STRAIGHTWAY

"And straightway they for sook their nets, and followed him" Mark 1:18.

CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

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Cynicism Against Godliness

Dr. H. T. Spence

While most people seem to have no quarrel with the compromising, carnal, indifferent Christian, our generation is ever increasing in its hatred toward God and those who truly desire to live a consecrated, godly life. Today, one would be hard pressed to find a professing Christian or even a pulpit that rebukes and exhorts those with loose dress standards, carnal music, or general wayward and worldly living. However, those who desire to live what they profess fall under the greatest attacks not only from the world but also from the Church. The term godliness has quickly become the target of carnal preaching, secret slander among church leaders, and outward ridicule of carnal church members, all of whom have no consciousness of God in their daily lives. Cynicism

of godliness is now a malignant spirit of the institutional Church.

The Desire for Godliness

How natural it is for one to condemn that which he is not. Christians could do so, especially when they do not grow with God and do not take God and His Word seriously. Those who are longing for the Lord in the details of their living tend to be viewed cynically by those who give few evidences of the principles of Scripture in their lives. Today religious maxims are heard regularly from the pulpits and in the fovers of the churches: "Nobody is perfect"; "He's trying to act piously"; "Who does he think he is?" "He thinks he is perfect"; "He's gone off the deep end with his religion; such people tend to be suicidal"; "That man has become

an isolationist in his Christianity"; as well as "He thinks he is the only one right." Such cutting remarks are also increasing against young preachers who discern the failures and compromises of older preachers. The older, compromising leaders are now intimidating the spiritually conscientious preacher with cynical statements such as: "You are following a man"; "You think you are God"; "Do you believe you have a monopoly on truth?" "Do you believe you have an inside relationship with God that no one else has?" "Do you think you are some prophet of God?" or "You need to get in harmony with the program and back off on your stands; you will never build a ministry that way." The remnant Christian who desires to go on with God will have to increasingly face this kind of badgering as the apostasy continues to make its inroads into the conservative church. Godliness is no longer part of public Christianity; sadly, such intimidations are coming from those who once called us to this godliness.

STRAIGHTWAY

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What is godliness and what should be the hope of it? The honorable Bible term godly or godliness in the Greek means "being well devout" (eusebeia). It denotes an honorable piety that is characterized by a Godward attitude and the desire to please the Lord in everything one does. It also has the understanding of fearing and reverencing God in all things that one does and in the decisions one makes in (theosebeia).

One of the characteristics that will mark the end time is ungodliness (asebeia). Ungodliness denotes that an individual does not honor God with his life, in his thoughts, in his speech, or in his decisions of life. The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 1:18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." The book of Jude warns us of the end time in the example of Enoch who saw these future, ungodly powers coming:

And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints; To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him (Jude 14,15).

Ungodliness is not simply an attitude of the world or non-believer; it has become a raging reality among many professing Christians and Christian leaders. While they profess to know Christ, the decisions they make in their churches, denominations,

and daily lives give evidence that they are not conscious of God and the principles of His Word. If one does not approach his life with a God-consciousness in every choice and action, his decisions and standards will be set according to self, the world, or human feelings. Such a person is not a godly person. Many preachers may preach truth in their messages, but outside the pulpit they are not God-conscious in their decisions and actions in the compartments of everyday living. When this discrepancy is present in a church leader's life, he will have a growing hatred for those who want to live with such a God-consciousness. We are saved by the grace of God alone; but this grace also teaches us that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:12).

The Godly Man Job

The book of Job presents one of the great, true stories of cynicism against godliness. Father Job was a historical figure. We are told in Job 1:1, "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job." Ezekiel 14:14,20 confirms Job as a historical character:

Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God.... Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.

Job, whose name means "persecuted"

or "afflicted," was a man appointed by God to suffer for righteousness' sake. God allowed Job to suffer for His own glory (made clear in the first two chapters), and for Job's own good (Romans 8:28). But even today, commentaries do not properly interpret the suffering of Job. Most commentaries are cynical about the man himself and take the position Job's friends took.

At the outset of this infallible book we are told by divine inspiration that Job was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil" (Job 1:1). God Himself reiterated twice this same declaration of Job (1:8 and 2:3). Even at the end of the book, the Lord speaks to Job's friends and clearly acknowledges the following:

And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job bath (Job 42:7).

Yes, Job was "perfect." He was perfect: he was not God, nor absolutely perfect as God, but he was as perfect as a human being could be before God. This perfection is not "sinless perfection." Paul writes in Philippians 3:12, "not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect" However in 3:15, he writes, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded" After condemnation is given to those who are not going on with God (5:11-14), Hebrews 6:1 states, "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on

unto perfection."

Christians must not be afraid of the term perfection because it is biblical. A Christian is supposed to come to maturity in his walk with God. When the Revivalists of the 1700s spoke of "Christian perfection," their definition was based on fulfilling the Great Commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37). Although most admire such a love for God in the lives of Hudson Taylor, Robert Murray McCheyne, and David Brainerd, carnal Christians often tend to despise and slander such a life in this present generation. The cry is "No one can live such a life!" Well, Job was one man who did, and God Himself declared it to be true.

We are also told that Job was "upright." He was upright, or right in his relationships with his fellow man. He was a man of integrity, of honesty, and of sterling character in the sight of men. Job also "feared God." That is the heart of "godliness." In everything he did, he was God-conscious. Lastly, Job was revealed as a man who "eschewed evil." He hated, despised, abhorred, and loathed evil.

As the historical narrative in Job 1 unfolds, we are given brief information concerning his family and possessions. The incident of Job 1:5 reveals the consistent reality of Job's character as told to us in 1:1.

And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in

the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

Job knew that prayer must guard happiness in a family. We must not read into this verse that Job's children sinned, for the offering that he gives for them is the "burnt offering." Rather than the sin or trespass offering, this offering was for consecration: "It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." It does not mean that his sons did sin. The Hebrew word for cursed suggests a "detracting, setting light, slighting" of God in their thoughts, perhaps forgetting to give God praise and glory for all they enjoyed. Yes, Job had a combination of zeal for God and true love for his children. What a jealousy for both God and his children!

The Great Cynic - Satan

But amidst the godliness of this precious man, we then read of Satan appearing before the Lord:

And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? (1:8)

Satan, the great adversary of God's people, could not gainsay the truth that God had just uttered about his servant Job. But how did Satan react? He spoke as the great cynic of godliness, the great cynic of righteousness, the great cynic of true living and a true heart. He was cynical of the perfect man, the

righteous man, the hater-of-evil man, and the upright man. The only thing he could question was the motive of this righteous, godly living. "Doth Job fear God for nought?" He questioned Job's motive in fearing God. He believed Job's motive was to get out of God what he could. "But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face" (1:11). Satan, in his dark heart, could not believe that anyone would serve God out of love; no one would want to give his entire life, heart, and thoughts to God. Satan is the great cynic, the one who is always making light of sin and of purity of heart.

What is a cynic? A cynic is one who has studied truth in disbelief of heart and mind. He makes light of sin and purity of heart and life. He is inclined to believe that a person's motives for actions toward God are insincere and selfish. A cynic displays this belief by sneers and sarcasm. A cynic is also a pessimist, always looking on the dark side of things and expecting the unpleasant or the worst to happen. The cynic cries of the godly man, "He's a hypocrite! Nobody's perfect! No one can love God that much! He has got to be putting on for the show of it! Nobody prays that much, nobody reads their Bible to find out how to live! No preacher should expect their people to live according to the Bible in this day and time!"

The Lord gave permission to the Devil for the test:

And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only

upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD (1:12).

But the godly man's motive was truly revealed under the devastating circumstances. When Job lost all his possessions through calamities and lost his dear children in death all in one day, we read of his heart and motive:

Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly (Job 1:20-22).

This godly man saw God behind it all, rather than the Devil!

Later when Satan came again before the Lord, the Lord once again pressed Satan:

Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause (Job 2:3).

But the great cynic arose again, still not believing that anyone could live godly:

Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face (2:4,5).

Satan again attacked the motive of Job's godliness. But when Job is slain with enough physical maladies to kill a man, we read, "What? shall

we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (2:10).

The Cynicism of Job's Friends

The news of Job's afflictions and poverty traveled far and wide, and three of his friends came with the intention "to mourn with him and to comfort him":

And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven (2:12).

Job's grief was so overwhelming in their sight that they were unable to speak with him for seven days.

But Job's first discourse opened the way for his friends to speak. What they had thought for a long time about Job came forth with the cynical spirit of the Devil. How often when the righteous person suffers, others take advantage of his weakness in observing his sufferings. They seem emboldened to reveal their own long-time surmising. But how should one interpret the silence of God? How will Job interpret it? How will his friends interpret it? Sorrow and affliction that come upon the Christian not only test himself but also his friends, the observers.

We must remember that Job's only problem was that he did not understand why he was suffering; God never revealed the reason to him. Each discourse of his friends becomes bolder in the cynicism against him. Because of their

interpretation of his sufferings, they openly declare him to be a hypocrite all these years; providence, they believe, is finally catching up with him. They believe his secret sins were now reaping their reward. Yes, the evil cynicism of the Devil became a malignant part of the thought pattern of Job's so-called friends.

The End-time Cynicism

Mankind is cynical of the perfect man, a man who desires to live for God. He doubts his sincerity, his integrity, and his motives. remnant has long been attacked as being a "holier than thou" people. Ecclesiastical leaders who have lost communion with God also despise the godly among their people. Their sermons include intimidations and belittlings of godliness. History has proved when such leaders compromise privately and eventually publicly in their preaching, they turn against the very thing for which they once stood. Their lives are cold and insensitive to God, and they despise those who are going on with God. They deny such a life can be known. They rise up like a Cain against a worshipping Abel and try to kill his character in their gossip with others. They are as the "daughters of Jerusalem" questioning the love relationship the Shulamite has with her beloved Solomon: "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" (Song of Solomon 5:9) They question her

love for Him, they question her stand for Him, and they question her conscientious living for Him. They are like the Sanhedrin Court in their attacks and conspiracy against Christ. They are like the Judaizers attacking the motives, heart, and preaching of Paul. The man of Psalm 1 has become the hated one by the nominal church. Those who have lost their first love look at others jealously hoping they have lost their first love also. Where will such a bitter heart lead them? The ultimate end could be hatred, turning to the sword, and finally excommunicating them from their churches.

Some individuals are being drawn to a remnant of preachers who are declaring, "Thus saith the Lord." These preachers are declaring the failures of church leaders and the carnality of the institutional church. These same remnant preachers are calling the people to a higher and nobler spiritual life, which the nominal preachers have abandoned. These remnants are then accused of "following a man." Such accusers tend to forget in their spiritually insensitive heart that Paul often told the people, "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me" (I Corinthians 4:16), and "Be ve followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Corinthians 11:1). I Thessalonians 1:6 states, "Ye became followers of us, and of the Lord." This truth will be mentioned in Hebrews 6:12, I Peter 3:13, and Philippians 3:17. In the last reference Paul was so bold as to state the following:

Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample, (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

Oh, that God would raise up godly men for us to follow as they follow Christ! For many church leaders are following error, carnality, and backslidden ways. Amidst these days of the falling away, may God keep His remnant, His elect! May they not allow the worldly church's cynicism against godliness to intimidate their quest for Christian purity of heart and life:

Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us (Romans 8:33-34).

"If I profess with loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the Devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point."

-Martin Luther

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Crucial Truths

for Crucial Days

Volume I

H. T. Spence, Th.D.

Crucial Truths for Crucial Days is a compilation of articles taken from *Straightway*, the published voice of the Christian Purities Fellowship, an outreach arm of Foundations Bible College.

The word *crucial* in its primary meaning suggests something critical, severe, or trying. Its secondary meaning, cross-shaped, actually stems from the Latin term for *cross*. The author believes we are living in the most crucial days of human history; these days are critical, trying, and severe. The Bible has prophesied that the days before the coming of the Lord will be filled with global apostasy.

These crucial days of global apostasy are marked by a falling away within the institutional church. Therefore, the triumphing truths of the Cross become a greater necessity for the biblical Christian life in such times. In this compilation of articles, the author affirms that the Lord through His eternal Word has given to us Cross truths for *crucial* days. (227 pages)

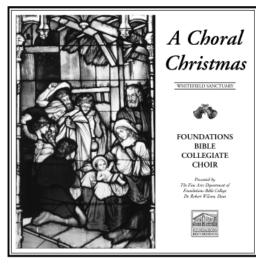
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