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What's Going On Here?

DONALD L. JERKE

The Church and the New Culture

There's a cartoon around which shows a perplexed father driving home from the local high school PTA meeting with his wife; he says, "Twenty years ago I was told I wasn't as smart as my father. . . . Today I'm told I'm not as smart as my teen-ager. . . . Where did we go wrong?"

Cartoons like that capture the agony and anxiety of family life in our day. Everywhere parents are asking, "Where did we go wrong?" Children from the best homes run away, lose interest in school, get involved with sexual problems, and try to find themselves by using grass and acid. As pastors and churchmen we ask the same question as our confirmation classes dissolve into thin air, as our youth are less and less interested in church programs, and as fewer and fewer come back even after they are married and have started their own families.

This essay presents a number of analytical approaches which may help us understand young people today—not only college students but also teen-agers in our large and small towns. We shall look at different ways to analyze youth culture, make some specific remarks about the university scene, and conclude with suggestions for the life of the church in the seventies.

Before proceeding, however, it is important to return for a moment to the father's question. The question, "Where did we go wrong?" arises from a stance toward

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life which assumes that human issues and problems can be dealt with by the simple process of determining fault and assigning blame. It is this erroneous view of human interaction that misleads some into thinking that they can deal with the youth revolution by determining whether it is really parents or peers who are to blame, or that they can deal with the theological revolution by deciding which men are unorthodox, or that they can deal with the military-industrial-university complex by denouncing the university president as an immoral, bureaucratic imperialist.

There are two assumptions which lay the groundwork for this paper: (1) Revolutionary social change is the name of the game. That's the way life is as history moves into the future under the lordship of the risen Christ. (2) The pertinent theological question is not, "Where did we go wrong?" but, "What's going on here?" "What's going on here?" assumes a dynamic interrelatedness of persons, groups, movements, and history. No one person or group is to blame for what is, but all are responsible.

I. ADOLESCENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

Observation of adolescents seems to be the latest American spectator sport. Hollywood has turned from "Mary Poppins" and "The Sound of Music" to "Easy Rider," "Medium Cool," and "Alice's Restaurant." Magazines are filled with articles about the youth scene. The mass media are constantly searching for the esoteric, the

erotic, and the energetic activities of the now generation. Madison Avenue has shifted to miniskirts and bell bottoms; industry is cashing in on records, tapes, and sex-appeal toothpaste. One might say that observing adolescents has turned into exploitation of them.

All of us have the vague feeling that things are not like they used to be. A few facts and figures might give some substance to that feeling and provide a context for thinking about youth, the university, and the church.

At the beginning of the 1970s there is within the United States a small nation of 25 million people between the ages of 13 and 19. And just a shade over 50% of our total population is under 25. That means that youth are worth studying if for no other reason than their sheer numbers and potential influence.

In higher education the following figures indicate the trend: 6.9% of the white over-25 population and 3% of the black over-25 population in the United States have completed 4 years of college. That needs to be compared with the estimate that 42% of current high school students will enroll in institutions of higher education, 21% will receive a bachelor's degree, 6% a master's degree, and 1% the doctor's degree.

Student enrollment in this country has zoomed from 1.5 million in 1940 to 7.7 million in the current academic year. Those 7.7 million students are spread through 2,537 private, public, and church-supported institutions. To temper the notion that every college and university is a military training base for left-wing revolutionaries, it is necessary to point out that only 22.4% of those institutions have had

disruptive demonstrations and only 6.2% have experienced violence or extensive property damage. When we talk about the revolution in higher education, we are talking about a social-cultural phenomenon that is far more extensive and complex than battlefield statistics or body counts. The revolution in higher education is concerned with the development of what Margaret Mead calls a prefigurative cultural model — that is, a social system in which the main direction of education and learning is no longer from elders toward youth or even from peer to peer. The prefigurative culture is one in which the primary educational process flows from youth to elder, in which the young teach their elders by the questions their experience of life forces them to ask.

II. CHILDREN OF THE TIMES

The erroneous question, "Where did we go wrong?" has an equally erroneous corollary. When the silent majority observes the mass media ignoring the *issues* of student dissent and freezing into picture form the *tactics*, the question comes, "What do they want now?" But most of us probably know, or at least ought to know, that one only gets the right answer when he asks the right question. To ask the right questions, it is helpful to take a look at Eric Hoffer's book *The Ordeal of Change*. He says:

We are usually told that revolutions are set in motion to realize radical change. Actually, it is drastic change which sets the stage for revolution. (P. 6)

Newspapers and libraries are full of written accounts which attempt to document those conditions of change that appear to have spawned the youth revolution.

We are all familiar with some of the terms that are used: alienation, generation gap, moral breakdown, loss of family function, drug abuse, and so on.

One of the most widely respected analysts of the generation gap is Kenneth Kenniston. He discusses the process of alienation in *The Uncommitted* and the process of radicalization in *The Young Radicals*. Kenniston notes that alienated youth come from homes characterized by maternal control, oversolicitousness, and exclusion of the father from the family's emotional life. The young radicals, however, come from upper middle-class homes with a characteristic equalitarian, democratic, and highly individuated atmosphere. In this familial setting the young person is prone to accept wholeheartedly the core values of his parents and their emphasis on education, high ideals, and community involvement. If Kenniston is correct, his conclusions invalidate the current popular assumption that all youth can be lumped together as irrational rebels against authority.

The alienated student is determined to avoid the fate that befell his father, whereas the protesting student wants merely to live out the values that his father has not always worked hard enough to practice.

(*The Young Radicals*, p. 310)

Another very interesting analysis comes from Charles Glock and Rodney Stark. In their book *Religion and Society in Tension* they suggest that the movement among youth against war, the military establishment, pollution, and other things is a direct sociological parallel to the religious movements that arose out of and after the Lutheran Reformation.

Another provocative analysis of our schizoid culture comes from Rollo May's

latest book *Love and Will*. He shows how the modern family has combined over-protectiveness with overpermissiveness. That combination enables us to take good care of persons but fails to teach us how to care for persons. The resulting absence of affection and loss of identity creates a sense of powerlessness that moves people inevitably toward apathy and violence.

Various psychological, sociological, and religious interpretations of our culture are instructive. But there seems to be a need for an even broader perspective from which we can ask, "What's really going on?"

I would suggest that it is impossible to understand the children of our time without considering three major social-cultural movements that have revolutionized the Western world since the Reformation era. Each of these revolutionary movements has significantly altered the Western consciousness and frame of mind.

1. The scientific revolution has brought Western man out of the static, structured universe of Copernicus into the open, dynamic, expanding universe of Einstein. Energy and matter are fluidly interchangeable, and the observer shapes and affects the environment he is studying. The companion of the scientific revolution is the rise of omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent TechnoGod whose high-priestly technocrats deliver the good news of a bigger and better way of life through chemistry, biophysics, and electrical engineering. And the ideological confession of the faithful is the assertion that every human problem has a technological solution.

2. The dramatic increase in world population combined with the instantaneous communication of TV has moved us into

a revolution of worldwide urbanization. The world's national boundaries are melting in McLuhan's "global village." Humanity is forced to understand politically and economically what the church has always tried to say theologically—in McLuhan's words: "Our new environment compels commitment and participation. We have become irrevocably involved with and responsible for each other."

3. The revolution of secularization has broken down the religious and social models and authorities of the past. The traditional Enlightenment ideology that nothing means anything and that truth is specific, value-free, amoral data still forms the basis for the ivory tower university. Philosophically, the word g-o-d is a linguistic symbol incapable of any tangible meaning outside of mythological historiography. The key to personal understanding is not conformity but "intentionality."

It appears to be more than mere accident that the significant elements of youth culture call into question and challenge the very ideologies that arise from those three revolutions in Western culture. Our children have discovered that technology cannot solve every problem, and there is growing disdain for the technocrats and their junk with built-in obsolescence. Instead of solving our problems, technology has brought us to that point in history when overpopulation will soon be solved by mass starvation and pollution-poisoning. While the elders busied themselves with putting men on the moon, the youth watched the death of Hal the computer in "Space Odyssey-2001," and knew then and there that TechnoGod had clay feet. The children of our time have discovered that

growth for growth's sake is the ideology of the cancer cell, and in bohemian and Romantic style they scorn the uptight world of business and bureaucracy as well as that biweekly image-creator called the haircut. T-groups, sensitivity groups, and communes are alternatives to the impersonal status-seeking world of suburban sterility. The whole world is a human city, Viet Cong are human beings with a right to live, and war is bad for children. The children of our time have rediscovered that everything means something, even the most simple flower. And just as Protestantism ironically plunges into more secular versions of Christianity, young people by the thousands are turning to Zen, transcendental meditation, mind-expanding drugs, yoga, and Buddhism to rediscover their inner spiritual selves.

Theodore Roszak, a history professor at Hayward College in California, recently released a book entitled *The Making of a Counter Culture*, which expands a series of articles published during 1968 in *The Nation*. He suggests that our youth are in the process of haphazardly assembling an entirely new culture:

An heroic generalization about this still embryonic culture is to say that what the youth are up to is nothing less than a reorganization of the prevailing state of personal and social consciousness. From a culture that has a long-standing entrenched commitment to an egocentric and intellectual mode of consciousness, the youth are moving towards a stance of identity that is communal and non-intellectual. (*The Nation* [March 25, 1968], p. 404)

Roszak compares the present youth move-

ment with its emphasis on the "feeling of togetherness" and "community" to the mystery of the early Christian faith as it challenged the individualism and rationalism of Graeco-Roman culture. Whether one wishes to go that far or not is debatable, but the concept of a "counter culture" does provide a way of thinking about and making sense out of the diverse elements of youth culture. When a large group of people comes to the conclusion that reality is not found in conforming to the customs and traditions of social institutions or in believing the ideologies those institutions perpetuate, then a ferment of cultural creativity is assured. This seems to describe fairly well what is going on. Children today do not see reality fitting in with the stratified and structured bureaucracies of a complex society. Reality for the youth culture consists in developing one's personal style of life on the basis of his feelings, experiences, and inclinations, or his psychic and spiritual development.

It is this shift from an institution-centered view of life to a person-centered view that ties together the disdain for professionalism, the rhetoric of antiestablishmentarianism, the politics of the New Left, the neo-Marxism of Herbert Marcuse, the Zen-based psychotherapy of Alan Watts, the drug culture of Timothy Leary, the psychedelic expansiveness of films and posters, the individualism of dress and hair styles, the search for humanness in noninstitutional religious experiences, the indiscriminate and spontaneous love of the hippie, and the neurotic agony and pain of teen-agers suffering in guilty silence until they can break the economic apron strings that tie them to Mom and Dad.

III. THE REVOLUTION AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Three quotes from diverse sources set a stage for discussing the youth revolution within our institutions of higher education.

1. The conclusion concerning the causes of "campus unrest" in the report of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence reads:

The problem of campus unrest is more than a campus problem. Its roots lie deep in the larger society. . . . Students are unwilling to accept the gap between professed ideals and actual performance. . . . Today's intelligent, idealistic students see a nation which has achieved the physical ability to provide food, shelter, and education for all, but has not yet devised social institutions that do so. They see a society built on the principle that all men are created equal, that has not yet assured equal opportunity in life. They see a world of nation states with the technological brilliance to harness the ultimate energy, but without the common sense to agree on methods of preventing mutual destruction. (Pp. 211—213)

2. William Stringfellow writes in the book *Youth in Crisis*:

The crisis which young people . . . face today is not specifically their own moral decadence or absence of purpose or bewilderment. The crisis of youth and for that matter, the crisis of their elders today, concerns the unreliability, corruption and obsolescence of many of the inherited institutions, policies, laws, standards, and presuppositions of this society. (P. 35)

3. A recent issue of *Kaiser Aluminum News* offers this definition of "the revolution":

A revolution . . . might be defined as any

expenditure of human energy that ultimately results in a change in the life-style of a majority of the people in a given culture. The introduction of the steam engine, electricity, the combustion engine, the telephone, radio and television were, in that sense, revolutionary. So were the introductions of the Magna Charta, the American Declaration of Independence, particularly with its "bill of rights." Typically, they were introduced by the efforts of a few . . . and they were opposed by the societies of their time. (Vol. 27, P. 5)

The revolution is on and the "troops" are in the apartment houses and dormitories surrounding every college and university. The university is a microcosm of the world, and it is here that the two cultures clash. It is here that the information flow demonstrates the inability of static, rural-oriented 17th- and 18th-century institutions to deal with the movement and flow of 20th-century technology and issues. It is here that our youth are both *more* aware of the apocalyptic nature of the near future and *more* willing to be personally responsible for shaping that future.

Youth is a time for idealism and action, a time for new visions of human possibilities and potentials, a time for questioning every ideology and mythology of national and institutional life. And our particular generation of youth happens to enjoy the affluence required for large numbers of people to become less concerned about economic problems and more concerned about ethical and moral problems. The search is no longer for quantity but for quality.

So the gauntlet is thrown at the feet of the university president — the resident symbol of the "Establishment." The "now generation" is well schooled in TV's abil-

ity to arrive at a 25-minute solution to the problems of good and evil, and they demand an immediate answer. Patience wears thin, rage builds, and the sense of powerlessness grows heavy. Well-proteined young people who do not expect to survive much beyond another 25 years hardly take a liking to the committees, boards, and 5-year plans that come from bureaucrats pushing papers, counseling patience, and claiming their hands are tied.

At a deeper level the children of change are demanding that *process* be substituted for static structure in the fields of sociology, politics, and religion. Almost unannounced to the laity of the world, this shift from static structure to process has taken place in every major area of life since the turn of the century (1890). Physics has moved from discrete particles to transitional phases within the atom. Biology has moved from fixed species to evolutionary development. Genetics has moved from immutable chromosomic patterns to mutational processes. Art has moved from representational to nonobjective forms. Theology has moved from fixed confessionalism to theologies of process, hope, and revolution. Every aspect of life in our technological society except for our traditional, monolithic institutions has shifted from static structure to process. And the children of change intend to complete the cycle by transforming our existing institutions into fluid structures that can meet the needs and issues of the day or by destroying them.

The tactics and style of the revolution might be compared to Don Quixote. There has been much lance-breaking against the "bad guys." The list of "bad guys" includes the military-industrial-university

complex with its ROTC programs and Dow recruiters; the antiquated educational system with its medieval curriculum and exclusive admission standards; the university system with its Victorian *in loco parentis* rules and regulations; the draft system which channels warriors into a war of genocide against human beings in the Third World; a political system in which the people have little choice among the financial elite who fill the ballots; an Enlightenment notion of the university as a neutral, amoral institution where truth by definition excludes moral considerations or ethical imperatives; a growing class system—perpetuated by the universities—which excludes the black, the brown, the migrant worker, the poor, the culturally deprived. If one recalls that the roaming knight Don Quixote died without honor under the trampling feet of a herd of swine, the fateful analogy is complete.

Not all students, however, participate to the same extent in today's youth culture. Students are individuals, who cannot be lumped together as if they all shared the same point of view. We should not kid ourselves—our school systems have taught them every device for an effective game of saying and doing the right thing in the presence of Establishment people. I was once asked to offer the invocation and benediction at the university's fall term graduation ceremonies. The occasion included lunch at the president's house with the deans of the university. Our discussion revealed an awkward amazement that there should be such widespread unrest and dissatisfaction among our students when—"as everyone knows"—studies on students show that only 2% are militant or revolutionary. The aristocracy on the hill always

makes the fatal mistake of measuring the influence of a movement by its numbers rather than its qualities.

Furthermore, every student body has a wide range of student types. In general, most students might be called "apathetic." Their primary concern is good grades, 2-S deferments, and careers. Another sizeable group consists of the "sympathetic," who have some knowledge and feeling about the issues of the day but no taste for action. The "concerned" have an acute interest in the issues of race, war, and social reform, but they merely stand by to cheer on the "activists." The "activists" are a very small percentage of the total student population who are determined to bring about change. Roughly 2.6% are "militants," who plan to use any means including violence, and about 0.1% might be called "revolutionaries" because of their determination to overthrow the present order.

Every campus is unique. The percentage of students in any category depends on the campus setting, the issues being raised, and, in particular, the response of the school administration to student initiative for change. Stationing police on campus street corners is one sure way to turn the apathetic and sympathetic students into activists and militants.

An illustration from Berkeley demonstrates the expansiveness of the student movement. In 1966 a number of undergraduates staged a sit-in in the naval recruiters' office at the Student Union. The undergraduates were almost immediately joined by nonstudents from the community. The administration ordered selective arrests for the nonstudents, and within hours the chief spokesman was a nonstudent, a 30-year-old father of two. The next

day the graduate teaching assistants struck in support of the undergraduates, and the agitation came to its ambiguous conclusion with thousands in front of Sproul Hall singing the Beatles' hit tune "Yellow Submarine." It was no mere accident that "Yellow Submarine" was the current number one tune in local high schools.

So far we have talked about the white-caps on the waves that lash against the rocky shores of our nation's established institutions and authorities. Beneath those frothy waves is the ebb and flow of the tide. That powerful tide encompasses millions of young people who at this point may be intellectually unaware of what is happening, but who nevertheless are acting out the cultural and emotional pressures of our time by means of drugs, promiscuity, disruptive family behavior, Eastern religions, dropping out, or running away. There are some optimists who currently predict that even the silent majority will join that powerful tide for change when they learn enough from their children, when they begin to suffocate from the accumulated lead poisoning spewn from their Detroit-mobiles, and when they too become sufficiently disillusioned with the upright, plastic-faced, computer-ordered nature of our society.

In 1970 two basic questions confront us: (1) What comes next on the agenda of the student movement? (2) How is the Establishment going to respond? The students see no stopping point. The same movement which dethroned Charles de Gaulle and Lyndon Johnson, exposed the shambles of archaic political systems, procured the confession that Vietnam was a mistake, began the long-overdue reform of the universities, and took on the Military

Establishment has plenty of supercauses. From the relative calm of the 1969—70 academic year comes the feeling that some children of the counterculture are continuing to drop out and turn on by using drugs, living in communes, or resorting to the privatism of careerism. The organization called Students for a Democratic Society has torn itself apart, and only a small faction is bent on revolutionary guerilla warfare against the Establishment. The vast majority of students, including even the lowly freshmen, are still demanding that the university become the moral conscience of our nation, and the issue is ecology. Books, papers, lectures, and entire classes have sprung up all over to deal with problems of pollution, overpopulation, and economic exploitation of underdeveloped countries. Already in January *Look* magazine predicted that the 1970s would see a coalition of SDS leaders, Santa Barbara millionaires, and police sergeants working side by side for breathable air and white sandy beaches.

The Establishment's future response is still undetermined. In many areas things are moving, but large portions of the population appear apathetic or at least stuck with the wrong questions. Some would prefer to reform higher education by giving everyone a haircut and by bringing off a counterrevolution from the Right. But when even Ronald Reagan and Richard Nixon start expressing concerns in the area of ecology, then the future is certainly open for reconciling possibilities.

IV. YOUTH CULTURE AND THE CHURCH

Numerous books today either predict the sudden death of the church or offer the ABC's of renewal. Many of those books

are worth reading. And while I am not excited about the sudden-death theories, I am concerned about the vague assumption in renewal literature that there will automatically be people in the institutions which are being restructured.

Our youth are searching, some of them desperately, for a faith that can interpret the world as they see it, for a faith that can offer tangible, hopeful direction in the midst of apocalyptic nightmares and visions, for a faith that provides personal identity, full humanness, and direction for community commitment. Our cultural experience says, "Great!!! They're ripe for the Gospel! Some Sunday morning the doors will be wide open! If you show up, we'll even try to explain the beards and long hair to uptight middle-agers!"

But the logic of youth culture moves in a different direction. The search for faith among youth is highly personal ("do your own thing"), almost totally noninstitutional (astrology, Zen, transcendental meditation, drugs), and, for many, issue-oriented (war and peace, racism, justice, poverty, ecology). At the same time this personal, noninstitutional, and issue-oriented search is almost always within the context of a community of peers (bull sessions, apartment mates, T-groups, pot parties, and communes).

With that complexity as a starting point, let me offer a number of suggestions which relate directly to the encounter between the church as an institution and youth as a new culture. Given the diversity of youth culture, the process of tuning in is not so different from preparation for mission work in a strange foreign land.

1. Theology for youth culture

- a) needs to be "poetry plus" rather than "science minus." Poetry is the language of fact and feeling, intellect and passion, assertion and commitment. It speaks on its own authority without defensive proofs, institutional authorization, or authoritarian imprimatur;
- b) needs a *Weltanschauung* which is process-oriented rather than structure-oriented. In Jesus Christ the church, as the community of the future, is called to be a lively, redeeming, history-shaping community, as the entire universe moves to ultimate fulfillment and unity under the lordship of Jesus Christ. God's future transcends our present;
- c) needs to interpret life as youth perceive it, to address the freedom we have in Christ to the slavery of 20th-century principalities and powers, to clarify the joyous responsibility of the Christologically oriented life as something growing out of, alongside of, and perhaps quite distinct from membership in a religious institution.

2. The church as institution for youth culture

- a) needs to repent of sins associated with the fraternity model in which conformists and racists find oneness in perverse ideologies of confessionalism, denominationalism, and racism. The community of the future finds oneness amidst diversity in its shared experience of Christ's lordship;

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- b) needs to remind youth of the sociological necessity for organization and at the same time take seriously that "where two or three are gathered in His name" the *ecclesia* is in process. The community of Christ has no denominational, geographical, racial, or institutional boundaries. There are many gatherings without benefit of clergy. Some want to institutionalize these by tagging them as the "underground church," a name which is not unlike the kiss of death;
- c) needs to recognize that it is the only institution in this country that can be the nation's moral conscience. My feeling is that a lot of students in the university are going to be disappointed on this score. Their *lack* of criticism of the church at this point indicates their perception of our propensity for maintaining the status quo;
- d) needs to know that passionate concern for persons, for the interpersonal quality of life within community, and for a well-kept earth attracts the attention of youth just as honey attracts bees. That means we must talk servanthood in the radical style of Christ rather than discuss institutional survival. It also means thinking about pledges of hours instead of dollars per week.
3. The role of the clergyman for youth culture is not easily defined. The clergyman's potential authority among youth is not determined by the number of Bible passages he can quote, by the size of his collar, or by his ordination and call. His authority, or "influence-potential," depends on his humanness, his total integration of the mind of Christ with his attitudes toward life, his reflections on current events, his passion for people, and his openness and honesty. He will get farther talking about his experience of Jesus Christ than about Jesus' deity. Most youth are approachable on a person-to-person basis, but one must risk their desire to find out what makes a person tick. There are many who are turned on by Jesus, but we cannot expect necessarily to see them on Sunday morning.
4. If one is a Dan Berrigan, a William Coffin, or a James Groppi, he has the potential to become a national clergy-guru for youth. Since most of us do not fit in that category, we begin best by being who we are and what we are under Christ. Youth ministry
- a) implies process rather than static structure in thinking, theologizing, and programming;
- b) is a case of form following function;
- c) requires support rather than suspicion;
- d) involves reading their books, seeing their movies, listening to their music;
- e) demands listening, listening, listening;
- f) means conversing with rather than preaching to;
- g) requires being the truth; and
- h) needs men loyal to Christ above all institutions.
- At this point it is only fair to say that

my conclusion so far is only one of several possible conclusions. It is a conclusion which assumes that the status quo will be relatively static, that our patterns of life will not drastically alter, and that there is interest in ministry to the new generation. I could have said nothing in conclusion and left the implications open for your interpretation, or I could have concluded with a projection of the life of the church on the secular campus. The problem is that the usual conclusions maintain the old social models of elders and institutions giving answers to their own questions. This essay has claimed that our answers must be directed to the questions of those who need to learn new ways of survival in an apocalyptic age.

If what ecologists are telling us is only 50% accurate—and I see no reason for assuming anything to the contrary—then we need to confront the reality that our pipe dreams for gradual renewal of the church are probably a waste of time. The new generation knows about the rape of natural resources, the poisoning of the atmosphere, the pollution of rivers and oceans, and the impossibility of feeding geometrically increasing populations to say that our concern for the institutional church is like painting the flagpole on a sinking ship. The holy Christian church is confronted with the necessity of saying loud and clear that TechnoGod is dead; that solutions will arise not from federal grants but from worldwide repentance and

changes in life-styles, that repentance will have to include not only *mea culpa* but also a worldwide willingness to consider virtually no population growth, feasible substitutes for the automobile and the jet plane, and calculation of the possible demonic effects of technological development.

The apocalyptic alternative is mass world starvation in 5 to 10 years, mass poisoning from air and water pollution in 5 to 15 years, and total disruption of our American way of life, in which 6.7% of the world's population consumes 65% of the world's resources. That kind of social change will bring with it revolution, riot, mass outrage, and war such as we have never imagined.

The question is: What are we who claim to be Christologically informed going to do? After centuries of comfort are we ready for judgment to work itself out in history? After centuries of relative calm are we ready for suffering and pain in the context of humanity's death? Are we ready to commit time and energy to speak about man's responsibility as the image-bearer to care for rather than to devastate the earth? Are we prepared to participate in the suffering of Christ in our present history as the style and process of discipleship and crossbearing? Are we prepared for such radical obedience in love that we literally give our lives as individuals and as the people of God for the life of the world?

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