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THE ORGANIZED CHURCH; AN ANALYSIS

Honors Program
Special Study

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THE ORGANIZED CHURCH; AN ANALYSIS

Modern religious education is fast coming into a time of new-found strength and interest. The official edicts of the past are gradually being overthrown by a spirit of individual study and discovery. For some this is a result of encouragement and help received from their religious leaders, the less fortunate are forced to seek enrichment outside their order and for many of these it is done beneath the hooded cloak of rebellion.

Religious educators, as opposed to religious puppets, have for years been changing and updating their methods and materials in an attempt to enstall satisfactory religious habits, attitudes, and values in children, youth, and adults as well. There have been several very obvious reactions to this change. The most obvious favorable reaction being the ability of change to draw the interest of the young. The disfavorable counterpart lies mainly with the aged who, quite naturally, are personally insulted to be told and sometimes shown that the methods of religion they practiced all their lives are now proven to be

insufficient. Yet, change is inevitable and if religion is to keep pace change must not be alien and removed from its nature.

The goals of modern religious education do not simply involve the attainment of certain bodies of knowledge, such as the Bible, creeds, doctrinal statements, history of religions, and other records of religious experience but are more closely related to the actual behavior of persons in society. ¹

If this is true, we need to briefly examine the institution through which religious education is distributed. For the most part, the church, as an organized, institutionalized unit is the foundation from which the structure of religious thought is constructed. However, too often the church is the foundation upon which religious thought is constructed. Why is it that the church has this responsibility above and to the exclusion of all other institutions? First, the validity of the previous statement is probably being contested in the mind of the reader. Yet, a careful examination may prove its worth. The church through programs of Bible study and guest lecturers seeks to enstall knowledge in its members. The pastor in his weekly addresses seeks to apply the age-old

¹ E. J. Chave, THE MEASUREMENT OF ATTITUDE, Thurstone and Chave, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois, 1929 p. ix

truths of the Bible to the particular situations encountered by his community of believers. How to live a knowledgable, socially active, yet spiritual life is taught by the Church. However, the "truths" are too often shallow half-truths considered to be sufficient for the general membership. Greater theology is left to colleges and graduate schools (seminaries) which accept only those who express more than a casual interest in becoming whole. These are privately sponsored institutions that, quite naturally, teach the doctrines supported by the source of their funds. The church, it seems, controls the strings of religious education.

Mr. Chave suggests, however, that the church is presently seeking to instruct its followers in social living as well as in "book-learning" and rote-memorization. This responsibility is commonly left to the liberal-arts-centered university endorsed and supported by the church organization. It is hoped that the university can succeed where a weak pastor might fail and bring the young into a state of maturity. That their belief in God and denominationalism be enriched is, of course, secondary.

If change is inevitable, the church will change alongside all other organizations, but not without questions.

The church, which represents many different power groups with often opposing ideas always looks before moving to the right or left, rear or forward. Caution in regard to change is present for various reasons. One being that it is extremely difficult to unite the power groups into a unity of mind necessary for effective change. Another is the fear of the unknown which asks, "Will this proposed change be better than the currently employed method?"

I take no stand on the politics of morality in this paper but do recognize the urgency and validity of the second question. The leaders of the church have for years sought ways to grade their progress and the success of instituted change.

In seeking to determine the success of the overall church program, as well as change, the leaders of the church reach out for opinions. Opinions held by those served by the church reflect attitudes. Attitudes in turn indicate acquired values. Values are the essence of the church. Opinions stated in either casual talk or formal discussion reveal knowledge about the attitudes currently held toward the church and its various factions and functions. Attitudes are a direct means of measuring whether or not the church has been successful in its goal of enstiling moral values in its membership. Thus,

opinions reflect attitudes; attitudes, in turn, indicate acquired values. The church cannot help but be interested in this process.

With these thoughts in mind, I have sought to make a contribution to an understanding of the opinions, attitudes, and acquired values of the college male. The remainder of this paper is a survey and analysis of the survey. The survey was conducted on the campus of Ouachita Baptist University. It was given to fifty college-age males chosen at random. The statements in the survey were taken from THE MEASUREMENT OF ATTITUDE by Thurstone and Chave, University of Chicago Press. Forty statements were chosen from the one-hundred thirty listed in the book as being the one-hundred thirty most commonly stated opinions by youth about the organized church. The forty statements were divided into ten categories; each category dwelling on a particular, controversial subject. The four statements or opinions in each category were so arranged that the first opinion expressed extreme disfavor toward the topic, the second only mild disfavor, the third tolerant agreement, and the fourth expressed complete and total agreement with the topic. Persons were instructed to circle the number of the one opinion from each category that most paralleled their own.

Of course, complete agreement with any listed opinion was not necessary or a requirement. Previous to marking the categories, the participant was asked to place an X somewhere on a line to indicate whether he was strongly in favor of the church, neutral, strongly against the church, or some degree in-between.

The following is a reproduction of the survey as it appeared in hand-out form:

A SURVEY OF ATTITUDES HELD TOWARD THE ORGANIZED CHURCH

Honors Special Study Project

Classification _____ Major _____

Place an X somewhere on the line below to indicate where you think you belong.

Strongly favorable to the church	Neutral	Strongly Against the church.
-------------------------------------	---------	---------------------------------

Circle the number of the statement in each category which most resembles your opinion. Complete all sections.

Organized Religion

1. I believe the church is far removed from the essentials of Christian love and brotherly kindness.
2. I believe in personal religion but organized religion as represented in the church has no meaning for me.
3. I think the church and organized religion is necessary but it should become less and less important.
4. I think the church is a divine institution and deserves the highest respect and loyalty.

Church Membership

1. I have no desire to attend, join, or have anything to do with any church I know.
2. I do not think one has to belong to the church to be religious.
3. I believe that membership in a good church increases one's self-respect and usefulness.
4. I believe church-membership is almost essential to living life at its best.

Church Members

1. I believe the majority of church-members are shameless hypocrites. They do not practice what they pretend to do and do not care.
2. I believe the church is fundamentally sound but some of its adherents have given it a bad name.
3. I believe the average of the morals of church-members is considerably higher than the average of non-church-members in the same social class.
4. If I were picking a man for a responsible job I would give preference to a regular church-member.

Church Attendance

1. I get no satisfaction from going to church.
2. I feel I can worship God better out of doors than in the church and I get more inspiration there.
3. I like church occasionally but do not feel that one should get too ardent about worship or church-going.
4. I like to go to church for I get something worth while to think about and it keeps my mind filled with right thoughts.

Denominationalism

1. I think the church allows denominational differences to appear larger than true religion.
2. I think that one church is about as good as another but some camouflage better than others.
3. I believe denominationalism is of benefit to the work of God.
4. My denomination is the only one that practices true religion.

Church Dogma

1. I think the church seeks to impose a lot of worn-out dogmas and medieval superstitions.
2. I believe a few churches are trying to keep up to date in thinking and methods, but most are far behind the times.
3. I believe in the church and its teachings because I have been accustomed to them since I was a child.
4. I believe the church is working steadily for the application of the principles of Jesus to all personal-social relationships.

Church Ritual

1. I believe church ritual is static and removed from the everyday realities of life.
2. I believe in sincerity and goodness without any church ceremonies.
3. I like the ceremonies of my church but do not miss them much when I stay away.
4. When I go to church I enjoy a fine ritual service with good music.

Church Influence

1. I regard the church as a static, crystallized institution and as such it is unwholesome and detrimental to society and the individual.
2. The church has not helped me to any satisfactory ideas of God or the future. I have had to work out my own ideas.
3. I think the church is valuable for creating ideals and for setting a person right morally.
4. I believe the church is the greatest influence for good government and right living.

Emotionalism

1. I believe the church represents outgrown primitive beliefs that are based largely on fears.
2. I think the church is more controlled by magic than by reason.
3. I believe interest in the church is more rational than emotional.
4. I feel that the church is rapidly coming to apply scientific methods to its thinking and its promotion of religion.

Church and God

1. I believe the church is bound hand and foot by money interests and cannot practice the religion of Jesus.
2. I believe the church would be all right if it kept close to the reachings of Jesus but it does not and so fails.
3. I cannot think through the mysteries of religion but like to get the assurances of reality, of God, and immortality that the church gives and stands for.
4. I believe the church is a changing human institution but it has divine realities behind it. The Spirit of God moves through it.

The survey, as printed here, was randomly distributed to fifty male Ouachita students. Upon completion of the fiftieth ballot, a count showed that

Juniors

	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>J</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>AVG.</u>
History	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	3	1.25	2.1
Business	2	2	1	3	1	2	2	3	3	4	1.25	2.4
Pol. Sci.	1	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2.00	2.1
Accounting	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	3	4	2.00	2.3
Chemistry	1	4	2	4	1	2	2	4	4	1	2.00	2.5
Phys. Ed.	4	3	2	4	2	3	4	3	3	3	2.00	3.3
Religion	1	2	2	1	3	2	1	1	1	4	2.50	1.8
Chemistry	2	2	2	3	1	2	3	3	2	2	2.50	2.2
Sociology	3	3	2	4	1	2	2	3	3	2	2.50	2.5
Drama	1	2	4	4	1	2	3	4	3	4	2.75	2.8
Art	1	3	2	1	1	2	4	3	4	4	3.00	2.5
Accounting	1	3	2	4	1	2	1	3	3	4	3.50	2.4
Sociology	1	3	2	2	1	2	4	3	4	3	3.50	2.5
English	4	2	3	4	1	4	3	4	3	2	3.50	3.0
History	4	3	2	4	1	4	4	3	3	4	3.50	3.2
Phys. Ed.	4	3	1	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	3.50	3.4
Religion	4	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	3.50	3.6
	<u>2.2</u>	<u>2.6</u>	<u>2.1</u>	<u>3.1</u>	<u>1.4</u>	<u>2.5</u>	<u>2.8</u>	<u>3.0</u>	<u>3.1</u>	<u>3.2</u>	<u>2.63</u>	<u>2.62</u>
	2.60 avg.											2.61

Seniors

	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>J</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>AVG.</u>
Pol. Sci.	2	2	1	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	1.75	1.5
Music	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	2	2.00	2.0
History	2	2	2	3	1	2	2	3	3	2	2.00	2.2
Psychology	3	2	2	3	1	2	3	3	1	2	2.25	2.2
Sec. Ed.	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	2.50	2.6
Biology	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	2.75	2.4
Religion	3	3	2	4	1	3	4	3	4	4	3.25	3.1
Soc. Study	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3.50	2.5
Religion	4	2	2	4	1	2	2	3	3	4	3.50	2.7
Biology	4	4	2	4	1	4	4	4	3	2	3.50	3.2
Bus. Admin.	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	3	4	4.00	3.8
	<u>2.9</u>	<u>2.5</u>	<u>2.0</u>	<u>3.2</u>	<u>1.6</u>	<u>2.5</u>	<u>2.7</u>	<u>2.8</u>	<u>2.7</u>	<u>2.4</u>	<u>2.82</u>	<u>2.56</u>
	2.53 avg.											2.55

Totals

	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>J</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>AVG.</u>
Freshmen	2.9	2.7	2.3	3.1	1.6	2.6	2.5	2.7	3.0	2.8	2.55	2.66
Sophomores	3.0	2.7	2.5	3.5	1.2	2.4	2.9	3.1	3.0	3.6	2.98	2.80
Juniors	2.2	2.6	2.1	3.1	1.4	2.5	2.8	3.0	3.1	3.2	2.63	2.61
Seniors,	2.9	2.5	2.0	3.2	1.6	2.5	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.4	2.82	2.55
	<u>2.75</u>		<u>2.22</u>		<u>1.45</u>		<u>2.72</u>		<u>2.95</u>		<u>2.75</u>	<u>2.66</u>
		2.62		3.22		2.50		2.90		3.00		

There were two underlying questions held in regard to the results of the survey. The first deals with whether or not the averages of the responses to the categories would match the position of the X on the attitude line. An attitude line is a more readily visible indication of position, and it was felt that it would tend to show the position desired by the participant, as opposed to his actual opinions. Secondly, it was hoped that the survey would expose deficiencies in acquired values.

The first question must be observed from the standpoint of both the individual and the collective average. Fifty percent of the participants had a variation of up to .3 on the 4.0 scale between the average of their responses and the position they took on the attitude line. However, forty percent of the fifty percent come from those in the neutral range (1.75 to 2.25) on the line scale. The next examination directs its attention to the group and total averages. Freshmen showed a variation of only .15 between the line scale averages and

the calculated average of the category averages. Sophomores showed a .18 variation, juniors only .01, and seniors showed .26. The combined averages of the four groups show a variation of only .09. Thus, individually we find that considerable variation may exist but that such variations are not dominant. Collectively, however, there are insignificant differences between the averages of the responses to the categories and the positions on the attitude line.

The second concern deals with value deficiencies as shown by the responses to the individual categories. For purposes of grading, the first category, Organized Religion, was represented by the capital letter A. The second, Church Membership, by the letter B. The third, Church Members, by a C; and so on through the remaining seven categories. A, B, D, F, G, H, I, AND J show favorable responses and have a combined average of 2.83 which is very favorable on the 4.0 scale. Two particular categories, C and E, compiled low scores. C deals with opinions about church members and E concerns itself with denominationalism.

The majority of participants marked response two under the category of church members. Response two says, "I believe the church is fundamentally sound but some of its adherents have given it a bad name." Thus, implying that there is little dissatisfaction with the

concept of the church but some contempt for its adherents.

The category on denominationalism received a combined average of 1.45 with thirty-five of the fifty participants marking response one. Opinion one says, "I think the church allows denominational differences to appear larger than true religion." Ten marked response two, five circled response three, and none checked the fourth response which says, "My denomination is the only one that practices true religion." Thus, it appears that churches are becoming more open in their approach to denominationalism but that the majority of the participants in this study feel that too much emphasis is still present.

As listed earlier, categories A, B, D, F, G, H, I, and J showed favorable responses and acquired a combined average of 2.83 on the 4.0 scale.

Category A deals with Organized Religion and seeks to discover opinions toward the structure behind the term rather than the term itself. The combined average on category A was 2.75. Nineteen persons marked response four which says, "I think the church is a divine institution and deserves the highest respect and loyalty." Nine marked response three, eleven checked response two, and eleven circled opinion one which is, according to the pattern, definitely against the topic of the category. The results seem to indicate that there is great dissatisfaction with the church and a general

lack of interest in its organization. However, it cannot be overlooked that 38% of those polled indicated the highest respect for the church.

Category B, Church Membership, received a combined average of 2.62. Note that not one person marked opinion one. This, combined with the concepts in the three other available responses, tends to point out that attitudes toward church membership are very favorable. Yet, only 6 circled response 4 which says, "I believe church-membership is almost essential to living life at its best." Of these six, all but one, who was neutral, placed themselves favorably to the church on the attitude line and compiled a combined average of 3.2 in regard to total responses.

Category D, Church Attendance, received a very favorable average of 3.22. Opinions three and four dominate and only three persons checked opinion one which says, "I get no satisfaction from going to church." Thus, church attendance is not objectionable to the majority of those polled.

Category F, Church Dogma, seeks to find attitudes toward the teachings of the church. A combined average of 2.50 was obtained in this category. Only one person marked response one which is highly opposed to church dogma and the majority (thirty-four out of fifty) circled opinion two which says, "I believe a few

churches are trying to keep up to date in thinking and method, but most are far behind the times." The church should take note of this response as it plans its programs of study and worship.

Category G, which concerns itself with Church Ritual, received a combined average of 2.72. This category shows a near-equal distribution of opinions except for opinion one. However, the largest response came from opinion two which indicates that sincerity and goodness is not dependent on ceremony.

Category H, Church Influence, received the favorable combined average of 2.90. Only two circled response one while thirty-two chose response three. Response three says, "I think the church is valuable for creating ideals and for setting a person right morally." Thus, the great majority recognize the validity of the influence of the church.

Category I, Emotionalism, received a 2.95 on the combined average. The majority of participants circled response three which says, "I believe interest in the church is more rational than emotional." The old criticism of emotionalism seems to have been displaced with a sense of trust. This is perhaps due to the intellectual atmosphere of the age.

Category J, Church and God, received a high combined average of 3.00. Opinion four was prominent

as was reponse three. The indication is that the majority regard the church as a divine institution separate from the social institutions of the day.

Opinions reflect attitudes and attitudes, in turn, indicate acquired values. Modern religious educators need to be aware of this criteria for understanding if they are to approach their jobs with a sense of responsibility.

The organized church has in recent years been the object of ridicule and attack. Whether this survey has shown a transformation in opinion or simply an idleness of thought, I do not know. This one thing is clear, however. The organized church still commands a great amount of respect.