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# BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

**Reflection on an American Tragedy: The Branch Davidians 20 Years Later**  
**April 18, 2012 - 9:00 am - 4:30 pm**  
**Truett Seminary, Baylor University**

## **Program**

### **9:00 am** Welcome

Kenneth W. Starr, President, Baylor University  
William H Bellinger, Jr., Chair, Baylor Religion Department  
Rodney Stark, Co-Director, Baylor Institute of Studies of Religion

### **9:30 am** Introducing the Branch Davidians

Presiding: Bill Pitts, Department of Religion, Baylor University

“The Branch Davidians and Texas Religious History” — J. Gordon Melton,  
Distinguished Professor of American Religious History, Baylor University  
“A Pictorial Introduction to the Mt. Carmel Property” — Matthew Wittmer,  
Documentarian

**10:00 am** “The Branch Davidians Dilemma: “To Obey God or Man?” — Phillip Arnold,  
Executive Director of Reunion Institute (Houston) and founder of the Religion Crisis Task Force

### **10:45 am** Coffee break

### **11:00 am** Putting a Human Face on the Branch Davidians

Presiding: Marie Dallam, Professor, University of Oklahoma Honors College

“Listening to Branch Davidians: Learning from the Survivors” — Catherine Wessinger,  
Professor, Religious Studies, Loyola University New Orleans

### **12:00 pm** Lunch

### **1:15 pm** The Fruits of Conflict

Presiding - Timothy Miller—Professor of Religious Studies, University of Kansas

“The Challenges of Negotiating at Waco” - Gary Noesner,  
Chief, FBI Crisis Negotiation Unit (retired)

### **2:00 pm** Break

**2:15 pm** Presiding - Byron R. Johnson, Director, Baylor Institute of Studies of Religion

“The Role of State Militarization in the 1993 Branch Davidian Conflict” -  
Stuart A. Wright, Professor of Sociology, Lamar University

### **3:15 pm** Break

**3:30 pm** Waco, the Branch Davidians and the Wider World

Presiding: Susan Palmer, Dawson College, Montreal

“Remember Waco! The Disaster in Politics and Popular Culture” —  
Philip Jenkins, Distinguished Professor of History, Baylor University





**Kenneth W. Starr, President, Baylor University**

Judge Starr, 14th president of Baylor University, has had a distinguished career in academia, the law, and public service. Prior to coming to Baylor, he served for six years as the Duane and Kelly Roberts Dean and professor of law at Pepperdine University School of Law, where he taught current constitutional issues and civil procedure. Judge Starr served as solicitor general of the United States from 1989 to 1993, as U.S. circuit judge for the District of Columbia Circuit from 1983 to 1989, as law clerk to Chief Justice Warren E. Burger from 1975 to 1977, and as law clerk to U.S. circuit judge David W. Dyer for the Fifth Circuit from 1973 to 1974. He earned his BA from George Washington University in 1968, his MA from Brown University in 1969, and his JD degree from Duke University Law School in 1973. He is admitted to practice in California, the District of Columbia, Virginia, and before the U.S. Supreme Court.



**W.H. Bellinger, Jr., Chair, Department of Religion, W. Marshall and Lulie Craig Chairholder in Bible Professor of Religion, Baylor University**

Dr. Bellinger received his Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge and he is known for his research on worship texts in the Old Testament. Much of his work explores the book of Psalms. He has also written on Leviticus and on prophetic texts related to worship. Professor Bellinger currently chairs the Steering Committee for the Book of Psalms Section of the Society of Biblical Literature and serves on the Editorial Board of the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*. He is also active in the regional professional organizations in the Southwest and in 2008 was named the John G. Gammie Distinguished Scholar by the Southwest Commission on Religious Studies.



**William L. Pitts, Jr., Professor of Religion, Baylor University**

Dr. Pitts, one of the leading experts on the Branch Davidians and has served on the Baylor faculty since 1975. He is the author of numerous articles and book chapters, including: "The Persistence of the Millennium;" "Davidians and Branch Davidians;" "Religious Cults in America;" "Millennial Spirituality of the Branch Davidians;" "Enlightenment and American Protestantism;" "Changing Views of the Millennium in the Davidian Tradition," in *Journal of Religious History*; and "Baptists and Millennialism," in *Baptist History and Heritage*. He is editor of *Journal of Texas Baptist History*, and book reviewer for the *Journal of Church and State* and *Choice*. Pitts is a member of the American Academy of Religion, the American Society of Church History and the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion.



**Rodney Stark, Co-Director, Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion, Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences**

Dr. Stark began his career as a newspaper reporter. Following a tour of duty in the U.S. Army, he received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, where he held appointments as a research sociologist at the Survey Research Center and at the Center for the Study of Law and Society. He left Berkeley to become Professor of Sociology and of Comparative Religion at the University of Washington. In 2004, he joined the faculty of Baylor University. He has published 30 books and more than 140 scholarly articles on subjects as diverse as prejudice, crime, suicide and city life in ancient Rome. However, the greater part of his work has been on religion.



**J. Gordon Melton, Distinguished Professor of American Religious History, Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion**

Dr. Melton is a pioneering scholar in the field of New Religions Studies and helped to create the sub-discipline. He also serves as the director of the Institute for the Study of American Religion in Woodway, Texas. He sits on the international board of the Center for Studies in New Religions (CESNUR) based in Turin, Italy, the primary academic association focusing studies of new and minority religions. Dr. Melton is the author of more than thirty-five books and numerous scholarly articles and papers. Dr. Melton recently completed the editing of the second edition of the award-winning *Religions of the World: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Belief and Practice*, which appeared in 2010, and most recently completed *Religious Celebrations: An Encyclopedia of Holidays, Festivals, Solemn Observances, and Spiritual Commemorations*, which appeared in 2011. He is currently working on a multi-volume Chronological History of the World's Religions.



**Matthew Wittmer, Head Middle & Upper School Librarian, The Buckley School, Sherman Oaks, CA**

He authored an essay in 2009 for *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* about finding documentation regarding the Branch Davidians and 1993 siege entitled "Traces of the Mount Carmel Community: Documentation and Access." With Catherine Wessinger, he co-edited, created property diagrams, and supplied photographs for *A Journey to Waco: Autobiography of a Branch Davidian*, by Clive Doyle. Since 1999, Matthew has traveled to the Mount Carmel property east of Waco to document the ongoing changes in memorial efforts. He maintains a webpage dedicated to this work on his website at <[www.stormbound.org/waco.html](http://www.stormbound.org/waco.html)>.



**J. Phillip Arnold, Executive Director of Reunion Institute and founder of the Religion Crisis Task Force**

Dr. Arnold received his Ph.D. in Religious Studies from Rice University, and was a Professor of Religion and History at Houston Graduate School of Theology (1983-1986). He is well known as one of two religious scholars (the other was *Dr. James Tabor*) who worked with the FBI to try to convince the Branch Davidians to come out safely. Dr. Arnold also gave his expert testimony at the Congressional hearings on the matter.



**Marie Dallam, Professor, University of Oklahoma**

Marie W. Dallam's expertise is in the area of American religion and culture. She has earned three degrees in the study of religion: a bachelor's from Hunter College, the City University of New York, a master's degree from the Divinity School of Harvard University, and a doctorate from Temple University. One of the recurrent themes in her work is marginalization; more specifically, she is interested in exploring groups that have become religious and cultural outsiders in the United States, whether by choice or default. This theme acts as a starting point in her research and also gives shape to the courses she teaches. Professor Dallam is an active member of the American Academy of Religion, currently serving as chairperson of the New Religious Movements Group.





**Catherine Wessinger, the Rev. H. James Yamauchi, S.J. Professor, History of Religions, Loyola University New Orleans**  
 Dr. Wessinger is editor of *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence: Historical Cases* (2000); author of *How the Millennium Comes Violently: From Jonestown to Heaven's Gate* (2000); and editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism* (2011). She is co-general editor of *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*. She edited *Memories of the Branch Davidians: Autobiography of David Koresh's Mother*, by Bonnie Haldeman (2007); *When They Were Mine: Memoirs of a Branch Davidian Wife and Mother*, by Sheila Martin (2009); and with Matthew D. Wittmer she edited *A Journey to Waco: Autobiography of a Branch Davidian* by Clive Doyle (2012).



**Timothy Miller, Professor of Religious Studies, University of Kansas**  
 Dr. Miller received his Ph.D. at the University of Kansas. His major research focus is the history of intentional communities in America, especially in the twentieth century. Dr. Miller has been recognized by the Communal Studies Association as a distinguished scholar. Additional areas of research interest include: American religious history, new and alternative religious movements in the United States and religion in Kansas. Dr. Miller also coordinates the Religion in Kansas Oral History Project. His upcoming publications include *The Encyclopedia of American Intentional Communities* (Richard Couper Press), *Out to Save the World: Spiritual and Visionary Communities in Modern Society* (Ashgate Publishing).



**Gary Noesner, Chief, FBI Crisis Negotiation Unit (retired)**  
 Gary Noesner retired in 2003 from his 30 year career as FBI investigator and instructor; for 23 years as a hostage negotiator. For the last ten years of his career, he was the Chief Negotiator for the FBI. As the Chief of the FBI's Crisis Negotiation Unit (Critical Incident Response Group), he was involved in crisis incidents covering: prison riots, right-wing militia standoffs, religious zealot sieges, terrorist embassy takeovers, airplane hijackings, and over 120 overseas kidnapping cases involving American citizens. After retirement, he became a Senior VP with Control Risks, an international risk consultancy, which assists clients in managing overseas kidnap incidents involving their employees. His book about his FBI career is "Stalling for Time: My Life as an FBI Hostage Negotiator" (2010).



**Byron R. Johnson, Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences, Director of Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion and Director of the Program on Prosocial Behavior**  
 Dr. Johnson is a Senior Fellow at the Witherspoon Institute (Princeton), and Senior Research Scholar at the Institute for Jewish and Community Research (San Francisco). He is also a senior fellow at the Sagamore Institute for Policy Research. Professor Johnson has directed research centers at Vanderbilt University and the University of Pennsylvania. He recently completed a series of studies for the Department of Justice on the role of religion in prosocial youth behavior. He is recognized as a leading authority on the scientific study of religion, the efficacy of faith-based organizations, domestic violence, and criminal justice. Recent publications have examined the impact of faith-based programs on recidivism reduction and prisoner reentry. Johnson is working on several studies of religious intolerance and tolerance in America. Johnson's research has been used in consultation with the Department of Justice, Department of Defense, Department of Labor, and the National Institutes of Health.



**Stuart A. Wright, Professor of Sociology, Chair, Department of Sociology, Social Work and Criminal Justice, Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas**  
 Dr. Wright teaches courses in religion, social movements, and terrorism. He is a former NIMH Research Fellow (Yale) and Rockefeller Foundation Scholar-in-Residence (Bellagio, Italy). In 2000, Lamar recognized Dr. Wright with a career achievement award as University Scholar. He has authored over fifty publications in scholarly books and journals. He is known internationally for his research on religious and political movements, conflict and violence. Wright's five books include: *Armageddon in Waco* (1995), *Patriots, Politics, and the Oklahoma City Bombing* (2007) and *Saints under Siege: The Texas State Raid on the Fundamentalist Latter Day Saints* (with James T. Richardson, 2011). His current works include a cross-national study of government raids on new or minority religious communities, to be published by Oxford University Press (coauthored with Susan J. Palmer).



**Susan Palmer, Professor of Religious Studies, Dawson College, Montreal**  
 Susan Palmer is a researcher and writer in the area of new religions ("cults"). She received her Ph.D. from Concordia University where she teaches a course "Cults and Religious Controversy." She also teaches at Dawson College in the Religious Studies Department. She is working on a book project called "Storming Zion: Exploring Government Raids on Religious Communities" with Stuart A. Wright, editor of "Armageddon in Waco." She received a SSHRC standard research grant award this year to fund her research, and is planning trips to various groups in the U.S. and France who have been targets of FBI raids.



**Philip Jenkins, Distinguished Professor of History at Baylor and Co-Director, Program on Historical Studies of Religion, Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion**  
 Jenkins, one of the world's leading religion scholars and international expert on terrorism, received his Ph.D. from Cambridge University. An historian by training, his work has been lauded in many different disciplines including sociology, criminology, and religious studies. He has an enduring interest in issues of crime and deviance, and the construction of social problems. Current studies include: the study of global Christianity; new and emerging religious movements; twentieth century US history, chiefly post-1970. He has published numerous books, recent titles include *Mystics and Messiahs: Cults and New Religions in American History* (2000), *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (2006), *Jesus Wars: How Four Patriarchs, Three Queens, And Two Emperors Decided What Christians Would Believe For The Next 1,500 Years* (2010) and *Laying Down the Sword: Why We Can't Ignore the Bible's Violent Verses* (2011).