
FAITH & FREEDOM

learning to live out in public the freedom to believe

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FAITH & FREEDOM

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The IRD is a non-profit organization committed to reforming the Church's social and political witness and to building and strengthening democracy, and religious liberty, at home and abroad. The IRD committees work for reform in the Episcopal Church, the United Methodist Church, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The IRD also sponsors the Ecumenical Coalition on Women and Society.

We welcome financial contributions in any amount to support this work.

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IN THIS ISSUE

Joyce Neville

in on the steering committee of the IRD's *Episcopal Action*.

Terry Mattingly

is a professor at Milligan College in Tennessee. His weekly Scripps-Howard religion column is carried in newspapers from coast to coast.

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► Your piece on Phil Wogaman ["The President's Pastor," Spring 1995] is lacking in context and balance. It distresses me deeply to see him described as though he has never entertained a Christian thought. You make the man out to be positively sinister—just the kinda guy you don't want hanging around your ecclesiastical neighborhood.

Rev. Stephen Swecker
Orchard Park Community Church
Orchard Park, NY

► I read your article about Dr. Wogaman with interest. Questioning the use of the pulpit to impose clearly political and controversial social views on a captive audience is a legitimate, indeed important, subject. Misuse of the pulpit is even more egregious when the pastor's views conflict radically with Scripture.

Lawrence Schulz
Buffalo, NY

► I am dismayed at your attack on the senior pastor of the Foundry Church. He has been inspired by Christ's message and in turn inspires many fellow Christians. I for one have greatly benefitted from his writings. I have also enjoyed many of the publications of the Methodist Church on social issues.

Dr. Barend A. de Vries
Bethesda, MD

► Your article reinforces my take on Wogaman based on my exposure to him a few years ago. When he criticized the *Discipline's* position on homosexual behavior and condescendingly opined that St. Paul's reference to the church as the bride of Christ was unfortunate, I knew we were on different tracks.

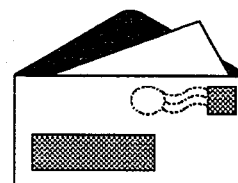
Rev. Russell C. Wentling
Emmanuel U.M. Church
Allentown, PA

► Thank you for "The Unpardonable Sin" in the last *Faith and*

Freedom. It is typical of church bureaucrats and tenured "prophets" to be utterly intolerant of criticism. Thanks also for the piece on the president's pastor. I've been familiar with his work for years, initially for his particularly sub-Christian version of the pro-choice position. He deserved the exposure.

Rev. Leonard R. Klein
Editor, Lutheran Forum
York, PA

LETTERS



► Because of *The Presbyterian Layman* and your *Faith and Freedom* ["Re-Imagining Movement Mobilizes," Spring 1995], our small First Baptist Church was able to receive information on our American Baptist denomination's involvement in the youth event "CELEBRATE!" We are a small church in a small state, but we want it known loud and clear—We will not tolerate our money being used this way.

Rev. David Hayes
First Baptist Church
Bottineau, ND

► Thank you so much the information on the "CELEBRATE!" conference! As disheartening as the conference may have been, I was much more disturbed reading of the National Catholic Student Coalition. I had not heard of this program before and made a couple phone calls. Thank you for bringing the NCSC to my attention. Keep up the fight and the faith!

Teri Seipel
Riverside, CA



from the
president

IRD Moves On (In Lots of Ways)

IRD is on the move. I mean this quite literally. This summer we moved to new offices on the third floor of a lovely old mansion up Sixteenth Street here in Washington. We'll be sharing the building with other compatible non-profit groups, so we're looking forward to sharing resources and ideas as well. Best of all, we will cut our rent almost in half with this move, which will mean more money for program and less for overhead. Our new address:

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Readers who know Washington well may be amused to note our new location. It's right across the street from Foundry United Methodist Church. Yes, that's the church which President and Mrs. Clinton attend, pastored by J. Philip Wogaman (see "The President's Pastor," *Faith and Freedom*, Spring 1995). But no, IRD staff member Mark Tooley did not find our new space while he was visiting Foundry and researching the article he wrote.

Mark's article created quite a dust-up. Cal Thomas wrote a column based on it which appeared all over the country. And several newspapers, including the *New York Times*, picked up the story. It says something about the media that most of the subsequent articles paid more attention to the fact that Bob and Elizabeth Dole are now looking for another church, than to the teachings at Foundry that drove them to it.

Mark Tooley is the newest IRD staff member. He's already gained a reputation for aggressive and plain speaking about the state of the United Methodist Church. (Shortly after he came to the IRD, the UM

News Service ran an article entitled, "Who Is Mark Tooley?") Mark directs our **UMAction for Faith, Freedom, and Family**.

I'm enormously proud of the entire IRD staff. Our Vice President is Alan Wisdom, who has been with the IRD since 1985 and directed our Presbyterians for

Democracy and Religious Freedom since 1990. Alan powerfully combines breadth of knowledge with deep analytical skills and godly character.

Our long-time Administrative Director, Kendrick Mernitz Smith, is unflappable as she efficiently keeps our financial records, maintains supplies and equipment, and, this summer, organizes our move.

Another relatively new staff member, Craig Smith, focuses on membership development. Craig has shouldered much of the burden for a campaign that has almost doubled the IRD's membership since January! We've a long way to reach our goal, but it's a great start.

Finally, our most "productive" staff member (she's just had a baby) is my assistant Faith McDonnell. Faith coordinates our religious liberty work and assists me with our **EpiscopalAction for Faith, Family, and Freedom** (formerly the Episcopal Committee on Religion and Freedom).

New Visiting Fellow for the IRD

This fall our staff will be supplemented by a visiting fellow, Dr. Paul Marshall, who will be on sabbatical from the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, Canada.

Paul's current area of research and writing is in human rights, and we are looking forward to his helping us with the various domestic and international rights debates. Don't miss his article on church accusations that the U.S. is a human rights abuser (p. 11).

Paul Marshall also wrote an article in the last issue of *Faith and Freedom* on religious repression in Islamic areas and trends in Christian/Muslim dialogue that, like the old Christian/Marxist dialogues, tend to ignore human rights abuses. Earlier this summer, he and I joined other religious liberty activists in London for consultations to address this growing problem.

Later this summer, as I explain in an article on pages 8-9, I plan to attend the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, with a delegation of like-minded women from IRD's new Ecumenical Coalition on Women and Society.

As I said in the beginning, the IRD is on the move.

IRD

by Diane Knippers

President, the Institute on Religion and Democracy



Doles Leave Foundry UM Church

Blaming its "liberal theology," Senator Robert Dole and his wife, Elizabeth, told friends they would no longer attend Washington's Foundry United Methodist Church, where President and Mrs. Clinton worship.

Mrs. Dole said she and her husband were searching for a new church home that more reflected their "traditional Christian beliefs."

The Doles's announcement came after national columnist Cal Thomas described Foundry's controversial pastor, J. Philip Wogaman, in an April article. Based on IRD's spring issue of *Faith and Freedom*, Thomas outlined Wogaman's outspokenly "prophetic" political views as well as his public doubts about the Virgin Birth and authority of Scriptures.

After publication of the Thomas piece, Wogaman cited both Thomas and the IRD for criticism from his pulpit, with Hillary and Chelsea Clinton in attendance. Wogaman claimed that the articles about him were really a "political attack" on the President. In his own subsequent newspaper column, Wogaman likened his critics to the perpetrators of the Oklahoma City bombing.

Church Leaders Use Holy Week Against GOP

The National Council of Churches staged an April press conference in Washington to urge that the week before Easter be used for "prayer and fasting" to stop the Republican legislative agenda.

"We will be sending a message to members of Congress and the administration," declared NCC general secretary Joan Brown Campbell. NCC president-elect Melvin Talbert, a United Methodist bishop, warned of the "disastrous

consequences" of the GOP's "Contract With America."

The NCC urged the wearing of purple ribbons and the hanging of purple draperies from church buildings to protest the alleged Republican assault upon "children, the elderly, and the poor and the oppressed." The Washington offices of leading NCC members, including the United Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church



CHURCH BRIEFS

(U.S.A.), Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the United Church of Christ, have condemned the Republican agenda.

Religious Left Condemns Religious Right

The Christian Coalition unveiled its new "Contract With the American Family" at a Capitol Hill press conference in May. Minutes afterwards, the Washington offices of leading oldline denominations denounced the Contract's provisions, which advocated tax credits for children and working mothers, restrictions on pornography and late term abortions, increased "school choice," and a religious equality constitutional amendment.

Even a White House spokesman lauded the "language and the tone" of the Christian Coalition manifesto, but liberal church offices responded with indignation.

"The Christian Coalition wants to dictate its version of Christianity to our school children and to us," said Episcopal official Robert Brooks, who was joined by spokespersons from the United Methodist, Presbyterian (U.S.A.), American Baptist, and United Church of Christ offices, among others.

The NCC also opposed the "family" agenda and derided "today's climate," which is "viciously hostile to poor people."

New "Progressive" Religious Network Formed

A new coalition of liberal evangelicals and oldline leaders has arisen to combat politically conservative religious groups. About 100 religious luminaries signed a "Cry For Renewal" that derided the Religious Right's alliance with the Republican Party as a "dangerous liaison of religion with political power."

"Political issues are at the heart of the Christian faith," claimed evangelist Tony Campolo at the "Cry's" press conference. He urged Christians to combat "gay-bashing," racism and poverty instead of promoting the Religious Right's agenda. "We need to recruit agents to work in this world and not for pie in the sky," he stated.

Other signators to the "Cry" were *Sojourners* editor Jim Wallis, James Dunn of the Baptist Joint Committee, Millard Fuller of Habitat for Humanity, Episcopal Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning, Disciples of Christ President Richard Hamm, United Church of Christ President Paul Sherry, NCC chief Joan Brown Campbell, United Methodist Bishop Melvin Talbert, and Catholic bishops Leroy Matthieson, Raymond Lucker and Thomas Gumbleton.

IRD



reforming
the church

Interfaith Impact—Its Rise & Fall

At an ecumenical affair in Washington, D.C. for 35 faith groups, the crowd laughed and applauded over the expected eternal damnation of an ailing former president.

"I'm trying to make sure you don't go to hell like Ronald Reagan," warned former U.S. Congressman Walter Fauntroy. The Lord will damn Reagan for his "cuts" in Medicaid and food stamps, declared Fauntroy, a Baptist minister.

The affair was the annual spring "legislative briefing" of Interfaith Impact, a coalition of oldline Protestant denominations, Unitarians, liberal Catholic and Jewish groups, plus the American Muslim Council.

Speakers included Hillary Rodham Clinton, Jesse Jackson, Andrew Young, and Democratic senators Dale Bumpers, Paul Simon and Paul Wellstone. This year's theme was "Covenant with the People, An Agenda for Justice." Most speeches during the four day gathering lambasted the Republicans' "Contract with America."

"We do not need that sort of contract," declared the First Lady, who alleged that Republicans were being "driven by fear and insecurity." Clinton told the Impact crowd of 350 people, "We are grateful for the support you have shown us." To cheers and applause she declared, "We will fight the Congress."

"You have pricked the conscience of our nation," responded Impact President Jane Hull Harvey, an executive with the United Methodist Board for Church and Society. National Council of Churches chief Joan Brown Campbell called the First Lady "wonderful" and "inspiring."

Other speakers echoed Clinton. "This [Newt] Gingrich crowd is basically mean-spirited," Jackson told Impact. "While [Gingrich] asks [students] to bow their heads [in prayer] he takes away their lunch program."

Wellstone denounced the "vicious policies done in the name of welfare reform." The Minnesota sena-

tor concluded, "I think Gingrich, Gramm and Dole have overplayed their hand."

"[American] conservatism is very much related to Islamic fundamentalism," explained Young, a former UN Ambassador and Atlanta mayor. "I call proliferers 'Khomeinists.'"

Young, a United Church of Christ pastor, admitted mistakes by liberal church activists. "Sometimes our sin is being more radical than thou. We measure our Christianity by how far out we can get."

Bumpers, a United Methodist from Arkansas, compared his own denomination to the Democratic Party. "We do not have a message that is being accepted by our people," he told the Impact crowd.

Fauntroy led the Impact worship service, which he concluded by singing Whitney Houston's song, "Learning to love yourself is the greatest love of all."



First Lady Hillary Clinton, flanked by Impact director Jim Bell and Impact president Jane Hull Harvey.

After the briefing, Impact announced the impending closure of its nine-person office on Capitol Hill because of severe budgetary problems. The closure comes after a 25-year presence in Washington's Methodist Building. Harvey affirmed that Impact's "social justice advocacy" will continue through its 23 state chapters and through its member groups.

Impact has long been controversial. In the 1980's it defended Nicaragua's Marxist government. Two years ago it sponsored the huge homosexual march on Washington.

Members of Impact include the American Baptist Church, Disciples of Christ, Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church, Columban Fathers, Jesuit Social Ministries, Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Church Women United, and the National Council of Churches.

IRD

by **Mark Tooley**
Research Associate

I was sitting in the chapel of the Church Center for the United Nations in New York. I wasn't at a worship service, but a briefing given by the U.S. State Department to non-governmental organizations (NGO's) interested in this September's Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China.

The State Department official began flippantly. "We aren't entirely opposed to the use of the 'f' word" in the conference's Platform for Action, she quipped. I was not amused. Her "f word" was "family," and her comment revealed an indifference about how the family figured in this potentially influential U.N. document.

The U.S. *might* accept some passing references, as long as they didn't lay *too* heavy a stress upon the bonds between husband and wife, parents and children.

After the briefing I gave her a copy of a memo that I had just written on this very issue. Her response—that I should go see a member of the Vatican delegation—floored me. "I'm not a Catholic," I thought, "but I am an American. The U.S. delegation represents me. I should not have to go to the Vatican to find someone who cares about the family."

A Church Agenda—An IRD Response

It wasn't entirely coincidental that the State Department briefing for this U.N. conference was held in a church facility. The official women's agencies of the old-line Protestant denominations are, in fact, highly interested in the Beijing women's conference. United Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal and ecumenical agencies will spend tens of thousands of dollars to send dozens of women to Beijing this fall.

It is likely that the message taken to Beijing will be one of radical feminism. We have seen this line of thinking already in church documents such as the United

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Will The United Nations' Beijing Conference Undermine Women's Real Freedom?

Methodist Women's Division 1993 policy statement on ministries to women and children. It has cropped up again in statements relating to Beijing.

Susan Craig, director of the Women's Advocacy Program Area of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), told the PCUSA General Assembly Council that her program's theme for Beijing would be "violence against women," including "physical violence, psychological violence, economic violence, and theological violence." "The theological piece," she said, "is the

most important."

When asked what she meant by "theological violence," Craig replied, "texts in the Bible that have been used to denigrate women." She said

that the church needs "to confront" these passages in settings such as Beijing.

The United Methodist Women's Division has funded several secular left-wing NGO's that have greatly influenced the Platform for Action. The most prominent of them is WEDO, the Women's Environment and Development Organization, headed by Bella Abzug, the flamboyant former congresswoman. WEDO advocates 50/50 quotas of men and women in all government bodies; prefers socialist economic models over free market options; argues against "traditional family values" and "fundamentalism;" supports "sexual orientation and sexuality as a right," and supports "abortion as a basic method of fertility regulation."

In the face of all this official church activism, the IRD is sending its own delegation to Beijing under the auspices of the IRD's newest program, the Ecumenical Coalition on Women and Society. We want to raise another voice on behalf of church women—a voice that reaches governments, the media, and other NGOs. We've already spoken out in testimony before a Congressional committee, and in newspaper, radio, and TV interviews. We want to make sure that there is someone

in Beijing watching the official denominational delegations, and responding as necessary. We also want to link up with like-minded Christian women from around the world, and be a witness to those who are not Christians.

We have obtained the coveted NGO status. Organizations that have joined in with our Beijing project include the World Evangelical Fellowship and the U.S. National Association of Evangelicals. Our Beijing team will represent millions of Christian women from across the globe.

What Is At Stake For Women?

Does this UN conference really matter? Yes, enormously. The Platform for Action adopted in Beijing will be used as a standard for economic, political, and social policies at home and abroad. The Platform will have particular impact within the education establishment in determining what our children are taught. Through this conference, the values of the Western left will be forced onto other countries.

Our deepest concerns are in four areas:

FAMILY. The 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, "The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State." But in the Beijing document, this high view of the family is replaced by a vision of the autonomous individual. The Platform would strengthen single-parent families but neglects strengthening marriages. Early child-bearing is rightly frowned on, but the problem of child-bearing outside of marriage is not mentioned.

GENDER ROLES. The Platform for Action asserts that gender roles are "socially constructed," not biologically determined (ignoring the reality that both nature and nurture are involved). Some radical feminists argue that there can be more than two genders, which would allow the Platform to be interpreted as defending affirmative action and quotas for an imaginative array of "genders" (including gays and lesbians).

RELIGION. Religion is frequently vilified in feminist circles, so it comes as no surprise that the Platform ignores the basic right of women to freedom of religion. In many societies, women who seek to exercise this right suffer severe repression. The Platform addresses everything from HIV-AIDS to environmentalism, from reproductive health to international economic institutions, but it says not one word about religious freedom.

RIGHTS OF WOMEN. In many places, women are brutally denied basic human rights. Forced abortions and sterilizations, genital mutilation, forced prostitution,

denial of educational opportunities and property rights, rape as a tactic of war, female infanticide—the list goes on and on. But the campaign to fight truly horrible abuses is weakened by linking women's rights with highly questionable economic, social, and environmental theories.

The Beijing agenda goes far beyond basic rights for women. The Platform claims that peace and development cannot be achieved unless women represent 50 percent of each nation's parliament or Congress and 50 percent of all economic and policy institutions.

How or why women are uniquely capable of bringing in this utopia is never explained. Nor does the document admit the degree of government coercion required to achieve 50 percent representation of women in all these areas. How might we have to change our democracy to reach a quota of 50 percent women in Congress? What if most Americans don't envision women as half of



Congress and men changing half the diapers as a sure-fire method to a just and peaceful social order? And what if we don't want the United Nations, our own government, and our religious and educational institutions imposing such a vision on us?

The Beijing Platform for Action calls for the most intrusive and radical restructuring of the social order in human history. The radical feminists know this and applaud it. The rest of us need to speak out—at home and in China this September.

IRD

by Diane Knippers

Responding To Media Signals

A few years ago I wrote an article about the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, an autumn celebration that many of us would know from biblical references to the Feast of Tabernacles.

In order to learn more about Sukkot, I visited the home of an Orthodox rabbi in Denver and we sat in the tabernacle that he had built in his back yard. As we discussed various traditions and scriptures, the rabbi's teen-aged sons joined us. Obviously, the teen-aged sons of an ultra-Orthodox Jewish rabbi are not the young people whom you see hanging out in the food court at your local shopping mall. These young men were dressed very formally and wore ornate yarmulkes, had spirals of hair over the cheeks, twine hanging from their belts and other visible symbols of their faith.

I looked at the two and thought, "How unique." Then I looked down. Both were wearing Nike Air Jordan

All too often the church has little to offer, in terms of informed insights into popular culture and the role that mass media play.

basketball shoes—loose and unlaced.

This is your culture, I thought. You can run, but you cannot hide. Your culture is going to get you. At that very moment another thought flashed into my mind. The Bible teaches that our feet are symbolic. How we walk says a lot about who we really are. It is not a good sign, I decided, if the mass media that carry our popular culture have control of our feet. Perhaps this is symbolic of how we live.

What I just did was take a media "signal"—a secular

parable—and then interpret it in biblical terms. My goal was to offer Christian images in response to an image from popular culture.

I believe that our media are constantly sending out "signals" that can help the church go about its ministry and mission work in this post-Christian culture. The 1992 premiere of the television series "Star Trek: Deep Space 9" offered a perfect example of a theological "signal" from popular culture. In this episode, which was seen by about 20 million viewers, space station Commander Benjamin Sisko tried to grasp the violence that was tearing apart the planet Bajor. Thus, he sought an audience with the high priestess who served as the only source of Bajoran unity.

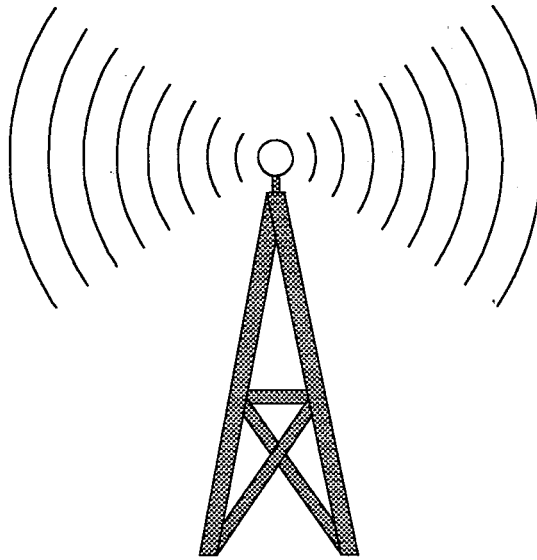
The only hope for peace was a spiritual breakthrough. Sisko, the priestess said, had to find the Celestial Temple and the prophets who shaped Bajoran "theology." Later, Sisko finally discovers the Celestial Temple and meets its god-like prophets, whose lives transcend linear time. Their ultimate message: "Look for solutions from within."

Consider that final message: "Look for solutions from within." This contrasts sharply with the Judeo-Christian emphasis on absolute truths, and a transcendent God. A Christian theologian from India, Vishal Mangalwadi, has told me that he sees many recurring Eastern themes in the "Star Trek" world. He calls this pop theology "Hollywood Hinduism."

Most seminary graduates—or at least those from seminaries that do not see apologetics as a form of intellectual bigotry—could do a much better job of debating a Buddhist on the nature of God than they can of debating the contents of an episode of "Star Trek" that focuses on the same theme.

What good does it do us to know apologetics, to know systematic theology, to know our church's moral teachings, if we cannot recognize when our culture

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beams theological and moral questions to us in the guise of entertainment?

Modern media constantly tell us stories and show us pictures. This frustrates church leaders. Stories offer lessons for life, but often in ways that are not logical or easy to translate. And besides, how can the church keep up with the waves of electronic media that flow through a typical American home in the space of a week, a month, a year?

The point is this: for better or for worse, popular culture has spiritual and moral content. Popular culture offers the church a window into the subjects and images of daily life. Yes, the mirror of mass media is warped, at times. But this does not lessen the power of media to influence our culture. We must be critical as we tune into "signals" from media.

But all too often the church has little to offer, in terms of informed insights into popular culture and the role that mass media play in daily life. I have found this to be just as true of churches on the left as on the right. It is true that many conservatives, and a few liberals, will attack the contents of specific shows. This is not enough.

We cannot see popular culture's power because it is too obvious and too close to us. We swim in media. Consider, for a brief moment, the role that television plays in most American homes. At least one television set is turned on in the typical American home somewhere between 30 and 50 hours a week. Meanwhile, other studies have claimed that children may spend only a minute or less a day in communication with their fathers.

In *The Plug-In Drug*, Marie Winn made this devastating observation. It is not children who are the primary television addicts, she said. "It is their parents, fatigued by their offspring's incessant demands for learning in the broadest sense of the word (learning that may involve retuning, screaming, throwing things, pestering) who require the 'relaxation' afforded by setting the kids before the television screen and causing them to become, once again, ... passive captives."

Is television a "discipleship" issue? Does it affect how people spend their time and money, and how they make their decisions? Is it an issue that the church should address? We must let women and men, girls and boys, know that the church cares about the forces that shape their lives. Like it or not, in modern America this means that the church must be prepared to

debate the contents of the news and entertainment media.

Church leaders who dare to do this will find that people want to discuss these subjects—a lot. They will not be dispassionate. They will challenge your opinions and criticize your judgments. Many will ask for help.

At least one television set is turned on in the typical American home somewhere between 30 and 50 hours a week.

For many church leaders these reactions will be scary, at first. The church will have actually addressed a part of people's lives that matters to them.

This is a reason to address media issues, not a reason to turn and run. We must fight the separation of church and life. Church leaders must admit that most of our people do not have the media under control. If anything, it's the other way around.

Today, many Americans vote for the presidential candidate who tells the best one-liners. Young people turn to rock stars, movies and cable television for advice about private affairs and sexual decisions that, today, can be matters of life and death. Many parents allow their children to be raised by fictional characters. If real-life versions of many of these fleeting characters actually showed up on the doorstep, most parents would call 911.

Paul had courage, and he didn't compromise. He listened to the voices in the market place. He paid attention to the images in the public square. Then, on Mars Hill in Athens, Paul was ready to debate for the hearts, minds and souls of the lost.

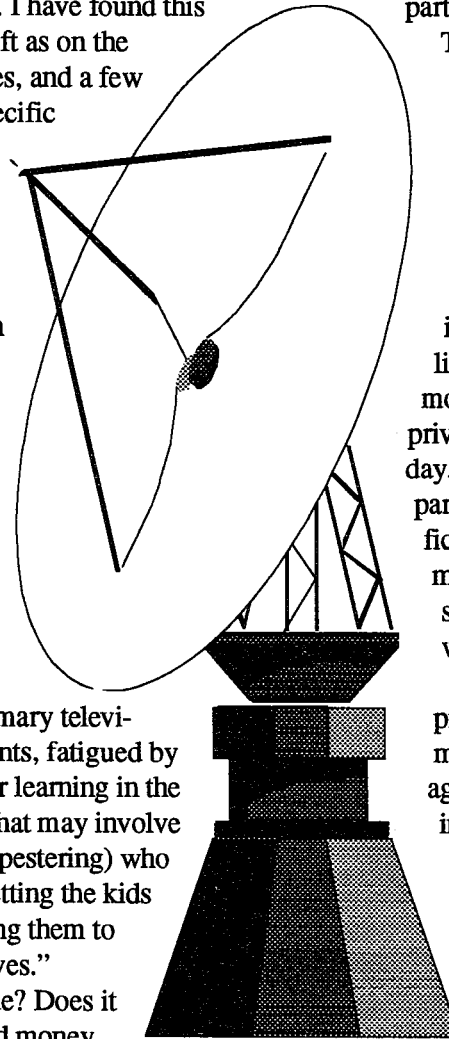
What would Paul see and hear, if he visited our market place? How would he see us spending our time and money, and making our decisions? What would he say about how we are living our lives?

Paul was a missionary and he founded churches.

Would Paul ignore the media?

IRD

by Terry Mattingly
Religion Columnist, Scripps-Howard News Service



A Crackdown in Cuba

A popular Pentecostal preacher in Cuba has been sentenced to one and a half years in prison. Orson Vila, a district superintendent for the Assemblies of God in the region of Camaguey, was arrested on May 24 and charged with "illicit meetings" and "insubordination." He was sentenced that very same day. In the days following, over 80 Assemblies of God "house churches" in the region were ordered to close by the Cuban Ministry of Justice.

These repressive measures appeared to be a reaction to the success of Vila and other evangelists. All Cuban denominations are reporting great increases in church attendance, baptisms, and other indicators of spiritual searching and Christian commitment. But the communist government of Fidel Castro restricts worship to registered churches. Building permits and materials for new churches are difficult to obtain. Therefore Vila and others have been accommodating thousands of converts in informal home meetings.

A letter from Cuban-American religious leaders in Miami demanded Vila's immediate release. Statements from national religious bodies were not so quick in coming. Earlier in the spring, the head of the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, Thom White Wolf Fassett, had asserted that there were no human rights problems "at this time" in Cuba.

Meanwhile, most U.S. Christian relief organizations opposed the Clinton administration's decision to return all new refugees fleeing Cuba immediately to the island. Voices as diverse as Church World Service (under the National Council of Churches), World Relief (linked to the National Association of Evangelicals), and Catholic Relief Services appealed to international human-

itarian standards requiring that asylum be available to those fleeing persecution. "We remind the Clinton administration that the conditions provoking Cubans to leave their country have not changed," Church World Service said.

A Message in Mecca

A featured Muslim preacher during the annual pilgrimage to Mecca exhorted the faithful to spread Islam in a peaceful manner.



INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS

"Otherwise you are giving the enemies the wherewithal to harm Islam, producing claims that Islam resorts to terrorism to achieve its aims," Abdel-Aziz bin Abdallah said in a May 9 sermon preached to a live audience of two million.

But later the same day, thousands of Iranian pilgrims staged a demonstration called a "Disavowal of Pagans." They chanted, "Death to the United States, Death to Israel."

Complaining in Copenhagen

The World Council of Churches joined other left-leaning groups in deploring the moderation of the United Nations World Summit on Social Development in March. They criticized the summit's stress on development through a mixed economy, with free markets for the private sector to spur economic growth and government social programs as a

"safety net" for the poor.

"To consider open markets and economic growth as a panacea for almost all social ills must be challenged," said WCC General Secretary Konrad Raiser in a speech at the Copenhagen summit. Apparently, Raiser and others would have preferred a more state-directed approach involving the forced redistribution of existing wealth.

Some 600 non-governmental organizations endorsed a "Copenhagen Alternative Declaration" that called for more government programs to end poverty worldwide. The endorsers included the United Methodist Office for the U.N., the Joint Ministry on Africa of the United Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ, and the evangelical relief agency World Vision.

Fighting for Foreign Aid

Oldline Protestant agencies are fighting hard to preserve U.S. foreign aid programs. Responding to a bill in the Republican Congress that would cut foreign aid severely, a coalition of seventeen mostly oldline agencies urged a flat "no" vote.

"In our view," a May 24 letter from the coalition said, "the bill's provisions represent a serious abdication of U.S. leadership in relation to developing countries." They charged that the Republican bill "would cripple the capacity of the U.N. to respond to acute conflicts around the world," as well as "eviscerate the U.S. commitment to sustainable development" in poorer nations.

Groups represented among the 17 included: the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Church World Service, and World Vision. Many of these agencies receive millions of dollars in U.S. government grants for their relief work overseas.

IRD



the global
Christian

World Council Racism Stand Gives New Weapon to Rights Abusers

At April's United Nations Human Rights Commission meeting in Geneva, the World Council of Churches (WCC) testified about racism in the United States. Unfortunately, says Paul Marshall, that testimony sets back the cause of all human rights, including the right to religious freedom.

The WCC held hearings throughout the U.S. last year in which community activists listed their grievances to a commission of visiting "eminent persons." At the United Nations, the WCC played back those grievances and accused the U.S. of "gross and consistent patterns of racism."

The accusation is largely true. The U.S. does have widespread racism—almost as much, in fact, as Britain and France.

Nevertheless, the report the WCC produced as a result of the hearings presents a muddled caricature of the situation.

In the racism report, the WCC cites California's Proposition 187, which stops government services to illegal immigrants. This proposition indeed merits criticism, but is it a matter of fundamental human rights? Perhaps the WCC might try to furnish a list of countries that *do* guarantee services to illegals.

As further evidence of pervasive U.S. racism, the WCC raises complaints about the recently-released book, *The Bell Curve*, which surveys race and intelligence—and which also merits complaint. But what on earth does the WCC want the U.S. government to do? Ban the book? Pronounce a *fatwah*

(death sentence) on its authors? As Geraldine Ferraro, U.S. Ambassador to the Human Rights Commission, politely pointed out to the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Racism, "recommendations calling for the prohibition of certain groups or forms of expression would violate basic constitutional protections...."

All of the WCC's complaints—including accusations that the U.S. has political prisoners and is on the verge of race war—are expressed with such inflated rhetoric that they are not likely to be taken seriously.

Normally, the matter could be left there. The report could be consigned to oblivion: quoted by main-line church bureaucrats claiming "prophetic" utterance, while ignored by everyone else. But because the WCC lumps together every social defect as a human rights violation, the world's worst human rights violators will reject criticism of their own persecution, repression, torture and murder on the grounds that their accusers also do not fully respect human rights.

In the Geneva meetings, Cuba was the first to seize this opportunity. It sponsored a resolution on

"Violation of Human Rights in the United States as a Result of Racism." The resolution did not get far, drawing support only from Sudan and China. But at least the WCC knows what states appreciate its efforts.

Sudan will now justify its near-genocide against southern black Christians and animists with the claim that the U.S. is also a rights violator. And, if the U.S. ever again criticizes China's bloody repressions, the accusation will be thrown back in its face.

If the WCC is concerned about the actual political consequences of its actions, perhaps one day it could instead use the U.N. meetings as an opportunity to highlight

the persecution of churches by, among others, Cuba, Sudan, and China. This does not seem too much to ask of a church body that claims to represent Christians worldwide.

IRD

by Paul Marshall
News Network International

General Board of Global Ministries'
Committee to Eliminate Institutional Racism (CEIR)
Report on World Council of Churches/
National Council of Churches' Racism Hearings
October 21, 1994



1994 Annual Board Meeting
Sheraton Stamford Hotel
Stamford, Connecticut

Flyer from United Methodist Global Ministries, which gave \$50,000 to the WCC campaign.



interview

The Struggle to Set a Standard with Lynne Cheney

Dr. Lynne Cheney is currently a Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. From 1986 through 1992 she was Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

You have been a leader in the movement to set national standards for what we expect our children to learn in school. But last year when standards for U.S. and world history were proposed, you opposed them. What happened?

What happened, unfortunately, is that the standards movement came up against the fact that history has been politicized in this country. So in the development of the history standards, a single viewpoint manifested itself to such a degree that it's cast in doubt, I think, whether we are going to be able to have any kind of national guidelines for the teaching of history.

You and others criticized the proposed history standards for dwelling too much on the darker aspects of U.S. and western history. Couldn't this be seen, from a Christian point of view, as a healthy confession of sin?

Well, our children should be aware of the darker aspects of our past. I think when you are talking about an academic undertaking, the teaching of history, that your primary goal has to be truth, and this means the good as well as the bad. You're never going to totally arrive at the truth, if that is your goal, but that has to be your goal.

This is not a religious exercise. This isn't about expiation. This is about trying to understand the truth of the past. This isn't a reformist exercise. This isn't an effort to emphasize failure in order to promote change—or it shouldn't be.

Are you saying that the history standards did not set truth as their goal?

I do not think that accuracy is the goal of the history standards, as they were finally developed. I think that social transformation is the goal.

Why were the authors not satisfied merely to try to be objective?

It's part of the whole postmodern critique of objectivity, the idea that all of reality is a social construct, all of reality is simply what we make it to be, and that objectivity is a delusion. Objectivity is [regarded as] a tool of the white male elite.

How would you describe the treatment of religion in the history standards?

Actually, there is a piece of good news in American education. The textbook publishers, the education establishment, and indeed the history standards are paying more attention to religion than they used to.

There is a tendency, though, to treat religion as a social phenomenon. It's a very hard thing, I think, to teach religion in the right way. But you don't want it to seem just like one more social phenomenon. It's something that people believe in deeply with their whole selves, and that's why religion has had such impact on history.

The best critique of the role of religion in the history standards was done by Walter McDougall in a recent issue of *Commentary*. He points out, for example, that Judaism is repeatedly reduced to "ethical monotheism." And the history standards seldom miss a chance to point out the role of religion in oppressing women.

Yet when humanities standards were proposed under a more conservative governor in Virginia, some critics alleged that they were promoting religion.

There have been complaints that Bible stories were included on a sample elementary reading list. But there is nothing wrong with having students read stories from the Bible so long as the emphasis is on literary and historical understanding.

If they do not learn about David and Goliath, they will not be culturally literate. If they do not know the story of the Good Samaritan, they will have missed an important source of moral instruction (which is not the same thing as religious instruction).

IRD

Giving China the Business

A Most Unworthily Favored Nation



religious
freedom

It has been over a year since China was granted Most Favored Nation trade status again by the United States. The American business community argued that free trade and commercial engagement would promote the development of democracy in China, and President Clinton agreed.

"I am confident that this decision will lead to more trade, more international cooperation, and a more productive dialogue on human rights issues," he said. He expressed the hope that China would evolve as "a responsible power, growing not only economically, but also maturing politically so that human rights will be ensured."

According to Nina Shea, the President of the Puebla Institute, China has made impressive free market reforms—granting the rights to own property, to start and own businesses, and to enter into joint ventures. But when it comes to freedom of religion and other human rights, China has sunk deeper into the abyss of repression and persecution.

Ms. Shea reports that almost immediately after MFN status was granted, China began a new series of crackdowns on Christians. The Puebla Institute documents the cases of 200 Catholics and Protestants currently victims of government repression and persecution.

China's state-run churches—the Catholic Patriotic Association, and the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement—oversee all "legal" Christian activity. But the persecuted Christians don't belong to these state-controlled churches.

Among China's suffering faithful listed by the Puebla Institute are 21 Roman Catholic bishops. Bishop Joseph Fan Zhongliang, 73, imprisoned for 25 years, is now again under house arrest. Bishop Peter Li Hongye, 76, imprisoned for 30 years is now being held at a Public Security Bureau "guest house," suffering from stomach cancer. Another 41 Roman Catholic priests are in administrative detention or in "reform through labor" camps.

Innumerable Roman Catholic women experience persecution because of China's national population control campaign, ruthlessly enforced through forced abortion and sterilization, destruction of homes, fines, and denial of education. Puebla's report also lists more than 55 Protestant preachers and lay leaders, including 25 women, being held at prisons or labor

camps. What an irony that China is hosting the United Nation's women's conference this September (see pages 6 and 7).

Protestant lay leader Zheng Yunsu was arrested in June 1992 for holding illegal religious meetings. He is now serving a 12-year sentence. His four sons were sentenced to nine years of hard labor in a coal mine merely for making inquiries about their father. Among women evangelical leaders are Dai Guillang, serving a three year prison sentence for "propagating the Book of Genesis," and Li Haochen, sentenced to 3 years reform through labor for organizing a healing crusade.

Puebla has also documented four torture deaths of Protestants in 1994.

At a recent conference on human rights and religious persecution, Nina Shea urged business leaders to defend human rights. She suggested to representatives of Texaco, Pfizer, Domino's Pizza, Metropolitan Life, Merrill Lynch, and other companies doing business in China, to make available company premises after hours for religious meetings for employees, provide fax machines and video cameras for employees, local human rights activists, and underground church leaders, and use business contacts in the government to appeal for the release of specific prisoners of conscience.

Since the United States Commerce officials and government trade representatives have decided to give China business in spite of human rights abuses, it is up to the private sector also to give China the business over human rights.

IRD

by Faith J. H. McDonnell
IRD Staff Member



Diane Knippers speaks to Chinese demonstrator outside White House.

Tom Oden's Requiem Rips Liberal Seminaries

In his new book, *Requiem: A Lament in Three Movements*, Tom Oden despairs of oldline Protestantism's liberal seminaries, which are dominated by "sexually permissive advocacy, political activism, and ultra-feminist hype."

Oden knows whereof he laments. He has taught theology for three decades at United Methodist-related Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. Himself once considered a liberal, he now despairs of the "McGovernization of ecumenical gridlock." He pronounces that the present seminary system is "practically irreformable."

His "lament" is for the death of "liberal learning" within the oldline church world. The study of ethics has become the study of "political correctness;" liturgy is now "an experiment in color, balloons, poetry and freedom;" while pastoral care is "a support group for the sexually alienated."

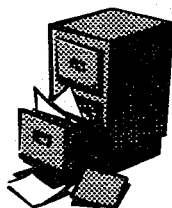
To judge from the rapid reaction from oldline seminaries, Oden's arrows have reached their targets. Although published by United Methodism's Abingdon Press, publishing officials have distanced themselves from the work. Seminary presidents have denounced *Requiem* as "skewed" and "grossly unfair." On the other hand, IRD board member Richard John Neuhaus, in his foreword to *Requiem*, hails Oden as "rollingly funny, devastatingly polemical, and instructively edifying at the same time." Neuhaus is right.

Requiem's only weakness is a refusal to name names. Perpetrators of theological misdeeds go largely unidentified. But Oden can be forgiven. Although tenured, he still must work day to day in a den of "political

indiscretions, bizarre experiments, and ideological binges."

Neuhaus warns readers not to be troubled by Oden's title. "Behind the requiem is resurrection, and behind the lament is laughter." Churchgoers will better understand their denominations' malaise and confusion after having read *Requiem*.

And they will draw hope from Oden's observation that increasing numbers of "young fogeys" in the



RESOURCES

seminaries are returning to the "esthetic beauty" of classic Christianity.

Requiem can be ordered from the United Methodist Publishing House, at 1-800-672-1789. Cost is \$16.95 for hardcover, \$11.95 for paperback.

The Theme is Freedom Locates Liberty's Real Source

The lords of modern history and culture assure us that religion and liberty are historic adversaries. They forbid public religiosity as a foe of free government. M. Stanton Evans, in *The Theme is Freedom*, seeks to prove that these secular know-it-alls are quite wrong.

According to the secular myth, freedom and democracy flourished under ancient paganism, were smothered by "the church" during the "dark ages," and awoke again thanks to the Renaissance and Enlightenment

diminution of Christian belief. These secularists claim that America's founders worked to guard political society from religious influences.

Evans argues that, on the contrary, modern liberty is a child of the Middle Ages, when Christians developed restraints on previously uninhibited state power. "Princes are bound by and should live according to laws," a clerical spokesman demanded in the year 1140.

Medieval restraints upon medieval monarchs were most famously developed in English Common Law and most vigorously defended by Puritan resisters to the "divine rights of kings." Both Catholics and Calvinists created a tradition of liberty that America's early settlers accepted entirely.

According to Evans, the writers of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution rejected the Enlightenment's anti-religious impulses. Instead, they fully subscribed to Christian suspicions of absolute power vested in either a king or a parliament. They viewed religion as essential to democracy.

Biblical religion rejects absolute trust of any human institution, Evans reminds us. This wisdom was rejected not only by 20th century perpetrators of totalitarian horror, but also by better intentioned advocates of the modern welfare-state, he surmises.

Readers may accept Evans' interpretation of Christianity's influence in fostering political freedom even while disagreeing with some of his advice for limiting governmental power. "Recovery of our religious faith and its teachings should be our first and main concern," he rightly concludes.

The Theme is Freedom is \$24.95 and can be obtained from Regnery Publishing in Washington, DC, at (202) 546-5005.

IRD

Keep Those Cards and Letters Coming!



from the pews

When I write church officials about an issue, I feel like ants at a picnic. I'm not going to break up the picnic, but they have to pay attention to me!

Church officials answer mail because their jobs depend on voluntary contributions from persons in the pews. Their answers reflect liberal control of the oldline churches and the realization that most of their members are conservative to moderate.

How do church officials balance on this tightrope? By trying to make their traditionalist constituents feel guilty for causing division.

A good example is the ecumenical CELEBRATE! student conference of earlier this year, and church officials' defense of it. Perhaps taking a cue from the uproar caused by the radical Re-Imagining conference of 1993, CELEBRATE!'s leaders tried to cover their agendas with traditional worship services and the distribution of Bibles.

But beneath this veneer they still featured speakers who promoted radical feminism, homosexuality, leftist politics and the equality of all religions. CELEBRATE! received sponsorship and over \$60,000 from eight Protestant denominations and the National Catholic Student Coalition (NCSC).

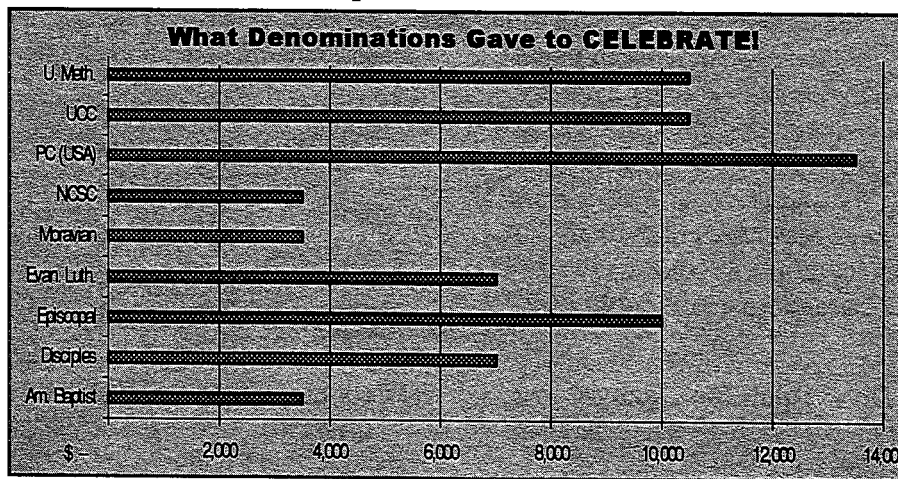
Letters of protest to Episcopal, Evangelical Lutheran and United Methodist officials elicited courteous but typical responses. They all seemed to follow an instructional handbook that advised the following:

- 1 Challenge the source of the negative report. "Help us counter the smear tactics!" wrote United Methodist campus ministry executive Don Shockley in defense of CELEBRATE!
- 2 Claim that nothing questionable was said by quoting innocuous presentations. "Nothing controversial was raised," wrote Lutheran higher education director W. Robert Sorenson. "The focus was upon the necessity for making decisions

about one's life that enables a clear sense of Christian vocation to emerge."

- 3 Remind the letter writer of the obvious. "We make every attempt to bring the Gospel to the young people we serve in a way that meets them in their world and their experience," wrote Episcopal higher education ministries officer Thomas Chu.
- 4 Reject responsibility because selection of speakers for an ecumenical event cannot be controlled by one denomination. "We find ourselves in conferences where many ideas are expressed. Because we are there does not mean we endorse everything that is said," wrote Sorenson.
- 5 Deny bias. "Aspects of the CELEBRATE! conference have received criticism from both the left and the right! Maybe it means that I have succeeded in my efforts to bring our campus programs

closer to the center...." wrote Shockley.
6 Use half-truths. "Every student was given a Bible," wrote Shockley, without mentioning that a leading CELEBRATE! speaker predicted that



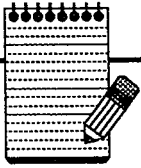
"more written Scripture" was on its way, or that workshops claimed the Bible justified homosexual practices.

All of these responses are easily addressed in a follow-up letter if the writer has accurate and complete information. We must let church officials know that we are aware of their programs and will protest their contents.

Will letters alone make a difference? Perhaps enough of them will, especially if followed by appropriate action such as withholding funds or running for office, such as delegate to national church conventions.

IRD

by Joyce Neville
IRD Member



IRD
diary

Careful But Not Shy

Confessions of a Cautious Critic

Sometimes I just can't help it. I have no choice but to criticize my leaders in the church that has nurtured me. If I truly want a renewed and reformed church, then I must speak about those things that require renewal and reform.

I am not naturally a contentious person. I would much rather follow the old motherly advice: If you can't find something good to say, then don't say anything at all. I would often be happy just to praise those church officials who are fulfilling their high calling. Meanwhile, I could pretend not to notice when the same or other officials go off on misguided political tangents.

But that's not the way God dealt in the Scriptures with religious leaders who had gone astray. He raised up individuals—the prophets, Christ himself, the apostles, even an ass on one occasion—to call the errant to account. I see my calling at the IRD as falling somewhere between that of the ass and that of the apostles. (Others may judge exactly where it falls.) My ambition, at least, is that I might be among the more honorable critics of my church leaders. I pray for prophetic boldness to challenge anything that misuses the name of our Lord to serve a lesser cause.

Leaving a Door Open for Change

My difficulty comes in communicating this complex attitude to the objects of my criticisms. One small way in which I attempt to do so is a practice that I have adopted: I check with church officials whenever I write about them. I send them a draft copy of my article, and I invite their corrections or comments.

There are several good reasons for this practice.

First, it's an application of the principle in Matthew 18: 15-17: We should take up a grievance privately with our fellow Christians before we make it public.

A second reason for this practice is that it improves my writing. Several times, church officials have saved me from publishing embarrassing errors. More importantly, they have helped me to understand their own views more accurately. This insight allows me to avoid some unnecessary debates, and so to sharpen my focus on the points of genuine disagreement between us.

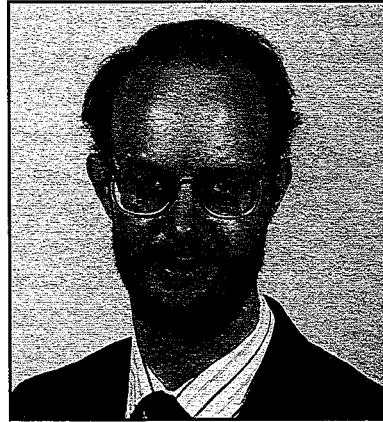
Finally, there's a sly game of influence that I'm playing. Officials are more likely to read an article that is sent to them personally and in advance. If they take advantage of their opportunity to respond, they may be drawn into a more careful consideration of my arguments.

Assuming the Best

But not all church officials respond so constructively. Some never even bother to pay me the courtesy of a reply. The attitude that I perceive is indifference: "We don't care what you think. You don't matter to us."

Others react defensively. They make blanket denials: "No, we're never partisan. We just do what the General Assembly tells us." They accuse me of all kinds of base motives. The attitude conveyed is fear.

I wish that there were more of the constructive responses. Yet I prefer to act on the assumption that all Christian brothers and sisters—even our beloved bureaucrats—are capable of a genuine dialogue of mutual correction in the Lord.



Alan Wisdom

IRD

by Alan F. H. Wisdom
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