



World in Crisis

DESPITE ENORMOUS ADVANCES in civilization over the last 200 years, the general consensus is that this world is rapidly moving toward unparalleled crises. There are proclaimed crises in edible food and fresh-water supplies, in available energy, in clean atmospheric air, and in tillable soil, cultivated crops and forested land. Furthermore, there are predicted declines and even extinctions in both plant and animal species.

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Origin of the Crises

While elements of these crises can be attributed to natural climatic changes, most of these problems can be traced to human ignorance, indifference and irresponsibility. World corporate structures are notoriously corrupt. World academia is abysmally dishonest. World healthcare is ordinarily despicable. World politics is virtually unrepresentative of the people. World religions are generally self-inflating. World communal behavior is disgusting and filled with criminality. Furthermore, the only recognized authority of postmodernism is the conviction that elevates *me, myself* and *I* at the expense of all *others!*

Suggested Resolutions of the Crises

The crises of this world raise the fundamental issue of possible human remedies, resolutions and corrections. There are several suggested options:

1. One option is to do nothing and simply anticipate the continuing decline, death and ultimate extinction of world life — including humanity. This is the principal path that humanity is following today.
2. A popular option among religious fundamentalists is to launch the final

battle of Armageddon between world adversaries. This will allegedly bring the “rapture” of devoted religionists, the “tribulation” for others, and ultimately the apparent demise of this planet. Actually, this would only ensure mutual destruction and extinction.

3. Another option is to somehow, sometime and somewhere bring human consciousness to the level of united integrity, responsibility and salvific action. However, this approach has proved hopeless, since for millennia humanity has unyieldingly focused on “scapegoating” others. “Others” have either dominated with command, possession and power or have refused to submit to command, possession and power. As a result, “others” have always been regarded as the source of the “problem” and must, therefore, be victimized and even eliminated.

The True Solution of the Crises

The truth is that none of the preceding options is viable. Creation is not capable of saving itself. It never has been and never will be. The only solution is the irrevocable and noncontingent intervention of the Creator himself.

The profound fact of history is that the Creator himself did intervene nearly 2,000 years ago. God as Jesus Christ adopted Creation in his humanity. With his self-emptying love he confronted the original predicaments of command, possession and power structures.¹ He took all these problems to Calvary, to death, and to the tomb. On the third day he rose from the dead and inaugurated the new era of faith, hope, love, peace and rest for an unending Creation. The resurrection of the Human God assured that the future existence of Creation would never be revoked.

Furthermore, Jesus promised his followers, all humanity and all Creation that he would be present always (Matthew 28:20). The fact is that God has indeed been actively present to preserve and protect the universe, this world, life and humanity. Because he is present with self-emptying, loving authority, this world is not destined for ultimate extinction.

Why, then, has God not appeared again as he long ago promised? Why has the new order of Creation not been fulfilled? Why are the world and all humanity still enmeshed in such apparent crises? In considering these

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questions, we freely confess with the apostle Paul that “now we see through a glass, darkly” and only “know in part” (1 Corinthians 13:12). Yet, as we ponder the passage of time, we reiterate that it is essential for a universe facing an eternity of infinite possibilities to first encounter the “negatives.”² Because God has permitted these aberrations in order to teach the universe the consequences of negative actions,³ evil “shall not rise up the second time” (Nahum 1:9; cf. Zephaniah 3:15; Matthew 6:13). Moreover, because God as Jesus Christ inaugurated the new order when he encountered and overcame all “negatives” at his First Coming, the universal disclosure of that victory at the transformative Second Coming is certain. So it is that we confidently anticipate an eternally human future of “positives” — “a new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21:1). The unfolding history of “negatives,” Jesus Christ’s inaugural victory over all “negatives,” ongoing gospel developments, and the emergence of reciprocal human relationality for both God and man — all assure us of an approaching Parousia (Second Coming).

Then why does not God unilaterally enforce the new order of Creation? The reason is both simple and profound. The God of Love purposes a reciprocal, relational Creation, represented by human beings. As the Human God, he has forever abandoned the original predicaments of command, possession and power.⁴ He no longer calls us servants, but he now calls us friends (John 15:15). One does not impose on friends. One lovingly invites friends to lovingly respond (Revelation 3:20; 22:17). Lasting and unbroken friendships involve reciprocal loving, giving care. This alone will unite the Bridegroom and his bride for eternity. The Parousia therefore involves a reciprocal response of faith, hope and love from humanity.

As wise men, shepherds, and Simeon and Anna in the Temple, were representative witnesses at Christ’s First Coming (Matthew 2:1, 2; Luke 2:8-21, 25-38), so we are called to be representative witnesses in anticipation of his promised Second Coming (Acts

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1:8; cf. Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1). Therefore, as we ponder these truths, recognizing that the Risen One is present with us, will we as friends stand up for Jesus? Will we accept his loving gifts and share them with others? Will we agree to be his witnesses at this time of crisis? If so, let us now enlist others as witnesses for him (Matthew 24:14). Then let us eagerly anticipate God’s relational act to fulfill the eternal order of a new Creation.

The golden morning is fast approaching;
Jesus soon will come
To take His faithful and happy children
To their promised home.

The gospel summons will soon be carried
To the nations round;

The Bridegroom then will cease to tarry
And the trumpet sound.
Attended by all the shining angels,
Down the flaming sky
The Judge will come, and will take His people
Where they will not die.

There those loved ones who have long been parted,
Will all meet that day;
The tears of those who are broken-hearted
Will be wiped away.

Refrain:

O, we see the gleams of the golden morning
Piercing through this night of gloom!
O, we see the gleams of the golden morning
That will burst the tomb.⁵

Endnotes

1. See “The Gospel for the Postmodern World III: The ‘Other Side’ of God,” *Outlook* (January 2008); “The Gospel for the Postmodern World IV: The Gift of God,” *Outlook* (February 2008); “The Gospel for the Postmodern World V: The Gift Abused,” *Outlook* (March 2008).
2. See note 1.
3. See John Polkinghorne, *Reason and Reality: The Relationship between Science and Theology* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), p. 84.
4. See note 1.
5. S. J. Graham (1744), “Gleams of the Golden Morning,” at www.digitalhymnal.org/dhymn.cfm?hymnNumber=205.

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