

God in his life. Man needs today, in a fashion that he never needed it before, what God can do in the human life.

It was to meet this very kind of situation that God became man. It was the point of the incarnation that man needs what God can do. God's supreme love for man in his desperate dilemma was revealed in Christ upon the cross. The purpose of Christ's coming, the purpose of Christ's life, the purpose of His death, the purpose of His resurrection, the purpose of His ascension, was that mankind might somehow be rescued from the plight into which he had fallen. God's desire is to save man, to live in man, to empower man, to lead away from his sin into the knowledge of God. It is the desire of God to bless the lives of men, rather than to punish and to destroy. And yet God, according to the old-time prophets, according to the New Testament Messiah, cannot countenance the sin of man forever. He is God, not to be argued, but to be obeyed. We cannot appropriate God for our use and our needs. We must allow Him to appropriate us for His use and His needs.

The beginning point for America today is to come to God in absolute confession

of her sin, in a repentance for the iniquity that has transgressed the divine command. There must be a turning from our evil and a complete faith in Jesus Christ; faith in what He did for us on the cross; faith that He will inhabit our lives; faith that He will walk with us tomorrow; a daily seeking of His way and His will; a daily yielding to His demands.

These are the basic facts of America today. These are the facts of God's desire to assist man in the impending destruction that he faces. The more you fit into God's plans, the more useful and happy you'll be. The more you allow God to work in your life, the more America will be coming to God. The more you give yourself to Him in absolute surrender to be used for His purposes, the more God will be able to accomplish in our nation and in our lives the things that He desires to do.

A prophet today would certainly say, "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Whatever others do about God's appeal, you can make your peace with God today.

RELIGION OR CHRISTIANITY

July 10, 1960

Scripture: II Tim. 3:1-5

On every side of the American scene there is considerable evidence that this is a very religious age. About 62% of all the American people are members of some religious body. One hundred and nine million people presently claim religious affiliation. The American Institute of Public Opinion indicates that 8 out of 10 American adults say they are members of some religious body. The *Catholic Digest* figures are even stronger than these, for they have said that 95% of all the American people above 18 years of age claim some religious affiliation. On almost every other index of American life, the nature of our religiosity is very evi-

dent. The attendance is up in the churches. The Sunday Schools are larger than they have ever been before. Church finances have never been at the level that they are at this time. Most of the denominations indicate that construction of new church facilities is at an all time high. Evidences of religious interest are everywhere. Religion has invaded politics. Religion is discussed in society. Religion has its place in entertainment. Modern entertainment personalities are taking prominent places in lay religious organizations. Religious books are on the best-seller lists and have been since World War II.

It would seem that it has become high-

ly fashionable for an individual to be religious today. One might even remember the words of Billy Sunday, who said that we Americans are as orthodox as the devil and nearly as mean. There can be no question that there has been a great upsurge of interest by the mass of our people in things religious.

WHAT KIND OF RELIGION?

It is interesting to note, however, that the very success of religion in our modern American society may very well constitute its greatest hazard. When one begins to examine the qualities of this new religion that is sweeping the American scene, he may very well ask many questions about its nature. Is this religion genuine Christianity? Does it have a lasting and permanent effect upon the lives of the people it reaches? Is this religion an experience that has changed the entire existence, the nature of the life, the interest of the soul, the affections of the mind? Is this *religion*, or is this *Christianity*?

Careful analysis of the religion that sweeps America indicates that in many places it constitutes a religion of humanism. *Man* seems to be its subject. Theology is a study of the nature and characteristics and attributes of God. This new humanistic religion often seems to be a study of man—of his capabilities and his potentialities. In many instances, it seems to put man at the very center of the religious scene. Man becomes the subject of the discussion, the object of the investigation, and it would very often seem to be humanism instead of theology.

In this connection, the new religious trends often seem to be an emphasis on a turn to religion instead of a turn to God. There might be a great deal of difference.

This new religion has often become a religion of reassurance. "Turn to religion, and get peace of mind." This is the sermon one often hears on the radio in these modern days. If one will turn to religion, the implication is, there will be an absence of conflict in the life. Turn to religion and be free of the troubles and

turmoil of the world in which we live. Turn to religion, and gain reassurance for your mind. Live more comfortably. Have things easier. And make sure, in turning to religion, that you get the peace of mind that this modern religion promises. The only difficulty with all this is that it doesn't work.

On some scenes, it appears to be a religion of success. There are those who are insisting in the American society today that religion will help you to be efficient, bright, and maybe even help you to get rich. This new modern religion, in many instances, is a religion of success. If you will be religious, it will help you to get what you want out of the world, the implication is. If you will turn to the religious experience, you may gain some new insight that will help you to get along in the business world. If you will turn to religion, you may have those necessary qualifications, *spiritually*, to gain the absolute support of God Almighty in the difficult business world in which you engage. This seems to be the emphasis of some of the modern religion that sweeps America—a religion of success.

It may very well be, on some occasions, called a religion of utility. Get what you want through religion. Sometimes it appears to be nothing more than the idea of "be good and get rich"—very much on the level of a child waiting for Santa Claus to come. "Now, if you will be a good boy," mother says, "Santa Claus will come to see you." And the old song that we sing, "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town," seems to indicate the level to which much modern religion has descended. If you will do what the Bible says you ought to do, then, you can get from God the things that you want. So, just be religious, and use God as a sort of domesticated deity to furnish the answers to life's difficulties. Make God a servant of man, or even worse, one might even compare God on this level to a vending machine. If you'll put in a little goodness, then, out from the other side will come the things that

you want. This may sound extreme, but it is the logical conclusion of much religious argument.

Now, this may be religion, but it is far from Christianity. It, in many instances, dignifies the pride of man. Jesus dignified meekness, and poverty of spirit, and humility. This new religion indicates we ought to strive for and be contented with plenty. Jesus talked about giving, and sharing, and forsaking all. Very often the new religion of modern America enthrones self. The statement of our Lord was, "If a man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

NEW TESTAMENT EXPERIENCE

While we have examined in a cursory fashion the nature of this new religious experience, one ought very well to examine the nature of an experience with God from the New Testament. It's very evident, when one begins to read the New Testament, that the religion of Jesus Christ is vastly different from many of the religious emphases that are being preached in America today.

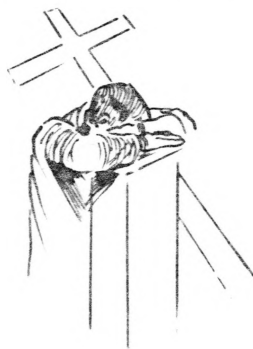
The New Testament religion, for example, begins with the fact of God. God is. Now, since He is God, by very definition of the word for God, by the very understanding that is basic to the idea that God is, He has a right to order the affairs of those who follow Him. Man, in the Scriptures, is classified as the creature of God. He is in God's image, but he is not God. Man may choose but man is not the final judge. While so often man in America is elevated as being the final judge of all things, the New Testament indicates that God is the final judge. Man is finite and sinful. Man is not so much, therefore, in need of tranquility as he is in need of forgiveness. He does not need to be pampered as much as he needs to be developed. God is not so much interested in satisfying all the demands of man as He is in transforming him into a son of God.

Another fact of the New Testament religion is that God is not made for man,

but man is made for God. God wishes to order and control his life that He may utilize man for the things that God developed man to do. Since God made us, it naturally follows that man operates best when he is obeying God's commands.

CHRIST IN FOCUS

It may be a shock to some that the New Testament is not primarily concerned with the problem of solving man's problems. The New Testament does not focus attention, primarily, upon the solution of human problems. It takes an altogether different point of view. The New Testament focuses attention upon Jesus Christ. Those who followed Him, it would appear from history, largely ignored their own problems. They focused their minds and their attention on Jesus and upon His work. They fixed their minds upon the problems of other people. This is very much in keeping with the statement of our Lord and with the teachings of the Old Testament, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy



mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." Jesus was concerned that men should surrender themselves absolutely to Him, that they would give of their time and their ability, of their possessions in the service of Almighty God. He was not interested primarily in giving to them tranquility in the midst of the world. He was vastly more interested in their losing their lives for Him, that they may serve Him. The New Testament followers of Christ, by

the way, in sinking their lives in the work of Christ, in absolutely forgetting themselves as much as in them lay, lost their lives, but they lost them to find them again. Jesus' statement was true then—it is true now. "Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:25).

To be sure, these people found many answers, wonderful answers, but they were incidental to the purpose of serving God with their lives. The answers which they found for themselves were by-products of pursuing the will of God.

The religion that is yours, the personal experience which you have had with God, what is its nature? Is it a thing that attempts to call God to your service, and to give you the things that you want? Or, is it an experience with God that says, "O Lord, I have trusted in Your Son. He has saved me. I owe to Him an

eternal debt of gratitude. Now here I am, Lord. Control my life. Let me be useful in Your kingdom. Help me to do the things that I ought with my life for You and for the rest of the world." Never has humanity needed so much the work, the idea, contained in the statement of our Lord when He said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Do you wish God to serve you, or have you surrendered yourself to the service of God? The answer to this question will reveal the nature of your religious experience.

As you, a child of God, learn to lose your life in His service, you will discover a sweetness to living, a joy in working for God, and a deep peace that cannot be bought. "Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." Why don't you try it?

THE GREATEST FACTOR IN YOUR LIFE

July 17, 1960

Scripture: Titus 2:1-8.

Home is an emotionally freighted word. It brings to mind a throng of memories, good and bad. The very word "home," associated with childhood, brings back, to my own mind, a frame house in the Southern part of the United States, with a lawn that seemed a half-acre in size, and a garden nearly as big. There was always a cow. Almost always there was from one to three bird dogs. There were the neighbors. I remember, when I think of home, the neighbors that we had; the homemade ice cream that Mrs. Swan, across the back fence, used to make on a Sunday afternoon, and invite the preacher and his family to share. Mine was the responsibility of bringing in the wood for the old fireplace. There was not much money. And yet, there was always plenty of everything essential for life—food, clothing, and an abundance

of love. The old house we used to live in—it might very well fulfill the words of the wag who said, "It stayed together only because the termites were holding hands." I remember, too, that the Bible occupied a very important place in my father's house. There was always the church—the church with its primary and fundamental significance. It is a good memory, too, to remember that the salvation of each child, in turn, was the subject of great prayer, and when it occurred, a subject of great rejoicing.

The word, home, for you may bring to mind a city mansion, or a cottage, an apartment high atop a building, or a shack. It may resurrect images of fellowship or feuding, shouting or singing, love or lust, drink or sobriety, jealousy or trust. Some will remember that every prayer was weighted with some object that was of great and intimate concern to the family. Others will