

From: "Keller, Karen E."
To: "West, Christal R.", "Weinstein, Jared B."
Cc: "Kavanaugh, Brett M.", "Gottesman, Blake", "Campbell, Sarah"
Subject: FW: [REDACTED] b(6)
Sent: Tue, 31 May 2005 06:34:47 -0500
[RELIGION, Perfection, LOVE.doc](#)

CW/JW - can you please run the attached commencement speech by Ambassador Roy Austin by the Chief to make sure he is okay with me printing this for the President?

Thanks,
KK

From: Roy Austin [mailto:royaustin@opus.co.tt]
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2005 7:33 AM
To: Keller, Karen E.
Subject: RE: [REDACTED] b(6)

Dear Karen,

[REDACTED]

b(6)

I am attaching a speech of a religious nature in which the Prez may have some interest. Please pass it to him; and thanks again.

Roy

-----Original Message-----

From: Keller, Karen E. [mailto:Karen_E._Keller@who.eop.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, May 25, 2005 4:34 PM
To: royaustin@opus.co.tt
Cc: Rex Cowdry
Subject: [REDACTED] b(6)

[REDACTED]

b(6)

b(6)

RELIGION, PERFECTION, OR LOVE? SEARCHING
FOR SOLUTIONS

Caribbean Union College Commencement Address

Sunday, May 15th, 2005

Dr. Roy L. Austin, U.S. Ambassador

Good morning!

I feel pleased as well as honored to be with you on this important and joyous occasion. This is a day of great pride for all of us gathered here. You have completed a major stage in your development and are ready to begin, or continue along, a career path.

In your studies here at Caribbean Union College (CUC), you have had the opportunity for exposure to the teachings of a religious denomination that between 1860 and 1901 established in America and elsewhere “16 colleges and high schools, a medical school, 75...hospitals, 13 publishing houses, and 30 other institutions.” The educational and health institutions suggest that Adventists are caring people; and together with the business establishments, they helped members to gain rapid upward mobility. These and later accomplishments of Adventism and Adventists suggest that church and members are imbued with the progressive and charitable spirit often associated with Adventism’s motherland, America. I must admit to a strong feeling of pride as I acknowledge the American provenance of your church.

If I am correct in my assumption about the predominant religious persuasion of your parents and this college’s teachers, you have been instilled with lofty and principled ideals in your homes and here in CUC. I am, therefore, not surprised that your graduating class has chosen perfection as its aim while recognizing in its

choice of motto and text that perfection may be impossible of attainment.

As I pondered over possible directions for this speech, some of what I see in the text that you selected from Philippians and the verses immediately preceding is consistent with some of the thoughts that were flowing through my mind. I was especially amazed to find that the Apostle Paul did not depend on religion (you may translate as religious affiliation) to gain virtue.

Certainly, your religious affiliation and the education that you have received from CUC have opened up boundless opportunities for you. Many of you will take advantage of these opportunities to obtain satisfactory jobs or move towards even higher educational accomplishments. You may become brilliant lawyers, outstanding teachers, life-saving surgeons. In sum, you may experience success educationally and occupationally that many regard as the ultimate in satisfaction. Is this all that you seek in your search for perfection?

I have entitled this address “Religion, Perfection, or Love? Searching for Solutions.” I selected the trinity of religion, perfection, and love for inquiry because of the kind of institution that runs CUC, the stated aim of the graduating class, and the many biblical statements about the importance of love; and the problem for which we seek solutions is crime, the source of greatest anguish for Trinidadians currently.

I shall be delving into an area of inquiry that probably should be left to persons more versed in spiritual matters than I am; but I wish to challenge the brilliant minds nurtured in this institution, and help to point caring people in a helpful direction.

Let me for a while replace the general term religion with the particular religion, Christianity, about which I know most. From

its earliest days, Christianity showed desirable characteristics. According to Rodney Stark, an eminent sociologist of religion (Aquilian, A Double Take on Early Christianity, 2004.jkirp.com/stark.htm), “Christians loved one another, and when they got sick they took care of each other.” Furthermore, Stark believes that while pagans tended to take care primarily of tribal brothers and kill everybody else, early Christians extended the definition of brother to any living human being, and cared for all brothers in this broader sense.

Understandably then, Stark says that in the Roman world, few people had any humanity. Christians were exceptional, conversion to Christianity gave them humanity.

Stark suggested but does not make clear that an unrivalled capacity to love is what distinguished Christians from pagans. Love is the source of Christians’ humanity. It is the way that Christians made life more bearable in a world filled with misery.

I am unaware of Stark’s sources for his account of what it meant to be a Christian in those earliest years; but there is biblical support for his interpretation in the parable of the good Samaritan in Luke chapter 10. Some of you may remember that this parable had its origin in Jesus’ response to a religious expert that in order to “receive eternal life” he had to love God fervently and also love his neighbor as himself. The expert then asked, who is my neighbor? And Jesus told him that if a Samaritan, traditionally despised by Jews, were to care for a Jew who was robbed and left to die along the roadside, the Samaritan rather than another Jew who offered no help is the Jew’s neighbor.

From all that I have been reading about racial animosity in Trinidad and Tobago, citizens of this country need to be constantly reminded of this parable. Afro-Trinis, Indo-Trinis, Sino-Trinis, and Euro-Trinis must extend their love beyond members of their

ethno-racial group, their tribe. Our love must encompass all human beings.

However, some later phases of Christianity are better characterized as intolerant and inhumane. From the eleventh to the fifteenth century, the portion of the world in which Christianity prevailed directed wars against infidels (Muslims, pagans, heretics and the excommunicated). The warriors of Christendom regarded themselves as soldiers of the Church, but sometimes slaughtered their conquered enemies regardless of age or sex. At that time, too, defenders of other faiths, engaged in violence that should repulse civilized beings. Indeed, even today, so despicable are some of the actions of these believers that many of us may find it difficult to believe that any twisting of religious doctrine can be motivating them.

In order to make the point of faith's inadequacy as a purveyor of the essentials of human virtue, I have chosen only the most extreme example (homicidal violence) of religiously contrary activities that humans prosecute in the name of religion. As you know, many people with strong religious attachment engage in less serious acts such as cheating, incest, and theft that violate Christian religious principles too. Faith often bears wormy fruit.

I have used the terms religion and faith interchangeably and have sometimes concentrated on a particular religion, Christianity. I hope that this switching has not confused you.

Please allow me now to take you back to my late teens or early twenties. We are in the Anglican church for the midnight service on Old Year's night; and the Archdeacon is into his favorite sermon for this night. At some point he utters these words from 1st Corinthians 13: "There are three things that will endure –faith, hope, and love – and the greatest of these is love." Faith is what I have developed most so far. I shall turn to hope long enough to

clarify its relationship to the rest of my address; then I shall dwell on love.

Goals are desires we hope to attain; and this class of graduands has proclaimed the hope that it can attain perfection. What is this state of perfection for which you hope? How will you know when you have achieved perfection? I suspect that part of the answer to these questions lies in the biblical text that you selected.

Philippians 3:12 states in part “I don’t mean to say that ... I have already achieved perfection! But I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ Jesus saved me for and wants me to be.” Of course, another question presents itself: What does Christ Jesus want us to be?

I am not sufficiently knowledgeable about relevant literature to attempt to provide an unequivocal answer to that important question. Also, there are many people in this audience who are better qualified than I am to attempt an answer. However, my limited exposure to matters of this kind clearly suggests to me that love is at least a part of the answer. For instance, the frequently quoted John 3:16 tells us that God allowed his only son to make the ultimate sacrifice because God loves us: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Later, in the same Corinthians location already cited, we learn that love is kind. John 3:16 exemplifies love’s benevolence.

Now I know that our faith should be strong enough to accept these biblical claims without further examination; but many of us require tangible evidence before we would accept even biblical claims. Empirical evidence from criminological research convinces me that love yields portentous outcomes that justify its depiction in superlative terms – the greatest of the three is love. In particular, empirical evidence on social control theory shows this to be the case with respect to juvenile delinquency.

In social control theory, attachment, commitment and belief are all restraints against illegal behavior. You may be surprised to find that these three concepts have meanings similar to faith (belief), hope (commitment), and love (attachment); and of the three, attachment is the variable for which there is the strongest evidence supporting its effect on illegal behavior. That is, of the three variables (belief or faith, hope or commitment, and love or attachment), the most important determinant of delinquency is attachment or love. An affectionate relationship between parents and children reduces the likelihood that children will engage in illegal behavior.

Some criminologists have argued that attachment to others can have the opposite effect to that proposed by social control theorists. Attachment increases rather than decreases the likelihood of illegal behavior. For example, attachment to peers makes delinquency more likely. This controversy could have been avoided had affection been substituted for attachment which indicates affiliation with or membership in an entity. When an entity is not virtuous, membership, belief, or faith in, or affiliation with it is unlikely to lead in a virtuous direction. Affection or love is a greater guarantor of virtue. Or, in accord with an earlier statement, of belief and love, the greater of the two is love.

Nevertheless, belief in obedience to the rules of society will hinder violation of those rules. Or, to use religious language, persons with faith in God are less likely to violate God's laws than those who lack such faith. Furthermore, while there are conflicting findings in studies of the relationship between religiosity and crime, a 2001 analysis of 60 previous studies (Wright, J. of Res. in Crime and Del.) reported "that religious beliefs and behaviors exert a moderate [constraining] effect on individuals' criminal behavior."

With respect to our third variable, commitment or hope, that too has been found to have a constraining effect on crime. What do I mean by commitment? A young person who has expended time and effort studying to obtain a good education may be said to have invested a great deal to obtain an education. That investment commits that youth to behave in ways that do not jeopardize his/her investment. If he/she engages in illegal behavior, he/she stands a chance of imprisonment, thus jeopardizing his/her investment. The opportunity to obtain the desired education may then be lost. The youth who cannot realistically hope to obtain a good education, may not invest much time and effort trying to get such an education. He/she has less to lose and is less concerned about the consequences of illegal behavior.

You should now be ready to learn of another way in which love is the supreme variable among faith, hope, and love. Simply stated, social environments of love increase the likelihood of belief in society's laws and commitment to conformity to avoid loss of something for which you have worked hard. That is, when a child is reared by loving caretakers, he/she more readily develops hope and the kind of faith that constrains against illegal behavior.

The recognition by Gottfredson and Hirschi of the primacy of love as a constraint against delinquency may have encouraged them to propose self-control theory as a replacement for social control theory. In this theory, they propose that ineffective child rearing is the major cause of low self-control, and therefore of criminal behavior. Moreover, they argue that affection for a child encourages proper child-rearing practices, including close supervision. They now make affection rather than attachment the key variable in their theory.

When I consider the many solutions proffered in this country for the vexing problem of crime, I am left with the impression that criminal justice solutions take priority over all others. Often they

seem to be the only solutions. That is, we hear about the need for an increase in police officers, more effective policing, more efficient courts, and prisons that rehabilitate. Occasionally, someone mentions not granting bail, capital punishment, or incapacitation through lengthy incarceration.

Criminal justice solutions do help to control crime, especially in the short run. For example, criminologists claim that most crimes are committed by a few serious criminals. Removing these serious criminals from the streets will reduce serious crimes; but to accomplish this goal, laws, police, courts and juries must function effectively. Indeed, a malfunction in any part of the system will frustrate the efforts of actors in other parts. If, for instance, juries do not return guilty verdicts when the evidence points in that direction, the efforts of earlier actors in the criminal justice system are worthless.

However, we should not overlook preventing the development of criminal tendencies in the first place through love – through effective child-rearing. A New York Times review of Levitt’s “Freakonomics” provides powerful support for paying greater attention to controlling crime through love. According to the book (reviewed by Tierney), longer prison sentences, the easing of the crack epidemic, and a large increase in police officers all contributed to New York City’s decrease in crime in the 1990s. Now let me warn you that you will be surprised and incredulous, perhaps even shocked, by what Levitt regards as the single most important cause; but do not judge the validity of his claim until you hear me out.

Levitt deemed “the legalization of abortion in New York State in 1970, three years before it was legalized nationally by *Roe v. Wade*, to be the single most important cause of New York City’s decrease in crime.” He says that a disproportionate number of the women who had abortions were lower income, poorly educated

unmarried teenagers. Legal access to abortion reduced the number of children born into this situation that increases the risk of becoming a criminal.

Undoubtedly, Levitt's finding will bother persons who find abortion abominable. Fortunately, utilizing abortion to reduce crime is only one of several policy implications that may be inferred from the finding. Certainly, we can reduce teenage pregnancy instead of acting only after conception has occurred. Also, the High Scope Perry Preschool Project conducted in Ypsilanti, Michigan has shown that low-income children at high risk for poor academic functioning and delinquency can benefit from appropriate early childhood intervention. More generally, Levitt's finding implies that rearing children in a loving environment will reduce the number of persons with criminal tendencies; and that is what is worthy of emphasis. If you have not yet reached the important conclusion, I say to you that "love is the answer."

Love will not immediately reduce crime in Trinidad and Tobago or elsewhere. Quick fixes for crime depend on proper functioning of the criminal justice system. However, criminal justice solutions have effects of relatively short duration and are very expensive. Recidivism rates of former prison inmates are astonishingly high; children who are poorly socialized are likely to swell the ranks of criminals; criminal justice personnel must multiply to satisfy the high demand for their services; and prisons must be built to remove dangerous criminals from the streets.

Furthermore, some citizens are reluctant to utilize criminal justice solutions because they view them as inhumane. For instance, prisons may be regarded as too restrictive of human freedom, as exposing inmates to brutal assaults, sometimes sexual, sometimes deadly at the hands of other inmates and even guards. When such thoughts momentarily paralyze us, we must choose between

continued exposure of community members to serious or deadly injury and criminal justice responses that may deter, incapacitate, or eliminate incorrigible predators. Faced with this dilemma, we must ask which option is demanded by love, and is more likely to leave faith and hope intact.

Graduands, I shall conclude with some apparent requirements that you must meet if you are serious about making perfection your ultimate goal. You must care for others regardless of age, gender, race, religion or other such attributes. You must care sufficiently to help reduce suffering in your society. That is the lesson taught by the parable of the good Samaritan. You must help young people to grow up in an environment that infuses them with faith, hope and love, despite the limitations of faith and hope. You must love God, have faith, and retain hope; and when you attain your goal, you should be able to sing with confidence – “when the roll is called up yonder, I’ll be there.”

I thank you for honoring me with the invitation to address you, and for the attention you have paid to my discourse. May the Almighty bless us all!