

"THE STATE OF THE WORLD TODAY"

A Series of Sermons

Preached at the Union Church of Manila

by

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I

CRISES OF MOTIVATION

Text: II Corinthians 5:16-20

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"From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

--II Corinthians 5: 16-20

The Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches which met at Uppsala, Sweden July 5-20 of this year was significant for two main reasons. First, it had an importance for the whole life of the church in providing a forum to think through many of the vital issues of our faith in the context of 1968. Secondly, the meeting was important in the fact that the gathering itself was the most all-inclusive world meeting of the last few years (apart from U.N. meetings), and, therefore, helped to reveal the state of the world in 1968.

In the paper, Reflections on the World Council of Churches, I have tried to sketch in some of the new presuppositions and realities of our age that were made vivid at the Fourth Assembly: the New World configuration that has partly replaced the older Cold War alignments with the new tensions of 1968 between developed and underdeveloped countries. Another painful reality is the pervasive mood of anxiety that exists in all parts of the world today. The reasons vary from place to place but the fear feels the same in every place whether it is the worry of underdeveloped nations concerning sluggish economic growth and the widening wealth and technology gap between these younger countries and the richer, industrialized ones; or it may be the anxiety of Americans for example deeply troubled over the national controversy concerning Viet Nam or the Youth Revolt that has swept like a brush fire; or it may be the fears in Eastern Europe regarding the breakdown in the solidarity of the Warsaw Pact countries and what this collapse will mean. The list could go on and on from region to region. Added together these anxieties and other ingredients as well have produced what the distinguished World Council of Churches leader Dr. W. A. Visser d'Hooft described as a Crises of Motivation. What it means is that at this moment in human history there is a general slump among many people; there is a tendency to draw back, to withdraw from active encounter. To put it



another way, there is a low grade infection that has struck at the roots of the classic sources of motivation in the lives of men and their society. All four of these sources of motive are in disrepair.

(1) The ideological source of motivation is in a slump. That is to say, the influence of great concepts and ideas upon the way we live. Ideology is in trouble more than ever before. The great themes and ideals of the human experience are unable to sway men and concretely influence daily living the way they once did. The university student wrote the following -

"I'm 22 years old and I'm tired. America has worn me out. I don't believe in God, and I don't believe that America is the golden center of the universe. You can get away with not believing in one of these, but not both."

Anonymous  
Life Magazine

We tend today to improvise from situation to situation with very little, if any, reference to larger truths. This breakdown in ideology is worldwide. In the Communist countries the doctrine of Karl Marx is losing its grip. Even the most impressive aspects of the Marxist dream of social solidarity and justice have been damaged by the essential weakness of man himself, his incurable bureaucracy, his desire for power and personal advantage.

The various ideologies of what we call the free world are in trouble too. As I see it, our problem is vagary; we have only the most minimal sense of public idealism. We have made so much of the value of freedom and, indeed, it is our crowning achievement nevertheless, where it turns selfish and insular, freedom begins to drift aimlessly from desire to desire without meaning or purpose. Such a liberty is carefree and self-indulgent, it lacks greatness, so that as with the idealisms of the left or right, it too collapses from within.

(2) There is also the interpersonal source of motivation. This is that bedrock sense of oneness and obligation that I feel toward people because of the relationship we share. 1968 has been a hard year on human relationships. We find it very easy to walk out on each other, don't we! We structure our lives so that anything deep in interpersonal relationships is minimized, kept under control. The result of this isolation is that the vital interpersonal building block of society has been weakened. We just do not care enough about the people around us to find any stimulus to positive action on our part.

(3) There is a third, the pragmatic source of motivation. This is that dynamism of logic that influences us when we recognize the practical gain that follows a particular course of action. But even this amoral, mathematical origin for motive power has been undermined by the widespread loss of self-confidence that has characterized this year for so many of us. There are growing numbers of people who are afraid to count up the obvious data and afraid to come up with the total, perhaps so intimidated by previous failure or imagined future failure that no action at all is ventured. Every crisis is met with a "wait-and-see" proposal - hoping either that someone else will make the decisive moves or that perhaps if we wait quietly enough the crisis will disappear.

(4) There is the spiritual source of motivation which is the most basic of all. I mean the inward source for all outward action which is rooted in a



man's individual discovery of the answer to the most generic questions of living: "Who am I?", "What am I worth?", "What am I living for?" But these inward discoveries are costly and most of the time most of us are unwilling to risk making them. Therefore, we have little else left to us but to attach ourselves to various immediate, passing fads and causes only to feel hurt and cheated by these at the end of each season when the style changes and leaves both the fad and us behind. One year it is "Wood is dead", the next LSD and the hippie generation, the next yippiedom.

What is the cure for motivational sickness? In the case of ideology the power of a greater idea is the only thing that can edge out an inferior idea. There is right now a need for meaningful public ideology and there are I believe encouraging signs that it is emerging. Here in the Philippines this is one fact that is exciting in the development of the Christian Social Movement which is endeavoring to break through and advance public idealism in the cause of nation building. Every society must have at its core men and women who are continuously working at the dreams and hopes of the social order and are dedicated to the proposition that we must never coast without worthy goals. Freedom, for instance is a reality that must be shared by every member of the society or it is not really authentic. It must be understood as a base from which responsibility grows or it is at best a wasting asset. Therefore, the cure for ideology illness is better ideology, growing ideology, infectious ideology and this means a nucleus of people who care enough to work at it and give themselves to it. We, as Christians, are inevitably drawn into such a task. Concern for public ideology is a natural for a Christian because the Gospel of Jesus Christ has remarkable social implications that we dare not keep quiet about. "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away..." Because of the Gospel we cannot accept injustice, slavery, the demoralization of individuals or minorities. We must be hard at work in the growth of meaningful public idealism.

(2) To rebuild interpersonal relationships takes time and work. Some of us will need to dare to reverse the present drift toward superficiality. We may not be able to solve everyone else's problems but we can certainly build meaningful bridges toward people ourselves. A single happy home has a contagious influence beyond its doors and genuine interpersonal interest and friendship is now rare enough that it has a very significant impact wherever it is experienced.

(3) In order to increase pragmatic motive power, we will have to prove to ourselves and to humanity that there actually are sound solutions to the complicated issues of 1968 and that these solutions will work. The only way this can happen<sup>is if</sup> men and women are creative enough to try the threefold pragmatic approach:

1. Get a firm hold on an issue and try to realistically add up its various ingredients;
2. Do something definite to solve either a small or large part of the problem;
3. See if it works.

Just a week ago one of our laymen who represents a large U.S. corporation and I were discussing the very difficult problem of the unemployment and underdeployment of youth in the inner city which is a major ingredient in the urban breakdown of peace and order, both here in the Philippines and in the U.S. Many of these young men are high school dropouts, unskilled and by most traditional standards unemployable. That is the problem, but what is the solution? Let me tell you what some firms are doing: Here is one of them. They are mobilizing employment procedures that break all of the rules. They are sending teams of employment recruiters into these ghettos just like they do to college campuses. They are hiring unemployed youth for jobs and then urging them to show up for work by 8:00 a.m., if possible.



Some of these young men have only occasionally got up in the morning before 10:00 a.m. because the social life on the streets is evening-oriented.) If the new employee drops out after several days on the job, the company sends their team back into the inner city to find their man and urge him to opt in favor of work, rather than other alternatives. In some cases it means transporting an employee each day to the place where he can work. When you think about it this approach to a very serious human and social problem is revolutionary--it doesn't seem to fit in with business practicality or long-established traditional employee-employer practices, but the problem was too staggering and urgent for the old ways and the old presuppositions. It simply took pragmatic courage and initiative to try a new way, to open new roads in order to give forgotten and disestablished citizens a real chance.

(4) The spiritual source of motivation is the most basic of all. The real question for our time is this: Is there any way to heal the inner brokenness, that civil war, the harassment that a man feels within his own soul? The World Council of Churches theme for the Fourth Assembly was the blunt affirmation from the Book of Revelations chapter 21:5, "Behold, I make all things new." I believe that Jesus Christ is the only one able to fulfill man's spiritual longings which in the profoundest sense are the prior force behind his ideological, interpersonal and even pragmatic creativity. Let us ask Christ to come within our lives and integrate that which is at loose ends within each one of us and grant to us and our fellow men that which we need so urgently in our time -- genuine newness.

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