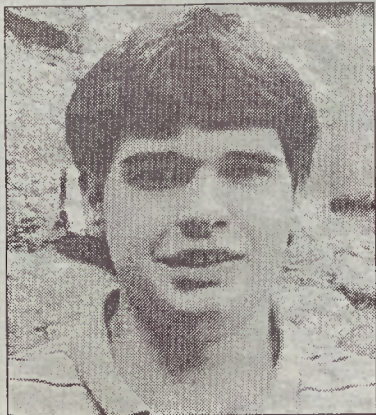


## Legalism (Part 3)



### Sacra

by Tyler Greene

*If you would like a response in the next issue, please send me an E-mail at*

*greenebt@montreat.edu.*

*Limit to approx.*

*100 words.*

Theologia

## Creative Writing

### "Blind Colors"

by Mandi Fields

My blind friend asked me what color is.  
I wasn't quite sure how to explain  
Until the clouds moved above my head  
I told him blue is the color of rain.

Smell the flowers that bloom in May.  
Feel the warmth of spring.  
Know the joy in a child's hug.  
Hear the squeak of a playground swing.  
This, dear friend, is yellow.

Smell the smoke from a blazing fire.  
Feel the hatred of discrimination.  
Know the story of the Crucifixion.  
Hear the cries from an un-Godly nation.  
This, dear friend, is red.

Smell the air of a frosty morning.  
Feel the calmness that a snowfall brings.  
Know the peace of a sleeping baby.  
Hear the words that a church choir sings.  
This, dear friend, is white.

Smell the scent of freshly-cut grass.  
Feel the joy of Christmas morn.  
Know the comfort of a friend's voice.  
Hear the shucks being peeled from the corn.  
This, dear friend, is green.

Smell the pollution in a crowded city.  
Feel the pain of a loved one's death.  
Know the fear of loneliness.  
Hear the sound of a final breath.  
This, dear friend, is black.

My blind friend thanked me with a smile.  
Then, he turned and walked away.  
He caught a few raindrops in his hand.  
God added color to the blind man's day.

Legalism, as we have seen, is a twisting of Christianity that tends to quench true faith. We have already looked at two types of legalism: majoring in the minors, and following man's laws in the place of God's laws.

A third aspect of legalism is following the letter of the law without following the spirit, or in other words only following the externals of the law without having the required attitude of the heart.

Jesus exposes this type of legalism in Matthew 5:21-22. In that passage, Jesus shows the heart of the sixth commandment. "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever

insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the fire of hell."

Again in Matthew 5:27-28, Jesus shows the heart of the seventh commandment, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

The scribes' and Pharisees' literal reading of these commandments, did not cause them to feel convicted, because they had not literally killed anyone or participated in extra-marital sex. This is known as following the letter of the law. In this way, they could rest easy each night believing that they had kept God's law entirely, and boast self-righteousness the next day.

However, what Jesus requires is much more than just the bare

letter of the law; he requires the keeping of the spirit of the law. The Pharisees read the sixth commandment and merely abstained from murdering anyone. Jesus, however, tells them that if they have hated their brother then they have broken the spirit of the commandment.

Keeping the commandments required an attitude of loving your neighbor as yourself. Only then would you have the proper attitude which would keep you from murder, or from hating your neighbor for that matter. This is why Jesus' words are that much more convicting for the Pharisees (and you and me as well) than simply reading the letter of the law.

The fallen human heart often has this legalistic tendency to only follow the letter of the law of God when confronted with the prescribed holiness it requires. As sinful people, we will always come up short when looking at

the spirit of the commandments.

We have to avoid the desire to simply water down God's law to its bare minimum. The heart that desires to reduce God's law merely to the letter is a heart that is seeking self-justification. It is a heart that desires to look into the perfect law of God and see approval, while yet being sinful. This is just not possible. The law constantly points out our sinfulness. What, then, is our hope?

Our hope is not in our approval from the law. Instead, it can only be found in Christ. As Paul says in Romans 10:4, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." This is our good news: it does not come at the cost of lessening the law, but rather having the law expose our sin, so that we claim righteousness not in ourselves, but only in Christ.

## Dear Counselor,

This may sound like a lame problem, but it is really beginning to bother me and I don't know what to do. My boyfriend has the worst manners ever. He interrupts people when they are talking, he yells, he never takes off his hat, he mocks people, he has belching contests with his buddies, and all kinds of things that are really embarrassing when we go out. When we are alone, he is really a great guy. I want to keep seeing him and I don't want to hurt his feelings by saying something to him, but I really am tired of pretending that it doesn't matter. What do you think I should do?

~Etiquette Counts

Dear Eti,

It does seem like the more casual our lifestyles become, the less we pay attention to manners. However, having manners does not mean that we have to be "stuffy," "stiff," or not have fun. Really, using good manners is simply being respectful of the people with whom we are in contact or with whom we interact—and even ourselves. Whether, in your boyfriend's case, it is a matter of immaturity, showing off for his buddies, or that he just is not paying attention to the feelings of others, having these offensive behaviors brought to his attention will give him an opportunity to make some changes. Keep in mind, confrontation does not have to be cruel or mean; in fact, it is a chance to model respectful behavior. Keep in mind, too, that supporting someone in changing behaviors often takes time and lots of patience. The great thing about being respectful is that it can be quite contagious and when that happens we all win.

Peace, Cassie

P. S. Keri and I want to express our gratitude to everyone here at Montreat College who supports the success of the students and the work that is done through The Counseling Center. We count you all among our blessings during this time of thanksgiving.

For more information about this and other mental/emotional health issues, contact Cassie Pavone or Keri Boer at The Counseling Center, lower level of Bell Library, ext. 3538, e-mail: cpavone@montreat.edu or kboer@montreat.edu.



-Cassie Pavone