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## **Radical Incoherence**

by William P. Wilson, M.D.

-- *Commentaries from past newsletters* --

I once flew to Toronto to speak at the annual meeting of the Christian Medical Foundation of Canada. The meeting was in Belleville Ontario east of Toronto. The major speaker was Dr. John Patrick of Ottawa University in Ottawa Ont. Dr. Patrick is a molecular biologist and pediatrician who works in the field of malnutrition. He is particularly interested in the effects of famine. Each year he spends four months in the rain forests of Zaire where there is much malnutrition. He did not, however, lecture us on malnutrition, instead he challenged us to respond to the message of the world.

As he opened his lecture he pointed out the absurdity of the secularists position on a variety of issues. He says that their positions on several issues are illogical. They are **radically incoherent**. By this he means that the secular humanists are aware of the tenuous positions they hold, but they defend them to the death. As an example he cites the position of the pro death people on the right to abortion. It is right in their minds to abort any fetus for birth control except under one circumstance. The circumstance is that one cannot abort female fetuses as a means of determining the sex of the child. It violates their rights. He responds by saying that it is equally wrong to abort fetuses that suffer from Down's Syndrome. It violates their rights too. He gave us other examples of their incoherence.

Profoundly impressed at the sagacity of his remarks, I obtained a tape of his primary address. I have listened to it five time now. Each time I listened, the two words **radical incoherence** stuck in my mind.

This diagnosis of the humanists ideological problems were graphically demonstrated to me two weeks later. Because I was program chairman for the Psychiatry section of the CMDS at the American Psychiatric Association, I had to stay for three days. To fill my time, I attended twelve hours of lectures and paper presentations. Two presentations, a lecture and a symposium, illustrated in graphic detail the radical incoherence that Dr. Patrick described in his lecture. The most important of these was a lecture by Dr. Paul Fink, a child psychiatrist and a former president of the APA. Dr. Fink was lecturing on the problem of violence in our society. He began by outlining the problem of violence. The statistics were appalling, and he knew they were. They are, however, common knowledge. I had heard most of them before. Next he listed the reasons why violence had increased so markedly in the last three decades. I knew the answers before he gave them. The first thing he mentioned was TV. He spent about fifteen minutes in a polemic against the violence that is so prevalent on TV. I knew, as I listened, that he was on safe ground. Everyone agrees, except the

network producers, that there is too much violence. I thought to myself, "There is nothing new here either."

Next he turned to the problem of the nuclear family. It was his belief that the high divorce rate and illegitimacy are the second and probably the most important factor. For another fifteen minutes he discussed this problem. His main emphasis was on the necessity of the father being in the home. I thought, "I know he is right, but does the rest of the intellectual community?" I could not help but feel that every person at the APA needed to hear his lecture. Then his lecture fell apart, when he tried to offer some suggestions as to how this problem could be dealt with.

He had only one concrete suggestion. It was the usual one--education. I am sure he knows that education in the public schools will not do it. In my heart I also felt that, as a Jew, he knew what the real answer is. He was, sadly, too "chicken" to provide the answer that will work. The answer is not better education, nor is it pouring more money into the inner cities, or reforming welfare. The answer I wanted him to give is a return to the ethical position that this country held when it was founded. We have to live by moral absolutes. He did not recommend a return to the ones that had worked so well for more than four thousand years. Instead he pussyfooted around the issue and ended up making few specific recommendations. As I thought about it, I knew that it is even more important that the Holy Spirit reveal to the citizenry the falsity of their beliefs. He must also empower them to live by Judeo-Christian standards. I think he was guilty of not prescribing an effective treatment.

The tragedy of this lecture was that a leader in the field of child psychiatry of his stature had so little to offer. It is not enough to diagnose a disease. One has to treat it. If not treated, a physician is liable for malpractice.

On the previous day I had attended a symposium of homosexual issues. After I took my seat in the almost filled lecture hall, I realized that the bulk of the audience consisted of gays and lesbians. Of the five speakers on the program four of them identified themselves as homosexual. The first paper presented was supposed to be on the lifestyle of homosexuals. It was primarily a slide show of homosexual protests and other innocuous activities.

The second presentation was a discussion of the care of homosexuals in a rural community in Oregon. The author came to the conclusions that their problems in a rural community are the same as those in the city. There was a third presentation that was totally useless. It really had little to say.

It was the fourth presentation that was so illustrative of the radical incoherence that Dr. Patrick mentioned. The presenter was from New York City and was on the faculty of a medical school there. Her subject was parenting in a same sex household. What she was trying to do was to examine the problems that exist

when a homosexual couple has children. She listed and discussed the problems, but did not have any solutions. The problem that she focused on was the nurturance of children. These are sometimes adopted children, but most often they are children born to one of a lesbian couple. I should point out to you that lesbians are not without the desire to bear and nurture children. Their problem is getting pregnant. Modern medicine solves this problem. Sperm is available from anonymous donors or from identified donors at sperm banks for artificial insemination. There are plenty of physicians who are willing to inseminate them. Those lesbians who want to have children take advantage of the availability of this service and use it. Having a child is no problem. According to the author of this paper, the problems arise in nurturance of the children. To illustrate, she described one situation where the nurturance problem got out of hand.

One member of a lesbian couple decided to have a baby. She got pregnant using her lover's brother's sperm. She, in time, delivered a baby girl. Clearly, her lover did not take to this well, and within a year she left to live with a new lover. She did not, however, end her relationship with the child. Even after she left, she returned and spent considerable time with her. The only problem was that her new lover wanted to be involved too. This development was not all, though, for the brother of the departed lover decided that he wanted to be involved in the nurturance of that child. After all it was **his** baby. Meanwhile, the woman who had bourn the child had taken a new lover. She too got involved. The author commented that these convoluted relationships could lead to real problems in the life of the child, and might have disastrous effects in the future. Her closing comment was that she, her two children and her lesbian lover did not have the instability described in her case illustration.

I had enough at this time so I went to another symposium on a more conventional psychiatric problem.

The radical incoherence of the meeting was certainly illustrated in the contrast between the two lectures. On the one hand there was a former president of the APA and an outstanding leader in the field of child psychiatry who was urging the maintenance of intact families, and especially the presence of a father, while another person of stature was saying it is all right to bear children in a same sex household where there is no father. It was also true that Dr. Fink was emphasizing the mental health of the child. The lesbian lecturer, in contrast, did not consider the mental health of the child as a primary factor in her discussion.

The point of this discussion is that although many people at the APA know what is right, their philosophy of deterministic humanism blinds them to the radical incoherence of their ideas.

Our government is also guilty of radical incoherence in many areas. It is particularly incoherent regarding the family. Many government leaders make statements that strong families are a necessity. Nevertheless they, like the APA,

support agendas that undermine the family. In a like manner, they say religious statements and make overtures to religious leaders, yet their policies are antireligious. Their incoherence is also apparent regarding abortion and homosexuality.

In the fields of education they try to take over the moral education of children with universal childcare, sex education in the schools and the distribution of condoms in schools. Still, they decry the high rate of illegitimacy and broken homes. They believe that education can do something about the moral degradation of society, yet they know that it is not possible to teach everything in schools.

Then there is the radical incoherence in the law. There is much talk about justice, but they do not even have a course on the subject in most law schools. There is no justice in the courts. We see a sentence of 45-years given to Jimmy Bakker for his activities, while in a local court a brutal rapist and murderer is given a 16-year sentence.

What should we do? Dr. Patrick says that we have to take action. This action is to challenge the arguments of those in government, education, medicine and law when they are advancing them in the pursuit of their goals. The most consistent action taken by the leaders of the Christian world is to use the *argumentum ad hominum*. This form of argument is to attack your opponent. If you cannot counter his ideas, you can attack him or her. We cannot continue to use such tactics. We have a God who is just and has given us rules to live by that make a favorable difference in our lives. All Christians have to proclaim his directions and rules for right living to a lost and incoherent world.

Second we have to make ourselves heard. We cannot sit purposeless and passionless while the world does its thing. This is particularly true in the church. We have let humanists take over the bureaucracy of the church. Though the rank and file oppose many of their actions they do nothing about it. There is a minority who does speak out, and they have had a powerful effect. Nevertheless, for some reason, they have not been persuasive enough to begin to turn things around.. Their impotence is the result of a failure to undergird their efforts with prayer. Prayer changes things.

When we do speak out it is necessary that we are as well prepared as our opponents. We have to have facts, and be prepared to present them in a logical coherent way. They have facts but they misinterpret them to their advantage. Dr. Patrick pointed out in his lecture that their position is often illogical. All we have to do is challenge the logic of their arguments. With appropriate logic they may admit their error.

It is also true that we must keep watch.

Ezek 33:6, "But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes the life of one of them, that man will be taken away because of his sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for his blood."

Dr. Patrick cited a case where the administration of the University was trying to carry out a bureaucratic federal mandate that was unlawful. When challenged, the administration tried to get it put into effect with a stacked study committee. When a few of the Christians on the faculty protested, they brought about the defeat of the proposal in the University committee appointed to study the mandate. All too often we do not understand their strategy, so we do not attack, or we attack too late because we have not kept watch.

But watching is not enough. We have to be prepared for the battle of ideas by being armed with knowledge. It is not enough to quote scripture. We have to have a position clearly stated and defended. Fortunately the evangelical Christian community is coming together to formulate position statements that represent the best thinking of Judeo-Christian ethicists. Recently the Institute on Religion and Public Life held the Ramsey Colloquium to consider *Morality and Homosexuality*. They published this statement in the March issue of *First Things*. It was excerpted in the *Wall Street Journal*.

In this article they first examined the origin of the present demands of the gay and lesbian movement. Their position, based on the fallacy that "human health and flourishing require that sexual desire, understood as a need, is to be acted upon and satisfied. Any discipline of denial or restraint is depicted as unhealthy and dehumanizing." The authors of the paper reply that "it is dehumanizing to define ourselves by our desires alone. Nor does it seem plausible that to suggest that what millennia of human experience have taught us to regard as self-command should now be dismissed as mere repression." They go on to clearly state that public anxiety about homosexuality is pre-eminently a concern about the vulnerabilities of the young. They emphatically consider it a matter of legitimate and urgent public concern. Space does not allow a complete discussion of this position statement. I have only quoted enough from it to give you a taste of its content. I suggest that you read it if you have an interest in this area, or if you want to see what the evangelical world can do when it sets its mind. We will be glad to send you a copy of the *Wall Street Journal* article if you will write us.

Finally, we have to write letters to our legislators, congressmen and senators stating our views. When we know there is legislation pending what is wrong we need to call and state our views. In our own communities we have to attend public hearings, and council meetings and speak out against things that we know are patently wrong, and praise things that are right. Then, too, we need to support those Christians who have the courage to run for office. We can make a difference if we set out to do it.

