

IN RESPONSE – THE DESTRUCTION OF SOCIETY

by Dennis Prutow

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As a youngster in the fourth or fifth grade, I recall we practiced a little ritual every morning as school began. Our teacher read a passage from the Bible. We recited a prayer together. Finally, we recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Over the years, court decisions removed Bible reading from Schools. Over a period of time, court decisions also eliminated corporate prescribed prayers led by teachers. A court decision also removed the Ten Commandments from schoolroom walls.

In the mean time, evolutionary science, so-called, denigrates the Biblical teaching of creation. The big bang, contrived fossil records, and supposed links between man and beast, with millions of years interposed, give us a godless materialism as the answer to existence. Children receive a subliminal message day after day in their classrooms. God is irrelevant.

In addition, activity after activity subverts the sanctity of the First Day of the Week. Blue Laws collapsed. Stores, factories, and businesses consider Sunday an important center for revenue. Professional athletics closed in on Sunday. College athletics followed suit. High school and college commencement exercises crowd the Lord's Day. The French philosopher, Voltaire, said something like this, "To destroy Christianity, subvert the Sabbath." Sunday is business more than usual.

Popular culture celebrates hedonism. Pleasure comes first. Image is everything. Truth, justice, and righteousness take back seats to partisan bickering and political ideology. The news is entertainment and entertainment is the news. Many young people look to the dark side. Gaudy looks derived from the occult and the spiritualism of the underworld make their way into the mainstream.

Sexual promiscuity and the perversion of homosexuality explode on the big screen, the little screen, on Times Square and in local town squares. The battle over abortion, and its attendant low view of human life, leads to other forms of violence. Guns go to school. Bomb threats prove real. Teens are actually murdered

because they make a confession of faith in the living God and Jesus Christ His Son. This modern martyrdom goes unnoticed in the media. It is not a politically incorrect crime.

Finally, churches, including evangelical churches, are more interested in attracting potential customers [attenders and members] than speaking the truth of God. As David Wells observes, pastors must be excellent administrators and counselors. The pastor as the broker of truth is an idea whose time has come and gone. Even in the church, basics like teaching the Ten Commandments have fallen on hard times. Some churches maintain the Ten Commandments are not normative for today. There is no creed but Christ. The subjectivity of our current culture rules the day. Objective standards are out. Eternal, final, unalterable truth does not exist in the world or in much of the visible church.

In the wake of terrible high school shootings, pundits, educators, bureaucrats, politicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, teachers, and administrators ask the proverbial question, "Why?" There is a simple answer. The elimination of God, the elimination of God's Word, the elimination of prayer, and the elimination of the moral standards of the Bible summarized in the Ten Commandments inevitably leads to the current crisis.

Think about this from two different perspectives. First, for two or three decades, classes of children have attended schools where God is officially forbidden, where the official use of the Bible is forbidden, where official prayers in the Name of Jesus Christ are forbidden, and from which the Ten Commandments have been removed. Of course the general culture around our schools, as discussed above, approves.

Now the parents and grandparents, who are products of our secularized society and schools, are our teachers and administrators. Their children attend these same schools. By and large, God is absent from the thinking of teachers, administrators, and students. See Romans 1:28. Prayer, a show of submission to and dependence upon Divine power, is ab-

sent. Bible reading, a display of dependence upon Divine revelation, is also absent. The Ten Commandments and specific submission to their authority are also absent. The constraints of the knowledge of God, the knowledge of His pattern for living, plus an implicit sense of foreboding for sins against God are also absent. Release from these constraints sets the stage for violence.

On the other hand, refusal to openly and officially acknowledge God in our education, refusal to accept the Bible and the revelation of God in this education, refusal to sanction public prayer in the Name of Christ in public schools, and refusal to recognize the Ten Commandments as the proper standard of conduct within our schools, is an open testimony to our rejection of God's Great Commandment. Matthew 22:37-40,

And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

Love God and love your neighbor. This seems quite simple. Christ tells us that all the Law, the Ten Commandments, is suspended, as an outline, from these two great principles. Loving God is the heading for Commandments One through Four. Loving your neighbor is the heading for Commandments Five through Ten.

Without a basic respect for God, there is no love for God. There is a violation of this basic tenet. There is no divine perspective upon life. There is no sense of duty, no sense of reward, and no sense of punishment on an eternal scale. Without this respect for God, there is no proper love of neighbor. Children denigrate parents. There is low regard for life, property, sex, and truth. Lust rules. School violence logically ensues.

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IN RESPONSE – RESTORING SOCIETY, PART ONE

by Dennis Prutow

If what I allude in the previous article is true, the legal and moral atmosphere within public schools undermines the basic tenets of the Christian faith. The words of Jesus Christ are clear.

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets (Matthew 22:37-40).

Love of God and love of neighbor are the heart and root of biblical faith. To undermine them is to set aside the great and foremost commandment and its biblical coordinate.

This is not simply New Testament faith; this is biblical faith. The great and foremost commandment comes from Deuteronomy 6:5, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” The second commandment, which is like the first, comes from Leviticus 19:18, “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.” There is no contradiction between Old and New Testaments. Love God and love your neighbor. These precepts are essential to all of life.

And what is love for God? What is the love of God? Again, the Bible is quite clear. Look at the words of the Apostle of Love, John, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3). He repeats himself in 2 John 6, “And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments.” Jesus puts it directly in John 14:15, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”

The Ten Commandments are not a burden cast upon believers to weigh them down. God gave us the Ten Commandments as a means we can use to display our love for Him. They are an objective base we may use to measure the visible and tangible fruits of love with reference to God and our neighbor. Love and Law are compatible and complementary. To exclude God from education and learning

excludes love. It excludes the foundational moral principles of life and society.

The answer to a restoration of love to society is a restoration of the God of the Bible to the center of private and public life. It is a return to the standards of the Word of God in private and public life. Specifically it is a recovery of the Law of God as the manifest means of expressing love to God and love to our neighbors.

As already mentioned, Christ gives us a basic outline for God’s Law. Love of God is the heading over commandments one through four. Love of neighbor is the heading over commandments five through ten. Obviously love of neighbor also manifests love for God. Lack of love for our neighbor betrays a lack of love for God. Yet, the basic outline holds. Let’s look at love for God and love for your neighbor in relationship to the recent school shootings.

Exodus 20:2-3, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me.” Understanding our deliverance from slavery to sin is a prerequisite to properly serving the one, true, and living God. Teens who gun down their peers are slaves to sin. They have and serve other gods. They play God.

Exodus 20:4-6,

You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

We love to fabricate buildings, furniture, clothing, and religious apparatus to assist us in worship. We center on pleasing ourselves rather than upon pleasing God. Calvin says we are all idol factories. Our minds compose a thousand ways to worship and venerate self and promote self-interest. Teens who murder their peers and teachers, desecrate the remnants of the image of God in other

human beings and idolize themselves by placing themselves at center stage.

Exodus 20:7, “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.” The vain and blasphemous use of the Name which is above every other name is commonplace in schools, on athletic fields, in government offices, in the halls of business, and on plant floors. God will not allow teens who shoot of their mouths, let alone shoot and literally kill their peers, to go unpunished.

Exodus 20:8-11,

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Moses connects the weekly Sabbath rest to creation in this Exodus passage. Teens adrift in the swamp of pagan thought, who are taught they are little more than animals, may turn to animal like behavior. They may attempt to devour their own kind. Going to the house of God to worship the Creator is not on their minds. Teens who attend worship with their parents are far less likely to be at risk regarding aberrant behavior. They are far less likely to be involved with drugs, illicit sex, and violence.

Moses ties this same commandment to redemption in Deuteronomy 5:15, “You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.” Teens who worship because they are redeemed from slavery to sin live above sin.

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IN RESPONSE – RESTORING SOCIETY, PART TWO

by Dennis Prutow

We now turn to the other aspect of love, the love of neighbor. The words of Christ are direct and specific, “The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:39).

Some Bible teachers pervert Matthew 22:39 by insisting Christ gives us a command to love ourselves. This is certainly not the case. First, Christ says quite explicitly He is giving us a second command like the first. He is not giving us two more commands. Second, a command to love yourself flies in the face of other biblical teaching. God calls us to esteem others more highly than ourselves and to view others as more important than ourselves (Philippians 2:3). With self-love, the commandment to love God is on its head. We worship and serve the creature rather than the creator (Romans 1:25). Third, we already love ourselves too much. This is the problem of sin. We ought not to be lovers of self (2 Timothy 3:2).

The commandment to love our neighbors turns our eyes off of ourselves and toward others. Exodus 20:12, “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you.” This is the first commandment to which God affixes a specific promise. “Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth” (Ephesians 6:2-3).

Teens who rebel against parents and other legitimate authority in school, church, work, and home, jeopardize length and quality of life. Teens who maliciously gun down their peers and then turn their weapons upon themselves forfeit life here and in the hereafter.

Exodus 20:13, “You shall not murder.” The word is clear and concise. Murder is a premeditated act of evil that knowingly deprives another human being of life in this world. Teens who gleefully and tragically spill the blood of peers are heinous killers. They have no fear of God. They have no fear of judgment. They are incorrigible. Teens who commit suicide indulge in self-murder. They consign themselves to everlasting torment in supposed acts of taking ultimate control over their own lives.

Exodus 20:14, “You shall not commit adultery.” This command forbids all sexual relations outside of marriage. Condom distribution in schools is a direct and flagrant violation of this command. Promiscuous teens put future intimate relationships in peril. Teens who murder other sexually pure teens deprive them of future fulfillment. They deprive the world of future children who are similarly faithful to God and His commandments. The devil is out to kill, maim, and destroy.

Exodus 20:15 is another concise command. “You shall not steal.” The right to the ownership of property is basic in society. Stealing takes other forms. Depriving men and women of life and freedom takes from them that which is inalienable. On the other hand, men and women may forfeit their lives by transgressing the inalienable. Teens who deprive families of children and siblings are men stealers and women stealers.

Exodus 20:16, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” Truth telling is the heart of a free society and a sense of freedom in the home. Those who lie, whether presidents or paupers, transgress fundamental principle. They break trust with family, friends, and nation. Teens who lie to parents, lie to teachers, and lie to friends, are not friends. They show no respect or love for their superiors or their peers. Teens who live a lie by presenting a mild manner and a peaceful façade only to break trust with violent murder prove themselves untrustworthy in every area of life.

Exodus 20:17 gives the final commandment. “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.” This command requires contentment. Lust easily breaks forth into all manner of sin. Lust for power provokes rebellion against the authority of parents. Inordinate lustful self-interest precipitates murder. Dissatisfaction, lust for the property of others, results in stealing. Uncontrolled lust promotes illicit sex. Lust for personal advancement and the preservation of a positive image advance the shading of the truth and outright lies.

All this refers to love for God and love for our neighbors. Love for God and neighbor alters our conduct before God and with our neighbors. We attend worship. We respect parents. We protect life. We revere marriage. We respect the property of others. We guard the truth. Simple precepts loved and obeyed change us as individuals, change our families, change our work environment, change our schools, and change society.

All this means a return to the God of the Bible is essential in all our institutions. It means a return to the precepts of the Bible is absolutely necessary in private and public life. It means we need a return to the morals and ethics of the Bible in our families, schools, and offices.

Those who love God and exhibit that affection in expressions of love for others, are like ancient Israel camped on the borders of the Promised Land. God said to Israel, “You shall take possession of the land and live in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it” (Numbers 33:53). Those loving God must take back this land for their Sovereign.

Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Take the land. Why? To live long and prosper in it. How? We must teach and live the love of God with all our hearts.

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IN RESPONSE – A MODEST PROPOSAL

by Dennis Prutow

Rejecting God and refusing the love of God outlined in the Ten Commandments undercuts the two Great Commandments of Scripture. “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). Remove these precepts from public and private life and we are left with paganism.

How do we restore these principles to life and society? I am making a modest proposal. It has two parts and has hope for the future. Part one has several facets. If love of God and love of neighbor are God’s priorities, each and every individual must make love for God and love for neighbor a personal priority.

Each and every professing Christian must love God and love his or her neighbor as set forth in Scripture and summarized in the Ten Commandments. Much personal work is needed. Christians must answer the call to take up their crosses and follow Christ under the banner of love. This means studying God’s commandments and thoroughly implementing them without compromise.

The number ten represents completeness. The Ten Commandments present a complete summary of the requirements for Godly living. Individual Christians must look to themselves first and learn and practice the love of God and the love of neighbor. Societal change will begin with individual change. Individual change must come first with those who purport to love God and Jesus Christ.

The two centers for learning love for God and neighbor and implementing this love for God and neighbor are the family and the church. After parents take themselves by the scuff of the neck and purposely learn and implement God’s will in their own lives, they must do so within their families. They must study, pray, teach, exhort, and practice the precepts of Scripture in the family. Family life must center on God, a love for God, a love for one another, and an implementation of the Word of God. Parents must teach their children this love by precept and example.

Parents must pray with each other, for their children, and with their children. Fathers and mothers must guide their families in personal worship, family worship, and corporate worship. Families must display their love for God by regular attendance in corporate worship with the body of Christ.

The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). The church must present the truth of God and guide the people of God in both the love of God and the love of neighbor. Pastors must take heed to themselves to walk in the love of God and the love of neighbor. Elders must take heed to themselves to know the love of God and to implement it. Pastors and elders must shepherd the church of God in these matters with their teaching, by their examples, and with opportunities to implement their teaching in mentoring situations.

Societal change cannot take place without individual influence, without the building blocks of stable God loving families, and without churches that passionately teach and train men and women, and boys and girls, in the love of God and the love of neighbor. These are basic elements in the engine of cultural change. May God give us grace to commit ourselves to His love as individuals, families, and churches.

Societal change, cultural shift, takes more. The institutions of education, business, and government must be nudged, pushed, and prodded toward the love of God implemented by individuals, families, and churches. How can this come about? Pastors, elders, churches, parents, and Christian professionals must urge young men and women to train for callings within every institution in society. Christian young people must go to graduate school to train as professors, scientists, writers, media specialists, philosophers, doctors, computer programmers and specialists, etc. God calls men and women to all areas of life and gives the requisite gifts.

Think about this. The sexually active, anti-government, anti-authoritarian, drug crazed rebels of the sixties are now in positions of leadership within education, business, and government. Is it not pos-

sible and even probable that Christian young people, raised in Christian homes and trained in solid churches can, with proper credentials, gain entrance into the leadership of the institutions of education, government, and business? Is it not possible and even probable that Christian people, well grounded in the faith because of faithful families and churches, and supported by other Christian people, can bring about change pointing men and women to the love of God and neighbor?

For years, I have encouraged my children to seek further education and get their masters and doctorates. They became quite familiar with my speech. I gave it often when we had guests, particularly college students, around our table for a meal. These degrees open doors in education, business, and government where the principles of love for God and neighbor may be implemented and influence greater numbers of people.

On the other hand, where some institutions of education, business, and even within the church, have lost their usefulness, Christian men and women must meet the challenge to build alternate institutions. The cost is high. The challenge is great. But are the principles worth the effort? Are the central principles of Scripture worth our whole-hearted engagement? Absolutely.

My proposal is nothing new. Individuals, families, and churches must commit themselves to the love of God by the grace of God. This is not radical from the perspective of Scripture. It may be radical from the perspective of a culture and society antagonistic to things biblical. So be it. This simply means Christians must aggressively reclaim their own lives before God, their family life before God, and their church life before God. With this step begun, Christians may consciously turn to training for future service in all manner of endeavors for the purpose of bringing the love of God to the institutions of education, business, and government. May God grant the grace and resolve to reclaim our society for Him.

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