

THEOLOGY | CRITIQUE | REVIEW | ESSAY | CULTURE

salt & light

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American Marriage

by Jimmy Hopper

Sunday Morning Emotions

by Jeff Pate

Mercy Ministries and the Gift of
Cognitive Dissonance

by Greg Vander Wal

A Divine Tattoo

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Through Faith and Patience

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The Confessional Church

by Tim Skaar

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FROM THE EDITOR

You hold in your hands an issue of *Salt & Light*, the first in a long while. Our last issue was the 2016 Winter Issue and was a semi-themed "prison" issue. This is an omnibus issue with articles under our general themes of theology, culture, critique, and review. It also includes a beautiful tribute to Catherine Walker, written by Mrs. Peggy Drinkard. We hope that the articles are thought provoking, inspiring, encouraging, and deal with the reality of living with our hope in Christ in a post-modern culture.

- **American Marriage** - Your editor considers the current state of marriage in America and in the Christian community and how it has deteriorated during his lifetime.
- **When We Were Young** - Rev. Jeff Pate, on the occasion of his father's death, remembers and contemplates his parents love and marriage in this poem.
- **A Divine Tattoo** - Dr. Robert Thornton considers the wonder of knowing that our names are written on His hand and we can't be forgotten.
- **Sunday Morning Emotions** - Rev. Pate, in this Easter Mediation, describes the effect of the Resurrection at sunrise of Easter.
- **Mercy Ministry and the Gift of Cognitive Dissonance** - Dr. Greg Vander Wal explores the call to mercy ministry and how our human psychology leads us to answer God's call.
- **Through Faith and Patience: A Tribute to Catherine Walker** - Peggy Drinkard has written a beautiful tribute to the much beloved Catherine Walker and her life and influence.
- **The Confessional Church** - Tim Skaar writes about how American Protestantism has devalued the creeds and Scripture through two centuries of revivalism and how the Confessional Church brings us back to the Biblical standard.
- **The Bittersweet Feast** - Daniel Page considers his salvation and the sacrament in his poem.
- **Finale: The Image of God** - Our Finale piece connects Hamlet, Psalm 8, and our call to love our brothers and neighbors as ourselves.

American Marriage

By Jimmy Hopper

Recently, I have been fascinated by a certain television commercial. The product they are selling is a security system for homes, and the setting speaks to a dynamic that has disappeared for a large portion of America. The commercial goes as follows. A man, handsome and well built (this is Madison Ave. via Hollywood) is preparing for bed. Downstairs, he is checking the windows, and he finds one unlocked. He locks it as he peers out the window into the foreboding darkness and mutters, "Not on my watch!" He looks around the room and sets the security alarm and turns off the light. We next see him opening the doors of his children's bedrooms. They are beautiful, innocent, safe, and sound asleep. He smiles and closes the door. Finally, he opens the door to his bedroom. His wife, who also is beautiful, is reading in bed. She smiles when she sees him and immediately puts the book down on the bedside table and turns toward him. He walks in the door and closes it, and the scene ends with information about the security system they are selling. However, we are left with a picture of a family, husband/father, wife/mother, and children, who are safe, enclosed, secure, loved and loving. A marriage, if you will. The sexual act in marriage is implied, and it should be, and the implication is that it also is safe, secure and even sanctified. What I, and America, was seeing in this commercial is a picture of a classic marriage, an outline of the way we once thought it should be, the day to day happiness that goes with a love vowed and kept. As I watched it, it crossed my mind that it is not the picture of marriage most of America now holds, in a culture that, more than ever, badly needs marriage both as a refuge and as a place to raise children.

When I have contemplated the blessings of God in my life, they have always included,

and were in some sense centered, in my marriage. My marriage was late arriving since I was thirty-four years old when Carolyn became my wife. I became a practicing Christian soon after we married, and the two things have sort of been together in my mind as a true and beautiful beginning. One of the many wonders I discovered within Christianity was that God had ordained marriage, and that, although broken in the Fall of man, as was I and she and all of life, marriage still held the ability to be as He had created it, to be very good. You may take my word for the fact that, prior to this discovery, I had neither considered nor treated marriage in this way.

For believers, there is no question that the institution of marriage is God given. Even a casual reading of the Bible will quickly make you aware of the importance of, and the exalted place of marriage in the mind and the plan of God. According to Pulitzer Prize winning novelist and Christian thinker Marilynne Robinson. John Calvin believed marriage to be a covenant that was most favored by God, and in this belief, rejected priestly celibacy as a less sacred condition than marriage.¹ The Genesis account is a beautiful story of God providing for the man He had created and loved. God's provision didn't include marriage in the beginning, since there was no woman yet created. The gift, the woman, was given through grace alone. Adam had to be shown his need, and he had to be shown his total inability to fill his need. The woman was given to him out of love, and the two were put *by that gift* into a relationship which has come to be known, ideally, as the essence of human love. God had shown the man that he was incomplete and that nothing else completed him until the woman was made, "bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh." Thus marriage was instituted as the union of a man and a woman

¹ Robinson, Marilynne *What Are We Doing Here: Essays*, in "Our Public Conversation" pg 178

By 2005.....the sexual revolution was 25 years old and American sexuality was hurtling toward whatever and carrying ideas and attitudes about the institution of marriage with it.

who will live and work together in love, bearing children, belonging only to each other, and living before the face of God. The marriage is sealed by the most intimate act possible, and in it, as Paul observes, the husband and wife literally become one flesh, as the Lord had proclaimed them figuratively in Genesis. In this act, the body of each belongs to the other, and the profound beauty of this is very powerful. The husband and wife each have a role in providing for, loving and caring for the other, and each have a role in providing for, teaching and loving the children of the union.

In the New Testament, as Jesus begins His ministry, we first see Him celebrating a marriage at a wedding feast. In the Old Testament, marriage is the favored imagery of the faithful relationship between God and Israel. In the New Testament, marriage is used in the same sense to describe Jesus and His Church. Biblically, the Church is the Bride of Christ. The Church as the bride is dressed and adorned in His righteousness for the wedding, even as a bride is dressed and adorned for her marriage. As the New Testament ends, we see the Wedding Supper of the Lamb, the great celebration of the marriage, finally and forever, between God and His people.

Marriage as an institution established by God is also the analogy most used in the Bible for a broken relationship with His sinful people. Perhaps the most extreme example is that of Hosea. God had him marry a prostitute, so there was never any question about the results of the Fall, and her sexual sins were used as the example of the nation Israel and the surrounding pagan cultures. When the Bible speaks of the ultimate betrayal, the rejection of God Himself by His people, time after time he puts it in the form of a wife betraying her husband. These accounts

aren't about incompatibility either. They are graphic accounts in which the wife, signifying the rebellious people God has loved and cared for, falls into prostitution and sexual degradation with other "gods" simply because it is the desire of her heart.

As we look at marriage in America (and in today's world), we see something that is increasingly quite different from the perfect institution initiated in the beginning. This gradual dissolution of the institution of marriage, sacred in its establishment, has been coming for a long time, and now it almost seems like a runaway train in danger of totally jumping the tracks. As I have observed in what has become officially "a long life," I confess to being dismayed and fearful for our children and grandchildren and for our culture.

Reflecting on what now is my long concern about American marriage, I confess that this article about American marriage in 2018 sort of began in the July 2005, issue of *Salt & Light*. That issue included an article I wrote entitled *Kinsey, Sexual Revolution, & Christian Morality*. I had lived through the so-called "sexual revolution" back in the 60's and had seen the changes, the loosening of restrictions on dress, language, definitions, sexual acts, obscenity laws, and social mores, and I had seen the very real effects on people and institutions, especially marriage, that had begun and were continuing to take place. To examine the issues in 2005, I combined the essay with a review of a new movie of that day, *Kinsey*, a bio-pic of Alfred Kinsey and his teams whose purpose was to de-mystify sex and make it a biological imperative, freed from moral and emotional restraints. This happened to a degree and his two books, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in 1948 and the more explosive, *Sexual Behavior in the Human*

Female in 1953 became *cause célèbres*, books much debated and both reviled and celebrated. The female version was more reviled than celebrated and Kinsey discovered that the reading public resented the exposure of their mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters' sexual behavior more than they did that of fathers, husbands, brothers and sons. A quote from the movie may or may not be something Kinsey said, I confess to never having read Alfred Kinsey, but I believe it ultimately describes his purpose in research and writing. The movie has Kinsey saying, "Everybody's sin is nobody's sin, and everybody's crime is no crime at all." His work was certainly a major foundation for what we find today in American sexuality and American marriage.

Another foundation in the "sexual revolution" that changed our outlook of marriage came in 1962 in a slick magazine package when the first installment of the so-called *Playboy Philosophy* was published. The publisher and editor of Playboy magazine, Hugh Hefner, took Kinsey's "biological imperative," dressed it up in supposed sophistication and undressed it in the array of beautiful women in his magazine and sold it to America as a glittering, acceptable, and even preferred way of life. It was more than upscale hedonism, however. Hefner was serious about the "philosophy" aspect and he had a very popular platform. On September 12, 1962 he took his argument to television and was interviewed by the conservative figurehead William Buckley on his program, *Firing Line*. The Firing Line staff summarized the debate for a DVD made of the program as follows:

Between these two antagonists one might have expected a heated debate, but what we get instead is a serious discussion of sexual ethics in the latter part of the 20th century.

Hefner: "The philosophy really, I think, is an anti-Puritanism, a response really to the Puritan part of our culture."

Buckley: "I'm not worrying about whether

you reject Cotton Mather's accretions on the Mosaic Law, but whether you reject the Mosaic Law. Do you reject, for instance, monogamy? Do you reject the notion of sexual continence before marriage?"

Hefner: "Well, I think what it really comes down to is an attempt to establish a . . . new morality, and I really think that's what the American . . . sexual revolution's really all about. It's an attempt to replace the old legalism. It's certainly not a rejection of monogamy as such, but very much an attempt--in the case of premarital sex, there really hasn't been any moral code in the past except simply that thou shalt not. And . . ."

Buckley: "Well, that's a code, isn't it?"

Hefner: "Well, perhaps. I don't think it's a very realistic one."²

Hefner, Playboy, sex as entertainment, women as sexual objects, were being legitimized and became a part of the culture. In his own words, he is trying to replace the Christian standards, or as he describes it, the "old legalism." It's just sex. It's natural. It's a biological imperative. Do it for fun. Just do it. By 2005, when we published the article, the sexual revolution was 25 years old and American sexuality was hurtling toward whatever and carrying ideas and attitudes about the institution of marriage with it.

It is 2018 and "whatever" is here. "Whatever" can be statistically defined in many areas and the statistics are staggering to those who believed in, or once knew about, a Christian standard for sexual conduct and marriage. Consider the following. The divorce rate today ranges around 48%-50% of marriages. The rate is constant for the public in general, but it is also constant for those who claim to be evangelical Christians. As a matter of fact, the evangelical rate of divorce sometimes exceeds the overall divorce rate of the secular public. No fault divorce by itself alone, has changed the American idea of marriage. It

² Summary of Hefner-Buckley debate by the *Firing Line* staff. From the DVD review of the debate on Amazon.com

When We Were Young and Love Was New

By Rev. Jeff Pate

*After his father's death, Jeff Pate reflects on his
parents' half-century marriage in this poem.*

When we were young and love was new
We shared the plank and said "adieu"
Plunged in the sea, just me, just you
When we were young and love was new.

When we were young and full of life
Just kids adrift, as man and wife
We wore the rings and held the knife
When we were young and full of life.

When we were young and love was new,
We drank the night and morning dew.
Atop the waves as passions grew
When we were young and love was new.

Now it just seems a memory
That boy and girl, just out to sea
The ring bound you, the knife cut me
Love hurts and costs, it isn't free.

As we grew old, far from the start
The journey's not the one we thought
I feared the years tore love apart
We grew old and love grew hard.

The ring that binds, bound you to home
The knife that cut, chiseled this stone
Love made us new, but not alone
It bound and cut and made us one.

So here we are, and love goes on
The lyric changed, we sang along
The water's deep, and I was wrong
As we grew old, our love grew strong.



A Divine Tattoo

By Dr. Robert Thornton

*"Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.
Isaiah 49: 15-16*

In recent months we have sung a hymn in worship service entitled *Before The Throne of God Above*. It's a very moving song that speaks of our relationship with God through Christ's sacrifice on the cross for us. On singing it, I've always been struck by one line: "My name is graven on His hands." I suspected it was drawn directly from scripture. So, I asked Pastor Jeff about it and he directed me to Isaiah 49:15-16. The passage reminds us that God will never forget His chosen people. In the ESV translation the verse that was incorporated into the song lyric is: "Behold, I have engraved you on the palm of my hands".

When you stop to think about it, the imagery is both profound and far-reaching. Humbling and uplifting. God is saying to us in that short passage that He is so concerned about us, so dedicated to sinful, fallen children, that He has cut our names in the palms of his hand so that we are ever before him. It's a permanent reminder to Him that we are forever His.

But, there's more to this passage in Isaiah. The profundity of this verse prompted men to do a little research. I found four concepts that spring from Isaiah 49:16.

First, God saying, "...I have engraved you on the palm of my hands;" tells us that this is a constant reminder to God. If there is one part of our body that we look at regularly it has to be our hands. We hold items up to our eyes. We check our hands for cleanliness before

cooking or eating. We groom our fingernails. We touch our faces. And, if you're like me, you nervously bite your nails. Our hands are constantly before us. Having someone's name tattooed on our hands would serve as a constant reminder of that person as we continually lift our hands in our day-to-day activities. The picture is clear. Think of it. God regularly regards His hands in divine activity and sees our names. What a great comfort to know that God is constantly thinking of us. That we are never out of His thoughts.

In today's world of medical lasers, people don't consider tattoos as permanent. You've broken up with Mary Jane. And that tattoo you got of her name doesn't seem like such a good idea now. Well, no worries. Just make an appointment with the local dermatologist. A bit of laser treatment and Mary Jane is on the dustbin of your history.

But, the Israelite in the 8th century B.C. didn't have the luxury of lasers (and neither did we up until the late twentieth century). The practice of tattooing or engraving an image or name into one's skin by the very act implies permanence. The procedure usually involves a sharp needle infused with a permanent dye being plunged over and over deep into the lowest layer of one's skin. (A little medical information: the top layer of skin turns over regularly). The tools of tattooing have evolved, but the concept remains the same.

Although tattooing was forbidden in Leviticus, the ancient Hebrews would apparently, on special occasions, get tattoos as a reminder of God's faithfulness. For example, some Jewish scholars believe Exodus 13:9 is such an occasion. In Isaiah 44:5 the prophet appears to suggest tattooing as a reminder to the exiles that they belong to God. The idea that God's faithfulness was permanent would certainly

What a great comfort to know that God is constantly thinking of us. That we are never out of His thoughts.

be driven home by the permanence of those engravings.

Isaiah 49:16 provides a picture of God reversing this practice. He has etched our name in His hand as a permanent reminder that we are forever His in Christ. In John chapter 10, Jesus speaks of being "the good shepherd" and of his sheep that, "...no one will snatch them out of my hand." (verse 28). The third idea that Isaiah 49:16 brings forth is sacrifice. People who get tattoos are willing to put up with the sacrifice of comfort. Having a needle plunged into the skin literally thousands of times has got to be painful. God saying that our names are engraved on the palm of His hands certainly implies a time of sacrifice of comfort. After all, the palm is the most sensitive part of the hand. Being constantly jabbed in that area would, I'm sure, cause a great deal of pain.

This calls to mind the sacrifice of God's own Son on the cross for us. Jesus willingly not only suffered the pain of crucifixion but the greater pain of separation from the Father for us.

Lastly, hands imply work. We type on a computer keyboard. We build a shed in the back yard. We rake leaves. These things are regularly done and involve the intimate use of our hands. Our hands are made for work.

And, to have instruments of work engraved with our names implies something greater. God's hands are involved in the work of salvation. As mentioned earlier Jesus says in John 10 that no one would snatch a believer out of His hands. And, He goes on to say, "...and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." (John 10:29-30)

Well, there you have it. We see in that one passage from Isaiah 49 great things. God loves us so much that He engraved our names in the palm of His hands. And, "...God show His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8).

As believers we are truly blessed.

Dr. Robert Thornton is an elder at Riverwood Presbyterian Church. You may contact him at rthorn3423@comcast.net



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Sunday Morning Emotions

By Rev. Jeff Pate

Luke's story of Jesus's death ends with this: *The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment" (Luke 23:55,56).* As Sunday morning approached, this group of women had been waiting since Friday evening to return to Jesus's tomb and anoint his body. They had needed something to do to help them deal with the grief of the death of their beloved teacher, master and gentle shepherd. I imagine that they tried to refrain from discussing it on Saturday, during the Sabbath, but had probably failed. Anxious whispers about who had prepared what, and would the guards let them into the tomb, and would the men join them or just continue hiding out in fear of being too closely associated with Jesus? But they rested on the Sabbath. Their world had crumbled down around them over the previous 48 hours, but they rested on the Sabbath.

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb

they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. (Luke 24:1-9)

Sunday morning couldn't arrive soon enough. Before daylight they gathered the precious spices and ointments they had prepared two nights before. Then, at early dawn, they went to the tomb. There is a strange feeling about seeing the body of a loved one who has passed away. Even moments after death, there is a very real sense that the person, their soul, is no longer present. Though they are bodily present, there is a void. A lifeless body isn't only still, it's empty. So these ladies walked to the tomb, hoping the guards would be willing to move the stone so they could walk into the dry darkness within. There, they would find the lifeless, empty body of their beloved Jesus. And they would weep, anointing him with their spices and oils and tears.

Upon their arrival to the tomb, things immediately seemed out of place. The stone was already moved. They walked in expecting to find an *empty body*. But there, in this burial cave with a single shaft of light pouring in through the once-sealed opening, they found an *empty tomb*. Luke puts it succinctly, they were perplexed. Confusion is a natural response when things aren't as we had expected them to be. In the 36 hours they had waited to make this trip to anoint Jesus's body, this wasn't how they had envisioned things would play out. They probably had contingency plans for encountering angry Jews, Pharisees, or even uncooperative guards. But they weren't prepared for this.

Standing in the tomb perplexed, the ladies suddenly realized that there was more light

I like the fact that the first Lord's Day, Resurrection Sunday, was like this. What began with despair moved to confusion, then fear, then remembering and finally excitement.

in the room, and other beings in the room. Two men had joined them. Their clothing was dazzling, it gave off light. There was no doubt now, as the room was filled with dazzling light, that the body of Jesus was not there, not in the dark corner in a heap, not on the floor in the shadows. The ladies' confusion was immediately replaced with terror. There are many people who are fascinated with angels. Those outside the church are even comfortable with the way many Christians view angels. In this fascination angels are often depicted as gentle cherubs, rosy cheeked and tiny winged, perfect for cuddling and gently singing us to sleep. However, the depiction in Scripture is dramatically different. When angels appear, the first response is terror. Angels are righteous warriors. The women fell on their faces. Then, they heard these words, perhaps spoken in perfect unison:

Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen!"

Not stolen, not moved, not incinerated, not vanished, and not dead...*why do you seek the living here, among the dead?* **He lives.**

He hadn't been taken up into heaven, he wasn't trapped in Sheol, and he had not been resuscitated. **He has risen.**

Remember, he told you these things. He would be delivered, crucified and then he would arise.

Where they had been perplexed, then terrified, their minds were now taken back to Jesus's words, his promises. This was just as he had said. Why didn't they remember that be-

fore?! He said it more than once. They heard it so many times they forgot to listen. These ladies then excitedly ran home to tell the others.

I like the fact that the first Lord's Day, Resurrection Sunday, was like this. What began with despair moved to confusion, then fear, then remembering and finally excitement. Sunday mornings are often difficult. Sometimes it seems like it would be better to just stay in bed. But we pull ourselves out from under the comforter, find something to wear, round up the family, and head out. Then we get to church and find that a few others have joined us there, but it still feels empty and lonely. Maybe we are just faking it, or they are, or both. We enter into worship and face the reality of our Almighty, and uncomfortably present, God. He is light and we fall on our faces. Then he reminds us: he was delivered, crucified and then rose...for us, for our salvation. He is not among the dead because he is alive. He lives victorious, and by his Spirit, he lives in us. Then we remember, we've heard it before. This same message, Christ died but he also lives to ever intercede. That is, he lives and is always interceding for his church, for me. We have heard it so many times that we take it for granted. We forget it over and over. So we need to hear it over and over. Then we leave reminded and excited.

The ladies never expected that the tomb would be so empty, but could hold so much. The Lord's Day has been full ever since. Each Sunday we gather and feel the emotions of that first Lord's Day, from despair to joy, as we celebrate an empty tomb and a Risen Savior.

Jeff Pate is the Senior Pastor at Riverwood Presbyterian Church. You may contact him at jpate@riverwoodchurch.org

Mercy Ministry and the Gift of Cognitive Dissonance

By Dr. Greg Vander Wal

Over the past 12-15 months, the topic of mercy ministry has been in focus for many of us at Riverwood. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of what I have learned about mercy during this time. Most of what I have learned I did not seek out on my own, but comes from others. It comes from conversations and books read together with my wife Sarah. It comes from leading and participating in Sunday School classes focused on mercy ministry, where I had the privilege of having discussions with fellow believers that helped me look at these issues through many different lenses. I have an immense sense of gratitude to all of these people and resources. I am in no way an expert on mercy ministry, but through these experiences, I have come to a better understanding of our call to love others and share the Gospel through acts of mercy. In this article, I will share a brief overview of the call to mercy ministry. (For a more in-depth exploration of mercy ministry, I refer you to the resources listed at the end of this article.) Then I will share some of my own personal musings on the difficulty of battling complacency when it comes to putting belief into practice.

We have been shown great mercy and are called to show great mercy

Mercy is defined as "having compassion or forgiveness toward someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm (English Oxford Dictionary)." Mercy is what we have been shown through the gift of cross. Ephesians 2:4-5 reads, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made

us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved." God's mercy toward us is the core of our hope of salvation. This is not a mercy that has limits or bounds, or a mercy that is only present when things are good, but one that God shows in eternal abundance to those who confess the name of Jesus. Jeremiah knew it well in the midst of his suffering: "But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end (Lamentations 3:21-22)." Furthermore, verses like Micah 6:8 tell us that as Christians we are called to extend that same mercy to others: "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" We are called to be radical in showing that mercy to others who do not deserve it. Luke 6 states it clearly: "Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return...Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." We are called to be radical in showing that mercy to everyone, not just those in our selected spheres (think of the Good Samaritan parable in Luke 10). There are no conditions placed here, but rather emphasis is painstakingly made toward extending mercy to those to whom it is most difficult to do so. God has shown us infinite mercy, and we are to be bearers of that same mercy to the world.

Mercy is central to Jesus's ministry

Jesus came to earth to provide a way for us to be reconciled to God. Colossians 1:19-20 reads, "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to recon-

We are called to show Christ to the world. This is not an optional calling. We are to express God's mercy to others just as God extended mercy to us while we were yet sinners.

cile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." Jesus continually chose to direct his ministry toward those in need of mercy so that the people would know he was the Messiah. When John sent his disciples to ask if Jesus really was the awaited savior, he responded by telling them to report to John what they see: "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me (Luke 7:22-23)." Jesus preached the good news and showed mercy. He engaged in ministry in both word and deed, and we are called to the same. One without the other is not effective or sufficient. Deed ministry alone is dead without the knowledge of our sin and the gospel. Word ministry alone often reaches deaf ears without the radical love and mercy of God shown through his people. Knowledge and faith in the gospel must be paired with love and mercy toward others. James 2:14-17 lays down difficult truth about this: "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

Mercy attracts attention and leads to knowledge of God

God uses acts of mercy as an entry point for His Spirit. A common occurrence in the Old

Testament was God allowing suffering and then showing mercy, so that His people would know He is God (see Deuteronomy 8:3 and Exodus 16:11-12 for examples). Mercy led to knowledge of God. Today, the church and its radical acts of mercy are a visible sign of His divine presence in the world. Mercy challenges, confuses, and demands answers. Peter tells us to expect questions when we live as Christ calls us: "Now who is to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you (1 Peter 3:13-15a)." Mercy extended toward physical needs attracts attention and provides opportunity to share the gospel salve for our spiritual needs. Mercy ministry gives the gospel message credibility.

Mercy is not optional

We are called to show Christ to the world. This is not an optional calling. We are to express God's mercy to others just as God extended mercy to us while we were yet sinners.

In Ephesians 5:1, we are exhorted to be imitators of God. Who is God? He is many things, but Psalm 103:8 states it well: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." The book of Titus teaches us that the children of God should be marked by the character of God. The Christian is to be marked by grace, mercy, manners, and respect.

How else are we called to live? Recall the song many of us have taught our children: "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine!" So how do we let it shine? Isaiah 58 says, "Is this not the fast I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall you light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noon-day (vs. 6-8, 10)."

Mercy is not an option. There is urgent need, and we are all called to task. Ezekiel 16:49-50 says, "Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. They were haughty and did an abomination before me. So I removed them, when I saw it." This is an easy exhortation to understand, one stated without stipulation. Failure to follow through cannot be chalked up to ignorance.

Mercy ministry is about restoring right relationships

After establishing God's call to mercy, the questions become more practical. What do I do now? What is Riverwood being called to do? Where do we start? These are not easy answers, but we must begin with a correct understanding of sin and its impact on our lives. This informs our understanding of poverty and the ways we approach ministries of mercy. Sin has resulted in broken relationships, and in order to effectively show mercy to others

we must focus on restoring relationships. Sin has had a profound influence on our relationships with God, ourselves, others, and God's creation. In his book *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*, Bryant Myers outlines these relationships and the impact that sin has on each of them. The main point is that if we view poverty through the lens of broken relationships, our understanding of it broadens and encompasses all of us. We are all poor and in need of poverty alleviation. This perspective helps fight against the tendency to approach mercy ministry from an "us versus them" mentality (I have the goods and you need the goods). This approach can be very harmful for everyone because it puts power dynamics in place that exacerbate feelings of superiority and inferiority. Understanding poverty through the lens of broken relationships removes that barrier. It also means that our approach to mercy ministry cannot be limited to free hand outs. It must involve building relationships with the ones we serve, relationships that ultimately allow reciprocity in service, love, and mercy. This takes time, effort, persistence, perseverance, and energy. It takes opening up to those we serve as much as we expect them to open up to us. Yes, we are specifically called to serve those who are economically poor (see 1 John 3:17, Acts 6:1-7), but we are all poor in spirit and in the same need of a Savior.

You don't have to feel ready to engage in mercy ministry

Don't feel ready to be involved in mercy ministry? You're in good company. Most of us are not experts and don't feel fully equipped. The good news is that God uses those he chooses. There are numerous examples of this in the Bible. Think of the slave girl in the story of Naaman. Think of David as he faced Goliath. Think of Gideon, Ruth, Abraham, Peter, and Moses. You don't have to have the whole thing

...principles like cognitive dissonance often illuminate the wonderful ways God has created us. For the Christian, we can see “cognitive dissonance” as the internal, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit calling us away from our sinful natures and toward God. We continue to struggle in our sin, yet we are tugged toward what is right and good.

planned out. You don't have to do it perfectly. So often I have stopped short of engaging in the call to mercy because of anxiety or ambivalence regarding the correct path to take. I have come to recognize this as my own sin—thinking that it is up to me to figure it all out. It is not up to me, but God, and with Him in charge, we can act boldly, repent freely, and strive to live mercifully.

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**My struggle with mercy ministry and cognitive dissonance**

I continue to struggle to live up to my calling to mercy ministry. As I reflect on my own experience, I see many instances of great zeal and motivation coupled with periods of stagnancy and complete disregard. To be honest, I usually get frustrated with myself when I return to this topic. The more I learn about the role mercy is to play in my life, the more I recognize its absence. If I truly believe what I have espoused above, mercy ministry is too far down my list of priorities. The root of my complacency is sin. However, when I say I continue to struggle to live up to this calling, the operative word is struggle. I would like to explore what is at the root of my *struggle* and my frustration with my complacency. To do so, I will turn to psychology.

I am a psychologist by training. As we psychologists are wont to do, I often find myself thinking of how our outward expressions of behavior are influenced by internal motiva-

tions, perspectives, and conditioning. This, at its core, is the basis of the work I do in therapy. In the course of my job, I find myself working with diverse people, cultural and religious backgrounds, and presenting issues. Just as we are unique individuals made in the image of God, every client I have worked with brings their own unique experiences and history, so I rarely feel like I've seen the same thing twice. This, if nothing else, makes my job far from boring. There are, however, certain themes that inevitably seem to come up time and time again. One such commonality revolves around the origins of distress. While not universally applicable, the source of much of the distress my clients face can be found through an understanding of the principle of cognitive dissonance.

The theory of cognitive dissonance, first categorized and defined by Leon Festinger in 1957, simply states this: Human beings have an internal drive toward harmony between our beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. When these things are not in harmony, there is a feeling of dissonance, or distress. This distress can describe the discomfort one might feel if they smoke regularly but have the knowledge that smoking causes cancer, or when someone avoids the work they need to do because they feel overwhelmed, or if someone finds themselves confronted by evidence that refutes a long-held belief. Simply stated, this is an incongruence between things we value or believe and



# Through Faith and Patience

A Tribute to Catherine Walker - April 24, 1942 - January 2, 2018

By Peggy Drinkard

The author of the book of Hebrews admonishes the Christians he is addressing to "be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promise." I don't presume I can do justice to the memory of Catherine Walker, one of Riverwood's earliest members. I'm also certain there are others who know more and could do a better job. The adage, "fools rush in where angels fear to tread" comes to mind. No, I'm just the one who volunteered, and someone who feels I will have done well in my journey as a Christian woman if I can imitate Catherine's faith and patience.

When I was a rookie, albeit a zealous young Christian working with Child Evangelism Fellowship, I taught Bible classes for children in and around Tuscaloosa. One of my assigned classes met in the home of Leon and Catherine Walker. Their two children, Tom and Lora, were elementary students at the time and along with other neighborhood children they gathered each week in the Walker's living room for "Good News Club." Catherine provided Kool-Aid, cookies and a warm welcome. We sang songs, memorized scripture, studied the stories of the Bible and talked about Jesus. Characteristically, Catherine was the quiet, behind-the-scenes facilitator of this outreach initiative. We became friends. She was gracious and kind and I admired her willingness to host that fairly large group of wiggly little bodies while extending love and generosity toward each one of them. Still, I did not know her well at the time. It would be many years later

after I embraced a Reformed theological perspective and joined Riverwood Church that I came to know Catherine and Leon more intimately and observe them more readily. And what a great gift, honor and blessing that has been.

Catherine was a humble woman, certainly never one to "toot her own horn," but beneath the quiet, servant-hearted exterior she was intelligent, strong, insightful, discerning, wise and a dedicated student of the Scriptures. She loved Christ and she loved

His people and His church.

She was a worker-bee, always reliable with a taste for doing things well and right. Neither she nor Leon were in the least showy, but they appreciated nice things and good quality, which they easily recognized. This was reflected in her hostess skills. Perhaps part of that is attributable to Catherine's early life.



Catherine Elizabeth Murphy was born in Yazoo City, Mississippi in April of 1942, the second child of her Catholic parents. The Murphys lived comfortably and little Catherine was seen after by three nannies simultaneously, so she was not wanting of attention. When her parents divorced and her mother subsequently remarried Catherine went to live with her maternal aunt where she spent a great part of her childhood. Eventually she moved with her mother and stepfather to Georgia and later to Carrolton, Alabama, where she graduated high school. Bright and independent, Catherine moved to Tuscaloosa to study microbiology at the University of

Alabama. On completion of her degree she went to work as a microbiologist at UAB in Birmingham, and this led to her meeting Leon.

It seems Catherine's roommate in Birmingham was dating Leon Walker at the time, but she felt Catherine would be a better match for him and helped orchestrate their first date. Her intuition proved true, for within five months of meeting

Leon proposed to Catherine and after one month's engagement they were married on January 24, 1967. The whirlwind romance and marriage left so little time for planning that

Catherine borrowed her wedding gown from a friend. This may have suited her frugal and practical nature anyway, and she looked so lovely in the borrowed gown it appeared to have been tailor-made just for her.

Leon was finishing up his master's degree in chemistry at UAB and soon he and Catherine moved to Tuscaloosa where he continued his studies in pursuit of a PhD. The newlyweds shared rather less-than-desirable student housing alongside other young families in apartments built from old army barracks at the site of Northington General Hospital, where Snow Hinton Park is located today. By the end of the year Tom, their firstborn, arrived. To supplement their income Catherine babysat the children of other families in their small



apartment in addition to tending to Tom. After Leon completed his studies, the Walkers stayed in Tuscaloosa, purchasing a home in Heritage Hills in 1970. Leon was now working for Druid City Hospital and in July of 1971 their daughter, Lora, was born, completing their family. A testimony to their practicality and Christian contentment, this home on Plymouth Lane remained the family home until Catherine's recent death. Fittingly, both she and Leon died in this house; he in September of 2015 and her a bit more than two years later.

One of many sweet providences associated with the Walker's settling in Heritage Hills came about when their next-door neighbors, Jim and Kathy Lawrence, invited them to a home Bible Study. They quickly became regular attendees and Catherine once told me this was a time of great spiritual growth for both she and Leon. Another couple attending the study were Ray and Peggy Mellichamp. Through these associations the Walkers visited Riverwood, then meeting in a building across the street from Calvary Baptist Church near the U of A campus. They soon joined the fledgling assembly and became integral, foundational parts of all that was to follow as the church grew.

It is fair to say only God knows the extent to which Catherine served and sacrificed herself for her family, the church and for others. She knew well how to "not let the right hand know what the left is doing" when it came to giving of herself. Deeply devoted and loyal to Leon, their children and their spouses, and her grandchildren, Steven, Camryn and Caleb, there was little she would not do to love, protect and support them. When Leon suffered severe chemical burns in a job

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## Catherine became the organizing and administering force when Riverwood sponsored a group of “boat people” from Vietnam.

accident in 1990 and an excruciating, long recovery Catherine suffered right beside him. Her love ran true and deep.

Along with her home and family, Catherine's primary area of service was our church. She seldom missed its events; hundreds of bridal and baby showers, years of Vacation Bible Schools, Angel Tree and Palmer Home projects and other children's ministry programs, Women's Bible studies, missions and outreach gatherings of all sorts...if the Riverwood congregation did something, Catherine was there, more often than not in the kitchen. Quick to extend hospitality, she and Leon hosted ministers and missionaries, college students, and anyone else with a need. Catherine once invited, sight unseen, a homeless pregnant woman into their home and allowed her to live with them and assisted her until she gave birth to her baby. I think if Catherine felt something was the right Christian thing to do she did not waver because of any challenges or difficulties it might present. Another notable example of using her gifts to benefit others in service to Christ, Catherine became the organizing and administering force when Riverwood sponsored a group of “boat people” from Vietnam. With the aid of a master calendar, Catherine kept up with every appointment concerning health, housing, school, employment, shopping needs and anything else that came up while helping these families acclimate to life in America. More often than not she was also the driver insuring the families' appointments were kept. Lora recalls how, for a time, it was just the norm when she got in from school to accompany her mom on these enumerable outings.

One would think all this would have consumed

all of Catherine's time, but in addition to home and church responsibilities she began working outside the home once the children were in middle school. Her first job then was serving in the library at West End Christian School where Tom and Lora were students. Sometime later she began working for the University of Alabama and served there in several capacities, including working as a lab technician and a librarian. When she retired she had served for many years as the University's laboratory safety officer. Because of the love she extended, her concern for others and her strong work ethic, all of which seemed so natural to her, Catherine had a host of co-workers who loved, admired and appreciated her. While she would never have been pushy, neither did she hesitate to share her

hope in Christ with them.



Several years before her death Catherine began experiencing memory problems. This concerned and was a source of worry to her. My mother was suffering

with dementia at the time and Catherine would discuss treatments, care needs, and other dementia-related topics with me. I remember her thinking long and hard about when she might begin taking a drug my mother was using that helped to diminish and even to some extent reverse some of the mental regress brought on by the disease. The problem was the drug has a four to six-year



life, after which it becomes ineffective. The scientist in Catherine was intent on figuring out the best timing possible to get the most benefit. As time progressed she developed motor and muscular symptoms, too, stumbling and eventually taking falls.

Always a strong, determined woman, Catherine didn't initially allow these problems to hinder her activities and she continued driving, serving and attending church functions, tending to Leon's needs and generally going on with life. There were times in our women's Bible studies when Catherine would get a confused or bothered look. I can remember her looking at me and slightly shaking her head in frustration.

I didn't put two and two together then so I worried I might have been teaching something wrong or something of which she didn't approve. Only later did I realize it was becoming difficult for her to keep thoughts organized enough to follow discussions or track what she was trying to read. For a woman whose intellect was so strong I believe losing these skills was perhaps one of the worst trials she had to endure.

After Leon's death Catherine continued to live in their home alone. Her health seemed to fail more rapidly. Falls became more frequent and her children recognized she needed



someone to be with her and help her during the week. God met this need in the kindest and most gracious of ways. Sandra Patterson, a fellow

Riverwood member and a sweet, thoughtful, fun and loving sister in Christ came forward and expressed her availability and desire to help. Catherine, who lived her life serving others, now was in increasing need of being

served, which probably constituted another sort of trial for her. The Lord could not have been kinder in bringing Sandra to help. Initially she stayed with Catherine for a few hours daily, driving her for shopping or to Bible study, helping manage Catherine's medication regime, making and keeping appointments and doing whatever else was needed to keep things running smoothly.

As Catherine's needs increased Sandra was always ready to increase her hours. When it became necessary in the last year to have around-the-clock care Sandra was with Catherine every weekday for eight hours. Other helpers were utilized at night and the children covered the weekends. Around Thanksgiving last Catherine became bedridden. This constituted another trial for her since it entailed missing church. She ALWAYS wanted to be there. Our pastor and others visited frequently and read to Catherine and sang hymns. Though her mind was giving way, she was able to sing carols without a misstep with Jeff and his family during the Christmas season, testifying to how wonderfully entrenched God's truths become through a wealth of years exposed to church liturgy and worship.

Finally, as the New Year approached, Catherine's life began to ebb and she quietly slipped away to her reward on January 2nd. Typically, she and Leon had thoughtfully planned ahead and picked out and paid for their funerals and burial plots so as not to leave a burden for others. Several years before,



**What Catherine has become now is something you and I can scarcely imagine. All those skills of service and love honed through life's joys and trials are no doubt shining bright.**



while Tim Lien was Riverwood's pastor, Catherine made an appointment with him to sit down and plan her funeral. Before his move to California Tim made sure Jeff Pate had this plan in

hand, and what a wonderful, God-honoring service of "Worship, Remembrance and Celebration" it was. Though a brief obituary was read, the focus of the service was on God and his faithfulness as described in a set of scriptures Catherine selected. A full sermon was delivered by John Robertson, Riverwood's first and longtime pastor. Catherine wanted to be certain that anyone attending her funeral would hear the full Gospel, and John did not fail her. He and his wife Ann shared a devoted, lifelong friendship with the Walkers that never waned. One of the closing passages Catherine chose as a responsive reading was Titus 3: 1-7. I can't think of a better summation of what this steadfast woman believed and how she lived her life.

*"Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he*

*saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."*

What Catherine has become now is something you and I can scarcely imagine. All those skills of service and love honed through life's joys and trials are no doubt shining bright. God doesn't waste things. But now they are shining without the consequences of a fallen nature; no more pain, no anger, no sadness, no dementia...no, not the least restraint to being her full, complete and glorified self. As C. S. Lewis once hinted, were we to encounter her right now we'd be tempted to fall down and worship her. But Catherine wouldn't allow it, not for a minute! She would point us to the only one worthy of worship, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now that's a woman I want to imitate.



*Peggy Drinkard is Former Director of Children's Ministries at Riverwood Presbyterian Church. You may contact her at [pdrinkard@riverwoodchurch.org](mailto:pdrinkard@riverwoodchurch.org).*

# The Confessional Church

By Tim Skaar

In 2008, Rick Warren had an epiphany. According to Warren, what Christianity needs is a second Reformation; one that is not focused on doctrine and divisive politics. The church's second reformation would be "about deeds, not creeds."<sup>1</sup>

Warren's epiphany is not novel. On the contrary, it is unoriginal and utterly consistent with the previous 250 years of American Protestantism.

## The Evangelical Born-Again Experience

In 1800, 2.5 percent of religious adherents in the United States were Methodist. By 1850, Methodists had become the largest Protestant denomination with 34% of church members in the country belonging to that denomination.<sup>2</sup> This religious expansion of Methodism came at the expense of more established forms of Protestantism, namely Anglicans, Presbyterians and Congregationalists. The thing that characterized this expansion, and indeed drove it, was the use of revivals.

In thinking about revivals, it is necessary to understand that American revivals aren't simply a spontaneous outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, they involve very particular techniques and practices. Perhaps the pinnacle of revivalist preachers was Charles Finney. Finney himself argued that revivalism was a "science." If you wanted converts, you followed very specific techniques.

Finney was an innovator. Not content with preaching, prayer and the sacraments, Finney

sought to attract converts through the use of "new measures." In his lecture "Measures to Promote Revivals", Finney argues that God has not prescribed any forms or methods to his church.<sup>3</sup> Yet for Finney, forms or religious practices were not items of indifference, on the contrary, it was a moral necessity to innovate new forms and practices. As Finney wrote *There never has been an extensive reformation, except by new measures. Whenever the churches get settled down into a form of doing things, they soon get to rely upon the outward doing of it, and so retain the form of religion while they lose the substance. And then it has always been found impossible to arouse them so as to bring about a reformation of the evils, and produce a revival of religion, by simply pursuing that established form.*

Finney went so far as to argue that the Apostles and Reformers themselves were innovators in worship practices and the spiritual vitality found in their times was a result of their introduction of new measures.

And how did Finney measure the success of his new measures? Finney was looking to gain the attention of the world. He and other revivalists were looking for converts and moral improvement. Indeed, for Finney, the gospel was, in essence, a message of moral improvement.

Revivalists were adept at marketing techniques to advertise their arrival and to drum up excitement for their preaching. In addition, they created techniques to bring about emotional outpouring among those who were their

1 Boorstein, M. Megachurch Pastor Warren Calls for Second Reformation. (2008, February 5). *Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.WashingtonPost.com>

2 Finke, R. and Rodney Stark. *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 72-83, 96, 104.

3 Finney, C. "Lecture XIV - Measures to Promote Revivals." *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*. (1835), ed. J. Leavitt. Retrieved from <http://www.gospeltruth.net>



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targets. Finney himself utilized the multi-day protracted camp meeting with anxious meetings in which Finney would publicly call out sins of individuals as well as the use of the anxious seat in which a pew or seat at the front of the church was designated for those who felt guilt to come forward to receive prayer.

What this leads to is an intense, public and emotional conversion experience that happens with very little instruction or knowledge on the part of the convert. If revivals were bringing about great conversions among the people, what exactly was it converting the people to?

In his critique of Charles Finney and his New Methods, John Williamson Nevin noted the following about forms:

*Religion must have forms, as well as an inward living force. But these can have no value, no proper reality, except as they spring perpetually from the presence of that living force itself. The inward must be the bearer of the outward. Quackery reverses the case. The outward is made to bear the inward. The shrine, consecrated with the proper ceremonies, must become a shecinah.*<sup>4</sup>

Nevin's critique is the shallowness of revivalist religion. For Nevin, the problem with the measures and forms of revivalism is that they seek the impossible: to transform men and women into the moral image of God by bypassing the slow, hard work of teaching and instruction in the knowledge of God. In Nevin's confessional view, sanctification and even conversion itself is slowly gained with effort, bit by bit, hour by hour through those forms that are laid out in the scriptures.

D. G. Hart sums up the distinction between revivalism (which he traces to pietism) and confessionalism succinctly:

*American pietism [secured in the great awakenings] dismissed church creeds, structures, and ceremonies as merely formal or external manifestations of religion that went only skin deep... pietists have insisted that genuine faith was one that transformed individuals, starting with their heart and seeping into all walks of life.*<sup>5</sup>

### Two Children, One Ethos

This revivalistic understanding of Christianity has dominated Protestant Christianity in the United States. Indeed, the revivalism characterized by Finney birthed two children: the first is evangelicals. For them, religion is intensely personal and inward. The measure of religion's usefulness is changed lives, whether that means recovery from drug addiction or improved marriages. They take the Bible seriously, but insist on the supremacy of private interpretations over and against any churchly authority.

The primary outlet of evangelical fervor has been parachurch organizations and the insistence on moment-in-time conversion, personal bible study and quiet times. This is not, to say that there hasn't been evangelical political activism, though. Evangelical politics has included such causes as Prohibition, the attempt to ban the teaching of evolution in schools and even the attempt to restore prayer to public schools.

The second child of revivalism is the mainline

4 Nevin, J. *The Anxious Bench*. (German Reformed Church, 1844), 51-52.

5 Hart, D. *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002), xxiii.

**What matters for the mainline Protestants, is the advancement of the kingdom through the perfection of society. These churches have been consistently political. While the specific programs and politics they advocate have changed over the years, what hasn't changed is the desire to transform society into a more moral and just place through politics and social engagement.**

Protestant denominations. Like the evangelicals, the mainline Protestants have disregarded historic churchly interpretation of Scripture and orthodox doctrine. In contrast to evangelicals, the mainline denominations have been heavily influenced by German higher criticism and thus abandoned any form of inerrancy or serious biblical authority. The end result is a view that makes the Bible little more than inspiring stories.

What matters for the mainline Protestants, is the advancement of the kingdom through the perfection of society. These churches have been consistently political. While the specific programs and politics they advocate have changed over the years, what hasn't changed is the desire to transform society into a more moral and just place through politics and social engagement.

Both these forms of revivalistic Christianity, mainline Protestantism and Evangelicalism are quintessentially American because they are quintessentially pragmatic. For both mainline Protestants and Evangelicals, what matters is what works. They are both united in their pragmatism, they are separated on the one hand on where their emphasis lies and on the other by their preferred politics. Both Evangelical and mainline Protestants put their hope and focus on this side of heaven. In so doing, they have both made the same trade off. As D.G. Hart explained in The Lost Soul of American Protestantism the mainstream churches, both liberal and

*evangelical, abandoned large pieces of their Christian heritage by working so hard to make their faith practical and relevant to everything from personal lives of ordinary citizens to the affairs of one of the most powerful nations in modern history. In a word, by trying to make religion relevant, American Protestantism ended up trivializing Christianity.*<sup>6</sup>

#### **A Churchly Piety**

In contrast to evangelicals who seek to usher in the kingdom of God through moral transformation achieved by individual, emotional religious experience with God and mainline Protestants who seek to usher in the kingdom through societal transformation, confessionalism is a much more quiet, outwardly unimpressive form of piety. Confessionalism does not have the religious revival. It does not have the great societal crusades and programs. Instead, it relies on preaching, prayer and catechism to prepare the saints for the world to come. John Williamson Nevin describes confessional practice this way:

*It is a vastly more easy thing to carry forward the work of religion in this way [using revivalistic techniques], than it is to be steadily and diligently true to the details of ministerial duty, as prescribed by the apostle Paul. To be "vigilant, sober and of good behavior" – "not self willed, not soon angry" – "just, holy, temperate" – "one that rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity" – holding fast the faithful word, in such sort "that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers;"*

<sup>6</sup> Hart, D. *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism*. (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002), xviii.

has made divorce a matter of agreement and signing your name. There has been a billboard on the interstate highway between Prattville and Montgomery advertising no fault divorce. If you agree to divorce and pay the advertising attorney \$250.00, you are free. In 2017, 42% of all American children were being raised by one parent, either caused by divorce or simply, and often, born out of wedlock. This statistic has been above 40% for eight consecutive years. Long term consequences of this are monumental, even when using a narrow focus, like a basic one of having role models for children of both sexes to emulate.

Teen pregnancies are a significant problem in America today as children bear children. I remember a community leadership course I was involved in some years ago in which a public health official spoke to the group on the problem of teen pregnancies. Aghast at hearing his story and statistics, a young, professional woman in the group asked what could possibly be done to change the situation. The official said, I thought rather sadly, that he didn't think we were going to be able to get that genie back in the bottle. Sex released from strictures finds its own path.

As a culture, we have fallen from the standard of the beauty, grace and majesty of marriage as instituted by God into something, several things, that are far different. Marriage, now includes same sex marriages. There will be transgender marriages, whatever that means. For the first time, in 2015, there were more single adults than married adults in America.<sup>3</sup> Couples are having fewer children, and 40% of all births are out of wedlock. Stephaney Hanes in the Christian Science Monitor examined the decreased interest in marriage and reported that only 30 percent of Millennials say that having a successful marriage is "one of the

most important things" in life, according to the Pew Research Center, down from even the 47 percent of Generation X who said the same thing in 1997. Four in 10 Americans went even further, telling Pew researchers in 2010 that marriage was becoming obsolete.<sup>4</sup> As we look at American marriages today in light of what we believe and what marriage means within that belief, we are both astonished and afraid, but we shouldn't be surprised. In retrospect, it was easy to see this coming.

Sex as a biological imperative and sex as an entertainment alternative has led to a society unrecognizable to earlier generations. Cohabitation in the place of marriage has become endemic. Cohabitation is even easier than no fault divorce. With cohabitation, you simply pack up and move out and save the \$250.00. Now, when you meet a couple, you may hear this: "We have been together for eight years and married for two years." Apparently, there has been some slight change in commitment level after six years, or maybe it was just easier to buy a house, or to have a cheaper tax bill if you are married.

On the dating level, traditionally in America the predecessor to marriage, there has been an incredible change, and never doubt that it will have a huge effect on marriage. Today we have the "hook up" culture. Simply put, it is dating with the understanding that sex will be a part of the date. As this has developed, much of it became a woman and feminist thing, quite unlike the Hefner Playboy culture which was basically for male gratification. Some five years ago, Hannah Rosin wrote in *The Atlantic*:<sup>5</sup> *Single young women in their sexual prime—that is, their 20s and early 30s, .... are more likely to have a college degree and, in aggregate, they make more money. What makes this remarkable development possible is not just the pill or legal abortion*

3 Hanes, Stephany Christian Science Monitor *Singles Nation: Why So Many Americans are Unmarried* June 2014,

4 Pew Research, *Pew Social Trends* 2010-2011

5 Rosin, Hannah *Boys on the Side*, *The Atlantic* September, 2012



*but the whole new landscape of sexual freedom—the ability to delay marriage and have temporary relationships that don't derail education or career. To put it crudely, feminist progress right now largely depends on the existence of the hookup culture. And to a surprising degree, it is women—not men—who are perpetuating the culture, especially in school, cannily manipulating it to make space for their success, always keeping their own ends in mind. Women, once in charge of chastity and marriage as a prerequisite for sex, have abdicated and with that abdication, a lot of the ideal of love and marriage forever, of cherishing one person, and of a lifetime commitment that transcends circumstance and time has, in large part, been lost. We are now accustomed to something entirely different. Again, it is now a biological imperative.*

That was five years ago. Now, we have technology that has again changed the situation. The web site *Tinder*, and its several offshoots, *OkCupid*, *Happn*, *Hinge*, have even eliminated prior knowledge and the tenuous dating aspect. You put a picture and brief intro on the site and by swiping you find attractive potential “dates.” When you find someone appealing, you touch the picture to denote your approval. Those interested in you do the same and you are “matched.” Match as many as you want, pick the “best” and text them. Meetings can be arranged in minutes or, say, before midnight. Nancy Jo Sales, in her article in *Vanity Fair*,<sup>6</sup> describes the transition into the world of *Tinder*. *Mobile dating went mainstream about five years ago; by 2012 it was overtaking online dating. In February, one study reported there were nearly 100 million people—perhaps 50 million on Tinder alone—using their phones as a sort of all-day, every-day, handheld singles club, where they might find a sex partner as easily as they'd find a cheap flight to Florida. “It's like ordering Seamless,” says Dan, the investment banker, referring to the online food-delivery service.*

*“But you're ordering a person.”*

Ms. Sales interviewed dozens of college students and young professionals. She spoke of meeting them in bars where everyone had their phones out and were swiping. She spoke to young men who had relations with five “*Tinderellas*,” as they are called, in eight days. She spoke to men who claimed they had slept with 100 women during a year. She spoke to women who felt devalued. She spoke to women who used the site in the hook-up culture way, to provide sex while still controlling their own destinies. Some of the interviews, even through the “cool” factor and the confidence aspect, are incredibly sad, even to the extent of being difficult to read.

Ms. Sales also interviewed David Buss, a professor of psychology at the University of Texas at Austin who specializes in the evolution of human sexuality. Dr. Buss looked at the long term impact of the phenomenon. “Apps like *Tinder* and *OkCupid* give people the impression that there are thousands or millions of potential mates out there,” Buss says. “One dimension of this is the impact it has on men's psychology. When there is a surplus of women, or a perceived surplus of women, the whole mating system tends to shift towards short-term dating. Marriages become unstable. Divorces increase. Men don't have to commit, so they pursue a short-term mating strategy. Men are making that shift, and women are forced to go along with it in order to mate at all.”<sup>7</sup> As we continue to move toward a devaluation of sex and marriage, we are dealing with much more than who we will have sex with tonight.

Coming of age in our postmodern society has caused American marriage, more than ever, to be beset by adultery. Adultery is certainly not a new thing, but it has become a much larger phenomenon. Shame came with the Fall, when marital sex suddenly changed when the man and the woman suddenly knew the possibility of evil, and when, in time, fornication

<sup>6</sup> Sales, Nancy Jo *Tinder and the Dawn of the Dating Apocalypse* *Vanity Fair* August 2015

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

## The first idea lost in this intellectual climate is the idea of God, and with it, we also lose our concepts of the human mind and the soul.

and adultery would become possible. In shame, the man and woman realized they must have something they had never needed, clothes to wear. Today, adultery is the plot motif for novels, movies, television, plays, even poetry. It is rampant in American marriages and one or both members confessed to have committed adultery in fully one third of all marriages. Because there are many reasons for hiding adultery, those figures are almost certainly understated. Adultery is named as the cause in 30% of divorces, and with the prerogative of no fault divorce, this figure is also almost certainly very low. As marriage is devalued, statistics indicate that infidelity among wives has increased drastically and now is near that of men who, because of the double standard, have always been more likely to admit adultery in surveys. So much for "forsaking all others."

Adultery is the ultimate betrayal. In our world, it is the blood sport of suburbia. The pain of a betrayal between a husband and wife is terrible. A man I was told about, a Christian man, said that he would have had an easier time recovering from the death of his wife than from her betrayal. A woman I knew had gone through a divorce because of her husband's adultery and she told me that, even years later, when she thought about it, the pain was excruciating, still a knife in her heart when it came to mind. Adultery is front-loaded psychologically. The adulterer "wins" and his masculinity as the victor is enhanced in his mind, as is his competitiveness. The adulteress has the psychological kick of being the "prize," of being irresistible and her idea of her womanness is enhanced. All of this comes at great cost to others.

The wronged husband and/or wife, and it is most often both because both participants are married, is not the only recipient of this

pain. Children of one or both of participants' marriages must deal with the loss of a parent, the addition of new siblings, the idea that they might be the cause of the divorce, the feeling of not being loved and of being abandoned. Their parents often use them as economic pawns or for revenge. Parents of the participants and other family members who love and have warm feelings for those their children marry also suffer pain and inadequacies, as well as isolation from their grandchildren. Adultery in many ways is the bottomless pit of pain, and while television and movies talk of "lovers" and "beloved", adultery is the anti-thesis of love, the destroyer of love, of family, of grace, and of much more. *Ashley Madison*, the web site of adultery in the same sense that *Tinder* is the web site of dating, claimed forty-six million members in 2016. Their credo: "Life is short. Have an affair."

So here we are, in a crisis no one talks about. It is a crisis that strikes at the very heart of Christianity, even of society, structure and order. What have we lost as Christians and as a culture? What are Christians to do as we live in this culture and raise our children in the midst of so much disorder? What should be the response of Christians be to this new order of marriage?

First, I believe that the changes in marriage are connected to the general philosophical malaise of Determinism, Reductionism, and Scientism. As the intellectual climate becomes more and more naturalistic, concepts of right and wrong are lost. The biological imperative is neither right nor wrong, and becomes, instead of a choice, simply a cause, something that exists. The first idea lost in this intellectual climate is the idea of God, and with it, we also lose our concepts of the human mind and the soul. Marilynne Robinson examines the result of this malaise and states that "We

have stepped from a metaphysics into a void." <sup>8</sup> We have moved from a reality that works into a nothingness that doesn't have a place for God, or even for the mind. In another essay, she examines this further: "*The fact remains that there is no other origin for the human mind which is not dependent on theistic assumptions we have agreed..... not to make.*" <sup>9</sup>

Paul Kalanithi, who wrote *When Breath Becomes Air* while fighting terminal cancer, sought out God and in a beautiful passage, wrote the following about the reductionist model in which he had been educated. He writes: "*The problem eventually became evident: to make science the arbiter of metaphysics is to banish not only God from the world but also love, hate, meaning—to consider a world that is self-evidently not the world we live in. That's not to say that if you believe in meaning, you must also believe in God. It is to say, though, that if you believe that science provides no basis for God, then you are almost obligated to conclude that science provides no basis for meaning, and, therefore, life itself doesn't have any.*" <sup>10</sup> The loss of traditional, God-given, faithful, loving marriage is simply a step, a further descent into a nihilistic world without mind and emotion. It happens because we are more and more accustomed to the ideas that have led us to the point of believing that marriage is only one option or that it once was an option in a benighted, puritanical world and is now obsolete.

The place we are at as Christians is that we must insist on, and we must demonstrate marriage as *the* institution for gender relationships given by God: one man, one woman, loving each other, forsaking all others, raising godly offspring, until death parts them. We have to live it, as we live other parts of our called-out life. We are not going to be able to legislate this. The alternative of easy sex and

a transactional life is very powerful. That genie is definitely out of the bottle and it isn't going back in. We need to live marriage and we need to raise our children with marriage as the only relationship standard suitable to live by. Marriage and its meaning is a talk we need to have with children of both sexes, early, and often.

Marriage is hard, as are many things that are worthwhile, chief among them being the Christian religion. Children will see the hard parts despite our efforts. We must demonstrate to them in the way we interact with their mother or father, our wife or husband, the goodness, the graciousness, the wonder of it all. We must love our wife, love our husband. It is supremely important, both in our life and the legacy we leave. The Apostle Paul can help: *Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.*

The day may come when Christians alone maintain this standard that we know as institutional marriage. It certainly won't be in my lifetime, or perhaps not in our children's lifetime. It may never come because the Lord may return before it happens. It may never come because the earth is still the Lord's and will always be. But if we live as the Bible teaches and teach our children about God and His ways and teach them to teach their children, marriage will never die. It will always remain within Christianity, if nowhere else because it really is God's covenant, and being that, is a profound and serious matter. God truly is a party to the vows we make in marriage.

*Jimmy Hopper is an elder at Riverwood Presbyterian Church. He can be contacted at [jimhop7@att.net](mailto:jimhop7@att.net).*

<sup>8</sup> Robinson, Marilynne *What Are We Doing Here: Essays*, in "Mind, Conscience, Soul" pg 203

<sup>9</sup> *ibid* "Grace and Beauty" pg 109

<sup>10</sup> Kalanithi, Paul *When Breath Becomes Air* pg 168-174



our actions (ex. I value being kind but I just made fun at someone else's expense).

When we experience this internal distress at the hand of incongruous beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, we then feel a drive to resolve the distress by altering one or more of these factors to achieve internal harmony. We adjust our beliefs ("the research on the link between smoking and cancer is suspect"), our attitudes ("That paper for class wasn't that important anyway, and my professor says we get a drop grade"), and our behavior ("I'll apologize to the person I made fun of and work to not do that again") in order to restore balance and rid ourselves of those uncomfortable feelings. When we resolve these incongruities in unhealthy ways, we can get into trouble, but when we resolve them in healthy ways, it can be very adaptive and functional.

One of the things I love about psychology is that principles like cognitive dissonance often illuminate the wonderful ways God has created us. For the Christian, we can see "cognitive dissonance" as the internal, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit calling us away from our sinful natures and toward God. While we are yet sinners, the Spirit moves in us and we are called to faith in Christ Jesus. We continue to struggle in our sin, yet we are tugged toward what is right and good. It is a constant struggle that Paul knew well. In Romans 7:14-15;19 he says, "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate...For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing." We feel that dissonance between what we now believe in Christ through the Spirit, and our attitudes and behaviors that remain in the flesh. When I find myself faced with the reality that I am not

living God's calling to mercy, this creates a cognitive dissonance between what I believe and how I act. If I truly espouse these beliefs, I am not living them out and this is distressing.

We are conditioned to view distress as bad and to make resolution of distress a top priority. However, when I recognize that my actions don't match my beliefs in Christ, I believe the struggle and frustration I feel as a result is very good. It is the work of the Spirit. It is a painful yet merciful tug. This "cognitive dissonance" is essential to my transformation as a Christian. The dissonance is often strong, and the desire to resolve it is strong. I am left with the need to change something. How I respond to this dissonance can either make it an aide or an obstacle to putting mercy ministry into practice. In our efforts to resolve the dissonance, do we work to change our attitudes or behaviors, or do we attempt to find ways to change and twist the beliefs we hold to justify our attitudes and behaviors? From my own personal experience, both with myself and in my work, it is far easier to change beliefs than it is to change behaviors. I see the temptation to do this daily.

It is easy to follow the pull toward changing our beliefs. We justify and rationalize. We hide behind busyness and tasks we deem more important. We say it's not our job, or that someone else who is better equipped can do it. We blame those in need of mercy for their own lot in life. We believe those that suffer are reaping what they sow and therefore deserve their lot (often true, but often a vast oversimplification). We let fear and anxiety be barriers or signs that we should avoid and retreat rather than pursue. We view our time better spent pointing out the sin in the world rather than living out our mission to the world. We align ourselves more with a political set of beliefs than a

Biblical set of beliefs, effectively putting our trust in the ideals of mankind. We human beings are exceptional at shaping perspectives and beliefs to fit the box in which we already live.

However, if we truly believe what the Word teaches about mercy, there is no room for changing our beliefs. We are called to seek justice and love mercy, just as God has shown mercy to us. It is clearly stated, without condition or stipulation. We are called to imitate God, who is merciful and gracious, abounding in love. We are called to pour out ourselves for the poor and needy, which is not a "when I have time" proposition. And we are promised that God will accomplish this through us not when we say we are ready, but in His time. It is not up to us to judge the world but to share the gospel through acts of mercy and words of truth. Dr. Alistair Begg says it well in a sermon entitled "Have Mercy." He explains that Jesus sent us out to be engaged in mission, and we have "no justifiable basis to change the exhortation from mission to admonition." The call is not to make sure we admonish those outside the kingdom. The call is to love the poor, do good, and spread the gospel to those that God has chosen for his kingdom.

So, if we cannot change our beliefs, then we are left to change our attitudes and behaviors. This is a lifelong process and one that comes with its ups and downs. It means leaning into the discomfort and frustration and trying again. It means not being afraid of making mistakes and being humble enough to learn from them. It means repenting when we let complacency and distractions win. It means looking for opportunities rather than waiting for people to reach out. It means asking God's spirit to continue to move in our hearts and stir

us toward action.

It is easy to begrudge this concept of cognitive dissonance. It is easy to see why we take pains to alter the belief rather than the behavior. Pray that God would help resolve our dissonance by rooting our beliefs in his unshakable Word and sending us out to show his mercy to the world.

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Here at Riverwood, we are moving toward this call to love those around us, to engage in effective mercy ministry, and to share the gospel. We are not doing it perfectly and it is often slow, but we are leaning into the dissonance and working to change our behaviors, not our beliefs. We are setting in place policies for mercy ministry that engage those in need in ways that emphasize relationship. We are partnering with fellow believers through agencies like Love INC and Wings of Grace to work with the bigger Church to reach out in our community. We are finding ways to better understand our gifts as a church and put them to use. Pray for these efforts. I ask that you push us. Push your leadership at Riverwood, and push yourselves into these efforts. Pray for the Spirit to work in all of our hearts. The Word of the Lord is good. His call is clear. He will accomplish it.

Much of what I have drawn from for this article comes from the following resources which would be excellent pieces for further reading, listening, and/or exploration:

"Have Mercy", a sermon preached by Alistair Begg
Tangible by Chris Sicks
When Helping Hurts by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert
Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road by Timothy J. Keller

Dr. Greg Vander Wal is a member of Riverwood Presbyterian Church. You may contact him at gsvanderwal@crimson.ua.edu

Instead, (Confessionalism) relies on preaching, prayer and catechism to prepare the saints for the world to come.

to 'follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness,' so as to be "an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity;" to be "gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves;" to meditate on divine things, and to be wholly given to them, so as to be continually profiting in the view of all; to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ;" to be a scribe well instructed in the law, a workman that need not to be ashamed able to bring from the treasury of God's word things new and old, as they may be wanted; to preach week after week, so as to instruct and edify the souls of men; to be earnest, faithful, pungent, in the lecture room and catechetical class; to be known in the family visitation, in the sick chamber, in the dwelling places of poverty and sorrow, as the faithful pastor, "watching for souls," whose very presence serves to remind men of holiness and heaven, not at certain seasons only, but from month to month, from one year always to another; all this is something great and difficult, and not to be compassed without a large amount of inward spiritual strength.⁷

Notice the ordinariness and churchliness of the forms laid out by Nevin: preaching, teaching, pastoral visitation, visiting the sick and dying, catechism. This is a form of piety that is much more quiet and subtle. It takes nurturing and years. It is a form of piety that is built on a deep knowledge of Christ and participation with his corporate church. It does not seek innovation, but faithfulness. The creeds are not hindrances to personal piety, they are

necessary to it because in them, we receive the wisdom of the church to know Christ and his Word.

For confessional Protestants, forms are not neutral. Nor are they to be innovated. The forms used in worship are commanded by God himself, namely the Word, including the visible word that we call the sacraments, and Prayer. It is a piety that seeks to honor God's command to "teach them diligently to your children" (Deuteronomy 6:7). It does not locate conversion in an instance but knows that God works in hearts over time, even those who have had a dramatic conversion experience. It is concerned with this world, but not ultimately. It seeks to love and serve neighbor, but knows that loving God is the first and great commandment. It seeks to understand the Bible through the church and her creeds, not through subjective personal experience and interpretation. It knows that God is holy and places great emphasis on that most impractical of activities: corporate worship.

In focusing on the societal problems of this age, the American Protestant church has failed to prepare the saints for the age to come. In attempting to appeal to the widest possible audience, the American Church has sacrificed the glorious riches of Christ. In trusting more in the forms of marketing, the church has lost the power of the simple forms instituted by her Lord. In seeking what works now, the church has failed to cultivate wisdom. In attempting to attract the culture by looking like the culture, the church has ceased to have a compelling reason for existence. There is no reason to attend a church that can only offer pragmatism. Americans have noticed.

Tim Skaar is a former member of Riverwood Presbyterian Church. You may contact him at timskaar@hotmail.com

⁷ Nevin, J. *The Anxious Bench*. (German Reformed Church, 1844), 58-59.

The Bittersweet Feast

By Daniel Page

The feast, the feast;
The bittersweet feast.
Bitter that the King had to die (for you and me),
Yet sweet that the King did die (for you and me).

Bitter is the bread,
With the taste of torn flesh.
This very flesh ripped from our King (by you and me).
Yet sweet this bread with the taste of pure honey,
That is given, true food to live by (for you and me).

Bitter is the wine,
With the taste of innocent blood.
For this very blood was spilled from our King (by you and me).
Yet sweet this wine with the taste of redemption,
In drinking this wine freely given by our King,
We have new life (for you and me).

The feast, the feast;
The bittersweet feast.
May we partake this feast as oft as we may,
Remembering the great sacrifice of our Savior King.
And until the day when this feast is no longer bitter,
But only sweet in the full embrace our Risen King.

FINALE:

The Image of God

I recently read Marilynne Robinson's new essays, collected in ***What Are We Doing Here?***. In her essay, *Considering the Theological Virtues*, she juxtaposes insights on man from Jonathan Edwards and John Calvin with William Shakespeare in his masterpiece, ***Hamlet*** in this quote from Act 2, Scene 2:

What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how
infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and
admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like
a god! the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals—and yet,
to me, what is this quintessence of dust?

The point Ms. Robinson was making, indeed the theme of the essay, was that we should regard man as a creature made in the image of God, indeed, in this vast universe, man is the only creature, as far as we know, that is made in His image. Her conclusion is that the meaning of this is profound, and that this knowledge should positively affect us, both in our respect for the worth of others and in how we treat each other.

Considering this, my mind went immediately to Psalm 8, about which Ms. Robinson had written another essay in ***The Death of Adam***, a much earlier collection. This beautiful psalm also speaks to Ms. Robinson's theme of respect and worth to all men and here, this idea is also a part of the Word of God.

Psalm 8

O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.
When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?
Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.
You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,
all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

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