Ethical spirituality: A new phenomenon called idealism

MORAL PERSPECTIVES

REV. KATE THORESEN

There is something stirring in the air. An energy, a movement that calls forth the dream to actually make our world a better place to live. In a recent book review, published by the University of North Carolina, there is a new phrase that describes this loosely related phenomena. It is summed up under the catch-all term of "ethical spirituality."

The article goes on to say that Robert Coles, a Harvard psychologist, has published a new book called, "The Call to Service." It explores the phenomenon called idealism.

Idealism as described by Coles is the impulse in all of us which makes us want to help others. It is evident in social activism. He explains, "While idealism is nothing new, nor is it necessarily opposed to traditional religion, the resurgence of it at this time is highly significant."

Why? "Because," Coles observes, "it gives meaning and direction to life."

This idealism has spread to many areas of life, continues the book review, and is finding expression in that area which has usually been considered most inconsistent with it, business.

"A new style of management which emphasizes the 'spiritual' and uses insights from psychology and traditional ethics has emerged," claims UNC's Bull's Head Bookshop review.

A typical title which reflects this trend is "Golden Rule Management" by Stephen J. Holoviak.

The article continues with these insights: "More generally, many people have realized the need to incorporate spiritual and ethical values into their lives, even if more traditional 'values' have a bad name with some." In his newest book, "A World Waiting to Be Born," best-selling author M. Scott Peck discusses the need for civility in our lives, with specific reference to business and the workplace.

There are other surprising new titles that are emerging in the business world. Peter Block's "Stewardship: Choosing Service Over Self-Interest" says that organization must replace traditional management tools with partnership and choice for all employees. William and Kathleen Lundin have written "The Healing Manager: Now to Build Quality and New Traditions in Business." And "First Things First: A Principle-Centered Approach to Time and Life Management" by Steven Covey (author of "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People"), we find the focus on 'relationships and results rather than on time and things."

And check this title, "Managing With A Conscience: How to Improve Performance Through Integrity, Trust and Commitment" by Frank Sonnenberg.

It will be fascinating to watch this movement of "ethical spirituality" take place as people search for models of authentic well-being. Perhaps some will even return to the basic values, stories and roots of their faith heritages.

Rev. Kate Thoresen is director of the Partnership Ministries at the First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham. If you have a question or comment, call her at 953-2047, mail box number 1882, on a touch-tone phone.

Writers' confab deadline's Monday

a Crime novelist Tom Kakonis will speak at the Oakland University Writers' Conference at noon Oct. 16.

Kakonis has written books called "Shadow Counter" and "Michigan Roll." He'll talk about writing as a career.

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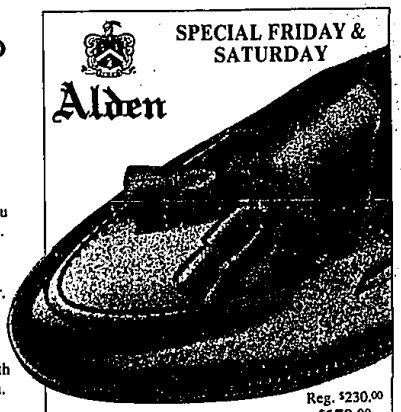

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