

RELIGION

In our darkest storm, we must find the 'mustard seed' of faith

Some people put their trust in their wealth. Others in their beauty. Others in their intellect. Still others in their strength. But you're most likely to be disappointed if you put your total trust in any of these things.

We must remember that the giver of each of these is God alone, not you. You have been given strength or beauty or intelligence to let you experience humility and duty, not pride.

There are those who say, "I earn my money by hard work," which is true in a limited sense. But who gave them the ability to work hard?

We should realize that God is in charge of

every area of our life. Ultimately, when we are confronted with a problem, we must call on God for solutions. His purposes are wiser than ours. Excessive worry only increases the problems, whereas prayer and thanksgiving to God for help in solving problems, often

lead to surprising solutions.

My parents reared my siblings and me on the philosophy that only God could protect us from mistakes and harm. They could not. What they really meant was that we should pray and believe that God would work through the problem or situation. As I grew older, I began to understand the true meaning of relying on God for everything. What it really boiled down to was "complete faith" in God. So often, when we come out of our secret prayer closet, we come out with the same burdens we went in with. This is not true faith.

"Faith," according to Hebrews 11, is the assurance of things we hope for but have no real evidence that they will ever happen.

I grew up in a small rural town in North Florida. Sunday after Sunday at the church I attended, the preacher would stand up in the pulpit declaring "you only need as little faith in God as a grain of mustard seed." As I listened to that old preacher, I remembered watching my father, a farmer, planting mustard greens during the spring. The seeds were so tiny that I wondered just how he

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RELIGION ROUNDUP

Gospel extravaganza

East Side Assembly of God in Marianna is sponsoring a three-day "Gospel Sing Extravaganza." Shows will be at 7 p.m. Wednesday through Friday.

Performances include the Masters Quartet of Greenwood on Wednesday and Friday and Jimmy Blackwood of Memphis, Tenn., on Thursday. There is no admission cost, but an offering will be taken.

The church is at 4723 Hatten St., three blocks north of Wal-Mart (just off U.S. Highway 71 in Marianna).

Convocation speakers

The Third Florida Convocation will be held at Christians Temple Church of Faith and Works Inc., 2150 Belle Vue Way, on Aug. 9-14. Scheduled speakers include:

- Aug. 9 — Howard McMillan and Bishop Lonnie Barber, 11 a.m.; Roger Harris and Josephine Roberts, 7:30 p.m.
- Aug. 10 — Bishop John Henderson, 7:30 p.m.
- Aug. 11 — C.E. Richardson, 7:30 p.m.
- Aug. 12 — Dan Young, 7:30 p.m.
- Aug. 13 — Tom Cabell, 7:30 p.m.
- Aug. 14 — Rev. Bookers, 7:30 p.m.

Aug. 15 — Special joy-night service for youth, 7:30 p.m.; speaker Preston Scott. For details, call 978-4114.

Celebrating 113 years in Lloyd

The Bethel AME Church of Lloyd will be celebrating its 113th anniversary Sunday.

The Rev. Willie Hagan and the choir of Concord AME Church of Miccookee will be in charge of the 3 p.m. service.

Bethel is located on the corner of Lloyd Subdivision Drive and County Road 158-A.

For more information, call Rosa Bassa, 907-2520.

— Priscilla A. Miller

Increasing membership

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, one of the mainline Protestant denominations that long have had membership declines, reports it had an increase in 1991 for the second year in a row.

Membership increased by 4,438 members to a total of 3,245,177, said the Rev. Louis G. Almon, ELCA secretary. The gain was twice the small increase of 1,920 in 1990.

"This second increase ... is certainly welcome news," Almon said.

Another mainline denomination, the Episcopal Church, also had a small increase after years of decline.

Reforming bar-mitzvahs

Reform Judaism says bar-mitzvahs and bat-mitzvahs initiating the young into religious responsibilities have become "excessive and inappropriate" by reflecting "materialistic idolatries of our society."

A meeting of the trustees of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations said the observances should emphasize "family cohesion, authentic friendship, acts of tzedakah (charity) and parties suitable for children."

The celebrations have become occasions "for idolatry and the religious commercialization of our sacred events," the statement said, but "should be the occasion when we motivate our children to seek values higher and better, more fulfilling and humanly responsible."

— Associated Press

Becoming Whole

An elder of modern Orthodox Judaism portrays the loneliness in our dual selves in his new book.

By George W. Cornell
Associated Press

In a way, you're two people, says the great religious scholar. You're ambitious, self-absorbed, sociable, fashioning goods and reputation. But you're also isolated, alone, mere "dust of the ground."

This is the "strange duality" of human beings, says Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, considered the venerable elder of modern Orthodox Judaism and often called "the Rav," a shorthand term for honored rabbi or teacher.

Although he is little-known by the public, his scholarly influence has been ranked among the foremost of recent centuries.

"In every one of us abide two persons," he says. They "are not two different people locked in an external confrontation ... but one person who is involved in self-confrontation."

On the one hand, you're practical, cooperative, efficient and productive, concentrated on worldly success, but on the other, you're humble, separate, inadequate, lonely, beckoned by some further dimension.

Drawn between these two aspects of personality — between the "surface existence" and "in-depth" need — "man does not feel at home" on either level, Soloveitchik says.

In a candid, impassioned book, "The Lonely Man of Faith," published by Doubleday, he says the condition is an "unending paradox."

Human contradiction

Soloveitchik, 80, now under care for Parkinson's disease at his home in Brookline, Mass., was a longtime professor at New York's Yeshiva University, fusing both Western thought and Orthodox Judaism.

Descended from a long line of eminent European rabbis, he broke ranks to study physics, mathematics and philosophy at the secularized University of Berlin, getting his doctorate in philosophy, before becoming a Boston rabbi.

His erudite writings have bypassed most readers, but this 112-page commentary on human loneliness, first published in a 1963 scholarly journal, has a personalized appeal to most anyone.

He traces the "contradiction in the nature of man" to the two biblical accounts of human creation, the first Adam in Genesis 1 created concurrently with woman in God's creative "image" to multiply, subdue and rule the Earth.

In Genesis 2, the second Adam emerges alone from "dust of the ground." God breathed into him a "living soul" and he had to sacrifice part of himself, a rib, to have a woman companion. They were placed in a garden.

Soloveitchik calls the first Adam "the majestic man of dominion and success," and "Adam the second, the lonely man of faith, obedience and defeat."

In every one of us abide two persons.
— Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik

Concerned with 'how' and 'why'

The first Adam is engrossed with the "how" of things to control them and gain dignity, responsibility and material comfort, while the second Adam asks the "why" of existence, its essence and purpose.

"God created two Adams and sanctioned both," Soloveitchik said, for they are both one person. God "wants man to engage in the pursuit of nobility as well as self-redemption."

Adam the first "is completely utilitarian," he is based on "practical implications." He is "aggressive, bold and victory-oriented. His motto is 'Success.' He engages in creative work, trying to imitate his Maker.

"He is this-worldly minded, finished-oriented, beauty-centered. His mind is geared not for the true, but for the pleasant and functional. He is dynamic and creative, transforming sensory data into thought constructs."

On the other hand, Adam the second "keeps wondering: 'Who is He who trails me steadily, uninvited and unwanted, like an everlasting shadow?' then 'vanishes into the recesses of transcendence?'"

He recalls from busy "outward existence," he "lets himself be confronted and defeated by a High-and-Truer being," each redemptive step entailing awareness of "only-one ... loneliness and insecurity."

"God summoned Adam the first to advance steadily, Adam the second to retreat," Soloveitchik writes. "Adam the first he led to exercise mastery ... Adam the second to serve."

Lessening the chasm

There is a "staggering incompatibility" nowadays between the motivations of faith and the "cry do of a utilitarian society." He says faith "speaks of defeat instead of success, of accepting a higher will instead of commanding, of giving instead of conquering."

The chasm has widened in the present century "which has witnessed the greatest triumphs of majestic man in his desire for conquest," Soloveitchik adds. "Majestic Adam has developed a demonic quality, laying claim to unlimited power — alas, to infinity itself."

"His pride is almost boundless, his imagination arrogant, and he aspires to complete and absolute control of everything. Indeed, like the men of old, he is engaged in constructing a tower whose apex should pierce heaven."

However, Soloveitchik notes that Judaism envisions a future unifying of creation, now torn by inner contradiction, a day when the searing between our two Adams ceases and whole persons will "achieve full redemption in a united world."



Frank O'Connor

\$7-million restoration of famous Jerusalem monument planned

The sacred Islamic Dome is steeped in religious and political controversy

By G.G. LaBelle

JERUSALEM — The graceful, golden roof of the Dome of the Rock — a symbol of Jerusalem and one of the glories of Islam — is being restored by engineers from Northern Ireland at a cost of more than \$7 million.

The restoration is being paid for by Jordan's King Hussein after a reported squabble with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia over who would pay and how.

O'Hare said his company will do its best to steer clear of the political hassles that seem to dog any restoration project in Jerusalem, with its mixed Jewish and Arab population and arguments over boundaries.

"We're not interested in politics, only in construction," O'Hare said. "We have enough problems at home." Miran is headquartered in Austin, just outside Belfast.



Engineers survey the golden roof of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

A climb up the scaffolding erected for the survey shows how serious are the disagreements over the mosque and its location on what Muslims call the Haram es-Sharif and Jews the Temple Mount.

The Haram es-Sharif, or Noble Sanctuary, is a political and religious mine field. It was the site of Solomon's Temple destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. and the Second Jewish Temple built by Herod and razed by the Romans in 70 A.D.

A radical Jewish group called the Temple Mount Faithful wants to rebuild the ancient temple on the site and suggests simply moving the Dome of the Rock and the nearby Al Aqsa Mosque to Saudi Arabia.

To Muslims, the rock beneath the dome is the place where the Prophet Mohammed made his journey to heaven described in the Koran, Islam's holy book. It is the third holiest site in Islam, after the Saudi cities of Mecca and Medina.

An indentation in the rock is said to have been left by Mohammed's footprint and another by the handprints of the angel Gabriel, who held the massive rock down so it would not rise up with the

prophet.

The first mosque on the spot was built by Omar, Commander of the Faithful, who conquered Jerusalem in 638 A.D. The present structure, known for its beautiful mosaics and blue exterior tiles as well as the golden dome, was completed in 801.

Adnan Hussein, who heads the Muslim Trust that manages the Haram es-Sharif, says the dome was last restored in the early 1960s and has a problem common to old buildings: the roof leaks.

Kenny Andrew, Miran's operations manager, said most of the 18-month project will be taken up with designing plans to cover the dome and completely scaffolding the structure.

The actual restoration will be done between next April and September, the dry season. The octagonal-shaped mosque is covered by a dome 20 yards across and 14 yards high, topped by the crescent moon of Islam.

The dome was originally covered in gold. Its present gold-colored aluminum plates will be replaced by brass plates, covered by a layer of nickel and then by a film of 24-karat gold, O'Hare said.