

Like a lot of other family conservative Americans, I am somewhat confused by this incessant bashing of the "Christian Right" by Democrats and liberals, some of whom see it as the greatest menace to the country since the communist conspiracy of the 1950s. For I wonder if I, who might be described as a traditional, con-

sider just a few changes. It is now okay to distribute condoms in public schools, but not to read the Bible. The four-letter f-word is not so bad any more, especially if it is used creatively, but the three-letter G-word has become forbidden. Sex apparently has become the most popular extracur-

ricular activity. It is now okay to insure the tuna harvest does not involve the destruction of dolphins. Abuse, child and spousal, has become a national epidemic. And violence and homicide are so prevalent that the odds of young black men living to maturity are depressingly low. They are casual-

ties. The agents of political correctness try to make us feel like bigots because, while we might accept homosexuals, we have a problem with the doctrine that makes sodomy the spiritual equivalent of marital sex. And feel guilty because we might object to an aide of Louis Farrakhan spewing out

"Religious Right." One would think this were some insidious force determined to destroy our country, rather than a sane one trying desperately to salvage what is left of it. Reprinted with permission of the Peoria Journal Star.

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Can Virtue Be Restored In America?



By Haven Bradford Gow

In 1960 in the United States, violent crime happened at the rate of 16 per 10,000; today, though, the rate is 75 per 10,000. In 1972, the teen pregnancy rate was 49 per 1,000; in 1990, though, the figure increased to 99 per 1,000. In 1960, 5 percent of all births were to unmarried women, but by 1990 the figure had increased to 28 percent. In his book *Prayer of the Warrior* (Faith Publishing Co., Milford, Ohio), journalist Michael Brown points out that "By the time they are 20, three-quarters of

young Americans have had sex, and each year a quarter of all teens contract some form of venereal disease. . . . Among sexually active teenage girls, 61 percent have had multiple partners, up from 38 percent in 1971."

Increasing numbers of scholars, social critics, and moral and religious people are beginning to discern that this nation is faced with a moral and spiritual crisis that threatens to destroy America from within. For example, Rev. Donald Gum, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, tells us that "The root cause of violence is spiritual depravity. We need to bypass all of the rhetoric about racism and gun control and get to the very heart of the matter . . . (The increase of violence results) from a denial of God. It is rooted in unbelief, as this is the original sin and the root of all sin (and violence)."

HODDING Carter III, a columnist-social critic in Washington, D.C., states that "There is today a growing mass of opinion in America that, in fact, we do face a national crisis of epic proportions. Its forerunner was a society-wide erosion of civic faith. . . . Its deadly companion is a social disintegration which an-

nounces itself in everything from the tidal wave of illegitimacy to the numbing repetition of casually violent crime."

Pete duPont, ex-governor of Delaware, is concerned about "the confusion and moral decay . . . in America, where society is fed a steady diet of moral relativism and agnosticism from a young age." Mr. duPont is alarmed that government officials and judges have succeeded in extirpating the influence of religion from public life: "An invocation before a public school graduation is forbidden. A federal judge in Denver orders the mayor to issue a press release denying the involvement of his office in the city's day of prayer against youth violence. A school principal in Mississippi is fired (and later reinstated) for allowing a student to read a morning prayer over the school's public address system . . . These are not sensible expressions of the separation of church and state; they are attacks on the role of spiritual belief in American life."

EX-SUPERINTENDENT of the Chicago Police Department LeRoy Martin shares the concern about the decay of morality in America; he says that the disintegration of moral standards has led

to the increase of violence: "So much of what's outside has contributed to the . . . callousness (that so many in our society) have for human life."

Mahatma Gandhi once observed that seven factors contribute to the moral and spiritual decline; these seven factors are: Wealth without work; knowledge without character; commerce without morality; science without humanity; worship without sacrifice; and politics without principle.

Lee Kuan Yew, the president of Singapore, echoes Mahatma Gandhi's observations. He declares, "Man needs a certain moral sense of right and wrong. There is such a thing as evil and it is not the result of being a victim of society. You are just an evil man, prone to do evil things, and you have to be stopped from doing them."

IN HIS contribution to *The Loss of Virtue* (Social Affairs Unit, National Review, 150 E. 35th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016), Dr. Adrian Frunham, professor of psychology at Pembroke College, Oxford, England, says moral and spiritual disorder emanates from our society's narcissistic preoccupation with self-centered happiness; a new value system based upon hedonism and

selfishness has replaced the old value system which emphasized decency, civility and the cultivation of virtue and good character.

Dr. Robert Grant, a former teacher of English Literature at the University of Cambridge in England, tells us in his contribution to *The Loss of Virtue* that popular culture — popular TV programs and movies, popular literature and publications — has contributed to our society's moral and cultural degeneration. Popular culture, he contends, is "a continuous soap opera, whose characters are half-real, half-fictional, and more imbecile than genuinely depraved. Its heroes are not exemplars of piety, courage, skill, artistry, dedication, charity, ingenuity, enterprise or other virtues, but more or less total nonentities who, at no cost to themselves, and with the reward of additional publicity, espouse the latest ephemeral cause. . . . Its villains die by alcohol or 'hard' drugs (death by promiscuous sodomy, however, is for some reason a badge of heroism) . . . Trust and honesty are barely intelligible . . ."

IN OTHER words, in today's culture, we make heroes and hero-

We would like to explore the possibility of entering into a collaboration with you.

ter in our parish and resource centers such as yours are a tremendous help to us.

As a former Peorian, I am very

world that is in love with death.

I've enclosed a copy of *Having Your Baby When Others Say No!* which I hope you will be able to

loan at the Family Resources Center. Her other books will also be available as soon as they are published.

Can Virtue Be Restored?

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ines of people like Hugh Hefner and Madonna, rather than genuine heroes and heroines like St. Thomas More, St. Clare and the Virgin Mary.

In his book *Warning: Nonsense Is Destroying America* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee), social critic Vincent Ryan Ruggiero insists that our moral and spiritual disorder emanates from the denial of personal responsibility and the repudiation of objective moral standards: "The tendency to absolve individuals of responsibility for their actions, blaming instead some nebulous villain, such as an inherent predisposition to antisocial behavior or dysfunctional family life, is but a reflection of the relativist's refusal to make honest, meaningful moral judgments. Holding individuals accountable for their offenses suggests that people are not animals acting on instinct or blind rage, but moral agents who can choose to behave well if they wish. This idea is anathema to relativists because it implies an objective standard of morality binding on all human beings regardless of their station in life, educational background, personal desires, or fantasies."

SISTER M. Alfonsa Pucci, a social critic and member of the Sisters of St. Charles in Melrose Park, Illinois, observes: "God's name cannot be used at convocations in graduation exercises in

some schools. Prayer in public school cannot be said because the U.S. Supreme Court declared that unconstitutional. This nation is in a decadent state; it is frightening to think what will happen if something is not done to bring God back into home, government and school. Prayer in school has been substituted by drugs, guns and condoms."

Clearly, America is in a state of moral and spiritual disorder. America's moral and spiritual crisis consists not simply in the widespread transgression but also in the repudiation of extrapersonal and extra-legal moral standards.

IT IS one thing to engage in envy, stealing, slander, adultery, rape, racial and religious bigotry and murder, but it is a wholly different matter to contend that the Decalogue should have nothing to say regarding such activities. It is one thing to abort an innocent unborn child, which in itself is alarming and immoral enough, but when there is an attempt to condone such conduct by denying that a right to life exists superior to our desires for personal or economic convenience, when we seek to justify abortion by denigrating the reverence for the sacredness of human life, then this is a wholly different matter.

Certainly, then, America's moral and spiritual crisis can be dealt with only through a resuscitation of human spirit and the renewal of religious faith and commitment.

"Sometimes, when the events of life are complicated, discerning God's will becomes difficult. But a family that prays will never forget its basic vocation—that of being a great journey of communion."

—Pope John Paul II
February 6, 1994

Open Letter To The Women Walking Into The Abort

By Beth Luteran

I was one of the women outside the abortion clinic you were walking into last Saturday. Although you took the literature I offered, you walked by quickly with your head down, and you shook it when I asked if you wanted to talk. I would like to say now what I would have said then, and to let you know why I was there.

I was not there to trespass on private property. I was not there to harass you or intimidate you. I was not there to block the entrance to the facility so that you could not obtain an abortion. I was not there to judge, to ridicule, or to condemn you. I was there because I know exactly how you feel. I know the fear, the panic, the anxiety of an unplanned pregnancy. I know the excruciatingly painful and agonizing decision of abortion. I know the pressure, the silence, the secrecy. I remember the desperation. I remember hating what I was about to do, but feeling like there was no other choice. I remember signing consent forms that I never read. I remember hearing "procedure," "termination," "cash only." I remember sobbing in my boyfriend's arms. I remember the guilt, the depression, the anger,

the denial. I remember the nightmares: I remember my brokenness of spirit and the loss of mys

I WAS THERE the other to let you know that you are alone. To ask if you know about all of your options, all of your choices. To see if you are aware that there are places that can offer you free financial and medical assistance, housing, career guidance, prenatal care, maternity clothes, baby clothes, parent classes, and adoption counseling. To ask if you are aware of what is happening inside your body. To see if you are educated on the topic of scientific embryonic and fetal development. To find out if you are truly consenting to the abortion or if you are being pressured and coerced by your boyfriend, your parents, your peers. To convince you that you deserve more than violence and destruction as a solution to your problems.

I was also there for you if, like the vast majority, you were there through with the abortion. I was there to let you know that there is hope — and healing — and self-forgiveness. And even if society doesn't validate your pain, it is still real. I was there full of understanding and compassion a

A Story In Need Of A Teller

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tripled the Nazi's totals and we're still counting.

THE GERMAN writer Gerhard Schoenberger said, "We do not escape the past by thrusting it to the back of our minds. Only if we come to terms with it and understand the lessons of those years can we free ourselves of the legacy of Hitlerite barbarism."

"Never again!" No, sadly, again and again. The lesson of Nazi evil must extend beyond the scope of modern facism. We will not see what we must see until we find in

the faces of the victims of the Nazis the faceless victims of abortion. The aborted unborn are direct descendants in human suffering of the Nazi Holocaust victims. They also die because we do not recognize their humanity. *Schindler's List* made us face our propensity to do evil, but it did not end the evil it portrayed. Steven Spielberg could surpass his accomplishment of *Schindler's List* if he could turn a social away from the kind of evil he obviously deplors.

The death toll mounts. Light camera, action!