosophical basis for the Movement. Here, his mystical meanderings and exploratory emphasis on inner transformation contributed significantly to the Civil Rights Movement. Thurman is referred to by many as the Dean of the Civil Rights Movement. While he is often associated with the Civil Rights Movement, Thurman’s legacy extends beyond it. Again, that is not to say that he did possess any fear of racial violence as he brilliantly outlines in Chapter 2 of *Jesus and the Disinherited*. But rather, while dealing with his own personal fears, Thurman decided to focus his creative energies on helping to develop the spiritual foundation of the Movement. One could argue that this important action of exemplifying spiritual wisdom is neither the absence nor the presence of fear but is an underestimated act of a powerful faith.

Historical Context: The United States in 1949

Jesus and the Disinherited was published in 1949. Four years removed from the end of World War II, this was a time when Americans were suffering, bleeding and dying at an expedited rate. This was also a time when late capitalism was beginning to bloom nationally and internationally. By then, Black people in all parts of the country were experiencing mortality rates comparable to those that whites had experienced 25 years earlier (1924). According to many studies, heart disease, cancer, stroke, accidents and certain diseases of early infancy were the main causes of death. Ills associated with economic/material poverty also played major roles in the death of a sizable number of Black Americans. This is due to the fact that the lack of economic resources increases one’s chance of developing certain diseases that lead to early death. Also, according to a study by the University of Wisconsin, the poverty rate in the United States was 40.5 percent in 1949. The poverty rate varied widely based on the major socioeconomic correlates of poverty such as age, race or ethnicity, sex of the household head, family size, educational achievement of the household head.

On the national scene, some important things happened in 1949. Oliver Marcell (June 21, 1895 – June 12, 1949), nicknamed “Ghost,” an American third baseman in the Negro leagues for a number of teams around the league from 1918 to 1931, died in poverty in 1949 in Denver, Colorado. Even worse, on September 6, 1949 Howard Barton Unruh, a World War II veteran, killed 13 neighbors in Camden, New

Jersey, with a souvenir Luger to become America’s first single-episode mass murderer. Barton shot and killed 13 people, many of whom were Black Americans, during a 12-minute walk through his neighborhood in Camden, New Jersey. This horrifying incident became known as the Walk of Death. Unruh was found criminally insane and died in 2009 at the age of 88 after a lengthy illness following 60 years of confinement. The shooting remains the deadliest mass shooting in New Jersey history, and is one of the first examples of a mass shooting in post-World War II U.S. history.¹³ As the result of this deadly shooting spree, many parts of the United States were paralyzed with a gripping fear as people wondered about the possibility of their own lives being cut short due to gun violence. This was a time when the fear of untimely death spread like wildfire.

The last year of the 1940s was indicative of the time when racial segregation in several prominent American cities and communities was premeditated for the purpose of lumping poor Black families in underdeveloped areas. According to many housing policy experts,

During this time, Black and white Americans suffered greatly in the hands of a negligent and violent United States.

federal government policies created the suburbs and the inner-city neighborhoods. Also, in 1949 the South African Citizenship Act suspended the granting of citizenship to Commonwealth of Nations immigrants after five years, and imposed a ban on mixed marriages.

This was the same year that the last U.S. troops withdrew from South Korea. Sadly, the Inglewood race riot, or Peoria Street riot, was one of many post-World War II race riots in Chicago, Illinois, that took place in November 1949. Whites in the neighborhood rioted, attacking other whites, partially based on rumors and misinformation that Blacks were meeting to take over their neighborhood. A 1949 letter to a friend from President Harry Truman reflects the opposition he faced in efforts to create a national health care plan, in particular the American Medical Association misrepresenting his proposal as “socialized medicine.” Sadly, a national program providing support for some lower-income and older people was not accomplished until more than a decade-and-a-half later. During this time, Black and white Americans suffered greatly in the hands of a negligent and violent United States.

Conclusion

In *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Howard Thurman describes fear as one of the hounds of hell that dogs the footsteps of the poor because fear paralyzes innocent human beings into an existential experience of hell on earth. Like vicious dogs that bite to kill, steal and destroy, fear negatively conditions the hearts of poor people into an instantaneous paralysis. In dogging the footsteps of the poor, fear follows those who are economically deprived like the desperate robber follows those he or she thinks are easy targets. Like dangerous dogs, fear bites into the skin of the poor for the purposes of creating pain, hell on earth and ultimately death. Fear has footsteps too. Its footsteps are bigger, larger, longer, richer, sturdier and more powerful than the dehumanized footsteps of the poor. They have the ability to scare the living daylights out of those who have weaker footsteps. The footsteps of fear are those of the opinion that they are superior to those of the inferior poor. I liken the hounds of hell that dog the footsteps of the poor to a dark shadow that follows those who are in desperate need of light. This dogged following is demonic in that its sole purpose is to keep the poor away from any type of light. One sure way that the hounds of hell instill a petrifying fear into the hearts of the smaller, weaker poor is by brute force and unmatched violence. In the same way King listed racism, capitalism and militarism as the three evils, Thurman recognized fear, poverty and violence as barriers to humanity's quest for freedom and equality. He then makes the case for Christianity as an authoritative and useful ideology in the face of oppression and argues for an interpretation of Jesus' moral teachings as politically relevant and centered on "the love-ethic."¹⁴ Says Thurman:

When the basis of such fear is analyzed, it is clear that it (fear) arises out of the sense of isolation and helplessness in the face of the varied dimensions of violence to which the underprivileged are exposed. Violence, precipitate and stark, is the sire of the fear of such people. It is spawned by the perpetual threat of violence everywhere. One can almost see the desperation creep into the quivering, pulsing body of the frightened animal. It is one-sided violence. If two men equally matched, or even relatively matched, are in deadly combat, the violence is clear-cut though terrible; there is gross equality of advantage. But when the power and the tools of violence are on one side, the fact that there is no available and recognized protection from violence makes the result-

*ing fear deeply terrifying.*¹⁵

Thurman seems certain that human fear can result from being considered inferior in a way that one knows for sure that they would not survive or succeed in an unevenly matched contest. In viewing the weaker culture as a frightened animal, Thurman brings to mind the fact the African slaves and Black Americans have for a long time been deemed as inferior and sub-human. What has never been explored in this racialized dichotomy of human perspective is that a sizable number of Black people have become like animals not because they needed to, but because they were afraid to die in an unmatched battle. Thurman gets it right when he describes the fight to death as one-sided violence with a gross inequality of advantage. When there is always a clear advantage on the side of the oppressor, the oppressed is consumed with fear of their human fate. This is what fear does to human beings. It makes them afraid of the outcomes in battle with a more powerful entity, as Thurmond writes:

Fear is a constant psychological symptom

In the same way King listed racism, capitalism and militarism as the three evils, Thurman recognized fear, poverty and violence as barriers to humanity's quest for freedom and equality.

*among the disinherited. It is a product of violence and the looming threat of violence on the part of the oppressor, and it takes a significant toll on the psyches of both the individual and the community. Fear is reified and passed on to children, robbing them of childhood innocence and creating a cycle of harm and anxiety. Thurman contends that the Christian belief that humans are children of God can build self-worth and act as a bulwark against fear. Faith can overcome fear, and it is therefore a particularly useful tool for the disinherited.*¹⁶

Thurman conceptualizes fear as one that negatively impacts the psyche of the disinherited—both the individual disinherited and the communal disinherited. His analysis brings to mind Albert Memmi's book, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*,¹⁷ where Memmi concludes that human oppression does great harm to both the oppressed and the oppressor. Thurman's work also brings to mind two more things. 1. How Black leaders participated in the forced kidnapping of Africans to be

the working slaves of the white slave master. 2. How white capitalists are willing to sacrifice their own and do economic harm to their own brothers and sisters just to make sure they keep Black and brown in fear of their own poverty situation. In both accounts, violence, fear and the promise of death are included in the experience of being disinherited and oppressed.

By all accounts, fear is a powerful force that can oppress the disenfranchised. In *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Howard Thurman delves into the impact of fear on those who face oppression and violence. In Chapter 2, Thurman conceptualizes the notion of fear in three realms:

1. The Primary Nature of Fear: Victimizing the Innocent with Overwhelming Power

- In a society where certain groups hold economic, social or political power, the disadvantaged know they are not numerically or militarily strong enough to demand protection from their persecutors. The politics of fear intentionally goes against the minority groups.
- It's not just the fear of death that plagues the disinherited; it's also the deep humiliation of dying without a sense of purpose or just cause.
- The integrity of physical violence degrades by contemptuously disregarding personhood. One group of people defines humanity and the other groups are considered as less than human.

2. The True Threat of Violence: Unending Harm

- Even without actual violence, the threat alone can wreak havoc in the souls of the poor. It does psychological and spiritual harm.
- The mere rumor or historical precedent of violence under similar circumstances is enough to make the threat effective. Here, the threat of violence has “hang” time as it causes pain and suffering without being visibly present.
- Like a dog yelping before being hit by objects that cut into their skin, fear perpetuates itself.

3. Jesus' Liberating Message for the Disinherited: The Work of the Holy Spirit:

- Thurman references Jesus' life as a practical and spiritual remedy for fear.
- Jesus' teachings emphasize abandoning fear of each other and fearing only God.
- The call to liberation is an unending search for truth and righteousness.

In his article, “Howard Thurman and the Problem of Faithlessness,” D'Ondre Swails asks the important question:

Why does the average man or woman who can

*barely pay rent or buy groceries still choose to go to work every day? What keeps them from resorting to crime or choosing to escape their miserable condition by turning to drugs or alcohol? The answer is faith. These people have been convinced—either by carrot or stick—that it is best to follow the prescribed means of American society. Under these conditions, the flawed Christian doctrine to which Thurman initially refers shows up as either 1.) a blinder, compelling believers to accept a *Candide*-like optimism about this being the best of all possible worlds, or 2.) a salve, treating their bruised spirits with the promise of better in the next life.¹⁸*

On these critical points, Thurman concludes “The whole experience attacks the fundamental sense of self-respect and personal dignity, without which a man is no man.”¹⁹ Even with faith in God, those who are systemically oppressed are also forced to bear the burdens of fear and violence as co-inhabitants that are

Even with faith in God, those who are systemically oppressed are also forced to bear the burdens of fear and violence as co-inhabitants that are designed to kill, steal and destroy (John 10:10).

designed to kill, steal and destroy (John 10:10). The faith of the innocent is not materialized in the sacred purpose of fighting against the hegemonic outreaches of evil. While I do agree with Thurman when he states that faith is the answer, I cannot help but ponder the dire consequences of one's thought process in regards to what it means to defend himself or herself while attempting to protect their respective families. What does faith in God have to do with one's decision to fight against those who are determined to send innocent people to their untimely death? Especially when the Bible says that the battle is not ours; it belongs to the LORD (2 Chron. 2:15).

According to Christian Collins Winn,

Thurman's gambit was that Jesus, subject to the same temptations as every dispossessed person, pursued a path distinct from the perils of adopting fear, deception or hatred as a means of survival. According to Thurman, Jesus began

with the simple idea that, “Every man is potentially every other man’s neighbor,” that “Neighborliness is nonspatial; it is qualitative. A man must love his neighbor directly, clearly, permitting no barriers between.” From Thurman’s perspective, wherever the spirit of Jesus “appears, the oppressed gathers fresh courage; for he announced the good news that fear, hypocrisy, and hatred, the three hounds of hell that track the trail of the disinherited, need have no dominion over them.”²⁰

As a Black sage theologian of the mid-20th century, Thurman conceptualizes the notion of fear with a vision of hope, faith and fearlessness. He teaches modern-day, liberation theologians and Black church practitioners that to be fearless in the midst of facing one’s deep-seated fears presupposes their commitment to the spiritual foundations of God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. *Jesus and the Disinherited* is a powerful critique of the way Christianity has been used to justify the materialistic oppression of the poor and marginalized. The United States in 2024 would do well in taking heed of Thurman’s conceptualizing the notion of human fear. Seventy-five years after its first publishing in 1949, *Jesus and the Disinherited* is even more relevant today than it was in the mid-20th century. The 2024 version of the United States is one that is still filled with fear, death, hate, oppression and violence. Even today, Thurman’s work is as relevant as it has ever been. The Bible reminds us that instead of giving believers the spirit of fear, God gave us the spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 Tim 1:7).

With Thurman’s conceptual notion of fear in view, I am reminded by the Holy Spirit that fear, death, hate, oppression and violence do not represent the end of our human fate. In stating that life does in fact go on, Thurman teaches us that there is something in the world that is greater than evil and the evildoers. This greater transcendence guarantees that our lives matter to God in Christ and have value in the love of the Holy Spirit. Despite how some of our ancestors have fallen to the hands of hate and violence, they still live on in our hearts, even as life in God goes on for those who have survived.

May Thurman’s poignant words remind us of the precious value of life, help us celebrate it, and protect our souls from the “contagion of inner disintegration” during these turbulent times²¹ of human fear. To be sure, the hellish violence that dogs the footsteps of the poor is not greater than the power of the Holy Spirit. ■

Rev. Darvin A. Adams I, PhD is Pastor of the Lane Tabernacle CME Church in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. He is a widely known speaker and prolific writer and serves as Dean of the Evansville-Hopkinsville District of the Kentucky Region Conference and Scholar-in-Residence of the Second Episcopal District.

-
- 1 Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1976.
 - 2 On many social occasions and in a number of his most important speeches, Dr. King made reference to what he termed the three evils in the world—racism, capitalism and militarism. All of which in the mind of Thurman, created a materialized spirit of fear among Black Americans and poor white Americans too. The demonic presence of all three evils is what prompted King to speak out against the Vietnam War in 1967.
 - 3 Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 26.
 - 4 *Ibid.*, 26-27.
 - 5 *Ibid.*, 27-28.
 - 6 I successfully defended my PhD dissertation in April 2018 at the Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary on the campus of Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. My dissertation committee consisted of Drs. Stephen G. Ray, Dwight N. Hopkins, Nancy E. Bedford, and Larry G. Murphy. My areas of study were theology and ethics (Economic Theory).
 - 7 Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 16.
 - 8 *Ibid.*, 17.
 - 9 *Ibid.*
 - 10 Jared Hudson quoting Howard Thurman, “What’s the Matter with Vassar,” Para. 36, Footnote 24.
 - 11 Gene Zubovich, “Revisiting the Legacy of Howard Thurman, the Mystic of the Civil Rights Movement,” Para. 8.
 - 12 Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 35.
 - 13 See Wikipedia: 1949
 - 14 *Ibid.*, 89.
 - 15 *Ibid.*, 27.
 - 16 <https://www.supersummary.com/jesus-and-the-disinherited.summary/> Para. 5.
 - 17 Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1991).
 - 18 D’Ondre Swails, “Howard Thurman and the Problem of Faithlessness,” Para. 7.
 - 19 Howard Thurman, “Fear: An Excerpt from *Jesus and the Disinherited*” Para. 2.
 - 20 Christian Collins Winn, “*Jesus and the Disinherited*: Howard Thurman still speaks to the church.,” Para. 6.
 - 21 Rhon Manigault-Bryant, ““Life Goes On:” A Meditation from Howard Thurman,” Para. 6.

Reflections on Jesus and the “Inherited”

By Carol Harston

Howard Thurman’s *Jesus and the Disinherited* caught my attention years ago. Thurman brilliantly describes the complex and powerful way that beliefs function within the lives of those whose backs are against the wall. Oppressive systems, whether in Jesus’ day or the present, employ beliefs that keep people with their backs against the wall even if the weapons are not exposed.

Thurman’s theology comes to life through his complete, devastating sincerity about life as it is, with Jesus, whose own back was against the wall, at the center.

Thurman locates the birthplace of concrete action as the internal landscape. Only through understanding, recognizing and destroying the fear, deception and hatred of oppressive systems can courage and love via nonviolent resistance be possible. As a pastor and scholar, Thurman knew that religious life was not just about loving Jesus. The spiritual life is about investigating our chosen beliefs and those that have snuck their way into our souls unaware.

Beliefs don’t just dwell in our intellect; they function in our lives. Beliefs are less an intellectual assent or some words we mutter and then shelve somewhere within us. Beliefs exist within us, active and powerful. We don’t only hold beliefs; they hold us.

Some beliefs we choose, while others have been passed down to us. The most dangerous of all beliefs are the ones I don’t “believe” in, but are shaping my words, deeds, relationships and citizenry without my conscious consent or awareness. Beliefs received can soak into our bones, warp our minds, and stunt our development, especially when they reach us in childhood.

The beliefs we don’t “believe” can affect us in sinister ways. The political, social and religious systems that have raised us implant beliefs that function in our internal landscape.

As a white woman of privilege reading Thurman, I’ve lived with the lingering question: What about Jesus and the “Inherited”? For those of us whose ancestors pushed the disinherited up against the wall or lived as silent benefactors of such violent systems, how are our spirits impacted by its legacy and its present evils?

Violence squeezes the disinherited into tight spaces

where they must fight for survival. The inherited assume that their wide-open spaces benefit them, unaware of how the evil beliefs born of white supremacy and racial oppression make it so that no one is free. Fear, deception and hatred fuel the whole system; levels must be regularly stoked within the inherited to keep tight the reins, tension racing through the system and wrecking the inherited’s political parties, churches, neighborhoods, family systems and bodies.

Without the system and its supporting narratives, the inherited have much to lose; so they grow up learning that self-protection is not only a “right” but a requirement.

Imagine a house whose rooms have no light.

For those of us whose ancestors pushed the disinherited up against the wall or lived as silent benefactors of such violent systems, how are our spirits impacted by its legacy and its present evils?

Daylight never reaches inside, and the lights don’t work. The man who lives there finds the darkness scary and unsettling; but his parents brought him up in this house, so it is the only house he knows. He inherited it from them and is proud of his childhood home.

Stories from the generations that preceded him taught him to beware of robbers who would take advantage of the darkness. Beware animals looking for food. Always be ready, weapons in hand, to defend your house from whatever lurks in the darkness. Even as the weapons weigh on him, clunky and awkward at times, they have become so ordinary that he barely notices them anymore.

Then comes a miracle from God: One day, the house becomes filled with light. The dark paper over the windows has fallen, so sunlight streams in. Electricity returns so lightbulbs can shine bright. The man is overjoyed. He can now clearly see all that he has missed. He sees all that he possesses, and he is pleased. Even more importantly, the danger he’s lived with all his life

is gone. He can see no threats present, and he will be able to see any danger should it emerge.

Yet, his hands are so used to holding the weapons. He is reluctant to lay them down. Even as he sees all the treasures in his home that he wishes to pick up, examine, hold and admire, he can't manage to part with his self-protection.

Now, he doesn't need the weapons to protect himself. Strangely, he still feels the need to protect the weapons from becoming obsolete or, worse, a symbol of his ignorance for all those years in the dark. Understanding is beginning to dawn. But is he willing to see that his eyes will only detect threats unless he's willing to set down the weapons? With the lights on, can he see in the mirror that he is his own enemy? He is the greatest danger.

Complete, devastating sincerity requires the inherited to realize that the weapons in one's hands that one has assumed to be self-protection are not protecting anyone. Weapons and wealth wound both the disinherited and the inherited.

When one's worth is so tied to power, to lay down the vestiges of power can be a terrifying ask. Especially when the inherited have lived under the illusion that one's sense of self and hope mirrors one's power and control. The strong are fooling themselves. Beliefs about protection, possession and power cannot co-exist with love and freedom.

When the inherited build more barns to hold their growing empire, fear of losing it all grows. One assumes those without barns must envy great wealth, so one builds another barn just to store the equipment to protect the other barns.

Children of the inherited learn that to be safe, loved and to belong, one must be better than everyone else. One's value, purpose and place are gained by achieving superiority and lauding it over those who are inferior. If one struggles to be better than one's peers, the disinherited fill that role. The vast conspiracy of noise drowns out the disinherited's cries for dignity, resources and freedom.

Are not today's political landscape and social media newsfeeds evidence enough that contact without fellowship and unsympathetic understanding leave everyone feeling their back is against the wall, even if they're the ones whose hands hold weapons of power

and status? If the inherited think themselves disinherited, what more crucial of a time is it for Thurman's voice to emerge and guide us to Jesus and his ethic of love-ethic?

Jesus illuminates the house, and the man sees that the only thing to fear is his fear, which has turned everyone into an enemy, including himself.

"In Jesus' insistence that we should forgive seventy times seven, there seems to be the assumption that forgiveness is mandatory for three reasons. First, God forgives us again and again for what we do intentionally and unintentionally. There is present an element that is contingent upon our attitude. Forgiveness beyond this is interpreted as the work of divine grace. Second, no evil deed represents the full intent of the doer. Third, the evildoer does not go unpunished" (98).

So, who am I?" Jesus leads each individual to ask of themselves. With Thurman's guidance, he learns to answer "a child of God" and believe it. Considering

When the inherited build more barns to hold their growing empire, fear of losing it all grows. One assumes those without barns must envy great wealth, so one builds another barn just to store the equipment to protect the other barns.

such grace, he is beginning to see the beliefs once cherished have been the danger all along.

He looks around the house, now full of light, and lays down his weapons. His journey toward true freedom, love, and holy resistance has begun. ■

Carol Harston is an ordained minister, wife, and mother. She has degrees from Wake Forest, Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, and Duke University (D.Min.) where she wrote "Traumatizing Theology and the Healing Church."

Warning Flags, Parallels to Not Be Missed

By John D. Pierce

Why would professing followers of Jesus get and stay onboard with obvious acts of socially-produced evil?

This important question has been rightly posed regarding German Christians amid the rise of Nazism and the scripture-quoting defenders of slavery in the American South. These are but two examples from history.

Sadly, the answer to that question is not particularly perplexing. It is a moral failure — by ignorance or design — of falling victim to lies, manipulation and all that fear promises but doesn't deliver for good.

It has been said that the first person to mention Hitler loses the debate. Such comparisons were considered insensitive to the victims of Nazism since the holocaust is incomparable in its scale of human destruction.

However, ignoring some modern parallels to how such abusive power was exerted — and culpability extended by those claiming Jesus as Lord — would be a serious mistake. Similar birth narratives of American slavery and the rise of Nazism are now found within modern movements to limit freedom.

The best deterrent to such growing acts of evil is to wave a warning flag early on and to heed its caution. Among the parallels that deserve warning are these three:

One is the scapegoating of a particular group or groups of people.

Whether African slaves, Jews, Palestinians, LGBTQ persons or modern immigrants, the blame for whatever one is angry about is cast upon them. To advance such evil, the targeted persons are demeaned. They are treated as less than God's creation — tagged as “animals,” “illegals,” “trannies” or whatever names help with dehumanization. Because once someone is dehumanized, then destroying them become acceptable.

Many who claim to follow Jesus but are driven by fear, insecurities and self-preservation eagerly join this practice. We see it in their social media postings. With just a little time, they will find a distorted scripture verse or the quoted words of a bloviating preacher to justify such hatred as being “biblical” and therefore Christian.

A second parallel is the unrelenting embrace of an

unquestioned, authoritative leader who uses fear to extract one-sided loyalty.

Once that commitment is made it matters not what the leader reveals about himself — yes, almost always “him” — or his agenda.

That would require admitting being misled — and, oddly, vulnerability and confession are not easy expressions for many Americanized Christians.

Facts do not matter to those captivated by fear mongering. Nothing is more wasteful than providing evidence to those who find more comfort in their hatred and falsities than in love and truth.

One example is the response to the well-documented work of historian Kristin Du Mez in her book, *Jesus*

With just a little time, they will find a distorted scripture verse or the quoted words of a bloviating preacher to justify such hatred as being “biblical” and therefore Christian.

and John Wayne. The very toxic masculinity she documents is precisely the way she is treated by toxic men — often those claiming to be Christian.

There are no valid counter arguments — just threatening behavior toward a woman who would dare reveal the long trail of abuses by powerful men within Americanized Christianity.

The same authoritative formula is used today to draw allegiance from particularly white men who feel a sense of losing personal privilege and power — due to aging, broadening equality and overall unfamiliar social changes.

Those grievances are stirred into a stew of fear, anger and untruth that blinds adherents to the leader's own deep lack of basic human decency. The sales pitch goes: “Someone is trying to take something away from you and I will stop them in exchange for casting aside your values and being wholly loyal to me.”

A greater commitment is made to preserving “social order” (personal privilege) than to the one who called for self-denial and cross bearing.

Ready-made excuses — such as false equivalencies and misrepresentations of reality — are always at hand to justify that which is abhorrent, evil and in conflict with basic Christian values.

A third parallel is the capacity for so many Americanized Christians to be motivated more by fear and self-interest than by the life and teachings of Jesus.

The economic benefits of human slavery trumped the basic biblical truth of all persons being created in the image of God. Slaveowners paid the preachers to tell them what they wanted to hear.

Many German Christians took Hitler's deal. It was a gradual capitulation that started with outsized patriotism and grew with fear and then every rationalization needed to excuse such evil.

Too often professing Christians find a way around the Way of Christ. Following Jesus is replaced with "believing the Bible" — which allows for extracting and mangling isolated verses in the same way many German Christians excused a holocaust and many Americanized Christians justified human bondage.

"But this is different today," some say. No, it is the same formula, same fears and same goals. Just some different human targets.

Too often the needed warning flags are limp and lowered while the flags of hatred and hostility are waved proudly — and flagstaffs used as weapons. It's time to speak up a bit more.

When someone promises to protect you by doing harm to others, raise a warning flag.

When a leader demands unquestioned loyalty that ignores basic human values, raise a warning flag.

When a presented ideology is in stark contrast to the life and teachings of Jesus, raise a warning flag.

When coercive power calls for rejecting the abundant life of following Jesus in advancing the common good of humanity, raise a flag. ■

John D. Pierce of Gainesville, Ga., served for nearly 24 years as executive editor of Nurturing Faith Journal (formerly Baptists Today). Now he directs the Jesus Worldview Initiative, part of Belmont University's Rev. Charlie Curb Center for Faith Leadership. This column was first posted at jesus-worldview.org.

Too often professing Christians find a way around the Way of Christ. Following Jesus is replaced with "believing the Bible" — which allows for extracting and mangling isolated verses in the same way many German Christians excused a holocaust and many Americanized Christians justified human bondage.

"In the day of Galileo...another scientist knew the earth revolved around the sun, but he had a large family to feed..."

Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Soviet Poet

Sentencing Donald Trump

By Wendell Griffen

A New York state court jury found Donald Trump guilty of committing 34 felony counts of falsifying business records to conceal checks signed by Trump to repay his former attorney (Michael Cohen) in 2017 for suppressing unfavorable information about Trump's alleged sexual encounter years earlier before the November 2016 presidential election. Trump could have been sentenced by Judge Juan Merchan by fine, up to four years imprisonment, or probation on each of the 34 counts. Because I had the same sentencing responsibilities for the last 12 of my 25-year tenure as state court judge in Arkansas (I retired at the end of 2022), I am familiar with the issues Judge Merchan Marchan will contemplate before he sentences Donald Trump, which should happen as soon as obstructions placed in the way by the absurd decision of the supermajority of justices on the US Supreme Court are overcome.

There are four theories of punishment judges weigh once persons have been convicted of crimes. They are retribution, deterrence, prevention and rehabilitation. Each theory has its own benefits and limitations.

The oldest theory or reason for punishment is retribution. This theory holds that people who commit crimes should suffer adverse consequences to punish them for the wrongs they commit, and the harms society suffers from those wrongs. That punishment signals to others that society will not tolerate the offending behavior and that offenders will not escape adverse consequences.

Another reason for criminal punishment is prevention. This theory is based on the belief that punishment should prevent wrongdoers from continuing wrongful behavior, thereby working to make society safer. For example, imprisonment operates to prevent certain offenders from continuing wrongful conduct by separating them from the wider community. Electronic monitoring prevents offenders from continuing wrongful conduct by limiting their freedom of movement and making their whereabouts known to law enforcement agencies.

A third theory of punishment is deterrence. Society imposes punishment to deter others from similar wrongdoing. Depending on the circumstances, fines, imprisonment, probation and suspended sentences also work to deter offenders from re-offending.

The fourth theory of punishment is based on rehabilitation. It is based on the view that wrongdoers can become law-abiding people and restored to society through education, counseling or other processes.

Judge Merchan will consider the theories of punishment as he weighs how to sentence Trump. He will also review the pre-sentence report and recommendation submitted by the probation department concerning Trump's personal history, health, education, prior legal history, as well as his pre-trial, trial and post-trial behavior.

Trump is a convicted felon. He has no presumption of innocence. District Attorney Alvin Bragg's legal team has hurdled the burden of proof it faced and

There are four theories of punishment judges weigh once persons have been convicted of crimes. They are retribution, deterrence, prevention and rehabilitation. Each theory has its own benefits and limitations.

convinced the jury of Trump's guilt on each of the 34 felony charges. At sentencing, lawyers for the prosecution and Trump will offer evidence aimed at persuading Judge Merchan on the sentence Trump will get for each felony charge.

For each charge, Judge Merchan will decide whether to impose a fine, probation, imprisonment or suspend all or part of the sentence. Then he will decide whether the sentences will run concurrently (meaning at the same time) or consecutively (meaning that Trump would be required to satisfy each of the 34 sentences sequentially in time). And if Judge Merchan sentences Trump to imprisonment, he will decide when Trump will be taken into custody to begin the sentence.

Judge Merchan's difficult work involves deciding which option would be most appropriate for Donald Trump and why other options would be less appropriate, if not inappropriate. I did that difficult work for 12 years. It was never simple because a judge must

consider aggravating and mitigating factors in every sentence. And there are mitigating factors in Trump's case. He has no prior criminal sentences. He is well-educated, politically connected and affluent.

Judge Merchan will consider the impact that Trump's sentences will have on his family, with special regard for his wife and remaining dependent child (son). And Judge Merchan will probably consider the impact of any sentence option on Trump's current and future political efforts.

That last factor can be mitigating or aggravating. Trump's legal team will argue that Trump should be fined, sentenced to community service, or placed on probation – rather than sentenced to imprisonment for any length of time – because re-offending would subject him to up to four years imprisonment on each of the 34 felony charges, concurrently or consecutively. Trump's lawyers will argue that the risk of imprisonment would deter Trump from further wrongful conduct and allow him to continue campaigning as a presidential candidate.

I disagree with those who believe Trump should not be sentenced to imprisonment. Trump is not a suitable candidate for probation. He flaunts the law and disrespects the rule of law. On 10 separate instances during his six-week trial, Trump was found guilty of contempt of court and fined \$1,000 (the maximum fine possible for criminal contempt under New York law). He has shown no remorse, contrition or respect about the crimes that jurors found that he committed.

Instead, he accused jurors of mistreating him. If he is elected president of the United States, Trump plans to use presidential power to seek revenge against any person associated with his conviction, including prosecutors, witnesses, Judge Merchan and jurors,

Donald Trump is a sociopath, not someone who would benefit from probation. He will violate probation conditions and terms the same way he disobeyed Judge Merchan. That is why Trump is not a suitable candidate for a probationary or suspended sentence.

Probationary sentences are proper to teach, counsel and coach people whose history shows they want to follow the law. But probationary sentences do not work for sociopaths. People who defy the law or use legal protections and liberties to violate the rights of others require imprisonment, not instruction, in order to protect the rest of society and deter others from breaking the law.

So, I would sentence Donald Trump to the maximum prison term – four years – on each of the 34 felony

counts of which he was found guilty of committing. I would run the sentences concurrently. I would not suspend any part of the sentences because Trump is more likely to reoffend than obey terms of a suspended sentence. I would not fine Trump. His followers would pay any fine in no time, and Trump would brag that they did so.

People who argue that Trump shouldn't be treated like a criminal who deserves imprisonment should remember that another notorious felon, Alphonse Capone, was convicted of tax evasion and conspiring to violate prohibition laws—white-collar crimes— and paid \$50,000 in fines and court costs, and was sentenced to 11 years in prison.

Martha Stewart was sentenced to five months in federal prison, five months of home confinement, and two years of probation for lying about a stock sale, obstruction of justice and conspiracy.

There is no legitimate reason why Trump should avoid imprisonment for his “white-collar” crimes.

If Americans are foolish enough to elect Trump president again, they will do so no matter what sentence

People who defy the law or use legal protections and liberties to violate the rights of others require imprisonment, not instruction, in order to protect the rest of society and deter others from breaking the law.

he receives. That should not matter to Judge Merchan. His job is to sentence Trump for 34 felony counts of falsifying business records for the purpose of committing another crime or crimes. If that happens, Trump, his followers and other politicians will figure out how he will perform presidential duties from prison if voters restore him to presidential office.

I think Trump should be sentenced to prison. Trump and the rest of us will ultimately know whether he receives that sentence from Judge Merchan. ■

Wendell Griffen is an Arkansas native, a Baptist pastor, retired judge, and well-known writer and speaker. He serves on the Board of Directors of CET and is Co-Chair of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference.

Book Review

Job's Choir: Essays From the Intersection of Grief and Hope

A "Precious Gem of a Book": Chuck Poole's Most Recent by Charles Eugene Poole (Macon, GA: Nurturing Faith, Inc., 2023). 47 pages.

A Review by Walter B. Shurden

In this book, the shortest and smallest volume I ever remember reviewing, are 47 pages. They leak with that "from the depths" life that the troubled writer of Psalm 130 described. My underlinings are on every page but two, indicating interest, enthusiasm or a question to chase.

"Chuck" Poole, as he is known by his part of the Baptist family, spent 45 years in the daily work of pastoral ministry in Baptist churches. The First Baptist Church of Christ in Macon, GA, my home church for 40 years, is among them. He also served the First Baptist Church of Washington, DC, and the Northminster Baptist Church in Jackson, MS, retiring recently from the latter. The *Washington Post* once rightly referred to him as "The Poet Preacher." This Baptist preacher, a lover of poetry, is both poet and hymn writer. A connoisseur of words and the well-turned phrase, he often demonstrates the spiritual discipline of "careful speech" in his preaching and writing. Chuck Poole is a spirit person—deeply so. Fortunately for us, he is a spirit person who uses wise and wonderful words.

The first two sentences set the table for this tiny banquet of a book: "There is a long list of ways things can go wrong in this life. None of us will go through all of them, but all of us will go through some of them." Imitating the creative African-American pulpit of North America, the pulpit that has taught us the indispensable value of repetition, this white Baptist preacher, born and reared in Macon, GA, unapologetically repeats his lines and thoughts again and again within these sparse pages. For example, on page 11 he extends the opening sentences, adding a bit of theology, easily overlooked. "There is a long list of ways things can go wrong in this life. While none of us will go through all of them, all of us will go through some of them, *not because God is that way but because life is that way.*"

The title is *Job's Choir*. Who stands to sing in Job's

choir? Biblical notables such as Moses, Elijah and Jonah, "and all the others, unnamed and unknown, beyond the Bible and across the centuries who, like Job, were sure that they could not go on," and who in despair asked God to end it all, but who "woke up the next morning to face the same fears and fear the same faces, all over again" (11).

Poole identifies not only those in Job's choir who have endured life's hideous sores and innocent suffering but who have nonetheless lived deeply, he also reveals "Chuck's Friends." On these 47 pages are 33 quotations or allusions from varied and rich voices: musicians such as the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band and Jimmy Buffet; mystics such as 14th century Julian of Norwich; modern ministers such as William Sloane Coffin and Barbara Brown Taylor; and poets such as

Here is a doctrine of God, cautious of human pronouns, a searing critique of theological transactionalism that, like the Bible, questions the Bible itself; a view of church that requires helping one another make it to dinner; a repudiation of "only-ism" or exclusivism in religion; and a universalism that will make the orthodox squirm and the aardvarks vark or however aardvarks cheer.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Mary Oliver and Wendell Berry. Just as Job sat with Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, Chuck Poole has sat with Anne Lamott, Frederick Buechner, Parker Palmer, C. S. Lewis, and Marilynne Robinson. Read the pastor's references and you know the pastor's soul.

Theology born in the crosshairs of the happiness and hurt of daily living slips itself unostentatiously upon these pages. Here is a doctrine of God, cautious of human pronouns, a searing critique of theological transactionalism that, like the Bible, questions the Bible itself; a view of church that requires helping one

another make it to dinner; a repudiation of “only-ism” or exclusivism in religion; and a universalism that will make the orthodox squirm and the aardvarks vark or however aardvarks cheer.

Chuck Poole and the late, influential John R. Claypool had much in common. Both had a “pool” in their names. Both were pastors throughout most of their ministerial careers. Both wrote extensively and preached every time Sunday rolled around. Both spoke slowly, southernly, mostly with quiet, almost monotone, voices. Claypool wrote 12 twelve books. Poole has written nine to date, but he is not finished. Both served the same church, Northminster Baptist Church in Jackson, MS, Claypool for six years, from 1976 to 1981 and Poole for 23 years on two different occasions, 1997-2003 and 2007-2022. And both wrote small, helpful books on grief. Ministers and counselors who keep multiple copies of John Claypool’s golden *Mending the Heart* to distribute to the grieving certainly will want to have extra copies of *Job’s Choir* on nearby shelves to hand to the despairing.

Often upon hearing John Claypool or Chuck Poole preach or when I have read one of their books, I have thought of Roberta Flack and her popular 1970s hit, “Killing Me Softly with His Song.”

Strumming my pain with his fingers
Singing my life with his words
Killing me softly with his song
Killing me softly with his song
Telling my whole life with his words
Killing me softly with his song.

“Telling my whole life with his words.” Chuck Poole, like John Claypool before him, excels at this priceless pulpit art. These two snoop our mail. They preach and pen our pain. They “sing” our lives. But rather than killing us with their words, they lift us up from the depths, teach us to hold on till dawn breaks, and supply courage for the hazardous journey.

Poole’s petite essays are much briefer than Claypool’s. You can read one of Poole’s in minutes. You can then ponder for several days what the good people at the First Baptist Church of Christ in Macon, GA, years ago dubbed as “Chuckology.” *Job’s Choir* contains lyrical lines to memorize, important ideas to write in one’s journal, and critical paragraphs to post on the fridge.

They tried to teach us in seminary how to write “critical book reviews.” “Critical” is no synonym for “nasty,” they explained. And they insisted that we must help our readers know who specifically should read the book. “Don’t ever write in your review,” they pun-

ishingly forewarned, that “**Everyone** should read this book.” Away with the generalizations! They demanded specificity. I try.

If life ever doubled you up and bent you over and if you had no idea how you could keep going, this little book is for you. If you ever asked, “If God cares, and if God can, then why doesn’t God step in more often to spare, heal, shield and protect?” this little book is for you. If you know that “the work of God gets done in the world both because of, and in spite of, the church” (Barbara Brown Taylor), but you still wonder how people make it without friends like those found at church, this little book is for you. If you have ever wondered about the dizzying, some argue dubious, relationship of prayer to pain, this little book is for you. If you have ever sobbed over the death of the dearest and deepest dream you ever had, this little book is for you. If you, or someone you love, is letting the life you cannot have keep you from the only life you can have, this little book is for you. If you have ever noticed that our pleasures and our pains often converge and overlap, that we often celebrate

If life ever doubled you up and bent you over and if you had no idea how you could keep going, this little book is for you.

the baby’s birth on the same day that we mourn Grandmother’s death, and that in this life we have no choice but to learn to “dance on broken legs and laugh with broken hearts,” this little book is for you.

If it is not obvious by now, I should fully disclose that I am an unapologetic, enthusiastic member of “Chuck’s Choir.” So is Dr. Kirby Godsey, revered and now retired president and chancellor of Mercer University. He and I listened to Chuck Poole preach for nine years at the First Baptist Church of Christ in Macon, GA. In his early 30s, Poole was stellar beyond his years at the preaching craft. Dr. Godsey spoke for me in his endorsement on the back cover of the book when he called *Job’s Choir* “this precious gem of a book.” Incredibly, only 47 very small pages! But it really is “a precious gem of a book.” ■

Walter B. Shurden is Emeritus Professor at Mercer University. He is a friend and mentor to many readers of Christian Ethics Today.

On Transgenderism

By Ryon Price

“From now on,” Paul said, “we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we no longer know him in that way. If anyone is in Christ, therefore, there is a new creation...”

(2 Corinthians 5:16-17)

And *“in Christ . . . there is neither male nor female; for [we] are all one [in substance] in Christ Jesus.”* (Galatians 3:28)

My great mentor, friend and Broadway ordinand, Hardy Clemons, taught me three key lessons for surviving and abiding as a pastor:

1. Never quit on a Monday.
2. Don't try to make friends with mad dogs.
3. Don't borrow trouble.

I'm glad to say I haven't quit *yet* on a Monday, and I don't feed salivating dogs.

And though what I have set out to say and do has sometimes been seen as quixotic, I can say that I've never caused controversy for controversy's sake, but have striven only to ever “trouble Israel” with a sermon solely when what needed to be said was a matter of the utmost conscience, conviction and/or care for the community. What I have to say today is a matter of all three.

I'm speaking today with you on transgenderism. And I do so because transgender people and their families are members of this congregation, and because it is a firm conviction of my conscience that they be cared for, as is fitting in the beloved community of Christ. Transgender people are not problems to be solved; they are human beings to be loved, honored, cherished and protected.

It is my hope that I can express genuine care to the transgender persons and their families who are members of this community and perhaps to help us all think theologically and Biblically about why it is that we can and should welcome and affirm transgender persons and other persons of gender fluidity within the church and defend their rights to exist within society.

Three core convictions form the basis of why I believe:

1. Everyone is made in the *imago Dei* – the image

of God.

2. The image of God is not biological, sexual, genital or congenital, but spiritual.

3. The radical spiritual message of the original “Jesus movement” – though much maligned, managed, masked, and often made to miscarry – is still a marker for a whole new way of making out what it means to be human:

“From now on,” Paul said, “we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we no longer know him in that way. If anyone is in Christ, therefore, there is a new creation.”

God made humanity in God's image. Both the masculine and the feminine were made in God's image. Therefore, both the masculine and the feminine belong to God. Thus God, in God's very own self, is gender inclusive.

And “in Christ . . . there is neither male nor female; for [we] are all one [in substance] in Christ Jesus.”

These words were written 2,000-plus years ago. We are still trying to catch up with their radicality even today – though, admittedly, some aren't trying very hard. In fact, many are still trying really hard to run away from them!

“‘But in the beginning God created them male and female.’ That's the Bible,” they say.

Well, yes, okay, that is in the Bible. And let's be biblical. Let's remember there are two biblical creation accounts. In the first, the Bible says God creates human beings in God's image – “in the image of God, God created” . . . “male and female God created *them*.” God made humanity in God's image. Both the masculine and the feminine were made in God's image.

Therefore, *both* the masculine and the feminine belong to God. Thus God, *in God's very own self*, is gender inclusive.

In the second Biblical creation account as well, there is the affirmation of mutuality and belonging. The *ishah* (translated “woman”) is formed from the rib of the *ish* (translated “man”), and so the *ish* says of the *ishah*, “This is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh,” which I interpret to mean there is something of and belonging to the male that is in the female, and, conversely, the female in the male. And, going back to the first creation story – since they are each made in God’s image, something of and belonging to God in both.¹ There is mutuality, and there is diversity, and there is fluidity in creation because there is mutuality, diversity and fluidity in God.

And so far as the binary goes, we recall that the first biblical act of creation saw the creation of the opposites of light and darkness, day and night, land and sea. Added to this is the creation of male and female on the Sixth Day.

But lest we absolutize this binary too greatly, let us remember not all land is as dry as Lubbock – thank God! God made the sea and the land; but God also made the marshes, and the estuaries, and the coral reefs, and the dawns and the dusks which are neither quite fully night nor quite fully day, and that is what makes them so brilliant and so beautiful.² (By the way, Lubbock has great sunsets. You can see Honolulu light up from your back porch.)

The diversity in creation is beautiful and amazing. And just to make the point, let us remember that not two or three months ago, we all saw the night of a total eclipse come right over us, right in the middle of the day. And we all bought special glasses and got out of school and work to come and watch. This was no aberration. It was certainly not an abomination! It was a celebration! Diversity in creation should be a celebration!

But not everything fits neatly into a binary box. There is both diversity and fluidity. There is land, and there is sea, and there are sea islands. There is day, there is night, and there is dawn and there are eclipses. There is male, and there is female, and there is also fluidity. And it all belongs. And as God says at the end of creation: “It is good, good, good.”

Now, let’s consider the New Testament. We read the hypothetical story presented to Jesus of the woman who had seven husbands, all of whom died. That poor woman! She either had really good genes or really bad luck!

Finally, she herself died. “Now, whose wife will she be in the resurrection?” they asked Jesus.

Jesus answers by saying that people will not marry or be given in marriage in heaven, but instead, “they [are] like angels.”

While I don’t know for sure, the scriptures seem to suggest, as traditional church teaching attests, that angels are not singularly either male or female. In fact, sex is not a definite or defining characteristic of angels. It’s not a fixed category. Neither is gender.

And my question is in Jesus saying that people will one day be “like angels” in heaven, was Jesus not more than just implying that the roles of sex and gender ought not be considered too definite, too fixed and too eternal? Was he not saying that they can be changed? That they will be changed?

So, I submit to you this morning that it should not be considered a sin that some be changed on earth even as we know there will be change in heaven.

For sex and gender are not eternally fixed categories.

And the essence of the scriptures teaches us, that “the outward body wastes away, but something inward is renewed,” and the mortal puts on the immortal, and

*There is both diversity and fluidity.
There is land, and there is sea, and
there are sea islands. There is day,
there is night, and there is dawn and
there are eclipses. There is male,
and there is female, and there is also
fluidity. And it all belongs. And as God
says at the end of creation: “It is good,
good, good.”*

the natural puts the supernatural, and the essential spiritual being is freed from the inconsequential and temporal body.

These are my thoughts which I know are somewhat speculative. But this is where I’ve arrived, both theologically and biblically. I hope that for anyone who is struggling to make sense of transgenderism that what I offer here is beneficial in helping us see that transgenderism and gender fluidity can be biblical and can also be good.

Now, let me speak pastorally for a moment. I know what I am saying may be difficult for some. For those who have a hard time with transgenderism, my prayer is that my Biblical reflections may at least crack open a door. I know we all see through a glass darkly and

that without love we are nothing. I pray you see this sermon as an act of love for transgender people. I pray you hear what I'm saying now as an act of love for you. "For without love, we are nothing."

So, let's keep talking. In other words, let's not quit on Monday!

As difficult as this topic may be for some of the rest of us, I know it is most difficult for families directly impacted. Transition is seldom an easy choice or path. There is almost always grief, fear and uncertainty involved, for both transgender persons and for their family members.

So, to the families of transgender persons, I wish to have you hear me say this morning that I will support you. I will not judge you. I will not shame you. I will do what I can to care for you. I know this can be a difficult journey, and I will try to walk it with you.

And, most importantly: To the individuals who are themselves transgender, and/or gender fluid, or sense they may be, I want to tell you this morning that I will be here for you. I care and am concerned for you. I will try to be a good advocate for you. And I will try to be a good pastor to you, though we all know that can come with a cost.

Last week, Broadway Baptist Church was attacked again on X by a local political party chair for our sponsorship of Pridefest, and specifically our support of transgender persons. He called us all manner of vile, disgusting, and wrong things. But I want you to know I will not be moved. I will not be shaken. Pastor means "shepherd." As Jesus said, the good shepherd is willing to lay down his life for the sheep. I want you to know, I am willing to lay my life down for you. You are made in the image of God. You are beloved of God. You are beloved by me. And I will do whatever I can as your pastor to make sure you are welcome, affirmed and beloved inside the doors of this Beloved Community of God, And outside this community, I stand in solidarity with you.

Some may be surprised to know how many transgender and gender fluid people and families of transgender and gender fluid persons we have here at Broadway. But I can tell you, I've had the privilege of pastoring several both here, and also elsewhere. And what I've discovered are tremendous people of faith who, in the words of transgender theologian Justin Sabianis, have experienced an extraordinary "calling"³ on their lives or the life of someone they love, and who long to have that calling recognized in church and respected in society.

Let me tell you about one. I will call her Catherine. She called me a while ago to ask if I would vouch for her as an ordained minister. I first knew Catherine

before she transitioned. She was a parishioner at a previous church I pastored, an ordained Southern Baptist minister, and the first trans person to trust me with their story, using a term I had never heard at the time – gender dysphoria. Catherine told me about the shame. She told me about the depression. She told me about the struggle to be believed.

There are so many transgender persons who aren't believed and who can't find help, even when they are on the brink of suicide. That's not humane.

Thank God, Catherine found a therapist and doctor who were humane and could help. And subsequently, she has undergone various gender-confirmation treatments, and procedures, and a church relocation or two, and has now been called to pastor a little church as an openly-trans woman. She was calling me because she lost her certificate of ordination in one of those moves and didn't think the church where she was ordained would reissue one. After all, the present pastor of that church is now a top-level, right-wing, fundamentalist pastor in the Conservative Baptist Network – a group

You are made in the image of God. You are beloved of God. You are beloved by me. And I will do whatever I can as your pastor to make sure you are welcome, affirmed and beloved inside the doors of this Beloved Community of God, And outside this community, I stand in solidarity with you.

that thinks the Southern Baptist Convention has gone off and gotten too liberal! (Apparently, there's even more than one way to be a Fundamentalist Baptist!)

Catherine told me, "I don't think they'd be real eager to sign another certificate of ordination. I'm no longer exactly what you'd call a good, ole' Southern Baptist boy! I never was."

Ordination is an act of God, not of the church. The church only affirms the call. And as a representative of the church, I affirm that Catherine has been called as a trans woman and as a minister of the Gospel.

I rejoice with her that she is able to preach that Gospel in such a way that not only forgives her of her sins, but also unshackles her from all the shame and all the guilt foisted upon her by the sins of a superstitious, misunderstanding and maligning society, and empowers her to proclaim the radically good news of the new

creation, in which there is neither male nor female, and where there is no judgement according to the flesh, and where we are all one in Christ Jesus. And where you don't have to be good ole' Southern Baptist boy to receive the vouchsafe and blessing of God's Holy Spirit!

God has done a new thing! God *is* doing a new thing! God is still speaking! God is still creating. God is still calling! And we are still catching up.

And as the old hymn says it:

*New occasions teach new duties
Time makes ancient good uncouth
They must ever up and onward
Who would keep abreast of truth*

There is a new creation. And things change. And we must be changed also.

From of old, all the way back in the Biblical days, they knew that queer people existed. They knew that non-binary, gender-fluid, intersexual, and asexual people existed. They called them "eunuchs." They were mostly misunderstood and thus rejected. But let us remember what Jesus himself said about such people:

There are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.

It is theological. And it is biblical. It is pastoral. And it is also Christian. Gender expression, gender fluidity, transgender people, lesbian, gay, bisexual people. Some were born that way. Some have chosen to be that way. Some have been called to be that way.

We should accept this teaching. And we should accept them. We should welcome and affirm them. For they too are made in the image of God, and they too are at one with all the rest of us in this new creation we call the Beloved Community of Christ.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy

Spirit, one God, Mother of all. Amen.

Ryon Price is Senior Pastor of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. Ryon Price is the Senior Pastor of the historic Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. A Lubbock native, Ryon is a graduate of Texas Tech University and Duke Divinity School, Duke University. Prior to his call to pastor Broadway in 2017, he served churches in Lubbock, TX Colchester, VT and Durham, NC. In 2021 Ryon was recognized with the Erma C. Johnson Hadley Servant Leadership Award presented by Juneteenth Fort Worth and "the Grandmother of Juneteenth" Dr. Opal Lee. This sermon was preached on June 30, 2024 and was shared by its author for Christian Ethics Today readers. ■

1 Here's a pretty good short summary: <https://www.rwuc.org/2020/01/30/affirming-theology-the-gender-queer-adam/>

2 [https://www.christiancentury.org/article/critical-](https://www.christiancentury.org/article/critical-essay/nonbinary-gender-and-diverse-beauty-creation)

It is theological. And it is biblical. It is pastoral. And it is also Christian. Gender expression, gender fluidity, transgender people, lesbian, gay, bisexual people. Some were born that way. Some have chosen to be that way. Some have been called to be that way.

[essay/nonbinary-gender-and-diverse-beauty-creation](https://www.christiancentury.org/article/critical-essay/nonbinary-gender-and-diverse-beauty-creation)

3 Sabia-Tanis uses the language of "calling" to describe transgender person's experiences. See Sabia-Tanis's book *Transgender*.

INCOMING: From our mailbag...

Hey Folks, Love your publication & don't want to miss a one! So, please make the following change of address on your records...Edna Langley

I especially want to thank you for the "He Gets Me" analysis—an article I have been sharing widely. I hope it leads to more subscriptions and contributions to CET. Sara Robertson

Pat and Carolyn, thank you so much for publishing CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY! I just read the latest issue and appreciated so much your opening piece, Pat, and all that followed. I think ethics, putting Jesus' teachings into practice, is the key question in life. I live every day with that question. What would Jesus do? Thanks for your reminder that the question is pivotal. Kay Shurden

To Whom It May Concern: ____ is no longer the Pastor of First Baptist Church...I ask you to discontinue the subscription...Please stop sending CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY BECAUSE I DO NOT WANT TO RECEIVE THE PUBLICATION...Thank you for your time and consideration. Sincerely, new pastor

We are interested in learning to discuss difficult topics in a dispassionate way. Christian Ethics Today, we believe, will help us. Joyce Roberts

Dear Pat, The enclosed check is in memory of my parents (Danna and Preston Whorton) who were long time members of Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas and friends with Foy Valentine. Penny Whorton Wells

Dear Patrick, Thank you for Christian Ethics Today as a source where I can get honest, reliable information on ethical issues in today's world and church. I often read articles to help my understanding of the complexity of many Christian issues. I rely on Christian Ethics Today to be an important resource for me. Thank you to all the staff, writers, and anyone who helps with its publication. God bless you. Bonnie Marshall

(voicemail) This is the husband of _____. And I am calling about Christian Ethics Today and we are tired of getting this mail in our mailbox. As far as I can see, it's nothing but trash. It's left-wing stuff and we don't need it. We don't want it. So, would you please stop sending it? My address is....Thank you....

Dear Dr. Anderson, Enclosed is a check...We appreciate your faithfulness. Foy would be proud. Please include the following friends to Christian Ethics Today mailing list. Stephen E. & Peggy O. Gooch

Thanks, Pat, for MAGA vs WWJD and for the quality of Christian Ethics Today. Bob Baird

CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY FOUNDATION

Post Office Box 1238
Banner Elk, NC 28604

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO 1478
DALLAS TX

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. From the beginning the purpose of the Journal has been “to inform, inspire and unify a lively company of individuals and organizations interested in working for personal morality and public righteousness.”

Christian Ethics Today is published four times annually and is mailed without charge to anyone requesting it, and will continue to be so as long as money and energy permit. The journal is also available online at www.christianethicstoday.com

We do not sell advertising space or otherwise commercialize the journal. We are funded by the financial gifts from our readers which is greatly needed, urgently solicited, and genuinely appreciated.

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

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 (preferably as attachments to email) to the editor for publication consideration and addressed to: drpatanderson@gmail.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS *Chair George Mason*

- Patricia Ayres • Tony Campolo (*emeritus*) • Aubrey H. Ducker, Jr. • Wendell Griffen
- Fisher Humphreys • Suzii Paynter March • Scott Dickison • Cody Sanders • David Sapp

Dr. Patrick R. Anderson is the current editor. He earned a BA from Furman University, MDiv from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and PhD from Florida State University. He is a professor, criminologist, pastor and writer. He and his wife, Carolyn, have been intimately involved in the development and operation of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship as well as several non-profit ministries among poor and disadvantaged people.

OUR CONTACT INFORMATION

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

Cell (863) 207-2050
E-mail Drpatanderson@gmail.com

Foy Valentine, *Founding Editor*
Joe Trull, *Editor Emeritus*
Pat Anderson, *Editor*

VISIT US ON OUR WEB SITE: www.ChristianEthicsToday.com