

“You Cannot Legislate Morality!”

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

The CEO of a major American corporation was forced to resign after admitting to a sexual affair with a female subordinate (Merle, 2005). The incident triggered the oft-debated ethical question: “Should one’s personal behavior in moral matters have any bearing on one’s position in public life?” Conventional wisdom now says, “no.” You’ve heard the claims—over and over again *ad nauseam*: “What a person does on his own time is none of the company’s business.” “Public life and private life are separate issues.” “After all, you cannot legislate morality and personal behavior.” From the president of the United States and the CEO of a large corporation to the public school teacher, Americans in large numbers have swallowed the baseless and ludicrous assertion that personal conduct and moral choices have no bearing on one’s employment position and credibility. Character, integrity, and ethical behavior increasingly have been detached from job performance as people compartmentalize their lives into separate and distinct spheres.



But such ethical schizophrenia is irrational, nonsensical, and destructive to the fabric of society. When a person manifests immorality in one aspect of his life, he demonstrates a character flaw that has become a part of his being. This circumstance must inevitably and naturally permeate a person’s character. If he is willing to lie in his private life, logically his propensity for lying can know no boundaries. The person who becomes comfortable with lying in one area of his life will eventually feel comfortable lying in other areas as well. Once a person sacrifices her integrity by embracing one illicit behavior (e.g., lying), she instantaneously opens herself up to embracing additional illicit behaviors (e.g., stealing, cheating). If a man cannot be trusted with your wife, why would you trust him with your money or your business?

God’s Word is the only reliable guide for human behavior (Psalm 119). In the Bible, God has given rules for the regulation of human behavior. Only He is in a position to establish

the parameters of proper behavior. Without law, humans would have no guidance and no framework for assessing their actions. They would be free to conduct themselves in any manner whatsoever. One person may choose to murder while another may choose not to murder. There would be no ultimate difference between those two choices—no objective basis upon which to assign any ethical or moral significance. The person who engages in immoral behavior would be open to being immoral in any and every area of his or her life. Only incidental circumstances would decide when and where the immorality manifested itself. If a CEO would sacrifice his sexual integrity, given the right circumstances, he would be willing to sacrifice his financial integrity as well.

Human civilization is, in fact, grounded and dependent on the fundamental principle that human behavior can and must be regulated. Laws, by definition, regulate human behavior! Why do we have traffic laws? Why do we require people to drive their automobiles on the correct side of the road, stop at red traffic lights, or yield to pedestrians in crosswalks? Weren’t we told that we could not legislate human behavior? Why do we have laws governing the food industry’s handling of food for human consumption? I thought we could not legislate human behavior? Why do we have laws that make murder, stealing, and perjury in court illegal—if human morality cannot be legislated? The fact of the matter is that human behavior **can and must** be governed. The very fabric and functioning of society depends on it!

Ultimately, morality must be based on the laws of God, with the understanding that one day, all humans will stand before the Supreme Judge of the world Who will “render to each one according to his deeds” (Romans 2:6): “For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil (Ecclesiastes 12:14). “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Corinthians 5:10-11).

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R&R RESOURCES

MORALITY WITHOUT RELIGION?

by Dave Miller, Ph.D.

In the incessant conspiracy to expel the God of the Bible from public life and to dismantle America's Christian heritage, a variety of ploys and myths frequently is floated by those who profess "political correctness." One commonly heard quip is: "We can have morality without religion." Those who advocate such thinking insist that Christianity must be removed from the public sector—whether in government or public schools. They declare that morality is distinct from religion, and that individuals will acknowledge and embrace morality in the absence of Christianity. It was Hitler who said, "The great masses of the people... more easily fall victim to a big lie than to a little one" (1933, 1:10).

The fact is that the Creator of the human race is the sole Author and Source of objective morality. Otherwise, moral distinctions would simply be the product of the subjective whims of humans. Morality would thus legitimately vary from person to person and country to country. One society might decide to legalize pedophilia while another might make it illegal—and both would be "right" in the sense that everyone would be free to formulate their own moral standards. The result would be complete and utter social anarchy in which every person would be equally free to believe and behave however he or she chooses.



Charles Carroll

In stark contrast, the Bible presents the only logical and sane assessment of reality—an objective standard, authored by the Creator, exists for the entire human race. That standard resides within the confines of the Christian religion as articulated in the New Testament. Unless human civilization gauges its moral behavior according to that objective, absolute framework, moral and spiritual chaos in society will be the end result. In the words of Charles Carroll, a signer of the Declaration of Independence: "Without morals a republic cannot subsist any length of time; **they, therefore, who are decrying the Christian religion**, whose morality is so sublime and pure...**are undermining the solid foundation of morals**, the best security for the duration of free governments" (as quoted in Steiner, 1907, p. 475, emp. added).

Yet, for some fifty years now, Americans have been pummeled with the humanistic notion that morality can be maintained in society to the exclusion of Christianity. With almost prophetic anticipation, the very first president of the United States—the Father of our country—anticipated and addressed this sinister misnomer. After serving his country for two terms as president, George Washington delivered his farewell address to the nation, dispelling the "morality-without-religion" theory in sweeping tones:

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, **religion and morality** are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be



asked: Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge **the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion**. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, **reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle**. It is substantially true that **virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government**. The rule, indeed, extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who that is a sincere friend to it can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric? (1796, pp. 22-23, emp. added).

Washington was simply echoing the teaching of the Bible. He recognized that the American republic was founded on the moral principles of the Christian religion. He understood that to abandon the Christian religion was ultimately to abandon the moral principles inherent in that religion. He also affirmed that those who "shake the foundation of the fabric," by undermining the importance of **Christian** morality, are not sincere friends of America. Indeed, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). "For the nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish, and those nations shall be utterly ruined" (Isaiah 60:12).

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R&R RESOURCES

Q Whence have come morals?

A Evolutionists are forced to maintain that morality evolved in humans. Yet, an examination of this premise demonstrates that it is not only illogical, but also wrong.

Consider, for instance, a situation in which a human feels guilt or remorse for having hurt someone. Evolutionists argue that those feelings occur because we have potentially threatened our own survival status. But one must ask: Where did the impulse to seek our own species' survival come from? If we argue that it evolved for our own survival, then we fall into circular reasoning.

Additionally, while that "just-so" answer may appear to be an acceptable explanation for how we feel when we hurt fellow human beings, what about the guilt one feels for hurting an animal? Why do most humans feel a sense of guilt and pain after accidentally running over a dog with their car? This seems to contradict the "survival of the fittest" mantra. It also is in direct contradiction to what we observe in nature, where animals often kill or injure other animals on purpose.

If morals are simply a "hard-wired" portion of the "evolved brain," then why are we concerned when people rape, murder, steal,

etc.? It could be argued that, given the environment and nature around them, these individuals simply are acting on primeval instincts. Yet, how many evolutionists would sit by idly and watch their wife being raped or their family being killed?

In order to answer the question of the origin of morals, we first must realize that morals are not physical, and have no physical properties. They possess no chemical characteristics, and cannot be measured in a laboratory. Yet, one cannot deny they exist! In fact, morals often exert feelings on individuals prior to their actions. For example, consider an individual contemplating committing a crime. That person often will feel anxiety, guilt, and anguish before the crime has ever even taken place.

Also, aside from the feelings of guilt and sorrow, morals also produce a feeling of dread or uncomfortable awareness that we are going to have to "answer for" our bad deeds. While humans may use denial or distractions to temporarily numb these feelings, those feelings never completely go away. We "know" that we have done something wrong.

Morals are a product of our Creator—the ultimate "Lawgiver." He gave us a moral code by which to live, and also the free will to make the choice of whether we will obey Him.

Brad Harrub

IN THE NEWS

Hurricanes in Florida. Tsunamis in the Indian Ocean. Food shortages in Somalia. The images the media provide from these horrific events often cause even the hardest of hearts to soften and want to provide some type of relief. And so we roll up our sleeves to donate blood, get out our checkbooks to donate money, and even in some circumstances, use our vacation time to volunteer for disaster relief. But why would humans act this way? Why are humans altruistic? As Mark Buchanan noted:

But when it comes to explaining the origin of our altruism, matters get a whole lot more contentious. In evolutionary terms it is a puzzle because any organism that helps others at its own expense stands at an evolutionary disadvantage. So if many people really are true altruists, as it seems, why haven't greedier, self-seeking competitors wiped them out? (2005).

Altruism is in direct conflict with evolutionary theory. Yet, evolutionists always have been able to put a spin on it. As Buchanan acknowledged: "For several decades, researchers have had a possible explanation: apparently selfless acts are nothing of the kind, but are instead a clever way of promoting individual self-interest" (2005).

But recent research is challenging this notion. For instance, Ernst Fehr and his colleagues wrote in *Human Nature*:

This paper provides strong evidence challenging the self-interest assumption that dominates the behavioral sciences and evolutionary thinking. The evidence indicates that many people have a tendency to voluntarily cooperate... (2002, p. 1).

Robert Trivers of Rutgers University went so far as to suggest that true altruism might be a "maladaptation" (as quoted in Buchanan, 2005). Calling it such does not suddenly mean evolution has explained this global phenomenon. The truth is, evolution cannot explain charity, just as it cannot explain morals. They are not found as molecular components of living cells, so exactly where did they come from?

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