

Frantic or Frustrated

"The world of our children is as different from the world of our childhood as the world of Julius Caesar was different from the world we were born into."

We are experiencing changes so fundamental that we can find hardly any parallel in all of history. The world changes, they say, and times change. And this saying is supposed to justify the habit of denouncing everything old and taking up everything new. When it's new, it's good. When it's old, it's good for the museum. No one apparently stops to consider that of ten the only fault to be found with the one is that it is old and the only virtue attached to the other that it is new. One thing seems to be forgotten: the world moves on, but people remain the same. Just take the new styles in fashions. What is hailed as new today is the old taken out of the closet of yesterday. Take the ideas on religion. Very old ideas are being revived. The space age is the age of the occult and mysticism. They sneer at the star that led wise men to Bethlehem, but they pay vast sums of money to discover their fortune through astrology. Men again want to be men and in their search for humanity they are even willing to lose their identity, go back to ancient neo platonism or gnosticism. It is like the creed the Beatles sing (on their Sergeant Pepper Lonely Heart Club Band Record) "When you've seen beyond yourself ... the time will come when you we're all one and life flows on within you and without you."

Ours is an age of change, and no responsible person will deny that some changes made over the years have been improvements. So many changes have brought better living conditions. But does change always mean progress? I doubt it. I wonder if many really know to what end they are moving, or even if such an end exists at all.

To a Christian, conditioned as he is to observe and judge all things in the light of eternity, the modern feverish devotion to the newest invention and the latest craze, seems more than a little ridiculous. He sees the never ceasing chase for the latest fad not only as a sign of the times, but as a symbol of frustration.

Christians have often been accused of being reactionary because they have not kept up with every latest scheme or dream somebody thinks up to usher in a new world. They will not scatter into all directions and become frustrated every time some Johnny comes late appears on a platform with some plan to deliver us from all ills; and the world cannot seem to forgive Christians for their lack of enthusiasm to jump on every new bandwagon that comes around the corner. Actually, this is no wonder. Christians are rather an odd lot anyway. They are devoted to Someone they have never seen, except to go to heaven on the virtue of Another, admit that they are wrong so that they can be declared right, want to be weak in order to be strong. They want to die to self so that they can learn how to live. They claim to have dual citizenship, citizens of heaven as well as of earth. Yet they are all the while very practically minded.

The man who has met God is not looking for something and therefore is not frantic or frustrated. He is not searching for light; he has the light that guides him on the way. He is not on the way to the truth, but he has the truth. His religion is not based upon hearsay or the imagination of a man. He claims to have received it from the very hand of God. I haven't described a super human, but an ordinary Christian who does not scramble to his feet when he hears the word change and progress. Let's not fall into the frantic steps of a bewildered world marching to nowhere. We, as Christians, are waiting the trumpet sound that will set into motion a series of events that will astonish everyone and will result in the new heaven and earth. We can afford "to make haste slowly."

Johan D. Tangelder

1973