

11
65

THE Christian Century

April 7, 1993
\$1.75

The human web

Reflections on pastoral care

by Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore

NEWSPAPER

76221 FEB94 P 1
1AA6337
UNIV OF CALIFORNIA
SERIAL LIBRARY

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA BARBARA
MAY 11 1993
LIBRARY



**Suicide among
Jews and Christians**
by James T. Clemons

**Clergy at the
White House**
by James M. Wall

**Shareholders
and corporations**
by David E. Provost

COMMENT & REPORTS

- A visit to the White House** 355
James M. Wall: Meeting with Clinton
- Corporate responsibility** 356
David E. Provost: A challenge to "ordinary business"
- The church in a ditch** 358
William E. Wallace: Making connections

FEATURES

- The human web:
Reflections on the state of pastoral theology** 366
Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore: New perspectives on care
- The shape of a noble death:
Suicide among Jews and Christians** 369
James T. Clemons: What the ancients thought
- Keeping pace with the code of codes** 373
Walter H. Capps: A question of genes

DEPARTMENTS

- News** 359
Sudan—the next Somalia? &c.
(Reports from Religious News Service and CENTURY sources)
- Poetry** 365, 374
*Irene Zimmerman, William North, Graham Kings,
Kathy Coffey, Paul Willis, William Jolliff*
- Books** 376
Messianic economics, &c.
- Letters** 380
Christian Science, &c.
- M.E.M.O** 383
Fleeting fame

We regret that the Living by the Word column does not appear in this issue.
The series will resume next week.

Cover drawing by Diane Johnson

THE Christian Century

An Ecumenical Weekly

Editor

James M. Wall

Senior Editors

Martin E. Marty **Dean Peerman**

Managing Editor

David Heim

Assistant Editors

Victoria A. Rebeck **Mark R. Halpern**
Gretchen E. Ziegenhals **Donald B. Owsen**

Manager, Administrative Services

Tom Dean

Advertising Manager

Ann James

Production Coordinator

Matthew Giunti

Production Associates

Dale Hasenick **Joy Urban**

Editorial Assistant

Laura J. MacLean

Administrative Assistant

Douglas Morgan

Contributing Editor

Alan Geyer

Editors at Large

Jill P. Baumgaertner **Edith L. Blumberg**
Robert McAfee Brown **Rebecca S. Chopp**
William F. Fore **Ronald Goetz**
Belden C. Lane **Janet Karsten Laska**
Robin W. Lovin **Jean Caffey Lyles**
Cornish R. Rogers **Lamin Sanneh**
Max L. Stackhouse **Betty Thompson**
David Tracy **Margaret D. Wilde**
Preston N. Williams **William H. Williams**
Ralph C. Wood

Established 1884. Renamed the CHRISTIAN CENTURY in 1900. Refounded 1908 by Charles Clayton Morrison. Editors: Charles Clayton Morrison (1908-47); Paul Harbo (1947-55); Harold E. Fey (1956-64); Kyle H. Rasmussen (1964-68); Alan Geyer (1968-72).

Printed in Chicago on March 30, 1993. Copyright © 1993 by the Christian Century Foundation. All rights reserved. Registered under the International Copyright Union, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Pan-American Copyright Convention.

The CHRISTIAN CENTURY (ISSN 0009-5281) is published weekly—except biweekly the first two weeks of January and February, the last two weeks of March, the last third week of May through September, and the last two weeks of November and December—by the Christian Century Foundation, 407 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, IL 60605; (312) 427-5380. Second-class postage paid at Chicago, IL and additional mailing offices. Subscription price: \$32 per year, add \$75 for airmail delivery. Send subscription orders and notice of address change to The Christian Century Subscription Services, 407 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, IL 60605-1150. Phone (312) 427-5380.

The CENTURY is indexed in the Readers' Guide to Periodicals, the Guide to Social Science and Religion in Periodicals Literature, Book reviews are indexed in Book Review Digest, Book Review Index; media reviews are indexed in the Review Digest; poems are indexed in Index of American Periodical Verse. An index is published in the final issue of June and December.

That Droge and Tabor are aware of the significance of their work for the current discussion of suicide is clear from their opening paragraphs in which they refer to Dr. Jack Kevorkian's development and use of his "suicide machine." They also note the widening scope and intensity of the debates on suicide over the past 20 years. From the early days of sociology in the late 19th century, and of psychology in the early 20th, most of the discussion of suicide has followed the guidelines laid down by medical and other professional personnel. As the exchanges have heated up and expanded, the apparent precision of the language used to speak about suicide has lost its sharpness. Current vague uses of the terms "right to die" (usually reserved more strictly for those in

extreme circumstances and often without the means to help themselves) and "rational suicide" (implying that all self-chosen deaths are irrational) not only reflect a broader participation in the scope and substance of the debates on suicide, but unfortunately perpetuate confusions and prejudices.

Questions of right and wrong can hardly be discussed without a clear understanding of the "initial presumptions" we bring to the discussion, including their historical basis and their historical development. The more embedded our ethical traditions, especially those as complex as the traditions behind suicide, the more they must be interpreted with a hermeneutic of suspicion. In that respect also, *A Noble Death* serves us well. ■

Keeping pace with the code of codes

by Walter H. Capps

The Code of Codes: Scientific and Social Issues in the Human Genome Project.

Edited by Daniel J. Kevles and Leroy Hood. Harvard University Press, 384 pp., \$29.95.

THEOLOGICALS OFTEN debate issues of personal freedom and human capacities. For example, do human beings have the ability to choose to believe? Most catechisms attest that some human beings receive or experience salvation, but not all do. Is the difference a matter of individual choice, or is a deterministic force at work? And how does one account for the fact that some people appear to have a larger propensity for religious belief and devotion than others? Is being religious like being intelligent, sensitive or musical? "God must simply have thrown darts," an abbot once told me when trying to explain why some are drawn to the monastery and others are not. It isn't that the others do not have the chance (though this may be true too) but rather that they are not so inclined.

Until a few years ago, it was possible to explore most of these issues in a thoroughly speculative manner. Now all aspects of the debate must be re-examined in light of the Human Genome Project and its attempt to identify the "code of codes" by means of which genetic identity can be discerned. The project was launched in 1988 and is intended to be a long-term venture. But already scientists have been publishing preliminary reports of findings. The startling likelihood is that if the genetic structure is discernible it must also be alterable, and if alterable it can be corrected and directed toward previously inconceivable human achievement.

Such issues are explicitly addressed in these essays col-

lected by Daniel J. Kevles and Leroy Hood. The majority of the essays were first delivered as lectures at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena (where both Kevles and Hood teach) during the 1989-90 academic year. The editors recognize the highly controversial nature of their subject, and they ask that readers resist science-fiction style speculation. Moreover, they affirm that the most compelling and durable implications of the project require tutored and shared judgments between scientists and practitioners of the humanities.

Kevles, a professor of the humanities himself, provides a history of the project from its birth in the science of eugenics. His survey includes a discussion of the work of Nazi SS doctors and the 1927 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Buck v. Bell*, which affirmed sterilization in the case of three generations of developmentally disabled individuals. Kevles documents the growth of predictive (and not simply preventive) medicine whose primary purpose is "to protect individuals from the kinds of illnesses to which they are genetically most vulnerable." Such protection sometimes requires preventing the transmission of genetic susceptibilities to succeeding generations.

Hood in his essay examines the relatively new field of biotechnology, which involves interdisciplinary cooperation between molecular biology and computer science. Biotechnology aims to improve both the diagnostic and therapeutic capacities of medicine. The former is achieved through identifying genes that predispose individuals to disease. The latter involves the circumvention of

Walter H. Capps is professor of religious studies at the University of California in Santa Barbara.

the limitations of defective genes (by manipulating the immune system, for example), new techniques in molecular pharmacology, environmental factors and, in the future, the substitution of good genes for defective ones.

Along with Kevles's and Hood's essays is an impressive assortment of chapters by scholars and authorities who approach the subject from virtually all relevant perspectives. Most of the authors—including Eric S. Lander, director of MIT's Center for Genome Research, and James Watson, director of the NIH genome project—are directly involved in genome project research, having been primarily trained

as biochemists or molecular geneticists. Others offering insights and judgments include Henry T. Greely, a health-law policy specialist, and Evelyn Fox Keller, a historian and philosopher of science. Kevles and Hood provide in the concluding essay an outline summarizing the proposals of these expert witnesses under the simple title "Reflections."

The essays themselves include responses to the charge that the project is merely speculative and is draining precious resources (financial and technological) away from useful endeavors, and also careful forecasts of the project's development. The authors and editors want to downplay fan-

ciful extensions of the project and judge it on the basis of what it is best able to do—produce an abundance of genetic information. Alzheimer's disease, Huntington's chorea, muscular dystrophy and cystic fibrosis involve specific and identifiable genetic defects. Manic depression and schizophrenia most likely carry specific genetic predispositions. And there is some arresting evidence that susceptibility to coronary disease, high blood pressure, arthritis and allergic reactions is triggered genetically. Establishing such links is crucial for devising and prescribing effective treatment.

But this last move raises difficult questions. For instance, if genetic sus-

Announcing 1993-1994



Phil Parshall
Fall 1993



Andrew Ross
Spring 1994

Senior Mission Scholars in Residence

Pictured above are two of the many good reasons why you will profit from your time at Overseas Ministries Study Center in 1993-1994. In addition to sharing in the leadership of OMSC's Study Program, Phil Parshall and Andrew Ross will offer personal consultation and tutorial assistance. Phil Parshall, with SIM International, has had many years of service in Bangladesh and the Philippines. He is known for his work in contextualization of the Gospel among Muslims. Andrew Ross, University of Edinburgh, is a former Presbyterian missionary in East Africa. These senior colleagues in mission have each written and taught extensively in their respective fields of mission.

Overseas Ministries Study Center
490 Prospect St., New Haven, CT 06511
Tel: (203) 624-6672 Fax: (203) 865-2857

Senior Scholars, Fall 1994: Drs. Ted Ward and Marc Spindler

The theologian talks baseball

for John Yeatts

Tar-rag and rosin
stigmata hands nailed

beneath his head,
wingtips crossed, dug-in

to the coffee table,
strained and tired

red and blue
eyes bending

absolutely heavenward,
trades and plays and figures

fly from his mouth
like sky shots cracking

for outfield practice—
lost in the lights.

William Jollif

ceptibility is known in advance, should such information be made available to potential employers? While this information might contribute toward the employee's being placed in the most appropriate position or line of work, the same information could also be used to discriminate against the employee. A subsequent question: since genetic identification can be known only through genetic testing, should such testing be voluntary or involuntary? Does society have the right to know the genetic makeup of each of its citizens? Mandatory genetic testing might violate human rights and individual freedom. On the other hand, since some people's genetic profiles place others at risk, such information might help the otherwise unsuspecting to avoid or mitigate such risk. Who would be responsible for regulating and monitoring genetic testing? If it is the government, then the Big Brother fears of George Orwell's *1984* will have surely come to pass. That is, if there is a national regulatory agency for all genetic testing, this agency would have more threatening information at its disposal than has ever been assembled by the FBI or the KGB.

THE IMPLICATIONS for life and health insurance are equally serious. Can insurance companies insist on knowing genetic identification before providing insurance? If the answer is No, then can insurance companies initiate litigation against those they have insured who, either deliberately or passively, have withheld vital genetic information? Or if the answer is Yes, do insurance companies then have the right to refuse to insure in cases where known risks are exceedingly high? Perhaps in the future only the genetically sound will have access to full insurance.

Another large set of questions focuses on reproductive choice. To what extent should genetic predispositions be a factor in choosing a mate or having children? Should two individuals who know that their combined genetic identities will adversely affect their offspring have unlimited freedom to make reproductive choices, or should they be encouraged (and by whom?) to consider alternatives? But wouldn't reproduction undertaken for offspring advantage invite all of the perils of a "eugenics mentality"? And such pre-knowledge accompanied by permissions, warrants and sanctions could create a hostile living environment.

The shifts and adjustments we must make in imagining and evaluating the Human Genome Project are monumental. The invention of the computer was made possible by mastering the thinking process and transferring these sequences from

the brain to technological instruments. The genome project takes such corroboration a significant step further. Not only is thinking committed to definitive modalities, but so also is the entire range of behavioral patterns and psychological traits. That is, via genetic identification the secrets of behavior and emotion are technologically accessible, and their consequences can be halted or redirected.

There are several theological responses to these issues. We can argue that such developments remain in the human realm, not the divine. That is, God's ways and ours are too distinct to be challenged by any increase in our knowledge of human makeup and behavior. Another theological response, however, is to view the project as part of our continuing disobedience to God. Humans have once again partaken of a forbidden fruit that deceptively promises knowledge. Or, alternatively, we can affirm that whatever we learn about our genetic makeup will only increase our respect for creation and the Creator.

Fundamental paradoxes surface in any theological reflection on the project. The discovery of a code of codes would seem to reinforce the powers of determinism, yet the same knowledge works to increase and encourage human freedom, creativity and responsibility. We are not yet in a position to fathom the outcome of genetic research. But it is already clear that the project presents extraordinary moral challenges as well as exciting and sobering prospects for theological understanding. ■

CALL FOR PAPERS

Messiah College (Grantham, PA) has received a grant from the Louisville Institute for the Study of Protestantism and American Culture to fund the project, *"Re-Forming the Center: Beyond the Two Party System of American Protestantism."* As part of this project, Messiah College will host a public conference: *"Reclaiming a Non-Partisan History of American Protestantism, 1900-1960."* Papers are currently being solicited that will re-examine the idea that American Protestantism in these years can accurately be described in terms of a "two-party system" (i.e., fundamentalists vs. modernists, or evangelicals vs. mainline), and that will consider the possibility that many Protestants occupied a ground that existed between and/or outside the so-called two parties.

The conference will be held at Messiah College, June 2-5, 1994. **Deadline for receipt of paper proposals is October 1, 1993.** Successful applicants will receive airfare to and from the conference, room and board, and a stipend of \$850.

Project directors are William Vance Trollinger, Jr., History Department, Messiah College; and, Douglas Jacobsen, Biblical and Religious Studies Department, Messiah College, Grantham, PA (17027). Direct all inquiries to Trollinger. (717)766-2511. Fax (717) 691-6002. E-mail: btrollin@mcis.messiah.edu