Educating For Christian Living In A Humanistic Age
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I

Morality is in the news. In June *Time* magazine highlighted the rapid rise of Christian schools in America and cited as the key reason dissatisfaction with the moral climate in public education. Two weeks ago the ABC network on its *Nightline* program highlighted the impact of the "New Religious Right" with its moral concerns, conducting a lengthy interview with evangelist James Robison. Earlier this month a Baptist minister in Indiana protested a government pamphlet which he felt undercut his right to spank children; his protest made the papers. This week Jerry Falwell and his Moral Majority were highlighted on the front page of the Sunday *Milwaukee Journal* and on CBS's *60 Minutes*.

Some of this attention is in reaction to attempts to develop morality in America's public schools. Over the past few years we have been hearing such terms as *values clarification*, *transactional analysis*, *moral development theories*, *behavior modification*, among others. These impressive-sounding approaches all relate to morality in some way, and they all have been associated with what is termed *secular humanism*.

Lately discussion about morality and education has become increasingly strident. On the right the Moral Majority has been directing verbal assaults on humanism. On the left atheistic humanists have not hesitated to respond with their own verbal salvos. Some people have gotten caught in the crossfire, among them Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona, long a hero of conservatives. Somewhat surprisingly, last month he complained bitterly about what he suggests is the Moral Majority's incessant meddling in American political life. Perhaps the greatest loser in the battle is clarity of understanding. As charges are met by counter charges, one has the impression that more heat is being generated than is light.

For our part, we might like to sit this one out. For one reason, humanism comes in several different stripes and colors, depending on who is doing the defining; therefore, we might have a good deal of difficulty knowing for sure what is being discussed and who the enemy really is. For another reason, we may be confident that the only morality worth knowing is that which our Lord has been pleased to reveal to us in the Scriptures, and that, we feel, we know.

That may be true, but as Christians—and particularly as Christians who are also teachers—we cannot afford to sit this one out. Some kinds of humanism are nearly as dangerous as the Moral Majority claims. Those influences have been building for a long time in our country—not suddenly in a grand conspiracy as some on the Moral Right suggest. As the religious fibers in our social structure have been gradually dissolving, and as materialism has come to afflict our own culture as much as the Soviets', it was perhaps inevitable that something like secular humanism should gradually make its presence felt in moral education.

We cannot hold ourselves aloof from that humanistic world, as much as we might try. Indeed, the media, which we demand for our own selves, make it less possible now than formerly. Newspapers and magazines penetrate our homes. The TV waves leap any ivy-covered monastery walls which we might like to erect. We are not *of* the world, of course, but we are inevitably *in* it. If we are to defend ourselves from the unwholesome and downright evil influences around us, we had better know the enemy well. And then fight him.

Accordingly, the first part of this presentation will address the kinds of humanism in education which confront the Christian as he attempts to lead a Christian life for himself and as he tries to train others in that same manner of living. But before that analysis, it would be well to have a taste of the kind of thing we are dealing with.

Imagine that seven of us are asked to serve on a panel advising a hospital regarding a decision on abortion. We are to rule on the relative merits of nine scenarios involving the request of a pregnant young woman. As members of this panel we are to make the following decisions: permit three cases of abortion, deny three, and table consideration of the other three to a later date. These are the nine cases:

1. The pregnant female possesses a blood disorder order. This disorder, called embolism, takes the form of blood clotting. Her physician estimates that should she bear the child her chances of survival are 50-50.
2. The pregnant female, it is suspected, has been impregnated by an older brother. The relationship is called incest. Inasmuch as the mother's family and neighbors are members of a fundamentalist Protestant sect, the child, if born, will be perceived as a symbol of sin and evil.
3. The pregnant female is married to an unemployed laborer. She has difficulty feeding, clothing, and providing for three children In addition, she and her husband subscribe to the work ethic and view the need to accept charity as evidence of their worthlessness.
4. The pregnant female and her husband possess a chromosomal abnormality. The odds are 60-40 that a full-term pregnancy and birth will eventuate in a mongoloid child.
5. The pregnant female, the mother of two children, is a social leader in the community. She is an active member of such organizations as Community Chest, Zero Population Growth, and a women's liberation group called NOW. She argues that she has the personal right to use her body as she sees fit.
6. The pregnant female is married to a prominent local attorney who does not want another child. The pregnant female is already the mother of two adolescents. The parents seek an abortion claiming that another child will make it impossible for them to provide the two adolescents the education they have already planned for them.
7. The pregnant female has been found guilty of manslaughter in the death of a former child.
8. The pregnant female, sixteen years old, was engaged in petting with her boyfriend. They went further than they had intended and pregnancy resulted. The parents of the couple have refused to give their consent for marriage.
9. The pregnant female, a nineteen-year-old college student, was picked up and raped by three boys while hitchhiking to class.[i]

So far the nine. Rather than indicating immediately how these relate to humanism, it would be well to pose some questions. Have you thought about situations described in that hospital setting? Have you seen some of them dramatized on television? Were such questions ever explored in the dramatizations? I wouldn't be surprised if you have witnessed such on television, for the taboo subjects of former years are no longer taboo, even as such subjects are becoming regular fare in the classrooms of our nation. I am sure also that certain people in our congregations have agonized over one or another of these situations, and I am quite sure pastors in our circles would attest to that.

But now think of students in our Lutheran schools—maybe elementary, but in this case more likely in the upper grades or in high school. Do you think they have considered these

problems? Do you think we and they are capable of handling them in a classroom? If so, by what standards should these cases be judged?

A goodly number of thinkers in American educational circles believe that such questions of morality ought to be discussed in class. What is more, they suggest these questions should be discussed on a free-exploration basis. The teacher is not to provide guiding principles by which such cases are to be judged. The youngsters are to suggest and discover their own principles.

This is one of the significant approaches which secular humanists have suggested for educating youth these days. We will note its implications later. First we should take an overview of secular humanism and its general implications for moral training in the schools.

One of the better summaries of humanism appeared in the periodical *Religious Humanism* about a decade ago. In the words of that periodical:

A contemporary statement of Humanism requires five assertions.

The first such assertion is the centrality of man. The principal concern is man—his relations with himself, with nature, with other persons and with the universe…Religion is both *man-centered* and *man-created*…Therefore the Humanist asserts that god has outworn his usefulness, if ever indeed he had one, and might as well be forgotten except as preserved in ancient and colorful mythology.

The second assertion of Humanism is the reliance on reason. Man is an animal, but he is distinguished from other animals by his capacity to, think and to create. The Humanist, however, is not one to be carried away by the rational nature of man…Man's acts are motivated by both thinking and feeling.

The third assertion of Humanism is the essential goodness of man. The emphasis here is on the word *essential*. I do not mean that man is inherently good, but that he is essentially good. In fact, man is inherently both good and evil. But he has the capacity to determine what he shall do in any particular set of circumstances. I contend that he is inclined to do good. The determination of the good is situational; that is, what is "good" depends wholly on the facts of the particular situation…The implication of this position for religion is that man is not condemned by original sin. Rather he is free to do right or wrong, but he is inclined to do right.

The fourth assertion of the Humanist is his ethical and social concern…Man lives in a social order, and definite advantages accrue to him from social living, if one wants to look at it from a purely selfish point of view.

The fifth assertion which Humanism makes is faith in man. Humanism does not believe man has achieved perfection, but that

he has the capacity to improve his condition. We want to speed up the progress. The question is, how?[ii]

To the Christian, this is nothing short of blasphemous. A brief contrast with Scriptural truth is in order. Regarding the first point, the centrality of man, not man but God and His grace are the center of the Christian's life. As to reliance on reason, the Christian knows that natural reason is flawed since the fall and thus, though still a blessing, it is a misleading guide. In asserting the essential goodness of man, humanism again simply ignores our flawed and fallen state. When it comes to ethics for the humanist, we must say that eventually his ethics goes back to basic selfishness focusing either on himself or on his group. Finally, regarding faith in man rather than God, the Christian knows that any ethical progress of man is belied by the present state of our society and the terrible wars we have seen in our own time; non-godly man is no better off now than was Plato or Socrates more than two thousand years ago.

These beliefs, of course, have immense implications for approaches to moral training. The conclusions, however, vary significantly from one humanist to another. Humanist author Morris Storrer has summarized what he calls a "few of the major viewpoints." These are brief and packed with meaning; therefore close attention is necessary to catch the drift in each case:

1. *Morality is a matter of self-realization.* Fulfillment of potential is of the essence, and the happiness that attends it. Aliveness is the principal virtue…
2. *Survival morality.* Life is a struggle, and it's everyone for himself or herself. You owe nothing to others in the last analysis and everything to number one.
3. *The morality of expediency.* Morality is whatever works. Live by the customary rules ordinarily. In unusual situations, do what promises best results for yourself and others closely affected…
4. *The "greatest happiness" theory.* The right course is the one that promises the greatest preponderance of pleasure over pain in the present circumstances for all the persons affected.
5. *The "right conditioning" theory.* People do what they are determined to do by genetic endowment and conditioning. Free choice is an illusion. The important thing is to groove children for orderly and constructive lives.
6. *"Cultural relativism."* Morality depends on the customary practices of the people in the particular culture in question. There's no basis for saying that one culture is morally superior to another.
7. *The morality of love.* Morality is about concern to know people in their inwardness, care,…, respect…, and responsiveness to their needs.
8. *The morality of sentiment.* Morality for you depends on how you feel about things. There is no truth in ethics, no reality against which moral judgments can be tested…
9. *The morality of justice.* Guide yourself by the principle which you think would be good for the guidance of all in situations like the present…[iii]

We will shortly look at three of these in greater detail. The three are self-realization, right conditioning, and justice. We do not have the time to examine all to the extent advisable. Those who espouse these various standards for morality cannot agree among themselves and often do not seem to understand each other. Suffice it to say that we are reminded of the Tower of Babel. But this much they do have in common: they have no time for what God might say, because they are not ready to admit His existence.

And even if some do, they suggest that what God might say doesn't really make much difference anyway. Out of this confusion of tongues, however, do come some major trends which are affecting education in our country. All of them have strong ties to psychology.

Psychology in the latter part of the twentieth century is dominated by three major movements. The first of these is the Freudian or neo-Freudian. Freud, the Viennese Jew, was responsible for attuning American moral standards to what he called man's basic drives, with survival drives, such as sex and hunger being paramount. The impact has been devastating on sexual standards. Morally, man is seen to merely be prisoner of his drives. Since he cannot rationally subdue them, the best he can do is try to understand them, accept them, and alter them somewhat. Be careful about calling attention to sin because in censuring people for their sexual actions we run the risk of making them sick with guilt and crippling their personalities. Freudianism was a blow to sound sexual standards and, as a result, the increasing sexual permissiveness in our land can be traced in part to psychology. Other than such permissiveness his theories do not directly involve teaching for moral standards. Regarding interpersonal relations, however, transactional analysis owes much to Freud. But that is beyond the scope of our presentation.

More significant an attempt to create a system for teaching morality is the theory of behaviorism. This has its source in Pavlov and more recently owes much to B. F. Skinner. Involved is the stimulus-response theory, also known as conditioning. In moral training, this has been reflected in behavior modification. More on that shortly.

Perhaps the most significant of the psychological schools presently is that called "third force." It is third after the first two: Freudian and behavioral. This third force is most closely identified with the term humanism, and actually has been given the title "humanistic psychology." This is using the term *humanism* in a narrower sense.

Centrally important in this approach are such existentialist philosophers as the French atheist Sartre, who coined the phrase, "Morality is a humanism." Among psychologists Abraham Maslow with his actualization theories and Carl Rogers with his non-judgmental approach to counseling are two other key figures.

The views of Abraham Maslow provide insight regarding how humanistic psychology impacts on moral education. He suggests that morality is really a process of "self-actualization." According to him, a child or an adult has internal resources which can be developed naturally, involving also moral attributes. The child merely needs to unfold like the flowering of a rose from a bud. Indoctrination is unnecessary and even harmful. Let the good that is in the person develop on its own. Maslow contends that "ultimately the search for identity, is, in essence, the search for one's own intrinsic, authentic values."[iv] He suggests that on this basis man can develop a scientific ethics and a natural value system. He goes on to say that this developing system of natural values is "a court of ultimate appeal for the determination of good and bad, of right and wrong."[v] In effect, Maslow is saying that we really don't need any revelation of right and wrong; we need no Bible.Indeed, we need no God! Man is good, man is free, man tends toward moral perfection.

On this basis the humanist constructs his own moral standards. The role of the teacher is to get out of the way as well as possible. In the words of Maslow, "No self-respecting humanist would deliberately set out to 'teach' morality formally and systematically."[vi] What the teacher will do is to present situational alternatives which the

student is to think of critically and responsibly. Without tipping his hand, the teacher will pose such questions as "How do I know whether marijuana is really harmful to me or not?" "Should Bill and I live together before marriage so that we can know whether we are compatible?"[vii]

The process -for carrying out such moral development is called *values clarification*. According to its proponents, values clarification seeks to help young people answer perplexing questions to life and aid them build their own value system. They grant that parents and educators in times past have used elements of this system, but they claim that this new approach is "more systematic" and is "widely applicable." Louis Rath, one of the leaders of the movement, relies on John Dewey's problem-solving methodology. Rath also suggests that he is not interested in "the content" of morality, but rather in the process: the teacher's focus is on how people come to hold certain beliefs and establish certain behavior patterns.[viii] The nine scenarios regarding the young pregnant woman is an exercise in values clarification.

In his analysis Rath points to seven sub-processes as people develop moral standards. First, *choosing* one's beliefs and behaviors consists first in noting the alternatives, then considering the consequences involved, and finally making one's free choice. The second is the *prizing* of one's beliefs and behaviors, involving cherishing and publicly affirming what one cherishes.

Third and last, *acting* must follow, which involves the act itself and then consistently repeating it.[ix]

At the heart of values clarification is the insistence that people choose among alternatives in developing moral standards. Christian educators must be disturbed by the claim of advocates that students must be given free choice in establishing values.

Teachers are given a series of stock questions which they are to ask people probing values. Most of these questions are helpful and are innocent. But those associated with "choosing freely" are destructive of past influences in arriving at moral conclusions. Consider carefully these questions:

> "Where do you suppose you first got that idea?"
> "How long have you felt that way?"
> "What would people say if you weren't to do what you say
> you must do?"[x]

An implication is involved with these questions. Students are subtly led to sense that they did not choose freely and that now is a good time to do it their own way. In this manner these questions undermine respect for authority. It reminds us of the devil's question to Eve in the garden: Yea hath God said?

The knowledgeable Christian teacher will also disagree emphatically with the claim that values clarification as has been described is only a method without content. By placing all moral preferences on the same plane, values clarification suggests moral relativity. It suggests that we all have it in ourselves to develop our own choices. Here the evils of secular humanism are to be seen in strongest terms. *Man* finally is the judge of all things. The Bible, the church, and the parents are placed on the same level as are the students' peers and the students' own half-formed ideals. The leader must take a non-judgmental approach to the views of those participating in the exercise. On this basis, Gandhi and Luther and Hitler and the Marquis de Sade and the Apostle Paul and the Ayatollah Khomeini all have equal time and are granted equal credibility. One observer

of the values clarification approach has correctly noted that its impact on a person's moral standards are devastating. He suggests that such an approach will lead us to one of four conclusions: 1) tolerance to all vices, or 2) create my own set of values and try to enforce them on others with all my might, or 3) throw off all moral standards and follow my base impulses, or 4) go along with the crowd as the path of least resistance.[xi]

Another man-centered approach to morality has received increasing attention over the past ten years. This is the moral development theory, championed by Lawrence Kohlberg, who in turn was influenced by Jean Piaget. Kohlberg claims that people develop moral standards in stages, one stage at a time. The six stages he identifies are combined into three levels called the preconventional, the conventional, and the post-conventional. The preconventional level lasts through the preteens. Authority figures are centrally important at this level, including both parents and teachers. In stage 1, lasting through about age 7, the key motivational factor is the avoidance of punishment. The second stage, lasting through about age 10, is one in which moral action is prompted by verbal approval or a desire for reward. On conventional level the significance of authority figures lessens, and the group becomes central. As for stage 3, role stereotype reigns supreme from about age 10 through adult. A person adopts the role—including moral role—which he thinks his peers expect. After that in stage 4 the concept of law and order is of ultimate importance. At this stage people avoid stealing because it is unlawful; to undermine law is to undermine the stabilizing influence of society. Kohlberg-places the Ten Commandments at this stage.[xii]

Kohlberg also claims that most people never mature beyond the conventional level of morality, with only about one in five moving on to the postconventional level. In the fifth stage, what is moral is determined on the basis of overriding rights in a social contract. Our Constitution's Bill of Rights provides an example. At this stage people may wrestle with such dilemmas as the rights of the individual over against the needs of society and government. Finally, a few go on to the sixth stage, that of universal principles. Here there are ideals which are comprehensive and consistent. Such a universal ideal, says Kohlberg, is the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Those operating at this moral level may well consider it their moral obligation to disobey "conventional" morality in order to live at this higher moral plane. Socrates for example, decided to take poison rather than conform to the will of his fellow Athenians. Thoreau went to prison rather than support what he considered the unjust Mexican War. Martin Luther King Jr. also suffered imprisonment rather than obey segregationist laws.[xiii]

The theory insists that people must move through moral stages one at a time. Kohlberg also claims that the stages are universally valid from one culture to another. Accordingly, it is the duty of the teacher to help the student move to the next higher stage of moral thinking. If the teacher believes that the pre-adolescent can move from mere peer-group morality (stage 3) to the general rights morality (stage 5) and skip the law-and-order morality (stage 4), that teacher is mistaken. Indeed, a student may not be sufficiently mature even to move to the next level. The dilemma involved in this situation is illustrated in the following example:

> Suppose a person wants to steal some medicine to help his
> sick mother, because he cannot afford it and the pharmacy
> will not give him credit. A preconventional person would

consider this act as to whether he would be punished and whether people would disapprove. A conventional person would judge it as to whether or not it is the "right" thing, and he would weigh the rightness of helping his mother against the wrongness of stealing. The postconventional person would consider whether or not he would earn the respect of others and of himself, and would judge this against his standards of honesty and of helping others. Suppose a person is in the conventional [level], and that you are trying to help him handle a problem. Suppose this problem involves something he or someone else has done, as in the case of stealing the medicine. He may have come to the conclusion that he did the wrong thing, because stealing is just not done, no matter what the reason. Then you would want to bring him out of this conventional stage and into a postconventional stage—at least, you might want to *try*. Kohlberg's theory implies that this would be a waste of your time in most cases, because chances are he would not be ready to pass or mature into the next stage, and there would not be anything you could do yourself, for or with him, that would get him *to* the stage. A more likely strategy, then, would be to work within the conventional [level] and try to bring him around to seeing that what he did was the "right" thing, in terms of the way most people act.[xiv]

As Christian educators, of course, we need a much sounder justification than the fact that most other people are doing it.

It has been noted that there are multiple reasons for doing things and that these reasons may involve several stages at the same time. Again, take the example of theft:

Most of us refrain from stealing from a shop. Naturally, since the reader is a sensitive and intelligent person, this is because he has worked out that the consequences are harmful to the shopkeeper, and if his example were followed, to society in general [stage 5]. But it is also because he would go to prison if they were caught [stage 1]; and also because authority is against it [stage 4]; and also because he would be ashamed of himself if his friends knew [stage 3], and also because he feels it just wouldn't be right [stage 6] And so on.[xv]

No one can accuse Kohlberg of cross relativity in morals, a charge that can be leveled against values clarification. The basis for a standard is present. In fact, there are several of them, and they accumulate as a person moves through the stages, with new ones becoming more important and old ones less. For the preconventional level it is what authority figures say. For the conventional level it is what our friends say or what the law says. For the postconventional level it is basic rights or basic general principles.

There are difficulties employing Kohlberg's approach even though many educators are fascinated with it today. For one thing it is cumbersome in the group setting of a classroom. But

more important as far as Christians are concerned, the entire system by implication goes back to man. It involves authority figures who are human, peers who are human, laws which are made by humans, and general rights and principles which are developed by humans.

Moving on to the influence of behavioral psychology, its educational application in behavior modification has immense influence. Four years ago Vance Packard estimated that up to twenty percent of the classrooms on the eastern seaboard are using it.[xvi]

The human being perceived by the behavioral psychologist is quite different from the free, autonomous human being presented by psychological humanists. Man here is a thing to be manipulated, shaped, created. People are neither, good nor bad, but become either good or bad depending upon how they are shaped.

Attempting to apply rigorous scientific procedures to human behavior, behaviorists refuse to go beyond what can be actually be observed. Hence, they are concerned with the surface of people, their *observable* behavior, not what is inside them. Don't bother with such intangibles as self-concepts and motivation. Never mind why a person steals, just that it happens; get rid of the happening. The thought is that the symptoms *are* the disease. Get rid of the symptoms and there is no disease.

Conditioning is the key to moral development for the behaviorist. He is attempting to obtain the proper stimulus for the desired response. B. F. Skinner, the giant figure among recent behaviorists, has gone far beyond Pavlov's salivating dog and works with what he calls *operant* conditioning, that is, conditioning which utilizes a reward or punishment to obtain the desired behavior pattern. This is the "carrot or stick" approach. The emphasis is on the carrot as behaviorists urge that we accentuate the positive, while not eliminating entirely the negative. It is commonly acknowledged that this approach is effective for surface behavior, and for the behaviorist that is all he is interested in.

The role of the teacher is more challenging in behaviorism than in the free-and-easy-going approaches of humanistic psychology. Never mind the establishment of rapport or providing a pleasant surrounding for self-actualization. Rather, the pupil becomes what the teacher and others in the environment cause it to become, and careful attention must be given to the process. This involves programming and reinforcement. Programming is the strategy for inculcating content. Each lesson is to have its own distinctive behavioral objectives in content learning. As the plan is carried out, careful attention must be given to reinforcement—a word of praise here and a pat on the back there. Very occasionally a reprimand, too, is in order. The various carefully prescribed strategies go under such terms as *token reinforcement*, *contracting*, *programmed instruction*, *shaping*, *punishment*, *cognitive desensitization*, *modeling*, *stimulus control*, and *extinction*.

The reinforcement strategy will operate both for individual training and in the overall classroom management. In point of fact, behaviorists claim that the approach has universal application. The student's preferences and prejudices, his view of himself and his society, his values and his morality, his ideals and goals—all these can be learned or unlearned through conditioning, or so they claim.

An example is in place. Notice how behavior modification is applied in a situation in which extinction is called for. In this case the undesirable behavior to be terminated is tattling. Extinction strategy involves the removal of the reinforcer which maintains the undesirable behavior. The reinforcer in this case is the attention the teacher has been giving the child every time the child tattles. The example:

Eight-year-old Robin was driving his third-grade teacher, Ms. Fly, up a wall. Robin was constantly tattling on every child who committed the slightest transgression within his purview.

Ms. Fly was unwittingly reinforcing Robin's behavior by responding and attending to him when he tattled on others. After her twenty-second trip up the wall, she planned an intervention program employing extinction to decrease Robin's behavior. She would ignore all his tattling. Each time Robin approached her to tattle on a classmate, Ms. Fly did one of the following:
- Intervened before Robin had an opportunity to tattle, and focused his attention on another topic, picture, book, and so on.
- Turned her back on him and attended to another child who was performing appropriately.
- Turned her back on him and walked away without any sign of recognition.

During the initial phase of the behavior change process, Robin's tattling increased for a brief period of time. As the program continued, the behavior decreased and was extinguished.[xvii]

In all of this there is something dehumanizing about behaviorism, something manipulative. Man becomes merely an object to be shaped. He becomes the plastic man, as is asserted by Vance Packard in his recent book, *The People Shapers*.

Just listen to the mechanical approach as described by a behaviorist:
1. Identify a behavior as being undesirable. Specify the deviant behavior in simple, descriptive language.
2. Identify the reinforcers that maintain the deviant behavior.
3. Systematically cut off the reinforcers that maintain the undesirable behavior.
4. Teach new, desirable behavior that will work for the person, obtain similar results, or new, equally valuable results. Follow instances of the new behavior with reinforcers.[xviii]

This almost sounds like a mechanic working on his automobile**.** Such control over the lives of others suggests the pictures we see in the anti-utopian novels such as George Orwell's *1984* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*.

Indeed, behaviorists themselves realize the danger of human manipulation. One behaviorist admits the difficulties and raises the following disturbing questions:

"Who shall determine whose behavior is to be modified?"

"Who will legitimize and monitor the interventions being utilized to modify behavior?"

"To what ends will the interventions be applied?"[xix]

It is well at this point to stand back, take an overall look at these three major approaches to morality, and observe some commonalities. Putting it all together, we see in modern secular humanism the use of utterly inadequate tools aiming at impossible goals. That holds true regardless of which brand of humanism it is which is trying to establish the system of morality. With the humanist psychologist it is man merely glorifying himself, and with the behaviorists it

is man manipulating himself. Through it all there is the irony that both brands of humanism are dehumanizing. Seeking to glorify man, they degrade him. Both suggest that man is the product of his own evolution, thus linking man with the animal and presenting him as the hairless ape. That is a good deal less than what the Scriptures say about man, the jewel of creation, made in the image of God.

But we need to do more than merely note the irony that humanism makes humans less human. There are dire consequences for morality. Secular humanists of all varieties are oblivious to that. While they admit to man possessing reason, in contrast to animals, they nonetheless ignore conscience, man's God-given guide for moral conduct. Both reason and conscience, though darkened in the fall, are still present. With that darkened guide, levels of civic righteousness, are still possible. But the morality of the secular humanists knocks the props out from under.

To be fair, we must not accuse secular humanists as being immoral people. Many lead exemplary lives in their communities. But they do advocate principles which tear away at moral standards, the results of which are all too evident in our society. Human beings are thus dragged down to the level of the animal. Consequently, the practical results of humanistic approaches to morality must be dehumanizing as well.

Examples abound in much of secular sex education. Gone is the Scriptural ideal of the family, the life-long union of man and wife, with the sexual act the sign and seal of that relationship. Gone too, is the impact of conscience—that darkened but still viable guide which the non-Christian also has at his disposal. Perhaps the most familiar example of the consequences for sex education is SIECUS—The Sex Information and Education Council of the United States. Approaches presented in its materials are more animalistic than human.[xx] The bottom line is sex without the necessary moral framework. Along with that, of course, has come the sexual revolution and the open promiscuity which abounds in our country. This, in turn, aids and abets the flood of pornography engulfing our country. Human beings have become more animal than human.

Other results are to be seen in the supposed morality of killing the unborn, euthanasia, and even suicide, as man usurps his authority over God regarding life. In other cases it is to be seen in drug education which in effect is education for drug use. Evidence accumulates that morality on all levels is declining. That should not surprise us. With no ultimate standard to support public morality, with no longer even a civic appeal to a collective conscience, there should be no wonder that we find ourselves in a moral wilderness.

In the context of our amoral and immoral times, Romans I is especially meaningful for us. There the Apostle Paul indicates what must be the result when God is supplanted and when man places himself in the position reserved for God. As did many in Paul's day, so also now men are worshipping man more than the Creator. We see the consequences as God gives human beings over to their own reprobate desires. The sexual revolution, the destruction of the home, pornography both soft and hard, the drug crazed society, increasing suicide rates—all this is evidence of the moral wilderness suggested in Romans I. So-called human advances have led to degeneration and decay.

II

The moral decay so evident makes us want to applaud almost every attempt to reverse the current trend to moral degeneracy. There are those who have been mightily vocal in their efforts

to do just that. Recently these voices seem to have coalesced in the Moral Majority, a movement aligning itself with the conservative political wave which has recently spread across our country. It is refreshing to hear that there are those who do care, those who point, to a high moral standard, both personally and for our society. Some of the results are heartening. In Mississippi the Moral Majority is credited with causing the enforcement of statutes prohibiting pornography. Nationally the movement has apparently succeeded in obtaining commitments from a majority of sponsors to limit sex and violence on television.[xxi]

Does this mean that we are to emulate Jerry Falwell? Ought we join forces with him and commit ourselves to a campaign that is one-third religion, one third politics, and one-third show biz? Before we cast our lot, we should stand back and take a good broad look. As we do, we will observe that there are signs that conservative religion and conservative politics do not mix well.

First of all, we would not want to be associated with the name-calling frequently employed by the "moral right." It is indeed true that secular humanism provides an insidious threat to America but distorted reporting is simply not fair. Jerry Falwell, according to a quote in the *Los Angeles Times*, insists that "humanism with its emphasis on moral relativity and amorality challenges every principle on which America was founded." He has a point as far as it goes. But what he adds unfairly distorts: "It (humanism) advocates abortion-on-demand, recognition of homosexuals, free use of pornography, legalizing of prostitution and gambling, and free use of drugs, among other things."[xxii] Indeed, the principles of relativity in humanism suggests that one has the freedom to reach such conclusions. But to say that it *advocates* it is something quite different and is grossly inaccurate. A Rogers and a Maslow in their presuppositions do undermine the sound basis for morality, but to suggest that they are directly advocating immoral practices is patently unfair.

Another failing of the New Religious Right is its sweeping condemnation of all things associated with the term *humanism*. When it castigates humanism, it frequently reveals it does not understand the many different uses of the term. Through sweeping condemnations and high-level rhetoric many associated with Moral Majority twist, distort, and condemn where no condemnation is in order.

Part of the confusion is somewhat understandable, since the term *humanism* is used in a number of different senses. Even those who call themselves humanists are confused by the categories. Humanism in the narrow sense is that of Maslow and Rogers and their non-directive counseling and self-actualization theories. Behaviorists are quite opposed to them. Much ink has been spilled as the two groups have engaged in verbal blood letting. An example of the confusion is, when behaviorist Skinner signed his name to the far out document entitled *Humanist Manifesto II*. That a behaviorist could sign a humanist document seemed shocking to some. But it is understandable when we realize that Skinner is a humanist in the broad sense, but not a humanist in the narrow sense.

Further compounding confusion is the frequently mis-applied term *Christian Humanism*, which is not Christian at all. In an article in the *Christian Century*, the periodical of the liberal Protestants, Robert Kysar advocated what he called a "Christian" humanism. He states that this humanism is "Christian…because the point of departure of its thought lies within the stream of Western, Judeo-Christian culture." But one becomes suspicious when he notes that "Christian humanism is in sympathy with the so-called secularization of the modern world and affirms the freedom given man through science and technology." One becomes downright alarmed when he states that "orthodox Christian thought has always emphasized man's servitude to…God…Christian humanism, however, holds that man must be freed from external authority

and so allowed to become his true self."[xxiii]How this author could dethrone God and retain the name Christian is incomprehensible. Such Christianity we can do without. It is flying under false colors. It is atheistic at heart and does not differ in essence from the man-centered religion of the secular humanists.

Nonetheless, there is a Christian humanism, confessed today with which we can be quite sympathetic. W. Stanford Reid in an article in *Christianity Today* insists that in the final analysis Christianity is the true humanism. He reminds us that because of God's creation Christianity places man in a special position.[xxiv] Man has been given a living soul, in contrast to the animals. He has also been provided a means to regain that wondrous position he once held. Through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ man is redeemed, bought back, made over to be one with God again. In that new relationship man through grace regains his special place in God's scheme of things.

To this point in this presentation the term *humanism* was used in a negative way. The fact that the term can be used in such a positive, biblical sense should make us careful so that we do not condemn that which ought not to be condemned.

That also applies when the term *humanism* is used in the sense of being humane, or when it is used in connection with the humanities. The humanism of the humanities still has an honored place in a school's curriculum—including that of Wisconsin Synod schools. Those of you who experienced the freshman composition course at DMLC within the past ten years were trained according to approaches provided in the *Rhetoric* of the classical humanist Aristotle.

By *humanism* some people sometimes do mean the *humanities*. We need to treasure the goals of that type of education. In an essay "Humanism through the Humanities" the Commission on the Humanities indicates that the key role for these Studies in a school's curriculum is to mirror our own image and to ask the question: What does it mean to be human? In answering that question the humanities employ languages, literature, history and philosophy.[xxv] Parenthetically I should add that if these studies are wrong, then the curriculum at Northwestern College should be reduced from four years to one. These subjects, in the words of Commission, have "humanistic content" and employ "humanistic methods." The methods involve insight, perspective, critical understanding, discrimination, and creativity. They employ verbal, perceptual, and imaginative skills which are needed to understand human experience.[xxvi] The Commission insists that the humanities "do not impose any single set of normative values, whether moral, social, or esthetic; rather as a record of the ideas that have guided men and women in the past, they give historical perspective." Regarding social education the Commission insists that "humanities, by emphasizing our common humanity contribute especially to the social purpose of learning—to educate for civic participation…No conception of the humanities is complete if it omits humanism as a civic ideal."[xxvii]As Christians who are also interested in civic righteousness, we would be hard pressed to disagree with those ideals.

Therefore it is well that we do not see red every time we hear or see the word *humanism*, as some on the New Religious Right apparently would have us do.

Recently educators have been applying the term *humanistic* in contrast to *mechanistic*. They observe the problems of a mechanized society. They see these problems as a result of the increasing industrialization in society and resulting increased complexity in our lives. They therefore see the need for humane values. In this sense they then perceive themselves as humanistic.

Those of the Moral Right who claim that the nation's schools are overrun by a conspiracy of secular humanists are distorting and exaggerating the influence of secular humanism One

writer has appropriately observed that, unlike the true secular humanist, 95% of teachers in America profess belief in some sort of a deity and that of the remaining five percent, only a minority are avowed secular humanists.[xxviii] Hence, the sweeping statements of the Moral Majority begin to lack credibility.

Finally, there is indication that the efforts of the Moral Majority are counter-productive. According to its own literature it is trying to gather a "great volunteer army across America." In response, Senator Barry Goldwater, though sympathetic to the moral aims of the Moral Majority, has lamented the "single issue" stance of the New Religious Right in opposing elected officials. As an example he cites the opposition to the nomination of Justice Sandra O'Connor to the Supreme Court because of the supposed position she has taken on abortion. In actuality, her position on that question was distorted.[xxix] Although conservative columnist William Buckley has taken issue with Goldwater on the advisability injecting religion into politics, he, too, indicated irritation at the rhetorical style of the Moral Majority.[xxx]

Where does all this leave responsible Christian educators? Christian educators will recognize that *humanism* is a term that twists and shifts. But when we understand the implication of secular humanism we see in it an utterly inadequate man-centered morality. "When we are finished with our wanderings through the arid wastelands of behaviorism and psychological humanism and all the other man-centered "*isms*", we feel good to be back home again. We are relieved to be in the blessed confines of our Heavenly Father's house, among our fellow believers, and working with a morality that God is only happy to give us through His Word.

As Christian educators we know we have something much better than that which is out there. When the psychological humanist points to the principle of human autonomy, which implies rebellion against God, and when behaviorism implies a plastic man crafted through the influences of genetics and conditioning, Christian teachers much prefer to operate with the principles of God's revealed grace in our Lord Jesus Christ. When it comes to morality for the Christian, it is all summed up in the metaphor spoken by Christ: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit."

In place of the relativity to be found as the basis of humanistic psychology, we have those solid standards our Lord has given us which stand to eternity. We have no need to clarify some vague feeling of morality that may be half-formed in us. We have access to that high and firm standard which our God has given us.

When it comes to the autonomy which the psychological humanist advocates, the Christian educator can gratefully respond that he has no desire to be autonomous. He wants to acknowledge the headship of his heavenly Father who is the ruler over all—that same heavenly Father who has blessed him with the Savior.

How wonderful, then, are all those Christian values in comparison to the wilderness of secular humanism—those wonderful old traditional Christian and Lutheran concepts which we may have been taking for granted:

> *Justification*—Declared just, forgiven for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ without any merit or worthiness in us. Yes, justified by a loving God, rather than standing naked before the forces of an unfeeling universe.
> *Faith*—The precious redemption made one's own for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ without any merit or worthiness in us. A God, a loving God, to trust and rely upon, rather than having to make our way on our own.

The Holy Christian Church—Not alone, but sharing that God, that
Savior, that faith, that view of life, that hope of heaven.

And also back to that dear old Law and Gospel. Above all, the Gospel with its sweet reassuring news. That Gospel which makes us one with our Savior as a branch in Him, the Vine. And happy also with the Law, which we need, and which indicates to us the direction to grow as branches in the Vine.

Then, too, we are blessed over and over again in the privilege to have that faith nourished day in and day out through the strengthening grace coming to us richly and freely in the Gospel and Sacrament. What a springboard for a life of morality! And what a privilege for us as Christian teachers to lead His youth toward that moral life He wants for them all. What a night and day contrast with what the secular humanists would have us do!

Oh, we do well to approach the task of moral training as Christian realists. Along with the new man in us and in our students there is also a large measure of the old Adam. Thus it will be all throughout our training days, whether we are training the youth the Lord has entrusted to us or whether we are training ourselves. Nonetheless, we keep before us the goal which our Savior himself set before his followers: "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. 5:48) Our goal is to set our sights and those of our children on that moral perfection, although as Christian realists we know that neither we nor they can fully achieve it. We do strive to have our children and we become "thoroughly equipped for every good work" as Paul urges Timothy. (II Tim. 3:16) As Paul also reminds Titus, we seek to aid our youth "to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:12-13)

In our training, too, we must always seek to frame moral decisions within the scope of Christian faith and love. Indeed, to do anything less would be moralizing. Simply put, moralizing is the inculcation of desirable behavior without any relationship to Christ. In other words, we try to grow a branch which has been cut off from the Vine. Christian morality is present when—and only when—the branch is growing from the Vine, when actions flow from sincere faith.

It is here especially that the Moral Majority goes astray. Our call as Christian educators is to impart the full Christian morality of the Bible. This is the "Vine and branches" morality. It is much more than facing up to an occasional issue such as sex education or abortion. It is the on-going life-in-Christ of the Christian as he experiences it day in and day out.

The Moral Majority can't provide that. Indeed, Jerry Falwell does not even claim to do that. Rather, he insists that the Gospel and the Moral Majority are separate and distinct entities. He wears his "gospel hat" as he preaches on the "Old Time Gospel Hour" and as he works with his Baptist church in Lynchburg, Virginia. Then he neatly removes it and puts on his "civic hat" when he serves as president of the Moral Majority. On the other hand, he claims that his platform for the Moral Majority involves only several basic issues: "Prolife, protraditional family, promoral, under which we have opposed the illegal drug traffic and pornography, and we are proAmerican, which means strong national defense and the state of Israel."[xxxi]

With that he suggests that the two hats can be worn and not become confused. But he is wrong. He advocates a pro-Israel stance because he sees the Jews still as God's special people. He suggests his efforts at raising the moral tone of America could well be a prelude to the Rapture which will introduce the millennium on earth. No, we cannot feel free to join hands with Jerry Falwell. His politics is mixed up with false religious beliefs and vice versa. What comes from him is a new form of the old social gospel. Although it surely contains civic righteousness,

it just as surely does not have the Gospel nor the law as God would have it. Nor, as a consequence does it have the full-fledged morality which is only possible through faith in Christ.

But we also need to react to the appeals to morality coming out of secular humanism. A common thread running through these approaches is that they also limit their focus to a few key moral questions. Then they try to answer them in an intellectual, rational way. Our approach as Christians is basically not through reason, but through faith. If the question has not already been directly answered in the Bible, the Christian will find his way on the basis of sound principles based on the Bible. The young woman thinking about an abortion and noting the 60-40 chance of a mongoloid child will first consider faith. That is, she will remember that she has a Lord who lovingly guides her life and that of her husband. Then she will consider love—her love for that person whose life the Lord has now created.

But that still leaves us with a big question regarding methodology. Do we dare make use of approaches coming out of man-centered philosophies? We need to know that there are strong dangers if we do. There is the danger that as we work with methods generated by these man-centered philosophies, we might also imbibe the philosophy along with the method. If "freely choosing" is an essential element to clarify values, then we will be tearing down the foundation for Christian morality. Similarly, role-playing may be quite innocent and indeed may help gain insights to problems. But by playing the devil's advocate we may end up imbibing the devil's own thinking—much to our harm. To do a good job of role-playing the position of a Mormon may make our youth more than sympathetic to it; they could become susceptible to it.

Nonetheless these methodologies can also be utilized with great potential benefit, as long as they are used with care and insight. The method of values clarification is basically a multiple choice approach to evaluating situations containing moral dimensions. Instructors long have used multiple choice questions on religion exams. If we use genuine Scriptural principles as we judge options, we will not be guilty of moral relativity, the basic problem with values clarification. We will then be allowing Scripture to serve as the standard by which we pick and choose our way through life's knotty problems. It is well to note that values clarification frequently utilizes extreme situations, such as the abortion problem faced by the young woman.

Some of these situations are quite rare, fortunately, and for that reason do not pose a typical dilemma for adolescents. Furthermore, we do well not to fuel the imagination of immature minds. But, we probably could well pose situations which normally do confront our youth, such as temptations involving stealing, cheating, drugs, alcohol, and the like.

In a similar vein, Kohlberg's levels of moral development may prove a helpful aid. As Christian educators we might well disagree with him that young people are incapable of deciding moral questions on the basis of universal standards. Our standards are those which are to be found in the Gospel. Like the Apostle Paul on Mars Hill, we can proclaim to Kohlberg and others like him that those universal standards they are seeking have been found; they are present in the Gospel of Christ. They are found in the principles for our very 'living and being: the branches grafted in the Vine. These are the principles of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; these are the principles of Christ-like "love to our fellowman; and these are the principles of finding answers to many specific questions in that Word which He has given us. Long before they achieve adulthood, children can apply these principles in practical situations. Using moral insights from "Stage 6", we may ask our students such questions as these: Would you feel comfortable to have your Savior stand a your side as you steal answers from the student across the aisle? Do you want your Savior at your side as you buy five ounces of pot?

We can possibly gain some insights from Kohlberg's observations that answers to moral questions will be influenced by certain factors at certain levels of development. If peer pressure becomes a key factor in preadolescence, we will keep peer pressure in mind as we counsel with preadolescents. Such sensitivity will aid us in helping them through difficult situations.

The same approach even holds true for behavioral approaches, even though we do not see our children as machines to be manipulated as do the behaviorists do. We will reject their "plastic man" approach to pupil development, but as we work with our youth, we can employ strategies and insights which behaviorists have defined with precision.

In summary, employment of these methods does lie in the area of adiaphora. Not that it doesn't make an difference whether we do or do not employ them. Rather, as in the case of meat offered to idols, the Scripture itself does not speak an overriding yes or no for all circumstances. Rather we are to examine the case in terms of the circumstances and then apply the proper Scriptural principles. Thus we will not employ such methods in situations in which man-centered philosophy inevitably is taught through them. On the other hand, we risk dangers if we don't employ them as appropriate. Lessons in Christian living profit from techniques which make situations come alive. Role-playing, for example, may enliven some drowsy heads in our classes and provide a real aid in the communication process.

One technique in behavior modification is not optional; it is mandatory. We have in mind the role of the teacher as model. Actually, the terminology is merely a recent name for a method as old as teaching. Jesus, the Master Teacher, was and is the Master Model. What kind of models are we as we appear before our students? Do we provide examples which our youngsters will observe and emulate? Or do our lives say something which contradicts our words? We need to be the genuine people we are in Christ, those Vine-engrafted branches. We will then be models who of necessity reveal sound faith in the thousands of situations in which the youngsters observe their teachers day after day.

As redeemed Children of God we enjoy the privilege of membership in God's kingdom. As his called servants we are also given the high privilege of working with his young children. A large part of that work is educating for Christian living. We are doubly blessed—both in our calling to grace and in our calling to work. In both roles he has given us the tools we need: the Law and Gospel with the Spirit working through them. Difficult work it can be, however, as we seek to apply properly both the Law and the Gospel. But what wonderful tools they are! They are the only adequate ones available for Christian educators living in a secular society.

Essay Outline

Educating For Christian Living In A Humanistic Age

Introduction: Recent emphasis on morality
      1. The verbal bloodletting
      2. The Christian teacher's stance
      3. An example as backdrop: nine scenarios
I. Humanistic influences in American moral education
  A. Secular humanism's imprint on values
      1. Basic tenets
          Man-centered, reliance on reason, essential goodness,
          ethical concern, faith in man

2. Resulting alternatives for moral values

   Self-realization, survival, expediency, greatest happiness, conditioning, cultural relativism, love, sentiment, justice

3. Significant related movements in educational psychology

   Freudian, Behavioral, Third Force (Humanistic)

   B. Key secular approaches to moral standards
      1. Humanistic Psychology (Third Force) and Values Clarification (see reverse side)
      2. Humanistic Psychology and Moral Development Theory (see reverse side)
      3. Behavioral Psychology and Behavior Modification

II. The Christian teacher in reaction and action

   A. The New Religious Right: attempts toward the moral society
      1. An active social thrust
      2. Distortions: humanism, humane, and the humanities
      3. Meeting the needs of both church and society
   B. The ingrafted Christian: morality's finest hour
      1. The only sound basis
      2. Proper use of Law and Gospel
   C. The methodology question

Concluding Comments: Leader and model in Christian living

Wisconsin State Teachers' Conference
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
October 29, 1981

Values Clarification: The Process

   Choosing: 1) freely, 2) from alternatives, and 3) after thoughtful consideration the consequences of each alternative.
   Prizing: 4) cherishing, being happy with the choice, 5) willing to affirm the choice publicly.
   Acting: 6) doing something with the choice 7) repeatedly in some pattern of life.

Moral Development Stages (Kohlberg)
Preconventional Level
   Stage 1: Punishment and obedience orientation
   Stage 2: "Pleasing others" orientation
Conventional Level
   Stage 3: Peer group orientation
   Stage 4: "Law and order" orientation
Post-Conventional Level
   Stage 5: Social contract orientation
   Stage 6: Universal ethical principle orientation

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