

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan SABA

The Right Reverend
Bishop ANTHONY



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

Diocese of Los Angeles
And the West

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**TEACHING BY BISHOP ANTHONY
TO BE DISTRIBUTED TO THE FAITHFUL**

Reflection on Modern Thinking

May God bless all of you!

Maybe I'm being ambitious, my brothers and sisters, in talking about this, but I wanted to help you understand the way people think today. Why do we think the way we do? Why is it harder for some people to believe in God than it used to be? Why is it that many of your friends don't go to church regularly? It's not that they don't believe in God, but they don't go to church on a regular basis. It may be time for brunch for them—God help them—but we have the banquet of immortality. It's not for me to determine what their lives will be, but I wanted to give you an example of what happened to us.

First, there is a verse in the book of Ecclesiastes that says, “He has made everything beautiful in its time; also, he has put eternity into man’s mind...” (Ecclesiastes 3:11). So, the first thing we would want to say in this talk is that we have an idea of who God is without anybody telling us. If you have little children at home, before you were able to explain who God was, when they did something wrong, they knew it right away. I had a niece who did something wrong and was put in what they called the timeout chair. I don't know how well they work, because she said to me, "Uncle, it's only a minute." I don't think she got it, but I've told that story many times. The truth is, there's a sense in our conscience itself that God is there. If you were to tell nobody about God at all, you would still believe He's there, because how could we have an idea of someone who does not exist? The idea is in us before we even think about it.

So, when we go to this verse on eternity, we wonder how did it happen, then, that in the Western world we live in now, it's become hard for people to believe in that? How did we take that presence of God, the light of God, the fire of the Holy Spirit within us, illuminating and warming our souls, and put it on the side? Well, here I will explain it a little bit. It's complex, if you will, but originally, when man worshiped God, he didn't immediately think through things; he just worshiped. He prayed. And when he prayed, his mind was cleared. When his mind was clear, his heart was purified. And when his heart was purified, his body acted in the way his mind directed. That's the way it was. You have to purify your mind before you can see God there.

“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)

But then, around the 12th century in the Western world, people began to think about God—and that's good—but the person who was called the theologian, or the one who knows God, became a philosopher rather than a pray-er. Rather than being somebody who prayed first and then understood God, they tried to understand God with their minds, and then they prayed to God. That's a simplification, but it generally happened. From the 12th century to the 14th century in the West, men still always thought about God and put together ideas about who God was. But then, around the time of the Renaissance, men began not thinking only about God but thinking about what God needs to do. So, there was a competition between thinking about God and thinking about what God made—not a rejection of God, but a dereliction of God.

By the time of the American founding fathers, reading the Declaration of Independence by Thomas Jefferson, it says that God is the Creator and that truth is a set of laws facts that are “self-evident.” Then, he says that knowing these laws will let us “pursue happiness.” But our Lord said, “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life” (John 14.6). God has to be more than a distant Creator. He must be an intimate Partner with me. We can't operate on our own. We must co-operate together with God. Happiness ensues; it can't be pursued as if it were a condition of pleasure outside God's blessed purpose.

Well, man thought that God made all kinds of natural laws, and all you have to do is know the natural laws, and you could live fine in the world. That's called the Enlightenment—Thomas Jefferson and all of those men. They meant well, but it wasn't only thinking about God; it was thinking about nature. Finally, we get to the modern world, and we have thinking without God—not that God doesn't exist, but He's not involved. Science is what it believes in. No, technological power is what we have. And then God is there, but kind of only private, not public.

When do we find God in economics today? When do we find God in our social life today? We can't even say prayers at the football game, because we're afraid that it won't be a prayer everyone will like. Well, didn't we just say we have seen the true Light and found the true Faith? Why can't we do that? When you push God to the side, then you become sidelined. That's what happened here. Over time, people began to think too much and pray too little. And then they started to think about themselves instead of God and each other, and we got in big trouble. How can we figure out how to live a good life in the world unless we have God telling us? We can't, but that's what they're trying to do. If we are like a mirror, my brothers and sisters, and, in our mirror, we have the eternity that God gave us, and we look at His icon, then everything else makes sense. We can order the world. But if we turn that mirror on itself and look at all the things He made, we lose sight of Him.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "+ Bishop Anthony". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

+Bishop ANTHONY

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