

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.**
(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)*

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Moral Excellence and Intelligence

June 3, 2009

Today, it is not uncommon to hear the words *intelligent* or *intelligence* being used across broadcast media to describe people in power, especially those in political power.

Generally speaking, the word *intelligence* is used in a very positive and glowing way to the point that it seems that what comes forth from one considered intelligent is sound and good, as if whatever an intelligent person does or says must be right. But is it?

The word *intelligence* means “the ability to learn or understand from experience; ability to acquire and retain knowledge; mental ability,” and “the ability to respond quickly and successfully to a new situation; use of the faculty of reason in solving problems.”

Notice that intelligence does not differentiate between the kind of knowledge that is retained, which means it could be good or evil. Further, although the word *successfully* is used in the definition, it does not define what success should look like. The same argument of good and evil could be made for the success achieved. If one uses intelligence for evil, then success to that person will be in the realm of evil.

What I am driving toward is this: Because of the fall of Adam in the garden, it could be argued that intelligence can be in the realm of both good and evil, for man has partaken of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

An intelligent person can retain evil knowledge just as easily as he can retain good knowledge. In fact, an intelligent person could, and most likely does, retain a mixture of the two. The danger comes when one reverses good and evil to call that which is good evil and evil good, and when one starts to see himself as clever in his own eyes. It will lead to woe!

(20) Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! (21) Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight! (Isaiah 5:20-21 NASB)

Consequently, I believe that judging one by intelligence alone is very dangerous. The same could be said for eloquence. One can be intelligent, and eloquent in expressing that intelligence in a good or evil way, or both. If this is true, which I believe it is, then we need to be very cautious in evaluating one's actions. Simply, action based on intelligence alone does not necessarily translate into something good.

I propose that intelligence that is of any merit must be joined with virtue or moral excellence, something that is seldom mentioned by today's media in describing those in political power, especially those who are leaders in mystery Babylon. They might be smart and intelligent, but do they have virtue?

If you have not already read about the word *smart*, please see issue #03-0902, January 5, 2009, *Babylonian Leaders Are Smart*.

Now, let us consider a word from Paul regarding what is important. Please note that these are issues of character, that is, inward character, not outward appearance or style or even intellect.

[As to] **the rest** [or, Finally], **brothers** [and sisters], **as many things as are true, as many as** [are] **worthy of respect** [or, honorable], **as many as** [are] **righteous, as many** [things] **as are pure, as many as** [are] **acceptable** [or, lovely], **as many as** [are] **commendable, if** [there is] **any**

virtue [or, moral excellence], **and if any**[thing] **deserving to be praised, be meditating on** [or, thinking about] **these things**. (Philippians 4:8 ALT)

Paul tells us to dwell upon or meditate on things that exemplify eight qualities; things that are true, honorable, righteous, pure, acceptable, commendable, virtuous, and praiseworthy. Each of these qualities is a subject unto itself, which I have taken up in article #8, April 2008, *Supplying All Diligence*. Interestingly, the number 8 signifies new birth or life. If we want to know life, then we need to seek after things with these qualities, and as we do, we will discover that they speak of our Lord Jesus, who is Life. However, for this discussion, let us consider that which has virtue.

The word *virtue* is not a common word today, so it is not heard very often in describing people and definitely not in describing politicians. *Virtue* means “general moral excellence; right action and thinking; goodness of character,” or “a specific moral quality regarded as good or meritorious.”

The Greek word *arete*, from which *virtue* is translated, applies in a wide signification to any excellence.

However, in Scripture, virtue speaks of Christ as seen in the epistles of Peter, the only other places it is used in the Greek text in addition to the above verses. As the Lord’s possession, we are to **proclaim the excellencies (virtues) of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light** (1 Peter 2:9); and, **applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence (virtue), and in moral excellence (virtue), knowledge** (2 Peter 1:5). Why? Because He has **called us by His own glory and excellence (virtue)** (2 Peter 1:3)!

Consequently, virtue or moral excellence speaks of the very character of Christ, and we are called to be like our Lord in character. This is the meaning of **Christ is formed in you** (Galatians 4:19) or becoming **a mature man** in Christ (Ephesians 4:13). It is not about manifesting all sorts of supernatural power but about the power of a righteous life manifested as right action and thinking. This is what God is after, and this is what New Jerusalem is all about. See the series on New Jerusalem.

What does right action mean? It means right standing before the Lord which is the meaning of righteousness. In other words, moral excellence has to do with right standing before the Lord, that is, thinking (dwelling upon, meditating on) and doing (acting upon) what is right in the eyes of the Lord. **The Lord our righteousness** (Jeremiah 23:6) demands that we be righteous in all our ways (1 John 3:7), which means that we are to exemplify moral excellence.

Now, I want to switch gears, so to speak, to challenge the notion that intelligence, especially among our political leaders, is the most important, or even the only, criteria by which to discern their actions.

Since 1973, it is estimated that there have been over 49 million abortions performed in the US alone. Today, at least 3,000 of the unborn are aborted each day, which is well over one million each year, depending on the source. Of this number, it is reported that about 16,000 babies are aborted after the 20th week of pregnancy. In fact, these late-term abortions are the height of barbarism as a baby’s brains are sucked out of its skull. Can you imagine an intelligent person supporting such atrocity? Sadly, so-called intelligent people do support such an atrocity, and even go out of their way to ensure that it is available and, in some cases, even funded by American tax dollars.

Do we honestly believe that those who support, even defend, such a thing are doing what is right in the sight of the Lord, who is Life? Is their intelligence joined with moral excellence?

To be fair in this discussion, we could add torture, redefining marriage, and financial deficits that belie logic to the list, along with abortion. Intelligent people support and defend torture, push the bounds of marriage beyond God’s joining together of a man and a woman, and spend astronomical sums of money that we do not have in order to prime the system of usury, which is against God’s divine law. Where is the moral excellence in such so-called intelligence? Where is God’s righteousness?

Dear brethren, the truly intelligent thing to do is to pursue and support moral excellence in our lives and to evaluate our leaders in this light, for without it, intelligence has no right standing before the Lord. Virtue will stand in the day of Christ.