

# When the persecuted become the persecutors

Column By  
ERNEST L. MILLS, JR.  
Chaplain

"A picture can tell a thousand words." I turn again to page 197 in one of the books I used in Seminary entitled *Through the Ages, A History of the Christian Church*. The page opens a chapter in the history of the church and above the page is a pen and ink drawing that tells it all. The caption reads "Dutch Mennonites Suffering Persecution for Their Interpretation of the Bible."

In the foreground are several bodies with decapitated heads. To the right several priests in robes holding the Crucifix look on as a man has his hands chopped off. In the background, several women are praying before a man being burned alive. The tragedy behind all of this is that it depicts Christians persecuting Christians.

History goes on and there are countless other such stories that could be related. For example, during the Crusades when the "Armies of God," carrying banners bearing the cross of Christ marched into Jerusalem and recaptured the city, Muslim men, women and children were beheaded all to the tune of "Marching into War" and all for the . . . glory of God?

It was not a very rewarding look at the history of Christianity, but it opened my eyes. Sadder still is the reality that persecution still exists. It does not take the form as depicted in these images from history. Today it takes another form. The persecution today is more subtle and less tangible, more emotional or psychological and less physical. It is directed toward both Christians and Non-Christians, and in some cases "Christians" are the perpetrators.

Their weapon is not an ax or a stake, they are not beheading or burn-

ing, their weapon is a very subtle scoffing and ridicule, shunning and coming across with an air of self-righteous, holier-than-thou, condescending attitudes. They use very subtle forms of coercion and force implementing judgement and condemnation and even humor as tools to persuade non-believers to see things their way.

I have seen it directed from so called "Christians" toward Quakers, Universalists, Unitarians, Jews, Hispanics, gays, victims of aids and the list goes on and on. In an article published in *The Journal of the Religious Education Association*, Olivia Pearl Stokes asked this question, "Were not members of the Ku Klux Klan religiously educated in the church?"

We would search the teachings of Christ in vain for any mandate or even hint that persecution in any way, shape or form is to be embraced by anyone who calls him/herself a fol-

lower. In fact Jesus tells his followers that they can expect persecution. Allow me to let Jesus speak:

"I say unto you, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you. Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take away thy coat also . . . and as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which do good to you, what thank have ye? For sinner also do even the same . . . But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; . . . ye shall be Children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." (Luke 6:27-36)

Have we even yet begun this journey?

# Prime time television needs dose of reality

Column By  
LENORA MOODY

I remember watching the "A-team," "Night Rider," "Mayberry" and many other shows while growing up. Now every TV show I come across differs tremendously from those memories.

Recent programs center around relationships, aliens, detectives and news, but the storylines do not have one main event. My childhood TV shows had a character with one struggle or problem and their battle to conquer the area of difficulty. Now TV has many characters, with many struggles and many episodes of conquering.

The plots of sitcoms and drams were once clear, crisp and to the point. Now it is "watch for a month and maybe you will discover what is really happening."

Some programs like the "X-Files" and "Profiler" intrigue me enough to make me watch month after month. New shows like "Once and Again," "Ally McBeal" and "Freaks and Geeks" consist of same or similar plot lines every episode.

I know some people would argue the only plot X-Files composes is about aliens. Yet, the X-Files is different in weaving a story. One episode is about this man being involved with the alien plot and the next is discovering a deadly virus connected to

the aliens.

The new shows coming out on TV deal with the same controversies. One controversy is love. They provoke society into believing there must always be a girlfriend, boyfriend, fiancé, husband, wife or some other lover. Why don't the producers create a TV show dealing with people living in a real world, with actual struggles (like death, no job, college pressure, etc.) in order to show the benefits of independence, and that all we need is motivation, self-respect and the support of our families to conquer life.

One show was headed this way, "Party of Five." It dealt with the loss of parents, finding a job, keeping the

family together, and much more. However, when the show was almost canceled they changed the plot line. Now almost every episode deals with "will so and so stay together this week and are what's their names getting married or will they separate?"

I am only one woman's voice, but I long for a change in television shows. I want a real show with heart-break, opinion and true controversies (like money). I am tired of the fake shows telling us what life should be like. TV characters and writers need to start paying attention to actual peoples' lives. I believe they have forgotten their own since they went to Hollywood.

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Brevard College

MG 126

400 N. Broad

Brevard, NC 28712

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