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The Divine Side of the Kingdom

Shelby C. Smith

The Kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven; which is the church of Christ, more than 5,000 years ago was a matter of prophecy. The prophetic thread to the Adamic tree in the Garden of Eden and was held by inspiration in plain view of God's special children as it passed from generation to generation until it reached the terminal at Pentecost of Acts chapter 2.

The kingdom of God, the church, the body of Christ according to the eternal purpose of God includes every saved person, for "he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love: having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us Beloved: in whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, making known unto us the mystery of his will, according to the good purpose which he purposed in him unto a disposition of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in heaven, and the things upon the earth; in him, I say, in whom also we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will" (Eph. 1:4-11).

The purpose of the church is set forth very clearly in Eph. 3:10,11 which reads: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." To preach the gospel is the business of the church, which includes the caring for the "poor saints." Bear in mind, that those

who preach the gospel through other institutions must look to such institutions for their reward. We are to clothe and feed the poor and administer to the suffering. The Lord Commanded his servants to work in his vineyard, then at the end of the day, each receives his pay from the Lord.

In the prophetic books such as Isaiah and Daniel we are told that "the kingdom of Jehovah's house should be established on the mountains" and from it the people should be taught the truth, and the inhabitants thereof should beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks and learn war no more and that house, "kingdom" shall stand forever" (Isa. 2:2-4; Daniel 2:44,45).

In Col. 1:13 we are informed that we have been translated "into the kingdom of the Son of love." Also in Rev. 1:9 John, the writer refers to himself as being in "the kingdom." Also Paul speaks of "the kingdom of God" as being in existence (Rom. 14:17). Again, Paul says in Heb. 12:28 "Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken."

Christ is the head of the church (Eph. 1:22,23); the king of the kingdom (1 Tim. 6:15); high priest of the priesthood (Heb. 8:1). The apostles were and are the ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20). The New Testament is the Lamb's Book of life, and is sealed by the blood of Christ, and is His inspired word.

Each congregation is complete with elders and deacons (Phil. 1:1). In summing up the divine side of the church we have: 1. The message given by the Holy Spirit — infallible. 2. God the giver of the plan — infallible. 3. Christ, the head, king, high priest — infallible. 4. The Apostles who were moved to speak by the Holy Spirit — infallible. 5. Organization, with elders and deacons which the apostles set up makes — an infallible organization.

Therefore, there is not one thing wrong with the divine side of the church; it is eternal, and unshakable, and will stand till the end of time, and then it will be returned back to the Father. (1 Cor. 15:24).

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THE DRUG PROBLEM

Larry Swaim

At least 5 million youngsters in this country have tried marijuana. Most of them would not be classified as delinquents and they are not from slums. They are kids you know, maybe even your own.

Like it or not, drugs permeate much of today's youth culture. Children as young as nine or ten are singing songs of drug induced heights, wearing clothes inspired by psychedelic dreams, speaking the jargon of addicts and experimenting with dozens of possible harmful substances. Yes, the drug problem is one of the most menacing problems facing us today.

Most Christians feel this problem is far from their doors, but it was brought close to home for me recently when I was called one afternoon to go to the Georgia Mental Health Clinic to visit with a young man who attended the congregation where I preached. In the conversation with the young man, I found that he had always been thought of as one of the potentially outstanding young men of the church. He attended Sunday School regularly, participated in church activities and could be described as the average young American. However, he became, as he put it, disillusioned with the vast gulf between what people claim to be and what they really are. Simultaneously he began to associate with the wrong crowd at school. He went to the Woodstock Pops Festival in New York State and it was there that he experienced a "bad LSD trip," as he put it. This led to a complete mental breakdown and confinement to the Georgia Mental Health Institute. It has been a long hard road back for this young man, but I am pleased to report that he is well on the road to recovery.

The drug abuse problem, though, is not limited just to our young. Many housewives, bored with their routine, are escaping their drudgery through drugs. Many business men, tense from the pressures of a complex society, take pills to pep them up for a day's work and to quiet them down for an evening's sleep.

If we can establish some of the causes of drug abuse, then we can begin trying to eliminate them. One reason people take drugs is to get "turned on." Of course, the current use of the phrase "turned on" means various things to various people. Many want to get high, to be set free from this unsatisfactory world in which they live, so they proceed to "take a trip" via drugs. What we really need is to be "turned on" to God. We need to have a personal awareness of the presence and work of God through Jesus Christ in our lives. If we experience "God Power" in our lives, then we can eliminate the crutches that only prop us. Earlier generations did not find it necessary on such a wide spread scale to depend on a crutch like drugs. They had a deep faith in God and a trust in Jesus Christ. This relationship with God saw them through many difficult situations. Today, though, we have

eliminated God, have said he is dead or never existed, have convinced our young people that God is only a myth and so, without any faith in God, they have been left hollow and empty in a world without meaning or purpose, and many have turned to experimentation with drugs, sex or headonism, in general, to add purpose to their lives.

A second reason many are turning to drugs, especially those who have been Christians, is because Christianity has evolved for many to a very dull lifeless program, dealing with only social programs which may be good, but not as an end in themselves. We have reared an entire generation of Christian young people who know little or nothing about the incredible power of God working in human life. Thus, they see Christianity as a social club or order, or as an organization totally out of touch with the real problems of life. This is not really Christianity at all. True Christianity transforms and changes an individual. It fills his life with purpose and destiny and gives him a sense of confidence and control. With Christ on our side, we are told we can do all things. No matter what we have to face, what problem we may have to deal with, we can find the power to see us thru. The Bible promises us this. In Psalms 46 the Psalmist states, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Simply stated, this means there is never a time when God is not there to help us if we will only turn to Him and allow Him to.

A third reason why millions of people are turning to drugs is as an escape from the fantastic pressures put on us by the most complex society in the history of the world. Mass communications bring to our doorstep daily the tragedies of the world. Our over burdened consciences cry for deliverance from such brutal acts as those committed at Mai Lai, the bombing of an Israeli school bus killing small children, the famine in India, taking millions of lives, the war in Biafra in which millions of others were shot or starved. These and a million other problems press on us for answers. For those who are sensitive to the needs of the world the burdens seem difficult to bear; yet, we who are Christ's must realize that all of the bad in the world has come about as a result of sin, and that Jesus Christ tries to eliminate as much of this as possible through helping us to live as good a life as possible. Certainly we can bear the heartaches of a sin ridden world only with the realization that the ultimate victory is assured; that those of us who are true to Christ shall be able to spend eternity in Heaven where God will wipe away all tears; where there will be no more riots or demonstrations; where there will be no more wars or deaths or pain or sorrow, "for all of the former things," we are told, "will be done away with." Not only does Jesus promise us



Drugs Kill

an ultimate victory, but he also promises us the strength to bear the pressures, difficulties, and trials of the present life. It is only by casting our burdens on Jesus and allowing him to help us bear them, that we can effectively live our lives. Once we have given our burdens to Jesus, life takes on a beautiful new meaning. It is as if burdens were lifted; as if the sun for the first time in a while has shown through the thick clouds. Truly Jesus seeks to be our way, our truth, and our life.

Others are so concerned about the trivial of life,

such matters as food, clothing, and shelter, that they become too preoccupied to trust Jesus. Actually, insecurity is the root of the problem. We feel that we have to do it all ourselves, but in the great Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told us that if we "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," then all of these things, food, clothing, and shelter, will be added to us. This is a promise of God and it is the kind of promise that should eliminate all of our insecurities and create in us a tremendous trust in the Power of God.

I think we can safely say that God has the answers to the drug problem. It is comforting to hear his words, "Peace be with you, my peace I give unto you."

TREES AND CHRISTIANS

Dennis L. Shaver

A fact of nature is this: TREES NEVER STOP GROWING! As long as there is life in the tree, it will continue to grow. When a tree grows older it may grow more slowly, but there is still a measurable amount of growth. This fact concerning trees, which were created by God, can be applied to the spiritual life of a Christian.

The apostle Peter instructs: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may GROW thereby: 1 Pet. 2:2." When one becomes a Christian, through obedience to Christ (Heb. 5:8,9; Mk. 16:16), he embarks on a new life. HE IS A BABE! Paul states: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (Cor. 5:17). He further instructs in the "Book of Romans," "... so we also should walk in newness of life (6:5)." Living and growing as a Christian is something one must continue. It is a daily process. Life in Christ is not revealed completely at the time of obedience to the gospel, but rather it involves a growing process. As with trees, as long as there is life (spiritual) in the Christian, he will continue to grow. If this life stops, he will die!

The tree grows quickly at first, as does the new Christian. The reason is simple — there is so much growth to take place. For example, the new Christian learns many new things that are easily remembered. (God's plan of salvation, the Lord's supper, judgment, etc. . . .) These are milk and are a sign of growth. But as one matures in Christ he finds other aspects of Christianity that are more rewarding to him personally. The older Christian may not grow as quickly as the new, because he is now on meat, and meat takes longer to chew and digest than milk. But, he is growing unto perfection in Christ. "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works . . . Heb. 6:1." Let us, like the tree, continue to grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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