

GOD, The Situation Ethicist

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INTRODUCTION

Situation ethics is not a new philosophy of right and wrong in human conduct. It has rather been the moral code of this world since the first day when man decided to abandon the principles of moral behavior given him by his Maker and to follow his own inclination, his own man-made philosophy of right and wrong.

But what is new, then, in this so-called "New Morality" entering upon the scene with Joseph Fletcher and other modern ethicists? What is novel in their animated debate on situationism? The novelty is that at the present moment even outstanding theologians, leading professors in Christian seminaries, take an active part in proclaiming that the attitudes of the world are the attitudes espoused by Jesus Christ.

It is of tremendous interest to look at these phenomena happening to the modern society of the Western World. They must be studied in the light of the Bible and every dependable testimony given to man for the purpose of guiding him safely through the particular mazes of these last days.

John Warwick Montgomery has summed up in a very interesting way just why so many existentialists today feel that they have to believe in a code of ethics entirely molded by the situation of the unique present moment.

They hold ontologically that by its very nature, reality or being itself is radically discontinuous. Every moment of existence, as they see it, is separate from what followed. Given this basic ontological theory of radical discontinuity, there is no logical foundation on which to generalize, to say nothing of absolutizing generalizations. They have no web of life, no connective tissue on which to generalize right and wrong, or good and evil, or desirable and undesirable.

Montgomery has the extreme kindness to say, in favor of those existentialist thinkers, that we need to respect intellectually what is here stated. I would agree with my good colleague if I did not know for a certainty that God--the God of the Bible, including both Testaments-- is the "web of life." What He has, in His own being, His own character, established as truth, and as absolute reality, this is infallibly true and absolutely real for all eternity. We just cannot expect humanist philosophers to have any vision of reality as truthful as that.

In the light of Christian realism--the only true realism I have ever known--I now want to examine the philosophy of modern ethical situationism, and try to discover exactly on what points it moves away from stern reality.

What does realism mean in a Christian context? It stands for a definite attitude toward everything that is real. The Bible's own term for that positive attitude is "the love of the truth." That is a concept of candid truthfulness playing a decisive part in men's lives, according to the Scripture. The person who willfully testifies against his own natural sense of moral obligation, runs the risk of going into an increasing degree of sheer irrationalism, ending in utter darkness. That darkness means eternal perdition, nothing less. Perhaps one of the most significant effects of this stubborn type of moral irrationalism is the fact that its victim enters into a ridiculous conflict even with his own basic human common sense. I am speaking about the sternly logical common sense that God gave to man on the day when He first created him.

It is just fair--and indispensable--that we should unveil the rashness and the impermissible lack of simple reason with which some of those honored philosopher-theologians draw their conclusions. It is, more often than people suspect, just their human pride, so an entirely nonsensical subjective mood, that leads them astray in ethics. And when you are led astray in your ethics, please do not think that you can separate your spiritual astrayness from your intellectual astrayness. That is one solid block of evil. You may

distinguish its sides, its different aspects, but you cannot cut it arbitrarily to pieces. You are entirely lost or entirely saved. Falsehood means perdition, just as surely as truth means salvation.

Perhaps the worst thing about situationist theologians is that they make it appear as if the Bible itself condones the so-called white lies, the so-called innocent thefts, and the so-called positive killings. The Scripture, they say, wholeheartedly praises the harlot Rahab for telling her "wonderful little falsehood" to those engaged in catching the Hebrew spies within the walls of Jericho. The only principle the Bible knows, they contend, is the principle of love, and that principle is bound to go contrary to the letter of every commandment of the decalogue.

How shall we meet this philosophy and its arguments:

MAN--THE "AUTONOMOUS ONE"

The situationist says: "Judaism, Catholicism, Protestantism--all major Western religious traditions--have been legalistic. In morals as in doctrines they have kept to a spelled-out 'systematic orthodoxy'" (Fletcher: Situation Ethics, p. 18).

The question I should like to ask here is this: What do you think about the Bible? Is the moral attitude of that Book legalistic? Yes or No? Please be specific and to the point in your answer. How is the tradition of the religion of the Bible? Is it legalistic? I here insist upon embracing the Bible as one great whole. I think I am a perfect realist in so doing. The Bible then, as the totality it composes, must have its individual characteristic also with regard to its attitude toward legalism. Now, what is that attitude like?

Fletcher further says: "Only the commandment to love is categorically good." And for the purpose of substantiating this standpoint he quotes Romans 13:8: "Owe no one anything, except to love one another."

Is it fair to suggest, as the meaning of this verse, that love in the Christian sense is limited to men's love for one another (the horizontal relationship)? That would be tantamount to making Christ also into a humanist, an agnostic who does not accept the Bible's concept of an all-important God. Christianity is not marcionism. It does not believe in a split God, a God more disrupted than any man or any devil.

The constant phrase in situationism goes: "God is loved in the neighbor." But is not God prior to the neighbor? It is humanism that teaches that God is loved in man only. Humanism is ignorant about man's WHENCE, as well as about his WHITHER. According to an extreme humanist, man has one point of reference only: SELF. "Every man must decide for himself what is right and what is wrong."

Is it at all consistent when the situationist claims that to love is categorically good? If God is not a Person--in fact, the Person par excellence--toward Whom man is to show a supreme respect, then it is bound to become meaningless from the outset to assume the existence of any categorical value whatsoever. It becomes absurd to infer that "the commandment to love is categorically good." For on what does any love ultimately hinge if not on God?

WHAT IS THE COLOR OF A LIE?

No "stickler to principles" of the "biblicist" kind can avoid the trying situation of the ethics debate when the herald of a "new morality" drives him into the favorite corner of an apparent blind alley, the narrow straits of no escape. We are more than familiar with the critical point of this kind, conjured up during the traditional fight taking place between the blue-eyed extreme pacifist and his merciless opponent, the sophisticated "idealistic militarist." The crucial question in this case is: Does there exist a type of killing that really deserves the appellation "innocent"?

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But let us rather start with something, by way of introduction, that many feel as a less shocking case than downright murder. Take simple falsehood. Do some lies have the nice characteristic of being "white"? The commandment against telling falsehoods, you see, is often considered to be on a far less serious and repugnant level than most others. The acts it deals with are "merely verbal."

It is such a common feature of ethics debates today to go back to events happening during times of catastrophic wars. So permit me to indulge in the same habit, telling a story happening in my own country, Norway, and the very place I lived in during the German occupation of that country in the year 1940. A lady of delicate conscience was tempted to tell a falsehood one day. And now I want you to consider, as we go along, whether the particular lie in question was "white," or just "black," as the traditional color of lies has been during millennia. It was an incident among thousands. The Gestapo was making a raid among the civilian population to check some underground movements obviously taking place in the neighborhood. A military policeman entered the house of a woman whom he already knew and respected very much. It was part of his duty to check that house as well, as a routine movement. It so happened, however, that this woman's brother kept an illegal radio-transmitter in a cupboard in one of her rooms. The officer entered that particular room, asking her in a routine way: "Is there anything of particular interest to my search in the cupboard over there?" This lady happened to be a serious Christian, and the ethical norms she had espoused and appropriated in her very life caused her to look upon falsehoods, in any form, as an abomination. She had now come to a place where she had to answer a painfully pointed question in a painfully pointed way. What was that answer going to be? There was not much time to weigh the matter in her mind. It would have to be a Yes or a No in the following moment. Could she decide to tell the plain truth? She had a very clear apprehension of what the result would be. Her brother would be arrested immediately. And an almost certain death would be awaiting him. She could not face this alternative, so she chose the openly false statement. Was her choice a right one or a wrong one?

Many--perhaps the vast majority--will say it was right. They have no hesitation about it. Some will not fail to cite just the case of Rahab. It is common knowledge how she led her own countrymen, the "Gestapo forces" of old Jericho, astray by telling them, without bashfulness, the straight falsehood that those Hebrew spies they were looking for were not in her house. They had gone away in such and such a direction at such and such a time. The remarkable fact about this is that the Old Testament record does nothing to cast any shadow of disapproval over her deed. And the apostle Paul tells us, that in view of the action she performed in hiding the Jewish spies, saving their lives at a time when they were in serious danger, she must be counted among the great heroes of faith. The harlot Rahab had here placed herself resolutely and wholeheartedly on the side of God, opting for full citizenship among His people.

Now it is, of course, bound to remain a great question whether it was the way in which Rahab protected the Hebrew soldiers that made the God of Israel place His stamp of approval upon her act. The deepest intentions of that woman's heart were right with Him; that is beyond doubt. But can a downright lie--or even a slight prevarication--under any circumstances constitute the right method? I dare say that the God of heaven and earth may demand ethical norms and patterns of behavior on a much higher level of you and me than He did of a woman who, up until that moment of her life, had been exposed to a pagan milieu filled with the densest darkness of sin and misery.

There are so many questions we fail to weigh conscientiously. And even if we do, we may have a hard time to arrive at the correct conclusions. I do not know of any man who can truthfully boast that he knows all the answers to the ethics questions. Least of all would I dare to pretend that I myself do. Particularly if you go on asking specific questions, for instance this one: How should that woman Rahab have acted in detail in the practical case confronting her with its demands and its duties? How could she have entered into the perfect harmony with God, as the highest ideal would have it? Well, then it behooves me to be truthful enough at least to answer, I do not know. What I do know is the fact that the dilemmas in a

human life appear crowded together so densely that you sometimes hardly perceive a moment's respite between them. I also know that appearances may be entirely false. To you and me those dilemma incidents in our lives ever so often do appear as if they were absolutely inevitable. But is it true that they could not have been avoided? Was it necessarily according to God's plan that we should have to come across them? This is what I would hesitate to make any cocksure positive statements about today. Too well do I know for a fact that situations without any apparent way out may have been provoked by the person himself. How many of our present impasses are simply the self-evident consequence of erroneous actions on previous occasions, actions we chose to perform deliberately at a time when we had perfect control of the situation as such.

There is also another question I feel duty bound to ask in this connection: What if we did choose the way of absolute truthfulness even in that "impossible" dilemma situation? A categorical clinging to the sternest principle of literal obedience to the commandments of God has perhaps become a rather rare phenomenon in our lives. Perhaps it is just non-existent. So how could we tell today what the actual results of such faithfulness to the strictest principles in our conduct would be? We just do not have any right any longer to pronounce ourselves on the subject. We never tried. We never put the principle to the test, so how could we know what it is worth? If that bold experiment of taking the principles seriously was ever ventured upon at all, it is such a long time ago that we have simply forgotten what happened. The prompt compromises of our traditional life style have not given us the slightest trace of a fair chance to make sure what would have happened if we did take the painful step right into the apparent void of the yawning precipice. In other words, the miracle of God has not had the slightest chance to manifest itself. We just go on singing our old sentimental song about the dilemmas, and the impossibility of being absolutely honest.

It is with frank deliberation I leave more questions open than I try to answer at the present stage of our discussion. Categorical statements of the premature kind, that is just one of the pitfalls which should here be carefully avoided. Our judgment should be unhampered by preoccupation and prejudice when we now undertake to have a critical look at a discussion of the greatest interest to us which took place at San Diego State College, February 11, 1971, as a feature of a series called "Religion and Contemporary Society." It was between Joseph Fletcher and John Warwick Montgomery.

COMING TO CLOSE QUARTERS IN THE ETHICS BATTLE

Montgomery started by pointing out how impossible it is to rely on an adversary who is a situationalist."

... There is no way short of sodium pentothal, of knowing when the situationist is actually endeavoring to set forth genuine facts and true opinions, and when he is lying like a trooper. Why? Because deception is allowed on principle by the new morality, as long as the ultimate aim is love.... Should he assure us, by swearing on his mother's grave, etc., that he will tell us the truth, no matter what,-can we even then relax our vigilance? After all, that very assurance may well be a situationally justified prevarication for the sake of 'doing us good in love' by convincing us of the merits of situationalism.

I think it must be admitted in all candor and sincerity, however, that on this occasion Fletcher, the famous--or ill-famed--situation ethicist, was not less academically correct in his argumentation than the conservative and conscientiously orthodox theologian Montgomery. In fact, my personal impression would be that in the fight that here developed, the "absolutist" in Biblical ethics had almost more than he could handle to defend his adopted standpoint against the situationalist's onslaughts. If this was the case, what could be the reason? I have wondered very seriously about that. Was it because Fletcher in certain parts of the skirmishes proved to be more consistent in his situationism than Montgomery was in his "absolutism"? The reader will have to evaluate that for himself, as we shall render the replications verbatim and in the right

sequence. Maybe you will feel that Montgomery did as well as anybody could expect of him in a field where the problems for the sternly conservative ethicist grow so overwhelming. Personally, I am inclined to refute this pessimism. I rather tend to believe that Montgomery's mediocre success must have been the natural result of a failure on his part to remain 100 percent consistent in his fight against situationism. You cannot partially yield to situationism and still hope to vanquish it.

You may, of course, disagree profoundly with my ultra-radical standpoint here. That is your privilege. But then you should try to find a better one. And it should be one that does not let down the cause of logical consistency. Anyway, let us dare to face the issue in all its rigor. Let us first listen to Fletcher challenging his adversary.

FLETCHER:

Are you saying, sir, that we must in conscience always tell the truth? And if there are any exceptions, when might we prevaricate, and why? And along with that, are you saying that tyrannicide is never justifiable? If it might be, when and why? And, in the same vein, were you or weren't you saying that interruptions of pregnancy are always wrong? But if there are times when it might be done, why would it be? . . . Is it always wrong to have an abortion? Is it always wrong to kill tyrants? Is it always wrong to tell lies? Not just quick replies, but elaborate a little bit. Tell us how you would answer, and the reasons.

MONTGOMERY

As to the specific questions, "Must one never lie? Must one never kill a tyrant? Must one never be an instrument in an abortion?" the answer is, in terms of what is right: "No. One must not tell lies; one must not kill other people; one must not abort." Now if you are saying, "Will you then under no circumstances do these things?" my answer to this is the same answer Dr. May gave [in Hello, Young Lovers]: "It may be that I am forced to do this, but if so, I am still committing wrong." In my judgment the greatest difficulty in situation ethics is revealed at exactly this point. The situation ethicist properly recognizes the ambiguity of situations and the extreme difficulty, often, to justify himself. In terms of the ethical approach that I outlined, one cannot so justify oneself. If concretely I were put in the situation you described, of either informing a killer as to where a child was hidden, or lying about it, it is conceivable that I would have to lie. But if I did so, I would be unable to justify this ethically. In short, I would be unable to get off the hook. In Christian terminology, I would have committed a sin which should drive me to the cross for forgiveness. This is what I find almost totally lacking in your writings: no one is driven to the cross. Everybody ends up justified in these situations, and I think the reason for this is very simple. I don't think you have any serious doctrine of sin, nor any serious understanding of Christ's redemptive work. These central theological verities just don't appear in your ethics. What you present is a utilitarianism with a kind of "Jesus flavoring" to it.

FLETCHER:

Is it in order now for me to comment? Am I being heard all right? You have spoken of a kind of fatal defect or inherent contradiction or weakness in situation ethics, but I don't think you answered my question, which was a very earthy down-to-cases kind of question (where I think all of these problems, even theoretically, must be decided). In my view you reveal the inherent defect of "law morality," for in reply to my question, "Is it always wrong to have an abortion?" you have said, "Yes it always is." It seems to me absolutely unbelievable that anybody could say that. And then you say, "But if one were the instrument of an abortion, which one might be on some occasions (you didn't say what), then one would be doing the wrong thing." Since the tragic complexities of life sometimes call us to do what we might call the "lesser evil," you would be an instrument because the alternative to the abortion would be greater evil than the evil of the abortion. Now this is asking us to think about the issues that are at stake, at a rather fundamental and even

elemental level. For, you see, the issue then arises: Where do we place the locus of value? Wherein is a human act right or wrong? Good or evil? Is the rightness or wrongness of an act inherent and intrinsic in the act itself, so that it is right or wrong according to its classification? Or is an act right or wrong extrinsically according to the context of the contingent circumstances? It is always dangerous to do another man's thinking for him, but it appears to me that what Montgomery is saying is that whether anything we do is right or wrong is determined by the act itself; that some things are inherently and intrinsically evil, although in some situations, when it appears to the conscientious decision-maker to be a lesser evil than the alternative, one would somehow be justified in doing it. It is ethically foolish to say we "ought" to do what is wrong! What I want to argue philosophically, with respect to the issue over the locus of value in human acts, is that the rightness or the wrongness of anything we do, is extrinsic, relative, and dependent upon circumstances, so that to have an abortion out of loving concern for everybody's best interests involved, is not an excusable evil thing to do, but a good thing to do. And therefore the basic issue at stake here might well be over the question of "How are acts validated in the forum of conscience, intrinsically or extrinsically?" And what I want to contend is that if I tell a lie for love's sake (and I don't think we tell the truth for truth's sake), then I haven't committed a sin for which I am to beat my breast, you know, in self-accusation: *Mea culpa, peccavi, peccavi* ("The guilt is mine, I have sinned, I have sinned," a traditional expression of personal contrition in Latin theology) but rather I am to say that having acted out of love, I have done the right thing!

I have quoted from this public discussion so extensively in order that we may have a good overview over some main elements emerging again and again. We should examine them closely and draw our own conclusions. Let us rehearse some points: Fletcher says, and this is supposed to hit his adversary hard on the head: "It is foolish to say we ought to do what is wrong!"

Does Montgomery anywhere say literally that we ought to do what is wrong? Does he say that one is "somewhat justified" in committing the "lesser evil"? No. It is evident that he does not say anything of that kind. At least the verbal expression coming out of his mouth is rather the very opposite. But now, what is it he does say then? And you may very well add another question: Is what Montgomery virtually and explicitly does say any better than what he is here accused of saying? Both those questions have to be faced with absolute fairness and with radical truthfulness.

Montgomery says (with Dr. May), "It may be that I am forced to do this, but if so, I am still committing wrong." In other words, according to Montgomery, it is not unthinkable at all that man today is simply forced to do wrong--not just an apparent wrong, not a wrong that turns out, in the last analysis, to be right,--but blatantly, indisputably wrong. That amounts to saying: Man is forced to sin. Is this Biblical doctrine?

If the final implication of what Montgomery here really says has even vaguely dawned on Fletcher's mind, then--and only then--will I agree that Fletcher has abundant reason to look askance at his colleague. He is fully entitled to have serious doubts, not only about the soundness of Montgomery's general philosophy, but particularly about the orthodoxy of that man's theology. Of course, by and large, I am on Montgomery's side in his brave fight against Fletcherian situation ethics, but we must be fair to both of them.

Let us therefore admit one thing frankly: Montgomery does realize that his personal shortcoming in ethical respect at the moment when he yields to a virtual evil (even a "lesser evil"), condemns him unreservedly and relentlessly. And this sense of utter condemnation drives him to the Cross. Insofar he may impress us as being infinitely more Christian in his views and his ways than his situationist colleague, in the science of higher ethics. For Fletcher insists on keeping his head high, while he persists in perpetrating his "loving" acts contrary to the law of God.

But as far as absurdity is concerned, I do not know which of the two is the more absurd. I would at least like to ask Montgomery this straight question: Can there be a full faith in the meaningfulness of

Christianity as a supreme and absolutely perfect way of life, if it is at the same time assumed that there are certain evils, mortal sins, which the Christian is obliged to perpetrate? Is not this actually casting a shadow over God Himself, the Originator of Christian faith?

Montgomery accuses Fletcher of deficiencies in his Christology. But are his own views on Christ entirely Biblical? The difficulty here came out most clearly, I think, when McClurg, the moderator of the discussion, asked a rather close question precisely in connection with the point here at issue:

MC CLURG:

Question for Dr. Montgomery: Is there such a thing as a boundary situation where a person must choose between two sins? If so, would not Christ have been subjected to such and thereby have sinned?

MONTGOMERY:

The answer to the first half of this question is yes, very definitely, there are such boundary situations; but it doesn't follow that the answer to the second half is also yes. The latter depends entirely upon the situation Christ encountered, and, secondly, whether or not He suffered from a lack of knowledge of His total situation as we do. If He was subjected to our limitations of knowledge, then He would have found Himself in the same kind of pickle that we find ourselves in. But the New Testament Documents present Jesus not at all as--what was your expression?--a Jew of "little philosophical sophistication,"(11Fletcher's remark here referred to, was in fact not so reverent as that. What he literally stated about Christ in the course of the discussion was: "He had no more philosophical sophistication than a guinea pig, and I don't turn to Jesus for philosophical sophistication.") but as very God who forgave sin, who got Himself crucified on the charge of blasphemy, and who arose from the dead, vindicating His claim to Deity. A Person like this was--in the words of the New Testament--"like us in all points, yet without sin."

Obviously there are very serious deficiencies in some of these statements, not only as regards Biblical anthropology, but also as regards Biblical Christology. And in both respects the Bible's ethical philosophy is made thoroughly absurd. A consistent Christian ethicist just cannot maintain a standpoint like this about the true followers of Christ and their position in the world: "There is a boundary situation where a person must choose between two sins." On the contrary, no force on earth or in the whole universe can force a Christian to commit sin. Only at the moment when he personally yields, with the freedom of will that God has given him, to the temptations of an evil world, only then does he succumb to sin. It is accusing God Himself of absurdity and incompetence, to teach a doctrine as pessimistic as this, inferring that a human being, in spite of the perfect help his Savior has promised him, and in spite of the clear enlightenment which the Holy Spirit is ever prepared to provide for that repentant sinner's soul, should still be forced to commit a sinful action. Implicitly a contention like that must come dangerously close to downright blasphemy.

And what about the true position of Jesus of Nazareth at the time when He sojourned on this earth? Did He have any other help and guidance available to Him than what is available to a human creature today? By no means. If He had, then the word would have been void that states: "He has been tempted like us in all points, and yet without sin." What validity would there have been in the suggested proof otherwise. Suppose that, even in one single instance, Christ had permitted Himself to have recourse to His power as the divine One in order to "pull Himself out of the pit," or save His own record of perfect integrity, what would the consequence have been? Well, simply catastrophic to the whole meaningfulness of Hebrews 4:15. For then the proving force of the fact Paul wanted to prove, and insisted on proving, in terms of the great Vindication which is the alpha and omega throughout the Holy Scripture, would have been nil, or worse than that, a resounding fiasco.

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Obviously, then, there is a desperate need of being even a thousand times more radical than that otherwise staunch believer in Christ Jesus, John Warwick Montgomery is. I cannot see any other solution to our present problem. And now, what does this mean in practice in the case of the specific topic that is facing you and me? It has to be stated quite positively, even though it may sound more radical than most of us care to have the reputation of being.

It may, of course, be easy enough to point out negatively where Montgomery seems to be deficient. Malignant detractors may even laugh gloatingly at his deficiency, perhaps comparing the present case Fletcher/Montgomery to the case Frederic the Great/Maria Theresia. The two latter personalities both distinguished themselves as rather gluttonous and greedy at the expense of a lacerated Poland. You may remember from your studies in world history how that state was practically eaten up by its surrounding neighbors. Each one of these in his turn took a substantial gob of the delicious pancake called Poland. During this process the entirely unsentimental Frederic did not for a moment excuse himself because of his misdemeanor in this respect. But Maria Theresia, they say, wept and lamented. Frederic, however, evidently did not think her weeping so much superior, ethically speaking, to his own cynical grin. At least he has gone on record as saying about the romantic Austrian queen: "She weeps and weeps, but she helps herself to new slices of the cake all the time."

Of course, we too may ask, in the case with which we are here concerned: What does it help to be repentant ("beat one's breast," as Fletcher ironically expresses it)? What does it help to "come to the Cross" (as Montgomery's undoubtedly most serious appeal goes), if every time this repentance happens, there is immediately, and all along, a tragic acknowledgment that the thing of which one repents was--and will go on to be--an absolutely inevitable necessity. If man must do evil (even "only" a "lesser" one), then ethic has lost its sense completely. It has become devoid of meaning. Ravenous man will just go on helping himself to "gobs of the cake" for ever,--with a certain inkling of guilty conscience, or without.

Here we cannot help crying out desperately for a restoration of the meaningfulness inherent in Christian realism. And that cry must not remain there at the stage of pure desperation. For Christianity is not desperate. Therefore our cry must never take the form of a sentimental lamentation over "inevitable ills," "incurable ills." The Christian ethicist must be positive in all his reactions. He must not content himself with compromises.

Here then I can see only one solution. And I can see only one cause to the ethicist's failure in cases like the one we have just considered. His radicalism in a Christian direction can hardly have been radical enough. Man must go--hand in hand with God--not only one mile, two miles, three miles,--no, all the way,--to the very end of the road, wherever that may be.

So it should not, by any means, be imagined that we are on the side of the liberalist Joseph Fletcher in this ethics battle of the ages. How could we in any way espouse the views of an ethicist so strongly caught in the insidious net of the AUTARKEIA motif; that is, the proud humanistic idea of man's total self-sufficiency; so the very opposite of the humble spirit of implicit obedience and absolute God-dependence. This is the motif we have found epitomized in the New Testament (NT) notion of METANOIA. So precisely creeping on one's knees to the Cross, as Montgomery so well expresses it. But now we must then proceed to the practical working out of this New Testament REPENTANCE motif in terms of its radical opposition to all that situation ethics stands for.

WHAT LIGHT DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF METANOIA SHED UPON THE CRUCIAL QUESTION: WHAT MAKES HUMAN ACTIONS GOOD OR EVIL?

It is evident that METANOIA, the total heart-brokenness of the repentant sinner had no chance at all of being conceived by pure humanism. It is a unique Christian phenomenon. It is the New Testament's famous term for the spirit of wholehearted penitence, what David had called the contrite soul. That means a spirit of entire submission to God. Only at this point do we manage to find true meaning in what is said about going all the way up to the Cross. This kneeling down at the feet of Jesus Christ must be a realistic thing. So it must be intimately related to what outward behavior a person manifests in his practical life. In other words, we must notice carefully how that historic motif of REPENTANCE in Christian theology visibly behaves in the practical reality of everyday living.

You should not be surprised if the theology of METANOIA enters the forum of realistic existence in a way that may tear down, relentlessly, any ingenious superstructure the situation ethics ideology of liberal theologians has erected today. Let us rather go all the way back to the Gospel to find a theology which makes sense in a truly Christian context. We must measure the respective values of two ideologies by placing them side by side and by observing their behavior very closely. To begin with, Christianity and humanism may look very much alike. But gradually the enormous difference between them will reveal itself in terms of realism versus idealism. The Christian motif of METANOIA, as I have observed it, impresses me exactly as being conspicuously unsentimental, unromantic; in short, realistic. The humanistic motif of AUTARKEIA will sooner or later distinguish itself as downright unrealistic in every one of its practical manifestations.

I have now for a long time made it a habit to place certain fundamental motifs in front of each other as a means of reaching the inexorable truth about crucial movements in human history. A fundamental motif is a basic attitude toward life and toward the whole of reality.

Now you certainly do recall with what existential seriousness Fletcher raised his most significant question: "...wherein is a human act right or wrong?" He could hardly have asked a more pertinent or a more destiny-laden question. What decides the value--or the non-value-- of an act. You also remember that his main distinction is between the "extrinsic" and the "intrinsic." An act, he insists, is not inherently-- that is, in itself--either right or wrong. The great decisive factor is rather something purely outward. It is the situation, the external circumstances, the context, that decides everything. The value or non-value of an action must be decided individually, according as the specific case may be.

IS THE LIBERAL EXISTENTIALIST A REPRESENTATIVE OF A "FINER ETHIC"?

Now, do you think Fletcher with those interesting formulations of his ethical creed found any favorable response to his talk among his listeners in a full-packed auditorium? You may be sure he did. I here only need to mention one group among the famous speaker's sworn friends. In fact, I would be very deficient if I failed to mention those. I am referring to existentialist thinkers of various kinds. They certainly constitute a most prestigious body within the realms of present-day philosophy and theology. In such an environment the situation ethicist could expect a most intensive approval.

With all the enthusiasm and exuberant vitality that is in him, the existentialist will tend to embrace situationism. How wonderful, he will exclaim. Finally, we are here winding our way from ESSENCE to EXISTENCE. To him that spells realism and true life. It means leaving the desolate chimerical jungle of abstract "propositional" truths, as he would disparagingly call them, and of finally entering the authentic world of individual human decisions; so, to him, the contingent world of unique human engagements, of personal choices and a freedom in which the human being can bask and really enjoy his uniqueness to the

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full. That is the kingdom in which the "thralldom" of fixed principles and absolute laws has definitely come to an end, and the individual can abandon himself to his gambols without any narrow dogmas or dry theories hampering the natural movements.

There is one thing, however, which some of these theologian-philosophers seem to have forgotten entirely. And so had, evidently, their forefathers in the past. It is this simple fact: The basic and all-important condition for Christian ethics--and for the ethical norms contained in the Bible, by and large--is not the casually wavering external situations happening to a human creature at any given moment. No, the decisive reality is still something absolutely unchangeable. I do not at all mean rigidly unchanging or automatic in the pagan-platonic sense; I mean unchangeable in a genuinely Biblical sense.

What is that entirely positive unchangeability? It is the very Essence of the living God. And notice, as I here step down to pronounce the despised word (essence), I do this without any trace of shame. "Essence" in this context is a perfectly honorable concept. It does not imply any connotation of secret inferiority. God's essence is simply synonymous with God's profoundest nature, His inmost character, His very Being as the living Lord, the Eternal Father, the majestic Originator of all things. And what are the eternal laws of that God? They are just eternal and inevitable, the absolutely unchangeable expression of that divine Essence. It is God's CHARACTER that never changes. And how could any man dare to suggest that this should ever be subject to the law of change? How could we rely on a Lord whose character changes from day to day, from moment to moment?

So to me as a Christian realist Essence is not "being as such," being as opposed to becoming. Oh no! The moral philosophy of the Bible has nothing in common with Plato's barren idealism (or pure idea-ism, to be more correct than general philosophy tends to be). To Biblical philosophy, divine essence is not a purely theoretical sort of being; it is not existence in a purely potential stage of being; on the contrary, it is life properly speaking; it is creative power in actual unfolding all the time. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the philosophical spiritualist's vain breath ("flatus vocis"). It never stands for some kind of empty abstraction without any bodily substance. By no means. It is concrete reality, tangible, visible, everyday reality.

Accordingly, there is no reason why we should be haunted by the modern existentialist's taboo-inspired fear which he constantly experiences whenever someone brings up the concept of essential, or anything that may remind him of doctrines,--or "propositional truths."

All such taboo phobia is bound to vanish immediately at the moment when an intelligent person gets to know that the "essence" is an essential thing in life. One need not move one inch from good old English in order to conceive of the term as what characterizes something, or somebody, most deeply and most comprehensively. That is the true essence of the matter. Essence here stands for realistic being. We have already pointed out, for instance, what is the essence of God (the Source of all being). It is nothing but His immutable nature. And graphical transcript of that upwelling goodness of God, however, is His LAWS (also including His natural laws). Accordingly, it is not wisdom at all to assume that there can be any discrepancy between God's eternal essence and His divine will, as this comes out in the unchangeable precepts of His Words. Thus Christian realism has no war to wage against a single one of God's commandments. Again God's kingdom avers itself as a kingdom of totality, not of dualistic splitness and disharmony. The Bible's philosophy is the most complete one ever known to any intelligent being in heaven or on earth. It is the only complete one. Its meaningfulness is without spot or wrinkle.

This is what the situation ethicist has failed to discern. He will tend to look down upon any obedience that is literal. Such literalism is condemned as narrow-mindedness. He boasts that the inward attitude is all that counts (so a certain rather secret obedience of a person's deepest heart). Yes, indeed, it is

the attitude of the heart that counts with God. But please remember that this means, in the first place, man's attitude toward God, an attitude of humble obedience toward the will of that God. The great humanist is concerned about something very different in the first place. Most of the time he is exclusively concerned about man. Man!! Man has grown up to be his supreme reality in life. The vertical relationship (God to man and man to God) has ceased to be the main reality. Or if it does exist still in his mind, he optimistically imagines that as long as his horizontal relationship (man to man) is what he himself finds to be right, the vertical relationship will arrange itself automatically. But the very opposite is the case. The indispensable prerequisite for man's right relationship to man is his right relationship to God. And there the objective Word is the only available standard. Man's dependence on that Word is the basic attitude deciding the whole issue. This, then, is the attitude from which all ethical acts spring out in the last analysis. And it is not supposed to be an attitude turning back and forth, hither and yon, as the wind may happen to blow. No, again it is a question of character, human character this time, but human character seeking its model in the divine. Whether it is God-oriented in this sense or not, this is the decisive criterion for approval or condemnation for the human creature who is on trial before God.

THE STUPENDOUS LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF REALIZING WHAT GOD'S LAWS ACTUALLY REPRESENT ACCORDING TO THE DEEPEST ETHICAL AXIOMS OF RADICAL CHRISTIAN REALISM

I have just summarily mentioned what all God's laws, without exception, factually stand for, according to the inspired revelation of basic Christian philosophy: The Law of God is simply a TRANSCRIPT of His eternal and unchangeable CHARACTER.

Specialists in ethics would be well advised to take due note of this fundamental truth about divine laws. For it is bound to be pregnant with enormous consequences for the logical conclusions we must draw regarding the basic essence of all realistic laws manifesting themselves in the universe.

In a way we have all tended to adhere to a sort of situationist philosophy, you see, regarding God's laws, implying that they must be subject to sudden changes or even total abolitions. We tend to imagine that God manipulates eternal laws with the dexterity of a magician, invalidating them or eluding them, as often as He has a chance to do so in favor of some law-despising maneuver of divine intervention. In other words, we seem to think that God despises rigid laws just as we do. Is this realistic thinking? No, it becomes simply absurd in view of the fact that the laws constitute an immediate and self-evident expression of His very character, the most dependable and absolutely immutable reality the universe has ever known. That sudden abolition or temporary suspension of realistic laws, as we seem to imagine it--and ardently desire it--would, of course, mean a corresponding abolition or suspension of God's inherent nature. Is this what we are so eager to have? Obviously yes. We naturally do not want to have any change in our own views and ways. So we are actually trying to have a radical change in God and in His Ethic. I elaborate on this important theme in my book *Day of Destiny (The Mystery of the Seventh Day. Does It Interfere Crucially with the Basic Structure of All Ethics, Chapter 8: Does God's Contingent Intervention in Man's Personal Life Mean that His Laws of Universal Validity are "Eluded"?* p. 72ff.).

That divine code of ethics does not only demand conformity with the strict letter of the commandments. It goes even far beyond the precincts of that literalness. Some people, I know, have a fit of consternation when ethicists of the severest Biblical type suggest the following: On the day of final judgment you will be counted guilty, not only of the evil acts you actually committed, but just as much of those you would have committed, if only the opportunity of having them unfold in practical historical reality had presented itself to you.

"Why! "they will exclaim, "is this fair?"

Yes, it is fair, entirely fair. It is just as fair as the reward coming to those persons who had the genuine attitude of performing good acts but failed to do so at a given moment for sheer lack of material means, or because time was running out. The decisive thing is the attitude behind the action,--or behind the failure to act.

Well, you say, but is not this almost the same as what the situationalist claims? The decisive thing is not the act as such, but the spirit of love, the attitude behind it?

No, in Christian ethics that all-important attitude of the human heart is an attitude, first and foremost, of implicit obedience to God, a God who reveals His essence precisely through eternal and unchangeable laws, laws that constitute the exact replica of His will forever and ever. The human creature's consistent obedience to those laws constitutes, in its turn, the only reliable expression (or exact image, faithful transcript) God Himself goes by, when He registers the all-important character of that creature. Here is an ethical realism embracing the contingent action and the potential one in one single embrace. For remember: your character--that is, your very identity as a person--is exactly equivalent to your attitude of obedience toward God.

Many brave men over the centuries have been sentenced to death because they dared to protest unflinchingly when the situation ethicist launched his sophisticated statement:

You must disobey God sometimes. You must bear false witness sometimes. You must kill sometimes.

No, absolutely not! was the firm reply given by the courageous vindicator of God, vindicating that maligned God's holy name through implicit obedience to His law:

You must not disobey God at any time, under any circumstances. "Man may stand where nothing can force him to do evil." Ed.289.

Beware of unfaithful shepherds, particularly those unscrupulous ones who have gone so far along the road of prevarication and flagrant dishonesty that they even contend: "Disobedience is obedience. So rejoice whenever you come to a situation where you must be disobedient."

This is the voice of the "father of lies."

WHERE THE CASUIST COMES SHORT, HOW MUCH DOES THE SITUATIONIST REALLY KNOW ABOUT THE SITUATION?

Situation ethics, also called "contextual ethics," or "casuist ethics," because it considers the context, or any given case, surrounding the action, to be the decisive factor,--would not work out so badly in the world of practical human reality--the world in which you and I have our existence, after all, provided that we could assume as self-evident that a man depending wholly on that kind of ethic for his right living had a really complete knowledge of the "situation." Does man have that knowledge? Can it be taken for granted that he does know the "context"? I mean the whole context of his life? How does the situationist manage to feel so absolutely dead certain about that? Or is the "sureness" he has about this just a cocksureness? Is it just plain self-conceit?

This is a matter to which we must pay the closest attention. For it must be of the greatest importance to find out exactly where situationism of the traditional type fails and falls. Let us do our best then to consider intelligently just how much that outstanding humanist of the situationist guild actually knows about the situation, the thing he enjoys speaking about more than anything else in this world.

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I do not believe that situationists are so much different from the rest of us. So instead of examining the case of a situationist, I shall first give study to the case of a very ordinary man whose story I know particularly well. If situationists also are fairly ordinary people with the human weaknesses we all seem to share, they might happen to succumb to the same human deficiencies and errors.

Once more I permit myself to take my point of departure in an event taking place during the Second World War in the underground resistance forces of my own country. It has become so popular among ethics theorists to refer to happenings developing under that kind of more or less precarious circumstances, hasn't it? So I might claim a similar approach as my professional privilege. Anyway, let us leave the dull harbors of an ordinary existence. To many adventure-seekers, the everyday life of an average Jonesville community, with all its bourgeois mediocrity, tends to appear pretty tedious. So why not go "underground" for a while. The mysterious atmosphere of a certain semidarkness seems so much more challenging than the broad daylight of ordinary chores and obligations.

In the present case you might be somewhat disappointed to begin with. For this immediately looks rather like being "above the ground" most of the time, which is almost an unbearable situation for the genuine adventurer.

A boy still in his teens had begged a relative who had a very responsible position in the Norwegian underground movement to give him some part in that thrilling type of work. Finally the relative yielded. He assigned to that youngster a task of apparently minor responsibility. In the reality it turned out to imply responsibility serious enough. Evidently the boss had considerable confidence in his young helper. This was not just a matter of professional appreciation, but of mutual affection. On one occasion the young man was given orders to pass a certain construction, resembling a garbage box more than anything else, at exactly half-past nine every evening without fail,--until further orders. There he was to throw in a package containing a certain number of sandwiches.

He soon had the joy of observing that a person came about the same hour night after night to pick up the package. He even got to know, by and by, that this man and his family depended for their lives on that food package. Of course, our good young man enjoyed the visible meaningfulness of the "context" of that duty assigned to him by his boss. For nothing in the whole world would he have failed to perform his "little" task.

One day, however, there was no man picking up the basket any longer. Our faithful little soldier on the "sandwich front" was, of course, most anxious to know how this could be. Soon he was able to gather the sad news that the refugee and his family had been caught by the Germans and sent to a concentration camp.

However, no counter-orders were ever given concerning the placing of the package every night at half-past nine. So he felt in duty bound to go on performing his routine task. Night after night passed without any change taking place, except for the fact that the heap of sandwich packages increased considerably. This was not only distressingly meaningless, as far as the young expert in sandwich warfare could see, but it even seemed to imply positive danger. The visibly accumulating bulk of packages might soon arouse suspicion. So one night when it became particularly inconvenient for the boy to perform his usual duty, he decided to skip his round for once.

On that night something catastrophic happened. And it happened because our little member of the team failed to do what he had promised to do--unfailingly--pending definite orders to the contrary.

That boy thought he knew pretty well everything about the "situation." To him that included just the human circumstances making the performance of his own contribution visibly meaningful. He looked upon himself as perfectly able to evaluate the entire context. But there was something extremely important he did

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not know. He was not supposed to know it. Those who did know were in no position to tell him for the time being.

What he had no idea about was the fact that his "meaningless routine task" had another purpose, besides that of providing some food for a hungry family. And that happened to be a purpose a thousand times more important for the rescue and successful activity of human beings. His passing there every night at half-past nine was a signal agreed upon for something really momentous in a wider plan. A whole team of men in life-risking activity depended on that boy's faithful performance of his imposed task, his carrying it out in spite of the apparent meaninglessness of continuing to do the thing commanded. The fact of the case was: the boss of that young helper was involved in more complicated problems than what here appeared on the outside. The superintendent relied on his subaltern doing exactly as he had been told, without questioning, without insisting on seeing immediately the meaning of his deed, its context in the last analysis.

Now, what about the great God in heaven who is our "Boss"? Does He have "problems," "complicated battles" to fight, hardships of sundry kinds, which we know next to nothing about? That is exactly what revelation from inspired pens tells us. Do we believe this revelation implicitly? If we do, then we cannot claim to be able to see the whole context of God's plan in every detail and all along the road. We must stop interpreting God's orders immediately according to what we see. We must look farther than the little corner of the situation

contained within the scope of our private little vision. Otherwise we are bound to fail miserably.

Our God is a God at inexorable war with an enemy whose wicked devices of slander He has to fight through a plan of gradual fulfillment and long-term vindication. Let us be quite frank here: What we know about the problems facing our God and Redeemer Jesus Christ is very little.

And what do we know about our own problems? How far do we see the ultimate contexts of those problems?

One of our major problems is to realize fully that in reality we have no major problems at all as long as we do not take upon ourselves the problems belonging to God alone. Christian ethics says: Obey God, and leave the rest to Him, humbly and trustingly, the One who knows the whole context.

The basic strategy of the situation ethicist invites an ever-increasing number of new problems by adopting a philosophy diametrically opposite to that of Christian realism in the field of ethics. It is with an unmistakable air of self-confidence and a definitely misplaced personal pride, he proceeds to take all things into his own hands. What he clearly expresses is not one bit different from the following: "I MYSELF am the one who can boast of a pretty perfect overview over all things here at stake. I know the entire context of my life, past, present, and future. So I reasonably demand to discern an immediate benefit coming to this visible world of mine as the evident result of the commandments I stoop down to obey. Wherever I am incapable of discerning any such beneficial or obviously meaningful connection, I just skip the commandment concerned. For I am certainly not going to act like a fool, performing orders of which I do not perceive the full meaning here and now."

This is very much the same unbecoming pride manifested by the extreme humanist who, from times immemorial, has declared haughtily: "I am a man; nothing human is unknown to me." Homo sum, nihil humani mihi ignotum. Or, expressed in more elaborate terms: The only true persons I positively know to exist are MEN. Of God as a person I have no realistic experience whatever. The only thing I have actual evidence of in that so-called higher sphere, postulated by the moral sciences, is an endless jumble of theoretical codes, assuming the worthiness of gods. But what is that godhead I am commanded to obey blindly, like a will-deprived slave, like a beast of burden without sense? I know no Lord higher than myself. It was such code-framers like Moses who once invented that Sovereign Yahweh, a divine tribunal outside man's

personal conscience, and mysteriously arising above man's own inherent knowledge of right and wrong. I am not going to take orders from any such commander greater than myself."

AN INFORMATIVE EXPERIMENT OF THOUGHT: SUPPOSE CERTAIN OF THE BIBLE'S OUTSTANDING CHARACTERS OF FAITH HAD REVEALED THEMSELVES AS ENTHUSIASTIC FANS OF THE NEW MORALITY?

Would they then have behaved very much the same way history informs us that they did? This inquiry ought to provide captivating material for study by imaginative minds. The time has now come for us to subject modern situationism and its underlying philosophy to thorough investigation, viewing it from a radically Christian angle. Let us, for instance, place that bold humanist philosophy of the new morality into super-tense proximity with the first "problem" man ever faced in this world according to the simple record of Holy Writ. The human creature's first trial was in connection with precisely the "tree of knowledge of good and evil."

Or perhaps the Sabbath commandment was the first test of all. One thing at least is beyond doubt: The Sabbath must have presented itself as somewhat of an enigma to the first human couple, as viewed with their eyes under the existing circumstances. The first whole day lying in front of them was proclaimed to be, not a work-day but a rest-day. Imagine them standing there, saturated with the pent-up energy of a brand new body and almost aching with the desire to give a natural outlet to those welling sources of energy (I am taking the liberty to apply some "post-fall" terms to "pre-fall" conditions). How wonderful it must have felt to spend that youthful power of a perfect body and a perfect mind, with which the Creator had equipped Adam and Eve. But was it work that now awaited them that first awaking morning of their life on earth? No, indeed not. The categorical announcement they were confronted with was simply this one: So, my dear children, we have come to the great day of rest. Now treat yourself to some real good rest.

Do you feel that a sudden greeting of that kind would be likely to appear particularly meaningful to newly created persons like our first parents? I am now suggesting that you consider the matter from a viewpoint (a "post-fall" viewpoint, if you please) such as pure human reasoning (another "post-fall" phenomenon) would tend to find immediately reasonable. What an enigmatic situation! What a curious context for a modern contextualist to cope with! Seen with the critical eye of a modern humanistic casuist, that case there would certainly seem to lend itself to interpretations which might not necessarily inspire literal obedience.

Karl Barth was not a situationist theologian in his interpretation of this special point in Genesis. Interestingly, he does not find it astonishing at all that the Sabbath was instituted as early as this after the creation of the first human couple. The Sabbath just had to come that early in their experience. What man needed to learn the sooner the better, says Barth, was not what he himself could do, but rather what God had already done for him. So it is the old question of man's own works on the one hand, and God's grace on the other. The great REST in God was simply an indispensable prerequisite for man's ability to do anything whatsoever. Therefore the rest had to precede the work. No other choice.

Well, where do you find the modern liberal theologian, or the modern situationist of any profession, who would display a view broad enough on the topic of the situation to grasp this fact of the God-man relationship?

We have no appropriate place here to go into the tumultuous history of the fourth commandment, and the treatment it was given by humanist-inspired theology in the course of 6000 years until The theologian-philosophers (or philosopher-theologians) just played around with the Sabbath as a cat will play with a mouse,--or as any situation ethicist will traditionally play around with anything that has been set aside as holy by an authoritative God. It is inherent in the nature of the matter at hand that the Sabbath was

bound to be a commandment more vulnerable than any other commandment in the decalogue. Why? Well, precisely because the Seventh Day means nothing less than a personal and absolutely sovereign God's most personal and sovereign intervention in man's life. What God here says is practically the following: "My dear human child, I am personally attached to you in a way you will only gradually be able to experience. That is why I insist on having a special and most personal rendez-vous with you under the canopy of a special holiness. So please do not permit any human ethics specialist to talk you into believing that this rendez-vous is "just a symbol." Let him not prevail upon you to accept the sophistry that the day and hour for this appointment of yours with God is a matter of no importance, so that you might as well yourself choose a different day or a different hour, just as the practical circumstances of extrinsic relations may happen to indicate."

EVE, THE FIRST SITUATION ETHICIST ON THIS EARTH

What I particularly intended to look at more closely, however, at the dawn of our human history, was the trial traditionally regarded as the first great touching stone in man's life, namely, the tree of knowledge in the midst of that famous garden in the East. Suppose you apply the situationist's principle, as any pagan humanist would apply it, to that event, then what would you have?

As far as mere human intelligence goes, what harmful effect could one assume from eating the fruit of that splendid-looking tree? Once more, then, the traditional question: What harm could any reasoning human being see in it? And notice: we have to admit one thing: that formulation does not necessarily imply a motive of the egocentric type. In fact, when it here says harm, that clearly implies harm for the others, the neighbor. So this is beautifully alterocentric, isn't it? Eve just could not see that her taking of the fruit would cause inconvenience to anyone around her. There certainly was no lack of intelligent human calculation of the costs in her candid evaluation of the case at hand, as far as her horizontal relationships were concerned. And what about God? Who could ever harm Him under any circumstances? God ought to be pretty immune against harm of any kind. Moreover, who would be so childish as to imagine that God, the majestic Creator of the Universe, would ever be bothered with trivial matters such as food and drink in man's little world of everyday life, for instance, the choice of apples rather than pears for the breakfast table?

Under all circumstances, one thing should be clear as daylight: God would be the last one you could think of as susceptible of being hurt! What a ridiculous idea: God being hurt for the simple reason that puny man tried to mobilize his own powers of intelligent judgment in order to make his own choice of a minor detail in kitchen affairs!

In short, as long as man took advice from his own reason only, regarding right and wrong, good and evil, or regarding what the relationship to other intelligent beings demanded, well then the conclusion seemed very simple: Let us eat. And they did eat, that's for sure. But the prognosis given by the Creator had been: The result of disobedience against the clear commandment of a law of life will be certain death. And they certainly did die.

Why? Because they took upon themselves a task of ethical judgment which God had reserved for Himself. They imagined themselves capable of having a perfect vista of the situation in its totality. But they just did not have it. No creaturely being ever does.

And what was that most important part of the situation which they had no way of knowing? Probably it was a part similar to the one which had not yet been revealed to Job at the time when he was going through the most decisive trials of his life. Job finally turned out to become, with God's gracious help, a victor in the great ethics battle.

But his story certainly provides material for experiments of thought of the most captivating kind.

WHAT IF JOB HAD BEEN AN UNBENDING SITUATION ETHICS MAN?

In Job's case the dramatic battle has received a rather comprehensive description. It is precisely part of the decisive happenings behind the scene that have here been opened up to our inspection in order to give us some idea of the otherwise invisible parts of the spectacle. We certainly do get some informative glances into essential elements of "the situation as a totality."

Because of the basic integrity of Job's character, that man has acquired the tremendous position in history of a creature among the most outstanding in the glorious task of vindicating the name of the Creator. I am speaking about a glorious name, but a name which the prince of evil has blackened so thoroughly that there just cannot be any perfect happiness in this universe before the Name of names has been washed clean again.

Also against Job do the false accusations of the devil (diabolos, the backbiter), go out with crushing fury. And here we should know one thing: To God it is of priceless value to have His name vindicated precisely by the other ones, even the smallest other ones. One of the infamous lies Satan has divulged is that no creature can remain steadfastly on God's side and lead a life of perfectly upright behavior.

It is particularly in the Prologue of Job's Book that the great standing controversy between God and Satan has been disclosed to the eyes of the open-minded reader. I have often wondered why so many poets and thinkers in our world tend to just skip this part of the book.

For where else would you look for a fascinating and highly understandable answer to the otherwise problematic question of the presence of evil in this world? Here it is clearly demonstrated that God has battles to fight which most men know little about. In fact, they hardly know anything whatsoever. I shall here for brevity's sake dive right down into a council in which God permitted the evil one to present his deceitful and almost malicious point of view:

Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord. And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? And still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him to destroy him without cause. And Satan answered the Lord and said, Skin for skin, yea all that a man hath, will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold he is in thy hand, but save his life. So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with the sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. Job 2:1-7.

The God here presented to us certainly is a God most men are entirely ignorant about. He is the God who has even stooped down to a position of astounding meekness and compliance. He has allowed mere creatures, angels and men plotting together in a most malicious manner, to simply place him in the defendant's dock. The reason is admirable enough: This faithlessly slandered God has made up His mind that both the accusations against Him and the defense procedure in favor of His acquittal should develop in open daylight, permitting everybody involved--directly or indirectly--to see for himself that nothing whatsoever is

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put under the rug. A whole universe, attentively watching and listening are to have opportunity to follow the spectacle in every important detail, and all the way up to the ultimate act of the drama.

For the time being the character on the stage on whom the search-lights are focused, is Job. So permit me to approach you with a relevant question, as far as I understand relevancy: Suppose Job had been a man with nothing to fill his heart except a handful of situation ethics, what a poor figure that man would have been cutting, up there in that immense world theatre, in which the actors themselves are hardly aware of being in the limelight at all, much less that they may be playing the parts of gigantic heroes under the torches, flooding with their penetrating light the scene of that vast theatre, filled to capacity with its myriads of onlookers.

And now stretch your imagination far enough to have the pathetic vision of a pitiable modern situation ethicist taking Job's place in the drama. What could such a one be supposed to behave like in the scorching heat of the trials kept in store for a true vindicator on God's side? What else could he do than leave God's cause in the lurch? He would most likely, abandon the fight completely before long. He would "curse God and die," exactly as Job's wife--the last, but certainly not the least of that man's calamities--suggested to him. The situationist would now feel more convinced than ever that he could not cause any harm to either gods or men by simply dropping out of the picture altogether.

Whether he would add his own little melodrama to that of the world, just committing suicide, as Job's sentimental wife proposed, this I cannot tell. I think it more likely that a mediocre fellow like that would simply make his retreat "in good order." The courage to go into "the valley of decision," as his traditional theory would like to boast, would simply fail him. That valley is a place far too drama-filled, indeed, for a person whose main passion is the passion for compromise the great perspective of all mediocrity.

Here we have had a fair view of the final result lying in wait for those who follow the philosophical tenets of the SELF-SUFFICIENCY motif (Autarkeia); that is, taking the whole business into one's own hands. Such a lousy course of behavior cuts a man off from every chance of obtaining even the faintest glimpse of any further or richer perspectives. His outlook becomes crippled from the very beginning. And now, what further repercussions is this bound to have? What does it mean to the lives and the outlooks of the others, the crowd of average onlookers? This question ought to touch you and me very personally, as we have to deal with the Book of Job. What if he had been that casuist whom we have here theoretically tried to imagine? What a risky thing for your life and mine? It is not without reason, you see, that Job's Book appears on the shelves of exquisite world literature. By numerous quite worldly men of letters it is regarded as a unique introduction to the mystery surrounding the problem of evil in our world. Even openly agnostic readers will admit that this book of the Bible looms large in man's literary heritage. And this in spite of the fact that they may have grasped hardly more than the extreme fringe of the tremendous meaning contained in Job's drama. Why then have they failed to grasp it? For the plain reason that they consistently skipped the intermezzo behind the scene, as displayed in the prologue.

And now let us compare Job's position to that of the boy with the sandwiches in the underground war during the German occupation of Norway. In the life of the patriarch of old there were things reminding us of that boy's position. The things going on behind the scene happened to be more significant by far than anything else. There happened to be Someone there in the obscurity of the night--the night of a mysterious ethics battle of the ages--Who depended tremendously on a faithful performance, on Job's part, of the apparently insignificant role assigned to him at the humanly invisible front of that most realistic battlefield of the spirit. Notice the word I used: God depended on Job. How in the world, you may object, could the God of heaven be "dependent" on a human creature? Is not God precisely the eternally Independent One, the only really Self-sufficient One in the whole wide World? Yes, but that incredible God has had the unique idea of making himself dependent on the other ones, in fact, even on a dubious race called mankind. In Job's particular case there was a particular condition that had to be met in order that God's name, under particular

circumstances, might be vindicated (His soiled reputation washed clean again): Job would have to remain true to His Master until the end. He would have to maintain his integrity in every essential detail, and this in spite of all that apparent meaninglessness spreading like a thick grey bank of fog over the entire field of human vision.

Again we get a little glimpse of the deeper connections. It turns out that the "Boss," right in the most contingent destiny of His own life, has problems to cope with. He has problems of a most intricate nature, problems about which His little assistant out there at the front does not have the faintest idea, at least not so far. Man's task then is to obey, to keep strictly to the given orders, and doing this with all the lowliness of spirit and all the "other-dependence" (God-dependence) that realistic obedience always demands.

EVEN NOBLE BIBLICAL PATRIARCHS MAY AT TIME YIELD TO THE TEMPTATION OF ADOPTING A SITUATIONIST STANDPOINT. THE BIBLE DOES NOT GLOSS OVER THE FACT.

We should not either try to hide the fact that even the great heroes of the Scriptures might have times in their lives when they departed from the eternal principles of absolute law-abidance. It would be unbiblical and unfair to be secretive about this. Take Abraham as one example. What else than a miserable situation ethicist was he at the time when he suffered a moral defeat in his everyday life during one of his travels to Egypt? Did you ever hear about the little "white" lie he produced in front of Pharaoh on that occasion? The patriarch himself had probably managed to fool himself into believing that his particular little lie was particularly white. For in a strange way it happened to be half a truth, considered toward the flattering background of certain undeniable facts. In other words, what Abraham permitted himself to manufacture was only the fraction of a regular falsehood:

During his stay in Egypt Abraham gave evidence that he was not free from human weakness and imperfection. In concealing the fact that Sarah was his wife, he betrayed a distrust of the divine care, a lack of that lofty faith and courage so often and nobly exemplified in his life. Sarah was fair to look upon, and he doubted not that the dusky Egyptians would covet the beautiful stranger, and that in order to secure her, they would not scruple to slay her husband. He reasoned that he was not guilty of falsehood in representing Sarah as his sister, for she was the daughter of his father, though not of his mother. But this concealment of the real relation between them was deception. No deviation from strict integrity can meet God's approval. Through Abraham's lack of faith, Sarah was placed in great peril. The king of Egypt, being informed of her beauty, caused her to be taken to his palace, intending to make her his wife. But the Lord, in His great mercy, protected Sarah by sending judgments upon the royal household. By this means the monarch learned the truth in the matter, and indignant at the deception practiced upon him, he reproved Abraham and restored to him his wife, saying, "What is this that thou hast done unto me? . . . Why saidst thou, She is my sister? So I might have taken her to me to wife. Now therefore, behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. PP 130.

But how, then, should we look upon the concept of falsehood, viewed with the eyes of the strictest Biblical ethics?

False speaking in any matter, every attempt or purpose to deceive our neighbor, is here included. An intention to deceive is what constitutes falsehood. By a glance of the eye, a motion of the hand, an expression of the countenance, a falsehood may be told as effectually as by words. All intentional overstatements, every hint or insinuation calculated to convey an erroneous or exaggerated impression, even the statement of facts in such a manner as to mislead, is falsehood. This precept forbids every effort to injure our neighbor's reputation by misrepresentation or evil surmising, by slander or tale bearing. Even the

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intentional suppression of truth, by which injury may result to others, is a violation of the ninth commandment. (Ibid.)

What a severe tribunal of right and wrong, some may again complain. The human tribunals certainly are not as severe as that. Particularly they would never go to the extreme of what was suggested a while ago: "On the day of the last judgment you will be found guilty not only of the evil acts you physically and visibly did perform, but just as much of those you had the intention to perform, if time and opportunity had been given you to perform them." What a merciless tribunal, indeed, says the average observer, shuddering at the very thought. And again his thoughts go yearningly back to the "more merciful" tribunals of human legislation. On that level of penal jurisdiction the defendant does at least obtain what people call "the benefit of the doubt." Why is not the great Judge up there in His sublime heavens just as generous, and just as fair? How could there be any fairness, after all, in sentencing to death a person for an act he has not even yet perpetrated?

The answer can only be: The fairness according to the simple principle of strict justice is impeccable? Or would you ever have any serious objections to it at the moment when it manifest itself from its positive side: You are rewarded by the same Lord for the good acts you would have performed, if time and opportunity had been granted. That remuneration from a most generous and a most fair divine Judge comes to you infallibly, exactly as if the good act you intended had been carried out in the visible world of contingent history. The decisive factor is once more the deepest reality of your inmost heart. Your heart (I might as well say your character) is identical with yourself. It constitutes you as you actually are in your total being. That is why no one except the entirely just Judge of heaven is entirely competent to pass an entirely fair and entirely decisive sentence over you and your most intimate life.

Again we realize how important it is that reality of a supreme Deity is taken into account. And who has the grace to make that reality a constant part of his life's account? Only creature who has abandoned his old motif of Self-sufficiency (the pagan *Autarkeia*) in favor of a total submission, the unique Biblical motif of *Metanoia*, which is the sinful creature's total God-dependence.

Here only do we find a realism which is broad enough to hug, in that one single embrace, both the contingent world of actual historical happening and the ideal world of eternal principles with its endless ocean of potential possibilities inherent in the repentant sinner's deepest heart. On this basis you can, to some extent, realize how indispensable it is that your attitude to God should be right; that is, the visible subject's perfect allegiance to his invisible King. Please note what I mean by "invisible." I certainly do not conceive of it in the spiritualistic sense of pagan idealism. That, you see, would imply total impersonality, a pure abstraction. The perfectly ethical God of Christian realism is intensively personal, and comfortingly concrete.

To me it has been a captivating discovery to notice that the Spirit of Prophecy constantly makes use of another formulation than that of "invisible" ("invisible world," etc.). Inspired pens seem to favor the term "unseen." What is the difference? The difference is that such expressions as the "unseen world" do not so readily lend themselves to philosophical ideas of the spiritualist kind, ideas which tend to become more and more prevalent in religious circles today.

Let me give you a very simple illustration of what I mean. At the present moment I must admit that Japan to me is an unseen land. But the only reason why this happens to be so is the fact that I find myself in a position from which Japan just cannot, by any physical means, appear as a visible object. In other words, there is nothing wrong with Japan as an entirely visible thing. Japan does not suffer from any deficiency similar to the one inherent in the world Plato used to consider as the only real world, the world of the pure idea. Oh no, in my human childlikeness, I rejoice to know that Japan is a concrete reality good enough. It has nothing whatsoever in common with Plato's world-including Plato's God-for to him the only good was pure

ideas, something barrenly impersonal beyond time and space. To me Japan has no sad deficiencies of that kind. The fact that I fail to see the country of Japan for the time being must ascribed wholly and fully to some deficiency in me, rather than in Japan. I just have not yet arrived at the geographical position from which I could nourish any reasonable hope of enjoying the sight of that most realistic Far Eastern territory, which I have been longing to experience.

With the alleged Super-reality of pagan idealism things are very different. This is invisible-and will always remain so-for the simple reason that invisibility constitutes an essential part of its profoundest nature. You will have no difficulty, I hope in understanding this. For is not invisibility an inherent quality of all nothingness? How should a true creature-however seeing-manage to see what does not exist at all? It is obviously only at the moment when something goes wrong in the upstairs regions of a human person, that visions of that kind begin to manifest themselves. But that, of course, also means the abrupt end of realism.

Not even the most fantasy-ridden spiritualist in the know history of philosophy has appeared inclined to entertain great hopes of being overwhelmed by sense impressions in Nirvana. If the main thing such a person was longing for happened to be hectic sense experiences of the traditional human form, he would probably choose quite a different land for his final excursion than that "blissful harbor" of absolute non-entity.

Now, to be sure, neither the modern situation ethicist nor the ultra-liberal theologian, I assume, would ever admit that this shadowy land of Nirvana nothingness is the one they are bound for. Nevertheless, I personally have no doubts that the spiritualist's Nirvana is the end station of any voyage of the human ethics kind. Just here, beyond the concrete concepts of a God-given law, lies the No-man's-Land where all reasonable contours of a definite right and a definite wrong tend to dissolve.

The obvious cause for such a gradual disintegration of all serious concepts of true ethics is easy enough to discover in the light of Christian realism: The awareness of all true facts, including a discrimination between good and evil, has been swallowed up by the fog banks of Nirvana joylessness and painlessness. All objective reality has ceased to exist, as it were.

Is this land also the goal of your longings? I hope not. For already the very fact of longing for nonentity of that kind seems, in itself, to be all that is needed for infallibly drifting ashore on that godless archipelago, and losing oneself in one of its lagoons without an issue. We must be on the alert--day and night--like watchmen without a moment's slumber at the entrance gates of our secret longings. For this may very well be gates leading right into the valley of death. Our longings must be actively turned toward the avenues of life. But no one can choose life without first having chosen the Lord of life. In practice that means choosing His special ethics. And this, in its turn, means obedience to the unchangeable ethical norms of His eternal law.

BUT WHAT NOW, IF THE CHOICE OF SUCH RADICAL OBEDIENCE MEANS INSTANT DEATH?

Here we come to a constantly repeated and most weighty apprehension: Suppose your very life is the price you must pay for the temerity of your law-abidingness! Should not an extremity of that magnitude deserve being counted at least as a mitigating circumstance?

To this I have a standard remark: It is strange, indeed, how inveterate and ineradicable this idea has managed to become in our minds: The worst thing that could ever happen to you and me--in fact, the very

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abyss of all evil--is that we must die. Whatever the circumstances and however the contexts, death is invariably assumed to be the ultimate fatality.

Do we realize how utterly devoid that philosophy is of every element essential to Christian reasoning? In true Christianity it is something quite different that is bound to take the position of the capital evil, the bottomless depth, the tragedy of tragedies in human life. That is SIN. And falsehood is sin. Do we, perhaps, flatter ourselves that it is sin on a lesser scale than most other forms of sin? Is the telling of lies a sin "on varying levels of sinfulness." How long are we going to carry along with us that nefarious notion? If the very light of TRUTH has been darkened in us, how great is our darkness (Matthew 6:23 paraphrased).

Even life itself should not be purchased with the price of falsehood. By a word or a nod the martyrs might have denied the truth and saved their lives. By consenting to cast a single grain of incense upon the idol altar they might have been saved from the rack, the scaffold or the cross. But they refused to be false in word or deed, though life was the boon they would receive by so doing. Imprisonment, torture, and death, with a clear conscience, were welcomed by them, rather than deliverance on condition of deception, falsehood, and apostasy. By fidelity and faith in Christ they earned spotless robes and jeweled crowns. Their lives were ennobled and elevated in the sight of God because they stood firmly for the truth under the most aggravated circumstances. (4T 336)

An adherence to the strictest principles of truth will frequently cause present inconvenience and may even involve temporal loss, but it will increase the reward in the future life. Religion does not consist merely in a system of dry doctrines, but in practical faith, which sanctifies the life and corrects the conduct in the family circle and in the Church. Many pay tithes on mint and rue, but neglect the weightier matters, mercy and the love of God. To walk humbly with God is essential to the perfection of Christian character. God requires undeviating principle in the minutest details of the transactions of life. Said Christ: "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." (4T 337)

If the situationist's insidious ideology manages to make its way to the very depths of our minds and hearts just at a time in our history when we are going to be placed at the crossroads of our most decisive trial before God and before the world, then that situationist is doing us a cruel disservice with his nice talk about "serving God in spirit and truth," as he understands the spiritual and the truthful. Certainly it was Jesus Himself who said to the Samaritan woman: "The time approaches; indeed it is already here when those who are real worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth." John 4:24. This, however, does not mean "spirit" and "truth" in a purely spiritualistic sense of the terms. It does not either mean "spirit" and "truth" in the human ethics sense of the modern situationist. Our only cure comes through an attitude of complete candor and sincerity. This, of course, also includes being intellectually sincere. In ethical integrity no half-truth will ever do. The Christian ethicist must be absolutely without guile (John 1:47). Here, as well, Christ is our only perfect example, the One "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." 1 Peter 2:22. There must be no bargaining with the principle of truth, whatever the cost. Here we have the obligation to go on and on with our pursuit of ethical research, for it has to be established with certainty what this totality within the realms of ethics actually implies. This will certainly require that we engage in active ideological warfare. Sooner or later we may have to examine conscientiously and without fear some of the most audacious moves undertaken by the advocates of the new morality. But first and foremost we must have some positive principles of Biblical ethics laid down in clear and quite understandable terms.

THE QUESTION THAT SHOULD BE ASKED AND THE ONE THAT SHOULD NOT IN ORDER TO FIND THE WAY OF CORRECT ACTIONS IN LIFE

You may be a good old Christian and still rise up in protest the first time you hear a demand that is here placed before you. What I would like to present to you now, you see, is a remarkable set of formulations of practical ethics which I myself found a bit strange--to put it mildly--in a book of Christian guidance I otherwise had learned to appreciate tremendously: Patriarchs and Prophets. I know no better one for captivating readings in the hearth of the family. The text I am referring to deals with a practical way to find out how a Christian should choose his course of action when problematic matters arise in everyday life. However much I generally enjoyed Mrs. White's counsels, I now arrived at one which I had some real difficulty in "swallowing." What were those "contrasting" alternatives she here put up, side by side? The first question was pointed out as the one you should not ask. The next was the one you should ask.

Alternative 1: The question not to be asked:

"In deciding upon any course of action, we are not to ask whether we can see that harm will result from it . . ." PP 634. Really? You might, perhaps, inquire with very much the same mood of wonder and hesitation that I felt the first time I read that passage. What kind of guideline in general ethics was this? It did sound like a principle of anti-ethics rather than ethics. For, frankly speaking, what more appropriate question could any serious, ethics-conscious person ever think of, as the right one to ask, than exactly that one? Would it not, on the contrary, appear to any conscientious man of action at the point of embarking upon an act he was planning, to be the ethical question par excellence: "What harm can I see as the possible result of the action I now intend to carry out?" Should not a human being be particularly concerned about the potential unfortunate consequences his course of action might cause to his fellow men? We all do have other creatures around us on every hand, creatures liable to suffer harm. So should we not weigh carefully in our minds, and as far as our practical intelligence is able to guide us, how those other ones might be harmed or benefited by the actions we intend to put into operation?

No, says the author, this is not the right question. But for goodness sake, tell us, what is it then?

Alternative 2: The question to be asked:

It is formulated by Ellen White as briefly and as concisely as any ethics ideology could ever demand it? Is my planned course of action "in keeping with the will of God?"

Well, you may perhaps still retort, somewhat disappointed at the logic inherent in a juxtaposition of two "contrasting" questions of that curious kind,--does not this rather amount to one and the same question?

By no means. The difference between the two is enormous. There is the same gulf between them as between two sharply delimited fundamental motifs we have previously mentioned: the pagan-humanistic on the one hand, and the basically Christian on the other. That is the decisive distinction between man-centeredness and God-centeredness.

Who constitutes the great center in the outlook you have on life? Is it man or is it God? Are you just anthropocentric in your deepest attitude toward the ethical issues, or are you theo-centric? Still more outspokenly the question could be formulated: Are you an egocentric ethicist or an alterocentric one? Is what you adhere to in your concrete life, barren humanism or living Christianity?

Should we not seriously ask ourselves the crucial question: When, in the course of earth's fairly long history, did it ever happen that God gave man the liberty (or rather the license) to take into his own hands the most intimate matters of his life?

"God has given man no liberty to depart from his requirements." (Ibid.) What does the Bible's wisdom pronounce on this topic? "Ye shall not do . . . every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes" (Deuteronomy 12:8). No, the thing man is plainly instructed to observe and do is "all these words I command thee" (verse 28).

The imperative reason for introducing an ethical norm of that heavily theo-centric orientation, is clearly given in Proverbs 14:12: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is the ways of death."

I should mention the context in which those two divergent questions have been placed in opposition to each other in order to illustrate the secrets of Biblical ethics. The author has just dealt thoroughly with the tragic end of the situation ethicist Saul, Israel's first human king. You may recall the last decisive test God in His mercy and longsuffering gave that man. But once more he stubbornly departed from the clearly traced road which God's solemn word had pointed out to him. Upon returning home from his otherwise successful war against the Amalekites, but without having annihilated all, man and beast, as God had explicitly demanded, Saul was peremptorily reproved by God's officiating prophet Samuel. On that occasion there was particularly one thing Saul alleged for his self-defense. He tried to impress the prophet by enumerating all the wonderfully positive things he had intended to achieve, whenever he had made his own arrangements for the way he wanted to carry out the task imposed upon him by God. And there were concrete results he could refer to. His personal planning had contributed so nicely toward increasing the offerings his men could now present to God. But what was the sharp answer given him by God through the prophet: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22).

It is that precious quality of obedience which tends to be lacking among men in a modern ethical context. And there is not necessarily so much to wonder at in that respect. Obedience presupposes something which seems to become particularly rare among philosophers, and even among so-called Christian theologians, in our milieu. The obedient person must, of course, first have some elementary notion that there does exist Someone to Whom obedience is due. In other words, he must possess the idea of a personal God Whom he can intelligently obey. But now, what about the agnostic humanist of modern scholarly circles? Who is the only personal being he happens to know and believe in? It is man. So how could one expect that he should manage the strange act of strict obedience to precepts the Bible refers to as being of divine origin? To an agnostic such an act would appear rather close to downright absurdity.

WHAT COMES FIRST IN MAN'S LIFE: HIS RELATIONSHIP TO GOD OR HIS RELATIONSHIP TO HIS NEIGHBOR?

Of course, even the one who believes in a God may have a problem here. There is something, after all, he will say, that I just cannot with certainty place exactly where it belongs. It has to do with that "vertical relationship" of mine (the man-to-God relation) on the one hand, and the "horizontal relationship" (the man-to-man relation) on the other. It has been maintained that Christian ethics knows one capital question only: "What is, in the matter at hand, God's will for me to do?" But is not this an unreasonable one-sidedness? why should I not be entirely free to ask that other question at the same time, or even before that solemn "vertical" one becomes the great issue? Does not the Bible say somewhere: "If you do not love your brother whom you see, how can you love God whom you do not see?" This seems to admit, does it not, that after all we are human beings, destined to have our life in a human world. True enough, my ultimate desire must be: How can I do the will of God. But would that concern necessarily suffer any detriment or catastrophic reduction for the innocent reason that I am so eagerly concerned about all those fellow creatures of mine; that is, just seriously preoccupied by that other question: "Would any man be hurt by my intended new

action?" Would there, necessarily, be any rivalry between the two concerns, so that one would automatically decrease whenever the other one increases? Reading your present book, Mr. Johnsen, gives me the impression as if the two are bound to be in the most glaring opposition to each other. Would it not be far more reasonable to look upon them as mutually supplementing elements, one relationship going harmoniously together with the other?

Well, let us tentatively accept your thesis about "supplementary elements" and a "harmonious working together." But this can be granted on one condition only. This is the capital point of the whole matter: Man's relationship to God (his all-absorbing concern about doing God's will) must be given absolute priority over any other relationship in his life. This is a basic concept of Biblical theology from Genesis to Revelation. Putting the cart before the horse will never do

On the other hand, there should be a full appreciation of the importance of all inter-human relations. It is hardly necessary to remind me of some revolutionary changes taking place in our super-civilized world of today. Certain sciences have sprung up like mushrooms in the West. We call them the social sciences. Sociology has recently established itself in European and American universities as the great thing. And be reassured, I am not going to throw forth any one-sided criticism against just that new cocksureness which seems to be asserting itself about the "art of living together" in societies as the one thing worth while. As human beings we are born to live together. So we shall have to make ourselves familiar with that art. We must learn the rules and play the game with harmonious know-how. Communication is one favorite term used to express it. And how many misfortunes would we not be able to avoid if only we had a more ample stock of that cardinal knowledge!

But here we shall hardly make any headway worth mentioning unless we appropriate one elementary fact regarding fellowship as a whole: If you have not established a tenable fellowship with God (or rather: if He has not yet been allowed to establish it with you) then you may as well abandon your cherished hope, forget your ambitious plan of establishing the "perfect fellowship" with your fellowman.

Let me illustrate this with an example from the Bible. Moses remained separated from those with whom he most longed to be together for forty years-in the first instance. At that age he definitely made up his mind: "It is high time I get together with my beloved people. I must finally make a heroic effort to save them from their misery." So he went about it to the best of his ability. Did he manage to establish fellowship? No, he failed miserably. In fact, he had to flee head over heels, far, far away from both Hebrews and Egyptians. Why? Well, he had simply committed the traditional error. He had started at the wrong end. He just did not have any fellowship worth mentioning with God at the time when he boldly laid his plans to join his own people. Therefore his well-intentioned efforts became a sad fiasco.

For the next forty years God made arrangements for him to spend the greater part of his days in a company he had hardly thought of as congenial: simple sheep. Evidently his fellowship with those lowly creatures taught Moses something which his previous teachers of the Egyptian universities, with all their proud scholarliness, had never been able to teach him. He gradually learned how a lonely human being establishes fellowship with God. So at the age of eighty he was finally mature enough to make his "horizontal relationship" a true success. He had the prerequisites for establishing with his peers, his God-given companions in the joys and sorrows of human pilgrimage, a lasting relationship which could finally become a blessing to both them and himself. Implicit in his fellowship with God he already had everything that lends meaningfulness to a human being's travel through life. The Bible is teeming with similar stories showing people who found their way to other people, but only after they had found their way to God.

PREPARING FOR AN ALL-OUT WAR AGAINST SITUATIONISM

I have already tried to show how empty the concepts of "spirit and truth" may become whenever the "spiritual" turns into the purely spiritualistic, and the "truthful" is sadly reduced to what so many existentialists enjoy speaking about as "inward truth," allegedly quite independent of the outward.

The only remedy for this emptiness is the courageous shift into full honesty. The Christian ethicist must insist on the whole truth and nothing but the truth. He must incorporate in his very being this literal totality in his commitment to truthfulness, irrespective of the consequences. So we must now push our research further in order to establish exactly what this ethical wholeness really implies.

To make it as clear as noonday how seriously situation ethics goes astray, and how dangerously it undermines the very fortresses indispensable for assuring meaningfulness, two stages impress me as being necessary: On the one hand, I must now have the outspokenness of demonstrating some of situationism's boldest onslaughts against divine law, outrages so bottomless in their audacity that any people in their normal senses, and with a minimum of elementary decency in their hearts and in their life-styles, may experience somewhat of a shock. For such a demonstration the only thing necessary is a simple confrontation with what is taught and practiced within the precincts of the new morality. It helps sometimes to take one's point of departure in the moral commandments for which most people have a certain respect and a minimum of basic knowledge. The seventh commandment of the decalogue happens to be such a commandment which people in general tend to conceive of as "particularly moral." It can hardly be denied: there are sins we all tend to look upon as particularly sinful.

Whether we are perfectly right and perfectly logical in that tendency is another question. For here, in fact, comes my second point: In Christian ethics it must be made crystal clear from the beginning how false is the preconceived idea we carry along with us in our lives, namely, that sins can be graded according to their respective degrees of sinfulness, some of them being hardly sinful at all, whereas others are assumed to knock down their victim inexorably.

And now, what about the "degree of sinfulness" attributed traditionally to prevarication? It almost invariably tends to be placed in the former category, the lightest imaginable one, while on the other hand, such nasty things as adultery and fornication tend to be located in the latter bag, the pool of mortal sins.

Now nobody ought to accuse Fletcher of belonging to those who think disobedience to that seventh commandment is a sin one has more reason to shy away from, or to indulge in with greater compunction, than the transgression of any other commandment of the decalogue. It would be unfair to insinuate any naive sin discrimination of that kind in his system of ethics. In fact, he has openly criticized that traditional naivete. This may be noted as having its definitely positive side. But here I am now going to refer to a famous-or ill-famed-passage in his writings, where his situationist philosophy reveals itself with a liberalist attitude toward that particular commandment against unfaithfulness in a person's marital life, which ought to impress most people as rather shocking.

"SACRIFICIAL ADULTERY"

Several thousand years were obviously destined to pass over our tottering globe before it could be deemed mature for so bold a concept within the realms of human ethics. So it was only toward the end of the twentieth century after Christ that liberal theology had progressed sufficiently far in its shamelessness to have a milieu propitious for creating such a term, and for openly launching it: SACRIFICIAL ADULTERY. That implies adultery as an ethical life-style, adultery for the purpose of "doing others good in love."

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An unusually daring story for the illustration of this latest achievement in the field of modern ethics has now for some years made its way across the world. It is supposed to demonstrate with unprecedented freshness the superiority inherent in man's ultra-modern code of ethics in terms of disengaging (liberating) itself from the "law-thralldom" of Biblical commandments.

At the Battle of the Bulge (World War II, winter of 1944) a German infantry man named Bergmeier was captured and taken into a prisoner of war camp in Wales. Later, his wife, compelled to forage for food for their three children, was picked up by a Soviet patrol. Before she could get word back to them, she was sent off to a prison camp in the Ukraine.

Within a few months Bergmeier was released and, upon return to Berlin, began the search for his family. He found Paul, who was 10, and Ilse, who was 12, in a Russian detention school. Their 14-year-old brother, Hans, was found hiding in a cellar. But they searched in vain for some word of their mother. Her whereabouts remained a mystery. During those agonizing months of heartache, hunger and fear, they needed their mother to reknit them as a family.

Meanwhile in the Ukraine Mrs. Bergmeier learnt through a sympathetic commandant that her husband and children were together in Berlin and were desperately trying to find her. But the Russian rules would allow her release for only two reasons: (1) an illness requiring medical care beyond the camp facilities, in which case she would be sent to a Soviet hospital elsewhere, and (2) pregnancy, in which case she would be returned to Germany as a liability.

She wrestled with the alternatives and finally asked a friendly camp guard to impregnate her. When her condition was medically verified, she was immediately returned to Berlin and to her family. They welcomed her with open arms, even when she told them how she managed it. When little Dietrich was born, they especially loved him, feeling that he had done what no one else could do--bring the family back together. (Quoted from *The New Morality: A Christian Solution*, William S. Banowski, 1968, Campus Evangelism, p. 1.)

Fletcher has obviously forgotten to include one factor in his "agape calculus" in this case of a situationist arrangement. It may seem nice to speak so eloquently about that woman's neighborly love. But what about the neighborly love she owed to the camp guard and his family? Maybe, after all, the smart arrangement here devised, was not such an ideal triumph for neighborly love in the last analysis. We are thinking of the deepest interests in the life of her male partner in that act of "sacrificial adultery." Her situationist "broadness" of view, it is true, did make some heroic attempts to encompass whatever positive results could be gained, as regards tying together her own family. But what about the other family involved? The possibilities for a positive result for them, as well, might be rather poor. What do we get to know about the Russian camp guard? Was he married? Did he too have children? If so, what would this incident mean in their lives?

The great question which has been raised all over the world is this: What harm could Mrs. Bergmeier's action cause by choosing ethically as she did? Some may think with pitying concern of her husband. What effects might the news about his wife's liberal action have upon him--immediately and in the long run? Others would seem to go farther down and have some thoughts of compassionate worry about the three--or rather the four--children. There is bound to be a future which mercilessly lets actions in the past come to a certain fruition. What might be the eventual influence of this act on the part of a mother, divulged and discussed in almost the entire world, upon the lives of her children? Some may even have a little thought to spare regarding the effects her action might, by and by, exert upon her own soul and her own destiny.

Who could ever tell what final reactions the memory of her "courageous" determination, on that memorable day way back in a concentration camp in the Ukraine, might some day cause? But very few seem

to be overwhelmed by thoughts of regret or apprehension regarding the camp guard who once staked his potential powers as a man in favor of the much-lauded service of "neighborly love."

What if the term "sacrificial adultery," ironical as it may sound, might also be brought to apply to the possible tragedy of that man's destiny?

One reflection certainly causes me to consider that camp guard with feelings of sincere compassion. If it is possible for a man to misuse (exploit cruelly) a woman as an object of sex, then it here seems equally possible for a woman to misuse a man. Existentialism today does reveal some most admirable traits. For instance, it seems to be frankly worried about the crime committed by some people who do not hesitate to treat other people, not as persons, but as things. The German expression coined just for the purpose of describing that inhuman treatment to which some men may subject other men, is "die Verdinglichung des Menschen" (the "thingification" of man). No greater cynicism could ever happen than thus reducing a personal being to a simple object, a pure number in the game of life.

And now what do you think about the way our good Mrs. Bergmeier permitted herself to treat that Russian camp guard? Was not this the act of exploiting a human creature, a personal individual, destined for a unique life, a unique call in life, using him cynically with the frigid calculation of thus catering for one's own needs ("imaginary needs," we might add here).

The author Banowski seems to be among those few who have had the originality of looking with some true existential worry at that man's special side of the issue. Did not he have a life and a family to whom he owed faithfulness? Or at least there ought to be the possibility of that man sooner or later entering the state of holy matrimony some day in the future. What then would that incident in the concentration camp with a strange lady mean to perfect happiness in his marriage? Even a most imperfect human eye must here be able to realize how miserably narrow Mrs. Bergmeier's scope of vision was. The situation as a totality is something, I am afraid, about which she knew next to nothing. Is this what situationists dare to call "broadmindedness"?

A REMARKABLE "REDUCTIO AD ABSURDUM" IN SITUATION ETHICS

Vernard Eller, Professor of Religion at La Verne College in California, has made a most interesting experiment of thought in order to evaluate the further perspectives, potentially inherent in the Bergmeier case of ethical adultery. Eller takes the freedom to add a few chapters to the "romantic" story, already cited by the situation ethicist, who has made it famous in world literature as part of his plan to illustrate the ethical value of calculated unfaithfulness in marriage. The author of the extended version of the old story does not actually change anything in the substance of the original account. He just lets his imagination play with certain details which theoretically might just as well have taken place.

One simply assumes that Mrs. Bergmeier, after the successful piece of cooperation with the camp guard, made special preparations for the long journey. Everything looks nice and quite promising. But, after all, she does find herself in a place discouragingly far from Berlin. Besides, it is winter. A storage of good food is a necessity for the strenuous travel. What if she were to die of hunger on her way? What benefit would anyone derive from her sacrifice in that case?

Fortunately she soon comes to a farmhouse. There the farmer offers her food in abundance, but only on one condition. She is going to be well equipped with victuals of all kinds his farm can provide, -if only she is willing to let him ... (You guessed it, exactly that).

Well, if she once made a correct ethical choice at the time when the camp guard demonstrated his "kindness" to her (or when she demonstrated her "kindness" to him), then why not follow up with a similar positive attitude toward the farmer's proposal of intimate cooperation? This would seem to be a most consistent way of regarding the situation. The woman has a desperate need for food. And the farmer evidently has his needs as well. At the same time he happens to have an abundant provision of the material necessities she is in need of right now for the rescue of herself and her family. She willingly complies with the conditions and finds an immediate solution of her acute problem.

Once more we find her out there on the highway. The route she has in front of her is a long and strenuous one indeed. She soon becomes aware of the problem she still has to solve in order to reach her destination. On foot she will never make it. The winter days are bitterly cold. A lonely wanderer may run the risk of just remaining on the wayside some night-cold and hard as a lump of ice. Still she plucks up her courage, walking on and on. And her fortitude is soon rewarded. After a while a truck comes up in the same direction. The driver offers her a place beside him, -that is, provided she is willing ... (and again you have certainly guessed the terms of the bargain).

Well, if one has said A, then B is the next letter. And one thing may not be one bit worse than the other. If the sacrifice was in good order in the cases of the first two loveable fellows, then why not in the case of the third one?

Thus it comes to pass that our sporty little woman hitchhiker eventually reaches a little village just next to the place where her children are supposed to be located. Then a sudden idea occurs to her. It is not exactly the most pleasant one: For the time being she just does not have any actual possibility of supporting those little ones. And of course, it would not sound too reasonable to be reunited with those poor children of hers if the final result were to be that they suffer death of starvation, all of them.

But, of course, luck is knocking at the door just at the moment when it is most needed. There are certainly men enough in the neighborhood who derive satisfaction from exploiting a poor female sexually. In the course of a relatively brief time she is able to establish a thriving business and have a sizable bank account. The ever-increasing figures of that account convince her that she is on the right way as regards financial matters. By adding sum to sum she is able to demonstrate her love for her children in a most tangible way. Now she can easily provide for their most urgent needs. By and by she arrives at the radical conclusion: The greatest act of love she can ever perform in favor of her needy children would be to stay away from them for good, if she could just bear the pain of such separation. Then she might devote herself entirely to the new profession she has found in the field of "love"-spending.

CONCLUSION OF THE "LOVE" STORY

Experts in theoretical logics sometimes complain of something they call *reductio ad absurdum*. People reduce a matter to the very limits of the absurd when they force it relentlessly into its last extreme, or even a couple of notches beyond what has been commonly established as such. Now Fletcher might have objected that this is exactly what has here happened to his own beautiful illustration. Even Eller himself seems prepared to admit something along that line. But we must also listen attentively to what he further says. He asks a most thought-stirring question. And that question certainly is not in any way tinted by absurdity or wild fantasy: Exactly at what point did this Bergmeier story begin to be absurd? Was it at the moment when the farmer got sex as payment for his food supplies? Was it at the moment when the truck driver got a similar reward in return for his services? Or was it only at the time when the woman came home to the suburb near Berlin and made up her mind to become a prostitute, seeking her material means of livelihood in the dirty pool of commercial love? What if the simple truth has to be sought at an entirely

different stage of evolution. To find the point where the story started to take on an aspect of downright absurdity, it is more likely that you would at least have to go all the way back to the Ukrainian concentration camp at the time when that woman made her first step in a series of immoral dispositions.

If situationism has its validity as a defensible ethical system, then how can one know, with any certainty, exactly where the line of limits should be drawn for transgressions of the traditional laws of correct behavior? Of course, Eller's travel along the potential roads of new radical situations and new corresponding actions is, in its turn, a game of hazards. But then, what about Fletcher's own choice of illustrations? Is not that at least equally fanciful and hazardous many times?

And now where is the only way out from the game of hazards? Let us not here push our faculty of imaginative thinking to extremes.

Let us, rather, limit ourselves to a good old piece of advice often given to Christians: Just try to figure out what Jesus would have done if confronted with a similar problem. Try to think what He would have counseled you to do in the case of your specific predicament.

In other words, in the case now facing us, we content ourselves with a relatively moderate experiment of thought. We imagine ourselves as contemporaries of the historical Jesus, both you and I and Mrs. Bergmeier. And then we just take the trip to Nazareth in Galilee, putting forth our candid question: "Say, Lord Jesus, we have a lady here today who has got into a terrible trouble. The situation is a desperate one indeed. But you know exactly what this lady needs. You know what her children need. And you won't refuse to tell us. For you have a genuine concern for every one of us. Now please give us some good counsel for Mrs. Bergmeier, a realistic solution for her acute case."

Well, do you find it reasonable, or likely, that He, the infinitely loving One, would indicate that she ought to try the remedy of "sacrificial adultery"? Would He suggest to that desperate woman in the concentration camp some other device similar to the one she herself eventually chose? Of course not. I am confident you know the general spirit of the Gospel, and the very style of Biblical writings as a whole, far too well for that.

But what else, then, should He give as His best advice to a poor mother separated from her children under so disparaging circumstances?

I have no exact idea. But what if it would be something as simple as this: "Dear Mrs. Bergmeier, I realize the atrocity of your present hardship. And I sympathize heartily with you in every aspect of your sorrow, but just do not despair, my dear child. Rely on your heavenly Father. He definitely has a way out for you, maybe one you never thought of. True, it may be a way demanding far more courage, far more patience and faith, than any of the solutions your turbulent thoughts may be turning over in your poor head. But please remember, Mrs. Bergmeier: Christian ethics is something infinitely far from bare humanism, something infinitely greater and so comfortingly close to the heart of God. You say that you love. You say you love Me also. You love the character that constitutes my identity. Good, Mrs. Bergmeier, my beloved child, but notice then this saying: `If you love me, keep my commandments!'" (John 14:15)

It ought not to be so difficult for observers with a Christian background to discern that the New Morality is nothing but thin humanism. It is conspicuously foreign to the very essence of Christian ethics. Let the situationist criticize the biblicist as much as he likes, calling him a poor stickler to principles just because he insists on obedience to the ten commandments of God. It is his privilege to reject that act of law-abidingness in his own life. But he should be clearly told that, in so doing, it is Jesus Christ whom he actually rejects. It is Christianity as a guideline for human living.

Since the harlot Rahab has been referred to so diligently by situation ethicists who want references for their standpoints, let us now also take up examples where persons in the Bible had a far more thorough knowledge of the minutiae of ethical principles.

WAS THE PROPHET DANIEL A STICKLER TO PRINCIPLES IN THE DEROGATORY SENSE OF THAT TERM?

To me the case of Daniel appears particularly significant. We all know his advanced position before the monarch of the world's greatest empire in his day. He had reached that position in the same way Joseph reached his position in the land of Egypt: that is, by sticking to principles of law which he believed to be coming to him directly from God. Let us have a look at Daniel's life at the time when Darius had taken over the reign of the world empire. Still Daniel was there as a vanguard champion in the affairs of the kingdom. Some envious men wanted to get at him, tear him down from his "pedestal." So they sought to find "occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom, but they could find no occasion nor fault." Daniel 6:9.

Then where did they think they might succeed in finding it? They seemed to say to themselves: "Ah, we do know Daniel's weak point. He is a stickler to principles. That man has some ridiculously fixed ideas about the necessity for man to observe certain paragraphs of law." Let us see how the Bible puts it: "Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Daniel 6:5.

Now they rubbed their hands, gloatingly self-confident: The success was right around the corner, for this Daniel, you see, was such a narrow-minded, or downright stupid fellow, when it came to certain matters "concerning the law of his God." That visionary notionist would go even to the length of jeopardizing a whole kingdom, and even his own life, once he had got it into his mind that "his God" had pronounced some "law" against this or that.

Such was their smart reasoning. And we know what followed. They went to the king with their grossly flattering proposal:

All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask any petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Daniel 6:7, 8.

And the thoughtless king "signed the writing and the decree." Daniel 6:9. What a tersely cogent way of stating the irretrievable fact that the scene was all set for Daniel's trial. And what did Daniel do? For now it was his turn to make a decisive move in the drama.

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. Daniel 6:10.

In verses 11 to 13 we learn how eagerly Daniel's mortal enemies followed up their plan to destroy him. We do not learn too much about what the king said immediately upon discovering what wicked goal those schemers were actually aiming at. But verse 13 does tell us that he "was sore displeased with himself." And that is no negligible information, for such displeasure with oneself is the first condition, on man's own part, for his eternal salvation, on God's part; so for things finally taking a new and better turn. We certainly can imagine what that repentant king did say within himself: What a fool I have been. Here I allow these

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mean tricksters to carry me off completely with their deceitful flattery. Now I see why they were so eager to have that decree, pretending to make a God out of me. It was not at all to pay homage to me. It was rather to kill my old friend and best helper in the whole government, Daniel!

The record has only this to say about the king's further efforts to save his faithful servant: "[He] set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him." Daniel 6:14.

It does not say that he reproached him in any way. For instance, he did not say anything like the following: "Oh, Daniel, Daniel, how intolerably prudish you are. That puritanical squeamishness with which you insist on obeying the commands of your God gets me into no end of trouble. You know how much I depend on you for the prosperity of my business and for the very survival of the kingdom. So please drop that primness of yours now for a moment. Skip that unbending formalism of your intimate worship. Please make an exception in the schema of your prayers,--for a few days at least. In fact, what does some purely outward gesture of apparent idolatry mean for the substance of your worship? Nothing in reality. Come on now, Daniel. Be reasonable, I pray you!"

There is no suggestion whatsoever, in the report, that Darius did say anything of this sort to his prime minister. Maybe, on the contrary, he was among the few who understood Daniel's principle-firmness fully well, and appreciated it immensely, realizing that this was precisely what made that man so valuable to him. Let us, rather, keep to what is expressly recorded: "Now the king spake and said unto Daniel. Thy God, whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee." Daniel 6:16b.

The next word of the Writ that I would like to mention as expressive of his attitude toward Daniel and toward this whole matter, is the word "lamentable" in verse 20: "He [the king] cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" This goes far to show how earnest that king was in his concern about his servant. All external royal worthiness in terms of decorous stiffness is brushed away. He is heartily worried, not only about the fate of Daniel in that den of lions, but certainly also about the very idea a pure human being may rightly entertain about God, God as a reliable personal Leader of man's destiny through the vicissitudes of life: Is that God a true Person, One whom man is justified in taking so literally at His word? Are His commandments worthy of being taken that seriously? These are questions of supreme significance to the human truth-seeker, particularly from the moment on when he has begun to think it an essential issue to find meaning in his life.

For, of course, all the time there is a temptation for any man, especially in an environment as thoroughly secularized as ours today, to just philosophize: Maybe the God who is supposed to have given the commandments of love, is nothing but a mere "principle" of love? That is, a nice abstraction. If, on the contrary, He is a Person in the sense that Daniel is seen to assume without the trace of a doubt, then He must be personally engaged to such a degree, in the literal obedience His servant renders to Him, that He Himself, as a Person, assumes every personal responsibility for any detail happening at the moment when that servant takes Him at His word, blankly and literally. In other words, this God must see to it that no tragedy, or virtual injury of any sort, happens to that kind of a childlike "literalist."

To me this seems to be what clearly lies implied in Darius' words at the moment when he cried out with that "lamentable voice": "O Daniel, . . . is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?"

In fact, it must be a very unfair insinuation to suggest that the human creature who does take the commandments of God that literally, is the one who reduces them to a chema of utter impersonalism. In reality it is, rather, the "spiritual interpretation" given to the commandments by the typical situationist that will tend most emphatically to such a reduction. The situationist's twist of the matter may just as well constitute a sophisticated adulteration of the real content of a commandment. So its trend may be exactly

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the same that is brought about by a definitely foolish literalistic understanding. For, of course, some cases of literalism are downright stupid, and not realistic at all. Here we have entered the category of the childish, not the childlike in the Biblical sense. The ability to distinguish between the two is primordial.

We must have courage enough, and realism enough, to meet the situationist's challenge when he pretends that Daniel was on the point of jeopardizing the whole good influence his eminent position had, so far, enabled him to exert for his own benefit and for that of the cause of God. The idea is that this jeopardy" happens simply because the servant of God is so "stubbornly particular" about a commandment, instead of making it the object of a "reasonable interpretation."

But now first one step back in time: What was it, really, that had been indispensable, in the historical instance of Daniel and his brethren, in procuring for them that influence in the first place? Was it not precisely their so-called "fixed idea," on an earlier occasion, about the absolute necessity of obeying God's command to the letter? Their first trial, we remember, was when they were standing before the king's master of eunuchs, right after their arrival at the court of Nebuchadnezzar. On that occasion they bluntly refused to eat and drink what was set before them. What was the reason for that refusal? Was it because they had a general contempt for the eating customs of a foreign nation? Or was it because they had found out, all by themselves, through some kind of scientific analysis, or practical intuition, that the specific food cooked in these kitchens was not the best for their physical systems? No, it was for no such self-produced reasons. Let us, rather, state it frankly: it was because their peculiar religion contained a clear and categorical prohibition against eating and drinking according to this fashion. Their God had simply revealed to his chosen people that they would be making themselves impure by so doing. In other words, the whole matter was what the modern situationist would presumably call a dogmatic one.

It is interesting to notice, in that connection, that their mind was made up in advance about what they had to do in this case: "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine he drank. Therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." Daniel 1:8.

So on the simple basis of a clear command of old, handed down to them by their supreme Lord and Lawgiver, Jesus Christ, they now accepted this as a case they did not need to speculate about or discuss at all. The matter could safely be left in the great Creator's hand, He who a priori, as it were, had assumed every responsibility for the issue, its perfect correctness and dependableness.

Daniel and his companions knew not what would be the result of their decision. They knew not but that it would cost them their lives. But they determined to keep the straight path of strict temperance, even when in the courts of licentious Babylon. (Youth's Instructor, August 18, 1898, 4BC 1167.)

The idea implied in Ellen White's comments just quoted is clear: There was here no self-assured human calculation in Daniel's mind that the determination he had made would secure for him a longer life. He did not pretend to know anything in detail about the immediate physiological or political effect of his obedience to God.

But why then did he put so much stock in that pulse and that pure water he proposed as his own diet? You have every good reason to ask, the more so as that proposal must have appeared like a stroke in the face to those would-be experts in nutrition of the world's most advanced and glorious empire.

Well, some things he did know about those vegetables he and his friends were to regale themselves with: (1) They were not unclean meats. (2) There was no reason to fear, as in the case of the king's meat, that one was eating animals not properly killed according to Levitical Law (Leviticus 17:14, 15). (3) No portion of that despised pulse had ever had the ill fate of being sacrificed to idols, thus being declared unclean by Yahweh in His message to His chosen people. (4) The risk of falling into habits of indulgence and

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gluttony would not be so disturbingly great with a menu reduced to "water and pulse." The history of Aaron's sons, victims of an immoderate use of wines confusing the human senses, was well known to Daniel. (5) The superiority of a vegetarian diet over an animal diet probably was not an unknown fact, either, to the sober-minded youth here concerned. The very desire to devote their lives to God's service unreservedly, was, in itself, a sufficient motivation guiding them toward a fuller realization of the meaningfulness of the particular commandment God had given. They did not perceive even an apparent caprice or absurdity in the Lord's commands relative to man's habits of eating and drinking. It is always an invaluable advantage to possess an enlightened and sensible heart, capable of grasping, as far as possible, the deeper reasonability of God's ethical demands.

Nevertheless, this may not have been the main point of the matter to Daniel as a general rule. Nor was any similar practical reasonability the decisive factor when he opted for unbending loyalty toward God in front of Darius and the entire Babylonian court on the occasion of this later trial. How could considerations of any finite human being's practical reasonability enter into the question at all in this special case?

Materially and physiologically speaking, there could hardly be any positive advantage perceived in spending the night in a lions' den rather than in one's own palace bedroom. Oh no! To Daniel this was mainly a matter of unflinching loyalty to the commandments of God, with whose tremendous qualities he was already familiar. At any time, to Daniel's way of thinking, a though form directed by the highest religious motives of other-dependence, rather than casuistic concerns, it was greatly preferable to be in a lion's den with a good conscience, than to be under a princely canopy with a guilty one. In fact, it was just the old question of obeying God rather than men, whenever a choice had to be made.

Let us mention one situational detail which the ready compromise of the casuist will never discern: Both Daniel and Joseph were to be especially prepared to perform an enormous service for their people and for their God. Only the Omniscient One Himself could know the practical details of the passages through which He intended to lead them in order to have them prepared for the great task. But for that very purpose of leading them along that unique divine road of divine providence, He first had to depend on something essential in them: namely, their general attitude of free will loyalty toward Him. And here the great general guideline of His holy commandments was-and is forever-the only thing to go by. God had to rely on those men's wholehearted obedience to the precepts they did know already: the great law he has communicated to His loyal children from the beginning. That is why the only condition enabling a creaturely person to assume the responsibility involved in the very nature of the task imposed, consist in the success He has in making that person fully obedient. That depends on the creature just as much as on the Creator. For full obedience means full voluntary dependence on the guidance of the only One who has full wisdom to guide. Therefore, nothing less will ever do in the case of a cooperation between God and man than simply learning to obey implicitly. This total God-dependence, or grace-dependence, is the diametrical opposite of self-sufficient human pride, the very attitude which has always disabled men for the task of carrying out exceptional deeds of valor for one's God and for one's fellowmen.

We have to come back constantly to the question of the situationist's greatest handicap: his purely anthropo-centric orientation. He does see the men constituting part of his specific situation, but he does not see God. Of course, the fact must not be lightly considered: man's horizontal relationship is tremendously important. But his vertical relationship is even more important. It is the primary factor of his life as a whole.

It is instructive here to observe something characteristic in Joseph's case. Let us read the text about one of his great trials:

And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph, and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me

in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand. There is none greater in this house than I. Neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife. Genesis 39:7-10a.

Certainly, there is a strong feeling of obligation in Joseph toward the man who has put his trust in him in this unreserved way. It is a sacred obligation to be faithful to this fellow creature. But notice what he says when he comes to the point of critical decision. Toward Whom does he have an obligation of faithfulness encompassing all other obligations, all inter-human types of faithfulness? "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Genesis 39:10b.

So Joseph had the realism in his life that taught him where the priority had to be sought. And this is certainly not disruptive like cases of non-choice in human psychology. There is no question of his being faithful to Potiphar or to God. By no means. His faithfulness toward his earthly master is entirely included in his faithfulness toward God. But the primacy, the center of all ethical reality, is with God, not with man. The human context is the narrower circle of ethical obligation. God embraces life in its totality. This theocentricity is, of course, exactly what tends to be lacking in modern theology. That is why it runs the fatal risk of becoming illusive. The reason for its casuistic breakdown is there, just there. We systematically imbibe that philosophy, in this casuistic society of ours, to leave out the very first and absolutely essential "Detail" in our relevant case, our great context: God.

DOES THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE (EPISTEMOLOGY) INEVITABLY TURN INTO A PROBLEM OF ETHICS AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY?

Traditional philosophy makes great efforts to distinguish between what is right intellectually (with another word: logically), and, on the other hand, what is right ethically. If you heedlessly fail to love and care for a dependent who desperately needs your love and care, this is universally regarded as wrong, and now definitely from an ethical or moral point of view, you have a sacred obligation to give loving care to your dependent.

In a similar way, if you say $2 + 2 = 5$, then that is also wrong, but now only in a purely intellectual, or logical, respect, not in an essentially moral respect. At least we do not commonly think of it as wrong in the sense that hate and mercilessness, for instance, are wrong.

But is this distinction always so perfectly clear? Is it entirely sure that your saying $2 + 2 = 5$ may not be morally wrong as well, -in the last analysis, at least sometimes? One thing is certain: the grade school child who has had the misfortune of stating in his copybook that $2 + 2 = 5$, is definitely punished for it in a way. At least that is what he feels when the grades are handed out. Of course, the wrong such a child has committed is not considered-by most teachers anyway-as an immoral action, properly speaking. They would hardly accuse him of downright sin, although they may not fail to show their strong displeasure at times.

And my question now is this one: Is it so sure, after all, that a statement of this erroneous kind could never enter into the realms of downright sinfulness, a moral evil of the clearest description? Suppose, for instance, that this particular boy in school has lent two candies to a playmate on Monday and another two on Tuesday; and then on Wednesday, when the candies are to be paid back, he presents this kind of bill to his debtor: "Two candies plus two candies equals five candies." Is it quite sure that this miscalculation is entirely due to a purely intellectual slip? No, that is far from sure.

In fact, as soon as we begin to speak about correctness as the great ideal, and as the irreconcilable opposite of wrongness, something remarkable happens. To be correct becomes a duty. So even in the way

you state "purely" intellectual facts, you suddenly find yourself right in the realm of ethics. In other words, even when you do your sums wrongly (for instance, $2 + 2 = 5$), this may mean that you are coming short of a certain ethical standard. If sheer carelessness is the cause of the shortcoming, the case must definitely be regarded as a moral one, not a logical one.

To a person who includes religion in the totality of his life, there can be no integration-and, in fact, no integrity-any longer at the moment when he commits an error he could very well have avoided, and therefore ought to have avoided. Frankly, there is a very serious danger lurking in the life of a person who goes on, day after day, accumulating errors, even "purely intellectual" ones, which some higher degree of personal concern or conscientiousness could have prevented. The very core of that person's moral life runs the risk of being gradually vitiated.

The constant repetition of erroneous statements, of illusive views, however sincere they may be at the time when they are expressed, is a dubious thing, sometimes a fatal jeopardy.

I have, in previous investigations, given particular study to one kind of illusionism haunting human minds, namely, just spiritualism as a philosophy cherished not only by most outstanding men in the tradition of Western thought, but by vast groups of people throughout the world for countless successive generations. (See *Man, the Indivisible*, Oslo University Press, 1971.) This special falsification of factual knowledge (spiritualism, or idealism, to mention another expression for it in philosophical terminology) has proved to be one that otherwise intelligent people tended to embrace with particular eagerness, and upon mature deliberation. Now, if the spiritualistic illusion is nothing but a vain substitute for genuine religion, you will immediately realize how absolutely impossible it would be to keep the matter of distorted facts entirely apart from the field of ethics. There are moral concerns involved, unavoidably, wherever religion comes to the fore.

Even where you would not immediately think of any moral implications whatsoever, they suddenly force their way up to the surface. Let us take a few examples where the ambiguity of the issue causes us to be extremely careful with the judgments we pass.

DO SOME SUFFER FROM BAD TEMPER AND FITS OF OUTRAGE AGAINST NEIGHBORS "EXACTLY LIKE OTHERS SUFFER FROM AN ATTACK OF SCARLET FEVER"?

How do we naturally and reasonably consider people who happen to be afflicted with an illness of some kind? Do we immediately look upon them as guilty, as personally responsible for that ailment? No, we just take it for granted, as it were, that people still in their senses do not get ill because they deliberately choose to. So the feelings we have for such persons, if any at all, are rather feelings of pity.

Now, would it not have some merit if we could look upon the people who antagonize us, committing some ethically objectionable act against us, in somewhat similar ways? It does not sound contrary to the tradition of common theology, or even to traditional common sense, to state that man's offensive conduct, his sin, is a sort of virtual illness, an illness of the mind or the heart. Throughout Scripture leprosy is used as an image to visualize the nature of sin. So the idea may not seem to go contrary to Christian though either, nor to Christian vocabulary.

And if you go to scholarly psychologists and psychiatrists today, they will remind you again and again that the objective way, the scientific way, of looking at the culprit who offends you, is not the way of personal resentment and anger. In fact, compassion would be more in place than anger.

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In accordance with this view, a rather impassive, a very simple matter-of-fact grasp of the actual situation would prevent that sentimental response you and I are so prone to manifest in terms of a personal resentment. For how on earth could we with good reason be mainly angry at a person who, for instance, suddenly heaps us with abuse, if we fully knew that this act of his was nothing but that inner despair of his tormented soul bulging out, and just casually happening to hit us? In point of fact, it would seem rather absurd, wouldn't it, to get so emotionally upset, or even furious, at a poor fellow, when we calmly realize that the true evil disturbing his interior is one that he really suffers from, "just as you and I may suffer from pneumonia."

The point of the argument may be brought home to you in somewhat the following terms: Suppose you meet an acquaintance of yours in the street one day, who has just caught a bad cold. And then you cry out at the top of your voice: Ah, you scoundrel, I notice you have caught one of those miserable colds of yours. You should really be ashamed of yourself. If you do not stop this wickedness, we shall have to tell the police to take care of you!

Does that sound reasonable? No, no! Intelligent people do not react in that passionate and merciless way in front of another person's notorious illnesses. The reasonable reaction in a case of that order is, rather, a reaction of compassion, true human pity. And generally we need not entertain any terrible fears that there shall be too much of that kind of feeling in this world. It is superman maniacs such as Nietzsche and Hitler who would lose their sleep at night for sheer worry lest a wave of compassion should inundate this globe and get the upper hand among men. Please remember that Nietzsche, one of the great sources of inspiration for the nazi ideology, was what the Bible describes as a fool. The fool says in his heart: There is no God. This is perhaps the main Biblical description of foolishness. And now what was the main statement of that illustrious Iranian super-prophet Zarathustra whom Nietzsche had made his principal speaking trumpet? "God is dead." That was the great message. And, according to Zarathustra, as Nietzsche portrays him, what was the special illness of which God had died, "poor fellow"? It was the pest of compassion. He had allegedly caught his death of that miserable pity from which he suffered so hopelessly, particularly his pity for human beings.

You see, where emotional "disturbances" of that kind are permitted to develop freely, the triumphant surging up of "superman" has no chance to assert itself. For compassion, according to this philosophy, is nothing but the terrible malady encouraging mediocrity to thrive in our world. The right thing would rather be to let the sick and suffering ones depart in peace. For the world simply is not going to reach that superb climax of the SUPERMAN until we have finally learned to throw overboard that sentimental pattern of human reaction called inter-human pity. This is approximately the "ethical" content of that tough super-manliness ideal.

Poor Nietzsche. He probably was among those needing the blessed currents of both divine and human compassion more desperately than most men. And he was sadly mistaken in the diagnosis he established for contemporary mankind. Compassion certainly does not belong to the exaggerations threatening to sink our vessel. Let us have pity on our fellowmen, as God has had pity on us. They are definitely suffering from a terminal disease. And even if we make all due allowances for some obvious guilt (in fact, a capital guilt) on the part of the patient himself, that is no intelligent reason why we should fail to be sincerely sorry for him. There is hardly any risk that we shall overdo our comprehension. I never heard about anyone who forfeited his eternal salvation because he was too compassionate with the sick, the suffering. The Bible has a different philosophy.

Notice, however, that we are here speaking about a person's attitude toward the ills of other people. The matter will have to be regarded somewhat differently if you yourself are the offender or the sick man. For if pity is a feeling that is rarely overdone, I know one that is constantly overdone. I am referring to self-pity. It certainly will not hurt the cause of stern realism if you apply a severely moral type of interpretation to

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your own errors, and even to your own physical ailments. You can hardly be too critical regarding yourself. Do not shy away from examining minutely to what extent you may be morally responsible for any evil haunting your life. Was it, for instance, to some degree due to sheer laziness when you failed to take that regular walk you needed so desperately for your health? For if laziness was the reason, is it then fair of you to flatter yourself inventing quite other reasons. "What a genius of productivity and industriousness I am," you seem to be saying. "How could it be expected at all that a unique worker of such rare dimensions should fail to remain sitting at his office desk until past midnight every day?"

But all the while, your more sincere self may be perfectly aware that the true state of the matter is an entirely different one. You are simply so fascinated by your office affairs, that you have no more self-control, you abandon yourself to it, body and soul. You are becoming a will-deprived puppet. So the walk, which would have demanded a certain minimum of energetic initiative, a resolute breaking of the force of inertia and automatic *laissez-aller*,--well, it just does not happen. And then you still complain that the burden of duties on your shoulders is crushing you.

The truth of the matter, however, is simply this: Everything we do or fail to do, thus reducing our potential of usefulness to the One who owns us, is a serious moral concern. Our love for Him is the decisive factor for our conduct, even in the smallest affairs of our lives. And we may someday find out that they were not all that small after all.

To the Christian there is no legitimate dichotomy establishing some kind of "secular realm" in this corner over here where we have the reassuring feeling that "we are not so responsible" for what happens in it, and then, on the other hand, a more "spiritual realm" over here, where we are held definitely responsible. On the contrary, we have a most active and responsible part to play in everything that Christ plans for our lives: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Here the viewpoint of a personal responsibility encompassing all realms of everyday life cannot possibly be eschewed. But should we not be endlessly grateful to God for that all-encompassing realism, and an active human participation on the highest level (the moral level), granted to man in everything that happens to him? Such gratitude would make us eager to manifest a greater spirit of cooperativeness.

Take the instance of that far-reaching moral responsibility we are bound to assume in the most meaningful relationships we are supposed to entertain with men of the world. This task, in terms of a witnessing mission, demands a peculiar Christian alertness all the time. It demands a Christian concern, a Christian delicateness of feeling in all our dealings with men. Sometimes I may be tempted to think that now both God and men are bound to let me pass as a good Christian in all essential things. For am I not, after all, quite a sympathetic fellow with all those charities of mine? Only people with delicate feelings, feelings of genuine neighborliness, I imagine, could be assumed to have so many nice friends and do so much good to others! And then, the very next moment, it turns out that what I possess of genuine delicateness of feelings toward my fellowmen is hardly too much more than that of an average hippopotamus. We would-be Christians are sometimes just too indifferent even to cause antagonism of any kind in our neighborhood. Not that the fact of having enemies on all hands is, necessarily, such a sure sign that we are genuinely and heartily concerned about our fellow creatures.

A WARNING AGAINST PULLING THE LION'S TAIL WHEN YOU GET INTO THE LIONS' DEN

Karl Barth was certainly very right in pointing out that we have a solemn duty not to antagonize our fellow creatures in this peculiar environment of ours which we call the world. To be sure, God does take mighty good care of us here. Daniel was safe enough, even in the lions' den. The Lord saw to it that nothing really bad happened to His servant. But even in this extraordinary case there was, no doubt, an attitude of cooperation that incumbent upon Daniel himself all the time. For lions, too, do have this characteristic trait about them that they can be antagonized. So Daniel probably did not, for instance, pull their tails while he had that singular experience of staying in their company under such forbidding circumstances. That would have been a rather curious way of reciprocating the "hospitality" he was enjoying in the depths of their Babylonian den, wouldn't it? There was no call, to be sure, in this situation, for making unnecessary experiments,—for instance, just that suggested "tail pulling," in case Daniel should be tempted by an "irresistible urge" to find out exactly how far the friendly attitude of those savage beasts toward him would really go. Stretching the marvel to its ultimate limit would be a frivolous act.

That is the mood of frivolity the Bible calls presumption. It means that you may just presume a bit too much. And this may happen to you in the company of lions as well as in the company of men.

Yielding to moods of sheer frivolousness is a levity permitted by sentimental humanism, but not by stern Christian realism. Humanism loves the broad road of self-indulgence and self-sufficiency, a road so broad, in fact, that even movements as opposite as materialism and spiritualism feel perfectly at ease sharing each other's company there. That is the historic monstrosity happening in the movement of pantheism, which is just another case of yielding to the urge for exciting experimentation, this time in the realms of speculative thought.

I have come to the conviction that it is just the peculiar thinness (rarification) of the atmosphere, spiritually and ethically speaking, that permits two creeds as heterogeneous as materialism and spiritualism to rub shoulders without any serious clash of disagreement. This happens in the semi-religious ambience of pure humanism, nowhere else.

In the stern realism of Christianity as a unique, absolutely incomparable form of spiritual manifestation, there is no toleration whatsoever for that rarification of the human consciousness. The awareness of mortal sin on the one hand, and the equally keen awareness of what perfect holiness demands, on the other hand,—these two together constitute, in Christian realism, a sense so acute, so irrepressible, so irreconcilable, that there is no bargaining possible. This is the very meaning of intensive personalism as a concept of Christian theology and Christian anthropology. Any attempt to reduce that awareness of the sinfulness of sin, or the awareness of the holy, as contradistinguished from the common, this is nothing but the lurking irrationalism of a humanism insinuating itself into all media of pagan thought and pagan feeling, whether in its spiritualist (idealist) variety or its materialist variety.

The goal of the reduction is invariably one thing: it is the ultimate flight into utter impersonalism. The humanist may deny this as much as he likes. He may deny it with a cocksureness that impresses both himself and historians of philosophy of the current mold. He assures everyone that he has no "goal" of that negative kind. But please do not believe him. He just does not know himself. He is ignorant about the secret urges of his own soul. He ignores the voice of the Holy Spirit, untiringly inviting him to accept what in human life is called the spirit of Metanoia, translated in the Vulgate as Penitentia, that is: Repentance, Penitence or Penance, so the very awareness of the sinfulness of sin. Where that intensive awareness of a paramount reality in man's life is wilfully rejected, the resulting irrationalism is bound to be fatal. It announces the end of his survival as a personal being.

That pagan lack of realism manifests itself precisely through not being particular in one's ethical relationships in life. We human beings seem quite naturally prone to leave as much as possible in our lives to simple haphazard. However, nothing could be more remote from Christian ethics than the concept of blind chance. In fact, our next great theme is going to be: The demon forces of light-minded gambling. Is it realism or irrealism? Is it Christian or anti-Christian to harbor the idea of life as a series of blind fortuities?

But we have not yet quite finished our present theme. I must seriously guard myself against every possibility of being misunderstood regarding what I have said about "sin as a veritable disease."

IS SIN IN ALL RESPECTS "JUST ANOTHER ILLNESS"?

One of the most fatal cases of irrealism our world today has succumbed to is a current idea in modern psychology and psychiatry. A rare realist among contemporary writers on Christian counseling, Jay E. Adams, in his stirring book, *Competent to Counsel*, sums it up in the form of an address he quotes from a chaplain of a state mental hospital taking part in a Mental Health Institute for pastors which Dr. Adams also attended; Adams refutes every point of this tirade:

"First of all, there is little you can do as ministers for people in a mental hospital. However, what you can do is support the patient's right to feel injured by others. Thirdly, it is important to understand that in a mental institution people with guilt no longer are subjected to rebuke from others outside. The pressure is off, and in this way they quietly lose their guilt and get well. Fourthly, we must consider people in mental hospitals not as violators of conscience, but as victims of their conscience. Finally, when we look at their erratic behavior, it seems to be sin, but it isn't; the patient is not really responsible for his actions. He can't help what he is doing; he is sick. Often he blames himself for what he can't help, for what isn't his fault, and this is a cause of his problems. Consequently bad behavior as blameworthy is taboo in a mental hospital. The usual religious approach of responsibility, guilt, confession and forgiveness is no good here. The patients' consciences are already too severe. These people are morally neutral persons, and all we can do is be ventilators for them." (p. 9)

Sometimes an observer of what is happening in this world today feels at a loss to decide whether laughing or weeping would be the suitable reaction to it. One writer with a "poetic vein," suggests that it is laughing:

I went to my psychiatrist to be psycho-analyzed, To find out why I killed the cat, and blackened my husband's eyes. He laid me on a downy couch, to see what he could find. And here is what he dredged up from my subconscious mind: When I was one, my mommie hid my dolly in a trunk, And so it follows naturally that I am always drunk. When I was two, I saw my father kiss the maid one day, And that is why I suffer now from kleptomania. At three I had the feelings of ambivalence toward my brothers, And so it follows naturally I poison all my lovers. But I am happy; now I've learned the lesson this has taught: That everything I do that's wrong is someone else's fault.

Personally, I rather tend to think that weeping would be the more realistic pattern of response. What has taken place is nothing less than tragic.

Two events in the history of ideas of modern times never fail to strike me with astonishment. And that is an astonishment of the rather painful kind. I am referring to the attitude Christians (depositors of a Christian philosophy and a Christian ethics) have taken toward two theories which, in themselves, are infinitely astonishing in view of their inherent irrealism on the one hand, and their success in the world on the other hand. The first case I am referring to is Darwin's Evolutionist Dogma. The second is Freud's Psychoanalysis Dogma. I can still understand that non-religious (or anti-religious) people could be tempted to

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accept these theories. They might have some subjective reasons to do so. But you would look in vain for any logical reasons why genuine Christian realists should be tempted to grasp ideas as fatal to Christian meaningfulness and to fundamental Christian thought as that.

In Freud's case it might have provided some rather wholesome bias against accepting uncritically that man's revolutionizing ideas, if the Christian student of psychology and psychiatry had known, not only that ingenious writer's famous work on dream interpretations, but also such productions of his later years as *Moses and Monotheism*, *The Future of an Illusion*, and *Totem and Taboo*. Of course, already his main and most famous contributions ought to inform the attentive reader that here is a student of the human mind to whom

Christianity--and religion by and large--is something illusory which has to be abandoned by objective research. Religiousness itself is to him nothing but another sign of neurosis, a dubious matter born out of man's fear of the great universe appearing rather lugubrious to primitive mankind. Conscience (the Superego) is to Freud far from being an original feature in man which a Supreme Being has implanted in his breast. What the Bible tells us to this effect is mere fairy tales. According to him, such sense of "moral responsibility" may cause serious mental disturbances. The Biblical Metanoia is just the way society raises its codes of correct behavior, punishing violations severely, so just a social invention of dangerous implications.

Adams (op. cit., p. 16) reminds us that Freud called himself "a completely godless Jew" and a "hopeless pagan." When he was a child some supposed Christians pushed his father around and muddled his clothes. The elder man did not retaliate. Freud was ashamed and thought his father should have fought back. He vowed that someday he would get even. In the eyes of some, psychoanalysis was the weapon he used.

Whether Freud's revolution in the field of modern psychiatry was, on his own part, an act of vindictiveness (a conscious or subconscious fight against the God of the Bible and against Christian Ethics), this is not the important thing to know. Let us rather emphasize, with Dr. Adams, the tremendous and indisputable fact: One achievement with which Freudianism must be credited is the leading part it has played in the present collapse of responsibility in modern society. The ravaging effects of the New Morality would appear impossible without Freud's contribution: It is the almost total triumph of the "Medical Model" over the Ethical Model of responsible behavior. Prior to the time of Freud's tremendous impact on man's general opinion about man, the prevailing exaggeration was in the opposite direction. Mentally ill persons were viewed as malingerers (that is, simulating illness and protracting them in order to escape duty), rather than true patients. Today the idea is rife and rampant all over the world that the so-called mentally ill should hardly be held responsible for anything they do. In the words of Thomas S. Szasz, "to argue that all men, even those labeled "paranoid" should be treated seriously, as responsible human beings, is like desecrating the psychiatric flag."

But the tide is evidently turning. A formidable revolution is brewing in America, with its 18,000 psychotherapists, a large percentage of which are the couch-side listening type. Even within their own midst there seems to be an actual landslide of defection from the Freudian fold. Why? It is sufficient for a layman to read multi-page spreads in *Look* and *Time* in order to see what the main cause is. H.J. Eysenck, Director of the University of London's Department of Psychology, has put it in terms of trenchant irony:

The success of the Freudian revolution seemed complete. Only one thing went wrong. The patients did not get any better. (Quoted by Adams, op. cit., p. 2.)

Surveys show that of patients who spend upwards of 350 hours on the psychoanalyst's couch to get better--two out of three show some improvement over a period of years. The fly in that particular ointment, however, is that the same percentage get better without analysis, or under the care of a regular physician. As a matter of fact, that same ratio--two out of three people--got better in mental hospitals a hundred years

ago.... Patients get better regardless of what is done to them. Unfortunately the analyst often interprets improvement as a result of his treatment. It does not bother him that other people use other methods with equal effect-hypnosis, electric shock, cold baths, the laying on of hands, the pulling out of teeth to remove foci of infection, suggestion, dummy pills, confession, prayer. (Leslie Lieber, quoting Eysenck in an article in This Week Magazine, September 18, 1966: "Farewell to Freud.")

THE NEW SPECTACULAR REVOLUTION IN AMERICAN PSYCHIATRY

In what does it do better than Freud's legendary revolution in man's thoughts about man? Is its ethics more holistic in terms of avoiding the onesidedness of traditional humanism?

Adams says that the ...movement cannot be set aside lightly. "Therapy" (the word is consistently retained by most of them) conducted by those who espouse the new view has been dramatically successful in contrast to Freudian failures. G.L. Harrington, in a V.A. hospital in Los Angeles, for example, worked with 210 male patients in building 206. Building 206 was the end of the line. All hope for these men had been given up. Many could not even take care of their most elementary needs. Previously there had been an average of only two releases from building 206 each year, but after the first year of Harrington's responsibility program, 75 men were released from the hospital, and the next year he predicted that 200 would be released--that is almost a complete turn-over.. Glasser, in the Ventura State School for Girls in California, showed an 80 percent success with hardened sociopaths in a structured total responsibility program. By success, Glasser means no return and no future violations of the law. This writer was able to view at first hand the quick and dramatic results of Mowrer's program in Illinois." Adams, op. cit., p. 15.

The Dr. Mowrer here referred to, is President of the American Psychological Association. His book, *The Crisis in Psychiatry and Religion*, constitutes a challenge to the entire field of psychiatry, declaring it a failure, and seeking to refute its fundamental Freudian presuppositions. (Ibid., p. xvi)

Adams describes Mowrer as the unofficial dean of the new movement, including names like Steve Pratt, William Glasser, G. L. Harrington, William Mainord, Perry London.

Now, how far does the approach of these men go radically against the pattern established by Freud, the demigod of modern psychiatry in the past? Again Adams sums that up quite succinctly: Mowrer proposes a MORAL MODEL OF RESPONSIBILITY. The patient's problems are moral, not medical. He suffers from real guilt, not guilt feelings (false guilt). The basic irregularity is not emotional, but behavioral.

He is not a victim of his conscience, but a violator of it. He must stop blaming others, and rather accept responsibility for his own poor behavior. Problems may be solved, not by ventilation of feelings, but rather, by confession of sin. (Adams, op. cit., p. xvii)

Even the very terminology here reminds us of Christian ethics on its sternest level, its most realistic level. But Adams warns us that the terms used by Mowrer must be "translated." The author of *Crisis in Psychiatry and Religion* redefines words like "sin" and "confession" in humanistic ways.

Once when Adams visited him, Mowrer told that the Bible would be fine "if the vertical dimension could be removed from it." According to the way we have consistently and emphatically defined the essence of Christian ethics, this does not, of course, testify to any fullness of Christian realism. But that must not discourage us from observing closely the part that is good and really revolutionary in the "new revolution." And we must rejoice at assessing its wonderful effects. That is evidently also what the greater realist Adams does. He says:

From my protracted involvement with the inmates of the mental institutions at Kankakee and Galesburg, I was convinced that most of them were there, as I said, not because they were sick, but because they were sinful. In counseling sessions, we discovered with astonishing consistency that the main problems people were having were of their own making. Others (grandmother et al.) were not their problem. They themselves were their own worst enemies. Some had written bad checks, some had become entangled in the consequences of immorality, others had cheated on income tax, and so on. Many had fled to the institution to escape the consequences of their wrong doing. A number had sought to avoid the responsibility of difficult decisions. We also saw evidence of dramatic recovery when people straightened out these matters. Humanistic as his methods were, Mowrer clearly demonstrated that even his approach could achieve in a few weeks what in many cases psychotherapy had been unable to do in years.

I came home deeply indebted to Mowrer for indirectly driving me to a conclusion that I as a Christian minister should have known all along, namely that many of the "mentally ill" are people who can be helped by the ministry of God's Word. I have been trying to do so ever since....

But neither Mowrer nor Glasser has solved the problem of responsibility. The responsibility they advocate is a relative, changing human responsibility. It is a non-Christian responsibility which must be rejected as fully as the irresponsibility of Freud and Rogers. At best, Mowrer's idea of responsibility is doing what is best for the most. But social mores change; and when pressed as to who is to say what is best, Mowrer falls into a subjectivism which in the end amounts to saying that each individual is his own standard. In other words, there is no standard apart from God's divinely imposed objective Standard, the Bible. Tweedie is correct, therefore, when he rejects Mowrer's "projected solution" to the problem of sin as an "acute" disappointment. (Op. cit., pp. xviii, xix)

What I have here tried to point out, is above all one thing. A barrenly humanistic view of man, like the one represented by Sigmund Freud, is a priori doomed to be devoid of true human meaningfulness,--so rather conducive to the imbalance which has viciated human ethics as long as pagan classicism has been the main mold of human conventions. It never failed to assert its most peculiar trait, namely, just that godlessness which Freud openly proclaimed to be characteristic of his "new" philosophy in matters of psychology. And now, in practical reality, how does that pagan peculiarity of humanist ethics manifest itself? The fateful thing about Freud, and most members of the great school of pure humanism, is that the humanity they lay down their theories about seems helplessly abandoned to the pure hazards of a meaningless universe. Blind chance is the absolute monarch of that empire. It goes without saying that no logical being in such a world can feel like assuming any burden of personal responsibility. What we become experts in is not being minutely accurate and conscientiously concerned about all relationships in our lives. It is, rather, leaving as much as possible to the mercy of barren fortuity. Is this an atmosphere favorable to the fostering of sober-minded ethics?

REMARKABLE ANTI-HAZARD TRENDS IN THE ETHICS OF CHRISTIAN REALISM,--NEGATIVELY DEMONSTRATED BY THE CASE HISTORY OF A WOMAN GAMBLER

It may be a good thing to show that men are not the only ones attracted by the delusive thrills of the gambling habit. We do not want to be biased in any direction. Maybe even male observers will better realize the seriousness of this modern epidemic when they are permitted to view it from a certain distance, as it develops "in the others." To me it is essential to demonstrate the facts in an impartial way, in a rigidly logical way, the way soundly intellectual people are prepared to approve of.

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The case I am concerned with is an incident from real life. It is not a made-up story. It has a solid basis in the historical annals of our contemporary world. I want to make it a practical specific example on which we may base a more general analysis. My immediate goal in this instance is not so much to show with an emotional emphasis what the catastrophic consequences may be of yielding to the lure of chance play, but rather how unworthy it is for men who put a major premium on sound sense and intelligent logic.

Our poor old lady of this story--let us call her Mrs. Smith--was a widow and earned her living as a washerwoman in a London suburb. The money she made did not go very far. The only luxury she permitted herself was to buy a lot in a local sweepstake every month.

One afternoon, when clearing a table, she was unfortunate enough to throw the latest lottery ticket she had purchased into the fire along with some rubbish she wanted to burn up. Almost immediately she discovered her mistake. But the greedy flames had already begun to feast on the very combustible material. She stretched out her hand with nervous rapidity to save the precious symbol of her rosy dreams. But the carbonized remains of a crumpled sheet of paper was the only thing rippling between her fingers. That was all there was left of her lottery ticket for that month. What a pity. Had she been just a little quicker, the lot could have been saved, at least a sufficient part of it to show the number and the date. Perhaps then it might still have been accepted by the lottery company. Now all hope was out.

Well, puh! What did it matter, anyway, she comforted herself. Why should there be any reason to quarrel with the lottery company over this matter in any case? For little more than 25 cents she could obtain a lottery ticket like the one she had lost, from almost any street corner in the village at that time. Forget about it, she said to herself.

One moment later, however, her mind was once more disturbed by that sad mishap. "Another lottery ticket like the one I lost?" In a slow whisper her voice was echoing the very words that had been her silent thought a moment ago. "Is that quite true? Can I have another lot exactly like the old one--at any price?"

A secret spectre had begun to haunt her weary brain. Year after year now she had been trying this fairy-like quick-cut toward the land of future and prosperity. Just there she had been anxiously seeking that great, great wonder, which, like the wave of a magic wand, was--someday--to throw the gates of happiness wide open before her. But every time when she had opened the list of prizes, it had been her sad lot to find that her particular number for that month was nowhere to be found among the endless maze of those almost incredible combinations of figures presented by such a list.

But what if the great thing was to take place just this time!

Suddenly the unbelievable seemed so easy to believe. A monstrous possibility was already winding itself up to tragic heights in the poor old woman's imagination.

Well, thank goodness, you may say. Even if the thing should happen this time, that would not hurt her peace of mind. For the number was lost.

There you are mistaken. The number was not lost. This woman, you see, had formed a curious habit in connection with her buying of lottery tickets. She probably would not have been able to give you any quite reasonable explanation for that if you asked her. But every time when she got a new lot, she conscientiously noted down its number in the margin of her almanac. That almanac was safely kept at the bottom of the deepest drawer she had in her sleeping room. Now, in fact, the thought of that "safety measure" of hers suddenly came to her mind. First it gave her a certain amount of consolation. How fortunate that she did have the exact figure there at least. It was safely put down in black and white. All she would need to do, to set her mind at rest, was to compare the figure in the almanac with the figures of the forthcoming prize list.

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Of course, the result would be the same as always. Her tickets used to take good care not to turn out winning prizes.

"By the way," she suddenly said to herself, reflecting on the matter a little further, "why should I bother about that list of prizes at all this time? After all, what have I got to do with it? It does not concern me, does it? It concerns those who have tickets in the sweepstake for that particular drawing. I have none. I'll throw the whole matter out of my mind."

The day of drawing arrives. And where do we find our good old lady? In front of the lottery booth. What is she doing there? She is getting her copy of the prize list. Then she hurries home. She is heading for the little sleeping room where the almanac is faithfully guarding its secrets. She pulls it out from its hiding place, and soon two great documents are lying side by side on that lady's bed. She herself is kneeling in front of them, to the left the almanac, to the right the prize list. Her staring eyes are soon following her shivering fingers as they race down the columns of that new list of prizes. Never has she examined a printed sheet of paper with such excitement. What makes her so excited and miserable? Is this an old mother scrutinizing death roll after some dire disaster in which her own children are reported to have been involved?

The anguish in her eyes might remind one of something almost as tragic as that. And what is this now? Her trembling finger suddenly stops on its way down along those endless columns. Her eyes have started wandering at random across the page. Suddenly they seem to be arrested by something all the way up in the left-hand top corner. It is a figure standing out there all by itself. Being printed in characters much larger than the rest of the page, it is easy to read. And, my goodness, what is this? It is exactly the number of Mrs. Smith's ticket, that historic piece of paper whose ashes are still lying, greyish-black and lugubrious, in front of her fireplace. And what is the sum of money declaring its golden promise right opposite to that number? It is 200,000 pounds. Is this true? Or is it a dream? It is true. And it is a nightmare.

Mrs. Smith feels as if all the world was breaking down beneath her. The tragedy of her life has reached its climax. Some demonic force must be interfering with her destiny. How otherwise could all this be accounted for? For the first time during all these years the thing has happened, and overwhelmingly so. Her number has turned out to be the winning one, -- the great, great winning one. But what does it help? Without that wretched piece of paper, turned into cinder and smoke, she will never be able to claim the vertiginous amount of money which is really hers. How unfair, and downright wicked.

From this moment on the poor lady lives in a continual state of heart-rending despair. All her thoughts circle around the sad drama of her "lost fortune." What could she not have obtained by means of such an enormous heap of ready money? It would, all of a sudden, have changed a hard-working washer-woman into a rich lady, a gloomy den into a mansion resplendent with luxury.

But the culmination of her dream is this: In one moment she sees herself surrounded by a bodyguard of livery-dressed footmen, all anxious to run to her bidding at the slightest wink. In the next moment, however, the light of her proud extravagant dream has turned into gloom.

And what was the unfailing consequence of abandoning herself so completely to this mood of utter disappointment? It would frighten you to observe to what extremes she was led by that heart-breaking thought of having lost, irretrievably, through nothing but sheer bad luck, all those brilliant things, all that luxurious abundance which, in her touching naivete, she had included in her notion of perfect happiness. It was simply more than her bodily frame could bear. In a most physical sense the heart of that woman was seriously affected. She died soon after this experience.

Before we start evaluating, ethically and logically, the case of Mrs. Smith, it might be good first to touch one rather peripheral question which some inquisitive observers would naturally ask themselves: What did her friends and neighbors say? For this woman, like most other people, did have her friends and

neighbors, of course. The latter category at least is hardly avoidable except in very rare cases. And, sure enough, Mrs. Smith did have next door neighbors. In fact, she never failed to keep them duly informed about every aspect of her tragedy, at the same rate as the different details presented themselves to her own weary mind, having time to mature into full-blown facets of individual misery which could be knit together to fit perfectly into the general mosaic of collective tragedy.

And what was the response on the part of those neighbors? Let us state it frankly: There was no lack of comprehension and sympathy. For people are awfully comprehending and sympathetic, aren't they? Not for one moment did anyone make light of her trials and cruel misfortunes. Not the slightest hint was made by any profane or frivolous person that -- perhaps -- she might be taking the matter too seriously, in mood of despondency which did not quite correspond to what had really happened, -- or failed to happen. Oh no, everybody nodded his head with full appreciation of the irreparable damage that had here happened to a poor old woman. Just think of it: That blessed sum of money which ought to have spread its gentle light over the eventide of her life had suddenly turned into ashes. How could any sensitive person help languishing as the result of so disastrous a happening? How could Mrs. Smith -- poor old thing -- avoid losing her very hold on life as a natural consequence of it?

We are all filled with comprehension and sympathy at the very thought of it, aren't we? In fact, who would be so callous and cruel-hearted as to refuse to nod his head in serious approval in front of the irreparable facts? No less than 200,000 pounds had suddenly blown out of the hands of a poor creature who needed them so desperately. The precious sum which should have filled a poor widow's life with comfort and delight had been irretrievably lost. Who will deny that?

I will deny it. In the holy name of Christian realism (or realism of any intelligent description) I will deny it. What I simply suggest is that both you and I -- and Mrs. Smith's sympathetic neighbors -- be invited to return from the gloomy dusk of a diseased imagination to the flashing daylight of sound reality.

A FAIR ANALYSIS OF THE CASE AT HAND

Is it true that Mrs. Smith had lost 200,000 pounds? Let us approach the matter with just a bit of elementary logic. So this question to begin with: Does it impress you as being of some importance, logically considered, that a person should have a thing before he can say that he has lost it? Or is that just a petty detail no one but pedants in the field of theoretical logic need to worry about? Our present case at least is of an urgently practical nature. So we just can't skip any kind of logic with impunity. We have to do with the case of a woman, poor as a church rat throughout her life. And then suddenly she "loses" 200,000 pounds? Some people I know are normal enough to think that a master stroke indeed.

"Hm ... well," you may be inclined to object, feeling a certain duty, as it were, to take poor Mrs. Smith's side in the debate, "but that woman might have owned the 200,000 pounds ... provided that ..."

Oh certainly, she might have owned them, provided that ... -- provided that what, if you please? I would like to tell you, confidentially, something very similar happening to my own life history: I for my part -- perhaps you did not know that -- might have owned 200,000,000 pounds provided that I am at a loss right now how to express the condition, -- but why not simply this one: provided that I had really owned them. No kidding, this is the only condition. If it had not been for that practical little detail, which evidently has kept bugging me all the time, the thing would undoubtedly have happened.

"That practical little detail!" I think I hear the scoffing tone in which you repeat my phrase. It tells me that you still tend to place yourself on Mrs. Smith's side of the logical fence rather than on mine. I can appreciate your feelings about this. I know why the view of Mrs. Smith and her sympathetic neighbors impresses you as so far more human than mine does. Some of my outspoken students would even dare to suggest that I am not logical at all on this point. They will say: What are you heading for, sir, with those

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200,000,000 pounds of yours? They are without any foundation whatsoever in the world of plain reality. How can you compare a wantonly fictitious tale like that with what Mrs. Smith experienced? She enters an entirely different category. She was on the very verge of grasping her 200,000 pounds. She had almost arrived at her great goal.

To this I have just one remark. In the stern land of realistic logic it does not help you one bit to be on the verge of arriving. "Almost" reaching the goal is tantamount to not reaching it at all. Evangelical preaching has for centuries and millennia known a concept called "almost a Christian." It is a profoundly tragic one. For "almost saved" means nothing but "entirely lost."

But now back to the topic of winning prizes. For evidently that is what really fascinates us and, therefore, seems worthwhile speaking about, isn't it? We would hardly be children of an era surrounded by chance games and gambling devices on every street corner if that were not so. Well, what about my real chances to win the great prize in a modern lottery? Here I shall once more try to impress you, and now in a field in which you might still be most impressible.

You might think it boastful on the part of an obscure writer who has hardly managed, so far, to scrape together the necessary money to publish a modest booklet on his own, if I make this wholesale statement: At any time you might care to mention, I could have won the great prize in every lottery in the world, --provided that I had bought the right tickets in them all, and could produce those tickets at the right moment. Evidently this is just what never happened. That is the reason why I still continue to be that poverty-stricken fellow who does not seem able to impress anybody, particularly not in a super-pragmatic and super-money-conscious country like America today.

By the way, you, on your part, should have no true reason to accuse me of being an unrealistic braggart. Considering the matter from your own "provided-that" point of view, you should, rather, realize how extremely modest I have been in the examples I have chosen for my argument. Frankly, why should I bother with the idea of buying those tickets at all? As if we had not both pulled on the seven-leagued boots of a free imagination! With those on, it must be just a waste of time to insist on buying the lottery tickets. For, of course, I might just as well have had all those blessed lottery prizes falling into my lap without wagging one little finger myself. Simply suppose that the administration boards of all those lottery firms in the whole wide world suddenly one day had the cute idea that, from now on, a certain Ole Olsen from Norway--or a Jim Jones from Alabama--was the one to receive the principal prizes directly, without any red tape or any time-absorbing formalities whatsoever! Would not that be the most expedient way to have the business settled, both for me and for them?

"Brilliant idea," you say, shrugging your shoulders ironically again, --"but still one naked fact: those lottery firms, if I know them correctly, at least, would never have that sudden fit of benevolence toward either Ole Olsen or Jim Jones."

Thanks a lot. And welcome home. I am greeting you heartily and sympathetically in the name of sober realism. So you have finally found it better to wiggle your way back to the grey old coasts of world geography called naked facts. At least you seem to be sincerely concerned about asking yourself one relevant question: What is here likely, and what is unlikely? That sounds quite sensible. But in the name of that same sensibleness, why not ask this little question as well, which has kept worrying me quite a bit for some time now: What chances (what likelihood) would that poor old lady in London really have of transforming a heap of black ashes into a winning ticket in an Irish sweepstake? What do you realistically think about the likelihood--or the unlikelihood of such an event?

In other words, what I feel the need of stressing for the time being is particularly this: Each one of those fascinating cases of a "provided that," means nothing but a theoretical possibility, a remote dream, a jumble of wishful thinking. I do not deny the niceness (the fascination) of the hypothesis. The beautiful

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mirage of an oasis surging up in the wilderness may seem to be a comforting and most blessed experience. But what about the next moment when it suddenly vanishes? What about the disappointment that is bound to follow in its wake?

That dream thought of having won 200,000 pounds was a figment of an excited brain. Let us admit it. Now, would a figment of the brain be a valid reason for contracting ill-health and even coming to a premature grave? Let us think this whole matter over calmly and seriously.

Why on earth should we hang on to vain daydreaming while the heavenly realities have things in store for us of infinitely greater comfort to a yearning human heart? Here Christianity invites you to stop and think one realistic thought: Your Father in heaven is the legitimate Owner of all lottery prizes in the entire world. The immeasurable wealth of the universe is His. You need not move one inch away from the most sober-minded reasoning in order to believe that. Just fix the idea in your otherwise somewhat swimming head. It will not in any way impair your objective grasp regarding values, material as well as spiritual. Nor will it cause you any painful disappointments in your life. The children of God are the sons and the daughters of a multi-billionaire, proprietor of matchless glories in a kingdom of peace and prosperity, not a dream kingdom, but a rock-bottom realistic one. That is an idea in which there is no guile, no vain-glory. No, there is both the sound simplicity and the immaculate truthfulness of the innocent child in it.

Here, of course, that candid little child of the Christian faith, so confidently "bragging" about the resourcefulness of "his Father," may easily become the laughing-stock of the "grown-up ones," the incredulous "smart" ones. Their sneering comment is a stunning blow: "If that marvelous God of yours is so rich and so fatherly as you try to tell us, then why does he not drop some suitable lump of gold into your lap once in a while?"

Just in our modern society of today the question might run: "Why does not that multi-billionaire granny, or Santa Claus, tuck some thousand-dollar bills into your empty wallet for a change?" And immediately all the idle bystanders nod their worldly-wise heads, smiling mockingly: "Oh no, we are not that credulous. In the practical reality of our everyday life we have some suspicion that the divine lavishness and paternal solicitude those naive Christians speak about is not a very safe prop for us to lean upon. So we have resorted to quite other measures of livelihood and fortune making. We have devised some far more this-worldly tricks of getting rich all of a sudden. We have simply turned to the tangible act of a more temporal gambling: We have made it a firm habit to play in lotteries."

You are not unique in the world today if your reasoning goes along those lines. In fact, some kind of chance play has entered the daily routine of human lives all over the globe by now. And the trend is increasing at a furious pace. It is that firm faith men everywhere seem to have in this kind of sorcery which strikes us as absolutely fantastic. It is just as fantastic as the current "Big Bang" theory in modern speculative astronomy, or why not remind again of the fabulous faith in the gods of blind chance on the part of speculative biology. I have chosen for my illustration of its sorcery the following simile: It so happens that a formidable explosion takes place in a printing office. And out of it, all of a sudden, comes Encyclopedia Britannica, 25 volumes in their final many-faceted form. Is that a computation of verisimilitudes testifying to great realism in human minds? Does modern man here permit plain everyday logic to bear sway in his search for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? Or is insidious falsehood going to turn out to be the great fatality of our lives? Let me approach this issue seriously.

Please do not get scared now. I am not here going to be overly theological in my approach. I am not, immediately, to set about brandishing the sword of sombre doomsday preaching over the heads of this "lost generation" and its sentimental dream of reaching the haven of perfect bliss. What I intend to attempt is just to have a closer look at this whole chance play business from a strictly objective and humanly sensible point of view. I think that is entirely fair. For if the present pattern of an intensively increasing gambling has one

tiny bit of common sense in it, it should be able to defend its own position in front of any fair jury of everyday practical logic.

So let us keep our inquiry on the level of what sound, sensible intellect can grasp. What are lotteries essentially like--even the most decent ones? I do not at all plan to deal with the more nasty specimens of the trade. The FBI may have informed you roughly about some crude traits pertaining to those. Some lottery companies are known to put nine-tenths or more of the customer's deposit right into their own pockets without blushing. In fact, with some fairly established types of lottery firms, this is the rule rather than the exception. But here we want every potential culprit to have the benefit of the doubt. So we shall, rather, choose a case among the most conservative ones; in fact, an incredibly decent specimen of the species, a lottery firm "returning" no less than two-thirds of the "deposited" sum (the "invested" money) to the poor depositor's pocket. Isn't that a generous deal?

YOUR CHANCE OF WINNING-VERSUS THE LOTTERY'S CHANCE

I am here keeping modestly to the case of an institution I know fairly well. It is a thriving business enterprise under the control of my original home country, Norway, where it is called Det Norske Penge­lotteri. For a long time it has now been striving heroically to satisfy the ever-increasing demand for a natural outlet for the spirit of hazard play in a small and relatively decent people, as an international estimate might term it. For several decades there was sadness and disappointment in many households toward the end of every month because the local lottery ticket dealer had been forced to hang out in his shop window the traditional poster: "Penge­lotteriet utsolgt hos oss." (All tickets sold out.) Today that note does not hit the public mind so hard any longer. For another institution has come to the rescue of the land. Its name is Norsk Tipping A/S. Every week now all the population--or most of it--may have the opportunity to satisfy the most urgent needs of some sort of gambling, thanks to a nice cooperation between the football business (soccer business), mainly in Great Britain, on the one hand, and the Norsk Tipping on the other. But now we go back to our most conservative example: Det Norske Penge­lotteri:

So what chances of "gain," or reasonable "refund," do the players in that lottery have? In this field of study the simple rules of the mathematical theory of probabilities constitute the generally accepted basis for an accurate evaluation. Of course, I now assume that we have agreed to let simple logic have a finger in the pie. For it was pure logic you wanted us to stick to in the first place, wasn't it? So we do not move one inch beyond that standard of evaluation in this first round of our investigation.

Now you are sufficiently familiar with business affairs and bank accounts to think in terms of investments as something that is supposed to yield a certain rate of interest. So our question will be: What percentage of likelihood is there that you will have a refund of at least the same amount you invested in the business. For this, as you know, is a minimum requirement we otherwise always feel entitled to maintain when we make an extra effort to be modest. I do not know any bank that would return to you less than 100 percent of your original investment.

But what new thing is this now: Here you suddenly find yourself involved in a field of business in which even 100 percent is far more than you could ever expect. The lottery, you see, is a bank of an entirely new kind. The person investing his funds in that kind of "sparekasse" ("savings institute"), is logically assumed to be even far more modest than what we mentioned as the model of general modesty. For here there simply is not any rational question of getting off from the business transaction without a definite loss rather than a handsome gain. This, by the way, is something you readily realize as soon as you apply a bare minimum of your common sense logic to the case at hand. You have settled for this type of "banking system," have you? Well, then I assume you do not want the "bank" to go bankrupt after the very first drawing. Here that National Lottery of Norway frankly announces to us exactly what we should be prepared

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to expect. The investing members are, officially, supposed to receive back 66.67 percent of their investment. And--let us stress it again--this is an exceptionally high percentage for firms of that nature. If you find the "interest rate" somewhat low (viz. minus 33.33 percent), you are free, of course, to choose another bank, hopefully more to your liking. But please do not complain, putting all the blame on Pengeletteriet. Where in the world do you think you are going to find a lottery returning back to the pockets of its customers more than 66.67 percent of their deposit? With some private lottery companies you should be glad if you have a return average of 6.67 percent.

"But this cannot be a fair deal in any case," comes the belated complaint of some half-awakening lottery player among my readers, rubbing his eyes. And then maybe in a tone of downright indignation:

I pay one hundred dollars, and I am told that sixty-six dollars is all I should be expected to receive back. Here something must be wrong."

Yes, indeed, something is wrong,--fundamentally wrong. Not with the logic of the lottery company, but rather, with your logic, my dear friend. You have not counted the costs, it seems. Did you really expect to have all this "fun" for nothing. I mean, what you have chosen as your type of fun? You demand a certain amount of thrilling excitement. Did you expect to have this entirely gratis? Please remember that you have a busy personnel working for you in that gambling institution. They provide with you exactly the kind of entertainment you are craving for. Isn't the worker worth his wages? This business is what provides for him his bread and butter. And it is you who keep the business going. If you want to have your big tombola, your exciting fortune wheel, rolling on and on, month after month, you must pay your dues, of course. It is you yourself who have insisted on having just this kind of pleasure. So just take it,--and all that goes along with it. Empty your goblet down to the dregs, and beyond. Thirty-three percent reduction of your deposited capital--that is not an unreasonable price. Pay it without a frown. You are relatively fortunate. Good luck, Ole Olsen! Don't forget that you are having the best deal provided by lotteries in any part of the world.

Well, you say, I buy my lottery ticket at a price of 100 kroner without grumbling. But then I am confident that the 66.67 percent which is due me does find its way back to my pocket. That would be 66 kroner and 67 ore.

Oh no, there you are again mistaken. The probable outcome is that you do not get one single ore back of your 100 kroner. Why, you say, and this time really grumbling. Did you not tell me I had a legitimate expectance, according to plain mathematics, which does not cheat, of 66.67 percent. Well,--and this time it is the authoritative voice of the lottery superintendent speaking: only every tenth lot is supposed to come out as a winning one.

Even this ratio--that is another thing you should know and appreciate--is a quite exceptional one. I doubt that you would find a higher percentage of winning tickets anywhere else. (Again I catch myself playing the accidental role of some kind of advertising puffer for the cause of Det Norske Pengeletteri, and that on an entirely nonprofit basis. I hope you will all forgive me.) What I want to point out is only this: If you limit your investment to just one lottery ticket, there are nine chances out of ten that you won't get anything back. The promised certainty of your getting back your 66.67 kroner out of one hundred will not realize itself that quickly. In that respect you had better gear down your expectations. The refund of the 66.67 percent, exactly, will assert itself after you have procured a handsome number of lots. In fact, your only way of making absolutely sure that you will get back every ore to which you are officially entitled, is to buy up every single ticket of the entire drawing. It may be hoped that the reader's common sense is strong enough to avoid that this latest statement of mine should have the effect of another gratuitous commercial in favor of the National Lottery of Norway.

But what about that 33.33 percent which never finds its way back into the customers' slinky pockets, you ponder thoughtfully. Oh, don't worry. Even those do not get lost. They do find their way to some

pocket, after all. Not to yours, that is true. Maybe you are making an exercise in "other-centeredness," are you? At least you are learning a lesson in resignation. That, too, is an art which may stand a person in good stead sometimes. A certain sum always has to be written off, it seems. The hobby you have chosen demands an operating budget. On the deficit side of that budget there is an insatiable slot called "current costs." Any great business has its "working expenses." That is inevitable.

Of course, I must finally leave it to my reader's common sense, under all circumstances, to decide whether the investment project lottery players (a most typical group representing the spirit of gambling in our society) have chosen, is a good one or a bad one. And here, as I have already assured you, I am still not speaking about "good" and "bad" in a specifically moral sense. So far, I have preferred to concern myself about it from an intellectual point of view. Does our ongoing lottery business in the Western World today mark you and me as persons of sound judgment and true logical smartness?

"Well," you answer with a trace of uncertainty in your voice, "maybe from that strictly logical point of view here adopted, this playing of mine with lottery chances is not the most intelligent thing to do. But isn't there something besides logics in our world? I am sick and tired of all those 'intelligent viewpoints.' Barren logic, I can assure you, is not the main guideline for my personal distinction between right and wrong. There is something in life called feelings, as well, I do hope. Man has a heart to attend to. Is it not possible that this heart may have ways of wisdom, and human values which the mathematical brains know nothing about?"

That first trace of uncertainty in your speech of defense soon seems to have been swept away by the violent waves of an offensive warfare, a determination in you to win a decisive victory over all doubts and hesitations. I would not be surprised if you manage to work yourself up to become not only convincingly eloquent, but even existentially inspired by the pathos of your own speech. I know the tenacity of the argument: I have heard the speech:

"The essential question to me, gentlemen, is this one: Is there anything morally blamable at all in that innocent habit of playing in lotteries, or similar acts which are here branded as 'gambling'? So your argument against it will have to go far deeper down to make a proselyte out of me! I am not going to give up my dearest hobbies just in order to please a dry theoretical logician. In my opinion, you see, there is something downright philistine in that one-sided intellectual rigidity of yours. Tell me, when was it ever proved that a purely rational analysis is sufficient to evaluate, in an exhaustive way, something as filled with human emotions as the thrilling activities we are here speaking about? Why don't you super-realists finally leave us alone with our little follies of the heart? Why are you so bent on robbing away from us every tiny bit of pleasure still making life enjoyable to us, or at least endurable? Is it too much for you if we have still managed to conserve, right in the midst of a super-pragmatic culture, some quite inoffensive little grains of human silliness, for instance, the one here permitting a man to imagine that he has a theoretical chance of waking up one day loaded with bank notes? We need something to look forward to once in a blue moon, don't we? Only dark misanthropists and thoroughbred pedants of the old school could feel called upon to apply logical evaluations to every romantic beauty in life. Of course, as I say, if you had any serious moral reasons which could be brought to bear upon the case before us, that would have been a different matter altogether. But, for the time being, I am not prepared to take your point as truly valid."

Let us meet the challenge. How could any radically truth-seeking ethicist fail to pick up a gauntlet as heavy as that, thrown down before him?

IS CHANCE PLAY WITH MONEY MORALLY DEFENSIBLE?

That is exactly the question we now have to decide. And we must look eagerly forward to such a decision. For here the matter has been moved to the field where it belongs, more definitely than in any

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other place. We have come to the end of our "mathematics," our formal logics, and our epistemology. So it is time to move right into the precincts of Christian ethics.

But then, first a question of general ethics. That question, already, might manage to raise us to the top of a tower, as it were, from which we may have a great glimpse of what is here actually at stake. So please tell me frankly: Would you ever hit upon the idea of investing another person's funds in a "business" of the "gambling kind" (as I have been bold enough to describe it, to the keen displeasure of some discussion partners)? Placing funds correctly is a problem which has to be faced ever so often, and more particularly so in times of galloping inflation like ours today. And it is not an easy task to tackle.

Now, let us take the concrete case that you have assumed the responsibility of managing a sum of money donated by some generous party for the promotion of some special department of God's needy cause on earth. However, it so happens that certain practical circumstances render it impossible for you, for the time being, to turn that money to good account immediately in that department. On the other hand, it should not be kept lying unproductive in the meantime. On the contrary, it is imperative that, wherever possible, it should, rather, be permitted to increase. Then here comes the curious question: Would you, perhaps, decide to place that capital temporarily in a "savings bank" of the peculiar type we have been describing?

I dare say even the greatest lottery enthusiast among us, whether Christian or non-Christian, would have some hesitation about such a course of action. Perhaps he would even be downright shocked by our question, making haste to answer it most emphatically: "Of course, I would not handle another person's money in such a way. I would not place even the smallest part of it in a lottery. I would regard that money as a sacred trust, something belonging to God Himself. But how could that be compared to money which is indisputably mine? My personal property must enter an entirely different category, I should think. I am free to dispose of that as I like, am I not? Is not every man accountable to himself for the values that properly belong to him?"

Thanks for the information. Or, to put it into the jargon of school-masters, expressing a certain finality: You are dismissed! You see, this is all I need in order to know something quite decisive regarding your notion of the ethics of stewardship, or rather, the lack of certain elementary notions the Bible teaches regarding creaturely accountability in front of the great Superintendent of all times and all created worlds. Not that I blame you, alone. For, indeed, that special view of accountability--or rather nonaccountability--you have here expressed, is based on a misconception which happens to be the peculiar heritage of the entire culture to which you belong. On the other hand, it must be pointed out how incredible that lack of all fundamental notions of Christian stewardship really is. For even by the standards of a purely human code of ethics, a view as self-sufficient and as isolationistic as that could hardly be accepted as valid in the long run. Still, this can be understandingly accounted for: It is only where radical Christianity marks the basic philosophy of an individual, or a collective group, that the idea of solidarity in terms of a fully responsible stewardship is seen to determine the general trend. In literary contributions the message may be just implicit sometimes, and nevertheless, most all-pervading and eloquent. But sometimes it becomes entirely explicit. Then it may take the form of a stern rebuke. May I epitomize that latter case by quoting once more Ellen G. White, a Protestant revival writer, endowed with an exceptional convergence of the qualities I have described as other-centered, sometimes also as God-centered:

Our money has not been given us that we might honor and glorify ourselves. As faithful stewards we are to use it for the honor and glory of God. Some think that only a portion of their means is the Lord's. When they have set apart a portion for religious and charitable purposes, they regard the remainder as their own, to be used as they see fit. But in this they mistake. All we possess is the Lord's, and we are accountable to Him for the use we make of it. In the use of every penny it will be seen whether we love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves. (Christ's Object Lessons, p. 351)

And this applies not only to talents of material property, but also to the talent most equally distributed among human beings, the talent of time. Besides it applies, of course, to talents in the most current sense of the term in our modern languages:

The youth needs to be impressed with the truth that their endowments are not their own. Strength, time, intellect, are but lent treasures. They belong to God, and it should be the resolve of every youth to put them to the highest use. He is a branch from which God expects fruit; a steward whose capital must yield increase; a light to illuminate the world's darkness. (Education, pp. 57-58)

Here it becomes evident how completely alterocentricity has to be equated with theocentricity. Man gets to know, not only that his center lies outside, but just where in that outside world it lies. It lies in God. That applies to any department of his life. This takes a heavy burden from his shoulders. He can rest confidently in the Lord in all matters of life. For instance, he need not entertain any fears lest the balance of secular finances be jeopardized by the intimate partnership he is supposed to have with God in every branch of business. All he needs is to cast his lot with the Lord's business. Man is to be the Lord's steward in all things, temporal and spiritual. This, and this alone, secures perfect prosperity in that main business transaction called life.

That which lies at the foundation of business integrity and of true success, is the recognition of God's ownership. The Creator of all things, He is the original proprietor. We are his stewards. All that we have is a trust from Him, to be used according to His direction. (Education, p. 137)

After having grasped the biblicalness of this trend of thought, could we still defend chance play involving material means? The issue seems clear enough. In fact, it stands to reason that anything needlessly detrimental to your own finances is also detrimental to the great common cause as a whole. So it is bound to be both logically and spiritually inconsistent to indulge in such a thing. Such indulgence would amount to downright unfaithfulness toward your Lord and Redeemer. For no man ever stands alone in what he does or fails to do. He has no business of his own. There is all the time someone else, as well, whom he exposes to the risk of serious loss.

THERE IS ALWAYS A CHANCE THAT WE MIGHT WIN IF WE GAMBLE. CAN WE TAKE THAT RISK?

Still some generous humanist may plead the cause of the gambler with a heart touched by deep compassion: "Oh, please don't be so hard on those poor romantic souls. The moments of gladness they have are not too many. They may run the risk of winning a ten dollar bill once in a blue moon. But even that risk is not so threateningly great. All they have, in reality, may be just that blessed on-going hope, from term to term, that they will make it next time. That is the time when they hope to wake up one blessed morning in the fairyland of unspeakable wealth and prosperity. How could we be so merciless as to begrudge them that pitiable little pleasure?"

That sounds noble-hearted and wise. But here it is not a question of begrudging anybody anything. The idea is not to deprive a person of something inherently good, but to free him from something sorely evil. So it is a matter of decisive significance to both Christian ethics and Christian epistemology. How could any responsible fellowman keep his eyes and his mouth closed in a life affair of that magnitude? That would be tantamount to refusing to help a gambler see his own life in a wider perspective, including issues of destiny-laden import. It might mean your failure to prevent the disappointments which could one day cause his death and eternal perdition. You may be as eloquent as you like about those repeated flashes of new hopes providing renewed courage for the discouraged. But do you know that hopes without fulfillment are worse

than no hopes at all? A human heart can only take a limited number of frustrations accumulated in that cruel way. The sores of the soul become more incurable with every new repetition.

But we have still hardly said one word about the most dramatically tragic of all coincidences in the chance play business. We are prone to forget that such a thing exists at all; so rarely does it happen in the chance player's life. I am here, of course, alluding to the theoretical eventuality of a bomb shock shaking a person's existence when a certain meteor hits his head in the form of a real prize, say the top event of the lottery drawing. Even a relatively well-balanced family barge may lose its equilibrium, temporal and spiritual, when suddenly struck by a misfortune of such dimensions. Overnight, quite a number of fairly innocent persons find themselves relentlessly at the mercy of the monster Mammon and the monster Vita Lauta (the exuberant life, luxurious living): It may take quite some time, you see, before the "lucky winner" and his "good friends" have managed to lick up the last drops of the profusely flowing champagne. Fortunately, the moment does come, by and by, when the bottom of the cake box has been scraped, and a definite end has been put to the wild delirium. But by that time many a victim to that inundation of material prosperity may have been naufraged already, both physically and mentally.

But, as we all know, most lottery players are fairly safe from disasters of that melodramatic magnitude. The maximal mishap to which they are likely to be exposed is some lonely one hundred dollar bill fluttering down from the skies after some decades of faithful gambling. And everybody knows the limited risk implied in sums of that size. In our days they hardly cause their owners to rush into either material revelry or moral debauch. An increase in your budget of one hundred dollars would not tempt you to make any extravagant plans of world circumnavigation, nor to abandon yourself to any luxurious living at home.

So your danger and mine evidently remains at a different level altogether. It is not necessarily a lesser danger. It is only more subtle and pernicious. The sting of those moderate prizes is in their stinginess, their tantalizing rareness. They are just sufficiently important to spur you on toward repeated attempts. And then the law of probabilities soon gets even with you.

On the other hand, those minor prizes are neither stingy enough nor rare enough to exclude the possibility of a vicious germ enclosing itself slyly in every one of them. That virulent foreign body simply encysts itself in the gambling gain like trichina in swine's flesh. Before you have even begun to sense danger, the insidious intruder has wound his way to the hidden depths of your inmost soul. The vital centers of your personal being have been contaminated. Soon a prodigious proliferation takes place there. True, the bug you have caught may still be so inconspicuous that it refuses to be detected under the sharpest microscope of the most perspicacious bacteria hunter. No wonder that your otherwise fairly rugged sense of reality has been carried away, piecemeal, to its grave, even before you ever had an inkling that there was any danger at all in the offing.

Let us face the difference between the true fact and the spurious idea: Now, almost everyone of us does know--theoretically, at least-- that money in itself has no proper value. Paper is not all that costly, particularly not waste paper. Money merely represents the value of something else that is truly valuable. In social economy that true value is called work. Money provides a measure for that So to every symbolic value in the form of a cheque or a banknote there is supposed to correspond some amount of genuine work.

But now, what is it that happens when all of a sudden that symbol in the substance of a fluttering piece of paper is thrown into your lap from the celestial heights of a lottery prize mixer? What is it, from that moment on, that decides how many monetary units you are to collect? It is the spooky monster our pagan culture has taught us to call blind chance. As soon as that inhuman brute enters the arena of our inmost minds, something fateful takes place. Our sound awareness of that close connection between the sham value (money) and the real value (work) is blurred.

It is high time we get to know what suddenly happens to man at the moment when a lottery prize makes its appearance upon the scene of his mind, and more particularly, what happens "back stage." His thinking immediately begins to adopt patterns of an unprecedented nature. Let us try to give some concrete formulation to one of the ideas surging up phantomlike: "Should I stay on the job now?"

What does an otherwise sensible and conscientious worker mean by that? He means: "It all depends,-in my uncertain case." On what? "On the unpredictable whims of a new goddess who has entered my life."

Some will use less poetic or less mystifying words to describe the position. They will say: "Whether I am going to continue working or not depends on how the 'drawing' turns out. It is a matter of good luck or bad luck. If that prize I am looking forward to is in my pocket tomorrow, of course, I am not going to continue the drudgery which is bugging me today."

So it is that fairy queen of "good luck" we all seem to be dreaming about. If only she would finally let some good round sum of ready money drop down into our laps, then we would not need to work at all. But there is always the nasty possibility of the opposite signal. The fairy does not smile to us. So we just have to bow our neck under the yoke again. The working grounds of this or that business enterprise will go on being our prison yard. We do beseech you, our blessed goddess: How long are we to be doomed to that degrading necessity of earning our daily bread through the menial services of a common worker?

Do you think that trend of thinking is conducive to rock-bottom realism?

IS MONEY A REAL VALUE?

Let us see what a true theocentric philosophy has to say about this great illusion about money and about chance:

Money has great value, because it can do great good. In the hands of God's children it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, and clothing for the naked. It is defense for the oppressed, and a means of help for the sick. But money is no more value than sand, only as it is put to use in providing for the necessities of life, in blessing others, and advancing the cause of Christ. (Messages to Young People, p. 310)

Here is a sober weighing of the respective values, temporal and spiritual. Nothing is overestimated, nothing is underestimated. The extremes of pure philosophical idealism, as well as pure materialism, have been carefully avoided. Money is not despised. It is not feared. For it has its right place in the world today. It renders service as a measuring standard. It constitutes a practical means of acquiring and mobilizing the good things of life.

And now the concept we tend to have of chance: What the thoroughly de-Christianized and rather agnostic Western World has settled on in this field is a category of chance or fortuity bearing in front the epithet "blind". What could be more eloquent than that to express the main characteristics of a self-centered, self-occlusive philosophy?

To the other-centered, that is, truly God-centered philosopher, there is bound to be something shocking inherent in the very term: blind chance. For that is not only un-Christian; it is God-denying, atheistic. It is more heathen than heathenism. For most ancient and properly pagan cultures did at least base their intimate beliefs on something more or less respectfully described as "fate" (fatum). There was always supposed to be some kind of superior force behind the scene, leading the course of human destiny.

We modern pagans of the Western World seem to have lost even that. Into the core of our fundamental ideas about life we seem bent on hauling the god-forsaken concepts of downright casualness

and automatism to account for the most vital processes of our intimate existence. What a bunch of hard-boiled atheists we are.

Frankly, what is this thing we are heading for? Do we realize its enormity? Can we take the freedom to express ourselves in such an overtly infidel way without-implicitly-declaring religion to be a jumble of sheer nonsense statements? If words a person permits himself to pronounce, finish by creating thoughts, the outward simply molding the inward in its own image, then what is the result of this process going to be? For words today may be pretty bold and blasphemous. One thing is certain: what we already see is frightening enough Occidental man has finished by losing sight of the basic perspective constituting a basic tenet of Christian thought. That is the core idea which ancient peoples, by and large, hardly submitted to any serious doubt: There is nothing, absolutely nothing, of vital importance to a man's life that occurs by mere chance.

On the other hand, the notion of a rigidly unchangeable fate, an eternal automatism, from which no man can escape one single inch, that extreme view is equally foreign to the treasure house of theocentric thought, as the Bible teaches it. True, that irreversible fatality of a circular orbit you can never break away from, may be a reality some day which constitutes the tragedy you will have to face. But when does this become man's inescapable lot for time and eternity? Only at the moment when his active struggle as a moral agent, endowed with freedom of will, has been abandoned definitively through the hardened renegade's blasphemous spite against God. Otherwise the word holds good that even the most debased sinner disposes of all the freedom he needs in order to cast his lot on the side of God's kingdom. Then with the generous help of the divine Helper his life may be put to perfect order.

Fate has not woven its meshes about any human being so firmly that he need remain helpless and in uncertainty. Opposing circumstances should create a firm determination to overcome them. The breaking down of one barrier will give greater ability and courage to go forward. Press with determination in the right direction, and circumstances will be your helpers, not hindrances. (Christ's Object Lessons, p. 332)

Here again it is the firm goal of uprightness and sober-mindedness that decides the issue. Again I have to think of the contrast this affords to the kind of ethics manifested by an infidel like Freud--in his personal life and in his research principles. It brings to mind a passage from his "Vorlesungen zur Einfuhrung der Psychoanalyse," describing the basic rule for the "association method":

We ask the patient to get into a mood of calm self-observation without any reflection, and then tell us everything about the inward observations, feelings, thoughts and memories presenting themselves, in the sequence it all naturally has, as it emerges. We encourage the person explicitly not to yield to some secret motive which might lead to some conscious selection, excluding this or that impulse (Einfall). Such exclusion should not take place, however unpleasant or indiscreet it may appear to pronounce it, and however strong the sense may be that it is unimportant and does not belong, or seems meaningless, so that it need not be said. We enjoin on the patient always to pay attention to nothing but what happens to the surface of his consciousness, and to refrain from all critical attitude toward what comes to mind.

Do you notice in this research methodology the determination to exclude all "petty" concern about what immediately strikes a person as (1) morally decent, (2) logically reasonable, and (3) humanly meaningful? Instead of these reactions, which basically stand for true wholeness and health in a human mind, what the mentally disturbed person is encouraged to opt for is the superficial, the casual, and the ethically unrestrained.

And were the basic tenets that man had for his research methodology any different from those he had for his deepest personal life? No, in his booklet, *Die Zukunft einer Illusion*, he demonstrates his contempt of everything that is constructively religious:

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Whereas the individual religions have their fight about which of them possesses the truth, we for our part think one may simply exclude the possibility of any basic truth in religions. Religion is an attempt of controlling the world of the senses, in which we find ourselves, by means of a world of wishful thinking we have developed in us as a biological and psychological necessity.

Freud had fallen a victim to the hazardous idea that he could not only live without any religion, but also die without it. Typical in this respect is the way he expresses himself in a letter to an American physician, who had written to him about the religious experience he had had about a definite "inner voice" the God of heaven let him hear. On that occasion the 72-year-old Austrian psychiatrist, already considerably marked by the disease which was destined to end his life, answered:

"For me God has never done that much. He has never let me hear such a voice. And, in view of my advanced age, if he does not now make great haste, it will not be my fault, in case, right up to the very end, I should remain as I am:--an infidel Jew."

This spiteful lack of faith in the existence of a God who is lovingly concerned about a human being, and about directing his life in accordance with firm principles of never-failing integrity, is, of course, also what permeates Freud's report in his work *Die Traumdeutung*, where he comments on the incident in which a "Christian" beat the head of Freud's father with the result that his new fur cap fell down into the muddy street. The father, being asked by his son how he had responded to this affront, answered rather meekly: I just went across the street picking my cap up again. In other words, he had a rather Christian response to the act of the would-be Christian who had screamed to him: Jew, away from this sidewalk.

The little boy, holding his father's hand on that occasion, simply became furious at what he calls an "un-heroic" response: "I compared this situation to another one which agreed far better with my feelings. I am thinking of the scene in which Hannibal's father, Hamilcar Barcas, asked his son to swear in front of the home altar that he would wreak vengeance on the Romans. For ever after this experience, Hannibal had a great place in my imaginations."

That influential genius in the history of man's ideas about man, Sigmund Freud, certainly did avenge himself on the movement he probably regarded as the worst enemy among all those religions modern psychiatric science had to fight to the bitter end, namely, Christianity.

And now please notice one reason why that researcher has exerted such a tremendous influence on students of the human mind all over the world. They have found great qualities in him. And many of those qualities cannot be denied. The perseverance and the singleness of purpose with which he fought-often against heavy odds-for what he believed to be the truth about man, are admirable enough. And in his research he did have principles of intellectual integrity which are not always to be found among so-called Christian scholars. Notice, for instance, one thing which has commanded great respect among his biographers: The love of sordid lucre did not lead Sigmund Freud astray, as this has been the case with so many researchers today.

That brings us back to the serious questions of financial ethics which we have here been forced to deal with in a particularly serious way just because that field of human ethics has tended to be rather lightly treated. The spirit encouraging principles of haphazard in human lives has had so many strange ways of asserting itself.

THE WORK AND THE WAGES-WHICH IS THE MEANS AND WHICH IS THE END?

What is the viewpoint of the God-centered philosophy here? Do we work in order to earn money? Or do we earn money in order to carry on our work? Pioneers in a practical idealistic movement often do not enjoy the convenience of any regular salary whatsoever. Yet they do not complain. They find meaning in work as such. On the other hand, they do not, for that matter, necessarily despise the blessings flowing from material sources at fixed intervals and in sufficient quantity for physical well being. It is not, of necessity, self-centered to accept the system of a fixed salary as the material foundation enabling the worker to carry out his task with maximum efficiency. This is beneficial to the rhythm of an other-centered life. It is the money-first-and-last attitude that is egocentric.

If the work-centered attitude of the worker is the prevailing one, in fact there seems to be nothing to fear about money. Even sums dropping in quite casually could not hurt the spiritual equilibrium of such a worker. Sums he does not strictly need for his right functioning will not turn into a deadweight that clogs his system. The explanation is simple: With a genuinely other-centered person all sums will find their natural channel in the general flow of life as an outward-streaming crescendo. For his personal use he will spend just the part that serves his life task. He will not suffer a premature death caused by overfeeding, no, not in any sense of the term.

But we must keep in mind the state of things in our civilized world by and large. There more people die of overfeeding than of hunger. I mean literally so. Even if their nutrients had been of a more perfect quality they would simply have died of them. And what part of that nourishment is it which takes their lives? Just the part they, in their foolish selfishness, have robbed from a starving humanity. In other words, what might have brought life and health to others becomes death to the egocentrist himself. This is one of the cases in which we should not hesitate to use the extreme word of tragedy.

Man's life has turned into a scramble for money, money, money as a value in itself, money detached from all connections with life as a meaningful whole. This perversity has transformed our planet into a robber's den. Had it not been for this self-inflicted misery, man's earth would still have been a comparatively pleasant place to dwell in.

If it were not defiled by the wicked, corrupt deeds of the men who tread the soil, we could, with the blessing of God, enjoy our world as it is. But ignorance, pleasure-loving, and sinful habits, corrupting soul, body and spirit, make the world full of leprosy. A deadly moral malaria is destroying thousands and tens of thousands. What shall be done to save our youth. We can do little, but God lives and reigns, and He can do much. The youth are our hope for missionary labor.

Schools should be established where there is as much as possible to be found in nature to delight the senses and give variety to the scenery. While we shun the false and artificial, discarding horse racing, card playing, lotteries, prize fights, liquor drinking, and tobacco using, we must supply sources of pleasure that are pure and noble and elevating. We should choose a location for our schools apart from the cities, where the eye will not rest continually upon the dwellings of men, but upon the works of God. (*Fundamental of Christian Education*, p. 320, italics supplied)

Even farm work, the type of labor most blessed by God from the beginning, does not always yield sufficient protection from the sad delusions of mankind.

Many farmers have failed to secure adequate returns from their land because they have undertaken the work as though it was a degrading employment. They do not see that there is a blessing in it for themselves and their families. All they can discern is the brand of servitude. Their orchards are neglected,

the crops are not put in at the right season, and a mere surface work is done in cultivating the soil. Many neglect their farms in order to keep holidays and to attend to horse races and betting clubs. Their money is expended in shows and lotteries and idleness, and then they plead that they cannot obtain money to cultivate the soil and improve their farms; but had they more money, the result would be the same. (Ibid., p. 327)

How universal has this modern chance play attitude toward life become today? To what extent has it asserted itself as "the normal thing," simply inundating the minds of even most respectable Christians. At that early date already, a chance game spirit had successfully introduced itself into the very midst of the most solemn church activities. But the Spirit of the Lord is not in any way disposed to pronounce His blessing upon the upsurging tendency. What was the method God had planned for the purpose of procuring means to promote His sacred cause? Oh, it was as far from the idea of church lotteries and church bazaars as anything could come.

As God's work extends, calls for help will come more and more frequently. That these calls may be answered, Christians should heed the command: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house." Malachi 3:10. If professing Christians would faithfully bring to God their tithes and offerings, His treasury would be full. There would then be no occasion to resort to fairs, lotteries, or parties of pleasure to secure funds for the support of the gospel. (AA 338)

What a bold and revolutionizing idea to go all the way back to the old Jewish theocracy bringing God's own financing system into new and living practice. How could any leader persuade a whole denomination to pay tithes of all their income? How could conviction be strong enough to prevail upon hundreds of thousands of men to make unheard-of free will offerings? Simply by a plain statement that this-and no egocentric devices whatsoever-has always been God's personal plan for His people. To top it all, there is the introduction of an incredible new concept: SYSTEMATIC BENEVOLENCE. Could there be anything more different from lotteries and blind chance methods than that term?

LOT CASTING IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE AND IN THAT OF THE CHURCH

Here now comes the grave question, the decisive question: Does the Bible itself go clearly against the traditional trend of "chance methods" in religious service and in private lives? In Bible history, as everybody knows, the custom of throwing lots for the purpose of obtaining divine guidance is certainly not an unknown phenomenon. Many would rather insist that it is a familiar feature. Some might even be tempted to think that lot-casting has here been consecrated as almost the favorite method of deciding what course to take when human wisdom fails in front of the crucial dilemma of the many crossroads in human lives.

One thing certainly must be admitted here quite unreservedly: That "crossroad" experience is a pretty frequent occurrence in almost any man's daily existence, isn't it? This seems to apply both to those who sincerely wish to know the will of the omniscient God for their lives, and to such who think their own judgment is the only safe criterion to go by. Either group is bound to have moments enough when they seem to have arrived at their wit's end. A true word says: "The difficulty of life consists in the choice." In fact, a human existence appears, from day to day and from hour to hour, or even from second to second, to be nothing but a continuous series of choices, sometimes even choices of momentous importance for life or death.

In that bewildering labyrinth of existential crossroads, the need for an expedient means of superior guidance seems to be paramount. And what could be more expedient than the simple act of throwing a die,

or a number of dice, into the air? In fact, that would be most temptingly expedient. But is it a reliable means? Is it a means quite compatible with the dignity of religion, even with the sublime ideal of Christianity?

On the other hand, no one could fail to observe how rich the Scriptures are in incidents of lot-casting. Of course, the question may still be asked, and it must be asked: Is the frequent use of the lot-casting method necessarily, in itself, a sure proof of its validity or of its appropriateness as the great way to arrive at decisions in vital matters of choice?

Of course, we are coming to a special feature of the unique government called theocracy, at the moment when we start speaking about God's mysterious Urim and Thummim, connected with the Sanctuary. To describe this as a "chance method" would be close to blasphemy. The solemnly oracular phenomenon here entering into operation, entirely on the initiative of Yahweh Himself, and in perfect accordance with His faultless planning, certainly has no similarity whatever to the practice of throwing up a die. We are here speaking about something quite different from the Urim and the Thummim, namely, the universally known method of casting lots. This was a custom which had been practiced all over the Oriental world from times immemorial, including the cultural environment described by the Bible authors.

Of course, we could not possibly deny the obvious fact. And we do not intend to make any attempt to deny it: The God of the Bible does accept that particular method as one means of making His will known to man. However, does that necessarily imply that He put His implicit sanction on the method, or even preferred it to any other method? It would hardly be wise to jump to conclusions in that manner. We are surprised to see to what extent the God of the Bible winks at the imperfection of human conditions, without in any way placing His seal of sanction upon it for that matter. There is never any lack of sound reasoning in Biblical writings. Only superficial readers assume that this is so. Caution is here a basic principle. It might be that we ascribe to God what actually has its origin in man.

If that principle is applied to the present case, it seems natural to remind of the incident from the New Testament of choosing a new disciple to replace Judas after his tragic failure. The method of casting lots was immediately adopted to designate the new man. The lot fell on a certain Matthias.

Just that example may throw some important light upon the lot-casting system in general. Was it God, or was it only the disciples themselves that made a choice of the "right" replacement in this case? That may here seem a very legitimate question. The Bible, at least, as in so many other instances of chance methods, is not too explicit about it. One reason for that might be that the issue itself was not at all so important in reality as it seemed in the minds of those who cast the lots. At any rate, one does not hear too much about that new disciple Matthias after his election. In fact, all Christendom has agreed to appoint quite another man as the most likely substitute for Judas. Saul of Tarsus is almost unanimously considered as the twelfth apostle, isn't he?

But did the disciples in those days have any human possibility whatsoever of choosing the apostle Paul by that method? Of course not. At the moment, he was one of their most dreaded antagonists. No disciple being in his senses could ever have hit upon an idea as "absurd" as that. This incident shows at least something very important concerning the danger of an inherently human element in the lot-casting method, as it is generally practiced: Those who choose by drawing lots have often chosen even before the ceremony proper has ever yet begun. They have already chosen the alternatives among which they are to choose. In the disciples' case this may not have been so serious at all. In other cases a fateful mistake might be the eventual result.

Now then, what is the essential element of danger in such hazard methods as a whole? And why must they be discarded as unworthy even in cases of no imminent danger? On these points, messages from Mrs. White's pen give an unusually clear analysis of the entire process. Let us consider an individual

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testimony in which she gives counsel to a businessman who had got into the habit of employing the well known heads-and-tails method to make important decisions in his private life.

You endeavor to reach correct decisions regarding religious duties, and to make decisions regarding business enterprises, by the tossing up of a coin, and letting the position in which it falls decide what course you shall pursue. They are too common, too much like slight-of-hand movements. They are not of the Lord, and those who depend upon them for direction will meet with failure and disappointment. Being nothing more than a matter of chance, the influence of adopting such test regarding duty is calculated to lead the mind to depend on chance and guesswork, when all our work and plans for work should be established on the sure foundation of the Word of God. (Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 17, p. 25; italics mine)

Here we first notice the clear idea of a degrading superficiality. The chance method--first limited to cases of spiritual grandeur and religious solemnity perhaps--will gradually and inevitably tend to make its way right down into the trivial details of everyday business matters. We easily comprehend how temptingly near that suggestion must be.

Our present-day civilization has rendered life so complicated that almost every moment presents an enigma or some kind of apparently inextricable dilemma. And the readiness with which long habit then suggests such a humanly convenient solution of the problem of the moment becomes a potent danger. It leaves its victim no time to reflect that some simple effort of just soberminded reasoning might apply wonderfully to the case in question. Thus the "Biblical" way of solving problems, as some might have the temerity to call it, may finish by pushing things definitely down into the dust of unworthiness; there can hardly be any intelligent disagreement on that point. The habit of casting lots is a phenomenon more dangerous today than it has ever been before. This should be a weighty reason for considering it with the utmost suspicion:

It is a haphazard method which God does not approve. To men who have suggested such tests, I have said, "No, no." The sacred things which concern the cause of God must not be dealt with by such methods. God does not instruct us that we are to learn His will in such a way. Will it furnish us with experience that will glorify God for us to decide what is His will by the dropping of a card or a coin and observing how it falls? No, no. Such tests as this will spoil the religious experience of the one who adopts them. Every one who depends on such things for guidance, needs to be reconverted. (Ibid., p. 16)

But how are we to learn His will then? Well, almost any way would seem as good or better than that one. By the way, is not this a strange tendency of the human mind? I mean that obstinate conviction that the mechanical is so far superior to the spiritual. Is there not in that obstination something closely related to our most unfortunate human predilection for methods of magic? One thing seems obvious: man hardly shows any exaggerated zeal for choosing the genuinely alterocentric forms of communication with God, the supreme Reality of his environment.

Curious enough, human beings today appear to find it comparatively easy to imagine that the divine Being is fully able and favorably disposed to interfere with the mechanical turnings of a piece of metal, tossed into the air, even a sordid business coin. But they apparently have no end of difficulty in believing that the same God is both able and willing to impress directly a living human mind, that marvelous device of biological creation which His artistic genius has wrought. Is it so utterly incredible that He might have a mind to commune a little more directly with just that noble central station, established in the very heart of every living person?

The Lord works in no haphazard way. Seek Him most earnestly in prayer. He will impress the mind, and will give tongue and utterance. The people of God are to be educated not to trust in human inventions and uncertain tests as a means of learning God's will concerning them. Satan and his agencies are always ready to step into any opening to be found that will lead souls away from the pure principles of the Word of

God. The people who are led and taught of God, will give no place to devisings for which there is not a Thus saith the Lord. (Ibid.)

What is this mysterious interference on the part of devils and demons here mentioned as a dreadful possibility. It certainly again has to do with that lugubrious, God-forsaken territory in which things have carelessly been left to themselves and to the inexorable laws of life, the laws against all personal neglect, causing nothing but an ever-increasing chaos--in man and around him. (See the second chapter of *The Maligned God*, p. 55, on "The Concept of Order Versus Disorder Taking on New Significance and Enormous Dimensions," and page 58, its natural science aspect: "The 'Mysterious S' of Modern Thermo-Dynamics," and finally, the inescapable evidence this furnishes for the realism of a "Personally Intervening God," visibly conquering "The Demon of Automatism" in your world and mine, page 70.)

In man's mental and spiritual life the dreadful forces of inertia governing the realms of the mechanical and the automatic constitute a fatal danger every moment. (I deal with that formidable foe of Automatism more elaborately in my work on the *Mystery of the Seventh Day*, pp. 192 ff.: *The Sign of a Free God*.) Here is the proper habitation of the solitary roaming spirits of darkness and dire despair. It is obviously the last recess to which the evil one and his angels have been driven back, as the true Lord of the Universe, Jesus Christ, has gradually torn one possession after the other out of his lethal clutch.

So what about that wretched piece of metal, falling and falling, without purpose or plan? Is not that as well one of those famous things happening "all by themselves"? No wonder that prophetic vision discerned, in that expedient heads-and-tails method of choosing, an adequate lurking-hole for the devil, an eligible brooding place for the vermin of this doomed world.

To our people I will say, Let none be led from the sound, sensible principles that God has laid down for the guidance of His people, to depend for direction on any such device as the tossing of a coin. Such a course is well pleasing to the enemy of souls; for he works to control the coin, and through its agency works out his plans. (Ibid.)

That simply signifies: Satan's favorite working field is a field of blind hazard; that is, a field where man plays his dangerous game of hazards, not first and foremost Satan. In fact, there is not much to indicate that Satan's working system, at this stage of his career, is preferably one of blind chance. Long experience has evidently made him too smart for that. His method today is a method of ingenious planning and plotting.

To sum up the views of alterocentric vision regarding this capital issue, we may say: Serious dilemmas of choice are sure to present themselves in contemporary man's life all along the road. Whenever this happens, however, it is by no means a fact that should be interpreted thus: "Now it is time to toss up a coin." But rather thus: "Now it is time to pray as never before."

And immediately after that--or even before the prayer has yet been finished--it is probably, above all, time to act. Tossing up a coin has pitifully little to do with action. It is, rather, the perfect symbol of inactivity. Never has an indolent mind invented a more consistent system of egocentric indulgence in the sentimentalism of a fatalistic *laissez-aller*.

A FARCICAL ACCOUNT INSPIRED BY MODERN SITUATION ETHICS

One of my ethics students at Andrews University in Michigan had certainly had ample opportunity to be exposed to the philosophy of Joseph Fletcher. But he had not permitted that philosophy to mold his intimate thinking. I was glad to have him present to me the impression he had of Fletcher's ethics ideology as

compared to that of Ellen White. After having presented the serious academic part of his essay, he concluded with the following somewhat burlesque sketch:

"My wife and I enjoy the outdoors and love to hike. While on an excursion in the deep forest, we wander from the trail and become hopelessly confused, lost. Snow is falling, night is approaching, we are exhausted. The unforgiving forces of nature will soon bring their inevitable result. We have no hope of finding the trail. By striking out across country and following streams downhill, we would be certain to eventually emerge from the forest. But this would take days, perhaps weeks. Such a journey would be quite impossible unless we had food, and the sub-zero nights would terminate our struggle in any case. It is apparent that we cannot survive.

But say--have I forgotten the principles of Fletcher--think? Perhaps all is not lost. I must apply the love principle, the agapeic calculus, calmly and dispassionately.

It now occurs to me that if one of us could wear all of our clothing, that one could survive the cold. But what of food? Again I reason carefully: if one of us were to become food for the other, this would provide sustenance adequate for a journey of many days. I now understand that all is not lost. One of us can survive. But which one?

With objective detachment I balance the evidence. I observed that I am physically stronger than my wife. Even with food and clothing, she would not be likely to succeed in reaching civilization. The journey would be too arduous for her. Next I reflect upon the relative values of her life and mine to our families and to society. I must consider that I am better trained and educated than she is, and that I have a greater earning power. I conclude that, to both our family and society, my value is the greater. I recall a principle of Fletcher think: It is right or wrong to follow principle only according to who gets hurt, and how much. Thus guided, I perceive that society would suffer a great and incalculable hurt should I not return, but a lesser and more measurable loss should my wife not return.

I am momentarily troubled by a question: Could my motivation actually be self-interest? Yet, Fletcher says I must accept this danger: "...the situationist is always vulnerable to error in any decision-making situation." But I am comforted by recalling that "...every man must decide for himself, according to his own estimate of conditions and consequences; and no one can decide for him or impugn the decision to which he comes."

I am no longer in doubt. But should I tell her that the application of the love principle of the new morality has made it unmistakably clear that I should kill her, and by using her flesh for food and her clothing for warmth ensure my own survival and protect society from the large hurt it would sustain, being deprived of the benefit of my talents?

Of course not. That would not be a loving act. Her lack of familiarity with the niceties of situation ethics might prevent her from appreciating my decision. A distasteful family argument might ensue. Worse, she might display such emotional and intellectual immaturity as to resist or try to escape from me, and there could be a nasty scene. I should not waste my strength by chasing her through the forest to kill her. No, love would do it quickly, and without warning.

I drop behind her long enough to pick up a large rock from the ground, then walk close to her again. I direct her attention toward a squirrel on a bough, and as she turns to look, I bring the rock down with great force upon the back of her head. As she crumples to the ground, I thrill to the realization that my troubles are over, my problem is solved. Her clothing will keep me warm. Her flesh nicely roasted, will sustain me for many days. I realize now more fully than ever before that the situationist is the truly liberated man. The forest rings with my exultant shout of identify and self-fulfillment:

Hurrah for the new morality!

Hurrah for situation ethics!

Hurrah for Joseph Fletcher!"

A wild comedy like this may tempt you to smile. But my student says: Let the reader not smile at this illustration. It is a perfectly valid application of the principles of situation ethics:

But would not a true man stay with his wife, let the consequences results as they may? Would not a deep and homing instinct for truth affirm that love is stronger than death? Would not a whole man count it a thing of value that his wife's last earthly thoughts might be of the trueness of his love? And would not he himself die well content, if faithful to the end? And if principles do come from God, no such act would escape the divine attention. As Ellen White says: "God never forsakes the one who is true to principle."

But Fletcher, it would seem, knows no such personal God, a Creator who takes a personal and present interest in the affairs of His creatures, seeking their highest good: eternal salvation. Fletcher does not recognize the fall of man, nor does he accept any truth as revealed except love, and that only by his own definition. The fact that his love principle is not fixed, but is capable of many definitions, indicates that it cannot actually be called a norm or principle at all.

It follows, then, that Fletcher is totally without principle. His ethical code is actually only anarchy in a thin disguise, however stoutly he may deny it. No other conclusion is logically defensible.

The essay concludes by saying: The publication of the book Situation Ethics must, therefore, be regarded as a most unloving act. I cannot help but agree with that outstanding essay writer regarding Fletcher's famous work.

And now I should have the firmness and the courage to draw a clear line of conclusion for my own little essay. I shall give it in the form of

AN OUTSPOKEN DIALOGUE BETWEEN READER AND WRITER

THE READER (as the writer imagines his formidable objections):

Sir, how can you defend a standpoint as radical as the one you maintain in this book--regarding situation ethics? To me this sounds incredible. I shall have to hallmark you as ten times worse in this respect than the conservative theologian Montgomery whom you quote so extensively in the first part of your book. How can you manage, in front of your intelligent students, to claim that there does not exist one single situation in this world in which abortion, for instance, must be accepted as the ethical alternative? How can you dare to deny that an abortion may present itself as an actual necessity, something we have to accept in the name of true Christian love? Here you must stand pretty much alone with your super-radicalism. I, for my part, know no congregation, either religious or secular, that would say boldly: "No single killing of embryos under any circumstances within our midst!" Or: "No execution of any criminal, even in the case of a savage mass murderer!" Tell me, what school do you belong to? Does there happen to be a group that really maintains a standpoint as radical as that?

THE WRITER:

It may be that I would have to admit my position of being something very close to a loner in this respect. But what safe indication is this now, that I ought to change my position? Even a man standing completely alone in this world might still be perfectly right in his standpoint. It certainly is not for the purpose of pleasing this or that institution that I make myself the advocate of such a radical standpoint. On the contrary, it would hardly be logical on my part to expect perfect agreement with those whom you call my "congregation," my "school." Perhaps I ought rather to expect an open conflict with almost any "circle," any "group," I might otherwise like to feel happily at home in. But should I not take a conflict with my own

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"group," rather than a conflict with my deepest conscience? I hope that is a standpoint that can be accepted as generally respectable.

But now I do not at all insist upon your having just as bad an opinion of my "school" or my "congregation" as you have about me. So I may as well at once tell you that those in policy-making positions in my Church set up three essential exceptions, definite cases in which abortions are permitted and recommendable:

1. The case of pregnancy as a result of direct rape.
2. The case in which the birth of the child would endanger the mother's life.
3. Cases in which the mother, in the course of her pregnancy, gets an illness involving the risk that the child may be misshapen or retarded.

THE READER:

That sounds very defensible. In those three cases abortions must be not only a right, but even a duty. A group, social or religious, making exceptions such as those, have my deepest respect.

THE WRITER:

There is no lack of respect on my part either. Do not misunderstand me. I am not a disrespectful person. At least I hope so. But quite a different question is this: Can I defend, in front of God and my own ethical conscience, to take the personal initiative of "being an instrument in an abortion" in any way, even in cases as sad as those mentioned? My conscience says NO. And I shall tell you why. Let us take the three instances one by one and in their sequence as mentioned above.

1. The case of a conception after a crime of rape. I willingly admit, of course, that this is a terrible misdeed perpetrated against an innocent person. But please tell me, where do you find it written that we never have to carry--even all the way to the end of the road--the burdens our unrighteous environments often impose upon us? Now please rather think of the possibility that the girl here concerned lets the child live, maybe simply because she, too, happens to be among those who just cannot bear the thought of taking a human life away under any circumstances. And suppose that the child here permitted to live becomes, in due course, not only a decent person, but even an actual hero in his--or her--community. What should there be to prevent such a child from becoming his--or her--mother's greatest pride, maybe her only comfort in life, humanly speaking?

In fact, what does that mother know about what is going to happen in the future? What if this special child, once "forced upon her," turns out to be the only one she ever gets? That may very well happen in any woman's life. Do you still nourish the absurd thought that, by and by, when the child has reached a certain age, its mother would say something like this: "Oh, what a mistake, what a misery! Why did I not put an end to the life of that child while he was still unborn? That would have been the only reasonable option in a case as desperate as mine in those days."

Do you discern something of the destiny-laden implications again contained in transgressing a divine commandment in a case where one thinks one knows the whole situation, whereas the only One really knowing that is God Himself.

2. The case of the birth endangering the mother's life. Here I often present to my students the case of Benjamin's birth, just as another experiment of thoughtful reflection. You may recall from your lessons in Old Testament history, the account about Rachel, the favorite wife of the patriarch Jacob. She died during the birth of her second child. This happened at a time when Jacob had suffered hardships of many kinds.

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Those hardships had caused him to pass through the great battle of his life, a battle of destiny. He had finally emerged a converted man.

Now just imagine the hypothetical case of Jacob being in something similar to our position today, the day of modern medical science. We may assume that he had full access to all the sophisticated knowledge about childbirths available here and now. Imagine learned physicians of today surrounding Rachel's bed, telling Jacob the ominous tale: "Rachel's case is a most critical one, sir; you must either accept the likely prognosis that Rachel will die during childbirth, or you must make up your mind about another alternative--that is, resolutely taking the child's life now before it is born."

Well, what do you think that god-fearing and trial-afflicted patriarch of old would have answered in response to this kind of talk. Remember now: For all Jacob could know, Benjamin, the wee little creature still lying there in his mother's womb, might very well some day have qualities in him to become another Joseph. You know what I am referring to: Joseph was destined by God to become the hero of faith enabled by God to save the whole Hebrew people from literal annihilation caused by a dreadful famine.

Suppose now that Benjamin, Rachel's second and last son, still unborn, but with the potential in him to turn out a similar hero, was seen worthy by divine Providence to accomplish a similar task. Tell me: what knowledge could Jacob boast of, regarding a future still in the hands of an almighty and omniscient God? Would he, as the man he really was at this time of his life, have dared to take the initiative of accepting the counsel given him by those experts in modern medicine? Could you imagine Jacob saying with conviction and urgency: "Whatever you do, gentlemen, save the life of my dear Rachel."

Or should we express that desperate husband's desire in still more passionate human terms: "Make speed to put to death that mother-murderer, before he has time to force his way toward daylight, destroying the life of my beloved wife."

I think I am perfectly correct when I state categorically: Such is not the voice of the Bible. This is definitely not the mood of either Old Testament or New Testament thinking. The unanimous vote is, rather, all the time in favor of leaving all dubious matter of life and death to Him who is the supreme Ruler of heaven and earth. And how does He rule? Every moment His dominion is exerted through the unfailing application of His holy law.

I imagine the thoroughly converted man, Israel, on his painful way toward Bethlehem Ephratha, humbly and prayerfully whispering: "God is able to keep both mother and child alive if that is His gracious will. Under all circumstances I have no right whatsoever to take the decision into my own hands, as if I, a poor human creature, were in a position to exert judgment over life and death. By virtue of what 'perfect' knowledge about the present and the future could I take upon myself the responsibility of doing that?" This sounds more like the language of dedicated servants of Yahweh in past and present.

And now the last case enumerated:

3. The mother attracts an illness during her pregnancy. We here have to do with illnesses of the peculiar kind supposed to constitute a threat to the health and normalcy of the prospective child. Misshapen limbs or even a retarded mind may be the permanent result of a child being born under such circumstances. Well, is an abortion in this case the self-evident answer to the problem at hand? Many facts can be presented as arguments against such a solution.

In the first place, we should not take it for granted that physicians, even today, are always able to make an infallible diagnosis, still less an infallible prognosis. In numerous cases where the medical experts considered with the greatest pessimism the prospects of the child being born as a normal infant, it was actually seen that the little one had no deficiencies of any kind, either at birth or later.

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But take even the instance that the baby really becomes abnormal in the above-mentioned ways and for the above-mentioned reasons. How often has not the history of human pathology shown that precisely children of this "inferior" category have become an invaluable blessing, not only to their own families, but also to the entire community in which they were permitted to grow up.

One mother, Evelyn Kaytor, whose daughter's birth was already a fact, writes in her captivating book about Lyn Kaytor, how little encouragement she was given by the great experts in modern medicine:

A surgeon came, and he also examined her [little Lyn]. "I am sorry, we can't do anything for her. She has a spina bifida-a severe one. The spinal cord and nerves are malformed, and part of the spinal cord is exposed to the outside, with no bone, muscle or skin to protect it. Varying degrees of paralysis from the waist down, hydrocephalus [water in the brain] and dysfunction of the bladder and bowel may result. She may never be able to sit up or walk. Some parents don't want treatment in this kind of case. She may live two weeks, maybe two months or even two years." [p. 16]

Lyn, however, is still alive, and it has fallen to her lot to become a veritable ray of sunshine to all those who have had the good fortune to be part of the circle into which this human creature entered so precariously. She is intelligent and has a life filled with happiness and real meaning.

Many parents have been tortured with making a life-or-death decision when told of the birth of a handicapped child. "Should we let this child live or die?" they ask themselves. Some feel a great sense of relief at having done the right thing for the child and themselves if they let their child die. Still the question persists, "Did we do the right thing? What have we missed by not allowing this child to live?"

THE READER:

I still cannot see that you have any strong case here in favor of your main thesis: "Let God intervene rather than man." Where did you ever find the clear divine intervention in this kind of instance? What about the miracle you seem to count on; for instance, the miracle that mother of your story had evidently been praying for? The miracle of manifest physical healing, where did that take place? It did not take place in the case you have just cited!

THE WRITER:

Maybe a greater miracle took place than anything you seem to be having in mind. The greatest miracle of all definitely took place: A human family were bound together as never before. They learned to accept the counsel and the aid of a greater One, a wiser One, a more loving One than themselves, and even than their most famous doctors.

THE READER:

Well, this happened to turn out a relatively lucky case. But what about the cases where the very spirit, the mind of the child, is seriously affected? What spiritual harmony and family fellowship can you expect of that order? What future happiness do you feel inspired to predict for a family of that kind?

THE WRITER:

Here, as well, human predictions may often be quite valueless. The totally unexpected thing may happen, just as well as the expected one. Retarded children may distinguish themselves as most sympathetic. A mother often derives more joy and motherly fulfillment from her mongoloid child than from all her other children put together.

But probably the most important question is one we have not yet asked at all just here where it is imperative. I am thinking of the profoundly ethical question: Do not parents have the duty to take upon

themselves the care-and the actual burden-any misfortune imposes upon their parenthood? Should they not accept this with patience and faithfulness, up until the very last moment of their child's life?

Ever so often the very suffering and the very sacrifice have turned out to be the rescue handed out to a married couple. This was what gave their life a purpose and a firm goal. Evidently there is power hidden in taking up one's cross and carrying it to the end of the road.

A FRUSTRATED LISTENER DEMANDS ARGUMENTS RIGHT TO THE POINT

THE READER:

Thanks, Pastor. We have heard the preacher's sermon. We have had our full share of homiletics and pathos. Now it would be a relief to come back even to the teacher's objective teaching, however dry that may be. You always speak about Christianity as realistic thinking. What it teaches is represented as an object lending itself to sober investigation, the eager search for truth of the accurate researcher.

But how come, then, that among serious and thorough-going Christians there should exist so many diverging conceptions, --also with respect to the issue of abortion?

You know what any study group with serious intellectual ambitions has to be looking for. It is--in this case--some concrete matter of sober-minded knowledge which conclusively may demonstrate the Bible's ethics to be such and such. So of our teacher, in this instance, we must be entitled to demand that he lay down clear and decisive evidence for the validity of the thesis he has put forth, namely, the rather controversial claim that Biblical ethics simply excludes every form of abortus provocatus.

THE WRITER:

From this I can only derive the conclusion that what I find to be clear and conclusive, is not yet so for you. And in one way I do not blame you at all. On the one hand, the Bible, sure enough, as the great lode-star of Christian ethics, says clearly and conclusively: Thou shalt not kill. In other words, Do not take any human life. But then you establish the historical fact that eminent representatives of the Christian faith--among them even people enjoying a great reputation of being most orthodox believers in the Bible--make impressive lists of cases where the killing of embryos "can not" be equated with taking human life (killing) in the strict sense of the Bible.

Here then you must have every right to ask: Is there not in this field of study any possibility of research in the narrowest sense of the objective truth-seeker? My reply would be: To be sure there is. The name of that specific field in our case is anthropology, more particularly, Biblical Anthropology, the science of how the Bible looks upon man's nature and man's destiny.

The divergent views of abortion, you see, are found to be due to one thing: the lack of a consistent anthropology. It is now a long time since I myself had to leave the basically false theory that the Bible's view of man is an obscure and dubious matter. The Bible knows when human life begins and when it ends. It knows everything worth knowing about man. And it is not stingy in setting forth its knowledge in front of you and me, in order that we may have those very clear and concise notions we need regarding essential questions for the guidance of our lives.

What happens among men, however, is that, in this case as well, they raise an unfair accusation against God Himself: "The Creator has not seen to it that the creature was equipped with the necessary knowledge about his own being." I wonder if there exists any Christian community in the whole world which can truthfully claim: We are entirely free from any unfair accusation against the Creator and Sustainer, Jesus Christ.

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I am bound to reveal in some further detail what an ad-hoc committee of a denomination I reverence particularly, arrived at, as it was to give its Recommendations to Medical Institutions. I have mentioned and commented on three cases of the five where that group of serious and most well-intentioned Christian leaders have demonstrated their humanly understanding attitude toward people who are looking for a "Statement of Principles for the Interruption of Pregnancy." I should here quote verbatim all five cases in which abortion may be administered, preserving "regard for the sanctity of life" and yet having at the same time "concern for people."

1. When continuation of the pregnancy may threaten the life of the woman or impair her health.
2. When continuation of pregnancy is likely to result in the birth of a child with physical deformities or mental retardation.
3. When conception has occurred as a result of rape or incest.
4. When the case involves an unwed child under fifteen years of age.
5. When for some reason the requirements of functional human life demand the sacrifice of the lesser potential human value.

To this I must add, from the general introduction, the following paragraph: "The intentional interruption of pregnancy involves complicated, subtle and sometimes morally obscure issues" (paragraph 1 of the same document).

I am sorry to be forced to say what I think about the immediate result of such a formulation. It casts serious doubt on any man's possibility of reaching the objective truth about himself, his nature and destiny. As far as I can see, this is not one whit better than the epistemological pessimism our Western World generally has received as its sad heritage from "our greatest philosopher," Immanuel Kant.

The conclusion the committee has drawn from that faithless premise is exactly the same you and I, heirs of a pagan culture, arrive at only too naturally: "Because of this, no set of moral generalizations can substitute for individual conscience" (Ibid.)

I know what a good and sympathetic maxim this was meant to be. Still, the temptation is so close at hand to interpret it as follows: The poor faltering human creature's own subjective notion of right and wrong is bound to be the only judgment throne for deciding the matter in the last analysis.

An introduction of that dubious kind impresses me as a scary one. But it is not a committee over in America somewhere that scares me. What scares me most of all is my own self. For how could I fail to realize to some extent that this entire and thoroughly pagan trend of thought is MINE? It is a property to which I have the full and inalienable title. As a co-heir to Plato's and Kant's kingdom, I have a special access and a special right to that paganism, which no one can take away from me. At least no one save Jesus Christ.

But tell me now: Is this alleged uncertainty regarding ethical right and ethical wrong in matters of abortion a Biblical fact or a pagan illusion? Is man's life subject to such arbitrariness or haphazard? No, this is a basic illusion. For Jesus Christ has spoken. And His speech is unambiguous, unmistakable.

What, then, does the Bible say about human nature, and hence also about our right attitude toward the embryo? Is it true or is it a black lie that the relevant Document, the Bible, is so poor in points of reference that we must remain ignorant, more or less, about the embryo's inalienable right of continued life? Will its human rights collapse in front of "more advanced forms of human values"? After a life of tireless inquiry into the "secrets" of Biblical anthropology, I do not hesitate any longer to throw into the balance my modest testimony in defense of the maligned God in this field as well. Particularly if I happen to hear some of

my fellow believers expressing themselves in terms of such destructive doubt, I see it as my duty to admonish them to the best of my ability.

Well then, what is the Bible's unambiguous view of man? And on what points does the mentioned committee-and so many other Christians, including myself during decades of willful ignorance-demonstrate that it suffers from the effects of an entirely different view of man, viz., the pagan classical one? I need not here hang out the knowledge my own studies have acquired. I have the privilege of being able to quote some pertinent and well-formulated statements by one of our most outstanding contemporary research experts in the field of Protestant theology, Reinhold Niebuhr, in his standard work on Christian anthropology, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*. The historical development has here been portrayed with drama-filled simplicity:

All modern views of human nature are adaptations, transformations, and varying compounds of primarily two distinctive views of man: (a) the view of classical antiquity, that is, of the Graeco-Roman world, and (b) the Biblical view. It is important to remember that while these two views are distinct and partly incomparable, they were actually merged in the thought of Medieval Catholicism. (The perfect expression of this union is to be found in the Thomistic synthesis of Augustinian and Aristotelian thought.) The history of modern culture really begins with the destruction of this synthesis, foreshadowed in nominalism, and completed in the Renaissance and Reformation. (Niebuhr: *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, 1955, p. 5)

That last sentence should strike anyone today as something remarkable, particularly if he finds prestige in being a modern man rather than belonging to the Middle Ages. I am somewhat afraid, however, that Niebuhr may here run the risk of appearing a little too optimistic in behalf of our own epoch-making modern culture. It may be doubtful whether our time deserves the honor of distinguishing itself as destroying the false synthesis which the Middle Ages formed between those two incongruous views of man: the pagan-classical one and the Judeo-Christian one. Such a wholesome disentanglement, disengaging the true in anthropology from the false, is a feat of critical realism which hardly either the Renaissance or the Reformation can boast of having "completed." Least of all is it a general trait of our modern times to accumulate merits in that direction. Here, by the way, Niebuhr's realism comes out triumphantly. He points out that liberal Protestantism is doing its best in favor of a new bastard, some kind of mixtum compositum of the old pagan-classical and the Christian-Biblical view of man.

Modern culture has thus been a battleground of two opposing views of human nature. This conflict could not be resolved. It ended in the more or less complete triumph of the modernized classical view of man. (Ibid.)

That is the Platonic view of man as a hybrid monster--I dare to use this epithet, and I have demonstrated its validity in my book, *Man, the Indivisible* (Oslo University Press, 1971)--a disrupted wretch fighting its meaningless battle between a body too exclusively material to have any trace of spirituality in it and a mind too abstractly intellectualistic to have any trace of personal humanity left in it.

So what is the fundamental, and fatal, difference between the two distinctive ways of looking upon man? This is certainly the question you require me to answer promptly. I may as well once more let Niebuhr provide the simple and still ominous reply:

The classical view of man comprised primarily of Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic conceptions of human nature, contains of course varying emphases, but it may be regarded as one in its common conviction that man is to be understood primarily from the standpoint of the uniqueness of his rational faculties. What is unique in man is his nous. Nous may be translated as "spirit," but the primary emphasis lies upon the capacity for thought and reason. In Aristotle the nous is the vehicle of purely intellectual activity and is a universal and immortal principle which enters man from without. (Ibid.)

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I should point out, in order to convey the full meaning of this, that the classical "nous" is an eternal and absolutely self-contained virtue of the SOUL with a capital S. This is the fairly constant pattern of pagan classicism's dualistic-spiritualistic notion of both human nature and spiritual values of any description. It invariably has to do with a spiritual dimension of the strictly immaterial kind, the timeless and spaceless kind. There is rarely any departure worth mentioning from Platonic idealism's concept of the pure spirit. So nous is essentially pure reason. This concept is basic to the proud humanistic intellectualism which has permeated your thinking and mine, not to mention the thinking of I do not know what number of committees "ad hoc," viz., "ad regulandum abortum provocatum" in our Western World. I am giving you a verbatim example of formulations born right out of this kind of anthropology:

According to the Bible, man's soul is a functional, rather than an objective reality.... The soul is not infused in a "thing" at a specific moment in life, such as the time of conception. It is rather a human capacity to function rationally and morally, achieved fully through growth and development and an increasing investment of human life; at the time of fetal viability (the viability to life after birth--approximately 20 weeks) and thereafter, that development and investment are such that only another human life could balance the scale. (Paragraph 2 of the above-mentioned committee report on regulating the administration of abortions.)

No, according to the Biblical anthropology, man's soul is definitely an objective reality, even a "thing" (Latin: "res," which is the basic word from which the term "reality" and the term "realism" have been derived!) The human soul is this,--most concretely and most realistically--even a long time before his (or her) rational (and moral) capacity has started to "function" at all.

But if you and I insist on being modern in the sense that we take for our pattern of thought the thinking of the first revolutionizing philosopher of modern time, the Frenchman Descartes, then it is evident where we arrive. In his epoch-making work, *Discours de la Methode*, he makes use of a modern European language, and there he chooses the word "esprit," the French word for "spirit," in order to express the value he considers to be the greatest and most impressive in the whole world. But what does he mean when he says "esprit," even identifying the deepest essence of his own being with that inestimable value? Here his onesidedness, his narrow mindedness, his empty sophistication, is exactly as great as that of his ancient spiritualistic father Plato. The great prestigious thing to him is human spirit in the sense of something entirely bodiless, entirely timeless and spaceless. It is vanity, both in the sense of time-honored human pride or infatuation and in the sense of utter emptiness. Man's summum bonum is pure intellect.

It was this one-sided intellectualism with all its inhuman chill and hardness which was destined to invade not only France, but the entire cultural domain of the Occident in modern times. That is the formidable triumph of our endemic "nous." Do you see what makes for prestige in the outlook upon man and the world which we have inherited from our secular forebears?

And what then is bound to be the unforgivable sin we seem to see in the foetus? In what does its inferiority consist, and this in an even far worse degree than in the case of the child? Well, the foetus is just unintelligent, that is all. It is dumb in every derogatory sense of the term. It is brute,--simply impenetrable to the great things of the spirit, the cunning of the super-smart. Such is the evaluation of the embryo, the pitiable unborn one.

How then could anyone expect a more generous treatment kept in store for such a wretch? How could any mercy or considerate come to a foetus from a band of intellectualists? Oh no, in our world a "retarded creature" like that would be doomed to the fate of death or barren fortuity. There seems to be only one hope of survival. That is an intervention on the part of a higher Power. I am speaking about the Sovereign One, whose authoritative voice is heard in the wilderness, calling out its categorical imperative, like rolling thunder: Thou shalt not kill.

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And now please do not try to tell me that this is the oratory of sentimental pathos once more making its appearance in my writing. In the name of intellectual reasonability and sober-minded search for truth you have already accepted the teacher, even the driest research lecturer. So with the same reasonability you must accept the representative of true jurisprudence, the custodian of righteous law. You must accept the defenseless ones.

But what do we see today? What is the historical reality of the present day? What protection on the part of contemporary law does the foetus enjoy? It is a thousand times worse off than the newborn child. For the child can at least assert itself to some extent--in spite of its "criminal" lack of adult intelligence. It actually has some kind of eloquent spokesman in favor of its shaky case in the simple fact that it is lying there, visible to anyone who happens to have eyes. That tiny tot possesses the full charm of innocent childlikeness. People no sooner get a glimpse of that little creature than they are touched to the core of their hearts by the very sight of it. And matters are not very different in the case of a newborn lamb or even a bulldog puppy. Those creatures too, possess the unfinished child's potential perfection as part and parcel of their mysterious esthetic radiation. Normally equipped grown-ups have a singular feeling of almost sensual rapture at the moment when they are allowed to hold that little one in their arms.

In fact, even the notorious lack of that discursive smartness we adults are so proud of, seems to have a charming effect on us, as long as it is allowed to last. For evidently even our obdurate sophisticated "westernness," has not yet managed to make us so inhuman that the deepest instincts of our humanity have been entirely lost or perverted.

But what now about the fate of the embryo, poor little one? Can he (or she) irradiate a similar charm? Does he (or she) have the advantage of being someone men will tend to feast their eyes upon? The foetus has the bad luck (or maybe the good luck) of being invisible. In some real way his mother, it is true, may have a certain vision of him. But to you and me who lack the special clairvoyance of motherliness, he is certainly invisible. It might happen by pure accident that some hospital nurse, like one I know about, gets a literal glimpse of that curbed little creature. But that was only after the operation, as he was lying there in an open garbage can where some careless surgeon had thrown him down without closing the lid. During a brief second, before she could turn her face aside, she got a full snapshot view of that sad figure of a mutilated human being. He was soiled with blood, but that could not prevent her from recognizing his humanness, the potential human destiny which here had been cut off abruptly. She turned pale at the sight of it. Then gradually her motherly compassion got the better of her. She burst into tears, followed by a convulsion of sobs. She was crying in despair over the tragic death of another woman's baby.

And now where was that other lady who really ought to have had maternal instinct enough to take pity on her own little unborn child? Perhaps she was having more than she could ever handle just trying to drown in some kind of potion of oblivion, the nightmare-like memories of the tragic moment when resolutely she turned her thumb down, just as Nero of old had the habit of doing whenever a martyr was presented on the arena in front of the cages of the wild beasts. "Shall this one die?" "Yes," says the down-turned thumb. "Let the savage lions loose. Crush the wretch. It is better for us,--and for him."

More often than not, that lady, the potential mother, does not even have for her excuse a single one of those "five points."

May I quote what a famous physician of old, Dr. J. H. Kellogg said in his book, *Man, the Masterpiece*:

"Among the moral evils resulting from marital excesses must be reckoned the heinous crime of criminal abortion. A woman finds herself the unwilling mother of an unborn child, the very thought of which fills her with repugnance and disgust. She argues, Why should I be made to suffer the pains of pregnancy and childbirth merely to gratify the animal propensities of another? She transfers the sense of injustice which she rightly feels against the author of the wrong, to the helpless creature which is the natural consequence of it,

and allows her feelings to grow into actual vindictiveness, when she is ready for almost any measure which will free her from the encumbrance, and willingly resorts to the use of drugs or instruments by which the purpose may be accomplished." (p.423)

This was written in the 1890s. Today there is no need of resorting to such clandestine manipulations.

THE READER:

May it be permitted to call the historian of ideas back to his history, and his ideas. You have enlarged upon what you call the false view of man. But now what about the true, the Biblical--and in your opinion, decisive--argument against abortion?

THE WRITER:

You are right. This is significant for the purpose of overthrowing the sneaking idea, craftily insinuating itself into our "point 5," an often rather neglected, but nevertheless most important issue. You may recall the fifth, by good and well-intentioned Christians alleged reason for recommending abortion: "When for some reason the requirements of functional human life demand the sacrifice of the lesser potential human value. (Emphasis is mine.)

So this has to do with a rational weighing against each other of different human values, one that may be efficiently functioning already and one that may not appear to be so efficiently functioning.

THE BIBLE'S VIEW OF WHEN HUMAN LIFE STARTS FUNCTIONING IN A FULLY ACCEPTABLE WAY

It is evident that we must here go to the very foundation of Christian anthropology in order to have a true basis for our answer. We must know the basic Biblical principles for weighing things of that delicate kind. We must make sure at what point it becomes relevant to speak about a "human nature" at all. When does your life start, and when does it come to a halt? Particularly the former part of that question may have received a rather step-motherly treatment. The problem that usually fascinates anthropologists, you see, both philosophical ones and religious ones, is rather this: What happens to me, as a human being at the moment when I die? Over this, one almost fails entirely to ask the other question: What happened to me, as a human being, at the moment when I started to live?

Now, in order to obtain fundamental knowledge about man, we must here again make a considerable detour. We must first know something fundamental about God. Today I never start a course in Christian anthropology without having given my students a sort of introductory course in theology. The doctrine of man presupposes a Doctrine of God. For that is, at the same time, the Doctrine of Life, since He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Again I have the pleasure of starting with a quotation from Niebuhr. By the way, it is inspiring to see the unanimity among the outstanding researchers in the field of Biblical anthropology, and to a large extent also the field of a Biblical Doctrine of God, which has been the result of intensive inquiry into the historical documents relative to the peculiar outlook on man and on God possessed by the first Christians. Still, I must say that I have found some of Niebuhr's formulations about the essence of the Scriptural teachings about God particularly remarkable:

"God is not merely mind who forms a previously given formless stuff. God is both vitality and form and the source of all existence. He creates the world. This world is not God. But it is not evil because it is not God. Being God's creation, it is good. The consequence of this conception of the world upon the view of

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human nature in Christian thought is to allow an appreciation of the unity of body and soul in human personality which idealists and naturalists have sought in vain. Furthermore, it prevents the idealistic error of regarding the mind as essentially evil. But it also obviates the romantic error of seeking for the good in man-as-nature, and for evil in man-as-spirit or as reason. Man is, according to the Biblical view, a created and finite existence in both body and spirit." (Ibid.)

Here we should so far particularly notice one aspect of the Biblical notion of man as compared to God. Man is a created being, whereas God is the Creator. Man is a creature first and last. A creature on a very high plane of creation, it is true. Man was created "in God's image," nothing less than that. That is, as a person from the first spark of life on, until the last. And this personalism is not a variable, depending on the greater or lesser degree of rational capacity. He is not a human person just to the extent that he may happen to "function efficiently."

An elementary sense of ethical reasonability will suffice to understand that this must be so. Would any normal father think he has reason to doubt that his newborn child is a person, a human being, because it is so "distressingly backward," so far, in its aptitude for discursive thinking or in its ability to distinguish between right and wrong? Would he on the basis of such doubts about the little one's inefficient functioning in intellectual and moral respects, arrive at the conclusion that it would be a lesser crime to put an end to the child's life prior to the stage when his "capacity to function rationally and morally" has been "achieved fully through growth and development and an increasing investment of human life?" (paragraph 2 of the Statement of Principles)

The diametrical opposite would seem more reasonable, simply in view of the fact that the particular helplessness in a child demands particular help and a particular sense of responsibility on the part of the parent.

The fact that a loving Creator has given life, even personal life, and the personal destiny which inevitably goes along with that, to a human sprout, can only signify that it has exactly the same amount of humanity at every stage of its development, and exactly the same right to be granted protection and a continuation of life.

Of course, some tough demagogue might ask: Is this living creature functional enough to meet the requirements of my material interests of exploitation at the present moment? But God's kingdom knows no barren pragmatism of that kind. To our Lord and supreme Ruler a purely pragmatic philosophy of leadership is something far too incomplete and therefore far too disruptive to form the ideal government. Disruption is the opposite of HOLISM, God's peculiar brand of anthropology (Greek: holos, totality).

According to God's notion of manhood, one thing seems to be the prerequisite for being considered as a man with the full spectrum of human rights: The creature must have been given by God the tremendous honor of possessing a human destiny. And that is certainly an attribute the foetus possesses from the very moment when the zygote is an accomplished fact. That holy encounter between the male semen and the female ovum is a destiny-laden event.

Notice this comment on Genesis 2:7 by Robert H. Dunn, M.D., in his essay: The Nature of Man in the Early Stages of Life and Our Responsibility:

"I believe the embryo or zygote at the moment of conception fulfills this definition of a person. The cell is made of the elements of the earth, and the principle of life is found in the protoplasm, the nucleus, the genes, the chromosomes, having the potentiality of the future person, requiring only time, nourishment, and protection to be that person. This is a passive phase in the life of a person, but it makes him no less a person.

DOES THE BIBLE PRESENT ANY CLEAR EVIDENCE THAT THE CREATOR HAS PUT A STAMP OF HUMAN PERSONALISM ON THE FOETUS, "PROGRAMMING INTO IT" A FULL POTENTIALITY OF INDIVIDUAL HUMAN DESTINY WITH FREEDOM OF CHOICE?

Such a factual "programming" device--to use a term borrowed from modern scientific technology, adapting it to the important Biblical philosophy of a free will and full moral responsibility, this is an association we can hardly avoid if we go to a text as solemn as the one in Luke where the angel tells Zacharias what has been decided by God for his yet unborn son, John the Baptist:

And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. And he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Luke 1:14-17)

Later in the same chapter we are told what happened to Elisabeth, the mother of John, six months after this event. Then Mary, who was also with child--and what a Child!--visited her. Elizabeth was then inspired to say the following:

"And she spoke out with a loud voice and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed. For there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." (Luke 1:42-45)

And now we may go to David, the psalmist He too is among those who do know how early the identity of a human creature is literally registered in the wonderful document of physical reality. No man in the world can flee away from that reality.

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day. The darkness and the light are both alike to thee. For thou hast possessed my reins. Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee. For I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thy eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." (Psalm 139:7-16)

THE HISTORICAL DRAMAS OF ENTIRE NATIONS HAVE BEGUN ALREADY THERE-DEEP DEEP DOWN IN THE OBSCURE RECESSES OF THE MOTHER'S WOMB

Just notice what the Lord said to Rebekah:

And the children struggled together within her. And she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels. And the one people shall be stronger than the other people, and the elder shall serve the younger. (Genesis 25:22, 23)

What is it, then, that those feel called upon to do, who decide to be instruments in an abortion? Is it to interfere fatally and light-mindedly in God's history, wiping entire peoples out of it? Is it to tear out irretrievably the wheat together with the evil weeds. What a high-handed arbitrariness.

Or is it just to make prospective mothers childless, perhaps comfortless for the rest of their lives. Please do not trifle away with a shrug of the shoulder what Dr. Julius Fogel of the Columbia Hospital for women in Washington D. C. says about the possible effects of abortion on the woman's mind:

It is not as harmless and casual an event as many in the pro-abortion crowd insist. A psychological price is paid. It may be alienation, it may be a pushing away from human warmth, perhaps a hardening of the maternal instinct. Something happens on the deeper levels of a woman's consciousness when she destroys a pregnancy. I know that as a psychiatrist. (Washington Post, February 28, 1971)

THE MOTHER'S DESTINY INTIMATELY JOINED TO THAT OF THE SPROUTING CHILD AND STILL THEY ARE SEPARATE INDIVIDUALS

Some will always infer that the embryo is nothing but a part of its mother, since the two have to such an extent a "joint economy." Accordingly, she must feel free to make decisions about the embryo's life with the same sovereign authority with which she decides her own.

To this one may first remark: With what "sovereign authority" does any creature in this world make decisions about his own life? We have seen what Christian ethics says about that "sovereignty." It is an illusion. God is the Sovereign One--nobody else.

Well, but is not the foetus totally dependent of the mother in order to exist at all? Quite right. But so is the newborn child. But tell me: does that total dependence a new creature has on its superiors mean that the superiors are made less responsible for the dependent's life? Of course not, rather the opposite.

In the final analysis the great importance of belief in God's transcendence is that it makes a difference between reverence and irreverence. Reverence is translated into all of life. Without belief in a God who transcends our own experience and our own consciousness, man must come to believe that he is the Lord of Life, and sooner or later he is led to arrogance or despair. In his arrogance he will decree when the lives of others shall begin and end. He will develop the perfect world with just the right number of people. No one will be born with physical defects, and no one will be born who is unwanted. No one will live longer than is good for himself and the community--all this in the name of humanitarianism. But in a time of despair this earthbound "Lord of Life" may logically decree the conclusion of his own. (Kenneth J. Sharp: "Abortion the Psychological Price," Christianity Today, June 4, 1971.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This, then, has been my personal little contribution to the present debate about situation ethics. My form of expression may have seemed somewhat sharp to many readers once in a while. Still, I cannot see how I could express myself otherwise. That would be contrary to the ringing voice of my deepest conscience in view of the specific experience that happens to be my background and the firm convictions that have gradually come to be mine. If sincerity is a capital virtue, I had better come out with my viewpoints exactly as they are.

Of course, all along the road there has also been opportunity for opposite viewpoints to come out with fiery candor and firm conviction on the part of fresh and sincerely disgusted ethics students of mine. Cross fire of that kind is what a teacher will always have to expect, as long as he himself is not spiritually dead. So he should rather stay alive and prepare to meet every protest and every onslaught with all the logic and all the fairness he can mobilize. By this I mean that he must meet his men, not in a self-complacent or sophisticated sort of way, but with comprehension and willingness to give consideration to all aspects of an intriguing debate. This I have tried to do in the adverse conditions of large auditoriums of crowded universities, as well as in the small classroom of a mountain farm in the peaceful surroundings of Alpes de Provence in Southern France. But I may assure you: Those skirmishes constitute memories I would not like to be without.

POSTSCRIPT

Dear Reader, here I am once more. I am enjoying the fairyland privilege of speaking to you at the most unlikely times, as if you were there right beside me at any moment. On the other hand, the real-world hope of having actual contact with you seems to be dwindling into nothingness. An author is a man who moves out in faith. And more often than not his faith tends to change into doubt. For day after day he speaks and speaks without knowing whether a single one of the words he sends out will ever reach a receptive public who are given the physical means of receiving anything whatsoever.

I can say, in all sincerity and candor: I did have the best intentions toward you, my potential reader, as well as toward my potential publisher (the arbitrary master of life or death in so many a writer's destiny): I did intend to stop short at this point of my booklet, presenting a manuscript of modest size. But my plan to stop has itself been stopped. I shall give you the whole little story of how it came to happen that I am still here in front of my typewriter, going on and on, stubbornly, in my writing:

I received in the mail today a letter from a friend. What do I mean by "a friend"? A friend, in my vocabulary, is a person who does not endanger your safe pilgrimage through life by exposing you to vain flattery. He knows the dubious bends in your being and is not afraid to tell you about them. In fact, he generously offers to straighten you out without delay.

My friend in this case happens to be a publisher. It was to him I had the boldness to send my typescript in its above form. I shall permit myself to quote some passages from his letter. (My books, after all,- permit me the immodesty of stating it myself this time-do have one point of indubitable merit sometimes: They may contain some excellent quotations. Here, then, is another example).

Dear Carsten:

I have just finished reading your manuscript on situation ethics and found it very interesting and provocative. You have made your points cogently and lucidly throughout. And I argued with you all the way. It was a pleasure to read the manuscript, believe me. But I am still furious over many of your points!

Now for a suggestion: You end your manuscript with these words: "But I may assure you: Those skirmishes constitute memories I would not like to be without."

What skirmishes? Skirmishes with "sincerely disgusted ethics students," who engaged in "cross fire" with you. You refer to this as an intriguing debate.

I would like to publish your manuscript, Carsten, but I personally feel that I could do so only if you would consent to have it published in a book that represents both sides of the issue. You have ardently argued your side. Obviously, you have spent a great deal of time wrestling with these ethical questions.

However, others have also spent a great deal of mental wrestling with the same issues, but have arrived at a different conclusion.

Then my good Book Editor friend goes on in his letter to me, suggesting that some other ethicist he knows be invited to present his case, and he concludes as follows:

What do you say? I think such a book would not only sell well, it would help stimulate the thinking of the . . . Church as few other books have. The more I think about the prospect of such a book, the more excited I get. It seems to me that this is the route of reasonable scholarship and reasonable Christian Maturity.

All other parts of the letter were equally kind and considerate. I hardly ever received a more pleasant rejection of a book manuscript.

THE AMBIGUOUS CASE OF PUBLIC DEBATING PARADES

Of course, it does not hurt any writer's ego to hear, as the phrase goes in a couple of subsequent letters from the same publisher: "I felt that this manuscript was the most lucid and well-written manuscript that you have submitted. Surely you did a good job." And further: "I believe such a book would be one of our best-sellers."

How could you fail to like promoters who speak to you in terms of that kind? But in those letters there were also points of realistic help which I could be sincerely thankful for. My adviser had here made me aware of the unwise way in which I had exposed myself to misunderstandings on the part of my potential readers. My formulations had tempted at least one man to assume something rather unwarranted, namely, a certain "pleasure" I am allegedly taking in "intriguing debates." Here I would like to point out that, as far as I know, I do not derive any sadistic enjoyment from antagonizing my students. What I have appreciated most in those "skirmishes" with my "sincerely disgusted students" (a jocular hyperbole) is precisely the way they place me in a dead spot where I find myself, again and again, at my wit's end. This forces me to admit my total personal insufficiency, and, accordingly, to depend on the great Master Teacher only, for a realistic solution. He is the One who really knows. And I may rest assured that He graciously assumes all the responsibility that falls to the lot of the perfectly knowing One.

I also realize far better now how naturally my reader might take another incident in my book as an indication that I might be the kind of person joyfully entering the arena of polemical debates, and staking confidently on this method as a most favorable approach. "You actually started out," one might say to me, "by presenting to us some sort of spiritual bull-fight in the very first pages of your book."

Yes, I plead guilty. I ought to have pointed out, expressly, on that occasion, that I seriously fear the final effects (and the insidious side-effects) of public debates we delight to engage in for the purpose of "advancing the cause of true religion," and of securing "reasonable scholarship and reasonable Christian maturity." I obviously took too much for granted here. I tacitly assumed, it seems, that there was sufficient indication of fears on my part in the fact that both debaters (Fletcher and Montgomery) were shown to be losers in that publicly arranged "skirmish," from which I quoted so extensively. And the one who loses most in cases of that order, strangely enough, is the one presenting what comes closest to a Biblical view. And the loss is not merely due to the general validity of the old saying: The one who wins a discussion loses a friend. No, there is more to it than that.

Our pioneers were, from the beginning, intensely aware of the tremendous power of cogent thought and intelligent argument in Biblical Christianity's special message for the end time. In matters of debate they

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were usually triumphant. But in this fact there was a great danger hidden. Self-sufficiency and personal pride would easily get the upper hand among the winners of such debates. On the part of those who had the sad experience of being vanquished, on the other hand, there tended to be a wave of bitterness and increased antagonism growing up.

These important drawbacks, however, still did not seem a sufficient reason to many of our ministers to shy away from such methods. Sometimes they took the initiative to challenge well-known opponents in contemporary theology and active evangelism to meet for public discussion on such and such a topic, often comprising the most controversial issues. Such confrontations were always quite popular. The public, by and large, never failed to enjoy any show of "spiritual pugilistics" of that sensational kind. They would come in crowds to the centers of such exciting entertainment.

But were they made more serious about the matters most important in their lives there? Did the debate cause them to become truly convicted in terms of a heartfelt conversion? On the contrary, it was constantly seen that after the "show" there was bound to be an anti-climax. Evidently there was nothing more there to stimulate the urge in most men for sensation and novelty. So the enthusiasm was bound to die. The air had gone out of the inflated balloon. The crowds never came back.

Now, are arrangements of a somewhat similar kind, made within our ranks today, necessarily a lesser danger? Sometimes in our schools and in our young people's societies we arrange meetings in favor of the truth, but in order to make that truth stand out spectacularly, we sometimes think it beneficial to present it against a background of obvious falsehood. Some eloquent speaker is called upon to present the opposite view for contrast's sake.

It has always made a very strong impression on my mind to read what Ellen White tells about the younger years of two famous and particularly infidel philosophers of our modern world, Hume and Voltaire:

It is said that Hume, the skeptic, was in early life a conscientious believer in the Word of God. Being connected with a debating society, he was appointed to present the arguments in favor of infidelity. He studied with earnestness and perseverance, and his keen and active mind became imbued with the sophistry of skepticism. Ere long he came to believe its delusive teachings, and his whole afterlife bore the dark impress of infidelity.

And now about Voltaire. I sometimes think that the worst thing that could happen to me would be if a true prophet of the Lord were ever to say about my future what is here said about that of Voltaire:

When Voltaire was five years old, he committed to memory an infidel poem, and the pernicious influence was never effaced from his mind. He became one of Satan's most successful agents to lead men away from God. Thousands will arise up in the judgment and charge the ruin of their souls upon the infidel Voltaire.

By the way, do you see the connection between realistic awareness in the churches of old of the danger inherent in playing certain games of insincerity and the historical fact that theatrical performances tended to be looked upon as a taboo. You know what a dramatic play is like. In the most impressive plays sooner or later the playwright will feel the need of introducing a character whom we traditionally call the villain. But that implies an awkward necessity: Someone must act out that person's role, as well. And he must do it convincingly. In order to make that part of the whole a real success the actor must virtually live the intimate life of the person he is supposed to represent. In other words, he must identify himself with an evil character. Now, what will be the effect of such identification in the actor's own life? His actions, his words, every single one of his gestures, every shade in his mimicry, is supposed to copy the inmost character of that villain. Would it be realistic to assume that this actor-as the only one in the whole world-would be

able to escape the inexorable laws of human psychology? Let us briefly point out what some specific aspects of those laws are like.

As a researcher in the field of psychological anthropology, I have been overwhelmed to establish the insights coming to us through inspired revelation. The testimony from God, miraculously presented to the open-minded student of Christian realism, conveys facts of psychological law-connectedness which coincide wonderfully with what scientific research, both ancient and modern, has amply demonstrated. What Aristotle gave us no more than an imperfect inkling about, and modern anthropological science has needed centuries to verify concerning a tremendous oneness in human nature, this is something God's inspired word pours out to us in upwelling cascades of illuminating brightness. We may help ourselves to its overflowing riches without money and without pay.

Owing to Plato's one-sided dualistic indoctrination of our Western world, we Westerners of today are all inclined to think of the inward in man (his "soul," his "thoughts," his "feelings," his "faith") as the only reality of true importance, to the almost total eclipse of every thing outward in the life of that same man (his "body," his "external formulations," his "actions," his "works" coming visibly and tangibly out in the concrete substance of everyday life). What we so easily forget is the importance of the "purely external" of man's existence as an integrating part of all human totality. It has always been a stubborn illusion in this prevailingly pagan culture of ours, that it is possible to separate the outward from the inward. But this is an undertaking just as impossible and just as nonsensical as trying to separate the front page from the back page of a sheet of paper. It cannot be done without doing cruel violence against the total reality at hand. You may, of course, intelligently distinguish between the two, but you cannot separate them. So this also applies to the quarrel-infested topic of "faith versus works" right in the center of fundamental ethics, envisioned as religious doctrine. Faith and works constitute two sides of one and the same reality. Making serious attempts at separating them must be a meaningless enterprise. Anyone observing it would have a right to suspect that something may be wrong with our normal senses.

In the spiritual field of human life such false dualism in a person's thinking must be nothing short of a catastrophe. So let us be particularly careful to develop and keep unimpaired a delicate sense of the totality in human life.

Words are more than an indication of character. They have the power to react on the character. Men are influenced by their own words. Often under a momentary impulse, prompted by Satan, they give utterance to jealousy or evil surmising, expressing that which they do not really believe. But the reaction reacts on the thoughts. They are deceived by their words and come to believe that true which was spoken at Satan's instigation. Having once expressed an opinion or decision, they are often too proud to retract it, and try to prove themselves in the right, until they come to believe that they are. It is dangerous to utter a word of doubt, dangerous to question and criticize divine light. The habit of careless words and criticism reacts upon the character, in fostering irreverence and unbelief. Many a man indulging in this habit has gone on, unconscious of danger, until he was ready to criticize and reject the work of the Holy Spirit. (DA 323)

Thus the un failing mechanism of psychological law works out, for good or for evil, as the case may be. Ellen White perceives both eventualities with visionary lucidity:

It is a law of nature that our thoughts and feelings are encouraged and strengthened as we give them utterance. While words express thoughts, it is also true that thoughts follow words. If we would give more expression to our faith, rejoice more in the blessings that we know we have--the great mercy and love of God,--we would have more faith and greater joy. (MH 251-52)

Of course, the importance of that inward thing we call our thoughts is not in any way diminished by these reflections. It is among God's main concerns that we should be in a position to have our thoughts safeguarded and controlled in a way as efficient as ever possible. Everything has been done by the Creator in

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order to ensure that safeguard and control. This, too, is provided by eternal laws. Nothing is left to mere chance or haphazard. The enemy of souls has been duly restricted in his activity. He is not permitted to read our secret thoughts. At the same time, however, we should know that Satan is a fine observer of outward expressions. Frequent references are made to this outstanding cleverness of the devil as an experienced student of human nature. But the protest we all ought to direct against our own carelessness and neglect is this one: Why should the archdeceiver be allowed to monopolize that important talent of strategical psychological insight? Some amount of cunning strategy and practical know-how is a good thing to possess for any warrior, particularly the one fighting in a battlefield as serious as that of the spiritual warfare each one of us is bound to carry on day by day. Why should we permit that merciless adversary of ours to have advantages over us which it is in God's providence that he should not have? We ought to have pretty good reasons not to provide him with all those unnecessary clues we seem so eager to give him in the form of outward manifestations of our interior life, such as rash words and thoughtless actions. God has made it possible for every man to watch his words and restrain his actions. Nevertheless, it is most interesting to observe, in the following statement, that the main emphasis is not so much on what we should avoid doing as what we should actively do. The attitude of the Christian is a positive one:

When we feel the least inclined to commune with Jesus, let us pray the most. By so doing we shall break Satan's snare; the clouds of darkness will disappear, and we shall realize the sweet presence of Jesus. Let us resolve that we will not sin against God with our lips, that we will never speak in a light trifling manner, that we will never murmur or complain of the providence of God, and that we will not become accusers of the brethren. We cannot always hinder the thoughts that come as temptations; but we can resist the enemy so that we shall not utter them. The adversary of souls is not permitted to read the thoughts of men, but he is a keen observer, and he marks the words and actions, and skillfully adapts his temptations accordingly. If all would labor to repress sinful thoughts and feelings, giving them no expression in words and acts, Satan would be defeated; for he would not know how to prepare his specious temptations to meet their cases.

Oh that the veil could be parted for a moment, and you could see the interest that all heaven takes in the human race! God and heavenly angels are anxiously waiting to see if we will not cleanse ourselves from all sin.

We want to get in the habit of talking of heaven. Talk of that life which will continue as long as God shall live, and then you will forget your little trials and difficulties. (Historical Sketches, p. 146)

Here you have a glance of something essential about the beautiful ethic instituted by God. You get to see the counter-strategy recommended in order to obtain, in our active behavior, the help of the Lord. That help is something He administers to us through the laws He Himself has established in the psycho-physical nature of our being. And notice: it is our unreserved obedience to those divine laws that makes it possible for Him to make the help we need so desperately, and which He so dearly longs to give us, a living reality in our lives. For precisely those laws, established from everlasting, because they simply constitute the direct expression of His character, the very essence of His being, are equally essential to the very being we have in Him. This is self-evident, since they constitute the basic foundation of all life. The great heavenly Agape of which they constitute the express transcript is the living power throbbing through every infinitesimal morsel of man's psycho-physical reality. So how could you and I have any life whatsoever apart from this? We must learn this all-important lesson: It is our humble attitude of submission to every divine law that constitutes our guarantee for being protected from all dangers threatening us on our way. Disobedience and proud rebellion against those same laws automatically work in the opposite direction. That titanic attitude immediately places us on the enemy's side. So what is it that really happens at the moment when man proceeds to carry out the acts of external behavior corresponding to his inward temptations? He simply tears down the very fortress erected by God for his protection. He simply gives the evil one an open chart, as it

were, showing every weak point in his armor. Why should we stoop down to such foolishness? Why should we release information which ought to remain top secrets between God and us?

A related testimony is given in an article of much later date:

Satan cannot read our thoughts, but he can see our actions, hear our words; and from his long knowledge of the human family he can shape his temptations to take advantage of our weak points of character. And how often do we let him into the secrets of how he may obtain the victory over us. Oh, that we might control our words and actions! How strong we would become if our words were of such an order that we would not be ashamed of them in the day of judgment. How different will they appear in the day of God from what they seem when we utter them. (Review and Herald, Feb. 27, 1913)

In connection with the negative part of these counsels (the effort to refrain from certain outward expressions of inward thoughts and sentiments), students sometimes ask me the following question: Then what about our prayers? Should we hesitate to pray out loud, lest the devil get to know our problems and our doubts? Should we be circumspect as we pour out our hearts to the Lord, entreating Him to come to our rescue regarding this or that specific trouble in our lives, trembling with fear lest the enemy be let into secrets we ought to keep with our God?

Of course not. We know that the devil and his whole army must flee and be completely routed at the moment when a sincere prayer from a poor human being goes out to the Lord of the Universe. Not one word of that prayer would be audible to the demons in terms of helping them to arrange their stratagems. The pens of inspiration inform us that the simple prayer of a sincere soul causes the evil one to tremble.

WHO ARE THE REAL TEACHERS OF A PITILESS BRAND OF ETHICS?

I know quite well that stern Christian ethics has no chance of becoming popular in this world. It will never be able to compete with human ethics in popularity. Christian ethics is a priori doomed to the destiny of being looked down upon, not only as pessimistic and narrow minded, but even as downright merciless and malicious. At best, the Christian ethicist will be regarded by the human ethicist as misanthropic. The feted "sunshine child" of this world is the human ethicist. For he is so extremely generous and gentle. A severe ethicist of the "biblicist mold" is more likely to be represented as a fanatic who loses his humanity in the legalist gloom of "propositional truths." He is branded an "doctrinaire."

Liberal theologians have an ideal as far removed from this as ever possible. Some of them claim that Jesus, our great Example, "did not care one wit about theological doctrines." His credo of ethical conduct, they will say, is contained in a few verses from the Sermon on the Mount. And on the great Day of Judgment (if any day of that kind is admitted as a possibility at all) He will not subject you to any exam in dogmatics. He will not ask you what the tenets have been for your religious teaching, but rather about entirely different things. And then they will quote Matthew 25:32, which is such a simple type of eschatology:

When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in: Naked and ye clothed me: I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer Him

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saying, When saw we thee and hungered and fed thee? or thirsty and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger and ye took me not in: naked and ye clothed me not: sick and in prison and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. Matthew 25:31-46.

To be sure, the quotation is well chosen and incontestable. Here it is the disposition of the merciful heart that takes the prize. And what, then, about a great humanist and liberal theologian such as Albert Schweitzer, just to mention one. On what side should we expect to find him on the solemn occasion? This is a question you are sometimes asked as a conservative Christian.

Of course, there are many things to admire in Albert Schweitzer's life. We must simply leave to God, the great Judge, to pass judgment on theologians as well as on other people. He knows every remote corner in a person's heart, and every situation in his life. But when I am asked a specific question like that by a sincere student who wishes to know my personal opinion, I just cannot make as if it coincides entirely with the opinions of those who take it for granted that Schweitzer is bound to be in the group of the sheep.

I do know, to be sure, what all liberal ethicists in Christendom will state, almost as a matter of course in the present case: "Albert a 'goat'?" -By no means! That would be unthinkable. For if any man has ever grasped the spirit of the Christian message, the spirit of the good Samaritan, filled with love for the suffering ones, then he must be the one. Can't you already hear the Lord greeting him in the kingdom, saying: 'Albert, I was a poor black child without clothes or food or housing down in the dark jungle of Lambarene. But you, my true and faithful servant, healed my wounds, clothed my naked body and provided food for my famishing stomach. Go in, Albert, to the kingdom prepared for you!' On the day of final reward or doom (if any such day can be assumed as a literal fact), in front of the Lord Jesus on His judgment throne (if any such throne can be assumed as a literal fact), Albert Schweitzer is bound to pass the test with honors! -Summa cum laude. No doubt about it!"

Is there no doubt about that? Let us proceed a little farther down into the "spirit" of the story of Matthew 25. Whatever that serious story means, I know one thing it does not mean. It does not represent a lesson in humanism. True, the Bible does teach that men should be humane, but its "humanism" in this sense, is always kept strictly within the framework of a sober-minded Christian faith. And that is a "humanity" reaching infinitely farther down than modern humanists generally seem to fathom. Theological humanists appear to have something remarkable in common with marxist (that is, rather non-theological or even anti-theological) humanists: They often tend to think that physical hunger and physical thirst are the only essential kinds of hunger and thirst we have got to relieve in this world of a definitely fallen humanity.

Is, for instance, that kind of hunger and thirst the most disturbing one we experience in Sweden today, to mention one land of the modern world? (The first time I was preparing a little talk on Albert Schweitzer, I just happened to be in Sweden, having been requested to give an address to a group of Bible students.)

Oh no, there is another kind of hunger and thirst in our civilized Western World today causing millions to languish in despair. What is it they are hungering and thirsting for? It is for meaningfulness in their lives. Their most nagging doubt and desperation is just about this essential issue in human existence:

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MEANING. But meaning is non-existent apart from the contingent and most specific intervention in individual human lives on the part of a convincingly intelligent personal God. I am speaking about the alternative represented by a historical Jesus who coincides entirely with the God-Man phenomenon of a literal incarnation the Gospel talks about in most unambiguous terms. Our world is on the brink of perishing for lack of knowledge about that living God, who, in a tangible and perfectly ordered way, leads the world He has created and redeemed, the literal Jesus Christ of a first and a second coming.

And now, what did Albert Schweitzer have as his "comforting message" to this generation of doubting and despairing Westerners, his own people, those curious disciples of a more sophisticated culture, hanging at his lips in super civilized Western schools of humanist sciences? What kind of bread did he have for a famishing youth?

He gave us "stones for bread." Worse than that: when a half-starved generation asked him "for a fish," he gave us "a serpent," if we may keep to the exact wording of Matthew 7:9. And please tell me, what kind of "bread" is it you and I happen to be doling out to an equally famishing group of despairing young scholars in our institutions of academic scholarliness? Is the formulation of Matthew 7 about the "stones" and the "serpents" still a fairly valid one, or is it grossly exaggerated? Notice, I am not now limiting the searching question to the overtly liberal schools of Christian theology. I feel I should rather address it to myself and my own circle, in fact, a whole network of schools calling themselves conservative and strongly orthodox. What will the great Judge have to pronounce on that last day to you and me as shepherds of the flock? Would it be possible that He, Jesus Christ, Shepherd of shepherds, might be standing there characterizing our theological teaching, and our teaching as a whole, in a way we have hardly expected? Will He express Himself somewhat as follows to me, to my great surprise: "Listen, my dear teacher of theology, I, Jesus, had the harrowing experience of sitting there in my desk right beneath your classroom chair in the form of a docile, but desperately wavering modern student. With all the pent-up tension of a twentieth century adolescent I was reaching out both hands, as it were, to receive the message to expert knowledge which might finally set my aching heart at ease. What I kept begging for, day after day, entreatingly, was some little morsel of that certainty of faith that speaks about a meaningful world order, an almighty, and at the same time, both infinitely loving and infinitely just, heavenly Father, a God realistic enough to lift me up in His arms and save me. But with what did you fill my pitiably shaking hand? With the strings of the scorpion, the poisonous bite of the serpent of secular erudition; in a word, with unbelief."

"I was a stranger, and ye took me not in." What does this mean in Christ's tragedy-foreboding formulation in Matthew 25:43? In our contemporary setting it might mean something like this: "I felt like a motherless child in a meaningless world. And you did nothing but increase my meaninglessness a thousand fold. You did that, for instance, by whispering into my attentive ear-in a certain mystifying, but the more impressive way-that the formulations handed down to us by the prophets of God are the works of man, and should be taken with great reservations, a message from the world of goodness and love, no doubt, so a message of truth, to be sure, but a truth with modifications."

And what then shall you and I, wonderfully broad minded theology teachers of today, spiritual heirs of Albert Schweitzer far more than of Jesus Christ, come up with in our defense? Maybe we will be heard stammering forth, somewhat like those "goats" of Matthew 7:22: "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" Or in our peculiar jargon of man-made works in an academic style, the speech of self-defense might sound more like this: "Lord, Lord, have we not composed great theological dissertations in thy name. Have we not diligently carried on our most learned *Leben Jesu Forschung*, revealing to the world a more reliable story of the historical Jesus, in fact, even letting the publishers send the entire royalties due to us for our amazing best-sellers, to emergency clinics and other charity enterprises in the darkest African jungles." And then will He profess unto them, "I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matthew 7:23.

Some may think the way I am here putting things, sounds harsh and unfriendly. But it is just realistic. For what is it we are doing when we preach a watered-down gospel of modern ecumenism to the children of our congregations, educating them to find greater prestige in a Christianity that is "not so forbiddingly peculiar"? We are simply putting a stumbling block, or an "occasion to fall," in our brother's way (Romans 14:13). Our theology, including our ethics, then immediately runs the risk of becoming an object of offense to the innocent child. And we should remember what Christ says about the situation we are finally getting ourselves into, if such is our preaching in church, and our teaching in school. "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him if a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea (Matthew 18:6).

Does perhaps this, as well, sound a bit hard in our ears? Evidently truth and justice are bound to appear somewhat hard ever so often. It is the hardness of our own hearts which has hardened them. Pure humanism has always felt infinitely softer,-and more popular. It knows no need of belonging to what the Bible calls a "peculiar people." We all naturally tend to dislike peculiarity. What we like to be is not peculiar, but rather, "like the others." That is why our ecumenism of recent date goes to the extreme of including Buddhists and Muslims, pure atheists as well as notorious spiritualists. If we undertake to mix Christianity with paganism, we would have been better off without any encounter whatsoever with Christianity. Such mixture is the greatest danger of all. The millstone safely around our neck would have been a lesser danger.

I am not here speaking about the danger for Albert Schweitzer, as you may notice. I am speaking about the danger for you and me.

Perhaps the main reason why I mention Albert Schweitzer may be the casual one that this man's theological writings caused one very fine young worker in a field of activity quite close to mine, to lose his faith and give up his Christian hope altogether. Visibly sad at heart, he handed in his resignation as a minister.

This also reminds me of a childlike Christian lady in my country who admired Schweitzer tremendously, and probably got the shock of her life when the President of the Human Ethics movement in that country produced public confirmation for her that Albert Schweitzer belonged to "his congregation," not to "hers."

IS THE NON-BELIEVER EXCLUDED FROM REALIZING A GENUINE PATTERN OF HEARTFELT GOODNESS IN ETHICAL ACTS?

Now, please do not think that I fail to have a real appreciation of the Human Ethics theologian's wonderful function as a Good Samaritan. On the contrary, my appreciation and admiration could hardly be greater. Therefore I also want my main word of seriousness and admonition to be directed, in the end, not to humanists, but to you and myself, and particularly those among us who like to believe that they form a peculiar people, a people set aside in the world, like Israel of old, to be depositories of God's holy law right in the midst of a generation of anti-nomianism rather than law-abidingness.

What do we have to boast of? Nothing, apart from that gracious intention inherent in God Himself and His merciful plan in our behalf. In reality, we have been as unfaithful to God as the Israelites were. We have betrayed our cause, which implied going out to witness in favor of Christianity, against paganism; that is, being Protestants in the best sense of the word. Today as in former days, that must mean a firm and courageous protest against humanism in all its non-Christian inventions. We ought to remain prostrated before the face of the Lord, like Ezra and Daniel, seeking "by prayer and supplication, with sackcloth and ashes," the forgiveness for our neglect. It is high time we confess our own proud humanistic sin of self-sufficiency, turning away from it with determination. (Read attentively Ezekiel 9:4.)

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I imagine you may be sitting with the following question at the tip of your tongue, almost as if you were somewhat offended: How can it be said that our pride is precisely humanistic, and then even a humanism of the genuinely pagan kind?

It is extremely important to make this absolutely clear. So let us start by stating again quite briefly, but also pointedly, what humanism in its ultra-pagan form consists in. I have arrived at the simple conclusion that its main essence comes clearly out in a cardinal thesis we may express like this: MAN IS BASICALLY GOOD.

In other words: it is only by pure accident, as it were (a most regrettable coincidence of unfortunate circumstances) that man, as we know him today, has perverted his ways. His paths have been made crooked as the sad result of a bad environment. We are not our own selves any longer. Those extrinsic haphazards of bad luck will have to take most of the blame, if not all, for the prevailing conditions of the present day. For "in himself," you see, man is "quite good."

That is where the Bible has a very different story to tell: Man today is basically evil. His inherent nature has no need of any additional element of "unfortunate circumstances" in order for that evil to come out, glaringly, and with absolutely conclusive evidence. Quite obviously, in matters of evil as a natural endowment, you and I are self-contained. No importation is necessary.

A colleague of mine with a top education in Christian Ethics from one of the world's most prestigious universities, one day in his classroom fell a victim to that current formulation of humanistic thought: Man is at bottom good. I do not say that this is more than almost any person among us may commit the heresy of expressing. Or please tell me frankly, has it never happened to you to say about a fellow whose rash acts on a particular occasion you wanted to consider in the best light possible, as, of course, a generous evaluator of other people's wrongs always should: "I still believe that, at bottom, this boy is good."

When the students I had in common with my good colleague told me about this classroom incident, demanding to hear my opinion about it, I assumed that he simply had had the bad luck, as may happen to any one among us, to express himself in an inaccurate way, without meaning any harm, thus giving occasion for misunderstandings to arise regarding his orthodoxy. Of course, my fellow teacher must know, just as well as I did, this basic Biblical concept that man today, in the inmost core of his being, is evil, and not at all good. A Christian ethicist of his caliber could not reasonably be assumed to be ignorant about this fundamental difference between the Christian conception of human nature and the humanistic one. The Bible says one thing about human nature: It is evil through and through.

Well, dear reader, here comes the gist of the matter. Be prepared to meet it. It is the formidable argument in favor of the opposite standpoint. I do not know exactly how it came up in the present case. Had my colleague sucked it in along with the milk of sound ethical knowledge from his alma mater, that prestigious theological faculty? Or had one of his inquisitive students suggested it to him? Anyway, it was there, and now it was being tried out on me.

To a conscientious teacher of Christian ethics, it is bound to become a crucially quivering question. How can any teacher in front of his intelligently reasoning students account for one indisputable fact: Even among avowed enemies of the Christian faith, we all observe a remarkable number of people of the sweetest disposition you could ever wish to meet. Even militant atheists sometimes distinguish themselves by a life of apparently impeccable practical idealism. I mean idealism in the popular sense of having tremendous ideals. I do not mean the idea-ism of Plato, the weird and barren ideology of having implicit faith in nothing but the pure Idea, a cold impersonal abstraction. No, no! The heart is visibly engaged in the idealism of those great non-Christians I am here speaking about. Their entire outward bearing testifies to a nobility of thought and a delicacy of feeling that few Christians can boast of. It actually puts our own testimony to shame ever so often.

So comes the crucial question: Do not these people demonstrate that they possess a basic element of "residual" human goodness in the very depths of their nature? Now, how would you answer an argument as persuasive as that in favor of a "basic goodness in man"?

Of course, the temptation would be near to have one's recourse to a counter-argument of negative insinuations. In order to save my own doctrine about man's "basic badness," I might do my best to cast a shadow of suspicion over the actual genuineness of those beautiful actions here performed. I could just shrug my shoulders and look down my nose at those "pure appearances," saying scornfully: "Ah, puh!-those deeds there are only seemingly good. Be circumspect, my good friends. Just have a closer look at the underlying motives. How do you imagine that a non-Christian could ever have pure motives for anything he does? Oh no, a deeper analysis would probably reveal that those actions of goodness were a jumble of hypocritical sham!"

God forbid that I should choose that cheap and fundamentally negative way out to boost up my seemingly precarious position. Not only would it be a most unworthy way of escape, but also an absolutely superfluous one. For frankly, what need do I have of calling the motives of my fellowmen in question? What right do I have to do that? I had better reserve that mode of approach for a critical scrutiny of my own motives. As for the good works of others, I have the sacred duty to look at them from the most positive angle ever possible. And I may be greatly surprised to discover how genuinely good those motives of my fellowmen really are sometimes.

A PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATION FULLY SUFFICIENT TO ACCOUNT FOR THE STRANGE FACT THAT TRUE GOODNESS STILL EXISTS ON EARTH

So far we seem to be without any satisfactory answer to the searching question the Christian ethicist is forced to face, if he persists in maintaining his categorical contention about man's basic depravity. In view of that inherent baseness of human nature, how can we explain in front of our challenging humanist opponents, the undeniable amount of heartfelt goodness manifesting itself daily right in the midst of a world of openly declared infidels? An explanation without any foundation in reasonable logic, either human or divine, would never do, of course.

Please permit me to state my conviction without pomp or circumstance: For the firm believer in Biblical theology, there is no need here of moving one single inch away from the plainest reasoning of a logical mind. Dropping an encumbering load of old prejudice is all it takes. The Bible accounts most intelligently for that indisputable datum of a factual goodness right in the midst of a fallen world.

Again it is we Christian believers who first and foremost should be taken to task for a misunderstanding we certainly have not derived from the teachings of Scripture. It must, rather, be our own stubborn pride that has caused it to creep into our hearts and mind. We just insist on harboring somewhere in the dark depths of our ignorant minds, an idea having very little to do with Christianity, and just as little with sound logics of any kind. We seem to wander around with the definitely unchristian notion that Christians have some kind of "monopoly" of God's grace: We--and nobody else on earth--are supposed to enjoy the blessing of being directly influenced by the greatest gift of heaven: the Holy Spirit, as a living, transforming force in the world.

What a grossly self-conceited idea. It does not only deny the existence of prevenient grace in that world of fallen mankind, but it causes us to forget the important fact that the great God of heaven is working wonders everywhere and at every moment. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and

sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Matthew 5:9. His grace, which is a never-failing power of goodness and teeming life, wells out in abundant waves of unending freshness to cheer human hearts in royal palaces and ramshackle huts, miraculously subduing or palliating the natural harshness of feelings in hardened criminals as well as praying saints. So how could this marvelously softening activity, on the part of divine grace, fail to let genuine goodness well up where otherwise nothing but furious wickedness would be normally predictable in human creatures?

Is it not time we wake up to the fact that the Holy Spirit is making a tremendous impact every moment, causing transformations to take place in human lives all around us? Do I have any sure evidence for the correctness of this view about currents of goodness flowing out everywhere in this world of sin and obvious grimness?

You might not think so. But that is only because you lack the possibility of due comparison. One day, however, a rather sad sort of evidence will force itself upon our attention. I am referring to the future, but not necessarily to a very distant one. Christ Himself, the true and faithful Witness, has provided us with ample information about this in special messages from His own mouth to the end-time generation: As the bitter fight between good and evil rushes into its ultimate phase of an unprecedented crisis, then--and only then--shall the surviving ones among us obtain a right glaring picture of what man, in himself, is actually like. The terrible development Jesus describes in Matthew 10 is exactly the unprecedented one happening at the late hour of history when God's Spirit is being withdrawn from the earth, thus permitting rather new and unheard-of conditions to become rife and rampant on this tragic planet of ours. At that juncture there will no more be any restraining power to keep the passions of natural man in check. Through his stubborn determination to cast his lot with spirits of evil rather than with the Spirit of good, man has precluded himself from the gentle influence of God's Agape in terms of heart-softening grace. Human creatures will then eventually experience what kind of beasts they turn into at the moment when they have to depend on themselves exclusively, with the nature they have in themselves.

The humanist will then finally realize what his bare humanism is worth. He will know for sure--although it is a bit late--how utterly helpless his barren mannishness is in a God-forsaken world of downright non-grace. What an eye-opener for proud humanity, but a sadly belated one.

For heaven's sake--and for our own salvation's sake--let us not be so blind and self-conceited any longer. Let us get an adequate vision of the marvels God keeps performing all the time in the hearts of people, even such who do not by any means profess to honor His name. The time is close enough when, in one part of the world after the other, that kind of constant living wonder will fade away, simply because the last rays of God's creative grace is fading away. At that time it will be seen how minutely correct the Bible was when it tried, again and again, to make us grasp the simple truth about the unappreciated presence of Christ's goodness, and what it has wrought right in the midst of a wicked world. And we shall know, as never before, the enormous difference between ethics and non-ethics.

SUMMA SUMMARUM

Sometimes, as I repeat to my students the dramatic story about Samuel, the Christian Ethicist coming authoritatively before Saul, the Situation Ethicist after the outwardly successful, but in the last analysis calamitous battle fought by that stubbornly disobedient Hebrew king against the Amalekites, some student of mine may call out protestingly: "How can you claim that Samuel, the prophet, was not a situationist just as much as Saul, the king?"

The context is that Saul has gone contrary to the clear order given by God to destroy every single Amalekite and every beast belonging to those hardened enemies of Yahweh. The army leader of the

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Israelites, Saul, had not only spared the best among the beasts, but he had even brought home alive from the battlefield the notoriously cruel king of the Amalekites, Agag.

Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag, the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. 1 Samuel 15:32, 33

What a shakingly unexpected turn of the events, unexpected to Agag, and perhaps also to you and me. Just think of it: Samuel, the peaceful shepherd of the Lord's flock, suddenly turning into a fierce executioner, an active warrior, bearing arms and not hesitating one moment to use them. "Had that law-abiding servant of the Lord suddenly forgotten what one of the severest commandments says: 'Thou shalt not kill'? What kind of pacifism is this? "says my ironical student, shaking his head. "What kind of Christian (non-situationist) ethics is this?"

Such straight questions demand an answer; of course they do. And it must be a straight answer, not a crooked one. Well, first one historical fact which is often left out of account: With this story we still find ourselves at a period of time commonly described as the era of theocracy. God is still the sovereign King of Israel. Here, by the way, Saul was the victim of a fatal mistake. He imagined that he was the king, the true sovereign of the country. One of the heaviest lessons God was endeavoring to teach that stubborn man was precisely regarding the true relationship in this respect. And Saul was not at all teachable. Therefore, God had to turn to another man. David was so much more able to accept the fact that theocracy was still the form of government in Israel.

The nominal "king" was supposed to address himself unreservedly to the highest spiritual office of the land to obtain a decisive counsel regarding matters of prime importance to the people over whom he had limited rule (as a vice-regent, not as the sovereign king).

Now, who was in charge of that office at the time of Saul? It was Samuel. So Samuel was the one through whom the Lord made his special will known to the nation in times of emergency, or whenever really great things were at stake. In other words, God had chosen Samuel as the human medium through whom the sovereign will of the real King was made directly known to the people. So we must understand the elementary fact that when the officiating prophet of God received his orders directly from the throne of heaven, it was God who assumed the whole responsibility for the message conveyed as well as the action executed. In our special case it was Yahweh who said, "Kill!" And it was He who killed.

"Well," the objector will go on to argue, "then it is God Himself who is the great Situation Ethicist."

Exactly. God is the Situation Ethicist par excellence. But He is also the only One who has a perfect right to be a Situationist. Why? Simply because He is the only One who perfectly knows the situation, the context in its absolute totality. So He is also the only One who can assume the total moral responsibility for viewing the general and immutable essence of His eternal law in the specific context of any given contingent situation in our little world. So for a human being to presume that he, as well, has a right to be a situation ethicist is nothing less than taking God's place. It is the presumption of self-deification. As members of a fallen race we all desire to become gods. This was the temptation to which Eve, our first mother, succumbed. But why should you and I follow her example? The grace of Jesus Christ has made it abundantly possible for us to overcome; that is, to turn resolutely away from human ethics illusionism, grasping the God-given treasure of Christian realism.