



EVERY SINGLE MARRIED CUSTOMER OF LAUER'S WAS A NEWLYWED ONCE

It's amazing how many of our young customers get our permission to open up a Lauer's charge account right after they get their parents' permission to get married. And it's been going on like this now for decades. Kids from all walks of life. Rich and poor. We sort of help

them set up housekeeping. We feel that our quality selection at all price levels helps make better homes out of good ones. It must. As the years go by they keep coming back. Lauer's - 3300 Monroe Ave., Opposite Pittsford Plaza. New location, same old reputation.

A Leap of Love to Fill the Gap of Self-Centered Life

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Christ. None of these is directly related to the ten commandments, though they imply their existence as a pre-requisite. (For instance, no one who habitually helped himself to other people's possessions would be likely to go out of his way to give them any possessions they lacked.)

So the saying of Christ about the fate of those who deny him (and whether we think of this fate as a description of eternal punishment or of exclusion from the Christian fellowship is immaterial) seem to be a sort of mirror-hold-up-to-each-individual conscience in which, if they are honest, people can see their real selves, and see whether they belong to Christ or are only pretending to.

There are two kinds of teaching recorded in the Gospels, and both contain a mixture of moral and dogmatic theology, for a distinction between the two is not to be found there. There was public teaching, consisting of general principles and statements, with stories or similes that illustrate them. And there was private teaching, the face-to-face encounter with an individual who was searching for God, however gropingly.

The public moral teaching seems to be also roughly of two kinds. There are passages which describe what kind of a person is likely to listen and respond to God's call. The beatitudes are of this kind, and if we were not so used to them we might realize more easily what a violent reversal of accepted values they represent, not only then but now, after two thousand years of so-called Christianity.

To be un-attached to possessions, material or spiritual; to ache with longing for something beyond the reach of human desires; to be afflicted with an increasing sense of the world's evils—and with the desire to fight them; to accept peacefully and as a matter of course all spiritual rejection, and because of all this to be filled to the brim with the joy of life in Christ; this is incomprehensible still to the vast majority. It contradicts all the ordinary hopes of human beings for safety, comfort, love.

On the other hand ideas like these are not startling to a child. Certainly they contradict his natural selfishness, aggressiveness, and fear, but when he has grasped them in terms that mean something to him, he can accept them without difficulty as an ideal towards which to work. And children seldom think they could fall in an undertaking.

This is presumably what Christ meant when he said that the Kingdom of Heaven was peopled by those who resembled children, those who have either never had, or have thrown aside, the normal defenses of the natural man against the onslaught of grace. But Christ also said that his followers should not "forbid" the children to come to him; in other words, they can be prevented from accepting Christ, their early receptiveness to his ideals can be effectively destroyed by catching the prejudices, fears, and rationalized hatreds of their elders.

All the same, those who try to bring children to Christ have an easier task than those who have to break down the de-

fenses of mental attitudes hardened by habit. It is enough that those around them should take for granted that attitude of openness to life in all its forms which is described in the Sermon on the Mount, and the children will adopt it as their own. As they grow they will hear these values challenged all around them, and then their adherence to them can be matured and strengthened by explanation and discussion.

It is not hard to get a child to see how these ideals, uncomfortable to the individual as they may often be, make for a more complete and worthwhile happiness than the more immediate satisfaction guaranteed by "enlightened self-interest."

Falling into a mind that is open to God, desiring, however ineffectually, to serve him, the other kind of teaching in the Gospel can take root. These are the teachings that call men to become witnesses of Christ, drawn out of the world but dedicated to its service. The call to give oneself to God, the call even to perfection, can be heard and answered by one who does not, in fact, recognize the source of the call or the nature of his own response. Probably the vast majority of those who are sanctified will reach holiness without realizing what is happening to them.

But there are also the millions, bewildered and fearful, whose desire for God, though real, is too obscure and too weak to overcome the obstacles of natural selfishness, ignorance and fear. These also must be drawn to God, and it is for these that there must be a witness, the assembly of Christians who in a body and as individ-

uals show to other men the real meaning of their own hopes and fears, and point out to them Christ, the fulfillment of desires they hardly knew they had.

For those who are called to this kind of work there are special challenges and special warnings. This seems to me a more intelligible and consistent interpretation of the differences between the two types of moral teaching.

The call to perfect holiness is for all, but some only of those who respond fully to God have a particular kind of work to do which requires more specific and specialized understanding of what is demanded of them. Especially there are warnings for such people so that they be under no illusions about the kind of life they are letting themselves in for. The enmity of the closest friends and relations, the loss (literal and spiritual) of home, possessions, security of any kind, the certainty of suffering, these are what Christ's witnesses must expect.

This is not the kind of thing young children can easily understand, and to reduce it to their terms is likely to rob it of meaning or invest it with an unreal glamor. But as they grow they can begin to hear and respond, if they already have the sort of attitude to God and man that is described by Christ in so much of his public teaching. There are no rules for this development. The age, the occasion, the individual temperament will vary, and each response can only come from the person as he is, not as we would like him to be.

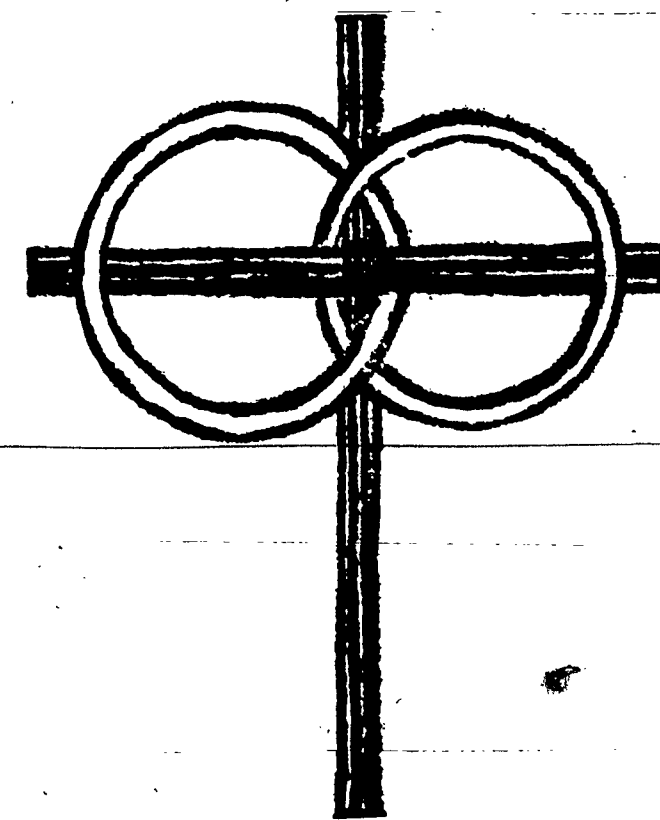
The acceptance or rejection of Christ's call will depend on

individual treatment. The development of a true moral sense of sin which is deep but not fearful, and a hope of salvation which is confident but not self-confident, cannot normally be achieved by the teaching of general principles alone. They need to be interpreted for each one. But this is not just a matter of clear explanation. When Christ was approached for intellectual clarification, as in the case of Nicodemus, he gave it; but contained in it and not to be separated from it was a personal challenge, a personal call to accept not an idea, primarily, but a person. And in most cases the encounter with individuals reduced itself to this: Christ offered himself and asked for the response of faith.

But the means he used were suited to the moral and intellectual capacity of each one. To each one he offered the same challenge, but never twice in the same way. It is noticeable how often the recorded incidents refer to people who had been healed, or had sins forgiven. It is not only then, but always, that suffering and remorse opens a way for God to touch the human heart. Usually Christ cured and forgave and afterwards, or at the same time, gradually elicited an act of faith. In the receptive condition created by a great need, he could work, and raise each one to progressively higher levels of understanding and love. Christ's methods are still the same.

It is still Christ who challenges, acting through his members, his witnesses. Sometimes he does it indirectly, through a book or some chance word pronounced.

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