

LIFESTYLE CHOICE

Carnegie is generally remembered as a great benefactor who founded universities and libraries. He was also a ruthless businessman who manipulated the steel market and ruined the lives of many working class folk. However, as history goes, he is probably remembered more for the limited amount of good that he did. Any properly functioning and accountable government could just as easily have founded those universities and libraries without the need for financial shenanigans or wholesale social and industrial devastation.

Understandably, the Carnegie life model seems to be a fairly common ambition. Do well, then do good. Of course, the “*Do good*” part always comes after the “*Do Well*” bit. It is really a sop to the mindset of the follower of this lifestyle model. Selfishness is the underlying motivation. The “*Do good*” is only intended to generate an image which can be publicised to perpetuate the person’s ego beyond death.

There is no basis for anyone to assume that they are uniquely placed to initiate good works. Everyone has that power if they choose to apply it. The extent of their achievements will always be constrained by the resources available to them, but the Proverb that “*A man who saves a life saves the world in time*” is thoroughly sound in its reasoning.

So, at the other end of the lifestyle choice spectrum there is the Mother Theresa model. Do good and hope you can keep going. For obvious reasons this is rather less fashionable. It requires considerably stronger character traits and a wider variety of personal skills than the Carnegie model. Mother Theresa types are rare indeed. Nevertheless they exist. Their natural unselfishness means that we do not hear about them often. When they get in the way, they are usually eliminated. There are many folk who did not enjoy the longevity and publicity which was given to Mother Theresa, but who were *every bit* as worthy of our respect. They just faded away, died quietly, or sacrificed their lives in the course of their efforts.

Lady Diana Spencer threatened the arms industry through her high profile and partially successful condemnation of anti-personnel mines. However, she went one stage too far through her affection for Dodi Al-Fayad. Had they married, a bridge between Christianity and Islam would have been created. That bridge would have proved too strong for those who were determined to start a second war against Iraq and thereafter develop their programme of destruction in the Middle East and elsewhere. Lady Diana and Dodi both paid the ultimate price.

For most of us, getting along from day to day is all we manage. A gamble on the Lotto or the horses is enough to keep the dream of luxury alive. We do a bit here and give a bit there. We gain a bit and lose some.

It seems fairly certain that the good guys seldom win, with wars and exploitation always proving highly profitable for the favoured few. Whether a country is at war or in peace there is always a catch. You may get your money back if you buy a product that isn’t fit for the purpose. If the tradesman makes a mess of the repair job there is a fair chance you will be compensated. On the other hand there does not appear to be any equivalent trading standard within the professions. The service economy is nowadays a playground for the confidence trickster. Perhaps that was always the way of things.

It may not be surprising that there sometimes seems to be a common thread in the use of one religious ideology or another as a respectability front while these types of individual indulge themselves destroying the lives of the unsuspecting innocent. Equally, there seems to be another common thread linking the apparent objective of the types of individual who perpetrate the injustices. This other thread is evidently their true religion.

Perhaps it is time for an open specification of that most devoutly held faith. After all, why should anyone be ashamed of the things they regard most dear. The following is offered based on observation of the *apparent actual*, as opposed to the *purported or implied* function of some practitioners in a few well established institutions and professions. The prayer is equally suited to both genders. It would be wrong of me to exclude women from their right to choose selfish egotism as a way of life.

MAMMONIST PRAYER

Oh great Mammon, thou art most powerful on earth and I am thy most devout servant.

So I fully expect to be rewarded by you with all the good things in life.

Blessed is the pharmaceutical manufacturer, for symptoms are more easily treated than causes

Blessed is the minister, for man shall always seek forgiveness and eternal salvation
Blessed is the Judge, for evidence shall not influence his Opinion
Blessed is the legal practitioner, for no legislation shall bind his actions
Blessed is the accountant, for to him is given the power to avoid rightful taxes
Blessed is the arms manufacturer, for intelligence reports can always be misinterpreted
Blessed is the elected representative, for a week is a long time in politics
Blessed is the educator, for the student dare not question the accuracy of his knowledge
Blessed is the doctor, for man shall always yearn eternal youth
Blessed is the insurance underwriter, for the small print shall deliver him
Blessed is the financial advisor, for he shall gamble with other peoples' wealth
Blessed is the broker, for he shall profit on both sides of the deal
Blessed is the mortgage lender, for foreclosure is his right
Blessed is the team player, for he shall share in the proceeds of corruption
Blessed is the banker, for the asset cover multiple ensures that one day all is his

Oh great Mamon, grant me a long and acquisitive life

In which I may trample underfoot those less fortunate than I
And may gather unto myself untold money and possessions
Which I may conceal in a security deposit box or in a numbered account in a tax haven
Where no mans eyes may rest upon it
In order that the digits on my balance sheet shall be greater than those of others
For only I posses the wisdom to distribute wealth appropriately to the needy
Who wouldst otherwise only let it run through their fingers
And I have made my Will
Within which I have bequeathed certain funds to good causes
That thou may interpret it as my dying wish
And forgive me my unrelenting arrogance, egotism, and self indulgence
Overlook my wholesale destruction of the earth's resources and its peoples
And deliver me without stain from eternal fire
Honoured forever in thy presence
And all peoples shall remember my name and call me blessed

Remember man that thou art dust

But embalming techniques are constantly being improved
And cryogenics looks promising.

Mea non culpa	(I have done nothing wrong)
Mea non culpa	(I have done nothing wrong)
Mea nemo culpa	(I have never done anything wrong)

Go for it !! (Mammonism equivalent of Amen)