

“Is the Church the Hope of the World?”

It is a common saying in religious circles that the church is the hope of the world. This question inevitably leads the objective mind to a bit of doubt. He immediately asks, “how can the church be the hope of the world when it is the most reactionary institution in society.”³³ In other words, the church is supposed to be the most radical opposer of the status quo in society, yet, in many instances, it is the greatest preserver of the status quo.³⁴ So it was very easy for slavery to receive a religious sanction.³⁵ The church is one of the chief exponents of racial bigotry. Monopoly capitalism has always received the sanction of the church.³⁶

Since this is the case, we must admit that the church is far from Christ. What has happened is this: the church, while flowing through the stream of history, has picked up the evils of little tributaries, and these tributaries have been so powerful

27 Keighton inserted “where” after the word “every” and added “d” to the end of the word “socialize.”

28 The 16th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified by the states in 1913, authorized a federal income tax. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) was established by Congress in 1933 for the purposes of electrical generation, navigation, and flood control. King may refer to either the National Recovery Act enacted in 1933 or the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) established in 1935, each of which sought to insure fair collective bargaining between businesses and unions. Keighton inserted a question mark following “N R B.”

29 Organized labor played a key role in the election of Harry S. Truman in 1948.

30 Keighton crossed out “might” and wrote “may” over it.

31 King paraphrases William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, act 2, sc. 2: “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet.” Keighton drew a line to this quotation and wrote at the end of the document, “Want to check this quotation? *Romeo & Juliet* II-ii-43-4.”

32 King folded this assignment lengthwise and signed his name on the verso of the last page.

33 Keighton drew an arrow to indicate that “asks” should come before “immediately,” and added a question mark at the end of the sentence.

34 Keighton added a “d” to the end of the word “suppose.”

35 Keighton inserted an “n” in the word “sanction.”

36 Keighton bracketed the phrase “monopoly capitalism” and wrote a question mark in the margin.

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that they have been able to overwhelm the main stream. In other words, the church has picked up a lot of historical vices. This is the tragedy of the church, for it has confused the vices of the church with the virtues of Christ. The church has been nothing but the slave of society; Whenever the mores call for evil practices, society runs to the church to get its sanction.

Therefore, I conclude that the church, in its present state, is not the hope of the world. I believe that nothing has so persistently and effectively blocked the way of salvation as the church. On the other hand, the church can be the hope of the world, but only when it returns to Christ. If we take Christ to the world, we will turn it upside down, but the tragedy is that we too often take Christianity.³⁷ It is our job as ministers to bring the church back to the center of the human race. But we can only bring the church back to the center of the human race when we bring Christ back to the center of the church.³⁸

[*signed*] M. L. King Jr.³⁹

AHDS CSKC Sermon file, folder 36, "Sermon Notes "

³⁷ Keighton added an "o" to the end of the word "to."

³⁸ Keighton circled the word "only" and drew an arrow to indicate that it should have come in between the words "race" and "when." At the end of this essay, Keighton wrote "You are careless in writing,—a characteristic that seems new!" Personal Comment Beware of making words carry the burden of thoughts. Do not substitute the one for the other. Would you be willing to debate your meanings of the words 'Church', 'Christianity' & 'Christ'? It is far too easy to make these things the whipping boys! Don't begin your ministry by taking this path."

³⁹ King folded this assignment lengthwise and signed his name on the verso of the last page.