



"Bad beliefs make bad behavior."
—Warren Akin Candler

06-Apr-07

Bloodshed Upon Bloodshed

The city of Charlotte, North Carolina, has been in mourning for the last week since two Charlotte-Mecklenburg police officers, Sean Clark and Jeff Shelton, were murdered late last Saturday night, March 31, after responding to a domestic disturbance. Witnesses say the officers left the apartment to which they had been called and encountered a young man, whom police now identify as Demeatrius Antonio Montgomery, 25. The three held a fifteen-minute conversation, and then suddenly five shots were fired, all by the suspect. Residents found the two police officers moments later, and both had been shot in the back of the head, their revolvers still holstered. No one saw how it happened, and no one seems to know why.

It has been more than a decade since Charlotte has had an officer killed in the line of duty, and many of her citizens are shocked at the brutality and senselessness of it. Early reports wondered if a recent crackdown on gang activity in the area had prompted retaliation, but police officials discounted the idea. Reports of a second suspect seen fleeing with the assailant have also been quashed. The department is being very tight-lipped regarding the investigation, perhaps to close ranks since the victims are two of its own, perhaps to safeguard its case against Montgomery, or perhaps to obscure the actual cause of the killings. The last supposition is not beyond the Charlotte-Mecklenburg police department under its current chief, Darrel Stephens, which officially denied that the Queen City had a gang problem until the last few years, despite the obvious presence of increased crime, violence, and territorial graffiti.

Nevertheless, it has been interesting to witness the reaction to this tragedy. Most people are grieved from an entirely humanitarian point of view, as they should be: Two families

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have suffered irreplaceable losses, and the city has lost the services of two of its finest, from all reports. Blue ribbons have proliferated all over Charlotte, pinned to lapels, tied around light poles and tree trunks, and affixed to mailboxes, car antennas, fences, and signs. Thousands paid their respects at the visitations on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, and thousands more lined the streets on Thursday and Friday afternoons to salute the fallen as their funeral processions wound their way to the cemeteries. The local television and radio stations have broadcast wall-to-wall coverage of the two funerals. Outpourings of sympathy have come from all over the nation and from as far away as the Marshall Islands.

In the past, syndicated columnist Dennis Prager has observed that, in America, conservatives and liberals view the world from two vastly different perspectives. Prager, who is a Jewish conservative, posits that the distinction in viewpoints comes down to each group's understanding of human nature, and these are informed by the sources of their fundamental beliefs. Conservatives, who are predominantly Judeo-Christian in their religion, accept the Bible's teaching that man's nature is flawed, that he tends toward evil unless he is strongly taught and influenced to choose to do good. As Jesus said, "There is none good but One, that is, God" ([Matthew 19:17](#)), and Paul echoes His Savior, quoting [Psalm 14:3](#), "There is none who does good, no, not one" ([Romans 3:12](#)).

Conversely, liberals are overwhelmingly secular and humanistic—and many are agnostic and atheistic. They consider mankind, then, to be the pinnacle of animal life and impersonal Nature's greatest achievement. In other words, human nature, being an evolutionary development, is good and getting better as mankind advances toward its self-propelled perfection. Philosophically, the belief in the innate goodness of human nature has been a part of the liberal mind at least as long as the ideas of Mencius, Confucius, and Plato.

Applied to this unfortunate event, the conservative and liberal reactions have been typical of their worldviews. Conservative talk-radio has rung with calls for prosecuting Montgomery to the full extent of the law—that is, making sure he receives the death penalty, an option in North Carolina—and diverting funds from arts, transit, and welfare programs to hire more prosecutors and police, as well as to build more jails. Government's first responsibility is public safety, they argue, and the city obviously needs to devote more resources to cleaning up its violent streets.

A few liberals have had the temerity to speak up for the alleged cop-killer. One caller made the unfounded assertion that this is what happens when the police target certain minority segments of the community. City councilwoman and mayor pro tem, Susan Burgess, one of the most liberal people in Charlotte politics, lamented, "I keep thinking

about that 25-year-old man, [Montgomery,] and I ask, where did we lose him?" Taking her comment at face value, she seems to feel more pity for the "wayward" perpetrator of a gruesome crime than for his undeserving victims. Apparently, this young man took to a life of crime through our negligence. With the right social intervention at the right time, he could have been a fine, outstanding citizen. It never seems to have occurred to Burgess that he may just be an evil person.

The Bible predicts that the nations of Israel will be filled with bloodshed as the time of Jacob's Trouble nears (see [Hosea 4:2](#); [Jeremiah 30:7](#)). [Ezekiel 7:11-12](#), 23 says, "Violence has risen up into a rod of wickedness. . . . The time has come, the day draws near. . . . Make a chain, for the land is filled with crimes of blood, and the city is full of violence." Charlotte is not alone among cities witnessing escalating violence and brutality, rising numbers of gangs and gang members, and increasing fear and insecurity. Unfortunately, it takes a tragedy as befell these Charlotte policemen to focus attention on the problem, but even so, questions remain. Will the community and its leaders have the vision and wherewithal to find and implement solutions? Will they have the endurance to see them through?

Perhaps the most troubling question is, with the state of society as it is, can these problems even be solved? Call me skeptical of human abilities, but God, I feel, will have to intervene to fix this mess.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The Talking Blood](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

In this sermon, John Ritenbaugh expounds the symbolism of the blood as a witness in I John 5:6. Blood atonement, referenced 427 times in the Bible, dramatically magnifies the seriousness God places on the consequences of sin. Only blood can atone for sin (Leviticus 17:11, Hebrews 9:22). No forgiveness of sin is possible without death. We dare not minimize or trivialize the impact or consequences of our sins. Forgiveness is not a casual matter with God. The pain of seeing the mangling of His Son's body makes forgiveness a most anguishing and sobering matter. The blood of Christ, a propitiation or appeasing force, the only means to satisfy God's pure sense of justice, is a testimony of God's intense love for us. This willingness to sacrifice needs to be incorporated in our relationship with our brethren (I John 4:10-11).

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The Sixth Commandment \(Part One\) \(1997\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Our society is becoming increasingly violent. John Ritenbaugh shows how the sixth commandment covers crime, capital punishment, murder, hatred, revenge and war.

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