1975

Rejection or Revival Pamphlet

Herald of Truth

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Rejection or Revival?

THE CHALLENGE TO RELIGIOUS BROADCASTING IN THE 1970'S
In the 15-year period following World War II, organized religion in the United States enjoyed an era of unprecedented growth. Church and Sunday school attendances swelled. Contributions soared. New church buildings mushroomed everywhere. Missionary activities in foreign countries reached new heights. All was well, we thought, with our religious world.

But as we wove about ourselves a cocoon of religious complacency, our minds became shielded from the danger signals that began to appear in the late fifties and early sixties.

Church attendance kept increasing, but no longer apace with the population explosion. Contributions, though rising, were falling behind the expanding income rates. Well-attended Sunday school classes masked the growing rejection of religion by teenagers and young adults. The Bible continued to be the world's best-selling book, but fewer and fewer people knew its teachings.

Agnosticism flourished in the culture-medium of affluence, even as the Bible warned that it would:

"You must face the fact: the final age of this world is to be a time of troubles. Men will love nothing but money and self; they will be arrogant, boastful and abusive; with no respect for parents, no gratitude, no piety, no natural affection; they will be implacable in their hatreds; scandalmongers, intemperate and fierce, strangers to all goodness, traitors, adventurers, swollen with self importance. They will be men who put pleasure in the place of God, men who preserve the outward form of religion, but are a standing denial of its reality."

The New English Bible, 2 Timothy 3:1-5

In the face of such Biblical condemnation, the religious bubble had to burst. It did in the mid sixties.
Recession in religion

Louis Cassels, UPI religion writer, stated in a recent column: “The ebbing of popular interest in religion which began to be apparent in the mid-1960’s has now reached the point at which local churches and national denominations are seriously hurting.

“The religious recession is reflected in every available statistical index. Attendance at worship services has declined about 15% during the past decade. Bible sales have dropped 25% (though they improved in 1970 with the publication of the New English Bible Old and New Testament — ed.) Sunday school enrollment has declined every year for the past six years.”

The 1969 Yearbook of American Churches reports church attendance down from a high of 49% (of U.S. population) in 1958 to 43% in 1968. In eleven years, this publication indicates, the proportion of American adults who believe that religion is “losing influence in American life” has jumped from 14% to 67%, as shown in the table on the following page.
Religion Increasing or Losing Its Influence?

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>% Increasing</th>
<th>% Losing</th>
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<td>1957</td>
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<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This figure jumps to 77% in the 21-29 age group.

Along with the decline in church attendance there has been a serious decline in giving, so serious, according to Cassels, that one large denominational group was compelled to cut its national headquarters staff in half and drastically reduce many of its programs. Budget cuts were also announced in 1970 by several other major denominations.

An editorial in Christianity Today (January 1, 1971) laments cutbacks in the overseas missions staffs of denomination groups and adds, “Ecumenical councils, already in trouble, felt severely the pinch of reduced income…”

But reduced attendance and decreasing income are not all that plague organized religion. More serious has been the growing rejection of religion by young people. The 1970 Yearbook of American Churches shows the greatest percentage of decline in church attendance, 11%, in the 20-29 age group.

**Why recession?**

There are probably as many theories as there are religious scholars.

Some claim the church is not relevant, does not concern itself fully with the great social and economic problems of today and is not keeping up with the times. An equal number argues that the church has become so involved in social and political issues, God has all but been submerged in a welter of humanism.

Harold Lindsell, editor of Christianity Today, points to theological liberalism as one of the causes of the crisis in religion. (“The Crisis of the Church,” September 11, 1970)

“Liberalism,” says Lindsell, “… is essentially anti-supernatural. It does not accept the deity of Christ, his vicarious atonement, the bodily resurrection of Christ, his virgin birth.”

Later in the same article, he adds, “The churches have been overtaken by liberalism and by repudiation of the Bible as the Word of God.”

Liberal scholars, on the other hand, charge the traditionalists with intolerance, legalism, dogmatism, perfectionism and antiscientific attitudes.

*Standing on the periphery of this inner conflict, the young people turn away in droves with muttered accusations of “Hypocrisy!” and “Materialism!”*

And finally, not to be excluded in this upheaval of religious opinion, the pragmatic religious leaders dismiss the underlying causes of the recession with “It’s just a religious cycle. The pendulum will start to swing back soon.”

Perhaps it will. Perhaps it already has. But the reason is much more meaningful than a “religious cycle.” The signs are already around us.
Revival amidst rejection

In Frankfurt, Germany, historic center of religious liberalism, a group of theologans issue a declaration reaffirming the evangelical mission of the church and their faith in the fundamental doctrines of the Bible. (Christianity Today, January 29, 1971.)

In California, a fundamentalist revival has taken hold, spearheaded by happy, Bible-carrying young people who stop strangers on the streets and ask them if they have accepted Christ. (Look Magazine, February 9, 1971.)

In the Pacific Northwest, similar groups of youngsters who call themselves “Jesus People” take to the streets and kneel on the sidewalks to pray. (Christianity Today, January 29, 1971.)

At the University of Illinois, the largest student missions convention ever held, 12,000 strong from 48 states, from every Canadian province and from 70 foreign countries, mobilized for over 4 days to sing, pray, listen about world evangelism. (Christianity Today, January 29, 1971.)

In Thurber, Texas, hundreds of young people called “Children of God” live in a communal group, having renounced materialism and returned to their claim for a fundamental faith. (This was the subject of an NBC telecast on the “First Tuesday” show in January, 1971.)

Something very exciting is happening among our young people, but it isn’t ending there.

UPI religion writer Louis Cassels, in his report on the religious recession, reveals that the fundamental, evangelistic religious groups are growing at substantially faster rates than the population, while major denominational groups are losing ground.

U. S. News and World Report (October 6, 1969), in a comprehensive article about the conflicts in churches, talks about a rekindling of what was once Christianity’s unique purpose in the world, saving
souls. In discussing the gradually eroding vitality of one of the large denominations, the article goes on to say, “Membership figures, however, suggest that it is not in the fundamentalist churches where vitality is being lost.”

*Time Magazine (September 19, 1969) talks about the extraordinary growth in recent years of the churches which place strong emphasis upon the central authority of the Bible, are conservative in theology, and concentrate on individual salvation through God’s grace and man’s repentance.*

The 1970 Yearbook of American Churches reveals that per capita contributions are highest among the fundamentalist churches and are still on the increase, despite the decline in most denominations.

In New York, Dr. Eugene A. Nida of the American Bible Society says that the demand for new translations and revisions of the Bible was greater in the past year than at any other time.

What does it all mean?

The signs point to an intense revival affecting all age levels, a revival rooted in the fundamental teachings of the Bible. At a time when men are searching futilely for human answers to the problems of society — taking no account of the providence, the grace and the will of God — this revival holds out a message that has never changed in two thousand years:

*Personal salvation through total commitment to Christ is the only way in which people’s lives — and society — can be transformed permanently.*

This involves unwavering acceptance of the divine origins of the Bible; the divinity and lordship of Christ; the redemptive power found only in Christ. And this is what lies behind the revival that seems to be growing in the face of widespread rejection.

**The challenge to religious broadcasting**

What are we going to do with this basic, Biblical concept? We are already using the effectiveness of our mass media, radio and television in particular, to help solve many of man’s problems through the broad dissemination of information.

*We are coming to grips with the problems of disease, pollution, prejudice, lack of education, international tension, and many others. But what are we going to do about the problem of man’s relationship with God?*

Are we going to continue with the usual bromide that seems to find ready acceptance, yet in the long run precipitates rejection — that “somewhere out there” is a God in Whom we really ought to believe, a God Whom we can mold to suit our own very human likes and dislikes?

This is not the God of the Bible, Who makes His Will known to all men in all ages through His Word. To reveal the God of the Bible and His Will is the single most crucial communication we can make to men today.

This is the challenge which faces the mass communications industry. To help meet that challenge is the purpose of Herald of Truth.

**20 years in the growing**

Since it first appeared regionally on radio in 1950, Herald of Truth has grown to international outreach. The program now reaches and influences people throughout the world, on 559 radio and 155 television stations.

Its message is simple — God is, the Bible is His revelation, and man can respond to God in hope. The current revival movement would indicate that it is a message people are receiving.

Herald of Truth is sponsored and supported by thousands of churches of Christ and individual members worldwide, people who believe the Bible and are convinced of the effectiveness of radio and television to communicate its message quickly and widely.

Speaker on both the radio and television programs is Dr. Batsell Barrett Baxter, a man whose experience stems from years of preaching in the pulpit and teaching in a Christian college. He is Chairman of the Bible Department at David Lipscomb College in Nashville, Tennessee.
Even today, after over ten years of speaking on radio and television, Dr. Baxter is still awed by the responsibility of talking to so many people at one time about God. This sense of humble dedication is reflected in the extraordinary warmth and sincerity which has endeared him to so many listeners. Over the years, he has received thousands of letters from people of widely ranging beliefs. He is the kind of man who takes no personal credit for this popularity, but instead, attributes it to the Biblical messages he presents.

The right man and the right message — a powerful combination for attracting and holding radio and television audiences.
What does Herald of Truth offer you?

Fresh, current radio messages each week, of course. But this year, we’re adding something new to radio.

First, a daily five-minute program. The message of the Bible is far too important to be relegated to the Sunday morning “ghetto” of religious broadcasting.

Second, a 15-minute, 5-days-a-week program in Spanish. This program is now being aired throughout Mexico but is also most suitable for U. S. radio stations which beam out programs to the large Spanish-speaking populations in this country.

For television, Herald of Truth offers two complete series of half-hour programs in full color. The first, “Worlds in Conflict,” has 69 episodes which examine personal, national and worldwide conflicts in light of Biblical teachings. The second series, “Search for Happiness,” has 60 episodes which discuss the current emphasis on material happiness and why it leaves men dissatisfied. This latter series employs an unusual semi-documentary format and some of the episodes use the modern subjective camera technique. Letters from station managers across the country have praised the technical excellence of these films.

You may be interested in another phase of Herald of Truth which is not aired on radio or television – our audience-building program.

Regularly, newsletters and posters for church bulletin boards, store windows and professional offices are mailed to churches of Christ in areas where the program appears, publicizing the station and time. In addition, a complete kit of audience-building materials are made available, including radio and TV spots, auto bumper stickers, post card mailers, door hangers, calling cards, bookmarks and a host of other suggestions to encourage more people to listen to the fundamental Bible truths presented on Herald of Truth programs.

For only through a better understanding of these truths can there be a deeper, more meaningful relationship between God and man.

Rejection or revival?
The radio and television industry, with its power of mass communication, can help make the decision.
Like more information about Herald of Truth? Audition tapes for radio or audition films for television? Please fill in and mail this card today.