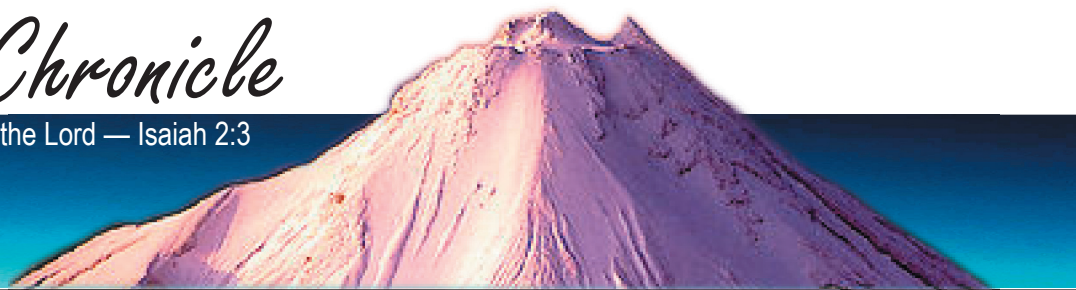


The Summit Chronicle

Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord — Isaiah 2:3



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Scripture of the Month

**"Do not be afraid of sudden fear,
nor of the onslaught of the wicked.
For the Lord will be your confidence
and will keep your foot from being
caught"**

— Proverbs 3:25-26

Contact Us

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RESTORING TRUE WORSHIP

by Kevin Moore

Upon the completion of the Jerusalem temple—the center of Jewish worship—Solomon reminded the Israelites that God is worthy of adoration and praise simply because of who He is and because of all that He has done (1 Kings 8:56-60). Then the king declared: "Let your heart therefore be loyal to the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, as at this day" (v. 61 NKJV). Solomon's plain yet solemn admonition highlights what is reiterated throughout scripture, namely the two fundamental requirements for acceptably approaching the throne of God: (1) a heart wholly devoted to Him, and (2) humble obedience to His revealed will.

At the death of Solomon, his son Rehoboam took the throne and attempted to rule with an iron fist, inciting a rebellion that led to the eventual division of the nation. Nebat's son, Jeroboam, took control of the northern kingdom and did not want his people worshipping in Jerusalem and

potentially being influenced to turn against him. He thus devised more convenient and innovative forms of worship in their own land, including new sacrifices, feasts, images, shrines, and priests (1 Kings 12:1-33).

The years that followed witnessed nineteen consecutive evil kings and a sustained digression in the North. Consequently the LORD allowed the Assyrians to conquer and exile the northern Israelites, and their land was repopulated with pagans from various Gentile nations (2 Kings 17:5-24). The chief complaint of these new inhabitants was that they did not know "the rituals of the God of the land" (v. 26), so an Israelite priest was repatriated to teach them how to worship the God of Israel (vv. 27-28). The intermingling of these new settlers with a remnant of the former populace resulted in what came to be known as the Samaritan race, whose worship was a mixture of God-revealed worship and man-made worship (vv. 29-41).

A few centuries later, as Jesus of Nazareth passed through this land, He encountered a Samaritan woman (John 4:1-18). After a brief discussion about "living water" and morality, the conversation turned to the topic of worship (the term is used eight times in vv. 20-24). As the woman enquired about the rightful place of worship (Mt. Gerazim or Jerusalem?), Jesus informs her that the place of worship is no longer as important as how one worships. As a matter of fact, the Samaritans were essentially worshipping in ignorance, while the Jews at least worshiped according to God's revelation (v. 22).

The mention of "true" worship (v. 23) naturally implies the converse reality of false worship. Yet the Samaritans were not the only ones who had it wrong. When Jesus said that true worshipers "will" worship the Father, He subtly indicated that neither the Samaritans nor the Jews, for the most part, were currently doing it correctly. In fact, when Jesus later applied the words

of Isaiah 29:13 to Jewish scribes and Pharisees, He exposed their absence of the fundamental requirements for acceptably worshipping God. Neither their hearts nor their teachings were in line with the divine will (Matthew 15: 1-9).

Alternatively, Jesus goes on to explain to the Samaritan woman that the two essential elements of faithful worship are “spirit and truth” (John 4: 23). The human spirit is elsewhere described as the inner person or the heart, including one’s thoughts, intentions, attitudes, and motives (cf. Romans 1:9). The truth is equated with God’s revealed word (John 8:31-32; 17:17). Jesus was simply restoring worship to what it was originally intended to be. The importance of this is shown further by his repetition of these directives in v. 24, stating that one “must” worship accordingly to be regarded as a true worshiper.

Today we still need to be concerned about restoring worship according to God’s design. Many, like Jeroboam of old, are discontent with the worship of days gone by and call for a more convenient, exciting, or even entertaining style of worship. In a misguided attempt to generate deeper spirituality, certain ones naively think that changing the outward forms of worship is the answer. While some changes might be good and necessary, many are not. Genuine spirituality is just not developed from the outside in.

There are others, however, like the early Samaritans, who seem to be chiefly concerned about “the rituals of the God of the land.” They are satisfied as long as the correct externals are in place. But simply going through the motions—even the right ones—are meaningless without dedicated, reverent, worshipful hearts.

The Bible presents a balanced approach – worship that is pleasing to God both internally and externally. True Christian worship involves observing the Lord’s supper with the proper focus, praying and singing with the right spirit, reflectively hearing the word of God, and giving with purposeful and cheerful hearts (1 Corinthians 11:23-29; 14:15; Romans 10:8; 2 Corinthians 9:7).

If one is truly seeking the Lord and sincerely desiring to please Him, the simple forms of worship revealed in the New Testament will not only be sufficient, they will be all that one wants to bring to the heavenly throne as worship is offered in spirit

and truth. Let us avoid the mistake of the ancient Samaritans of only caring about external “rituals” without having hearts dedicated solely and completely to the Almighty. Let us avoid the error of Jeroboam and his successors of changing the forms of worship which God has revealed, sanctioned, and authorized. May we approach our Creator only as He desires, with genuinely devoted hearts and uncompromising allegiance to His immutable word.

Kevin Moore and his family were very instrumental with the work in New Zealand and still continue to travel back for evangelical efforts with FHU students.

*The heavens declare the glory of
God and the firmament shows His
handiwork.*

*Day unto day pours forth speech
and night unto night reveals
knowledge.*

*There is no speech nor are there
words where their voices aren’t
heard.*

*Their line has gone through all the
earth and their utterances to the
end of the world. In them He has
placed a tent for the sun.*

*Which is as a bridegroom coming
out of his chamber. It rejoices as
a strong man who runs his course.
It’s rising is from one end of the
heavens and it’s circuit to the other
end of them. And there is nothing
hidden from it’s heat.*

—Psalms 19:1-6

THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN SUFFERING

by Allan Fowell

The problem of human suffering is a complex issue for many; it is the common denominator of mankind. Grief, pain, heartaches, trials and tribulations often occur in our lives and we want to call out, "Why me God?" Pain, disease, suffering, and death are a real part of the world in which we live. Events in our lives, over which we may have no control, can leave us hurting. It might be illness, the loss of a loved one, loss of a job, financial problems, unfaithfulness of a mate, a child on drugs, or any number of physical, emotional, or even spiritual traumas that bring pain into our lives. These may leave us with feelings of fear, anxiety, helplessness, and even hopelessness and despair.

If, by some chance, we have escaped pain in our own lives, then we only need to look around us to see that we do live in a world of suffering. None of us need look far for there are people all around us who are hurting. Pain and suffering have transcended not only time, but also all social, economic, and political boundaries. Pain is no respecter of persons. It isn't hard to find someone that is hurting. We need only to look in our neighborhood, at school, at work, church, read the newspaper or watch the evening news. Pain and suffering are universal.

The magnitude of hurting, physically, as well as emotionally and spiritually, in our world is not difficult to imagine. Thus we do acknowledge the fact of suffering.

Perhaps this is one reason why we have a deep interest in book of Job in the Old Testament as to the fact of human suffering and the necessity of an answer to such a powerful element in our world. With these few thoughts in mind we explore the problem of human suffering in connection with Job and the overall Biblical concept.

The Book of Job and Suffering

Even though we look to the book of Job as the text book for human suffering we can be sure that it does not give us all the answers; in fact it may raise, in our minds, more questions than answers. Job does shed some light on the subject but it is not comprehensive and is not the primary message of the book. Yes, it deals with the problem of suffering and proves that suffering is not merely the result of sin. Yet, in the treatise there is a defence of the absolute glory of God and His perfection. To be more specific, the book also reveals who God is.

It shows the kind of trust which God wants His children to have regarding Him and the absolute control that He has over Satan. Yes, human suffering is an age old problem and we must deal with it as did the patriarch Job who struggled with it. His three friends were no help in this struggle thinking that, basically, Job was suffering because of some secret sin that he had committed and that if he repented all would be righted. I'm sure that as Job sat in the ashes

in his grief, his body covered with boils, he might have cried out, "Why me?" Philip Erichman stated, "It was common in biblical times for people to interpret illness, loss of relatives, status or finances to be the result of sin."¹

In other words, the person was thought to have been punished by God for some type of disobedience. Thus the conclusion of Job's companions was simple: "Job, you are being punished therefore you must have sinned; repent therefore and God will heal you." Job steadfastly replies: "No I did not sin I am innocent, I do not deserve to be punished and cannot understand why God is doing this to me." The great struggle of Job, and many, is the notion that God is, indeed, the author of suffering and sin in the world. Wayne Jackson writes that it is the "atheist's most influential argument, that there cannot exist a loving God because of the presence of suffering."² Job helps us understand.

The book of Job helps us to understand the universal question of human pain and suffering. Job is described as "blameless and upright, one who feared God and shunned evil," (Job 1: 1). These qualities were reiterated by God in verse eight showing that they were not just the opinion of men but also of God. In the account Satan disputes with God over the righteousness of Job. Satan claims that Job fears God because of His protection and that if God allowed affliction to come upon Job that he

would curse God as a result. God then allows Satan to afflict Job but Job held true to his integrity.

Job's reaction in this unfolding drama was three fold. His first reaction was one of sorrow. Second, he falls to the ground and worships God (1:20). Thirdly he came to understand life (1:21). However, defeated, Satan was not satisfied. So Satan again contends with God over the righteousness of Job. God notes that even though Job suffered "without cause", "still he holds fast to his integrity" (Job 2:3). Satan further accuses God of protecting Job, but this time from personal injury.

Again God allows Satan to afflict Job but limits Satan in that Satan is not allowed to kill Job. Sadly, Job is afflicted by a dreadful disease from head to foot. Even his wife implores him to "Curse God and die!" (Job 2:9). Yet, faithful Job maintains his integrity and later said: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own way before Him" (Job 13:15)³

From the book of Job, we see that human pain and suffering does not always come as a result of sin. Afflictions in life are at times the result of godly living as was the case of Job. Also, from the example of Job, we learn the proper reaction to pain and suffering which is that we ought to maintain our faithfulness to God. Thus, we see that God allows Satan to tempt us in order to test our integrity and our faithfulness to Him. Even with temptation, we can be assured that God cares for us.

I Corinthians 10:13 is a source of great encouragement. Paul wrote: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."⁴

An important point to be stated is, God created man as being of choice, having the ability to choose. We are not robots programed to do the Divine will. If God grants us this freedom, then the reverse must be true. God cannot block that choice when we choose to do that which is contrary to His will. Wayne Jackson made the point, and I concur: "Freedom of choice, therefore, for finite beings, necessitates the ability to make wrong choices."⁵ Because we have choice and because we at times make wrong choices, we suffer the consequences of those choices.

With the problem of suffering, God has not revealed all things to man. There are some things that are a mystery to man and will remain a mystery to man. Moses declared, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29). We know that God has "given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue" (2Peter 1:3). Since there are those things that only God knows, we must rely upon God.

The evidence says that God

will only do those things that are just and right. God's love is the evidence. God's love is demonstrated by His creation, by His provisions, and by His sending His only begotten Son into this world as a sacrifice for sin. God will only do that which is right! From reading the book of Job, we know why Job suffered afflictions, but notice that God did not reveal it unto Job. God at the end of the book of Job asked Job some specific rhetorical questions concerning the nature of deity, where the world came from, and who is in control of the universe. By this means, God reminded Job that God was in control and that Job needed to trust in Him.⁶

When God reveals His mystery, man cannot help but to be in awe of it. Paul proclaimed: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33).

Is there a value in suffering? Yes. Suffering highlights the fact that we are frail human beings; that is to say, we are not God. Suffering can draw our interests toward the true God. When one is in a state of anguish that offers little respite, the natural inclination is to turn toward a higher source for help. Only a deliberate and forced stubbornness can quench that urge. When we are hurting, the "God of all comforts" (2 Corinthians 1:3) is waiting to help. Suffering aids us in seeing the real worth of things. When one passes through the experience of intense suffering, and perhaps comes to the threshold of death,

the entire world can take on new meaning.

The problem of human suffering is indeed a perplexing problem for man, yet it should not serve to draw us away from God but rather enhance our relationship with Him. We may at times not understand why but we know that God will stand with us in those times of suffering and pain as He did with Job.

I conclude this paper with the story of Joe: Joe, a personal acquaintance of this writer, was taught the gospel of Christ and happily embraced it, being united with the Lord in baptism (Romans 6:3ff.). For a while, this likable gentleman in his mid-forties struggled to remain faithful against matters.

Finally, he drifted away from conscientious service. Then, Joe suffered a severe heart attack. He hastened back to the Savior and maintained a contented fidelity until, some months later, his spirit slipped quietly away into eternity. Suffering can get our attention! David once wrote: "In my distress I called upon Jehovah, and cried unto my God" (Psalm 18:6).

Allan Fowell is the main preacher in the congregation in New Plymouth, NZ. Allan and his wife Venna were instrumental in helping to start the work in New Plymouth.

(Endnotes)

- ¹ Erichman, Philip. www.wayhome.org
- ² Jackson, Wayne. "The Book of Job" Abilene, TX. Quality Publications, 1983.
- ³ Fowell, Allan. [Class study notes wisdom Lit.](#) 2006. E.T.S.P.M.
- ⁴ www.1lord1faith1baptism.com/human.
- ⁵ Ibid:Jackson.pg123.
- ⁶ www.1lord1faith1baptism.com/human.

THE FULLNESS OF TIME

by Gary Hampton

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons (Galatians 4:4-5).

The Fullness of Time

Those who would deeply ponder the body and shed blood of Jesus weekly, must begin by looking into God's wonderful plan. Before He ever formed the world, our Father made provision in case man should sin (Ephesians 1:3-4, 9-10; 3:10-11). Or, to put it another way, God could see Calvary before He ever formed the world. Knowing how hard it is for men to dread an event just a few days removed makes one marvel at the persistence of the Almighty.

It would take centuries for the time to be fully ripe for the coming of the "seed of woman," a clear reference to Jesus (Genesis 3:15; Matthew 1: 18-25). Numerous things would be carefully brought into place. For instance, God showed Nebuchadnezzar in a dream four great world empires beginning with his own Babylonian, then the Medo-Persian, followed by the Greek and culminating in the Roman. It would be "in the days of these kings" that God would set up His own, eternal kingdom (Daniel 2:1-45).

Virtual worldwide peace made it possible to enter nearly every nation under heaven. Additionally, the Roman love of engineering led to a vast system of roads, making travel simpler and smoothing the way for those sent forth under the great commission to take

their proclamation over the whole world (Colossians 1:23). Also, Koine Greek, essentially the language of the common man, had begun to be used almost universally for trade. Anything written in Greek could be read by people all over the globe, thereby opening the door for the written word to be read far and wide.

Finally, man had come to see his great need for a Redeemer. Once man had been driven from the Garden, God began to command men through instructions given to the heads of households, like Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Then, He delivered a law through Moses on Mount Sinai. Slowly, through unendingly repetitious sacrifices, man began to realize he could not live perfectly and would need a perfect sacrifice to extricate him from the terrible bondage of sin.

Paul expressed it best in Romans 7:24-25a, when he wrote, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" With such in mind, let us all reverently thank God for the body and blood of His only begotten Son.

Gary Hampton is the Director for the East Tennessee School of Preaching & Missions, USA.

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CHRISTIAN CHARACTERISTICS AND ACTIONS

by Edwin S. Jones

In my formative years I spent a considerable amount of time living with my grandmother. My grandmother was a feisty Irish woman who loved me like a son and was determined that I would eventually amount to something. I well remember how she would lecture to me and conclude by saying, "Edwin, I want you to be somebody!"

I knew very well what my grandmother meant. I tried to get by with going through the motions of obedience to her wishes, only to lapse into old habits when she was not looking. However, such outward sporadic efforts were not what she wanted. Mrs. Leonie Sullivan Bryant was determined that I would not settle for anything less than the development of true character.

I've often looked back on those days and the encouragement that that relentless, caring lady drilled into my heart. As a Christian I especially appreciate the value of her very biblically based lesson. Our God, too, wants us to be somebody. This desire cannot, however, be fulfilled with mere "eyeservice" as "menpleasers," it must be from the heart.

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: (Eph. 6:5-7).

Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; (Col. 3:22-23).

Therefore, in order to fully understand the role of Christian characteristics and actions, we must look to the character of our God who enjoins on us the responsibility and privilege of reflecting His holy nature. It is a look to God that will orient us to a proper view of ourselves.

God, Himself, is the very standard for our own character. What He is in character we must strive to imitate (Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5: 48). God's holiness is internal, what He lives by is not a list of rules outside of Himself; His standard is His own nature. The rules of moral conduct reflect God's essential being, an essence He can no more violate than He can cease being what He is (Heb. 6:18; II Tim. 2:13).

This point is one that needs to be understood well. Many have chosen to explain certain accounts of God's actions by saying, "He is God, He can do whatever He wants to do." This, however, cannot be true. "Will not the judge of all the earth do what is right?" (Gen. 18: 25). God is bound by His nature to be what is right and therefore do what is right. Sin cannot be forgiven without a price being paid (Rom. 3:26). Covenants cannot be broken because God is no liar and His word is His bond. Therefore, we must come to see that

righteousness in its purest most godlike form, is internal and part of what we truly are in the heart.

This then demands that we further understand two aspects of Christian character: **what we are to do and how we are to do it.** In short, the spirit and the truth of the thing (Jn. 4:24).

To illustrate the point, consider one person who grudgingly keeps some commands, another person who has a good attitude but doesn't know what to do and a third person who knows what to do and does it in the right spirit. Clearly only latter example would be correct. There are many reasons why people might perform the right action, but there is only one right motivation that God will accept.

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then we're all dead: And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves; but unto Him which died for them, and rose again (II Cor. 5:14-15).

If false doctrine is spoken against and the motivation is to make a name for one's self, pride has been the unacceptable motivation. If one enjoys finding the fault of others and turns the discovery of error into a "jolly good time," then self-righteousness rather than true indignation or concern is behind the action (Matt. 23:4; Rom. 2:21).

If we manufacture the case

against those in error by making something bad seem even worse than it is or if we fail to be completely honest in our appraisal of the actions of those in error, then we are not acting like God, but like Satan. Truth does not need an unethical assistance that is no real assistance at all.

If we disassociate our character from our actions we become as guilty of wrong as those we oppose. In that way, Satan will try to discredit our opposition to error by giving those we oppose way to defuse the force of our otherwise just protest.

In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say to you (Tit. 2:7-8).

With this in mind, there are certain key points to establish when considering how to be a people of true character and appropriate actions:

1. We must love the lost in such a way as to take no delight in their fall (II Pet. 3:9; I Tim. 2:3-4).
2. The truth must be held to with a zeal that cannot be silent in the face of error (Jn. 2:14-17; Eph. 5:11).
3. The desire to always do the right thing no matter what the cost might be (Matt. 5:6,10; Ps. 15:4).
4. Realizing that true biblical

holiness revolves around a broad agenda that encompasses the whole of life and not just a few things (Mk. 12:28-34).

5. Doing all we can to be at peace with all men by seeking every honorable means to helping them find salvation.

For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you (I Cor. 9:19-23).

While we might easily list various other key items of a Christian character, these are chosen because they especially address areas that are often overlooked in the heat of battle when a distorted sense of pragmatism, rather than truth, seems unusually tempting. We must remember that those who take the defense of the truth seriously are more likely to fall in the areas we have just mentioned.

Another very important lesson to learn about Christian characteristics and actions is not a lesson for the polemic arena. On the other end of the spectrum is the stage of normal everyday life where we are found

most often and where we will usually touch more lives.

And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing (I Thess. 4:11-12).

Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread (II Thess. 3:12).

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth (Eph. 4:28).

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matt. 5:13-16).

Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man (Col. 4:5-6).

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil (Eph. 5:15-16).

In life's ordinary pathways we learn more about our faithfulness and sense of resolve than in any other setting. Life from day to day is where we must be ever vigilant so that "self" will not rule and God's way will not be forgotten.

Now let us step back for a moment to recap. To this point we have observed the value of being changed from within and how motives and actions in either confronting error or living from day to day are essential to Christianity. But how can I bring these truths into the practical reality of my life? How might I truly develop proper characteristics that will in turn lead to correct actions?

Let me suggest two passages of Scripture that, although seemingly quite different on the surface, illustrate the fundamental procedures for true and lasting change of character and actions. The passages are Isaiah 6:1-8 and Luke 5:1-11.

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for

mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me (Isa. 6:1-8).

And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners

with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him (Luke 5:1-11).

In the diversity of these two passages we find a sameness that is most instructive. In Isaiah's exalted vision of Jehovah high and lifted up we find the prophet: saw God in His holiness, saw himself in his undone state, was cleansed of his sin and then, in thanksgiving and through forgiveness, was eager to serve.

In Peter's very down-to-earth encounter with deity in a wet fishing boat full of flapping fish the apostle: saw the incarnate God in His holiness, saw himself most clearly as a sinner, was reassured by Jesus and then left all to follow Jesus.

For all the theological excesses of our liberal brethren and for all the foolishness they propose, they have hit a nail on the head when they say that we need to renew our awe over the reality of God's holiness. The source of the admonition must not cause us to rationalize the general truthfulness of it away.

As we reflect on the holiness and wonder of God, much as did those who wrote the Psalms, we find our selfishness giving way. Today, because of the coming of Christ we can relate to this even more clearly than did the Psalmists. We of all men in all ages have reason to stand in awe of God (Heb. 2:1-4).

In seeing God we see ourselves all too clearly. Our littleness and pettiness are exposed from behind the garments of self-righteous

rationalizations to reveal that the emperor is wearing no clothes.

Only in our shame and sense of need will we seek the true source of rescue and find the joy of forgiveness and acceptance (Rom. 5:1-8).

Having escaped the utter hopelessness of our previous condition we now are filled with a heart of thanksgiving (Lk. 7:47) that compels us to want to serve (II Cor. 5:14-15).

In many ways we at times have veiled the lessons we have just observed. We are not so much ignorant of them as we are guilty of looking more toward Madison Avenue techniques of salesmanship and marketing than to the word and to the testimony. Biblical illiteracy has brought the ignorance of God.

We dropped the ball not because of liberalism but because of apathy. The liberalism we all now abhor would never have sprung up as successfully if a void had not been left by Christians who lost their zeal for service.

We cannot go back in time to do a better job, but we can learn a lesson and retrace the path of Isaiah and Simon Peter to renew our zeal now!

The fact that the actions of many brethren are increasingly secular, should tell us that Christian character must be restored. We have learned how to divorce, be materialistic and generally ignore the Bible from those of the world. The time has come to rekindle the fire that once burned in our bones

that would not let us hold in the truth so that we might again teach the world.

The Bible gives patterns to guide our renewal. Josiah's great restoration movement of II Kings 22-23 should inspire us as a people to arise and reaffirm the truth. The admonition to put off the way of the old man to take up the ways suited to our new birth must instruct us individually to overcome our spiritual lethargy and become strong once again in the strength of the Lord (Eph. 4:17-32; Col. 3:1-17).

Brethren, we truly stand at a crossroads. Some 100 years ago the church in almost identical fashion so stood. The losses then were horrific because many brethren were lulled into a false sense of security that bred complacency in the area of personal commitment to living the word. We must do all we can to keep history from repeating itself. If we will allow the word to once again rule in the heart and do God's will God's way then our characteristics will be those of a godly character and our actions those of a people of the Book.

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in children's' films and books. The bottom line is that the Christian needs to be alert and to understand something of the times in which he lives in order to preserve the true gospel in a world that is always ready to offer counterfeits.

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Poetry Corner

When I look at the heavens and the
beautiful display of glory
I smile and blow a kiss to God
because I know I don't have to worry
For the ways of the wicked will always
beside me perish
But in my righteousness, God will keep my
life and that I always cherish

No matter what happens and no matter
what this life's strife
I know Who holds my hand as well
as the tree of life
I will be faithful and receive
the crown promised to me
By the very begotten Son of God
Who rose to set me free

Who can stand before the mighty hand of
the Lord God Most High?
The enemies of Israel tried but they all
failed miserably and died
Can anyone or anything take me away
from my God, my King?
Never in all eternity, for who will a charge
against God bring?

Relax my soul, return to your soothing rest
and tranquil peace
For God has always looked after you so
your faith may increase
Tell the world Who looks after you day
and night from all harm
Let them know Who guards you so that
there is no fear nor alarm

So help me Lord to always have faith in
You and Your Word
So that when I pray and petition to You
I will always be heard
This I know from years of looking on
with my very own eyes
And seeing the blessings of God
that rain down upon he who cries

A broken spirit Thou will not despise
Therefore the help of the Lord will come
and it will be to no surprise

I call upon the Lord Whose mighty hand
I forever trust
Because I know that at any time I can
return to the lowly dust
But when I finally do the angels will
by my side stand
Ready to carry me home to the joy of my
Lord—yes how eternally grand!

THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT Part 3

by Rex Banks

The New Age View of Christ

Of course New Agers are quite prepared to acknowledge the deity of Christ, but then since *everyone* is divine this is of course a far cry from the Bible's *good confession of Jesus Christ as Lord*. The New Age Christ is simply a man possessing the same nature as all other men but differing from most others in his grasp of the great truth that *humanity is divine*. Now one of the so-called ascended *masters*, Christ functions as a guide for other men who are striving to realize their godhood. Some (certainly not all) New Agers await the coming of a shadowy figure called *Maitreya* whom they believe to be one manifestation of Christ (among others).

New Age Polytheism

Polytheism

As we can see from looking at Hinduism, *pantheism* is compatible with *polytheism*, and like Hinduism the NAM accommodates many gods and goddesses. Perhaps this rejection of monotheism in favour of a multiplicity of gods reflects the movement's rejection of moral *absolutism* and its commitment to moral *relativism* (see below). What we mean by this is that Christianity is an *absolutist* system which involves the adoption of a *single truth*, acceptance of an *immutable moral law*, commitment to *one view of reality* and allegiance to an *unchanging God*. It is clear that such a system is just not compatible with the kind of pluralistic, relativistic

world view characteristic of NAM. Polytheism however is well suited to such a view because a multiplicity of gods is compatible with a multiplicity of values, competing explanations of reality and a variety of lifestyle choices. Whatever the reason, the rapid rise of polytheism in the West in recent years testifies to the popularity of NAM.

A Golden Age

Many New Agers look for the return of a golden age characterized by equality, peace, harmony, freedom, tolerance, and inventiveness. Allegedly there was once such a time, and it was during an age when nature was sacred, when pleasure was not considered sinful and when spirituality was an inward experience. As the story goes, it existed before the present *patriarchal* age, and it was a time when *Goddess* worship prevailed and *feminine* qualities predominated. Christianity with its narrowness, its absolutism, its dogmatism, its preoccupation with sin and its intolerance is the product of a *patriarchal* system which seeks to oppress women, to stifle individuality and creativity, and to destroy the ancient matriarchal system of worship.

Now historical evidence for such a golden age is conspicuously lacking but the NAM is not reluctant to employ useful myths, and many in the NAM are feminists for whom the recovery of goddess worship is an important motif. In her book **Changing of the Gods: Feminism**

And The End of Traditional Religions feminist Naomi R. Goldenberg wrote in the late 1970s:

"We women are going to bring an end to God. As we take positions in government, in medicine, in law, in business, in the arts and, finally, in religion, we will be the end of Him. We will change the world so much that He won't fit in anymore. As man's belief in the one true God has waned, those old impostors, the 'gods and goddesses' are well and truly making a comeback."

Illicit power and knowledge

Eve succumbed to the temptation to acquire *power* and *knowledge* which the Lord had not wanted her to possess, and throughout history many of her children have fallen prey to the same temptation. Like generations of pagans before them, New Agers have experimented with a variety of different ways of manipulating reality and obtaining illicit knowledge by means of *occultic* practices. Consider the following examples:

Mantics

Astrology, *numerology* and *palmistry* are examples of this area of the occult, which has to do with the *acquisition of hidden knowledge*. Astrology, of course, is the practice of consulting the stars in an effort to obtain insight into man's personality and future, and numerology involves the analysis of the "hidden meaning" contained in the letters of one's name and in one's birth

date in an attempt to gain insight into character and destiny. Each night the astrologers and numerologists invade our T.V. screen with their New Age music and their promises of 'mystical insights.'

Magic

Magic is that area of the occult which has to do with obtaining *power* from the spirit world. *Amulets* and *talismans* are considered to provide protection and benefits for the wearer; charms and incantations are held to ward off negative forces and invoke divine assistance; witches, covens, magic circles and the like are associated with the use of occultic power. In most of our larger cities New Age bookstores make a good living supplying crystals, pentagrams etc, and of course *witches* and *covens* are often in the news. Over the past quarter century radical women's groups have introduced tens of thousands of women in the West to *Wicca* (witchcraft) and some *witches* have attained celebrity status (e.g. "Starhawk").

Spiritism

This term is used to describe the process of obtaining *knowledge* and *power* by way of a medium who facilitates contact with the spirit world. We associate spiritism with *seances*, *ouija boards*, *familiar spirits* and the like, and of course New Agers are kept in a constant state of excitement by the so-called *channelers* and the *ascended masters* who provide spiritual enlightenment from the other side (see above).

the prospect of illicit knowledge and power appeals greatly to man's pride, and he also knows that in the pursuit of these things man is led away from God and away from a correct understanding of his own *reason for being*. The NAM represents a great victory for our ancient Adversary.

Concluding Comments

According to scripture "the Lord is one" (Deut. 6:4) and He will not give His glory to another (Isa. 48:11). Of course this means that human claims of divinity which emerge from New Age pantheism are simply blasphemous. The Creator of the universe honors the individual who is "humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at (His) word" (Isa 66: 2), but when a created being says in his heart "I will make myself like the most High" (Isa 14:14) he is courting disaster.

Reincarnation flatly contradicts the Biblical teaching that it is appointed for a man once to die after which comes judgment, (Heb 9:27) and no amount of shuffling can harmonize the two positions. Equally offensive to God of course is the restoration of the old pagan gods in violation of the first commandment of the Decalogue ("You shall have no other gods before Me" [Ex 20:3]). Israel fared badly whenever she forgot this commandment and God has never changed His mind on the subject of idols.

Nor has God altered His view of occult practices. We need to take to heart the Biblical warning that the man who seeks power and knowledge through "mediums or spirits" is "defiled by them" (Lev 19:31). The Lord has granted us "everything pertaining to life

and godliness" and He makes it available to us, not through *ascended masters* or occult practices but instead "through the true knowledge" of God Himself (2 Pet 1:3) which scripture provides. Do Christians believe in developing a *positive mental attitude*? Of course! Who would not have an optimistic view of life knowing that the God of the universe loves us enough to die for us and that He will take us home to heaven? Why then object to the *human potential movement*?

Quite simply because unlike the New Ager, the believer grounds his optimism, not upon any belief in the innate goodness in man, and not upon the myth of man's divinity, but rather upon his trust in the transforming, enabling power of His Creator (Phil 2:12; Heb 13: 6, 20, 21). The difference is vast and vital. The New Ager deals with sin by denying that man is a sinner; the Christian deals with sin by confessing it and turning to Christ for healing (Jn 3:16) - again the difference is vast and vital.

Sometimes Christians do not recognize the profound differences between the two world views because they fail to understand New Age vernacular. When New Agers speak of *God* and of *Christ* it may sound reassuring to the Christian, but as we have seen they are not speaking of the God of scripture or the Christ of the gospels. Similarly when New Agers speak of *taking responsibility* for themselves they are not speaking of *dealing with sin*, but instead of *recognizing their divinity*.

Sometimes too Christians fail to appreciate the pervasive influence of New Age themes in the entertainment industry, especially

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Mankind's Old Enemy knows that