

YOUTH WITH VISION

THE MEANING OF WORLDLINESS

Rev. E. W. Tokley

What is worldliness? John writing of it says: "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, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world". (I John 2:15, 16).

These words suggest among other things, a pattern of worldliness, and a consideration of it may help us to answer our question. Note that John says, that which is "in the world" is "of the world." It is its product, and it is patterned by it and after it.

The thought of a pattern of worldliness is suggested also by Paul in Romans 12:2: "Be not conformed to this world." J. B. Phillips renders that: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould," and the idea of a mould suggests a pattern, and "its own mould," the world's peculiar pattern. The New English Bible gives a like thought with: "Adapt yourselves no longer to the pattern of this world."

This pattern has to do with things, and so we have John's warning concerning "the things that are in the world" and are "of the world." Of course we would not class as worldly all the pleasures, activities, and associations non-Christians enjoy. It has been rightly said that "it is not the Christian view to lump together all human delights and label them as being 'of this world'". Yet there are things that are distinctly worldly. They are, regardless of our attitude toward them. They are the world's product and clearly bear its marks or traits. John says of them, they are not of God and are contrary to His will. Such things are many and varied, and they include things to see, things to hear, things to read, things to wear, things to imitate, things to join, things to do, as well as possessions to gain, customs to follow, and places to frequent.

The New English Bible rendering of our scripture defines them as: "all that panders to the appetites, or entices the eyes, (and) all the glamour of life." Evidently John was thinking of things desired, as well as of the desire for such things. Without a doubt much of the world's pressure comes

by way of the attraction of things that make their appeal to the appetites, the eyes, and the spirit of pride or vain glory. These are the things that often defile and mar, and that lessen and destroy the appetite for things spiritual and eternal.

Then worldliness may also be a pattern of doing things. Even good things may be done, or attempted, in a way definitely worldly. Motive of course must be considered, but sometimes motives may be good and methods wrong. Thus the handling and managing of many of the affairs of life, including the work of the church and the business of God, may be of the world rather than of God.

William's Translation of Romans 12:2 is: "Stop living in accordance with the customs of this world." Much of our doing is according to custom, right or wrong. "Everybody's doing it" is so often said, and so custom settles our way of doing, and often it is the custom of the world. Dr. Dale wrote that to be worldly is "to regulate our life by public opinion instead of religious principle; to do as others do without inquiring why they do it; to follow the crowd without inquiring where exactly they are going."

Actually, worldliness is a pattern to which the whole life may be moulded or fashioned. Joe Brice, friend of Samuel Chadwick, wrote, "The world is a way of life easily distinguishable from that proposed by Christ. There is no affinity between them; in fact there is fundamental disparity. Worldliness is self, in one form or another, asserting its will against the will of the Father." That, too, is the teaching of John, who gives doing God's will as His alternative to the way of the world.

Concluding, according to our text worldliness is also a matter of what John calls "love" and "lust." The two are really the same, unless the lusting, or much desiring, or craving, is the result of the loving. In any case, the worldliness is of the heart, the seat of affections and desires, the source of the inner liking and longings. It has been said, often, that worldliness is a matter of the motives and desires which dominate and direct the life. These, again, are of the heart. One hymn poet wrote of "the secret springs, the motives that control; the chambers where polluted things hold empire o'er the soul." It is there, too, that the world without, with its forbidden things, finds a response to its powerful, persistent, and often subtle appeals.

Many of the Bible warnings concerning worldliness, are written to Christians, and John's message is one of them. That seems

to indicate their constant danger. J. Gregory Mantle wrote years ago of worldliness, that "it is the devil's principal weapon for lowering and poisoning the heavenly life in the individual and in the Church, and for antagonising and destroying the work of the Holy Spirit.

"I'd rather have Jesus than anything this world affords today" be our testimony and stand.

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board a ship and left him to live or die on lonely Patmos. What must have been the feelings of this man so accustomed to deep friendships! When God saw what had taken place He said, "I'm going to do something I have not done since the World began. We are going to move down to Patmos — heaven, angels, throne, and everything else belonging." So the first Sunday morning that John was there God set Heaven down on the Island. If ever a man had good company it was John; if ever a human got information on things celestial it was John. And all that his enemies accomplished by their little trick was to have a man return in a few months that really could preach. God knows how to "deliver the godly out of temptation." We may be able to ask a thousand questions for which we can find no satisfactory answer but this fact is large enough for many of the most difficult ones: God is mindful of us. Discouraged soul repeat it again and again, it will do something wonderful to you.

TAKE A SECOND LOOK

FOREWORD: This article is the second of a series. The subject of each article will be a familiar word, phrase, or Scripture verse which demands a closer look. The purpose is to make these words more meaningful and to point out misuses that may have developed in their histories. I offer these articles only as purely personal footnotes on the language of the Kingdom.

Howard L. Cogswell

No. 2: WORLDLINESS

The very minor point I wish to make concerning the words "worldly" and "worldliness" has to be pushed a little to fit this series. It may, however, serve as a useful footnote to the article by Mr. Tokley in this issue of the **Highway**. These words deserve a second look because they have a much broader connotation than they usually receive in our everyday conversation. We speak of "worldly amusements," "worldly pleasures," and "worldly adornments" and

aim our attacks at these symptoms instead of at the seat of the problem. The point I wish to make is that worldliness reaches farther and deeper than these symptoms and that "unworldliness" cannot be achieved by paring away layers of things.

The neglected symptoms

Mr. Tokley shows us that worldliness is a whole pattern of living. He shows us that it includes not only a predilection for things but also a way of doing things, and that it is essentially a disease of the heart. Any attempt at healing it, then, must touch the heart. Worldliness is a serious and widespread disease in our denomination and in others, but we must not waste our warnings, invectives, and epithets by aiming them at such trivia as television, hairdos, and hockey games. All of these are symptoms, but unimportant symptoms. Mr. Tokley wrote that worldliness is of the heart. We should not neglect those symptoms of worldliness that point us to a heart problem. I should like to draw your attention to a few