What is Wrong With Man?

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Because of the recent shooting in Connecticut, we are engulfed in a national conversation concerning what caused the shooter to do what he did. The shooter's destructive behavior has been blamed on everything from a lack of access to affordable health care, to listening to too much political commentary, to the easy accessibility of firearms. Sadly, many use a tragic event of this nature to advocate a political agenda that calls for greater control of government over our lives. Yet, in the midst of all of this pontification, few have adequately articulated the root cause of the problem.

As tempting as it may be to blame such an unfortunate incident on a person's environment, the root problem relates to man's fallen nature. The human heart is sick.

Jeremiah says,

> "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9)

Ever since the Fall of man in Eden, every human being has inherited a sin nature that is at war with his Creator (Ps 51:5; Rom 5:12; 8:7-8).

Thus, Christ explained that the natural state of the human heart is one of violence and murder:

> "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man" (Mark 7:20-23).

James also spoke to the root of the problem when he explained,

> "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel…" (Jas 4:1-2).

Genesis 8:21 explained the violence (Gen 6:11) of the pre-flood world as follows: "…for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth…"

The millennial kingdom will amply illustrate the truth that man's evil emanates from his nature rather than his environment. Although the kingdom will start with believing mortal, tribulation survivors (Matt 25:31-46), they will have children, and their children will have children, etc ... until the entire earth is again repopulated. During this 1000 year period Christ will rule the world from David's Throne in Jerusalem (Isa 2:2-3) consequently ushering in a perfect environment for the earth's inhabitants (Isa 11:6-9). Yet at the end of this glorious era, when given the opportunity, mankind will participate in a universal revolt against God (Zech 14:16-18; Rev 20:7-9). Quite clearly man's appetite for sin cannot be blamed on his environment since he had been living in a perfect environment for 1000 years before deciding to rebel against God.

For those that blame man's evil propensity on adverse economic conditions, they need only remember that crime statistics actually fell during the Great Depression. For those that think a lack of education is the problem, they need only recall that one of the most educated societies of all time according to literacy standards was none other than Nazi Germany. As the old saying goes, "if you educate a thief, you only increase his capacity to steal." For those that believe that a lack of government spending on social programs is the problem, they need only recall that we have spent trillions on social spending thanks to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. Despite these massive expenditures, violence, similar to what we have witnessed recently, continues unabated in our society.

The only meaningful solution to violence that emanates from man's depraved nature is an internal transformation that only God can provide. People must trust in Christ (John 3:16) and consequently experience the new birth (John 3:3-6), receive the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9), and participate in the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4). Only such an internal restraint on man's wicked heart will provide him with the internal conviction that he needs to deny his natural proclivity for violence. America's founding fathers well understood that if man will not externally be restrained by the bayonette (the threat of punishment from the State) then he must be internally restrained by the Bible. Should such internal restraint be removed, our ability to govern ourselves becomes impossible thereby leading to the end of the unique American experiment in liberty, independence, and limited self-government.

Given the current drift of our culture away from biblical truth, what surprises me is not the occurrence of violent episodes, like the one that recently occurred in Connecticut; but what surprises me is that these tragic events do not happen with greater frequency. The only lasting solution to man's wicked heart is an internal transformation that only God can provide, and this is the root cause of man's problem.

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