

The More-Loving-Than-God Argument (2)

Our neighbours are those whom God has put in our path. Our neighbours are our spouses, our parents, our children, our siblings, our fellow church members, our friends, our work mates, our relatives and all whose lives touch ours. Sometimes they get in our way; sometimes they need us. They include the wounded man lying on the side of the road. Our neighbour is someone whom God puts in front of us so that, as we walk our pilgrim's path in the world, we meet people who, for one reason or another, need our help.

It is hypocritical, however, when people prate piously about loving someone on the other side of the planet who needs food and who have the loudest word about loving all men, but refuse to love their neighbours nearest to them. They abandon their spouses in favour of another man or woman. They neglect their children, send them to a day care so they can earn more money, and refuse to discipline their children and teach them the ways of the Lord. They too are our neighbours and they are the ones we must especially love.

God also puts unbelievers on our path so that we bump into them: the man who works next to me in the factory, the passenger on a seat alongside of me in an aeroplane, the man in the ditch who cannot get his car out ...

We are commanded to love them too. We are commanded to love them simply because we are witnesses in this world of Jesus Christ to whom we belong. We have to be witnesses; it is a solemn and urgent command.

I would like to know from one of these defenders of the spurious well-meant offer how they define love. Do they view it as some sentimental attitude to the down-trodden? But God's love for His people is a love that seeks the ultimate good for the object, which is a glorious eternity with Him in heaven. Our love for our neighbour is not a sloppy and sentimental love for him; it is love that is an expression of God's love for us. It means simply that we desire and seek the salvation of our neighbour by witnessing to him. What better thing would anyone want for his neighbour than to seek his salvation? We can surely help him if he has a need but we do so in the name of Christ who has loved us. That is what it means to love our neighbour.

Our neighbour may be someone unexpected; he or she may even be one who hates us. But then too we witness to him or her by explaining the gospel and emphasizing his or her calling before God. It is like the preaching. The church preaches so that everyone who hears knows the truth of the suffering and exalted Lord Jesus, and what God requires. We are to do the same, for the power of our witnessing is the power of the same gospel that saved us. We must tell them that they must repent of their sins and believe in Christ crucified.

How do these people who defend a love of God for all interpret Psalm 5:5-6, Psalm 6:8 (cf. Matt. 7:23; 25:41), Psalm 139:19-22 and countless other Psalms in which the Psalmist prays that God may destroy the impenitent wicked (cf. Prov. 3:33)? I know that some claim that the so-called imprecatory Psalms are not inspired but this is a ruinous lie about God's Word (II Tim. 3:16).

This argument borders on the ridiculous.

Prof. Hanko

In my article last month, I began a series addressing a reader's concerns over the heresies of common grace and the gracious or well-meant offer of the gospel (the notions that God loves everybody and passionately desires to save those He has eternally decreed not to save). The writer of the question remarked that he had run into various arguments in defence of common grace and the well-meant offer to which he would like answers. I began my response with a general criticism of these heresies but reserved answers to his specific questions for future articles. With this *News*, I begin my answers.

One remark, however, before I start. I was astonished to see that all the questions, though fairly lengthy, involved no scriptural proof for the position advocated. Only one biblical passage was mentioned in all six questions. In subsequent letters, the questions continued but involved only one additional Scripture. It is remarkable that the two heresies of common grace and the well-meant offer can be supported for the most part only by human reasoning. Does not that in itself say a great deal about the wrongness of the arguments of those who defend these heresies?

I would also like to make a clarification, lest those who read these articles conclude that the questioner is a defender of these false doctrines. He is not; he merely wants answers to the objections.

Question 1. "God commands us to love one another, to love our neighbour, to love even our enemies. Why? Because God wants us to be like Him and to be Christ-like. He wants us to love everyone the same without partiality, and that love is not a selfish love or something that seeks its own. Therefore, to have a mind-set that says that God only loves a few while also believing that He commands us to love everyone is to make us more loving than God."

The argument is based on an untrue premise. God nowhere commands us to love everyone. He does command us to love our neighbour but the connotation of the word "neighbour" is much narrower than (absolutely) "all men." I do not see how it is possible for me to love all men: I do not even know the vast majority of those presently living. I do not understand how I could possibly know and love 7-8 billion people.

The idea is, of course, absurd. Yet, apparently, the defenders of a well-meant offer really mean that, because we must love everyone, God certainly loves everyone. The argument is, of course, that God would not command us to love all men if He Himself does not love all men. But God does not command us to love everyone: He commands us to love our neighbour. The term "our neighbour" is broader than God's elect: that is true.

(continued on p. 4)

Our Identity in Christ (2)

As we saw in the last issue of the *News*, Western views of man's identity are becoming more and more secularist and anti-Christian. Though no mortal man knows the future, there are several converging factors that suggest that things are likely to get worse.

First and most obviously, there is evolutionism. It is over 150 years since Charles Darwin's famous book *The Origin of Species* was published (1859). Over this period, evolutionary ideas have been working through all areas of human thinking and activity. According to evolutionism, man is merely developed slime. Life is resolutely materialist and meaningless. Thus man does not know, and cannot know, where he came from or where he is going.

Second, there is postmodernism, according to which there is no absolute truth. Truth is subjective. Knowing objective truth would only make people proud. The supposedly omniscient state takes care of "truth" for people.

Third, there are powerful political and legal forces, such as the homosexual lobby, which seek to marginalize and silence the Word of God. Man's identity is continually changing, as homosexual activists and their abettors have progressively rolled out their agenda. More is to come, as people become more and more accustomed to the previous elements and are readied for the next stage.

Fourth, there are technological developments in the spheres of medicine, computing, robotics, etc., as well as in the theory and practice of propaganda to influence the masses.

In all of this, there is an ongoing redefining of man and his identity: redefining humans as animals, redefining the human person, redefining marriage, redefining human sexuality, redefining gender, etc.

Before and alongside this redefining of man is the redefining of God, especially through a false view of love. God's love is presented as the #1 divine attribute and, in effect, the *only* divine attribute. God's wisdom, omniscience, justice, power, unchangeability, holiness, eternity, etc., are dissolved in this false view of love. "So, even if God exists, He is no threat to us or our sinful lifestyle"—such is the thinking of foolish man.

The vague and inoffensive God of sentimental and unrighteous love is being replaced by man, redefined man, with the highest expression of redefined man being the autonomous state. Moreover, the state or nation is increasingly being seen by many as an intermediate stage in the movement towards a one-world government.

All this redefining of man and God serves to soften the world up for the Antichrist or man of sin, who "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (II Thess. 2:4).

Thankfully, we have God's Word, with foundational truths set forth even on the opening page of the Bible. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). He is the Maker and Ruler of the universe. As early as Genesis 1, we read of Him as God, the (commanding) Word and the Spirit of God (1-3). Jehovah refers to

Himself as both "I" (singular; 29) and "us" (plural; 26), the God who is one in Being and three in Persons.

The truth about man's origin and nature is that he is the pinnacle of creation, being made on the last day of the creation week. Everything else was formed for him so that he should serve the glory of God (*Belgic Confession* 12). Man is not the product of cosmic chance and random mutations.

Man was formed from the dust of the earth and by the breath of God (Gen. 2:7). The two aspects of the one divine creation of man correspond to his being both body and soul. So people should be happy "under their own skin," so to speak!

Man was made in the image of God (1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), not in the image of an ape. Indeed, man is to exercise godly dominion over all the animals, fish and birds (1:28).

God created humanity in two genders. Christ's words to the Pharisees two thousand years ago are just as relevant to the politically correct in our own day: "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female" (Matt. 19:4; quoting Gen. 1:27)? So rejoice in your God-given gender!

Jehovah made mankind for marriage, which is a one-flesh union between one man and one woman for as long as they both shall live. As Christ said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6). So be content in either singleness or married life (I Cor. 7).

The Most High created man for work. Work for six days to God's glory in your lawful calling (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11)! Rest in Christ (Matt. 11:28), especially on the Lord's Day (Rev. 1:10).

The things in the previous seven paragraphs are based upon the first two chapters of the Bible. They are foundational truths about humanity, and what is good for men and women. But, as our society becomes more humanistic and pagan, even these basic building blocks for man's life in God's world are being removed.

We hear a lot in our day about "equality." The following are key elements in a biblical framework of equality. All human beings are equally created by God. All were equally represented in Adam and fell in him, so that all are equally totally depraved of themselves (Rom. 5:12-21). All should wear clothes to cover their nakedness (Gen. 3:21). All are equally governed by God's eternal decree and providence (Eph. 1:11). So we must know ourselves to be those who are under God's wise and powerful rule!

Moreover, biblical equality includes the truth that all will stand on the last day before the judgment seat of the Lord Jesus Christ. The exact same gospel comes to all, whether Jews or Gentiles: Salvation is in Christ alone, and all (equally) must repent and believe in Him!

Rev. Stewart

Covenant Protestant Reformed Church

83 Clarence Street, Ballymena, BT43 5DR • Lord's Day services at 11 am & 6 pm

Website: www.cprc.co.uk • Live broadcast: www.cprf.co.uk/live

Pastor: Angus Stewart, 7 Lislunna Road, Kells, N. Ireland, BT42 3NR • (028) 25 891851

pastor@cprc.co.uk • www.youtube.com/cprcni • www.facebook.com/CovenantPRC