

Conclusion

Although these extracts need no further comment from me, let me try to gather the threads together.

There are two systems competing for the minds, hearts and lives of men: what this world offers and what God offers. And Scripture is uncompromising in its assessment of the two:

Man does not live by bread alone, but... by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4).

‘Bread’ here stands for material things, the things of this world, possessions, careers, power, reputation, money, stuff. Man needs stuff, of course, but if that is all he has, and all he lives for, he is bankrupt, destitute. It is spiritual bread, and only spiritual bread, that satisfies; that is, it is the word of God – its doctrines, its laws, its commandments, its promises, its gospel – that can satisfy; above all, it is Christ, the incarnate word of whom the written word speaks (John 1:1-18) – and only Christ – that can satisfy. The material can only enable man to exist; to truly live he needs the spiritual sustenance and satisfaction which God alone can supply. Thus Scripture flatly contrasts material things with spiritual; it contrasts this life with eternal life; it contrasts material bread with spiritual bread; it contrasts the desire for stuff with desire for Christ. And the believer, having come to trust Christ, knows by experience the difference between the two. Indeed, so marked is the contrast in his experience, he is more than eager to sing about it, addressing his worship to his Lord and Saviour in such words as these :

*O Christ, in thee my soul hath found,
And found in thee alone,
The peace, the joy I sought so long,
The bliss till now unknown.*

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Refrain:

*Now none but Christ can satisfy,
None other name for me:
There's love and life and lasting joy,
Lord Jesus, found in thee!*

*I sighed for rest and happiness,
I yearned for them, not thee;
But while I passed the¹ Saviour by,
His love laid hold on me.*

*I tried the broken cisterns, Lord,
But ah! the waters failed!
E'en as I stooped to drink they fled,
And mocked me as I wailed.*

*The pleasures lost I sadly mourned,
But never wept for thee,
Till grace my² sightless eyes received,
Thy loveliness to see.*

And, to repeat the refrain:

*Now none but Christ can satisfy,
None other name for me:
There's love and life and lasting joy,
Lord Jesus, found in thee!*

‘Ah, but that’s just a hymn’. No it is not! Well, it is, of course, but it really does catch the spirit of the scripture I quoted: ‘Man does not live by bread alone, but... by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD’.

Do not miss the fact that this assertion was made by God through Moses in the second giving of the old covenant with its law to the people of Israel just before they entered the promised land, and further quoted by Christ in his time of temptation as he opened his new covenant. In other words, this message runs throughout the entire Bible; it stands as a kind of epigraph to both covenants, old and new: ‘Man does

¹ Original had ‘my’.

² Original had ‘the’.

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not live by bread alone, but... by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD’.

The apostles – and, above all, Christ – made the point over and over again:

What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? (Matt. 16:26; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25).

One’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions (Luke 12:15).

Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal... Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world... I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst... Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh... Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever... It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life (John 6:26-27,32-33,35,47-51,53-58,63).

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I came that they [that is, my sheep] may have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10).

Godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called (1 Tim. 6:6-12).

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever (1 John 2:15-17).

Why do I say all this now? For three reasons.

1. Every *unbeliever* needs to hear and heed it.
2. Every *believer* needs to hear and heed it.
3. Above all, for my purposes in this booklet, every *church* needs to hear and heed it. Alas, many churches – an increasing number of churches – are devoting much time, thought, money and effort into devising methods to attract the ‘unchurched’ into church. They are doing this by offering the ungodly plenty of stuff: food of the highest quality, events to entertain and divert, pleasure trips, (fairly) contemporary music of the highest possible quality, and the like, all with professional polish, glitz and glamour. Don’t they realise that they are acting directly contrary to the principles spelled out in the scriptures I have quoted in this Conclusion? I acknowledge that the ultimate aim of such

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churches is to see the ‘unchurched’ converted – at least, I hope it is – but don’t the advocates of this method of evangelism see that what they are doing is confirming natural men in their love of stuff, the material and unalloyed pleasure and gratification? Can they not see that what they are doing with all their programmes to attract the unbeliever is without scriptural warrant, and destructive of the very gospel they wish to proclaim? Or do we need to re-write the apostle’s conviction for our day and our own use:

I am determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified – once, that is, I have attracted the ‘unchurched’ into church by offering them quality stuff? and lots of it, and for a long time, always with something new in the pipeline?

Perish the thought!