

One Word
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Upbeat
V.3, n. 8, 1970

There is so much confusion over just how a Christian is to observe and participate in the world. We all know that we cannot escape the problem of living. We may have no choice about being born into this world, or when we leave this world, but we *do* have a choice as to what we shall make of the problem of living in the world. This is exactly where the problem lies: what shall we make of our life in this world?

Shall we listen to the Prince of this world? It is he, who in a very discreet way, will tempt us to leave the teachings of Christ. Just look around! Which of us are isolated from the mockery of our friends? Which of us have not thought that all this “Church-business” and its teachings about love is ridiculous? Which of us have not been taught to fight wars as a way of life?

And we pray – God, we pray! We pray that we shall not be swallowed up by it all. How are we to fight our pride which blinds us to the real worth of our friends? How are we to live in peace when the world “screams” war? How are we to live a holy life when there is only a perversion of holiness in the world? And how could He allow such temptations to exist?

Of course, we cannot isolate ourselves from the world and its “prince.” But must we be slaves to it? Was this not the real and driving motivation for the development of monasticism? Surely Our Lord Jesus Christ wanted us to live “in” the world but not “of” the world. He tells us in St. John’s Gospel: “I pray not that thou should take them out of the world, but that thou should keep them from evil.” To be “in” the world means simply to live in this life, and that can be totally with Christ. But to be “of” the world means to subject ourselves to that evil of which Christ referred.

But the choice will ever be ours to make. It will always be an “either-or” choice, “either” Christ, “or” the world and its “prince,” we will continue to head for the self-destruction which seems so apparent today. We will fight the wars, hate the black man, pollute the earth and hate each other in the process of it all. If it be Christ, we will personally devote our lives to peace, love all mankind (despite the color), begin (finally) to do something about the polluted conditions of this world-something more than just “words.” And if it be Christ, it will be with a love – one that has the power to forgive others that misuse, misunderstand, and even betray us!

It is a hard choice to be sure – Christ or this world! But I wonder – is there a choice – really?