

**PROVOCATIONS FROM P.T. FORSYTH
(1848-1921, Scottish Theologian)**

“The first duty of every soul is to find not its freedom but its Master.”

“Unless there is within us that which is above us,
we shall soon yield to that which is about us.”

“The peace of God is not a glassy calm but a mighty confidence.”

“An undogmatic Christ is the advertisement of a dying faith.”

“The seat of revelation is in the Cross, and not in the heart.”

“Half gospels have no dignity and no future. Like the famous mule,
they have neither pride of ancestry nor hope of posterity.”

“The only preaching which is up to date for every time is the preaching of this eternity,
which is opened to us in the Bible alone—the eternal of holy love, grace and redemption,
the eternal and immutable morality of saving grace for our indelible sin.”

**RUTH S. BROWN:
A Good and Faithful Servant of
The Gospel of Life
(October 17, 1932-October 5, 2024)**

Mrs. Ruth Brown has crossed the Jordan. Our Lord, who died for Ruth's sins and who was raised from the dead to transform her life, has met her and carried her across the great divide. Mrs. Brown's service as the Administrator of the Taskforce of United Methodists on Abortion and Sexuality (TUMAS) was remembered and celebrated in the September 1, 2021 issue of Lifewatch.

Even after crossing the Jordan, Mrs. Brown leaves those who knew her—especially her four sons and the larger family—with many endearing memories and lasting impressions. She also leaves behind a written record. Her years of leadership at Sav-a-Life, located in her hometown of Dothan, AL, are described in her chapter “The Ministry of a Crisis Pregnancy Center” in The Church and Abortion: In Search of New Ground for Response (Abingdon Press, 1993) and her informative “From the Director” columns which ran in each issue of Lifewatch from December 31, 1990 until September 1, 1996. Most important of all, her legacy is scattered about—in her sons and their families, and in those young women inspired and empowered by her life and ministry to carry their preborn children to term and to love them for years to come.

Back in the 1990s, standing up for the preborn child was especially difficult, perhaps even more intimidating than it is today. But that is exactly what Mrs. Ruth Brown did—always with extraordinary thoughtfulness and firm love.

May the soul of Ruth Brown enjoy the Communion of the Saints, as her body awaits resurrection at Christ's return in glory and power. (PTS)

ABIDING IN SCRIPTURE (LAW AND GOSPEL) AND SEXUAL ETHICS

by Rev. James A. Seelhorst

We Methodists inherited a canon of Scripture from our ancestors in the faith. With Jesus Christ as the cornerstone, our faith is based upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, which we consider to be divinely inspired revelation that is authoritative for the faith and life of the church. As we abide in Scripture, we learn the truth about, and find the freedom of, this salvation in Jesus Christ. Abiding in Scripture will also enlighten us to the truth of the Biblical-sexual ethic. (I Pet. 2:6; Eph. 2:20; Gal. 1:11-12; and John 5:39-47; 8:31-38)

Scripture reveals and clarifies God's desires and expectations for humanity: initially, through the **Mosaic covenant, the law, with its moral, judicial, and religious works** [emphases added here and below]; then, through the Christian covenant of faith in the Good News of Jesus Christ. In essence, both the law and the Gospel encapsulate what it looks like to live rightly before God and with others. Yet, we often misconstrue their distinguishing external and internal features, as well as their differing approaches to mercy and judgment. (Heb. 8:6; Mt. 5:21-22, 27-28; and Jas. 2:12-13)

The Law

The judicial or civil element of the law reinforced the moral component with penalties for any violations. For example, whereas the **moral law** says No! to adultery, the **judicial law** spells out the consequence as death. However, with the Good News, Jesus forgave and extended mercy to the woman caught in adultery, which abrogated the penal aspects of the law. Moreover, it should be noted, He also told her to go and sin no more, which nevertheless upheld God's moral standards. (Deut. 5:18; Lev. 20:10; and John 8:10-11)

The religious element of the law pointed to the moral component with both **ritual and purity**. The **ritual** aspects reminded God's people that they must be obedient to worship and serve the Lord only as a holy people consecrated to their God alone. As an example, God's people were generally prohibited from wearing cloth made woven with wool and linen. This is just one of many external rituals reminding the people to be separate and distinct from other peoples, neither to intermarry with them nor adopt their customs and beliefs, which would inevitably lead their hearts astray to worshipping other peoples' gods. Conversely, Jesus denounces the scribes and Pharisees for thinking that their outward appearance would make them right before God while they neglected the law's internal moral standards of loving from the heart. (Lev. 19:19, 20:26; Deut. 7:3-4; and Mt. 23:5, 27-28)

The purity aspects of the law's religious element demanded sacrifices to cleanse spiritually the sins of both the priests and the people. So the priests offering the sacrifices for atonement must be physically clean (e.g., they must bathe before each sacrifice) and be without defect (e.g., no eunuchs could present offerings to God). (Moreover, the animals sacrificed must be without blemish.) Later, Jesus pronounces, as foretold in the prophet Isaiah, that eunuchs can now faithfully serve in the kingdom of heaven. Indeed,

the Ethiopian eunuch celebrates this fact after hearing the prophecy explained when he asks Philip for and receives baptism. (Lev. 16:6, 24, 30; 21:16-20; Isa. 56:3b-5; Mt. 19:12; and Acts 8:36, 38)

The law, with its many moral prescriptions and prohibitions, functioned as our custodian to guide our interactions with God and others. Yet, as the prophets frequently pointed out, the law could not deliver us from the power of the brokenness in the world, because we have to fulfill the law always perfectly, an impossible task. The law serves only to remind us of our inability to rightly love God and others through works alone. (Gal. 3:23-26 and Rom. 7:5-13)

The Gospel

With the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus challenges the self-righteous lawyer with an example of the extravagant works of mercy and compassion the law would require. What must the lawyer do to inherit eternal life? It is foremost a matter of one's heart and love extended to all, even our enemies. (Lk. 10:25-37 and Mt. 5:43-48)

In God's economy of justice, Christ fulfills the law. Jesus served as the unblemished sacrificial lamb, who heals us of the brokenness in this world. Jesus' powerful work on the cross pays the just penalty for our missing the mark, and

erases the debt we could never pay. God mercifully deems us righteous by grace through faith in Christ, who presents us faultless in God's presence. (Mt. 5:17-18; I Pet. 1:18-19; I John 1:9; Col. 2:13-14; and Jude 24)

It is noteworthy that, throughout Scripture, numerous lists highlight what this love does and does not look like. These examples encompass our attitudes, words, and actions. It is important to realize that in these lists is a moral standard, not ritual purity, through which Scripture consistently addresses sexual ethics of all kinds. It is also important not to confuse descriptions recorded elsewhere in Scripture of non-traditional sexual ethics, which God allowed, as God's implied approval of such. (Gal. 5:19-6:10; Ex. 20:1-17; Mk. 7:21-22; I Tim. 1:8-11; Heb. 13:1-5; and I Kgs. 11:1-2, 9-10)

A close reading of these Biblical lists and their surrounding verses reveals: All violations of the moral standards stem from living by our fallen nature, setting our minds on the desires and passions of the flesh, loving the world and living by its standards, as well as holding to a pride of life and self-righteousness, all of which enslave us in brokenness. (Gal. 5:16-17; Rom. 1:22, 6:11-14, 8:5-8; Jas. 4:3-5; I John 2:15-17; and Tit. 3:3)

Instead, the Spirit transforms us into new life by pouring God's love into our hearts, so we can rightly love God and our neighbors and ourselves, and do good works consistent with repentance. All the while, we are being conformed to the image of Christ, setting our minds on the things of the Spirit, putting off our old nature, and mortifying the things of the flesh that can cling so closely. (Rom. 8:9-15; John 15:4-5; Eph. 2:10, 4:22; Mt. 3:8; I Pet. 1:14; II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 5:24; and Heb. 12:1)

Thus, Scripture clarifies that our ability to uphold a Biblical sexual ethic hinges upon whether we live according

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to the world or to the Word (by God's love). (Eph. 5:1-2; Col. 3:14; and I Cor. 13)

Proclaiming differently than this Gospel contained in Scripture amounts to an injustice and distortion of love. It turns us away from and distorts God's grace. (Gal. 1:6-7 and Jude 4)

Be Humble, Receptive, Teachable

Regardless of the time or culture—Philistine or Canaanite, Roman or American—God's moral expectations for humanity remain. Conceit leads us to assume that the moral expectations revealed in Scripture are outdated and out of sync with our so-called enlightened sensibilities. To the contrary, the faith proclaimed historically by Methodists (which reflects the faith of the apostles) challenges us to correct such humanistic abandonment of the moral teachings found in Scripture.

Recall the twenty-five original, foundational Articles of Religion that John Wesley gave to the Methodists in the newly established United States of America. Article VI, regarding the Old Testament, affirms that, while Methodists are not bound to either the judicial or the religious elements of the law, we are not free to live contrary to the moral intent of the law.

Persisting to abide by the world's way of living and thinking, and defining our sexual ethics accordingly, undermines the legitimacy of our Christian confession and jeopardizes our inheritance in the Kingdom of God. **If we have a disagreement with Scripture, then the problem lies with us—not Scripture. When we tower over Scripture, our Wesleyan heritage directs us instead to submit ourselves through faith to its authority as divine revelation.** Only then can we expect to know the truth, be set free to find transformation from the brokenness of this fallen world, and love as God desires. (I Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:21b; and Eph. 5:3-5)

Abiding in Scripture enables us to understand this broken world from God's perspective and God's all-in effort to fully renew it. That is when we will rightly understand and do justice, extend mercy and grace, and love God and others and ourselves as God intends.

Rev. Seelhorst is currently an elder in The United Methodist Church. Now he is on honorable location in the Kentucky Annual Conference. A more thorough list of Scriptural passages is available on request at jaseelhorst@gmail.com. ♥

PASTORS: FEED THE SHEEP, DO NOT QUEER THE CHURCH

Megan Basham is the author of [Shepherds for Sale: How Evangelical Leaders Traded the Truth for a Leftist Agenda](#) (Broadside Books, an imprint of HarperCollins, 2024). A part of [Shepherds for Sale](#) was published as an article on the First Things website. That article should be of particular interest to American Methodists; it reports: "Between 2013 and 2018...[John Stryker's Arcus Foundation] gave over two million dollars [\$2,000,000!] to the Reconciling Ministries Network to 'secure the full participation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the United Methodist Church,' the last mainline denomination still resistant to full affirmation of the entire rainbow panoply." (brackets added for detail and for emphasis)

Basham underlines the greatest harm committed by this queering-of-the-churches project: "Author Rosaria Butterfield left a life of lesbianism when she became a Christian. She has described her process of dying to self to live for Christ in several books, but in her latest, [Five Lies of Our Anti-Christian Age](#), she offers a haunting rebuke to anyone peddling false peace in these matters. 'How sad indeed for someone who is already weighed down by sin to be denied the true remedy for the problem. **That is what gay Christianity does. It denies the sexual sinner repentance.**' **Without repentance, there is no salvation.**" (emphasis added)

According to Basham, pastors need to engage—right now: "Many pastors, doctrinally sound but unaware of the boot-camp efforts [to make the churches pro-queer] that have been underway for years, have, out of a desire not to appear judgmental or overly focused on one sin to the exclusion of others, been successfully shamed into barely mentioning homosexuality, transgenderism, or the rest of the LGBTQ array. Given this imbalance in commitment to our respective beliefs, faithful Christians can hardly wonder at the fact that the LGBTQ movement is chewing up ground and claiming new converts as quickly as evangelical churches are meekly ceding the field.

"The shepherds should recall the warning of John Calvin: 'Ambiguity is the fortress of heretics.' Well, the heretics are here. They are all around us, and their numbers are growing. **Pastors need to remember that while evangelism is important, it's not their first responsibility. Their first responsibility is to feed the sheep, to equip the saints.** For too many pastors, concern for showing compassion to the lost means they're not protecting the sheep from false teaching. They are, in fact, starving the sheep to appease goats. John 10:12-13 has a word for them: 'The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.'" (Meghan Basham, "The Plot to Queer Evangelical Churches," [firstthings.com](#), Web Exclusives, 8.1.24) (PTS) ♥

THE CROSS, A CHILD, AND SALVATION

Years ago, Bishop William H. Willimon preached a Pentecost XVI (Year B) sermon on Mark 8:27-38. That passage contains this challenge from our Lord: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it...." (8:34-5, NRSV)

Toward the end of the sermon, Willimon explained: "The cross. It's not a bad back or a difficult-to-get-along-with mother-in-law. The cross is what you get for walking with Jesus. Furthermore, Jesus says...it's how you'll know that you are walking with [Me]: if there's a cross.

"But note that He also says: Those who lose their lives, those who throw away their lives and what they have, for My sake and the Gospel, they will...be saved. This word of the cross is Good News. The way of the cross, this walk with Jesus, becomes not an impossible, terrible way, but a way that leads to life abundantly.

“I was there in the hospital when she gave birth to a child. And we could tell, from the way the nurses were acting, there was some kind of issue. Sure enough, the doctor came in shortly. And he said, ‘Ahhh, there is a problem with your baby.’”

“And they said, ‘What kind of problem?’”

“He said, ‘Well, this child is born with a condition that affects brain development. And it affects motor skills. The child has a little respiratory issue. And maybe, maybe, if we just sort of step back, and let nature take its course, the problem will be solved.’”

“Well, the husband spoke up and said, ‘This baby is not a problem. We have prayed for this child, and this is a gift.’”

“And she [the wife] said, ‘You know, you think about it, the lives that we have had, the privileges we’ve enjoyed, this makes a whole lot of sense: That we would be given a child like this.’”

“The doctor spoke up and said, ‘Ahhh, ahhh, studies show that couples who keep these children suffer a high rate of marital stress and separation.’”

“And she said, ‘Well, you don’t know us. We won’t.’”

“And the doctor left.”

“When they walked out of that hospital four days later, you could hear the cross coming down the hall. You could hear it going out the front door down the steps. The amazing thing was: What they bore was not a burden, but, in the redemptive hands of God, ...a divine vocation. It was a blessing...that those who the world might look on as losing, were gaining.”

“Behind today’s gospel [reading] is the truth. Only the life you lose, because it’s taken by God, for God’s purposes—that is the life God saves. Amen.” (“B42: The Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Year B [2025],” “A Sermon for Every Sunday,” [vimeo.com](https://vimeo.com/1017106632?share=copy), 7:30f.) (PTS) ♥

DEMENTIA AND THE GOSPEL OF LIFE

Bishop Kenneth L. Carder (ret.) led a wonderful webinar, on October 1, 2024, entitled “Dementia Through the Lens of Grace.” (It was recorded and is available at <https://vimeo.com/1017106632?share=copy>).

Sponsored by the Center for Leadership Excellence, of the North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, Bp. Carder’s presentation powerfully demonstrates where the Gospel of Life leads. Over the years, in caring for his beloved wife Linda who was afflicted with dementia, he learns every day much about the dignity of each and every person, who is created by God in the divine image. In the webinar, he summarizes his learning and applies it to possibilities for ministry, in the name of Jesus Christ, with those with dementia.

In his presentation, Bp. Carder claims: “The Gospel says, ‘You are a beloved child of God.’ Beautiful to behold, you have inherent worth and dignity. Therefore, persons with dementia may lose their capacities, their capacities to function, to know, to remember, to produce. But they are valuable because of the ones to whom they belong—to us and to God....”

“[My wife] Linda would say, ‘I just don’t want to be a burden.’ And that’s one of the great fears that many of us have as we move toward our frail years...we fear being a

burden. Well, we need to get over that. We came into the world as a burden, didn’t we?”

“In the midst of all the storms in western North Carolina, I became a great grandfather again. My granddaughter gave birth to little Callum Douglas Aiken. He can’t do anything. He’s totally dependent.... I haven’t heard them say, ‘Well, he’s such a burden.’ He’s not a burden. Now, some tasks—getting up in the middle of the night—may be *burdensome*; but we don’t identify that little one coming into the world as a *burden*. [emphases added] Linda, even though she lost all of her capacities to feed herself, to care for herself, she never became a burden.... We come into the world dependent, and...our dependency only grows in complexity over the years. We are interdependent.... And we bear one another’s burdens, as St. Paul said in Galatians [6:2]....”

The bishop then talks about our Lord: “God came among us as a dependent little baby, totally dependent on the care of Mary and Joseph and others. Born among the homeless of an unwed teenage mother, grew up in a working class family, interacted with neighbors even anonymously.... [H]e was the Son of God and the Savior of the world when He was nursing at Mary’s breast, [and] when Mary was changing his diaper [just as much as] when He was hanging on the cross. He was saving Mary. He was drawing out of Mary her capacity to love, to care, to nurture. And as he worked in the carpenter shop and helped the neighbors, He was no less the Savior than when He was hanging on the cross. So God has chosen to come among the vulnerable and the least of these. And in coming among us, we are transformed....”

In this presentation, Bp. Carder is faithfully serving the Gospel of Life. Watch the video of his presentation, show it to others, and teach its content to many. With the help of the Holy Spirit, spread the Gospel of Life. (PTS) ♥

THINKING ABOUT EUGENICS AND HOW CHURCHES ARE SEDUCED*

Last spring in Charlotte, The United Methodist Church’s General Conference voted to change its teachings and practices related to life, marriage, and sexuality into matters of choice and preference. Those recent votes are, of course, a departure from the Church’s apostolic teaching and practice that have been handed down through the ages. “How could that have happened?” is a common response. The book Preaching Eugenics might offer glimpses of an answer.

At the end of last summer, a used copy of Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement (Oxford University Press, 2004), by Dr. Christine Rosen, was delivered to my mailbox. Dr. Rosen is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, and she writes many insightful articles for Commentary magazine.

Eugenics, generally defined, is a field of study that claims to be scientific and that strives to improve the human race through various strategies, including sterilization. Rosen points out the origin and spread of eugenics: “[E]ugenics is best understood within the context of progressive reform ideas” (p. 12) found in American society—during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

As is well known, the eugenics movement in the United States provided ideas for the development of a lethal eugenics project in Germany. When discovered and widely reported after the war, Nazi doctors employed eugenics in

ways that mistreated, persecuted, and murdered Jews, the disabled, and others. The Nazi practice of eugenics caused eugenics as an accepted form of “public health” to be besmirched, delegitimated, and canceled. Even so, because of credibility gained from its scientific connection, eugenics—in new, attractive, “compassionate” forms—resurfaces regularly in America’s medical-scientific complex.

Rosen notes that, before Nazi doctors discredited it in front of all the world, eugenics was vigorously promoted by religious leaders in America. The “Protestants proved the most enthusiastic and numerically powerful group of religious participants in the eugenics movement. Supporters ranged from high-ranking clerics to small-town ministers in the Methodist, Unitarian, Congregational, Protestant Episcopal, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches. Their participation had its roots in the movement for social Christianity that in many ways paralleled progressivism: the Social Gospel.” (p. 15) American Protestants participated in “Fitter Family Contests” and “Race Betterment Conferences.” They dedicated themselves to encouraging the “breeding” of human beings so that strong, smart, beautiful children, not disabled and otherwise compromised kids, would be born.

To be sure, pro-eugenics Methodists and others had the best of intentions. Again, Rosen: “For many religious leaders, compassion, empathy, and a deep sense of social responsibility informed their judgment of the ‘feeble-minded’” (p. 23), and how to limit their numbers through eugenics.

It is interesting that Margaret Sanger, the mother of today’s Planned Parenthood (which is an abortion corporation with some gender-transitioning services thrown in), was a significant player in the American eugenics movement. She spoke, wrote, and worked for “the elimination of the unfit.”

Preaching Eugenics and Christine Rosen suggest that we Protestants in America became entangled in the eugenics movement because our doctrine and discipline did not protect our clergy and churches from this seduction. (She notes that the eugenics movement was not as well received among Roman Catholics, perhaps because of their sturdier doctrine and discipline.) The world dangled in front of Protestant churches a new, shiny object—eugenics—with which clergy and congregations could prove themselves to be scientifically astute, morally advanced, and compassionately committed. Lacking sufficient doctrinal and disciplinary discernment, American Protestants simply could not say No! to such a fashionable, high-minded, progressive cause as eugenics.

The lesson is this: **Churches lacking functioning doctrine and discipline are vulnerable to the socially fashionable causes of the day**—such as eugenics, legalized abortion, legalized gay marriage, anti-racism, gender transitioning, legalized drugs, and on and on. Taking doctrine and discipline seriously, churches become more skeptical about jumping on the bandwagons that regularly arise in, and rumble through, modern society—while most often flying the flapping flag of “compassion.”

One of my saintly mother’s commandments was: “People should never try to act like God.” She believed that those pushing eugenics were trying to do exactly that. Mom was right. Yet again.... (PTS)

*United Methodism’s Book of Resolutions (BOR) contains a resolution entitled “Repentance for Support of Eugenics.” In the 2016 BOR, that resolution is numbered 3184. It declares, in part: “The United Methodist General Conference formally apologizes for Methodist leaders and Methodist bodies who in the past supported eugenics as sound science and sound theology....” (Adopted 2008, Amended and Readopted 2016)

U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL GARLAND: IDEALS WITHOUT ACCOUNTABILITY

In American democracy, the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) is the leading law-enforcement agency. During Democratic administrations and in Republican administrations, in carrying out its responsibilities, DOJ must be singularly and fully committed to seeking justice. That means DOJ must be non-partisan. Therefore, DOJ must always strive to uphold the rule of law for all Americans and, at the same time, treat all Americans equally under the law. If DOJ wanders from its pursuit of equal justice for all, the Church and Christians have an urgent duty to call it out. Sadly, in recent times, DOJ appears to be increasingly politicized and partisan; unfortunately, that now leads to the targeting of pro-life citizens and ministries. Hence, the following article. --Editor

On September 12, 2024, United States Attorney General [AG] Merrick Garland addressed the closing session of the 85th Annual US Attorneys Conference at the Department of Justice in Washington, DC. DOJ employees were invited to attend this event in the department’s Great Hall.

AG Garland began by sincerely thanking the more than 115,000 “selfless public servants and patriots” of the department for doing their “difficult and dangerous work.” He recalled that these public servants regularly help vulnerable people in extreme distress.

Garland went on to recall that, 84 years ago and in exactly the same DOJ room, then-Attorney General Robert Jackson spoke to US Attorneys (or federal prosecutors) about their work. AG Jackson eloquently claimed that “a good prosecutor is a person ‘who tempers zeal with human kindness, who seeks truth and not victims, who serves the law and not factional purposes, and who approaches his task with humility.’ That speech, which he titled ‘The Federal Prosecutor,’ outlined values that have echoed in the halls of this department, and outside of it, for a generation.... His words have inspired generations of public servants—including me.”

Garland at Justice

Then Mr. Garland gave an account of his service at the Department of Justice. He went to work at DOJ soon after Watergate, when the department was trying to regain the public’s confidence. At that time, said Garland, “Department leaders like [former] Attorneys General Ed Levy, Griffin Bell, and Benjamin Civiletti developed and formalized a set of norms to ensure the Justice Department’s adherence to the rule of law, relying on values that are foundational to our democracy, in particular the promise of equal justice under law. They put forward a set of policies to guide the Justice Department’s work. Those included policies designed to protect the independence of the Justice Department from partisan influence...[and] regulations to protect the freedom of the press.... I assisted on that project. The result was a slim, paper-bound volume entitled Principles of Federal Prosecution, published in 1980. As you well know, the

current version of the Principles is now a 23,000-word, electronic document enshrined in the Justice Manual.... The purpose of those Principles, as we wrote in the preface, was ‘to promote the reasoned exercise of prosecutorial authority, and contribute to the fair, even-handed administration of the federal criminal laws.’...

“The core of the Principles is its directive about which factors an attorney of the government may not consider. In the words of that document, ‘The attorney for the government may not be influenced by a person’s race, religion, gender, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, or political association, activities, or beliefs, by the attorney’s own personal feelings concerning the person, the person’s associates, or the victim, or by the possible effect of the decision on the attorney’s own professional or personal circumstances.’ This provision of the Principles ends with an admonition: ‘Federal prosecutors and agents may never make a decision regarding an investigation or prosecution for the purpose of affecting any election or for the purpose of giving an advantage or disadvantage to any candidate or political party.’ In short, we must treat like cases alike. There is not: One rule for friends and another for foes, one rule for the powerful and another for the powerless, one rule for the rich and another for the poor, one rule for Democrats and another for Republicans. Or different rules, depending on one’s race or ethnicity. To the contrary, we have only one rule. We follow the facts and apply the law in a way that respects the Constitution and protects civil liberties....

“Our norms are a promise that we [DOJ staff] will fiercely protect the independence of this department from political interference in our criminal investigations. Our norms are a promise that we will not allow this department to be used as a political weapon. And our norms are a promise that we will not allow this nation to become a country where law enforcement is treated as an apparatus of politics.” [loud applause]

AG Garland continued: “When I came back to DOJ in 2021, after a particularly difficult period for the department, I said that my mission as Attorney General would be to reaffirm and strengthen those norms as the principles upon which the Department of Justice operates....”

“Over the past three and one-half years, I have seen how the public servants of this department have continued to uphold and strengthen those norms....” Garland marveled at their service and sacrifice, which were often maintained in the face of attacks, verbal and/or violent. Garland strongly stated that his listeners deserve “better” than what they are experiencing—plus “gratitude,” “recognition,” “honor,” and “respect.”

This led AG Merrick Garland to a bold, unqualified proclamation: “You...have my promise that nothing will ever stop me from defending this department...and defending the extraordinary people who work here....”

Garland neared his conclusion: “As we wrote in the preface of the first edition of Principles of Federal Prosecution, ‘Important though these principles are to the proper operation of our federal prosecutorial system, the

“There is not: One rule for friends and another for foes, one rule for the powerful and another for the powerless, one rule for the rich and another for the poor”

success of that system must rely ultimately on the character, integrity, sensitivity, and competence of those men and women who are selected to represent the public interest in the federal criminal justice process. It is with their efforts that the

purposes of these principles will be achieved.’...

“The protection of law, the rule of law, is the foundation of our system of government. Our democracy relies on an independent, law-enforcement agency—the Department of Justice—to ensure those protections.... Protecting the rule of law is the obligation of every generation of public servants at the United States Department of Justice. In this time and place, that responsibility is yours, and it is mine. I know we are up to it. I am grateful to each of you for your commitment to this department, to the norms that sustain it, and to the people we all serve. Thank you.” [The AG’s hand covered his heart, and grand applause followed.] (CBS News, [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...))

Ideals without Accountability

AG Garland spent the majority of his September 12th speech stating and detailing the governmental mission of the United States Department of Justice, and its employees, in these high-sounding terms: to uphold the rule of law within American democracy. Concluding, he declared: “You...have my promise that nothing will ever stop me from defending this department...and defending the extraordinary people who work here....” Again, Mr. Garland promised, he vowed always (that is, without exception), to defend the Department of Justice and its employees.

Think about that. Critically.

What if some of “the Department of Justice and [several of] its employees” behaved in a less than exemplary fashion, to the point of bending or breaking the rule of law? In that case, Mr. Garland should have promised to hold the Department of Justice itself and its employees themselves under the rule of law, to equal treatment under the law. Then Mr. Garland would play an essential role in legally responding to DOJ attorneys or staff members who allegedly betrayed and/or broke the department’s norms and rules. Then Mr. Garland would make sure that DOJ employees, who apparently violate the law, would be pursued, investigated, prosecuted if necessary, and punished if guilty. Also Mr. Garland would legally go after a bureau or an office within DOJ (such as the FBI) that had gone astray and would, by following the rule of law and its processes, bring that group back into line.

Below are situations where employees of the Department of Justice and/or the Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI, which is a part of the DOJ] were recently involved in activities that might have violated the law. There is credible evidence that they:

- *Misbehaved in the Clinton email-server investigation, as determined by Inspector General Horowitz’s 2016 report.
- *Instructed social-media corporations to suppress the New York Post story about the Hunter Biden laptop story just before the 2020 election.
- *Misused the Steele dossier and Fusion GPS opposition research to obtain FISA warrants to surveil a presidential campaign.

*Minimized criticism of the federal government's Covid narrative.

*Neglected threats against the lives of United States Supreme Court nominees and justices.

*De-prioritized dozens of acts of violence committed against pro-life citizens, Roman Catholic churches, and pro-life centers—especially after the *Dobbs* decision was handed down.

*Prosecuted, with extreme aggression, pro-life protesters.

*Treated local-board-of-education protesters as domestic terrorists.

*Treated so-called Radical-Traditionalist Roman Catholics as potential domestic terrorists.

*Participated in so-called lawfare trials of a presidential candidate to weaken the candidate's campaign and lessen the possibility of the candidate's election.

DOJ under Law

Attorney General Merrick Garland rightly and vigorously esteems the rule of law. So do Methodists. So does Lifewatch.

However, Lifewatch's concern is that Attorney General Garland appears insufficiently committed to maintaining the Department of Justice and its employees under that same rule of law. AG Garland should never defend his department or his employees when they step outside, or violate, the rule of law. He must treat them as he would any other citizen who apparently violates the law.

The United States Department of Justice is an imperfect institution. It is led by imperfect appointees and populated with imperfect employees. For exactly those reasons, the Attorney General of the United States, Democrat or Republican, must hold DOJ and all of its employees accountable to the rule of law—without exception. If the United States Attorney General refuses to hold his department accountable, that AG must be reprimanded and/or removed by Congress—or by votes of the American people. (PTS)

An earlier version of this article appeared as a Pastoral Reflection on The Human Life Review website [www.humanlifereview.com]. It was posted on October 29, 2024.♥

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT

•Did your last Annual Conference or General Conference include loud outbursts from individuals in the assembly at usually quiet and respectful times? If so, consider this: "Ours is a childish age.... That is not to say that the matters at stake in both church and world are not deeply serious. But the idioms for addressing them have

become infantile, and the church must resist the temptation to follow the world in this. To seek relevance therefore requires not capitulation to, or emulation of, the infantile, but rather a recapturing of what it means to be an adult. The church must bear witness to a grown-up faith. That means that we need a renewed sense of the holy, the sacred, and the transcendent. And that must start at the top, where it is too often most absent. The X feeds of many of the loudest Christian pastors today indicate little difference from the categories, attitudes, and preoccupations of secular leaders. This is a sad dereliction of duty; of all people, pastors should point heavenward, to where Christ sits and intercedes for his people. That is their calling, as prosaic and limiting as some clearly seem to find it. If Christian leaders are childish, what hope is there for their congregations? For the church to become relevant, it must eschew childish things and recapture her priorities. She is first and foremost the place where Christians worship a holy God who, at great cost delivered us from 'our childish ways' (I Cor. 13:11)."

This hard-hitting comment is from Dr. Carl R. Trueman, a professor of Biblical and religious studies at Grove City College and a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center. ("Lose the Gospel, Return to Childishness," [firstthings.com](https://www.firstthings.com), Web Exclusives, 9.19.24)

•"This...People of God proclaims and bears witness to the Good News of salvation in the different contexts in which it lives and walks. Walking together with all the peoples of the earth, shaped by their cultures and religions, it dialogues with them and accompanies them." This is from the Synod-24's "Working Document" (Paragraph 2) of the Roman Catholic Church. But honestly, it sounds like a United Methodist statement offering up the denomination's current conventional wisdom. Right?

George Weigel, the Roman Catholic lay theologian, responds to Paragraph 2: "Fine. But does [the Church] convert them? [emphasis in the original] Does the Church 'accompany' people indefinitely in whatever direction they happen to be going? Does the Church's evangelical mission include pointing out the direction along which we might 'live and walk' in order to attain eternal life? Does the Church 'dialogue' with the world include challenging and, when necessary, confronting the world about what is death-dealing in its various cultures? (One imagines that, in sixteenth-century Mexico, a Franciscan 'dialogue' with Aztec priests about their liturgical practice of human sacrifice would not have yielded encouraging results, except, perhaps, for enlarging that band of what *Te Deum* [a Latin hymn] calls the 'white-robed army of martyrs.')" ("Where, Oh Where, Are the Life Issues?," "Letters from the Synod—2024: #5," 10.10.24, Web

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Exclusives, <https://firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2024/letters-from-the-synod-2024-5>)

Weigel's comment is spot on—in a Catholic context and for a Methodist setting.

• Sorry about all the attention to the DOJ in this issue....

Eric H. Holder, Jr. was the United States Attorney General at the Department of Justice during most of the Obama Administration (2009-2015). (By the way, he was the first sitting Attorney General to be found in contempt of Congress.) He has written (with Sam Koppelman, who was the “director of surrogate speechwriting on the Biden-Harris campaign”) *Our Unfinished March: A History, A Crisis, A Plan*. The front cover boasts: this book concerns “The Violent Past and Imperiled Future of the Vote.”

The General Board of Church and Society, of The United Methodist Church, must consider this book worthy of promotion and study. An email from Church and Society's Aimee Wong, which your editor received on September 5, 2024, invites people to download a free study guide, call together a group, and use the study guide to dig into the Holder/Koppelman book.

It is no secret that Church and Society has leaned politically leftward for a long, long time. Church and Society's promotion of the Holder/Koppelman book demonstrates and deepens its politicization. This has the feel of partisan-political proselytizing by a United Methodist agency.

Church and Society would be wise, and faithful to the Church and the Gospel, to tone down and walk back its political partisanship. It would be wise, and faithful,

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to receive its marching orders from our Lord—not from a political party.

• “On December 9, 1968, the night [Karl] Barth died, he spoke to [Edward] Thurneysen [his best friend] on the phone....

Thurneysen expressed his concern—and most likely anxiety—about the world's current situation to Barth. The late 1960s were rife with conflict, including the Cold War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. (and the broader civil rights movement), and the Vietnam War. In response to Thurneysen, Barth said ‘Indeed, the world is dark. Still, let us not lose heart! There is still someone who reigns, not just in Moscow or in Washington or in Peking, but from above, from heaven. God is in command. That's why I am not afraid. Let us stay confident even in the darkest moments! Let us not allow our hope to sink, hope for all human beings, for all of the nations of the world! God does not let us fall, not a single one of us and not all of us together! Someone reigns!’ (Eberhard Busch, *Barth in Conversation, Volume 3, 1964-1968* [Westminster John Knox Press, 2019], p. 379)

• *Vulnerari praesidio*. “Protect the most vulnerable.”

• *Magna est veritas, et prevalebit*. “Truth is most powerful, and will ultimately prevail.”♥

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