

MAY 22ND 1995

ARTICLES & FEATURES

NEWS & COMMENTARY

by Kim Shippey

At the international Moral Re-Armament conferences held last year in Switzerland and Kenya, speakers at both gatherings remarked on the incredible speed at which much of the world has moved away from time-honored traditional values, and called for a reassessment of those values.

GENERATION GAP? NOT IN VALUES!

During an "intergenerational dialogue" at the conference in Caux, Switzerland, English journalist Edward Peters spoke with extraordinary honesty about what used to be called "the generation gap."

He openly admitted he wasn't sure where he belonged. "The young think I'm over the hill; the old think I'm an upstart. I see ample evidence within myself," he said, "of the things I react against in others, both younger and older than myself. I catch occasional

glimpses within myself of the marvelously uniting honesty and vulnerability which I often see in those older and those younger than me. . . . But I do know that comfort in my life takes—and always has taken—the form of wanting to be secure and certain, of not wanting to be challenged. This kind of comfort transcends age barriers."

Mr. Peters feels that people's vulnerability stems from the fact that the society in which we live, all too often seems to penalize weakness and reward strength, leaving people—young and old—fearful and insecure, ashamed to admit their weakness.

"What we all need," he continued, "is a big dose of love. Not some vague warm glow which excuses wrong in ourselves or in others. Nor an earnest overresponsibility which believes it has a duty to correct every sign of error wherever it can be found."

Drawing freely on a Bible passage familiar to his audience, Mr. Peters said: "Love is patient, very kind. Love knows no jealousy;

love makes no parade, gives itself no airs, is never rude, never selfish, never irritated, never resentful; love is never glad when others go wrong, love is gladdened by goodness, always slow to expose, always eager to believe the best, always hopeful, always patient. We need the kind of love which is firm in what it believes, but never judges others" (see I Cor., chap. 13).

He continued: "If it is action we need—and of course we need action, we need to live out what we believe—then let it be action which is the fruit of love. We can have our external behavior all correct and yet lack love inside our hearts. Equally, it is all too easy to claim love inside, while the fruits in our lives tell it to be a lie."

Edward Peters emphasized that to him, one of the central issues of the world is whether humankind will accept that the creator who made us has also given us unchanging instructions about how we are meant to live—young or old. He said that he believes passionately in absolute moral standards or values, and does not accept the existence of a generation gap there.

"It is only in obedience to God today—NOW—that we can

approach tomorrow," he concluded. "So, let us each—young and old and everyone in between—look for a next step of obedience that God is asking each of us to take. The next step of obedience is the step of adventure which keeps us young whatever our age."

GOD-GIVEN PURITY

At the meeting in Kenya, representatives from many countries exchanged ideas about the world's most urgent problems, including sexual morality and the widespread breakup of family life.

Among their conclusions was the thought that "Purity relates to more than sex. It refers to all our motives and relationships. Other powerful urges in our nature can become addictions, blocking our openness to God—forces like power, fear, and money. To pray for purity is to pray for freedom to be directed by God in all these areas."

Today, they suggested, purity takes on a dimension that is more than just personal or religious. "There is a desperate need for societies, as well as individuals, to experience God-given purity that heals inner conflicts and turns away from exploitation for gain." ■