

THOUGH I FIRST heard the words nearly fifty years ago, they still ring in my mind. There in tropical North Queensland, the land of crocodiles and monsoons, sharks and cyclones, sweaty bare feet and boys who often ran wild like animals, I emerged imperceptibly into my contemporary heathen society. At the theater each Saturday afternoon (a theater where during the evenings the wall blinds were rolled up so cool

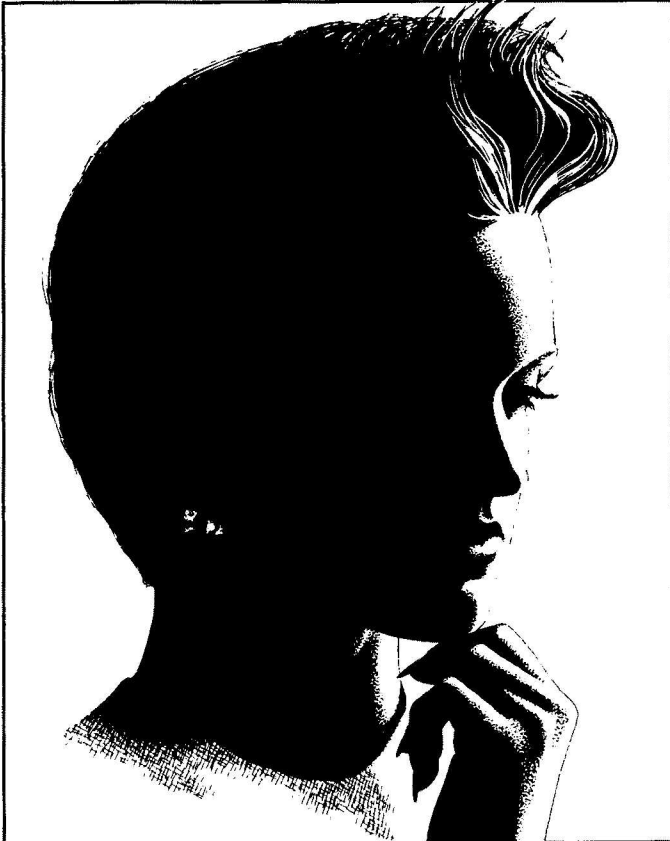
again and again and again? Why do we never seem to learn? From whence can come the motivating power to enable us to do what we know we ought to do? That's the theme of this article. Drawing from the best medical book in the world, we shall tell the truth about human nature and set forth the sovereign remedy for all our ills.

There Is a Right and Wrong, Cause and Effect

The reason that a searcher after revealed truth does not need to understand Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, archaeology, textual criticism, higher criticism, exegesis, hermeneutics, apocalyptic, dogmatics, etc., etc., is because the truth of Holy Writ is self-authenticating. Scripture affirms that the universe is moral because it has been made by One who is innately holy and just. Scripture teaches that there is a difference between right and wrong, as sharp as the difference between night and day, and life and death.

Scripture teaches, moreover, that there is a cause-effect relationship operating throughout the whole universe. None of this is really hard to believe, as every person's experience is a microcosm of what is happening throughout the whole world. Modern science could never have started but for the belief in a creator who ran the universe by law, and therefore necessitated the cause-effect relationship that permeates all activities. The modern scientist assures us gravely that when a baby throws

Why do we make the same mistakes again and again and again?



WHY DO WE NEVER LEARN?

(Part One)

by Desmond Ford

breezes could blow upon excited cheeks), I enjoyed the adventure stories of sin and judgment. For in those days, before the existentialist philosophy hit us, evil in screen stories inevitably brought judgment. Among what we called the "shorts," were very brief police stories, and the moral to each of these stories was given by the speaker at the close—"crime does not pay!"

In our souls we were not convinced. Why do we make the same mistakes

its rattle out of the baby buggy, it affects the motion of a furthest star. And yet, convinced though we are that the universe is run by law and that that law at its essence is moral, we never learn sufficiently to cease being deceived repeatedly by sin and folly.

An Example from the Third Reich

Take, for instance, Obersalzberg Mountain, Hitler's mountain, that overlooked the town of Berchtesgaden.

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The scenery is magnificent. In the Wolf's Lair, the fortress resort built by the Nazis high atop Obersalzberg, Hitler found frequent refuge. At this mountain he finished writing *Mein Kampf* before he came to power. The entire mountain became a Nazi retreat for party leaders, Gestapo, and others.

If you go to Berchtesgaden today to hunt for Hitler's headquarters, you will find the driveway completely blocked and overgrown. If you get to what was once Hitler's home, you will find the concrete moldering and the bricks crumbling. Only a few concrete blocks and iron ventilation shafts remain of the once-imposing house. A visitor described it as "a dead, dead place!" Yet it was once the nerve center for the Third Reich which was intended to last a thousand years.

Of course, no European in 1941 would have said that crime did not pay. All surrounding evidence said crime did pay, for the victorious Nazi divisions had conquered most of Europe. But this only shows, once more, how correct Scripture is when it not only affirms that sin brings judgment but also warns us that sin is a sowing which may take time to come to harvest.

An Example from Drugs

Let us come closer home. *Newsweek*, of June 4, 1984, contained a story concerning the multitudes of Americans now struggling to break the grip of drugs and alcohol. We quote:

The snapshot is frightening: A grinning skeleton of a man wearing a Lacoste shirt. "Look at that," says Paul, 37, a lawyer and owner of a trucking firm. "Matchsticks for arms and slits for eyes. Eighty-seven pounds and coked out of my gourd." In the five years before the photo was taken, Paul explains, he "snorted away, his wife, his suburban home and \$500,000. After the drug ate away the cartilage inside his nose, he bought liquid cocaine and droppered it into his eyes. Then a year and a half ago, shortly after posing for the cadaverous photo, Paul pointed a .38 pistol at his head. . . .

The same article went on to speak about the fact that 35,000,000 Americans were users of illicit drugs in 1982.

An Example from the Failed Sexual Revolution

Of course, there are much more "respectable" crimes against society and the self. Illicit sex is one of these. It is astounding that in recent years even prominent figures who helped inspire the sexual revolution of the sixties have begun to confess that it didn't work. Such men now acknowledge that casual sex does not offer a satisfying meal but rather a plastic-wrapped fast-food product. The fact that between 9 and 15 million new cases of sexually transmitted diseases are contracted each year in this country alone gives adequate support to such confessions from another angle—not one of satisfaction but of health. Only the fact that it is many of the same people contracting additional sexual diseases within their own generation, prevents the above-mentioned statistic from meaning that all Americans from earliteens up would soon have venereal disease.

A limited percentage of the younger generation are beginning to suspect that moral crime does not pay. Said one boy recently:

I don't care whether it's wrong, I want to know whether it's smart. Now don't give me your old religious pitch. I'm looking for some adult who will cool his moral fever long enough to tell me what is smart for me. I have this girl on the make and she says she wouldn't mind. But I want to know, would I mind? What am I going to think of me? You can go anywhere in the world to get away from a pregnant girl or from a boy who took it away from you but you can never get away from you. Every morning when you get up you are going to look in the mirror and there you are.

We have heard from childhood that it's love that makes the world go around, but somehow we've confused love with lust. Sex was never meant to be a main dish in the feast of life. It's a garnish. True love has much more to do with giving than with taking, with improving things rather than desecrating them. Marriages launched by sexual attraction alone have no staying power. Said a typical mismated wife, "You've heard of the Sphinx—well, I married it." Despite

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the mixing of metaphors, it's appropriate to say that silence from a spouse is a far cry from the whisperings of sweet nothings before sexual attractions became dim.

Howard Hughes

I have toyed with the possibility of one day writing a book drawing from modern biographies evidences that the Christian way is the only real way to live successfully. Tragically, the people who best demonstrate that moral crime does not pay rarely have any wish to write autobiographies. So far as we know, Howard Hughes didn't write one. Among his gods had been financial success and he had succeeded indeed. He wasn't a millionaire, he wasn't a multimillionaire, he was a billionaire. It's estimated that he owned over \$2 billion worth of real estate, etc. What was his life like in those closing years? Half lunatic for the final fifteen years of his life, he neglected himself dreadfully. It cost millions of dollars just to take his entourage of four doctors and six Mormon helpers (his guards), from country to country. He lived in luxury hotel penthouses. He let his straggly beard grow down to his waist, his matted hair fall halfway down his back; he refused to cut his fingernails until they were two inches long, and his toenails until they looked like yellow corkscrews. What a miserable life for anybody, let alone a man who could have bought anything he wished in this world—except peace, health and happiness. Of course, not all who worship mammon experience such a weird climax to life. It may be that the air crashes of Hughes had paved the way for his eccentricities. But having said that, how many people do you know of who, having made the pursuit of money the first thing in their life, have gone on to find health and happiness trailing along behind will-of-the-wisp wealth?

Personal Health Habits

Take our personal health habits. Everybody knows that they ought to exercise. Some are aware that the most sedentary have eight times more likelihood of an early death than the most active. But only the minority really want to exercise. We don't really believe that God meant it when he

declared, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread" (Gn 3:19). We forget that exports must match imports, and, consequently, about one in three in this country has a problem with encroaching obesity, and about one in four regularly goes on diets. We take in platefuls of compacted energy by way of imports, but our exports are very much deficient in the matter of the expenditure of energy.

Think also of the 50 million in this country who still worship at the shrine of nicotine. Ninety percent of them have tried to give up smoking and failed. Apparently they don't really want to give it up enough. If we watched a man burning ten-dollar bills, we would know he was crazy. Or if he drenched himself in gasoline and went looking for a match, we would suspect the same. Yet this habit of over 50 million smokers in the USA is not different in principle to either of these. I use again the love letter of one smoker that I quoted in my book on stress.

You are closer to me than any living creature, reposing in my pocket near my heart. With my lips, I caress you more than I do my family. When I awake, my thoughts turn to you and remain there all the day. I worship at your shrine with burnt offerings, constantly. At my desk, the fires seldom go out on your altar. I scatter your incense of smoke in the faces of my loved ones. I call upon you more than upon my creator. I pay more money for you than to the church and charities combined. I risk my life for you. By smoking, I take one chance in eight of having lung cancer and twice as many chances of death from heart attack. I take no such risk for my religion. I bear in my body the marks of my devotion to you—the color of my fingertips and skin. My body is so soaked with nicotine incense that when I perspire, many people hold their noses and walk away. A new light is dawning. I have become your slave. I do not smoke but suck one end of the cigarette while you smoke at the other. I am a sucker!¹

Why We Are Slow to Learn

Why is it that we do not learn that moral crime indeed does not pay?

*True love
has much
more to do
with giving
than with
taking, with
improving
things
rather than
desecrating
them.*

The universe is run by law and that law at its heart is moral.

Why are we so much like tortoises in the speed with which we regress from our wrong habits? Scripture has the only right answer. It tells us that the heart of man is desperately wicked, and every imagination of his heart from his youth up is evil continually. Scripture says that we have cut the cord that once united us to God. An unholy spirit dwells within us instead of the original Holy Spirit. It is time for all sane people to look again at the biblical doctrine of original sin, a doctrine of human depravity. Let none ever be ashamed to consider the religious answer to the human dilemma. All other answers have been tried and failed. If God exists, then outside of

him there is nothing but death. A moment's thought should convince us that he either matters tremendously or he doesn't matter at all.

SUMMARY

All moral truth is self-authenticating. Light proves itself, we never prove light.

The universe is run by law and that law at its heart is moral.

History and biography are replete with illustrations and examples that only righteousness works in a permanent sense. ☐

1. *Coping Successfully with Stress and Distress*, pp. 30-31.

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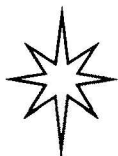
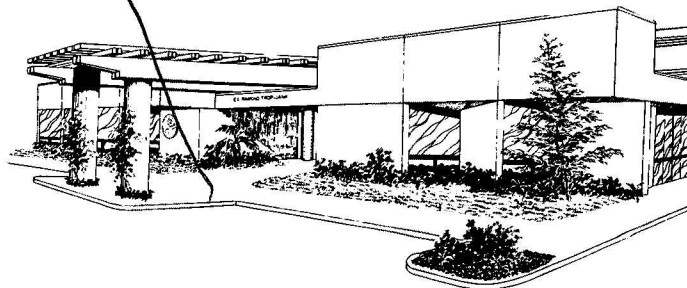
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