

## Absolute Values

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called a “bastard.”

Rev Moon always believed in absolute values. As a student of science, he studied the absolute values in physics and engineering and taught that there should also be absolute values in life as well. What was morally right for one should be morally right for another. My parents, who were not particularly religious, raised me with the golden rule, “do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” In high school, we read Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “The Scarlet Letter,” a book about pilgrim morals and I understood that having a child, “out of wedlock” was quite a serious sin. The child of that union was

I remember very clearly, many years ago, how shocked I was to learn that Michael Jordan’s girlfriend was pregnant. She had the baby, and eventually, they got married. In fact, my boys played basketball against his son in high school.

Of course for the actors and actresses in Hollywood, there were no such rules. I remember a story about how Elizabeth Taylor was so in love with Richard Todd. After he was killed in a plane crash, she married Eddie Fisher who had been married to Debbie Reynolds (I am probably dating myself here). Then, of course, she abandoned that marriage to hook up with Richard Burton while they were filming Cleopatra. Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie hooked up while making a movie together. More recently I learned that my favorite guitarist Eric Clapton had “stolen” Beatle George Harrison’s wife. Another Beatle, John Lennon switched from his first wife to Yoko Ono.

Today, I listened to the endless reports about how the most medaled Olympian in history, Michael Phelps had closed out his storied career with a final gold medal. I also saw a story about how he had announced his wedding date to marry the mother of his child.

Of course, I can go on and on and on and on with seemingly every other celebrity out there. My question is, how come the old time actors like Jack Benny, James Stewart, Bob Hope and Bing Crosby managed to stay married so long? I can honestly say that when I was growing up, I never knew even one of my parents’ friends who was divorced. Not that everyone was happily married, but the society did not accept divorce at the time. And, if you got divorced you didn’t fit into their bridge groups anymore as a single.

Of course, some couples decided to stay together “for the sake of their kids,” and split up immediately after the kids moved out, as did the man who was the Emcee at my Bar Mitzvah. Not that they had a perfect relationship by any means, but my parents stayed married for 68 years and I know that they got along much better after my brother and I finally moved out.

I am a student of history and I know that this is not just a recent problem. We read about the affairs of Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson though, of course, they pale in comparison to the great patriotic deeds that they each accomplished. Yet, John and Abigail Adams managed to stay faithful all of their lives and their love letters are in the public domain for us all to read.

Again, as a historian, I read the works of Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee predicting the possible rapid demise of our great American culture. The great empires, Rome, Greece, Egypt and Babylon all disintegrated from within -- due essentially to a lack of moral values. After making the world safe for democracy by defeating the Kaiser in World War I, Hitler in World War II, then saving Korea, America became God's champion and was loved by nearly all the people throughout the world. But then came Vietnam, Watergate, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan.

Alexis de Tocqueville is reputed to have said, "America is great because she is good. If America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great." If we are no longer good, if we are no longer a God-centered culture, if we want to take God out of our schools, out of the pledge of allegiance and off of our money, do we really think that we can continue to be God's champions? Are we so naive to believe that God will continue to bless us no matter what?

So, while I applaud Michael Jordan's athleticism, Michael Phelps swimming prowess and Elizabeth Taylor's acting abilities, I have to join with de Tocqueville in believing that if America ever ceases to be good that she will cease to be great. I truly believe that 2016 has found us on the precipice. Our two presidential candidates have higher negatives than they have approval rates. They talk less about what they believe than they tell us about everything that is wrong with their opponent.

I may be old-fashioned, but I believe that Rev. Moon was right on when he taught us about absolute values -- which are as real for a moral society as they are for the physicists and engineers. I worry when the headlines, not just the National Enquirer, but of our most respected and conservative periodicals and dailies, celebrate these out of wedlock babies in such a nonchalant way. In other words, you want to have sex and children out of wedlock -- no problem, there's nothing wrong, who needs morals anyway? Exactly what the Romans, the Egyptians, the Babylonians and the Macedonians felt hundreds and thousands of years ago. I suppose that Hester Prynne must be rolling over in her literary grave, just mourning the fact that she was born about 300 years too early. In fact, Demi Moore recently starred in a remake of *The Scarlet Letter* -- one that was made without the moral lesson of the original Hawthorne book.

Maybe we are not too far off base if we accept the teachings of Rev Moon and many Nobel prize winning scientists, who state unequivocally that such laws as gravity are true in all places at all times anywhere on our God-given Earth. Likewise, moral laws may be universal and absolute; laws that, should they be violated, cause all things to go haywire. Haywire.... which is what would happen if we were to test the law of gravity by jumping off a bridge.