

UPON THE ROCK

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HAS GOD BLESSED AMERICA?

Phil Gear

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17). Without a doubt God has so lavishly blessed America that it would be impossible to list all of the wonderful things He has done for us.

The continent on which this nation was founded has contributed greatly to our high standard of living. Our abounding natural resources made possible the industry that has provided our income. We have a standard of living far exceeding anything the world has ever seen. Most of our “poor” live better than a large percentage of the world. Our “middle class” lives on a standard of comfort and luxury of which even kings dared not dream only a century or so ago. The only concern we have about our next meal is that we do not overeat. With literally millions living at subsistence level, we have classified cars, televisions, telephones, air conditioners, computers, and VCR’s as “necessities.” The Bible says, “And having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (I Timothy 6:8). Most of us are well past the “food and raiment” level.

We have been blessed with medical advancements that absolutely astound us. Diseases that wiped out whole populations in the past have been eliminated. Vaccinations have eliminated worries about small pox, diphtheria, whooping cough and many other illnesses that caused fear in previous generations. Diagnostic equipment and testing procedures, such as MRI and CT scans, mean earlier and more effective treatment of conditions that killed only a few years

ago. Organ transplants make it possible to extend lives that would have ended before. And most of us have access to this medical care in the very community where we live.

We have been spared the devastation of war experienced by other nations. Yes, we have fought our share, but not on our shores. It has been over 130 years since a major war has been fought within our borders. Our civilian population has been spared the suffering experienced by others.

Our "Bill of Rights" blesses us with a level of personal liberty that is envied by the world. We have no hesitation in saying so when our government officials have made a mistake. We can even boldly write them a letter and say so. If we do not like the current government we can use the ballot box to change it. Unlike many nations, we will not be stuck with a corrupt, egotistical dictator who tramples on people for his own purposes. We may freely worship God as the Bible instructs, a freedom that becomes all the more precious when we read of nations where this is not allowed. Many may not agree with our beliefs, but they cannot legally injure us for our faith.

But of all the blessings God has given us, the ease with which we have access to the Bible is the greatest. There are places where it costs several weeks wages to buy a Bible, if it is available at all, but here in America one can be purchased for just a few dollars at a local discount store. We can spread the word of God by means of radio, television, the printed page and the internet. No one who goes to the Judgment Day from America can honestly claim they had no opportunity to know the will of God.

Unfortunately, many of the blessings God has so bountifully given us cut with a two-edged sword. With the blessings come dangers. For example, we are grateful for the material plenty found in our nation, but tragically that has destroyed the spiritual interest of many. We have it so good that many feel no need for God. The Bible says of ancient Israel, "He [God] made him [Israel] ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of

WILL GOD BLESS AMERICA?

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

HAS GOD BLESSED AMERICA? — PAGE 1

THE FALL OF ROME — PAGE 5

ISRAEL'S DEMISE — PAGE 8

THE EFFECT OF EVOLUTION ON AMERICA — PAGE 13

TELEVISION'S INFLUENCE ON AMERICA — PAGE 18

WHAT THE HOME MEANS TO THE NATION — PAGE 22

WILL GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS AMERICA — PAGE 28

UPON THE ROCK
Mark Reynolds, editor
2411 E. Riggin Road
Muncie, IN 47303

Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape. But Jeshurun [another name for Israel, PLG] waxed fat and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation" (Deuteronomy 32:13-15). God foresaw that when Israel reached a point of great material prosperity she would turn her back on Him. Solomon prayed, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD?" (Proverbs 30:8-9). The accumulation of material wealth can lead us to feel that we do not need God. The less we have the easier it is to see our dependency on God. Perhaps this is why the Gospel of Christ is so much more readily received in economically poor nations.

A nation, greatly blessed, has a tendency to pride. There is a tremendous temptation to say, "Look what we have accomplished." We are often like King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who took complete credit for the power and might of his nation. "The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30). God taught him a painful lesson when he sentenced him to live in the fields as an animal.

"While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: They shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall passover thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Daniel 4:31-32). He suffered this horrible punishment until he realized his need for God. "And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation" (Daniel 4:34).

The blessings we have richly received from God's bountiful hand should never be treated lightly. They ought to make us humbly

grateful. Yes, God has blessed America, and may we never take that for granted!

Phil Grear may be reached at 2863 E. High St Springfield, OH. 45505, or by email at Grear@juno.com.

UPON THE ROCK is published monthly for the purpose of setting forth sound biblical material concerning first principles and evangelism. We strive to print articles that are informative for Christians and non-Christians.

Mark E. Reynolds, Editor
Larry G. Reynolds, Co-Editor
Jim Witty, Printer

We may be contacted at (765) 289-5138, or by email at mreyn8391@aol.com

THE FALL OF ROME

Roger Rush

Bismarck (1st chancellor of the German Empire 1871-1890) said, "Some people learn from their mistakes. I on the other hand make it a practice to learn from the mistakes of others." That certainly is the wise course. Those who do not learn from the mistakes of the past are destined to repeat them.

By way of example, look at The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, by Edward Gibbon. We can learn much of value from his observations. In it Gibbon identifies the following causes for Rome's demise: 1) rapid increase of divorce, with the undermining of the sanctity of the home, which is the basis of society; 2) higher and higher taxes; the spending of the money for bread and celebrations; 3) the mad craze for pleasure; sports becoming every year more exciting and more brutal; 4) the building of gigantic armaments, when the real enemy was within; the decadence of the people; 5) the decay of religion; faith fading into mere form, losing touch with life, and becoming impotent to guide it.

have the Paper out the first week of each month, and we usually make it, thanks to the fine job Jim Witty does in printing the paper. Each month Jim prints 6,500 copies of *Upon the Rock*, and then he and Larry Reynolds mail them out to the various congregations and individuals. This work could not be done without the great work of Jim and Larry as well as the grand support that many congregations give each month. There are several Bible Correspondence Courses that have been set up through the advertisement that is placed in the publication each month. Todd Stults, a member at the West Side congregation, takes care of all correspondence. Several people have even obeyed the gospel through his efforts.

At the end of June a congregation that has been so wonderful to support this work will not be able to continue their support due to a new mission work they will be starting. If you know of any congregations that would like to become involved in this work, please contact me, and I will be glad to talk with the leaders of that congregation. This is the first time we have ever made a request such as this, and we do not anticipate having to do so in the future, but this paper has grown beyond our wildest imagination, and some help would relieve the West Side congregation, who just purchased a new printer for us. Again, thank you SO MUCH for your interest in this work. Please pray for us!

Mark F. Reynolds, Editor

Of course, as long as the world stands, America will enjoy the life-giving air, sun, and rain, as these blessing are given to the righteous and the unrighteous alike. Jesus came promising an abundant life (John 10:10) with the possession of all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3). This life is only experienced by those who have surrendered to God. Dear friend, are you living this life?

To many it may seem as if it is impossible to make America into the nation that God would have it to be. Yes, there must be a change in America in order for her to be known as a God-fearing nation, but that change begins with the individual. America is made better when individuals act to make it better. Will God continue to bless America? The answer to this question may depend on people like you and me.

Dustin Forthun may be reached at 511 Mt Pelia Rd., Martin, TN. 38237, or by email at theforthuns@hotmail.com.

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

1. Hear - Romans 10:17; Matthew 7:24-27
2. Believe - Hebrews 11:6; Mark 16:15-16
3. Repent - Acts 2:38; 17:30; Luke 13:3
4. Confess - Matthew 10:32,33; Acts 8:36
5. Be Baptized - Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27
6. Live Faithfully Unto Death - Revelation 2:10

WE ARE THANKFUL

Mark E. Reynolds

As we close this issue of *Upon the Rock*, I feel it necessary to say that we are so thankful for all the good comments we have been receiving concerning this work. As you know, I began editing this paper about six months ago, and have been learning as I go. We try very hard to

History does tend to repeat itself. Nations crumble from within. Freedom without restraint leads to ruin. It was Solomon who wrote nearly three thousand years ago: "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). It may be the hardest lesson of all to learn, but it's true, internal decay is a far greater threat to the welfare of the state than any external force!

What do we see when we survey the American horizon? 1) Marriage is under assault. The family has been redefined. Homes are crumbling. 2) Taxes have reached an oppressive level. The national debt has become a heavy burden. Yet, citizens continue to demand more entitlements. 3) Sports figures command multimillion dollar deals while educators struggle to make ends meet 4) Billions and billions are spent on national defense while nothing is done to combat internal decay. 5) Religion has failed. More and more profess faith, but fewer and fewer allow God in their lives. Conviction has given way to compromise. It's still not too late! But time is running out! If we don't learn from the mistakes of the past, we are destined to repeat them. As Christians we can be a powerful force for good, but only if we raise our voices in unison to call our nation back to God, That is essentially what Christianity did for Rome.

Gibbon attributes the victory of Christianity over the pagan religions of the first century to "the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and to the ruling providence of its great Author" (THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE, Vol. II, page 2). He then offered five secondary causes for the rapid growth of the church: 1) The inflexible...and intolerant zeal of Christians; 2) The doctrine of a future life; 3) The miraculous powers ascribed to the primitive church; 4) The pure and austere morals of the Christians; and 5) The union and discipline of the Christian republic (Vol. II, page 3).

The church came to be in an age of religious harmony when even hostile nations embraced or respected each other's superstitions. It seems that folks were always happy to embrace another deity. The lone exception was the Jews. Their law was explicit: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). It was out of this inflexible commitment to the one true God that Christianity was born.

Early disciples were clear in their denunciation of idolatry. Polytheism was repugnant to both Jews and Christians. Paul was sickened by what he saw in Athens. It was a city wholly given to idolatry. On every corner there was an image or altar to some pagan deity. One inscription even read, "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD" (Acts 17:23). He warned them of the dangers of such ignorant worship and called them to faith in Christ (Acts 17:30, 31). There is not the slightest hint in Scripture that one belief was as valid as another, or one god as acceptable as another. In fact, just the opposite is asserted. "There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:6). Further, there was one Lord and Savior (Acts 4:12). Christians had no tolerance for opposing views, and their intolerance for false religions was a major factor in their evangelistic zeal.

We have now come full circle. The popular mantra today is tolerance. Only intolerance must not be tolerated! Why would we be so narrow-minded as to suggest that there is but one church, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God (Ephesians 4:4-6)? Because it is true! Two thousand years have passed and we are right back where we started with a world lost in religious ignorance. There is hope for our world, but only in Jesus Christ.

The reasons for Rome's fall were obvious. The reasons for the triumph of the church were just as obvious. We can learn from the mistakes of the past, or we can repeat them. Sadly, as a nation we seem poised to repeat them. Will Christians rise to the challenge and call our nation back to God? That remains to be seen. It is still not too late, but time is running out.

Roger Rush may be reached at rogerrush@juno.com.

ISRAEL'S DEMISE

Mark E. Reynolds

Having traveled to several different countries, and various continents, I have only strengthened my opinion that America is the best country in the world in many ways. We have advanced past many countries in

When thinking of the great blessings given to this country, one is likely to recall God's gracious treatment of ancient Israel. In the many blessings that she received, ancient Israel is similar to modern America. God provided His people with manna and quail to eat (Exodus 16:12). They were given a land by Jehovah which flowed with milk and honey (Joshua 5:6). Israel had gold and precious jewels which they gave for the making of an idol calf (Exodus 32:2-4) and the tabernacle (Exodus 36:5-7). These blessings are just a few of the many that Israel enjoyed. One wonders if the question, "Will God continue to bless Israel?" was ever asked. We know that God did indeed cease blessing Israel. He sent them into cruel captivity, and God also withheld His Word from them for approximately 400 years. God ceased to bless ancient Israel because of the actions of the Israelite people. The Israelites abused the many blessing that they were given by making idol gods and building ceiled houses (indicating luxury, Haggai 1:4) while shrinking from their responsibility to care for the temple of God. With the many blessings that Jehovah gave Israel, she became greedy. They gave God far short of their best by offering animals that were blind, lame, and sick (Malachi 1:8). God's ancient people felt a sense of entitlement. They reasoned that they were owed the blessing that they were receiving and that God had to bless them. Oh, how much modern America is similar to ancient Israel in these unbecoming qualities.

So, to the question at hand—will God continue to bless America? It depends. God is able to continue His blessings, but God is not obligated to continue His blessings. Ancient Israel learned this lesson the hard way. By taking their blessings and turning on the giver of those blessings, Israel made the wrong choice. America also has a choice to make, and it seems that America may be doing the very same thing that Israel did—turning our back on God. With America's many advances in science, technology, medicine, and other influential fields, there has been a clear turn against the source of these blessings. Ungodliness seems to reign supreme on most television programs. Abortions and "mercy-killings" are becoming more and more accepted in our land. School violence is rampant. Adultery, divorce, alcoholism, and gambling are wrecking our families. On and on the list could go that notes America's abandonment of godliness. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

GOSPEL MEETING

MAY 20, 21, 22, 23— 2001

GOSPEL MEETING WITH A.J COX
TOWNE ACRES CHURCH OF CHRIST

THEME: NEW TESTAMENT TRUTHS AND THE
PROPHETS

SUNDAY, MAY 20

9:30 AM—OUR CHILDREN AND PUBLIC
EDUCATION

10:30 AM—THE NEW COVENANT AND THE
PROPHETS

I 2:00—LUNCH IS PROVIDED

1:30—GOSPEL SINGING

2:00—THE CHRIST AND THE PROPHETS

MONDAY, MAY 21

7:00 PM—FALSE TEACHERS AND THE PROPHETS

TUESDAY, MAY 22

7:00 PM—THE CHURCH AND THE PROPHETS

WEDNESDAY, MAY 23

7:00 PM—CONVERSION AND THE PROPHETS

Towne Acres Church of Christ
2411 E. Riggins Rd.
Muncie, IN. 47303
(765) 289-5138
Mreyn8391@aol.com

many areas. A garbage disposal, in a typical American home, eats better than most of the rest of the world. We have to worry about how best to invest the “extra” money we have. We drive to work then pay money to a gym where we can walk for exercise. We go to restaurants known for their great “home-cooked meals.” We go fishing to catch fish only to throw them back in the water (better known as catch and release). There is little doubt that we have much for which to be thankful in this great land of ours.

It is also true, however, that the things with which we have been blessed can lead to our spiritual and physical demise. A study of what led to Israel’s demise should be an eye-opener for all people of this world. Let us notice just some of the things that led to Israel’s moral and physical decay.

First and foremost, Israel fell hard and heavy, because they did not have a keen knowledge of God’s Word. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee..” (Hosea 4:6). We have more places of “higher learning” in our country than any other, and more people are able to attend these colleges than ever before. There are fewer colleges than ever, though, that are teaching the most important type of knowledge that one can acquire...the knowledge of the Almighty God. How many parents study the Bible with their children every night? How many households, today, put Bible study before school study? It starts in the home and is continued in the schools. Unless knowledge leads one to God it is USELESS! School is important, but if it leads our children away from God, get them out and into a learning environment that will teach them about the Creator of the Universe. Work is important but if it leads us away from God, QUIT, and find something that will allow you to put God first. If the Israelites, in the day of Hosea, could speak to you today, they would say the same thing that Paul said to Timothy: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God (II Timothy 2:15).

Second, Pride was a cause for Israel’s fall. “And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them” (Hosea 5:5). False pride will lead to destruction (Proverbs 16:18). The people of Israel were so full

of pride that they would have rather worshipped idols made by their OWN hands, than to worship the Master who made all things! They thought that they were the reason for their good fortune, and treated the God of heaven as if He had nothing to do with their prosperity. They took the blessings of God and turned them into a curse, and because they did, God cursed the nation's blessings that He once poured upon them (Malachi 2:2).

Why is it that one can knock on 100 doors here in the United States, and find few people, if any, who desire to study the Bible with him; then, that same person, can go to Jamaica, Tanzania, or many other countries, knock on one door and have a willing Bible study participant answer? There may be several reasons for this, but one is pride! We have taken the blessings that God has given us, and allowed them to carry us farther away from God rather than closer to Him. Like the Israelites, and many after them, most people in this country have begun to "worship" the creation more than the Creator, Who made all things possible! Have you ever heard someone say, "I can worship God in my tree-stand, or in my boat just as well as I can worship Him in a church building"? There is no substitute for gathering together with the church to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). When we put our pride into what God has created rather than the Creator Himself, we go the way of Israel.

Third, Israel was destroyed because she became a corrupt nation. "They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah: therefore he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins" (Hosea 9:9). They made their worship profane and became bored with worshipping God: "But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible. Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! And ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 1:12-13). They divorced the wives of their youth (Malachi 2:14), and married women who worshipped false gods (Malachi 2:11). As a consequence of marrying women who worshipped false gods, they began to have children who were not taught the truth about the God of heaven. God commanded the Israelites: "And thou shalt teach them [the words that God commanded, MER] diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up"

The home is designed to be a foretaste of heaven. Sadly, for far too many in this nation, heaven would be the last word used to describe their homes. Too many homes have forsaken and forgotten Almighty God, and for this grave sin, our nation is drowning in the cesspool of sin. America's flame has not yet gone out, but it is flickering. We can ignite the torch of godliness and goodness in this land for the whole world to see if we will all decide to enthrone Christ within our hearts and within our homes. May homes all across this great nation unite their voices and proclaim, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

Patrick Morrison may be reached at PO Box 345, Mablevale, AR. 72103.

The date of the third annual UPON THE ROCK lectureship has been set for February 23, 2002 at the West Side Church of Christ in Yorktown, Indiana. This year's lectureship was well attended, and every sermon preached was outstanding and uplifting! Please watch for more information in future issues.

WILL GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS AMERICA?

Dustin Forthun

There are many who have and many more who will continue to risk their own lives for an opportunity to live in this great land. Doubtless is the fact that this country is blessed beyond measure, and the source of these blessings is God. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights (James 1:17). Yes, God is the giver of all blessings, but God does not always approve of everyone who receives those blessings. "...For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). There are quite a few people (atheists, the immoral, those living in sin, etc.) who receive blessings every day (like air, sun, rain, etc.) while rejecting the very God from Whom those blessing come. What then, are we to think of America's blessings and God's continuing to bless us?

about the separation of church and state. Our greatest problem, however, is the separation of church and home.

Can the spiritual wounds of our great land be healed? Is it possible for America to get back on course before we lose Divine favor? It can be done. It is possible, but not without many great changes. One great change that must take place within the home is the realization and recognition of God's law concerning marriage—one man and one woman for life (Matthew 19:5,6). God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16), and those who seek Him first should also hate divorce. Our society tells men and women that they may divorce and remarry for any reason they desire. God says that man may divorce and remarry because of fornication (Matthew 19:9), and then only can the innocent remarry. Any other excuse concocted by man by which he leaves his union with one and enters into "marriage" with another is labeled by God as fornication, adultery, SIN! Is it any wonder that this nation is going to pot when one out of every two homes is broken asunder by divorce and infidelity? Broken homes lead to a broken nation, and our nation is in shambles as a result.

Man's desire for material things is another termite eating away at the foundation of the home and society. In man's attempts to "keep up with the Joneses," every waking minute is spent trying to earn money. The wife goes to work in order for her family to enjoy the "finer things." Both work sixteen-hour days, and the children are left at home to be raised by Hollywood and Sega. Children grow up without the parental supervision they need and want, and many come to resent their parents as a result. Even when mom and dad are not "working," they are busy on the computer, the fax machine, cell phone, etc., trying to get all their work done that they have brought home with them. And in the midst of all this fanfare, there is no time for God. The schedules are entirely too busy to find time for religion. Despite all the happiness that is supposed to come with this lifestyle, no one is happy, and many homes are destroyed in this futile effort to find happiness in material possessions. God's way is so simple. Put Him first and you will find happiness (Matthew 6:33). Give to God, and He will bless you beyond measure (Malachi 3:10). Give to your fellow man, and it will be returned unto you (Luke 6:38).

(Deuteronomy 6:7). As the nation of Israel became corrupt, the children were still learning. Unfortunately, however, they were now learning at the feet of parents who walked with God no more.

When a nation refuses to worship God in the way He planned for them to worship Him, His blessings are bound to stop. When the home in a nation falls through divorce and spiritual neglect, God will not and cannot be pleased! It is not my duty, in this article, necessarily to show a parallel between Israel and America, but rather to give reasons why Israel fell. But how can one not see the similarities? The divorce rate is hovering somewhere around 50% in this "great" land of ours, and more children than ever are being taught everything but the truth. It can be turned around, but it must start in MY home and in YOUR home. In other words, we cannot wait for someone else to keep our families pure. If we want a nation free of corruption, "let it begin with me."

Fourth, it can be seen, by examining the fall of Israel, that the leaders of that nation led the way to destruction. "Hear ye this, O priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel; and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor" (Hosea 5:1). The priests, the "spiritual" leaders, and the king became a snare, or a trap for the people rather than a help! The people of Israel were enjoying a time of great prosperity, and were not concerned with the corrupt leadership, as long as they were flourishing materially. Jeremiah said, regarding the relationship between the leaders and the people: "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jeremiah 5:31). The leadership was ungodly, and the people loved to have it so. Why? Because they looked at what they had now, rather than what they could have hereafter.

How is it that we can have a leader look us in the face, shake his finger at us, and tell a boldfaced lie, and have his approval rating soar? How is it that a lady can have an adulterous affair with a leader of the "greatest" country of all, and become rich because of it? How is it that men and women who have proven to live ungodly lives can continue to be reelected? Because, we are rich! So we allow the

prophets to prophesy falsely, and the leaders bear rule by their means, and we love to have it so.

Last, Israel fell, because she was determined to fall. “And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him” (Hosea 11:7). With all the great work that the true prophets did, and with all the reminding that took place about how God brought them out of Egypt, and took care of them in the wilderness, Israel still fell away from God. Why? Because she was bound and determined to do so. If only they would have been so determined to follow God as they were to leave God! If only they would have been so diligent to keep the word of the Lord as they were to forsake it! If only they would have been as determined to make their own marriages work as they were to marry unfit mates! If only they were as “proud” of the God of heaven as they were of the false gods that were brought in. If only a lot of things, but the fact is they were not determined to put God first and because of this...they fell.

Is there hope for America? Yes, and a thousand times Yes! But it will only turn, when we, as Americans, turn from following false gods, to following the One True God! It will only turn, when I turn. Your family will only turn, when you turn. God has certainly blessed us with more than we deserve. Now let us use those blessings to draw closer to Him, rather than being bent on leaving. God Bless America!

Mark E. Reynolds may be reached at 2411 E. Riggin Rd., Muncie, IN. 47303, or by email at mreyn8391@aol.com.

THE EFFECTS OF EVOLUTION ON AMERICA

Tony Choate

It would be fair to say that the majority of Christians do not realize the effect evolution has on America today. Many in the church are naïve, and sometimes willfully ignorant, about the part evolution plays on their everyday lives and those of their children. It is therefore important for sermons to be preached, lessons taught and articles written about evolution.

reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34). Oh how this needs to be proclaimed from every hill and mountaintop in this country! America has for decade upon decade enjoyed the favor of the Supreme Ruler of the universe because the families which composed her lived according to Divine precept. The favor of God will be completely lost if the homes within this land continue to embrace sin and forsake the Savior.

What does the home mean to the nation? The answer is simple—everything. The very essence of a nation is found in the home of its citizens. The problems which are now so evident in our society—drugs, alcohol, immorality, lack of respect for authority, unwillingness to accept responsibility—are merely reflections of what has been occurring, or of what has been overlooked, more and more frequently in our homes. It cannot be denied that society, for the most part, has turned into a pleasure-seeking, hedonistic culture, far removed from her moorings in righteous living. Those within the Lord’s church have witnessed an alarming trend within the church toward the same pleasure-seeking, hedonistic lifestyle. Is society to blame for the change within the Lord’s church, or is the church to blame for her failure to bring society back to its original foundation? Where there is blame that could be leveled against both society and the church; the greatest blame rests upon the home.

Someone once remarked, “As goes the home, so goes the nation.” It could just as easily be said that, “As goes the home, so goes the church.” The greatest influence upon society is not the church *per se*, but those homes which have at their very heart Christ, His word, and His church. This is not said to belittle the importance of the church. After all, the church of Christ is the one and only religious institution on the face of the earth that exists and operates with God’s approval. The home is the pulse of the church. Homes into which Christ has been invited and is allowed to reign bolster the influence of the Lord’s church upon society. Many times godly homes have more influence for good than even the greatest of sermons. On the other hand, those homes which refuse the headship of Christ within their daily lives do irreparable damage to the influence the church has on society. Hypocritical homes do far more harm to the cause of Christ than most fervent of false teachers ever will. In our nation we hear a great deal

the issues, and emphasize Bible truth in response to the propaganda and distortion displayed on the television screen.

Tom McLemore may be contacted at 2 Crescent Hill Drive, Selma, AL or at tmdidymus@juno.com.

WHAT THE HOME MEANS TO THE NATION

Patrick Morrison

What a glorious blessing it is to live in this wonderful nation! Not a Sunday goes by that I do not hear an expression of gratitude offered to the Almighty for allowing us to live in this great land. We are fortunate and blessed beyond measure to have been granted the privilege to live in the greatest nation in the world—the United States of America. How many times have we stopped to consider what makes this nation so great? Is it our economic policies, which have given us such a robust economy that makes America so great? Is it our military might, which makes nations around the world fearful of armed conflict with the United States that have made this nation so grand? Is it our educational system, which seeks to ensure that all children have equal opportunities to gain an education that has pushed the United States head and shoulders above every other country upon the face of the earth? The answer to the questions above is a resounding NO! Though many in this nation consider the policies and programs above as the reasons for the continued success of the US. as a nation, the masses could not be further from the truth. This nation has been the greatest nation in the world from its inception, and continues in that capacity to this day, because it was founded by God-fearing men upon godly principles, and her subjects were loyal to their foundation.

Unfortunately, this nation has forgotten from whence she came, and cares little or nothing for where she is going. The United States of America is in a downward spiral, not because of her economic policies, or military stance, or her educational platforms. America is falling from her pedestal of greatness to the pit of degradation and despair because we as a nation have embraced sin and forgotten God. The sage admonition of the wise king Solomon has for too long gone unheeded: “Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a

The Evolutionary Theory is taught everywhere one looks in America. Large billboards on the roadside advertise caverns, stating the caverns were “formed in 500,000,000 BC.” Signs are posted in museums and aquariums discussing the origins of the animals and how they have existed for hundreds of thousands and even millions of years. Movies attempt to convince people that dinosaurs lived long before humans and that the two could not possibly co-exist. A person watching the nature channel cannot help but be bombarded with statements made about animals existing for millions of years and the ancestry of man through evolutionary lineage.

Not only is America being saturated with evolutionary ideology through television and movies, children in school are now forced to take classes attempting to “prove” scientifically evolution as fact. Children in public schools are forced to learn something which science cannot prove, and is in direct opposition to the very fundamental laws of science. Tax money is being spent to pay teachers and professors to teach evolution, some against their own will. Countless tax dollars are also spent every year to fund research projects in attempts to find “the missing link” (which in actuality the entire chain is missing), to discover from whence man came (when Genesis one gives the answer) and to prove a theory which they cannot and will not prove.

Christians often wonder how Americans can allow abortion to occur. Such sinful practices have their roots deeply planted in evolutionary thought. Certainly an unborn baby will not be desired by an evolutionary society if it is not desired by its own mother. Likewise, a mother will not desire an unborn baby which she has been led to believe is not human, but simply a fetus, and will be a hindrance upon her everyday activities and social status. In a world where “Survival of the Fittest” is thought to rule, unborn babies, elderly, and diseased are at the mercy of family, because society has no need for such “unfit” individuals. A person could not argue that another individual ought to do something or ought not do something if evolution were true. A British evolutionist Richard Dawkins, admitted that “a human society based simply on the gene’s law of universal ruthless selfishness would be a very nasty society in which to live” (Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford University Press, 1989, p.2-3). This would certainly ring true in a society, as Dawkins describes it, where, “You are for nothing. You are here to propagate your selfish genes.

There is no purpose in life” (Thomas Bass, “Interview with Richard Dawkins,” *Omni*, 1990, p. 60). Large sums of money are spent by animal rights groups which contend that animals deserve equal rights with humans. This thinking is in harmony with evolution, which teaches animals are simply ancestors or distant cousins to humans. It is not in harmony with Genesis 1:27,28, which plainly teaches that man is to have dominion over every living thing. A person believing evolution can fight harder for the life of a monkey than for the life of an unborn baby. Certainly the senseless abuse and killing of animals is not to be tolerated, but animals are not equal to humans and should therefore not be treated as such. Only a society strongly affected by evolution puts animals on an equal plane, much less on a higher plane, with humans.

Sadly, many religious individuals have been so saturated by America’s evolutionary ideology, that they are now compromising as well. Many denominations, and likely some members of the Lord’s church, are now teaching such things as the Gap Theory and the Day-Age Theory. They have been convinced that anyone of intelligence agrees evolution is fact, and thus compromise by including it in their religious teaching of the Creation. Not only are we not standing up against evolution, we are incorporating it into our religious beliefs. Any individual with too little backbone to stand against a false doctrine, must less compromise with it, is not fit to preach God’s word or consider himself a follower of God (Matthew 6:24). Certainly the effect of evolution on America has been enormous.

Individuals must realize that taking a passive approach toward evolution will not allow it simply to “go away”, but will continue to encourage its false teaching to permeate our government, our public schools and even our Sunday school classes. Unless Americans take a stand against evolution, money will continue to be spent on animal rights above human rights, on evolutionary curriculum in schools and on evolutionary research; our children will continue to be saturated with evolutionary ideology through their schools, television and movies; and our churches will continue to compromise instead of preach the word (2 Timothy 4:2).

Subtly, yet dramatically, television has affected modes of thinking. Generally today, unless a message is packaged like television, it will not be given much attention. (Neil Postman’s superb analysis of this shift, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, is worthy of careful reading). This has had a tremendous impact upon the issues of preaching and worship, and is greatly responsible for much of the movement to replace legitimate, scriptural worship practices for those which have appeal to the masses in the television age.

A Response to the Impact of Television upon America

The television industry and television itself have greatly influenced America for evil. This medium has brought great amounts of evil into the homes, minds, and hearts of Americans and has distracted Americans from more valuable pursuits. The Christian must guard himself against this influence. In order for America to be virtuous, the influence of television must be resisted by individuals and families. Self-discipline is the need of the hour.

Let us heed the biblical warnings: “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23). “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:15-18). “...[A]pprove things that are excellent” (Philippians 1:10). “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.” (1 Thessalonians 5:21, 22). Jesus said, “Take heed what you hear. . . Take heed therefore how you hear (Mark 4:24; Luke 8:18). Indubitably, Jesus would say to people in the television age: “Take heed what you watch, and take heed how you watch!”.

Parents, be informed of the nature of the content and the effects of television programming. Be discriminating in what you allow your children to watch, and take responsibility for it. Make rules, and set a good example in the use of your time and what you view. Help your children to see the difference between the fads and fetishes of the world and the virtues and eternal truths of the Christian way. Discuss

Television viewing affects the scholastic performance of children. Many parents are confronted with the task of getting the children to turn off the television (or the stereo) while doing their homework. However, television watching in itself can have a detrimental effect upon performance. A study conducted two decades ago by the California Department of Education revealed that there is a direct correlation between the amount of time a child spends watching television and his scores on standardized achievement tests: the more television watched, the lower the scores. Even common sense would suggest that television viewing does not stimulate or strengthen the brain.

Television programming often distorts reality. Viewers are left with the impression that perversion, profanity, casual sex, and indecency constitute normal behavior representative of the majority of people in the country. Can there be any doubt that writers, directors, producers, and sponsors intend to shape thinking, promote this kind of behavior, and thus reduce adverse reaction against immoral behavior on their own part and on the part of those who will patronize them? One frequently sees irregular driving and property damage dramatically portrayed on television with infrequent resultant death, physical injury, and legal penalty. The selectivity and interpretation involved in news programming often aggrandizes the trivial and is clearly intended to promote liberal thinking and policies.

While watching television, the typical American child will witness eight thousand murders and one hundred thousand acts of violence in his lifetime. Violence is often portrayed as the appropriate way to solve interpersonal problems. Violent revenge and vigilantism are frequently glamorized. Violence as a means of getting what one wants out of life is typical. There is a relationship between what it is viewers see and what they do. A seven-year statistical analysis conducted by Dr. Brandon Centerwall at the University of Washington revealed that one half of North America's murders and rapes can be attributed directly or indirectly to television viewing. He also observed that after the introduction of television in South Africa in 1974, the murder rate among the white population increased by fifty-six percent over the next nine years.

A people who fight harder for the life of a whale than for the life of an unborn baby are not a God-fearing people. A people who punish a child for reading a Bible in class but give him extra credit for reading the opinions of Charles Darwin are not a God-fearing people. A people who rebuke a young person for leading a prayer at a ball game but exalt him for speaking about evolution are not a God-fearing people. A people who claim that man is just an advanced animal at the top of the evolutionary tree and mock Bible passages concerning the account of creation are not a God-fearing people. A people who spend millions of dollars annually attempting to find the "missing link" and give nothing to the Lord's work are not a God-fearing people. A people who spend countless hours researching the ancestry of man from a single-celled organism and spend no time teaching God's plan to save man are not a God-fearing people.

Has evolution had an effect on America? Certainly. Any false doctrine that is taught will only cause moral decay. When people believe they are no better than monkeys, they will act no better than monkeys. When a society believes evolution, it will no longer hold sacred the teachings of God. May we, as Christians in America, do our best to fight the evils that evolution has brought upon this great nation. If we do not, the effects it has on Americans today will seem insignificant in comparison to the effects it will have on Americans in generations to come.

Tony Choate may be reached at P0 Box 2005, Gadsden, AL. 35903

TELEVISION'S INFLUENCE UPON AMERICA

Tom McLemore

The Prevalence of Television Viewing in America

In America, a television set is in almost every home, and in some homes there is a set in almost every room. In general terms, what influence has television had in America? A.C. Nielsen Company estimates that children from ages two to seventeen years old average more than twenty hours per week watching television.

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Over sixty percent of teenagers watch television more than three hours per day. By the time most of them are eighteen, they will have spent more time watching television than they have spent in school or talking to teachers, friends, or parents. By age seventy, they likely will have spent about seven years watching television. Thirty percent of middle-aged men watch television for three or more hours per day, while sixty-one percent watch it at least one or two hours per day. There is a large amount of television viewing that goes on in this country!

TV sets seem to be selling quite well, and the cable and satellite industries appear to be thriving. Many people consider TVs and cable or satellite to be necessities rather than luxuries. Even the poorest of people have televisions and think that they cannot live without them. Annual gross American broadcasting revenues are in excess of twenty-five billions of dollars according to conservative estimates.

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The Impact of Television upon America

Could not most of this time and money be more profitably spent on other things such as conversation, reading the Bible or other materials, prayer, thinking, teaching, service, or family activities? Every dime that is spent on television is a dime not given to the Lord, used for food, clothing, education, helping the needy, or other more beneficial things. While entertainment is not evil per se, every person must be sensitive to the issue of stewardship of both time and money.

Television viewing affects people physically. One study showed that body metabolism and calorie burning is an average of fourteen and one half percent lower when watching television than when simply lying in bed. Men who watch television three or more hours per day are twice as likely to be obese than men who watch for less than an hour (Does "couch potato" come to mind?). Of the twenty-two thousand commercials which are produced each year, five thousand of them are for food products, and more than one half of these are for low-nutrition sweets and snacks.