

237 Look up!

In the summer of 1967 “flower power” broke forth in San Francisco, and to mark the fiftieth anniversary this year various people have been wistfully reminiscing about those heady days. The anti-Vietnam War demonstrations and the Civil Rights protests were rapidly gathering pace in the United States; the “rock n’ roll scene” had opened the way into psychedelic drugs, “free love” (until that time known as “promiscuity”), Eastern spirituality, coloured clothing, long hair and of course “flowers in your hair”. Here was a bright new start – away with the old and in with the new - the building of a better, happier, simpler, truer and more peaceful world: the Beatles’ song “All you need is love” encapsulated the mood. There is little surprise that soon things turned out rather differently, as they always do when Man mounts the throne singing that other song, “I’ll do it my way”.

Meanwhile Professor Stephen Hawking has warned that Darwinian evolution has implanted in us all a “genetic selfishness”, meaning that before long, unless Man gets a grip on global warming, Earth will become uninhabitable and Homo Sapiens will only survive by living in independent colonies on other planets.

So in these topical examples we have before us two Man-proposed visions of that longed-for but ever-elusive “better future” – flower-power here, or life lived inside a plastic dome on a barren planet – take your pick!

We cry again, “Oh Lord, have mercy”. For “flower power” and all that it stood for, far from being new, was well-established even by the time of Genesis 6.1-5. The Professor’s “genetic selfishness” has nothing to do with Darwinian macro-evolution which has never happened anyway, and everything to do with Genesis 3 and its consequences. Truly, “the fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Psalm 53.1); and - “But God said unto him (the “certain rich man”), Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee” (Luke 12.20). We need to be quite clear: Almighty God regards any human activity which omits Him from the picture – in other words, a startlingly high percentage of all human activity today – as being perpetrated by sinful “fools”, no matter how many flowers they may have in their hair or academic qualifications after their names (eg., John 15.5).

As those seeking to be faithful sheep of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, we are well aware of our responsibilities in these folly-filled days to proclaim the Good News, even when that Good News is despised and its bearers spat upon or worse. To avoid our being worn down in this precious task of proclamation, we can do something very, very simple: we can look up – UP rather than merely around or down.

We can look up, gazing at the clouds in their constant, silent, unfolding scene of wonder and beauty. What a blessing, and what a source of reassurance! (And with

our Concordance we might ponder the great spiritual significance of clouds within Scripture, literally from Genesis to Revelation).

And in the “lower up” we can follow the birds (perhaps like us you currently have swifts every evening swooping and chasing and dancing in the sheer delight of being swifts!), and watch the trees reacting in the wind; and in the “higher up” we gaze at the blueness above and beyond, or at the immensity of the clear night sky, each drawing us in dumb-founded silence towards the One who is the ultimate “Above and Beyond”, and to His Son now seated in glory at His Father’s right hand (see for example Psalm 8.3-9 / Psalm 19.1-2 / Psalm 104 / etc ...// and Colossians 3.1).

“Unto thee I lift up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens” (Psalm 123.1). Confronted with the stone across the grave of Lazarus, “... Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me” (John 11.41). At the Last Supper, “These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven” (John 17.1).

This simple act of looking up has a fine, long pedigree, and helps us keep strong in our Christian boldness and confidence. For let there be no doubt: these days we are being bombarded with a stream of loud, daft, God-ignoring twaddle (not to put too fine a point on it!). The Antidote to this twaddle remains Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. He alone remains at the epicentre of everything, as one day will be acknowledged by all (Philippians 2.9-11), and He alone is the Achiever and Giver of victory (I Corinthians 15.57-58).

The Lord Jesus kept “lifting up His eyes”, and we can be blessed by doing just the same.

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