

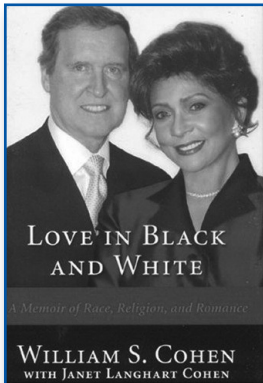
RECONCILE™

Mending Broken Relationships

Volume 12 / Number 1

—More than a Decade of Help and Hope—

Summer 2010



William Cohen and
Janet Langhart Cohen

Boundary Crosser

Former Defense Secretary William Cohen and his wife, Janet (pictured above) have launched a new book titled *Race and Reconciliation in America*. Of mixed Protestant Irish and Jewish ancestry, Mr. Cohen continues his penchant for crossing societal boundaries. This peaked with him serving as a Republican Defense Secretary in the Clinton administration (1997-2001) – one of few political appointments to cross party lines in recent history.



The Office of Reconciliation Ministries (ORM) is an Outreach Ministry of Grace Communion International.

Building Bridges in Dallas/Fort Worth

by Tom Pickett

Arlington, TX: “A Time to Reconcile” seminar promoting conflict resolution is planned for the Dallas/Fort Worth area on August 7-8, 2010, at the Omni Dallas Park West Hotel, 1590 LBJ Freeway in Dallas, TX.

The goal is to bring people together to understand the problems and solutions related to conflict and discrimination. It involves two days of transformational learning, especially relevant for churches and community groups leading to further discussion and implementation.

Three church pastors - two of them ORM chapter leaders - from the Dallas/Fort Worth/Arlington areas got the idea after talking about the need to bring Curtis May to our area to conduct an ORM conference. It became obvious that the outreach needed to include the entire metroplex. The emphasis will be on conflict resolution.

Six workshops will feature *Racial Profiling in Business; Community Conflicts; Family Conflicts; Racism in Our Society; Church, Community and Education; and The Church and Racial Segregation*.

City mayors, ministerial alliance groups, businesses and citizens from Farmers Branch are invited. For information regarding tickets and luncheons call 817-249-2728, or e-mail tom.pickett@gci.org. By listening and dialoguing together true unity can be achieved here and across the nation. This is the vision and hope which your prayers can help bring about.



Curtis May with Texas Pastors Tom Pickett,
Arnold Clauson and Robert Persky.



Our Readers Respond



Dear Mr. Earle,
 On behalf of the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, I would like to acknowledge receipt of your correspondence with which were enclosed several issues of the Office of Reconciliation Ministries' *Reconcile* newsletter.

Please be assured that your kind words of support have been carefully reviewed and are appreciated. Thank you for writing to the Prime Minister.

Yours sincerely,
 P. Monteith
 Executive Correspondence Officer
 Ottawa, Canada

Dear Curtis,
 I want to commend you on the fine work you have done since the inception of this ministry. You have continued to allow God to direct you and inspire you, and the fruits are evident. ORM continues to expand its positive influence around the globe.

Enclosed is our missions gift... May God richly bless you and your small staff.

In brotherly love,
 Willard High, Pastor
 The Shepherd's Community Church
 South Holland, IL

Dear Mr. May,
 You and ORM are always in our prayers. You are doing an important and necessary work for God and we know he will continue to bless you in it.

Our love and thanks,
 John and Jean Campbell
 Los Angeles, CA



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FROM THE DIRECTOR...

On my way to Boston recently with my wife Jannice, I had the surprising opportunity to meet astronaut/*Dancing with the Stars* contestant Buzz Aldrin and his daughter at Los Angeles International Airport. I told him I appreciate the work that he's done for the country. I also gave him the latest issue of *Reconcile*.



Buzz Aldrin

He thanked me and started thumbing through it. I told him that the editor of *Reconcile*, Neil Earle, wrote about him recently in *Christian Odyssey* magazine, in fact the June-August 2009 issue. He was pleased to hear it and then noticed Neil's name in *Reconcile* and smilingly called my attention to it. He asked if

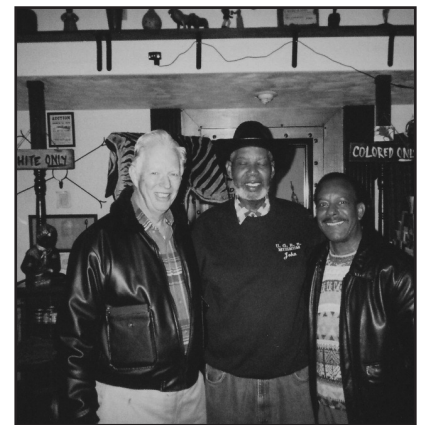
the article had to do with him taking communion on the moon, which I affirmed. Here's what Neil Earle wrote in *Christian Odyssey*:

"An Episcopalian, Buzz Aldrin had somehow wedged into his stowage pouch a plastic bag. In it were a small flask of wine, a chalice and some wafers. About 5:57 p.m. Houston time, he set the elements on the fold-down guidance-computer table. Aldrin gently poured the wine into the chalice. He then recited John 15:5, 'I am the vine; you are the branches... Without me you can do nothing'."

Taking Communion on the moon! Thank God for the simple faith of a bold scientist who inspired us all to work for reconciliation on earth with a ceremony in the heavens!

This spring John Halford, editor of *Christian Odyssey*, and I toured the Underground Railroad Museum in Flushing, Ohio. The founder and curator, Dr. John Mattox, took us on a personal tour of this three-story museum. It contains thousands of artifacts, documents and pictures, and Dr. Mattox allows tourists to touch and handle these items. If you ever have the opportunity to see it, it is well worth your time.

I passed on some ORM literature to Dr. Mattox, and he wrote the following: "After meeting Curtis May from the Office of Reconciliation Ministries, he has given me and others around the world knowledge and appreciation that will help different cultures better understand the principles which faith-based counseling considers. Curtis' life story gives him the will and wisdom to lead in Christian counseling." He added, "I would like to use these teachings in my prison ministry."



John Halford, Dr. Mattox & Curtis May

Of course, I approved. Our aim is the spread of the ministry and gospel of reconciliation. You play a major role in the process. Thank you so much for your prayers and financial support. Until next time, God loves you and so do I.



In a Polarized Era: Defusing Conflicts

As an educational psychologist, Mary Robinson Reynolds learned how to turn emotional and social crises into “teachable moments,” moving students from conflict to cooperation. She recently sent her insights to reconciliation groups after watching the political and public dialogue in the United States take on an unfortunate tone in recent years.

In the age of twitter and tweet it seems that almost any accusation can be made by someone with access to a computer or a cable TV outlet. Reynolds editorializes on what she calls “the inalienable right Americans have to voice their opinions.” She responds: “Yes, we have that right and...what the deepest part of you already knows is this: there is no excuse for abuse, and it's never OK to express your opinions in ways that you know fully will hurt others.”

It seems that today everyone has an agenda... a magazine... and a web site. Reynolds calls for a time out:

“Before you hurl your opinion at someone, ask them first if they are open to your opinion, i.e. criticism of them and/or what you feel you **know-it-all** about more than they do, even though you've never asked them anything directly, with an intention to understand them.”

She's right. Most debate today is conducted in “take-no-prisoners” style. “Since I know more than you about this subject, allow me to illuminate you.”

Ever seen this kind of discussion? Of course you have. Many bemoan the lack of civility in Washington, on TV discussion shows, in city council meetings, etc.

Return to Civility

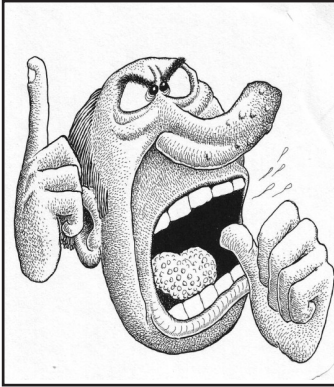
Civility. It's related to “civilize” and “civilization.” *Mad* magazine had a joke defining a super-patriot; “Someone who loves his country so much he hates half the people in it.” Truth is often spoken in jest.

Reynolds continues: “Once you've asked if they are open to your opinion, if they say, ‘No, I'm not interested in your opinion, i.e. criticism and why you think you know more about me than I do,’ **then step away** and vent to someone who cares about what is upsetting you.”

Reynolds is speaking a bit tongue in cheek here. Venting is never good personal relations. Better still: “Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19).

Three Step Strategy

Here's Reynolds' strategy (with our own scriptural additions):



How Not to Dialogue
Cartoon by Basil Wolverton

1. STOP – Does this person even want your advice (see above)? Analyze your motives in giving it. Proverbs 17:14 says, “The beginning of strife is like letting out water; so quit before the quarrel breaks out.” Today, via the Internet, we can send our own glandular opinions from miles away without asking if they are wanted. We never know what is lurking behind the next e-mail. Stop. Think, says Reynolds. Are you able to use neutral language and avoid loaded terminology such as “listen here,” “that's sick,” “how stupid,” and

on and on ad infinitum.

2. LOOK – Look especially at your own reactions, adds Reynolds: your heart rate, your temper, your emotional state. Keep checking yourself until you are under control. “A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.” We don't get anywhere by winning an argument and losing a potential friend. If we feel that the person before us possesses no shred of truth—that we have all the facts on our side—then we may well ask ourselves: “Why am I talking, anyway?” But a wise old counselor once said, “There are three sides to every question: My side, your side and the truth.”

3. LISTEN – Can you hear what's really being said? Can you look beyond the non-verbal communication to discern perhaps some deeper issue? Judas Iscariot criticized Mary of Bethany as a wastrel, but the truth is that he was a thief (John 12:1-8). Reynolds advises that most people want fair play, equity and just solutions. “Be strong by bending,” she advises. Steer towards common ground by listening to our better angels.

Amen to that.



Mary Robinson Reynolds
www.MakeADifference.com

Coming Together in the Diverse 21st Century

by Neil Earle

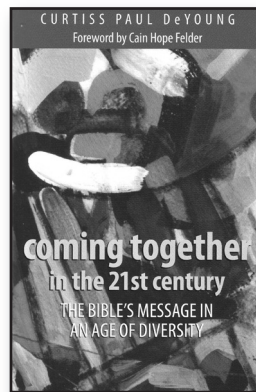
"In today's context of racial and ethnic fragmentation, it is essential to rediscover the wide cultural diversity of biblical people if we are ever to rediscover the oneness of the human family."

This is Dr. Curtiss DeYoung's introduction in his latest effort, *Coming Together in the 21st Century: The Bible's Message in an Age of Diversity*. In large measure DeYoung succeeds in moving the dialogue forward by, first, writing in an accessible and non-academic style. Second, he has assembled a competent team of contributors to drive home the message of the radical inclusiveness of Jesus Christ. The authors challenge Christians to move beyond the biases of past and present biblical interpretations.

Only at the beginning, in introducing the theme of "God's universality," might some feel DeYoung strays into quagmires, such as where Eden was located – Asia or Africa. After this "special pleading" he returns to his central message. African-American writer Brenda Salter McNeil, after her husband spoke to a church group at Oxford on how the African-American church developed outside the mainstream, experienced Christianity's cultural divide. They were both touched by the plea of a white Anglican minister: "Wait a minute, lad. Your church is young and agile. Our church has become old and arthritic. We need you to wait up for us" (page 136).

Bias For the Excluded

DeYoung well knows that such conversations are happening all across the global north and south, though North American Christians seem the most unaware of this. Perhaps the 24/7 aspect of our over-communicated, navel-gazing culture is a cause. Curtiss DeYoung's compressed, provocative 226 page effort might help stimulate healthy rethinks. Frank M. Yamada and Leticia Guardiola-Saenz illustrate the new themes: "Latinas read the Bible with the poor as a point of departure, because this is where most find themselves...As the Bible is read from the perspective of the poor, it gains greater power for this majority of the world's people." Latin American theologians have long seen Jesus represented in the Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man as Lazarus, the beggar. The poor in the barrios readily identify with



a Jesus who lies in the ditch with them "outside the gate" (Luke 16:20).

This anthology is full of such bold, alternative readings. Asian thinker Tissa Balasuriya states: "As an Asian I cannot accept as divine and true any teaching which begins with the presupposition that all of my ancestors for innumerable generations are eternally damned by God unless they had been baptized in...one of the Christian institutional churches" (page 44). This is a piercing comment. Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism have sustained Asia's teeming millions for millennia. Christian missionaries have not always known how to proceed in such cases. Neither do soccer moms when Buddhists show up in the suburbs or ride with their kids to school.

Christian Imperialism

Steve Charleston writes about "The Old Testament of Native Americans." There is much in the Torah Jesus condemned, but there was much he accepted as well, Charleston reminds us (pages 48-49). A view of the traditions of indigenous cultures as a source of "preparation" for the Gospel, e.g. Paul quoting the Greek poets comes to mind (Acts 17:28), this could open the door to fruitful dialogue. "Each Native American tribal community in North America had a relationship with God as Creator...long before they knew of the Gospel of Jesus Christ," states George Tinker. Christian missionaries to the Indians were most successful when they started where people were, rather than imposing a religion from outside – Christian imperialism.

Such insights make DeYoung's book both timely and strategic. The world is fast moving beyond the stereotypical "Euro Jesus." Palestinian Christians urge evangelicals in particular to rediscover the Master's Middle Eastern roots. This again echoes St. Paul, who admitted that he was in the debt of both the Greeks and the barbarians, the wise and the "foolish" (Romans 1:14). Churches and ministries will benefit from this book.

Special Offer!

If you have never read the booklet, *Standing in the Gap: Christians Against Racism*, now is your chance to get your own copy for a suggested donation of only \$3.00. This amount includes the postage cost. Just mail your request to:

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Glendora, CA 91740-0730

