

New Bethel Christian Life Commission Report – September 2006

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Ethics Word of the Day—Pretexter

The tactic of “pretexting” has been used widely from a variety of professions, like repossession firms. “I’ve got many voices I use with customer service reps,” says David Gandal, to get personal information. This came out in the boardroom trouble of Hewlett-Packard. Several states are initiating laws, and several lawsuits are pending against pretexters. Federal Trade Commission Commissioner Jon Leibowitz noted, “telephone pretexting is a cottage industry, and that is very troubling to us.”¹

Technology—World of Warcraft

Two years old and global, the World of Warcraft or WOW is an internet on-line game that currently has 7 million players, and as yet “no one has successfully ventured into the dungeon to slay a group of computer-generated villains known as the Four Horsemen.” Teams work together on a quest, as many as 40 persons in a “guild” in this new genre called Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games, or MMO for short. Blizzard, the company, has made \$300 million so far. “Though WOW is a fantasy world, the interaction between guilds and individuals relies on human choices and morals. The first thing one does when joining the game is to choose an avatar [incarnation or embodiment] from one of the eight ‘races,’ split between two factions: the human-looking Alliance and the more bestial Horde.” Edward Castronova, (Level 42, Priest), an Indiana University professor and author of *Synthetic Worlds*, thinks these kinds of games blur the lines between virtual and physical, especially as the technology makes them more realistic. “Yes, it’s just a game,” says Joi Ito, “the way that the real world is a game.”²

How to Spot a Liar

The U.S. is “pouring millions into new lie-detection technologies,” through “black budget” millions from Defense Department and Homeland Security budgets. Next month, “No Lie MRI of San Diego, a beneficiary of some of that largesse, will roll out a brain-scan lie-detection service it is marketing to government and industry.” So is Cephos of Pepperell, Mass., in a couple of years. The methods use MRIs, electroencephalograms, eye scans, and even the what card sharks and poker experts would recognize—the face. San Francisco psychologist Paul Ekman has codified 46 facial movements into more than 10,000 microexpressions in what he calls the Facial Action Coding System, or FACS for short. Jeffery Kluger and Coco Masters conclude, “for now, the new lie-detection techniques are likely to remain in the same ambiguous ethical holding area as so many other privacy issues in the twitchy post-9/11 years. We’ll give up a lot to keep our cities, airplanes and children safe. But it’s hard to say in the abstract when ‘a lot’ becomes ‘too much.’ We can only hope that we’ll recognize it when it happens.”³

Bookshelf—The Creation

Legendary biologist E. O. Wilson addresses a fictional Southern Baptist preacher in his 22nd book, *The Creation: an Appeal to Save Life on Earth*, specifically the natural world. Wilson believes that the evolutionists should not have to go to this *battle of saving the earth* alone, and so Wilson wants to enlist an army of evangelicals. Raised a Southern Baptist himself, Wilson believes that millions of Christians can be made to care about God’s creation. Between militant atheistic biologists, like British Richard Dawkins, and the fashionable attempts to bridge the differences between religion and science, Wilson says, “the gap between the two world views is very wide, and it’s widening.” Millions of Americans believe the End Times will occur within their own lifetimes, in view of which the fate of a particular species of frog or beetle seems irrelevant.⁴



¹ Brad Stone, “Data Mining: A ‘Pretexter’ and His Tricks,” *Newsweek* (9-18-6): 43.

² Steven Levey, “Living a Virtual Life: Is World of Warcraft a game, or is it a harbinger of virtual realities that we all might inhabit? Only the Night Elf knows for sure,” *Newsweek* (9-18-6): 48-50.

³ Jeffery Kluger and Coco Masters, “How to Spot a LIAR,” *TIME* (8-28-6): 46-48.

⁴ Jerry Adler, “All God’s Creatures,” *Newsweek* (9-18-6): 14.

CLC Report - New Bethel Baptist Association

BGCT Texas Christian Life Commission, www.christianlifecommission.org & www.bgct.org, 888-332-5870 — **Baptist Joint Committee**, Washington, DC — www.bjcpa.org — **SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission**, www.erc.com— **American Center for Law and Justice**, www.aclj.org - **Christian polling**: www.grassfire.org & www.ethicsdaily.com ~ **Christian Coalition** www.cc.org

Congresspersons ~ 80th Texas Session begins January 2007

Todd Staples, Senator, Texas Senate District 3 – Capitol: 512-463-0103; District: 903-729-7717

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www.Senate.gov www.House.gov
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