Business and Ethics

This essay grapples with some of the problems Christians face trying to operate ethically in today's business world.

 *This article is also available in Spanish.*

Can "business" and "ethics" be used in the same sentence?

A while back, a member of the Probe lecture team was invited to speak on the topic of "Business Ethics" in a class at Colorado State University. When the Probe speaker arrived at the classroom, the professor explained that the reason the class chose to have him speak on this topic was their overwhelming sense of curiosity. They could not comprehend how the words business and ethics could be used in the same title.

Business enterprise has received a very diverse review from the ethicists of this generation. In the "Me First" era of the 80s, there was very little concern for ethics in the world of business, and you would have been hard pressed to find a university that dealt seriously with the need for ethics in its business school curriculum. A case in point concerns John Shad, former chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission. He donated $35 million dollars to the Harvard Business School to establish an ethics department. Yet two years later, Harvard had only come up with one rather flimsy-sounding course, and they had been unable to find an ethicist to head up the department.(1)

The 90s saw an awakening to the need for ethics because of the many scandals that were beginning to erupt within the world of business and finance, moral failures such as the disgraceful actions that brought down Michael Milken and Ivan Boesky. The problem is that in the 90s, the concern for ethics has not returned us to any absolute standard of ethics, but rather to a search for relative balance between ethics and the bottom

line or personal values. The following statement by a state representative from Tennessee demonstrates this tendency all too well. While explaining why he was for fair trade price controls on milk, but against it for liquors, he said, “I’ve got 423 dairy farmers in my district, and I’ve got to rise above principle.”

Often, today, the highest ethic is “tolerance.” By that, I don’t mean the traditional view of tolerance in which one tries to recognize and respect other people’s values without necessarily accepting those values as being correct. I’m talking about a whole new meaning to the word tolerance. Today the word is used in a way to imply that all values, beliefs, and claims to truth and life-styles are equal. It becomes extremely difficult to run a business when (1) you have to walk the tightrope of balancing everyone’s values and (2) you are expected to treat all these values as equally valid. Our society today has lost its ability to determine what is right from what is wrong. Business enterprise requires a level of trust among the participants. Where is that trust going to come from if we have no common platform upon which to base our ethics and must rely, instead, on the assorted and conflicting individual values of whatever group we’re a part of? This essay will grapple with some of the problems we must face as Christians in trying to operate in the business world, while surrounded with people who believe their personal values are not subject to any higher standard than their own reasoning.

Who Makes the Rules?

The fundamental question we need to address is, Who makes the rules, God or man? That is what the issue of ethics is all about. Either there is a source for what is morally right that is beyond ourselves, i.e., God, and that standard is absolute and universal, or we are left to ourselves to figure out what is right and what is wrong, if we can even agree among ourselves that there is a right and a wrong. If we were, in

fact, left to ourselves, how could we say one person's values were any better than another's? In the age of the industrial and scientific revolution, people believed they could reason themselves toward better behavior, but today, having seen the horrors of what the industrial and scientific revolution has brought upon us, many have given up any hope of finding a unified answer for right and wrong. In fact, many now actually fear anyone who thinks that he or she has a handle on any absolute standard by which we might live.

Society has moved from a Christian base, which held that there is a source of ultimate truth, through modernism, which saw truth as relative to circumstances, duty, consequences, situations, etc., to post-modernism, which asserts that there is no truth, only the power to put forth one's values.

King Solomon, who was hailed as the wisest leader ever to govern any nation, said, "Be wise and give serious thought to the way you live." In all endeavors, including our work, we must realize that morality is the single most important guiding principle behind all that we do and say. Our morality molds our ultimate being, who we really are.

Today most professional organizations have a code of ethics. The problem is that their codes are often ignored or not made known. For example, a few years ago Probe was speaking in the engineering department at Southern Methodist University. One of the students, after hearing the lecture on engineering ethics, came up to the speaker afterwards and said, "I have been an engineering student for four years, and this is the first time I ever heard that there was an engineering code of ethics."

There are some companies working hard to communicate to their employees a corporate goal and standard that puts forth biblical values. One company like this is the Servicemaster Company. Their corporate goals are: (1) Honor God in all we do, (2) Help people to develop, (3) Pursue excellence, and (4)

Grow profitably. Notice that the profitability goal, although one of their four key goals, is listed last. Making a profit is a necessary goal, but there are things more important than surviving in this world. In fact, there are a lot of businesses that should shut down, for their only legitimate goal is that they do make a profit. In this regard, the vast pornography business comes to mind, not to mention state lotteries and all the other forms of gambling.

So, as an individual or a business, do our personal or corporate goals demonstrate a commitment to a standard beyond ourselves? Do we have a set of guidelines that helps us to steer a course that is straight and narrow in a world that is adrift—floating all over the ethical map? What we need are some guidelines that will help us to steer that straight and narrow course.

Ethical Guidelines for the Real World

In his book, *Honesty, Morality & Conscience,* published by NavPress,(2) Jerry White gives us five excellent guidelines for conducting our business activities.

First, there is the guideline of a **just weight** as found in Deuteronomy 25:13-15. The principle of a just weight is to give a full amount in exchange for a fair payment. Another way to look at it is to give full quality for what is paid for and according to what is advertised. We must accept responsibility for both the quality and the amount of our product or service. As a business owner, do I fairly represent my product or service? As an employee, do I give a full day's work for a full day's pay? Remember, as it says in Colossians 3:23, we are working for the Lord and not for men.

Second, the Lord demands our **total honesty**. Ephesians 4:25 calls upon us to speak the truth. Jerry White reminds us that, "Although we will frequently fail, our intent must be total honesty with our employer, our co-worker, our employees, and

our customers."(3) This is a difficult principle to adhere to. James 3:2 says this is where we often fail, but if we can control our tongue we will be able to control the rest of our body as well. The Living Bible best sums it up in Romans 12:17 which says, "Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honest clear through." We must ask ourselves, are we totally honest in reporting our use of time, money, and accomplishments?

The third principle is **being a servant**. Someone has said Christians like to be *called* servants, but don't appreciate being *treated* like servants. To serve God sounds glorious, but to serve others is another matter. As usual, Jesus Christ is our example. Matthew 20:28 says that Christ did not come to be served, but to serve others, in fact, to give up his life for others. The value of a business is its service. How well it serves the needs of its customers will determine its success. The business, in turn, is made up of people who must do the serving. The value of the employees is in how well they serve the customer's needs. This is putting the needs of others before our own and then trusting God to meet our needs in the process.

The fourth guideline is **personal responsibility**. We must take full responsibility for our own actions and decisions. We should not try to excuse our actions based on pressure within our business or organization to do what we know is not right. We all fail at times to do what we know we should do. We must then accept the responsibility for what we have said or done and not try to pass that responsibility on to someone else or try to blame it on some set of circumstances. Romans 12:2 warns us about the danger of allowing the world to shape us into its mold.

Finally, there is the issue of **reasonable profits**. This principle is quite a bit harder to get a handle on, but it is still vital to have guidelines to follow. What is a reasonable profit? This is something each person has to deal with on his

own. Luke 6:31 is a great help on this. It says that we should treat others the same way we would want to be treated. Put yourself in the other person's shoes and ask yourself how you would want to be treated in a particular situation. To the business person this is the price of our service or product above our cost. To the employee it is the amount of our wages for our service to the organization. Luke 3:14 says to be content with our wages, but the Bible also reminds the employer in 1 Timothy 5:18 that the laborer is worthy of his wages.

It is all too easy to rationalize our way around many of these principles, but God will hold us accountable in the end. Ultimately it is God whom we serve and to whom we must give account.

The Cost of Living Ethically

The media is awash with reports of faulty business ethics: frauds, manipulations, thefts, industrial espionage, corruption, kickbacks, conspiracy, thefts, tax evasion, embezzling, and unfair competition proliferate. Either a lot more unethical acts are taking place today or those behaviors that have always existed are being exploited more in contemporary society. A Gallup report concluded that "you can't trust Americans as much as you used to." The *Wall Street Journal* reported that churched persons appear only slightly more likely to walk the straight and narrow than their less-pious compatriots.

Why is it so hard to walk the straight and narrow in our business dealings? We are continually under the stress of performance on the job and in the competitive work environment. Often our very livelihood is threatened under pressure of the job. Usually we know what we should do, but we count the cost of doing the right thing and then back down due to pressure from people or circumstances. If we feel that we must do whatever is necessary to keep our jobs, we may end up

serving the wrong master.

Steven Covey, in his book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*,(4) addresses the issue of the need to become principle-centered individuals. Are we living principle-centered lives? This means that there are some principles that are more important than the success or even the continuance of our business. Are there some ethical standards for which we are prepared to die if necessary? Those who let their business die rather than set aside their ethical standards can return to do business again someday, since they were able to maintain their integrity and their reputation. Those who cave in to the pressures to keep the business alive may be caught and end up losing their reputation and thus deprive themselves of a platform from which to rebuild their lives and businesses.

Ten Global Principles for Success

We are going to close this essay on business ethics with *Ten Global Principles for Business and Professional Success* from the booklet *Mega Values* by Colonel Nimrod McNair.(5) These principles are modeled after the Ten Commandments.

The first principle is, “Show proper respect for authority.” This is the invisible superstructure of productive enterprise. God clearly commands us to respect those in authority over us. God uses this command to bring order out of chaos. Authority is a necessary prerequisite to order.

The second rule is, “Have a singleness of purpose.” Divided purposes dilute effectiveness when interests conflict. We cannot serve two masters effectively. We must evaluate our time, talent, and resources and make sure we are using these God-given elements in a way that ultimately brings Him the glory.

Precept number three is, “Use effective communication in word and deed.” Complete communications and predictable follow-

through are the basic expressions of personal integrity. It means doing what you say you'll do, even if it is uncomfortable or inconvenient. This commandment is honored when promises are kept and accurate recounting of transactions is given.

A fourth truth is, "Provide proper rest, recreation, and reflection." This ensures a quality of life that will be reflected in creativity, productivity, and motivation. Rest is a necessity for effectiveness. Recreation guards the mind against mental and emotional fatigue. Reflection promotes self-monitoring, allows for mid-course corrections, and ensures single-mindedness. The fifth tenet is, "Show respect for the older and more experienced." Our parents, teachers, coaches, employers, pastors, and other elders in our lives have an investment in us. It is to our benefit to honor that investment and to draw fully from the wisdom and expertise of those more experienced than ourselves.

The sixth axiom is, "Show respect for human life, dignity, and rights." This encompasses product quality and service, the work environment, health and safety, personnel policies and responsibilities, and competitive practices. It is simply the Golden Rule—treating others as you would want to be treated.

The seventh principle is, "Maintain a stability of sexes and the family." Wisdom and good business practice dictate equal regard for men and women as persons irrespective of gender or marital status. Respect for the family structure as the crucial foundation of our cultural system must be reflected in our decisions regarding the conflicts between business demands and the value of the family and personal life.

Precept number eight is, "Demonstrate the proper allocation of resources." Two fundamental responsibilities and privileges of business are optimal use of material resources and wise leadership of people. We must treat all our business assets, whether they be people, funds, or materials, as a gift from

the Lord.

The ninth truth is, “Demonstrate honesty and integrity.” Integrity is the cornerstone of any good relationship. Without demonstrating the willingness to give and the worthiness to receive trust, no business can survive or prosper. A reputation for honesty is a comprehensive statement of both a person’s character and how he or she treats others. It is a fundamental mindset against stealing, lying, or deceiving.

The tenth and final business commandment is, “Maintain the right of ownership of property.” Those who are disciplined, creative, prudent, and industrious are entitled to the fruits of their labor. We must not covet that which belongs to another.

Business ethics is more than a list of do’s and don’ts, but these principles can help us get off to a good start.

Notes

1. Chuck Colson, Jubilee (October 1989).
2. Jerry White, Honesty, Morality & Conscience (Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 1978).
3. Ibid.
4. Stephen R. Covey, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989).
5. Colonel Nimrod McNair, *Mega Values: 10 Global Principles for Business and Professional Success Written in Stone* (Executive Leadership Foundation, Inc., 2179 Northlake Pkwy. Suite 119, Tucker, GA 30084-9885).

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Movies and Morals

The movie industry is spending billions of dollars to grab the undivided attention of the movie-going public. The majority of the film makers work very hard at increasing the technical quality of their movies so that you and your family will keep coming back for more. There is no doubt, statistically speaking, that these efforts have been very successful.

Movie theaters are doing better than ever. Oh, they are not the grandiose movie houses with giant chandeliers and ostentatious splendor that some of us can remember. The new movie theaters are big, unappealing buildings containing many small, very plain looking theater rooms. But, attendance is not a problem. In fact, we live in a country filled with the magic screen. Television, which we thought would bring down the movie theaters, has become an extension of the phenomenon through the vast market of video movies.

Statistics tell us that the average child spends many hours viewing movies, either in theaters or on video. Is it not reasonable to conclude that such media can affect his or her view of the world? In particular, can their understanding of ethical guidelines be affected? As is true with all media, movies contain someone’s ideas about life. What do the producers, writers, and directors want to convey? Do their ethical perspectives align with those you want to teach your children? Unfortunately, the world of movies is too often a world apart from God.

What are we as parents and concerned adults to do? Well, for one thing we can try to use movies to help our kids learn the lessons they should be learning. There are lessons that can be gleaned from the vast library of video movies, but it will take some effort on our part to know how to guide our children’s viewing habits and to interact with them in the process. We must make the medium work to accomplish our goals,

and make certain that what they are exposed to in movies is helping to develop healthy minds. Tragically, too many parents use movies as a babysitter for their children. Thus, such parents are often not aware of what their children are watching, yet in reality they should be watching films together so the family can discuss what they are viewing.

In this essay we will explore some ideas concerning how you can use movies to discuss ethics and morality with your older children. We will introduce some principles and guidelines that you can use in order to lead them to make good value judgments. This is very important because you can never assume that your children see the evil in certain situations, nor that they grasp the moral climate of a story. In fact, if they are not regularly hearing the wisdom a parent can provide, they may be buying into a deformed world view.

During our discussion we will use particular movies as examples. But many films can be used, even ones that show the dark side of life, as long we are not exposing ourselves to material that we know in our conscience we should not be viewing. We will be dealing with films that for the most part work well with older children. Many of the films are also in book form, so reading the story would enhance the process. So, let’s look at some ideas about how we might teach ethics while viewing movies.

Popular Films and Ethical Dilemmas

As we seek to help our children glean ethical lessons from movies, they will, of necessity, come face-to-face with challenging ethical dilemmas. There is a certain amount of safety, however, in first encountering ethical tests in the realm of the imagination through movies or literature. This is especially true if a parent is actively participating and helping the young person think through the alternatives.

Let’s continue this thought by examining some scenes from

Jurassic Park.(1) This film includes the very contemporary issue of bioethics. Genetic engineering can be used for both good and evil. The movie presents in vivid detail a type of dilemma frequently faced today; that is, If we have the ability to do something, does that mean we should go ahead and use that ability? Does capability = justifiability?

You may want to emphasize the hard-learned lessons of the scientists in this story and use the implications of biotechnology gone astray. Discuss with your children some of the rapidly growing medical procedures such as test tube babies, surrogate parents, genetic manipulation, and artificial insemination. Debate whether the Jurassic Park scientists merely proceeded in an irrational and irresponsible manner, or whether they were in fact trying to play the role of God, thus trespassing into an area they should have never invaded. Perhaps they were so caught up in the excitement of the possibilities that they never stopped to consider whether the "invasion" should have taken place.

Another area of ethical discussion is in the realm of computer ethics, a subject that may be of great interest to your child. The computer security design in Jurassic Park was out-dated and poorly conceived. It hinged upon one person, Dennis Nedry, who turned out to be the weak link in the whole system.(2) The design flaws allowed one person with a self-serving motive to shut down the whole system.

In his greed for greater wealth, Dennis, the core programmer, shut down the security system and jeopardized the whole project. In security systems, as in our legal system, we must develop a design on the basis of fallen human nature. All of us should realize that we are capable of the worst of evils. We must design safeguards into our security systems to protect against those who go astray. For example, even the President of the United States can't begin an atomic attack without others being involved in the process. This is a safeguard for all of us.

A film such as this also gives you an opportunity to encourage your children to think beyond the exciting technology of the production. Dinosaurs that appear so real and frightening are one thing, but ideas implanted in the script are another.

For a deeper analysis of Jurassic Park you may want to read Probe's article, The Worldview of Jurassic Park by Dr. Ray Bohlin.

Another film that you may use with older children is *Class Action*(3), a story about a daughter's relationship with her father in the context of battles over personal and legal ethics. (Warning, it does have an "R" rating for language.) At stake in this film is the code of ethics of the California Bar Association. It shows that we may not evade responsibility just because we wish to do so. The film is based on the Ford Pinto gas tank case, and there are many interesting developments in the areas of legal, business, and engineering ethics.

Discuss the concept of cost-benefit analysis and what role, if any, it plays in ethical dialogue. In this type of analysis a company computes the cost of making the necessary changes to correct a situation against the cost of paying off the anticipated number of lawsuits that would arise if the problem is not corrected. Bottom line decisions are too often made based on money, rather than the effect on people's lives.

Ethical Struggles on the High Seas

Now, let's investigate *Billy Budd*, a classic movie which seethes with ethical conflict. This powerful story is "a stark dramatization of man's fight between good and evil. The battle is fully realized in the personal and physical struggle between Billy Budd, a young innocent sailor on a British man-of-war and his superior, the cold, cruel and often vicious Claggart. When Billy Budd's strong belief in goodness is threatened by Claggart's equally strong force of evil, the

consequences for both individuals are tragic and lasting.”(4) The film is based on Herman Melville’s book of the same title.(5) Billy Budd, the popular deck hand, is convicted of murder and is sentenced to be hanged from the yardarm. In the process of his court martial, stimulating ethical questions are surfaced. But remember, this is a classic black and white film. Some children will have difficulty paying attention. You may want to develop in your children a taste for thought-provoking types of movies by first using more popular films, such as Jurassic Park. Then you may decide to explore the classics later.

Billy Budd is a good movie to watch with your older children. You may even want to hit the stop button from time to time during the dialogue. See if your children understand the dilemma that Captain Vere is experiencing as he struggles with the decision of Billy Budd’s fate.

Consider some hints of what to look for. For example, the issue of peer pressure versus responsibility is apparent. Captain Vere was very concerned about what the crew would do when they heard about the verdict, because Billy Budd was very popular among the crew members. How often do we make decisions based more on what we fear our peers will think or do rather than on what we know is right?

This discussion may lead to a second example of great concern. To whom are we responsible? Captain Vere, as the commissioned captain of the vessel, was solely responsible for the ship and all the personnel on board. Yet he was not totally an independent agent; he was accountable to the fleet admiral. He knew the requirements of military law. There were demands of duty upon him.(6) The question that Captain Vere seemed to ignore was whether he had a responsibility to a power higher than man, i.e., God. Was the captain’s only choice to follow the letter of the law?

In following the letter of the law, Captain Vere made the

right legal decision, but his decision showed a lack of moral courage. He knew he was executing a righteous man, although technically a guilty one. In the end it is Billy Budd who demonstrates the highest level of moral inspiration. About to be hanged, Billy Budd proclaims, “God bless Captain Vere!” This was a moment of great pathos that can stir moral outrage.

Billy Budd is a thought-provoking film that will be worth your time and concentration. Not only is it based on a great story; it also benefits from fine acting and production.

Carpe Diem, “Seize the Day”

In the movie *Dead Poets Society*, John Keating, a prep school English teacher played by Robin Williams, challenges his students with these words: “Carpe Diem, lads! Seize the day. Make your lives extraordinary!”(7) In this bold statement he is telling his prep school students to seize the moment or enjoy the day, trusting as little as possible to the future.

One of the major questions in the film is, “What is the meaning of life?” First you should understand the background of these prep school boys. This is a very upper class school supported by rich, respectable parents. It’s an institution that is very establishment-oriented. Keating, the inspired English teacher, seeks to instill in his boys a sense of passion for poetry and the arts that goes beyond just understanding it. But, he totally ignores the spiritual life beyond mere human feelings.

In discussing this film with your children you may want to point out the fallacy of a “Carpe Diem” philosophy of life. How does it contrast with the Christian perspective of our being strangers and pilgrims in this world with our hope set on being with Christ for all eternity? What are the positive aspects of this philosophy? Here you might compare and contrast this approach to life with that of the book of Ecclesiastes. A “Carpe Diem” philosophy of life does encourage

living life to the fullest, at least in the senses, but, who or what are these boys taught to rely upon? Themselves or God? Does this philosophy promote a full-orbed spiritual life?

Another fascinating film about human nature and ethics is Woody Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanors*.(8) The story contains Allen's existential philosophy. This worldview is even summarized in the closing narrative of the film. According to the existentialist, we must give meaning to an indifferent universe, and we define ourselves by the choices we make. Thus we are nothing but the sum total of our choices. The existentialist's only hope is that future generations may learn from our choices and have a greater understanding of life.

In spite of its existential point of view, the film does contain some excellent lessons on moral choices and the penalty of sin. Judah Rosenthal, played by Martin Landau, is a wealthy opthamologist, revered as a pillar of society. But he has a mistress and his world begins to crumble around him when she threatens to expose their affair. He eventually has her killed. While this story develops, we are able to observe the different moral reasoning between those who believe in a God who is there and cares, and those who live a life devoid of God. We see the contrast between those who believe in a moral structure to life, those who believe you only go around once, as well as those who believe "might makes right."

As you discuss this film, key in on the moral struggle Judah goes through after the tragic deed is done. The dining room vision he has when he returns to his childhood home is especially poignant. You will want to note that even though Judah's father is seeking to make a stand for God, his closing remark is a fallacy, even though it demonstrates great loyalty to God. God is truth and defines truth. God will never stand opposed to the truth. In fact, we can only understand truth in the context of understanding God.

Our children are growing up in a world heavily influenced by existential thought. It is important in viewing this film to describe this non-biblical perspective of life.

Guidelines for Viewing Films

We will conclude this essay with some guidelines and possible resources for more productive film viewing:

1. You may want to subscribe to a movie review newsletter such *as Movieguide: A Biblical Guide to Movies and Entertainment,* Good News Communications, Inc., P.O. Box 9952, Atlanta, GA 30319, or *Preview: Family Movie & TV Review*, PO Box 832567, Richardson, TX 75083-2567. Their website is www.PreviewOnline.org.

2. Take note of the ratings and read a review as you attempt to determine if a movie conforms to the established non-Christian ethical standards of Hollywood. You may have had the experience of walking out of "PG" movies wondering why they held a "PG" instead of an "R" rating. Or perhaps you have seen "R" rated movies that were far less offensive than some "PG" offerings.

3. Before exposing yourself and your children to a film that may be questionable, you may want to talk with friends who have already seen it in order to discover what they recommend. But you should also exercise caution with these recommendations. Everyone's perspective is different, so don't rely on referrals alone.

4. Don't hesitate to walk out of a movie or to shut off a video that offends your conscience. Your mind and your time are far more important than the money invested. The more movies we see that we know we shouldn't, the more jaded we become about what offends us. We become desensitized. For example, we may allow our children to see sex scenes that years ago would have been very troubling. Or we may find

ourselves watching senseless violence and gore without being offended.

5. You may want to invest in books on how to analyze films, such as *The Art of Watching Films*, by Joseph M. Boggs.

6. Never go to a movie with the attitude of just shutting down your mind and being entertained. Always think as you watch. Be a good critic. It can be especially helpful to attend a film with someone who will discuss it with you afterwards.

7. Finally, think through what you want to learn from the film, such as the film's premise and how it relates to biblical truth. How are various roles portrayed? How accurate is the historical perspective? What part, if any, does religion play? How do you feel after watching the film? How are various ethnic and other groups of people depicted? Or was there redemptive value in the film?(9)

Above all, be involved with your children in what they are watching. Help them develop a sensitivity to the ethical dimension of their everyday lives. Train them to pay attention to the moral choices they make. Education begins in the home. There is no doubt about it, children are establishing some of their values from what they see in movies. We need to develop an interest so that we know what our children are watching. Then we can use opportunities to interact with them to discover what they are learning from what they watch. Help them begin to think God's thoughts after Him as they enter the world of movies.

Notes

1. Jurassic Park, Disney, 1993.

2. For deeper study in this area you may want to refer to Mitch Kabby's analysis in Network World. 10(30):89, 26 July 93.

3. *Class Action*, Fox Video, 1990.

4. *Billy Budd*, Key Video, a division of CBS/Fox Video, 1985.

5. Herman Melville, *Billy Budd and Other Tales* (New American Library, 1961).

6. For those who want to study ethical theory (for example, families involved in home schooling), this would be a good point to discuss the ethical teaching of Kant. His "categorical imperative" is based on a sense of duty. Through your actions you must treat individuals as an end in themselves, not only as a means. See Rex Patrick Stevens, *Kant On Moral Practice (*Atlanta: Mercer University Press, 1981).

7. *Dead Poets Society*, Touchstone Home Video, 1989.

8. *Crimes and Misdemeanors,* Orion Home Video, Orion Pictures Corp., 1989.

9. Lois Beck, "The Discerning Moviegoer: Watch What You Watch," *The Bridge* (Messiah College, Mechanicsburg, Penn).

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Morality Apart From God

Recently, I became aware of a professor at one of the local colleges whose goal is to convince his students that you can have a system of ethics without a belief in God. Now I agree with him that holding his position is theoretically possible, but I said to him that such an ethical system is one built on sand. It would not stand the test of time nor the waves of adversity.

The U.S.S.R. tried to build an empire on godless atheism, and it failed miserably. Today in Russia we still see the results of the ethics of atheism. You would think that the Russians, having suffered so much under a totalitarian regime, would

strive to do the right thing in appreciation for their new freedoms. Many have, but Russia today is torn apart by crime, greed, lawlessness, and immorality. Why? Was it merely too much freedom too soon, or are they still reaping the rewards of the ethics of atheism?

Many people today believe that God is, at best, unnecessary, and at worst, an intolerant task master. They say they don't need God to live right, and they can set their own rules for life. We live in a world obsessed with personal values. What people do depends on their personal values, but since everyone's values are different, there seems to be no standard by which we must all live. The very idea of basing our morality upon our values means that we have bought into the idea of a system of relativistic ethics. Personal values have replaced values of virtue as the foundation for ethical thought. Virtues speak of some objective realities, but personal values speak only about subjective decisions of our will.

Basing ethical decisions on personal values is problematic. For example, is something good because we love it, or do we love it because it is good? German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche would tell us that something is good because we love it. According to Nietzsche, man himself is the universal and absolute reference point for all of life. "God is dead," he declared, believing this release from the demands of any metaphysical reality was an opportunity to develop his own system of ethics based on self cultivation.

Today the world is continuing to build an ethical system based on tolerance and enlightenment apart from God. Men have tried many ways to teach this new godless form of morality. A decade ago we constantly heard the term, "values clarification." It was a national effort to allow even children to set their own standards of behavior. It was a disaster as it justified almost any kind of behavior. Educators may not loosely throw around the term, "values clarification," as they once did, but

many still try to teach a system of ethics based on man's own values. These are values which are rooted in the idea of desirable goods, i.e., that which we decide is important to us.

The use of the term "values" can have objective content, but we must evaluate the source of that "objective content," and that leads us back to the question at hand: Is it possible to have true morality without a belief in God?

In this essay I will address this question by presenting common arguments against the need for God and then I will respond to those arguments.

What Is Ethics Without God?

From the time of the Greeks, there have been many philosophers who have sought to prove that it is possible to have a universal morality without God. There have been many arguments presented to support this position, and in theory they may be right, depending on what one means by the word *universal.* They would say, all you have to have is a consensus on what is considered right and wrong behavior. Their position, with which I disagree, goes something like this:

First: If God is necessary for morality, then whatever God deems moral is moral. Therefore, why praise God for what He has done if He could have just as likely done the opposite, and it would have been equally moral. If whatever God says goes, then if God decreed that adultery was permissible, then adultery would be permissible. If things are neither right nor wrong independently of God's will, then God cannot choose one thing over another because it is right. Thus, if He does choose one over another, His choice must be arbitrary. But a being whose decisions are arbitrary is not worthy of worship.

Second: If goodness is a defining attribute of God, then God cannot be used to define goodness. If we do so, we are guilty

of circular reasoning. That is, if we use goodness to define God, we can't also use God to define goodness.

Third: If one doesn't believe in God, being told that one must do as God commands will not help one solve any moral dilemmas.

Some philosophers, therefore, come to the following conclusion: the idea that a moral law requires a divine lawgiver is untenable.(1)

What should be our response as Christians? We should point out to people who side with the preceding position their lack of understanding concerning both God and the nature of man.

God is the creator and sustainer of all things. We would not even be self aware, let alone aware of right and wrong, if God had not created within us His image, and therefore the ability to make moral distinctions. The truth is we have no reference point for all this discussion about morality except as God reveals it. For us to argue with the source of morality is for the clay to argue with the potter.

Some philosophers say that for God to define what is right or wrong is arbitrary. God is not arbitrary; He is the source of all life and therefore the source of all truth. We have no basis to even understand the concept of being arbitrary except in reference to an unchanging God. That which would be circular reasoning or arbitrary in discussions about ourselves comes into perfect focus as we bring the dilemma close to the universal, absolute focal point for all creation, God Himself.

The second problem with these arguments is that they fail to recognize the nature of man. If man were not fallen, i.e., not corrupted by sin, we would have limitless potential to create from within ourselves a universal moral code. But, we are a fallen lot, every last one of us, and therefore incapable of fully knowing what is good (Rom. 3:23). We are even incapable of carrying out what we do know to be good (Rom. 7:18-21).

So the question of right or wrong has everything to do with the origin of our belief, not just the substance of it. No matter how sincerely I believe I am right about some moral decision, the true test is in the origin of that belief. And God is the only universal and absolute origin to all morality.

The Ethics of Belief

We are discussing arguments for the removal of God from ethical systems of morality. Many are trying to formulate an ethical platform that is devoid of any need for God.

We previously looked at one approach based on the idea that the need for a divine lawgiver is arbitrary and untenable.

Another argument, also based on scientific naturalism, holds that it is immoral to hold to a belief for which one has no evidence. The problem is that the backers of this theory are naturalists and, therefore, automatically limit all evidence to that which is naturalistic, i.e., what can scientifically be tested. For such people, putting any trust at all in the metaphysical is folly.

To these naturalists, all humans are born with a moral sense which becomes a habit of virtue as we practice comradeship and work through our common struggles. It is merely the result of a social instinct born within us.

This is a very evolutionary approach to knowledge and ethics that considers theistic approaches as outmoded hypotheses. Scientific discourse is seen as an alternative to faith.(2)

As Christians, we recognize that man is more than just material; there is a lot more to us than just the physical body. We see this in our ability to mentally stand back and evaluate our lives, our ability to know right from wrong, and our self awareness and personality that make us unique from the rest of God’s creation.

Because of our Christian perspective, we are interested not just in the physical evidences to the realities of life, but in the metaphysical evidences as well. For example, we have this book called the Holy Bible. It obviously is physical in nature because we can hold it and feel it and read it. But is there valid evidence that this book contains a message from God? Yes, in fact there are countless other books written to affirm that there is, in the pages of the Bible, a metaphysical message from the Creator of the Universe. The historic testimony of the ages confirms to our satisfaction that this book is the very communication from God to us. Can we prove this with scientific experiments? No. But, we have experienced countless testimonies and evidences that this book is more than just physical in its nature.

As Christians we must not allow the reductionism of this present age to eliminate the metaphysical in ethical dialogue. We must use the truth of God's Word unashamedly. We do not need to defend the Bible, for the Bible will defend itself. We just need to use it and live it to show the reality of God in our lives and demonstrate the power of our changed lives.

When man is allowed to see himself as only an animal, controlled by inborn or acquired instincts, he becomes self-centered and power oriented. Everything becomes an issue of power to be what he wants to be, and we either seek to create our own reality and purpose in life as the existentialist would do, or we slump into the despair of the postmodernist who says nothing makes any difference, and it really doesn't matter what we do.

Next we will look at what can happen if we allow the world to tell us we are nothing but living flesh, totally on our own in this physical universe.

From a Crack in the Dam, To a Flood in

the Valley

Intellectuals like Nietzsche, Spinoza, and Tillich and many others who have followed them have tried to create a godless society, a society free to create its own ethical system without the constraints of God-given mandates.

What can we expect if these leaders are able to advance their model for a system of ethics that has no need for God?

An interesting example may be the story of the medical profession in Germany during the Nazi regime. The medical profession is supposed to be the protector of human life. The Hippocratic Oath, that dates back to the Egyptians, states the highest standards of trust for those dedicating themselves to this honorable profession.

How did the medical profession in Germany become nothing more than an instrument of death in the hands of the Nazis? First, one's view of the nature of man had to change from that of a spiritual being to that of a purely physical being of no universal value beyond what society places on the individual. Through years of assault upon traditional morals and biblical truths, the German people began to see mankind through the eyes of German philosophers like Nietzsche and Hiedigger. These men viewed humanity as strictly flesh and blood, different from the animals only in progression, not in basic nature.(3)

Once the German population in general, and the medical profession in particular, was sold on a collectivist-authoritarian way of life, everything was in place to use the medical profession to accomplish the purposes of the Third Reich.

The Nazi holocaust began with a subtle shift in attitude that judged the value of people based upon their cost/benefit ratio to the state. First, it started with sterilization and

euthanasia of people with severe psychiatric illnesses. Soon all those with chronic illness were being exterminated. Before too long, all patients who had been sick for five years or more, or were medically unable to work and unlikely to recover were transported to killing centers; what started as "mercy killings" in rare cases of extreme mental illness soon expanded to mass extermination on an unprecedented scale. Before long all those who could not work and were medically evaluated as incapable of being rehabilitated were killed.(4)

The German medical profession then started using human body parts for medical research, and this led to the grisly "terminal human experiments," in which live people were used in medical experiments.(5)

It all started with the idea that humans belong to society and the state. According to this view, if someone is a burden to society and the state, it is logical to conclude that their life was not a life worth living. From the first decision to put to death burdensome mental patients, a chain of events followed that ultimately led to the death of the majority of all the Jews in Europe, as well as millions of other "undesirables."

If we don't believe we are created by God, but simply highly evolved animals, and if we believe we have accountability only to society, then there is no end to the depths of depravity that we can go in our search to justify our actions. Corrosion of morals begins in microscopic proportions, but if not checked by a standard beyond ourselves, it will continue until the corrosion wipes away the very foundation of our lives, and we find ourselves sinking in a sea of relativity.

Repairing the Ethical Breach

In this essay we have been addressing the danger of trying to establish an ethical system apart from the need for God.

I was recently impressed by an editorial in the *Dallas Morning News.* Written by Al Casey, the editorial was entitled, "Our ethical foundation needs repair."(6) In emphasizing the need for high ethical standards, Mr. Casey quotes the famous medical missionary, Dr. Albert Schweitzer: "Ethics is concern for good behavior . . . an obligation to consider not only our personal well-being, but also that of others and of human society as a whole."(7)

This is so true, but there is an even higher standard than what we might consider the good of human society. It is God alone who can set that standard. Earlier we spoke of some unbelievable atrocities that were committed by the German medical profession for the "good of society."

There is an old adage that says, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." Human beings left to themselves often start out with good intentions, but somehow, without guidance from above and obedient hearts, we lose our way.

Al Casey came the closest to the truth when he quoted Professor Alexander Tytler of the University of Edinburgh:

> *From bondage to spiritual faith.*
> *From spiritual faith to great courage.*
> *From courage to liberty.*
> *From liberty to abundance.*
> *From abundance to selfishness.*
> *From selfishness to complacency.*
> *From complacency to apathy.*
> *From apathy to dependency.*
> *From dependency back again into bondage.(8)*

A consensus of ethical norms apart from the supervision of God will eventually erode. Power begins to take over in determining our actions. Look at our government today. It is controlled for the most part by special interest groups vying for influence. Every day I receive in the mail a plea for

funds to help some group influence our government. What ever happened to sending upright men and women to Washington and trusting them to do the right thing without our funding various organizations that seek to influence our leaders to do their bidding?

Mr. Casey said it right, “To an alarming extent, America has become complacent, a nation inhabited by people concerned only with their own well-being.”(9)

But, we don’t just need a code of ethics, as important as that is; we need to put God back into our lives. We need to submit to His leadership in our lives, to recognize that only the God who created us knows what is best for us and only God is capable of revealing to us the ethical standards that can ultimately bring the peace we so desperately seek.

How do we do that? It starts with His book, the Holy Bible. God has spelled out some pretty clear principles on how to treat others. Do we love others as we love ourselves? That is not so easy when everyone around us is living out the relativistic ethics of power. The true force of Christianity has never been the use of power plays to conquer the world. From the Crusades of the Middle Ages to the moral majority of the last decade, efforts by Christians to use political or economic power to advance the Kingdom of God have been questionable, if not disastrous. The true power of Christendom has always been the testimony of Christians who are living out their faith in a world obsessed with self promotion—Christians who are in the Word of God and who maintain ethical and moral integrity!

Notes

1. Theodore Schick, Jr., “Morality Requires God . . . or Does It?,” *Free Inquiry* (Summer 1997), pp. 32-34.

2. Timothy J. Madigan, “The Virtues of ‘The Ethics of Belief,'” *Free Inquiry* (Spring 1997), pp. 29-33.

3. Leo Alexander, *Medical Science Under Dictatorship* (Flushing, N.Y.: Bibliographic Press, 1996), p. 9.

4. Ibid.

5. Maccaro, James A., "'From Small Beginnings:' The Road to Genocide," *The Freeman* (August 1997), pp. 479-81.

6. Casey, Al, "Our ethical foundation needs repair," *Dallas Morning News,* Sunday, 27 July 1997, p. 6J.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

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Where Have All Our Heroes Gone?

We all want to look up to someone, somebody who models a lifestyle we admire. These people need not be perfect—we know that perfect people only exist in the comic books—but they should be individuals who have risen above the circumstances of life to accomplish something significant. And, we want our heroes to be above self promotion and climbing on the backs of others. But this is where the problem lies. In today's world of widespread self- centeredness, it is very difficult to find those heroes from whom we can gain a right perspective of the world about us.

Did I say that only comic book heroes are perfect? Even the comic characters are more flawed than we may want to admit. The comic books of today hardly resemble the comic books of the past. Today's comics are often full of violence, sexual themes, and grotesque imagery.

So where do we go to find heroes? What about our parents? Some of us were fortunate enough to have parents that we could look up to as role models in our lives. But, lamentably, many have grown up in homes that are not at all conducive to establishing healthy role models.

Author Steve Farrar, speaking at Probe's annual banquet this spring, related that when he was a student in grade school he didn't even know what the word "divorce" meant. None of his relatives were divorced, and the only way he came to find out what the word divorce meant was when one of his classmates used the word in referring to his parents. To Farrar's knowledge, no one else in that school had divorced parents. What kid entering grade school today doesn't know what the word divorce means? Divorce is epidemic in today's society, and it is rather difficult to see your parents as your heroes when their breakup has caused you so much pain and confusion.

Well, there are always heroes from the world of sports. But have you kept up on "America's Team," the Dallas Cowboys? From a tobacco-chewing quarterback to drug-thug linemen, America's favorite team has become the brunt of numerous jokes based on the team members' legal and ethical problems. We could also pick on some prominent basketball and baseball players, as well as other sports figures, but I think the point is made that finding upstanding heroes, even in the realm of sports, has become difficult.

In all fairness, one must admit that there are some great athletes out there with solid, moral lives and radiant testimonies.

But what about movie stars? The movie industry can make a hero out of anyone. Since the movie makers have absolute control of the medium and can make their world of fantasy seem so real, heroes are “created” right before our eyes, but they are heroes of fantasy, constructs of the imagination. What this world needs is real heroes, not some fantasy that doesn’t exist except in our minds and on the silver screen. Movies are wonderful teaching tools, however, and great lessons can be learned and our minds and hearts can stimulated by the events and people portrayed. Sooner or later, though, if we seek to emulate the personalities of the silver screen, we will fall flat on our faces or be disillusioned when we see or hear of the actors’ true lifestyles.

We need heroes that last, who walk on the earth, and yet have that something within them that carries them beyond the frustrations and failures of everyday life. Next, we will begin to look at some heroes who inspire our better nature and motivate us to stay focused and faithful.

Heroes Worthy of Admiration

Please allow me to share with you the story of one athlete who is a hero worthy of admiration. His name is Josh Davis.

Josh, a student at the University of Texas at Austin, won three gold medals in the swimming relays at the Atlanta summer Olympics. I guess that qualifies him as a hero to every aspiring swimmer who wants to shoot for the gold, but for the rest of us it is not the gold medals that makes him a hero, but what he has done with them.

But let me back up and tell you about the transformation that took place in Josh’s life leading up to the Olympics. This change in perspective enabled him to handle the pressure of the Olympics and the race for the gold in a way that makes him a model for a world so in need of true heroes.

As a young athlete back in high school, Josh excelled in his sport and was recruited by college swim teams. He chose the University of Texas where he continued to excel and became a BMOC—Big Man On Campus. His athletic gifts became his god. But he became aware of a nagging emptiness in his heart even with all the attention, affection, and acceptance he was receiving. At first he tried the world's way to fill the void by filling his life with women and alcohol, but found that was not the answer.

Josh finally overcame the emptiness in his life when he gave his life to Jesus Christ. No longer did he need to strive for love and acceptance through his performance, but found all that in the God who created him and loved him and accepted him unconditionally.{1}

Excited in his new-found faith, Josh began to witness to others on campus about his relationship with Jesus Christ. But his zeal exceeded his knowledge, and many challenges were thrown in his face about the validity of his Christian faith. But instead of hiding his Christianity and bringing it out only in the presence of other Christians as so many do, Josh sought out the help of the Probe Study Center on the UT campus. There through the help of the center staff and the materials they were able to provide him, Josh was able to start a journey of knowledge and understanding to strengthen his faith. Whenever he came across a charge he couldn't answer, he would return to the Probe Center to find answers. His boldness in witnessing increased, and today he is an athlete with a message to the world, and he is excited about the position God has placed him in to reach out with the truth of God's word. Josh is invited to schools, clubs, and other organizations to tell about his experiences as a gold medal Olympian. He uses his gold medal status to bridge the gap to a greater reward, that of how we can all experience a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

This spring, Josh shared at the Probe annual banquet of the

invaluable help the Probe Center was in his quest to become the kind of athlete God could use to implant in others a seed of the truth of the gospel message. It's not the gold medals that made Josh a real hero, it is how he has chosen to use them. He has chosen the courageous route by using his gold medals for the glory of God and the salvation of others.

"In Search of New Heroes"

Some time ago the *Dallas Morning News* ran some articles on the search for heroes. One of the articles wasn't too encouraging. It told of teachers who no longer ask their students who their heroes are because many of the students have such a hard time coming up with someone they look up to or admire. Too often today, when you ask a kid who his heroes are, all he can think of is someone who has made it to the top with fancy cars and lots of money. The kids have no real picture of how these "heroes" made it to the top; all they know is that this individual has what they hope to have someday. What a sad basis for the definition of a hero.

In his book, *Heroes of My Time*, the late Harrison Salisbury says, "We do not live in the age of heroes. This is not the era of Jefferson, Lincoln, or Commodore Perry. Nor even of Charles Lindbergh. The politicians of our day seldom remind us of Franklin D. or Eleanor Roosevelt. Athletes signing five-and ten-million- dollar contracts do not resonate as did Babe Ruth."

Today, the media often tries to tell us who our heroes are and that means celebrities, athletes, and stars of the silver screen. These are not the heroes we need. Rabbi Jeffrey Leynor has said it so well when he stated, "The world doesn't run on Magic Johnson; it runs on all us little heroes."{2}

Fortunately, a more encouraging article was featured on the same page as the previous article. Titled "In Search of New Heroes," the article spoke of everyday heroes, ordinary people

who became heroes by their unselfish acts of heroism, like Lucy Narvaiz who volunteers her skills to help Hispanics and American Indians learn to read and write, or Eleanor Poe who runs a clinic in the poorest section of El Paso. These people are not the showy, dramatic type of heroes, but they exhibit the quiet, often unnoticed kind of heroism of people who have the courage to do what needs to be done.

The an article is about the television series, "Unsung Heroes," and the heroes featured on the program were quiet, unassuming people who can't imagine why anyone would call them heroes. But these individuals have uncommon courage, and Janet Carroll, the producer, wanted the viewers to see that. David Walther, Janet's program director said, "When you sit down and look at it and see people doing these things, it makes you feel good. It makes you want to emulate or at least be a better person than what you are already." I couldn't have said it better myself. What a contrast to the normal fare we get from the media in shows like "Hard Copy," "Inside Edition," and "Hollywood Access"!

As we hear about these unsung heroes' quiet resolve, it makes us stronger and more determined to do the right thing. We see their strength and the peace they have within themselves, and we begin to see the world in a better light.{3}

Home Grown Heroes

Now I want to continue our discussion of heroes by looking at an excellent book called *Home Grown Heroes: How to Raise Courageous Kids*, by Tim Kimmel.{4}

In the foreword to this book, Brigadier General Joe Foss (retired), a recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor, says, "America needs a new generation of heroes . . . people who are ruled by a conscience that doesn't take the Ten Commandments lightly who have a fundamental reverence for their Creator, and a respect for the people and things He has

created."

That's what this book is about, being that kind of person, the unsung heroes of life who have uncommon courage. Specifically, it deals with the process of learning to add courage to our faith. Many people have faith, or at least they say that they do, but it does not seem to reveal itself in the outworking of their lives. The problem is the absence of courage and "courage is the muscle that faith uses to hold its ground." So many people today do not seem to have the ability to courageously live out their faith. Now we are not talking about those instantaneous heroes who make the headlines because they happened to be at the right place at the right time people you typically read about in the newspapers or see on TV. I'm talking about those unsung heroes who daily make conscious decisions to respond courageously to life's dilemmas. Webster's Dictionary defines courage as:"mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty." Courage is putting our faith in action, adding sweat to our convictions, doing what is hard to do because we know it needs to be done.

Kimmel writes about the fact that God has placed a seed of courage in everyone. It's part of being made in His image. We need to water, cultivate, and pray over that seed so that it may grow within us. And remember, even if you've blown it many times, it is never too late to do what is right. Sometimes it is the courage to confront a person or situation that you know is not right. Often it is the courage to forgive when you want revenge. It may be the courage to turn off the TV when you know you shouldn't be watching it or to maintain your focus until you accomplish a specific goal.

What about building courage into the lives of those we love and feel responsible for? Courage is the core word in the word encouragement. Therefore when we encourage others we are helping to build courage into their lives. The more someone is encouraged when they try to do the right thing, the more

courage will grow within them.

Kimmel reminds us that the lion's share of courageous living takes place in the daily grind, behind the lines, in the lonely places, among our allies, in our own hearts. Courage is the natural result of internal disciplines. Courageous living comes from daily, deliberate acts of resolve. Courage assumes there is a battle to be waged and won. To live a courageous lifestyle is a choice.

The preceding comments have been attempts to whet your appetite about this book. Now I'll state it plainly: for a wonderful book that lays out steps to courageous living, please read *Home Grown Heroes* by Tim Kimmel. You'll be glad you did!

Spiritual Heroes

Now I would like us to take a look at our spiritual heroes. Let's start with the live ones.

It has been intriguing as we have observed the rise and fall of so many of our spiritual leaders. In Texas we have had our share with the likes of Rev. Robert Tilton and Rev. Walter Railey. Over in Louisiana it was Rev. Jimmy Swaggart. Probably the biggest headlines in the national news have been about Jim and Tammy Bakker of PTL fame, once popular televangelists. He went to prison for fraud and conspiracy. She was treated for drug dependency. But the story doesn't end there. While Jim spent his time in prison reflecting on his failures and sin before God, Tammy divorced him and sought to separate herself from the situation. She appears to have learned nothing from the experience and still tries to keep herself in the public spotlight by getting on TV shows and running her own ministry. Meanwhile Jim, after much reflection, comes out with a book of his confessions. He was humbled and seeks a fresh start on a new and different foundation. Now I don't know how being out of prison will stir up the old nature in Jim Bakker and how he

will stand the test of time, but it does remind me of another man of national prominence who rose up out of the ashes of prison time to become a spiritual leader among us.

Chuck Colson was not a spiritual leader before his fall, but was known as Nixon's hatchet man. Then there was Watergate, his fall from power, his time in prison, his conversion to Christianity and his courageous road back in obedience to God. Chuck Colson is one of our heroes today, not because he lived a life without moral or ethical failure, but because he chose to accept God's grace and had the courage to admit his sin before God and man and build within himself, with the help of many others, the personal discipline needed to become a pilgrim for God in the journey of life.

Jim Bakker seems to have chosen the right path back. Only time will tell, but God may restore him to a place of spiritual leadership. Are you prepared to deal with that? If not, how do you deal with King David? He was an adulterer and a murderer who repented of his sin and God restored him. Yes, there were dire consequences for his sin that did not go away, and there will be dire consequences for Jim Bakker that will never go away. There are probably some past sins in your life that have resulted in some consequences that don't go away. But are we willing to chose the courageous path that can lead us to be the heroes God wants us to be. We may only be heroes for our children, but is there anyone else for whom we would rather be a hero?

Heroes are made, not born. We have such a great spiritual lineage to learn from. Chapter 11 of the book of Hebrews tells us about spiritual heroes, men and women who put their confidence in God, like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Samson, Samuel, David, and Daniel. They were all far from perfect models, but they had the courage to not give up. God offers to each of us a journey of hope. May God bless your journey.

Notes

1. *Path To Victory: A Sports New Testament With The Testimonies Of Athletes Who Are Winning In Life*, New International Version (Colorado Springs, Colo.: International Bible Society, 1993).

2. Leslie Barker, "Wanted: Heroes; Warning: The job ain't what it used to be." *Dallas Morning News*, Sunday, 12 September 1993, Section F.

3. Leslie Barker, "In Search of New Heroes: With credit cards and a dream, one woman creates a legacy for her daughter." *Dallas Morning News*, Sunday, 12 September 1993, Section F.

4. Tim Kimmel, *Home Grown Heroes: How to Raise Courageous Kids* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah Press, 1992).

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Ethics: Pick or Choose?

Written by Ray Cotton

How to Choose Right From Wrong

After four years at Harvard University as an undergraduate, one student proclaimed in his graduation oration that there was one central idea, one sentiment which they all acquired in their Harvard careers; and that is, in one word, confusion.

That same year, Harvard's graduate-student orator said, "They tell us that it is heresy to suggest the superiority of some value, fantasy to believe in moral argument, slavery to submit to a judgment sounder than your own. The freedom of our day is

the freedom to devote ourselves to any values we please, on the mere condition that we do not believe them to be true."{1}

Our universities are teaching students that there are no solid guidelines to life. Since everything is relative, they are totally free to create anything they want out of their lives. Students are told that no one has a right to tell them how they ought to live. Decisions about right and wrong are strictly up to them. It makes no difference what they choose to make of their lives. Students are not encouraged to ask the traditional questions about the usefulness of life or the value of an exemplary life. As the above graduate student pointed out, they don't even want you to take your own conclusions about life seriously. It is a philosophy of ambiguity. It is the philosophy of humanistic existentialism. Many today are striving to break away from traditional values and embrace a sense of futility. Today we see it in the lives of teenagers who have "tried everything" and found life to be wanting. We see it in the life style of the "survivalists" who have given up hope in God and the future, holing up in defense of a coming catastrophe.{2}

According to Jean-Paul Sartre, one of the fathers of humanistic existentialism, the world is absurd, lacking any concept of ultimate justification. Sartre declares we have no ultimate purpose or plan to our lives. We are nothing and are therefore free to make ourselves into anything we want to be.{3} It doesn't even matter if you believe in your own proclamations because there is no more reason for you to exist than for you to not exist. Both are the same. The existentialist says you can just pick and choose your values. It makes no difference. There is no transcendent truth or power beyond man himself. Sartre doesn't believe in any God, nor does he believe that there is any preconceived design. There is no principle of authority to determine action. He says one must invent an original solution for each situation.{4} Therefore, in the sovereignty of his freedom,

man creates his own values. Morality is rooted in human choice. Man alone gives his life its importance. Mankind must somehow transcend a life of absurdity and despair.

Is this humanly created reality true or are those who believe it trying to live in a dream world? Is the existentialist trying desperately to deflect the true absurdity and despair of his position? Is this the view of life that we expect our college students to be learning?

The Foundation of Existentialism

Prior to World Wars I & II, modern man believed that through science and human engineering an ever better world was evolving. They believed that mankind was getting better, that peace and prosperity would reign. They were convinced that we had finally figured out how to live together in harmony and to build a better world.

Then came the rude awakening of two world wars and the hideous crimes against human beings perpetuated by Hitler's Third Reich. Out of the continuing frustration and destruction of World War II came a new philosophy of life. It was a philosophy conceived by those who had lost hope, who could only see the chaos. They lost their hope in any ultimate meaning for life. They were unable to see beyond the carnage of war-torn Europe. Their view of life was called humanistic existentialism.

Men like Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus sought to establish a new view of life, a "new humanism" with a whole new set of values. Prior to these men, the need for a transcendent force, a higher authority beyond man himself, helped set limits and gave guidance to our lives. An example of this transcendence would be the Ten Commandments, given to man by God. These new philosophers defined transcendence in an entirely different way. They saw transcendence only in their own aims and goals. For the existentialists, transcendence was a way to escape

what they saw as the meaninglessness of life by establishing aims and goals to make whatever they wanted out of themselves, to create their own reality. For them there were no norms or standards, other than what they might choose to agree upon among themselves.

You have to realize that for these existentialist thinkers, all human activities were equivalent in value. Human activity amounted to the same thing "whether one gets drunk alone or is a leader of nations."{5} However, without God, there can be no transcendent view of human nature because there is no God to have a conception of it.{6} Man is merely an evolved animal. Today we see many young people caught up in this attitude of cynicism and despair. They just don't care anymore. Life has become jaded. Many young people pass their time in a fantasy world of drugs, music and sex.{7}

Man's nothingness forms the foundation of existential thinking. Man is an empty bubble floating on a sea of nothingness.{8}

Trying to build an ethic for life based on the philosophy of existentialism is quite a challenge. Not only do the existentialists have to create a set of values to live by, but first of all, they have to create optimism out of a view of absurdity and despair. It is called an ethic of ambiguity because each person has no one to answer to but himself. There is no one else to blame, each individual is without excuse. Life is merely a game to be won or lost, to seek to become one's own hero.

The existentialist wills himself to be free and in so doing wills himself to be moral.{9}

Existentialism Collides with a Biblical Worldview

We live in a world that has been characterized as "plastic",

without value and sterile. Many have forgotten what it means to live, to be fully human. Hours are spent in front of the TV, in a world of fantasy and escapism. Many people are becoming devoid of human warmth and significant human interaction.{10}

In this essay I have examined the ethics of humanistic existentialism.To fully understand ethics one must have considerable clarity about what it is to be human.{11} Is man an evolved animal required to create his own essence, as the existentialist would say? Though there is freedom to choose our own actions, there is no significance in our actions. Choices are made in the face of meaninglessness. The values of existentialism are anchored in the world of ordinary experiences. Their values come from what is. And for the existentialist what is, is man's absurd condition.{12}

How does existentialism compare to a God-centered, theistic view of ethics? For the Christian, ethical values are revealed to man by God. Perfect freedom lies only in service to God.{13} The existentialist defines God as "self-caused" and then says there is no God because it is impossible to be self-caused. The Christian says that God is "uncaused", not self-caused. If you want absolute freedom, it is all too easy to deem God nonexistent. Even Sartre admits that "since we ignore the commandments of God [concerning] all value prescribed as eternal, nothing remains but what is strictly voluntary."{14} Throwing off all limitations and declaring his atheism, Sartre explains the process in his autobiography:

> I had been playing with matches and burned a small rug. I was in the process of covering up my crime when suddenly God saw me. I felt His gaze inside my head and on my hands….I flew into a rage against so crude an indiscretion, I blasphemed….He never looked at me again….I had the more difficulty getting rid of Him [the Holy Ghost] in that He had installed Himself at the back of my head….I collared the Holy Ghost in the cellar and threw Him out.{15}

Aldous Huxley, another famous existentialist, said:

> For myself, no doubt for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was … from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom.{16}

The truth of Huxley's words ring out loud and clear. All around us we find individuals rejecting the truth of God's word and embracing false doctrines that allow them to vent their passions and immorality. Satan loves to get us discouraged and despairing, then he shows us a false way out that caters to our old fleshly nature, a way that allows us to do as we please.

The Bible says that we are in bondage either to sin or to God. We will serve one or the other. Our only choice is to decide who or what we will serve, the God of the Spirit, or the god of the flesh. The choice is ours.

Rejecting Biblical Truth Ultimately Leads to Despair

How did modern philosophy arrive at such a seemingly absurd state? In the late nineteenth century certain scholars assaulted the Bible and Christian beliefs. This "higher criticism" was promoted by men dedicated to the destruction of orthodox Christianity. In their minds the Bible was no more than a novel, a book of fiction with some good moral lessons. This movement was the spiritual legacy of the Enlightenment which put the claims of religion outside the realm of reason. Natural law, based on human reason alone, was slowly substituted for biblical law. Christian faith was separated from historic reality. The focus of all studies was shifting from God to man.

The real motive of higher criticism of the Bible was purely

ethical. Men and women don't like the idea of having to be obedient to God. Therefore, they denied the historic validity of the Bible. This denial was based on an evolutionary model of human morality and human history. They sought to separate ethics from faith{17} in order to free themselves from God's final judgment.

Kierkegaard, a 19th century philosopher, is considered the father of existentialism. He took this idea of the separation of faith and reason and said that we could not know God rationally. Therefore, he tried to reach God by what he called an irrational leap of faith.Since it was not rational to believe in God, but it was necessary, you must believe irrationally.Sartre and Camus simply took the next step when they said belief in God was not only irrational, but unnecessary.

Therefore, modern man started the path to a meaningless life when he questioned whether man could know God. Indeed, when man questioned even God's ability to communicate with man, this led the existentialist to ask, "If God is dead, isn't man dead also?" This existential death of man has lead to apathy, absurdity and ambiguity.The philosopher Bertrand Russell said it best when he said:

> What else is there to make life tolerable? We stand on the shore of an ocean, crying to the night and to emptiness. Sometimes a voice of one drowning, and in a moment the silence returns. The world seems to me quite dreadful, the unhappiness of many people is very great, and I often wonder how they all endure it. It is usually the central thing around which their lives are built, and I suppose if they did not live most of their lives in the things of the moment, they would not be able to go on.

Rejection of God's grace creates a world of hopeless despair. Existentialism leaves man without hope. In contrast, the Christian has the hope of eternal life based on faith in a

living, personal God whom we can personally experience with all our mind, body and spirit.

Can Human Beings Live the Existential Life?

How many of your acquaintances are demonstrating by their lives that they believe there are significant ethical implications in the decisions they make and the activities they are involved in? Do you know people who live life caught up in self-preoccupation, doing only that which gives immediate pleasure? Are they filling their lives with movies, TV, sports and other preoccupations which shield them from dealing with the ethical reality of their lifestyle?

In this essay I have been discussing the ethics of humanistic existentialism, an ethic of freedom in ambiguity. It is an ethic that says man is nothing except what he or she decides to create of themselves and whatever choice they make really doesn’t matter.

It sounds absurd, and it is, but sadly it is the ethic often being taught on the college campuses. One philosophy professor at a major university in Texas proudly informs his classes that he is an atheist and that his goal is to show the class that they can develop a system of ethics without a belief in a god. Of course he is right. One can design a set of relativistic ethical standards, but it is an ethic built on sand. An ethic of ambiguity will never give the support these students need in the hard world of reality. Did Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, the leading writers in existentialist theory, hold to their position till the end? There is evidence that they did not. From a dialogue recorded in 1980 when nearing his death, Sartre came very close to belief in God, perhaps even more than very close. He made a statement that may show his acceptance of the grace of God. He said,

> I do not feel that I am the product of chance, a speck of

> dust in the universe, but someone who was expected, prepared, prefigured. In short, a being whom only a Creator could put here; and this idea of a creating hand refers to God.

In this one sentence Sartre seems to disavow his entire system of belief, his whole life of dedication to existentialism. If this is true, it is a condemnation of humanistic existentialism by Sartre himself.{18}

What about Albert Camus? According to Rev. John Warwick Montgomery, an internationally respected Lutheran minister and author, there was a retired pastor of the American Church in Paris who told him that Albert Camus was to have been baptized within the month of his tragic death and that Camus had seen the bankruptcy of humanistic existentialism.{19}

All this is second hand information, but it does cast a shadow upon the ethics of existential humanism. Either we live a life of hope or of despair. Regardless of the claims made, existential humanism does not leave room for hope. Simone de Beauvoir, the mistress of Sartre and also an existentialist writer, came the closest of any of these writers to the real truth when she said it was reasonable to sacrifice one innocent man that others may live.{20} This is the foundation of the whole gospel message of Christianity: Jesus Christ, the innocent Son of God, died that all men might be saved. Meanwhile the existentialist stands alone with hope only in one's self. He is alone in a world without Christ, instead of being secure in the knowledge of Christ's love and redemption. Praise God that He is there and He is not silent!

Notes

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12. Otto Bollnow, “Existentialism’s Basic Ethical Position,” *Contemporary European Ethics,* Joseph J. Kockelmans, Ed. (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1972), 332.
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The Morality of the West

Cheating in the Schools

According to a study by Rutgers University, over 70% of all university students admit they have cheated at least once. And there's probably a few more who wouldn't admit it. The most common form of cheating admitted to is plagiarism. Students have always copied from someone else's paper or stealthily brought forbidden notes into the classroom. But the incidence is rising. Nineteen percent admit they have faked a bibliography, and fourteen percent say they have handed in a computer program written by someone else. {1}

This report highlights the fact that many students today are either unable or unwilling to act in an ethical manner. William Kilpatrick, in his book *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right From Wrong*, brings to light the millions of crimes committed yearly on or near school property. Children go to school scared and intimidated. Many teachers contemplate and actually do leave the profession because of all the discipline and behavior problems.{2} A professor of philosophy at Clark University says:

> *Students come to college today as moral stutterers. They haven't been taught much respect for what I call "plain moral facts," the need for honesty, integrity, responsibility. It doesn't take a blue-ribbon commission to see this. Students don't reason morally. They don't know what that means.{3}*

Also, Mr. Michael Josephson, founder and president of the

Josephson Institute for the Advancement of Ethics, said “Far too many young people have abandoned traditional ethical values in favor of self- absorbed, win-at-any-cost attitudes that threaten to unravel the moral fabric of American society.”{4} This “self-absorbed” attitude is based on a whole new set of assumptions about how we should adopt our values and the right of individuals to construct their own values.

Where do these ideas come from? Are our young people only now discovering the difference between what their parents have preached to them and what they actually do? Is it simply due to the fact that society is changing? Or is this an ethical vacuum caused by a value system without a solid foundation?

Some have suggested that we have simply discovered more efficient ways of uncovering people’s wrongdoing so it just seems that people are less moral in their dealings. In other words, we are just more aware of the imperfections that were always there. A more interesting question, however is whether the behavior is the result of values being communicated by society? Have the rules changed? and who makes these rules, God or men? The Christian and the theist turn toward the Creator of the Universe. The humanist or atheist turns toward himself. This distinction between theism and humanism is the fundamental division in moral theory.

It appears that we are rapidly approaching a Godless, valueless society in which “power ethics” or the “political rationalism” of humanism is replacing the Judeo-Christian ethical base of traditional morality. The roots of our present dilemma go all the way back to the secular humanism of the fifteenth- and sixteenth- century Renaissance, and the Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The idea of the sufficiency of human reason grew stronger during these periods, continually challenging Judeo- Christian values in an increasingly sophisticated way. Humanity was placed at the center of the universe, rather than God.

The Moral Results of Reason Alone

Just as our Lord said that man cannot live by bread alone, so man cannot live by reason alone. If we exclude revelation as a source of direction in discovering who man is and rely solely on our intellect, and our own ideas of how we came to be, then we will naturally slip into a pessimistic and ultimately depressing view of human nature.

The seventeenth-century philosopher John Locke said that all knowledge comes from sensation. In other words, the only reality is what we can see, hear, feel, smell, taste, or measure. Not much room for revelation here. Other philosophers have followed up on this idea and have concluded that man is shaped by evolutionary processes and the culture that surrounds us. The notion that man is born with some innate nature has been rejected. Men like Hegel, Darwin, and Marx believed that all living forms and social systems were nothing more than the result of progressive transformations over time. As the influence of the religious community began to wane in the nineteenth century, many began to search for a meaning to life totally apart from God. Man simply no longer believed he had a place in eternity. Therefore all he could do was hope to find his place in the movement of history.{5}

Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* catapulted the abandonment of God and revelation by attempting to show that God was not even necessary in the creation of living things. If God did not create us, then we certainly could not gain our sense of meaning and purpose from a book purportedly written by Him. Frederich Nietzsche purposed to highlight the ethical implications of Darwinism. Nietzsche's "superman" concept transformed man into the maker of his own destiny. Man was truly the measure of all things. If God is dead, as Nietzsche declared, and nature is all there is, then what is, is right. Human life was therefore stripped of any purpose or goal. The contemporary Harvard professor, E. O. Wilson has stated, "No

species, ours included, possesses a purpose beyond the imperatives created by its genetic history." Elsewhere he declares that our dilemma is that "we have no particular place to go. The species lacks any goal external to its own biological nature." This will ultimately result in a sense of hopelessness, pessimism, apathy, and absurdity. William Kilpatrick in his book *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right From Wrong*, says "Suicides among young people have risen by 300 percent over the last thirty years."{6} Next to accidents it is now the second leading cause of death in teenagers. Many of the deaths due to accidents are the result of auto accidents in which alcohol has played a role which can also be traced back to a sense of hopelessness and despair. Young people who may have never heard of Nietzsche are nevertheless living their lives in accordance with his philosophy of living recklessly.

A group of scholars presented the case of biblical authority to a group of students at Princeton University. At the conclusion of their presentation, a student stood and said:

> *I am surprised that I found myself feeling that you two were right and all of us were wrong, at least insofar as this very basic point: why we stand where we stand makes all the difference in the world. So the weakness of your presentation was that you were arguing on the basis of logic and presuppositions and intellectual integrity with persons who are perfectly ready to dispense with all three.{7}*

Our young people are so far removed from a rational discussion of what is right and what is wrong that they are unable to even decide what criterion should be used to make the decision, let alone make the decision itself. This is the inevitable result of the philosophical trend to utilize human reason alone apart from the revelation in Scripture. As our creator, God alone has the authority and knowledge to inform us as to how we are to act. Left to ourselves, we will only be confused.

Why Are Biblical Values No Longer Taught in Schools?

Many students today are so confused that they not only don't know what ethical system is valid, but they don't even know how to evaluate them. One might ask, why aren't the schools teaching the values our children need, values that will work for them rather than against them?

To understand the lack of values being taught in our educational institutions, we need to go back to the biblical critics who were writing in Germany in the nineteenth century. The product of an attempt to operate by human reason alone, this movement placed the claims of religion and particularly the Bible outside the realm of human reason. If the Bible was not reasonable, then the Scriptures lost their foundation in real history. The traditions of the faith were seen as merely that, tradition with no basis in reality. This meant that the events contained in the Bible were to be evaluated on whether they were reasonable within a universe where the supernatural was assumed to be nonexistent or at least not involved in the real world. These scholars, called higher critics, believed that all morality is totally relative to historical time and place. The laws of the Bible were now to be seen as being understood only within the times that the Bible was describing. A Sabbath was only useful to an agrarian and shepherding culture. The same would be true for adultery or taking the Lord's name in vain.

This approach essentially denies the unity and moral integrity of the entire Bible.{8} The end result is that in people's minds, their ethics became separated from their faith. This eventually resulted in deism, a view that says that God only provided the necessary input to get the universe started but left it completely on its own after creation. He never intervened in natural or human history again. God is still there, but there is no possibility of any communication

between God and His creation. Well, if you can't communicate with God and He has no influence over your life, why bother with worrying whether God existed at all? The worldview of naturalism quickly follows which says that there is no God.

Nietzsche's "madman" said, "God is dead!"{9} God was now out of the picture. Nietzsche simply took the next step. He tried to force men and women to, "feel the breath of empty space." If you have been following the train of thought here you are probably beginning to see the connection between Nietzsche's ideas and the state of our youth today. Many young people feel that there is no grand purpose for their life. Life is empty and cheap. If you believe in some form of a grand purpose, it is really only a grand illusion. All that is left, therefore, is to live for the pleasure of the moment. Gain what pleasure you can in an absurd universe. This will ultimately lead to an attitude of despair. If God is dead, what's the use of conforming to any rules. If I die as a result of my actions, so what, life is absurd anyway.

Students today often seem to be lost in relativism and are unable to think about or look into their futures. They shrivel up within the confines of their immediate surroundings. There is no longer any hope in eternity or in real justice.

Many of today's young people wander about their school halls with no hope, no dreams, no optimism about their future. Rock groups such as *Nirvana* and *Nine Inch Nails* continually fill their heads with the meaninglessness of a universe in which God is dead and life is absurd. We should be filled with great sadness when we witness the destruction this kind of thinking results in such as the suicide of Nirvana's heart and soul, Curt Cobain. I believe we should also see such people as Jesus does, as lost sheep. They are a great mission field for which the truth and historical reality of the gospel can find fertile ground.

The Twentieth Century Results of a "God Is Dead" Universe

The Greek philosopher Plato understood that there must be some universal or absolute under which the individual things (the particulars, the details) must fit. Something beyond the everyday must be there to give it all unity and meaning. Even the atheist and existentialist, Jean-Paul Sartre, realized that a finite point is absurd if it has no infinite reference point.{10} Sartre chose to believe that this infinite reference point did not exist, therefore, the only thing worth doing is existing and making choices, regardless of what those choices may be. But how can we tell students, our children, that anything is right or wrong if there is no absolute reference point such as the Bible, to base this on?

Existentialism says that we need to make a "leap of faith"{11} and seek to find our meaning without reason. In other words, we just have to find what works for us. And as we go through life, what works will constantly be changing. If we actually try to think about it, if we try to rationalize a meaning, we will only get depressed. According to existentialism, the only way to be happy, is to not think, to be blindly optimistic.

Another perspective is power ethics or "political naturalism." Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) was a great voice in the revival of political naturalism in the sixteenth century. In his book *The Prince*, a ruler who wants to keep his post must learn how not to be good, and use that knowledge, or refrain from using it, as necessity requires.{12} In other words, do what you need to do to preserve your position and don't concern yourself with what is ethical. Just preserve your power. Machiavelli's ethical stance of whatever strengthens the state is right had a great influence on the thinking of Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872). Feuerbach's claim that God was merely a human invention had a lot to do with the writings of Karl Marx (1819-1883) who took these ideas as validation of

his own views. His ideas provided a foundation upon which Lenin and Stalin were able to build a society around the power ethics of political rationalism. Feuerbach and Marx rejoiced in the fact that the loosing grasp of religion had made it possible to create a city of man in an entirely human space.{13} In Russia there was a concerted attempt to root out Christianity and substitute an extremely intolerant and militant form of the religion of the Enlightenment.{14}

Adolph Hitler is another example. So profound was Nietzsche's philosophy upon Hitler, that it provided the framework for his tireless efforts to obliterate the Jews and the weak of this world.{15} Nietzsche had proclaimed the coming of the Master Race, and a Superman who would unify Germany and perhaps the world.{16} Hitler, in his book *Mein Kampf*, clearly announced his intent to take Nietzsche's logic and drive the atheistic worldview to its logical conclusion. In Nietzschean terms, atheism will inevitably lead to violence and hedonism.{17} Hitler personally presented a copy of Nietzsche's works to Benito Mussolini, and Mussolini submitted a thesis on Machiavelli for his doctor's degree.

When human reason is allowed to be unaccountable it becomes solely a function of power, it legitimatizes the construction of a totalitarian state and in the case of Hitler the end result was the Holocaust. The real legacy of unbridled humanism is terror.{18}

The Purification of Moral Relativism

We construct museums so that we may never forget the horror of the German Holocaust. Russia is trying to recover from a total collapse of a power structure that was based on political rationalism and historical materialism. They had to find out the hard way. The fundamental dogma of the Enlightenment, the natural goodness and/or reasonableness of man, is a myth at best. It was Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn who related what he overheard two old peasants say during the blood baths of

Stalin's regime, "It is because we have forgotten God. That is why all this is happening to us." Out of the rubble of a failed system rose a people desperate to reestablish an ethical base that will work for them rather than against them. An article in *USA Today* illustrates a new hope for values in Russia. It reports that:

> *Officials say up to 55% of Russian teachers, many of whom were former atheists, have made personal commitments to Christ. Many are using the New Testament in schools. "For ages, (Russia) was a country of believers and morality was very close to the people," says assistant principal Olga Meinikova, 32, of school No. 788. "For a short period 74 years we lost it all. All Russian teachers should teach this course; Americans too. The Bible is part of normal education."{19}*

Teams of Americans are helping to train Russian teachers how to teach Judeo-Christian morals and values based on a system of biblical ethics. The military has also been retraining their staff in Judeo-Christian morality, ethics, and values. Russia reached the bottom of a Godless society and is making an effort to rebuild its ethical base.

We face a dilemma in Western culture. We can continue along the line of thinking that "reason" is our only hope and trust in the natural goodness and/or reasonableness of man. Another extreme is to throw out reason altogether and embrace the philosophy and religion of the new age. The biblical view is to return to the concept of the fallen nature of mankind and rebuild on the traditional base of historic Christianity, which puts reason under the authority of Scripture. This is the traditional basis for ethical teaching in Western culture. It applies to all our institutions of training, including churches and ministries. The ethics modeled by too many Christian leaders is at best a utilitarian form of ethics. At worst, it is a pragmatic form of ethics that serves the self-

centered goals of the individual or institution.

In conclusion, ethics based on Enlightenment thinking is not the answer. Crane Brinton, in his book *A History of Western Morals* says, "the religion of the Enlightenment has a long and unpredictable way to go before it can face the facts of life as effectively as does Christianity."{20} We appear to have an implosion of values in a society. Many are seeking to teach our children that there is no God and no afterlife, but if you live an ethical life it will pay off. It is a standard without a foundation, floating in mid air. Society must re-evaluate its commitment to Enlightenment ethics and thinking. Until it does, we will see a continuing loss of values and respect for humanity.

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Politically Correct Ethics

Liberal Idealism's Approach to Ethics

Ben and Jerry's ice cream is renown for being the ice cream for those who want to be friendly to the environment. Ben and Jerry's Homemade Inc. built a national reputation by (1) claiming to use only all natural ingredients and (2) sending a percentage of the profits to charities. The company's Rainforest Crunch ice cream supposedly uses only nuts and berries from the rain forests.

But there is a lot more to ethical behavior than a laid-back, socially correct agenda. An audit of Ben & Jerry's Homemade Inc. revealed the use of sulfur dioxide preservatives and use

of margarine instead of butter in some of the flavors. Ben Cohen of Ben & Jerry's Homemade Inc. also served on the editorial board of Anita Roddick's Body Shop, another company expounding the use of natural products. It took an article in *Business Ethics* to expose Body Shop's false advertising claims and other ethical failures. Synthetic colorings, fragrances, and preservatives were being used in Body Shop products.{1}

Today we live in a world engrossed in the ideas flowing from a socially correct agenda, and it is overshadowing the time proven priority of basic business ethics. It is an agenda centered in tolerance and environmentalism. (Interestingly, those on the environmental side are not very tolerant of those who do not hold to their rigid perspective, such as their stand on not using animals in product testing.)

Levi Strauss is another interesting case in point. The company has a strong politically correct mindset, and diversity and empowerment are central for their organizational ethics. They have demonstrated a strong concern for human rights, yet they are clearly on the liberal side of family values. They have been boycotted by the American Family Association for their support of homosexuality providing benefits for the "domestic partners" of their employees.

Although this socially correct movement expounds the idea of tolerance for all, proponents tend to be very intolerant of anyone who may support a position they do not agree with. Kinko's Copies found this out the hard way when they advertised on the Rush Limbaugh show. A boycott was quickly threatened until Kinko's promised not to advertise on Rush's show again.

There is great danger in using political views to measure business ethics because social goals can become equated with business ethics. This is not right. Business ethics is concerned with the fair treatment of others such as customers, employees, suppliers, stockholders, and franchisees. Truth in

labeling and advertising is paramount in establishing a business enterprise and is even more important than the issues of animal testing and commitment to the rain forest, as important as they may be.{2}

This approach to ethics comes from liberal idealism. We see this perspective in Robert Bellah's book, *The Good Society.* Liberal idealism seeks to transform society by social engineering. The liberal idealist looks for ways of managing a modern economy or developing broad social policiesthat will meet the needs of society as a whole. This system believes in the innate goodness of mankind, the worldview of enlightenment thinking, that men and women are fully capable of reasoning what is good and right, i.e., the autonomy of human reason. There is no felt need for revelation or any authority beyond themselves. Liberal idealism is marked by a lot of faith in government and the ability of organizational programs to orchestrate a healthy society.

We will be contrasting this line of thought with a more bottom up view that emphasizes personal integrity and greater concern for individual moral convictions.

Bottom up Ethics

But there is another more traditional way of looking at ethics. It is an individual model, rather than an organizational one. It demonstrates a greater concern for the moral conviction of individuals. This view emphasizes that institutions don't make ethical decisions, people do. It stresses that virtue comes from the individuals who make up the many small groups and larger institutions, from families to voluntary associations to multinational corporations. The goal is to convert the individual in order to change the institution. Answers are sought more through education and/or religion to reach the individual in the belief that transformed individuals will transform their institutions.

A corporation that has established an ethics department with an approach more along the lines of the individual model is Texas Instruments. Their theme is “Know What’s RightDo What’s Right.” Their emphasis is on training individuals within the corporation to know the principles involved in each unique ethical dilemma that may present itself and motivating the individuals involved to make good ethical decisions. The company maintains various avenues of support to assist individuals within the corporation in making difficult decisions. Carl Skoogland, vice president of the Ethics Department at Texas Instruments, has said, “In any relationship an unquestionable commitment to ethics is a silent partner in all our dealings.” Their seven-point ethics test is oriented toward individual initiative:

1. Is the action legal?
2. Does it comply with our values?
3. If you do it, will you feel bad?
4. How will it look in the newspapers?
5. If you know it is wrong, don’t do it!
6. If you’re not sure, ask.
7. Keep asking until you get an answer.{3}

Although critics might say these types of simple maxims lack in specific guidance, when combined with an overall educational program they help individuals think through issues and make the right decisions themselves, multiplying the base of ethical agents within the corporation.

Traditional Western culture, which has given us the most advanced and free lifestyle of any culture, has been based on both a Greek model of transcendent forms and a Judeo-Christian model of God- given objective standards. This tradition has taught us that we are all flawed and need a personal

transformation before we can be of any true value in transforming society.

Religion and Education in Ethical Development

Earlier we mentioned Robert Bellah's book, *The Good Society,* and its support of liberal idealism, or the ability of government and organizational programs to orchestrate a healthy society through broad social agendas.

William Sims Brainbridge, in writing a review of Bellah's book, makes a statement that could well apply to so many of the modernist writings: "The book's prescription sounds like a highly diluted dose of religion, when what the patient needs might be a full dose."

This "organizational model" fails to fully appreciate the need for integration of religion and education in order to provide a united front against the materialism and self-centeredness of our present culture. As long as we allow our educational system to teach that we are evolved animals, here by chance and of no eternal significance, we can only expect short-sighted self-interest. If fundamentally all there is is matter, energy, time, and chance, why can't one believe in anything such as apartheid, or ethnic cleansing, or euthanasia, or genocide? Where is liberal idealism's source for personal integrity and convictions other than in cultural relativism? Under a theory of cultural relativism all intercultural comparisons of values are meaningless.

The need, of course, is for transcendent truths. By transcendent, we mean an ethical ideal independent of any given political system or order. This ethical ideal can then serve as an external critique of corporate or political aspirations or activities. Is this not what Plato was referring to when he discussed his theory of universal forms, that there are ideals beyond the reality of this physical

world? In this postmodern world we are now experiencing a complete rejection by many of any objective truth. In fact, anyone who still believes in the search for truth is often labeled as ethnocentric, i.e., the liberal idealism of our present age refuses to accept that someone might find a truth that has universal application.

The ethics of enlightenment thinking do not appear to be the answer. Crane Brinton, in his book, *A History of Western Morals* says, "the religion of the Enlightenment has a long and unpredictable way to go before it can face the facts of life as effectively as does Christianity."{4} We appear to have an implosion of values in a society that is seeking to teach that there is no God and no afterlife, but if you live an ethical earthly life somehow it will pay off.

British historian, Lord Acton, is best remembered for his warning that power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. He believed that liberty was the highest political end. But, he also recognized that liberty can't be the sole end of mankind. There must also be some kind of virtue, and virtue has its roots in religion. Lord Acton's work showed that no society was truly free without religion.{5} Professionals must be educated to understand the moral worth of their actions and the roles religion and education play in promoting self-control.

Religion and Education at Odds

We have been discussing the need for both religion and education in establishing an ethical base for all our actions. But the question arises, how will we find the needed balance in an American society in which public education and traditional religions are at odds with one another over very basic presuppositions such as the nature of the universe, humanity, ethics, culture, evil, truth, and destiny?

The liberal solution has been to remove the traditional truths

and make our institutions humanistic. The conservative response has been to establish an independent educational system in which those who hold to more traditional values can integrate religious truth with educational aims. We now have two major educational tracks, the public track based on the religion of secular humanism and the private track based on the religion of biblical Christianity. The professionals involved in the educational institutions must decide how to deal with the tension between the two tracks. The need is to resolve tension and build bridges of understanding, rather than intensify the cultural war. But, as Christians, we must not compromise truth. There must be cooperation without compromise.

John Adams, our first vice-president, said, "Our constitution was made only for a moral and a religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."{6} Meaning is the living fabric that holds us together with all things and meaning for life will only be found through the transcendent values of religion. In his article, "The Globalization of Business Ethics: Why America Remains Distinctive," David Vogel writes, "Thanks in part to the role played by Reformed Protestantism in defining American values, America remains a highly moralistic society."{7}

At this point, in realizing the need to be fair, we must be willing to give a critical assessment of the gross behavioral failures that have occurred in the realm of the religious. The most blatant examples are probably the numerous TV evangelists who have fallen prey to greed and other temptations that have destroyed their lives and ministries. Another example is the many ministers and priests who have practiced sexually deviant behavior with children in their care. Many of these religious leaders are now or have been serving time in prison for their personal moral failures.

These examples highlight the moral depravity of mankind. But this does not mean that we need to adopt the sixteenth century

views of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) who had a very low view of human nature. Unfortunately, much of the world has been heavily influenced by the amoral perspective of a Hobbesian foundation of ethical behavior. Hobbes decided that what is good or bad is based on what society likes or dislikes. This is cultural relativism, the rejection of any standard beyond that established by the present culture. Hobbes, like so many others, seems to have had an innate fear of the possibility that there might be a transcendent truth out there worth pursuing. Because of our personal inner moral failure, we must look outside ourselves to find the standards by which we are to live and establish those standards in our laws and in our educational systems.

Does a Rising Tide Lift all Boats?

President Kennedy said, "A rising tide lifts all boats." But think about it! Does a rising tide lift all boats? Not if some of the boats have holes in them.

In this essay we have been discussing the contrast between a politically correct ethical approach to dealing with our ethical concerns against a more bottom up individual responsibility approach.

The historic roots of the American experience are bound up in the idea of individualism, a political tradition that enshrines individual liberty as its highest ideal. But democracy requires a degree of trust, and unfortunately, our heritage of trust is eroding. American businesses have been transformed from comfortable and stable rivals into bloodletting gladiators.{8} There is a problem in emphasizing individual freedom and the pursuit of individual affluence (the American dream) in a society with an economy and government that has rejected the principles of natural law. Too many of our boats have holes in themi.e., little or no personal integrity. We must work at restoring the principles of individual integrity and personal responsibility before we

try to establish an ethical agenda for our organizations. Unless we realize our own morally flawed state, we will seek to repair the institutions without the humility and personal transformation necessary to afford any hope of ultimate success. Organizational ethical behavior is very important, but it must be elevated through an upsurge of individual ethical behavior.

Those coming from a liberal idealism approach to ethics hold noble ideas of common good based on a belief in the inherent goodness of men and women. They believe that if we just change the structures of society, the problems will be solved. Their perspective is that greater citizen participation in the organizational structures of our government and economy will result in a lessening of the problems of contemporary social life. What they neglect to consider is that government attempts to make people good are inherently coercive. Our constitution rests on the premise that virtue comes from citizens themselves, acting through smaller groups, such as the family, church, community, and voluntary associations. The stronger these small, people-centered groups are, the less intrusive the government and other large organizations need to be.

But how do you deal with the need for individual transformation? A common phrase we often hear is “You can’t legislate morality.” In reality all laws are a legislation of morality. All we are doing is changing an “ought to do/ought not to do” into a “must do/must not do” by making it a law. A solid base of moral law helps to establish the standard for individual behavior, but as the New Testament so clearly tells us, the law is inadequate to the task at hand. It is the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ that enables us to overcome the forces within and without that seek to destroy our God-given abundant life. Only by placing our trust in Christ can we begin to repair the holes in our life. When the internal integrity of our life is as it should be, we are then ready

for the tides of life to come. A rising tide does lift all boats that have internal integrity.

Notes

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The Holocaust: Ideas and Their Consequences

Former Probe staffer Ray Cotton examines two conflicting worldviews in Nazi Germany, the Christian church and atheistic naturalism.

"Schindler's List," Steven Spielberg's award-winning film

based on a novel by Thomas Keneally, brings us a story of great moral courage in the midst of a culture of fear and hate. Set in World War II Europe, during the horrors of the Jewish Holocaust, the movie chronicles the fanatical determination of the Nazi regime to eliminate the Jews from the face of the earth. Along the way, the movie teaches a lesson about the power of a single individual to do good, in spite of the circumstances and in the face of unbelievable difficulties.

The movie allows us to observe the moral growth that took place in the life of Oskar Schindler as he matured from a greedy war profiteer to a rescuer of Jewish people. Mr. Schindler went from amassing a personal fortune to draining that fortune and risking his life in the process. He saved 1,300 Jews from the Nazi death camps. But he could only save a small percentage of the persecuted Jewish people, and the movie re-emphasizes the horror of this tragedy.

Six million Jews (and five million non-Jews) went to their deaths under the hands of the Nazi exterminators. This means that half of all the Jews in Europe and a third of all the Jewish people on earth perished in the Holocaust. This historical lesson of man's inhumanity to man must never be forgotten and today, thanks to Holocaust museums in cities around the world and movies like "Schindler's List," the message is being kept alive.

1994 marked the 50th anniversary of the D-day invasion of Europe; it also marked the liberation of the first death camp, Majdanek, where 360,000 people, most of them Jews, were exterminated. The liberations continued as the Allied forces advanced during the next six months.

Auschwitz, the most infamous death camp, was liberated on January 27, 1945.{1} The stories of that came forth from those who liberated the camps were at first dismissed as too horrible to be true. But as each succeeding camp was

liberated, it became impossible to deny the reality of it all. To this day the world continues to ask, how could such things happen in modern times? Even more frightening is the realization that the same forces which gave rise to the Holocaust are operating in our world today.{2}

Adolf Hitler, on the last day of his life, April 29, 1945, in the Berlin bunker, dictated these final words to the German people: Above all I charge the leaders of the nation and those under them to scrupulous observance of the laws of race and to merciless opposition to the universal poisoner of all peoples, international Jewry.{3}

What was the overpowering idea that brought forth the paradigm that allowed Hitler and the Nazi party to come into power? Was it the anti-Semitism of the church or was it the ever growing idea of atheistic naturalism?

It has been asserted that the early church said the Jews may not live among them as Jews, that the secular society followed by saying the Jews could not live among them, and the Nazis ultimately said the Jews may not live. Is this a valid view of the progression of ideas that led to the Holocaust and, if so, how did this progression develop and what, if any, leaps of logic or inconsistencies took place during the process?

Accounting for the Holocaust

Accounting for the Holocaust, deciphering and explaining the social and moral conditions that led up to it, has prompted all sorts of theories. It is more than an academic question for if the same conditions occur again will we be able to forestall another Holocaust? Also, how could one of the world's most advanced nations become the seat of such cruelty and depravity? What ideas were in place in the German culture that led to this tragedy? How did these ideas gain enough of a following among the European people to produce such a hideous atrocity? These are important questions. They deserve serious

answers, and we will now attempt to shed some light on the issues.

The Church and Anti-Semitism

First, we need to look at the record of the early Christian church. The early church was zealous in its efforts to convert both Jews and Gentiles. The Jews were a major stumbling block because of their resistance to conversion, their unwillingness to accept Jesus Christ as their Messiah. The first anti-Jewish policy started in the fourth century A.D. in Rome under Constantine. Comparing the anti-Jewish measures of the early Catholic Church canonical law with the anti-Jewish measures of the Nazi regime in the 1930s and early forties reveals a striking similarity. As soon as Christianity became the state religion of Rome, in the fourth century A.D., Jewish equality of citizenship was ended. Over the centuries this eventually led to expulsion of the Jews and the establishment of ghettos in Rome in the 1800s in which the Jews were incarcerated.{4}

The Roman Catholic church deviated greatly from the teachings of Jesus Christ as demonstrated in the parable of the good Samaritan and other lessons from the life and ministry of Christ found in the gospels of the New Testament. Christ's teaching was the ethic of love and the only individuals He dealt with severely were those Jewish Pharisees and Scribes who were hypocrites. The attacks of the Apostle Paul were directed at the Judaizers (Phil. 3:2) who were trying to oppose the spread of Christianity among the Gentiles. The Judaizers often described the gentiles as dogs, so Paul called the Judaizers dogs. Paul was not attacking all Jews, but only those actively opposing the teachings of Christ.

But all the blame does not fall upon the Catholic church. Martin Luther and some other reformers in Germany were guilty of communicating an ever increasing anti-Jewish perspective.{5} Clearly, Jews were perceived as enemies of Christendom by many church leaders, but it is a huge leap from

considering someone an enemy of your cause to seeing them as a non-person whom you are free to dispose of at will.

In today's culture, you may consider yourself to be anti-Nazi or anti-skinheads. This means you avidly oppose all that they stand for, but it does not mean you would actively pursue their physical demise, except in just retribution for their personal actions. In fact, if you saw one of them in physical danger, you would probably take action to protect them, possibly at your own personal risk. The Catholic church and many fathers of the reformation may be guilty of anti-Semitism, but that does not provide the foundation necessary to set the stage for the events to follow. The far greater question is how one arrives at the Nazi position of annihilation or "the final solution" to the "Jewish Problem"? That is, how did the German people come to the point of seeing the Jews as non-persons whom they could dispose of at will? What ideas came in to corrupt the thinking of a people steeped in church culture?

The Real Culprit: Atheistic Naturalism

At this point we must bring in a completely different world view, that of atheistic naturalism. Atheism is the doctrine that denies or disbelieves the existence of God or divine beings. Naturalism, which goes hand in hand with atheism, is the belief that all truth is derived from a study of natural processes. All action is based on natural instincts and desires. Only the natural elements of the world are taken into account, the supernatural or spiritual is excluded.

Machiavelli's Evil Influence

To set the stage for a naturalistic worldview, one could go all the way back to Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), a great voice in the revival of the ancient view of political naturalism or power ethics, long suppressed in the Western world by the impact of the early Christian church.

Machiavelli's most influential work, *The Prince*, was significant because it helped to mold modern minds and, in turn, modern history. His theme was plain: the ruler "who wants to keep his post must learn how not to be good, and use that knowledge, or refrain from using it, as necessity requires."{6} In other words, do what you need to do to preserve your position and don't concern yourself with what is the ethical thing to do.

The Downward Spiral Continues

The ethical stance that whatever strengthens the state is right had a great influence on the thinking of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). Hobbes, although heavily influenced by the ideas of Machiavelli, was also influenced by the revived Epicurean ideas of pleasure. Epicurean philosophy is centered around the goal of maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain. Thomas Hobbes developed the idea of good being what we like and evil what we dislike, as well as the idea that self-preservation is achieved through the sovereign state. In Hobbes we can trace the merging of Machiavelli's power ethics philosophy with the Epicurean philosophy of pleasure.

The teaching of Hobbes influenced others such as Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Karl Marx (1819-1883), and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895). From this group came the power politics of men like Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini. In fact, Hitler personally presented a copy of Nietzsche's works to Benito Mussolini, and Mussolini submitted a thesis on Machiavelli for his doctor's degree.

From Neitzsche to Auschwitz (and the Gulag)

There is a need to take a much closer look at the ideas espoused by Nietzsche, since he became the primary influencer of two divergent worldviews or paradigms, both antagonistic

toward the Jews and both responsible for the murder of countless millions of innocent people. One line leads to the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini, while the other leads to the communism of Lenin and Stalin. Nietzsche had a profound impact upon Hitler and subsequent politicians of power.

Although atheism has never lacked a spokesman, German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche shines forth as the one who changed the flow of history with his eloquent presentations leading to the "death of God."

"There will be wars," Nietzsche had written, "such as have never been waged on earth. I foresee something terrible. Chaos everywhere. Nothing left which is of any value, nothing which commands: 'Thou shalt!'" Nietzsche and others prefigured and predicted the moral nihilism of the twentieth century, the revolt against reason and the limitless pursuit of the irrational. Nazi Germany materialized the progression toward this chaos.{7} "Nietzsche despised religion in general, and Christianity in particular. So profound and operative was Nietzsche's philosophy upon Hitler, that it provided the conceptual framework for his demogogical onslaught to obliterate the weak and inferior of this world."{8} Hitler's hatred of Christians was second only to his hatred of Jews and Gypsies.

Nietzsche was quick to attack the ethics of love as taught by Christ in the Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount. He believed that if mankind sought to show responsibility toward the poor and weak, then the losers would be in control. He predicted that the twentieth century would become the bloodiest century in history and that universal madness would break out. Hitler and Stalin brought forth the reality of his predictions.

In Nietzschean terms, the cause—atheism, and the result—violence and hedonism, are as logically connected as the chronological connection between Hitler's announcement of his

intent in *Mein Kampf*, and the hell ushered in by the Third Reich.{9} Hitler took Nietzsche's logic and drove the atheistic worldview to its legitimate conclusion.

Even though there was anti-Semitism both in the Catholic church and expressed by reformation leaders, it was atheistic naturalism that provided the real power behind the Holocaust. In seeking to blame both the church and atheistic naturalism for providing the ideas that led to the Holocaust, how does one reconcile the huge antithesis between the two totally opposing worldviews?

One cannot, except to say that the weakness, or failure of the church to maintain biblical standards allowed for the inroads of anti-Semitism. The biblical position is totally at odds with the actions of the Holocaust. As we address the church, we can say the Holocaust may not have happened if the church had maintained obedience to biblical teaching, for love is the ultimate norm of the Christian ethic (Matt. 22:37-40).

But to the atheistic naturalists, we must say, you have faithfully followed out both the ideology and logical conclusions of your position.

The mass murder of the Jews was the consummation of his (Hitler's) fundamental beliefs and ideological position.{10}

There is a world of difference in the lessons to be learned from the two positions. The naturalist's hope is in man and looks at the world accordingly. The Christian's hope is in God and sees man as sinful. History bears witness to both the sinfulness and failure of man, i.e., history validates the Christian position and destroys the naturalist's position. The naturalist's only hope is in education. What hope does education give us for preventing another Holocaust? We will examine the hope of education and the true nature of man.

Is Education Really Our Best Hope?

The philosophy of atheistic naturalism can logically lead to the excesses of the Nazi and Communist regimes. Since this is true, howare we to prevent such horrors from happening again?

Many today believe the answer lies in education. Education does an excellent job of teaching us how to best do what we already believe in, but it does a dismal job of helping us see what it is that we should believe. It is at this very point that we realize the need for transcendent truth.

Man's Greatest Need

Man's greatest need is for a redemptive truth beyond himself. The murder of millions has been perpetuated by some of the most educated, cultured people in the world. While up to 12,000 people a day were being obliterated at the Auschwitz camps, the builders of those state of the art camps were enthralled by the music of Wagner. They had the best of education and of culture. The Bible tells us that the nature of man is flawed and that without help from beyond ourselves we are doomed to eternal death. Even Bernard Shaw recognized this problem as sin when he wrote:

The first prison I ever saw had inscribed over it "Cease to do evil, learn to do well": but as the inscription was on the outside, the prisoners could not read it. It should have been addressed to the self-righteous free spectator in the street, and should have read, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."{11}

We all stand naked and guilty before God. Romans 3:10 says that "There is none righteous, no not one." If the Holocaust did nothing else, it did strip away all illusions about the refined nature of man. Only when we are prepared to come humbly before God and confess our sin and ask for forgiveness and deliverance can we have a hope for the future. Speaking to

the Jewish people, God said in 2 Chronicles 7:14, “If my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” This is a promise that all those who belong to the kingdom of God can apply and claim.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we are drawn to say that the Nazi’s “final solution” was the untimely child of the union of Christian anti- Semitism and German nationalism,{12} but Christian anti-Semitism is an oxymoron and is the product of an disobedient church, be it Catholic or Protestant. Jesus Christ, the One we adore was a Jew, the Apostles from whom we have the New Testament Scriptures were Jews, and all the teaching of the New Testament is built upon the foundation of Jewish Old Testament Scriptures. In contrast, the anti-Semitism of Nazi Germany was the logical conclusion to the ideology that German nationalism was built upon, that of atheistic naturalism.

Therefore, the anti-Semitism of the church became the convenient, albeit invalid, excuse while the real reason for the Holocaust was the atheistic anti-Semitism of German nationalism based on a naturalistic worldview.

Notes

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11. Bernard Shaw, Preface to "Imprisonment" in *English Local Government* quoted in *Making Moral Decisions*, ed. D. M. MacKinnon (London: SPCK, 1969), p. 67.

12. Dawidowicz, p. 23.

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