

WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE

By

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The Humanist Manifesto II states that traditional authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species. “We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience,” they say. This is the basis for the philosophy of “situational ethics.” It is also one reason why every time a terrible crime is committed the press is filled with speculations about who caused the criminal to commit the wicked deed. Was it his parents, his environment, or his peers? Or perhaps we are all to blame — anything but the obvious, that he is guilty of sin.

That’s the one word modern man has no use for. Yet he fills the waiting rooms of the psychiatrists and psychologists, trying to rid himself of his guilt. Let the funds for public counseling run dry and a community thinks it is in crisis! Even the churches welcome “pop preaching” that promises wealth and success to everyone without ever mentioning sin.

In the beginning man was created accountable. Adam and Eve knew very well why things were so radically changed, even though Adam tried to blame Eve: “The woman you gave me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat.” Eve blamed the serpent: “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” But they knew they were guilty of sin. They had rejected the purpose of their creation, to live in the image of God, thinking and acting and living according to the Creator’s plans. They wanted their own way, and this is the root of sin. James writes, “Each man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. Then the lust when it has conceived, bears sin: and the sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (James 1:14–15). No one can force us to sin! Whatever the sin, it is the result of our having our own way, fulfilling our own desires, instead of being obedient to God.

Taylor Cladwell wrote, “no matter how an individual man pleads that he is not responsible for his evil deeds, he knows in his heart that he alone is to blame. When the maudlin and sentimental try to explain a man’s fall from virtue and decency as ‘the fault of society or environment,’ each man knows that it is a lie, and that what he has done is his own crime and inspired from within, and that he has listened in the darkness of his soul to the terrible Adversary, and that he has, by the full force of his will, rejected the God.”

Every religion recognizes that sin lies at the root of man’s problems. The pagan poet Ovid wrote, “We all strive for what is forbidden.” The Bible states, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

The humanist solution to sin is not new. Throughout history restraint has been attempted through regulative laws. When these fail, man decrees new laws and sets up more state agencies to control the populace. Eventually sin is not seen as that which violates the will of God but that which violates the will of the state.

The reason the Constitution of the United States is such a marvelous document is not because the men who wrote it were better educated than statesmen today, but because

they recognized that moral and social order which makes freedom possible must be rooted in the will of the Creator and that whatever violates that will also undermines man's freedom. Having abandoned the basis of the Constitution, God, the modern state turns in desperation to a form of tyranny where man is forcefully regulated by the state from the cradle to the grave.

Of course, this cannot eliminate sin and guilt. One may not be free to act, yet harbor the sin in his mind and heart. He is still alienated from God and full of guilt, for all sin is against God. David cried out, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned" (Psa. 51:4). Sin not only alienates us from God, but places us under the final sentence of death. "The soul that sins, it shall die" (Ex. 18:20). This death is final and eternal. The judgment is described by John where Jesus is portrayed as gathering up the wheat for Himself, but burning up the chaff. Jesus compared it to the harvest, where the wheat is harvested but the weeds are gathered and cast into the furnace to be burned up (Matt. 3:12, 13:37-43).

The solution to sin is found nowhere else but in Christ, who came into the world "to save His people from their sins." Sin violates the very nature and purpose of God, yet He provides its cure through His Son, Jesus. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way, but the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). Christ, who was totally obedient to God, suffered the penalty of death on our behalf who believe in Him.

What God requires first of all is our acknowledgment of sin. The Pharisee, who could see nothing amiss in his life and thanked God for his perfection, remained in his sin. It was the publican, who shamefully but contritely said, "Be merciful to me, a sinner," who went home justified. The Prodigal Son made no excuses for his conduct and blamed no one else for his predicament, but confessed, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight." David found no relief from his guilt until he faced up to the fact of his terrible sin and confessed it. Seminars on improving one's image, "coping," and possibility thinking may only help to avoid the real issue — sin. Jesus did not send people to therapy, but confronted them with sin and offered forgiveness. The apostles' message was not "Smile, God loves you," but "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sin."

The evil that is in the world, which surfaces in mass killings, rape, child abuse, the ugly brutality of war and the oppression of whole nations, comes from the heart of man. It is individual, personal. And it can only be cured individually, personally. This is why Jesus charged His disciples to take His message to all the world, making disciples, baptizing, and teaching them.

The answer to our ills, personally and publicly, is not more welfare, more government, more laws and more secular education, but a recognition of the core of evil in human hearts that can only be removed by the power of the Creator through the means He has provided in Christ.

"God commended his own life toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

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