

Trying to Make Sense Out of Another Senseless Act of Violence

Editor's Note: *This article was originally written after the Colorado movie theater shooting, but we thought it had an appropriate message for this tragic time.*

Another senseless act of random violence in America has made the headlines. How do we make sense out of this kind of thing? Why do things like this happen?

I can't help but feel that to some extent, we're reaping what we've been sowing as a society. We said to God, "Get out of the public arena." Lawsuit after lawsuit, often by misguided "civil libertarians," have chased away any fear of God in the land—at least in the hearts of millions.

Recently, I wrote on the subject of hell and how our society has generally lost its cognizance of it.

We've lost this cognizance to the point that a recent bestseller was a book by an "evangelical pastor," who for all practical purposes denied hell (or the import of it). (It exists, but don't worry—supposedly nobody's going there.) When the book was first published 16 months ago, it made the cover of *Time* magazine. It was all republished as a paperback.

This makes me think. *Wow, what the heck happened to hell?* Was there some new revelation that changed what the Lord warned about? To me, what He said 2,000 years ago is still worth heeding: What does it profit you if you gain the whole world and lose your soul?

Tens of millions of young people in this culture seem to have no fear of God. It's becoming too commonplace that some

frustrated person will go on a killing spree of random people. If they kill themselves, they think it's all over. But that's like going from the frying pan into the fire. Where's the fear of God in our society? I don't think people would do those sorts of things if they truly understood the reality of hell.

I'll never forget what an Alabama black pastor said to me one time when I interviewed him about judge Roy Moore, the Ten Commandments judge. He said: "All across America people should stand with Judge Moore about the Ten Commandments. Why? Because when they took prayer out of school, you didn't hear about kids killing each other, about them bringing dope to school, shooting the teachers, you didn't hear about that. You see what I'm saying? That's what's wrong. We need more God-fearing."

The founders gave us a system where voluntary God-fearing was the underpinning of civility in society. The more internal restraints people have, the less need they have for external restraints. (And the converse is true.) That's why I can't understand the ongoing crusade of those who want to remove any vestige of Judeo-Christian in the public arena. All they're doing is making everything worse for everyone else.

Religion and morality were key to the founders' vision for a civil society. In his farewell address, George Washington highlighted the source of morality: "Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle." Will somebody please tell that to these civil libertarian lawyers always suing against public displays or the Ten Commandments and the like?

In America's early years, a "future state of rewards and punishment" was an important concept. For example:

- In 1786, founding father Benjamin Rush wrote: "Such is my

veneration for every religion that reveals the attributes of the Deity, or a future state of rewards and punishments.”

- Noah Webster’s first Dictionary (1828) had many Bible verses. He said one aspect of “Religion” includes “a belief in a state of rewards and punishment, and in man’s accountableness to God.”

- The Constitution of the state of Maryland, adopted in 1864, required political officials to hold to a belief “in a future state of rewards and punishments.” The same held for South Carolina’s 1778 constitution, as did Tennessee’s constitution of 1796.

- The Pennsylvania Supreme Court stated in 1817: “Laws cannot be administered in any civilized government unless the people are taught to revere the sanctity of an oath, and look to a future state of rewards and punishments for the deeds of this life.”

In short, hell was viewed as a part of divine accountability.

When Osama bin Laden was finally killed in May 2011, a CNN/Opinion Research Corporation poll released shortly after found that 61 percent of the public thought he went to hell, thus showing that a lot of Americans still believe in hell.

I know in my natural state I am worthy of hell before a holy God, who doesn’t grade on the curve. I am eternally grateful that on the cross Jesus went to hell for me, so I don’t have to. The next time someone wants to take out their frustrations on others by killing innocent victims, they ought to consider the eternal consequences of their evil actions.

Jerry Newcombe is host of and spokesman for Truth that Transforms with D. James Kennedy (formerly The Coral Ridge Hour). He has also written or co-written 23 books, including *The Book That Made America: How the Bible Formed Our Nation* and *Answers from the Founding Fathers*. Jerry co-wrote

(with Dr. Peter Lillback) the best-selling George Washington's Sacred Fire. He hosts the website . The views and opinions expressed here are his own.