

**Faith
on
Earth?**

LOU POUMAKIS crisply summarizes the late Dr. Rousas John Rushdoony's remarkably influential applied Biblical faith in this readable and pithy overview.

"Shall He find faith on the earth?" is a question Christians must answer for they will decide the matter. Believers today have yet to appreciate the magnitude of the responsibility God has placed on their shoulders. You may be surprised and challenged as Lou Poumakis sets forth the eternal significance of your personal efforts in this brief, thought-provoking volume. This book will stimulate your thinking about faith on Christ's terms. The church and the yet to be evangelized world need this message.

Lou Poumakis' *Faith on Earth?* is clear in its language, cogent in its presentation, and bold in its challenge to Christians to obey God's laws. Here and there, it's even rather startling. The reader will probably find himself asking, probably more than once, "Why didn't I think of that?"

LEE DUIGON

Contributing Editor to the Chalcedon Foundation's *Faith for All of Life* magazine, and author of the *Bell Mountain Series* of novels

Faith on Earth?

*When the Son of man cometh,
shall he find faith on earth?*

(Luke 18:8)

Lou Poumakis



Ventura, California
2013

Faith on Earth?

*When the Son of man cometh,
shall he find faith on earth? (Luke 18:8)*

by Lou Poumakis

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International Standard Book Number: 978-0-9831957-8-8

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013934608

Cover Photo: NASA Image

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Printed in the United States of America.

Published by



AN IMPRINT OF



Nordskog Publishing, Inc.

2716 Sailor Ave., Ventura, California 93001, USA

1-805-642-2070 • 1-805-276-5129

www.NordskogPublishing.com



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INTRODUCTION

“NEVERTHELESS when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). These words from the Lord come at the end of a parable about a widow’s prayer for deliverance.¹ They seem out of place, a cryptic remark disconnected from the subject at hand. But there it is and, when we look at the history of the Christian faith, we can see there is cause for concern. There certainly could have been no doubt on the Lord’s part as to the outcome but He doesn’t indulge in asking idle questions. There is a strong implication here that says: first, man bears responsibility for the maintenance of the faith; and, second, the presence or absence of faith on earth when He returns depends on man. As we shall see, Christ has given His people much more responsibility than most Christians would acknowledge today. Without denying God’s sovereign control over all things, we can say that Christianity has no life of its own; its continuance and survival depends on Christians who make it what it is.

There was a time, really not so long ago, when Christianity was the dominant faith in the Western world. It thrived in Europe, Australia, South Africa, and the Americas. In the Colonial era until well after the War of Independence, Christianity was virtually the only religion in America. During this period the Christian faith was central to the life of virtually

¹ For a thorough exposition of this passage see: R. J. Rushdoony, *Salvation and Godly Rule*, Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1983, 413–417.

the entire population.² Christianity is still the largest of the world's religions. Its numbers, particularly in the West, may not have changed greatly, but its influence on the cultures of the world has diminished markedly. Indeed, it is evident to the most casual observer that Christian influence in the Western world is now only a very small fraction of what it once was. Christianity has changed; it no longer has the cultural vitality it once displayed. When we look at the worldviews espoused and demonstrated by most of the leaders and educators of the Western world, the true extent of the degradation of Christian influence can be better assessed.

The challenges to Christianity today are greater than ever before. The anti-Christian forces arrayed against it and seeking its demise are powerful and deeply entrenched. They either control directly or at least are able to strongly influence every significant world power and are moving inexorably toward a socialistic and atheistic one-world government. What is needed to prevent their plunging the world into an age of abysmal darkness and to preserve or regain individual freedom is a restoration of Christian credibility and vitality. This will not be accomplished without a major sea change in thought and deed within the ranks of Christianity. But before reasonable and effective action can be taken, we need to understand the current situation, and, even more importantly, how we got here. The following is an attempt to explore, in very much an overview fashion, what the changes were, why they took place, and what will be needed to recover the ground that has been lost.

The author of this work does not claim originality for much of the content. He draws heavily from the lifelong works of Cornelius Van Til and R. J. Rushdoony who have made extensive contributions toward the advancement and development of Biblical understanding—the former having laid the theological and philosophical basis for the latter's writing on a broad range of subjects pertaining to the Christian faith and its relationship to culture. The works of both are well worth further study.

There is no intent in this work to produce a thorough analysis comprehending every detail of each point raised. It is rather to provide an outline of what is today an important aspect of the Christian faith that is

2 Winthrop S. Hudson. *Religion in America*, 4th ed. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987, 13–18.

not addressed in most Christian books or theological material. It is the author's hope that the reader will be sufficiently motivated to investigate further.

The ideas contained herein are not likely to gain immediate widespread acceptance; today's church is not yet ready for strong medicine. But there is a growing remnant who are aware that something is seriously wrong in society and that many of the churches are either part of the problem or just not relevant to a solution. The time is coming though, perhaps fairly soon, when it will become obvious to many more true believers that their leaders have let them down and have thereby brought about calamitous changes in America and the rest of the world. It is hoped that this work will lead some of the faithful to a better grasp of Christian responsibility and the scope of Scripture, particularly for application to life in this world and the future it promises—in time and in history.

PART ONE: THE FAITH

1

ORIGINS

WHEN and where did Christianity originate? What are its roots? How old is the faith that we now call the Christian Faith? These questions go beyond a desire merely to satisfy curiosity. How they are answered affects our basic understanding of Christianity itself and what it means to be a Christian. A right understanding of the historical origins of a belief system often sheds much light on the nature and applicability of the teachings of that system. It's important that any study of the faith begin with a correct view of its origins. The common belief today is that Christianity originated with the coming of Christ and is about 2,000 years old. What we now know as Judaism claims origination from Abraham in ca. 2000 BC, which makes it almost twice as old. Both Christianity and Judaism appeal to Holy Scripture—the Word of the Creator God—so one must go there to gain a better understanding of their origins.

OLD TESTAMENT FAITH AND CHRISTIANITY

In John 5:45–47 we read Jesus' statement that Moses was writing of Him in Deuteronomy 18:15, but the leaders of the Jews did not believe Him. In John 7:19 He told them that none of them kept God's law. In many other passages, Christ castigates the Pharisees for their failure to follow Moses and believe in the Messiah, of whom he wrote (see Matt. 23:13–35; Mark 7:10–12, 12:26–27; John 7:19, 22–24). The faith that Christ was defending at this time, the faith that Moses had but the

Pharisees apparently did not have, was faith in Him, faith in the Christ, the second Person of the Triune God.³ This faith in the Person of Christ is what characterizes Christianity. We speak of it today as being the Christian Faith.

Moses, of course, wrote the first five books of the Old Testament, known in Biblical terms as the Law. Since Jesus told us Moses was speaking of Him, this tells us that Christ is in and behind the Old Testament Law (see John 5:39; Matt. 5:17-19). Indeed, references to Christ are not limited to Moses but can be found throughout the Old Testament. Paul tells us that Abraham, whom God chose to be the patriarch of ancient Israel, held to that same faith and therefore was the father of all Christian believers (see Rom. 4:1-3, 9, 12, 13, 16; Gal. 3:29). The prophets, some of the kings, and many other Old Testament saints held to this faith in Christ (Heb. 11). The Israelites of Moses' day looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, the Anointed One, to whom all the sacrifices offered by the Israelites pointed.

These verses make it clear that ancient Israel held to the same faith as do Christians today, faith in the Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity. The difference, of course, was in perspective. Today we look back to the incarnation. For the ancients, the Christ was yet to come and the exact nature of His coming was not as clear to them as it is to us today. The sacrificial system God gave Israel was instituted to keep the faithful on track. It offset this lack of clarity by demonstrating the seriousness of sin and the need for the shedding of blood as its remission (Heb. 9:22). The sacrifices were necessary then but, if continued today, would represent a denial of Christ's final sacrifice (Heb. 10:9-14). So, with this understanding of the temporary expediency of the sacrificial system as an exception, there does not appear to be any essential difference between the religion of ancient Israel and Christianity. Both revered the same God, both acknowledged the truth of His word—which at that time was limited to the

³ The concept of the Triune God is evident from the Hebrew language which has dual and plural forms. The name for God in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God [*Elohim*, plural of at least three persons, not singular or dual] created" [singular verb form in Hebrew as in He (singular) created] reveals both the plurality and singularity of the nature of God. (See Neil Cullan McKinlay, *From Mason to Minister*, Ventura, CA: Nordskog Publishing, 2011, 83.) And in Genesis 1:26 God refers to Himself in the plural when He says, "Let us make man in our image..."

Old Testament—and both looked to the Son as Savior.

For a variety of reasons, this early faith degraded over the centuries. But even as late as at the time of Christ's birth, there were still some of the faithful in Israel that did believe and recognized Jesus as the Messiah (see Luke 2:25–34). The inventions of the priests and religious leaders corrupted the faith to such an extent that most did not recognize their Messiah when He came. These religious leaders refused to listen to His words of correction and, finally, as was prophesied in the Scriptures, they had Him crucified.

By this time, the transition of the religion of national Israel away from the true faith to rabbinic Judaism was well advanced. With the resurrection of Christ and the work of the Apostles, that true faith was reborn in Christianity—first among the Jews, and then in the Gentile world. We read in the New Testament of thousands of Jews including many priests that believed in Christ.

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:41)

Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand. (Acts 4:4)

And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7)

And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: (Acts 21:20)

These were not converts in the true sense of the word; they merely returned to the faith of their fathers and acknowledged Christ as their Messiah.

Paul tells us that the children of the flesh are not necessarily the children of God, and he refers to Christian believers as “the Israel of God” (see Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:15–16). Indeed, Christianity has always been based on faith; its heritage follows a faith-line, rather than a blood-line. The

Pharisees taught that God favored the Jews because of their lineage from Abraham through Isaac to Jacob, but it was never that. It was always the faith of the people as expressed in their obedience to God that made them His people and resulted in His blessing. Regardless of race, national origin, church, or family background, anyone who places his faith in Christ, is a Christian. This was as true in ancient Israel as it is today.

The idea that the Christian faith was alive and well more than a thousand years before Jesus was born may sound strange to modern ears. But what is Christianity other than faith in the true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? And wasn't ancient Israel founded on just that faith? Consider the confession the apostle Paul made before the Roman governor Felix:

But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets.
(Acts 24:14)

Paul is defending here the Christian faith—which the Jewish leaders were calling heresy—as being the logical continuity of the ancient faith found in the law and the prophets (the Old Testament Scriptures). Paul was a Jew, a learned Pharisee; he studied under Gamaliel, a descendant of Hillel, and knew that faith in great detail. When he says that Christianity is not something new but is the true faith of ancient Israel, we should take notice. More significantly, these are not just the words of the man Paul. They are the inspired words of Holy Scripture, which cannot be set aside.

Furthermore, to assert that faith in ancient Israel was not the same as Christian faith is to say that the God of the Old Testament is not the same God as the God of the New Testament (see Heb. 13:8). It is, in effect, to erroneously ignore the Old Testament as part of the Bible. But this is impossible because the Bible is a unified entity; the two testaments are interwoven much too tightly together to be separated without destroying the new and rendering the old unintelligible.⁴

⁴ For an in-depth study of the unity of the Old and New Testaments, see: Charles D. Provan, *The Church Is Israel Now*. Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 1987.

EARLIER FAITH

To return to the question of timing, one can look in the Ancient Near East and in Early Dynastic Egypt and find many religions that are even earlier than Moses (ca. 1450 BC). But we can actually date the origin of the Biblical faith much earlier. After Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, God promised He would send His Son (the seed of the woman) who would crush Satan's head (see Gen. 3:15). Later, in the godly line following Seth, men began to "call upon the name of the LORD" (Gen. 4:26). The word LORD in this instance is a reference to the true God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the God of the whole Bible. It is very likely they looked forward to the coming of the seed of the woman as God promised. We can conclude then that the line of Seth shared, at least to some extent, what is today the Christian faith.

The true faith, though, actually existed even earlier; it is the faith that prevailed prior to the Fall where we read that God spoke with Adam in the Garden (see Gen. 2:16-17, 28-29; 3:8) and Adam was obedient to Him. At that time, Adam and Eve worshipped the true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the God of the whole Bible. Christ's atonement on the cross was yet future at this time but it was still inherent in their worship and faith.

Christianity is not merely an addition to, or an offshoot of, Judaism; it is the oldest religion in the world. It is the embodiment of God's eternal plan for what man should believe and how he should worship and has a continuity that extends throughout all of history. Without this perspective, we lose or misunderstand much of what Scripture says about the faith. Christianity is not a Johnny-come-lately religion. It goes all the way back to Adam and Eve and it cannot be properly understood without that context.

HUMANISM

The religion that has roots almost as old as Christianity is humanism. It dates from the Fall itself when Eve and then Adam, acting in accordance with the serpent's lie, decided to be their own gods (Gen. 3:5). This was a definite change in religion; they worshipped new gods (themselves) and had a new faith—a faith in Satan's word instead of God's word. Most humanists today insist that they are not religious, and, unlike Christians or

others who believe in God, they believe in science. They define religion as belief in a god but the correct definition is “a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe.”⁵ Humanists believe that the universe had no purpose or design and came into being entirely by accident. This certainly cannot be empirically proven and is, therefore, a belief—a religious belief. Some tenets of this faith are the Big Bang, abiogenesis (life arising spontaneously from non-life), and Darwinian evolution. That humanism is a religion is affirmed by Humanist Manifesto I, which begins:

First: Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created.

Second: Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as the result of a continuous process.⁶

This is humanism in its modern form. (Humanism can be defined in a broad sense where it takes many forms: eastern mysticism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and including Islam that copied the Bible yet is a man-made false religion that opposes the true God of the Bible, etc., as well as in the more narrow, modern sense of atheism and agnosticism.) All are based on man’s word and man’s ideas of God. All are forms of idolatry that worship the creature rather than the Creator.

So upon further examination we can see that, from the Christian point of view, elements of Christianity and humanism are the basic constituents of all the world’s religions. All others are some combination or variant of these two. Christianity represents faith in God’s word, and humanism on the other hand represents faith in man’s word. This, then, is the key: Who is it that is speaking in these religious documents? Is it God or man? The Bible not only claims to be the absolute word of God, but in it God Himself speaks: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (see 2 Tim. 3:16). All others are clearly man-made documents containing man’s opinions as to origins, purpose, and ethics.

⁵ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/religion>

⁶ Copyright 1933 by the New Humanist and 1973 by American Humanist Association (www.jjnet.com/archives/documents/humanist.htm).

There are, then, only two basic religions: belief in the God of the Bible (Christianity) or belief in man (humanism). Most other religions contain only vestiges of the true faith as carried by Noah's family into the post-flood world where it scattered into variant expressions. But as one would expect, these have diverged widely as man's ideas were introduced over the centuries and now bear little resemblance to God's word.

It is also true that neither Biblical faith nor humanism is practiced in a pure sense anywhere. Although they might not like to admit it, humanists cannot help but have a great deal of Christian influence (God's word) in the philosophy they live by and, consequently, their faith. Humanistic scientists, for example, assume that their experiments and discoveries have meaning and purpose and that they fit into an orderly, rather than chaotic, universe. There is no basis for such a view other than in the Bible.⁷ Likewise, as we shall see in what follows, Christians have imbibed considerable quantities of humanism (man's word) in both their theology and their practice. Many of the troubles of mankind throughout history can be traced to the confusion caused by the intermixing of these two faiths.

⁷ There is much evidence in support of the truth of the Christian faith but the most powerful argument (developed and documented by Cornelius Van Til) is that without the creative and continuing providential work of the Triune God whom we find only in the Bible, there could be no order in the universe. Because meaning is dependent on order, this would render all facts meaningless and human knowledge itself would be impossible. See: Cornelius Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1967, 31–46.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



LOU **POUMAKIS** is a retired electrical engineer. He practiced this profession until his retirement in 2002 but has been a serious student of God's word since his conversion in 1974. He was ordained as elder in the Christian Reformed Church and later as minister in the Federation of Reformed Churches. Early on, he was attracted to the work of R. J. Rushdoony at Chalcedon Foundation where he discovered Postmillennialism and Christian Reconstruction. These doctrines reflected a truly Biblical Christian faith that possessed a dynamic that contrasted favorably with the passive outlook that predominated in what he had seen elsewhere. *Faith on Earth?* is primarily based on information garnered from this source. Before writing *Faith on Earth?*, he published several articles relating God's word to current events. He and his wife Joan, who have been married since 1955, now live in Florida. They have been blessed with two children, seven grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

PUBLISHER'S WORD

*When the Son of man cometh,
shall he find faith on the earth?"*

Luke 18:8

THE voluminous work of the late Dr. Rousas John Rushdoony, founder of Chalcedon Foundation, has remarkably influenced Biblical understanding in the twentieth-century church. The Nordskogs have long supported this work. Therefore, we are pleased to publish this important new contribution to Biblical worldview literature.

Faith on Earth? by Lou Poumakis crisply summarizes Dr. Rushdoony's applied Biblical faith in this readable and pithy overview. It begins with Christ's question, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Lk. 18:8). Faith is a big term. Faith means understanding that God is our great Father, Lord, and Redeemer. Everything in life belongs to Him. In this world of ultimate spiritual battle for the souls of men, everything matters for God's glory and mankind's good. Otherwise, all must count toward sinful death and destruction. No territory is neutral. Faith requires the constant, thorough seeking of God, of His purposes, and His ways. Faith defers to God in all things—including everything economic and everything relational, even the civil sphere and its politics. The whole Bible is God's Law-Word, as all Scripture is inspired of God (2 Ti. 3:16).

For too long the church has allowed a misguided and essentially Greek view to direct Christian life. In this view, known historically as Pietism, only so-called spiritual things are good. Material things are evil. The Gnostics went so far in this regard as to characterize Satan as the hero of the creation story. He thus attempted to stop the Creator from creating an evil material universe. The common Christian version of this gnosticism, upon a limited Biblical understanding, teaches that the mysterious spiritual realm is the only good, Satan owns this world, and thus any

involvement in it, short of evangelizing, means soiling our spiritual selves. They believe salvation is essentially personal and irrelevant to the greater community. Often, a primary temporal goal of this faith is to find God in merely mystical experience. Such practice completely ignores the moral and ethical imperatives of the Gospel. Many varieties of this view have merged to become the mainstream Evangelical Movement. Added to it, Dispensationalism has provided a seeming rational excuse for allowing the world to go to ruin. In Dispensationalism, the world must become increasingly evil. As it reaches a crescendo of wickedness, Jesus will rapture His church from the world, and soon after will set up an external kingdom of Christ's rule-of-iron over the remnant of the evil world.

On the face of it, the Pietistic and Dispensational view flies in the face of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Even Christ's disciples at first expected such an external Kingdom. But no. Christ's Kingdom expands from the heart of the individual outwards under the salt and light influence of believers. Thus, Jesus said the Kingdom comes without observation (Lk. 17:20). The Biblical view, the one the early American Pilgrims and Puritans held, says that Christ's ministry will successfully fill the world with a mountain (world order) made without hands (Dan. 2:35, 44-45). Psalm 110 indicates that Christ rules at the right hand of the Father, reigning in the midst of His enemies, until they are made His footstool (Mt. 22:44; 1 Co. 15:25-26; Heb. 2:8). Clearly, Christ intends to rule over an earthly Kingdom, in anticipation of eternity, by expanding His benevolent influence through His people as they build the Kingdom. He rules by His Holy Spirit through the individual hearts of those who belong to Him.

In *Faith on Earth?*, Lou Poumakis presents a Biblical worldview designed to bring us out of selfish Christianity into the Kingdom-oriented faith of the Scriptures. Lou does an excellent job of stimulating our thinking of the world on Christ's terms. The church and the yet to be evangelized world need this message. When He returns in glory, may Christ indeed declare, "Yes, the Son of Man found faith on the earth!"



— Gerald Christian Nordskog,
Publisher
Christmas, 2012