

The World to Love and Not to Love

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Horace E. Allen



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Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful men, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

1 John 2:15–17

Contents

Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction.	xi
1 Love the World of Order and Structure God Created.	15
2 Love the Celestial and Terrestrial Worlds God Created.	33
3 Love the World of Humanity God Created	53
4 Love Not the World under Satan’s Control.	75
5 Love Not the World of Spiritual Darkness	101
6 Love Not the World of Emotional Darkness.	121
7 Love Not the World Estranged from God.	143
8 Love Not the World That Is in Constant Moral Decline.	167
9 Love Not the World of Which Man Is the Center	189
10 Love Not the World That Is the Creation of Man’s Imagination	213
Notes	233

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Introduction

The purpose of this work is to bring about greater awareness of the world Christians should love and the world they should not love. Its driving force began as a contemplation of 1 John 2:15–17, “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.” In the process of contemplation, it became clear to me that there was fogginess in the minds of Christians regarding the idea of “the world.” For the most part, Christians do not see how their social lives, entertainment, and politics define their world, and there is little difference between how some Christians and non-Christians live their lives. Both groups engage in the same social activities, enjoy the same entertainment, and choose their political stance on the same basis. It became clear that there is a need to define what the apostle John meant by the world we should not love.

The casual or carnal reader of scripture might not see a contradiction between the world we should not love and the world God loved and gave His one and only Son to save.¹ It is possible that the worldliness of some churches and Christians is due to the lack of distinction between these two worlds. There are those who point to the fact that Jesus associated with the despised of His day. They do this to justify their participation in things dishonoring to God. What they don't acknowledge is that Jesus' participation with sinners always affected the sinner; the sinner's behavior never affected Him. Those who seek to justify their involvement with the sinful world do so because they are in love with it.

I started writing about the world we should not love. In the process, it occurred to me that the world "cosmos" Christians should not love is the same word used for the world God loved. It became necessary, then, to show the contrast between the two worlds—the one God loved and the one Christians should not love. Hence, the first three chapters describing the world of perfect order and structure God created and loved. He adorned the universe with celestial and terrestrial bodies reflecting His majesty and power. He furnished earth with all good things to make it the dwelling place for man. When the world was ready and suitable to sustain man, God created him and gave him power over all other things. The perfect world system God created was spoiled when man chose to disobey Him and listen to Satan. For the sake of man, God put a curse on His perfect creation, and the world now limps along under the weight of the curse. However, God still loves the world He created and His special creation, man. He has not given up on either but is determined to restore all things on earth and in heaven to Himself. Hence, God has designed and carried out the plan of salvation through His Son, Jesus. Through Christ, a new system, the kingdom of God on earth, has been established. It is a system of righteousness designed to counter the defective moral world system. The purpose of God's new spiritual system is to reconcile fallen sinners to Himself so we could

participate in His divine nature and avoid the corruption of the sinful world order. This is the world God loves and that we should love.

The world we should not love is the organized system under the direct influence of Satan's rule. That diabolical influence resulted in man's fall from righteousness and the loss of moral innocence. Man, who was created in light, now finds himself groping in moral and spiritual darkness.² With the loss of light, he has become physically, mentally, and emotionally disabled. Man, in seeking to compensate for his loss of wellness, invented artificial means that only make him physically, spiritually, and emotionally sicker.

The world believers should not love is a system constantly formed by man's imaginations. This world system is a religious form without true, biblical content and understanding. In such a world, religion is what is important; subscribing to the rules makes people feel better about themselves. The religion, of course, could be secular or religious—a mere form of belief or disbelief, theism or atheism. However, none of it eases the conscience that is disturbed by relational separation from the one true God. So, instead of man's moral inventions helping him, they only serve to distance him from his Creator and plunge him deeper into confusion. The further away man drifts from God, the more he devalues himself. He sees himself less as having intrinsic worth and more of a machine with a temporal existence. Hence, the world system we should not love is constantly changing to cater to man's regressive desires.

The hope is that this work will cause greater awareness of the difference between the world God loves and the secular world system under satanic influence. We will then understand the subtleties of sin and how we have allowed ourselves to be co-opted by a system antagonistic to God and His righteousness. The goal is that the distinction between the two worlds will be clear, and we will fall out of love with the evil world system.

At the end of each chapter, questions are added for study and contemplation. This is ideal for both individual and small-group study.

Love the World of Order and Structure God Created

John tells us in his epistle not to love the world or the things that are in the world. On the other hand, we are told in the Gospel of John that God loved the world and sent Jesus Christ to die for it. On the surface, this seems to be a contradiction. It is, therefore, necessary for us to understand the difference between the world God loved, which we should love, and the world we should not love.

The Adornment of the Natural Order God Created

The word *world* for both statements—God loved (John 3:16), and we should not love (1 John 2:15–17)—is the same word in Greek with the same general meaning. It is the word *cosmos*. It means the ordering of the things that make up the world or the ordered universe.³ The idea is that of arranging furniture in a house. One example of this is the parable Jesus told of expelling an evil spirit from a man. After the evil spirit left, it wandered around seeking a place to settle. When it did not find a resting place, it returned to take up residence in the man and

found the house (the man in whom it used to live) unoccupied, swept clean, and put in order.⁴ The word *order* is the same Greek word *cosmos*.

The meaning of world (*cosmos*), then, is the ordering of things and ideas that constitute a system. It is the structuring of specific things and ideas that constitute a particular world or a world order. As it relates to the universe, the design and arrangements of the planets and their positions make it clear that the ordering of the universe is not a random act, but a purposeful design. The apostle John says of Jesus, “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3). “All things” suggests the intricacy with which everything was designed and put in its rightful place. It is like decorating a house in a certain style and choosing all the furniture to complement that style. If you desire a colonial look for your home, you will travel far and wide to find pieces that would complement that décor. Therefore, the world is adorned according to its designer’s intent. Nehemiah prayed, “You made the heavens, even the highest heavens and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything and the multitude of heaven worship you” (Neh. 9:6).

The world God loved, the world He designed and created, was the perfect system—a system that was consistent with His divine plan and purposes. It was a good and wholesome system designed to maintain its own equilibrium. God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.⁵ It was a system of goodness; there was to be no decay, aging, and death in it. It was in perfect harmony with itself because it was in harmony with God’s will. All its arrangements and orders functioned together in perfect balance. Man, being its caretaker, was in perfect harmony with the created order. There was no evil in his heart to oppose God’s perfect will. Man did not turn his inclination away from God’s moral standards but was in line with them. It was not in man’s heart to invent ways that would contradict God’s perfect creation.

Despite the Fall and the curse that He placed on the world, God still loves His world. He does not love what man has done to it, but He loves His creation and desires to restore it to its original position. For the sake of clarity and ease, I will examine some of the things God loved and decorated His universe with, what happened to them because of the Fall, and why we cannot love them in their present state.

God Loved the Natural Order He Created, Not What the Curse Has Produced

God has built order in the physical world as well as in the moral and social world. In the natural world that God loves, there is order in how things work with each other; it produces consistency and predictability. For example, God has set the sun in its orbit to govern the day and the moon and stars to govern the night.⁶ Hence, we can predict hours, minutes, and days so we can rest from our labor and sleep to recuperate our energies after an exhausting day. As the earth revolves around the sun, we count the days, weeks, months, and years, and we predict the seasons. For the moon marks off the season, and the sun knows when to go down.⁷ All this is possible because God has given orders to each of these systems. He states, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth” (Gen. 1:14–15).

Not only did God give orders to create the natural world, He also gave orders to maintain and sustain His creation. Regarding weather and the climate, Dr. Henry M. Morris, in his book, *The Bible and Modern Science*, says that the “water cycle” is precipitation of rain or snow that drained away by the river systems into the ocean. It then rose by evaporation into the skies and was carried by the wind back to the land to again be precipitated.⁸ It is now well-known that the major

wind currents of the world follow well-defined circuits that are largely responsible for all the great ocean currents. However, these truths were stated in the Bible centuries before science discovered them. King Solomon states over three thousand years ago in Ecclesiastes 1:6–7, “The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again.” And Job 36:27–28 says, “He draws up the drops of water, which distill as rain to the streams; the clouds pour down their moisture and abundant showers fall on mankind.”

For as much as the curse on the earth has resulted in natural catastrophes such as hurricanes, earthquakes, tidal waves, and flooding, all causing serious damage to the landscape and to humans alike, God still loves His world. It is His plan to reverse all these conditions and to restore His world into a friendly place for the righteous. It will happen on the day Jesus Christ returns for His redeemed people. This system as we know it will be completely made over in God’s appointed time. “That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with this promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:12–13).

Michael Green in his commentary on the Second Epistle of Peter and Jude states that in a renewed universe, the glory of the restoration will repair the ravages of the Fall. *Paradise Lost* will become *Paradise Regained*, and God’s purpose shall eventually be done in earth and in heaven. The destruction of the present universe is an attempt to convey, in the language of this world, something of the wonder of the next. It is not so much to describe the indescribable, but to prevent us from getting earthbound, to assure us that God has a purpose and a future, not only for our souls, but for our bodies—not only for redeemed individuals, but for a redeemed society.⁹

God Loved the Social Order He Designed; We Should Not Love What It Has Become

The world that God created and loved includes the marriage and family system. Even as God has built order and sustaining forces into the original physical system, He has built the same order and sustaining forces into the people system as well. From the very beginning, God created the first couple in such a way as to establish order and structure. First, He created man and gave him the instruction, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die” (Gen. 2:16–17). The man was to be the leader who carries out the supreme order given by the supreme leader, God. God then made the woman and gave her to the man as his “help meet.”¹⁰ As long as they kept in mind that their Creator was their supreme leader and obeyed His instruction, all would continue to be well with them and the world. The created order would continue its positive state of predictability and continue on the path of wellness.

The order of God’s creation of man and woman was no accident. That God formed Adam first and then declared that there was no suitable helper for him was not a suggestion that his loneliness took God by surprise.¹¹ Since God created all the living creatures in pairs so that they could multiply themselves, surely He would know that if man was going to increase in kind, fill the earth, and subdue it, he would need a mate.¹² So then, it was God’s intention all along to provide man with a mate. However, His purpose was to accomplish it in such a way that would express a built-in order, a structure of leadership that would leave no confusion as to who governs. In the built-in order of God’s design, man is not superior to woman since she is taken from his side and is one flesh with him. Hence, everyone that descends from this union—all humankind—would be created equal since they are of the same flesh and

blood. However, the order of the creative design meant that a structure of leadership was necessary to maintain social order.

There is no question that the social order God gave to man is now corrupt given the conflict and confusion therein. The change in the social order started when the woman began a discourse with the devil as to what God told her husband. When she willingly entertained the devil's discussion regarding what God said, she violated the leadership position of her husband and effectively embarked on a destructive path. She took on a role of defending what God said without the knowledge of her husband whom God put in charge. And when she did so, she violated the structure and opened herself to the devil's questioning God's instructions. The devil planted doubt in her mind so that she then started questioning who was right, God or the devil. She did not know that, "The serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made" (Gen. 3:1). He knew exactly who to approach and what approach to take. So before long, the woman was doing exactly what God said they should not do. That usurping of her husband's authority is the start of the distorting of leadership in the human system. However, the real reason for the curse was not because of her doing, but because her husband gave in to her rebellion.¹³ Despite the violation of God's command and the subsequent curse, God still loves man.

God does not love the fact that His creation is tarnished with sin, which now produces all kinds of maladies. He does not love the fact that the ground is cursed and is swaying under the weight of that curse, producing thorns and thistles. He does not love the fact that man's struggle and so much of the world's hardship results from the challenge of producing food. He does not love the fact that from the day of man's birth, he exists in a state of physical death. Simply because God still loves man, from the moment God pronounced the curse on the earth and on man, He demonstrated His love by making man a promise to save him.¹⁴ In spite of the curse, man is not without the faint light of

God, the image in which he was created, to guide him. God's law is imprinted on his heart as a basic principle that gives man the sense that there must be order in the world. Without order and structure, society would self-destruct.

God Loved the Marital and Family Systems He Designed; We Should Not Love What It Has Become

God loved the marriage and family system He created: one man and one woman committed to each other for life.¹⁵ Within the confines of the marital exclusiveness, they were to produce children and raise them.¹⁶ This system has built-in orders that there was to be perfect harmony between husband and wife. According to the very creation of the woman, taken from the rib of man, divorce was never to be an option. The response of the man when God presented him with the woman was, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man" (Gen. 2:23). The implication of the woman taken from the man is, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24 NASB).

The implication of the man and woman united together for life is inherent order built into the design of marriage. Since the two have now become one by a divine design, no human courts should be allowed to separate them. When the Lord Jesus was asked about the legality of divorce, He responded, "Haven't you read that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female and said, 'for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?' So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate" (Matt. 19:4–6). The fall, however, shattered the ideal order. The evil imaginations of men's hearts have made divorce possible. Divorce is part of this world's system that

is opposed to God; it defies God's divine principle for a strong, stable, and moral society.

Now then, since Christians should not love the world, we should not love what marriage has become. The Lord Almighty says, "I hate divorce and I hate a man covering himself with violence as like with his garment" (Mal. 2:16). Should we say any less than God has said about the state of marriage and divorce? The sad fact, however, is that many Christians are in love with having a divorce option for marriage. They have come up with euphemisms to justify people skipping from one marriage to the other. Years ago, when churches were more stringent on divorce, someone came up with the guilt trip that the church is the one place that shoots their wounded. So as not to be guilty of unloving behavior, many churches started entertaining divorce for just about any reason. No one wants to be inconsiderate. I suppose that is why the disciples tried guilt on Jesus when they confronted Him on His stringent stance on divorce. Jesus responded to them, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it" (Matt. 19:11–13). In our day, and in the church, this kind of thinking is mostly unacceptable. Hardly anyone is willing to make that kind of a sacrifice for the kingdom of heaven. It's strange; in the discussion of divorce, this idea is seldom brought up. Divorce is often an excuse for people not to deal with personal issues that would lead them to a life of sanctification. If God declared, "I hate divorce," we should say the same thing.

In *The Costly Retreat from Marriage*, Bruce Christensen describes why we should not love the present world system of marriage:

I must be very clear that we should love God's design of marriage but not the present world's perspective of it. Gone are the days when Americans looked at marriage and family through the prisms of duty,

obligation, and sacrifice. A successful, happy home was one in which intimacy was an important good but by no means the only one in view. A decent job, a well-maintained home, mutual spousal aid, child-rearing, and shared religious faith were seen almost universally as the goods that marriage and family life were intended to advance. Increasingly, marriage has become a vehicle for a self-oriented interest of romance, intimacy, and fulfillment. In the new psychological approach to married life, one's primary obligation is not family, but to one's self. Hence, marital success is defined not by successfully meeting obligations to one's spouse and children but by a strong sense of subjective happiness in marriage—usually to be found in and through an intense, emotional relationship with one's spouse. For many Americans, the more institutional model of marriage has given way to the “soul-mate model” of marriage.¹⁷

Christensen says that the present system of marriage and divorce began in 1969 when Governor Ronald Reagan of California signed the nation's first no-fault divorce bill. He later admitted that it was one of the biggest mistakes of his political career. In the decade and a half following the signing of the bill, virtually every state in the Union followed California's lead and enacted a no-fault divorce law of its own. The purpose of this bill was to eliminate the strife and deception often associated with fault-based divorce—the need for couples to fabricate spousal wrongdoing in pursuit of a divorce. What resulted was unexpected. The law gutted marriage of its legal power to bind husband and wife, allowing one spouse to dissolve a marriage for any reason—or for no reason at all.¹⁸

Christensen points out that the legal transformation was only one of the more visible signs of the divorce revolution. The nearly universal introduction of no-fault divorce facilitated the opening of the divorce floodgates. These laws facilitated unilateral divorce and lent moral legitimacy to the dissolution of marriage. The sexual revolution, too,

fueled the marital tumult of the times. Spouses found it easier in the swinging seventies to find extramarital partners. Also, partners came to have higher and often unrealistic expectations of their marital relationships. Increases in women's employment as well as feminist consciousness-raising also did their part to drive up the divorce rate.¹⁹

The transformational wave of divorce encouraged by the no-fault laws affected religious institutions as well. Churches lost much of their moral authority to enforce the marital vow. It didn't help that many mainline Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish leaders were caught up in the secular world and lent explicit or implicit support to the divorce revolution sweeping across American society. This moral accommodation was evident when the United Methodist Church issued the following statement: "In marriages where the partners are, even after thoughtful reconsideration and counsel, estranged beyond reconciliation, we recognize divorce and the right of divorced persons to remarry, and express our concern for the needs of the children of such unions. To this end, we encourage an active, accepting, and enabling commitment of the Church and our society to minister to the needs of divorced persons."²⁰

The changing cultural meaning of marriage also made it less necessary and less attractive to working-class and poor Americans. When the older, institutional model of marriage was the norm, marriage was the only legitimate avenue for having sex, bearing and raising children, and enjoying an intimate relationship. Moreover, Americans generally saw marriage as much more than a high-quality emotional relationship. Therefore, it made sense for all men and women—regardless of socioeconomic status—to get and stay married.

It was the divine plan of God for marriage to be a safe and healthy environment for children to grow. Marriage provides benefits both to children and to society. But with divorce and the breakdown of marriage, comes the dismantling of that healthy child-rearing environment. It was once possible to believe that the nation's high rates of divorce,

cohabitation, and non-marital childbearing represented little more than lifestyle alternatives brought about by the freedom to pursue individual self-fulfillment. However, experts now believe that these individual choices can be damaging to the children who have no say in them and to the society that enables them.²¹

Moreover, children in single-parent homes are more likely to be exposed to Hollywood's warped vision of sex, relationships, and family life. Christensen points out that a study by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that children in single-parent homes devote almost forty-five minutes more per day to watching television than children in two-parent homes. Given the distorted nature of the popular culture's family-related messages and the unorthodox family relationships of celebrity role models, this means that children in single-parent families are less likely to develop a healthy understanding of marriage and family life and are, therefore, less likely to have a positive vision of their own marital future.²²

Other research has confirmed the connection between divorce and cohabitation in America. Data from the General Social Survey indicate that adult children of divorce are 61 percent more likely than adult children from married families to endorse the notion that it is a "good idea for a couple who intends to get married to live together first." Likewise, adult children of divorce are 47 percent more likely to be currently cohabiting, compared to those who were raised in intact, married families. Thus, divorce has played a key role in reducing marriage and increasing cohabitation, which now exists as a viable competitor to marriage in the organization of sex, intimacy, childbearing, and even child-rearing.²³

God loved the marital and family system He designed and created for the well-being of couples and a healthy environment in which to raise a family. However, He does not love the present world's perspective

on family relations, which suggests that its only good is to provide individual happiness.

God Loved the Government He Designed, Not What Most Governments Represent

The government God established and loved was a theocratic one. God was to be the leader over His universe and humans were to be governed by Him. God's plan was to visit with man frequently and communicate His instructions to him directly.²⁴ Under God's rule, family heads, such as Adam, would be responsible to communicate God's will to their families. However, when Eve usurped her husband's authority and Adam gave into it, the governmental structure God designed for His world was disrupted.

Following the disruption of God's divine government, man had to invent his own government to preserve his society. And although nothing is said about the institution of government for hundreds of years, after the Fall, there must have been some form of government. Seemingly, family heads were the leaders, and since they were all descendants of the one family, there was undoubtedly a hierarchy, perhaps an extended family structure where people function in clans. A group of people can only exist as a community if they have some central force or power to ensure fairness of transaction and the protection of individual rights. When there is no centralized authority or government, everyone will do as he or she sees fit, and that will result in the survival of the strongest.²⁵ The need for government is intrinsically baked into the human psyche for maintaining community life. It is part of the divine order by the Creator.

The highest form of government is the one that existed before the Fall, a government under God, a theocratic government. When God delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage, He instituted a theocratic form of government based on the Levitical system with Moses as its leader

under God. Moses was to enter the Tabernacle to get his instructions from God. “There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites” (Exod. 25:22). The priests were necessary for a theocratic government, particular to the Old Testament economy. They were to atone for the people’s sins by offering sacrifices.

God knew that the Israelites, sharing in the fallen human condition, would not appreciate a theocratic government for very long. So even before they were settled in their land, He gave instructions concerning a monarchy. He told them, “When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, ‘Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us,’ be sure to appoint over you the king the Lord your God chooses” (Deut. 17:14–15a).

So said, so it happened! After some years in the land the Lord brought the Israelites into, they became jealous of the surrounding nations, most if not all of them, ruled by kings. They disliked the theocratic system; the system had become corrupt, and the people were dissatisfied with their judges and priests. “So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, ‘You are old and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have’” (1 Sam. 8:4–5). Samuel was grieved that the people wanted to exchange God’s leadership for a king like every other nation. “The Lord told Samuel, ‘Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king’” (1 Sam. 8:7).

The fact is that fallen human beings cannot function under a theocratic government. The leaders are prone to discredit God by the abuse of their authority. Fallen human beings are subjective and prone to hear what they want to hear from God. It is like the pastor who verbally and emotionally abuses his wife because God made him priest

and head of his house. His personal issues distort what he reads in the Bible. Therefore, the perfect theocratic government God designed will only work when sin and evil are removed from the earth, and man's heart is purified so he can hear from God perfectly. Until then, any attempt to set up a theocratic government on earth will be maintained only through oppression: the forcing of the human will to submit to the subjective will of the few. Hence, in an attempt for peoples and communities to carry out their innate desire for government, many forms of government have been invented. I will highlight three.

One of the oldest forms of government is *monarchy*. When a monarchy has few or no legal restraints in state and political matters, this form of government is called an absolute monarchy.²⁶ Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates are absolute monarchies. In ancient times, most governments were this type. The monarchs, like the pharaohs of Egypt, usually felt that they were gods, descendants of gods, or at least given their authority and position by the gods. The ruler in an absolute monarchy tends to be despotic. At the other end of the monarchy spectrum is the constitutional monarchy form of government in which its discretion is limited, either by law or by convention such as in the United Kingdom.²⁷ The United Kingdom is a unitary democracy governed within the framework of a constitutional monarchy. The monarch is the head of state and the prime minister is the head of government. Executive power is exercised by Her Majesty's government on behalf of and by the consent of the monarch.²⁸

Another form of government is socialism. A socialist government is one in which the means of planning, producing, and distributing goods is controlled by a central government. The goal is a just and equitable distribution of property and labor. The government also seeks to determine output and pricing levels. The challenge for the socialist government is synchronizing these decisions with the needs of consumers. Although many other forms of government practice aspects of

socialism—providing for the poor and aged—most socialist governments have been no more than dictatorships over workers by a ruling elite. Often the words socialism and communism are used interchangeably. According to Friedrich Engels who worked alongside Marx, socialism is the first phase of the revolution in which the government plays a prominent role in economic life, and class differences begin to shrink. This interim stage ultimately gives way to communism, a classless society.²⁹ It is a noble idea to provide for those who are less fortunate. However, any effort by the government to make everyone equal in social and economic standing is not of God because an attempt to create sameness in a society is an attempt to subjugate. All men are created equal, but not all are given the same abilities and talents.

The third form of government is democracy, “a system of government in which all the people of a state or country are involved in making decisions about its affairs by voting to elect representatives to a parliament or similar assembly.” Democracy is further defined as, “a government by the people” based on majority rule. Supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation, usually involving periodically held free elections. According to political scientist Larry Diamond, a democratic government consists of four key elements:

1. A political system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections
2. The active participation of the people, as citizens, in politics and civic life
3. Protection of the human rights of all citizens
4. A rule of law in which the laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens³⁰

Whatever the form of government, it is based on the intrinsic design of God for the good of society. For that reason, “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong” (Rom. 13:1–3). Let us keep in mind that when Paul wrote this under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Rome was a terror to the Christians.

It is the people who occupy the positions and the rules they enact that determine if they are honoring to God. Many government leaders do not serve the greater good but instead focus on personal and party interests as opposed to the interests of the people. The best interest of the people is what enhances God’s purpose for their lives. When the best interest of the people is not served, God’s purpose for government is undermined. Christians should love the world of government, which God designed for our good, but be careful not to side with leaders and party affiliations that undermine what is godly.

Conclusion

God created a world that could sustain, not only the natural creative order, but consistent, healthy interpersonal relations between peoples and between peoples and their governments. The fall resulted in disorder that affected every aspect of human life, particularly social and relational life. People’s efforts to find order and balance shift according to their moral and spiritual health. As they move further away from God, their interpersonal relations become more confusing. In their effort to hold society together as a community, their governmental structures often reflect their distrust for each other. Although we have God’s Word that

tells us why our lives and systems are tenuous, there is a refusal to return to the source of health.

Questions for Contemplation and Study

1. Christians believe that the Creation of the world (cosmos) was not a random act, but a purposeful design. According to John 1:4, through whom were all things made?
2. According to Nehemiah 9:6, what was the extent of God's creation?
3. The world God created and loved was perfect and harmonious. How was the world harmonious?
4. God built order and structure into His creation, which cause predictability. What are some of these things that work in relation to each other, and what do they make predictable?
5. According to Dr. Henry Morris, how does the water cycle sustain life on earth?
6. This present world is under a curse and in a state of ruin due to man's sin. According to 2 Peter 3:12–13, what can we expect to happen in the future?
7. God created man first and then later He created woman. Was there a particular reason for this creative order?
8. If there was a reason for this creative order of man and woman, has it changed? And if so, how has it changed?
9. God has designed and created the marital system and declared it good as part of His creation. What is it about the marital system that God loved? And what are some things about it He does not love?
10. What is it that Jesus said to His disciples about divorce that is never mentioned in the discussion on divorce today?

11. How has the changing cultural meaning of marriage affected the attitude of Americans?
12. According to researchers, what are some negative attitudes of adult children of divorce?
13. God designed government as part of His world order. The original government was theocratic, and God was the direct leader of people. Why is theocratic government not presently the best form of government?
14. Knowing that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely, which of the following forms of government—monarchy, socialism, democracy—is more suitable for fallen human beings and why?