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city

VOLUME II, NUMBER 4

MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

JANUARY 30, 1975

DISCOURSE ON ETHICS: III PORTABLE ETHICS & THEOLOGY

The crucial, ethical issue, it seems to me, is not the degree of absoluteness or flexibility which characterizes our moral standards. Of greater import is the fact that in a multiplicity of day by day situations, throughout a life-time, we as human beings are responsible to determine a proper course of action. It is fundamental to our birthright that we are empowered to make moral distinctions and decisions in all areas of conduct. And it is just that we be held accountable for the same.

On the ethical stage, the spotlight should illumine the actors rather than the prompters in the wings. The "right" moral standards, then, are those that take seriously our dilemma and acknowledge the nature of our predicament.

Human life is a process by which we move through an untold number of experiences on our journey from birth to death. And the journey itself is always changing so that the life experiences of one generation are not exactly the same as those of the next, and so on. Many of our more critical, ethical dilemmas of today did not exist in previous times; and we cannot possibly predict the issues with which our descendants will struggle. We are constantly moving from one situation to another and exercising again and again our powers or skills of moral discretion. Ethical conduct requires "on the job training" and "mid-course correction". The concept of process also implies that being on the move, we must rely on moral resources that are themselves mobile. We cannot be forever running back to headquarters or to the main library of correct answers (even if such existed), but we must be making decisions in the precise time and place where the situation occurs.

The Judeo-Christian tradition of ethics has relied heavily upon the Ten Commandments as a perpetual, moral standard, a resource for all time or times. I

think it is interesting and essential to note that the Decalogue was given to a people on the move. It is characterized by its brevity and by its mobility. (The Commandments were on tablets of stone which were placed in the Ark of the Covenant and carried throughout the years of wilderness wandering.) In later centuries a settled people proceeded to expand and enlarge upon the law. However, the more specific the standards become, the less mobile and flexible they are bound to be. The Christian tradition finds in Jesus' summation of the law* a mobile, moral standard designed for people on the move through all of the experiences of life.

Morality does not change, but ethics do. Because life is a process, we are ever experiencing the flux of change. The questions and issues of our lives do not remain the same. We are required to be making new decisions which are apt to lead to even further change. It is a blessing to us all that life is a communal experience, that we live and face ethical issues together with other people. We have the benefit of other insights: those who are our contemporaries as well as the experience (tradition) by which moral values are transmitted (transported) from one generation to another. To honestly and diligently face the ethical questions and dilemmas of our day, utilizing the moral resources at our disposal, is to be growing in maturity and appreciation of what it means to be a human being.

**You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets also.*

Matthew 22:37-40 (Jerusalem Bible)

by David R. Freeman
Pastor of First Presbyterian Church

Readers wishing to contribute an essay expressing their ideas on ethics are invited and encouraged to do so.

SPECIAL NIGHT AT
LIBRARY'S FRIDAY FLICKS — FEB. 14, 1975:
SOUTHERN FOLKLORE

After receiving her advanced degree from Memphis State's Department of Broadcasting and Film in 1970, Memphis filmmaker Judy Peiser joined with Bill Ferris, assistant professor in American Studies and Afro-American Studies programs at Yale, "to preserve and record certain southern traditions that still exist in isolated areas". They incorporated to create a non-profit, anthropological research Center for Southern Folklore, headquartered here in Memphis, and began filming the extemporaneous behavior of interesting people and modes of life in the mid-south region.

All of their short films — glimpses into Southern folkways — will be presented Friday night, February 14, at the Memphis Public Library. "Gravel Springs Fife and Drum" is one of this collection; it traces Othar Turner, a fife maker and player, as he starts out in the early morning to join his fife and drum band in an open field where it performs at a rural picnic. This film, along with "Ray Lum: Mule Trader", about a talkative professional swapper whom Bill Ferris knew while a boy in Vicksburg, and "Greene Valley Grandparents", recording a Tennessee program in which elderly persons serve as volunteer "grandparents" for retarded children, are award winning films: they each won the Chris Bronze Plaque Award at the Columbus Film Festival in Ohio. "Fife and Drum" has won the Golden Eagle Award of the Council on International Non-theatrical Events, the Silver Medal at a film festival in Belgium, and a \$3,500 commission at Tennessee's 1972 Sinking Creek Film Celebration, all of which assisted in the Center's obtaining grants from the Rockefeller Foundation for other films. In addition to these three films, the Library will show their other shorts on Delta Blues music and gospel singers.

At present the Center for Southern Folklore is working on a film featuring Mrs. Fannie Bell Chapman, a South Mississippi faith healer and gospel singer. They also plan to distribute the first issue of their newsletter in early 1975.

For further information about the Center's work, write CENTER FOR SOUTHERN FOLKLORE, 3756 Mimosa Ave., Memphis 38111, or phone (901) 323-0127.

A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION RESOLVED IN
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

March 20, 1864—MEMPHIS DAILY BULLETIN

Council met at Chamber yesterday—Mr. Moffet attended as reporter for the BULLETIN. "Alderman Vollintine approached him and commenced to beating him about the head with a stick, saying he did so on account of something he alleged Mr. Moffet had published about him." Mr. Moffet asked him to cease and listen to explanation. But Mr. Vollintine refused, saying he wished to gain satisfaction in his own way. Having broken the end of his stick, he turned it and started to inflict more injury. Mr. Moffet already bleeding and deeply cut on the head, drew his pistol and fired, wounding Mr. Vollintine. The wound did not prevent him from continuing his assault with the stick. Mr. Moffet refrained from firing again, but beat his assailant on the head with the butt of his gun. Mr. Vollintine soon began feeling his wound. The wound being in the femoral artery, "blood spurt forth in a jet, issuing in so rapid a stream that in a quarter of an hour from the commencement of the contest he was a corpse."

Mr. Moffet turned himself in but was judged as acting in self-defense.

"We deeply regret the unfortunate occurrence. Mr. Vollintine, though impulsive, and apt when excited to be rash in his remarks, was a gentle man of kind heart and amiable qualities, and was justly respected. On account of this occurrence, the meeting of the Council was postponed until tomorrow."

Contributed by Joyce Hulme

MEMPHIS FILM SERIES

UT—Center Film Society

January 31 — "Citizen Kane"

Southwestern

January 31 — "Dr. Strange Love"

Brooks Art Gallery

February 2 — "Blue Angel"

Jewish Community Center

February 4 — "The Battle of Algiers"

Lyceum Film Theatre

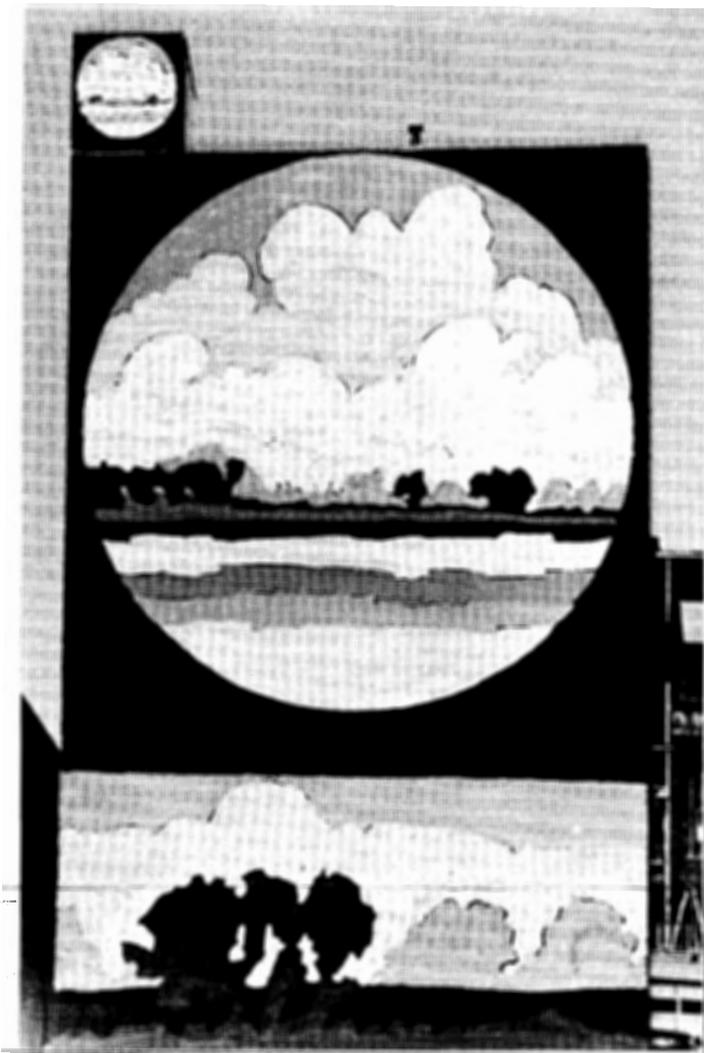
February 4 — "Shanghai Express"

MSU

February 5 — "The Pit and the Pendulum"

UT—Center Film Society

February 7 — "Knife In The Water"



DOWNTOWN WALL ART—The above is the winning design for the west side of the Memphis Cold Storage Building on Front done by Ron Pekar.

LONG LIFE VIDEO—DISCUSSION

At 3:00 p.m. on January 29, the topic of the Main Library's series on aging will be "Housing and Transportation"; and on February 5, the program will focus on "Gray Power", the future of older Americans as a political and social force.

CENTER CITY invites all individuals, organizations, and institutions to utilize its services for any pertinent, non-commercial announcements to be made to the downtown community. Articles, and announcements must be mailed c/o the Editor, to *CENTER CITY*, First Presbyterian Church, 166 Poplar, 38103.

CIVIC CENTER COMMUNITY CULINARY CLUB

Serving from 11:30 to 1:00

First Presbyterian Church, 166 Poplar Avenue

PRICE: \$1.50 per serving, including drink

MENU FOR JANUARY 30 – FEBRUARY 7

THURSDAY, JANUARY 30

Corned Beef, Scalloped Cabbage, Buttered Potatoes, Corn Bread

FRIDAY, JANUARY 31

Beef Stew, Tossed Salad, Corn Bread

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3

Steak w/onion gravy, Whipped Potatoes, Green Beans, Rolls

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4

Macaroni & Cheese, Turnip Greens, Corn on the cob, Beets & Onions & Corn Bread

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5

Spaghetti, Cole Slaw, French Bread

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6

Ham, Sweet Potatoes, Green Beans, Rolls

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7

Turkey & Dressing, English Peas, Cranberry Sauce, Rolls

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First Presbyterian Church

166 Poplar Avenue

Memphis, Tennessee 38103

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