

THE MADNESS OF SIN

by J. D. Harvey

The question of what constitutes reality is more than an abstract problem for philosophical minds. It is of vital importance for everyone, for our eternal salvation lies in our ability to separate the real from the unreal in the swiftly-shifting scenes which make up our lives in this world.

Some have cast doubt upon both the materiality of the universe and the validity of the senses. However, the dividing line between that which is real and that which is unreal is basically neither physical nor psychological—it is moral.

Satan is called "the father of lies," and the very fabric of his kingdom is woven of falsehoods, or unreality. The lie is the opposite of the truth. The truth is the thing that is; the lie is the thing that is not. This is why the followers of Satan, in the end, find life empty and devoid of meaning.

Satan's picture of reality is not reality—it is rather a mirror image of life. It looks like the real thing, as lust sometimes looks like love, but everything is in reverse. When we seek to grasp it, we grasp not life but death.

When we read the Book of Revelation, we see that there is a false image of everything good and holy. The false image of Christ is the Antichrist; the false image of the New Jerusalem is Babylon; the false image of the Lamb is the Beast; the false image of the Bride is the harlot. These symbolic representations are pictures of the antipodes of the moral universe. The code of the kingdom of Satan is, "Evil, be thou my good." The worst evil appears as the highest good. In the extreme depths of delusion, the drunkard sees his highest good in drink, the libertine in sensuality, and the miser in his money.

However, there are levels of falsehood which are difficult to distinguish from the real thing. Here lies the adversary's power to deceive. The Antichrist will not appear outwardly as an evil person, but rather as a brilliant, soft-spoken, personable friend of humanity. Babylon does not appear as a culture of greed and sensuality and cruelty, but rather as the very essence of refined civilization, patroness of the arts, the sciences and the humanities. The harlot, the counterpart of the church, will not appear to be atheistic—she will be very religious; her sin is spiritual adultery, false doctrine, heresy and idolatry.

We may note in passing that the overtures of Pope John's Ecumenical Council toward the Eastern Orthodox groups, the Russian segment of which is under the influence of the Kremlin—that same Orthodox group which united with the World Council of Churches at New Delhi—may well presage the temporary union of atheistic, political Babylon with ecclesiastical Babylon, which seems to be hinted at in the Scriptures, as a part of those events leading to the end of the age.

However that may be, there are too many today who are looking at the mirror image of life rather than at reality. Babylon seduces the young with the promise to show them what life is really about. She seduces the gay with the promise of pleasure; the serious-minded with the power of her pagan philosophies; the sensitive, with the beauty of her arts and crafts. But her arts too often pander to depraved tastes, and her sciences to the bloody struggle for world mastery, and her streets are filled with the living dead—men possessing animation but no life. In God's sight they are "dead in trespasses and sins." They are vain, empty, corrupt, and occupied with unreality.

One has only to look into the murky depths of the writings of such men as Sigmund Freud to measure the depths of human depravity. The Old Destroyer manipulates the life forces which seem necessary for the survival of the natural man in a fallen world. These are the natural

TAKE TIME TO PRAY

Dr. S. D. Gordon has said, "The great people of the earth today are the people who pray—people who take time to pray. They have not time. It must be taken from something else. That something is important, very important and pressing, but still less important and pressing than prayer. There are people who put prayer first and group the other items in life's schedule around and after prayer. These are the people today who are doing the most for God in winning souls; in solving problems; in awakening churches to supply both men and money for mission posts; in keeping their lives fresh and strong in sacrificial service on the foreign field, where the thickest fighting is going on; in keeping the old earth sweet a little while longer."

GIVING

Giving is an essential part of the Christian religion . . . The system of redemption is, from first to last, one prodigious process of gift . . . Every man on whose spirit the true light of redemption breaks, finds himself heir to a heritage of givings, which began on the eve of time, and will keep pace with the course of eternity. To giving he owes his all; in giving he sees the most substantial evidence he can offer, that he is a grateful debtor; and the self-sacrifice of Him in Whom he trusts says, far more pathetically than words can say, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."—William Arthur.

desires for security and for the gratification of the bodily appetites. They include also the more subtle urges to gain superiority over our fellows. These elemental drives have been twisted into fear, pride and sensuality. It was the diabolical manipulation of these traits which accomplished the fall of Adam in the Garden. It was the failure to manipulate them in the humanity of our Saviour in the temptation in the wilderness which constituted His victory for us as the Second Adam.

Satan tempts us to selfish and self-centered uses of every human gift and motivation. Sin is selfishness. Selfishness seeks to preserve and gratify the life of the flesh at any cost. The sinner, the selfish person, will tread upon his fellows, and defy God in order to do so. This is madness. This is loss of contact with reality. The world is suffering from the mad hallucination that they can live without God. The greatest madness of all is the rejection of the truth that is in Jesus. Jesus said, "I am the truth."

The Bible warns us to "fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." Sin is suicide. But the Bible says, "If we confess our sins, he (Jesus) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Unregenerate men are mere cells or capsules of void, where God is not. They are empty bubbles of inflated selfhood, filled with their own emptiness. The apostle Paul reminded the pagan Greeks that even they lived and moved and had their being in God. When we plead for forgiveness and for the new birth, the Spirit of Christ is able to pierce the fleshly membrane of the selfhood and pour through the rent, life, light, love, and Himself! Who that is filled with Christ can ever live selfishly again?

Love must reign supreme in the regenerate heart. Love is all. Heaven is founded on grace, and shines with the splendor of holiness, but it is fashioned of love. Love paves her streets with transparent gold, love fashions her mansions and flings open her gates to a perishing universe, and love has come to dwell in her in the person of Christ. Love is the greatest of all realities, for God is love.

—The Free Methodist

The King's Highway