

Cults and the World System

The subject of cults is an important issue confronting the Church today. They are not confronting the Church so much directly as they are indirectly, and therein lies their danger. Almost every Christian is aware of the direct misrepresentation of the Person of Jesus Christ, and the teaching of unbiblical doctrines which mark the cults. But for many months we have had a growing concern that the purposes of Satan are being advanced in such a subtle way that many people are missing the main deception in the existence of cults, and the Jonestown incident has magnified our alarm. Aside from the fact that individuals are being misled, there is another great delusion taking place on a much larger scale.

The Deception

We feel that Satan is attempting to imitate what God is doing in this day. Satan is putting forth the cults as a viable alternative to the normal American way of life. People who are bored, confused, and looking for purpose in life can find one in the cults. *The church fails to attract them because, for the most part, no practical Christianity is offered.* At best, even in "Bible-believing", "Fundamental" churches, an incomplete gospel is presented which, even though it proclaims Jesus Christ as Lord Who died for us on the cross and wants us to accept Him as our personal Savior; it goes no further. It doesn't call people to really change their life-source. This gospel doesn't really call for anything substantial except to "believe (mentally assent), and be good". Actually the structure of this system doesn't show for true involvement of the body of Christ. So when people sit and listen to a message and no results come about, faith in God is destroyed.

We are supposed to follow an almighty God and yet our religion seems powerless. As Jms 2:17 says, faith without works is dead. The preaching of the true gospel demands a moral response, and if this response does not come forth, then the hearers are only absorbing knowledge which will puff us up and make us proud, so that we will continue

to harden our heart and stiffen our neck to what God is saying today. People are exhorted to “get saved” and to help “save others”, but no provision is made to care for these new-born, spiritual infants. Consider the result if a mother brought her child into the world and left it alone to care for itself. The child would die. So do we spiritually wither and die if we are not properly cared for by those who led us to the Lord. God provided the proper environment for this growth by establishing His Church. Here there is supposed to be the spiritual guidance and gifts to bring us to maturity in Christ. “And He gave some to be apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:11-13). It is evident that we still need all these gifts because the verse states that we will need them *until* we attain to the unity of faith. When this happens, we won’t be tossed around by the trickery of men and false doctrine. A true church will provide this practical Christianity, because there will be true shepherds who are concerned about the condition of their flocks and give spiritual and physical aid to the sheep. This is a place where the people do not “go to Church”, rather they are the Church (called-out ones). Their lives reflect this fact because brothers and sisters are constantly encouraging each other as they work and live together. Acts 2 and 4, supported by the epistles, truly describes what the Church was and is supposed to be. “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles, and all those who believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

praising God...” This norm of the Christian calling is witnessed by our Lord’s life as He gave of Himself and shared His life intimately with His disciples.

Of course there are those who dispensationally dismiss the truth of God’s Word. There is nothing wrong with seeing how God has dealt with man in different ways through the ages, but to attempt to limit God by saying “He doesn’t do things like that anymore,” is a misrepresentation of the sovereignty of God. He can do anything He chooses according to His righteousness. Some say that Acts 2 and 4 describes the first mistake that the Church made; and thus they miss the truth. By this hyper-dispensationalism, they rationalize away their responsibility to obey God at this moment in space and time. By saying that the first act of those who had received the Holy Spirit was a mistake, they are actually saying that God Himself made a mistake. Another error is to say that there is a distinction between a “disciple” and a “Christian”. Thus the Christians were not given the same commands as were the ‘disciples’. Jesus made no such separation. We disagree with those hyper-dispensationalists who draw lines of separation even in the middle of sentences! 1 Cor 12:28 — when Paul is speaking of gifts — many claim that apostles, prophets, workers of miracles, and those speaking in different tongues have all mysteriously disappeared, but that teachers, and those able to help others and administrators still exist! How can this be, especially when in chapter 14, Paul tells us to eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially prophecy! In like manner, the dismissing of the Church as community is improper interpretation of Scripture.

The deception of cults at first glance is obvious to most observers. Many books have been written on the subject even exposing the error of their doctrine concerning the person and work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. However, most of the modern day cults offer some answers to man’s problems — answers that the Church is not supplying. There are truth, ideals, absolutes and love found and expressed to some degree within the framework of the groups called cults. 20th century man is no fool! He is

intelligent, rational, and sees that there is something offered by cults which is very desirable, and which he has not found anywhere else. It is sad that man is not finding the answers to the longing of his soul in the existing denominational and Roman Catholic churches. Neither is he finding them in any other religion, as witnessed by the large number of Jewish youth involved in the cults. To the disgrace of Christendom the cognitive ones of our society are turning away from existing forms of religion with nothing to turn to except cults.

The great deception of cults is to get our attention away from the greatest deception of the age, the deception that will delude all those who are not organically married to their brothers and sisters in the body of Christ, loving the truth with all heart. If Satan can divert our attention, our anger, our wrath, and our energy, and our time to exposing and wiping out “cults”, then he will have accomplished the great rip-off of our time. This rip-off is intended to disguise the arising of the Great Harlot who very quietly, in the midst of great tradition and acceptance in society, will seduce men’s minds into thinking she is the true church and thus pronouncing judgment on everything else that is not a part of her, calling all other groups cults! Within this ‘other’ group will be such groups as Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, Unification church, People’s Temple group, and *the true Church*. The true church will not be accepted in the world any more today than it was 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem or Ephesus or Philippi or Rome.

Legislation has already been prepared to limit cults. Their activities, beliefs, and members are coming under increasing attack. The great harlot is being raised-up as “the” standard. Everything not like the harlot will be judged as false. Possibly there will be more incidents like the Peoples Temple group to draw attention to the perversion of cults. The result will be that people will be afraid of anything that is different from the institution whose presence and authority we have all become so accustomed to and comfortable with.

We feel that the costly sharing of the first Church stands as a constant challenge to Christians of all ages. They dared to give concrete, visible expression to the oneness of believers. The result was unconditional economic liability for and total financial availability to the other brothers and sisters in Christ. Most people believe that this vision quickly faded, but the actual practice of the early believers proves the contrary.¹

The powerful evangelistic impact of the economic sharing at Jerusalem indicates that God approved and blessed the practice of the Jerusalem church.

When, in some places Scripture commands transformed economic relationships among God's people, and in other places describes God's blessing on His people as they implement these commands, then we can be sure that we have discovered a normative pattern for the Church today.²

The Church described in Acts 2 and 4 is a discernable community, separate from the world, who were in such close contact and involvement with each other that they could daily worship and eat together, and aid one another. Needless to say this type of living would require a drastic change of lifestyle for most Americans, and this is where we feel that practical Christianity strikes right at the very heart of people. It doesn't require much to mentally assent to the reality of Jesus, neither is much required to attend an hour-long meeting once or twice a week. But when you start preaching that Jesus said, "Unless you give up all your own possessions, you cannot be my disciple" (Lk 14:33), then there is much opposition. You get the same response that Jesus did.

REDEMPTIVE Community AS GOD'S Rectifier

"By divine right everything should be common and no man should take to himself what is God's, any more than he can divide the air, rain, sun, or water, the moon, the elements or snow." — St. Augustine.

"A common life is necessary for all, especially for those who fight blameless for God, and desire to follow the life of the apostles. But through acquired wickedness one

says, “That is mine”, and another, “That is mine”, and another, “That is mine”, and thus has a division taken place among men, but not out of the counsel of God.” —Clement (in a letter written to James, the brother of our Lord in 92 A.D., quoting from Psalm 133:1 and speaking of the First Church, that everything had been given for common use.)

All denominations believe in the mystical body of Christ. They will confess that all believers are part of it, but how do you get it to work? How does it function? We may be labeled “Evangelicals” or “Charismatics” or “Fundamentalists” and we may know a few basic points of the gospel, but beyond that there is only a hypertension of mistrust. What are we waiting for to transform us? We have knowledge, but what is God doing, and what does He want us to do?

On Pentecost the believers were not of one mind and heart because they had the Holy Spirit. They were united because they received the same message. They responded to the Kingdom of God in the same fashion. The apostles knew no other message nor any other way to proclaim the gospel. They were in dead earnest, not just whimsically speaking some “off-the-wall” message that they had heard somewhere. What they had learned from the Lord through much suffering for over three years, they were now proclaiming by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul preached to the Corinthians and every church no other gospel than John and Peter preached to the 3,000 and 5,000 at Jerusalem, who remained constant in community, even long after the first dispersion (Acts 7; 8). Fourteen years later Paul visited the Jerusalem community (Gal 1:8; 2:1) and it was still going on. Many say that God scattered them after Stephen’s death, but it was actually the *Devil* who sent persecution upon the community to scatter them. It is obvious that they were not all scattered, for in II Cor 8 and 9, Paul was taking collections for the saints in Jerusalem who were still living in community. If Peter, Paul, or an angel from heaven should teach a different gospel, or a different gospel of community (as false brothers teach), they would be laying a wrong foundation — which thing is a curse.

The foundation laid at Jerusalem, the foundation of Jesus Christ, the foundation of the apostles and prophets are all the same foundation. It can't be discovered except by total surrender of yourself and all that you possess. It is the strait gate that few find. To the carnal man it is the "eye of the needle". It is a 'hard saying', but not as hard as the hearts of those who won't respond.

"Sell all you have and give to the poor". The way is a furnace in which men are tried like gold in the fire.

Ask what the Strait Gate means, and people will go through much mental gymnastics, but nothing real and physical. This is the cause for much stumbling and offense, but blessed is the one who does not stumble because of Christ. He is absolutely unworthy of Christ and His Glory, and will not taste of His supper if he loves his own possessions more than Christ. This is so basic and elementary sounding, but the vast majority fail here.

Community is not just some nice thing that Christians can do "if they feel called"; rather there is no Church without it. It is the only context for baptism and the Lord's Supper, as well as headcovering and proper child rearing. It is an institution of Christ and of the Holy Spirit and His teaching. True community in the Lord is part of God's plan of restoration upon the earth and it leads us back to the place of accomplishing God's plan in creation. In community we can stand against the idolatrous power and dominance of the institution of the world system. Thus we are actually taking dominion over the earth, which is God's intention for the creation of man as put forth in Gen 1.

Communicate means to make common to all what one presently possesses. "What we have seen and heard ... that you may have fellowship with us" (1 Jn 1:3). God is light, and in Him there is no darkness. If we don't have fellowship (koinonia) with one another we are still walking in darkness and we still don't communicate of fellowship. Job said, "What is the hope of the hypocrite that he is so greedy? Will God hear his cry when fear comes upon him?" (Job 27:8-9).

The absolute simplicity and clarity of the gospel makes our choice black and white. It cuts through the thick cloud of grey that boggles men's minds and keeps them spinning in the insanity of this world. A quotation from Erick Fromm:

“Our contemporary Western society, in spite of its material, intellectual, and political progress, is increasingly less conducive to mental health, and tends to undermine the inner security, happiness, and reason, and the capacity to love in the individual; it tends to turn him into an automaton who pays for his human failure with increasing mental sickness, and with despair hidden under a frantic drive for work and so-called pleasure. The really hopeless victims of mental illness are to be found among those who appear to be most normal. Many of them are normal because they are so well adjusted to our mode of existence because their human voice has been silenced so early in their lives that they do not even struggle or suffer or develop symptoms as the neurotic does. They are normal not in what may be called the absolute sense of the word; they are only normal in relation to a profoundly abnormal society. Their perfect adjustment to that abnormal society is a measure of their mental illness. These millions of abnormally normal people, living without fuss in a society to which, if they were fully human beings, they ought not be adjusted, still cherish “the illusion of individuality”, but in fact, they have been to a great extent de-individualized. Their conformity is developing into something like uniformity.”³

The only hope for man to come out of this insanity is to see the Kingdom of God, to be radically changed, to come through the cross of Jesus Christ which demands that you change Kingdoms, not just in your mind, but in every aspect of your life — the one, a path very broad which leads to destruction; the other, a path very narrow which leads to the Kingdom of God.

The great insanity, the greatest delusion is for a man to say, “I'm on my way to heaven; I've been born again; I have eternal life”, yet in his daily life he takes identity with the world and walks daily on the road to destruction. If your life is rooted and grounded on this broad path, if your social and economic relationships are found on this path, then you can be sure that in the end, your life will end in destruction, according to Mt 7:24-27.

Religious System

“Since the Reformation a subtle tendency has developed in Protestant theology to deny any point of contrast between man’s normal life and his religion, which is based on the grace of God in Jesus Christ.”⁴

Pharisees and Sadducees were names familiar to those living in Israel in Jesus’ day. Both groups were interested in religion, moral conduct, and social issues. They differed from one another greatly in their doctrine, but they could agree on at least one thing — to crucify Christ. (Jerusalem would stand true to her reputation as the murderer of prophets and the killer of those sent to her from God. Jesus would join the ranks with Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and John the Baptizer.) “Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets and it was your fathers who killed them. Consequently, you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers because it was they who killed them, and you build their tombs. For this reason the wisdom of God has said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill, and some they will persecute, in order that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world — from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the house of God shall be charged against this generation’” (Lk 11:47-51).

The image, though, that most modern Christians have of these Jewish people is far from the truth. They were the height of godliness in their day. They were respected, looked to for leadership and were even bowed to on the street. They studied the Torah and attempted to follow the Law and the Prophets and all the religious traditions and they claimed to worship YHWH, the only true God. Paul does not speak the name “Pharisee” with great reproach, but as a title of honor, because the Pharisees were greatly respected by the masses of Jewish people. In a similar manner, church leaders today might say, “We are the Pharisees.”⁵

Christians today, of course, see the Pharisees truly, according to Christ's appraisal. We see that despite their outward appearances and piousness, and 'going-to-synagogue-every-Sabbath' religion, they were full of deadness on the inside. They claimed that Jehovah was their God and Abraham was their father; but in actuality, as far as they were concerned, YHWH was dead. God had no practical effect in their lives, thus Jesus said that their father was Satan. And when that God, whom they claimed to worship, stood upon the earth looking them straight in the eye, they rejected Him. "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty. But, as I told you, you have seen Me and still do not believe" (Jn 6:36). Jesus was the complete statement of the Godhead, and today, the Body of Christ is the complete statement of Jesus upon the earth.

"A madman once ran into the marketplace calling out, 'I seek God.' The bystanders, vastly amused, said, 'Why? Is God lost? Has He taken a sea voyage? Has he emigrated?' But the madman cried out again, 'Where has God gone? I mean to tell you, He is dead.' So he went from one church to another saying, 'What are these churches now, if they are not the tombs of God?'"⁶ The meaning of this parable, as related by its author Nietzsche, fixed upon the great new phenomenon of Western society, the gradual fading out of the consciousness of God from the mind of Western man. He has driven Christ out of Christendom and now lives as if God were indeed dead.

In the Western world today, many people are quite willing to serve God on Sundays, but the decisions made in their everyday life have no clear connection with the Apostles' Creed which they confess in the church building once a week. A lot of people are sincere, but they have been misled by false shepherds into a satanic system where God is practically dead. "Thus says the Lord God, 'Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock. Those who are sickly you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back,

nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them, and they were scattered for lack of a shepherd ...” (Eze 34:2-5).

Tradition, too, can serve as a shield for people to hide behind as an excuse not to truly give up their lives and serve God. “Why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?” (Mt 15:2-3). “A son honors his father and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my respect? But you say, ‘How have we despised your name, O Lord?’ You are presenting defiled food upon My altar. But you say, ‘How have we defiled You?’ But when you present the blind for sacrifice is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick (animal), is it not evil? But now you entreat God’s favor, that He will be gracious to you. Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you,” says the Lord of Hosts (Mal 1:6-10). These are the modern Pharisees who claim to believe in Jesus Christ, but when they are confronted with Him in His Body they will deny Him. “Those who hate the Lord will pretend obedience to Him” (Ps 81:15). When their hypocrisy is exposed, they will again try to destroy God by striking out at His Body.

People tend to justify the way they live. Thus, when close friends or relatives become involved in a lifestyle with a whole new set of values that doesn’t promote individualism, affluence, comfort, and the “Great American Dream”, the others feel threatened. They must make a judgment so as to justify the validity of their own way of life.

We are not anti-American (or anti-anything else, we’re not protesting anything). We love our country and we praise God that we are blessed to be in such a wonderful place where we have the freedoms that we possess. We are thankful that we have food to eat, a place to sleep, and all the spiritual and physical blessings that have been showered down upon this country. However, something is amiss. With all good intentions, and a desire to serve God, most of us Americans (Christians) have been ripped-off.

From the hard times in the '30's and 40's', we've struggled to provide for our families, to make ends meet, and to work for a better world. We have given our sons and brothers (for the second time) to die for the war that was supposed to end all wars. We have our gold to help repair this war-torn earth, to the point that our nation is fatally suffering. But somehow, we have strayed from our own God. Today we find ourselves struggling to exalt ourselves (I am number one); the seductive self has taken over, our eyes are turned upon ourselves (Me and Mine); our work-ethic has turned us into clock-watchers at work, because our life and work has been separated from our service to God in the body of Christ; our affluence has raped us; our possessions possess us; and we are taught by every media that "More is better". To my amazement, I found "the American Dream" expressed in the Bible, and I was saddened to realize how truly it reflects our philosophy as a nation. "Jesus said to His disciples, "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, "What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops." Then he said, "This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink, and be merry.'" but God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" This is how it will be with anyone who stores things up for himself, but is not rich towards God. Keep free from the greedy longings to have more, for a man's life does not consist and is not derived from possessing overflowing abundance or that which is over and above his needs. For all the pagan world is greedily seeking after these things and your Father knows that you need them. Only aim at and strive for and seek His Kingdom, and these things that you need will be given to you. Sell what you possess and give to the poor; provide for yourselves purses that don't grow old and lay up treasures in heaven where no thief comes near and no moth destroys, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Lk 12).

We hear of the terrible sins that filled the streets of Sodom and Gomorrah and how great was the punishment poured upon them by God. Yet, the offense which brought about such wrath was not their homosexuality or rampant sensuality, these were only symptoms of the problem. It was pride, over-abundance of food, prosperous ease, idleness, and not helping the poor (Eze 16:49). These sore offenses are obvious in America and the Western world.

Cults

The cults have been denounced by most Christians, and rightly so; because they do not correctly present the truth about Jesus Christ. However, there is something that attracts people — a purpose, a common life, and living together in a world of strangers alienated by their philosophy of individualism. Harvey Cox, professor at Harvard Divinity School, discussed the cults in *Psychology Today*, July 1977. He stated that the reasons most people turn to cults is that they are seeking: 1) friendship, 2) a direct experience of God, 3) a way out of intellectual and moral confusion, and 4) a new way of a life of innocence. *We feel that the Church provides these things.*

Vance Packard, in his book, *A Nation of Strangers*, has made a study of relationships in the American society, which he calls a “cold society”. Loneliness couples with greed to isolate individuals and families and the problems which arise are obvious: 1) *Identity crisis*: When we forget God, we forget who we are. The family unit, as well as the tangible community is gone because of technological advancement, mobility, and the transient society. 2) *Loss of authority*: We cannot have relationships which lead to identity unless there is an orderly context in which it can happen. Authority, per se, is not bad; it is the abuse of authority which causes problems. Authority exists in order that people can relate to one another in an atmosphere of peace. God’s authority must be practically expressed on earth so that these relationships can exist. Jesus emphasized that the proof of our Christianity is in our relationships. 3) *Guilt*: Guilt is both good and

bad. We sense our need for a Redeemer because of it, but if it isn't released, our creativity is stifled. No one can experience a meaningful identity with God, himself, or anyone else, or even with creation until the guilt problem is solved.

These, then, are the reasons that people are seeking the cults: they do answer basic questions (however superficially) and furnish a practical lifestyle where people can exist in a unity of purpose and have some sort of meaning to life. *Therefore, these are exactly the points where the church is falling short.* However, the apostles and prophets of today are not blind, and some people are trying to do something about the situation. They are saying that 16th century church forms are not adequate for the 20th century. They are saying that Peter, on the day of Pentecost, knew what he was talking about. He went beyond telling them to repent and be baptized. He told the people in Jerusalem that they should "escape from this wicked and perverse generation." How could they escape? Peter told them "with many other words"! And so what Peter told then is evident in what they did, since they had "received his message." Their actions are recorded in Acts 2 and 4 — they had koinonia!

In this day, to accompany our "Lone Ranger" Christianity, we think of koinonia (fellowship), in terms of drinking coffee with a brother in the "fellowship hall" after the sermon, or singing together after a prayer meeting. We think of it only in "spiritual terms" terms. The word is really talking about a commonness of life; physical (social and economic) as well as spiritual. When we miss the divine practicality, we have spiritualized away divine truth, and the spiritualizing away of divine things is the desperate expedient of those who don't have the reality.

The Parable of the Black Spider

Two boys were once sitting on a bench, eating their lunch, when a black spider began to crawl up on the bench leg. One boy saw it and immediately rolled up his lunch bag and killed the spider. "Why did you do that?" the other boy asked. "Well, my mom

told me that a black widow spider is poisonous. It could kill you if you got bit!” “Was that a black widow spider?” the other boar asked in amazement. “I don’t know, but it sure looked like one. Besides, I kill every black spider that I see, just to be safe.” As they were talking, they failed to see the Brown Recluse Spider crawling toward them.

The parallel is obvious. The cults, even though they mislead people, do provide some answers to the problems of the 20th century man. So when the church comes along in a form relevant to today and truly answers some of these same problems, people see another black spider. While their attention is averted, they are bitten by the Brown Recluse. Satan has done his work, because the closer to the truth he can come, the more devastating are the results. The reasoning runs something like this: “Moonies” live in community (share what they have); “Moonies” are a cult; therefore, anyone who lives in community is a cult member. We, as a church, have been accused of being a cult simply on the basis of our lifestyle — living with all things in common. We have been told by some that we look like the Children of God cult because our hair is a little longer than theirs. By this same token, they look like Jehovah’s Witnesses because they wear a suit and tie. If the Church allows itself to be intimidated by this sort of opposition, then we can’t ride bicycles because the Mormons do, we can’t share about Christ on the street because “Moonies” do, we can’t pass out tracts because the “Children of God” do, etc.

Solution

We believe that the Body of Christ today must return to true koinonia in order that the proper environment for spiritual maturity may be established. The good government of God must be practically expressed on earth in each local community of believers if the validity of rebirth in Christ is to be seen by unbelievers. As the philosopher Nietzsche once said, “I would be more inclined to follow your Redeemer if you looked a little more redeemed.”⁷ Jesus said, “I pray that they may all be one: even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in Us; that the world may

believe that you did send Me” (Jn 17:21). Those who confine the manifestation of the oneness of the Body of Christ to heaven are those who seek to maintain and strengthen sects and divisions.

We must all repent of our greed and share what belongs to us to the point that equality is established so that some Christians won't be starving while others live in luxury. “Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written: ‘He that gathered much did not have too much, and he that gathered little did not have too little’” (2 Cor 8:13-15). This life is not considered to be normal in this day. Instead of having all things in common (which is true communion), Christians have very little or nothing in common, and the present condition of the Church reflects this tremendous deficit. In 1 Tim 6:17-19, the literal translation (not the evangelical translation) of verse 18 reads, “That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to *distribute*, willing to *communicate*.”

Communicate — making common to all what one presently possesses. K. J. V. says communicate, the root meaning coming from “koinonia” — commonness of being, participate, partake, social or ready to dispose or unite into one body, fellowship or communicate our soul and being. A *communicant* is one who communes at the Lord's table, one who is entitled to partake or participate in the Celebration of the Lord's Supper — to communicate is to have all things in common — joint possession. Community means common possessions, a community of goods, common wealth. Common means belonging equally to more than one, this stands in contrast to one's *own*. Community is not novel or a fad, but the Body of Christ functioning according to the word of God. “Not a separated people, but together and having all things in common.”

The Body of Christ has been reduced to having a mystical “unity” that is not at all visible but rather it is one of the attributes of the “invisible church.” *We feel that there is*

no such thing as spiritual unity being expressed in outward separation. We submit that even the external uniformity that is shown by participating in certain religious ceremonies and rites, if it does not come from inward unity is only an empty husk. Kierkegaard has said, “Emptiness results from uniformity masquerading as unanimity.” Spiritual unity is unity, it means unity, and it is expressed in unity. Outward separation is a certain sign that unity does not exist.⁸

There is nothing about a disunified, broken, sect-ridden, divided “body” that would cause anyone to want to be a part of it. If there is anything that the Jews could identify with, it was a peoplehood. The preaching of the “Kingdom” of God appealed to those who truly desired to be part of God’s people, under His government, led by His direction, for His purpose and to accomplish His goals: to be the real “Israel of God.” No sane Jew would ever be made jealous by a bunch of people, sitting on a pew, looking at their watches because the preacher has exceeded his 12:00 o’clock limit and they had to drive across town to get their pork roast out of the oven before it burns. Jews and others will only be envious of something they don’t have: those who demonstrate their common life together by loving one another and be going in the same direction because they have the same Lord who is leading them in a specific manner. “Those who were not a people have become My people.”

Deprogramming — Whose Program?

Living in community has been given a bad connotation by those attempting it without the government of God. Communists do it under an oppressive dictator and thus lose their freedom and identity. Hippies, “freaks”, and “back-to-the-landers” do it under improper or no leadership and with no purpose, and thus end up with apathy and chaos. Religious devotees do it for asceticism, self-mortification, harsh discipline, or other such selfish reasons, and thus they become egotistical; but who is doing it under the good government of God? *Regardless of how the concept has been maligned, we believe that “All*

things in common” is the biblical norm for the church of all ages; and it is this particular lifestyle that strikes right at the very heart of 20th century Americans. For instance, we have no doctrinal differences with most of Protestantism, and yet we are condemned by some as heretics and a cult. We feel, also, that it is the issue of lifestyle, not religious freedom, which is at stake in the current wave of “deprogramming.” We are reminded of the Psychologist, B. F. Skinner, who had a standard of behavior which he thinks should be arrived at through “behavior modification.” Even though he sees it as a very positive and healthy concept, what he is headed toward is a society of people molded into certain limits called “normal.” When Jesus left His family and a promising career as a carpenter to follow the will of God; we are indeed fortunate that His parents didn’t hire a “deprogrammer”. “When Jesus’ own people heard of the multitude following Him, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, ‘He has lost His senses.’ And when His mother and brothers arrived, someone said to Him, ‘Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You.’ But Christ answered the man who was telling Him saying, ‘Who is My mother and who are My brothers?’ And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, ‘Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother’” (Mk 3:20-21; Mt 12:47-50).

The Parable of the Deprogrammer

A reporter for a local newspaper was having an on-the-street interview discussing religious freedom when a man approached him. “Sir, we’re having a discussion on religion and freedom, today. What’s your opinion?”

“Well, you’ve certainly come to the right person. I’m a deprogrammer!”

“Oh, really? Tell me, I’ve always wondered about something. Whose standard do you use when you deprogram someone?”

“Well — my own standard, of course!”

We aren't trying to defend the cults, but we do wish to present the truth. Psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, lawyers, judges, or even parents are not the ones to establish the norms for God's people. Only God can do that through His Church. In a recent poll by a Christian magazine, 70% of its 3000 participants supported the concept of deprogramming. It is a frightening thing to see this un-Christian, as well as unconstitutional practice being condoned by Christians in America. In the end, those favoring restricting the freedom of some, lose freedom themselves. You can never win when you start legislating against freedom. That's why religious freedom was one of the basic tenets of the founding fathers of America. They knew that you can't dictate a man's religion without limiting your own rights.

To sum up, we feel that Satan is counterfeiting God's work in these last days. Using socioeconomic and religious bias, he's trying to employ his old tricks to discredit God. Especially, he's attempting to block any true expression of koinonia, because when God's people are united in heart and mind, tremendous things begin to happen.

Economic System

“All economic and social action is religion in the sense that it serves the cause of either the true God, as expressed in Jesus Christ; or some false God. All economic and social life, then, must express the belief of those who are engaged in it.”⁹

“An opposition exists between human lives lived in apostasy from God and human lives lived in obedience to God. Since this opposition roots itself in the hearts of men, it affects the whole of men's lives, and this includes their economic and social activities. For God is sovereign over His creation and Christ's Kingship extends over the whole of culture.”¹⁰

“According to biblical faith, YHWH is Lord of all things. He is the Sovereign Lord of history. Economics is not a neutral, secular sphere, independent of His Lordship.

Economic activity, like every other area of life, should be subject to His will and revelation.”¹¹

“And He sat down opposite the treasury and saw how the crowd was casting money into it. Many rich people were throwing in large sums. And a widow who was poverty-stricken came and put in two copper mites ($\frac{1}{2}$ cent). And He called to His disciples and said, ‘Truly I tell you, this widow has put in more than all the others. For they gave out of their abundance, but she, in her poverty, gave out of her life’” (Mk 12:41-44).

The word for life quoted above is from the Greek word *bios*. This means that the widow literally gave *life* to God. She was obviously drawing her life from God because she literally gave her last half cent (which would buy her food to sustain her life) to the Lord. Money (Mammon) is the very essence of the world, and yet this widow did not look to money to sustain her. In a very practical way she was living by the words that proceeded from the mouth of God. Her actions proved that her identity and trust was not with the world, but rather with God. She realized that the Lord would be the source of other money, food, and everything else that she needed. She had caught on to the principle of increase in the Kingdom of God — give. “Practice giving to others, and it will be given to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap” (Lk 6:38). The widow knew where her life was and she knew where her treasure was — with God. In the Kingdom of God this is the only practical way to live, and those in that Kingdom should be marked by this lack of greed. The kingdom of darkness, on the other hand, is marked by greed and every other kind of evil. The principle of increase in Satan’s kingdom is keep, hoard, and save, which is the exact opposite of God’s way. Thus, what we give is judged by God according to what kingdom we are participating in. Even if we give much money, but not our life, then God is not pleased. “Which does the Lord prefer: obedience or offerings and sacrifices? It is better to obey Him than to sacrifice the best sheep to Him” (1 Sam 15:22).

The biblical concept is clear, No gift is accepted unless the giver is consecrated to God. Even the Macedonian saints, whom Paul commended for their generosity, first gave themselves to the Lord, and then their money (2 Cor 8:5). To give ourselves to the Lord requires 100% giving, but a sacrifice can consist of a mere 10%. If we obey the Lord, then we will give up everything to be His disciple. Besides giving up the correct perspective of God, our 100% giving practically aids the brethren in God's Kingdom. By sharing my electric mixer, for example, a brother doesn't have to buy one. His money can be spent for something else. Otherwise, if we don't have our vision focused on the same goal, if we aren't all going in the same direction then we will be like those who have sown but reaped little; we eat, but never as much as we wish, we drink, but never more than we want, we are clothed, but never warm, and the laborer puts his wages into a purse with holes in it. "Why?" says the Lord of Hosts. "Because my house lies in ruins, while each of you has a house that he can run to and busy himself with. Is this a time to dwell in your well-roofed and paneled houses, while the Lord's house lies in ruins?" (Hag 1:4-6). Jesus said that anyone who gives up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms for My sake and for the gospel's sake, he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life (Mk 10:30).

Recently, a professional man wanted to help us while we were establishing a church in a local town. He wanted to give us his tithe of 10%. This money went to remodel three houses, pay utilities, provide maintenance and gasoline for three autos, provide clothing, food, and etc., for 10 people. All this was done on his 10%, while he was having difficulty squeezing along on his 90%. He wasn't married, but his earnings were gobbled up by a house on the lake, his individual car, boat, and all the other necessities and luxuries that the average American requires. Consider that his 100% earnings could have supported 75-100 people who were living community!

Christians in this day realize their obligation to obey God and His commands, yet few people realize that this obedience or lack of it is completely stated in our everyday life. The Lord admits of two kingdoms now in operation on planet earth. As the New Testament affirms a basic tension between the values and character of the Kingdom of God and the assumptions and structure of the systems of the world, so the Church is visioned as a new social reality that bears witness to the new order of the kingdom in the midst of the old.¹² We, practically, must be in one or the other. Believers or unbelievers, we are daily pouring out our very life for the advancement of the Kingdom of God or Satan's kingdom. And if we have only a mystical concept of God and His Kingdom, it is a safe bet that we're missing His purposes. Most Christians miss their religion exactly here, not in its doctrines, but in its practical aspects. For instance, Harvey Cox, of Harvard Divinity School, says, "One can sympathize with those who hope to gain a lost innocence - a world free of complications, a world of black and white choices. But eventually they will find out that no such world will ever be found. For maturity means learning to live in a complex, shades-of-grey world."¹³ While Harvey Cox is a very accurate observer and has some sound explanations for the maladies of the day, he is off-base in his alternatives, and white choices. But eventually they will find out that no such world will ever be found.

The creation is admittedly complex and living in God's world is not easy. In fact, Christ said that while we are in the world we would have tribulation. Especially believers are promised hardships. "For you have been granted the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but also of suffering for Him" (Phil 1:29). "We are God's heirs and Christ's fellow-heirs if we share His sufferings now in order to share His splendor hereafter" (Rom 8:17). "We sent Timothy to encourage you to stand firm for the faith under all these hardships, for you know that we are called to suffer" (1 Ths 3:4).

No easy believism can plug us into a Blessing Machine that dispenses "grace" at our convenience. The "strong" do not need God's grace, because they are not weak. The

proud can not get God's grace, because they are not humble. The disobedient do not have God's grace because they do not need it. Grace is given for a purpose — obedience. If we are not going to learn obedience then we must suffer because suffering is the avenue to know obedience. Even Christ learned obedience through suffering (Heb 5:8). So Jesus never said that life would be easy, but He did say it would be simple; so simple that a child could understand. Because of this simplicity, we do not have to compromise our beliefs that come about through faith in Jesus Christ, in order to live in the world. The world of Satan, however, does his best to make his darkness appear as light; or at least, inoffensive gray. This "shades-of-grey" world is the place where Satan is enthroned to carry out his deceitful "shades-of-grey" plans. What the darkness hates is the light. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men, and the light shines in the darkness; and the darkness has never extinguished it" (Jn 1:4-5). White + Black = Grey. God calls us to be lights that have nothing to do with the darkness. "He that follows Me shall not walk in the darkness" (Jn 8:12). "And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness" (Eph 5:11). However, this separation is not speaking of isolation from the world as some like the Mennonites have thought; but rather of being in a different kingdom — in this world, but not of it. We live on this planet, but we are supposed to be participating in a kingdom which has its own economic, political, religious, and governmental systems that are different from the world. This Kingdom is still located on earth, and we can't seek to be in a place where no immoral people exist, or else we would have to leave this planet. God's people, beginning with Abraham, are supposed to be lights in the midst of darkness, cities on hills, salt of the earth.

This very place is the point of failure for the true followers of God down through history. The *Jews* missed this concept of being a light to the Gentiles and so became content with the way things were. Thus, they fell away from the living God. In the same manner, Christians today became safe in their self-satisfied solitude. Thus we lose our motivation to keep ourselves pure and we miss the purposes of God. This kingdom is the

one that Christ came to establish, and His Kingdom will never end (Lk 1:33). We can experience now a foretaste of that perfect kingdom which will be fully established and finally culminated with the return of the King of kings to planet Earth to rule for a thousand years.

Satan's kingdom, too, is on the move, and economically it is practically enslaving people. The dominant institutions of the world system control not only socio-economic and political systems, but also shape cultural patterns and engineer the very personal values of populations. This is because the vast majority of the people depends upon them for their livelihood and security and cannot afford to fall out of favor with them. Thus the values and priorities of the institution become the values and priorities of the people.¹⁴ The danger and the effectiveness of Satan's economic system is its subtlety. People are caught up in it without even knowing it. Thus as the Prophets of old tell us; when destruction comes, "It will come upon them quickly."

"In order to give the people no time to think and take note, their minds must be diverted towards industry and trade. Thus all the nations will be swallowed up in the pursuit of gain and in the race for it will not take note of their common foe. The intensified struggle for superiority and shocks delivered to economic life will create, nay, have already created, disenchanted, cold and heartless communities. Such communities will foster a strong dislike towards religion. Their only guide is gain, that is Gold, which they will erect into a veritable cult for the sake of those material delights which it can give."¹⁵

"The triumph has been rendered easier by the fact that in relations with men, we have always worked upon the most sensitive chords of the human mind, upon their cash account, upon their strong desire for wealth, upon the insatiability for material needs of man; and each one of these human weaknesses, taken alone, is sufficient to paralyze initiative, for it hands over the will of men to the disposition of him who has bought their activities."¹⁶

Our time is one of large-scale concentrated power. We have grown to depend upon large industrial corporation and state bureaucracies for our basic needs and to a frightening extent, allowed these to decide for us how we will live. In many ways, their values have become our own. Power elites act to control and dominate, removing the decision making process from those affected by their decisions. Their predominance is supreme in production, distribution, and control of the economic process, in the political arena of public policy both domestic and foreign, in information, advertising, mass media, in education and cultural activities, in labor and various professions, in the legal and judicial process. We have exchanged our decision making for a “pre-packaged” life of comfort, security, and convenience. The greatest source of power these organizations have is not merely political or economic, but it is the spiritual hold they have on people’s lives.¹⁷

True to his nature, Satan is promoting illusions. In the field of economics he is deceiving people. While he is putting forth the idea that the rulers of nations are politicians; actually money (Mammon) and those who are controlled by it, control politics. Presidents and kings can only make decisions according to the economic conditions of the nation. Thus it is an obvious fact that economics dictate politics. We can speak about politics in America, and everyone will agree that the situation is bad and no one is trustworthy anymore. We can speak of the religious system, and everyone will say that more love is needed. We can speak of the educational system and others will join together in saying that new measures are needed to help our schools. But if we speak about the economic system, people are offended and angered.

Political System

“The world is governed by very different personages from what is imagined by those who are not behind the scenes.”¹⁸

As was stated in the section on the economic system, the real rulers of nations are those who control the earth's wealth. However, the political system itself reflects the kingdom to which it belongs. It is a part of the world system which operates without acknowledging God. This is not to say, of course, that all politicians are individually wicked and evil, but the system to which they belong is part of Satan's kingdom. The direction in which governments of the world are headed truly exhibits their essence. The direction is one-world government and it is evident all around us; new laws passed in Congress, ideologies taught in our schools, resolutions drawn up by the U. N., etc. The culmination of this government (Satan establishing his government to its fullest extent) will be that "all inhabitants of the world will worship the beast (Satan's representative) because the whole world was astonished and therefore followed him" (Rev 13:3, 8).

"The only escape from total destruction of civilization will be a world government." — Harold Urey

"In the field of atomic energy, there must be set up a world power." —Robert J. Oppenheimer

"The secret of the atomic bomb should be committed to a world government, and the U. S. A. should immediately announce its readiness to give it to a world government." — Dr. Albert Einstein

"World government has become inevitable." —Arthur Compton, author

"One-world government is in the making. Whether we like it or not, we are moving toward a one-world government." —Dr. Ralph Barton Perry of Harvard

"As I moved from country to country, I was astonished at the amazing political phenomena of the times, the continued trend toward totalitarian controls. A world government of unprecedented size and power would demand a world leader, and mankind is ready to receive this leader. In a world of intellectual enlightenment, man is stumbling in the darkness of his own confusion with morals too low, and taxes too high, power groups arrogant, crime rampant and extremists violent. In this world of the lost

hope, men are ready to do anything to have peace. At the U. N., speaking of one-world government, one representative succinctly stated the predominant attitude of world politicians. ‘No, it is not desirable; but we have no alternative. There is no other way out.’”¹⁹

There is a way out through faith in Jesus Christ and being vitally united to His body. But the hopelessness of man is caused by separation from God. Men of governments, once wholly dependent upon their Creator, now turn their back to the Light which they desperately need to correctly govern God’s creation. As a result of this apostasy, mankind suffers. “The leaders do not know, nor do they understand justice; they walk about in darkness, and thus all the foundations of society are shaken” (Ps 82:5).

“If God’s structural order is denied, on what basis shall society function? If there is a conflict between two people which is brought to court, on what basis shall the judge decide, or what right do the parties have to take it to court, or what is right? Appeals to convention, to intelligence or to whatever is best, have no lasting basis, no binding validity. On such a basis, a society is bound to disintegrate.”²⁰

Historical Perspective

As the previous sections on economics and politics imply, history as we have been taught it and as we now view it has been highly distorted. All the blessings of peace and tranquility, without which there can be no stable social order and no civilization as we know it are the result of the gospel. And the true Church is the custodian of that gospel. The Church is the salt that makes the world palatable to God. Therefore, the true Church is not only the central and fundamental, but also the vital institution upon which every other structure — social, political, and governmental — depends. For most people, historians included, the center of history for any given age or period is the political entity or state which occupies the greatest territory, represents supreme material resources, and

boasts the largest and most invincible military might. So men like the Pharaohs, Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great, Caesar, Charlemagne, and Napoleon seem to be the authentic makers of history. They believed that they were the central forces of history, and the prime movers of its events. However, there is only one philosophy of history that makes sense that is the Biblical Philosophy. It was true in the ancient world that as the knowledge of and reverence for God disappeared, moral corruption and crime completely destroyed the social order. It is the same today. The only force in the world that is contesting Satan's total rule in human affairs is the Church of the living God. What we know as Western civilization is definitely a by-product of the Judeo-Christian ethic and the redemption wrought by Jesus Christ.²¹

Man is on the move away from God. As a reflection of this, the science of history has divided into two parts. The same events form two distinguishable series. Secular history extends over all recorded time, to our own day, and is still unfinished. Events are linked together by succession in time and by the operation of efficient causes whether these be physical or psychological.²² However, few secular historians have any conception of the meaning and purpose of history. They may record and systemize the characters and events, but they have little or no clue to their interpretation or significance. "There is no secret and no plan in history to be discovered." — G. N. Clark, Cambridge historian. "I have not the slightest idea why we are here on this puny mud heap, spinning in infinite space, and I am quite convinced that no one has ..." — Andre Maurois, French biographer, critic, and despair. But there is another series which views historical events as a process of redemption and revelation of God. The Maker and Ruler of all mankind, through His Son Jesus Christ, is fulfilling His ultimate plan of having a people upon the earth who desire to do His will with all their heart.

God has a purpose in creation, and the fall of man did not nullify that purpose. God's purpose is still the same and through redemption, God brings us back to the place where we can do His will that He purposed in creation. For this reason, the true gospel

will call us to forsake everything to find that place where the will of God is being carried out and to join that people. After all is said and done, the crucial question is “Did you do the Father’s will?” (Mt 7). If we have been restored to fellowship with the Father through Jesus Christ, then we will know what His will is because He will tell us.

Conclusion

“England Goodbye”

*I've been missing you in this troubled time
You had your problems many times before.
You always shook them loose, you never let
Them drag you down, But will you ever rise
Again from this?*

*Time once was when you walked so tall setting
Others free? You gave your hand and work for
Everyone in need. And you left them words of
Peace, now there's no peace left within you and
You find yourself your only enemy.*

*Turn your eyes back to the sky. Bow your head
And cry, How you let it all slip by.*

*I've been watching you steadily decrease, being
Seduced by the demon's deadly dance. How it's
Mocked you and it's rocked you till your found-
ation's crumbled and somehow you've mislaid the
Master key.*

*Bow your head and cry. You've believed in a lie
and the dream has long gone by.*

*Memories you left with me lay strongly in my
Mind, and when I think of you you're beautiful
and green. But somehow you've turned to
Grey and I see you've lost your way like a
lover who's unfaithful to his bride.*

*How could you deny the Lord of earth and
sky? I hate to see you die; England, goodbye.²³*

The above words were written specifically about England, but could easily apply to the United States and other nations of the world. As we have tried to express thus far, things are going rapidly from bad to worse. In our religious, economic, and political systems; we have been misled, robbed, and deceived. In viewing history, our perspectives have so successfully been distorted that we don't even realize what has come upon us. Our condition is similar to that described in 2 Ths 5 — “while they are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” Indications are all around us to warn that all is not well and that “Peace and safety” is far removed.

“It is difficult to resist the conclusion that there is a death-wish at work at the heart of our civilization whereby our bankers promote the inflation which will ruin them, our educationalists seem to create the moral and intellectual chaos which will nullify their professional purposes, our physicians invent new and more terrible diseases to replace those they have abolished, our moralists cut away the roots of all morality, and our theologians dismantle the structure of belief which perhaps “in which they exist to expound and promote ...”²⁴

The reason that this death-wish is present is that it is in accordance with the spirit of this age, the course of this world, which is under the authority of the prince of the power of the air, and the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience (Eph 2:2). The authorities in their respective fields are blinded by the god of this world and they do not see the true problems and so cannot offer correct solutions.²⁵ Bankers try to fight inflation, but ignore the fact that national banks are not owned by their governments, as almost everyone imagines, but are privately owned monopolies which control interest and credit, issue our money, and therefore control our economy.²⁶ Physicians try to treat illnesses which come about through poor nutrition. Thus the symptom is eliminated, but the disease goes on. Educationalists attempt to bring instruction in a meaningful way without admitting to any moral absolutes. In fact, most states prohibit the teaching of absolutes concerning morality.²⁷ Theologians attempt to arrive at true conclusions about Christianity apart from an organic union with the Body of Christ — the only support and pillar of the Truth which they wish to know.

“America is great because America is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.” —Alexis de Tocqueville, French political philosopher.

“One of man’s most tragic weaknesses is his failure to benefit from the lessons of history. In the light of today’s conditions, the below listed failings of ancient Rome make a rather sobering comparison with our own. 1) Rapid increase in divorce, 2) Spiraling rise of taxes and extravagant spending, 3) building of gigantic armaments and the failure to realize that the real enemy lay within the gates of the Empire in the moral decay of its people, 4) Decay of religion and the fading of faith into a mere form, leaving the people without any guide.” —Edward Gibbon, author of *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

“The god of America is materialism and its goddess is sex.”²⁸

“The ever more affluent standard of living is the god of 20th century North America and the adman is its prophet.”²⁹

“Our standard of morality in the U.S. and Western Europe have sunk far below the level of Russia or Red China to that of the Greek and Roman civilizations in their last stages of complete disintegration. This is not the subjective impression of a few malcontent churchmen and politicians; it is the substantial verdict of well-informed sociologists, historians, jurists, economists, and medical scholars, men with a worldwide outlook and experience in all countries in the Western world.” — Professor Hermann Sasse of Australia.

“In order that they say not guess what is occurring, we will further distract them with amusements, games, pastimes, passions, people’s palaces and we will begin through the press to (promote) competitions in art and in sports of all kinds; these interests will finally distract their minds from questions.”³⁰

“When you have eaten and are full, and have built good houses and live in them; and when your herds and flocks multiply, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and you say in your heart, my power and the might of my hand has gotten me this wealth; I testify against you this day that you will surely perish. And if your heart becomes proud and you forget the Lord your God, like the nations that have perished before you, so you shall perish” (Dt 8:12-14, 17, 19).

The Alternative

Satan has seduced the majority of mankind into breaking away from reality and getting lost in a maze of foolish reasonings. Even those who see something of Satan’s strategy try to beat him at his own game. Our enemy is not political or economical; he is spiritual. Therefore, the battle must be combated on the spiritual plane.³¹ We cannot fight the world system with another worldly system because Satan is the god of this world (2 Cor 4:4). The battle is between kingdoms, not systems, and as was previously stated; we, as believers, or unbelievers, are pouring out our lives for the advancement of God’s Kingdom or Satan’s kingdom.

“Either make the tree good, and its fruit good, or make the tree rotten and its fruit rotten” (Mt 12:33). In other words, we could waste a lot of time hacking away the leaves, fruit, and branches of a rotten tree (the world system), trying to cure that old rotten tree. But we will still end up with an old rotten tree. If the fruit is already rotten, then the tree is rotten and will never produce good fruit. “A healthy tree cannot bear worthless fruit; nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire” (Mt 7:18-19). This is exactly the fate that God has in store for Satan and his world system, and anyone who is caught up in that system (Rev 20:10-15). The fruit of the world system has been described at some length here, and its fruit is definitely bad and rotten. So, the time is now to quit trying to fight that system and make it good. We must get out of that kingdom!

The greatest influence on a person’s life will be that institution or set of institutions on which the person feels most dependent for survival and support. As long as most Christians are more dependent upon the powers and principalities of the world for their survival and security than they are upon the Christian community, the Church cannot do anything other than conform to the world. We must see through spiritual eyes that our lives and our very spiritual survival, personally, economically and politically must be centered in the Christian community.³²

If the one-world, politico-economic system is already close at hand and headed towards its fulfillment by the mark of the beast, without which no one can buy or sell; if the governmental crisis is already here, with uncontrolled deficit spending (spending money we don’t have) and a soaring national debt to banking monopolies; shouldn’t we, as the people of God, be separate from this system? Are we Christians going to participate in Satan’s kingdom right up until the time that the mark “666” is offered, and then choose to get into the right kingdom? If we want to wait that long, then we most probably won’t be able to refuse the mark. It will be accepted as just a part of the normal activities of the world, much like getting a credit card now. The mark of the beast will

not be such an obvious thing that anyone will be able to know what it is. It will be so subtle that everyone will accept those who are vitally united in the Kingdom of light. Professing Christians will be so much a part of the world system that they won't even realize that they have taken the mark. If there is no proof of our confession of faith in Christ now, will there be such proof then? Will we further Satan's kingdom because our *security or job or lifestyle* is at stake? As we have attempted to show, these false concepts are the stuff that Satan's kingdom is made of.

There is a theory that when the persecution of Christians in America begins, then the Body of Christ will unite. When hard times come and we can't buy or sell, then we will band together, and depend upon each other. If God commands those things, shouldn't we be doing them now? And, in fact, if we aren't doing them now when things aren't so bad, how will we ever do it then, under tremendous pressure and hardship? If we aren't getting to know our brothers and sisters now, and learning to lay down our life for one another in small ways, how will we ever die for each other?

This isn't the time for Christians to compromise with the Satan-inspired society which is all around us. Now is the time for true servants of the Living God to exercise their faith. However, this faith is not just an inner spiritual attitude, it involves concrete action. Immediately following the moving statement about the carefree life of the ravens and the lilies, Jesus said, "Sell your possessions and give alms; provide yourself with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail ... for where your treasure is, there will your heart also be" (Lk 12:33-34). Jesus' words are detested by Marxists and capitalists alike: by Marxists because they worship Mammon by claiming that economic forces are the ultimate causal factors in history; and by capitalists because they worship Mammon by idolizing economic success as the highest good.³³

The enterprise to which Jesus called men was so vast, so total, that it required all their energies. All other considerations become secondary. People left their nets and tax

booths in order to carry out the calling of Christ. *Everything* became subordinate to God's interests on earth. Jesus exhorted the followers to be amalgamated together that they might be perfectly in unity — the unity of necessity, of desperation not of gentlemanly doctrinal agreement. The fierce conflict of the spirit world demands that God's children stand together. Each man must resolve in his heart to follow Jesus, but then he must stand vitally united to his brethren to achieve God's purpose — “as awesome as an army with banners” (Song 6:4). In order to carry out the word of Jesus toward their neighbors and to remain unstained by the subtle persuasion of this society, Jesus called His followers to a life of mutual dependence on each other. With unmistakable clarity, God is beckoning all to forsake the cowardice of worldly security. If a man still has a warm heart toward the things that are desirable in this present world, let him know that he does not love the Father or the purposes of God. That person has not given up everything that hinders his devotion to Christ.

“In our present world the whole question of church structure takes on an increasing urgency. As social acceleration increases, only those churches which are structured flexibly and biblically will be able to keep up. These churches will offer the best conditions for the church truly to be the messianic community in these days — and to withstand persecution when it comes. The Church will increasingly have to choose between a charismatic (Meaning “gifted”. We are not speaking of the so-called “Charismatic movement”. We merely mean that a Church must function on the gifts and graces of God given to His Body, not on a rigid, organizational basis.) and an institutional, or bureaucratic model for its life and structure. However, the acceleration of change puts new strains on all institutional structures today. Biblically, it is clear that the Church *should* be prepared to withstand future shock. But churches which are encased in rigid, bureaucratic, institutional structures may soon find themselves trapped in culturally-bound organizational forms which are fast becoming obsolete. But a biblical concept of the Church is not enough. Local churches must incarnate the biblical reality

by structures for worship, witness, and common life such as is evident in Acts 2 and 4. Just as many false Christs will come in the last days, so many counterfeit and apostate “churches” will litter the spiritual landscape. *We must not be led astray by our own fuzzy ideas of the church.*

“This means the necessity for both doctrinal clarity and authentic community; orthodoxy of belief and orthodoxy of community.”

“In many ways, we Christians today are reliving the New Testament age. These are days of rapid church growth, and yet also of uncertainty, apostasy, threatening persecution and above all, the expectation of the return of Christ. This was the situation of the early Church. First-generation Christians thought that Christ would come back in their lifetime; He didn’t.”

“What about Christians at the end of the 20th century? Like the first Christians, or like believers in A.D. 999, we could be mistaken about the times and seasons. Perhaps Jesus’ return is very near, perhaps not. In any case, the Church is clearly facing difficult days. Many believe that if Christ does not return soon, then some great catastrophe is surely coming.”

“But dare we hope for a miracle? Dare we hope that we will escape all suffering? Is it possible that God in His grace will grant another reprieve in human history, another chance for the Church to really be the Church? Is this the meaning of the Spirit’s new stirrings in our day? Is it possible that God yet has a great kingdom task for the Church to perform? The Church seems impotent before the ecological crisis, for example, or in the face of mindless technology or the world-wide web of political power and intrigue. But the weapons of our warfare are from God, and when we use them then it is the world that becomes weak. And it is the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, Who says to the Church, ‘Watch, therefore ...’”³⁴

Where does this leave us? It leaves us with the Church as a community governed by God, in a local, defined area, which expresses the Kingdom of God. It leaves us with commitment, because God is committed to a place and a people — definable, locatable, and seeable. If God is committed to such a purpose, then we should be committed to that same purpose.³⁵ In fact, this is the *only* way in which we can escape the world system. “You, God, hide your people in the secret place of Your presence from the conspiracies of man” (Ps 31:20).

These communities will be able to meet the needs of the individuals in that church and proper government will insure that proper care will be given to each person. Since problems in society are due to problems in individuals, the emphasis will be upon therapeutic relationships among the people. *The call will be a call to conversion from sinful self-centeredness and alienation to community in the Lord.*

Thus, apostles in this day fulfill their mission and purpose if they are seeking to build community in Christ. Social apostles, who aim at restructuring social, political, and economic life, have not yet learned the more fundamental aspects of life that Jesus taught; which is the healing of people in their relationships with other people. In fact, we must be in this relationship with each other in order to fulfill the "Law of Christ". Without being in the geographical place where we can know and share the burdens of our brethren, we miss the desire of God's heart. Christ is only manifested in unity. "If then our common life in Christ yields anything to stir the heart, any loving consolation, any sharing of the Spirit, any warmth of affection or compassion, fill up my cup of happiness by thinking and feeling alike, with the same love for one another, the same turn of mind, and a common care for unity. Let your bearing toward one another arise out of your life in Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:1-2, 5). The basis for this unity is commonness of life, and all ministry must come forth from this life. All social action, to be in God's order, must proceed from this unity. If the Church speaks prophetically, then its authority must come from this unity. How can we put forth an opinion and say, "This is what the Church says"? If the Body is united in a city, then there is authority to speak in that city as the Church.

The healing of people in their relationships gets to the very roots of the evil in our human society by striking at the sin which divides people and sets them against one another and organizes them for selfish goals, so that one profits at the expense of another. The Church cannot be restricted in justice and love unless people are healed of sin and resentment in their hearts. Such true healing can only take place in Christina

community, which takes the unloved and the hated people into their midst and heals them, remaking them in the Holy Spirit by the power of community love (koinonia), which is the catalyst of the Church. Therefore, we must strive to restore true Christian community to the Church. *Our chief effort will be to build communities of people with deep personal concerns and commitment to one another, in fraternal love; both with what they are and what they have.* “Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation, but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one” (Jn 11:52).

We will be criticized for leaving undone political, economic, and social reform. But our first and primary concern is for healing people in their human relationships. The building of true community goes to the deepest roots of the world’s problems which are: alienation, division, and the disintegration of basic human relationships. All this disintegration springs from sin which separates men from each other through selfishness, greed, and manipulation of one another for one’s own profit and gain. Thus, through the healing of human relationships and the building of community, we have the solution to society’s ills. Poverty, hunger, and oppression are struck at their very roots and not simply at their super-structure.³⁶

In this manner, we will occupy our outposts of the Kingdom of God upon the earth until Jesus Christ returns and establishes His perfect Kingdom to rule upon the earth for a thousand years. We will carry on until we can join in with the 24 elders in heaven, saying, “We give thanks to You Lord God Almighty, Who is and Who was, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. The time has come for judging the dead and for rewarding Your servants and prophets and Your saints and those who destroy the earth.

The Kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev 11:15-18).

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