

A PREZ RELEASE
from AGTS
(Monthly commentary from the President of
the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary)

IT'S BRILLIANT !

In a recent interview in the German magazine *Amica*, the British pop legend Elton John said the following: "I've got money, don't have to follow any rules, don't have to be in the office from 9 to 5 and take the kids to school in the morning. It is simply a fantastic life when you don't have any parameters, it's simply brilliant!" When I read those words I was left with a numb feeling..., sort of sick to my stomach. Elton John is a fairly good musician who has been around awhile, but this profile of the core of his life simply leaves me gasping for air.

Life is fantastic when you don't have parameters. Now there's a mouthful! But the "Rocket Man" Sir Elton John is merely the personification of what the enlightenment and modernity bequeathed to 21st century life. Accountability to each other as human beings, let alone the God of the universe is not what life without reference to the Creator yields. Accountability replaced by entitlement and the loss of any kind of vocabulary capable of describing moral responsibility is now the norm.

Several years ago MTV did a report on the historic seven deadly sins. In response to the sin of lust, rap-star Ice-T spoke confidently that lust isn't a sin, just part of some ancient "dumb list of restrictions." Actress Kirstie Alley commented on the same show that she didn't think pride was a sin; rather some idiot had made that up. Now there you have the authoritative word of America's influential "chattering class."

Even the arguments of notable social scientists in the last part of the 20th century have been left in the dust. The accountability for personal actions appealed to in William Glasser's Reality Therapy seems like ancient history. I remember hearing the renowned psychiatrist Dr. Karl Menninger speak when his volume *Whatever Became of Sin?* first was published. This venerable gentleman of 80 years stood in my seminary chapel and in uncompromising tones called the pulpits of America to task for avoiding the difficult yet necessary task of preaching a solid message of sin and salvation.

As Charles Colson has written, the utopian mind-set has become so pervasive that most people in Western culture have no intellectual resources to identify or deal with genuine wrongdoing. When Hitler and Stalin, Pol Pot and even Osama Bin Laden are viewed merely as having "mental disorders" we truly live in an age that has been set adrift on an ocean of human hopelessness. Charles Colson has written further that "in a world where juries excuse the inexcusable and psychologists explain away inexplicable evils, people are groping...when we

refuse to listen to the true diagnosis of the sickness of the soul, we will not find a true remedy and in the end it will destroy us.”

I'm not suggesting that we create a Christian version of the Taliban to define what is right and wrong. Nor am I longing for the good old days when “sin was sin.” In western society we are facing the clear fact that to deny the reality of evil is to set ourselves up for a path forward toward self-destruction. Frankly, the issue is, can any civilization exist without a sturdy view of moral accountability? This is not merely about a spiritual question that is privately queried. The potential for evil is alive and well and part of the human experience. Cultures that look at evil in the eye, flinch or call it by any other name, will reap the tragic consequences.

So back to Sir Elton and his magic formula: The celebration of life without parameters is simply a pipe dream. That fairy tale world fails to correspond with what CNN reports on an hourly basis. To the “Rocket Man” I would say that your plan is not brilliant, it's naive! The world you describe is a virtual reality that's been created by too much money and fame and too infrequently suffering the consequences of your decisions.

The ancient wisdom of Proverbs gives us eternal perspective: “The fear (recognition that we are accountable to our Creator) of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For by me your days will be multiplied and years of life will be added to you.” (Prov.9:10-11)

(My thoughts include reference to concepts by Charles Colson in *How Now Shall We Live?* (Tyndale Press) Chapter 19

Check it out!!!!

AGTS will be sponsoring two leadership roundtables in 2002. March 4-5 in Sacramento, California and November 18-19 in Philadelphia. Our special guest for these roundtables on Emerging Church Models will be Brian McLaren, well known author of *Finding Faith* (Zondervan, 1999) *The Church on the Other Side* (Zondervan, 2000) *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey* (Jossey-Bass, 2001) and coming in January, 2002 from Zondervan, *More Ready Than You Realize: Evangelism as Dance in the Postmodern Matrix*. For more information on these two events contact Randy Walls at rwalls@agseminary.edu or register online at www.agts.edu

Do you know someone interested in attending seminary? The 2002 SEMINARY DAY is March 22. A one-day event that includes attendance in classes, conversation with faculty and all the information needed to make a decision. There's also a Job Fair with potential employers and real estate options. To register call: 1-800-467-AGTS and ask for John Skinner or Raquel Perez or check on-line at: <http://www.agts.edu> .