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An Ethics Primer

By Foy Valentine

A friend of mine once asked M.E. Dodd, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Shreveport, Louisiana, "Dr. Dodd, what is the secret of your great success?" Now, I am told, Dr. Dodd was not a personage burdened with false modesty. He clearly did not find the question inappropriate or the questioner undiscerning. On the contrary he responded with a ready answer: "I prepare my sermons; I never touch the money; and I shake hands with all the women."

That may be the best course outline for a lesson on Christian ethics that I have ever seen or heard about.

Think about it.

"I prepare my sermons." What he was saying I think was: I take my work seriously; I do what I am paid to do; I honor my calling; I recognize my obligation to feed the flock; I refuse to be unprepared; I will not stand in the pulpit and bore the members with vain prattle; I studiously avoid tired cliches." By taking this primary work responsibility seriously, the preacher was avoiding the proverbial church member's gentle put-down who observed

My pastor's eyes, I've never seen
Though light from them may shine,
For when he prays, he closes his
And when he preaches, mine.

Every human being is created to be homo faber, man the fabricator, man the maker, man the worker. Most of our lives are spent working. It behooves us to prepare for our work carefully, to do our work responsibly, and to improve our work performance conscientiously.

One day before he died, Renoir, with his paint brush strapped to his very badly crippled fingers, said, "I think I am beginning to learn how to paint anemones." And on his deathbed Michaelangelo told Cardinal Salivati, "I regret that I die just as I am beginning to learn the alphabet of my profession." Since M.E. Dodd thought he was called by God to preach the gospel, he rightly perceived that he was obligated to prepare his sermons. Whatever our work may be, if it is honorable work and if it helps others and honors God, then it should be done "as unto the Lord." So, whether it is teaching, farming, ranching, counseling, laying bricks, typing, sweeping the streets, washing the dishes, or preaching, "prepare your sermons."

"I never touch the money." What Dr. Dodd meant by this, I feel sure, was that he understood that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. He did not want to compromise his life or work with mammon's blandishments. Money can be seductive. A little of it is needed. A lot of it can lead to big trouble. It is a useful servant but an awful master. The acquisition of it can be addictive. By not cozying up to it, Dr. Dodd no doubt hoped to stay out of harm's way regarding what he would have known to be one of the most lethal weapons in Satan's arsenal.

Milton says that before Lucifer was cast out of heaven, he walked always with his head down, unable to take his eyes off the streets of gold.

Have you heard of the preacher, called to two different churches on the same day? Unable to decide between the two, he went to his old father in the ministry saying, "What to do? I just want to be where God is." "That's easy," said the old man, "Go where the money is. God is everywhere."

Paul said, "The laborer is worthy of his hire." Jesus said, "Don't be anxious about tomorrow." God knows our needs and will supply them out of his riches in glory through Christ Jesus. So….

"Don't touch the money."

"I shake hands with all the women," Dr. Dodd said. He meant, I should think, that he took with utmost seriousness matters related to sex, sexuality, gender, and his deportment in relationship to "members of the opposite sex." Well he should have. And well we should.

My neighbor at Red River, New Mexico hunts trophy elk with a bow and arrow. He got the best one of his life not long ago with an appeal to the old bull's excessively horny sexuality. When my neighbor shot his arrow, after patiently calling the rutting old conquistador up quite close to him, the arrow was deflected by a twig and totally missed the giant elk. While the old bull warily assessed the situation, looking all around and trying to figure out what was going on, my friend put another arrow in place and again started the siren call to draw his victim yet a few steps closer to him. Again, with his nostrils flared, the old bull stepped forward, this time close enough to receive the hunter's arrow in his very heart. I have not the heart to count the friends who have, with hormone-driven abandon and similarly flared nostrils, stepped witlessly into the line of destruction.

Adultery is wrong for many reasons. It violates God's immutable law. It destroys trust. It shatters covenant. It betrays confidence. It wounds genius. It crushes hope. It closes doors. It ruins careers. It hurts everybody it touches. (If you want more lurid details, you'll have to turn to the mass media.)

Indeed, sex, love, marriage, children, and family are major components of our lives.

S-o-o-o-o. Shake hands with all the women.

What to do?

Prepare your sermons.

Never touch the money.

Shake hands with all the women. ■

Editor: Foy Valentine
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Ten Things That Light My Fuse

By Charles Wellborn

In a recent issue of this journal my good friend, Foy Valentine, wrote a delightful article entitled "Ten Things to Light Your Fire," in which he described a number of homely human experiences that add greatly to our personal enjoyment. I read his article with appreciation and sheer pleasure. But, curmudgeon that I am, I was also inspired to write a balancing article in which I could talk about the things that light, not my fire, but my fuse.

My fuse has grown noticeably shorter as the years have passed. I have concluded, based on my own experience, that one symptom of aging is a steady increase in the level of irritability. Things that I once could shrug off with indifference now sometimes drive me to the point of distraction. It is perhaps as a means of mild catharsis that I share some of them here. Actually, my list could go on almost indefinitely, but I will restrain myself. Some of my "flash points" have to do with inanimate objects, but most concern people. Some are inconsequential; others are perhaps a bit more important.

1. ***Gadgets.*** The modern world is constantly inundated with a deluge of new and innovative gadgets, all presented to us in the name of the great god Progress. I must be a primitive man, for I am constantly frustrated by these "convenience" devices. I fight a continuing and unhappy war with milk cartons that apparently require a hacksaw to open, "child-safe" medicine bottles that defy my every attack, and mayonnaise jars that obviously should be supplied with a wrench, if one is to actually get into them.

2. ***The Telephone.*** This indispensable instrument of modern communication is my personal "bete noire," I hate it with a vengeance. My principal complaint is the automatic priority over all things which the telephone assumes. Whatever you are doing, no matter how important, you are supposed to interrupt it if the telephone begins to ring.

   Two personal illustrations. Some time ago I made an appointment with the manager of my bank to discuss some important financial matters. I kept my appointment on time and was ushered into the manager's office. We had hardly begun our conversation, however, when the manager's desk telephone sounded. He immediately ignored me, with hardly a nod of apology, and spent the next five minutes chatting with his unseen caller. I wanted to shout at him, "Look, I took the trouble to make an appointment and travel across town to see you personally on an important matter. I deserve first consideration here." I did not, however, vent my irritation. I realized that both of us were the slaves of that inanimate object on his desk.

   Some years ago I was in the Miami, Florida, airport, waiting to catch a flight. An unexpected difficulty had arisen and I needed urgently to talk to someone at my airline, and I had limited time. When I made my way to the counter, I found myself at the end of a line of some twenty people, all waiting to speak to a rather harassed young lady. My anxiety increased as the line moved with snail-like pace. As I waited impatiently, I glanced at my travel documents and spotted an information telephone number which I could call. I quickly made my way to a nearby telephone and dialed the number. I was answered immediately and put my question to the person on the line. From where I was making my call I could see the airline counter I had just left. To my amazement I realized I was talking to the young lady at the counter. She had interrupted her dealing with a another passenger in order to take my call. Moments later I was on my way, looking with a twinge of guilty sympathy at the long line of waiting people.

   One other caveat about the telephone. My day has often been ruined by the experience of ringing a business phone, only to be greeted by a disembodied mechanical voice which instructs me to go through a long menu, in the course of which I am required to press nine different buttons. More often than not I hang up in frustration, having not achieved my goal and having never succeeded in speaking to a single living person.

3. ***Cashiers.*** I am offended by the theater or restaurant cashier who automatically gives me a senior citizen discount before I even ask for it. I know I've lost most of my hair and the age lines are on my face. I just don't like being reminded of it every time I turn around. I long for that never-to-be-realized moment when I do ask for the discount, only to be met with the response, "Do you have any proof of your age?" Oh, what joy!

4. ***Computers.*** I am computer-illiterate. I realize what a monstrous confession that is to make in these technological times, but it happens at the moment to be my choice. It does get to me when some of my friends, who apparently spend hours glued to the computer, surfing the Internet, ask me for my e-mail address. When I confess that I have no such thing, only an ordinary street address, their looks of pitying sympathy give me the message that they consider me somewhat retarded.

   We may well be a dying breed, but some of us still prefer

to do our writing in other ways. I have a successful author friend who refuses even to use a typewriter, writing his manuscripts with an ordinary pencil on a yellow legal pad. His creative juices don't flow in front of a keyboard. I'm on his side.

5. ***Television.*** Television supplies me with almost unlimited points of irritability. I am upset, for instance, by the makers of commercials who apparently believe that sex, in one form or another, will sell everything from toothpaste to automobiles. Equally offensive are lengthy, sensationalized advertisements which, so far as I can determine, have absolutely no relation to the virtues of the product being advertised.

   But my biggest complaint has to do with television "talk-shows." Hours of viewing time are used by pathetic individuals pouring out to the nation the sordid stories of their failures and depravities. I believe less than 10 per cent of what they say, and I have a sneaking suspicion that some of these people, using wigs or other means of disguise, move effortlessly from one program to another, making up new tales as they go. I suppose all of this is symptomatic of what appears to be a world-wide phenomenon: the apparent need of so many people in public life to bear their souls in well-publicized confessionals. Does it never occur to these people that stories appropriate to a counseling room or a psychiatrist's couch are not necessarily fit subjects for public discussion?

   If I had my way, Jerry Springer, Ricki Lake, Montel Oprah Williams et al. (including even, perhaps, the sainted Ophra) would be locked up together in a small room, without a television camera, and forced to listen interminably as each one of them confessed in detail every unsavory and sordid detail of their own personal and private lives.

6. ***Politicians.*** I confess that almost all politicians irritate me a good deal of the time. I have a particular animus against the political candidate who uses the last two weeks of the campaign to air television commercials proclaiming every negative aspect of his opponent, with blatant assertions that reflect what he believes, surmises, or even imagines from his totally biased viewpoint, to be true.

   I profoundly distrust the politician who speaks in well-worn clichés, indulges in populist rabble-rousing with little regard for the truth, or relies upon carefully crafted "spin-bites" to put his case across.

   And I long for politicians who are also statesmen, exercising their own consciences and careful judgment about important matters. The Clinton affair—clearly a complex and ambiguous morass of constitutional issues—is a case in point. It says little for the wisdom and patriotism of the United States Congress that virtually every vote in the whole was cast along strict party lines. So that I may not be misunderstood, that's a bipartisan condemnation.

7. ***Proof-texts.*** In the narrower field of my own profession I am constantly upset by preachers and would-be theologians who build doctrinal arguments on the basis of carefully selected snippets of Scripture, often taken completely out of context. Don't these individuals understand that a legitimate Biblical affirmation must be supported by the overall tone and teaching of the Scriptures, rather than by one obscure verse from the Book of Daniel and another from the Revelation of St. John the Divine?

8. ***Millennial "bugs."*** So far as I am concerned the most frightening thing about the approaching millennium is not the possibility something may go wrong with our computers when the date changes to January 1, 2000, but the irrational significance that sensation-seeking doomsday prophets apply to that date. Calendars and clocks are purely human contrivances, designed to measure human time. They have nothing to do with eternal time, and I seriously doubt that God ever looks at a calendar. If these people had any sense of history, they would realize that the same hysteria over "magic" dates has occurred again and again, always resulting finally in bitter disappointment and disillusionment for the credulous who have once again been cruelly misled.

9. ***Super-churches.*** I have a real thing about super-churches. I'm sure there are people who profit spiritually from their involvement in them, but I can't escape the feeling that there is something terribly incongruous about a Christian

church which spends millions on an elaborate facility equipped with every possible recreational device and headed by a pastor who, far from being an humble servant of the Lord, has become a corporation entrepreneur, paid an inordinate salary, dressed in an Armani suit, and driving a Jaguar.

I often remember an experience with my old friend, Carlyle Marney. As we strolled through one of these mammoth religious monuments, surrounded by the trappings of affluence on every side, Marney smiled wistfully, raised his head piously toward Heaven, and murmured, "Lord, we have left all to follow Thee."

10. ***One-eyed academics.*** I spent more than 25 years of my working professional life on a university campus, where I constantly brushed shoulders with men and women from other disciplines than my own—the natural sciences, sociology, economics, business studies. I say "brushed shoulders" because, with a good many of these individuals, there could be little interchange of ideas or dialogue. They had long ago decided that truth was their own special province. Nothing could be regarded as having intellectual worth unless it had been verified in their laboratories or supported by long tables of statistical data. Many of them were historically illiterate in the broad sense and had no concept of the centuries of careful thinking and experience that have gone into building up a vast body of spiritual and philosophical knowledge. They had cut themselves off from the most important part of the human story, and they were intellectually and spiritually impoverished. They looked at all life through only one eye.

I knew when I started writing this article that I could easily get carried away, and so I have. I have no time or space to finish my list of "flash-points." I haven't talked about men and boys who wear baseball caps backward, older women who plaster their faces with heavy make-up in a vain attempt to look a mite younger, parents who take their children into public places like restaurants and then don't control their behavior, men who sport obvious hairpieces, telephone salespersons who ring me up at the dinner hour and try to sell me double-glazing, people who let their mobile phones ring in the middle of theater performances or concerts, etc., etc., etc. I would have no stopping point.

In airing my personal peeves and prejudices, I have probably revealed more about myself than I wanted anyone to know. But I take comfort in two things. First, aging has brought me the luxury of not worrying too much about "political correctness." I also feel no compulsion to be overly tolerant of those things in life that don't really deserve tolerance. And, second, I am rather certain that "lighting my fuse" once in a while is a thoroughly therapeutic exercise, making me, in the long run, a more balanced human being who is, perhaps, easier to live with.

And so, "happy irritations" to one and all. ■

The Mess We're In

[From "The Bright Side of the Plague," a review of The Black Death and the Transformation of the West by David Herlithy. This review by Joel E. Cohen was published in The New York Review, March 4, 1999.]

…In the twentieth century, the supply of people has surged to unprecedented levels. The absolute number of people has nearly quadrupled, from perhaps 1.6 billion at the beginning of the century to just over 6 billion expected by its end. Since World War II, the growth rate of global population has been, and remains, higher than ever before in history. To judge by the preventable ills of the human population today, people collectively are valued cheaply. Three quarters of a billion people are chronically undernourished; at least another billion are malnourished; a billion adults are illiterate; perhaps two billion people are infected with the tuberculosis bacillus (with hundreds of millions more under threat from other infectious diseases); and roughly four fifths of the world's population live on average annual incomes of approximately $1,100…. ■

Living in the New Dispensation

By Harvey Cox

[Dr. Harvey Cox is professor of Christian Ethics at the Divinity School of Harvard University. He is the author of the widely influential book, *The Secular City* and his most recent book is *Fire From Heaven,* an immensely significant study of Pentecostalism. An expanded version of the article printed here will appear shortly in a collection of essays honoring Robert Bellah. Under the title, "The Market as God," this article was printed in the March issue of *The Atlantic Monthly,* Volume 283, Number 3, March, 1999, pages 18-23 and
is used here with that journal's kind permission together with the permission of Professor Cox who has been a friend for a long, long time.]

A few years ago a friend advised me that if I wanted to know what was going on in the real world, I should read the business pages. Although my lifelong interest has been in the study of religion, I am always willing to expand my horizons; so I took the advice, vaguely fearful that I would have to cope with a new and baffling vocabulary. Instead I was surprised to discover that most of the concepts I ran across were quite familiar.

Expecting a terra incognito, I found myself instead in the land of déjà vu. The lexicon of *The Wall Street Journal* and the business sections of Time and Newsweek turned out to bear a striking resemblance to Genesis, the epistle to the Romans, and Saint Augustine's City of God. Behind descriptions of market reforms, monetary policy, and the convolutions of the Dow, I gradually made out the pieces of a grand narrative about the inner meaning of human history, why things had gone wrong, and how to put them right . Theologians call these myths of origin, legends of the fall, and doctrines of sin and redemption. But here they were again, and in only thin disguise: chronicles about the creation of wealth, the seductive temptations of statism, captivity to faceless economic cycles, and, ultimately, salvation through the advent of free markets, with a small dose of ascetic belt tightening along the way, especially for the East Asian economies.

The East Asians' troubles, votaries argue, derive from their heretical deviation from free-market orthodoxy—they were practitioners of "crony capitalism," of "ethnocapitalism," of "statist capitalism," not of the one true faith. The East Asian financial panics, the Russian debt repudiations, the Brazilian economic turmoil, and the U.S. stock market's $1.5 trillion "correction" momentarily shook belief in the new dispensation. But faith is strengthened by adversity, and the Market God is emerging renewed from its trial by financial "contagion." Since the argument from design no longer proves its existence, it is fast becoming a postmodern deity—believed in despite the evidence. Alan Greenspan vindicated this tempered faith in testimony before Congress last October. A leading hedge fund had just lost billions of dollars, shaking market confidence and precipitating calls for new federal regulation. Greenspan, usually Delphic in his comments, was decisive. He believed that regulation would only impede these markets, and that they should continue to be self-regulated. True faith, the author of Hebrews tells us, is the evidence of things unseen.

Soon I began to marvel at just how comprehensive the business theology is. There were even sacraments to convey salvific power to the lost, a calendar of entrepreneurial saints, and what theologians call an "eschatology"—a teaching about the "end of history." My curiosity was piqued. I began cataloging these strangely familiar doctrines, and I saw that in fact there lies embedded in the business pages an entire theology, which is comparable in scope if not in profundity to that of Thomas Aquinas or Karl Barth. It needed only to be systematized for a whole new *Summa* to take place.

At the apex of any theological system, of course, is its doctrine of God. In the new theology this celestial pinnacle is occupied by The Market, which I capitalize to signify both the mystery that enshrouds it and the reverence it inspires in business folk. Different faiths have, of course, different views of the divine attributes. In Christianity, God has sometimes been defined as omnipotent (possessing all power), omniscient (having all knowledge), and omnipresent (existing everywhere). Most Christian theologies, it is true, hedge a bit. They teach that these qualities of the divinity are indeed *there,* but are hidden from human eyes both by human sin and by the transcendence of the divine itself. In "light inaccessible" they are, as the old hymn puts it, "hid from our eyes." Likewise, although The Market, we are assured, possesses these divine attributes, they are not always completely evident to mortals but must be trusted and affirmed by faith. "Further along," as another old gospel song says, "We'll understand why."

As I tried to follow the arguments and explanations of the economist-theologians who justify The Market's ways to men, I spotted the same dialectics I have grown fond of in the many years I have pondered the Thomists, the Calvinists, and the various schools of modern religious thought. In particular, the econologians' rhetoric resembles what is sometimes called "process theology," a relatively contemporary trend influenced by the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. In this school although God *wills* to possess the classic attributes, He does

not yet possess them in full, but is definitely moving in that direction. This conjecture is of immense help to theologians for obvious reasons. It answers the bothersome puzzle of theodicy: why a lot of bad things happen that an omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient God—especially a benevolent one—would not countenance. Process theology also seems to offer considerable comfort to the theologians of The Market. It helps to explain the dislocation, pain, and disorientation that are the result of transitions from economic heterodoxy to free markets.

Since the earliest stages of human history, of course, there have been bazaars, rialtos, and trading posts—all markets. But The Market was never God, because there were other centers of value and meaning, other "gods." The Market operated within a plethora of other institutions that restrained it. As Karl Polanyi has demonstrated in his classic work *The Great Transformation,* only in the past two centuries has The Market risen above these demigods and chthonic spirits to become today's First Cause.

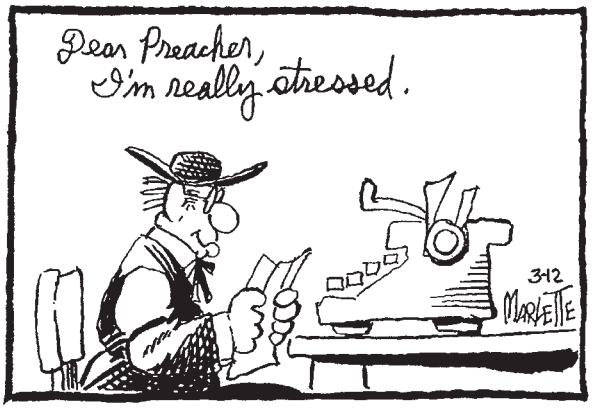
Initially The Market's rise to Olympic supremacy replicated the gradual ascent of Zeus above all the other divinities of the ancient Greek pantheon, an ascent that was never quite secure. Zeus, it will be recalled, had to keep storming down from Olympus to quell this or that threat to his sovereignty. Recently, however, The Market is becoming more like the Yahweh of the Old Testament—not just one superior deity contending with others but the Supreme Diety, the only true God, whose reign must now be universally accepted and who allows for no rivals.

Divine *omnipotence* means the capacity to define what is real. It is the power to make something out of nothing and nothing out of something. The willed-but-not-yet-achieved omnipotence of The Market means that there is no conceivable limit to its inexorable ability to convert creation into commodities. But again, this is hardly a new idea, though it has a new twist. In Catholic theology, through what is called "transubstantiation," ordinary bread and wine become vehicles of the holy. In the mass of The Market a reverse process occurs. Things that have been held sacred transmute into interchangeable items for sale. Land is a good example. For millennia it has held various meanings, many of them numinous. It has been Mother Earth, ancestral resting place, holy mountain, enchanted forest, tribal homeland, aesthetic inspiration, sacred turf, and much more. But when The Market's Sanctus bell rings and the elements are elevated, all these complex meanings of land melt into one: real estate. At the right price no land is not for sale, and this includes everything from burial grounds to the cove of the local fertility sprite. This radical desacralization dramatically alters the human relationship to land; the same happens with water, air, space, and soon (it is predicted) the heavenly bodies.

At the high moment of the mass the priest says, "This is my body," meaning the body of Christ, and, by extension, the bodies of all the faithful people. Christianity and Judaism both teach that the human body is made "in the image of God." Now, however, in a dazzling display of reverse transubstantiation, the human body has become the latest sacred vessel to be converted into a commodity. The process began, fittingly enough, with blood. But now, or soon, all bodily organs—kidneys, skin, bone marrow, sperm, the heart itself—will be miraculously changed into purchasable items.

Still, the liturgy of The Market is not proceeding without some opposition from the pews. A considerable battle is shaping up in the United States, for example, over the attempt to merchandise human genes. A few years ago, banding together for the first time in memory, virtually all the religious institutions in the country, from the liberal National Council of Churches to the Catholic bishops to the Christian Coalition, opposed the gene mart, the newest theophany of The Market. But these critics are followers of what are now "old religions," which, like the goddess cults that were thriving when the worship of the vigorous young Apollo began sweeping ancient Greece, may not have the strength to slow the spread of the new devotion.

Occasionally backsliders try to bite the Invisible Hand that feeds them. On October 26, 1996, the German government ran an ad offering the entire village of Liebenberg, in what used to be East Germany, for sale—with no previous notice to its some 350 residents. Leibenberg's citizens, many of them elderly or unemployed, stared at the notice in disbelief. They had certainly loathed communism, but when they opted for the market economy that reunification promised, they



hardly expected this. Liebenberg includes a thirteenth-century church, a Baroque castle, a lake, a hunting lodge, two restaurants, and 3,000 acres of meadow and forest. Once a favorite site for boar hunting by the old German nobility, it was obviously entirely too valuable a parcel of real estate to overlook. Besides, having been expropriated by the East German Communist government, it was now legally eligible for sale under the terms of German reunification. Overnight Leibenberg became a living parable, providing an invaluable glimpse of the Kingdom in which The Market's will is indeed done. But the outraged burghers of the town did not feel particularly blessed. They complained loudly, and the sale was finally postponed. Everyone in town realized, however, that it was not really a victory. The Market, like Yahweh, may lose a skirmish, but in a war of attrition it will always win in the end.

Of course, religion in the past has not been reluctant to charge for its services. Prayers, masses, blessings, healings, baptisms, funerals, and amulets have been hawked, and still are. Nor has religion always been sensitive to what the traffic would bear. When, in the early sixteenth century, Johann Tetzel jacked up the price of indulgences and even had one of the first singing commercials composed to push sales ("When the coin into the platter pings, the soul out of purgatory springs"), he failed to realize that he was overreaching. The customers balked, and a young Augustinian monk brought the traffic to a standstill with a placard tacked to a church door.

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It would be a lot harder for a Luther to interrupt sales of The Market's amulets today. As the people of Liebenberg discovered, everything can now be bought. Lakes, meadows, church buildings—everything carries a sticker price. But this practice itself exacts a cost. As everything in what used to be called creation becomes a commodity, human beings begin to look at one another, and at themselves, in a funny way, and they see colored price tags. There was a time when people spoke, at least occasionally, of "inherent worth"—if not of things, then at least of persons. The Liebenberg principle changes all that. One wonders what would become of a modern Luther who tried to post his theses on the church door, only to find that the whole edifice had been bought by an American billionaire who reckoned it might look nicer on his estate.

It is comforting to note that the *citizens* of Liebenberg, at least, were not put on the block. But that raises a good question. What is the value of a human life in the theology of The Market? Here the new deity pauses, but not for long. The computation may be complex, but it is not impossible. We should not believe, for example, that if a child is born severely handicapped, unable to be "productive," The Market will decree its death. One must remember that the profits derived from medications, leg braces, and CAT-scan equipment should also be figured into the equation. Such a cost analysis might result in a close call—but the inherent worth of the child's life, since it cannot be quantified, would be hard to include in the calculation.

It is sometimes said that since everything is for sale under the rule of The Market, nothing is sacred. But this is not quite true. About three years ago a nasty controversy erupted in Great Britain when a railway pension fund that owned the small jeweled casket in which the remains of Saint Thomas a Becket are said to have rested decided to auction it off through Sotheby's. The casket dates from the twelfth century and is revered as both a sacred relic and national treasure. The British Museum made an effort to buy it but lacked the funds, so the casket was sold to a Canadian. Only last-minute measures by the British government prevented removal of the casket from the United Kingdom. In principle, however, in the theology of The Market, there is no reason why any relic, coffin, body, or national monument—including the Statue of Liberty and Westminster Abbey—should not be listed. Does anyone doubt that if the True Cross were ever really discovered, it would eventually find its way to Sotheby's? The Market is not omnipotent—yet. But the process is under way and it is gaining momentum.

Omniscience is a little harder to gauge than omnipotence. Maybe The Market has already achieved it but is unable—temporarily—to apply its gnosis until its Kingdom and Power come in their fullness. Nonetheless, current thinking already assigns The Market a comprehensive wisdom that in the past only the gods have known. The Market, we are taught, is able to determine what human needs are, what copper and capital should cost, how much barbers and CEOs should be paid, and how much jet planes, running shoes, and hysterectomies should sell for. But how do we know The Market's will?

In days of old, seers entered a trance state and then informed anxious seekers what kind of mood the gods were in, and whether this was an auspicious time to begin a journey, get

married, or start a war. The prophets of Israel repaired to the desert and then returned to announce whether Yahweh was feeling benevolent or wrathful. Today The Market's fickle will is clarified by daily reports from Wall Street and other sensory organs of finance. Thus we can learn on a day-to-day basis that The Market is "apprehensive," "relieved," "nervous," or even at times "jubilant." On the basis of this revelation awed adepts make critical decisions about whether to buy or sell. Like one of the devouring gods of old, The Market—aptly embodied in a bull or a bear—must be fed and kept happy under all circumstances. True, at times its appetite may seem excessive—a $35 billion bailout here, a $50 billion one there—but the alternative to assuaging its hunger is too terrible to contemplate.

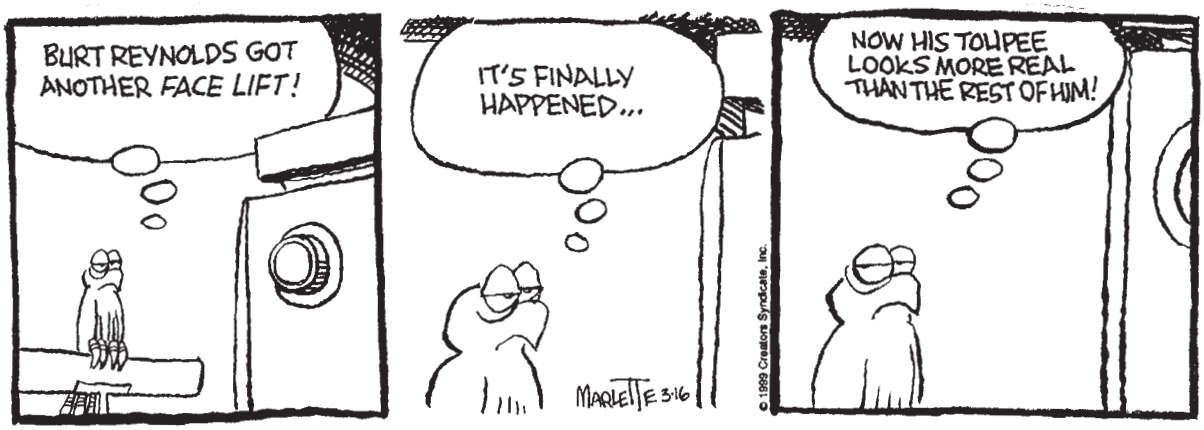
The diviners and seers of The Market's moods are the high priests of its mysteries. To act against their admonitions, is to risk excommunciation and possibly damnation. Today, for example, if any government's policy vexes The Market, those responsible for the irreverence will be made to suffer. That The Market is not at all displeased by downsizing or a growing income gap, or can be gleeful about the expansion of cigarette sales to Asian young people, should not cause anyone to question its ultimate omniscience. Like Calvin's inscrutable deity, The Market may work in mysterious ways, "hid from our eyes," but ultimately it knows best.

Omniscience can sometimes seem a bit intrusive. The traditional God of the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer is invoked as one "unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid." Like Him, The Market already knows the deepest secrets and darkest desires of our hearts—or at least would like to know them. But one suspects that divine motivation differs in these two cases. Clearly The Market wants this kind of x-ray omniscience because of probing our inmost fears and desires and then dispensing across-the-board solutions, it can further extend its reach. Like the gods of the past, whose priests offered up the fervent prayers and petitions of the people, The Market relies on its own intermediaries: motivational researchers. Trained in the advanced art of psychology, which has long since replaced theology as the true "science of the soul," the modern heirs of the medieval confessors delve into the hidden fantasies, insecurities, and hopes of the populace.

One sometimes wonders, in this era of Market religion, where the skeptics and freethinkers have gone. What has happened to the Voltaires who once exposed bogus miracles, and the H.L. Menekens who blew shrill whistles on pious humbuggery? Such is the grip of current orthodoxy that to question the omniscience of The Market is to question the inscrutable wisdom of Providence. The metaphysical principle is obvious: If you say it's the real thing, then it must *be* the real thing. As the early Christian theologian Tertullian once remarked, *"Credo quia absurdum est"* ("I believe because it is absurd").

Finally, there is the divinity's will to be omnipresent. Virtually every religion teaches this idea in one way or another, and the new religion is no exception. The latest trend in economic theory is the attempt to apply market calculations to areas that once appeared to be exempt, such as dating, family life, marital relations, and child-rearing. Henri Lepage, an enthusiastic advocate of globalization, now speaks about a "total market." Saint Paul reminded the Athenians that their own poets sang of a God "in whom we live and move and have our being"; so now The Market is not only around us but inside us, informing our senses and our feelings. There seems to be nowhere left to flee from its untiring quest. Like the Hound of Heaven, it pursues us home from the mall and into the nursery and the bedroom.

It used to be thought—mistakenly, as it turns out—that at least the innermost, or "spiritual," dimension of life was resistant to The Market. It seemed unlikely that the interior castle would ever be listed by Century 21. But as the markets for material goods become increasingly glutted, such previously unmarketable states of grace as serenity and tranquillity are now appearing in the catalogues. Your personal vision quest can take place in unspoiled wildernesses that are pictured as virtually unreachable—except, presumably, by the other people who read the same catalogue. Furthermore, ecstasy and spirituality are now offered in a convenient generic form. Thus The Market makes available the religious benefits that once required prayer and fasting, without the awkwardness of denominational commitment or the tedious ascetic discipline that once limited their accessibility. All can now handily be bought without an unrealistic demand on one's time, in a weekend workshop at a Caribbean resort with a sensitive psychological consultant



replacing the crotchety retreat master.

Discovering the theology of The Market made me begin to think in a different way about the conflict among religions. Violence between Catholics and Protestants in Ulster or Hindus and Muslims in India often dominates the headlines. But I have come to wonder whether the real clash of religions (or even of civilizations) may be going unnoticed. I am beginning to think that for all the religions of the world, however they may differ from one another, the religion of The Market has become the most formidable rival, the more so because it is rarely recognized as a religion. The traditional religions and the religion of the global market, as we have seen, hold radically different views of nature. In Christianity and Judaism, for example, "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and all that dwell therein." The Creator appoints human beings as stewards and gardeners but, as it were, retains title to the earth. Other faiths have similar ideas. In The Market religion, however, human beings, more particularly those with money, own anything they buy and—within certain limits—can dispose of anything as they choose. Other contradictions can be seen in ideas about the human body, the nature of human community, and the purpose of life. The older religions encourage archaic attachments to particular places. But in The Market's eyes all places are interchangeable. The Market prefers a homogenized world culture with as few inconvenient particularities as possible.

Disagreements among the traditional religions become picayune in comparison with the fundamental differences they all have with the religion of The Market. Will this lead to a new jihad or crusade? I doubt it. It seems unlikely that traditional religions will rise to the occasion and challenge the doctrines of the new dispensation. Most of them seem content to become its acolytes, or to be absorbed into its pantheon, much as the old Nordic deities, after putting up a game fight, eventually settled for a diminished but secure status as Christian saints. I am usually a keen supporter of ecumenism. But the contradictions between the world views of the traditional religions on the one hand and the world view of The Market religion on the other are so basic that no compromise seems possible, and I am secretly hoping for a rebirth of polemics.

No religion, new or old, is subject to empirical proof, so what we have is a contest between faiths. Much is at stake. The Market, for example, strongly prefers individualism and mobility. Since it needs to shift people to wherever production requires them, it becomes wrathful when people cling to local traditions. These belong to the older dispensations and—like the high places at the Baalim—should be plowed under. But maybe not. Like previous religions, the new one has ingenious ways of incorporating pre-existing ones. Hindu temples, Buddhist festivals, and Catholic saints' shrines can look forward to new incarnations. Along with native costumes and spicy food, they will be allowed to provide local color and authenticity in what could otherwise turn out to be an extremely bland Beulah Land.

There is, however, one contradiction between the religion of The Market and the traditional religions that seems to be insurmountable. All of the traditional religions teach that human beings are finite creatures and that there are limits to any earthly enterprise. A Japanese Zen master once said to his disciples as he was dying, "I have learned only one thing in life: how much is enough." He would find no niche in the chapel of The Market, for whom the First Commandment is "There is never enough." Like the proverbial shark that stops moving, The Market that stops expanding dies. That could happen. If it does, then Nietzsche will have been right after all. He will just have had the wrong God in mind. ■

It's Hard to be Humble

By Hal Haralson

[Hal Haralson practices law in Austin, Texas.]

There's a song that goes, "Oh Lord, it's hard to be humble, when you're perfect in every way."

I have had a problem with this perfection business since I was in the primary department of the First Baptist Church of Loraine, Texas.

That was about 1941.

It all began in Sunday School. We had an envelope where we placed our offering and checked off:

Present	X
On Time	X
Studied Lesson	X
Offering	X

We lived 8 1/2 miles down a dirt road from church, but Mother always saw to it that we (my brother, Dale, was two years younger) could check every one of the boxes above.

That meant we were perfect….Gold Star!

At the "graduation ceremony" we were given a "gold" bar which attached to our other bars on our left lapel.

Dale and I still walk with a slight limp due to the weight of the bars.

Mrs. Thornhill and Mrs. Johnson were the leaders of the Department. They were only slightly younger than God and spoke with great authority.

When they said you were perfect, you began to believe it.

At age 9, we became "Pages" (the lowest rank) in one of the most active RA (Royal Ambassador) Chapters in West Texas. This was the Baptist missionary organization for boys. Sort of a religious Boy Scout Chapter.

By the time we were 15, we had attained the rank of Ambassador Plenipotentiary (the highest rank), the first in West Texas to do so.

There were recognition ceremonies, capes and shields, and swords that whacked the fiery darts of the wicked.

Talk about perfection!

I had a scrapbook two inches thick that had projects approved and signed by Jimmy Allen, the state RA leader.

I could recite the stops on all of Paul's missionary journeys and tell you what happened at each place, starting at either end.

I became concerned about the 90% who weren't perfect. Their lives must be miserable.

Thirty years later, being in the top 10% was the big thing in the University of Texas School of Law. If you were in the top 10%, you got a good job. If you weren't, you were out in the cold.

Perfection was still rearing its ugly head.

For the first time in my life, I didn't make it. I wasn't perfect. It was a blow to my ego. It was also a great lesson in life for me.

There were other things that had a higher priority than law school, like my wife and our three children.

I've known some people who put grades, work, and money first, and wound up losing their families.

I've come to realize that God doesn't expect me to be perfect. He loves me the way I am. He made me that way and "God don't make no junk."

Judy fusses at me for chewing tobacco. Now I don't chew except when I'm at the deer lease or out at the barn. I've got this bad habit well under control. A little "Levi Garret" is good for the soul.

"Besides," I tell my wife, "this is the only sin I have and without it, I would be perfect."

"There's nobody more obnoxious than somebody who is perfect."

Jesus spent his time with crude, cussing fishermen and women whose backgrounds were not exactly what you would want for someone teaching a Sunday School class at First Baptist Church.

These were "imperfect people."

The only "perfect" people around were Pharisees. They were the only group of people Jesus had little to do with.

Maybe it's a good thing it's hard to be perfect. Keeps us humble. ■

Truth: Can We Do Without It?

By Dallas Willard

[Dr. Dallas Willard is professor of philosophy at the University of Southern California. The material presented here is a slightly edited version of remarks he made at Southern Methodist University in the 1998-1999 Luncheon Series of addresses sponsored by Dallas Christian Leadership. I am indebted to my friend, Robert Glaze who heard it, secured a tape of it, and recommended it to me for possible inclusion in this journal. Since Dr. Willard does not use a manuscript for such speaking, we transcribed it and submitted it to Dr. Willard for such changes as he deemed appropriate; and we are indebted to him for his helpful attention to this project and for his permission to share it in this form with the readers of *Christian Ethics Today.*]

"Truth in the Academy: Can We Really Do Without It?" You might be surprised at the suggestion that we might do without it. But while truth is featured on various buildings, public and private, it is little honored in the academy. On my philosophy building at USC is written, "The truth shall make you free." It is perhaps the single most commonly inscribed saying on university buildings and it testifies to the origins of the university enterprise. (Except, of course, for those things that are written with spray paint cans.)

Truth is in trouble. It is in trouble for various reasons. This comes out when I open my courses. Usually I will open my courses by asking the students, "Why are we taking this course?" And after we've gone through the trivialities like "to get credits," "to graduate," "to get a job," and so on, then I finally come around and say, "Now really is that it? I thought this study was about knowledge. I thought it was about coming to know something. I thought it was about getting a grasp on truth about things, and, on the basis of that truth, being able to deal effectively with reality." It's strange language to them, friends. It is a part of our public discourse that has changed and it permeates everything we do.

Sometimes I will half jokingly say to them as they hand me their tests after an exam, "Did you believe what you wrote?" And they all smile. Because they know that the important thing is not to believe what you write but to write the "right answers." And unfortunately that is a very encapsulated way of indicating what happens when we lose truth. When we lose truth, there's nothing left but conformity. And that is a sober thought which I hope you will dwell on for just a moment. What my students are actually giving to me is the power to enforce what the right answer is, whether that answer is true or not. But of course the right answer might be false, might it not? You've probably had some experience with right answers which turned out to be false. And we can think of reality as what you run into when you are wrong. And if you do, you'll recognize that most of us have some first hand acquaintance with reality and truth, which are so vital and so important for human life that we can't really survive in the academy or elsewhere without them.

I just want to say a few simple but clear things about truth. I wish that all of us might, if we haven't already, become very clear in our minds about what truth is. Sometimes certain truths are very hard to be clear about, but just understand now that for the moment I'm not talking about truths in the plural. Of course they are important and we want to come to those at the end of this presentation. But I want to talk to you first about truth in the singular.

What is "truth"? Now if you are very highly paid, or if you're a political leader, you might with Francis Bacon when he opens his essay on truth say, "What is truth?", suggesting Pilate who would not stay for an answer. But you have to be in an unusual position to say that. You would not accept that question from a child who had just absconded with the cookies. If they said to you, "What is truth?" when you ask them what happened to the cookies, you'd know something was badly out of shape. They couldn't even say it all depends on what the meaning of truth is. But if you're a highly paid professor or political leader you can say that sort of thing.

The first thing I want to say to you, then, that what truth is is very simple and very obvious. One of our leading contemporary philosophers, Michael Dummitt, has a book, an interesting and important book called *Truth and Other Enigmas.* A part of our problem, to start out with, is the idea that there is something deeply mysterious about truth, and I hope to dispel that idea, if at all possible, before we go on to talk about why truth is so important. A representation or statement or belief is true if what it is about is as it is presented in the representation or belief or truth. I'm going to say that again. An idea or statement or belief is true if what it is about is as it is presented. That's simple isn't it? You know how to do it. Someone says, "The broom is in the closet." You know how to find out whether or not that statement is true, don't you? You go look at the broom in the closet. There are various ways, sometimes not as directly. If someone says, "There's gas in your tank," and then your car sputters to a halt and your gauge goes down, you don't have to climb into the tank; you know you're out of gas. Truth is the same everywhere it shows up. It's not always directly verifiable but truth is always that

matching up of an idea to reality. And we learn it from a very young age. We know what truth is. You ask a little child. If you make him a promise and don't keep it, they will instruct you on truth. They know what it is. They learn to manipulate it by lying. No one ever had to teach their children to lie. It's such an obvious thing. And the nature of truth is extremely clear and obvious. If it weren't for that fact, we wouldn't be able to deal with the simplest situations around us that we think about and talk about.

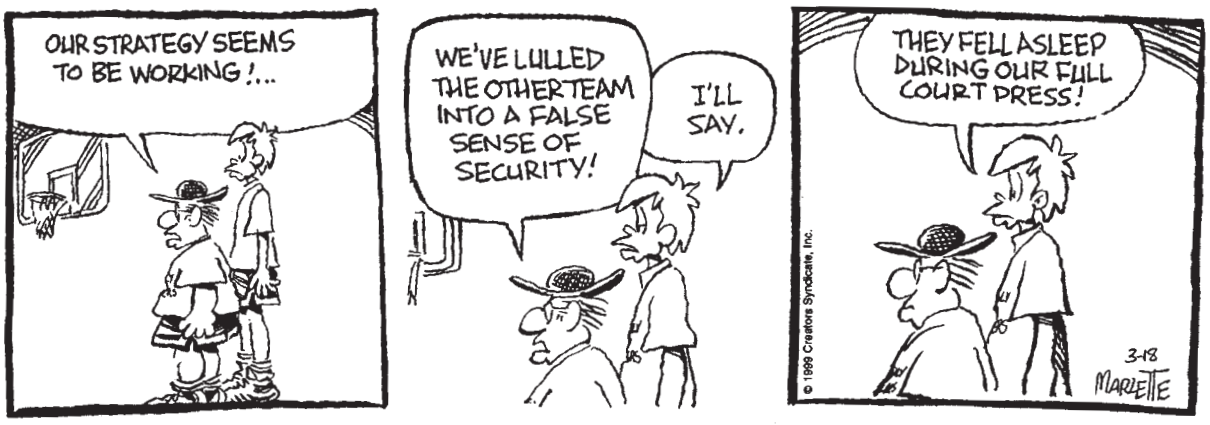
The next thing I want to say is this. That matching up that occurs with truth is totally indifferent to what you may believe or I may believe. No one has ever yet made a belief true by believing it. Try it. Try making a belief true just by believing it or by having an attitude of some sort towards it. Believe there's gas in your tank. It won't help. Get two other people to believe it with you. Start a political movement, the "gas in the tank movement." It won't help. Of course you can put gas in your tank but you can't do that by believing it, by being favorably disposed to it. Or anything else in the way of mere belief. That structure of matching up or not matching up is not affected by what we believe. That's why the statement, "True for me" is so destructive. What it does is that it actually substitutes belief for truth. Belief, of course, is relative. A proposition is believed only if someone believes it. But you can't "truth" a belief by believing it. You can't make a fact exist just by believing it. It's important for us to understand these things. Truth is so important that we cannot fail to understand that it is unyielding in the face of beliefs. A mass movement will not change truths though sometimes it helps to have lots of company if you have to get the government to pay for the consequences of believing something that is false. It may help, then, to have a lot of people on the same side.

Truth is a part of what God has put in creation to help us deal with reality. Truth is like the aim of a rifle or a gun or some kind of mechanism. If it is right, it enables you to hit the target. If our beliefs are true we are enabled to deal with reality effectively. I hope that's so obvious that I don't need to take time to illustrate it further. But it is not generally understood. And the idea that truth is somehow enigmatic and unrecognizable, the idea that somehow it's relative, is what pervades our culture today. This is a tragedy. Precisely because it encourages us not to try to find out the truth and especially the truth about the most important things in our lives.

Politics and truth come together in an important way precisely because truth is so important to human life. And political issues are issues where we have to get a group to act in a certain way together. And in order to get that group to act in a certain way together, we have to make truth claims. And the truth claims, which unfortunately, are not always true, provide the basis for group action. Insofar as we can convince people of truth we are able to move them to action. That's really just a part of action theory if you wish. It's what an action is. We're built to act from our beliefs; and our beliefs, when they are true, enable us to deal with reality.

Truth is also the only basis of tolerance. And now we come to a really difficult area in contemporary discussions. I say truth is the only basis for tolerance. Some months ago at the outset of the course on what truth is, I had a young man who walked up to me and said, "It was all quite convincing; but of course I couldn't accept it because I'm a liberal." I thought about that. This was a perfectly spontaneous comment. He was completely sincere, but he had accepted the idea that only if truth is relative, can you not be oppressive. And of course, he didn't want to be oppressive. Who does? He certainly didn't want to be. So he thought that the consequences of accepting truth as I am very simply presenting it here, was that he could no longer be a nice person. So he wasn't going to do it. No matter how convincing I was.

That's a very strange conception when you stop to think about it. We have a long tradition of political and religious tolerance in our country. It's true that perhaps it has not always been lived up to, but we have tradition. But that idea of tolerance was based upon the idea that tolerance is good. It was based upon the idea that there is moral truth, that there is a right and wrong way to treat other people; and in the absence of that, tolerance itself is without foundation. The only basis of tolerance is truth. Tolerance has suffered a great deal recently in our religious and political and educational areas. And tolerance, because truth has been pulled away from it, has slipped over into the idea that everything is equally right. No longer is tolerance a matter of saying, "I disagree with you and I believe



you're wrong, but I accept you and I extend to you the right to be wrong." That's not enough. We're now in a situation where everyone must be equally right, where you cannot say that people are wrong and still love them. We used to say humorously, "Love me, love my dog." Now we in effect say, "Love me, love my opinions—love my views." And this is humanly disastrous.

A story, an image, might be useful to illustrate that. Imagine a group of people out in a forest, lost, and all of them have compasses but their compasses all point in different directions. Now can you imagine one saying to the other, "Well, I'll respect your compass if you'll respect mine." That's not exactly going to get you out of the woods. It is so important to realize that what we accept as the truth is going to determine our action and that the finding of the truth is not just sort of a "nice" thing. It is essential to our lives. It is necessary for us to be able to become the kinds of persons we ought to be as well as for us to deal with our choices about family arrangements, political arrangements, technical issues. I've noticed in my own circles that among the few people who very rarely speak well of relative truth are engineers, and I've come to suspect it is because they know the bridge is going to fall down or the rocket's going to blow up if you don't do it right. There's a right and wrong way in reality, and there's no pluralism with reference to it . Pluralism is a moral approach which we take to people that does not say everyone is equally right, but rather that says, "We respect you and we love you, based on the truth that you also are God's creation. You are an eternal being whom God has put in this world; and I will respect you and love you for that. Even if you are wrong." When it really matters, for great issues at stake, and it's clear it matters, we don't accept pluralism. You don't want pluralism in a brain surgeon. You want someone who knows how it is. You want someone who has learned the truth and is able to communicate it. And we know very well that in order to do that you don't have to be a brutal, mean, bigoted person. In fact it's only if you really understand the moral life and the truth of the moral life that you can find the resources to be a good, open, loving, caring person—pluralist where it makes sense and is objectively right to be so.

We've come to the point in our culture today where it is the concept of reason and truth itself that requires redemption. Reason and truth itself, especially in the arena of human affairs has lost its foundation because of misunderstandings about truth, misunderstandings about relativity, about how we are conscious of objects. A lot of this gets into rather arcane, philosophical issues that I'm sure you don't want to hear about. I don't think I'm short-cutting the substance of the case just to say that, in fact, reason and truth are in desperate trouble within the academy itself. I often ask my students to ask their other teachers in the various subjects, "Do you teach the truth?" You can guess what the response is. Most are embarrassed by the truth. Reason itself has disappeared to the point in education generally today that I don't know of a single reputable college that requires a course in logic as a part of its degree program. And if some of you know one, please let me know. But I've done some research on this and had some assistants doing research on it. That is new. That didn't used to be the case. Logic used to be a standard requirement. But logic is now often treated as a power conspiracy, as a part of an oppressive practice; and of course it can be misused, but logic goes with truth and with reason and without these, the institutions of learning and law have no basis except the desire and movements of politics in the population. That is a long and important story we cannot tell here. I just want to say as I come to the end of my remarks that the return to Christ as moral teacher, as one who brought the light of life into the darkened world, acceptance of the truth about Him and the truth that comes by Him is the only way we can redeem reason and truth itself. I'll turn it just another way. Reason and truth cannot support themselves. They will fall victim to the drive of the human heart to do what is wrong and the truth will be twisted. And reasoning will be turned into rationalization unless there is a moral foundation to guide life and support the dedication to truth.

I'll illustrate it briefly. We have a real problem in our universities and colleges now with just such things as grading and grade level and grade inflation. We didn't used to have that problem so much. But now there is a doubt that is present in the minds of many people who even teach the courses as to whether or not it is fair and right to do things like grade papers. In fact one of the cases that I use to challenge my own students is when they adopt a relativistic view of truth in grading. "Suppose I were to grade papers on your theory?" I ask them. It doesn't take them long to figure out what the point of that is. You see when I grade a paper and put an A on it, it should mean something. In fact I do tell my students how I grade and what I look for so that they will have some idea of what the letter grades mean. I even tell them that one of the most important things I do is to teach them how I grade papers. Grading is making a judgment about the quality of something, and I need to be able to tell them exactly what it is about a paper that makes it an A paper, a B paper, or a C paper. They would never accept from me the idea, "Well, I liked it." But if we don't have the moral courage and the love to carry all this through in the academic context with our students, we will never be able to teach them effectively what good work is. You have to have the courage and the patience and the love to stay with people and enforce standards which they don't like in order to teach standards of reason and truth. And you must have moral standards to do that. This is nothing unique to the Academy. You have to do that with your children, don't you? You have to do that with your employees, with everyone around you. That is part of the human condition. It's crucial to have the moral character to support reason and truth. And if you can't found those moral standards in reality, you can't sustain them. You have to take moral standards as a reflection of reality in order to sustain them. And if you don't sustain them, you'll not be able to hold the standards of reason and truth in public and private life. It all hangs together.

For now, we come back to the issue of, "Where do we get our moral truths?" And the answer is that as far as our culture is concerned, the only effectively moral tools we have derived are from Jesus Christ. And to pull the foundation out from under them, is to leave them swinging in the wind of politics and unreality. And that's why it's so important for those of us who are committed to the way of Christ that we should stand as clearly and as firmly and as strongly and as intelligently as we can and simply say, "Want to know what a good person is. Want to know what a right action is? Want to know what a good life is? There's one person who can show you." Respect and admiration for Jesus Christ is the only basis for a viable academic culture. I know that if we had time we would want to discuss other cultures and traditions and see how they work, but as it is, I'm just going to have to let that stand. And if we want to be responsible to the truth and for the truth, and lead others in that path, that can be only effectively done by being steadfast disciples of Jesus Christ in our whole life. It can't be done any other way.

Question: Can there not be academic culture without Christ?
Answer: I say one **successful** way of sustaining a **viable** academic culture. There are of course many ways of having an academic culture. But that's the qualification I insist on.
Question: Are there not outstanding universities in other cultures?
Answer: Well, I just ask you to consider where the great universities of the world are. Obviously you have universities in Islamic culture, in some other cultures, etc. But ask yourself who is going to those universities to study; and who comes to the universities in the Western world to study. What is written on the walls of those universities; what is written on our walls? This is an empirical claim. And thus it opens itself up to counter examples. What I'm concerned about is that we have come through a period in our recent past when a lot of people had what looked like great ideas to them but they don't work. On the other hand, we have a two millennia long track record to look at to see what does work. That's not to say there's nothing wrong in that record. There's been much wrong with it. That needs to be corrected, and we can then go on from there rather than supposing, especially, that there is a realistic secular basis upon which to do human education. See, we have had let's say 300 years to try to work out a secular basis for morality in the Western world. We've now come to the point where in the Western world there is nothing that stands as moral knowledge in our culture. There's not a single moral truth that you could teach in a course in this university and grade students on. Again, show me I'm wrong. I would be happy to be wrong about this. Try it. I'm not saying there aren't any other very fine cultures, I'm just saying with reference to this pursuit of truth in an organized social context, I don't think there is another comparable basis to the Christian one.
Question. Do you see any decrease in the popularity of relativism with regard to truth?
Answer: I think it's accelerating at the popular level. It's very interesting. You won't find many people in the profession of philosophy itself who will defend relativism. But, for example, nearly everyone in literary studies will defend relativism. In religious studies, same thing. Nearly everyone. Again, if I'm offending someone here who is in those fields, I'm willing to learn so please instruct me. At a popular level I think the force of the theory is definitely ***not*** on the wane. It is increasing in all areas of culture—the failure to understand what truth is. That's why I've taken the course of painfully dragging you through this little discussion of "what is truth?" It's because we need to understand this clearly. We all know what truth is, but when we get caught up in the jargon of the discussion, often we are thrown off course. Normally after talking like this, I'll have someone come up and say "Well you know there are a lot of different truths. There's what's true for me and there's what's true for you and so forth." Unfortunately that just misses the whole point because they are confusing belief with truth. I don't deny that people believe different things but the "true for me" talk is just changing the topic, and if we had time and interest I could go into the various theories of truth including some that try to define it in terms of belief.

Truth still remains just what I said it was—the matching up of the idea or belief with what it's about. We all know what that is. We have to come out and say that, and we have to say that's still what truth is when we're dealing with religion or dealing with law, politics, and history. Even though in those areas you obviously can't check truth out so immediately as you can in some of the other cases like where we learn what truth is. So I'm afraid things aren't getting better; and I believe that ministers and teachers have the primary responsibility to deal with this matter because they have the ear of the public and we really need to take it very seriously.

Anyone else?

Question: What can we do to help those who are advocating a relativist understanding of truth?
Answer: Well, there are various things that you can do. Many of them are helped just by pointing out that they are making an absolute claim about the nature of truth itself. They are not telling you how they think truth is—they are telling you how it ***really*** is. And they expect you to agree with their claim and not just say, "Well, that's nice. You believe that. I don't believe that." They are not willing to leave you with your belief about what truth is, and that's a dead give away that they are not just telling you what they think truth is. They are telling you what it ***really*** is. And some people are helped by having this pointed out to them. Now a consistent person will at that point back off and tell you, "No, I'm just telling you what I think." But that's what you would call a Pyrrhic victory, because if he's only telling me what he thinks, that carries no weight with others. Obviously he is not. He wants to tell me what I should think. Why should I think what he should think? No reason, unless there is something called truth. ■

If It's Right for You Is It Right for Me?

By Gilbert C. Meilaender, Jr.

[Dr. Gilbert Meilaender holds the Board of Director's Chair in Christian Ethics at Valparaiso University in Indiana. The accompanying article was first printed in the *Journal of Religious Ethics,* Spring, 1980, pages 125-134.]

Abstract

It is almost commonplace to suggest that what is morally right for one person to do must also be right for anyone else similarly situated. The author suggests that this "universalization requirement" applies to only a limited sphere of the moral life, chiefly to duties of perfect obligation. Extending the requirement beyond this sphere fails to leave room for human freedom in vocation or for a clear recognition of human finitude.

Most of us, at least some of the time, are inclined to think that whatever is right for us to do must also be right for anyone in similar circumstances. And, of course, there is often good reason to stress this. We may fear that we or others, in denying the Kantian thesis about universalization, may simply be making excuses to protect a guilty conscience. Or, more modestly put, we may think that regular attention to whether we would be willing to universalize our deeds may have a salutary effect on the self-regarding impulses which in large measure shape our action. The requirement of universalizability is, in such contexts, a demand for fairness.

Without denying this, we may still question whether it is necessary to hold that, whenever I think I ought to act in a certain way, I am committed to thinking that all persons similarly situated ought to make the same choice. I offer here several reasons for doubting this. By contrast, my thesis, roughly stated, is that a universalization requirement can apply only to a certain restricted set of moral obligations, namely, those which constitute our duties of perfect obligation. This can for now be only a rough statement because a consideration of certain complexities will require that this simple thesis undergo modification below.

It may be helpful at the outset, though, to be more precise about what universalizability requires. J. L. Mackie *(1977:83-102)* has provided a classification of three stages at which universalization may be required in our ethical reflection. First, it may mean simply that all merely numerical differences between one person and another should be deemed irrelevant. Thus, Mackie writes *(1977:84),* the ascetic could not say, "I cannot allow myself such indulgences, but I do not condemn them in others." At this level, however, nothing would prohibit a strong man from adopting and universalizing a principle endorsing rigorous competition and survival of the fittest. Second, it may require that—beyond the obvious preference of self involved in regarding numerical difference as morally relevant—we seek imaginatively to put ourselves into *the other* person's place. Thus, the strong man would ask himself what life would be like for the weak man in a rigorously competitive world, and whether he would want that life to be his. Third, it may require us not only to imagine ourselves in the other's place but to imagine that—while in his place—we share his preferences, values, and ideals. Thus, the strong man would not consider that, even in a harsh world, *he* prefers to be self-reliant. He would instead consider the preference of the other person.

Only the first of these stages can with any plausibility be said to be a requirement built into the *logic* of moral language (and even that may be questionable, as Mackie indicates). The third is clearly a substantive moral position and, indeed, one which, though perhaps useful for achieving political compromise in a pluralistic society, may be quite unsatisfactory as a fundamental moral stance. Our discussion will for the most part be limited to the first and second stages.

I. Freedom in Vocation

An adequate ethical position must recognize that we have some moral responsibilities which oblige all persons similarly situated. But it must not characterize the whole of morality in these terms. To do so would be to destroy any possibility of choosing the sort of person we wish to be, of determining our character through the choices we freely make. There are many important human ends which one might choose to serve—ends as diverse as close personal friendships, communion with nature, self-sacrificing service of others, cultivation and creation of beauty, worship of God, and so forth. It seems true to say of these ends (1) that they are incommensurable; and (2) that any of us might say to himself and others when choosing a way of life: "This is what I ought to do; nothing else would be right for me." It is the ineradicable use of moral language in such first person contexts which a universalizability requirement fails to allow.

Of such a decision we may want to use the language of decision ("I am determining my being") or, with Peter Winch (1972:168), of discovery ("I am finding out something about

myself"). The fact that we may consider it our vocation, our calling, indicates that it may be and often is regarded as a discovery, not merely a decision. Either sort of language is, in fact, appropriate, since here discovery and decision are inseparable. Moralists who want to require universalizability throughout the whole of morality must either deprive us of the words 'ought' and 'right' in such contexts or deprive us of the freedom to determine our character in a way of life. One is occasionally tempted to think that many moralists do want to deprive us of such freedom. It makes for a neat and tidy world but then, so does what I sometimes believe is the librarian's ideal: to have all the books in the stacks and no one permitted to check any out. Tidy, but too restrictive!

"One of the marks of a certain type of bad man," C. S. Lewis (1960:62) has written, "is that he cannot give up a thing himself without wanting everyone else to give it up." To be such a bad person is what universalizability requires of us. We may recall that at even the first stage of the universalizing process Mackie does not permit the ascetic to say, "I cannot allow myself such indulgences, but I do not condemn them in others."

"One of the marks of a certain type of bad man," C. S. Lewis (1960:62) has written, "is that he cannot give up a thing himself without wanting everyone else to give it up."

Those theorists who would make universalizability a requirement governing the whole of the moral life deprive us of the freedom to determine our way of life in such a way as to consider it peculiarly *ours.* This is, I think, what Hauerwas and Burrell (1977:122) mean in suggesting that the standard account of moral reasoning (i.e., universalizability and related viewpoints such as an "original position" argument) "obligates us to regard our life as would an observer." I cannot think that I ought to forego meat twice a week because there are many hungry people in the world or because it is a useful discipline without committing myself to the belief that all of us who are not starving (except perhaps children, pregnant women, and those with certain health problems) ought to do likewise. There are countless decisions like this one which, when we make them, shape our character and vocation and determine the manner in which our life will relate to others. To deprive us of the ability to use "ought"-language concerning these choices not only flies in the face of ordinary language but also removes from morality's realm many of the most important decisions people make. To permit "ought" language here but require that it be universalized does not do justice to the human power of self-determination. It is what we might call the imperialism of moral theory at its worst.

Although extreme cases are not always best for making my point, it may prove instructive to consider the case of Captain Oates, a case considered by W. D. Hudson (1970) in defending Hare's account of universalizability. Hudson maintains that if Captain Oates, in walking out of the tent to die in the Antarctic, had said to himself, "I ought to walk away," he would be committed to requiring the same of all persons similarly situated. He then writes (Hudson, 1970:221): "Would Oates have rejected that implication? I doubt it. Surely a man in his position, acting as he did, we presume from a sense of duty, would think that anyone in the same position who failed so to act would be blameworthy." It is possible—though I am not sure even this is clear—that Oates (were he to wax philosophical at such a moment) would think that any person similarly situated, who held the set of ideals which he himself held, ordered and balanced those ideals in the same way, and had committed himself to the same way of life, would also be committed to walking out of the tent to die.

Even if this should be true, it would still be quite different from the sort of duty which is universalizable in any strong sense. Suppose, for example, Captain Oates had decided that, in order to make his own food supplies last longer, he should take his companions by surprise and kill them. We would, I believe, condemn such an act in the case of Captain Oates and anyone else with a set of ideals similar to his. But, more importantly, we would condemn anyone at all who ventured to take that way out of his predicament. We would feel no need to inquire about the whole way of life he had chosen before rendering moral judgment, and to see this is to see the sphere in which universalization properly operates. Certain fundamental moral duties are indeed universalizable, but the ways in which we exercise our beneficence toward others are (usually) not. Indeed, I suggest that if we thought Oates' act should be required of anyone similarly situated we would not really think that it told us much about Oates' character, about the man he was. It could not have such meaning for us if we thought, as Hudson does, that Oates himself would assume that anyone else in his position would be blameworthy for not doing the same.

Thus, I make no claim that all choices concerning what we ought to do are free from the requirements of universalization. There are duties which bind all of us and which we are free to omit only at our moral peril. We may account for these in any number of different ways: with Kant (duties of perfect obligation); with Philippa Foot (negative duties); with Bernard Gert (the moral rules); with Grisez and Shaw (basic human goods against which we may not directly turn); with H. L. A. Hart (minimum content of natural law); or with Yahweh (the Decalog). What we ought not do, however, is extend the claims of universalizability beyond this portion of the moral life.

If we press further, we may see that there is a connection between the requirement of universalization and that of utilitarianism (i.e., universal and impartial benevolence). The utilitarian, believing all human goods to be commensurable, thinks that (at least in theory, however difficult the calculations may

be) we can prescribe how each of us ought to exercise his or her benevolence. On this theory, benevolence is no longer an imperfect obligation, binding on us all in different (and freely chosen) ways. Instead, the course my benevolence ought to take is strictly determined. Anyone similarly situated ought to be benevolent in exactly the same way. At this point the requirements of universalizability and universal and impartial benevolence merge—and, in so doing, destroy genuine freedom in vocation.

II. Adding Some Complexity

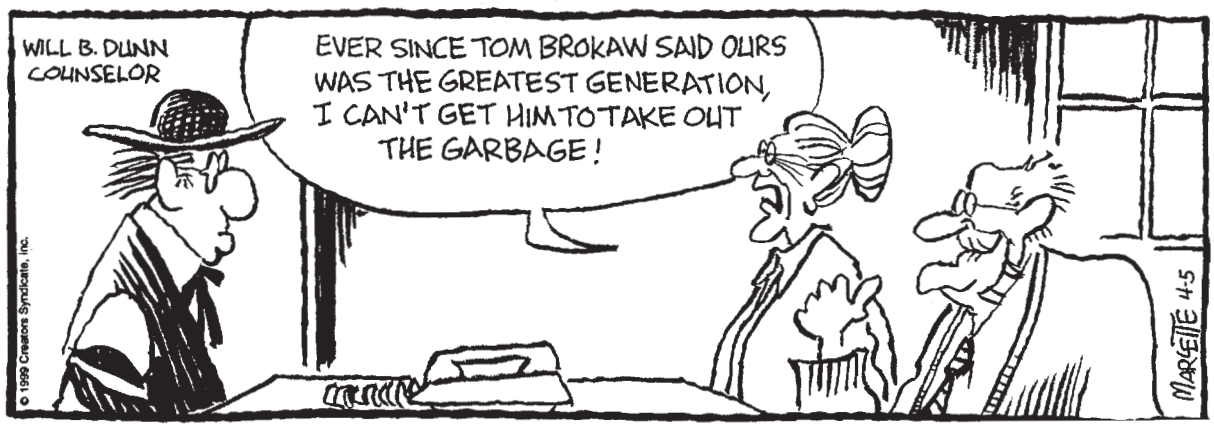
I have suggested that only certain fundamental moral duties are universalizable. These by no means constitute the totality of the moral life. Having done our duty in this limited sense, there remain for each of us countless decisions about who and what we shall be and how we shall aid others—decisions which cannot be universalized, though we might well use the moral ought in speaking of them. Moral duties which are universalizable remain fundamental in the sense that one cannot, I think, choose a vocation which requires systematic violation of these duties. We should permit them that much imperialism, but no more.

Now, however, we must complicate this thesis a bit. The Kantian language which characterizes beneficence as a duty of imperfect obligation may be misleading. Consider the following case: I am starting my usual after-dinner stroll during which I make it a point to think of nothing significant. As I walk out to the street I notice the neighbor child playing in the street where she may quite possibly be injured by one of the passing cars which so often speed down our street. It will take relatively little effort for me to carry the child over to her parents who are planting flowers along the side of their house. To do so would, I presume, be characterized as a beneficent act. To fail to do so would not precisely be to inflict harm on the child. Yet, I suppose we would think that anyone similarly situated ought to remove the child from the dangerous place she has chosen to play. The child's need is relatively great; my loss if I help her relatively small.

This is an obligation which seems universalizable even though it requires more than merely refraining from inflicting harm. It requires that one bring aid. Hence, it was not incorrect of Luther to write, in explanation of the commandment not to kill, "We should fear and love God that we may not hurt nor harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need." There are, however, limits to what we can be morally required to do in bringing aid (whereas there are, in my view, no limits on the requirement that we refrain from doing certain evils). If, instead of finding the neighbor child playing in the street I see her drowning in the ocean, and if furthermore I cannot myself swim, I do not think I am morally required to try to save her. Even so, if when I catch a glimpse of her terrified eyes as her head bobs up I say to myself, "I ought to give it a try," that is a correct use of moral language. It announces or expresses the person I am or will be. But that moral ought cannot be universalized.

What distinguishes these cases? We might suggest at first that they are distinguished by the different degree of burden I must bear and risk I must run. It is, after all, likely to cost me far more to launch out into the ocean than it will to interrupt briefly my stroll. And there is surely something to this explanation. It is part of the reason Christians have often claimed that only grace could elicit from a person like me a decision to brave the waves and try to save the child; for such a decision would require a degree of self-forgetfulness not naturally to be expected (or required) of us.

But I do not think that the burden or cost to the agent can be the decisive factor. Consider another case. Suppose others judge me capable of doing great benefit as a physician. Suppose also that I have made no commitments which would make it impossible for me to undertake the necessary training, that I know myself capable of it, feel reasonably sure that I could be happy as a doctor, believe there is a great need for doctors, and would not have to make any great sacrifice to become one. Suppose also, however, that what I really want to do, what I would find most satisfying, is running a catering service for elite country clubs. Should I be subject to moral censure if I decide that others, perhaps even those less suited for the task, will have to be physicians while I run my catering service? I think not; for this is simply one of those choices which



goes beyond the moral law and determines one's being. As long as, in making it, I do not violate any of my fundamental moral duties,I cannot be blamed.

This is an instance where the question of cost or burden borne by the agent does not seem to be a crucial factor. Rather, what is important seems to be what a decision does to one's character. If, when the little girl is playing in the street with cars speeding by, I blithely continue my stroll, I help to make myself a person who is indifferent to the obvious needs of other human beings. If her parents ask me why I did not move her when I saw her in the street and I answer that I thought perhaps someone else might, that is not likely to seem a very good answer. If, on the other hand, my very sick neighbor catches me in a spare moment when I am not catering at the country club and says, "You might have helped me had you become a doctor," I am entitled to respond, as Charles Fried (1978:38) suggests, "No more than countless other persons." The little girl playing in the street is particularized; to ignore her need is to shape my character in important ways. It begins to make of me the sort of person who will not be beneficent at all. The same is not true of the decision to cater at the country clubs. That vocational choice tells us nothing about whether we might expect me to respond with help for (at least some) human beings in need, even to respond at great cost to myself. For that choice involves no rejection of the duty to be beneficent.

Thus, the crucial factor is not merely the cost or burden borne by the agent. Relevant also—and, I think, more important—is the effect on the character of the agent, the degree to which a particular decision will necessarily help to create a person indifferent to human need. As long as our vocational decisions do not shape our character in that way, we are free—free to make of ourselves what we will, free of the imperialism of any universalization requirement.

III. Some Strictly Theological Considerations

It is always good to have a text, and the following will do:

> You are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples; but it is because the Lord *loves you.... (Deuteronomy* 7:6-8a)

In the Bible terms like 'grace and 'mercy' are terms of particular, personal relationships for which no more universal rationale can be given. As Oliver O'Donovan (1977:14f.) has pointed out, this is quite different from the sense we give to 'mercy'—as when, for example, we say that it ought to temper justice. God's mercy rests upon Israel for no reason—beyond the simple fact that it does. Similarly, with Jesus' parable of the laborers in the vineyard *(Matthew 20:1-16).* Some work many hours, enduring the heat of the day; others begin only near the very end of the work-day. Yet, all receive the same wage. This is not injustice to those who worked longest (or so the owner of the vineyard claims) but generosity and mercy toward those who came last.

If a moral imperialist asks why they should be preferred to the countless other people living (and still to be born), we are not likely to find an answer any better than Moses' "because the Lord loves you."

An ethic which seeks the kind of universality we have been considering may find itself judging even the holiness of God. As Donald Mackinnon (1957:104) has written with respect to Kanes ethic: "There is a kind of arrogance here, and also more than a hint of the clear subordination of what is personal—namely God and men and their relation to Him—to something which is formal and universal, even in a special sense abstract—namely the law of reason." Our concern here will not be with judging the holiness of God—we must leave something for the philosophers of religion to do—but with whether such personal, particularized concern can be a justifiable feature of our actions toward one another.

Even if God can be trusted always when be shows this kind of particularized, personal mercy, we probably cannot. That is sufficient, reason for thinking that many of our basic duties must be subject to the requirement of universalization. It represents a drive for fairness and disciplines our self-regarding impulses. To apply this to the whole of our lives, however, is, as Mackinnon hints, a sign of o'erweening pretension. We do not, like God, have unlimited responsibilities which are universal in scope. We are tied to particular people in particular times and places—and we may wish to spend ourselves especially in their behalf and, even, think we ought to. If a moral imperialist asks why they should be preferred to the countless other people living (and still to be born), we are not likely to find an answer any better than Moses' "because the Lord loves you." This does not mean that such an answer justifies any conduct at all. The basic, universalizable moral duties limit the ways and the degree to which we can prefer the needs of certain people. But, within the discretionary space which they leave, we are genuinely free to do so (or not to do so).

Advocates of universalization cannot deny what all of us know: that such "arbitrarily" focused concern adds much of great importance to human life. They are therefore likely to defend it on grounds something like Sidgwick's *(1907:434)* suggestion that

> each person is for the most part, from limitations either of power or knowledge, not in a position to do much good to more than a very small number of persons; it therefore seems, on this ground alone, desirable that his chief benevolent impulses should be correspondingly limited.

Sidgwick here has his hand on the right idea, our finitude; but he misunderstands its significance. It is as if, being finite, we give a grudging acquiescence to this fact while doing all we can to blunt its significance for human life. Or, we might say, it is as if a parent were to be like a public functionary, charged with looking after a certain number of members of the body politic. To some that might seem very rational indeed—but how little like a family it would be! What is needed, instead, is a glad affirmation that we are finite—that we are creatures rather than the Creator and that, therefore, we are neither responsible for achieving the greatest good on the whole nor always of legislating for humankind. If we do not see this and insist on worshipping the creature rather than the Creator, it is to be feared that God in his wrath may give us up to a universal and impartial benevolence.

IV. Conclusion

It may be suggested that, in terms of the tradition of Christian ethics, I have been asserting the importance of the traditional Roman Catholic distinction between a lower realm of duty (commands) and a higher standard of perfection (counsels). While there would be some truth to that suggestion, the difference is important to note. There is, on the view I have been defending, no particular vocation that is saintly or closer to perfection. Or, to put it differently and in the way my own theological views incline, all ways of life which do not in themselves violate the fundamental duties we owe all human beings are ways that saints may choose to live.

Moralists will begin to be (almost) as interesting as novelists when they recapture some sense of the importance of the first person. What is right for me may not be right for you, even if our situations are similar. This does not mean that I cannot feel the force of your chosen way of life or be drawn by its lure. Indeed, much of the charm of the novelist's work is that (if he is good at it) he permits us to feel the lure of many ways of life not our own. "Literary experience heals the wound, without undermining the privilege, of individuality " (cf., C. S. Lewis, *1969:140).* There is no reason why moralists, along with their other tasks, could not eschew imperialism and strive (in their own perhaps less imaginative ways) to do as much. ■

Endnotes

[1] I am not, of course, the first to look askance at the universalization requirement, whether in the general Kantian sense I gave it above or in the specific sense given it by R. M. Hare. Stanley Hauerwas (1974), from the perspective of an ethic of character, has argued that universalizability plays only a limited role in ethical reflection. For an~even more explicit statement of this point of view, see the essay co-authored by Hauerwas and Burrell (1977). Peter Winch (1972:151-170) provides a very sensitive and critical discussion of Hare's thesis.

[2] My argument here draws heavily on Grisez & Shaw (1974) and on P. F. Strawson (1966).

[3] It seems clear to me (a) that we do indeed speak this way; and (b) that the "ought"' can only be characterized as a moral one. Gilbert Harman (1977:59) has distinguished four senses of ought. They are (1) an ought of expectation (Oscar ought to be here by now); (2) an ought of evaluation (there ought to be more time for baseball in life); (3) an ought of reasons (the thief ought to wear gloves); and (4) the moral ought. I do not see how statements of the sort I am discussing, statements which we often utter, could be anything other than the moral ought.

[4] To put it this way makes clear that we could argue for the applicability of a universalizability requirement here only by reading into "similarly situated" the character and vocation of the agent. But to do this raises several worries. (1) We may worry that "similarly situated" has been interpreted in such a way as to trivialize any moral bite it might have had. (2) We may worry about the sense in which Oates could really imagine others to have committed themselves to the same way of life and still call it his life. Both worries are legitimate.

[5] It is also to see that my criticism of universalization in morality is far less sweeping than that of Hauerwas and Burrell (1977).

[6] Mackie (1977:93) suggests that this happens only at the third stage he delineates—i.e., when we (for purposes of reflection) adopt the values and preferences of the other persons and seek some compromise among them. This shows even more clearly that this third stage is a substantive moral position, not part of the logic of moral discourse.

[7] It is the failure to appreciate this which leads Charles E. Harris, Jr. to find problems where there are none in the ethic of *agape.* Harris (1978:21) "assumes that the fundamental idea in universalization is that one must accept as an ideal the state of affairs in which everyone acts in accordance with the principles to be universalized." Such moral imperialism the Christian ethicist, at least, ought to avoid. If we do not avoid it, we will end where Harris (1978:20) does, using "universalizability ... as a filter" to separate acceptable from unacceptable forms of *agape,* There was a time when Christian ethicists thought the Bible would aid them in that endeavor!

[8] Much of the example and argument in the following paragraphs, though certainly not the conclusions, I owe to the helpful criticisms of David Little.

[9] For their helpful criticisms of an earlier version of this paper, I wish to thank David little, Gene Outka, and Paul Ramsey.

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Ethical Issues in Pastoral Counseling

By Bill Blackburn

[Dr. Bill Blackburn is pastor of the Trinity Baptist Church in Kerrville, Texas. This article was originally prepared for InterVarsity Press and published in a Handbook for Therapists, Pastors, and Counselors under the title Christian Counseling Ethics. It is used here by permission.]

Pastor, can I talk with you sometime this week? I need some help." "I am so torn up about what I need to do with my mother. Can you see me this week?" "I lost my job, and I need to talk." "Pastor, my wife told me that she wants a divorce and that she hasn't loved me for a long time. I don't know what to do. Can we get together?" "I think the Lord may be calling me into the ministry, but I'm not sure. I just need to talk with you." "I've never felt anything like this before. Somebody told me I might be depressed. Can you help me?"

As a pastor I receive numerous requests such as these, many of which result in pastoral counseling sessions. Each story is different, and new dimensions of the original request are discovered once the story unfolds. But what is similar in each instance? Here are people who are hurting and reaching out for help, and they are reaching out to a pastor of a church, implying a recognition that there are spiritual dimensions to their dilemmas.

This chapter will address the major ethical issues involved in pastoral counseling. These issues center around how a pastor sees his or her role as Pastor and the particular dimensions of that role when he or she is doing pastoral counseling. The kinds of questions this article will address include: How is Pastoral counseling understood in light of the total work of the pastor? Considering the biblical image of the pastor as shepherd, how does that affect the understanding and practice of pastoral counseling? What about the common tendency in pastoral counseling that "uses" God as a means to the end of personal peace? What are some of the limits of what a pastor can or should do in the area of pastoral counseling? What are the ethical dimensions of referral? What are some basic guidelines for pastors who counsel? Searching for answers to these and other questions will, I hope, aid pastors and others who counsel to explore some of the ethical dimensions of counseling.

Pastoral Counseling in Context

Many pastors divide their work as pastor into three main areas: (1) preaching/teaching, (2) pastoral care and (3) leadership/administration. Obviously, the three areas overlap and are intertwined.

I include pastoral counseling in the area of pastoral care (2), Whereas pastoral care would include such things as hospital visitation, telephone calls expressing concern or reassurance, and informal, brief conversations about needs in people's lives, pastoral counseling, as used here refers to those times when an appointment is made and a church member comes asking for help, guidance, or perspective on a problem she or he is facing.

It is important for a pastor to set guidelines and limits as to the amount of time he or she will spend on various duties. In my own case, I explained to my church when I became their pastor that I would do only three to four hours a week of pastoral counseling and that I would see persons for no more than three sessions.

Why did I set these guidelines, and why do I still hold to them? I do not believe that a pastor can do more than three to four hours a week of counseling and get the rest of his job done. My major thrust as a pastor is preacher/teacher. My mornings are spent in my study and are given to prayer, study and preparation of sermons and Bible studies. My main focus as a pastor is not on counseling, although I do much pastoral-care work. But I do not believe a pastor can lead and build a church with the emphasis on pastoral counseling. And as a fellow pastor noted, "When the body of Christ functions as it should, a lot of problems will be resolved at a 'grass roots' level, the first level where counseling ought to take place" (Getz, 1980, p. 132).

Second, I keep these guidelines to protect myself and my church members. Ministers can get into trouble in sexual relationships with persons they were first counseling. It is striking how dangerously intimate and even seductive a counseling session can become when a woman is pouring out her heart to a male minister, especially if she is in a bad marriage or is unmarried. He can be providing with his listening and acceptance something no other male is giving her, and the issues of transference and countertransference loom large (Seats, Trent and Kim, 1993). Additionally, if there is not a general guideline regarding the number of sessions, it can be easy to start selecting who will have more sessions and who will have fewer. Often those decisions are made even unconsciously by such needs as affirmation, dependence or sexual desire.

Third, research has shown that many parishioners who do in-depth, long-term counseling with their minister will end up leaving the church. The counselees can end up feeling exposed and feeling that the accepted veneer of social contact has been removed. They can also believe that the pastor is singling them out from the pulpit in his sermon examples when in fact he is speaking more generally.

Finally, by following these guidelines I limit my counseling to brief, supportive counseling and referral counseling. I believe that these are the forms of counseling most appropriate for pastors (Stone, 1994). Although I have the educational requirements and experience necessary to do counseling, I do not feel that long-term counseling is what I should be doing as pastor. That is not what God has called me to do as a pastor of this local congregation. By adhering to these guidelines, other pastors are able to decide this for themselves as well.

The Pastor as Shepherd

The most basic image of the pastor in the New Testament is that of a shepherd. That is, of course, what the word pastor literally means. And what is the role of the shepherd? Looking at the key passages of Ezekiel 34 and John 10 as well as Matthew 18:10-14 and Luke 15:3-6, we see that the shepherd (1) provides for the sheep, (2) protects the sheep and (3) guides the sheep.

What does this tell us about the pastor as counselor? Counseling is an extension or different dimension of the pastor's total work. In the context of counseling the pastor provides scriptural and spiritual insight as well as perspective on what is happening in the counselee's life, given the pastor's training and experience and the exercise of the gifts of wisdom, discernment and teaching.

The pastor offers protection in several ways. In the trusting and confidential counseling relationship, the individual, couple or family can pour out what is being felt or report what has happened, knowing that what is heard is listened to with openness, concern, confidentiality, and prayer. Protection is provided when a couple or family has come for counseling and the pastor serves as interpreter/mediator. The pastor acts in this role as one who helps the counselees deal with conflict but also keeps the conflict in bounds.

There is another way the pastor provides protection. He or she can warn the counselee(s) about the destructive ways other persons have dealt with the same kinds of problems. And he or she can caution the client from seeking help in either destructive or inappropriate ways, such as abusing alcohol or drugs, "looking for love in all the wrong places," or wrongful sexual encounters. It is important to discuss the danger of major decisions made during a crisis, which can sometimes include suicide.

A Pastor also provides guidance, which can include various ways of listening, responding, and offering observations and possible suggestions. For example, I was initially trained in the somewhat stereotypical Rogerian nondirective approach to counseling, and although I continue to benefit greatly from that training, which taught me to listen carefully and to let the person know by some form of reflection that they were being heard, I moved some time ago to a more directive stance in counseling, which I believe is thoroughly biblical.

In the more directive approach to guidance, a pastor listens carefully and explores through questions and clarification what the client's issues are, how they are viewed by him or her, how they have been responded to and what the person sees as the options. Then the counselor shares what he or she has heard from the counselee, some perspective on what is happening, and initial guidelines or suggestions about how to deal with the issues. Here the pastor can deal with biblical principles that seem pertinent and can point to particular Scripture passages, and can even assign some specific tasks to do, such as reading certain Bible verses or other books. Here the pastor may also discuss with the counselee the importance of taking care of him- or herself in regard to diet, exercise, sleep, hobbies, social contact, and spiritual disciplines.

Integrity of the Pastor

In any discussion of ethics, integrity is central. Integrity implies soundness, adherence to principle, completeness in the sense of being undivided. What shape does integrity take for pastors who counsel?

First, integrity is seen as faithfulness to the Lord. It must be understood that whatever problems are presented in a pastoral, counseling session, the ultimate issue is the person's relationship to the Lord. Wayne Oates, a pioneer in the fields of pastoral counseling and psychology of religion, deeply desires to help pastoral counselors see "the difference it can make if you and I make the presence of the Eternal God the central dynamic in our dialogue with counselees." He adds, "In essence, I want to move from dialogue to trialogue in pastoral counseling" (1986, p. 23).

This does not mean that every counseling session should become a mini-sermon. But when pastoral counseling is understood this way, it can dramatically change the counseling event. How the counselee presents himself, what issues he raises, what he does not want to talk about, what history he reports—all become facets of the deepest issue of his life, his relationship to the Lord.

In a classic work in the field of pastoral care, The Minister and the Care of Souls, Williams writes, "To bring salvation to the human spirit is the goal of all Christian ministry and pastoral care" (1961, p. 23). He goes on to observe, "The key to pastoral care lies in the Christological center of our faith, for we understand Christ as bringing the disclosure of our full humanity in its destiny under God" (p. 13).

God is not just a utility player called in as one among others to help the client. In a prophetic message to pastors and other Christian leaders at Leadership Network's 1993 annual conference, "The Church in the 21st Century," Crabb detailed how easy it is to so focus on the needs of people that God is then used to meet a need. God becomes part of the recipe given to people to help them feel better. Crabb suggests that a crucial question to ask when a counselee presents symptoms is, "What are the obstacles in the soul of this person that are blocking them from God?" (1993).

Consider a distinction made by Oates between the teachings of Jesus and the teachings of psychoanalysis concerning the issue of leaving one's father and mother. Oates observes that psychoanalysis dwells on the fixation and looks to the individual to use the insight to manage his or her life better by

a courageous act of will. The New Testament, to the contrary, says that "in the beginning it was not so," i.e., the Creator intended that a person leave father and mother. He or she is empowered to do so by reason of the larger love of God and neighbor (1986, p. 47). This is another illustration of the importance of faithfulness to God in pastoral counseling. When God is at the center of the counseling session, he is never just one of those "things" trotted out to help someone.

A second facet of integrity is integrity of role. A continuity exists between who you are as pastor of the church and who you are in the counseling session. Who you are, your perspective and how you present yourself have unity, completeness. In the pastoral counseling session you are still the pastor; you are not now junior psychologist or psychiatrist. You are not now a counselor applying the latest technique learned in the last workshop you attended. You are a pastor seeking to be faithful to the Lord and to your calling as you listen and address a person who is seeking help.

Third, there is integrity in regard to Scripture. The person seeking out the pastor may not be directly asking, as did King Zedekiah, "Is there any word from the Lord?" (Jer 37:17), but that question is certainly in the background of the session. Therefore what is shared and advised must have integrity with Scripture and not be in violation of scriptural principles,

Fourth, there is an integrity with the congregation. In the pastoral counseling setting the pastor represents the congregation. Pastoral counseling occurs within the body of Christ. The pastor acts as agent for the congregation in the sense that he or she symbolizes the care of the congregation, speaks as the leader of the congregation and represents the congregation's further resources to help deal with what is raised in counseling. What happens in the counseling session should not be in conflict with the pastor's role as representative of the congregation.

Integrity must be kept in regard to what has been promised. The pastor must take opportunities directly and indirectly to interpret and reinterpret his or her role in the counseling setting. Care must be taken not to promise too much or to hold out unrealistic hope. My mentor and professor of pastoral counseling, Wayne Oates, used to tell students of pastoral counseling, "It's the promises I make that keep me awake. It's the promises I keep that let me sleep."

Sixth, integrity can concern the limits of the pastor's training, experience, or responsibility. Many lay people do not understand what pastors have been trained to do and what their training did not include. I have found, however, that when this is discussed, most persons appreciate the pastor's being honest in confessing a lack of training, background, or time to deal with the particular issue being faced. In regard to such things as substance abuse, unrelenting depression, sexual abuse, bulimia, or the serious threat of suicide, for instance, I am careful to explain why I cannot provide all of the help that is needed and why another professional needs to be called on.

Sullender and Malony state in an article in The Journal of Pastoral Care, "Clergy must be mature enough and professional enough to know their limits when it comes to counseling troubled persons. These limits may involve training, available time, conflict of interest, or just available energy" (1990, p. 206).

All pastors and other Christian ministers would do well to meditate on this verse describing King David and his leadership of the people of Israel: "And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them" (Ps 78:72).

The Ethics of Referral

It is important for pastors who counsel to be willing to refer their counselees to other professionals and to be knowledgeable about when and to whom a counselee should be referred. Following are some general guidelines that can be used in this regard.

First, a minister has a responsibility to know the variety of professionals to whom she or he might refer. In my situation, I minister in a semirural area but have the good fortune to have competent professionals in two nearby towns and a metropolitan area about an hour away. If I am going to refer a parishioner to another professional, I will want to know his or her (1) reputation, (2) training, (3) experience, (4) professional supervision, (5) network of other professionals or hospitals to call on, and (6) faith commitment or appreciation of such a commitment in the client. The first three points are self-explanatory, but the last three may require some explanation.

It is very important that the professional, whether a pastoral counselor, clinical social worker, psychologist, or psychiatrist, is receiving some form of supervision or consultation on their work. This indicates their professional ethics and their desire to keep perspective in the midst of helping people in need. What is the extent of the professional's network of consultation and referral? And if hospitalization is a possibility, what arrangements can they make for the client.

Should a pastor refer parishioners only to Christian counselors? No. I do so whenever I can, and I am fortunate that I have many to whom I can refer. However, I will refer to a non-Christian if I know she has the best skills and background in dealing with this particular need and that she would neither demean religious faith nor suggest that the person do something in violation of their faith commitment.

Second, a pastor has the responsibility to appropriately present the referral to the client. The pastor must interpret carefully why she is making the referral and why it is being made to the particular professional. He or she should explain personal limitations of time and/or training, and the qualifications of the other professional, while being careful not to promise what the professional will do. It is a good idea for the pastor to reassure the counselee at this point that he
isn't crazy (and I do use that word sometimes) or about to lose his mind. This is what many clients have been afraid of, and that fear can be reinforced with a referral to a mental health professional.

Next, the pastor should explain how to get in touch with the person referred to and something of what the client can expect from the sessions. If the cost is raised, provide what information is available and let the person know that the

church has a fund to help with these sorts of costs (if it does). In some situations the pastor can make the call to the professional and help set up the first appointment.

Fourth, the pastor should reassure the client about their relationship together. I do this so that the counselee knows I am not rejecting him or her. I explain that I will be in touch and that along the way we can get back together to talk things over and to pray. I am, of course, careful here not to serve as another therapist, but as pastor.

Fifth, after reassuring the client I as pastor have a responsibility to maintain that relationship. I do this myself by having the client on my prayer list so that I am reminded regularly to pray for him or her and to maintain contact through phone calls, notes, and visits.

Finally, it is appropriate for the pastor to keep proper contact with the professional to whom the client has been referred. Some professionals want information prior to the first visit, and others do not. Personally, I do not seek to get a report on the sessions, but with appropriate consent from the counselee I do want to know how things are going and what I can do to be of further help. And because of the continuing relationship with the client through the church, I will sometimes consult with the professional on any relationship issues that may come up due to this.

Boundary Issues

How should pastors decide how much to counsel, whom to see, appropriate boundaries in counseling, and how available to be to persons in need? These boundary issues are crucial, because if they are not decided in some reasonable manner, the pastor can risk his or her effectiveness, mental health, family life, and leadership of the congregation.

In the guidelines outlined earlier I noted that I do only three to four hours a week of counseling. That obviously varies week by week, but that is still almost half a day per week of pastoral counseling, and depending on the size of the church, even that can be too much time for this facet of pastoral ministry. In order to hold to a limited amount of counseling it is important that the pastor not communicate an unlimited availability to the congregation. One of my professors of preaching, George A. Buttrick, used to tell us, "Many pastors are a quivering mass of availability." I cannot be the husband, father, and pastor I need to be and also be constantly available for counseling.

Most pastors could end up counseling twelve hours a day if it were allowed. But a failure to draw boundaries and deal with the limits of what one can do often implies other issues. Is there such a need to please that the pastor cannot say "No" or "Later"? Is there a feeling of impotence in other areas of ministry that leads the minister to do an inordinate amount of counseling and thereby feel the power and helpfulness and adulation that often comes from counseling? Is there a problem in the pastor's marriage or family that encourages getting emotional needs inappropriately met in counseling? Does the pastor have a messiah complex, seen in rescuing persons in trouble? Is there withdrawal from other duties and relationships and into counseling? In looking at those who are seen for counseling and those who are not, is there a clue to the underlying issues related to too much counseling?

On this last question of who is or is not seen for counseling, a troubling issue for many pastors is whether or not to do counseling with persons who are not members of the congregation. I generally do not see persons for counseling who are from outside my congregation. I will see someone who is attending and not a member, and I will on occasion see persons in crisis whom I know in the community and who ask to see me. In this latter instance, it is almost always for one session in which a referral is made if that is needed. One of the issues for pastors today is that there is a greater possibility of legal liability when counseling persons who are not members of your congregation (ABA, 1989).

Concerning boundaries, in looking at the Gospels, did Jesus see every troubled soul in each village he visited? Did he stay in one place until every sick person was healed? Was Bartimaeus the only blind person in Jericho? Didn't Jesus in fact retreat either with the disciples or by himself when he needed to? And when he retreated, were there not still persons who could have been helped who were left behind? And didn't Jesus in his ministry move more toward preaching and the training of the disciples and less toward healing and other miracles?

From the time of Satan's testing in the wilderness at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, to how Jesus presented himself to the crowds and the authorities in his last days in Jerusalem, to his resurrection appearances and final discourses prior to the ascension, Jesus was setting boundaries and defining limits according to who he was and what his mission was. Look again at the repeated "I am" statements of Jesus, and you will see boundaries, limits, and possibilities.

As a contemporary pastor, how does one deal with these boundary issues? I myself find it necessary to continue interpreting to the congregation what my role is as pastor, how I spend my time, and what my guidelines are for counseling. It is important to set aside time for the various parts of pastoring, such as preparation for preaching and teaching, administration, and pastoral care. My secretary has my schedule and sets appointments for me within the time that is already allotted to certain things. Time is protected for sermon preparation, worship planning, administrative matters, meetings with staff and other key leaders, and pastoral visitation. I also protect time for my family and for my own personal renewal and rest.

General Guidelines for Pastoral Counseling

Following are some general guidelines for pastors who counsel to keep in mind. Some of these have been discussed earlier in the chapter but bear repeating here.

1. Maintain confidentiality. The exception to this rule would be if there are ethical or legal reasons dictating the breaking of a confidence. It is imperative that pastors familiarize themselves with the laws in their state pertaining to privi-

leged communications with the clergy and to the exceptions to confidentiality. Usually these exceptions will include such things as suspicion of child abuse. These kinds of situations point to the necessity of not making a blanket promise that nothing will be shared out of the counseling session.

2. Avoid manipulating the counselee. This almost goes without saying, but because there is such a risk due to the vulnerability of many persons in crisis who seek pastors out, it needs to be stated.

3. Avoid making decisions for the person seeking help. Because the pastor is an authority figure who is knowledgeable about the Bible and is assumed to have a strong prayer life, many persons come to him or her expecting a divinely revealed answer to the problem at hand. As I've indicated earlier, I believe the pastor should be directive in his or her approach in counseling but should be careful about simply making decisions for the counselee.

4. Do not inappropriately carry messages. There are times in the ministry of reconciliation when interpreting the behavior or words of one person to another can be appropriate and healing, However, because the pastor often has contact with the family or group the client may be in conflict with or alienated from, sometimes there is the desire or expectation on the part of the client that the pastor act as a Western Union messenger. This is inappropriate.

5. Do not be a voyeur. Particularly in the area of sexuality, the pastor must be careful not to seek, directly or indirectly, information that is not germane to the issue at hand. Seeking information for sexual titillation is inappropriate, unfair and counterproductive.

6. Never become romantically or sexually involved with a counselee. This is assumed, of course, but needs to be stated because it is an immensely important and pervasive issue. A one-on-one counseling relationship with a person of the opposite sex can be powerfully seductive. This is why I make sure someone else is in the office area if I am counseling a woman counselee, and why I have maintained a guideline for myself of seeing a person for only three sessions. In a study done of Southern Baptist ministers through the Baptist Sunday School Board, it was found that among ministers who became involved in adulterous affairs, 71 percent of those affairs started through counseling sessions (Booth, 1994).

Wayne Oates used to tell his students that he knew he was beginning to cross over a dangerous line when he woke up in the morning and began thinking about a female counselee he would see that day. If, in anticipation of seeing her, he was careful to think about which tie to wear, he knew danger was lurking.

Conclusion

The opportunity, responsibility and calling to be a shepherd is awesome and ought to be so intimidating that we go to our knees before the Lord, knowing that we cannot do what must be done and be who we need to be without God's help. I firmly believe that in the years ahead, the task of the pastor will grow more difficult because of the needs of the people, the expectations that grow into demands, and the confusion and deterioration of our society. Only by prayer, wisdom and much discipline will pastors be able to carry out their God-given assignment and maintain their spiritual, mental, physical, familial and social health.

My deep conviction, borne of experience as a pastor, is that time management that grows out of faith and a clear understanding of the mission of the church and the work of the pastor is crucial to maintaining health. In that regard, I highly recommend two books that have proved invaluable to me in this area: First Things First by Stephen R. Covey, A. Roger Merrill and Rebecca R. Merrill (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), and The Management of Ministry by James D. Anderson and Ezra Earl Jones (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978).

Finally, my prayer for pastors reading this article is that God will use it to help every pastor be a shepherd with integrity of heart and skillful hands (Ps 78:72). ■

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Wellness Then and Now

By David Moncrief Jordan

[Dr. David Moncrief Jordan is pastor of the First Baptist Church of Rockingham, North Carolina.]

It is a long walk home. The road is dusty and the sun is hot. But more important matters. He hears the musical call of birds gliding overhead and the captivating rhythm of his sandals flapping against callused feet. The land around his pathway glows with a refreshing emerald green. Life-giving winter rains have resurrected a land parched from long days of intense Middle-eastern heat.

Jesus doesn't think of this as exercise, these long walks he makes over the countryside. This is simply the lifestyle of his time and place. I imagine Jesus tending a garden, too, digging his hands into the rich dirt of the Galilee soil. I see him covered in sawdust from a newly crafted table created for a family down the street. There would have been hours of study and prayer, I'm sure, but not at the expense of physical labor and recreation. Surely he joined neighborhood friends in competitive games of soccer (or the ancient equivalent). I can see him covered in sweat, physically exhausted, arm around a buddy from the other team, smiling with a word of encouragement, and a slap on the back: "Good game. Thanks for playing!"

Today, we would call this a "healthy lifestyle": physical labor, aerobic exercise, worship, meditation, study, deep appreciation of beauty, consistent interaction with nature, and appropriate recreation with friendly competition. Jesus also would have enjoyed a high-fiber diet rich in fruits, vegetables, grains, and fish with very little red meat and virtually no fat or cholesterol.

This is not some far-fetched new age fad for losing weight. This is the way Jesus would have lived. In fact, this is the lifestyle the Bible assumes people of the Covenant like ourselves would be living. But times have changed.

Our remarkable labor saving devices and the plentiful resources of the modern world avail us with far more choices of food, how we spend our time, and modes of transportation than at any other point in history. This array of possibilities is a real gift unless we allow ourselves to be seduced by the avoidance of exercise, the lack of interaction with God's world, and the consumption of less-than-healthy foods.

There is an intimate connection between how we feel physically and how we feel emotionally and spiritually. How we eat, exercise, work, and play has a significant bearing upon how and even if we pray and discipline our spiritual selves. And certainly our physical wellbeing, or lack of it, profoundly affects our outlook on life and the way we treat one another.

The Bible reminds us consistently that these all go together: "Love the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul and strength; love your neighbor as you love yourself" (Matthew 22:37-40). It takes a whole person utilizing every aspect of ourselves truly to enjoy the kind of existence the Bible advocates and that our Lord expects. Therefore, may our call to follow Christ include also attentiveness to lifestyle, attention to wellness and intentional discipline in every aspect of our walk with God.

Sigmund Freud once called religion an "illusion." Religion, he said, simply fosters an inability to address the actual problems of background and personality development that contribute to psychological difficulties. And in a sense, he was right. His culture during the 19th century in Vienna, Austria was steeped in a religion that was pessimistic, cavalier, apathetic, and self-centered. Most of his Austrian clients considered themselves to be religious. They, for the most part, were also wealthy, aristocratic, and generally quite unhappy with their lives (which is why they sought Dr. Freud's services in the first place).

So Freud's appraisal of the religion he encountered each day was largely accurate. The faith most of his clients exhibited was an "illusion," a sad and an insufficient coping device derived more from culture and manipulation than from Biblical truth and divine inspiration. This is unhealthy religion.

Unhealthy religion is not necessarily a foreign concept in our own society, either. A casual scan of the religious programming on television and radio stations reveals a wide variety of strange, unsound, and often unchristian religious systems competing for our spiritual and financial devotion.

Yet, just as Freud's perspective on 19th century Austrian religion fails to provide an accurate picture of healthy faith, neither does channel surfing through our own cultural messages today. For all the current voices condemning the rising interest in spiritual matters and who continue to call faith an illusion, let us be more specific about the Biblical faith that God intends for us all.

There is a plethora of evidence now which suggests, in fact, that faith can be miraculously healthful. Those who have a sincere belief in a loving God and who attend church regularly literally live better, longer, and more optimistically.

This is not an illusion. A number of well-respected studies have demonstrated that active involvement in a community of faith fulfills a deep-seated need in us all for love and companionship. The belief in a good and gracious God who loves us and cares for us, while uplifting spiritually, is also calming emotionally and energizing physically. Spiritual growth, Bible study, and the specific charge to live a better, more loving life is stimulating mentally, comforting emotionally, and challenging spiritually.

So, the combination of a healthier lifestyle as exemplified by Jesus, and a genuine, hopeful faith in God as taught by Jesus, make for a life that is truly exciting, remarkably fulfilling, and extremely healthy.

So you want to live a better, longer, and happier life? Go to church. Love God. Care deeply for those around you. Take care of yourself. And have faith in God. ■

Can We Solve the Sunday Dilemma?

By John Warren Steen

[Dr. Steen was the founding editor of *Mature Living* magazine, has been assistant editor of *International Christian Digest,* and is the author of four books. He has served a hospital chaplaincy and pastorates in three states. He lives with his wife, Dorothy, in Nashville, Tennessee.]

Sporting events, like a greedy child wanting the biggest part of the family's pie, have taken over the focus of Sunday. The day has exploded into a celebration of sports. During the 1999 Super Bowl XXXIII, officials boasted 74,803 ftans who were present in the stadium, 83.7 million TV viewers who watched the entire game, and an additional 43.8 million viewers who watched part of the game. Incidentally, Sunday night services were canceled in unnumbered churches, and the one I attended had only six members in the congregation. "0 Day of Rest and Gladness" has become a day of rush and madness. All these road signs point to how much customs have changed in the last 60 years.

I recall from 1936 that my Junior Department Sunday School class had a lesson on keeping the Sabbath day. My teacher said, "Boys, do you think it is permissible to play softball on Sunday?" We thought it might not be sinful since the ball game was recreational for us, not work-related.

Then the teacher asked, "What about going to see the Jackson Senators play on a Sunday afternoon?" We decided that the so-called "game" was work for the minor league players and we should not encourage them to break the Sabbath by attending.

The setting was Jackson, Mississippi, a church-going town that did not allow movie theaters to open on that special day. It was not until the Army Air Corps established a base in Jackson that the town fathers permitted theaters to open for the boys in the army to have something to do on a Sunday afternoon.

People from Chicago and New York laughed at our rigid stand on Sabbath observance and snickered that we were living in the Victorian Age. Like good Pharisees, we felt we were protecting God's interests.

Later I found people in biblical lands holding on to similar hair-splitting customs. When I went on an archeological dig in Israel 30 years later, I discovered the biggest theological and ethical problem in that unique society to be the observance of the Sabbath. A meeting of rabbis met to discuss whether it was lawful to open the door of a refrigerator on the Sabbath and thus "kindle a flame" by causing the interior light to come on. The decision was that such an act was in opposition to the law. People might open their refrigerators before sundown on Friday but must close them and keep them closed all day Saturday.

Some Jewish leaders even denounced the custom of Israelis' driving to the beach for sunbathing or swimming on a summer Sabbath afternoon. They recruited followers to lie down in the streets that led to the beautiful beaches of the Mediterranean and defy the motorists until the protesters were dragged away.

The influence of these experiences has colored my thinking today. I doubt that God could find anything sinful in a Sunday afternoon ball game or a relaxing trip to the beach. At the same time old thoughts flood back and swamp my brain with questions about loving God with devoted obedience that might somehow include Sabbath observance.

To solve this dilemma, I would suggest returning to the spirit of our Teacher and Shepherd for some principles to build on. I invite you to join me in examining the following ideas:

1. Keep the Lord's Day a Day of Happiness. When I was in Israel and had made a purchase on a weekday, I enjoyed hearing a store owner say as I was leaving the shop, "Shalom." That blessed word of peace echoed in my soul for a long time afterwards. There was another expression that was even more blessed. When I went late on a Friday afternoon (the eve of the Sabbath) to make a purchase, the store owner would say, "Shabbat Shalom," literally "Sabbath Peace." When I heard those words, they meant to me, "Have a joyful, healthy, and peaceful Sabbath." I discovered many native people who luxuriated in the Sabbath and its preparation.

   I have read that there were rabbis who used to go out to the eastern edge of their village late on a Friday afternoon. They wanted to greet Queen Sabbath when she arrived, announced by the appearance of the first stars of the approaching night.

   Jesus became disappointed with the scrupulous legalists of his day who turned the Sabbath into a dreaded time of burden. Instead the Master said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). In that statement, he indicated that the day was to be enjoyed and not burdened down with legalistic minutiae.

2. Focus on the Lord's Day as a Day of Worship and Learning. Most Bible scholars point out that the Sabbath and the Lord's Day are entirely different. The Sabbath was given in honor of God's completion of his creative work. Honoring this one day meant acknowledging that all seven days had come as a gift from the Creator.

   The Lord's Day was the day on which Jesus Christ rose triumphant from the dead. The early church celebrat-

ed this day with joy. They met regularly to encourage one another and to learn from the apostles what Jesus had taught and accomplished in his messianic mission.

Since the days are different, some Bible teachers say we are not bound by the old covenant. Yet I think that we would make a big mistake if we should ignore the fourth commandment, especially one that is given in a positive mood and is longer than any other nine. Christians generally agree that we can transfer to Sunday some of the rationale behind that command to remember a day and keep it holy. We can be proactive in dealing with our stressed-out, pleasure-seeking culture.

As we begin a new millennium when we are short on moral heroes and ethical giants, we can turn to the example of Jesus. He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath, "as his custom was" (Luke 4:16). What an example! He didn't wait until the most noted rabbi of the nation led the service. He didn't consult the weather forecaster to see if it would be a pleasant day. He simply went. He was a disciplined person, in the best sense of the word. He was consistent. He was dependable.

His synagogue, as well as others in the land, had developed from the difficult days of captivity and exile. When the Jews had been defeated and humiliated by mighty Babylon, don't you imagine they suffered a terrible melancholy? Their glorious temple had been destroyed, and their God had been made to appear puny. They hung their harps on foreign willow trees for awhile. Eventually the displaced persons began to realize, however, that a group of people could gather to discuss God's eternal covenant and his law. Such groups formed the first synagogues. They brought this small-group idea back from the exile.

The services in a synagogue were informal. The presiding elders could invite any competent member or visitor to read from the sacred writings and to give a commentary. That exegete stood up to read the scriptures and sat down to comment on them. The service Jesus attended was similar to our adult Sunday School classes. The master Teacher entered fully into the services, and he set a worthy example for his followers. He attended every week.

Every dedicated Christian knows that we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves "as the manner of some is" (Heb. 10:25). A part of our happy celebration includes singing the Lord's praise on his special day and interceding in prayer for those in need.

3. Continue to Use the Lord's Day as a Day for Good Works. When I was a teenager, I told my Aunt Birdie Gray Wroten, a Methodist minister's wife, about something I needed to do on a Sunday, seeking to prevent a problem from building up. She responded, "Go ahead. The ox is in the ditch." She was referring to Jesus' application of Deuteronomv 22:4 found in Luke 14:4.

In a similar mood, a male marriage broker in an Israeli film was meticulous about keeping the laws of the Sabbath. Yet he had not had a customer for a long time and was growing poor and hungry. A message came just at the beginning of the Sabbath for him to go to a prospective customer's house and help two people find each other for a yearned-for lifetime of happiness. He paused only a few moments and then proceeded to break two rules, walking a forbidden distance and doing his work. His explanation was priceless, like a page from the New Testament: "I'm not doing work. I'm just doing the Lord's will."

At a Sabbath feast in the home of a Pharisee leader, Jesus responded to people's needs. He noticed a person with dropsy (too much fluid in the body). He asked the legalists present, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day" (Luke 14:3)? His question echoed against the walls of the building, amplified by the passive silence of the gathering. Jesus healed the man. Then he told them about the ox in a ditch that would be rescued on the holy day. Again stony silence engulfed that room, and the guests left looking as if they had eaten sour grapes for dessert.

In our time we need to follow the Master's example. We need to look for good works to be done in the name of Christ. Taking food to a shut-in, helping an older person move to a retirement home, or even rebuilding a person's storm-damaged house: all these could be done on the Lord's Day in the spirit of Christ (and I would venture to say with his approval).

I find that I must continually resist the temptation to become a Pharisee. When I drive to Sunday School at 8:45 a.m. and see joggers along the way, I say to my wife, "I'm not going to criticize; those dudes have probably already been to early mass." Then when I return home and find neighbors on both sides of my home cutting their lawns, I tell myself that their hearts might be purer than mine.

I am not ready to reinstate the strict blue laws of colonial New England. Those ordinances became extremely odious because the religious views of one segment of society were imposed on all the rest of society.

President Jimmy Carter had this diverse backdrop on the stage of his thinking when he was asked about Sunday. The former director of the Lord's Day Alliance of the United States, Dr. James P. Wesberry, a father in the ministry to me, wrote a request to the President "to avoid the use of Sunday for transacting business" and to help pass laws "to protect one day in seven as a day of rest and renewal for the people of our nation."

He received this reply from the President's assistant: "The best the President can do in this area is to set an example, which he does. As you know, the President attends church regularly and does not schedule official events on Sundays. Most Sundays are devoted to church and family."

We, too, might set an example for our children, grandchildren, and neighbors by trying to keep the Lord's Day in the Lord's way. ■

Watching the World Go By…

Hard Times

By Ralph Lynn

[Dr. Ralph Lynn is a retired professor of history at Baylor University and is a frequent contributor to *Christian Ethics Today.*]

Perhaps the steam engine, which made the industrial revolution possible, is the most significant instrument for change in the millennium just closing.

Certainly the infrastructure of our own marvelous world, including even the computer, is unimaginable without the foundational wealth flowing from the steam engine—the equivalent for us of the Greeks' Pandora's box, the opening of which led to endless problems.

The news which inundates us twenty-four hours a day is replete with horror stories of ecological problems which beset us, just as the earliest industrial city populations suffered from poisonous industrial wastes.

With the populations of natural paradise areas like Los Angeles smothering from smog, with the employees of our Environmental Protection Agency headquarters in Washington being made sick by their "sick" building, and with the desolation of our inner cities, we cannot claim that we have solved the problems which Charles Dickens depicted so graphically 150 years ago in his searing novel of social and political criticism, *Hard Times.*

That Britain escaped the revolution, which Dickens warned was possible, seems to be due in part to the social-political criticism he and other writers made and partly to a remarkable influence of religion.

In *Hard Times,* originally a weekly serial, Dickens wrote of a city he called "Coketown."

"It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood, it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage.

"It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves forever and ever, and never got uncoiled.

"It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye."

Dickens' description of the home of a Coketown mill worker is a classic. (I have kept Dickens' punctuation but have broken his long paragraph into sections.)

"In the hardest working part of Coketown; in the innermost fortifications of that ugly citadel, where Nature was as strongly bricked out as killing airs and gases were bricked in;

"At the heart of the labyrinth of narrow courts upon courts, and close streets upon close streets, which had come into existence piecemeal, every piece in a violent hurry for some one man's purpose, and the whole an unnatural family, shouldering and trampling, and pressing one another to death;

"In the last close nook of this great exhausted receiver, where the chimneys, for want of air to make a draft, were built in an immense variety of stunted and crooked shapes, as though every house put out a sign of the kind of people who might expect to be born in it;

"Among the multitude of Coketown, generically called the 'Hands'—a race who would have found more favor with some people if Providence had seen fit to make them only hands, or, like the lower creatures of the seashore, only hands and stomachs—lived a certain Stephen Blackpool, forty years of age."

Josiah Bounderby, Coketown's leading banker, undismayed or perhaps just unaware of these horrors, was a one-man Chamber of Commerce. Addressing a visitor, Bounderby observed that "First of all, you see our smoke. That's meat and drink to us. It's the healthiest thing in the world in all respects, and particularly for the lungs."

He further declaimed that although "It's the pleasantest and lightest work there is, the hands still want to be fed on turtle soup and venison with a gold spoon."

Dickens did not miss much.

Just as tens of thousands of Americans have deserted our cities for rural areas, so Josiah Bounderby "took possession of a house and grounds about fifteen miles from town" where the industry-desecrated countryside "mellowed into a rustic landscape, golden with heath, and snowy with hawthorn in the spring of the year, and tremulous with leaves and their shadows all the summertime."

Dickens understood that people living and working in such circumstances might one day strike out blindly against a society which consigned them to so bare an existence.

He warned the upper classes to "cultivate in them while there is yet time, the utmost graces of the fancies and affections to adorn their lives so much in need of adornment; or, in the day of your triumph, when romance is utterly driven out of their souls, and they and a bare existence stand face to face, reality will take a wolfish turn and make an end of you."

Dickens deserves some credit for Britain's escape from revolution but the Church deserves more. From the Middle Ages forward, the Church had fostered the idea that the pow-

erful nobles had a sacred obligation to look after the powerless poor.

This idea survived in England into the 19th century as Tory Democracy. In tragic contrast, the Russian nobility refused all change with the result that the Russian masses literally made an end of their oppressors.

The United States, like Britain, has escaped the kind of revolution Dickens warned against but the reasons for this similarity differ somewhat.

The United States, at the turn from the 19th to the 20sth century, had more than a decade of sharp, clever, sometimes amusing social-political criticism. If not for the label, "Muckrakers," which Teddy Roosevelt gave the critics, the leaders of the social gospel movement should be included.

Despite the work of the social gospel people, religion probably played a smaller role in modernization here than in Britain. It is not easy to explain—and perhaps impossible to justify—the relative lack of religious influence.

Perhaps an explanation should begin with the fact that, in this vast and virgin land, we had neither an established nobility nor a nationally established church.

The gradual emergence of a wealthy class (plutocrats) was our substitute for the British nobility. Our problem was that this new, powerful nobility had not been imbued with the European idea that they had a sacred obligation to serve the needs of the powerless poor. In Britain, as on the Continent, this obligation was called *noblesse oblige*. Our historians have, therefore, called our captains of industry and finance a "nobility without noblesse."

Why was the influence of religion not more significant?

On the frontier, each man and each community had to proceed rather on their own. The lack of established customs and the difficulty of communication in this vast new land dictated a degree of anarchy in comparison with the old and orderly society of Britain.

This confident disorderly individualism resulted in the denominational splits which have given us literally hundreds of differing religious groupings—nearly all calling themselves Christians.

Since we had no dominant national religious entity, able to speak with real power, but only a multitude of discordant voices, each local religious leader was so dependent upon the local nobility (without noblesse) that the wealthy powerful could and did exploit the poor without significant rebuke from religion.

The situation in the South is only the most obvious and regrettable example of this weakness of religious witness on social-political problems.

Thus, Jim Crow was dominant in the South until the unrest of the fifties and sixties finally issued in the Civil Rights Acts.

Since then—and not surprisingly—many have concluded that economic concerns and university ambitions for success in athletics have been more effective than religion in promoting racial tolerance.

If this brief account has reasonable validity, it seems that both the British and the Americans, to some degree, owe their happy history to their patriotic writers of social-political criticism.

But the influence of religion in Britain seems more significant than in the United States—except for one consideration.

The African-American population in the United States has displayed, on the whole, a remarkably forgiving attitude toward their white oppressors—which the dominant whites have only inadequately acknowledged.

It is more than just probable that this particular religious influence is the most significant religious contribution to the American escape from widespread revolutionary activity. They deserve our smartest salute. ■

THE SENILITY PRAYER

[Gleaned from the Internet by friends who seem to have no gainful employment.]

GOD, GRANT ME THE SENILITY
TO FORGET ALL ABOUT THOSE
FOLKS I NEVER CARED MUCH
FOR ANYWAY;
AND GRANT ME THE GOOD FORTUNE
TO RUN FREQUENTLY INTO THOSE
FRIENDS I REALLY LIKE;
AND GIVE ME THE GOOD EYESIGHT
TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE.

AMEN

THE CENTER FOR CHRISTIAN ETHICS AT BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

The Center for Christian Ethics exists to bear witness to the relevance of the Christian gospel in the world. It maintains an emphasis on applied Christianity with program activity based on Christian experience, Biblical truth, theological insight, historical perspective, current research, human needs, and the divine imperative to love God with our whole hearts and our neighbors as ourselves.

CHRONOLOGY

- In 1988 plans were made and the foundations laid for the Center for Christian Ethics.
- In 1989 the Center for Christian Ethics name was carefully chosen.
- In 1990, on June 14, the Center was chartered as a non-profit corporation.
- In 1991, on June 17, the Center was granted 501(c)(3) standing by the Internal Revenue Service.
- In 1997, a mutually beneficial relationship between the Center and Baylor University was established, with the Center's primary offices situated in the Baylor Administration Building, Pat Neff Hall. Waco. Texas.

TRUSTEES

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SUPPORT

Financial support for the Center for Christian Ethics has come from churches, through the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, from Foundations, and from interested individuals.

CONTRIBUTIONS ARE

- Greatly needed
- Urgently solicited
- Genuinely appreciated

OBJECTIVES

- Strengthen and support the cause of Christian ethics.
- Champion the moral values without which civilization itself could not survive.
- Publish a Christian ethics journal as a needed voice for the Christian ethics cause.
- Conduct forums to discuss critical ethical issues with a view to recommending practical responses.
- Address the ethical dimensions of public policy issues.
- Prepare and distribute Christian ethics support materials not being produced by others.
- Work with like-minded individuals and entities to advance the cause of Christian ethics.
- Perform needed Christian ethics projects and services for those welcoming such help.
- Recognize and honor those who have made unique contributions to the cause of Christian ethics.
- Utilize the contributions of responsible stewards who designate resources to be used in furthering the cause of Christian ethics.

The **VOICE** of the Center for Christian Ethics is *Christian Ethics Today.* Within the constraints of energy and finances, this journal is published about every other month. It is now sent without charge to those who request it.

COLLOQUIUMS are Center-sponsored conversations held several times a year with knowledgeable participants coming together to discuss relevant ethical issues with a view to recommending appropriate actions.

INITIATIVES in Christian Ethics (related to such things as race, class, gender, publishing, mass media, translation, teaching, and curricula) are Center agenda concerns.

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CHRISTIAN ETHICS TODAY
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