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The Good News

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW



Make These Your
GOLDEN
YEARS

True Spirituality

What Is It—Do You Know?

By Herbert W. Armstrong

HOW OFTEN do we hear one say, “He is *so* SPIRITUAL”? Or, “Those people are not very spiritual”? What *is* true spirituality — do you know?

We need, just now, to be warned against being deceived into a false standard of spirituality. We need to examine the true scriptural standard.

Four things usually accepted as sure evidence

There are four things generally regarded as sure evidence of a spiritual mind:

- 1) Speech, noise, emotion, demonstration.
- 2) Knowledge of Scripture.
- 3) “Faith.”
- 4) Rigid standard of righteousness.

It will prove interesting, and profitable, to take a brief look at each, and measure according to the scriptural standard.

1) The most commonly accepted evidence of spirituality is the way people talk or demonstrate.

Some people have deliberately cultivated spiritual-sounding language. Or, perhaps, they have unconsciously acquired the habit of using “spiritual” sounding expressions. People say, “My, isn’t Brother so-and-so *spiritual*?”

Many think a church service does not amount to anything

unless there is more or less noise, mass enthusiasm and a great deal of emotion worked up and visibly expressed. They never enjoy a sermon, no matter how edifying, unless the preacher is full of certain emotional enthusiasm, fluent in the accepted spiritual phraseology and able to generate in his audience the usual emotional reactions and outbursts expected in this type of meeting. If such things are present, these folk enjoy themselves immensely, whether they learn anything really worthwhile or not.

This is not to discount or to criticize the natural emotional expression resulting spontaneously from a genuine spiritual experience, or the true spiritual language springing naturally from an honest heart. Far from it.

Some people are naturally emotional. Some are not. We shall see from the Scriptures that emotion and spiritual phrases of themselves are not the essence of spirituality. They may be the natural result, the honest and spontaneous expression of it; or, if deliberately generated and “worked up,” put on for show and effect, they may be only its counterfeit. And the sad part is that those who deal in counterfeit always *insist* they have the genuine.

“By their *fruits*,” Jesus said, we shall KNOW (Matthew 7:20).

It is important that we get a right balance.

2) The second class is well

indoctrinated. Usually these people do not believe in much, if any, noise or any spiritual manifestations. They have a great deal of head knowledge, but most of this class have a great deal of misunderstanding, and often they have queer personal theories resulting from misapplied, wrongly divided Scriptures.

They love to try to trap and corner others with the Scriptures, and especially do they delight in it if they are able to corner some minister. Arguing Scripture is their one great interest in life.

These misguided people believe their arguments, contentions and beliefs will win their eternal salvation, without real repentance, or living a surrendered, righteous life in Christ Jesus, showing the fruits of the Spirit in their lives.

3) And then there is the “faith” group. These say they are saved “by FAITH, and faith ALONE.” They are not so much concerned about the Holy Spirit, and seldom mention such things as repentance, utter surrender or any need of submission and obedience to God’s will and law.

Their religion never works any miracle-changes in their lives. Since “Jesus died for our sins,” we do not have to obey. “Just BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” is their sole condition to salvation. The invitation of the ministers of

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this group is, "Give the preacher your hand, and the Lord your heart."

And when, later, you ask such "converts" what they did — what really happened — when they "gave the Lord their heart," they usually just look blank. They do not know. It really did not MEAN anything. It was merely a FORM. The churches of this class should be called social clubs — they are not soul-saving institutions.

4) Finally, there are those whose spirituality consists of a rigid standard of righteousness. In fact, they usually are so strict about following God's commandments that they fall into the error of keeping the strict LETTER of the law in their own strength. They are scrupulously honest, severely punctual, critically exact.

But, as Paul said of the strictest sect of his day, they are "seeking to establish their OWN righteousness," and have not "submitted to the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:3). And they are usually harsh, stern, critical, intolerant of those who do not live up to their particular ideas of righteousness.

The true scriptural standard

Now, let us turn to God's Word, and humbly seek GOD's standard of spirituality.

Of the true spiritual mind, God says to us, through Paul, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

But HOW can you have the mind that was in Christ Jesus in YOU? Jesus says: "Behold, I stand at the door [of your heart] and knock. If anyone hears My voice and OPENS the door, I will come in to him" (Revelation 3:20).

And Jesus meant exactly what He said! He will come in, through His Spirit, and literally LIVE His life of true righteousness in you, if only you will surrender all of SELF and let Him IN.

"But you are not in the flesh

but in the Spirit, IF indeed the Spirit of God *dwells* IN you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, HE is NOT HIS." Unless His Spirit abides within you, living His life of true righteousness in you, you are not a real Christian! "And if Christ is IN you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness" (Romans 8:9-10).

When God first begets us as His children, He takes us who have been proud, worldly, sensual, disobedient. His aim is to make us like Himself. This transformation (not *reformation*) is a tremendous undertaking. It requires a miracle.

God stands pledged, upon real, thorough repentance and faith in Christ (Acts 2:38), to start the performance of this tremendous miracle by putting His Holy Spirit literally WITHIN you! But God will work the complete change in your life ONLY if you are willing to SUBMIT to the process!

The FIRST condition is real, deep, thorough repentance. You will have to be willing to accept correction and repeated chastisements at His loving hands, for "whom the Lord loves He chastens" (Hebrews 12:6).

The spiritual mind is the *surrendered, yielded* mind. It is the mind that has given up all wanting its own way. It is the mind that has been CONQUERED in its rebellion against God.

It is the mind that, henceforth, is *willing* to obey God no matter what the cost, and that continually studies God's Word, not to argue and strive and corner others, but to *learn* more of God's will, and to WALK in it!

It is a mind FILLED to overflowing with real LOVE for God and all fellowmen — even one's enemies — and that has sympathy, patience and kindness for others in their ideas and beliefs, their faults and mistakes, that speaks softly, gently, kindly, that seeks only to help and to serve. It is the mind that has DIED to SELF.

True spirituality

The real spiritual mind can say with the apostle Paul, "I have

been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but CHRIST LIVES IN ME" (Galatians 2:20). When you can say that, then you have the mind that was in Christ Jesus.

The real spiritual mind is a SOUND mind (II Timothy 1:7)!

To those being carried away with a false and pseudo spirituality, where real manifestations of the Spirit were being counterfeited by DEMONSTRATIONS of SELF in a fanatical emotionalism, Paul, correcting them, said, "Brethren, *do not be* CHILDREN in *understanding*" (I Corinthians 14:20).

True, Paul said to these same Corinthians, "I wish you all spoke with tongues, BUT," he added, "*even more* that you prophesied [preached]; for he who prophesies [preaches] is *greater* than he who speaks with tongues" (verse 5).

True, Paul said to those overly emotional Corinthians, "I speak with tongues more than you all; YET," he continued, "in the church I would rather speak five words *with my understanding*, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue" (verses 18-19).

And also he said, "God is not the author of confusion," and, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (verses 33, 40).

Let us get a proper balance, in the position of their relative *scriptural* importance.

"By their FRUITS," not by their tongues, their language, their emotion, their ability to argue, their empty profession of faith, their self-righteousness, said Jesus, shall we KNOW their true spirituality.

And the true FRUIT of God's Spirit is "love" first of all, then "joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). *These things*, expressed in living character, determine true spirituality.

These things are the expression of "the LOVE of God," which has been "poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5), and thus the Holy Spirit *in us* is simply GOD'S LAW *in action* in

LETTERS

Asking for a visit

I would like to comment on "GN Focus: What Happens If I Ask for a Visit?" [March].

So many questions that were brought up in the article were some of my very own questions and fears four years ago, but after one visit I knew that these had to be true, ordained ministers of God. Suddenly I was so at ease, and the questions began to come out so easily — and many of them, as I recall.

But as the article stated, there is no follow-up unless you request it, nor any pressure put on you.

I'm so happy I asked for a visit, despite the negative vibes I started out with. I know now that it was one of the wisest decisions I've had to make, and I realize that this wisdom came from God.

Frieda Hodge
Carpentersville, Ill.

Your thoughtful article stirred up memories for my wife and me of our first visit with one of God's ministers. We must have had dozens of questions, and the minister answered every one with genuine concern and patience, respecting our thoughts.

One thing that made these visits much more profitable was that we wrote our questions down. I'm sure those who do this will never have to say, "There was something else I wanted to ask, but I just can't seem to remember."

Mr. and Mrs. David Whitney
Goffstown, N.H.

"Are You Happy as a Christian?"

In this world of increasing troubles

and unhappiness, the article "Are You Happy as a Christian" [March] was certainly timely and refreshing. It's so easy to be caught up in the moods and feelings of the society in which we live, and as a result our thoughts are not always what they should be (Philippians 4:8).

May I direct a suggestion to my fellow readers? If you make the mistake of not taking the time to look up and read the scriptures referenced in articles such as these, you have really missed a lot.

Hank Berger
Diana, Tex.

"Jesus Died for You"

I would like to congratulate George M. Kackos for his article "Jesus Died for You — Can You Live for Him?" [February]. It is one of the best articles I have read in the past three years that I have been receiving *The Good News*.

The way that the events leading to the crucifixion and death of Christ were described made them so vividly real that I could almost see it happening in front of me.

No ordinary human could have endured such pain, humiliation and ridicule without hitting back in some way.

G. Gallo
Swindon, England

Thank you for the wonderful article "Christ Died for You — Can You Live for Him?" That is the most sobering article that I ever read in my life.

While reading the article tears came to my face until I had to stop and get a towel to dry my eyes. My weak and insignificant mind really is understanding and

being able to comprehend how our Savior suffered and died for all our sins.

Christene Jefferson
Cincinnati, Ohio

I write this letter to you after having been truly humbled to tears. I truly, for the first time, have seen the incredible love that Christ has for each of us.

The horrifying ordeal that Jesus went through for me makes me look at my trials in a different light. It is sadly true that we sometimes forget that important day as though it were something out of a history book instead of being on our minds throughout our daily lives.

My personal trials now do not look so terrible in the light of what Jesus went through, not because He deserved it, but because without it we would have no hope.

R. Gramza
Milwaukee, Wis.

Christmas keeping

In response to Willard McDonald's letter about keeping Christmas [February], let me say this: For many years, I, too, asked (and applied my own answers to) the same questions. I would not "deprive my children" of the pleasure. I struggled against God's will in my life. I finally realized and had to admit that I was terribly wrong. I was putting my children *before* God. This past year we did not celebrate Christmas and we did not miss it at all. Knowing that we were pleasing to God was a wonderful substitute for the Christmas spirit!

Mary Bottinelli
Slade, Ky.

our lives, for LOVE is the fulfilling of the law.

And that, and that alone, is true Christian spirituality.

The four substitutes

REAL spiritual-mindedness is the mind of LOVE, for God is LOVE.

So let us review our four SUBSTITUTES for spirituality in the light of God's Word:

1) "Though I *speak* with the tongues of men and of *angels*, and have not LOVE, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal" (I Corinthians 13:1). Did you ever hear one speak with the tongues of ANGELS? Spiritual

TALK, "tongues" or "manifestations" are only a lot of wind, or a noise like beating old tin pans, *if you have not* LOVE.

2) "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and . . . ALL KNOWLEDGE," and

3) "Though I have ALL FAITH, so that I could remove mountains, but have not LOVE, I *am* NOTHING" (verse 2).

4) "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not LOVE, *it profits me* NOTHING" (verse 3).

What is it to have LOVE? The next four verses of this chapter tell. Here is TRUE spiritual-

mindedness: "LOVE is very patient, very kind." Are YOU? "LOVE knows no jealousy; love makes no parade, gives itself no airs, is never rude, never selfish, never irritated, never resentful; love is never glad when others go wrong, love is gladdened by goodness, always slow to expose, always eager to believe the best, always hopeful, always patient" (verses 4-7, Moffatt).

Read those four verses again, substituting your own name wherever "LOVE" appears. Try it as a test on yourself. It will tell you how truly SPIRITUAL you are. Let us seek more real, genuine SPIRITUAL-MINDEDNESS! □