

The New Morality—A Question of Ethics

By Joel C. Gerlach

Near the end of World War II, a German woman by the name of Bergmeier, a mother of 3 children, was captured by the Russians while foraging for food and taken to a prison camp in the Ukraine. Her husband, who had been captured in the Battle of the Bulge, was a prisoner in a POW camp in England. The three children, without knowing what happened to their mother, were left to fend for themselves. Mrs. Bergmeier learned that there were only two ways to get out of the camp. If she became seriously ill, she would be transferred to a Soviet hospital. If she became pregnant, she would be released as a liability. She asked a friendly camp guard to impregnate her. She was released, reunited with her family, gave birth to a baby boy, Dietrich, and made him a part of the reunited family.ⁱ Did she do right or wrong? Would you agree that this was a case of “altruistic adultery?”

Perhaps you are familiar with the case of the “William Brown” sailing out of Liverpool in 1841. The ship struck an iceberg off Newfoundland and sank. One lifeboat counted a first mate, seven seamen and 32 passengers, twice the capacity of the lifeboat. Heavy seas and inclement weather doomed them unless—. The mate asked the males to leave the boat. They refused. The mate ordered seaman Holmes to throw them into the sea to save the lives of the rest. He did. Several days later the survivors were picked up. Did Holmes do right or wrong?ⁱⁱ A Philadelphia court convicted him of murder with a recommendation for mercy. How would you have voted as a jury member?

The current issue of the Reader’s Digest contains an article which poses a similar question. “The Agonizing Decision of Joanne and Roger Pell.”ⁱⁱⁱ Their baby was born with a malformation of nerves and spinal cord. Part of the spinal cord was exposed with no bone to cover it. Even with surgery, the baby would be paralyzed and a hydrocephalic. Without surgery the baby would die very soon. They decided to let the baby die. Would you have?

The classic Biblical example of that kind of dilemma concerns a harlot named Rahab. Two spies were in hiding on her roof. The police were at the door looking for them. What do you do in such a situation, tell the truth or lie?

How does one proceed to answer such questions? The questions are all questions of ethics. The answers a person gives are indicative of his own personal ethics. One of the currently popular approaches to such questions has been dubbed “the new morality.” That is the subject about which your program committee has asked me to speak to you. The new morality is street talk for what philosophers call situationism, or to use Joseph Fletcher’s term, “Situation Ethics.”

I suppose that when most people speak about the new morality, they are thinking, not so much about a decision-making process, but rather about the results of a certain process of decision making. The results are painfully apparent. Those with high moral standards speak deplorably about the tendency of contemporary society to out-Sodom Sodom. They wring their hands over the obvious disintegration of the basic institutions of Western civilization. What in the world is the world coming to they ask with increasing frequency, betraying their consternation in the way they ask it. As often as not the new morality, (whatever that is) is singled out as the culprit. The new morality is the grease on the skids of the downhill slide.

When your students take their seats in your classrooms they bring the problem with them, and thus it is one with which you have to deal, like it or not. Christian children from Christian homes do not come to us from behind the sheltered walls of a cloister. The “undisciplined generation” is Helmut Thielicke’s way of describing them. We’d call them Dr. Spock’s kids. They come from homes where the numbers 4, 6, 10, 12 and 18 bring in the same channels that sets in non-Christian homes do,—the same papers with salacious X-rated movie ads, the same magazines replete with evidences that hedonism is a way of life in affluent America.

But you didn’t ask me here just to *talk* about it. The need is to *do* something about it for the sake of our children and their welfare as lambs of God. Our purpose then will be to diagnose the malady, and then to

suggest a preventive and a corrective. We propose to do that in this way: first we shall turn to ethics to make a survey of the six basic approaches to decision making with special emphasis on the ethics of the new morality. Secondly we shall attempt to analyze the ethical situation as we see it today in this age of the new morality. As we proceed, we hope to answer three necessary questions: How did we get where we are? What are some of the consequences which show up in your classrooms? And what can we do about the situation?

I. The story of Rahab and the spies provides a good question with which to illustrate the approaches which different schools of thought take to the question of ethical norms. The question is this: Was Rahab morally justified in lying to save the lives of the spies? In other words, is lying to save a life ever morally right?

One way to answer the question is to reject the idea of morality altogether. In philosophy this position is called antinomianism (Gr. anti-nomos). Antinomians contend that there is no objective way to declare an act morally good or bad. There are no norms by which to judge. What Rahab did was neither right nor wrong. She did the existential thing to do at the time.

If you are not a student of philosophy, you may think that sounds a bit weird. No sane person could hold to such a view. However, for a true evolutionist, it is the only logical position. The man generally regarded as the father of existential ethics is the Danish Lutheran philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard. However, in fairness to Kierkegaard, it must be said that he was not strictly speaking an antinomian, and that he did believe in moral law. He believed that there are times when the ethical must be transcended. He used the story of Abraham's offering of Isaac to illustrate his point. Sometimes, according to Kierkegaard, a person's duty to God conflicts with his universal duty to men. At such a time, the ethical universal (don't kill) ought to be *transcended* by the individual as a religious being. Thus when Abraham acted in faith to God, the ethical imperative of the fifth commandment was reduced to a relative position. Don't kill—but, in this case *do!* Kierkegaard insisted that a man's religious duty cannot be stated as a universal proposition, and thus it is not known propositionally. It is known only by a "leap of faith."

In a book just published entitled *Ethics: Issues and Alternatives* by Norman Geisler, the author offers this summary evaluation of Kierkegaard's ethic.

"Even though the ethical is not destroyed while it is suspended by the religious, there are at least two ways in which Kierkegaard's teaching is the soil for incipient antinomianism. First, Kierkegaard posits as higher the duty to break these "universal" ethical norms without having a higher *ethical* or *rational* reason for doing so. In other words, no ethical norms are really universal; they can and should be broken for non-ethical reasons. Thus Kierkegaard has taken a stand against any unbreakable ethical norms—there is always the religious duty to disobey the so-called 'universal' ethical norms when a man is called upon by a religious consideration to do so."^{iv}

Kierkegaard unlocked the door for antinomianism, and Friedrich Nietzsche then proceeded to open it. In "Joyful Wisdom" he insisted that "God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed Him!" When God died, all ethical values went with Him. Man must therefore find new values—his own values. Man needs a new morality, Nietzsche insisted. The "flock" morality needed to be replaced by individual morality, the morality of creative geniuses. All absolutes become relatives. Experimentation is the way to decide what to do and not to do. What the world needs is supermen with a "will to power." Nietzsche rightly deserves the dubious distinction of being called the father of the new morality. To give you some of the flavor of his diabolical mind and to help you appreciate the seriousness of the new morality problem, we offer these quotes. In "Ecce Homo" he wrote, "Christian morality is the most malignant form of all falsehood...It is really poisonous, decadent, weakening. It produces nincompoops, not men." In "Anti-Christ" he wrote, "I condemn Christianity and confront it with the most terrible accusation that an accuser has ever had in his mouth. To my mind it is the greatest of all conceivable corruptions...I call it the one immortal blemish of mankind."^v (It's nice to know what your "friends" are saying about you, isn't it?)

The most influential of modern antinomians is French playwright philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre, author of *The Flies*, *No Exit* and *Being and Nothingness*. He insisted that human existence is an absurdity. "Man is a being whose project is to become God," Sartre says. And since that is impossible, existence is an absurdity.

There is no explanation for it and no justification for it either. Dostoevsky had argued that if there is no God, then everything is permitted. Sartre insists that is precisely correct. There *is* no God, and everything *is* permitted. There is nothing anyone should take seriously. In your radical freedom, you are free to do as you please. Freedom is without reason to justify it and without norms to guide it. In the oft-quoted closing words of “*No Exit*” Sartre concludes “Hell is—other people.”

Before we proceed to list the remaining five approaches to ethical norms, we wish to point out here parenthetically that there are two types of new morality, a “worldly” kind and a “churchly” kind, if you will. The worldly kind is antinomian and the churchly kind is situational. In a sense they are related to each other in a way that is similar to the relationship between atheistic and theistic evolution. One i.e. evolution for the non-religious, the other for the religious. So too there is a new “morality” for the non-religious and a new morality for the religiously inclined. The element common to both is the idea that ultimately *you* decide everything for yourself.

So then, one way to answer the question, is lying to save a life ever morally right, is to reject the idea of morality altogether, and thus to say lying is neither right nor wrong. A second approach answers the question by saying, “Lying is generally wrong, but not always so.” Generalism is the name that attaches to this view. It says that there are no *universal* norms. It is *usually* correct to say in an objective sense that lying is wrong, but not always. It is permissible when the lie will accomplish a greater good, like saving the lives of the spies. Ethicists call this the utilitarian approach. You do whatever accomplishes the greater good for the greater number of people. John Stuart Mill is one of the better known representatives of this view.

The third approach to the question says that there is *one* universal norm, and therefore lying is sometimes the right thing, the moral thing, to do. This is the view that is currently in vogue in liberal churches, popularized by Joseph Fletcher, Professor of Social Ethics at Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, Mass. His book “*Situation Ethics*” is subtitled “*The New Morality*.” Situationism holds that since circumstances differ in each situation, therefore there can be only one universal norm which covers all situations. If there is more than one norm, conflicts will result between them requiring that exceptions be made. Love is that one universal norm. Rahab did the loving thing in lying about the spies. Therefore her lie was “justified”. Selfless lying is right. Selfish lying is wrong.

Before we take a closer look at situation ethics, we wish to summarize briefly the remaining approaches to ethical norms. A fourth approach says that there are many non-conflicting norms. These several norms are all absolutes and must never be broken. To tell the truth is one of them, and therefore, lying is always wrong. Rahab sinned in perpetrating a deceit. The person who holds to the non-conflicting absolutist view would argue that there were other alternatives open to Rahab. She could not have known with absolute certainty that the spies would have been caught and killed if she told the truth. There are many possibilities, so she should have said nothing (which would have been a give-away) or she should have revealed that the spies were in hiding in her home thus leaving the matter in God’s hands. She would not have been responsible for any deaths that might have occurred.

A fifth approach which has a large element of truth in it is sometimes called ideal absolutism. It holds that there are many norms which are absolutes, and which sometimes conflict. Christians identify them as the Ten Commandments. When a person is caught in a dilemma such as Rahab was, it is wrong to tell a lie, but it would also have been wrong to tell the truth. Or in the case of seaman Holmes, it would have been wrong to let all 40 survivors perish, and it was also wrong to cast the male survivors into the sea. In such a dilemma, one must make a choice between the lesser of two evils. Of course, if there were no sin in this world, there would be no such conflicts, and no one would ever face such a dilemma. The answer to such a dilemma in the life of a Christian is to be found in God’s forgiveness.

A final approach espoused by many Christian ethicists holds that there are many absolute norms, but not all are of equal value and importance. There is a scale of norms, some higher, some lower. Thus lying is sometimes right. When one is confronted with a choice between killing and lying, one ought to choose to save the life because it has a higher value. Thus while Rahab did not tell the truth, neither did she do wrong. Her lie

was justifiable in view of the circumstances. The only important difference between approaches five and six (ideal absolutism and hierarchicalism) is the fact that the one who chooses the lesser of two evils is regarded as doing wrong while the one who chooses to do what the higher norm requires is regarded as doing right. In Christian terminology, the one who commits the lesser evil needs to seek God's forgiveness while the one who opts for the higher norm does not.^{vi}

We wish to return now for a closer look at Joseph Fletcher's ethics of the new morality. Dr. Fletcher seeks to steer a middle course between what he would regard as the radical right and the radical left. The left is represented by the antinomians who have no laws for anything, and the right is represented by the legalists who have neat little laws like the Pharisees to cover every possible situation.

Dr. Geisler offers a succinct explanation of the difference between legalism, antinomianism and situationism. For the antinomian it is a matter of "no law or love." For the legalist it is a matter of "law over love," and for the situationist it is a matter of "love over law." "The legalist believes in the love of duty; the situationist holds to the duty of love."^{vii}

Four presuppositions underlie Fletcher's new morality: Pragmatism, relativism, positivism, and personalism. The pragmatic presupposition asserts that a thing is right if it works or satisfies for love's sake. Love seeks concrete, practical answers to problems, not just word solutions which produce no corresponding action. The relativistic presupposition asserts that everything is relative to the one universal norm—love. And Fletcher means the agape love of the New Testament Scriptures as he understands it. The positivistic presupposition in opposition to naturalism insists that values are derived voluntaristically not rationalistically. In other words, a man *decides* his values, he doesn't derive them from a source outside himself. His feelings are involved in his moral values; his moral values are not based upon prescriptions. Fletcher places values in the same category as art. Both call for a decision on your part,—for "a leap of faith." The personalistic presupposition says that *persons* are the ultimate moral values. Things are not inherently valuable; only persons are. Persons are to be loved, things are to be used. When we reverse that by loving things and using people, our loving and our using are immoral.

Fletcher explains the new morality by means of six basic propositions. Each proposition in turn explains how love functions in an attempt to live situationally. He devotes a chapter to each of the six propositions. The chapters are titled: Love only is always good; Love is the only norm, Love and justice are the same; Love is not liking; Love justifies its means; and Love decides then and there.

It would take us too long and too far afield to try to summarize and to analyze each of Fletcher's basic propositions. However, if we are to understand the blight of the new morality which infects society in our times so that we can come to grips with it effectively as teachers, we must have at least a minimal understanding of what Fletcher is saying. What follows is an attempt to give you just a little taste, something like in a sampling room at a winery,—the disconnected statements give you only the flavor.

Fletcher says that what helps persons is good, what hurts them is bad. (p. 59) "In the Bible, the image of God, man's model, is not reason but love." (p.63) Christ's death on the cross, Fletcher says, was Christ's "thing" as the Son of God. You must likewise do your thing. "Love does not say to us 'Be like me.' It says, 'Do what you can where you are.'" (p.62) Thus, "If a lie is told in love, it is good, right." Or if a prisoner of war commits suicide to avoid torture which might cause him to betray his comrades to the enemy, he is doing the right thing.

Thus love replaces law; the spirit replaces the letter. The only reason we keep the law is for love's sake, never visa versa. Law and love sometimes conflict, and when they do, it is the Christian's obligation to put love over the law. Justice, he says, is love using its head. Therefore, one may have the moral duty to disobey an unjust civil law. On occasion love may even demand a revolution against the state. Love, Fletcher insists, is free from specific predefinition. What love requires in a situation is something you cannot know until you are involved in the actual situation. Thus if you ask Fletcher, "Is adultery wrong his answer would be, "I don't know. Maybe. Give me a case." (p. 142)

To sum up the new morality ethic, the *what* and the *why* are absolute, but the *how* is relative. The *what* is “love”, the *why* is “for God’s sake.” They are absolutes. The *how* is relative; that’s up to you to decide.

As Christians who accept the inspiration and the absolute authority of the Bible, and who espouse church constitution articles which say that the Word of God is the sole rule and norm for all matters of faith and life, we must say that the Ten Commandments are universal absolutes. It can never be right under any circumstance to break a commandment of God. It may be unavoidable, but it is never right. Because sin corrupts every human being including the Christians in this world, even causing the realm of nature to groan and travail in pain until now waiting for God’s final deliverance, it is inevitable that we will be confronted in life by conflicts of duty. When a man’s sheep falls into a pit on the Sabbath day, must he leave it there or may he get it out? When the law says that showbread is to be utilized only for the benefit of temple servants, and David shows up with his men hungry, do you share the showbread with them or not?^{viii} In a sinful world there is no escape from such conflicts. We are going to sin, no question about it. Even all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. But when confronted with a dilemma, we dare not seek justification for our acts by reducing absolutes to relatives.

What makes our confrontation with the new morality so difficult is the fact that there is in it an element of truth, in fact in Fletcher’s new morality, a very large element of truth. When he discusses agape love in distinction from erotic love (*eros*) and philic love (*philia*) he is close to saying what the Scripture says. Moreover, all of Scripture is in agreement with the proposition that “love is the fulfilling of the law.”^{ix} Jesus himself has taught us that the whole thrust of the law is love,—love for God and love for our neighbor.^x God is still a God who desires “mercy, not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”^{xi}

In this connection, Luther says something of interest. In a sermon study in “The Church Postil” for the 18th Sunday after Trinity, Luther discusses the Lord’s defense of His disciples in Matt. 12:3-4. He says, “Therefore, when the Law impels one against love, it ceases and should no longer be a law; but where no obstacle is in the way, the keeping of the law is a proof of love, which lies hidden in the heart. Therefore ye have need of the law, that love may be manifested; but if it cannot be kept without injury to our neighbor, God wants us to suspend and ignore the law.”^{xii}

A careful analysis of situationism reveals one vital, essential difference between Fletcher and Luther. Both agree that love is the one, absolute, universal norm for decision making. But according to Fletcher and the new moralists, a person decides for himself *how* love is to express itself in a given situation while according to Luther and the Scriptures, *how* love is to express itself is something God reveals in His Word. “He that hath my commandments;” Jesus says, “and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me... If a man love me, he will keep my words... He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings; and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.”^{xiii}

II. It is time to turn our attention from the theoretical to the practical. With an understanding of the fact that the new morality is an “Ethics” which leaves *you* to decide what is right and what is wrong for yourself, we are ready to ask: what is the situation today and how did we get where we are?

It is generally conceded that the new morality has firmly entrenched itself within contemporary society. This was acknowledged in the cover article in Time magazine as long ago as January, 1964.^{xiv} How far we have traveled down the road of situation ethics is doubtless most apparent in the sexual revolution which is presently running its course. But the malignant influence of the new morality is by no means limited to matters of sex. To cite examples would be both time consuming and unnecessary. However, let me cite just one example to illustrate how far we have moved away from a “Christian” ethic. New moralists regard the capital punishment of a convicted murderer immoral, while the arbitrary termination of the life of an unborn child by abortion is regarded as an ethical, even humanitarian thing to do. When white is black and black is white, ethically speaking there is obviously something wrong with our ethics. (The front page article in last Sunday’s Journal about Zeke Johnson is another case in point.)^{xv}

The situation which prevails today is this: The world has abandoned what Arnold Toynbee terms the ethics of absolutes, which have prevailed in Western civilization since the 4th century, in favor of a no norms

ethics ala Nietzsche and Sartre. And the church has followed in step, abandoning Biblical ethics in favor of situational ethics ala Fletcher, Bishop John Robinson, (“Honest to God”) Emil Brunner (“The Divine Imperative”), the late Reinhold Niebuhr (“Moral Man and Immoral Society”) and others. Public pronouncements of the World Council and the National Council of Churches offer ample evidence for this conclusion. You can cite your own examples of the changing times in the churches. The ordination of women to the ministry in Lutheran Synods is just one example which comes to mind.

How did we get where we are? The finger of accusation must be pointed at evolution. Perhaps this is an oversimplification; yet it is unquestionably true that the widespread acceptance of evolutionary theory helped to prepare the way for the general acceptance of the new morality. This is not to suggest that there were no new morality eras prior to the time of Darwin. For after all, every man is by nature at enmity with God and in favor of deciding things for himself. Adam and Eve were the first situation ethicists when they “saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise.” In the New Testament age, however, the salt of Christianity preserved society in a general way from the rot and decay of the new morality until evolution began to rob the salt of its savor.^{xvi}

Men who are evolutionists in their science are generally humanists in their philosophy. Humanists reject the idea that man is a creature created in God’s image in favor of a god created in their own image. That god is man himself. “Man is the measure of all things,” said Protagoras. Alexander Pope said so too in his “Essay on Man” asserting that “The proper study of mankind is man.” Once God has been dethroned and man enthroned, the new morality is inevitable.

The Humanist Manifesto, first published in 1933, contains fifteen theses which state very clearly the position and the objectives of the humanist movement. Theses one states “Religious humanists regard the world as self-existing and not created.” Theses two states: “Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as a part of a continuous process.” The third theses rejects the body and spirit view of man. The sixth declares that the time for theism has passed. Number nine says: “In place of the old attitudes involved in worship and prayer, the humanist finds his religious emotions expressed in a heightened sense of personal life in a cooperative effort to promote social well-being.”^{xvii}

The Humanist Manifesto is significant because one of the more prominent of the original signers of that document was John Dewey of Columbia University. Most educators will agree, I think, that he did more to shape the character of the philosophy of education in the nation’s schools in the modern era than any other single individual. He is the acknowledged father of progressive education. Progressive education is simply the application of the humanist philosophy to the process of education. In “*Bending the Twig*” published in 1957, Augustin Rudd observed the following:

“Many of Dewey’s educational disciples may be copy or confused, but the master himself is clear enough in his writings about the implications of his philosophy. It excludes God, the soul, and all the props of traditional religion. It excludes the possibility of traditional truth, of fixed natural law, of permanent moral principles.”^{xviii}

In “*Man and God at Yale*,” Wm. Buckley Jr. insisted already in 1950 that the teachings of Dewey had borne fruit. Not a single department at Yale was uncontaminated with the absolute that there are no absolutes, no ultimate truths, Buckley observed. “The acceptance of these notions,” he said, “makes impossible any intelligible conception of an omnipotent, purposeful, and benign Supreme Being who has laid down immutable laws...and posited unchangeable rules of human conduct.”^{xix}

In 1969 The California State Department of Education issued a set of “Guidelines For Moral Instruction In California Schools.” In a section entitled “Humanists and Evolutionists” the report states: “Evolution in other words is the *a priori* assumption of the Humanist religion. Evolution is thus inseparable from John Dewey’s progressive education theories.” Then with reference to Rudd’s book, “*Bending the Twig*,” the report continues, “Dewey had to deny the dualistic theory of man as mind and body; therefore, the concept of the soul is patently false; therefore, there is no reason at all to include the spirit and its source (theology) as a subject of study; therefore, there are no eternal verities, but only changing conditions to which man must adjust, and

therefore, traditional beliefs are largely hindrances in the broad evolutionary movement of man who is something continuously changing and “becoming.” (Guidelines, p. 63)

Is it any wonder that we have the problems we have in the schools of the nation? Is it any wonder that the President of California State College at Fullerton allowed the on-stage presentation of “The Beard” which concluded with a sex act, or that the Unitarian Church of Brookfield is about to introduce a sex-education Sunday School course which not only tells all but shows all? Who will be first to use live models in place of audio-visuals for a demonstration?

What are the results of the new morality influence in the classrooms of our own schools? If we didn’t have problems, you would not have asked me to deliver an essay on this subject. I haven’t been a resident of the Midwest long enough to know what your problems are. I do know of one 8th grade girl in California who regaled her classmates with the details of how it feels to go all the way. That’s not too surprising in view of the fact that our students who came to school on Harbor Boulevard had to pass no less than five topless-bottomless bars with their lurid signs to get to school. Even drugs have become a problem on the elementary level. In one school I know, eleven seventh and eighth graders were expelled from school because they were habitual users of drugs and pushing them among their schoolmates.

The big question before us is not, What’s the problem? The question is rather, What’s to be done about it? More specifically what positive steps can one take to counteract infection of the new morality ethic? What can we do to preserve and to promote a return to the historic Christian standards of conduct and behavior? When we put the question that way, it answers itself, doesn’t it? How do you motivate anyone to travel the narrow way and to strive to enter in at the strait gate? With the Gospel, of course, what else? Right now you may be fighting back the urge to ask, is that all you have to offer? In our Christian schools we present the Gospel to our children every day, and look what’s happening! Are you trying to tell us then to resign ourselves to the inevitable? Isn’t there something specific one can do? I have two answers to that question, one a warning, the other a positive suggestion.

Too often we try to solve problems with programs. Two examples come to mind. In the secular world, an attempt is being made to combat the problem of dirty sex with a program of clean sex. The way to curb venereal disease, illegitimate births, and related problems of illicit sex is to program children with information about the subject in sex education courses in the schools on the assumption that if a person *knows* what he ought to do, he will *do* what he ought to do. The Anaheim school district in California, pioneer in the sex education experiment, has discontinued the program. It created more problems than it solved.

The church, too, sometimes tries in its frustrations to solve problems with programs. “On Your Doorstep,” the program to combat drug misuse sponsored by the Aid Association for Lutherans, is an example which relates to the subject at hand. According to the program, local branches are encouraged to spearhead community-wide efforts to curtail drug abuse. The program’s planners recognize that there is a spiritual dimension to the problem. Programs undertaken by groups of Christians to solve *spiritual* problems at the *community* level????? Sounds like someone has lost sight of what Christ commissioned His Church to do, doesn’t it?

The warning which needs to be sounded then is to beware of the temptation to combat the malignancy of the new morality and its consequences with stop-gap measures. Drugs and illicit sex are symptoms of something deeper which is wrong. They are a means of escape for some people from the real problems they don’t want to face. It is that “something deeper” which demands our attention as Christian leaders. We can’t afford to waste our time on symptoms when it is causes which need to be dealt with.

That brings me to the positive suggestion I have to offer, a suggestion which has the authority of God’s Word behind it. What the world needs now is more salt and more light,—salt to arrest the decay, light to illumine the way. You and I are privileged to labor in plants which produce illuminated salt shakers. The One who is in charge of quality control wants to use us to upgrade the quality of our product so each one shakes out more salt and gives off more light.

How is this done? If the new morality accommodates the old-Adam and lets him have his way, then we need to offer clear instructions on how to drown the old-Adam daily with all its sins and evil lusts so that the new man in us may daily come forth, and arise, and live before God in righteousness and purity.^{xx}

There is but one place you can drown the old-Adam, and that is in the ocean of God's love in Christ. That is the one place he can't swim. The new man who emerges from that ocean lives before God in Christ's righteousness and purity from now on. That's the transforming power God gives you to work with in your workshops.

We believe that in order to be effective in accomplishing the educational goals God sets for us in a Christian school, there must be full cooperation between the church, the school and the home. Pastor and teacher cannot be leading the child in one direction while parents unconsciously lead the child in the opposite direction. Yet in all too many cases, that is precisely what is happening. Children are consequently confronted with a double standard. They are quick to perceive the discrepancy between classroom "theory" and homefront practice. Probably all Christian parents would acknowledge that permissiveness in children training involves a violation of basic Christian principles. The problem is that they do not recognize permissiveness when they practice it. It's what is spoiling someone else's kids.

In this connection I am reminded of something that was said on one of the programs in the public service T.V. series entitled "God and Man in the 20th Century." A panel was discussing "The Bible and the New Morality." In commenting on the widespread appeal of the new morality, Dr. John Warwick Montgomery said, "Psychology has come to the conclusion in recent years that there must be a structure of principle within which the individual operates. Without the structure of principle the individual gradually comes to the conclusion that no one cares. If one attempts to bring up a child without any structure of principle, the child will keep pressuring to see if anybody out there really loves him to the extent of providing an opportunity for him to move by principle. And this means that if the structures are left out, the child or the adult destroys himself trying to create principle from within."^{xxi}

Recalling the complaints voiced most often by the teachers on the staff of the school in the congregation which I last served, I am convinced that many Christian parents do not understand the importance of a structure of principle,—or in other words, the importance of drawing the line where Scripture draws it and then saying, "You must not step across this line." Some don't know *where* to draw the line, and some don't know *how*. I am further convinced that parents need help in understanding what evangelical discipline involves,—help in understanding how law and Gospel function as essential tools in the task of bringing up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

If the problem is traceable in part to a situation in the home, what chance is there that you can make a contribution toward the solution through your efforts in the classroom? One thing we had better understand clearly is that the home and the family are under attack today as never before in our history. George Farrell, one-time professor at Gustavus Adolphus College and now head of the School of Religion of the State University of Iowa makes this point most emphatically in his book, "*Ethics of Decision*." He says, "It seems significant that today the enemies of the Christian Church are more aware of their need to destroy the authority of the family than Christians are of their responsibility to maintain it. Wherever totalitarianism and secularism attack, they attack the family first. They realize that the Christian family, where parents and children love each other, is the most dangerous cell of opposition to a government that attempts to subordinate everything and everybody to the total state. Wherever parents and children trust and love each other the state cannot penetrate with its thought control and secret police. This kind of family relationship must be destroyed. Children are taken away from their parents to be educated and controlled entirely by the school and the youth organizations of the totalitarian government. Fathers and mothers are encouraged to live their lives apart from their children and also apart from each other so that the family as a living unit is destroyed."^{xxii}

Those words were penned by Dr. Forrell back in 1955. I submit that if we are going to accomplish anything in our struggle against the new morality, the church must take positive steps to help strengthen family life. Parents must have help in diagnosing the cancer which is eating away at the fiber of the family. New

morality notions in the classroom are brought there from the home. Faculties and pastors must ask: What positive steps can we take to extend our influence beyond the walls of the classroom into the home? What can we do to help strengthen family life so that church, school and home are all saying the same thing to the child?

In the classroom too there is something positive we can do. We can work at improving the quality of religious instruction we provide. There is a danger that we teach the facts of Bible history without teaching the meaning of Bible history's facts. Or we may sometimes content ourselves with stock in trade answers to application questions. Our children are not computers to be programmed to give pat answers to stock questions with little more expected of them. They are impressionable lambs whose lives and character need molding with the gentle fingers of love. We need to ask ourselves honestly if in our approaches to the teaching of the Bible and Catechism our emphasis is primarily on intellectual comprehension almost to the exclusion of the will and the emotion.

It seems to me that we pastors and teachers of the Wisconsin Synod are characterized by a certain reserve which sometimes suggests to others that we aren't very excited about our faith. It is as though we think the control of the emotions represents a high degree of sanctification. Prof. Paul Eickmann, in a recent "Lutheran Educator" editorial entitled, "Get to Grips with the Actual Stuff." (Dec. 71) used a transparent illustration to suggest the kind of excitement that ought to characterize our work. He had made the point that we can teach straight from the Bible story books, Catechism and teachers' manuals, but, he insisted, if we do we'll be poorer for it. "It is the difference," he said, "between, on the one hand, following a map three paces north of the oak tree, digging, hearing the spade clunk on the top of the chest, and prying open rusty locks to be greeted by the golden lustre of doubloons and pieces of eight." Then underscoring the point of his illustration, Prof. Eickmann added, "Remember Andrew's excited announcement, 'We have found the Messiah'? That's the way I would like to begin teaching religion." I'd say, that's the way we should all be teaching it. Perhaps this is one area in which we could improve the quality of our religious instruction.

In this connection, I have a question to ask. Do our courses in religion help our children sufficiently to understand the basic Biblical principles of Christian conduct and morality? The New Testament contains 27 books; five are historical, one is revelational, and 21 are epistles. The epistles present us with our primary source material on the third use of the law. In Matthew Christian sanctification is presented indirectly. In Paul it is presented directly. Yet what percentage of our teaching of the New Testament relates to the historical books, and what percentage to the epistles? Is it possible that in our genuine concern for teaching justification with Scriptural preciseness we are not giving sanctification its due? And in our teaching of God's holy Law, the foundation of morality, do we concentrate too much on the mirror at the expense of the guide function of the Law? Paul is just as intent on telling us how to *live* the life of faith as he is in telling us how to *obtain* that life. Is this perhaps an area that needs some rethinking in our religious instruction in view of the inroads of the new morality?

In conclusion, our criticism of the new morality has pointed out that it is characterized by a certain vagueness, that love as the new morality presents it is ambiguous, undefined, and lacking in content and direction. If that is the basic weakness of the new morality, then we had better not endeavor to counter it with a teaching of the old morality that is also ambiguous and lacking in content and direction. Remember what Jesus says: "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

The new morality is ultimately one that challenges the authority of the Bible as the revealed, inspired, inerrant Word of God. The answer to that challenge is to assert the authority of the Word, and to do it with authority, and not as the scribes.

ⁱ Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, Westminster, pp. 164, 165.

ⁱⁱ Ibid p. 136.

ⁱⁱⁱ "The Agonizing Decision of Joanne and Roger Pell," *Reader's Digest*, Feb. 1972, p. 69.

^{iv} Norman Geisler, *Ethics: Issues and Alternatives*, Zondervan, p. 32.

^v Ibid. p. 33.

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- ^{vi} The terminology used to identify the six basic approaches is that employed by Geisler in chapter 1 of his “*Ethics*”.
- ^{vii} *Ibid.* p. 61.
- ^{viii} Matt. 12:1-12; John 5:10ff; Luke 6:6ff.
- ^{ix} Romans 13:10.
- ^x Luke 10:26-28.
- ^{xi} Hosea 6:6; Matt. 9:13.
- ^{xii} Martin Luther, The Church Postil, 18th Sunday after Trinity, *Luther’s Works*, J. N. Lenker, Vol. 5, p. 175; cited by Fletcher, *op. cit.* p. 62. (St. L. Edition Vol. 11, 1691, 13).
- ^{xiii} John 14:21-24.
- ^{xiv} *Time*, Sex in the U.S.: Mores and Morality, Jan. 24, 1964, pp. 54-59.
- ^{xv} *The Milwaukee Journal*, Feb. 13, 1972.
- ^{xvi} Matt. 5:13; Mark 9:50.
- ^{xvii} *A Humanist Manifesto*, American Philosophy in the Twentieth Century, Paul Kurtz, Macmillan, 1966, p. 368ff.
- ^{xviii} Augustin Rudd, *Bending the Twig*, American Book—Stratford Press, Inc., New York, 1957, p. 135.
- ^{xix} Rudd, *op. cit.* p. 167.
- ^{xx} Luther, *Small Catechism*, Baptism, IV.
- ^{xxi} The Bible and the New Morality, a panel discussion in the series, God and Man in the 20th Century. See: *Christianity Today*, July 21, 1967.
- ^{xxii} George Forell, *Ethics of Decision*, Muhlenberg, 1955, p. 122f.