

“Advice for Living”

Sept
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Chicago, Ill.

Question: *How can the crime wave among Negroes be reduced? Shouldn't the church take a stand on this problem?*

Answer: There is both an external and an internal solution to this problem. Both must work simultaneously if the problem is to be solved. The external solution to the problem is to work passionately and unrelentingly to remove the conditions which make crime possible. The Negro is not criminal by nature. Indeed criminality is environmental, not racial. Poverty and ignorance breed crime whatever the racial group may be. So we must work to remove the system of segregation, discrimination and the existence of economic injustice if we are to solve the problem of crime in the Negro community. For these external factors are causally responsible for crime. On the other hand, the Negro must work within the community to solve the problem while the external cause factors are being removed. Community agencies and the church must work untiringly to give Negroes moving into the big industrial urban areas a sense of belonging and help them to adjust to urban living. The church must extend its evangelistic program into all of the poverty-stricken and slum areas of the big cities, thereby touching the individuals who are more susceptible to criminal traits. By bringing them into the church and keeping them in touch with the great moral insights of religion, they will develop more inner stability and become more responsible citizens.

Question: *Do you believe that Nuclear tests should be stopped?*

Answer: I definitely feel that there should be a cessation of Nuclear tests. Some of the best scientists tell us that it is hardly possible to produce a so-called “clean” bomb. This means that hundreds of thousands of people can be affected from delayed effects of local fall out radiation. It is also possible that these Nuclear tests will do harm to succeeding generations as a result of genetic effects. Even if these assertions are not true, and scientists are capable of producing a clean bomb, it seems to me to be a wise course of action to suspend the tests until scientists come to some unanimous conviction on this question. We should not risk the lives of hundreds and thousands of individuals now living and millions yet unborn, while scientists disagree over such a basic issue. There is also a greater reason why I feel that Nuclear tests be banned; that is, that the purpose of the tests is to strengthen nations in military might and thereby prepare them for Nuclear war, if necessary. It cannot be disputed that full scale Nuclear war would be utterly catastrophic. Hundreds of millions of people would be killed outright by the blast and heat and by the ionizing radiation produced at the instant of the explosion. All of this leads me to say that the principal objective of all nations must be the total abolition of war, and a definite move toward disarmament. War must be finally eliminated or the whole of mankind will be plunged into the abyss of annihilation.

Question: *Is Christianity, as a religion, more valid than the tribal religions practiced at one time by Africans?*

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Answer: I believe that God reveals Himself in all religions. Wherever we find truth we find the revelation of God, and there is some element of truth in all religions. This does not mean, however, that God reveals Himself equally in all religions. Christianity is an expression of the highest revelation of God. It is the synthesis of the best in all religions. In this sense Christianity is more valid than the tribal religions practiced by our African ancestors. This does not mean that these tribal religions are totally devoid of truth. It simply means that Christianity, while flowing through the stream of history has incorporated the truths of all other religions and brought them together into a meaningful and coherent system. Moreover, at the center of Christianity stands the Christ who is now and ever shall be the highest revelation of God. He, more than any other person that has ever lived in history, reveals the true nature of God. Through his life, death, and resurrection the power of eternity broke forth into time.

Question: *My problem is that I don't have any confidence in myself. I can't hold a job and in social situations I am always afraid that I will say or do the wrong things. I am married and I have a daughter, who is two years old. Please help me. People are always calling me stupid and dumb.*

Answer: I would suggest four things to you as a guide to confident living: First, know thyself. This means that you should analyze yourself and discover your potentialities as well as your limitations. Secondly, accept yourself. Never try to be anybody else. Realize that you have something unique to offer society however humble it is. Third, trust thyself. In spite of the inevitable limitations you may have, never develop an inferiority complex. Always develop an internal sense of security that no external situation can remove. Fourth, deny thyself. You probably lose confidence in yourself because you are thinking too much about yourself. Don't continually keep thinking what other people are thinking about you. Nine times out of ten people are not thinking about you at all but about their own problems. You have much to be thankful for, a wife and baby daughter. Think of all the things you can do, little things to make them happy—Also how you can make your fellow workers happy. Soon you will find that you spend so much time thinking of others that you have little time to think of yourself. There is so much more to think about than ourselves.

Question: *Last Sunday my preacher did something that disturbed me. He mixed a lot of worldly things in his sermon. My question is this. Should God and the NAACP be mixed in the pulpit?*

Answer: I know of no way to separate God from the noble work that the NAACP is doing. Religion at its best is a two-way road. On the one hand it seeks to change the soul of the individual so that he can be one with himself and with God. On the other hand it seeks to change environmental conditions so that the soul can have a chance once it is changed. Therefore any religion that professes to be concerned about the souls of men and is not concerned about economic conditions that cripple them and the social conditions that damn them is a dry as dust religion in need of new blood. Therefore your minister by including so-called "worldly things" in his sermon revealed that he is a man of great spiritual depth and deep civic conscience. He revealed his awareness of the fact that the gospel

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of Jesus Christ deals with the whole man—his body as well as his soul, the earthly as well as the heavenly.

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