

BE NOT AFFRIGHTED

During the Second World War, C. S. Lewis published his book, *The Abolition of Man*. In his book he criticized the view that there are no objective values, and that man, by applied science, can solve the world's problems. Lewis argued that this view must lead to totalitarianism, and to the abolition of man, and he warned that men in all nations are laboring to produce this "world of post-humanity." He wrote:

I am not here thinking solely, perhaps not even chiefly, of those who are our public enemies at the moment. The process which, if not checked, will abolish Man goes on apace among Communists and Democrats no less than among Fascists. The methods may (at first) differ in brutality. But many a mild-eyed scientist in pince-nez, many a popular dramatist, many an amateur philosopher in our midst, means in the long run just the same as the Nazi rulers of Germany. Traditional values are to be 'debunked' and mankind to be cut out into some fresh shape at the will (which must, by hypothesis, be an arbitrary will) of some few lucky people in one lucky generation which has learned how to do it.

In the final days of the war, Lewis wrote *That Hideous Strength*, a dystopian novel about the conflict between The National Institute for Coordinated Experiments, or the N.I.C.E., an organization who would produce this world of post-humanity, and those who would prevent them. Concerning the aim of the N.I.C.E., Dr. Filostrato, a physiologist says:

This Institute—*Dio mio*, it is for something better than housing and vaccinations and faster trains and curing the people of cancer. It is for the conquest of death: or for the conquest of organic life, if you prefer. They are the same thing. It is to bring out of that cocoon of organic life which sheltered the babyhood of mind the New Man, the man who will not die, the artificial man, free from Nature. Nature is the ladder we have climbed up by, now we kick her away."

The Head of the N.I.C.E. is a severed head, kept artificially alive. Reverend Straik, the theologian of the N.I.C.E., tells Mark Studdock, "The Head has sent for you. Do you understand—*the Head*? You will look upon one who was killed and is still alive. The resurrection of Jesus in the Bible was a symbol: to-night you shall see what it symbolised. This is real Man at last, and it claims all our allegiance." Men fear death, and they seek immortality. Yet, they will have immortality on their own terms, and not on God's. They will not submit to God, but rather seek to be God. Their project must end in ruin. Jesus Christ has defeated death, and He gives eternal life to those who believe in Him, and eternal death to those that do not.

When God made the first man, Adam, He made his body out of the dust of the ground, and then He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. God placed the man in the garden of Eden, and there man's life was sustained by his eating the tree of life. In the garden, God gave man a special command. He said, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Genesis 2:16, 17) Then God made, from the man, and for the man, a woman. The serpent, the craftiest of all the beasts of the field, said to the woman, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:21) With this question, the serpent cast doubt on the benevolence of God. He raised in the mind of the woman a question concerning why God would keep something from mankind. The woman replied, "And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit

of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.” (Genesis 3:2) The woman repeated to the serpent God’s commandment, and His warning of the consequence of breaking the commandment. Then the serpent said, “Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” (Genesis 3:4, 5) The serpent cast doubt on the truthfulness of God. God said that, if the man and woman ate of the tree, then they would die, but the serpent contradicted, saying they would not die. Of course, the devil was the liar. The serpent said that, if the man and woman ate from the tree, then they would be like God, knowing good and evil. This much was true, as God Himself would later say. Yet, the serpent pretended to reveal something that God concealed, something for the good of mankind. The woman judged between the word of God and the word of the serpent, and, having no objective ground for judging, she judged wrongly, and believed the serpent. She ate of the forbidden tree, and she gave to her husband, and he ate. God made good on His threat, banishing the man and woman from the garden, and barring the way to the tree of life. So the man and the woman died. Not only did Adam die, but with him all mankind. Saint Paul wrote to the Romans, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” (Romans 5:12) This is the origin of human death; it is the punishment for sin.

The serpent murdered mankind, but God promised to undo what the serpent did. He said to the serpent, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” (Genesis 3:15) To a descendent of the woman the serpent would deal a crippling blow, but to the serpent that same descendant would deal a fatal blow.

God promised Abraham He would redeem the world, nation by nation, and He would begin with Abraham’s physical descendants, the nation of Israel. God redeemed Israel, and made them His covenant people. Yet, they continually rebelled against Him.

In the days of the divided monarchy of Israel and Judah, the people of God were in rebellion against Him. Isaiah the prophet warned the people of Judah of the consequence of continued rebellion, and he called them to repentance. He said:

Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings are against the LORD, to provoke the eyes of his glory. The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves. (Isaiah 3:8, 9)

Isaiah prophesied judgment on Israel and Judah. He said:

The LORD spake also unto me again, saying, Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son; Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel. (Isaiah 8:5–8)

Like the waters of a great river overflowing its banks, the army of Assyria would overwhelm the kingdom of Israel, and carry the people away into exile. It would even penetrate into the kingdom of Judah. Assyria’s attack on Israel would be God’s judgment upon them, but God would punish Assyria for it; He would cause the army

of Babylonia to conquer Assyria. This miserable cycle of death and destruction would not continue forever, however. Isaiah said:

And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. (Isaiah 25:6–9)

From the city of Jerusalem on Mount Zion, God would bless the whole world. The nations were blind to the truth about God, but God would remove their blindness. He would cause all nations to turn to Him, and He would make all things right in the world. He would even do away with death itself, and so remove from the world all sorrow. No more would God's people be the scorn, for all the nations will be the Lord's people. The world would no longer be a world of sin and death, but of righteousness and life. The people of God would then rejoice, for this is the salvation for which they so patiently waited.

Jesus told Nicodemus, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." (John 3:16, 17) God loves the world, and because He loves it He did what was in its best interest. He sent into the world His Son, His only-begotten Son, not to condemn it, but to save it. Everyone who believes in the Son of shall not have everlasting death, but shall have everlasting life.

Jesus said that the Father has life in Himself, and that the Father gave to Him to have life in Himself. (John 5:26) Jesus, in His earthly ministry, went about doing good, restoring people to life. He gave health to the sick, gave sight to the blind, gave hearing to the deaf, gave speech to the mute, and even gave life to the dead. When Jesus's friend, Lazarus, was deathly ill, Lazarus's sisters sent word to Jesus. Jesus, when He received word, said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." (John 11:4) Jesus did not immediately go to his friend, but He first waited until he was dead, so that He might glorify God by raising Lazarus from the dead. When Jesus arrived at Lazarus's tomb, Lazarus was indeed dead, and had been for four days. Jesus said to Martha, sister of Lazarus, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." (John 11:25, 26) Jesus then went to the tomb, and commanded Lazarus to come out, and Lazarus did come out alive. When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard what Jesus did, they did not believe in Jesus. They feared that the people would declare Him king, and then the Roman army would destroy the city of Jerusalem. So, they plotted to kill Jesus. Eventually they arrested Jesus, found Him guilty of blasphemy because He said He is the Christ, the Son of God, and they turned him over to the Romans for execution.

Saint Mark recorded what happened after the death of Jesus:

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when

they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid. (Mark 16:–18)

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Salome, bought spices with which to anoint the body of Jesus. As the sun rose, they went to Jesus's tomb, and they discussed who would roll away the stone that covered the entrance, because it was large and heavy. When they arrived at the tomb, they saw that the stone was already rolled away. Mary Magdalene ran to tell Peter and John that some party had removed Jesus's body. The other women entered the tomb, and there they saw a young man, clothed with a long garment, brightly white, sitting on the stone on the right side of the entrance, for it was he who had descended from heaven to roll away the stone. Naturally, the women were frightened. They came to the tomb expecting to find it sealed, with Jesus's body inside, but they did not find what they expected. They rather found the stone rolled away, an angel sitting on it, and Jesus's body gone. What had happened? Where was the body of Jesus? Had he really died? Had someone stolen his body? It was all more than they could understand, and they were afraid. The angel said they sought Jesus, who had, in fact, died, but who had risen from the dead. He told them to see for themselves. Then he told them to go on their way, and to tell the disciples, including Peter, who had three times denied Jesus, that Jesus would meet them in Galilee as He had before said. (compare Mark 14:28) The women went out of the tomb, and ran away, for they were trembling and bewildered. They were so frightened, in fact, that, on the way to tell the disciples, they said nothing to anyone about what had happened to them. Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb with Peter and John, and the two disciples saw for themselves that it was empty. John remembered what the Lord had said about rising from the dead, and he believed. Peter and John left the tomb, but Mary Magdalene remained behind, and to her Jesus made His first appearance. Then Mary left the tomb to tell Peter and John what she saw. As the other women made their way to tell the other disciples, Jesus appeared to them. When they told the other disciples what they saw, the disciples did not believe them. Jesus appeared to Clopas and another disciple on the road to Emmaus, and He appeared to Peter. Then Jesus appeared to ten of the original twelve disciples, Thomas being absent. He did appear to the eleven, and He rebuked them for their hardness of heart because they were so slow to believe what He told them would happen, and what the women told them had happened. Then He said to them, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15, 16)

Saint Paul gave theological perspective on the death and resurrection of Jesus. He wrote to the Corinthians:

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was

seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed. (1 Corinthians 15:1–11)

Some of the Corinthian Christians held that the dead do not rise. Saint Paul repeated to the Corinthians the gospel that he had preached to them, which they had received, and on which they stood, and by which they were saved, if they continued to believe it, or else they once believed it in vain. The gospel that Saint Paul gave to them is the same gospel that was given to him, namely that Christ died for the sins of the Christian, as taught in the Scriptures, that He was buried, and that three days later he rose from the dead, as taught in the Scriptures. Saint Peter saw Jesus risen, and then to Peter with the other disciples. After that He appeared to five-hundred at one time, and, at the time Saint Paul wrote to the Corinthians, most of those witnesses were still alive. After that, he appeared to James, the brother of Jesus. Last of all, He appeared to Saint Paul, who among other apostles was late to the faith. He considered himself least of all the apostles, for, unlike them, he had persecuted the church; yet, God gave him grace, Because of his great sin, and God's great grace, Saint Paul worked harder than all the others. Yet, he was careful not to take credit for his work, but rather account it to the grace of God. This is the gospel that the apostles preached, and this is the gospel that the Corinthians believed, and that all Christians believe.

If the dead do not rise, then Christ has not risen, and if Christ has not risen, then both the preaching of the apostles and the faith of Christians is in vain. This would mean that the apostles are false witnesses, and that the sins of Christians have not been forgiven. It means, moreover, that Christians who have died have perished. If the hope of Christians is for this life only, then they are the most miserable of men.

But Christ has, in fact, risen from the dead, and He is the first of many to follow. By one man, Adam, death came into the world, but by one man, Jesus, came the resurrection of the dead. All those connected to Adam die, but all those connected to Christ shall live. Christ has risen first; when He returns, He will raise all those that believed in Him. In the meantime, Christ is extending His reign on earth, bringing all the world to faith in Him. When He has subdued all His enemies, when all the world acknowledge Him as Lord, then He will return to destroy the last and greatest enemy, Death. At that time He will give His followers immortality. Then will be fulfilled the Scripture which says, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:54, 55) The Christian ought to give thanks to God for this victory. He ought to be firm in faith and hope, and diligent in good works, knowing that his work for the kingdom of God is not in vain. He must not fear death, but rather take heart, knowing that his good work is not in vain, and that his death will lead to eternal life with God.

Let us believe that Jesus had died for our sins, and risen from the dead. Let us rejoice that He will raise us from death to life. Let us be diligent to work for Christ's kingdom.

Unto the Son who must reign, till he hath put all enemies under His feet, and unto Him that put all things under the Son, that God may be all in all, be honor and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.