

Dialogue I: Christians in Non-Christian Arenas

How Christian Character Education Can Help Overcome the Failure of Secular Ethics Education

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Lantos gives an historical overview of ethics education, discusses the current renewed emphasis on character education and virtues, and offers suggestions for how Christian educators can integrate this renewed emphasis with a Christian worldview in both Christian and non-Christian institutions.

Introduction to the Problem

In the wake of much-publicized acts of depravity, from high school shootings to teenage cyberterrorism, people know that something is amiss in American secondary schools and institutions of higher learning. A 1980s Gallup poll showed that Americans want two things to happen in their schools:

- 1) students learn the “3 R’s,” and
- 2) students develop a reliable sense of right and wrong (Bennett, 1987, p. 10).

Unfortunately, educators who have been busily trying to rectify the situation are looking for help in all the wrong places. The problem is that society is attempting to instill ethics without religion and, until recently, without moral values.

The renewed emphasis on character education and virtues, however, is an encouraging beginning that I shall describe and integrate with a Christian worldview. I will offer suggestions for Christian educators in both Christian and non-Christian institutions.

An Historical Overview of Ethics Education *Old-Fashioned Character Education*

For thousands of years, civilizations ranging from the Chinese, Egyptians, and Greeks have considered education as the means to make students both smart and good (Hill, 1997A, p. 3). Modeled after Plato’s academy, Western education has since promoted wisdom and

virtue. Most children in 19th century America learned their ABCs from McGuffey Readers, which also taught morality, replete with stories of honesty, self-reliance, and courage. The readers also discussed right and wrong *from God's viewpoint* and included prayers and Bible readings.

Over the years, families and schools have also used classic children's literature to teach *virtues*—fundamental traits of character. Through the power of imagination, readers vicariously participated in a story, sharing the hero's choices and challenges, and identifying with favorite characters, thereby adopting their actions (Bennett, 1987, p. 10).¹

Until approximately 1935, U.S. citizens commonly believed that schools and universities should provide their students not only scholastic knowledge and skills, but also moral guidance, a sense of right and wrong, and sound character (Lamm, 1986, p. 35). Plato believed that “education makes good men and that good men act nobly” (Plato, 360 B.C.). Thomas Jefferson deemed that “well-directed education improves the morals, enlarges the mind ...” (Jefferson, 1818-1819). John Locke observed, “’Tis virtue that we aim

at, hard virtue” (Bennett, 1987, p. 10). In a letter to his son Kermit, praising the boy's interest in playing football at school, President Teddy Roosevelt wrote, “I would rather have a boy of mine stand high in his studies than high in athletics, but I would a great deal rather have him show true manliness of character than show either intellectual or physical prowess” (Roosevelt, 1919). In the 1980s, Cornell President H.T. Rhodes observed, “Without acknowledgment of the moral dimensions of our world we risk creating informed cynics who know the price of everything and the value of nothing” (Wiley, 1987, p. 3).

According to Boston College Professor of Education William Kilpatrick, prior to the 1960s morality was taught through exhortation; assumptions about how students should behave; and discipline, dress codes, and school spirit. The emphasis was not on taking a stand on an issue but rather on building good *habits* of behavior (McCabe, 1992, p. 32). Morality was not abstract *head* knowledge (discussed later in the “Platonic Integrated Model of the Moral Agent”), but was wired into students through habit and practice (*heart* knowledge, will or volition in the Platonic

Model). Morality thus taught was known as *character education*—not just a curriculum or course but an entire way of life.

Twentieth Century Retreat from Moral Education

Years ago colleges acted *in loco parentis* (in the stead of mom and dad) (Sanoff, 1984, pp. 69-70). Professors felt tasked to impart the essentials of Western tradition (Sanoff, 1984, p. 69), including Judeo-Christian values (Brownfeld, 1987, pp. 14-15). However, by the early 20th century, schools began to lose their comfort with moral indoctrination and instead shifted the emphasis to careerism and professional education (knowledge and skills), concerned more with credentialing students for future jobs (how to earn a living) than in providing an education in how best to live life (wisdom) (Brownfeld, 1987, p. 14). Gradually, literature was replaced by computer science, and education was edged out by business math, as training in the physical sciences and in utilitarian/pre-professional disciplines and skills began to replace humane schooling (Brownfeld, 1987, p. 15). Acquiring values and a

meaningful philosophy of life became antiquated, as fewer professors possessed a commitment to traditional values. By the mid-1970s, character development and traditional moral education had all but disappeared. As Eagle Forum VP Tottie Ellis noted: “Our emphasis on career education has taught us to take care of business; somewhere in this process we forgot to take care of our souls. Consequently, we have been witness to episode after episode of major figures in industry caught in Faustian struggles for their soul” (Ellis, 1987, p. 10A).

During the 20th century until the mid-70s there was little study of values or ethics for three reasons (Hill, 1997A, p. 3). First was the philosophy of *positivism*, which distinguishes between facts (objectively verifiable) and feelings (subjective and viewed as lacking value) (Hill, 1997A). Thus, only objective, “scientific” inquiry was respectable (*U.S. News and World Report*, 1983, p. 83). Values were not subjected to rigorous scholarship, since moral issues are soft and not scientifically verifiable. Instead, morality was viewed as limited to the realm of feelings, intuition, personal

opinions, experience, and other nonverifiable dimensions (*U.S News and World Report*, 1983, p. 83). Hence, morality, ethics, and theology became less respected in the academic community, resulting in agnostic conclusions in both ethics and theology (often rechristened “religious studies”). As author Allan Bloom noted in *The Closing of the American Mind*, educators believed that there is no firm rational basis for distinguishing between right and wrong (Podhoretz, 1987, p. 5).

Second was a rise in *personalism*, emphasizing personal autonomy and subjective judgment, ending up with no moral

consensus because “what is right for one person might be wrong for another” (Hill, 1997A, p. 3). The thinking was that we dare not “impose” our values and norms on others.

Third was *pluralism*, a fragmentation of a common definition of “the good” and lack of agreement on common moral values (Hill, 1997A, p. 4). As pluralism rose in America, it became harder to agree on what constitutes good behavior.

Moral education, it was therefore argued, was best left to the individual child’s family and religious institutions.

Late 20th Century Renewal of Ethics Education

Several factors swung the pendulum toward ethics and morality during the 1970s. First was the growing recognition that help was needed by the weakening social institutions of religious organizations and families. Competing with them for moral authority were peers and the mass media, often leading young people in troubling directions. In the race for a balancing influence, schools,

where children were spending more time, became necessary partners with parents, with

whom children were spending less time.

In the latter quarter of the 20th century, schools went from benign neglect or fearful avoidance of moral education into three somewhat sequential movements: 1) *affective* approaches, such as *values clarification* and *self-esteem building*, 2) *moral decision-*

making, and 3) *character education* (Johnson, 1999, p. 1). The first two movements were used in applied ethics programs.

Affective Approaches: Values Clarification and Self-Esteem Building

Starting in the early ’70s, “values clarification” programs (aka “values education” and “cognitive moral development”) turned up in American schools (grades 1 to 12) (*USA Today*, 1987, p. 10A). This philosophy alleged that schools should not transmit moral values; rather, they should allow a child to “clarify” his or her own values. Values clarification stressed individual self-reflection on values over the promotion of any specific values. Professional educators and administrators promoted “value-neutral,” “value-free,” “nondirective,” “nonjudgmental” education (Feder, 1986, p. 9; McCabe, 1992, p. 32).

“Do not ‘moralize,’ ‘sermonize,’ or ‘preach,’” educators were warned, because administrators feared that this would offend students. (Romans 1:18-32 seems to suggest that the natural man does not want to hear about sin and judgment.) Also, events of the ’60s and ’70s, such

as the assassinations of the Kennedys and Martin Luther King, the Vietnam War, the drug problem, student unrest, and Watergate, caused doubt that the culture survives and thrives through time-tested moral values. People believed that we were transmitting outdated, “old-fashioned” values and instead should start anew and let the young decide what their “own” values would be.

Thus, whereas once instructors were to transmit cultural norms and ideals, now they were strictly admonished not to let these “interfere” with the process whereby students could develop their own value systems. The ultimate decision on what was right or wrong was left up to the student—value-neutral educators merely facilitated discussions. The process was “nonjudgmental”—no behavior was deemed right or wrong. Students were free to break rules they disagreed with, and so instructors could not tell students what to do; they could only help them explore their feelings through classroom discussion, dialogues, and games.

Unfortunately, the values clarification movement did not clarify values; it clarified wants

and preferences. Educators realized that there are, indeed, some choices we should not want kids to feel good about. While disdaining “indoctrination,” educators still became downright imperialistic about academic honesty, respect for self and others, and violence-free schools. American public schools thus realized they could not afford to be value-neutral, thereby churning out what Boston College Professor of Education William Kilpatrick called “morally illiterate” students (McCabe, 1992, p. 32).

Another *affective* (but not so effective) approach was *self-esteem building*. Humanistic educators hoped that natural goodness would follow from a stronger sense of and appreciation for self and others, but it did not. This thinking flowed from the 18th-century French philosopher Condorcet, who wrote glowingly of “the indefinite perfectibility of the human race” (Colson, 2002). In fact, among the greatest puzzles faced in self-esteem research is that chronic criminal offenders tend to have high self-esteem (produced from pride in antisocial accomplishments), whereas many of the most altruistic and productive members

of society show low self-esteem (Johnson, 1999, p. 3).

Moral Decision-Making

The *moral decision-making* approach, also begun in the '70s, concentrated on the study of ethical principles and their application to controversial issues such as euthanasia or capital punishment. Moral decision-making assumed children would figure out the ethical principles for themselves and generalize these principles to their everyday moral mazes. However, the problems were rarely situated in the children’s own lives, and they had trouble applying the abstract principles to everyday living (Johnson, 1999, p. 3). Consequently, they still favored self-gratification and substituted self-indulgence for personal responsibility and self-restraint.

Both affective approaches indoctrinated students into *relativism*—the idea that all values are equal and no one can say what is right or wrong. Students became moral agnostics who believe 1) there are no moral truths, just good or bad judgments, 2) all moral questions have at least two sides and all of ethics is controversial, and 3) there is no solid foundation for

ethical decision-making (Trunfio, 1993, p. 155).

Applied Ethics in Higher Education

In conjunction with the values clarification and moral decision-making movements, “applied ethics” became fashionable in college and university courses in disciplines as diverse as law, medicine, psychology, engineering, economics, and business (Feder, 1986, p. 9). In part as a response to AACSB standards encouraging increased attention to issues of social responsibility in business (Dupree, 1993, p. 126) and the eventual mandating of coverage of global and ethical issues, business textbooks in the 1980s expanded coverage of social responsibility to include discussions of ethics. Stand-alone courses in business ethics mushroomed, usually taught by either business or philosophy professors, and focused on having students come to grips with significant moral dilemmas. Today business schools are having the most lively ethics debates since ancient Greece.

There are some general warnings that are taken by most teachers of applied ethics courses (Ferrell & Fraedrich, 2000,

pp. xiii-xiv). First, do not moralize, telling students what is right or wrong in a particular situation. Second, do not prescribe any one moral philosophy or moral reasoning process as best. Third, do not expect to make students more moral; rather, get them to understand and use their current values in making decisions. Fourth, do not make any value judgments—this would be to “indoctrinate” students.

However, the word “indoctrinate” simply means to impart doctrines (Brownfeld, 1987, p. 15), which is what teaching is all about. It is amazing how we are able to teach basic rules and truths in math, science, and other disciplines, including business, but not in ethics. Thus, while the ethicists solemnly warn us not to tell our students what is right or wrong—this is nihilistic—it teaches that right and wrong are just matters of personal preference (philosophically this is *intuitionism* or *subjective relativism*).

A criticism of this applied ethics approach is that, because it allows students to make up their own minds (unless one denies moral rights and wrongs), they might come to a wrong

conclusion for several reasons. First, students are left with little more guidance than their own momentary feelings and those of their peers, which can be misleading and easily lead one astray. Students end up judging with feelings rather than the intellect, even though ethics education is touted as developing “cognitive moral reasoning skills.” Also, allowing students to make up their own minds could suggest rejecting the teachings of their homes and churches (Colson, October 24, 1991). And, 20-year-olds sometimes need moral guidance because they lack the experience in dealing with moral issues that their elders have.

The entire educational system has by and large failed to create moral people, as evidenced by security systems being added to campuses in reaction to higher levels of violence and by a general consensus that our nation is in moral decline. As the American Society for Ethics in Education stated, “Our schools are filled with bullying, hatred, discrimination, racism, and a plethora of other pernicious and destructive forms of social filth” (“ASEE Condemns Santana High School Violence”).

Representative James Maloney explained:

Our schools offer our young people a “value-free” morally neutral education. Teachers refuse to tell students what is right and what is wrong—rather students are encouraged to decide for themselves. The results are now apparent. Youth in trouble: There are 600,000 drug-addicted children in the United States. Six percent of boys between 16 and 18 carry guns outside the home for “protection.” Twenty-five percent of inner-city school students report carrying a weapon in school, and 44 percent report carrying weapons out of school. By the time a child completes elementary school, she/he will have seen more than 8,000 made-for-TV murders. By the time a student graduates from high school, she/he will have seen more than 80,000 acts of violence on television. While only four percent of inner-city school students report use of hard drugs, 13 percent report either dealing drugs or working for a drug dealer. One percent of graduating high school seniors admit having used illicit drugs by the time they reach their senior year of high school. Youth WITHOUT OBJECTIVE STANDARDS of

truth are: 48 percent more likely to cheat on an exam, two times more likely to get drunk, three times more likely to use illegal drugs, six times more likely to attempt suicide (Maloney, 2002).

Criticisms of Applied Ethics in Higher Education

Situation *ethics* is the dominant approach in higher education today. Today’s scholars and therapists are forever tearing away at the Judeo-Christian values that serve as the foundation for a decent society (Feder, 1986, p. 9).

In effect, they are *practical atheists*, ignoring the fact that God has given us a moral code.

The goal of some modern ethics educators is to free students from everything they have been previously taught so they can develop their own ideas about ethics. Lawrence Kohlberg, pioneer of the ethical dilemma approach, says the situations and cases used for instruction are meant to be so hard “the adult right answer is not obviously at hand” (Colson, 1996). Therefore, students are free to think their own answers. This philosophy is based on Immanuel Kant’s *autonomous*

self-concept—the inner self should be absolutely free and self-governing (Colson, 1996). Thus, secular courses in ethics teach not only relativism; they idolize the human self, suggesting that pupils know best.

Consequently, today’s college students are ethically illiterate. Their professors perpetuate this ignorance because the objective of most ethics educators is aimed towards *knowledge* and intellectual

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gymnastics rather than *action*. Students so trained can be great debaters, but it

is doubtful that they will be ethical when faced with a real-life ethical problem (Whetstone, 1993, p. 108). For instance, the Wharton Business School admits that its ethics project does not guarantee that its graduates will behave ethically. “The intellectual understanding of ethical obligations may not be sufficient to ensure ethical behavior, but it can be an important contributor to that goal” (Foglia, 1993, p. 6). However, educators should also want to achieve *ethical action*. The major difficulty is that, if our goal is to get students to act ethically in life and in professional situations, we must

somehow touch the *heart* as well as the *head* so that they will be *motivated* to behave morally.

As Professor Andrew Sikula notes:

Unfortunately, the more education one receives, often the more self-centered, egotistical, and independent (and the less other-centered, spiritual, and dependent) one becomes. Public universities especially bend over backwards to accept every and any ideology. A separation of church and state mentality, critical thinking, personal choice, liberalism, tolerance, diversity, and academic freedom are the hallmarks of academe. However, such emphases often work against rather than for moral development and ethical consensus which historically was based on traditional values (Sikula, 1996, p. 68).

Character Education/ Values-Based Education

While situation ethics is the dominant approach to moral education, there is a third approach that once prevailed. This perspective holds that whenever possible instructors should help learners to use traditional values in making decisions because there are

indeed often clear-cut answers to moral dilemmas. Through a strong emphasis on the idea of right and wrong and good and evil, instructors can touch the conscience.

This third method, *character education* or *values-based education*, was mandated in grades K through 12 in several states such as Massachusetts and Mississippi beginning in the mid-90s (Hill, 1997A, p. 4). It was a reaction to teen violence, pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, horrifying instances of kids shooting down their classmates in the halls of public schools, and other self-destructive behaviors. Character education tries to tackle the problem of people often having trouble doing what they know is right because they lack the *will*.

Values-based education tries to create conditions in students' lives where they will more consistently *do* what they know they should. It involves developing moral skills as well as *habits* and *dispositions*, such as honesty and self-control, so students automatically respond to situations ethically.² For example, a nationwide program called the Community of Caring has teachers integrate the values of caring, trust, respect,

responsibility, and family into every class lesson, current events discussion, and extracurricular activity (Henry, 1995, p. D1).

Character development includes teachers and parents striving to be good role models and agreeing to teach a set of *core virtues* with a *code of conduct* to support them. This mirrors the character education found in schools prior to the 1960s. Instead of students taking positions on moral dilemmas that are controversial, instructors take stands on non-divisive issues, teaching virtues like courage, loyalty, and justice. Curricula (such as materials from Michael Josephson's Character Counts and the Character Education Partnership) try to impart basic universal values like trustworthiness, respect for others, responsibility, fairness, honesty, caring, and good citizenship. They get students talking about these values, studying history, literature, and current events for real-life examples, and then set about practicing them (Ombelets, 1992, p. 56).

Character education recognizes that students are most likely to do what they know is wrong when they are in angry and intensely emotional situations;

where peers pressure them; when personal or academic honesty works against their own self-interest; or where they are involved in patterns of self-destructive, drug/alcohol-related, gang, or delinquent behavior. Students are taught practical ways to overcome these obstacles via training in anger control, social skills, conflict resolution, dealing with hostile people, and situational perception (not finding trouble where it is not intended).

Secular skeptics asked, "Whose values will be taught?" and felt that such education best belongs in the family (Riggenbach, 1987, p. 10A). Supporters generally answered that "American values" should be taught (Potok, 1995, p. 2A), i.e., values on which most people agree (*USA Today*, 1987, p. 10A). Other critics, however, felt that to teach values is to close kids' minds (*USA Today*, 1987, p. 10A).

Some Christians criticized character education, pointing out that the universally accepted values are bleached of any religious reference under the idea of "separation of church and state." However, they correctly observed, this notion is found nowhere in the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the

Articles of Confederation, or any other official U.S. document (Moore, 2000, p. 4). Christian and other religious critics say that without acknowledgment of God, programs substitute humanistic situational ethics for moral absolutes. Scholastic character education ignores that caring, honesty, and such are universal values because the Master of the Universe ordained them.

If values conflict (as discussed more later), character education, which cannot prioritize, has no answers and leaves it up to students to decide.

Nonetheless, Christian ethicist Hill (1997A) demonstrates that character education can be assessed along the cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions. Exams and term papers can measure the comprehension dimension; community service reports and feedback from the served organizations can gauge the behavioral dimension; and the affective dimension, while more difficult to measure, can be assessed via both self-reflection and survey input from others, such as fellow students, mentors, faculty, internship supervisors, and employers (Hill, 1997A, p. 12).

Spiritual Neglect in Today's Ethics Education

An appreciation for and an understanding of the spiritual side of life are usually missing in modern education. The general feeling is that "religion" and "God" are dirty words to be kept out of the classroom, especially in "professional" and state schools (rather than private colleges and

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universities). This shows how much educational institutions are out of touch with the real world, since religion is a huge part of U.S. culture and a primary individual motivational factor (Sikula, 1996, p. 30). In fact, a spiritual revival is sweeping across corporate America as more executives rely on their religious faith to guide their business decision-making (Conlin, 1999, p. 152). Yet, most business professors not only ignore the topic; they also sometimes ridicule those few business professors who try to do something with the subject.

Much of the problem centers on the myth of separating church

and state activities. This is fiction because federal and state laws and constitutions do not restrict religion from public instruction—in fact, they promote it (Sikula, 1996, p. 30). In their Mayflower Pact, the Pilgrims who landed at Plymouth recognized their debt and gratitude to God, and they acknowledged Jesus as their Lord and Savior. They came to America seeking religious freedom—not freedom *from* religion but freedom *of* religion, as discussed in the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution. What is restricted is advocacy of any single faith, not advocacy of faith per se (Moore, 2000, p. 5). Another reason for religious neglect is that many regard religion as a deeply personal topic to be separated from our professional lives.

Also, God is precluded from ethics education because man-made motivational models exhibit "spiritual neglect." The common view of human behavior is two-dimensional: *mental* and *physical*. In reality, however, human beings have a third component—the *spiritual*—although it is often underdeveloped or even neglected. Human existence is best envisioned as a triangle with physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions. The physical element

concerns the body, the mental component deals with the mind, and the spiritual dimension involves the soul. The healthy human gives these three components equal priority (Sikula, 1996, p. 30).

The spiritual dimension is critical to understanding one's purpose in life and role in eternity. This is where the soul resides and where values, morals, and ethics abound. Today, many individuals overemphasize physical health and underemphasize spiritual health. Yet, I Timothy 4:8-9 says, "For bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come."

Neglecting the spiritual dimension in our professional lives is part of the fallacy of compartmentalizing or dichotomizing between our personal and professional lives, resulting in a dual morality. We should always consider the religious or spiritual aspect when confronted with ethical dilemmas because 1) it is part of our personal beliefs, and/or 2) we are constantly dealing with other people to whom religious values are important.

The Platonic Integrated Model of the Moral Agent and Character Transformation Assumptions Underlying the Model

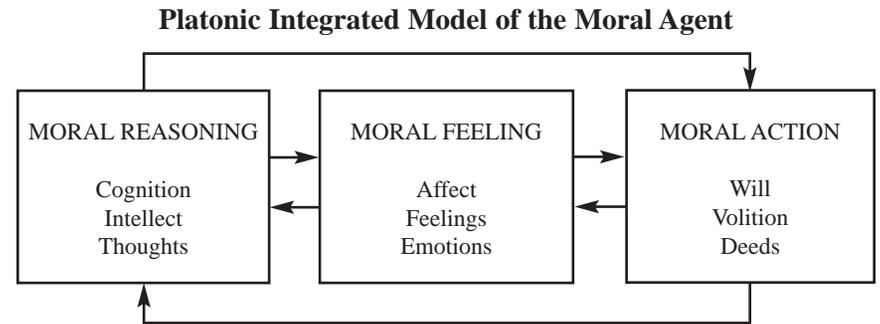
I have two working assumptions regarding how to properly educate for a moral citizenry. First, along with *virtue ethicists* and current proponents of character education, I assume that moral decisions and actions are more likely where there is *moral character*. Aristotle argued that ethical *character* comes from the *heart* as well as the head. *Character* is a person’s inner constitution causing him or her to be able to distinguish between right and wrong (*knowledge* and *feeling*) and then having the will to choose the right course despite the possibility of personal sacrifice (*doing*). Character is the right-mindedness and reformation of the *will* that causes one to recognize and then *do* the correct thing. The hard part of morality is not *knowing* what is right but *doing* it (Ombelets, 1992, p. 53). As Garrison Keillor said in *Lake Wobegon Days*, “Knowing right from wrong is the easy part. Knowing is not the problem.” Knowing is only half the battle—the other half is acting on it. Moral education needs to focus

on *training the will* (“Willpower is ‘won’t power!’”). My second assumption is that the best way to develop ethical character is to become a Christian, because making a genuine commitment to Christ allows Him to begin a process of transforming one’s character to His image. Thus, Christians should be witnessing at every available and appropriate opportunity (although in public schools “appropriate” would generally be limited to a “lifestyle” witness).

Overview of the Platonic Model

The Platonic Integrated Model of the Moral Agent explains character transformation. According to Plato (and modern psychologists), the mind has three faculties or domains: *cognition* or intellect (thinking), *affect* (feelings and emotions), and the *will* or volition (which results in action) (See Exhibit 1). These three components are interrelated and tend to be mutually consistent; as one changes, the others vary in the same direction. Although we usually think of a change in thoughts leading to an alteration of attitudes, resulting in changed behavior, a slew of research on attitude formation and change in psychology and

Exhibit 1



marketing has shown that a modification in any of the three elements can result in changes in the other two. For instance, one way to *think* right is to *do* right.

Most ethics education focuses solely on developing *moral reasoning skills*—the first element of the Platonic model. This was the approach taken by Arthur Andersen & Co. (1990), and look where it apparently got them. To know what is moral, academia and the professions typically rely on *philosophy*—“the love and pursuit of wisdom by *intellectual* means and moral self-discipline” (*The American Heritage Dictionary*, 1982, emphasis added). Philosophers rely on *deduction*, inquiring into the nature of the world using human reasoning. *Moral philosophy* has become synonymous with ethics (Feeley & Gendreau, 1993,

p. 5), the oldest and, according to Socrates, the most important branch of philosophy (Boatright, 1997, pp. 22-23). In fact, the academic study of ethics is at least 2,300 years old. Questions of right and wrong were discussed at length by both Plato and Aristotle during the classical period in Athens, Greece, and have been treated by Western philosophers ever since.

However, to be ethical and have moral character, one must not only *know* the good; one must also *love* the good (moral feeling) and want to *do* the good (moral action) (Henry, 1995, p. D1). *Character* is formed in the first two elements of the Platonic Model—the head and the heart, with the heart being viewed by Chewning (1990) and others as the seat of moral decision-making—and character is carried out in the model’s third element,

the deeds. *Emotion* from the heart can provide the energy and conviction for ethical behavior, while *rationality* can actually sometimes be a brake on ethical action, as people rationalize unethical behavior (George, 1998, p. 9).

Implications of the Platonic Model: Today's Ethics Education is Doomed to Fail

The Platonic Model suggests that students need more than *information*; they need *motivation* or desire to act ethically. It follows that virtue cannot be effectively taught via readings or lectures alone (Whetstone, 1993, p. 117). Knowing that a given action is wrong does not do any good if we lack the motivation to avoid engaging in that conduct; there is a wide gap between knowing and doing in the moral realm. To paraphrase Thomas Edison, "Morality is one percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration."

The answer to the philosophical question "Is virtue knowledge?" is "No!" Knowledge of good alone *does not* lead to *commitment* to doing good. For instance, people know the possible dire consequences from drinking and smoking too much and overindulging in junk

food, yet many persist in these activities. A student might be smart and have the *ability* to get good grades, but not the *will* to work hard to earn them. Wisdom goes beyond knowledge: it is the ability to apply knowledge correctly, to have common sense and good judgment, and to live a life pleasing to God. In fact, knowledge alone can puff one up with pride if he or she does not properly act on it (I Cor. 8:1).

Yet, the secular college community assumes that they can teach ethics by giving students information on ethical perspectives and moral decision-making models, plus practice in using them in case studies. However, there is a disconnect between knowing what is right and doing what is right if the *will* (desire, motivation) to do good is not there. Our sin nature causes us to lack this desire. Sinning is either pleasurable or leads to what we believe is a desirable goal (for instance, in a business context this could be money, a raise or promotion, putting a competitor out of business, etc.). When there is a conflict between what we know is right and what we desire, we act on the desire and then rationalize the behavior. Unfortunately, moral desires cannot be taught! But, the Holy

Spirit can change them when one becomes a Christian, sometimes instantaneously, but more often gradually through the sanctification process as one grows closer to God.

It is interesting to note that Socrates proposed that children be taught to reason correctly (the Socratic method). He suggested that since human nature is rational, children would surely do what they know to be right. This is exactly the approach being used today via debates about resolving ethical dilemmas presented in ethics cases and scenarios. What Socrates ignored was the need to influence feelings, which can override rationality, and to train the will and character (Colson, October 25, 1991). Consequently, Socrates was accused by the Athenians of corrupting the young and leading them away from their parents, and he was forced to end his life by drinking hemlock (Colson, October 25, 1991).³

Kant also taught that ethics is a matter of rationality—reason compels us to do right. Thus, both Greek and Enlightenment scholars argued that reason and the powers of the mind could derive moral judgments. The goal of philosophy was (and is) for reason to control

passion so people can make right choices and do the correct thing (George, 1998, p. 9).

However, we have all seen passion get control of reason (have you ever tried reasoning with a really angry person?), and consequently reason becomes a slave to passion. After committing our passionate act, we use reason to *rationalize* our wrongdoing (George, 1998, p. 9). People have an unlimited capacity for *rationalization* (resolving the conflict between what we *know* is right and the fact that we *desire* or *did* something wrong), self-delusion, and feeling self-righteous (Colson, October 25, 1991). "The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars but in ourselves," wrote William Shakespeare in *Julius Caesar*. Thus, the *intellectual* understanding of ethical obligations is necessary but insufficient to ensure ethical behavior.

Plato said that the Socratic method, the dominant pedagogy in teaching ethics today (e.g., class discussions, debating cases in class), should be reserved for mature men over 30. He believed it is more important to learn virtues than to argue them. Dialogue, Plato suggested, is for those

who already have the virtues (Ombelets, 1992, p. 54).

Aristotle argued that ethical character comes from the *heart* as well as the head. The Socratic method deals only with right *thinking*; it cannot inspire right *action* (Colson, November 1, 1991). Aristotle said that virtue consists not merely in *knowing* what is right (“Virtue is knowledge”) but in having the *will* to do what is right, i.e., the power to carry out the mind’s judgment into action. The hard part of morality is not *knowing* what is right but *doing* it! The apostle Paul lamented, “The good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil I do not want” (Romans 7:19). Leo Tolstoy’s hero in *War and Peace* said the same thing: “Why do I know what is right and do what is wrong?” St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, and other great Christian thinkers have all discussed this issue.

Former Watergate conspirator and Prison Fellowship founder Chuck Colson has observed that “Reason alone is no match for passion. The fundamental problem with learning how to reason through ethical solutions is that it does not give you a mechanism to override your

natural tendency to do what is wrong” (Colson, 1992, p. 14). It is in our nature to flirt with compromising our principles. Even though some people know the ethical rules and how to make an ethical decision in theory, when the rubber meets the road they experience emotional hijackings.

As Colson pointed out in a talk to the Harvard Business School, one of the greatest myths of our culture is that human nature is good (Colson, 1992, p. 13). While this belief is noble, and we must generally assume that most people are trustworthy most of the time to effectively conduct our everyday affairs, we must still recognize that people are fallible and do sometimes stumble when tempted or are in doubt about what is right. Although it is very unpopular to admit, according to Judeo-Christian teaching, human nature is corrupt (“sinful”) (Colson, 1992, p. 13). Paul said, “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not” (Romans 7:18). In Romans 7:21-25 he discusses the dual nature within him, the new Christian nature struggling with the old sin nature. This too suggests that

moral reasoning alone is insufficient for consistently virtuous behavior even for the regenerate (spiritually renewed).

Where ethics differs from other academic disciplines is that ethics is *not just* about *knowledge*; it is about *choices* between right and wrong and good or bad behaviors. Humans have a “free will” and might choose to take either the high or low road. The high road is tougher; Scripture says, “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matthew 7:13-14). People are evil by nature, and thus improper decisions come easily and “naturally” to us.

Prerequisite for Ensuring Ethical Behavior: A Character Transformation

The best possibility to ensure that a person be ethical is for that person to have a *religious regeneration* (renewal), not just an *intellectual education*! Christians understand this to mean a wholehearted commitment to Christ, i.e., a conversion experience which puts

Jesus metaphorically in a person’s *heart*. When we repent, we are transformed as a result of God’s grace operating through the Holy Spirit (Smith & Steen, 1996, p. 32). Romans 12:2 admonishes Christians: “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

This is the *sanctification* process—a work of *regeneration*,

... one of the greatest myths of our culture is that human nature is good.

i.e., renovation or renewing of the human heart and spirit by the work of the Holy Spirit. This *character transformation* is like renovating a house—you tear down the old, dilapidated materials and erect new, better matter. The Bible is meant not merely to *inform* but to *transform*!⁴

A healthy conversion experience means one becomes *intellectually* convinced, *emotionally* attracted, and *willing* to submit control of his/her life to Christ. To do the right thing takes *self-control*, which comes from the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is

difficult, if not impossible, to overcome our strongest temptations on our own. To do what is right, people need not only the intellect but also the *will*—which can be totally transformed only by Jesus Christ.

In fact, research has studied the effect of religion on ethical judgments. Although the conclusions of such research are somewhat equivocal, with some studies showing religion has little or no influence on ethical decision-making, Knotts, et al. (2000, p. 159) report that past studies have discovered that people with a high degree of intrinsic religiosity tend to be more moral, more conscientious, and more disciplined. They also found (p. 162) that a greater number of intrinsically religious persons evaluated various business ethics scenarios as less ethical than did those with lower levels of intrinsic religious commitment. Additionally, a study done by Kennedy and Lawton in the *Journal of Business Ethics* in 1988 discovered that students at evangelical colleges were less likely to engage in unethical behaviors than were students at Catholic or secular institutions (Kennedy, 1999).

Character education will never fully succeed without

spiritual revival. God's absolute moral principles may not seem real to people who are not committed to Jesus Christ, but they are very real to Christians, i.e., those who personally know Christ. In fact, Aquinas said that divine law only binds the faithful to whom it has been revealed.

Character Transformation and Formation of A Christian Worldview

A Christian worldview, including moral renewal, is formed through *eyes of faith*, i.e., spiritual discernment, viewing the world as God does (Chewning, et al., 1990, p. xi). However, developing a Christian worldview does not automatically happen to a believer—sanctification takes effort. A Christian worldview develops through the spiritual disciplines of prayer and reading and studying the Word of God. Just as laser beams can be used to clear away obstructions such as cataracts from our physical eyes, so the Holy Spirit indwelling Christians uses the Word of God to clear away obstructions from our spiritual eyes and to cleanse us (e.g., Titus 3:5: “He saved us, not because of the good things we did, but because of His mercy. He washed away our sins and

gave us a new life through the Holy Spirit;” John 15:3: “You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.”)

Through the spiritual disciplines, Christians become holier (more perfect, living up to God's absolute standard) by degrees. This process is never completed (they are never perfected) in this life, but healthy Christians continue to grow throughout their lives (II Corinthians 7:1: “Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”)

This maturing process can only occur in a *regenerate* (renewed) heart. Character transformation and spiritual discernment can, however, be blocked and blinded by a *hardened* heart. Biblically, the *heart* involves the innermost depth of all three of our Platonic components. Jesus taught that all of a person's difficulties and problems come from a sinful heart: “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man” (Matthew 15:19-20).

Character development takes practice. For example, George Washington used practice and habit to develop into a “good” man. The general was keenly aware of his faults, and from an early age he worked at controlling his temper and other faults. In today's “anything goes” culture, this intense striving after moral excellence is rare. But it is the reason Washington's men were willing to sacrifice for him—even when their cause appeared hopeless. And his biblical character is the reason he was chosen our first president (Colson, 1998). When the Old Testament writers judged a leader, it was always in moral, not political terms. Even if rulers captured a vast empire, if they neglected their spiritual duties they were dismissed as men “who did evil in the sight of the Lord” (Deuteronomy 9:18; 31:29; Jeremiah 32:30). The qualifications for church leadership listed in II Timothy 3 do not include qualities of worldly success or position but rather godly character.

Christian Ethics and Christian Character

A person with Christian character will practice *Christian business ethics*—the application

of a Christian worldview and values to the business decision-making process (Hill, 1997B, p. 12). There are five basic principles here.

Principles of Christian Ethics

Principle one is that Christian ethics is an expression of God's character and of His will for us to be conformed to His character. All ethical imperatives given by God are in accordance with His unchangeable moral character: "Be *holy*, because I am holy," the Lord commanded Israel (Leviticus 11:45); "Be *perfect*, even as your Father in heaven is perfect," Jesus said to His disciples (Matthew 5:48); "It is impossible for God to lie" (Hebrews 6:18), so we should not lie either (Colossians 3:9); "God is *love*" (I John 4:16), so Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). Thus, Christian ethics is similar to *virtue ethics* in that it emphasizes the *character* of the moral agent (Rae & Wong, 1996, p. 38).

The second principle is that Christian ethics is *absolute*; situation ethics has no place in

Christian ethics. This is because morality is based on God's unchanging nature (Malachi 3:6—"I the Lord do not change;" James 1:17—"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows;" Psalms 102:27—"But You (God) remain the same, and Your years will never end"). Since God's moral character is unchanging, His moral commands are immutable, binding on everyone, everywhere, and all the time. Whatever is traceable to God's unchanging moral character is a moral absolute. This includes ethical obligations like holiness, justice, love, truthfulness, and mercy.

Principle three is that Christian ethics is based on *divine revelation*, also known as *special revelation* or *supernatural revelation* (II Timothy 3:16-17—"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work"). Biblical revelation declares God's will for believers.

God's biblical revelation is the only test to which we can put our moral beliefs.

special revelation or *supernatural revelation* (II Timothy 3:16-17—

"All Scripture

It provides principles which can be derived by aggregating a number of individual biblical passages addressing the same general issue, although the issue arises in different specific situations (Chewning, 1990, p. 7). "The teachings of Scripture are the final court of appeal for ethics. God's biblical revelation is the only test to which we can put our moral beliefs. Human reason, church tradition, and the natural and social sciences may aid moral reflection, but divine revelation, found in the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, constitutes the 'bottom line' of the decision-making process" (Davis, 1985, p. 9).

The fourth principle is that Christian ethics is *deontological*, i.e., duty-based (Rae & Wong, 1996, p. 39). Where this differs from *teleological ethics* is that it does not judge good simply by the *results*, but by the *act* and the *motives* behind the act. For instance, if one attempts to rescue a drowning person but fails, according to the teleological ethical theory known as *consequentialism*, this was not a good act since it did not have good results, whereas deontological ethics would call it noble. Thus, the Christian ethic says that even some acts that fail

are good because moral actions that reflect God's nature are good in themselves whether they succeed or not. God calls us to be faithful, not successful!

However, results must still be considered, for the Bible endorses *contextual absolutism* (aka *near absolutism*, *prima facie absolutism* [absolutists "on the surface"], or *graded absolutism*)—one must look at the results of an action in a particular situation (Davis, 1985, pp. 14-16). Thus, contextual absolutists allow for justifiable exceptions to the general principles, depending on the circumstances, keeping several considerations in mind. First, the moral laws are absolute regarding their source (God). Second, each moral law is absolute in its *sphere*. *Contextual absolutists* believe that absolute laws might conflict in certain circumstances, and we are responsible to obey the higher law (Rae & Wong, 1996, p. 36). The principle of *hierarchicalism* suggests there is a hierarchy of values and interests, and each moral law is absolute in its *hierarchy* (Rae & Wong, 1996, p. 37). Generally within the hierarchy, God has priority over persons, and persons over things. Just as a magnet overpowers the pull of gravity

without gravity ceasing its pull, the duty to love God (the first Great Commandment) overpowers the duty to love human beings (the second Great Commandment). Thus, if a human being we like or even love (a parent, spouse, or employer) tells us to do something that disobeys God's law, as Paul told the Roman authorities, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). "Just following orders" is not an excuse. When norms conflict, one must determine which is the higher norm and obey it, thereby not being guilty for breaking the lesser rule (Feinberg & Feinberg, 1993, p. 30).

For example, some believe that abortion is wrong except in cases of rape, incest, or to save a mother's life (in which case, however, the value of human life inside the womb is viewed as a secondary value to the life and health of the mother). Or, consider that although lying is generally immoral, when it conflicts with lifesaving, one is exempt from truth telling (DeGeorge, 1990, p. 36). For example, in Joshua 2 Rahab the prostitute lied to protect Israelite soldiers from the Egyptians, and in Hebrews 11:31

she was commended by God as carrying out an act of faith (although not for the act of lying). Or, consider that in Exodus 1:19 the Hebrew midwives lied to save the baby boys, including Moses, from Pharaoh's command to kill them. In effect, not all telling of untruth is lying in a sinful sense. Very few would condemn someone for "lying" to an enemy who would use the truth to destroy him. Thus, there is an exemption to the lower rule (truth telling) in view of the higher rule (protecting human life). The Bible shows that among the laws of Scripture there are some that do not qualify as absolute standards for all people, at all times, and in all circumstances.

Figuring out the higher vs. lower standard suggests the fifth principle: Christian ethics is a *reasoned* ethics. As noted, we are to love the Lord with our entire *mind* as well as all of our heart. We must use reason to correctly interpret God's absolute divine rules and the duties they suggest in each situation. Our ethical judgments should be determined through Scripture and its application through reason (Feinburg & Feinburg, 1993, p. xiv).

Two Approaches to Christian Ethics

Duties-Based Ethics

One approach to Christian ethics based on principles two through five would be to view the Bible as a *rulebook* or set of rules to be applied to specific situations (Hill, 1997B, p. 12). However, while this strategy works fine for *simple* moral problems (e.g., a worker is tempted to steal or an executive considers slandering a competitor), in ambiguous *ethical dilemmas* it is deficient in its ability to give precise answers. As just discussed, a problem with rules is that they can clash with each other and can have situational exceptions. Also, many Scripture passages are open to numerous interpretations. For instance, does "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8) mean we cannot work at all on Sunday? Go shopping? Have fun? There are many such "disputable matters" (Romans 14:1), like attending R-rated movies and drinking alcoholic beverages in moderation (Hinckley, 1989, p. 137). Another difficulty with rules is that "... right(eous) behavior flows not from rules or policies (Romans 7, Philippians 3), but from a personal faith in an

immanent and transcendent God. Rules appropriately set boundaries but they do not enable or *motivate* [emphasis added] individuals to live within those boundaries" (Dupree, 1993, p. 132). Recall that *motivation* is the key stumbling block to effectively teaching ethics.

Nonetheless, two particular passages offering rules can help in the development of a concept of Christian business ethics (Talarzyk, 1990, pp. 77-78). Matthew 7:12 contains the *Golden Rule*: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." If you faithfully apply this verse in your dealings with your various stakeholders, these dealings will always be ethical (Rush, 1990, p. 58)

The second rule-based passage is Matthew 5:39-42: "But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you." This basically

says that we should always go beyond what people and the law require of us (Rush, 1990, p. 59).

Character-Based Virtue Ethics

Christian ethicist Alexander Hill argues that a better foundation than rules for Christian ethics in business is the *changeless character of God* (Hill, 1997B, p.13), which brings us back to character education and principle one (mentioned earlier)—Christian ethics is an expression of God’s character. This is consistent with the fairly recent rediscovered ethical perspective in the secular literature—*virtue theory* or *virtue ethics*. Whereas rights and justice ethical systems focus on moral principles or rules and ethical reasoning, virtue ethics centers on moral *character* and its consequent actions. Virtue ethics asks, “What kind of person should I be or become?” Although character encompasses six major dimensions—physical, mental, spiritual, social, emotional, and moral—here we emphasize moral character.

Virtue ethics emphasizes moral *education* and development of moral character—virtuous people are made, not born. Social institutions (family, houses of worship, and schools) can all

teach character by educating about virtues and by providing role models to imitate. However, legal or societal moral principles are often merely moral minimums for the beginning of virtue.

Virtues, on the other hand, are transcendental constants that are timeless and not bound by culture.

Although it has a long tradition going back to the Greek philosophers Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Thomas Aquinas, as well as the New Testament’s emphasis on developing the character of Christ, virtue ethics was ignored from at least the 17th century until the late 20th century. We earlier saw that it is receiving renewed support in the educational system. Character education is also being promoted through best-selling books such as Steven Covey’s *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and William Bennett’s *The Book of Virtues* (Rae & Wong, 1996, p. 36) and through contemporary philosophers like Michael Josephson and Alasdair MacIntyre. The rekindled interest in virtue and character is in part a contemporary reaction to the rampant relativism that results in lack of moral consensus.

Virtue ethics focuses on *ideals*—morally important goals,

virtues, or notions of excellence worth striving for. Virtue theory says there is more to life than simply *doing* the right thing, which the teleological and deontological approaches emphasize (i.e., making the correct *moral judgment*).

As important as that is, *being* the right type of person is more important, and that entails *character* (Rae & Wong, 1996, p. 38).

Christian Virtue Ethics

Christian virtue ethics goes a step further and focuses on God’s character. Behavior consistent with God’s character is ethical, and behavior inconsistent with God’s character is unethical (Hill, 1997B, p. 14). This approach is close to virtue ethics, but where it differs is that Christian virtue ethics does not focus on human happiness and the fulfillment of ethical obligations as its primary concern. Rather, it prizes the life that seeks to emulate God’s character. As the great Catholic saint Ignatius Loyola was eulogized: “The aim of life is not to gain a place in the sun, nor to achieve fame or success, but to

lose ourselves in the glory of God.” (Hill, 2000).

Believers disagree on an exact list of these Christian virtues. Hill believes that there are three divine *virtues* that have direct bearing on ethical decision-making and that are repeatedly emphasized in the Bible (Hill, 1997B, p. 14):

1. God is *holy*. Therefore, we are to be ethically pure and devoted to Him (Exodus 31:13—“I am the Lord, who makes you holy.”)
2. God is *just*. Thus, we are to be fair and respect peoples’ rights to be treated with dignity and to exercise free will (*theory of justice*).
3. God is *loving*. Hence, we should concentrate on developing and maintaining good relationships and treat others with empathy, mercy, and self-sacrifice.

Christians can also subscribe to the four *cardinal* or *natural moral virtues*, which according to ancient Greeks and Romans are:

- *Prudence*—practical wisdom and the ability to make right choices in the concrete

Christian ethics is an expression of God’s character.



situation. It is not just sheer intelligence or cleverness but rather understanding and insight into human nature, human needs, and human values.

- *Justice*—fairness, honesty, and lawfulness in society. It emphasizes being in harmony with and cooperating with others.

- *Temperance*—self-discipline, self-control, or moderation. It restrains destructive passions. Unlike abstinence, temperance requires us to practice a discerning self-discipline of our sensuous experiences.

- *Fortitude*—moral courage. It is the bravery to persevere in the face of adversity, to act on your own convictions even if it costs you something, such as convenience or social acceptance. As the old saying goes, “A principle is not a principle until it costs you something.”

Western tradition added to these the virtues of magnanimity (nobleness of mind and heart, especially forgiveness), patience, perseverance, sympathy, fellow feeling, benevolence, generosity, honor, self-discipline, selflessness, and others.

St. Thomas Aquinas, a Christian philosopher of the Middle Ages, accepted the four

cardinal virtues. But, as a Christian, and so unlike Aristotle, Aquinas held that the purpose of a person is not merely the exercise of reason in this world, but union with God in the next. Therefore, to Aristotle’s list of the moral virtues, Aquinas added the “theological” or Christian virtues of faith, hope, and charity—the virtues that enable a person to achieve union with God. Moreover, Aquinas expanded Aristotle’s list of the moral virtues to include others that make sense within the life of a Christian but would have been foreign to the life of the Greek aristocratic citizen on whom Aristotle had focused. For example, Aquinas held that humility is a Christian virtue and that pride is a vice for the Christian, while Aristotle had argued that for the Greek aristocrat pride is a virtue and humility is a vice.

Christianity added the Christian, theological, or supernatural virtues of:

- *Faith*—What is important is the object of our faith, not you (“believe in yourself”) or some other person (which can enslave you to that person), but rather Jesus Christ.

- *Hope*—This is not the modern “I wish” hope but a certainty in God’s working in our lives here on earth and in our eternal security in heaven—an assurance that all of God’s promises will come true.

- *Love*—This is not the contemporary conception of *eros* love—desire love (sexual or otherwise). Nor is it *storge* love—the love a mother naturally has for her children. It is not *phileo* or friendship love. Rather, it is *agape* love—unconditional, in-spite-of love (not merely pity or compassion) (Trunfio, 1993, p. 158). Agape love is demanding and shown in action.

These supernatural virtues supersede the natural ones, for without the former the latter ultimately fail. For instance, without love no one could be totally unselfish; without a hope in heaven no one could be entirely courageous; and without faith no one can be truly wise, because faith sees higher or farther than wisdom or experience can (Trunfio, 1993, p. 158).

Scripture contains other descriptions of character. Perhaps best known are the “fruits of the spirit” found in Galatians 5:22-23: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,

goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” These Christian character traits are like fruit—they take time (and diligence) to ripen. Another set of character traits is found in II Peter 1:5-7, which describes fruitful sanctification: “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.”

However, some philosophers like Pincoffs would say that these theological virtues would not count as moral virtues because of their special importance for a Christian life, i.e., they are useful only for the pursuit of special religious objectives. I would say that, when doubting whether something is a virtue, a Christian should 1) ask if it would generally help to live the good life (not just a successful, happy, rewarding life, as secular philosophers suggest, but a life which pleases God), and 2) see if Scripture suggests it is a virtue. The virtues should be taught by word and deed as the guide to the “good life” and to pleasing God.

Conclusion

Teaching business ethics without consideration of character and its development simply does not work (Whetstone, 1993, p. 108). The secular community has begun to do a better job with their emphasis on character education. Although the number of Web sites devoted to values clarification still exceeds the amount devoted to character education, the renewed focus on the latter is encouraging. Since non-Christians also have consciences, they can also desire to and, to an imperfect degree, improve their moral character as God's common grace permits (Whetstone, 1993, p. 109). Thus, students should learn about the virtuous character traits and be given historical as well as current well-known role models from the worlds of sports, the performing arts, politics, and religion who exhibit the virtues. The successes and rewards that came to such people through exercising virtues should be discussed. Although it is illegal and not appropriate to try to "lead students to Christ" in secular institutions, it is legitimate to describe how the great religions such as Judaism and Christianity emphasize moral character, how people of virtue are admired, and

how they tend to succeed in life. This could motivate students to further investigate religion on their own, eventually making a decision to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Nonetheless, what is discouraging is the intolerance of public schools and private non-Christian colleges for biblical teaching on the relevance of religion to moral development. Absent a revolution in the Supreme Court and in most local school boards and college boards of trustees, little is likely to change here. However, Christian business professors can help build a case for such instruction by doing research in this area, as Knotts, et al. (2000) report that the influence of religiosity on ethical decision-making has been virtually ignored. Equally (if not more) discouraging than intolerance of instruction related to religious ethical principles is the lack of zeal many Christian colleges have for fulfilling their stated mission to develop students' character (Whetstone, 1993, p. 111).

For those teaching in Christian colleges the mandate is clear—focus on biblically-based ethics and character. Teachers of Christian students are obliged to impress upon their students the

biblical truth that acting ethically will be a spiritual struggle between our new nature on the one hand, and the flesh, the devil, and the world on the other hand (Smith & Steen, 1996, p. 37). Moreover, they should take time to personally introduce those students who do not appear to be Christians to the Lord Jesus, so He can use these teachers as an instrument to effectively and positively transform the students' character. In the public square, we must all voice our opinions for the right to include virtues—virtues found in Scripture and even in Christian theology and ethics—in education curricula (education curricula which are supposedly "tolerant" and "inclusive" when it comes to ethics and character education). To fail to do so is to ask to witness the continued moral mudslide of our society.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹For example:
To learn about Honesty Read About Aesop's shepherd boy who cried wolf, Pinocchio, and Abraham Lincoln walking three miles to return six cents
Courage About Joan of Arc
Kindness and compassion *A Christmas Carol*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*
Recognizing greed *King Midas*
Recognizing vanity *Sleeping Beauty*
Recognizing overreaching ambition About Lady MacBeth
Dangers of unreasoning conformity *The Emperor's New Clothes*
- ²The word *morality* comes from the Latin *moralis*, which means *habits*, and the Greeks talked about *virtues* as being good habits and *vices* as being bad habits.
- ³One is tempted to say that the same fate should await today's humanistic ethics professors.
- ⁴Other less powerful ways the heart can be genuinely transformed besides religion include marriage (especially for young men who tend to "sow their wild oats") or simply growing up.
- ⁵Covey says we cannot expect to respond correctly to situations if we have not formed correct habits of character through discipline and training.

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