

*Lovedness is the root of human life
& of the morality the Bible teaches.*

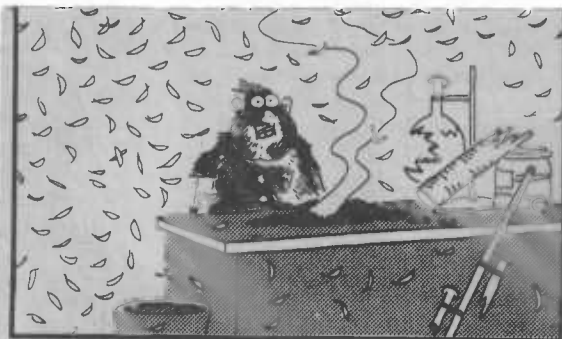
From your own life-story, jot down some evidences that this is so. Maybe just names, a very select list of those who have loved you into being & into being who you are, loved you into your hope of becoming what God wants you to be, you as God sees you forward. ...Now put a "B" in front of any whose lives were / have been profoundly shaped by the Bible's message--who had / have a deep sense of being loved by God.



1 Have you seen this newsphoto before, a four-year-old boy in a big hug with mom? How does it make you feel? What memories are feeding that feeling?....Some of you have seen this pic in #2555.20, where I confess that the thought that swept over me when I saw it in a newspaper was, "So much is RIGHT with the world!" and "That photographer is happy!" and "My heart sings praise to God when I see a pic that's technically excellent & humanly triumphant."....My next thought, swiftly following was, "How many millions of unhugged children in the world, O Lord!" All little boys need a mother's hug (& a father's), all little girls need a father's hug (& a mother's). Then I thought of Sister Souljah, whose rap's so full of hate: she never knew a father's hug. How much hate is motored more by the subjective fact of an inner void where lovedness should have been, than by objective circumstances. The void is not a mere absence. It is the presence of unlovedness, an unlovedness that expresses itself actively as hate & passively as low affect (apathy, indifference). These active & passive reactions to unlovedness combine to produce various forms of self-&-society destructive behavior--in a word, violence. Then violence fosters further alienation & isolation in the unloved, & public fear of them, a fear that wants to keep its distance--so the pressure to distance comes from both sides, the gap widens, & the desire to narrow the gap weakens. What then? Explosions like Watts '65 & South L.A. (including Watts) '92. CHOICE: **Love or violence?**

Of course I'm not suggesting that love-deprivation is the only source of violence. But I do believe that unlovedness is the deepest root of violence. Another is power-desire, sometimes hypertrophied into power-lust, which demands submission. Then (as Hannah Arendt spells out in her analysis of revolution), when the suppressed come to believe that the power-wielders are no longer able to sustain the suppression, violent resistance (riot, insurgency, revolt, revolution) occurs...."Violence" is a pejorative word to use for these three types of destructive activity, as though nothing needs destroying. "Force" is pejorative only in that it's antonymic to persuasion. My plea is for seeing the Whole Picture, instead of making propaganda out of some psycho- or socio-analysis.

2 **Love** takes at least 2: it's essentially communal. **Reason** takes 1 (though reasoning can be communal): it's essentially individual. Aristotle thought you human because you're a "rational animal." You are sort of rational, but is that what makes you human? In the morality the Bible teaches, what makes you human is creational connectedness (God's loving effort to make you, far tougher a project than making a chicken [21 Mar 92 THE FAR SIDE]) as it continues in parental love (zygote-embryo-fetus-neonate--including the invisible umbilical cord of nurturance of your whole being) + your trust-faith (which involves reason) + your assuming the beloved's responsibilities (which involves reason). *No one piece of this picture makes you human.* Morality's focus is on the last piece.



God as a kid tries to make a chicken in his room.

3 So morality, focusing on responsibility, must be against **having fun**--since the consciousness of being responsible occurs only at the points where duty calls against desire. The Puritan was & is indeed dis-tressed at that thought that at any given moment "somebody somewhere is having fun." But that joke comporteth not well with the fact that the Puritans were a joyful, fun-loving people. The resolution? Their joy centered in the Lord (in private & family devotion, in public worship, in neighbor-love, in the prayer-&-work continuum), & their fun was within the wide sphere of responsible love, with lovedness (God's love, parent-love, child-love, neighbor-love) setting the tonic & tone of life....Yes, they were severe on "transgressors" (lit., those who step over the moral lines, violating the limits of freedom). But is a society that accepts Murphy Brown really superior, in human values, to the society that rejected Hester Prynne?



"I found out what life is all about. It's having to do what you don't want to do."

4 Here's a story of unlovedness & its consequences, a story told on NPR's "Morning Edition" July 6-7/92. A highly talented boy dropped out of highschool in spite of the school's heroic efforts to keep him. (Let's not be too hard on our public schools. They must struggle with an almost unteachable mix of wannabe-taughts, don'twannabe-taughts, & can'tbe-taughts.) Multi-problem home. Father gone: "I was never hugged by my father." (Caught graffitioing "DAD" on buildings.) Loose mother; just had a baby by a boy only two years older than he; so many children running around her, little attention to any one of them. Welfare the only income. Anomic (duty-less) personality: "This is what I want to do. This is what makes me happy." (Contrast the "happys," the Beatitudes, of Mt.5.)

In prison, the dropout said to the NPR reporter, "I wasn't looking at the whole picture. It [my unsocial behavior] just seemed like the thing to do at the time." Morality looks at the whole picture, & parts of the picture say "You're not going to like this, it's not what you'd like to do." Remember the uncomfortable voice Jimminy Cricket & Pinocchio heard? In our dropout, conscience never developed or was early atrophied. He concluded (to use some words from this NEW YORKER cartoon) that "life is all about" having fun, doing your thing, which is whatever makes you happy at the moment. Contrast the boy in the cartoon for the opposite extreme: "Life is all about....having to do what you don't want to do [& not getting to do what you want to do]." The second boy knows love as parental discipline though perhaps not as affection; the first boy knows neither form of parental love, & only the discipline form of societal love (first the school, which he could evade; second the "correctional facility," which he could not avoid). The pathologies are clear, & so is social health, which flowers from the root of two-parent affection & discipline. It's stupid, & worse, of the media to come down hard on Quayle for saying so. It's included in the morality the Bible teaches, & life teaches, & church & school should unashamedly teach (no matter the rumpus from gays & single parents, who should be respected as civil equals despite their propaganda about the equality of "alternative lifestyles").

5 "I the Lord your God **love** you & **liberate** you, & here are the parameters of your freedom" (Ex.20, Deut.5). No, that's not the exact text of the Ten Commandments, but it's their tone. Think through the Decalog from this perspective & you'll easily see that violating any one of the "thou shalt/nots" results in a decrease of freedom: the Ten Commandments are liberationist! The basal fact of the Bible's morality is that we are God-loved, & commanded only within the sphere & limits of that love that liberates us from every Egypt, every enslavement, every addiction, every violation of our own best interest as the beloved children of God. Now ask yourself this: "If God would be less severe, & say 'Choose any nine,' which one would I drop?" Then project the personal & societal consequences of letting desire replace duty vis-a-vis the commandment you drop....Sadly, our dropout thought he was free when he was the slave of his desires.

6 A short reading-course in Christian morality could consist only of what I call the Three Fives, the fifth chapters of Deuteronomy, Matthew, & Galatians. When in church last Sunday I read my own translation of Gal.5, I hadn't yet read the translation appearing here (Contemporary English Version [American Bible Society, 1991]), which is excellent. Loved by God in the person & example of Jesus Christ, we are commissioned to love as God loves, other-regardingly & thus self-sacrificially (as in the Cross). "Above all, you must be loving, for love is the link of the perfect life" (Co.3.14 Moff.).

As you can see by Paul's vice- & virtue-lists here, deciding what to do is a dialog between text (the love commission) & context (the situation in which we are to act on love, on which, said Jn. of the Cross, we are to be judged "when the evening of life comes"), under the guidance of the Spirit. The situation-ethics movement has been long on context & short on text: let your ethical-relativistic conscience be your guide. Not quite "write your own Ten Commandments," but in that direction. Not a balance of order & freedom, & of tradition & modernity, but with freedom & modernity as top-dog. To this school, conformity to traditional standards of right/wrong, good/evil is itself a violation of "love." Result? Desire wins most of its battles against duty.

7 In the NT & its immediate sequel, the Apostolic Fathers, God wants to love you right into his kingdom & is eager to help you remove any roadblocks you want removed from your path thereto. Love was there before you, love wants to walk your path with you, & love awaits you at journey's end. **You are loved** on the way, as you **were loved** before the way & **will be loved** after the way. I've put my hands in the basin from which, seven centuries ago, the infant Dante was baptized, infilled & surrounded by the Love he celebrates in The Story ("The [Divine] Comedy"), the Love leading him through the Inferno & the Purgatorio to the Paradiso, where it appears as glory in the first line of Canto I: "The All-mover's glory penetrates through the universe...." In a vision, Beatrice, the personal symbol & memory of the conjunction of human & divine love (& thus a female parallel to the Incarnation), says to him, "All things whatsoever observe a mutual order; and this is the form that makes the universe like unto God." She confronts Dante's longing, as a creature having "both intellect and love," (1) warns him against "false seeming pleasure" (against being "seduced by false

delights"), & (2) tells him he should "no more wonder" at his desire to ascend unto God than he does at the fact that "a river drops down from a lofty mountain to the base." And Dante prays "from that of me which You did new-create [cf.2Cor. 12.2, Purg.25, Parad.Canto 3], **O Love who rule heaven**,...with Your light you lifted me up." Dante enters the paradox that freedom is a fruit of letting the heaven-ruling Love rule us, as all other ruling is slavery.

8 Now please read again this Thinksheet's first sentence. The morality the Bible teaches roots in **depositum amoris**, Love's deposit in us, in our bodies & minds & souls & spirits & relationships. My model for coining this Latin phrase is "depositum fidei," the technical theological term for the deposit of Christian faith throughout church history (a deposit sometimes also called "tradition"). While the

¹³My friends, you were chosen to be free. So don't use your freedom as an excuse to do anything you want. Use it as an opportunity to serve each other with love. ¹⁴All that the Law says can be summed up in the command to love others as much as you love yourself. ¹⁵But if you keep attacking each other like wild animals, you had better watch out or you will destroy yourselves.

God's Spirit and Our Own Desires

¹⁶If you are guided by the Spirit, you won't obey your selfish desires. ¹⁷The Spirit and your desires are enemies of each other. They are always fighting each other and keeping you from doing what you feel you should. ¹⁸But if you obey the Spirit, the Law of Moses has no control over you.

¹⁹People's desires make them give in to immoral ways, filthy thoughts, and shameful deeds. ²⁰They worship idols, practice witchcraft, hate others, and are hard to get along with. People become jealous, angry, and selfish. They not only argue and cause trouble, but they are ²¹envious. They get drunk, carry on at wild parties, and do other evil things as well. I told you before, and I am telling you again: No one who does these things will share in the blessings of God's kingdom.

²²God's Spirit makes us loving, happy, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, ²³gentle, and self-controlled. There is no law against behaving in any of these ways. ²⁴And because we belong to Christ, we have killed our selfish feelings and desires. ²⁵God's Spirit has given us life, and so we should follow the Spirit. ²⁶But don't be conceited or make others jealous by claiming to be better than they are.

actual deposit of love is imperfect in all of us, in some of us--the above dropout, eg--the human love-deposit hardly exists, & a self-destructive self-love fills the vacuum. This self-love takes various forms: (1) eudemonia (doing your current happiness-thing, including psychotropic drugs), (2) vocal rage (as in Sister Souljah's rap, & rap in general), (3) physical rage (as in Rodney King's attack on the police before the beating, wife-beating, & effort to run down a vice cop who was trying to stop King's car that had just picked up a transvestite). The flipside of this self-love is self-loathing, which is a primary cause of most suicides. In sum, love-deprivation leads to self-indulgence &/or some form(s) of violence, ie, the internal &/or external abuse of....

9**power**. Since our powers are gifts of God, Christian morality views power as (1) stewardship & (2) personal-interior (Prov.4.23: "Careful how you think! Your thoughts shape your life"; Mt.12.34, 15.18-20 // M.7.16). This perspective, in light of the Christ Event, determines (1) how Christians are to use power among themselves (Mt.20.25-28 // M.10.42-45) & (2) how Christians are to view, & relate to, secular power ("Render unto Caesar..." [Mt.22.21 & //s], "Obey state authorities," which "have been put there by God" [Ro.13.1; though persecution led to alienation from secular government, as Christian apocalypses, such as Rev., show]).

10 The Bible's morality teaches that **love**, the source of **power**, is the cure for the abuse of power. Positively, love promotes the virtues; negatively, it suppresses the vices. It does both interiorly (in "the heart," where love frees) & societally (in laws & institutions operating in the interest of **justice**, the communal form of freedom)....The ideal of "**liberty** and justice for all" confronts the sad fact that liberty for most requires non-liberty for some, & justice for most cannot always avoid in-justice for some in a society in which jurisprudence is not ideal. And since jurisprudence is ideal in no society, the actual operation of "justice" in any society will include some injustice. (Examples: sometimes the wrong person is ignorantly or even willfully punished, & the existence of some nations--eg, Israel & the U.S.A.--necessitates injustice to the earlier inhabitants. Good will, a dimension of love, will eliminate conscious injustice to the accused & seek to reduce injustice to the displaced to the minimum essential to the existence of the new state.)

11 Under the ultimate judgment of love & the proximate judgment of justice, what form(s) of **restraint** should "non-liberty for some" take? Call it the L.A.P.D., or Daryl Gates, or Rodney King Event, question. As an alternative to torture (R.K.'s beating), L.A. is trying to increase taxes enough to add 1,000 footpatrol police, to depress crime by (1) friendship, (2) improved prediction (from knowing better the probables of when/where/who), (3) increased threat (to would-be criminals), & (4) earlier intervention in crime incidents. In all this, love must raise questions signaled by the words restraint, suppression, repression, oppression. Given the whole picture, love would have to think about whether R.K.'s beating was excessive; sentimentality doesn't have to think about it, it snaps "Yes!" & instantly condemns the jury that, on almost all counts, said no.

*Apostolic Fathers

12 I did a study on lovedness vis-a-vis the early Christian (NT & AF) use of the two main words for inner **force**, both on the root κρατ/σ- (krat/s-). *Enkratia* means (literally) inner-strength or holding-in, (thus) **self-control**, temperance, (in sex control) chastity, (as self-restraint toward others) forbearance (according to Steele's TATLER, the central virtue of the English gentleman). Antonymic to it is *akrasia*, (literally) **un-control**, without self-control, (thus) self-indulgence (ending in) dissoluteness (violence to self), assault (violence to others), breach of contract (which Satan tempts to: 1Cor.7.5). The former word appears in the Gal.5 virtue-list (vs.23), & both words appear in Hermas (The Shepherd) Sim.9.15 virtue-vice lists. In the later, the moral temple has (Erechtheum-like) four maidens holding up the corners: faith, *enkrateia*, power (*dynamis*), & long-suffering (similar to the second maiden, temperance, as forbearance, patience, endurance when provoked, leniency). The vices are these women in black: un-faith, *akrasia*, disobedience, & deceit. Love (*agapē*) is in the climactic position among the eight additional virtues, the position hate (*misos*) has among the eight additional vices*.