

TAKING GOD SERIOUSLY

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When historians have written the final commentary on our day, human misery will be explained by one major cause! Man did not take God seriously!

There have been individuals and little groups in every generation who yielded their all to God—their total lives were laid on the altar—but surely no one is so misled to believe that the great masses, the rank and file of the human race ever took God very seriously.

To the great numbers, religion has been a necessary evil, something of a pinch of salt to season life's aesthetics. But when it comes to a soul-revolution, an about-face, a new birth, this is an experience that they have little interest in or use for.

The ulcers which belong to pagan worrying, the sores which belong to hands that have toiled at sin, the battlefields which belong to a world estranged to God, the partitions which divide the church and society are quickly traced to man taking God lightly.

In the Book of Ecclesiastes there is a strange line, "Be not righteous overmuch . . . be not overmuch wicked." (Ecc. 7:16-17) A cautious way of saying that there may be a danger of too much religion . . . at least, so reason many.

A tongue-in-cheek reservation about going all out for God. A fear of being fanatic which certainly is ill-grounded in our day with its premium placed on lukewarmness.

Many never take God seriously because of such fear—the fear that Karl Marx was right in saying that "Religion is the opiate of the people." Did any character in history ever give more of an opiate to so many people as the godless disciple of the Communist lie, Karl Marx?

Yet, it is easy to be serious about everything else: the rise of prices, the probability of war, the trend of fashions; still, we stumble and falter when it comes to surrendering our wills, our intellect and ways to our Creator. What inconsistency! What appalling shame!

Restore God's Garden

I do not mean in some great millennial dispensation, not in a vague theological never-never land, but in this

earth in the here and now. What would happen to us right down where we live, if God were enthroned in our hearts?

Isaiah prophesied, "And the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." This earth, as the waters cover the sea.

God made the earth to be a garden. His first record so speaks. A land of plenty, of beauty, of light, and innocence. Then He looked upon it, placed His approval and said, "It is good." But man made it a jungle. Man, wanting to be his own god, introduced the ugly story we know too well. Curse came in: Blight in the plants, thorns on the roses, the grass would wither, nuts were cloaked by hard shells, pain came to childbirth, sweat to man's brow, shame to his eyes.

Yet, God is still providing the means of man's reconciliation through Christ Jesus. He is saying, "Come back to me and we will restore the garden; repent of your sins and the blight, the heartache, the disease and misery will go out of the garden."

Moreover, look what would happen to society if God came in to stay. The evil eye of suspicion that caused Cain to slay Abel would be changed. The poverty that curses one-half of the human race because of selfishness and greed would give way to a more representative blessing for all God's people.

Surely there is no weed in God's garden as damning as war, that irrational process by which man slays his brother to assert his own sinful will. Of all the ugly pockmarks in the garden, none is worse than the battlefields.

The specious security which many have in our world today is without any solid foundation. War is always near when sin rides a fast horse. Every force which has bred world wars before is now playing on the field and why they would be expected to produce anything else is absurd! The original commandment still holds as a severe judgment over us all, "Thou shalt not kill."

No Monopoly on God

What would happen to religion if God was taken seriously? The world would have to take God's Son seri-

ously, the only Mediator between God and man.

Peter Ainsley makes the startling conclusion that one-half of Christendom is not on speaking terms with the other half. What a commentary! Is God divided? Is there more than one heaven, one hell or one way of the cross? How can one be a Christian and not bear the fruit of Christlikeness?

By what pagan error does any religious group arrogate to itself a monopoly on the grace of God? What would happen if man took the Son of God seriously? It would make the church of Jesus lay less store by cushions, more by the cross, less by paper facts, more by fruits of the Spirit, less by the fuss, the sound and fury, more by the life of contrition and sacrifice.

Then, that group which is called out of the world to proclaim His saving grace would march like an endless army to reclaim the sacred precincts of God's garden, this earth here and now. Dreaming? Hardly . . . just an effort to put in words what God already has proven in actions.

Hell on Earth

The prophets of doom today are legion in number, but for the first time in history they are secular prophets. Once it was the itinerant man of religion who foretold the downfall of nations and civilizations. Today, nuclear physicists are trying to give us the real dimensions of thermonuclear destruction. The fact that the world as we know it can be destroyed is now an acknowledged possibility.

This generation has given rise to a group of nuclear giants, many of whom are moral infants. This is evil at its worst. A godless man equipped with the tools of destruction is the one most to be feared today. But as inconceivably horrible as this would be, it is not the worst thing that could happen. A worse tragedy would be the continuation of life as it is now for many.

Purposeless living, bare existence, life without any real meaning, this is hell on earth!

No longer can we moderns afford the luxury of being indifferent to God. We shall reap both in kind and quantity as we sow. It has passed the stage of electives. We cannot take it or leave it . . . and survive. God's Word says: "I shall not always strive with man."

It isn't that He stops caring, but that man stops caring, and there is a point beyond which God cannot help because man will not be helped. This is pathetic—a drowning man refusing to reach up to grasp the only hand that can help. This point of no return can be passed unawares, not by sudden leaps, but gradual defection.

Now our people are faced with the decision: shall we take God seriously or continue the political palaver about peace? Shall we make Christianity a way of life, soul-changing, nation-transforming or not? The answer is stenciled by urgency, knowing that the judgments of God can be visited upon us in time as well as at the end of time. This is no threat, this is the Word of God. We are blessed for one prescribed purpose. To be a blessing.

A little boy with his homemade boat walked to the creek bank and launched his little boat on the water. As he played, the boat drifted out in mid-stream and was washed beyond his reach. Some days later the little boy saw his boat in the hands of a stranger. He rushed up to him and said, "That's my boat. I made it. Give it to me." "But no," said the strange boy, "I found it and it's mine."

"But I'll give you twenty-five cents for it . . . all that I have if you will give it to me." The bargain was made and the proud discoverer pulled the little boat up close to his chest and said, "Little boat, you are twice mine. I made you and I bought you." God is saying, "Friend, you are twice mine. I made you and I bought you. Come to me now."

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