

The subject is "Needed: A New Way to Meet." Now, that may sound really simple. It is not a simple subject. In fact, one reason I get so worked up is that I cannot believe we have been so utterly blind to the incredible needs we have in the business of meeting. I am going to propose things so radical that they cannot possibly be fulfilled on a large basis within our lifetime. In fact, most of what I have to say probably will never come about for most Christians as long as mankind shall live on this earth till the Lord comes. But frankly, I hope what I say today will be debated and become reality a hundred years from now. I am here to scalp the entire Christian community from the days of Constantine to right now.

Now, this is not theological; this is about the practice of the Christian faith. Theology is not involved. Theology has been plowed over and under and around and through for 17 centuries, whereas the matter of practice is virtually never touched. In my estimation, our problems do not lie in the theological; they lie in the practical and in the practice. You know, theologians will debate hairs and splitting of hairs from now until the Lord comes, and it's not going to change much of anything. It's going to satisfy their frontal robe, and that's about the end of it. You and I have to sit out here and put up with Sunday morning, and that is one of the worst crosses ever asked of any man or woman to endure.

A few days ago, I was with a gentleman, a theologian who was pastor of the largest Moravian church in America. I had been in a church in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, that Sunday morning. I was with him on Monday. He asked me, "What did you think of our meeting?" I felt this big bear trap right in front of me. I said, "Well, honestly, I won't pick on the Moravians. I think that Sunday morning church service is just about the worst thing that any Christian could ever be asked to endure." Very relaxed, he said, "You know, what amazes me is not how few people go to church, but how many do." I have to agree with him. Now that you know where I'm headed, and I hope to goodness...do you remember the little note that said, "This is not for the faint of heart"? This is not for the faint-hearted.

I'm going to start with a history of Christian meetings, but I'm not going to start with the first century. I want to come back to it at the end. The first thing I want to say about the history of people gathering is that no one ever thinks about it, and no one seems to care. I care. I want to know how we got into this gosh-awful mess. How could anything come to where we are today in the way of Christian gatherings, in light of the New Testament? In fact, the question that will fascinate me as long as I live is how the human mind can find modern-day Christianity in the New Testament.

We can bang on that Bible now and forever, world without end, and thump it, and say we've got to be New Testament, and turn around and build church buildings and seminaries and ordain ministers and call them pastors, and there ain't none of that in the New Testament.

Well, you've got to go back to the period just before Constantine. Now, that's about 323, so let's talk about 300 years after Pentecost, and we'll be pretty accurate. There was a tremendous persecution going on in the Christian faith, and it had, like other persecutions in the past, decimated leadership. We tend... have you ever heard the law of all food in your living room, in your kitchen, tends to become the same temperature as the room itself? Have you heard that law? I don't know

what that's called, but it explains why your food doesn't get cold or hot; it just gets room temperature. We all tend to become what our surroundings are, unless strong, powerful forces push back. The Christian church had lost its apostles, and in losing its apostles, the madman, if you please, it had lost its resistance to that which was around it.

Now, it had lost its leadership; it was very vulnerable; it was being persecuted, and a new emperor took over, and his name was Constantine, and he professed Christianity, and he protected the ecclesia, the gatherings, the churches. What happened from the time of Constantine to 500 A.D. should take someone's entire life and write a book about it, because none of us can ever explain how anything moved so fast, so dramatically, from where it was in, say, 290 A.D., to where it was by 450 A.D. How many years would that be? Okay, around a hundred years, but I, for this hour, and I've studied this about as much as sources will let us, there's just no explanation of how the church moved that rapidly from something very close to being pure to something outright pagan as the church became during those hundred and fifty years. I personally hold that the church had maintained its purity pretty much up to about 290 A.D. and was in fair shape even when Constantine took over. Her problem was that she didn't know she was in good shape. She was so persecuted that she embraced Constantine when he came along.

Let me try to explain to you what's going on. You have a Christian faith surrounded by not a religion, but a culture and a mentality of paganism. That's far more important than belief. Culture will always win out over belief. The matrix, that which surrounds you, the womb, the matrix, will greatly influence you and me. We are Americans, and because we're Americans, our Christian faith tends to be an enterprise more than it is anything else. Did you understand that? I trust you did. For Europeans, it is a tradition more than anything else.

Well, try to imagine the clergy beginning to emerge out of all the simple elders of the churches. Money from the coffers of the Roman Empire is being sent to these churches, and Constantine and his sons have certain standards for how the money must be received. Constantine has a pagan mind. He understands that a department of religion receives money and has priests. That's where he's coming from. Pagan priests dispensing money out of temples. The priests have costumes.

Now that's where he's coming from. Can you imagine what must have developed in the Christian church? Central authority, dispensing money to build buildings, because they're used to buildings. The Christian faith, up until that time, was the only religion in history that had no special buildings to meet in, the first and only religion to never have ritual or a clergy. Now it faces the mind of the pagan: the priest, the temple. It doesn't take long, especially for the gentleman who is the head elder and is now being called a bishop, before he distinguishes between the word "presbyterial" and the word "bishop." There should have been no distinction whatsoever. They grab hold of this distinction in Scripture, and they begin to have a "bishop over."

Now, I don't know if you realize that there are 70 senators in the Roman Senate. Do you know that? Do you know then that there are 70 bishops appointed for the church, and they later become cardinals? You do not know, for instance, that a proconsul or a governor rules a province, one of the two, depending on whether he takes his orders from the emperor or the senate. But each province is divided into, for ruling, for purposes of government, are divided into, and I bet you no one can fill in this blank. Do you know what word I'm about to say? I'm talking pagan Romanism.

Roman government. Dioceses. Now the Christian faith takes the provinces, appoints those who distribute funds, and in each province, they accept the same diocesan boundaries. That has become part of our world.

Church buildings began to be built in 323 A.D. People have never seen anything like this. It is a whole new concept to Christians. Every generation is becoming more and more pagan in its faith. What you've got is a pagan religion developing with Christian terminology, and we're on the verge now of what is called the medieval mind. I need to explain to you what the medieval mind is. It is a cross between paganism, an understanding of the Roman Empire, and the Christian faith, all mingled together with one more ingredient: superstition.

Do not underestimate what we're talking about when we use the word superstition. Will Durant, who's been called the dean of historians, said religions may come, and religions may go, but superstition remains forever. I bet there's not a person in this room without some superstition; I don't care how you would refuse to admit it. My father was extremely superstitious. I am totally free of all his superstitions. I do have a real problem: when we leave the house, I hate to go back. My daddy said it was bad luck. Once you start on a journey, don't ever go back to the house. My wife will tell you to this hour; I have a hard time. I'll do almost anything to keep from going back to the house, but of course, I'm not superstitious. I bet every one of you got something in you somewhere along the line.

Superstition gives the Christian faith its dark colors. The shadows. It's extremely difficult for me to explain what I've just said, but take it literally. Shadows and dark things. That which is foreboding. That which is magic; that which is dark; that which is feared, now comes and takes its place in the Christian mind. The medieval Christian mind had this paganism, this concept of the Roman Empire, the Christian faith, a large part of that is mostly vocabulary, and the dark aspect of superstition.

Now, we need to surround that with one other thing, because we have to draw a line here between the clergy and the theologians and the ordinary people. I've just described to you the ordinary people. Let's move over now to the clergy and the theologians. You who are listening to this on video will probably wish to burn me at the stake for this statement, but theology is not Christian. I'll quote that, and somebody will corrode on the spot.

Let me explain where theology literally and historically originated. The Christian faith, always, theologians today - I'm talking about men who taught me in the seminary, and I'm not fussing with them - I can even see the need for theology. Still, they will interpolate and impose their viewpoint on the first-century writers' theology.

Let me see if I can explain that from another angle. If I say there is no place for the present-day concept of the pastor in the New Testament, someone will immediately stand up and say, "But the word pastor is in the New Testament," and then I add, "You cannot take present-day practice of the pastor and impose it on that word." We take the concept of theology and impose it on Paul and John. Paul was a hot-blooded Jew writing passionate letters to Jewish people who were having all sorts of messy problems in something we would call church life. Then men of later centuries come together literally with scissors, I mean literally with scissors, cut up the verses, put them into topics,

and then approach them with dialectical Aristotelianism. Now, I am using two words very deliberately and very correctly. Aristotelian dialectics.

Now, you could care less about this, I know. Nonetheless, there are growing up philosophers...we're talking about the Greek mind, that which Paul gave such a fit in 1st and 2nd Corinthians, especially 2nd Corinthians; well, no, especially 1st Corinthians, I guess; both of them...he really ran that mind down, the mind of the abstract and, if you please, the mind of the mysterious. Many people don't understand that philosophy was considered something secret, known only to a few. I don't think you know that. I don't think most theologians know that.

You have heard of the mystery religions of the East. Well, the West had mystery teachings too, including Aristotelian, Platonic, and Socratic philosophy. It was held for a few. Their libraries could only be entered by a few people. What was there was not to be known except by the elite, by the philosophical class. A lot of these guys are getting converted, and they are taking their Aristotelian dialectics and applying it to the New Testament with scissors and glue, coming up with topics that had never existed before.

Are you aware that when the church was having this big debate over a theological issue, Constantine called the Council of Nicaea in 325? Are you aware that when he arrived in that town, he came with an entire battery of pagan philosophers for the one purpose of helping the Christians formulate and write down in high philosophical terms, first of all, the differences, the cleavages between the two groups of Christians, and then to help draw up the Nicene Creed? Now, that's not something you and I are supposed to know, because the Nicene Creed is held in great honor. So I honor it. It's beautiful. It's incredible. I don't see how anybody could have written a document like that. I agree with it, and so do you; we all do. Nonetheless, pagans penned it.

The Christians were ill-equipped to write such things. The pagans could sit there, hear them argue, and put it down in clear words. Theology is beginning to be born. And so, in the 150 years that followed, we have the rise of men like Ambrose, Jerome, Origen, and Tertullian. Okay, Tertullian came earlier than that, but Augustine - and did I leave anyone out? Ignatius was too early for that. He was a madman. I think history says Ignatius was a madman...and Clement, too. Not a madman. I think there are a little earlier. Tertullian, Ignatius, and Clement are a little too early. Origen is kind of in between, and then you have Jerome, and you have Ambrose, and you have Augustine, who are great titanic minds, some of the most brilliant minds in human history, begin to write down our faith.

Now, my whole point in telling you all of that is that, surrounding the Christian faith, the aura of, here are my next two words, "set classicalism." Now, what in the world do you mean by that, Gene? I mean by that that you did not change the teachings of Aristotle. Plato was sacred. Socrates was sacrosanct. Now, I don't know if you understand what I've just said, but I'm talking about the root problem of the Dark Ages: that the classical philosophers set all truth, and it can't be improved on. You might gain a few insights, but you can't broaden it much.

Do you realize that Aristotle stopped science in its tracks? I don't think you know that. Aristotle said you don't need to experiment; you just need to think. This was called the Pythagorean School of Science. There was the Ionian School of Science, which we call "empirical" today: observation

and experiment. After the Ionian School of Science was suppressed by the Aristotelian concept of science, the Pythagorean concept of science dominated until Francis and Roger Bacon; science based itself on philosophy. *You sit there and think; you don't experiment or observe.* That was what brought on the Dark Ages. It took the revolution of Francis and Roger Bacon to break loose from that.

I don't know if you can comprehend this, but if the Ionian school had survived...I'm going to make an outrageous statement: man would have gone to the moon around 500 A.D. From the time of Francis Bacon to the time Armstrong set foot on the moon was about 500 years. The steam engine had already been proposed. The understanding that the Earth was round and that it went around the sun was already proposed by the Ionian scientists. All that died, and mankind's ability to think, rationalize, or conceptualize froze in Aristotelian Platonic teaching. If the Christian faith was to do anything, it had to find rational reason for its existence within the Platonic-Aristotelian framework given to it through a man named Augustine and later lifted to greater heights by Thomas Aquinas, who has always been called the man who baptized Aristotle.

The Roman Catholic Church has two ways of doing things: the Aristotelian way and the Platonic way. Ninety-nine percent of all it does is Aristotelian; the other one percent is Platonic. Do you have any idea what I'm talking about? It doesn't matter. My point is this is the atmosphere in which the Christian faith got its first way to meet. I'm moving toward that point. Now, understand that everything is frozen in time under the great, almost godlike influence of Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates and their followers.

Now come back to the growth of the Christian mind. Now, a combination of philosophy and theology on one side, and among the people of Christianity, mostly in terms of paganism in practice, and its way of apprehending, basically, superstition with the dark, deep shadows and the mysterious. Now we introduce to you a gentleman who had his finger in every one of those, and he is the gentleman who gave the Christian faith its concept of meeting.

I'd like for you to go to the city of Rome. The year is approximately 500 A.D. The city is almost totally covered in dirt. The seven hills, the Forum...all of the wonderful things there...are under dirt. It's the past; people are literally grazing their cows and their sheep in the Roman Forum. The town has been invaded, vandalized, and "Visigothized." Can you help me with some other words here? "Barbarianized." It has been burned and pillaged and burned and pillaged and burned and pillaged and burned and pillaged, but I'll tell you this: the Christian faith is still taking its orders from Rome.

A man has been called the first pope, and I don't really agree. Damascus or Sylvester should have that title, but the man who was called the first pope wrote voluminously. I mean, he just wrote and wrote and wrote. He said...here comes his pagan mind: we should save parts of the bodies of anybody we can find who is a great person in the past because it has great, great powers. That's right out of the pagan mind. In every temple, they kept some sacred relic, like a meteorite, and they'd say, well, that came from Mercury, or some piece of cloth that Jupiter once touched. Maybe a piece of dirt from an earthquake they thought Zeus had done. He says, "Let us go and find these portions of the people from the past. They were the saints; we are not. There will be very few saints. Let us take these parts of their bodies and build big temples over them." Pagan mind.

Then he...and this has been growing for about a hundred years; he could not distinguish between miracle and magic. So instead of someone being healed, now you have people who are dying, and they die, and they go to bury them, and their chest opens, and 15 doves come flying out. Now, that's the pagan mind. You all look at me rather strangely. The whole Christian faith is filled with those kinds of stories. Miracle has turned to magic, and they are indistinguishable. Something strange happens; it's a miracle, or it's magic. The word magic should be superimposed. Don't you think that mentality still exists today? Then you have never been a real dyed-in-the-wool, rock-ribbed Pentecostal. The concept of miracle blends in with magic.

I remember when I was a little kid; I remember so vividly. I was sitting in a Pentecostal church, scared to death, and this guy walked up to the platform and said, I got here tonight on an empty tank of gasoline. There was no gasoline in that tank. I drove this. It was past empty, and there was no gas in that, and God got me here. That's not a miracle. That's magic. Somebody should have told him that all the manufacturers leave three gallons of gasoline in your tank past the empty mark if the empty mark still works. There was gasoline in that car.

Now, I'm back to this gentleman named...do you know his name? Do you know who I'm talking about? Gregory the Great. Gregory is writing about relics and about dark things and about shadows and about magic and about God turning bread into the body of Christ and wine into real blood. Now, he's producing new stuff here, folks—the need for relics to worship. And then, by George, if that guy doesn't sit down and write out and pen out, and because he's living in Rome and because he is using Latin, he puts it in Latin. He puts an order of service together on a sheet of paper. He doesn't realize what he's doing, but with his mind of magic, he sees the bread coming out with candles lit and words being said. "Hoc est corpus," and with that... the bread turns to flesh, and the wine turns to blood. You know who we got the word "hocus pocus" now.

Well, it's really weird, but this shows you our problem. Your problem, my problem, our problem. How can anybody invent a way of worship in the year 500 A.D., and no one ever questioned it nor changed it for 1,500 years? It hasn't changed one iota...in your lifetime and mine, they've allowed it to be spoken in a language besides Latin. This solidified the mentality of the classical, and everything from about 300 B.C. in philosophy to 500 A.D., and in the Christian faith, everything from 30 A.D. to 500 A.D., is considered classical, and it cannot be changed. There is no difference between Scripture and the traditions of men up until the year 500 A.D.

Are you aware that men could not build buildings except by using textbooks written by architects before the year 500 A.D.? Are you aware that man could not receive any idea or concept about medicine, anatomy, or healing after the year 500 A.D.? Do you know that they burned men at the stake who proposed that you and I had blood in our bodies that circulated because it did not fit classical teaching? Knowledge froze...and worship froze...in one of the darkest hours of the Christian faith. That man did not know what he was doing, but the way of meeting together froze in 500 A.D.

Now, sympathize with me a minute; agree with me for a second. Is it not incredible that people would sit for 1,500 years and never question how they met, and do the same thing over and over for 50 or 60 years in their lifetime, then die and leave it to somebody else to do again and again, and that keep on going for 1,500 boring, unbelievably boring years? Is that not outrageous?

Ha! *Then why have you Protestants been doing it for 500 instead of 1,500 years?* You walked into that one. We do not have a different mentality as Protestants. We have exactly the same concept. Martin Luther and John Calvin gave us something, and it hasn't moved for 500 years. It may never move, but this weekend it's coming under attack.

Well, one night back in the 500s, somebody walked into these musty, stinky old buildings that didn't have any windows because the architect's teachings at the time couldn't provide windows. The walls had to be really thick to hold up a roof. There was room for only little bitty windows, and it was dark inside, so they had to bring in candles. Well, then they had the little kids bringing in the candles, giving them something to do, like we do a Sunday school booster bag. Then they started putting clothes on the little kids, and so pretty soon, you had the little altar boys coming in with candles to light up those dark buildings.

Well, the buildings stank because so much fungus grew on the walls and mildew covered everything, so somebody went in there and tried to cover the stink up with burning incense, and somebody said, "Well, let's hire someone who'll do that every day, every time we meet." So the guy did, and pretty soon they had a uniform on him. And pretty soon, here again, you have institutionalized the candle and the burning of the incense. It has become a sacred, holy thing when it started out being nothing but light and covering up stink.

Now, brothers and sisters, I hope you enjoy what you are laughing at, because wait until you get to the Protestants! Now, I want you all to understand something, and it is this. People today try to justify what we do by appealing to Jewish tradition and going back to the Old Testament to pick up words. No historian, no historian who knows his history, will go along with that. You and I trace our traditions and our concepts back to Greece and Rome, not to Judaism. There is a break there; that break comes with Constantine.

In fact, it really comes with about 45 or 50 A.D. The Christian church was primarily Gentile as it moved westward, and it had left the Jewish mind entirely. You cannot justify what we do today by saying, 'choir'; it's mentioned in the Old Testament. Pulpit; it's mentioned in the Old Testament. Once more, that is trying to take present-day concepts and put them back into the Bible. Besides that, I don't happen to be an Old Testament Jew. I happen to be an ex-heathen, pagan, uncircumcised Gentile, and the faith of Christ is for me, without ritual, and it came to the rest without ritual.

Well, anyhow, it's solidified. It's stuck. It is now part of classical...of the classical faith. Along with medicine, it has been classicalized. Theology, classicalized, frozen, petrified. Our astronomy, classicalized. The earth, the sun, and all else move around the earth. Everything is frozen in time and will remain that way until help me, until when? Philosophy, medicine, psychology, theology, astronomy, science, all of science, frozen. That's why they had a dark age, saints. You cannot say intelligence, observation, and science died, but boy, it sure slowed down. We cannot say it quit, but it slowed down.

Then what happened? The Renaissance. Where did the Renaissance come from? Do you know? The Arab; the Arab world. That is correct. They never took the bait. They never did. Even the Eastern Church never quite became what the Latin Church had become. The original Greek

language was still alive. Real architecture never went into Western classicism. The ability to think was still a little bit alive. When Western man tried to get over and get those herbs and spices and all those beautiful cloths and that stuff, he began to reach and touch a freer mind, freer architecture, freer medicine, freer astronomy. We can't say theology particularly; someone will have to break the mold of theology. I'm not sure it's ever been done.

Now, brothers and sisters, we're coming up to you and me: Protestants. If you're taking notes, tomorrow and the next day, I ask you to take copious notes, because tomorrow I'm not going to be laying ground. I'm going to rip down strongholds and build whole new concepts in your mind.

Do you realize what we have left behind us? We have left behind us. We turn around and look at nothing but carnage. Nothing that I've talked to you about has got anything to do with the Christian faith of the first century. None of this is even remotely similar to the first-century church.

It's hard to talk about the Reformation without getting off topic. Let me say, this is in print by me, but let me see if any of you remember. Who is most responsible for the Reformation? Always, Luther gets in there; Luther would have been burned at the stake before he ever saw his 30th birthday if it hadn't been for Frederick the Wise. Frederick the Wise, who may be burning in hell right now, for all I know, who had wanted to be pope so bad, who had the largest army in Europe. He was a German, and he heard about this beer-drinking German down there who was raising fits and making the pope worry, and he thought that was an absolutely royal idea. You tell the pope to leave that man alone, and don't you dare try to come in there with your army and burn him at the stake.

A brother and his wife were telling me this story. Their little girl was asking how old they were and trying to figure it out; you know how a little child is. They don't exactly know who Mom and Daddy are, and the little child says, "So you lived...'", now see if you can catch where this came from: "...you lived back in the day when the world was black and white." Did you catch that? That little girl had been sitting there watching old films in black and white, and new things on television were in color. This little kid thought Mom and Daddy lived in the world before it ended and turned into color.

Please think of the Reformation as the period when everything...there was no color. I mean, I want you to think that we're coming out of a dark day. What year did Gutenberg invent his movable-type press? In the middle of the 1400s. Okay, now Luther's coming around the early part of the 1500s; you have less than 100 years of movable type. I don't know if you can understand this, but people in general were living in abject poverty, still with the medieval mind and superstition deeply rooted in the lower levels of Europe. Illiteracy ran somewhere between 95 and 97 percent, leaving scientists, theologians, philosophers, and others whose profession was to write. And others whose profession was to read. Some could read but not write; others could write and left the reading to someone else. You hired someone, just like today; you would hire a mechanic to write for you and to read for you.

The Gutenberg Press is revolutionizing Europe, but don't you ever think you're suddenly waking up to a world where everybody can read. No more than 5 percent of people outside can read. People are living in filth. Homes have no windows. They dump garbage in the middle of the street. Most

people have never been 5 or 10 miles from their home. They are provincial. They are superstitious. What is called the Reformation is happening up here at the top. What is happening in Switzerland and what is happening in Germany is mostly a few people taking over church buildings that victorious rebel armies have given to them. Are you following me here? Can you imagine this? Calvin, because of the Swiss people's independence, and please understand, most of this is happening...boy, I'm going to be off subject here.

Have you ever watched or seen a map of where the Reformation took place? Well, take that map, flip it over, and compare it with the Roman Empire, and it will be almost identical. Everything outside the Roman Empire became Protestant. Everything within the Roman Empire stayed Roman Catholic. Folks, you've got cultural problems here. This is the difference between the barbarians and the Latins. Wherever you have a mixture of the barbarians and the Latins, you will invariably have a place where the Protestants and the Catholics are either fighting one another or learning how to live compatibly. Belgium is a perfect example. Northern Belgium, Dutch breed. Southern Belgium, Latin breed; cut right through the middle. Northern Switzerland is Germanic. A little bit of the French Switzerland gets free. They're faced with thousands of very big, empty cathedrals. They're turning out theological papers by the hundreds.

First, please understand that the Reformation was primarily theological. These thinking men, these professors of theology, were thinking in terms of the Roman Catholic Church being corrupt, and we have got to show what the proper teachings of the New Testament are and what the proper teachings of classical Aristotelian dialectics really would show of the New Testament. A theological philosophy. A philosophical theology. These men, like Erasmus, who learned Greek from the Arabs or from Renaissance influence, are titanic theologians and philosophers with rich philosophical backgrounds, and they are turning out what is primarily intended for the head. Intellectualism...and it's still just a few people.

Luther could hardly comprehend the peasant, and the peasants made up most of the people. You know he came out against the peasant revolt. It never got down among the people. That later spread among the Germanic people through culture, not conversion. They developed a new culture. People came over from England to the wilderness, and a new culture was born. Martin Luther created a new theology and a new way of worship, and a new culture began to be born. Culture took care of evangelism, not so much the gospel.

Now, these are hard facts to face. The people are living in darkness. They are not well educated. Superstition is rampant. Well, the Reformation is going on at the intellectual level, and man alive, we have an intellect to deal with. I would say the two greatest minds of the Western world that I've ever heard of, post-Christian minds that I've ever heard of, would be Leonardo da Vinci, and you want to try to fill in the other blank? This is my personal opinion. Thomas Aquinas. I'll make three blanks there. Fill in another one. You're right. Absolutely.

You want to try to fill in the third one? Got to be one of the most brilliant minds that ever existed. I'll give you a hint. It's not Martin Luther, although he was brilliant. John Calvin. I suppose the only man who ever explained everything. Calvin's Institutes stand as one of the great wonders of the world. Don't think that changed northern Switzerland or western Switzerland. It did not. That was

written for the theologically minded people, those who could read and write, and that was a very minor group of people.

Now, you may not like my interpretation of history, but I can back it up to the hilt. This is a theological, an intellectual movement. Now, I want to tell you something else. They didn't have you and me in mind. They couldn't conceptualize us any more than you can conceptualize the people living 500 years from now. Who knows that I might say something today that will start a tradition people will never turn loose for the next thousand years? I can't believe that's happening today. I couldn't, but John Calvin was made a hero. Luther was made a hero, and Zwingli was made a hero.

Go to Zurich, Switzerland, and see where Zwingli preached. They have a nice, beautiful velvet rope keeping you out of his pulpit. I was in there one day when no one was present, but my wife and I stepped over the rope. I walked up into his pulpit and stood there. As I stood there, I recognized once more that he was part of a world that should not have been frozen in time and given to you, to me, and to all of Christendom. But it was.

Luther gave us the pulpit. Luther gave us a pastor. Luther gave us the Protestant funeral. I'll eat this entire book if you can find a Christian funeral in the New Testament. There's no Christian funeral. No one goes out and visits old ladies. No one prays over a gladiator contest. Nobody's mounting a pulpit to preach at 11 a.m. on Sunday. All these traditions came out of Wittenberg, Germany, around 1540 A.D. You tell me what's wrong with the Christian faith. Where is the root problem of the Christian faith? That those things never get questioned.

You tell me what's wrong with you and me living almost in the twenty-first century, with people going to the moon and sending objects to Mars, who will stand in the midst of traditions that have nothing to do with Scripture and institutionalize them forever. Tell me why we will walk into a church building, never wondering where it came from. Tell me why sending our children to Sunday school is sacrosanct. Tell me why we have Greco-Roman orations delivered to us today in the tradition of Diocletian and John Chrysostom on Sunday morning, in the name of preaching the word of God. That is Roman Greek rhetoric, built on the concepts, teachings, and science of Greek-Roman oratory, with nothing to do with the church of the living God. You tell me why we're still having costumed clergymen 500 years after the Reformation.

I'm not asking you why we're doing it; I'm asking you why you and I never think about it. My question is not about the problems. My question is: why do we walk into the church and accept it all? If you ask the Baptist why he's doing this, he'll turn and look at you and say, "The Bible says, 'forsake not the assembling of yourselves together.'" If you took that verse away from the Baptist, if the guy in Hebrews had never written that thing, the Baptist church would probably never exist.

These men were used to prayer books; they were struggling to break free, but please understand, they are reforming the Catholic Church. They are not provoking a revolution. A man named Conrad Gable wanted a revolution. He died at 29, I believe, maybe 27. Everyone in the Anabaptist movement of northern Switzerland died horrible deaths, with one or two exceptions, most of them before they ever saw their 40th birthday. They were the Radical Reformation. They wanted a revolution. They wanted a total break and to start all over again...and they did not get it.

Probably the largest number of Christians in the history of the Christian church, outside the organized church, were in the period right after the Reformation. Those people were summarily killed in a slaughter that has been estimated at something like five million...and mostly by Protestants, that is correct, although the Catholics were in there helping. I read the original documents of a man who has a diary. He rode from someplace through Holland; it was a trip of several hundred miles, I believe - I may be incorrect in the distance of it. He said he never saw a tree, but what it had was the dead body of an Anabaptist hanging from it. It's funny, I've read that, but I have never seen it in a history book, and I've wondered why historians have so neglected the recording of that slaughter. Again, how can we get so attached to our traditions? It's unbelievable. We are attached to them. I hope that I can show you just how attached you are to them.

Well, I'm bringing this up all to tell you that one day a guy by the name of John Calvin, who wrote something about that long called the Institutes, Calvin's Institutes, one day sat down and penned a little doohickey...it's about 1540 A.D...and he called it the common order of worship service. On that sheet of paper, John Calvin passed on to you and to me the most boring, the most horrendously inept, unbelievable, outrageous thing that has ever been perpetrated on the Christian. We have willingly and obediently obeyed that sheet of paper like sheep going to slaughter, for he is the gentleman who gave Protestant Christianity the Sunday morning order of service.

The Scots picked it up and took it down into England, brought it over on the Mayflower, or the Puritans brought it over in whatever way they came over, actually. You and I picked it up and never blinked an eye. It is scattered throughout Europe and every place where every missionary has ever gone. I will tell you some memories I have. I drove into a compound...I was 19 years old...I drove into a compound in a town called Aijalon, Jordan. All the Christians lived within the French compound—really great concept. With the church building in there and all these converted Arabs, mostly Christians, saved on their deathbed in the hospital or something like that. It's all where you went, Arabs. I'm not criticizing that.

Here we are in the middle of Aijalon, Jordan. Do you know what happened in the Old Testament in Aijalon, Jordan? That's where the sun stood still. Well, that's where the Christian gathering still stands. We walked into that thing, and we sat down in these little pews, and there was that pulpit, and this guy got up, and we sang three songs, had a prayer, two songs, passed the offering plate, had another song, he got up and preached, had the benediction, and we went home. John Calvin strikes again.

I've told you this story, and I'm going to tell it again. I went into the jungles of Thailand to bring out a tribe of Christians out of the land of Laos, where these people, who are called Hmong, have lived in the jungles for 5,000 years. In fact, they have the oldest recorded history in the world. The oldest slip of paper that ever mentions any human beings is the jungle people of Laos, who migrate to the jungles and live in the mountains. John Dooley wrote *The Night They Burned the Mountain*. He was talking about the Hmong.

Well, this tribe of Hmong had been led to the Lord something like 50 or 75 years ago, but the missionary had left, and they'd never seen a white man. When Vietnam fell to the Communists, they had to walk through the jungle for days and days, 4,000 of them, in a line, a single line, through the jungle, hacking their way through, and finally came to a refugee camp in northern

Thailand. I went there based on the rumor that they existed. I went to try to get as many of them out as I could. I got out 29, and they got out the rest. As they said, they had a string that ran from Santa Barbara, California, to the jungles of Laos. They brought in...they were all kin to one another...over 4,000 of them. They brought one another over based on kinship.

Anyway, I sat down in their tribal meeting to talk with them. We went over to the refugee camps, and I want you to imagine plastic, rolls of plastic 12 feet wide, 100 feet long, 1,000 feet long, and brought into that place by the American military. They cut it up and built huts out of this translucent plastic. And right in the middle of this refugee camp, the Hmong, who had not seen another Christian in somewhere between 50 and 75 years, had built a plastic hut about two feet higher than any other hut with a pitched roof. They had not seen a Christian in 75 years, other than themselves, or 50 or whatever, and I walked into that tent, a plastic tent. There they had put stakes in the ground and put a bamboo rod over the stakes in neat little rows, two rows, a row on that side, and in the front, they had set a table with an open Bible. And they gathered together at 11 a.m.

The power of men's traditions is in the marrow of your blood and bone, in your bloodstream, and in mine. The first Sunday morning I didn't go to church, Helen, my two children, and I all felt like we'd sinned away our day of grace. The children sat at home and cried. Have you done that? Do you remember that? Have you had a day like that? I can see absolutely no reason to go to church, and if anybody can give me one good reason on this earth that is based upon the Bible, I stand with Luther. Unless you give me a good reason soundly based on the Scripture, I will not go. I've been to church twice, I think, in the last 26 years...and I am still a Christian. God be my helper; I'm never going to go again.

Well... let me tell you something. We again tend to institutionalize what belongs to a particular day when a new tradition is born. So we institutionalized the classical music that existed that day. Now, if you don't know what I'm talking about, I'm talking about Beethoven and Bach. Bach, isn't he the Christian gentleman? Yes. Beethoven, Bach, and a few others. That kind of music was institutionalized. Then, of course, it went to England, changed a little in the 1700s, and we got our classical English music. John Wesley gave us evangelistic singing, and he gave us our own classical music. Well, things are getting better today, aren't they?

I don't think the Lord Jesus liked going to the synagogue. I really don't think he was any more excited about that than he was about obeying the Sabbath. Let me do this really quickly. Jesus is eight years old. They take him into a building where it's about 20 degrees hotter inside than outside. People don't take baths. They all smell and stink. The room has very little light. He sits there with his feet hanging off of a bench. They read something, and they go through a ritual. It's all in Hebrew, which nobody can understand. I don't know if you understand that, but the peasant people didn't understand Hebrew; they understood their local Nazareth dialect of Aramaic.

He sits there for two hours listening to these people going through this ritual. By the way, it is translated into Aramaic, and he hears the same old stuff every week; they sing everything in one tone. It's dark. It's dank. It's smelly. It's boring. There's no life in it. He walks out of there; he's eight, nine years old, and he says, "Boy, I enjoyed that so much, I think when I get grown, I'll start a religion like that." I don't believe that. I think when he got outside that building, he went, "Whew, if I ever have a chance to take a whack at that, I'm going to."

The Christian church, and this can be proven historically, met in homes starting with Pentecost, and it met without ritual, and it met without clergy. And it met without form. He said (to the woman at the well), “Yes, little lady, you people in Samaria are worshiping in the wrong place. The people in Jerusalem are worshiping in the right place, but the day is coming, and now has arrived at this very moment that I'm standing here talking to you. My Father is seeking those who worship inside themselves, in reality and in truth. Amen, in spirit and in reality...and that was the curtain call for the temple and for the synagogue. You could not have put that off on the Gentiles anyway. The Gentile Christians weren't about to take up a Jewish...this whole thing of circumcision was tied up in concepts of which way the Christian faith was going to go. Was it going to go with form, or was it going to go free?

I'm going to do a real quick one. Evangelistic singing came in and loosened up what is called the independent churches. Now, an independent church is sometimes called a free church. In Europe, they call them free churches. Do you know why they call them free churches in Europe? It's because they do not receive any money from the government. They're free of the government, and everything they do is free. They don't get any money. The Baptists, the Congregationalists, and the Methodists in America, at least for the Methodists, are free churches. They have no tradition of their denomination ever receiving money from state churches. That has never been part of their history. They don't even believe in it. So they got loosened up a little bit from the Presbyterian-Lutheran way of meeting by evangelistic singing, but we're still reporting in at Sunday morning with their church service.

Now, our concept, whether we are in the organized church or we're meeting in homes, of the Christian meeting is to sing songs, pray a little bit, and if we are outside the organized church meeting, we might even share a little bit, and then we're going to have a message. Now, that's in a home, and that's in a building. I'm standing up on my hind legs, and I'm telling you it's all foolishness—every bit of it. The entire concept needs to be ripped down totally, absolutely, from the bottom to the top.

Now, today, we have the following kinds of churches. I'm going to try to go through them right quickly. The churches in Europe are state churches. Name them really quickly, please. See if you can do it. Anglican. Lutheran. Presbyterian. I think that's about it, isn't it? Okay, hang on. Episcopal is the way Americans spell English. Alright, deader than a doorknob. Presbyterians, frontal lobe. Lutherans, tradition. Catholics and Episcopalians, you know the old saying, Episcopalian is a Catholic who failed Latin. We have the independent churches, the free churches that have more or less mimicked them in their Sunday morning worship service. Then you have the parachurch organizations, who are very loose in their singing and very enjoyable, and then you have us outside the organized church.

Before we get into them, I want to bring you two kinds of churches you may not be aware of. I have named them. One is the Super Church. The Super Church. Hot dog. I'm going to name the other one right quick: the Glory Church. The Super Church and the Glory Church. I want to be a member of the Super Church and the Glory Church; that's where I really want to put my membership. You go in and sit down and...a friend of mine said that you've got everything the Christian faith can give you and everything the world can give you, all in one place. We are teetering on the brink of a

whole new age for evangelical Christianity. God alone knows where it will lead us, but we are in the midst of a revolution.

One of the great women singers of our day came to Portland, Maine, the other day. I was out of town. My wife was there. The auditorium is filled with thousands of expectant Christians. The curtain throws open, and the entire stage fills with smoke. Lightning and thunder and fire, and a great chorus breaks out. In a short crescendo, a spotlight comes on, and in the midst of the fog emerges this nationally famous young lady, and she begins singing, and the crowd goes wild.

Now, that's what the super church will give you. A choir that sings like you can't believe. They have drums and bugles, and they have trumpets, and they've got all this stuff. On top of that, they have a great chorus, and they have got music from every instrument on the earth. And good night...a little organ over here, a piano over here, maybe three or four pianos, four or five organs. Who knows what else they got? They've got puppets behind you, and they've got it all in stereo, and lights are turning on and off. They've got it on television. They've got it on the radio. They've got it coming to you in stereo. Boy, it is exciting, folks. You've been there, haven't you? It's wonderful. And you say, I'm going to join along with these other 55,000 people that church has.

I tell you, my mouth waters, and at the same time I get sick at heart. How are we ever going to compete with that? The super church. The glory church is like the super church. It's just smaller...and we all want to go join. In fact, I would give you a word of advice. Join the blooming thing. This is the place where you come in, and everybody is free, and everything is informal, and there are hundreds of people there. There's the pianist and, again, the organ, and there are singing choruses, and everybody is lifting their hands and praising God, and maybe there's even sharing, and it is all so loose and informal. It's glory. Glory. Glory. It just has a little problem: come back two years later, and by Henry, they are sitting there doing the same thing. Just like the Methodists and the Baptists do, only their congregation is now half that size.

Someone told me about a super church in Southern California. I don't know if this is true. He said every two years that congregation is totally new. It's a complete turnover. Can anybody verify that observation from your own experience? You can? Yes. Definitely. I've been in contact with two Glory churches for the past five years; that's my observation. We can take that singing and that glory for just so long.

I want to say something to the glory churches and the super churches: I don't care what you do or how glorious it is; it eventually gets boring. It becomes a ritual, and brother, one day you'll have the same problems as the rest of us. You can listen to those bands and those drums just so long, and the people sit there, and they get just as tired as a woman Catholic does going through the Hocus Pocus on Sunday morning in St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome. And the musicians get tired, too; the musicians get tired of it.

I'm going to say a kind word here to the musicians. Musicians, are you listening to me? It was the tradition, I hope you are hearing me, all of you, of the Roman Catholic Church to take right-brained people and give them a job painting their cathedrals. Now, do you know what a right-brained person is? They are someone who is not fit for this world. They cannot make an honest day's living

at anything practical; a dreamer. Hey, listen, don't laugh too hard, I'm right-brained. I may not be, but I definitely tend that way.

Have you ever tried to hire an artist to do something for you, like printing or something? Oh, here he is. Oh, yes, I can do that. Oh, I have very little to do right now. Yes, it's a slow period. I'll be happy to get it to you in two weeks. Two weeks later, who are you? Oh, I'm so sad; I've slowed down. In fact, I am skiing in the Alps. That's where I'm slowing down, and you come back three weeks later, and four weeks later, and a month later, two months later, three months later, look, I'm thinking about it... They used to turn church buildings over to these people. They'd give them a roof or a door or a ceiling or a wall and say, there, have fun, and they would pay them.

You want to know the name of some of those people: Michelangelo. Right-brain painter. That man couldn't have gotten a job doing anything if it hadn't been for the fact that the Catholic Church had most of the money in the Western world. Did you know that at one time the Roman Catholic Church owned 60% of Europe? Its land, 60% of Europe's land, most of its wealth was in its churches and in its government houses, and everybody else was starving. All right, so today the super churches give these right-brained musicians... a place to sing and to play instruments.

Now listen, those people would be out there...forgive me, hey, I'm being extreme here, this is not a fair statement, but those people would be playing in a rock band if they hadn't gotten hired in that church building. Oh, but they got converted. Great, they got converted. They don't have to bring that stuff inside. They don't have to bring that stuff to me. The matrix always wins out. The atmosphere around you wins out. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is seeing a convulsion in its worship and in its music, and it is the world. It's all those right-brained musicians who got converted, and they're coming in, and we're so glad that whole acid rock band got saved and they're down at our church now doing wonderful things. They will get tired of doing it, and they will go away, and we will never hear from them again. And this is kind of where we are right now.

Let me take another potshot at the sacred. Now I'm going to stop preaching, and start meddling. There's a wonderful or seemingly wonderful thing...I'm afraid...I'm afraid of the religious system. Every time you think maybe it's going to die, it'll come up with something else new that's no good. So today, we've got the worship movement sweeping across American churches and outside the organized church, too. Now, those of you who are Pentecostal know that we watched you back when I was a little kid. We watched you, and you would have these glassy-eyed fits. Forgive me. I'm sorry. I'm telling you, I watched them when I was a kid, and they would do like this. I really thought they were seeing something. That was put on...and they're still doing it.

Well, now today we've got worship. And worship...Lord, forgive me, but Lord, I'm doing this because this is the way I feel...we've got people who are going, well, you know, I do that too, but I watch those people. They do that for two or three or four years, and I get to saying something to myself. You're cheating. You're cheating. That's not real. I know it's not real. I didn't say it wasn't real in the beginning; it ceased to be real.

You see, saints, everything we do has to have a source. There's only one source for all we do, and if we don't have that as a source, everything else we do will die out. I'm afraid of today's worship

movement. I'm just as afraid of it as I am of "Hoc est corpus meum." It's going to get institutionalized, and it's going to be there; it has no source.

I'm going to repeat myself later on, but I'm going to say it now. Worship does not lead you to Christ. Can you please understand this? Worship does not lead you to Christ. Christ will lead you to worship. It has to start with Jesus Christ. *The worship movement does not start with Jesus Christ; it starts with worshipping Jesus Christ, and as fine as that is, it's two totally different worlds.*

Yes, people worship "worship"; and if not, pretty soon you've institutionalized it. Yes, I'm afraid of it. It's beautiful, and I love it. I'm standing up here and telling you I love super churches and glory churches; I want to be a member of one, but I know two years from now it's going to be worn out. I'm telling you, worship is heading in the same direction tongues is. You can just milk that cow so long, and it won't give any more milk. It's all hat and no cattle. It's all boot and no horse. That dog won't hunt. It will not work. As you sit there, my question is: you do it over and over, and somewhere in your heart you know this, but you never stop to question it. My question is not why we do it. My question is: *why do we never question this?*

Now, I'd like to say to the Roman Catholics, the Episcopalians, the Baptists, the Lutherans, the Presbyterians, the super churches, the glory churches, and the people currently heading up worship. I know the people heading up that worship are so driven by this that they will be really offended. I want to tell you all that it will be Jesus Christ first, or it will be death in two to three years, and sometimes much sooner.

I am just going to wreak havoc here for a minute. One, I believe the entire concept of meeting needs to be laid down—the whole thing. In fact, I'm not sure, but we may need to end meetings, period. I don't think we can begin the Christian church with meetings. She's got to begin somewhere else. Meetings must come later. We need to lay down our singing. We need to lay down our worship. We need to lay down the preaching of the sermons that go with it. Lay down the sharing. Lay it all down...and start all over again somewhere else. Lay the whole blooming thing down. It's been 1,700 years in pain; take it out and shoot it.

Brothers and sisters, let me tell you something. This weekend's conference is not about how to meet. This weekend's conference is *the church*. This weekend's conference is about the church, because we're dealing with how our meetings are part of the body of Christ, the meeting of the church. We've got to have a totally different concept for the church. I'm going to get ahead of myself here, but I'm really tired of this; the church getting so short-changed. Luther, Calvin, you don't know what you did to us. Our concept of the church of Jesus Christ is that Sunday morning meeting from 11 to 12 a.m. God, have mercy on us all that we would think that is the glorious church.

Let me tell you something. Isn't it true that everything fun in the Christian faith is outside the church, and everything boring is in it? Is that not true of our present-day situation? If you want to do something exciting, you join Campus Crusade for Christ, or InterVarsity, or Youth with a Mission.

Is it not true that most of the fun you've ever had as a Christian has been outside the church and all the boring stuff has been in it? Is it not true that most of your touch with Jesus Christ has been outside the church, somewhere else? What a shame. Why, she's better, more beautiful, more glorious than the church buildings, Sunday morning, Campus Crusade, InterVarsity, and Youth with a Mission, Young Life, and Youth for Christ, and...is there any more? Let's go all in here. Sorry, I love all you people; you're wonderful Christians and all that, but you ain't got a shred of New Testament to back up your existence...and the church has got no business being boring.

I'll tell you something else she's got no business being: a violin with only one string. Let me tell you what I mean by that. Go into any group, and they're stuck in one way of meeting, no matter what it is. It's either glory, or it's praise, or it's worship, or it's classical singing, or it's a certain kind of preaching. The word versatility doesn't seem to exist in the Christian vocabulary. Variety seems like a word from a world beyond us. Whatever happened to versatility and variety? And part of this is your fault. Hey, you like one kind of meeting, and you'll play that thing until it's dead. Then you'll take it out and bury it and play it at its own funeral.

I'm going to propose to you that the first-century church had a different way of approaching everything than anything that we do today.