

CHAPTER ONE

GOD CREATED MAN

The question of man's existence on Earth and what caused it has been one of the most asked and contested questions of all times. As soon as man began to be conscious of his existence, he began to ask himself about his origin, and who or/and what was responsible for his presence on this planet.

This question never occurred to Adam or Eve, because the cause of their existence was there with them. They saw God; they talked with Him and enjoyed His company for sometime before they were kicked out of His presence. The Bible tells us that God loved them and treated them as His children, and they must have loved Him in return and acknowledged that He was their Lord and creator.

Moses, who wrote the story of creation in Genesis, must have known through his experience, and his knowledge which he gained in Pharaoh's palace, that man had always asked himself and others about the

reason of his existence and his obsession with a related question; is their life after death? Moses was taught that there is life after death, and that man should make himself ready for it. This is why the Ancient Egyptians invented and perfected a way to embalm the dead, among many other related accomplishments that they were able to invent. They did that, so when they are called to begin their second life they would be ready. When one asks, "How did the Ancient Egyptians come up with this answer so early in the life of man?" Nobody can answer that. And when one further asks, "On what basis did they come up with their answer?" Still nobody can think of a reasonable answer.

As we reflect on this dilemma, and wonder if they had a proof that made them so sure that there is life after death. We find that since they had no such proof, they must have come to this conclusion from their successful life and their advanced civilization, and based on that they concluded that they have not been created and then destined to die after such a short life. The gods must have decided to give them another life to live which will be much longer to reward them for their success in their first life. Their thinking was definitely guided by their arrogance, and not by any revelation or a proof that was revealed to man many years after that.

After Adam and Eve were kicked from the Garden of Eden, they undoubtedly told their children about God and how He treated them and loved them. They probably taught them that man will have another life and urged them to live a life of virtue so they can enjoy their second life. But when Satan coaxed their children to disobey God, and defy His way of life, that fact began to fade slowly in their thinking. The result was that very few people knew God and believed that there will be life after death.

This continued even after God selected the Israelites to be His people from whom He would come as their Messiah or savior. After sending many prophets to them to remind them of their creator, and urging them to remain faithful to Him, very few people believed them. During that period the people of God did not only reject what those prophets told them, but killed every one sent to them by their God. Then when the Messiah came they crucified Him and He died on the cross. But on the third day He rose from the dead. When He did that He convinced humans that there is life after death and that as He rose from the dead so everyone will also rise from the dead when the world ends and the Son of God comes again to judge the world and reward every one according to his deeds.

Moses did not witness all that, but he was told by God all these facts. He was told how God created man, that he was created as eternal as God Himself, and that he was granted to live on earth and select one of two roads open to him. Then he will die and be buried. But when the end of the earth comes, he will be resurrected, and will be judged by his deeds and rewarded or punished during his second life. This is how we were taught the truth about our destiny. But Satan continued to fight in order to defeat God's truth and convince mankind that what God told them about their origin is a big fat lie.

The result was that today half the people of the world do not believe in God, and consequently don't believe in anything that He had said. And among those who say they are believers, a very significant number of them do not really believe. They say they do, but they don't.

Now, what are the facts that God has sent to us through His distinguished prophet Moses?

God makes a home for mankind

+ *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen1:1).*

When Moses under inspiration from God began to write the history of the earth as dictated by Him, he started at the time when God began to prepare the earth to receive man his newest creation. From the billions of planets that He had created before, He chose our earth to place man on it. The Bible tells us that it was

“ Without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep’ (Gen1: 2).

This was the condition of the earth at that time. It was obviously unsuitable for man’s existence. Then we know that God was there to fix it to become a beautiful place that will welcome Adam and Eve when the Lord God creates them. Moses continues by saying:

“ And the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters” (Gen1:2).

Two questions come to peoples’ minds when they read this record as written by Moses. In the first they wonder if this is obviously the story of the creation of our humble planet earth, how was the rest of the universe created? Why didn’t God tell us how He created that magnificent universe which has mesmerized human beings since they began to look at it even with their naked eyes?

No one knows the answer to this question. God chose in His wisdom not to share with us this bit of information. He also chose not to tell us in plain narrative the story of the angels who fell out of grace and were banished from heaven. All that we know is that these two happenings occurred before what Moses wrote about. From this we can conclude that Satan and his followers were there when the Lord God did what He did in changing the earth, and creating Adam and Eve.

The Second question is what does it mean that the spirit of God was moving over the deep? Is this a hint that God is a triune being consisting of more than one person? It seems that most students of the Bible agree that this is a clear declaration that God was made of two of the three persons that He is. These are: God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit.

The Bible tells us that God saw that the earth was not good enough as it was to receive mankind, and He had to change it to make it a nice place for them to live in. Then Moses told us how God did that. It took Him six days to change that dark and inhabitable place to a beautiful home for Adam and Eve.

After God saw that all that He did was good, He decided to create man. Here we are faced with few important questions. The first of which is:

Why did God create man?

When learned scholars consider a question of this magnitude, they always go first to the Bible. As this author searched the Bible, he did not find any reference explicit or otherwise to this important question. All that the Bible tells us is that God created Adam from the dust of the earth, and what happened after that. It was completely silent about the reason that made the Lord God create him.

We found two small pieces which are remotely related to this question. The first one came in Psalm 8 written by King David when he says, “What is man that you are mindful of him or the son of man that you visited?” (Ps 8: 4).

David was surprised by the magnificence of the universe that reflects the grandeur and the glory of God. And then turning to man, and finding him so sinful and so pitiful, he was expressing his surprise and gratefulness for God’s love and kindness toward man, despite his failings and unworthiness. His surprise was expressed to

the extreme when he prophesied about the coming of the Savior who is to come. He who is God, who will take our nature, be born as a man and visit us, and die in our place and redeem us from our deserved destiny. In this it sounds that David was telling mankind don't ask why you were created. Just be happy that you were.

The second piece comes from the Holy liturgy by St. Gregory in which he says "Because of your plentiful mercy you formed me while I was no where to be found. You were not in need of my servitude, but I was in need of your Lordship"

St. Gregory was stating the fact that it was an act of mercy and love that God created Adam. He then proceeded to enumerate all that God did for mankind which has proven His love and mercy. But when he said that God did not need man in anyway, he was reiterating the fact that he did not create him for any purpose that will benefit Him. But from what he added about the sacrifices that He went through to secure salvation for him, he was saying that creating man has cost God a lot, because of His great love for him.

So, the lack of an explanation for the creation of man did not surprise this author, because he remembered that

God also did not want to reveal His identity to His own people.

When Moses saw the burning bush, and heard God telling him that He wanted to send him to Egypt to lead the Israelites out of it, he asked Him what would he tell them when they ask him about the name of God who sent him. God told him

***“I am who I am. Tell them this, I am sent me to you”
(Ex 3: 14).***

So, Again when God told Moses the story of man’s creation, He chose not to tell Him the reason for creating mankind. It seems that in His wisdom He saw that humans should not know the reason for their existence. And that they have to accept it as something that happened as a result of the will of God. And if they know that He loves them, this should make them happy with what happened and try to make the most of it.

This happened with a lot of people who did not dwell on that question too long, and who looked at their life as “a fait accompli”. Then they proceeded to learn what God asked of them to do, and did their best to do it. Most of them trusted Him, and feeling His love decided to surrender their lives to His care, and came to the

conclusion that God must have a good reason for withholding that information from them.

One cannot say that every one of those who love God followed that path that we just described. Some who have a strong inquisitive mind continued to be interested in the question, and tried to solve it on their own, or looked up what others did with it.

As this author looked at some of the answers that people came up with, he found the following. Some answers were based on a very important overarching theme that the Bible seems to reflect throughout the book. This is the enmity between God and Satan. This enmity began when one of the highest archangels rebelled against God, and was immediately kicked out of heaven. When God found that one third of His angels had supported him, they were expelled from heaven with him. God could have destroyed those rebels, but for a reason we do not know chose to let them live in exile. Then we read in the Bible that Satan and his followers continued to fight God, by deceiving his beloved mankind to defy and disobey Him. In response to this God sent many prophets to help mankind to understand God's actions and His commandments.

This story according to the Bible did not go God's way, to the extent that the Bible tells us time after time about God's disappointment in mankind and its behavior. Early in man's life after his exile from the Garden of Eden, God had to destroy mankind by a flood that killed every human being living on earth except Noah and his family; eight people in all. On this occasion it is written that:

“The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, And the lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart” (Gen 6:5,6).

This wickedness did not diminish but increased as man moved further and further away from God. During all that God repeatedly warned his people of the dire consequences of their behavior, but very few listened. Finally, He decided that it is time for Him to put into action His plan for saving man from the disastrous end that he deserves. He became man, came to our earth, lived with us thirty-three years showing us the kind of life He requires of each of us. Then he died on a cross killed by none other than His beloved man whom He came to save.

This animosity between God and Satan is felt by all His children and will continue until the very end. That end is described in the Book of Revelation when Archangel Michael and his army will defeat Satan and his army, and finally throws them all in hell where their fire will never be extinguished and their worms will never die.

One of the explanations under this overarching principle is that God created mankind to replace those falling angels. And the fact that He created man from the dust of the earth; a substance inferior to the stuff from which He created angels, was to prove His powers in filling those empty places by men and women who will be able with His help to defy Satan and become worthy of becoming God's sons and daughters. This was also revealed in the Book of Revelation.

Another explanation is that God created mankind to live a happy life based on a holy relationship with Him. He definitely loved them even before He created them. He worked for six days to change the place that He chose to put them on in order to make it not only habitable, but also enjoyable. He treated them well, provided for them, and showed them His love. As a result our first parents enjoyed their life with Him. But God did not want man to love Him because he had to, but because he wanted to. This is why He granted him the privilege of making

his own decisions, particularly in obeying or disobeying Him. This is why he was given the choice of eating of the fruits of all the trees of the garden, except one. He was told by God that he can eat of it, but if he does he will be disobeying Him and will surely die. Those who claim this also say that God knew before He created Adam and Eve that they will disobey Him, and He had already perfected a plan to correct what man did, and save him from the death that he deserved.

Another explanation that is also based on this overarching assumption says that the purpose of human life rests in God's plan of salvation. He is creating His own kind. He is reproducing Himself through the many men and women that He is calling now Christians. When these are baptized and receive the Holy Spirit, they become sons and daughters of God. But they are still in the flesh.

Then through supplication, prayers, partaking of the Holy Communion, and the various spiritual experiences they grow spiritually. Their carnal nature is reformed and shaped into a Godly character. Then at the time of resurrection they are instantaneously changed from mortal to immortal. They are born again in God's family.

This claims that God is not a closed Trinity, but a growing family, and every one of us can be a part of it.

This is a brief summary of some of the thinking that exists outside our church about the question that many ask when they observe what has been happening to mankind. They simply ask themselves “Why were we created in the first place?”

But the rest of mankind did not share in this effort, but went to the opposite. They wondered about the reason they were created, and were not satisfied with God’s right to withhold this information from them. Of course God knew that this will happen. He knew that Satan will not let an opportunity such as this go without exploiting it against Him. He knew that he will tell these people that God had to explain to them why did He create them, and that His refusal reflects His arrogance and His callous disregard for mankind.

Another question that we need to answer is;

How did God create man?

As we read the story of creation, it becomes obvious that God considered man the crown jewel of His creational

activity. As mentioned before, He made many changes in the earth to make it fit to receive Adam. He created all the physical changes that will support him as a living thing, before he was created. Then He proceeded to create the animals and the plants which will provide food and enjoyment to him.

The way He created all the other living things was different from the way He created Adam. In all the other living things He simply uttered few words and whatever He named was instantaneously created. So, when He said:

“Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth” (Gen 1:20)

In an instant all those living things were formed, and began living according to the will of God.

But when He created Adam we find few important differences. The first is that He made him in two steps. The first was that He made him from the dust of the earth. Somehow the dust was shaped in the form of a man. The Bible does not tell us how did this happen. It simply said:

“And the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground” (Gen 2: 7)

This could have happened by God ordering the dust to accumulate in the shape of a man, or ordering one of His angels to do that. One thing is certain. Whatever happened happened under God’s supervision.

The second difference is that God gave man something that He did not give to any of the creatures that He created before him. He gave him a spirit. The Bible stated that when it told us:

“And (God) breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living thing” (Gen2: 7).

This is simply telling us that Adam was not just another animal created by God. He was different. He was unique and in a different category all by himself. This in itself is enough proof that what many scientists claim that he and the other animals are of the same nature is false.

But if you look around you today and examine what our schools are teaching our children about the story of creation, you will be surprised that they forgot what the Bible tells us about that, and promote what Darwin claimed in his famous theory that man has evolved from the apes. More about this later.

The third difference is that he was created in the image of God. The bible tells us this very important difference when it said:

“Then God said, let us make man in our own image, after our likeness...So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, Male and female He created them” (Gen1: 26,27).

The first conclusion that we can make here is that the difference which we talked about between Adam and the other animals that God created before him was testified to and made clear by that statement. The second conclusion is that by mentioning Eve the female in that early statement describing the creation of Adam is very significant in putting Eve on the same level as Adams. They were BOTH created in the image of God.

But what exactly is the meaning of creating Adam and Eve in the image and likeness of God? The immediate interpretation that comes to our mind is that God wanted to endow man with some features in which He shares. But our interpretation stops dead in its tracks when we ask: in what way? Does this mean that man’s form or looks would resemble God in some way? This cannot be

true because God is a spirit that nobody has seen. So, the resemblance cannot be physical but spiritual and moral.

Reviewing what was written about this by students of the Bible we find that the following were mentioned by the majority. Let us keep in mind that these qualities exist in man as they exist in God. But the difference here is that they exist in man in a much reduced quantities. The reason is that if they did not and were equal to those of God, He would be creating many copies of Himself.

+ Holiness and righteousness:

This means that Adam and Eve were created without any blemish of sin of commission or inheritance. They even did not know what sin was. They were supposed to continue that way and live with God in peace enjoying His Company, and loving Him indefinitely. But they did not. And when they disobeyed Him, they lost their holiness and righteousness. This is why God kept reminding them of those lost qualities and urging them to do whatever it takes to regain what they had lost. From the hundreds of such reminders, the following two quotes are good examples of God's efforts in this respect.

In the book of Leviticus God says to Aaron:

“Do not drink wine nor strong drink, you or your sons when you go into the tabernacle of the congregation lest you die. It shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations. And that you may put difference between holy and unholy” (Lev 10: 8).

And in the epistle to the Ephesians, St. Paul writes:

“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph: 20).

+ Thinking, Knowledge, and Language :

As we examine the other animals that God had created before He created Adam, we find that there are big and very significant differences between them. While man, because of his superior intellect, is capable of thinking and of intelligent behavior based on his advanced brain, we find that even the best of them is way back of man in anything related to these qualities. We find man is capable of translating his ideas into words. As a result he can transmit them to others, and to discuss them with them. He was able to accumulate a tremendous body of knowledge, and also create works of literature, art,

history, and other components of what we call a culture. He is also capable of having plans and dreams for his present and for his future. This is why despite the fact that he is not the strongest physically among the living things that roam the earth, yet he has been able to dominate all of them because of his superior intelligence.

+A Free will:

This quality is the most discussed quality when this topic is mentioned. There is no lack of understanding in what it means. Every body knows what it means. It means that man was offered freedom by God to make his own decisions. This means ALL of his decisions including obeying or disobeying God.

There is always a strong disagreement about God's decision to give man this privilege. Some say was it necessary especially when it is known that God knew even before Adam was created that he and Eve will disobey His order not to eat of the forbidden fruit. And they continue by asking," If He knew that they would, was there any chance that they would not?" The answer to this is "No". Then they proceed by asking "wasn't that an invitation to them to disobey Him?" The answer to this is also "No". This is predestination which many

believe in as a result of God's prior knowledge of what will happen in the future. It is generally felt that God's prior knowledge does not rob man of his freedom to choose which road he will take, simply because he does not know what God already knows.

In our lives very often earthly fathers can see and predict the future of their children, and some may share with them what they see, and may warn them about it if it looked bad. Does this cause their children to always follow their warning? The answer is "No". Some do, and some don't. This shows that father's knowledge does not always result in a fulfillment of that knowledge. Sometimes it does not, when the children decide to change their course, as a result of his advice.

The bottom line in this dilemma is that man knows and feels that he has the freedom of making his decisions about what he would like to do with his life. He also knows what constitutes evil, and what constitutes good. In addition he knows and was warned many times about the consequences of his behavior by what God sent to him via His prophets, and by what His only son said during His short stay on earth. This is why God said :

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their

wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world His invisible nature, namely His eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So, they are without excuse.” (Rom1: 18-20)

+ Authority:

There is no disagreement about this quality which the Lord God decided to grant Adam before He created him. The Bible tells us that God said:

“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth” (Gen1: 24).

As we read this we immediately realize that this authority that was given to Adam was complete, and indisputable. He was simply the supreme master of everything on earth. This was made possible by the superior intellect that he was endowed with.

Adam exercised this authority while he was still in the Garden of Eden when the Lord God, asked him to name every animal that He had created. It is also conceivable that he and Eve knew how to talk to all the animals, and

how to subdue them. The Bible tells us that Satan used the serpent and talked to Eve, and had a conversation with her about God's order to her and to Adam about eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

But after they were expelled from the Garden of Eden, their authority was not taken away from them by God. They were allowed to keep it. God knew that they will need it in order to survive away from Him.

Soon we see this authority demonstrated in the behavior of some after the flood. The Bible says that some of them said to each other:

“Come let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Gen11: 4).

The Bible tells us that God did not look favorably on this attempt by man to use the authority that He gave him. The reason is that pride was the motive behind it. Those people wanted to make a name for themselves away from God. They were defying God's order to spread and fill the earth which He told Noah and his children as they left the Ark.

He told them:

‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth’ (Gen9: 1).

They wanted to stay in one spot, and dwell in the city and the tower that they planned to build. This is why God came down and confused their tongues, so they could not finish their project.

This episode shows us that man can use any of the many gifts given to him by God to do evil. This is due to God’s gift to him to make his own decisions. But if he uses them properly, God will bless his efforts and help him accomplish whatever he desires. Observing this attitude man was able to accomplish the impossible. Just look around you and observe the results of man using his ingenuity and authority and the other gifts that God has graciously bestowed upon him. All the innovations that man invented over the years have extended his authority over every component of the earth. He became the absolute master of vast areas of the ground, the air, the seas and the oceans. He spread his authority on all living things both animals and plants.

It is interesting that despite all his progress, yet there are many areas in which he was unable to establish his

authority. God probably kept those for himself, so man can still believe in Him.

+ **Eternity:**

This is the most important gift that God had in mind when He created Adam and Eve in His image and His likeness. There are no differences about what it means. It simply means that man once created will never die, but live forever. The differences that exist are about whether this will happen or not. Many claim that this is wishful thinking on the part of some who are fooled by what the Bible tells them. They base their claim on what happens to every human being who was ever born on this planet. They challenge every one who believes otherwise, to tell them or show them any human who defied death and did not heed its call.

On the other side of this argument, we find those who explain what happens to people now, and how it does not conflict with the concept of the eternity of man. They say that when God created Adam and Eve in His image, He assigned them to eternity. But when they sinned they lost some aspects of that image. They had to suffer the consequences that the Lord had declared before,. He had told them that the day you eat of that tree you will certainly die. Does this mean that when they did He took from them the eternity that He had

granted them before? The answer is “No”. Then the other side claims that god reneged on His decision to give them eternity. Didn’t He tell them that they will die if they ate of the forbidden fruit? And when they did they died after living away from God many years.

The difficulty and the disagreement between the two points of view are due to a different interpretation of the word “death”. The group that believes in eternity says that death means separation from God. Then they say that this separation can be temporary or permanent. Any human being who commits sin while on earth suffers from a temporary separation from God. This ends when he repents of his sins and partakes of the communion. But if he refused to repent and his life on earth ends, he will suffer from permanent separation from God.

This is one classification of death. There is another. Death can be physical or spiritual. The first happens to all human beings, except for the only two who were taken up to live with God without tasting death; Enoch, and Elijah. This death entered man’s life when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate of the forbidden fruit, and then refused to repent. When they did, God expelled them from the Garden of Eden and told Adam:

“In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. You are dust and to dust you shall return” (Gen3: 19).

This is what happened to the bodies of Adam and Eve when their life on earth came to an end. How about the other component that God put when He breathed in them the breath of life? What happened to their spirits? The answer was revealed in the Old Testament. The words “Sheol and Hades” were mentioned many times to mean the place where every human being went whether he was good or evil. But we learned about it more after Jesus revealed it to His disciples probably during the forty days that He spent with them after his resurrection. He probably told them that those who lived a righteous life will be released when He is crucified on the cross, and goes down into Hades.

So, Adam’s spirit and all his children before Christ came went to Hades or Sheol. The question here is: Did Adam know that his spirit will go to that place? We do not know. Most of his children probably knew nothing about it. Those thought that man’s death means his end. Those who knew, died on the hope that they will be freed one day, when God saves them. This happened when Jesus after His death, descended into Hades and

released those who lived a righteous life and have been waiting for Him to save them.

One more step and every one who is reading this will hopefully be convinced that man is created to be eternal. We left the human body after the physical death in the grave, changing to dust. What will happen to it? The answer is that it will be resurrected before the day of the Lord comes, when He will judge every one who ever lived and reward or punish them according to their deeds when they were in the flesh.

Few of the prophets of the Old Testament mentioned this idea in their writings. One of them is Job who said:

“If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come. You shall call and I will answer you” (Job14:14, 15).

David also knew about it and wrote:

“As for me, I will behold your face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied, when I awake with your likeness” (Ps17: 15).

The prophet Hosea also wrote about it. He wrote:

“I will ransom them from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be your plague. O grave I will be your destruction.” (Hos 13:14).

Despite all the many declarations in the Old Testament, many Israelites did not believe in life after death. The Bible tells us that the Sadducees who were a sect in the religious structure of the Jewish people did not believe that man will be resurrected to face God’s judgment.

This may have been the reason that motivated the Lord to clarify this several times in clear words during His ministry on earth. At one time He said:

“Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves will hear his voice, and shall come forth. They that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation” (Jn5: 28).

St. Paul talks about the way this will happen in his first epistle to the Corinthians. He wrote:

“Lo, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound,

***and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and the mortal nature puts on immortality”
(1Cor15: 51-54).***

So, man has been given the gift of eternity, and consequently his life on earth is very short compared with his life after death. But Satan knowing the value of man’s disbelief in this fact, kept lying to him about it until the overwhelming majority of those who ever lived died believing that it is a myth. The result was a strong belief that man’s life on earth is the only life worthy of their attention. It is the only reality that they knew. And because this idea leads to another, which is the non existence of a God who will judge people, it found great acceptance among those who prefer to live in a world where no master will ask them to do this or that, and in which they will be free to do what seems good in their own eyes.

Chapter Two

God created woman

Most of what we said so far about man applies also for woman. But there are differences that should be addressed. These differences may have been the reasons behind the problems that have plagued the relationships between men and women ever since the creation of Adam and Eve.

Adam was created first

This is the first difference. Why God chose to do that? Nobody knows, and the Bible is completely silent about it. This does not surprise anybody, because God as we mentioned before did not feel that He had to explain every action he takes to those whom He created.

But some concluded from this that He did that because He regarded Adam to be superior to Eve. Then they add to this by pointing to what

happened in the world, as the man dominated the woman from the very beginning, that this proves that this was meant from the time they were both created. Putting it simply they tell you that this is the will of God. It is difficult to argue with this because this is the way man behaves. He puts the important items at the top of the agenda. This is man's way. But we are talking about God, and we cannot forget that He told us that:

“ My thoughts are not your thoughts neither your ways are my ways” (Isa55: 8).

But we very often make the mistake and interpret God's actions by our human standards. So, interpreting God's creation of Adam before Eve should not make us jump to the conclusion that Adam is Superior while Eve is not. We will deal with this dilemma later.

The reason she was created

While God never revealed the reason for creating Adam, He willingly told Moses the reason for

creating Eve. The Bible tells us that after God created every thing He created Adam toward the end of the sixth day. Then it tells us that HE took him and put him in the Garden of Eden and ordered him to till it and keep it. Then He warned him against eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil lest he dies.

After this the Bible says:

“Then the Lord God said,” It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him” (Gen2: 18).

This is the reason that made God create Eve. He saw that every thing that He had created was good, except leaving Adam by himself. He knew that Adam will be lonesome and probably bored because he will observe all the advanced animals that the Lord had created were created in pairs; a male and a female that help each other. But he had no mate to help him.

So, God decided to make him a mate, who will live with him, help him, keep his company, share

his life, and whom he can love. God saw this as the final step in His creational activity and after He did this, He must have felt that now every thing is really good.

The way she was created

This is the third difference between the creation of Adam and Eve. We know that when God created Adam He did not just say a word as He did in the creation of lower forms of life. But He formed him from the dust of the earth and then breathed into his nostrils a breath of life, after which Adam became a living thing.

God may have chosen the same procedure to create Eve, but did not. The Bible tells us that:

“So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man He made into a woman and brought to the man”(Gen2: 21,22).

As we read this we ask why? This is a human habit that we question every thing we hear or see, because we have an inquisitive mind which the Lord God put in us, when He created us. We should realize that we should not question our creator, but we do.

As usual we were not told why God chose this way to create Eve. So, many people began to guess the reason or reasons behind this unusual procedure that God used to create the mother of mankind.

Some claim that since she was made of living flesh which is a superior material to the dust that Adam was made of, she must have been preferred by God who chose not to make her of dust. Others respond to this by saying that Adam's living flesh from which she was made is still dust. Didn't God tell him that when he dies he will become dust again? This means that Eve also was made of dust.

Then some ask, why did God choose a rib from Adam's body to make Eve? He could have chosen another bone such as a tibia or a fibula? Some said that His choice must have been built on an idea that God had, but didn't reveal to us. Others said that he chose a rib which is located more or less at the center of the body, so she will be regarded by man as his equal. For if she was made out of a bone in his upper half, this may suggest that she is superior to Adam. And conversely if she was made of a bone chosen from the lower half she may have been destined to an inferior status compared with Adam. God wanted to create a woman who is equal to man.

Another attempt to explain God's choice what some others suggested that God chose a bone close to Adam's heart something that will make him love her. This must have happened. The Bible tells us that when Adam awoke from his sleep and saw Eve, he said:

“This at last is a bone of my bones and a flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man” (Gen2: 23).

Obviously Adam somehow knew that Eve was one of his bones and literally a part of him. He must have loved her at first sight. None of the other animals had a mate created for it as Eve was created for Adam. This must have pleased Adam as he realized that he is favored by God over all His other creations.

The bottom line in creating Eve in God’s design was that there will be love between her and Adam. He knew that as long as this love survives and remains strong between them they will never leave each other. He knew that no problem will ever separate them. Their love for each other will bind them with such a strong tie that will survive any differences that may crop between them.

Here we have to differentiate between this love that the Lord God created between Adam and Eve, and some of its new versions that prevail in

our world today and which may lead to hatred, a separation or a divorce between husband and wife.

St. Paul described such love when he wrote to the Corinthians. He wrote:

“ Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrong but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, love never ends. (1Cor 13:4).

When one examines this list of qualities for this Christian love one can easily see two things. The first is that this is not the love that we are familiar with and which we observe in most people. The second is that if this love existed between any two people it would definitely make life for both so joyful and full of happiness that they will never fight or even have a disagreement.

The love that we see today is opposite to what St. Paul described above. We see it impatient, jealous, boastful, insisting on its own way, irritable, resentful, and selfish. This is what happened to the love that God put in the heart of Adam when he saw Eve. This was what happened when they disobeyed God and were kicked from His presence. Satan never left them or their children. He was the one who guided them away from God and taught them to disobey Him and stay defiant to His commandments.

CHAPTER THREE

Relationship Between Man and woman

As we mentioned before, many think that God never intended to make Eve inferior to Adam. Above, we mentioned some of the facts that promote this. But those who don't believe that present a number of verses that support their view.

The Evidence

When this topic is discussed the following quotations from the Bible are among the most quoted verses, which are supposed to be the most convincing evidence that those who claim that men should be the masters of this world use when their thesis is challenged. They point to the fact that they declare and reiterate in an unambiguous way the superiority of man over woman.

God was the first to say it

They begin the defense of their position by the strongest evidence that they have. They point to what God said after Adam and Eve refused to admit their guilt when He questioned them. They say isn't this what He said to Eve?

“ I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (Gen 3: 16).

They comment on this by saying that what God said here is an unequivocal proof that this is what was going to happen to mankind after they leave the Garden of Eden. Then they add that this is God's punishment for Eve because she was the one who disobeyed Him first and also because she made Adam disobey. They indict her of introducing sin into the world, and conclude that she deserved what she suffered in her life, as a result of her fatal mistake.

This is one interpretation of what the Lord said to Eve. There is another one, which is seldom used but nevertheless can and should be mentioned when this topic is discussed. This interpretation does not say that what God said was His verdict for what Eve did, but rather a prophecy as to what will happen as a result of sin entering their lives. God was simply saying that when Adam and Eve leave the Garden of Eden, Satan would entice him and his male descendants to abuse their female companions or wives. He will do that in an attempt to destroy the good relationships between males and females, and thus drive them further away from God, who created them to love Him and to love each other.

This defense offers another judgment of the guilt piled on Eve for what happened while exonerating Adam from any guilt. They say that it is true that Eve was the one who was deceived by Satan and decided to disobey God's commandment. But Adam should have refused to obey her when she offered him the forbidden fruit. He should have told her that she made a grievous mistake and

asked her to repent and apologize for it when God talked to them after that. And because he did not do that, he is considered as guilty as her in disobeying God. They were both to blame. This is why God punished them both by exiling them from His presence.

St. Paul also said it too

The second evidence comes from the writings of St. Paul. The proponents of this point of view indulge in the many quotations that they find in the Pauline epistles. He talked about this topic more than any other high official in the history of Christianity.

The following are some of his writings on this topic presented with others one by one:

1. In his epistle to the Corinthians he wrote:

“The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.” (1Cor 11: 3).

The interpretation that they come up with translates the word “head” into “superior”. According to this man is superior to the woman because he is her head. Does this mean that Christ is not woman’s head? Or is He there eventually because He is her husband’s head? This explanation may have been permissible if the statement did not include the last part, which says, ” The head of Christ is God”. We cannot say that God the Father is superior to the Son, because we know that they are equal in everything. So **this** quotation cannot be interpreted as saying that the husband is superior to his wife.

2. In his epistle to the Ephesians he wrote:

“ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church his body, and is Himself its savior. As the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in every thing to their husbands, Husbands

love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her” (Eph 5: 22-26).

As people read this, many would conclude that this statement without doubt shows that man is superior to woman, and if they became husband and wife, the wife has to obey her husband in everything as St. Paul said. The word that gives them this interpretation is the word “subject”. And they conclude by pointing out that wives ought to obey their husbands as the Church obeys Christ. Some of them agree that wives have to do that in their religious behavior, where man has been designated as the religious leader of the family. But they insist that this is not the only area that wives have to obey. They insist that they have to obey their husbands in every thing.

Again this is not the only interpretation. There are those who point out that the key part of that statement is the last part of it, which tells husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. And then they ask; how did He

love the Church? He gave Himself up for her. So, the obedience of the Church to Christ was the result of His sacrifice on her behalf. And if husbands sacrificed for their wives as the Christ sacrificed for the Church, they would definitely obey them. Not only that but they would put them up high and make them their heads.

3. St. Peter reiterated the same theme in his first epistle, when he wrote:

“Wives be submissive to your husbands, so that some though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives” (1Pet 3: 1).

As we examine this recommendation we find something new. We find St. Peter asking wives to be submissive to their husbands because this is the behavior that God can use to attract their husbands who are sinners and not His worshippers to follow Him.

One of our famous priests tells this story from his personal experience receiving confessions and advising members of his congregation. One day a lady came to confess before she can partake of Holy Communion. She told him that her husband treats her like dirt. He curses her, humiliates her before others, beats her and does not have any respect for her. Then she asked him how should she treat him? The priest told her that she should treat him well, obey him and serve him and respect him. When she objected because this is not rational and also impossible, and that she cannot do it.

The priest told her that God told us not to meet evil with evil, and also that we have to love even our enemies, and concluded that she must follow his advice and treat her husband well. Then he added that he knows that it is not easy, and that she should pray and ask God for His help so that she will be able to behave according to his advice.

The lady promised to try to follow what he recommended. After few attempts she was able not only to treat him well, but she was able also to love him. Despite this change in her behavior her husband did not change his. He continued to treat her badly.

In this case the hope that St. Peter had in converting such husband by the good behavior of his wife was not realized. Knowing this, the priest continued to recommend that she persist in treating her husband the same way, showing him love and respect.

After some time, during which both the wife and the priest hoped for him to change, she became sick with cancer. Her condition deteriorated to the extent that she had to be hospitalized. One day her husband came to visit her. As she saw him, she was surprised, but she greeted him with a grin and a smile. He sat at the edge of her bed, and while he was trying to gather himself to express to her his sorrow that she is sick, she bent on his hand and kissed it.

The man could not contain his absolute chock at her behavior, and blurted, “ Are you kissing my hand after all that I did to you?”. She calmly told him, “Yes I did”. He looked at her with an unbelieving look in his eyes and asked her, “ How come you were able to do that?” She answered by telling him that God had helped her to love him and to forgive him for all that he did to her. And she added that because of what he did and her ability with God’s help to treat him well, she is going to enjoy an increased measure of glory in heaven because of it.

The husband expressed his sorrow that she is still sick, and wished her a speedy recovery, and left. The next day his wife died. When he heard, he went to the priest to tell him and to make arrangements for the funeral and the burial. When he knocked on the priest’s door, he opened it to find the man crying and sobbing and about to fall from his uncontrollable condition. He ushered him inside. Then he cried, “She is dead” and collapsed on a chair, still tears coming down his face.

The priest trying to condole him said to him, “ Please don’t worry, She is now in paradise with the other saints”. The husband almost exploded saying, “ And I am going to hell because I treated her so bad, and she repaid my cruelty with her care and love. Woe to me I am a sinner”. The priest responded by telling him that if he repented of his sins, God will forgive him and accept him as His son. The man looked at him with strong disbelief in his eyes. But the priest assured him that this is true, and added that his wife will be interceding on his behalf asking Him to forgive him. The man left, and decided to begin a new life. After this he became one of the best parishioners in the church.

4. St. Paul continues to write about this topic in his epistle to the Ephesians when he said:

“ Husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh,

but nourishes it and cherishes it, as Christ does the Church.” (Eph5: 28).

As we examine this statement we do not find in it any thing that suggests any difference between man’s status in the family and his wife. On the contrary we find a concept that tells the reader that what St. Paul meant here supports the equality between them, He said that let us not forget that the husband and his wife are one flesh. And if so the husband should consider his wife as his self, which means that they are equal. No superiority for any over the other. They are one flesh, and one person.

Here he again reminds the faithful that the relationship between husband and wife is exactly similar to that between Christ and His church. It is a relationship built on a sacrificing and giving love, which Christ has shown to His Church.

5. In another place in his epistle to the Corinthians St. Paul wrote:

“ Women should keep silent in the Church. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says” (1Cor 14: 34).

As we examine this statement, we find that it is often interpreted as another proof that women are inferior to men. What does it mean that they should be silent in Church, and are not allowed even to ask a question? The other interpretation is that men had been chosen by God from the beginning to be His agents for spreading and administering His messages to the rest of the people. When He wanted to select somebody to bless and guide from whose children He will come to the world incarnated as a man, He chose a man called Abram. When he wanted to select a person to guide the Israelites out of Egypt, He chose Moses. When He gave Moses the law, He gave man the privilege of serving him either as a

priest of a Levite. No women were designated for any of the religious functions that were detailed in the books of Leviticus, or Deuteronomy.

These are just a few examples of God's decision to select man to be his agent in most of the religious duties that He delegated to mankind. The Old Testament is full of these examples.

So, St. Paul who was a Pharisee and knew the Old Testament well, under direction from the Holy Spirit wrote that God did not want to change the status of women in the New Statement in regard to their participation in the religious duties. He wanted men to continue to administer His commandments and statutes to the world.

He also added as a justification of what he wrote, that what he said is taken from the law. He did that probably because he anticipated that women would question this ruling in the future, and decided to give the future leaders of the Church the necessary ammunition to be able to defend this against any challenge. This writer wanted to

check where in the Old Testament Law was this ruling taken. But he could not find any. Then he realized that it was not written because all God's decisions in this area would clearly reveal to the leaders of the congregation what the law was. So, there was no need to write anything in the Law about it.

6. Another quotation from St. Paul's writings about this topic comes from his epistle to the Colossians when he wrote:

“Wives be subject to your husbands, as fitting in the Lord. Husbands love your wives and do not be harsh with them” (Col 3: 18).

Here again we find St. Paul telling wives to be subject to their husbands. But he adds the condition “in the Lord”. What does this mean? It means that they have to obey their husbands in the things that the Lord has given any commandments or orders. Not every thing as we mentioned before. Then we find him again telling husbands not to be harsh with their wives. He is reminding

them that being harsh which often happens when husbands feel superior to their wives, is not allowed. She is not your *servant* or slave to treat her this way. She is your equal and should be treated accordingly, with love and dignity.

7. We bring this series of quotations from the New Testament that are relevant to this topic to a close by quoting St. Peter in his first epistle, when he wrote:

***“As Sarah obeyed Abraham calling him Lord”
(1Pet 3: 6).***

There is nothing new about this, except Sarah calling her husband “ Lord”. This does not mean that Sarah felt that she is inferior to her husband. If she did she wouldn’t have questioned some of his decisions or ordered him to do something he did not like. This is what she did. She did question his decision to keep Hagar and her son after God gave them Isaac. Then she did ask him to send them both away, which Abraham did not like. But when God told him to obey his wife, he did.

So, if Sarah called Abraham Lord, she was simply telling him how much she loved him and revered him to the extent to call him Lord. This was her way of showing her love and respect for him.

Summarizing all the above:

We can say that the superiority of man over woman is a myth, which is not biblical and was not ordained by God. God created them both in His image and likeness. He created them equal in their relationship with Him, with the same rights, privileges, and obligations. He wanted man to shoulder the responsibilities and the leadership in the religious life of mankind. In other matters, the leader would be either one of them according to their individual strength.

We can say that he is first between the two equals. Each is supposed to treat the other with love and respect. May be the woman appreciating her husband's love would put him first, but this is up to her. On the other hand if she finds him

inconsiderate and abusive and she selects to meet evil with good and treat him well. In this case the marriage could be preserved.

The most important part of their relationship is the true love, which should bind them and make them one flesh. In the presence of this love no problem could ever exist between them. This is where Satan strikes very hard. He tries to change that kind of love that St. Paul described in his epistle to the Corinthians, to another love that has little resemblance to that love. When this happens, we find that love has been reduced to lust, coupled with selfishness and arrogance. Such love cannot stand the smallest problem and will result in arguments, disagreements, and downright conflict, which cannot be resolved and which the marriage cannot stand. This is what often happens, and the inevitable result in such situation is a separation that would eventually end up in divorce.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHAT THE WORLD BELIEVES

We stop here to see what the world did with those facts, believes, and convictions that God had been very careful to deliver to His beloved man through His many prophets, and which we have been trying to briefly clarify and describe.

Before we do that it may be useful to list them as clearly as we can, and look at them, and see what our world has done with them.

So far we have said that:

1. God, who is a spiritual being, made of three persons; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, existed from eternity, and will continue to exist forever.
2. God created this magnificent universe that we observe and has controlled it and will continue

to do so until the time He chooses to do something with it.

3. God also created a host of spiritual entities to serve Him and worship Him.
4. God chose one of the planets and changed it in such a way to make it suitable to receive his last creation; the human race.
5. Among those changes, He created several kinds of living things. These were either animals or plants, or microorganisms, and they were all inferior to man.
6. Finally He created Adam and Eve and put them in a Garden to enjoy life with Him and with each other, in an atmosphere of love.
7. It took God six days to do all that. Adam and Eve were created on the sixth day.
8. They were both created in God's image and likeness.

This meant that they were created righteous, with no knowledge of evil, had a measure of intelligence, understanding, and a free will to make their own decisions. Also they were eternal, and they were given authority over the rest of God's creation.

9. Adam and Eve were created equal. They were supposed to love and respect each other, and help each other depending on the gifts that God gave to each.

10. Adam and Eve were permitted to eat of all the fruits of all the trees in the Garden of Eden except the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

11. When Satan deceived Eve, she exercised her free will and ate of the forbidden fruit, and gave to her husband and he ate also.

12. The result was their dismissal from the Garden of Eden and they were told that they would die as the Lord has warned them.

What did man do?

The answer to this question is the long history located in the Bible that was written by those whom God sent to His beloved man to tell him that he is living away from his creator and has been drifting away since.

As one surveys the Old Testament, one finds a regrettable story of God's favorite creation defying, questioning, and disobeying its God. And we find a loving and a forgiving God, who time and time again discipline his beloved man when he errs, and then rescues him when he repents of his evil. We find a patient God, who waits on man to come back to Him, and we find a man who cannot keep away from sin, and who drifted away from God, to the extent that most of those who live today on earth do not believe in Him.

Let us consider the above points and see what did man do with them.

He denied the existence of his God.

This is by far the most important and devastating change that man made in his relationship with God, since the day he was kicked out of the Garden of Eden.

This denial does not make any sense. It flies in the face of many obvious and strong indications that point toward the existence of a superior creator who by his power has created this magnificent universe, and all the things that are in it.

But as we go over what happened from the very beginning, we could easily see how this happened. We know that before Adam God created the angels and the archangels. This happened sometime before the creation of Adam, but we don't know how long before that. We also know that one of the archangels rebelled against God and wanted to be equal to Him. The result was his fall from grace and banishment from Heaven. It is also known that one third of the angels supported him and were also kicked out with him. They were exiled to the planet earth.

When God created Adam and Eve, Satan became jealous when he saw God loves them and treats them well. When he knew that He gave them the freedom to make their own decisions, he decided

to tempt them and entice them to disobey God, as he did. He saw that God had a new project and decided to destroy it in its infancy. He hated God and wanted to fight him in every thing He wanted or did.

We know what happened. He approached Eve and told her that God lied to them when He told them that they would die if they ate of the forbidden fruit. He told them that if they did they would be like Him knowing good from evil. Eve believed him, ate and gave Adam.

This was the first step toward denying His existence. They denied His truthfulness. They believed that He lied to them. If God lies he is no God.

After they were kicked out of the Garden of Eden, and lived away from God, whom they felt has abandoned them; it became easier for Satan to tell them more lies about Him, which they easily believed.

Let us look at one of the many episodes in the history of the Israelites to demonstrate this. The Israelites were in Egypt for 430 years during which they were badly treated by the Egyptians. When they cried to God He sent Moses to take them out of Egypt. But Pharaoh refused. And God had to hit Egypt with ten strong plagues before Pharaoh agreed to release them. But he repented that he did and pursued them with his army. When he caught up with them he found them standing with their backs to the Red Sea. When they realized their desperate situation they panicked and screamed to Moses who told them that God will save them. Then the water was parted to reveal a dry path in the middle of the water that the Israelites walked on to the other side of the sea. When Pharaoh followed them the water came back and destroyed him and his army.

The Israelites passed to Sinai, and began their travel in its wilderness. Then God talked to them from Mount Sinai, and then ordered Moses to come up the mountain to receive the Ten

Commandments. When Moses stayed on the mountain sometime and the Israelites felt that he was late, they forgot their God. They made a golden calf and worshipped it saying “these are your gods that brought you out of the land of Egypt”.

How can this happen? These are the same people who saw the ten plagues that their God poured on the Egyptians, while nothing happened to them. They were the same people who walked on the dry land of the Red Sea, and observed Pharaoh and his army perishes in it. It is unbelievable that this can happen. But it did. Is there any explanation? Yes. It is the mighty power of the Prince of this world, and the weakness and the inability of man to stand up to him and to defeat him.

Denying God continues

As we study the rest of the history of the Jewish people we see them disobeying and defying their God more times than one can count. They

expressed their denial of God by worshipping every false god that they could find. They followed every strange direction, fad, cult, or deviation from what God required of them.

They more or less taught the world how to deny God. If His chosen people whom He selected, loved, pampered, protected, and destroyed many nations who threatened them did reject Him over and over again, how much more would the rest of the world do?

Even when the promised Savior, whose coming and works were Prophesied in more than three hundred prophecies written over thousands of years by none other than the Jewish prophets, they denied, maltreated, tried Him in a kangaroo court, and finally they crucified Him.

Their denial continues to this day. Despite the fact that their rejected Messiah was embraced by millions of worshipers all over the world, who consider Him their God, and savior, yet the Jewish people continue to defy, and reject Him.

Other ways of denying God

After we saw how God's chosen people have rejected and denied God, we have to see how did the rest of world do. As expected those people who were not chosen by God, denied Him, and remained defiant throughout the ancient history until the Messiah rose from the dead. When His disciples spread the word, many of those nations accepted the message and became Christians. Satan must have panicked when he saw that happen. So he began to re-arrange his efforts and plans to launch a counter attack on God. He looked for new ways by which people can deny God. The following are some of his suggestions to mankind that were followed by some, and rejected by some.

Atheism

This is the outright belief that there is no God, or any other spiritual entity that created the

universe, and to which we should pray, or deal with, when we are in trouble. We are absolutely alone and should depend solely on ourselves.

There is no exact recognized date on which this movement began. It probably began in the minds of some of those peoples who were not chosen for anything but only to be destroyed so the chosen people could occupy their land.

But despite of their hatred of the God of the Jews, they must have felt a need for a god. This is why we see many of those nations creating their own gods. The Greek and the Egyptian mythologies are good examples of this trend, and are full of such gods.

Beside these who may not be technically called atheists, because they have a religion and worship a god even if it is a fictitious one; there are others who could be truly called atheists. These are the ones who have no gods either true or false. They say that their position is based on several reasons. They claim that they examined

all the existing religions and found them wanting. The following are some of the reasons that prevented them from adopting any one of them.

Lack of empirical evidence

They say that all the claims that religions make were not proven through evidence or observed facts. There is no proof that there is a god. The driving force behind this trend is the discovery of the scientific revolution, and what it is built upon, including the scientific methods and both the inductive and the deductive approaches. When man discovered this scientific bonanza, he felt that he has the keys of knowledge in his hands. What he did was that he discovered a very small number of the laws that God had ordered for this universe to keep it functioning. This should have made man more impressed by what God did. Instead man felt that he has attained an unprecedented knowledge of his environment. This made him so arrogant that he refused anything that he did not investigate, or anything that he did not understand.

The problem of evil and suffering

This is one of the most mentioned reasons behind the atheism that we see rampant in our world today. It is built on the often-mentioned quality of God, namely His love especially for humans. We call Him "Lover of mankind". They say if He is such a loving God why does He allow such evil and suffering in this world. They mention plagues, severe diseases, wars, and natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, and volcanoes. Then they add why such a loving God could allow these things to happen and destroy millions and millions of innocent people.

As we consider this we realize how clever Satan is. He emphasizes God's great power and control over the universe, and reminds man of that, claiming that He is then the one responsible for all the evil that happens. In answering this we have to remind people that God controls the

whole universe. But he granted man the freedom to make his own decisions, without any interference from Him. This simply means that man's will is the only thing that God chose not to control.

The result of this is that a good part of the evil that happens in the world today is happening because of man's mistakes and his wrong decisions. Just take one example such as the global warming and the effects that it is having right now on our weather, and the dire predictions that loom for the world in the near future. All what is happening here is the expected result of our advanced technology, which releases more carbon dioxide than what the green plants, can use. God could interfere and He does sometime. But as a rule He stands by and watches man destroy the beautiful environment that He gave him. He has to meet the consequences of his behavior.

It is true that not all evil can be traced to human errors, but this may be due to the fact that

sometimes there are hidden results for some of the things that we do. For this reason and may be others it may be difficult to see the relationship between an erroneous behavior and its consequences.

Also we know that sometimes God initiates or allows some action, which can be seen by some as evil. But when we investigate what happened we discover that out of that supposed evil action, came a lot of good for someone or a number of people. We all know that St. Paul had a thorn in the flesh. And when he asked the Lord to heal it, He refused, and told him:

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2Cor 12: 9).

The Bible tells us that God did that so St. Paul would not feel arrogant. It is also known that God disciplines His followers so they can feel their mistakes and repent of them immediately. He is also known to punish them even after they repent of their sins. An example of that is when David

committed adultery with Oriah the Hittite's wife and then killed him. When he repented of his sins, God forgave him in heaven. But he had to pay the price when his own son Absalom violated his father's concubines in front of all those who were there, and revolted against his father and tried to kill him and rule Israel in his place.

All the above proves that a lot of the evil that we see around us these days can be explained logically, and not to be seen as the result of the actions of a God that is cruel or does not care about anybody but himself.

Inconsistent revelations

Among the other reasons for the denial of the existence of God is what they call inconsistent revelations, which they find in all the holy books. They say that there are many contradictions that shed a strong doubt on the authenticity of those books. This is one of the classical claims that the

followers of a given religion find against other religions. To go through all of those so-called contradictions in Christianity would require an enormous space that we don't have. And even if we had it, it would have no effect on any atheist reading this book.

Poor design

Then there is also what they call poor design. They say that since God is supposed to be a perfect God, all that he makes is supposed to be perfect. Then they point to a child born with a serious defect or to a pair of twins connected together at birth, and conclude from that your God is either not perfect or does not exist.

Facing this and few other phenomena that no body can explain, we are reminded of a very important observation that our wise and experienced spiritual leaders have been careful to point to us. This is that we cannot always understand God. We may be able to understand

Him some time, but not all the time. It is amazing that we admit that some of us cannot understand those among us who have superior intelligence. Few in today's world understand Einstein's work, yet we insist on understanding every action that God takes, and when we cannot we say He does not exist.

Darwin's theory of evolution

This is probably the cleverest attempt that mankind came up with under Satan's close supervision for the purpose of denying the existence of God.

Its cleverness is due to the fact that it is wrapped in a false claim that it is science. It is correctly called a "theory", which means that it is only a possible explanation of the difficult question "How was man created?" Its author was a scientist who became famous because no human being before him was able to formulate such a simple answer to such an important question that persisted for all ages without an answer. On top

of that its author used some components of the scientific method. He used observation, and the deductive approach. Let us see what does it say?

It says that all life is related, and has descended from a common ancestor. Life has developed from non-life components acted upon by stresses purely undirected and naturalistic. Life began as one-celled organisms and evolved into more complex forms. This happened when environmental conditions changed. Those individual organisms that had a trait, which helped them in the new environment survived while the others perished. These traits, which are called mutations were passed to their off springs. This slow change is called evolution, and the process by which these survived is called "the survival of the fittest".

As these mutations accumulated they gradually changed the simple one-celled organisms into more complex multi-celled organisms. This process went on for millions of years after which

the evolutionary process produced the most advanced animals namely the apes.

Looking at the resemblances between the most advanced apes and man, even though they could not find any links that presumably did exist between them, they concluded that man has evolved from the apes.

As we examine this attempt by Charles Darwin to discredit the facts of Creation as stated in Genesis, one has to approach this examination with the known tools of science. The first objection deals with the way it is presented to people. We said that it is called a theory, and Darwin himself said:

“If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break.”

This means that this is a tentative explanation of the question of the existence of man. But if there is only ONE exception, the theory will be judged wrong and consequently abandoned.

There have been many exceptions, which we will mention later. But despite these the theory is still presented to us as a fact. This is not science it is a pseudo science.

The theory has been under severe attack by none other than the informed people who were before among its strongest supporters. Their main criticism focuses on the lack of convincing evidence on which it was built. They say that because of the tremendous advances in molecular biology, biochemistry, and genetics during the last fifty years, we can see that there are tens of thousands of incredibly complex systems on the cellular level that the theory cannot explain.

Michael Denton, a noted Molecular Biologist wrote:

“ Although the tiniest bacterial cells are incredibly small, weighing hardly anything, each is in effect a veritable micro-miniaturized factory containing thousands of exquisitely designed pieces of intricate molecular machinery, made up altogether of one hundred thousand million atoms, far more complicated than any machinery built by man and absolutely without parallel in the non living world.”

As we reflect on the above statement, we can conclude that the author was really saying that this unbelievable complexity couldn't be the result of chance. It certainly forces us to scientifically conclude that it is the result of someone who had the unusual intelligence and the unprecedented capacity to design and produce such product. Doesn't science teach us that every effect has to have a cause?

Many books have been written lately about the lack of scientific support for the theory of Evolution. One of the most convincing books;

“Billions of missing links” was written by Dr. Geoffrey Simmons, in which he says:

“ This book will help explain why when a species of animal or plant is too complicated to come about by chance, it must be caused by, created by, or guided by intelligent design... In any case modern scientists despite public statements supporting newer Darwinian theories are steadily disproving the theory of evolution. As they delve deeper into the chemical and biological sciences, the more complex and perplexing it is becoming”

Mark Cahill the author of ” One Heartbeat Away” wrote:

“ You may find it hard to believe that God could make everything out of nothing, but the alternative is that nothing turned itself into everything”.

The bottom line here is asking the question; why do we see almost universal opposition to the

teaching of the story of creation in our schools and the stubborn support of Darwin's theory despite all the mounting criticism aimed at it from noted scientists. The answer again is the tremendous power that Satan has over most human beings and the inability of man to stand up to him, even if he had strong evidence that he is right.

St. John the beloved disciple wrote more than two thousand years ago:

“ And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (Jon 3: 19).

Beside our insistence on giving credit to an outmoded theory that denies the existence of God, we have in this country and else where added to that few other ideas and practices that take us further away from God. These include taking Him out of our public life. We have cancelled “ In God we trust” from our currency,

prevented His mention in our schools, forbidden people from praying to Him in public places, outlawed His symbols to be displayed in places where they can hurt the feelings of non Christians. We even gave our approval to organizations that try to wipe out our faith from the face of the earth, and to those who worship Satan.

Bringing this discussion of atheism to a close, one cannot avoid thinking about the remarkable reversal that happened between men of science and men of religion over the ages. During the so called the Dark Ages, men of religion had the upper hand, and more or less ruled the world. So, when Galileo discovered that the earth and the solar system revolve around the sun, He was excommunicated by the Catholic Church, because she said that the sun and other components of the Milky Way galaxy revolved around the earth.

Now scientists have the upper hand. They rule that God does not exist and they condemn any

behavior that suggests that He does. And the people listen.

CHAPTER FIVE

GOD’S DESIGN FOR THE FAMILY

Beside man’s denial of the existence of God, he also twisted and changed many other commandments, and statutes that God recommended for human life through His prophets since the very beginning. In the following pages, we are going to discuss those, which are related to the human family, and how Satan was successful in convincing most humans to abandon what God decreed.

Marriage

This is one of the most important areas of behavior that was targeted by Satan from the beginning, as an area in which he can score big successes against God. As we said before Satan was there when God created Adam, and Eve. He observed how He was careful to create Eve in a way that would make Adam love her. He also

was jealous when he observed how God loved them, while he was cast out of His presence.

As he reflected on that he realized that if he enticed them to disobey God, and eat of the forbidden fruit, he would be accomplishing several triumphs. He would upset God's plan, saw the seeds of rebellion in mankind against their God, and put Adam and Eve on the beginning road, which would be rife with all kinds of conflicts between them. He knew that if he destroyed the institution of marriage, he will have succeeded in ruining the feelings of love between males and females, and accomplished the failure of mankind to return to their creator.

Before we go to specifics, let us summarize what was God's design for the human family?

Marriage is consecrated and blessed by God

It is not difficult to see this. God is the one who thought of it, when He said that it is not good to leave Adam alone. Then He proceeded to create

Eve. Adam never thought of marriage or of her nor asked Him to create her or anybody to keep him company. So, God was the one who instituted this relationship between men and women. He also blessed that men would have only one wife, and women would have one husband.

The Bible is full of hundreds of verses that attest to this. But there is no other verse that shows this more than what our Lord said when He was asked about divorce. He said:

“ Have you not read that He who made them from the beginning made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one?

So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” (Mt 19:4).

Our Lord was pointing to us that marriage is sacred, and is blessed by Him as the only way

mankind could multiply and fill the earth as He ordered them. He also wanted to state that divorce is not blessed, and that it is hated by Him.

When He was asked why did the law that Moses administered to the Jewish people allowed them to divorce their wives. He answered by telling them that it was allowed because of their cruel hearts.

What did man do with this? He did not see that marriage is that sacred. Men and women betrayed the trust on which marriage is built, and had relationships with others outside of wedlock. Then lately they began having these intimate relationships without getting married, saying that marriage is old fashion. In a recent poll taken in the U.S. 40% of all those who participated said that there is no need for marriage. Their contempt of the concept of marriage is obvious in the fact that more than 50% of all marriages in the U.S. end up in divorce.

Marriage is between a man and a woman

We don't need here any supporting evidence. It is so obvious and clear. But men and women all over the world have challenged this and claimed that marriage can happen between two men or two women. The overarching assumption here is that homosexuality is an accepted way of life that could culminate in marriage.

Homosexuality was condemned throughout the Bible. This began in Genesis. The story began when God accompanied by two angels visited Abraham, who hosted them and served them a meal that his wife Sarah prepared for them. After they ate the two angels left for Sodom and Gomorrah to destroy them because of their sinful behavior, while God stayed with Abraham to tell him about it. When the two angels got to Sodom Lot Abraham's nephew, who lived there took them in to spend the night. But the Sodomites knocked on Lot's door and asked him to bring out the two angels so they can know them. Lot didn't like that and begged them to accept his two

daughters in place of the two angels whom they thought were ordinary men, but they refused. When they pressed hard against Lot trying to break the door, the two angels put their hands out and pulled Lot inside and they struck the men outside with blindness. Then, next morning they took Lot and his family and let them out of the city and God burned it with brimstone and fire.

This is a true and an unusual story. It is one of the few times in the Bible that we are told that God took a human form and descended to our earth. There are few other instances that God did that, but He was not openly called God. In most of them He was called the Angel of the Lord. But in this story Abraham called him Lord, and then He said to him:

“ Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do....Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave” (Gen 18: 17).

God Himself came to tell Abraham how much He hated homosexuality and has condemned those who practiced it in Sodom and Gomorrah, and has sentenced them all to death, by fire and brimstone. This story was the reason that the English language named the acts of homosexuality “Sodomy”.

Then as we go through the law that God gave Moses we find the following:

“You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination” (Lev 18:22).

This was among a whole list of sexual behaviors, which the Israelites were not permitted to do, because God considered them sinful. Anyone who committed such acts had to repent of what he has done, if he wants to be forgiven. With confessing the sinner had to bring a sacrificial animal and put his hand on its head, while confessing. Then the animal is killed and presented to God as a sin offering.

St. Paul wrote in his epistles about a lot of things that Christians had to know, and observe if they want God's blessing. Despite the fact that he had a lot on his mind, he did not forget the problem of homosexuality. He mentioned it in his epistle to the Corinthians. He wrote:

“ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, not revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1Cor 6: 9).

St. Peters also mentioned it in his second epistle, when he wrote:

“ If by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction and made them an example to those who were to be ungodly; and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the licentiousness of the wicked” (2Pet 2:6).

St. Peter in this passage was talking about what God did in Sodom and Gomorrah. He was saying that God's action in this case resulted in two results. The first was a warning to other nations who were involved in similar practices. The other was His love and concern for the righteous people and how He saves them from whatever calamity that threatens them, as He saved Lot from the burning city.

It looks from the above that homosexuality is a grave sin, and should remain that way even in a society like ours where freedom has acquired an unprecedented and unrealistic importance. We have idolized freedom over everything else. We have sacrificed most of our values and traditions on the alter of freedom, which we worship. The going trend is that this is a free country. People have the right to be free, exercise their freedom even if it clashes with every worthy value in our heritage. Under this people felt free to steal, defraud, hate, kill, flaunt their flaws, and ask for their rights to do anything they feel like doing.

Going back to homosexuality, we find that those afflicted with it, who used to hide in closets, now go in the open with it, flaunting it as if it were a virtue. They ask to be treated fairly by others, and they claim that their way is as normal as the heterosexuals. The so-called scientists came up lately with the strange discovery that if you are a homosexual it is not your fault; it is in your genes. After that they widened the circle of actions that are in your heredity to include killing, adultery, greed, and may be others. This trend says to people that they are not to be blamed if they did anything wrong. It is out of their hands.

Applying this to homosexuality we find that some churches have ordained openly gay priests, and others even dared to appoint a gay bishop. The sex scandals of the Catholic priests attacking young alter boys is well known. And the attempts to cover up these behaviors even on the part of higher ups in the Catholic hierarchy are well known and documented.

The rest of God’s design:

So far we have discussed God’s design for the two main players in the social unit, which we call “The Family”. We discussed their qualifications, as a man and a woman. And we saw how mankind twisted those qualifications, and said that it is OK for men to marry men and for women to marry women. And we proved that this is not what was designed and that God would condemn those who engage in such practices.

The relationships inside the family

Next, we would like to discuss what God had in mind for the relationships between the other members of the family and the mother and the father, and between those and the rest of the members of the bigger family.

We know that Adam and Eve were ejected from the Garden of Eden before they had any children. And we also know that when they got their first two boys, one of them killed the other. And as we look into the history of mankind we do not find many families that we can take as examples for us to follow. But we find that God early in human history has selected a family to bless and to come from its descendants to earth as a man who would save His beloved man from eternal death.

This was the family of Abram and Sarai from Orr of the Chaldeans. God told Abram to leave his people and to follow him into the land that He would show him. And he and his wife did, and Lot his nephew went along with them.

What do we see in this family whose father was called God's friend. We see divine love between the father and the mother, and we see respect. The wife respected her husband calling him "Master". The husband respected his wife's wishes and sacrificed his love for his firstborn

Ishmael, whom his wife wanted to send away, something that he abhorred, but did when God told him to do it. We see love and humility between Abram and his nephew Lot, when their shepherds fought. We see Abram; who was the uncle ask Lot to select first the land that he wants and was satisfied to take what Lot left.

Then we see Lot choosing to live in Sodom, and when the four kings raided the area and took Lot and his family captives, Abraham did not hesitate, but went after them, beat the kings and rescued his nephew and his family. Another man would have said to himself, that Lot deserved what happened to him, for he knew that he chose to dwell among sinners, and refused to leave. Then the fact that four kings were the ones who kidnapped him and his family, would have given him additional justification if he decided to stay put. But he did not. He went after the four kings and their four armies with his servants who were only 318. This shows us what kind of man was Abraham. He was loving, humble, non-judgmental, brave, and trusting in God. These are

the attitudes that we must have when we treat others whether they are members of our family or not. We have to be honest, truthful, and forgiving. We also have to be courteous to our elders, women, and children.

All of these qualities are parts of our religious heritage, and we don't need to list appropriate quotations to prove that. Nevertheless the following quotations are written so we can be sure that certain behaviors have been mentioned by the ancient prophets.

The Bible says the following:

“ Only take heed, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children.” (Dt. 4: 9).

In this passage god was telling the Jewish mothers and fathers to teach their children what

He told them from the top of Mount Sinai, when He appeared to them and told them how to behave under the Law.

In Genesis we see Joseph who was badly treated by his brothers, forgiving them for all that they did to him. When he revealed himself to them, and they became afraid that he would treat them badly, he said to them:

“And now don’t be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life” (Gen. 45: 5).

And the psalmist tells how good is the love and unity among brothers, when he says:

“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity. It is like the precious oil upon the head...For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life for evermore.” (Ps 133:1).

In the book of 1Samuel the Bible tells us that God severely punished Eli the High Priest because he neglected to discipline his children. It says that He told Samuel:

“Behold I am about to do a thing in Israel, at which the ears of everyone that hears it will tingle. On that day I will fulfill against Eli that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. And I tell him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever” (1 sam 3: 11-14).

All of the above mentioned qualities were prevalent in this country just a measly fifty years ago. But since the Vietnamese war, things began to deteriorate. This war had a devastating effect on this country. It divided the population into those who supported it and those who did not. The feelings between the two groups gradually

changed into hate. And suddenly we found ourselves fighting each other over our values, our rights, our customs, and our liberties. This schism continued and mushroomed into all kinds of conflicts in our homes, families, organizations, churches, just to mention a few.

We and our children

Because of the fact that the human baby is totally dependent on its parents for a long time, the task of raising our children has been from the very beginning a most important task for mothers and fathers. The way our early ancestors raised their children was by pure intuition. No experts were available to help them and to answer their questions if they had any. They did what felt good to them, no matter whether it was right or wrong.

During that period it was known that parents should bring their children to love and fear God, by instructing them about God and His commandments. Parents were supposed to show

their children by their good example what is expected of them. If they did not obey, parents were supposed to punish them.

In this we find King Solomon the wisest man that ever lived states this when he said:

“On the lips of him who has understanding wisdom is found, but a rod is for the back of him who lacks sense” (Pr 10:13)

What King Solomon was saying is that corporal punishment is appropriate in punishing the guilty. Today we do not accept this recommendation in all cases, We accept punishment but we feel that physical punishment can produce negative responses, and should not be used with the exception of very few cases in which it may be the only remedy available.

The punishment that we recommend can be just showing your child that you don't approve what he did. This is very effective during the early years but its effect may wane in latter years.

Other ways of punishment could be depriving the child of some of the things that he loves, or restricting his privileges or putting certain family shores on him to perform.

We also find another statement from King Solomon about the topic when he wrote”

***“He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.”
(Pr13: 24).***

Here he tells us that hitting your son does not mean that you hate him, but that you love him dearly.

But as people began to use their God given intelligence, they tried to find out what are some of the good and the bad ways of dealing with our children. This field of knowledge was never a field that lends itself to the scientific method per se. The only ways to come to any conclusions were observations and comparisons. The conclusions were at best tentative and subject to

modifications dictated by the individual differences of those considered.

Even now most parents never avail themselves of those conclusions, and continue to raise their children intuitively. In many cases they raise their children the way their parents raised them. No wonder we often find many serious mistakes committed by fathers and mothers, who have the best intentions and who love their children so much.

To summarize and simplify the basic components of the recommendations made by the authorities in this field, we can say that raising good children depends on the parents treating them with a combination of love and a rational consistent discipline. They have to provide them with a good example to emulate, and to teach them the essentials of our Coptic values and our love for God and His Church.

In order to clarify what we mean by the two essential parts of that formula. When we say we

have to love our children, some may say that we all love them, so why do you include this in your formula? As if we or some of us do not love their children. My answer is that I know that, but many children say that their parents don't love them. They interpret the way they discipline them that they really don't love them.

Many parents when they hear about one of their children making a mistake, they lose their cool and blow their top and go in a tirade and even curse or swear and simply lose their temper. They do this because they were shocked that their beloved child whom they love so much has committed a serious mistake, and they are outraged. The children hate this way of condemnation, and become defensive about what they did. They resent their parent's reaction, and in most cases insist on whatever behavior was criticized.

The other component is the consistent rational discipline. By discipline we mean that children should be constantly taught what qualifies as an

acceptable behavior and what does not qualify. This is absolutely essential for our children to grow and become law abiding, and good citizens. They have to be told very early in their life what is expected of them, and the clearer this is made to them the less confusing life becomes. The way this is done is for the parents to comment and judge what their children do, and tell them if it is good or bad. The father and the mother have to do this. And by consistent we mean that it remains the same. It does not change, and also that it is practiced by all the members of the family especially the two parents.

When we describe the discipline by the word “rational” we mean that there are good reasons behind it. So, when parents condemn a certain behavior by one of their children, they have to defend that judgment when they ask; why? This is not going to happen when our children are young, but when they become teenagers or a bit before that they will. We, as parents should not be upset when this happens, but should accept

their inquiry and calmly answer it with the good reasons behind our judgment.

Then parents often ask, "what are we supposed to do if they refuse to obey our Do's and Don'ts? The answer is that we have to punish them. More about this later.

When we ask how our parents and our children are doing in this most important area of our lives, we find many problems.

Parents refuse to discipline their children

This is definitively one of the most devastating changes in raising our children. This complete reversal of the traditional way, which was even used by God is simply amazing. The Bible tells us that when the Israelites sinned, God disciplined them by hitting them with plagues, or letting their enemies invade them. Even when David one of God's favorite people sinned by counting the people of Israel without consulting

with Him, he was punished by God. He sent to him Gad the prophet who told him:

“Thus says the Lord. Three things I offer you; choose one of them, that I may do it to you. Shall three years of famine come to you in your land? Or will you flee three months before your foes while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days pestilence in your land?” (2Sam 24: 12,13).

Some may say that this was in the Old Testament time, and that it does not apply to us who live in the New Testament. We are living in a new era of grace in which God has given us the forgiveness of our sins. Then they remind us that we are living in a period where everything is new, so they claim that this old way of dealing with our children is old fashion.

To these I refer them to one of the parables that our Lord told the people. This is the parable of the master who gave his servants talents before he left on a long journey. He gave one of them

five talents, one two talents, and the third one talent. When he came back, and asked his servants to give account of what they did with their talents, the first two told him that they have earned as many talents as they were given. But the one, who was given one talent, told him that he buried it in the ground, and did not do anything with it. This is what the master said:

“ Take the talent from him and give it to him who has ten talents...And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth” (Mt 25: 28).

Another possible source for this reversal may have been the cruel ways the older generations used in disciplining their children, and which the new breed of parents greatly abhorred. Or it may have been the cry of few of the modern philosophers such as John Dewy, Kilpatrick, or John Piaget. These condemned the way everything was imposed on the child, and preached a new way which allows him to express his ideas, hopes and aspirations. The parents who

were impressed by this approach jumped to the conclusion that disciplining our children means frustrating them, and consequently should be stopped.

As mentioned before the lack of discipline is the worst mistake that modern parents are committing. Children who were raised this way, will never mature, and will remain children no matter how old they get. They will feel that anything they desire is theirs for the taking. And if they can't get it, they can't accept that, and would try to fulfill their desire using any means under their disposal whether it is good or bad.

They become selfish, egocentric, cruel, and very difficult to live with. Their parents usually see those results after the damage has taken place, but they unfortunately realize that they can do nothing about it. These spoiled children sometime develop hostile attitudes toward members of their immediate family, and commit a variety of crimes, even killing their own parents. Beside reading the upsetting news about

children killing their fathers and mothers, we are also witnessing a whole list of unprecedented happenings of fathers, mothers, and even grandparents killing their beloved children and grandchildren.

To be added to this list we cannot ignore what some men do, when they snap for some unknown reason, and go to a public place and spray bullets on innocent people, and kill many of them. Or those who kidnap either young girls, or grown up women, rape them and then kill them.

This kind of news is becoming a daily occurrence, which stopped to produce the shock that it used to just a few years ago.

Our felt corruption

To complete the picture of our present relationships with each other, we have to mention that one of the most important values in this respect is honesty. Those among us who are over fifty can tell you many stories about how honest

were people even when dealing with complete strangers. Today we hear almost every day about financial crimes and scandals committed against thousands of people who trusted a reputable financier or a company, and were swindled of thousands of dollars. The strangest thing about these tragedies in which hundreds and thousands lose their life savings, is that the perpetrators are among the richest people in this country. Why do they do that? God only knows.

We, the United States of America, who used to pride ourselves on our honesty, truthfulness, and who chastised the rest of the world because of their corrupt ways in dealing with their own people, find ourselves plagued with the same disease, that we condemn in others. How dare we preach others while we are guilty of the same sin? How can we hide ourselves from what our Lord and Savior said in this respect?

“ How can you say to your brother let me take the speck out of your eye, when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, take first the

log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.” (Mt 7: 4).

We, as a nation have to thoroughly examine this recent development in our fabric, and get to the root of what caused it in the first place. This writer who has been in this country for more than fifty five years, and who was fascinated by what he observed in the people at that time is amazed at the change that he has observed over the last few years. His humble opinion is that this trend is the result of two overarching priorities that were found in this nation from the very beginning. But they were tempered by limitations put on them by a strong awareness of the rights of others. These are our worship of freedom at any cost, and our obsession with the almighty dollar. These are good priorities if they are practiced with certain constraints, but if they become obsessions they are very dangerous. This is what happened in this country.

Our disrespect for our poor and our seniors

Another result of our lack of concern for others is our lack of respect for our poor, our elders, and our senior citizens. They say that one of the most important criteria for judging the greatness of any country is the extent to which it serves its least important citizens. If we apply this to this country, we find that we fail miserably.

Every time a state budget or a federal budget is cut, the first appropriations to go are those, which serve the poor, the minorities, or the senior citizens. The rich are never threatened by even rumors that their incomes would be cut. Even our respect goes to the rich, the strong, and the young.

While other nations have reserved their old habits of respecting their seniors, we have showed our disrespect for them in every way we can. We show this disrespect when we neglect to install the appropriate loud speakers that they can hear, or fail to build the ramps and the entrances that

they can maneuver through on their wheel chairs. And we surely don't show them the respect that they deserve when the young people who deal with them in public call them by their first name ignoring their titles, honors, and their distinguished service to their country.

Bringing this to an end, this writer would like to discuss a strange phenomenon that began to form itself recently. This new phenomenon strangely enough is opposite to some of the attitudes that we dealt with above. This is what happened in the last few years. On certain occasions such as Christmas, people used to display a variety of objects, artifacts, signs, and others to show their belief in that occasion. This is as we all know, protected by the first amendment of the constitution, and the freedom of speech that we defend vehemently when it is breached.

Then someone, who is an atheist or a non-Christian in passing by and observing one of those signs expresses his objection because the sign is displayed on a public building. After few

days the sign is pulled down. This is outrageous, because it granted that observer what he wanted because it annoyed him, while neglecting the feelings of the many who wanted that sign up. They were denied their freedom of speech. What kind of democracy is this in which the majority bows to the will of the minority without even stopping to question it?

It seems that members of other religions who are mostly Muslims in few other Christian countries raised similar sensitivities. Among these was Australia, whose Prime minister declared emphatically that :

“ This country is a Christian country. We believe in Jesus Christ as our God, Lord, and Savior. We worship him openly and publicly. Our language is English, and our customs are all known. If anybody is offended by anything we do, he is free to leave the country. Nobody will prevent him from leaving”

All of these are symptoms of a deep-seated deficiency in our belief in God, which is at the root of all this. The faith that the forefathers of this country had in God, had faded away, and we need to go back to it. We as individuals can and must do that. The alternative would be a further decline in our faith, and a life further away from the one that we observe today. The consequences of which would be too severe even to contemplate.

CHAPTER SIX

GOD'S DESIGN FOR THIS NATION

Before we deal with this topic we should ask the question: Does God have designs for nations as he does for families and individuals? The answer is Yes. As we examine the Old Testament we see God selecting a man; Abram of the Chaldeans to leave his people and relatives and follow Him in order to make him a family from which the second person of the Trinity would be born to save mankind from the death they deserved when Adam and Eve disobeyed Him and all their descendants sinned and deserved death also. God had a design for Abram whom He named Abraham, and his wife Sarai whom He named Sarah.

Then as Abraham became a father to many, God had a design for his family. He expected them to behave in a certain way, to love Him and to obey

Him. Then when this family became a nation, God continued to have a design for that nation. He outlined that design in three books of the Old Testament; Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. God's design in those three books was complete. God gave them a law that did not ignore any issue or any problem His people were expected to meet.

Some may say that this happened because Israel was God's chosen nation, and He was planning to come from them as their messiah, the one who will save them from their sins. So, this required that super design to make them worthy of Him who was to be born as an Israelite. All this is true, but the Jewish nation never behaved according to God's design. They rebelled against Him, disobeyed His commandments and statutes, killed His prophets, and worshipped all the foreign gods that they can find.

When they did that God's anger was kindled against them. He gave them in the hands of their oppressors and were exiled from their land for seventy years. Then He gathered them again in

their own land, but they still did not live according to His design. And when the Messiah came they denied Him and crucified Him as a common criminal.

Since that time the Jewish nation stopped being God's chosen nation. We, the Christians became His new chosen nation. And as such He definitely has a design for our life. This design is outlined in the books of the New Testament. As we examine God's design in those books and compares it with His design in the Old Testament, we find that they are quite different. The new one raises the bar, so to speak. It elevates the standards, and takes the human race another step toward restoring them to their original condition before they sinned, when they were created in the image and likeness of God.

The Old Testament design was reflected in the Ten Commandments, which were given to Moses on two tablets written by God. When Jesus came, He told the people that He did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it. This meant that the

law was incomplete in the eyes of God, and that He will fulfill it first, and then complete it. In the Sermon on the Mount He told them how to make it complete. He was more specific when He said:

“ You have heard that it was said to the men of old you shall not kill and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment. But I say unto you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment. Whoever insults his brother is liable to the council, and whoever says, ‘you fool’ shall be liable to the hell of fire” (Mt 5: 21).

He was saying to them that as true children of God, you should not allow yourselves to become angry with those whom you have a conflict with. The reason is that if you allow anger to conquer you, most likely it will lead you to harm those whom you consider your enemies, and even kill them. So, what God wants us in His new design is not to refrain from killing, but from getting angry at our fellow men.

Jesus in that sermon outlined His new theology further when He stated that it is no longer the accepted standard to love those who love you and hate those who hate you. He told the people to love their enemies, and to pray for those who persecute them. He also did the same with adultery, and stated that God will no longer accept a man's lusting after a woman without committing adultery with her. But He will consider his lust for her as equal to the sin if he had committed adultery with her.

He then went down the line and elevated most of the commandment that Moses included in the Law. He told the people that it is written that eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I tell you whoever hits you on one cheek turn to him the other also.

He told them that men were allowed to divorce their wives, but I tell you that he who divorces his wife and marries again is committing adultery.

These are just few examples of His new design for mankind as individuals, families, and nations. He taught them more by example, than by words. He preached to them God's word, His love and mercy for them. He healed their sicknesses, raised some of their dead, He called them to repentance. He went around doing good to all. He was an excellent example for them in every thing that He did. He forgave them what they did to Him. Even when they seized Him, and tried Him accusing Him of false accusations, and condemning Him to die, He asked the Father to forgive them because they didn't know what they were doing.

He was also careful to point out our obligations toward the poor, and those whose fortune in life has been limited, and who are in need of help. In this He said to the man who asked Him what should he do to inherit eternal life:

“ If you would be perfect, go sell what you posses and give to the poor, and you will have a treasure in heaven, and come follow me” (Mt 19:23).

On another occasion He re-emphasized the importance of giving when He said:

“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared to you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me” (Mt 25: 34).

And when those asked Him When did we do that to you, He told them:

“ Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.” (Mt 25: 40).

To summarize the features of the new design that God outlined for us as a nation, we can say that He wanted us to do the following:

He wants us to love each other, to forgive each other when mistakes are committed, and not to sue each other in an attempt to get revenge. He wants us to be courteous, respectful, and helpful to others especially our parents, grandparents, the women, the poor, the guests, the foreigners, and the children. He wants us to be generous with those who need help. He recommends that we treat each other with honesty and dignity. He wants us to be calm, cool and collected, without anger and disrespect. He wants us to remain faithful to Him and to each other. His hope for us is that we will do the right thing according to His will and not according to our will. He wants us when laws are enacted that they have to be fair to all, with no discrimination or prejudice against any body. He wants us to guard against corruption, favoritism, theft, cruelty, terrorism, and all criminal acts. The perpetrators of these acts of evil have to be punished by a fair system of justice, that does not favor some over others. We have to have sympathy for those in need and to do our best to help them. He wants us to

practice Christianity in all our dealings with each other and also in dealing with other nations.

Where do we stand on this as a nation

The first step in discussing this question is to examine the foundation on which this country was founded. History tells us that this nation began as a nation almost three hundred years after Christopher Columbus discovered the Western Hemisphere in the year 1492. Between that discovery and the time this country became one nation, the settlers began to establish independent settlements that fought each other sometime. Then they became autonomous colonies with identified borders and jealously guarded independence.

By the year 1733 there were thirteen colonies on the Eastern Seaboard, which were gradually claimed by England. Soon the settlers rebelled against the British rule. England sent an army to quell the rebellion, but it was defeated. The colonies declared their independence on July 4, 1776. And on that date The United States of America was born.

Why did the first settlers come?

As one reads the history of what happened during that early period, we find that those early comers who came from Europe came for the same reasons that motivate immigrants to come to this country today.

Some came to escape religious persecution, which they suffered in their homeland. The British Monarchy and the Church of England were against the Protestants who followed the Reformation movement, which Martin Luther began. These people sought the freedom to exercise their religious beliefs, and enjoy living in a free atmosphere not dominated by their oppressors.

Some came to escape the British rule, which was unfair and brutal to many, who were not considered British by the early rulers of England. Some others came to escape the depressing conditions of over crowding and disease that prevailed in some areas of Europe. Some came to

improve their chances in life. They heard that in the newly discovered land the opportunities are tremendous compared with those where they came from. So, they decided to come and try their luck.

When these people came to this country, they were shocked to find that what they heard about their new home was greatly exaggerated. They did not find the land covered with nuggets of gold, and pearls and other precious stones, as they heard back home. They had to endure unfair policies imposed on them by those who brought them in for the purpose of exploiting them for a profit for themselves. They had to face strong hostility from the Native American Indians who considered them enemies who came to snatch their land from them. They had to cope with poor living conditions that lead to the spread of some devastating diseases. On top of all this they had to contend with raids, and outright wars waged by other settlers who were different from them and who suffered from similar problems and who sought a solution for their problems by invading

their neighbors and steeling their meager possessions.

All in all it was not an easy life, and many died. But the rest persevered and survived all those severe conditions. The final difficulty was the oppressive policies of the British government, which through its Parliament issued a series of laws for the colonies, which the residents of those colonies rejected as repressive and unfair. When this was announced the British considered it a rebellion, and sent an army to snuff it. After some time during which the war became a stalemate, some European countries including France, and Spain joined the war and finally the British forces were defeated and the colonies became independent and called themselves “ The united States of America”.

From the above we can say that the early settlers, in leaving their countries, their relatives, and their friends, and whatever possessions they might have acquired did that in the hope that they will be able to create an environment of religious

freedom and establish for themselves the life that proceeds from it. They were determined and strong in their belief, and fought hard to accomplish their goals. They were true Christians and did things, the Christian way.

We know that many of them became friendly with the natives, who reciprocated by helping them with some of their problems. We also know that they began what is known now as Thanksgiving. Historians tell us that when the settlers celebrated that occasion, it was a truly religious celebration, thanking God for all the blessings that He bestowed upon them in their new country. Now when we celebrate Thanksgiving we rarely mention God or His goodness to us. The emphasis shifted from God, to the turkey and its goodness.

We also know that they celebrated Christmas with a lot of spirituality and the behavior that it invokes. They truly worshipped the newly born Jesus with gusto. They concentrated on the story of Mary and Joseph going to Bethlehem, delivering baby Jesus in a stable, declaring his

humility, and love for mankind. Now we seldom think about Jesus or mention Him during our Christmas celebration. We even stopped calling the occasion "Christmas". We no more exchange Christmas greetings, we exchange Seasons Greetings. And our behaviors during the season have nothing to qualify it as Christian. Our celebration of Christmas became a purely commercial event in which we use His name to make money, while denying Him any further recognition or relevance.

We also read about their honesty in dealing with each other, in which a simple handshake or a word of mouth was all that was needed in any contractual agreement. Now if you shake hands with anyone with whom you are going to have a business deal, you better count your fingers after the shake. Now you cannot engage in a business without an extensive contract is drawn. You have to have the patience to read carefully what it states before you sign on the dotted line. In many cases that agreement is not honored and the people who signed them discover that they have

been swindled of hundreds or thousands of dollars, because they did not read the fine print in the contract. Some others found themselves in the same position because those with whom they had a contractual agreement were corrupt and would have violated that contract no matter the way it was written.

These episodes became a daily item on any newscast, not only perpetrated by some of the lower echelons of society, but by the highest echelons; the millionaires and the multimillionaires. We cannot dismiss these happenings as temporary and individual cases. They are becoming one of our features that declare to the whole world that we have abandoned God and built our lives not on Him, but on something different; the mighty the all-powerful dollar.

How did this nation act as a nation?

Up to the year 1776 the settlers acted independently as separate colonies. But when they

became one nation they had to change the modes operandi and begin to act as one united unit. The first step was to declare their independence to the world. To do this representatives of the thirteen colonies got together and after extensive discussions they announced that they have agreed on what they called:

“The Declaration of Independence”

As we read that document we find ourselves impressed not by not only its language, but by the background of values that it reflected in a masterfully expressed, and simply written words. It said:

“ We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

As we reflect on those few words, we find ourselves admiring the Christian spirit that those

representatives expressed by confessing before the whole world what they believed in. They emphatically stated that they believe in the absolute equality of all human beings regardless of their color, religion, or social status. This is a Christian belief, which is based on the fact that all men and women are created in God's image and likeness.

This equality was beautifully described by St. Paul in his epistle to the Galatians, when he said:

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3: 28).

How can this be overlooked and profoundly violated by those who contributed to the shame of slavery by buying thousands of slaves from Africa, and bringing them to this country to work in the fields something that the rich landlords of that period abhorred and despised. The Christian respect that those early settlers had for every

human life was forgotten in the rush to build a country over the backs of the black slaves.

Once Americans agreed to abrogate the first part of that statement in the Declaration of Independence, and refused to believe that all men are created equal, they also abrogated that part that said that those had any rights to a decent life, liberty, or the pursuit of happiness. History tells us that many of those slaves lived a life lower than most animals. They had absolutely no rights, and were saddled with a lot of obligations and responsibilities that most of the time defied human decency.

This dark spot on the history of this country remained for many years until President Lincoln who was a religious man had the courage to declare that all slaves in the United States are free. This happened before he was elected president. When he was elected in the year 1860, he did not receive one electoral vote from the southern states. By that time the country was in reality two different countries. The one in the

north abhorred slavery and did not have any slave. Despite that they prospered and made life better for all its citizens including the blacks. After Lincoln became president the South seceded from the union and declared themselves as an independent Confederacy under the name “ The Confederate States of America”.

Lincoln faced with this ordered his troops to march on the South. This conflict which was called “The Civil War” began in the year 1861, and continued until 1865 When the Southern army was finally defeated. During those four years one million Americans lost their lives and several more were seriously injured.

Did slavery stop as a result? The war may have stopped the business of buying and selling slaves, but it took many more years to give the blacks who became an important minority their rights, that the Declaration of Independence, The Bill of Rights and the Constitution guaranteed. Despite all that, blacks still suffer a lot of discrimination everywhere, at the hands of white police officers,

Supremacy, and prejudicial organizations, which are allowed to exist under the first Amendment of the Constitution. Even after a black president was elected in 2008, still many blacks are not treated as full-fledged citizens of this country.

Before leaving this major mistake, which cost this country so much, and still is, we have to admit without feeling defensive, that we did not learn anything from that mistake.

What did we do this time? We allowed illegal immigrants to cross our border with Mexico, and we gave them jobs in our fields doing few simple chores that did not need any skills. They were happy and our landowners were happy, because they saved a lot using those illegal immigrants as cheap labor.

This was a big problem in the making because those who employed them were breaking the law, and they knew it, but nobody did anything about it. After years and years of neglect those immigrants began to become a significantly large

minority. Then they began to raise their voice demanding their rights, and those of their children, many of whom were born in this country and became American citizens.

Today there are twelve millions of these illegal immigrants in this country, waiting impatiently for the government to solve their problem. Unfortunately there is no easy solution in sight. It is an extremely difficult problem to deal with. And both houses of Congress, and few governments have tried to deal with it, but to no avail. The plain truth is that we are the ones who created it because of our greed and love of wealth, even if we have to sacrifice the lives of millions to get it.

This is typically an American problem, which no other nation on earth has it. Why do we have this distinction? The reason is our obsession with wealth at any cost. This is not something that our Christian Heritage has taught us. Our Lord mentioned this in His Sermon on the Mount, when He said:

“ Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consume and where thieves do not break in and steal.” (Mt 6: 19).

The story of the rich young man who asked Him, what must he do to inherit the kingdom of God? The Lord answered by asking him about the Ten Commandments, which the young man said that he has kept them from his youth. The Bible tells us that Jesus loved him and told him that he lacks one thing. Then He asked him to sell all his possessions, give the money to the poor and come and follow Him. The Bible tells us that he could not, because he was very rich.

St. Paul also warned against the love of money, when he wrote to Timothy saying:

“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless

and hurtful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs.” (1Tim6: 9,10).

The U.S. Constitution

In the year 1787 the Constitution of the United States was written and signed by the representatives of the thirteen colonies. This ended the debates that reflected the differences between the views held by the colonies about the future direction of the new country.

As one examines this outstanding document, one is struck by its brilliance, simplicity, and the Christian values behind it. This shows that those who participated in producing it were devout Christians who envisioned that the new country would develop into a Christian Country that believes and practices Christianity.

It is impossible, in this limited space to enlist all the outstanding features, which can be traced to the Christian beliefs of those who drew that constitution. But it is fun to try.

One of the most obvious principles that prevail throughout the document is "Freedom". This was seen as a prerequisite to human happiness. So, it was offered to all who lived in this country, without any pre-conditions, or qualifications. It was everyone's birthright. This, as everyone knows, is a Christian idea. When God created man, He gave him the freedom to make his own decisions, including the freedom to disobey Him. With this freedom came the responsibility to exercise his freedom so long that it does not interfere with other people's freedom. But if it did there were penalties for those who perpetrated the offence.

The freedoms granted in the constitution covers almost everything. It covers the freedom to embrace any religion, to have any belief, to say almost anything, to engage in any activity (with

few limitations), to acquire any possessions (with some limitations), to get married or remain single, to choose any career you want, ...etc etc.

Another important principle is the checks and balances,

which permeate the document. The power in the country is invested in three branches of the government; the legislative, the executive, and the judicial. The legislative branch is the Congress, which is elected by the people. It is made of two bodies: the House and the Senate. Any legislation has to be approved by both houses before it becomes law.

The second branch is the Executive. This is comprised of the president who is also elected by the people, and who appoints a cabinet to help him execute the laws that the congress enacts. Nobody is imbued with absolute power.

The judicial branch is made of the courts, headed by the Supreme courts of the States, and on top of that there is the Supreme Court of the United States. These courts rule between people,

organizations, states, and other entities when they have conflicts or problems. They also rule when the two other branches of government clash over any problem, which each sees in a different light.

This system of checks and balances, which was put into place by the founding fathers, reflects the religious feelings of those founders. They were keenly aware of man's nature and the fact that he is corruptible, and that power makes him more so. God Himself said the same thing, very early in man's life on earth, when Moses wrote in the book of Genesis:

“ The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had created man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So, the lord said, 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground.’” (Gen 6: 5-7).

The question that many ask when they read the Constitution and are impressed by the insight of those who wrote it, is did those checks and balances prevent the future generations from making corrupt decisions. The answer is that it did when the nation's commitment to Christian values was strong. But as this commitment became weaker and weaker, ways of getting around those checks and balanced were found and routinely utilized.

The result is that after centuries of trusting the government and backing its policies, people grew more and more suspicious of every decision it makes. The feeling among many is that everything is politicized, and that partisanship reigns supreme in all our political debates and very often truth is sacrificed on its alter.

An example may clarify what we mean by that. In the year 1997, the United States attended a global meeting that was held in Kyoto, Japan. This meeting, which was attended by representatives of 120 countries, discussed the problem of "Global

worming”. Many Nobel Prize winners participated and told those attending that the problem which threatens life on the planet in the near future is real, and is caused by too much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Those who attended agreed that all nations, especially the industrial nations should seriously try to reduce their production of carbon dioxide.

The United States at the direction of then President Bill Clinton signed the agreement. When George W. Bush became President in the year 2000, he pulled the United States from the committee, and refused to sign on the agreement. When he was asked why he did that? He answered by saying that this will cost us some unemployment that we cannot afford. This was not the true cause. It was the Republican Party’s policy, which he had to obey, and implement. This is simply playing politics with a very important issue that should have been treated as a future threat that should be met on its own merits.

In my humble opinion that, what the United States did was wrong. Even if there is a possibility that what the Nobel Prize scientists said was exaggerated, we still have to comply with it. Refusing to participate is a pretty big gamble, in which we, and the rest of the world could loose everything. The bottom line here is that we are talking about the survival of our planet. This is an enormous stake that nobody has the right to gamble with, no matter how important he/she is.

How did we treat other nations?

Looking only at the way we acted in regard to global warming, anyone can answer the preceding question by saying, not so well. We did not show any respect to all those nations assembled at Kyoto, but went our way alone regardless of the consequences. America for a long time has followed policies, which are in harmony with its priorities. If we chose to help a given nation, with a gift, there are agreements that give us some privileges that that nation has to concede. If we

choose to help a nation in its struggle to support or to defeat a leader, we make our decision whether to support him or not, in terms of our priorities. Very often we pick a leader and support him, not because he is better for his nation, but because he is more amenable to our privileges than the others. We picked and supported Mubarak in Egypt, Khadafy in Libya, and Castro in Cuba just to mention a few.

Everywhere we interfered in any country's present or future even by providing aid free of charge, people always ask, "What are they getting in return?". Around the world we have earned the name of "The Ugly Americans". This is the way other nations see us. They see us as selfish egocentric opportunists, who look around the world to see where they can exploit others. And if we can put a good face on what we do, and call it help, aid, or genuine concern about our brethren in such location, it is much better.

Our wars

Another activity that reveals the true mettle of any nation, its values and character are its wars. Wars are usually classified into defensive, offensive, and civil. The United States experienced the three.

Generally speaking wars are tragic events that man has tried to avoid especially if he had followed the teachings of Jesus Christ, and became a true Christian. Most wars are fought over worldly gains. Since Christianity teaches that these are not the most important things to be sought after, fighting to keep these or to gain more of the same, never appealed to Christians. We have witnessed that since Jesus' ascension Satan has instigated severe wars against the believers, during which millions were killed. Many of those martyrs were heard singing as they were on their way to be thrown to the lions. They did not fight back only, but they were happy because they were found worthy to suffer on their Lord's behalf.

Sometimes people find themselves with no choice, but to fight. This is true in the case of the

defensive wars. When a country or a nation finds itself under attack by a determined enemy, it picks up the challenge and declares war on the invaders. Nobody can condemn that. The civil wars can be considered a variety of this kind of war. Those wars are waged when a part of the population tries to impose itself, its philosophy, or its way of life on the rest. So, if that part of the population fights, the part that wants to impose whatever they want to impose on them, they will be fighting to defend themselves against those invaders.

The independence war

This was a defensive war in which the thirteen colonies fought the British who wanted to enslave them. This was an honorable war that showed the true character of the early settlers. Those settlers refused to accept the tyrannical rule of the British, and decided to fight it. And God helped them, and as a result they became independent. They gained their freedom and thanked God for it.

The Civil war

This war was also an honorable war in which the North found itself facing a shameful situation in the South, owning slaves, and badly treating and abusing them. The South defended itself pointing out that the rest of the world is engaged in the same behavior. They even declared their independence from the North. By this they were saying by the virtue of our sovereignty we are declaring ourselves free to do what we want.

But the North under the leadership of President Lincoln refused to accept that, and decided to correct that mistake committed by the South and save the country from its consequences. Behind this was the Christian belief of the equality of men regardless of any qualities that they may have.

World war I

The early settlers and the founding fathers had the attitude of considering their country as an independent self-sufficient new world, with few

or no ties with the Old World. This isolationism served them well, and helped them to build their own country and to avoid wasting their resources outside their borders.

As the eighteenth century ended, and the nineteenth century began rolling, few strong countries began to emerge in Europe and Asia, beside the ones that already existed. So, beside England, Germany, France, Russia, and Spain, other countries began to flaunt their importance such as Austria, Italy, Turkey, and Hungary.

This war that began in 1914, was a small conflict that got much bigger when Austria and Hungary attacked Serbia, declaring war against it. Soon after that other nations such as Germany, Russia, Britain, and France were drawn in it because of previous treaties that obligated them to take sides in the conflict. Few months after that Turkey was tricked into participating against the Allies who were England, France, and Russia.

The war was at a stalemate for a while. The United States decided to participate in the year 1917 for two reasons. The first was her anger over the sinking of few of her ships by the Germans despite the fact that we were not involved in the war. The second was our cordial relationships with England at that time. It was not a defensive war, but some claimed it was such. Any way we were not involved long because the war ended in the year 1918. How does one judge our involvement in this war? It is not easy. Some feel that we had to respond to the Germans who attacked few of our ships including submarines with no provocation on our part. This is an act of war declared against a sovereign nation that cannot remain unanswered. One of the results of our participation in this war was that the world felt our presence as a significant world power that nobody can ignore anymore. But at the same time our isolationism, which has protected us from all that was happening in the rest of the world suddenly ended.

World war 2

This war was different from the previous one. That began as a small conflict that mushroomed into a global war, while this one began as a big response on the part of Germany to the severe punishment imposed on her in the armistice that ended the first war. Suddenly a new Chancellor came to power, and began to prepare Germany to avenge itself for the humiliation that she suffered on the hands of the Allies. Hitler was able to entice Italy and Japan to his side. He was able to conquer most of Europe in a relatively short time. Then he turned toward Britain, pounding her with relentless air attacks, but Britain never blinked. The German air force never was able to defeat the British air force.

This was Hitler's first defeat. His second came when he tried to attack Russia. This proved to be a much bigger job for the German army than they had anticipated.

By that time Japan gave the United States a good reason for joining the war. On December

7,1941the Japanese air force in a sneak attack on Pearl Harbor destroyed the American fleet there. The Americans were shocked by what happened, and declared war against Japan. The American war effort was concentrated on South East Asia to defeat the Japanese hold on many locations there. But our effort soon began to join our traditional allies in invading Europe and opening a front against German occupation. As the allies won battle after battle Hitler committed suicide, and Germany surrendered. Then Japan after a series of defeats, and sustained air raids on its capital, and finally two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, she also surrendered. The war ended in in August of 1945.

Here also one can justify our involvement in this war because we were attacked without any war declared against us. It was an honorable war, which was forced on us, but in which we prevailed, and showed the world our resolve and our power against any attack on our sovereignty.

The Vietnamese war

The war in Vietnam was our next war effort outside our borders. It was a different war from the ones we have been in before. The story behind it is long and complicated. The following is a brief summary of its main points. Before the war, Vietnam was occupied for centuries by two countries. The first was China who dominated Vietnam until 1800. Then France invaded it and established the French Indochina. Around 1900, the Vietnamese people under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh rebelled against the French rule and demanded more national power and less French interference. When France was occupied during the Second World War, Japan took over power in Vietnam. They were also resented by the nationals, but Japan also was eliminated when she was defeated and surrendered in the year 1945.

When this happened Ho Chi Minh extended his power over the rest of the country, and declared the independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

But France refused to recognize Ho's declaration, and returned to Vietnam. When this happened Ho appealed for aid from the United States. But America refused to help him because of his Communist leaning, and decided to help France instead.

Fighting continued between France and the Vietnamese forces until 1954 when a humiliating defeat At Dien Bien Phu forced France to seek a peace settlement, and withdrew.

Once Vietnam found itself independent, there arose a struggle between those who wanted a Communist Vietnam and those who did not. This is when The United States found itself leaning toward helping the anti communists. With our help Ngo Dinh Diem took control of the southern part and declared the independence of The Republic of Vietnam.

But the Communists in the North refused to acknowledge that declaration, and began to wage war on the South. In 1962 President John

Kennedy sent a number of American advisors to help the South. America soon discovered that Diem and his government were corrupt, and that the South under them has no chance. So, in 1963 a coup engineered by the States gave control to a new leader. Later they found that the new leader was as corrupt as the one he replaced.

After Kennedy was assassinated President Johnson sent troops to Vietnam, and by the end of 1966 we had 400,000 troops there. Even at that level of involvement the war was going nowhere. In a desperate move to win a decisive battle against the gorilla warfare waged by the Viet Cong, we used unconventional weapons such as napalm, and Agent Orange. Gaining no edge in the war, our troops were engaged in killing hundreds of unarmed civilians in what was called "The My Lai Massacre"

This prompted an immediate and strong opposition from young people across the country. Thousands of college students demonstrated

against our involvement in Vietnam, and called on the government to withdraw.

The police trying to stop the protest used brutal force outside the Democratic National Convention in 1968. The war continued despite that, and police brutality showed itself again in Kent State University in 1970 where four students were killed when the Ohio National Guard fired on the demonstrating students.

When President Nixon was elected he claimed that the silent majority supported the war. Trying to gain the upper hand, he authorized the bombing of the Viet Cong sites in the neutral nations of Cambodia, and Laos, without the knowledge or the consent of the Congress. When this was known a scandal erupted. Nixon was forced to push for a peace settlement, and finally we withdrew from Vietnam.

As we reflect on what happened during that long war, we couldn't help but agree with our young people, who judged this war as an illegal war that our country had no right to wage or participate in. First it was based on a rivalry between the

Communist, and the Capitalist Camps, which lead to some kind of confrontation called “ A cold war”. Both camps were engaged in jockeying for any advantage over the other, in preparation for an inevitable armed confrontation that both strongly believed that it would come one day.

Under this motivation there was no reason to sacrifice even one single life to get ahead of the Communist Camp. Sending technical advisors would have been more than enough. But to send hundreds of thousands to die for such a flimsy reason was indeed a foolhardy decision, which violated many of the Christian values that this country believed in. Then the immoral acts committed by our troops during the Me Lai massacre, and the use of Napalm, and Agent Orange proved that when People get desperate they compromise their values.

The first Iraq war

The reason behind this war was that Iraq suddenly invaded Kuwait on August 2,1990. The reasons

were that Kuwait was the culprit behind the fact that Iraq had lost 14 billion dollars selling its crude. This happened because Kuwait had increased its production of oil, which caused a drop in its price. Iraq also claimed that much of that oil came from one of the Iraqi oil fields adjacent to Kuwait, who pumped it illegally. The world knew that Iraq had always claimed that Kuwait was part of Iraq before it became independent. And that she manufactured those claims in an attempt to annex the territory that belonged to her.

The United Nations discussed the situation and ordered Iraq to withdraw her troops from Kuwait by January 15, 1991. When Iraq refused a coalition of 32 countries was formed under the leadership of the United States. The Coalition forces under an American General entered Kuwait on February 24, and attacked the Iraqi forces pushing them out of Kuwait. By February 28, Most of the Iraqi forces were destroyed or badly beaten. Iraq had been defeated and she was

penalized by the United Nations for its aggression against Kuwait.

As we reflect on this war, we find that America was careful not to flaunt its world position as the only super power left in the world, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. She consulted with other countries, and coordinated an attack by 32 countries on Iraq. Then she used its superior power to attain victory in few days, and then withdrew. This was done under the auspices of the U.N. So, it was an honorable war that the world supported and approved. There was no violations of any of our values, but a compliance with a call for help from a small nation bullied by a bigger nation.

The second Iraq war

The first Iraq war happened when president George H.W. Bush was president. The second war happened when his son George W. Bush was president. When the son was elected he brought back some of those who served with his father.

These people seem to believe that there is some unfinished business pending against Iraq from the first war. Nobody knew exactly what was that unfinished business. Rumors had it that they were after Saddam Hussein for his alleged conspiracy to kill President Bush the father.

So, after the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, those people saw this as an opportunity to settle their old business with Saddam. Unfortunately he has been elusive in complying with the U.N. sanctions, which were imposed on him for his invasion of Kuwait. One of those sanctions was allowing inspections to make sure that he does not develop or acquire weapons of mass destruction.

So, the United States prepared a detailed presentation about Iraq with photos, and videos, to prove that she has weapons of mass destruction. Colin Powell our distinguished Secretary of State made the presentation to the members of the Security Council of the U.N. But few were convinced. As a result the coalition that

we wanted to build did not attract many like the previous one, and we ended up having an army comprised from England and the U.S. While this force was preparing to attack Iraq, France, Germany, Russia, and Canada expressed their strong disagreement with the decision to attack Iraq.

Despite that our forces with those of England attacked Iraq on March 19, 2003. By May 1, the Iraqi army was soundly defeated, and President Bush declared the war won. Saddam was captured after a period during which he hid himself. Then he was tried by the Iraqis and executed for the crimes that he committed against his own people. We were supposed to withdraw from Iraq soon after our victory, but we did not.

What happened here was that Saddam belonged to the minority group called the Sunnis while the majority called the Shia were persecuted by him and kept under an iron rule. So, when he was killed the majority rebelled against those who took power after him hoping to take over. This

conflict continued as a civil war in the form of suicide bombings, cars and trucks wired to explode their load of explosives by remote control, and side road traps. The Americans were forced to stay until the new Iraqi army becomes strong enough to stabilize the situation. This has not happened yet. This is why we are still there. In the meantime, thousands more of our brave troops were killed.

We are also staying in Afghanistan, which we began bombarding on September 20, 2001. The reason was that after 9/11 President Bush demanded that the government there turn over all al-Qaeda members and close their training camps. But they refused. We then thought that Bin Laden lived there and sent some troops to capture more of the terrorists. The result is a widening war with no end in sight.

As we evaluate this war, we cannot ignore the fact that it was waged based on a big lie, that Iraq had a lot of weapons of mass destruction. And when Iraq was defeated and the U.N. inspectors looked

for those weapons, examining everywhere in the whole country, nobody found any. And also it was clothed with another lie, that Saddam was a terrorist with strong relationships with Al-Qaeda, which was also not true. To add to this is the fact that our troops did not exactly behave according to the values on which this country was founded. There was a well-publicized brutality in questioning the enemy, and some sexual misbehavior by some of our men and women. Based on this we can only condemn it, and consider it as a further proof of us abandoning our commitment to our Judeo-Christian heritage, and leading our lives away from Him who created us in His image and likeness.

Epilogue

Any reader who just read what I have written may jump to the conclusion that I am saying that there is no hope for this country. This is not what I am saying. There is still a lot of good in it. But there is a lot of evil also, and the evil is gaining while the good is waning. I know that many are as

worried as I am about where we are headed. I also know that many are praying to Almighty God to help us in our struggle against the powers of evil. And we know that He listens to prayers. So, let us all pray for the country that we love.

May God bless our beloved U.S.A.

