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Look at It This Way

Questions Youth Are Asking Today

C. Mervyn Maxwell

CONSCIENCE AND GOD

Everybody I guess knows that Seventh-day Adventists have always tried to brainwash their young people into taking the 1-AO classification. Just recently I learned that they have now agreed to endorse a draftee who elects either a 1-O or a 1-A, but that they still insist that 1-AO is the only correct position. This in effect makes everyone who wants a 1-O or a 1-A into a second-class church member. This is wrong. A Christian church should respect the conscience of every member equally. The Bible says, "We ought to obey God rather than men." Acts 5:29.

You quoted Acts 5:29 correctly. It says we should obey God; it does not say that in every case we should obey conscience. Many people's consciences are "seared with a hot iron." 1 Timothy 4:2.

Under the 1-AO position, most Seventh-day Adventist men in the U.S.A. respond when drafted by entering the military to serve as medical corpsmen. It is dangerous for an unarmed medic to serve in a battle zone, but the General Conference believes that this position meets the requirements not of "con-

science" merely, but of "God." The Bible says that Christians have a solemn obligation to "render unto Caesar" by obeying their governments as far as they can short of disobeying the Bible. They can find clear instruction that Christians should not kill, but they cannot find a commandment against wearing a uniform or rescuing the wounded.

People who choose to take a different position may be following their consciences but, church leaders believe, they cannot prove that they are following the Bible.

The General Conference has voted to endorse young men who seek the 1-O or 1-A positions not because it thinks they are right but because it wishes to respect them as first-class church members.

FIFTEEN YEARS, FIFTEEN MINUTES

I am 15 years old. This is the first time I have read your answers in "Signs of the Times." I am a Christian, but I feel as if I am pulling away from God, and I don't want to. He is the best thing that ever happened to me. I haven't been going to church as often as I used to. It seems like I have a hard time putting my mind on God, and I always have something else to do besides the things God wants me to do. I am unworthy of His love and all He gives to me, but I will always believe in Him. Could you help me strengthen my faith?

The old advice is still good: 15 minutes a day talking to God (in prayer), 15 minutes letting God talk to you (by reading the Bible and other good books), and 15 minutes talking about God to someone else.

Pray not only for yourself but also for other people. This will increase your desire to help them. Good reading will give you ideas of what to talk about. "Talking to others" can be done either informally (as with your classmates), or

through organized church activities. You might, for example, teach a children's Bible class in your church, or take a friend with you regularly and read the Bible to a shut-in.

Don't expect God to make you be good. He asks you to "take up your cross" and to "put the armor on." (See Matthew 16:24 and Ephesians 6.) You must choose to serve God even when you don't feel like it. "Many will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians. They do not come to the point of yielding the will to God. They do not now choose to be Christians." *Steps to Christ*, page 48.

COURTSHIP BY CORRESPONDENCE

I'm single and I'm stationed in Europe with the U.S. Navy. A few weeks ago on furlough to the States I prayed especially hard for God to lead me to His choice for my wife, and the very next time I went to church (in America), I met a very lovely, attractive young woman about my own age (early twenties) named Diana. We have been writing since I returned to my base. I am very much in love with her, but she has been married before. Her husband left her after only a few months. She wasn't a Christian then, but she found Christ just before I met her. Would it be adultery in the Bible sense if we were to get married? Does it make a difference that she wasn't a Christian when their marriage broke up? . . . I want to do the right thing.

The Bible permits remarriage after a divorce only if the reason for the divorce was adultery on the part of the "guilty" party. Matthew 19:9. The fact that Diana was not a Christian at the time may make a difference, for the Bible also says "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James 4:17.

Her divorce may be her hus-

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION?

Would you like to ask Mervyn Maxwell to help you find an answer? If so, send your question to:

Mervyn Maxwell
"Signs of the Times"
1350 Villa Street
Mountain View, California 94042

It is not possible to answer all letters in the "Signs"; and publishing procedures being what they are, answers published in this column may not appear until several months after you send in your question. If you want to be sure of receiving an answer to your particular question, be certain to give your address when writing.

band's fault, but it may be due to some personality traits of her own that conversion may not yet have taken care of.

Courtships by correspondence are mined harbors. Mushy love letters paint a serene scene, but one that blows up at your first contact with the real person.

Better do a slow reconnaissance and keep your sonar turned on.

DOES GOD REPENT?

Numbers 23:19 in the Bible says that God does not repent—and this makes sense, because what could God ever do that He would need to repent of? He never does anything wrong. But Genesis 6:6 says, "It repented the Lord that He had made man." It looks like a contradiction to me. What do you make of it?

You know enough about language to realize that words mean different things depending on where they're used. For instance, the "gas" in your car is different from the "gas" you heat your house with.

Sometimes "repent" means to be sad or sorry. In Genesis 6 God is sorry that the people He created have used the power of choice which He gave them to make a mess of things, bringing on disease, violence, and unhappiness.

In Numbers 23 "repent" means to change one's mind. The Bible is talking about a promise God has made and is assuring us that God will *not change His mind*; you can count on Him never to go back on His word.

WILL YOU PLEASE PAY MY TUITION?

I have read your name and address in "Signs of the Times" and would like to have you as a friend. My financial condition is very bad. I have no job, and I belong to a very poor family. I would like so much to get an education in college. Could you help me? Could you send me something every month to pay my tuition? [Philippines]

I have received many letters like yours, from your country and from others, including India, Kenya, Nigeria, and Ethiopia.

It is wonderful that young people are seeking an education; it would, of course, be impossible for me to give a college career to everyone who asks.

But I have good news for you!

As a matter of principle, Seventh-day Adventist colleges provide jobs where students can earn money while attending school. Even if you have very little money to start with, you can usually complete your education if (a) you don't mind hard work, and (b) you are willing to spend an extra year or two.

Seventh-day Adventists operate colleges in so many countries that one is not too far away from every young person who wants to attend one. There are two SDA colleges in your homeland, the Philippines—one of them in Manila. Why don't you write for information at once? The address is: The Registrar, Philippine Union College, P.O. Box 1772, Manila D-406.

JESUS HELPED ME

I am a teen-age girl who has found Jesus in a new and real way. I was searching, reading the Bible, and praying, but I hadn't learned really to love and trust Jesus.

I was caught up in a physical relationship with another girl.

I rationalized my actions, but had no peace. I felt the Holy Spirit convicting me. I had been baptized and had asked for the Holy Spirit. Now He was doing His job. John 16:8.

Jesus has shown me a better way; complete surrender to Him. He said that lust is wrong, Romans 13:12-14; Galatians 5:17; Titus 2:12; 1 Peter 1:14; 2:11; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20.

I still love this girl, but I have received victory from the dirty, "turned-on" part of it.

When I made my decision that this was wrong and accepted the fact that I could never have the relationship I wanted to have with God unless I gave it up, I wrote her a letter.

I sat with her as she read it, and when she was done, I started crying because it hurt me so badly. But Jesus' Spirit not only convicts us of sin, He also comforts us and gives us something to replace emptiness with: His truth. John 14:16, 26; 16:13.

If anyone has this same problem, I want her to know that she can have victory over it and a happy, secure, pure life too. Just ask, believing Jesus will help you, and He will!

