

Samaritan is ample evidence that this is true (Luke 10:30-37). The self-righteous Levite "passed on the other side" (v. 32) while the Samaritan put his faith into action (vv. 33-37). For the Levite, religion did nothing for the world. The benefit was purely for himself. We should remember at this point that abortion kills a human being. If helping to rescue the Samaritan traveller is the result of a justified and regenerated sinner manifesting his salvation in sanctification, then how can Christians stand by and allow abortion to go on without a protest?

In another example, Zaccheus, the despised tax-collector, expressed his sanctification almost immediately after his conversion: "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much" (Luke 19:9).

If injustice is operating in the world to hurt others, can we sit by and do nothing like the self-righteous Levite? Isaiah tells us, for example, that tampering with monetary commodities affects orphans and widows, those least able to care for themselves financially (Isa. 1:21-23). Is economics neutral? Apparently not. Notice too that Israel, the people of God, were condemned because they did nothing. In Matthew 23 Jesus indicts the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day, for not making their faith applicable outside their own self-interests.

Marxists Fill the Gap

The Marxists in Central America have attacked the Christian gospel on this very point. Liberation Theology advocates preach a gospel that has something to do with the here and now. Liberation Theology parades as a biblical system that supposedly brings justice to the masses. We are told that only in Marxism, the heart of true Liberation Theology, is there a true struggle for justice. Marxists "try to resolve the situation of exploitation and inequality. The new society they desire and the kingdom of God are the same," one priest said (Edmund and Julia Robb, *The Betrayal of the Church* [Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1986], p. 119). A person only discovers the meaning of the kingdom of God by making this world a better place. "In 1972 the bishops of two of Nicaragua's largest dioceses declared their support for 'a completely new order.' The new order should include the 'preferential option for the poor' and a 'planned economy for the benefit of humankind' " (Robb, p. 124).

This is very attractive to poor people, many of whom do not know where their next meal is coming from. The terminology of biblical Christianity is used to draw in the

nominally religious and usually hopeless. But it's with the promise for land, food, housing, and political power *now* that motivates many of them to embrace the Liberationist's Gospel of "salvation."

The gospel of "Christian fatalism" must compete with the Marxist "gospel" of immediate social reform. Many of the evangelical groups doing missionary work in Latin America are "millennialist, preaching Christ's imminent return to earth — and thus favor a passive response to social injustice. 'I've got nothing in the world but a mission in the next,' announces a favorite song" ("The Protestant Push," *Newsweek*, September 1, 1986, p. 64). What does this type of thinking do to multi-generational thinking? There is none! Planning and building are irrelevant in a world of insignificance. Western civilization was not built using the world view of "I've got nothing in the world but a mission in the next." Rather, it was built with this in mind: I've got *something* in this world *because* I have a mission in the next."

What does a next-world only gospel do for the impoverished? It throws them right into the arms of the Marxists. The Marxists stand by and offer (wrong) answers, but for the poor they are better than what they have. The Christian comes with hope, but a hope that only has meaning when they die. This is not the Christian message. Eternal life begins *now* for the believer. The benefits of heaven are ours *now*. While I was in seminary, I remember Tom Skinner's chapel message dealing with the here-and-now gospel. He quoted a portion of the Lord's prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Then he went on to say: "Whatever is going on in heaven ought to be happening down here. God's will is no different in heaven as it is on earth. If our Christianity is to have meaning when we die, then it ought to have the same meaning in the here and now."

The anti-Christian mentality that pervades our world is content to have the church cloistered in its own world of cultural non-engagement. Christians are tolerated as long as we do not make waves, that is, as long as we do not engage the world for Christ. The time has come for Christians to think about what it will take to build a Christian civilization in the next 200 years. That's right. We must begin to think multi-generational. While the next election is important, the kingdom of God and its extension through the generations is much more important. Let's begin the building process now. Let's get our eyes out of the clouds and on the work at hand (Acts 1:11).