

# A PREZ RELEASE

## from AGTS

*(Monthly commentary from the President of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary)*

December 2000

### "We're all alone and it is dark!"

"We're all alone now, and it is dark and I am writing blindly!" These were among the chilling last words in the life of Lt. Dimitri Kolesnikov on board the ill-fated Russian submarine, Kursk, this past summer. These reflections, written in absolute darkness at the bottom of the Bering Sea, are poignant, painful and powerful descriptors of impending death that were discovered by recovery teams weeks after the tragic incident.

When I listened to the account of this tragedy, the note written by Lt. Kolesnikov and the impact on his widow I couldn't help but think that this tragedy personified the way much of world views their own personal circumstances.

Of course, people feeling alone and hopeless is nothing new. It is a human condition that clearly describes life apart from relationship with God. Jean Paul Sartre, the French philosopher expressed the universality of this hopelessness when he observed that a finite point that has no reference point is, in fact, meaningless and absurd. And so, just as the darkness and hopelessness was very personal and unique to Lt. Kolesnikov, the ever widening sentiment of darkness and hopelessness in post-modern western society cannot be treated as merely a trendÖ a fadÖ..or a sermon illustration. Our society, as persons, distinct family units and communities, increasingly expresses its understanding of the human condition in terms of hopelessness.

When the "ageless" Tina Turner pounds out the lyrics to "*What's love got to do with it*" and calls love a "*second hand emotion*" she is expressing her understanding of life that has provided more than her share of broken promises, domestic violence and personal darkness. These lyrics, in the form of popular music, are akin to the last gasp of Lt. Kolesnikov.

When Fox TV offers their latest version of voyeuristic programming called Seduction Island, we must discern what is really being expressed. Married couples are taken to an isolated "island" to encounter a bevy of *swinging singles*

intent on seducing the couples into extra-marital relationships. If you're offended at this latest attack on family values, I'd suggest your repulsion must also take on the realization that morality may not even be part of the equation. This program is purely about what the market will consume and where money can be made in TV programming. We are not merely in a battle to defend biblical morality; we are dealing with a culture that has lost the capacity and the willingness to include human dignity and marital fidelity as categories in the way they navigate life. If "scoring" is now the focus of a game show, humanity has truly been reduced to the cultural equivalent of ***being alone and in the dark at the bottom of the Bering Sea.***

I went to college in the turbulent 1960's. One of the most articulate voices of that era was Christian philosopher Francis Schaeffer. In his book He is There and He is not Silent, Schaeffer brilliantly observes the propensity in western society to dismiss the reality of a God. Arguing in sturdy philosophical categories, he says that a God who is there (who exists) also is by nature a God who has spoken. That message has been embodied in the person of Jesus Christ and authoritatively recorded in the Bible. I am instructed by the writings of Schaeffer today as much as I was 30 years ago. Yet, we are farther down the spiral of despair today than when Schaeffer so brilliantly described the dilemma and its inevitable result. I do spend time wondering how we convince people whose personal lives and social structures are at the bottom of the Bering Sea that there is a rescue in process. If morality has no reference point; if consumerism is now announcing what is acceptable socially and communities refuse to acknowledge their complicity in the destruction of civil society; how does the Christian community get a word in edgewise?

The Apostle Paul provides for me a clear statement of why and how God rescues folks stuck "in the dark and all alone." As Paul defends himself in Agrippa's "kangaroo court" in Acts 26, he recounts his conversion experience on the road to Damascus. Paul gives us insight into what he had based his entire life and ministry on from that decisive day forward. This venerable apostle recounts how Jesus had called him to a purposeful ministry that would actually transform people living in the depths of darkness, into persons navigating life flooded with hope-bearing light. The previous domineering Satanic force would have to give way to the power of God that could rearrange the constitution of human beings, families and communities. (See Acts 26:15-18)

I value the capability to analyze culture through philosophical lenses and describe the sheer hopelessness of humanity in the terms of popular culture. I do so with a clear integration point (to use Schaeffer's term) in the Bible. Yet, I have come to believe that unless God takes the initiative to transform hopelessness and cynicism in the fashion that Paul described in Acts 26, we may remain ever at the point of merely describing the problem.

And though I would like to continue to wax eloquent at this point, I will revert to

my upbringing and the countless times I sang the truth of the Gospel out of an old beat-up green-colored "Songs of Praise" songbook.

***"Oh victory in Jesus, my Savior forever,***

***He sought me and He bought me with His redeeming blood,***

***He loved me 'ere I knew Him and all my love is due Him,***

***He plunged me to victory beneath the cleansing flood."***

The rescue is in progress, it goes beyond cynicism of Tina Turner's lyrics and the crass consumerism of Fox Television. The victory that Jesus initiates brings hope and light to folks that think darkness is normal. The resulting testimony of those rescued from the bottom of their personal Bering Sea is:

***"He brought me out of the miry clay, He set my feet on the Rock to stay,***

***He puts a song in my soul today, a song of praise, hallelujah!"***

Have a blessed New Year!

***Byron D. Klaus***

***[aqtspres@aqseminary.edu](mailto:aqtspres@aqseminary.edu)***

***Check it out...***

***Mark your calendar!***

***PRE-COUNCIL EVENT***

***August 6 & 7, 2001***

***Westin Crown Center Hotel***

***Kansas City, MO***

***Transforming Church Ministry for the 21<sup>st</sup>  
Century***

***"Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix"***

*A seminar offered in partnership between the AGTS and the Division of Home Missions Church Planting*

***featuring***

***Brian McLaren, founding pastor,***

***Cedar Ridge Community Church, Washington, D.C. area***

***For more information contact AGTS Continuing Education at 1435 N. Glenstone, Springfield, MO 65802 or call (800) 467-2487, ext. 1044, Fax (417) 268-1009, or E-mail: [agts-ext.@agseminary.edu](mailto:agts-ext.@agseminary.edu).***