

THE KIND OF RELIGION THAT GOD HATES

by Virgil Vogt

We usually think the man without any religion is the one who falls under the judgment of God. However, the Bible makes it clear again and again that certain religious men are even worse in God's sight. And these are not the followers of some heathen religion, but religious men who regularly worship the one true God of Israel.

At first this thought may surprise you, but let us investigate. Listen, for example, to the message which God once sent to His people through the prophet Amos: "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal offerings, I will not accept them . . . take away from me the noise of your songs . . . (5:21-23)."

Was it that these people were without any religion, or that they had stopped worshipping the God of their fathers? No, not at all. They were, on the contrary, a very religious people. They kept all the Jewish feasts and festivals. They brought offerings and sacrifices to Jehovah. They regularly contributed their tithes (Amos 4:4) and even beyond the tithe, their free will offerings (4:5). Such things they "loved to do" (4:5). They even spoke with great anticipation about the "Day of the Lord" (5:18). What fine religious people, we might think. If only some of our American church-goers could be as religious as they were!

Yet God looked down upon these religious people and said, "I hate your religion." I despise your feasts. I refuse to receive your offerings. When you sing I wish you would be quiet. When you pray I stop my ears!"

Why? What was wrong? The prophet Amos spelled out his answer in no uncertain terms. He made it clear at the beginning of his message (chap. 2) that God's judgment was coming upon the people of Israel 1) because of their economic greed—the people were terribly materialistic—and 2) because of their immorality. Both of these were related to the acceptance of certain practices of Caananite worship. Thus we are reminded that no matter how fervently people pray, or how loudly they sing, or how zealously they bring their tithes — if covetousness and immorality are being practiced among them, God hates that kind of religion. It means nothing at all to Him. He despises it.

How is it with you, my friend? Perhaps you are a very religious person, an active member of your church, serving on several committees, contributing regularly in church offerings. Is there, however, any immorality and impurity hidden away in your life? What kind of thoughts go through your mind as you look at the scantily dressed women who adorn the pages of our popular magazines today? What goes on in your mind as you spend those hours before the TV set, or as you observe shapes and styles on the bathing beach? Jesus said, "Every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matt. 5)." Are you guilty of this sin? Is it lying hidden away in your life, unconfessed and without repentance and forgiveness? If so, let me tell you, God hates your kind of religion! Going to church profits you nothing. Your songs and your prayers mean nothing to God.

This sin of immorality and impurity is so widespread among church people today that such things are found even among religious leaders. More than a few ministers have confessed in my hearing that such sins have been hidden in their lives at the very time when they were standing before their congregations week by week, pretending to be men who speak for God. Is it any wonder that things go from bad to worse under their leadership? God hates such mockery!

Paul says, "Be sure of this, that no immoral or impure The King's Highway

WHO SAID PASTORS ARE OVERPAID?

A study which appeared not long ago in *Business Week* magazines should be of interest to all church people. In a list of 20 businesses and professions, showing lifetime earnings of men during the years 18-64, ministers are last. The estimates are made by the Census Bureau:

Doctors	\$717,000
Lawyers	621,000
Managers & proprietors (with college degrees)	593,000
Dentists	589,000
Natural scientists:	
Geologists	446,000
Biologists	310,000
Social scientists:	
Economists	413,000
Psychologists	335,000
Engineers:	
Aeronautical	395,000
Civil	335,000
Teachers:	
College	324,000
High school	261,000
Elementary	232,000
Accountants	313,000
Electricians	251,000
Airplane mechanics	248,000
Plumbers	236,000
Carpenters	185,000
Radio & TV mechanics	183,000
Clergymen	175,000

THE BEST TIME TO GET SANCTIFIED

John Wesley wrote to Thomas Rankin, first superintendent of American Methodism, "I have been thinking lately a good deal on one point, wherein, perhaps, we have been wanting. We have not made it a rule, as soon as ever persons are justified to remind them of going on to perfection." Whereas this is the very time preferable to all others. They have then the simplicity of little children; and they are fervent in spirit and ready to cut off a right hand or to pluck out a right eye. But if we once allow this fervor to subside, we shall find it hard enough to bring them again even to the point."

man, or one who is covetous (that is, an idolator), has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 5).

Let no one deceive you! The immoral and impure shall not inherit the Kingdom. Yet many today are being deceived. Such impurity exists in the lives of many church people and yet they are so religious and so faithful in all the church activities that they seem to feel that their heart is right towards God.

Young people, in particular, are being deceived by the thousands. Just think of this: Jesus said, if a man looks on a woman lustfully, he is already an immoral man before God. How then do you think God must feel about it when the young man who has looked on a woman lustfully takes her out in his car at night, they stop the car on some quiet road and for several hours indulge in the most suggestive kinds of bodily contact. We call this courtship. God calls it immorality. And yet many young folks are regularly engaging in this kind of relationship, and still they come to church and think they are Christians. What nonsense! Do not be deceived; no immoral or impure person has any inheritance in the Kingdom of God.

God hates that kind of religion.

—The Herald