

'A law written on the human heart'

I have claimed that one needs an absolute standard in order to pronounce moral judgment, and as yet no objections have been made which

to apprehend truths about God, and draw logical conclusions from what he observes. Through arguments and observations, we can gain intel-

THE ALTAR OF AN UNKNOWN GOD

JOEL P. SHEMPERT
Copy Editor



did not themselves appeal to absolute principles. But I have said little of what that absolute might be.

In the most basic terms, the Absolute is that to which we appeal whenever we call something "good" or "bad." It is what "good" means.

So, the question is before us. What is the Absolute? What is this "good" that we refer to as we judge the actions of dictators, presidents, and even, one hopes, ourselves? Is it like the Christian claim, or is there some other standard? How can we know what is right?

The most basic knowledge of right and wrong we have is our conscience. That is, we feel we should take certain actions, and that we should not take others. Paul put simply that we have "a law written on the human heart."

This "natural law" is a good start toward determining morality, but it is imperfect. We differ greatly on moral views, and seem hardly capable of obeying even our own consciences. C.S. Lewis wryly observed that the uniqueness of humanity is that we have a law by which we feel we ought to behave, yet so often we do not follow it.

There is, of course, a point of view which suggests that a Being, a Personality, an Ultimate Reality called God, is the source from which human understanding of right and wrong flows. If this is the case, then we come to the question, "How can we discover this Absolute?" We must determine the ways God, if He exists, has revealed Himself to mankind.

There are three ways by which we can obtain knowledge of the supernatural. The first is through pure reason. Our intelligent mind is able

lectual knowledge of God. The second source of divine knowledge is through supernatural experience. Mystic encounters such as those of Moses, St. Paul, or Joan of Arc, provide unique knowledge of something beyond human understanding. They have gazed into Deep Heaven, and returned to tell the tale.

Yet neither of these sources is infallible. Reason is a powerful tool, but a person's logic may be flawed, or the result of false premises. And the experience of the mystic is not to be dismissed, but such revelation often defies description, and is quite subjective. God works through different individuals in different ways. Such knowledge of the divine is not always conclusive.

The third source contains a startling and controversial claim—that the Eternal God has chosen throughout history to reveal Himself through an inspired and written Word. The debate over this Word's authenticity is a deep and complex issue, but if this claim is true, then there is concrete knowledge of God's attributes which man can obtain. The moral debate has moved beyond guesswork and opinion.

We now have a collection of thoughts which we can test against reality and determine if its principles best describe the universe that reason and observation reveals to us. The moral claims made by this Word, the Bible, can be judged our reason and our consciences for validity.

This Book states in Paul's letter to the Galatians, for instance, that the "fruit of the Spirit" (that is, the qualities produced in our behavior by God's Spirit dwelling in us) is "love, joy, peace, gentleness, faithfulness, goodness, and self-control." That these qualities are self-evidently good by the light of conscience is summed up beautifully by Paul: "Against such there is no law." These are the absolutes of which I have spoken.

I show you a more excellent way.



We're getting off to a quick start

I would like to start off this week by apologizing to Religion Instructor, Bill Briare for the mess we made of his letter to the editor that we ran in issue No. 5

we had a commentary by Karl Katzke on the purchase of a sculpture by Oregon artist Devin Laurence Field. Nothing like taking a stick to a hornet's nest to see

what will happen when the nest gets knocked to the ground. We have an excellent art department here at CCC and they responded to Karl's argument with enthusiasm. Some of these letters are printed today, too.

There have also been other responses to the commentary about Paul of Tarsus that Mr. Shempert wrote three weeks ago. I've been hearing rumors that instructors and their students have been discussing Mr. Shempert's remarks in class. I then received an e-mail from Diane Averill that some of her students decided to each write a response to the com-

mentary. I am very glad to hear that these discussions are going on. The discussion, the responses, the attention around campus to issues presented in the paper are some of the effects a newspaper is intended to have on its readership. Some of the letters from the students in Diane Averill's class have been included in this week's letters to the editor.

I also want everyone to know that responding to our group of commentators is not the only chance to have a favorite issue published. At any time, anyone, student or faculty, administration or classified staff, can bring in an opinion on whatever issue they feel needs to be brought to the attention of our readers. Keep it under 300 words and we can see that it gets in the paper. (As for those who write more than 300 words, and we know who you are, bring it in anyway; we can always edit the magnum opus to a mere masterpiece.)

THE SACRED & THE PROFANE

ROBERT SCHOENBERG



(Nov. 4, 1998). We left two words misspelled, and in one sentence, left out a word entirely. Needless to say, mistakes like these can make a drastic change in the meaning of the text.

Again, I am sorry for the errors. The letter is repeated this week on the next page, error free. Please, everyone, read it again.

Also in the our previous issue

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