



BROADCAST TALKS

And What About the Future?

(originally titled “The Judgment
of the Nations” (1971))

by James M. Houston



C·S· LEWIS INSTITUTE

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The following is adapted from an address delivered by James M. Houston at the Jerusalem Conference on Biblical Prophecy in June 1971 and published in the book *Prophecy in the Making: Messages Prepared for Jerusalem Conference on Biblical Prophecy*, Carl F. H. Henry, editor (Creation House, 1971).

BROADCAST TALKS presents ideas to cultivate Christ-like thinking and living. This special issue features a transcription of a talk at the Jerusalem Conference on Biblical Prophecy in June 1971 by James M. Houston, who would later become a co-founder of the C.S. Lewis Institute.

Introduction by Joel S. Woodruff President, C.S. Lewis Institute

In June of 1971, around 1,300 evangelical Christians from 32 countries met in Jerusalem to proclaim their faith in the coming return of Christ and discuss the implications of the modern re-birth of the nation of Israel. The 1967 Six-Day War had brought the entire ancient city of Jerusalem under Israeli control and with it great interest in the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments.

Dr. Carl F. H. Henry, chairman of this Jerusalem Conference on Biblical Prophecy, called it “the largest Christian ingathering at Jerusalem since the early days of the church after Pentecost,” in the first century A.D.

While this was a momentous event for the Christian world at the time, it was also the conference where Jim Hiskey and Dr. Jim Houston met for the first time and shared a common burden to disciple and equip Christian working professionals to be as intelligent about their faith as they were their profession. Their discussions in Jerusalem continued in the coming years and led to the founding of the C.S. Lewis Institute in 1976 with a focus on discipleship of heart and mind.

As a plenary speaker for the Jerusalem Conference, Dr. Houston gave the following message, originally titled, “The Judgment of the Nations,” over 50 years ago. Re-titled by Dr. Houston himself for this publication, “And What About the Future?,” his analysis of the biblical view of nations, the opportunities and challenges posed by technology and his call to Christians to follow Jesus wholeheartedly is amazingly relevant and prophetic for today.

His closing words encourage and exhort us as he proclaims, “the Christian contemporary understanding of the Judgment of the nations must surely involve a radicalism of Christian discipleship that is disciplined, sacrificial and wholly committed to Jesus Christ. We can only be free from the tyrannies of our age, whether it be the love of money, the anxiety for status, or the desire for personal security by

denying their overrated significance. The only way to win victories over these spiritual powers that oppress us is to give them up... If we believe in the reality of Christ's love, we must go Christ's way... This is brutal, it is heroic, it is against our own natures, but it is the only way of convincing our generation that God is our Ruler and Christ is our King."



I feel very inadequate to address you on this vast and most difficult subject. Perhaps I have been given an impossible task. For if you remember in the parable of the tares when the disciples were eager to differentiate the wheat from the tares in the field, they were told this attempt to commence an operation of weeding was not theirs. That prerogative belonged to the Lord of the harvest alone.

I must also confess that looking into the crystal ball has never been a hobby of mine. I have always felt that an exaggerated interest in the predictive element of prophecy often leads to unreliable, subjective views which, at their worst, tend to be schismatic, fanatic, sectarian, and even on the lunatic fringe. We suffer enough scorn, my brethren, from the world for being Christians, without suffering unnecessarily so from our own prophetic extravaganza. Rather, I find assurance that a great portion of biblical prophecy is concerned with forthtelling, with the unfolding of God's judgment on the behavior of His creatures.

This does not deny for one moment that there is not the authentic reality of prediction in the Scriptures. In the passage of Deuteronomy 18:21-22, this is clearly stated. It is a sign of God's word when the prophet's words, spoken predictively, come to pass. For instance, in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, the apostle recognized that the prediction of the

life, death and resurrection of Christ had been made in the Scriptures. We can therefore claim from the Scriptures that the sign of the living God is His power to reveal the future to His people! But “of the times and the seasons,” about which we may speculate concerning specific rulers and events, it is not given to us to know.

There is a danger that many simple believers in Christ, weary of theological and doctrinaire disputations about this or that view of prophetic interpretation, react by having no future perspective at all.

What we wrestle with is an understanding of what the prophet intended to mean, and what God intended the prophet to understand, in the Scriptures. Thus valid principles of hermeneutics need to be applied to biblical prophecy as to any other portion of the Bible. In giving all diligence to scholarly exegesis of the prophetic texts, there is, however, another danger some may face: the creation of a theological professionalism that does not speak relevantly enough to our own complex times.

It is thus as a nontheologian that I appeal to evangelical Christians to use the whole range of their professional skills to speak prophetically about our times. We need deeper analyses of the pathology of scientific, technological, economic, social and political evils in our contemporary world, in the light of the eternal realities revealed in God’s Word. A new missionary enterprise is involved: to go virtually into every professional area of life, just as in the past we have emphasized the geographical penetration of our world with the gospel.

The difference now is that whereas the previous geographical enterprise of missions penetrated the spatial world, largely under the shelter of colonialism, now we must penetrate our cultural world today with no defense other than academic scholarship and the other professional abilities of disciplined excellence. It is from these viewpoints that we shall consider four major issues in this address: the nature of divine judgment, the biblical view of the nations, some traits of our contemporary world, and conclusions we may draw for an evangelical strategy in the light of these features.

The Nature of Divine Judgment

As Christians we have no special techniques that give us empirical advantages over others with more specialized tools at their disposal, whereby we can see what particular nations will survive our times, or what will be the future of our own standard of living, or what particular perils will overcome other societies. But what we do have as Christians in the ferment of our times is faith in the righteousness and judgment of God. It is this which provides the Christian with a pattern of living which embodies in concrete everyday behavior, a sure faith and a certain hope. We have no excuse for complacency in the atomic age, nor have we any cause for panic as the problems of the remaining decades of the century appear more and more terrifying. The assurance for such an attitude lies in the judgment of God.

Judgment may entail punishment, but it is much more. It is the necessary instrument to live wisely. In our ordinary day-to-day lives, we judge all the time. We judge by the endowment of our rational, aesthetic and moral faculties. But our judgments are relative to our capacities, to our consensus of what is lawful, and to our ability to perform what is legitimate. Thus the concept of a judgment day, when man finally appears before ultimate justice, has been widely recognized in all the great religions that accepted immortality and believed in the supremacy of divine justice.

In two major passages of Scripture concerning divine judgment we learn two significant principles about God's judgment. First, in Matthew 25:31-46, we are warned that the sheep and the goats will be distinguished and separated at the throne of the Judge. The nations of the world are pictured as standing at the final assize and divided, but not between those who have committed certain sinful acts to which a definite name can be given and those who have avoided doing so. No, the scene relates to sins of omission, of those who neglected to help their fellowmen, those blind to the needs of others, those indifferent to the opportunities they had to redress wrong. They are condemned to perdition because they paid heed to the devil's suggestion that self-interest should be the primary motive in conduct. As in other

parables of our Lord, the censure of judgment is that of omission: the negligence of the foolish virgins, the indifference of Dives to Lazarus at his gate, the unenterprising servant who does nothing with his talent. To that nation or to that individual “that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (Ja. 4:17). Sin is a failure to do what that law demands. It is also the failure to do what is known to be right: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger into the home, clothing the naked, caring for the sick and visiting the outcasts in prison. These are such elemental necessities that the corporate personality of a society will be judged primarily by such criteria.

Another lesson of judgment we learn is that when man casts himself adrift in self-interest, God allows him to drift further into chaos and destruction. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth” (Ro. 1:18, RSV). God’s wrath, as a present reality, is evidenced in the sickness of society and turmoil among the nations. We may well believe that the point of disintegration of our Western civilization is now such that it is doomed to dissolution and collapse, and that only a massive recovery of the belief in God can save us.

Again, the apostle Paul, as did our Lord in the gospels, reveals how insidiously it all begins. Ungodliness is primarily an absence of reverence, and without reverence there can be no foundation for a lasting morality. But reverence is not a commodity we happen to possess or not; it is a personal attitude which must be cultivated toward each other and supremely so toward God. Irreverence thus springs from two sources: that which is rooted in pride, in self-autonomy, in the denial of God; and that which issues from concupiscence, that insisting on choosing only what is agreeable and pleasurable. Irreverence quickly leads to revolt, to rebellion against God and of our obligations to Him. Inevitably, revolt against God leads to the idolatrous worship of the other—whether it be Venus the purveyor of hedonism, Prometheus the promise of power, Sisyphus the nihilistic seeker of meaning, or other idols of the mind and the senses.



Today, as men cry out that “God is dead,” we see in faith that the silence of God is also His wrath. It is in the manner of divine judgment among the nations that apparently God does nothing. He judged the builders of the Tower of Babel for their ungodliness, by their confusion. He judged the Graeco-Roman world by permitting it to collapse in its own rottenness. And in the irreverence and revolt of contemporary society, God is permitting the seeds of decay to bring forth their own fruit of alienation and despair.

In Adamov’s play *The Confession* (1938), he writes in the opening statement: “What is there? I know first of all that I am. But who am I? All I know of myself is that I suffer. And if I suffer it is because that at the origin of myself there is mutilation: separation. I am separated. What am I separated from?—I cannot name it. But I am separated.” In a footnote, Adamov adds, “Formerly, it was called God. Today, it no longer has any name.” .

Such is the deep sense of alienation of modern man. This is the ignominy of man: that he cannot name God. The sense of the sacred is lost. Life is no longer clothed in mystery. There is awareness that life may have a meaning, but that meaning can never be found. In his loneliness, man eventually loses the art of communication, so that culture dies with the death of languish. Is this not the judgment of God? “Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a ... mind [void of judgment] to do those things which are not convenient” (Ro. 1:28).

The Biblical View of the Nations

A nation is a birth (*natio*), the offspring of a common heritage whose identity has been associated with language, ethnic groupings, and geographical cohesion. This is the biblical use of the term, as in Genesis 10 where we read that the descendants of Japheth, Ham and Shem were distributed according to their families, languages, lands and nations (Gen. 10:5, 20, 31). That is, a nation is a group solidarity expressed in tribal units or larger social groups.

Israel is uniquely the nation under God, for it is the eternity and immutability of God as the partner of the covenant He made with His people that guarantees their continued identity. From the outset, its national unity was not based on blood-group, on psychic groupings, on language only, but on its religious alliance with the living God. The true place of the nation has always been the recognition of the rule of God. Therefore, under the covenant of God with His people, nationhood—true nationhood—cannot be taken seriously enough.

In contrast, the biblical view of the Gentile nations has a much more shadowy character. Rather, their identity tends to be a negative one, “not my people,” outside the commonwealth of Israel, so that frequently the allusion to “the nations” is a collective term for those outside the promises of God. There is a parallelism between Israel, the authentic nation and the collective pride of men that call themselves national powers (see Jer. 46—51).

It is hinted that apart from the rule of God, the nation is really a myth that mankind perpetuates. Likewise, the biblical view of the state as the executive authority of the nation indicates clearly that it has only a provisional authority delegated by God, but outlived and dissolved eventually by the rule of God. The state is authorized by God as an interim measure for a fallen world. But wherever the Christian can dispense with the state without threatening its existence, he should do so. The state is not to be renounced; neither is it to be accepted uncritically as the norm of final authority. Between the two passages of Romans 13 and Revelation 13 are found this polarity and tension, depicting in turn the necessity for the state as ordained of God, and yet having within itself demonic powers that can rise up against God. Thus God is drawing out to Himself, out of all nations of the world, a redeemed people.

Thus today we have sound reasons why we, as Christians, on the one hand should shoulder our responsibilities as citizens of the states to which we belong, without succumbing on the other hand to a false patriotism.

Traits of our Technocratic Society

Perhaps the most fearful specter we face today is the growth of technology in a postindustrial age with its temptation to substitute rational, mechanical order for the life of the spirit, and for what is personal and of God. There is the trend toward a new idolatry which we may term “technolatry” the worship of techniques for their own sake, which is the most formidable of all contemporary idolatries because it can pervade everything, everywhere. It is a misplaced concreteness that defines all that life is and should be, with a scientific spirit that questions neither the validity nor the necessity of all spiritual, moral and human values.

You may think this an exaggerated assessment of our times. Yet the well-known American economist, Kenneth E. Boulding, has said the same thing. “One notices in these days,” he said at the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1969, “a tendency almost to deify technology, to regard it as a sentient agency in society, with a will of its own, imposing its own methods and mechanisms on at best a passive and at worst an unwilling mankind.” Perhaps in tracing trends in this “technolatry” we may reapply the relevance of Revelation 13 for our own times. With matchless vigor, events and traits of evil that repeat themselves in new forms are described. They have just the same outcome today as the apostle anticipated in his day, though we may believe they are uniquely powerful now.

First, there is the *autonomy of technolatry*. John testified: “I... saw a beast rising out of the sea” (Rev. 13:1). This suggests that it arises among the nations, self-directing, unquestioned. No power on earth can resist its arrival and diffusion. Is this not descriptive of the advent of technology and science today, coming into the world system of men from the depths of the human mind and will? There is a widespread feeling today that technology is an autonomous force, largely out of control. The accumulation of the rational endowments of man, given by God to be steward over the earth and subdue it, has now reached unique proportions. For whereas previous civilizations used techniques and folk culture, today technology has become such

a force that it threatens to overwhelm every realm of man's being and activity. Since the 1860s, when large industries developed from a large body of theory in the pure sciences, our economic and social life has been radically altered. It is difficult to say what proportion of the economic activity of an advanced nation is composed of such science-based industries, but it is certainly more than half, and still growing.

The dynamics of technological processes have not been studied much, but an associated attribute appears to be *self-augmentation*. In the past, man chose the tools he wanted. No longer is the personal vision of a Stephenson or Ford the decisive factor. Technology today is the anonymous accretion of conditions leaping ahead by geometrical progression. Society is thus being conditioned to accept technology for its own sake. More and more scientists, technicians, and bureaucrats are being involved in the processes of "technocratization." The motion from an individual or even a national point of view is now irreversible, with a new kind of spontaneity of which man knows neither its laws nor its ends.

Second, there is the *absolutism of "technolatry."* The apocalyptic beast has ten horns and seven heads (Rev. 13:1). It appears to be omnipotent and omniscient. Is this not the modern view of science and technology? Through his instruments the scientist can now "see" in the infrared, ultraviolet and other radiation frequencies, as never before, the earth and its resources. He can "hear" the distant pulsations of the stars by radio and other waves. He can "feel" more delicately through electronic devices than with his most sensitive touch. His range of psychic mobility has been extended in both space and time. The whole range of sensory thought and other psychophysical processes is now in process of being developed by the science of cybernetics. Man's power is now reaching the scale of the potential disruption of both regional and global ecosystems.

Idoltrously, the beast is an inversion of the creature and the creator, a seductive imitation of God. It wears "the diadem of royal authority and it bears a blasphemous name." Is it not a phenomenon of our generation that science has become *the* only dimension of human

reflection for many of our contemporaries? Science is now being worshiped, for science will achieve all, we are told: the selective genetics of supermen, the organization of the best society and, if we accept Waddington, Edel and others, even a new science of ethics. There is a blind monism in “technolatry” that embraces all within its grasp. Use and being are bound as one. The machine is beginning to dictate the values men should have, while precise psychoanalytical techniques will help to change the individual into a mass product.

The forms of idolatry have always been multivariate—the leopard, the lion, the bear. Bestial they are, but whereas Daniel (chap. 7) saw these realities geographically in the rule of empires, John saw them zoologically as chaotic, inhuman power. Today the specter of *Animal Farm* is close to us, as the trends of depersonalization convert anthropology into zoology. The myth of the technocrat today is not, however, even *The Naked Ape*; It is Man, *homo faber*. It is not you nor I, but an abstract entity, blond or brunette, introvert or extrovert, a number in the computer, a generalization of social science, a cog-in-the-wheel, a functionary. Man must be an abstraction, for the individual is disruptive of the machinery of production and consumption, of the state, and of the ideology.

Third, therefore, there is the *worship of the beast*. Evil cannot be understood; it can only be described. And John’s description is that “men worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshipped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?’ (Rev. 13:4, RSV). Clearly, the dazzling achievements of science explain some of the motives for its idolatry, but not all.

Since man lives not only in a natural world but also in a spiritual one, there are realms of his being that are mysterious. And the deep inclinations of a society, as the collective myths of man’s need of values, must express themselves somehow. Yet, for what we may call “technocracy” there are no secrets; all must be desacralized, the inner shrine of being must be invaded. So the techniques of the sexual act

are analyzed; the inner veils of personality are torn apart in sensitivity studies; and every secret of nature must be opened.

Yet, mystery must remain a dimension of man's life. As Jung has shown, it is catastrophic to make superficially clear what is hidden in man's innermost depths. This is the profanity of Esau (Heb. 12:16). But man cannot live without the sacred, so he is now transferring his worship to the very thing which has destroyed his former worship. "Technolatry" is now the new religion, whether in Communism or Western secularism.

Fourth, there is the *instrumental power of propaganda*. "The beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words" (Rev. 13:5, RSV). Then John saw "another beast which rose out of the earth" (Rev. 13:11, RSV). "It deceives those who dwell on the earth, bidding them to make an image for the beast" (Rev. 13:14, RSV). "It was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast should even speak" (Rev. 13:15, RSV).

All this is surely a frightening description today of the tyranny of ideological manipulation. Today propaganda is the Siamese twin of "technolatry." The apocalyptic imagery suggests that it has the deceptive gentleness of the lamb, a profanity of the Redeemer of mankind, and also the of the demonic, the dragon (Rev. 13:11). It was mass communication that permitted Hitler to rise to power.

Yet propaganda has developed a long way since the pioneering efforts of two world wars and the cold wars. No longer is it the use of lies, for it now manipulates the use of facts; for without facts it is powerless. But the facts are used to expose half-truths, truths out of context, truth removed from the basic foundations of valid presuppositions. To its followers there is the lamblike quality of covert propaganda guiding and "educating" their susceptibilities. To its enemies, it demonstrates dragonlike overt forms of propaganda, to attack in a flood of verbal abuse, and more diabolical forms of brainwashing, drug use to cause personality changes, and other terrors.

Today propaganda has many of the attributes of the first beast,



“technolatory.” It operates within the milieu appropriate to the exaltation of “technolatory,” for it is itself but one of the series of techniques. To political propaganda for the exaltation of the myth of the state, there are manifold forms of sociological propaganda to incite acquisitiveness, envy, racism, pride, and every form of lust. It uses the whole gamut of the spoken word, the written word, the visual symbol and the sensory world in films, television, radio, billboards, and literature. It may be that the real impact is not so much in the content of information as in the sheer increase in the quantity of information.

The effects of propaganda in mass-mindedness are consequent, paradoxically, on the rise of individualism. And we are all aware of the association between the increase of money and the cult of individualism. This in turn is associated with a dissolution of basic groupings based on loyalty and reverence—the home and the family, the small social group, the church fellowship, etc. Envy and economics suck growing proportions of the world’s population into city life where economic and individualist values are at their most intensive state. Therein is the milieu, the vacuum of basic values for mass-mindedness. So that in the guise of apparent individualist freedom there is a totalitarian bondage of spirit to mass values and cultures. Authority is personalized, visibly displayed in the hopes that “public opinion” can be substituted for political or social moralities; hence “the star cultus” at all levels of society. It is within this atmosphere of expectancy that *divus Caesar* begins to loom large. For the enormous expansion of the centralized transfer of information reinforces the potentialities for centralized power.

Am I exaggerating this picture of totalitarianism that looms ahead of us? Are there no political or social recipes that have the power to check the drift? In a very different context from our study of Revelation 13, the political scientist Bertrand De Jouvenel, a student of law and sovereignty, comes to the same conclusion about our times. He asks, “Can we find any phenomenon which seems common to all countries in our day? Indeed we can. One is the prodigious growth of Agency, linked to the great increase in the functions of government.” “Another

is the personalization of authority.” Linked to the decline of law is the decline of Parliament. All countries today have a princeps, the combination of which, with an extensive technology, exaggerates the feasibilities of totalitarianism in our world.

Christian Strategy for Our Times

It is in the light of these trends that we may well ask ourselves John Donne’s question: “What if the present were the world’s last night?” We cannot calculate the time of the end, but the fact of the end is certain. The biblical view of history is that it will reach a climax of final judgment in which “the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll,” and where “there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known.” The judgment of the nations is thus the assurance that history has a direction and ultimate meaning. Every moment of the Christian’s life must therefore be lived in the light of this final event. What conclusions can we therefore draw from our survey of our times?

First, we cannot take the future seriously enough. In the past the study of the future was very largely a religious attitude. Today, however, the danger is that the sciences of the future predictions will become overprofessionalized and oversecularized. To the weather-forecasting service there have been added the innumerable studies of economic trends, political and social Gallup polls, the implications of technological developments, and much else. Forecasting is creating its own mentality for change and invention, with “think tanks” such as the Hudson Institute, the Rand Corporation, Systems Development Corporation, the Institute of Defense Analysis, and much else. The future orientation is also central to Soviet thought. And universities are now developing future-based curricular studies and “institutes for the future.” Compared with this outlook, the evangelical Christian witness seems woefully backward in its concern and need of a concerted and wise strategy.

There is, too, the very real danger that Christian movements are swept off their feet by the restlessness and instability of what Toffler has

described as *Future-Shock*. Thus in innumerable ways the function of man to surmise spontaneously, privately and uncritically is now a whole new way of life determined scientifically and often arrogantly. The possibilities of the future, “futuribles,” are forcing themselves upon us all, with the threats of atomic holocaust, the population explosion, world hunger, the pollution of our planet, and much else. We face the future in new and radical ways, aware that the apocalyptic conclusion to this whole scene of man and his planet might be readily terminated within the next three to five decades. These might well be the most dangerous decades in all of man’s history. Thus forecasting is no longer presumptuous; it is necessitous for all responsible men.

Second, it is imperative that as Christians we are neither daunted by the magnitude of global issues and problems, nor obsessed by them. Evil, we have noted, comes about through many small, diverse, and often imperceptible movements and events. The misuse of the growth of knowledge, the problems of pollution, the racial prejudice and the collective selfishness of nations have all their source in peccadilloes rather than in great crimes. It is the accumulative impact that is so devastating. The permissive society, for example, with its sexual immorality, does not begin in the red-light districts of our metropolitan centers. It begins in every home where there is gossip at the table, that prostitutes the reputation of another person before the family. A reverence for other people, in the light of reverence for God, is the foundation for any bulwark we seek to establish against the immoral influences of our day. Our vigilance against personal prejudice of other people is a start to any attempt to break down the barriers that separate man from man. The great task Christians have today, in an impersonal world, is to demonstrate the reality of being genuinely human and wholly committed to Christ.

Third, as Christians it is vital that we take the complexities of contemporary life more seriously than we often do. Christians in the social sciences need to study in depth the impacts of technology and of the mass media on society. There is a need for economists to work out alternatives to a society motivated by economic growth

if we are to avert the catastrophe of global pollution. The burdens of municipal responsibility and inner-city conflicts are a complex mission field today. Thus social involvement and philanthropy are not enough. Evangelical scholarship is needed vitally in the marketplaces of university life to witness unashamedly of Christian realities in every sphere of meaningful scholarship.

Our postindustrial age, by freeing some men and classes of men from the harsh tyranny of their physical environment, is forcing into consciousness the contradictions within society itself. Again it is easy for us to drift into sins of omission, to let technology have its own way simply because it, at least, seems to know where it is going. We believe, however, that a future dominated by technology will be an inhuman future, and that our young people are becoming aware of the danger. Must we not come to clear convictions about the role of technology in society? Surely it is here that as Christians we can make the greatest contribution to our times. We know of genuine manhood in Christ. Instead of indulging in the power politics of ecclesiolatry, and of arid disputation in theological debate, surely we as Christians should far more seriously turn our minds, our scholarship, our practical concern to know how future man can be defended against the impersonal forces, the manipulations and other pressures of the complexities of life in these closing decades of the twentieth century.

Fourth, we must witness against the use of violence and the advocacy of political revolution. Violence has become one of the more visible realities of national life today. Rejection of violence, however, is not enough. Rather, the implications of violence need to be proclaimed: that “all those who take the sword die by the sword” (Mt. 26:52, Phillips). For violence is habit-forming and, once it is adopted, it tends to be perpetuated. It forecloses the possibilities of peace, hardens the postures of hate and, however honorable the aims pursued, the means seduce them into a perpetuation of evil. Let us not therefore confuse the revolutionary character of Christianity, which is spiritual in its motivation and outcome, with the carnal lust of power and grandeur.

The kingdom of God is a revolutionary magnitude that cannot be

measured by human criteria of measurement. Let us have no delusions of our ability to accomplish what only God can do. Our role is to be as yeast, as seed, as treasure, that works in the world—often hidden, humble, obscure—yet used of God mysteriously to change the world. The orientation of the Christian is to be on the lookout, vigilant to discern signs of God’s working. Thus the Christian who endorses violence and accepts it as a solution to the complexities of our times, is a failure. For violence is a sign of incapacity to discern alternative action. And it is the abdication of the Christian way of life.

Finally, the Christian contemporary understanding of the judgment of the nations must surely involve a radicalism of Christian discipleship that is disciplined, sacrificial and wholly committed to Jesus Christ. We can only be free from the tyrannies of our age, whether it be the love of money, the anxiety for status, or the desire for personal security by denying their overrated significance. The only way to win victories over these spiritual powers that oppress us is to give them up. Christ proved more powerful than all the principalities and powers arraigned against Him by surrendering Himself even unto death. If we believe in the reality of Christ’s love, we must go Christ’s way. We must reject worldly standards, carnal desires, and the human techniques of selfishness, to live by faith alone, faith in the living God. This is brutal, it is heroic, it is against our own natures, but it is the only way of convincing our generation that God is our Ruler and Christ is our King.

[For the complete published version of this address, including additional text and footnotes, see James M. Houston, “The Judgment of the Nations”, in *Prophecy in the Making: Messages Prepared for Jerusalem Conference on Biblical Prophecy*, Carl F. H. Henry, editor (Creation House, 1971)]



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