

THE CHURCH REACHING TOMORROW'S WORLD

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A father was listening to the late news as the commentator referred to different sections of the world. Desiring a clearer understanding of what the commentator was saying, he slipped quietly into his son's room where he knew there was a world globe on the desk. Picking up the globe, he started for the door. His son roused and looking at his father, asked, "Dad, what are you doing with my world?" God is asking the church this same question about His world. Indeed, what is the church doing with God's world? This is a deeply probing question which the church should face realistically. The church must do this in order to evaluate properly the effectiveness of its ministry. The church must analyze and take a careful inventory of its procedures and programs in this day and also of its Bible orientation while relating these considerations to the future.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

What are we talking about when we speak of the church reaching tomorrow's world? We must define terms or risk being misunderstood and worse, failing in communication. Semantics seem to change at a dizzy pace. Today, "soul" means a certain type of modern music. Now people smoke "pot." A "trip" is taken by grabbing a bedpost while sniffing glue. "Grass" is really marijuana. A "cool cat" does not always purr but could bash your head in for a few dollars. "Split" now means to take off for somewhere. Just wait for a while and the meanings will change again. Values also change. For instance, a little boy was looking at a Western on TV. As a gunman moved into a

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saloon with his gun drawn, said the little fellow to those seated around the TV, "Don't worry. He's not going to drink; he's just going to kill a man."

What terms are more misunderstood than Bible terms? For instance, take the term "Christian." Ask almost anyone, "Are you a Christian?" Inevitably the answer will be, "Of course I am a Christian; do you think I'm a heathen?" All the while there is not the slightest idea where the term originated, how it should be used, or what it means.

CHURCH

The word "church" must be defined. Jesus declared in Matthew 16:18, "And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." The English word "church" comes from the Greek kuriakos which infers possession by the Lord. The other Greek word translated "church" is a compound of ek and kaleō meaning "to call out." It principally means a gathering of people, and assembly or a congregation. The word is used in several different ways which may confuse those with whom we are trying to communicate. It is used to designate the invisible, universal church involving all true believers in the Age of Grace. This is usually the meaning of the word in the Ephesian and Colossian epistles. Literally, this is what Jesus meant in Matthew 16:18. It is also used to designate various local churches no matter where they may be. In the Book of Acts we find the word used in this sense. It is also used to designate the visible church comprising a large body of believers who may be scattered all over the world. Since it is the invisible church with which men deal in this world, and it is the visible church which is under criticism and direct fire from many quarters today, and it is the visible church which actually represents God in the eyes of men and nations, and it is from the visible church the gospel will come, we shall use the word in this sense. This would include all who are associated with a visible assembly of professed Christians.

May I suggest that each pastor should periodically teach the doctrine of the church so that people understand the New Testament revelation. Many church members have not the faintest idea of the true Biblical nature of the church. They should be informed.

The church, which represents God on earth today, His name, the name of Jesus Christ and the Bible, is a continuation of the body which began at Pentecost. Even though man has changed, modified and in many senses damaged what God started at Pentecost when He miraculously manifested the Holy Spirit, the fact remains that the image the church presents is usually the image of God and of Christ held by men.

A review of the Biblical nature of the church is always in order. For the church, this means taking an inventory. The Bible is the church's only handbook. Other books deal mostly with techniques. The church must see itself in this mirror of God constantly. Does the church measure up to Bible standards?

Too often the church has forgotten or ignored the fact that it is an organism, not an organization. It is a living instrument of God according to I Corinthians 12:12-23. A microscope is an organization in which mechanical parts are joined. The human eye is an organism, a complex of all essential parts mutually dependent on one another and partaking of the same life. This is the church, a complex of many members mutually dependent on each other and all dependent on the Lord while being equally possessors of eternal life.

Ecclesiastical organizations encircle the world like a giant spider web today. The church has frequently become trapped in the meshes of its own organization. The organism within the organization is stifled.

The New Testament teaches that the church is to be a testimony. This involves a process. For this process God has given the church spiritual gifts. Ephesians 4:11-13 explains this. It is a stimulating thing for the church to reflect on what God has done to implement its mandate. He has placed specifications in His Word for the ideal church. In Ephesians 4 the church is seen as a Christian community with gifts of grace for service.

In chapter 4, verse 11, Jesus Himself gave the apostles, specifically the twelve, to the church. These men were fully empowered and authorized to represent Christ in the church. They were a select group for that particular time. When they died the apostleship ceased.

The prophets were a specific group who expounded the revelation of God until the Scripture was complete. They spoke under the direct prompting of the Holy Spirit. These also ceased. Both apostles and prophets kept the early church moving in the right direction as the direct emissaries of God.

Evangelists were the bearers of good news as the word indicates. They were church starters, traveling from place to place as Philip in Acts 21. Theirs was a special, stimulating and warm ministry as they faithfully preached the truth. Certainly today there are those who have the gift of evangelism as did Knox, Wesley, Moody, etc.

Pastor-teachers are God's key men for the church on earth. Pastor is poinēn, from a root meaning "to protect", while the verb poinainō

is to "shepherd." The pastor protects and shepherds but he also teaches. Feeding the flock is an important function of any shepherd. He either brings the food to the sheep or shows them where it is. The pastor is not a true shepherd today unless he feeds the Word of God to his sheep. He has the authority of God to do this.

Verse 12 shows that the clear purpose for all of this is for the "perfecting" katartizō or "fitting together" of the saints. Just as a broken bone may be set, the saints are brought into their proper spiritual condition and made fit for service. To some extent all of the saints are to be involved in this edifying process. This is "for the work of the ministry." God-directed service is the goal. This productive energy glorifies God. The basic task of any pastor is to edify or build up the Body of Christ in the faith. This brings greater expression for God through the whole community of the saints.

Verse 13 distinctly shows the church that it is God's desire for each member to grow to maturity, "till we all come in the unity of the faith." This is one faith in Christ and produces unanimity in the Body. "And of the knowledge of the Son of God." This supreme knowledge is about Jesus Christ. Only when believers have a unity of knowledge about Christ do they achieve spiritual maturity and unity in the church. What the church knows about Christ will determine the extent of its faith. "Unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." The believer is a full-grown, mature, spiritual man. He is not a child in any sense. He constantly moves ahead spiritually and in knowledge toward what Christ is.

So, God has made adequate provision for His church. The gifts make steady, maturing growth possible through the processes prescribed by Paul. On this basis the church is equipped with everything necessary to please God.

This is a New Testament church and nothing less will do. Each local assembly should evaluate its present Bible base and program in the light of this passage of Scripture. It is not enough to make a few evangelical declarations about the church and its mandate. It is safe to say that until the church does this, it will not be doing what God desires. The result of its operation, therefore, will not be for His glory. As each pastor moves into his field of service, his first task is to evaluate the church of which he is the pastor in the light of Scripture. Where the program of the church needs to be brought back into line with the Bible, he should insist on this. Otherwise, his ministry to a large extent will be unprofitable.

But we must remember that we cannot explain all of this to all of the people who have an opinion about the church. So whether we are talking about the National Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, the National Association of Evangelicals, the American Council of Churches, any denomination, group or fellowship of churches, or any local church, remember that it is the visible church which appears in the eyes and minds of people and with which they deal directly. Ideally we do not want it this way. But this is the way it is.

WORLD

By the "world" we generally designate the human race and all future generations until Jesus Christ returns to rapture His Bride. The spiritual vision of the Church is always world-wide according to Acts 1:8. The globe must be encircled with the gospel message.

There are almost three and one-half billion people in the world today. The population is gradually increasing. The human race gives no indication that it will reduce the rate of replenishing the earth. Therefore, our mission field is increasing statistically. It is this world which God loves with redemptive purpose and power. This world, part of it here in America, is the missionary concern of the church.

The composition of any society is important in its evangelization. Let us see a few of the segments of our society at which the church must launch a gospel barrage.

The present population of the United States is close to 207 million. About 60% of these people are too young to remember the first bad depression. About 50% of them are too young to recall World War II. Nearly 20% were not born when John Kennedy was elected President. Approximately one-half of our population is under 25.

Lacking a better designation, we have called this generation "The Now Generation." In some very clear respects we have a different world today from that which Paul confronted as he first preached the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Recently an article appeared in the United Church Herald by Robert Kemper. It was entitled, "The Groovy, Lonely, Way-out, Up-tight, Mini-skirted, Maxi-active, Turned-on World of the Young." It contained a short biography of a member of the "Now Generation":

- 1953 - The year I was born the Korean War ended.
- 1954 - When I was one, the Supreme Court banned racial segregation in the public schools.

- 1955 - When I was 2, Dr. Jonas Salk's polio vaccine was pronounced a success.
- 1956 - When I was 3, we exploded an H-bomb the equivalent of 10 million tons of TNT.
- 1957 - When I was 4, the Russians launched Sputnik I.
- 1958 - When I was 5, Cardinal Angelo Guiseppe Roncalli became Pope John XXIII.
- 1959 - When I was 6, Fidel Castro assumed power in Cuba.
- 1960 - When I was 7, John F. Kennedy was elected President.
- 1961 - When I was 8, the Peace Corps was established.
- 1962 - When I was 9, John Glenn orbited the earth.
- 1963 - When I was 10, John F. Kennedy was assassinated.
- 1964 - When I was 11, the Senate passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and we bombed North Vietnam.
- 1965 - When I was 12, there was a march in Selma.
- 1966 - When I was 13, the Red Guards appeared in China.
- 1967 - When I was 14, Newark, Detroit, Los Angeles and many other cities rioted.
- 1968 - When I was 15, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy were assassinated.
- 1969 - I am 16 now. Men have walked the moon. These are the events that have shaped my life.

This kaleidoscope of a 16-year-old demonstrates the broad experience and background of our youth as compared with the previous generations.

Recently the residents of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, had to deal with an unusual problem--a walking fish. It is called the Asian walking catfish. It grows to a size of two feet and has breathing organs and pectoral fins that give it overland movement as well as swimming ability. It can jump four feet out of the water. It sleeps during the day and is active at night. It is so strong and slippery that it is almost impossible to handle. Two scientists from the Florida Game and Fresh Water Commission said, "A fish with the ability and inclination to leave the water and walk around is, to the best of our knowledge, unmanageable."

Not a bad description of parts of the Now Generation. We have a "different breed of catfish" today. Youth today often do not follow

predictable patterns, or stay in the "ponds." They are all over and full of surprises, some of them unpleasant. Regardless, we must bait our gospel hooks for this new breed!

Unquestionably, our youth today have broader horizons in every field except the spiritual than any other generation at the same age. Compare what a ten-year-old boy who has just made and launched his own rocket knows with what some of us knew when we were ten. Their high school material now was college curriculum years ago. The "Pill" is no secret. Some of them know more about sex than their parents know.

A missionary in the jungles was stopped on the trail by savages with bows and arrows. About that time a jet was flying over. The missionary pointed up and said, "See big bird. If you hurt me big bird will come down and hurt you." The leader of the band looked puzzled. He said, "Bird? Him no bird! Him Boeing 707!" These are amazing days. And yet kids today are trying to extend their limits with drugs and psychedelia.

There is the "new breed" we call hippies, most of whom act as if soap and water have gone out of style. These sad-faced, long-haired kids are alienated from almost everybody except their own kind. They have withdrawn from the world into one of their own making. They hate the "Establishment" which has provided the freedom they enjoy. It is interesting that Mexico does not admit hippies from the U.S. They have enough poverty and parasites in their society. Hippiedom is increasing in numbers, at least in California. Before you say, "These poor kids," remember their beastly, brutal murders, their thievery, their "pot" parties. These "back-to-nature" kids who infest our parks and beaches should take a few lessons from nature. Based on age and superior ability animals in the forest discipline and train their young. Who hasn't seen a bear or lion knock a cub sprawling? Nature is way ahead of the hippies. This segment of our population the church cannot ignore, even though our emotions alternate from contempt to pity to grace.

Again, the idealists and activists on our campuses today with anarchy as their goal are increasing in numbers. Anarchy is here! Dr. Fred Schwartz of the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade says:

The revival of anarchy is one of the significant and sinister developments of the last few years. Ten years ago it would have been difficult in most communities to find an individual who claimed to be an anarchist. Today anarchists abound on every side.

Terrorist tactics, such as bombing and assassination, have characterized the conduct of the anarchist. The unprecedented massive bomb wave sweeping this country testifies to the rebirth of anarchism. The magnitude of this bomb wave is revealed in a survey prepared for the Senate Permanent Investigation Committee (which is chaired by Senator John McClellan) by the Treasury Department. This survey reveals that during the 16-month period beginning January 1, and ending last April (1970), there were 40,000 bombings, attempts to bomb, and bomb threats recorded by local police. 'This figure is conservative,' states Eugene Rowsides, Assistant Secretary of the treasury, 'since not every law enforcement agency of the country was contacted.'

The survey showed that there were 4,330 actual bombings, 1,475 attempts to bomb, and 35,129 threats to bomb. The reported bombings were responsible for the deaths of 33 people and \$21.8 million of property damage. The end is not yet in sight.

Yes, we do have several new breeds. Some of them are unmanageable and some very difficult to handle. But I have no frustrations here. I find that the transforming power of the gospel is sufficient even for these. It works! Don't allow the oddities and ridiculous attitudes of these young people to alienate you from them so effectively that they are out of your circle of evangelization.

There is also the "old breed" of young people. I hope they outnumber the "new breed." These youth are just as knowledgeable, and have just as much individualism as any of the others. They may want change in the "Establishment," but they go about achieving it in the right manner.

In fact, it seems apparent that in spite of some university curriculums, the majority of college students still want to learn. However, the influence of some large universities is gradually undermining the good ambitions of some of these.

For instance, even though it has been a great school, the University of California at Los Angeles now rivals most other universities as the number one school of revolution. It offers a 12-unit course in the history, anatomy and techniques of revolution, past, present and future, and, of course, all in the name of academic freedom. The course glorifies such infamous characters as Eldridge Cleaver, Fidel Castro and Mao Tse-tung. It isn't any wonder Bob Hope says, "Many colleges are no longer giving Bachelor of Arts degrees. After four

years you become a certified guerilla fighter."

Drugs and alcohol are continuing to exact their tragic toll. Dr. Stanley Yolles, former director, of the National Institute of Mental Health, estimates "that more than 20 million Americans have used marijuana. By the time adolescents reach college age," he says, "25 to 40 percent have at least tried 'pot.' About 10 percent of all marijuana experimenters may become chronic abusers of marijuana, LSD, barbiturates, amphetamines, and other drugs."

In many instances drugs have taken the place of alcohol on college campuses. Yet the number of alcoholics increases each year.

Especially since the college campus has become a center of action, we must regard it as an important and strategic part of our world to be evangelized. The church should be keenly aware of this.

The average high school graduate has spent about 17,000 hours glued to a television set. Thus, all of the baser passions and desires in him have been stimulated and he has received a fraction of good education and wholesome entertainment. Our youth, in fact, our entire society, have been conditioned by communication media to produce the wicked violence and dangerous permissiveness of our contemporary society.

The group we call senior citizens has greatly increased since the longevity of life has increased. This is a segment of society needing very special help from the church in this day. Leisure world complexes, with as many as 10,000 units, are springing up all over the nation. Most of these have very little gospel testimony. These people are friendly and willing to talk about Christ.

The great "middle class" in America today is where the power really is found and they are the most reachable for Christ. Many mothers and fathers can still be found who are concerned about the spiritual welfare of their children. In thousands of contacts through door-to-door visitation this fact has been established. The snares and traps set by the devil today for our young people and children have sobered these parents ranging in age from 30 and up.

Our contemporary American society is a confused mixture of cultures. Often our evangelical churches have a tendency to function within a certain culture. But when we send missionaries to Africa we break out of our culture. Why not here at home? The missionary vision of each New Testament church should cover the entire gamut of society.

The reason for emphasizing these facts is not to infer that sins committed today are different from sins committed in the first century, although this would be partially true. Nor do we suggest that young people, physically, psychologically, or spiritually, are any different. Nor do we suggest that their spiritual needs are different. But the shattering and overwhelming intensity of anti-God and anti-Christ powers and influences has increased to white heat. There was a time when there were less illegitimate children per capita or when 10% of our school children were not smoking marijuana, etc. As far as I can see, there has not been a time in history when the world presented the same image across the spectrum of human life.

Unless we make an exhaustive and determined effort to understand the world today, the effectiveness of our evangelism will be minimal.

REACHING

By "reaching" we mean doing exactly what Jesus said we should do in Matthew 28:19 and 20, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father, and of the son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. Amen." How could our Lord Jesus have been clearer? Who could improve on that command in its worldwide scope? It is a definite, concisely outlined plan of the divine will which is to be accomplished by the Church of Jesus Christ. It is assumed that we are going into this world as believers in Jesus Christ carrying a message which is the Word of God. This teaching was given by our Lord with the promise of more doctrine to come. Now we also have this outline of Christian doctrine from the pens of Paul, Peter, James, John and others. Also, we are to baptize believers by Christian water baptism. We are to teach them to observe the things which have been commanded in the New Testament for daily living and practice. This is to be a continuing ministry until Jesus brings it to an end as far as the church is concerned by the rapture of believers from this earth. The methodology used in performing this task so clearly outlined by our Lord may indeed change from time to time. We must not be absolutely conformed to certain methods. We will consider this further in a later lecture.

Never has the world presented a greater challenge to the church!