ARTICLES

SUBCULTURES AND COUNTERCULTURE: A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

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Much is being written, and even more is being quoted, today with respect to cultural variants within our society. Groups of persons who consider themselves to be outside the mainstream of the world’s life and activities are striving to achieve status as entities possessing objective and visible factors which differentiate them from prevailing society. Unfortunately, little is being written which seeks to understand the complaints and claims of these alienated groups in specifically Christian terms. It is not surprising, in the light of this, that Evangelicals have not yet come to grips, in a systematic way, with the problem of subcultures, nor that not much of the public ministry is devoted to the application of Christian insights to the problems which they pose.

It is the aim of this paper, first to give brief attention to several forms of subculture groups which today strive for public recognition and acceptance; and second, it is anticipated that a discussion of these may offer some assistance in understanding the countercultural claims made in behalf of those who are unable (or unwilling) to participate in the general activities of society. This last consideration will, it is hoped, be undertaken within a framework of Christian insight and Christian compassion.

I.

One is impressed with the variety of groups within our society who are today pressing for special recognition. Certain of them may be regarded as typical of the larger number; it is proposed to note here the following: the Women’s Liberation Movement, the movement toward homophile recognition often called the Gay Liberation Movement, The Black Theology Movement, The movement of “The People,”

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the Radical Activist Movement, and, last but not least, the group popularly called The Jesus Freaks.

A. The Movement for Women's Liberation

The subject of the proper role of women in American life has emerged in a new form in recent times. In the 19th century, there was a reaction to the formerly embraced English model and style with respect to woman's place in society. Middle class women of the past century began to play prominent roles in antislavery and temperance crusades. A group of women, meeting at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 issued a "Declaration of Principles" which outlined the newer demand upon the part of women for equality in natural rights, and a rising demand for legal, economic and political recognition.

Following the Civil War, the struggle for woman suffrage seemed to be lost in the campaign by both parties to capture the black vote. However, in the three decades following the War, women gradually found new openings in the labor force and in the professions. Colleges and universities, as well as professional schools, accepted young women in increasing numbers. The struggle for women's rights culminated in the ratification of the 19th Amendment, which granted the right of the franchise to all, regardless of sex.

Up until 1930, however, the achievements toward equality for women were largely confined to middle class, white females. It was World War II which brought women from all layers of society into the labor force. Expressions of 'emancipation' which were in vogue in the 'twenties, including smoking and drinking in public, the exercise of sexual freedom, etc., were replaced by serious and creative participation in the larger frame of public life. In reality, there emerged an identifiable women's white collar class and consciousness.

In the 1960s, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the establishment of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission put into our legal codes that for which many women had been working for decades. At the same time, women became aware as never before of the covert discrimination against women because of their sex. This discrimination was shown to exist in the economic, educational and political areas. Betty Friedan, who wrote the volume The Feminine Mystique, became something of an unofficial leader in a more articulate movement for feminine equality.

In the later 1960s, many women felt either left out of, or else actually snubbed by, "new left" organizations. Noting that moderate feminist groups concentrated upon middle class white women's needs, the newer movement for Women's Liberation protested both the neglect of their needs by student radicals, and their non-inclusion in the moderate feminist groups. The "Women's Lib" movement has thus
developed a leftist movement of its own, intended to transcend color barriers and distinctions. Having established a base including activists from both white and black society, its adherents have sought to challenge both a "male supremacist" society and the New Left.

The Women's Lib movement, in its more radical forms at least, demands an end to the patriarchal family, complete sexual freedom and self-determination for women and such 'reforms' as abortion on demand, the right of single women to adopt, and the removal of all social stigma upon births outside of wedlock. While these measures are also demanded by other groups, the Women's Liberation movement seeks to form a visible group within society, presenting demands of this type upon a platform identifiably their own.

B. The Gay Liberation Movement

The demand for public recognition of homosexuals is becoming increasingly shrill in our time. It is difficult for Christians to discuss this question dispassionately, and the present writer claims no special ability at this point. Certain things may, however, be said as objectively basic to the problem.

In general male homosexuals (homophiles) are more vocal in the demand for 'recognition' than are lesbians. This is due, in part at least, to the fact that society has dealt more firmly with the former, both culturally and legally, than it has with the latter. Many feel that the restrictions which our society has imposed upon homophiles are arbitrary and unnecessary.

Basically, the restrictions have rested upon three grounds: the appeal to the human conscience, the pragmatic appeal, and the appeal to religious conviction. While much of the discussion centers upon the first two, the legal structures seem to stem from the third. Arguments from conscience usually rest upon the view that the "general conscience" of mankind has disapproved homosexuality, probably upon the grounds that if it were pursued by all men as a good, then the downfall of society would follow within three generations.

Pragmatic arguments often rest upon psychological and analytical grounds. The homosexual is regarded as being something other than 'normal' so that the pursuit of his impulses leads to debilitating and destructive effects upon his personality. Thus, the overt tendency is seen as a symptom of deep and severe inner problems. This view has come under vigorous (and understandable) attack by homophiles themselves. After all, no one likes to be accused of personality disorder. Thus, homosexuals are today seeking desperately to achieve "acceptance" by what they call "straight" society. This is being sought, not only at the level of secular agitation, but within the framework of the Christian Church. It goes without saying that the more 'liberal' forms of
organized Christendom respond more readily to the appeals of homophiles. Whether this stems from a more humane and understanding attitude within these circles, or whether it involves an unBiblical attitude toward deviation, is of course a disputed point.

In extreme cases, "Gay Churches" are being established; in others, "straight" churches are being urged to "accept" homophiles as if they were "just as normal for themselves as heterosexuals are for themselves." For detailed discussion of this subject, see the issues of *The Christian Century* for March 3, 1971, and April 21, 1971. If we may anticipate that which will be said in the closing section of this paper, it may be noted that "acceptance" is an ambiguous term. It is one thing to 'accept' the homophile as a person for whom Christ died, and who is thus in need of divine grace as are all other of the sons of men. This means basically that the Christian must love the homophile but hate his sin. It is, of course, quite another thing to 'accept' the homophile as being "normal for him." The former would counsel the homophile to live as ought also the unmarried, as celibates, in the meantime seeking every available means for the correction of his deviation. The latter seem disposed to insist upon the right to express their impulses, some even to the point of sanctioning 'marriages' between persons of the same sex.

Certainly the problem of homosexuality is urgent in our society. The media of communication have, it seems, encouraged homophiles to press for legal and social acceptance. Quite probably the pressures of today's society have not only forced deviates into the open, but also, have tended to drive many persons into a "Gay" pattern, who in a less demanding type of society would achieve a fairly satisfactory type of heterosexual adjustment. These same pressures are impelling homophiles to press for total acceptance, in legal, social and occupational areas. Representative of this is a demand, published within the past few days, of a group of homophiles to be employed as counselors for boys' summer camps.

C. The Black Theology Movement

The patience of Blacks within white society, particularly in our land, is one of the marvels of recent times—perhaps a pathetic one, but a marvel nevertheless. But the Black Power movement(s) of the past few years mark the end of black acquiescence in a society which places sweeping disabilities, both overt and covert, upon men and women on the basis of color. No longer will Blacks remain quiescent within the framework of a 'white' eschatology which promises them much in an eschatological future, while white men determine their external circumstances in the here-and-now.
It is not at all surprising that Christian Blacks are seeking a form of theology which will serve as a spiritual basis for the emancipation of their brothers and sisters from discriminative measures by Whites. There is not space here to detail the manner in which extremely able black theologians, such as James Cone, or Major J. Jones (to name but two) are seeking to articulate a theological form which will project a sense of selfhood and racial pride into the black community.

This movement is gaining ground, and may well mark the emergence of a theological subculture possessing identifiable qualities and well articulated principles. It claims to be 'revolutionary,' and to tie together revolution and Christian hope. The method is, of course, that of seeking to purify theology from its intrinsic involvement in racism, and thus from its "white acculturation." The objective, in the short pull, is a black Christian community which can hold its head up in self-respect and dignity. The long-range objective is the creation of a new community among men which will be beyond racism. Thus, the movement is ethnic, but not narrowly so. Not today or tomorrow, but years from now, its success or failure will depend upon whether or not it can truly transcend racism.

In the meantime, the Christian world—and particularly the world of organizational Ecumenism—will probably be frustrated by Black Theology and the ecclesiastical decisions which stem from it. Like all subcultural movements, this one is subject to the peril of encapsulation, of forming a cyst-like body within society, lacking essential relation and vital interchange with it.

D. The Movement of "The People"

It is becoming increasingly clear that the "Youth Revolution" is far from being a simple movement. On the one hand, there is the spectacular form of youth radicalism which meets the TV camera and attracts the attention of the secular press. But, as Kenneth Keniston points out in his now dated volume, The Uncommitted, one stream of alienated youth has chosen to 'drop out' of society—to avoid any long-term commitments, and in most cases at least, to stand aside from the mainstream of societal life, including the decision-making aspect.

In general, this more quietistic branch of the youth movement is a scattered and somewhat uncoordinated group of persons who have in common certain basic criticisms of contemporary life, and feel that they ought to express their protest against the current order by the adoption of a common life-style which sets them apart visibly from the 'standard' way of public behavior. There is little uniformity of thought—or of behavior for that matter—among the more quiescent types of youth. Their unity must be sought rather in terms of inner attitudes.
A common denominator for those who live under the rubric of the uncommitted youth is found in the motif of alienation. While the term 'alienation' is often one with which to conjure, and certainly its use is cultic among "The People," there is a generally-accepted meaning for the term. An alienated person is one who cannot, or will not, accept and meet the demands which current society places upon him. There are of course more specialized definitions, ranging from that of such Romantics as Rousseau and Feuerbach, who held that alienation resulted from a man's being severed from his natural roots by social conditioning and social conventions, to the doctrinaire view of the (later) Marx, who held that alienation is inevitable within the framework of a capitalist society, which always tends to alienate man from his work and from the means and products of his labors.

Members of The People profess to reject all uniformism, while at the same time accepting as infallible and regulatory the norms of the peer-group. The rejection of the family in favor of their compereers is, of course, but a symbol of their rejection of society. The relative affluence of Western society makes it possible for these to subsist upon very little—many survive on allowances from parents obsessed by feelings of guilt, or by sporadic work, or by begging, or by the tolerance of friends.

Members of this group frequently dedicate themselves to some type of agitation for reform, usually of a non-violent type. Currently their protest against their elders is in terms of the latter's alleged destruction of the environment. Many have called our attention to a lack of consistency upon the part of these; wherever they congregate, they seem to leave behind the most distressing type of littering. One finds little inspiration by visiting the areas of public domain such as Central Park or Boston Common where they congregate, or to read of the vast clean-up projects which follow their rock festivals.

More distressing still is the solidarity of belief among The People of certain myths, notably that of superior morality. While the older generation must accept as valid some of their criticisms of "adult hypocrisy," yet one is perplexed when he reads that most of the attempts to re-create Woodstock are now failing, due to the prevalence of gate-crashing and the sale of counterfeit tickets, apparently by the youth themselves. Some have even suggested that The People have their own selective hypocrisies.

But the presence of these inconsistencies within the movement under discussion must not blind us to the fact that a significant number of young people, many from middle-class and upper-class homes and many of above-average intelligence, have written-off life in current society, and have adopted a type of cultic alienated mood, leading to a renunciation of the usual forms of productive work as "irrelevant" and of "consumerism." They profess, at least, to have no place for what
they call "goal-oriented, success-oriented, work-oriented ways of life."

This movement, amorphous as it is, has led to the establishment of
communes, of which some three thousand are said to exist today.
These have their own configurations of subsistence and of familial
living. They frequently renounce the "nuclear family" (that is, the
family consisting of only two parent-figures), and are usually totally
informal in their sexual arrangements. The commune is designed to
give corporate expression to the personal reaction of individual rebels
toward their social institutions, especially the primary institution of
the home.

"The People" rely heavily upon symbols, many of which seem
to be primitivistic and totemic, to express their common elements. It
is not without significance that the rock musicale which is alleged to
articulate the life-style of "The People" is based upon The Tribe.
Activists in respect to politics among the otherwise non-violent societal
dropouts have likewise resorted to this form of symbolism, as is
witnessed by their adoption of the term Mayday Tribe to denote the
antiwar protest of this past spring.

The interest in symbols among The People is reflected also in
the prevalence of their concern with the psychology of oriental mysti-
cism and of drug use. The exploration of consciousness has issued in
corporate experiences, not only with psychedelic drugs, but with forms
of musical and dramatic expression designed to "blow the mind" and
to produce a sense of inward exaltation similar to that induced by
mind-distorting drugs. In short, The People seek to remake the world
after their own image—an image which is to be secured by resort, not
to the norms of rational exploration and rational discourse, but to an
interior exploration of consciousness aimed at the transcending of the
normal processes of cognition.

E. The Radical Activist Movement

It has been noted that among alienated youth, there is a segment
(perhaps a majority) which is non-violent, whose symbols are those of
"peace and love." There is a minority, however, which is committed,
whether permanently or not, to physical violence as a means toward
social change. These not only share the basic criticisms of contemporary
life, and a similar impatience with traditional institutions, which mark
the mentality of The People, but they add the conviction that the
existing order is irredeemably evil and must somehow be overthrown.

The Radical Activists are usually known collectively as the New
Left, which is a somewhat amorphous movement including the violence-
prone hard core, and hangers-on of varying degrees of commitment to
violence. Government surveillance has tended to polarize activists, and
to cause those really willing to resort to hard-core violence to set themselves apart. One thinks in this connection of the Black Panthers and the Weathermen faction of the Students for a Democratic Society.

Politically speaking, the hard-core radicals tend toward the moralization of politics—toward making a moral issue of every political dispute. This leads, of course, to a rejection of any compromise, any adjudication of issues along the lines of democratic give-and-take. It is from this that the impetus to violence probably springs, or at any rate is nourished. The members are drawn from what Kenneth Kennison calls "the protest-prone personality."¹ They make a great deal of the alleged institutionalization of hypocrisy, by which they mean the resistance which institutions make to change. They agree with the non-violent protesters that those who reject existing institutions do so out of a superior honesty and superior virtue, and seem to derive from this conviction a dynamic toward action.

Radical activists are the heirs of several streams. They owe much to the existential humanism of Albert Camus, the collectivist anarchism of Paul Goodman, and (in a vague sense) to such revolutionaries as Chairman Mao, Che Guevara and Fidel Castro. Their "heroes" are guerilla fighters; and they are thus vaguely concerned with the Third World. Vaguely, we say; for they seem much more concerned with mastering guerilla tactics than with working to abolish poverty and malnutrition, to counteract illiteracy and to establish social justice.

The radical activists are a curious blend of will-to-violence and romantic idealism. While some of them seem to be motivated by a kind of death wish, others can at times be almost naively idealistic. For example, their literature reveals a commitment to the view that every person in our society, beneath his acting out of a social role, possesses a "real self" which is waiting to be actualized.² This actualization is held to be attained only through an enlargement of freedom; but to the social activist, "freedom is not just freedom to express yourself, but to be able to change conditions."³

How this change is to be made remains undisclosed. Some feel that this can be attained through a kind of anarchism in which the political organization is abandoned. Others, expressing a "Phoenix

¹. Kenneth Kennison, Young Radicals: Notes on Committed Youth, pp. 306f.
². Ibid., p. 286.
"mentality" feel that if the existing order can be pulled down, something good will inevitably arise to take its place.

At this writing, there does not seem to be any coherent and articulated "movement" which enlists all or most of the radical activists. The SDS and Black Panthers have tended to fragment; the infiltration of all levels of the violence-prone by informers, federal and otherwise, seems to have debilitated them—on the surface at least. Actually, the tendency seems to be toward an accentuation of the solidarities (e.g., the acceptance of the myth of superior goodness or of the 'good group') with a consequent encapsulation of the several groups within the New Left. In other words, the struggle for self-identity within the group may tend to deprive it of any effective contact with the prevailing society.

F. The Jesus Freaks

Out of the masses of alienated youth, many of whom are involved in the drug culture, there has emerged in recent months a group with Christian tendency which has attracted the attention of the major weekly magazines. While it is too early to form an opinion with respect to the permanent validity of that which binds the "Jesus Freaks" together, it must be noted that they are coming to constitute a type of Christian subculture, with a measure of inner coherence and common outer presentation. Their language is eclectic: while adopting some traditional Christian modes of expression, they also utilize the terminology common to the drug culture. It is possible that this is an unconscious hangover from the experience of many of their number with the drug-scene; or it may be tactical in the sense that they feel that such a vocabulary offers them the most effective approach to those whom they wish to influence.

More basically, they seem to represent a mid-position between the more pronounced advocates of "dropping out" and the predominant culture. This does not mean that they regard the "Jesus message" as a total bridge between the alienated youth and the 'Establishment,' for the Jesus Freaks carry into their recently-found posture a critical attitude toward adult society. Their major protest against established Christianity is that it fails to embody the message of love which they find in the New Testament.

Like the dropouts, they utilize the theme of adult hypocrisy, but without much of the bitterness which characterizes the protest of the totally alienated. In general, the Jesus Freaks have a preference for a positive thrust in their attitude toward the culture about them, along with a large measure of compassion for those who have "given up on" contemporary society. To those people involved in the drug scene, they offer what they believe to be the final answer to the contemporary
quest for “instant insight” through drugs. This lies behind such expressions as “Jesus gives the true high,” or “Turn on with Jesus.”

Do the Jesus Freaks represent a sub-culture? Certainly the movement which they embody does not possess all of the elements of sub-cultural protest. Certainly their alienation from current society is less radical, and their condemnation of society less sweeping. Perhaps as a result, their legitimate grievances are better chosen and more accurately grounded. And it seems, at this point, that none can deny that the Jesus Freaks express a genuine love for the Saviour, and a profound desire to make Him known—at least within the context of their understanding of Him.

II.

The challenge which subcultural movements offer to the Christian mind is by no means a simple one. An attempt will be made to show that the Christian way of viewing things does offer a creative framework for the assessment of such movements, both as individual movements, and also as collective groups, which in their larger impact possibly constitute a counterculture. This latter seems to be especially needed, as some seek to be predictive in this matter, and to discern within subcultural movements an underlying groundswell which promises a totally new cultural orientation.

The Christian mentality ought, first of all, to be willing to probe any and all hypocrisies. While subcultural youth have their selective hypocrisy, it does not absolve members of the so-called ‘established society’ from the obligation to assess their own postures. Hypocrisy is hypocrisy, wherever it may be entrenched. And it is only from the vantage point of a rugged and fearless honesty that societies can be assessed with accuracy.

Again, the Christian mind ought to be deeply concerned with the entire motif of alienation. We have noted that most or all of the subcultural forms under survey have in common the conviction upon the part of their adherents that they do not belong within the established and dominant society. Granting that much of the talk of alienation is cultic and imitative, yet our society does exclude many from its central drive, and does make it extremely difficult for other sincere persons to operate creatively within it. It is quite possible that some of the reasons given for inability to do so merit serious attention.

This is especially the case with the Black community, many of whose members have incontestably been the victims of socio-economic practices which have positively excluded them from any adequate participation in the life of the dominant culture. It is at this point particularly that the Christian mind should make itself felt in our society. It goes without saying that the violence of such groups as
the Black Panthers needs to be curbed. But none whose hearts have been touched by the compassion of the Lord of the Church can fail to demand that this curbing shall be done in a manner which is according to law, and in ways identical with those used to curb white violence.

The Christian, especially in his relation to protest groups within American society, faces the difficult dilemma posed by two facts: first, there are desperately sore areas in our national life; and second, that in a nation whose internal economy is interlocked with the technical needs of the developing nations, conventional forms of revolution are anachronistic. By this latter is meant, that to pull the pillars of our economic system down would be to inflict wounds on the body of aspiring societies which would be wholly unjust to them. Therefore the Christian must discover in his own thinking what means for the removal of the ugly scars on our life are licit and creative.

With respect to the nihilistic radical, both black and white, the follower of the Nazarene must perform the difficult task of “loving the sinner, but hating his sin.” Far from being pharisaical, the one taking such a stance will ask himself what qualities in the dominant society have driven the anarchist to despair of constitutional means for the rectification of social and economic ills.

Pertaining to the non-violent forms of protest, whose common denominator seems in these times to be dropping-out of current society, the Christian mind again faces some severe challenges. It goes without saying, that the one who loves people for the sake of Christ will have a sense of humor about externals which are, after all, peripheral. Such matters as cut of hair or style of clothing do not touch the deeper matters of the human spirit—although the rejection of the code of manners which the human race has developed so slowly and so painfully may be more serious then seems on the surface. When all that passes for politeness and for courtesy is shrugged off as hypocrisy, the Christian will ask what is to be put in their place.

The cultivation of sexual looseness in, for example, the communes, or the insistence upon the ‘liberation’ of dormitories and rest rooms in student housing establishments, are matters of somewhat different import from those of dress or style of hair. The Christian, knowing something of the law of “sowing and reaping,” cannot but feel deep pain in his heart at the realization that the so-called sexually liberated ones will ultimately find that their cherished “life-style” is exacting a severe tool in the psyche. The prevalence of psychological disturbances in the ‘freest’ of university settings may well be but a harbinger of things to come.

The existence of the drug scene as a widespread phenomenon in the sub-cultural world is likewise a cause for profound concern to the Christian mind. One may dismiss as inconsequential the objection of the drug user that his form of drug is merely his euphoriant, just as
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coffee is the euphoriant of the conventional person. He will feel more keenly the claim that, for example, marijuana is "no worse than alcohol," particularly when he reflects that we now have some eight millions of alcoholics in America. In place of "no worse than," he will ask why youth will expose themselves to another social evil whose long-range effects have not yet been established.

With respect to the 'harder' drugs, the Christian finds his convictions strengthened by the findings of the medical profession. He cannot but be moved with compassion as he views the 'drug scene' in some of our more permissive cities, where young men and women barely twenty years of age carry all the marks of senility as they sit along the streets in front of the haunts of the drug pushers. He must recognize, in all realism, that the drug scene interlocks intimately with organized crime (through its 'fences' for stolen goods) and with prostitution.

Perhaps no greater strain will be placed upon his Christian compassion than comes from the demands of the homophiles for 'recognition' by 'straight' society. Those who are fairly secure in their own gender-image are able to face the arrogance of the homophile movement with some personal equanimity. What is more difficult for them is to react in Christian charity in the light of the Biblical perspective on the matter. If the second half of Romans I has any meaning for our own time, then the movement for the legitimation of inversion can scarcely be understood as being other than perverse.

In relation to some sub-cultural forms, a sense of humor is essential to the Christian stance. This will enable a kindliness toward the innocent freakishness of "the Freaks." But it is much more difficult to sustain the feeling for humorousness in the light of the emergence and acceptance of violence as a way of life, or the demand for the acknowledgement of that which is manifestly evil as being somehow good.

In a deeper sense, the Christian is obligated to attempt to penetrate the states of mind which have led to sub-cultural movements. He ought to find ways to distinguish between the merely cultic forms of alienation on the one hand, and the genuinely alienated pattern on the other. He will not only recognize that the alienated are recruited from the psychological misfits and rejects, but will seek to probe the reasons for the popular confusion of the call for life commitment with "ego dictatorship." He will take a realistic account of the dislocations in

modern life, particularly that by which youth are kept from adulthood (in a full sense) by artificialities in society, so that their formative years are spent in a "special culture only peripherally related to the adult world." Rather than accept the status quo in, for example, the conventional educational process, he will seek with others to explore alternate educational modes and norms.

In a broader sense, the Christian will not only acknowledge that there are severe sicknesses in our dominant culture, but also will see his own solidarity in a society which is profoundly ill. He will recognize, for example, his own place in a society of 'joiners' in which nevertheless great multitudes never really belong. He will recognize that a technological society, in the benefits of which he shares, exacts a severe price in human values and human relationships. However sincerely the individual may seek to live his own life, yet he does contribute to a society which is, in many and profound ways, unjust and exploitive. Perhaps it is time once again to explore the deep meaning of the line in the hymn, "Every moment, Lord, I need the merit of thy death."

There remains to be noted the question of the relation of the Christian mind to the claims of some sub-cultural forms to constitute a genuine counterculture. It is fashionable, in our time as well as earlier, for men to formulate philosophies of history, and then paint their own times or their own groups, or even themselves, into the picture in a self-congratulatory manner. It cannot be doubted that some groups not only exist upon the basis of a myth, but also profoundly believe themselves to be the harbingers of a new era. These do not lack adult supporters, who see in the sub-cultural strands in our society a new and redemptive strain—the foregleams of a wholly new society in which a long chain of psychological and cultic changes will lead at last (and as a mere final step) to a total cultural overturn. One thinks particularly of such a volume as Charles Reich's *The Greening of America*, in which it is assumed that any major socio-economic changes are preceded by profound developments in the area of human consciousness, and that the newer sub-cultural movements do indeed represent such a development.

Now, the Christian who thinks will not fail to recognize that changes in psychological outlook do lead to changes in institutions. But he is not likely to jump to the conclusion that a generation of persons whose awarenesses are 'expanded' by hallucinogenic drugs is likely to gain thereby new and safe perspectives, in terms of which a new and creative society will emerge. He will have a sense of humor with respect to the profundity of the psychological freeing which is yielded by the wearing of bell-bottom trousers, even if he cannot respond in the same light vein toward the use of marijuana.

Further, the one who seeks to think as a Christian will recognize that while change occurs in all areas of life, yet the changes which are
likely to occur in the deeper aspects of our national life will probably be smaller than the ideologues believe. He will, for example, feel that the virtues of industry and thrift, or the conviction of the givenness of work, are not merely outmoded forms of consciousness, to be superseded by wholly new attitudes toward work and toward things. He knows, realistically, that all of us are fed, and will continue to be fed, as the result of hard work upon the part of many—'irrelevant work' to the pot smoker, but essential nevertheless. Certainly he will feel no necessity to pander, in a comic-opera sycophant fashion, to those who imagine that they have for the first time discovered the real secret of the universe of work—that all legitimate work ought to be fun.

Much of what has been said centers about two poles: first, the Christian mind must, to be true to itself, respond in compassion toward those who are (or feel) alienated from the major and dominant stream of life as it is lived; and second, that he ought to be discriminating with respect to claims and demands of sub-cultural groups. The latter seems especially worthy of stress, in the light of the sentimentalization of so much of the protest-form of today’s society, especially among youth. The Christian, if he is to avoid being engulfed by the mood of the times, must maintain a hard-headed realism with respect to persons and movements, being neither impervious to the blowing of the winds of change nor yet carried about by every breeze.

It seems, however, that the major stress ought to fall upon the motif of compassion. As followers of One who was “able to feel with those who are out of the way,” the Christian is under heavy obligation to probe the deeper causes of today’s social malaise. And in doing so, we venture to say that he will discover, just beneath the surface, that the alienation which pervades most forms of sub-cultural assertion has its roots in the cleft which human disobedience has placed between man and his Maker. After all, reconciliation—the removal of alienation—is what the Cross in all about.

Those who, being hag-ridden by guilt (or by its ventriloquist double, anxiety), cannot accept others as being ‘authentic’ are really profoundly out of sorts with themselves. Having never known God’s compassion, they are themselves loveless, despite their quest for ‘warm relationships’ in casual sex. The Christian Evangel has something profound to say to the world’s alienated, and more particularly to those who have panicked in the midst of a relatively stable form of existence. It is the task of the Christian mind to bring to bear upon the minds of those plagued by anxiety or boggled by drugs, the word of the Reconciling Deed on Golgotha. And in the long pull, this may need to be dramatized by attitudes and deeds before a mistrustful generation will listen to the reconciling Word.