

THE REFLECTOR

FULTONDALE CHURCH OF CHRIST

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LOVE NOT THE WORLD

by Connie W. Adams

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17).

The word "world" here does not mean the physical globe on which we live, but stands for the forces of evil in the world which are arrayed against the Lord and his will. Satan is referred to as "the prince of this world" (John 16:11). As he desired to "sift" Simon Peter as wheat (Luke 22:31), even so, he desires to "sift" us all by exposing us to the three avenues of temptation by which all have entered into sin. John said that to abide for ever we must do the will of God. This is placed in contrast to the world and its seductive voice. We cannot do the will of God and the will of the devil at the same time.

Worldliness is an improper attitude toward the world. It sets higher store by the praises and standards of those under Satan's power than it does the approval of God. Paul said those who are "risen with Christ" should set their affections "on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-2). "But the wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17). This is placed in contrast to that wisdom which is "earthly, sensual, devilish" and which ends in envying, strife, confusion and every evil work (verses 15-16).

It does not take a Solomon to see that among the professed children of God there seems to be a growing affection for the world and its will and a diminishing respect for the will of God to govern the conduct of his people. Every preacher who travels about among various congregations of our day knows what I am talking about. Not only have congregational activities been patterned after the "nations round about" in so far as the more liberal churches are concerned, but in

those same congregations and among those who claim to be conservative respecting Bible authority, there is observable a growing infatuation with the world.

Many of our men, young and old, have become so concerned with pleasing those about them in the world that they have adapted the grotesque dress, hair styles and speech of the rebels of society who seem bent upon depriving humanity of every vestige of dignity and self-respect. The language of our young is contaminated with the bizarre expressions of the hippie musicians to whom they listen by the hour.

Our women, young and old, have adorned themselves, not with modesty, shamefastness and sobriety, but with the alluring attire of the mini-skirt and tights (misnamed "slacks"). Nobody asks or expects our women to dress in the style of the eighteenth or

GOSPEL MEETING

NOVEMBER 29 - DECEMBER 4

7:30 P.M.

H. E. PHILLIPS

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nineteenth centuries. But it is shameful when so much flesh is exposed to the public eye as is true in places of worship and elsewhere. What are mothers using for sense when they allow their daughters to go to school, to say nothing of a place of worship, looking like a sex symbol? Why are fathers not exercising their headship in their families to put a stop to it? And, by the way, where are the preachers? Where are the elders? Are they all blind? Certainly such problems must be resolved with wisdom, but they **MUST** be resolved if the will of God is done.

Worldly attitudes toward error have devastating effects. The world peace movement in politics and the ecumenical movement in religion have had their effect upon some among us who want to back away from the fight with sin and error, find a convenient spot on the plains of Ono to negotiate with the devil, and raise a terrible outcry against anyone with the affrontery to ask them to clarify their ambiguity, if not outright compromise.

What, other than the spirit of the world, is behind the woeful lack of corrective discipline throughout the land? Have numbers become such an important barometer that we have overlooked the fact that pruning is necessary to growth? What did Paul mean when he said "mark them which cause divisions and

offenses contrary to the doctrine and avoid them" (Romans 16:17-18)? What did he mean when he said to "deliver such an one to Satan", "purge out the old leaven" and "put away from among yourselves that wicked person" in 1 Corinthians 5? What does "withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly" mean in 2 Thessalonians 3:6? The spirit of the world calls for blindly covering these aberrations with what it mistakenly calls "love" while God and his will are dishonored all the while.

The church is in the world to radiate the light of divine truth. Its members must be salt, light and leaven to permeate every corner of the globe. But when the world gets in the church the salt loses its savor, the light is hidden under a bushel and the leaven spreads evil and not good. Moses regarded the pleasures of sin as only "for a season" (Heb. 11:25). So must we consider them. Paul said "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). Hearing and doing the will of God builds our house upon the rock and endures through eternity. Hearing the siren call of the world and submitting to its temptations builds upon the sand and eventuates in everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. Make up your mind.

by George I. Jones

WHICH DOES THE LORD LIKE BETTER?

On a recent, cold Saturday, quite early for Saturday, I was sitting in the den reviewing one of my lessons for the next day. The door bell rang and I answered the door. Standing there was a very young teenager who clearly communicated his message. He was from a denominational Church in our area. The lad politely told me of their services, extended an invitation to attend and handed me a form letter written by their pastor, urging attendance and assuring welcome. I tried to be equally polite, accepted his literature and thanked him for calling. After I'd shut the door and sat down to my study again, I found it harder to concentrate because of some thoughts which naggingly tugged my mind.

On another occasion about two years ago, a service man from a local business machine firm called at the study to make an adjustment on the church typewriter. He was a genial person and we talked as he worked. Seeing my library, he expressed an interest in religious books and his conversation led to further talk of religious activity. Turns out he's a Baptist and a member of the First Baptist Church. He told me of their efforts at "personal witnessing" for Christ. He described their preparation, on the part of those who volunteered for this work. Then related how they went door-to-door in pairs. He stressed that they didn't try to make Baptists out of folks but to prevail

on them to give themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. He left me that day with my mind wrestling with some thoughts. In fact, I haven't been able to put this typewriter service man and his deep earnestness out of my mind.

Some of my readers are probably ready to ask, "Didn't you tell this teenager and this service man how wrong they are?" As a matter of fact, I didn't! I could have told them that if they would become members of the Church of Christ they wouldn't have to get out early on cold Saturday mornings or after dark and go door-knocking to try to bring folks in; because the Church of Christ builds a building, erects a sign in front of it and expects people to come, even though a large per cent of those in the Church of Christ don't come except on Sunday morning.

I could have told them how the congregation I preach for has made a few attempts at activity related to this and only a few were interested initially and the efforts soon fizzled out and were even opposed by some. But some how or other, I couldn't work up enough enthusiasm to make a spiel like that to this teenager or the service man—even though it's the truth.

Which leads me to the end of this little piece and the question at its head. Will you give the question a solemn, truthful answer?

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EDWARD O. BRAGWELL, SR., Editor

SCHEDULE

Sunday:

BIBLE STUDY	9:45 A.M.
WORSHIP	10:45 A.M.
WORSHIP	6:30 P.M.

Wednesday:

BIBLE STUDY	10:00 A.M.
BIBLE STUDY	7:30 P.M.

THE DEEPER ISSUES OF OUR STRUGGLE

by Luther Blackmon

Brother N. B. Hardeman told a story about a man who received a telegram which read as follows: "Your Uncle James, being advanced in years, and being debilitated both physically and intellectually by reason of the frailties that attach to the encroachment of senility, and having suffered severe financial reverses, in a moment of temporary dementia precipitated his own demise." Not being familiar with the terminology of the message he took it to a neighbor for translation. "Well," said the neighbor after reading it over, "it just says that your Uncle Jim got old, lost his wad, went nuts and bumped himself off."

Some time ago I read in a bulletin the following: "Nurtured on a piety in which God is lavished with our saccharine love and a theology in which membership in the right religious institution becomes the key to salvation, our morality, gutted by a process of spiritualization which psychologizes and disembodies all our social responsibilities, and the legal systematization which catalogues an impersonal list of touch-me-nots, we modern christians are unable to recognize the towering presence of unbelief, especially in ourselves."

When you strip the excess fat from this logomachy it sounds like the brother is trying to tell us that our religion is anemic and our love for God hypocritical because our faith has been stunted by such scriptural

handicaps as the contention that *salvation is only in Christ*, hence in the one body which is His church (2 Tim. 2:10; Eph. 1:3; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18-24; Eph. 4:4, etc.); that the work of the church is primarily spiritual and not social, designed to prepare people for heaven rather than trying to solve the world's social ills, and by placing upon us certain restrictions—certain "don'ts."

In the same article the writer tells us that the people who emphasize the need and necessity of immersion and oppose the musical instrument in worship are fools. I don't get excited every time I am called a fool. I learned some time back that there are different kinds of fools. I don't even mind very much making some enemies if I make them by contending for what I believe to be the truth. When Senator Vilas nominated Grover Cleveland for a second term he said, among other things, "We love him for the enemies he has made." Neither am I greatly disturbed if my "love" is not the quality and measure that this "Church of Christ" preacher thinks it ought to be. I have noticed for several years now that my preaching brethren hardly ever reach the intellectual pinnacle and develop the capacity for love indicated by this brother until they have attended a denominational school of religion and outgrown the Bible. "This is the love of God that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). I'll settle for this if I can make it.

Our learned brother continues (and this brought to mind some questions): "The deeper issues of our struggle are . . . clarifying the alternatives between faith and unfaith . . . and developing an honest and articulate faith which is willing to risk itself in combat with worldly-wise and intelligent exponents of unfaith."

I don't think I know this fellow personally, but anyone who has been keeping up with the trends in this brotherhood will, like Isaac of old, recognize his voice. I could not help wondering when I read this, just what kind of ammunition this preacher would use if he should encounter one of these "worldly-wise and intelligent exponents of unfaith." Surely, he would not try to use the Bible. That would invite certain defeat because he either doesn't know much about that book or he doesn't believe enough of it. An intelligent infidel would make him look like Lil' Abner at a scientists' convention.

In any contest there must be some norm, some standard. Otherwise, there could be neither winner nor loser. If there are such things as right and wrong, truth and error, then there is a standard by which these things are determined. Otherwise, we have only a war of words. What is our standard of authority? With what shall we meet the "exponents of unfaith"?

Is revelation subjective? Then there are as many standards as there are individuals. Is the Bible the

standard? Whose Bible? Karl Barth's? Emil Brunner's? With a bible that has been "guttled" by the compromise of timid souls and by those who have been captivated by the "wisdom of the world"?

I must confess that all I know about my duty to my Creator came from the Bible. All I know about the Bible is found in the words of the Bible. Words in the Bible mean just what they mean anywhere else. A combination of words make a sentence. Sentences convey thoughts. A sentence in the Bible conveys the same thought now that it conveyed when it was written. If God had *anything* to do with writing the Bible, He had *everything* to do with it. If God meant to convey any message through the words of the Bible, that message is still there and means just what it meant 1900 years ago. Twentieth century science, vanity and

deification of human wisdom have not changed that. The word *baptize* meant immerse when the New Testament was written and it still means that. Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:18-20, Luke 1:34,35 teach now just what they taught 1900 years ago, namely, that Jesus was miraculously conceived and born of a virgin. First Corinthians 15 and other scriptures teach that he was raised from the dead. Hebrews 9 teaches that his blood made atonement for our sins. Men with confidence in these things will not cringe in the presence of "towering unbelief." If the Bible is the word of God then man must obey it, and he can find out what it teaches only by finding out what it says. If some of the Bible can be ignored or rewritten with impunity, then why not all of it?

Paradoxes of Living: CARING

"Every time I care, I get hurt. My three kids got all my love, my energy, my everything. I really cared for them. But since they've grown up I've had to insulate myself from them. They have hurt me too much already. Two of them married bums and the only time they care about me is when they need money. To the third one, I'm just a babysitter while he and his wife go out with HER parents. Care a little, stick your neck out, and you get it chopped off."

What a strain it is on one's faith in virtues like caring if he cares for the wrong purposes or with the wrong ends in mind. As commendable as it is to throw yourself into loving and caring for another, such a virtue can become a destructive vice.

For caring to be a worthwhile part of your life:

(1) Let it be an expression of love. Paul suggests how far caring could go without love: "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor. . . and have not charity, I am nothing" (1 Cor. 13:3). When you care because you love, you are "never selfish, not quick to take offense." Such love "keeps no score of wrongs" (v. 5,6a, NEB).

(2) Especially care for those who don't care for you. "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee" (Prov. 25:21,22).

(3) Care wholly, wholeheartedly. You can't afford to do this unless you are wholly, wholeheartedly Christian. The risk is too great. But if the care of a surrendered child of God is wasted, he won't fall far before the arms of His heavenly Father cushion him.

(4) Don't expect reward or even recognition. This is caring for the wrong purpose. Let reward or recognition be a surprise, like it was to the righteous people described in Matthew 25:34-40.

Caring is risky. But caring because God cares for you isn't.

