

Reaching Out

Issue #77

Welcome to *Reaching Out*, a Christian magazine to serve the community.
Our goal is to offer Biblical solutions to the problems facing our society today.

What's Inside?

Four regular columns:

- The Church in Society** 3
- The Christian Home** 6
- The Bible and Science** 8
- The World Today** 10

Feature Article for Youth

Five Minutes

Till Midnight 5



Rebellion!

—Clay Zimmerman

Arab Spring, it was called. Many countries in the Arab world within the last years saw violent protests and marches by millions of citizens—Egypt, Libya, Syria, and others. Governments were overthrown, leaders ousted, and thousands and thousands have died. Has this ended their problems? All three of the named countries are still struggling as of this writing.

But the popularity of protesting was not limited to the Arab world or to countries with dictators. Turkey, Brazil, Chile, and others who seem to have vibrant democracies, have become involved also. Millions of demonstrators, smashed public and private buildings, clashes with riot police, and many deaths. Indeed, some call it the “Age of Unrest.” One writer made the statement that “mass rage just seems to be in the air.”

The summer of 2013 was dubbed the “summer of middle class discontent.” Middle class? Yes, a lot of the protests were not started by fanatics or the severely underprivileged, but the cause is the same—discontent.

Some of the protests were fueled by anger with government corruption and/or mismanagement, and yet sometimes triggered by seemingly small things. In Turkey it was the proposed closing of a downtown park. Chile’s discontent included the high cost of higher education, and in Brazil one of the issues was the cost of public bus tickets.

In any rebellion the process seems to be the same:

discontent + anger + disobedience, with death waiting around the corner. The cry of the people involved always has the same basic thought: “NOT YOUR WAY—OUR WAY!” “WE WILL HAVE IT OUR WAY!”

We shake our heads at these situations, we feel sorry for the innocent ones that suffer, we are appalled at the deaths, and we pray for peace. But consider. These government rebellions are what gets in the news and grabs our attention, but what about the GREAT rebellion?

Yes, God is the highest form of government over man. He has told us the way we are to live, the way He has willed things to be, and the obedience He expects. And we as a people have rebelled. The thought is the same: “NOT YOUR WAY—OUR WAY!” “WE WILL HAVE IT OUR WAY!” The process is the same also: discontent, disobedience, and death waits around the corner.

But there is a way out. God offers us forgiveness, restoration, and blessings, along with life! Our part is acceptance, submission, obedience to God; the rewards are eternal! So simple, yet so profound. The tragedy is that most still insist on “MY WAY.”

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23).

Would you like to receive each issue of
Reaching Out,
or do you know of a friend who might?
Send your requests to the church
represented on your back page.

Do you care to respond to any of the articles?

Send your thoughts and comments to:

Reaching Out
Roger Berry, Editor
6872 State Highway K
Seymour, MO 65746

Reaching Out Published Quarterly

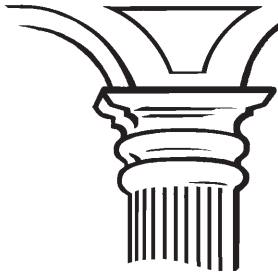
Issue #77, 4-2013

Editor: Roger L. Berry

Board: Joe Weirich, Allan Miller, Wayne Miller, James Yoder, Clay Zimmerman

Regular Columnists: Lester Troyer, Marlin Kreider, Elvin Stauffer, Clay Zimmerman, Roger L. Berry

Reviewers: Glenn Kilmer, Lewi Graber



—Lester Troyer

Is Heaven for Real?

Proof of Heaven, Heaven is for Real. Some of the book titles on this popular subject give the impression that the evidence is finally in, that Heaven is, sure enough, a real place. Seriously though, we ought to raise some very different questions. What kind of reality do these accounts represent? If they are dreams or visions, in what sense are they true? Do they respect the Biblical parameters on the subject, or do the authors actually claim authority on the subject equal to, or greater than, Biblical revelation? If these are legitimate, has the Bible been incomplete?

If these experiences are actual crossovers to the “other side,” then obviously this gets into the spirit world. Some apparently come back with information about loved ones, the manner in which they died, their appearance, activities, etc.,—things that they could not have known except that it was shown them while out of the body. So we’re not prepared to argue against the “reality” of such experiences. The sobering question is whether these revelations are from God. The Bible teaches that Satan does masquerade as an angel of light. Perhaps, instead of taking assurance and consolation, we ought to consider the possibility that these revelations could be part of the spiritual deception of the times—and be thoroughly alarmed. Idle curiosity and seeking truth outside of Biblical parameters is perilous. It is also the sign of a faithless generation (Matthew 17:17).

Going to Heaven is a big step—from time to eternity. Biblically, the information on Heaven is adequate, but far from exhaustive. On the other hand, the steps to actually reaching one’s eternal

abode (whether Heaven or Hell) are addressed in crystal clarity. Everyone is either saved or lost. Everyone has an appointment with death, followed by an inescapable judgment before God, followed by a verdict from God. The options are but two—*Come Ye Blessed* or *Depart Ye Cursed*. How is it then that these authors reflect little concern whatsoever for a practical guide to readers on *how* to get to Heaven?

So a little research and consideration should be time well spent. We will first note the tenor of Scripture in relation to Heaven, which should quickly reveal whether the modern stories are correlations of the same.

Jesus, in the story of the rich man in Hell, seeing Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom, clarifies two things. First, that signs and miracles are of no avail with people who reject Scripture. It also teaches that the perimeters of Heaven will be absolutely secure. (There is a great gulf fixed that none can cross. Yet in two separate near-death accounts, both related by preschool boys, Heaven is threatened by terrifying beasts, demonic forces, or both.)

In Acts 9, we have the account of Stephen who, at his martyr death, “*looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.*”

In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul speaks of a man in Christ (very probably himself) caught up to the third heaven (the Heaven that is for real), yet if description were possible, it was also “*unlawful to utter.*” (Have these authors never seen that?) If Paul was not permitted to describe Heaven, then who is?

The most extensive revelation of the glory-world is that of the Apostle John. His tour of Heaven begins in Revelation 4. The first thing he saw was a throne and the One that sat upon it. Around the throne were four and twenty elders. (These are not your next of kin: grandparents, cousins, or playmates, but representatives of the saints.) He also sees four living creatures around the throne. These have no rest 24/7, saying, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.” When these give glory, honor, and thanks to God, the four and twenty elders fall down and worship Him who lives forever and ever.

This introduction sets the tone of God-centered reverence and awe that permeate the whole of John’s experience, and any other experience in the New Testament. The popular accounts that describe practically anything except the holiness of God—joking angels, wrestling, bear hunting, cow herding, or doing homework, should get no quarter from serious seekers of Heaven. If it sounds like a family reunion, it’s probably not the true Heaven where the saints adore and worship the One who redeemed them.

Most of the information thus far, I have gleaned from reviews. I simply fail to see these books as worth the time to read them. What follows, however, is the exception:

In *Proof of Heaven*, the offerings change quite dramatically. I bought and studied it after seeing a favorable review. The book is scholarly and “credible.” This is the account of a Virginia neurosurgeon’s experiences while in a deep coma from which there was no medical hope of recovery. The doctor is now convinced that the essence of being human will continue beyond physical death. (One of the few things on which I would agree.) His out-of-the-body experience brings him into a place of indescribable beauty among creatures of unspeakable joy.

He is guided on his tour by a glorious female escort. (She was his deceased sister. Having been adopted, he had never met her but identified her from a photograph after the coma experience.)

Communication was understood without words. (Speech giving way to actualization.) She conveyed to him (page 71), a threefold message:

- You are loved and cherished.
- You have nothing to fear.
- There is nothing you can do wrong.

Also he was contacted by a psychic while in the deep coma (page 87).

This doctor claimed to be in the presence of God via a “divine link.” He didn’t so much “see” God. It was more like being one with Him. This “divine presence is with us at all times . . . loving us without conditions.” Apparently people are also interconnected as one, through our “divine link with God” (page 261). (I take this to mean that all people are connected to one another, and together, to God.)

It sounds so good to have everyone going to Heaven. To be told we’re unconditionally loved. That we can do no wrong. That we have nothing to fear. On a personal level, who wouldn’t want to say, “bring it on”?

However, this gets really problematic before you even compare it to the Gospel. This concept does away with evil by denying its existence. But in reality, such a Heaven would be worse than the earth we came from. On earth there are at least token efforts to identify and isolate evil. Who would want to be “one” with Jeffrey Dahmer who ate people or Adolph Hitler who killed millions of Jews? We do and should abhor rape, murder, and the molesting of children. In fact, most of us will still admit that even lying, stealing, and cheating ought not to happen. In that, we confess that we all rightly face an appointment with justice. The problem is that apart from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit through regeneration, no one is in union with God.

Because of the “reality” of the experience, this doctor has highjacked and counterfeited the really glorious truth of the Gospel. Indeed, Heaven has done away with evil—not by denying it or excusing it, but by paying the price of it with the blood of Christ. Heaven is not for those who can do no wrong, but for those who through repentance and faith have been washed, cleansed, and sanctified.

The doctor has presented a false sense of unity with God and with people. It is forgiveness and peace with God that brings unity and fellowship with the saints. “*If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another . . . and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*” (1 John 1:7, 3).

The old spiritual declares that “not everyone talkin’ about Heaven is a-goin’ there.” That does coincide with Biblical teaching. “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*” (Matthew 7:21).

Feature Article for Youth . . .

Five Minutes Till Midnight

One of the world's most unusual clocks can be seen at the University of Chicago. This symbolic clock does not change from hour to hour but stands at one setting most of the time. Recently this clock was set at five minutes until midnight.

This clock is called the "Doomsday Clock." The clock is supposed to demonstrate the potential closeness of a nuclear holocaust or some man-made disaster.

Ironically, this Doomsday Clock is located at the University of Chicago, where, in the 1940s, the first atomic bomb was developed. Now that same university is trying to discourage nuclear weapons.

In early December of 1987, the United States President and the Russian Premier met to discuss the weapons' race and forged an agreement to limit some types of nuclear weapons.

The keepers of the Doomsday Clock were elated and sufficiently impressed to move the hands on the clock back to six minutes before midnight. The change was a small but significant comfort to those who fear nuclear war. The clock has been maintained since 1947. It came closest to midnight in 1953 when it was set at 2 minutes until midnight after a hydrogen bomb test was done by the USA. The farthest from midnight was 17 minutes until midnight in 1991 after the fall of communism in Russia. Since that time, optimism has visibly waned.

The Bible teaches that wars and rumors of wars will only increase. *"Ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom"* (Matthew 24:6, 7).

There will be a day of judgment from God—Doomsday. The Bible calls this day of reckoning "the day of the Lord." It is

mentioned in both the Old and the New Testaments. *"Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come"* (Joel 1:15). *"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them"* (1 Thessalonians 5:2, 3).

The Doomsday Clock is far different, however, from God's timetable. Someday God will judge the earth—that will be the real Doomsday. Perhaps it is even now very nearly midnight on His eternal clock. There is no turning back of the hands on His clock.

The important thing is to be ready for Doomsday and helping others to get ready for God's midnight hour. The prophet Joel also spoke of many in the valley of decision because the day of the Lord is near. *"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision"* (Joel 3:14).

Some, no doubt, hope that disarmament talks will provide a little more peace and safety, but the Bible declares that peace only comes through the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). Are you afraid of the very real possibility of wars and destruction from wars? Accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and your source of peace.

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" (2 Peter 3:10, 11). —RLB



The Christian Home Series

—Marlin Kreider

How to Love Our Children

In an earlier issue of this “Christian Home” series, we featured an article titled, “Love at Home.” Today, we want to pursue this thought further, looking at some practical ways how we can truly love our children. Love is a vital, foundational ingredient in the home and family relations. Here are five basic areas for our consideration and instruction.

Value Your Children

What we love, we value; and what we value, we love. The Bible says: “*Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is His reward*” (Psalm 127:3). Children are gifts — an inheritance from God. Let’s not allow selfishness and man’s vain philosophies to rob us of this inheritance. Jesus said: “*Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones*” (Matthew 18:10). Woe to those who despise God’s gifts. Children are to be desired, loved, and appreciated. Like all of God’s gifts to us, they are to be trained and reared for His purposes and praise. The prevailing mind-set of not wanting many or any children and the wholesale abortion of the innocent are all contributing to Satan’s strategy to destroy God’s all-wise plan for the home and the human race. God’s faithful people have always valued children!

Hannah, who was barren, pled with God for a son. She vowed that if God would grant her request, she would give him to the Lord all the days of his life. And that is what she did. Later, God blessed her and her husband with three more sons and two daughters. (See 1 Samuel Chapter 1 and 2:21.)

Rachel, another God-fearing woman from Bible times said: “*Give me children or else I die!*” She seemed to understand that one’s posterity, along

with enduring values and faith in God, are passed from generation to generation through children. Do we understand this fact? Children are valuable! With children we can reach people and places for God and good beyond ourselves. That is why the Bible likens children to arrows and says: “*Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them*” (Psalm 127:5). This is God’s plan. Parents, what a privilege to partner with God’s purposes in our homes!

Protect your Children

The young and innocent are very impressionable and vulnerable. God designed the home to be the place where young lives are loved, cared for, nurtured, guided, and protected from harmful influences, both physical and spiritual.

Both father and mother have unique God-given roles and responsibilities in this high calling of preparing the rising generation for a life of usefulness to God and humanity. Home, like a greenhouse is to young plants, is to be a safe and secure haven of protection from the elements of a cruel world of selfishness, lust, immorality, and violence.

Today, many young children are being robbed of their innocence by overexposure to the vices of sin and immorality. Many parents are neglecting their God-given responsibilities by following their own selfish, sinful desires. Mass, uncensored, worldwide communication has invaded every sphere of society, including the home, with all sorts of pornography and moral perversions. This is one good reason why God-fearing parents say no to the TV, Internet, and video influence in the sacred realms of their homes. The battle to protect our homes requires more than

“Thou shalt not.” But true Christian parents do have established standards and restrictions in their personal lives and their homes. If we fail to raise a standard against the moral pollution of our day, our posterity will be swept away and lost with the world.

We have a lack of good, godly role models today. Much of the professing Christian church has surrendered and compromised with the world’s sports, music, and entertainment programs. This fosters more moral and spiritual failures, and the spiral is downward. Praise God there is a remnant! Our encouragement is for you to find and join them.

Teach Your Children

Children come to us very helpless and like blank sheets of paper. They need to be taught. What shall we teach them? Teach them God’s time-proven values of obedience, respect for authority, as well as respect for the feelings, rights, and property of others. Teach them that the world does not revolve around them. We’re here to serve God and our fellowmen. Teach them honesty along with the disciplines and rewards of hard work and a job well done. Teach them the value of moral purity and chastity. Teach them to cover their bodies (not expose them as the masses are doing) and reserve themselves for that special someone they marry. Teach them the exclusiveness and permanence of marriage.

Teach, Teach, Teach! (Deuteronomy 6). It is a full-time job. It is urgent.

Parents must be leaders in their homes. We teach both by precept and example (as role models). Remember, a good leader and a good parent **“knows the way, shows the way, and goes the way!”**

Something is being taught today; and by much of the fruit, it isn’t good. We are up against the New Age heresy that there are no moral absolutes and man is his own god. As faithful Christians and parents, let’s teach in our homes, in our Christian schools, and in our churches. Choice Bible passages of wisdom and instruction as found in Proverbs 7-9 must be taught to every generation. God will enable us. Let us rise up and teach!

Train Your Children

Love your children by not only teaching them truth and right but also by training them in God’s ways. Training means “to bring up, rear, to discipline and instruct, to cause to do.” The Bible says: *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6). Ephesians 6:4 has the same thought when it says: *“Bring them up in the nurture [discipline] and admonition [instruction] of the Lord.”* Sound teaching backed by firm, loving discipline is powerful and brings security and stability in children’s lives. Parents, love your child enough to say “no” and make it stick.

Discipline is a sensitive issue today. Atheistic, humanistic psychology says that discipline, especially corporal correction, is harmful and now in some

places unlawful. We agree that to correct a child out of frustration, anger, or hatred is wrong. We stand against real child abuse. We also believe that abortion is not only abuse but murder.

There are other good forms of correction besides the use of the rod. However, the old saying: “Spare the rod and spoil the child” is still true. More authoritative is that the Bible in Proverbs 22:15; 23:13, 14; and 29:15, 17, etc., teaches that correction by the rod is right; and when done in true love, yields good fruit. In fact, the good products from wholesome Biblical discipline are indisputable. And then, Hebrews 12:1-11 teaches that God chastens and scourges His children whom He loves, for their good! If you have never been chastened (spanked) by our loving God, you have reason to question if you are one of His children. Does it feel good? NO! Does it produce good fruit? When we respond rightly, yes! So, parents, do your children a favor by training them.

One question for those who may not agree: Why is child abuse increasing at such an alarming rate? Most of the true child abuse is coming from parents and other adults who never had good, wholesome Bible discipline in their growing up years. Or if they had it, they have rebelled against it. This strikes at the root of our problem today! Many have forgotten or refuse to hear and believe God’s clear Word of truth. Will you be among the wise and take God’s good, proven path?

Have a Relationship with Your Children

Love your child by having a good, open relationship with him or her. Some parents make the mistake of trying to rear their children on relationship alone. Rather, the parent-child relationship is the bond that compliments and ties it all together when the first four points already mentioned are well in place.

Good relationships take time. Families must live, eat, talk, worship, work, and play together. Our fast-paced, high-tech lifestyle militates against good relationship building—family life. We all do well to examine our priorities and our value system. This is another good reason to limit or eliminate the distractions of questionable technology so that we may truly love our children. To do this, we must value them, protect, teach, train, and have a healthy relationship with them.

Our world has a warped view of children and what constitutes true love. The answer is to do it God’s way and truly love our children—even the less gifted or handicapped ones—in the way He says we should. There can be beautiful home life. We will enjoy the children God has so graciously given to us. We can continue to enjoy them long after they leave our homes. And then we can enjoy grandchildren. Again, the Bible is true when it says in Proverbs 17:6: *“Children’s children are the crown of old men.”* May God bless us with Christian homes, children, and grandchildren for His glory!



THE BIBLE AND SCIENCE

—Elvin Stauffer

The Love of God in Creation

Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the sky of parchment made; were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade. To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry, nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky.—“The Love of God” by Frederick Lehman

True love is expressed in what we do for those we love. The most phenomenal example of this is when God created a home for the crown of His creation—mankind—made in His own image.

We as human beings take so much for granted. We benefit daily from multitudes of marvels and miracles. “*Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation*” (Psalms 68:19). Yet we live in a time when most people are educated to believe our good things are accidental and that our world of resources self-organized from the chaos of a primordial cosmos. However, that is a false faith. Scientific principles say complex things and order don’t just happen where entropy (decay) is the rule.

God Provides a Habitation

When we take a look back from space at this blue planet we call home, we see a miracle of precise conditions for life. It is just the right distance from the sun for temperature and tilted in an orbit for seasons. The earth is just the right size for our weight and has the right gases to breathe for life. The minerals and nutrients in the ground are assimilated by plants, which make them accessible for our bodies to metabolize for life. Man’s scientific knowledge in agriculture has improved varieties, but he is still dependent on suitable weather and water from the heavens.

God also created animals to serve man. Throughout history man has depended heavily upon animals as beasts of burden and transportation. From the science of animal husbandry, we enjoy daily provisions of meat, eggs, milk, leather shoes, and the like. Besides the visible flora and fauna, is the microscopic realm of plants and

animals. Bacteria were all beneficial in God’s first “very good” creation.

Animals were created with a limited thinking ability and also with some abilities beyond men’s called *instinct*, but that is all! The difference in man is that he shows his God-likeness (John 10:34, 35). He begins with very little ability, but he learns and accumulates knowledge with no apparent stopping place.

Everywhere man looks, he finds marvels of science that are inexhaustible. If we would try to describe the many fields of science, there is no end to the detail of God’s “*wonderful works to the children of men*” (Psalm 107:8). The magnitude of this endless stream of knowledge would approach that of the songwriter in “The Love of God.”

Man - The Crown of Creation

God formed man from the earth and breathed into him the spirit of life that would last forever (Genesis 2:7). God then gave Adam and his helpmeet, Eve, a mandate to be stewards over this new creation. “*Let them have dominion over . . . all the earth and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth*” (Genesis 1:26b). With this “great commission” and man’s mental abilities and strength, along with the resources on this earth, nothing was lacking for his success.

The world Adam and Eve were given was perfect without the curse of sin. It is hard to imagine how nature in the first world operated when things didn’t degenerate and destroy one another. Where were the lines of life and regeneration in plants and animals? There were no parasites, antibodies, bad germs, or disease. The wolf and the lamb, the child and the asp, played together.

Man has been given a mind to understand and utilize the laws of nature. With the scientific principles of electricity, radio waves, atomic power, and the elements of the earth, ways have been found to do our work and communicate our wishes. Though God is not usually given credit, these activities all depend on His sustaining power. He is faithfully *“upholding all things by the word of his power”* (Hebrews 1:3).

Computer technology can now hold and process incredible masses of information. Present day commerce, communication, and transportation could not do without it. Man is continuing today in what he gathered together to accomplish at Babel. *“Now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do”* (Genesis 11:6).

The goodwill of God toward man and humor in nature are evident all around us. *“Out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight”* (Genesis 2:9). God did not just make a utilitarian environment where the fittest survive. Why should anything be beautiful? Here is more evidence against materialistic evolution and for our loving, caring God. *“He hath made every thing beautiful in his time”* (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

A Curse and Redemption

Though God is sovereign—in control—He did not just want puppets forced to do His will. A bird that is set free and returns to its master is truly loyal. Thus God allowed for some self-determination in His universe. Satan took advantage of this and got one-third of the created angelic beings to rebel after him (Isaiah 14:12-15; Revelation 12:4). He also got man to violate God’s will (Genesis 3). This brought a curse; and the blight of fear, pain, suffering, and death settled upon humanity.

Now redemption was necessary. Here we again see the amazing love of God for His handiwork. *“Thou [God] shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands”* (Job 14:15). Before He made the world He knew that he would need to redeem and rescue man. Jesus was slain in the plan of God *“from the foundation of the world”* (Revelation 13:8). God in His great mercy devised salvation’s plan, whereby He will now accept repentant sinners into Heaven. He has now both made us and bought us.

Neither Were They Thankful

A conscientious, thinking person can see the wrong of those who use all these resources, scien-

tific principles, and good things from a gracious God and never think twice about giving Him credit or thanks. Worship is due Him. This is where God is coming from when He says, *“The plowing of the wicked, is sin”* (Proverbs 21:4). It’s because they are working in rejection and rebellion against God. There is no neutral place on this issue! Those who deny God’s creation work have no excuse (Romans 1:20). Their chief sin is that *“they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful”* (verse 21).

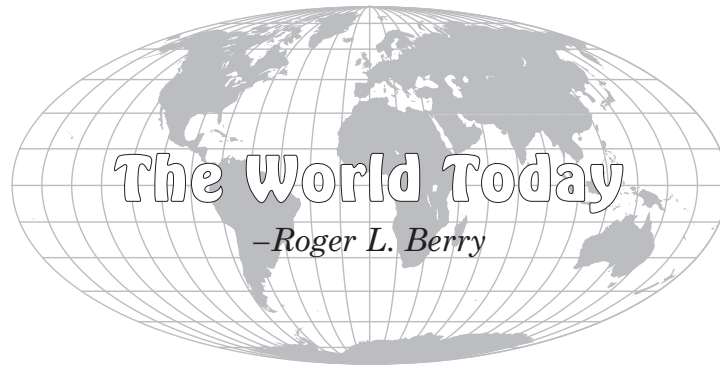
Opponents to Gospel truth today are saying Christianity is the world’s problem. But true Christianity delivered multitudes from pagan bondage throughout history. The ungodly bring the curse of sin and degeneration into God’s world. Resources cannot be developed that would feed the whole world. Governments are not in place who seek the welfare and good of all people in the world under the oppression of despots. What we see in the world today is not what God intended.

God Will Wrap It Up

Since the fall the earth has been wearing out. *“Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed”* (Heb. 1:10-12). God’s priority in the universe is in humanity, not the earth. It is a vain hope to try to “save our earth.” God chose rather to redeem those of the human race in the earth who believe His work in creation and redemption and return His love.

In the midst of the human tragedy we see today, there is still much evidence of a loving heavenly Father (Matthew 5:45). He created this world of good things, and He has provided salvation to change the evil hearts of men. God’s love is demonstrated through His children (the morally fittest) who show others how to be servant to all. Putting others down in a survival of the physically fittest (physically) is causing the world to self-destruct (Matthew 24:22).

Life is rather a responsibility of cooperation and mutual benefit. A touch of Heaven can be experienced on earth when God’s way of life is followed. The Bible is the operator’s manual. Converted hearts demonstrate God’s love in the Christian graces of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, and loving one’s enemies (Gal. 5:22, 23). This salvation is available for all!



Can a Deeply Religious Person Be Involved in Politics?

This is not a theoretical question. A newspaper reporter asked the question and illustrated it with a politician who spoke of his deep religious faith and his opposition to abortion, euthanasia, and other positions that religious conservatives tend to take.

With an obvious knowledge of the Bible and its implications in practical life, the reporter noted, “The New Testament that [he] believes in calls on everyone to ‘render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.’” (Pay your taxes and give your life to God.)

He aptly noted that the people of the United States need to know what this politician would do when rendering to one would offend the other. I am convinced the reporter had a clearer understanding of the dilemma of a Christian serving in government than many “conservative” Christians have.

Politics is, by its very nature, the art of compromise. Even a professing Christian in politics is going to have to compromise Christian principles at times. For example, one Christian governor efficiently established a state lottery system in his state in spite of his religious opposition to gambling. The state voted to establish a lottery, and it was up to him to see that it was carried out. He also needed to enforce the abortion laws on the books.

I am not a judge of any politician’s spirituality. However, Acts 5:29 says, without compromise: “*We ought to obey God rather than men,*” when God’s laws and man’s conflict. The word *ought* there is not optional—it is our duty. Rendering to God the things that are God’s and to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s is not optional either—the choice is clear-cut.

The Bible teaches a two-kingdom ethic: the king-

dom of heaven and the kingdoms of this world. Romans 13:1-6, for example, clearly delineates the responsibility of the government and of the believers. The believers’ main purpose is to be salt and light, influences for truth, and witnesses of the power of Jesus Christ to transform lives. The purpose of the government is to maintain law and order, to protect the good, and to punish those who violate its laws. The attempt by many to blend these two purposes has resulted in confusion. Jesus said of the believers: “*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*” (Matthew 5:14, 16).

In recent U.S. presidential elections, many have insisted that the future of Christianity in America hinges on electing “Christians” to high places to preserve moral values. While Christians can appreciate when people of principle are in control, the salvation of the United States as a nation or of individuals within the nation does not hinge on Christian involvement in politics. Far too many have taken their focus off working to meet man’s spiritual need and focused on political action to Christianize laws and government institutions. Would someone who stands consistently for Christian principles ever get elected in our secular and pluralistic society?

Do we forget Rome after it was “Christianized” and other governments since that have tried to enforce Christianity? All of them failed. Many people suffered. For Christianity, by its very nature, is a voluntary faith. It is a faith of love that does not force itself on the rest of the world, but invites all to salvation.

The Bible teaches complete separation of church and state. The temptation is to trust in the hope that somehow Christianizing politics and government will lead to the betterment of society. In the last half century, numerous government leaders from the top down have professed to be born-again Christians. But it is also true that society in general has been on the skids spiritually as never before. I believe the fault does not lie at the door of the government as much as at the door of the church that has trusted in politics to promote its standards. The church has failed in the call to hold a standard of right living and to point men and women to the Christ who alone can change their lives.

The Christian's "politics" is not earthly or carnal but persuading men and women to be reconciled to Christ.

The Road to Salvation

The Bible presents the way to God clearly, so that all mankind is without excuse. Many passages in the Bible show God's way clearly. The following "plan of salvation" is found in just one Bible book, the Book of Romans.

Acknowledge your need . . .

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

God provides hope . . .

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Romans 5:8, 9).

Sin brings consequences . . .

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Christ brings deliverance . . .


"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

Confess and believe . . .


"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9, 10).

Be transformed . . .

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1, 2).



Study the Bible!



The Bible has the answers for you. Find out what they are! Find out what Jesus did for you. Find out what true love is. Find out what true peace is. Enroll today in the *free* Bible study course *The First Step* to learn about God and His love for you.

We also offer other courses dealing with commitment, fasting, discerning God's will, witnessing, worship, and other subjects. If you want to study another course, request our course brochure.

✂

Please enroll me in *The First Step*. (Please do not enroll if you are less than fourteen years of age.)

Please send me your course brochure.

Please send me information about Spanish Bible courses.

Please send me information about French Bible courses.

Please send me your English catalog.

Name _____

Mailing address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Religion _____ Age _____

Check two boxes: Male Female Single Married

If you are presently our student, you must write your student number here. _____

Send enrollment to: Lamp and Light Publishers, 26 Rd. 5577, Farmington, NM 87401. Phone: 505-632-3521 Fax: 505-632-1246

