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Worldliness a Mark of the Unconverted

by Horatius Bonar

WORLDLY people seem to be well aware that it is only in this life that they will be able to get vent to their worldliness. They quite count upon death putting an end to it all; and this is one of the main reasons for their dread of death, and their dislike even of the thoughts of it.

The character as well as the life of these men is undecided and feeble. They are not decided in their worldliness, and they are not decided in their religion. If they were compelled to choose between their two masters, the probability is that they would prefer the world; for their heart is not in their religion, and religion is not in their heart. Religion is irksome to them; it is a yoke, not a pleasant service. Their consciences would not allow them to throw it off; but it occupies a very small part of their thoughts and affections. They are, in fact, worldly men varnished over with religion; that is all. They are made up of two parts, a dead and a living; the living part is the world, the dead is religion.

These are the ambiguous disciples of our age, who belong to Christ but in name. These are the stony-ground or thorny-ground hearers; men who have a place at our communion tables, who figure at religious committees, who make speeches on religious platforms, yet are, after all, "wells without water," "trees without root," stars without either heat or light.

The religion of such is but a half-and-half religion; without depth, or decision, or vigour, or self-sacrifice. It is but a picture or a statue, not a living man.

The conversion of such has been but a half-and-half conversion; it has not gone down to the lowest depths of the man's nature. I do not say it is a pretence or a hypocrisy; but still, I say it is an unreality. It has been a movement, a shaking, a change, but it has not been a being "begotten of God," a being "born from above."

Such a man's whole religious life is one grand misconception; and every step he takes in it is a blunder, and a stumble, and a snare. Let such a man know that, in his present half-worldly, half-religious condition, he has no real religion at all. It is a fiction, a delusion. It will stand no test of law or gospel, of conscience or of discipline, of time or of eternity. It will go to pieces with the first touch. It is all hollow, and must be begun again, from the very first stone of the foundation.

O worldly formalist, thou wouldst make sure thy hope, and obtain a discipleship that will stand all tests, begin this day at the beginning. Count all the past but loss. Fling away thy vain hopes and self-righteous confidences. Give up thy fond idea of securing both earth and heaven. Go straight to Calvary; there be thou crucified to the world, and the world to thee, by the cross of Christ. Go at once to Him who died and rose again, and drink into his love. One draught, nay, one drop of that love will for ever quench your love of sin, and be the death of that worldliness which threatens to be your eternal ruin.

-Edited from the sermon, Christ and the World, Family Sermons, 1863.