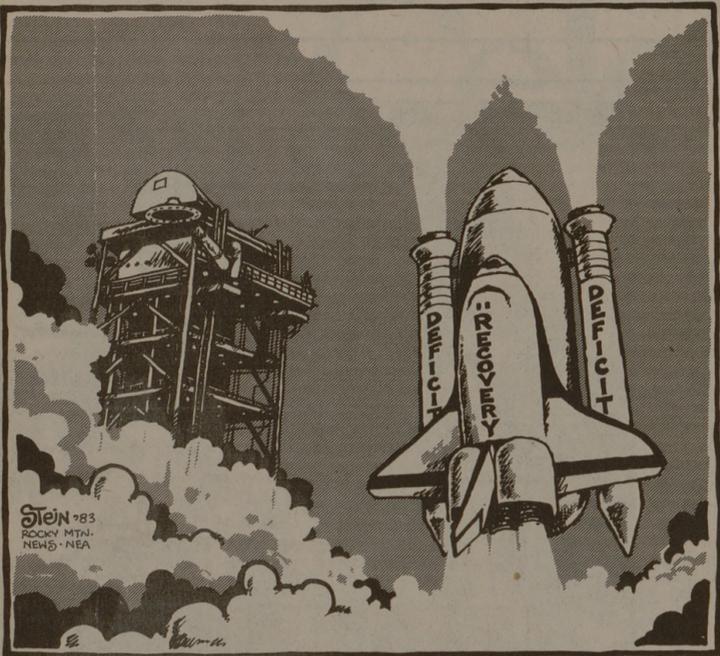


opinion



Reagan disagrees with clergy

by Wesley G. Pippert
United Press International

WASHINGTON — President Reagan, addressing a group of cheering evangelicals in Orlando, argued against a nuclear freeze and declared communism may be the focus of evil in the modern world.

A few hours earlier, in the Capitol, a group of ministers, using equally strong moral language, charged that Reagan's budget shows a nation "intent on a selfish and dangerous course of social stinginess and military overkill."

Who was right? Who was making the truly moral statement? Both appealed to the Bible and were not modest in asserting their point of view was in synchrony with it. Was Reagan worshipping at the shrine of civil religion? which tends to equate American culture with Christianity. Were the ministers going beyond their proper mission by engaging in politics?

Reagan, speaking to the National Association of Evangelicals, which represents groups with about 40 million members, laid out a tray with many of the items important to social conservatives — parental notification when teenagers receive birth control information, restoring prayer to public schools, abortion, infanticide.

Then Reagan said: "There is sin and evil in the world, and we are enjoined by Scripture and the Lord Jesus Christ to oppose it with all our might. Our nation, too, has a legacy with which it must deal. The glory of this land has been its capacity for transcending the moral evils of our past."

It left no doubt that in the minds of Reagan and the evangelicals, what the president had cited were among the nation's worst sins.

Reagan saved his most fervent charges for the nuclear arms issue. He said a nuclear freeze would reward the Soviets for their military buildup.

"Let us pray for the salvation of all who live in totalitarian darkness, pray they will discover the joy of knowing God," Reagan said.

"But until they do, let us be aware that while they preach the supremacy of the state, declare its omnipotence over individual man, and predict its eventual domination of all peoples of the earth — they are the focus of evil in the modern world."

He concluded by linking morality and military strength: "So I urge you to speak out against those who would place the United States in a position of military and moral inferiority."

To the north, in a tiny room in the Capitol, the religious leaders, representing bodies with 50 million members, took a different view of what was evil. Two denominational presidents, Kenneth Teegarden, of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and Avery Post, of the United Church of Christ, were present. Others religious executives, mostly mainliners, signed the statement.

Calling the federal budget "the most important moral statement the government will make this year," they asked Congress to refuse any more cuts in survival programs for the poor, to pass the jobs and emergency relief legislation, to cancel the MX missile and B-1 bomber and reduce military spending.

They said Reagan's budget "rejects the rights of the poor . . . rejects the rights of the unemployed . . . rejects the rights of human beings to live their lives in peace and security."

"We are profoundly disturbed by a vision which emerges from this 1984 edition of our statement of purpose," they said. "It is a vision, nation intent on a selfish and dangerous course of social stinginess and military overkill."

So, was Reagan or the ministers prophetic, condemning like Amos or Jeremiah of old the real evils of the world? Neither? Or perhaps both?

The message of the Bible is that it chooses life over death, always it chooses down on the side of the poor and oppressed. From Genesis to Revelation, it admonishes people to care for the orphan and the stranger. The message of the Bible is that it allows tremendous diversity in how to accomplish its tasks — there is no ordained economic or political system. But always the Bible insists that whatever the philosophy, whatever the system, it must be measured against the plumbline of justice and righteousness. The Bible isn't so concerned as to whether a person is liberal, conservative, a capitalist or a socialist, whether he is just and righteous.

Maybe Reagan and the ministers should have done a better job of listening to each other.

The same Bible that Reagan and the ministers appealed to also suggests rather bluntly that pride is the most grievous sin, and in that sense there is no shortage of guilt to go around in Orlando and Washington.

Don't lie to me — take polygraph test

by Art Buchwald

The President has issued an executive order requiring every federal employee with a security clearance to sign a non-disclosure pledge and submit to lie detector tests if asked.

Mr. Reagan's given reason was to prevent leaks of classified information. His real reason was to stop leaks that make his administration look incompetent or bad.

Will this stop leaking in Washington? "Not on your life," said Stanley Pincher, chief coordinator of Leaks for High Government Officials. "But the government will now have much better control over what is leaked to the press and what is withheld because it would give us a black eye."

"What constitutes a good leak?" "Top secret information about the nuclear superiority of the Soviet Union. We want that leaked out as fast as possible, especially while Congress is debating the defense budget."

"What, in your opinion, is a bad leak?" "Top secret information of sweetheart deals with U.S. defense contractors on weapons now in production that don't work and cost three times as much as we said they would."

"I can see why you wouldn't want that kind of information leaked," I said. "The lie detector will be a great help in stopping whistle blowers from ratting on the administration."

"It may not stop all unofficial leaks but it will certainly have a chilling effect on anyone who leaks to cover up wrongdoings."

"How does your department operate?" "We have a National Council of Office Leakers, which meets every Monday morning. It is composed of senior officials from all the departments and agencies, and is chaired by a very high White House source. Each official presents the leaks he would like to pass on the media that week. If, for example, the Gross National Product is going up, Commerce will ask to leak it, and if unemployment is going down we'll let Labor leak it."

"This is all nuts and bolts stuff. The big leaks, to have any credibility, have to come directly from the White House."

"Would you give me an example?" "Well suppose it's decided that Secretary of the Interior James Watt will have to go because of the EPA scandal. I'm not saying we have decided it yet — but we can't rule out that he is becoming a political liability. A White House aide will tell a reporter 'This is off the record, but the President has no intention of firing Jim Watt.'"

"The very fact that the White House aide denied it without being asked immediately alerts the reporter that something is in the wind. He reports it and the rest of the media pick it up. When Watt reads about it he calls the President and asks him if he wants him to resign. The President says of course not. Watt can have his job as long as he wants. This private conversation is also leaked to the press, and pretty soon the only question is not will Watt resign but when."

"It's the old 'leak by denial' trick," I said. "They've used it on me a hundred times."

"It never fails. The trick of leaking when it comes to firing somebody in the administration is not to push him out the window, but make him jump of his own free will."

"What about unauthorized leaks? Is that where the lie detector comes in?"

"That's correct. As soon as we read a leak that we didn't okay, we send F. Lee Bailey and his technicians over to the department to take the tests. Anyone who refuses to have the electrodes attached to his chest will automatically be dismissed. If he takes the test and Bailey decides he's lying, the leaker is pushed out the window."

"But isn't it true that lie detectors are very unreliable and can't even be admitted in court as evidence?"

"The President was aware of it and the lie detector was not his first choice. He preferred to have an employee swear on the Bible he wasn't a leaker. But to his chagrin he discovered this was unconstitutional."



Letters: Pondering Aggie education

Aggie hero

Editor:

I recently read President Vandiver's indictment of our graduate program in the Bryan-College Station Eagle and his comment that "the quality of our graduate students leaves a good deal to be desired." His remarks have serious implications for the undergraduates because many freshman, sophomore, and even junior-level courses are taught by graduate students. In effect, President Vandiver is saying that many of our undergraduates may not be receiving a proper education at Texas A&M.

An equally disturbing and truly ironic aspect of this is that a large percentage of Texas A&M professors have graduate degrees from Texas A&M. Many universities will not hire their own graduates because the intellectual growth of a university depends on a constant influx of new ideas as well as a wide divergence of views. Yet perhaps 20 percent or more of the present Texas A&M faculty have Texas A&M degrees. If, as Dr. Vandiver suggests, Texas A&M graduate students are not as bright as they should be, is he also implying that faculty members with Texas A&M degrees are not as bright as they should be? The implications of his remarks are sobering.

Dr. Robert Scott Kellner
Department of English

It was a miracle that he even saw her. He is a student at A&M; he was driving back to College Station. Did he catch a glimpse of something in the rearview mirror? I don't know. Something made him turn around. He found my grandmother. He carried her out of the mud. He helped her to wash her hands and feet. He stayed to see that she was right. He probably saved her life.

She insisted that he take the money that she offered; nothing could truly repay his kindness.

He is an Aggie. He took the time to help another person. His name is Bill Griffith.

Marilyn Clemons

Lost bracelet

Editor:

On Monday March 28, around 9:00 a.m., I lost a gold serpentine bracelet, lost it somewhere between the post office at Northgate and the Academic Building. If anyone finds it please call me. My mother gave it to me for Christmas. There is a reward for the return of the bracelet.

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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Communications.

Questions or comments concerning any editorial matter should be directed to the editor.

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Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length, and are subject to being cut if they are longer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must also be signed and show the address and phone number of the writer.

Columns and guest editorials are also welcome, and are not subject to the same length constraints as letters. Address all inquiries and correspondence to: Editor, The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843, or phone (713) 845-2611.

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