

BASIC CONCEPTS; from *Frontiers in Mission*, 26, 27

•There is no more impressive measure of the impact of Christ on this planet than the nearly global celebration of the year 2000.

To Understand the Role of Our Faith

•The understanding of the last 4,000 years as a single story of the expansion of the Kingdom of God, the progressive conquest of the earth and evil is highly nourishing to our faith. The very acceleration of global population growth reflects extensive progress in reducing both war and pestilence.

•It is not Christianity we are trying to spread in the world but Christian faith. That can be done without duplicating or extending our present concept of church-going activity, of “churchianity.”

•The renewal of faith in the West must include a fundamental restructuring of Church life in favor of recognition of Christian faith in the home.

•Home-based faith in Christ is the bedrock goal of our concern. Therefore, the kind of church activity which takes the place of worship in the home is not even good as a second best.

•A detailed knowledge of our Christological formulations has never been essential to the kind of fellowship with God the Bible portrays as available to those who diligently seek Him, although even this seeking assumes and builds upon at least a Biblical knowledge of God’s existence.

To quote Karen Armstrong: Increasingly, Western Christians would come to equate faith with belief in official doctrine. Even though Luther did not see faith in this way, an obsession with intellectual conformity would become one of the legacies of the Reformation and is peculiar to Reformed Christianity. In traditions such as Judaism, Islam or Buddhism, religion is not about believing obligatory propositions but about behaving differently. The emphasis on doctrinal correctness has been experienced by many as intellectually damaging and as a reason for Christianity's decline in Europe.

•The “man of peace”—the people of faith—whom we seek will not necessarily be open to Jesus Christ at first, especially if they have a Jewish background, but that does not mean that they have nothing to gain from Biblical, New Testament witness.

•The history of the Jews reflects the presence of both legalistic futility and an element of true faith, obedience and righteousness. This is true both before and after Christ.

•In general it is neither wise nor to be expected or desired that a believing Muslim would adopt the name “Christian.” Thus, the often referred to category of “Muslim Background Believers” represents, generally, an undesirable evangelistic achievement. We need to be able to conceive of “Muslim Foreground Believers.”

•The same is true of Hindus who have put away their idols, revere and study the Bible, and revere and worship Jesus Christ as the Son of the Living God—whether or not they identify with any of the current traditions of Christianity in their land.

•Extolling the glory of God is the most basic endeavor in missions compared with efforts to assure individuals of their salvation, which at best are a means to that end.

To Understand the Phenomenon of Life

- Since the Christ Event, the strongest new evidence of the very nature of God's glory is the immense insight into His handiwork revealed only recently by microbiological studies. By comparison, astronomy does not so much reveal the role of His intelligence as the vastness of His creation.
- There is evidence in the record of the rocks that at one point predatory forms of life suddenly appeared—that is, there appeared forms of life that are life-destroying, whether micro- biological in size or visible forms of life. Prior to that time life forms were not dangerous to each other—in the so-called Ediacaran period just before the Cambrian explosion of life.
- It is also true that Genesis portrays the existence of an Evil One prior to the temptation of Adam. The rest of the Bible makes clear that this Evil One did not always exist but formerly served God and then rebelled at a given point in time.
- The thought therefore occurs that the time of Satan's rebellion may coincide with, and explain, the appearance of life-destroying forms of life, such that nature—not just man—from that point on has become a vast scene of constant violence in which we see life destroy ing life. The number of life forms being driven extinct today is on the order of 30,000 per year. The number of life-forms now in existence is about 1,000th of all that have existed. More than half of two million existing life forms are destructive (parasitic).
- Thus, the “works of the devil” would seem to include the perversion of the very structure of life at DNA levels. The discovery of thou- sands of defective genes in the human genome is possibly evidence of demonic activity at the DNA level. Even the violent traits of animals and man may exhibit the same kind of distort- ing influence at that level.
- To do this we may understand the possi- bility that Satan's angels of darkness, some of them, may be so small as to be capable of tin- kering directly with the DNA molecule.
- Disease is thus a result of hereditary fac- tors as well as external assaults of destructive microbes, and often both working in coordina- tion.
- That is, 1) we inherit genetic defects— defects that are both accidental such as would be caused by cosmic rays or radiation but also defects which seem to be highly intelligent dis- tortions.
- We also, 2) “contract” diseases coming from outside our bodies, like flu or colds or pneumonia or tuberculosis or malaria. Not only that but some of the specific perversions of our genetic inheritance are preyed upon by external disease factors with considerable, obvious intelligence.
- Promoting God's glory is inextricably related to destroying the works of the devil— “The Son of God appeared for this purpose that He might destroy the works of the devil.” I Jn 3:8.
- The Garden of Eden is portrayed in Gene- sis as a locality which differed from the disorder of the surrounding world and that the evil outside the Garden existed prior to the creation of man.
- The Genesis mandate to man to care for life would thus seem to include serious human efforts in collaboration with God to work with Him to restore (to redeem) all perversions of disease or violence in the various forms of life. In this activity we can “Let our light so

shine among men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven.” (Matt 5:16). This is part of “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matt 6:

To Understand the Nature of Society

- The multilevel family—where a child growing up can witness an obedient relationship between his parents and his parents’ parents—is an element essential to social stability. No amount of focus on the mono-generational, or nuclear, family can enable it to be an ideal environment for children to be raised or for even parents to properly mature. This state of affairs is all the more difficult to attain when the marriage ceremony itself does not define which set of parents is to have the primary continuing parental role.
- The society that has banished young people from the work force is thus forced to reassign children’s work to adults. This, in turn, misuses and abuses both adults and children, and it cuts the natural bond within families and between generations in favor of an age-stratification which destroys the normal function of learning passing from older to younger.
- In the light of the latter point, the comparatively recent achievement of a large proportion of U.S. population becoming involved in the phenomenon of a seventeen-year tunnel in non-productive school experience represents the largest and most stubborn obstacle to the normal maturation of young people as well as the maintenance of cohesive families and a cohesive society.
- The arrangement by which each husband and wife pursue different careers independently in separate social environments must be considered a dubious attainment which puts great strain upon the marriage and further distances the children from the parents.