

SPIRITICITY, December 1954

PROPHETS: TRUE AND FALSE

By Robert Applegate

"False prophets shall rise, and shall show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect."

In the Year 852 B.C., King Ahab of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah formed an alliance to make war against the King of Syria for the purpose of regaining the Israelite city of Ramoth-gilead. At the insistence of Jehoshaphat, Ahab consulted the prophets to determine if the expedition would be successful. Four hundred prophets prophesied success for Ahab and his ally; but there still remained one prophet to consult, an obscure man named Micaiah. Ahab summoned him but warned him to prophesy only good. Micaiah's answer to this warning was characteristic of a true prophet of God: "As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak." Then he went on to tell Ahab that if he went to war with the King of Syria, he would not return alive. Ahab immediately had Micaiah thrown into prison and set out on the expedition. He was killed the same day.

It is easy for us, looking back on this incident, to see that Micaiah was a true prophet; while the four hundred who prophesied what they knew would be pleasing were false. But how was Ahab to distinguish the true from the untrue when numbers were on the side of falsity and one lone person was on the side of truth? How can anyone tell a true prophet from a false one? This is a question that concerns us all today; for there are many prophets in the world; and if we are wise, we will distinguish the true from the false.

The word prophet usually suggests to us the canonical prophets of the Old Testament; but basically the word designates anyone who speaks, or pretends to speak for God; and also anyone who pontificates about the destinies of mankind. Every minister, every evangelist, is ex officio a prophet. There are also political prophets and economic prophets. Some of these prophets foretell imminent destruction unless we follow certain courses; some, as Jeremiah said, cry, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace." Who is right?

In order to answer this question we can look back over the history of Israel, which is preserved for us in the Old Testament. We can see what qualities the true prophets had in common and what qualities the false ones had. We can then compare these two sets of qualities with those displayed by our modern prophets to determine which we should listen to and which we should not. It is easy to look back two thousand years and see who was true and who was false, but it is much more difficult to look out into the present and know who is speaking truth. But we can use the past to measure the present.

The first thing that strikes us about the true prophets of Israel is that they were few in number. We can list them without much trouble: Moses, Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets. There were one or two more, whose writings are embedded in the Book of Isaiah; but still this is not a large number for a stretch of time that was nearly a thousand years in length. On the other hand, we have seen that Ahab consulted four hundred prophets at one time, all of whom turned out to be false. At other times the false prophets were equally numerous. Ezekiel denounced "the foolish prophets, . . . that follow their own spirit, and

have seen nothing." So did Jeremiah. Always the false prophets are referred to in the plural. The true prophet was an individual.

Not only were the true prophets a small minority, but they were usually despised during their lifetime. Today we honor them for their courage and their truthfulness, but it was not so while they lived. Elijah had to flee for his life on more than one occasion. Amos was driven from the temple at Bethel. Jeremiah was persecuted and imprisoned. Even when a prophet received recognition and honor, it was from a small handful of men and not from the people as a whole, much less from the rulers and the established religious organization.

It is easy to see why these men were persecuted and scorned; for they never flattered the people, princes, or priests. They did not speak what they thought would be pleasing but what they knew would be salutary if listened to. The unpopularity of a prophet's message is in itself an attestation to the truth of that message. We can easily see why a person would say what people want to hear, why he would cry, "Peace, peace."

This is an indulgence to wishful thinking as well as a sure way to win approval of men. But the man who says what he knows will be unwelcome must care more for the good of his listeners than he does for their approval. He can be motivated only by the desire to help those who will listen and by the compulsion to speak what he knows is true. Thus it was with the true prophets of Israel. They warned the people when they needed warning and comforted them when they needed comforting. They did not comfort the people when they needed awakening. They did not pander to their complacency.

Since the true prophets were a minority and were generally disregarded during their lifetime, of necessity they stood outside the organized religious structure of their day. They did not, as so many are doing today, point to organized religion as the hope for their day. They did not regard a religious revival as an encouraging sign. Listen to what Amos says of the religious sanctuaries that were crowded in his day (as the religious centers are crowded today): "Come to Bethel (the religious center of Israel), and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression." Hosea summed it up in one sentence: "Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples." The prophets realized that organized religion does not point to God, but puts itself in the place of God.

This brings us to the heart of the matter: the one point that most clearly distinguishes the true prophet from the false; the factor that has made the true prophets revered today, two thousand years after they lived. With one voice, these prophets pointed to God - not to the works of man. This is what has made their words live and glow for two millennia.

Listen to the prophets sounding this one note.

Elijah: "If the Lord be God, follow Him."

Amos: "Thus saith the Lord, . . . Seek ye Me, and ye shall live."

Hosea: "Turn thou to thy God: . . . wait on thy God continually. . . . Take with you words, and turn to the Lord."

Isaiah: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things."

. . . They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. . . . Thus saith the Lord: I am the Lord; and there is none else. . . . Look unto Me, and be ye saved."

Jeremiah: "Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart."

Zephaniah: "Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth."

Of the many prophets that are in the world today, we can be sure that the false will greatly outnumber the true; for mankind has not changed. The specious prophets will be well received; while the true prophets will be few in number and generally disregarded. The true prophets, however, are "the light of the world." They point to God and to nothing less than God. How many do that?

As Arnold Toynbee declares, mankind as a whole does not worship God but man. The communists worship collective man. The western "Christian" humanist worships man as an individual. Toynbee goes on to state (after half a lifetime spent in an exhaustive study of the history of mankind) that the one hope for our present civilization is for men to return to God. A return to orthodoxy, he says, would spell failure. He would seem thus to be in the line of the true prophets; and, like them, he has been more criticized than listened to.

There are true prophets in the world today. Seek them out and follow them, for they alone are worth listening to. Honor them; for this promise is sure of fulfillment: "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet (i.e., because he is a prophet) shall receive a prophet's reward." The true prophets will be easy to recognize, for they will point to One only as your Hope and your Saviour - God.

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SPIRITICITY, December 1954

THE CHRIST LIGHT

By Alden Truesdell

The candle is a universal symbol for spiritual Light; and as such, we use it in our Christmas Candle Service to represent the Christ Light and the light that is kindled in each of us as we partake of Christ.

Yet it is strange that we need a symbol to remind us of light when according to Scripture, we are "all children of light." We live in Light; for God is Light, and "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." We are children of Light, dwelling in a universe of Light; and yet a great part of our lives seems to be spent in darkness, and we require artificial lighting systems to lighten our way through the shadows. Truly the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness comprehends it not. That many love "darkness rather than light" is also true.

Because the race has chosen to work in darkness, it is the individual who now and again turns to his original radiant Source and becomes in the sight of his fellows a lightbearer. Isaiah prophesied the coming of such a one and said, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." He also

advised, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

There are as many degrees of light in the race as there are degrees of willingness to receive enlightenment. But, just as no one has strong enough vision to look directly into the face of the sun, so all must be weaned from darkness and gradually nourished on spiritual Light before they are able to stand the full force and glory of the Original Divine Brilliance.

All light is a degree of spiritual Light, even though the source might seem to be oil or wax or electricity. These are all a part of the spiritual Creator who also sustains in their orbits all the lights in the firmament and charts for them their courses. The light we receive from coal, wood, and other fuels is storage of sunbeams; while the sun, in turn, is but a concentration of the gases and essences to be found through all creation. These substances are all concentrated energy, and that energy is the Activity of the Father. We find the scientists declaring that the universe is a universe of energy or a universe of light, which is one form of energy. That which we call matter is concentrated energy and cannot be understood, the scientists declare, when it is considered by itself. "The childish, mechanical conceptions of the nineteenth century are now grotesquely inadequate," writes Robert Millikan, an outstanding physicist and astronomer.

From Genesis to Revelation, the Scripture sets forth the effects of spiritual illumination in the consciousness and affairs of men. We note with interest the change in concept of the characters in our Book from the timid consideration of a problematical spark of spiritual Light to a scientific declaration of the Omnipresent God, in whom there is no darkness at all. We know that every individual must experience the same changes in understanding, as he grows in awareness of Reality.

Anyone who turns in God's direction will see a great light shining in the darkness. The Psalmist sang much of light. He said, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" He sang, "In Thy light shall we see light." He saw light as the garment of God. He contended that the entrance of the Lord's word is light-giving. Proverbs declares, "The commandment is a lamp; and the law is light." And Ecclesiastes attributes the quality of sweetness to light, "Truly the light is sweet."

All research deals with light or uses light in its investigation, to bring out the beautiful colors in a spectroscope or to measure vast distances in light-years. But the light man is most in need of is not the light of the stars, the moon, or the sun; it is not the light of gas, electricity, oil, or candle; but the Light of the Father - the Light "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

Jesus Christ knew well His own nature and declared that nature to be Light. "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." It is this radiant aspect of the Christ that assures a freedom of utilization for all. The Light cannot be confined by presumptuous religious claimants; it cannot be quenched by atheist or agnostic. A sunrise of great beauty and brilliance, flooding all visible area, is but symbol of "the dayspring from on High," which shines away the nighttime of ignorance and foolishness.

The new consciousness that comes when anyone turns wholly to God is described in Revelation in the figure of the new Jerusalem. This is the

consciousness of the Reality of the Allness of God, and therefore of the Allness of Light (of which the scientists have caught a glimpse). John writes of the new Jerusalem:

"The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they need no candle, neither the light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light."

The Christmas Season, with its contagion of joy, is an opportunity for us to turn to the omnipresent Light of the Father and the Son, which we can find within our own being. Christmas celebrates the birth of Christ into the world, and it should witness the rebirth of Christ in each of us, which is our awakening to the Universal Light. When the angels announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds, "the glory of the Lord shone round about them." Similarly, the birth of Christ in each consciousness is attended by a great enlightenment. "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

Christmas is the Season when the hopes, aspirations, and secret longings cease to be anticipations and become present realities. We may use Christmas as a reminder of the Christ Light in ourselves and thus give to the Season a greater and deeper joy. We may rededicate ourselves to following and seeking Christ, until every day is Christmas - the day of Christ-birth, the day of the coming of Light.

"These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. . . .

"And he that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us."

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SPIRITICITY, December 1954

APPROVAL OF GOD OR PRAISES OF MEN

By Nell Truesdell

To have the approval of God is better than to have the praises of men.

In his expression of praise, a man exalts only himself; for no man can see another except in the light of his own consciousness. When that light flickers, the brightness thereof prompts him to applaud a fellowman who, at the moment, appears to represent the talent or the capacity to perform that he himself feels that he also possesses. But the outburst of acclaim is reactionary; and he who praised while his own light burned within is apt, when the glow fades, to strike out at the very person he had so recently exalted. Man's praise for man is a perishable commodity. It is subject to quick deterioration because it has not in it the substance that is essential to lasting survival. The vital element is lacking. Built on mortal foundations, it shifts under the pressures of the strongest influence at any given time.

"Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets," admonished Jesus Christ.

The approval of God reveals itself in an inner peace and satisfaction that quietly uplifts the heart in mute adoration to Him for His Presence perceived and acknowledged. The mind, with all its ramifications, is still with the stillness of a stone. Turbulent emotions are quelled. No feeling for sensation or stimulation overthrows the perfect balance that prevails. In the exquisite hush, the inner vision, free of the pull of sense desire and personal will, flies swiftly to the Heights from which a golden glow radiates and falls in soundless glory. The inner sight and the inner ear are filled, and thrice filled, with the silent, boundless Presence and the fathomless, unspeakable Word. Livingness quickens the frame; and knowing stirs a cry that comes, not from the heart of flesh, not from the conscious mind but from a depth and breadth and height that transcends both flesh and mind.

The yearning, up-reaching willingness to efface the self and glorify God shakes a man to his roots and rushes through his trembling frame in overpowering self-giving to Him who needs no gifts.

Praise, then, is reversed. A man so stirred gives praise, not to some person who seems to merit praise, but to the Almighty before whom he pours out himself without reservation or thought of return. He gives, not to receive thanks, but for the privilege of selfgiving.

But God answers. A man knows that God answers.

Alphabet Of
DAILY MEDITATIONS
For Every Week Day Of The Month

DECEMBER 1954

1. Let us put on the ARMOUR of Light.
2. He that cometh to God must BELIEVE that He is.
3. Let brotherly love CONTINUE.
4. DESIRE spiritual gifts.
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6. We . . . DECLARE unto you, that God is Light.
7. The Lord my God will ENLIGHTEN my darkness.
8. Hast thou FAITH? Have it to thyself before God.
9. GROW in GRACE, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.
10. Lift up your eyes on HIGH, and behold who hath created.
11. I will INSTRUCT thee and teach thee.
*
13. True and righteous are Thy JUDGMENTS.
14. KEEP yourselves in the love of God.
15. We LIVE unto the LORD.
16. Search for ME with all your heart.
17. Speak ye every man truth to his NEIGHBOR.
18. OWE no man anything; but to love ONE another.
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20. Live PEACEABLY with all men.
21. QUENCH the violence of fire.
22. The Spirit of glory and of God RESTETH upon you.
23. Be STRONG in the grace that is in Jesus Christ.
24. TURN THOU TO THY God.
25. UNITE my heart to revere Thy Name.
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27. They that dwell under His shadow shall . . . grow as the VINE.
28. It is the same God WHICH WORKETH all in all.
29. YE are Christ's; and Christ's is God's.
30. My ZEAL is for the Lord.
31. Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.
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"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

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As electricity is the working power of the electrical principle,
SPIRITICITY is the working power of the Spiritual Principle.