

Artificialism

Introduction:

1. There are many “isms” with which we have, or have had to, cope in our modern world, isms such as:
 - a. Socialism
 - b. Communism
 - c. Nazism
 - d. Feminism
 - e. Denominationalism
 - f. Catholicism
 - g. Monotheism
 - h. Etc., etc.
2. In this lesson we shall discuss an “ism” which is not often recognized as an “ism,” but one which has always adversely affected the Lord’s people and their work, whether in the Old or New Testament periods. Specifically, we are talking about “Artificialism.”
3. “Artificial” Defined: “Made as a substitute or an imitation; not real. Put on for effect; effected; pretended, false.” Also describes that which is produced by human skill and labor, in contrast to that produced in nature, but which often corresponds to natural things or processes.
 - a. “Ism.”
 - (1) A distinctive doctrine, theory, system, or practice (Premillennialism, Calvinism, etc.)
 - (2) “A suffix forming nouns, act or practice of (Baptism, Heroism, Alcoholism).
 - b. “Artificialism” is evidenced in both the natural and spiritual realms.

Note: The word “artificialism” is not in my Dictionary; but the word “artificiality” is. I’m coining the word “artificialism” because “ism,” when attached to “artificial,” includes the “act or practice” of being artificial.
4. In a very real sense, we live in an artificial world – eyes, eye lashes, finger nails, sweeteners, flowers, hands, legs, arms, intelligence (computers), respiration, etc.
5. Artificialism regarding things in the material world can be a good thing; however, it is a bad thing when it relates to the immaterial world and to the inward man.

Discussion:

I. Artificialism, as it relates to one’s relationship with, and His service to, God is Wrong.

- A. The Inward Disposition must harmonize with the outward acts.
 1. Worship – in spirit and in truth, John 4:24.
 2. Obedience – must be from the heart, Romans 6:17-18; Phil. 2:13.
- B. When the Inward Disposition does not match the Outward Acts, God is displeased!
 1. Matt. 15:7-9.
 2. Matt. 23:2-5.

II. The Bible abounds with examples of Artificialism.

- A. Jacob, Gen. 27:1-23.
 1. Observe: Jacob did not mind carrying out his mother’s scheme for him to get his father’s blessings; his concern was that he might “*seem to him as a deceiver...*” v. 12. He didn’t mind **being** a deceiver!
- B. Jael, Judges 4.
- C. Haman, Esther 3:1-9; 5:9,13-14; 6:1-11.
- D. Herod, Matt. 2:7-8.
- E. Judas, John 12:1-6; Matt. 26:47-49.
- F. The Pharisees, Matt. 22:15-21.
- G. Tertullus, Acts 24:1-6

III. Society in General abounds with Examples of Artificialism.

- A. Illus. “Term Papers Unlimited.”
 1. One of several organizations which sell ready-made term papers to students.
- B. Illus. A “Bit of Sculptor adorns the wall on the grounds of Ribstin Hall in Yorkshire, England, called “the two-faced butler.”
 1. One side of the face is all smiles and politeness; the other depicts insolence and impoliteness.
 - a. Said to represent a butler who had served the household.
- C. Illus. Politicians who take the oath of office – but not an oath of honesty.

- D. Illus. lady to child; “here comes our neighbor; I can’t stand her!”
 - 1. The neighbor arrives; the lady opens the door, with all smiles says, “come in Mrs. Jones, I’m so glad to see you.”
- E. Some “Charity Organizations.”
 - 1. Leaders who profess genuine concern for the poor, handicapped, the orphaned, etc., but manage to skim off most of the money contributed for themselves.

IV. In Modern Religious Circles Artificialism Abounds!

- A. We should not be surprised.
 - 1. 2 Cor. 11:13-15; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; Jer. 6:13-14.
 - 2. Jer. 7:4-10.
 - a. The people made a fatal mistake; they thought the presence of the temple itself would make up for the absence of holiness.
 - b. Many still “pretend to be what they do not intend to be.”
- B. Examples:
 - 1. Jimmy Swaggart – “we’ve got to rid the body of Christ of this cancer!”
 - 2. Peter Popoff’s “revelation” as revealed by another in the book **Flim Flam** (cf. transmitter and receiver).
 - 3. Methodist Preacher, I know I’m wrong, but I’ve been preaching this for 40 years, and I can’t change now.”
 - 4. My first experience at Patton Hospital – with patient who “used” me to gain favor with the personnel.

V. Artificialism Exists in the church!

- A. Examples:
 - 1. Brother “campaigning” to be appointed as a deacon.
 - 2. Lady who wanted to “restored” in the middle of week.
 - 3. “Brother” seeking help and bragging about how close he was to a certain preacher in New Mexico.
 - 4. A brother who was disappointed that he was not appointed to serve as an elder in the local church.
 - 5. A brother, when publicly confessing his sins (as he had done so many times before), said “this time I’m repenting; the other times I was merely reporting.”
- B. Evidenced when we notice the contrast between Singing and Performance.
 - 1. “Sweet Hour of Prayer,” Luke 18:1), yet content with less than five minutes a day.
 - 2. Sing “Onward Christian soldiers,” 1 Tim. 6:12, yet wait to be drafted to serve.
 - 3. Sing, “Blest be the Tie that Binds,” Col. 2:2, yet allow the least offence to sever it.
 - 4. Sing “I love to tell the story,” Mark 16:15, but never mention it.
 - 5. Sing “Cast thy burden on the Lord,” 1 Pet. 5:7, but worry selves sick.
 - 6. Sing “Throw out the Life Line,” John 6:63, but spend much more time throwing out the fishing line.
- C. Evidenced in Contrast between Prayers and Performance.
 - 1. Pray “Bring us back at the next appointed time,” Heb. 10:25, but fail to return at the next appointed time.
 - 2. Pray that “the borders of the kingdom will be spread,” Mark 16:15, but do nothing to spread the word.
 - 3. Pray “lead us not into temptation,” Matt. 6:13, then go home and watch Porn on the TV!

Conclusion:

- 1. None of us is perfect, 1 John 1:8,10. Try as we may, all of us, often inadvertently, are inconsistent at times, and when that inconsistently is pointed out (if we are honest), we will change.
 - 2. But when artificialism becomes a life style, a way of life, it becomes an “ism” that can keep us out of heaven, and may well help keep others out of heaven!
 - 3. Artificiality has its place in some areas: I’m glad for artificial limbs, artificial joints, artificial respiration, etc., but when it comes to serving God, all obedience must be real; it must be genuine; it must be “*from the heart.*”
- Bobby Witherington, April 12, 2015