

Focus on the Kingdom

Vol. 27 No. 7

Anthony Buzzard, editor

April, 2025

Online Theological Conference

April 11-13, 2025

See theologicalconference.org

The Landscape of Life

The Architecture of Our Thoughts

by Barbara Buzzard

Our lives are largely shaped by the architecture of our thoughts. Our beliefs and hopes will define our destination and its direction. As in nature's landscapes, we have highs and lows, hills and valleys, rivers to cross, quicksand to avoid, jungles to beware of, peaks and plateaus, wilderness to conquer. We speak of the valley of despair and of our "mountain top" experiences. Such are the risks of life. Which of us cannot relate to these physical/topographical features as seasons of our lives? Conversely, Scripture attributes human characteristics to physical features such as "mountains quaking," "hills melting," and the "earth trembling." As Solomon observed, our world provides us examples of wisdom and examples of folly on a scale from good all the way to evil.

Solomon makes astute observations about mankind and advises that we do so as well: "Guard your steps when you go to the house of God; to draw near to listen is better than the sacrifice offered by fools" (Ecc. 5:1b). As a human race we haven't followed this advice at all well. That is why it is said multiple times of our forefathers that they did evil in the sight of the LORD.¹ Then they were punished and all was well for a little while, until they did evil again in the sight of the LORD.

We have also failed to understand that *listening*, in order to be valuable, requires *action*, to conform to the words or advice given. This would be to *heed* the counsel given, something that we perhaps have ignored or not understood, and yet we are told that there is wisdom in a multitude of counsel (Prov. 11:14). *Truth must be responded to*. We know perfectly well that when we find our neighbor's sheep in the road, we must do something. By the same token, when Truth is presented to us, we must *activate* it (as with a new credit card) in order for it to "work." And after that we must become valiant for Truth, unlike the wicked who

defend and proclaim lies (Jer. 9:3). 1 Peter 1:13 is a compelling scripture: "Prepare your **minds** for action." If that idea were built into the architecture of our thoughts, we could find the motivation we need to be profitable servants. What was a good idea then is a good idea now.

Which one of us would exchange youth for wisdom? Not I. We must give God the honor of belief when it says of Him: "The heavens belong to the LORD, but He has given the earth to all humanity" (Ps. 115:16). To believe what Scripture says about inheriting the earth will propel one in a different way than does the unbiblical teaching of going to heaven at death. This biblical promise will have an enormous impact on the architecture of our belief system, especially as to how to develop the character God requires of us so as to humbly mete out justice and teach the ways of God in the future millennium.

Am I going too far to compare one aspect of the wisdom of Solomon to that of Kindergarten teaching? Judge for yourself. Oddly and ironically, this quality of observation which Solomon stressed is also what schooled those of us in the West who experienced Kindergarten. We were taught that the biggest word of all was LOOK (as in the Dick, Jane and Sally readers). What if that is true? We were also taught to clean up our own messes, never hit people, always share, and say you are sorry when you hurt someone.²

The core message is still relevant today, as the brilliant psychologist Dr. Jordan Peterson says. He adds that the horrible advice of just accepting yourself as you are is to settle for good enough. What rubbish! "Good enough" is the enemy of "perfect," that rather terrifying word given as advice to us (Matt. 5:48). We should do our very best every day to be a force for good and for truth.

Back to Kindergarten's profound wisdom: we were given a sense of wonder by planting a little seed in a cup and watching the root go down and the plant go up. *Does anyone really know why?* How totally appropriate that at the young age of 5 or 6 we would be introduced to the idea of a seed being a miracle. Not that it would have registered in our little brains, but perhaps a seed (idea) was planted at that time and we might have marveled that a seed can produce a plant millions of times bigger than itself and that this happens millions of times over. Such a giant impact from a tiny seed.

¹ Judges 2:11; 3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 8:27, 33; 10:6; 13:1.

² Robert Fulghum, *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*.

Of Fools and Their Folly

German theologian and pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer asked the question: Which is more dangerous — the fool or an evil person?³ He then answered: “Folly is more dangerous to the good than evil.” Which is to say that fools are more dangerous than evildoers. He said this because “the fool will be capable of any evil and at the same time incapable of seeing that it is evil.”

“Folly⁴ is more dangerous to the good than evil...Evil always carries the seeds of its own destruction, as it makes people, at the least, uncomfortable. Against folly we have no defense. Neither protests nor force can touch it; reasoning is no use; facts that contradict personal prejudices can simply be disbelieved — indeed, the fool can counter by criticizing them, and if they are undeniable, they can just be pushed aside as trivial exceptions. So the fool, as distinct from the scoundrel, is completely self-satisfied; in fact, he can easily become aggressive. A fool must therefore be treated more cautiously than a scoundrel; we shall never again try to convince a fool by reason, for it is both useless and dangerous.”⁵

Bonhoeffer says surprisingly that foolish actions are *moral* rather than *intellectual* defects. Therefore intelligent people can behave foolishly if their moral compasses are not set for true north. He notes that we *make* fools of ourselves. As the Bible says, “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 1:7). In other words, the only cure for folly is spiritual redemption, for that alone can enable a man to live as a responsible person in the sight of God. Mark Twain perceptively said, “It’s easier to fool people than to convince them that they have been fooled.”

In the landscapes of our lives, we have all presumably met with foolish people and foolish ideas. It seems this situation is the perfect testing ground for our Creator God to watch us and to see how we handle exposure to foolishness. We should note that wherever wisdom is, folly is also sure to be found (Prov. 9:1, 13). That is to say — wherever, whenever, everywhere, and always wisdom and foolishness compete with each other. And we are in very dangerous territory if we do not recognize that folly can masquerade as wisdom; we must test and see. It really is a war of wisdom vs. folly. And there is a fatal divide.

In speaking about fools, I scrambled to commentaries for confirmation and support lest I be in danger of the following: “Whoever says ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the lake of fire” (Matt. 5:22). Why then did Jesus and Paul call people foolish? They were

criticizing people who were behaving rashly and without thinking, and without wisdom. The saying in Matthew 5 that we were warned *not to use* involved a judgment call on one’s character — saying that his nature was empty-headed. Jesus and Paul never condemned the nature of a person, nor could they as we are all made in God’s image. They warned people who were acting unwisely and thoughtlessly, as per the instruction in Galatians 6:1 on Christian behavior.

British theologian John Stott saw foolish behavior as so serious that he said: “The Galatians turning away from the gospel, therefore, was not only a kind of spiritual treason (Gal. 1:6), but also an act of folly. Indeed so stupid was it that Paul wonders if some sorcerer ‘has bewitched’ them.”

“God assumed from the beginning that the wise of the world would view Christians as fools, and He has not been disappointed. Have the courage to have your wisdom regarded as stupidity. Be fools for Christ. And have the courage to suffer the contempt of the sophisticated world.”⁶

Romans 1:21-22 is a stern warning for us all, and note the word “became”: “They became futile [fools] in their thinking...claiming to be wise, they became fools.” Discernment, a most precious gift to be prayed for and valued most highly, will prevent us from falling into foolishness.

The Blindness of Sin

There is a type of evil that looks like love; it is deluding. It deludes and deceives us by its seeming *similarity* to the truth, functioning as a subtle stumbling block. It is flooding us with its agenda, opposed to all that God says is good. Much of what is being taught our children is morally repugnant to us, a veritable swamp of heresies. The only way out is discernment and *with that the accompanying trait of courage*. Far too often this is missing, not even acknowledged as an integral and essential part of wisdom/discernment. One astute witness wrote: “I know the blinding power of error, and what saddens me most is its efficiency at so nearly mimicking truth that it effectively prevents adherents from delving into Scripture.” He said that he had previously heard with disgust and anger the teachings of those who denied the Trinity. How masterfully, he said, the Devil had a hold on him.

Sin is often blind. That is why those who squander their inheritances or even more importantly their heritage cannot see it at the time, but only after the fact. The sins that blinded well-known long-time abortionist

³ Lynn Vincent, *World* magazine, Aug. 2024.

⁴ The word “folly” has gone out of fashion; it refers to the actions of a fool. “Scoundrel” is also a word rarely used. It would refer to one who is doing evil.

⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, letters from prison.

⁶ Supreme Court Justice the late Antonin Scalia.

Dr. Bernard Nathanson were later recognized: “Why couldn’t we make the link between the ethical and the moral, between the shoddy practices and shabby practitioners, the evident greed and callous motives, between the crassness of the enterprise and those involved in it, between all these ethical indicators and the grotesque immorality of the act itself?”⁷ Others who have worked in the abortion industry testify to the fact that they had shut or sealed off their consciences, being willingly blind. Dismemberment and poisoning are ugly words; that is why they must be covered up and masked by words like “rights” and “choice.” But we are not to be deceived. And we are not to be blinded by evil.

The blindness of sin (evil) is well seen in the story of the prodigal son. One wonders how long the son ate pigs’ food before he woke up to the fact that this condition did not have to be. And then how long did it take for the blinders to come off as to what he had actually squandered?

Perhaps we are all cowards at heart? We read in Judges 7:3 that 22,000 (!) warriors were given a choice and those who were timid or afraid went home. Many of today’s churches have failed us in not stepping up to the dangers of compromise and compliance, and most of all, they have committed the sin of silence. “Evils that befall the world are not nearly as often caused by bad men as they are by good men who are silent when an opinion *must be* voiced.”⁸ Is it possible that one of the reasons that the forces of evil and wickedness are so strong/successful is that the children of God are silent? I would submit that silence is a type of evil — deluding and deceiving. It is right that as God’s children we stand in opposition to godless trends. It is right (as in a commandment) to protect the weak and the vulnerable and the innocent. To do less is tantamount to surrender, to capitulate to the evil one.

Courage is rare, exceedingly rare. And yet, Christians are not to be without it. Being timid in the faith is not an option. Being part of the herd is not an option. Choosing not to advance or grow in the faith is not an option. Why do we refer to cowards as chickens? Could it be because of their halting way of walking? “How long will you go limping [halting] with two different opinions?” (1 Kings 18:21). Similarly the advice of “keeping your head down” just could be disastrous. Trudging through life with your head down is not a good witness. I am confident in saying that Jesus would not approve. The sobering and stark fact is that cowards are the first to be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8).

⁷ Dr. Bernard Nathanson, *The Hand of God, A Journey from Death to Life by the Abortion Doctor Who Changed His Mind*.

Returning to our theme of life’s landscapes: if we were to consider the book of Matthew as a mountain with the action rising to a peak (and then subsiding), the peak would be Matthew 16:16: “Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’” It could be said that up until that time Jesus had been proving his claim of Messiahship through words and actions. Perhaps “Who do you say I am?” (v. 15) was the test question to see if the lesson had been learned. Peter scored an A+. And what would our scores be? And perhaps, more to the test — what would they be if we were in company with orthodox believers who answer that he is God? Would our answers be bold enough to function as enough evidence to convict us?

We are all aware that landscapes possess darkness as well as light. Landscape painters such as Prime Minister Winston Churchill recognized that there must be engagement between the light and the dark, and that even still life paintings must have shadows. Which is to say that when we are at a low point we must remember that life is like the “law of undulation” (the rolling English road), full of ups and downs. As with landscapes there is always change. We may not know what is up ahead, but there is much comfort to be found in knowing that it is our Father only Who can see around the corner.⁹

Maranatha! ✧

Are There Christian Nations?

by Tracy Z, Minnesota (kogmissions.com)

Are there any Christian nations in the world today? Are there any Christian leaders? Let’s consider if it is biblical or realistic that if a leader of a nation “turns to Christ,” then that is a Christian nation.

Before we consider that though, we must first ask, what makes a “Christian” leader? This is the same question we ask in general: What is a Christian? A Christian is one following Christ, one who knows who Jesus is and what he taught and then chooses to lay down his or her life and follow and obey him. But before making that decision it is imperative that people know what he taught so that they can make an educated decision to obey what he said, and as he said, obey *all* that he taught (Matt. 28:20).

Social media and everything people read and listen to drips with a world view — not God’s view, however. Even the church has bought into another Gospel and has been politically radicalized in their thinking; just read the tweets and posts.

⁸ Anonymous, emphasis added.

⁹ Not that He has predestined all that will happen.

Just because someone goes to church, uses religious words, or even calls themselves a Christian, that does not mean that they are a Christian, that is, one truly following and obeying Jesus.

Another question we must consider is if Jesus or the Apostles talked about “Christian leaders” in the government, or about Christian nationalism. I have not found any teachings or examples. I have read that we are strangers and temporary residents in the nations of the world. We are waiting for a Christian nation to come, the Kingdom of God.

1 Timothy 2:1-7 does tell us to pray for our leaders, and it tells us to pray for everyone as well: “First of all, then, I urge that requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanks be made for everyone, including kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and peaceful life in all godliness and dignity. These prayers for all are good and pleasing to God our Savior, as He desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth — namely that there is one God and one mediator between that one God and humanity, Messiah Jesus, who is himself human. He gave himself as a ransom for all, a testimony at the appointed time. To this I was appointed a herald and Apostle — I am telling the truth; I am not lying — and a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.”

Many use this passage a bit out of context, as well as reading things into it. Let’s consider what it is really saying. First of all, as I said, it starts by telling us to pray for everyone and then adds, “including kings.” It gives us a good reason to pray for our government leaders: “so that we may lead a tranquil and peaceful life in all godliness and dignity.” If we are blessed to live in a relatively peaceful nation, we are required to use the “talents” we are given and we will have to give an account to Jesus about this when he comes. If you live in the West where you have more freedoms and opportunities, more is required of you than if you live in North Korea. Living a peaceful and quiet life is not just for your benefit or because you are better than someone living in Haiti. We must consider ourselves blessed and be grateful, but then we must do something with those blessings.

Paul then goes on to say that when you pray, intercede, or give thanks for all people, such prayer is welcomed before God *because He wants all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth*. Paul is not saying that God wants people to vaguely “accept Jesus” as the world and most churches think, but He wants them to truly come to the knowledge of the truth! That is knowledge, not just feelings or emotions.

We also see that the knowledge of the truth is essential for salvation! Just as 2 Thessalonians 2:10 says, people perish because they are not passionate for

the truth, they do not love the truth, which means that they do not obey the truth.

Paul goes on to state immediately some of that important truth that people must come to know — that “there is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, Messiah Jesus, himself human, who gave himself as a ransom for all, a testimony at the appointed time.”

So, it is important to know who God is, and that Jesus is not God but the mediator between God and mankind, and that Jesus is human. You should also know that he gave his life for us, as well as knowing that he revealed God’s purpose at the proper time. Luke 4:43 tells us that God’s purpose for Jesus was to proclaim God’s coming Kingdom. The full Gospel is the good news about the coming Kingdom and that Jesus died for our sins and was resurrected so that we too can have that same hope of resurrection.

The focus of Jesus and the Apostles was on God’s coming Kingdom, not any kingdom or nation of his day; and that has not changed. Christians today should not try to change that!

We are not told to have “national patriotism.” Therefore, we are never motivated to bring our national patriotism into line with our God. The only allegiance we are demanded to have is to God and to His Messiah.

Of course, we should be thankful and grateful for the nation we live in if it is “good,” better than some others, but we should use that blessing then to accomplish what Jesus told his followers to do. If we are claiming to follow Jesus, we are to proclaim the coming Kingdom and to teach people to *obey all* that Jesus taught.

If we are doing those things, do we really have time to give to another king and another nation? Our allegiance should be to Jesus, not to the country we live in, and we must strive to obey *all* that he taught.

Let’s go back to our original idea about a so-called “Christian nation.” Some think that if a leader of a nation “turns to Christ,” then we live in a Christian nation. I think we can say that there never has been and is not today a Christian nation, regardless of the leader. The only true “Christian nation” will be when Christ returns and establishes God’s nation under Christ as Leader.

No president, king, or world leader has or can force his nation to know what Jesus taught and require that they obey it. I think we would be hard pressed to find in history *any* leader who truly knew Christ and what he taught and walked in obedience to those teachings, and this includes today’s leaders.

Of course, some have claimed to be “Christian,” and some try to do more good than those who outright reject Christ, but that does not make a Christian nation.

If a national leader truly turned to Christ and started walking in obedience to Christ, he would be thrown out. He would not be allowed to preach the coming Kingdom and Jesus and his teachings and demand that everyone obey. He would also have to make a new constitution.

If a father “comes to Christ” that does not mean his wife and children will, although there is more chance for that than if a national leader does. And if we are to say that if a leader is a Christian then the nation he governs is Christian, we must also say that if a leader is an evil fascist then all his subjects are as well, which would certainly not be true.

Only Jesus will have the power to demand righteousness. In the millennium if nations don’t come and honor the King, they won’t get rain (Zech. 14:17-19). But this process of educating and converting the nations will take 1000 years, and even then, many unconverted people, with free will, will reject King Jesus and try to overthrow the government at the end of the 1000 years.

Only after the Great White Throne Judgment when Jesus has put *all* his enemies under his feet, including death, will he then hand over a perfected truly “Christian nation” to the Father, so that God may be all in all as 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 says.

At that time the residents will never again experience pain, suffering, or death. The old order of things will be done and forgotten and God’s eternal Kingdom age will continue forever. This new age will be much greater than we can even think or imagine.

I encourage you now to learn *all* of what Jesus taught and make the *choice* to obey him. Obedience is not always easy, especially when we are tempted or hurting. But we must make our minds up to obey regardless of how we feel or our circumstances. Keep your eyes focused on Jesus returning and on the coming Kingdom hope when you will never again get sick, be in pain — physical, emotional, or mental — when you will not mourn for what you may have lost, or for the past. You will never suffer again and you will not die. You will have a renewed body and mind and you will be like Jesus, that is, immortal.

Is not all that worth suffering a “few” years, relatively speaking, when considering eternity? Is obedience to God and to Christ not a better decision than “following your heart,” which is most likely a deceived heart and mind? Choose to trust God. In the long run He has your best interests in mind, even if you must endure suffering today. Jesus did, and so will we. And, choosing not to obey does not take the suffering and pain away. You will experience that now whether you obey or not (Acts 14:22).

Again, Jesus did tell us that we would suffer today if we chose to follow and obey him; but no matter how

bad it may feel today, it is worth enduring and then overcoming. And yes, Satan is the god of this age, and many people use their free will to make wrong and sometimes evil decisions, but we must choose to endure all that in obedience to Christ (Heb. 5:9). He will give us strength to endure suffering. Again, we were not promised no suffering during this mortal life. But we are promised through Christ that we can do all things! (Phil. 4:13). Remind yourself of that when you are struggling or suffering.

We must keep our focus on our leader, Jesus, and in the hope of the coming Christian nation, not wasting time on the politics of today’s leaders and nations. The only thing Jesus said about Christians and today’s leaders and nations was that we should pray for them because God desires all to be saved, and that we should take the Gospel of the Kingdom and Jesus’ teachings to those nations. There is nothing more exciting or rewarding! Will you enlist? Will you follow and obey?✧

A Christian Nation?

“There is no such thing as a Christian nation. Nations are not the kind of things that turn the other cheek, love their enemies, or lay down their sword as Jesus commanded. They exist because they use the sword. Nations and violence go hand in hand. Our hope is not found in nations finally getting it. Our hope is found in Christ and his kingdom alone...

“Not everything about the kingdom of the world is bad. Insofar as versions of the kingdom of the world use their power of the sword to preserve and promote law, order, and justice, they are good. But the kingdom of the world, by definition, can never be the kingdom of God. It doesn’t matter that we judge it good because it stands for the principles we deem important — ‘liberty and justice for all,’ for example. No version of the kingdom of the world, however comparatively good it may be, can protect its self-interests while loving its enemies, turning the other cheek, going the extra mile, or blessing those who persecute it.

“Yet loving our enemies and blessing those who persecute us is precisely what kingdom-of-God citizens are called to do. It’s what it means to be Christian. By definition, therefore, you can no more have a Christian worldly government than you can have a Christian petunia or aardvark. A nation may have noble ideals and be committed to just principles, but it’s not for this reason Christian.”

— Gregory Boyd at reknew.org, adapted from his book *The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power Is Destroying the Church*, 2007, p. 53-55

Who Cares?

by Anthony Buzzard

I sometimes wonder if anyone cares about God. The Bible says that “God cares about us” (1 Pet. 5:7), but do we care about God, about the teachings of His inspired prophets and his last “word” to the world, through the Lord Jesus Messiah and his words and teachings? Do we care passionately about the teaching given by Jesus? Or have we been systematically told that Jesus preached to and taught **only Jews!** No lie is greater than that! Jesus is the founder of the Christian faith we claim, and if we do not believe in what he taught (in addition of course to what he later taught us through Paul) we are floundering in chaos. Jesus is the first preacher of the saving Gospel (Heb. 2:3), and he preached the Gospel *first* to his colleague Jews (Matt. 15:24). This same Gospel is now equally for us all. “This one and only Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached in the whole world,” Jesus said (Matt. 24:14). He promised to be with all who faithfully teach everything he taught, until the “end of the age,” which is of course the Second Coming, the single future arrival of Jesus (Matt. 28:19-20). If this is not lucidly clear to you, kind reader, nothing is clear!

Millions of churchgoers across the world go weekly to church ostensibly to learn about Jesus and the faith he taught. Millions of churchgoers emerge reinforced in a conviction drawn not from Jesus at all but from Platonic philosophy. Does anyone care?

Woven into what we call our Western Christian outlook is the belief that when we die our conscious, separable soul leaves the body and ascends to heaven. “When we all get to heaven...” So runs the title of a popular hymn, and its message is repeated and reinforced in an unending succession of sermons at funerals and other occasions — and in vastly popular language about where the dead are now.

Does anyone care that this endemic teaching is false to the Bible we claim as our Christian guide? If the evidence of simple texts in Scripture (“Lazarus is sleeping. Lazarus is dead. I am going to wake him up,” John 11:11, 14) will not persuade the would-be disciple of Christ, who can do it? Do you and your children really find Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10 difficult? People who are dead know nothing at all. Neither are they doing anything at all in Sheol, “gravedom,” the world of all the dead. The dead are dead, not alive! No part of a dead person is alive or active. And there is no point at all in praying to dead persons.

Jürgen Moltmann, “the foremost Protestant theologian in the world” (*Church Times*), tells us that

our Christianity has been infected by paganism. It happened in the second century. But does anyone care?

“In the degree to which Christianity cut itself off from its Hebrew roots and acquired Hellenistic [Greek] and Roman form, it lost its eschatological [future] hope...It merged into late antiquity’s gnostic religion of redemption [salvation]. From Justin onwards [150 AD], most of the Fathers revered Plato as a ‘Christian before Christ’...God’s eternity now took the place of God’s future, **heaven replaced the coming kingdom**...the immortality of the soul displaced the resurrection of the body...People ceased to hope for ‘the redemption of the body’ (Rom. 8:23)...They now hoped for the soul’s final deliverance *from* the body...”

“In the world of late antiquity, Christianity encountered the Platonic dualism of soul and body in the form of the gnostic contempt for the body...The soul, condemned to life-long incarceration in the body, yearns to be freed from this prison. It does not long for the prison to be changed into a home in which it likes to live. In this gnostic form, the Christian hope no longer gazes forward to a future when everything will be created anew. It looks upwards, to the soul’s escape from the body and from this earth, into the heaven of blessed spirits.

“All the Greek and Latin Fathers had to fight against this contemporary gnostic religiosity, and **most of them succumbed to it**, developing a Christian spirituality which went half-way to meet these religious requirements...**And this is so even today**...A gnostic spirituality in fact replaces the original Jewish and Christian vitality of life reborn out of the creative God.”¹⁰

Ponder those words. “In this *gnostic [paganized]* form, the *Christian* hope...” Do you see what has happened? Gnostic paganism reappeared in the guise of “Christian” faith. But the switch of labels ought not to conceal the true nature of such religiosity. It is still Platonism — dressed up as the teaching of Christ. It is still paganized religion. Lots of scholars and historians know this well!

In the Bible and the mind of Jesus, no one emerges from death except by resurrection of *the whole person* from the grave. And the great event of resurrection belongs to the *future* at the last trumpet, the seventh trumpet, only when Jesus returns (1 Cor. 15:23, 50-52; Rev. 11:15-18). No human beings go to a bodiless immortality in heaven at death, and in the Bible no human person is currently being tormented in a subterranean hell. Such popular beliefs could never have caught the imagination of churchgoers if the biblical view of our destiny had been retained. Mary

¹⁰ Jürgen Moltmann *The Spirit of Life*, 1992, p. 88-89, emphasis added.

and the saints are therefore currently dead, unconscious.

Do churchgoers care enough to raise a protest? Many see gnosticism in the rise of the contemporary New Age movement. But gnosticism is a little closer to home. It is embedded in the “evangelical” faith of millions. Every sermon which preaches the “soul” off to heaven at death reveals that early intrusion of gnosticism via mystically-minded “church fathers.” There is a hidden paganism in the belief system of many who claim nevertheless to believe the Bible only (*sola scriptura*)!

The faithful are not in heaven. They are waiting to be resurrected. There is only one way to be “with the lord.” It is described with surgical precision by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. “**In this way** we will come to be with the lord” — through resurrection, not before! And only on the occasion of the one return, the Second Coming of Jesus. Paul in verse 15 was discussing the one future Second Coming of Jesus: “the coming of the lord.”

Perhaps it is that churchgoers find no comfort in the future return of Jesus to raise the faithful dead from death. It appears that Plato’s view is more comforting than the biblical hope. This should be openly admitted, and the gnosticism/paganism recognized for what it really is. It should be repented of and the truth embraced, with enthusiasm, in its place (2 Thess. 2:10).

It makes no sense in this amazing information age that we should cling to the “Christian” hope in a *gnostic* form. Those who care about Jesus and the truth will surely wish to distance themselves from the corrupting influence of pagan philosophy and its falsehood about the “immortality of the soul.” If the church “loves the truth” — a condition for salvation itself (2 Thess. 2:10) — it ought to abandon wholesale a tradition which is no more than a thinly disguised, gnostic Platonism. Christians presumably believe in Jesus and his teachings. At least that is what they claim! And Jesus the Jew cared nothing for the speculative and mystical outlook of Plato. He said nothing about the natural immortality of the soul. As a Hebrew he believed in the *acquisition* of immortality only via resurrection of the whole person *in the future* when he returns at his one Second Coming to inaugurate his worldwide Kingdom on earth (Rev. 5:10; 20:1-6, 9; Dan. 7:18, 22, 27).

But does anyone care? We really cannot risk not caring. Loving Jesus means loving what he taught. A major part of loving the truth is “loving his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8). ☆

Comments

- “Thank you very much for your highly informative newsletters and biblical articles, *Focus on the Kingdom*, that still keep coming here. We shall pray that God shall restrain any effort put forth against His servants to proclaim His truths. Of course all forms of governments, even the best that man can establish, will one day fail. I believe God is always teaching us not to rely on any government or leader — but only on Him.” — *Philippines*

- “About a year ago, I was a very confused Trinitarian. I could understand both the Father and Jesus being God, or so I thought, but my sticking point was this supposed third person of the Trinity. Why didn’t he get a proper name? Why was he excluded from a familial relationship with the Father and Jesus? Etc. I had no idea there were Christians who didn’t believe in the Trinity, until I typed in on YouTube, ‘Christians who don’t believe the trinity’ or something to that effect. This led me to your content. I have been a Biblical Unitarian for a year now and have managed to throw off all of the nonsense of the Trinity. I can’t help but wonder how much damage this false doctrine has done to the gospel of the Kingdom. I don’t seek to buy my own salvation through works (God forbid). I’m not a Roman Universalist or Orthodox, but I would like to serve the LORD Adonai, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Father of the Lord Jesus Messiah, before my life comes to an end. I’m starting my own YouTube channel dedicated to spreading the Biblical Unitarian message and going through the Scriptures and bringing out all the texts that affirm God is one Person. To that end, I’ve read through your translation of the New Testament, back to front, front to back etc. multiple times now, highlighting what must be a thousand verses or more that affirm God is one Person.” — *Isle of Man*

- “Thank you for your insightful newsletters. One key point, which you addressed twice, specially the first time last summer, is the meaning of the word ‘faith’ (believing God’s and Jesus’ words). I could write a small book here as to my struggles with that word for probably over sixty years. Here, you have it; it’s right in our face and simple, but true. As you’ll know, Martin Luther was a champion of ‘faith,’ but it didn’t make sense to me. I used to listen to the Lutheran Hour and remember them saying, ‘In the next message we’ll explain what faith means.’ You know the answer; it was a non-answer. Amazing that no thinker that I’ve come across over many years didn’t come up with the true definition sooner. A big thank you!” — *Canada*