

opinions

We're all on a highway to hell

Western society is without belief for the first time since the decline of active devotion in the official religion of the Roman Empire. Our situation is unprecedented.

There is no example in the last two thousand years of civilization surviving for fifty years without belief. There is nothing in traditions or mythology to deal with it. As an immediate result we have been overcome by individualistic focused beliefs. The strongest social and economic fashions have taken on the full aura of self-serving religious belief for a short period of time. We have devoted ourselves to economic growth at all costs. And to uncontrolled consumption.

We have given ourselves over to abstract ideas such as capitalism, socialism, market economics or nationalization (multiculturalism). Things as lovely as nuclear energy have been vested to suffice short term consumption goals at long term expense. We

have fallen into drug epidemics and sexual anarchy; our generation X has become a manifestation of deification of personal ambition.

The modern experiment to live without religion has had disastrous consequences for mankind. We know that this century is the most violent ever achieved by man. We tend to blame this on the invention of new weapons of mass destruction (which is the single most manufactured product in the US). But weapons are inanimate objects. And men have often shown themselves capable of remarkable self-control, even when weapons are at hand and victory is sure. In this century we have opted not to control ourselves. Inexplicable violence is almost always the sigh of deep fears being released and there can be no deeper than that of morality. Enchained, we have become a spectator society. As Nietzsche put it, morality is often the herd instinct of the individual who has become ill

equipped or is unwilling to participate on a community level.

The marked absence, in every occupation, of role models for children is so glaring that TV now provides the role models. Children as well as adults are becoming programmed with values that glamorize violence, lust, addiction, greed and selfishness. Is it surprising that the computer age is now the age of anxiety? Without a sense of self there is deep anxiety. The crisis in self-esteem, drug addiction and random teenage violence can be traced to absence of values in home, school, church and society. The failure to differentiate between right and wrong is not due to the complexity of the modern age with its new technologies but the eclipse of our conscience. We have given up on this world. We have to remind ourselves of the hope and pride we had in the past. We must once again enter the institutions that make us feel more charitable.

One of the reasons we are unable

to recognize the necessary relationship between morality and peace is that moral traditions are a product of civilization, and we have little knowledge of our own "civilization" because of the ruthless manifestation that present day communication has become.

The best way to avoid such confusion is to actively participate once again in present day religion with the intention of wanting to help it grow to new levels of enlightenment. Or we could replace the present day structure by a generally agreed-upon ethical relationship, which is saying the same as the latter. That, interestingly enough, is the central purpose of democratic society. The citizen has trouble remembering this because the ideologues profess that values are in flux because ethics, although worthy, are naive. I contend this is true of a idealistic society but not the one which is proposed here.

John Howard, president of Rock-

ford College makes this statement, "If freedom is to survive, the public schools and Universities must go back to teaching and emphasizing four basic attitudes, namely respect for the law, respect for private property, self-restraint, and self-reliance."

As future professionals we have a role and a responsibility to preserve that freedom by helping to pass on these crucial moral values. Twentieth-century man is a scientific and technical giant but a moral idiot. We are all miracles and it is time we acknowledge the keys we all possess to unlock our fears and feeling of isolation. For those who seek this reawakening, here are a few suggested books: the Bible, The Foundation for Inner Peace's *A Course in Miracles*, Chogyam Trungpa's book *Shambhla: The Sacred Path of The Warrior*, William Bennett's *The Book of Virtues*, and John Saul's *Voltaire's Bastards*.

Ron Samson

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largest cause of death of young adults. Education is quickly becoming a privilege of the well-to-do and well-fed. Taxes go up every year while the average person makes less.

And yet, the government is more than willing to give convicted violent offenders a free ride. They don't work, they don't pay taxes, they don't in any way provide society with a useful service. They certainly don't cover the costs of keeping themselves incarcerated. And of course, even if their victims can find it in their hearts to forgive, the innocence that was stolen, the lives taken can never be replaced.

At the same time, the government seems unwilling to commit itself whole-heartedly to finding a cure to a disease that is ravishing the lives of thousands with no end in sight or to feed and clothe the homeless, much less provide them with the training that will allow them to take care of themselves. They are unwilling to give disadvantaged students a hand in getting a quality university education or job training. Why on earth should someone who has violated the personal rights of another person find themselves in a position where they are provided with food, health care and an education gratis, paid for by the society that they preyed upon and then, in a relatively short period of time, find themselves free?

There are those who believe that the purpose of the criminal justice system is not to extract revenge on those convicted of a crime. My response however, is that the criminal justice system is not that of a drunk tank, holding violent offenders for a time, but eventually releasing them vast majority of them.

Those people, almost all of them men, who commit such violent crimes, should be allowed to set foot in free society. I agree that the criminal justice system isn't there to exact revenge. It is however there to PROTECT society and all the innocent victims like Melanie Carpenter.

How many more like Melanie will it take before people like Auger are locked away for the rest of their lives? Even if a dozen Auger's are able to turn their lives around, are those twelve success stories worth one Melanie

I don't think so.

Oscar Mire

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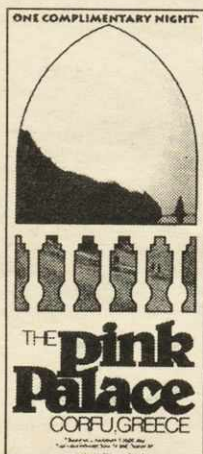
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