

ADVENTIST REVIEW

WEEKLY NEWS AND INSPIRATION FOR SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

MARCH 29, 1990

Where do Adventists stand on public issues?

- ☐ Military buildup
- ☐ Gun control laws
- ☐ Equal Rights Amendment
- ☐ Prayer in public schools
- ☐ Capital punishment



Abortion, Conscience, and Freedom

I was amazed at the suggestion that we give equal honor to a woman's decision to kill her unborn child and to a man's decision to fight to defend his country ("Abortion and Conscience," Jan. 25)!

The first is totally selfish; the second largely unselfish. Selfishness and unselfishness are not considered equally honorable in Scripture.

*Naedo Henry
Lincoln, Nebraska*

Whether or not you would have an abortion is not the issue. The issue is that religious teachings on abortion differ. The Jewish faith has a long tradition of holding that the fetus is not a person until it is born. The Old Testament seems to treat the loss of an unborn child (Ex. 21:22-25) as a loss of property or body part—not as murder. Other religious groups—such as the Presbyterians, United Methodists, Unitarians, United Church of Christ, and Young Women's Christian Association—share similar beliefs, or support the right of a woman to make this choice for herself.

Thus, any laws that restrict or prohibit abortion become a violation of religious liberty. I cannot believe that Adventists would knowingly support such a course of action. If this matter of religious conscience becomes legislated by the government, which religious belief or practice will next come under attack?

*Madelle Becker
Champaign, Illinois*

As much as I believe that there should be no law forcing me to break God's seventh-day commandment, I also believe that we ought to have a positive vote against abortion. The sixth commandment clearly states: "Thou shalt not kill."

Unless we take a stand such as we do on the Sabbath issue, unless we plainly state the truth that abortion is the taking of human life and is therefore breaking the sixth commandment, are we not pro-abortion by virtue of the fact that we do not take a stand against it? And isn't our witness of the Sabbath truth weakened by

our neutrality to this other matter of the sixth commandment?

*O. C. Reid
Weimar, California*

Should we also equate the attempt to kill an armed enemy with the murder of a defenseless babe in utero? If the Spirit of Prophecy condemned the former, how ought we to regard the latter? Here are they that keep the commandments! Whom are we trying to fool?

That this should even be an issue for God's remnant church, let alone that its administration should be found supporting those who wish a license to kill babies, is astounding beyond comprehension.

*Pastor Kenneth B. Blake
Purlear, North Carolina*

This editorial was the best article I have ever read pertaining to the subject of abortion. I am glad our church organization is taking a slow and cautious action concerning this issue.

The more I see concerning those promoting pro-life, their radical marches, violence, and mob action, the more certain I am that we should not get involved too actively in such a controversy.

*Gordon C. Wallace, D.D.S.
Gravity, Iowa*

Every conflict our country was ever involved in was against an aggressor or oppressor. Is the writer suggesting an unborn child is in the same category?

The baby is not the villain. Less than 1 percent of abortions in Michigan are because of rape or incest. Pregnancy is not a punishment; it is a consequence. When a mother aborts a baby, she is denying herself the right to keep this part of herself—that baby is part her. She is also denigrating her right to the gift from God of nurturing and motherhood. The consequences of this attitude in future generations are incalculable.

The Bible speaks of the searing of the conscience, and the love of many growing cold—surely this speaks of the abortion epidemic!

*Ralph and Audrey Joslin
Edmore, Michigan*

The Other Side

The editor feels sorry for children left in day care from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. ("Who Speaks for the Children?" Jan. 11). Struggling parents are now led on a guilt trip because they want to provide for their families. Do they enjoy leaving their children?

People who once had homes and money are now homeless. They are confused and scared, and feel humiliated. Is it better to work and put the children in day care, or be homeless? Many Americans are only two paychecks from being homeless. And we indirectly condemn those who work and must leave the kids in day care?

Please, let's give them hope.

*Marilyn Carpenter
Chicago, Illinois*

Worthy of Note

I wish to express appreciation for Ralph Martin's article, "The Church in Changing Times" (Jan. 4).

His analysis of the situation in the church is apt and worthy of note. Instead of demanding rigid uniformity we should respect legitimate differences in background and outlook. In a spirit of love and Christian tolerance we can find the heart of Adventism and move forward together. The same God who made the variegated floral world is no doubt responsible for some of the differences in the human species.

*Eric C. Webster
Voice of Prophecy
South Africa*

Give Us Managers Too

Re "Give Us Leaders, Not Managers" (Jan. 25).

Wilson and Willimon address a problem faced not only by churches but by many other organizations as well—namely, poor management. Really effective managers are leaders. If managers are not performing properly, let's help them or replace them if they are beyond help. But why ask only for leaders and neglect all the other functions managers perform in addition to leadership?

*Harold R. Phillips
Professor of Health Administration
Loma Linda University*

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Cover photo by Wide World

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Taking a Public Stand

As I wrote the introduction to this week's AR Seminar, "Adventists and Public Issues," I couldn't help agreeing with the writers' comments preceding the report of the findings: "While the Seventh-day Adventist Church has campaigned strongly in areas in which it has discerned moral content, it has failed to perceive moral dimensions to most public issues."

The inference is that *if* the church perceived a moral dimension to any sociopolitical issue facing our society, it would be *compelled*—because of its very nature—to take a public stand, to fight for the right.

Historically the church has followed this, with its vigorous stands against slavery, alcohol, tobacco, misuse of drugs, and its fight for liberty and the separation of church and state.

We must admit, though, that our church's primary focus has been, and continues to be, giving *direct* aid to affected individuals, not taking public stands.

For instance, we have pioneered in holding Five-Day Plans to Stop Smoking and Regeneration programs to aid the chemically dependent. But we have yet to go for the jugular veins of the trouble-producing entities. We could do so if we created a national media effort to help reduce or restrict the consumption of tobacco and alcohol, lobbied for mandatory prison sentences for drunk drivers, and lobbied for the elimination of tax subsidies given to these industries. No business can flourish long without a market or business incentive. And we know pornography exists, particularly on the airwaves, but again we leave the fight for decency to others. And we leave unaided the fight over environmental pollution, poverty, affordable housing for the poor, aliens' rights, and the homeless.

Should we, though? Should we fight for every issue with moral underpinnings? Or should we maintain our his-

torical approach—with an emphasis on giving direct aid to individuals?

Which One Will Prevail?

If we accept the Institute of Church Ministries' findings in this week's AR Seminar as an accurate representation of United States Adventists' views, we won't change our approach. The overwhelming majority (70 percent) of those surveyed felt the collective church should *not* become involved in political action, nor should it issue position statements (p. 16).

Why? The study didn't ask for reasons, but from history we can guess why.

■ **Modeling by Christ.** Christ never urged the Jewish people to fight the oppressive Romans for freedom, or the slaves to rebel against their masters, or the poor to seek redress from the rich. And He never lobbied the government to change the underlying structures that caused distress. Instead, Christ ministered individually to the affected ones, teaching that His kingdom—and that of His followers—was not of this world.

■ **Dilution of the Message.** A fear that often vetoes any church stand on a public issue is the fear of so diverting the church's energies that its final, last-day message of salvation will either be diluted or forgotten. Many point to the "liberal" churches that follow a social gospel approach and fear we could become like them, losing our distinctive mission in the process.

■ **More Action Than Talk.** Many members would rather minister than fight political battles, as is borne out by the fact that thousands, if not millions, of Adventists are involved in ministries that help the needy.

Why else would we support hospitals, clinics, schools, Community Services centers, food programs, adoption agencies, and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency?

Why else would my own local church collect and take coats to the homeless in downtown Washington, D.C.? Why else would we open soup kitchens or maintain a van ministry in downtown New York?

■ **The Alienation Factor.** Whenever a stand is taken, there is invariably one faction that almost always disagrees. Be it in business or in the church, this factor prevails. As for the church, it finds itself in double jeopardy because it can cause alienation and division on two fronts—among its *membership* and with a ruling *government*.

When the church takes a stand perceived to be wrong by even a fraction of its membership, it stands to lose unity, if not members. And it could lose its freedom in many countries if its position or political alignment runs counter to the ruling government, particularly if another ruler comes to power.

■ **Difficult to Decide.** Last, making decisions on any critical issue seems increasingly difficult for the church. Maybe that's why it has begun to rely more on *presidential proclamations* on certain issues—including apartheid—rather than going through years of frustrating debate, discussion, and division to form a public stance on an issue.

While I have only touched the surface of this subject, we also must recognize that many members hold equally compelling reasons *for* taking a public stand—including the reasoning that if we only feed the poor or clothe the naked and do nothing about the causes of their poverty, we really haven't fulfilled our Christian commitment.

Whatever the reasons for or against the collective church taking public stands, one thing is clear from "Adventists and Public Issues," reported on pages 14-18: Adventists hold strong opinions on almost every public issue, even if we don't want our church to get involved.

MYRON WIDMER



Like Adam or Like Us? —1

In typical Eastern style, Nicodemus began his nocturnal interview with Jesus by uttering a mouthful of compliments: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles . . ." Jesus gently brushed aside the flatteries and went directly to the point: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:1-3).¹

Attempting to avoid the spiritual thrust of Jesus' remark, Nicodemus posed a conundrum: "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" (verse 4). Impossible!

That question is important to the subject before us, for it brings into sharp focus, albeit indirectly and inadvertently, the miracle and mystery of the Incarnation. Nicodemus probably did not realize at the time that he was seated in the presence of One who was Himself a living specimen of an infinitely more complex phenomenon. Jesus was the one whom Micah described when he wrote of a ruler "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). He was "The mighty God, The everlasting Father" (Isa. 9:6). And the astonishing claim of the New Testament is that He did indeed enter the womb of a human mother, a part of His own creation, developed for nine months as a regular embryo, and then emerged a helpless screaming baby in a Bethlehem stable. Absolutely mind-boggling!

A Deep Problem

Said Ellen G. White: "When we want a deep problem to study, let us fix our minds on the most marvelous thing that ever took place in earth or heaven—the incarnation of the Son of God."²

The English word *incarnation* comes from two Latin words: *in* ("in") and *caro* ("flesh"). Thus *incarnation* means literally "in flesh" or, in reference to Christ, "becoming flesh." The clearest

affirmation of this doctrine is that found in John 1:14: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (NASB).

This is the central doctrine of the Christian faith. Without it, the whole canon of Scripture becomes a meaningless document, a *non-sense*.

Yet across the centuries many Christians have had difficulty accepting the idea of the Incarnation. Some, like the Gnostics, could not bring themselves to accept the *real humanity* of Christ. Others, like the Ebionites (an early group of Christians of Jewish orientation), could not accept the *real divinity* of the Saviour.

Three Century Debate

The initial debate and controversy that ensued from these conflicting views of Christ were intense and bitter, and lasted three centuries—to the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. Delegates to that council, representing all of Christendom, finally came to an agreement on the question of the divinity and humanity of the Saviour:

*"We believe in one God, the Father almighty, . . . and in one Lord Jesus Christ, . . . only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, . . . begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into being, . . . Who because of us men and because of our salvation, came down and became incarnate, becoming man, suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, and will come to judge the living and the dead."*³

But if Christ was both God and man, how then were divinity and humanity combined in His person? How did they relate? Was He a schizophrenic? Was He one person, or was He two persons? It was an issue of immense theological

complexity, and occupied the attention of theologians and philosophers for many decades until "settled" at the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451. Said the council document:

*"We all with one voice teach . . . [that] our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same God, the same perfect in Godhead, the same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly Man, . . . in all things like unto us, sin only excepted: . . . one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, known in two natures [which exist] without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the difference of natures having been in no wise taken away by reason of the union, but rather the properties of each being preserved, and both concurring into one Person . . . not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten, the divine Logos, the Lord Jesus Christ."*⁴

Notice the extreme caution of the language pressed into the service of this great mystery. Observe the care taken to plug every loophole, and to thread a way through the theological pitfalls that have bedeviled many through the centuries. It was a ringing testimony to reverent and careful scholarship.

And in that shining credo are the sentiments upon which many to this day have made shipwreck: "In all things like unto us, sin only excepted." What does this mean? Was Christ really like us? Or was He like Adam? This is the issue for our next segment. (Continued April 12)

REFERENCES

The three editorials in this series first appeared in the *Canadian Adventist Messenger*, April and May 1988. Slightly modified, they are reprinted with permission here in response to queries that have come in to us, some arising from a recent series that touched on the nature of Christ.

¹ All Scriptural references, unless otherwise indicated, are from the King James Version.

² *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 904.

³ John N. Davidson Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, pp. 215, 216.

⁴ Cited in J. L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, Vol. I, pp. 390, 391. (Italics supplied.)

ROY ADAMS

WORLD CHURCH

Texas Evangelist Conducts Santiago Crusade. Victor Collins, Texas Conference evangelist, conducted a four-week crusade in Santiago, Dominican Republic, which ended March 5 with 185 persons joining the Adventist Church, reports Adalgiza Archbold, editor of the Inter-American Division edition of the *Adventist Review*. Local church leaders estimate that the total baptisms will reach more than 350.

Nigerian Pathfinders Evangelize. Pathfinders in the Gotelga-Kholga zone of the Rivers Mission in Nigeria have conducted evangelistic efforts over the past three years that have led to 21 baptisms and the beginning of a new church, reports Mark Attey, editorial assistant for the Africa-Indian Ocean Division edition of the *Adventist Review*.

During the same period, 59 leaders were trained and invested as Master Guides. These leaders received training in conducting public crusades, door-to-door witnessing, and literature distribution. As a result of the outreach efforts, the total Pathfinder membership grew from 200 to 525.

AIMS Holds First Medical Congress. Physicians and other medical personnel from Baja California, Monterrey, Montemorelos, Zatecas, Mexico City, and Sonora gathered in Guadalajara February 2-4 for the first medical congress of

AHS to Reevaluate Its Management Structure

Constituent members of the Adventist Health System/United States (AHS/U.S.) will meet in special session on April 1 to study the system's structure, reports Charles E. Bradford, AHS/U.S. chairman and North American Division president.

"Church leaders for some time have been concerned about the issue of ascending liability," Bradford says. "The Financial Review Commission, appointed by the General Conference officers to study church businesses, suggested changes in AHS's structure that would reduce the risk of ascending liability to the Adventist Church."

A transition task force was then set up by AHS/U.S. and the General Conference officers to make specific recommendations on how to decentralize the system and limit ascending liability, Bradford explained. Among the proposed changes is the dissolution of the AHS/U.S. level, leaving the direct administration of North American hospitals and related businesses to the five current divisions.

The recommendations, voted by the AHS/U.S. board on February 15, will be presented before the health system constituency made up of AHS/U.S. board of trustees, 10 appointees from the General Conference Executive Committee, North American union officers (except Canada), one lay church member from each union, and General Conference and North American Division officers and health and temperance representatives.

the Mexican Adventist International Medical Society.

Participants received medical and health updates as well as spiritual enrichment, reports Naomi Modeste, Inter-American Division health and temperance director.

Brazil Physician Organizes Fruitful Crusade. After opening an office in Iacanga (near São Paulo), a town with only two Adventists, Benjamin Jara Tadeu, an Adventist physician, became instrumental in organizing a Festival of Faith crusade in the area, reports *Revista Adventista*.

The crusade, supported by several speakers and musical teams, resulted in seven people joining the Adventist Church.

NORTH AMERICA

Atlantic Union Plans 600 Outreach Programs. Church leaders in the Atlantic Union are planning more than 600 outreach programs in 1990, says Geraldine I. Grout, assistant editor of the *Atlantic Union Gleaner*.

The programs include Daniel and Revelation seminars, family seminars, and public crusades. The Greater New York Confer-

ence plans at least 308 outreach programs. Northeastern has planned 187 Daniel and Revelation seminars, 83 cottage meetings, 16 tent efforts, and five crusades. New York Conference has scheduled 50 outreach programs, including a special seminar for the deaf. Northern New England and Southern New England conferences have planned eight and 10 programs, respectively.

Guideposts Recognizes Union Students. The March issue of *Guideposts* magazine applauded Union College students who painted the home of Peggy Rowlee. The 92-year-old widow helps the needy by giving away blankets, toys, furniture, and food.

Mrs. Rowlee was featured in *Guideposts'* August issue. When the Union College students learned about her work, they decided to give her something that she couldn't



give away. The college students have painted nearly 90 houses in

the Lincoln, Nebraska, area.

Bermuda Rotary Supports Listen Magazine. As a result of efforts by Maria Davis, who coordinates distribution of *Listen* magazine in Bermuda, the Sandys Rotary Club on the island has donated \$5,100 to distribute the youth jour-



John Drinkwater and Maria Davis in the Sandys Secondary School.

Listen, which is published by the General Conference Health and Temperance Department, targets teenagers and stresses a drug-free lifestyle. Rotary president John Drinkwater presented the check.

To New Position. Peter Bath, formerly senior pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist church at Kettering, has been appointed senior vice president of education/provost of Kettering College of Medical Arts.

Bath replaces Robert Williams who will retire at a yet-to-be-disclosed date. Bath, 37, has served for 10 years as an Adventist pastor. Before becoming denominationally employed, he was a marketing analyst for the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce.

California Member Wins Kodak Award. An award-winning picture taken by Shefrah Ann Rozenstain, a member of the Mentone Adventist Church, has become part of a permanent display at the Walt Disney World/Epcot Center in Florida, reports Jocelyn Fay, Southeastern California

Conference communication director.

The picture, a black-and-white photo of a flock of sheep taken after dark, garnered the second place black-and-white award in the 1989 Kodak International Newspaper Snapshot Awards competition. The competition includes contests conducted by 162 newspapers in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, and there were more than 500,000 entries.

GENERAL CONFERENCE

New Headquarters Building Cited for Excellence. The Seventh-day Adventist world headquarters building was chosen as the 1990 Building of Excellence by the Iron Workers Employers Association of Washington, D.C. (IWEA), reports Frank Jones, associate North American Division treasurer and building coordinator.

Buildings receiving the award in prior years include the Dirksen Senate Office Building, D.C. Convention Center, and Central Intelligence Agency headquarters.

FOR YOUR INTEREST

International Youth Conference Set. Youth and adults from all divisions are invited to participate in the International Adventist Youth to Youth Demonstration Conference planned for July 1-15 at Indiana Academy in Cicero, Indiana, reports Patricia Mutch, conference coordinator and director of the Institute of

Alcoholism and Drug Dependency at Andrews University.

The Adventist Youth to Youth program reaches youth who are making decisions about drug issues in their lives. The demonstration conference will acquaint division youth leaders with the unique program. For more information, contact Dr. Patricia Mutch, Institute of Alcoholism and Drug Dependency, Marsh Hall 100, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49104.

Correction. When delegates for the East Colombia and West Venezuela missions met in their respective constituency sessions last month (March 15, 22 Newsbreaks), each delegation voted *final* approval of conference status. Approval of the new status already had been granted by the union and division.

ALSO IN THE NEWS

Cambodia Legalizes Protestant Church. For the first time in 15 years, Protestant churches in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, are once again free to meet together for public services, reports News Network International.

Church leaders requested

permission to reopen church doors in July 1989. The petition requested that changes in the Cambodian constitution, which technically allowed freedom of religion, be applied to Christian groups in the same manner as they were applied to Islamic and Buddhist groups. Governmental leaders changed the constitution after meeting with church officials.

Salvadoran Priest Honored.

The Lutheran bishop in El Salvador, who lives under continuing assassination threats, has been chosen to receive the 1990 David W. Preus Leadership Award, reports Religious News Service.

Bishop Medardo Gomez will be honored for his leadership in helping thousands of Salvadoran refugees to return to their country and begin rebuilding their bombed-out homes.



Bishop Medardo Gomez

CHURCH CALENDAR

- Mar. 31** Thirteenth Sabbath Offering for the Inter-American Division
- Apr. 4** Spring Meeting begins in Silver Spring, Maryland
- Apr. 7** Missionary Magazine Emphasis
- Apr. 14** Andrews University Offering
- Apr. 14** Youth Spiritual Commitment Celebration
- Apr. 21** Literature Evangelism Rally Day

Salvation by Guilt?

*Some of us
don't find peace
in Jesus
because we
carry terrorists
around in our
heads.*

My conscience has been working on me," confessed a citizen in a letter to Uncle Sam. "So to shut it up I'm sending you this money order for \$400." It was signed "One of your conscience-stricken nephews." Then he added this postscript: "If I still feel guilty, I'll send in the other \$400."

In 1811 someone first sent money to the U.S. Treasury Department with an anonymous note saying "I defrauded the U.S. government. Here is \$5 to pay it back." Not knowing what to do with that \$5, officials created the Conscience Fund. Since then the fund has received about \$5 million, including the \$400 from the "conscience-stricken nephew."

Police had to drag 19-year-old John handcuffed into a hospital emergency room. He was screaming, "Let me out of here! I want to kill myself!" Shaking, he told the doctor, "Unless I'm high on drugs, I can't get rid of guilt. I just want to die!"

A few years before, he had had a terrible argument with his father and had stormed out of the house. That same night his father died of a heart attack. John took upon himself guilt for the death, and it drove him to the verge of self-destruction.

Maybe we can't relate to guilt that intense, but we can relate to Marge or Joe. Marge is the lady next door. Joe is the person who works at the desk next to yours. Marge and Joe are you or me.

Sometimes it's a plague of headaches, backaches, or digestive problems. Sometimes it's depression. We are never quite happy with ourselves, never satisfied. We feel we should not be making mistakes, be discouraged, be angry. We think we should always be happy. In short, we should be perfect!

But we're not. The result is guilt feelings.

Because we don't know what to do about our guilt, we punish ourselves. We feel guilty about our guilt. What an unhealthy cycle!

Guilt robs us of the freedom, peace, and joy that God intends for His children. God gives truth and grace to free us—not to keep us in bondage to our failures and mistakes.

Appropriate Guilt

Guilt, of course, is not all bad. God uses appropriate guilt to help bring us to a right relationship with Him and with others.

The Old Testament records the story of David, who apparently flew directly in the face of God's will by conducting a census of fighting men in Israel. Though his generals tried, David would not be talked out of the project. But eventually the Spirit penetrated his heart, and David cried, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O Lord, please take away the iniquity of Thy servant, for I have acted very foolishly" (2 Sam. 24:10, NASB). When David repented and accepted

forgiveness, he found peace. He also made peace with his people.

Inappropriate Guilt

But sometimes people suffer with inappropriate guilt. Perhaps an obligation is pressed upon them and they overrespond. A letter to the editor of the Los Angeles *Times* illustrates this. A senior citizen on a fixed income wrote: "I feel compelled to send some money that I need for paying bills, because I have been trapped, embarrassed, and manipulated by the implication that I would 'rob' the needy if I didn't 'fork over.'"

In a conversation with his mother, a teenager explodes, saying, "If you don't let me use the car tonight, I won't be able to study with Joe, and if I get a bad grade on the exam tomorrow, it will be your fault." Will it? Should she accept her son's "dumping"?

The shame-on-you guilt trip is typically judgmental, striking at a vulnerable spot we each have. When we hear such words, we often begin



self-incriminating tapes playing in our mind, such as:

I'm selfish. I should be giving more.

I'm not spiritual enough. I should be praying more.

If I were closer to God, this wouldn't hurt so much.

I'm not good enough; let someone else do it.

If I studied my Bible more, I wouldn't be making so many mistakes.

Some of these statements may be true. We probably need to be praying more, giving more, or studying more. But have you noticed how many times we punish ourselves by feeling guilty rather than *doing* something about it? How we somehow expect salvation to come by guilt?

Inner Terrorism

Remember Joe? He cannot accept his human feelings, and so he lives in a state of self-punishing guilt.

His feelings come from expectations and demands that have become internalized as rigid dictates that manifest themselves as *shoulds*, *oughts*, and *musts*.

We are all imprinted with do's and don'ts that important people in our lives have conveyed to us early in our lives. These admonitions become little tape recorders inside our heads. All these rules—valid now or not—lie in wait for us. For the rest of our lives, things can trigger the tape recorder to play back these admonitions to us.

Satan's preferred strategy among God's children is to lower our standards. But his second choice is to make the standards *too high*. People who try to keep impossibly high standards without accepting their own growth process soon get so bogged down that their sense of God's grace is lost.

The result? Joe becomes depressed or develops other disturbing physical, emotional, or spiritual symptoms.

Or Marge tunes in the "I-must-be-perfect" tape in her head. All it takes is one tiny stimulus—such as forgetting to send her grandmother a birthday card—and the tape clobbers her with guilt over her failure. She is only 99 percent perfect.

Learning New Ways

What can Marge do? How can she find peace in Jesus rather than torment?

■ First, the more she becomes aware of what triggers her guilt feelings, the better equipped she is to combat inappropriate guilt.

For instance, when she forgets to send a birthday card to her grandmother and the "You-shouldn't-forget" tape is playing, she can identify what is happening. Then she can reason it out, send a belated card with a sincere apology, and resolve to do better next time. Marge can accept forgiveness—from herself, from her grandmother, and from God.

It is very demeaning for Marge to compare herself to others, for she always will find others who do things better. That is a no-win situation. Why should

our relationships with God and others.

Inappropriate guilt is Satan's counterfeit to God's correcting guilt. Inappropriate guilt accuses us, tells us no change for the better is possible, and makes us feel miserable. These guilt feelings can even become an attempt at self-atonement—for they are self-centered and deny Christ's sacrifice.

Appropriate guilt focuses on repentance and salvation. It changes lives. It accepts God's grace. It brings about true repentance, for we know we have wronged God. It produces sorrow for sin, determination to change, and by God's grace, salvation!

It would be well to learn to reserve

Satan's preferred strategy is to tempt us to make

our standards too low. But his second choice is to

convince us to make our standards too high!

she punish herself? What matters is her own growth and development.

■ Another helpful hint is to substitute the word *sad* for the word *guilt*. Marge, for example, can admit that she feels *sad* about forgetting to send a card to her grandmother. But she doesn't need to continue to feel *guilt*, because she has taken action. She has said she is sorry. She has sought to resolve any misunderstandings that may have arisen in her relationship to her grandmother. Certainly the Lord has forgiven her (even if her grandmother hasn't).

Invalid Feelings

■ A third thing all of us must learn to detect are invalid feelings. You may think, for example, *If I were closer to God, I wouldn't hurt*. But pain does not equal sin! Christ experienced deep pain, and yet He is our perfect example.

These suggestions may seem simple. But it is not an easy task to rewrite our tapes. A trusted Christian counselor may be needed to help us sort out the original admonitions from what is valid and worth keeping now. When we better understand ourselves, we open ourselves to spiritual and emotional growth, which will enrich

guilt for sin. Like David, whose heart was perfect toward God, we can say, "I will confess my transgression to the Lord" and believe God will "forgive the guilt of my sin" (Ps. 32:5, NASB).

Then, counted "complete in Him" (Col. 2:10), we can sing "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!" (Ps. 32:11, RSV).

When we find ourselves feeling as Marge or Joe do, we can say with conviction, "I confess my inadequacies to the Lord. I will accept the power of God's forgiveness. I will accept my human growth capacity. I will forgive myself and count myself complete in Christ and be glad in the Lord. I will rejoice in His grace."

Salvation comes not by guilt, but by joyfully accepting God's forgiveness! ➤



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Deciding About Women's Ordination



By Calvin B. Rock

How do you justify the procedures being followed with regard to women's ordination? Is it right for a few men at headquarters to deny the women of this church full participation in ministry?

The decision regarding the ordination of women is not being made by a few General Conference leaders, but by the world church—the duly constituted representatives of our membership around the world. We follow this procedure because ordination carries global privileges and responsibilities. An individual ordained anywhere has functional authority everywhere. The task force that has studied the issue during this quinquennium includes one or more women from almost every division.

Reports from representatives reveal that 9 of the 10 divisions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are either unprepared for or opposed to women's ordination. The North American Division (NAD) *leadership* is the only one that expresses itself as positive. I know of no scientific study that details precisely how the NAD *membership* thinks about ordaining females to full ministry. Obviously the idea has far less than unanimous support. However, the NAD leadership believes that it correctly reflects the prevailing mood of its constituency.

A major influence in the growing acceptability of women's ordination in the North American Division is the increasing number of ordained women local elders. The NAD now has approximately 1,000 such elders, most of whom are ordained and functioning very effectively. Many people are not convinced, however, that the success of our women local elders and the more than 40 females in pastoral ministry and chaplaincy adequately answers the *theological* questions.

Some NAD advocates of women's ordination suggest that the way around the hurdle of international agreement is to ordain women for the NAD only. But since even permission for the NAD to go it alone must be voted by the world church in formal session, the issue remains in the hands of the many—not the minds of a few as you have assumed.

Some think that the recent vote of Annual Council that gave unordained women in ministry (female pastors) the same privileges as unordained male pastors is but another step toward the inevitable—women's ordination. That is by no means a certainty, but if it does happen, it will not be because a few people at headquarters approved it. Rather, it will be because the world church heard the proposition in general session and gave approval.

Is it ever right to disobey civil law? I question the method of Christians who defy laws in the hope of doing good.

The Bible has many examples of justifiable civil disobedience. Moses' parents disobeyed when they hid him among the bulrushes (Ex. 2). Rahab disobeyed when she slipped the spies out of Jericho (Joshua 2). So did the early believers when they smuggled Paul out of Damascus (Acts 9) and when they hid him from the authorities in Thessalonica (Acts 17) and in Ephesus (Acts 19), among other places. Also, the courageous Waldensians acted against existing laws when "they secretly carried about with them copies of the Bible" in garments sewed to conceal their precious treasure—"the precious manuscripts of the Scriptures" (*The Great Controversy*, pp. 70, 71).

In no case should Christ's followers ignore or disparage the principles of government outlined in Romans 13:1-4.

However, when the laws of human legislators clash with God's commandments (or His commission), the latter take precedence. In such instances, Christians will respond, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Two clear examples of justifiable civil disobedience in more recent times appear in the Spirit of Prophecy writings. Reflecting upon the refusal of the German princes of the Diet of Spire (1529) to cooperate with national authorities in their attempt to stifle conscience, Ellen White compliments the princes for their courage and reminds us that even at the risk of punishment, divine orders must be obeyed above human legislation (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 69).

Speaking of the laws that required American citizens to return runaway slaves to their masters, the prophetess wrote: "Some . . . laws are good, others are bad. The bad have been increasing. . . . When the laws of men conflict with the Word and the law of God, we are to obey the latter, whatever the consequences may be. The law of our land requiring us to deliver a slave to his master, we are not to obey; and we must abide the consequences of violating this law" (*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 201, 202).

The question of which laws are good and which are bad is not always easy to answer. Neither is it pleasant to suffer, even for "righteousness sake." Nevertheless, there are cases—I hope very rare—when Christians must take this course.

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Love in Practice

*A portrait of
God's final
remnant*

Two and a half millennia ago, the people of God were forced to settle into an alien culture. It was the destruction of all that they knew and loved, the destruction of their security. As they reflected on their unhappy circumstances, they lamented:

"Beside the streams of Babylon we sat and wept at the memory of Zion, leaving our harps hanging On the poplars there.

For we had been asked to sing to our captors, to entertain those who had carried us off: 'Sing' they said 'some hymns of Zion.'

How could we sing one of Yahweh's hymns in a pagan country?" (Ps. 137:1-4, Jerusalem).

They determine that they would remain unassimilated in Babylon. Zion may be lost, but they would remain faithful to the memories of the city and the temple and the faith.

Seventy years later, however, they were largely indistinguishable from their Babylonian neighbors. They had adopted the values of Babylon. They came to speak the language of Babylon. They looked, sounded, ate, and smelled like Babylon. They even sang the songs of Babylon now—new songs in a different key.

In the midst of this spiritual amnesia God spoke to a remnant who remembered: "Come out from Babylon! Flee from the Chaldeans! Declare this with cries of joy, proclaim it, carry it to the remotest parts of earth, say, 'Yahweh has redeemed his servant Jacob'" (Isa. 48:20, New Jerusalem). Take down those harps. Learn again the songs of Zion. Sing a new song to the Lord. You have been exiles long enough—it is time to go home.

History Repeats

The perception that history repeats itself has not escaped the notice of historians and theologians. The Old Testament concept of a remnant finds fresh expression in the New Testament also. And in words that echo Isaiah's, the book of Revelation records God's call to:

"Come out, my people, away from her [Babylon], so that you do not share in her crimes and have the same plagues to bear" (Rev. 18:4, Jerusalem).

This is an eschatological call to a unique min-

istry. It is an invitation to faithfulness in a time of widespread apostasy. And it results in a people who "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 12:17).

Looking down toward the climactic conclusion of the plan of redemption, God again calls to a people to remember *who* they are, to remember *why* they are, and to respond positively to His purposes.

It is time to learn again the songs of Zion, it is time to sing a new song to the Lord. We have been exiles long enough. It is time to go home.

In each instance the remnant is described as a prophetic people who understand God's will, who are sensitive to what God is currently doing, and who are extravagantly public about it. The description continues in Revelation 14:1-12, which details their concerns and activities; the fullness of their prophetic message, involving the worship of God as the Creator; the arrival of the hour of judgment; the emptiness of nominal, or casual, Christianity; and the call to speak clearly and forcefully to the world.

A group is not a remnant simply because it calls itself a "remnant." It is a remnant only when it behaves as a remnant, prophetic people should behave.

Over the years, Seventh-day Adventists have sensed their calling to be a remnant, but in the past few years some confusion has arisen over the role and function of the remnant.

The Biblical Portrait

Come walk with me through a few passages of Scripture as we seek to understand, historically, the behavior and message of the remnant. We will come to understand *why message and behavior* must be interfaced. *Orthodoxy* (correct theology) is not sufficient. It must be complemented by *orthopraxy* (correct behavior or lifestyle).

Biblically, remnant people are identified by a concern that extends beyond themselves, specifically for social justice. Theirs is never a "mystical" religion of personal feelings and private devotions, but a sense of responsibility to society, to all of God's children, to see justice prevail, the hungry fed, the widows and the fatherless de-

BY BRUCE C. MOYER

fended, and the oppressed set free. Jesus referred to it as being salt, light, and yeast, preserving, illuminating, and changing the world around us.

A contemporary of Isaiah, the prophet Amos invited God's people to "seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is. Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph" (Amos 5:14, 15, NIV).

Later in the same chapter, Amos states that the issue is not the purity of formal worship, but rather causing justice to roll on like a river, and righteousness like a never-failing stream (verses 21-24, NIV). While righteousness is a common Adventist term describing a vertical relationship between people and God, justice, more appropriately, suggests a horizontal relationship between people.

Again, in Isaiah, in the context of beautiful but futile worship, God begs, "Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow" (Isa. 1:17, NIV). Their worship was impressive, but meaningless without a corresponding concern for the poor, the oppressed, the hungry, and the homeless.

It is futile merely to read and understand the Scriptures. It is meaningless to offer the most exalted worship and the most profound prayers if our love does not extend, in practical ways, to those who live on the economic and political margins of society.

In Isaiah 58, a passage very familiar to all Seventh-day Adventists, remnant activity is described as rebuilding the broken walls, and restoring age-old foundations. We are called to loose the chains of injustice, to set the oppressed free, to share our food with the hungry, to shelter the homeless, and to clothe the naked.

The Scriptures indicate that God has always preserved a "remnant" with a prophetic voice, both to the rest of God's people and to the world at large. Consistently this has always involved a specific concern for people who are castoffs, socially marginalized and forgotten.

This concern for the poor, the oppressed, the homeless, the victims of unjust systems, is not to be an end in itself—not another opportunity for

righteousness by human activity. Rather, it is specifically to demonstrate the loving character of God to the world. That love must always find concrete expression in terms of the needs of both individual people and society.

One writer with a strong eschatological orientation has written: "It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. People are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. *At this time a message from God*

*It is meaningless to offer the
most exalted worship, and to
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is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. *His character is to be made known*. . . . The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 415; italics supplied).

That revelation of the truth about God must be given on two levels. Invariably this will involve both direct ministry to the poor and oppressed, and indirect ministry, speaking prophetically to the structures of society that cause poverty and oppression.

In His inaugural sermon at Nazareth, Jesus spoke these challenging words: "The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the

afflicted, to heal the broken-hearted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free" (Luke 4:18, New Jerusalem).

Learning From History

When the remnant Jews returned from their Babylonian exile, they made a great theological and behavioral error. They kept the Sabbath rigorously, they ate healthfully, they tithed to the penny, and faithfully studied their Bibles and Sabbath school lessons. They were determined not to repeat their history and return to idolatry.

In doing this, however, they effectively isolated themselves from a world that desperately needed their ministry. Separate and undefiled, ritually pure and theologically correct, they became distant from all others, untouchable and unreachable, useless to God. They were like a newspaper not printed, a radio station not broadcasting, or a billboard not painted.

What a shame it would be if Seventh-day Adventist Christians should isolate themselves from the world and become a remnant that speaks only to itself, squandering its prophetic ministry in self-adulation and empty worship!

God is looking for a remnant today. We can be that remnant. We have the opportunity to reveal His character of love in practical demonstrations: in soup kitchens; in community services; reaching out to twentieth-century lepers; and in public advocacy for the poor, the helpless, AIDS victims, and aliens without proper documentation.

God is looking for a remnant today. We can be that remnant. We can live as though taking the gospel to all the world—including our own homes, schools, offices, and shops—is our own personal, individual responsibility.

God is looking for a remnant today. We can be that remnant. Ours is the opportunity to invite the world to the marriage supper of the Lamb, to welcome back the victorious Jesus, and to meet Him in peace and joy.



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Short Story

By Collene Kelly

While leafing through the pages late one night
A faded flower caught my eye. The small
And fragile petals' placement told what might
Have been the old gent's thoughts. For life, in all
Its days, for man or plant, will hear the call.
In time, to this one fact they both are driven:
Between a psalm and proverb life is given.

Adventists and Public Issues

The Seventh-day Adventist Church's vigorous campaigns in favor of religious liberty, separation of church and state, and temperance have resounded around the world. But on the majority of other issues facing contemporary society the church's voice has fallen silent.

Deliberately the church has chosen to remain silent on such issues as nuclear war, registration of firearms, capitalism, and government-sponsored insurance for the elderly in nursing homes. We have left members to choose their own course without specific guidance.

Perhaps the church's silence or reluctance to speak out comes from a sense of being only "strangers" here on earth. Perhaps it arises from the fear of diverting its energies and diluting its primary message of salvation to a dying world.

But even if the collective church, for whatever reasons, has chosen to remain silent on most sociopolitical issues, its individual members have not. A recently completed study on Adventists in the United States, conducted by the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, shows that members hold strong opinions on most public issues. This AR Seminar features the findings of this study.



Public Issues: Where Do U.S. Adventists Stand?

BY ROGER L. DUDLEY, SARA M. K. TERIAN, and EDWIN I. HERNANDEZ

Some years ago the senior author was invited to join the working force in a particular conference. As the conference president chatted with him about the new position, he remarked: "You'll like it here; this state is a good place for Adventists to live." "I'm sure I will," the author replied, "but why is this state good for Adventists?" "For one thing," explained the president, "it's politically conservative."

After the passage of years, the senior author cannot remember the other factors, but he has often mused about this one. Are Adventists more conservative in politics, economics, or social issues than the general public? Are U.S. Adventists most likely either to vote Republican or not to vote at all? Do they espouse capitalism as a desired form of government? Are they "doves" or "hawks"? Do they have a tendency to oppose governmental aid to the needy and downtrodden?

Considerable social scientific research, with theoretical underpinning, has demonstrated that people who are liberal in politics tend to be more liberal in religion.¹ However, a careful review of 266 empirical studies reveals that a direct parallel relationship is more elusive, with various religious factors affecting one's view on public issues differently. And while a large number of studies indicates much research has been done on relationships between religiousness and positions on public issues, little or no research has been done within smaller conservative denominations, such as the Seventh-day Adventists.

The recent study, though, by the Institute of Church Ministry (ICM) at Andrews University sheds light on the positions of U.S. Adventists on public issues, political identification, and voting behavior. Adventist history tells us that we have not ignored entirely the sociopolitical environment surrounding us. And while the church has campaigned strongly in areas in which it has discerned moral content, it has failed to perceive moral dimensions to most public issues.

But the rise of the New Christian Right and the capture of the political agenda by conservative religious groups in the 1980s have forced us to take a new look. Part of this "coming out" can be seen in Neal C. Wilson's 1988 visit to a peace conference in the Soviet Union and his appeal to the Soviet government on behalf of

human rights.² Many Adventists are beginning to realize that their religion indeed may have something to say about how they relate to temporal society.

The Questionnaire

ICM constructed a questionnaire that elicited opinions on various public issues along with questions on political party affiliation, voting preference, political orientation, religious beliefs, experiences, attitudes, and practices. Because of the breadth of these findings, we will limit this report to the views expressed on public issues, with a few allusions to relationships with religious variables.

The sample was created by drawing 800 households by a random sequential method from the mailing lists of the unions in the North American Division. However, since public issues are somewhat different in Bermuda and Canada, addresses in these two countries were eliminated from the sample. Recipients were told that the survey must be completed by a baptized member of the Adventist Church who was at least 18. If more than one member of the household met these criteria, the one whose birthday came first in the calendar year was asked to complete the questionnaire.

Fifty-two of the letters were undeliverable because of incorrect addresses, thus reducing the sampling frame to 748. After three mailings, 419 members completed usable instruments, resulting in a response rate of 56 percent. The following information is based on these 419 subjects.

Profile of U.S. Adventists

The questionnaire asked members to respond to 18 public issues, using a five-point scale:

1	2	3	4	5
strongly oppose	somewhat oppose	uncertain	somewhat favor	strongly favor

To simplify reporting, we have combined the first two into "oppose" and the last two into "favor." The extent to which these two groups come short of 100 percent represents the "uncertain" category. The complete wording of the items is displayed. Of the 18 issues, nine are worded as typically liberal statements; the other nine as typically conservative. Here are the liberal issues, in descending order of support:

**Many Adventists
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to say about how
they relate to
temporal society.**

Adventist history
tells us that we
have not ignored
entirely the
sociopolitical
environment
surrounding us.

<i>Liberal Issues</i>	<i>Favor</i>	<i>Oppose</i>
1. Elimination of all racial restrictions in housing, education, and employment	81%	7%
2. Establishment of normal, peaceful relations with the Soviet Union	79%	5%
3. Government-sponsored insurance for elderly in nursing homes	75%	6%
4. United States-Soviet freeze on the development of nuclear weapons	72%	10%
5. Registration of all firearms	63%	21%
6. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the Constitution, which guarantees equality for women	62%	22%
7. Increased government aid to improve the social and economic position of Blacks and other minorities	52%	25%
8. Christians as individuals becoming involved in political action (such as running for office, working for a candidate)	41%	35%
9. Churches as corporate entities becoming involved in political action (including issuing position statements)	14%	70%

On seven of these nine issues the majority favored the position—an indication of inclination toward liberalism on the sociopolitical front. Thus it appears from our sample that U.S. Adventists are most likely to favor the liberal stance on socioeconomic and peace issues, but are most likely to be conservative on strictly political concerns.³ While they favor government action (numbers 1-7), they are not as willing to see Christians become personally involved in the process—much less for churches to become corporately involved (numbers 8 and 9).

When the nine conservative issues are arranged in a similar manner, the following picture emerges:

<i>Conservative Issues</i>	<i>Favor</i>	<i>Oppose</i>
10. Control of crime by tougher laws and stiffer sentences	81%	9%

11. Capital punishment (the death penalty) for certain classes of dangerous criminals	62%	18%
12. Regarding capitalism or free enterprise as that form of government most in harmony with biblical Christianity	53%	11%
13. A constitutional amendment to permit prayer and/or Bible reading in public schools	39%	46%
14. Construction of Strategic Defense Initiative (Star Wars) to ward off possible nuclear attack	34%	35%
15. Military aid to the Nicaraguan contras	23%	44%
16. Appointment of conservative, strict-constructionist justices (such as Rehnquist, Scalia, and Bork) to the Supreme Court	22%	35%
17. Increased spending for national defense	21%	49%
18. Withdrawal of the United States from the United Nations	14%	54%

In contrast to the liberal issues, the majority of the sample favored only three out of the nine conservative issues. The overall support was much less here, with many choosing the “uncertain” category. Thus it must not be inferred that the subjects necessarily *opposed* these other issues. The “uncertain” response was high for six of them, especially for numbers 12 and 14 to 18. The two issues drawing the highest support deal with law and order—perhaps reflecting a heavy law orientation among Adventists.⁴ The third most supported issue (with 53 percent) deals with approval of capitalism. This may again reflect the work ethic that grows out of a strong sense of law and justice. Alternately, perhaps U.S. Adventists have essentially embraced the political ethos of the surrounding culture.

We also asked “With which political party do you most closely identify?” While most members did not consider themselves Republican, those who did constituted the largest grouping (44 percent) of any political identification. Democrats were considerably behind at 24 percent, 20 percent had no interest in politics, and 12 percent listed themselves as independents.

To compare actual political behavior with sim-

ple affinity for political groupings, we asked whether our respondents had voted for Republican Ronald Reagan or Democrat Walter Mondale for U.S. president in 1984. (Candidates for 1984 rather than 1988 were listed because the questionnaire was constructed and data collection begun prior to the 1988 elections).

Only about 60 percent of the sample Adventists voted (probably not worse than the nation at large), with Reagan outpulling Mondale three to one (46 percent to 15 percent). Either all the Adventist Republicans voted, or a fair share of the Democrats and independents went for Reagan.

Finally, in describing their political orientation (conservative, moderate, liberal), about one fourth claimed no political opinions. Most of the rest divided fairly equally between conservatives (34 percent) and moderates (37 percent). Only 5 percent claimed to be liberals politically.

Religion and Public Behavior

As mentioned above, it is outside the parameters of this article to describe the copious information gathered concerning the religious life of Seventh-day Adventists. However, a few comments will be made concerning the relationships between members' religious beliefs and practices and their public positions.

Orthodoxy Scale Correlation

A six-question belief, or orthodoxy, scale was included. This is an ideological measure designed to see how Adventists might differ on doctrines that have been historically important to the church but that have become more or less controversial to some members in recent years. Answers on the belief scale were correlated significantly with five public issues.

Those who expressed stronger agreement with traditional Adventist beliefs were more likely to be against individual Christians and corporate churches becoming involved in political action and against a constitutional amendment permitting prayer in public schools. They were more likely to support tougher measures on crime and to uphold capitalism as a Christian ideal. In other words, they leaned to political conservatism except on the prayer issue, which they tended to oppose, influenced, no doubt, by the church's historic stand on separation of church and state.

Subjective Experience Correlation

A second religious scale represents the subjective experience of sensing the divine presence in one's life. The experiential scale was significantly correlated with five public issues. Those

whose religion was marked by more subjective experience were more likely to support peaceful relations with the Soviet Union, government aid to minorities, churches becoming involved in political action, tougher measures on crime, and capitalism as a Christian position. While the first three are liberal positions, the last two are conservative.

Church Activity Correlation

Questions on frequency of church attendance, holding a church office, outreach activity, and financial support were combined into a church activity scale that was significantly correlated with six public issues. Again the liberal-conservative mix occurs. Those who engage more frequently in these church-related behaviors were more likely to favor aid to minorities, elimination of racial restrictions, and *not* permitting prayer or Bible reading in public schools. On the other hand, they also favored aid to the Contras and withdrawal from the United Nations, and upon capitalism as a cousin of Christianity.

Devotional Scale Correlation

Several more private religious behaviors, such as frequency of personal prayer, Bible study, reading religious literature, and family worship, were combined into a devotional scale that correlated significantly with six public issues. Those more active in private devotional behavior were more likely to favor government aid to minorities, elimination of racial restrictions, and registration of firearms—all liberal positions. But they also tended to favor conservative Supreme Court justices, tougher measures on crime, and capitalism—all conservative causes.

Conclusions

To the extent this sample accurately represents Seventh-day Adventists in the United States, it appears that the members favor liberal sociopolitical causes as long as the church itself does not become involved. Yet only few designate themselves political liberals. In 1984 Adventists voted disproportionately for Reagan. This voting behavior is significantly related to self-identification with a conservative ideology.

When Adventist positions on public issues are studied for religious variables, the picture continues to be mixed. Adherence to traditional beliefs seems to go with conservative positions on public issues. However, subjective religious experience, church activity, and private devotional behavior are related to both liberal and conservative public causes.

While the church has campaigned strongly in areas in which it has discerned moral content, it has failed to perceive moral dimensions to most public issues.

On which issues
should the
church remain
silent? On which
should it
speak out?

Perhaps the historical Adventist practice of ignoring most public issues and the choice of the denomination not to articulate clear-cut principles for relating to contemporary world and national concerns may at least partly explain why members, in spite of their being Seventh-day Adventists, hold varying views on public issues.

And the introduction of background variables such as age, education, and ethnicity tends to reduce the magnitude of any relationship between religion and public position. This may indicate that these *demographic differences* carry more influence in shaping political views than *religious beliefs and behaviors*.

As a result, perhaps the church needs to study more carefully whether or not the kinds of issues investigated in this study are related to the life of faith and, therefore, call either for continued silence or for providing guidance to our people as they seek to live for Christ within their social and political communities.

REFERENCES

¹ For example, see Jeffrey K. Hadden, "An Analysis of Some Factors Associated With Religion and Political Affiliation in a College Population," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 2 (1963): 209-216; Benton L. Johnson, "Theology and Party Preference Among Protestant Clergymen," *American Sociological Review* 31 (1966): 200-208.

² Neal C. Wilson, "Proposals for Peace and Understanding," *Spectrum* 19 (November 1988): 44-48.

³ Since the response rate was only 56 percent, it is possible that the sample may reflect a self-selection bias. By completing a questionnaire of this type, respondents may have indicated a previous interest in sociopolitical issues.

⁴ Note that 62 percent support the death penalty and thus apparently do not see it as a violation of the commandment "Thou shalt not kill." This is perhaps one indication of the influence of our sociopolitical traditions on our interpretations of Scripture. Would the response have been different in the countries of Northern Europe, where the death penalty has not been practiced for a long time?

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When Prayer Unlocked a Prison

BY ALYCE PICKETT

King Herod had Peter arrested and put in prison. The king wanted to please the Jews, and the Jews wanted to persecute the Christians. As soon as the Passover celebration ended, Herod planned to put his prisoner on trial. He ordered 16 soldiers to guard Peter in prison.

"Be sure this man does not escape," he told them. "It's very important."

Peter's friends were very sad about this. They feared Herod and the Jews. "Only God can deliver our friend," they said. "We must pray earnestly that his life will be spared and that his ministry can win many people for Jesus." And pray they did!

On the night before the trial these friends met for an all-night prayer meeting. While they prayed, Peter was asleep in prison, double-chained between two guards. All was quiet. Suddenly there

was a light in his cell, and an angel stood by him.

"Quick! Get up," the angel told him. "Get dressed and follow me." The chains fell from his wrists, and Peter followed, wondering all the time if he was dreaming. Everything seemed so unreal.

When they reached the outer iron gate, it swung open for them, and they walked silently together for about a block. Then, without a sound, the angel disappeared.

Peter stood there for a moment. This was real. "The Lord sent an angel to rescue me," he said. With a thankful heart he hurried to the home of John Mark's mother. He knew his friends would be there praying for him.

He knocked at the door. "It's Peter," he said. A girl named Rhoda came to the door and recognized his voice. Before

opening the door, she ran back to tell the others, "It's Peter! He's at the door!"

"That can't be," one said. "Maybe it's his angel; maybe they have killed him." Peter knocked again, and everyone went to answer the door this time. How happy they were! God had answered their prayers.

Peter told them all that had happened. "We serve a powerful and loving God," he said. Everyone agreed. They all knelt and thanked God for delivering Peter out of the hands of his enemies.

Since the king would soon be searching for Peter, they helped Peter get ready to leave. He left his friends to go to a safe place from the king. His friends left the house that night rejoicing and praising God, and went joyfully to their homes again.

See Acts 12:1-17.

■ Ohio

Mass Mailings Bring Results

Volunteers send books to zip code areas.

A few years ago I learned of Project: Steps to Christ, a plan for sending a packet of spiritual material to every residence within a particular zip code area.

Each packet contains a cover letter, an invitation to listen to Adventist radio and television programs, information and a request card for free Bible courses, *Steps to Christ*, and an opportunity to order (without cost) 10 Spirit of Prophecy books plus *Bible Readings for the Home*.

The cost: 33 cents per residence. Because the computer cannot "break" a zip code, packets cannot be sent to an area until there is enough money to send them to every home.

Since learning of this plan, a group of us has covered many zip code areas, and many earnest seekers have been led to baptism and church membership.

A Visit to Headquarters

This past year my husband and I visited Project: Steps to Christ headquarters in Western Springs, a suburb of Chicago. James Barclay, the director, welcomed us to the office of this organization, where every Monday six women volunteer their service for the day. They write letters in answer to inquiries, send books to those requesting them, and send requests for Bible studies to local churches. Records must be updated, and innumerable details cared for.

While much is done by computer, much must be done by hand. Each week brings 35 to 85 requests for Spirit of Prophecy books and 25 to 60 requests for Bible studies.

Mel Durland and his wife, owners and operators of the Ever-Redi Printshop in La Grange, Illinois, said, "We haven't any time to donate to your organization, but we can let you have space in the back of our printshop for your production line."

Here the Adventist volunteers have in-

stalled a Pitney-Bowes Insertamax machine that gathers the materials and stuffs them into envelopes, then seals and labels each packet.

Storage space in the printshop holds the project's inventory of books and supplies.

Many other church members have given long hours of service at the production without thought of remuneration. One faithful volunteer commented, "For many years I have had part in soul-winning endeavors. Project: Steps to Christ has proved the most rewarding." Adds another, "We cannot be missionaries overseas, so this is our mission field."

The day we visited, a truckload of about 30,000 packets went to the post office to be sent bulk mail, at a not-for-profit rate. Nearly every month several such truckloads arrive at the post office.

Jim Barclay got started on this missionary venture in 1973. "I was impressed with Ellen White's statement that the bulk of the seed-sowing work would be done, not by ministers, but by the laity, from door to door and city to city. She identified the mail as a tool by which this can be done.

Dedicating More Time

"My wife and I have our own accounting and tax practice, but the Lord impressed on my mind so much the need to finish His work, that we have been cutting down on our own business to dedicate more time to this work."

Project: Steps to Christ aims to provide each of the 82 million residential units in the United States with the gospel message in the setting of the great controversy. By this past October, more than 3.5 million of these had received packets.

The project first targeted Downers Grove and Joliet, Illinois, then covered Chicago. Now every home in Alaska has received a packet.

At present, 355 people in Alaska have signed up for Bible lessons

through this plan; 117 have asked for Bible classes; and 694 books have been requested. The territory is so vast and sparsely populated that many Bible studies must be conducted by correspondence. Pastors' wives, as well as laymen, have gotten involved in this ministry. Responses have come from the rain forests and logging camps of the southeast to the frozen arctic and desolate Aleutian Islands.

Enthusiastic Responses

Recipients respond from many parts of the country.

"I enjoyed reading *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*. I could hardly put it down. Please send me *The Ministry of Healing*."—S. M., Illinois.

"*Steps to Christ* has meant so much to me. I thank Jesus for your ministry. I've written Voice of Prophecy for their adult study course."—J. S., Illinois.

"Thank you for all of your help. I have come to believe in God's Holy Word and in His church (SDA), and am now keeping God's holy Sabbath."—J. W., North Carolina.

"Please send me a copy of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, by Ellen G. White. I recently attended a Bible study at the A.M.E. Church. The instructor utilized this book and recommended it highly."—C. M., Maryland.

"In December, two Eskimos from Hooper Bay, Alaska, who enrolled in your Bible study course after receiving *Steps to Christ* were baptized. They have already begun to share their faith and recently sent us seven requests for Bible studies. Hooper Bay is an area where we have not had any work before, so that will be the beginning of a church among the natives in that area."—Pastor R. W., Alaska.

If you or your church are interested in this plan, write to Project: Steps to Christ, Inc., P.O. Box 40, Western Springs, Illinois 60558, for information.

By Ina Eyman, Cookeville, Tennessee.



Surgical nurses held a "Quake Bake Sale" on National Operating Room Nurses Day to help disaster victims.

■ California

Hospital Provides Earthquake Relief

St. Helena employees donate time and money.

Employees of St. Helena (California) Hospital and Health Center (SHHHC), a 165-bed member of Adventist Health System/West, found a variety of ways to help area residents in the wake of the October 17 earthquake. Relief projects include donations of money, time, and talent.

President Stan Berry delivered an envelope containing \$7,324 to the St. Helena chapter of the Red Cross on November 1—a gift from the hospital and its employees and volunteers. Employees were also involved in fund-raising projects. Kathy Clark of the patients' business office made a brightly colored hobbyhorse that she sold to the highest bidder for \$100. On November 14, operating room nurses celebrated the tenth anniversary of Operating Room Nurse Day by hosting a quake bake sale in the hospital lobby. All proceeds went to disaster relief efforts.

Employees also become personally involved. Although the hospital did not receive transfer patients, many of the

staff participated in a modified disaster drill the evening of the earthquake.

Fire Fighter Strike Team

Brian Atkins was relieved of his duties for the hospital's communication services to be a part of a strike team of 15 volunteer fire fighters from Napa County. After a few hours in Aptos, his three-member team went to Watsonville and joined in rotation with the Watsonville fire trucks.

"We didn't respond to any fire calls,"

Atkins said, "but we handled lots of gas leaks and a three-car accident, helped knock down unsafe chimneys, and gave medical aid." Sleeping in the fire truck, catching meals at the firehouse, and seeing firsthand the devastation (the downtown area will be razed) proved quite an experience.

Lanis Shearer responded to an announcement in the Pacific Union College church on October 21. An emergency department nurse at SHHHC, she heard about the Red Cross's need for nurses, so called the Napa chapter Sabbath afternoon and volunteered to help.

Aircraft Carrier Shelter

Shearer received a call the next day asking if she would set up a temporary relief shelter on an aircraft carrier. She raced 75 miles to San Francisco, where she was escorted to Pier 30 and the U.S.S. *Peleliu*.

Because a convention was coming to the city's huge Moscone Convention Center, 1,000 people who had been staying there since the earthquake had to be shifted to other shelters. Adult single men were sent to the *Peleliu*, and Shearer had to figure out—quickly!—what they



Lanis Shearer was lead nurse setting up the first Red Cross shelter on a naval vessel.

By Pat Benton, communication services manager, St. Helena Hospital and Health Center.

needed. "Ask for anything you need and you'll get it," Red Cross officials told her.

A shelter was set up on the deck of the huge carrier. (Most of the 4,000 seamen remained on board in their regular quarters.) The immediate needs were cots and blankets. When Shearer surveyed the sanitation facilities, she found only two bathrooms for 300 men.

"We need portable toilets!" she radioed the Red Cross. "How many?" they asked. "Ten!" she said, expecting to get a fraction of what she requested. Within half an hour 10 such toilets were sitting on the dock.

A volunteer medic named Chris became Shearer's right-hand man. They were also assigned six Navy corpsmen with limited medical training.

Bussed from the Moscone Center, all the men descended upon the ship at once. Shearer and her team got them into lines and medically triaged them. (Ordinarily that would have been done at the Moscone Center as people checked into the shelter, but because of the enormity of the disaster, medical evaluation was postponed.)

Evaluating the men's health needs proved to be an interesting experience. Most of them were street people. Some had psychiatric problems, several were AIDS patients, and a few were suffering heroin withdrawal. Dressings on wounds that were sustained during the quake were changed. A shipboard doctor wrote emergency prescriptions to be filled from the ship's pharmacy.

From Chaos to Calm

Gradually chaos settled into calm. Frightened, angry, hungry men were registered by county service workers, checked by medics, and fed a steak-and-potatoes dinner from the ship's mess. Since no other nurse was willing to take over for Shearer, she agreed to work a second shift.

"When we dimmed the lights and put those men to bed, they all hung onto their few possessions. Men were lying on their cots clutching garbage bags or cardboard boxes containing everything they owned. We couldn't get them to put any-

thing under their cots," she said. After working 16 hours ("It was the hardest work I've ever done!"), Shearer drove back across the Golden Gate Bridge. Although this was her first volunteer as-



Stan Berry, president of St. Helena Hospital and Health Center, presents an envelope containing \$7324 for earthquake relief to Rafael Rodriquez, chapter chairman of the Silverado Red Cross.

signment with the Red Cross, it was not to be her last. During the two weeks that followed, she returned for two more tours of duty, the second time serving as charge nurse for the Marina Middle School shelter.

Despite her experiences, some of them quite harrowing, Shearer said she would gladly do it again.

"I think the gratitude of those men was the high point for me," she explained, reconstructing the story of one man who asked for Tylenol for his headache. When Shearer gave him his medicine, he grabbed her hand and kissed it.

"I'd never experienced that kind of gratitude before," Shearer declared. "There's real satisfaction in helping to meet people's immediate needs. Attitudes changed when we treated those men with respect and compassion," she concluded.

■ Texas

Discarded Literature Brings Baptisms

A discarded piece of literature may have untold value. Amapola Zarate is proof of that.

This past September the Dallas, Texas, Spanish Oak Cliff Pathfinders, along with other area Pathfinder Clubs, marched in a parade celebrating Mexico's independence. Church members walked beside them, soliciting funds for Ingathering while Pathfinders handed out the Ingathering issue of the Spanish magazine *El Centinela*.

The group made such a good impression on parade officials that they were moved from fifty-third to first place in the parade line. The members collected more than \$2,000 and handed out 7,000 pieces of literature.

When one group of Pathfinders returned to their homes, they threw away the last remaining copies of *El Centinela*. Seeing the magazines in the trash, Amapola Zarate recognized them as the ones her parents in Mexico read. They had become Adventists a few years before, but could never interest their

daughter in their new church.

Amapola saw the address and phone number of the Spanish Oak Cliff church stamped on the back of the magazine and decided to call. She reached a lay leader of the church, Luz Rendon, who invited her to attend church the next Sabbath. Amapola did just that. During the service Pastor Carlos Martin invited her to tell how she had come to attend church that day. He also invited her to a Revelation Seminar, starting that evening.

From the beginning of the seminar Amapola never missed a night. Just after it began, Amapola's brother from Mexico visited her. He had become an Adventist back home, so he encouraged her in her studies.

As Amapola embraced the Advent message, she began bringing a friend and then her 18-year-old son to the seminar. In November Amapola and her friend took their stand for Christ and were baptized into the Adventist Church. Just two weeks later her son was also baptized.

■ Inter-America

Lay Workers Reap Rewards of Involvement

Four festivals inspire Inter-Americans

What makes Adventist membership in Inter-America grow? Are people in Mexico and points south more responsive to evangelism than residents of the North American Division? How is it that the Inter-American Division already has surpassed its Harvest 90 goal of 400,000 baptisms, while North America still has not reached two thirds of its 225,000 baptismal goal?

I had been assigned by the General Conference Ministerial Association to attend all four of Inter-America's Festival of the Laity—III sessions this past August (see *Adventist Review*, Nov. 16).

By Kenneth R. Wade, assistant editor, Ministry.

Some of my questions found answers in Mexico, others in Guatemala, Trinidad, and Haiti.

Festival of the Laity

The Festival of the Laity is the brainchild of Sergio Moctezuma, director of the Inter-American Division Church Ministries Department. But the idea goes back to Jesus, who, after His disciples had labored long and hard, invited them to come away with Him to a quiet place and rest (see Mark 6:7-13, 31, 32).

Elder Moctezuma believes that laypeople who devote their lives to soul winning today should be able to look forward to a similar time of rest, learn-

ing, and spiritual refreshment. So in the late 1970s he promoted a festival where lay workers could come together to receive recognition, encouragement, inspiration, and training for even greater work.

It soon became clear that four separate sessions would be needed—two for the Spanish-speaking fields and one each for the French- and English-speaking areas.

The first Festival of the Laity convened during 1979, with sessions in Mexico, Colombia, Jamaica, and Haiti. Division leaders soon recognized that the training given at that session and the enthusiasm generated among delegates had sparked a great evangelistic explosion.

■ South Africa

Marathoners Run Around Sabbath

All marathons and major road races in the Cape Province, South Africa, take place on Saturdays. Seventh-day Adventist athletes have either been barred from participation or have had to travel 1,000 miles to another province for a Sunday marathon.

Dr. Kevin Rochford, a serious runner in the 1970s (before he joined the Adventist Church), has carried a burden to open up road races for Seventh-day Adventists. As a result of much prayer and personal negotiation on his part during the past year, the organizers of about a dozen different marathons have granted official permission for

Adventists to participate either on a Friday or a Sunday.

On Friday, August 11, four Adventist athletes ran their own Beaufort West Marathon: Kevin Rochford, Gerald Steyn, Johan Pretorius, and Eric Webster. They received permission to

run the distance the day before the official marathon. The men's times were also officially taken into consideration.

In appreciation for this consideration and on behalf of the church, the men gave a floating trophy to the Beaufort West municipality to be presented to the organization that contributed most to the success of the marathon.

All four men are experienced runners. For Professor Rochford it was a nostalgic participation because he had won that race in 1975 before joining the church.

The four men were assisted by the chairman of the Road Runners, who came to Beaufort West the previous day. They were accompanied by two traffic officers in cars, and one on a bicycle.



Professor Rochford (left front) hands trophy to town clerk Jan van der Merwe, and Elwina Otto, marathon official. Back row, left to right: Sample Bezuidenhout, chairman of the local Road Runners; Dr. Eric Webster; Johan Pretorius; Gerald Steyn.

Festival of the Laity—II convened in Mexico, Guatemala, Barbados, and Haiti in 1984.

The growth spurt after that festival made Festival of the Laity—III a foregone conclusion.

Nine Thousand Delegates

Of the 1.1 million members in the division, approximately 3,500 came to the Mexican session and about 3,500 attended in Guatemala. The gatherings in Trinidad and Haiti each drew about 1,000 representatives, since we have fewer English- and French-speaking people in the division.

These delegates were the cream of the crop of soul winners from the division. But the right to attend was not based on numerical achievements. I met laypeople who had led more than 100 souls per year to Christ, but I also visited with many who averaged much fewer.

The chief qualification for potential delegates is to be involved in outreach activities for at least three years during the quinquennium. The local church nominates those who will represent them at the festival. Pastors who wish to attend must achieve their district baptismal goal for each year of the quinquennium.

For delegates the festival is a rich reward, a meaningful thank you, a time of spiritual refreshment, and a time to meet with others and learn new strategies for soul winning. Except for a small portion of the cost of personal transportation, all expenses for delegates are paid by the division, union, local field, and local church. This year the division's portion of the budget exceeded \$250,000.

Early and Late

Delegates arrive on Wednesday and keep busy until their departure the following Sunday. Meetings run from early morning until late evening.

The theme of this year's festival: "There remains much land yet to be possessed." During the meetings each union and local field reported on the work in its territory. Some of the most dramatic reports came from remote regions of Mexico and Central America where laypeople

carry the gospel to isolated villages, sometimes in the face of violent opposition. But the stories of souls won in the cities are equally exciting, if not as dramatic.

In Mexico I interviewed the top soul winner from 15 different fields. A young farmer, who has been a member only three or four years and has only a second-grade education, walks to neighboring villages several nights each week in search of people who will open their homes for Bible studies.

A dentist from Monterey has cut back the hours he spends in the office in order to have more time for evangelistic work. Another man spent seven months working in the United States, saving up money so he could return to Mexico and devote full time to unpaid evangelistic work in a remote area where we have no Adventist church.

Key to Success

From speaking with these people and listening to reports from every corner of

the division, I learned that perhaps in some areas soul winning is slightly easier than in much of North America because people are less preoccupied with worldly distractions. But a culture that promotes more interest in religion also promotes closer attachment to the religion of one's parents. It takes well-designed plans to help people break free of their traditional religion and accept the third angel's message.

The real key to success in Inter-America is *involvement*. The people believe the good old Seventh-day Adventist message and are eager to share it with their neighbors. They are willing to spend and be spent in evangelistic endeavors.

Everyone I spoke with had a practical plan for reaching his neighbors—Bible studies, evangelistic meetings, CB radio, jail bands, ministry to AIDS patients, community service work.

I returned home with a deep respect for the lay members who have dedicated their lives to winning great victories for God's kingdom.

BULLETIN BOARD

To New Posts

Sosamma Phoebe Z. Lindsay, returning to serve as associate professor, Eastern Africa Division School of Nursing, University of Eastern Africa, Eldoret, Kenya, left August 20.

Donald Everett Mansell, returning to serve as professor of medicine, Montemorelos University, Montemorelos, Nuevo León, Mexico, **Gladys (Tax) Mansell**, and three children left August 31.

Scott Gregory Newbold, returning to serve as physician/surgeon, Guam Seventh-day Adventist Clinic, Tamuning, Guam, **Martha Rose (Knowlton) Newbold**, and three children left November 8.

Brook Lamar Powers, returning to serve as assistant engineer, Adventist World Radio/Asia, Agat, Guam, and **Patricia Ann (VanArsdale) Powers** left mid-August.

Charles Edward Proud, returning to serve as production manager, Africa Herald Publishing House, Kendu Bay, Kenya, and **Ruth Ann (Campbell) Proud** left around September 10.

Dwight Gregory Scott, returning to serve as program director, Adventist World Radio/Asia, Agat, Guam, left early in October.

Dale LeRay Thomas, returning to serve as publishing director, Africa-Indian Ocean Division, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa, and **Joyce Annette (Vetter) Thomas** left October 30.

Olan Boyd Thomas, to serve as publishing director, Indian Ocean Union Mission, Antananarivo, Madagascar, **Phyllis Jean (Walkup) Thomas**, and two children, of Gables, Michigan, left November 28.

James Augustus Washington, returning to serve as treasurer, East African Union, Nairobi, Kenya, and **Sarah Elizabeth (Costen) Washington** left November 6.

Literature Requests

Each name below is in need of the following: Bibles, Spirit of Prophecy books, periodicals (*Adventist Review*, *Ministry*, *Liberty*, *Vibrant Life*, *Signs*, *Message*, *Insight*, *Guide*, *Primary Treasure*, *Our Little Friend*), hymnals, songbooks, sermon ideas and illustrations, audiovisual aids, sermons on cassette, Picture Rolls. Specific requests are listed after the address.

Uganda

Pastor Samuel Bwami, SDA Church, P.O. Box 532, Masaka, Uganda, East Africa

Jackiline Nakiyingikiwanuka, P.O. Box 31153, Kampala, Uganda, East Africa: **clothes, bed sheets**

West Indies

Cecil Parris, Randall Street, Sangre Grande, Trinidad, West Indies

West Indies College, Mandeville, Jamaica, West Indies: **physics lab equipment, tape recorders, record players, cassettes, earphones; television, video recorder, video camera, typewriter, and textbooks for shorthand, typing, mathematics, English, communications, and physics**

Zambia

Mr. M. Mbaita, P.O. Box 35076, Lusaka, Zambia, Central Africa

Mr. Eddie Nalisa, Home Health Education Service, P.O. Box 940128, Kaoma-WP, Zambia, Central Africa: **needs only cassette player/tape recorder**

Pastor Willard Sichilima, Mukobeko Prison Training School, P.O. Box 80167, Kabwe, Zambia, Central Africa

Unbelievable!

The history of ancient Greece contains many inspiring stories. Take the battle of Thermopylae, for instance, in which 300 Spartans held off a huge invading army of Persians, then died to the last man.

As the Spartans prepared for battle they heard a spy describe how the advancing Persians would shoot enough arrows to make the day look cloudy. In words that have rung down the centuries Dieneces shouted back that this was "excellent tidings. If the Medes darken the sun, we shall have our fight in the shade!"

But a terrible principle underlay the resolve of those brave pagans. We can see it in the experience of two Spartans who were too sick for combat that day. One, temporarily blinded, still felt an obligation to grope forward until the enemy cut him down. The other was unable to rise at all. Nevertheless, this soldier was branded a coward, and lived in utter disgrace until he threw his life away in a later battle.

Though extreme, his was not an isolated instance. An ancient Olympic winner would be honored as a god, while a loser would return home to stones and spittle—or worse. Tragic plays told stories of heroes whose prideful choices destroyed them, regardless of later insight or remorse. Failure was final.

Treacherous Gods

The Greek gods themselves were famous for harsh judgments, often combined with trickery. Dionysus was said to wander the earth in lowly costume, killing those who refused to worship him. The terrible Zeus was known both for his disguises and for avenging any disrespect.

Such stories help account for the procession that greeted Paul and Barnabas in Lystra after they had healed a cripple there (Acts 14:9-18). The citizens, quick to conclude that Zeus (Jupiter) and Hermes (Mercury) had arrived, rushed to sacrifice before it would be too late. No wonder that the apostles "scarce restrained" them.

What must have been the reaction of men and women from that time to hear that a God of love had sacrificed *Himself*, allowing His people to



*To the Greeks,
failure was
final, and gods
in human form
could not be
trusted.*

execute Him as a criminal, to buy forgiveness for them?

Those who did not laugh aloud at this absurdity of the idea must have been overcome with wonder. Nothing in their old religion had prepared them for that.

Paul might have been thinking of the former reaction when he wrote that the Greeks thought of Christ's crucifixion as "foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:23). But many accepted the miracle, were baptized, and went out to witness the unbelievable news to others. The church grew rapidly.

Perhaps we could use a renewed sense of awe at God's gift of grace today. The Laodicean church seems to agree comfortably with the attitude of nineteenth-century philosopher Heinrich Heine: "Of course God will forgive me; it's His business." Catching sight of the world's alternatives might help us remember how terrible a chasm He bridges for us.

Beyond Failure

A recent television advertising slogan might help. Sounding a faintly Greek note, it reminds us that "you never get a second chance to make a first impression."

That is obvious common sense, but it is dead wrong where our Lord is concerned. Through the miracle of grace, God allows us to make a brand-new first impression on Him. It's as though He were meeting us for the very first time. Those who dare believe this truth find a hope undreamed of by ancient pagans.

Without grace the tragedy of sin would be absolute and final. But "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

He remembers our sins no more.

Unbelievable!



By Jan Charles Haluska



Jan Charles Haluska is a professor of English at Southern College, where he lives with his wife, Marcia, and their two sons, Aaron and David.