We are introduced to a gentleman now. By all accounts, he is very respectable and highly regarded … if not least, by himself. He’s nothing like Obstinate or Pliable. He is much more sophisticated and refined … a ‘nice’ man. I would imagine he was very articulate and well-educated. He would have spoken with a cultured accent. He would have been well turned-out … the kind of man that if you asked him a question he would spend a great deal of time letting you know how much he knew. Notice his very pleasant words of greeting to Christian, “How now, good fellow …”

**His Identification**

Roger Sharrock was a contemporary and friend of John Bunyan. In an old publication dating back to when *Pilgrim’s Progress* was written, Sharrock identified Mr. Worldly Wiseman with an Anglican vicar of Northill near Bedford called Rev. Edward Fowler. Fowler published a book in 1670 (*Design of Christianity*) that was blatantly offensive to the evangelical cause. In fact, Bunyan was so outraged that he wrote a rebuttal document, *A Defence of the Doctrine of Justification*. Fowler belonged to a group within the Church of England known as latitudinarianism. They were clergy who believed that human reason alone was sufficient to determine truth … and that Biblical evangelicalism was an unnecessary burden to inflict upon their congregations. As far as Fowler and company were concerned Christianity was simply a pathway requiring moral improvement … good works leading to a better lifestyle … social reform based upon evolutionary advance and moral influence. … A very ‘nice’ inoffensive liberalism, devoid of any requirement of the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross.

So, in this beautiful part of Bedfordshire countryside, Mr. Worldly Wiseman can be pictured as a ‘nice’ influential ‘religious-izer’ that had no time for the message of Evangelist (“I beshrew [curse] him for his counsel. There is not a more dangerous and troublesome way in the world than is that into which he hath directed thee”). In fact, up until this juncture in the conversation, Mr. Worldly Wiseman had portrayed himself as mild-mannered and willing to accommodate just about anything … but he wasn’t prepared to accommodate anything Evangelist said! He was no friend of the Gospel! **His identification.**

**His Location**

He came across the field to meet Christian. In a very jovial manner, Mr. Worldly Wiseman began to engage in a very pleasant conversation. He let Christian know he had heard of him, - oh yes, he kept up-to-date with all the latest news. He knew all that was going on. He was at the very hub of society … the kind of man every community needs! He politely looks Christian ‘up and down’, and in a patronising way begins to address the pilgrim’s puffing and panting as he carried his heavy burden. Christian told him off his intentions to head towards the yonder wicket gate to find release … to find the place where he would be freed of his burden.
Now, poor downtrodden Christian has been hounded by many people thus far … two of them have been highlighted (Pliable and Obstinate). Mr. Worldly Wiseman wasn’t in the same category though. He was a different type altogether. He didn’t confront him … instead, he used a different tactic on Christian, “Hast thou a wife and children?” … How it must have been a great wrench for Christian to have left them behind in the City of Destruction! Mr. Worldly Wiseman knew exactly what he was doing using this line of questioning, - ‘pulling at the heart strings’. … He came at it from another direction, - subtle and devious … with, no doubt, a smile of sympathetic concern on his face, - “Wilt thou hearken to me if I give thee counsel?” … What a fitting reply from Christian, “If it be good, I will”.

Mr. Worldly Wiseman started off by pretending to understand, and he used religious language so that Christian responded, “I will, for I stand in need of good counsel”. And then Mr. Worldly Wiseman spoke in terms that seemed to indicate he knew exactly and very personally Christian’s predicament, “I would advise thee, then, that thou with all speed get thyself rid of thy burden: for thou wilt never be settled in thy mind till then; nor canst thou enjoy the benefits of the blessing which God hath bestowed upon thee till then.” That was exactly what Christian wanted to hear … and God was mentioned too! Was this someone who had ‘happened’ along his way with the answers he needed?! No, this is the kind of man Jesus warned about, Jn. 10:1 He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

He saw the muck on Christian’s clothes and he correctly deduced he had fallen foul of the Slough of Despond. It wouldn’t have taken a genius to have arrived at that conclusion, but Mr. Worldly Wiseman warned Christian that he would meet similar, - and even worse, - catastrophes if he was to continue along the road Evangelist had directed him. He tried to frighten him into stopping where he was. Notice the subtle way he tried to sell his wares, - he started off with the simpler and graduated to the more pronounced, “wearisomeness, painfulness, hunger, perils, nakedness, sword, lions, dragons, darkness, and, in a word, death, and what not!” Why set yourself up for such misery by heeding the words of Evangelist when I can show you a better … more comfortable way!!

But it wasn’t working as quickly as Mr. Worldly Wiseman might have hoped. The burden on Christian’s back needed to be taken off. … So Mr Worldly Wiseman comes at him from yet another angle, “How camest thou by thy burden at first?” Mr. Worldly Wiseman already knew the answer. He knew Christian had been reading his Bible. He didn’t actually attack the content of the Bible ‘head-on’, - he was far too wise for that. Instead, he patronisingly informed Christian the Bible was such profound literature it was beyond the ability of the ordinary person to understand. You would be better staying away from it rather than arrive at a wrong conclusion.
It was dangerous even, because “other weak men, who, meddling with things too high for them, do suddenly fall into thy distractions”. … How patronising! In other words, you need to listen to me, for I can explain it to you the right way! Listen to me with my vicar’s gown on, and with my upper class university education, and my refined accent and manner … And of course, he also appealed to his experience, “Hear me, I am older than thou”.

What an absolutely pompous religious rascal! He spent his time trying to waylay seekers after the truth of the Gospel. He delighted in challenging them, and placing doubts into their minds so they would stop searching. Paul described his type, II Cor. 11:13 for such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. He was the kind came to you with a smile on his face … a jovial citizen belonging to “the town of Carnal Policy, a very great town”. He suited them there, and they suited him. He was all things to all people, except to those who followed after the Gospel! ... His identification, his location, and ...

**His Occupation** He occupied his time by watching out for vulnerable people like Christian. They were ‘soft-touches’ … ignorant people, with little learning. They were gullible, and he met them, pretended to be their long-lost friend, engaged them in conversation, polluted their minds by dripping seedlings of doubt, and stopped them in their journey towards the wicket gate. … He was nothing like the rough and vulgar man called Obstinate. He was polished and winsome, with one of those grins that stretches from ear to ear. Remember how he opened his conversation with Christian, - as he would have opened the conversations with all the other travellers, “How now, good fellow”. He didn’t push his opinion, but he nevertheless sought to sow the seeds of doubt in Christian’s mind. … Oh yes, he had Christian’s best interests at heart … not!! Peter wrote, II Pet. 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. 3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.

Look again at the spiritual benefits he was willing to speak about, and the familiar phrases he employed … “enjoy the benefits of the blessings which God hath bestowed upon thee” … This man speaks my language! He knows what I’m looking for! … No, it is this ambiguity of religious terminology that ‘hooks’ many a Christian! … And he was out to divert him from the path that led to the gate, beyond which he would find the cross. But for Evangelist, Christian would not have been on that road. However, Mr. Worldly Wiseman despised the plain speaking of Evangelist concerning God’s judgment upon sin, and the need for repentance. …
No need to worry about it! He challenged taking the Bible literally ... and he tried to convince Christian how dangerous it was, as evidenced by his recent experience in the Slough of Despond.

Nonetheless, Christian regarded those trials as less troublesome than his burden so Mr. Worldly Wiseman advised him to put the Bible away and listen to him. Basically, no Bible, ... you would soon have no burden! ... And then, Mr. Worldly Wisemen jumped at another opportunity when Christian used the phrase "ease from my heavy burden". Mr. Worldly Wisemen made him a tempting offer, "I could direct thee to the obtaining of what thou desirest, without the dangers that thou in this way wilt run thyself into; yea, and the remedy is at hand. Besides, I will add, that, instead of those dangers, thou shalt meet with much safety, friendship, and content." ... An easy road to Heaven ... and Christian fell for it! "Pray, Sir, open this secret to me." ... The devil and his preachers need no encouraging!

He directed Christian to a lovely sounding place, - a nice little quiet peaceable village called Morality. It would have been surrounded by tranquil countryside ... and in one of the homes there lived a man with a lovely name called Legality. He was another gentleman! [cf. p. 25 "The gentleman's name that met him was Mr. Worldly Wiseman"] He was a very nice, fine man too ... “very judicious ... very good name ... has skill ... he hath done a great deal of good ...” He’s the answer to your problems. He’ll show you the right thing to do. ... And you won’t have to put much effort into finding him ... just a small village, less than a mile from here ... and he’ll actually be at home ... and you’ll meet his lovely son, - Civility, - ... and between the two of them, they will help you. “there, I say, thou mayest be eased of thy burden; and if thou art not minded to go back to thy former habitation, as, indeed, I would not wish thee, thou mayest send for thy wife and children to thee to this village, where there are houses now stand empty, one of which thou mayest have at reasonable rates; provision is there also cheap and good; and that which will make thy life the more happy is, to be sure, there thou shalt live by honest neighbours, in credit and good fashion.” ... Sure you needn’t go any further. Send a message and bring your family here ... forget all about the wicket gate, and all Evangelist told you. ... Settle down with us, and you’ll become happy here. ... “Come into the parlour, said the spider to the fly, It’s the nicest little parlour that ever you didst spy!”

... And Christian stops. He listened to Mr. Worldly Wiseman for far too long. He shouldn’t have stayed in his company. He had been telling him the complete opposite to what Evangelist had been telling him. ... II Cor. 6:14 what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? ... 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not
the unclean thing … But Christian had spent so long in this man’s company he had begun to believe what he said!

He reckoned the wisest course of action to take was to get himself into that beautiful little village of Morality where he wouldn’t have any bother finding this man Legality and his son Civility … Sure you never know … it might be a good wee place to send for the family, and bring the children up, and settle down. … Lovely neighbours!

“Sir, which is my way to this honest man’s house?” … It was music to that old rascal’s ears. “Do you see yonder hill?” Mr. Worldly Wiseman replied without hesitation … I do, indeed, “Yes, very well.” … Too well, Christian, because you shouldn’t have been looking any direction he pointed you to! In fact, he noticed it far easier than when, - at the start of his journey, - Evangelist asked if he could see the wicket gate (cf. p. 16). Yes, the things of the world are far easier to see than the things of God! I Cor. 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: 8 Which none of the princes of this world knew … 10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. … 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth … 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

… It couldn’t have been any easier, as Christian listened to Mr. Worldly Wiseman giving him the directions, “By that hill you must go, and the first house you come at is his.” … That thief and robber, - no matter how respectable he put up to be, - thought he had successfully guided another pilgrim from off the road that led to the wicket gate. The worldly salesman claimed to offer the same product, but at a cheaper price … to arrange for the release of Christian’s burden without the trials he would meet along the narrow way. …

It was nothing less than an old-fashioned type of prosperity gospel, - I’ll show you as good a way, - only a short distance, - and it won’t even take so much out of you! A handy gospel that will put no one out! … Less than a mile, he said … but how often those miles can be an elastic mile!

Christian has been overawed by the conversation with this man. He was distracted and in danger of taking a detour that had the potential to cause him spiritual ruin … in the village of so-called Morality! John Kelman, in his The Road: A Study of John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress, wrote, “The chances are that those who dwell in this village, and make friends of these men, will end by giving hush-money to conscience, and adopting as their moral code the one great commandment, Thou shalt not be found out.”
The options dangled before Christian was either the large town of Carnal Policy or the small village of Morality, - whichever best suits your taste! Take your pick! ... Anything to divert you away from the road that leads to the cross. ... Christian shouldn’t even have given it a moment’s thought. He should have told him, Mt. 16:23 Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. ... No, he was asking directions from a blind guide! This was a man with only a veneer of righteousness ... a religious rascal ... a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

Christian was mesmerised ... a hill ... If he would have had his wits about him he would have realised that hill would have become higher and higher ... He was ready to take the word of this man to climb a hill with that burden on his back! Common sense should have dictated to him that he shouldn’t even consider it ... but common sense is cast aside when the fallen will of man is sought for instruction ... Christian, stop listening. Get yourself away from that man, - and those other men like him. Get back on to the path Evangelist directed you ... Don’t turn off. Make your way to the gate, and pass in through it! I Cor. 3:19 the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.

We are surrounded by men such as John Bunyan described as Mr Worldly Wiseman, and Legality and Civility. The hill Bunyan was thinking about was Mount Sinai, and its relationship to the giving of the Law ... hence the man called Legality. Do what is right and moral ... and it is enough to get you to Heaven. But no, you can keep meticulously the laws of men and satisfy yourself you’re a good soul ... but God’s Word tells us, Is. 64:6 all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

But for the grace of God we could have taken our pick, - in the Town of Carnal Policy where ‘anything goes’, or in the sleepy village of Morality. But, instead, consider this: “Grace first inscribed my name In God’s eternal book; ’Twas grace that gave me to the Lamb, Who all my sorrows took. ... Grace led my roving feet To tread the heavenly road; And new supplies each hour I meet, While pressing on to God.” ... Phil. 3:13 this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, [...this one thing I do ...] 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.