

...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembly together...but encouraging one another.  
 Heb 10:24-25

Share the teaching  
 Guard the sharing

# Male Call

## March 28, 2008—Atonement—The Problem: Possible Causes and Solutions

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| 6:00 –<br>6:05 | Coffee & Donuts Opening Prayer  |
| 6:05 –<br>7:00 | <p>1) Review the <u>virtually undisputed</u> problem:<br/> <i>As a rule, religions, philosophers, and social scientists agree that the world is not as it should be, that there is a problem with human existence individually and corporately.</i><sup>1</sup></p> <p>a) Recall the four broken relationships—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) With God</li> <li>ii) With self</li> <li>iii) With others</li> <li>iv) With nature</li> </ul> <p>b) Mk 7:14-23</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>A weak view of sin produces a weak view of the need for atonement.</i></p> <p>2) <u>Atheism</u>: Possible causes and solutions (simplified!):</p> <p>a) <u>Sigmund Freud</u> (God as man’s creation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Cause: Biologically-based guilt—Our unconscious desires driven by pleasure-seeking (<i>id</i>) is in tension with our values imparted to us by parents, society, etc. (<i>superego</i>). Our <i>ego</i> tries to maintain the balance. Pride or guilt arises from our <i>superego</i>.</li> <li>ii) Solution: Resolve guilt through scientific understanding of its cause.</li> <li>iii) Religion: God is a projection of our infantile, repressed desires for protection and security against the crush of nature.</li> </ul> <p>b) <u>Karl Marx</u> (God as an opiate)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Cause: Social alienation—Every aspect of human life and thought, including ideals and values, is determined by social and economic factors.</li> <li>ii) Solution: Change the prevailing social and economic systems (e.g., ridding society of private property and class distinctions).</li> <li>iii) Religion: Dulls the pain of downtrodden people in an unjust world.</li> </ul> |

<sup>1</sup> *Missing the Mark*, vii.

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|  | <p>c) <u>Secularism</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Cause: Humanity depends on the escapist promises of religion, rather than facing problems squarely and believing that humankind has the potential to create a world in which peace and justice will prevail.</li> <li>ii) Solution: Extend the scientific method of rational inquiry into all aspects of life, while at the same time maintaining a sense of compassion for the individual. There is nothing beyond this life.</li> </ul> <p>3) <u>Theism</u>: Possible causes and solutions (simplified!)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <u>Buddhism</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Cause: We desire that which is temporary, which causes us to continue in the illusion of the existence of the individual self.</li> <li>ii) Solution: Eradicate our desires by following a prescribed Path.</li> </ul> </li> <li>b) <u>Hinduism</u><sup>2</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Cause: All suffering is due to one's own past actions, in this or in a previous life; though one's present is determined by one's past, nonetheless one can influence our future by conducting one's self in a proper manner in the present. The first is the goal of pleasure or enjoyment, particularly through love and sexual desire. This is called <i>kama</i>. The second legitimate aim in life is for wealth and success. This is called <i>artha</i>. The third aim in life is moral duty or <i>dharma</i>. One who gives himself to dharma renounces personal pleasure and power, to seek the common good. The final aim in life, however, is <i>moksha</i>—liberation from the cycle of lives in this material world, and entrance into Nirvana.</li> <li>ii) Solution: Hindus recognize three possible paths to <i>moksha</i>, or salvation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The first is the way of works or <i>karma yoga</i>. This is a very popular way of salvation and lays emphasis on the idea that liberation may be obtained by fulfilling one's familial and social duties thereby overcoming the weight of bad karma one has accrued. The Code of Manu lists many of these rules.</li> <li>(2) The second way of salvation is the way of knowledge or <i>jnana yoga</i>. The basic premise of the way of knowledge is that the cause of our bondage to the cycle of rebirths in this world is ignorance or <i>avidya</i>. According to the predominant view among those committed to this way, our ignorance consists of the mistaken belief that we are individual selves and not one with the ultimate divine reality called Brahman. It is this ignorance that gives rise to our bad actions which result in bad karma.</li> <li>(3) The third and final way of salvation is the way of devotion or <i>bhakti yoga</i>. This is the way most favored by the common people of India; it satisfies the longing for a more emotional and personal approach to religion. It is self-surrender to one of the many personal gods and goddesses of Hinduism. Such devotion is expressed through acts of</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/hindu.html>

<sup>3</sup> [http://islam101.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=44&Itemid=32](http://islam101.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=44&Itemid=32)

<sup>4</sup> Rhodes, Ron. *Reasoning From the Scriptures With The Mormons* (ebook)

<sup>5</sup> Rhodes, Ron. *Reasoning From the Scriptures With The Jehovah's Witnesses* (ebook)

worship, *puja*, at the temple, in the home, through participation in the many festivals in honor of such gods, and through pilgrimages to one of the numerous holy sites in India.

c) Islam<sup>3</sup>

i) Cause: Every person—

- (1) Is born "Muslim." Every person is endowed with spiritual potentialities and intellectual inclinations that can make him a good Muslim, if he has the right access to Islam and is left to develop his innate nature.
- (2) Is born free from sin and all claims to inherited virtue. He is like a blank book. When the person reaches the age of maturity he becomes accountable for his deeds and intentions, if his development is normal and if he is sane. Man is not only free from sin until he commits sin, but he is also free to do things according to his plans on his own responsibility.
- (3) Must bear his own burden and be responsible for his own actions, because no one can expiate for another's sin. Thus, a Muslim believes that if Adam had committed the First Sin, it was his own responsibility to expiate for that sin.

ii) Solution:

- (1) Man must work out his salvation through the guidance of God. This means that in order to attain salvation a person must combine Faith and action, belief and practice. Faith without action is as insufficient as action without Faith. In other words, no one can attain salvation until his Faith in God becomes dynamic in his life and his beliefs are translated into reality. This is in complete harmony with the other Islamic articles of Faith. It shows that God does not accept lip service, and that no true believer can be indifferent as far as the practical requirements of Faith are concerned. It also shows that no one can act on behalf of another or intercede between him and God (see, for example, the Qur'an, 10:9-10; 18:30; 103:1-3).
- (2) Everything we do in this world, every intention we have, every move we make, every thought we entertain, and every word we say, all are counted and kept in accurate records. On the Day of Judgment they will be brought up. People with good records will be generously rewarded and warmly welcomed to the Heaven of God, and those with bad records will be punished and cast into Hell.

d) Mormonism<sup>4</sup>

i) Cause: "Children are 'innocent' until they reach accountability at the age of eight. Children are born innately good. [No original sin.] They have no propensity for evil. In Mormon theology sin basically amounts to a wrong judgment, a mistake, an imperfection, or an inadequacy."

ii) Solution: "Jesus 'became our savior and has done his part to help us return to our heavenly home. It is now up to each of us to do our part and to prove ourselves worthy of exaltation.'"

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|      | <p>e) <u>Jehovah's Witnesses</u><sup>5</sup></p> <p>i) Cause: Sin entered the world through Adam's disobedience.</p> <p>ii) Solution: "The human life Jesus [a 'small-g' god] laid down in sacrifice was exactly equal to the human life Adam fell with. "Grace" is more or less the opportunity for human beings to "work out" or earn their salvation. One cannot know for sure if they have salvation during this life; only a constant, unbending stance against sin and total obedience to God (through obedience to the Watchtower Society) gives one any hope of salvation."</p> <p>4) Table exercise</p> <p>a) Is there any truth in these views?</p> <p>b) What is one thing the theistic views have in common that is absent from Christianity?</p> <p>c) What is missing from the atheist views that Christianity offers?</p> <p>d) If you held one of these views, how would you now live?</p> |
| 7:00 | Closing Prayer   |

Further reading:

- *The Bible*
- Biddle, Mark E. *Missing the Mark*. Abingdon Press, 2005.
- McGrath, Alister. *The Twilight of Atheism*. 2004.
- McKnight, Scot. *A Community Called Atonement*. Abingdon Press, 2007.
- Plantinga, Cornelius. *Not The Way It's Supposed To Be: A Breviary of Sin*. Eerdmans, 1995.
- Volf, Miroslav. *Free of Charge: Giving and Receiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace*. Zondervan, 2005.
- Wright, N.T. *Following Jesus: Biblical Reflections on Discipleship*. Eerdmans, 1994.