Articles and Sermons :: Biblical Ethics - Oswald Chambers

Biblical Ethics - Oswald Chambers - posted by CJaKfOrEsT (), on: 2006/2/11 3:48
I post this as an attempt to offer a pearl from the lips of a "master" (as in one who stood the test of James 3:1, during his lifetime), into the mix of the whole "is it normal to sin" discussion. As I know that Mike B shares the same frustration as I, in that oftentimes the correct words to communicate an idea adequately, are as elusive as snow in Hawaii. Sometimes it is best to leave things in the safe hands of the great wordsmiths of the past, the Tozers, the Ravenhills, the Vavners, etc... but many will know that the man known affectionately by his solider commerades in Zeitoun as "The OC" stood out in a league of his own.

This tome provides a framework where the attainability of sinless life is shown, and where every sham of a counterfeigt is exposed. Chambers was always one who would prefer anonymity, knowing that deeper union with Christ was attained, than to receive accolades regardless. Many in the past have said they did, but this man did it.

Enjoy

Publication History
This material was first published as articles in the Bible Training Course (BTC) Monthly Journal.&65279; 1932-1945.

It was first published as a book in 1947. Shortly after the Bible Training College&65279;&65279; opened in January 1911, Oswald Chambers began teaching a class on biblical ethics. The class was open to resident and visiting students alike, and reflected Chambers&65279;ãi deep belief in the importance of thinking.

&65279;We must never forget that God is a great deal bigger than our experience of Him; that Jesus Christ is a great deal bigger than our experience of Him,&65279; Oswald said. &65279;It is because people won&65279;'t take the labour to think, that the snare gets hold of them; and remember thinking is a tremendous labour&65279; (Ã©&65279;Thinking.&65279; Tongues of Fire, January 1914, p. 5).

Noted London pastor Dr. G. Campbell Morgan&65279; spoke at the College&65279;'s first anniversary celebration and made special mention of the classes on biblical ethics and biblical philosophy, saying that such classes were unusual in a Bible college of that day.

Throughout the years of the BTC&65279; (1911-1915), Biblical Ethics remained a part of the syllabus, with Chambers sometimes using James Stalker&65279;'s lectures&65279; book The Ethic of Jesus according to the Synoptic Gospels (1909) as a text.

Foreword
(to the original 1947 edition)
This latest book of Talks, Lectures, Addresses, given by Oswald Chambers at different times and in varied circumstance &321;as when the New Theology was making its shallow appeal in 1909, or in the strenuous days of the Bible Training College&65279;&65279; in London, or when speaking to the soldiers in Egypt in 1917 (just before his own Home-call)Ã©—covers a wide range of religious thinking.

The earlier chapters on Biblical Ethics remind us that the ultimate aim of Christ&s Atonement is that God may readjust man to Himself. That calls for a moral response on our part, involving thought and feeling and will. And we need to recognise the ethical demands made in the Scriptures on God&s people.

Our Lord gave us the Sermon on the Mount; it appears in the beginning of St. Matthew&s Gospel. He also taught what appears later in the Gospel, that &321;the Son of Man must suffer many things. . . and be killed, and the third day be raised up&321; (Matthew 16:21 &321;Matthew 20:28); and that His Life would be &321;a ransom for many&321; (Matthew 20:28). The former without the latter would mock us. Oswald Chambers based all on the Atonement.

I have found in this book some of the most arresting truths I have yet met with. Those who have been most helped by th
e O.C. literature already published will find fresh pastures here. For he was indeed a scribe bringing forth &amp;&amp; 65279;Â”&amp;&amp; 65279;out of his treasure things new and old;&amp;#65279;Â”&amp;&amp; 65279; whose ideas never become obsolete or stale, as he is divinely enabled to see old and precious things in new relationships. May God make this book to be a blessing to man y.

David Lambert&amp;#65279;&amp;#65279;

The Moral Imperative - posted by CJaKiOrEst (), on: 2006/2/11 3:55

The Moral Imperative—I

(i.e., a law universal and binding on every rational will)

How Can I Do What I Ought to Do?

Strictly speaking, there is no disobedience possible to an imperative law, the only alternative being destruction. In this se nse the moral law is not imperative, because it can be disobeyed and immediate destruction does not follow. And yet the moral law never alters, however much men disobey it; it can be violated, but it never alters. Remember, at the back of all human morality stands God.

1. GodÂ’s Â“OughtsÂ”—Old Testament

The Ten Commandments were not given with any consideration for human ability or inability to keep them; they are the r evelation of GodÂ’s demands made of men and women who had declared that if God would make His law known, they would keep it. Â“And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will doÂ” ( Exodus 19: 8 ). Â“And God spake all these words saying, . . . Thou shalt . . . Thou shalt not . . . Â” ( Exodus 20:1-17 ). The command ments were given with the inexorable awfulness of Almighty God; and the subsequent history of the people is the record of how they could not keep them.

The moral law ordained by God does not make itself weak to the weak, it does not palliate our shortcomings, it takes no account of our heredity and our infirmities; it demands that we be absolutely moral. Not to recognise this is to be less th a n alive. The apostle Paul said, Â“I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I diedÂ” ( Romans 7:9 ). Undress yourself morally and see how much you owe to your upbringing, to the circumstances you are in; when you have got rid of all that, there is little to stand before God in, certainly nothing to boast of. Immediatel y we come into actual human conditions we find inability with regard to the keeping of GodÂ’s law, then comes in the eq uivocation—Â“Of course God wonÂ’t demand it.Â” Â“Of course God will make allowances.Â” GodÂ’s laws are not watered down to suit anyone; if God did that He would cease to be God. The moral law never alters for the noblest or the we akest; it remains abidingly and eternally the same.

Every man has an imperative something within him which makes him say Â“I ought,Â” even in the most degraded speci mens of humanity the Â“oughtÂ” is there, and the Bible tells us where it comes from—Â—it comes from God. The modern tendency is to leave God out and make our standard what is most useful to man. The utilitarian says that these distinct in aws of conduct have been evolved by man for the benefit of man—the greatest use to the greatest number. That is not the reason a thing is right; the reason a thing is right is that God is behind it. GodÂ’s Â“oughtsÂ” never alter; we never grow out of them. Our difficulty is that we find in ourselves this attitude—Â“I ought to do this, but I wonÂ’t Â”; Â“I ought to do that, but I donÂ’t want to.Â” That puts out of court the idea that if you teach men what is right they will do it—Â—they w onÂ’t; what is needed is a power which will enable a man to do what he knows is right. We may say Â“Oh I wonÂ’t count this timeÂ”; but every bit of moral wrong is counted by God. The moral law exerts no coercion, neither does it allow any compromise. Â“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of allÂ” ( James 2:10 ). Once we realise this we see why it was necessary for Jesus Christ to come. The Redemption is the Reality which alters in ability into ability.


If the Â“OughtsÂ” of the Old Testament were difficult to obey, Our LordÂ’s teaching is unfathomably more difficult. Remem ber, the commandments were given irrespective of human ability or inability to keep them; then when Jesus Christ ca me, instead of doing what we all too glibly say He did—put something easier before men, He made it a hundredfold mo re difficult, because He goes behind the law to the disposition. There is an idea abroad to-day that because as Christian s we are not under law, but under grace, therefore the Ten Commandments have no meaning for us—what did Jesus s
ay? Â‘Think not that I am come to destroy the law . . . : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfilÂ’ (Matthew 5:17). The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is overwhelmingly and disastrously penetrating. Jesus Christ does not simply say, Â‘Thou shalt not do certain thingsÂ’: He demands that we have such a condition of heart that we never even think of doing them, every thought and imagination of heart and mind is to be unblameworthy in the sight of God. Who is sufficient for these things—an unsullied purity that never lusts, a forgiving disposition that loves its enemies, a generous spirit that Â’t aketh not account of evilÂ’? That standard can produce only one thing in an open-eyed man, absolute despair. What is it he says of saying, Â‘All we need is to know what Jesus Christ teaches and then live up to itÂ’: where are you going to be gin? If we are Christians we have to live according to the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount; and the marvel of Jesus ChristÂ’s salvation is that He puts us in the place where we can fulfil all the old law and a great deal more.

Be careful not to be caught up in the clap-trap of to-day which says, Â‘I believe in the teachings of Jesus, but I donÂ’t see any need for the Atonement.Â’ Men talk pleasant, patronising things about Jesus ChristÂ’s teaching while they ignore His Cross. By all means let us study ChristÂ’s teaching, we do not think nearly enough along New Testament lines, we are swamped by pagan standards, and as Christians we ought to allow Jesus ChristÂ’s principles to work out in our brains as well as in our lives; but the teaching of Jesus apart from His Atonement simply adds an ideal that leads to despair. What is the good of telling me that only the pure in heart can see God when I am impure? of telling me to love my enemy when I hate them? May I keep it down but the spirit is there. Does Jesus Christ make it easier? He makes it a hundred fold more difficult! The purity God demands is impossible unless we can be re-made from within, and that is what Jesus Christ undertakes to do through the Atonement. Jesus Christ did not come to tell men they ought to be holy—there is a n Â‘oughtÂ’ in every man that tells him that, and whenever he sees a holy character he may bluster and excuse himself as he likes, but he knows that is what he ought to be: He came to put us in the place where we can be holy, that is, He came to make us what He teaches we should be, that is the difference.

Our LordÂ’s first requirement is a personal relationship to Himself, and then obedience to His principles. Tolstoi blundered in applying the Sermon on the Mount practically without insisting on the need to be born again of the Spirit first, and he had an enormous following of intellectual faddists, mere Â‘spring-cleaners.Â’ It is not a question of applying Jesus Christ Â’s principles to our actual life first of all, but of applying them to our relationship to Himself, then as we keep our souls open in relation to Him our conscience will decide how we are to act out of that relationship. The principles of Jesus Christ go to the very root of the matter, they have an intensely practical application to our moral life. Â‘For I say unto you, Th at except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heavenÂ’ (Matthew 5:20).

We said that the teaching of Jesus Christ apart from His Atonement leads to despair; but if it produces the pauper condition, it is the right kind of despair. Â‘Blessed are the poor in spirit. . . .Â’ Conviction of sin will bring a man there, and so will the realisation of GodÂ’s demands. The best expression for us is the 139th Psalm, Â‘Search me, O GodÂ’; I cannot make my heart pure, I cannot alter my heredity, I cannot alter the dreams of my mind; Â‘Search me, O God, and know my heart.Â’ That is the poverty of spirit Jesus says is blessed; if you are in that condition, He says you can easily enter the kingdom of heaven. Why? Because God gives the almighty gift of salvation from sin to paupers; He gives the Holy Spirit to paupers (see Luke 11:13).

3. The New Man—Present Day

Jesus Christ, as Representative Man, accepted the responsibility of exhibiting on the human plane the absolute holiness of God: He lived up to GodÂ’s standard in every detail of holy living and holy speaking and holy working, and His claim is that through the Atonement He can put us in the place where we can do the same. The very disposition that was in Him is put into meÂ—is it there? If it is not, I will have to answer for it. It is not that God puts the life of Jesus in front of us and says, Â‘Do your best to follow Him,Â’ but that Â‘the life also of JesusÂ’ is to Â‘be made manifest in our mortal flesh.Â’ When Â‘Christ is formedÂ’ in us by regeneration (Galatians 4:19), we have to see that our human nature puts on the Â‘clothingÂ’ that is worthy of the Son of God. That is where our responsibility comes inÂ—not in being absolutely holy, but in seeing that we allow Jesus Christ to be absolutely holy in us. Regeneration does not resolve a human being into imbecility, it lifts him powerfully into oneness with God in Christ Jesus.

We shall come to find that being Â‘not under the law, but under graceÂ’ does not mean we are so free from the law that it does not matter now what we do; it means that in our actual lives we can fulfil all the requirements of the law of God.
Re: Biblical Ethics - Oswald Chambers - posted by crsschk (), on: 2006/2/11 11:21

Quote:
-------------that oftentimes the correct words to communicate an idea adequately, are as elusive as snow in Hawaii. Sometimes it is best to leave
ve things in the safe hands of the great wordsmiths of the past, the Tozers, the Ravenhills, the Vavnars... but many will know that the man known
affectonately by his solider commorades in Zeitoun as "The OC" stood out in a league of his own.
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Much suffering under a mangled expression... Indeed, it is; "I appeal to _______" and none better than Oswald in his inc
redible ability to convey understanding. If there is anything of a heart pleading that continues to scream, it would be to p
ut the Lords people to thinking. Of all peoples of this earth it ought to be the Christian, who has the Truth, loves the Truth
... knows the Truth, it's an impertinent must, but it is us who alone can make 'philosophy' reality and that requires us to p
roduce some 'brain sweat' as OC would put it, to attain it.

This is just masterful, I do hope it gets absorbed and contemplated over.

Â‘&lt;65279;It is because people won&lt;65279;&lt;65279;Â’t take the labour to think, that the snare gets hold of them; and rememb
er thinking is a tremendous labour&lt;65279;&lt;65279;Â”

Re: The Moral Imperitive - Part 2 - posted by CJaKfOrEsT (), on: 2006/2/12 22:34

The Moral Imperative—II

(i.e., a law universal and binding on every rational will)

Why Should I Do What I Ought to Do?

Authority in the final sense must spring from within. To begin with, we are educated by means of authority on the outside
Â—Â“thou shaltÂ” and Â“thou shalt notÂ”; but that authority does not treat us as men. The ultimate aim imbedded in all
external authority is to produce a standard of authority within ourselves. The authority our Lord obeyed was an internal a
uthority, not an external one, that is, His inner life and the life He exhibited were one and the same, and the purpose of a
II external authority is to bring us there. We only realise the moral law when it comes with an IF, that means, I have the p
ower not to obey it.

We imagine that if we obey authority we limit ourselves, whereas obedience to authority is not a limitation but a source o
power; by obeying we are more. Naturally we are built to command, not to obey; man was originally constituted by God
to have dominionÂ—Â“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion . . .
Â” (Genesis 1:26); consequently there is the natural desire to want to explain things, because everything we can explai
n we can command. Spiritually, we are built not to command, but to obey. Always beware of the tendency to want to hav
e things explained; you may take it as an invariable law that when you demand an explanation in connection with a mora
I problem it means you are evading obedience.

1. Authority and Humanity—Conditional

The first standard of authority the Bible reveals is the authority of innocence, a conditional authority (see Genesis 2:16-17). Innocence means the absence of legal guilt. As long as Adam obeyed God he was in this state of innocence; God pl
aced him in an external setting so that he might transform his innocence into moral character by a series of choices. It w
as to be a natural progress of development, not from evil to good, but from the natural to the spiritual. This Adam failed t
o do; the temptation cameÂ—Take dominion over yourself, Â“and ye shall be as GodÂ” (rv); he took dominion over him
self, and by so doing lost dominion over everything else, and the disposition of sinÂ—my claim to my right to myself, I wil
I do what I likeÂ—became the inheritance of the whole human race. Â“Therefore, as through one man sin entered into th
e world . . . Â” (Romans 5:12 rv). Children born of natural generation are not innocent in the same way that Adam was i
innocent, neither does the innocence of a child contain conditional authority; the innocence of Regeneration alone corresponds to Adam’s innocence.

Some people maintain that innocence should be the only standard of authority; the idea works out magnificently on paper or in thinking, but it does not work out in practical life. If we were all born with the right disposition, development along the line would have been all right; but we quickly find out that there is something drastically wrong, the disposition of sin at work, this opposing principle which is not true to human nature as God created it. It sounds very delightful to talk about the innocence of children and “living the simple life”; but try it in actual experience, and you will find it works out the wrong way every time. Authority based on innocence soon becomes ignorance, not ignorance of ourselves, but a detrimed being without the knowledge of God, and ignorance quickly corrupts into iniquity (see Genesis 3-4).

Another standard of authority is that of conscience, or “the inner light”—what Socrates called “the presiding daemon,” an un-get-at-able, indefinable spirit which gives liberty or check to whatever a man feels impelled to do. Every man has a conscience, although every man does not know God. If God had never made known His demands we might have said that every man was a law to himself—“Whatever I think is right according to my own inner light, must be right.” As soon as a man becomes a law to himself he begins to do what he likes, and if you teach development along the line of obedience to a man’s inner light, what about the man who is born with damnable tendencies—where will it lead him? to a moral pigsty. The final standard of authority must be one that can be owned by all men.

2. Authority As Happiness—Corrupt

Happiness is the portion of a child, children ought to be thoughtless and happy, and woe be to the people who upset their happiness; but if you take happiness as the end and aim for men and women you have to make its basis a determined ignorance of God, otherwise men will, like Job, remember God and be troubled (see Job 23:15). Read the Seventy-third Psalm, it is the description of the man who has made happiness his aim—he is not in trouble as other men, neither is he plagued like other men, he has more than heart could wish; but once let his moral equilibrium be upset by conviction of sin and all his happiness is destroyed. The end and aim of human life is not happiness, but to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever. Holiness of character, chastity of life, living communion with God—that is the end of a man’s life, whether he is happy or not is a matter of moonshine (insignificant or meaningless). Happiness is no standard for men and women because happiness depends on my being determinedly ignorant of God and His demands. Whenever the Spirit of God disturbs a man, He brings him back to the Decalogue. The point is that anything that relieves us from the individual responsibility of being personally related to God is corrupt.

Immorality will produce happiness very quickly—the duration of the happiness is another matter; if you go on doing wrong long enough you will be happy doing wrong and miserable doing right—therefore quit doing right! Immorality may be physically clean, but at its heart is this thought—“All I am concerned with is the happiness of the greatest number, and I don’t care anything at all about God.” Once remove personal accountability to God and you will get immorality, whether it is bestial or not is a matter of accident. The Bible talks very unvarnished, it tells things by the hideous names that belong to them (e.g., Colossians 3:5; Galatians 5:19-21). Beware of being cute enough to detect immorality only in a moral pigsty, learn to detect it in your own spiritual imaginations.

3. Authority As Holiness—Correct

The commandments of God exhibit not His consideration for man, but His authoritative demands of man. Man has to fulfil God’s laws in his physical life, in his mental and moral life, in his social and spiritual life, and to offend in one point is to be guilty of all (see James 2:10). Until we realise that God cannot make allowances, the Gospel has no meaning for us; if God made allowances He would cease to be God. All through the Bible the authority of God’s law is unflinchingly revealed, together with man’s responsibility to meet its demand; but the problem of problems is how is it going to be done? When a man reads the teachings of Jesus he is obliged to say, “Yes, that is right, but His teaching destroys my peace; I believe that is what I ought to be, but where am I going to begin?”

Holiness is the agreement between a man’s disposition and the law of God, as expressed in the life of Jesus. According to the Bible there are only two Men, Adam and Jesus Christ; both came into the world directly by the hand of God, innocent. Jesus Christ, the last Adam, did what the first Adam failed to do; He transformed innocence into holy character. The law of God was incarnated in Jesus Christ, He walked this earth in human guise and lived the perfect life which God desired. Never think of Jesus Christ as an individual, He is the Federal Head of the race; He not only fulfilled all God’s demands, but He made the way for every imperfect son of man to live the same kind of life. Jesus Christ does not put us back where Adam was, He puts us where Adam never was: He puts us where He is Himself; He presences us with Divin
ity, viz., the Holy Spirit. The meaning of the Redemption is that any man can be regenerated into the life Jesus lived and can have the holiness of God imparted to him, not the power to imitate His holiness, but the very nature of God—Á“...that we may be partakers of His holinessÁ” (rv). Holiness is the characteristic of the man after GodÁ’s own heart.

The holiness which God demands is impossible unless a man can be re-made from within, and that is what Jesus Christ has undertaken to do. Jesus Christ does not merely save people from hell: Á’thou shalt call His name JESUS; for it is He that shall save His people from their sinsÁ” (rv), i.e., make totally new moral men. Jesus Christ came from a holy God to enable men, by the sheer might of His Redemption, to become holy. Á“Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy.Á”

Á—Notes of this Lecture are incomplete.

Re: Moral Institutions - Part 1 - posted by CJaKfOrEsT (), on: 2006/2/21 8:07
Moral InstitutionsÁ—I

In Precept

By Á“In PreceptÁ” is meant necessary principles laid down beforehand.

God has ordained that man is to govern man, whether he wants to or not. This keeps socialism from being Á“itÁ”; the sociological scheme falls to pieces because it ignores the fact that human institutions are not utilitarian, that is, they do not spring from the ingenuity of man, but were deliberately ordained by God for the government of man by man. Peter brings this out when he says, Á“Be subject to every ordinance of man,Á” but he is careful to add Á“for the LordÁ’s sakeÁ” (1 Peter 2:13 rv).

Man is responsible to God for the government of the whole world, but if a man succumbs to the temptations of his official position, that very position will have the effect of hardening his heart away from God. We read in the Old Testament that Pharaoh hardened his heart (Exodus 7:14 et seq.); and we read also that God hardened his heart (Exodus 4:21 et seq.). The difficulty of this apparent contradiction is purely superficial. It must not be interpreted to mean that God hardened a manÁ’s heart and then condemned him for being hardened. The hardening of PharaohÁ’s heart by himself and by God is the expression of the working of one of GodÁ’s laws, and GodÁ’s laws do not alter. Any ruler or ordinary man who refuses to obey the right law will find himself distinctly hardened away from God. If a man is to govern rightly he must see that the institutions he builds up are based on the stabilities of human nature as God created it; otherwise havoc will be produced.

One of the first general principles to be borne in mind is that we must never think of men and women in the mass. We talk about Á“the struggling mass of humanityÁ”—there is no such thing, the mass is made up of separate individuals. The danger of thinking of people in the mass is that you forget they are human beings, each one an absolutely solitary life. Everyone has something or someone to govern, the most ignominious slave has an influence somewhere, and God is going to hold us responsible for the way we govern.

Another thing to be borne in mind is the incalculable element in every life. In the government of man by man you are not dealing with a mathematical problem, but with human beings, and you can never be sure how they will act, any more than you can always be sure how you yourself will act.

These are simply indications of the problems a man has to face in the government of other men, and yet God has so constituted things that man has to govern man and to answer to God for the way he governs.

DESIRE. One of the biggest ingredients in a manÁ’s make-up is what he desires, or regards as good. Discouragement or any kind of Á“sulksÁ” is accounted for by the fact that the good a man aims at is not good enough. A man of character will set himself at nothing less than the highest.

The remarkable thing about the Á“universe of desireÁ” is that at any second it may alter. Every now and again a tumult comes into a manÁ’s life and alters what he desires. For instance, death has an amazing power of altering what a man desires, because death profoundly affects his outlook; or the experience of new birth will do it. When a man is born again he stops desiring the things he used to desire, not gradually, but suddenly; things begin to matter that did not matter before, and the things that used to matter no longer do so. He experiences a conflict of desire; at one time he wants to do the old things, at another, the new, and for a while he is in an unbalanced state. That is the result ethically and morally of co
nvention of sin, and is exactly what Jesus meant when He said, "Think not that I came to cast peace on the earth: I came not to cast peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34 rv mg).

This sudden alteration in the universe of desire is one of the perplexities in the government of man by man. You cannot be sure that the man you are dealing with will always be the same, at any second he may alter. You see someone set on a line you know to be wrong, but remember, at any second the universe of his desire may change. To remember this will bring a tremendous helpfulness and cure us of our unbelief about any life.

Another thing to bear in mind is the difference between a young life and a mature life. A boy or girl just emerging from the "teens" is always chaotic; if a young life is normal it is a chunk of chaos; if it is not, there is something wrong, there ought to be the chaotic element. A precocious young life rarely ends well, it becomes ordered too soon. God holds us responsible for the way we judge a young life; if we judge it by the standards by which we would judge a mature life, we will be grossly unjust. As you watch the life it seems sometimes to lean towards the good, sometimes towards the wrong, and you find yourself getting either excited or depressed over it; but there is one main trend coming out, and that trend cannot be guarded by prayer. This emphasises the importance of intercessory prayer. Much misjudgment of young life goes on in the religious domain. There is a stage when a young life manifests a sudden interest in everything to do with religion, but never bank on these awakenings because they are not necessarily awakenings by the Spirit of God, and when the intense stage passes—and it certainly will pass if it is not born of the Spirit—the one who is judging is apt to say that he boy or girl has backslidden. What has happened is that they have passed through a dangerous stage of development. The defects of a growing life are one thing; the vices of a mature life are another. Be as merciless as God can make you towards the vices of a mature life, but be very gentle and patient with the defects of a growing life.

These things make us understand how careful we have to be to recognise God in our government of other lives. If the government of our own life is upon His shoulder, we will be careful to rely on Him in connection with the lives we are called on to influence and govern.

Re: - posted by somar79126 (), on: 2006/3/13 16:01
Sir,

Great stuff! But is this all that comprises for the whole book? Please, if you have more, post them. I'm printing them out...

Thanks

Andrew R.

Re: Moral Institutions - Part 2 - posted by CJaKiOrEsT (), on: 2006/4/11 9:34

Moral Institutions—II

In Practice
By "In Practice" is meant fitness through regular exercise. If we do not fit ourselves by practice when there is no crisis, we shall find that our nature will fail us when the crisis comes. The grace of God never fails, but we may fail the grace of God. Unless our nervous system is made the ally of the new life from God it becomes a humiliation to us, and we sit down under a tyranny of nerves. Once we have received the Holy Spirit we must sit down to nothing. In these distinctly personal matters it must be borne in mind that the moral institutions ordained by God take no account whatever of nervous disabilities, they take account only of God Himself and the way He has designed man. When your nervous system, which has been ruled by the wrong disposition, is inclined to say "I can't," you must say, "You must," and to your amendment you find you can!

1. Righteousness—Conformity to a Right Standard

Where no one but God sees us. That is where very few of us are Christians.

(a) In Intention

Quote:
"Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous. . . . (1 John 3:7)"
Jesus Christ demands of His disciples that they live in conformity to the right standard in intention. We say, "Though I did not do well, I meant well"; then it is absolutely certain you did not mean well. Jesus Christ makes no allowance for heroic moods; He judges us by the diligently applied bent of our disposition. Concentration on the part of a Christian is of more importance than consecration.

"...he that doeth righteousness is righteous." There are different kinds of intention, e.g., outer and inner; immediate and remote; direct and indirect. The righteous man is the one whose inner intention is clearly revealed in his outer intention, there is no duplicity, no internal hypocrisy. A man's outer intention is easily discernible by other people; his inner intention needs to be continually examined. The marvel of the grace of God is that it can alter the mainspring of our make-up; then when that is altered we must foster in ourselves those intentions which spring from the Spirit of Jesus and make our nervous system carry them out. The Holy Spirit will bring us to the practical test, it is not that I say I am righteous, but that I prove I am in my deeds.

(b) In Individuals

Quote:
"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20 rv)"

Take Saul of Tarsus as an example of Pharisaism; he says of himself in writing to the Philippians, "as touching the law, a Pharisee; ... touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless ..." (Philippians 3:5-6): Jesus Christ says a s disciples we have to exceed that. No wonder we find His statements absolutely shattering. Our righteousness has to be in excess of the righteousness of the man whose external conduct is blameless according to the law—what does that produce? despair straightaway. When we hear Jesus say "Blessed are the pure in heart." our answer, if we are awak e, is, "My God, how am I going to be pure in heart? If ever I am to be blameless down to the deepest recesses of my intentions, You must do something mighty in me." That is exactly what Jesus Christ came to do. He did not come to tell us to be holy, but to make us holy, undeserving of censure "in the sight of God. If any man or woman gets there it is by the sheer supernatural grace of God. You can't indulge in pious pretence when you come to the atmosphere of the Bible. If there is one thing the Spirit of God does it is to purge us from all sanctimonious humbug, there is no room for it.

(c) In Institutions

Quote:
"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. ... (1 Peter 2:13; see 2 Peter 2:13-18)"

Peter's statements in these verses are remarkable, and they are statements the modern Christian does not like. He is outlining what is to be the conduct of saints in relation to the moral institutions based on the government of man by man. No matter, he says, what may be the condition of the community to which you belong, behave yourself as a saint in it. M any people are righteous as individuals, but they ignore the need to be righteous in connection with human institutions. Paul continually dealt with insubordination in spiritual people. Degeneration in the Christian life comes in because of this refusal to recognise the insistence God places on obedience to human institutions. Take the institution of home life. Hom e is God's institution, and He says, "Honour thy father and thy mother"; are we fulfilling our duty to our parents as la id down in God's Book? Guard well the central institutions ordained by God, and there will be fewer problems in civilise d life. We have to maintain spiritual reality wherever we are placed by the engineering of our circumstances by God; as s ervants we are to be subject to our masters, to the froward master as well as to the good and gentle. That is where the s hoe pinches, and whenever you feel the pinch it is time you went to the death of something.

2. Rights—What One Has a Just Claim To

Every right brings with it an obligation. Legally, a man can do what he likes with his own; morally, he is under obligation to use it for the general good; spiritually, he is bound to devote it to God.

(a) Of Life
Every man in the sight of God has an equal right to life, and if a man takes away the life of another, his own life shall be taken away. The right of life is insisted on all through the Bible. As long as I do not murder anyone outright the law cannot touch me, but is there someone dependent on me to whom in the tiniest way I am not giving the right to live? someone for whom I am cherishing an unforgiving dislike? Â‘whosoever hateth his brother,Â’ says John (1 John 3: 15). One of the terrors of the Day of Judgment will be our indifference to the rights of life.

(b) Of Land

The twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus is the great classic on the rights of the land. The establishment of menÂ’s rights on the earth is limited by the rights of the earth itself. If you keep taking from the land, never giving it any rest, in time it will stop giving to you. We talk about the rights of the land, and make it mean our right to grab as much from it as we can. In GodÂ’s sight the land has rights just as human beings have, and many of the theories which are being advanced to-day go back to GodÂ’s original prescription for the land. When God ordained Â‘a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath unto the Lord,Â’ it was a reiteration of the instructions given to Adam in the Garden of EdenÂ—Â‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue itÂ’ (Genesis 1: 28). Man was intended to replenish the earth by looking after it, being its lord not its tyrant; sin has made man its tyrant (cf. Romans 8: 19). The rights of the land will probably only be fully realised in the Millennial Kingdom, because in this dispensation men ignore obedience to GodÂ’s laws.

In the teaching of Jesus the earth is never confounded with the world. Â‘Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earthÂ’ (Matthew 5: 5). The meek, i.e., those who have the disposition of the Son of God and are practising righteousness in accordance with that disposition, are to inherit the earth. The world is the system of things which man has erected on GodÂ’s earth. To-day people belong to various Â‘ismsÂ’ and Â‘itesÂ’ and they say, Â‘We are going to inherit the earth; we are the favoured people of God,Â’ but that characteristic is not meekness, it is rather the spirit of the devil. Jew or Gentile, lost tribe or found, none of it is of any account unless it is based on the principles Jesus Christ lays down. He says that the meek, those who obey the laws of God, shall inherit the earth. The material earth is GodÂ’s, and the way men treat it is a marvellous picture of the long-suffering of God.

(c) Of Liberty

We call liberty allowing the other fellow to please himself to the same extent as we please ourselves. True liberty is the ability earned by practice to do the right thing. There is no such thing as a gift of freedom; freedom must be earned. The counterfeit of freedom is indecision. The Spirit of God deals with sin, it is independence that He touches, that is why the preaching of the Gospel awakens resentment as well as craving. Independence must be blasted right out of a Christian, there must be only liberty, which is a very different thing. Spiritually, liberty means the ability to fulfil the law of God, and it establishes the rights of other people.

The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is the exact opposite of the modern jargon about Â“equal rightsÂ”; Â“Why should I do this? IÂ’m within my rights.Â” Of course you are, but never call yourself a Christian if you reason like that because a Christian is one who sacrifices his liberty for the sake of others, for Jesus ChristÂ’s sake. PaulÂ’s whole argument is based on this (see 1 Corinthians 8; Romans 14). DonÂ’t use your liberty Â‘as an occasion to the flesh,Â’ he says. When we receive the Holy Spirit we receive the nature of God, and He expects us to keep our nervous system obedient to the dictates of the Holy Spirit. All through these studies we have emphasised the principle of obedience to the highest; it is one of the most practical guides for our conduct as individuals. Paul continually dealt with people who under the guise of religion were libertines; they talked about liberty when what they really meant was, Â‘I insist on doing what it is
my right to do, and I don’t care a jot about anyone else.Â” That is not liberty, that is lawlessness. The only liberty a sain
t has is the liberty not to use his liberty. There is nothing more searching than what the New Testament has to say about the
use of liberty. It is never your duty to go the second mile, to give up your possessions or property to someone else, b
ut Jesus says if we are His disciples, that is what we will do.

Re: - posted by Aunt_Beth_64, on: 2006/6/10 23:56
Aaron-

This is rich commentary and along the lines of what I was looking for. Thank you so much for alerting me to this thread.

Beth

Re: The Moral Individual - Part 1 - posted by CJaKfOrEsT (), on: 2006/8/5 19:26

The Moral IndividualÂ—I

Individuality

Individuality is the husk of the personal life, it is all Â“elbowsÂ”; it separates and isolates. The husk of individuality is God Â’s created natural covering for the protection of the personal life, but unless individuality gets transfigured it becomes o
jectionable, egotistical and conceited, interested only in its own independence. Individuality is the characteristic of a chil
d and rightly so, but if we mistake individuality for the personal life we will remain isolated. It is the continual assertion of
individuality that hinders our spiritual development more than anything else; individuality must go in order that personalit
y may emerge and be brought into fellowship with God.

1. Independence

Quote:
--------------------- . . a fugitive and a wanderer shalt thou be in the earth. (Genesis 4:12 rv)
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Individuality is natural, but when individuality is indwelt by sin it destroys personal communion and isolates individuals, li
ke so many crystals, and all possibility of fellowship is destroyed. The characteristics of individuality are independence a
nd self-assertiveness. There is nothing dearer to the heart of the natural man than independence, and as long as I live in the
outsskirts of my pridelul independence Jesus Christ is nothing to me.

Personality, not individuality, is the great Christian doctrine, but we misunderstand the teaching of Our Lord when we co
nfound the natural with the spiritual, and individuality with sin. Independence of one another is natural; independence of
God is sin. When natural independence of one another is wedded with independence of God it becomes sin, and sin isol
ates and destroys, and ultimately damns the life. Positive* individuality in any form is not only anti-Christian, but antihum
an, because it instantly says, Â“I care for neither God nor man, I live for myself.Â”

Cain stands for positive individualityÂ—Â“not as Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he h
im? Because his works were evil, and his brotherÂ’s righteousÂ” (1 John 3:12 rv). (It is not the act of murder only that is
taken into accountÂ—Our Lord said Â“out of the heart proceed . . . murders.Â” The statements of Jesus at times startle
us painfully awake.) Cain was the first isolated individual; Adam was not an isolated individual. Before the Fall Adam wa
rs in relationship with God and with the world; when he was driven out from the Garden he was still in relationship with th
e world. CainÂ’s sin shattered him into absolute solitariness. Being alone is not solitariness; it is the loneliness with an el
ement of moral dis-esteem in it which is solitariness. There is no comrade for a murderer, he is isolated by the very succ
ess of his sin. It is instructive to notice what associates itself with God and what with the sinner: nothing associates itself
with the sinner but his sin. The sinner is absolutely solitary on GodÂ’s earth, and as long as he remains proud in his solit
ariness he goes against everything that is anything like God; he goes against man, who is likest God, and against the ea
rth, which is also like God, and both man and earth cry out to God against him all the time. Â“The voice of thy brotherÂ’s
blood crieth unto Me from the groundÂ” (Genesis 4:10).

For an individual to be isolated is either a sign of sin or of a transition stage, i.e., a person in the making. The most dang
erous stage in a soul’s development is the Â“No one understands me” stage—of course they don’t! Â“I don’t understand myself—of course you don’t! If this stage develops unduly the boy or girl will find when they get out into the world that they cannot work with others, and they become more and more impossible until the unwholesome idea that they are different from everyone else is knocked out of them. It is well to remember that our examination of ourselves can never be unbiased, so that we are only safe in taking our estimate of ourselves from our Creator instead of from our own introspection which makes us either depressed or conceited. The oft-repeated modern phrase Â“self-masteryÂ” is misleading; profoundly speaking, a man can never master what he does not understand, therefore the only master of a man is not man himself, or another man, but God. Because introspection cannot profoundly satisfy, it does not follow that introversion is wrong; it is right, because it is the only way in which we will discover our need of God. It is the introspective power that is made alert by conviction of sin.

b2. Interdependence

Quote:

------------------------------And not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. (Acts 4:32 rv)

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. . . . (Hebrews 10:24-25)
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These two passages serve to indicate the main characteristic of Christianity, viz., the Â“togetherÂ” aspect; false religions inculcate an isolated holy life. Try and develop a holy life in private, and you find it cannot be done. Individuals can only live the true life when they are dependent on one another. After the Resurrection Our Lord would not allow Mary to hold a spiritual experience for herself; she must get into contact with the disciples and convey a message to them—Â“Touch Me not; . . . but go unto My brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your GodÂ” (rv). After PeterÂ’s denial the isolation of misery would inevitably have seized on him and made him want to retire in the mood of Â“I can never forgive myself.Â” had not Our Lord forestalled this by giving him something positive to doÂ—Â“. . . and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.Â” Immediately you try to develop holiness alone and fix your eyes on your own whiteness, you lose the whole meaning of Christianity. The Holy Spirit makes a man fix his eyes on his Lord and on intense activity for others. In the early Middle Ages people had the idea that Christianity meant living a holy life apart from the world and its sociability, apart from its work and citizenship. That type of holiness is foreign to the New Testament; it cannot be reconciled with the records of the life of Jesus. The people of His day called Him Â“the friend of publicans and sinnersÂ” because He spent so much time with them.

The danger of the Higher Christian Life movements (various groups and organizations that emphasized sanctification and personal holiness) is that the emphasis is put not on the regenerating power of the grace of God, but on individual consecration, individual fasting and prayer, individual devotion to God. The apostle Paul sums up individual human effort under the guise of religion as things which have Â“a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the bodyÂ” (Colossians 2:23). It is simply individualism veneered over with religious phraseology Â“What has Jesus done for me? I have done it by prayer, by fasting, by consecration.Â” To reason like that is to put Our Lord Â“out of itÂ” as Saviour and Sanctifier. We do not come to Jesus Christ, we come to our own earnestness, to our own consecration; what happens when we do come to Jesus is the miracle of a new creation. The Christian life is stamped all through with impossibility. Human nature cannot come anywhere near Jesus ChristÂ’s demands, and any rational being feeling those demands honestly, says, Â“It canÂ’t be done, apart from a miracle.Â” Exactly. In our modern Christianity there is no miracle; it isÂ—Â“You must pray moreÂ”; Â“You must give up this and thatÂ”Â—anything and everything but the need to be born into a totally new kingdom.

In these talks we have traced all through the insistence that we are brought up in families, and families form communities, and communities institutions, and institutions are under governments, and governments are answerable to God—always for one purpose, that we might develop together. In the external aspects of Christianity in civilised life individuality is not lost, but it is not positive, (independent, not related to anything else) it is interdependent. Beware of becoming a positive individual in your Christian community, and saying, Â“I must separate myself and start a little place of my own.Â” Â“If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, Â” we have fellowship with everyone else who is in the light. Natural affinity does not count here at all.

3. Identification
Christianity is personal, therefore it is un-individual. An individual remains definitely segregated from every other individual; when you come to the teaching of Our Lord there is no individuality in that sense at all, but only personality, “that they may be one.” Two individuals can never merge; two persons can become one without losing their identity. Personality is the characteristic of the spiritual man as individuality is the characteristic of the natural man. When the Holy Spirit comes in He emancipates our personal spirit into union with God, and individuality ultimately becomes so interdependent that it loses all its self-assertiveness. Jesus Christ prayed for our identification with Himself in His oneness with the Father—“that they may be one, even as we are one.” That is infinitely beyond experience. Identification is a revelation—the exposition of the experience. The standard Revelation with regard to identification is Our Lord Himself, and you cannot define Him in terms of individuality, but only in terms of personality. When Jesus Christ emancipates the personality individuality is not destroyed, it is transfigured, and the transfiguring, incalculable element is love, personal passion, devotion to Himself, and to others for His sake.

The Moral Individual—I - posted by crsschk (), on: 2006/8/5 20:21

Quote:
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Beware of being cute enough to detect immorality only in a moral pigsty, learn to detect it in your own spiritual imaginations.

Good to read through some of this again.