

A New Vision of God

By M. M. Campbell

According to many, by December 21, 2012 we will be hit by a polar shift, solar flares, Planet X, ETs running amok, a failed economy, cannibalism, and troops of jack-booted thugs threatening us at gunpoint. May I add an additional item to the list? Listen carefully.

What could account for these things? Never in the history of humankind have so many dangers threatened us at the same moment—on a global scale. Dangers totally out of our control. Now I want to introduce a topic that some consider passe' and irrelevant, but I'm going to make the connection. The subject is God. What has God to do with these things? They're not ordinarily the sort of events that one usually connects with God. I must ask you to hold off your reaction until I have a chance to defend my statements.

Let me first state the facts. We have misunderstood on the subject of God. We have taken statements of God's wrath at face value—His bringing a Flood in the days of Noah, His intention to eternally burn those who do not choose to serve Him, etc., etc., etc. Where the wicked are concerned, we have depicted God as totally without pity. Since the wicked have chosen a pathway leading away from God and don't want to have anything to do with Him, we have felt that it was permissible for Him to dispose of them any way he chooses. However, when we look deeper into Scripture, we find that the true situation is very different. God does not destroy. He continues to protect and provide for people, until they let it be known that they want nothing more to do with Him. He continues for a time, protecting and defending, saying, in essence, "Are you sure you want nothing to do with me?" When the free will of the

inhabitants of the land assures Him that they want no part of Him, He does what you or I would do under similar circumstances. He walks away. Then *all hell breaks loose on planet earth.*

Some will agree that this is how God operates—sometimes. I insist that this is how God operates *all the time.*

Many years ago I was having trouble understanding God. My life was a mess; I actually thought I might die because of all my troubles. And so I prayed. God, why are you doing this to me? I thought you were love. And, as He is wont to do, God answered through His word. I had the fortuitous habit of reading the Bible every day. It became more than a habit, as I began seeing something that grew bigger and clearer with each passing day. I began to see a whole new picture of God's dealings with the human race.

If you read the Bible carefully, you will find that where Scripture speaks of God's killing, it also, either before or after, speaks of God's "handing over" the wicked to destruction. These statements are so commonplace in Scripture that we read over them. Every place in Scripture where God's destructive acts are spoken of, there is a word or phrase that mitigates the action. Where God is said to destroy, it simply means that He backs off his protecting duties and lets nature take its course. In this picture, God expends His energy protecting and generating life to His creatures. He does not expend His energy destroying them. Humans have no way to sustain their life apart from Him. They have no defense against the evil one. When they get their way and God has to let them go, it's the worst day of their life.

Because apart from God, there is no life. "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). We cannot live apart from Him. He exercises His energy to give us life. When we will have nothing to

do with Him, He regretfully backs off from His protecting and life-giving duties, says, in essence, Have it your way, and nature takes its course.

A very bright friend of this concept, overwhelmed and overjoyed at it, shared this fact with me. In the Middle East at some time in the past it was customary for everything done within the realm to be attributed to the king. Scripture merely follows this tradition. If we don't know the traditions of the time and place these documents came into being, it puts us at a great disadvantage in understanding them.

A further reason exists for Scripture to be expressed in such terms as to make God guilty of all that blood. God had a serious problem when it came to setting down His character and covenant in black and white. How could God express Scripture in such a way as to reveal Himself as omnipotent and in charge, and also show that He is totally benign. We usually attribute that quality to weaklings, which God most assuredly is not. He wants us to know that *He is in charge of His universe*. Human free will determines the outcome. But giving His children the capability of writing Scripture, and knowing how limited human language is in expressing this concept, perhaps it can be understood why this misunderstanding occurred in the first place.

And, where God's wrath is concerned, instead of pushing the frontiers of truth forward to enlightenment, the church discontinued studying before it became fully known, stopping short of the full statement of Scripture on the topic. The church accepted the present perverse view of God and stopped studying. And there you are. Eventually it became "hard wired" into our brains until the proverbial stick of dynamite wouldn't move it.

Now what is there about this concept that adds another danger to our list of threatening items above? Because God is going to give you up to the things that you love apart from him. Your victimizing and your fornicating and your stealing. If you love these things better than God, He'll let you have them all right, but it will be the saddest day of your life. God is a gentleman, and He will respect your free will.

So the next time someone says to you, "God loves you," please know, He really does.