

CHRISTIANITY TODAY AND THE ISSUES OF
THE RACIAL CONFLICT AND ECONOMIC
CAPITALISM BETWEEN 1956 AND 1968

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ABSTRACT

CHRISTIANITY TODAY AND THE ISSUES OF THE RACIAL CONFLICT AND ECONOMIC CAPITALISM BETWEEN 1956 AND 1968

By

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Christianity Today, a theological journal founded in 1956, was one of the most significant publications of its kind to appear in the last half of the twentieth century. By circulation figures alone it ranked near the top for religious publications in the United States. The large circulation precipitated criticism from other religious periodicals, however, since Christianity Today carried an extensive free subscription list during the first years of its publication.

The criticism was that Christianity Today was instituted by certain wealthy industrialists to promote their own conservative views on religious, political, social and economic issues. J. Howard Pew, chairman of the board of Sun Oil Company, was named as one of the wealthy opportunists.

Carl F. H. Henry, journalist, theologian, and editor of Christianity Today from its inception until 1968, was significantly involved in the controversy. Critics of Christianity Today predicted that Henry and the financial subsidizers could not work together since they supported opposing views on many important issues.

From the basis of this controversy, an intensive

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study was initiated. The editorial columns of Christianity Today were perused from the first issue in 1956 to the last issue of Henry's editorship in 1968. Every editorial dealing with the racial conflict in the United States and economic capitalism was noted carefully. A study of the writings of Carl F. H. Henry was also undertaken. This included reading most of his eighteen published volumes. Part of this study was under the guidance of a professor in the Department of Religion at Michigan State University. Personal correspondence was used to clarify some issues that were uncovered in the reading. This included correspondence with Henry and other prominent staff members of Christianity Today.

The study revealed a static editorial policy concerning economic capitalism. Biblical theology and economic capitalism were linked with an undefined inner logic. In one instance, Henry's view expressed in a speech prior to his becoming editor of Christianity Today was more critical of economic capitalism than anything published in the editorial columns of Christianity Today during his editorship.

A distinct change in editorial policy with regard to the racial conflict was discovered after 1963. Before that date the issues of individual choice and state's rights were emphasized in most editorials dealing with the racial conflict. The rights of the individual and the state were pre-empted by a concern for the constitutional rights of

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the Negro minority after 1963. Henry even acknowledged this change in personal correspondence.

This study endeavors to establish Christianity Today as an important voice in United States Protestantism by its extensive circulation and the attempt of the editors to involve the conservative Protestant church in contemporary problems.

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W. Cameron Meyer
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CHAPTER I

Christianity Today:

Its Beginning in Controversy

"God must love religious publications; He makes so many of them."¹ To this peal of skepticism, Newsweek, a weekly news magazine of general circulation, welcomed the first issue of Christianity Today in October, 1956.

But Christianity Today was by no means another average religious publication. The projected circulation figure of the interdenominational Protestant theological journal attested to that fact. "Christianity Today, charging that liberal theology has failed, calls for return to 'truly biblical preaching' and hopes its evangelical message will reach 200,000 readers."²

Other prominent interdenominational religious publications in the United States in 1956 included in the Newsweek article were the Christian Herald, circulation 427,957; Christian Century, 37,147; and Christianity and Crisis, 4,750.³ The Christian Herald, however, is a popular magazine for

¹"The Word in Print," Newsweek, Oct. 22, 1956, p. 73.

²Ibid.

³N. W. Ayer & Son's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Son, Inc., 1957), pp. 1384-1390.

general circulation, and cannot be considered a theological journal as are the remaining two. It is therefore evident that in terms of circulation alone, Christianity Today proposed to become one of the nation's most widely read theological journals. Table 1 compares the circulation figures of Christianity Today with those of Christian Century. The free subscription list totals are also included for Christianity Today as reported in N. W. Ayer & Son's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals.

Under the contention that Christianity Today became one of the most influential theological journals in the United States from its first issue to the time of this study, it is the purpose of this study to investigate the editorial policy of Christianity Today with regard to economic capitalism and the racial conflict. These two issues were of national significance during the years of Carl F. H. Henry's editorship of Christianity Today, 1956-1968, which is the period here considered. But before the two issues can be analyzed, the place of Christianity Today in the religious life of the United States must be established.

Christianity Today made its appeal to the conservative wing of the Protestant church, often called Fundamentalists or evangelicals. These conservatives were constituents in the memberships of most of the large Protestant denominations in the United States as well as in many of the smaller denominations. They lacked a common voice to reach across denominational lines and unite the conservatives as

TABLE 1
COMPARISON OF SUBSCRIPTIONS

Year	<u>Christianity Today</u>			<u>Christian Century</u>
	Paid	Free	Total	
1958			162,429	37,147
1959			163,271	37,000
1960	29,212	130,456	159,668	36,000
1961	35,010	141,178	176,188	36,500
1962	38,208	140,657	178,865	37,500
1963	36,422	139,138	175,560	38,000
1964	36,422	139,138	175,560	38,000
1965	94,642	128,792	223,434	40,000
1966	141,137	108,573	249,710	43,000
1967	132,211	107,906	240,117	43,000
1968	151,137	88,083	239,220	40,000

Sources: Helen Koch to author, Dec. 2, 1971.

N. W. Ayer & Son's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer & Son, Inc., 1958-1968).

Christian Century had united the liberals. This unification became one of the goals of Christianity Today--to be the united voice of the Protestant conservatives. The New York Times confirmed accomplishment of this goal in 1967 when it reported that "the journal [Christianity Today] is to evangelicals what the Christian Century is to liberals."⁴ Christianity Today followed closely the format of Christian Century in 1956, using a similar quality of stock with 8 1/2-by 11-inch pages and varied column width between two and three columns per page. Christianity Today, however, consistently carried more pages per issue, averaging between forty and sixty, while Christian Century carried between thirty and forty. Both were published bi-weekly.

Appealing to the conservatives was not an easy task, for being scattered throughout the divisions of Protestantism their beliefs varied as much as their denominational affiliations. Conservatism became a visible movement within the Protestant church in the United States about 1910, with the publication of a series of books entitled The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth. These professed to set forth the five fundamental Christian truths. More than 2,500,000 copies of the twelve volumes were published. "The doctrines set forth as fundamental were the Virgin birth of Christ, the physical resurrection, the inerrancy of the Scriptures in every respect, the substitutionary theory of the atonement,

⁴New York Times, Dec. 30, 1967, p. 11.

and the imminent, physical Second Coming of Christ."⁵

The emphasis of these fundamentals received enthusiastic welcome by many conservative Protestant clergymen. The battle against the scientific attitude and the social gospel of modernism or liberalism also attracted more conservative followers. It was a battle against liberal Christianity as it sought to relate meaningfully to modern life.

The Liberal Movement in Protestantism has been an attempt to rethink Christianity in forms that are meaningful for a world that is dominated by science and subject to rapid change. Protestant liberals--more than other Christian groups--stress the right of individuals to decide for themselves what is true in religion, and they react to the challenge of modernism and science by refusing to accept religious belief on authority alone. All beliefs must pass the test of reason. The Liberal, therefore, accepts biblical criticism, discoveries in the new sciences, and human evolution.⁶

The Fundamentalist movement was a reaction against liberalism's denial of the supernatural in religion and its emphasis on human reason. The philosophies of such men as Kant, Hegel, Scheiermacher, and Ritschl led many Protestants away from biblical Christianity. These philosophers, combined with the rising prestige of the natural sciences and technological advancements, influenced many educated people to consider Christian supernaturalism a relic of the past.⁷

⁵William Warren Street, The Story of Religions in America (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1930), p. 511.

⁶W. Seward Salisbury, Religion in American Culture (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1964), p. 120.

⁷Ronald H. Nash, The New Evangelicalism (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963), pp. 21, 22.

Fundamentalism could not accept the test of reason as a basis for religious faith. But in its zeal to protect traditional Christianity against a movement toward rationalism, the Fundamentalists often went to such extremes as to alienate other conservative theologians, especially in the Lutheran and Presbyterian bodies.

In their reaction against the principle of Modernism that the Bible is subject to the same literary criticism as every human document, many conservatives . . . resorted to a theory of mechanical inspiration and extreme literalism, which brought discredit upon Fundamentalism.⁸

The Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy raged between 1910 and 1930. Darwin's theory of evolution was a direct contradiction of the Bible, according to the Fundamentalists, and they fought to keep the teaching of evolution out of the public schools.

Their battle with science and scientists was not a battle of wits. The Fundamentalists had no leaders with impressive training. Their champions were men of zeal and conviction, primarily from the rural South where academic standards fell far below those existing in most parts of the country. Ignorance was a feature of the movement. It became a badge that was often worn proudly. Higher education was considered a handicap in seeking the Kingdom of God.⁹

⁸F. E. Mayer, The Religious Bodies of America (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), p. 482.

⁹Norman F. Furniss, The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918-1931 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 38, 39.

The Fundamentalists met defeat after defeat, and finally lost hold of the major denominations of Protestantism in the United States. Many Fundamentalists withdrew to form separate denominations that continued to subdivide as Fundamentalist fought Fundamentalist. Theologically, Fundamentalism appeared to be dead.¹⁰

But this was a premature pronouncement. In the period during and following World War II signs of life began to appear in various Fundamentalist circles. Seminaries began receiving more students with Fundamentalist beliefs. Much of the growth of church membership was in the more conservative Fundamentalist churches. And although their congregations were drawn from lower-income groups, Fundamentalist churches usually raised more money per member than more liberal congregations. There were signs of new life in many areas of Fundamentalism.¹¹

Fundamentalist Renaissance

This surge of new life in the Fundamentalist movement was termed a "Fundamentalist Renaissance" by Arnold W. Hearn, writing in the Christian Century.

Something has been happening within Fundamentalism. Away from centers of ecclesiastical power and theological education in the major denominations, there has been a remarkable renaissance of intellectual activity among Fundamentalist scholars, several of whom have studied in centers like Basel and Zurich and hold doctorates from

¹⁰William Hordern, New Directions in Theology Today (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 75.

¹¹Ibid.

such places as Harvard and Boston. The periodical Christianity Today has made its appearance, counting President Eisenhower's pastor among the contributing editors. The latest volume of apologetics from the pen of the president of Fuller Theological Seminary [a Fundamentalist Seminary] has been put before the public by a front rank publisher. And Billy Graham storms city after city under the auspices of "respectable" churches.¹²

Christianity Today became one of the leaders in this Fundamentalist renaissance. And the editor of the journal for its first twelve years, Carl F. H. Henry, became an activist in the movement. He was typical of the young renaissance scholars across the country, who rejected the term Fundamentalist as both abusive and meaningless in describing their theological position. They were conscious of the shortcomings of their theological fathers and wished to remold tradition. "They were as concerned as the liberals of an earlier day were to make Christianity relevant to the modern age, but they were determined not to repeat what they saw as the errors of liberalism."¹³

These scholars returned to their denominations and their seminaries to revitalize the theology that had hardened during the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy. They can be classified as conservative because they desired to preserve the truth and values of the past, while keeping their minds open to change. The designation "new conservative" or "evangelical" was preferred by the young renaissance scholars and may help distinguish this group

¹²Arnold W. Hearn, "Fundamentalist Renaissance," Christian Century, LXXV (April 30, 1958), 528.

¹³Hordern, New Directions, p. 75.

from the movement that continued to be referred to as the Fundamentalists. "This latter group was the 'radical right' of the theological world, and it is often allied with the radical right of the political world."¹⁴

Writing in the Catholic World, Carl F. H. Henry called these Fundamentalists the "hard rock" variety because they refused to engage in dialogue with those of differing views, whom they considered unfaithful to the Gospel. Dr. Carl McIntire of the American Council of Christian Churches (A.C.C.C.) was a good example of the extreme right in Fundamentalism. He condemned the National Council and World Council of Churches and all members who belonged to the organizations as apostate. Evangelicals outside his organization, the A.C.C.C., were frequently misrepresented, along with their institutions and projects. Fundamentalists like Carl McIntire, Bob Jones, Sr., and John R. Rice had

stamped the Fundamentalist movement with the image of irresponsible criticism from which many evangelicals eagerly dissociate themselves. Such a climate of emotional and distortive propaganda supplies little promise of dialogue aimed at understanding; the "hard rock" Fundamentalists promote the "conversion" of outsiders to attitudes that many evangelicals are eager to avoid.¹⁵

The young renaissance scholars had not wavered on the doctrine of biblical inerrancy or any of the other basic doctrines of Fundamentalism. But neither did they exhaust themselves in their theological defense.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Carl F. H. Henry, "Fundamentalists and the Faith," Catholic World, CCV (June, 1967), 149, 150.

The writing of such men as Bernard Ramm, Edward John Carnell, Dirk Jellema, Carl F. H. Henry, Warren C. Young and Paul K. Jewett, the publications of the Evangelical Theological Society and some of the volumes of the Pathway Book series [Eerdmans] reveal thought which has a theological concern, is abreast with developments in philosophy and theology, endeavors to deal honestly with the findings of natural science, manifests an interest in social ethics and is striving to attain a more than moralistic approach to literature and the arts.¹⁶

The new approach was critical of the ethical stance taken by earlier Fundamentalists. Henry's book, The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism, published in 1948, was one of the beginnings of the Fundamentalist renaissance. It charged earlier Fundamentalism with neglect of its obligation to society. Fundamentalism had come to mean more than a particular theology. It became a puritanical form of personal ethics. And while Henry's book was one of the first expressions of the new conservatism, he developed an ethical concern that has not been matched in evangelical circles.¹⁷

The Inception of Christianity Today

In this climate of effort toward understanding in evangelical Protestantism, Christianity Today was born. The young renaissance scholars were scattered throughout many denominations and educational institutions in America. They needed a national voice to unite them and to serve as a means of both self-expression and of propaganda.

¹⁶Hearn, "Fundamentalist Renaissance," p. 529.

¹⁷Hordern, New Directions, p. 78.

The idea for an outspoken evangelical theological journal was attributed to Billy Graham, international evangelist, as early as 1953. Graham, however, must have realized that he had neither the time nor the educational background to head such a journal. He therefore shared his idea with his father-in-law, L. Nelson Bell, a medical doctor, who said he had a similar idea. Dr. Bell soon gave up his medical practice to become the new journal's first promoter and later executive editor. His first major task was to establish financial support for the publication. Dr. Bell noted that

. . . there were over a thousand individuals who contributed to the work of Christianity Today during the first years of its publication. The donors were members of every major Protestant denomination. Only about \$300,000 had been pledged by the date of the first issue.¹⁸

The close family relationship between Dr. Bell and Billy Graham brought some criticism of the journal as being a pulpit for Billy Graham from which he could express his views. Graham frequently had articles published in Christianity Today. In the beginning it was even suggested that Graham should make Christianity Today the official publication of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. But he decided against such action, and soon after he founded Decision magazine to serve the needs of the B.G.E.A. By 1965, the monthly publication Decision had a circulation of

¹⁸L. Nelson Bell to author, July 16, 1969.

more than three million, which included several foreign language editions.¹⁹ "Christianity Today, therefore, has been independent editorially and in every way from the start, but it owed much to Graham's judgment in its early days."²⁰ Graham "is considered an 'evangelical' but not a 'Fundamentalist.'"²¹

The author of Billy Graham's authorized biography praised Christianity Today, saying, "It [had] stimulated new writers and thinkers, provided a forum for the sifting of ideas, [had] helped lift evangelicals out of their anti-intellectual mire, and [had] directed or clarified the theological views of many ministers and laymen who were trudging aimlessly in a welter of second-hand liberalism."²²

The only criticism of Christianity Today recorded by Billy Graham was that in its desire to be thoroughly theological, it had become almost obtuse. "It has settled down to become a strong, intelligent medium of news and opinion . . . ,"²³ Graham's biographer suggests.

Aside from gathering financial support, L. Nelson Bell was also instrumental in the organization of a board of trustees for Christianity Today, which was formed in

¹⁹John Pollack, Billy Graham: The Authorized Biography (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. 241.

²⁰Ibid., p. 171.

²¹Salisbury, Religion in American Culture, p. 121.

²²Pollack, Billy Graham, p. 172.

²³Ibid.

1955.²⁴ A list of more than fifty contributing editors was composed of Protestant churchmen from center to right in theology. A broadened appeal was attained through an increased editorial menu, adding a larger variety of articles, departments, and features than one religious periodical usually carried. But the most astute move of the organizers, the editor of Christianity and Crisis observed, "was their choice of the editor-in-chief: the eminent conservative theologian and Baptist minister, Carl F. H. Henry who holds a Th.D. from Northern Baptist Seminary and a Ph.D. from Boston University."²⁵

Henry originally had agreed to be editor for only one year. He later decided, upon the request of the Board of Directors of Christianity Today, to retain the editorship for twelve years.²⁶ Henry wanted to create a publication to compete with the liberal Christian Century, which

[said] Henry, "always spoke out of the left side of its mouth, whether on theological, political, or economic matters."

From the start, Henry found a large readership among conservative Protestants who nonetheless belonged to liberal, ecumenical Protestant denominations. "There was little point in fishing in only Fundamentalist waters," he [recalled]. "Except for internal conflict, the Fundamentalists had hardened into a monologue. So we fished for evangelicals where the ecumenical whale had inconsiderately swallowed them, and it was remarkable how many Jonahs emerged."²⁷

²⁴Ibid., p. 171.

²⁵Christianity and Crisis, XVIII (Oct. 27, 1958), 148, 149.

²⁶L. Nelson Bell to author, January 22, 1971.

²⁷"Mr. Inside," Newsweek, Jan. 15, 1968, p. 71.

After twelve years of his editorship, Newsweek reported that he had combined the rationalism of the medieval scholastic philosopher with the polemics of a Protestant sectarian in his doctrinal defenses. "He can--and has--argued the merits of theologians like Rudolph Bultman and Paul Tillich; but in the same breath he is apt to bury more recent, radical theologians in fancy denunciation."²⁸

The Newsweek article, announcing Henry's resignation from the editorship of Christianity Today, characterized him as "Mr. Inside" of conservative Protestantism, while the "flamboyant" Billy Graham was "Mr. Outside." Graham characterized Henry as the professor, while he himself was the student. And through his researching and writing more than twenty published works, as well as his influence as editor of Christianity Today, Henry had become the arbiter in defining and defending conservative Protestantism.²⁹

Christianity Today editors, after Henry's resignation, credited much of the journal's success to Henry's sensitivity to the importance of a comprehensive news section. That they said, could be attributed to Henry's background as correspondent and newspaper editor on Long Island.³⁰ Henry had edited the Smithtown Star and the Port Jefferson Times-Echo and was suburban correspondent for the New York

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Christianity Today, XII (Sept. 27, 1968), 29.

Times, the New York Herald Tribune, and the Standard News Association.³¹ He gave up his newspaper career to enter seminary.

Under Henry's direction, Christianity Today became one of the few religious publications that "demonstrated that it is possible to work theologically within tradition and at the same time to keep the mind of the whole church on the vital context of theological reflection."³² It is apparent that Christianity Today has been successful, and that it has both fostered and been fostered by the Fundamentalist renaissance. But the movement came at a critical time in the history of the church. It was able to provide an alternative to neo-orthodoxy and post-Barthian liberalism. The success of the renaissance movement and of Christianity Today confirmed the fact that the trend after 1914 was prevalently conservative.³³

The founding of Christianity Today occurred in the right place at the right time. With the generous financial backing of industrialists such as J. Howard Pew, chairman of the board of Sun Oil Company, Christianity Today was able to be circulated to most American Protestant clergymen without charge for almost twelve years. And while some clergymen did not appreciate the free literature, "it attracted a

³¹Carl F. H. Henry to author, Jan. 26, 1971.

³²Daniel Day Williams, What Present-Day Theologians Are Thinking (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), p. 47.

³³Stephen Neill (ed.), Twentieth Century Christianity (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1963), p. 269.

large segment of American church leadership because it [was] a voice that this segment wanted to hear, a conservative voice for 'historical and evangelical Christianity.'"³⁴

The generous financial backing and excellent quality of the magazine and its staff made it possible for Christianity Today to take a role of leadership in the progressive Fundamentalist renaissance.

The Controversy

The response of the secular press to Christianity Today, as cited previously, was for the most part favorable, both in the early years of publication and toward the end of Henry's editorship in 1968. But the religious press seemed skeptical and suspicious of the aims of the publication.

Christianity and Crisis, a periodical established in 1941 with a tradition of liberal theology and extensive concern with the social aspects of the Gospel, cited what it believed to be a basic conflict. The magazine editors questioned whether the new publication could survive with the diverse opinions of its editor and financial subsidizers.

Carl F. H. Henry was characterized by the editors of Christianity and Crisis as representing "a sophisticated and irenic theological conservatism."³⁵ They said that in his

³⁴Christianity and Crisis, XVIII (Oct. 27, 1958), 148.

³⁵"The Resourceful Mr. Pew," Christianity and Crisis, XVI (June 11, 1956), 75.

book, The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism, Henry had criticized the Fundamentalist movement for its tendency to ally itself with a one-sided reactionary social point of view. But that was exactly what Henry was doing in assuming the editorship of this journal, according to the editors of Christianity and Crisis.³⁶

The executive editor of Christianity Today, Dr. L. Nelson Bell, was characterized in an editorial in Christianity and Crisis as being

one of the most intransigently conservative leaders of the southern Presbyterian Church, who fought bitterly and successfully against the union of that church with the northern Presbyterian Church. Dr. Bell is also the father-in-law of Billy Graham. Since Billy Graham is reported to disagree with Dr. Bell about the Presbyterian union and other issues, there should be no point in mentioning that relationship if Dr. Graham himself were not one of the contributing editors and a contributor to the first issue.³⁷

J. Howard Pew, the major financial subsidizer of Christianity Today, was said to be

obsessed with the threat to America in all deviations from a pure laissez faire economic individualism . . . a fighter for freedom of the small businessman against government and private monopoly . . . unable to recognize the need for many new forms of social control in an interdependent technological society and he identifies this concern for unqualified economic individualism with the Christian concern for personal freedom . . . a sincere crusader, who wrongly identifies Christianity with his own version of economic individualism.³⁸

Christianity and Crisis concluded that the positions of the editor of Christianity Today and its financial

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

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subsidizer were opposed to each other, and the magazine questioned whether the two could work together. The possibility of this controversy was important since Christianity Today was distributed to a large majority of its circulation list on a non-paying basis. If the Christianity and Crisis charge that the periodical was just another propaganda medium being used by Mr. Pew were accurate, the subscribers had a right to know.

The editors of Dialog: A Journal of Theology also questioned the purpose of the extensive free circulation list in an editorial in its Winter issue of 1962. They classified Christianity Today with Christian Economics, the Word Alone, and Through to Victory, religious publications that apparently carried large non-paying circulations. In a cutting criticism, an editorial, "The Price of Free Literature," concluded:

It is significant that all of these other free papers carry the same ideological tendencies. They have the same message whether they are writing on the Supreme Court or the Supreme Being. God and America are packaged together. They are rightest, reactionary, romanticist, republican (Old Guard) and even Roman. They are very confident that the will of God is more compatible with the past than with the present or future. . . . Religiously, politically, socially and economically, they are prudishly moralistic, legalistically censorious, and biblicistically fundamentalist.³⁹

The editors of Dialog did not recognize the renaissance in Fundamentalism, and they indiscriminantly classified all free literature together. They did not recognize

³⁹"The Price of Free Literature," Dialog: A Journal of Theology, I (Winter, 1962), 12.

the possibility that clergymen could be receiving free publications from liberal and leftist groups as well. The editorial implied that little confidence could be placed in the discretionary powers of the clergy; it made clergymen sound like a most impressionable group, in need of strict protection from the invasion of new ideas, or old ones, for that matter.

Those who invest thousands of dollars in reactionary propaganda are worldly wise. They know what they are doing. Their dollar is buying what they want. For pastors do read some things in their hasty search for sermon materials, and they transmit what they read. It can hardly be doubted that their minds, and therefore their messages are being shaped by what they read. While many are reading this free literature, only a few subscribe to journals and magazines of more lofty goals. . . . The protestant pulpit today is threatened by a flood of free literature, for it cannot be assumed that the average pastor is a discriminating reader nor that he subscribes to other periodicals which might counter-balance this retreading of old, out-worn ideas.⁴⁰

There seems to be some question concerning when the free subscription list was dropped. N. W. Ayer & Son's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals lists an extensive free subscription circulation (88,083) in 1968. Mr. David Kucharsky, associate editor of Christianity Today, asserts that "the free list was phased out over a period of a year--December, 1966, to December, 1967."⁴¹ The only free subscriptions currently active go to seminaries.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 13.

⁴¹ David Kucharsky to author, January 28, 1971.

Much of the initiative for the extensive free subscriptions came from the Christianity Today Board of Directors. "There were always Board members who wished the magazine to go to certain blocks of ministers, if they did not subscribe, to keep them informed of evangelical concerns, and their gifts indirectly made this possible."⁴²

The concern of liberals that Christianity Today was being read by many on the free circulation list was not without foundation. In 1958 Christianity Today engaged an independent research corporation to conduct a representative survey of what Protestant clergymen were reading. Christianity and Crisis published the results. They included the estimate that 46 per cent of the clergymen interviewed said they read Christianity Today regularly, while 35 per cent said they read it occasionally. One clergyman in three said he had a paid subscription to Christianity Today, which was a higher subscription rate than any other publication tested.⁴³

Although Christianity Today had received harsh criticism from some editors of religious publications, the popularity and significance of the relatively new periodical could not be doubted. While other popular religious periodicals, such as Christian Herald and Presbyterian Life, enjoyed larger circulations than Christianity Today, these

⁴²Carl F. H. Henry to author, Jan. 26, 1971.

⁴³Christianity and Crisis, XVIII (Oct. 27, 1968), 148.

were not considered scholarly journals of theology. Christianity Today quickly gained the largest circulation of all scholarly theological journals edited for the Protestant clergy.

Several articles in the first issues of Christianity Today gave insights into some of the areas questioned in the controversy. In the first issue, the editors set forth the purpose and basic philosophy of the periodical.

Christianity Today has its origin in a deep felt desire to express historical Christianity to the present generation. Neglected, slighted, misrepresented--evangelical Christianity needs a clear voice, to speak with conviction and love, and to state its true position and its relevance to the world crisis.⁴⁴

In speaking to the world crisis, the fortnightly cleared the way to speak to theologians and Christian laymen about theology and the church and also about social, economic, and governmental issues, since the editors saw these closely related to the expression of Christianity.

Christianity Today will apply the biblical revelation to contemporary social crises, by presenting the implications of the total Gospel message for every area of life. This, Fundamentalism has often failed to do. Christian laymen are becoming increasingly aware that the answer to many problems of political, industrial and social life is a theological one. They are looking to the Christian Church for guidance, and they are looking for a demonstration of the fact that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a transforming and vital force. We have the conviction that consecrated and gifted evangelical scholarship can provide concrete proof and strategic answers.⁴⁵

⁴⁴"Why Christianity Today," Christianity Today, I (Oct. 15, 1956), 20.

⁴⁵Ibid.

The initial position taken by the editors on social issues seems to be the traditional Fundamentalist stand. Essentially the evangelical attacked the social needs on an individual basis. "We believe . . . that the basic needs of the social order must meet their solution first in the redemption of the individual,"⁴⁶ the editors said.

Christianity Today considered attacking the manifestation of social ills as futile. The magazine editors encouraged the church, therefore, to be "person centered" instead of "cause centered." The editors said: "In our desire for social righteousness, by the rectification of the corporate sins of a corporate society we are forgetting that there is no such thing as corporate salvation other than in and through personal, individual salvation."⁴⁷

The primary task of the church was to win individuals to Christ. Critics often charged that the evangelical church had oversimplified the solution to social problems by working to convert the individual to the "evangelical brand" of Christianity. Christianity Today defended the evangelical position by stating that "the Gospel affects all the powers and capacities of the individual and extends to all relations and conditions of human life."⁴⁸

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 21.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸"Oversimplifying the Remedy for the World's Woes," ibid., I (March 4, 1957), 24.

The editors also cited the fact that the evangelical church has often been unbiblical in her approach by not accepting more of the responsibility for her fellow man.

"The evangelical has often hobbled the Gospel unbiblically. He has not shown that the Christian is a new moral creation destined to become the salt of the earth and the light of the world."⁴⁹ In assuming greater responsibility in matters of social concern, Christianity Today encouraged increased concern for social justice and righteousness on the foundation of Christian principles.

It is significant that the editors of Christianity Today considered national stability and survival dependent upon enduring spiritual and moral qualities. This gave the editors the priority to investigate thoroughly social, economic, and governmental issues.

Some of the criticism made by Christianity and Crisis against the new publication showed evidence of fruition in the editorials published in the first issues. Christianity Today editors flatly asserted that "when the Church, in the name of the Church, enters the secular arena and exerts political pressures for righteousness in the social order, then the Church is prostituting her mission and adding to the confusion of the world."⁵⁰

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰"What is the Way to a New Society?" ibid., I (Nov. 26, 1956), 24.

But this statement did not restrict the periodical from commenting editorially on social, economic, or political issues. The rationale for such editorial commentary may have been based on the concept that the members of the church may exert political pressures for righteousness in the social order, speaking out as concerned citizens rather than as members of the church. Much of the editorializing was done in harmony with the Christianity and Crisis suspicion, however, and one could detect in the language used the promotion of a pure laissez faire economic individualism, similar to that promoted by J. Howard Pew.

But in a more comprehensive study of the editorial columns through the years of Carl F. H. Henry's editorship, one can discern a growing awareness and dialogue with contemporary problems. Two of the most important national problems during this period were the questions of the racial conflict and national economic stability. This study was an attempt to analyze the editorial position taken by Christianity Today magazine on these two basic problems during Henry's editorship and to establish from what basis this influential periodical propagated its opinion to its readers.

This study was written under the assumption that Carl F. H. Henry had full control over the editorial columns of Christianity Today during his editorship (1956-1968). Henry himself states that he "wrote many and perhaps most editorials but by no means all. I commissioned some, and

staff members wrote others. But I was responsible for editorial policy."⁵¹

There was some question about the source of editorials that were commissioned. David E. Kucharsky, currently associate editor of Christianity Today and news editor during Henry's editorship, indicated that Henry solicited editorials from persons other than staff members.

Occasionally we would use an unsigned editorial [a] manuscript that came in (either solicited or unsolicited) and was originally intended for the article section. In virtually all cases, however, editorials not written by Dr. Henry would be edited by him.⁵²

Christianity Today editorials were unsigned, and the anonymous authorship was strictly maintained.⁵³ While this could stimulate questions as to the source of Christianity Today's editorial opinion, Dr. Henry clearly takes all responsibility for its content. This study, accordingly, was based on the assumption that the editorial voice of Christianity Today and Carl F. H. Henry's opinion during his editorship were synonymous.

⁵¹Carl F. H. Henry to author, July 22, 1969.

⁵²David E. Kucharsky to author, July 25, 1969.

⁵³L. Nelson Bell to author, Aug. 9, 1969.

CHAPTER II

The Church and the Economy

The concern of the American Protestant church with the economy is closely related to the concern of the church for the people. If the people are to be able to live with an adequate supply of the necessities of life, the economy of the nation must be relatively healthy. The American economy has historically been healthy, providing for most of the people most of the time. But as the economic structure became more complicated and more dependent upon the economies of other nations, the economy became of much more concern to the people than it had been in the past. Since the government discovered it could by means of specific action control the economy, at least partially, the government's role in the nation's economy came under debate.

The sources of American Protestant thought with relation to the economy go back to the Protestant Reformation, a sixteenth century religious movement that profoundly influenced European life. Its indirect influence on the economic, political, social, and religious life has had incalculable ramifications on the entire world.¹

¹William Stevenson, The Story of the Reformation (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1959), p. 178.

The two basic tenets at the root of the Protestant Reformation were (1) the right of the individual to interpret the Scriptures for himself and (2) justification by faith alone, or primarily, with no dependence on good works. John Calvin (1509-1564) added to the Reformation theory the concept of "divine predestination." Neither of these two currents in Protestantism connected eternal happiness with rewards for works accomplished during the earthly life. The natural tendency was concern for the present life totally engrossing human existence, leaving no time to concern oneself with preparation for the life hereafter.²

Since man no longer had to worry about good works toward others for his own salvation, worldly goods were no longer to be eschewed. Quite the opposite. "Unceasing industry and thrift were erected into virtues. The Puritan virtues of thrift and economy usurped the place of the medieval virtues of justice and charity" ³ Economic successes became the manifestation of divine predestination.

Not all economists are convinced of the significance of the Reformation in the development of capitalism. "Where capitalism already existed, it had henceforth freer scope [because of the Reformation]. But men did not become capitalists because they were protestants, nor protestants

²Joseph F. Flubocher, The Concept of Ethics in the History of Economics (New York: Vantage Press, 1950), pp. 64-71.

³Ibid., p. 72.

because they were capitalists."⁴ Protestantism facilitated the triumph of new values in a society already becoming capitalist.

Although there is considerable disagreement regarding the actual influence of the Reformation on capitalism, the conservative American Protestant church has historically thought of the economic capitalistic system as created by Christian men under the approval of God. The editors of Christianity Today followed this same line of thought. In an editorial published in 1958, the editors noted that

An inner logic has bound the tradition of biblical theology and of free enterprise. As does the whole of life, free enterprise belongs under the will of God, . . . The theological left, with its repudiation of the sovereignty of God, became vulnerable to a collectivistic emphasis on human controls as over against individual rights. Today a new awareness of the perils of collectivism exists in some liberal Protestant circles. Even among college students one may detect a growing feeling that socialism is reactionary, and that most of the current campus enthusiasm is mostly a case of uncritical conformity.⁵

The editors of Christianity Today again and again asserted that Christian theology could be used as a basis for the formulation of a valid economic theory; and the use of theology as a basis for one's view of these matters was of extreme necessity to the editors. Christian theology must not be used solely for basic values and ideals, they reasoned; it must be applied in all areas of life as an

⁴David S. Landes (ed.), The Rise of Capitalism (New York: Macmillan Co., 1966), p. 50.

⁵Christianity Today, II (Aug. 18, 1958), 23.

expression of the will of God.⁶ The editors stressed that an economic system could be considered part of the will of God.

In an editorial, "Interdependency of Religious and Economic Freedoms," Christianity Today editors reported the results of a poll of American Protestant clergymen with regard to their insights into the relationship between religion and the economic system. The editors noted that 71 per cent of those interviewed thought businessmen had a humane regard for their employees. Rather reluctantly, the editors admitted, however, that only 55 per cent of the clergymen saw any relationship between religious and economic freedom.⁷

This latter finding was a blow to the editors' position that both religious and economic freedom were essential to complete human liberty. But the editorial reaffirmed the position that the two were closely related and dependent upon each other, as tradition and history had shown.

Modern political philosophers are detecting once again that the ideals of limited government and free market economics as a heritage of Western civilization presuppose the spiritual and ethical framework of Judeo-Christian religion. It is not enough to observe (true as it is) that political liberty and economic freedom are as important to man's search for spiritual growth and material sufficiency as is religious liberty. Rather to sanction freedom primarily by the pragmatic results of political and economic liberty, some modern thinkers show a growing readiness to premise the case for freedom in its entirety on religious assumptions.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 22.

The Judeo-Christian tradition insists on the connection between religion and economics by relating revealed religion in a determinative way to economic principles. It defines the link between economic liberty and economic duty in terms of the revealed will of God.⁸

The editors of Christianity Today tied economic capitalism and the Judeo-Christian tradition closely together; and while these two concepts may have been based on compatible theories, the practical relationship could not be considered altogether harmonious. Capitalists were often indifferent or hostile to the church. They claimed little attraction to the pious boredom of paradise and scorn for a religion that drew people away from earthly labor to dwell on super-earthly thoughts. The church had equal criticism for the capitalist who found meaning not in what he was working for, but rather in the perpetual motion of his work.⁹

The capitalist had a responsibility to the Judeo-Christian religion, according to Carl F. H. Henry. If he were to enjoy the benefits of the Judeo-Christian philosophy concerning the validity of the profit motive and private property, he should accept the "concept of man as a creature with changeless moral obligations, economic as well as others, to God and his fellowmen alike."¹⁰

⁸Ibid., p. 23.

⁹Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, trans. by Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 70.

¹⁰Carl F. H. Henry, "Christianity and the Economic Crisis," Vital Speeches of the Day, XXI (May 15, 1955), 1246.

Henry wrote that the right of private ownership was a biblical concept, defended by the Old Testament and assumed by Jesus Christ.¹¹ Christianity Today editors also thought private property of enough importance in the theological world, and in enough danger in the political world, to editorialize on the subject. The editorial concluded that the "neglect of high intellectual interest in questions of property and ownership has, in fact, contributed to the climate of indifference in which socialist influences have increasingly modified historic American ideals, institutions, and practices."¹²

Henry did show a concern for economic justice, but did not see mere rearrangement of property holdings as the answer to the problems of man, or a guarantee of economic justice.

The idea that social utopia may be derived simply through the redistribution of wealth is naive from the biblical viewpoint. It disregards the spiritual predicament of man which requires more than a mere rearrangement of external factors for its solution. Man's basic problem is one of an internal defilement by sin, not merely one of external possessions. Man is a sinner, and the problem of a collectivistic order will remain one involving collectivistic sinners instead of capitalistic sinners.¹³

Here Henry seemed to be skirting the issue of economic justice for the entire society with a digression to the personal needs of individual men. Surely economic

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Christianity Today, VIII (Sept. 11, 1964), 32.

¹³Henry, "Christianity and the Economic Crisis," p. 1245.

justice would not create a utopian society. But it would be a step in that direction. Since utopia was not even a possibility in Henry's theology, the steps toward it were not of great concern to him.

The justification for the profit motive followed the same argument. "Throughout the Bible the good life is represented as divinely rewarded, and it is assumed that the industrious investment of talents and possessions also merits its rewards."¹⁴ This statement, however, was qualified with the idea that the profit motive cannot be abstracted from other areas of life, or other Christian obligations such as the Golden Rule, brotherly love, and charity.¹⁵

The editors came out strongly against preferential treatment given churches owning property used for purposes other than religious worship or education: "The fact is that no country can long tolerate laws that give churches engaged in commercial ventures special competitive advantages over secular business establishments."¹⁶

On the matter of general taxation, the editors of Christianity Today held the position that while it was not good to undertax the people, a greater effort should be made to keep government expenditures within the annual budget acquired by taxation. "It seems never to occur to the

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Christianity Today, VI (Jan. 19, 1962), 26.

political demagogue that it is possible for governments, as well as individuals, to live within their means and to practice the Christian virtue of frugality."¹⁷

The government's role in relation to the economy was difficult to comprehend in an analysis of Christianity Today editorials. While President John F. Kennedy was criticized in one instance for not intervening in the New York electrical workers' strike, when labor was asking for a twenty-five-hour work-week, he was also criticized for his attempt to hold the price of steel at a stable level. The editorial showed concern for the tumbling stock market because of its effect on the many small investors who could have been hurt financially. It was emphasized that this instance was no time for government intervention. "Government pressures which established the current price of steel were clearly based on the judgment of men and not on the enforcement of law."¹⁸

But this controversy had much more significance than merely the price of steel and losses on the stock market. It was seen as a trend toward big government control, which was strongly opposed by Christianity Today.

If the freedom of steel men to name the asking price of their products can be repressed by government, what does the widening image of omnipotent government imply? The force of government can be brought to bear on any wage or any price of any product or service. And the handling of the steel controversy supplies the precedent: nothing

¹⁷Ibid., III (March 30, 1959), 22.

¹⁸Ibid., VI (June 22, 1962), 23.

more is needed than the decision of a tiny handful of men in the White House. Americans may well ponder the security of their rights and property of every nature under this relationship to government.¹⁹

On the other hand, the government was charged with complete responsibility for the inflationary trends in an editorial published in 1958 which advised manipulation of the economy. Rising prices and wages were not really the cause of inflation, the editors said. It was, rather, caused by the government's increasing the supply of money. The theory advanced by the editors of Christianity Today was that if the supply of money was not increased, the supply would be insufficient to pay higher costs, and therefore unemployment would result, which was the inevitable solution. The editors contended that unemployment would have to be stopped, but this would be accomplished by a wage reduction first, a cost reduction second, and finally price reduction. "It now becomes clear that the government must be held strictly responsible for inflation, because government, and only government, is responsible for the money supply."²⁰

Christianity Today editors called for a return to the gold standard to prevent inflation. They also labeled inflation a moral problem, charging that the government profited from inflation by the reduction of the value of its debts. Inflation also directly affected people morally, according to the editors.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., II (Jan. 6, 1958), 22.

The existence of unsound money is one of the socially demoralizing factors in any civilization. It deprives the aged, who have long practiced the virtues of industry and thrift, of their proper reward. It discourages the young from exercising their ingenuity, resourcefulness and industry, because they see no way by which they can be rewarded for their efforts. Once it is clear that the intrinsic value of money is compromised, men will turn from savings and insurance and other provision for the future, in order to spend the earnings before purchasing power further declines. The people lose hope in their future. Moral deterioration follows the debasement of the dollar.²¹

The editors based the whole moral system of meaningful life on the profit motive. The account showed how traditional Christian virtues were being undermined by the inflationary economy.

As the economy and morality were intimately related, according to Christianity Today editors, so the government and the economy were actually interdependent. The editors shared the opinion of United States Senator Barry Goldwater, a Republican from Arizona, that the collapse of one would likely cause the collapse of the other. This, he had reminded the Eighty-fifth Congress, was part of the Russian plan to collapse the U.S. economy and thereby destroy the government.²²

In a speech he had made before his acceptance of the editorship of Christianity Today, Henry had urged rejection of collectivistic economic theories; but along with this position, he also had urged Christians not to blindly accept

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., II (Sept. 29, 1958), 22.

capitalism as the ultimate economic system. Conservative Protestants had too long implied that American capitalism was the ideal form, somehow related to the Kingdom of God, according to Henry. He conceded that evangelicals may have been realistic about their view of limited man, but they had never shown realistic concern for the injustices and inequities in the world of economics. "If the Bible links the cure of economic injustice to repentance and redemption, Christian economics--even if anti-collectivistic--might be expected to find some ground of complaint even in American capitalism."²³ This was a much more critical statement about capitalism than is found in the editorial columns of Christianity Today during Henry's editorship.

Yet Henry made it clear that he found no middle ground between collectivism and free enterprise. The question was not in which system Christianity could survive, nor that of branding one system wholly evil and the other wholly good, and binding Christianity to the latter.

The issue was rather whether in the world of labor, unredeemed and frustrated in sin, human worth and dignity in the balances, which one of the other of these economic options best stands between fallen man and his economic enslavement, and maintains points of control with the Christian view of man as an economic creature, and hence is more compatible with the biblical concept of life.²⁴

Much of the evangelical concern for the government and the economy comes down to a basic fear of communism.

²³Henry, "Christianity and the Economic Crisis," p. 1246.

²⁴Ibid.

What was good for America, therefore, became what was good for the government and the economy, and not necessarily what was good for the people. The great concern the evangelical church held, as verbalized by Henry, was that although the Christian Church might be able to exist in a collectivistic or communistic society, "this enthronement of the economic zone as the decisive value-level of human existence serves as the mold for paganism in its Communist form."²⁵

The fundamental judgment of an economic system must be made on the consideration of the more ultimate moral and spiritual principles it encourages. And if American capitalism was not concerned with and involved in Christian spiritual and moral ultimates, it had no right to expect the support of the Christian conscience.

Any economic philosophy, even an inferior one, may well prove a safer guide in the long run than one which affirms no moral base, because the best theories lead to immoral and demonic manifestations when they lose that objective basis in the spiritual and moral world to which economic life is to be conformed. Faith guards the economic order best by subordinating all spheres of life to God.²⁶

The attitude expressed by Henry, and here summarized, gave the reader the opinion that there was no more favorable option than American capitalism. Before affirming the American system as the ultimate, however, Henry said the wise man should probe the basis and value structure of American capitalism to see if it was in harmony with the ultimate

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., p. 1244.

values held by the individual. Here Henry gave no blind patronage to American capitalism but neither did he provide any real options besides American capitalism.

The Concept of Labor

The view of Carl F. H. Henry, articulated editorially in Christianity Today, concerning economic capitalism may never be understood until one understands his concept of human labor. The working world was the only meaningful existence for the human being. Since it was assumed that everyone lived in the world of labor and economics, "evangelical Christianity emphasizes that man's work is a divinely appointed realm in which man is to glorify God and invest his talents for the good of his fellows; it is not only a means of livelihood but also an avenue of service,"²⁷ Henry wrote.

This interpretation of man's calling in an activist sense is one of the major contributions of John Calvin to modern social and economic theory. "He emphasized man's duty to serve society in harmony with God's will. . . . This vocational activism proved to be a powerful dynamic in western civilization."²⁸

It may be difficult for the man on an assembly line inserting the same type of screw into an engine block eight

²⁷Carl F. H. Henry, God Who Shows Himself (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1966), p. 69.

²⁸Harold J. Grimm, The Reformation Era 1500-1650 (New York: Macmillan Co., 1967), p. 581.

hours a day to sense any divine appointment in his task. But the editors of Christianity Today commented several times on the condition of work in the United States and what could be done about its improvement. In these editorials the ultimate nature of work in human existence was expressed. One editorial made it sound simple:

The problem of the American worker today, like that of society in general, is the problem of false gods. The solution of his problem must therefore be a religious solution. He may blame the meaninglessness of work on the monotony of the assembly lines, upon the disproportions of capitalism, or a hundred and one other things. Some of them, indeed, may be contributory factors, but their rectification will not solve his problem. Deep down, the modern worker's sense of estrangement in his job is due to his estrangement from God. He does not know the meaning of life, and hence he does not know the meaning of work.²⁹

From this vantage point the labor-management disputes may be seen in a different perspective. This may be the reason Christianity Today editors were so unsympathetic with New York electrical workers who were agitating in 1962 for a reduction of their work-week from thirty to twenty-five hours. When the electrical workers won the battle, an editorial chided the Kennedy administration for doing nothing to stop the reduction in working hours and concluded, "The objective was less work and improved pay, a program that could lead, as the New York Herald Tribune commented, 'to the point of no hours at all and yet a guaranteed wage.'"³⁰

²⁹Christianity Today, I (May 13, 1957), 21.

³⁰Ibid., VI (Feb. 16, 1962), 30.

The boredom and meaninglessness of increased leisure time were not the only issues that Christianity Today editors were protesting. With their high regard for the value of work, they believed man was being cheated of the opportunity to experience meaning in life. The editors did not begrudge many of the gains made by organized labor; but they did emphasize that with improved working conditions, shorter days, higher wages, fringe benefits, and increased security through organization, the average worker had not experienced increased pleasure in his job. "Featherbedding, goldbricking, organized insistence of a 25-hour work week (with 40 hours of pay) suggest that men desire the products of their labor but dislike the activity which produces them."³¹

The editors cited the time of depression in the thirties, when the effects of unemployment were demoralizing to the general public. Because men and women were not able to find work, the editors contended, their lives lost all meaning. They also pointed to those people forced into retirement whose greatest joy would have been to again perform their old tasks.³² In the editorial, "Time to Recapture the Joy of Labor," the editors concluded:

Labor will lose everything if in its problem solving process it loses the joy and dignity of labor. This is a matter of the heart and spirit of man, a matter that

³¹Ibid. (Aug. 3, 1962), 23.

³²Ibid.

cannot be solved by labor legislation, or gains at the collective bargaining table, a matter worthy of reflection as America again celebrates Labor Day.³³

Any idea of basic insured income, therefore, was considered to jeopardize the basic right of the individual to find fulfillment and dignity in work. One editorial cited the Apostle Paul's statement that if any man would not work, neither should he eat, and claimed it was still relevant. The question here seems to be his ability and desire to work.³⁴

This appeared to be a rather hardboiled approach. And the major concern established as a basis for this philosophy was how increased leisure time would be used. "Certainly the present use of available free time causes one to ask how millions without stimulus of working for a living would use their total leisure. . . ." ³⁵

Since Christianity Today editors placed labor in such a significant role in human life, it seemed evident that the editors believed they had a prerogative to discuss and comment upon the various aspects of the labor-management conflict. The editors called upon the local churches to interpret the meaning of work and the responsibilities of the economic sphere for those both inside and outside the church. "For out of this conviction of ultimate

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., VIII (April 10, 1964), 27.

³⁵Ibid.

spiritual responsibility can rise a new sense of moral integrity and earnestness in the workaday world."³⁶

The church, therefore, did have a responsibility in the economic life of the community. But it was, as always with Christianity Today, the responsibility of the church to influence the individual Christian, who would in turn influence his fellow citizens and his government. It was often easy for some conservative Protestants to blame the problem of unemployment on lazy men. Newspapers in their classified advertisement columns offered a variety of jobs. But Christianity Today editorials did not take this superficial position. Although editorially Christianity Today claimed that much of the unemployment problem was due to indolence, the editors admitted that this was not the sole cause of the problem. One editorial charged the Christian community with the responsibility of helping those unemployed who could be helped. With their elevated concept of the meaning of work, Christianity Today editors did not promote a program of finding the unemployed menial, unrewarding labor. They suggested a more comprehensive program in keeping with their philosophy of work. They called their program a ministry to the jobless, not merely a job-finding, stop-gap program.³⁷

For the concept of vocation, or calling in one's work, holds special importance to Protestant Christianity.

³⁶Ibid., I (May 13, 1957), 21.

³⁷Ibid., XII (July 19, 1968), 33.

The provision of work--and not merely welfare-program jobs--should therefore be of special concern. Wherever there is a jobless man willing to work, the Christian community has an opportunity to consider that man's special gifts and how he can invest them in service to God and neighbor. And wherever the jobless are unwilling to work, the Christian community faces the high task of providing new and adequate incentives. That is at least as important as holding together the biblical emphasis on "work to eat."

The man who has found a job, and in finding it has also found the meaning of work, is able to replenish both his stomach and his spirit.³⁸

Although the attitude of no pity for the lazy jobless was evident, there was also a pronounced emphasis on helping people find work that was rewarding to them. Christianity Today editorials never scorned manual labor, and it was evident that the editors believed a great many people could find meaningful work on an assembly line as others found the labor of caring for human beings meaningful.

The editors of Christianity Today stressed that the world of work held meaning for the Christian because it was where the people were. Given the opportunity to work, men were provided with the opportunity to associate with other men. This association could give the assembly line job meaning for the Christian that it could not have for others.

The editors saw the world of work as the center of life; and if the center of life were meaningless, the fringe areas of reward for labor would also be meaningless. The economy and labor-management disputes, therefore, touched a central chord in the philosophy of the Christian life, as expressed by the editors in Christianity Today.

³⁸Ibid.

Labor-Management

The two title words of this division, separated by a hyphen, seem to indicate opposites to many persons today. But in the columns of their publication the implication is apparent that the editors of Christianity Today thought of labor and management as partners, along with capitalism, democratic government, and free men.

Conservative Protestants have historically sided with the moneyed capitalists as a reaction against the rising power of organized workers. They have had several reasons for their choice of sides. Laissez faire capitalism has been traditional in America. It may have been traditional because of ignorance, neglect, or apathy, but it was traditional. Success was a characteristic also thought to be a sure sign of frugality, honesty, and hard work, all of which are traditional Christian virtues.

Twentieth century conservative Protestants had seen the citizenry revolt in many European countries. In throwing off totalitarianism, they had taken on communism and forms of socialism; and accordingly, the fear of communism along with respect for the achievements of successful capitalists pushed most conservative Protestants to the side of management.

Little can be found in Carl F. H. Henry's earlier works that deals with his opinion on labor-management disputes. A significant reference to the subject appears in The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism, which deals

with the fear that Christian principles were being left out of labor-management confrontations, and being replaced by "leftist precepts of political Socialism or Communism."³⁹

The editorial columns of Christianity Today, however, dealt more extensively with the continual controversies between labor and management than did Henry's other works, either before or during his editorship. After only eight months of publication, Christianity Today proposed editorially that its readers consider three dangers in the union system of organized labor.

(1) Apathy of union members to union responsibilities.

(2) The feeling of union officials that members have given them a mandate to implement any policy that the labor leaders endorse. This pledges the conscience of workers in matters on which there has been no debate.

(3) The fact that the same leaders are often elected and re-elected, and the rank and file seem incapable of effecting a change.⁴⁰

The editors were obviously alarmed by the growing power of big labor. They cited the merged AFL-CIO as a political force spending some four million dollars on a political campaign, having great power over who was and was not successful in running for public office, and perpetuating the myth of a labor class distinct from the remainder of American society. "There is a growing feeling that labor seeks coercive power over the citizenry as a whole, demanding and getting from government special

³⁹Carl F. H. Henry, The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), p. 31.

⁴⁰Christianity Today, I (May 13, 1957), 22.

privileges and hence unfair advantage because of its size as a pressure group."⁴¹

The editors hypothesized the fundamental difference between big labor and capitalism to be that big labor was not trying to perfect capitalism but rather was trying to destroy it. "The reforms at which the labor unions aimed encompassed the destruction of Capitalism, and in many respects continue to do so."⁴²

The editors could not stand idly by and witness the destruction of capitalism, for capitalism was a major concern since they believed it to be both biblical and particularly Protestant and Calvinistic. "A genuinely Christian critique of Labor must hope that the unions will absorb more of the capitalistic 'mores.'"⁴³

The charge was also made that the labor movement shared an ambiguous relationship to the capitalistic economy and that its programs led constantly toward collectivism.⁴⁴ This is a different attitude from one that was expressed in later editorials, when the editors urged labor and management to work together as necessary parts of the American economic system.

Congress was blamed for lack of action against the labor's threat to capitalism. An accusation was leveled for

⁴¹Ibid. (Dec. 10, 1956), 23.

⁴²Ibid., p. 24.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

the lack of as much as a congressional investigation. Big labor and the two major political parties were lumped together by the editors, who charged that "the constant modification and weakening of capitalistic 'mores' is an activity which both major political parties have shared with organized labor."⁴⁵

Concern over the union movement was expressed consistently in the editorial columns of Christianity Today. The Dave Beck controversy in 1957 drew a call for unions to clean house and insisted upon punishments that fit the crimes committed, or else the government might be forced to enter the situation.

Dave Beck, leader in the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, was accused of embezzling \$322,000 in union funds between 1949 and 1953. He was brought to testify before John L. McClellan, Democrat from Arkansas and chairman of the Select Committee on Improper Activities in the Labor and Management Field. These investigations caused a major shake-up in the entire labor movement. Beck was suspended by the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organization (AFL-CIO) from his position as vice-president of the Federation and member of the Council.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶New York Times, March 27, 1957, p. 8.

Government intervention was considered an eminent threat to unionism by the editors of Christianity Today. "The danger exists that reactionary legislation may hinder labor in its rightful pursuits."⁴⁷

By September, 1958, Christianity Today editorials had gone so far as to label union leaders "entrenched criminals." Editors were upset because the United States Congress had not enacted labor legislation against the criminals. The large unions were controlled by men who were associated with gangsters and hoodlums, Christianity Today charged editorially. One editorial charged that the Congress had not acted on labor legislation because of political expediency. This inaction was believed to be a threat to national security. The editors, however, tried to make it clear that they were not calling for anti-labor legislation.⁴⁸

Punitive anti-labor legislation is not indicated, nor should it be contemplated; but there is a desperate need for controls which will protect all of America--labor, capital, and the average citizen. An anti-monopoly law for the unions would be no more anti-labor than the Sherman Act is anti-business. What is important is that the sinister grip of criminals should be recognized and adequately legislated against, regardless of where those criminals are found.⁴⁹

A pessimistic view was taken editorially in Christianity Today of the economic settlements made between labor and management. Beneath the heading, "Steel Differences

⁴⁷Christianity Today, I (May 13, 1957), 20.

⁴⁸Ibid. (Sept. 15, 1958), 22.

⁴⁹Ibid.

Settled: Everybody Loses," the editors wrote: "Unbridled in power, the giant labor unions jeopardized national well-being, sidestepped pleas for justifiable work rule revisions, and achieved another inflationary settlement."⁵⁰ Besides the devaluation of savings and earning, the editors saw a sound monetary system as a virtue that the politicians had compromised.

The power of labor over the press was a disturbing fact to the editors of Christianity Today. In March, 1963, the editors charged that great newspapers in New York City had been forced to suspend publication, either temporarily or permanently, because of labor bosses who were desirous of special economic objectives. The editorial asserted that the survival of these newspapers, with long records of community service, was "conditioned on the whim of union leaders who advance partisan goals even when a strike lacks the sympathy of most of the employees and of the community as a whole."⁵¹

In the case of the New York City newspaper strike of 1963, the editorial mentioned above admitted that the strike was doubtlessly caused by publishers who were late in beginning negotiations and reluctant to compromise their original position taken in the strike.⁵² But why did the editors use

⁵⁰Ibid., IV (Jan. 18, 1960), 23.

⁵¹Ibid. (March 15, 1960), 23.

⁵²Ibid.

more space in the editorial to criticize labor after they admitted the guilt of management? It is difficult to understand aside from the inclination that keeping labor in line was an editorial purpose of Christianity Today, and the editors never passed up an opportunity to do just that. The newspaper was portrayed as a public servant in the editorial, a part of the great democratic system. Labor leaders were characterized as powerful opportunists, who were overstepping their proper position and who did not know their place in the American system of economics.

During American history repressive government was the villain that most often threatened the right to a free press. Today, as the Washington Post observes, that right is just as seriously threatened by the arbitrary action of labor bosses, who exalt their prerogatives as labor leaders above those of the community and do not hesitate to topple giant enterprises largely engaged in the domain of public service.⁵³

The strike method of forcing management's hand was distasteful to the editors of Christianity Today, but the "illegal" strike of workers in public transportation was intolerable. New York City public transit workers went out on strike on January 2, 1966, the day after John V. Lindsay's first inauguration as mayor of New York City. Pleas for an extension of the contract were rejected by union leaders. The strike was in violation of the Condon-Wadlin Act which forbids strikes by state and city employees.⁵⁴

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴New York Times, Jan. 2, 1966, p. 1.

The editors estimated in April, 1966, that the New York City subway strike, which had taken place a few months previously, had caused irreparable damage to the economy.⁵⁵

A strike of this nature involving so many people is intolerable. Calling such a strike was senseless. No real stalemate had been reached, nor had any evidence emerged to show it was impossible to reach some sort of compromise. Moreover, the union struck in open defiance of the law, a defiance that bodes ill for the future in destroying respect for the law and encouraging future breaches of it by others.⁵⁶

Christianity Today editors struck at the irresponsibility they believed was displayed by union leaders. They proposed that illegal strikes be countered by the courts with stiff fines and imprisonment for union leaders; and always hovering in the background was the possibility of government restriction of labor unions because of their unlawful, irresponsible acts. "Such irresponsible labor-union activities could bring about restrictive legislation that would hurt unions that have acted fairly and responsibly across the years."⁵⁷

A major issue that Christianity Today editors emphasized was the right of Americans to work anywhere, without being forced into union membership. And the editors admitted that this was largely their own battle. Big business usually conceded that it was easier to bargain with organized labor. "But the price of exalting expedience over

⁵⁵Christianity Today, X (April 29, 1966), 29.

⁵⁶Ibid. (Jan. 21, 1966), 28.

⁵⁷Ibid.

virtue, and of submerging individual rights in the collectivity, will ultimately prove as costly to Big Business as to Big Labor."⁵⁸

This right of the individual to choose seemed to be a focal point in the editorial policy of Christianity Today. The editors placed great importance on the decision of the individual, whether it be the individual state in the state's rights controversy or the individual person in the compulsory union membership controversy.

This respect for individuals' moral convictions is one of the profound ways in which American democracy differs from totalitarianism; totalitarian governments demand the ultimate loyalty of their citizens, whereas American democratic government recognizes that man's ultimate loyalty is to God, not the state.⁵⁹

The moral conviction of the individual against union membership was not pursued very far in any of the editorials. This may have been difficult, since morality is such an individual concept. Yet one is left to wonder upon what basis the moral conviction against union membership is built.

Christianity Today editorials were consistently critical of the role of the church with regard to labor and management disputes. The editors recognized that there was a need for protection of the union's right to organize in the thirties, but the unions had become powerful, established institutions of American society that needed the same restrictions as other institutions. "The widespread corruption

⁵⁸Ibid., IV (April 25, 1960), 22.

⁵⁹Ibid., IX (May 21, 1965), 27.

revealed by the McClellan Labor Rackets Committee [referring to the investigation of Dave Beck by the Select Committee on Improper Activities in the Labor and Management Field], and the fact that communists have infiltrated some powerful unions, help to indicate why freedom of association guaranteed by the right to work concept, is important to Christian workers."⁶⁰

Several times Christianity Today editors categorized liberal church leaders and union leaders together, citing instances in which they had cooperated in influencing the public toward collectivistic ideals and government control of the economy. "The AFL-CIO Executive Council's recently adopted statement on 'Labor and the Churches' not only pledges the labor movement to a continuing program of socialization, but even measures the social concern of American religious forces by their enthusiasm for this program. . . ."⁶¹

To this, Christianity Today editors spoke indignantly. They saw no inherent justice in the labor union. Rather, they charged that a labor union was just as apt to impinge on human liberties as any other social institution. "Human nature in the ranks of labor and its leadership is no worse, and no better, than human nature generally."⁶²

⁶⁰Ibid., IV (April 25, 1960), 22.

⁶¹Ibid., II (March 17, 1958), 22.

⁶²Ibid.

While it was evident that the Christianity Today editorial policy was pro-management, the editors criticized church leaders who aligned themselves with labor, stating that the church had a responsibility to society as a whole and could not favor a particular segment.

The Bible teaches the duty but also the dignity of work. It requires honesty by the employer and the employed. The employer is enjoined against withholding rightful wages or in any other way oppressing those who labor. The worker is enjoined against dishonesty, either in the appropriation of things or stealing time which rightfully belongs to the employer. It is therefore the duty of the Church to teach and preach, "Thou Shalt Not Steal," whether to labor or capital. It is equally her duty to refrain from becoming a pressure group in favor of either.⁶³

Powerful unions were seen as a threat to American democracy by use of direct political pressure. The proximity of a strike to a national election could become a factor in influencing the political pressures exerted by negotiators. Christianity Today editors wrote that some politicians naively accepted the notion that all the legislative goals of union leaders must be best for the economy as a whole.⁶⁴ Keeping the economy healthy seemed to be the ultimate concern of the editors:

Even more somber skies shadow today's bargaining sessions, especially the compromise with inflation and the uncertainties of the unstable dollar. One would think that wage negotiators would be reminded at every step how much government tampering with the economy has already contributed to, rather than rectified, our financial dilemmas.⁶⁵

⁶³Ibid., V (Aug. 28, 1961), 35.

⁶⁴Ibid., IV (Nov. 9, 1959), 23.

⁶⁵Ibid.

But although the editorial depreciates the value of government tampering with the economy, the editors said it was government's duty to stop the inflation spiral. "Only the government can give the necessary assurance that there will be no further increase in the supply of money or credit."⁶⁶ The role that government should play in the nation's economy was nebulous, to say the least. Somehow government must work to stabilize the economy but not control it, according to the editors of Christianity Today.

Only one editorial during the editorship of Carl F. H. Henry centered solely upon corruption in business, with no reference to the equal corruption in labor. It dealt with the shaken public confidence in business because of the dangerous drugs being marketed by pharmaceutical companies, and the recalling of two million automobiles by automotive manufacturers because of defective parts. The editors concluded that the desire for profits apparently overcame concern for public health and safety.⁶⁷ But this was assuming that the public had confidence in business in the first place, an assumption that may not have been altogether valid.

Although Christianity Today was decidedly pro-management in its editorials, it must be noted that the editors recognized the value of worker organizations and recognized that unions were a permanent fixture in American

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid., X (April 29, 1966), 30.

society. The editorial goal seemed to be one of improving the unions. Great Britain was cited as an example of uncorrupted labor organization. An editorial cited that British workers were organized on an even larger scale than those in the United States, so the bigness of labor was not the fundamental problem.

What really accounts for the moral temper of the labor movement in Britain is its heritage from the days when labor unions were Christian in outlook. Britain still shares the lingering influence of the Methodist Revival on the trade union movement.⁶⁸

The editors came back to their foundational assumption that Christians working as individuals within the institutions of society could effect needed change. Encouraging punishment of the labor movement because of its corruption was not their purpose, according to the frequent claims of the editors of Christianity Today. The editorials stressed the necessity of regulating the unions into a workable place in society. Fear of corruption and Communist infiltration kept the possibility of government control always in the editorial comments. And although the editorials treated government regulation as undesirable for the labor unions, Christianity Today editors appeared to favor government legislation that would have limited the sphere of the union's influence to its "proper concerns," and encouraged responsibility to the people, the government, and the economy.

⁶⁸Ibid., I (May 13, 1957), 21.

CHAPTER III

The Church and Racial Conflict

The racial conflict between whites and blacks became one of the most prominent problems facing American society during the period in which Carl F. H. Henry was editor of Christianity Today. Since the journal allotted several pages of each issue to editorials, a reader of the periodical could expect that racial conflict would receive extensive editorial attention and treatment. And this was the case. While Christianity Today was a journal of theology, the implications of the racial conflict were too significant to both the church and the nation to ignore or even treat with editorial lightness.

Under this topic, more than under economic capitalism, an evident change in editorial policy became apparent. Although in earlier issues state's rights had been emphasized, a humanitarian position was taken by Christianity Today editors after they realized the significance and serious consequences of the racial conflict.

L. Nelson Bell, executive editor and first promoter of the journal, gave the most comprehensive statement on race in the early issues of Christianity Today. He kept it in close context with the church, stating that segregation

had no biblical base, and that it was un-Christian and un-American. God had made no distinction between the races, Dr. Bell wrote, so neither should the church in matters of membership. All churches should be open to all races of men.¹

The initial statement on race in Christianity Today did, however, decry forced integration as sociologically impractical, since it violated the right of personal choice. This argument against compulsory integration was emphasized consistently by the editors. The other cautionary statement was that the church should recognize racial differences, not implying inferiority or superiority, but merely that racial differences exist.²

The evangelical church had offered little leadership toward solution of the racial conflict; and Christianity Today editors admitted this in the early issues of the publication. They also admitted that they were in trouble since they had not taken the leadership earlier in areas in which they could conscientiously take such a position. This inaction caused much misunderstanding as to the real position of the evangelical church.³

The editors said they believed that the evangelical church had surrendered something of her moral initiative in

¹Christianity Today, II (Sept. 29, 1958), 21.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 20.

the life of the nation when she allowed secular forces to implement correction of racial injustice. "There are wrongs in the land, and the church had best be the Church, and cry against them; there is no biblical mandate to preserve the shaggy status quo."⁴

Early in the history of the journal the editors affirmed the place of the church as a voice, crying out against wrongs. The church, however, theoretically, cried out to her people, not directly to the government. The church people then agitated for change in their own name and not directly in the name of the church.

Evangelical Protestants often pointed to their extensive foreign missionary effort as proof that they were doing something for minority races. But the situation at home could not be ignored.

In mid-twentieth century America, humanism and liberalism and evangelicalism alike were slow to protest political discrimination against the Negro, although evangelical missionaries have deplored the incongruities of segregation. Regrettably, the Negro's plight became for some liberal reformers an opportunity for promoting social revolution, and for some conservative reactionaries an occasion for perpetuating segregation and discrimination. Evangelical Christianity has taken a burden for social renewal but no penchant for revolution or reaction. Because it champions the redemptive realities inherent in the Christian religion, evangelical Christianity will vindicate the judgment that the Negro is not only politically an equal but also spiritually a brother.⁵

⁴Ibid., I (March 18, 1957), 21.

⁵Carl F. H. Henry, God Who Shows Himself (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1966), p. 71

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Christianity Today editors recognized the hypocrisy of the past in regard to race relations in the church, to the point that they speculated that "had the Church really practiced the love and brotherhood it preaches, the present crisis might have been averted."⁶ Hypocrisy was cited in the missionary program, which often looked down upon Negro Christians as inferior and called "for missionaries to lift the life and culture of the dark-skinned natives of Africa--these factors suggest the deep need for soul searching and repentance in the churches."⁷

Racial intermarriage was one of the feared consequences of integration that had quieted many otherwise concerned evangelical Christians. But Christianity Today frankly asserted that white men could not afford to align themselves against legitimate Negro aspirations because of opposition to racial intermarriage.⁸

Instead of proclaiming the positive resources of the spirit of man to resolve racial controversy, the evangelical church allowed "indignation over statute breaking to run deeper in the Bible Belt than a sense of guilt concerning the injustice of their own local laws."⁹ In reaction to this, the liberal churchmen neglected biblical

⁶Christianity Today, VIII (May 8, 1964), 29.

⁷Ibid., I (March 18, 1957), 21.

⁸Ibid., VIII (May 8, 1964), 28.

⁹Carl F. H. Henry, Aspects of Christian Social Ethics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 123.

principles and broke community laws in an existential response to the needs and rights of people, while conservative churchmen neglected people and principles and demanded legal proprieties for the peace of the community.¹⁰

Christianity Today editorials hit hard at the hypocrisy among white Christians even in its early issues. But the editors could not bring themselves to fully support any side in the problem. Evangelical Christians were on both sides of the controversy, and Christianity Today promoted a tolerance of both sides. "In a conflict of such dimensions there are divergent convictions. Surely it is not compromise to recognize that however wrong one's neighbor may appear to be, he may be sincerely and honestly wrong."¹¹

Christianity Today editors did not want to apostatize either side in the controversy. Neither did they want to equate the Gospel with one side against the other. In a sense, they wanted to keep theology out of the controversy.¹² In recognizing all of the failure of the evangelical church, the editors countered frustration with a call for an end to evangelical lethargy and the beginning of evangelical action. This, they suggested, could include support for legislation that assured all citizens the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Christianity Today, VIII (May 8, 1964), 28.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., p. 29.

Civil rights legislation had not been enthusiastically supported in the editorial columns of Christianity Today. The editors believed the issue was ultimately a person-to-person problem, not actually involving government; and while in earlier issues legislation had been seen as a threat to state's rights, by 1963 the editors conceded that civil rights legislation was essential, and although it would not solve the problem once and for all time, it was a step in the right direction.¹⁴

The issue of state's rights was given prominent editorial attention in the first years of the discussion of the racial conflict in Christianity Today. In looking back on the Civil War, the editors of Christianity Today recalled that although many Southerners had known slavery was morally unjustifiable and inevitably doomed, they had believed the states should be free to individually resolve the issue. In the abolition movement these Southerners detected a bondage of legitimate state's rights of which they wanted no part.¹⁵

The state's rights issue was still alive in October, 1962, when an editorial charged that Mississippi's refusal to admit James Meredith to the state university was a bold

¹⁴Ibid., VIII (Nov. 22, 1963), 31.

¹⁵Ibid., III (Jan. 5, 1959), 22.

act of defiance against the federal government.¹⁶ But this struggle was given legitimacy and even nobility as a struggle for freedom of the states. The editors said, however, that the choice of a purely racial issue was "a vulnerable sector along which to battle for the worthy cause of freedom."¹⁷ The editors actually praised the defiance of the federal government as part of the struggle against the growing power of the central government.

At least some Americans in the North will not fail to understand the legitimate Southern concern caused by the federal government's constant gnawing at State's Rights. . . .

The struggle between authority and freedom is age long. In both political and ecclesiastic arenas the tug of war has usually been uneven, with victory going to authoritarianism at the cost of creeping encroachment on individual rights. . .¹⁸

In an editorial two weeks later, additional discussion was given to the poor choice of issues on which to fight for state's rights.

Unless public education has something inherent to do with color, a student's skin is in no wise of academic importance. Because of the widening concern for universal human rights, the linking of the fight for State's rights with the segregation issue so blunted the force of the arguments that the validity of the Fourteenth Amendment remains in doubt.¹⁹

¹⁶James Meredith was the first Negro to be enrolled at the University of Mississippi. He was enrolled Sept. 30, 1962, after several unsuccessful attempts which touched off campus rioting. New York Times, Sept. 22, 1962, p. 1 and Dec. 17, 1962, p. 4.

¹⁷Christianity Today, VII (Oct. 12, 1962), 30.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., VII (Oct. 26, 1962), 25.

The editors admitted that the battle for state's rights had been polluted with the addition of the issue of race in a section of the country where segregationist sentiment ran deepest, and was the major plank in many politicians' platforms. But the counter criticism was that politicians who were clamoring for integration with the Negro were on the side of big, centralized government and were not above exploiting the issue of racial integration for support at the polls.²⁰

Yet Christianity Today did come out with a strong, although rather selfish, statement on equal rights. The editors concluded that

. . . to all who thought things through, it remained clear that whoever deprives another person of equal rights before the law helps shape in world in which he himself soon may be deprived of rights he now enjoys because of similar discrimination based on status or color. . . .²¹

The editorial also showed concern for the consequences of federal intervention, fearing that bitterness would be added to prejudice creating a worse situation than had existed initially. But the editors found hope in the belief that the Southern attitude toward the Negro was changing.²² By the summer of 1963, Christianity Today editors concluded that "in respect to civil rights, a state

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

must either go color-blind or Constitution-blind."²³ This was a giant step toward accepting the position of the federal government against that of the state's rights supporters.

After this pronouncement, concern turned from the issue of state's rights to areas of the racial conflict intimately related to human beings and their needs.

State's rightists have much to deplore about integrationists' methods of advancing the Negro cause, and equally much to regret about their ambiguous objectives. They resent mob demonstrations that flout local statutes, the Washington political approval of mob clamor, the promotion of coercive formulas in the absence of supportive community conscience. They long warned integrationists that lawlessness breeds lawlessness, and pleaded for judicial procedures rather than revolutionary techniques.²⁴

And with this statement confirming some of the beliefs of the movement, the state's rights issue was eliminated from the issue of race in the columns of Christianity Today.

A society of law and order was a concept held more highly than any cause by Christianity Today editors. A serious problem acknowledged by the editors was to restore respect for the law, without which no society could function, they asserted. But surprisingly enough, the editors did not rule out all violence. "Although violence itself is not necessarily an evil when controlled by law and exercised in the cause of righteousness, outcroppings of violence in individuals for individual ends must either be

²³Ibid., VII (July 5, 1963), 27.

²⁴Ibid.

restrained or punished."²⁵ The editors did not, however, explain what legal violence actually entailed. Unruly demonstrations gained no support from the editors.

When civil rights demonstrations turn from peaceful protests to angry clashes marked by bottle- and rock-throwing, mass arrests, and wanton destruction of public property, the cause of racial justice suffers serious setbacks.²⁶

Racial discrimination was firmly denounced in the editorial columns of Christianity Today, although in early issues little attention was given to the matter. Those who sought theological grounds for discrimination were considered fair game for the theological journal. The Reverend Carey Daniel, president of the Dallas church chapter of the White Citizen's Council of America and author of the booklet, God the Original Segregationist, was cited as a leader of one such group. In its nineteenth edition, the booklet was said to have been read by a half million people, propagating the argument that by creation God made the races with different characteristics, and intended them to remain separated.²⁷

The biblical law of love was used as an argument against the segregationists by Christianity Today editors.

Standing in naked defiance of this [the law of love] is the doctrine of racial supremacy, all the more horrendous because biblical sanction is often sought for it. When the doctrine gains national eminence it compounds individual sin into a mass vacuum of empathic

²⁵Ibid., XI (Aug. 18, 1967), 29.

²⁶Ibid. (Sept. 29, 1967), 33.

²⁷Ibid., III (Jan. 19, 1959), 21.

love. Involved are a stunning parochialism, an unbelievable provincialism and an unutterable egotism, all the more terrifying because tolerated within the hearts of Christian people as a dark, blighting grief to the Spirit.²⁸

Patriotism was another human resource called upon by the editors to fight discrimination. In one editorial patriotism was said to be not only biblical but clearly encouraged in the Bible.

Moreover, ethics are united with patriotism; no Christian can stand passively by when the good of others is jeopardized. Obedience to the law of love for one's neighbor requires concern for the welfare of one's neighbor.²⁹

In two of Henry's most recent books he spoke out decisively about the equality of all men. His view was based both upon the creation by a common God and the fact that acceptance of the common salvation related all men even more intimately. Henry again called for evangelicals to "identify themselves conspicuously and publicly with Negroes and others in the struggle for equality before the law."³⁰

Henry charged all men with the task of supporting man's God-given universal rights. And support of free government was seen as a practical way to enact this theory. The ideal government may vary for different nations at any particular time in history but "no improvement can be made

²⁸Ibid., VII (Aug. 2, 1963), 27.

²⁹Ibid., VIII (May 8, 1964), 28.

³⁰Carl F. H. Henry, Evangelicals on the Brink of Crisis (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1967), p. 71.

on a government that assures every man his rights, and that limits the freedom of citizens where and when it intrudes upon the rights of others."³¹

The Role of the Church in Racial Conflict

The editors of Christianity Today gave no specific duties to the church in direct involvement with the racial conflict. Their attitude seemed to be that if the church were doing her job, that of redeeming men, the influence of these redeemed men would make unnecessary any official action by the organized church. The church was to concentrate on the Gospel.

While justice for all, regardless of race, is an incapable outcome of the Gospel, it is not itself the Gospel any more than any other fulfillment of the law is the Gospel. Let race prejudice and hatred be unmasked as the sins they surely are (and in the North as well as the South, who is wholly free from them?); but let not a stand for civil justice or participation in demonstrations be confused with the Gospel through which alone men are redeemed by faith.³²

More liberal churches were criticized by the editors for passing resolutions and endorsing social welfare legislation while they neglected the Gospel. The editors believed the man in the pew was losing his sense of personal responsibility since the organized church had adopted so many social action issues.

Many churchgoers are increasingly alienated by an inner circle of churchmen who have put the Church's

³¹Henry, God Who Shows Himself, p. 63.

³²Christianity Today, VIII (May 8, 1964), 29.

trust in inadequate political processes, and not in the realities of spiritual renewal and personal voluntarism. But until the two-thirds of the American people who belong to churches assume a personal obligation in regard to national problems, the Christian community will not be guiltless for the rising tide of violence. Nor will it be showing itself a viable force within the country, much less the salt of the earth.³³

The spirit and genius of Christianity was voluntarism, according to Christianity Today editors, and any attempt at coercion, no matter how just the cause, should not be associated with the Christian Church.

When the church undertakes to force people into a desired (even a desirable) mold by picketing, demonstration, and boycott it forsakes the spirit of Christ. Much as it may affirm that its position is "Christian," this intimidation is clearly not Christian.³⁴

This argument was used against Project Equality, a program that enlisted local churches to question business leaders concerning racial balance among employees. Where racial imbalance did exist, the church would threaten economic boycott against those businesses until the situation was corrected. Christianity Today editors cited pastors who crusaded for civil rights and whose churches were located in Negro communities where not 1 per cent of their membership was Negro. The editors suggested that until the church rectified her own racial imbalances, she had no right to boycott the business world.³⁵

³³Ibid., XI (Aug. 18, 1967), 29.

³⁴Ibid. (March 17, 1967), 27.

³⁵Ibid.

Other specific instances cited where the church was questionably involved in racial issues included the case of the Reverend Father James E. Groppi, a Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Roman Catholic priest, who allegedly encouraged destruction of property and who said the term "cool it" was no longer a part of his vocabulary. "When demonstrations are led by clergymen who advocate violence and force, the Christian principle of love is mocked and participation by churchmen becomes hypocrisy."³⁶

Another specific example of a rebuke by editors of Christianity Today to churchmen with regard to the racial issue concerned an attempt by five Protestant denominations to use economic pressure to force Eastman Kodak of Rochester, New York, to yield to demands of Saul Alinsky's organization F.I.G.H.T.³⁷ Officials of F.I.G.H.T. asserted that Kodak had broken its contract to hire 600 Negroes that F.I.G.H.T.

³⁶Ibid. (Sept. 29, 1967), 33.

³⁷F.I.G.H.T. (Freedom, Integration, God, Honor, Today) was a militant Negro group formed to aid the poor in Rochester, New York. The Rochester Area Council of Churches brought Saul Alinsky to Rochester in April, 1967, to lead the demonstration against Eastman Kodak Company.

The dispute began when Kodak declared invalid an agreement signed by one of its assistant vice-presidents (John G. Mulder), agreeing to recruit, hire, and train 600 unemployed persons. Kodak's claim was that Mulder was not authorized to sign such an agreement. The dispute concerned how the recruits would be chosen. F.I.G.H.T. wanted to select the 600 persons.

The dispute was settled on June 23, 1967, when Dr. Louis K. Eilers, Kodak president, agreed to work with F.I.G.H.T. to find a mutually agreeable plan for the organization to recruit employees from among the Rochester Negro population. New York Times, June 25, 1967, p. 55.

had selected for employment. The Protestant denominations involved owned \$5 million worth of stock in Kodak. Christianity Today editors argued that "members of denominations backing FIGHT must consider whether their churches should be so deeply involved in big business, and whether their stock voting power should be used to harass responsible private enterprise."³⁸

Christianity Today editors supported Eastman Kodak as having been responsible in efforts to aid Negroes by listing an impressive history of social action.

Churchmen must resist efforts to undermine public confidence in the leadership of a responsible American business concern that continues to provide jobs for people of all races, whose experience led to the establishment of the American social security system, whose philanthropy is known world wide, and whose influence has been vital even to the function and life of the RACC [Rochester Area Council of Churches]. At the least, Kodak deserves honest scrutiny and careful assessment. So also does the philosophy of churches that are attempting to restructure themselves as agents of social justice.³⁹

The church had to be careful with whom she aligned herself, the editors reminded their readers. The allegedly disruptive behavior and irrational demands by F.I.G.H.T. not only showed that the militant organization was undeserving of the support of the Christian Church, but also that its tactics could cause increased antagonism in race relations. The editors held Rochester church leaders partially responsible for any violence and bloodshed caused by the "war"

³⁸Christianity Today, XI (April 28, 1967), 27.

³⁹Ibid. (July 21, 1967), 14.

declared on Kodak by F.I.G.H.T.:

In its zeal to aid the Negro, the church must exercise care that it does not promote organizations that sow disruption and seek political power while professing to help the less fortunate. On the basis of its tactics against Kodak, FIGHT seems to be such a group.⁴⁰

Critical Comment on the Racial Conflict

In assessing research material recovered from an examination of Christianity Today editorials, it is evident that the editors had much more negative comment about the racial conflict, its leaders, methods, and causes than positive comment. A tactic used in earlier editorials was to attack the leaders of the civil rights crusade, especially the white leaders. The editors charged that the white civil rights leaders were not motivated in their action by the law of love but rather by selfish desire for personal gain.⁴¹

A major premise of the editors of Christianity Today was that forced integration was as contrary to Christian principles as forced segregation. Using the example of the church, the editors said that a church may be as impoverished by racial limitations in membership as it could be by showing total indifference to cultural ties. "Churches in which integration is not practiced may be just as Christian as those where it is found. The determining factor is exclusion or inclusion because of race."⁴²

⁴⁰Ibid. (May 12, 1967), 29.

⁴¹Ibid., I (March 18, 1957), 20.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 21, 22.

Immediate integration was questioned by the editors as not always being in the best interests of both races. Segregation need not always imply disbelief in the equality of men, they said. The movement for immediate integration was said to offer a strategic vehicle for a socialistic political philosophy that shows little sympathy for state's rights or limited government.⁴³ Here again, the cause of civil rights was immersed in the troubled waters of political and economic systems. The editors, however, did not want to be identified with reactionary conservatives who claimed the issue of integration to be a Communist-inspired plot to destroy the United States government.

Some influential clergymen, and some members of NAACP, doubtless have records of organization allegiance distressing to the House Un-American Activities Committee. But most are motivated by a sense of social responsibility and justice, indebted at long or short range to Christian idealism, but now conformed in its objectives to the temper of modern reform movements.⁴⁴

Keeping the protest movement within the democratic process was the one way Christianity Today editors saw to control the increasingly radical tendencies of some of the leaders of the civil rights movement. Integration was inevitable, but let it come about through the democratic process, said the editors. The freedom riders, in trying to break down segregation in transportation facilities, were

⁴³Ibid., III (Jan. 19, 1959), 21.

⁴⁴Ibid.

criticized for using mob pressure to force social change. They were criticized for not halting their program of coercion after the government had begun action to eliminate segregation in transportation facilities.

They may have less in common with the spirit of the Republic than with that of a Strong Man on a steed. Abolition of segregation in all public facilities is inevitable and right. But if it is to be achieved by pressures that violate constitutional procedures the long-term implications may be unfortunate both for the land and for the people.⁴⁵

Appearing as a constant concern in the editorial columns of Christianity Today was the fact that the editors could not forget their fear of revolutionaries using the civil rights disturbances as a good chance to overthrow the government. In discussing the Selma-to-Montgomery freedom march in 1965, the editors commented:

Communist sympathizers exploit these activities to undermine confidence in free-world governments. Selma was not without such entanglement; the syndicated Washington columnists Roland Evans and Robert Novak reported that "there is no doubt whatsoever that SNCC [Southern Negro Christian Conference] is substantially infiltrated by beatnik left-wing revolutionaries and--worst of all--by Communists. Political agitators exploit mobocracy to overthrow constitutional government rather than to achieve political reforms by judicial processes."⁴⁶

The democratic process was giving the Negro the chance to gain equal rights and equal opportunities in society, according to the editors. The mere population growth of Negroes in Washington, D. C., had given them the majority voting power and the opportunity to "demonstrate whether

⁴⁵Ibid., V (July 17, 1961), 22.

⁴⁶Ibid., IX (April 9, 1965), 32.

they can carry the responsibility for public safety and rise above race discrimination. . . ."47 Here the editors seem to be asking Negroes to prove their capability to handle equal rights.

The freedom march on Washington in 1963 was labeled a mob spectacle in a Christianity Today editorial, so full of coercive political pressures that its value was greatly outweighed by its liabilities.⁴⁸ Critical comments were featured by George R. Davis, pastor of the National City Christian Church. The Washington, D.C., clergyman said:

I reject the idea that solutions must finally be found "in the streets," by massive demonstrations, and by violence. I reject the idea that the church to be relevant must "go along with" just any policy of any group, or race, or pressure organization, even when such a group has cause for resentment, and is appealing for rights long overdue. . . . Ministers, churches, people in general, are expected to "jump when the whips are cracked" today, to take an "all out position" in one direction or another. I refuse! . . .⁴⁹

The editors had no sympathy with the view that the Negro deserved preferential treatment in job placement, since he had been so long discriminated against. They believed that if the practice were used in military and government positions, it would soon be carried over into

⁴⁷Ibid., VII (July 5, 1963), 27.

⁴⁸More than 200,000 people, predominantly Negro, participated in this march on Washington. It was an orderly gathering, the occasion when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., gave his moving "I Have a Dream" speech. Demonstration leaders met with President John F. Kennedy and various congressmen, trying to encourage passage of civil rights legislation. New York Times, Aug. 27, 1963, p. 1.

⁴⁹Christianity Today, VII (Aug. 30, 1963), 34.

private business, and further irritate the problem of unemployment. The right to universal work opportunities, as the editors labeled them, was too basic a precept to discard. They warned that any attempt by government to meddle in this area would create a more explosive situation than had the integration of schools or housing.⁵⁰

Education was seen by Christianity Today editors as one of the major means by which inequalities could be overcome; and education of the Negro was an important part of the education of the total society. The editors admitted that substandard schooling had long been given to Negro children, but objected to demonstrations such as the New York City school boycott⁵¹ because mass truancy was "undermining the child's respect for the very school which is his surest hope of attaining equal opportunity."⁵²

The editorial policy was basically against busing pupils to achieve racial integration. The thought was that Negroes must be improved within themselves before they would be ready to enter into white society. The most enduring solutions to the problem, as proposed by Christianity Today

⁵⁰Ibid. (Sept. 13, 1963), 28.

⁵¹Negro and Puerto Rican groups in New York City staged a school boycott on February 3, 1964, to protest alleged de facto segregation. Absenteeism increased from the normal 10 per cent to 44.8 per cent. A second boycott was staged on March 16, 1964, with 26 per cent absenteeism reported. New York Times, Feb. 4, 1964, p. 1, and March 7, 1964, p. 1.

⁵²Christianity Today, VIII (March 13, 1964), 27.

editorials, included "expanded housing for minorities, better vocational opportunities, and other such corrective measures reaching beneath the school problem."⁵³

The concept of the neighborhood school, historically American, was firmly supported by the editors. Busing students to overcome de facto segregation was considered artificial, illogical, and a violation of the civil rights of the students being bused. "Civil rights means equality before the law; it does not mean the mixture of the races beyond the demands of law. In the long run, only the removal of housing barriers will eliminate de facto segregation."⁵⁴ Christianity Today, however, did not editorialize on the evils of de facto segregation nor the need for fair housing laws.

The matter was reduced to the fact that the government was trying to legislate morality, according to Christianity Today. While good laws did compel men to deal morally with each other, the editors questioned how far law could go in regulating moral behavior. The editors claimed that in civil rights issues the moral requirements were plain. It was the legal requirements that were in question. The editors actually supported the individual's right to choose to do either right or wrong.⁵⁵ One may wonder what the

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid. (May 22, 1964), 22.

⁵⁵Ibid., VII (Aug. 2, 1963), 26.

editors' reaction would be to the abolition of all laws governing prostitution, homosexuality, drunkenness, and murder on the basis that the individual has the right to do wrong.

When the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., outspoken leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, chose to do the wrong, as he admitted he did when he occupied a Chicago apartment house, Christianity Today editors did not honor his moral right to chose the wrong. Dr. King chose to call it "supra-legal," an act of higher legality than was known to American law. Christianity Today editors, however, did not see it that way, and argued that "however bad conditions of the apartment house, however culpable the landlord, Dr. King was ill-advised to take the law into his own hands."⁵⁶ Dr. King was also criticized for urging the citizenry to engage in an economic boycott of those who supported United States involvement in the war in Vietnam. The editors charged that King's proposal hurt the American cause and the possibility of peace in Vietnam. They also charged that King was politically naive. The editors fully supported the United States position in Vietnam.⁵⁷

Resurrection City, while its founders borrowed a biblical term, did not gain the sympathy of Christianity

⁵⁶Ibid., X (April 29, 1966), 30.

⁵⁷Ibid., XI (April 28, 1967), 27.

Today editors.⁵⁸ Weeks before the demonstrators entered Washington, D.C., Christianity Today predicted that little would be accomplished except increased possibility for violence. The editors did, however, present an alternate proposal to the construction of a temporary tent community in Washington:

If civil rights leaders want to make a constructive impression, they would do well not to stage a useless tent-in but to organize a program for economically deprived Negroes to work together to remove the rubble and rebuild many facilities destroyed by rioters in past weeks. This would show Congress and the American people their determination to apply themselves to the task of social reconstruction.⁵⁹

The overburdened national budget was given as one reason why the demands of Resurrection City residents could not be met. But the editors did suggest, half in jest, that the poor people who were demanding subsidy from a government that was \$340 billion overdrawn itself should "think of encamping instead at Las Vegas, where untold

⁵⁸Nine caravans of approximately 3,000 poor people converged on the nation's capital between May 2-17, 1968, to demonstrate for more jobs, massive housing programs, large welfare payments, and a guaranteed minimum income. Temporary shelters were constructed on a sixteen-acre site dubbed Resurrection City, U.S.A., in West Potomac Park. On May 23 a bi-partisan ad hoc committee of congressmen was formed to help the demonstrators present their demands. Resurrection City closed down on June 23 after the permit for the campsite expired. The campaign ended without accomplishing the dramatic goals proposed, and 124 persons were arrested after they refused to leave the campsite on June 24. Luman H. Long (ed.), The World Almanac and Book of Facts (New York: Newspaper Enterprise Assoc. Inc., 1969), p. 77.

⁵⁹Christianity Today, XII (May 10, 1968), 25.

millions are squandered with no appreciable benefit to organized society."⁶⁰

The Reverend Ralph Abernathy, successor to the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., as head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, was criticized for living in a modern motel instead of with the residents of Resurrection City. He was also characterized by the editors as a "poor replacement" for King and possessing "neither the eloquence nor the administrative ability to attract and hold followers and to mold a movement that will exert significant influence on the public at large."⁶¹

The editors pointed to the passage by the Congress of open-housing legislation prior to the establishment of Resurrection City as proof of the government's desire to help the disadvantaged improve their status.

But despite this constructive congressional action, Poor People's leaders have relentlessly castigated government officials and staged unruly demonstrations. Their language has often taken the form of demands and threats.⁶²

The editors of Christianity Today did not perceive much benefit in many of the civil rights demonstrations. Although the majority of the editorial comment was critical, there were several instances in which civil rights activities drew praise.

⁶⁰Ibid. (July 19, 1968), 35.

⁶¹Ibid. (June 21, 1968), 24.

⁶²Ibid.

Positive Comments on the Racial Issue

For all the liabilities of the Poor People's Campaign, the editors conceded that it was the demonstration that had prodded the conscience and reminded Christians of their inescapable responsibility to the poor and hungry.

Many Christians readily join in the recent confession of Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, president of the Lutheran Church of America, who laments that he has "been able to live all these years with so little prickling of my conscience, regarding the fate, the difficulties, and disadvantages of the people who have been condemned to live in the ghetto." To the extent that the Poor People's Campaign represents a genuine plea for victims of destitution, it deserves the loving ear of Christianity.⁶³

The emotional response, therefore, was the only value Christianity Today editors saw in the entire event.

The editors blamed white America for teaching the Negro by example to seek economic equality and social status before all else. This criticism came in response to the march on Washington, D.C., in August, 1963, when thousands of Negroes and a large number of whites left their homes to demonstrate for equal rights and equal opportunities. The editorial proposed that such qualities as "moral integrity, spiritual power, social justice, and creative contribution be placed above secondary economic considerations."⁶⁴ But one can draw the inference that the editors missed the whole concept of hungry people needing food.

⁶³Ibid. (June 7, 1968), 25.

⁶⁴Ibid., VII (Sept. 13, 1963), 28.

The editors were outraged when James Meredith was shot while marching through Mississippi to encourage Negroes to vote. "There is no excuse for the fanatical attempt to destroy Meredith; and Meredith's right to march in Mississippi in order to encourage Negroes to dare to vote cannot be denied."⁶⁵ The brutality of the Alabama state police at Selma in 1965 was criticized by the editors of Christianity Today as an episode out of Nazi Germany.⁶⁶ The issue of state's rights did not even enter the argument.

The issue at Selma goes to the root of democracy. It is a constitutional matter. . . . "The right of a citizen of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." For ninety-five years this right has for multitudes of Negro citizens been abridged and even denied.⁶⁷

In this situation, Northern clergymen were praised by Christianity Today for choosing the appropriate moment to march with the Southern Negroes at Selma. The editors commented that the march would have had significant impact if white Alabama clergymen and laymen had rallied to the cause, but that the Northerners would suffice.

⁶⁵Ibid., X (June 24, 1966), 25.

⁶⁶On March 9, 1965, nearly 200 Alabama state troopers and possemen of the Dallas County Sheriff's Office attacked a group of 525 Negroes in Selma, Alabama, as they were attempting to march to Montgomery to protest the denial of Negro voting rights in Selma. Alabama Governor George Wallace had banned the march. Later that month Federal Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr., upheld the right of the demonstrators to hold the march. New York Times, March 17, 1965, p. 1.

⁶⁷Christianity Today, IX (March 26, 1965), 27.

Yet the response from the North was existential identification with the rightness of the Negro cause at a time when police brutality compounded the evils of a sad record of racial discrimination. Tragic evidence of the cost of that identification came not on any march to Montgomery but on the downtown streets of Selma, where the Rev. James J. Reeb was fatally clubbed in an attack by a group of white men.⁶⁸

Solutions to the Racial Issue

Christianity Today presented a voluminous treatment of the racial conflict in its editorial columns. Along with the extensive criticism of the civil rights movement, the editors proposed solutions on several occasions to some of the major problems in the racial conflict.

The "hard-rock" variety of Fundamentalists would have concluded that if all Americans could be "saved," there would be no problem of racial conflict. This is not to say that total integration would come immediately. It would mean, however, that the people would not complain about the status quo. The editors published a cynical editorial cartoon exposing the hypocrisy of this position. A white man was pictured shaking the hand of a Negro. The caption read, "Remember, all our problems will be over, boy, if you'll just believe in Jesus."⁶⁹

This is not to say that Christianity Today editors ruled out spiritual solutions to the problem of racial conflict. The Billy Graham Easter Sunday meeting in Birmingham,

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid., XII (May 10, 1968), 15.

Alabama, in 1964, was seen as a hopeful development by the editors. They cited the fact that the many thousands of Negroes and whites who sat side by side "represented a remarkable and hopeful development in racial relations there. . . . We feel it especially significant that it was the preaching of the Gospel that brought these people together."⁷⁰

The editors said they believed that something more was accomplished than getting Negroes and whites to sit together. The Gospel was seen as a power to heal the strife in society. The ministers and laymen of Birmingham were praised that their "confidence in the power of the Word to heal was vindicated. Christians everywhere share the hope that this meeting in Birmingham may have been the beginning of better things for that Southern city."⁷¹

The solution to the racial conflict was not believed to be some mystical experience. Carl F. H. Henry set forth a practical solution, not tied to any profound theological theory, but rather tied to the realities of human condition. "The problem of racial discrimination can be permanently met only by Christian behavior that faces up to the ugliness of bias, the evils of immorality and delinquency, and the whole complex of problems that surround race feelings."⁷²

By the year 1960, the editors supported a workable civil rights act. But their major emphasis for hope was

⁷⁰Ibid., VIII (April 24, 1964), 26.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Henry, God Who Shows Himself, p. 65.

still in renovating the individual attitude. They claimed that the solution was infusing both cultures, Negro and white, with the Spirit of Jesus Christ, removing cultural blights and establishing genuine community. This indicated total integration of the Negro into society, which was a bolder stand than they had previously taken. But establishing genuine community could only be achieved by the individual, according to the editors. "That is why eventual solution must come at the personal level, not simply in the halls of Congress."⁷³

Response was particularly strong to the Selma and Montgomery marches, as Negroes were demonstrating for the right to vote. There was significant favorable response to the demand for voting rights. This response indicated that finally the American conscience was being awakened, the editors wrote. Pressure tactics were even supported.

It is . . . encouraging that all over the nation people are insisting that freedom everywhere become a reality for their Negro fellow citizens. It is undeniable that in some areas there has been, and continues to be, a calculated determination to keep Negroes from voting. Public accommodation rights have also been grudgingly acknowledged, and only under pressure.⁷⁴

While the editors encouraged such stop-gap measures as city public relations programs, youth job-training, and employment opportunities and publicized police readiness to control disturbances, the editors supported some basic and

⁷³Christianity Today, IV (March 28, 1960), 23.

⁷⁴Ibid., IX (April 9, 1965), 32.

substantial needs of the Negro community on which they previously had not spoken out.

Economic, political, and educational injustices must be challenged; housing and job opportunities must be made available without racial bias; every citizen must carry his share of the burden to provide for his family and contribute to the betterment of his community.⁷⁵

As to the part that the church should play, the editors assigned a major role of creating harmony between the races through the common tie of the church. But they were realistic in accepting the fact that Negro ministers and laymen would have to be the primary agents in reaching the Negro community for the church. The role of the white Christian would be to support and encourage the Negro Christians who were devoted to that task.⁷⁶

The report of the President's National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders was disturbing to Christianity Today editors. They despaired that after all the legislation, the marches, and the violence, the plight of the American Negro was growing worse. But the editors found another reason for the condition, besides white racism, as the report contended. "The underlying evil is not so much prejudice as avarice. The inordinate desire for more, more, more is at the heart of the matter. Blame must be shared by Negro and white."⁷⁷

⁷⁵Ibid., XI (July 21, 1967), 27.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid., XII (March 29, 1968), 26.

The editors claimed prejudice to be an economic phenomenon perpetuated by people who thought the Negro was a threat to their own economic well being.

The Negro represents a lower standard of living, and the white man sees the granting of equal rights to the Negro as a lowering of the white standard. This is so in housing, in employment, and in education--the three major frontiers of the Negro struggle.⁷⁸

Although this position may be seen as an excuse for not accepting and facing the problem of white racism, it also has some merit to be considered.

The economic theory of prejudice and discrimination was supported by the belief that the high unemployment rate of the Negro male was caused by the large number of white working mothers who come into the city from the suburbs. These mothers, Christianity Today editors asserted, did not work of necessity. Their working was a matter of greed, common in both races.⁷⁹

While the report on civil disorders found that Negro rioters had made targets of white power symbols, Christianity Today editors contended that the targets of the rioters were of more practical economic gain than simply symbols of power. Had the rioters concentrated on white power symbols, the objects of destruction would have been schools, police stations, courthouses, banks, loan companies, and employment agencies, according to the editors. But the

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid.

riot report noted that the primary targets had been stores selling liquor, clothing, and furniture.⁸⁰

These criticisms of the riot report were not made to place blame on the Negro.

Let it be plainly said that if greed were ever justified, the American Negro would be among the first to qualify. The squalor of slums--seen, for example, in the estimate of 14,000 cases of rat bite each year, most of them in the inner cities--is a condition for which the smug suburbanite, both Christian and non-Christian must share the blame.⁸¹

But what, then was the solution? Christianity Today editors believed the vast new financial commitments recommended by the report on civil disorders to be only necessary stop-gap measures. They proposed a new grass-roots movement, in which Negroes would make constructive proposals for what white Christians could do. While liberal churchmen were suggesting the riot report for Lenten reading, the attitude of Christianity Today editors was that "Lent might well be observed with a riot report in one hand and an open Bible in the other."⁸²

The basis for a solution to the racial conflict was proposed editorially. The editors encouraged the speedy remedy of legitimate grievances that underlay Negro discontent, the examination of the attitudes of all citizens in a conscious attempt to rid themselves of racial bigotry,

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid.

and a repudiation of leaders who had incited hatred and violence.⁸³

The editorial policy of Christianity Today had progressed markedly from a position of clouding the issue of civil rights with that of state's right. While the editors might not have been as outspoken on civil rights as their liberal counterparts, they did speak to their readers with more frankness and concern than many conservative publications during this period. Although the editors kept their discussion of the racial conflict closely related to the church and its constituency, they tended to steer clear of involving any complicated theological argument in the conflict.

⁸³Ibid., XII (Feb. 16, 1968), 26.

CHAPTER IV

Conclusions

In evaluating the editorial position of Christianity Today and its editor, Carl F. H. Henry, it is logical to go back to the initial statements of purpose made in the first issue of the journal. Two excerpts, quoted in chapter one of this study, seem to be a policy statement in relation to the issues of economic capitalism and the racial conflict. "Evangelical Christianity needs a clear voice, to speak with conviction and love, and to state its true position and its relevance to the world crisis."¹ Christianity Today editors took on the task of representing evangelical Christianity in the United States through the print medium of communication.

The proposed method by which Christianity Today would arrive at conclusions and formulate an editorial policy concerning contemporary issues was defined in the following excerpt taken from the journal's first issue.

Christianity Today will apply the biblical revelation to contemporary social crises, by presenting the implications of the total Gospel message for every area of life. This, Fundamentalism has often failed to do. Christian laymen are becoming increasingly aware that the answer to many problems of political, industrial

¹"Why Christianity Today," Christianity Today, I (Oct. 15, 1956), 20.

and social life is a theological one. They are looking to the Christian Church for guidance, and they are looking for a demonstration of the fact that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a transforming and vital force. We have the conviction that consecrated and gifted evangelical scholarship can provide concrete proof and strategic answers.²

Economic Capitalism

The editorial policy of Christianity Today with regard to economic capitalism remained static during the editorship of Carl F. H. Henry. Biblical theology and the free enterprise system were linked with an undefined inner logic. The editors asserted that theology must be the basis for one's economic outlook and that an economic system could be the Will of God. Prior to his editorship of Christianity Today, in a speech before the thirteen annual convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Chicago in 1955, Henry called for individual Christians to probe the value structure of American capitalism before affirming it. This is the most forthright statement, calling for an evaluation of economic capitalism to be found by Henry. No such challenge was ever repeated in the editorial columns of Christianity Today.

A philosophy concerning the role of the government with regard to the economy was nebulous in the editorial columns of Christianity Today. In one instance the government was criticized for taking action--in the next instance the government was urged to take action. There was no

²Ibid.

discernible pattern behind these criticisms except that big government control was strongly opposed.

The one area in which Christianity Today editors favored the intervention of the church into the economic sphere was in the field of employment. A ministry to the jobless was proposed, where a man's special gifts and skills could be considered and a method devised to invest these gifts in the service of God and his neighbors. An effort to motivate those who were unwilling to work was also suggested. Christianity Today editors involved the church in this one area of economics because of their high regard for employment and vocation. They pictured the working world as the only meaningful existence for the human being.

In the area of labor-management relations, Christianity Today editorials took the traditional conservative side with management on most issues. In the numerous editorials dealing with specific labor disputes, only once did an editorial focus exclusively on corruption in business. The original editorial thesis with regard to organized labor was that it shared an ambiguous relationship with the capitalistic economy (see page 46). Later editorials, however, urged labor and management to work together as necessary parts of the American economic system.

The Christianity Today editors were against mandatory labor union membership since they believed that the labor union could be just as apt to impinge on human liberty as any other social institution. Here again the emphasis

was on the individual's right to choose. In this examination of the editorial position of Christianity Today, the editors commented on many of the contemporary issues and current disputes. The only editorial policy change evident was the acceptance of the labor union into the American economic system. Even with this acceptance, the editors continued to take a pro-management position on most issues.

The Racial Conflict

The initial statement in Christianity Today concerning the racial conflict in the United States made by L. Nelson Bell, associate editor, asserted that segregation had no biblical basis. With his refuting of the segregationist's theological foundation, Bell also condemned forced integration as a violation of personal choice. The issues of individual choice and state's rights were emphasized in most editorials dealing with the racial conflict until 1963. About this time, a distinct change in editorial policy was evidenced. The rights of the individual and the state were pre-empted by a concern for the constitutional rights of the Negro minority. Henry acknowledged this change in editorial position: "When it was clear that some areas of the nation were frustrating the deliberate intention of the Constitution regarding equal rights before the law, we spoke out more vigorously."³

³Carl F. H. Henry to author, July 22, 1969.

In considering the role of the church in the racial conflict, the editors readily admitted that the evangelical church had offered little leadership toward a solution. This inaction had forced the evangelical church to surrender something of her moral initiative in the life of the nation, allowing secular forces to implement correction of racial injustice.

Although the editors of Christianity Today urged evangelical church people to identify themselves with the Negro demand for equal rights, they criticized the liberal, main-line denominations for issuing social welfare resolutions while they were allegedly neglecting the Gospel. The liberal church was criticized for participating in coercion and violent demonstrations, neither of which could be associated with the Christian Church, according to the editors of Christianity Today.

Henry was clearly opposed to most demonstrations for civil rights. He favored, rather, the democratic test of the federal courts for most issues.

I criticized mob pressures that leaped over the possibilities of a test through the courts. In some cases a single infraction could have plummeted the issue into the courts, if that were the only way; there was no need to demonstrate coercively and to hurry social change as if the courts were unavailable.⁴

A majority of the editorials dealing with the racial conflict were critical of the civil rights movement, even after the change in editorial policy in 1963. The editorials

⁴Ibid.

supported the goal of equal rights for minority groups, but opposed most of the methods used by civil rights groups to achieve this goal. One method employed to criticize the civil rights movement was to attack its leaders. This was especially true of white civil rights leaders who often were accused of using the racial conflict for selfish gain. The editors also were concerned with keeping the protest movement within the democratic process. Once the government began to act on a civil rights issue, Christianity Today editors expected the civil rights demonstrators to halt all action on that issue, even though the government process might take months to enact any legislation.

Large demonstrations were usually opposed by the Christianity Today editors. One reason for the opposition was that they feared these disturbances would be used by Communists and other subversives to undermine confidence in free world governments. Large demonstrations were also considered a waste of human energy. In 1968, when plans were being completed for the construction of Resurrection City, the editors made a counter-proposal. They suggested that a meaningful demonstration could involve the rebuilding of the many facilities destroyed by recent riots in the national capital. The editors of Christianity Today said they believed that type of positive demonstration would win more support for the civil rights movement than the construction of a temporary city.

The editors of Christianity Today made several

positive comments about various civil rights demonstrations. The Poor People's Campaign was seen as a valuable symbol to prod the conscience of Christian men. This, however, was the only praiseworthy result of a civil rights demonstration recorded in the editorial columns of Christianity Today. The editors supported the right of James Meredith to march in Mississippi to encourage Negroes to vote. This support, however, came after he was shot during his march. Northern clergymen were praised for marching with Negroes in Selma, Alabama, in 1965. The actions of the Alabama state police during the demonstrations at Selma were compared to an episode out of Nazi Germany.

The solution to the racial conflict was seen in three specific areas. The first was spiritual. Billy Graham's Easter meeting in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1964, was assessed as a hopeful sign that the Gospel could unite the nation. Thousands of blacks and whites worshipped together. Workable civil rights legislation was the second part of the proposed solution. Negroes were vigorously supported when obvious constitutional rights were denied, such as the right to vote. Creation of a genuine community was the third part of the proposed solution. The editors called for a movement to remove cultural blights from both black and white communities. They suggested total integration of the Negro into society. This was a bold position for a theological journal representing evangelical Christianity. The editors challenged every citizen to rid himself of bigotry.

In both economic capitalism and the racial conflict the editors of Christianity Today often failed to relate their position directly to a theological philosophy or biblical revelation. They rarely tied their editorial position to a biblical passage to serve as a basis. But they did allude to a biblical principle for both defending economic capitalism and condemning segregation. The editors successfully kept the church out of government in dealing with these two issues. Their high regard for the rights of the individual could not allow any social organization, not even the church, to override these rights. The church had the responsibility to influence its people toward correct actions in response to contemporary problems. But nowhere did the editors of Christianity Today urge church denominations or church associations to make resolutions or take coercive action against the government or private business. The church was to influence its members to be activists. These individuals then would be speaking for themselves as individual Christians, and not for the church.

Although Christianity Today did not fulfill all of its purposes, it did take giant strides in involving the conservative Protestant church in contemporary problems. The preceding analysis illustrates the extensive involvement in contemporary issues and progressive changes in its editorial policy. This combination of broad influence and extensive involvement makes Christianity Today one of the most important contemporary voices in U.S. Protestantism during

the editorship of Carl F. H. Henry, 1956-1968.

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