

March 26, 1974

**American Youth Rate High
In Religious Interest**

By George Gallup Jr.
American Institute of Public Opinion

Perhaps at few other times in history have the American people so craved moral and spiritual leadership as they do today. The typical citizen is searching for new heroes--heroes with character, not just charisma.

Whether or not the church in America succeeds in providing the moral and spiritual leadership so needed today depends in large measure on two key groups in the population:

- (1) Those with a college background (accounting for about one-fourth of the population), who include a high proportion of "activists" and "opinion leaders" and who will spearhead movements in the church and in society; and
- (2) Young adults in America (18 to 29 years old) who will set the tone for religion in the decade ahead and provide the nation's leadership.

The church's declining influence often has been blamed on these two groups--the college-educated and the young--yet survey evidence strongly suggests that these groups could well be in the vanguard of religious renewal in this country.

All signs point to the fact that religion is gaining a new intellectual respectability in this country. The assumption that the educated person "needs" religion less, and is more ready to discard religion as a product of ignorance and superstition, is not borne out by survey findings.

These findings, dealing with the religious beliefs and practices of persons with a college background and with those of young adults, coincide with current trends in religious thought which indicate a de-emphasis of rationalism and a growing acceptance of intuition as perhaps man's more impressive faculty.

The following survey findings reveal the levels of religious belief and practice among these two key population groups. First the college educated group.

Perhaps surprising to some, church attendance is as high--if not higher--among persons with a college background than among persons with less formal education. A very large majority also hold to the beliefs in God and in life after death, though slightly lower than the percentage for the U.S. as a whole.

College people are also somewhat less inclined than are non-college persons to believe in the devil or in hell, but belief still outweighs disbelief.

One person in four (24 per cent) among the college group describes himself as "very religious," a proportion which almost exactly matches up with the national figure.

It may be generally believed that the "mystical experience" is something that occurs among only uneducated and susceptible people in revival meetings. Yet a Gallup Poll taken a few years ago showed that as large a proportion of the college-educated as the rest of the population say they have had a mystical experience--that is, a moment of sudden insight or awakening.

~These findings would seem to lend heavy support to the conclusion that religion has solid intellectual respectability and is not just something for the "masses."

The other key group to whom the church must appeal are the youth of America.

Many young people are turned off by organized religion, with the criticism frequently voiced that the church is "sterile," "outmoded," "not relevant."

In fact, a recent Gallup survey shows that among persons 18 to 24 years old who describe themselves as "very religious," as many as one-fourth say they have little or no respect for the church or for organized religion.

Yet it would be demonstrably wrong to write off youth as "non-religious." A majority (55 per cent) of young adults, 18 to 24, say they have a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of respect and confidence in the church or organized religion. Only seven per cent say "none."

In addition, most persons in this age group attest to a belief in God, heaven and other basic tenets of faith.

The religious character of American youth stands out in bold relief when our young people are compared with the youth of other nations of the world. This is seen from a study of youth conducted in 11 nations for the Japanese government by Gallup International. Interviews were conducted in person with more than 15,000 persons, 18 to 24.

The U.S., India and Brazil, for example, have the lowest percentage of atheists (less than one per cent). The percentage is as high as 10 per cent among youth in France and 12 per cent in Sweden.

Next to youth in the Philippines, Americans are the best churchgoers. One third of youth in the U.S. said they attend church in a typical week, a higher figure than recorded in nine other nations. The percentage is lowest in France, Sweden, Japan and Yugoslavia.

In addition, far fewer young people in the U.S. than abroad say they have "no interest" in religion. About one young adult in eight (12 per cent) in the U.S. says he has no interest in religion, while the figure goes as high as 32 per cent in the United Kingdom, 41 per cent in Sweden and 74 per cent in Japan.

Still further evidence of the religiousness--or religiosity--of American youth is seen in international comparisons on the question, "What one of these things (from a list of seven) do you want most in life?" A higher proportion of youth in the United States and in the Philippines say "salvation through faith" than in any of the other nine nations surveyed.

American youth are not only exceptionally religious when compared to the youth of other nations but also put a higher premium on "love and sincerity" as a goal in life and less on "money and position."

These findings would seem to indicate that the church in the U.S. has excellent raw material with which to work.

-30-

Editor's Note: By special permission, courtesy of the Religious Public Relations Council.

#

Christian Life Seminar
Urges Economic Concern

3/26/74

HOUSTON (BP)--A prominent tax attorney urged at a national seminar here that Americans, facing tax return deadlines, critically examine their "own personal morality in dealing with the tax system."

"Certainly the impetus to private morality in taxation has not been pushed forward by the questions raised with respect to the President's tax return," said Vester T. Hughes Jr. of Dallas.

Hughes spoke on the opening day of a 3-day national seminar on Christians Confronting the Economic Crisis, sponsored by the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist

-more-

Convention.

"Fortunately," Hughes declared, "none of us is required to account for the President's action, and I suggest that before our individual tax returns are due, a critical examination of our personal morality in dealing with the tax system as a useful endeavor."

He added, "Taxes by their very nature are bad in the sense they seldom have any directly productive economic aspect and they discourage economic activity and investment. Nonetheless, we have been fortunate in this country that many, if not most, people feel that tax fraud is morally reprehensible, even though there is a lessening of this view."

It has been said, Hughes added, that "where there is a free bridge and a toll bridge, patriotism does not demand that the taxpayer take the toll bridge. Nor, in my opinion, does morality demand that the taxpayer take the toll bridge."

"But there is a vast difference between taking the free bridge and stealing one's way across the toll bridge," he said.

A Christian ethicist from Fort Worth, William N. Pinson Jr., challenged Christians to exert influence on the economic structure.

Pinson, a professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, said, "Just as there is no Christian chemistry or Christian mathematics as such, there is no Christian economics. But there should be ethical guidelines for the use of chemistry as in economics. We must forever insist that economic practice is not a separate category apart from moral considerations."

"The economic order," Pinson added, "portrays vividly how much we need one another. We are all terribly fragile, dependent on one another and vulnerable to acts of irresponsibility by others."

"Irresponsibility in a fast-moving technological world can bring tragedy to thousands-- a jumbo jet crashed because of failure to follow safety standards, poisonous canned goods caused by shortening the process or a polluted water supply."

Pinson said churches should "first evangelize and educate people. The beginning is a changed person."

"But some insist," he said, "Christians should avoid economic issues and concentrate on converting individuals. That is an appealing position. But it fails to give any guidance as to what we are to do about economic injustices while we evangelize individuals. Nor does it speak to the problem of why so many so-called 'converted individuals' contribute to injustice in the economic system."

"Much of the Old Testament," Pinson continued, "deals with economic issues--business and agricultural practices, work, wealth, poverty, interest, laws pertaining to trade, land, cattle and the like. The New Testament also speaks to economic matters--the proper perspective of possessions, ministry to those in need, the danger of wealth, the importance of work."

"The early Christians were urged to work to earn their own bread honestly to use their possessions to care for the poor," Pinson said. "Only through sinful selectivity in reading scriptures could one conclude that God is not interested in man's economic life."

"Salvation leads to responsibility. The Christian being made new in Jesus Christ needs to live a life of courageous love. How the child of God is to relate in specific ways to a sinful world is a complex problem."

"We are obligated under God to strive to bring love and justice to bear upon the economic order," Pinson said.

William Dyal Jr. of Washington described what he called a topsy-turvy world where economic laws aren't applicable anymore.

"Everything once nailed down is coming loose," said Dyal, president of the Inter-American Foundation in Washington, D.C., a \$70 million fund designed to aid economically deprived people in Central and South America.

-more-

"The era in which the buyer was king is over and we are moving overnight into an era in which the seller is king," said Dyal, a former staff member of both the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and Christian Life Commission. He is also a former Peace Corps official.

"There will be a shift from emphasis from problems of growth and problems of distribution," he said. "There will also be a shift in global political power from those nations which control capital and technology to those which control raw materials."

"The time is here when developing nations, acting in concert, may be able to veto the wasteful use of materials, food and other resources. The politics of oil is only the visible tip of the iceberg," Dyal added.

Dyal identified the key issue on "everybody's list of worries and issues" as the economy, both in its global interdependence and its affluence.

"Economists have tended to underestimate the impact of affluence on a demand for goods," he said, adding that "economists and planners do not see man as the focal point of concern."

Another speaker, John Martin, former commissioner on the aging of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, urged later mandatory retirement to encourage people to stay on the labor forces formomore years.

"The conclusion is inescapable that earnings will continue to be an important part of the total income needed to maintain living standards for our older population," said Martin, now consultant to the American Association of Retired Persons and the American National Retired Teachers Association.

"If we are really seeking to encourage our older people to continue in gainful employment, rather than driving them out of the labor market, we should be willing to develop incentives for continuing to work," Martin said. "The federal government is doing this. . .where the mandatory retirement age is 70.

"The long-range objective," he said, "is to make life as pleasant in its last one-third as it was satisfying in the first two-thirds."