

BULLETS and BLOOD— and SELF-INFLICTED BLINDNESS

Who is not appalled by the horrific slaughter of innocent people at the hands of demented maniacs in today's society? It is all too common to tune in to TV news only to see images of another shooting rampage at some location where an angry, cowardly predator is assured of multiple defenseless targets. Schools have taken top billing, then various public facilities and gatherings including churches, theaters, shopping malls, play grounds, and celebratory parties. Tragically, these events have become so frequent that it is no longer a question of "if" it will happen again, but "when" and "where"?

This article does not address the daily acts of mayhem and murder perpetrated on individual targets—robberies, road rage, arguments gone ballistic, abortions and abandonments of helpless babies, but keep these in mind. The principle we will introduce later applies here also.

Nor is it intended to deal at length with the reality of Islamic terrorism now perpetrated world-wide. We note the fact, however, that we are being told Islam is a religion of peace and the Muslim's responsible for these despicable attacks have been "radicalized." One has to wonder if those who so contend have actually read the Koran (Kur'an) or studied Islamic history. As tedious as the reading of Islam's "holy book" is, and as bloody and grotesque is the study of its history, doing so will reveal that what the Jihadist terrorists are doing is how Islam began and has been perpetuated throughout its history. They are doing precisely what the Koran teaches Muslims to do. Cf., Koran, Surah/Chapter 5:51, "Take neither the Jews nor the Christians for your friends"; 8:12; 47:3, "Strike off their heads"; 8:59, "Strike terror into the enemy of God," i.e., Allah, JFB. Yes, moderate and peaceful Muslims are encountered. But the fact is they are not practicing the religion of the Koran that they espouse. This brief scan of the Koran clearly documents its call for bloody terroristic war against all who do not submit to the teachings of Islam's prophet, Mohammed, and its god, Allah, for whom the former claimed to be spokesman. Jihadism is required as one measure of a Muslim's faithfulness in this system of perpetual barbarism.

We are well aware of the hand wringing that follows occurrences of tragic mass murders (including those perpetrated in the name of Allah). Politicians, law enforcement officials, sociologists, psychologists, religious spokespersons, et al, weigh in on what is wrong with our society, us, that is motivating these killers to rain down such carnage on innocent, peaceful, unsuspecting people—adults young and old, men and women, teenage students; even little children.

Some point to the fact of the abundance of firearms in our society. One writer recently called on newspapers to stop carrying advertisements for firearms because, he claimed, they (the ads themselves) are a root cause of violence. One might as well call on the papers to cease advertising food based on the assumption that such advertisements are a root cause of obesity. Some point to the prevalence of violent movies, TV shows and video games. Others suggest it could be the possibility of an abusive childhood at the hands of cruel parents, or perhaps the result of bullying schoolmates. Or, maybe it is triggered by the frustration of poverty and deprivation. Others point to the prevalence of mood altering drugs, both the illegal variety as well as those that may be legally prescribed by well-intentioned physicians.

Personally, I well remember a time when our society was not so afflicted. OK, so I'm an old guy invoking the "good old days." True, on both counts. Born in Missouri in the depths of the Great Depression but reared in Southern California, I graduated from a high school of almost 2,000

students. The year was 1950 and problems existed then as now. We had all lived through the fearful years of World War II with its very real threat against our national existence posed by powerful enemies bent on our destruction. Many kids struggled with the fact that a loved one, probably their father, never returned home from military service. Then came the Cold War and the USSR's threat against us, "We will bury you." Personal problems that most adolescents must resolve are not of recent origin, kids were kids back then, just as today. Drugs were available and a problem for some kids, especially in the form of alcohol. How about guns? It was a time of easy access to firearms, much easier than now, including all types of semi-automatic weapons. Practically everyone either owned a firearm or had access to one. Shooting rampages in that school? NONE, nor in any other in the country of that day. Something has changed? But what?

In this day of the enlightened progressive 21st century, the bullets keep flying and innocent blood continues to flow. Could it be that there is another factor underlying this carnage, something more basic and fundamental that is being overlooked by the societal experts mentioned above, and to which today's society has made itself blind?

Yes, there is. It is a factor so vital that no society of humans can ignore it and long remain civilized. That factor is GOD.

Almost two thousand years ago, Jesus was asked, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Without hesitation Jesus answered, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'" "This," Jesus said, "is the first and great commandment." (Matthew 22:36, 37-38. Cf., Deuteronomy 6:5).

Then, giving his questioner more than he had asked for, Jesus added, "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matthew 22:39. Cf., Leviticus 19:18).

Unfortunately, most of the world has chosen to blind itself to the "first and great commandment" with reference to God while expecting society to honor the second commandment which calls on one to love his neighbor. Nor has American society been spared this disastrous mistake. As expressed in humanist philosophy, "...we begin with humans, not God, nature not deity" (Humanist Manifesto I & II, p. 16). This thinking has been pumped into our society's education for several generations and accepted by so many authoritative people our culture has been altered from one of respect for God's existence and moral values to one in which even the mention of God, or any reference to the Bible, is ridiculed and even outlawed.

Following the recent killing rampage in San Bernardino, California, by a married Muslim couple several prominent political leaders called on Americans to remember the victims and survivors in their prayers. In response, the *New York Daily News* ran an article under the headline, "GOD ISN'T FIXING THIS," as though God is either unable to do so or does not care to bother himself with doing it. The fact is that God had provided the prevention for these tragedies in the beginning of man's existence by virtue of the principles Jesus enunciated. If mankind had observed these two principles, and the further instruction provided for their implementation, such tragedies would never have occurred, not in the past and not today in the present of our time. No, God is neither incapable nor uncaring. Rather, as Isaiah wrote to ancient Israel when she was beset by the self-induced problems and the consequent impending disaster of her day, "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1, 2). A people who not only ignore God's will and then scorn him for not fixing their consequent problems is like a rebellious child who scorns his

parents, having ignored their advice, and then blames them for the troubles that result from his own stubborn stupidity. God is indeed able, and he does care. However, he may also give up on a people who insist on disdain his person and his values and leave them to suffer the consequences of their own self-willed folly. As Paul put it in his letter to the Christians in Rome, "Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness in the lusts of their hearts..." (Romans 1:24). Be assured that as God has dealt with recalcitrant peoples in the past, so also will he do now, "For I am the LORD," he reminded Israel, "I do not change" (Malachi 3:6).

Concerning today's rebellious and self-induced blindness to God's instruction for mankind, what is the result of this irreverence? Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ cited earlier, spelled it out in this same letter to Christians in ancient Rome. He said, "...since the creation of the world His (God's) invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they (those who turn from God) are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). He then proceeded to describe the effect of ignoring this evidence and denying the God it demonstrates—a people that, "...knew God, [but] did not glorify Him as God..." (Romans 1:21ff) thus failing to observe "the first and great commandment."

What effect did this irreverent ingratitude toward God have on mankind's treatment of his fellowman? Mankind sank then, and sinks now, to the most crude and abusive conduct toward his "neighbor" that demented minds can invent or human language can describe—including disregard for the value of human life as demonstrated in acts of wanton murder (Romans 1:26ff, esp. verse :29).

So, what does this have to do with our society now? Simply this, when people have been taught and convinced that they are nothing more than naturally evolved animals rather than human beings created in the image of the righteous Creator and accountable to his expectations of them, it is inevitable that at least some (perhaps many) will begin to live down to this ungodly, animalistic, bestial self-image.

"Really? Awe, come on," some may scoff. Well, if one is not willing to accept Paul's observations, I suggest he tune into TV news or read a newspaper. Then ask oneself, How is our society, 21st century America, doing having expelled God from its thinking and having banished from the practical day to day affairs of its life observance of the moral principles and values inherent in his nature and expressed in his word? Please, give it a try—and some careful thought.

Unfortunately, history teaches that societies seldom reverse the downward trend now seen in ours. A reversal in the United States would require the overcoming of generations of widely disseminated philosophical misconceptions and the consequent false self-image so deeply imbedded in the minds of so many of our citizens. It would also require the striking down of a plethora of faulty judicial decisions, laws, regulations and executive orders. Unfortunately, the chances of this happening are slim to none—with the scale tipped toward none.

But honoring God is an individual matter, not a collective or societal matter. God has created man with free will, and to each one's will, and the intellect that molds it, God has addressed his teaching: (Joshua 24:14, 15, "Now therefore fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and truth,...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve..."; Matthew 7:24-27, "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:...").

So, thoughtful reader, as a responsible individual with intellect and will of your own, what say you? What do you think; where do you stand; and whom/what will you serve? —Jerry F. Bassett