

**Articles and Sermons :: Conventional Christianity or Biblical Faith?****Conventional Christianity or Biblical Faith? - posted by HeartSong, on: 2009/1/17 4:49****The Radical Kingdom of God:
Conventional Christianity or Biblical Faith?***by Art Katz*

The Lord gathered about 100 men from across the State of Minnesota, as well as some from Canada, for this occasion, where Art spoke forcibly for the Church to become what God intended it to be right from the beginning. Art brings to men's attention a number of relevant issues necessary for God's Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven.

There is a remarkable indifference in the earth to the fact that this planet was visited by God. I think we just have to recognize that we are in a kind of sleepwalk, a stupor; the god of this world has blinded the minds, not only of those who do not believe, but also of those who only nominally believe. The impact of the significance that this planet was visited by very God has not penetrated us to the depths of our understanding. I very much agree with a brother who said, "We are not yet ready for the second coming of the Lord, because we have not yet fully appropriated the meaning of His first coming." There is not a sufficient sense of astonishment. No one is really raising the electric questions: Why is it that God would choose to visit the earth, and for what purposes did He come? What was affected by His coming, and what is the significance to us who remain? It is surely much more than just a matter of historical curiosity or interest.

Instead of asking these questions, people see a world without God, and even if they do see a world with God, they think He has done nothing but set it in motion and abandoned it to men. And that this is a kind of mechanistic universe that prevails and perpetuates itself, in which God does not have to be too seriously considered. Therefore, it is not at all surprising that in the vital interests that affect the lives of men and of nations, God is not invoked, nor is He sought. It is just remarkable to pick up a newspaper, Newsweek or Time magazine, and see that the media is filled with the counsel of men. They discuss issues of war and peace and what constitutes wisdom, but never once is there any mention or reference to the fact that there is a God who can be considered, whose counsel can be sought, whose will can be obtained, or who was here at one time, had spoken, and had left us a body of statements saying that He intends to prevail in terms of the conduct of nations and of men.

There is an astonishing unresponsiveness toward God that amounts to rejection, and I hold the Church responsible for allowing men's views to prevail. When it comes to the effectual circumstances of our own lives, though we believe, the way that we conduct our lives and make our own decisions is virtually the same way that the world makes theirs. God is not radically taken into our own consideration, and we make our decisions, whether it is going to college, getting married, establishing a business, or any such thing on the same basis as the world makes its reckonings—by appealing to reason, logic, circumstance, convenience, and personal advantage.

The world is indifferent to God because we who believe have not radically taken God into our consideration. The conditions have become such that any thought of bringing God into the counsel of men is considered a violation. It is ironic that it is the world that raises the issue of the separation of Church and state, as if somehow the state needs to be protected against the Church. The Church is not to have any voice, not to stick its nose in, not to sound itself, not to express itself, not to bring the counsel of God into the secular affairs of men. They say this would violate the separation of Church and state, but they are altogether forgetting that the principle, when it was first invoked, was invoked to protect not the state, but the Church. God never intended that there be the distinctions of sacred and secular that prevail today and constitute the comfortable categories, not only of the world, but also of the Church itself. God intended for the sacred to penetrate the secular, and the Church is the instrument by which the divine is to come into the ordinary and eternity is to come into time.

However, in keeping with the kind of impersonality that prevails today, and God only as a Sunday object, the phrase "the Kingdom" has lost its currency, or has never been known. It is a kind of airy phrase that refers, in some vague way, to some distant thing that could possibly be our experience after we die. The Church has little expectancy for a "Kingdom come...on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:10). The incredible thing is that the Church has allowed the world to define it—to define its functions, its role, and its activity. I am reminded of the condition of Israel in its apostasy, "and many people love to have it so" (Jer 5:31).

As I go on, I think you will recognize that the alternative to what is prevailing will be a Church that is Kingdom-oriented; it will be an active, victorious, and triumphant Church that requires challenging things from its members. In the pursuit of this, the consequences will at least be reproach and persecution, and at the utmost, martyrdom. Martyrdom is not some kind of rare experience for the very few because they were not wise enough to avoid the consequence; it is the normative, logical end result of faith in Christ, if we pursue Him truly, because we live in a world that is hostile against Him. The fact that we do not expect martyrdom and are not preparing for it is in keeping to the statements I have already made, that the Church is living beneath God's Kingdom intentions. We do not share the apostolic view held by the Church fathers. We do not share the apostolic view of the radical Anabaptists of the 16th century who were burned at the stake, tortured in dungeons, and drowned back-to-back, because they saw, as the context of the drama in which their own Christian lives were set, two Kingdoms in inexplicable conflict—the kingdom of darkness and the Kingdom of light. They had, as it were, a Kingdom view, and they lived out of that kind of seeing; therefore, they had a radical impact in the communities in which they lived. The result was persecution, not so much from the world or the state as from the prevailing religious bodies who saw their kind of Christianity as threatening, intimidating, and going beyond the safe prescriptions that they wanted to define as Christianity.

All these things have relegated the Church to a nominal and secondary place, as a kind of an institutional adjunct to society. The Church has been effectually domesticated, made tame. Its role has been defined by the world. The world has given us the hour in which we can safely conduct our services without interrupting the football schedules or the golf course. As long as we adhere to a schedule of services and see the faith as a Sunday continuing succession of services, as long as we keep our nose out of the world's business and stay within the confines that have been established for us, we will be allowed our tax deductible advantages and the like. In the world's sight, the Church constitutes a kind of fraternal order, or a society sharing a quaint vocabulary and a hymnology, whose presence can be tolerated, so long as it does not interfere in the things of the world that "really count."

Unless the Church introduces truth and righteousness into the earth, there is no means by which these things can be admitted. Do you realize that? Unless the people of God return to the standard of truth as lived out by Jesus Himself, we cannot admit these sins, because we would undermine the very foundation we have chosen to build on. Will you, like our fathers before us, fall on your knees, call your sin what God calls it, humble yourself, and cry out for God's grace and mercy, longing to see a house truly built on God's plumb line of truth and righteousness? Righteousness and truth are distinctive of the Church alone. Only the Church has the capacity to understand the meaning of these words, as they are spirit words given from heaven and are understood not by reference to the dictionary, but in the living experience of the saints. God expects the world to see righteousness and truth through our lives, because His Spirit dwells in us. Unless the Church makes truth and righteousness visible through its conduct and through its presence, there is no way for the world to understand what these words mean.

However, the Church today, for the most part, moves as the world does; that is to say, they live as if God does not really exist and that no practical input by God into their daily lives is expected by virtue of their believing. What am I saying here? I am saying that those who wear the name of Christ do not themselves believe that there is going to be an existential consequence for their life by virtue of their believing. The fact that they believe does not effectually touch the practicalities of their life, and we therefore conform to the world's attitude toward the Church that is antiseptic, making the Church of no consequence, because they see that it has no visible consequence for those who profess to believe. Instead of seeing transcendent men and women who are really above disease and above calamity and above disaster, they see them beset by the same kinds of misfortune as those who make no profession to believe in God. Such things ought not to be! The reason that they prevail is because the Church is not the Church until it recognizes its Kingdom mandate. It always will live beneath the transcendent and powerful place that God intended for it until it understands its Kingdom call. Church life is more than a succession of Sundays. Our salvation is intended to procure something in this earth. We are intended to affect nations and societies. We are a light unto the world. We are not just a fraternal society that has its own peculiar vocabulary and hymnology.

As I said before, the decision making of most Christians is like the world, predicated upon secular premises such as reason, logic, need, self-interest, probability. It is not assumed that God has a will in such matters, that it can be discovered and obeyed, or that it is indeed His normative intention to reveal His will for those who call upon His Name. What this shows is that the reality of what we believe is not determined by what we say with our mouths, but rather what we demonstrate in the actuality of our life. As long as that actuality does not demonstrate a God whose will can be revealed and obeyed, the world has no obligation to consider Jesus as God and Lord and King. As long as they see us predicating our lives and making our decisions on secular premises and not the consultation of God's will, as long as we do not have a faith that believes God's will can be revealed by the Spirit, the world is under no obligation to take the Church seriously. Unless He is the Lord of everything, He is the Lord of nothing. As long as we have a mentality that divides the great

questions and the small, consulting for the will of God in what we consider the great questions and allowing ourselves the prerogative of making our decisions in what we consider the things that are small, we will suffer from an inadequate view of the King and the Kingdom. In the Kingdom of God, there is no decision that is small; there is no issue that is little.

He is totally the Lord, or He is not the Lord at all. That is something that has got to be more than just a piece of our doctrine. It has got to be demonstrated in the actuality and the totality of all of our living.

Another demerit of the Church that reveals to the world that there is no such thing as a King or a Kingdom is our attitude toward sickness, toward accidents, and toward death. We think these things are wholly arbitrary. "It just happens; that's the way the cookie crumbles; it's natural; I caught it." The Church has little sense of divine causation, little awareness of cause and effect of things that come from God as chastisement or judgment, or the various reasons why God will allow things to happen. So we dismiss our things as the world dismisses them and therefore repair to the same remedies, whether it is aspirin or doctors, without asking why it is that we are suffering an economic setback, or a calamity in marriage, or a failure in health, or the various other things by which God is seeking to probe and touch us. We do not have a Kingdom view that sees the hand of God in our circumstances; therefore, the world is not obliged to see the hand of God in theirs.

Another aspect of this cosmic impersonality of not bringing God vitally into the world that He created is a lack of awareness of the invisible spirit world, which is greatly dismissed and is outside the consciousness of most Christians. There is no practical knowledge of the wiles of the enemy who manipulates his victims at will. The prevalence of Halloween, or jokes about the devil, or pictures of him in magazines with a tail and a three-prong trident, and all of these kinds of cultural things show the complete dismissal of one of the most awesome facts that constitutes the reality of the universe, namely the existence of a whole spirit world of principalities, powers, and rulers of darkness that affect the conduct of nations and men. Because the Church has not sufficiently reckoned on that, does not sufficiently believe it, and does not walk and live as if it believes it, the world has not been required to take it seriously into its consideration. Therefore, Satan is having an unparalleled opportunity to jerk, to intimidate, to threaten, and to affect the conduct of nations without the slightest awareness that he is the source behind the evil that prevails in the world, since. The Church is too anemic to even indicate the source of the evil in the world, let alone to bring the remedy. We have not understood the great conflict between light and darkness that underlines all reality, both in the things of the past and of the future. This is a Kingdom consciousness that needs to be restored.

As a matter of fact, the Church is devoid of any sense of the past. It does not have in its consciousness a sense of the history of the Church in the vital way that it should. It does not have a living sense of continuum, nor of those antecedent conditions that go all the way back to the apostolic Church. Consequently, because we are cut off from the vital knowledge of the past, it is not surprising to find that we have no real regard for the future either. We are lacking a sense of the things that are imminent and are about to take place. We are without a past, and we are without a future, and therefore, our present is emasculated. We have no sense of real eternal expectations.

One of the earliest sources of pain for me as a Jewish believer was to hear transient references by Christians to the "Lord's soon coming." I heard those statements, and I was never once persuaded. That is to say, people speak of it as a trite cliché, as a conventional kind of burp, but there is no real conviction, passion, or palpitating expectation of the soon coming of the Lord. This is as much lost from our living consciousness as any regards to the past, and as a result, we do not see ourselves as the successors, the inheritors, of those who constitute around us even tonight, the cloud of invisible witnesses. We are cut off from both the past and the future, because both these things are elements in a true Kingdom view.

We also lack a sense of the glory of God. You can quiz any number of Christians for a definition of the word "glory," and they will be hard-pressed to give you an answer. In a certain sense, I sympathize, because it is not a word that lends itself to an easy definition. However, there is not even a jealousy for the glory of God. There is not an anticipation of the glory of God. There is not an expectation that there is a glory to be experienced or to be sought. We have so long been accustomed to living outside the glory of God as something visible, felt, or experienced, that we measure our meetings by another criteria altogether: whether they were good, whether we enjoyed them, whether they were well-attended, or whether the offerings were successful. We evaluate things in this way, when the only true measure of the success in the Kingdom is how these things pertain to the glory of God.

I am mentioning all of the factors that are absent from the consciousness of the Church to the same degree as is the absence of the Kingdom, and so it is no accident that as the sense of God's glory is absent, so also is any reference to suffering absent. Not only is suffering absent, but it is also avoided and even despised. Theologies and doctrines have grown up in modern times that have relegated suffering, or any anticipation of suffering, as somehow being outside the faith.

h and needless in the experience of most Christians. I want to go on record tonight as saying that to the degree to which we shun a necessary suffering in the pursuit of apostolic faith, to that same degree will we also miss His glory. There is a place for suffering. It is a central place, and it has everything to do with the cross, which has equally been lost to our consciousness.

I am hard-pressed as I stand here tonight to remember the last time I heard a message on the cross preached. The cross is no longer in vogue. I do not know that it ever was in vogue, and yet when you read the apostolic literature, when you read about the Anabaptists or any revival restoration of true Kingdom Church reality, you receive the centrality of the cross, the expectancy of suffering, and the jealousy for the glory of God as being central to the consciousness of the saints of that generation. They need to be restored to our own.

The glory is absent, the suffering is absent, and the hope is absent. Dynamic faith is absent. Faith has become somehow a formula, a genie lamp that we rub to obtain Cadillacs or other things that pertain to our personal benefit. Our faith is lost in the sense of being apostolically understood as a mode of life, a radical clinging to God, an utter trust, a dynamic. In that sense, hope is lost, and love is lost, or perhaps it has never been known in the sense of being self-sacrificing, utterly giving, and unconditional. The knowledge of the resurrection life is lost as well. The doctrine remains, but the experiential knowledge of the resurrection life has been lost, or it has never been known. My prayer for this seminar is that at you will not only hear me speaking on these things, but that you will see the very demonstration of them. It is very clear to me, as I sense what God wants to set before you in the short time that we have together, that the only way it can conceivably be done is by the His resurrection life, by His wisdom in that life, and by the dynamic and the power of that life. We have really forfeited the doctrine of the resurrection, except that we are actually living in it.

It is interesting that these were the central things to which the Anabaptists, the radically reformed wing of the Reformation, were persecuted—for their belief in the incarnate life of Christ in the body of Christ, that they should say with Paul, for us “to live is Christ.” This was considered scandalous in the years of Catholics and Reformers who burned them at the stake, and those religious establishments were all the more persuaded that these heretics must be of the devil, because they had the joy and the glory of God, even in the moment of their martyrdom. They showed forth a demonstration of the life of God, which was so unknown by conventional religionists of their generation that the very demonstration of that life was proof to those who persecuted and killed them that they were in heresy.

Apart from a demonstration of this life of Christ, they would have been just as gray, just as lack-luster, just as unbelieving, just as cynical, just as full of self-apology as those who persecuted them. The prevailing mentality of the reformed Church, whether Lutheran, Zwingli, or Calvinistic was, “I’m only a sinner saved by grace. God knows I’m only human.” There is no expectation for perfection; there is no expectation for obtaining Christ-likeness, or the character of God. Those who made such profession and believed that there was a way that it could be obtained by union with Him in baptism were considered so heretical as to be destroyed.

We are going to see that same drama enacted again at the conclusion of the age. Men will kill us, claiming that they are doing God a service (Jn 16:2). It is not the world who will do this, but religious men, because something so offensive will arise that cannot be tolerated, namely a people who have an apostolic faith and a Kingdom view, believing the “Kingdom come” on the basis of the power of Christ’s life that broke all fetters of death when He rose from the dead. The Church will also believe that this Christ life can be fulfilled and enacted and expressed through the body of saints who are in the earth now.

It is interesting to see the kind of view held by the apostolic fathers. They believed in a Kingdom view that says God has appointed a time when He will judge all men. “He will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom he has appointed, having first proved to all men by raising him from the dead” (Ac 17:31). I do not have time in the few moments we have together, but I invite you to look at the reference of “the day of the Lord,” the judgment of God. God as Judge is one of the central factors of the consciousness of the apostolic generation that is completely lost from our own consideration, for which reason we are still fornicating like jackrabbits, or at least contemplating the possibility. The easy standards that have prevailed in our charismatic and evangelical age is a testimony to the fact that we, unlike the apostolic Church fathers, do not believe that God is the Judge, and we have not the faith to believe that we are actually being observed. We have not a living conscience that establishes what our conduct is when we are not being observed and determines what kinds of thoughts we allow ourselves to think when we are free to think what we will. We do not really believe in our hearts, with Paul, that God has appointed a day in which He will judge all men for all that they have done in their bodies, both good and bad.

Because the Church has not communicated the sense of God as Judge, this world is on a reckless course of such abandon

don, of such apostasy, of such total self-indulgence and gratification so as to make the things that God looks upon as abomination the standards of behavior in our own generation, or at least alternate lifestyles. Sodomy has become an alternate lifestyle, because there is no fixed standard, because the world does not believe in a Holy Judge, because it does not believe God has given a law that is common to every generation; it thinks the law has been abolished because grace has come.

The world is in this very condition because we, as the Church, have not lived in a priestly fashion before it, to teach the world the difference between the common and the profane. We have not communicated the sense of the fear of God, because we ourselves do not have it. Paul says, "knowing the terror of God, we persuade men" (II Cor 5:11), but we have been notorious in our failure to persuade men. We may have enticed a few by telling them that God has a plan for their life or by telling them about the benefits they will receive if they make a decision to "accept Jesus," but we have persuaded very few, because we ourselves do not know the terror of God. We do not understand Him as Judge. We are not living as if we believe that God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world. We do not believe that there is a standard that God requires, not only of the Church, but also of nations and of men. We do not live as though we believe that "righteousness exalts a nation" (Pr 14:34). The coming of God to earth was not just to bring a certain body of truths for a Church, but to bring a revelation of God to the earth. We have not made the message known to the nations.

There is a righteousness that God is going to hold both nations and men responsible, and for which He is going to judge them. We cannot allow men to dismiss God from the universe, which He Himself made, to dismiss His judgment, to dismiss His standards, to ignore the possibility of eternal punishment. If we will not, men will reinterpret all facts according to their own purposes and ideals, because if there is not a God who created the universe and set His purposes in that creation, if it is not moving towards some fulfillment in His will, then we as unaided men have the right to provide our own purposes, whether they be orgies or revolution. This is indeed what men have done in the absence of the knowledge of the purposes of God, and this knowledge has not come to them because the Church has not made it known. Man has become the determiner and the interpreter of the universe, and, understandably, secular man prefers not to interpret the universe in terms of God's categories. He much prefers to live in the hypothetically random universe that is posited by modern humanism.

Therefore, we need to contend for the faith. This contending for the faith that was once given to the saints is more than just a little, patsy formula. It is a whole worldview. It is a cosmic sense of the purposes of God that adhere in His creation and through the Church, which is the agent He intended for the fulfillment of His purposes. We need to recognize that we are living in a poisoned atmosphere, poisoned because it is secular, because it is skeptical, because it is rationalistic. "The god of this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe" (II Cor 4:4), and it is these people who are shaping and influencing our culture and our civilization. The world is becoming secularized, and God is being omitted from the consideration of men, and we are rushing into doom, which is the consequence of living a life without the presence of God and His counsel.

If we lived in the atmosphere of revelation, which God intended, our every thought would express the truth that is laid in the creation of God. "Let the wicked man forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and return unto the Lord" (Isa 55:7). You cannot believe how much we need to have our thoughts formed by God Himself. We do not have that kind of expectancy or understanding, because we have not the cosmic sense of God's own thoughts. It is the plan of God that gives meaning. A fact cannot truly be known or understood except to the extent that it is related to God. God needs to be so alive in our consciousness. Every fact of our circumstance needs to be related to Him, and everything needs to be seen in terms of what is His ultimate purpose and intent. It is for the lack of that seeing that our life is so presently marred, crippled, and inadequate. We need the view of the largest cosmic sense of God's things in order to set our life in the context that God intended.

No fact of the universe is independent of God and His plan. He is both Creator and Lord of the earth, and to the degree that the evolutionists have been able to dismiss God as Creator, to that same degree has modern thought been able to dismiss God as Lord. We see the same thing in Acts 17, Paul's sermon on Mars Hill; he says to these philosophical and secular Greeks who embodied the same spirit that prevails today in the world that "the God who made the world (v.24) and all things in it, since He is Lord of Heaven and Earth, He does not dwell in temples made with human hands." In the same breath and in the same statement, Paul sets forth before secular Greeks that the God who made the world is both the Lord of Heaven and Earth. There is a connection that cannot be broken: if God is the creator of the universe, then He is also its Lord. There is a purpose to this creation, because He is not a mindless or an aimless Creator. Therefore, our life has to be related to that purpose, or else we are falling short of His glory, and we invite His judgment.

When the random purposeless universe of the secularists ejects God from His own creation, autonomous man becomes his own god. Man becomes the source of cosmic purpose and the measure of all things. The famous statement, the axiom out of the enlightenment from which the whole genius of secular thinking has come, is that man is the measure of all things. However, the truth of the matter is that God is the measure of all things. As long as we have forfeited the field and have not made that God clear, and have not demonstrated Him in the awesome reality that we should, man has prevailed as the measure of all things and asserts his sovereignty and control over nature. That is why we have genetic experiments today such as abortion, economic planning, social elites, superstars, sodomy as an alternate lifestyle, world wars, and all of the phenomena of modern times that has threatened the very life of man and the planet itself.

I hope I am not throwing a little wrench in the works, but I cannot help but speak of the things that are pressed in my consciousness at this particular moment. I am thinking of my daughter who is about to graduate from high school, and in her senior year, she is now filling out her forms for college, in terms of the requirements necessary to become a nurse. I discovered that she has to have algebra, chemistry, and I forgot what other kinds of sciences and math, which I doubt in a million Sundays she will ever be required to use. I am becoming conscious of a kind of elite, a kind of academic elite, where the sovereignty of men prevail, and where they arbitrarily determine what is the criteria by which you earn your diploma so that you can obtain a certain mode of living, a certain income, and a certain entree to classes in society. If God is absent and men themselves have to fill the vacuum, they will define their own criteria and make their own rules. The whole system that has come to prevail is senseless, time-consuming, wasteful, and self-perpetuating, because God is absent from the counsel of men.

So if this is the case, then what is an alternative Christian cosmology, or worldview? This does not say that the universe was established by God and then allowed to operate by itself for the free exercise of men, but that God gave a dominion mandate right from the beginning to man, that he is to prevail in the earth, that he is to fill the earth, and that he is to rule in the earth. He is to be the subregent of God in the earth. The man who is made in God's image is called to a purpose in God: to prevail over the earth that He has made and to make Him and His laws known. The basis for order in society is a personal relationship between God and men who are in a covenant relationship to obey His law in love, to subdue the earth and rule over it as the regents, the subregents of the Creator Himself, on the basis of a righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees and exalts nations.

What is the alternative to a random and aimless universe in which man does his own thing? The alternative is to see that God is the Creator and the Lord of Heaven and Earth. God has given us a mandate that we, who are made in his image, shall have dominion over the earth. That dominion is to be through the expression of his walk and through the counsel of his will. Because we have not believed that, and have not consciously walked in it, nor sought it, nor expected it, we have forfeited the field to secular men who have no regard for God, men who have done their own thing and filled the earth with their own nonsense.

I want you to see two columns: one being a theocentric view in which God prevails, and the other being a secular view in which God is absent. In the latter column, we see a random world in which man is free to do his own thing; in the former column, in which God is present, there is a planned view. There is a purposeful universe intended by God, and it requires a knowledge of God and a knowledge of God's Word. For "His word is a lamp unto our feet" (Ps 119:105), and it is by His Word that we walk blamelessly before Him. "Blessed are they who walk blamelessly before Him in all of His Law" (Ps 119:1).

God has things to say about how we should conduct ourselves economically and socially, what should be the quality and the character of our relationships, how we should tend the earth, what we should do with our firstfruits and our increase, what we should do with regard to the poor, how we should enact justice and righteousness. There are practical things that God has given us in His Word, and for the absence of that, we have planned economies and social elites to the point where men have exceeded the intention of God of a minimum of government required to establish order. Consequently, the state itself has become deified and requires the virtual worship of its citizens. It has replaced God, which we have seen in more extreme forms, such as the Nazi state fascism in our past generations. We have even seen this in democratic states as they become larger, more monolithic, more consuming, requiring the attention, the energy and the devotion of its citizens. This far exceeds God's intention for it; it has become an object of worship.

In fact, probably no single factor has occasioned the blood of the saints more than their unwillingness to bow before the god of the state, whether Rome or any other government in the history of the Church. The world cannot accept that there is a Lord who is above the state, that there is a loyalty and allegiance that is above government, that the law of God is of such a kind that exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees, that saints who walk in the light of it far more than exceed the minimum requirements of the secular law in the nations where they live. However, they cannot worship the state.

Their allegiance is reserved for God.

I am thinking of my recent experience in Africa, where I saw these issues really magnified in nations that are in their formative stages, whose situations are like an open book. These nations can move in any direction, and though the presidents of these black nations have had a background in mission schools and have some semblance of the knowledge of God, they do not know Him. Therefore, they have come more under the influence of a Marxist, socialist, and secular view, by which they themselves are required to be the elite state planners who are to determine what the condition of the economy is going to be, or what is grown, or by what means it is going to be produced and distributed, what constitutes justice and so on. There is no consciousness of God, no awareness of why it is that they suffer droughts, no causal connection between conditions of drought, social calamities, or calamities in nature with the fact that bribery, corruption, and violence exist in their nations. These things are unrelated because they do not understand that the right hand of God is already judging them. Men have a choice of either praying for rain or crying out in repentance for the sin that has withheld the rain.

I take this like an almost quaint and humorous illustration, but it shows graphically what the alternatives are, and what is going to be the clash of kingdoms at the end of the age. Those who are about to put their confidence in what they call science and technology, which is to say, the gods of this present world, will think that they are going to invoke rain by seeing clouds, but only those who commend to men the bending of their knees, their supplicating of God, and their crying out in repentance for their sins will be heard by God when they cry out for rain. We are coming to an inescapable clash of two basic cosmologies, two basic worldviews, one in which God is very present and who lives, who is the Creator and Lord who can be sought, whose will can be known and who can answer, and another in which God is completely absent, and men have no alternative but by their own chicanery and their own devices to procure and obtain the things that they think constitute human happiness. There is going to be a clash between these views. Those who believe in God will seek Him with fasting and in prayer for wisdom, guidance, and blessing.

I remember once right here in Cass Lake, where we live—I think it was a year or so after we moved here—when there was a seething and rising condition of discord between the Indians and the whites. There was a community meeting, and all kinds of suggestions were made for relief of the situation. One committee after another was being formed to discuss discipline in the schools, or some other secular, philosophical, or rational way of addressing the problem, and I, like some jerk, rose at the end of the meeting with faint voice to suggest that I was willing to head up a committee on prayer to as many as would be willing to join me, believing that God needed to be invoked and brought into that secular situation as the only true answer to the distress between white men and colored. There was not a single soul that responded, who believed that prayer had any efficacy, or that my suggestion was in any way realistic.

There is a reason why right now in the Soviet Union, Christians are sent to mental institutions, why their children are taken from them, why they are considered unfit parents; it is because they are teaching their children “superstition” and irrationalities that are contrary to reason, sanity, and reality. If you think that it is going to be confined only to that location, then you are mistaken, because as the crises of the world heightens, the issue is going to be faced as to what it is that really constitutes reality, what it is that really constitutes an answer, and what it is that really constitutes sanity and practical answers to the predicament of men.

If the Church would be the Church and stand with conviction to point the world to a very present God, I do not think that our presence would be casually acknowledged. I think once again we are going to find the same kind of radical response to us as was the response to the apostolic Church at the first, and the response even to Jesus Himself. Men either said, “Throw Him off over the brow of the hill” (Lk 4:29) or fell at his feet and cried out, “My Lord and my God” (Jn 20:28). Men either wanted to destroy the apostolic generation, or they came with trembling to cry, “Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?” (Ac 16:30). I think we are moving toward a radicalization of all of the conditions of life in which men are going to be moved toward one extreme or the other. As a matter of fact, if we would take God seriously in these very days and begin to walk out, and do, and to be the kind of Church He intends, then we ourselves would be a factor in precipitating a radical response to God, either favorable for Him or against Him. The Church has got to be a living example. It has got to be the apostolic model, or the world is without any example to which to bend its views.

The alternative to the exploitation of the earth is its stewardship. What that means and how that is to be exercised needs to be demonstrated by the Church. That is part of the dominion mandate that God has called us to, to be stewards of the earth—not its exploiters and destroyers. The Church must show what it is to be a servant, what it is to have God’s glory as a paramount motive. The way in which these things are pursued is with a spirit of humility, a spirit of truth, a spirit of love, a spirit of peace, a spirit of discipline and obedience, as against the world’s spirit, which is a spirit of arrogance, deception, lies, hate, and violence, in which torture is justified.

There are two radical alternatives to living, and the Church has not sufficiently shown God's way of living, so that the world has had reason to be compelled to turn from what it considers the rightness of its way. If God has convicted me about anything, it is about arrogance, it is about impatience even in small things, because if we have not the spirit of humility and meekness in the small things, then we do not have it in the large. Something is required from us more than Sunday attendance. God wants a character that exhibits His own, which is Lamb-like. The genius of God that was revealed on the cross is the Lamb that was slain. This is the thing that broke the back of the power of the enemy, disputed the wisdom of the world in its arrogance, in its power, and in its hatred, by a Lamb-likeness unto death that needs to be exhibited by the Church in its life.

We must see the connection between community and the Kingdom, because Church, as it is presently constituted, with a mere schedule of services, has not the framework to present an opportunity to men by which their character can be attended and be brought to the God-likeness that God intends. Merely seeing each other Sunday by Sunday, being physically present in pews, does not provide the opportunity for the redemptive working of God in the Church, for the shaping of character and life by which we can live in the spirit of humility, truth, meekness, love, peace, obedience, and have a conscience that is without offense both to God and to men. The Church needs to be a demonstration, the thing in itself, an expression already of the Kingdom come. "The Kingdom come" is not just for some future millennia, there is a way we can live in its reality now.

It is remarkable that when you begin to pursue this subject, you see how little the Church believes that God intended the Sermon on the Mount for now. We seem to think that God does not really intend that we should turn the other cheek, walk an extra mile, or love our enemies. It was relegated to some future millennial time, when the Church itself would be absent from the earth, and the Jews that remained would somehow fulfill the requirements of the Sermon on the Mount, when the Holy Spirit would be taken from the earth. It is insanity. It is cowardice. It is apostasy. It is heresy. God intended the fulfillment of these things now, through the Body of Christ, which is a covenanted community of God. This is more than the issue of doctrine or atonement. This is more than soul winning. This is more than proper orthodoxy. This is more than a Pentecostal distinctive. This is more than salvation as a private experience. This is corporate reality, something demonstrated by the Church in its corporateness in such a way as we can say to an unbelieving world, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

One of the books I have been reading these days is called *The Community of the Spirit*, written by a Mennonite, which states, "Our social definitions and presuppositions inherited from the previous century have largely blinded us to the reality and dynamics of an organic and spiritual community, and it is precisely such a community which is designated as 'Church' in the New Testament." The very fact that we think that community is an option—and for most of us it is an undesirable option—a kind of experiment that might be of interest to a few, shows how much we have dismissed what God intends for the Church. In my opinion, it is the only kind of Church that can reveal the glory of God and show an alternative to men. "Our social definitions and presuppositions inherited from the previous century have largely blinded us to the reality and dynamics of an organic and spiritual community, and it is precisely such a community which is designated as 'Church' in the New Testament," because we have not believed we are a Kingdom. We have satisfied ourselves with a definition of Church that is other than and less than God's own intention. We have not been willing for the inconvenience and the demands that are required from going from house to house daily. We have not given God His opportunity to work the deep, redemptive things in character and life that He works in us through the frequency of daily relationship. This is how God intended for the Church to live its life. The fact of the matter is that we like Sunday services, and if we are thoughtful, we will come out on a midweek day, but we are not willing for the more total and demanding requirement of God by which the Church is the Church. If we want a "Kingdom come," then this is what is going to be required.

The Church is not intended to perpetuate itself as a movement, but to bring its purposes and its realization within the whole social order of which it is part. It is not an entity unto itself, fulfilling its own requirements and seeing only to its own perpetuation. It is intended to be the "salt in the earth" (Mt 5:13), and the "light unto the world" (Mt 5:14). It is intended to permeate the world. I want you to understand this, and I am only recently coming to understand it myself. Though I despise and hate the world as a system, God wants us to remember that God still "so loves the world." "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, and those that dwell therein" (Ps 24:1). We have a Kingdom mandate and a dominion mandate to the world and in the earth, and the fulfillment of it is going to require a quality of life, relationship, and commitment with ourselves to each other that is beyond what has been presently understood as Church.

It is a demonstration of the new, reconciled order of society under the rule of God. It needs to be brought to the larger social order so that it might become a reality in the life and history of the world. This is what Jesus meant when He said,

“making disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19). It is not just plucking a few brands from the fire, but bringing the divine perspective of God to the attention of entire societies. We are not to tolerate this secular distinction by which we safely stay on our side of the line and conduct our Sunday service and let the world go to hell because it has not a wisdom that it can only get from on high. To those who embody institutional power and authority, the Church announces the fact God is Ruler and calls them to fulfill their respective roles in submission to God’s authority and plans. The Anabaptists confronted magistrates with the biblical requirements of their office. They were conscious that the activity of God was not limited to the Church, and that His rule extends over all men, whether they recognize Christ or not. All authority is going to be brought under His feet. From the very beginning, “Of the increase of His government and His Peace there shall be no end” (Isa 9:7). There needs to be an increase, and that increase exceeds and extends beyond the borders and the parameters of the Church itself. “Of the increase of His government and His Peace there shall be no end.”

The Church therefore needs to rebuke dishonesty, injustice, violence, and selfishness in the public administration of the social order. The Church needs to tell men in institutions about how to follow the way of righteousness, love, and peace. If this were not so, Paul could not have made his statement to the Athenians: “God has appointed a day when He will judge the world in righteousness” (Ac 17:31). What shall they be judged by, if there is not a requirement even now for them to live according to certain minimal requirement of righteousness, justice, and peace? They need to know that God is the Creator of the earth they inhabit, and He is a purposeful God, and He has intended that righteousness should exalt nations.

God so loved the world and still does. It is not His desire to forfeit it to the devil. He has broken the devil’s power; He has made of him an open spoil, and He is waiting for us, as the Church, to make manifest the triumph that has already been won at the cross. Something has been left and remains for us to fulfill, the power of which was broken at Calvary, but if we ourselves do not believe it, then we are not going to fulfill it. God has reserved for us the final demonstration of the glory of the cross by which the serpent’s head was bruised, but the destruction of that head and its evil works remains for the Church in the final chapters of time.

Even the demonstration through the Church of the manifold wisdom of God to the principalities and powers, and the rulers of darkness in the air is reserved for us (Eph 3:10). There is a cosmic purpose reserved for the Church; there is a mystery reserved for the Church that has more to do even with the earthly fulfillment of things pertaining to nations and men about which have just been spoken. But you want to know something? We will not fulfill the earthly things, we will not touch the cities in which we live, unless we both see and consciously seek to fulfill the cosmic intentions of the Church, to demonstrate to the principalities and powers of the air the manifold wisdom of God. What that wisdom is, and how that demonstration is to take place, I believe is going to be revealed in persecution and in martyrdom. It is not God’s desire to forfeit the world to the devil. To occupy till He comes means the progressive taking of the land from the usurper, whose kingdom was destroyed and whose power was broken at Calvary. It is for us to make manifest that triumph, that dominion, that authority and rule in every area in life, thought, and action.

It is for the lack of a challenge of this magnitude that the Church is presently asleep. I see it so clearly; I wish you could see it. There is something wrong. There is something grievously amiss. There is something lacking, for which the Church stumbles on in its lack-luster, matter-of-factness from service to service, punctuated by the novelty of some visiting speaker or some other distraction. What is lacking is the largeness of the mission and the task that God intended for it, namely taking of the land and the fulfilling of the dominion mandate. This means filling the earth with the knowledge of God and His Glory, bringing the knowledge of the righteousness of God and His Law to nations, and demonstrating as a nation within the nations what that means in terms of the actual conduct and life of people who are living outside of the world and above it in a transcendent way even while they live in the earth, for they are citizens of heaven. It is our failure to seize it, to take it seriously, and to do it that explains why our services are so sleepy, why our Churches are so lack-luster, why we can hardly manage the energy to do our visitations. Our services, Bible studies, programs, visitations, prayer meetings, and their condition is the symptom of our unfulfilled mission. The Church is conducting a holding action; we are hanging in there until we are raptured. We are escapists. We want to get by, and we want to get out. We have no intention of remaining, we have no stomach for suffering, we have no desire to experience affliction, and we have no desire to demonstrate or to prove. We just want to hang in there until we shall be conveniently relieved of any further responsibility and escape.

It is amazing that the rapture theory, which is hardly more than a century old and was never understood by the Church fathers, has become so sacramental today, that even to question it is to put yourself in the place of being suspected of being heretical. The hope of the Church was not escape in times past; the hope of the Church was a Kingdom come, and a King coming to rule and to reign in the earth with His saints. That hope needs to be revived. It needs to be restored as the true hope, which will bring to the Church an electric, dynamic expectancy and an atmosphere that God intended

to prevail in our life.

I want to suggest the reason that we take the millennial and theological views that we do; it is not because they are air-tight with reasons given for them in the Scriptures, but I think that we choose the view that is comfortable with our timidity, with our fear, with our cowardice, with our reluctance, and with our desire to avoid confrontation. It is not the love of the truth that determines why we take a millennial view of seeing some future Kingdom age that will take place independent of us. We choose to believe that and to enjoy subscribing to that, because it absolves us of present responsibility now. Our cowardice has more to do with our theology than our love of the truth.

The founding fathers saw an unbroken continuum. They did not see a God of the Old Testament and a God of the New; they saw a God of Law, a God of Justice, a God of Righteousness, a God who has been fulfilling His purposes before the foundations of the earth were laid, and a Lamb that was slain, because sin took place in the heavenlies before it was ever manifest in earth. They saw a cosmic purpose of God, and they saw the purposes of the Church. They had a view that we lack, which needs to be restored. We have cut it up into convenient pieces, into little categories, and the result of doing this has unfitted us to be a Kingdom people, for we have no Kingdom expectations. It is only some future thing, and therefore it never comes.

We have chosen convenience over confrontation, and passivity over proclamation. We have preferred to be the Church invisible rather than the Church triumphant. We have surrendered the world to Satan, so long as our small portion goes unimpaired and the things pertaining to our security and pleasure are not threatened. Just allow our Sunday services to continue, allow our income as ministers to continue, and our lifestyles, just allow those things to continue, are the unspoken norms. We need to see how cowardly we have been and how comfortably we have allowed the world to define our circumstances, so long as our self-interest is not threatened. We have some reasons by which we can justify our conduct, because, after all, we are bringing a Sunday service, and we are bringing a sermon, and we are visiting someone sick in the hospital. The fact is that we have fallen below God's Kingdom intention. We are not fulfilling our mandate. We have preferred to be invisible rather than triumphant, convenient rather than confrontational, passive rather than proclaiming. We have surrendered the world to Satan.

God expects His glory in the earth to be made visible through men in the practicalities of their daily life in the earth. That is the faith. Therefore, repentance needs to begin in the house of God. God will judge the earth. God will judge the Church, and it is our repentance that brings in the Kingdom of Heaven that is at hand.

We are without a sense of the past or an expectation of the future. Why it is that the Holy Spirit has been relegated to improving our services or renewing our denominations, that we have not seen Him in the context in which He was intended—namely as the enablement of a Kingdom come? Why it is that we have dismissed martyrdom as some historic phenomenon out of the past, completely irrelevant to our life?

In conclusion, I want us to realize that we need God to stir our hearts and break our hearts. He needs to show us how much our theology has been conditioned by our cowardly hearts, rather than a love of truth and a desire to see God's ultimate intentions fulfilled. Finally, we need to see how quickly we have condescended to theologies of convenience, which have absolved us of responsibilities today to bear the fruit of God's Kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven."