

"NEW MORALITY" AND "FOLLOWING CONSCIENCE"

Two phrases very much in vogue -- frequently used in the same frame of reference -- are "the new morality" and "following one's conscience."

"New morality" is obviously distinguished from "old morality". To be more concrete the old morality is sometimes called Victorian morality, and sometimes even Catholic morality. Thus Victorian and Catholic become synonymous when used as adjectives to describe the old morality as opposed to the new. This is the vogue.

First of all, in the context in which "new morality" is used (sex morality, of course) it really isn't new at all. It generally connotes a mode of conduct as new as ancient Babylon, as Sodom and Gomorrah, as decadent Rome, as the seventeenth century French court and the period of the Restoration in England.

To the present-day users of the term "new morality" the age of Victoria may be as remote as the origins of the Catholic Church -- hence their confusion in making the terms synonymous. The more enlightened, however, know that the Victorian age is roughly the nineteenth century. The silly prudishness of the age, which called legs, limbs; the breast of fowl, white meat (breast was a nasty word); and put pantaloons on table and piano legs, was the extreme reaction of an age under the leadership of a girl queen (in her early years, at least) against the profligacy of her royal uncles and even her father before he dutifully produced a legitimate heir, Victoria, for the throne of England. The Church has never applauded such superficial Victorian standards of respectability, much less confused them with true morality. On the contrary, the Church has always been the champion of human dignity, combatting every aberration which would equate men with angels and make matter (and hence the body) evil. Manicheanism, Albigensianism, Jansenism were all heresies denounced by the Church because they lacked a proper reverence for God-created matter.

So there is no relation between silly Victorian moral standards and reverent Catholic morality. Nor is Catholic morality out-dated. It's the "new morality" which is old hat, the "new" being just a trick of the devil to ensnare moderns into loose moral standards.

As for "following one's conscience." This, too, is not a new idea. Catholic moralists for centuries have advocated it, encouraged it, even demanded it. As some are using the phrase today, how-

ever, it has become equivalent to subjective morality. "My conscience justifies certain sex intimacies which modern social custom sanctions on dates; other more intimate intimacies when I become engaged; the use of contraceptives when I am married," -- the teaching of Catholic moralists, and even the teaching authority of the Church notwithstanding.

Most of these Catholics who confuse following one's conscience with subjective morality have forgotten, or overlooked, a prior obligation to following the conscience. That is the obligation of forming a right conscience. And for most Catholics, this forming of a right conscience is done with the aid and guidance of the teaching magisterium of the Church. Because I don't like a particular teaching of the Church, because the modern pagan world calls Christian morality out-moded, even because some prominent Catholic theologian sets forth a theory which seems to go contrary to the traditional teaching of the Church -- none of these are sufficient basis for forming a conscience. This is done only by sincere -- and often profound -- investigation. And it takes some extremely weighty personal reasons (to say the least) to counterbalance the overwhelming conclusions of Catholic moralists or the authoritative statements of the Popes.

Recently Cardinal Alfrink, Archbishop of Utrecht, re-issued a statement on marriage made by the Dutch hierarchy last August. He re-issued it because of misunderstandings which had arisen. The Dutch bishops -- certainly not aligned with the conservatives -- have said:

"Everyone realizes that the bishops are deeply concerned about the current problems in marriage. Clergy and faithful alike are waiting for us to give clear answers to those questions which are troubling the consciences of many.

"In moral questions, a decision eventually has to be made by a man according to his own conscience. But conscience must be guided in each decision by the law of God. The interpretation of the Divine Law is given to her children by the Church."

"At the very time when so many new views on man, on the meaning of life, the purpose of sex and the notion of love in marriage are being expressed, there has been a remarkable development in biological and biochemical means of regulating and limiting human fertility. The Church is now confronted with questions which arise from conditions which are continually changing. It is impossible to provide one ready-made solution for every problem in this rapidly evolving situation.

"The new contraceptive pill now being advertised

can be no more acceptable as the answer to the problem of married people than the contraceptive instruments hitherto in use. But moral theologians are discussing whether there are any special circumstances in which the use of these pills can be justified."

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URGENT APPEALS TO YOUR CHRISTIAN CHARITY

BLOOD DONORS NEEDED -- A special appeal has been directed to Notre Dame students for 19 units of blood for the father of a family. The man is not a member of the Notre Dame family but even if he were, the supply of blood on deposit would barely be sufficient to meet his needs. For this special case there surely must be 19 Notre Dame students charitably disposed to give a pint of blood. Volunteers in excess of 19 will provide the Notre Dame Blood Bank with extra units to meet demands during the summer.

Call -- in person (117 Dillon) or by phone (7032) -- for an appointment to donate a pint of blood. If you are under 21, you need parental permission. Permission slips are supplied by the University Chaplain.

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SPECIAL PRAYERS -- For Callisto Madavo, a long way from his home in Southern Rhodesia, confined to Healthwin Sanatorium (turn left off U.S. 31 at Christ the King corner) with tuberculosis. He will be there at least six months. Besides prayers he will appreciate reading material. (He likes mystery stories.)

For missionaries in one of the Holy Cross missions. The situation is critical for the Church and dangerous for the missionaries.

HELP WEEK VOLUNTEERS -- One hundred men are needed this weekend to guarantee the success of HELP WEEK sponsored again this year by the Blue Circle. If you are free between 1:15 and 4:30 on Saturday, April 25, get in touch with the representative whose name is printed on the Help Week poster on your hall bulletin board. Busses will pick up the volunteers at the circle at 1:15 on Saturday to take the work crews downtown to help with spring cleaning at places like the Day Nursery and the Northern Indiana Home for Children. You qualify as a volunteer: if you have some clothes to work in; if you have the ability to do a little physical labor; if you have the spark of Christian charity. Don't wait to volunteer; you might forget.

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PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED -- father of John Pagel of Badin; mother of Bishop Bernard J. Topel, '38, of Spokane; grandmother of Jim Fagan of Howard; grandmother of Terrence Coffee of Farley; grandmother of Thomas Anderson of Farley; Rhody Shiel of Purdue; Earl Rauen, '50; wife of Robert Mohlman, '28; Thomas Cholis, '34; Martin B. Daly, '26; father of Robert F. Joyce, '53.

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK -- father of Tony Perez of Howard; Father James Moran and Father Arthur Hope, C.S.C.

Fresh from the Pad.....

WHAT KIND OF FRIEND AM I?

In a gripe session when nothing good can be found in the University there is always one bright spot: "The fellows are great." The restlessness you feel every August about getting back to school is not so much a yearning for the place as a genuine homesickness for the fellows. Your friendships are among the greatest values of these years. But are your friendships really deep? Are you truly interested?

If you can passively watch friends being mangled, distorted and crippled in their Christ-life do you really care? How often have you gleefully contributed or remained an uninvolved observer while the dignity of your friend as a Christ-bearer was abused and even shattered by filthy stories? How many times have you see obscene magazines and smutty novels circulated among your friends or been in a group when juicy sections of this rot were read aloud and you couldn't care less how the Christ-life in your friends was polluted? Yet you still vehemently protest your undying friendship: "I'd do anything for the guys."

Except for a small number of students who see their friends as Brothers in Christ the rest of the student body fits into one of the following groups:

1. This group is so wrapped up in the incessant search for pleasure and comfort that in reality their life is completely dominated by materialistic values. Their sensitivity towards their friends extends to whether he is a super stud, a mover, a nice guy, a teller of good stories, and likes the same things they do. They are completely insensitive to his dignity as a Christian. The Christ-life in their friend literally never enters their cramped mentality. Their friend might be a Catholic because he hits Sunday Mass, but in bermuda shorts walking the sidewalks, sitting in a bull session, or drinking a coke in the Huddle he is not really a living member and brother of Christ. The fellows in this group don't set out to kill the Christ-life in their friends; they aren't even aware of it. It's a value that's just never considered.

2. Those in this group are committed to the Christian life but not committed enough to care for the Christian life of their friends. They know that saving their souls is important, and they work at it. They make sure they remain unpolluted, but they can't take a chance of missing heaven by being concerned about the Christ-life in their friends. Friends are important, but they can go to hell-in-a-hand-bag if friendship demands Christian charity. Somehow, fellows in this group are afraid they will lose their friends if they become concerned about their Christian life.

Can you really care for someone and remain insensitive while their Christ-life is mangled, crippled, and killed?

--Father Baker, C.S.C.