

STRAIGHTWAY

“AND STRAIGHTWAY THEY FORSOOK THEIR NETS, AND FOLLOWED HIM” (MARK 1:18).

CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

Living in a Strange Land

Dr. H. T. Spence

Entering this series of articles concerning another prophetic perspective of the End Time, we must carefully acknowledge that the Bible is the only source of infallible Truth for man on this planet. Within this infallible revelation, God has revealed the path we are to tread; He also grants the light to find the path that we are to take. The Bible speaks of the precarious environment in which the Christian finds himself in this present evil world. From this precious book, we gain insight for living, either through *principles* revealed specifically for our times or *patterns* that bespeak the spiritual and moral climate of the days. This climate and age in which we live now is the burden of these articles.

The Strange Land

First, we must ask the question, “What is the strange land in which we find ourselves?” In type and shadow, the Bible speaks of three such strange lands. This article will prayerfully present the first two. Both are identi-

fied with the life of Moses, who was greatly concerned about being caught within these two lands. Egypt is the first of these strange lands in which Moses found himself. What does Egypt symbolize in the Bible? Before answering this question, we must carefully rehearse the history of how the Lord’s people were found in this land.

Joseph was sold into Egypt as a slave. Not too many years later, Jacob and his family came down into Egypt. Within some thirty years after their entrance (when a Pharaoh arose who knew not Joseph), a spirit of enmity began to be manifested against Jacob’s family. For over four hundred years, the Israelites came under bondage to this new Pharaoh and his successors.

Egypt in Scripture symbolizes the world, the world as a system away from God and opposed to Him. The topography of Egypt is most peculiar. It is comprised of two narrow strips of land that fall on both sides of the Nile River. Without this river, basi-

cally Egypt is a wilderness, a desert, a sterile land. Where very little rain falls, the land is in continual conflict between life and death. Its primary health is derived from the Nile River, which bears water and a rich silt as sustenance for the land. Without the overflow of these rich waters, the land would be desolate. Little did the Egyptians appreciate that the richness and nourishment of these waters came from the rains of a very far country (flowing from south to north, finally reaching Egypt).

The Egyptians do not look *up* for their blessings. They are constantly looking *down* upon their Nile, their god. Their god is their source of life and blessings. (In fact, it has only been within the past 160 years that men have professed to have finally found

the source of the Nile—the feeder rivers of Lake Victoria. Will man ever find the actual source of the Nile?) The Egyptians did not know that the blessings flowing for thousands of miles were coming from a faraway country. From the Egyptians' perspective, they were independent of the God of heaven; Egypt worshiped her river. The river came to her so constantly that she was practically independent of heaven's rain (locally), yet heaven was the source of her supplied living (at a far distance).

Egypt worshiped the god of its river. This represents the spiritual state of our nature so far away from God. The world looks to the god of materialism, whose god is Satan. The world believes that all its blessings come from the god of this world. They worship a closed world system devoid of the God from above (truly from Whom all blessings flow).

Egypt was also noted as a powerful civilization. It built monuments and edifices of great magnitude confident they would exist eternally. These edifices testify with equal proportion what they believed about themselves. They believed their leaders could potentially live as long as these edifices existed. Thus, mummification became their hope of immortality, of living eternally, just as their great pyramids would survive the sands of time. But, these bodies did not live; they did not

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continue to exist. In fact, the erosion of the body came sooner than the erosion of the pyramids. Everything of Egypt is built on the dead. Even their literature (the *Book of the Dead*) speaks of this legacy. Truly, Egypt was a land that amidst its sterility and barrenness believed it would live forever. It never rose above the death that consumed it.

Egypt: The Commentary of This Fallen World

Our fallen world is Egypt, the land of death, a land dedicated to the monuments of the dead. Death is stamped everywhere throughout the very fabric of the world system. Egypt worshiped the creatures and not the Creator. It deified hundreds of beastly objects (the images of their own lusts) and de-based itself in its worship and slavery of these deified objects. (All heathen worship is basically the deification of man's own lusts and passions.) This hope of deification was the same bait the Devil used in the Garden of Eden promising, "Ye shall be as gods." Man is ever craving for that which satisfies. Fallen men do not find satisfaction in God, so they look to the world—the world which they have created throughout their civilizations in philosophy, science, anthropology, medicine, etc. What God made in the beginning we now see that sin has warped and twisted, turning it all into what man has now made (even in his ecological "mother nature" promo-

tions). Truly, this land is fallen, sterile, and barren without the belief in God. The world has become a world system of death and depravity.

By the time our lives come on the scene of human history, we are both "born in sin and shapen in iniquity" and into this world system. The system of the world is allied to the principle of sin working within each heart. These two collaborate with one another. My life unconsciously becomes extremely interwoven with the system that this fallen mankind-world has made (through the thousands of years of the outworking of man's sin from within). So, when we came to Christ, we came not only with our personal sins but also with our lives interwoven with the world system. The world was our life, our philosophy, our thinking. The world was our Egypt to whose river we sought its blessings to satisfy.

We never knew that the little blessings we were receiving in the natural world were coming from the God above and His mercy. Perhaps as children we thought such blessings were coming from our parents, or later, that the blessings were coming from sources like the government. As we grew older, perhaps we thought the benefits of life were coming from our own accomplishments and that which we had personally attained. We failed to ever see that what few blessings we were conscious of came from a far

country. Carefully God permits such mercies to filter down through this world system to be a natural blessing, despite the plight of sin's pervasiveness within the world system.

Egypt: The Environment of Our Birth

"How did the children of Israel get down into Egypt?" Exodus 1:1, "Every man and his household came with Jacob." We entered this world's power, lusts, and spiritual bondage through our natural father Adam. As with Jacob, Egypt (symbolically) was not the first land Adam occupied. Adam was first in Eden, where he was free to eat of all but one of the trees of the garden. In violating this one restriction, he had to leave the garden. It was *outside* the garden of Eden where all of Adam's children were born—born into the place of bondage with him. Outside the garden was an estranged land from God, the only place man was permitted to live.

By invitation, Jacob came down into Egypt from Canaan at a time when Joseph had been elevated from slavery to his prime leadership. But within thirty years, a Pharaoh arose who knew not Joseph. For the next four hundred years, Joseph's Egypt became a tyrannical land, a land of a Pharaoh that did not know Joseph, that did not know the God of Joseph, and brought the Israelites into great bondage and captivity, the bondage of death, the

bondage of servitude. Thirteen times Egypt in the Old Testament is called "the house of bondage."

When God found us, we were in Egypt. Note Ephesians 2:2, "Wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world [the age, or the segment of time within the world system]." We in sin were part of the world and walked according to the course of this world. We lived by the appetites of this world—by its desires, its enticements, its thinking and persuasion. We believed the land of Egypt was the paradise from which the god of this world fed us, even using the providences of God upon our undeserving lives. The god of this world took the credit for all nourishment and benefits of life we gained, just as the Nile took the credit. Yes, we walked according to Egypt's god,

according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and [the fleshly desires] of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others (Eph. 2:2, 3).

We were part and parcel of this Egyptian world system. We never looked up. We always looked down (into the world) for the blessings to come, for the overflow of its system for our life. But then Ephesians states that "God,

who is rich in mercy . . . hath quickened us together with Christ" (2:4, 5). It was while we were in the plight of not only our sins, but also the plight of our world, that God saved us.

Egypt: Now a Strange Land

Let us then note Galatians 1:3, 4:

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.

The Christian must view the death of Christ as a *twofold death of deliverance*. It was not only for our sins that He gave Himself; He gave Himself also that He might deliver us from this present malignant, evil world system. Oh, dear reader, we must realize that Christ's death for us was not only to save us from the problem of sin (and its great damage in our lives) but also to deliver us from this present evil world system. This world system is not in reference to the world God made, because God's world is not evil. This system is the world that fallen man has taken from God and (over the years of fallen humanity) has re-created as a world he believes is without the necessity of God.

We live in the world by the world system. We live in the world by the powers of those who have created the world system. Christ died to deliver us

from this present evil world. Why is that important? In John 17:15, Christ with great clarity in His prayer to the Father declared, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." What is this evil? The evil which is in the world.

Why is it imperative to be delivered from this present world? Because, once Christ saves us, this world becomes strange to us. Before our glorious New Birth, we were at home in this evil world; we felt comfortable in it; we did its bidding; we lived for its pleasures; we desired and lusted after it. But when Christ saved us, the first thing He did (after the Father forgave us of our sins and reconciled us unto Himself) was the unique miracle of delivering us from this present evil world. The word here for *delivered* is a word that means "to remove from, to pluck out of its power."

Is this deliverance possible without our being taken to heaven immediately? It may stagger the mind how much we use the world system: bank accounts, cars, gasoline, money the government has printed, insurance, medicine, groceries, laboring in the work force, etc. Is it possible to exist outside of the world system? I greatly doubt it. However, is there a possibility that God can deliver us out of this present world while at the same time we live for Him within this world system?

When Christ came to this world, He told His disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). These words were uttered before His prayer of John 17. He declared in this preface verse that in the world we will have tribulation, but to be of good cheer (of good courage) for He has overcome the world. Christ paid taxes; Christ partook of food of the world system. Christ entered a temple that was made or reconstructed through the mind of an Idumean called Herod. So, what does this truth mean? How can the Christian live in the land of Egypt, but not be of it?

Once we become a Christian, things must radically change. We cannot live the way we used to live; we cannot live according to this world with the Christian heart we have. Since our conversion, the present evil world system has become a strange land to us. A strange land is one that I do not like anymore; I do not want it for my life. Though caught in this world, this world should be a strange land to me as a Christian.

Although Exodus records Moses' life, Hebrews 11 reveals the choices Moses made when he came "to years" (or when Moses came to a full consciousness of the world he was in). Moses was "40 years old" when he came to years (Acts 7:23). The apostle declares in Hebrews 11:24, "By faith Moses,

when he was come to years." His decisions took place in Egypt, the place where he grew up, where he was educated, and the place that potentially was preparing him to be their next leader. But, "When he was come to years," he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." This choice concerns the *pride of life* (the pride of *bios*, Gr.) of what he was, and what he had accumulated in life. "Moses, who are you?" "I am Pharaoh's daughter's son." "That's a great honor; that's a great title."

Additionally, he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." This final phrase addresses the *lust of the flesh*. "Esteeming the reproach of Christ [Messiah] greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."

Finally, he made a decision addressing the *lust of the eyes*. This deified land of Egypt had made a river its god. But, oh, what the Pharaohs had made this land to be—the accomplishments, the beauty, the splendor, the glory of the land! Nevertheless, Moses came to a time in his life that he had to make an important decision in the light of the pride of life, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes found in the world of Egypt (1 John 2:15–17).

The story continues in Hebrews

11:27, “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king [an insight only revealed in the New Testament]: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.” This was when Moses was 40, not 80 years old. He “forsook Egypt.” It is very clear (in the original Greek) that Moses was going to leave this land and never return. It was truly a final ruling choice by this dear man. When a person becomes a Christian, this is what he must do. He must forsake the land of which he was born—the land system, the world system. He must turn away from that which has denounced God and created a life system without God.

Leaving Egypt

One of the great failures today in the religious Christian environment of America and the world is that Christians do not believe that there must be a full forsaking of this land. Is it possible to know the truth of sins forgiven without being delivered from the present world? We are not suggesting isolation, but the Christian must know how to live in the world without being of the world. And the Bible is the only source that will reveal to us how to do this. You will not find it in nature; you will not find it in your heart. The Holy Spirit must reveal how our beloved Lord lived on this planet, in perfection, and without sin. His life proved that one can be in this fallen world and not be of it. The Christian does not have

to continue as a product of the world. As Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 7:31, “And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.”

We dare not let the world control our lives; we dare not allow it to affect our judgments in life; we dare not let it declare the philosophy of how we are to live. Christians have so many problems because they do not, in their hearts, leave the world. They want their sins to be forgiven through Christ, but they do not want to be delivered or “plucked out” of the power of this present evil world. Christians must come to a point every day that they realize this world is not their home. We must be careful what our eyes are attracted to. We must be careful what our heart is enticed by. We must be careful what our families desire of this world system—its dress, its cosmetics, its jewelry, its trinkets made just to entice us. Later it was said of the children of Israel that they would not obey Moses, “but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt” (Acts 7:39).

When Moses left Egypt, forsaking Egypt with the intent to never return, he fled to the “land of Midian: and he sat down by a well” (Exod. 2:15). Moses left a land in which he had become a stranger, to then become a stranger in another strange land. We read in Exodus 2:22, “and she [Zipporah] bare him a son, and he called his name

Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.” Now here, what land is Moses talking about? When his son was born, Moses was no longer in Egypt. In fact, when he left Egypt, he was like Abraham—he did not know where he was going. When a person becomes a Christian, this is the way he starts out. He does not know: “What am I going to do next? I have always lived life this way. I have always done this. Am I to continue in this? Am I to give up my job? Is the job going to affect my walk with God? Am I going to need to move to find a place that will now help me as a Christian?” Yes, when we become a Christian, we enter an unknown sphere.

So, what did Moses do? The providence of God led him to the land of Midian. Midian is in the wilderness. Midian is somewhat on the way to Canaan. Canaan is God’s appointed land; Canaan is not the life of the world in me; it is the life of Christ in His full, plenary living.

But Moses went to a different land than Egypt. The Levitical law surprisingly permits an Israelite to marry a Midianitish woman. When Moses came to this new land, the people were not warm to him; they did not embrace him. Though not recognizing him, they did let him remain in their land. The Midianite Jethro gave him one of his daughters, Zipporah. The two married, but it was evident that Moses

was discontent and unhappy. Leaving a strange land, he came to a strange land. Here in this second land Moses made the statement in the naming of his first son: “I have been a stranger in a strange land.”

Was it God’s will for Moses to marry Zipporah? He did not seek God’s counsel when he went there. He was on the run; he did not know where to go. He came to this place where a man took him in, yet there was an awkwardness and a strangeness. Thus, we ask the question: “When Moses speaks of ‘a strange land,’ is he speaking of Egypt, or of Midian, or both?” “I have been a stranger in Egypt, and I have been a stranger here.” Moses is a stranger in a strange land. He is far from any true home. He is far from his own people. He has become a refugee among foreigners.

Then Moses has a second son. We do not read of him in Exodus 2. It is not until Moses and the children of Israel arrive at Mount Sinai, that Jethro brings Zipporah and now the two sons of Moses with him. Here we learn a second son had been born that Moses named Eliezer, meaning “my God helps.” It is important to see that although Moses viewed himself as a stranger in a strange land, he still believed that God was helping him.

Another Strange Land

Once the Christian has been born again, God must take the thirst, the

appetite, and the desire of the world out of him. But, do such things leave the heart immediately? We are strangers in a strange land. It is not just Egypt that should be strange to us, but this land with Jethro, this land with Zipporah—this land of Midian is not the final land we long for.

There is going to come a day in every Christian's life when carnality begins to rise in the heart. The Christian must remember that the flesh principle within his heart is an ally to Egypt. It is not Egypt, but it is an ally with and a spy for the spirit of Egypt. Carnality only begins to be revealed within us right after our New Birth; carnality is that power within us which draws the Christian back to Egypt.

In the Book of Deuteronomy, the remedy for carnality is *circumcision of the heart* (30:6). In the Book of Joshua, when that covering of the flesh of the seed (the secret seed of man) is cut away, it is called "the reproach of Egypt" (Josh. 5:9). When this flesh principle, this old man, this desire begins to rise in the heart, the true convert will cry out as in Romans 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Yes, the true Christian cries out, "I don't want this! I don't want to live in this land! I'm not in Egypt anymore, but I'm not in the land where God wants me to be." Even carnality is a strange land to a Christian.

If the Christian is honest, there will be moments where that Midian influence rises, and the heart will respond, "I don't want this! I don't like this! I want to have a victorious life! I want to be completely free from the power of sin in my life as well as free from the power of the world!" If such a man never comes to deliverance from the Midianite influence, he will be this miserable man. This is where Moses now found himself. Did he want to be there? Did he have in his mind that "I'm going to stop over here in Midian land, but I don't want this to be my final home. It is just a stopover." When we were unsaved, we had no consciousness of an old man, or the flesh, because we did not have Christ in us. Therefore, there was no war, there was no battle within. But once Christ enters the heart at the New Birth, we begin to see this carnality for the first time: "I am saved; I have been forgiven of my sins; but I don't like this arrangement. Surely, this is not the fullness of the Christian life."

On a personal note: A few months after I was saved and was in this battle, I went to my father and asked him, "Dad, is this the best it will ever be? Am I going to have to live this way, with this war all the days of my life?" (In growing up I never saw this war with my father, at least I was not conscious of it.) He responded, "No, Son, this is not the way it is supposed to be, but you will have to go through

this battle, this land, to get to the land of Canaan. To enter the land here on earth in a life with Christ, you will have to be delivered from this wilderness life."

I learned that day that Egypt is not the only strange land to a Christian; Midian's land of carnality is a strange land to a Christian as well. If your heart is hungry for the fullness of God, and for the heavenly land on earth, you will long, you will desire for it to become the land of your inheritance, your rest. There may be a stopover in Midian; however, if we fail to respond to God's call unto holiness, we probably will remain in the miserable Midian wilderness for the rest of our lives.

The deeper working of grace is a calling. If God had not called Moses, he would have never left. Although we may say he never physically entered Canaan, his heart was living there. The same was true for Caleb and Joshua—their hearts were in the land! Sad will be the day if we lose that consciousness in carnality that "I am a stranger to this land of Midian." If we do, we have made the choice for Christ to leave Egypt only to settle in the wilderness. The cry comes from the Christian: "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24b). If we settle down in the carnal state, we will end up in 1 Corinthians 3, where there is no longer any burden to wrestle, or to cry, but where "there

is among you envying, and strife, and divisions," where Paul asks, "Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"

Truly, every Christian, right after leaving Egypt comes to this in his life. Perhaps, such an individual was never told of the hope of deliverance from the wilderness. Nevertheless, God is still with the carnal Christian. Is that a paradox? How can you make it through the confrontation and the battle of the flesh without God bringing manna, leading through a cloud, through trumpets, and the presence of the Tabernacle? Yes, the Christian, in looking back over his ups and downs, ins and outs, backslidings and comings back to God, sees just as many miracles in the wilderness of his life, and yet he does not want his Christian life to be that way. He does not want to live in that carnality. Even out of Egypt there can be another land in which the Christian is a stranger as well, but God is there to help him through his struggles.

Conclusion

May God help us as Christians never to try to fit in with the Egyptian world system, or even in the Midian world of carnality. May we never try to accommodate either of these lands with the Christian life. We pray every day for our Christian brethren working in the business world. They are in it, but God forbid they ever get so tied up in it that the world controls them. Since

Christ saved us, we are strangers living in a strange land. This world is not our home; we are just passing through. The powers of carnality are still a link to the old land. May we see the principles and the patterns of God's singular revelation to the planet Earth; may we gain both insight and the power to live as a stranger in this strange land. And may the agony, may the wretched feeling of the carnal life cause us to cry, "Lord, You have to deliver me out of this land, too!"

We are at an hour now where Christianity no longer preaches a radical change—a radical change where old things of the flesh pass away (2 Cor. 5:17), and all things of God become new. Though we are in the world, we do not have to be of the world. To this world we will be a perpetual stranger in its strange land. May we also be delivered from living in the wilderness of carnality, for that too should be a strange land to all Christians.

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The Christian's Strangeness in a Strange Land

Dr. H. T. Spence

The great problem today in contemporary Christianity is the absence of a clear, defined change of life identified with becoming a Christian. There is no difference between the citizens of this strange land and contemporary Christianity; there is no difference between the institutional church and the world. The institutional church has redefined itself to accommodate the contemporary it loves. The professing Christian church on earth has not pressed for this radical change of life; consequently, it has radically changed the definition of a Christian.

As a result of this redefining, we dwell in another strange land—the land of contemporary Christianity. Contemporary Christianity has made captive true biblical Christianity. Like Israel of old, the End Time requires of the true child of God two exoduses. First, there must be the exodus from Egypt. God wants us totally out of one land and into another, the land of Canaan—the Christ life on earth. God does not want us even dwelling on the border of Canaan. Is our heart captive in Egypt? Is our heart lingering in the wilderness? Or, is our heart abounding in the land of Canaan? After Egypt, there remains a second exodus End-time Christians must make.

The Second Exodus

A thousand years later, there was for

Israel a second and equally important exodus from a land, a strange land. Israel left the land called Babylon:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land? (Ps. 137:1-4).

After seventy years of this religious captivity, they finally departed from this second strange land. Unlike the captivity from sin (Egypt), this was an exodus from the captivity of religious apostasy (Babylon).

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah carefully present this second exodus. In each of the three returns (536 B.C., 458 B.C., and 444 B.C.), a remnant longed to get back to Jerusalem, to build a temple, to build the city, and to be restored to their God. They had gone into this captivity because of their rejection of the God whom they had served for hundreds of years. They knew that over a process of time, they had defected from Jehovah by turning to other gods.

This is where Christianity finds

itself today. It is in another strange land—the land of apostasy, the land that destroys the true Christian faith and causes that faith to acclimate to the strangeness of the strange land, the world. Growing up in a preacher’s home (with the truth all around me), I was seventeen years old before I finally gave my heart and life to the Lord. I left Egypt and immediately was part of a church denomination that was (at that time) strong for the Lord, helping me in my walk with God. But over a process of time, these churches and denominations began to compromise, believing that change was the only way to survive. They believed that Christianity, or the denominations, must change with the times. This included a change in everything identified with their concept of Christianity—the music must change, the dress and the living standards must change, the concept of holiness must change.

We saw the “heart” of Christianity leave the churches, as the “form” of the Christian became contemporary. I remember a sermon preached by one of the ecclesiastical leaders just before my father and I left the denomination. It was entitled “Building the Church in Spite of the Saints.” The sermon was exhorting pastors to continue with the changes despite those who were fighting against the changes. It was the plea for everyone to “climb on board” or otherwise leave the church. This sermon was the final, bold word we heard

before our exodus. The leadership believed that for the denomination to grow with the “rest of global Christianity,” it needed to change. Each day we felt like a stranger in a strange land. A land that was once a land where we walked with God, this land of our spiritual legacy, kept changing over a process of time until it became a “strange land.” Now, in this land we became a stranger as it became a new religiously formed land against the truth of God.

With these changes, there was no liberty to freely preach the truth, no liberty to seek God with the fullness of a heart sealed in God’s Word, and no liberty in pursuing the biblical holiness of God. Then questions came to us. People began to wonder why we were not getting in harmony with the changes. “Why do you look so burdened all the time? Can’t you enjoy the liberty that has come to us in these changes?” More and more our hearts were restricted in services as the churches fabricated a false form of worship. Far from the true biblical worship and a Christian walk with God, all was reinterpreted with a self-centered perspective. Our response to the questions became more and more pronounced: “How can we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?”

Yes, dear reader, just as Egypt was a strange land after we became a Christian, the churches in which we grew up

have become a strange land as well. Many of our home churches were no longer familiar, biblical land—Canaan land. Even the religious terminology was becoming a foreign tongue—a new language—with new concepts of God, of worship, of music, and of teaching. It was absolutely necessary to depart from this Christian apostate land; we had to find a land where we could worship and serve God according to the principles of His Word. How could we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? Just as the world has become a strange land to us since our conversion, sad to say, modern Christianity has become a strange land religiously.

We must carefully reflect upon what happens when an individual becomes a born-again Christian, when one accepts Christ as Saviour and enters the Kingdom of Heaven. This conversion to God involves an inward and an outward change. It is supernaturally wrought by God; it is literally being born from above through the power of the Holy Spirit. A believer in Christ is brought from death unto life, from sin into the holiness of God; he leaves the world and becomes a pilgrim and stranger in the earth. When born again, one receives a new nature with new desires and ambitions for life. The whole behavior is changed from that of a selfish worldling to a devoted life transformed by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because of this radical change of

being plucked from the powers of the world (which was once the great influence upon our lives), God now gives us the church to take the place of the world in our fellowship and in our living. The church becomes a place where all should live the same way in principles and standards, encouraging one another to live according to the precepts of Christ. Therefore, it is a grief when this gift of a church (for fellowship and strengthening in the things of the Lord) now changes and becomes worldly under the guise of Christ. The true Christian now becomes strange to the church. The land that once fed the Truth and encouraged the life in grace now has restructured itself to the world—essentially, there is now no difference between the world and the contemporary church. The child of God is a stranger to both worlds; he is denied the opportunity to live according to the Word of God in both worlds, in both lands. As the sinning world (under the god of this world Satan) increasingly hates God's saints, the saints are counted as not worthy to live in the world (which the world believes belongs to them). Likewise, the church today believes the saints are not worthy to live among the professing people of God, the church's fellowship. God's saints today are living amidst both lands that are strange to them, and God's saints have become strange to the two worlds, the two lands.

The Cross: Hated by the World and the Church

The First Epistle of Peter carefully presents the sufferings and persecutions that come to God's people because of their living for Christ. Within this epistle we are drawn to the verses found in the fourth chapter. This chapter begins with a unique stigma (the emblem, the critical root) of the Christian life that is the reason for a Christian's strangeness to both the world and the contemporary church. It is the stigma of the Cross! But certain aspects of the cross the world has little problem with. Most are not offended by the truth that Christ died on the cross for our sins and that our sins can be forgiven. The offense comes in how the cross must be identified with the Christian life! The Christian must remember that the cross is not only the place where our sins were borne by Christ, but it is also the place where we read, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." The cross likewise becomes the place "by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 5:24; 6:14). It is in this First Epistle of Peter that we read of the sufferings of Christians in a variety of ways. It is the sufferings of the cross-life that contemporary Christianity despises.

In 1 Peter 4:1 the apostle declares, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh . . ." This is the

declaration that Christ suffered on the cross in that His flesh was nailed and put to death. Peter then proceeds to declare to us, "arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." The "mind" here is a thought that controls both the mind and the life. Therefore, "arm yourselves with the same thought." Philippians 2:5 states, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." This mind was the thought of humility and submission in obedience to the Father, even the obedience to the death of the cross.

But Peter reveals in chapter 4 the thought of the work of the cross in the suffering, or the crucifixion of the flesh (as Christ's flesh was crucified). Our flesh must be crucified! Crucifixion frees us from the power and dominion of sin; this is when the flesh and the appetite for the flesh are crucified. But this crucifixion also will bring about a willful rejection of Egypt, the desire for the world and for sin; this will take place in the heart. The cross is the unique work to put to death that which is an ally with the world and the world system—that which is controlled by the power of the flesh. When Satan and the world attack us with temptation, the carnal Christian has an ally called the old man, the Adamic nature, the sin principle, or the flesh. In this passage, this call by Peter is for us to know this suffering in the flesh in order to cease from the desire and heart for sinning. "For he that hath suffered

in the flesh hath ceased from sin." This "suffering" does not speak of Christ, for He never sinned nor had any sins to cease from. This suffering refers to the Christian's crucifixion in Christ. This believer has taken hold of the cross (to put the sin principle to death in Christ) in order to cease from willful sinning and its desire.

Verse 2 continues, "That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." From the time that a Christian has known that deathblow in a crisis, he should not live the rest of his time in his fleshly body to the lusts of that flesh (which is the controlling principle of the world) and to the way the men of the world live (their lusts, the burnings of the strange land of the world). Therefore, *this is God's will, even our sanctification* (1 Thess. 4:3), which is most important while living in this strange land. Sanctification becomes the breaking of the world within us, which is part of the world without. Note Christ's prayer in John 17:15-17:

I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Because of this work of Christ within the heart, we come to this principle of living in the world; but we do not live as the world does by its lust of the flesh.

The Will of the Gentiles versus the Will of God

In our unbelieving days before our conversion, we did the "will of the Gentiles"; our living was in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and the abominations connected with idolatry (1 Pet. 4:3). At one time our living, thinking, motivation, and words were as the world; we lived the norm of the world for we were of the spirit and heart of the world. But now, since this deathblow has been given to the flesh principle (the principle of the world), we are no longer to live to the will of the Gentiles in sin. The believer must forsake the world, the flesh, and the things of the Devil. The believer must forsake his old companions who do the will of the Gentiles in the world and in sin. A true Christian who has come to know the forgiveness of sins must also come to know the power of sin broken in his life. He is now to live in direct contrast to the will of this world.

In 1 Peter 4:2 and 3, two wills are mentioned. In verse 3 there is the "will of the Gentiles." In the Greek this word is *thelema* or "the wish, heart will, and desires of the world system." The Gentiles created the world system of which we were a part before we became a Christian. This world is according to the wish-will and desire of the Gentiles against God. They have created this world system, its lust and desires,

its purpose, its philosophy, its morals, its music, its speech, how one is to live within its government, etc. This world is controlled by the Gentiles' will. If we live worldly, we will live by the will of the Gentiles.

But in verse 2, having been delivered from the lusts, the flesh of this world system, we now live by the "will of God." God's will is contrary to the will of this world. Everything is totally different. God's will, by which we live, is based on His Word, His principles, His absolutes, His morals, and His way. The way we live as a Christian is radically different; in reality, the will of the Gentiles and the will of the Christian are enemies of one another.

Because of these opposing wills, the Gentile world thinks us "strange"; our manner of living is strange, and everything about our life is strange to them. "Wherein they think it strange" (4:4). This "wherein" is referring to our manner of living, or their observation and hearing of it. It is foreign to them, it is alien, and brings forth anger. One time we ran with them, we lived the life with them. But now we have so radically and wholly changed that we do not run with them "to the same excess of riot." We do not have the same passions, the same burning desires that we once had. We do not dress the way they do; our children do not dress the way their children do; we do not enjoy the same pleasures;

our families are different; the very contrasts become a condemnation in their thinking. "To the same excess of riot" declares that lost state in which a man is given to self-indulgence and saves neither reputation, earthly position, nor his immortal soul. And this is what they do: "Speaking evil of you," literally "blaspheming them [the true Christians], cursing them." This is the way the world system through its talk, its news media, and its actions will treat God's people.

What is this strangeness that they see in us? Part of it is to be found in 1 Peter 4:7-11. "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer." The true Christian is ever to keep the end in view. He does not live for the passing existential moment; he lives as one who knows the end of all things. He lives for the culmination of life in Christ. This ushering in of all things is to be at the Lord's return; therefore, the importance of sobriety and watchfulness unto prayer must be a part of the daily Christian life.

"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (v. 8). This verse speaks of the importance of fervent love among those who are of the pilgrim company: "among yourselves." This is a noble rule in Christianity! Mutual affection must be fervent, not cold; this affection

must be sincere, strong, and lasting. The world hates God's people, and this is why Christians should cling to one another. Even though they cannot be blind to the faults of others, yet love covers the multitude of sins. We must not take this verse to mean that true Christians are indifferent to evil. "To cover a multitude of sins" is to forgive and forget offenses against one another; to cover and conceal the sins of others rather than aggravate them and spread them in gossip. For those who are weak, who have been guilty of many evil things before their conversion, these we forgive and love.

Another important truth is "use hospitality one to another without grudging" (v. 9). How are we toward one another? Are we without murmuring and complaining? This is what the world is given to. But we are to give such hospitality, no matter the cost of the inconvenience. Murmuring takes from hospitality all its beauty; hospitality should be given as a gift.

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (v. 10). Whatever we can do for God's people, let us remember it first is a gift from God that should not be hidden in a napkin. We should do service with these talents one unto another. They are entrusted to us by God for others.

If any man speak, let him speak as the

oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (v. 11).

The true Christian is always speaking God's Word. What Christians do in private, or what they minister in public, or whatever they teach and preach must be the pure Word and oracles of God. They are not to mix psychology or philosophy or the ways of the world with this pure Word of God. They must not mix anything with the Bible except faith! As regarding our manner of speaking, it must be with the seriousness, reverence, and solemnity that befit those holy and divine oracles of God. How Christians treat the Bible with respect and as the infallible Word and absoluteness of God also causes the secular world and the religious world to hate them! The cross brings Christians into humility and their living is by the absolutes of God. These imperatives of life the world hates with great intensity.

Conclusion

We are in a day now that both the world and the church think us strange, and we must learn through God's Word and the Holy Spirit how we are to live with this. We must pray that God will give us grace to not be shamed or intimidated by the world. We must not let its bold rebuke and

name-calling offend us. We as parents will also have to make this clear to our children; they must not be conformed to this world system. It does not mean they always have to dress up when going downtown, but God forbid we wear the clothing of the world simply to blend in with the world or wear clothes that become walking billboards for the secular world. Let us dress nicely; let us act nicely. The casual dress is destroying the church. I am appalled with the casual dress of ministers publicly, in their travels to preaching engagements and church functions. We have let the world dictate our standards and intimidate us to become "one of them." If the world is against the biblical Christian manner, then so be it. We have already been warned by the Bible that "wherein," the way you live, the world will think you strange. We are not of the world anymore; we are not to be conformed to its dress, its music, its entertainment, its amusements, its perspective of life.

May God enable us to live in these two worlds that have become strange to us, as they look upon us as being strange with the intent to blaspheme us. The day is coming, and may already have arrived, when martyrdom will become common. As Jesus said in Matthew 24:9, "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." In Mark 13:13 we read, "And ye shall be

hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." It is not that they simply will not like us. They will hate us!

In these days when the churches are redefining Christianity to accommodate the world, may both our lives and words ever be clear with others concerning the distinction of the world from biblical Christianity. Although our lives have known the exodus from Egypt (the land of the world), may we also come to know an exodus from Babylon (the apostate system of contemporary Christianity). May we keep our hearts and minds from promoting the language and the clichés of the contemporary Christianity in our conversations. May God not only deliver our hearts from the contemporary music of the strange land of Egypt but also deliver us from the contemporary music flourishing in the churches today. May our hearts be delivered from the contemporary dominant rhythm, its shallowness of message, its sensual appeal to the ear and the flesh, and its carnal approach to God.

We must ever remember that Christ birthed the Church to take the place of the world for our fellowship, and may we stand firm in keeping our own lives pure in Christ and in seeing the need of a spiritual Bible church for our souls and for our families. May God help us to be a spiritual Christian, contribut-

ing spirituality to our local church, rather than contributing carnality and indifference to the flock. May we know the dominion and the power of the flesh crucified in and through the cross of Christ, as He enables us always to do the will of the Father rather than the will of this world and the Devil. We must ever be conscious that the world

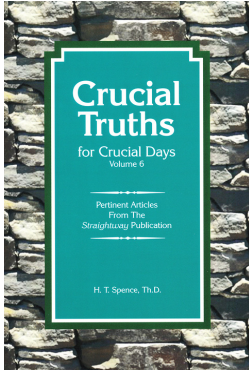
loves its own, and anything contrary will be hated and despised.

Although the world naturally hates the Christian, a greater sadness is that the professing church hates the Christian as well. May God enable us to live in these two worlds that have become strange to us. S

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Strange Culture in a Strange Land

Dr. H. T. Spence

One prominent power Christians are facing today in the strange land of this world is the pervasion of sin and anti-God sentiment in the culture of society. Today's culture has gone beyond the normalcy of sin. A strangeness has taken over the culture of daily human behavior. Society's continued bold defiance of even basic moral principles makes it increasingly difficult for Christians in society.

Defining Culture

What is culture? How does a culture arise among a people? What governs culture's purpose and influence over the world? Culture is basically the outworking of inward beliefs. More specifically, culture is the customs and beliefs worked out in the living of a race or nation. Culture is a system of beliefs, values, and assumptions about life that guide the behavior of a community, a nation, and possibly an entire world. Culture includes customs, languages, and artifacts that are transmitted from generation to generation with rarely any explicit instructions. A culture measures a people's quality of life, its vitality, and its social health. Through culture one develops a sense of belonging, personal and cognitive growth, and the ability to empathize and relate to others.

Culture has five basic characteristics.

(1) Culture is *learned*. One is not born with culture; one's culture is learned consciously or unconsciously through family, school, peers, and public media. (2) Culture is *shared* daily among people. (3) Culture is often *symbolic* or based on symbols uniquely understood by a people. (4) Culture is *integrated* into daily life. (5) Culture is *dynamic*, or fluid and susceptible to changes. Though much of a culture is tied to a people's foods, habitation, and dress, yet many other things affect a culture. A people's view of God, morality, eternity, or even the innate goodness or evilness of man is a part of culture.

It is increasingly clear that the world in which we live is multicultural. The great varieties of culture throughout the world and throughout history are all now being mixed together. As a result, Christians are facing radical cultural changes as more and more the world's system becomes increasingly strange.

Through culture we develop a sense of belonging, being identified with certain people and customs. Because of this identity we can empathize with a people. Culture is eventually inbred in us. We are now witnessing the hope of the world coming to a global culture that will be inbred in all mankind. With this humanistic hope, the world

will empathize with itself against God. This evolving strange culture is now considered the measurement of a quality of life, the vitality of a nation, as well as the moral and spiritual health of society.

Belief: All Cultures Are the Same and Equally Accepted

Contemporary society has succumbed to the belief that each culture has an inalienable right to exist and that no one can question it. In our multicultural society, a historic American culture no longer exists. While visiting England a few decades ago, I expected to see on the streets of London the popular English derby and cane umbrella. However, during my visit I saw only two or three men so dressed. What I did see were Pakistanis, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists contributing to an eclectic culture throughout a city that spoke seventy languages.

It used to be that if America's leaders believed there were problems in another country, they would invite individuals to America to live and learn our culture. Compared with many primitive cultures, our culture was more civilized, wiser, and more mature (even though the youngest of the nations). Many believed America's culture would be the antidote to the problems of the world.

However, with the defeat of Hitler

and his theory of a master race, the world swung enthusiastically to the belief in the equality of all cultures. If any culture suggested it was better or the best, the world retaliated fearing a resurgence of Hitler's German supremacy. More and more the world began to look at culture from a new perspective. The League of Nations (eventually, the United Nations) declared that no one could claim a specific culture was the ideal, absolute, or necessary culture for mankind. All cultures must be viewed equally and true in their own right. There was no absolute standard that could rightly judge it.

Throughout the twentieth century, one primary purpose of the magazine *National Geographic* was to objectively present the world's cultures without any condemnation. This magazine often traveled to remote civilizations and cultures typically unknown. At times it presented aspects of public nudity, polygamy, and polyandry without condemnation. It simply chose to educate the world about other unique cultures. Its articles were written to inspire the reader to respect these people and their cultures in the sphere in which they existed.

Several principles now govern the contemporary view of cultures: (1) Man is on his own. (2) There is no God to govern man's culture. (3) Man is securely chained to this earth. (4) Man has the right to live the way he

desires in his environment. (5) All religions are man-made. They are simply what groups of men have thought. If the value systems of various cultures have been deified or believed to be of the gods, it was the culture's way of enforcing these systems. (6) There is no revelation from God. (Any idea of God disclosing Himself, especially in a little-known culture on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, is utterly unbelievable.) (7) Although each religion is good for those who believe it, claiming any universal authority is going too far.

Today, the world is being forced to accept a worldview of cultural relativism. Believing all religions are equally true, everyone must accept equally all religions. With cultural relativism comes the belief that there are many ways to God, many standards of right and wrong, and we have no right to persuade men of other cultures to our way of thinking. Any form of religious absolutism is defamed as cultural imperialism.

Cultural relativism has paved the way for philosophical relativism, whereby many Millennials today are accepting the cultures and philosophies of Marxism, socialism, communism, positivism, and secularism. Although these are political philosophies, they create their own culture. All philosophies of heart and mind are outworked into a culture that influences others in daily living.

The outworking of communism in Venezuela has cultivated an obvious failing culture. The outworking of Islam manifests itself with its dictates of prayer times, dress, food preparation, and food consumption. Similar observations may be made of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Roman Catholicism. Once a religion becomes the dominating factor of a people, it becomes intricately woven into the warp and woof of the fabric of that culture. Although religion is a great key to control a culture, there are some cultures purely based upon atheism.

The Bible and Its Culture

We have come to an hour where this global culture of relativism is being weaponized against Christianity. The world now views Christian missions as an impertinent invasion into ethnic societies satisfied with their own customs and beliefs. It is no longer acceptable for Christianity to declare to other societies principles of universal truth. Global cultural relativism declares man is capable of living life without God; he needs no God to reveal to him how to live.

Despite geography, language, and customs, the true Christian declares there is a singular revelation that tells man how to rightly live before God. The world responds that each culture has its inalienable rights that require no God or His revelation. In this same spirit, there are professing Christians

who falsely claim Christianity has no right to correct the culture of others.

When an individual comes to Christ and into the fullness of this Christian faith, even his culture must submit to His Redeemer. There are not many ways to God—there is only one way! Although there may be many good cultures and standards of right and wrong, the Word of God emphatically declares only God has revealed from heaven the one right way of life. Note Romans 1:19, 20:

Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.

This verse declares a natural revelation has been given for and to all men. Apart from conscience and God's general revelation (both of which man has steadily violated), man has no sure knowledge other than God's special revelation in the Bible and in Jesus Christ. If there is only one way to God, one revelation, one Saviour, and one baptism, can we declare there is one Christian biblical culture? Is there one way of acting, thinking, forgiving, worshiping, repenting, and one way of believing that is pleasing to God? Is it possible for the Gospel to come to any man on the planet, permeate his

life, and thereby affect all aspects of his living? As such a Gospel shapes thoughts, deeds, customs, institutions, and governments, a Christian biblical culture will naturally arise.

What is Christian culture? We must remember that all cultures are created by men who live together long enough to develop a distinctive language and a way of life. As we have stated, God gave all men a degree of revelation through nature in addition to a personal conscience (the law written in the heart). Nevertheless, sin and the world can re-educate the conscience against God. Because mankind has known something about God through natural revelation and conscience, it can be said that God has played some part in man's culture. However, man's sin nature has taken him into realms in his culture that are against God. The depth of man's depravity has become progressively worse throughout history.

The young prophet Daniel and his companions had to confront a Babylonian culture. Note Daniel's response:

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself (Dan. 1:8).

Daniel took a stand against the culture of Babylon. Although he submitted to some things (e.g., the changing of his

name), when it came to the principles that his God had declared, he would not yield to their culture. This stance was consistent in Daniel's life (e.g., Daniel 3 and 6). The Word of God within the human heart that is worked out in such decisions testifies of a biblical culture. Each Christian may live in a different geography, climate, economy, and natural heritage, yet he must make decisive changes in his life as he discovers God's will for his living.

When Christianity and cultures clash, culture must submit. While some differences among cultures are permissible, customs and practices contrary to God and His Word are never permissible. We must know, according to Scripture, when and where in our culture something is proper or permissible and when it is contrary. As a Christian we must follow the Bible.

When the Gospel reaches a culture where public nudity, polygamy, alcohol, or even the occult is acceptable, what should a missionary do? The contemporary missionary says his burden is to lead them to Christ while leaving their culture alone. The true Gospel's purpose is to change the lives and the living of the souls it reaches. The true Gospel delivers them from the wretchedness of sin unto a holy living governed by the principles of the Word of God. The power of the true Gospel reaches into the private life of

an individual and extends to his home, his marriage, his personal stands, his business, and eventually reaching aspects of his society and government. The true Gospel is given to change the entirety of human existence. The heart cannot be changed without affecting the living of life in every aspect and compartment of a person. The Gospel is given to change everything and conform us unto Christ.

The Gospel changes a whole life. It enables, yea, encourages and inspires one to make his home look the best that it can. If every man and woman in each society would accept Christ biblically into their lives, they would change in every way they live and express life. Architecture, art, even a people's vocabulary would be different.

Is there a Christian culture, a biblical culture, that is universal? If we believe that Christ is the Saviour of the world, that He is the Saviour of all men, can the Gospel then bring a culture that is universal? We are not necessarily stating that all the houses would be the same design or quality, but in their given geographical and economical context, each Christian would strive to make it the best testimony possible. We preach the same Gospel everywhere. We declare the same Saviour everywhere! We declare the common salvation for all men everywhere. Is it possible—is it probable that if men

would accept this universal Gospel, this universal Saviour, this universal salvation, this universal Christ life, there would be aspects of the Christ to come out in every culture, destroying the things sin created in that culture?

When I travel out of the United States, I initially express to a congregation the following burden:

I have not come as an American. We have deep problems in America. America used to send out godly missionaries; now, it is exporting the apostasy that is influencing your country. The contemporary music that you are singing in your churches came from our apostate churches. Our carnal churches have condoned and encouraged your casual dress for church. These things have now become part of the substance of your Christianity; you received these contemporary changes from us. As a minister of the Gospel, I condemn these things from my country, and I must tell you that what you are now receiving from America in the name of Christianity is false. This is part of the falling away, and you are now inheriting our falling away.

It does not matter where the Christian lives on this planet, a day comes when he must make a choice between his culture and biblical culture. Will he choose a biblical culture for only some aspects of his life? When his culture clashes with the Bible, will he choose personal culture over the Bible? If Christ is to rule and we are to be conformed to His image, we will be conformed to what He was and is

as a human—how He walked in life, how He talked, how He handled His enemies. Speaking of Paul and those with him, the Jews out of exasperation declared, “These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also” (Acts 17:6). To the contrary, they were trying to turn the world right side up. It is sin that has destroyed the world. It is sin that has invaded the cultures of society.

Cultures and Their Strange Gods

Solomon loved many strange wives who introduced him to the gods of their strange religions and cultures. Pursuing this strangeness, Solomon was drawn away from the true God of heaven. Psalms 114 and 137 speak of the strange language of Egypt and Babylon. Oh, the way people are talking now: cursing, swearing, bold terminology, sensual speech, a language that decades ago was unheard of in public normal communication. The culture of our time is producing strange children—young children of rebellion, stubbornness, lying, cheating, stealing, disobedience, and with pride that formerly took years to cultivate. In Psalm 144:11, David called upon God to “Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.” Strange children grow up to be strange men and strange women without any consciousness of God and

the morality of His Word.

When Paul ascended Mars' Hill (Acts 17), he observed all the idols and their altars. He witnessed their Greek culture. Then, observing one altar to the unknown God, he was prompted by the Holy Spirit to deal with their culture! Paul preached to these philosophical leaders that in the past, God did wink at this ignorance, but now, since a man has come (Jesus Christ), Who will call to repentance, they have no excuse for this idolatry as part of their culture. We learn from this classic message that part of the responsibility in preaching the Gospel is to preach the fullness of the message to bring the total change to the human heart.

Oh, if only we could get the total Gospel message into our homes, it would change the manner of life with one another, our conversation with one another, and bring a dignity even to the way we eat. A Christian mother would want to dress her children the best that they could afford, to do the best, to be thankful, to be hospitable, to be cheerful, to be uncomplaining. We cannot let this world intimidate us by declaring that we may preach about God forgiving sins, but do not touch culture, do not deal with native music and dancing, do not deal with alcohol consumption. Even some professing Fundamentalists (from their soul-liberty perspective) believe that drinking wine is permissible, especially as it has

become a greater part of our culture.

Conclusion

In the past thirty years (even in America), the world has radically changed its cultural ways. From the most sophisticated to the most uneducated of men, their ways of culture are now introducing strange gods. Western civilization, we must remember, has been influenced by Christianity for nearly two thousand years. Its various cultures have had some semblance of truth influencing morals and ethics. Christian principles have been interwoven into the fabric of our culture. Now, more and more, the strange gods of Eastern religions have deluged Western thought and transformed its culture. The permissibility of a multitude of sins has changed our way of thinking, and thus, our entire culture is embracing a strange debasement of living. Human dignity is fast leaving our society. Strange clothing, strange colors of hair, strange body piercing, strange tattoo markings on the body continue to abound.

The dominant influence of sodomites appears in contemporary mannerisms, speech, and apparel. Sodomites have brought a strange flesh into Western culture. Transgenderism has affected the culture of public bathrooms, high school athletic programs, and professional sports. It has brought total confusion to the biblical concept of gender. Their confusion is continually and intelligently

promoted by the media, education, music, cartoons, sitcoms, and local governments. The prophet Zephaniah spoke of even rulers' children wearing strange apparel (Zeph. 1:8). Strange gods bring strange garments into a society's culture. New politicians are wearing the strange apparel of the foreign powers of Islam. Abortion is part of our culture now. Euthanasia is fast becoming a part of our culture.

When Christ comes into the life, it does not matter what geography you live in, what your nationality is, or what your ethnic race is. It is a biblical culture that Christ demands. It is amazing that people today believe "we have a right to have our own gospel music; we have a right to have the syn-copated beat in our music because this is our culture." The venues of culture now are endless. There is a southern gospel culture, a redneck culture, a country culture, a rock culture, and even a country western culture.

We must even pray about our attire in our public testimony before others. How sad and wretched the world dresses; how equally sad the way professing Christians dress. There seems to be little dignity in the way Christians publicly dress. Even ministers are poor testimonies of the Lord in their attire both in and out of the pulpit. When I was waiting at the airport in Grenada, dressed in coat and tie, an airline attendant came up to me and

asked if I was a minister. She made the statement, "You know, you dress like our ministers, but not the way they dress when they travel." That was an insight. I have seen preachers traveling by airplane to meetings who were dressed no different from the world. It appeared that the pulpit was the only place where they thought a testimony for Christ was needed. Even in the heat of Ghana, in our times of ministering there, we daily wear a long-sleeve white shirt with tie, and on Sundays a dress coat for the ministering of God's Word. Even the pastors in Ghana put our American ministers to shame by the dignity they maintain in their dress for the Lord's house.

Note the cry of the Lord through his prophet in Jeremiah 8:19:

Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country [the enemy had come to take them into deep captivity]: Is not the LORD in Zion? is not her king in her [two provisions given to strengthen them]? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities?

Oh, dear reader, what gods of our culture and strange vanities have taken control of our hearts and living? God must enable us through His Word and Spirit to live in our society, our cultures, without compromising God's Word. Biblical culture must be part

of every Christian's living; it must be the outworking of the living and of the family, no matter where we are. May God deliver us from our sins, the sin principle, the world, the flesh, the Devil, as well as the strange culture of this strange land of the world system.

A Postscript for Personal Thoughts

What has influenced my culture of living over the years? Has my past living, the family in which I grew up, my schooling, my country, my companions of life? Have they affected my culture of living? Since I have become a Christian, have I seen in God's Word how I am to live and that a Christian culture must dominate my life above the culture of my country and upbringing? Do I have a God-consciousness in all that I do? Have I been willing to give up those things in my culture that contradict the Word of God? Though God permits culture, the outworking of life, yet my Christian culture must be the outworking of the Christian principles controlling my life within. No matter where I live, no matter what country I reside in as a Christian, biblical culture must take precedence over my country or family culture. Do I live my marriage as I have been taught in my cultural background, or do I live it in the light of biblical principles? Do I raise my family according to the way I was raised or according to the Bible? Do I work and pay my bills honorably and biblically? Does biblical culture

principally dictate the way I dress or does the world's culture? Does biblical culture control even my reactions to situations in life and to others? How do I view Scripture in the light of my dealings with culture? Do I take the high view or a low view of Scripture to accommodate society or family?

A Final Prayer: "When the culture of a nation degrades its historic laws (e.g., by legalizing abortion, homosexuality, lesbianism, and all forms of fornication), help me, O God, to remain steadfast to the principles of the Word of God. When the laws of the land or governing cultures by the government clash with the living of Scripture, may I obey Thee rather than man. Amen." \$

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A Congress for the Christian Remnant

October 2–6, 2019

“Christ’s Call to the Last Church Age” - Revelation 3:14–22

WEDNESDAY

- 7:00 pm “Christ’s Address to the Laodicean Church” — Dr. H. T. Spence
8:15 pm “Christ’s Salutation to the Laodicean Church”
— Pastor Stuart Hunt

THURSDAY

- 8:30 am “Christ’s First Complaint: Lukewarmness”
— Dr. Douglas Wilson
10:00 am “Christ’s Second Complaint: Spewing Out of His Mouth”
— Dr. Dennis Lowry
1:00 pm Prayer Meeting
7:00 pm “Christ’s Third Complaint: A False Reputation”
— Pastor César Martínez
8:15 pm “Christ’s Fourth Complaint: The Reality of Their Existence”
— Dr. Luis Soberanes

FRIDAY

- 8:30 am “Christ’s Counsel: Buy of Me Gold” — Pastor César Martínez
10:00 am “Christ’s Counsel: Buy of Me White Raiment”
— Dr. H. T. Spence
1:00 pm Prayer Meeting
7:00 pm “Christ’s Counsel: Anoint Thine Eyes with Eyesalve”
— Dr. Douglas Wilson
8:15 pm “Christ’s Love Revealed in Rebuke & Chastisement”
— Dr. Dennis Lowry

SATURDAY

- 6:00 pm “Christ’s Song for the End-Time Heart”
— SINGSPIRATION & MEDITATION

SUNDAY

- 9:00 am “Christ’s Call to Repentance” — Dr. Luis Soberanes
10:30 am “Christ’s Knock at the Door” — Pastor Stuart Hunt
6:00 pm “Christ’s Promise to the End-Time Saints” — Dr. H. T. Spence
— FOLLOWED BY THE LORD’S SUPPER

A Congress for the Christian Remnant

The call for “A Congress for the Christian Remnant” comes at a desperate time in the history of the world as well as of the Institutional Church. We are on the eve of the secret coming of Christ to the air to catch His saints away, and we are on the eve of the coming of Antichrist. The Church on earth has entered into a wholesale apostasy, and Fundamentalism is following in its wake. Today, only a remnant remain who are true to the Word of God. While scattered across the globe, they live with vexed souls amidst the political and religious darkness of our time. We are warned by the words of Amos 8:11, 12:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD; and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.

Even though Christianity has reached the ends of the earth with Bibles translated into almost every language, yet we stand in the worst spiritual hour in the history of the Church. We are not in an “awakening” but in an “apostasy.” Only a remnant of God’s true people are to be found who are living for Christ and longing for His soon return—and the number is diminishing. Thus for the hope of encouraging the Remnant, we cordially invite you to attend “A Congress for the Christian Remnant” to be held on the campus of Foundations Bible College and Theological Seminary.

Special music for the Congress will be provided by the Fine Arts Department and will include the Foundations choirs and orchestra along with various vocal and instrumental ensembles under the direction of Dr. Robert Wilson, dean.

Prayer meetings will be held in the afternoons with the burden to pray for the remnant around the world in their stand for Christ and His Word against the apostasy.

Meals will be provided in the College dining common at a modest price. For information concerning accommodations convenient to the Congress, please call or check our website.

1-800-849-8761 (US & Canada)

+1-910-892-8761 (International)

www.foundations.edu

“We respectfully request that attendees to the Congress be appropriately dressed with dignity and modesty.” Gentlemen—suit and tie; or sport coat, dress pants, and tie. Ladies—dress or skirt of proper length, refraining from sleeveless or low-cut attire. Our Christian testimony speaks this in biblical love.