

Evading Responsibility

By Mark Mayberry
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Introduction

As an illustration of the human tendency to evade responsibility for wrong-doing, consider the following article, written by Malcolm Moore, originally published in *The Daily Telegraph* (a British Newspaper) on August 1, 2007, and reprinted in the *New York Sun*:

In Italy, Christian Politician Found With Two Prostitutes

ROME — An Italian politician whose party represents Christian values has been embroiled in a scandal involving two prostitutes, a hotel room, and a large amount of cocaine.

Cosimo Mele, 50, a Christian Democrat UDC MP, was caught out when he had to call an ambulance to the hotel in Rome after one of the girls suffered breathing problems.

The property entrepreneur, whose wife is pregnant with their fourth child, has now resigned from his party.

The scandal's timing is sensitive since the UDC Party has been calling for all MPs to take voluntary drug tests.

Mr. Mele said, *"I did nothing other than go to dinner with a friend who introduced me to this girl. Since it was late, she came to bed with me. How many politicians go to bed with young girls?"*

He said he had nothing to do with the other girl who had *"taken drugs or something else."* She had felt ill, and he had called reception.

He added: *"So politicians in the UDC do not make love? Of course, I recognize Christian values. But what has that got to do with going with a prostitute? It is a personal matter. This affair has nothing to do with family values. I cannot be branded a bad father and a bad husband simply because after five or six days away from home, an occasion presented itself."*

Notice the passive, detached phraseology of the last sentence: "I cannot be branded a bad father and a bad husband simply because after five or six days away from home, **an occasion presented itself.**" People often evade responsibility in this manner:

- “I cannot be branded a bad person, simply because after holding up five or six liquor stores, an occasion presented itself: a stupid clerk refused to hand over the money, and the gun went off.”
- “I cannot be branded a bad person, simply because after mugging five or six ladies, an occasion presented itself: a silly woman refused to release her purse, and the knife went in.”
- “I cannot be branded a bad person, simply because after drinking five or six beers, an occasion presented itself: the driver in the other lane refused to yield, and a wreck ensued.”
- “I cannot be branded a bad person, simply because after failing five or six pop quizzes, an occasion presented itself: the test answers were copied and passed around because the students wanted better grades.”
- Politicians say, “Mistakes were made.” Defendants say, “What was done was done.”

Examples of Evasion

Adam evaded responsibility for eating of the forbidden fruit by blaming his wife, and by extension, God: “*The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.*” For her part, Eve also shifted the blame, saying, “*The serpent deceived me, and I ate*” (Genesis 3:11-13).

Aaron evaded responsibility participating in idol worship by saying, “*Do not let the anger of my lord burn; you know the people yourself, that they are prone to evil. For they said to me, ‘Make a god for us who will go before us; for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ I said to them, ‘Whoever has any gold, let them tear it off.’ So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf*” (Exodus 32:22-24).

King Saul evaded responsibility for disobeying the Lord’s command regarding Amalek by first affirming, “*I have carried out the command of the Lord.*” After being rebuked, he defensively said, “*I did obey the voice of the Lord, and went on the mission on which the Lord sent me, and have brought back Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took some of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the Lord your God at Gilgal*” (1 Samuel 15:13-21).

The scribes and Pharisees repeatedly sought to evade responsibility. A lawyer, in asking and answering the question, “*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*” afterwards sought to avoid application of the very truths he had spoken: wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “*And who is my neighbor?*” (Luke 10:25-37). Again, Jesus said of the Pharisees, “*You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God*” (Luke 16:14-15).

Exhortations to Responsibility

As free moral agents, we are creatures of choice (Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Joshua 24:14-28). Regardless of age, whether young or old, we must live in view of the judgment (Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:1, 13-14; Romans 14:10-12). In that final day, Christ will repay every man according to his deeds (Matthew 16:27; Romans 2:4-11). Therefore, are you prepared to meet your God (Amos 4:11-13; 2 Corinthians 5:6-11)?

Conclusion

Modern intellectuals evade responsibility for wrongdoing through the overlapping philosophies of relativism (i.e., there is no absolute truth), determinism (i.e., man is the product of his environment), and egalitarianism (i.e., inequities in life are inherently unfair, so the underclass are excused for stealing from the rich). However, the Bible affirms we must accept responsibility for our actions. David manifested the proper spirit when he said, “I have sinned against the Lord” (2 Samuel 12:1-15; cf. Psalm 51:1-4). So also did the tax collector, who said, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:9-14). Repentance and full submission to the Lord’s will is the only pathway to forgiveness (Psalm 51:10-19; Acts 2:36-41).