

Charles E. Lawson

UTOPIA



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UTOPIA

CHARLES E. LAWSON

Utopia. Just hearing the word stirs the imagination. Its general definition is a continually harmonious society, a “a community or society possessing highly desirable or near perfect qualities.”¹ Many people have dreamed of a utopian society—a new world, where all is love, peace and happiness, where the vestiges of our failed society meld into a new, ideal reality. High-ranking officials from powerful nations are currently working to bring about a new world order, wherein nation states would no longer act primarily for their own benefit, and wherein, they claim, a redistribution of national and individual wealth would bring relief to world’s stagger-

1. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utopia>, accessed March 23, 2105.

ing financial and humanitarian problems. And one of the most influential of modern popes is pushing for a global religious-political power base, with one man, a pope, reigning as the spiritual leader of the world. This ambitious global religious-political-financial symbiosis, we are assured, will result in global greater good—an earthly utopia, of sorts. Simply put, we want to believe that the world—or at least a part of it—*can* get better.

Proponents of evolution teach that humanity is indeed improving—progressing—through natural selection of more desirable traits. Not everyone shares that opinion, though. *People for the Advancement of Human Spiritual and Technological Evolution* posted the following pessimistic comment on their Facebook page:

“Each human being is an individual processor, running at a different frequency. Some barely conscious, some so aware of what’s going on, it’s unbearable.”²

For many the unvarnished reality of life on earth *is* empty and dissatisfying at best, or overwhelming and almost unbearable, at worst. Perhaps that’s why we keep ourselves distracted with entertainment, sports, music, drugs and work. Then we don’t have to think about the dark side of life that exists in our world. Pop

2. <https://www.facebook.com/pages/People-for-the-Advancement-of-Human-Spiritual-and-Technological-Evolution/264072523611734>, accessed March 23, 2015.

culture uses the word *nirvana* as a state of existence desirable to achieve. Even here, we see the tragic nature of our world. Curt Cobain, the leader of a rock music group called Nirvana, committed suicide. The details of his life reveal that he was deeply troubled by the grief and heartache he experienced from the divorce of his parents. This set him on a course as a rebel against adult authority. He was a wounded and hurting soul reacting to a society that had failed him personally. He couldn't reconcile the vicissitudes of his life with the *nirvana* he desired so much, that constantly eluded his grasp.

And if personal woes don't threaten to discourage or overwhelm us, other negative influences intrude into our lives. The media conglomerates continually distribute detailed accounts of the world's woes to our mobile devices, computers and televisions. We cannot escape the devastating blows to our fragile hope of a better world. For some compassionate souls, the pathos on our planet is too much to bear; they descend into depression or end their lives to escape the misery and pain caused by their conscious awareness of the world's desperate and seemingly hopeless condition.

What happened to the Age of Aquarius, the New Age movement of the 60s and 70s that promised universal

peace for mankind? The song *Aquarius* opened with the following line:

“When the Moon is in the seventh house, and Jupiter aligns with Mars, then peace will guide the planets, and love will steer the stars.”³

Astronomer David Williams said,

“The world will have to wait for the Aquarian decan (arising star patterns) of the Aquarian Age before the *true fellowship of mankind is experienced in the world.*”

And when does he predict this will happen? He says, “...About the year AD 3284.”⁴

If that is the case, the stars don't seem to provide any realistic hope for Utopia for any of us, do they!

Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States and author of the *Declaration of Independence*, wrote:

“Perfect happiness, I believe, was never intended by the Deity to be the lot of His creatures in this world; but that He has very much put in our

3. <http://www.elyrics.net/read/0-9/5th-dimension-lyrics/age-of-aquarius-lyrics.html>, accessed March 9, 2015.

4. David Williams, *Simplified Astronomy for Astrologers* (American Federation of Astrologers, 1969), pp. 45-56.

power the *nearness of our approach to it*, is what I have steadfastly believed. The most fortunate of us, on our journey through life, frequently meet with calamities and misfortunes, which may greatly affect us; and to fortify our minds against attacks of these calamities and misfortunes should be one of the *principal studies and endeavors of our lives*.”⁵

While pragmatically optimistic, Jefferson was also realistic in his awareness of the pain that is the lot of humanity. In a utopian paradise, we wouldn't need to “fortify our minds against attacks of these calamities and misfortunes ... as a principle ... endeavor of our lives.” Jefferson believed that Deity has placed in each individual the power to achieve nearness to perfect happiness—in other words, to approach to it. However, perfect happiness can only exist in a perfect society. Why is that? It's because so long as humans have empathy, we can never really be truly at peace while we are aware of widespread human suffering.

Failed Utopias

Utopia, although not once achieved in earth's history, nevertheless draws us with its alternative “what if?” scenario of an ideal society. However appealing the

5. Edward Sylvester Ellis, *Thomas Jefferson: A Character Sketch* (The University Association, 1898), p. 48.

concept may be, though, is of no practical benefit to humanity unless it is achievable. Many young people have dreamed about, talked about, and tried to implement a subculture in society that approached utopian values. My son lived in a counter-culture community in Portland, Oregon, for several years in the 90s. He passionately described what he and his friends envisioned as a working model for a perfect society. Also, events like “Burning Man” in Black Rock, Nevada, try to achieve a kind of utopian society, even if only for a few days. During the “Burning Man” festival in 2014, over 65,000 people converged on a patch of desert near Black Rock in what people describe as an experiment in community, art, radical self-expression, and radical self-reliance.

In 2014, Fox Television produced a “reality” program called *Utopia*. Devon Maloney posted a blog on *Wired* in which he explained why *Utopia* was cancelled by Fox TV:

“Utopia, like utopias, was never meant to work. The ‘social experiment’ that premiered on Fox last week has a fascinating premise—15 vastly different contestants are dropped into an oasis, deprived of almost all possessions, and tasked with creating their own sustainable paradise—but the show’s grand gimmick quickly become a portrait of disastrous irony.

“Five hours of Utopia have aired thus far, and already the differences and inequalities that cause many ‘real world’ problems—the ones supposedly wiped clean upon contestants’ entry—are becoming sources of violent conflict. Drunken bros, angry hillbillies, and homeless ex-cons are butting heads with ex-military chiefs,

Utopia, the simple title of Sir Thomas More’s seminal book, comes from two Greek words: *ou* (not) and *topos* (place). He knew it to be a place that is, literally, *no-place*. And yet, humans persist in thinking such a place, large or small, is possible, *if* it were populated by people possessing near-perfect, compatible characters. Perhaps that is why More chose the title *Utopia*—because he knew no such place could ever exist on planet earth. Who could find a group of humans so compatible? Even those who have never even thought about utopian ideals would conclude from observation of human nature that perfect communities are impossible. Earthly utopia cannot be realized, because it is unrealistic. It is truly “no place” on earth.

Stephen Duncombe, in his preface to *Open Utopia*, a book that is largely about the original *Utopia* book published in 1516 by Sir Thomas More, wrote:

“Utopia is a hard sell in the twenty-first century. Today we are people who know better, and what

we know are the horrors of ‘actually existing’ Utopias of the previous century: Nazi Germany, Stalin’s Soviet Union, Maoist China, and so on in depressing repetition. In each case there was a radical break with the present and a bold leap toward an imagined future; in every case the result was disastrous in terms of human cost (an estimated 150 million people died in these new Utopian experiments). Thankfully, what seems to be equally consistent is that these Utopias were relatively short-lived. History, therefore, appears to prove two things: one, Utopias, once politically realized, are staggering in their brutality; and two, they are destined to fail. Not exactly a ringing endorsement.”⁶

In addition, despite the efforts of many religions to establish God’s kingdom here on earth—a noble-sounding utopia based on religious convictions—they, like their political counterparts, have left devastation and death in the wake of their determination to impose their particular beliefs upon the targeted populace and *force* people to be religious. It is estimated that during the Dark Ages, the Catholic Church killed, tortured, or maimed over 50 million people⁷ who opposed her “di-

6. <http://theopenutopia.org/full-text/introduction-open-utopia/>. Accessed March 8, 2105.

7. David A. Plaisted, *Estimates of the Number Killed by the Papacy in the Middle Ages and Later*, 2006. Found at <http://www.cs.unc>.

vine right” to rule the world in both spiritual and temporal matters. History attests that when force is employed, utopian dreams—whether political or religious—die.

The Bible predicts that in the last days, there will be “distress of nations,” and “men’s hearts failing them for fear”⁸ because of their seeing and knowing of dire things happening in the world. Does that prediction describe the world we live in today? Some are fortunate enough to live in nations with relative peace, yet while they remain content with their lives, millions in other countries suffer beyond comprehension. The fact is, if we dig a little deeper into the history of almost every civilization, we will find war and bloodshed. No one really knows when the next devastating conflict will erupt like a supervolcano. Pre-eruption rumblings and shakings are daily occurrences around the world. Investment adviser Larry Edelson once wrote an email describing the consequences of World War III:

“Since the 1980s, I’ve been studying the so-called ‘cycles of war’— the natural rhythms that predispose societies to descend into chaos, into hatred, into civil

edu/~plaisted/estimates.html on March 11, 2015.

8. Luke 21:25-26 KJV

and even international war.... And based on what I'm seeing, the implications could be absolutely huge."⁹

With each new global conflict, the war machines become more deadly. Can we even conceive of a World War III, with the powers of China, Russia and the United States engaged in all-out war? No one on earth would be able to escape the fearsome effects. No, it's certain. There will never be a utopian society on earth.

Utopian Dreams

In contrast to present world conditions, as worrisome as they are, the idea of a real utopia is quite appealing, isn't it? What if there really was a Utopia, a real place somewhere off-planet where every single person possessed *near-perfect* qualities? Would you want to live there? Who wants to stay on this doomed planet, anyway? How many centuries would you want to live here? It seems that about 100 years in this world is about all the pain and heartache a human can take! But what if everything that causes that pain and heartache in this world and in your life were completely gone? Can you imagine no hospitals for the sick and suffering, no wars or corporate greed, no fear for personal safety for our children or ourselves, no inner-city crime and violence, no welfare lines, no need for prisons and locked doors,

9. <http://www.other-news.info/2014/08/top-financial-experts-say-world-war-3-is-coming-unless-we-stop-it/>. Accessed March 23, 2015.

no bullying and shootings at schools, no cemeteries? Who wouldn't want to live in a place like that!

In utopia, marriages would last forever. There wouldn't be any matrimonial arctic wastelands or relationships that make life a living hell, no family circles devastated by divorce. Instead, the union of man and wife would be like an ever-blossoming spring, rich with the fruitage of love, romance, mutual respect and admiration, honesty, chastity and virtue.

In this paradise, the universal brotherhood of mankind would be realized. There would be no race or class distinctions, no poor or slave, no ideological oppression and misguided government controls. And the most amazing thing about this Utopia is that no one would be forced to live that way! If such a place existed, millions would seek to secure citizenship there, don't you think?

Dreams Derailed

Let's just imagine for a moment that there *is* such a place—a genuine paradise, a genuine utopia. What if *you* are put in charge of approving the passports of people wanting to live there? Will you set up some criteria to determine who could colonize this new world, or would everyone be welcome? Will you say, "Listen, everyone. There are no rules or laws on this planet. Everyone is free to do whatever he or she feels like." Is that what you will say? If people board an intergalactic

space ship and travel to this new planet—the one without rules or laws—will it be any different from our world right now? Sadly, no.

So you see the problem, don't you? Everything would be just the same. It wouldn't be Utopia! Why? Because we are all selfish from the day we were born; the 6,000-year history of our world proves it over and over. Utopia can't be a place where there are no moral laws to govern society. Without such laws, it wouldn't be utopia; it would be dystopia—just what we already have here on this sin-plagued earth.

Now, what if you were one of the applicants seeking an asylum in this new paradise—this perfect world? Would *you* be approved for the passenger list to Utopia? Probably not! Remember, you are an imperfect being! People in Utopia have perfect qualities. Would the hurtful things you've done in this life eliminate you from the passenger manifest? Are there traits of character in your life that would disqualify you to live with others in a perfect society? In other words, would your presence there threaten the happy tranquility of the place? Frankly, no one on planet earth would be allowed to transfer there, because we each inherently possess character traits that would ruin a perfect society. Understandably, no one who has ever lived on

earth, except One, would ever be eligible to live there. Utopia again sounds totally unattainable, doesn't it!

The Great News

After all those discouraging facts, would you like to hear some really good news? Believe it or not, there *is* such a paradise—a Utopia that humans can travel to and live in. It's a *real* place! Forget fiction and fantasy in this case. Utopia exists! For a moment, suspend your disbelief. Open your mind to an idea that is so radical, a truth so astonishing, that your first response probably will be to say, "No way. I am not buying that."

But wait! Before you jump ship here, answer this question: "Of all the information in the universe, what percentage do you think you know perfectly? Maybe five percent?" That would probably be quite generous! Is it possible that a utopian reality exists in the other ninety-five percent of facts that exist in the universe? Let's not be so naive as to think that because we can't see it, it doesn't exist! That's like a child saying, "I can't see the wind, so it must not exist," or "I can't see electricity, so I won't turn on the light switch."

For centuries, intelligent, scientifically-minded scholars thought the earth was flat! And they were living on it! How much less we can know of a universe that is 28 billion light years across (at least the visible part we can see)? The universe contains billions of galaxies, and,

based on the size of the universe, scientists estimate probably millions of inhabitable planets! We can't possibly know for sure that Utopia doesn't exist, based on our limited knowledge.

Fantasy has long borrowed the idea of another world, a "parallel universe," from myth, legend and religion. Could there be, in reality and right now, an inhabited place in the universe where utopian ideals are lived effortlessly and without exception? Yes! In fact, a remarkable manuscript thousands of years old contains the details about this magnificent society. The author Himself claims to be from that parallel universe. Does that sound far-fetched? It's not!

In this manuscript, several passages describe a place—a utopia, or paradise, where everyone in that society possesses those highly desirable, perfect (not near-perfect) qualities! It is called, in Greek, *ouranos* (ü-rä-no>s), or Heaven. The Dead Sea Scrolls also describe this utopian city in mind-boggling detail: streets paved with pure gold, flowers that never die, beings that can fly! Look what is written about this real Utopia:

"The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of

the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone.”¹⁰

The main boulevard in this beautiful, orderly metropolis is made of gold, as pure as transparent glass. Life in the African plains can be brutal, but in this Utopia, you can have a lion for a pet, or any other animal on *National Geographic's* ten-most-dangerous list! Can you imagine the thrill of getting up close and personal with animals that here would kill you in a heartbeat? In Utopia they could be your pets! But it is not the external beauty of Utopia, or the prospects of enjoying nature as never before, that makes it what it is. No, it is the principle of genuine, other-centered love that is embraced and lived there that makes this paradise such a desirable place to live. There is no selfishness there, no self-centeredness—only unfeigned love for one another, in one happy, harmonious society.

Who May Enter There?

As explained earlier, though, you and I are not qualified to journey to this perfect paradise. The virus of self-centeredness has contaminated the heart of every human ever born on planet earth. It is surprising, really, that so many people have such a strong aversion to morality, when only a moral society is safe. That is because God's moral laws are based on self-denying love, and that kind of love promotes a utopian society. In his

10. Revelation 21:18 NIV

important *Massey Lectures* delivered in 1991, Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor spoke of *The Malaise of Modernity*. The Modern Age, he argued, is marked by two great intellectual moves. The intellectual move pertinent to this topic is a *pervasive individualism*. This fierce individualism, manifest in the attitudes of a post-modern generation, casts off all ties once “grounded in the order of things or the will of God.”¹¹

In the minds of many, morality is now purely subjective. There are no moral absolutes. “You have your truth; I have mine. They are equal.” Thus our world descends deeper and deeper into a dystopian dysfunction, and tragically, no one makes the connection between violating moral laws and suffering the consequences seen in the fast-deteriorating condition of the world. Indeed, those who write on the subject of utopia, even those who concede such a society is most improbable, never quite identify the reason why it could never work. Few seem to be able to articulate the real reason behind the catastrophic failure of all previous attempts to create a utopian society, as well. The reason they fail is very simple: we are selfish by nature. Until

11. http://www.albertmohler.com/2013/10/21/a-clear-and-present-danger-religious-liberty-marriage-and-the-family-in-the-late-modern-age-an-address-at-brigham-young-university/?utm_source=Albert+Mohler&utm_campaign=a7a427071c-Albert_Mohler_Email_June_7_2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_b041ba0d12-a7a427071c-307743769. Accessed March 23, 2105.

the nature of every human is radically changed, utopia is beyond the reach of humanity.

According to the Bible, humanity is incapable of transforming its own inherent selfish nature without divine power. One Bible writer said,

“Can an Ethiopian change his skin or a leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.”¹²

You don't believe that is true? Just go one week without saying an unkind word, thinking an unkind thought, or doing anything selfish. During this week you can't be envious, jealous, irritable, impatient, angry, proud, boastful, lustful, untruthful or unkind in any way. In addition, every thought and action must be for the benefit of someone else, not yourself. Before one week is over, you will realize just how selfish you really are.

Politicians often brag about how they plan to eliminate poverty, abolish inner city crime, and win the war on drugs. Some of us wonder, “Whom do they think they are kidding?” No end of any of it is in sight. It doesn't seem that any government has had any effective solutions to these problems in society, does it? With all the money, time, effort and legislation, these cancerous conditions in society just continue to get worse. That doesn't mean we should not help the poor, organize

12. Jeremiah 13:23 NIV

programs for facilitate recovery for people caught up in drugs and crime, or assist in any number of other humanitarian efforts, but we need to realize that no person or government has the answer to the “self” problem. We are free moral agents—free to choose to do good or evil. No amount of government control can stop selfish people from doing hurtful things.

The widely-accepted evolutionary model is itself a cruel, heartless philosophy of life. The strongest survive, which means anything that the strong do to survive is the way evolutionary “progress” is achieved. But that model introduces two destructive ideas: (1) Self-survival is the ultimate arbiter of all our decisions, and (2) no one can be held accountable for his or her actions because the end justifies the means! Taken to another level, the rationale becomes that so long as the group survives, it doesn't matter that individuals not in the group must suffer or even die. It's a cruel and brutal calculus, yet millions unthinkingly subscribe to the theory. Let's face the hard facts. Evolution's theoretical ideas promote the devolution of life, not evolution of society to some higher level of existence.

If one examines the underlying issue pervading all that is wrong with this world, a common principle of life will emerge: selfish, immoral actions hurt people. The fact that we can hurt someone by our actions implies we are moral creatures, and therefore are accountable

to moral laws. According to Victor Nell's article, *Cruelty's Rewards*,

"Cruelty requires a theory of mind. Most animals cannot imagine themselves in the place of another animal and cannot understand that their actions cause that animal pain; in other words, they lack empathy. Humans, however, have a well-developed sense of empathy, and with that in mind, they are fully conscious of the pain they inflict on others, be it physical, mental or emotional."¹³

Perhaps that is why Jesus gave us the golden rule, "Do to others what you would want them to do to you."¹⁴ Now that is pure empathy! Come to think of it, this world would be utopia if we all practiced the golden rule.

How to Get a Passport

Actually, the Creator of this planet intended a global Utopia here. He never intended for earth to become a dystopia. According to the book of Genesis, mankind was created to live forever in Paradise. Death came only as a result of self-centered choice. Humans broke away from the law of God's universe, their nature became corrupt, and selfishness entered the equation. Do you know why humans die? Old age? No. You and

13. Victor Nell, Oh cruel world: the evolution of cruelty in human beings. Submitted by Molly Tamulevich from <http://serendip.brynmawr.edu/exchange/node/348>, on April 17, 2007.

14. Luke 6:31 NLT

I will die because our sinful selfishness has cut us off from the Source of all life. God said, “The wages of sin is death.” That is why humans die. It is why not one of us possesses immortality.¹⁵

Speaking of immortality, have you ever heard about the ancient Tree of Life that existed on earth 6,000 years ago? So long as humans had access to the fruit of this tree, their bodies would never age and they would never die! However, once humans betrayed God’s love and became adversaries against their Creator, He cut them off from that tree, whose fruit perpetuated life. Heavenly guards with flaming swords blocked man’s access to this tree. God would not allow evil to be immortalized. Thus, there will never be immortal, self-centered humans. We should be thankful for this fact. Can you image a Hitler, or a Stalin, that could never die?

You may believe that life is just happenstance—totally impersonal—and when you die, it’s all over forever, but is this life truly all there is to our existence? Some believe otherwise, based on what is written in that remarkable ancient manuscript mentioned earlier, that we know as the Bible. If you could choose one of the two options described in that manuscript—dying and going out of existence forever, or having your life re-

15. Romans 6:23 KJV

stored after death so you can live in that utopia—which would you prefer?

Let's just suppose you *did* want to go to Paradise, where you will never die, where the friendships you formed on earth would continue throughout eternity. Is the possibility worth investigating? Consider this, too: If you choose to go with the atheist view—that once you die, it's all over—and there *really is life after death*, you will have lost everything. If you choose God's plan and it turns out to be true, *you have gained everything—including* eternal life in utopian paradise.

Assuming you have made the happiest and wisest choice, the next question is, "How can anyone be rescued from this planet to live there?"

Are you ready for the answer? It is profoundly simple. Just one word: "Believe."

"What?" you ask. "Believe?"

The ancient manuscript tells of the earthly life, death and resurrection of a unique, sinless man named Jesus, who is both the Son of God and the son of man. It explains His purpose in coming here to earth. And it clearly states, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...."¹⁶ No ambiguity there! Believe in Him,

16. Acts 16:31 NIV

and you SHALL be saved from this doomed planet. You CAN go to Paradise!

We need to back up just a little here. If you haven't been raised in a home where the greatest love story ever told has been taught, you really have no background for "believing" in this person named Jesus. You really should be introduced to Him, because He's the mastermind behind Utopia. He is an astonishing person. He created Utopia; He established the underlying principles that make for perfect harmony and peace there, and, best of all, He wants you there.

The list of His divine fiats makes any Nobel Peace Prize winner's accomplishments pale in comparison. For starters, He created not just Utopia, but everything in the universe! He created the planet you live on, the stars you gaze at in the night sky. He is commander-in-chief of the armies of heaven. He is all-knowing, all-powerful. There is absolutely nothing beyond the scope of His power to accomplish, but there is one thing He will never do. He will not force anyone to accept Him as Lord.

Now, here is the most amazing part about Him. God is love. Absolutely everything He thinks and says and does is motivated by love for others. His government operates on principles that are the opposite of self and

self-serving. And all the subjects of Utopia love and emulate His divine, loving character.

Back a few thousand years ago, the first humans He created—Adam and Eve, by name—betrayed His love. God had created the earth in all its stunning beauty and then placed them in charge of Utopia on earth. Once they betrayed His love, their natures fell and they became selfish and self-centered. Their thoughts and feelings were no longer in harmony with the principles of Paradise. It is thus that the planned earthly Utopia became Dystopia. But Jesus/ Jehovah/ Creator saw the hopeless condition of the human race and knew that if a power outside and above humanity wasn't freely given to us, Utopia could never again be realized, for humans were helpless to change their nature back to its original purity. Not only that, Adam and Eve's treasonous actions demanded their death. Jesus stepped forward in the great assembly of Utopia in heaven and said, "I will pay the penalty for their lawless actions. I volunteer to go to earth, to be born behind enemy lines, and to endure the penalty for their sins."

In Him we find the secret to living in Utopia. The whole story of Utopia lost and regained is really quite simple. God's moral law is holy. Humans broke the His moral law and were then under its condemnation. Just as when you break the laws of the land, and the law demands your punishment, so, too, the broken *divine* law is such

that it demands the death of the lawbreaker. Only the Lawgiver could pay the debt owed against all of the wrong and evil actions of humanity. The life of a created being would not be sufficient to pay such a massive penalty. Only the death of the Lawgiver could satisfy the justice of God's government. All the things you have done in your life require the payment of death—eternal death. But Jesus, standing in your place, took the punishment you deserve, so you could go to Utopia.

“Christ, at an infinite cost, by a painful process, mysterious to angels as well as to men, assumed humanity. Hiding His divinity, laying aside His glory, He was born a babe in Bethlehem. In human flesh He lived the law of God, that He might condemn sin in the flesh, and bear witness to heavenly intelligences that the law was ordained to life and to ensure the happiness, peace, and eternal good of all who obey.

“This is the mystery of godliness, that One equal with the Father should clothe His divinity with humanity, and laying aside all the glory of His office as Commander in heaven, [should] descend step after step in the path of humiliation, enduring severe and still more severe abasement. Sinless and undefiled, He stood in the judgment hall, to be tried, to have His case investigated and pro-

nounced upon by the very nation He had delivered from slavery. The Lord of glory was rejected and condemned, yea, spat upon. With contempt for what they regarded as His pretentious claims, men smote Him in the face.

“Pilate pronounced Christ innocent, declaring that he found no fault in Him. Yet to please the Jews, he commanded Him to be scourged and then delivered Him up, bruised and bleeding, to suffer the cruel death of crucifixion. The Majesty of heaven was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and amid scoffing and jeers, ridicule and false accusation, He was nailed to the cross.... He was giving His life for the life of the world, that all who believed in Him should not perish.

“Christ bore the sins of the whole world. He endured our punishment—the wrath of God against transgression. His trial involved the fierce temptation of thinking that He was forsaken by God. His soul was tortured by the pressure of a horror of great darkness....”¹⁷

In His agonizing struggle as to whether or not to take upon Himself our deserved punishment and die in our stead under the wrath of God, Jesus made a final decision. Even if He passed out of existence forever, He

17. Ellen White, Manuscript 29, March 17, 1899: “Sacrificed for Us.”

would go through with the plan to save people from eternal death. Imagine, the King of the universe willing to die eternally, so you and I can live in Paradise! Have you ever heard of greater love than this?

What is your response to this King of Utopia, this lover of your soul? At this point, you may say, “This is fantasy and fiction. Besides, I don’t like religion. I don’t want to be a hypocrite like all the Christians I know.”

Dear reader of this book, Utopia isn’t about fallen selfish people like you and me. It is about a person named Jesus who has provided everything necessary for you and me to go to Paradise. People aren’t saved because they go to church! Many go to church because they have chosen to join with others who also want to go to Utopia. They know they are faulty, and so is everyone else in that church. They know they have inherited a fallen nature, just like you have. Growing up into the full beauty of Christ’s character of love takes time—for you, for me and for them.

Many of those “hypocrites” are nothing more than lost people in the process of being transformed by divine love, so they will be safe to transport to that real Utopian society. I suppose if you never did a thing wrong in your life, you could cast the first stone at religious people whom you see as hypocrites. But you are not perfect, either. You are lost, just like everyone else that has not understood and accepted the atonement of

Jesus for their selfish acts. That's not to say that there are no hypocrites in the church; there are. The Bible says it is the nature of things that the converted and unconverted will remain together in God's church until He separates the two groups. But that is not to be our job, nor our focus.

Every human on this planet feels empty at times. Why? We carry the burden and guilt of all the wrong things we have done in this life. Whether we realize it or not, wrong actions—violations of God's moral laws—burden the life and strip the soul of real peace and joy. That's why, when people do something bad or evil, they sometimes try to inflict pain on themselves to expiate (pay for) their guilt. For instance, a woman who has had an abortion may try to inflict pain on herself because she is deeply troubled by her taking the life of the child that should have been safe in her womb. Only Jesus, the divine burden-bearer, can lift such guilt and shame from our souls. Only His presence can bring peace to the soul.

Do *you* feel empty inside? Are there moments in your life, after all the fun and entertainment has subsided and you are in the quietness of your own space, when you feel that something is missing in your life? Only Jesus can fill that empty void.

You must remember one key principle to find your way to Utopia: spiritual things are discerned only by the

aid of God's Holy Spirit. You must come to this topic of salvation and the path to Utopia in a teachable, humble spirit. Only then can you begin your journey to this perfect world, and that journey begins here on this planet. It can begin right now.

To believe in Jesus as your rescuer from this doomed planet means you must turn away from everything that would disqualify you from Utopia. The Law of God permits no evil, selfish or proud person to enter there, for obvious reasons. But turning away from the ways of the world is something you can't do in your own power. The beautiful thing about the Creator of Utopia is that He can transform your mind and heart. He can empower you to live by the principles that prepare you to live in His Utopia, and that make even this sin-stricken world more beautiful. His divine power, working in your heart, can radically change your life. If you yield your life to His divine healing power, He will make sure you make it to Paradise.

How then can you get your passport to this new world? Simple. Jesus lived a perfect life. He offers His life of self-sacrificing obedience to you, in exchange for your life of selfishness. How great is that? Once you accept this gift of life, God exposes the virus of sin coursing through your soul to the ultra-quiet rays of His perfection and love. The infectious, deadly virus

of selfishness is destroyed, and we are then cleared to make the journey to Paradise.

Here's the most amazing part. You can't pay for the ticket to Utopia. It's beyond anyone's ability to purchase, but none need despair. Jesus has already paid the price for your rescue from this planet—for everyone's rescue, in fact. That means Paradise is a free gift! Eternal life is a free gift from Jesus. He wants nothing to stop you from coming to live with Him there. True belief in Him as your sin-pardoning Savior is all He asks of you.

Just now, the door to Paradise is only inches away! That's right. All you need to do is kneel down, right now, and ask God to forgive you for past wrongs you have done, then believe in and accept the new life that only HE can give. Peace—amazing peace—awaits you just now.

Are you ready for Utopia? Why settle for the other option of purposeless life ending in nothingness? Why not risk checking out Utopia? It can give you hope and purpose now, and joyous eternal life in the future.

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