

333 BEFORE AND AFTER (Eph. 2:1-10)

INTRODUCTION:

One Message - Redemption, 3:3-2:10

God's provision for our Redemption, 1:3-14

Man's benefit from Redemption, 1:15-2:10

1. A new insight into the nature of spiritual realities, 1:15-19

2. A new comprehension of the person of Christ 1:20-23

3. A new life, 2:1-9

4. A new work, 2:10

We are concentrating on the contrast between what the believer was once and what he is now.

This reminds us of I Cor. 6:11 where we have a similar contrast.

I. ONCE THEY WERE:

1. Dead in trespasses & sins

A. Spiritually dead - out of fellowship with God.

B. Gen. 2:17-3:19, "In the day ye eat thereof ye shall surely die."

C. The walking dead - spiritual corpses.

2. Walking according to the spirit of this age (Zeitgeist).

A. The character of this present age or times

B. Christians are not supposed to conform to the "Zeitgeist", but to transform it.

3. Walking in fleshly lusts & fancies.

A. "Gratified the cravings of our lower nature"

B. Paul uses the word "flesh" to mean human nature as conditioned by the fall, or the state of the unregenerate being in which the sin principle is dominant.

C. This sin principle is potentially conquered for the life of the regenerated believer, but it must be expelled completely by faith in Christ and by putting off the old man.

4. By natural inclination children of wrath.

A. Being an Israelite and a member of the chosen race did not exempt the Jew from the necessity of regeneration.

B. By nature, all men are exposed to the wrath of God.

II. NOW THEY WERE:

1. Made alive together with Christ, v. 5.

A. This is a spiritual quickening, or a spiritual resurrection, (See Rom. 8:9-11)

2. B. Raised up together with Christ.

This is a present experience

3. Seated in the heavens together with Christ.

A. Present participation with Christ in the results of his redeeming work.

B. An intimate spiritual union with Christ -- a present holy and happy communion on heavenly things, forecasting the unspeakable bliss of heaven.

C. But it is a mistake to have the mind so occupied with the future, that we miss the wonderful privileges of the present.

4. Saved by grace through faith in Christ.

A. Grace is God's part

B. Faith is your part

C. Specifically not of our own works.

D. Rediscovery of this fact was the source and sustaining power of the Reformation.

There is great need today that Christendom should lead professed members of the churches to search their hearts to recognize the necessity of a clear experience of salvation by grace through faith, not a mere matter of form or church membership or good religious works.

Redemption is not by human achievement; it is by God's provision.

This contract is continued in vs 11, 12, + 13.

III. Concluding Thoughts

A. The contrasting conjunction in v. 4, "BUT" God...

B. The masterpiece ("poema") of God's power and grace.

As Paradise Lost is Milton's greatest masterpiece, so a sinner saved by grace is God's greatest masterpiece.

19 Jan 64 Cent. Ch. Angshing

BEFORE AND AFTER

I Cor. 6:11 - "And such were some of you;
 but ye are washed,
 but ye are sanctified,
 but ye are justified,
 in the name of the Lord Jesus
 and by the Spirit of our God."

I. BEFORE Christ comes into the heart.1. Description of the Unrighteous

A. Immoral - sections of our cities where
 debauchees drag the robes of human dignity
 in unnameable mire -

B. Idolaters

C. Thieves & robbers - conscience had lost
 its authority.

D. Covetous

E. Drunkards & revilers

2. Condition of the unrighteous - Eph. 2

A. Their Works v. 2

(1) according to the course of this world
 (2) " the prince of the power of the air.

B. Their manner of life - in desires of the flesh

C. their nature - children of wrath

II. AFTER Christ comes into the heart.
(Eph. 2:4. "But" — the mighty contrasting conjunction)

1. Ye are Justified — (I cor. 6:11)

A. Declared righteous

B. Conversion of Tagawa

2. Ye are Washed —

A. Cleansed of sin.

B. Legend of the Fairy Loch, a lonely pool
of water on the mountain side
near Loch Lomond.

3. Ye are Sanctified

A. Set apart unto God

B. Consecrated

4. How is this done?

A. In the Name of the Lord Jesus
— through our faith in His name.

B. By the Spirit of our God.

Conclusion: While the truth speaks
comfort to the penitent,
It leaves the impenitent
without excuse.

The Fourth 'R'

JOSEPH M. HOPKINS

Did you know that *Mary Magdalene* was the mother of Jesus? That the New Testament book which records Paul's conversion is *Psalm*? That the last book in the Bible is *Evolution*? That *Mary Margaret* was Naomi's daughter-in-law? That the first murderer listed in the Old Testament is *Pilot*? That the title of the first four New Testament books is *Beatitudes*? That King Saul consulted *Sybil* on the day before his death? That *Isaiah* was a son of Solomon?

These are but some of the answers taken from a Bible-knowledge test administered to 357 incoming freshmen at Westminster College (New Wilmington, Pa.) in September, 1962. Of a total of twenty-five questions (most of them elementary), the average number answered correctly was *eight*! Seventy-five students who had served as Sunday school teachers achieved a median score of *eleven*. A check of six typical questions revealed that:

256 students could not name the New Testament book which recounts the story of Paul's conversion;

209 failed to identify correctly the title given the first four New Testament books;

208 did not know the name of either of Naomi's daughters-in-law;

173 could not name the first murderer listed in the Old Testament;

140 were unable to identify the last book in the Bible;

129 could not name the author of the largest group of letters in the New Testament.

Are the test results valid? In previous years, freshmen who evidenced superior Bible background were assigned to advanced classes. It is possible, then, that many deliberately did poorly on the placement test to disqualify themselves from the more difficult sections. This year no such class divisions were made, however, and it must be assumed, therefore, that the students did their best and that the test results are valid.

But are these Westminster College freshmen really typical? Most of them come from what might be called

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upper middle-class Protestant homes. Eighty-six per cent ranked in the upper two-fifths of their high school graduating classes. Since 60 per cent of these young people are drawn from the sponsoring denomination (the United Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.), it would seem likely that many of them and their parents have an above-average interest in the church and have therefore selected this particular college. For this reason one might expect these students to score *better* on a Bible-knowledge test than would the average young person.

Moreover, 335 of these 357 freshmen identified themselves as communicant members of their respective churches—a relationship which presupposes prior instruction and personal commitment to the Christian faith. Nine are Roman Catholic, 205 United Presbyterian, and 121 represent other Protestant bodies. Most of the students admitted having attended Sunday school from childhood; many reported additional Bible study in vacation church school, released-time classes, summer camps and conferences, and personal devotions.

Yet this appalling ignorance! How can we explain it? What does it mean? J. B. Phillips has observed: "It is one of the curious phenomena of modern times that it is considered perfectly respectable to be abysmally ignorant of the Christian Faith. Men and women who would be deeply ashamed of having their ignorance exposed in matters of poetry, music, or painting, for example, are not in the least perturbed to be found ignorant of the New Testament" (*The Young Church in Action*, Macmillan, 1955, p. ix).

The sociologist explains the situation by calling it the inevitable result of that process whereby a sect evolves into a denomination or church. The first-century Christian fellowship began as a sect of Judaism. As such, it exhibited the sect characteristics of spontaneity, spiritual ardor, evangelistic zeal, lay participation, loose organizational structure, high membership requirements, rigid discipline, and rejection of the world's sense of values and standards of success. But gradually church characteristics began to appear. Worship services became stuffy and formal. Control shifted from the laity to a professionalized clergy. Organizational structure grew more complex. Membership became traditional rather than voluntary. Admission requirements and discipline were relaxed. Whereas the

sect had been in conflict with society, the church began to accommodate itself to worldly values and success standards.

SECOND-HAND RELIGION

In view of this transition, the twentieth-century prevalence of second-hand religion, with its accompanying apathy toward religious education, should come as no surprise. While accepted in theory, the faith which most people so easily profess is denied in practice. Parents who agree that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" nevertheless fail to provide religious instruction for their children. Most church-going (to say nothing of church-belonging-but-not-going) parents glibly covenant to rear their children in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord" without the slightest intention of fulfilling this vow.

Several years ago two couples who had been delinquent in their church attendance asked me to baptize their infant children. I agreed to do so only on the condition that they make the sacrament an occasion for recommitting their lives to Christ and assure me of their intention to keep faithfully the covenant promises—which I then carefully explained. All four parents assented, whereupon I administered the sacrament. Neither couple has been inside the church since!

What does this irresponsibility signify? That religion in American life has deteriorated to the level of the merely cultural. Social custom dictates that babies be baptized, that children "join the church," that young couples be married by a clergyman, that deceased loved ones receive Christian burial. Often these ceremonies are performed with a minimum of religious significance for the persons involved. Many ministers, moreover, by administering church sacraments and covenants indiscriminately, have made the Church itself a party to the downgrading and decline of religion.

The most damning heresy of our time is that of admitting God's existence while denying his relevance. We are guilty of fencing God off from life, of isolating him to the circumscribed confines of a particular building. A religion that is unrelated to what a man does outside of church can hardly be expected to enlist his undying devotion, or that of his children. Still less can it be expected to stimulate in its adherents a desire to study seriously its literature and teachings.

It is no mere coincidence that the growth of the secular mind has been paralleled by a similar growth in the concept of the secular state. Each has contributed to the development of the other. For a state to be religiously neutral is an impossible paradox. A government which fails to encourage faith encourages non-faith; when it leans over backwards to avoid discrimination against *any* religion, it willy-nilly discriminates against *all* religions.

Let the church and the home teach religion, say advocates of the secular state. But what are the odds that parents reared in a religiously emasculated culture will devote themselves to this task? And what are the odds that the few parents who *do* will be successful? Already

imbued with secularism, our society has demoted religion to an extra-curricular status. As a result, today's children feel imposed upon when asked to devote their "free" time to Bible study. Such a situation, accordingly, makes the task of religious education extremely difficult, in both home and church.

Even released-time classes in religious education are viewed with a take-it-or-leave-it attitude by many church-member parents and their children. A boy who was given a poor grade for his work in a sixth-grade released-time class complained to his mother. She thereupon sent a note to the teacher and requested that the boy be withdrawn from the course. Would it ever have occurred to this mother to ask permission for her son to drop English or history if he didn't like the subject or received a low grade in it? The fact that many church people did not enroll their children in released-time classes indicates the low priority given to religious education in allegedly Christian homes.

What is the answer? How can the Bible be elevated to at least the level of the arithmetic text? Certainly not by continuing to widen the gap between the sacred and the secular. This deplorable trend must be reversed. Only as the state declares itself honestly on the side of moral and spiritual values can the church and the home be expected to do an effective job of Christian education. This is no argument for a state church—or for the suppression of religious or anti-religious minorities. Such a declaration, rather, is the acknowledgment that faith in God is the will of the people and therefore the official policy of government.

THE MYTH OF NEUTRALITY

It is ironic that much of the insistence upon extreme church-state separation has come not from atheists but from ecclesiastical leaders. One of their principal arguments is that a lowest-common-denominator faith, one which dilutes theology to a content acceptable to all religious groups, is to be abhorred because it fosters superficial, shallow religion. In answer let it be said that "the fear of the Lord is the *beginning of wisdom*." In committing itself to faith in God—and leaving the content of that faith to be amplified by the various religious groups which comprise our society—the nation encourages its citizens at least to acknowledge God and to cultivate attitudes of reverence, dependence, and love toward him. This approach is of fundamental importance, for it lays a spiritual foundation upon which *all* faiths may build. When government fails to encourage religious faith it actually *undermines* faith; such failure conveys the impression that as far as the nation is concerned God is either non-existent or irrelevant. The result of such dereliction breeds a climate which is favorable to agnosticism and atheism and consequently hostile to religion. The will of the minority thus becomes the rule for the majority—and, what's more—in the name of democracy!

It is *not* advocated that our government deprive atheists, agnostics, and freethinkers of their constitutional rights. What *is* advocated is that we abandon