

## Are You Being Brainwashed? (Part 2)

He Who Hates His Brother Is In Darkness

Martin G. Collins

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It is interesting to see the crowd mentality of those who are celebrating this Christmas season. If there is a commercial for it on television, there will be a line to purchase it in the stores. I remember years ago, it was the Beanie Babies. Before that, it was the Cabbage Patch Kids. Now, I think, a lot of it is video games, and that type of thing.

Darkness is mainly a devious biblical representation, because it conceals evil activity from ordinary view. The apostle Paul provided a fitting summary of this aspect of darkness when he commands Christians in Ephesians 5:11-12 to: *"have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret."*

The apostle John warns us, along the same lines, of the sightlessness of a person who walks contrary to the commandments of God.

**I John 2:11** But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

This hatred produces blindness, which has caused many people to impose the powers of suggestion upon people for the purpose of controlling them for personal gain. On the other hand, this being in darkness has caused even more people to follow convincing leaders and/or the current popular trend, in an emotional tantrum, or so they do not make waves, thereby protecting and saving their own skins.

Throughout the history of mankind, human beings have had natural inclinations to do unthinkable things when they are part of a passion-driven group, which also became a source of power in the hands of ambitious rulers.

The positive side of this crowd mentality is called synergy, by social engineers. But, the negative effects can be seen in the mindless brutality that incites murderous riots, lynchings and persecution around the world. God tells us in Exodus 23:2: *"You shall not follow a crowd to do evil."*

Such things were seen in Nazi Germany, and are seen in Islamic countries today. There

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is not a country on earth that has not had such violent incidents occur within its borders in the last one hundred years, or even in the last decade.

Throughout the remainder of this sermon, I am going to pull information from research that a woman by the name of Berit Kjos, did for her article titled, "Who Can Resist the Pull of the Crowd?"

She says, that in 1899, Gustave Le Bon wrote about this same blind mentality in his book titled, "The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind." Regarding the mentality of the crowd he wrote:

Little adapted to reasoning, crowds are quick to act, .... How powerless they are to hold any opinions other than those which are imposed on them.... [They are led] by seeking what produces an impression on them and what seduces them.

He continued:

[Crowds possess] a collective mind which makes them feel, think and act in a manner quite different.... a sentiment of invincible power which allows [him] to yield to instincts which, had he been alone, he would... have kept under restraint.

In Brainwashing and Education Reform, a 1956 expose of brainwashing tactics, used by Communist prison guards on Western prisoners-of-war, Edward Hunter echoes Le Bon's warning:

Brainwashing is a system of befogging the brain so a person can be seduced into acceptance of what otherwise would be abhorrent to him. He loses touch with reality. Facts and fancy whirl round and change places.... However, in order to prevent people from recognizing the inherent evils in brainwashing, the Reds pretend that it is only another name for something already very familiar and of unquestioned respect, such as education or reform.

I might add, even in religion, mainstream Christianity is a different religion from the true Christianity of the Bible. They use the same terms, but the meanings are different. That

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began back in the Holy Roman Empire under Constantine, when he named the pagan worship by Christian names, for example Christmas and Easter.

The moral weakness of the collective mind has been researched and exploited throughout history. Lenin, Hitler and countless other tyrants, saw psychology as an essential tool for managing the masses, for eradicating or reinventing Christianity, and for ruling the world.

All around us, we see the result of seven decades of increasingly brainwashing education. Tolerance of evil and "group thinking" are closing minds to God-given wisdom. And since today's collective "holism" is incompatible with God's holiness, very few people dare to take a contrary stand with the popular culture on what they say is truth. We see things like the Purpose Driven Church growing by leaps and bounds, absorbing people into it as fast as they can. It is popular culture placed in a "moral stance."

The courage to stand firm for God's truth is viewed as intolerance. Neither individual responsibilities, nor God's standards, have any place in this horrendous system of pop culture brainwashing.

Popular movements based on Hitler's perverse concept of "mental health" in which "health" is equated with collective thinking and conformity to the 'right kind' of group is transforming churches, as well as cultures around the world, into societies that will be easily absorbed into the anti-Christ, one world government.

"Thirty years before the sadistic humiliation of [nude] Iraqi prisoners [at Abu Ghraib], the same behavior was exhibited at Stanford University," according to Pat Nolan, President of Justice Fellowship.

In his article, "Iraqi Prisoner Abuse and the Importance of Self-Restraint," he compares the brutal images from the Abu Ghraib prison with similar sadism among graduate students during a notorious 1971 research project. I found the information I am about to give you actually shocking.

In this experiment, the participating Stanford students were divided into two groups: prisoners and guards. Nolan begins with a quote from the New York Times, by John Schwartz:

'Within days the 'guards' had become swaggering and sadistic, to the point of placing bags over the prisoners' heads, forcing them to strip naked and

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encouraging them to perform sexual acts.' Their professor was so profoundly shocked by this behavior that he stopped the study after six days, rather than two weeks [as] he had planned.

These were college students, and it was supposed to be an experiment.

None of us should feel smug. While we all hope we would not have taken part in such abasement of our fellow human beings, we are all stained with original sin. Alexander Solzhenitsyn said that 'the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being.' It is only by restraining these base impulses that we can be civilized.

It is shocking that "innocent," if you can call them that, in the world's terms, college students would do such a thing. They did not have to, but it is the way that they followed their human nature, and that is the way it led them. Yes, it was shocking, and so is a study done ten years earlier, back in 1961. Yale psychologist, Dr. Stanley Milgram, divided paid volunteers into two groups: teachers and learners. The "teachers" were told to punish slow "learners" with electric shocks that would rise in intensity with each wrong answer:

Dr. Milgram wanted to obtain an insight as to why the Nazi war criminals who committed atrocities against humanity willingly participated in the deaths of millions of people. Often their excuse was, 'I was just following orders and doing my job, sir.' Were these men and women abjectly evil, following orders, or was there another reason?

Dr. Milgram's experiments gave some insightful answers that help show why Hitler and other tyrants throughout recorded history have often had the popular support of the population. The willingness of ordinary people to commit cruel acts against their fellow man exists today in all nations as it has in the past....

At 75, 90, and at 105 volts the learner would groan with pain. At 120 volts the learner complained that the pain of the shocks was unbearable. When the teacher showed any reservation about administering the higher voltages for wrong answers, the scientist would explain that the shocks are not lethal and the learner will suffer no permanent damage from the shocks.

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The "learners" did not actually feel the electric shocks. They had been coached to act the role of a victim and pretend they felt excruciating pain. But, the "teachers" who followed orders, and administered the cruel punishment did not know that and they thought that they were inflicting pain. They heard the "learners" cry out in agony. Many felt uncomfortable, but still continued to pull the levers.

Yet, few resisted the seemingly heartless commands of the "scientist" who facilitated the project. To most participants, complying with the group project, and obeying their leader, overshadowed any sense of wrong. These experiments were done in America, with American citizens.

Referring to the Yale study above, Ahanad O'Connor, in the May 14, 2004, issue of the New York Times, in his article titled "Pressure to Go Along With Abuse Is Strong, but Some Soldiers Find Strength to Refuse" wrote,

In numerous studies over the past few decades, psychologists have found that a certain percentage of people simply refuse to give in to pressure—by authorities or by peers— if they feel certain actions are wrong. ...

In the noted experiment 40 years ago when Dr. Stanley Milgram showed that most people will deliver a lethal dose of electricity to another subject if instructed to do so by a scientist in a white lab coat, a minority still said no.

'These people are rare,' said Dr. Elliot Aronson, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, who studies social influence. 'It's really hard for us to predict in advance who is going to resist by looking at things like demographic data or religious background.'

Some of these students, if not many, who were fulfilling the role of "teacher" in this experiment, no doubt considered themselves Christians. Is Christianity a conviction or a preference to us? We really need to have that set well in our minds so that we know.

Could anyone ever make you do such a thing? Have you ever done this type of torturous thing verbally against another member of God's church, where you have caused someone to suffer by what you have said? Suffering comes in many packages. It comes both physically and mentally.

In I John 2, John says that the final proof any one can have of the fact that he is a Christian is that he keeps, and delights in keeping, and goes on keeping, the

commandments of the Lord.

He says that this is something that is a very reliable test of whether we truly know Christ. This is much safer test than any experience that we may have had. Certainly much safer than any feelings or sensations that we may be conscious of within ourselves.

Then, after John reminded us of that, he begins to emphasize the quality of our relationship with each other as brethren—specifically the love of the brethren.

**I John 2:7-11** Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

We see there, a basic fundamental reason, why the world is in darkness. They have not learned to love one another, the way that God loves us. Neither can they, without the Holy Spirit to help them. They can make stabs at it, and they can do it in increments, by loving one another and loving their spouses and their children, but not the true godly love that God is developing in us.

John is concerned about our fellowship with God, so he tells us that there are certain things that interfere with it. One of the most important is to fail to love the brethren. This will interrupt our fellowship with the Father, and therefore rob us of many of the blessings of God's way of life, if we do not get this important aspect of Christianity, that is, to love the brethren.

We can also state this in a different way. It also provides us with a very reliable test of the genuineness of our professing to be Christians. The quality of our fellowship with God is manifested in the level of love we have for others in the church; and it is a test of the level of our conversion.

John recorded Jesus' words earlier in his gospel, where He clearly tells us that loving

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one another is a new commandment. Jesus' words regarding this are found in John 13:34, *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."*

We see there, Christ repeating Himself in that one sentence, because it is so very important.

Christ has made it possible for us to keep this commandment in an entirely new way. John reminds us that we are without excuse. It is possible now for us, as the result of receiving new life from Christ, as the result of the power of the Holy Spirit, to love our neighbors, and to love the brethren in the way that God originally intended.

It is a vain effort to ask the world to love one another, because it is incapable of it without the Holy Spirit. Mainstream Christianity believes that all one has to do is preach Christian ethics to the world, and then you can expel wars and conflicts. It is a complete illusion for anyone to think that is all which has to be done, because the world is incapable of it. God calls whom He will. We do not call anyone, so we cannot do as the mainstream Christian churches do. They go out and proselytize; go out and try to drag people into Christianity. We see the same things happening in the negotiations with the Arabs in Iraq. It is impossible to try to convince them to follow the Judeo-Christian ethic, or the constitution that we have here that was developed as a result of the Judeo-Christian ethic.

Christ brought into this world a new order of life, which changed everything; and the difference that Christ made, is the difference between light and darkness. What did John say at the end of I John 2:8? *"Because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining."*

The New Testament is full of this type of imagery.

**John 8:12** Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

The apostle Paul put it this way:

**II Corinthians 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Not just some things, but all things, have become new to those who have Christ dwelling in them.

This new life in Christ has changed everything. We are like new people in a new realm. Nothing is the same as it was before our conversion. I think this is one of the greatest mistakes that members of God's church make. Sometimes we forget that we are completely different from the world, and should be. We are ambassadors of another kingdom—and that is an excellent thing! Whereas, the world is in darkness and they are ambassadors of darkness. When I say the world, I am not talking about the physical world. I am talking about the mentality of the world, the thought process and where the influence comes from.

The apostle John strongly emphasizes this difference, between light and darkness, in a practical way.

**I John 2:11** But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

We see people in the world as just automatons following the crowd mentality, and walking in different ways than the true way.

The metaphor is quite involved, but simply put. People who are not Christians are walking in the dark. In addition to that, there is darkness within them. The trouble with flagrant sinners and unbelievers is not simply that they have darkness all around them and cannot see where they are going. The darkness has blinded their own eyes. They are blind as well as being in the dark. It is bad enough when you are walking around blinded in the light, at least light filters in, but when you are walking around blindly in the dark there is nothing that comes in.

Do you wonder why moral courage is so rare these days? Then, take a look at the public education system of this country. We are toward the end of the long-term common effort of plans to merge Education, Labor and Mental Health programs into one to prepare "healthy" human resources for the global community. Or, using Hitler's definition of "health"—a collective thinking.

Our leaders are preparing collective thinking workers for the global labor class. Starting in kindergarten and elementary school, children learn to conform to group values. The peer pressure in public school is a tremendous to force all children to conform to the

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"right group." That right group is the one that is part of pop culture.

Students are subtly encouraged to reject and hate those who are different, or who do not conform to the accepted truth. Already, the public government school system, and especially higher education, requires through peer pressure that students believe in free choice when it comes to murdering babies by abortion. There are textbooks in the elementary schools called, "Johnny has two mothers" or "Johnny has two fathers." This is the way they are programming children in school. There are good teachers out there, but the system is corrupt. The system is in darkness, the administrators are in darkness, and many of the teachers are as well, who follow such propaganda.

If children refuse to comply, the state's mandatory assessments will expose the problem. Their permanent (lifelong) digital data file will record their lack of cooperation and failure to be a group player.

It will come to a point where a person with this problem of cooperation on their permanent record will not be able to buy or sell within the global community. At the earliest stages, in kindergarten and elementary school, people are being tagged as to where they stand with regard to the group mentality.

The ultimate goal was exposed by Professor Raymond Houghton, in *To Nurture Humaneness* (published by the curriculum arm of the massive National Education Association in 1970). He wrote:

...absolute behavior control is imminent.... The critical point of behavior control, in effect, is sneaking up on mankind without his self-conscious realization that a crisis is at hand. Man will... never self-consciously know that it has happened.

Ahanad O'Connor explains an important part of this problem:

The power to resist coercion reflects what psychologists call internal locus of control, or the ability to determine one's own destiny. People at the other end of the scale, with external locus of control, are more heavily influenced by authority figures.

"Locus of control" is a significant factor in today's student data file, the records that they keep on every student. While change agents want students to have an internal locus of

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control with regard to resisting their parents, they also want them to yield their individual choices to the external control of the peer group. You can see the way that the minds of these young children are being formed to go along with the group but to go against parental instruction. This is done very subtly. I just read a quote from the man, who in 1970 was a major part of the design of this movement. Where he says that people will never know what hit them. They will not know that it is happening to them. That is exactly right in the world today.

In other words, they want students to be released from the external control of traditional authorities who might hold them accountable to biblical values.

Yet, they want to build dependence on the "group" and its facilitator, since peer pressure will be the primary means of changing the student's values and molding the collective thinkers needed for the 21st century workforce. Complex as it sounds, this concept is familiar to those who have followed education technology during the last decade. If you are in the know in education, this is very familiar to you because you are actually working to produce crowd mentality students.

The key is control. To transform whole nations, trained leaders must manage group behavior. And periodic assessments of the student's locus of control, and rate of change, are needed to continually update a student's IEP (Individual Education Plan). That is, they are catering specific plans for each child, depending on what his strengths and weaknesses are.

By using computers programmed according to each child's needs, weaknesses, and interests, felt needs, and resistance, they hope to mold citizens who can be managed through group pressure—even as the students are assured that they "own" their choices and think independently. Students are being assured that they are standing on their own and being independent as they go along with the rest of the crowd. You can certainly see this in the fashions of the youth. They all think that they dress differently, but to us they all look the same.

This is part of the reason we home schooled all three of our children. Children today are being brainwashed in public school, and have been for decades. It is a very serious thing even though we can send our children to public schools and they can learn reading, writing and arithmetic, there is so much other propaganda that is going on as well. Parents think that it is such a tough job to home school their children. Well, you will find out, if you have not already, how tough it is to try to untrain your child in what the school system's propaganda has funneled into their heads.

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The public school system is in the realm of darkness, and the administrators as individuals are in a state of darkness. Even if you put them into the light they would be unable to see, because they are blind to the truth. I am not saying that everyone should pull his or her children out of the public school system. You have to be willing to dedicate yourself to train your children at home, and also have a background, or an education yourself, to be able to do that. I am not promoting home schooling, I am just saying that it is definitely a way to go for those who are willing to commit to it, or who have the ability to. It is expensive as well, so there are financial concerns.

We are not simply the way we were before, just dropped into a new position. We are both transformed and translated into a new position and condition. Conversion is a process, it is not a one time thing. Because of this process of total transformation we are left without excuse in this matter of staying out of darkness by loving the brethren.

The darkness is passing away, the light has come, and we are a new people. There is no excuse for us whatsoever, if we are not fulfilling the commandment to love our spiritual brothers. That is both in word and deed.

Whether or not we belong to the kingdom of God is proven by our behavior in this issue of love. The test of whether we are truly in this new realm of light, which Christ has brought into this world, is our response to this commandment to love one another.

**I John 2:9, 10** He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

We can see the contrast between the two ways of life. We have to think of these as different ways of life, twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, not just on the Sabbath, or when we are with the other brethren.

It is clear to see what John means here—it is definitely a test. John says that there is no way of explaining away our attitudes toward others. The reason he is firm about this is that we proclaim and portray exactly what we are by our conduct and behavior.

If we do not love the brethren, we are still in darkness, and the darkness is within us. No matter what we may say, or how we may view ourselves, if we are treating the brethren with love, it is a primary proof that we are truly in the light of God's church.

Of course, there must be obedience to God's commandments in order for us to

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understand what it means to love our brother. The commandments define love between God and humans, and between humans and other humans.

It takes more than intellectual opinion to truly make known who we really are. We have seen time and time again how it is possible for us to be perfectly keeping the letter of the law, but to be unloving.

We have seen people who have attended God's church who were very strict about keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days, but who judged others very harshly. It is not a matter of either keeping the Sabbath properly or loving our spiritual brothers; it is a matter of doing both. Obedience to God shows us how to love each other.

By obedience in keeping the Sabbath and the other commandments—that is, by living God's way of life, through obedience, we learn how to love one another. People who walk in the darkness of the world neither love one another as God directs, nor have very much resistance in refraining from inflicting pain on someone else.

We can talk about doctrine intellectually. We can be a defender of the faith, and still the spirit in which we are defending it may be denying the very doctrine we are defending, and that is the doctrine of God's love.

This is a tough test! Doctrine is essential, but it is not enough by itself. The apostle John says, *'If we do not love our spiritual brothers and sisters we are in darkness.'* In effect, we do not have the love of Christ if we are in this condition. The love of Christ, and Christ in us is light, and that rids our human lives of that darkness.

To love one another is at least as important as having true doctrine, but we cannot have one without the other because true doctrine defines God's way of love. It provides the base for unity.

I have said repeatedly, about light and darkness, and the fact that the world is in darkness because I really believe that it is a serious problem in the greater churches of God in realizing how different the world is from the church. In having a mentality of not realizing that, we easily slip into the world and its way of doing things.

In a sense, many of us are somewhat like the rich young ruler who said, *"All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?"*

**Matthew 19:16-26** Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" So He said to him,

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"Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

What was the attitude behind the young ruler's question?

The wealthy gentleman's serious address to Jesus Christ, in verse 16, was the wisest question that he could have asked: *"Good Teacher (or Master), what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"*

First, the rich young ruler addresses Christ with a respectful title. "Good Teacher," he called Him. It does not signify a ruling Master, but a teaching Master. His calling Him 'Teacher' shows his submissiveness and willingness to be taught.

It shows excellence of character when a person's good conduct and modest dignity genuinely carries over into his respect and courtesy, which this young man was showing. It was, at the very least, gentleman-like to show this respect to Christ. We do not see someone that you would look at in the world and think that he was evil who asked this question, but a man who genuinely wanted to know, and much of his life was "righteous."

Jesus certainly deserved the honor and respect. He was the epitome of the Good Teacher. No one teaches like Him. He is distinguished for His goodness, for His compassion on the ignorant, and He is meek and He is humble.

Secondly, the rich young ruler came to Jesus on an important quest. He did not come to

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test Jesus, but to sincerely be taught by Him. In the younger ruler's question, "*what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?*" it appears that he had a firm belief and limited understanding of eternal life and God's way of life, at least according to the letter.

He was convinced that there is a better quality of life waiting for those who prepare for it in this life. It is very common for wealthy people to avoid asking questions lest they be seen as ignorant. And it is just as common for young people to think that they have all the time in the world to learn about their long-range future. But here was a young rich man concerned about his future and eternity.

He was wise in knowing that he must do something himself, and not just expect immortality to be automatic. He realized that he had a personal responsibility to do something good for the attainment of eternal happiness. Paul says that, it is by patient continuance in well-doing that we successfully seek eternal life.

**Romans 2:7** eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality;

The blood of Christ is the only thing that can purchase eternal life for us, but obedience to Christ is the appointed way to it, as we read in Hebrews 5:9 "*And having been perfected [or completed], He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.*"

Christ gave this man a command to do something, and that was to forsake all and go and give everything he had to the poor, but he could not do it. He could not obey Christ in that area.

So what did the rich young ruler lack with all of the positive aspects of his character?

He lacked the motivation to have no other gods before the Great Eternal God. He lacked the enthusiasm to put away and destroy the idols in his life. He lacked the willingness to give up the world! He still had an element of darkness within him that the world could fill with its darkness. We know that darkness is emptiness.

He would not give up material things. Nor would he give up his obsession of the sports stars, nor would he give up his fixation on the entertainers of his day. Although he kept the letter of the law of God's commandments, he could not fully commit to keeping the spirit of the law, or to sacrificing all that he had. He was a fair-weather follower of Jesus. He could see the value in what Christ taught, but he could not bring himself to be

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dedicated to it.

Usually people in the church are not guilty of flagrant, or willful, sins, which we see in people in the world. But sometimes they have critical attitudes that are so harsh they show they do not love one another. A harsh and criticizing spirit is a contradiction of this spirit of love.

Maybe criticizing people, or neglecting to help people in need, are some of the things that he needed to overcome. To look at him on the surface he looked like a fine upstanding Christian young man.

In I John 2:8, John mentions obedience to the new command of loving one another which leads specifically to love among brethren. In contrast, there are opponents to the new command who claim to be in the light, but live hateful lives of darkness.

**I John 2:9-11** He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

To see this more clearly, let us look at the characteristics of the non-Christian in light of this. This person does not love his brother, and this unloving person still claims to be a Christian.

During this time, John was battling with the Gnostics. They claimed an unusual knowledge and advancement in the Kingdom of God. But, they denied it by their attitude toward the brethren whom they despised as being less enlightened than they were.

So what does John tell us about unloving people? The first thing he points out, in I John 2:11, is that they are in darkness. That means they belong to the dominion of the kingdom of darkness. The apostle Paul gives a succinct and terrorizing description of the life of the world which is not Christian.

**Titus 3:3** For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

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That is what it means to be in darkness. That is the picture the New Testament describes as the world. It is a state outside Christ. Some may disagree that this is a true description of the world—of men and women who are not Christians. But it is very accurate! This is the type of character that drives people in the world, those without God's Holy Spirit.

It may very well be that those individuals have become a part of the world. Maybe they never completely left the world from which they came. Maybe they are unable to recognize what is wrong with it. They are able to recognize what is wrong with it politically, between democrat and republican. Even that is so twisted that they only see small bits and pieces of it. They are looking through a glass darkly.

For decades the liberal educators and politicians in the United States have blamed almost every crime involving guns on the guns themselves. Certainly no individual predator could possibly be to blame, could he? A case in point is the Columbine School shooting in 1999. That situation prompted this to be read by Paul Harvey as a Letter to the Editor, on his newscast April 27, 1999, titled, *How can we blame it all on guns?* Keep in mind that we are looking at the characteristics of an unloving person.

For the life of me, I can't understand what could have gone wrong in Littleton, Colorado. If only the parents had kept their children away from the guns, we wouldn't have had such a tragedy. Yeah, it must have been the guns!

It couldn't have been because of half our children are being raised in broken homes.

It couldn't have been because our children get to spend an average of 30 seconds in meaningful conversation with their parents each day. After all, we give our children quality time.

It couldn't have been because we treat our children as pets and our pets as children.

It couldn't have been because we place our children in day care centers where they learn their socialization skills among their peers under the law of the jungle while employees who have no vested interest in the children look on and make sure that no blood is spilled.

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It couldn't have been because we allow our children to watch, on average, seven hours of television a day filled with the glorification of sex and violence that isn't fit for adult consumption.

It couldn't have been because we allow our children to enter into virtual worlds in which, to win the game, one must kill as many opponents as possible in the most sadistic way possible.

It couldn't have been because we have sterilized and contracepted our families down to sizes so small that the children we do have are so spoiled with material things that they come to equate the receiving of the material with love.

It couldn't have been because our children, who historically have been seen as a blessing from God, are being viewed as either a mistake created when contraception fails or inconveniences that parents try to raise in their spare time.

It couldn't have been because our nation is the world leader in developing a culture of death in which 20 to 30 million babies have been killed by abortion.

It couldn't have been because we give two-year prison sentences to teenagers who kill their newborns.

It couldn't have been because our school system teaches the children that they are nothing but glorified apes who have evolutionized out of some primordial soup of mud by teaching evolution as fact and by handing out condoms as if they were candy.

It couldn't have been because we teach our children that there were no laws of morality that transcend us, that everything is relative and that actions don't have consequences.

What the h..., the president gets away with it. Nah, it must have been the guns.

The world hides itself; it protects itself from the exposure of its

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true character. But the character is so wicked that its sins are flowing out like a flood everywhere. The dam has broken! There is a superficial culture and chivalry and a glitter that conceals its true black color much of the time.

But, have you looked at people's faces and listened to what they say about one another? Have you heard what they say about a person to whom they have recently been so pleasant and polite? Especially in this Christmas season we see the true colors of the world and the attitudes of people. We see the way that they treat each other in the stores. We see the way that they drive and cut each other off. Look at the sneer on their faces. The world is full of this, in spite of all the superficiality. They are hateful, hating one another, greedy, jealous, envious, malicious, self-absorbed and selfish. Those are the characteristics of the life of the world, the state of being in darkness. There are people, in the world, who do good things—people that we consider as good people in a general way. It is quite superficial because they do not understand the spirit of the law because they do not have God's Holy Spirit. They are able to loosely keep some of the Ten Commandments, but to keep the spirit of the law is impossible for them.

Anyone who is not a Christian is in that position; he is in darkness. Remember how the apostle John puts it! John 2:11, "*...he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness.*"

The second thing that John points out, in verse 11, is that this person is not only in that dominion of darkness, where that is the kind of life and outlook of people. He is also completely controlled by that outlook and walks in that darkness.

Alan Bloom, in *The Closing of the American Mind*, wrote: "The great democratic danger is enslavement to public opinion."

This is no small threat in today's marketing atmosphere where high tech pollsters and opinion masters know all about our wants, needs and resistance to tempting thrills and tastes. And now trained facilitators everywhere can use similar information to

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appeal to the needs of their clients or group members.

In other words, the tragedy about the non-Christian is that he is not master of himself, or in control of himself. He is governed by his surroundings and circumstances, and he is governed by the world that Satan has created. This type of person is always governed by what is taking place. He is easily manipulated by those who promote and sell self-gratification. The commercials on television that we have seen leading up to Christmas certainly show this self-gratification.

If things go right, he is happy in a shallow way. He may meet a person, whom he likes, and he is initially happy. If someone else comes along to disrupt this perceived happiness, he is quickly provoked and angry. It all depends on a sort of accident and chance as he goes through his life: whom he meets, what happens to him, what his state and condition is.

He has no idea where he is going, no standard, and no control. There is no steady course of action in his life. He is the victim of the darkness, and because of this he is always uncertain and unreliable.

The third thing John mentions, in I John 2:11, is that the worldly person *"does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes."* In other words, because all his trouble is just that he really is blind, as to the true nature of life, he has not awakened to the whole, real meaning of life. He does not realize that life is not all about him. He does not grasp that God will ask him about his attitude toward others. He is blind to his present degenerate condition, and he is blind to his eternal potential.

In a recent newsletter, George Barna listed the "12 Most Significant Religious Findings from 2006 Surveys." Here are two of the noteworthy outcomes of the surveys:

Three out of every four teenagers have engaged in at least one type of psychic or witchcraft-related activity. Among the most common of those endeavors are using a Ouija board, reading books about witchcraft or

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Wicca, playing games involving sorcery or witchcraft, having a "professional" do a palm reading, or having their fortune told. Conversely, during the past year fewer than three out of every ten churched teenagers had received any teaching from their church about elements of the supernatural.

Most Americans have a period of time during their teen years when they are actively engaged in a church youth group. However, Barna's tracking of young people showed that most of them had disengaged from organized religion during their twenties.

So, even though they had a Judeo-Christian upbringing, or if they were in one of the true churches of God, then they had a righteous upbringing, but most of them rejected it in their twenties, according to the statistics.

People in their twenties have a stronger tendency to be distracted by other cares of life and to lose their focus and vision on what is truly important. Those who keep the right perspective on what is really important are to be heralded for going against the extreme pressures placed upon them. Especially the faithful of this age group should be admired.

In I John 2:10 John says, *"He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him."*

I have to ask myself, as these children have grown up, and they become young adults in their twenties, was there light in them, or was it darkness? Did they actually have a sense of hate within them, rather than love?

If a person loves his brother, and abides in the light, then there is no cause for stumbling in him. He will not pull away from it, or leave.

But, the person that does not know where he is going is a

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stumbling block to others. The person who is in darkness, who is walking in darkness and whose mind is dark, is a stumbling block both to himself and to everybody else that he comes in contact with.

This is a serious danger, especially to children and young adults. A person who is walking in darkness (that is, who is socializing with the world and absorbing the perversions it has to offer) will drag down people who are trying to live godly lives into that darkness.

Conversely, a person walking in the light cannot pull a person out of the darkness. Although some have tried and been dragged down into the darkness. God must call a person out of the darkness into the light—we cannot.

A person walking in the light of Jesus Christ can set the right example for someone in darkness, but he will not, and cannot, come out of the darkness himself without God's help. A person in darkness may make some moral improvements in his life, but he is still in darkness if Christ is not dwelling in him. The improvements that a person in the world can make in his life is limited.

If people in the darkness of the world yield to amoral group opinions, who will take charge?

Who will inspire those opinions? Who will control mass behavior? The terrifying answer might lie in the vast global networks of leadership training systems that mold pastors, as well as leaders and facilitators for schools, governments, corporations and non-profit organizations.

One of the most influential training grounds is the Aspen Institute. One of its former lecturers was Bob Buford, the founding President both of the Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management and the Leadership Network.

Buford trains large churches to follow the latest business management techniques. Those tactics include the dialectic

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process conceived by occult philosopher, Georg Hegel, then used by Karl Marx to break down walls between Christianity and communism. That is the background behind who is training the mainstream Christian churches.

The negative side of such synergy, as it is called, is obvious: minds are closed to unwanted facts, rational arguments, and unpopular scriptures—but open to group values and opinions. Those opinions are likely to include hostility toward any Christian who refuses to become part of the dialectic process or conform to the crowd mentality.

Half a century ago, Dr. Solomon E. Asch, helped answer the question: How might someone be released from the seductive grasp of this sought-after group synergy? His experiments on "compliance" showed that:

...people are more likely to break from a group if they have an ally. Subjects in his experiment were asked to look at different lines on a card and judge their lengths. Each subject was unknowingly placed in a group of "confederates" who deliberately chose a line that was obviously wrong. About a third of the time, the subjects would give in and go along with the majority.

But if one confederate broke from the group and gave another answer, even a wrong answer, the subjects were more likely to give the response they knew was correct.

"The more you feel support for your dissent, the more likely you are to do it," said Dr. Danny Axsom, an associate professor of psychology at Virginia Tech.

We see there the value of being in the church and developing close relationships with brethren. When the young adults leave the church, many times they have gone to college, or gone off on their own, and they have been away from the support of their parents and other brethren. We see here, in these statistics, how important it is to have to have that support.

Such support has been sadly lacking in many classrooms, churches and corporate teams. The cost of resistance has seemed too great! People who conform are rewarded with acceptance, appreciation, applause and celebration. They belong in the group. But, resisters face rejection and exclusion, which brings more emotional pain than most are willing to endure.

But, what we see in this, is the importance of brethren not forsaking the assembling of themselves together in fellowshiping and worship with one another, but more importantly to genuinely love one another.

These people, with this unloving nature, are always finding problems and troubles. They always see insults where they do not exist. There is always something upsetting them. They are always being put out. They are constantly stumbling because of their unloving spirit.

But John says that they cause other people to stumble also, because as they are in this state and condition no one knows what to do with them. They are always so touchy and sensitive, and they constantly run other people down. They subtly character assassinate others.

This is the inspired written word of God's description of the person who does not love his brother. There is this horrible picture of the unloving nature. Since the apostle John has given us this in detail, we are able to see this picture of the unloving person in darkness, and we are sickened by it. We have to ask God to forgive us if we have seen anything of ourselves in it.

Saul, the Pharisee who was later called and became the apostle Paul, zealously persecuted and murdered members of God's church by using the "crowd mentality" to incite groups of Jews to hate the disciples of Christ. He was in darkness with the Jewish world—blind to the truth.

**Acts 7:51-52, 54, 57-59** You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. "Which

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of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

We see that Saul was actually a primary figure in this persecution of Stephen, and then even his stoning. Paul, no doubt, had a part in inciting the crowd, using the crowd mentality to go after this loyal member of God's church.

**Matthew 23:26-28** Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. "Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

Paul was a Pharisee, and this was a description of him at that time.

**Acts 8:1, 3** As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

**Acts 9:1-6** Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

There are still some who attend God's church, possibly they are tares, who have not yet asked God what they are to do.

**Acts 9:10-28, 20** Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. " And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight." Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. " And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. " For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared

to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?" But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

Saul was not taken out of the darkness and into the light until God called him, and he received the Holy Spirit. Then, he was able to resist the "crowd mentality" of the blind Pharisees. And, God used him in a great way. Many times, in Paul's epistles, he shows his love and compassion for the brethren. This is such an encouraging thing to read of what God's power can do in changing our minds, and changing the minds of anyone in the world completely—yanking them out darkness and placing them in the light. This is an incredible story. I just think that we have always underestimated how opposite the world is. How opposite Paul's attitude was from what it became when he was given the Holy Spirit. What a contrast!

Christians are loving people. We are the exact opposite of all I have been describing, that is, the unloving person of the world. We are in a different realm—in the light and not in darkness. We have a purpose governing our lives. We are not dependant on circumstances, accidents and chances. We are not subject to nor led by the world. We have a specific goal and central true doctrine, which we follow very closely.

Our eyes have been opened. We have understood the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the result is that there is no occasion of stumbling in us, or that is the way it should be. We do not trip and stumble constantly as we socialize and meet people, and so

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other people do not stumble because of us. There is something about us that draws the best out of others.

We have come to see that Satan had introduced principles into our lives, which made us hateful. We were alienated from God, but we realized we were in danger. We heard God's call that offered forgiveness because of the love of God in Jesus Christ.

We saw ourselves as death-deserving sinners who were given the potential to receive salvation and eternal life because of the love of God. We realize now that this must govern our attitude towards our whole life.

Our knowledge of the love of God in Christ makes us love other people even as we have been loved ourselves. We are new men and women with a new outlook. We are part of a new realm. By living as Christ lived we thereby show and prove that we truly are His disciples.

Jesus Christ put this perfectly in a parable of the man who was a servant and was in trouble. He went to his lord and pleaded for forgiveness and that lord forgave him. However, there was another man who was a servant under the first servant who came to him and made exactly the same plea. Nevertheless, he took him by the throat and said, 'No, I will not let you off—you have to pay to the last farthing.' A farthing, in the British currency, has been discontinued, but it actually was used up until the 1960's. It was a quarter of a penny—very small.

Jesus warned that that man must not think that he has been forgiven. The man who does not forgive will not be forgiven, as Christ says in the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, in Matthew 18:23-35.

What this means is that you and I can only be happy about the fact that we are Christians if we find this loving, forgiving spirit abiding within us. It is idle for us to say that we know God has forgiven us if we are not loving and forgiving of others ourselves. People who say that they are in the light, but who hate and do not forgive their brother, are in darkness even now.

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Remember what we read in I John 2:10, *"He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him."*

God grant, that as we have examined ourselves in the light of this, we may be able to say, with assurance and confidence, that we are abiding in the light and loving the brethren.

**I Peter 2:9-10** But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.