

quite completed, the lack of appreciation on part of the perfection-minded critics . . . a place where

“those that were good shall be happy, they shall sit on a golden chair, and splash on a ten-league canvas with brushes of comet’s hair. And only the Master shall praise us and only the Master shall blame, and nobody shall work for money and nobody shall work for fame, but each for the joy of working and each in his separate star, to paint the thing as he sees it for the God of things as they are.”¹

NEGATIVE FORCES ABSENT

Moreover, heaven will be devoid of certain negative forces. Death will never invade that holy precinct. It served its ghastly role on earth, reaping like an impersonal scythe all mankind. The theories of its origin, purpose, and destiny would fill a library but the good thing to say is that by virtue of death’s reality, a Christian goes to heaven. It is a passage through which the follower of Christ walks.

Sometimes death is excruciatingly painful; other times it is sudden and torturous; then at times, peaceful, quick but always final. The act of dying may be a disconcerting boner, but the state of death is

¹Kipling’s, “When Earth’s Last Picture is Painted” *The Book of Poetry*, William H. Wise Co., New York 1928, p. 2596.)

THIS YOUNGER GENERATION

July 13, 1958

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 11:9-10

My grandfather in his house of logs said the younger generation is going to the dogs. His grandfather in the Flemish bogs said the young people are going to the dogs, and his grandfather in his skin of togs said the young people are going to the dogs. But there is one thing I have to state, the dogs have had a mighty long wait.

non-existent for those who are enrolled in heaven.

There is no sin in heaven. Sin is the curser of earth’s beauty — a curse that denudes, erodes, corrupts, defiles, diverts, denounces, and destroys. Sin, like a virus, invades the soul of man and makes him sick. Sin separates while exacting a behemoth tax in the process. It drives a wedge between holiness and heartlessness. Sin is never satisfied with its conquests but ever rises to new campaigns to divide and conquer. To say that heaven will know no such defilement is a sermon in itself.

PLACE OF JOY

Tears will not flow in heaven. The author of the Book of Revelation adds a tender touch by saying that “God will wipe away all tears.” The only tears God will have to wipe away will be those tears of ecstatic joy since there will be no other reason for crying up there.

Misunderstanding, disappointment, accidental harm or hurt, loneliness, spurned love, disconsolation . . . none of these will enter those portals.

Over the three doors of the great Cathedral in Milan, Italy, there is inscribed words of lasting wisdom. Over the left door where a cross is sculptored is written, “That which troubles is but for a moment.” Over the right door where a garland of roses is carved, “That which pleases is but for a moment.” But over the main entrance is carved, “That only is important which is eternal.”

Today as we come to consider this younger generation we must refrain from seeing it in unrepresentative extremes. To call it the worst of young people is to misunderstand it; to call it the best is to ignore the facts. Both are relative statements and need to be seen in the light of the most honest information obtainable.

This younger generation certainly isn’t as bad as many religionists conclude. Cer-

tainly not as bad as a social worker concluded after a trip into a backward, mountain community. She called on a family living back in the sticks and one of the children came to the door. "Where is your Mother and Dad?" she asked the child. "Mom's in the county home and Pop's in the pen," was the quick, unapologetic reply. "Well, that's bad. Don't you have any brothers or sisters?" "Yes," she answered, "Sis is in the home for delinquent girls, Jo Jo is in the reform school and Spike's at Harvard." "You say, your Mother's in the county home, your Pop is in the pen, Sis in the home for delinquent girls, Jo Jo in reform school and Spike is studying at Harvard?" "No," the child quickly corrected, "Spike's not studying at Harvard, they're studying Spike."

There are lots of folks who are convinced that this is representative of today's youth.

THE STATE OF YOUTH TODAY

Needless to say, there has been a steady decline in the morals of our world in the last ten or fifteen years. Treason in government, corruption in business, scandals on Broadway and in Hollywood, former enemies becoming supposed friends, double-dealing in personal ethics . . . these and

many other tendencies have become daily fare in recent decades.

Things that once chagrined and ensensed us have become tolerated to the point that they are ignored in any effort to assess real dangers. The young people living today are children of these decades. The so-called "good old days" were unknown to them . . . these are the only days they have known. They have known three wars in their short span of life: a hot war, a cold one, and a war of attrition. This is the first generation to know a peace-time draft.

Hearing for the first time such terms as motivational research, inter-planetary travel, spaceships, nuclear fission . . . they have had science to outrun their young souls and leave them in a heady grog not knowing what really mattered or why. The youth of former generations have been called the lost generation, or the silent generation. Today's have been called the beat generation. Beat, not in the sense of being whipped down, but a rawness of nerves.

Not youth that are fed up, but emptied out . . . those who live on the bottom of their personalities. Life that is stripped of non-essentials is the appropriate personality for revolting against traditional niceties and the accepted norm of living.

APPARENT CONTRADICTIONS

The contradictions of today's youth are apparent: a tenor saxophone player, doped up to irrationality playing through the night, but stopping long enough to attend a religious meeting; group loyalties to gangs and fraternities which at the same time decry equal loyalties to the church.

The heroes of today's young are a strange combination. Previous generations have admired the swashbuckling gusto of muscle, downright good looks or an adventurer who swept over the lesser man's limitations. Unfortunately, many millions of teenagers make for their heroes those who represent a sad dejection, or a profane orientation of life.

Disheveled hair, sloppy clothes and a snarl at all that would guide seems to be necessary equipment for multimillions. The tragedy is not that these heroes are what

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many young people want to be but that they are what they are.

The literature of many of the young must be heavily laden with one recurrent theme: sex, sex, sex. As a matter of fact, unless this theme runs through the average drama, song, or story, it is destined to the trash pile of being unsuccessful. Not only does it have its own music, its literature, its fashions, but a code of ethics all its own. Some are coined in the gangs of the teenagers; others are written on fraternity walls, some are borrowed from the common gutter . . . whether good or bad there is a certain jargon all their own . . . their unique way of expressing what is deep inside of them.

NEEDS OF TODAY'S YOUTH

Now, take a look at the most desperate needs of today's young people. The greatest need by far is that they be understood. No, this is not an effort to evade or overlook the sordid crimes on one hand or the saintliness on the other extreme. It was no accident that the Old Testament sage prayed for an understanding heart.

Take for instance what happened recently in a large city when a young boy stabbed his best friend with a steel letter opener. After having done so he said, "Thanks a lot, I just wanted to see how it would feel." Not liking what he felt, he quickly rushed his friend to the nearest hospital.

Now, why did he do it? Well, one school says that it was sadism. Unfortunately, too much intellectual pabulum has been used to either defend or denounce much that must be explained otherwise. Did the lad not know better? Certainly he did. Then why? He stabbed the boy because of the cruel absence of God in him. A cruel absence which makes necessary his proving that he could do it. There is the tragedy of the matter.

Most of the violent crimes in this nation are being committed by the young people. Along with this fact is the fact that three out of four boys and girls already have dropped out of Sunday School and church before their seventeenth birthday. Does one fact have anything to say to the other? Of course it does! The vacuum that exists in millions of teenagers and those in their early twenties is a fertile seedbed for all sorts of crimes against society.

CHILDREN AND PARENTS

Much of this problem must be thrown in the laps where it belongs: namely, in the laps of the parents. Someone has defined a delinquent child as one who has reached the age where he wants to do what mama and papa are doing. The fact that our homes have become waiting stations while someone else is using the car, speaks a commentary on the listlessness of this beat generation. When the home forfeits its duty of understanding a child, it automatically forfeits its prime duty. If the young are started out right in high chairs, there will be no criminals for the electric chairs.

Discipline is up near the top of young people's needs. A discipline that neither reverts to animal cruelty nor buys the thin-veneer of self-assertion psychologies. A discipline that is firm and kind, admitting of human errors but also admitting of the coercive powers of rigor.

Unfortunately, many schools went on a binge of delusion about two decades ago so far as discipline is concerned. Exercising the folly that if a child is left alone to vent his natural feelings he will most nearly realize the ideal for him, they suddenly were faced with the problems that defied all reason: problems that involved rape, murder, stabbing, insult, and chaos. Now the pendulum is swinging back to a more reasonable attitude. Human nature needs discipline at every age, but particularly at the age when habits are being formed.

DIRECTION NEEDED

This younger generation also needs direction . . . it needs a kind finger to point in the direction of significance. The questions of why, where, when, and how must be answered with honest intelligence. To ignore them is nothing short of cruelty. Much of the momentum, the hotrods, the constant being on the move is not so much a flight as it is a search . . . a search in the final analysis for God. In that search some turn to all kinds of paths . . . many of which wind up in jail, or madness, or death.

This closing word is to the young people directly. Our generation of older people let you down . . . they let you down by giving you this kind of world. Don't curse the unborn generation by letting them down. Take a hold of this sorry scheme

of things and set it right. Invest your life in the things that matter . . . and prove to this world that you can be an improvement. I know why you don't buy our worn shibboleths, our mouthing prayers and our slick doxologies. It is because these have produced this kind of world!

Ours is a solid case of hypocrisy. In the same breath we have talked of God and anti-God. We have known a better way but we haven't walked in that better way. We have asked our youth to do one thing

while we did another. At least one healthy sign is that the youth are not deceived by this doubledealing.

So chart your new course, run with eager zeal and prove to this tired, contradictory society that something better is in the offering for tomorrow. To do this you need to surrender your life to Jesus Christ for it is He and He alone who can reveal His perfect will for you and help you make of your life a worthwhile adventure.

LOOKING AT YOURSELF

July 20, 1958

Scripture: Romans 12:14-21

Life is a grindstone and whether or not it grinds you down or polishes you up depends on what you are made of. Friends, in this sermon let us look at ourselves, not as others see us, but as we really are. We have a way of decrying the woes of the world, the troubles of society, the sins of the human race. There really is nothing wrong with the world. The trouble is with us as Shakespeare reminds, "Brutus, the trouble is not in our stars, but in ourselves."

In talking about his wild impulses, Carl Sandburg exclaimed, "I think I have a whole menagerie under my ribs," by which he meant, his inner life acted like a whole group of wild animals, screaming and crying out for expression. This is just another novel way of saying that the inner makeup of nature is often a mysterious and awful anatomy needing to be understood more than anything.

As you look at yourself you may be inclined to dislike what you see, or what you feel. Others are too inclined to like all that they see. It is the purpose of this sermon to point out three possible courses of action that are open to us all when we look at ourselves under close scrutiny.

DEFY SELF

One thing one can do is to defy himself. Simply to resist one's self on every hand is the lot of missions. Falling so far short

of what they would like to be or do or say, there is a type of resistance that follows which robs life of much of its meaningfulness. It is not difficult to find many people who are at civil war with themselves.

Having discovered the weak spots in their personalities, instead of setting themselves to the work that would strengthen, instead, they aggravate the weakness, pick at the sore spots and set up a battery of defiant resistance. Little wonder that this self battling prevents one from accepting himself as he is. If he is not battling himself, he usually is at war with other people. Such a person seldom knows a minute of real joy or happiness.

Life is lived between boxes of pills, another drink, another interview or someone's lecture or sermon. Pretty soon the person is victimized by a rat race of obsessions, running from one witch doctor to another as though this exhaustive effort would result in some sort of cure. The folly is accentuated by changing jobs, or moving from one community to another, or divorcing the life's partner, whereas the real trouble most times is neither in the job nor in the partner but in ourselves. This is defiance! Fighting ourselves instead of accepting as we are and then setting our energies in the direction of self-improvement.

DEMAND PERFECTION

Defiance usually means belligerence . . . a war-like attitude. Naturally, to this kind