

This Generation: The End of a Search

It was the winter of 1968. We were at a standstill. For ten years we had been entangled in the twisting coils of a volcanic frenzy – gripped by a churning fear that we stood on the verge of Armageddon and beset by a driving conviction that we were a CHOSEN GENERATION called to set the cornerstone of a new society. We had grappled with the fruits of our father's sins – war, inequality, racism, bureaucracy, poverty, boredom – but we were no better for it – either as individuals or collectively. Our energy was spent! We were exhausted – drained of enthusiasm and emptied of idealism. The specters which had haunted us in the late 1950's and early 1960's and which had spurred Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg to cry out for a great Youth Movement *still* haunted us. The Brave New World which we have sought to raise up had collapsed into rubble.

The engines of our warfare were ruined – each in its turn smashed by the stark power of inexorable forces rooted not in the nature of our society – as we had originally thought – but in the nature of our very being. Our political machinery, already weakened by 1967, had been crushed in the fall of 1968. The few political ventures undertaken since then had been spasmodic and lacking in the boiling passion and ebullient confidence which had characterized the actions of the earlier years.

The demise of the Flower Children had followed hard on the heels of the expiration of the political activists. All that remained of their bold experiments were a few fads and fashions – lifeless forms devoid of any content, of any real substance. The “Street People” of Wintertime 1968 were little more than tired-out teenage tramps and derelicts. They bore no resemblance to the throbbing-with-life revolutionaries who had stalked the country in 1966.

Our “Turn toward the East” in 1967 had been born of desperation and impelled by the realization that we were losing – that we were failing to stem the epidemic of insanity against which we had been hurled. Western thought had been a washout. We needed a “deeper” wisdom” – the wisdom enshrouded in the mysteries of the East. But, in short order, we had found that it too was bankrupt. The most forceful expression of our “Turn toward the East,” was but a farce – a hodgepodge of inane religious practices which the East itself had rejected fifty years earlier. It was Wintertime – Wintertime 1968.

THEN IT HAPPENED – THE YOUTH MOVEMENT TOUCHED JESUS! A spark was ignited on the West Coast – a spark which was soon a conflagration sweeping across the entire country. Nobody had expected it! Nobody had thought it possible! But there it was – We had hooked into JESUS – THE LIVING JESUS – THE PERSON JESUS – JESUS HIMSELF.

Those of us who were there – there in the beginning – remember the joy! But how can we describe it? It was REAL! It was WONDERFUL! We had never seen, never heard, never imagined that life could be so full! So packed! The freshness of a new beginning blew into us. We were alive – REALLY ALIVE! We had been born all over again.

When we laughed, we laughed Jesus! When we breathed we breathed Jesus! When we sang, we sang Jesus! When we ate, we ate Jesus! And, even when we slept, we were with Jesus! Awake or asleep, we were one with Jesus! He was the center of our being, our reason for living – He was LIFE ITSELF.

We saw clearly, though, that Jesus was laying claim to our entire generation – not to just the few of us who had found Him first. Consequently, we stormed into 1969 with one goal, to bring our generation to Jesus. *The same generation that had sought to sweep away the foundations of the kingdoms of this world had been called by God to lay the foundations of the Kingdom of Heaven. Ours was the CHOSEN GENERATION OF THE LIVING GOD.*

Spring turned to Summer and we were everywhere – on sidewalks, in coffee houses, at rock festivals. Again and again we hammered home our message: “This is THE GENERATION – the generation raised up to seek the face of God. This is our destiny – Get with it! Get burned! Call on Jesus!”

The summer of 1969 was wild! Jesus communes springing up all over – from San Diego to Spokane – from San Francisco to New York! We were on the move! Surging Forward! Nothing it seemed could stop us!

But Summer passed into Fall and with the change of seasons, a growing uneasiness crept into many of us. We were losing the spontaneity. Something was smothering us.

Throughout the early months of 1970 and into the Spring, we watched the Movement sink back.

The love and oneness which just one year earlier had flowed so easily began to give way before an onslaught of petty jealousies and silly doctrinal squabbles. Bickering and backbiting were setting in. We were pushing the gifts hard: We had to keep things pumped up; we had to maintain our momentum. We grew sick with disappointment. We *knew* that we had found the mark of our generation, but we were letting it slip away! We were losing it before our generation had turned completely toward it – before we had all been able to fully link up with it.

IT WAS NOW SUMMERTIME 1970! We were waiting for God to move – to do something to redeem our calling. June and July slipped past and still no change. But then in August some of us caught word of what was happening on the West Coast. People were gathering – people who loved the Lord. They were gathering from all over the country, from all over the world. We went to see! What we saw astonished us! The people we met were still on fire! *Still* pounding with excitement! *Still* charged with purpose! The joy and freshness that had been ours once again coursed into us. We were back – back with Jesus! Back with the person who had reached out and caught us two years earlier. Once again we had the new wine to bring to our generation!

What fools we had been! *We had poured our new wine into old wineskins – the worn cisterns of traditional Christian religion. The wineskins had ripped! And our new wine had drained away!*

Religion! A storehouse and dumping-ground for countless numbers of rules, regulations, beliefs, and tenets! A showplace displaying all manner of good works, human eloquence and powers! A three-ring circus! An extravaganza! But it never has been, is not today, and never will be a fit vessel to contain the Living God!

Our experience in those days drove home one point. We can never forget it: Jesus is not contained in teachings – however good; ceremonies -- however descriptive; gifts – however mighty. The teachings can point to Jesus, but the teachings are not JESUS HIMSELF! The ceremonies can symbolize Jesus – but ceremonies and rituals are not THE PERSON JESUS! The gifts can exemplify the power of Jesus – but the gifts are not the GIVER and the power of Jesus and JESUS are not the same! Prophecies fail, tongues cease, knowledge vanishes away – BUT JESUS – JESUS HIMSELF – IS TODAY, TOMORROW, AND FOREVER!

When we were children, we spoke as children, we understood as children, we thought as children; but if we were to become men, we had to put away childish things. THE TIME HAD COME FOR US TO PUT AWAY A DECAYING RELIGION!

God was preparing a NEW WINESKIN! The people we saw really had it together. They were solid! Not each on his own trip! They were jelled! Really close! Built up! They were ONE!

But their oneness was not organized. There was nobody telling them what to do, how to act, what to wear, what to think. It did not depend on a set of by-laws! It was a oneness that flowed from the presence and reality of God. They were united not by a religious credo but by the *one* fountain of living waters from which they all drank, the *one* spiritual meat they all ate, and the *one* love they all shared – JESUS!

“There was no joining”! We were already “in”! We were brothers and sisters by virtue of the same life we shared. We *all* had been born into Jesus! We *all* had been born into each other!

WE HAD FOUND THE CHURCHES – *the new wineskins that God was establishing in every city of this country!*

Our appetite for God had enlarged. We had been led to a well that not only quenched our thirst for Jesus, but also heightened our desire for Him, deepened our love for Him, and sharpened our yearning for Him. We were drawing upon a richness of Jesus that we had never known was there – a hidden wealth implanted within at the time of our new birth, but never before revealed.

The meetings brimmed with rejoicing and spilled over with love. Gone was the imprint of one man's personality! All of us *could* share. All of us *did* share. Together we enthroned God upon our praises. Together we released a flood of thanks. Jesus flowed from all of us – from the least to the greatest. And the joy of one was the joy of all – in the suffering of one, we all suffered.

Our lives merged with the lives of our brothers – we found our being in their being, our inheritance in their inheritance, our portion in their portion. No longer was our gaze fastened upon the weaknesses and frailties of our brothers. It seized upon the Jesus that had been wrought into them, it saw through to the permanence of His victory.

Two years have elapsed now since the summer of 1970. In those two years, more and more of our generation have discovered the churches! But the time has come to issue a call to the rest of our generation. **IT IS A CALL SHAPED FROM THE HISTORY OF OUR GENERATION AND POINTING TO THE DESTINY OF OUR GENERATION.**

1. **THIS GENERATION** is a **PURSUED GENERATION!** It is a generation pursued by God. He has waited for it since the beginning of time. History envies this generation! Our fathers looked for this generation! But we have been born into it! God has sown the seeds of a search within the heart of this generation. And has planted a root of despair within the soul of this generation – all to bring it to Himself. For the womb of this generation carries within it the completion of the ages.
2. **THIS GENERATION** needs a **NEW HUMANITY.** That humanity that now clings to us is a dead weight. It has conceived pleasant dreams but it has given birth to nightmares. We have wrestled with it long enough! It cannot be salvaged! We need to step out of it altogether. We need to **PUT ON JESUS!** To put on His humanity!
3. **THIS GENERATION** has been given the decade of the 1970's to **FULFILL ITS CALLING.** The 1960's are gone! The turmoil of our quest is subsiding. A brief period has been set aside by God to permit us a chance to unveil the mystery which he has kept hidden since the heavens were formed. But, in a short while, the violence will return – even more bitter than before. And when it does, our chance will have disappeared. Some will use this time to hide in nostalgia. – to return to the past. We, however, must not be so foolish! We cannot waste our time. We are nearing the end! Look for yourselves: a Fig Tree is blossoming in Israel!
4. **THIS GENERATION** must take a stand of **ONENESS.** – oneness among all Christians. Nothing can satisfy God, and nothing can satisfy us short of this oneness being put into practice. To have mere talk of oneness, yet with no *practical expression* of this oneness, is just untested terminology, mere idealism. To have talk of “oneness in the Spirit” and yet be separated by doctrines, names, and divisions is a grief to God.

The situation is today everywhere one of confusion. Yet, in our midst a recovery has started – a recovery of the fullness of CHRIST. – a recovery of the reality of HIS BODY. It is the genuine CHURCH LIFE. It is the RECOVERY OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH!

This is the calling of this generation. This is the end of our search.

Editorial

All the events, circumstances and happenings today point to one fact – Time is drawing to an end. The course of human strivings was not meant to be an endless one. We have run the gambit of all human experiences only to find the footprints of previous generations upon our path. Now we are running out of time. We are coming to the end.

As 1972 draws to a close, we of *The Generation* feel that God's purpose is becoming increasingly clear to us. At the sunset of the world, we are tasting the daybreak of God's life. We are confident that in the remaining days in which the world will sink into darkness, the light of God will yet break upon many. The burden that we feel is both sobering and encouraging – sobering, in the light of the present situation with mankind; encouraging, in the promise of the Word of God and in the assurance of the foretaste that we have enjoyed.

The calm which shrouds the young people of this country today is but a pause, a sign of further reconsideration. A choice will soon have to be made. May we choose to spend earth's twilight hours in gaining God – in opening to the One who is pursuing our generation.