



Sharing the Good News!

Penn Northeast Conference of the United Church of Christ

God's will?

by Alan C. Miller, Conference Minister

The ground had barely stopped trembling when Pat Robertson began to sermonize about the devastating earthquake that struck Haiti.

Evangelist Robertson first suggested that good could come out of this tragedy because it might generate a massive rebuilding program and then he suggested that the Haitians deserved this suffering. Robertson stated that when the Haitians were throwing off the tyranny of the French they "swore a pact with the devil" thus resulting in the poverty in which most Haitians now live.

Robertson is not the first to draw connections between earthquakes and God's will to punish people for their sinfulness. In 1750 two small shocks hit London and preachers raced to their pulpits to draw conclusions. The Bishop of London blamed Londoner's lewd behavior; the Bishop of Oxford argued that God has used these rumblings to alarm and shake the Londoners out of their sin, while in Bloomsbury the Rev. Dr. William Stukeley claimed that God uses earthquakes as a sign of his wrathful intervention.

Proponents of God's will of wrath have not confined their warnings to earthquakes alone but have drawn similar conclusions for other types of natural disasters. Pat Robertson blamed Hurricane Katrina on legal abortion.

A few days after the Haiti earthquake a young person asked me if I thought what happened in Haiti was the will of God. I responded: "No I don't believe that natural disasters are the will of God, but I also believe that I saw God's will in action in Haiti."

As long as people have sought to understand God there have been arguments about God's will. Personally, I believe that God's will has been most revealed to us in the life and teachings of the Christ. The Gospel of John is filled with Jesus describing himself and God through a series of confessional statements: ... *whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again ...* (John 4:14a) *I am the bread of life.* (John 6:48) *I am the light of the world.* (John 8:12a) *I am the good shepherd who is willing to die for the sheep.* (John 10:11) *I am the resurrection and the life.* (John 11:25a) *I am the way, the truth, and the life ...* (John 14:6a) *I am the vine and you are the branches.* (John 15:5a)

When we talk confessionally, we are describing the very core of our being --- our will ---if you will. All of the Christ's "I am" statements are about life and about putting life back where we have experienced death. Christ's ultimate "I am" statement was made through his death and resurrection. To me, this means that God's will is life.

So do I believe that the earthquake that struck Haiti was God's will --- no! But I do believe the outpouring of love by the world through gifts of volunteers, food, money, prayers, doctors, field hospitals, search and rescue teams, and so much more is God's will because it is God working through all of us to help the people of Haiti find life in the midst of death.

(To assist those suffering in the aftermath of the earthquake, you can make an online contribution to United Church of Christ - [Haiti Earthquake Relief Fund](#), or mail checks to UCC, 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115, or send your checks to the Penn Northeast Conference Office, 431 Delaware Ave., Palmerton, PA 18071. Write "Haiti" in the memo line of all checks.)

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