

## **"Sadistic Syndrome" and "Sexual Harassment, Sexual Hypocrisy"**

*By Dr. Greg Bahnsen*

When Jeffrey Dahmer was arrested in Milwaukee last summer, his subsequent confessions -- coupled with police investigation findings -- set off shock waves of repulsion and fear. Here was a man who had apparently brutalized and killed a number of unsuspecting younger men, sexually molesting them, dismembering some corpses, and either refrigerating or cannibalizing portions of the bodies. The midwestern city was aghast at the horrors told (and residents of similar large cities around the nation nervously wondered if such things could transpire closer to home). The revelations surrounding the arrest of Dahmer have created a crisis of confidence for the Milwaukee police department. Dahmer's alleged activities have brought a crisis of sorrow and shame to the families of victims. The Dahmer incident has generated a psychological crisis of fear and loathing in just about everybody who has heard of it -- similar to the crisis connected with the infamous "Night Stalker" attacks in southern California.

Most striking of all, however, is the philosophical crisis that is set off by a story like that of Jeffrey Dahmer's. Abrupt and shocking news about an especially gruesome crime has the effect of shaking people out of their placid perspectives about human nature and forcing them to face challenging questions about the adequacy of their working assumptions. Just what kind of creature is man that he could do the things that a Jeffrey Dahmer claims to have done? How can we account for the brutality and perversion that man is capable of performing? Such questions are disturbing to any upbeat humanistic philosophy about man, and yet we cannot avoid asking them. They are expressed outloud even by the shallowest of television reporters and anchormen -- sometimes in rhetorical disbelief, sometimes in honest perplexity.

Then, in rush the psychologists and psychiatrists -- the professionals! -- to save the day and keep us all from worrying that there might be something radically wrong with human nature as such. "Doctor, what are we to think about the ugly behavior of Jeffrey Dahmer? How could someone do such perverse things?," asks the troubled anchorman for all his audience. The expert on human nature replies (as I recently heard on television) with pseudo-scientific insight and precision: "A man like this suffers from sadistic disorder syndrome." This is intellectual legerdemain: treating a mere redescription of the behavior in question as though it were actually a causal explanation of that behavior.

Worse yet, the (intended) effect of the expert psychologist telling the audience that a heinous criminal falls into a special category, suffering as he does from a "syndrome" of some sort, is that "we" no longer need to look upon "him" as somehow the same with "us." The reassurance is that this perverse murderer does not share a common human nature with "normal" folks because he, unlike us, falls into the specified psychological category. This makes him the exception. And

treating dramatically wicked offenders exceptional in terms of "what makes them tick" reinforces the general preconception that human nature is really something basically good and kind and safe. Fragile humanistic illusions must be protected from the facts and logic, lest a cherished religious faith be weakened.

#### Sexual Harassment, Sexual Hypocrisy

What has not been obvious to many is that the negative attention given to the sin of sexual harassment, engendered by the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings, has exposed the hypocrisy of American society as a whole, especially the feminist faction.

Syndicated columnist Mona Charen has noted, very insightfully, that in the 1970's sexual revolution, women insisted that they did not have any more tender ears than men -- that they could hear and speak profanities "just like one of the guys." Protecting them from dirty talk was a sign of hopelessly outdated values.

Now in the 1990s, feminists are puritanically horrified at the monster they have created -- men using dirty language around them (creating an atmosphere of harassment). Now everything is unpredictable. It all depends on the woman's whim whether a man talking dirty is enlightened (she likes it) or a criminal (she doesn't). By contrast, God's law is constant and predictable.