



# Paul B. Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity and Politics

www.calvin.edu/henry -- 616.526.6870 -- email: henry@calvin.edu

## Religious Voters in the 2008 Presidential Election

A new survey by the Paul Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity and Politics at Calvin College, funded by the Lynne and Harry Bradley Foundation, assessed religion's role in fostering civic responsibility. Conducted in April with a sample of 3002 respondents, the survey also gauged political preferences of American religious communities on a variety of issues related to the 2008 presidential election.

On June 9, 2008, in a news conference at the National Press Club in Washington DC, the results of the *Henry Institute National Survey on Religion and Public Life* were announced. According to Corwin Smidt, Henry Institute director and professor of political science at Calvin College, "In the aftermath of the 2004 presidential election, much was made of the religious divide in the election. As voters became more observant religiously, they were less likely to vote for Democrats. Following the election, a series of polls further revealed that only a small minority of Americans thought the Democratic Party was 'friendly to religion.' By 2008, the political landscape had changed: the Democratic Party began actively seeking religious voters; evangelical voters potentially changed the way they evaluated their political choices; the Christian Right

was more fragmented; and citizen concerns over the Iraq conflict, rising oil prices and a stagnant economy competed with long-standing social issues."

The national survey was led by Corwin Smidt, who has been involved in similar polls and has done extensive research related to religion and politics over the past quarter century. Other members of the research team included: Kevin den Dulk of Grand Valley State University; Bryan Froehle from Dominican University; Doug Koopman and James Penning of Calvin College; and Steve Monsma from The Henry Institute.

The poll was conducted by Opinion Access Corp. of Long Island, New York, with questions designed to gauge the political attitudes and preferences of 18 distinct American religious communities on a wide variety of issues. The results revealed some important changes underway in the way religion relates to American politics — some are likely to be short-term in nature and unique to the 2008 election while other changes are part of long-term shifts that have been transpiring within American politics.

At first glance, the relative proportions of Democrats and Republicans appear to have hardly changed over

the past sixteen years. Looking further, there has been a shift in the way dominant religious traditions have aligned themselves with the two major parties. Evangelical Protestants continue to more heavily favor the Republican Party over the Democratic Party, while 2008 marks a historic turning point in the partisan dispositions of Mainline Protestants who have traditionally been the mainstay of the Republican coalition. Poll results show Mainline Protestants today to be more Democratic than Republican. Roman Catholics have long been held within the Democratic coalition, but 2008 finds a bare plurality of non-Hispanic Catholics still in the Democratic fold.

Even where there is apparent stability in partisan loyalties within a major religious tradition as a whole, there may be change within the group. To allow for more evaluation, the survey divided believers into three major positions (traditionalists, modernists, and centrists). *Traditionalists* adhere to historic beliefs of their faith, have high levels of religious observance, and identify with sectarian religious movements; *modernists* hold more heterodox religious beliefs, are less religiously observant, identify with more liberal or

*continued on page 2*

### Inside this issue:

- Symposium on Religion & Politics **3**
- Upcoming Institute Lectures **3**
- Semester in Washington D.C. **4**
- New Books Published **6**
- DOL Grant Evaluated **7**
- Recent Henry Institute Lectures **8**
- AIDS Pandemic and Poverty Conference **10**

More complete results from the *Henry Institute National Survey on Religion and Public Life*, as well as tables and statistics, can be found at [www.calvin.edu/henry/civic/CivicRespGrant/SurveyFindings.htm](http://www.calvin.edu/henry/civic/CivicRespGrant/SurveyFindings.htm)

**Summer  
2008, No. 9**

## Religious Voters (continued from cover)

ecumenical religious movements, and accept more modern beliefs and practices within their religious worldview; *centrists* fall between traditionalists and modernists.

The 2008 survey showed that in comparison to 2004, traditionalists in the Mainline Protestant, Evangelical Protestant and Roman Catholic categories remained heavily Republican. Among the centrists, Evangelicals were slightly less Republican than in 2004 while Mainline Protestants exhibited a large shift to the Democratic Party, and Roman Catholics shifted away from the Democratic fold to a more even division between the two affiliations. Modernist Evangelical Protestants were more strongly aligned with the Republicans in 2008 than 2004, while Mainline and Roman Catholic modernists fell more heavily with the Democrats in 2008 than 2004.

It appears that the religious beliefs and practices held by individuals are beginning to replace religious affiliation as the primary basis for political cleavages. Religious tradition continues to shape political tendencies, but political preferences are being more

strongly shaped by the kind of believer one is within that particular tradition.

The survey also evaluated attitudes toward free trade, environmental regulation, and posting of the Ten Commandments in public buildings. Overall attitudes toward free trade have not shifted markedly in the last four years, and support for environmental regulation has remained relatively strong. Americans continue to support the right of local communities to post religious symbols in public buildings.

Additional survey questions assessed attitudes toward ancillary issues that may effect political affiliations. Gay marriage is more strongly opposed among the American public than is abortion. Evangelical Protestants were the only religious tradition to agree that “the U.S. did the right thing in taking military action against Iraq.” And finally, most Americans, regardless of religious tradition, express disagreement with the statement that “clergy should be permitted to endorse political candidates during worship services.”

During the polling, the Democratic Party nominee was still undecided, so half of the respondents were asked

about their support for John McCain versus Hillary Clinton, while the others were asked to select John McCain versus Barack Obama. Religious tradition continued to shape voting preferences, with Evangelical Protestants being the most Republican in their choice. Roman Catholics and Mainline Protestants trail considerably behind in support for McCain, but were the only other predominant religious traditions giving McCain a plurality of their support. Both Mainline Protestants and non-Hispanic Roman Catholics were evenly divided between McCain and the Democratic candidate, while Black Protestants, Latino Protestants, Latino Catholics, other Christians, Jews, believers from other faiths, and the religiously unaffiliated expressed overwhelming support for the Democratic candidate over McCain. Within religious traditions, the responses of the three groups of traditionalists, modernists and centrists also showed different patterns. Across the major affiliations, traditionalists were most supportive of McCain, while modernists gave more support to the Democratic candidate.

## Religion and the Civic Engagement of Americans

A team of local political scientists, working through the Henry Institute, is continuing to research the role of religion as it relates to the civic engagement of American citizens under an ongoing grant from the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation. “The Civic Responsibility Project” began in the spring of 2005 with Phase I which will culminate this fall when *Pews, Prayers, and Participation*, a book summarizing the initial findings, is published.

The project is led by Corwin Smidt, Henry Institute Director and political science professor at Calvin College. While previous studies have demonstrated a connection between religion and the fostering of civic engagement, the first phase of The

Civic Responsibility Project expanded upon previous research. According to Smidt, this project “broadens the analysis to assess both the attitudinal, value-rooted commitments and the behavioral responses – as well as the interplay between the two.”

By incorporating an empirical analysis of civic responsibility, the study demonstrates how religion has encouraged citizens to participate in the political process. Four professors from Calvin College and one from Grand Valley State University undertook extensive scholarly examination of prior information from publicly available national surveys of the past decade, examining the religious elements most closely tied to implementing civic involvement.

The initial research divided the over-

all topic into singular aspects of civic responsibility. Kevin den Dulk, professor of Political Science at Grand Valley State University, examined individual decision-making as it relates to motivation beyond personal self-interest and towards a common good. Calvin Political Science professor Doug Koopman investigated political tolerance, while his department colleague James Penning looked at the role of religious institutions in fostering civic skills and political knowledge. Stephen Monsma, a Research Fellow at the Henry Institute, pursued philanthropy’s role in spurring civic engagement, and Smidt researched the impact of membership in voluntary associations.

*continued on page 3*

## Civic Engagement (continued from page 2)

The detailed research resulted in several notable discoveries. People who report no religious affiliation tend to volunteer less and give less to charity than those with some religious tradition, even when also considering membership in secular organizations. Additionally, church attendance rivals education as the most important variable affecting the likelihood of maintaining membership in a voluntary association.

Initial project research demonstrated the need for a national survey which more clearly explored the relation-

ships between religion and civic responsibility than past polls, which led to the second phase of The Civic Responsibility Project. In the spring of 2008, with funding from the Bradley Foundation, the Henry Institute commissioned a survey of 3,000 Americans to further explore the role of religion in fostering civic engagement. The results of the survey were announced at a national news conference on June 9 in Washington D.C. and will be included in a volume written by the research team, with a tentative publication date in 2009.



The research team includes (left to right) Corwin Smidt, Doug Koopman, Steve Monsma, Jim Penning and Kevin den Dulk.

(See related article, *Religious Voters in the 2008 Presidential Election* for additional details.)

## Henry Institute Symposium on Religion and Politics

The fourth biennial Symposium on Religion and Politics was held in April of 2008, providing an opportunity for scholars to present papers on their research findings, learn about potential research opportunities, collaborate on future projects, and foster personal and professional relationships. The three day event included 25 panels at which more than 70 papers were presented.

According to Corwin Smidt, Henry Institute director, "Since the event began in 2002, the Symposium on Religion and Politics has

brought individuals together who share an interest in the interaction between religion and politics. Each year, the number of participants and the distance they travel to the Symposium has increased. We are known by scholars from as far away as China, Africa, Scotland, Canada, Romania, Turkey and various other Eastern European countries, and many of them come to participate in the Symposium."

Symposium topics have covered a wide variety of subjects, ranging from Christian Zionism to bioethics to Québécois independence.

The focus of presentations includes philosophy, sociology, history and politics; the religious contexts encompass nearly all forms of Christianity, as well as the Jewish and Muslim faiths. Scholars and graduate students across various academic disciplines participate in the Symposium, and many return to present papers at repeated Symposiums, finding the event to be thought provoking and intellectually challenging.

"I love this Symposium," noted one participant. "You have done a fantastic job in balancing the perspectives

presented, and the structure of the panels is excellent. I look forward to this Symposium, both intellectually and personally; it is a wonderful community of Christian political scientists."

In 2008, the Henry Institute offered the opportunity for Symposium presenters to have their paper include on the Henry Institute website, following the completion of the event. Further information about upcoming Symposiums, as well as past events, is available on: [www.calvin.edu/henry/program.htm](http://www.calvin.edu/henry/program.htm)

## Upcoming Henry Institute Lectures

**September 17, 2008**

**7:30 pm**

Jim Wallis

*The Great Awakening: Reviving Faith and Politics in a Post-Religious Right America*

Calvin Fine Arts Center

**October 8, 2008**

**3:30 pm**

Chris Soper

*The Challenge of Pluralism in an Age of Diversity*

Location: TBD

**October 14, 2008**

**3:30 pm**

Matthew Sitman

*Through a Glass Darkly: Politics and the Problem of Knowledge in Calvin's Thought*

Commons Lecture Hall

**March 2, 2009**

**7:30 pm**

Cal Thomas

*Two Kingdoms: Why Political Action Cannot Save America*

Gezon Auditorium

## 2008 Washington D.C. Interns

Marie Grace Alinsao  
Philippine Embassy

Clara Campbell  
Bread for the World

Brette Davis  
U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk

Annalise deZoete  
Community Family  
Life Services

Ivan Gan  
International Center for  
Not-For-Profit Law

Goel-Amos Garcia  
UPeace-US

Paul Gehm  
Republican Governors  
Association

Timothy Graff  
Institute for Global  
Engagement

Lena Halasa  
Middle East Institute

Catie Kawchak  
U.S. Rep. Bill Shuster

Lerae Kroon  
International Justice  
Mission

Colin McWhertor  
Court Services and  
Offender Supervision  
Administration

Susan Pearson  
DCI Group

Josh Ryden  
American Enterprise  
Institute

Paula Simoni  
U.S. Rep. Pete Hoekstra

Heather Smilde  
CNN

Nathaniel Valk  
Canadian Embassy

Rachael Willett  
White House, Vice  
Presidents Office

## Spring Internships in Washington D.C.

The history of Calvin's involvement in providing hands-on student experience in Washington DC goes back many years to the start of a month-long off-campus interim course for political science majors. In 2000, the Henry Institute expanded the opportunity to encompass a full semester program, placing students in working internship positions from February through May. At the same time, the Washington DC Semester program was broadened to encourage participants to explore positions beyond the traditional political sphere. In the past nine years, many Calvin students have spent their spring semester in Washington, working in social work, law, communications, art, politics, marketing, health care, human rights, international affairs, embassies, and many other fields.

In 2008, eighteen Calvin students arrived in the city eager to experience Washington D.C. and begin their unique internships. The participants were pursuing college majors in Accounting, Business, Communications, Economics, International Relations, Philosophy, Political Science, and Social Work. Doug Koopman led the academic-based program, teaching several courses during the semester, including "Politics as if Reality Mattered," an introduction to Christian realism combined with some economic and fiscal policy readings. In addition, students took a course which involved "site visits" to organizations, and speakers who work at the intersection of Christian faith and public life. According to Koopman, "Students reported their internship experiences to be extraordinar-

ily positive and worthwhile ... [and] adjusted reasonably well to the life and work of a young professional. They were amazed at the variety of specific opportunities and experiences the internships opened to them."

As in previous years, a number of the 2008 participants received job offers and future work opportunities at the close of the semester, and all noted that the experiences had been valuable for their future.

Matthew Scott, from the Institute for Global Engagement affirmed what the Henry Institute hears from many of the employers where Calvin interns have worked: "Thank you so much for running such an excellent program and supplying us with such capable and mature Christian learners. The Calvin program is one that other schools would do well to emulate."

## Henry Institute Grants Funding for Student Fellows

Since 2003, the Henry Institute has funded undergraduate research fellow grants, with participants ranging from three to as many as nine Calvin students each year. For the 2008-09 academic year, the Institute is using a different approach to encouraging student research, seeking proposals from Calvin College faculty for funding a research project that would provide financial support to pay a Calvin student to assist them with their research and project tasks. The new approach is intended to encourage Calvin professors to further their research endeavors as well mentor undergraduates in scholarly research.

The 2008-09 Henry Institute awards were granted to four Calvin faculty members.

Randall Bytwerk of Communication Arts and Sciences will continue work on the German Propaganda Archive he has created, which includes material from Nazi Germany and the German Democratic Republic, both of which claimed religious scope but held an ultimate goal of eliminating religion from the public sphere.

Janel Curry from the Geography Department will consider the range of Christian responses to climate change, including examining the responses and arguments of different Christian groups within the public policy realm and in public policy debates.

Political Science professor Amy Patterson will investigate the role of Protestant churches in shaping policies to fight HIV/AIDS in Zambia and Ghana.

Stephanie Sandberg of Communication Arts and Sciences will explore the relationship between poverty, race and faith in Grand Rapids, interviewing individuals about their personal experiences and ultimately turning those interviews into a theatre piece.

## An Interview with Judge Michael McConnell ...

*Excerpts from an interview before his presentation of the annual Paul B. Henry Lecture on Oct. 12, 2006. For a DVD of the lecture, contact [www.calvin.edu/campus-store/recordings/](http://www.calvin.edu/campus-store/recordings/) or call the Calvin College campus store (616/526-6376) and use code V14021.*

*Briefly describe what you'll be talking about at tonight's lecture.*

I will be offering a historical perspective on the relationship between religion and liberal democracy, currently a highly controversial area. Conventional wisdom is that the American founding and liberal democracy in general require a secularization of public life, particularly in politics and government. I believe that is not precisely the way the American founders viewed the matter: they rejected the idea of an official religious orthodoxy, but for reasons which I find interesting and compelling – and which are different from most of what we hear today.

*What does the term “separation of church and state” mean to you?*

First, the term is not in the language of the U.S. Constitution; the first amendment does not mention church or state, simply that Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion. That said, the idea of separation was alive and well at the adoption of the first amendment. Jefferson was a dedicated student of John Locke, who addressed the issue of tolerance and while he did not use the word separation, he clearly believed it essential to distinguish the business of government from the business of religion.

Turning the metaphor of a wall of separation into a principle, however, can be difficult and misleading. Locke's role of government was small: the state was to keep peace, prevent force and fraud among citizens and protect against foreign enemies. The rest of society, including education and social welfare was on the side of the line with church. So, how do we preserve religious freedom when Locke's limitations on state have been pushed back extensively to leave little on the church

side of the line? In the U.S., we have historically made accommodations which blur the lines today's critics call for. For example, when public support for education began, funds were granted to religious denominations to provide education. Over the last 40 years, the idea of “strict” separation has led to misreading the original concepts and American tradition, calling for everything touched by government to remain secular. I believe a union between church and state would be a terrible thing, but we do not need strict separation that secularizes all aspects of life touched by government.

*Is the constitution primarily designed to protect the state from too much church interference – or the church from state interference?*

I believe the words of the first amendment give the answer: ‘*Congress* [italics added] must pass no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.’ The prohibition is directed at the state, not at the church.

*What about instances when religious groups seek to influence government to impose potentially religious values without the establishment of religion per se, such as in the temperance movement?*

There is no such thing as a morality-free system of law; every law reflects morality of some sort or another. Civil rights laws reflect a moral judgment; laws which require us to pay taxes in order to maintain agricultural price supports reflect a moral judgment. I think every citizen in a republic, including a religious person, is entitled to push for what he believes is the best way to run public institutions.

*So you believe it is undesirable to have “morally-neutral” government?*

I would say not only undesirable, but impossible. People sometimes assert that this is their position, but I

cannot see what they mean. Some say they are taking an “objective, secular approach” to issues, but obviously everyone will assert what they believe to be closest to the morally correct position.

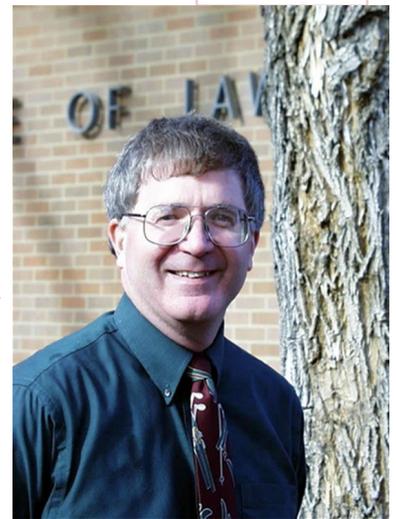
*How does the constitution fit within this concept of people advocating for what they believe is morally right?*

I believe the constitution derives from the authority of the people to form their government. Our government is composed of branches authorized by the people, each operating in a somewhat different mode. The constitution has authority in our society because it was adopted by the people.

*What practical advice would you offer for Christians as they interact with government?*

Each citizen's obligation is to vote and speak in favor of their understanding of public good, rather than self-interest, regardless of their premises or religious beliefs. If you are persuaded that something is right, then that's what you should support. The main problems with modern democracy stem from people who view politics as a way to appropriate the wealth of others, or who view politics as a mean-spirited party preoccupation. These are the two greatest threats to modern American democracy.

Michael McConnell is a federal appellate judge for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit and is known for his judicial opinions related to church-state issues, as well as his scholarly work in constitutional law and theory, particularly in the religion clauses of the First Amendment.



## Workshop on Survey Research and American Religion

Since 2001, the Henry Institute has sponsored the week-long *Pollsters and Parishioners: Workshop on Survey Research and American Religion* program. Participants explore existing survey data to learn methods for correlating religious and political beliefs and behaviors. The students expand their knowledge about strategies and scientific measurement, and apply these new skills to draw conclusions, presenting their findings at the close of the workshop. Through 2007, the program was held every other year, with about ten to fifteen graduate students from political science and related fields participating each time.

Over time, the academic disciplines in which participants were studying broadened, and the educational level of the students also expanded to include some who have completed PhD work. In June of 2007, the program included the largest number of participants ever. Twenty-three individuals attended the workshop, led by Corwin Smidt (Henry Institute Director), James Guth (Political Science Professor, Furman University), and Lyman Kellstedt (Political Science Professor emeritus, Wheaton College). The students were selected from among 45 applications received from across the United States, Canada,

Brazil, China, Romania, Austria and Lebanon.

Due to the popularity of the workshop and the



2008 Workshop Participants shop provided a unique and valuable path to expand their knowledge in the field of statistical and scientific measurement, as well as make connections with colleagues who share their academic interests.

One participant thanked the Henry Institute for the opportunity to

“be a part of the workshop. It turned out to be even more useful for me than expected. On top of learning about [the data bases and statistical analysis methods], the contacts with workshop participants might be very useful for the future. Finally, the possibility to ‘play with’ all of your data-files was an academic delight. I am very grateful.”

For information about the tentatively scheduled 2009 program: [www.calvin.edu/henry/program.htm](http://www.calvin.edu/henry/program.htm)



2007 Workshop Participants

large number of 2007 applicants, another *Pollsters and Parishioners* session was held during 2008. Sixteen PhD students working in political science, sociology, religion, and economics traveled from across the United States, Hungary and Romania to participate in the program from June 12 through 18. When the workshop concluded, each individual offered a resoundingly positive evaluation of the program, noting that the work-

## New Books Published

The initial results of research from The Civic Responsibility Project (see related article on page 2) will be published this fall in *Pews, Prayers and Participation: Religion and Civic Responsibility in America*, by Georgetown University Press. Authors Corwin Smidt, Kevin Den Dulk, Jim Penning, Steve Monsma and Doug Koopman take a fresh look at the question: Does religion really matter in American public life? The book uniquely forms its evaluations based upon a citizen’s level of participation in private and public dimensions of religious life, rather

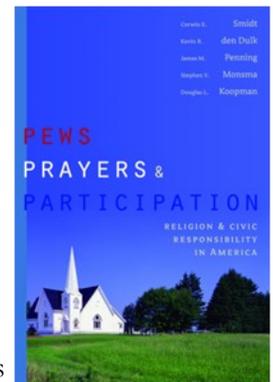
than using individual religious affiliation as the basis for evaluation.

The book is available from Georgetown University Press at: [www.press.georgetown.edu](http://www.press.georgetown.edu)

In April, a new book by Henry Institute Senior Research Fellow Steve Monsma was published. *Healing for a Broken World* calls Christians to live out their faith in politics, using a scriptural, Christian response to issues such as genocide, global warming, and human trafficking. The

author’s goal in writing the book was to equip Christians to make godly, humanitarian choices rather than purely political ones.

Monsma has had a distinguished career in both academia and political office, teaching political



## Evaluation of DOL Grant to Serve At-risk Youth

In 2007, the Henry Institute received a \$96,000 grant from the Department of Labor to conduct an evaluation study of a three year initiative completed by the Latino Coalition for Faith and Community Initiatives based in Bakersville, California. The Coalition program was funded by a \$10 million DOL award. The evaluation and report by the Institute's Steve Monsma and Corwin Smidt was to be submitted to the Department of Labor by mid-2008.

The Latino Coalition formed a unique program in 2004 in seven cities (Phoenix, Denver, Los Angeles, San Diego, Dallas and Houston), partnering with twenty-eight social service agencies to provide programs for at-risk Latino youth between the ages of 14 and 21 to address educational needs, job training and preparedness, counseling and anger management, and problems related to other life situations, with a goal of avoiding future involvement with the justice system.

Over the three year grant period, the Latino Coalition carefully maintained records of youth participation and program outcomes. The final data showed that of the roughly 2,750 participants, 91% avoided recidivism, 20% gained employment, almost 11% reached an educational milestone, and almost half spent a significant amount of time in the Latino Coalition programs. Monsma and Smidt visited nineteen of the social service agencies participating in the grant, interviewing staff at each and

holding focus groups at ten sites with the young people enrolled in the programs. Analysis of the data as well as the focus group interviews clearly showed that the programs most successful at reaching the target individuals and accomplishing their goals were those that affirmed a holistic on-going approach to reaching the youth and keeping them involved in ongoing programs, rather than simply enrolling individuals in single training sessions.

In looking at the statistical data, Monsma noted, "One can debate whether these are encouraging or discouraging percentages. Almost half of the participants did not experience even one of the positive outcomes identified in our evaluation other than avoiding recidivism. However, one must consider that most of these youths – although not without talents and a desire to make something useful out of their lives—were facing huge social, cultural, educational and economic challenges. Given their circumstances, these positive outcomes can be seen as a success level to be applauded. The very low 9 percent recidivism rate itself is particularly impressive, given that national statistics for the overall population show 82.1 percent of 14 to 17 year olds who have been incarcerated were rearrested within three years of their release."

Smidt added, "A second fact to be taken into account when evaluating the positive outcome levels of the Coali-

tion's effort is that many of the youth had been with the programs only a short time and were still "works in progress." It is naïve to think that a young person's life can be turned around quickly or easily. Months, and sometimes years, are needed. Even persons who eventually succeed often experience some failures in the process. Our evaluation was that the positive outcomes of the participants—while far from the 100 percent level—were certainly sufficient to signal the overall success of the Latino Coalition's program."

After concluding their evaluation, Smidt and Monsma were invited to participate in the June, 2008 White House National Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Conference in Washington D.C. Smidt presented their findings and evaluation of the Latino Coalition's program as part of a panel regarding At-Risk Youth. Several thousand scholars and practitioners in the field of faith-based and community initiatives attended the Conference, and the At-Risk Youth panel spoke to an audience of approximately 500 people, discussing various government-funded efforts designed to meet the challenges faced by young people who are at-risk.

The full report will be published after the evaluation process is completed by the Department of Labor. For additional information about receiving a copy, contact the Henry Institute ([henry@calvin.edu](mailto:henry@calvin.edu)).

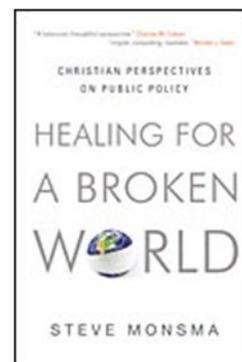
## New Books *(continued from page 6)*

science at Calvin College, Pepperdine University in California, and State University College in New York. He served in both the Michigan House of Representatives and the Michigan Senate, and was Acting Director of the Michigan Department of Social Services and Director of its Office of Quality Review.

The book has been hailed as a balanced and timely perspective on how Christians should engage in the political process. Ronald Sider of Evangelicals

for Social Action states that "Monsma's entire life—as a successful politician and a gifted professor of political science—has prepared him to write this clear, compelling book. Every Christian with any interest in politics should read it."

The book is available from Crossway Books and Bibles ([www.healingbrokenworldbook.com](http://www.healingbrokenworldbook.com)) and can be accompanied by a companion DVD and study guide, which are



available from Faith Alive ([www.faithaliveresources.org](http://www.faithaliveresources.org))

## Forgiveness in International Politics

On November 27, 2007, Wheaton College professor Mark Amstutz presented a Henry Institute lecture focusing on the concept of forgiveness within the international political setting. Dr. Amstutz has done considerable research on international politics and ethics, with a focus on forgiveness and reconciliation in public life, particularly the healing of nations in the aftermath of civil war and mass atrocities. *The Promise and Limits of Forgiveness in International Politics* addressed the nature, as well as the act, of forgiveness, with Amstutz asserting that forgiveness is not letting someone off the hook, but rather the lifting of debts in part or in whole. It has both a subjective and objective dimension, beginning with a transformation of disposition, giving up hatred against one who has committed the wrong. The objective aspect of forgiveness is less about a “feeling” than about specific deeds and confessing wrong doings.

According to Amstutz, forgiveness restores relationships and brings healing. It frees individuals from captivity

the moral courage needed to forgive horrific deeds and atrocities is greater than the courage to do anything else. And yet, without forgiveness, there can be no hope.

Five aspects of forgiveness were outlined by Amstutz. The first is recognition of the actual deed; one does not need to forgive unintended consequences; as the act of forgiveness involves actions committed intentionally. The renunciation of vengeance is the second step in the process, followed by empathy, or seeing the shared humanity in both the oppressor and the victim and recognizing the fallen nature of individuals. The fourth aspect is the necessity of truth-telling as perpetrators must acknowledge wrong doing without making excuses or trying to justify their actions. The final step is



of debts: the oppressors moved on with their lives after the acts were committed, but victims who may be harboring hatred must let go and move on with their lives as well.

Amstutz noted several approaches that may be taken as nations and individuals deal with past acts: to deny the occurrence of the act; political amnesia so one need not deal with the wrong; amnesty, whether partial or complete; trust-telling of some sort to make oppressors accountable for their actions; purging (however, innocent people are usually hurt unintentionally); and finally through trials. He argues that the last option is the only one that really heals both victims and offenders, leading to reconciliation. He asserts that nations around the globe need to embrace an ethic of forgiveness, and further, that the church has a duty to proclaim this ethic of love and grace.

Dr. Amstutz concluded his remarks with the famous words of Desmond Tutu: “Without forgiveness, there is no future.”

## The Church in Russia Today

Alexei Bodrov presented an enlightening and informative lecture on the state of democracy and religious liberty in Russia on October 3, 2007. Bodrov teaches at St Andrew’s Biblical Theological Institute in Moscow, which offers a variety of programs for both undergraduate and graduate students interested in studying Orthodox theology.

Bodrov discussed the current state of the Orthodox Church in Russia at large, asserting that religious consciousness in Russia has not really been revived. In the country today, there is a distinct difference between Orthodoxy as religious practice and as cultural heritage. The majority of Russians who claim affiliation with the Orthodox Church view it as a cultural identification more than a religious

one, and there are even certain Russians who will assert their identity as “Orthodox atheists,” or those who view Orthodoxy as strictly a cultural heritage.

The Orthodox Church has a formal association with the federal government in Russia, and there is no conversation about, or prescription for, the separation of church and state. The notion of “a wall of separation” between the two which is commonly espoused in U.S. politics is not mirrored in Russia, where Orthodox clergy regularly hold political offices within both the church and government. The Orthodox religion is even incorporated into the military establishment, with state ceremonies to consecrate weapons and military equipment. According to Bodrov, this

close relationship has poisoned the effectiveness of the Church as a vocal advocate of civil society, undermining its ability to influence political life in a moral direction. He asserts that until the Church is able to fill such a role as critic and leader, civil society in Russia will not have a chance to flourish.

The current popular Russian perspective on human rights is articulated by many prominent church and government leaders who view “human rights” as a Western concept and assert that the majority of the people must determine what is best, even if that results in the sacrifice of individual rights and freedoms. This concept that Russia should establish its own standards for human rights is believed by Bodrov to be an excuse created by Russian officials, and



## The Christian Church and African American Civic Engagement

The Henry Institute hosted Dr. Harold Dean Trulear on November 19, 2007, as he spoke on “The Christian Church and African American Civic Engagement.” Trulear is a professor of theology at Howard University, and fellow at the Center for Public Justice in Washington D.C., as well as the former Senior Pastor of the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church of Twin Oaks (PA). Trulear offered a historical account of the main forms of civic engagement used by African American congregations throughout our nation’s existence. Sadly, but not surprisingly, nearly all have centered on the issues of slavery and racial differences.

Beginning with the pre-Civil War era, which Trulear characterizes as the Moral Suasion period, vocal African Americans like abolitionist David Walker argued against slavery using America’s founding documents, while Henry Highland Garnet spoke of slavery as a sin by both slaveholders and the slaves who accepted their position. Garnet’s calls for armed resistance

were tempered by the start of the Civil War. This conflict spawned the era which focused on education, and it was during this time that many of the traditionally black colleges were founded. Later the Supreme Court *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision resulted in the desegregation of the American public school system.

Inspired by this legal precedent, the African American pursuit of equality turned towards more direct action, in



what is commonly referred to as the Civil Rights Movement. While Trulear lauded the actions of Dr. Martin Luther King, he noted that the nonviolent resistance of the movement actu-

ally originated with James Farmer Jr. and his Congress of Racial Equality. With a philosophical goal of pacifism rooted in the Ghandian method of nonviolent civil disobedience, events like the Montgomery bus boycott joined whites and blacks in the pursuit of total desegregation. While these actions culminated in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, they also signified the reunification of religious institu-

tions with the African-American movement.

Though the Civil Rights Movement established a more equal environment for blacks in America, it did not cure all social injustices. Noting this, African Americans turned toward Community Development, with non-profit groups working to provide necessary services in the community. Rooted in Saul Alinsky’s efforts in Chicago through his Industrial Areas Foundation, community development organizes church congregations for social change through a process of consensus building. Trulear noted that while President Bush formally founded the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in 2001, this type of government involvement can be traced back as early as the administration of Jimmy Carter. Today, much African American civic engagement still centers on community organizing.

In his discussion, Trulear highlighted different elements in each of the seven forms of action, noting that his view of the proper response was often a question of discerning the right strategy based on the specific situation. While community developers offer hope for the future of African American communities, Trulear remains skeptical of their ability to maintain their religious element.

(continued from previous page)

validated by the Orthodox Church, to erase the government’s atrocious human rights record since the fall of Communism.

Bodrov asserted that ignorance in religious matters and theological education can be remedied in Russia, and this must occur for a true rebirth of religious consciousness in the country. St. Andrews Orthodox School is seeking to help Russians leave behind ignorance about their religious roots as they establish interdenominational and interreligious dialogue. The school, funded by private grants and donations, attempts to facilitate discussion and reflection about the relationships between science and religion as well as the interaction between Christianity and Islam, the second most popular religion in Russia.

### *The Paul B. Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity and Politics*

The Paul B. Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity and Politics was created in 1997 to continue the work of integrating Christian faith and politics advanced by its namesake — educator and public servant Paul B. Henry.

The Henry Institute continues Paul Henry’s quest to promote serious reflection on the interplay between Christianity and public life by providing a non-partisan forum for research and information on their interaction. The Institute provides resources for scholarship, structures opportunities to disseminate scholarly work, seeks avenues to communicate and promote such efforts to the general public, and motivates and trains future scholars and practitioners to engage in these areas. The Henry Institute is particularly dedicated to creating a new generation of scholars and public servants who are engaged, active and aware of the important interplay between Christianity and politics.

616-526-6870 ~ e-mail: [henry@calvin.edu](mailto:henry@calvin.edu) ~ [www.calvin.edu/henry](http://www.calvin.edu/henry)  
1810 East Beltline, SE ~ Grand Rapids, Michigan ~ 49546-5951

## The AIDS Pandemic, Poverty, and Sub-Saharan African Churches

In August of 2007, the Paul B. Henry Institute co-sponsored and participated in a conference in Lusaka, Zambia entitled *The Effects of the AIDS Pandemic and Poverty on Church Life in Sub-Saharan Africa: Stewardship Implications*. The event was coordinated by the NetAct and the African Society for the Study of Reformed Communities at the Justo Mwaile Theological College, with many of the attendees including pastors and professors who live and work in southern African countries. The seminar focused around issues involving the role of the church in addressing AIDS and poverty and was an eclectic display of presentations and topics.

Dr. Amy Patterson of the Calvin College Political Science Department recounted her time in Zambia and was deeply moved by the discussion with other conference participants as she heard their experiences firsthand. In one session, a woman shared her struggles with being HIV positive in front of a primarily male audience, despite the gender component in Africa that is almost never addressed. A higher percentage of women are HIV positive in Africa as women are more vulnerable to the disease due to the cultural norms and status roles. Yet, the issues is often ignored, due to the social stigma that accompanies a HIV positive diagnosis.

Throughout the worldwide Christian community, pastors and parish-

ioners frequently talk about HIV/AIDS vaguely and indirectly. A lack of knowledge about HIV/AIDS is further complicated by a high level of denial. Nevertheless, Christian congregations in Zambia address HIV/AIDS more than congregations in the United States. The churches in southern African countries have taken responsibility for organizing volunteers and creating programs to care for orphans and provide home-based care for those afflicted with the disease. Many of these programs are run by unpaid volunteers who dedicate themselves to full-time work. The churches are also establishing community schools for the poorest of the poor who cannot afford the expenses of attending public schools.

Many conference participants concluded that the Christian church needs to more publicly acknowledge HIV/AIDS. Leaders in the religious community do not talk about HIV/AIDS or admit when they test positive for HIV. The social stigma of contracting the disease has been reduced over the last few years but still remains, and although there may not be blatant acts of discrimination or ostracism, the negative stigma still exists, exemplified in such ways as elders who stop visiting infected

church members.

While those infected with HIV/AIDS are very aware of the social stigma, the healthy find it easy to look away and ignore the problems and those who are effected.

The conference concluded by recognizing the need for Christian solidarity, which emphasizes that all Christians around the world are members of Christ's body. When those in Africa are hurting, Christians in the United States and around the world should hurt also and work to assist, heal, and change inequality and injustice. The United States and other countries can make a significant difference by increasing efforts to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS in Africa and around the world.



Calvin Political Science professor Amy Patterson, Henry Institute Director Corwin Smidt, and Calvin senior Kyla Vander Hart (left to right) in Zambia for a conference on the church, AIDS and poverty.

### The Henry Institute in the News

The Paul Henry Institute is dedicated to encouraging exploration of the interplay between religion and politics, seeking to disseminate information and encourage people to participate in this interaction. Corwin Smidt, director of the Henry Institute has been frequently interviewed and cited in national journals and popular media, based on his work and expertise regarding Christianity and politics. In just the past 18 months, his comments have been quoted in *The New York Times*, *Christianity Today*, *The Politico*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Detroit News*, *The Patriot News*, *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, *The Denver Post*, CNN, and *The Chicago Tribune*, among others. He has been interviewed for radio broadcasts on Michigan Public Radio, WOOD radio in the West Michigan area, the Moody Broadcasting Network, United News and Information, and Harbor Country Radio. His expertise in the area of religion and politics has been sought through professional presentations at universities across the United States and as far away as China, Germany, Norway, and Zambia. In May of 2008, Smidt met with numerous legislators from the Nigerian parliament to discuss interaction between the church and government in their country and the United States.