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Christ for Me!

Walter Scott

*"O pardon us, Lord! That our love to Thy name
Is so faint, with so much our affections to move!
Our coldness might fill us with grief and with shame
So much to be loved, and so little to love.*

*"O kindle within us a holy desire,
Like that which was found in Thy people of old,
Who tasted Thy love, and whose hearts were on fire,
While they waited, in patience, Thy face to behold."*

It was with tearful eyes and with mingled shame and sorrow that, some time ago, we sang those verses in company with others. How we longed for the fire of a holy enthusiasm, for the burning zeal of a Paul, the fervor of a Peter, and the all-absorbing love of a John! Power was the distinguishing feature of the apostolic age. Under Pagan and Papal Rome, love to Christ was the prominent characteristic of the beloved saints who, for His sake, counted not their lives dear unto them. In our day and generation and all-consuming personal devotedness to Christ and His interests is but lightly valued and intelligence in the things and Word of God is rated at a high degree.

This may be our last appeal to our beloved fellow-members of one body united to Christ in glory, and in the deepening sense that we are about to pass into His presence, we would say to one and all, Give yourselves wholly, heartily and freely to Christ. Let "Christ for me!" be the aim and object of life. Turn away from the strifes and quarrels of men and saints, unless vital questions are concerned. Be earnest, humble, patient, enthusiastic in life, in service, in testimony. Do

not, however, enter into covenant with the Lord, nor make vows, nor enter into written engagement to be the Lord's. Let the power be in the heart, and not on paper, or on the lips merely. Be out and out for Christ, your heart given to Him, and set your whole mind on heavenly things. Earnestly we press full surrender of heart and all to Christ; but in the Macedonian order, "first" yourselves to Him (2 Cor. 8:5), and then what you have. We dread a mere appeal to the feelings, a fit of fervor for the passing moment, then a return to the old state of apathy and indifference. What maintains personal devotedness; what creates, fans, and causes our hearts to burn is Christ. What imparts energy of character is Christ, known as man in glory (Phil. 3). The only answer to a dull and indolent state of heart and life is CHRIST. All else save Christ on high and we in Him, or Christ in us (Rom. 8:1, 10), is but "dross" and "dung." Christ in glory is our true and only "gold." O live unto Him as "constrained" by the love of Christ, but let your holy resolve be also the fruit of the calm judgment of the soul, formed in the Lord's presence (2 Cor. 5:14,15). May God impress upon our lives Paul's life-long motto, "One thing I do" -.

*"Him first and last, Him all day long,
My hope, my solace, and my song;
He sweetly leads my soul along.
Christ for me! Christ for me!"*

We shouldn't ever interpret Biblical teaching in the light of present practice; rather, present practice must be compared with Biblical teaching.

The Lord's Supper

Joel Portman

The central meeting of any assembly of Christians gathered solely to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ on New Testament grounds is clearly the Lord's Supper. Other

"Truths for our Day"

is a monthly publication that is freely available on the Internet and is intended to be a help to believers who appreciate the timeless truths of God's Word and who recognize the unchanging principles of God's will for His people. It is primarily intended to strengthen those who enjoy fellowship in local assemblies of believers who are gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

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meetings of the assembly are also important, and none should ever be neglected. Sadly, there are those who seem to think that the Lord's Supper is the only meeting that they should make an effort to attend, but this is a serious mistake. Likewise, we believe that all meetings should be governed by the same principles of conduct, dress, behavior and expression of spiritual exercise, seeing that all have been instituted according to our Lord's will and are marked by His own particular, personal presence in the midst. One might rank the meetings in some manner, and we grant that the Lord's Supper is the preeminent focus of the assembly, but a proper estimation of its character and importance would also result in our recognition of the importance of one's presence at all meetings. This one gathering was specifically instituted by the Lord Himself, and Paul places definite and proper emphasis on this fact when he gives the Corinthian believers instruction to correct their improper behavior at this solemn remembrance. It was the "the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread. . ." (1 Cor. 11:23), so this is an aspect that we should hold in our minds and hearts, since it was the last command to His own ere He went to Calvary to suffer for them.

Purpose of the Lord's Supper

It is clear that the original practice of the Lord's Supper in the early church was marked by two characteristics: its stark simplicity, and its superlative spirituality. A survey of church history and recognition of its present practice generally in professing churches shows how sadly departure has eroded and erased those two marks. It has been complicated into a "sacrament of grace", i.e., one that imparts grace to the participants by some mystical means, or changed into the complicated ceremonial seen in the mass of the Roman Catholic church system. Even in Protestant churches, it has suffered a great loss of its importance in order to accommodate and give priority to an ordained man preaching a message, with it being an "afterthought" at the end. That was never the intention of our blessed Lord, nor of the apostles. Even the words used to describe it

militate against the complication of this remembrance into anything ceremonial.

Along with that corruption, there is obviously a degeneration in its spiritual character. Those who attend may not even be genuine believers, and if they are, their lives may not express any evidence of spirituality. Often it is celebrated monthly or less and unbelievers who consider themselves "worthy" partake as well as true believers. This is religious confusion! Also attending a ceremony never requires any depth of spiritual exercise, since those who are present are not expected to participate in any way other than observe and repeat by rote (at times). Everything depends on the functioning of those who are "ordained" to fulfill that role.

However, we don't seek to change practices in churches at large. Nor could we! It is enough to consider whether or not assemblies can corrupt this solemn remembrance by carelessness or lack of concern for its vital importance. We must ask ourselves if we complicate the simplicity of the Supper by adding acts that border on ceremonialism or ritualism. For instance, some have made it part of the Supper to have one brother take the bread and elevate it while he gives thanks for it. Likewise for the cup. This is beyond what the Scriptures teach. Some may demand that only certain recognized men can distribute the memorials and can only do it in a certain, prescribed manner. We must seek to maintain Scriptural order without transgressing into the introduction of man-made rules that exceed its simplicity.

Likewise, it is our responsibility to realize the importance of coming to remember the Lord with exercise of heart and with genuine preparation of our minds and spirits prior to doing so. We are enjoined to "examine" ourselves and then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. That examination is not at the supper; it is prior to the supper, and it involves confession of sin with a contrite spirit before the Lord. Matt. 5:23-24 suggests that before we offer any sacrifice of praise (at any time, but especially at this time), we need to be reconciled to our brethren and seek to remove any issues that might separate us from our brother or sister. This may be difficult, but it's not impossible on our part to attempt to do so, having a desire that our own conscience might be clear

before the Lord on any matter. It's amazing in some cases, that believers will remember the Lord together with others, and then refuse to shake their hands afterward! Those of Israel who responded to the Lord's command to present themselves before Him at the solemn Day of Atonement were to do so having afflicted their souls (Lev. 16:29), indicating repentance, confession, and abstinence from food. It was to indicate the solemnity of this dealing with their sins before God, and while it was the only fast commanded under the Mosaic law, it indicates the exercise of soul that should be demonstrated in all who are having dealings with God. Other feasts of Jehovah were to be marked by their responsiveness to His call and the joy of being able to meet with Him and with other Israelites.

We also need to remember that the exhortation to examine ourselves is not, as some use it, indicating that any person who comes to be present only needs to examine themselves whether or not he or she should partake of the emblems. No, this word was addressed to those who were already in assembly fellowship, not to someone who might come who is not in fellowship at that local assembly. We will say more about this.

Our coming to the Lord's Supper is not only to thank God for the blessings of salvation, though that may form part of our expression. We note that the Lord's Supper is never called a "worship" meeting, though we often refer to it in this way. Nevertheless, it is the central meeting of the assembly for that purpose, though every gathering of the believers as an assembly should have some form of worship. It is a meeting to remember and express worship to the Blessor more than for the blessings. It is an opportunity for believers to function collectively as a priesthood, offering up spiritual sacrifices and praise to honor the Lord Jesus (Heb. 13:15). It is a meeting to Remember Him (Lk. 22:19), and He should be the focus of our thoughts. As a sacrifice of praise, we must have something to offer, and He is the One who is worthy to be presented to the Father out of our appreciation of Him. This includes consideration of His glorious person, His Deity, perfect humanity, sinless purity, unswerving obedience to God to the point of the Cross death, as well as

His glorious resurrection and exaltation to God's right hand. It is HE that we consider and present to the Father. Joseph reminded his brothers that they were to "tell my father of all my glory" (Gen. 45:13), and we have far more to tell than they.

We are often reminded that possession of gift is not required in worship. Gift is for service, but worship flows from hearts that have been occupied with the Lord Jesus and appreciating His greatness and goodness toward us. Chafer said that "Worship is the overflow of the heart in appreciation of all that God is in Christ." Some brethren never, or rarely, participate publicly at the Lord's Supper. This possibly indicates a paucity of appreciation, lack of meditation and preparation, or a sad habit of coming without the intention of expressing worship and praise. It may be due to one thinking that his participation in public expression of worship is a competition with other brethren, and since one cannot "perform" or express as well as others, silence is preferred. This should never be entertained in our thoughts! Those of Israel brought the materials out of their dwellings to build the tabernacle. Some had different abilities but all brought something "of a willing heart" (Ex. 35:5) or whose heart "stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing" (35:21). Israel was challenged by Jehovah in Malachi 3:8 by the question, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. . . in tithes and offerings." They not only offered polluted bread on the altar (1:7), but they also offered animals that were not suitable to a human governor (1:8), thus dishonoring Him (1:6). Beloved, do we do anything the equivalent of this sad practice? Are we coming to remember the Lord, but with the wrong attitude of mind and heart, as those in Corinth? Do we come physically, but not spiritually, occupied with cell phones, electronic devices, and reading rather than centering thoughts on Him and expressing worship that is suitable to Him? This is a dishonor to His glorious Name and indicates our failure to recognize the sacredness of the moment and the reality of His own blessed presence.

Sometimes believers say that we come to remember the Lord so that we might not forget Him or His sufferings for us. There may

be some measure of truth in that saying; however, we never read in God's Word that we come to receive. Rather, we come to give. It really isn't a question of whether I receive anything or not; the issue is whether He receives what is His due. We come to remember Him. If we come to give our heartfelt worship and honor to Him, we will inevitably receive much from that activity. The more that we come to give, the more that we will receive. But it seems that the need to be thus reminded of Him and His death for us indicates a poor conception of how precious He is and must be to a child of God who has been redeemed by His precious blood. How could one not remember Him daily? How could any believer in Christ fail to find their thoughts turned again and yet again to His work and the depth of suffering that He endured? Are we so shallow in our appreciation of Christ that we must have a meeting to remind us of Him? Granted that the time spent listening to others expressing worship and praise, along with personal meditation on Christ and Calvary, will inevitably refresh our minds and revive in our hearts a love and devotion for Him, recognizing that He is worthy to receive far more than we ever do or can render to Him. So it does have that value as well, but that is not its primary purpose.

Placement of the Lord's Supper

Two principles characterized the Lord's Supper in the apostolic days: first, it was an act of a local assembly of believers that had been established by a work of the Holy Spirit in a place. Secondly, it was only celebrated on the first day of the week. To practice it otherwise is contrary to the precept and practice of the Scriptures.

Ideally, in the New Testament, every believer in Christ was also in fellowship in a local assembly. The fact that this is no longer the case doesn't change the pattern of our Bible. We shouldn't ever interpret Biblical teaching in the light of present practice; rather, present practice must be compared with Biblical teaching. The teaching of the epistles and the practice in the Acts doesn't specifically emphasize this, since very clearly, there were no other "church" gatherings outside local assemblies. As a result, we learn that the disciples came together as an assembly in Troas on the first

day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7). A number of factors are important in this event: one is that Paul, in his journey to Jerusalem, arrived at Troas after sailing from Philippi, but then waited seven days until the first day of the week. It would have facilitated his journey to meet with and break bread with the believers right away. But it would not have been on the first day of the week. So Paul establishes a precedent so far as timing. Then we see that those who came together were the disciples, and though it is not stated, this was a local assembly that had regularly established gatherings, not simply a time when they decided to come together only as Christians.

Again, we see in 1 Cor. 10:16-18, in the context of an epistle to an assembly in Corinth, Paul speaks of the Lord's Supper with relation to the peace offering of the Old Testament. It is "the cup which we bless" and the "bread which we break. . ." But then he says, "is it not the communion (fellowship) of the body of Christ? For we being many (or, the many) are one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." Who blesses the cup, or who partakes of the one bread? It seems that this refers to those who are present at that remembrance, those who together bless the cup and the bread, then partake of both, (though some would see this expression to include the entire body of Christ. This is true, and perhaps the local assembly displaying its fellowship in this way is representing the entire body, including those who cannot or do not take part). So that the Lord's Supper is also an expression of the fellowship that exists between believers, on one hand between all who are in the body of Christ, but specifically, those who are in the local assembly. In the peace offering in Lev. 7:11-38), fellowship was expressed in that offering that included a portion for the Lord, the priest who offered it, the priestly family and the offerer (possibly including his family and friends?). Those who partook of the altar were showing their fellowship with the altar and with others who were also included. We lose sight of this aspect of the Lord's Supper; it is first of all, for remembrance of the Lord Jesus, but secondly, it expresses the fellowship of believers in the person and work of Christ. As such, it is a function only of a local assembly.

We heard of some sisters from an assembly, including wives of elders in assemblies, who met in a motel room while on a shopping trip, to carry out what they said was the Lord's Supper. This wasn't scriptural and shouldn't have been practiced. This either indicates the lack of teaching on this subject, or their own attitude toward the truth. They should have known better than to act in this unscriptural manner, to fail to understand that the Lord's Supper is distinctly an assembly function, practiced in the local assembly setting, with the entire assembly involved. Only in this way does it conform to the teaching and practice of the New Testament.

(continued)

For faith rests not primarily upon promises, but upon character. A believer's faith can never rise higher than his conception of God. A promise is never better or worse than the character of the one who makes it. An inadequate conception of God must result in a weak faith, for faith depends upon the character of God just as a building rests upon its foundation. This explains why unbelief is such a grievous sin; it is pure libel against the Lord of heaven and earth. Unbelief judges God to be unworthy of confidence and withholds its trust from Him.

A. W. Tozer

Turning from God to man

R. E. Surgenor

The word "age" (aion) in the bible is very often translated, "world," and as W.E. Vine states, "signifies the condition of humanity, which since the fall, is in spiritual darkness, with a nature, tendencies, and influences controlled by the powers of darkness in opposition to God, and now under the prince of this world." Scripture warns Christians against being conformed to this age (Rom. 12:2). The conforming of the Christian is found in Romans 6:17.

"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." Another version reads, "that form (mold) of doctrine unto which ye were delivered." In other words, Christians are poured into a specific mold, consequently conformed to that mold. That mold is the doctrines of the New Testament. Christians are conformed to the Word of God, not the principles and schemes of this world.

The age also has its several molds (the world's standard) that seek to deform all who are in it. Here are some of them:

The World's Mold of Secularism

The word secular means "the world in terms of time." We all live in the secular world, the world of time and space, but Christians are warned against adopting the secular world view, which views all within the limits of this present time. Contrariwise, Christianity thinks of life in terms of eternity.

The secularist believes that when one dies, he ceases to exist. However, the Christian believes that we shall all be in heaven or hell and by God's grace he will be in heaven." Does our world have a supernatural or secular orientation? Consider what kind of world is pictured in the world's popular magazines, movies, and TV. Do these mediums portray the human race in sin, traveling down the broad way to destruction? Does it picture the world fashioned by God, sustained by God, and loved by God? Of course not!

The world represented in the press, TV, movies, and by journalists and politicians is quite the opposite. Secular modernism pictures humanity as a self-sufficient world. It pictures man as a self-sufficient and progressive creature, making the world better and better, day by day, until finally, a utopia will be reached, solely through man's ingenuity and wonderful achievements. God is not in the picture at all. In fact, in many instances, they consider Christianity as a hindrance to man's progress, and an enemy of man's free thought, and simply a crutch for feeble, weak-minded people. It is a world consumed with acquiring more and more possessions and comforts, then all is over when you die. There is no God to meet.

The World's Mold of Humanism

The root of humanism may be traced to ancient Greece, to the pre-Socratic philosopher Protagoras (480–10 BC). His motto was, "man is the measure of all things." Man, in himself, is the ultimate norm by which values are to be determined. He is the ultimate being and the ultimate authority; all reality and life center upon man.

Humanists believe that every mortal is essentially good, while God teaches that man is a fallen and sinful creature in need of the new birth. Humanism is man-centered. Christians are God-centered. Humanists claim to be humanitarian, i.e., caring about people. However, humanism is atheistic and secular. This world is all there is. There is no divine revelation. Mankind is the only source of morals. The humanist will stand one night outside a prison protesting capital punishment, yet the next morning he will stand outside an abortion clinic defending the right of a doctor to kill an unborn baby. He loves humanity, yet he will fight for legislation to protect 40 or 50 spotted owls—legislation that will cost 50,000 people their jobs.

Humanism is irrational. It wants Christian ethics without Christ. Humanism has invaded the church in the form of theological liberalism. It is anti-supernatural thus it has done away with all the supernatural elements of Christianity, such as, miracles, the resurrection of Christ, the atonement of Jesus, and the Virgin birth. The humanist thinks only of his own happiness and needs. The Christian says, "What can I do to help the church?" The humanist says, "What can the church do to help me?" Humanism is essentially selfish, self-centered, irrational, and atheistic.

The World's Mold of Existentialism

The father of existentialism was Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), who penned the slogan, "God is dead!" He took secularism to its logical conclusion. If this world is all there is, then there is no God, no ultimate essence beyond this present existence. If there is no God, then life is meaningless. All human life is shut up to the here and now. There is no exit to the eternal. Values and truth are what we make them.

This world view has been embraced by the arts, whether in painting, popular music, or the theater, including TV and the movies. Human passion has changed from meaningful and lovely romance to a meaningless and coarse animal drive. All of life is meaningless. In other words, we are all animals who through the evolutionary process have pulled ourselves up to the superior standard we presently possess. As an animal, why not fulfill all your animal lusts. Do your thing, live it up, for you only live once, and there is no God to give an account to. What a horrible deathbed some of these have faced.

The World's Mold of Relativism

Out of secularism and existentialism comes relativism. There is no ultimate reference point. Nothing is absolute. There are no absolutes in religion or morals. Philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein said, "If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put." In relativism there are no hinges.

If "everything is relative," as many moderns say, then we cannot condemn Hitler. He believed he was right to exterminate Jews. Why should we condemn him? Relativism ultimately leads to statism, totalitarianism, and Antichrist because eventually it becomes intolerable. It leads to emptiness and division. Someone has to bring unity.

One issue will serve to illustrate the relativistic world view. America has been severely divided over the issue of abortion. Some vehemently oppose it, others favor it. In the middle are people who say, "I would not choose to have an abortion, but I believe every woman has the right to make that choice for herself." This middle position is the stance of the relativist.

The relativist hates rules and regulations. They feel that it isn't right to impose rules on anyone else. Why should another person tell me what right or wrong, or whether I'm allowed to do my thing or not? I should be free to do anything, whatever it is! That is their mindset.

Relativism has greatly affected thinking about Christian missions. The Bible teaches that Christianity is true. All other religions are false. People must trust Christ for forgiveness or be

lost. Relativism says that there are many paths to God, one no better than the other.

Consider a church bible reading and the question is asked, "What does the passage under consideration mean?" Not so today when relativism has invaded the church. Today the question would be, "What does this passage mean to me?" In other words, there is no certain meaning to the passage. There are as many meanings as there are members of the class. Such an attitude is relativistic. While all would agree that various Christians may apply a passage in a variety of ways, the meaning of the text is absolute. There may be several applications, but there can be only one meaning. Not so with the relativist.

The World's Mold of Materialism

Materialism is the philosophy that says that matter is all that there is. It is a variation on secularism. It works itself out in a life that centers on money and possessions. The materialist looks to wealth to give him purpose and meaning.

His possessions are his god. The happiness of his being is determined by his wealth. His beautiful home, luxurious automobile, finery, and large bank account all contribute to his happiness. However, if by chance these "gods" are taken away, despair, and sometimes suicidal tendencies invade his mind. Since his joy was based on his possessions, when his possessions flee away, so also does his joy. How different for the Christian, whose joy is the Lord. As scripture says, "The joy of the LORD is your strength" (Neh. 8:10). Since the Lord has promised the Christian that He will never leave them nor forsake them (Heb., 13:5), and their joy is found in Him, consequently it too will never leave them nor forsake them.

I remember, many years ago visiting an aged black Christian couple who lived in a shack. They had nothing of this world's entertainment or goods. They lived in poverty. She was blind. I will never forget my visit. Knocking on the door, the brother invited me in and announced to his bedridden blind wife, that it was brother Surgenor. She was delighted and said loudly, "Brother Surgenor, I'm so glad to see you!" Then she went on to tell me all the blessings that the good Lord had given to her.

She was a most happy Christian. I thought of all I had, and I also thought of all the unhappy rich sinners that I had met in my lifetime, and looking down on the beaming face of that poor blind black invalid – I wept. She has the Lord 24/7 and the joy. The spiritually destitute materialist knows nothing of this.

Doctor Walter Wilson of Kansas City told a story of Caleb Baker, a Christian businessman. His warehouse burned down. Young Dr. Wilson said, "I'm sorry Caleb." Mr. Baker replied, "Young man, I gave this business to the Lord 20 years ago. If He wants to burn His own warehouse it's all right with me. Let's have a cup of coffee."

The World's Mold of Pragmatism

The term pragmatism sounds innocent for it means the spirit of practicality and problem solving. There is nothing wrong in being practical and having the wisdom to solve problems. However, pragmatism is dangerous because it is unconcerned with principles like goodness, truth, and justice. The pragmatist says that questions about ultimate truth and goodness are not practical. "What works?" is the question of the pragmatist.

Pragmatism is seen in politicians who won't do the right thing because it is an election year. Their solutions are short term in spite of later crippling effects. As long as they can hoodwink their constituents to help them get into office, nothing else matters. Pragmatism is government economists driving down inflation with short term tax cuts and inflated money supplies with no concern for the present crippling deficit. Hitler was pragmatic in solving the Jewish "problem" by the Holocaust.

President Obama used pragmatism in hoodwinking the American public into thinking that under his Obamacare plan, people could choose their own doctor. He knew otherwise, but lied to the American people in order to get his legislation passed. It worked, to the dismay of the victims.

The greatest pragmatist of all time is the Devil, who artfully blinds the minds of his victims into thinking that the world holds all that they need to be happy

Pragmatism is using modern techniques such as advertising, and entertainment instead

of biblical preaching and teaching to build the size of one's church. It advocates putting every biblical teaching that offends in a box and closing the lid. Political correctness dominates the pulpit. Worldly schemes are devised to rake in the money for the coffers of the church, all in the name of Christ. Entertainment of all sorts is introduced to keep congregations happy and content, while salvation truths are carefully avoided, lest they offend, and drive people away. Many churches have degenerated into social clubs, entertaining their congregations on the way to hell.

The World's Mold of Hedonism

In the 4th century BC, the Cyrenaics of Greece had a philosophy of hedonism. They believed that man's ultimate purpose was to be found in enjoying pleasure and avoiding pain. This philosophy was elevated to a religion. The worshippers of Dionysius would get release from the normal restraints of life by drunkenness and sexual involvement with temple prostitutes. The Epicureans were a more sophisticated variety of hedonist. They valued exquisite taste in the choice of the finest wines and foods. They valued pleasure without excess.

Falling America has become very hedonistic. Modern corporations are selling their wares, especially to the young, with a hedonistic world view. Many people are finding happiness in chemicals. Drugs are king in many lives. Our sexual revolution is rooted in hedonism. "If it feels good, it is good!" Promiscuity is becoming the norm.

Many young couples see nothing wrong in having sexual relationships outside of marriage. They feel that if it feels good it can't be wrong. Their behavior is based on feeling and intuition, not the forthright, objective teaching of God's Word that forbids all sexual relations outside of marriage.

St. Augustine (A.D. 354-430) was a hedonist before he was converted. He penned this famous prayer, "O Lord ... Thou hast created us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee." He saw the root of man's restlessness. We were created for God. "What is the chief end of man?" The Westminster Catechism answers; "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forev-

er." The Christian's goal is God. They understand that we were created for joy, happiness, and peace, to be only found in Christ, not hedonism.

The World's Mold of Neo-paganism

Paganism is a condition that exists where the Gospel has never been preached. It is belief in false polytheistic religions. America is becoming what might be called a neo-pagan nation. The morality and ethics of Christianity were once commonly held in the West. Today, as the West rejects Christianity the old gods are coming back. Over 100 years ago a German Jew, Heinrich Heine, saw the sickness of neo-paganism coming. He wrote, "Should that subduing talisman, the cross, ever break, then the old stone gods will rise from the long-forgotten ruins and rub the dust of a thousand years from their eyes, and Thor, leaping to life with his giant hammer, will crush the Gothic cathedrals."

The numbers are increasing where so called nominal Christians are embracing Celtic and Norse paganism, witchcraft, Voodooism, American Indian shamanism, and nature goddess religions. Yoga has become popular to many professing Christians, but little do they realize that the Yoga exercise program is subtly pushing them into Buddhism. My primary care physician is an Irish Roman Catholic. We are friends. One day he told me that he was a Buddhist. He also assured me that he was still a Roman Catholic. I said to him, "Before becoming a Buddhist, you attended Yoga classes, didn't you?" That surprised him, and he answered and said, "Yes, how did you ever know?" I told him that Yoga was a subtle door to Buddhism.

Neopagans are deeply committed to environmental causes. Their gods embody nature, and animal rights. Thus we have "tree huggers" and the like today. Some actually have more love and affection for a tree than for a human being.

Professing Christians have been known to attend seminars on New Age thought. Neo-pagan and New Age thought is unified in its rejection of the Christ of the Bible. His true deity and atoning sacrifice are denied. He is reduced to being an enlightened master; he is a god just as we are all gods in human form.

The Bible asserts that Christ is the unique Son of God (John 1:14, 18). There is no other name under heaven whereby men can be saved (Acts 4:12). Jesus claimed to be the only way to God (John 14:6).

The World's Mold of Anti-Christianity

God warns His own; "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (1 Jn. 2:18).

Anti-Christian groups cry out for separation of church and state, but that is never mentioned in the constitution. The founding fathers wanted to keep the state out of the church, not the church out of the state. If they had, do you think they would have had church services in congress and the supreme court? This happened until after the Civil War. At the beginning of our country congress had days of fasting and prayer. During the Revolutionary War congress ordered 20,000 Bibles to be bought from foreign countries when the supply was cut off by England because of the war. From the beginning congress started each session with prayer and still do to this day. A lot of textbooks had biblical passages and history in them.

When I was a child, our school teacher daily opened the class with prayer. A passage from the Bible was read. That is outlawed in our school system today. In fact, thirty years ago my grandson was reprimanded for bringing his little Bible to school. The public school system seems to be quite willing to provide special rooms for Muslim children to pray, yet outlaw any Christian activity on their property. There has been a removing of any reference to God in textbooks and historical sites. Atheist Michael Newdow, in his relentless pursuit of a Godless America, continues to seek court approval to remove all vestiges of Christianity from the public places. His latest petitions sought to have "under God" removed from our Pledge of Allegiance, our national motto, "In God We Trust" removed from our currency, and the words, "...so help me God," removed from our presidential oath. Fortunately, the courts denied the petitions. Nevertheless, this antagonistic attitude toward Christianity is ferment-

ing like yeast and growing in America.

Many groups are forming that are deeply intolerant towards the Christian religion. Their objectives are to silence Christians and to remove all public displays of Christian heritage and faith in America.

Because of anti-Christian bigotry, private business owners have been sued and forced to close their business. Families and businesses that express a Christian worldview on social issues often face vicious retaliation from bigoted anti-Christian zealots.

Some members or supporters of these groups have committed violent crimes against Christians and faith-based groups. Physical and profane verbal assaults against Christians are methods frequently exercised in their angry methods of intimidation. In a gay parade in California, an elderly Christian lady stood on the sidelines holding up a cross. The paraders were so enraged over the sight of her cross, that they tore it from her hands, ripped it apart, and then mercilessly beat her to the ground, almost taking her life. Yet these vile sinners cry out demanding tolerance! What warped minds and desperately wicked hearts!

G. K. Chesterton has observed how Christianity is today attacked "on all sides and for all contradictory reasons." Some condemn Christianity for being too pessimistic, others for being too optimistic. Christianity is attacked by some for stressing sin, judgment, and austerity, and for being inhuman and bleak; others reject it for its pie-in-the-sky comforts. The followers of Karl Marx charge Christianity with suppressing the poor; the followers of Ayn Rand condemn Christianity for helping the poor. In a history class a professor blames Christianity that Edward the Confessor was mild and ineffective; yet he blames Richard the Lion Hearted for being warlike. A science teacher will snipe at Christianity for suppressing modern knowledge in the name of outdated superstition; down the hall an anthropology professor will attack missionaries for introducing modern technology and health care to primitive cultures. This attitude is not new. The Lord in the Gospel of Matthew 11:18-19 states; "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man glutton-

ous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children." In other words, no matter what action is taken, it is wrong.

"The fashion (its manner of life) of this world passeth away" (1 Cor. 7:31). "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 Jn. 2:17).

Yes, this "age" is passing away, but Christians belong to the "age to come." What a tragedy for a Christian to conform to this perishing world. As another has said, "What madness it is to join in this puppet show which is displayed on a tottering stage."

Poem

**To stand by error, and the truth refuse;
To close the eyes against unwelcome light;
The crooked paths, through prejudice, to choose;
For one's own will, and thoughts and ways to
fight;**

**To fear to have the sleeping conscience stirred,
By letting in truth's quick and searching ray;
When ignorance to knowledge is preferred,
And dull obscurity to heavenly day:
By marks like these is stubbornness descried,
Offspring of foolish selfishness and pride.**

**To stand by truth, to suffer loss and pain
Rather than swerve from duty's sacred way;
To count reproach an honor; suffering gain--
Endured, because we will God's will obey;
Ne'er to abate one jot of what is right,
Though crowds deride or flatter, smile or frown;
To brave the dungeon, rack, or tyrant's might;
Or, harder still, refuse a proffered crown:
This is true Firmness, such as Heaven approves,
The noble steadfastness our Father loves.**

**All that I've done, and was, and am, below,
Caused my own Lord His agonies and woe:
All that He did, and was, and is, is mine;
My Light, and Life and righteousness divine:
I was His death upon the accursed tree,
In heaven He lives to intercede for me:
There He prepares my home; and soon in love
He'll come and take me to His rest above.**