
AN AGE OF TRANSITION

Matthew 28:20

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Introduction

An attempt to reconstruct and analyze sequences of historical movements seems to be a formidable task, thus by no means probable without the indispensable aid and intellectual tutelage of a certain know-it-all professor, universally known as “TIME,” professor Time. Its unending lectures to the students of the “University of Life” in the successive chains of generations reveal the essence of human history, that is, “*the enduring recurrence of significant transitions.*” Professor Time said, “I observe the meaningless cycles of birth, maturity, and decay in the rhythm of natural created order. I watch the rise and fall of nations, the survival of the fittest and the elimination of the weak. Nevertheless, I discern a predetermined pattern, intelligible accounts, interconnection of events, and the unification of divergent movements in a meaningful whole under the direction of divine providential sagacity and rationality. I recognize in the development of human destinies the interplay of the ‘contingent and the unforeseen.’” And then fixing his piercing eyes upon us asks, “In this world of dynamic transition, constant change and unprecedented innovations, where are you going?”

The promised presence of Christ in His great commission reflects the basic premise that the Greek word *aion* by extension connotes perpetuity of duration. Classical minds believed that the only permanent reality is process itself. The world is constantly in a state of flux. It is always changing. Heraclitus, whose profound thoughts is said to have essentially influenced the cognitive framework of the New Testament writers, pioneered the idea of the logos-governed cosmos. He is known to the ancients as “the Obscure” due to the fact that his philosophical formulation

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is difficult to decipher. He asserted that “you can’t even step in the same river twice.” The moment you withdraw your foot and put it where you think you had previously placed it, it would be a different river. According to him, common sense is mistaken on two accounts: primarily in thinking that the world is stable, as well as in thinking that the world consists of things—reality is movement, process, and change.

The Idealists affirm that the process is “inherent contradictions” propelled by opposing forces, which proceed *ad infinitum*. Opposition of unique and different ideas finds synthesis virtually indicating tentative cessation in the form of impasse or peace. However, in the course of time, the accepted idea will be challenged by new emerging antithesis and thereby the dialectic confrontation between the established thesis and current antithesis will consequently usher into another synthesis.

On the other hand, anthropologists have labelled the changing social phenomena as mobility. It is the movement of people from one status to another. People’s status quo in any case never retains permanence in a grand scheme of things and duration.

Ours is an era of radical transition from myth to modernity to postmodernity. Today, the growing sense of dissatisfaction with established/institutionalized systems has led to the accommodation of the new approach to and understanding of reality. It is technically called a *paradigm shift* by way of scientific revolutions. The existing model is riddled by anomalies and is unable to solve emerging problems. Therefore a new model should be created to face the changing times and situations.

Postmodernism is generally understood as innate incredulity to any metanarratives. It is indeed a defiance of whatever which is attributed as objective truth or fact claims. Complexity, indecision, dehumanization are the prevalent propensities of this transitional age as well as the natural product of technological development. The film entitled “Matrix” explains the fact that technology seized our sense of reality. What is real? The real is an electrical signal interpreted by your brain. In the postmodern age, the singular consciousness of humanity is conditioned to respond to machine, or more accurately, dependent on machine to survive. The matrix is a computer-generated dream world. It is a neural interactive simulation keeping us under control to change human beings into battery. As long as it exists the human being would not be free.

Our world has experienced sweeping, revolutionary changes. We live in a global society that is filled with fear, doubt and uncertainty. In such unstable milieu, deprived of intellectual, social, and spiritual certitude, how could we determine the *foundational constants* that will secure our Christian

faith against the vicissitudes of time? How can our existence and ministry be turning points of history?

The Great Commission unveils eternal truths to encourage us with the passion of a mission driven zeal. Christ said, “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20).

There are three fascinating insights in this verse:

FIRST FOUNDATIONAL CONSTANT: *“The Truth, who is Jesus Christ, is a never changing Word/Message in the midst of shifting paradigms.”*

Postmodernism denies ultimate truth on the basis of uniquely different worldviews. Each fragment of phenomenal actuality represents the whole reality. Scientific truth is a correspondence between the ideas in the mind and the existing state of affairs. It is the final conclusion reached by collective scholarly community by means of critical thinking, rigorous arguments and series of experimentation. The result can always be verified and falsified in the course of time.

Studies have shown that the halfway point of all human knowledge is located less than ten years ago; that is man’s knowledge has doubled within the past decade. Every sixty seconds, two thousand typewritten pages are added to man’s knowledge, and the materials produced every twenty four hours takes one person five years to read. It necessarily implies that we never have access to the bulk of information the world offers. It is beyond our capacity to know every single truth in the universe. However, we are supposed to be acquainted with the “ultimate truth” that has significant bearing to our existence or non-existence. Indeed, it is our ultimate concern.

A very intelligent theologian finally completed his magnum opus, a five-hundred volume written work entitled, “A complete definition of God.” Elated by his achievement, he advertised the opus and boasted that his work could explain the complete mystery of God. All that wants to know about God is in my book.

An angel appeared to him and said, give me a copy of your work. God wants to read it. The theologian gave the angel a copy, and the angel left. In less than a minute, the angel was back, returning the book to the theologian. Did God read my book? The theologian asked. Yes, the angel answered. What did God say about it? God will sue you for libel, the angel replied.

He said that everything you wrote about him in your book is not true. No one knows everything about God.¹

In biblical Christianity, the truth is personal. It is not the product of arguments and experiments. Jesus Christ did not say I will teach you the truth, but He said, “I am the Truth.” It is not something to be attained but someone to be accepted. The Truth, Jesus Christ, is the living incarnated Word, message of God.

Without any sense of superiority or air of arrogance, Paul tells the Ephesians that he is a man who knows a secret. He says, “You may perceive that I understand the secret of Christ.” Christ is more than a historical figure, He is the principle of unity toward which all history is moving. God’s ultimate goal for his whole creation is that the whole universe, all in heaven and on earth, might be brought into a unity in Christ. The existential encounter with that truth produces transformation of beings, perspectives, vision, and mission. This knowledge is never acquired. It was by revelation that His secret was made known to us. Human beings in their religiosity reach up heavenward to discover truths. God descends to our very level to reveal Jesus Christ, the Ultimate Truth of God. As the lyric of the song goes,

Everything is changing everyday, there are things we
thought would last forever, that will fade and slip away.

You can set your feet upon this rock that will not move.

You can trust all your tomorrows to this never changing
Truth.

Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.²

SECOND FOUNDATIONAL CONSTANT: *“Our call to be something different is an ever-binding commitment as witnesses, catalysts, and ambassadors of the king of kings.”*

How would you like to be the turning point of history? Prior to Thales, the Greek conception of the world, its organization and operation, was predominantly theocentric, anthropocentric, and supernaturalistic. The world was as it was and did what it did because of the will of gods. To every question you ask, you get but a single answer, “the gods willed it.” For

¹Andrew Maria, *Vestiges of Wisdom, Vol 11: An Anthology of Anecdotes* (Manila: St. Paul, 1993), 23.

²Claire Cloninger, “Yesterday, Today, and Forever.” Maranatha Music.

instance, if lightning struck, ordinary Greeks have in mind that Zeus, the highest god of Olympus, had hurled another thunderbolt. When the sun moves around the heavens all knew that Apollo was driving it in his fiery chariots. It is usually taken to be 585 BC, for about that time Thales offered distinctive and different explanation of the world and phenomena. He saw natural processes as subject not to the whims and caprices of human-like gods but rather to the order and rationality of a law-governed world. He radically broke the prevailing worldview of his time. This crisis event credited him as the father of Western philosophy as well as the birth of the Greek miracle.

If you are called to be something different to represent Christ culture and kingdom values to the world and you lack the boldness to do so, then you cannot be the turning point of history. You cannot be the father and the mother of faith. Kings' ambassadors are not compromisers, they model heavenly culture and dictate fashion to the world rather than being dictated by the mold of this world. "You are in the world but you are not of this world."

We can pray, work, and give confidently toward the completion of His great commission knowing that whatever we invest will surely yield eternal dividends. No bank can provide those guarantees that will beat the return you will get for investing in eternal promises like those found in Christ's great commission. Just as an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, to excite them to fly (Deuteronomy 32:11), so Christ stirs up His disciples to disperse them to go into all the world to effect transformation in the lives of those who might sense the uniqueness of spiritual vitality ensuing from the difference Christians can make in their being and doing.

THIRD FOUNDATIONAL CONSTANT: *"God's kingdom, the dynamic community of faith, is a never-ending fellowship that edifies, transforms, renews beings by instilling into them direction, meaning and purpose after the Will of God."*

In a caterpillar, an embedded purpose is present that gives direction into a creative metamorphosis. There was once an ugly, creepy, creature limited by space, time, and speed. After undergoing long painful processes of incarceration inside the cocoon, it is transformed into a beautiful butterfly unbounded by space and time. It now enjoys the considerable freedom it possesses.

Likewise, God's kingdom, the church, is a living organism that continually evolves into higher forms to adapt changes. God has planted a purpose that guides its development and progress in changing situations until it reaches the highest metamorphosis. Jesus told his disciples, "I will be with you." His presence gives direction, strength, power, guidance, and

determination in a changing age. Through loving fellowship, the members of Christ's body grow in grace and knowledge of Him. The members are molded, recreated, renewed by the exchange of spiritual energies.

The African impala can jump to a height of over 10 feet and cover a distance of greater than 30 feet. Yet these magnificent creatures can be kept in an enclosure in any zoo with a 3-foot wall. The animals will not jump if they cannot see where their feet will fall. Faith is the ability to trust what we cannot see, and with it we are freed from the flimsy enclosures of life that only fear allows to entrap us. The body of Christ as the recipient of God's commission has been endowed with proportionate capacity to transcend the confines of meaninglessness and earthbound existence. This collective entity can rise above its circumstances to pursue considerable growth by exercising personal optimism of faith. Faith does not operate in the realm of possible. There is no glory for God in that which is humanly possible. Faith begins where man's power ends. God engages the community of faith organically through divine-human mentoring enterprise for the edification of the saints and equips them for the works of service.

Conclusion

It is seldom the immediate pressure of the task that causes us to falter, but the vexing uncertainty of changing times, when we begin to doubt and question the rightness or purpose of what we are doing as well as the stability of principle constituting our noble vocation. Upon embracing a new calling, our courage to go on despite the intricate journey of our commissioned responsibility should be grounded in the truths of regulative spiritual constants. James Michener, in his novel *The Covenant*, tells of a remarkable Bantu Custom. When lack of rain and green pastures forced Bantu to move great distances to find new watering spots and hunting terrain, the women joyfully carried large eggs containing their essential water supply. While the eggs were full and heavy, the women walked with light step. But as the days dragged on and their physical burden became lighter, their hearts became heavier and their gait slower. For with the lightness of their physical burden, their hope of survival slowly ebbed away. Similarly, we can have light hearts even though the burden is great in the midst of perpetual change, radical transition, and escalating innovations. This has something to do with the a sense of purpose, meaning, value, commitment in spite of and as well as Christ's Promised Presence with us when He said, "I will be with you even in changing modes of time."