

THE BAPTIST HOUR

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THE ETERNAL SPIRIT

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THE ETERNAL SPIRIT

The free world looks with amazement at the steady, relentless spread of Communism. During the past decade the United States alone, assuming that the answer is military, has spent three hundred billion dollars on weapons designed to stop it. Operating on the thesis that the problem is economic, since 1945 we have given almost eighty-six billion dollars in foreign aid. By comparison during the last six years Russia has spent only five billion six hundred million dollars for the same purpose. Yet Communism continues to spread in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Quite obviously the answer to Communism is power. But its continuous enslavement of free peoples indicates that we have not yet employed that power. Communism itself is a power. But it is neither political, military, nor economic. It is a spiritual force unlike any other which has confronted modern man.

In Latin America last spring I saw no Russian armies or flags flying over capitol buildings. I saw much evidence of United States economic aid, but none from Russia. But I did find evidence of a small but well organized, active Communist group.

What is the basic element in Communism? It has been described as a "counterfeit Christianity." By this it is meant that Communism is a religion which thrives on the weaknesses and failures of true Christianity. It is the very opposite of Christianity, yet it builds its religious system parallel to but in contrast to basic Christian doctrines.

Communism is atheistic. Its messiahs are Marx and Lenin. Its Bible is Marx's *Das Kapital*. To it sin is the holding of private property. Man is a material machine, or as one has said, "Man is an ape in britches."

Communism is immoral. It possesses no absolute standard of truth. Whatever furthers Communism is right, be it cheating, stealing, lying, or killing.

Its term of greeting is not the Christian word "brother" but the Communist word "comrade." Its

heaven is a classless society. And its arch-enemy is not Satan but capitalism. "Counterfeit Christianity" may well be a good title for it.

Yet with an evangelistic zeal which puts Christians to shame its adherents press their cause day and night. They are driven by a diabolical spirit which promises but does not deliver. Some months ago in Ghana one high in the government spoke thusly: "As goes China, so goes Ghana. In China there is no unemployment, no poverty, no hunger. Everyone has work to do." It would be to laugh were it not so tragic.

What is the answer to the challenge of Communism? More munition? To deter it, yes. More economic aid? To relieve human suffering, yes. A more vigorous foreign policy? Perhaps. But these things get only at the symptoms. What we need is a cure. The only cure for "Counterfeit Christianity" is true Christianity. The answer to their diabolical atheistic zeal is a holy Christian dedication. The power to overcome the evil spirit of Communism is the Holy Spirit of God. It is to the achieving of this power that my present message is dedicated.

I want you to think realistically with me for a few moments about present world conditions. And as we do let us note, first, the failure; second, the force; third, the future.

CONSIDER THE FAILURE

"Neither by the blood of goats and calves . . ." (Heb. 9:12) With these words the author of Hebrews describes the failure of instituted religion to meet the deepest needs of man. Over against it he proposes *"the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God . . ."* (v. 14) This he offers as the answer to man's spiritual need. This is the very essence of Christianity.

But today we are faced with the awful fact that Christendom is failing. Note that I did not say that Christ is a failure. I said that Christendom is failing. Many of you will not like these words. I do not like them either. But let us face this unhappy truth. It is the only way that we can correct it.

is taking the world can we say that true Christianity is succeeding in meeting its challenge? On a population basis alone there are more lost people in the world in the twentieth century than in the first. More people are being born into paganism daily than we are winning to Christ.

Is there a reason for this failure? Certainly it is not found in the gospel itself. (Rom. 1:16) There is no instance in history where the gospel has failed when brought to bear upon the needs of sinful man. The reason is found in Christian people themselves.

With fanatical enthusiasm the Communists propagate error as though it were truth. But the average Christian, fearful that he will be called fanatical, never allows Christian truth through him to come to grips with this error.

Charles Wells tells of seeing 40,000 Communist youths march through Red Square in Moscow on a cold winter day, chanting in Russian. Mr. Wells asked a by-stander what they were chanting. "Oh, Comrade, it is nothing. They just sing, 'We may be cold, we may be hungry, but we change the world.'"

They are changing the world, not for the better but for the worse. And all the while we are doing little or nothing, although we possess the only message that will change the world for the better.

When you get down to the basic difference between the success of Communism and the failure of the Christian witness it is a matter of spirit. They are caught up in the power of an evil spirit, while we refuse to be used by the Holy Spirit. It is no mere pious preachment to say that the only thing that will change this tide of current history is for Christian people to be wholly possessed by the Holy Spirit of God. J. Edgar Hoover puts it another way when he said that it is either "communist domination or Christian rededication."

NOTE THE FORCE

“. . . Christ, who through the eter-

9:14) Thus, Holy Writ explains the redemptive work of Christ. It is not too much to say that if this redemptive work is to realize its purpose it must be said of His followers, "We, who through the eternal Spirit offered" ourselves. The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity. He is God working in spiritual power in the affairs of men.

Jesus lived and worked "*in the power of the Spirit.*" (Luke 4:1, 14) He died in the power of the Spirit. (Heb. 9:14) He arose from the grave by the power of the Spirit. (Rom. 1:4) And He sent forth His followers in the power of the Spirit. (Acts 1:8)

To the worldly minded was there ever a more audacious scene in world history than what we call the giving of the Great Commission? Jesus, a product of the peasant class, saying to five hundred people, "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*" (Matt. 28:19-20) He gave them no army, no government, no treasury. Yet He told them to take the world for Him.

Had someone told Caesar that this little band constituted a threat to his empire, he would have laughed in derision. Yet in less than three hundred years this little band, and those who came after them, so changed Caesar's empire that it became politically expedient for his successor openly to espouse its cause. For this Son of a peasant woman was the Son of God. He was the Conqueror of sin and death. He gave to His followers the greatest message that the world had ever heard. And His promised presence was the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

This little band completely surrendered to the power of the Holy Spirit. And in His power they wrought a work which still amazes the minds of men. They preached, and men's hearts were broken only to find healing in God. (Acts 2:37ff)

They were threatened, and in answer to their prayers the Holy Spirit assured them of His presence and strength. (Acts 4:29ff)

They were confused, and the Holy Spirit gave them guidance. (Acts 8, 10)

They became discouraged, but the Holy Spirit urged them on. (Acts 18:9-11)

With the might of a pagan and cruel empire set to destroy them, they came through to victory.

With good reason the book of Acts has been called "The Gospel of the Holy Spirit". I recommend that you read it through at one sitting, noting how the Holy Spirit empowered and directed the followers of Jesus in world conquest. Caught up in His more than conquering power, they swept from victory to victory until the greatest empire in ancient history lay prostrate at the feet of Christ.

The forces of Christ need the rebirth of such an experience today. Without it we shall continue in headlong retreat before the devotees of an evil spirit. With it the tide of battle will change, until the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

CONSIDER THE FUTURE

Let us read Hebrews 9:13-14: *"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God."*

Now what is the writer saying? "The blood of bulls and of goats" speak of redemption from sin. "The ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean" refer to the rite of purifying to make the redeemed suited for service to God. Speaking in modern language it refers to those who are redeemed and dedicated to God's service. And it is all through Christ by "the eternal Spirit."

What about the future? Does it hold a continuing spread of Com-

munism until a godless atheism fills the earth? The only thing that can give a negative answer to this question is a complete dedication on the part of the people of Christ. This may appear to be a weak answer to the forces of evil which would dominate the earth. But this is because you do not reckon with the power of God. Khrushchev will not speak the last word in this age. It will be spoken by God. But He chooses to speak through His people.

And we must march forth armed not with bombs but Bibles, not with the gimmicks of war but with the gospel, not in the power of the sword but in the power of the Spirit. We have tried everything else, and we are losing the battle. Why not try God for a change?

Now how are we going to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit? We are not to pray for the Holy Spirit. This may startle you, but it is true. In John 14:16 Jesus said, "*I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter . . .*" The Holy Spirit came in answer to Jesus' prayer. And He has never left the world. He is here now. When you became a Christian He came to dwell in you. He is there now. What we need is not to pray for the Spirit, but to surrender to Him.

In Luke 24:49 Jesus said, "*And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye get yourselves clothed with power from on high.*" (author's literal translation) "Until ye get yourselves clothed with power." We are not to wait until God clothes us. We are to get ourselves clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now the disciples got themselves clothed through prayer. For ten days they prayed. Not for the Holy Spirit to come. He came at Pentecost in answer to Jesus' prayer, not theirs. They prayed that they might be ready and able to be used by the Spirit.

For what did they pray? For a reconciliation among themselves? I think so. There was plenty of strife there prior to the death of Jesus. For

forgiveness because they had forsaken Jesus in His hour of greatest need? Most certainly so. But most of all they prayed for a spirit of surrender to the power of the Holy Spirit when He came. The book of Acts tells how completely God answered their prayers.

The people of Christ need to pray likewise that they may be surrendered to the power of the Holy Spirit. Someone has said, "It is not how much of the Holy Spirit you have, but how much of you the Holy Spirit has." Beloved, you have all of God's Holy Spirit there in you. How much of you does He have. The answer to that question may well determine the future of this age.

During World War II a chaplain said to a soldier, "Soldier, you are building a new world." The soldier replied, "No, chaplain, I am destroying the old world. The building of a new world is the job of guys like you."

Indeed it is. And if it is to be built according to the plan and purpose of God, it must be done by "guys" like us who are completely surrendered to the Holy Spirit.

This sermon leaflet is free. However, if you wish to share in the cost of printing and distribution our address is: THE BAPTIST HOUR, P. O. Box 12157, Fort Worth 16, Texas.

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