

Stephenson addresses fisheries commission; new book is reviewed

E. Frank Stephenson, director of Upward Bound, gave a presentation on the history of the Albemarle Sound herring fishery at a recent meeting of the Marine Fisheries Commission and Finfish Committee Advisors.

Gatling: A Photographic Remembrance, by Frank Stephenson, received a favorable review in the November edition of *Guns & Ammo*, an international publication with a circulation of more than 7 million.

The editor described Stephenson's work, which spanned several years of research, as "a fascinating, and seldom encountered, pictorial journey into this colorful man's (Gatling's) life as well as the highlight of numerous events that followed years after his passing."



Business and community leaders and other friends of Chowan were invited to an "after business hours" reception during the fall semester and enjoyed the hour of fellowship. Refreshments were served and the visitors had an opportunity to see the newly renovated and decorated Ward Parlor.

Need for teaching Christian values, principles cited in address

Continued from Page Eight

"Fidelity," and "Decency."

In my own area, the Wake County School System has recently completed a study that recommends the teaching in the public school system of what they have identified as eight essential "character traits." Putting together a committee composed of teachers, parents, students, principals and community representatives, they came up with these eight "character traits." They contend that, though cultural differences do exist, there was enough common ground on these eight traits to identify and define them as "core values" which would be acceptable to the entire community. Not surprisingly, the list bears a striking resemblance to Bennett's.

Even Dr. Benjamin Spock has gotten into the act, for heaven's sake! Now in his eighties, he's recently published a new book which he hopes, in his words "... will undo some of the damage wrongly attributed to my earlier books on child rearing." His new book is entitled: *Rebuilding American Family Values*.

Why all the sudden interest in "values?" Well, I don't know for sure. But I'll tell you what I think. I think it's because the evidence is now in and is irrefutable: the current fascination with such trendy, but ill-considered philosophies as the so-called "political correctness movement" and "multiculturalism" and "deconstructionism" and "ideological egalitarianism" have proven to be morally bankrupt and have run up a moral deficit in this country that we can no longer afford.

In our haste to correct some of the abuses of the past, especially dominant culture prejudices that shut out and excluded certain people groups, we unwittingly embraced the logical fallacy that because everyone has an "angle of vision" or a "point of view," therefore everyone's "point of view" or "angle of vision" is equally valid.

Ideological egalitarianism is really a perfectly stupid idea, if you think about it. One of the most difficult tasks I had as a graduate professor was to convince my students that criticism of their ideas was not criticism of their personhood. I used to tell students in doctoral seminars: "The idea you're defending is really quite stupid, but even a stupid idea deserves a better defense than you're given it! Go ahead, take your best shot!"

All ideas are most certainly not created equal. You take it out of the humanities and social sciences and try it. "Everybody's ideas are equally defensible when considered from their point of view or angle of vision." Apply that to math, for example. "Why do we insist that math problems have to have answers? Why can't they have opinions? You know, you have your opinion and I have mine! Can't we just be brothers?"

No. All ideas are not equally valid. Some ideas, and certainly some moral ideas, are better than others. The moment we call something "good" or "bad" and everybody does, we've already smuggled in a moral standard by which those judgments were made. And when people really sit down and stop to think about it, an activity that there's been precious

little of in our society, a "surprising" consensus emerges about what that standard looks like. I say "surprising" sardonically, with tongue firmly planted in cheek, because people like C. S. Lewis were saying this back in the 40's. In his book, *The Abolition of Man*, in his inimitable style, he cuts to the heart of the matter when he asks: "If value itself is on trial, who then will be the judge?" Indeed.

No. Moralities may differ from culture to culture, but not nearly to the extent that the pundits of moral relativism and ideological egalitarianism would have you believe, a fact to which an ever-increasing chorus of voices on both sides of the political spectrum are joining to affirm.

No. Morality is neither intrusive nor arbitrary. It is, as C. S. Lewis said years ago, "merely the directions for running the human machine." Therefore, what God requires of us He requires because we require it. He's not imposing an arbitrary moral standard upon us that's irrelevant to our personhood. It's what we require to be complete, whole human beings.

Imagine going to see your physician and following the examination she gives you a vial of little blue pills to take. And you say: "Well, Doc, I guess this will fix me up!" "No, I just like the color blue. Aren't they the cutest little pills you've ever seen?" I doubt you'd ever go back? No. A physician worthy of the name prescribes for you what you need, not what she likes or wants you to take without reference to your needs. In the same way, what God requires of us He requires because we require it! God is never arbitrary! That's why we ignore God's moral law at great personal peril. Because you see, it is the directions for running the human machine. You won't "work" without it, you cannot.

And so it should come as no surprise that, despite our obvious differences, there yet remains a striking consensus about morality. There are moral laws, if you will, woven right into the fabric of reality itself that can no more be violated with impunity than can physical laws like the law of gravity or the laws of thermodynamics.

And now my word to you. While public education may be forced by the nature of the beast to ameliorate and vitiate and mitigate and extenuate when it comes to the teaching of morality and values, the Christian college can and must unapologetically advocate a value system which will, if faithfully taught, give its students, in this morass of relative ideas we call "modern American society," a place to stand. It's in your purpose statement: "Chowan College, a four-year institution founded upon and dedicated to Christian principles and values, endeavors to provide quality higher education on a liberal arts foundation..." That's a good statement! Don't ever apologize for that!

Now I do not want to be misunderstood. I'm not suggesting that the purpose of Christian higher education is to indoctrinate students rather than to educate them. Just because someone is a Christian doesn't give them permission to be a dunderhead. The Christian classroom should be a place where the toughest, most tenacious, most clear-headed thinking

done anywhere goes on. It was Jesus, wasn't it, who said: "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free!"

But I am saying that a distinctively Christian institution should be distinctively Christian! Now, don't get nervous. I didn't say you should be teaching "Christian biology" or "Christian English." But I do mean that one of the goals of a distinctively Christian institution should be to produce Christian biologists and Christian English teachers.

Because everybody needs a place to stand! To be sure, in the course of maturing it will have to be modified, but you've got to have a place to stand — some place to weight and consider and choose and decide. And for the Christian, that means taking your stand with Jesus Christ — no excuses, no exceptions.

Ruth Whitford gave me a place to stand. She was my major English professor in my undergraduate studies program at a Baptist college in Florida. A graduate of Columbia, she had done post-doctoral work in Renaissance literature with C. S. Lewis at Cambridge. It was she who first introduced me to the writings of C. S. Lewis and R. R. Tolkien and G. K. Chesterton and George MacDonald saying to me: "As an English major who is preparing for the ministry, here are some people who bring faith and literature together effectively and you need to be aware of them and their contributions. Her classes were celebrations of the great ideas expressed in the greatest literary works of the ages. She would sit in a circle with her majors and talk to us for an hour, completely without notes, about the lives and works of the great literary minds and the ideas that used them, people like Chaucer and Malory, Shakespeare and Donne, Moliere and Voltaire, Turgenev and Tolstoy, Kafka and Balzac. They came alive and took their seats in our circle and told us their stories one after the other. Accursed 50 minute classes! How I hated that bell!"

I'll never forget a conversation I had with her one day in her office, dusty little room more congenial to books than people. I was not the most motivated freshman you'd ever meet, and she was gently scolding me for not applying my best efforts as a student to my studies and telling me about the importance of a life of study for one who aspired to the ministry. She said: "You know, Wayne, there's more than one way to love God! We're commanded to love God not just with our hearts, but with our minds, too! What we do in the classroom no less than in the sanctuary is an expression of our Christian faith." She went on: "When Jesus was asked one day to sum it all up, he quoted Israel's creed, *The Shema*, and said: "You are to love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength and mind." But look it up. *The Shema* doesn't say that we're to love God with our minds. That's not in there, Jesus added that. Must have thought it was pretty important, huh?"

Changed my whole life! Game me a place to stand!

I didn't learn that in religion class. An English teacher taught me that! You wanna know something? I'll bet she doesn't even remember that conversation.

But I do. I do.

"The Christian classroom should be a place where the toughest, tenacious, and the most clear-headed thinking done anywhere goes on."