

# the DISCIPLINE

Since the beginning, UBs have held strong convictions about these issues.

## The Big Three

The UB church has taken strong stands on many issues. Three issues in particular stand out—matters we've strongly opposed in the Discipline since our earliest days. They are alcohol, slavery (later changed to race relations and human relations), and secret societies.



### Alcohol

I doubt that UBs dislike anything more than alcohol. We've always taken a firm, uncompromising stand against the whole industry. In fact, whenever our statement on alcohol was changed, it always strengthened our aversion to it.

With one exception. The original 1814 Discipline had the first statement on the subject: "Every member shall abstain from strong drink and use it only on necessity as medicine." For some reason, it was removed from the 1815 Discipline.

However, the matter reappeared for good 18 years later when, in 1833, we added a statement on

"The Vending and Distillation of Ardent Spirits." We stopped calling it "ardent spirits" in 1873, when we adopted "intoxicating drinks." Today, we say "alcoholic beverages." Tomorrow—who knows?

But back to the 1833 statement. It applied only to preachers, and gave them three chances. The first two times a preacher was caught making or selling alcohol, the quarterly or annual conference would tell him to stop. The third time, he could be expelled.

We really got nasty in 1837. A circular printed with the proposed new Discipline referred to alcohol usage as "the rage of that great monster in the land." It quoted Scripture as saying no drunkard shall inherit eternal life, and asked members to "withhold your influence from the inordinate use of the hydra monster, which has done so much evil in this Christian land."

The circular said General Conference preferred advising on the subject, rather than legislating. With that, it advised against operating a distillery and selling alcohol to taverns, groceries, and neighbors.

After that, General Conference felt no reluctance to legislate.

In 1841, a revised paragraph said, "The distilling and vending of ardent spirits shall hereafter be forbidden throughout our whole society." However, the pharmaceutical lobby's voice reached the General Conference floor. A line tacked onto the end said "druggists and others" could still sell alcohol for medical or mechanical purposes.

Other minor additions were made in succeeding years.

1849: A revision forbidding the making and selling of alcohol "as a beverage."

1853: Extended the prohibition to the making, selling, and use of alcohol as a beverage. There had

been a minor oversight. Until this time, there was no rule against members *drinking* alcohol, only against making or selling the stuff.

1873: We began using the word "Temperance" to title the section.

1881: Now we forbid members to rent or lend property for making or selling alcohol. Also, we forbid members to sign license petitions for businesses engaged in the alcohol trade.

1893: We prohibited "in any way sanctioning the liquor traffic."

1901: Another restriction similar to the one in 1853. Now we outlawed making, selling, using, and *giving* alcohol.

After that flurry of legislation, General Conference didn't change anything for almost 70 years. They revived the subject in 1969 by drastically changing the whole section. The wording against making, selling, using, and giving was removed. Instead, alcoholic beverages were dubbed "useless and injurious" and opposed to the best interests of "personal and social morality, economy, and welfare." Members were told to abstain from using alcoholic beverages in any form. Plus, alcohol could no longer be sold for mechanical purposes, and druggists could sell alcohol for medical purposes only at doctor's orders.

The section was overhauled again four years later. This time, it mentioned the "scientific evidence" that proves alcohol to be useless and injurious, and prohibited UB members from "consuming alcoholic beverages, except as a medical prescription."

In addition, UBs were forbidden to have any business dealings with the liquor trade—as an investor, manager, or owner of such a business. And they still couldn't rent or lease property to people for making, selling, or even storing beverage alcohol. That's pretty stiff. The only remaining restriction might be against working for a business which sells liquor—like a grocery store. Maybe that's on the way.



### Slavery and Human Rights

The UB position on slavery is just as tough as the one against alcohol. Way back in 1821, 40 years before the Emancipation Proclamation, General Conference passed this resolution: "That slavery in every sense of the word be totally prohibited and in no way tolerated in our community."

What about the UB members who owned slaves? They had two choices. The first and most preferred: set the slaves free. The second: let the quarterly conference (the local church) decide how long the slave had to work for his master to compensate him for his "investment." A rather nebulous clause said "wherever the laws of the state shall permit," which shows that it wasn't such an easy issue to solve in states which allowed slavery.

The resolution added, "In no case shall a member of our society be permitted to sell a slave." In other words, you might be able to keep a slave for a while, but you couldn't sell him to someone else.

The 1937 Discipline strengthened the stand by prohibiting slavery "in every sense of the word." The leniency provision for slave owners was removed. Now, slave owners couldn't continue as members unless they freed their slaves. The 1949 Discipline added a provision for expelling slave owners after one admonishment.

And thus it remained for 100 years.

In 1945, the section was replaced with a new section called "Race Relations." It began by noting the UB church's historic stand against slavery, thanking God that it had been made illegal. Now we headed in a new direction consistent with the times: "We wish to reaffirm our faith in the sacredness of human personality in all men, regardless of race or color."

We now officially deplored the "racial intolerance which is now menacing the future peace of America." Members were urged to protest racial prejudice not only against negroes, but also against Jews, Japanese, and other groups. (Evidently some influential UBs had been upset by the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II, which was nearing its end.)

The statement went on to defend "equal access" of racial minorities to public education, and opposed job discrimination against blacks and forced housing segregation.

The 1957 Discipline contained a condensed version of the 1945 statement, saying many of the same things, yet not taking as strong a stand. For instance, the term "racial discrimination," so prominent in 1945, never appeared in the new version. Rather, we substituted the term "racial prejudice," which is more a mental viewpoint than a definite action, like housing or job discrimination—neither of which were mentioned this time. We also removed the 1945 recommendation to advance the well-being of underprivileged groups.

One more noteworthy change was the 1947 line saying we don't favor "race amalgamation." That's a euphemism for inter-marriage. We removed that line.

That section was replaced in 1969 with the current section, "Human Relations." It rejects belief in "the superiority or inferiority of any people," and opposes discrimination based on "racial, national, creedal, or social differences." It says, "The church believes that there must be equal rights and justice for all."

The statement goes beyond racial matters. It also advocates eliminating poverty and unemployment, and promotes decent housing for everyone, fair wage practices, and "a proper concern for total human need in our contemporary world."