

outreach

The New Horizons Newsletter

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May-August
2022

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Matthew 28:19-20

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Our planned Future

Armed conflict disrupts the lives of millions of earth's populace—though 'the West' has been blessed with more than half a century of relative tranquillity with a welcome rise in living standards. But inequalities persist, and world leaders are behind the scenes planning radical change, change that will affect all of mankind.

Our track record down the centuries, however, raises a red warning flag. After six millennia of civilisation governments have utterly failed to implement utopia; '*...the way of peace they have not known*'. For every 'solution' is undermined by human nature and scorn for foundation principles.

Right v. Wrong

Civilisation—and its governing laws—is formulated on the basis of majority opinion driven (despite democratic elections!) by those who wield power—overtly or from behind the scenes. Their agenda, however, sprouts from fallen human nature—which cannot discern right from wrong.

**Woe unto them that call
evil good, and good evil;
that put darkness for
light, and light for dark-
ness; that put bitter for
sweet, and sweet for bit-
ter Woe unto them that
are wise in their own
eyes**

(Isaiah 5:20-21)

To discern *right* from *wrong* demands a recognizable universal standard based on the divine 'law of love' as summarized in the Decalogue—all ten of God's guiding laws.

The imposition of the humanly devised standards has now devolved to a global level, with the 'United Nations' and its covert sponsors dictating the agenda for all nations from behind closed doors, and national governments as enforcement pawns.

Future Shock

Our new rulers present their agenda as benign paternal leadership dedicated to the welfare of all mankind. Their clearly stated plan can be summed up as 'net zero by 2050', with implementation of most measures by 2030: A laudable end to destructive air and water and agricultural pollution. An end to poverty and recurring pandemics and to the housing shortage.

The shock comes, as always, in the detail. Public transport replaces cars. Air and sea travel curtailed. Food and water rationed. Meat banned. Animal husbandry eliminated. Hi-tech GM food. 'Smart' cities. Reliance on (fragile) internet technology. A cashless society. Behavioural monitoring via intrusive surveillance *via* out smartphones and TVs, Alexa, CCTV.

But such aims can be achieved only by *coercion*. Indeed plans for this are well advanced as digital IDs are imposed and an army of 'hit squads' recruited to monitor our spending, our *cont'd p.4*

Open Borders

'Red and yellow, black and white; all are precious in His sight'. The children's hymn is a window through which we may view race relations. In our troubled world, however, that ideal is obscured by an all-pervasive major factor—*human nature*.

Each of us is a 'little empire' constantly bumping against all other little empires, with the inevitable clashes. Of necessity we blend our belief system with those closest to us (*eg* our spouse), and a nation is born. Each has its culture, its language, its laws, its territory—all closely and proudly protected. Hence the vast sums expended on armaments and a standing army. And so, individually and national—an globally—, from time to time we clash.

Such clashes manifest as neighbourly disputes, family arguments—and wars. They arise when there are *differences*: culture, lifestyle, colour for example. (Hence the challenges facing a multicultural society.) At all levels of human society they are suppressed by learned self-discipline—and contentment. Hence the scriptural admonition to *'...love your neighbour as yourself'*. It's an attitude urged on both Christian and non-Christian.

Such 'love', however, is integral to the Spirit that was in Jesus—and is in the Christian. It empowers us—with our co-operation!—to suppress the universal in-born antipathy to those who differ from ourselves. We all are from the same root, as said the apostle Paul, *'...[God] has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation'* (Acts 17:20).

Yet though God wisely separated and dispersed the nations, His purpose was, as Paul adds, : *'...that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being'*. It is only *'in the Lord'* that harmonious relations can fully develop between individuals and between nations.

Peruse the record of the infant first century

Insight from Paul

The apostle Paul's letters shed a bright light on our walk with God

Here in the Western world, openly profess the Christian faith and you may attract the odd snide comment. Worldwide, however, it is estimated there are 380 million (1 in 7) who profess Christianity experiencing severe persecution—including just short of 6000 known murders, many of them pastors [*Open Doors* charity]. Christian values have been absorbed by Western nations (though they are now being eroded), contributing to the peace we experience. Elsewhere alien faiths such as Islam and Hinduism seek to cleanse their nations of contrary faiths.

80% of religious persecution is against Christians

Increasingly our modern world mirrors the culture faced by the early church—and not just the opposition faced by those preaching Christ's message. They and the faithful brethren were harried by Jew and by Gentile (*eg* I Thessalonians 2: 14). The apostle warned the church: *'...that no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and you know'* (ch 3:3-4).

With our world on the knife-edge of another global conflict we would do well to prepare ourselves mentally and spiritually for dark times ahead. The world's leaders seem intent on 'fighting inflation' by stoking the smouldering embers of conflict into a full-scale war.

The apostle comforts the brethren with the sure knowledge that those martyred—and now 'asleep'— would be raised to life in power at the sure return of the Saviour. It's a message pertinent to our own times.

As he tells concludes his letter to the Corinthians: *'...thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ'*. Ω

church, however, and it's clear what a mountain there is to climb—notably in 'race relations'. Tensions simmered between Jewish brethren and the varied gentile Christians. Yet Paul emphasised that we are now, in Christ, different—a new spiritual nation, begotten of one Spirit. As such we share the same values as Jesus. And our responsibility, following our conversion, is to grow into those values - as he describes in the 'love chapter'—I Corinthians 13. Ω

Distracted!

Our daily routines are too often plagued by distractions. *Working from home?* The fridge and the coffee pot fill our horizon. *Cooking?* There goes the smoke alarm. *On the phone?* I didn't see that kerb. It can, however be life-changing.

As Christians we have embarked on a journey—a journey to eternity. Having 'bought the ticket' we are on the right train, the destination certain—*for as long as we stay on board*. Those attractive locations viewed along the route are alluring, inviting us to disembark, to linger.

God Himself picked ancient Israel out of obscurity, ensuring they were on the correct scheduled service. Despite travelling first class they became distracted by the passing culture and were mired in idolatry (see Ezekiel ch 16). They didn't reach the scheduled destination.

Jesus, in the parable of the 'sower', warned about distractions: '*...some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them*' (Matthew 13:7)., explaining this as '*...he also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful*' (v.22).

Our world is dominated, saturated, by a culture spawned by the devil. He has infiltrated every institution from education, entertainment, finance and even religion. There is an array of philosophies to distract, an endless selection of faiths to choose from and embrace, depraved entertainment available at a click.

Jesus, having just warned us to beware deception, says: '*...because iniquity [lawless behaviour] shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved*' (Matthew 24:12-13).

Wherever you are - *there* is Satan. As a Christian he is intent on diverting you from the true faith: '*...Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith*' (I Peter 5:8).

In this battle, however, we are not on our own, for '*...You are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*' (I John 4:4). The apostle Paul notes: '*...There has 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 you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it' (I Corinthians 10:13).

The apostle then adds by way of warning: '*... Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry* (v.14). He echoes Joshua's dying admonition to Israel warning against fraternizing intimately with the idolatrous Canaanites (Joshua 23:12) - for His protection depended on their obedience.

Our Armoury

But we are well-armed, with an endless supply of the heavy-duty spiritual weaponry essential to the battle: Writes Paul: '*...For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds*' (II Corinthians 10:4).

The brethren in Ephesus had been apprised of the dangers from these spirit opponents. The apostle details the weapons available to each Christian: '*...Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*' (ch 6:11-12).

Acting through the institutions of this world—governments, education, finance, entertainment media—the devil deploys his deceptive weaponry: *lies* (can you believe the media?), *deceit* (what we are fed by the authorities, by formal education), *opposition* (from family, neighbours, colleagues, the churches and even well-meaning friends).

But we have God's weapons: truth, right behaviour, the gospel, the 'shield of faith' '*...*' (Ephesians 6:14-17). He concludes: '*...And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;*'.

Now, in these volatile times, we must learn to deploy these weapons on a daily basis, knowing He that is in us is greater than all the devil can throw at us. Ω

APOLOGY!

There will not be a print edition of *New Horizons* for July/August. We hope to later add an on-line edition for this issue.

Just passin' thru..!

The much-maligned 'travellers' are often here today, gone tomorrow. No desire to put down roots, and most comfortable when on the move. Not so for most of us, for we want a long-term family home, friends and neighbours, familiarity. *My patch.*

It's the same for professing Christians and most have a settled location., preferably within reach of our local assembly and the close companionship of brethren. (Though in or modern world of disbelief that is increasingly a pipe-dream.) Yet we are called '... *strangers [foreigners] and pilgrims [temporary sojourners]*' (Hebrew 11:13). Everyone, of course, is a 'pilgrim' given our '*three score years and ten*'—we are here today, gone tomorrow.

As Christians our pilgrimage is spiritual. We inhabit an alien world, and we behave differently: '*...As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which has called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation [conduct]*' (I Peter 1:14-15).

The early church was born into a world where the gross sins of abortion, pederasty and homosexuality were the norm, even supported in law—much like our own age is fast becoming. Our brethren then resisted these pressure—often to the point of martyrdom.

A New Creation

The 'right to life' is at the heart of every national constitution. Without law to deter the taking of a life—*anarchy*. It is reflected in earliest records: '*...Whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed*'. Every human life is of the highest value to our Creator. Yet, in the realms of human justice the blood of millions in the womb is shed every year.

That precious life, of course, begins long before birth—not even at conception but a *gift* inherited from our first parents in Eden, a gift from God: '*...the LORD God formed man [Heb. 'adam] of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living person*' (Genesis 2:7). A new creation - physical but with the potential to become spirit.

A gift with purpose. In placing us in families God's purpose is '*...That he might seek a godly seed*' (Malachi 2:15), The family is the 'university where godly principles are instilled from birth. Although now despoiled by our sin, God's plan is for each of us to attain to a place at His side in the Family of God—to join our Father and our elder brother Jesus: '*...we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*' (I John 3:2).

Life is indeed precious.

Ω

Our Planned Future...from.p.1

behaviour, our recycling, our eating habits, our travel.

Christian Values

Such humanist attempts to solve man's challenges are the focus of Isaiah's analysis (as quoted earlier). That is, the rejection of our Creator and His guidance. Man was created as a perfect, rational, sentient being created from earth's elements but with an in-built guiding spirit (the 'spirit in man') and described as being '*...in the image of God*' (Genesis 1:27). His purpose is to become, through our life experiences, restored to that character image.

For sinful mankind the 'Ten Commandments' express the essence of 'love'

Our 'operating system' was *ahab, agape*—love, defined as total harmony with the divine mind, the force that maintains our relationship with the Father and keeps us on the straight and narrow. Our rejection of that pathway ('sin') and our dependence on distorted human reasoning required the intervention of the Godhead (John 3:16).

It is 'the way of the world'—a world rejected by those who are 'in Christ: '*...Who but the man that believes that Jesus is the Son of God overcomes the world?*' (I John 5:5). Our mission as Christians is to 'walk as Jesus walked'—to overcome the world and its ways, as did our Saviour (John 16:33).

Much of society presently stumbles through a fog of fear. But that's not for us, for '*...There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love*'. Paul adds: '*...So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me*' (Hebrews 13:6).

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Festivals 2022

Trumpets	September 26
Atonement	October 5
Tabernacles	October 10—16
Last Day	October 17