

The Oologah Informer

August 4th, 2013

MODERATED RELIGION

Garrett McGilvray

Among the works of the apologist and novelist C. S. Lewis (best-known for *The Chronicles of Narnia*) is an interesting specimen of adult fiction titled *The Screwtape Letters*. It is a novel about a senior demon writing to his nephew to counsel him on the best ways to tempt man. The book essentially becomes a discussion on man's various weaknesses for temptation couched in a fictional account from the side of Satan's angels. The book is not without a doctrinal fault here or there, but it does make for an interesting and thought-provoking read.

One of the quotations that are worth our consideration (there are several) is this: "A moderated religion is as good for us as no religion at all— and more amusing." The uncle demon suggests that the nephew should capitalize on his patient's recent lull by convincing him to believe in "moderation in all things." He then goes on to say, "If you can once get him to the point of thinking that 'religion is all very well up to a point', you can feel quite happy about his soul."

What is shocking to us is the idea that a moderated Christianity could be just as much a win for Satan as the most irreligious unbeliever. We generally believe in the principle that "something is better than nothing." We tell ourselves that "at least it's a step in the right direction." Such a state is to be expected as a transitional phase when a recent convert is a new babe in Christ, but any lasting moderation in our zeal for Christianity is dangerous at best.

One passage that, to speak frankly, I find rather frightening is Revelation 3:15-16. Jesus warns the church at Laodicea, "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot or cold, I will vomit you out of my mouth." It would seem the fictional demons caught on to this passage. Here we have a congregation that is neither hot in their pursuit for righteousness, nor outright cold against everything godly, but instead a tepid state of in-between.

Jesus evidently does not share the "something is better than nothing" philosophy in religion. It is not surprising that he would rather us follow him with all diligence than half-heartedly. What *is* surprising, however, is that he would rather us tend toward *either* extreme—hot or cold—rather than be content somewhere in the middle. How could Jesus prefer a person to be on the extreme of ungodliness rather than moderately Christian? He does not say, but I would guess (and here comes an opinion) that it is because tepid Christianity is a real danger to the church, both in that its negative example is contagious, and that it gives the scornful something to point at and say, "See there, that is why I am not a Christian!" Since this is such an important concept, it may be helpful to consider what a lukewarm Christian is in practical terms.

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Service Times

Sunday

Bible Class: 9:30 A.M.
Worship: 10:30 A.M. & 5 P.M.

Wednesday

Bible Study: 7 P.M.

Preacher:

Russ Earl

AM Sermon:

Christ – A narrow-minded man
(Matthew 7:21-23)

PM Sermon:

God Forgotten

Sunday AM Bible Class:

The Book of Job – D. Jackson

Wednesday Bible Class:

Summer Series:
Challenges Facing the Christian

This week's lesson:

"Understanding Forgiveness"
Dan Fredman

Righteousness - A cold unbeliever cares nothing for seeking to be righteous, while a hot person (faithful Christian) “hungers and thirsts for righteousness” (Matt. 5:6). A lukewarm Christian tries to be “basically good.” He makes sure to avoid the “really bad sins,” but he does not “sweat the details.” He consoles himself in the fact that “I’m no saint, but I do the best I can.”

Bible Study - An unbeliever will not even crack open a Bible except if it is to mock or find fault with it. A zealous Christian finds in it the daily sustenance for his soul; it is his meditation all the day (Psa. 119:97). A lukewarm Christian keeps a Bible on his shelf and hears it preached on Sunday morning. Maybe he intends to read it more frequently *someday*, but for now it will just have to do.

Prayer - It is no surprise that the ungodly have no need for prayer, while the righteous “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). The Lukewarm Christian utters a hasty prayer right before his meal and perhaps a quick recitation just before he drifts to sleep. He has no deep relationship with God as a constant companion.

Attendance - The wicked certainly would not “waste their time” with tedious church attendance. The righteous are pleased to assemble with the rest of the saints any chance they have. The lukewarm man is concerned with attending only when he has to, usually just a token Sunday morning appearance. He lets any little excuse take priority: a ballgame, a bit of a headache, tired from staying up late the night before, a visit from the family. He is never short on excuses.

Giving - The infidel has to spend too much on himself and his sinful desires to have any to offer God. The righteous cheerfully gives of his means each Sunday with liberality (2 Cor. 9:6-7). The lukewarm Christians gives something each week because he must. He offers leftovers, maybe whatever is in his pocket at the time. Perhaps a man of \$50,000 a year congratulates himself on giving a crisp \$20 bill each Sunday.

Christian Service - Forget service to God; a cold unbeliever is preoccupied with self-service. A diligent Christian does not grow weary from well-doing (Gal. 6:9). A lukewarm Christian does well just to attend the Sunday morning service. If the widows need visiting, the needy need help, the ignorant needs Bible studies, the Bible classes and VBS need teachers, let “someone else with more time” take care of them.

Unfortunately, the lukewarm usually do not read articles such as these. Let me then encourage you, my dear brother or sister who is not content with being lukewarm, to let these words serve as a motivation for ever increasing progress and patching up what areas of your life are deficient. You know that despite the greater effort to do as you ought, the reward is far worth it. It is as the fictional demon complained about God with contempt, “He really loves the hairless bipeds He has created and always gives back to them with His right hand what He has taken away with his left.”

Announcements

Summer Series

Our Summer Series speaker this week will be Dan Fredman. His topic is “Understanding Forgiveness.”

Men’s Meeting

Our next men’s meeting is today after evening services. Please let Russ know if you want to add anything to the agenda for the meeting.

Fellowship Meal

Our next Fellowship meal will be next Sunday, August 11th, after morning services. Please make plans to participate in this time of fellowship with one another.

Recent Prayer Requests

Jerry Watson – seems to be improving.

Joyce Cash – having some difficulties recovering from her knee surgery.

Roy Daniel – is taking steroids for the fungus in his lungs.

Barbara Coats – will be going back to the doctor on the 2nd for the pain in her arms.

Daphne Miller – is home now.

Kenny (Patty Payne's husband) – is going to the doctor to have the lesion on his kidney checked for cancer.

Please keep all of these in your prayers.

Please keep the following in the prayers.

Ed & Barbara Coats

Allen & Joyce Cash

Mary Ann Haugh

Emma, Ruth and Shirley (Darla Smith's sisters)

John Babb

Kennedy Cox

Larry Brown