

why this chaos?



BY DESMOND FORD

NO SPECIAL GENIUS is needed to diagnose our age as sick and sorry. The Age of Anxiety, the Age of Violence, the Age of Unbelief, the Age of Sexplosion—these and other titles compete as descriptive captions for the twentieth century.

Ours is a world of sorrow, sadness, insanity, and uncertainty. International strife, racial violence, adolescent mob hoodlumism, sex worship, and a skyrocketing crime rate—these things are the badges of our modernity. This is an age where pugilists are permitted to batter each other to death and where murder can take place on the sidewalk in the sight of scores of uncaring onlookers.

Never has man known so much about controlling the elements of nature and so little about controlling his own human nature. That technologically we stand in the Atomic Age, while morally we dwell in the Stone Age, is now a commonplace truth. Not the atomic bomb, but the man behind it, creates our fear. Scientists and psychiatrists are our current high priests, and the test tube and the couch symbolize our era. The world is staggering like a drunken man before his fall. Toynbee has declared that nineteen of twenty-one notable civilizations have perished because of spiritual decay. Shall ours be the twentieth? The modern spirit has turned from the worship of God to the idolatry of thing worship.

Besides the emptiness of soul that comes from the worship of things, there has come a spirit of uncertainty transcending the doubt of all earlier centuries. Endless debate, discussion, and propaganda, regarding anything and everything, shake the confidence of nearly all. Contradictory philosophies and theologies are engrossing the intelligentsia, while the masses huddle behind the thinker or nonthinker of their choice. Few intellectual leaders appear to be willing to be certain about anything. However, there are three things which exist that are quite beyond all dispute—evil, sorrow, and death. These are the staple facts of everybody's personal world. Should we not turn attention to these "immediates," these "certainties," and ask whether aught can be done to redeem mankind from their apparently invincible grip? Why

waste time killing gnats when giants are falling upon us? Why dabble with a legion of ethereal will-o'-the-wisp theories when our personal threat is an ever-present three-pronged "tangible" onslaught?

Might it not be that if we discovered the *cause* of our present chaos, the origin of evil, sorrow, and death, that we should then have a clue toward the *cure* we seek? Cause and cure must be linked; therefore let us inquire concerning the first. *Why* this chaos?

At the outset let us acknowledge that most of the ills under which the twentieth century groans are the work of man, not of nature. It is man, not nature, who is vile. As Henry Louis Mencken once said, "Man in his behaviour seems to be a cross between a jackal and a jackass." Greed and stupidity have precipitated the race into its present abyss. Humanity is afflicted

C. S. Lewis, in his *Broadcast Talks*, declares, "Two facts are the foundation of all clear thinking about ourselves and the universe we live in." "First, that human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they *ought* to behave in a certain way, and can't get rid of it. Secondly, that they don't in fact behave in that way. They know the Law of Nature; they break it."—P. 13.

Notice how an ancient prophecy from Isaiah expresses this twofold truth: "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left." Isaiah 24:5, 6.

When man was created, he, as with

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by a virus of soul evil which causes it to afflict itself unmercifully. How strange that not one nation, not one city, not one hamlet, nor a single heart under the sun is entirely free of this virus! How came this to be?

From the first few pages of Scripture a child can learn more in half an hour about these problems than the philosophers of the ages have learned without Scripture since the world began. Here, and here only, do we have the key to our international, national, and personal situation. Here is the explanation, the "why" of the human debacle.

The opening chapters of the Bible give us in a nutshell the cause of our chaos. They explain that "by one man *sin entered* into the world, and *death by sin*; and so death [and sinfulness] passed upon all men. . . . (*But sin is not imputed when there is no law.*)" (Romans 5:12, 13.) God thus tells us that death is a fruit of evil, and that evil is the violation of law. *It is the transgression of divine law that has brought chaos and death.*

everything else in the universe, from the stars on high to the motes in the sunbeam, was put under law. To him alone, however, was given free will—the ability to choose to obey or to disobey. According to Genesis, man failed in his probationary test, and the oppressive giants of evil, sorrow, and death have stalked the race ever since. If transgression of God's law caused man to lose Paradise, it is obvious that the regaining of bliss depends in part at least upon a restoration of a right relationship to this same law.

What is the divine law for human beings, and where is it to be found? Only our generation could ask such questions. In previous ages wherever Christianity had gone, people early lisped the commandments once spoken and written by the Deity at Sinai. Practically every church catechism, Protestant and Catholic, has enshrined the Ten Commandments as God's imperishable rule of right. Only in this century have guilt feelings been analyzed away as mere tarrying childhood complexes. For this



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the rules of his house, that I may know how to serve him. Love without law to guide its impulses would be the parent of will-worship and confusion, as surely as terror and self-righteousness, unless upon the supposition of an inward miraculous illumination, as an equivalent for law. Love goes to the law to learn the divine will, and love delights in the law, as the exponent of that will; and he who says that a believing man has nothing more to do with law, save to shun it as an old enemy, might as well say that he has nothing to do with the will of God."—*God's Way of Holiness*, pp. 69, 70. Had the law of God been dispensable or changeable, Calvary would have been unnecessary. The death of the Son of God is the most indisputable evidence that God's holy rule of right is the immutable moral foundation of the universe. The atonement was required because of the law's violation, not to violate the law!

What, then, is the meaning of the many New Testament texts which appear to disparage law? All such fall into one of two categories: they are either condemning those who considered it obligatory to continue the observance of the typical ceremonial laws of national Israel, or they warn against regarding law as a method of salvation. The Ten Commandment law is never disparaged as a *standard*, but only as a

means. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Romans 10:4. That is, he who believes in Jesus finds in Him the righteousness he previously hopelessly sought by mere human efforts of obedience to law.

As the penitent believer finds union with Christ by faith, both Christ's obedience to the law's requirements and His death for its violation by men are imputed to him. Christ is made unto us "righteousness." (1 Corinthians 1:30; Jeremiah 23:6.)

In the courtyard of the ancient sanctuary stood a laver with a brass mirror-like support. Into this the priest gazed before he washed and entered the presence of the Lord. Similarly, we are to look into "the perfect law of liberty," beholding our shortcomings, and then by faith accept the salvation that issues from "the washing of regeneration" and the "renewing of the Holy Ghost." (James 1:25; Titus 3:5.) Righteousness is ever a gift, received, but not earned, by heart union with Jesus.

It is significant that God Himself has given His immutable law a special title. In Exodus 31:18 and other places in Scripture, the Ten Commandments are referred to as the "testimony." Wherever this word occurs in connection with the sanctuary, the Ten Commandments are intended. Foreseeing latter-

day controversy over "law," the Holy Spirit guided the last of the Bible writers to avoid the use of that polemical term, and urged them to dwell instead upon the sacredness of "the commandments" of "the testimony." (See 1 John 2:3, 4; 5:3; Revelation 12:17; 14:12; 15:5.)

Sixty years after the cross the Scripture thus focuses upon the eternal Ten Commandments as still central in Heaven's plan, bearing testimony to all men of God's holy character and of what all sinners may become through fellowship with Christ. More than any other generation this present age of anarchy needs for its healing just such admonition.

Blessed is he who, in gratitude to God for Calvary, can echo the words of his Saviour, "I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart." For such a person chaos will give place to cosmos, vanity to verity, and hollowness to everlasting happiness.

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One of the most meaningful questions ever put to Jesus Christ was. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." John 6:68. Yes; where can we go for help but to our Creator? Truly there is no hope in the counsels of man. Despite flashes of brilliance, even the wisest of men fail to provide the ultimate answers to life. Only God has these. He says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." Rest, joy, dynamic, satisfaction, hope—all these are yours in Christ. Our free Bible course will make all this very plain. Simply send in the coupon at the left. There is no obligation.