

ARISE & BUILD

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THE SCOPE OF HEALING

BY MARTIN G. SELBREDE



In the last issue of *Arise & Build*, we drew attention to the repairing of Jerusalem's destroyed walls:

The "restoration of the walls" is referred to by way of a metaphor derived from the healing of a wound.¹

The expression used meant "to lay a bandage on" the walls to heal them.² This is consistent with the precedents concerning the three words translated as *healing*:

In the Old Testament this word is always used in its figurative sense.³

But pietistic and self-centered forms of Christianity relegate *healing* almost entirely to physical healing from infirmities: the healing of one's own injuries or diseases, with no broader context needed or desired. It's something of a miracle that 2 Chron. 7:14, overused to the point of becoming a cliché, is cited at all given its reference to healing the *land* (which too many Christians think of in partisan political terms, echoing the confidence the ancient Romans had in their Caesars).⁴

If healing means more than merely personal healing, then Christ's mission for us is much wider than the pietists (who focus on personal holiness and little else) teach. By neglecting the Bible's wider doctrine of healing, many solutions to our current problems are left on the table. Those Biblical solutions are not so much the victims of neglect but of outright disdain. Too many Christians are taught to abandon much of the world to humanism, and this diminution of the faith widens the world's sufferings.

WHAT DO PIETISM AND HUMANISM HAVE IN COMMON?

There can be no doubt that humanism intends to shrink the domain where Scripture is applied. Regrettably, pietism's commitment to the intimately personal dimension of God's Word often ends up in functional lockstep with humanism. Some pietists admit this, asserting that concern for "worldly" things is beneath the Christian, whose focus should be a spiritual one.

When radical two kingdom thinking dominates, the line drawn between God's solutions and humanistic policy rules out the former. The bouncers at the door of culture, busy tossing out interlopers offering Biblical solutions, claim Christ as their authority for dethroning Him in this way. The *non*-application of Scripture is argued for in spite of Isaiah 8:20: "To the law and the testimony: if they do not speak according to these, there is no light of dawn in them."

The Parable of the Good Samaritan illustrates how Christians have been trained to walk around problems in their path, while the cleansing of Naaman's leprosy sets forth the ironies that shape how God works to reverse the curse. Since every Biblical doctrine has a defective humanistic counterpart, we will consider how humanism "heals the wound of the people lightly" in comparison to Biblical solutions to cultural problems.

WHO, OR WHAT, IS LEFT IN THE DITCH TO DIE?

In Luke 10:30-37, Christ describes a man set upon by thieves who is beaten and left for dead. Those who gave the

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man a wide berth rather than engaging with him believed they had good reason to act as they did. Good sense, plus a strong sense of vocation, guided them around the injured man. The only one who took steps to see the injured man healed was someone with whom the previous men had serious theological differences. They, unlike the Samaritan, acted on noble theological impulses centered on what they believed God's focus was.

Were we to name the man in the ditch *Culture* and then translate the situation into the 21st century, we might consider that those who passed by the victim might have been guided by the overriding importance of liturgy, or of R2K (radical two kingdom) theology (the first dictating a higher priority than the wounded man, the second asserting that the man fell to the secular kingdom to deal with). In either case, *Culture* is left in the ditch⁵ to die of his wounds.

Instead of generating excuses to not engage with *Culture*, the Samaritan sees the need and acts without overthinking things, without insulating himself using theological weasel words. The man whose theology was sketchy was the one who got *Culture* back on his feet.

Is it warranted for me to shift our thinking from an injured man to a damaged culture? Is this playing fast and loose with Christ's parable? The answer depends a lot upon what was Christ intended to heal when He descended to this sin-filled world. There is something that the Samaritan did for the man in the ditch that is paradigmatic, even iconic, that demands the widest possible application. We wouldn't dream of saying that "the situation only applies to men left in a ditch; it doesn't apply to a man left anywhere else, because that would be stretching the parable where it is silent." We're able to see the error in such arbitrary limitations, but we'll restrict it in other ways to keep His Word from piercing our conscience.

Those who passed by the victim *should* have done what the Samaritan did and engage this "secular" situation and not barricade their hearts behind a wall

of theological excuses. The standard for intervention isn't set by the theologians here, but by the one outside their camp. The Samaritan puts them to shame, only because he doesn't adopt any excuses for non-engagement with the need.

Today there are many victims lying in the ditch, victims of humanism's campaign to embed autonomy within all of human culture. Who will bind up the wounds and put culture back on its feet? Misapplied theology drove a wedge between the people and the point of need.

Perhaps Isaiah 32:2 will shed some light here, as the older expositors see it detailing the duties that only the Samaritan fulfilled.

THE REFUGE WE MAY BE TO ONE ANOTHER: *Any man may be, and every man should seek to be, a hiding-place, a covert ... Who would not like so to live, with such quick and ready sympathy of spirit, with such kindness and hopefulness of word, with such friendliness of uplifting hand and sustaining arm, that his life should be suggestive of the words, "A man shall be a hiding-place?"*⁶

When Isaiah says with such simplicity *a man*, he means any man, he means the ideal for every man. Having in verse 1 laid down the foundation for social life, he tells us in verse 2 what the shelter and fountain force of society are to be ... Isaiah's words present us, *first*, with a philosophy of history, at the heart of which there is, *secondly*, a great gospel, and in the application of which there is, *thirdly*, a great ideal and duty for ourselves.⁷

The *closed eye* is typical of the blindness of those who will not see. To shut the eye to evil, to turn the head away from what disgusts,—this may seem for a time equivalent to canceling the evil itself. Not so; and reformation sets in from that hour when men are willing to face the most painful facts, to let the light into the darkest corners of existence. *Ears* were made to listen, not to be stopped. Let the bitter cry be hearkened to; its tones thrill through every fiber of our sympathetic being; nor let pleading be dismissed until the question, *What can I do?* has found *some* distinct answer.⁸

The sequence of events in Isaiah 32 is

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significant, as the reconstructive mindset leads to opened eyes and unstopped ears, the exposure of false facades, and on to the reformation of language to match reality rather than mere social conventions. That last point is a *consequence* of earlier steps that Isaiah outlines for us, whereas too many today jump the gun without satisfying the preconditions to stop erosion of language and communication. Today's *pronoun trouble* is the result of earlier abdications of duty on the part of God's people, so God won't hear our demand that the consequences of our dereliction be lifted. Healing comes one way: God's way. Disdain for the Samaritans among us speaks a lot more about us than about the Samaritans.

HEALING IS TOO SIMPLE FOR US TO ACCESS IT

What should we do to deal with these massive societal problems that are plaguing us everywhere we look? When this question arises, nobody believes that the Biblical answers will work: not the majority of Christians, and certainly not the humanists. The Bible's answers are considered far too simplistic, perhaps useful at one time for primitive agrarian economies, but laughably ridiculous if promoted in the modern world in all its complexity.

Solutions to big problems have to be commensurately big and massive: we seek trillion-dollar solutions and stupendous upheavals and technological revolutions to fabricate the new bandages for our contemporary wounds. Those who promote God's Word in this arena become objects of contempt for not taking the situation seriously.

Healing, it is believed, comes from doubling down on the humanistic impulses that created the wounds in the first place. If there's to be healing of our world, it will involve enormous sacrifices on the largest possible scales. The Bible is out of its league here: humanists and far too many Christians are agreed on this point.

In the days of Elisha, a Syrian general (Naaman) suffered from a form of leprosy. A captured Israeli girl who had been committed to servitude in his household

made mention of a prophet that could heal Naaman's affliction. Her God hadn't liberated her from Naaman's service, yet she proffered this counsel graciously, upon which Naaman acted. This military man was to receive a multitude of shocks on his journey to healing, for nothing fell out the way that he had expected it to.

Elisha wouldn't meet with him, but sent out a servant to instruct Naaman to wash seven times in the river Jordan. This was ridiculous counsel that raised Naaman's ire, but his lowly aides made one of the most profound arguments in all of Scripture: "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed!'"

Naaman relents and travels to the Jordan. Kaiser speculates on Naaman's thought processes as he cools off from the rude reception he had received at Elisha's hands earlier:

...if he is indeed healed, the miracle has little to do with the prophet himself, who by then has distanced himself too far from the scene to get the credit by being in the same proximity. So to whom does Naaman give the credit? It could not be in the special properties of the waters of the Jordan, for had that been true, why would there be any lepers left in Israel? The answer had to lie elsewhere.⁹

After his damaged skin is made better than new, Naaman backtracks to Samaria to speak with Elisha. Maier lays out the nature of the huge spiritual change behind this healing:

The gods of Syria, supposedly superior to Yahweh, could not heal Naaman; thus he sees that what he has been taught, and what he has believed, about these gods, is false. They are false gods, they are not really gods at all. They are in fact non-existent, and, if such is the case for Syria's gods, that certainly holds for the gods of other nations. Yahweh cured him; Yahweh exists; indeed Yahweh is the only God in all the earth.¹⁰

We can start to see applications to our era, seeing the gods of Syria as the non-

theistic gods of humanism which cannot deliver what they perpetually promise: heaven on earth.

But we may not grasp what today's equivalent of washing seven times in the Jordan might be. We see this as a one-off miracle, suitable for Christ to use to agitate a crowd enough to want to throw Him over a cliff (Luke 4:27). We fail to draw any further conclusions beyond the surface ones.

The one statement that shifts Naaman from rejecting the whole sordid affair was that offered by his aides: had Elisha told him to do something imposing, he'd have done it—so his anger at the modest means proposed is misplaced, an artifact of his pride. He wanted something burdensome to do, something Herculean in scope or costly in price, reflecting his sense of self-importance. But the commands of God are not burdensome, are not grievous, do not involve doing great things, do not involve Five Year Plans or Inflation Reduction Acts. Yet doing them has tremendous ramifications that we fail to acknowledge out of arrogance and complacency.

HEALING POVERTY

Nations prefer self-medication over the Great Physician. This is why America has lost its “war on poverty.” God's solution to poverty is the poor tithe, which can lead to an age when “there shall be no more poor among you” (Deut. 15:4). During the Maccabean era, poverty was abolished in Israel by obeying these laws. Since there were no poor to distribute to, the unused surplus (200 talents of gold and 400 talents of silver) was stored in Jerusalem (2 Macc. 3:10-11).

Despite the modest means God required (an amortized 3.3% voluntary tax on the people's increase), Israel later backslid: Jesus could point out a widow offering all she had when throwing two mites into the temple treasury. Today, massive programs are demanded to resolve poverty that continue to fail. God's very simple policy achieved the extraordinary, as history has proven.

When men act autonomously, they can only “heal the wound of the people lightly.” Politicians promise to heal the nation, not because healing will ensue when they're elected, but because promises gain votes. Humanism only doubles down on its nostrums because public policy cannot appeal to Scripture. The result? No real healing, just soothing words falsified after the fact.

The world thinks as Naaman: big problems need extraordinary solutions, not several dunks in a dirty river. Naaman the Syrian saw the logic in his aides' advice and did what Elisha commanded. But modern pietists, antinomians, and humanists just stare in disbelief when informed that Israel had abolished poverty by following God's law.

HEALING A NATIONAL ECONOMY, ETC.

Observing God's laws of economics would also heal the infirmities plaguing our national economy, starting with monetary policy, debt policy, and much more. The details have been laid out in Dr. R. J. Rushdoony's books and lectures. One cannot do justice to this topic without referencing the late Dr. Gary North's economic commentary on the Bible. Dr. North also wrote *Healer of the Nations: Biblical Principles for International Relations*. He was clearly not catering to what he called “responsibility-fleeing Christians” in writing this volume.¹¹ He perceived the common ground between humanists and antinomians: denial of the applicability of God's law.¹²

There is no Biblical doctrine which doesn't have a humanistically-distorted counterpart. The Great Reset is a caricature of the Biblical Jubilee (occurring every fifty years when a double land sabbath triggers built-in economic resets). Dr. Rushdoony explained how the Jubilee prevents an overheated economy:

It is noteworthy that Kirkland finds one instance in past history of an awareness of this cycle, the Levitical law of Jubilee. This places a brake on accumulated debt, on inflation, and on the continuing expansion of credit. By this means, the cycle was controlled and disaster prevented.¹³

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The Jubilee hasn't fallen out of favor with serious thinkers, however. Five years ago, Bruno Roche and Jay Jakub published *Completing Capitalism: Heal Business to Heal the World* which seeks to put the Jubilee principle back on its feet.¹⁴ In fact, all three sabbaths (weekly, annual land sabbath, and the Jubilee) are extolled in this volume:

...the concept of Shabbat (proactive rest) is foundational to human freedom. And it can be conceptually enacted as a form of remuneration for people, allowing work to be remunerated according to its "own kind"—for six days of work, there is one day of rest.¹⁵

...one year of rest for the land in every seven years to protect from overuse. During this Sabbath year ... the land is supposed to lie fallow with all agricultural activity forbidden. Whatever agriculture is produced during that year of rest is not meant for the landowner, but rather is for the poor, the stranger, and the beasts of the field. This is an illustration of how the concept of Shabbat can be enacted as a form of remuneration for the land, allowing nature's work to be remunerated according to its "own kind"—for six years of work, there is one year of rest. Note that during this Sabbath year, all debts between debtors and creditors are supposed to be cancelled and all slaves are to be released.¹⁶

[The Jubilee] during which all land mortgages were to be returned to the original owners (or their heirs), debt was to be cancelled, and slaves could be released. This ... can be used to deal with ownership and accumulation of wealth across generations ... giving all a fresh start ...¹⁷

Their summation is worth repeating here:

These definitions ... map across to the four new areas of capital we have been discussing:

1. To individual people on leave (human capital)
2. To communities as a shared period of rest (social capital)
3. To nature, giving it a period to recharge and replenish its resources (natural capital)
4. To allocation of profit (shared financial capital)¹⁸

These authors emphasize that the fourth commandment precedes¹⁹ Do not kill, Do not steal, etc. Protection of human, social, natural, and shared financial capital is important enough to appear ahead of the commandments against murder, theft, adultery, etc. The ordering of the commandments is indeed based on their importance.

We may one day have to face a choice between the humanists' Great Reset and the Jubilee of the Lord God, where the consequences of choosing man over God will reverberate for decades.

HEALING THE LITERAL EARTH

Ecological and environmental concerns have also gotten the massive governmental treatment. Rather than observe the land sabbaths that God had commanded, etc., men use chemicals to wrest productivity from the land by force. Israel seemed to believe that God was winking at their violation of this law, for He had not enforced it for seventy times seven missed land sabbaths—until He lowered the boom. "My land shall enjoy her sabbaths," He declared, and Israel was exiled to Babylon for seventy years.

It is easy to resist wrong steps when promoted by those who worship the creature rather than the Creator, who are not shy about worshiping Gaia. But when a Christian promotes a faulty agenda, it becomes problematic.

Dr. Katharine Hayhoe's new book, *Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World* is just this kind of inadvertent Trojan horse. Dr. Hayhoe treats dissent as something to be psychoanalyzed. She prefers a six-fold classification because *two* climate tribes don't provide enough labels.²⁰ Once you've been labeled, you can be safely dismissed.

The Christian here isn't promoting Biblical solutions. The irony of the title of her twelfth chapter, "Why We Fear Solutions," is *that far more people fear Biblical solutions to these problems* than fear the humanistic solutions. With the notable exception²¹ of Dr. E. Calvin Beisner, few

expound God's counsel regarding environmental issues.

Dr. Hayhoe's book isn't entirely bereft of scriptural quotation (e.g., she cites from Proverbs and Hosea on page 242 and Romans and First John on page 244) but quotation falls short of a reasoned, systematic application of Scripture. Her quotes serve as window dressing in support of her final sentence: "Together, we can save ourselves."²² I do not doubt her sincerity, but I'm apparently not allowed to doubt her view of science, which ends up being politicized no matter how carefully she tries to avoid that elephant in the room.

THE PATTERN OF HEALING

Isaiah 19:18-25 describes the conversion of Egypt and its relationship with fellow-convert Assyria in respect to Israel. The pattern here may well be paradigmatic, for God summarizes His work with Egypt in this way:

And the Lord shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them. (Isa. 19:22)

Egypt was the first great enemy of Israel, followed by Assyria, yet these two peoples build altars to the Lord and worship Him so faithfully that the prophecy concludes with these ringing words of paternal pride:

In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance. (Isa. 19:24-25)

The healing of Egypt is premised on its conversion to the Lord (verses 18 through 21). God's power is strong enough to take Israel's first two mortal enemies, Egypt and Assyria, and convert and heal both of them, such that Israel becomes the third part *behind* Egypt and Assyria in God's enumeration.

There is smiting followed by healing in Isaiah 11 as well, with the Messiah smiting the earth in verse four followed

by all relationships between the earth's creatures being healed in verses six through eight, concluding thus:

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Isa. 11:9)

The pattern of global healing is one of gradual expansion, as delineated by the imagery of Ezekiel 47:1-12 where the miraculously growing stream, then brook, then river, "go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed" (Ezek. 47:8-9). On either shore of this healing river are countless trees "whose leaf shall not fade" (verse 12), whose leaves in fact are for healing. This imagery appears again in Revelation 22:2 where "the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

Dr. Vishal Mangalwadi has suggested a connection to Psalm 1, where the righteous are compared to trees planted by rivers of water bearing fruit in their season, whose leaf never withers. Although these predicates indeed align, his proposal remains a controversial one (and easily misread by careless observers hunting for heresy rather than nuance). His idea had appeared before the first Advent in the apocryphal Psalms of Solomon: "the trees of life are His pious ones" (14:3). One implication is that the leaves of the trees are the agents of healing, perhaps in the same sense as the Samaritan's actions were.²³

MALACHI'S FINAL PROMISES

We're on firmer (canonical) ground when returning to Malachi's final chapter:

But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. (Mal. 4:2)

Jacobs sees the significance of "the wings' restorative effect":

The healing addresses disease, disasters, brokenness, and anything that distracts from wholeness. Thus, despair is manifested by lack of healing . . . Healing, however, is manifested by prosperity and security.²⁴

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Jacobs points out that “the mode of the [Sun’s] rising is depicted with reference to its wings—healing in its wings (*marpe’ biknapaha*).” As the people grow in their fear of God’s Name, the domain of healing is enlarged and the Sun rises higher upon those wings.

This wounded world of ours, disfigured by sin in all its institutions, cultures, economics, arts, sciences, crafts, trades, medicine, and pedagogy, will be transformed in the same way that the Dead Sea is healed in Ezekiel 47. Every new application of God’s law transforms and renews everything it touches.

God informed the people that their economic woes (holes in their purses and extended drought, Hag. 1:6, 9-11) were well-deserved, but once they made the first move toward putting God’s house first, that changed. God is not stingy with healing: *we* are the stingy ones. Moore’s comment on Haggai 1:13 shows us how speedily healing can be accessed.

The people had not yet begun to work, but as soon as they showed a disposition to do so, the stern and reproofing tone of God is changed for one of the most exquisite tenderness.²⁵

Because the God Who Heals has unlimited power, the scope of His healing for this world has no limit either. Everything and every relation injured by the curse can be healed. We can either be proactive agents for His Kingdom, or offer up excuses for disengagement like the Samaritan’s orthodox counterparts did. We are to stretch out our hands to heal “as far as the curse is found” rather than urging theological rationales for keeping the car in neutral. The crooked *shall* be made straight²⁶ and the healing waters *will* grow until they’re impassable.²⁷ 🏰

1. Williamson, H.G.M., *Word Biblical Commentary: Ezra, Nehemiah* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), p. 225.

2. Keil & Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. 3* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982 reprint), part 3, p. 202.

3. Orr, James, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1939, 1956 [orig. copyright 1929], May 1984 reprint), vol. 2, p. 1349. The Hebrew words are

marpe, t’alah, and kekah.

4. Stauffer, Ethelbert, *Christ and the Caesars* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1955) provides significant details on this point.

5. I use “ditch” in lieu of “the side of the road” to simplify the description.

6. W. Clarkson in *The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. Spence and Exell (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962 reprint), vol. 10, *Isaiah*, p. 531.

7. Smith, George Adam in *The Expositor’s Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992 reprint), vol. 3, p. 679.

8. E. Johnson in *The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. Spence and Exell (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962 reprint), vol. 10, *Isaiah*, p. 527.

9. Kaiser Jr., Walter C., *Mission in the Old Testament, 2nd ed.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000, 2012), p. 44.

10. Maier III, Walter A., “The Healing of Naaman in Missiological Perspective,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 61 (1977): 177-96, qtd. in Kaiser, op. cit., p. 44.

11. North, Gary, *Healer of the Nations: Biblical Principles for International Relations* (Fort Worth, TX: Dominion Press, 1987), p. 177.

12. *ibid.*, p. 176.

13. Rushdoony, Rousas John, *Leviticus* (Vallecito, CA: Ross House Books, 2005), pp. 358-359. Rushdoony is referring to the controversial Kondratieff Wave Theory in part, although his analysis doesn’t stand or fall with that theory. Kirkland is William H. Kirkland of *Power Cycles* (both the eponymous 1986 book and the 1987 newsletter #2).

14. Roche, Bruno and Jakub, Jay, *Completing Capitalism: Heal Business to Heal the World* (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2017), pp. 150-151.

15. *ibid.*, p. 134.

16. *ibid.*

17. *ibid.*, p. 135.

18. *ibid.*

19. *ibid.*, p. 134.

20. Hayhoe, Katharine, *Saving Us: A Climate Scientist’s Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World* (New York, NY: One Signal Publishers, 2021), pp. 7-10.

21. www.cornwallalliance.org

22. Hayhoe, op. cit., p. 245.

23. Cf. Greenhill, William, *An Exposition of the Book of Ezekiel* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1994 [1645-1667]), p. 819, 822. Greenhill regards the trees as faithful believers whose leaves (good works and holy lives) heal others.

24. Jacobs, Mignon R., *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), pp. 321-322.

25. Moore, T. V., *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi* (London, UK: Banner of Truth Trust, 1979 [1956]), p. 64.

26. <https://chalcedon.edu/resources/articles/the-crooked-shall-be-made-straight>

27. <https://chalcedon.edu/resources/articles/standing-in-the-waters-of-the-kingdom-of-godma>



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