

THE IMAGE

By

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The contemporary scene never supplies the solution to a Christian's problems. His directions are found as he resorts to the revealed intent of God as seen in Jesus Christ.

From the beginning, man was intended to be a reflection of the Creator. "Let us make man in our image" (Gen. 1:26). Jesus said, "You that have seen me have seen the Father," thus assuring us that He is the image; "Who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance..." (Heb.3:3). It is the purpose of God that we should grow into that image. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). The apostles expressly stated that this is God's purpose, and assumed that each Christian understood as much, "being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col 8:10). This image is already given. It was present before man was created, and was the pattern for his creation. Since God has not changed, neither has His image, and neither has His purpose to have man in that image.

RELATING TO CHRIST

The new evangelism insists that we must "relate" Christ to man and his condition that the church must come to terms with the world. The purpose of God is adjusted to match man's false hopes, like the marksman who shoots first then draws the bull's eye around the mark. But God does not have to relate to man. It is man who must relate to God. "It is He that hath made us", and not the other way around (Psalm 100:3).

Jesus said, "I am the way." Socialism (or Humanism) insists that we must continue seeking a way. The young are told to launch new frontiers, and to blaze new trails. But God did not put us here to be trail-blazers. He mapped the way before man was ever placed upon the planet. Christ is the way. He blazed the trail by His death. He met the penalty for sin; by His resurrection He entered immortality; and by His ascension He was glorified to the highest glory and power in the universe. The way is open — Now. Yet each generation is told that it must experiment and research for a way out of the world's confusion, that the hope of the world depends upon their discoveries. All such socialist madness is an insult to God the creator. It is characterized by the optimism that someday a "right" way will be found. Projections are made to 2,000 AD, and committees are formed anew every day for study and research. The way always lies in the future, but the present continues harrowing and futile. Why? Because the socialist-humanists are without direction. They are searching for direction, yet refuse to bow down to Christ Jesus, and acknowledge that He is the way; that He is the image of the invisible God, and therefore the only means by which man can possibly reach the ultimate purpose of his existence.

The humanist is characterized by a disposition to look at everything from the point of satisfying the sensual desires: comfort, pleasure, prestige. He looks upon every affliction, every judgment of God and every hardship as evil, and labors always to eradicate such. In seeking to eradicate them, every facet of humanity must be touched; consequently the change necessarily erupts in revolution, riots, violence, and war. Of course, these only breed worse conditions.

The individual gets no help whatever in all this effort to effect change. The more he searches for his own way, the more he finds frustration, because he only proliferates the pieces of the jig-saw, making it harder to work. His solution is in relating his life to the way already set: the image already revealed.

THE ABSOLUTE

Socialism, the philosophy of our generation, denies the absolutes. It teaches our children that there is no absolute "good" or "evil." Theft may sometimes be good (good for society, especially when it takes from the rich and gives to the poor). Adultery may be bad or good, according to the situation. Murder may be tolerated under certain conditions, and becomes benevolent when in the name of revolution or war.

But Christ is Absolute: Unchangeable. He "is the image of the invisible God." (Col. 1:15). Christ demonstrates exactly what God wants in a person. Of course, we do not know what Jesus looked like. Probably not much like some of the pictures we see, either feminine or hard and course. Neither is it possible that he looked like an Indian, a china-man or a Negro. The idea that each person may worship a Christ of his own race is a clever piece of treachery, developed by unbelievers. We KNOW the race to which He belonged. The scripture makes a great deal of this, so that He is not to be considered by each race as one of its own members. But, His personal appearance is never described in detail. What is given is the portrait of a man in perfect obedience to God. "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him" (John 8:29). "For Christ suffered for you leaving you an example that you should follow His steps who did no sin." (1 Pet. 2:21). Get it? Always pleasing to the Father. No sin. To the woman of John 8 He said "Go, and sin no more." Not, "Try to do better," but "sin no more." So with all his teachings. He never tried to bring God down to fit into man's carnal desires. He said "I am the way ... no man comes unto thy Father but by me." This leaves no variety of ways, only one. You don't have to believe it. You don't have to accept it. You can reject God and die. But, if you want to fulfill the purpose of God and find peace of mind in this world and immortality in the nest there is just one way to do it, and that is the way already laid out for you by Jesus Christ.

A LIVING WAY

Problems do not automatically vanish upon one's becoming a Christian. We remain in the same world where we must face those who continue rejecting Christ. But the questions are now answered by Christ's way. It is true that millions who profess Christianity do not find answers to daily problems, but it is not because the answers are not there. It is because they have found Christ's answers unacceptable to the world and to self, and therefore haven't applied them. His way requires self-denial. "If any man would come

after me let him deny himself” (Luke 9:23). It is opposed to the world. “Friendship of the world is enmity with God” (James 4:4). It is only after one has become severed from the world, having torn his roots from it, that he can see in Scripture the answers to daily problems. “If any man wills to do His will He shall know the doctrine...” (John 7:17). It is after we have set our feet on the path of total committal, having crucified self and abandoned any desire or hope of comfort and help from the world, that Christ’s way is clear to us.

Then his way is a “new and living way”, His word becomes “living and active”. But it is living only to those who live in it; that is, to those who read it and act upon it until it becomes a part of their lives. We are transformed by the renewing of (your) minds” when we know His word well enough that each situation brings to our minds some application of it. Thus we are “transformed into the same image.” The Holy Spirit was sent to “bring to remembrance” the word of Christ. Of course, He cannot bring anything to your remembrance which you never learned in the first place.

Therefore diligent Bible study is essential to one who is going to follow Christ’s way. In order to be directed by God, one must read God’s directions.

GOD AND ORDER

To the world His way is obscured, and they see only a picture of confusion. Believers often fall into the terrible pit of pessimism and are overcome because of this confusion about them. Then they are easy prey for the false teachers presenting the humanist socialist doctrine of some new way out of turmoil. But the turbulence of our world is not as chaotic as it appears to the naked eye. It may look as if all the world is coming apart, that events are unrelated, the product of mere confusion.

But nothing is independent of God. Christ has “all power in heaven and on earth”. All the events of the world are moving toward the fulfillment of the plan of Him “who knows the end from the beginning. (Isaiah 46:10). Even the disorder of the world is part of the course by which God is bringing to finality His eternal plan and purpose. Just as God reveals the “image” He has in mind for man, so has He revealed a plan for the whole universe. He has already set the time, even the day and the hour, in which He will bring judgment upon the earth. (Rev. 9:15). While this date is not revealed to man, God has revealed that the present age is to be brought to a close at the climax of great turbulence and wickedness, More than that, he expressly states that absolutely all that there is, save for the ones who are called His saints, will come to naught. These saved ones will be the fulfillment of His eternal purpose, to be His own possession, serving Him and receiving from Him the fulfillment of the highest and deepest desires. Then “we shall be like him” (1 John 3:2), thus fulfilling the Creator’s purpose to have man in His image.

Of course this does not solve the problems around us. But we are not called on to solve the world’s problems. One of the characteristics of the socialist is that he tries to change everything and everyone but himself. But, Christ does not require that I change the world, only myself. The problems, as they touch my life, become the means whereby I learn and develop the nature of God.

Love, peace, long-suffering, goodness, meekness, self-control - none of these things are developed by prosperity or Utopian existence. Neither are they legislated. But they are the fruit of the Holy Spirit, after the pruning and the cultivation in the heat of the battle against sin, as one turns from the world to Christ. The directions are given. The way is open. Victory is assured. "We are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory"

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