

CAN YOU be a *completely dedicated* Christian without being some kind of "freak"?

Without missing out on the interest and excitement of our fast-moving jet age? Without

What is "WORLDLINESS"?

Does the Bible REALLY condemn such things as dancing, card playing, drinking, theatergoing? Here is a frank, straight-from-the-shoulder explanation of what GOD regards as "sinful."

by Roderick C. Meredith

appearing sanctimonious or "nicey nice" and talking a lot of religious gobbledegook?

Just what kind of personal, private, cultural and recreational life should a real man or woman of GOD be living in this twentieth century? I mean a man who wants to obey and honor his Creator—a *dedicated* and *consecrated* individual who wants to fulfill the purpose for which he was born. I mean someone who is really *on fire* for his Maker and who *wants to be used* in God's Work today!

Read on carefully—because many of you may be SHOCKED.

But if you really want *truth*—*whether or not* it agrees with your present ideas and convictions—then you need to *study* and *prove* this *in your Bible*. Consult the *Bible*—because it is *God's Word*—and it is His opinion you want, not the scores of disagreeing, conflicting, confusing HUMAN *ideas* on this subject.

How to Be Sure

The Apostle Paul was inspired to write: "*Prove* all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thes. 5:21). So don't just try to argue and "defend" the ideas you grew up with. Don't take your former opinion—or *any opinion*—for granted. Learn to *think*—to *carefully meditate* and consider the *end result* of each course of action in broadest terms—and to *PROVE* what your Creator says in His inspired Bible!

If you do, you will find that the great Creator of this vast universe is NOT a "pin-headed," small-



It is God's will for us to enjoy abundant living.

mind, old fuddy-duddy type or creaky great grandfather figure at all. He is not trying to "catch" people in some little act He arbitrarily defines as "sinful." Rather, He is *reproducing man in His own image!* He is revealing to a select few — those *whom He calls* — a WAY OF LIFE and an approach to building *character* which fit them to *live forever* as members of His Kingdom, His *ruling family* in the universe.

This BIG-minded, all-wise, all-powerful Creator has also set LIVING LAWS. These laws define THE WAY to produce peace, prosperity, happiness and everything men want. They also, conversely, reveal the *opposite way* which leads eventually to frustration, misery, suffering and DEATH.

In the society of His day, Jesus of Nazareth — the *very Son of God* — upset a lot of human ideas and traditions by turning water into wine, using His powerful, muscular arms and shoulders to violently overthrow the large tables of the money changers in the temple and make a real "scene." And He did *many other* things which upset to no end the old religious "fuddy-duddies" of His day. Yet, this same Jesus Christ often rose up early while it was yet dark and went out in the early morning mists and dews to *pray fervently* to His God and Father for strength and wisdom (Mark 1:35). He *constantly* talked to God.

When giant problems or decisions loomed ahead, Jesus literally *prayed all night* to the great Creator of the universe for help and wisdom (Luke 6:12-13). He *walked with God* and OBEYED God — setting us an example. He said: "I have kept my Father's commandments" (John 15:10). He also attended sumptuous dinners and banquets with the Pharisees (Luke 7:36).

Yet, because of His particular ministry and foreordained approaching death, He *sacrificed* the comforts of a home and family in order to do the will of His Almighty Father and God.

Can we *get our balance* on these things? Can we *earnestly* and *sincerely* find the way to LIVE as Jesus lived? And can we truly AVOID becoming involved with "worldliness" as God defines it — *walking in the footsteps of Christ instead?*

Bearing all these points in mind, be willing to look through the *entire Bible* on this matter. Consult *all* the Scriptures and examples — not just *part* of them. Completely *rid yourself* of blinding PREJUDICES. Seek GOD'S will with open-mindedness and *honesty!*

God's Attitude Toward Material Things

Since the problem of "worldliness" revolves around *material* things and their uses, let's understand God's overall attitude toward the physical

things and circumstances surrounding man.

First of all, many people *assume* that God loves the *poor* people — and that He would have us all *do without* any abundance of material things. Because James wrote: "Hath not God chosen the *poor* of this world rich in faith?" (James 2:5), a lot of professing Christians can hardly bring themselves to believe that a person of means could really be a sincere follower of Christ.

What about this? Must we *give up* material wealth, must we drive a second-hand car, must we buy *cheap* things in order to be a really *zealous* Christian?

The answer to James' inspired statement lies in a proper *understanding* of it. God has "called" or "chosen" more of the poorer classes in this present age because — as a general rule — they are the *ONLY* ones who will willingly *yield* themselves to Him. They have not become so wrapped up in and *OVERLY* attached to *material* things as to prevent them from understanding God's message. Having little in a *material* sense to lose, they will more readily accept *spiritual truth*.

But IF we can learn to *rightly use* material possessions, God *intends* that we should PROSPER. After all, God Himself is no pauper!

Notice these inspired words of the Apostle John: "Beloved, I wish above

all things that thou mayest PROSPER and be in *health*" (III John 2).

Yes, it is God's will to *bless* us in material goods if we will learn to use them properly.

Jesus said, "I am come that they might have *life*, and that they might have it more ABUNDANTLY" (John 10:10). Solomon wrote: "The substance [material wealth] of a *diligent* man is PRECIOUS" (Prov. 12:27), and he exhorted: "*Whatsoever* thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy MIGHT" (Eccl. 9:10).

So if we work hard, if we use our God-given minds, if we are *diligent*, it is God's will that we be *blessed* and *prospered* materially, and that we live a happy, full, ABUNDANT life.

The *danger* in material wealth is that most people come to "set their hearts" on it. They get *so involved* in making a living, in making an impression on their business and social acquaintances, and participating in general in this world's ways and customs, that they find it almost impossible to *accept* and *obey* God's truth when it comes along.

Material prosperity as such is certainly *not* "worldliness"! In fact, the *lack* of sufficient material goods usually indicates a lack of *diligence* and *wisdom*. God's concern is that we learn to evaluate material things properly, and to use them *wisely* for our own good and the good of others.

Are Physical Pleasures Evil?

Now that we see that just having wealth or physical goods is not a sin, what about the physical pleasures men indulge in? Are they necessarily *evil*?

One of the principal texts often used to condemn the pleasures of the "world" is I John 2:15-16. Let's examine it carefully, bearing in mind that it does *not* contradict the rest of the Bible.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the *lust* of the flesh, and the *lust* of the eyes, and the *pride* of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

You will notice that it is the LUST of the flesh, eyes and life that God condemns. *Lust* is illicit, illegal desire. *Lust* is desiring or using something contrary

to God's will and to His revealed *laws*.

For instance, many people who have grown up in *ignorance* of God's true plan and purpose for humanity suppose that SEX is *sinful*. Just the very word — "sex" — is a nasty, filthy word to them, and they cannot imagine how anything good could possibly be associated with it.

It has probably never occurred to them — or to those who taught them — that it is GOD who made us *male* and *female* — it is *God* who *created* SEX. And it is *God* who even *commanded* the man and woman to *use* sex in a righteous, holy, God-intended manner when He told them: "Be FRUITFUL, and *multiply* and *replenish* the earth" (Gen. 1:28).

Notice that it is *not* the THING that is wrong. It is *lust* — the *wrong* USE of the thing — that is *sin*.

Lust is not a "thing," an object, or an entertainment. Lust is the *wrong* USE of material objects or things.

Lust is a *wrong* attitude of heart and mind which causes one to *misuse*, to *misapply* what God has created for good.

Sex is not evil — it is the *wrong* use of sex, outside of marriage, in a way God never intended. The *motion picture* is not "sin" — it is the *wrong* use of this invention that becomes *sin*.

Dancing, liquor, a deck of cards — these things are not "sinful" or "worldly." It is only the *wrong* use of these things which violates God's will.

Remember that it is the *lust* of the flesh and eyes that constitutes "worldliness." The pleasurable use of your five senses — as such — is *NOT* "worldly."

God *gave* us our five senses so that we might enjoy life to the *full*. God is *not* some fiendish MONSTER who delights in our *suffering* — who wishes us to *do without* and *deny* ourselves all the right enjoyments and pleasures of this physical life.

Christ came to show us the way to happy, ABUNDANT living. So the *right* enjoyment of physical pleasures is *not* "worldliness" — or *sin* in any sense.

What Is Being "Worldly"?

If it isn't *wrong* and "worldly" for us to enjoy material things and physical

pleasures, then just what is being "worldly"?

Again, recall that it is only the *wrong* USE of physical things that God calls "worldliness." This involves the *lust* of the flesh or eyes — which is COVETOUSNESS. And *covetousness* is *breaking* one of the ten points of God's great spiritual Law.

God tells us through the Apostle James: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in *one point*, he is *guilty* of ALL" (James 2:10).

So "worldliness" is just one form of *breaking God's Law*, which is SIN. For as we read in I John 3:4, "*Sin* is the *transgression* of the law."

Contrary to much of today's religious teaching, that is GOD's definition of *sin* — a plain, direct statement in His Word. *Don't ever forget that definition* — because it is *God's* definition!

Thus we see that "worldliness" is simply *lusting* for, or *using* material things in a way which *violates* the principles of God's Law. No thought or action is "worldly" — regardless of what misguided, mixed-up *men* might think — UNLESS it breaks the letter or spirit of the *Ten Commandments*.

"Sinful" Pleasures?

Now let's get specific. Many people who think they are Christians firmly believe that "worldliness" and "sin" consist mainly of *drinking, dancing, card playing* and theatergoing.

How can we *prove* whether or not these things are *worldly* or *sinful*?

ONLY by the *Word of God* and the *inspired example* of Jesus Christ and other true servants of God. And *much* of this proof will be up to YOU and to *your honesty* before God. For to completely answer every little technical point and trick argument that people might bring up on this subject would require an *entire book* of several hundred pages!

But let's be HONEST — and look at the plain, clear principles involved, and the examples of Christ and His servants and prophets. Let's look for TRUTH — not an excuse to get around it!

First of all, is DRINKING a *sin*?

The *principle* is this: Jesus Christ set us an example that we should follow in His steps (I Peter 2:21). Jesus Christ

is the *same* yesterday, and today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). Jesus has *not changed!* He would still be living the *same* kind of life if He were to come in the flesh today as He did live 1900 years ago.

Now notice His *example* in John 2: 1-11. Here is the account of how Jesus turned water into *wine*. If you will look up the meaning of the word "firkin" (verse 6), you will see that this amounted to many gallons of wine!

The account is very clear. It simply shows that — according to Jewish custom — they were having real *wine* at the wedding feast, and ran out. Jesus helped them out, for it was a time of rejoicing, and there were probably several hundred people there.

So He turned the water into *wine* — and it was real, *fermented wine*. They would NEVER have said, to the bridegroom: "Thou hast kept the *good wine* until now" — if Jesus had provided only *grape juice* — which they would have regarded as an inferior beverage for this occasion.

Also, the original Greek word used here is *oinos*, and it *always* means the *fermented* juice of the grape — nothing else.

Jesus was here only carrying out the principle He gave through Solomon: "A feast is made for laughter, and *wine* maketh merry" (Eccl. 10:19). If properly used, wine is an aid to relaxation and affability at a special occasion.

But being "merry" is NOT being "tight" or "drunk" — which God's Word condemns (I Cor. 6:10).

Paul instructed Timothy about the medicinal and health values of wine when he wrote: "Drink no longer water, but use a *little wine* for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" (I Tim. 5:23).

Again, the Greek word is *oinos* — *fermented wine*, not grape juice!

There are many, many examples in the Old Testament where God's servants used *wine* in a proper way and with God's blessing. Perhaps the most significant one is given in Genesis 14:18. Here we read, Melchisedek — whom we have *proved* in our article, "The Mystery of Melchisedek," to be none other than *Christ* —

"brought forth bread and wine: and He was the priest of the Most High God." This seems to be a type of the observance later called the Passover — which many mistakenly call the "Lord's Supper" today.

God Himself here gave *wine* to Abraham — *the father of the faithful*. And again, the original Hebrew word used *proves* that it was *fermented* wine — NOT grape juice. The original word is *yayin* — and *always* means *fermented* wine.

This same Hebrew word is used in Amos 9:14 to show that when Christ frees our people from captivity after His return, and brings them to the land of Palestine, they will "plant vineyards, and drink the *wine* thereof."

So Christ — who is the *same* always — is going to *bless* His people with good food and *wine* in the millennial rule!

Contradictory Texts?

Some diehards still cling to certain texts which *appear* (to them at least) to condemn wine, but in reality condemn only the wrong USE of alcohol.

One of these is Proverbs 20:1: "Wine is a *mock*, strong drink is *raging*: and whosoever is *deceived* thereby is not wise."

The simple explanation is that wine certainly does *mock* and *deceive* many individuals who have not learned the proper, temperate USE of such beverages. Yes, God's way is *moderation* and *temperance* — NOT prohibition! And there is a *great difference* between these, which so-called "temperance" people seem unable to recognize.

Another text which is often twisted and misapplied is Proverbs 23:29-32. Here is a warning to those who "tarry long" at wine. Of course! One who "*tavries long*" at wine is a "winebibber," or in modern terminology a "barfly" or an "alcoholic."

Such *excessive use* of wine is bound to bring harm on the person involved and on others. Therefore, it is breaking the spirit of God's Law and is SIN. But this is *no condemnation* *WHATEVER* against the moderate, sensible use of wine, following Jesus' example.

The latter part of this passage warns

us not to "look" upon the wine when it is "red," when it "moveth itself aright."

In the *first* place, it is not a sin to LOOK on *anything* except in *lust*. *Secondly*, the terms "red" and "moveth itself" refer to wine when it is in the *process of fermentation*. This is BEFORE it is fully fermented. And if at this time you "look" on it so as to finally *drink* it, you will become violently ill and possibly even DIE!

Even today, the term "red" is often applied to wine which is in the midst of the process of fermentation. Again, this has NOTHING to do with the proper use of fully aged wine.

God's Way Is Moderation

There are many other texts which *some* people will want to argue about. But the *principle* should be clear to any honest person from the examples we have covered.

Can't we get our BALANCE?

Drunkenness and *alcoholism* are breaking God's Law and are therefore SIN — which leads to *death!* (Rom. 6: 23). No *drunkard* shall inherit God's Kingdom (Gal. 5:21).

But on the other hand, wine has been given as a *blessing* from God. It can help one *relax* at a meal or *rejoice* at a social occasion, and it can be a definite aid in building up one's blood and health — as Paul advised Timothy. It is a thing which *glorifies* God when it is used *sensibly* and *moderately*.

Incidentally, true *moderation* means drinking a great deal LESS than do many who call themselves "moderate drinkers" today. Overindulgence in drink is NOT to be tampered with! *Alcoholism* is a growing CURSE in our land today! (Write for our free article, "Alcoholism — A Worldwide Curse".)

Nevertheless, God gave us wine and alcoholic beverages to learn to use *properly* — and to develop CHARACTER by the proper exercise of *wisdom* and *self-control*. *Prohibition* is NOT God's way — and it does *not* develop character.

This proper use of alcohol and *moderation* in drinking is a great *responsibility* to God. But it is only the *wrong* USE which becomes *sin*.

The same principle of the right or

wrong USE of a thing applies to nearly every action which some consider as "worldly." The real question in each case is "Is this particular thing being used in a way that BREAKS God's Law?"

If so, then it is *sin* — or "worldliness."

Dancing and Card Playing

But if any action or pleasure *does* NOT of itself break God's Law, then it may be quite harmless as long as it is properly *used*, and only the wrong or "worldly" *use* needs to be guarded against.

Such is the case with *dancing*. The Bible is full of examples of dancing. To cite a few, we can turn first to Exodus 15:20, where Miriam and the women of Israel rejoiced in the dance over God's deliverance of their people from Egypt.

In I Samuel 18:6, the women came out singing and dancing to greet Saul as he returned after a military victory. In Psalm 149:3, we read that the saints are to praise God "in the *dance*."

In the account of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), we are given an example of how human joy ought to be expressed — for the "father" is obviously typical of God Himself. Here we see that *dancing* (verse 25) is a natural and RIGHTEOUS way to express human joy.

Certainly, we do not know exactly *how* the people danced and what particular *steps* they employed. But the *principle* is that dancing *as such* is not evil.

Wrong USES of dancing such as in a *lustful* manner in a smoke-filled nightclub while half-drunk — these *uses* of dancing are obviously WRONG. And it is sadly true that these wrong uses characterize *the vast majority* of dancing situations today!

But, if real Christians — young or old — wish to relax or rejoice by dancing with others of godly faith and character in a *righteous* manner, and in a clean, wholesome atmosphere and surroundings, that is NOT sinful or "worldly."

God says: "There is a *time to dance*" (Eccl. 3:4). Let's see to it that this time is used *properly*!

The principle regarding such matters as *card playing* or *theatergoing* ought

to be clear by now. The Bible makes no *direct* statement about either — but the principle is obvious in the light of God's laws and the Biblical examples.

A deck of *cards* is NOT a sin — and neither is playing with those cards merely for amusement. The only danger is that one might waste too much time in such amusements, and Christians are to use their time *wisely* (Eph. 5:15-16).

The wrong *use* of a deck of cards — or *any* physical object — for the purpose of *gambling* DOES become *sin*. God commands: "Six days shalt thou LABOR, and do all thy *work*" (Ex. 20:9). As God is the supreme Builder and Creator — so are we to learn to *build*, to *construct*, to *produce*.

Gambling makes one a *leech* on society and *violates* this entire principle and thwarts the very purpose of human existence! Also, the very basis of gambling is the idea of getting something for nothing — of *desiring* material gain at the EXPENSE of someone else. This directly breaks another of the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt not *covet*" (Ex. 20:17).

So card playing as such is *not* sin. But the wrong USE of this activity does break God's Law and is therefore "worldly" in the truest sense.

Movies and the Theater

The matter of *theatergoing* revolves around the *reason* why one goes, and the *type* of play or movie being offered.

To frequently attend *any* kind of plays or movies for the purpose of pleasing "self" and of *escaping* from the responsibilities of life is definitely "worldly." And this very thing is done *all too frequently* by MOST Americans. Let's not *deceive ourselves* about this. We are a nation of escapists!

Also, common sense ought to tell any real Christian that most plays and movies today are simply *filled* and *saturated* with scenes of illicit sex, murder upon murder, hate, greed, lying, cheating, gambling, drunkenness and every conceivable type of vice and sin. Indeed, the movies are a *living testimony* as to why God is going to PUNISH this world. Having one's mind filled with this sort of thing *hour*

after hour is CERTAIN to cause one to break God's laws in his heart, and probably his actions as well.

You cannot vicariously *kill*, *steal*, *seduce*, *gamble*, and *get drunk* through the eyes of a movie hero and not have those thoughts affect your character! And what a frightful CURSE *television* can become by these same means. Let this be a warning against the *improper* USE of movies and TV!

But on the other hand, the *right use* of motion pictures, stage plays, or television can certainly be experienced. For instance, Walt Disney has produced a number of full-length feature movies showing the astonishing *wonders* and *beauty* of nature as God created it. These are truly educational and inspirational in every sense of the word.

There are a number of plays and movies which have a historical or other type of educational basis, and are not unbalanced in regard to violence and lust. But they are in the minority, and you will have to be alert to find them. Even a clean, wholesome love story or comedy would not influence you to break God's Law.

The *right kind* of play or movie is hard to find. But God will condemn no one who sincerely uses these means as a proper educational or recreational experience. It is only their *wrong* USE which becomes *sin*.

But DO Avoid What Really IS "Worldliness"!

God *does* want us to have a happy and abundant life. He actually *intends* any human being who will serve and obey Him to become healthy and prosperous — according to his abilities.

And although the "old-fashioned gospel" preachers of a bygone puritanical Protestant era invented the idea that drinking, dancing, card playing and theatergoing were "worldly," we have seen that they are NOT wrong at all if used *in the proper manner*. Again, it is simply a matter of *what* is SIN. And sin is defined as *breaking God's Law* — the Ten Commandments.

The Ten Commandments — as spiritually magnified by Jesus Christ — reveal a *way of life*. They teach us *how* to love, worship and serve our God.

and *how* to love and serve our fellowman. Any activity, atmosphere or "system" which tends to break or cause *you* to break the spirit of the Ten Commandments is, however, real "worldliness." If you are to be a man or woman of God, develop God's character, be finally BORN into His family to help *rule* this world under Jesus Christ, you *MUST avoid this kind of actual worldliness!*

Writing to the ancestors of the British Commonwealth and the American peoples, the Apostle James stated under inspiration: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). What does this mean — we are not to "love the world"? Does this mean we are to hate our fellowman?

Certainly not.

For James had just written that we should keep the royal law: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (James 2:8).

The "World" Defined

To understand the meaning of this and similar passages we need to know the definitions for the Greek word translated "world" in the New Testament. One of these — the one used in James 4:4 — is *cosmos*, which means the *society* or *system* of things men have set up on this earth. So, this passage simply means that true Christians are not to love the *system* or *society* that men have set up here on earth. This *system* is based on *competition, greed, selfishness* and *vanity*. At the present time this system is bringing more and more wars, total corruption of morals, and soon — unless Almighty God intervenes — WORLD SUICIDE.

And yet it is *so easy* to get wrapped up and want to be *part of* this vanity-filled, competitive and, humanly speaking, "exciting" system! This is perhaps

the greatest danger to most sincere believers.

It just seems *natural* and "right" to get into the clubs, lodges, activities and social life of the people and society around us. To think and talk and dress and act like *they* do. To have our minds on what is simply *more blatant* VANITY — keeping up with the Joneses, drinking *too much* alcohol, getting *involved* with this world and its politics, backbitings, wars, etc.

No matter how sincere, people who watch *many hours* of television and movies each week are simply FILLING their minds and hearts with "worldliness"! Because they *cannot escape* the effect of having their minds bombarded by countless examples of wrong emphasis on sex and various implications involving the MISUSE of God's gift of sex; plus fantastic amounts of violence, bloodshed and rebellion against authority; and endless scenes or commercials concerned with interest on "*self, self, self*" and blatant appeals to build the ego and great swelling VANITY of the viewer or listener!

The world of television and the motion pictures is a *fake, a fraud, a false* world in every way. It is not truly "realistic" in any sense of the word. It presents a completely UNBALANCED view of violence, sex, family, home, religion and almost anything else you care to name!

The true Christian simply *cannot live and walk in this kind of make-believe world*. Nor can he live in the world of cut-throat competition, shady deals, dirty jokes and paid women; or in the cocktail lounge or "jet set" world of lust and vanity. And the *weird* world of the "hippies," the "swingers," the "wife swappers," the wild, hedonistic marijuana or "pot" users — this is "worldliness" to the TOTAL EXTREME and must be *avoided*.

Prepare for Tomorrow's World

The man who would avoid what the Bible really does describe as "worldly," the man who would *dedicate himself*

to his God and yet at the same time live a *happy* and *balanced* life — this man must have definable *values*, definable *goals* and a WAY OF LIFE to achieve these. He must, therefore, be a man who carefully *studies, meditates on* and LIVES BY every word of God (Matt. 4:4). He must be a man who, following Christ's example, gets up early in the morning and PRAYS on his knees to his God for *help, wisdom, love* and *guidance*. He must be a man who is carefully and diligently *studying* and FOLLOWING the inspired example of Jesus Christ as revealed in *the Bible* — not in someone's human imagination of what *they* think Christ would be like.

Such a man will be building real *balance* and *character* to qualify him to live forever in *Tomorrow's World*. Therefore, he will NOT allow himself to get overly involved in the passions, politics and petty stupidities of *this* present evil world (Gal. 1:4).

If this goal rings true to you, then you should write immediately for your free copy of our vital booklet, *The Wonderful World Tomorrow — What It Will Be Like*. Also, for an *in-depth* understanding of how to apply God's Law to your daily life in every way — how to WALK WITH GOD — write also for our important free booklet entitled, *The Ten Commandments*.

Then, keep *reading* and *studying* every issue of TOMORROW'S WORLD. Get the right *balance* on how a man of God should love his wife and build a happy home, train his children, glorify God in his body, get the right kind of recreation, keep God's financial laws and prosper. Yet, at the same time, he should have his real GOAL as the Kingdom of God and be building his mind, his life and his character *toward that goal* even as he learns the right and happy way of life here and now.

Do this and, through Christ's help and mercy, you will surely qualify to live forever in *Tomorrow's World*.