Hope! A Renewed Way of Thinking

Summary

From bank failures to counterfeit parts to insider trading, this article names the scale of modern dishonesty in blunt statistical terms — then argues the same "old mind" that excuses small lies is exactly what leaves humanity blind to dangers too large and too slow-moving to feel urgent.

- A statistics-heavy survey of financial and institutional corruption.
- The link between small, personal dishonesty and society's blindness to large-scale, slow-building threats (nuclear, environmental, demographic).
- The case that the Bible's "timeless" principles are the "new mind" the world actually needs.
- Paul's calls in Ephesians 4 and Romans 12 to be "renewed in the spirit of your mind."

The full article begins on the next page.

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Bribery, cheating, corruption, fraud, graft, larceny, financial failure, debt crisis, economic collapse - have you paid attention to the news lately? If so, you know these are the focal points of the majority of leading stories and headlines.

Consider these trend setters:

* Hundreds of U.S. and other major banking institutions have gone bankrupt or are on the verge of collapse. No one knows *(or will admit)* the cost of rescuing depositor's funds. Heading the list of reasons as the cause of these failures - an uncontrolled lending binge that turned sour due largely to human greed and corruption. The conclusion in one sample study of 26 institutions was that fraud or insider abuse existed in every case. Estimates say such fraud accounts for over 80% of all banking failures.

* Counterfeit, and often substandard parts have been found in nuclear plants, commercial airliners, missiles, trucks, bridges, hospitals, schools, buses and even the U.S. space shuttles.

* A corrupt and shoddy Soviet construction industry was largely responsible for the huge death toll in the 1988 Armenian earthquake, the later Chernobyl nuclear disaster and others.

* White collar crime is estimated at nearly US$280 billion annually in North America - about US$160 billion in West Germany. Many investment bankers, corporate executives, lawyers, politicians and securities firms have been convicted of criminal offences over the past few years, with many such cases still pending.

* Insider trading scandals have reached every facet of ours, as well as the world's economic community - even forcing a recent Japanese Prime Minister and members of his cabinet to resign.

* Hundreds of billions of U.S. weapons contracts have been tainted by corruption - these are only the ones we know of! Evidence has linked U.S. government agencies to being major profit-taking participants in huge international drug smuggling operations. Government employees of dozens of countries have passed along classified information to business acquaintances.

* Bribery is a problem with no temporal or geographical bounds. America instituted the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act in 1977, as a result of the Senate being informed of over 300 bribes paid by American companies. After the Act was passed, widespread complaints of reduced business were waged! One U.S. aerospace firm defended itself against bribery charges, saying: "Such payments...are in keeping with business practices in many foreign countries" *(The Economist)*.

* Shoplifters cause over US$135 billion in annual losses to North American retailers. British retailers put such losses at nearly US$115 billion, with all shop crime losses at nearly US$160 billion.

It's not just drug addicts, the impoverished, or professional thieves who steal. These groups, due to our woefully inadequate distribution of wealth, do comprise the majority of incidents and the majority of the criminally penalized, but they only account for less than 5% of thefts by dollar amounts! It seems, the "establishment", about 2% of our top executives and political leaders, that so efficiently manage to "direct" *(and keep)* over 96% of all the goods and services in our societies, exert considerable influence on these down-trodden "peasants", when they attempt to "steal" *(back)* a measly 5% of the wealth - especially for a purpose as trivial as survival!

The tragic profile for theft, is "nearly everybody"! To write in this chapter, all the known examples of theft, corruption and other unethical business practices, would literally take a lifetime - and then it would only be a repeat of the "daily news" anyway. We pay dearly for this across-the-board dishonesty. The most obvious cost is financial.

But the consequences of dishonesty go far beyond the money. Money is, after all, merely dead trees with ink on it. Dishonesty saps the spirit and soul of a nation. Personal and national cynicism - decaying morals - fear - mistrust - insecurity - anger - hatred - revenge - these are the real and lasting tragedies.

In a dishonest society we are constantly looking over our shoulders. When honesty breaks down, when trust is violated, when morality no longer governs human action - everything and everyone becomes suspect. When we cannot trust our government, our neighbour, our colleague, our advisor, our boss, our employee - the very fabric of society has already begun to unravel!

Corruption and dishonesty in government and business - the so-called leaders of our communities, causes an increase in dishonesty throughout society. A type of pragmatic cynicism takes hold, and people reason, since everyone is cheating, they also have a right - a need to do likewise. It becomes a question of economic survival. In other words, disrespect for authority fosters a self-serving cynicism. "If it's alright for them - it's alright for me! After all, what have they done for me lately?"

People thus begin making moral decisions based on "situation ethics". They believe that no moral code can apply to everyone at all times and under all circumstances. It is only the "naive" who maintain a man or woman can be honest and succeed at the same time.

When cynicism says it is impossible to prosper without being "equally", or "competitively" dishonest as the next party - it is also saying morality must be circumstantial. It is saying take advantage of immoral means, if necessary, then opportunity will present itself. Not fast enough to win the race? Use illegal drugs to enhance your normal abilities - the other runners do. Losing a hefty contract? Offer a bribe - the other companies are. Don't have the qualifications for the job? Lie about your credentials - other applicants do. Our entire global village has been polluted by this "sophisticated" thinking.

Visualize an ideal society in which everyone is honest. We would ALL benefit. Collective, across-the-board honesty would create trust and confidence in a world full of security and safety. This type of honesty must come from within. It begins in the hearts and minds of people.

No government can legislate this goodness, honesty, or integrity. Laws are only effective if the people are willing to obey them. Without individual support and participation, ethics or moral legislation does not work. To be honest is to love your neighbour as yourself. Yah'shua said that we should treat others as we would like them to treat us. The apostle Paul said it this way: "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" *(Phil. 2:4; New English Version).*

Following these principles would make honesty the dominant theme of our society. However, it would require change. It would require a fundamental acceptance of revealed truth. A prominent philosopher once said that revealed truth is first ridiculed, later resisted, and finally becomes self-evident. This insight does not seem so profound as we enter into the early years of this century.

Diplomats, historians, politicians, scientists and sociologists are all taking the pulse of the times. None likes what he sees - all say a new way of thinking is needed - but somehow, as a society, we simply don't change.

The dishonesty catalogued above, and the blindness described next, are really the same failure seen at two different scales. An old mind excuses one padded expense account, or one small lie, because in the moment the harm seems too slight to matter. That same old mind waves away slow-building, global-scale dangers – environmental, nuclear, demographic – because their true cost unfolds too gradually, and too far off, to feel urgent. Both are failures of the same kind: an old way of thinking that was never built to weigh consequences beyond what is immediate and personal.

What we need, is a "new mind", because the old way of thinking, the "old mind", is proving incapable of handling the world we have made for ourselves. The human mind is now "mismatched" for the world it has created.

This serious and dangerous mismatch occurs because civilization seems only to be threatened by its perception of changes that take place over years and decades. But changes required over short periods seem too difficult for us to perceive. We therefore do not allow ourselves to feel threatened in the short term. We are impressed with dramatic changes at the beginning and end of events, but become insensitive to what happens in between.

For example, the first atomic bombs that levelled Hiroshima and Nagasaki still shock the world. Yet they are trifling compared to the explosive power of what we continue to store. These stockpiled megaton warheads, although thousands of times as destructive, do not pose the same mental impact on us as the very first ones.

Our old mental system typically struggles and often fails to distinguish the relevant from the trivial, just as the ability to make such distinctions becomes crucial. The human mental system is failing to comprehend the modern world. The old mind is struggling to cope and it is realizing that the problems it used to tackle are now of a totally different nature.

We have allowed critical issues to go beyond human scale and individual human capacity. Today, it's not families that are starving, but nations. It's not patches of drought that are spreading, whole farming regions are suffering and deserts are growing. It's not furnaces that blow up, but nuclear reactors.

The predicaments we face are like weeds we have ignored in our lawn. We turn around and they have taken over. No longer is simply weeding sufficient - we have to totally destroy the old lawn and reseed. We do not just need a new mind because the old one can't adapt. We need a new way of thinking - a change - a new mind, because the old mindset has failed us. Look at our present situation - watch the news, it provides ample evidence.

Our environment is one excellent example of how the old mind makes crucial issues appear trivial. In the '50s, we dismissed cries to save the land, conserve the water or clean the air. In the '60s, we belittled and ignored them. In the '70s, we ridiculed what we resisted in the '80s, until finally, in the '90s, it had become self-evident that the environmental crisis was real, and that we must take action to address it!

The way our old mind works, we would like to stick our heads in the sand, and hope the problem would somehow go away. Or at best, we would like to throw the blame of degradation of the environment on others - preferably far away - like on overpopulated third world countries.

But studies prove that the biggest contributors to environmental degradation, measured by waste generation, come from countries where population growth has been stable, if not declining for some time. These countries *(like ours)*, have primarily absorbed themselves in technology, armaments build-up and industrial development. Technology has twice the effect on the environment as population. War has been proven even more damaging.

According to one study conducted by the United Nations in an attempt to illustrate the "limited damaging effects" of war on the environment, it was established that during the brief period between 1955-75, war denuded more than 2.5 million acres of forest, and rendered close to 6 million acres unproductive due to "Agent Orange" herbicides, pesticides and other chemicals.

No amount of deforestation in Brazil, desertification in the Sahel, or water pollution in the Nile can compare with the cumulative effects of our ongoing wars.

Today, more than two thirds of all people who have ever lived are alive. As conditions get more crowded, competition and greed will increase, and human conflicts will keep rising. Wars in many places in Europe, the Middle East and Africa have already seriously affected food production and critical water supplies.

None of us would talk in terms of a future catastrophe if our present family income was less than a dollar a day - if we lived with our family in a hut or shack without heat, water or electricity - if we were starving and lost every second child to malnutrition - if our surviving children were physically or mentally destroyed by deficiency diseases - if there were no medical help available. If this were the case, it would be obvious to us that we were living in a current state of catastrophe. THIS IS HOW OVER 80% OF HUMANITY LIVES TODAY - these people are not distant, small groups - they represent the vast majority of mankind right now!

For most of us reading this, it is difficult to perceive that in about five years, over 90% of the world's population will live in what we call developing countries. Then, the "world" will be "developing", not countries. Today, developing nations have accumulated a large share of the world's debt - many trillions of dollars, and about 120,000 children die before sunset each day. The old mind just has not registered these vast numbers.

Concerned, informed voices, are saying if we want a brand new cultural and ecological standard, no longer can we delude ourselves by dividing the world into the rich and the poor, the east and the west, the haves and the have not's - because we will inevitably have to admit, that we - the "haves", are vastly outnumbered by them - the "have not's".

Nearly 7 billion people, of which nearly 6 billion are poor and starving, are living on this planet - temporarily segregated. Our old minds tell us we have a firm grip on life, based on our self-defined values, laws and ideas. Our world, we say, is stable despite our over-filled prisons, false contracts, drugged youths, failing families, government corruption, criminal banking schemes, and political scandals.

We are a world of people afraid to own up to ourselves. We all sense that the rules that we live by are no longer valid. That our laws, religions and customs are archaic - in no way suited to the present. We know exactly how many ounces of powder it takes to kill a man, but we don't know how to pray to Yahweh - or worse yet, we don't think we need to!

The old mind says that in the next few years, about 5% of the world *(us, in the so-called "developed nations")*, can look forward to talking toasters, hundreds of cable channels, interactive TV, computer shopping and maybe even environmentally friendly cars. The other 95% of the world *(them)*, will continue to hope for tomorrows - for a ration of water barely equal to one flush of a toilet, for a speedy death to their starvation-tortured loved ones.

Fair or unfair, we have wrapped our old minds around this self-centered concept of "economic" thinking, that we have convinced ourselves is the basis of our "success"! The old way of thinking - the old mind, is obsolete and we don't want to face it. It is not simply time for a change. Change is essential for our very survival.

Our old way has been around since we gave ourselves the authority to determine truth and error. Having not learned the truth, we were bound to err. Not wanting to be taught, we were bound to suffer. Not wanting to heed warning, we were doomed to fail. It was once said: "To whom can I speak and give warning? Who will listen to me? Their ears are closed so they cannot hear...But am I the one they are provoking?. Are they not rather harming themselves, to their own shame?" *(Jeremiah 6:10;7:19)*. This was Yahweh warning us - teaching us to seek a new mind before it is too late.

At conferences concerning the future of our planet, we hear that we need a more culturally compatible world, we should maybe start instituting a new ecological ethos and new social standards, leading to a type of global interdependency. But these are not new ideas. They are ideas that stem from revealed truth, that for centuries have been ridiculed, then resisted, until finally, they are becoming self-evident.

Global interdependency, merely means working together. A new ecological ethos, merely means working within the laws of nature. The new social standards proposed, merely mean doing unto others as you would want them to do unto you.

So we see that we do not need new ideas, simply a "new mind" - to get around the old ideas, to re-think and re-evaluate what we have previously ridiculed and resisted.

Agronomists and farmers are realizing that in order to feed some 200 million more mouths every year as 24 billion tons of topsoil is blown and/or washed away, we had better start looking at the health of the land. Increasing world fertilizer consumption from 14 million tons in 1950 to nearly 200 million tons today, has proven to be a "new idea" that is not an effective answer. It does not work!

Leaving land fallow, or letting it rest every few years has long been ridiculed. It has also been resisted until recently, when several progressive farming communities in North America have tried it out as a "new idea". After several experiments, the concept, "proved" that it worked, and it has since become another example of the many self-evident truths revealed in the Bible.

As we begin the 21st century, there is hope. The self-evident principles that work, are not old - they are timeless. They were merely first written down for our benefit about three and one half thousand years ago. They would have worked then, they will work now and they will work for all eternity - if we learn to stop ridiculing and resisting them long enough to recognize the revealed truths that are so self-evidently contained in them.

When Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians, he was telling us: "This I say, therefore, and testify in Yahweh, that you should no longer walk as the rest...having their understanding darkened, being alienated from Yahweh...because of the ignorance that is in them...who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to licentiousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness...but you...put off concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and BE RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF YOUR MIND, and that you put on the new man which was created according to Yahweh"

(4:17-24). And in Romans 12:2, we are instructed; "And do not be conformed to this world, but BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND, that you may PROVE what is that good and acceptable and perfect Will of Yahweh".

So our hope then, is that we place our faith in the absolute - that we stop ridiculing and resisting the Bible - that we start believing - accepting the overwhelming self-evidence of the many simple but awesome truths revealed in it! ALL KNOWLEDGE needed for humans to enjoy a happy, prosperous, healthy and wonderful world, has been carefully and thoroughly set forth in the Bible - FREELY GIVEN, for all of us to benefit from.

Answers to who and what is man, who and what is God, what is our relationship with Yahweh, what is man's purpose and potential, why man was given dominion over the earth with instructions to "dress and to keep it" - meaning to manage and preserve our environment, the history of life PRIOR to the account of Genesis - Genesis being the RE-CREATION of the earth for Yahweh's newly added human life, how to have successful marriages and great sex, happy families, friendly neighbours, honest governments, what is honourable employment, proper education, entertainment, food, exercise, sleep, waste management and much more.

Information for today's ever-doubtful, sceptical reader, on how to successfully and objectively reconcile the Bible with the many versions of modern Christianity, modern science, history, and archaeology is revealed. The theme of this article, which is the simple truth of how we come to understand the Bible, and how to SHARE this understanding with others, is revealed in Yahweh’s WORD.

In keeping with the theme of this article, only a few details essential to explaining some obvious examples of revealed truth, are outlined. If you are honestly seeking answers to any important issue, including those listed above, you will find them by READING Yahweh's WORD AND FOLLOWING HIS INSTRUCTIONS.

Some Bible topics may at first seem obscure and difficult, but as you come to understand - as you are RENEWED IN THE SPIRIT OF YOUR MIND, you will see this as part of Yahweh's purpose, and you will marvel at the Bible's simplicity. By reading the Bible with a NEW MIND, we can learn to SOLVE OUR GREATEST PROBLEMS - all of them!

← Return to the Articles Index