

**THE SOWER
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Have you visited our web site lately? (www.Arthurcoc.com)

“THE CHURCH OF NATURE”

While we frequently hear of a general decline of church membership and attendance in churches, we also are reminded that spirituality is alive and well. When polls have asked people for church preference, more are responding with “None.” This trend away from what is sometimes referred to as “traditional religion” is cause for concern. While there is much within “traditional religion” that is out of harmony with true biblical Christian principles, yet what biblical standards do still remain are being threatened as well. What all must understand is that Jesus didn’t come to make man religious or what is sometimes called “spiritual.” He came to atone for man’s sins, thus making God accessible. The New Testament standard for the church has been greatly disregarded, producing a confusing array of denominations, sects and cults, all claiming to be “Christian,” while often ignoring basic elements of the teachings of Christ and His apostles. These groups bear different names in order to distinguish themselves from other “Christians.” These names usually reflect who the founder of their denomination is, or some system of ecclesiastical government or doctrine they promote.

As we see more and more in our country, and also in Europe, turning away from “organized” or “traditional” religion, another group is increasing from among the “Nones”. They were described in an article I read as “a church of nature.” Reference was made to a Baylor University study that found that regions with “beautiful landscapes and good weather” had “lower rates of adherence to traditional religious organizations.” It seems that those who appreciate the beauty of God’s creation, but reject church membership and attendance are more prone to simply finding God in nature. As one stated it, “Beautiful weather, mountains and waterfronts can serve as conduits to the sacred, just like traditional religious congregations.” Another, referring to “nones”, (people apart from traditional religion) said they “may find something of the divine in forests, lakes and mountains.”

This, of course, is not something entirely new. I’m sure we have all been told by some who are non-attenders, things like,, “I experience God on the golf course” or “fishing on the creek bank.” Nature is indeed awe-inspiring, but we must be reminded that it is a product of God’s infinite power—it is His creation. To forget this, we become as those who “worshipped the creature (creation) more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever” (Romans 1:25). When we see

a beautiful sunset, for instance, let us give thanks to the LORD who “made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is” (Exodus 20:11). The “church of nature” is patterned more after the religion of pagans, wherein is no hope. Being in touch with nature is no guarantee of being in touch with nature’s Creator. Being “spiritual” without God and His direction in our lives is to be in touch with a spiritual entity that is spoken of as “spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12). God, the Creator, is found only in relation to Christ, “in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins....” (Eph. 1:7) --Ron

“IT IS PATRIOTISM that helps transform a mere stranger into a countryman that, under the right circum-stances, a man will help and defend, sometimes at the cost of his own life. For love of country, people will donate money, toil for countless hours in the most thankless of jobs, and even take up arms if necessary. Such a noble urge should be encouraged, taught to our children at every opportunity, and honored for the good that it does for our society.”

--Margaret Thatcher

“THERE’S GOOD NEWS TONIGHT”

(With all the bad news being aired today about the Covid-19 virus, it is well that we not dwell on the negative excessively, and especially news that demonstrates that God is still in control, and that He is able to make “all things work together for good to them that love God...” [Romans 8:28]. The following from the bulletin from the Windsong Church of Christ in Little Rock, Ark. illustrates this fact):

Even when our armed forces were losing battles during WWII, radio newsman Gabriel Heater brought hope to millions of Americans with this sign-on each phrase, always finding something positive to report.

COVID-19 has brought death and destruction of incomes and economies to the world, but “There’s good news tonight.”

Brethren **in Hungary** are reporting a significant increase to their radio listening audience as they proclaim the “Good News.”

In **France**, more people than ever before are listening to Bible lessons and worship on YouTube. Many non-Christians are watching live streaming of church services with their Christian family members for the first time and showing interest in the gospel. One brother from Lille, France said, “This may be the best evangelistic opportunity the church in Europe has experienced in years.”

In **Austria**, a new sense of unity is being reported as brothers work together to bring the gospel to Middle Eastern refugees who are locked down due to the Virus. Many are engaging in “online studies” and responding to the gospel. There are now five congregations across Austria of these people that have left Islam to follow Christ.

In **Cambodia**, our Pure Water distribution system is providing more water than ever before as people have renewed interest in sanitation and health due to the Virus. Our Bible schools report being locked down with the students being provided more opportunity for concentrated study with fewer distractions.

“There’s good news tonight”—the Good News is spreading.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT—

“If there were no God, there would be no Atheists.” (G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936), English writer and Christian apologist.)

MEETING AGAIN: Last Sunday we began meet-ing again for a worship hour, following the quarantine and Doris’s and my stay in Mason Point Nursing Home. We are not having our Bible class, but will continue with the 10:30 service. Doris continues to be helped by therapists and nurses twice a week. She is regaining her strength, and her sugar elevation is actually better than it was in the Home. Your prayers are appreciated.

OTHER PRAYER CONCERNS: Continue with prayers for: Ruby Bradd (Clinton; doing well after cancer treatments); Wayne Polk (Shelbyville minister; health problems).

As we see the chaos, especially in our cities, as well as throughout the world, may our prayer be that at the close of the Bible:

“Even so, come Lord Jesus” Rev. 22:20