

Reaching Out

Issue 102

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?

Five regular columns:

THE BIBLE AND SCIENCE	Sin Shortens Life	3
THE CHRISTIAN HOME	The Christian Home—Is There a Substitute?	5
WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?	To Whom Does It Belong?	7
FEATURE ARTICLE FOR YOUTH	You Are Related!	8
THE WORLD TODAY	The Lost Generation	10

Born Again

by Dallas Witmer

Would you jump at a chance to give up on life and start over again? If you were to be born again, would you hope it might be with better looks, or richer parents? Might you use the opportunity to do things differently in your youth to insure yourself greater success in life?

Jesus once told a man, "Ye must be born again." But He wasn't commenting on the man's looks, his social standing, nor was He criticizing his religion. When pressed to explain what He did mean by "born again" Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).

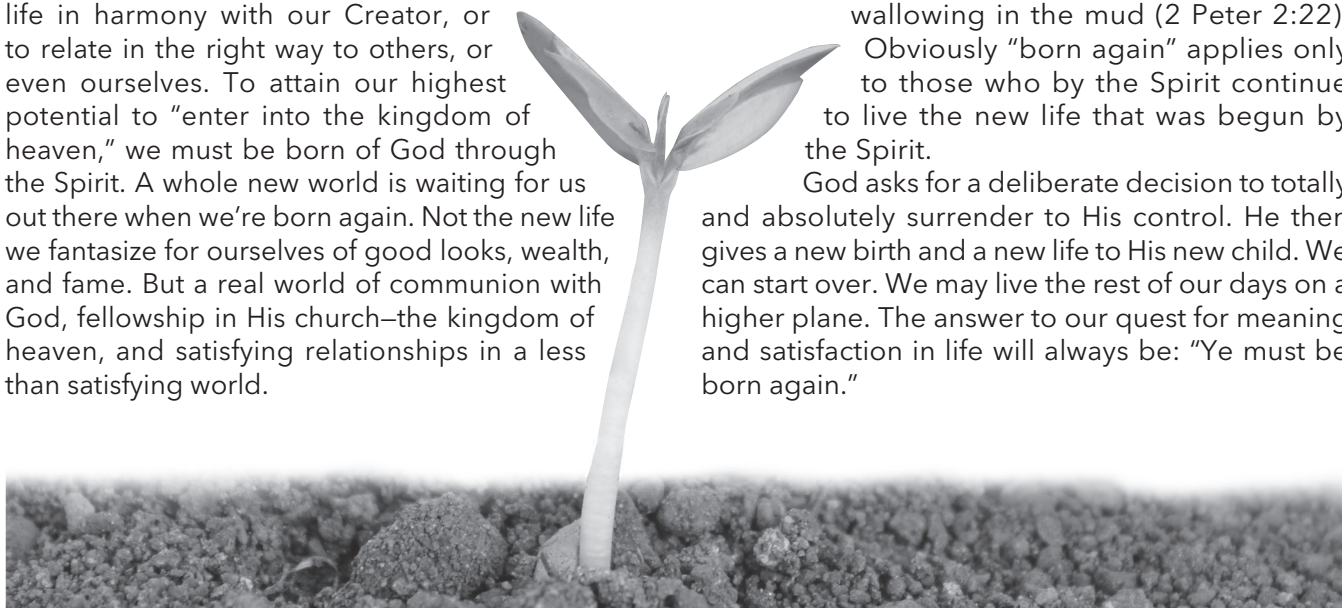
Once we were born naturally. The body we inherited from our parents equipped us to live in this material world. Spiritually, however, nothing we received from our parents by birth equipped us to enjoy life in harmony with our Creator, or to relate in the right way to others, or even ourselves. To attain our highest potential to "enter into the kingdom of heaven," we must be born of God through the Spirit. A whole new world is waiting for us out there when we're born again. Not the new life we fantasize for ourselves of good looks, wealth, and fame. But a real world of communion with God, fellowship in His church—the kingdom of heaven, and satisfying relationships in a less than satisfying world.

Jesus was general in His terms. "No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." Understanding this deepest of our own needs is half of attaining spiritual life. The truth is that we all need to be born again.

Why does the murderer kill? He has not been born again. Why do men cheat on their wives or mothers neglect their children? They must be born again. Why will folks rip off each other or evade taxes, get mad at fellow motorists, or feed on pornography? They haven't been born again. Why do some who preach high morals and profess religion do things that would shock a sinner? They too must be born again. Some who once were born again return to their old ways like the proverbial pig that was washed returning to her wallowing in the mud (2 Peter 2:22).

Obviously "born again" applies only to those who by the Spirit continue to live the new life that was begun by the Spirit.

God asks for a deliberate decision to totally and absolutely surrender to His control. He then gives a new birth and a new life to His new child. We can start over. We may live the rest of our days on a higher plane. The answer to our quest for meaning and satisfaction in life will always be: "Ye must be born again."



*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:

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THE BIBLE AND SCIENCE

Sin Shortens Life

by Elvin Stauffer

"Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die"

(Ezekiel 18:4).

When man left the perfection by which he was created *"in the image of God,"* his life span was shortened to about one thousand years. Today, our upward reach may approach one hundred years. A few exceed that. The oldest person to die in recent times reached 122 in 1997. It is also noteworthy that centenarians have not put forth any consistent diet or formula for growing old.

Man's problem of aging and dying has received much research, experimentation, and travel. An early American explorer, Juan Ponce de Leon came looking for the "Fountain of Youth." This fountain was thought to be on Bimini (in the Bahamas), and its waters were supposed to make old people young. Ponce de Leon found Florida instead and this imaginary fountain is associated with it.

The Origin of Death

Man was created to live forever in the paradise God created for him (Genesis 2:8). However, when Adam and Eve listened to Satan and fell into disobedience and sin, God needed to place a curse on creation (Romans 8:20). God then shut them out of the garden lest they would continue to eat of the tree of life and live forever in this sinful state (Genesis 3:22-24). They along with all creation began the process of dying (Romans 8:22, 23, 1 Corinthians 15:22). We do not question God. He is sovereign and knows what is best to *"fulfil all righteousness"* (Matthew 3:15).

Death, instigated by Satan but initiated by God, was an effort to maintain righteousness through new beginnings. A child is born into the world in innocence with an untainted conscience. He also inherits Adam's nature which makes him innately selfish and inclined to wrong doing (Psalm 58:3). As he matures he has the choice to follow the good or the evil and he becomes culpable for his sin.

In the broader perspective, human cultures have arisen one after another and shown a flash of glory in architecture and military might. But inevitably they become vile and inhumane and God destroys them. *"Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again"* (Job 12:14). *"I will overturn, overturn, overturn, . . . until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him"* (Ezekiel 21:27).

Death is considered an enemy. Jesus defeated it at Calvary and it is the last enemy that Christ abolishes at the consummation of world events (2 Timothy 1:10; 1 Corinthians 15:24-26).

A Declining Life Expectancy

When death was first unleashed as a judgment on sin, life spans still reached into the 900's. Adam lived to be 960 years old. His son Seth reached 916, Cainan 910, Jared 962, and Methuselah was 969 when the flood came. The worldwide flood in Noah's day when eight persons were saved (1 Peter 3:20) proved to be a genetic and life span "bottleneck." A narrow selection from a species always reduces genetic diversity.

God also showed a new tolerance toward man's failures. *"The LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth"* (Genesis 8:21). He put a rainbow promise in the sky that he would not again destroy the earth with a flood. But the tradeoff was that He again did something (perhaps an atmospheric change) to greatly reduce life spans.

Noah's son Shem lived 600 years, Arphaxad 438, Peleg 239, and on down to Abraham who lived 175 years. By Moses day lives were reduced to 70 to 80, a common number for today (Psalm 90:10).

Sin continues to cut life short whether by drunkenness and accidents, drugs, crime, suicide, or dis-

eases caused by sins of immorality. Plagues and hard living conditions throughout history have produced a short, destitute life for many. In my anthracite coal mining region of Pennsylvania (as well as Europe) men lived impoverished lives picking out coal in dark underground tunnels. At the week's end they got a paycheck and would drink it away at the local bars. On Monday they would go down in the hole again.

It was said there were forty bars in Williamstown. Mahanoy City is a typical mining town with a string of row houses and an old mansion house in the center of town. The mansion was owned by the brewer. That is where their money went while their families suffered. The men got black lung from coal dust and coughed until they died around forty years of age. If life got too hopeless they would take a stick of dynamite to a vacant lot and end it all. Such is life when men sin by disregarding their fellowman's welfare.

As a general rule, the deeper man has plunged into sin the shorter his life. There are those of course who have lived evil, unjust lives and seem to get away with it. Job said, *"The wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power. . . . They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave"* (Job 21:7, 13). The law of retribution is not always fulfilled in this life.

Medical Means to Extend Life

Today, through new "miracle" drugs, life expectancies have often been extended. It is said 1/3 of the people are living today who would have died without these medical advances. Presently I am kept in reasonably good health by the goodness of God and one dozen pills a day plus a shot of insulin. Scientists continue to look for ways to extend life. However these medical advantages in the rich countries do not reach to the poor multitudes around the world.

Aging is a deterioration of the whole body beginning with the cells and DNA. It appears that since God unleashed judgment on sin, our bodies are programmed to run down—Ecclesiastes 12:1-7 (read Psalm 139:15, 16). It has been discovered that the chromosomes in our cells have end caps (telomeres) that get shorter with age. There is no one thing that can be found to raise the upper thresh-

old of life. It seems to be set at no more than 120. In the 1960's Leonard Hayflick determined that the body's cells do not replicate indefinitely. Cells such as brain neurons are lost and not replaced.

Life Ending at the Beginning

In countries where promiscuity runs rampant, such as South Africa, the death toll from AIDS runs high. One statistic said that 40% of the 12-year-olds would not reach 20 years of age. But it continues to worsen. Millions of lives are truncated through abortion before they even see the light of day. They are not here to speak to us, but there is a cry for justice.

When I considered this and the age when God holds a soul accountable for his sins, I suddenly realized that through death God snatches the most souls from this world to heaven! *"Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands"* (Job 14:15). Satan does not get the most people. Through the sacrificial blood of Jesus the sins of the innocent children are covered (Mark 10:14)! Thus, even in death, God frustrates Satan's purpose of taking some of the human race for Himself. *"How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out"* (Romans 11:33).

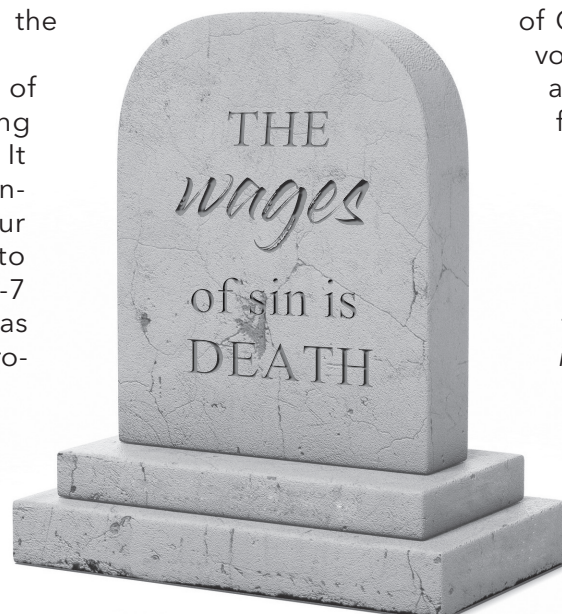
But woe to those who perpetrate these evils. Jesus said that those who *"shall offend one of these little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea"* (Matthew 18:6). Man rises up feeling very strong, intelligent, and proud of his liberty and achievements for a short time. But a cry goes up to heaven from the casualties of a fast paced, self-serving, alternate life style. God said at Sodom, *"I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me"* (Genesis 18:21).

The matchless mercy and grace of God is seen in that anyone involved in these vices, who repents and turns from his sins can be forgiven and saved (See Luke 23:39-43). The apostle Paul also considered himself the chief of sinners, having delivered Christians to death. *"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief"* (1Timothy 1:15).

Resources:

The Bible - God's Word

Answer in Genesis - "Why Do We Age?" (November-December 2018)





THE CHRISTIAN HOME SERIES

The Christian Home—Is There a Substitute?

by Jim Yoder

Some time ago we enjoyed a conversation with a neighbor. He was an elderly public school teacher who had been coaxed out of retirement to teach an advanced mathematics class at the local high school. This rigorous class was not compulsory for the high school students. The eleven young people who made up the class were there simply for the challenge of learning. Our teacher neighbor stated with satisfaction, "I only get the best ones!" He then shared a noteworthy observation. All eleven of these honor students came from traditional two parent homes. "This is no coincidence," said the veteran teacher, "There really is no substitute for an old fashioned home."

The traditional home consisting of father, mother, and children (as God provides) living and functioning together as a happy unit has been considered since ancient times as the foundation of society.

The mighty Roman Empire which once dominated the world gradually lost its power and faded. The historian Edward Gibbon wrote a lengthy six volume masterpiece called *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. This controversial writing gave various reasons Gibbon felt were paramount in the Empire's decline. Today we will mention only one point since it pertains to our subject.

The weakening of the Roman Empire homes was a key factor. Adultery, divorce, and homosexuality were rampant. Promiscuous living was the norm. Roman children born in this sleazy moral climate grew up without exemplary role models to follow. They simply followed the patterns of their morally lazy parents. So the confusion not only continued, but deepened. The downward spiral picked up speed. Roman society developed a dependence on its government to provide for them. More and more of Rome's economy went to provide for those who were not willing to take responsibility for their own. Less and less of Rome's economy went for expansion of its borders and fortifying its strongholds. So the Roman Empire, once strong and proud, began

fading, and then fragmenting. So the Roman Empire fell, not from enemies from without, but from moral cancer from within.

What lessons can we glean from the Roman Empire's demise? Do you see any likeness between the fall of the Roman Empire and the path that the western world is taking? Do you feel America's outcome will be different then the Roman Empire's if it insists on taking the same course? Joni Ericson Tada has been credited with this sobering quote: "And gradually, though no one remembers exactly how it happened, the unthinkable becomes tolerable, and then acceptable, and then legal, and then applaudable." Many people in America today are shocked at the decline in our nation's manners and morals, and wonder what they can do to stem the flood tides of filth.

As a Believer in the God of the Bible, I believe the fall of the Roman Empire centuries ago reaffirms the Truth of God's Word. The Bible says: "*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people*" (Proverbs 14:34). A simple paraphrase of this verse could be: Right living lifts up and expands a nation, but wrong living will embarrass and weaken it eventually. Another verse from God's Word that fits this situation is found in Galatians 6:7: "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*" Man has had a hard time learning that sin never turns out well. Sin is a transgression of God's laws.

**IF YOUR HOME IS A
WAR ZONE
FILLED WITH
BITTERNESS
AND CHAOS,
THERE TRULY
IS HELP.**

You see, the God of the Bible has established the bounds of what is right and wrong. Our good, benevolent Heavenly Father designed His restrictions and commandments for our good. In God's Word, Amos chapter 7, the prophet Amos saw a vision of the Lord God standing upon a city wall with a plumb line to test its straightness. In today's modern building methods, the plumb line has been largely replaced by sophisticated laser levels. But in ancient times the simple plumb line was hung from a high point with a weight called a plumb bob fastened to the bottom of it. The unchanging force of gravity upon the plumb bob kept the plumb line tight. This gave an accurate and dependable standard in which to build from.

Young people, do you dream of a happy home? Wives, do you wish your marriage would be fulfilling? Husbands, do you wish your wife and children would respect you? Maybe it is time you consider God's plumb line. What we are talking about is God's Word, the Bible. We believe the Bible has true, accurate answers on courtship, the longevity of marriage, the wife's role in marriage, the husband's role, the training of children, and even speaks to the role of grand parenting.

If you are dissatisfied today with the condition of your personal life, there are answers in God's Word. If your home is a "war zone" filled with bitterness and chaos, there truly is help. In the past, multitudes of troubled people have turned to God, repented of their sins, accepted the wonderful forgiveness from the Lord Jesus, and have taken real steps to align their lives with God's Word, His Plumb-line. The results have been restored lives and revitalized homes! These revitalized homes, in turn, are then a blessing to the local church and an uplifting presence to the nation. God, the Great Architect, designed the home to serve at least five great functions on earth.

1. For the Procreation of the Human Race

"Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" was God's commandment to Adam and Eve at Creation (Genesis 1:28) *"Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD"* (Psalm 127:3). Children are not a social inconvenience to be endured, but a blessing to be enjoyed!

2. For the Purity of the Human Race

"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4).

3. For Companionship

God said, *"It is not good that the man should be alone"* (Genesis 2:18). As the number of absentee parent and dysfunctional homes have increased, violent gang membership has increased. Why? Simply because all of us have a need for a sense of belonging and security. The home should provide each one under its roof with the wonderful feeling that they are wanted, accepted, needed, and loved.

4. A Training Ground and Classroom

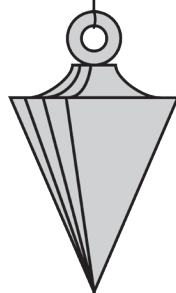
"Train up a child in the way that he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"* (Ephesians 6:1-4).

The home puts children into the care and training of their parents during the most impressionable period of their lives!

5. The Christian Home Is an Object Lesson of Christ and the Church.

The Apostle Paul, after he spoke about love flowing between husband and wife, followed with these words: *"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church"* (Ephesians 5:32). Indeed, I do not know of a more convincing testimony of the reality of a loving God in Heaven, than a happy Christian home! The example of a happy Christian home functioning together is powerful. When I see a happy Christian home, I have real curiosity to visit their church.

"The Christian Home—Is there a Substitute?" The answer to that question is an emphatic: "No! There is no substitute!" When there is a shortage of Christian homes within a society, the decline of that society will be forthcoming. The answer to this is not in more government programs. The only real remedy today is a spiritual revival within our homes and a return to the plumb line of God's Word. Please listen to God's plea in 2 Chronicles 7:14: *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."*





WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

To Whom Does It Belong?

by Merle Ruth

A certain minister had just delivered a disturbing sermon on the subject of God's ownership of all things. As the congregation was leaving, a wealthy member approached the minister and invited him for the noon meal. The surprised preacher accepted. After the meal, his host took him on a tour of his farm, proudly showing him his livestock, his buildings, and his fields. Then, turning to the preacher, he said, "Do you mean to say that I don't really own all this?"

After a few moments of silence, the minister replied, "Ask me that question one hundred years from now." The farmer frowned thoughtfully. Obviously, in one hundred years these things would no longer be his. But were they his even now?

To Whom Does the Earth Belong?

In his sermon, the minister had given his audience the Bible-supplied answer: "The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1).

Although we glibly talk about the land we "own," we are actually using what belongs to another. Concerning Canaan, Israel was told, "The LORD your God hath given you this land to possess it" (Deuteronomy 3:18). In that transaction, did God relinquish His ownership? No, to that same people He said, "The land is mine" (Leviticus 25:23). Possession and ownership are not the same. God's people in the New Testament also recognized this difference. "Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own" (Acts 4:32).

Upon What Is God's Claim to Ownership Based?

The basis for His claim appears in the majestic affirmation with which the Bible begins. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). The earth belongs to God by virtue of the fact that He created it.

Is God an Absentee Owner?

Some people, while conceding that God initially

created the earth, view Him as too remote to care about what is happening here now. As they see it, the fate of the earth is now entirely in human hands. The Bible, however, paints a brighter picture. "For by [Christ] were all things created, . . . and by him all things consist [hold together]" (Colossians 1:16, 17). A similar affirmation appears in Hebrews 1:3, where Christ is depicted as "upholding all things by the word of his power."

God, an absentee owner? By no means! Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without His knowledge (Matthew 10:29). Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). The Father and the Son are giving close attention to this earth, whose function depends continually upon them.

For What Ultimate Purpose Did God Create the Physical Order?

Here philosophical speculation is of little help, but God has not left us to grope in the dark. The answer comes from the lips of heavenly beings worshiping around God's throne. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11).

There it is, friend, the ultimate purpose—God's pleasure. But, you say, that is too general. Other Scriptures are more specific. "For thus saith the LORD. . . God himself that formed the earth . . . he formed it to be inhabited" (Isaiah 45:18). Inhabited by what or whom? He wants it inhabited by His countless creatures, especially by man, the crowning work of creation. Of man, God said, "I have created him for my glory" (Isaiah 43:7).

Next to God Himself, for Whose Benefit Does the Earth Exist?

God's design was to create an ideal dwelling place for man, the masterpiece of His creation. That the earth does indeed exist for man's sake is evident in the following Scripture: "Every moving thing that

liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things" (Genesis 9:3).

Although the Bible-taught Christian opposes killing for the fun of it, he understands that killing animals to sustain and protect human life is part of God's plan. Man alone was created "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27). This gives human life a sacredness that is not attached to lower forms of life. Jesus was talking to people when He said, "Ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:31).

Is Man Responsible for the Care of the Earth?

The Bible gives us clear answers. "And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15). "Thou madest [man] to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet" (Psalm 8:6).

As His appointed stewards, man is to use the resources God has made available in non-wasteful (John 6:12) and nonabusive (1 Corinthians 7:31) ways. The Creator will pour out judgment on those who "destroy the earth" (Revelation 11:18).

Since Day One, What Has Happened on the Earth?

After what appears to have been a relatively short time, Adam and Eve disobeyed God (Genesis 3:6). Thus occurred the Fall of man. Since then, "nature" has never been the same. God informed Adam: "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee" (Genesis 3:17, 18).

All forms of life became subject to disease, decay, and death. Man, the one creature who had freedom of choice, degenerated until "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). God cleansed the earth with a watery judgment that destroyed both man and beast (Genesis 7:17-24).

Can We Save the Earth?

Some alarmists insist that we must repair the damage that man has been inflicting on his environment or face global ecological catastrophe. That sounds good, but is it realistic? The stubborn fact remains that this planet is part of an enormous system that is literally running down. God likens the universe to a suit of clothes that is wearing out (Psalm 102:25, 26). Finally, He will destroy it. "The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. . . . Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:10, 13).

Let us not suppose that we can prevent the inevitable. It is equally foolish to suppose, as some do,

that God is counting on us to help Him create the new world, the home of the redeemed.

Should a Christian Be a Conservationist?

Yes, indeed, a true Christian is indwelt by the Spirit of Him who said: "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost" (John 6:12).

Becoming a Christian awakens a sense of stewardship. He sees the sinfulness of the throwaway lifestyle that surrounds him. Christianity motivates him to live simply so that others may simply live. The Christian farmer sees the need to conserve the long-term productivity of the land he tills. His sense of stewardship makes him a protector, not an exploiter.

Some of the same people who campaign for the preservation of natural resources, do not hesitate to glorify war when it is "in season." The true Christian sees this as a glaring inconsistency, for nothing is so wasteful and destructive as warfare.

For the Christian, environmental pollution has an added dimension. He views the pollution of public morality, to which so many thoughtlessly contribute, as the worst form of pollution.

Governed by the law of love and kindness, the Christian refrains from cruelty to animals (Proverbs 12:10). At the same time, he understands the wrongness of elevating animals to the level of the sacred (Romans 1:25).

Yes, my friend, being right with God is far more important than merely living in harmony with nature. Jesus died, and then rose from the dead, so that we can be cleansed from sin and have fellowship with our Creator. By repenting of our sins and surrendering to God, our lives can be transformed from a swampland of sin, into a beautiful garden where God Himself dwells (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

*From The Eastern Mennonite Testimony,
used by permission of Eastern Mennonite Publications*

Kingdoms and Thrones to God Belong

Kingdom and thrones to God belong:

Crown Him, ye nations, in your song;
His wondrous names and pow'rs rehearse,
His honors shall enrich your verse.

Proclaim Him King, pronounce Him blest:

He's your defense, your joy, your rest;
When terrors rise, and nations faint,
God is the strength of ev'ry saint.

—Isaac Watts

You Are Related!

by Harold Brenneman

There are some things more certain than death and taxes. If you are alive (and you are if you're reading this), then you are related three ways: to God, to other people, and to the world.

Whether you ever thought of it or not, you do have some relation to God. But how near is that relation? Is God only a powerful, Supreme Being, or has He come near to you and brought you near to Him? Has He only started the worlds spinning and drawn the curtain, or has He shown Himself to you and made you a part of His plans? Does the thought of God and His terrible judgments strike terror to your heart, or have you found Him to be your Father? Or, do you just prefer to forget God and say, "God's in His Heaven, and all's well with the world"?

Now God is not only in His Heaven, but He came down into our world—His world. The coming of Jesus Christ as perfect God and perfect Man to draw God and man together again is an established fact and experience. I say that Jesus Christ draws God and man together again because the "togetherness" in which man and God first delighted was broken by man's sinful disobedience. The deepest springs of human nature were so incurably poisoned that cleansing and purifying could only be accomplished by the outside help of God. You, likewise, must look to power outside yourself for betterment. *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."*

When rebellious man comes to God for this renewal, this cleansing, this restoration, the process is so drastic and so painful to sinful nature that God likens it to a birth, a new beginning, a new creation. *"Ye must be born again"* is God's express requirement. To change the rebellious mind of man into a loving, dependent submission to God requires the power of God Himself. But God will not usurp man's power of choice. Man's decision and surrender are his part. The transformation of man's life can be imitated but not successfully duplicated. *"It is the gift of God."*

The sure fact stands: all mankind is guilty before God and remains so until pardoned by Him. Is that your relation to God—guilty? Have you seen God's way to forgiveness and pardon through Jesus Christ? Have you learned of His sacrifice and His blood which cleanses from all sin? Have you come to abandon your own opinions regarding your condition, agreeing with God to your guilt and shame? Will you prefer God's Word to your own? Have you abandoned sin completely as God lays it bare be-

fore you and convicts you? Have you believed in the work of pardon accomplished by Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection? If you have so abandoned yourself to Jesus Christ for pardon, for cleansing, and for obedience, then your relation to God is right, straight, and plumb; your vertical relationship is then true and upright.

Some feel sure about this vertical relationship but not so sure about the horizontal relationship: with other people. How are you related to others? By love or by strife? Have you enemies you will not forgive? If so, God cannot forgive you. Can you say in truth of heart that you have no resentments or ill will? Can you further say that you have not only absence of ill will but the actual presence of love? Is your love for others a self-denying, sacrificial love or a kind of looking-down-on-others sort of love that wears a superior feeling while it sympathizes? Can you enjoy the prosperity of your rivals? Do you cater to the admiration of others, their praise of your person, your appearance, your talents, your possessions?

The carpenter's square is true vertically only if the horizontal is level. So likewise is your relation to God truly upright only if your relations to men measure true. How, then, is your relation to other people? On the square?

Just as real as God and other people is the world about us. This "world" is the whole system of customs, ways, and standards by which men without God live. What is your relation to this social order? Are you living by these customs, ways, and standards? Are you devoting your time and affection and interest to the "arts," the "sciences," or to "wine, women, and song"? Are you a slave to the values of your social order or political order? The apostle had to count them all as worthless in relation to Christ. Likewise, the religion which is acceptable to the social orders of the world is not the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus. The most sophisticated of world cultures is, after all, pagan.

Let the question be put in the words of the Scriptures: Do you love the world? The things that are in the world? Its entertainments, its pleasures, its goals which are designed to appeal to human honors and accomplishments, to satisfaction of the flesh and the carnal mind? Its religions are designed to appeal to the carnal mind, too. What is your relation to this world? *"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* Could any pronouncement be clearer than this?

contd. p.11...



THE WORLD TODAY

The Lost Generation

by Roger L Berry

"Behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23).

The famous Jewish leader, Moses, said this to a people who wanted an inheritance among the people of God. Moses assured them that obedience to God would bring them blessing, but failure to honor God was sin—sin that would hound them until their dying day.

An article on the aging baby boomer generation reminded me of the above Bible admonition. The gist of the article was that many baby boomers (generally considered to be people born between 1946 and 1964) are or will be facing old age alone. They are entering old age now, and during the next 15 to 20 years with few or no family members to take care of them. It has been said that the Baby Boomers are in a state of denial concerning their aging and death.

The article called caring for the older generation "the single most devastating social, economic, and spiritual sinkhole of the early decades of the 21st century." The cost and the burden could be devastating to the economy.

The cause of the looming crisis in eldercare is largely a result of the lifestyle of the baby boomers. They have gone all out in the pursuit of material prosperity and pleasure seeking. They postponed having children, had fewer children, or no children at all. Many boomers are divorced and remarried or not living with a spouse at all. Increasingly their families are fragmented. Many of them had abortions rather than assuming their God-given responsibility of raising these children.

Many of the surviving children of baby boomers are ignoring their parents in the mad pursuit of wealth and pleasure, following their own parents' examples. Many have chosen divorce, cohabitation, remarrying and creating stepfamilies. This has continued to weaken the ties between generations.

As the baby boomers continue to retire and need more care, many will have to face their elder

years alone. Boomers and government agencies are trying to make plans to provide for eldercare, but all the planning in the world won't take care of the loneliness and depression of the rising older generation. Many boomers have lost their spiritual moorings and face old age and death depressed and unsure of their eternal destinies.

If you belong to the boomer generation and have not honored God yet, what can you do to prepare for the future? You cannot go back and live your life over, focusing on God's will and family values. However, you can still turn your life over to God, who will give you purpose in life and a reason for living the rest of your days. You will need to repent of your sins, including selfishness which lies at the root of the boomers' problems. The baby boomers have also been called the "me generation." You need to become involved in a Biblical church family who can also give you support and encouragement. You will want to point out to the oncoming generations the vanity found in the pursuit of selfism and pleasure.

The Bible is our only source of hope for the future, including old age and death. *"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon"* (Isaiah 55:7).

If you are of the boomer generation, and you have been living for the Lord, you have a great responsibility. You can be a living demonstration of what most boomers lost. Your demonstration of the power and love of God can yet lead some of them to repentance. In turn, helping your generation to return to God will give you added purpose in life.

And what about future generations? With no compass or moral guidance, they will be lost generations as well. You can still choose to be a living example to younger people to take God's way.

"The hoary [white] head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness" (Proverbs 16:31).

Related contd. from p.9...

Lest you feel happy about your relation to God and to your fellow men, consider carefully your relation to the world. This may well be the proof of your first two relationships.

God has an open book, the Bible, revealing His will in these three relationships: man to God, man to man, man to the world. No other authority exists for safe steering from here to eternity.

I urge you, while opportunity is at hand (for it may be cut off at any moment), to take serious, sober thought of your inescapable relation to God, for someday you will give account of yourself to Him and will answer as to what you did with this opportunity. As God clears your vertical relationship with Him, He will enable you to clear your relations with other people. He will likewise give you power to live above the sub-Christian standards of the world.

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

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How to Be Born Again

Salvation from sin is a *GIFT* from God. You accept it on condition that you will let Christ deliver you from your sin and control your life.

RECOGNIZE

That you have transgressed God's laws and have fallen short of God's will.

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

BELIEVE

That God loves you and offers you His mercy through the salvation work of His Son, Jesus Christ.

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

ACCEPT

Christ's death and Resurrection as God's provision for your forgiveness. Acknowledge your acceptance of Christ by praying sincerely:

"Jesus, I am a sinner, I accept You as my Saviour and Lord of my life. Make me an obedient child of God."

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12).

LIVE

In newness of life. When a person truly becomes a child of God, it will change the way he thinks, the way he talks, the way he acts.

"Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.... Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Romans 6:4, 12, 13).

