

## Ethical Issues for 2000 A.D. and Beyond

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I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but in this article I am going to try to play the role of an amateur futurist. I will attempt to project what will be the major ethical issues faced by Christians in particular and American society in general as we approach the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century. The content will be more generic than specific, technical, and scientific. Documentation with statistical material will also be avoided; such matters are available in the sources recommended. This will be more of a sign pointing to potential ethical danger zones than a thorough analysis and prognosis of each issue. An entire book could be written on any one of these topics.

Several books have been written in recent years which attempt to anticipate what life in general and for the church in particular will be like by 2000 A.D. Two of the best are: Russell Chandler, *Racing Toward 2001: The Forces Shaping America's Religious Future* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), and George Barna, *The Frog in the Kettle: What Christians Need to Know About Life in the Year 2000* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990). With less emphasis on religion are: Martin Cetron and Owen Davis, *American Renaissance: Our Life at the Turn of the 21st Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989) and John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene, *Megatrends 2000: Ten New Directions for the 1990's* (New York: Morrow, 1990). However, these books tend to focus on religious and cultural factors, while my article here will focus on ethical issues to be faced in the next ten years.

My target audience is college campus ministers and their various constituencies. Students are already thinking, at least in a preliminary way, about most of these ethical issues. Some are directly involved in them on campus either in a personal way or in classroom discussions. Students think about their future, else why are they in college? They want helpful insight as they anticipate the various ethical crises on the horizon.

This article will offer two things: identification of the ethical issues to be faced at the turn of the century and some recommendations of helpful (hopefully still in print) books for further study. I do not necessarily endorse everything written in these recommended sources, but I am saying that I have found them to be insightful, helpful, and readily available.

Various ethical issues are herein classified under seven general areas:

### I. Issues of Life and Death

Without question, the A.I.D.S. (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) crisis will be humanity's most serious ethical issue at the turn of the century. Millions are already infected with the HIV virus (human immunodeficiency virus) worldwide. This virus destroys a body's immune system so that it cannot fight off infections. Deaths from A.I.D.S. complications will appear out-of-control. It will soon overshadow all other medical problems. It will no longer be simply a homosexual community problem (if it ever was exclusively). It will present both a national and an international crisis. It is the new "Black Plague," but this time affecting the entire world. The financial cost will severely strain national budgets, as well as personal and family budgets. The social and emotional costs will far exceed the financial. The HIV infected will be social pariahs. Think what churches will face regarding HIV infected members and attenders. Already churches are struggling with what to do when an HIV infected infant is brought to the nursery. Public schools have struggled with this considerably during the past decade. For every HIV infected person there will be somewhere between 30-50 friends, work associates, and relatives emotionally impacted with much fear, frustration, and unanswered questions.

I recommend two books dealing with this issue: William M. Tillman, Jr., *AIDS: A Christian Response* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1990), and Gregg R. Albers, M.D., *Counseling and AIDS*, Vol. 24 "Resources for Christian Counseling," Gary R. Collins, ed. (Dallas: Word Publishers, 1990). Tillman is a Christian ethicist and Albers is a Christian physician.

The second largest ethical issue regarding life and death will be hunger and resultant disease. World population will have exceeded six billion by 2000 A.D., and many third-world countries will simply be unable to feed and care for their burgeoning masses. Currently, the major hunger and resultant death crisis is in Somalia where United Nations forces have gone in to stabilize the political crisis and allow food to reach the starving thousands. Similar crises will escalate by 2000 A.D. in several other countries. What will affluent nations and churches do about this?

Southern Baptists already find themselves paralyzed regarding world hunger needs as they disintegrate denominationally over the decade long inerrancy controversy which now has seriously impaired the SBC Foreign Mission Board with the "hostile Fundamentalist takeover." Consequently, SBC world hunger offerings have been decreasing recently.

An excellent treatment of this issue is Robert Parham's *What Shall We Do in a Hungry World?* (Birmingham: New Hope Publishers, 1990). New Hope is the publishing arm of the SBC WMU.

The third most serious ethical issue in this area will be bio-medical research. Several types of research will present ethical concerns in carrying them out: genetic engineering, the use of fetal tissue (particularly that of aborted fetuses),

organ transplants (who gets the limited supply?), and artificial insemination for a heretofore infertile couple. The latter will be an ethical issue regarding the use of a donor's sperm not belonging to the woman's husband. The Roman Catholic Church is already fighting this practice vigorously, claiming it is tantamount to adultery. Doubtlessly, there will be other ethical issues in bio-medical research which we simply do not currently have information about which to anticipate.

A helpful resource dealing with several bio-medical research issues is *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, edited by James F. Childress and John Macquarrie (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986). Start with the article on "Bioethics" (p. 61) and notice related articles listed there.

The fourth major issue of life and death I foresee for the future is that of euthanasia (the good or gentle death). One medical doctor has already received nation-wide publicity over his "death machine" which allows the terminal patient to assist in his/her own death. In Great Britain a manual on how to carry out euthanasia has been in circulation for years. The medical profession is pulled in one direction (to save or prolong lives at all costs and avoid potential lawsuits) while the terminally ill and their family members are pulled in another.

Many people are now preparing "living wills" regarding the eventuality of their having a terminal illness, leaving instructions on what is to be done under certain terminal circumstances. As more people are living longer there are greater numbers of people who will face the possibility of considering euthanasia, especially when the war over painful cancer conditions and A.I.D.S. complications is not being effectively won in the medical world. The question is, Does a person in great pain with a terminal illness have a right to die with dignity and actively choose to do so? And what about the person who is beyond the mental ability to give his/her consent?

For a brief yet helpful discussion on euthanasia see the article in the *Westminster Dictionary* cited above. Also read Lewis B. Smedes, *Mere Morality: What God Expects of Ordinary People* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), pp. 145-154.

The fifth ethical issue for the next century will be abortion. Some may be wondering why I have not listed this earlier. As heated as the debate has been since *Roe v. Wade*, especially during the late 80's and early 90's, the issue of abortion is waning as an all-consuming issue as the nation moves from a radical right wing stance under the Reagan-Bush administrations (heavily influenced by the national ultra-conservative mood swing) to a more moderate stance with the election of Bill Clinton. The country simply isn't buying into the Fundamentalists and Right-to-Life anti-abortion arguments. Freedom of choice is emerging as the new prevailing mood.

However, the debate will continue even though not as a top national priority. Most women of child bearing age will continue to fight for their right to control what happens to their bodies. The "abortion pill" [RU-486] and other

non-surgical abortion procedures will be common. At this writing it is expected to be approved for use in the U.S. in 1993. Anti-abortion groups will continue to fight for some forms of restrictions (e.g., parental consent for teens; a time waiting period involving counseling regarding alternatives, etc.). The courts will not uphold these and *Roe v. Wade* will remain intact as the law of the land.

Another new direction to be expected regarding abortion will be greater efforts at preventing unwanted pregnancies (that which drives the engine of abortion in the first place). Denominations with a future will give greater emphasis on theologically based Christian sex education in home and church. It is said (and may prove to be their Achilles heel) that many in the anti-abortion movement have given about 95% of their energies to opposing abortion and only about 5% to preventing unwanted pregnancies. When will Evangelicals learn that it is better to build strong fences at the top of the cliff than to run ambulanceservices at the bottom? Also, is one really "pro-life" when very little is done for the mother and unwanted infant after birth? Such inconsistency might better be called "pro-birth" rather than "pro-life." At least many "pro-life" groups say and do very little for mother and child after birth. The debate will go on, but most young adults will oppose any national ban on abortion.

The best ethical discussion of abortion may be found in Lewis B. Smedes, *Mere Morality: What God Expects from Ordinary People* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), pp. 124-145. Additional help may be found in C. Everett Koop, M.D. and Timothy Johnson, M.D., *Let's Talk: An Honest Conversation on Critical Issues: Abortion, Euthanasia, AIDS, and Health Care* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

## II. Issues of Human Sexuality

On the horizon I see several ethical issues in the area of human sexuality. Numerous gender issues will continue to consume much time and energy, especially among the more conservative church groups. Men do not easily give up positions of power and control over women. The next generation of religious leaders will see the struggle over gender power as one that has more to do with masculine insecurity and uncertainty than a simple hermeneutical battle over what the Bible really teaches regarding male and female leadership roles in home and church. An increasing number of churches will recognize and accept women for ordination to the ministry and deaconate. However, this will be nothing new since such a pattern of acceptance developed in the nineteenth century only to be squelched in the early twentieth century by ultra-conservatives. Biblical scholarship has opened up a new reading of Scripture that reveals that both Jesus and the early Church were the first Christian feminists.

In a more specific area, teenage pregnancies will continue to be a major moral concern by 2000 A.D. The number of unwed mothers will continue to escalate toward epidemic proportions, and this problem will cut across all

racial, ethnic, and economic lines. Both public and private schools will be relating to two categories of female students: the pregnant and the soon to be pregnant. The question of sex education in the school systems will be a major area of parental debate. Conservative churches' call for abstinence among teens will generally fall on deafened ears in the public schools. The great majority of teens will be sexually active outside of marriage.

Consequently, the issue of birth control will be much debated. Educators, parents, politicians, and religious leaders will be caught up in the question of how to prevent the spread of the HIV virus and other sexually transmitted diseases. The distribution of condoms will become the norm among most mid- and senior high schools, especially in the larger urban school systems, but in time this practice will filter down to smaller towns and rural areas. The real battle between homes, schools, and churches will be over the type of sex education to be offered in the schools. To what degree will moral values be inserted (and whose values)? How do we separate moral values from religious teachings? The separation of church and state issue gets involved here. There will be no simple or easy answers.

Sexual crimes will be another major area of debate and action. Homosexuality will have been completely de-criminalized in all states, and the "Gay Community" will be a major political and economic force in society. There will be a significant "sexual war" by the turn of the century between the "Straights" and the "Gays." What form this war will take is anyone's guess. A lot of physical, economic, emotional, and relational harm will be done. A big question will be, How will these two opposing categories learn to live together in harmony in a pluralistic society? Most churches will continue to reject and condemn the homosexual lifestyle. A minority of congregations will be tolerant.

Among the more serious sexual crimes that will continue to increase will be child sexual abuse, including incest. This has already reached epidemic proportions in our society. It is going to get worse as the population increases, the influence of the churches wanes, the economy falters, and as moral values become blurred and family life fragments. Related to this issue is the growing pornography business: Americans spend millions of dollars each year on it, and they will continue to do so in a relatively free society. The moral and behavioral effects of pornography will continue to be debated, but as long as there is big money in its sales and people demand it, it will flourish.

Rape will continue to be a major sexual crime. Because it is an expression of violence by people who come from dysfunctional family upbringing, the reduction of this crime will be a growing problem due to continuing family breakdown. The entire socialization process in the family is the crux of the rape crisis. Family life education and stabilization contain the only ultimate hope to alleviate this problem. Tougher laws dealing with rape calling for more severe penalties will only slightly deter rage-filled men from rape.

The best book dealing with issues of human sexuality is *Sexual Ethics: A*

*Biblical Perspective* by Christian theologian and ethicist Stanley Grenz (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990).

### III. Marriage and Family Life Issues

Closely related to issues of human sexuality is a cluster of marriage and family life issues that will be hotly debated into the next century. Among the churches the issues of divorce and remarriage will be at the forefront. The divorce rate will continue to be high as will the remarriage rate. However, new breakthroughs in biblical scholarship along with a growing number of seminary trained pastors will encourage churches to be more compassionate and accepting of the divorced and remarried. Even divorced and remarried pastors will be more common than today.

Ultra-conservative churches with their traditional intolerance of the divorced and remarried will rapidly find themselves cut off from large segments of society. These wounded persons and families will not attend churches with no compassion for their situation and status. Churches that will be able to reach the masses will have developed an openness, an understanding, and an acceptance of these wounded persons. Their theology will be more grace-oriented than law-oriented.

Unfortunately, some of the best books on divorce and remarriage published in the past decade are out-of-print. One of the best is E. Earl Joiner, *A Christian Considers Divorce and Remarriage* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1983).

Another family life issue of the future will be cohabitation by the unmarried. Several million Americans will be living together "without benefit of clergy" at the turn of the century. This trend has been developing rapidly since the 1960's and will continue to be a life-style chosen by the hesitant who question their ability to maintain a commitment and who wish to avoid the pain they observed in their divorced parents and friends. The big question will be, How will the churches respond to these millions of unmarried cohabitants? Evangelism will probably prevail over moral convictions since the intolerant will never reach them.

Blended families will be competing for the norm in American society by 2000 A.D. due to the large numbers of marriages that end in divorce and the resultant remarriages for most of them. The growing churches will be those who accept the blended families and specifically plan a ministry for their special needs. Blended families will not attend churches that convey the idea that the "normal" family is a never divorced father and mother, and a couple of children of their own, while all other family arrangements are "abnormal" and unacceptable.

Consequently, definitions of the family will be an area of much continued debate in the near future. What is a family? The answers that will be constructively accepted will be formulated by churches that are flexible, compassionate, and tolerant of the differing experiences of people. A plural-

ism of family lifestyles will be the wave of the future. A major crisis for evangelical churches will be the trend toward homosexual families as one alternative life-style, a trend this writer decries. Such families will inevitably destabilize the development of human personalities from a biblical perspective. Some public schools are already teaching children that homosexuality is an acceptable life-style (it is just "different"). How will churches respond?

Family violence will continue to be a major social problem, probably getting worse than it is today. This is the most threatening aspect of family life in America today. Abusers in families tend to produce abusers in future families. This problem appears to be escalating as we approach 2000 A.D.

From a numbers perspective, ethical issues of aging will be among the most prominently discussed issues of the future. The population above 65 is rapidly expanding. The problem is not that people are living longer, but that more people are living longer and with better health. This is due to better health care, new developments in medical research, and better nutrition for most Americans. A national health care insurance program for all citizens will be in effect by 2000 A.D. and this will also boost the numbers of active senior adults in our society. The big questions will be, What will be the quality of life for these large numbers of aged persons? And, how will the church respond?

A very helpful book dealing with family life is *The Church's Ministry with Families* by Diane S. Richmond Garland and Diane L. Pancoast (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990). The content and thrust of this book will be useful for many years to come.

#### IV. Business and Professional Ethics

In recent years there has been growing concern regarding business and professional ethics. Corporate leaders and C.E.O.s in all levels of business appear constantly frustrated over stealing within their ranks by employees. The Saving & Loan scandals of the late 1980's were but the tip of the iceberg of corporate thievery. Junk bond scandals, computer thievery, contractors stealing from the government by overcharges and inferior materials, Wall Street "insider" trading in violation of federal laws, kick-backs by builders to those "with influence," accountants who "juggle the books" to take a haul for themselves, the selling of non-existent items to buyers, exorbitant fees by physicians and attorneys for work either not done or poorly done, builders using inferior, even dangerous materials in construction work that may be coupled with shoddy work that even building inspectors miss, taking bankruptcy in order to escape paying money owed with no intention of ever paying it back, taking sick leave when one isn't really sick, these are but a few examples of breaking the Eighth Commandment in the business and professional world.

Stealing from "the company" is not the only ethical problem in the commercial world. There is often gross mistreatment of one's employees and fellow workers: e.g., undercutting someone by lies and negative innuendoes



to step over him/her in order to get a promotion for oneself, refusing to provide adequate health insurance for one's employees, penalizing a woman employee who stops work to have a baby by giving her job to another before she can return to work, etc.

By the end of this century a growing number of businesses and corporations, including government agencies, will sponsor regular seminars on business and professional ethics especially for new employees. Executives will be required to attend also. This will be a vital part of their continuing education. Schools of medicine and law will be putting more emphasis on the ethics of their professions, especially since some of the ethical issues they face will become more and more matters of life and death.

Honesty will be recognized at the turn of the century as an absolute necessity for a stable economy in our society. Fairness will be a major expectancy in the work place if workers are to be at their best in production and sales. Those who produce or use inferior products in manufacturing and construction will find themselves put out of business by their superior competitors. Shoddy service will prove to be a "kiss of death" for sloppy companies since the public will be more informed about such careless and inferior work. Workers will be told to either "do your best work" or "find yourself another job."

Finally, greed will become a vice that must be avoided at all costs simply because "it's bad for business," primarily because consumers will be better informed as to their choices. Customers will be avoiding business and professional persons when they know they are being "ripped off." Representatives of the media will more and more become the watch-dogs of the commercial and professional world.

A helpful treatment of this subject is Karen Lebacqz, *Professional Ethics: Power and Paradox* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985). Also, check your local college library for issues of the journal *Business and Professional Ethics*. Additional help may be found in A. Pablo Iannone, editor, *Contemporary Moral Controversies in Business* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

## V. Economic Issues

A related area to that of business and professional ethics is that of economic issues. There are many of these, but the two that will be the largest areas of debate by the year 2000 A.D. are: the crisis of wealth vs. poverty and the issue of health care for all citizens.

Ever since Michael Harrington's *The Other America* was published in the 1960's that exposed the hidden dimension of severe poverty in the U.S., the poor continue to be a major concern of our national leaders. It was the stagnant economy that was the major issue in the 1992 presidential campaign. The administration of Bill Clinton will either make or break itself over the promises to change the direction of the economy. Already Mr. Clinton is moving quickly to keep his campaign pledges to do something constructive about this issue.



By the end of this century there will still be 20% of Americans struggling to make ends meet hoping to have the bare essentials of food, clothing, and shelter.

The indifference and lack of action on the part of wealthy Americans could easily spell the end of the Republican Party, at least as we knew it under Reagan and Bush, by 2000 A.D. Just as the Democratic Party had to change its image to get Bill Clinton elected in '92, so the Republican Party will have to change its image to get back in power, simply because too many Americans will have grown tired of being "on the edge" economically.

A related problem will be health care since it is so expensive with all of the advancements of medical science and the greed of many in the medical profession. By 2000 A.D. the Clinton Administration will have worked with Congress to provide a national health insurance program that will cover all Americans. The unanswered question will be how the nation will be able to pay for this. The wealthy will be pressured to help pay a greater portion of the bill.

The mental and physical sickness of the "street people" or homeless will continue to be a major problem simply because of the growing numbers of such persons. Since a large number of these people are inflicted with some form of mental illness, the mental health field will become more important than ever before. State and Federal governments will be called upon to deal with the homeless in a more constructive way. Churches will become more involved in caring for these people.

Closely related to the poor and homeless are the problems of alcohol and drug abuse, which, of course, affect all levels of society. The extent of alcohol and drug abuse will continue unabated by the turn of the century. There is simply so much money involved here that no religious or political institutions will be able to stem the tide. These abuses will remain a curse upon our society. Just as prostitution will always be with us, so will alcohol and drug abuse. However, poverty is the social soil in which these vices tend to grow.

Ethical issues related to crime and victimization are actually expressions of economic issues. Criminals tend to be persons who are poorly educated and untrained to hold their own economically. The crime rate will continue to be high in the U.S. at the turn of the century because so many Americans are school dropouts or were poorly educated for future jobs. The "new poor" will be the computer illiterates, and they will be a major pool out of which tomorrow's criminals will come.

The reader will find the following insightful: Conrad Boerma, *The Rich, the Poor—and the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), Bruce C. Burch and Larry L. Rasmussen, *Predicament of the Prosperous* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), and dealing with the homeless there is Carl R. Resener, *Crisis in the Streets* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988).

## VI. Political Issues

There will be many political issues as we enter the next century, but from an ethical perspective I foresee three areas of major concern still plaguing us then. The first is racism and discrimination, including religious discrimination. Even in the "new" Germany, after their tragic history with Nazism, there continues to flourish a hateful racism. Black and white relations, Anglo and Hispanic relations, Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish relations, and Christian, Jewish, Muslim relations will continue to be serious problems.

The real test of democracy in the U.S. will be the test of pluralism, including racial, cultural, and religious. It is sad to say that government (through new laws and the model provided in the military) will be a greater force for change toward more harmonious relations between different groups in society than the church will be by 2000 A.D. A disturbing book on racism is William Pannell, *The Coming Race Wars* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic Books, 1993).

Extremism will be the second political issue of the future. Extremists from far Left to far Right will continue to prevail and preach their messages of hate and exclusivity. Although the Religious Right will continue to be a vocal force in the U.S., they will gradually wane in their influence. If they could not stop the election of Bill Clinton, they are probably becoming a rude hangover of the faltering religious Fundamentalism in our society. Fundamentalists get their steam from fighting the future, and this will spell their demise in time. The future always wins. Communism (the far Left) is already dead, so it will only be in the history books by 2000 A.D. (Today there are more communists on the faculty of Harvard University than there are east of the Elbe river, to quote columnist George Will.)

Extremism in the Southern Baptist Convention will in time ring its death knell. A new generation of pastors and lay leaders will rise within the ranks of the churches and reject Fundamentalist power politics along with its lust for position and greed for money. But the SBC as a bureaucracy will want in influence and eventually go the way of Pedo-Baptist and Hard-Shell Baptists, caught in the stagnant waters of the past, as a new generation of evangelical Christians passes them by. A new force of missionary zeal will emerge outside the ranks of the SBC structure when the new generation of Baptists realizes that Fundamentalism is neither historically Baptist nor missionary but is interested only in controlling people and institutions. Denominationalism per se (at least as we have known it in most of the present century) could easily become a thing of the past by the early years of the twenty-first century.

This topic is well covered by Lloyd J. Averill, *Religious Right, Religious Wrong: A Critique of the Fundamentalist Phenomenon* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989). A fine sociological and historical treatment is given by Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987). Ammerman is an active Southern Baptist teaching at Emory University.

The third major political issue of the future will be the on-going debate of church and state separation. Already, most Fundamentalist leaders in the SBC have shown they really do not believe in the principle of the separation of church and state. Many Southern Baptist leaders as well as non-Baptists of the New Religious Right, will continue to use the political arena in their attempts to transform society, something the older Fundamentalists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries accused the Social Gospel Liberals of doing in their day. A superb treatment of this topic is by Robert Maddox, *Separation of Church and State: Guarantor of Religious Freedom* (New York: Crossroad, 1987). Maddox is a Southern Baptist who was once Jimmy Carter's pastor in Georgia, then White House religion liaison aide to president Carter, and until recently the director of Americans United for the Separation of the Church and State. Readers are also advised to subscribe to *Report From the Capitol* (Washington, D.C.), the monthly publication of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

An issue which is both political and economic is that of gambling. It appears that gambling in all forms will be widely approved in our highly secular and materialistic society by 2000 A.D. State governments will be so desperate for tax revenues that they will acquiesce and legalize (with some restrictions) the lottery as the major form of gambling in most states. A smaller number of states will approve of parimutuel gambling. Gambling cities (e.g., Las Vegas) will be limited to only a few for purposes of control. Gambling will be an on-going debate in both church and legislature because of the economic harm done especially to low-income families and persons who become addicted to gambling. The politicians will find themselves in a catch-22 situation; i.e., legalized gambling will be both economically appealing (tax revenues) and damaging (family disintegration and resulting higher welfare costs and crime escalation).

A helpful treatment of gambling is by Southern Baptist attorney-ethicist-educator Larry Braidfoot, *Gambling* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1985).

## VII. Professional Ministry Ethics

The last two decades of the twentieth century have seen a rash of moral failures by numerous prominent television evangelists and pastoral leaders in local churches. Even today, many still ask, Who will be next? Most of these moral failures involved either sexual immorality or monetary scandal or both. This will continue to be a major problem for the church directly and for society indirectly. On-going stress, materialism, the attitude of some ministers who believe that they "live above the law," and the spiritual failure of weak ethical character will guarantee this to be a major problem in 2000 A.D. There seems to be no let-up in preacher failures during the 90's.

This will be seen largely as a failure to require integrity as a qualification for ordination and continued service. Many of our largest seminaries do not

require any courses in clergy ethics with emphasis on character and integrity. For a period of over 30 years the largest theological seminary in the world did not teach a course directly dealing with this topic. This writer re-instituted this long neglected course in 1990 at Southwestern Seminary, but it could only be an elective in an already crowded curriculum.

Sexuality issues for clergy will continue to be a major concern for many years to come. Many preachers will continue to "shoot themselves in the foot" with indiscreet involvement with women in the congregation.

Another serious ethical concern for ministers in the future will be their role identity: they will tend to be "preachers" but not "pastors." Even now several large churches have called men who have neither pastoral experience nor theological training but who can entertain the people in the pulpit. They do not have a pastor's heart, so they delegate this task to their associates. Such churches are being cheated by such shoddy leadership.

Similarly, more and more ministers especially in the "super churches" are falling into the trap of authoritarianism. They are like the monarchical bishops of the Middle Ages in Europe. They are more like C.E.O.s than shepherds of a congregation. Again, these churches are being cheated by the lack of a shepherd from the biblical perspective. This will continue to be a major trend for some years ahead. Many pastors of smaller churches will seek to emulate this style since the "super church" pastors continue to serve as their models. This style of leadership is driven by unholy ambition and the lust for power. 2000 A.D. will see more of this, especially where Fundamentalism prevails in the churches. Spiritually stifling denominational manipulative power politics of the 1980's and 90's offers a vivid example of this style of leadership, especially seen in the Southern Baptist Convention. However, this could prove to be the path to denominational self-destruction by the early years of the twenty-first century. Christian laymen will grow very sick of this and will revolt with their check books.

On the topic of clergy ethics, see Walter E. Wiest and Elkwyn A. Smith, *Ethics in Ministry: A Guide for the Professional* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990). See also Gaylord Noyce, *Pastoral Ethics: Professional Responsibilities of the Clergy* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988).

### Conclusion

Ethical issues will be among the hot topics of concern as we approach the twenty-first century. The future stability of human society depends upon the moral convictions of its people. Every academic subject taught in the university ought to include an intensive study of the ethical implications and responsibilities of that subject. This is what makes and keeps us human.

Christians especially have a unique responsibility to be intellectually informed regarding the ethics of the Bible and the resultant applications of those teachings to contemporary life, which is the subject of Christian ethics.

Therefore, Christian ethics will be the most crucial topic confronted by the church and society as we enter the twenty-first century. Without a solid grasp of Christian ethics in belief and practice, the church will have no credibility, and with no credibility there will be little if any future for the church, at least from a biblical perspective.

The following works cover several ethical issues dealt with in the above discussion: William M. Tillman, Jr., Editor, *Understanding Christian Ethics: An Interpretive Approach* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1988), Paul D. Simmons, editor, *Issues in Christian Ethics* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980), and John Stott, *Involvement* Vol. II, *Social and Sexual Relationships in the Modern World* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1985), especially Stott's chapter 3 on race, chapter 4 on poverty and chapter 6 on marriage and divorce.