

## GOD AND CAESAR

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This morning I met with an attorney I had never met before. He has founded a new organization called the National Educational Consortium. He is profoundly concerned about education in America. What he said was almost overwhelming. He sees details as only a lawyer can see them. He sees modern education moving farther and farther away from the family and from the local school board. He sees curricula that try to develop social behavior having virtually nothing to do with morals, ethics or values. When you look at the statistics of some of the things that are being planned for modern education, it is frightening indeed.

The interview brought to mind an experience I had a few years ago. I was asked to address the National Association of Christian Educators at a breakfast held in Washington, D.C. I agreed to do so. In preparing myself for that address I tried to find out how many Christian teachers there are in public-school education in America. I came up with the figure 350,000. When I got to the breakfast, I was taken to the table where the president of the association was sitting. I gave him the results of my statistical research. He said, "Well, your numbers are conservative. We estimate that there are 500,000 Christian teachers in public-school education in America."

So when I got up to speak I began with those statistics. Then I asked this question: "What do you think 500,000 card-carrying Communists or Marxists would do if they were in the public-school system like you are? What would they do?" I did not expect anyone to respond, of course. But I waited a moment, and then I said, "Let me tell you what they would not do. They would not wear little lapel buttons saying they were Communists or Marxists. They would not openly carry Marxist literature around wherever they went. They would not display slogans on their desks or tables. They would do everything in their power to hide the fact that they were Communists or Marxists. They would do everything they could to conceal their true identity. They would do this because their job would be to infiltrate and subvert the system." Then I said this: "To really understand the work of Christ in history in the world is to understand that basically and fundamentally it is benevolent subversion."

I was ordained in 1942. I have been a pastor now for over forty years. I have been in two pastorates on the west coast, one assistant pastorate in

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the midwest, and one pastorate on the east coast. I have been involved with many parachurch organizations. One of my greatest concerns—and it has been growing since I came to the United States Senate and have been able to see things from the inside—is the impact or influence of evangelicals on Congress or on government. One of my greatest concerns about the Church of Jesus Christ today is that it is thought of only institutionally. The Church is an institution. It is a council or councils. The impact that the Church has on the world—as far as the world is concerned, and as far as most people in the Church are concerned—is mostly institutional. And I would like to suggest that that is like dropping a salt shaker on food.

Let us consider the real influence of the Church of Jesus Christ on the world in history. How does it impact culture? What happens when the Church is gathered for a few hours a week is infinitesimal. It is marginal compared to the real impact of the Church in the world.

Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth.” Now salt works on contact. When the contact is made, the salt disappears. When salt is doing its work, it is invisible. Jesus used an analogy in his parable of the weeds. He said that the good seed stands for the children of the kingdom. The field is the world. The Son of Man is the sower. The enemy that sowed the weeds is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age. And the reapers are angels.

I was born in Christ as an evangelical. I have been an evangelical involved in evangelicalism all my life. But I am absolutely appalled at the minimal impact that evangelicalism is having on the world, on culture, on society, on government. Evangelicalism is primarily institutional, and the people in its congregations assume that they are having an impact on the world only when they are involved in some kind of program and have learned some kind of marketing technique or method that they can use to “evangelize” or “witness.”

A senator friend of mine was giving a luncheon. He had been asked by a television broadcaster if he would be willing to take responsibility for helping him raise some money for airing his programs in the Washington area. He said he would be glad to help. So we were having lunch in the senator’s private hideaway. In the course of the conversation with the people that were there as his guests the senator said to the television broadcaster, “How much do you estimate it costs you to broadcast your program here?” He answered, “We estimate that it costs us such and such an amount to market our product in this area.”

I later wrote him a letter as a friend. In it I said, “I have to tell you, my brother, I was shocked to hear you refer to a mission field as a market.”

Almost every day I get at least one brochure that is very slick, beautifully printed on fine paper with photographs of a lot of speakers. It always identifies them as world-renowned, and/or as having written so many books, and/or as being famous preachers or teachers, and on and on. And they are doing their thing exactly the way the world does its thing. We have learned from the world everything about marketing.

I am not against learning things from the world. But we must not market the gospel. The tragedy is that what we have communicated unwit-

tingly to the men and women that sit in the pews is that they are witnessing only when they are using some kind of marketing technique or method and are saying something. They never think of the idea of being salt that disappears or seed that disappears while it is doing its work. It is only when they are obvious, when they are broadcasting that they are Christians, when they are involved in their programs—it is only then that they assume they are witnessing.

Matthew 13 contains a total of seven parables, the first and longest of which has to do with Jesus' parabolic method. The rest of the parables have to do with the kingdom of heaven. Every one of the six stresses the hiddenness of the kingdom. It is like treasure hidden in a field, like yeast hidden in dough, like good seed hidden in soil. But we have become bottom-line conscious in the institutional Church and in parachurch organizations. We cannot raise money to support our ministries unless we can quote statistics concerning how successful we are. We have to be able to measure results. We want to evaluate the harvest day after day after day so that we can use the information in our fund-raising endeavors. And we forget that the real impact of the Church of Jesus Christ in the world is immeasurable. We will only know what it is at the harvest, which is the end of the age.

As a pastor, I faced my greatest challenge when I walked into the pulpit on Sunday morning or Sunday evening. I looked at the congregation and tried to imagine where they would be between Sundays. Where is the Church between Sundays? The church buildings are empty except for the pastor or the staff or an infrequent committee meeting. But the Church is hidden in the world. It is hidden by Christ as his witness.

John 14 begins: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. . . . I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." Then Jesus added, "You know the way to the place where I am going."

Typically, Thomas contradicted him. Although he had been with Jesus intimately for three years, he said, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Now if you had been discipling or teaching someone for three years and he told you he did not know where you were going, how would you feel? In any event, we can thank God that Thomas asked his question because it gave Jesus the opportunity to say, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Then he said, "If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well." And now Philip spoke up. "Lord," he said, "show us the Father and that will be enough for us." For three years Philip had had the same intimate relationship as that of Thomas. And you can almost feel the sadness in Jesus' voice as he says, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been with you such a long time?"

I often wonder how long it should take us to know Jesus. We know so many other things, but we do not know Jesus. In this case Jesus added: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." He continued: "The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me,

who is doing his work." Everything Jesus did demonstrated that Almighty God the Father was working in his body. And then Jesus said, "At least believe me, Philip, on the evidence of the miracles themselves. I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to my Father." And then Jesus talked about the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Do you believe in Jesus? Then you are doing the things he did. He said so. In fact, you are doing greater things than he did. Here are the words that Luke opens the book of Acts with: "In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach." Jesus had begun something in his incarnation that was going to continue in a new incarnation when the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost. Later in the same first chapter Jesus said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Now notice what Jesus said: "When the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will be my witnesses." He did not say, "When the Holy Spirit comes on you, you may choose to be my witnesses" or "you may decide to be my witnesses" or "you may learn how to be my witnesses." He said, "You will be my witnesses."

Now I have to believe, on the authority of the Word of God, that wherever a man or woman is indwelt by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit that person is a witness whether he or she ever says a word. They will be witnessing by the quality of their lives. They will not have to broadcast the fact that they are Christians or that they are church members. As a matter of fact in today's world, in our contemporary world, to do so is a liability. When you say that you are a Christian or you are a church member, people expect certain stereotypical things from you.

Some years ago I was leading a seminar in Denver. A rancher attended it, and when he had the opportunity he got up and spoke to the whole group. He said, "When I took over a ranch, I decided I was going to only have Christians working on the ranch. So I worked hard to get only Christians working there." And then he began to lose his composure. He faltered a little in his speech and he said, "You know, again and again and again and again they had excuses for not doing what they were supposed to do because they had something 'Christian' to do. So," he said, "I got rid of all my Christians hands on the ranch."

I used to have a weekly luncheon at a lawyers' club in Washington. One morning one of the lawyers was late. After the luncheon he apologized and said, "The reason I was late is because I left my job early to go to a prayer meeting. In fact, I'm going right from here to another prayer meeting. I'll get to my job late, but it's because I'm at a prayer meeting." I said to that attorney, "Have you ever stopped to realize what goes on in the mind of your boss when you leave early from work and come late to work because you're in a prayer meeting? What do you suppose he thinks about prayer meetings?" He was rather proud of the fact that he took time off from his job—for which he was being paid—to be at a prayer meeting.

Can you think of any better way for a Christian to be a witness on the job than to do the job that that witness is supposed to do—what he or she

is paid to do—and doing it right and doing it better than anybody else? Do you think there is any better witness than the quality of a believer's life? When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment is, he said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Paul wrote in Rom 13:10: "Love is the fulfillment of the law."

Can you think of any better way to be a witness in a world where love is so scarce than loving people? Love communicates. When I went to the United States Senate I did not get any orientation from the former chaplain. I did not get any orientation from the Senate leadership. As I began to get acquainted I realized that my job was to be available and visible and just to love the senators, the staff, their families and everybody that worked on the Senate side of Capitol Hill. Everybody that visits me in the Senate these days or that walks with me from my office over to lunch or breakfast or whatever in the Capitol Building is absolutely amazed that everybody recognizes me. The security people, the subway operators, the elevator operators, the custodians—everybody recognizes me. And they express their appreciation because they have learned that I love them and that I am there as their servant.

To really understand the influence of the Church of Jesus Christ in the world we must understand that it is hidden and that it is immeasurable. There are no criteria for measuring the results. And if a pastor is doing the job that Paul says he is supposed to do, he is equipping people "for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." That has come to mean developing a program with a method or a marketing technique instead of being filled with the Holy Spirit, filled with Christ, manifesting the Son of God wherever that pastor is, day in and day out, every minute of every hour of every day.

When I had finished speaking to the National Association of Christian Educators in Washington, I was surrounded by teachers, many of whom were weeping. They said, "Mr. Halverson, I get absolutely no encouragement from my church about teaching in a public school. The assumption is that you are only serving Christ when you teach in a private school that is Christian."

Have you ever thought about having in your church—one Sunday in the year, just before school begins—all the public-school teachers stand and having a prayer of dedication, thanking God that they have been planted there to be Christ's witnesses and to do his work?

But when all is said and done, the real witness is the work of God in the believer. It is not what we do for God. It is not what we do for the Church. It is God himself working in us and through us every second of every minute of every hour of every day of every week of every month of every year. That is the optimum impact, the maximum impact of the Church on the world. Compared to that, the impact of the institution is marginal.