

All Things New - Total Renewal.

St. Anthony's

Vr/ap

3.02.80.

Isaiah 65: 17-25; } Rev. 21:
2 Cor. 5: 16-19 } 1-5.

In many circles of our white S.A. community there is currently an air of expectation, a feeling of interesting and even important signs of possible change. Words such as change, reform, renewal are constantly used to describe this current mood and hope. The State President talks of a decade of decisive change whilst in Zimbabwe everyone is aware that, whatever the outcome, the old dispensation ~~has~~ is something of the past.

This spirit of expected change has to a certain degree replaced the previous feelings of uncertainty, confusion and even despair of the past years. At the same time we should be aware that in our black community the ^{doubt or} disbelief that any worthwhile social or polit. change will occur, remains as strong as ever.

Churches: How has this current mood affected the churches as institutions? If we judge the churches by ^{the} specific actions of ^{resolutions} synods & conferences and decisions involving definite actions there seems to be very little proof of a vital interest in and adequate understanding of the signs and movements of change at work in society. And even where

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Such an understanding exists, it does not seem as if the churches are aware how deeply ~~possible~~ ^{the} changes flowing from such movements are going to affect the churches' witness, work and worship. I get the strong impression that the mainstream of new ideas which will bring about either transformation or ~~disintegration~~ of our present social structures are largely flowing past and not through our churches for many members and congregations their religious (as well as their general) life remains more or less the same as it has been the last 10, 20 or even 50 years. The challenging predictions and stimulating prophecies of Isaiah, Paul & John (Rev) about a new life, a new creation, a new heaven & new earth has very little relevance or meaning for them.

Charismatic movement: In contrast to these I think there are the many charismatic groups talking excitedly - and sometimes ecotatically - about renewal through the power of the H-Spirit. Some of them do not realize that their active participations reflect an unconscious withdrawal from the harsh realities of racial and social conflict when emotional release ^{from} tension is experienced which has very little relevance to the suffering and injustice which so many experience daily

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Other Christian groups: Other Christians, deeply aware of their own spiritual need & hunger, dissatisfied or disillusioned about the failure of the institutionalized church to ^{assist in} bring about the newness of life promised by God, are more and more coming to believe that the answer lies in the direction of small groups of Christians spontaneously and informally creating communities of people giving mutual spiritual and material support, meaningful sharing of talents, material wealth & spiritual experience and that such communities could become the seeds of a new life, small models of real renewal of human society.

Problem & Dilemma facing Christians different

If we now consider all the situations and viewpoints I have just described to you, one realizes something of the seriousness of the problem and the dilemma which Christians are facing when they are confronted with the prophecy and the promise of a new life, a new creation, a new universe, a new human society which both the Old T. and the New T. constantly portray and affirm:

1. To know whether this clear and definite promise of a new life and a new society which the prophets predicted, Christ confirmed and the apostles proclaimed is to be taken lite-

rally or figuratively? Is it part of reality of the future of mankind on earth - or is it an utopian dream never to come true? ~~Is~~ Was it only intended as a flight of phantasy, of human dreams never to be realised? What can we really believe about these prophecies and promises?

② 2. To adequately face and answer the disappointment, the disillusionment - yes even the ecgicism about an institutional church which has been proclaiming this message of hope for centuries but with what concrete, tangible results? ~~defeat proof?~~ Don't there much truth in the criticism that for 2000, 4000 ~~years~~ years this message has been proclaimed in some or other form - and that despite that we are no nearer to the realisation of these prophecies and promises than, say, 2000 years ago?

③ 3. To discern clearly which, if any, of the widely diverging interpretations of Scripture of these prophecies & passages presented by theologians and lay Christians is the valid one. How do we discern between the what, the when and the how if there is so little unanimity within the Christian community?

④ 4. How to respond to 5 proud claims: we are busy creating new life - reshaping human nature, reorganising human society.
The Direction to seek the Answer

It would be presumptions and arrogant of me to ~~state~~ claim that I have the answer to these problems and to the dilemmas in which both Christians and non-Christians find themselves but I believe that God is pointing out to us very clearly the direction in which the answer is to be found.

① The unfolding message of human history (which both the Old & the New Testaments confirm) is that the events of history all move towards an eventual realisation of God's purpose with his whole creation - including humanity. God ^{the creator is also} the initiator, the prime motivating force. It is his voice speaking clearly through the visions, the prophecies and the promises of his servants ^{Greek}, of Paul, of Peter when we hear the words of Rev. 21:5 - Then the one who sits on the throne said: "And now I make all things new!"

② The birth, the life ^{and message}, death and resurrection of Christ is God's unfailing assurance that he has in fact already created and set in motion this powerful force of renewal of human life and human society.

6.
The pronouncements of Paul in Corinth and of the writer of the ~~Hebrew~~ letter to the Hebrews confirm this truth:

2 Cor 5:16 - When anyone is joined to Christ, he is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come - - -

Heb 10:19 - We have then, my brothers, complete freedom to go into the Most Holy Place by means of the death of Jesus. He opened for us a new way, a living way through the curtain - that is, through his own body.

3) God does not and will not bring about this new life on his own. He makes it quite clear that despite our own weaknesses and moral failures as human beings, God does not intend establishing the new life and the new humanity except in and through men and women willing to do His bidding. God is telling us clearly, in unequivocal terms, that we do not need more knowledge, more light, more wisdom, more experience before embarking upon this pilgrimage of a new life and a new future. All that we need is the willingness and the courage to take the one step which Christ and our conscience demands.

7.
And when, but only when, we as His children have taken that first step ~~with~~ in obedience and trust, will He show us what to do next and when and where to ~~take~~ ^{make} the next move on our pilgrimage into a new life and a new future - God's future for each of His children and for all mankind!

Amen.

← We are waiting for God to do on His own what He will not do except in and through His own! - Wait in vain!

St. Anthony's Church

3-02-1980.

Total Renewal.

Hymns: 6 vs 1-7

8 vs. 1-4

23 vs 1-2 (~~20 vs 1-4~~)

26 vs 1-5.

Scripture: Isaiah 65: ~~17~~-25

⊗ 2 Cor. 5: 16-19.

Heb 10: 19-25

⊗ Rev 21: 1-5 (Rev)

1. Welcome
2. Notices
3. ~~Scripture~~