

Out of Horror, Hope:
A Biblically Based Study of Torture's Ravages and
Potential Responses in the Reformed Tradition
from the
No2Torture Group (studyguide@No2Torture.org)

Final Session:
In Christ We Respond in Action and in Hope
HANDOUTS

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Source:

<http://www.cvt.org/main.php/Advocacy/TheCampaignToStopTorture/WhatCVTknowsaboutTorture>

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717 E. River Road, Minneapolis, MN 55455, 612-436-4800, www.cvt.org/

(Underlining, bolding and color highlighting have been added for emphasis.)

EIGHT LESSONS ON TORTURE

Based on CVT's experience with torture survivors and understanding the systems in which they have been abused, CVT believes it is important that discussions about the U.S. use of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment not be shaped by speculation but rather through an understanding of how torture is actually used in the world. There are eight broad lessons CVT has learned from working with torture survivors:

1. Torture does not yield reliable information

Well-trained interrogators, within the military, the FBI, and the police have testified that torture does not work, is unreliable and distracting from the hard work of interrogation. Nearly every client at the Center for Victims of Torture, when subjected to torture, confessed to a crime they did not commit, gave up extraneous information, or supplied names of innocent friends or colleagues to their torturers. It is a great source of shame for our clients, who tell us they would have said anything their tormentors wanted them to say in order to get the pain to stop. Such extraneous information distracts, rather than supports, valid investigations.

2. Torture has a corrupting effect on the perpetrator

The relationship between the victim and the torturer is highly intimate, even if one-sided. It is filled with stress for the interrogator, balancing the job with the moral and ethical values of a person with family and friends. One way this cognitive dissonance is managed is through a group process that dehumanizes the victim. But still another way is to insure that some sort of confession is obtained to justify to the interrogator and to his superiors that pain and suffering was validly used.

3. Torture does not yield information quickly

Although eventually everyone will confess to something, it takes a lot of time. We know that many militaries and radical groups train their members to resist torture and to pass along false pieces of information during the process. **And those with strong religious or political beliefs that help them understand the purposes of torture used against them are most able to resist and to recover from its impact.**

4. Torture will not be used only against the guilty

Inherent in all of the scenario building is the assumption that we know, with great reliability, that we have the appropriate party who possesses knowledge that could save lives. But **our clients are living testimony that once used, torture becomes a fishing expedition to find information. It perverts the system which, seeking shortcuts to the hard work of investigation, relies increasingly on torture.** The estimate from the Red Cross was that at least 80 percent of those imprisoned at Abu Ghraib, for example, should never have been arrested, but were there because it was easier to arrest persons than to let them go (people feared letting go a terrorist more than protecting the innocent). The Israeli security system claimed to use its stress and duress techniques only where they had the most reliable information about the detainee's guilt. Yet human rights monitors estimate that they were used on over 8000 detainees. It is not credible to believe they had this precise information about so many.

5. Torture has never been confined to narrow conditions

Torture has often been justified by reference to a small number of people who know about the "ticking time bomb," but in practice, it has always been extended to a much wider population.

6. Psychological torture is damaging

When torture is defined as strictly a physical act, many believe that psychological coercion is okay. **CVT's clients say it was the psychological forms of torture that were the most debilitating over a long period.** The source of their nightmares, 15 and 20 years later, was the mock executions or hearing others being tortured. **The lack of self-esteem and depression were more related to scenarios of humiliation, consciously structured to demean the victim.** Many within the world treatment movement believe we have seen increasingly sophisticated forms of psychological torture over the past 20 years.

7. Stress and duress techniques are forms of torture

Many of these techniques were developed during Israel's struggle against terrorism, and so this example is often cited for effective interrogation techniques falling short of torture. But the Israeli Supreme Court concluded that they were illegitimate. **Every democratic nation's court system and international court which has reviewed them has concluded that they are forms of torture.**

8. We cannot use torture and still retain the moral high ground

The arguments we hear are not so different in form and content from those used by the repressive governments of CVT's clients, and which the U.S. has refused to accept from other nations that have used torture to combat their real or perceived enemies. Torture is not an effective or efficient producer of reliable information. But it is effective and efficient at producing fear and rage, both in the individuals tortured and in their broader communities.

Text of Luke 12:4, 11–12

^{NRS} **Luke 12:4** “I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that can do nothing more. ...”

“... ¹¹ When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, do not worry about how^A you are to defend yourselves or what you are to say; ¹² for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say.”

^A Other ancient authorities add *or what*

Text of James 1:22–25

^{NRS} **James 1:22** But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. ²³For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves^A in a mirror; ²⁴for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. ²⁵But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act — they will be blessed in their doing.

^A Gk *at the face of his birth*

Source:

<http://www.pcusa.org/iraq/gastatements/abuse.pdf>

A Resolution and Confession on the Torture and Abuse of Prisoners

The 216th General Assembly (2004) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) adopted this resolution:

1. That it call upon the whole Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), while recognizing the honorable performance of the majority of coalition forces in rebuilding Iraq, to join with the commissioners to
 - a. reaffirm our support for human rights and the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War;
 - b. explicitly reject torture and abuse as methods of interrogation and treatment of prisoners for they are inconsistent with the Gospel; and
 - c. acknowledge we are inescapably part of our culture and offer our confession in repentance.
2. The treatment of those incarcerated in the naval base in Guantánamo, Cuba, and in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq (and perhaps elsewhere), has highlighted serious legal and moral issues that cannot be ignored and must not be allowed to pass unexamined. Violations of international law as well as serious moral malfeasance are involved.

Such treatment is contrary to the Geneva Convention Relative to Treatment of Prisoners of War (1949), particularly Articles 13, 14, 15, 17, and 18. Article 17, Fifth Paragraph, provides:

“Neither physical or mental torture nor any other form of coercion may be inflicted on prisoners of war to secure from them information of any kind whatever. Prisoners of war who refuse to answer may not be threatened, insulted, or exposed to any unpleasant or disadvantageous treatment of any kind.”

Objections to such practices have been voiced by lawyers within the armed services as well as by human rights organizations. Such practices have been deplored by a great majority of the citizens of our country, quite irrespective of their views as to the legitimacy of taking military action against Iraq. These actions have undercut American claims to a moral high ground and opened the way for enemies to maltreat

members of our own society that fall into their hands. Moreover, they constitute flagrant violations of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, to which the United States is a signatory. [Document available from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights:

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/prisonerwar.htm>]

As citizens of our country, members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have been urged to engage in repentance for these actions, even if their personal responsibility for them is indirect and minimal. That call for repentance is an indication of the extent to which these actions must be deplored.

But efforts must be made to ensure that such actions are eliminated from future practice. This can be done only if there is a complete and adequate understanding as to why they have arisen – a matter of present uncertainty and possible confusion.

3. Further, efforts must be made to ensure that such torture and abuse do not occur in the future. To that end, the 216th General Assembly (2004) directs the Stated Clerk to take the following actions:
 - a. Commend all who have brought this prison abuse to the attention of the public as well as all who have recognized the seriousness of the issues raised and the need to deal vigorously with the policy and administrative questions that are involved;
 - b. Urge the U.S. Congress to direct an appropriate independent and formal inquiry to determine what led to these events. This body should have full investigative powers and issue its findings publicly.
 - c. Urge government officials to develop safeguards that will serve to prevent such behavior from arising in the future.
4. Write and send a pastoral letter to the churches, communicating the intent of this resolution.

A Call to Say No! to Torture October 12, 2005

The terrorist attack on September 11, 2001 was a heartbreaking tragedy which we will never forget. That catastrophe is also an opportunity to witness to the power of God. Some have said that everything changed on the morning of 9/11, but it did not. We were challenged, but our beliefs and our society are stronger than a handful of terrorists. As Christians, we know that our hope and security come from one place only: our full trust and complete confidence in Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and Savior. Unfortunately, instead of taking comfort from the strength we have in God, instead of drawing on our nation's standards of decency and justice, too often, we have given way to the temptation to fear and, in our fear, we have jeopardized some of the very things that we value most.

Due process has given way to secret detentions, justice has given way to expediency and humane treatment of prisoners has given way to torture. We are told that our country does not torture prisoners, but our heads and our hearts tell us differently. Hidden, institutionalized torture has become routine. Doing things beyond our borders, or having others do them for us, does nothing to lessen our responsibility.

Torture threatens the very nature of our society. Torture degrades us more than its victims. Torture puts us and our troops at risk from those seeking vengeance. We must adhere to our principles for our own sake, as well as out of concern for others. To be aware and be silent is to be complicit. As Christians and patriots we cannot be silent; we must say "no."

We must not let fear or hatred be our motivation individually or as a nation. Instead we must trust that "God is love... and perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, 'I love God,' but hate their brothers or sisters are liars..." (1 John 4:10b, 18-20a).

As Presbyterians we are aware of God's sovereign call to witness to Christ's reconciling work of justice and love. Central to this are the hard tasks of speaking the truth to power and loving our enemies. While those who conspire to terrorize innocents must be brought to justice, we cannot achieve this by terrorizing others who may be innocent.

In response to a groundswell of concern, we invite all Presbyterians to join us in a three-month period of prayer, study, discussion and action focused on the treatment of those detained by and at the request of the United States and its allies in the four years since September 11, 2001. Our invitation is grounded in a growing concern we hear from Presbyterians who are theologically diverse, including those who have served with distinction in the Armed Forces and those who have spent their entire adult lives working for peace and the abolition of war. The 216th General Assembly spoke forcefully on matters regarding terrorism, violence, war and the use of torture. While not all Presbyterians agree with every action of the General Assembly, we are committed to pursuing honest discussion and seeking common ground to speak to these difficult issues. Therefore, we invite individuals and congregations:

To pray: We pray for those who are detained and their families, and we pray for our troops and their families. Those who serve their country must never be asked to treat prisoners in ways that are contrary to the law, their own conscience, or basic human dignity.

We pray for ourselves and our nation. We must strive to create a climate of religious tolerance and respect, rather than perpetuate a cycle of fear and vengeance. Expressing our outrage and demanding an end to torture in all its forms are the first steps.

To study: Abuse and torture are complex and difficult issues, but knowing the truth — even uncomfortable truths — can set us free to act. Therefore, a group of concerned Presbyterians has developed a curriculum to be used by congregations and others who wish to study the facts carefully in light of their faith.

To dialogue: We are called to be in thoughtful, respectful dialogue with one another, seeking common ground and listening carefully to one another when we disagree. In so doing, we know that our witness as followers of Jesus Christ becomes ever stronger and more faithful.

To speak out: Our faith and our constitution remind us that it is our duty to ask hard questions of those in power and to speak out whenever truth is compromised.

We call on the United States and its allies to invite an independent and impartial investigation of the conditions under which detainees are held and by whose orders they are being held. The truth must be convincingly told. For Jesus says, “Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not be known. Therefore, what you have said in the dark will be heard in the light and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed from the housetops.” (Luke 12:2–3)

We call for these investigations towards the goal of eliminating torture, and holding accountable all those who are responsible. We further call for the release of those who have not been charged with any crime, and demand fair and speedy trials for those who have been accused.

To these ends, we encourage Presbyterians to lift up their concerns with their elected officials. Current information and advocacy suggestions will be posted on the Act Now section of the Presbyterian Peacemaking website: www.pcusa.org/peacemaking/

To come together: All are invited to become part of a rapidly growing grassroots network by signing on at www.no2torture.org.

We also invite all those who are concerned to a meeting in Miami on January 6 and 7 to make a public witness and further organize our efforts to call upon our nation and allies to treat all detainees humanely and justly. More information about this gathering will be posted on the No2Torture and PC(USA) websites listed above.

We give thanks for the overwhelming grace that comes as a free gift from our God. We know, however, that the gift of God’s grace is not cheap, and we dare not cheapen it by living lives of timidity and fear. God commands that we seek the truth and say “no” to what is wrong, that we might be free to join with God and our neighbors to build what is just. The cross of Jesus Christ makes it clear that God’s love is stronger than torture and fear.

In faith and trust,

Rick Ufford-Chase
Moderator of the 216th General Assembly

Ed Brogan
Director, Presbyterian Council of Chaplains

Source: http://www.witherspoonsociety.org/2005/resisting_torture.htm

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It's Time to Say No to Torture (Part 2)

by Doug King

[6-6-05]

[J]ust a week ago a woman in our church was reflecting on what she heard a few months ago from a Holocaust survivor who spoke to the youth in the church. He described, she said, how the Jews saw their neighbors and friends simply stand by, silent, as the Jews were removed from their homes to face unknown fates of which we now know too much. And the churches, said the speaker, were silent. The pastors and priests said nothing.

And now, she said tearfully, "I see it right here." Our nation is doing terrible things, and we're standing by, silent, doing nothing. And where's our church?

So why this echoing silence? Why aren't all of us in the streets demanding an end to our government's betrayal of our nation's heritage, our affirmations of human dignity?

There seem to be a number of reasons for our silence. Perhaps the most important one is President Bush's success in legitimating torture as a legitimate tool in "the war against terror." So many of our fellow citizens (and fellow Christians!) are convinced that "torture is OK," that we argue against it at the risk of being called unpatriotic or worse.

[Just a small example of that from an e-mail comment to our web site: "It is sad that you seem to spend your time hating your own country and everything that it does. It is even sadder (not to mention a bit alarming) that folks who call themselves 'Christians' should seem to take such positive delight in any problems US policy might seem to be having under George Bush. Shame on you all!"]

Perhaps another reason for our silence is that the acts of torture are well removed from where we might witness them, or even stand in protest at the sites where they're happening.

Guantánamo is off limits in Cuba. It's hard to visit Iraq or Afghanistan, and we're outsourcing a lot of the torture work now to places even harder to get to – and harder to find.

And there's the perennial question: What can we do? Obviously no words or actions so far have made a dent in the administration's policy of torture. The denials continue, as do the justifications. (So the argument seems to be "We're not doing it, but if we were it would be OK.")

Well, what can we do?

First, we need to offer clear answers to the question, "What's wrong with torture?"

Many of us who oppose war might still acknowledge that in some situations (such as genocide) the use of military force seems (tragically) necessary. Just war? Well, maybe. Sometimes. But "just torture"? It's hard to imagine any moral argument that could justify the intentional, systematic destruction of a human being – physically and psychologically – for no clear reason other than to cause pain.

Jonathan Schell wrote in *The Nation* last January, commenting on Alberto Gonzales as the President's nominee for Attorney General. He said it brilliantly:

Torture is not wrong because someone else thinks it is wrong or because others, in retaliation for torture by Americans, may torture Americans. It is the *torture* that is wrong. Torture is wrong because it inflicts unspeakable pain upon the body of a fellow human being who is entirely at our mercy. The tortured person is bound and helpless. The torturer stands over him with his instruments. ... [T]he victim bears no arms, lacking even the use of the two arms he was born with. The inequality is total. To abuse or kill a person in such a circumstance is as radical a denial of common humanity as is possible. ... Torture destroys the soul of the torturer even as it destroys the body of his victim. The boundary between humane treatment of prisoners and torture is perhaps the clearest boundary in existence between civilization and barbarism. Whether the elected representatives of the people of the United States are now ready to cross that line is the deepest question before the Senate as it votes on the nomination of Alberto Gonzales.

Well, they crossed that line. As René put it, "**Torture is a weapon of terror.**" So who are the terrorists? And what can we do to resist our nation's imperial designs, and the abuse of human beings that seems to go with those designs?

We must begin by making clear in every way we can, that torture is wrong, and no words can justify it. When President Bush says (as he did in Brussels last February about what he was going to tell Vladimir Putin of Russia) that democracies are based on "the rule of law and the respect for human rights and human dignity," we must agree with him, and demand that he try it.

Certainly truth-telling can be an act of resistance, and we must do all we can to help people see what is being done in our name. We must help people recognize how deeply those actions betray our heritage as Americans and as people of faith.

But I am becoming convinced – reluctantly – that it is time to go beyond arguments to action, and specifically action of resistance.

What else can we do?

How about finding ways to stand with the victims of torture? Can we do more to support legal defense for them? Can we help get their stories out when they are able to speak? As some of them are finally released, can we help them find help from organizations like the Center for Victims of Torture?

And as René reminded us, the torturers too are often victims of the system they have fallen into. Can we provide support for them as they return to their homes and families – medical and emotional and spiritual support for them and their loved ones? Can we help them find ways to speak of what they have witnessed?

We can certainly support the growing movement of parents and young people who are resisting the use of our public schools to help military recruiters in their work. Under the No Child Left Behind laws, schools are now required to provide personal data on their students for the use of recruiters. Parents can demand that their children be left out of that process, but efforts are now being made to require that parents "opt in," so that their children will be left out of the process unless the parents explicitly ask to have them included.

We can join with groups that are focused on non-violent resistance and conflict resolution, to shape better ways to deal with the threats of terrorism, and to find creative ways to resist our own practice of terrorism through torture.

We can help organize vigils to pray for those imprisoned, and for those few who have been freed – and for those who have been guilty of abusing them. *And* for those in places of power who have condoned or even encouraged the torture of human beings.

And how about the Presbyterian Church (USA)?

The 216th General Assembly (2004) passed a [Resolution and Confession on the Torture and Abuse of Prisoners](#), which is worth reading.

But a staff person in the Presbyterian Washington Office recently noted that the Washington Office has so far received only two inquiries or expressions of concern from Presbyterians about the whole issue of torture. The Washington Office is paying attention to this issue, but can't do much until people across the church speak up.

You can speak up by contacting the
Presbyterian Washington Office
100 Maryland Ave. NE, Suite 410
Washington, DC 20002
Phone 202-543-1126
E-mail rhouston@ctr.pcusa.org

You might also contact
Sara P. Lisherness, Coordinator of the **Presbyterian Peacemaking Program**
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202
Phone 888-728-7228, ext. 5779
E-mail slishern@ctr.pcusa.org

There are many good resources on the PC(USA) web site. For starters, you might look at
“Ask U.S. Officials to Say 'No' to Torture,” by Catherine Gordon
[<http://www.pcusa.org/washington/issuenet/gs-050414.htm>].

Out of Horror, Hope — What We Can Do **No2Torture Group**

We can end our own complicity in torture, and, together, we can work to end involvement by the US and its allies. Here are some specific things that we, as Christians, can do:

Pray: We can pray for the captives, the captors, the others who suffer the consequences, our country, and ourselves. We can ask others to pray about these things with us.

Study: Abundant information is available on this complex topic. The www.No2Torture.org/ site lists links to Internet resources on the torture issue and provides the *Out of Horror, Hope* curriculum (free download); also see www.pcusa.org/peacemaking/. Volunteer speakers are even available from groups like CVT:

<http://www.cvt.org/main.php/Advocacy/SpeakersBureau/RequestForm>

Speak Out: This can take many forms, including:

- Share information with friends and relatives, as appropriate.
- Write a letter to the editor.
Tips & Sample Letters to the Editor: <http://www.cvt.org/file.php?ID=5312>
- Sign and/or circulate a petition; see www.no2torture.org/act/petitions/
- Organize a community forum on responding to acts of torture in our society.
- Write or call US government officials who can influence government policies on torture: the President, your senators and representatives. Addresses can be found through the official sites <http://www.house.gov/> and <http://www.senate.gov/>, or private sites like <http://www.congress.org/>.
_Sample letter to the president: <http://www.cvt.org/file.php?ID=5239>
_Sample letter to senators and representatives: <http://www.cvt.org/file.php?ID=5247>

For current information on pending policy and legislation visit the the Presbyterian Peacemaking website www.pcusa.org/peacemaking (click on “Act Now” and then on “Stopping Torture”). Invite friends to join you for an evening of discussion and letter writing.

Come together: All are invited to become part of a rapidly growing grassroots network by signing on at www.no2torture.org/ or the No2Torture Yahoo group. All are invited to our future meetings to make a public witness and organize further. More information will be posted on the No2Torture and PC(USA) websites. Those who can't attend might consider holding a prayer vigil with other concerned Presbyterians and friends from other faith traditions.

Source:

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/stoptorture/document.do?id=B10C72B4FFC25C7180256FEA00424B4F>

Used with permission of Amnesty International USA
5 Penn Plaza, New York, NY 10001, 212-807-8400, www.amnestyusa.org/

(See full article for elaborations on the main points.)

Amnesty International's 12-Point Program for the Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment by Agents of the State

1. Condemn torture and other ill-treatment
2. Ensure access to prisoners
3. No secret detention
4. Provide safeguards during detention and interrogation
5. Prohibit torture and other ill-treatment in law
6. Investigate
7. Prosecute
8. No use of statements extracted under torture or other ill-treatment
9. Provide effective training
10. Provide reparation
11. Ratify international treaties
12. Exercise international responsibility

Internet Resources on Torture Issues

Deborah E.H. Bowsher
September, 2005

American Civil Liberties Union:

<http://www.aclu.org/International/> and <http://action.aclu.org/torturefoia/>

Amnesty International USA: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/stoptorture/index.do>

Association for the Prevention of Torture (APT): <http://www.apr.ch/>

Center for Constitutional Rights: <http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/home.asp>

Center for Cooperative Research: <http://www.cooperativeresearch.net/timelines.jsp>

Timelines on torture, rendition and other topics.

Center for Victims of Torture (CVT): <http://www.cvt.org/>

Fellowship of Reconciliation: <http://www.forusa.org/programs/iraq/tortureresources.html>

Investigate Torture: Online Resources

Friends Comm. on Nat'l. Legislation (FCNL): http://www.fcnl.org/issues/issue.php?issue_id=70

Frontline (PBS), *The Torture Question*: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/torture/>

90-min. video program, interviews, readings, links...

Human Rights First: <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>

Monitors and reports on human rights abuses around the world.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service: <http://www.lirs.org/InfoRes/links.htm#torture>

Resources for and about torture survivors

No2Torture: <http://www.no2torture.org/>

Grassroots Presbyterian (USA) group committed to ending torture and abuse of US detainees.

Physicians for Human Rights: <http://www.phrusa.org/>

Presbyterian Church (USA): Stopping Torture:

<http://www.pcusa.org/peacemaking/actnow/actnow.htm#stoptorture>

Rabbis for Human Rights-North America: <http://www.rhr-na.org/torture/torture.html>

School of the Americas Watch: <http://www.soaw.org/>

Human rights organization, especially as related to Latin America and SOA/WHINSEC.

Survivors International: <http://www.survivorsintl.org/index.html>

A San Francisco group serving survivors of torture.

Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition: <http://www.tassc.org/>

A coalition of torture survivors working “towards the abolition of torture and ill treatment.”

UN OHCHR Committee against Torture: <http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cat/>

UN committee of independent experts that monitors the “Convention against Torture...”

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), Stop Torture Permanently (STOP):

<http://www.uusc.org/programs/STOP/index.html>

Bibliographic Listing of Readings

Many of these are referenced in this curriculum. Many more can be found elsewhere on line. Articles not excerpted or reproduced here can be examined at the website listed.

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[This guide clearly explains that torture is unreliable and may never be used.]

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Hersh, Seymour. From his series in *The New Yorker*:
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Chain of Command, May 17, 2004. http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/040517fa_fact2
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