

St. Stephen's News

St. Stephen's Anglican Church,
Timonium, Maryland

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Edited by Anne Hawkins

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FROM THE RECTOR

No ethics at all -- and all in the name of ethics

SOMETIMES the things we do with the best of intentions turn out to have appalling consequences. One of the most devastating examples of this is the way in which America and much of the rest of the Western World have embraced the theory of Situation Ethics.

Situation Ethics is an ethical system, developed in the 1960s, that is in the process of undermining and destroying the moral foundations of Western Civilization; what was once called Christendom. The irony is that the theory was principally developed by a Christian impelled by supposedly Christian motives. He was Professor Joseph Fletcher, an Episcopal priest, who taught Christian Ethics at Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and at Harvard Divinity School from 1944 to 1970.

Fletcher's theory basically states that sometimes other moral principles can be cast aside in certain situations if love is best served. He was influenced in this by the German-American theologian Paul Tillich who declared: "Love is the ultimate law."

The love that supersedes the moral codes of Christianity, according to Fletcher, is the type of love St. Paul describes in the 13th chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians. It is the love the Greeks called *agapē* – meaning absolute, universal, unchanging and unconditional love for all people.

Fletcher believed that an ethical system based on love was the best expression of Jesus' command that we love our neighbors. From this command, he deduced that there are no absolute laws other than the law of *Agapē* love.

All the other Christian moral principles were laid down in order to achieve the greatest amount of this love, he concluded. Thus, as mere guidelines achieving this love, they could be broken if an alternative course of action seemed likely to result in more love.

This meant that all situations are always relative and "never" and "always" were words situational ethicists should try to avoid. "Only the end justifies the means, nothing else," he wrote.

Fletcher's theory of Situation Ethics – expounded in his books *The Classic Treatment* and *Situation Ethics* – took the academic world, including the mainline theological colleges, by storm. It was embraced by theologians of all jurisdictions and denominations, including not a few bishops and a host of clergy.

Its primary attraction was that it provided an elegant solution to the ambiguity we confront in a fallen world – a world in which there may be no good solution to problems but merely the less worst.

For the parochial clergy, it offered an easier means of approaching the moral dilemmas they wrestled with on a daily basis. For the impressionable young, it furnished a perfect excuse for embracing an increasingly fashionable "drugs, sex and rock-and-roll, make love, not war" culture. For their elders, it provided a reason for accommodating the younger generation's self-destructive, behavior.

Not everybody embraced it, of course, especially those of us living or working in parts of the world in the thrall of totalitarian political regimes – such as Soviet-style communism and fascist dictatorships.

The Situation Ethics' maxim that "situations are always relative" and "only the end justifies the means" seemed custom built to serve evil and unscrupulous politicians. All they needed to do was declare a laudable goal and their totalitarian policies would be cloaked with respectability.

The late John Robinson, the controversial Bishop of Woolwich and Dean of Trinity College, at first embraced

Fletcher's theory, declaring that it gave individuals the responsibility for deciding the morality of their actions.

Later, however, Robinson utterly rejected Situation Ethics when he realized that leaving responsibility for morality up to the individual was a responsibility nobody -- not even the noblest among us -- was adequately equipped to handle.

Fletcher, he concluded, had handed people an excuse for not obeying the rules when it suited them. When folks wanted to do something badly enough, Situation Ethics gave them a means of justifying it to themselves. How right he was!

By the end of the decade in which it was conceived, Situation Ethics enabled the evil North Vietnamese Communist regime and its Viet Cong surrogates to present themselves as patriots engaged in a popular cause. Later, the even nastier Khmer Rouge adopted the same sorry fable.

By the 1980s, Situation Ethics had transformed the ruthless Soviet dictatorship into the moral equivalent of the United

States – equating American attempts to defend its allies with the Soviets' brutal suppression of its satellites and Comintern's subversion in the Third World as manifestations of the democratic aspirations of oppressed people.

Most recently, it has supplied the perverse logic by which Islam, a religion with history of unrelenting violence, is hailed as "the religion of peace." And, at the same time, it has been deployed to condemn Christianity, the faith that has endowed humanity with undreamed of freedoms, as the religion of oppression.

Extremists espousing atheism have been responsible for the slaughter of at least 126 million

people over the past 80 years, yet Situation Ethics permits them to portray Christianity as a primary source of discord, prejudice, hatred and violence

Indeed, the theory of Situation Ethics has infected virtually all aspects of life the in what was once called Christendom – our families, schools, media, business life, political life and, yes, our spiritual lives, too.

It promulgates the falsehood that family life inhibits personal growth. It fosters teaching school children wishful thinking as fact. It persuades to mistake greed and unscrupulousness for enterprise and innovation. It excuses biased news reporting, and permits politicians to wink at corruption and immorality.

But then this was bound to happen. Any system that labors under the delusion that human beings are, of their own accord, capable of *Agapē* love is doomed to failure.

Agapē, to quote the hymn, is "love divine all loves excelling." In other words, it is a degree of love that human beings can strive to emulate, but will prove incapable of achieving unaided by the Holy Spirit,

History, not just Holy Scripture, eloquently testifies that human beings have an inbuilt predisposition to do what is right in their own eyes. Thus, as Bishop Robinson discovered, Situation Ethics is rooted in Original Sin.

What, he asked, will be the consequences for a society that embraces the belief that all situations are always relative and only the end justifies the means? "It will all descend into moral chaos," he lamented. How prophetic he was! **GPH**

FROM HOWARD BURNHAM

Humble Pie Department

REFERENCE last week's article by the Rector, I think there's a tiny typo omission of three IIs in the Henry play that saw the demise of the original Globe by fire. It was a production of Henry VIII or All is True that WS wrote with Fletcher.

Cannon wadding fired in Cardinal Wolsey's Masque scene ignited the thatch. Mercifully no one was hurt apart from -- according to legend -- the patron whose flaming breeches were deftly put out with a "pottle of ale!"

(Note to the Rector: Never argue with a Shakespearean actor about Shakespeare! Ed.)

THE SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR
THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
being the Commemoration of Independence Day, July 3rd, 2011
8.00 AM, 9.15 AM & 11.15 AM
HOLY COMMUNION
For the Epistle: Deuteronomy 10:17-21
The Gospel: St. Matthew 5:43-48
FOR YOUR MORNING PRAYER
The Psalter: Psalm 18:1-20
The First Lesson: Isaiah 26:1-12
The Second Lesson: St. John 8:31-36

FROM THE PARISH CHEFS

Silly Suppers are being served

THE MOMENT you’ve been waiting has arrived. St. Stephen’s chefs are serving their Silly Summer Suppers again. Join us for good food and fellowship on Thursdays at 5.30 PM sharp..
Truth to tell, its hard to think of a less appropriate name than “Silly Summer Suppers” for these remarkable gastronomic events. Not least, the food is absolutely scrumptious – and there is plenty of it.
The only thing silly about these suppers is the price. Where else can you get a home-cooked entrée, dessert and salad for a meager \$10. Add to that soda for a buck and wine at \$3 per glass and \$5 for two.
FROM THE LADIES WHO LUNCH

Please join us on July 20th

THE LADIES Who Lunch will be sampling the food at Christopher Daniel’s Restaurant on Padonia Road, Cockeysville on Wednesday, July 20th. As usual, we will be meeting at 12 noon, which allows plenty of time for leisurely studying the menu. Why not join us for good food, sparkling conversation, fellowship and fun? All it takes to make your reservation is to lift up the phone and call me at Tel: \$10-252-2680 and say you’ll be coming. **JOYCE PERLBERG**

✠ **St. Stephen's Anglican Church** ✠
11856 Mays Chapel Road, Timonium, MD 21093
Tel.: Office (410) 560-6776: Rectory (410) 665-1278
Web Address: ststeve.com.

RECTOR: The Venerable Guy P. Hawtin
VICAR: The Rev. Rhae E. Kelley
ORGANIST & CHOIRMASTER: Adric
DIRECTOR OF PASTORAL CARE: Anne Hawkins (410-308-2771)
WEDDING CO-ORDINATOR: Anne Hawkins (410-308-2771)
SUNDAY SERVICES
8.00am -- Holy Communion
9.15am -- Holy Communion
(Nursery & Church School)
11.15am -- Morning Prayer
(1st. Sun. of the month: Holy Communion at 11.15am)
(1st Sun. of the month: Choral Evensong at 6.00pm)
WEEKDAY SERVICES
Wednesday: 6.00pm Evening Prayer
Friday: Noon: Healing Eucharist
Saturday: 5.00 PM Family Eucharist.

✠ PARISH PRAYER LIST ✠

OUR Prayer Chain offers prayer daily for people on the Prayer List and guests of the Joseph Richey Hospice. To add a name to the list, or to the visiting list, or to join the Prayer Chain, call the office at 410 560 6776.
RECOVERY: Michael, Gracie, Paula, Blair, Jim, Georgetta, Melvin, Noah, Mavis, Heather, Laurie, Diane, Don, Lynn, Helen, Katherine, Hindra, Sara, Ravi, Elizabeth, Brian, Tracey, Linda, Robert, Nancy, Edithann, Doris, Jay, Perry, Amelia, Shirley, Adrian, Kimberly, Dean, Barb, Tanya, Jane, Brook, Val, Helen, Joseph, Joshua, Rachel, Carl, Cal, Catherine, Sam, Ruth, Kristi, Paul, Sue, Patty, Antonio, Lauren-Michelle, McKayla, Randy, Jack, Grace, Bob, Fran, Carolyn, Ken, Serina, Wyatt, Bobby, Alexander, Erline, Kathleen, Earle, Judy, William, Betty, Trisha, Peggy, Linda, Millie, Walt, Bruce, Cienna, Tracy, Tom, Leliliah, Jennifer, Miriam, Karen, George, Eliza, Mel, John, Randy, James, Sarah, Linda, Suzanne, Marian, Steven, Jeanne, Tammy; Ellen, Patricia, Bonnie, Mary Ann, Robert, Christine, Dee, Brian, Barbara, Gillian, Eileen, Matthew, Bryan, Jason, Jane, Joan, Frances, Pat, Michael, Ray, Leslie, Brandon, May, Scott, Stephen, Robert, Danny, Billy, Betty-Ann, Mildred, D'Metrius, Laura, Stacey, Frank, Alma, Christine, John, Henry, Naomi, Pam, Ben, Kevin, Gwen, Gloria, Lee Emily, Elsie, Bruce, Regina, Lewis, Madolin, Linda, Carol, Bernie, Charlene, Josephine, Margaret, Jody, Sheila, Jo Anne, John, Geradine, Thomas, Jeanne, Sister Catherine-Grace, Maxine, Ann Sharon, Dennis, Mae, Anita, Marilyn, Lawrence, Rebecca, Dorothy, Joanne, ✠Albion, Martha, Jackie, Charles, Tony, Edward, Kim, Vivian and Carol.
LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE: Rosa, June, Anna, Jean, Garrett, Ned, & Stephen, Rachel, Robert & Renee, Lydia; Richard, Melba, Debbie, Phyllis, Georgetta, Carolyn, Suzanne, Tony, Erik, Doris, Drake, Bobby, Kay & Emma, Gillian, Beverley, Adrienn, Jhana, Marla, Matthew, Joan, David, Laurie, Ellen, Lynn, Mildred, Sarah Lee, Tom, Susan, Kathy, Owen, Douglas, Amy, Jo Anne, Mary, Gregory, Isabel, Bobby, Dorothy, Darren, Scott, Rebecca, William, Charles, Joyce, Asfa, Eleanor, Kathy, Linda, James, Barry, Ann, Evelyn, Jeanette, Elizabeth, Virginia, Mildred, Chris, Stephen, Carol, Sandra, John, Mary, Michael and David
ON ACTIVE SERVICE: Lt. Benjamin Schramm, USMC; LTC. R. J. Lytle, PFC Charles E. Heintz, IV, U.S. Army; Alex Bursi, US. Navy; Capt. Charles Bursi & LTC Harry Hughes, U.S. Air Force.

COLLECTS FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY
AFTER TRINITY & ST PETER

O GOD, the strength of all who put their trust in thee; Mercifully accept our prayers; and because, through the weakness of our mortal nature, we can do no good thing withou thee, grant us the help of thy grace, that in keeping thy commandments we may please thee, both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *AMEN*

AMIGHTY God, by who by thy Son Jesus Christ didst give to thy Apostle Peter many excellent gifts, and commandest him to feed thy flock; Make, we beseech thee, all Bishops and Pastors diligently to preach thy holy Word, and the people obediently follow the same, that they may receive the crown of everlasting glory; though the same thy Son Jesus Christ. *AMEN*
Book of Common Prage Pages 188 & 244

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Timonium, MD 21093

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