

from mentioning Jesus except “when it is allowed”? Will we join the forces of cultural revolution instead?

Dear brothers and sisters in the church that I love, I am persuaded better things concerning you! I know you will not disappoint me with either violence or cowardice; I know you, that for you it will continue to be simply Jesus, all day every day, to the last day.

Jesus told us the way to survive the Apostasy and also to thrive. He said, “Make disciples of all the nations, teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you. See, I am with you always even to the end of the age.” I have every hope that my home church will not go into hiding during the Apostasy. No, you will not be stockpiling food and arms. You will be among the faithful few who make disciples to Christ Jesus right up to the day He returns. If Jesus returns next year, He will find me making disciples in Africa again, and I pray He finds you faithfully teaching all that He commanded us, right to the end of the age.

Let our missionaries pray for America with alertness and perseverance, as America's churches pray for our missionaries: that God may open up a door for the word, and that we may speak boldly the mystery of Christ Jesus the way we ought.

Maranatha,

Colin

Let No One Deceive You

Parting Words in a Time of Storm

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Let No One Deceive You

When my family came back from our sixteen-year church planting mission in Africa, we expected to find some changes in our home country. But even though we prepared ourselves and our children for the experience, “reverse culture shock” hit us hard. Having grown accustomed to living in a tribe on the edge of starvation, just walking around among very well-nourished Americans proved intimidating, like entering a land of giants. Everything about America can seem extravagant to a newcomer—the wide roads, the large homes, even walking into a Wal-Mart supercenter made us physically dizzy. We had to gradually build up our resistance to the excesses of our own nation in small doses until we could return to “normal” life.

To tell you the truth, I hope we never return to normal life again. It has been healthy for the McDougalls to learn how to live a missionary lifestyle, eating simply, sharing transportation and maintaining a moderate footprint; since these are habits that seem to lend themselves to physical and economic health. The lifestyle issues that were such a shock to us on our first arrival, however, have mostly receded into distant background noise; and for the most part, our kids feel at home here now and we seem to be able to fit in with our surroundings most of the time.

The one culture shock that we have never recovered from, however, is the seismic shift in our country backward into paganism that took place while we were away in the 1980s and 90s. We were surprised at the extent to which human life had been cheapened, human sexuality had been perverted, and the environment had become a god to be worshiped. This regression identifies itself with the label “post-modern,” because it goes beyond the “modern” moral relativity of the twentieth century. Today’s opinion leaders claim that moral standards are not just unnecessary, but that it is actually wrong for anyone to suggest universal standards exist.

What our culture calls post-modern, the Greek New Testament calls “apostasy” meaning “a falling away”. Every generation of Christians in the last 2000 years has had to deal with apostasy

when He comes we will be caught up to meet Him in the clouds. This is His glorious promise to us.

Jesus’ imminent return is only half of the story, however. There is still one prophetic event that takes place before Jesus comes to gather us to Himself, and it is called the Apostasy (or the Falling Away, you can read all about it in 2 Thessalonians 2). Elsewhere in the Bible it is called a time of peril, a time when evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse. Jesus may come today! If He does, our generation in America will either be famous or infamous—not because we survived the Great Recession or the Great Climate Change! We will be known for better or for worse as the generation that lived through the Great Falling Away.

The Apostasy is not the same thing as the Tribulation. The Tribulation is a time of trouble that will come upon Israel when she is betrayed by the Antichrist and persecuted. The trials of that terrible time will come upon the whole world as a punishment that is almost unimaginable, and I have good reason to believe that you and I will not experience those terrors. No, the Apostasy is not the Tribulation; the Bible says that “the Apostasy comes first” before the Day of Christ. If you and I are caught up in the Rapture when Jesus returns, it will be because we have survived the period of time called the Apostasy, the deception that will cause so many to fall away.

The first deception comes when our nation begins to deny the opening sentence of the Bible. When Americans cease to believe that God created the heavens and earth and Adam and Eve in His image, then they will begin to worship the creation rather than the Creator; they will reject God’s institution of marriage, and He will abandon them to homosexual acts. The second deception comes when our so-called churches begin to question whether Jesus is the Christ and become susceptible to those who say, “The Messiah has come and is preaching here or there.”

Brothers and sisters, it is upon just these two prophetic points that we are revealed in our time as either the light of the world or a candle under a basket. If we criticize the Nazi generation in Europe for “just following orders,” how will we respond when our culture and our government put on the squeeze to suppress the evidence for intelligent design? When all men speak evil of us and call us intolerant? When our simple affirmation of God’s design in marriage and sexuality is mocked in the media as bigotry and hate speech? Will we too “follow orders” and refrain

stinctively that we should not cheat someone else's marriage or our own partner; we are all instinctively repulsed by the idea of sexual behavior with a close family member or an animal or a person of the same sex. But here in Leviticus 20 God tells us how strongly He abhors these behaviors.

In the fifty states these moral principles were also codified into law until the 1970s. During our lifetime, the society has changed to the point that most of the acts that are an abomination to God and were at one time punishable by law are now protected civil rights under our Constitution. This is what we should expect if we are approaching the time of Christ's return and entering the generation of the Apostasy. But Christians should be able to wisely witness to the truth that God did not create us to behave in this way. We should be armed to point out that sexuality is celebrated in the Bible, is honored by all cultures, and is holy to a married husband and wife.

The answer to the sexual aspect of the Apostasy is found in I Corinthians 7:1-5. Let each man marry a woman and let each woman marry a man and let them not deprive each other of sexual attention and comfort, and let them be faithful to one another. We say this not because it is more convenient for us or because we are conservative traditionalists; we say this because God tells us He designed us to behave this way. I am dismayed when Christians do not know how to argue for sexual morality or when they say, as the world says, "Whatever works for you..." I hope that my home church will be bold about celebrating marriage and vigorous about defending marriage in America's age of darkness. I hope we will clearly point out that sex was God's idea and marriage is His institution created for its expression, and that He is the only one who has the authority to prescribe true sexuality for mankind.

The Coming Apostasy: How to Thrive

As I conclude this letter to my home church, I sense a great urgency, and it's not just because of how important it is that God made us and is the sole authority over His creation. I also feel urgent because Jesus is coming again. Jesus preached several parables to press home His last message from the Mount of Olives, "I am coming for you and my reward is with me. I am coming unexpectedly. Be on the alert because I could come for you at any time." People who take Jesus' message seriously affirm His imminent return, meaning that Jesus could come today. And

in one form or another, but the generation that Jesus rescues at the Rapture will have to face apostasy at its most intense. If it is true (as many Bible students believe) that Christ will return in this generation, then the post-modern apostasy is the Great Apostasy that the Bible says must come first (2 Thess. 2:3; I Tim. 4:1). The Great Apostasy is that prophesied period of time when biblical teaching will begin to be generally mocked and rejected in cultures around the world and when Jesus' identity as the Christ will be questioned even by so-called churches.

After ten years of living in America, I still don't get post-modernism, but at least now I understand what has happened in our culture. I may not have the know-how to move our culture back toward health, but at least now I know where the cancer came from and what organs it is attacking; and I know where in the Bible to look for the right medicine.

This booklet is a letter to my home church in America to let the people dearest to me know how I pray for their love to grow in knowledge and discernment, so that my American brothers and sisters can thrive in a post-modern world, blameless until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:9-10). Like Paul's letter to the Philippians, this is a letter to a very special missionary supporting church. My home church has to swim in the same poisonous waste water as first century Philippi, and it too needs love based in a growing knowledge of the word of God. Just like the Philippian church, my home church needs to be able to recognize and "affirm the things that are excellent as the children of God in a crooked and perverse generation."

It all goes back to the beginning

When I was a kid in Sunday School at Church of the Open Door we had to memorize Psalm 100. I must have been about ten years old, and when I first heard it I laughed. It says we should know that it is the Lord God "who has made us and not we ourselves." I thought, how ridiculous that anyone could imagine that we made ourselves! I immediately envisioned a tribe of people who were trying to make themselves, perhaps putting gingerbread dough in the oven and hoping people would pop out! As I grew up I realized that the Israelites in Psalm 100 did not have an irrational belief that they could make people—they fully understood that God created all people, but they needed to be reminded to give God glory for making the people into a nation. As an Ameri-

can patriot I have come to apply this psalm to give God credit for making our colonies into a great nation. We are not His chosen people in the way Israel is, but God formed our nation just as surely as He formed theirs.

Today, however, most citizens in our great nation are foggy about the basic facts, not only regarding the work of God in making nations, but even regarding God's work of making people! Oh, they are very well-acquainted with sexual reproduction and with the biology of embryonic development, but they are unaware of the fact that God knits the embryo together in the womb or that God created the first man from the dust. Genesis 1 seems like a fairy tale to this generation of Americans; whereas to Christ, the first chapters of Genesis were an elementary history lesson: "From the beginning of creation, God made them male and female," Jesus said.

The critical moral quandaries of this generation in my country—abortion, euthanasia, environmentalism, homosexuality, fornication (meaning sex without marriage)—can only be resolved by laying again the foundation of God's creation. If people believe that they are just highly evolved animals in "mother nature's laboratory", then they have no basis beyond personal preference for discerning true morality. On the other hand, believers who know that God created them as human beings can resolve each of these moral questions on the basis of God's stated design.

This is the fundamental test of our day. This is where we are either the light of the world or a candle under a basket. The pilgrim generation was tested to see whether they would risk their lives on the open sea and in a wilderness land just for the opportunity to worship God freely. The Civil War generation and the Civil Rights generation were tested to see how much they would sacrifice for the truth that all races of men were created equal by God. The World War II generation in Europe was tested to see whether they would sacrifice to stand with God's chosen people. Our generation is being tested to see whether we will sacrifice to defend the truth that it is God who has made us and not we ourselves.

Brothers and sisters, let no one deceive you. When our generation is evaluated for better or for worse, the central issue of our day will not be our response to climate change or to economic recession. They will ask, "How did our fathers respond to post-modernism and the Falling Away?"

ness" in order to legitimize sexual immorality. They also have to deny God and refuse to honor Him as the Creator. As long as they continue to suppress the truth and live in denial about God, these societies can develop an appetite for depravity that infects the entire civilization leading to societal breakdown. But this is an unnatural way to live and deeply unsatisfying for those who are so infected. The history of the Romans themselves shows us that as soon as the society decayed to the point of breakdown, the people gladly returned to accept the message of Jesus Christ. The history of the Israelite tribe of Benjamin also demonstrates how a society may destroy itself through sexual immorality almost to the point of extinction but will then naturally return to the societal norm that God hard-wired into human beings when He made them in His image, male and female.

The Bible does record instances where people groups departed so far from the knowledge of God that they could not reset. God destroyed the earth with the Flood in response to human depravity so abysmal that He had no choice but to start over with one family. Again roughly twenty centuries before Christ, the city-states of Sodom and Gomorrah were utterly destroyed in response to their sexual immorality and homosexual acts. But generally speaking, God's twin witnesses of instinct and conscience have kept pagan cultures on track even without the Bible as a guide.

Besides our instinct for monogamy and our God-given conscience, people in our country also have the Bible, if only they will listen to it. Regarding the beauty of human sexuality the Scriptures give roughly equal parts positive affirmations for the joy of sex in marriage and warnings regarding the consequences for sin. A good summary is found in Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed is undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge." God does not treat all sins equally, but requires capital punishment for seven crimes besides murder (Leviticus 20): sacrificing your children to a pagan god, seeking out a demonic spirit-guide for yourself or someone else, cursing and abusing your own parents, committing adultery with another person's spouse, committing incest, committing homosexual acts, or committing bestial acts. While it is true that any sin separates us from God and needs to be made right, it is not true that all sins are equally evil in God's sight. In His list of seven sins that are an abomination to Him, four are sexual in nature, and all of these are universally recognized to be sins even in cultures where the Word of God has never been translated or distributed. We all know in-

pendent on a healthy culture to foster and sustain it. Not so. Marriage is an institution created by God for the good of mankind and as a sample of the richness of Christ's relationship with His church. It is a cultural universal in every human society, and it is an institution that can be recovered in any home in any culture where a man and his wife determine to submit to their Creator. I hope that in my home church, there will increasingly be inspiring stories of marital restoration and reconciliation that will light a pathway for others back to the One who created mankind in His image, male and female.

Sexuality

Not only is there hope for marriage in America wherever Christians are living faithfully, but there is hope for improved health in our nation's sexuality—even in communities where there is no Christian witness. This is because God's design in the two sexes is indelible and because He created it with a failsafe provision, so that human beings could know how to behave even where His written instructions are unavailable. Even in societies that have never had the written testimony of God's law, every culture in the world has been able to deduce God's institution of marriage, and every culture in the world has drawn similar parameters to constitute legitimate marriage. The Apostle Paul writing in Romans 2 says that "this shows the work of God's law written on their hearts."

There are many species that God hardwired for monogamy, but that is not what we are talking about. Humans are different because our behavior is not merely controlled by instinct but is also filtered through a conscience. Paul goes on to say to the Romans that even the most pagan society knows instinctively what standards of behavior are appropriate, but when people fail to live up to those standards they suffer the conviction of their own guilty consciences. Whatever depths of paganism America reaches, one thing we can always know is that our people are hardwired from birth to seek a monogamous marriage partner, and no matter how much they praise "free love" and pretend to be "okay with a bit of promiscuity" their consciences are bothering them.

Humans grasp sexual differences and differentiate their behavior from a very early age, making it almost impossible for a society to get this part of God's will wrong. The Bible says in Romans 1 that societies have to "suppress the truth in unrighteous-

Let Us make man in Our image

Let's begin at the beginning. The first truth taught in the Bible is that God created the heavens and the earth. There are differences among believers regarding the time of God's creation or the manner in which He created, but there can be no doubt that God is the one who took initiative to create everything in the universe, and that He created all of the galaxies from nothing. He not only created the heavens and the earth, but He also made every living thing on earth. This is the united testimony of Job (chapters 38-41), the Psalms (eg, Psalm 19), the prophets (eg, Isaiah 40:25-26), and the New Testament apostles (eg, Acts 17:24 or 1 Peter 4:19). According to the Bible, the reason that God has authority to do whatever He deems best on the earth and the reason that men should obey Him is because He created everything and therefore has the right to determine the path and purpose of His creation (Isaiah 45:9-12). According to the Bible, one reason God is to be worshiped by all is that He created all things (Rev. 4:11).

On the sixth day God said: "Let Us make man in Our image," an obviously corporate decision. In the New Testament (John 1:1-18) we discover that both the Father and the Son were intimately involved in creating, and in Genesis 1:2 we see that the Spirit also had an important role. The Bible reveals that God discussed and decided the plan of Creation—not that He was muttering to Himself under His breath, but God was resolving an important issue that required the active involvement of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The result of this interaction was that we should be made in God's image, exercising His delegated authority over every other living thing God had made on the earth (1:27-28). Jesus was not a marginal contributor to this decision, but the Bible recognizes Him as Co-Creator with the Father (John 1:3; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16).

Post-modern theories that deny God's special creation of earth or of living things or of human kind strike at the heart of several of the Bible's fundamental doctrines. For instance, when God called the tongue-tied Moses, He based His right to choose a spokesman upon the fact that He not only designed the human speech organs but also forms those organs in each individual who is born (Exodus 4:11). When God ordained the six-day work-week and set aside the seventh day for rest, He based this ordinance on the pattern He had set by creating the world in six days (Ex. 20:11).

There are some believers in Jesus today who do not accept

what the Bible says about God's creation of the world. Those most affected by post-modernism say that it doesn't really matter anyway. They say that the first three chapters of Genesis are an allegorical description of what was in fact a process of some ten billion years that God may or may not have set in motion. But I seriously doubt that these believers have thought this all the way through. If living things came into existence through time and chance, and if humanity gradually evolved from other species, here is a partial list of the biblical doctrines that would lose their rationale:

- Human stewardship over the environment.
- The seven-day week and the principle of weekly rest.
- Adam as personal head of our race and genetic ancestor of every human being.
- Adam's sin as imputed to the entire race.
- Death as an enemy which entered a perfect creation as a result of sin.
- Marriage as instituted by God rather than man.

The Scripture ties the doctrine of Creation also to the historical account of the Flood and the prophetic promise of Christ's return. In 2 Peter 3:1-7 the apostle warned us in advance that during the Apostasy people would be "willfully ignorant of the fact" that God created the heavens and the earth with a word. He told us that the last-days generation would ignore the history lessons of Noah's time when God destroyed the earth with floodwaters and that they would live in denial, pretending that the day of judgment would never arrive. According to Peter's prophecy the first step of the fallacy will be to deny the accuracy of the Creation account, the next step will be to deny the historicity of the worldwide Flood, and the next step will be to deny the imminent judgment. Do you see how much of Bible doctrine hangs on that first sentence? "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Since God created the heavens and the earth and Adam and Eve, the New Testament protects the freedom of every believer to choose marriage or to choose singleness (I Timothy 4:3-4 and I Corinthians 7). Post-modern thinking views sexual release as a basic human need and marriage as completely unnecessary for couples who are in love and want to live together. But the Bible views marriage as holy and something to be desired, simply because God created it. At the same time, the Bible models chaste singleness as a high calling exemplified in the lives of John the

Jesus' passionate zeal was to restore His Father's original design. He felt we should be more concerned not to deface God's beautiful creation than rationalizing how to satisfy the fine print of Moses' law.

Jesus' teaching is in complete harmony with Malachi's prophecy (2:13-16) that God "made them one" and that "He hates divorce." The prophets recognized that one of the major reasons for alienation between God and man was that people were dealing teacherously with one another and "profaning the Lord's holy [institution] which He loves."

In the United States until the last fifty years, divorce was a cultural scandal, and people who did not know God would often continue in dysfunctional marriages simply because divorce was so culturally stigmatized. But after the sexual revolution of the 1960s most Americans came to feel that it was better to divorce than to live miserably together. They even came to believe that it was better for their children to live in a broken home than in a miserable home. Today's young people have seen the pain caused by divorce in their parents' generation and their grandparents', and many are deciding that marriage is neither necessary nor desirable for couples in love who just want to live together. These are mere symptoms of the post-modern logic that is leading our culture toward the apostasy described in the Bible.

The answer to the marital aspect of the Falling Away is found in Ephesians 5:22-33. The Apostle Paul says that not only did God institute marriage with His mystery sentence in Genesis 2:24, but He also designed marriage to be the metaphor for the relationship of Jesus Christ to the Church. Jesus not only taught us what marriage was intended to be, He showed us in flesh and blood. He demonstrated how a husband makes loving sacrifices for his wife and how a wife responds by obeying her husband.

Jesus Christ also modeled for us how to live a chaste and single life without living alone. He showed that the greatest fulfillment in life does not come from food or from sex but from doing the will of His Father. He commended those who choose the single life for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Falling Away is answered by every married Christian who selflessly sacrifices out of love for a spouse, and it is answered by every unmarried Christian who finds true satisfaction in Christ Jesus.

Some Christians give the impression that they have given up hope that marriage can be restored in our country, as though marriage were some kind of American idea to start with and de-

Marriage

There are actually two accounts of the way God created man and woman, and these are recorded in the first two chapters of the Bible. In the Genesis 1 account, the Bible simply says that God created man both male and female in His image, that He accomplished this on the sixth day and that He gave mankind dominion over all the earth. In the Genesis 2 account, we discover that God made Adam out of the dust of the ground and then breathed life into him. We further discover that God created woman afterward by taking a rib from Adam as the raw material from which He made her.

These two accounts are in no way contradictory. The first account shows the order in which God created the earth and all that is in it, while the second account describes in more detail the steps He took to create mankind. When Jesus quoted from the Creation accounts, He believed them both to be equally true.

The Creation accounts conclude with a statement by Adam (Gen. 2:23 “she shall be called Woman!”) and a statement by Moses the history-writer (Gen. 2:25 “the man and his wife were both naked and unashamed”). But there is a sentence in between these two statements that might have been made either by Adam or by Moses. The sentence reads, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh (Gen. 2:24).” This is a mysterious sentence in the historical record because we have no indication about who was speaking. Did Adam say this as a prediction? Did Moses write this as an observation or as some kind of mythic explanation?

Surprisingly, Jesus taught that this mystery sentence should not be attributed to either Adam or Moses but to God Himself (Mark 10:7-9). It was God who as our Creator stated the principle that a man should leave his father and mother and become one with his wife. This was God’s idea from the beginning and one that He instituted on the day of Eve’s creation. Jesus taught that no human being has a right to break apart the marriage that Creator God designed and put together.

In this passage, Jesus was especially speaking to the issue of whether it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife, and Jesus’ conclusion was that divorce is the exact opposite of God’s original design. Jesus taught the scandalous doctrine that the person who divorces a spouse and then marries someone else is committing adultery. But His primary concern was not whether through legal sleight of hand someone might be able to justify getting a divorce;

Baptist, Jeremiah, and Jesus Christ Himself.

Another important teaching that the Bible bases upon the Creation account is the masculine leadership role in the family and in the churches, a teaching which is very unpopular in our culture today. In 1 Corinthians 11 and again in 1 Timothy 2 the Bible gives specific roles for men and women in the church’s worship service, and in both passages the basis for masculine leadership is God’s decision to create man first and then to create the woman for the man’s sake. As the churches in America begin to deny that God created Adam from the ground in a special act of creation and then later created woman to be his ally, they will move quickly toward denying masculine headship in the family and in the house of God.

This is just a quick attempt at a partial listing of the Bible doctrines that are built upon the truth of its first sentence, but it should also be obvious that if the first sentence of the Bible is in any way inaccurate or fanciful, then the whole book is disqualified as a faithful history. Many people feel that they can affirm both Darwinism and Creation. They will say, “I believe that God can create the world however He chooses. He could make it in six days or He could create a colony of bacteria and let natural processes take over—it makes little difference to me.” But this is extremely short-sighted. Of course He could do it however He chose; but if God has decided to record something about the history of His actions, we have to presume He at least got the facts straight.

Consider this: if God created only the bacteria and then let Nature do the rest, then Adam as our literal and genetic ancestor is only a myth. Then Jesus was wrong about God having created all things, and He was wrong about God creating Adam and Eve as male and female and joining them together in marriage (Mark 10:6-9). Then Adam and Eve could not have committed the original sin, and sin could not have been imputed to the whole human race through the sin of one person. Then the Bible is wrong about the way that death entered the world, since there must have been trillions of deaths during the millennia leading up to human evolution. If death is not the result of one man’s sin, then Jesus’ death could not at one stroke pay the price for Adam’s original sin and could not turn back the clock to our original and deathless creation. Then there truly is no hope of eternal life. If the first sentence of the Bible is a lie, then none of the Bible can hold together.

Earth and the environment as man's dominion

An encouraging development in our culture over the past fifty years is that our environment is being much more carefully studied and preserved. This has been an important concern for believers from the beginning, since one of God's stated purposes in creating mankind was to subdue or domesticate the earth and to have dominion over all the other creatures. This is a shared privilege and responsibility of all mankind, male and female equally (Genesis 1:26-29). The Scripture goes so far as to say that several vegetable species (the shrubs and plants of the field, Genesis 2:5) were created in seed form and did not actually sprout until Adam and Eve were on hand to cultivate them. The Genesis historical account explains that God created the earth and all that is in it as a habitable place for human beings, and then He created human beings to be caretakers over the planet. King David in Psalm 8 recognized this stewardship and was amazed that God would entrust the care of all His great creation into the hands of measly men.

Our concern over the destruction of species or the loss of habitat is an impulse that God planted in our hearts. We are not "tree huggers" but tree planters, and when the environment fails to thrive, we are charged with a responsibility to find out why and to change our own activities in order to promote the health of the dependent species. It pains me to hear Christians scoff at those with a legitimate desire to promote the welfare of our planet, since this is one of the few things that our culture is finally getting right.

The problem with the present American approach to conservation is that it starts with a rejection of our mandate from God who owns all things. When our culture forgets that God is the Creator and that we are simply the guardians He appointed to take care of His work of art, then the culture begins to create pseudo-religious myths to take God's place. Our teachers and politicians create mythic figures like Gaia or Mother Nature to whom they attribute the acts of God. Our children are taught the myth that aboriginal peoples had great respect for the earth and that their pagan religions promoted ecological conservation. For instance the State Department currently prints this Mohawk thanksgiving prayer near the back of the U.S. Passport: "We send thanks to all the Animal life in the world. They have many things to teach us as people. We are glad they are still here and we hope it will always be so." This is a symptom of the Apostasy that the apostles told us was going to come.

Regarding the false religion of environmentalism, the Bi-

ble says "they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creation rather than the Creator" (Romans 1:25). In other words, human beings were designed to take care of the environment, and our desire to see the earth flourishing is natural for us. So then, when a society begins to deny God as Creator, they still have to do something with their God-given passion for environmental health. The result is that the more they deny God as their Creator, the more they will begin to worship the Sequoias, the pelicans and the whales.

Over the past few years our culture has become so confused that many now feel humanity is acting as a pest and a parasite upon the eco-system, and that something has to be done to curb the expansion of human population. This confusion too results from their denial that God created the heavens and the earth perfectly and man in harmony with creation until sin entered the world. The problem with our environment is not that there are too many people—in fact, the only command of God that mankind has ever consistently obeyed is "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." This was God's command to Adam and Eve and one He re-affirmed to Noah and his family after the Flood. Wherever human beings have taken our stewardship seriously, our habitat has been able to support surprisingly dense settlement. No, the problem is not over-population; the problem is sin. After the explosion of human sin and debauchery that led up to the Flood, God placed relational distance between us and the other animal species (Genesis 9): we were permitted to eat them for food and they were made to instinctively fear us. This tension will continue to accelerate during the generation of the Apostasy to the point that the wild beasts will begin to habitually prey upon people (Rev. 6:8), something that mankind has never experienced except in a few unusual instances.

The answer to the environmental aspect of the Falling Away is for Christians to know and to defend God's purpose in creating mankind and to personally pursue that purpose energetically. One of the hallmarks of the coming kingdom of our Lord Jesus is that the creation will again flourish under our care (Romans 8:18-25). When we are revealed as the sons and daughters of God, a new era of freedom will be initiated not only for us but also for beast and bird, flora and fauna. I hope that in my home church I will hear more and more that our people are not only speaking the truth about God's creation but are also effective in causing the creation to prosper and rejoice.