

Individual Ethics Response

By Dallas Willard

Dallas Willard:

Let me just preface my first round of comments by a few remarks about the focus of the conference as I understand it and this is stated in this little bulletin which you may have seen under the heading "The Dilemma" Just a few words here. To date, I don't know whose words these are. Perhaps the author will stand up. "To date, Christians of Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox commitment have identified certain activities as being evil, but they have yet to set forth before the general public the wisdom, propriety, and genius of their ethic." I want to re-read that and I believe it's true. I believe it is profoundly true and extremely important. "They have yet to set forth before the general public the wisdom, propriety, and genius of their ethic." And I submit that it would be very instructive if a person were able to sample effectively opinion, general opinion in this country as to what a Christian ethic is. Not in a group like this but with your ordinary church attending Christians, with your ordinary non church attending Christians and your ordinary non-Christians. And I I would suggest to you that if you were to do that, and I have some opportunity of this in virtue of teaching where I do. Uh if you were to do this you would be very very discouraged at what you've heard. And I would uh I'm sure that what you would come out with is something which you would hesitate to call an ethic at all.

Now, that's partly due to the fact that many of these people wouldn't know an ethic if it ran over them in the middle of the road. So hehe in part you can dismiss it in that way. On the other hand, it does refer to a very fundamental problem about our um contemporary teaching, and I think that the statement from the brochure uh makes and excellent point. We have not succeeded in setting forth to the general public the wisdom, propriety, and genius of our ethic. You know I think that there are some crucial uh things to be said about the situation of ethical reflection today. I I will try to put it this way since my role here is not to deliver an uh independent discourse. I will try to limit my comments but I wish to make certain points which I think bear very importantly on the whole issue of ethics and ethical theory and therefore on personal or individual ethics.

When I speak of a personal or individual ethics I refer to the standards or ideals by which a human being is judged to be a good or bad person. Derivatively, by which they are judged to have satisfied or failed certain obligations or duties or to have done what is right or wrong in a context which reflects favorably or unfavorably upon their standing as a good or bad person. In my view the fundamental datum of ethics is the contrast between good human beings and bad human beings. And I would be surprised if many of you, being raised and nurtured in the contemporary atmosphere aren't a little uneasy at this point, because there is a very deep redolence to deal with being a good or bad person. Our society has trained itself in various ways to back off from that issue and ethical theory as a professional discipline in the academic and intellectual world has been a part of the retreat from dealing with this contrast. And I think in many ways the Christian church has been uh has complied with this. Partly by teaching things about how we're all sinners and how as the bumper sticker says we're not perfect, we're just forgiven.

And uh in some circles the doctrine of not only salvation by grace but paralysis by grace. And I think we have been complicit in this. And I think that this contrast is the fundamental datum and uh those of you who teach or know the history of ethics I think will recognize that for the great greater period in the history of ethical thinking indeed that has been regarded as the fundamental datum. Now, this contrast goes much deeper than what people actually do. It is rather a matter of what people would do, could do, under a wide range of possible circumstances of human life which may in fact come to pass. It is what the person would do, what they could or could not bring themselves to do under specifiable circumstance that shows the content of their character and occasionally we edge up to the point of trying to say something about hat now-a-days, especially since there's been a little revival of what you, some of you will recognize as virtue ethics.

And when we talk about the content of the character, we're talking about the stuff that makes up our souls. We're talking about the thoughts that we harbor or that harbor us. We're talking about feelings and inclinations, we're talking about values. We're talking in an interesting turn of English, we're talking about what occupies us, occupies us. See this is why something like the amount of time spent watching television is such a morally significant thing. It is because for that amount of time a person allows themselves to be occupied by whatever trivial drivel comes across that screen. Whatever evil and perhaps worst of all the picture of the good that is presented. You see it is this that this stuff in us that faithfully expresses the kinds of persons we are. That when one did not steal or lie or abort or whatever is of course a significant fact. But, by itself it does not show that we are dealing with an honest or pure person. We have to know whether the restraint came from within whether it is something that is proper to the person, and independent of the circumstances. One that doesn't shoplift because of hidden cameras or the

presence of the house detective is not because they didn't not shoplift, morally praiseworthy and at most has good sense.

Now, it's crucial to say this from the outset. Not only because it gives the orientation of comments to follow, but also because it touches the point where contemporary ethical thinking is most deficient. And where the uh Christian contribution to ethical theory is greatest, where its genius, to use the words of the brochure, shines brightest. Currently, with erratic efforts toward a virtue theory exempted ethical theory in the United States is almost totally devoted to rights and the consequences of actions. It fanatically avoids discussions of good and evil personality. And so you can have people who uh for example just to refer to things that are current, the Maple Thorpe exhibit, and the pictures of men urinating in other men's mouths and uh so this will be, there will be a big discussion about whether or not this hurts anybody. There'll be a big discussion about people's rights to choose to see it. There'll be a big discussion about the use of the rights of people to be supported by the government you see. You see, we have to finally come around to the question of the of the of this question, what kind of persons are involved in such things? What kinds of persons urinate in other people's mouths? What's the stuff that makes up their souls? What kinds of persons make photographs of them? What kinds of persons make up a society in which issues like these can be discussed? The rap groups, same sort of story. Someone asked a rapper the other day; they counted the number of times the F-word occurred on the particular CD. And the person replied well after all people go home and in their beds they use the F-word so why not?

Now when you're dealing with someone who can ask that question, you have to recognize that there are limits as to what progress you're going to make with them. Right. You have to recognize that there is, there are deeper issues to be brought up, and what I'm saying is um that

we, in order to get a hold of ethical theory and I can't go at any length into what an ethical theory would amount to this morning but to think and let's just say to think coherently about all the judgments which might, if you were just to go around collecting everything that looks like an ethical judgement to think coherently about that, you're going to have to look at this issue of good and bad persons, and what the difference is between them. And that's exactly where Jesus addressed his own words. I refer you to passages like Matthew 12:33-37\ . Where Jesus says either make the tree good and its fruits good or make the tree evil and its fruits evil. And goes on to talk about how behavior comes out of the abundance of the heart.

Now this this is what I'm saying to you this morning is that if we're going to deal with personal ethics, that's what we're going to deal with. The abundance of the heart is what there is a lot of in the heart. And it is out of what there is a lot of in the heart that action and thought and word then proceed. And so in that passage Jesus very insightfully indicates that the words which we speak when off guard, that is idle words are the ones by which we will be judged. And this matter, this emphasis on the heart is of course not one Jesus alone has, you find it in Plato or Aristotle or in Kant. And in all of these great traditional thinkers you will find the same teaching that the central issue of ethics what we may, in biblical language call the heart. It is a personality and of course we need to say other things here. We can't say a lot but we need to say other things like it is a personal God who stands in this universe as the standard of personal goodness. Not what he says but what he is. Not anything he does but what he is. And he alone is the moral standard of the universe against which every person is measured for their moral stature. And he has expressed himself, as Paul said to the ethical thinkers of this day on Mars Hill; he has expressed himself in a person by whom also he will judge the world. That is every person at

some point in their trajectory as a personal being is going to be stood up by Jesus Christ and measured by who he was as a reflection of God.

Now, you see our problem is that we've said that well now this is preaching this is not moral theorizing and let me just ask you to extend this one final uh thing about this on the abstract issue of moral theory. If Jesus was who he said he was he probably understood moral theory, wouldn't you say? Maybe even Physics and Logic. And we have a problem today in taking the scriptures seriously intellectually. And if we're going to show the genius of the Christian ethic we have to look at it in that way. Well there's an awful lot more I'd like to say. Maybe I'll take the chance after father Bender speaks to say a little more, but now I'd like to turn to just a few remarks about uh Jim's paper which uh reminded me of the days when I was in college and I constantly struggled with the temptation why am I here studying when souls are going to hell and I should be out there evangelizing. And this issue that Jim deals with is so painful and is so searching and so deep that you really do, when you look at the forceful way he puts it have have the challenge of justifying why you're doing anything else, and he mercifully did indicate that he wasn't saying that everyone out to be blocking the doors to the abortion mills but still it's such a challenging and um penetrating uh discussion and goes to the heart of this basic Christian, Christ question.

What kind of people are we today? In America. I think I just want to say that I just find his argument completely convincing and right. I think that I would take it I want to not so much criticize as possibly extend it. I do think, and one of the things I've been watching with great interest is the extent to which the hierarchy of the Catholic is going to stand up to political pressure. And the case down in San Diego and other cases around the country have been a real challenge because in our living memory, most of us here we can remember when a Catholic was

automatically challenged by their allegiance to Rome as to whether or not they could junction in the American political arena. And now having worked through that, we have this challenge. And I must say I'm hopeful that there is going to be enough strength in the hierarchy to stand up and represent the views which have tentatively advanced rather tentatively that you must take a stand against your own adherence if they do not obey the teaching of the church about the sanctity of life.

Now what measures are to be taken of course is a difficult practical matter, but I think this is one of the greatest opportunities and in the context of that we need to say something very important. There is nothing sacred about democracy. I'm gonna say that again. There is nothing sacred about democracy. God never says anywhere that democracy is the best way of government, the Christian way of government, the Godly way of government. He never says that. In fact, if you were to look at the contents of scripture and I think tradition you might find that there are suggestions that democracy is not of course those of you who spend time dealing with these kinds of issues know that there are many many ways that democracy can be taken. But the criticisms by someone like Plato in "The Republic" of democracy, the criticisms that have come down through the ages and continue up to our present day need to be carefully weighed. You see what lays back of a kind of feeling that democracy is a sacred thing is something which is on uh the front of uh an abortion mill on Vermont ave. on uh Figueroa by USC. It is a big banner which says "Choice above all" Choice above all.

Now, you know that is not a biblical conception, to put it mildly. The issue is whose choice? In what role does self-denial have to do with a Christian ethic? And now we're really getting un-American because the unrestrained pursuit of freedom understood in the sense of the Chris Christopherman' song freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose. Freedom aint

worth nothing but it's free. Freedom as knee-jerk impulse. Freedom as no chains on me. See that is an idolization. And that together with the exultation of hedonism in our time brings us to the heart of the kind of people we are. I have heard statistics quoted that as high as 90 percent of abortions are the result of adultery. Can we speak out about abortion and remain noncommittal about adultery. Can we speak out about adultery and remain noncommittal about the sexual sauna in which we either are forced or choose to live constantly. And uh these kinds of questions become very very urgent. What kind of people are we if we live in such a way as to generate masses of unwanted babies and then claim to have the right to kill them as we please. And they say we, because you see when it gets right down to it, we're talking about something that it is very hard to divorce ourselves from because these actions come out of a context in which we share and perhaps we have to cry as Isaiah did, I am a man of unclean lips and live in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

So I want to commend strongly the argument which Jim gives and thank him for it and I hope I have not blunted the sharp point of what he has to say by insisting that there also are deeper issues and that we cannot touch the genius of the Christian ethic until we are willing to deal with this fundamental question about what kinds of people we are, until we recognize that it is in the care of the heart that the final ethical issues are dealt with. And I think I will save the rest of what I have to say until after Father Bender's talk. [inaudible] And I will just sort of go over what uh Father Bender has to say and make my final comments if that's alright. And if I get farther out of line please speak hehe alright um [inaudible comment from audience] Tim why don't, yes why don't you just come up here and stand with em and then address your comments to the one or the other.

Speaker 2:

I appreciated both of these remarks and I appreciated um uh Dr. Willard's uh clarification. One point that he had touched on a different level of the question uh I, yes, yes Jim Spear from Trinity Divinity School um I did find a little surprising your embrace of what Dr. Hanak has shared and wonder if it doesn't mask part of the core of the problem here. It seems to me that [inaudible] would probably not, at least ostensibly disagree with you that the fundamental issue is one of personal goodness. But it seems to me that his posture uh represents the heart of the problem and one which Dr. Hana has attempted to address, which is how do you translate your personal view of goodness into the public arena uh if the major agenda is to set before the general public the wisdom, propriety, and genius of our ethic, which assumes that there would, in the setting forth of that, be a positive response to it.

Um, it seems to me that Dr. Hana has proposed a suggestion, a very different posture that is to say that especially because eh has challenged the point that that uh number one there is a consensus for abortion, number two even if there was that that's an appropriate, that, that the Christian posture for that would settle for that consensus as the definition of what is appropriate in the public arena, and he's pressed on to suggest that that we even should go so far that is to say that that there is there's and issue of power here, not just a question of the appeal of our ethic on a rational or theological basis which would then be condensing and persuasive and change the way people would act, but in fact here's an issue of power and that we must be willing even to lay our own bodies on the line and oppose the public order. So that the, the basic question is ethic and ethic as far as ethic reform in a free society the basic question is are there basic

Christian positions which at times must involve the embrace of power, that is use of coercion in order to change the public order even against the specious consensus in favor of abortion. The question then becomes how we do in a free society and you've already suggested democracy isn't sacred but certainly one of the issues here is the question of freedom. How in a free society do we justify the embrace of power to change the public order? And you've suggested there's a hierarchy of uh importance to certain issues and the question of human life and abortion is serious enough and threatens enough the public good that that's an issue at which we must be willing to embrace power, even most personally putting our own bodies on the line to attempt to alter the public order. It seemed to me that your remark did not, while your point is absolutely correct, and you say that it is the most important contribution that Christianity has to ethics is the, really the redemption of the person, but it does not connect adequately to the basic point you're making which is that there are times at which we must be willing to embrace power to alter the public order. The question becomes on what grounds do we justify that embrace of power in a free society? Now I'm not, I wanna know if I'm interpreting you correctly or if I've-

Speaker 3:

All the words get used differently don't they. Uh, my first reaction would be that I don't want to appeal to power uh I think often times the rhetoric of liberation theology has gone wrong in so far as being some appeal to power. I think that uh if there's anything that scripture teaches us is that the power of God is revealed in our obedience to God so what we're really talking about here is the manifestation of obedience not our trying to cease power or out trying to control

power but simply through obeying God uh God in his spoken word, God in his his legislative will if we could think of scripture as God's legislative will, and God in his creative will if we think of what Roman Catholics speak of as the natural order, God in his creative will it's an attempt to be obedient rather than an attempt to cease power.

And I think in so far as we talk about our society uncritically as a free society when in fact, in our society we have over a million human beings killed uh every single year with legal sanction we don't have a free society, we have a society in which those who do in fact control power in the world's term, enjoy a certain license but I would dispute the notion of our society being free uh in in a rich sense, in a deep sense, in a biblical sense just as much as I would dispute the claim that in some way we're acting against the law. What we're acting against in operation rescue is a pseudo-law a putative law, a simulacrum of the law that there is in fact no law with moral authority. There is no law with moral authority that says that we cannot intervene to protect abortionists from killing the lives of the unborn.

Speaker 4:

I I don't oh go ahead, I don't wanna put words in your mouth, but it does seem to me that we are dealing with an issue of power, especially if we consider a pseudo law. That is we're not talking about authority even, primarily, but we're talking about power realities. And put your body in the door of an aboratorium and to mobilize people to do that it seems to me is unmistakably an act of power and it seems to me we must claim responsibility for that exercise of power and and recognize or at least and must by some way ethically justify that. I guess I

don't want to put words in your mouth that you're talking about power, but I would interpret that as a as an exercise of power.

Speaker 3:

I I think that it's a mistake to take some observable behavior uh a hand raised this way or a hand raised this way or a body situated at such and such a point. it's a mistake to take some observable piece of behavior and hope to describe it adequately without reference to the intention of the person who so waves uh if I put my arm up like this it's an observable piece of behavior right? I could be either though waving at somebody with whom I've been engaged in a quarrel and thereby showing a sense of let's get on with things. Or making a right hand turn signal. If you just look at this you don't know what's going on apart from my intention. Now when people in OR sit in front of an abortuary door, you could say well their being there constitutes a disciplined effort to cease power, but it seems to me given their intention what we'd want to say is their being there is an expression of their wanting to save the lives of innocent people. Now, by the same token you could say that a lifeguard is somehow engaged in a power demonstration but it's really a misdescription of what a lifeguard is doing.

Speaker 4:

I'll only say one more I'm not talking about ceasing power; I'm talking about an act of power, that is a contravention of the will of another person. and when you block the door-

Speaker 3:

Oh ok. I'll accept contravention of the will of another person.

Speaker 4:

And that's an act of power and that's what I mean.

Speaker 3:

Gee I I think that we're called to contravene the will of people who are assailing the lives of the innocent. I think any one of us would do so under ordinary circumstances. if you see a mugger about to attack somebody you would try to contravene the will of the mugger uh but I think it's uh a misdescription really to speak in terms of power and I think it's a misdescription to speak of our society uh without all sorts of additions as a free society, I don't think it's a free society.

Speaker 5:

Just briefly I'm not sure that I understand uh professor Spear how you solve a problem with what I said about the relationship the basic ethical quality of good and bad person and the exercise of power as you defined it. Could you just comment on that briefly please?

Speaker 3:

Sure, I'm sorry. Um, no. it's I what I would like to see joined is your call for to the importance of this virtue ethic and the problem of Christian responsibility in a free society where not all are good and yet we are concerned about certain unethical behaviors. And when those become of such magnitude we are called upon to act in a society to alter that. The ques- the point there is that when we act to alter patterns of public order, we cannot count on the fact that all have become good.

Speaker 5:

Right

Speaker 3:

We're going beyond that and the question is what justifies that and thus there's a slight gap between your emphasis and Dr. Hanak's. What is the connecting link?

Speaker 5:

Let me try to address it very briefly and then I'll come to you I'm sorry to hold you up. First of all, if we are to show forth the genius of the Christian ethic, we must be people of such different quality that people who live for pursuits that are ordinarily accepted in a democratic society today would, when compared with us, and I'm now going to use a great moral term that has totally passed from the vocabulary of ethical theory. They would be ashamed of themselves. Shame, like guilt, has dropped out of ethical theory. So there will be an effect of the kinds of persons that we are called to be and offered by grace to be as followers of Jesus Christ. Then there will be times when a sufficiently great value, the value of a human life being one of those, would cause us to lay down our lives. That is where, again, I mean you can't get a discussion of self-sacrifice as an ethical issue today. I mean most actually most of the traditional terms are have totally disappeared in favor of terms like Justice and Maximal Utility and things of that sort. So there will be a connection.

Now, you will never be able to deal with that connection legalistically. For example many of the people that are blocking doors to abortuaries, and I'm sure Jim would agree, they're not there to save people, they're there because they're lonely, they like company, they'd like to get involved in something and have a cause for their life. They like publicity, they might like to run for public office or who knows what I uh if you disagree with that Jim, say so. But uh I mean I just think we recognize that you can't handle that issue legalistically. But there is a time when it is necessary because of what is in your heart to lay down your life or go to prison and so forth. And I guess that's about the best I can do on that.

Speaker 6:

Um I'm Tom Snider, adjunct instructor at uh in communications at SCC. Uh Southern California College uh, my question is kind of two fold I guess. What role would the individual Christian artist or Christian media person play in this Dr. Willard's comments about the sexual immorality in the in the society at large and uh what role should the non-believer artist be required to play in depictions of nudity or uh even um depictions where you know you've got some sexuality between two characters or in advertisement, doesn't have to be a nude photo um what legal action should Christians take and what, you know that whole issue there. Kind of broad but.

Dallas Willard:

Well it is broad, and I uh I want I do not want my remarks to be construed as indicating for example that nudity is inherently evil. Or that dealing with any aspect of life in the artistically appropriate way uh should be banned. I do not believe that. Uh I think that the primary responsibility of the Christian is to do it so well, to do it so beautifully, to do it with such an expression of the goodness of God in all things that people who are experiencing that sort of thing will look at the other as a person who is eating a good steak would look at slop. And I don't know how to put it I mean that's a technical term, slop. Um. I don't know how else to put it but that. And the person who is an artist or an engineer or anything else stands in the position of the vicar of God upon the earth, to live under his kingdom, and to use those resources to do what they, he or she is doing, at its very best.

And, now this is uh this is tied in with other issues because the artist does not work in isolation from the intellectual of his time. There's a general culture of intellect and taste that many people are involved in. For example if you look at the turn the novel took in the early 20th century, and you compare the writings of a Hemingway to the writings of an Alexander Dumas or a Victor Hugo even and and you go back further to even Fielding or someone of that sort, you'll notice characteristically uh characteristic moral differences, which are not done because someone said E. Hemingway or Steinbeck or whatever that we're gonna do it this way and the other said we're gonna do it- not it was an expression. It was an expression of a sense of what they're doing. And under God that's all we have to go with. But I think that is what I will say and uh there're many particular issues that deal with legalities of the law or of the scripture that um again you cannot handle, you can't handle I think in general terms. That's why I think it's so important to say that the operative moral standard in any period and in any setting is the level of

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moral excellence of the people who are there. That's the operative moral standard. Doesn't matter what people say they ought and ought not to do, the operative moral standard is the level of moral excellence or lack thereof of the people who are there. And God is the one who is always there and so it's, it's our call to exemplify the excellence of our work and that lends right over into the moral issues, in my opinion.

Speaker 7:

I think that well we want to deal with these questions but I think we should perhaps look at it this way of before the questions are raised that uh since Dr. [inaudible] did not show up, uh I hope that you don't feel that you have to comment on-

Dallas Willard:

No, I'm happy to do that; I would like to do it.

Speaker 7:

Well, yes I think we should perhaps deal with these couple of questions here that have come up and then try to finish our discussion at about uh 10:15 altogether so that we can then take a break early and have a little more time in the second uh break's supposed to start at 10:30 if we stop at 10:15 I think that would be sound. So why don't we- there were two or three people who raised their hand, Professor Milner and uh the man sitting behind him and him we have well one, two, three, can we do it that way? And then let you uh go ahead [inaudible].

Speaker 8:

I guess I should come back to the question which will accompany the three days of this meeting uh but without wanting to be uh the Devil's Advocate, I nevertheless have to take the defense of people like governor [inaudible] here is a Catholic and he is very very representative as we just heard it from statistical figures and that there is a cult in this country in the whole west the object of the cult, the idol is democracy, free society, pluralism and so on. Now here is a poor man uh governor [inaudible]. You are putting him in a situation in which uh many many Christians were in the first centuries of Christianity. You expect him to go down to the arena and get killed. Tortured and killed just the same problem as the North African church was facing, the odonatists. Many of them are willing to go down to the arena, but after all Christianity is not made for saints. Christianity made for normal human beings, and while sainthood is the ideal, and one should uh almost statistically spread it, uh nevertheless one cannot expect saintliness of everybody.

So, either you make up your mind, to choose however the Christians of the first centuries also accepted a great deal of of actions and laws on the part of the pagan state you know it as well as I do that uh Saint Augustine and Tertullian and Seprian and many others regarded Rome, Roman civil- Greco-Roman civilization as the greatest thing that mankind had ever saw. And they were not willing to jettison that civilization. They tried, just like we do here to come to some sort of a compromise. Many of them did not accept the compromise but many of them did. So, in order to make the thing uh this morning someone clear, we would have to understand the [inaudible] of this world who are not uh going to give up their cult at the same time as they don't want to give up their religion.

They are forced into a very difficult situation and we have to understand this Christian charity that is only those of us who are on the side of anti-abortion of course, but also those like [inaudible] who are in an increasingly difficult situation and I would say that we would have to find the theoretical at least, theoretical and moral solution for them to which they then would have to give some sort of a response but to put them in a situation that here is what is good and you are evil is uh not going to solve any situation especially now and I come back to Dr. Henning's statement about St. Thomas. Don't forget that when Saint Thomas made the dichotomy between the moral law and the civil law he never in his mind imagined a society in which there would in which there would be no church, in other words the state and the and the church. The civil law and the moral law would have to be, according to St. Thomas in some sort of relationship, positive relationship. Now we have not only made a cult of democracy we have also separated state and church. In other words we have established a situation that St. Thomas would not even have imagined. Or or or I would say St. Augustine would not imagine and we have to come to terms with this kind of of uh dichotomies uh solvable or not but we have to uh

face them directly and not uh uh self uh uh uh righteous in a sense that we have solved this question and therefore it is up to the [inaudible] of this world to uh to adjust.

Speaker 3?:

Thank you for your your comments and reflections I think they raised any number of crucial issues and I'm somewhat at a loss as to where to start. In no special order I think the first thing I'd want to say, speaking as a Catholic and trying to draw on the Catholic tradition is that while democracy can be turned into an idol, it nonetheless, in itself is a good thing. After all, when we speak about each human person being made in God's image and likeness, we locate a central manifestation of that likeness in our freedom and in our intelligence. And a democratic political order is one which encourages people to use their freedom and their intelligence to have a careful and clear exercise of freedom. So all things being equal I would want to do anything possible to promote democracy. Nonetheless, the church in its wisdom is only too familiar with our propensity to sin, and the sins that we perform, the sins that we engage and can distort even the best manifestations of our human nature, and I think that the sins in which engage currently distort our our expression of democracy.

With respect to [inaudible] I think it's certainly the case that the church has never encouraged people to seek martyrdom but we oughtn't to dramatize things. [inaudible] if he says look I want to do whatever I can to oppose the killing of the innocent might be pillared in the press but even a pillaring in the press is a far cry from martyrdom. I would not at any point want to judge his soul and if anything I said would suggest I think that's a grave mistake but I think we

can hold all politicians, the church is right to hold all Catholic politicians to the requirement that they not support actions which directly undermine fundamental human rights in so far as Mario Como not only tolerates but aides and abets a state funding program for abortion, in so far as he again and again rejects not particular interpretations of classical Catholic authors but in so far as he rejects again and again in a public way the clear and persistent teaching of the magisterium today I would want to maintain that whatever his individual conscious might be he has parted company from the church.

Announcer:

I think this gentleman was uh ready first [inaudible] we've got an order here [inaudible]

Speaker 9:

My name's Bill Jordan from Louisiana Tech University and my question relates to what extent should we involve ourselves in traditional political activity relating to abortion if it appears it might be successful. For example, last Thursday the Louisiana house of representatives passed a bill banning abortion and that included jail sentences for doctors who committed abortions. To what extent would you recommend the Christians in Louisiana, concentrating in the next few weeks on the state senate and the governor, rather than on more operation rescue type activities?

Speaker 3:

Uh I think you have a a wonderful state in that respect, wonderful state in that respect and I would think that uh people in Operation Rescue would would always counsel in favor of the Christian virtue of prudence, and I think prudence would certainly suggest that in your situation there's no need to do these other sorts of things. But I would also suspect that your situation is perilous and while it might hold steady for the for the for the short term might hold steady for the long term. You might set an example for the whole nation. I would always be ready to do the other if doing the other is necessary.

Speaker 10:

I, you mentioned Dr. Hana that- [inaudible statement from announcer]. Yeah, Joyce Brooks from Biola University. Uh you mentioned that operation rescue provided a form for people to see that that people that they would ordinarily respect or taking a stand against abortion. But I am not seeing that in the media. Um I am seeing the media portray operation rescue as a bunch of crazed fanatics and I am wondering how we can portray our Christian or Biblical ethic to and through a media that is biased against it. What else could we be doing to give the public a a more accurate portrayal and understanding of why operation rescue is functioning the way it is?

Speaker 3:

Sometimes it's necessary to read between the lines with the media. For example, the most recent account of operation rescue activities in the Los Angeles Times was maybe last Wednesday or last Thursday and it focused on what rescue is doing around a particular abotuary in Tustin. Now, the the the big picture you got in the media was operation rescue has been so persistent in this area that the poor people in the neighborhood haven't been able to have a block party all summer long. So this is an ultimate assault on the primary expression of the American Spirit. so it's it's fundamentally a negative piece of publicity. But if if you read the whole article that the police department representatives say gee, and this isn't a direct quote. We can't help but see that these are censer people, these are the sort of people that we might on many issues find ourselves in company with and it's very hard on us, it's very hard on us to have to arrest them. I think if you read the media carefully you can have a sense that the operation rescue message is being seen even there.

Another thing that's very important if there are church leaders present. If there are church leaders present uh the media can maybe make the whole article two inches but it can't say what it would otherwise say. This past Saturday the Archdiocese of Los Angeles had it's it's yearly ordinations of the priesthood. Last year at this time, I couldn't help but remember it, no sooner did Archbishop Mahoney finish the ordinations then he walked three or four blocks to where there was an operation rescue activity taking place. arrests had been going on for over an hour. He walked past the police lines; he walked right up to where the police were applying nun

chucks to rescuers. And the next day in the paper he said as best as he could see it was an excessive use of police force. The more we have church leaders, the less easily the media can do that. The more the church media, the more, say the Los Angeles Tidings I think a Roman Catholic publication features uh rescue activities, the harder it is to do it. And even then I I can't always quote scripture freely so freely in Catholic contexts as I feel I am able to do here. "Even then the very stones will speak out" right, sooner or later the stones will speak out.

Speaker 11:

My name is uh George Bate from uh Westmont College in Santa Barbara. This business of power I think is a very critical one and just to comment in passing on the previous remarks it seems to me that uh in in weighing the actions of operation rescue that uh we should be aware that there's a significant difference between non-violent protest and uh power as it is practiced by the uh radical left for example. And and just to place uh a contrast to put it in focus, seems to me that uh to bomb an abortuary or to burn it down is indeed an act of power uh by the radical right if you will. But I I can't see putting that in the same category as a nonviolent protest of placing one's body uh you know at the door of an abortuary. Well, what I wanted to get at is that our culture uh has become blind to what I call operative power and in this particular case this will also illustrate that abortion is by no means a single issue and my question ultimately is why are we so indifferent to uh another issue of power uh which among other things uh feeds and propagates uh the abortion issue. I refer to public schools. If you go back to the origin of public schools they are artifacts of the enlightenment. Jacque Baron uh traces us their advent to the French Revolution. Public schools are power structures and in in my view all kinds of evil flow

from them uh one in particular is, as far as I can tell, one of the most influential media in our culture today that is uh if you will indoctrinating at least influencing very impressionable young people is the public schools. And in Santa Barbara there is no way that planned perdition is going to be eliminated from the public schools.

So, my question is what is our strategy, are we willing to to face up to a very profound problem uh. Mr. Willard referred to uh a current myth that democracy is sacred. In the same breath we almost have to say that public schools are sacred. They are culturally entrenched and I find among evangelicals a great reticence to talk about public schools in in any rationally significant way. And so my question is are are we pro-life people being short sighted uh why are we neglecting this extremely influential power structure in our society and I I should say parenthetically I don't think that fighting to abolish public schools is not the answer uh pragmatically speaking that's not going to happen. But there are ways of legally addressing the problem so that our freedoms can be restored and if you will really move in the direction of free society. We don't have free society now I quite agree with you.

Dallas Willard:

Well, you really have hit some deep ones on that. Um but it's right in the area where I would like to place the emphasis, and I don't mean to say Jim wouldn't do the same because he's addressing a particular issue. But you have to remember we live out of the stuff between our ears. We are totally at the mercy of our ideas. And schooling, if you look at the development of the literature through people like Rousseau and others and Thomas Jefferson and so on you will

see that schooling is regarded as the source of whatever it is it takes to make democracy work. And of course from the earliest thinking about government and society, you always have that problem. The people who are going to make it work and then how are you going to make them work, right. I mean that starts early on, and of course we read Plato's Republic again which is a classical source and most all of these issues you'll see that the answer is education. How do you get the controllers to control themselves, education? How do you get them to control [inaudible], education? Well of course education is like choice and freedom, and democracy itself. It means 85 different things. What do you mean by education?

And so that get concretized and I see no reason in this world why Christians should not oppose the existence of public schools as we know them today. Um and in fact I think, you know, there're a lot of good causes. I would be ready to sign up for that on if I wasn't already busy standing in abortuary doors, if I want' already busy- so when practically we have to divide up the work but I think that uh for one thing what we call public schools today in this society is so different from what public schools were when they were begun or developed or what they were thirty years ago or forty years ago that to call them by the same name is ridiculous. That's just one of those things that happens. But we have to attack the idea structure, and the illusions that go with it. Jim you want to say something on that?

Speaker 3:

I I would just mention one consideration from Catholic history in in this country and especially say in the last 50 or 60 years, many times people have been critical of Catholic

education, people involved in public education have been critical of Catholic education at the elementary school level and in the high school level. My mother was a public school high school teacher uh because they saw the public school system playing a critical role in educating the poor and a critical role in preparing people who would otherwise be ill prepared to participate in the political process. In so far as any Christian criticism of the public education system can be dismissed as elitist, racist, or narrow in its understanding of our broader intellectual heritage, then I think our efforts will be in vain but what I think is recently happened maybe not quite so recently, perhaps over a twenty year period.

Again and again and again we find in inner city contexts, in inner city contexts uh the the parents uh of color wanting their children in particular to have an opportunity to go to Catholic schools precisely because the education is better, precisely because the schools train people for a real democracy, precisely because the schools are not elitist. Here's a case, I think, in which we have another application of the notion of a consistent ethic of life. Our schools will be seen for what they really are if we can convey the message that our schools are committed to racial integration, that our schools are committed to a more equitable distribution of wealth, that our schools are committed to to genuine academic excellence. When we are in that position, I think for the most part we are. That I think we oughtn't to be unnecessarily shy in pointing out to what an extent public education fails in precisely those areas.

Dallas Willard:

I think there's one other gentleman had a point to make and then I'm gonna have to carry on but please go ahead if you would.

Speaker 12:

Uh Ted Stileanopolis [sp], Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology Boston Massachusetts. I'm wondering why the timidity or at least the hesitation about power, strength or force to bring about the advocacy or the practice of moral positions. The printed word has power, a professor in the classroom has power, a politician has power, and my voting for him in part for his moral positions is power. Love is an example of love, humility's power, gentleness is power. So isn't the question really what kind of power we're talking about, what kind of force uh and what are the limits of of the Christian understanding of the nature of power and uh my own personal problem is uh I can see myself putting my body in the line uh but what about the physical destruction of other people's properties. Is that non-violent? I wonder, professor Hana, how do you deal with that question of what exactly is non-violent although it is forceful.

Speaker 3:

Uh two specific questions that I find you raising. Question number one uh reconsider this concept of power and question number two what about the destruction of physical property. Uh, when we take a particular term that we're also particular term when we take a particular term

almost always the term functions in the context of a larger vocabulary. For the most part, the term power in our context of political discourse functions in a vocabulary where power serves as an expression of personal self-interest, where power serves as an expression of physical coercion, where power serves as a substitute for rational discourse, where power serves as a replacement for ethical consideration. I even find this often times in the Christian use of this concept of empowerment, it's used over and over again and almost has an incantatory value. But if people use power in a self-conscious way to indicate that all power originally comes from God, all power is really centered in God, then I have no objection at all to it. It's just that uh I think the term power is seldom used in that context, uh in terms of the destruction of physical property uh after every rescue that I've ever been to the rescue leaders encourage everybody to clean up any litter that might have fallen about the grounds, they're a very factitious bunch. I've not ever on any occasion seen any destruction of physical property whatsoever.

Uh, I suppose the grass isn't as always as upright when we leave as when we come but I don't think that's a thing of real significance. Now, Joan Andrews, who is a Catholic involved in Rescue and spent almost two years in solitary confinement for her rescue activities did in fact do something more than we do in rescue, typically. What Joan Andrews did was get into an abortion mill and dismantles the equipment, but even then that's not the destruction of any equipment. What she would do was unplug a suction machine and wrap the wire around and around and around and push it out in the hall, something of that sort. That's not even the destruction of property. I think that in and of itself the destruction of property is not wrong but I think the destruction of property uh doesn't communicate what we're all about. I think it's a grave prudential error. Were someone, however to destroy scalpels that are used wholly in the course

of dilation and evacuation abortions I don't see any moral objection to it but I see a great prudential objection. [inaudible whispered comment]

Dallas Willard:

We're going to have to move on, I'd love to respond to that question myself also imagine someone objecting to someone taking a hammer to the gas ovens in Auschwitz on the basis of property rights. You see there's a continuum. It all depends on what's involved, but there is nothing sacred about property. That's a terrible thing to say, possibly but since I've already say it about democracy I might as well say it about property too. There's nothing evil about property, there's nothing evil about power or money, and all of these things we have a terrible time working through and I don't think you can live without exercising power and power always means also to some extent, some degree, exempting the choice and power of others.

And uh so well I wanted to say a few things about um Father Bender's um contribution and I do wish that he had been here I guess you have his um discussion in writing. Father Bender correctly sees the divine, the moral model for human relationships and the loving society of the holy trinity. How God loves is expressed in his effusive and unrestricted abundant creation of good which continues in his relationships to his creatures and to mankind, humankind, and uh in the orthodox tradition as Father Bender represented uh this is the standard of the good person, the trinity is the standard. The Trinitarian nature of God. His grace and salvation moves us towards the same kind of loving personhood as our complex embodied beings are taken over by 1 Corinthians 13 type of love, as Father Bender says on page five of his paper, "the prototype par

excellence for human behavior, that kind of Agape love then loving worship and now father bender in his paper begins to take having made that initial statement about uh the moral standard begins to apply this loving worship of God himself is the center around which human personality develops into Godliness. That is, becomes a good person. it is this ethically, it thus ethically central and see one of our great problems derives in dealing with issues we're concerned about drives the fact that religion is one thing and ethics is another."

And uh in old discussions, you go back 17th, 18th century, in the discussion of the various categories of duties in us writers such as Richard Cumberland or um Cud worth, there are three areas. The first on the list is "to God" then "to others" and then "to oneself" and we've lost that conception but uh Father Bender I think rightly represents the orthodox tradition as retaining that and so worship becomes ethically central, and this is psychologically related to the fact that what anyone worships is the key to who they are, or if they don't worship anything that is even more fundamental key or if they worship themselves. So of course this ties in with the second commandment, which has to do with the spiritual nature of God and uh worship is the key, it is ethically central not only in providing direction and strength to be and act but also in the community of worship as a sacramental unity around the sacraments. Branching out then into the family which he calls in beautiful phrase uh phraseology making the home into a little church, wherein Christ's presence can be effective for growth in love, harmony, and oneness of mind as well as in life. Those are his words on page 9.

So stewardship now then, we have worship, the church, the redemptive community, the home, then stewardship, work, occupation of all life's powers set free by the forgoing from hedonism and egotism the same thing in sexuality childrearing. The business work world, charity in the general sense where we have charity, we do acts of charity, integrity, activism also,

political responsibility, civility, civility disobedience even revolution are possible I this tradition. within that framework and all are appropriately fitted into the nature of love as expressed in the Trinitarian uh conception.

I think the most important point Father Bender has to give us is form his, form his tradition of orthodoxy is the emphasis upon the moral dynamism of the constant integrative love within the trinity between the trinity and the redeemed community, then within the redeemed community and reaching out toward all creation. In continuation even to issues of environment and so on. And such a person then is the good person, meets the standards of individual or personal ethics. I think that I would like to say now retreating back to my own viewpoint on these matters that anyone who has not committed themselves to being in love of this type can hardly be described as morally serious. And indeed this whole issue-

[End of recording]