

Hednesford Pentecostal Church

Morals and Ethics





This study was based upon the Assemblies of God publication “Questions of Ethics”, written by Keith Munday and Andrew Davies.

Bible Version

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SESSION 1

INTRODUCTION

2 Tim 3:16-17.. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, {17} that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Bible is the timeless and inspired word of God. The principles contained within its pages are as relevant and illuminating for us today, as they were to those to whom they were originally given. This is true because the nature of God and the nature of man are unchanged. We are not evolving into higher beings, as some suggest. Mankind is not heading for a utopia where the evils of this world are solved by scientific progress. The problems of this world are rooted in the hearts of men and women.

Jer 17:9. The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; who can know it?

Mat 15:19-20. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. {20} "These are the things which defile a man..."

There are, however, enormous differences between the world in Biblical times and the world in which we live. Technological advances have raised all sorts of moral questions which never existed in previous generations. It is the task of the church to interpret scriptural principles and apply them to these new areas. The church is the only source of light and salt. We should be declaring to the world the moral boundaries and restraints that are needed. The question remains "If not us, then who?"

The purpose of this study is to inform, equip and generate awareness so that we believers can discuss various issues with, offer advice to and pray for those people we meet.

1. ABORTION

With abortions in England and Wales running at some 500 a day¹ there is a concern among many people, including members of the medical profession. Arguments for and against usually centre upon the perceived status of the unborn child. The word 'foetus' is a right designation for an embryo, whether human or animal, within an egg or a womb, but its usage tends to deflect from its status.

When does life begin? The traditional Christian understanding has been that life begins at the moment of conception. Some Christian teachers have suggested that it is the moment when the fertilised egg becomes attached to the mother's womb². Within the law of the land the unborn child has no rights until "X" number of weeks. Where the number of weeks has varied as a result of debate. Pro-abortionists have suggested that because the foetus is totally dependent upon its mother, it is not a life.

A new-born child however is equally dependent upon others for everything it needs. Could therefore the life of an unwanted baby be disposed of? Is a baby less than a human life because it

¹ A conservative estimate is that there are 75 million abortions per year world-wide.

² An important distinction when medical practises such as IVF are being considered.



is totally dependent upon others? Adults can suffer the effect of disease and be made totally dependent upon others. Are they therefore no longer “a life”? Can they be disposed of at the will of those they inconvenience.

The foetus is not a potential life, which is the definition some use. It is a life with the potential of development. Traditionally a pregnant woman was said to be ‘with child’ and antenatal clinics still stress the care for two persons.

1.1. THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

Adam and Eve were unique in the created order, because they were created in the image of God and to have dominion.

Gen 1:26-28. Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." {27} So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. {28} Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

God confirms to Noah that human life is sacrosanct because it is made in the image of God.

Gen 9:6. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.

The New Testament equally teaches the sanctity of human life:

James 3:8-9. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. {9} With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.

Medical science tells us that human life is the result of 23 sets of chromosomes from both the father and mother coming together to form the DNA of the foetus at conception. But that is not the whole story. Our life did not just result from a chemical reaction. There is a spiritual element to our lives which Scripture attributes to God breathing his Spirit in us.

Gen 2:7. And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

Gen 7:22. All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, all that was on the dry land, died.

Job 33:4. The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

Isa 42:5. Thus says God the LORD, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, And spirit to those who walk on it:

Scripture also clearly teaches the sanctity of the life of the unborn child. The mother of John the Baptist conceived a son and when Mary the mother of Jesus visited her, the baby expressed its joy by leaping in her womb.

Luke 1:36. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren.



Luke 1:44. For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

God told Jeremiah:

Jer 1:5. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."

When Job poured out his complaint to the Lord he described how God fashioned and forms us in our mothers womb.

Job 10:8-13. Your hands have made me and fashioned me, an intricate unity; yet You would destroy me. {9} Remember, I pray, that You have made me like clay. And will You turn me into dust again? {10} Did you not pour me out like milk, and curdle me like cheese, {11} clothe me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews? {12} You have granted me life and favour, and Your care has preserved my spirit. {13} And these things You have hidden in Your heart; I know that this was with You:

The psalmist equally describes how the formation of a child within the womb is God's handiwork.

Psa 139:13-17. For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. {14} I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvellous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. {15} My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, and skilfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. {16} Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them. {17} How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!

In Exodus if a miscarriage came about through violence and the child died, the penalty was a life for a life. The unborn was valued as a person.

Exo 21:22-23. If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. {23} "But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life,

1.2. ABORTION PROCEDURES

Mrs E Peacock, a former MP, said:

"One of the more barbaric forms of abortion involves withdrawing the foetus through the birth canal until only the head remains inside; the bottom of the child's head is pierced and the brain sucked out to collapse the head."

The Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) have issued two videos 'The Silent Scream' and 'The Eclipse of Reason'. These have been shown to MPs. In these videos a 5½ month old foetus is brutally dismembered by the surgeon's instruments, and a healthy child with less than 4 months to go to birth becomes a tangled heap of human remains. Pro-abortionists accuse Christians of getting emotional about this, but if we are not moved, how desensitised are we?



1.3. THE MEDICAL WORLD

Why are there so few surgeons and nurses who refuse to take part in this horrid business? What has happened to the Hippocratic Oath, 'I will give no deadly drug to any, nor will I counsel such. Especially I will not aid a woman to procure an abortion'!

1.4. OUR CHRISTIAN DUTY

We do not counsel violence against the pro-abortionists as happens in the USA but we can make our views known in our publicity, in the local press and also to our MPs. The 1967 Abortion Act is now ignored and abortion is by demand or request, or even by medical offer. It is obviously now being used as a post-pregnant form of birth control and is unacceptable to Christian ethics.

1.5. COUNSELLING

More Pro-Life Counselling Centres are needed where pregnant women can be shown their options, such as keeping the child or offering for adoption. All counselling must be non-judgmental, as should counselling to those who suffer guilt through having an abortion.

1.6. SPECIAL CASES

When a mother's life is danger during a pregnancy, some believe that an abortion should be allowed. Fortunately with good medical care such cases are rare. A heavy responsibility rests upon the doctor and his decision is made with a second opinion and consultation with the parties concerned. One can only accept their considered decision.

Rape causing pregnancy is an awful dilemma and a terrible trauma for the victim, but despite its horror we must not lose sight of the sanctity of life, however conceived. Ezekiel states that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father. Should then a child be punished (by losing its life) because of the sin (rape) of the father?

Ezek 18:20.. "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

The counsellor in such cases must be super-sensitive. It has been known for such to go through with the birth. In one exceptional case the child grew up, was converted and became an evangelist! Even through human failing God can overrule.

1.7. RESOURCE MATERIAL

Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC), 5/6 St Matthew St. Westminster, London SW 1 P 2JJ Tel 0171 222 5845

'CARE' 53, Romney St, London SW1P 3RF



2. ALCOHOLISM AND ITS EFFECTS

2.1. ALCOHOL IS A DRUG

If alcohol came on to the market as a new drug, it would probably be put on prescription. It can make people feel happy, relaxed and sociable with a lessening of their inhibitions; but it is also a depressant, acting on the brain and central nervous system, affecting judgement, self-control and co-ordination.

2.2. MEASURES

For reference purposes alcohol is measured in units.

1 Unit equals a half-pint of beer or lager.

1 Unit equals a small glass of wine.

1 Unit equals a measure of spirits.

The medical authorities suggest that men should not drink more than 3 or 4 units per day and women 2 or 3 per day. In 1996 the average intake was about 16 units weekly. Men's drinking remains fairly stable, but women's drinking is increasing. In that year there were 43,000 cases of drunkenness offences.

2.3. DANGERS

Medication: People who take alcohol should be cognisant of the dangers if they are on medication. Checks should be made as the two will interact and the effects of the alcohol can be changed.

Young people: This group is drinking more alcohol and drinking more often. They are the heavier drinking section of the population. They start at about 12 years of age and by 15 most youngsters have tasted it. Twelve percent of 16 to 19 year olds show signs of alcohol dependency.

Health: One in four males admitted to hospital have an alcohol-related problem. Deaths from liver disorders are ten times greater in heavy drinkers than in non-drinkers.

Driving: 1 in 7 of all road deaths are alcohol related. It is an offence to drive with more than 80 mg per 100 ml of blood in the system.

Family: 30 % of child-abuse cases and 40 % of domestic violence are alcohol related. Separated and divorced men seek solace above the average drinker.

Crime: Research has shown that 30 % of sexual offences are alcohol related; burglaries 33 %, street crimes 50 %, pubs and clubs 85 %, murders 65 % and stabbing 75 %.

Industry: Employers report that 75 % of problems at work are alcohol related, as are 25 % of workplace accidents. Up to 14 million working days are lost annually through alcohol-related problems.

Accidents: Most drowning in unsupervised bodies of water are alcohol related. Intoxicated persons swim alone at night. Alcohol induces them to stay in the water too long, leading to hypertension and cardiovascular collapse.

Falls: Studies have revealed that at 100 mg alcohol in 100 ml blood, surging occurs when standing. Slower reflexes and diminished co-ordination mean heavier falls.



Burns: Alcohol causes drowsiness. People fall asleep while smoking. The condition also impedes speedy escape.

2.4. DEATHS

28,000 deaths occur annually through alcohol-related incidents. 4,000 are directly due to alcohol annually in England and Wales. A major cause of accidents and violence in young men is alcohol related. Alcohol is seventh in the list of causes of death in the world. There are over three quarters of a million (774,000) such deaths annually world wide.

2.5. SOCIAL COSTS OF ALCOHOL MISUSE

Industry: £964 million per year through alcohol-related sickness. £222 million through unemployment, £150 million NHS costs, and police and court expenses £50 million.

2.6. CHRISTIAN COMMENT

The statistics shown above are supplied by Alcohol Concern and show very clearly that we have a national problem with alcohol.

The Bible has a lot to say about wine, both for and against. It can be safely assumed that it refers to it as an intoxicant, from possibly a light wine to a strong drink.

In Bible days, wine was a popular beverage, but there are still warnings of its abuse. It brought benefits and curses. It gladdened the heart, but also caused the mind to err.

Psa 104:15. And wine that makes glad the heart of man, Oil to make his face shine, And bread which strengthens man's heart.

Isa 28:7. But they also have erred through wine, And through intoxicating drink are out of the way; The priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink, They are swallowed up by wine, They are out of the way through intoxicating drink; They err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

It made for merriment but also for anger.

Eccl 10:19. A feast is made for laughter, And wine makes merry; but money answers everything.

Isa 5:11. Woe to those who rise early in the morning, That they may follow intoxicating drink; Who continue until night, till wine inflames them!

Drunkenness is consistently condemned. Believers are to exercise self-control, and this is impeded or lost during drunkenness.

Prov 20:1. Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

Eph 5:18. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

Because Jesus drank wine He was dubbed a winebibber (which was a critical exaggeration). He did turn water into wine at Cana, His first miracle. The Apostle Paul recommended a little wine for a physical ailment.

1 Tim 5:23. No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.



Samson and John the Baptist abstained from it altogether. The Old Testament priests were strictly forbidden it when they entered the tabernacle. The reason for this was to enable them to clearly discern between **holy and unholy**. This tells us about the detrimental effect of alcohol upon our ability to reason.

Lev 10:9-11. "Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, {10} "that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean, {11} "and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses."

Some restrictions applied to New Testament Ministers.

Titus 1:7. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money,

1 Tim 3:2-3. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behaviour, hospitable, able to teach; {3} not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous;

2.7. WHAT IS OUR RESPONSE?

We must recognise alcohol's potential danger. It is a drug, and the habit can become addictive. All alcoholics began with the first glass!

Although the Bible does not forbid the taking of alcohol, it does condemn drunkenness, and often there is a fine line between the two.

A Christian does have a responsibility in the way of example and older Christians should be a role model for the younger. Romans 14:21 is appropriate here.

Rom 14:21. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.

In view of the mass of evidence showing the damage that is being done in so many areas of our national life, Christians should surely think seriously about their response.

In Numbers 6, when a person took the Nazarene Vow they voluntarily and willingly abstained from anything connected with the vine as a demonstration of their devotion to God.

Paul's words should be taken to heart:

1 Cor 6:12. All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

Prov 23:29-35. Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? {30} Those who linger long at the wine, Those who go in search of mixed wine. {31} Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it swirls around smoothly; {32} At the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper. {33} Your eyes will see strange things, And your heart will utter perverse things. {34} Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, Or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: {35} "They have struck me, but I was not hurt; They have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?"



2.8. RESOURCE MATERIAL

Alcohol Concern, Waterbridge House, 32-36 Loman Street, London SE1 OEE, Tel (0171) 928 7377. (This organisation has a full range of literature on every aspect of the alcohol situation.)



SESSION 2

3. CITIZEN AND SOCIAL ISSUES

3.1. TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGING

The 20th century, with its two world wars, and revolutions in industry, technology, economics, politics and morals, have all disturbed the cloistered calm of the religious life. Today many people comment upon the apparent deterioration in standards and morals. In the last fifty years society's attitude has drastically changed towards many important issues. Values once held dear and never questioned have now totally eroded away.

England, once famous for its conservative attitude to sex, now openly exhibits a tolerance for debauchery and many types of perversion. Marriage is now openly disdained. Fidelity and faithfulness are discarded. The result has been a breaking down in the family unit. Functional, healthy families are a minority and are fast becoming a rarity.

Streets that were once safe for women to walk in and children to play on, are now perceived to be the hunting grounds of criminals, rapists and paedophiles.

Society's attitude towards church and Christian values has greatly altered. The Christian church has been seen as old fashioned and irrelevant, where as other religions and cults have been accepted as valid alternatives or expressions of differing cultures. In the West, the church has become alienated from the world around it.

This leaves the church faced with various questions. How do we interpret these social shifts? Is there anything we can do to reverse the trend?

3.2. CHURCH'S VISION

The answers we come up with to such questions will depend upon our vision of the church and our interpretation of Scripture. There are two divergent perspectives we can take.

3.2.1. Pessimistic Fatalism

Scripture teaches us that there is a very real spiritual power that lies behind the darkness that seeks to engulf mankind.

1 John 5:19. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

Eph 2:1-2. And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, {2} in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,

The Bible also tells us that in the last days things will get much worse.

Mat 24:7-13. "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. {8} "All these are the beginning of sorrows. {9} "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. {10} "And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. {11} "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. {12} "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. {13} "But he who endures to the end shall be saved.



In light of such verse many believers see the social deterioration around us as inevitable. All we can apparently do is bewail the downward slide with an air of self-righteous dismay. Some Christians take the view that society is entirely godless and governments are little more than puppets of Satan, we have only one responsibility and that is call them to repentance. As a result there are those believers who consider that any involvement in politics or social causes is “going into the world”. There are those who will not even vote in elections.

3.2.2. A Winnable War

Other believers do not consider that such a view truly reflects the scriptures. In recent years Evangelicals have been rethinking their attitude to social issues. Jesus describes the church as the “light of the world” and the “salt of the earth”. Light and salt have the ability to bring change and to penetrate their surroundings. Light dispels the darkness and cannot be overcome by it. Salt stops the decay. If the world around us is full of darkness and if society is rotting, then the church by its very nature has the ability to fight against such trends.

Paul teaches us that prayer can influence governments to bring about a better lifestyle.

1 Tim 2:1-3. Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, {2} for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. {3} For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour,

There have been those godly men in Scripture who have successfully changed the society around them for good. Men like Joseph, Daniel, David and Jehoshaphat. The integrity and devotion of such men brought about radical social changes.

History also tells of the powerful effectiveness of a Christian minority upon their surrounding community. The world in the time of the Acts of the Apostles was a dark place and yet the few disciples that Jesus left were able to spread that gospel and transform the whole world in just a few generations.

In England there have been times of greater moral darkness and lawlessness. Over two hundred years ago this country was in a terrible state, but the work of powerful preachers such as Wesley and Whitfield, and the work of Christian social reformers such as Shaftesbury and Wilberforce brought about tremendous change.

John Stott says:

The combined witness of history and Scripture is that Christian people have an enormous influence on society. We are not powerless.³

Society cannot see the demonic forces which are at work, and neither is society equipped to wage warfare against such forces. The church however is equipped for such a battle.

Mat 18:18. "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

The church remains

1 Tim 3:15. ... the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

³ *New Issues Facing Christians Today* John Stott



And truth is very powerful. We do not need to be afraid of the truth and neither do we need to be afraid for the truth⁴.

2 Cor 13:8. For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.⁵

Jesus said:

John 16:33. "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

3.3. GOD'S SECULAR MINISTRY

The spiritual activities of the church such as preaching, prayer and evangelism, are very effective in combating darkness. However the truth must be proclaimed in other ways as well and each believer must be salt and light in their own sphere.

But what about getting involved in social action? What should be our response, and what action, if any, should we take? There are many references in the Bible to social conditions, and in the Old Testament laws were given to govern daily life.

We need to get things into perspective before rushing into the secular situation. God being sovereign has an eye on all human affairs. According to Romans 13, the Officers of the Law are described as the Ministers of God. We are not only to respect them, but to pray for them.

Rom 13:1. Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

Rom 13:4-6. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. {5} Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. {6} For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing.

Jesus said let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and "glorify your Father which is in heaven"⁶. This refers to righteous living and would include our stand against injustice, helping the poor and seeking to champion the causes of the weak. Light is for dark places, and salt is for spreading not for being kept in the container. Evil triumphs when good men do nothing.

3.4. THE CHRISTIAN AND GOVERNMENT

It is wrong to develop a cynical view of government, whatever its political colour. The only alternative is anarchy. The world may be under the sway of the evil one, but it is God who sets up or pulls down kings.

⁴ *New Issues Facing Christians Today* John Stott

⁵ *The New International Version*, 1984.

⁶ Mat 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."



Dan 2:20-21. Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, For wisdom and might are His. {21} And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding.

Democracy may have feet of clay but dictatorship has a rod of iron and a godless one at that. We do have the opportunity of contacting and lobbying our MPs on matters that concern us.

There was a time in Sweden when the Pentecostal Christians refrained from voting, but when they saw that the communists were getting parliamentary seats they went to the Polls and turned the tables! That could be seen as passive involvement, but what about more active involvement?

3.5. THE CHRISTIAN AND PROTESTS

Like Lot of old we look around and vex our souls at the condition of society.

2 Pet 2:8. (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds);

The moral and spiritual deterioration of our country in almost every area makes it difficult to know where to begin. The tares are ripening as well as the wheat and they bring a bitter harvest.

Protests can be time-consuming. If we start, where do we stop? We cannot read every questionable book or see every doubtful film to qualify as valid protesters. In most cases we can only judge from reliable reports, which of course is quite legitimate.

We should avoid a purely negative attitude. The gospel of Jesus is a positive message of good news to mankind, and to continually take a negative stance will misrepresent our essential calling.

Beware of the 'engineered' protest. Sometimes a protest is organised to secure x thousand of signatures. This may show the strength of feeling, but many may not know all the arguments, and organisations receiving them may adopt a cynical attitude.

On the other hand, a mother was greatly offended when a trailer for an adult film was shown after a children's TV programme. She wrote to the station as a mother concerned about her child, and received a most apologetic reply stating that it happened inadvertently and would not happen again.

When a controversial film is due to be shown, it might be good for responsible people to see a preview if possible and carefully assess its merits or otherwise, and send a detailed appraisal to the producer (congratulations for good productions should be encouraged).

Wrongly handled protests can be counterproductive. Film producers and authors know that if a book or film is singled out for public criticism, it will ensure its success in a secular society. 'Bad publicity is better than no publicity' is their policy.

It will be said that such films and books have to be paid for and therefore those not wanting to indulge are free to abstain, but it must also be remembered that cinema films eventually come on to TV, where they are accessible to all.

It will be appreciated that after all our activities and protests the ultimate issues are spiritual, and we are waging warfare with powers beyond the earthly. We must never underestimate the power of intercessory prayer at all times.



4. DRUG CULTURE

Drug misuse has been around for *many* years, but it has *now* escalated to a scale of frightening proportions. World-wide there are millions trapped by its destructive lifestyle.

- a) It is a social problem and the Government is concerned about it.
- b) It is a medical problem and the medical profession is constantly researching it.
- c) It is an educational problem and schools are taking it seriously.
- d) It is a legal problem and the Courts are dealing with offenders.
- e) It is a spiritual problem and the Church needs to play its part.

There are many reasons for drug taking. Some indulge to release tension; some to experience a euphoric state, while others see it as a rebellion against authority, often egged on by their peers. Other reasons include availability to experiment, curiosity, boredom and escapism. As with other social problems there is a need to look beyond the symptoms to the causes. This can be done by counselling, and often a spiritual reason can be detected.

4.1. THE GENERAL OVERVIEW

Statistics from the Institute for the Study of Drug Dependency (ISDD).

These are the findings of five major surveys in the last five years:

- * One in four people will have misused drugs at some time.
- * Over the age of 35 misuse is rare. Under that age the average is more than 2 in 5.
- * Schoolchildren have an increasing knowledge and experience of drugs. At the age of 12, possibly one in 12. At the age of 14, 1 in 3, and by the age of 16, 2 in 5 will have taken drugs.
- * After leaving school young people's exposure to drugs dramatically increases. It is possible that every other person in their late teens and early twenties will have misused drugs. Averages include male and female, but in the twenties age group the female average drops to a third compared with their male counterparts.
- * There is a parity between Afro-Caribbean and Whites, but there seems to be less hard drug misuse among young Asian males.

4.2. SOME SURVEY RESULTS

The 1994 British Crime Survey (Home Office) found that only 13 % of 45-59 year olds had taken drugs as against 46 % of 16-19 year olds.

- * Schoolchildren: In 1995 9 % of 12-13s reported taking drugs or solvents, 30 % of 14-15s, 37 % of 15-16s.
- * Young adults: Peak periods for drug-taking are consistently found in 16-35 year olds. 41 % in early twenties, 25 % 30-34s, 8 % in 45-59s and 1 % in over-sixties.
- * Of drug-takers in general 48 % live in 'professional' households and 42 % in 'unskilled manual' households.



4.3. GEOGRAPHICAL STUDIES

Scotland had the biggest level of drug misuse with 55 %, followed by England with 41 % of 15-16s admitting to lifetime misuse. Wales came third with 33 %, then Northern Ireland 26 % (only 18 % in females).

4.4. SUMMARISING THE SURVEY

In the UK as a whole, 1 in 3 fourteen year olds and 2 in 5 sixteen year olds will have tried drugs.

4.5. ETHNIC GROUPS

A four-city study revealed that White and Afro-Caribbean lifetime misusers were identical at 29 %, Indian 11 % and Pakistani/Bangladeshi 15 %.

4.6. TRENDS

Over a five year period there has been a 79 % increase in the number of drug addicts notified to the Home Office. In 1995 there were 37,164 notified addicts (actual numbers could be many more). One thing is sure; the groups notified are getting younger.

4.7. SUMMARY

It is obvious that Satan has an interest in the drug culture, because it is a counterfeit gospel offering life, joy, peace and even a pseudo-religious experience. Among the four major sins in Rev. 9:21 (along with murder, theft and immorality) is sorcery; this included witchcraft and the use of drugs. The Greek word for sorcery is *Pharmakea* from which we get the word Pharmacist (or Chemist). The sorcerer used them in spells and curses, etc. It can be seen that there could be a fine line between the drug culture and the Occult, involving the need for spiritual help and deliverance.

SESSION 3

5. ECOLOGY AND ANIMAL RIGHTS

Green issues are no longer exclusively the concern of conservationists and hippies which they once were. The way we should care for the planet has become a mainstream political concern of immense national and international significance, and cases of pollution and environmental damage still raise passions to boiling point.

The 'spiritual' justification offered by many environmental protesters often has strong roots in 'new age' or pagan philosophies. There are however, strong theological reasons for arguing that Christians should equally care for our God-given resources, although the Bible also offers an equally important counterbalance.

5.1. GOD AS CREATOR

One of the central doctrines of the Old Testament is that God created our environment, out of nothing but himself. 'The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it', as the Psalmist reminds us⁷.

⁷ Psa 24:1 The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein.



The New Testament expands upon this teaching by examining the place of Christ in creation. Paul teaches ‘by Him all things were created’⁸; whereas the prologue to John’s gospel is even more explicit: ‘Apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being’⁹.

Old Testament scriptures were used in the Early Church as evidence that the formation and sustaining of the universe was an act of the whole Trinity together.

Gen 1:1-3. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. {2} The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. {3} Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

Gen 1:26. Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

Gen 3:22. Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever";

But why did God create us? We were made for God’s own pleasure and greater glory, so that we might have communion with him. ‘The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever’, as the Westminster Shorter Catechism has it.

But the created order has its own purpose too - it is not only for the benefit of human beings. That much is evident from the fact that there are plants and animals which serve no apparent purpose for human beings, and from God’s command for Noah to preserve of the unclean as well as the clean animals from the flood.

Also, there is a sense in which the Universe itself worships God. Jesus told the Pharisees at his triumphal entry into Jerusalem that, were it not for the praise of his followers, the stones would feel the need to applaud his presence. Job 38:7 tells us that ‘the morning stars sang together’ for joy when God laid the foundations of the earth. Although we should probably take neither text totally literally, the underlying thought of creation worshipping is quite clear and must not be disregarded.

More radically, Paul points out that the creation of a visible world has made it possible for us to ‘clearly see’ God’s divine nature, even going so far as to say that He can be ‘understood through what is made’.

Rom 1:20. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

This means that our environment is a revelation of God’s character. Surely then we should take care of it.

⁸ Col 1:16-17 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. {17} And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

⁹ John 1:3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.



5.2. THE PLACE OF HUMANS IN CREATION

How do human beings fit into God's plan for creation? Gen 1:26 is clearly a key verse here, and it states that God created us in his own image and likeness.

Gen 1:26. Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

This claim is made for no other part of the created order and must imply that humankind has a special place within creation. While we have to live in the animal kingdom and relate to it, we are inherently different from the animals, and have our own unique status.

Furthermore, in Gen 1:28, Adam is explicitly given responsible tasks and powers of decision and determination with regard to the earth. He is put in control as God's viceroy.

Gen 1:28. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Note however that the verb is in the plural. God did not just give this position to Adam, but to mankind. This is an hereditary regency, and is still legitimately applicable to the human race today, even though as we shall see it is now over a fallen and corrupted creation.

An examination of the key words of God's blessing upon man in Gen 1:28-29 also proves instructive. The Hebrew verb translated 'rule' is also used in Joel 4:13 of treading grapes in a winepress. Still more harshly, 'subdue', can also mean 'to bring into bondage', 'to keep under', 'to force', and is even used to speak of rape.¹⁰ So we must not become so pro-environmental that we discard our God-given right to use the resources around us. We are given dominion over the planet, but we have to use its resources wisely. This is a biblical concept. God's commission to man also requires him to 'cultivate and keep' the Garden.

Gen 2:15. Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

Theologians interested in a biblical response to the ecological crisis have found the concept of stewardship helpful. We hold the earth in trust (for the Lord, not just for future generations) and are obliged to use its resources for his glory.

5.3. ANIMALS

Genesis declares that animals too were recipients of the breath of God at creation.

Gen 7:15. And they went into the ark to Noah, two by two, of all flesh in which is the breath of life.

Animals along with Adam and Eve, were given by God the right to make use of the planet's resources for food. They deserve therefore to be treated with respect and compassion.

¹⁰ Est 7:8 When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine, Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther was. Then the king said, "Will he also assault the queen while I am in the house?" As the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.



Gen 1:30. "Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it was so.

Solomon recorded how the righteous are mindful of the well being of his animals.

Prov 12:10. A righteous man regards the life of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

Peace in the animal world is also one of the marks of the Messiah's millennial reign.

Isa 11:6-9. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. {7} The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. {8} The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. {9} They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

But, does the Bible present all creatures as of equal worth in God's sight? The plain answer is no. Under the Mosaic Law innocent animals were sacrificed to spare the life of a transgressor. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, explicitly places man higher than the sparrows.

Mat 6:26. "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

The following Psalm stresses the subjection of animals to humans.

Psa 8:6-8. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, {7} All sheep and oxen; Even the beasts of the field, {8} The birds of the air, And the fish of the sea That pass through the paths of the seas.

Dominion brings authority and responsibility. Mankind has a responsibility to care for the world and all the creatures within it.

God instructed Noah after the flood, that animals were given for the food of man.

Gen 9:3. "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.

There is therefore no theological ground for vegetarianism, but there are increasing number of people refusing to eat meat for none spiritual reasons. Some refuse meat in protest at the brutality of some modern farming methods. Others are concerned about the effects of growth hormones given to animals, which may be retained in their meat.

5.4. RESOURCE MATERIAL

Ian Bradley, *God is Green: Christianity and the Environment* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1990). (A good brief theological summary.)

Tim Cooper, *Green Christianity: Caring for the Whole Creation* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990). (A more popular and practical discussion.)



Sean McDonagh SSC, *To Care for the Earth: A Call to a New Theology* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986). (A rather more radical response!)

6. EUTHANASIA

Our word, euthanasia comes from the Greek *eu thanatos* which means 'good death'. We use the term to mean the deliberate termination of the life of another person by a definite act or omission in the context of a painful illness. There are different classifications of euthanasia.

Active Euthanasia is a positive act done to bring about death such as the administering of a drug.

Passive Euthanasia is a deliberate shortening of life by omission, e.g., the withdrawing of treatment.

Involuntary Euthanasia is the ending a person's life without any indication that this was their wish.

Voluntary Euthanasia is the ending a person's life at their request.

Non-voluntary Euthanasia is the ending of a person's life who does not have the faculty to choose life or death.

The definition of suicide has not changed but society's attitude has. It is no longer considered an offence but as an act of self-release (see chapter 15. Suicide - A Christian Perspective, page number 42).

People today can make a Living Will. This is an Advance Directive in which they express the health care management and treatment they wish to be applied in the event of their incapacity to make such decisions, or convey such instructions when the circumstances envisaged occur.

The Bible does not address the subject of Euthanasia directly as it was not an issue at the time, but there are principles which can guide us. Man is made in the image of God and was given his life by God. The taking of life therefore can only be done at His command. Many societies base their laws on the Judeo-Christian ethic and accept the view of the sanctity of life. It is also embodied in Article 2 of the European Convention of Human Rights, and Article 6 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights. There are recognised exceptions, such as taking life in self defence.

Voluntary euthanasia by active means is unlawful, as is aiding and abetting such an act. When drugs are used on a patient to add a quality of life when they are terminally ill, the Law accepts that the drug may shorten the life. In such circumstances it would be recognised that the illness was the underlying cause of death, and it would not be deemed a criminal offence. A patient however has the right to register their intent to refuse such treatment. This must be done previously while of sound mind and by the making of a Living Will.

6.1. PRESSURE FOR EUTHANASIA

There is a growing voice for voluntary euthanasia to be made legal. In May 1990 a Bill was supported by 28 MPs. 35 voted for it and 101 against, with 501 abstaining. In 1993, the 'Termination of Medical Treatment Bill' was introduced in the House of Lords but it failed through lack of time.

In September 1991 the EC Commission on Human Rights stated, 'Wherever a sick person in perfect clarity of mind strongly demands that an end be put to their existence when it has lost all



meaning for them, and a committee of doctors recognise the unavailability of any other treatment, euthanasia should be granted'.

Euthanasia is generally practised in the Netherlands, although it is strictly illegal. The doctor involved must report it, and he is virtually granted immunity from prosecution.

6.2. ALTERNATIVES TO EUTHANASIA

It has been noted that requests for euthanasia come from patients whose symptom control has been less than adequate. Where control is established, the fear of unbearable suffering is diminished, and it is significant that in the Netherlands, where euthanasia is practised, there were no Hospices in 1992.

A recent report of the Health Council on Palliative (pain control) Care stated that 54 % of cancer patients suffered unnecessary pain because of inadequate skills in this area. In 1992 there were already 183 Hospices established in the UK. Palliative Care is a part of the programme and courses are available. Funds must be available for research.

6.3. CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY

The Church must make itself heard in the national debate, not only in opposing the pro-euthanasia lobby, but also by promoting life-affirming alternatives.

Its ministry should include:

- Providing spiritual, emotional and physical support for sufferers and carers alike.
- Identifying with and coming alongside those involved, emphasising the hope of the Christian.
- Providing practical and consistent support for Care Establishments.
- Visiting the terminally ill in their homes or hospices.

6.4. RESOURCE MATERIAL

Euthanasia', United Pentecostal Committee for Morals & Ethics Position Paper. Available from: The Secretary, Rev Bryn Thomas, 149 Manor Road, Smethwick, Warley B67 7HH. Tel. (0121) 558 1788.



SESSION 4

7. ETHICS

7.1. DEFINITION

Ethics is concerned with what society views as being morally right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable, permissible and impermissible. This means that ethical views vary from one culture to another because the culture itself becomes the measure by which right and wrong are determined. This also means that ethics change with time and will be reflected by the way society changes and views its needs.

Christian ethics are the main concern of this article. Christian ethics differ from secular ethics because they are linked to the Bible and determined by the unchanging truths of the Scripture. Christian ethics are therefore, God-centred and Christ-centred rather than man-centred.

The purpose of any Christian system of ethics is to enable mankind to live in correct relationships, firstly, with his God and secondly, with his neighbour. All correct behaviour, and any truly moral system, should facilitate and improve upon these relationships.

Any ethical system which has man as its centre degenerates into a system which is based upon the relative needs of mankind which is reflected by what is called 'Situation Ethics'.¹¹

7.2. CHRISTIAN ETHICS ARE REVELATIONAL ETHICS

The main difference between Christian ethics and any other system of human ethics is that they are *revelational*. This means that they are based upon God's revelation of Himself to mankind through the Scriptures. They are not merely a new system of rules and regulations. This is because the Scriptures reveal to mankind the heart and desire of God with regard to his creation. This divine will is revealed in the Word of God and by the working of the Holy Spirit.

The Word of God unfolds God's plan of salvation from the beginning of time and points out the way in which mankind needs to re-establish his relationship with God. This relationship needs to be restored because it was ruptured due to man's sin. This sin led to the Fall and results in mankind's complete solidarity with his first ancestor - Adam.

Any system of ethics which does not acknowledge man's inability and his sinfulness is immediately deficient. This is the reason for the weaknesses that are apparent in non-Christian ethical systems. In all their emphasis upon right and wrong, they ignore the fact that mankind is unable to do what is right because of his fallen nature.

Rom 7:14-15. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. {15} For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.

7.3. BIBLICAL ETHICS

A biblical system of ethics has to take into consideration both Old and New Testament principles, because these need to be understood as presenting the full will of God.

¹¹ The term 'Situation Ethics', as made famous by Joseph Fletcher in his book by that name, (London: SCM Press. 1966). He believed that there is no such thing as an absolute truth other than his interpretation of Love and Justice. The problem with his interpretation of these two matters is that they are not biblically based.



7.3.1. Old Testament Ethics

Christian ethics do not ignore Old Testament ethics. Within the Old Testament are found the foundation stones of Christian ethics. It needs to be remembered that there is both continuity and discontinuity between what we find in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Some principles of behaviour from the Old Testament persist while others do not. The basic matters regarding relationships between man and God and man and man do not change.

The Decalogue (Ten Commandments - Exodus 20) lays down basic rules which are meant to deal with both attitudes and conduct. It is only in the New Testament that these are developed further in terms of motivation and the basic thoughts behind the outward acts (The Sermon on the Mount – Matthew chapters 5 to 7).

We should see the Old Testament teaching on behaviour as introductory and as establishing lasting principles. In order not to get confused, any study of Old Testament should recognise the difference between ritual, ceremonial and absolute unchanging principles. In other words, rules about ritual washings, planting of various kinds of plants in the same field, etc., should never be considered on the same level as rules regarding man's obligations to his God and man's obligations to his fellow man.

The difficult sayings of the Old Testament which have to do with the command to destroy rebellious peoples should be seen in the light of God's purity and his willingness to take what we perceive as extreme measures to keep his 'chosen people' from being compromised by their association with evil.¹²

Intermarriage and agreements with the godless nations would have resulted in the loss of a national identity as 'the people of God'.¹³ There are lessons to be learned here for the Christian. Often he has become so identified with the world in which he lives that he is swallowed up by its way of thinking and its behaviour, to the extent that there is no longer any apparent difference between the Christian and the non-Christian.

The Old Testament could only define sin, but was powerless to deliver people from spiritual bondage. Demonized nations had to be destroyed, people with contagious diseases had to be placed in isolation. Under the New Testament people can be set free from demonic powers. Jesus touched lepers. He did not become unclean, but they became clean.

Much of what we understand (or misunderstand) as sanctification/separation should be viewed in the light of the calls upon Israel to be different. Not just for the sake of being different, but so that it would not be confused with the ways of the ungodly who did not know Jehovah (Yahweh).

¹² Deut 7:2-6 "and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. {3} "Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. {4} "For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. {5} "But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire. {6} "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.

¹³ Exo 23:32-33 "You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. {33} "They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you."



This is at the heart of what we should understand by holiness.¹⁴ Separation in the Old Testament ethic is separation from a whole way of life, but at the same time separation to God and his service of God. Yet it is also separation to the service of mankind. Judaism insists on the vital link between religion and ethical conduct. It was not possible to be a good Jew unless you were a good person. This meant loving God and being good to your fellow man.

7.3.2. New Testament Ethics

Without the New Testament we could not have Christian ethics. We would merely have a modified presentation of the Old Testament Jewish teachings.

7.3.2.1. A Trinitarian Ethic

The New Testament ethic is a Trinitarian ethic. It takes into account the place of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Without this emphasis any ethic degenerates into a Unitarian system which ignores the primacy of the Saviour and the work of the Spirit of God in the life of the believer.

7.3.2.2. A Christ-Centred Ethic

The New Testament ethic depends totally upon Christ and the salvation provided by Christ. In the same way that salvation is by faith, so the moral conduct of all believers is based upon a life of faith in the Lord and the obligations brought about as the result of a life lived in communion with the Saviour.

Eph 2:10. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

In other words, works spring out of faith and communion with Christ and are not the result of human effort. Conduct is dependent upon a love relationship with the Lord. Because Christians enjoy a life which is freed from the shackles of sin, they are now able to be free to serve God and man as was originally intended prior to the fall of Adam.

An unbeliever cannot live according to Christian principles because there is no Christ-centredness, nor any relationship between the sinner and the Saviour.

7.3.2.3. An Ethic of Freedom

As a result the Christian Ethic is an ethic of liberty. However, this is not to be understood as licence. The believer is only free when he is doing the will of God. There is no such thing as unlimited freedom. Freedom always falls within the parameters established by God's word and the direct leading of the Holy Spirit.

2 Cor 3:17. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Anything outside this will lead to renewed bondage. Legalism is the opponent of Christian freedom. However, freedom is linked to the law of Christ and of faith¹⁵, the law of the Spirit who will always do what is right¹⁶.

¹⁴ Lev 19:2 "Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

Lev 20:26 'And you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine.

¹⁵ Rom 3:27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.

¹⁶ Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.



7.3.2.4. An Ethic of Love

Christian Ethics are based upon love - love of God and love of our neighbour.

Because the word 'love' has been so badly abused in our day, it needs to be understood that it should be perceived in the light of its Scriptural use. The New Testament uses the Greek word *agape* and never *eros*.

The latter conveys the sense of love of self and is associated mostly with sexual and egotistical love. This is the way in which love is portrayed in the media and this is the way in which the majority of Western society understands the term.

Agape, however, is love which is based upon the concept of doing what is right. It is altruistic, and does not take into account the individual's feelings or emotions. It is based upon the will of the individual who wills to do what is right, even if it is the most difficult thing to do. This is Christian love. This is the kind of love God had when He sent His Son into the world to save the sinner.

7.3.2.5. An Ethic of the Holy Spirit

The Christian is a person who is dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit¹⁷. The Holy Spirit not only brings about the regeneration and conversion ('new birth') of the individual, but He enables the believer to live in victory over the sinful nature and thereby do what is right in God's eyes.

He is the means of empowerment of the entire life of the Christian because He lives within the believer and is his personal helper and guide¹⁸. Any system of ethics which minimises the role of the Holy Spirit in the fulfilment of what is right and the avoidance of what is wrong has failed to underline the means by which all 'good' conduct must be motivated and empowered. Without the Spirit's enablement it would be impossible to please God.

7.3.2.6. An Ethic of Expectation

Christian ethics looks to the future. It knows that life is lived in anticipation of the redemption of the Sons of God when Christ returns for his own, at his appointed time¹⁹. There is a future hope; life does not come to an end when a person's last breath is drawn and he is buried in the cold and unwelcoming ground. The Christian's behaviour is modified by the fact that there is a day of accountability coming when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord²⁰.

¹⁷ 2 Cor 3:3-4 clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. {4} And we have such trust through Christ toward God.

¹⁸ John 16:12-15 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. {13} "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. {14} "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. {15} "All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

¹⁹ Rom 8:19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

²⁰ Phil 2:9-11 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, {10} that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, {11} and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.



The Christian lives in hope.²¹ This makes him re-evaluate his conduct continually. In the final analysis, all Christian conduct is basically motivated by a new relationship with the Living God. This is made possible through the sacrifice of the Son and the continued action of the Spirit. This is the essence of Christian ethics.

7.4. RESOURCE MATERIAL

William Barclay. *Christian Ethics for Today* (London: Harper & Row, rev. edn 1984).

Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Opinions and Issues* (Leicester: Apollos. 1989).

Author: David J Garrard

8. GAMBLING

Gambling is the nation's number one Pastime. The National Lottery, bingo, horse-racing, fruit machines, football pools, premium bonds and scratch cards all raise hopes (many false) for those who would get-rich-quick.

£4.5 billion worth of tickets were sold in the Lottery's first year. Each £1 stake is divided as follows: 50p for prizes, 28p to Charities, 12p for tax, 5p to the seller and 5p to Camelot the organisers. Christians are subtly being drawn into the net, and some Churches are applying for an allocation.

8.1. WHAT IS THE BIBLE PERSPECTIVE?

Gambling was not unknown in the Bible²², and although there are no direct references that forbid it, there are Scriptures dealing with its underlying causes. 'Thou shalt not covet'²³, and 'the love of money is the root of all evil'²⁴. The Christian is seen as a steward of his money and possessions and should handle all of his affairs responsibly.

8.2. WHY DO PEOPLE GAMBLE?

According to a survey the three principal reasons for gambling are:

- a) To secure financial security;
- b) To help one's family; and
- c) To fulfil a life's ambition.

²¹ Rom 8:24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?

²² Mat 27:35 Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: "They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots."

²³ Exo 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbour's."

²⁴ 1 Tim 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.



8.3. OBJECTIONS TO GAMBLING

The gains are unrelated to creative or merited effort. The reward is collected from others' loss many of whom cannot afford it. Always present is the danger of addiction. The great majority of gamblers lose.

The Bible warns against those who would get-rich-quick. It brings tragedy to both winners and losers. Marriage breakdowns, jealousy, thefts, burglaries, suicide, loneliness and despair. Example: Mandy is a single mother with two children. She spends over £5 weekly on gambling, fearing to stop lest her number should come up!

Gambler's Anonymous received over 15,000 calls in a year from those with problems through gambling. This has increased by 17 % since the National Lottery began. Straight giving to Charities has diminished since the Lottery came.

8.4. IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GAMBLING AND INSURANCE?

Yes. Because gambling premiums are paid in the hope of gaining money, whilst insurance premiums are paid to guard from possible loss. Gambling hopes to obtain what one does not have, whilst insurance guards what one already has.

Gamblers often set their families at risk, whilst insurance protects families from disaster. Most gamblers get no return, whilst insurers received benefit if needed. The motives between gambling and insuring are totally different.

8.5. IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GAMBLING AND BUYING STOCKS & SHARES?

The Stock Market provides funds for investment in commerce and industry; at the same time provides income for investors. All money invested in business carry risk which cannot always be foreseen. There is a risk in crossing the road!

Playing the market however is something different, where someone carefully studies the financial position and constantly switches shares for the highest profit. That must be gambling.

8.6. CONCLUSIONS

Christians should avoid all forms of gambling. Churches and Religious organisations should not seek allocations from the Lottery or any other gambling source. The Federal Free Church Council are expressing concern that the Government are considering the use of Lottery Funds in Education. Some Christians sit on School Governorships and are anxious that they may be drawn into what they consider to be hypocritical situations.

8.7. RESOURCE MATERIAL

Free Church Federal Council, 27 Tavistock Square, London WC in 9HH. Tel. (0171) 387 8413.

'Gambling', United Pentecostal Committee for Morals & Ethics Position Paper. Available from The Secretary: Rev Bryn Thomas, 149 Manor Road, Smethwick, Warley B67 7HH. Tel. (0121) 558 1788.

Gamblers Anonymous. Tel. (0171) 352 3060.



SESSION 5

9. GENETICS

Genetic engineering was until recently something of a science fiction horror story. However, dramatic developments in the last couple of decades have brought the issue out of the 'X Files' and into the headlines. The science of Genetics affects modern society in a surprising number of ways.

9.1. REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

The 'In Vitro Fertilisation' or IVF programme, despite its low success rate of only about 1 treatment in 10²⁵, has offered the chance of a child to thousands of infertile couples since the birth of the first 'test tube baby' Louise Brown in 1978. IVF involves the mixing of the husband's sperm with the wife's eggs in a test tube or culture dish, in the hope that one or more viable embryos will be produced which can then be inserted into the woman's womb. If the treatment is successful, these embryos will be implanted in the womb lining and continue to develop.

Although the idea that a child could be conceived outside of a human body was initially felt to be controversial, most Christians now would have few problems with the idea of IVF in itself. The major ethical problem the programme poses is that it requires the fertilising of more than one egg. Hence more embryos than can be used in treatment are produced. Only three embryos may be implanted into the mother's womb.

Those embryos not required are frozen for later use, used for research or allowed to die. This is the donors' choice in British law. There is a moral issue for Christians concerning IVF treatment. If we accept that "life" begins at the moment of conception then the freezing of, research upon or destruction of unwanted embryos is not permissible. Some believers suggest that "life" begins when an embryo is implanted upon the wall of the mother. The Bible does not tell us exactly at what instant life begins, but we are told the forming of a child within the womb is not just the result of a chemical reaction, but there is a divine, spiritual component.

Psa 139:13-17. For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. {14} I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvellous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. {15} My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, and skilfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. {16} Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them. {17} How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!

In Exodus if a miscarriage came about through violence and the child died, the penalty was a life for a life. The unborn was valued as a person.

Exo 21:22-23. "If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. {23} "But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life,

²⁵ More recent figures suggest a great improvement to about one in three.



One additional issue to be taken into account is the tendency of some medical practitioners to want to terminate any 'imperfect' foetus - embryos are often screened for genetic abnormalities before implantation - but this regrettably is true of naturally conceived children as well.

'Donor insemination' (DI) is generally of value when the husband's sperm is the cause of the infertility problem. Another man's sperm (usually taken anonymously but after careful research from a sperm bank) is used instead to fertilise the egg. This poses additional ethical difficulties:

- DI can be used by women who wish to have a child outside of an orthodox family: single or gay women, for instance.
- As with adoptive children, it may be difficult for the child to realise that his/her biological father is not the man who they have always considered their father.
- Children born with the aid of DI need to check they are not marrying someone with whom they have a close genetic relationship (this is made possible by the retention of a confidential central register).
- The issues of child support in the event of a family breakdown have yet to be resolved satisfactorily in law (since the husband would not be the child's father).

Egg donation is also a possibility, but is medically far more complex, rarer, and also less ethically problematic, since the embryo is still grown inside the mother's body.

9.2. CLONING

Cloning is the precise duplication of an embryo to produce two genetically identical individuals. It amounts to the artificial production of a "twin" to the cloned animal. While the technique can be used positively to preserve endangered plant or animal species, cloning poses significant ethical problems.

- It interferes with the divinely ordained processes of reproduction.
- It compromises the uniqueness of divine creation.

Despite the fact that human cloning is illegal throughout the developed world, this is clearly the ultimate goal of some current research.

9.3. GENETIC ENGINEERING

This is the manipulation of the component genetic parts of a plant or animal to 'improve' it. This might be to make it more resistant to disease, more productive or simply larger. Again, this interferes with the natural processes of life. The potential side effects are unknown, particularly the way genetically-engineered produce might interact with normal, unadulterated crops in the open field.

9.4. TRANSGENICS

One of the latest developments in the science of genetics is transgenics, the growing of animals to use their organs for transplantation into humans. Sometimes these animals are genetically engineered to make that transplant more successful.

There are potential dangers in this. We cannot know what might result from the introduction of animal DNA into the human body. Could it cause animal diseases to leap across into humans or



affect the human immune system? Also, if the use of animals in experimentation is ethically suspect, how much more difficult is it to accept the production of animals purely for the purposes of having their vital organs being harvested.

9.5. RESOURCE MATERIAL

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, who oversee IVF in the UK, publish a number of helpful leaflets including a *Patient's Guide to IVF* and some helpful material on the legal aspects of reproductive technologies. They can be contacted on (0171) 377 5077, and their website is at www.hfca.org

The Human Genetics Advisory Commission supervises research into human genetics on the government's behalf, and publishes reports and position papers on its website at www.dti.gov.uk/hgac. Of particular interest is their consultation paper and research report of 1998, 'Cloning Issues in Reproduction, Science and Medicine'.

See also the articles on some of these areas in I F Childress and J McQuarrie (eds.), *A New Dictionary of Christian Ethics* (London: SCM Press, 1986), which is worth consulting on most ethical issues.

10. HOMOSEXUALITY AND LESBIANISM

10.1. DEFINITION

The dictionary definition of homosexual is "feeling or involving sexual attraction to persons of the same sex." A homosexual / lesbian is a person who is attracted to another person of the same sex. Some accept the difference between being attracted to and entering into a sexual relationship with such a person. There is always a difference between being tempted to commit sin and actually performing the deed. Temptation itself is not sin. However if a person has homosexual desires this indicates a spiritually unhealthy state which should not be allowed to continue.

10.2. STATISTICS

Surveys in the USA and the UK found that less than 1.5 % of the adult population were actually homosexual. A detailed study in the UK showed that only 0.4 % of the male population were exclusively homosexual²⁶.

10.3. CAUSES

The origin of homosexuality is unclear, but evidence points to it being acquired or learned, resultant from childhood confusion of identity and / or adolescent trauma.

There is no medical evidence of genetic factors. Lawrence Hatterer, an American psychiatrist stated that 'homosexuals are not born but made, and genetic, hereditary, constitutional, glandular or hormonal factors have no significance in causing homosexuality. To be told that homosexuals cannot be treated is a misinformation' (Dr Fine).

There were in the early Christian Church former homosexuals who had found deliverance.

²⁶ 'The National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles', Penguin, 1994.



1 Cor 6:9-11. Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, {10} nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. {11} And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

10.4. CHARACTERISTICS

Most homosexual relationships are temporary. There is a lot of promiscuity, and in a survey, 74 % of male homosexuals reported having up to a 100 partners during their lifetime. In 1992 a SIGMA study funded by the Medical Research Council and the Department of Health reported that 34 % expressed regret for their lifestyle.

10.5. MEDICAL ASPECTS

The Homosexual lifestyle is linked with premature death, life expectancy being reduced by 25 to 30 years. A further survey found that less than 2 % of homosexuals survived to 65 years or older. Anal intercourse causes tearing of the anus and rectum which can lead to infection. The major cause of premature death among homosexuals is HIV / AIDS. A 20-year-old has a 30 % chance of being HIV positive or having AIDS by the age of 30. There is also a high rate of suicides. 40 % had a history of depression disorder compared with 3 % with males generally.

10.6. SOCIAL ASPECTS

In 'British Sexual Attitudes' (1994) 70 % expressed that homosexuality is generally regarded as unnatural and unacceptable.

The Gay community has an influence disproportionate to its numbers because of its successful lobbying and propaganda. Their first breakthrough was in the 1967 Sexual Offences Bill allowing homosexual practice between consenting adults (age 21 at that time). They continue to seek for a lowering of the age of consent which brings us nearer to paedophilia. Same-sex marriages will also be campaigned for.

An error of the Gay community is the readiness to identify young men as homosexuals when they may only be passing through a temporary stage. Children from broken homes can easily be destabilised. In the Gay Liberation Front Manifesto (1976) they stated that 'We must aim at the abolition of the Family'. Yet some Gay groups receive public funding from local councils and the National Lottery!

The initial spread of AIDS was definitely related to homosexual practice and the Terrence Higgins Trust circulate publications entitled 'You're Never Too Young' and 'Hot Sex Now'. This Trust receives some public funding.

10.7. THE SPIRITUAL ASPECT

'I do not, and cannot deny that homosexual acts are condemned by the Bible and Christian tradition' (Former Archbishop Runcie - 'Gay Christians', P. Coleman).

The scriptures forbid homosexual acts.

Lev 18:22. 'You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.



Lev 20:13. If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.

There are now those quarters which believe it is ‘politically correct’ to say that homosexual activities are ‘natural’. However activities which are natural do not destroy a person’s self-esteem or health. No where in the animal kingdom are homosexual activities practised. The Scripture clearly describes such acts as being contrary to nature.

Rom 1:24-27. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonour their bodies among themselves, {25} who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. {26} For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. {27} Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

Scripture does not discriminate against homosexuals. It states that “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”²⁷ Heterosexual acts outside of marriage are equally forbidden and designated as being sinful. Heterosexual lust is also sinful and harmful.

10.8. THE NEED FOR UNDERSTANDING AND COMPASSION

Because Christians take a serious view of the abomination of homosexuality they are dubbed ‘homophobic’ which is viewed as hating homosexuals. We must take the stand of Jesus by hating the sin but loving the sinner and seeking to bring them to salvation and deliverance.

Like others involved in unscriptural sexual relationships, homosexuals are damaged people looking for love, acceptance and wanting to be valued. These needs and desires are only really met through a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

10.9. RESOURCE MATERIAL

Homosexuality, the Medical, Social and Religious Implications, The Maranatha Community. 102 Irlam Road, Flixton, Manchester M4 1 6JT.

A Statement on Homosexuality and Lesbianism, Assemblies of God in Australia.

A Position Paper on Homosexuality, Assemblies of God USA, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, Missouri 65802, USA.

²⁷ Rom 3:23



SESSION 6

11. INDUSTRIAL ACTION AND STRIKES

No one likes a strike, except perhaps, the militant minority. Employers lose profits and customers, the workers lose pay, and the public are highly inconvenienced. The irony of it all is that eventually the parties must settle their differences or ask an arbitration body to do so for them.

Democratic countries allow workers to strike in the interests of the individual. The worker sells his labour and therefore has a right to withhold it if a dispute arises. The strike is his weapon of last resort.

There is legislation governing strikes, and a secret ballot should be taken before it can take place. This has made the situation more reasonable and has stopped what was known as “wildcat” strikes, where workers would stop work at a moment’s notice for trivial reasons. Strikes are usually over pay or working conditions or some action by the employer thought to be unjust by the work force.

The cause of a strike is not always on one side. Bad management is sometimes to blame and can provoke the employees to respond. When a strike takes place it can produce a lot of things that are distinctly unchristian. It is not just a matter of the workers sitting at home until things are settled. There is the inevitable picketing, shouting abuse and the waving of banners. Sometimes injury to persons and property ensues. Major strikes can cause bitterness that can last for years.

An unfortunate result of striking can be the suffering of many who are not connected with it, and it can have a knock-on effect into other industries. Big companies employ thousands of workers and although this is an economic way to produce goods, it does present problems when an industrial dispute arises. Smaller units in such cases could be a way of containing the results of a large-scale walk out, because customers would have an alternative.

Another way of minimise disputes would be for firms to encourage partnership between employers and employees and so eliminating the “us and them” syndrome. In America, for instance, the Unions have been known to loan money to the bosses! The Japanese have devised a code of practice covering all eventualities, and when difficulties arise they simply apply the appropriate article, common sense and discipline, and a strike is averted.

Scripture is not silent on this issue. The Old Testament was specific about the required behaviour of masters and servants, carefully guarding the interests of both. The master was not allowed to oppress his servant and at the end of their contract they had to be released, with ample redundancy. In the case of the casual worker he had to be paid as soon as he finished his day’s work.

Deut 24:14-15. "You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether one of your brethren or one of the aliens who is in your land within your gates. {15} "Each day you shall give him his wages, and not let the sun go down on it, for he is poor and has set his heart on it; lest he cry out against you to the LORD, and it be sin to you.

Deut 15:12-14. "If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. {13} "And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty-handed; {14} "you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. From what the LORD has blessed you with, you shall give to him.



Where does the Christian stand when a dispute results at his place of work? Obviously the New Testament did not envisage the type of strikes that we have today, but some principles can be gleaned. To start with, employers are to forbear threatening, realising that they too have a boss in heaven. They are also commanded to give their workers that which is just and equal.

Eph 6:9. And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

Col 4:1. Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

The Christian's responsibility involves strict ethical behaviour. He must not purloin or steal. Certain privileges or perks may be allowed by some employers, but where none are stipulated then the use of their facilities amounts to dishonesty.

Titus 2:9-10. Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, {10} not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

The believer must first and foremost regard his service as unto God rather than man.

Eph 6:5-6. Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; {6} not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,

This enhances the work ethic and ensures good workmanship, and the master will be respected and honoured. After all, it is his expertise and capital that founded the business, giving opportunity for employment and livelihood.

1 Tim 6:1. Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed.

The worker is expected to obey orders and not be insolent. In this way neither the Name nor the doctrine of the Gospel will be blasphemed.

Titus 2:9. Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back,

When however a dispute arises and all negotiations have failed to resolve it, then the following verses must still hold good.

1 Pet 2:18-19. Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. {19} For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully.

The Christian must respect the good and the awkward employer, and this involves Christian conscience, for such have a duty not generally expected from the non-Christian. His righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees whose behaviour was strictly correct and no more.

A strike is an industrial conflict between management and workers. It is an official and corporate action involving principles - real or imaginary.



This brings us to how we interpret the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter five²⁸. Some regard these as the required behaviour of Christians and argue that Jesus' teaching here is not relevant to the armed forces, the police or secular industrial disputes.

The Christian who has maintained a sincere and credible witness will be respected - albeit sometimes secretly - by his work colleagues for showing courage in opposition and possible misunderstanding by loved ones. He must weigh up carefully what his attitude must be, consulting other mature Christians. If he decides not to take part in a strike then it should be made an urgent matter of prayer and fasting, seeking the support of his Church.

1 Pet 4:19. Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

Each situation will differ and must be taken on its merits.

The following points might help:

- He must be satisfied that there has been sufficient negotiation on the matter and a strike is seen as the last resort.
- If a secret ballot has been taken, he should accept the democratic process.
- He should evaluate the results of the strike particularly if they are likely to cause suffering to others.
- If he does not take part in the strike, he must decide whether he should share any advantages the strike may win. At no time will he take part in violence but always conduct himself with Christian dignity.

12. LAW AND ORDER

Every country has its judicial code. The classification and punishment may vary, but there is a universal desire for law and order, without which, society would descend into chaos. Offences against the person, property and the state are deemed worthy of punishment.

12.1. RETRIBUTION

This involves a balancing of justice. The word comes from the Latin *retribu* which means 'I pay back'. Society through its laws shows its values, and the breaking of these laws is regarded as anti-social and the displeasure is shown in the form of punishment. This aspect of law reflects the Divine law where God punishes the sinner.

In Genesis chapter 9 Noah was virtually appointed the first Prime Minister. His portfolio included the administration of justice and authorised capital punishment where murder was concerned. This crime was seen as shedding innocent blood and the life of the perpetrator was to be forfeit²⁹. It was a form of atonement.

²⁸ Mat 5:38-42 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' {39} "But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. {40} "If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. {41} "And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. {42} "Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

²⁹ Gen 9:6 "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.



There is a reference to the sanctity of life in James³⁰, where we are forbidden to curse our fellow men because they were made after the similitude of God. How much more serious then is it to take a life? Imagine what an affront it would be to a famous artist for some vandal to smash the canvas of his masterpiece.

The judgement of a criminal in Israel had to be scrupulously fair. Two or more witnesses were required³¹ and the Law stipulated that in the case of corporal punishment, the number of stripes was strictly controlled³². The whole ethos of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth was not so much vengeance, but fair and measured retribution.

12.2. DETERRENCE

Deut 13:11. So all Israel shall hear and fear, and not again do such wickedness as this among you.

This thought is reflected in Church discipline where Timothy is told to rebuke publicly those who sin.

1 Tim 5:20. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.

A judge however in seeking to deter crime must not make an example of a criminal and punish more heavily than that which the law requires. We have the Myra Hindley case which shows this danger. She was sentenced to a stipulated number of years in prison, which she has now completed, but because of the public uproar at her (admittedly) heinous crimes, the Home Secretary refused her release.

12.3. RESTITUTION

In modern penal codes there is not a lot said about restitution, but the Israelite laws were quite specific. Criminals today if they have stolen money or goods can often hide them away and then get them back after release from prison. We do have a law whereby it is illegal for a criminal to profit from his crime, e.g., by selling his story to a newspaper, but there are still loopholes.

If a man stole a sheep or an ox he would have to restore four sheep for every one stolen and five oxen for every one stolen.³³ This is similar to returning stolen money with 300 % and 400 % interest! Obviously Zaccheus knew his Bible:

³⁰ James 3:9-10 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. {10} Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

³¹ Deut 19:15 "One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.

³² Deut 25:1-3 "If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, {2} "then it shall be, if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, that the judge will cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence, according to his guilt, with a certain number of blows. {3} "Forty blows he may give him and no more, lest he should exceed this and beat him with many blows above these, and your brother be humiliated in your sight.

³³ Exodus 22:1



Luke 19:8-10. Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." {9} And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; {10} "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Where thieves could not restore then the option was to sell themselves as slaves.

There were no prisons as such in Israel. The nearest thing they had were six Cities of Refuge to which anyone guilty of an offence (accidental or intentional) could go pending a fair trial. The guilty would have to be virtually under city arrest and remain there until the High Priest died when an amnesty would be given.

12.4. REHABILITATION

Retribution is only one element of punishment. On the positive side rehabilitation is also necessary. However deserved a prison sentence may be it carries with it some negative elements. The criminal is introduced to the criminal fraternity from whom he may very well learn the tricks of the trade and return to a further life of crime.

Human law should reflect the Divine law. In Christ the sinner's penalty has been paid and he is rehabilitated into the family of God with the past forgiven and forgotten.

We have already seen that corporal punishment was limited so that the person was not humiliated or degraded³⁴. There is a plea here for human dignity. It is again reflected in church discipline concerning a member who had sinned and had been disciplined:

2 Cor 2:6-8. This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, {7} so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. {8} Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.

Rehabilitation today does give the offender opportunity to work, and also to study and prepare for future careers. Some obtain degrees and also enjoy parole.

12.5. POSTSCRIPT ON CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

For Christians this has always been a controversial matter. As we have mentioned, the Law given to both Noah and Moses stipulated the death sentence for murder. Some query whether we should still support capital punishment in the day of God's grace.

It is true that in the Lord's encounter with the woman taken in adultery (a capital offence), He neither condoned nor condemned her but forgave and told her to sin no more³⁵. One can hardly see this as a precedent for today. The position was unique and Jesus knew all the facts and heard all the evidence, and as a supreme Judge had every right to drop the case for the prosecution. If

³⁴ Deut 25:1-3 "If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, {2} "then it shall be, if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, that the judge will cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence, according to his guilt, with a certain number of blows. {3} "Forty blows he may give him and no more, lest he should exceed this and beat him with many blows above these, and your brother be humiliated in your sight.

³⁵ John 8:1-11



our courts were to use this as an unqualified precedent, then we would not imprison criminals either but release them all. Is there anyone who would argue for that?

Romans 13 shows that the powers that be are ordained of God, and that the officers of the Law are God's (secular) ministers, "not bearing the sword in vain"³⁶. The New Testament also reiterates that the Law is made for the lawless and disobedient.

1 Tim 1:8-10. But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, {9} knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for man-slayers, {10} for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine,

The grace of God is available for people to live right, but if that grace is spurned then the law must take its course. In Britain capital punishment no longer remains. Perhaps a strong case against it is the recent spate of cases that have been re-examined and found to have been flawed. False imprisonment can at least be compensated, but execution is final.

SESSION 7

13. PORNOGRAPHY AND MEDIA VIOLENCE

13.1. WHAT IS PORNOGRAPHY?

Pornography includes books, pictures, magazines and films, etc., which deal with or depict sexual acts in an explicit way in order to arouse sexual excitement. The word pornography is from the Greek for prostitute, *porne* from *pernemi* - 'to sell'.

There has been a mounting evidence from teachers, social workers, probation officers, doctors, paediatricians, psychologists, police and the prison service that there is a link between scenes of violence depicted on TV, video and films, and human behaviour.

A survey carried out by Opinion Research Business in 1996 showed a contrast with a 1979 survey. The later survey showed a greater public concern about the effects of pornography. The response indicated that 60 % felt that the freedom of expression had gone too far. It is now questioned whether the Media is reflecting cultural and social norms, or whether it is creating them.

13.2. VIDEO INFLUENCES

All videos must be classified by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). Categories range from Uc (young children) through U, 12, PG, 15, 18 and R18. The R18 are only available in licensed sex shops. Computer games also come under the Act if they contain violence or explicit sex scenes. Hard-core porn videos can be purchased from abroad, and producers claim that they fall outside UK Law.

In the 1996 Survey 73 % of women linked the effect of videos with domestic violence. In some cases they coerced the women to take part in unacceptable sexual practices. One county police

³⁶ Rom 13:4



vice squad recorded several cases where sex offender's behaviour was clearly linked with pornography.

The prison service from their one-to-one interviews with sex offenders, report that in 50 % of the cases, pornography could have been the motivation for rape. School teachers have evidence of aggressive behaviour in the playground attributable to violence learned from computer games. Children can buy videos from car boot sales; borrow from adults; watch them in a friend's house or in their own house when parents are absent. A 14-year old-boy who tied a 12-year old girl to a tree, assaulting and raping her said, "I got the idea from a video".

13.3. TELEVISION

Children often watch adult films on TV in their bedrooms where parents neglect to supervise the viewing. Many stay up beyond the 9:00 PM watershed, and in any case they can record programmes. Satellite channels from abroad show blue movies, and school teachers witness copycat behaviour from what has been watched.

The sad thing about children's viewing is that they have no particular moral standpoint from which to evaluate things, and often get fantasy mixed up with fact. Pressure groups are strongly recommending that all actual and visual portrayal of rape and sexual violence be eliminated from TV, video and films. TV classifications are not strong enough.

13.4. SEX TOURISM AND CHILD ABUSE

A deplorable situation has arisen where pornography is used for child abuse. Tourists go abroad on holidays and sexually abuse child prostitutes. Interviews have been held with such tourists, as well as a hundred child and adult prostitutes, pimps and brothel keepers, so the facts are well established. Sex tourism features on the Internet and tourists produce their own pornography in videos and photographs.

This brings into question the need for some kind of censorship of the Internet. There has been the case of a man with no previous history of child abuse who spends three weeks holiday in Thailand every year to engage in sexual tourism. Some of the girls are only ten years old. His practice caused a progressive shift in his moral boundaries. These offenders can now be tried in Britain when they return.

13.5. THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL CONSIDERATIONS

Although the use of pornography is not specifically mentioned with in Scripture, it clearly transgresses several Scriptural principles. The Tenth Commandment states:

Exo 20:17. You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbour's.

Those who participate in pornography covet for and lust after someone they are no married to. They lust after and they fantasize about using the person in the image for their own gratification. Jesus spoke some very stern words on this issue, telling us that drastic measures should be taken by those who are caught in the sin of sexual lust.



Mat 5:27-30. "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' {28} "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. {29} "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. {30} "And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

Pornography is designed to feed and arouse the flesh. Yet Paul tells us:

Gal 5:16-21. I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. {17} For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. {18} But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. {19} Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, {20} idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, {21} envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Pornography can be described by "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness". The believer must be seeking to put to death the works of the flesh. The Psalmist gives us a good example to follow:

Psa 101:3. I will set nothing wicked before my eyes...

There is a limit to what believers can watch or read without feeding their flesh, damaging their spirit and grieving the Holy Spirit within them.

Pornography devalues and abases those who participate in its trade. These are people made in the image of God. People for whom Christ died. We are called to honour our neighbour as our self, and that means we should show them dignity and respect.

Pornography is a lie, and Satan is the father of all lies³⁷. It raises false expectations which cannot be satisfied. It fills the mind with images which cannot be quenched. Pornography can be addictive and those who have used such material may need deliverance from demonic strongholds.

13.6. LEGISLATION ON OBSCENITY IN ENGLAND AND WALES

SEX SHOPS: Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982. Any shop selling a 'significant degree' of sex articles has to obtain a licence from the local authority. Licensed sex shops are the only retail outlets allowed to sell or hire the most explicit (R18) videos. This includes sex cinemas.

IMAGES IN A PUBLIC PLACE: Indecent Displays (Control) Act 1981. This restricts what can be seen in a public place, e.g., magazine covers, videos, window displays, etc.

FILMS: Cinemas Act 1985. Local authorities have to licence any cinema in their area to approve the films shown. Most authorities accept the classification of the BBFC, which acts as a self-regulating body.

³⁷ John 8:44



VIDEOS: Video Recordings Act 1984. The BBFC also classifies Videos and refuses those on grounds of violence or pornographic content, or demands cuts before giving permission. The Act defines the criteria and the penalties.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY: Protection of Children Act 1978 and Criminal Justice Act 1988. It is an offence to possess or distribute an indecent photograph of a child under 16 including images on a computer.

PUBLICATION OR BROADCASTING OF OBSCENE MATERIAL: Obscene Publications Act 1959 and Broadcasting Act 1990. These Acts define obscenity and contain provisions on the importance of standards of taste and decency on television and radio.

TELEPHONES: Telecommunications Act 1984. This bans using the telephone system to communicate any material of indecent, obscene or menacing character, including computer pornography.

14. PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

Counselling and psychotherapy were undoubtedly among the major growth industries of the 1980s and 1990s. Practitioners of all kinds of self-help therapies made their names with a plethora of TV shows and publishing deals, and the phenomena carried over into Christian circles as well.

Far from traditional pastoral counselling, which focuses on applying general biblical truth to an individual's particular personal difficulties, we have seen the rise of 'Christian psychology', which generally amounts to little more the application of secular psychological methods within a Christian context.

While some churches have successfully used counselling centres as a major element of their evangelistic strategy, there are some ethical issues which need to be considered.

1. Counselling can produce dependency. This is most obvious in its excessive state, often parodied in American TV shows, where people are incapable of making decisions or doing anything without consulting their therapist. But there are rather too many people in the British church today who feel that they couldn't survive without their regular visit from the pastoral counselling team.
2. Persistent therapy could be seen as denying, even undermining, the effectiveness of the work of the Holy Spirit. If at conversion we truly become 'a new creation'³⁸ then why should the problems of the past need continual re-addressing?
3. The core principles of psychotherapy - its understanding of human nature, or its approach to issues such as guilt and sexuality, for instance - are essentially non-Christian. Its founding fathers were solidly atheistic. Sigmund Freud considered all religion to be a neurosis, a crutch for the emotionally weak and frail to lean on, and Carl Jung 'saw his work as providing an alternate conceptualisation of spirituality to Christianity's'³⁹. It is difficult to see how Christian practitioners could base their methodology primarily on such anti-Christian approaches.
4. Psychiatry is not a purely medical and scientific discipline. Some therapies such as dream analysis and positive thinking might be considered to have their roots in Eastern religions. Spirit

³⁸ 2 Cor 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

³⁹ David Benner – *Psychotherapy and the Spiritual Quest*, page 53



channelling and mediumship and other 'psychic' approaches to counselling are clearly beyond the bounds of acceptability for Christians, although these techniques are unlikely to be used in mainstream medical psychiatry.

Hypnosis is probably in a slightly different category, however, since it does seem to depend on solid scientific data, but still opens the subject up to external manipulation. Many Christian teachers believe that we should not participate in hypnosis since in doing so we are relinquishing the control of our own minds. Self-control is something which Good wants all his children to attain to and maintain.⁴⁰

All this does not mean that there is no such thing as Christian psychology or therapy, or that it has no merit. Many people could testify to the value of a wise and insightful counsellor. However, the techniques and approaches used need to be thought through carefully and applied with as much sensitivity to the teaching of the word of God as to the needs of the person seeking help.

14.1. RESOURCE MATERIAL

Roger Altman, *Through the Counselling Maze: A Guide for Those who Help Others* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1996).

David Benner. *Psychotherapy and the Spiritual Quest Examining the Links between Psychological and Spiritual Health* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988).

Gary Collins, *Can You Trust Counselling: 31 Key Questions Answered* (Leicester: IVP, 1988).

SESSION 8

15. SUICIDE - A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

What causes people to take their lives? There must obviously be some strongly compelling power to make such a final and irrevocable decision. In recent years the number of young people committing suicide has greatly increased.

As the Bible reflects all human experience, it is not surprising that it records some suicide cases. In the Old Testament we have Saul, Israel's first king, attempting to take his own life. When he was seriously wounded in battle with the Philistines, He asked his armour bearer to kill him. The armour bearer refused so Saul 'took a sword and fell upon it'. The reason seems to have been military tradition, taking one's life rather than surrendering to the enemy - a kind of early hara-kiri. Similar incidents occurred at the end of World War 2, when Hitler killed himself and some of his top generals swallowed poison phials. Saul's words to his armour bearer suggest that he did not want to be tortured by the Philistines.

1 Sam 31:4. Then Saul said to his armour bearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and thrust me through and abuse me." But his armour bearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell on it.

One of the most ignoble suicides in all history was that of Judas Iscariot after he had betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. He had probably hoped that Jesus would escape from His captors,

⁴⁰ Gal 5:22-23. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, {23} gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.



but when that did not happen he rushed back to his sponsors in remorse and returned the money. They didn't want to know so he hanged himself.

Elijah the prophet went into a deep trough of depression when he received a death threat from the Queen, and in his fear and frustration he asked God to take his life; a request that seems to have been motivated by suicidal tendencies.

There is the demon-possessed boy who the disciples brought to Jesus. His father told how the spirit would take him to the fire and sometimes to the water; an obvious reference to the self-destructive urges prompted by evil powers. There is the further case of the maniac of Gadara, who, when under demon influence would cut himself, and when Jesus delivered him, the demons went into the pigs and immediately destroyed them.

It must however be said that by no means are all suicides in this category, as we shall see from some case histories.

The Law is usually understanding in matters of suicide and attempted suicide, especially when there have been pressures surrounding the tragedy. It is no longer regarded as an offence, and one can often detect a note of sympathy in the oft-recorded verdict, "whilst the balance of mind was disturbed".

15.1. IS SUICIDE A SIN?

One cannot ignore the spiritual implications of such a serious act, and it must be admitted that Christians have been known to commit suicide.

There was a time when the Law included suicide under *Fel-de-See* and it was regarded as self-murder. Other forms of self-murder could be when a person tried to use a gun on a second party which backfired, killing the would-be assailant; or when a woman seeking to procure an abortion, took a substance which resulted in her death.

If then, suicide did come into the murder category, it would break the sixth commandment and therefore be an offence against God. 'Thou shalt not kill' or 'Do no murder'.

The murder element however could be questioned on the grounds of what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount.

Mat 5:21-22. You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' {22} "But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

The inference is that anger and hatred are the motives for murder, whereas those feelings one would say are absent in a suicide case. But it is still the taking of life, even if it is one's own. It is an enormous protest against life, or an expression of utter frustration with its circumstances, but its sinfulness cannot be denied. God alone has the right to give life or to take it.

It has been said that those who take their lives have no chance to repent because of the very nature of the act, but in some cases they may have asked forgiveness before doing it! Would that prayer be valid?

We do have an example of a pre-offending prayer in 2 Kings 5. Naaman had been healed, but on returning to his duties, he would have to accompany the king when he worshipped the idol-god Rimmon, so he prayed,



2 Ki 5:18-19. "Yet in this thing may the LORD pardon your servant: when my master goes into the temple of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand, and I bow down in the temple of Rimmon; when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD please pardon your servant in this thing." {19} Then he [Elijah] said to him, "Go in peace." So he departed from him a short distance.

Some argue that suicide is unforgivable because it cannot be confessed. But what happens to anyone who dies with unconfessed sin? If someone had bitterness in their heart would that invalidate their trust in Christ? It is our faith in Christ that saves us, not the performance of a ritualized confession.

15.2. ATTEMPTED SUICIDES

Suicide is sometimes a call for help that was answered too late, and all attempted suicides must be taken seriously. Some years ago the junior hospital doctors went on strike, and while they were out, the number of attempted suicides was greatly reduced, showing that some make a sufficiently serious gesture to invite medical attention, but they are not willing to risk anything if it is not on hand.

15.3. CASE HISTORIES

There are various reasons why people take their lives; these four were recorded attempted suicides:

An elderly lady suffering physically. But she said, 'I could bear the pain, but not the loneliness'.

A young man utterly frustrated by failing university exams.

A middle-aged man for whom life had lost its meaning. When asked about his family's reactions he said, 'They wouldn't miss me'. An obvious case of the loss of self-esteem.

A young woman whose wedding was called off at the last minute.

15.4. THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

The gospel message is defined as being good-news. It brings hope, a sense of personal worth and of life-purpose. Strong emotions which can lead to suicide can be replaced. Emotions such as despair, guilt, worthlessness and fear. The gospel brings the power to be set free from demonic forces which may seek to destroy people through suicide.

16. SURROGATE MOTHERHOOD

One cannot but have great sympathy for married couples who are unable to have children, and for the woman particularly, the non-fulfilment of the maternal instinct can result in frustration and at times deep depression. Some couples have contracted with a third party to have a child for them - the surrogate principle. The surrogate being artificially inseminated with the husband's sperm, and then at birth the child is handed over to the couple. It all sounds quite straightforward and even charitable; the helper being looked on as a kind of benefactress of society. But of course there is another side to the story and the case fairly bristles with problems.



16.1. SURROGACY IN SCRIPTURE

There are recorded cases of surrogate mothers in the Old Testament. The outstanding case is that of Abraham whose wife Sarai was barren. Hagar the handmaid was chosen to supply an heir by Abraham. Jacob too took his wives's two handmaids to procure children. Zilpah was the mother of Gad and Asher, and Bilhah was the mother of Naphtali and Dan.

Perhaps these would be considered special cases as there was no law against polygamy at that time. The handmaids would be regarded as secondary wives or concubines and would be properly treated, except for Hagar who had a bitter experience. The practice was generally shown to be inexpedient and usually with unhappy results such as jealousy.

16.2. A PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEM

If we are to consider the maternal instincts of the childless wife, we must also consider the surrogate mother for whom such instincts are heightened in pregnancy and at the birth. At the outset of the contract she may be perfectly willing to hand over the child, but what if the bonding becomes very intense and she becomes attached and changes her mind about the matter? Must she still hand it over like a parcel to a couple of relative strangers? The vulgar phrase "rent-a-womb" is somewhat distasteful, but it is all too realistic. For some it may take place without psychological scarring, but for others it may be a different story.

16.3. A LEGAL PROBLEM

This cross-pollination brings other problems. The big question will always be "Whose child is it?" It could be considered as being born out of wedlock, and although the word illegitimate is no longer used, one wonders how they juggle with words on the birth certificate. The biological mother will always be the mother. She must cease to have any further contact with the child, even if some important decision is required concerning its welfare before it reaches maturity. And likewise does the child have any claim on the estate of its mother?

16.4. A MORAL PROBLEM

Above all, for Christians, there are the moral and theological aspects to be considered. Artificial insemination by donor (see section 9. Genetics on page 28) may not equate with adultery, but the insertion of an unrelated man's seed into a third party must constitute some kind of irregularity and a threat to the sanctity of marriage.

Whilst adultery breaks the seventh commandment by an illicit sexual union, there was a deeper reason in Jewish thought than that. Because adultery was likely to lead to conception, it not only threatened the marriage, it also threatened the solidarity of the family. In the book of Judges there is the account of Jephthah, who was the son of a harlot, and when he grew up the legitimate family strongly opposed his having any share in the inheritance.⁴¹

⁴¹ Judges Chapter 11



16.5. HOW CAN THE CHILDLESS BE HELPED?

- For Christians it must be made a matter of prayer. This may sound super-spiritual, but we are instructed in Proverbs to acknowledge God in all our ways.⁴² Many couples, when all hope was lost, rejoiced in answer to prayer.
- If a direct miracle does not take place, then the couple can submit to investigations as to the cause of their infertility, and they may feel happy with in-vitro fertilization, where the conception takes place in a test-tube and the embryo is planted into the mother's womb for normal gestation. There would seem to be nothing against the morality of this procedure providing the egg and sperm of the mother and father are used. Artificial insemination by donor is not recommended from a Christian ethical aspect (see section 9. Genetics on page 28).
- A couple may opt for accepting the childlessness as the will of God, and consider adopting or fostering. Alternatively, their interests and energies could be channelled into some other worthwhile activity.

⁴² Prov 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; {6} In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.



SESSION 9

17. TRANSEXUALISM

Transsexualism is a rather more complex phenomenon than is often realised, and sometimes has a medical or psychological motivation as much as a sexual one. A number of different categories of transsexualism need to be distinguished.⁴³

17.1. TRANSVESTISM

Those that cross-dress for sexual pleasure are called transvestites. This is specifically forbidden by Scripture, and needs to be firmly dealt with as inappropriate moral conduct. This cross-dressing may or may not be associated with homosexuality.

Deut 22:5. A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God.

Such cross-dressing defies the differences between the sexes which God ordered at Creation. It is a rebellion against God and it is a sexual perversion which opens up people for demonic influence in their lives.

However, transvestites should probably be distinguished from those who dress up in women's clothes for entertainment purposes. Comedians and pantomime dames, for instance, are surely not the intended subject of the Bible's condemnation, although medical research has shown that many female impersonators also fall into one of the other categories.

17.2. GENDER DYSPHORIA

There is the psychological syndrome 'Gender Dysphoria', where the person genuinely seems to be confused as to whether they are really male or female. Stress is sometimes responsible for temporary cases of transsexual behaviour, for instance.

Furthermore, there are cases where people have been brought up 'misgendered'. Generally these are men who were subjected to a dominant mother, dressed in girls' clothes as infants, surrounded by women for their formative years and only permitted to be involved in traditionally feminine activities. In extreme cases, this may lead to a desire to remove their physical sexual characteristics. While this attitude is normally the result of psychological damage, and more sympathy is perhaps needed in dealing with this kind of person than with transvestites, sufferers from this syndrome need to be brought back into biblical perspective gently but firmly.

Some teaching on the purposes of God for our lives, His perfect plan and foreknowledge and His design for family life will help, as will compassionate support and prayer. The medical treatment proposed is generally psychiatric or psychosexual counselling, although there are a growing number of medical practitioners who are concerned that such a treatment process may actually serve to push some sufferers further towards the third category

⁴³ The author would like to express his appreciation to Dr Robert Baldwin for his advice on the medical aspects of this article.



17.3. TRANSEXUALISM

The medical phenomenon of transsexualism affects approximately 1 in 30,000 males, but only 1 in 100,000 females. This desire to assume the opposite sex is distinguished from transvestism and gender dysphoria in that it is never the result of sexual desire, and it goes beyond the craving to remove one's own physical sexual characteristics to a wish to adopt those of the opposite sex.

If this desire remains constant for two years or more and is not abated by counselling, then the only medical treatment available is 'gender reassignment surgery' - the sex-change operation (those who have gone through it are labelled 'postoperative transsexuals'). This operation (or, more specifically, series of operations and long-term hormonal treatments) was for a time universally believed to improve the quality of life for those who go through it, on the basis of some now controversial research done at Johns Hopkins University in the USA. But there is increasingly a move to reject gender reassignment as merely a surgical attempt to solve a largely psychological problem.

Furthermore, the sex-change operation can only alter a person's physical sexual characteristics, and not their DNA and the chromosomes which make them biologically male or female, so the process only actually serves to produce individuals of indeterminate gender.

Theologically, the process is ethically problematic principally in that it questions the decision of God to create an individual as male or female.

17.4. GENETIC ABNORMALITIES AND HORMONE DEFICIENCIES

The final and most complex category is those who are of biologically confused gender. These people fall into two different groups, both of which are extremely rare. First, there are a number of chromosomal disorders and genetic abnormalities (such as Turner's and Klinefelter's syndromes, which both affect the development of the child's sexual characteristics).

Second, some individuals are born with a hormone deficiency ('adrenogenital syndrome') which mean their sex is very difficult to determine purely on the basis of the appearance of their external genitals. If such deficiencies are identified at an early stage, the child may have surgery or hormone treatments to establish the physical characteristics of their real gender in their body.

However, if this process starts too late (and sometimes it takes the onset of puberty for the problem to be noticed), there are likely to be severe psychological after-effects for the child to deal with. Tragically, suicide attempts are quite common in these circumstances.

For this reason, one of the major factors in this kind of gender reassignment treatment is the sex that the child feels it has. Have they been brought up as male or female? Do they feel male or female (if they are old enough to give such a response)? Doctors will want to know all these things before proceeding. Furthermore, in the UK, it is presently impossible for a change of gender, even one on purely medical grounds, to be acknowledged on a birth certificate, which could prevent the individual from marrying.

Most ministers are unlikely ever to have to deal with such a case, since they are extremely rare, but if they do, we recommend they play a sympathetic and supportive role for the family involved, and allow the clinicians to recommend the best medical course of action. The tendency of some practitioners to push families towards a particular course of action should be resisted, however, and a minister's support may be needful here.



17.5. RESOURCE MATERIAL

A number of transsexuals have written accounts of their feelings before, during and after reassignment surgery which may be of interest for further research. See, for example:

Mark N. A. Rees, *Dear Sir or Madam. The Autobiography of a Female-to-Male Transsexual* (London: Cassell, 1996).

Stephanie Castle, *Feelings: A Transsexual 's Explanation of a Baffling Condition* (Vancouver: Perceptions Press, C 1992).

Two of the major medical texts on the issue are:

Thomas Kando, *Sex change.' The Achievement of Gender Identity Among Feminized Transsexuals* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1973).

Richard Green, *Transsexualism and Sex Reassignment* (Baltimore.' Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969).

Additional material of interest may be found on the Internet, including personal web sites of some postoperative transsexuals and medical and counselling resources.

18. UNEMPLOYMENT

The real number of unemployed people in Britain is hard to assess as there are different ways of counting them. It is safe to say however that there are well over a million at the present time, and for many of them the prospects of finding work are not good. The situation all adds up to a fearful sense of frustration, disappointment and loss of dignity.

18.1. A BIBLICAL VIEW

The Christian should always seek to take a biblical view of problems whatever form they may take, and we must appraise the place that man has in the world. It is clear from Scripture that man was created in the image of God⁴⁴; in other words certain characteristics were built into the human personality which reflect the character of the Creator.

He was the first workman, and after completing His creative tasks, it is recorded that 'God saw that it was good'⁴⁵. He was happy about it, and this feeling of fulfilment after performing useful jobs is still reflected in man.

The Garden of Eden was a perfect environment for a perfect man, but we notice that even in the ideal surrounding, man had work to do. Adam and Eve had to care for the garden. It was not toilsome labour, but rather a delightful duty, nevertheless still a duty. Even in Heaven the Bible states that 'His servants will serve Him'.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Gen 1:27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

⁴⁵ Gen 1:10 And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

⁴⁶ Rev 22:3 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.



18.2. WORK IS A PART OF LIFE

Apart from our present state of unemployment, we have been educated to believe that more and more leisure would come to us because of modern technology, but an imbalance of leisure would not be good for us, even if we had enough money to do our own thing. Paul warns us:

2 Tim 3:1-4. But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: {2} For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, {3} unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, {4} traitors, headstrong, haughty, **lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,**

The Bible certainly shows that an all-wise God designed the world in which work was necessary. The fourth commandment envisaged full employment with a six-day week and a compulsory rest day on the seventh⁴⁷. That not only safeguarded the health of the worker, but it also guarded against inconsiderate employers.

The New Testament, although it is essentially a spiritual document, nevertheless takes up the theme of work.

2 Thess 3:10. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.

1 Tim 5:8. But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

The biblical philosophy of work is that it is good for man on several counts, and experience agrees. First, it occupies time and interest. The old adage that the Devil finds work for idle hands is all too true. Work also gives scope to man's inventiveness, talent and craftsmanship. Being made in the Image of God, man's making ability is clearly seen. Thirdly, a nation's economy depends on the contribution of its labourers.

18.3. CAUSES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Daily living consists of hard facts. A factory must find a market for its goods at competitive prices. Lack of investment, or the wanting of more wages for less work can contribute to unemployment. We are also faced with overseas rivals whose goods are imported. Knowing that we are in the last days, unemployment may well be a part of the prophesied social unrest.

18.4. PASTORAL CARE FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

The workless obviously suffer from frustration and pastoral care is essential. It can affect them domestically, socially and spiritually. It is also hard to bear when they are accused of malingering. The Church leadership should maintain a constant good relationship with them, encouraging them in their search for work. Fellow Christians should also be on the lookout for job vacancies. I heard of one pastor who encouraged the unemployed to pray themselves into a job and it worked! The Church can also help in cash or kind as necessary.

⁴⁷ Exo 20:9-10 Six days you shall labour and do all your work, {10} but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.



Where a job is not quickly found, the waiting time should be constructively used. Work on the house and garden, correspondence courses to enrich the mind and help prepare for further work. Churches and Charities are looking for helpers, and just because work is not remunerated does not mean that it is not valuable.