



# F.A.C.S. REPORT

*"A Monthly Newsletter on the Relevance of the Christian Faith."*

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## What's Inside:

*"Talkback radio can be frustrating and a waste of time.*

*Not so in the United States where some of the radio hosts bring strong religious convictions to the program. It is especially encouraging when one of these hosts uses the Ten Commandments as the basis of her discussions.*

*This contrasts with the Evangelical community that seems to despise the Ten Commandments in favour of some other standard. The result is an inability of those within evangelicalism to indicate a program of how things might be improved.*

*If the bible does not contain such a program of reform for everyone, then we are left with each individual creating his or her own program, each person being his or her own god.*

## STUPID THINGS

*By Ian Hodge Ph.D.*

I AM NOT A GREAT FAN of talk back radio. However, I have come to realize that I could be converted to this medium. Not by Australian talkback hosts, though. Recent experiences with foreign talkback radio have almost made me a radical supporter of this kind of entertainment.

Mind you, I have heard some of the funniest lines on talkback radio, even in this country. I recall a late night conversation the late John Pearce had with a lady who was trying to convince him of the reality of reincarnation. In usual acerbic style, Pearce disagreed strongly with her. At the end of the conversation, and after he had cut her off the air waves, he concluded with a remark along these lines. "I don't believe in reincarnation. And I didn't believe in it last time, either."

Unfortunately, talkback radio is not always of such a high caliber. More recently in Australia, some radio hosts have come under scrutiny by public and government agencies. While the comments of

talkback hosts carry a lot of weight, a recent trip to the United States convinced me that in this country we have still to learn what real talkback radio can be.

Upon arrival in the US, I rented a car to travel to my first destination and turned on the radio to hear conservative commentator Rush Limbaugh, a radical free tradesman, taking to task Pat Buchanan, another conservative (and Christian) who has jostled around the edges of the Republican party nomination for presidential candidate. Unsuccessful to date, Buchanan is now courting the Reform Party (or perhaps it is the other way around) of Ross Perot. Mr Buchanan, it seems, favors a limited free trade deal. Protection of local industry is more important than the abolition of borders for trade. But we are reminded of the comment of the great Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises, who said that if goods did not cross borders then the armies would.

What was strange in this for this Aussie visitor is the fact that there are enough conservatives in

America for them to criticize each other. In Australia, conservative radio hosts are rare. Even rarer are the conservative hosts who support the idea of free trade. There is always some reason to limit the idea of free trade, although reasons vary why we should avoid free trade with foreigners. Apparently buying foreign goods takes jobs from Australians, and so it does, just as buying fruit from Victoria doesn't help the Queensland fruit farmers. And those of us who shop in K-Mart do not help the workers and shareholders in Target one bit. Does this mean we should abolish K-Mart? If the answer is no, then there is no logical reason to stop foreigners undercutting local producers *unless* we can find some reason to argue that foreigners are a different class of people. Thus, the limits on free trade are not *economically* based; they are *racially* based. This is why some of us argue for the complete abolition of trade barriers. It maintains the equality of races while providing cheaper goods and services.

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If Limbaugh is not enough, then a quick turn of the dial brought on the radio program of Michael Medved, who gained notoriety in recent years for daring to criticize Hollywood and its constant attack against the idea of the Christian family and Christian moral standards. Medved, a Jew, brings conservative biblical values to bare on an industry that fails to adhere to any moral values other than those the industry manufactures for itself. His radio program was a discussion on movies while, at the same time, being a discussion on moral values.

While Limbaugh was fascinating to listen to as he defended the right of free trade and criticized Buchanan for his lack of a free market stance, and even though Michael Medved's penchant criticisms of the film industry are spot on, nothing compares in talkback radio to another conservative commentator, a devout Jew, Dr. Laura Schlessinger. This is one lady you do not want to get into an argument with under any

circumstances. She, too, brings conservative biblical values to the air waves, but not in the area of films. Dr Schlessinger, you see, is a psycho-therapist. Now just when I had become convinced by the Bobgans and others of the dangers of psychotherapy, Dr Laura (as she is called) has overturned all these notions by providing some of the most brilliant and daring comments to people on talkback radio that you can imagine.

Take, for example, a young man who rings in who can't make up his mind which girl he should go out with. He has a couple on the hook right now, and he needs advice from Dr Laura on which one he should continue to date. "Which one do you think you should marry?" she asks. None of them, came the reply. "Then don't go out with either one. Find the girl you want to marry and date her instead." Somehow, this does not seem like the advice the young man was seeking.

Others ring in (or in America "call" in) in the hope that Dr Laura might offer some advice on what to do in custody battles. The advice they get is straight and narrow. Do what is right, argues Dr Laura. And for her, right is obeying the Ten Commandments. And what is the title of her latest book? You guessed it, *The Ten Commandments*. Just when you think the Bible is losing ground to Hollywood, to pop culture and the desire for man to be his own god, a major publishing house publishes Dr Laura's *Ten Commandments*.<sup>1</sup>

For the past 300 years or more evangelicals have been trying to avoid the implications of believing the whole Bible.<sup>2</sup> In spite of all its talk, the post Reformation Church has failed to continue with Luther's original stand on the idea of *sola scriptura*. Catholics and Protestants of all persuasions have all capitulated to the reign of reason and concluded that the mind of man is the

ultimate arbiter of what is true or false.

The world that has been created by this presupposition and commitment to rationality as the guide to life has not been pleasing to many Christians. Yet, when they are told what the problem is, they demur and *will not* alter their position. It is not as if they do not understand the issue, for they understand it well. It is just that they do not intend to take a different path and hold to the fact that the sovereignty of God must take precedence over the sovereignty of reason.

To take this path, however, is too difficult for many. This would mean, for example, that the Ten Commandments *and all that they imply* are the governing standards for how we should live. Many evangelicals are looking for biblical answers to the problems of life, but they have committed themselves to the mistaken belief, thrashed out in England in the seventeenth century according to Beiser, that the Bible is an *inadequate* guide and therefore needs to be supplemented. The depths of sin are perhaps nowhere more apparent than these subtle attempts for man to live the tempter's lie (Gen. 3:5) and maintain his claim to divinity by determining what is good and evil, right and wrong. This is the essence of the revolt against God described in the Bible, and therefore ought to be the issue that we guard against most.

The trouble is, too many evangelicals have followed in the tradition of the seventeenth century church rather than what Scripture says. Or, in the name of a higher Christianity, they argue that the Gospel takes priority over other parts of the Bible. This view, in our opinion, makes God contradict himself, among other things. It also fails to address major issues that confront us.

1. Her other books, *Ten Stupid Things Women Do to Mess Up Their Lives* and *Ten Stupid Things Men Do to Mess Up Their Lives*, inspired the title for this article.
2. See Frederick Beiser, *The Sovereignty of Reason: The Defense of Rationality in the Early English Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

# UNHELPFUL EVANGELICALS?

By Ian Hodge Ph.D.

**I**N A RECENT CONVERSATION with a clergyman, it became clear that the issue of how we might advise politicians or businessmen on how they should act was not something he considered we should be doing. This view is unfortunately held by some very prominent evangelical and reformed clergymen. Sometimes it is held with good intentions, but still fails to address some fundamental issues.<sup>3</sup> We know and recognize that without regeneration men and women will continue in their revolt against God. This means they will maintain their desire to be their own law makers. Does this mean, however, that the unregenerate are incapable of keeping any of God's laws? We think not, for the desire to be one's own god does not rule out keeping God's commandments. They will, no doubt, be kept for wrong reasons. They will be kept for expedience rather than because it is the right thing to do. And no doubt God's rules will be abandoned at the first opportunity. This is what we are seeing in our society.

But does this mean that God's laws should not be imposed upon the unregenerate? The fact that they cannot and do not wish to keep them is surely an issue. But is it an issue that should drive us to argue, for example, like this? "As a Christian I have my own thoughts and ideas about such things, but they have no authority whatsoever above the thoughts of anyone else."<sup>4</sup> Does this mean, for example, that if we say murder is wrong, this idea has no authority above the thoughts of those who say murder is OK?

While the evangelical community is arguing about whether or not Christian views should take priority over the views of non-Christians, an Orthodox Jew, Dr Laura Schlessinger, is taking the message of the Ten Commandments to a sizeable number of people. Some evangelicals will bemoan this fact and argue it is not something we should be doing. We should not be telling other people how they should live. This is not our task, they argue. A waste of time, we are told, for the unregenerate cannot do what God wants them to do. If they are unable to do what God wants them to do, we might ask, then why ask them to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be saved. They cannot do this without regeneration either. Does this mean we should not preach the Gospel? Of course not. And neither should it stop us telling others that our views about how life should be believed are the views that everyone should adopt because they are the *right* ones.

But the problem does not end there. Even if the view illustrated here by the words of Dr Lloyd-Jones were correct, what stops the evangelical community telling its own how they should live? If the unbelievers cannot adopt biblical standards, we could at least tell the believers how they should act. But we search the myriad of books on the evangelical shelf and find that there is little that guides the believer in terms of the Ten Commandments. There is a certain attraction to the idea that the unbeliever cannot be expected to live up to God's

standards. But this should not stop the evangelical community from developing for itself answers to the many questions of life.

Thus, we see here two views. The first one says that we cannot expect unbelievers to live the way God wants them to live. So let's not bother telling them what they should do. To these, we'll just preach the Gospel. When they've been converted by the Spirit of God, that is the time to teach them the Commandments and how to live the Christian life.

The second view goes one step further and is, in fact, the *de facto* standard of evangelicalism. This is the view that we do not bother to tell anyone how they should live, believers or unbelievers, because the Scriptures do not provide an objective standard. Each person must therefore work out his own rules for life.

The logic of these positions is understandable, even if they are wrong. That grown men and women can believe such things when the logic of them is so false indicates the blindness that men and women have, even when they are Christians. This should act as a warning and cause us not to readily accept our own views but test them thoroughly before we try to impart our ideas to others.

Meanwhile, a major portion of the world's people continue to suffer under ideas that are in conflict with the Ten Commandments. The former Soviet Union's abandonment of communism in the name of a so-called free trade economy has faltered. This is because there is no real commitment to the key economic principle of free trade: private property. Having failed in its *revolution* to make a utopian society where wealth would be available for all, the Soviets under Gorbachev and then Yeltsin embarked on a return to private property and free trade.<sup>5</sup> (Free trade anywhere in the world today is not really free trade. It is trade controlled by government regulation. This is *not* free trade. But we recognise that the Soviets determined to

3. See D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *God's Ultimate Purpose: An Exposition of Ephesians One* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1978), p. 197 ff.

4. *ibid.*

have a little less regulation in some areas.) The outcome has not gone well, but was predictable to those who knew and understood free-market economics taught by the Austrians (von Mises etc.). It is simply impossible to run an illogical (and in our opinion immoral) economic system then expect everything to work out without trouble once the process is reversed. For a start, the personal disciplines needed to make free trade a reality are weak or non-existent. For too long the people have been clothed and fed by the state. Like pensioners at home, they are not about to give up a free lunch, especially if the price for this can be extracted out of the younger generation that have jobs.

Thus our evangelical leaders face an impasse. Having adopted a stupid and illogical position that we cannot tell the unbelievers (or even the believers) how to live, they leave the world to wallow in the quagmire of incorrect rules and laws. Even at home, we are told, we cannot tell our legislators what to do. There are no biblical prescriptions for politicians, nor are there principles that can be applied to business.

### The Crowning excuse

**O**N TOP OF ALL THIS comes the crowning excuse: we can never expect the world to convert to Christianity because the devil is in control. We are sojourners. We are travellers in a world that does not belong to us. This is not God's world until He comes back again on a great rescue mission. His first rescue mission was a failure, or was never designed to rescue the world at all. Meanwhile, the best we can expect is to salvage a few odd souls from ultimate destruction. As

for turning the world into a *Christian* world, that is just wishful thinking but can never be a reality.

Meanwhile these evangelicals who say we cannot impose God's laws on the world insist that the legislators in the country adopt practices of social equity. Redistribute the wealth, some of them argue. Make sure crime is punished, they cry. But on whose terms should this happen? If not God's terms, then they must argue for some other basis.

And what do we find? A consistent pattern that when the Ten Commandments are not the basis for legislation, then the opposite of these things comes true. Whereas the commandment against theft protects property of all kinds including being taxed by the politicians, the evangelicals want property to be controlled by the legislators, taken from the rich and transferred to the needy. This levelling approach has done little except to make the rich richer and the poor poorer. Meanwhile, the middle class, the transition position from poor to rich, has been steadily eroded. So it is increasingly more difficult for the poor to become rich.

This is the legacy of an evangelicalism that refuses to understand and apply the Ten Commandments. This is the inheritance left to us by the Christian world that cannot accept the Ten Commandments as being God's standard for today. This is the world that now needs transformation in light of the Gospel so that the redeemed in Christ will progressively abandon the idea of man's self-proclaimed ability to determine what is right and instead submit reason to the Word of God.

Because evangelicalism cannot do this at the moment, it is marked with an anti-intellectualism, a propensity to shallow preaching, an ignorance of the issues that need to be addressed in the world, and an animosity towards those who do claim to be able to apply the Bible to the problems at large.

Dr Schlessinger's *Ten Commandments* will probably outsell Rushdoony's study on the same theme. Her market, however, will not be evangelical Christianity. Her market is those who are looking for answers to real problems. This is not a market that looks to evangelicalism for answers. This comes as no surprise because evangelicals say they have none. They just point people to Jesus, and while this is a good start, by itself it is not enough. Meanwhile, the folk turning to Dr Laura are not necessarily seeking godly answers to often difficult issues. But that is what they get.

Let's pray and work for the day when evangelicalism can recover its roots in the historic faith that once transformed pagan nations into Christian nations. Let us work for a world that can once again establish the sanctity of the family (Commandment #7), property (Commandment #8), and honesty (Commandment #9). Let us pray and work for the day when people will be content with their lot in life (Commandment #10) yet willing to work their way to greater wealth knowing that with greater wealth comes greater responsibility and with greater responsibility comes a greater power to influence those about us. And then we might get the Christian revolution many of us are looking for.

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5. See Tom Bethell, *The Noblest Triumph: Property and Prosperity Through the Ages* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998). While a worthwhile study on the institute of private property, the author does not see the link between private property and the Ten Commandments. This is because the church, Protestant and Catholic, had been compromised by rationalist belief and fascinated by the idea of human autonomy since the humanists invaded the Christian universities from the twelfth century onwards.