

Are We Better Christians If We Have Left-Overs And Patched Garments?

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How do you reconcile your advice on the economic qualifications a husband should have with the following statement by a Catholic writer? "Delicacy means a happy-go-lucky freedom from believing that if we have God in our hearts, it does not really matter whether we have fine raiment or patched garments, expensive food or left-overs and remnants, money in the bank or hardly enough to live on."

Frankly, Ed, I won't even try! The quotation you have sent me is poetry, not prose; but more live by prose. Of course I would have to see the entire article before I would wish to pass judgment on the author's viewpoint.

As it stands, the statement is unacceptable without a whole series of qualifications. There's nothing "happy-go-lucky" in the Christian definition of the spirit of poverty. Catholic doctrine places no greater premium on patched garments than on fine raiment.

If we are to eat leftovers, somebody must first have planned and worked hard to prepare the main meal. And there's nothing "contrary to Christ's teaching" in having money in the bank, though most modern couples trying to raise a family don't know how they can manage it.

Nevertheless, your letter raises an important point. Modern Christians live in an affluent society geared to the ever-increasing production of material wealth.

By its very nature, such an economic system can endure only through the constant, calculated stimulation of consumer needs. As the general standard of living continues to rise, the distinction between necessities and luxuries becomes increasingly blurred. People begin to identify happiness with the mere possession of material goods.

At the same time, since we live in a socially mobile, open-class society, competition and social activity are by definition's stock in trade. This necessarily takes for granted. This necessarily focuses attention on the acquisition of material goods, for in a mobile, open-class society your success is gauged by what you won.



Material possessions become the recognized symbols of success.

People feel frustrated and unhappy not because they lack the necessities of life, but because they may have less than their more-successful neighbors. We call this "relative deprivation" that is, people estimate their "lucks" in terms of what others in their class may possess, not in terms of objective need.

Although Christians run the danger of falling in poverty by focusing their attention too completely on the acquisition of worldly goods, this does not justify the opposite extreme of irresponsibility, imprudence, or sheer waste of cloth. Particularly, if a man wishes to marry, he should offer a reasonable guarantee that he is capable and willing to assume the economic burdens necessarily associated with family life. It would be illusory to deny the pressures they are under.

THE TEMPTATION may take many forms. At the most obvious level, the observance of Christian virtue may limit or impede their pursuit of wealth in a ruthlessly competitive system in which the moral is narrowly identified with the legal.

More significant for Christian couples, many socially approved practices related to family planning must be categorically rejected: the religious education of their children must be provided for at their own cost, and the adequate acceptance of motherhood prevents the wife from taking a job outside the home to increase the family budget.

Perhaps the most subtle form of the temptation, however, makes itself felt in the area of attitudes and outlooks. Some couples feel that they are being penalized for their religious beliefs; condemned, as it were, to bypass their rightful share in the benefits of our affluent society because they must observe the moral law in their married lives.

Hence the gift of faith comes to be regarded as a burden rather than a privilege, and the practice of religion becomes a cross rather than a joy.

Under the circumstances, the modern Christian stands in constant need of rethinking his scale of values. In his teaching on "poverty," Christ taught us that there is hierarchy of values. "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his immortal soul?"

Serious planning to provide for the future, hard work, material possessions, economic life — all have their rightful place in the Christian scale of values, but they are necessarily subordinate and subservient to the achievement of neither goal.

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Defective Poses As Clergyman

Admits Attempt To Trick Prisoner To Confession

Pueblo — (NC) — A Pueblo detective's attempt to obtain a confession from a prisoner by posing as a clergyman has touched off a controversy here.

The Southern Colorado Register, Pueblo diocesan newspaper, denounced the "unethical attempt to betray one of the most important of human relations." It added that the "confidence which a person has in his priest or minister is a sacred trust."

"WE DO NOT deny these men the right to enforce our laws," the paper said editorially, "to apprehend criminals and to see that justice is done, but we do deny that they have the right to obtain a confession under false pretenses by seeking the confidence of a suspect as it were, to bypass their righteous share in the benefits of our affluent society because they must observe the moral law in their married lives."

The Catholic paper pointed through stories printed in two daily papers denied the charges and accused the Catholic paper of printing stories without investigation. The Catholic paper pointed out that an attempt had been made through a meeting set up with a police department official, but the official did not show up.

The Catholic paper pointed out that "plain clothes are an accepted Protestant minister's garb in Pueblo," and added: "If Capt. Jones really did what he says he did, then this sort of misrepresentation must not be permitted to continue. Protest is necessary."

The detective, Capt. Harold L. Jones, said in his statement:

"I went to the Parkview Hospital to talk to Mr. Ditterline (the prisoner). Scanlon called me Rev. Jones when I walked in. I spoke to Ditterline as though I was a minister. He would not talk to me, lie rolled and tossed, throwing his sheet around and innumerable to himself. I could not get any response from him in any way."

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