

**THE REAL THING IS NOT ARTIFICIAL**

As a general rule we would rather have the real thing as opposed to something artificial. But in our present-day world many, many things that we use, eat, and wear are in part or in whole artificially colored, flavored, or manufactured.

Just because something is artificial doesn't make it bad. Something artificial becomes bad when it can easily be identified when compared with the real thing. Artificial flavoring in our pies means less taste than if we used real pie filling with real fruit and fruit juices. We know the difference between instant coffee and fresh brewed coffee. Artificial sweeteners fall into the same category. As a rule, once we have tasted the real thing, the artificial is but second best.

Sometimes we find that those things that are artificial are better. When one wants to make a store window display of a winter scene, "fake" snow works a lot better than trying to stock the real thing! Artificial, miniature animals are much easier to take care of around the house than our always hungry, always dirty house pets. Even Hollywood knows that it is sometimes cheaper to build an "artificial town" than it is to go on location on the other side of the world to shoot, a movie. It usually so well done that we cannot tell the difference anyway.

The real tragedy of artificial things is that some of us have "grown up" drinking artificially flavored soft snack cakes, and other food stuffs so that when it comes to the real thing, we don't prefer it. Personally, my palate cannot differentiate between butter and margarine. Therefore, it is better to save some money and buy the artificial spread, while others know taste of real butter is far superior. I have had the artificial so long that I actually prefer it over the real thing.

The same is true in religion. Many of us have been handed a bill of goods and a substitute for the real thing so long that we fail to recognize true Christianity when we see it. Within our many buildings, erected some times for looks and beauty instead of for meaningful worship, we have substituted "churchianity" for Christianity. We substitute church attendance for daily devotion. We go through the outward appearance of godliness and righteousness but have lost the inward power of Christian obedience.

Jesus recognized this type of living in the Pharisees of His day. He told them in no uncertain terms that even though they looked to be very religious and knew the Law, they had to live it to make it work. Artificial religion is one that substitutes man's will for God's directives and then soothes the conscience with manmade wisdom and counsel.

Have we been living, working, and worshipping artificially? Do we pour our whole lives in to our worship so that God is glorified? There are many artificial substitutes around us for the true Christian religion, are part, of one of them?

Finally, the apostle Paul said that we should test ourselves and see if we are in the faith (see 2Cor. 13:5). Paul probably understood that man would drift, sometimes unaware, from the original pattern to an artificial substitute. Things artificial aren't always bad, but when it comes to soul's salvation, the church I am a member of, and the doctrine I teach and practice: I want the real thing.