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# On Turning the World Around... At the Turning of the Age

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# On Turning the World Around . . .

## At the Turning of the Age

BY PAUL ANDERSON

**E**LTON TRUEBLOOD tells the story about the airport in Dayton, Ohio, that serves as a symbol of our Christian calling in the world. At Dayton's airport there used to be a large globe, a model of the earth, that displayed the global extent of NCR's business enterprise. This rotating globe was about ten feet tall and provided the perfect landmark for the meeting-point at the airport.

Oddly enough, the globe had been there for years, but no one had ever noticed that it was rotating the *wrong* way, from left to right instead of from right to left. This means that the sun would have risen in the west and would have set in the east, from the vantage of any point on the globe. Eventually, someone pointed this out to Elton (one of his sons, I believe), so he promptly called the president of NCR in Dayton and informed him of the error. Needless to say, while the man was embarrassed about the mistake, he was extremely grateful that someone had cared enough to shed some light on what had until then gone unnoticed. Within a matter of days the globe at Dayton's airport was turning from left to right, and in at least one small way the world was restored to its proper order.

As we enter 1991 we enter the last decade of the century (being the last century of the millennium), we stand at the turning of the age. In many ways the world still needs to be turned around and headed in the right direction. But how can this happen? The angry mob at Thessalonica stormed Jason's home in search of Paul and Silas, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also . . ." (Acts 17:6), but I doubt that many of us would be accused of such an impact today. We tend to be polite and soft-spoken folk, but the needs of the world call for decisive action. The world needs to be

turned around, but causing that to happen is another matter.

Turning the world upside down, or even turning it around, must seem dreadfully impractical. After all, it takes just about all we can muster to get ourselves going in the right directions, let alone worrying about others. And yet, Jesus calls us not to practicality but to faithfulness, and this is where our spiritual callings and the needs of the world converge. All true mission begins and ends with vision, so allow me to suggest a few insights that carry the potential of being the seeds of revolution.

**1.** We must be changed and changing individuals before we can expect to make a difference in the world. One cannot hope to teach what one has not learned, and one cannot expect to influence significantly beyond one's experience. Authentic transformation always begins at home. As William Penn said about the early Friends,

"They were changed men [and women] themselves before they went about to change others. Their hearts were rent as well as their garments; and they knew the power and the work of God upon them." (William Penn, *The Rise and Progress of the People Called Quakers*, Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1976, p. 38)

**2.** When God is at work in our lives this causes us to be more acutely sensitized to the needs of those around us. Virtually all revivals and prophetic movements begin with people noticing that something is wrong with the direction the world is headed. Seeing others through Jesus' eyes cannot help but change the ways we respond to their needs. As John Woolman said,

"The outward modes of worship are various, but wherever men [and women] are true ministers of Jesus Christ it is from the operation of his Spirit upon their hearts, first purifying them and

thus giving them a feeling sense of the condition of others." (John Woolman, *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*, ed. by Phillips P. Moulton, New York: Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 31)

**3.** Ministry involves identifying human needs and then seeking to meet those needs, energized and empowered by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. One of the enduring beliefs of the Church is that its Lord is alive and actively seeking to lead His followers into Truth. He did not leave us as orphans but has sent His Spirit to empower us with all we need to be effective. As He ascended, Jesus promised His disciples,

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

As we enter the last decade of the millennium we stand at the turning of the age. Whether or not we have a redemptive impact upon the world around us remains to be seen, but who knows? Perhaps a simple act of faithfulness to the Truth may result in turning the world around. **EF**

### FRIENDS WRITE

**CORRECTION:** The Friends Write column on page 13 of the November/December issue had two important words omitted in the next to the last sentence. It should have read: "I pray that Friends *will not*, because of apathy, lose this opportunity to make a difference." Sorry, Carol, we know you wouldn't have made a statement like the one we printed.