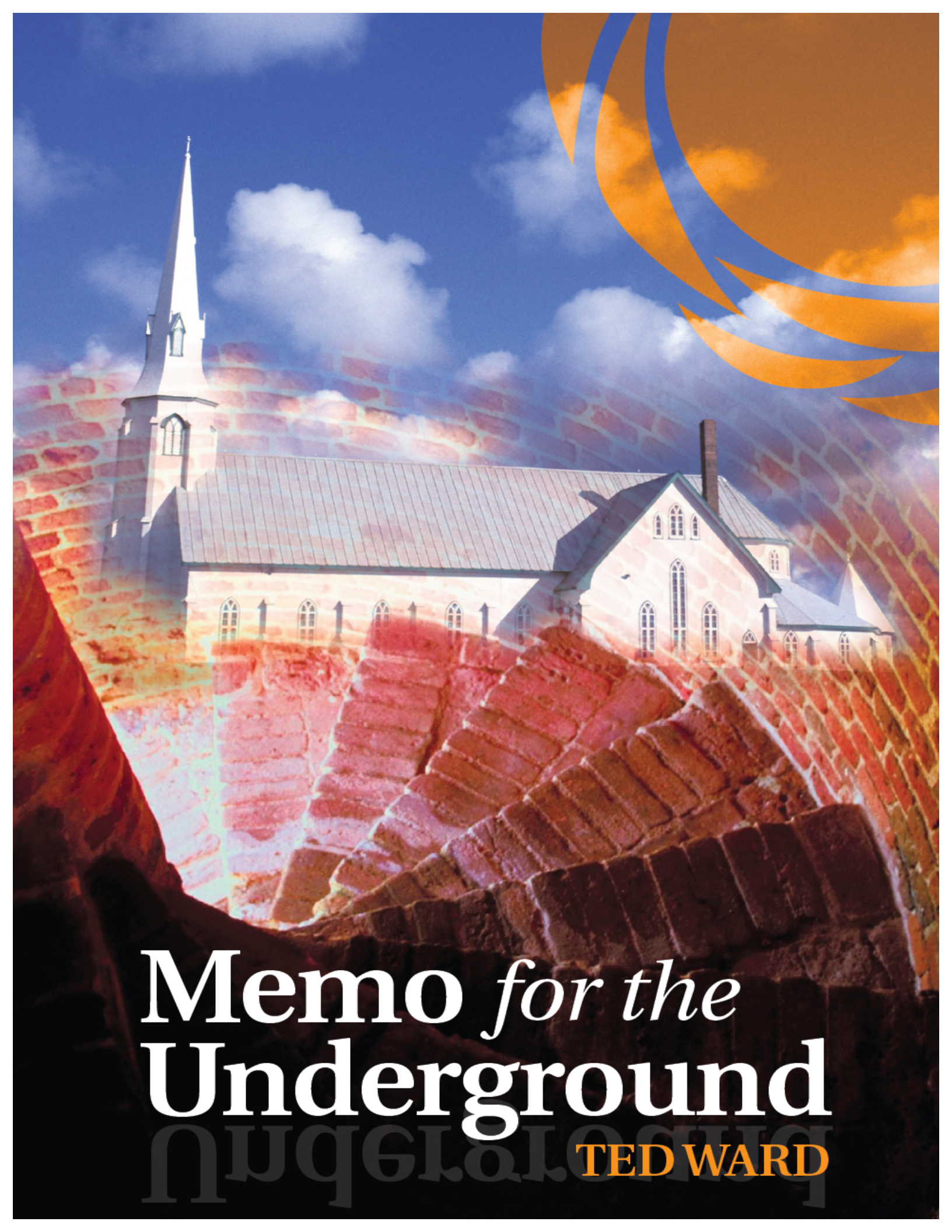




Memo *for the* Underground

TED WARD



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Dedication

For five young people, my constant reminder of the thousands who must, for themselves, raise the questions, seek the answers, and take the steps that will hasten or delay the reformation of the church in North America—David, Dan, Tim, Sarah, Sam.

to the reader . . .

Not all the memos are to the underground. Many are written so that members of the underground will relay them to those with whom they are trying to communicate. Some of these are focused on the problems of understanding youth and youthful ideas—intended for those who are losing contact with the younger generation.

Foreword

Today may be the first time in history that a movement for church renewal has been lead by the young.

Mainly students, they are behind the underground church. You find them all over—in California, of course, in greatest numbers, but also in Chicago and Dallas and Boston and Seattle.

Wherever they are, they disturb the peace of the church.

In many places they are charismatic, but everywhere they are enthusiastic, joyful, busy. Busy creating underground newspapers, new forms of worship, new music; busy helping their peers find freedom in Christ; busy feeding hungry old people, visiting prisoners, being salt to their generation.

Sometimes they seem to be too busy to communicate these new ideas, including their biblical basis, to older people in the church. And so some of us turn them off, wish that they'd do some really important things—like cut their hair or sing “Onward Christian Soldiers”—and let things continue in the church as they were in the beginning, are now and ever shall be, world without end.

But they won't let it be, they won't go away, they won't let us alone. Thank God they won't let us alone.

It would be wrong to imply that contemporary pressure for renewal in the church is exclusively a youth movement. Many older adults are involved in change or thinking about change. In small churches and large, urban and rural, people are trying to find God's plans for change.

Here's where Ted Ward comes in. Ted knows these disturbing Christians. He's taught them, rapped with them, young and old, in church and secular university and Christian college. He knows how they feel about foreign missions and worship services and music and the rest.

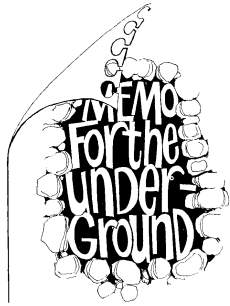
Ted Ward recognizes the value of this underground and tries to plug it in (plug into it?) with a line that leads not to the Establishment, but to the Word.

Memo for the Underground is understandably disturbing. You'll find some controversial places, as I have, along with a lot of tentative conclusions; possible answers, rather than neatly packaged solutions. The book is a collection of thoughts, not an exhaustive treatise. But those thoughts represent one of the best perceptions known to me of where young adults in the church are heading, and how we'll have to change to keep them—possibly to renew the church.

I appreciate Ted Ward as a people-oriented scholar, a creative Christian leader, and friend. I commend this book to you.

Joseph Bayly

So that faith may work
... to turn frustration into hope,
... to turn anger into love,
... to turn loneliness into community.



Re: The People of the Underground

The Underground

Members of the underground of church reform are in high positions and low. Not all members are readily identifiable except by the things that they do. Some are engaged in quiet efforts. Each member of the underground has a particular location, role and influence slightly different from any other member. The common burden is for the mission of the church in the world as it really is.

Unlike underground movements of the past, the members of the underground of church reform rarely convene as a unit, even in secret. But the underground of church reform, as has always been the case with underground movements, welcomes newcomers whose hearts are faithful. Newcomers are encouraged not to break away from their present roles and places of service. Each member is to be busy about the business of affecting the church from the inside.

Contrary to popular rumors, the underground is not altogether a youth movement. Members have only one characteristic in common: they take Jesus Christ seriously.

To Be Distinctive

We are a most unusual minority. Minorities are expected to become clannish, to withdraw into their protective shells, to lash out against the oppressive majority whenever a relatively safe occasion arises.

Christians find no such pattern laid down in the behavior or teachings of Jesus Christ. He gave himself without complaint. True, he gave himself in a way that would really count, but nonetheless, it was Jesus Christ who taught that we should turn the other cheek—the very opposite of harsh reaction, the very opposite of bitterness, and a significant alternative to both retreat and belligerence.

“Love your enemies,” he taught. “Pray for your persecutors.” “If you love only those who love you, what reward can you expect?” This is the sort of ethical teaching that should make Christianity so very different. How distinctive we would be if we truly had faith enough to practice it.

The day is coming when we must live by such faith. The day is coming when we will have no distinctiveness without this precept. Like any other minority, we will want to keep our little group intact; like any other minority, we will try to put up a single front against outside pressure; but these things won’t make us really different.

Even that we call ourselves by the name of the almighty God won't be unique or distinctive. The Scriptures warn us that in those days ahead many will falsely set themselves up as speaking for God. No, our only distinctive will be in our taking very seriously this matter of love—to love our enemies and to love and to serve one another within the community of Christ. To accept, and to bring to life this most basic of Christ's own teachings: to love. And to give evidence of that love through service to humanity. *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another"* (John 13:35).

Conformity

In this day of mass culture, stereotypic behavior, and perpetuation of useless habits, there is value in each person doing his or her own thing when it can be done for the glory of God. And there is a very real sense in which, as we do our own thing for God, we can be happy and approved of God. Is there anything in the Word of God that suggests we are all *to look alike*? Conformed to the image of Christ and transformed into his image, of course, but we are to maintain individual personalities and to play out individual characteristics, talents and attributes. *"And there are varieties of activities, but the same God who activates all of them in everyone. . . . All these are activated by the one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one in individually just as the Spirit chooses"* (1 Corinthians 12: 6, 11).

A Third Dimension

Knowing Jesus Christ gives life a third dimension. Life is more than an interplay of dreams and realities. For those who know Christ it is a life of dreams, reality, and *faith*! Perhaps a better way to see it is dreams, *faith*, and reality, because faith is the link between dreams and reality. *"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen"* (Hebrews 11:1).

But to make faith work in your life, you must come at it God's way. Dreams are a human creation; you have a right to dream and to make of your dreams whatever you can. Realities are also a human creation, mostly; you share with all other people the harshness that humanity present and humanity past has created. You cannot escape. Such is reality.

But *faith* is God's creation and God's gift to you through Christ. Faith is not at all the same thing as wishful thinking. Faith is another and more substantial kind of reality. Through faith, which is clearly one of God's distinctive gifts, we see another sort of dream in another sort of reality.

We see, through faith, what *God* wants to do. To see what *God* sees; to comprehend something of what God must do with the world; to recognize the part that we can play for God, in the strength of the Holy Spirit. Such vision is the consequence of faith. And it is greater than all the dreams of all the ages, more solid than all the realities of the world of humanity and nature that we see collapsing all around us.

A Lesson from the SDS

A campus leader, a radical revolutionary, wrote:

A great many movements go down the drain. People get all wrapped up in their symbol and forget what it was that they were originally talking about. . . . People gravitate together because

they like each other's views. Very soon this close proximity kindles a group feeling of 'us-ness'—which immediately implies an antithetical state of 'them-ness' *We* are together and, therefore, *we* have the answers. Obviously, the world is not exactly right as far as *we* are concerned. . . . It follows, therefore, that *we* need to initiate some changes. It is necessary to bring *them* around to *our* point of view—but watch out! There are more of *them* than there are of *us*. . . . Indeed, every time *we* speak of *our* initiation of change as 'the revolution,' *we* feel good because of the ideas we load into *our* symbolic term, 'the revolution.' But the movement soon fails because we get hung up in 'us-ness' of 'our words.' The movement becomes static because we have turned off all our prospective allies and, worse, we have turned a lot of them into enemies. History assures us things are guaranteed to go downhill from here.¹

These thoughts came from serious attempt to describe the seeds of weakness in the now defunct *Students for a Democratic Society*. He probably wasn't aware that he was also describing so much that has happened in the history of Christianity!

The Way You See Yourself

In a remarkably consistent way Jesus Christ dealt with people in his first contact with them in terms of their own definition of their problem. Later, he would develop his definition of their problem. He was consistent, whether helping children, young women, older women, young men, older men. Jesus really ministered to each person in terms of that person's own perspective. Typically, Jesus listened first, then healed, and preached later. Jesus Christ—this God-Person—demonstrated the beautiful personality of a very competent teacher.

Are you looking for something of Jesus in yourself? Do you really want a share of the image of Christ? Start with *listening*.

Others

If we infer anything at all about Jesus Christ as a person, we must conclude that his personality was dominated by a basic drive to meet the needs of others. Is this an unrealistic model for us? Should the followers of Christ become more responsive to the problems of others? This is not a utopian goal. To live it to the degree of perfection that apparently Jesus Christ did would be a goal far beyond us, but as an objective it is worthy. Self-centeredness is the more natural condition of men and women; but the Spirit of God is at work in us transforming us into the less natural state of *unselfishness*.

A Sample of Acceptance

Contemporary behavioral science provides data that increasingly dramatizes the wisdom, insights, and the integrity of the Word of God. This should come as no great surprise. A proposition in psychological therapy reads like this: *unaware needs cannot be treated until aware needs are recognized*. Unaware needs are needs within oneself that a person may not be able to identify and describe. These needs cannot be treated until the needs of which he or she is aware are at least put clearly on the agenda.

Is this modern psychology? Yes. Is it scriptural? In the life of Christ it was. The behavior we see in Jesus Christ is just one more evidence that our Lord and Creator is completely in command of human affairs—both those which he encountered and those which we will

¹ *The State News*, Michigan State University

encounter. As a Christian, I must accept people on their own terms, not expecting them to change themselves as a precondition of my willingness to relate to them.

Souls

Assume that you can't afford the necessary effort to be concerned about both the salvation of souls *and* about meeting the human needs of people. Which will you choose to engage in?

You shouldn't feel obligated to answer such a lazy question! To do so is to fall again into the very trap set for the church almost a century ago, from which we are just beginning to stagger free. The assumptions are all wrong! Don't *try* to answer questions based on such obvious oversights.

The riches of heaven itself are invested in the church. Don't for one moment accept the assumption that we can't afford to be concerned about people as human individuals. We err if we are too busy counting them up as bodies—pardon me, as souls that we must win for God. Note the awkward phrase “*souls to win for God*.”

People are quick to spot cynical and insincere behavior. Many believe that being interested in a person only because he or she is a “soul to win” is profoundly insincere. It doesn't help much to argue that nothing is more important than the salvation of the person's soul. That just isn't going to do it. Even today's Christian young see right through this dodge.

They point out the behaviors of Jesus and the apostles in the Gospels and in Acts. A man came to Jesus, the man had a *name*; where a man *lived* was important to Jesus. Often what concerned an inquirer was a physical need, and coming to Jesus was not a wild goose chase. Physical *and* spiritual needs were met. There was no put-down for failure to give priority to the spiritual issues. How unfortunate that we've been trapped by the “social-gospel panic” into a position of believing that spiritual needs are all we can afford to relate to. What a small view of God's mercy!

The Law and Order Trap

Pick up any newspaper or any magazine. It is easy to speculate about the desperate condition of a nation bitterly divided as it has never been since 1850, lacking in clear-cut views of purpose and honor, placing matters of national pride and prestige above any other values of decency and more humble honor. We live in an age when the bank accounts that humankind has been drawing on so lavishly seem to be drying up. The bank of natural resources threatens bankruptcy. The bank of humanity threatens to foreclose on the generations-old mortgage of inhumanity.

The selfishness of our individual and national stance before a needy world is becoming more embarrassing. Indiscriminate pride has become a substitute for informed, honest perspective. That our country has had within it a remarkable number of God-fearing men and women is surely historical. But the United States of America has never been truly controlled or even dominated by disciples of Jesus Christ. Such claims and the right to such pious posturing reflect a tradition loaded with pride and false piety. At best it is wishful thinking. Influenced by the Gospel, somewhat informed by the Word of God, yes, but quite honestly it is a falsehood to see America as a God-fearing nation.

The reality we must face is that Christ-honoring citizens of this country are a distinct minority. As Christians, we are severely outnumbered. Francis Schaeffer went to his grave urging that Christians in America should start to think like people in a minority in order to preserve their identity. This would mean, for one thing, that we not take comfort and security from the present establishment and system. It can and, indeed, *will* turn on us when we least expect it.

Christ refers to his followers as the “salt of the earth.” The symbolism here is generally taken to refer to the preserving power of salt. In preservation of meats, for example, salt is used to delay spoiling. Christians are a preserving agent, Jesus said, retarding spoilage in an evil world. In the face of the doubling and tripling of the world’s population, we wonder just when the handful of salt will become an unbearable nuisance to humanity’s worldliness. Society in general may turn on us, using the much-boasted “majority rule” (in which so many Americans take such pride) to stamp its boots on us.

Surely it is false confidence to take comfort in law and order. The term “law and order,” in the sense that most people use it, does not refer to what God wants to establish as a lawful orderliness of righteousness. In its popular use, “law and order” refers to the potentially vicious imposing of a majority view of right and wrong on the world’s minorities through domination by force.

Never forget: we are a minority. Our view of what is right will not win out in a popularity contest. Christians are one of the logical targets of repression. In a world that settles its needling differences by brute force, Christianity has many times been a target. Even in “Christian America,” of the 21st Century, our turn may come.

The Way of Life?

There are Japanese Christian ways of life and American Christian ways of life; and if we expect the Japanese Christian to think like, act like, and talk like an American Christian, we are very wrong. And it is nearly as unreasonable to expect all American Christians to look and think alike. We share the responsibility with others in the world to adopt, adapt, and embrace within our cultures the elements, beliefs, habits, tastes, and lifestyles that glorify God. And there always will be major differences with others.

Tents for Sale

What sort of a shingle do you suppose he put on the door? It was a secular occupation, but he was a Christian. So perhaps he made a special bid for the business of fellow Christians.

This should be about right:

CHRISTIAN TENTMAKER: PAUL OF TARSUS

But then, anybody knows that Christians often have to do things on limited resources. People might suspect that the quality of his tents might be a bit poor.

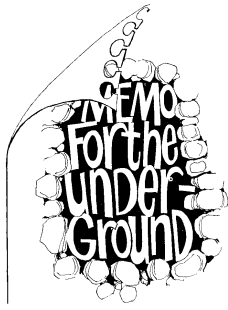
Try it this way:

PAUL OF TARSUS: QUALITY CHRISTIAN TENTS

But no, Paul always made his own reputation as a person—a person of dedication and thoroughness. The quality of his tents would speak for itself. And he was too much involved in the world of the lost to take a chance on limiting his market. *People* need tents—and not just Christian people. A Christian tentmaker need not limit one's clientele. Besides, why would Christians want to cut themselves off from the very people who need them most?

PAUL OF TARSUS, TENTS

That should do it.



Re: The Church

The Key to Confusion

The word *church* is at the root of the church's most troublesome problems. When Jesus said, "I will build my church," what did he mean? Here is the place to start in understanding the meaning of the church: the church 1) is the entire body of believers—all those who accept the claims of Christ on their lives. This meaning is frequently indicated in the writings of the apostles (Colossians 1:18). Another use of the word in the New Testament indicates the particular groups of believers. In this second use, the designation is sometimes of the church 2) in a region (the letters to the Christians in Thessalonica), sometimes in a city or village (Romans 16:1), and sometimes of a very specific group assembling in a particular place (Colossians 4:15). In all the biblical uses, church means *people*.

But in the course of human history, two more meanings slipped in the back door. These two non-biblical uses of the word *church* are the most common today: church 3) the *building*; and church 4) the *denomination* or system. Even among Bible-believing Christians these meanings confuse the issues.

The Answer for Everything

There are several profoundly important questions for which the Word of God gives completely flat, outright answers, particularly in the realm of *soteriology*. Or so it seems. This is probably why Christians find it easy to act as if God has spoken unequivocally on *all* matters and issues. Those of us who find the Bible to be a comprehensive source of understanding need to be reminded over and over again that not all Christians see things exactly alike. We have relative knowledge of absolute Truth. God uses his Word to speak to us, but he speaks in terms of our own limited understanding and particular needs.

People today are shaken, sometimes completely turned off, by bickering about whether God has or hasn't said this or that. In some ways Christianity might appear to be stronger if Christians all were, in fact, white, middle-class, conservative, Republicans and, of course, Americans.

Sometimes I think youth is the only period of life when you can be detached enough from what you are *becoming* to recognize what aspects of your self and your personality are truly a reflection of Christ and what parts are a reflection of what *you* want to believe.

Partnership

When God's truths are involved, we must assume that the overseeing ministry of the Holy Spirit is capable of convicting the conscience of men and women in mysterious ways. In one sense, we take this for granted, in that we expect God to work his will; yet, in the sense that God has elected to work his will through those of his choosing, we must do all that we can to assure clarity of meaning and import to the truth as we pass it on. *We* have the task of pointing out its relevance to today's problems and today's human needs. We are in the church. We are the church. We have a partnership with Jesus Christ—and with each other.

Why Are We Here?

The doctrine of separation is troublesome. If monasteries were not so thoroughly identified with the Catholic Church, some Protestants might find in them just the protection they think they need. Fellowship with God is supposedly enhanced by avoiding sinful mankind.

The King James Version's translation of 1 Thessalonians 5:22 gives an added semantic jolt to Paul's reasonable command that involvements with evil be avoided. The term "appearance of evil" serves as the basis for many spurious arguments that Christians should reject Jesus' own example of interaction with unbelievers. He recruited some pretty far-out types and seemed to really enjoy lunch and conversation with folks whom separatists would avoid like the plague.

At the last evening gathering before his crucifixion, Jesus prayed that his Father would keep, unite and protect the disciples he was leaving in the world. In this prayer, he said that he had sent the disciples into the world just as he had been sent. It's clear enough why Jesus was sent into the world. Now why do you suppose we're here?

What We Want To Do vs What We Do

In virtually all of the institutional functions of the church there are elegant generalized statements of intent. They are found on the front page of a church's constitution, in a Bible college catalog, in the professor's introduction to the course, in the Sunday school teachers' manual, and in the flowery pronouncements of the church's chief spokespersons.

The question that must be raised deals with what role these statements of goals play. Far too often they are not used as a basis for evaluating the church's effectiveness and achievement. It is not enough to have good intentions. If no evaluation is made to determine the extent to which goals are being accomplished, sham can get pretty deep. What we *want* to do is no alibi for what we are actually doing. Responsible institutions make clear statements of their intentions *and* careful assessments of their accomplishments. What about the church?

Human Nature Wants to Boast

The religions of "works" seem, throughout history, to have had more mass appeal than the gospel. The idea of *earning* merit has much more dignity and propriety than being given unmerited favor. Disdain for any advertising that offers "something for nothing" is a cross-cultural phenomenon. Get-rich-quick schemes and humanity's common tendency to haul away anything that isn't nailed down are, in a sense, exceptions that prove this point. In the

eyes of the perpetrator, theft and graft are not a matter of “getting something for nothing”; instead, they are more a matter of exercising one’s superior judgment and skills. To craftily achieve or acquire is a sign of strength in almost any culture; to be granted an undeserved favor, on the other hand, is a sign of weakness.

The gospel is handicapped by its basic argument that salvation is a *gift*, “not of works, lest anyone should boast.” The trouble is that human nature *wants* to boast. The historic power structures in Christendom have learned this. The most common and the most corrupting additions to the plain New Testament plan of salvation are the various schemes that introduce the element of earning favor with God. Though evangelical and orthodox Christianity is doctrinally straight on this issue, the practice of Christian living is shot through with the earning of righteousness by not doing certain things. Defining Christian behavior as *not doing* distorts the freedom of the redeemed. A goody-goody merit badge society. Very human.

(Take a look at 1 Corinthians 10 in a readable translation, such as the New English Bible, J.B. Phillips’ The New Testament in Modern English, the New American Standard Bible or the Revised Standard Version.)

Who Runs the Show?

If we are sincere about wanting to do God’s business, now is the time to get more serious about exactly what it is that God wants to do. I like the way Ed Dayton says it: “Our job in research and planning is to find out what God is doing and find ways to help—to find the methods God wants to use and to use them.”

This is a large order, and it sounds presumptuous on first hearing. But, what is the alternative? To decide what God ought to be doing and to tell him about it? That’s hardly less presumptuous.

Yet, as we look at the recent history of the evangelical cause, we have to wonder about the possibility that this “bringing God in to endorse our cleverness” has been going on. It is hazardous to decide for ourselves who God can work through and who are so unfit that he wouldn’t want to let them help.

Catholics have been reminding God for years that he isn’t supposed to let the Protestants in on the action. And the Protestants have wasted much emotional energy and prayer time in returning this favor. Conservatives know that God can’t possibly use liberals unless they first shape up their doctrinal stance. And certainly God would be embarrassed to get involved in the new emphasis on the Holy Spirit. But it’s getting pretty hard to explain the development of the church in Africa and in Latin America by using the “doctrinal purity first” formula. Surprise! God is still running the show!

The Numbers Game

We like to count things. We were up twenty-eight from last week! (Never mind what they learned.) Coming to church is the thing! And Sunday school too, and prayer meeting and girls’ club and boys’ club and choir practice and missionary society and deacons’ meeting and deaconesses and elders (are there elderesses?) etc., etc., etc.

We'll be there and we'll bring others. Bring them to our pretty building. Giving people a chance to hear. That's why we're here. Never mind whether they get even more turned off after they get here. We can't count that, so it can't be very important.

Say—maybe we *could* count that too! How about counting those who never come back? That ought to be interesting to *somebody*.

Credibility

A convincing message is rarely preoccupied with its own truthfulness. Of course the authority of the speaker may be cited, but, beyond that, the message's own relevance or import must be its authority. Any message perceived to be irrelevant will not be believed, regardless of the weight of its authority. Circumstance is an overpowering contradicter.

Unfortunately, credibility does not always increase in direct proportion to conviction. Awareness of the truth and the importance of a message create eagerness to see belief in others. Those who have special access to truth or "the facts" in any field often lose patience with people who pay them no heed. In such a situation, elemental truth is apparently expected to establish itself and to make its own relevancy known. Dangerous assumptions!

The prophets of old usually allowed God to speak for himself through his word. They told the people what God had told them to say. "Thus says the Lord" was their seal of authority. Credibility of the message came largely from its relevance and importance. Even so today God's message has credibility because of relevance and importance in terms of the needs of humankind.

Your credibility?

The Creation Argument

The church wasn't ready for Darwin. A one-hundred year war has resulted. Rather than taking sides in the arguments about ways and means of creation, arm yourself with the *important* facts:

The Bible doesn't set itself up to be a scientific thesis. Whether the first chapter of Genesis is to be read as a scientific document still seems to be hot issue for those who don't have anything more serious to fret about. The fact that the Bible uses figurative illustrations doesn't reduce its credibility, anyway.

But the Bible *is* quite clear on one matter in the accounts of the creation. Whether you think about it scientifically, philosophically, theologically, or merely calmly and logically, this one contention comes through clearly: *God was there first*, and he created the whole thing. Don't be surprised that the Bible doesn't give us much detail about the methods he uses in his creative processes. It doesn't say much about photosynthesis either.

The King-Sized Hang-up

The Roman Church was unable to accept the demand for Scriptures in the language of the common people. *No!* The beauty of the Old Latin is essential. *No!* The priest is able to

explain it to the worshipers. *No! No! No!* Then came the Reformation.

So history doesn't repeat itself? The next time a preacher struggles to make the Elizabethan English come alive ("Now, beloved, we see in the Greek that what this *really* means is . . .") ask yourself if the beauty of the old language is worth the price of letting (or is it *not* letting, as in Romans 1: 13?) the minister become the key to the Scriptures.

Especially for young people, who no longer get a guaranteed exposure to Elizabethan English in school (curricula have changed), and for new converts who were not brought up in the church, the King James Version is a serious obstacle to independent spiritual growth. We owe no more homage to Elizabethan English than to Latin. Why the king-sized King James hang-up?

Cultural Snags

To a certain extent, we bind the truth up in our own cultural values. It is so easy to assume that the truth of the gospel will bring everyone to the same conclusions about proper human conduct, correct political views, right social values, and singular and perfect creeds. That this doesn't happen even in our own church assembly should be a warning to us!

Such an expectation that God will remake all of us in the same mold leads to frustration and hostility within the assembly and will make us unable to accept people who are culturally different.

When our view of things is fundamentally different from the view held in another culture (or subculture!) communication is incredibly difficult; influence is almost impossible. The logic and truth of a culture bound message will not hurdle the cultural barriers.

Images

One of the impressive recurring sights in Latin America is the heroic sculptured image of Christ. These huge statues of our Lord, perched high on mountain peaks, in border passes of the Andes and above magnificent harbors, are hard to overlook. Regardless of your convictions about "graven images" and statuary representing the Son of God, you cannot avoid a sense of the splendid, the magnificent and the enduring as you gaze from the harbor of Rio de Janeiro upon the Christ of Corcovado, floating as if it were on a ship of rocks in the distant sea of clouds.

The image of Christ is a compelling force in the thinking of people. The Christ of Corcovado, the Christ of the Andes—what are these but expressions of those who found one way to declare, "Sirs, we would see Christ."

This is what the mission of the church of Jesus Christ is all about: not the material substance of the statue or the painted icon, but the more solid spiritual reality that answers the most basic human need: "Sirs, we would see Christ!" Those who are living out the mission of the church are like the image of the Christ of Corcovado; they show forth the majesty of a *solid* Christ fixed on the rocks that hold firm, shining through the boiling of earthbound clouds.

The Temptation to Sound Off

Pastors of assemblies of Christians have accepted a sacred trust. They can be upheld, dismissed by the assembly, or left by individuals and families. But the demands of order and love in churches rule out harsh treatment of their pastors. In the case of conflict within the church, it is Christ's church, the body of believers, that matters, not ours. This is what keeps some of us underground! The church belongs to Christ; though we have a right to claim it for him, we also have an obligation to operate in keeping with Christ's requirement of orderliness and decency. No one has an inherent right to split a congregation. (In most "church splits" the triggering problem is usually pride, anyway.)

But when pastors cannot hear the reasonable voices of counsel from their fellow believers, their effectiveness falls away. Sooner or later someone is tempted to sound off. And then the fur flies.

If each pastor were inclined to listen responsively and if church members could resist the temptations to belligerence, the church could develop more in the manner which Christ intended.

God's Museums

God is changeless, but his creative work with and through his creation makes for a constantly changing scene. Pastors must relate to God and to people. They need attunement to both. Unfortunately, it can happen that although pastors are faithful to what they have heard from God, they are unresponsive to the needs and conditions of their flock.

Unresponsiveness in an otherwise faithful servant of God can result from a fear of the realities of the present age. Escape from fear is sought by looking backward to a more manageable yesterday. (Would that God's assurances about his adequacy for the needs of the times were more fully accepted!) An insecure or fear oriented pastor is constantly striving for a return to the "old days," and thus becomes even more frustrated, for with equal vigor he or she is rejecting the contemporary scene as it really is.

Sometimes enough like-minded people rally around a backward-oriented pastor to create a sort of ecclesiastical museum—a perpetuation of the way people once related to the building (church 3) and to the manmade part of the system (church 4).

Reform is Now

It seems likely that some of the confusion in the minds of Christians about the church's mission at mid-century arose from institutional forms that had become so sacred they couldn't be reexamined.

As in the North American church, in many overseas mission-church assemblies the pastor's educational credentials became more important than the call of the Holy Spirit and the ordination through the church. An elitist view of Christian ministry has been emerging. Worship sometimes has been replaced by erudite teaching from the pulpit. Pre-Reformation sorts of hierarchical authority have militated against a sense of community in the fellowship of believers, and the missionary has fought for the "right" to continue his or

her career “where God has called him or her.” Never mind the matter of raising up and supporting an indigenous national leadership.

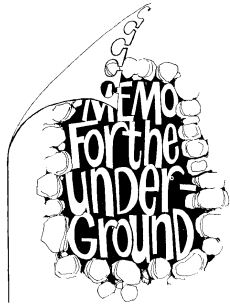
Within the past few years a reexamination and reform have made headway. Timely and Christ honoring changes are under way. Specifically, the rise of short-term missionary opportunities and the extension mode of pastoral training constitute significant returns to New Testament vigor.

Caution!

Please don’t turn off the church #’s 1 and 2. In many sad cases, rejection of the church—the particular local assembly (church 2), the building (church 3), the system or denomination (church 4)—is understandable. The “Jesus people” and thousands of their more timid brothers and sisters in Christ are hardly to be blamed for their decision to go their own way in fellowship with one another and in isolation from the main body of churchgoers. They say that they’ve “turned off the church,” but that they’ve “turned on [for] Jesus.”

Look out! It doesn’t work that way. If you belong to Christ, *you are in the church*—the family of Christ, even if the more “properly” dressed members of the family are too rude to accept you!

It’s your own business to decide where and whether to affiliate as a formal member of a congregation, but don’t deny yourself the important experience of fellowship (today’s word: *interaction!*) with fellow believers. The assurance of being in the church 1 (Christ’s body) comes partly from being in a church 2 (a specific group of believers). We need each other.



Re: Education

Behavior Change

Contemporary thought in education sees learning in terms of behavior change. The major consequence of this view is a rejection of any doctrinaire teaching that seeks lip service alone. What a person knows, truly knows, is measured in terms of the difference it makes in the daily decision-making of his or her life.

There is, of course, a highly pragmatic overtone here: what has been truly learned is what the individual can put to work in daily life. Pragmatism or not, this behavioral definition of learning does help to put the emphasis on dynamic application of information. Sterile acquiescence or nodding and shallow acceptance cannot rightly be called learning.

Does this view threaten the church? We should devoutly hope not. The gospel's power is reflected in its capacity to change hearts (inner processes) so that what flows from the inner motivations will be observably different. With all our emphasis on what Christ can do for the inner self, let's not minimize the scriptural contention that "... the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). Youth insists that these outward appearances should be consistent with what people claim is their hearts. We can be refreshed and encouraged by this view.

Indoctrination

From our rich heritage of doctrine and dogma, from the long centuries of creeds and catechisms, it is not easy to break smoothly into an era of increased objectivity and skepticism. The struggle is decades old. The crucial hour of birth or death seems to be at hand.

One important hangover from the age of dogma and indoctrination is the insistence that every question has an answer. But that oversimplifies it. More fully explained, this "tradition of closure" makes a distinction between worthy and unworthy questions. The distinction rests on the practice of legitimatizing and honoring only the questions for which we have the answers. So the tradition of closure advocates a form of teaching by posing the right questions. The catch is that only those questions for which there are precise and dogmatic answers are allowed. Catechisms are a relic of the tradition of closure—and, in their defense, some catechisms, creeds and confessions have played a valuable historical role in clarifying doctrine.

But if you still are living in the tradition of closure, please use a really *good* catechism; don't invent your own and call it "discussion questions."

It isn't enough that the so-called discussion questions that follow a lesson are worded in a "What do you think?" form. It's depressing to observe that so very many such questions don't really value what a person thinks; instead they are slyly worded to get a person to say that he or she thinks what the author thinks. Putting words in people's mouths causes gagging and ultimately results in nausea.

To Educate

The issue is whether Christianity can be taught as a process of education rather than indoctrination. Must faith be approached as a task of indoctrination?

In general, indoctrination is a process of imposing an informational knowledge without encouraging an objective and rational examination or use of the knowledge. Indoctrination is an accepted procedure where a massive group must be rapidly marshaled into uniformity. Indoctrination, therefore, may seem appropriate to those who practice "crisis Christianity."

To others, whose Christian experience is able to stand the tests of rational examination and evaluation, a process of education seems more appropriate. In *educating*, the crucial difference is a willingness to allow learners to make and to face up to their own decisions.

No true education occurs without the freedom to make mistakes. If learners are hedged in by rules, structures, and forces that deny them the opportunity to make wrong choices, they gain nothing but blind habits. *Conditioning*, yes, but what a low level of learning and how predictably they will react against it sooner or later! In order to *choose* to do right, there must be the live option to do wrong. This is what the human will is all about. And if God himself refuses to step across this boundary of the responsibility of the individual's choice, what right have *we* to do so?

"Christian Education"

If you call it "Christian education" but use tactics of indoctrination or conditioning, you are deceiving yourself (and others?). The field of Christian education is paying quite a price today for the years of indoctrination. Emphasis on rote-memory tasks, conformity of behavior to unaccepted values, and perpetuation of unchallenged dogma have long been basic.

Although there is only the weakest sort of defense for these three tactics, they are persistent. Especially since the older generation of church leaders are largely the survivors (the products?) of an indoctrination system, their stance of acceptance of its tactics is predictable; this stance is certainly easier and more natural for the old-timers than would be a stance of challenge and change. True, there are notable persons who want to see changes to a more powerful system of church education. But make no mistake about it; change is coming about too slowly.

Sunday School

A generation of children and young people whose formal education has been superior, in many respects, is now upon us. For thousands of churchgoing American youth, the Sunday school hour is a weekly visit to another era—often a more crude, more dusty, and more deadening experience, by contrast, than it was twenty years ago. Changing it by updating methods, improving the teaching, and refining the materials is a grand idea; but even this admirable aim is getting threadbare with age. Updating of methods, materials and teaching, alone, simply won't work.

The problem lies deeper and concerns more sensitive issues. Are we ready to face up to the differences between education and indoctrination? Today's youth are apparently inclined to indoctrinate each other, but they are highly resistant to indoctrination from any other segment of society (except through the mass media). Campus Crusade's tactics demonstrate this fairly well: when adults relate to youth, the framework and tactics are to *educate*; when youth relates to youth, they are often inclined to use *indoctrination* tactics. I'm not sure why young people are willing to make this exception with each other, unless it relates to the self-preservation syndrome: any group that seeks to preserve itself against external threats tolerates deviations *within* the group that it cannot accept from outside.

But if the established church intends to make Sunday school count, two changes must be made: The educational approach must be shifted toward an atmosphere of openness and inquiry in which the basic problems, uncertainties and needs of boys and girls are respected. And the involvement of children with and for each other and for the outreach of the church must be turned on. Thus, adult roles in the Sunday school need to be remodeled to fit the way young people think and live *today*.

The Answer?

A promising alternative to the "tradition of closure" is the growing respect for the open-ended question. A truly open-ended question indicates awareness of the importance of the question, value of the search for understanding, and respect for the potential insight of the respondents.

Many people today take thoughtful interest in open-ended questions. They have no quarrel with the contention that our society must face up to some really tough issues. Their only quarrel is with the proposition that there is only one answer for a given question. Their disillusionment is not really spiritual; it is in the realm of politics and social ideals where they've been burned.

Today's under-thirty Americans have never seen a political, economic, or social proposition achieve its promises. Only in the scientific and technological realm have promises been shown to be achieved. Perhaps our culture is anesthetizing us to any but the technological consequences of "progress." It's no wonder that people are becoming more materialistic. Outside the spiritual realm that's the only aspect of life where they've seen any payoff.

So Jesus is the answer—but what is the question?

Phony Education

Verbalisms (words, words, words) can become substitutes for more substantial experience. Are you starving yourself intellectually? Do you let words substitute for experiences and for more profound thought? Are you satisfied that you have given a new idea sufficient thought just because you can label it?

If you can't deal with an idea in its own terms, what good does it do to put a label on it? Phony education is a process of learning enough labels so that you can duck any new thought by being preoccupied about categorizing it. Ideas need to be tested in terms of what assumptions they are based on, what they lead to, what they look like in action, and what consequences they have—not tested merely in terms of what company they keep or who says them.

No matter where you sit, *labels* will tempt you away from thought. You can't believe him, he's a *Democrat* (or *Republican*); she's a *Women's Lib*; that's a *communist* plot; that's the way a *fundamentalist* looks at it; a *conservative* is conservative in all matters. Sounds like a rather *liberal* point of view.

Labeling is easier than thinking. If labels have become more important than the ideas they represent, your education is doomed to be stunted and self-defeating. It is painful to behold the avid reader whose only interest in new ideas is to test their agreement with his or her biases. This problem, to some extent, confronts all of us; and it isn't really our fault, it's characteristic of the total system we're in. But we must free ourselves from phony education through learning what an idea is about, how to recognize one, how to evaluate one, and—please—how to *have* one.

Worth of Every Person

One of the basic propositions in effective teaching is that every student has worth and unrevealed potentialities. This assumption leads to important consequences in practice. For one thing, learners are encouraged to set goals for themselves; for another, good teachers try not to limit their expectations for a learner to only what they can see at the first. Try as you will, it isn't easy to reject this assumption on theological grounds.

The New Testament shows several significant cases where crusty fishermen, low-principled publicans and hyperthyroid sword-swingers were recognized by Jesus as having potential far beyond what anybody had seen. The idea that there are value and worth in every individual need not be rejected on the grounds of depravity of the soul. The “born-againers” are not the only ethical and morally “good” folks in this world. And they certainly aren't the only creative and able people.

Christian youth today want to talk about this, to better understand it, and to know that their elders have also noticed that there is worth in every person.

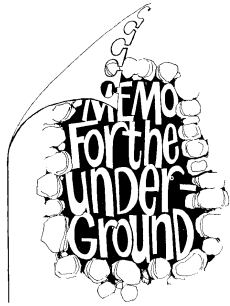
We Are Kidding Ourselves

Verbal acceptance of doctrinal propositions about the reality of God and about the necessity of living according to God's standards is not adequately reflected in the positions that many people hold about moral and ethical standards of living. It looks as though we

are reaping a generation or two of Christians whose Christianity is just “words deep.”

Verbal acceptance of verbal propositions—creeds, if you please—is not necessarily linked to appropriate behavior change. We can “teach for the test” fairly well, especially when the test—the objective of our communicating and our teaching—is verbal regurgitation.

We must reduce this fantasy, this massive self-deception that weakens the church. We must focus on putting into practice the deeds that the doctrinal propositions represent.



Re: Mission

Escape from Missions

The “establishment church” has been thoroughly restructured by its special vocabulary—and not for the better. This has seriously hurt missions, among other things. There are special words used in the “establishment church” to reduce the sense of mission obligation. Mission is usually “overseas” and is the responsibility of those who are “called.” Three particularly troublesome terms are at the heart of the problem: “mission,” “call,” and “full-time Christian service.”

Mission has to do with being sent, and being sent is scriptural; *call*, in the sense that God places particular demands on us, is scriptural; and *full-time Christian service* is implied of some but not of all followers of Christ in the New Testament. But these three terms, their misuse and their overuse, lie at the root of several problems in our understanding of ourselves as *called* ones and as *sent* ones.

Questions we ask reveal several resulting fallacies: “Have you been called?” suggests that some Christians aren’t. This seems strange in the light of Ephesians 4:1,4; Colossians 3:15; 1 Peter 2:21; 3:9; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 7:20,24, and virtually every other New Testament section dealing with the call of God. “Are you in fulltime Christian service?” suggests that only those whose salaries are paid by the church are truly set apart. This would come as a great surprise to a certain tentmaker.

Missionary

The word *missionary* is known to turn off many young people today. The word has negative associations for many people, even for a significant percentage of Christian young people, according to the surveys administered by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. Finding some new word to substitute for *missionary* has been quite seriously suggested.

But any new word would soon take on all the negative tone now attached to *missionary*. The problem is not to find a new word but to clear up the concept. The old stereotype is of a tired and tiring old codger, or dear Aunt Millie, slogging about in a jungle helmet and tennis shoes—usually reading a three-inch-thick book about heaven-knows-what to thirty-two kids, naked up to their ears, squatting under a banyan tree.

Some missionaries on furlough are still feeding the old stereotypes. Missionaries to Africa still show slides of elephants and lions, though they sometimes have to borrow them from tourism

agencies. The missionary conference still gives the impression that missionaries relate themselves only to incredibly primitive and ill-kempt relics of dinosaur days.

But there is another side to this. Missionaries are, in general, more sensitive than American pastors to the folly of requiring de-culturization as a requisite of Christianity. Most missionaries, for example, are not blind to the tremendous opportunities for witness in the upper social classes overseas. In plain words, missionaries are no more stupid than the rest of us.

Let's get rid of the silly old stereotypes of the missionary who tromps down jungle underbrush and cultural values without knowing the difference. Granted, not enough missionaries get a background of behavioral-science training—particularly in the crucial fields of anthropology, sociology and human learning but let's be fair: the dark ages of bumbling (to the extent it is even fair to think of the past this way) are largely over.

The Where of Service

What is a missionary? The term *missionary* is an extension of the biblical designation *apostle*. *Missionary* is useful to designate the man or woman who is on a special assignment for the church. An arbitrary distinction—but useful.

Through experience with newly appointed missionaries, I have come to expect an alert and energetic person—often a young couple, sometimes a mid-career fortyish couple—usually with some prior overseas experience, with business, industry, government, or the Peace Corps, maybe returned from a summer in Costa Rica swinging a hammer and helping a construction crew of nationals. Not heading out for a ride to the bottomless pit, not having broken all their old ties, but extending their circle of friends and place of service. Set apart to go forth; but, long before this, *called* into the service of Christ. Not with some new mysterious call ringing freshly in their ears, but with an awareness of a new *assignment*, a new *event* in their series of service activities for Christ.

Resources and Lives

“Set apart for missions”—an important concept, but careful reading of the Word shows special missions usually to be events rather than careers. God needs workers. Potential is great everywhere (because God is great!). Some of us are inclined to think that it is self-indulgent to spend an unfair proportion of God's resources on our own State-side establishments. We must answer to needy humanity for our resources, and to God for our lives.

Overseas

Missions can sound so much in the far, far off, never-never. But that's the wrong image. The world is small, the laborers are many; they can be considered *few* only in the light of the potential harvest. Missionaries aren't some little struggling handful; they are great armies of men and women—and from many countries.

From my experience I'd have to say that many are very competent men and women, often wise and full of insight far beyond the degree of formal education they have had; and, in some cases, they are highly educated in the greatest universities of the world. These are

people who could teach North American Christians quite a bit about the necessity of relating the Christian message to the local situation. What a difference it could make if energy and committed missionary insight were focused on the problem of attunement of the church to the various American subcultures!

Missions in the minds of many is divided into “foreign” and “home.” While “foreign” is defined merely as *Overseas*, “home” is defined as *Indians* and *mountain folks*. The mission of the North American church needs to be redefined to include the varieties of neighbors that are so easily overlooked while we gaze overseas.

Neighbors

When Jesus was asked, point-blank, which of the commandments was the most important, he gave a very remarkable reply. He didn’t dodge the question by saying, as he could have, “All the commandments are given by God, therefore, you surely must recognize that all are equally important.” Nor did he say, “The commandments against killing and against adultery obviously deal with more grave sins than the commandment about honoring parents or the one about greediness.” He did not make this sort of distinction.

But neither was he able to say simply that the most significant commandment is the one that tells us that we must love God with everything that we are and everything that we have. True, he said all of this, but he wasn’t able to stop here. He went right on (check it out in Matthew 22) to say, “The second is like the first.” Notice, *not* “the second is second,” or “the second is also important.” No. He said that the second is *like* the first.

When two things are truly like each other, we call them “twins” or “identical” or “the same.” We say that they match or that they are equal. So with this sort of precise linkage Jesus tied something else into the important matter of loving God: “Love your neighbor as yourself. Everything in the Law and the Prophets hangs on these two commandments.” Everything!

What is Christianity? Jesus’ life and teachings give a consistent answer: Christianity is a matter of such profound love for God that it shows through in our dealings with all people. This teaching seemed to disturb some of his more legalistic listeners. They wanted more precise definitions. They pushed him to define his word, *neighbor*. Surely they were willing to accept Jesus’ idea if *neighbor* meant the person next door or the cousin in the house across the road.

But Jesus really surprised them. He answered their question about what he meant by *neighbor* by relating one of his most famous word pictures. We call it the parable of the Good Samaritan. But Jesus doesn’t call it a parable; he said that it happened. It’s a story that tells of an act of great kindness. The suffering man in the incident is one of Jesus’ own countrymen, a Jew; but the *hero* of the story is a man of a different racial group and a different religious system.

How very shocking it must have been to hear Jesus define the word *neighbor* by jumping across racial, social, and religious lines. Would that we all might wake up to Jesus’ definition of *neighbor* and recognize that he said this teaching is basic to understanding the greatest

commandment of God.

Typical preaching emphasizes the issue of sin, and certainly it must be emphasized. Sin separates us from God. Christ's great mission focuses on the cross, where the sin-guiltiness of all people was satisfied before God. Our salvation as individual believers rests squarely on this completed act. But to be right before God is to be compassionately concerned about the needs of our world of neighbors.

Culture?

Stripped of their accustomed costumes and finery in order to look more like their impressions of missionaries, men and women in primitive countries, especially the women, sometimes look like the least pleasing sort of down-and-outers. Their own native dignity, the elaborateness of their own customs and institutions, the pride of their own creativeness—all of this, we gather, has been sacrificed to the cause of Christ.

Isn't it odd that we have come to expect this cultural devastation as the characteristic of evangelized persons in other lands, yet we don't make these sorts of demands on each other in our own lavish, bloated demi-culture.

Missionary Conference

It's unfair to judge the competency of missionaries at a missionary conference. In a typical missionary conference, missionaries are up for test in the arena least comfortable for them and under circumstances that may bring them close to throwing up. Missionaries see *real* problems of humanity close up; most have to learn to live above some of the petty junk that overly fat Christianity in the United States spins its wheels in. Why should you expect a missionary nurse or linguistic specialist also to be a whiz-bang entertainer? Why not stay home and watch Jack Benny giggle?

A missionary has to please too many different people. So it can be rather difficult for him or her to "tell it like it is" without confusing or disappointing someone. Every missionary is affiliated one way or another with a mission organization or some specific institution or agency. The organization's platform gets in their way. They can't speak publicly as merely a private person if they are under appointment with the American Mission to Old Tribes. What they say will be heard as reflecting the views of that organization.

The men and women serving the church overseas need our prayers. And when they are home on "deputation" they also need our sympathy.

Money for the Missions

Christian laity have left the job of talking about missions to pastors and mission representatives. Even the crucial need to spur missions on into the new era of systematic goal-setting and precise planning is a burden to a handful of specialists.

But in the field of missions there are only a few specialists who are not bound by policy statements, internal politics, and anxieties about possibly offending some part of the donor public. Virtually everything seems committed to maintaining a status quo. It's a wonder that development can occur at all!

As a member of the church of Jesus Christ, why don't you tackle the really tough problem of finding better ways to provide the finances for missions? Here's a real serious need that sooner or later some bright person is going to *solve*. We need to get individual missionaries out of the fund-raising business. They have other business to attend to.

Wherever, Whenever

Going overseas isn't evidence that God wanted you more than if you stayed in the United States. The place of service is relatively unimportant, but the level of commitment is very important.

God is not too proud to ask men and women to do what they ought to do, but God's plea is for *commitment*, not related to geography or employment. "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Romans 12: 1).

Does that sound familiar?

God is in the business of getting through to you for a commitment of your life and resources to do his will wherever you are. After you're moving along with God this way, you'll find really exciting things happening. God will let you work for him in ways and in places that you'll be glad about. Testimonies about how great it is to be where God wants you can be pretty solid. You start with the commitment—you sell out the whole scene to God. And on the basis of that commitment, God provides the mission. You'll know where to go—and when.

Planning

The Holy Spirit directly asked that Paul and Barnabas be *set apart* (dedicated and supported) at a certain time for a particular mission (Acts 13:2). But note: these men were already in the service of God; that is easily seen in the context of Acts 13, and also in Acts 9. Also, in other such moments of beginning a special mission, the logical processes of *men* act for the Holy Spirit in the matter of calling young missionaries. Take a look at Acts 15:40 and 16:3. The role of human goal-setting and planning is clearly part of the procedure. Don't assume it downgrades the role of the Holy Spirit. Take special notice of the apostle Paul's deliberate, precise, and bold hand in mission-planning. The Holy Spirit wasn't off on a holiday.

Communism

On the world scene communism's basic appeal is not as a religious or antireligious system but as a political economic alternative to imperialistic colonialism, military dictatorship, and capitalism. (These three go together in the minds, and experiences, of a majority of the people in the world). By contrast, the American Christian view of communism is concerned with its typically atheistic stance.

Since most of the spokespersons for communism in Germany, Russia, China, and the United States have identified formal religion as an "enemy of the people," and have simplified their position into atheism, American Christianity has reacted sharply to place

itself squarely on the line of “anti-communism.” But, as millions in the world see it, the apparent alternative to continued poverty and economic oppression is communism. So, in the perceptions of those in other cultures for whom communism has some appeal, our Christianity is seen more as a competing political system rather than as a personal religious system.

It isn’t necessary to agree with the argument that communism and Christianity are compatible, but it *is* necessary to gain an understanding of the tragic futility in which the world’s masses find themselves. A religion that is committed to the preservation of the social and political status quo will have two strikes against it.

De-Westernizing Christianity

Our forms of worship and our behavior as we act out our roles as Christians are more creations of our culture than they are absolute functions of godliness. Our sermons and even our hymns deal with problems of reconciling Christ’s claims with the demands *our* culture places upon us. A sermon for Japan must deal with reconciling Christ’s claims with the demands of the Japanese culture.

Formal theology itself provides an apt illustration: Much of evangelical theology is concentrated on resolving issues that have arisen to pervert, threaten, and fragment the Western church. Now that the evangelical church has taken firm root in Asia, for example, the need there is for a theology that concentrates on issues that distinguish Christianity from the seething religiosity of the Orient. It takes culture respecting insight, acceptance, humility, and a willingness to confront issues in a new way for an American to make this leap. Apparently few can do it in theology. How many can do it in cross-cultural witness?

We need to get out of the business of making Christianity in other cultures look just like it does in America. If we backed off a bit from the culture transplanting business, perhaps it might give God more room to de-Westernize Christianity.

Recruitment Speech

Long ago mission executives began saying that they didn’t want to send a man or woman overseas who wasn’t already working for Christ at home. You’ve heard it: a boat ride (or is it a plane ride?) doesn’t make you a missionary. That’s a fact.

So what? So this: so if you aren’t already a missionary, try to forget it. If you haven’t learned to use the English language for Christ, why do you think Swahili might be easier to use? And *talk* about Christ that isn’t backed up by Christ-like living isn’t going to get very far in Bombay or in Birmingham.

If you haven’t already accepted this, try to suppress the idea of being a missionary. If God really wants you overseas, he’ll not let you forget it. So it’s safe to suggest that you might try to suppress it. I have a lot of confidence in the Holy Spirit, so I don’t need to give you God’s pep-talk; *God* will find ways to get through to you.



Re: Youth

The Gap

Scientific investigation of the youth culture has been complicated by the rapidly evolving events of our times. Even scholars have resorted to the simpler tactics of rhetoric and logical analysis. All we know for sure is that the “generation gap” is a function of communication breakdowns rather than of deliberate or willful acts on either side of the so-called “gap.”

That the gap is easier to identify across the generations is not surprising. It has always been so. Whenever schisms in a society emerge, the love/hate relationship of parent and child always emerges as a highly visible symptom. In today’s case, these conflicts of the older versus the younger are only the predictable symptoms. The real causes lie deeper; they are visible only to the most compassionate eye. Obsession with the symptoms blinds the soul. To see the beard, to resent the vulgarity, to defend oneself against apparent attack—these command the mind’s eye and chill the heart. Mature Christians force themselves to stay calm and look deeper.

Split Youth

One of the most difficult problems in dealing with the youth culture is to know who or what speaks for youth. Clearly it is inadequate to think of “youth” as being all of one piece. No one voice could honestly speak for all. At least four groups or clusters can be seen.

The radicals are a minority; these are commonly called “revolutionaries,” but their voice is less Marxist-Leninist than it is old-fashioned anarchist. The other small fringe group is the counterrevolutionaries, youth caught up in the eye-for-an-eye doctrine of answering violence with violence. There isn’t any reason to believe that this group is very large.

A much larger group is the pre-revolutionary set, fairly eager, not yet committed to taking any particular action, but carefully watching for signs of inconsistency, more inclined to support the underdog, especially when there is any trace of injustice. (These are the ready-to-be-committed youth who could get turned on for Christ.)

Uncommitted youth still seem to form the largest group. Most churchgoing young people are in this group. For one reason or another, they are standing back—perhaps believing that they can avoid getting their hands dirty—or bloody. Lately I’ve seen some shifts in these youth, mainly over the issue of the war. They’ve been able to keep their peace over

the issues of racial justice, the social relevancy of the church, and the use of raw power in “keeping the peace”; but Viet Nam is becoming hard to keep in a repose of digestion. If something doesn’t break soon in our nation’s stance, we’re going to see some of these passive youth in this largest group march noisily into the prerevolutionary and revolutionary camps.

Relevancy

There may have been a time when professors and experts knew the answers. During the last 20-odd years more research has been carried out in the physical, medical, and social sciences than in previous centuries. A major outcome of all these studies may be summarized in the following statement: Knowledge is changing; what was thought to be true yesterday represents at best a limiting case today, valid under certain circumstances only; new research uncovered new problems to which only preliminary, tentative, and probabilistic answers could be given. Therefore, and also because of the prevailing information overload, it is no longer possible to teach that this is how it is. The teacher cannot say, ‘Learn this by heart, then you will be an expert.’ What *is* necessary today—for future scholars and future teachers, and even for those who wish to learn how to read newspaper articles on trips to planets or on inflation—is to partake of the process of discovery.²

Can you hear George Katona’s conclusion? “What is necessary today . . . is to partake of the process of discovery.” Even for the church, where the content is, in part, the “old truth,” the relevancies and values of that “old truth” must be discovered or at least rediscovered by each generation for its own era. Can we find ways to involve today’s youth in such an exciting search?

We need not so much to “wrestle with the minds of young America” as to *accept* the minds of young America. Accept them as being basically inquiring, slightly cynical, but ever so ready to become involved in seeking out the connection between precepts and practice, between values and living—in short, what they call “relevancy.”

Law and Order

“Law and order” is a hollow god when it serves only its own ends. The fact that Jesus and Paul, particularly, aren’t recorded as having spoken out against the excessive and evil power of the Roman Empire is a mystery to today’s youth. Perhaps as no other group before, American youth today has seen and sensitively reacted to the danger of raw power.

Previously in history, power displays had to hit you and hurt you before you became aware of their danger. How else can you explain the complacency of German citizenry in the late 1930s? Today, thanks to television, power displays can be observed closely—hitting and hurting others that you can identify with; it is now possible to learn in advance.

The vicious displays from Chicago in 1968 were a turning point. Yet, the change was mostly among the youth of America. The older generation was *onlooking*, and could say, “It

² George Katona. *Memo to the Faculty*, Center for Research in Learning and Teaching. The University of Michigan.

serves them right.” The youthful watcher was *feeling—and* saying something very different: “That could be me—I feel the way he feels about this, and he doesn’t deserve that sort of treatment.”

Even for many Christian young people the policeman is now a potential terrorist. Perhaps the voice of mature Christianity was buried that week—buried under a cloak of “righteous indignation” about “Communists behind it all.”

Silence in the Streets

The “adult society” is powerful enough merely to ignore, contain, and wait out the upsurge of youthful activism. There is a profound danger that such a cynical consequence may develop and lead ultimately to sullen withdrawal, isolation, and unwillingness to accept responsibility. This is the sort of hollow “orderliness” that frightens me.

The powers that be are ordained of God. Sure enough. So that means we should sit on our well-padded seats with folded hands? Is the church to have no social conscience?

The men who turned the world upside down in the first century after Christ didn’t beg off so easily. No, they had caught sight of a transcendent reality whose beauty and strength exposed the hideousness of the social order of the day and its “powers that be.” Thus they suffered and died for defying the corrupt society and the powers that maintained it.

Have Christians lost their right to a social conscience? Have we so lightly paid our debt to the heritage of Reformation and Puritan outcries? Today’s youth is screaming against society’s outrages; and if we don’t scream with them, their hoarse voices will ultimately go silent, and the glaring white rush of silence will chill us to the bone. *Silence* in the streets, not violence in the streets, marks the end of a civilization.

What’s wrong with wanting equal treatment and rights for all? Don’t we, in Christian conscience, want police forces and courts that are concerned for the human worth and dignity of everyone? Are recrimination and retribution more Christian? What’s wrong with wanting the church to show compassion and love for *all* those created in the very image of God?

Hair

The eminent sociologist and lawyer David Riesman fears that the idealism of today’s youth is too abstract and too fragile—that protest will deteriorate into a sort of “romantic withdrawal.” He writes, “Even where students have obtained the power to control their own lives and their own education, they find it difficult to create the structures that would sustain an ongoing cooperative and . . . self-directed educational process.”³

We should do all that we can to keep communication lines open between the younger and older toward the day when we all might become more sane.

Youth says that the old-timers take the wrong things too seriously. In part, that’s what the

³ David Riesman in T. George Harris. The Young are Captives of Each Other. *Psychology Today*. October 1969.

shaggy hair and beards are trying to say. We knock their music, their dress, and their grooming. They seem to be sorting us out—finding out who they can antagonize with these superficial factors, as if to say, “If I mean so little to you that you will attack me for these silly things, I want to know it now.”

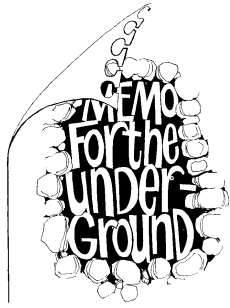
It seems like weird logic to some of us, but then, that’s how we know we’re over the hill. Maybe there is one sober truth at the bottom of it all: In this age of anxiety when we daily confront incredible international problems, national problems, racial problems, urban problems and, it seems, interpersonal problems beyond our power to cope, this persistent sense of powerlessness distorts our sense of proportion. We tend to exaggerate little irritations; we let minor issues become our major issues; we attack only little problems because we’ve grown weary of dealing with the important but impossible problems.

Our young people get caught in this pinch. They give us so many of our little problems that we develop the habit of working out our frustrations on them. The tone and stance of the news media illustrate that it isn’t only parents who fall into this trap. As a whole society we are majoring in minors (the pun is intended).

Relating to Youth

You can’t have it both ways. Either you wake up to youth or you walk off from youth. Whether you agree with what they are saying is not the important issue. What is important, if you intend to help them and to teach them, is that you try to understand and accept that what they are saying and doing is, in part, based on some justifiable complaints and anxieties.

The educator (or, if you please, the church educator) who turns youth off doesn’t have much future. They are already retired, whether they know it or not. I’m not even very optimistic about retraining him. We’re entering an age when apparently only the youthful can reach the youth. Fortunately, youthfulness is also a state of mind.



Re: Worship

Tradition

Something that is set apart especially for God is sacred. Some say that tradition in the church determines what is and isn't sacred. But we must reject this on the basis of Scripture. An emphasis, especially in the Bible's own songbook, the book of Psalms, is made on the need for "a new song." In the face of this biblical request for newness, it is hard to believe that tradition alone is the proper authority.

This is not to say that the past is wrong or that tradition is worthless. Indeed not. The more aware we become of tradition and history, the more widely we will open our appreciation and understanding.

Now is the time to reexamine what is and what isn't acceptable—not in any attempt to destroy tradition or to take a radical turn into some contemporary fad. What is needed is a broader sense of appreciation—an awareness of the majesty and grandeur of the sense of worship that reached a peak in the past, *along with* a recognition that as new generations develop new forms they, too, have something to add.

In the music of worship, for example, there are the *traditional* and the *contemporary*. Even in what we consider traditional, there is quite a variety of styles and forms. Many churchgoers already have a broad sense of music appreciation. In a "spiritual" is heard the simple expression of a soul's happiness in God or an outcry for God's help. In a marching tune such as "Onward, Christian Soldiers" we accept something of the testimony of those who are joined in the battle for righteousness. Yet, in sharp musical contrast with these simple forms, the majesty of a chorus from Handel, Brahms or Bach reminds us that even certain highly artistic forms of music can also be accepted as sacred. Who is so bold as to set limits on what God will and won't accept as worship?

Youth and Guitars

Guitars have no place in worship—especially if they have electronic amplifiers. *Oh?* Guitars are bad enough by themselves (sinful associations, you know); but when you add the electronic amplifier and speaker box, that's just *too* much. *Sure it is.* But don't look under the lid on the handy-dandy electronic organ in the chapel! (What would you find? A set of electronic oscillators to produce whistling and squeaking noises, a keyboard to control them, electronic filter networks to make them sound pleasant, a powerful amplifier and speaker box to make them sound loud, and a pedal-operated volume control to hold it all

down so the ladies on the third row don't complain.) So then it must be the *guitar* that is such a corrupting influence, not the electronic amplified.

Don't tell the folks about Franz Gruber. They'll never buy the part about his performing his new "Silent Night" on the guitar. On Christmas Eve, yet. In a church!

And for heaven's sake don't remind the youth with guitars about this inconsistency. It could make them more angry.

Taste and Worship

Sacred music is a communication to God shared with one another. We don't all use the same words or even the same forms in prayer. Nor should we expect everybody to use the same songs or the same styles of music in worship.

But in God we are united, though our forms and styles differ. In him we can fellowship as one through various sorts of sacred music—even when we know full well that our own tastes and preferences are less wide and perhaps even less well-tuned than the tastes and preferences of others.

Sacred Music: The Facts

Not all "sacred music" was written by professing Christians. . . . *so what?*

Among the compositions the evangelical church sets apart for God are compositions by Baptists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Catholics, Mormons, Jews, Unitarians, and agnostics. . . . *why not?*

Very few of the great "Christian" composers wrote church music exclusively—and some were after the money. . . . *this is wrong?*

Not all composers of "sacred music" were or are being screened for piety. . . . *anybody want the job?*

Not all "sacred music" began as sacred music. The tunes of several favorite hymns began as folk-dance tunes and drinking songs from as early as the Middle Ages. Several favorite anthems were originally sections from operas—with very different words. And several well-known gospel songs take their inspiration from 20th Century Broadway shows. . . . *so?*

Not all the songs in the church are conducive to a thoughtful and serious reflection of the majesty of God. . . . *now, there's the rub!*

Instruments in the Church

The use of musical instruments in worship has long been a matter of controversy in the church. Although the early Christians probably used only hand-held instruments, some Christians in America can become indignant about the use of any portable instruments, preferring the piano and organ exclusively. Although the instruments of worship listed in the Old Testament include the specific equivalent of the flute, clarinet, trumpet, violin, harp and guitar, a particular church today might accept the flute but reject the clarinet (they are

essentially the same, musically) and accept the harp and violin but reject the guitar: again, essentially the same origins historically.

These distinctions have been explained as necessary because of the “associations with sinful activities” of certain instruments. Perhaps we should be grateful that church members today don’t know what music historians know about the pipe organ. It isn’t all hearts and flowers! We have to chuckle a bit about the popularity in the church of the good old American favorite of skating rinks and cocktail lounges from coast to coast: the omnipresent electronic organ. But then it isn’t the faithful churchgoers who know about this anyway—it’s only the stragglers coming in off the streets who wonder about this weird “nightclub” where everybody looks so sad. Thank goodness what *they* think doesn’t matter.

But wait a minute—who has the right to have the last word on this controversy? Hit the cymbal a lick or two. See who runs out. You can bet it won’t be God.

What Makes Music Sacred?

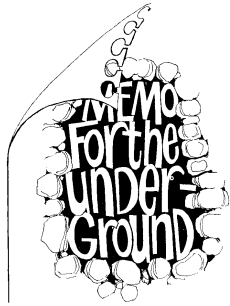
- It isn’t loudness or softness;
- It isn’t simplicity or complexity;
- It isn’t sentimentality or formality;
- It isn’t fastness or slowness;
- It isn’t how old-fashioned the words are;
- It isn’t the kind of instruments;
- It isn’t how good the performer is;
- It isn’t even a matter of whether or not we like it!
- Instead, what makes music sacred is a matter of genuine expression, from the participant’s heart, of a praise or testimony to God, put forward in such a way that the praise or testimony is made more communicative to one who wants to hear and share.

Worship as Essence

As an educator, I know the difference between learning and doing. *Doing* usually enhances *learning*; learning is sometimes dependent on doing (and vice versa). But learning and doing are not the same thing.

As a Christian, I know the difference between being taught and worshiping. For spiritual growth, I need both to learn and to worship. I value at least one experience a week in which the primary focus is worship. Sometimes it seems that study about God and preachments from his Word compete rather than complement the worship experience.

In worship, awareness of fellowship with believers provides the physical and emotional setting from which the soul reaches up to God. Human preoccupations and personalities recede from the scene, and the fellowship of believers is transformed into the fellowship of God. Listening to what God has to say is an essential part of worship, but being taught *about* what God has to say so readily falls into the category of “our program.” The essence of worship is undergirded by what has been learned—and by what has been taught from the pulpit about the things of God. Nevertheless, a distinction can be made between worship and teaching.



Re: Communication

The New Frontier: Communication

Just a few years ago there were many geographic frontiers on the earth. Today we think of frontiers in more restricted terms: New Guinea, Antarctica and the moon. Frontiers are wherever new ground is being broken: geographically, technologically, or conceptually.

The technology of mass media has greatly affected the art of communication in recent years. Yet, as often occurs in human progress, a technological frontier often pushes at a pace ahead of the necessary conceptual frontier, leaving a sort of backwash of neglect and ignorance where the misuse and disuse of the new technology breed. Communication technology is not yet properly used—for lack of conceptual understanding and wise applications of new knowledge.

Clearly, the technology is well ahead of its application. Side by side with the technological development of media has been a deterioration of interpersonal relationships—the essence and basis of communication. We can take all sorts of sounds and sights, spool them, can them, snip them, store them, mix them, bounce them into space, and mirror them back again. All of this is spectacular and promising. Now if we can just learn how to communicate, we'll really have something!

The Communication Revolution—What It Isn't

Interesting as they are, devices and machines are not what the communication revolution is all about. A device, machine or system springs from the mind of man the inquirer, man the meddler, man the challenger. But what it is all about is always more than the gadget: the revolution begins when the new discovery or invention brings about a change in the minds of men and women—when the old ways are reexamined, discarded or modified in favor of a new concept of humanity's needs and aspirations. In the 20th Century the revolution is in humanity's involvement with communications—their concepts of communication, and the way they relate communications to their old needs, their new needs and, in turn, to their aspirations. These concepts determine one's capability of using the technology.

Not everyone is aware of the communication revolution. Not everyone was aware of the industrial revolution until its effects were shot through every strand of the fabric of life. Machines can be ignored. What the machines do with the nature of life itself cannot be ignored. Mass communication can be turned off—the television receiver unplugged, the subscription canceled, the billboard ignored. But what is happening to people and the

fundamentally altered sources of their values and their awarenesses cannot be ignored. There is a massive revolution under way.

Purposeful Communication

Carelessly used, the word *communication* refers to the process of transferring information from one point to another. The over-simplicity of this common definition conceals dozens of difficulties. Purposeful communication is more than a one-way transmission; communication is more than telling; communication is *interaction*. Purposeful communication is essentially the same process as education: the presentation of information in a carefully designed form to an appropriate audience through a useful medium in order to produce change. Notice how the definition ends: to produce change. Purposeful communication is more than *telling*; telling may or may not produce change. Until change results, we haven't gotten through—we haven't communicated.

Fog

Words play an important part in the human scheme of things. Some of us today are wondering if words are not a mixed blessing. Contemporary rethinking of the function of words in thought and communication began with the semanticists—social scientists who began looking at the fact that words rarely have standard meanings. Semanticists study the imprecision of language—they spend their time trying to identify the emotional content of words; and, as their field has become more sophisticated, they find common ground with the perceptual psychologists who have been pointing out that words are given meaning by the *bearer* rather than by the sender.

You are now attempting to construct an idea for yourself from what is put here in the form of printed symbols. The ink and the paper are concrete—the ideas are only relatively understandable, depending to a large extent upon what you are doing in your mind with these words.

Philosophers and psychologists try to comprehend the problem of meaning. From their efforts we can derive both understanding and patience. What they tell us is that no two people are able to derive exactly the same meaning from a concrete experience—much less from a string of words. No wonder there is confusion about the sort of wordy Christianity that sounds better than it looks!

Christianity And Communication

Everyone wants to communicate. Oh? Until you look closely at the matter, communication can be assumed to be one of the desirable universals. Although it might seem that *everybody* would want to communicate effectively, the facts don't follow. When selfish purposes rule, deception and confusion seem to be preferable to openness, clarity and honesty. But on behalf of an honest cause, and when motivated to share that cause, communication is the name of the game.

Within the church of Jesus Christ, and especially with regard to the Word of God, there is a particular necessity to be concerned with communication. Christianity is not properly a static religion. From the examples set by Jesus' behavior, from his directives to his followers, and from the documentary evidence concerning his followers' behavior, it is

obvious Christianity is actively involved in outgoing processes of communication. In fact, the communication implicit in Christianity is purposeful and objectives-oriented. It isn't enough to stand on a street corner with a tract or a sign. It isn't enough to saturate the airwaves (of one local station). It isn't enough to stand in the pulpit and spin prayer-wheel sermons. The issue is communication: What are people hearing and what are they doing with what they hear?

Truth and Persuasion

One of the curiosities in advertising is the tendency to make more noise over a weak case than over a convincing case. Radio and television advertising seems to be more blatant for the product of dubious value. Perhaps we've been enculturated to expect "sound and fury signifying nothing." This enculturation can work against us. So convinced as we are of the truth of the gospel of Christ, we decide it doesn't *need* any yelling. So we become rather subdued, even careless in the packaging of the message. Or, being afraid that our hearers will suspect us if they see any sign of blatancy—again, same problem, we tend to play it in a low key.

A more subtle inhibition to effective communication is the assumption that truth will sell itself. To expect truth to be its own witness is a temptation to laziness. Rarely is truth inherently more clear, more reasonable, or more desirable than non-truth. In fact, when truth is the contrast of evil, truth seems often to be less convincing! Whether in psychology, sociology, communication or education, researchers make a common observation: *Facts alone don't change people.*

Bad News About the Good News

To examine the appeal of the gospel in terms of the concepts of advertising is a revealing exercise. We need to know what we're up against. If Madison Avenue were putting a "gospel" together, two aspects of the true gospel would be cut. Good contemporary advertising does not argue a listener into feeling a need, especially not a *guilty* need. Second, a Madison Avenue approach wouldn't dare suggest that the listener must accept something free in order to satisfy his need. No, people want to believe that anything worthwhile must be bought or earned.

From the behavioral viewpoint, it is unlikely that people in any culture would be favorably disposed to a communication based on these two premises: guilty need and free gift. Unless a person has been conditioned in some unnatural manner, he or she does not want to be told that he/she has a particular need. Advertisers recognized this truth not too many years ago; now the trend is away from "You need a biscuit" to "Our brand is better." In other words, "You, the buyer, can identify your own needs; we, the advertiser, will help you verbalize them; and our client, the sponsor, will sell you, for a price, what you will conclude that you need."

Take a good look at the advertising copy for any of the aggressively sold products. They may show little respect for the intellect of the buyers, but their emotional reactions are thoroughly respected. They aren't told that they have a need or a problem. Sales are based upon helping them define their needs and meet them in some specific way. Maybe we shouldn't downplay the price tags on living for Christ. Isn't there a difference between the

free gift of salvation and the costly matter of taking up the cross daily? From an advertising viewpoint, nothing is gained by pushing a cheap gospel.

Christianity Or Anti-Communism?

Although communism is this century's most important new value system, Americans don't often try to deal with it in terms equivalent to those that give it such massive appeal. It is popular to treat communism's advent as a calamity, and its hold on people's minds as purely satanic. Satanic it may be (and the blood of martyrs supports this condemnation), but nevertheless we must deal with it in a more thorough way.

In the oversimplified equation of "communism equals calamity," Christianity is communicated as anticommunism. The result is a confusing secondary message that weighs down the primary message of the gospel. Less of the message of Christ comes through because of the extra baggage of the message of anticommunism. Could we be so busy communicating anticommunism "on behalf of Christ" that to the desperate farmer in India, the oppressed peasant in Greece, and the black man in the Union of South Africa we seem to have nothing to offer?

Secondary Messages As Distractions

Some well-meaning people intentionally attach secondary messages to the message of the gospel. This leads to serious confusion in and about the church. Some decide that the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit are not quite enough; They decide to help out. They decide for themselves the particular political and social causes that God wants all good Christians to be for or against and wraps preachments about these issues into their communication as part and parcel of what God's redemptive work is all about. Excess baggage.

What is Heard as Being Important is Important

Perception is an essential part of communication. What the hearer hears in the message is more important than what the sender thinks his or her message was. Like most solid theory, this sounds painfully like common sense. (But remember, there is nothing so uncommon as applied common sense!) Effective communicators are concerned about how they are heard; they know it does no good to argue with receivers about what they think they have heard. Reshaping and resending the message are the solution.

Further, an effective communicator tries to minimize the secondary message—the accompanying messages that travel along as stowaways or excess baggage to weigh down, becloud or embarrass the primary message. Again, there is a common-sense adage that speaks to this point: "What you are speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you say." A wrathful message about love, for example, may be perceived as contradictory confusion. A head-bashing delivered in the name of law and order can be understood several ways. Supposedly supportive relationships of the missionary to the national church nurtured in an atmosphere of mistrust and within policies of patronizing separateness can seriously backfire. Pastoral backpatting interspersed by backbiting is apt to be seen as hypocritical. These are illustrations of perceptual problems that arise from inconsistency of the verbal message and the behavior of the sender.

What Sort of Christ?

We are communicating something or other about Christ—about the work he has done in each of our lives; about what he wants us to be and to do; about how closely we are tuned to his message; about what he is trying to do through his church. Consider the perceptions people make of Christ through the messages they see and hear in you. Are the messages coming through to them with singleness and clarity? Are there stowaways or excess baggage weighing them down? Are there contradictions? *You are* communicating some sort of Christ.

Truth Without Consequences

“Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” may easily be the all-time prizewinner among misused aphorisms. The truth is hard to discern; and harder to share, virtually powerless against any really appealing alternative, and often poorly translated into personal meaning for those we most want to help.

All Christians are in the business of communication. At the very least, we are the walking, talking, “audiovisual materials” of a complex informal system which is communicating what Jesus Christ means in today’s terms. We have too often been content to be part of a “Truth Without Consequences” program. Consider those who are watching you. Perhaps they get the message about Christ as truth—but what message do they get about freedom? In what sense has the truth made you free? How do you show it? Has Christ *really* released you from the bondage of sin? Has he really given you *abundant* life? What are the consequences of truth for you?

Putting It All Together Takes Time

The technology for the communication revolution is already here. If invention and discovery were to stop altogether, we would still need the entire decade to assimilate effectively the technological resources now available. Of course, the dizzy reality is that invention and discovery will *not* stop, and by the end of the Seventies we will likely observe that it will take us two *more* decades to assimilate what is *then* available. Such is the nature of the snowball and avalanche of progress.

Spreading The Gospel—A Cruel Approach

Tell, inform, send, show, and *broadcast* connote a one-way information flow. By contrast, *communicate* connotes a two-way flow of information—from sender to receiver and back to the sender again in such a way as to allow the sender to reshape and resend his or her message. The objectives of communication are expressed in terms of changes in the receiver; in contrast with the objectives of *telling*, which are more a matter of *exposing* the receiver. (Or, as we more cruelly say, “Giving people a chance to hear.”)

Souls At \$2

The new technological resources of communication mayor may not significantly affect the church. Recent history can make us skeptical: the church-related uses of radio and television so far don’t seem very promising; the level of creativity typically associated with uses of tapes and filmstrips isn’t exactly inspired; and the pie-in-the-sky schemes for winning souls at \$2 each ignore the research that shows mass media to be relatively ineffective in bringing people to a point of decision. Nevertheless, the church isn’t really behind; the rest of society

is also still trying to figure out how to harness up the media. Effective use of the new media depends on understanding and know-how--and money.

Quality Demands Know-How

It is now time to quit kidding ourselves about the value of random one-way messages in the name of Christ. Without a listing of specific objectives regarding specific audiences, without the getting and using of significant and reliable feedback, without the continuous evaluation and reshaping of messages, we place an unreasonable load on the mysticism of Christianity.

We can appropriately ask and expect God to lead in our planning and our evaluating; we can rightly expect the Holy Spirit to work the message of the gospel to the salvation of souls. But should we blithely and blindly stir around in things so basic and so vital as the development and extension of the body of Christ? No. We are obliged to employ all the know-how that God in his providence has made available. We can settle for no less than the best of both technology and human know-how.

The Sanctified Two-Step

After the flurry of excitement over the technological gadgetry of the mass media subsides, it may be interpersonal confrontation that emerges as the most powerful sort of communication. Scientific evidence seems to point in this direction—that winning men to a cause may be best accomplished through two separate steps: (1) a mass approach to raising questions, challenging the status quo, and creating an awareness of need, followed then by (2) an interpersonal interaction wherein feedback to the communicator can be instantaneous, and the warmth and depth of human encounter can be brought to bear.

In this two-step design, the use of mass media helps people see their needs; the awareness of such needs raises questions that then can be the focus of real communication. Perhaps the day will come when the old “discussion forum” will return, to be employed as a follow-up of inquiries and awareness generated through the mass media. Could this be what the assembly of believers, the church in congregation, is all about? Could we be about to rediscover the vitality of communication through conversation—today’s lost art? If this should be the case, the church, through its local congregations with their suitable places for public dialogue and discourse, and with its traditions for public gatherings, could find itself reaching those people who have been sensitized and made curious through the mass media.

Notice the emphasis on conversational interaction in Jesus’ ministry. Notice the questions expressed by the inquiring people who came to him. Notice the dialogues in Acts that give us a picture of the early church. Could this sort of conversational ministry account for the procedure used by Paul and Barnabas at Iconium when they “spoke in such a manner that a great multitude believed”? Speculation on these matters may be useless in itself, but the church can come alive through patient inquiry into what the Holy Spirit wants to do in *this* age, coupled with an energetic application of the theory and technology of communication to those objectives.

Genius for Peanuts

Credit Charles Schulz with more communication—more effect through the use of media—than most popular writers of “how to understand yourself” books who have the same basic

objectives as those that guide Schulz. The creator of “Peanuts” applies what he knows about people, getting them to look critically at themselves in non-threatening ways. A clever person and certainly an artist, he also is an informed student of human behavior. We can see ourselves in his caricatures because Schulz has been watching us. Less of his communication comes from out of his own head than from what he observes in people. Like Charles Schulz, every communicator, public or private, needs to be a “people-watcher.”

One Anxious Thought

It is better to be left behind than to be on the wrong train. If all we are going to do in the contemporary “communication revolution” is adopt some new names for old processes, count me out. If there is to be any constructive impact on the church and on the mission of the church, we must first be very clear about what that mission really is. Frankly, relating the powerful new technologies of communication for behavior change to such an unclear structure as the contemporary church makes me uneasy. I’m not convinced that enough scholarly attention in Bible colleges and seminaries is given to the doctrines of the *church*. What is the *entity* of the church? What is the *mission* of the church? What are the church’s *objectives* and *procedures*? These issues must be clarified before better communication can help the church.

Traveling Two Roads at the Same Time

Behavioral science is coming of age. The consequences in terms of new and powerful means to shape men’s thinking are less a matter of *soon* than of *now*. Just as the era of the physical sciences was introduced by the industrial revolution, so the era of the social and behavioral sciences is heralded by the communication revolution.

We live in one of the great moments of history when the fruits of science—of the systematic study of God’s creation—lie within the grasp of the church, to be employed for his glory and for the building of his church. Is this what God is offering to us in the communication revolution? If so, how do we claim it for him?

There are two roads we must travel simultaneously. We must inquire more diligently into this matter of the church in the world. (There is no way to turn the power of scientifically designed communication to the glory of God without having a clear basis from which to derive the *objectives* of the communication.) And we must also quickly master the concepts and skills of the new technologies. This latter demands quite a different order of things than just the matter of how to build and manage a radio station, how to operate a television camera, or how to publish an attractive book. Of course, these are the aspects of the “revolution” that the layperson sees, but the more basic gains lie in matters of understanding and planning for changes in human behavior through communicative and instructional media.

The Fateful Race

Modern man has at his fingertips powerful new know-how for influencing men. The race to find ways to employ new understandings and technologies of communication may well be decisive in the development of man’s condition in these latter days. Effective communication of truth is the key to men’s minds. The church of Jesus Christ should not settle for second place.



(PERSONAL)

Dreams

Take a good look at your dreams before they bump into harsh reality. Dreams, hopes, visions—these play an important part in keeping us sane and keeping us moving. There's nothing wrong with having a dream about what the world might be, and what you might become in it. Without dreams, nothing improves. Dreams have kept people going in the face of despair.

Martin Luther King was such a man. "I have a dream," he said; over and over he said, "I have a dream." It wasn't just a rally cry. He spoke from a heart of frustration and compassion. He dreamed of a world without discrimination. Realistic? No. Useful? Yes. He spoke of a dream that was in harsh contrast with reality, but it kept him going; and our world is different because he kept going.

This is what dreams are for—to give us a glimpse of alternatives to the accepted realities. We each need to have dreams. We need to see ourselves as we *could* become. We need a vision of the good we might do in this dark world. The sidewalks of life are dangerously disjointed. If you don't have a dream, you may fall into the cracks!

Do It Yourself?

You may make your own dreams, but it takes faith to cling to dreams. God responds to faith (check it out in Ephesians 2). Faith, real faith, concerns itself first with your relationship with Jesus Christ. But it surely doesn't stop there. Faith makes us *involved*. Faith makes us *active*. Faith makes us *loyal*. Faith gives us *goals*. Faith gives us *courage*. Faith gives us *value*. Faith makes life itself *important*, *exciting* and *productive*. "[S]o that you may not become sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Hebrews 6: 12).

Think about it. You, too, can inherit God's promises. "I have a dream. My dream is attuned to God. And God responds to my faith. My dream, through faith, can change today's reality."

Can you say this?

Honesty

The transforming power of Jesus Christ is, in a way, rather embarrassing. We want to claim and live in the fact of this transforming power, yet we know full well that there are some gaps and slips. When we want to "tell it right" in order to give God the glory, we describe

ourselves as Christians and emphasize what Christ has done for us. And we easily fall into a trap of exaggeration. For some reason it is hard today to admit, with Paul, that the “old nature” still hangs in there, cropping up in the most exasperating ways.

I’ve discovered that my collegiate friends, especially the undergrads, like to hear me admit that I have trouble with the old sinful nature. It encourages them not to relax their convictions, but to better understand and accept their own problems as being a normal aspect of living for Christ. My students call that sort of talk “honesty.” What this means to me is less a matter of honesty than a matter of openness, of frankness—a frankness that tells them I’m not entitled to any halo. “*I have the will to do good, but not the power. That is. I don’t accomplish the good I set out to do, and the evil I don’t really want to do I find I am always doing*” (Romans 7:18-19, Phillips).

Once Upon a Time

As I became increasingly involved in those things that a college professor does get involved in—the mixture of roles of teacher, adviser, counselor, and in other functions demanded in the academic community—I became concerned about what I was becoming. I became suspicious that there were certain values that I was compromising, particularly values with reference to the worth and value of other people and my responses to them.

In a sense, the symptoms that I was observing were rationalizations; and whenever we begin to observe rationalizations in ourselves, we ought to assume that they might be symptoms. I was becoming more and more preoccupied with matters that clearly were more important to me than people. I was trying to relate myself conscientiously to more and more people, but in order to spread myself so thin it became clear that I was having to justify and rationalize a much less involved relationship with people—a shallower and less sincere relationship.

The symptom that really caused me to take notice was the development of a stylized response to people, patterned along a rather standard set of responses that I would make to other people. I speak for myself, but perhaps for you this may serve as a kind of personality mirror. I recognized in my own behavior more formality, more stiffness, and certainly more indifference. I particularly became anxious because it seemed that I was dealing with people less in their terms and more in my terms. In fact, for “good reason” I became disinclined to trust others’ views of themselves. My views of others were those I operated on. Never mind their view! I was becoming less sensitive to peoples’ views of themselves and their needs. This realization began to get to me.

Perhaps I was sensitized by an encounter with Matthew 8. “After Jesus had come down from the hill, he was followed by a great crowd. Now a leper approached him, bowed low. He said, ‘Sir, if you will, you can cleanse me.’” And I wondered what I would do in a moment like that. This is where my rationalizations would come in. Here is where I would become obsessed with the fact that I had more important matters to deal with, that I had larger crowds of people to be concerned about, and that, in the final analysis, this man didn’t even have his basic need defined correctly!

Then it struck me: “Jesus stretched out his hand and said, ‘Indeed I will, be clean again.’” I

wondered, is this characteristic of Jesus Christ? This “failure” to recognize that the poor leper had a spiritual need? This “failure” to recognize that Jesus Christ was here for much more important business than that? This “failure” to recognize that the man couldn’t even be trusted to define his own problem?

And now I enjoy the gospels in a new way. I enjoy reading the gospels to notice how Jesus reacted when people came to him. How different from those of us who lack the time for sincere relationships!

Christlike

As an individual Christian, I am glad that my Lord is in the habit of meeting needs and that I feel very free to describe my problems as I see them, knowing that he starts there to provide the help I need. I’d like to develop to the point where my most basic personality characteristic is this thing I see in Christ—a need to meet other people’s needs. For me, this is what it will take to become Christlike.

Less Talk, More Walk

The church doesn’t need a special vocabulary or a sanctimonious style of conversation. We need to clean out the pat answers, the silly “joy bells” slogans, the trite epithets, and the half-understood terminology of fake scholarship. The cause of Christ needs less talk and more *real* thought followed by action.

Never allow talk about Christ to become your substitute for experience with Christ. *Walk* in the faith.

Listen!

Through his human personality Jesus revealed a singular need: the need to precisely and fully meet the needs of others. And I wonder, does this relate to what’s wrong today? I wonder, am I stylizing my responses to people? Do I posture as if I know more about your needs than you know? As a Christian, when I recognize that a person needs repentance, do I disallow his view of himself and badger him until he accepts my view of his basic needs? Does this relate? In a recent newsletter of MARC (the Missions Advanced Research and Communications Center on the West Coast), there was this paragraph:

For the past quarter-century there has been an increasing polarization within mission agencies toward either proclamation or presence. There have been those who have decried as unchristian an emphasis on verbally proclaiming the lostness of man and the salvation available through Jesus Christ to people whose material needs continually force them lower into the mud of poverty and despair. Some even question our right to invade the personality of another individual with such a divisive message. To many in this group the task of the church is to be a presence for God in the world and to testify to God’s concern and goodness by acts of compassion and love. At the other pole are those who are burdened by the lostness of men and driven by the command of God to make disciples of all nations. What good, they ask, does it do to fill a man’s stomach if he is separated from God and under judgment?⁴

⁴ Edward R. Dayton. *Newsletter*, Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center

The issue will continue to rage; the argument that assumes a distinction between spirituality and social action. But, one thing is very clear: Jesus himself was interested in meeting all the needs of humankind. And it is inescapable, from the evidence in the gospels, that he met needs systematically in the terms and in the sequence that those who approached him described their needs.

Graduation Speech

What do you say to a friend who is graduating in this crazy era? When commencement is the threshold to such an uncertain future, what do you say to a graduate? Try this: “Here you are, the graduate; you step away from the sheltering and encouragement of the past, you step into the anger, the rage, and the confusion of the future. These are the basic ingredients of your celebration. This is the stuff that graduation today is made of. “You may see it in terms of a release from various sorts of domination. How quickly you will learn that your hopes for freedom are doomed. You get away from one sort of domination, but you will quickly find that another sort has taken its place. You may see this moment in your life as a chance to try your own wings. How quickly your wings will tire when you discover that flying alone is indeed just that: lonely flying. Your dreams of independence, self-reliance, and making a better life can so quickly come to frustration. This isn’t an easy era. It’s an exciting time to live, but it isn’t easy. Your life needs a solid foundation; you need God-reliance more than self-reliance.”

Where Will It End?

Our poor corrupt nation! A good bit of the protest of youth today is valid. There are justified and responsible complaints. The society and its institutions are overdue for some important changes. To view the moral condition of the nation with alarm is necessary. Panic is already commonplace. But the hazard in the state of panic is its numbing effect on our discriminations that would otherwise seek out alternative escapes. The danger in despair is the tendency to give up.

Where will it all end? What predictions can we make? What predictions *dare* we make? More important, will we write ourselves *into* or *out of* those predictions? Will we decide to make an impact? Will we decide *correctly* just how to make an impact that will alter the apparent course of crumble and decay?

Will it end in anarchy? In national catastrophe? To abandon hope seems both unnecessary and unwise. Unwise, because it can breed only a sense of futility and lethargy. Unnecessary, because there is still far too much that is genuine, too much that is solid, substantial and foundational. Indeed, the rudimentary and frank honesty of today’s youth convinces me that we are entering a very hopeful era. We may be able, with God’s help, to seize it for the cause of Jesus Christ.

This could be the beginning of an era in which the church of Jesus Christ will shine as a beacon above the mess in the world. If we are quick to set our house in order, to listen closely to what youthful voices are trying to tell us, to respond in time--before disillusionment grips them--we will see great things done for God. These great things may demand our lives, but knowing God is still there will help to make us courageous.

Open For Change

Today is an exciting era for Christians. God is speaking to many. God is opening many eyes to participation in his plan. God is working in remarkable ways. It's an era of openness and of questioning rather than of closure and dogma. God is reshaping our concepts and our institutions through the new acceptability of investigation and challenge.

Change IS. Fear of change is a threat to sanity.

The great creative God is still on the throne and he continues to create. Revering the past is one thing. And, if accompanied by honest and careful study of history, it provides a basis of understanding the present. But clinging desperately to the past dishonors God.

Is your God only the God of yesterday?

The God of the past is still the God of the future!



Prayers of the Underground

To Walk in the Presence Of God

Help us know your presence. Help us feel your presence. Make everything in us conscious of your reality. We are real. We have to deal with real people. We want them to know your reality and ours. Help us to walk, to act, to shine with the reality of your presence. We need to live in the ways you have described for us. We need your Holy Spirit to enable us to show your reality through our lives.

Not to Laugh

Please don't let us laugh off our shortcomings. Your model for happy living isn't natural for us. We want to really live! Help us move into the new nature available for us in Christ. Father, it's so embarrassing to see the ways we fall short. It's so tempting to laugh them off. Make us more sensitive. Please.

When People Let Me Down

Jesus, people sometimes disappoint me. And I don't think I expect too much of them. I wonder sometimes if you are losing out with some Christians. It isn't just that they stumble-I do that too-but the problem is that I'm counting on them and they let me down. I'm surely glad *you* don't let me down. Help me to keep my eyes on you.

For People Who Are Different

Our church is comfortable the way it is. When the new housing project is finished, this neighborhood will change. Many of the people who move in will be different from us. They probably won't be interested in our style of worship. No doubt they will have backgrounds that are very different from ours. Will we be able to "absorb" them? Perhaps if we just go after the unsaved they could be brought into our style of church. Get them at the start; that's the solution! But those who are already Christians? Maybe they will prefer to start their own church. They will prefer to be among their own kind, anyway.

Forgive me, Father. This is the way I sound when I talk to myself. Help me to talk to you instead.

More Than My Share

Father, sometimes I resent having to carry more than my share of the load. Help me to get free of this way of looking at it. How much my brothers and sisters are doing for you shouldn't be my measuring stick. I'd rather be measured against Jesus. He even took my share as his own on the cross. I want to carry as much as you want me to. Help me be

strong enough.

To be Christlike

The way we see ourselves, and the way we describe ourselves, you can understand. We're all different and you intend for us to be. I have needs. My companions have needs. In the gracious manner you dealt with people while you were here, deal with us. But help us to realize and to be aware of the help that we do get, so that we can become increasingly thankful and more inclined to be helpful to others. May we be Christlike, Father, in specific ways. Give us each one a drive-a compulsion-to be more Christlike in our personalities. And help us, Father, to model our lives in such a way that others will see Christ in us.

About the Author

His Title: Professor of Education, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI and for eight years the Director of the Institute for Research in Learning.

His Roles: Teacher, behavioral scientist, instructional systems designer for education and communication, consultant in theological education and intercultural education, musician, counselor, husband, father.

His Purpose: To contribute toward the reform and renewal of the church of Jesus Christ in North America.



Photo by Steve Hoke