

God Is *Like* a Woman, But God *Is* Our Father

I have been out of the Adventist academic loop for some time now and have just recently begun to read *Spectrum* again. Please permit me a diversion from my pastoral duties to offer a brief critique of Iris Yob's article on feminine language about God (*Spectrum*, Vol. 23, No. 3)—from the theological right.

Yob correctly notes that all human speech about God is analogical—or, as she says, metaphorical. We can only speak about something in terms of what we already know. This is a truism in philosophy and theology. But I cannot agree with her (modernist) assumption, implicit in her remarks, that all references to the divine in Scripture fall into that category. It fails to take into account the doctrine of revelation. The divine names in particular are not represented in Scripture as the products of man's groping toward God but rather as authoritative disclosures of the divine about itself—words *of* God *to* man.

The "Our Father" given by the Messiah to his disciples is perhaps the only instance of a divine name revealed in the New Testament. It is the equivalent of the revelation of the tetragrammaton (YHWH) to Moses at the burning bush. It is *the* revelation that Christ brings to those who believe in him. Hence, although there are numerous meta-

phors and (more often) similes about the divine in Scripture, "Our Father" is not one of them. The Messiah did not instruct his followers to address God thus so that they would compare God to their own fathers as they prayed. Rather, the name signifies the Messiah's own relation to God, which, according to the Gospel of St. John, the Messiah enjoyed even before he was born as a man. The orthodox doctrine of the Trinity asserts that the relation of the divine Father to the divine Son precedes and is independent of any human relations that might resemble it. By instructing his disciples in use of this divine name, Christ was announcing that they had become one with him and thus enjoyed the same relation to the Almighty—that of being his sons. The address of God as "Our Father" is a privileged one that a believer makes *in Christ*. It is not merely a term chosen from among a slew of metaphors that human beings have used to refer to the divine in the history of religion.

In stark contrast, any comparisons that the Bible makes between the ways of God and a feminine activity are strictly that—comparisons. In every translation I have encountered, they are always put in the form of a simile. Speaking for God, the prophet can say, "As one one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you" (Isaiah 66:13).

Readers react to Yob on feminine images of God, Burnham on Adventism and AIDS in Africa, and Christenson on race.

Or Moses will say of Israel, "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the LORD alone did lead him" (Deuteronomy 32:11-12). Both Isaiah and Moses drew attention to divine nurturance, but neither would have considered addressing God as "Mother" any more than he would have addressed him as "Eagle."

Thus, even though we mortals may feel ourselves quite justified in comparing a divine activity to either the ways of man or the ways of

woman (or, for that matter, to the ways of a bird), we must tread carefully when invoking the deity: the divine names are not human inventions; they are sacred revelations and should be treated as such. God is *like* a woman in much that he does—or, rather, she is like him, having been as much fashioned in the divine image as a man. But God *is* our Father. There is a difference.

The Reverend Jeffrey Smith
All Saints Anglican Church
Aiken, South Carolina

sexual partners was similar.

Traditions in African cultures do not automatically change with church membership, in spite of what we teach. In fact, customs such as the Levirate marriage still are followed in the Christian, including Adventist, community. The church, according to this recent study, was not viewed as a source of AIDS information. Dr. Burnham made some very concrete and useful suggestions regarding the potential of youth organizations, Adventist schools, and service organizations in educating Adventists and non-Adventists alike in Africa. His comments about teachers' reluctance to teach about sexuality and HIV/AIDS are equally applicable to Africa and schools in the United States. The North American Division Office of Education is currently publishing a series of elementary science-health textbooks that include sex education and HIV/AIDS education. Good textbooks, however, do not ensure that the subjects will be taught. Information alone is rarely enough to produce behavior change. Families must reinforce the teaching by role-modeling and discussing appropriate behaviors.

Abstinence until marriage, then faithfulness on the part of both partners, is the goal of sex education and HIV-prevention education. But studies done among Adventist young people, both in the U.S. and in Africa, indicate that approximately 20 percent of our youth do not follow that ideal. Which brings us to the "C" word: What do we teach about condoms? Dr. Burnham again correctly points out that while they do not offer absolute protection, they do reduce risks. Apparently the Adventist participants in our African study agreed, for they were among the highest users of condoms in the groups studied.

Seventh-day Adventists must

Burnham's "AIDS Hits Africa" Earns Praise, Condemnation



I wish to applaud Gilbert Burnham for writing—and *Spectrum* for publishing—the article on the Seventh-day Adventist Church's response to the AIDS epidemic in Africa (*Spectrum*, Vol. 23, No. 4). He has clearly identified the problems: (1) the AIDS epidemic is devastating sub-Saharan Africa; (2) HIV is spread almost exclusively by heterosexual contact; (3) sexual practices—such as early onset of sexual activity, extensive premarital sexual intercourse, multiplicity of partners—result in high HIV infection rates; and (4) the response of the church in

caring for persons with AIDS or in education of its members has been limited.

The high ratio of Seventh-day Adventist members in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa virtually guarantees that many Adventists will be among those who contract AIDS. Our continued success in evangelism undoubtedly will result in many baptisms of HIV-infected individuals. Dr. Burnham correctly points out that "sexual practices among unmarried Adventist youth differ little from their non-Adventist and non-Christian peers." His observations are confirmed in a study recently completed by one of our doctoral students at Loma Linda University School of Public Health. This study, conducted in the East African Union, has been submitted for publication; therefore, I can only refer generally to its findings. Adventists did not differ from other Christians in their premarital and extramarital sexual behavior, but the rate was half that of traditional African believers. The number of

respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, not only for self-protection but in caring for others as Christ would care. Not only in Africa and the United States, but in every country this epidemic is sweeping. It is not the time to bury our heads in the

sand and pretend "it doesn't happen to good people."

Joyce W. Hopp, Dean
School of Allied Health Professions
Professor, School of Health
Loma Linda University

"solutions" which are foreign to us.

The promotion of condoms, which he advocated when he was here and is still advocating, is not an "African traditional" way of dealing with such problems. He has imposed his views of African sexuality on the community he lived in and now he is trying to impose his views and approaches to solve the problems, neither of which are African.

I speak from experience. I was in a youth congress in Malawi that hundreds of young people attended when a skit on AIDS prevention was presented by a group from Malamulo, where Burnham was the medical director. The director of the AIDS skit worked directly under Burnham.

The presentation was culturally offensive and unacceptable to the attendees because it was devoid of the Christian principles of morality and was no different than the "party line" that would be given by any non-Christian organization. Condoms do have a place in some situations, but a limited role in AIDS prevention in Africa; but promoting the use of condoms is a diversion from the central issue of sexual behavior.

Promoting the use of condoms in Africa by donor countries and other groups may have some economic advantages to them, but it is of limited use because, apart from the moral issue, there are problems of acceptance, distribution, transport, availability, and, in many areas, cost. (Early in the condom distribution program, condoms were given free of charge and distributed in schools to children in the sixth and seventh grades. Now there is a charge for the condoms. While the charge may appear minimal for Burnham, it is significant when mounting a church-wide or nationwide effort.) These concerns are, of course, apart from the moral

Are Adventist Beliefs Culturally Determined?

Thanks for Mr. Burnham's article on AIDS in Africa and the importance of a truly Christian response to this plague. It seems shocking that sexual practices among unmarried Seventh-day Adventist young people were about the same as those in the general population, Christian and non-Christian. One wonders about the U.S. Could this be true in our country as well? Have we been hiding our light under a bushel on this issue, or is it simply an unrealistic, culturally determined vestige of our roots in another age?

It was heartening to read Mr. Burnham's suggestion of "fall-back stances" on issues where cultural pressures are strong. This realism will make the job of evangelizing the

world much easier, both overseas and in this country. The rigidity of our health message has been a major disincentive to many otherwise committed people, who may even be turned off from Christianity by our stance. Another example is our emphasis on tithing in societies where materialism is as strong as it is in the Western world. And the absolutism with which we have presented the seventh commandment is simply unrealistic in modern America. Once we have articulated a reasonable and caring "fall-back stance" on each of our peculiar beliefs, the end will really come quickly.

Earl M. J. Aagard
Angwin, California

Burnham Should Apologize

I was surprised that a professor of Johns Hopkins would write an article such as the one that appeared in your journal. The article was "AIDS Hits Africa: Where Are SDAs?" by Dr. Gilbert Burnham. This requires an apology from him to the two Seventh-day Adventist church divisions in Africa and from your journal for publishing an article full of racial overtones, and shows a colonial mentality of "we know what is good for you."

For an African reader, it appears that Burnham does not intelligently understand "African culture." He

does show the typical mentality of the "missionary" who had problems fitting in today's Africa under indigenous leadership with the attitude of "I know best," which has been abundantly evidenced in his article.

"Traditional African" culture, for his information and the information of your readers, prohibits promiscuity; it is punishable by death. What Burnham does not know or fails to admit is that the Western culture, which was brought to Africa by him and others like him, brought the permissiveness and

and spiritual implications. Perhaps Burnham, who seems to have so much concern and has the answer to AIDS in Africa, should leave his ivory tower at Johns Hopkins and head up the AIDS prevention program in the World Health Organization. It is a shame that a man with such insights is buried at Johns

Hopkins!

Johns Hopkins and Gilbert Burnham should apologize for this article.

Baraka G. Muganda
Youth Ministries Director
Eastern Africa Division
Zimbabwe, Africa

Africa: We Know What to Do

My attention was drawn to the article "AIDS Hits Africa: Where Are SDAs?" by Dr. Gilbert Burnham. My interest in the article was thwarted by the prejudices with which the author, a Johns Hopkins University professor, discusses the issue of AIDS in Africa, which led me to wonder what his motives were. Having worked in Africa and also being a Seventh-day Adventist, I am sure he has not just discovered that AIDS hit Africa. As a concerned Adventist and the medical director of Malamulo Hospital in Malawi for more than a decade, who helped to build the physical plant, it would be interesting to find out whether he was able to reduce the spread of AIDS

around Malamulo as compared to other parts of Malawi. The citing of unpublished research leaves a lot to be desired.

The author shows little understanding of what Adventists are doing in our educational as well as health programs in Eastern Africa. Instead he portrays prejudices and generalizations. His citing of a statement that "many African societies do not proscribe sexual behavior before marriage" leaves a lot to be desired, especially as man in the "Western world" has termed measures against such behavior in Africa as being too harsh. Burnham's suggestions are elementary and a "rehash" of what he stands for—condoms—as the answer, with a

sprinkling of behavioral change.

While in Malawi, he promoted his program, including the promotion of condoms, at will. He, however, cited an unpublished study that concludes that there is little difference found between Adventist churchgoers and non-Adventist girls who do not attend church. How could one expect different results while advocating and promoting the same program as the general populace? Would this be the natural consequences of such a program?

For those of us who know what we should be doing in our Adventist schools and among our membership, we are confused by this kind of muddled thinking. This is exactly what he terms as "a bland interdenominational restatement" was emphasizing—traditional Christian morality, which we as a church see as the only answer to the problem of AIDS the world over.

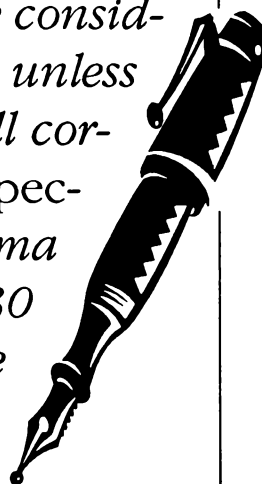
What Burnham did while here in Africa, and other countries do as far as the AIDS problem is concerned, is a disservice to our efforts against AIDS. One would like to evaluate his accomplishments, outside of those alluded to above.

Some of the questions one would pose in relation to the AIDS problem in his country are:

- 1). What has the \$4 billion the U.S. government spent on promoting "safe sex" done to curb the disease in the U.S.?
- 2). Do Adventist schools have a lower incidence of HIV/AIDS than non-Adventist schools? If the answer is yes, is that due to condoms?
- 3). Why is homosexuality prevalent among Adventist schools in the U.S., and what does Dr. Burnham propose to do about that?

Hudson E. Kibuuka
Education Director
Eastern Africa Division
Zimbabwe, Africa

Letters to the editor are always welcome, and will be considered for publication unless otherwise specified. Direct all correspondence to the editors, Spectrum, P.O. Box 5330, Takoma Park, Maryland 20913-5330 (U.S.A.). The editors reserve the right to condense letters prior to publication.



Burnham Speaks the Truth. Listen!

Dr. Gilbert Burnham, in his article "AIDS Hits Africa: Where are SDAs?" spoke from a deep love for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I know Dr. Burnham. When I visited his program at Malamulo Hospital, Malawi, in 1989, I saw what he had done and the vision he brought to the problem of AIDS in Africa.

Because of the vision and leadership of Dr. Burnham, Malamulo Hospital became the premier medical institution in Malawi. It was the center for quality medical care and the training program for medical assistants whose graduates had the highest qualifying scores in all of Malawi. Malamulo and its graduates provided more than 20 percent of the medical care for Malawi. (At that time, there was no medical school in Malawi, and medical assistant was the highest level of medical training available in the country.)

Malamulo Hospital, under Dr. Burnham's leadership, developed public health programs: (1) He humanized the care of Hansen's disease (leprosy) in Malawi. No longer were those afflicted with Hansen's disease isolated in leprosariums; he

developed a home-care program for the entire country. A few medical assistants rode bicycles from village to village providing medication, observing and supervising their care. This saved money, maintained patient dignity, and preserved family units. (2) He actively promoted reforestation—planting well over 1 million trees. (3) Under his direction, villagers dug and developed nearly 200 wells in surrounding villages.

During his tenure, he obtained grants from many agencies for buildings, curricula, and training facilities at Malamulo Hospital. In addition, he received multiple grants to study the effectiveness of treatment and prevention programs for "river blindness."

Dr. Gilbert Burnham made a tremendous contribution to Adventist medicine in tropical Africa. With wisdom he speaks the truth; in love he speaks the painful truth. Listen to him.

Harvey A. Elder, Professor
Loma Linda University
Chief, Infectious Diseases
Jerry L. Pettis Memorial
VA Medical Center

Burnham Responds

Perhaps a quarter of Adventists live in sub-Saharan Africa. Few areas of the world can match the growth of the church here. More than 10 million persons with HIV, or about 75 percent of the world's infected population also live in the same region. How do these two phenomena interact? For *Spectrum* readers I set out to objectively consider demographic and cultural patterns contributing to infection, the potential impact of AIDS, the

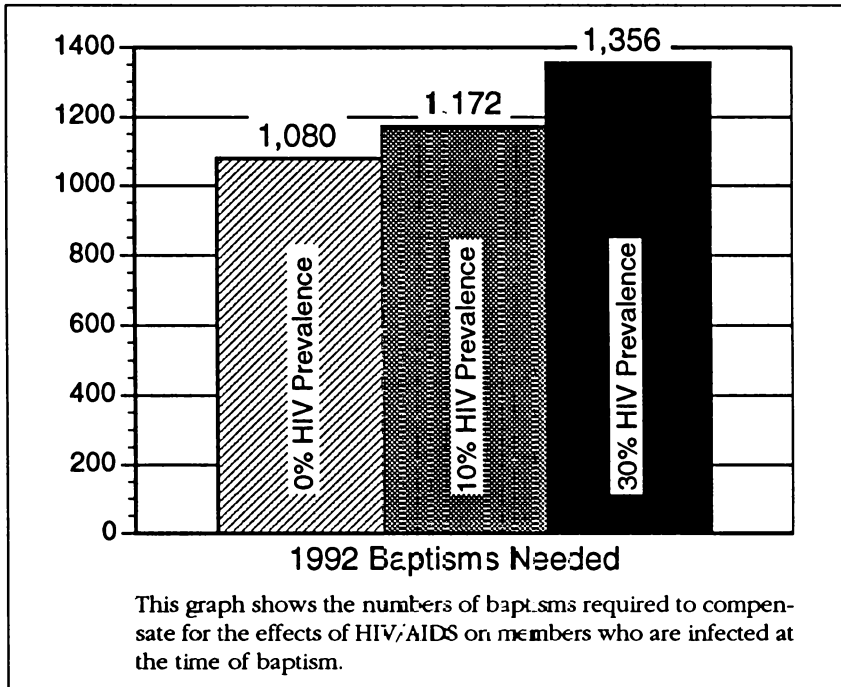
church's resources for fighting AIDS, and its response so far. The approaches I suggested which could be used for control, and labeled as "colonist" or "racist" by correspondents are, in fact, based on successful African approaches developed and implemented largely by Africans. One of the most comprehensive is SYFA (Safe-guarding Youth From AIDS), designed by an Ethiopian, Dr. Aklilu Lemma, for UNICEF.

In their letters, Pastors Muganda and Kibuuka very effectively illustrate the depth of defensiveness and denial which has made addressing HIV/AIDS difficult for Adventists and other Christians virtually everywhere. The first step in dealing with HIV/AIDS in the church is to get past the stage of denying the problem or blaming others. If a parallel can be drawn from national HIV/AIDS control programs, those countries that have confronted the crisis openly, such as Uganda, whose vice-president is a Seventh-day Adventist physician, seem from early data to be more effective in reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS than countries that are still in denial.

Promiscuity has been a taboo in many if not most traditional societies. This and other traditional behavior patterns are now breaking down in Africa as they have elsewhere before. As societal values change, appeals to traditional standards no longer have the force they once did, requiring new approaches to promoting Christian moral values.

Drama, which Pastor Muganda refers to, is a traditional communication method popular in many African cultures. This is one of many approaches that Adventists can use to get across important HIV/AIDS messages. Adventist youth have used drama very effectively to promote Christian responses to the temptations, struggles, and perplexities youth experience in rapidly changing societies. Making these too "preachy" can blunt the drama's effectiveness in influencing decisions of youth for right moral values.

The letters of Pastors Magunda and Kibuuka also illustrate the difficulty in clear thinking about condoms common to many Christian groups. Finding it difficult to effectively combat promiscuity or rejection of moral values, it can be



easier to attack condoms as a proxy. Unfortunately, energy may be wasted in attacking condoms that could be used to address the risky behavior that increases the spread of HIV/AIDS. The promotion of condoms for irresponsible sexual behavior is not consistent with Christian values. At the other end of the scale, few would prohibit the use of condoms in a marriage where one spouse is infected and the other not. Many would also accept the use of condoms to protect one spouse where the other spouse is engaged in risky sexual behavior.

The difficult thinking begins when the focus shifts to the person who is engaged in risky behavior. Should persons likely to become infected with HIV/AIDS as a consequence of willing choices be offered protection? From a public-health standpoint the answer is clear. The health, economic, and social consequences of AIDS are so gigantic that any reasonably effective measure should be actively promoted. But, from a moral standpoint, would this be condoning irresponsible sexual behavior? If Christianity is about caring rather

than judging and fear-mongering, and if we believe that Christ can bring about long-term (and often delayed) behavior change, then perhaps we should be less strident over condoms.

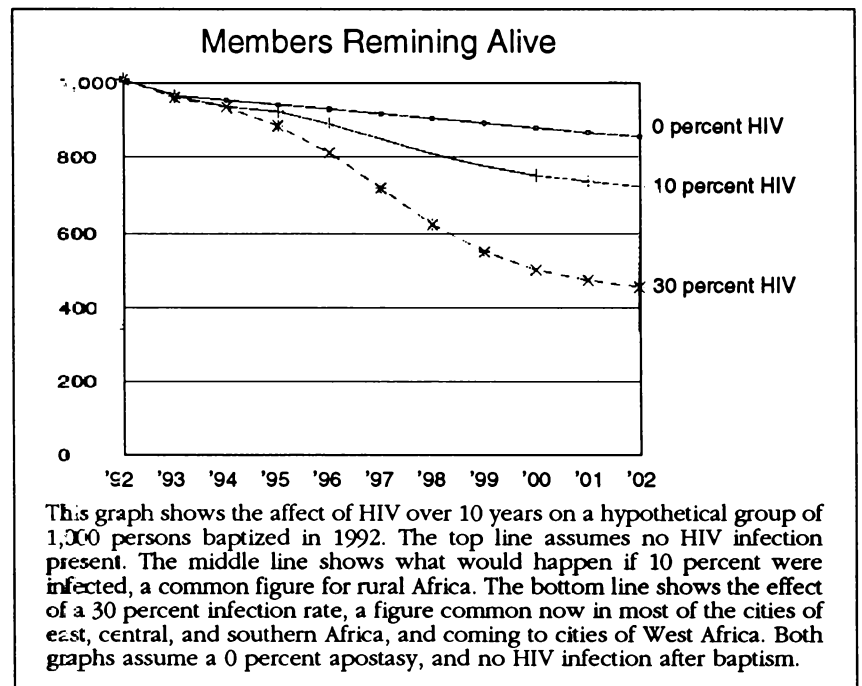
Joyce Hopp stresses the importance of not only developing an HIV/AIDS school curriculum but also effectively implementing it,

and following this up with support in the home. In any country, teachers can, unfortunately, also have negative influences, as illustrated by a recent article in a national Uganda newspaper under the headline "LIRA HEADMASTER SUSPENDED OVER ALLEGED AFFAIRS" (*The New Vision*, Kampala, Uganda [June 25, 1994], p. 4).

The Headmaster of the Amuca Seventh-day Adventist School, Lira, Mr. _____, has been suspended indefinitely for allegedly having love affairs with his school girls. . . . _____ reportedly threatened to dismiss any girl who refused to have sex with him. . . . Several girls have allegedly given in to him because of fear that they would be suspended from school. . . .

Citing this recent example is not meant to indicate this problem is confined to Africa, for it can occur in North America as well as elsewhere, but it is to emphasize the potential of this behavior for HIV spread among adolescents in school.

An important impact of HIV/AIDS on the church in Africa, that



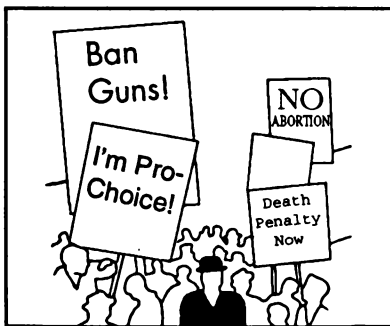
of membership loss, needs additional emphasis. If one considers the deaths of members who are already infected with HIV at the time of baptism, the impact is substantial, as illustrated by the two graphs. This continuing loss of members will greatly increase the marginal costs of each new baptism. In an era of sharply reduced

operating subsidies from the world church, under the title of "load-sharing" (read load-shedding), this can have serious consequences for the Adventist Church in Africa.

Gilbert Burnham, Assoc. Professor
School of Medicine
School of Public Health
Johns Hopkins University

sounds like that of a thoroughly white, middle-class, and contented centrist who became angry—and I mean really, really angry. But not, of course, from centuries of slavery, continuing discrimination, unemployment, disrespect for your language, police beatings, intense envy and extreme want, a lack of opportunities because your country would rather jail you than educate you, and the disrespect and apathy upon the part of your representatives. *Those* angry people Christenson tells to turn the other cheek, pray, and go sit in front of the television.

Further Chastening of A White Liberal



I have just finished reading Reo Christenson's article entitled "The Chastening of a White Liberal" (*Spectrum*, Vol. 23, No. 5), and my emotions are thoroughly confused. I am simultaneously angry, humored, frustrated, disappointed, and saddened. I am angry that space within this journal should be provided for such pseudo-intellectualism. I am humored because the ignorance and blindness is so great that maybe, just maybe, the entire essay is a joke—albeit a cruel one. I am frustrated because once again we must read the words of a supposedly enlightened individual who is truly anything but. I am disappointed that the *Spectrum* editors weren't more critical of the piece and didn't demand more revisions before publication. And I am saddened because of the harm this piece will do by allowing all those people who feel similarly to Prof. Christenson to now call themselves liberals. I hope this es-

say does not represent mainstream liberalism. If it does, then I can no longer be a part of it.

I have so many questions about this article I am sorry that I can only touch on a few. It is, though, the sort of article one could literally pick apart sentence by sentence. My criticisms are directed at Prof. Christenson and do generally follow the order of the essay:

1. Throughout the entire essay you seem to limit yourself as to the color of poverty. After reading the essay the only conclusion to be made is that poverty is black and an urban phenomenon. Did you know that the latest census figures show that the poverty rate is higher in non-urban areas than urban areas? And we all know, don't we, that as for absolute numbers there are more poor whites than blacks? Poverty is neither a black nor an urban problem. It is very much *our* problem. If you had been more sensitive to the realities of poverty, this response letter could have been even more interesting. Because you have limited your criticisms to minorities, I will primarily limit my criticism as a means to counteract your complete dismissal of the experience of minority groups.

2. In the third paragraph I wonder just whose "common sense" you are talking about. To me it

Prof. Christenson, have you ever said a bad word after accidentally mashing your thumb with a hammer? I think you need to re-evaluate your usage of that phrase, and maybe try to place yourself in another's shoes sometimes. It is possible to have "sympathy and understanding" for the rioters without condoning what they did. I don't condone what they did, but I have no problem saying that if my life experience was similar to that of some of the residents, I might have been down there myself that day.

3. I couldn't believe this: "the deepest roots of poverty . . . were fixed in *family* (italics my own) environments. . . ." I and many others would argue that what is really at bottom cannot be reduced to a simple generality like "family environment." Consider some alternative forces combating the progress of minorities: (a) An economy that is quickly metamorphosing from one based upon manufacturing to one based upon service—and changing quicker than we can react; (b) an industrial policy that encourages American corporations to lower their manufacturing costs by moving their operations offshore; (c) an economic policy that holds that unemploy-

ment can get too *low*. The ideal unemployment rate is about 5.5 percent. We are pretty close to that rate now (that is, the nationwide rate), but the unemployment rate among African Americans is twice that, and many times that for teens. The conclusion being, unemployment ye shall always have with you. It's called structural unemployment and we better get used to it. We have yet to figure out how we as a nation are going to psychologically and physically deal with the fact that there will always be tens of millions of individuals out of work.

(d) What about the educational disadvantage African-Americans suffer from due to centuries of slavery, discrimination, and lack of educational opportunities? We educated whites seem to think the desire for education is somehow a genetic urge. People, it is learned desire. The public school system is the best thing this country ever created. It provided an opportunity for all children to learn how critical education is. Education is not merely learning the three R's. Education is also learning how important education is. Why don't we let all kids learn that lesson?

(e) When it comes time to leave college and get a job, boy is it nice to be able to rely on the school alumni network, or maybe call upon Dad to help find you something; nothing like that old-boy network. With so few African-Americans in positions of power making hiring decisions, if you are an African-American looking for work in white corporate America, you better hope you have an outstanding résumé, or find a sympathetic and egalitarian employer. (Thirty-one percent of Americans hold negative attitudes towards blacks.) Professor Christenson, certainly this nation needs to re-evaluate its attitude toward family, but I think the plight of the poor deserves a more complex and nuanced consideration

than you have provided.

4. The ideology behind busing was exactly as Professor Christenson suggests: busing provided African-Americans an opportunity to become white via osmosis. By merely being near whites they could via osmosis embrace white values, attitudes, and behaviors. And, of course, what a money-saving idea busing turned out to be. We, the people, didn't have to sink any new money into educational facilities for black communities. The conclusion Christenson leads me to make about the failure of integration via busing is that segregation is preferable. The equation he sets up is as follows: integration, disciplinary problems, racial hostility, and white flight (as if racial hostility or disciplinary problems never existed prior to integration). Maybe Christenson did not mean to posit solely this equation, but from his brief discussion of busing, that is the only equation I found sensible.

5. I, along with many others, find it extremely suspicious that after centuries of de facto affirmative

We educated whites seem to think the desire for education is a genetic urge. People, it is learned desire. The public school system is the best thing this country ever created. It provided an opportunity for all children to learn how critical education is.

action (and quotas—"white males only") for whites, it is only when minorities are given the benefit of affirmative action policies that we whites start complaining. I think maybe, just maybe, the smoke and mirrors of arguments against such policies are really covering up a desire to sustain the status quo.

I assume that since you believe "equal treatment without regard to gender or ethnicity" is the only means to creating opportunity, then you must be against granting special treatment to new mothers who decide to take an extended leave to be with a newborn by giving them back their jobs upon return?

6. I am interested in your characterization of middle-class values that you say Headstart tries to inculcate in its students. "It's the only way to expose these children to an educational environment similar to that of most middle-class families—one in which parents use proper English and pronunciation, patiently answer questions, read to children, give them educational games, and so on." Could you please supply me with the survey that presented these findings. I would be interested in reading it. I am especially anxious to read the author's definition of "proper English and pronunciation."

I assume from the paragraph that you would prefer non-native English speakers be disallowed from teaching at a Headstart school? Often times non-native speakers still speak with a bit of an accent long after they have moved here. Your racist policy will surely disappoint all those Spanish-speaking children here in southern California who will have fewer teachers who look similar to them to look up to because of your stringent English law.

7. I was totally stunned that you should ignore discussion of all the structural constraints over which minorities have little or no control and that impact their lives in such

a disproportionate manner (see number 3 above), but make way for this most inane criticism: the underclass need to buy “fewer soft drinks and junk foods” and eat more “cooked rather than packaged cereals [and] more vegetables and less meat.” Unbelievable!

8. I really appreciate the paragraph on apprenticeships vs. job-training. The problem being, of course, you make it sound as if that is the only option that should be given to members of the underclass. Are you so pessimistic, Prof. Christenson, about the dreams, aspirations, and goals of both inner-city kids and good-hearted U.S. citizens that you have given up on the possibility of a college education being extended to all?

9. I am glad I read further into the essay because I found one thing we could agree upon. I commend you for warning about “the erosion of moral values” in this nation. The decline really bothers me, too. I am truly frightened about where this nation is headed. It really bothers me that: the respect citizens give to our Constitution has waned to the point that we refuse to protect the civil rights of gays and lesbians; our sensitivity as fellow human beings to individual desires, ambitions, and dreams has waned so much that this nation is having to weather a backlash that is struggling to return women back to the home (“where they belong”); government programs, PAC’s, and not-for-profit groups are doing the charity work to aid the needy that we as individuals should be doing—what happened to our sense of service?

10. By the end of the essay I am still not sure what your response would be to such civil (if you will) disobedients as Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Rosa Parks, and maybe even Jefferson, Madison, and Washington. Would your pre-revolution

advice to each of them be to “behave responsibly. . . . and daily manifest the characteristics of hard work”? Disavow me, please, of my impression that you think civil-disobedience is not a middle-class value, but rather something radicals do, or African-Americans do, or gays do, or communists do, or anti-semitics do.

11. So we shall teach children that “sex outside of marriage is an evil just as great as theft and perjury and wanton violence”? Could you supply your estimate of the jail time adulterers should be sentenced to? If you are going to equate it with wanton violence then, what do you think, five to 10 with the possibility of parole after three?

12. One thing I was really disappointed you didn’t cover was personal responsibility. Throughout the essay you criticized government programs for doing less than expected or planned. I was hoping that, at last, maybe, someone was going to make a call for personal and individual involvement in fighting social problems. It just seemed a logical move. I actually was waiting for it at the very end of the essay, but it never came.

What a disappointing essay this turned out to be. This essay could have been an opportunity for *Spectrum* to really engage readers on some truly basic ideas such as equality, racism, difference, and oppression. Instead, you have played right into the misconceptions that many decent people have without revealing the ignorance and interested assumptions that underlie those beliefs. In addition, *Spectrum* and Christenson have also sullied the good name of liberalism by claiming to speak from that position, yet all the while discounting the experiences of racial and ethnic, sexual, and economic minorities. Suffering as many minority social groups do from contemporary marginalization, powerlessness, violence, exploitation, and cultural imperialism, coupled with a legacy of discrimination that is much worse, I guess I would have hoped for a much more insightful social and cultural critique that might have gone a long way toward disabusing readers of some of the reasons they support and sustain the status quo.

Dean A. Harris

Christenson Responds

While a fully adequate response would take up more space than I think *Spectrum* wants to print, here are a few counter-comments.

I concentrated on inner-city poverty because my article was written shortly after the Los Angeles riots, and those riots involved minorities, especially African-Americans (who, alas, often vandalized the shops of Koreans, another minority. That should be viewed with tolerance and understanding?).

Inner cities have indeed been depleted of manufacturing and other jobs but no one had come up

with a feasible solution for bringing those jobs back. Exhortations won’t work, since entrepreneurs find the inner-city environment an unattractive location compared to green and spacious suburbs, with lower taxes, lower insurance rates, less crime and a more-reliable labor supply. Business men and women aren’t in business for social uplift purposes.

Spend more money on predominantly black schools? A hundred studies have found almost no correlation between the amount of per pupil spending and educational achievement. And because of af-

fluent suburban school districts can spend as much as they wish on education, no practicable method exists for equalizing school spending even if that were more helpful than it is. On inner-city kids' negative attitudes toward education, I suggest the reader consult *Time* magazine, March 16, 1992. (A score of other writers have made the same point.)

If Mr. Harris wants to believe in affirmative action, he has a lot of company among people whose judgment I often respect. But in this area we'll just have to agree to disagree. Equal rights for all used to be considered a liberal stance; now it is often seen as reactionary. Call it what you will, I'm for it.

Am I opposed to special employee treatment for new mothers? Oh, come on, now.

Has Mr. Harris noted that it is blacks today who increasingly reject integration? Even where schools are numerically integrated, blacks tend to associate with one another and even ostracize blacks who associate with white students.

Yes, Headstart *should* teach good pronunciation and good grammar, because African-American children and others who obtain this asset clearly have an economic and social edge over those who don't. Why doom minority children to a lifelong handicap? Ideological blinders shouldn't obscure reality.

Low-income people often struggle with the grocery bill. The proposals I made were sensible ones—and ones that my wife and I practice. Saving \$25 to \$30 a week on grocery bills isn't peanuts, if your paycheck is slim. Especially if it improves your health. No apologies for making the point.

We should strive for a college education for all? Most institutions of higher learning bend over backward to attract black students and keep them on campus. But after 38 years of college teaching, I'm con-

vinced we send too many kids to college now. Almost 60 percent of American youth get *some* college training, and I doubt if more than 15 percent are capable of doing college work that is rigorous and demanding. Europeans agree. What we do need, for blacks and whites alike, are more good apprenticeship and vocational-training programs.

Among blacks who currently get a college degree, it's worth noting that black women earn more than comparable white women. In general, there is probably as much reverse discrimination where black college grads are concerned as there is negative discrimination. Many corporations are eager to demonstrate how non-racist they are. Some blacks know this and almost all whites are aware of it.

If Mr. Harris wants to champion special legislation to protect gays and lesbians, that is his privilege. I shall not join in, for reasons too lengthy to develop here.

How would I view courageous blacks who fought for equal rights in decades past? It's not an academic question; I strongly championed them when they were fighting the good fight. But they fought for equality, not affirmative action. As for civil disobedience being unseemly for middle-class people, during the Vietnam War I declined to pay a portion of my income tax as a protest against the war. The IRS seized the unpaid portion from my bank account, which it had a right to do.

Yes, fornication causes more suffering in America than theft and perjury and random violence combined. Fornication takes a terrible toll among African-Americans, especially, because they have such high rates of illegitimacy, single-parent families, school dropouts following pregnancies, subsequent entry onto welfare rolls plus their

children who get involved in crime, drugs, poor educational performance, and often lifelong poverty. Think of the parental distress all this brings, too. Add these up and the reader can see why I think fornication is an evil far greater than modern society likes to acknowledge. It is sad that even churches are unwilling to give this sin the attention it so richly deserves.

I didn't emphasize personal responsibility enough in meeting poverty problems? I plead guilty. That should have been stressed more.

In sum, it would have been ever so easy (and politically correct) to write a piece about the L.A. riots and inner-city distress by blaming it all on white racism. But despite its historical contribution to black troubles, white America cannot solve inner-city problems today. Especially the plight of the lower-class black family. Looking back will get us nowhere; what can be done today is our real concern and that was the thrust of my article.

As not a few African-American leaders recognize, the primary burden for dealing with these problems must fall on blacks themselves. White America can and should help (as I specifically pointed out in my article) but blacks must do most of the job. The "victim mentality" so prevalent in America today is not a prescription for progress. It's not what produced the growing black middle class which, happily, respects traditional American values and takes advantage of its opportunities.

I didn't pretend to write as a spokesman for liberals; I expressed the opinion one liberal arrived at after three decades of studying the subject of poverty. For those who still think I must have written a truly dreadful piece, I invite a re-reading of that piece. I'll take my chances on your verdict.

Reo M. Christenson
West Carrollton, Ohio