



Discernment

So that you may be able to discern what is best. *Phil. 1:10*

Recovering Personal Responsibility

■ When I was a new Christian, I scoured the papers for signs of the “revived Roman Empire” (the European Common Market?) and the Antichrist (Kissinger? Sadat?). There was little separating my faith from an apocalyptic reading of the headlines. Though this introduction to Christianity was great fun, it provided a flimsy foundation for discipleship. It also encouraged apathy about the world God created.

Judging from Christian book and video sales, I had plenty of company. As John Stott said recently, “There are many of us evangelicals who have a good doctrine of redemption, but a bad doctrine of creation.”

Even the Christian Right’s vaunted entrance into politics has sometimes seemed more a reaction to lost privileges than a well-thought-out plan to present a Christian worldview. “We had Newt Gingrich and the Contract with America,” conservative commentator and former Moral Majority activist Cal Thomas said recently on “60 Minutes.” “If we couldn’t get it done with all that presumed political power, then it’s quite clear to me at least that it can’t be done.”

David Neff, executive editor of *Christianity Today*, says that corporate, judicial, and media elites have short-circuited the democratic process, marginalizing the influence of professing Christians. “All of this argues for the idea that the political detour of the past 20 years—though not a complete waste of effort—brought us little cultural change,” Neff said. “The lack of putting the same kind of effort into training scientists,

journalists, film makers, and other cultural gatekeepers has left us farther behind culturally.”

Nonetheless, evangelicals have played major roles in everything from fighting slavery to helping the poor. Despite our missteps, we’ve also influenced the current moral climate. According to the conservative Family Research Council, serious crime rates have dropped seven straight years. Approval of casual sex has plunged

among college freshmen. And the number of Americans receiving public assistance has fallen from 14.3 million in 1994 to 7.6 million at the end of last year. Even the abortion rate is down.

With the millennium almost upon us, we may be tempted to stare into the sky, waiting for the Second Coming, instead of continuing the hard work of transforming our societies for Christ. But as Martin Luther said, “Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go

to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.”

This *Discernment* examines recovering personal responsibility. Most of the authors first presented their ideas during the CACE triadialogue workshops March 17-19, 1999, at Wheaton College. We call them triadialogues because they bring into play three points of view: those of practitioners, professors, and students. And now with you, the reader, involved, perhaps we should rename them quadialogues.

Stan Guthrie, editor of *Discernment*

“Though this introduction to Christianity was great fun, it provided a flimsy foundation for discipleship.”

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The Family as the Seedbed of Democratic Citizenship

By Don E. Eberly

■ Sociologist David Poponoe argues that the success of every society depends upon its ability to produce a large number of adults who are good citizens and who uphold high standards. The central task of a

democracy, therefore, is for older generations to devote themselves to socializing infants into adults, a process which transforms self-interested private individuals into public-spirited citizens. Preserving democracy requires far more than merely maintaining the machinery of elections, lawmaking, and public administration. American democracy, in short, requires democrats.



Photos by Dave Wittig

Don E. Eberly argues that fathers are key to the future of civil society.

Civil Society

How do people come by their capacity for self-mastery and citizenship? By what process do they acquire democratic habits, skills, and values? How is moral conscience, so vital for a civil and humane society, formed? The answer is found in our civil society, which is generally understood as a social sphere that encompasses the entire web of voluntary associations that dot our landscape: families, neighborhoods, civic associations, charitable enterprises, and local networks “of a thousand kinds,” as Alexis de Tocqueville put it.

These voluntary associations are often referred to as “mediating structures,” because they stand as a buffer between the individual and the large, impersonal structures of the power-driven state and the self-interested economic market. Civil society is a sector where individuals are drawn together into horizontal relationships of trust and collaboration.

The weaker this voluntary layer of civic association, the stronger the vertical relationship of the individual and the state—a relationship characterized by power, authority, and dependence. When civil society atrophies, the individual is left more and more isolated in a politicized and conflicted society

in which all roads lead to the lawyer’s office, to the courts, or to social agencies.

Tocqueville maintained that individual character and the civilized habits and dispositions upon which democracy depends, which he called “habits of the heart,” were gained first through family and then through wider associations in society.

However, these institutions, the basis of American greatness, already contained seeds of corruption, as Tocqueville observed during his visit to America during the 1830s—generally extreme individualism, materialism, and the desire to simply be left alone to pursue one’s “paltry pleasures.” Now academic studies warn of a nation in civic decline “bowling alone,” becoming a “nation of spectators.” The ideology of autonomy reduces every decision to a matter of private, personal choice, leaving communities with almost no claim on the individual.

While the public mood is bullish when it comes to America’s scientific and technological achievements, people are deeply dismayed by the persistence of crime, illegal drugs, teen pregnancy, family fragmentation, and a host of ills affecting children and youth. They are baffled that prosperity has not translated into a more civil and humane society.

Americans are deeply worried that we are not passing along character to the young. Pollster Daniel Yankelovich reports that “public distress about the state of our social morality has reached nearly universal proportions: 87 percent of the public fear that something is fundamentally wrong with America’s moral condition.”

Father Absence

We Americans have been talking and arguing about the family for decades. The debate has matured recently as a far wider consensus has begun to take shape. Many, many changes have come to the family, and certainly not all of them negative. For example, most appreciate the shifting and expansion of roles for both men and women across the spheres of home and workplace. We have decided that some

things are worse than family dissolution, for example when abuse takes place among its members.

One negative change, however, is that fewer and fewer children are being raised by committed, involved fathers.

Societies, of course, have always had a certain percentage of father absence. Fathers have always left home for work or war, sometimes for long periods, sometimes never returning. Moreover, we have always had a certain amount of divorce and nonmarital births. And in all too many cases, dating back to the beginning of recorded human history, there have been fathers who have been largely dysfunctional—perhaps physically present, but in all other respects disengaged. But American society is now having to cope with something radically different. Whereas father absence has always been a challenge, it was once the exception to the rule; today it is rapidly becoming the rule.

The number of children living only with their mothers in 1960 was 5.1 million. Today, the number of children going to bed in a household in which the biological father does not live is pushing 24 million, or almost 40 percent of all children. Thirty-two percent of the children born today are to nonmarried, father absent households, and one in every two will spend a portion of his or her lifetime apart from the father.

Why? There was a time when many concluded that fathers did not make a unique, gender-specific contribution to the nurturing of children, implying that any number of possible substitutes would be fine. There was a time when many entertained the idea that children were more resilient in cases of family breakup than they actually are, which usually meant they spent less time with the father.

Over the past decade, a voluminous body of data has documented the ill effects of growing up without a father. Fatherless children, for example, are five times more likely to live in poverty, three times more likely to fail in school, two or three times more likely to experience emotional or behavioral problems, three times more likely to commit suicide.

One important caveat must be introduced here. Research does not suggest that children who are raised in single-parent households are bound by some immutable law to fail in school, turn to drugs, or commit crime. Kids from father absent households can and do become merit scholars, all-star athletes and professional successes, and even for those who don't excel, many grow up to be fine citizens. Good single mothers and good nonresidential fathers can make a huge difference.

Bad Outcomes

But neither can we deny the basic evidence that many bad outcomes for kids are strongly tied to the presence or absence of fathers. According to Urie Bronfenbrenner, controlling for factors such as low income, children growing up in father absent households “are at greater risk for experiencing a variety of behavioral and educational problems, including extremes of hyperactivity and withdrawal; lack of attentiveness in the classroom; difficulty in deferring gratification; impaired academic achievement; social misbehavior; absenteeism; dropping out; involvement in socially alienated peer groups; and the so-called ‘teenage syndrome’ of behaviors that tend to (occur) together—smoking, drinking, vandalism, violence and criminal acts.”

Perhaps no factor is more powerful or disturbing than the undeniable tie of father absence to poverty. Poverty has many causes, but none so decisive or powerful as father absence. According to the National Commission on Children, almost 75 percent of America's children who live in single-parent families will experience poverty before turning 11, whereas the majority of kids from father present families will never experience poverty. Child poverty rates would be one-third lower today if family structure had not changed so dramatically since 1960.

Equally troubling is the contribution fatherlessness makes to antisocial activity. American society is paying a huge price for having failed to heed the warning issued by Daniel Patrick Moynihan in

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Don Eberly states, “The renewal of fatherhood and the renewal of civil society go hand in hand.”

1965, when he stated that: “a community that allows a large number of young men to grow up in broken homes, dominated by women, never acquiring any stable relationship to male authority, never acquiring any expectation about the future—that community asks for and gets chaos.”

Male acting out against the social order is widespread and comes in numerous forms, from behavior that is merely obnoxious to that which is socially menacing. Evidence of its impact can be found in every sector of American society.

Seventy-two percent of adolescents serving sentences for murder are from fatherless households; 60 percent of the rapists, and over 70 percent of the long-term correctional facility inmates are from father absent households.

Noted social scientist James Q. Wilson has said that “every society must be wary of the unattached male, for he is universally the cause of numerous social ills. The good society is heavily dependent on men being attached to a strong moral order centered on families, both to discipline their sexual behavior and to reduce their competitive aggression.”

Angry Young Men

Curbing the aggressive impulses of young males is perhaps the greatest challenge for fathers. As the national news regularly reports, there is today in American society an unusually large number of young people who seem to be very, very angry, who appear wound up like a tightly coiled spring, waiting to explode at the slightest provocation.

The nation has been served a stream of shocking reports of brutal schoolyard shootings by young males. Shawn Johnson, a California-based forensic psychologist who has conducted over 6,000 evaluations of adult and juvenile criminals, states that “this is the price we are paying as a society for the number of fathers who have bailed out on their children.”

Obviously, only a small minority of troubled kids will turn to slaughtering others in cold blood,

and certainly father absence is not the only factor behind this growing epidemic. Nevertheless, the alienation among youth and even young children today is widespread.

Our sons and daughters need to see examples of confident males turning their energies toward affirming life and nourishing character, not the pseudomascularity of power or domination.

Those who have studied masculinity have remarked about its basic fragility. It is all too easy for masculinity, which is held together tenuously by societal norms, to fall out of kilter when too few fathers are there to model it in all of its complexities of strength and tenderness, initiative and restraint. Without these supports, society suffers, not from too much genuine masculinity, but from far too little.

A society of too few mature fathers ends up with what Dr. Frank Pittman calls “toxic masculinity” where essentially weak, insecure and poorly fathered men chase after a socially destructive masculine mystique.

Says Pittman, boys who want to become men have to “guess at what men are like,” which usually turns out what he calls a “pathologically exaggerated masculinity.” Whatever the challenge, these men are never “man enough.” “Ultimately,” says Pittman, “we’re not going to raise a better class of men until we have a better class

of fathers.”

Father absence also harms girls and young women, of course. Poorly fathered girls often fall victim to poorly fathered young men who prey on the vulnerabilities of girls who hunger for the father’s affection and who confuse it with false and costly alternatives. Girls from father absent households are 164 percent more likely to have children out of wedlock.

Social Capital

It is not enough to describe the consequences of father absence without detailing the positive contri-

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butions fathers make in nurturing children. What relevance does fatherhood have to the cultivation of those positive ingredients of citizenship such as trust, cooperation, and social generosity among citizens?

To what extent, in other words, is the restoration of father-involved families integral to the renewal of American civil society? The family benefits society by producing what scholars call social capital. This refers to personal capacities, such as the ability to be helpful, trustful, and respectful to one's associates.

A generation that has over-invested in itself and under-invested in its children can be said to have borrowed social capital that it has not replaced, creating intergenerational social deficits. Deficits in social capital created in our families quickly affect the social health of the nation.

For example, large majorities of the American people are distrustful of their public institutions. Now we have discovered the unsurprising fact that American citizens are more and more distrustful and suspicious of each other.

Trust is nurtured in the family. In bonding to the children, the parent puts in place the rudiments of trust: a process which, according to family scholar Urie Bronfenbrenner, conveys "a strong, mutual, irrational, emotional attachment" offered through a person who "is committed to the child's well-being and development, preferably for life." Much like economic capital, social capital can be drawn down. Disillusionment with our primary relationships leads to distrust of kin and community.

Wondering why so many American teens are depressed or alienated, the George Gallup organization concluded that a deprived family life seems to be the key "cause" indicator of alienation. Often there is simply a huge disconnect between the lives of parents—little to talk about, little in common, extreme busyness. In many cases, one of the parents, most frequently, the father, is simply not there for them.

Authority Figures

Or consider authority. Fathers are the first encounter kids have with male authority, and perhaps authority generally. How interaction with that intimate form of authority takes shape will likely determine the child's success at navigating his or her way through the more challenging territory of authority and conflict in the school, on the playground, or at the mall.

In many ways, healthy fathers serve as a bridge between the more protected life of the home and the more demanding environment of the world beyond. Good fathers tutor their children toward developing positive habits of self-control and respect toward others.

Impulse control is one of the most important socialization functions fathers carry out. Wade Horn, prominent child psychologist and president of the National Fatherhood Initiative, points out that "well-socialized children have learned not to strike out at others to get what they want; undersocialized children have not. Well-socialized children have learned to listen to and obey the directions of legitimate authority figures, such as parents and teachers; undersocialized children have not."

Renewing Fatherhood as a Social Norm

It is nearly impossible to discuss the renewal of fatherhood in isolation from other social and cultural realities that are now common in America. For example, the vagueness of our recent discussion of family reflects our need to accommodate a steep rise in separated, divorced, blending, and never-formed families headed in the vast majority of cases by single mothers. To some, "family" now means little more than a collection of adults bound together by temporary needs and agreements. But embracing an elastic notion of family out of a legitimate desire to improve fathering may unintentionally make the job harder in the future. To put the problem plainly, fathers are the first to be written out of the family script. When the cutting and pasting begins on the ever-changing family portrait, it is the father who is typically cut out. In the vast majority of cases, children from fragmented families live apart from their fathers and, in many cases, see them infrequently.

Reasserting a basic family norm of two parents, preferably the biological parents, preferably parenting cooperatively in the context of marriage, depends largely on the validity of the claim that fathers are essential in the contribution they make.

Fathering, says family sociologist John Miller, is "a cultural acquisition to an extent that mothering is not." Given the fact that there are few biologically compelling reasons for the male to care for his offspring, "a set of overlapping largely cultural developments" is required.



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Corporate Social Responsibility: Must There Be Any?

By Daniel Primozic

■ Corporate social responsibility—can there be any? Should there be any? Should corporations be socially responsible? Should they take any responsibility for what happens to the community outside of their corporate walls? For instance, should they worry about pollution or other ill effects of their products on the environment or on people? Must they worry about the homeless or the economic communities in which they thrive? What about the people within their own corporate structure? When I say “worry,” I mean to give moral scrutiny to these issues and maybe even do something unprofitable and impractical to make and keep things right.

Stacks of Paper

It depends on what corporations are. Corporations are not just groups of people; they are legal entities. They are stacks of paper in somebody’s files—the documents of incorporation, etc. These papers allow people (who elsewhere in their daily lives are personally, morally responsible for their actions and decisions) to avoid personal responsibility for their business decisions: i.e., “liability.” If the fine legal purpose of a corporation is to attract and assemble enough men and women of capital to invest in a business enterprise so that the means of production can be secured as can profits and wealth, then whence do we arrive at the other, more dubious purpose: i.e., providing a personal liability shield? One might reply that the shield is morally neutral in any case. But is it, in fact, so morally neutral?

Milton Friedman, economics advisor to Ronald Reagan, wrote a famous 1970 *New York Times* article called “The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Profits.” There, Friedman said a corporate officer’s responsibility is very simple: Obey the law and make as much money as possible for the shareholders. There are no other special social responsibilities to the communities that

surround you, nor other businesses, nor to your own employees, for that matter. Any social obligations apart from the two mentioned are optional for the corporation and the CEO, and are probably economically unwise in any case. For Friedman, corporate social responsibility is oxymoronic and perhaps simply moronic, economically speaking. Profits are the name of the game, not morals—this, one must recall, is business. Friedman and others suggest that we understand corporations solely as legal entities, not persons. Only persons can be held morally responsible. Ergo, since corporations are not people, they cannot be considered capable of anything like a moral social conscience.

An Odious Smell

Here’s an example of that approach. The film “Roger and Me” gives a quasi-documentary view of what happens to a community when the mainstay of its economic structure decides to send its plants south. GM was making a very good profit, but in the interest of higher profits, its CEO, Roger Smith, shut down every plant in and around Flint, Michigan. Flint was thereby destroyed. Now, yes, doing this brought more profits. The shareholders grinned widely and drank deeply of those profits. Smith was also happy because he got a \$2 million raise. Friedman would say that Smith simply did his job, made money, and obeyed the law. As CEO, Smith was not acting as a person but as a human appendage of a legal batch of papers called the corporation, and, as such, bore no personal responsibility for the hideous consequences which befell Flint—“nothing personal, just business.”

There is an odious smell I begin to encounter, morally speaking, in all of this. First, it is just false to claim: “nothing personal, just business.” Grim personal consequences can befall real people, who are the outcomes of corporate decisions. But the odor comes also from other directions.

Albert Carr, in his notorious 1968 article in the *Harvard Business Review*—“Is Business Bluffing Ethical?”—helps to make a compelling case that



Photos by Dave Wittig

Daniel Primozic says that a corporation’s personal liability “shield” is not morally neutral.

business majors may have to become moral schizophrenics when entering the corporate world. He says our personal, perhaps “Sunday School” moral beliefs and behaviors will at times be set aside in favor of the demands of a separate corporate business morality. To help describe the separate moral domain of business, Carr quotes Henry Taylor, the British statesman, who pointed out that “falsehood ceases to be falsehood when it is understood on all sides that the truth is not expected to be spoken.” Carr maintains that the same absolution for lying and deception is available to business, to poker, and to diplomacy. He maintains that when you walk into the business arena, you have a different set of rules. You may have to deceive, harm, fire, or you may be asked to do many other things that you would never do as a responsible person in the world. Carr’s position helps to bolster Friedman’s attitude toward personal responsibility in the world of business. But their theories, especially when put together, don’t smell very sweet, morally speaking. Both allow us to avoid personal responsibility for what we do in our business dealings. But, so what? Why is that important?

There are manifold examples we could examine—Bhopal, the Exxon Valdez, the Challenger disaster—that would support my hunch that many of these moral outrages stem from the ability to avoid personal responsibility in corporations. For example, in the Challenger disaster, an engineer knew that the O-rings would fail in very cold weather. He informed Morton Thiokol, the manufacturer, of his findings. But he was pressured to launch, Thiokol was pressured to launch, NASA was pressured, the administration was pressured, etc. The pressure was on, and the launch took place. We all know what happened. Who is personally responsible for that disaster? As we also saw, the personal responsibility tends to evaporate into corporate responsibility, which we have been told isn’t possible to expect in the first place. That is the shield factor, and that is the frightening moral odor that comes with it.

A Corporation with a Conscience?

Is there any coherent sense in which we can hold the corporation socially responsible? Can a corporation have a conscience? If Immanuel Kant were on

the scene, he could hold a corporation morally responsible in the very same way we hold people responsible for their actions. We can simply apply his moral imperatives to the corporate decision makers in question: We can ask of corporations, “Is what you are doing universalizable?” and “Are you showing adequate respect for people as people, and not means to ends?”

And I wonder if God will heed our “personal responsibility shields” and our “special business moralities” and our “nothing personal—just business” claims when we arrive at our final judgment? Would a “Christian economics” allow us to duck our personal responsibility? I wonder, if we were to remove the “shield factor,” would life in business be morally different? I think that removing the shield would not do anything to destroy capitalism. But it would require business heads to be more careful, more empathic, more moral, and more vigilant.

My hope is that a Christian economics would somehow resemble the passage in Matthew 25:14-30, the “parable of the talents.” Jesus holds the one who buried the talents in the ground personally responsible for his business decision. Jesus didn’t say that the “landowner” attacked a superstructure, a shielded legal entity, but a person. He calls this *person*,

“You wicked and lazy servant.” That doesn’t seem like impersonal legalese. He continues:

“You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed, so you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming, I would have received back my own with interest. Therefore, take the talent from him and give it to him that has ten talents, for it is that everyone that has, more will be given, and he will have abundance. But from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.”

He then cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. It seems clear that a Christian form of making money in business must require, first, destroying the “shield from personal liability” and the reinstallation of personal responsibility in corporate and business dealings. In Christian economics, one must recover personal responsibility. And to do that, we must remove the shield.

“Grim personal consequences can befall real people, who are the outcomes of corporate decisions.”



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Corporate Social Responsibility: Some Questions

By Annette Tomal

■ Corporate social responsibility—is there any?

Daniel Primozic is correct that the corporation's owners—individual stockholders—face no responsibility for the corporation's decisions. Most stockholders are concerned only with “return on investment”—through increasing stock prices and dividends. However, stockholders' limited financial liability does not demonstrate that employees will be irresponsible. Corporations can face lawsuits, government fines, community boycotts—all with adverse effects on profits and stock prices—because of employee malfeasance. Maximizing short-term profits is not always the most important goal; the top executive of the world's third-largest airline was ousted two years ago for being too focused on profits at the expense of employee morale and customer service.

Since Andrew Carnegie first coined the term “corporate social responsibility” a hundred years ago, businesses (not just corporations) have become more socially responsible, not less. Such progress has occurred both voluntarily and via legislation—anti-pollution requirements, child labor restrictions, safe working conditions, maternity leave, minimum wage pay, health insurance coverage, and so on.

A plant closure, called socially irresponsible by Primozic, can, of course, be devastating for a community. Many small businesses dissolve every year, yet they are not lambasted as socially irresponsible. Should an unprofitable plant be prohibited from closing, just because its workforce is large? Should the government bail out ailing corporations, such as Chrysler, when local economies would be greatly affected by plant closures?

Primozic intimates that Christian principles are not compatible with the corporate pursuit of profits. What are Christian business principles? Being honest in customer and supplier transactions? Producing safe

products? Purchasing energy-efficient technology? Offering employees health benefits? Providing outplacement services to laid-off employees when demand decreases? Providing training and education services to employees? Donating to charitable organizations? Sponsoring community events? Are not these behaviors also considered socially responsible? Indeed, many corporations already operate by these principles, even if only because of potential long-run profitability. Corporations can be socially responsible and can operate on Christian principles.

Primozic states that any social obligations apart from making money and obeying the law are optional for corporations. Is socially responsible behavior the domain only of corporations, however? Why put the entire onus of socially responsible behavior on corporations? Shouldn't all organizations have social obligations? And, more importantly, shouldn't we, as individuals? Let's personalize those questions that Primozic poses to corporations: Should I worry about pollution? Should I worry about the homeless in my community? Do I? Or do I act “socially responsibly” only when it is in my best interest to do so—when I become concerned about the homeless only after they've moved into my neighborhood park, when I start recycling only because my garbage fees will be reduced? If I do not make socially responsible decisions unless I am personally affected, how can we expect anything different from individual corporate decision makers?

Yes, corporations can make socially irresponsible decisions. And so can mom-and-pop businesses ... and nonprofit organizations ... and government agencies ... and so can we. Corporations, after all, are made up of people—people who may make socially irresponsible decisions, both at work and at home. Perhaps we should focus not only on the lack of social responsibility by corporations, but also on the lack of individual social responsibility, even in us Christians. Perhaps the perceived lack of social responsibility by corporations is but a symptom of individual social irresponsibility.



Photo by Wall Danyak

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The Ethics of Human Cloning

By Nigel M. de S. Cameron

■ My colleague John Kilner, who directs the Center for Bioethics at Trinity International University, has said, aptly, “I have met a lot of people who would like to be cloned. I have not yet met anybody who wishes they had been a clone.”

Let me set three contexts for our discussion and then focus on a number of the ethical issues.

Three Contexts

1. **BIOETHICS.** Cloning is one of many issues that have been hotly debated over the last 30 years, specifically in the context of “bioethics.” The word is new, coined so that issues of science, medicine, and ethics could be debated in a new way. The old term, “medical ethics,” carried all the overtones of the sanctity of life and the Judeo-Christian consensus on human dignity which had infused the Western notion of medicine. In the word bioethics, a clean start could be made.

2. **DIVORCE BETWEEN SEX AND PROCREATION.** When the history of the 20th century is written, I suspect that high on the list of achievements, good and bad, will be how we divorced sex and procreation. In part one of this process, back in the '50s and '60s, effective contraception was introduced. In part two, about two decades ago, in vitro fertilization came onto the scene. Louise Brown, the first in vitro baby, was born. This procedure has since been routinized in our health care system. The technology is morally ambiguous, but it has had an extraordinary effect on the capacity of our species to control our reproductive process.

To be candid, in light of cloning, in vitro seems rather old fashioned. You can go choose the kind of person—good in sports or the arts, height, eye color—to be the father of your child. You can buy the egg and the sperm on the Internet, and receive them by mail. You bring together the gametes and, in an environment which is appropriately conditioned, at least a certain proportion of them succeeds in fertilizing. If they are implanted,

you will have what in the trade is known as a “take home baby.” The take home baby rate, as many couples have found to their cost, is very low.

Not least among the ethical problems of this technology is the way it has been promoted through profit-making institutions at the couples who may be little aware that a lot of anguish lies ahead of them, and the chance of their actually having a healthy child is quite low.

In cloning, the latest prospect, we go further. It is asexual human reproduction—sex without procreation, and reproduction without sex. We may like it, we may not, but we have achieved it. And this is a development of historic significance for the human race.

3. **THE SPECTER OF EXPONENTIAL TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT.** The exponential development, the compounding effect of technology, particularly information technology, is not going to be stopped—at least as far as we can see. So the questions to confront us will become harder as we move ahead.

These are the three contexts. Our generation, however, is rarely able to set things in context and to look behind and around and in front of individual questions of technological capacity and its success. People say, “Look what we can do. Isn't this wonderful? I want it.” Unless you examine the contextual questions, you will never get at the significance of each incremental development.

The Cultural Mandate

However, it needs to be said that we Christians should be pro-technology. We have been given a creation mandate to subdue this earth. We are to use what God has put in His world to rule this world for Him. Technology isn't the problem. The problem is technology out of context—capacities which we

“I have met a lot of people who would like to be cloned. I have not yet met anybody who wishes they had been a clone.”

gain to rule this world out of the moral context in which we have been called to do the ruling.

In Genesis 1 you will find the crucial verse describing God's cultural mandate for us to rule the world. Part of our ruling the world is, of course, procreating. We are to fill the earth and subdue it. The fateful significance of human cloning is that it offers us a point of convergence between our ruling the world and our filling the world. Because technology comes to take over the process of procreation, we find ourselves undermining our dignity in our very attempt to exert our dignity as those whom God has placed in this world to rule on His behalf.



Photos by Dave Wittig

Nigel M. de S. Cameron originally presented these remarks at the CACE triologue workshops on "Recovering Personal Responsibility," held March 17-19, 1999, at Wheaton College.

Most of us followed the story about Dolly, the first cloned sheep, the most famous sheep in the history of the world, the only sheep ever to make all the news magazines in the week. When this was announced, nobody, worldwide, was prepared for its ethical and policy implications. It took us by surprise because we thought that achieving mammalian cloning would be far more costly and time consuming. There will be future surprises of this kind awaiting us as we move further along the track.

The Secularization of the Church

Of course, people will say, "But aren't most of the ethical problems you are raising the same problems that were raised with in vitro fertilization?" I don't know how many times I found myself saying, "Well, I don't think they were settled, but you are quite right. Most people think they were."

This is perhaps one of the most chilling examples of the secularization process within the evangelical church. I am most alarmed by the way in which in vitro fertilization has been domesticated by Christians. You try to raise a serious, moral objection to in vitro in a Christian context and you will offend somebody. On so many occasions, Sunday school or whatever, a couple will tell me, "Look at our baby. Isn't in vitro wonderful?" We have domesticated this question. All our slogans about being countercultural Christians aside, when push comes to shove, we have an extraordinary capacity for double thinking. Now, I am not saying that in vitro is

always wrong. It seems to me, however, that it is always dubious and a serious question. And I think many of its uses are plainly wrong. My point is, it is serious; it is a big issue.

I know of a number of young, unmarried Christian women who have considered in vitro fertilization, and I suspect there are others who have gone ahead with it. Because of this technology, you can avoid adultery and marriage and still have a baby. But this is using technology to bring about a wholly different kind of lifestyle from that to which the Bible leads us. We are here engaged in tithing mint and cumin and avoiding the weightier matters of the law. Technology could be one of the ways in which evangelicalism dissipates much of its moral energy at the end of the 20th century, through its lack of critical awareness.

Ethical Objections to Cloning

Cloning offers the prospect of completely asexual reproduction. Starfish reproduce asexually, as do others of the lower orders. This is not how mammals reproduce. Mammals reproduce by procreating. Cloning means moving from the interpersonal mystery of sex into Kinkos. If I may put it in these terms, it means moving from the bed to the photocopier. This doesn't just say something symbolic about human dignity; it does something to human dignity. You go all the way from two human beings in the interpersonal mystery of sex, to pressing a button on a copier, doing something in a lab. Human dignity, this most cherished recognition of Western civilization, is up for grabs.

The second ethical issue involves the question of choice. It is one thing to be able to send off to an Ivy League campus and to get your egg from some nice tall, white, bright young woman and then off to some West Coast lab to get sperm from an athlete, and you can mail this to a lab that will do it for you, cheap. You hope that you will end up with a wonderful, bright child whom you have designed, but you might end up with someone who rather spoils your planning, by falling from a bike or contracting a disease. This is all part of the way in which the dignity of our children is assured. You can press all the levers you want, but you cannot entirely determine the outcome. You can weight the dice, but God will determine how they fall. Even

with cloning, you have an illusion that you can determine precisely the outcome, but it's finally no more than that.

Potential for Abuse

If cloning gets out there, it won't just be infertile couples who use it. There will be people who want to buy some of Michael Jordan's genetic tissue. Soon enough it will be the religious heroes, too. Within a few years, we will have the birth of thousands of identical children reflecting the tabloid heroes. Whether 5,000 of your favorite sports star or singer is quite what you want, think what life will be like for the members of this new class of person who are all monozygotic "twins."

We will get all kinds of abuses of that kind, because people make strange decisions. And, of course, some of us would like to have children who are our twins as well as our kids.

The mother of a child who is the clone of her husband might well say, "This isn't my baby at all. This is your parent's baby. I just carried him, and anyway, he is your twin brother. So no wonder he behaves like you do!"

On "Nightline" I was presented with the hypothetical case of a couple with a child who is dying. This couple wants to have another baby who will be this child's twin, so they want to clone the dying child. I was challenged, "How can we say 'No' to them? Surely this is a good and proper use of cloning technology, isn't it?"

I said, "That is a good use? This child will grow up in counseling."

Think about it. Little Johnny has died. David is born an "identical twin." At a year, 18 months, two years old, it dawns on him that he is not an individual, but someone who has been brought into being as a manufactured copy of another.

Now we know the difficulties in growing up and rearing kids and staying sane in this crazy world when other things basically are serving our advantage. Imagine bringing into being a child who knows from the very beginning that

he or she is a copy of somebody else. The expectations are all distorted; the pictures are on the wall; the grave is there to be visited.

The anchor replied, "You know, Dr. Cameron is right. We will have to come up with a better case than that."

"Imagine bringing into being a child who knows from the very beginning that he or she is a copy of somebody else."



Nigel M. de S. Cameron is a member of the National Advisory Council for CACE and is former provost and distinguished professor at Trinity International University, Deerfield, Ill. He is president of Strategic Futures Group, LLC, a consulting firm that helps colleges plan for the future.

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The Family as the Seedbed of Democratic Citizenship

Conclusion

Democratic character flows from vital, character-shaping institutions in society, of which the family is the most foundational. According to Mary Ann Glendon, professor at Harvard, "Governments must have an adequate supply of citizens who are skilled in the arts of self-government." Liberal democratic values flower when rooted in the subsoil of virtuous and vibrant institutions. Periodically in American history, citizens have reacted to the general disregard of social standards and obligations, and with the help of societywide social reform movements, moved individuals toward restraint and social obligation. Spiritual awakenings,

temperance movements, and many private and public efforts were made to strengthen character and responsibility.

James Q. Wilson, who has tracked social reforms, says that "throughout history, the institutions that have produced effective male socialization have been private, not public."

The renewal of fatherhood and the renewal of civil society go hand in hand. Fathers have much to offer in strengthening communities, and community-based institutions can be mobilized to strengthen fathers—to reinforce their importance, to offer training and assistance, and to help them pass on to their children a strong fathering heritage.

CACE News & Notes

1999-2000

■ The theme for the coming academic year is “Violence and Peace.” Several events are planned for both the fall and the spring. Our office will gladly send you a schedule.

The Annual Penner Debate

■ Our first public event of the year will be on September 16 at 7:30 p.m. in Edman Chapel on the Wheaton College campus. The 1999 David A. Penner Debate—“The Use of the Human Genome: At What Point Do We Violate Humanity?”—will feature Dr. Francis S. Collins, the director of the National Human Genome Research Institute.

Two other speakers will present alternative perspectives: Dr. Ted Peters, a national leader in genetic ethics and currently at the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences at Berkeley, Calif., and Dr. Raymond G. Bohlin, the executive director of Probe Ministries (Texas) and a frequent lecturer and commentator on ethics and scientific advancements. Dr. C. Everett Koop, the chair of the CACE National Advisory Council, will moderate the forum.

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