

BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES

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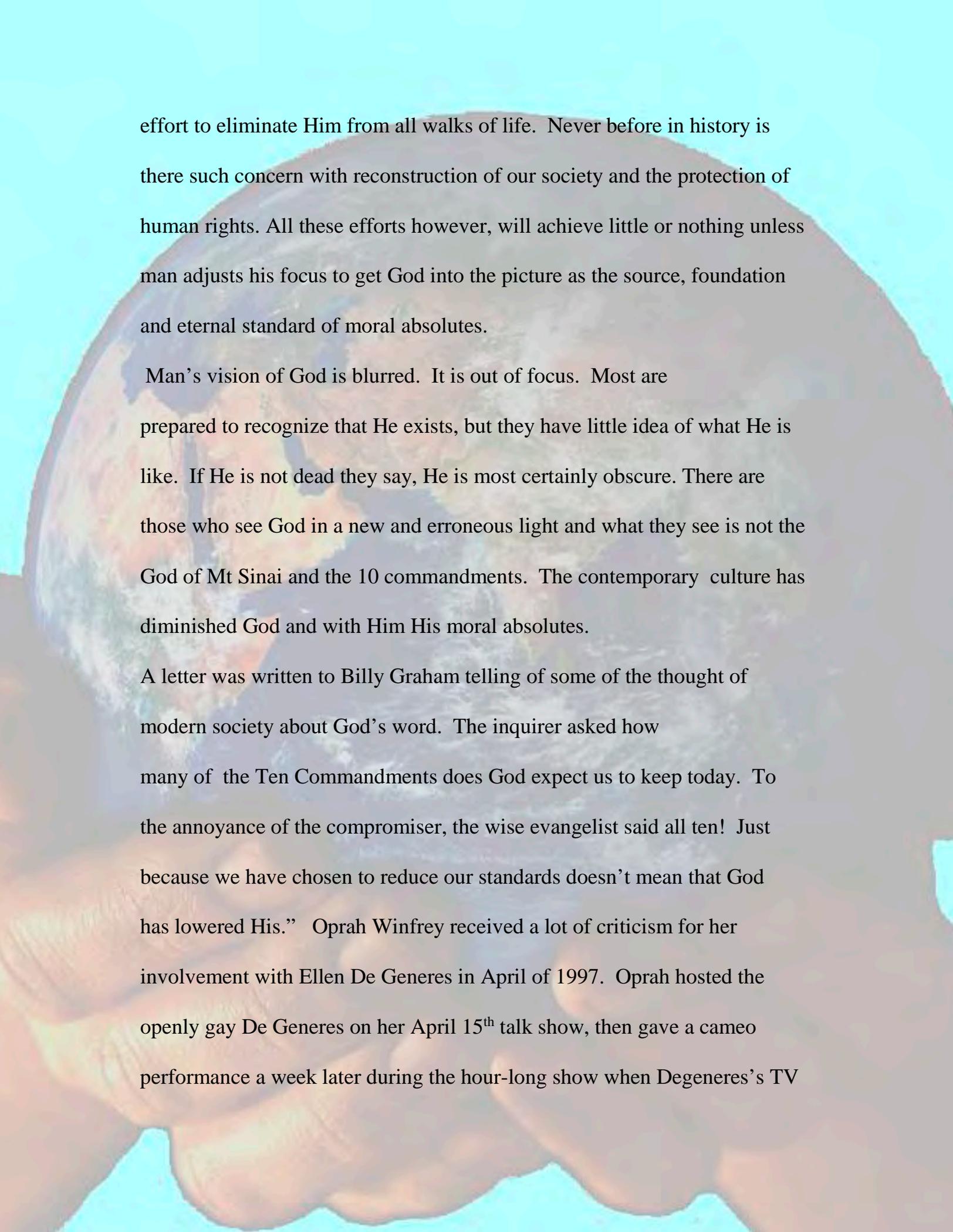
THE GOD WHO WAS...AND IS...AND WILL BE.

Scripture Reading – Isaiah 57::15-21.

Introduction

A friend once confided in Alfred Lord Tennyson. “My dearest hope is to leave the world a better place than I found it.” To which Tennyson replied mine is to have a clearer vision of God. The latter response should be the Christian’s supreme goal. And when that is reached, the first goal is achieved also. For the person who really sees God in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ, and comes to know, love and serve Him will inevitably leave the world a better place than he found it.

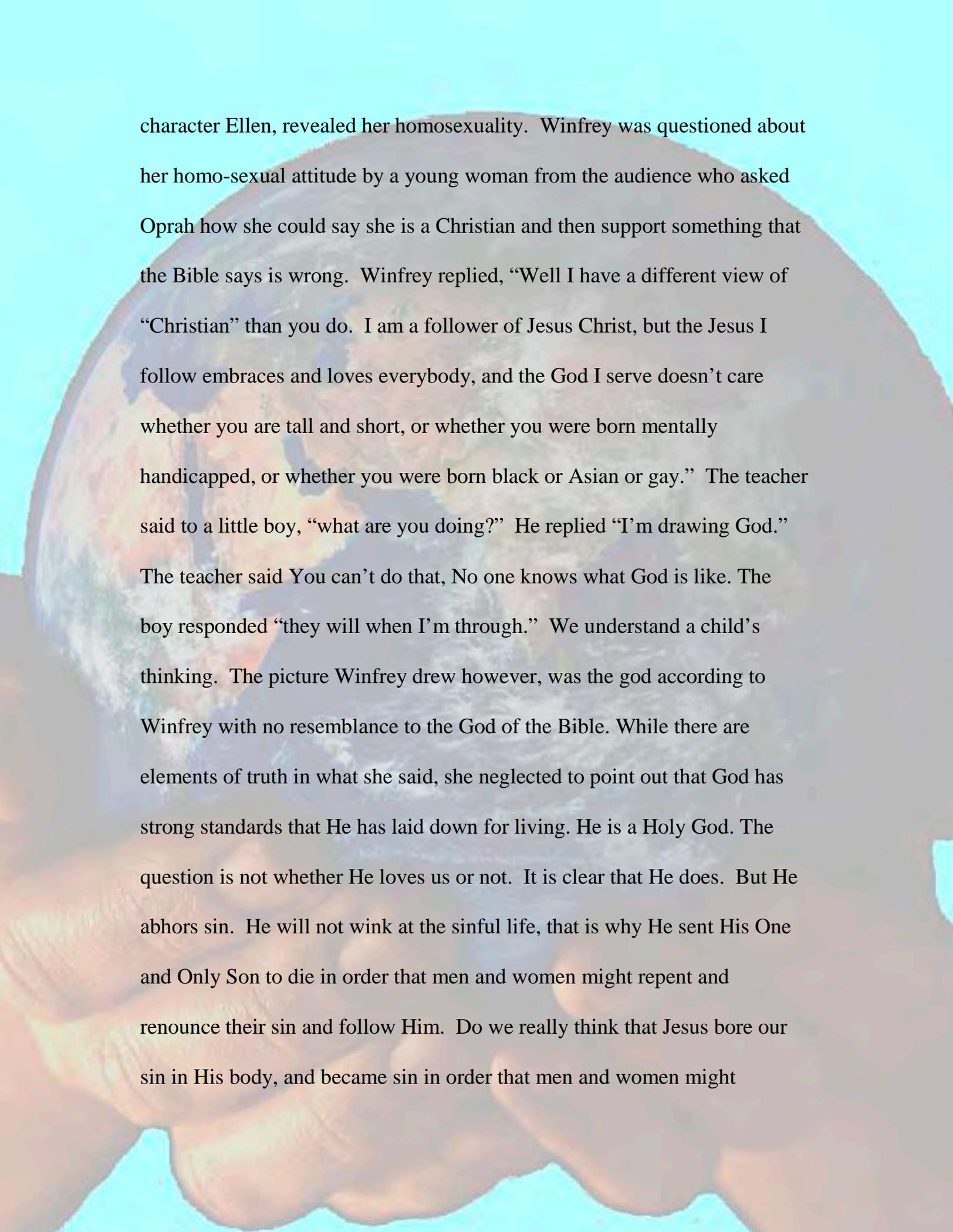
The greater tragedy of our age is that we are trying to improve the world without any reference to God, who is the unchanging source of goodness, integrity, righteousness and holiness. Truth is that we are making every



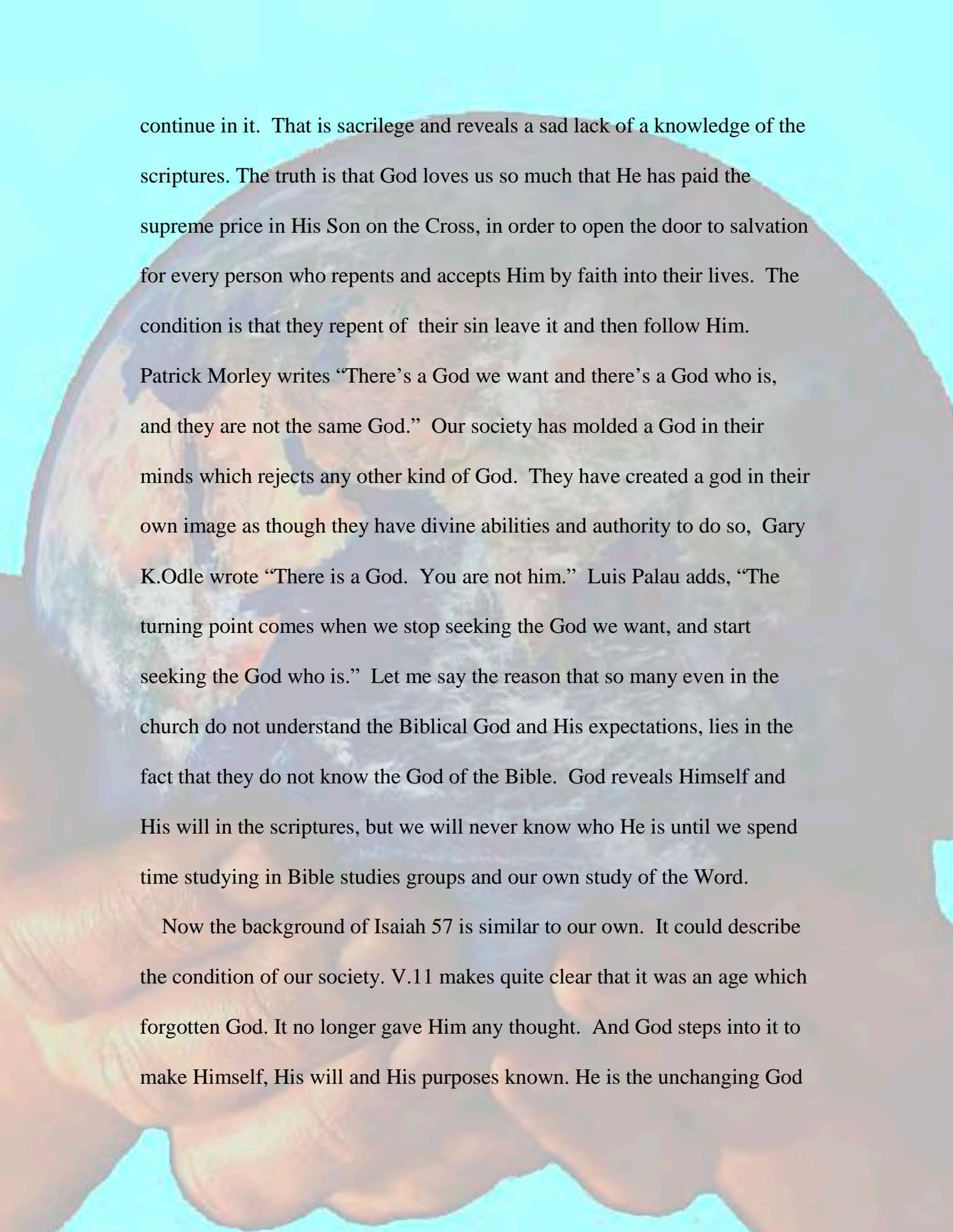
effort to eliminate Him from all walks of life. Never before in history is there such concern with reconstruction of our society and the protection of human rights. All these efforts however, will achieve little or nothing unless man adjusts his focus to get God into the picture as the source, foundation and eternal standard of moral absolutes.

Man's vision of God is blurred. It is out of focus. Most are prepared to recognize that He exists, but they have little idea of what He is like. If He is not dead they say, He is most certainly obscure. There are those who see God in a new and erroneous light and what they see is not the God of Mt Sinai and the 10 commandments. The contemporary culture has diminished God and with Him His moral absolutes.

A letter was written to Billy Graham telling of some of the thought of modern society about God's word. The inquirer asked how many of the Ten Commandments does God expect us to keep today. To the annoyance of the compromiser, the wise evangelist said all ten! Just because we have chosen to reduce our standards doesn't mean that God has lowered His." Oprah Winfrey received a lot of criticism for her involvement with Ellen De Generes in April of 1997. Oprah hosted the openly gay De Generes on her April 15th talk show, then gave a cameo performance a week later during the hour-long show when Degeneres's TV

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a small globe of the Earth. The hand is positioned at the bottom, with fingers wrapped around the base of the globe. The globe shows the continents of North and South America. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue.

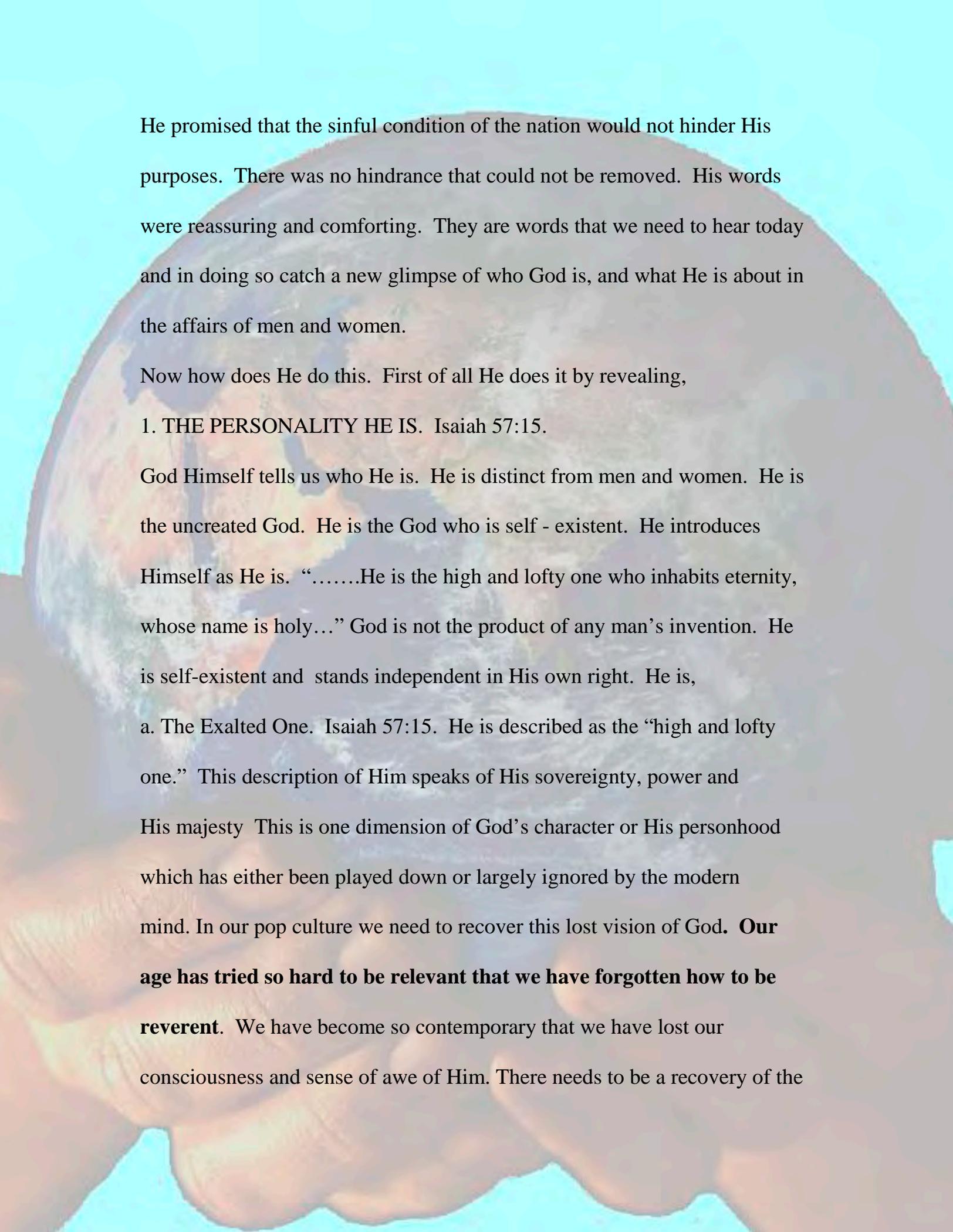
character Ellen, revealed her homosexuality. Winfrey was questioned about her homo-sexual attitude by a young woman from the audience who asked Oprah how she could say she is a Christian and then support something that the Bible says is wrong. Winfrey replied, “Well I have a different view of “Christian” than you do. I am a follower of Jesus Christ, but the Jesus I follow embraces and loves everybody, and the God I serve doesn’t care whether you are tall and short, or whether you were born mentally handicapped, or whether you were born black or Asian or gay.” The teacher said to a little boy, “what are you doing?” He replied “I’m drawing God.” The teacher said You can’t do that, No one knows what God is like. The boy responded “they will when I’m through.” We understand a child’s thinking. The picture Winfrey drew however, was the god according to Winfrey with no resemblance to the God of the Bible. While there are elements of truth in what she said, she neglected to point out that God has strong standards that He has laid down for living. He is a Holy God. The question is not whether He loves us or not. It is clear that He does. But He abhors sin. He will not wink at the sinful life, that is why He sent His One and Only Son to die in order that men and women might repent and renounce their sin and follow Him. Do we really think that Jesus bore our sin in His body, and became sin in order that men and women might



continue in it. That is sacrilege and reveals a sad lack of a knowledge of the scriptures. The truth is that God loves us so much that He has paid the supreme price in His Son on the Cross, in order to open the door to salvation for every person who repents and accepts Him by faith into their lives. The condition is that they repent of their sin leave it and then follow Him.

Patrick Morley writes “There’s a God we want and there’s a God who is, and they are not the same God.” Our society has molded a God in their minds which rejects any other kind of God. They have created a god in their own image as though they have divine abilities and authority to do so, Gary K.Odle wrote “There is a God. You are not him.” Luis Palau adds, “The turning point comes when we stop seeking the God we want, and start seeking the God who is.” Let me say the reason that so many even in the church do not understand the Biblical God and His expectations, lies in the fact that they do not know the God of the Bible. God reveals Himself and His will in the scriptures, but we will never know who He is until we spend time studying in Bible studies groups and our own study of the Word.

Now the background of Isaiah 57 is similar to our own. It could describe the condition of our society. V.11 makes quite clear that it was an age which forgotten God. It no longer gave Him any thought. And God steps into it to make Himself, His will and His purposes known. He is the unchanging God



He promised that the sinful condition of the nation would not hinder His purposes. There was no hindrance that could not be removed. His words were reassuring and comforting. They are words that we need to hear today and in doing so catch a new glimpse of who God is, and what He is about in the affairs of men and women.

Now how does He do this. First of all He does it by revealing,

1. THE PERSONALITY HE IS. Isaiah 57:15.

God Himself tells us who He is. He is distinct from men and women. He is the uncreated God. He is the God who is self - existent. He introduces Himself as He is. “.....He is the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy...” God is not the product of any man’s invention. He is self-existent and stands independent in His own right. He is,

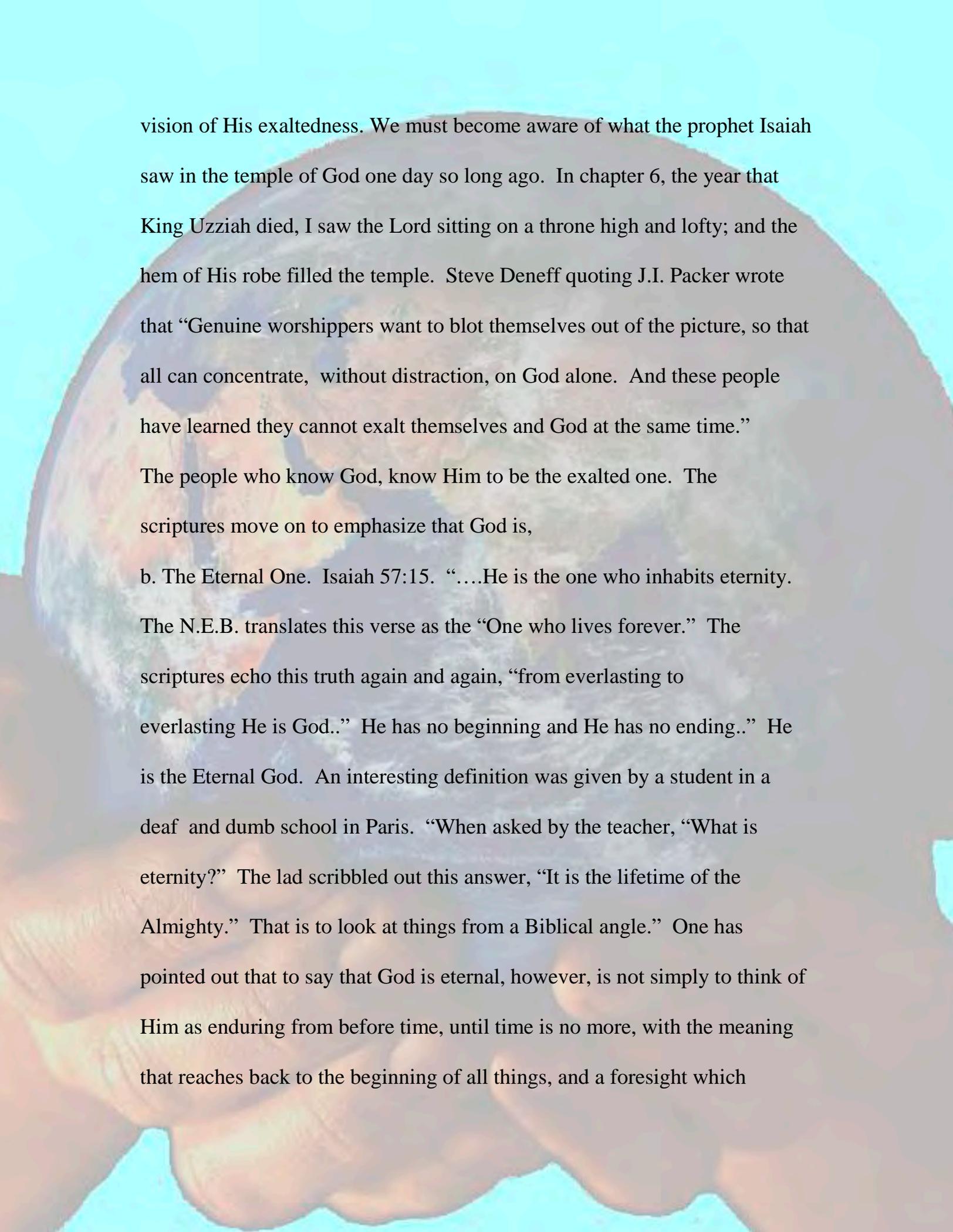
a. The Exalted One. Isaiah 57:15. He is described as the “high and lofty one.” This description of Him speaks of His sovereignty, power and

His majesty This is one dimension of God’s character or His personhood which has either been played down or largely ignored by the modern

mind. In our pop culture we need to recover this lost vision of God. **Our age has tried so hard to be relevant that we have forgotten how to be**

reverent. We have become so contemporary that we have lost our

consciousness and sense of awe of Him. There needs to be a recovery of the

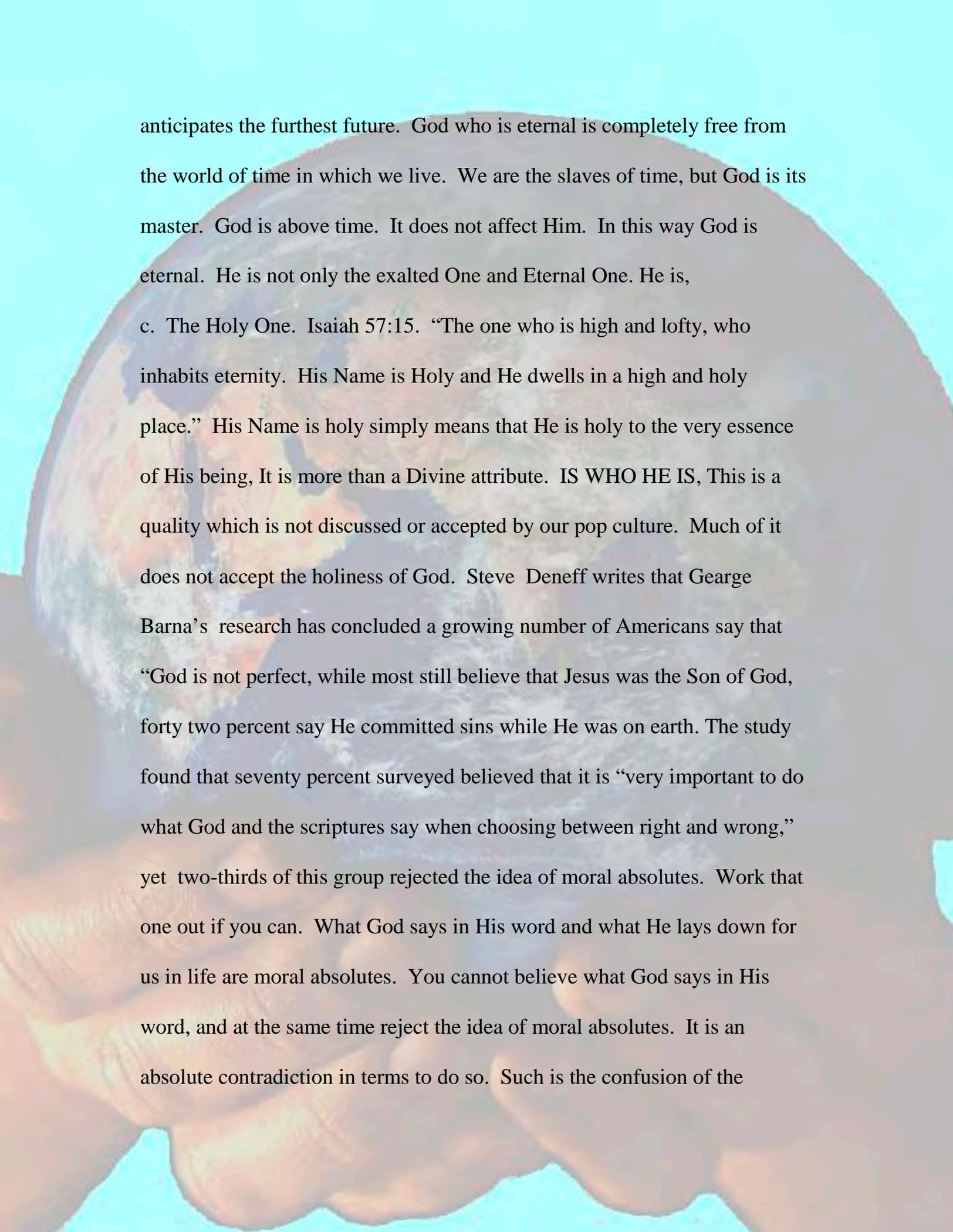


vision of His exaltedness. We must become aware of what the prophet Isaiah saw in the temple of God one day so long ago. In chapter 6, the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne high and lofty; and the hem of His robe filled the temple. Steve Deneff quoting J.I. Packer wrote that “Genuine worshippers want to blot themselves out of the picture, so that all can concentrate, without distraction, on God alone. And these people have learned they cannot exalt themselves and God at the same time.”

The people who know God, know Him to be the exalted one. The scriptures move on to emphasize that God is,

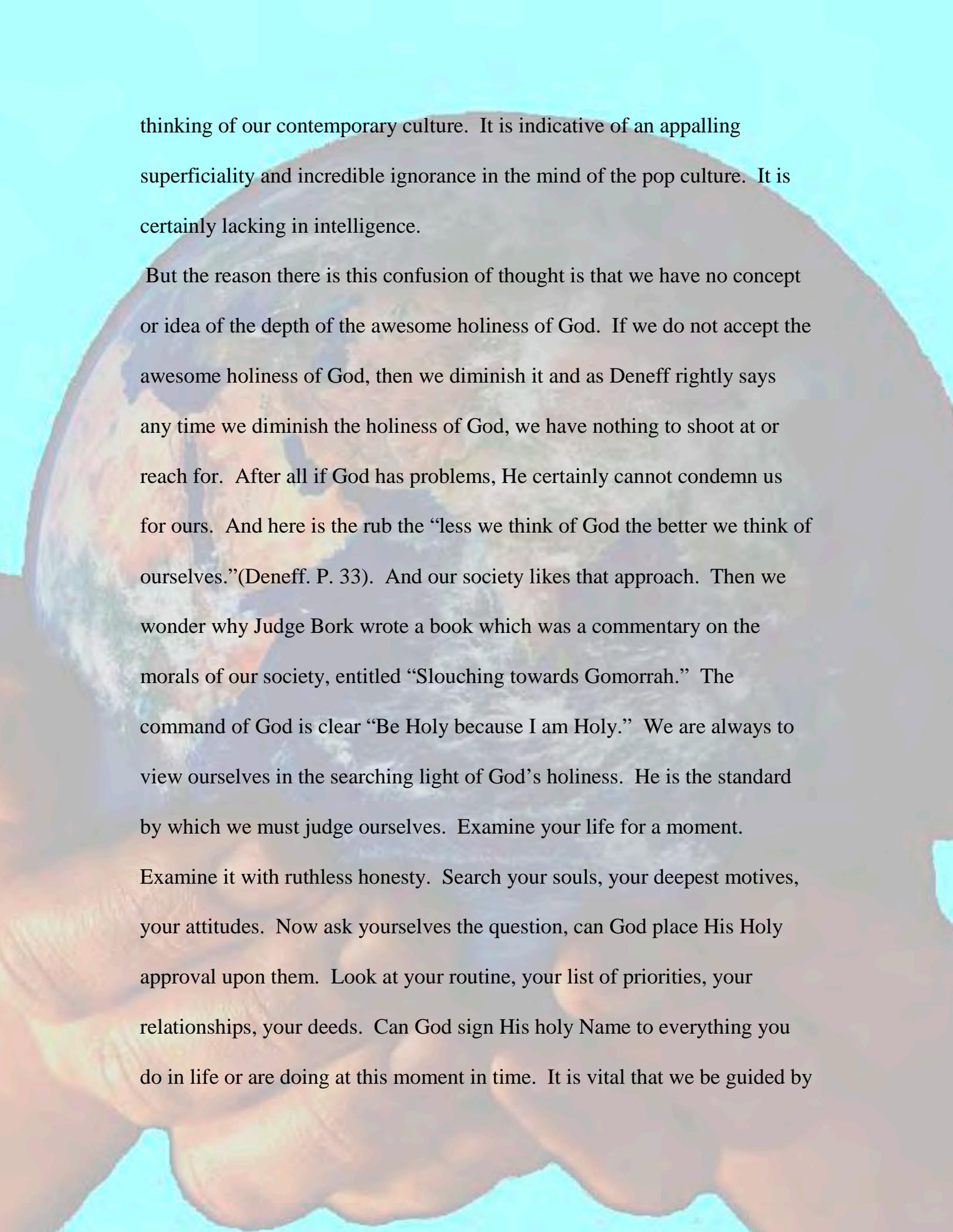
b. The Eternal One. Isaiah 57:15. “....He is the one who inhabits eternity.

The N.E.B. translates this verse as the “One who lives forever.” The scriptures echo this truth again and again, “from everlasting to everlasting He is God..” He has no beginning and He has no ending..” He is the Eternal God. An interesting definition was given by a student in a deaf and dumb school in Paris. “When asked by the teacher, “What is eternity?” The lad scribbled out this answer, “It is the lifetime of the Almighty.” That is to look at things from a Biblical angle.” One has pointed out that to say that God is eternal, however, is not simply to think of Him as enduring from before time, until time is no more, with the meaning that reaches back to the beginning of all things, and a foresight which



anticipates the furthest future. God who is eternal is completely free from the world of time in which we live. We are the slaves of time, but God is its master. God is above time. It does not affect Him. In this way God is eternal. He is not only the exalted One and Eternal One. He is,

c. The Holy One. Isaiah 57:15. “The one who is high and lofty, who inhabits eternity. His Name is Holy and He dwells in a high and holy place.” His Name is holy simply means that He is holy to the very essence of His being, It is more than a Divine attribute. IS WHO HE IS, This is a quality which is not discussed or accepted by our pop culture. Much of it does not accept the holiness of God. Steve Deneff writes that Geerge Barna’s research has concluded a growing number of Americans say that “God is not perfect, while most still believe that Jesus was the Son of God, forty two percent say He committed sins while He was on earth. The study found that seventy percent surveyed believed that it is “very important to do what God and the scriptures say when choosing between right and wrong,” yet two-thirds of this group rejected the idea of moral absolutes. Work that one out if you can. What God says in His word and what He lays down for us in life are moral absolutes. You cannot believe what God says in His word, and at the same time reject the idea of moral absolutes. It is an absolute contradiction in terms to do so. Such is the confusion of the



thinking of our contemporary culture. It is indicative of an appalling superficiality and incredible ignorance in the mind of the pop culture. It is certainly lacking in intelligence.

But the reason there is this confusion of thought is that we have no concept or idea of the depth of the awesome holiness of God. If we do not accept the awesome holiness of God, then we diminish it and as Deneff rightly says any time we diminish the holiness of God, we have nothing to shoot at or reach for. After all if God has problems, He certainly cannot condemn us for ours. And here is the rub the “less we think of God the better we think of ourselves.”(Deneff. P. 33). And our society likes that approach. Then we wonder why Judge Bork wrote a book which was a commentary on the morals of our society, entitled “Slouching towards Gomorrah.” The command of God is clear “Be Holy because I am Holy.” We are always to view ourselves in the searching light of God’s holiness. He is the standard by which we must judge ourselves. Examine your life for a moment.

Examine it with ruthless honesty. Search your souls, your deepest motives, your attitudes. Now ask yourselves the question, can God place His Holy approval upon them. Look at your routine, your list of priorities, your relationships, your deeds. Can God sign His holy Name to everything you do in life or are doing at this moment in time. It is vital that we be guided by

who God is and what He says, for that will determine how we ought to live on this earth and not how we want to live or according to our lusts and desires.. “His Name is Holy and He dwells in a high and Holy Place”

But God moves on for He also reveals,

2. THE PLACE OF HIS RESIDENCE. Isaiah 57:15.

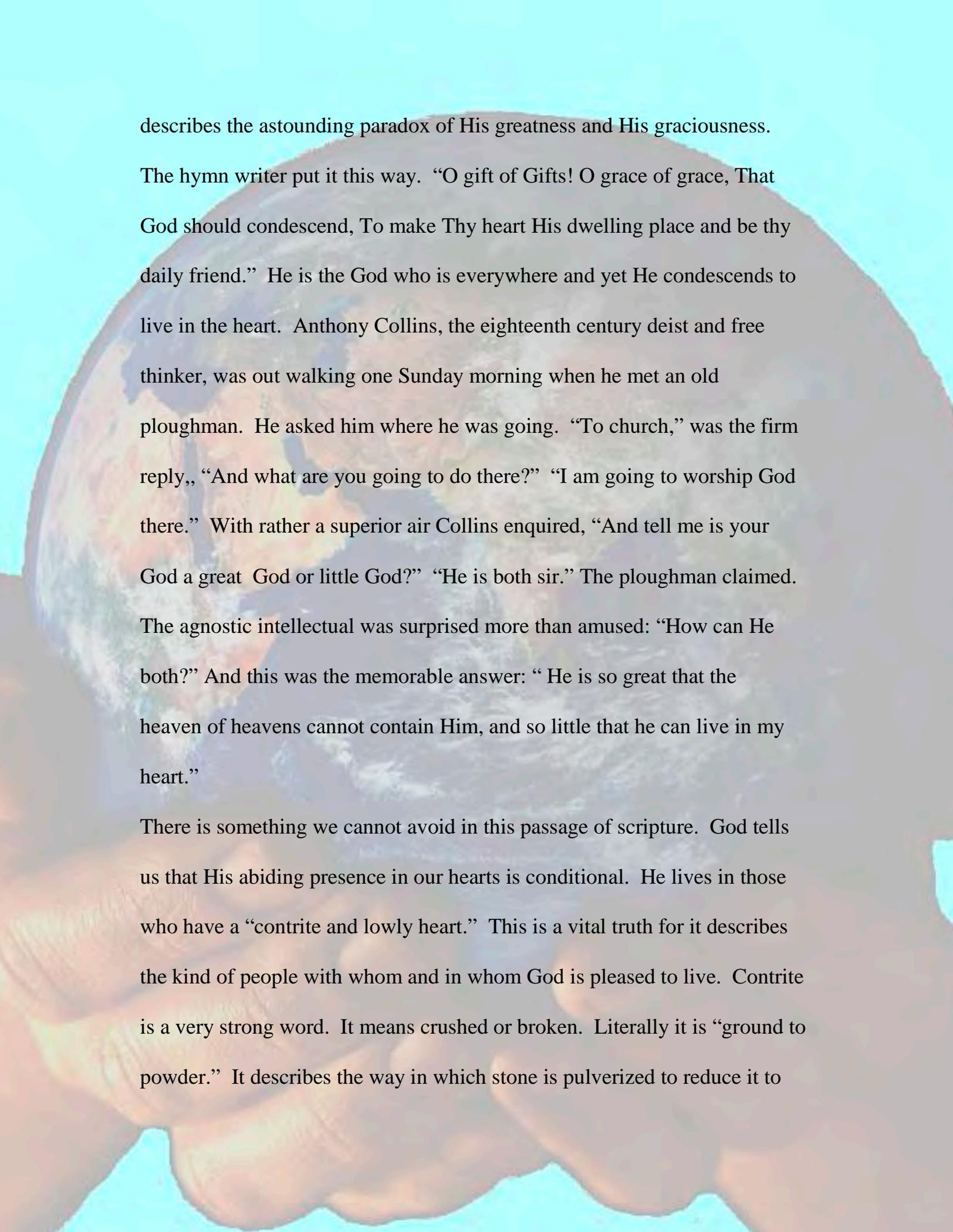
“I live in a high and holy place but also with him who is contrite and lowly spirit to revive the spirit of the lowly and revive the heart of the contrite.”

Note that God lives,

a. In Heaven. Isaiah 57:15. There is nothing really startling about that.

That is what we would expect. It is compatible with what we know about where God is. He is in heaven. He rules from heaven. He sent his Son from heaven. There is nothing surprising or revolutionary about that. But there is an incredible disclosure here, because He tells us that He also lives,

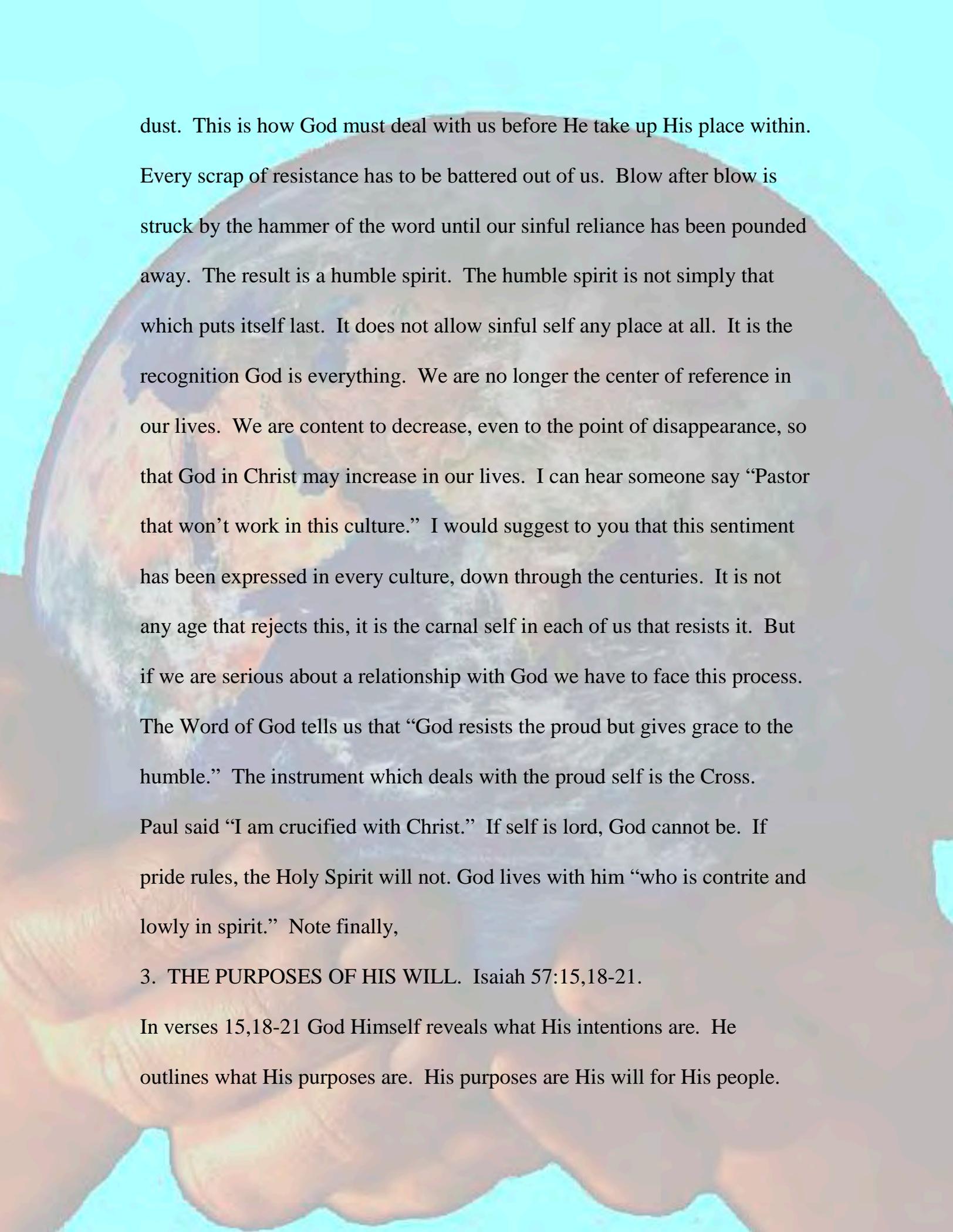
b. In the Heart. Isaiah 57:15. I live in a high and holy place but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit to revive the spirit of the lowly and revive the heart of the contrite. The place of residence is in heaven itself, and whose presence fills the vastness of space, also makes His home in the believers heart. This is an incredible truth. The Exalted One, the Eternal One, the Holy One will take up residence in the human heart. This



describes the astounding paradox of His greatness and His graciousness.

The hymn writer put it this way. “O gift of Gifts! O grace of grace, That God should condescend, To make Thy heart His dwelling place and be thy daily friend.” He is the God who is everywhere and yet He condescends to live in the heart. Anthony Collins, the eighteenth century deist and free thinker, was out walking one Sunday morning when he met an old ploughman. He asked him where he was going. “To church,” was the firm reply,, “And what are you going to do there?” “I am going to worship God there.” With rather a superior air Collins enquired, “And tell me is your God a great God or little God?” “He is both sir.” The ploughman claimed. The agnostic intellectual was surprised more than amused: “How can He both?” And this was the memorable answer: “ He is so great that the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, and so little that he can live in my heart.”

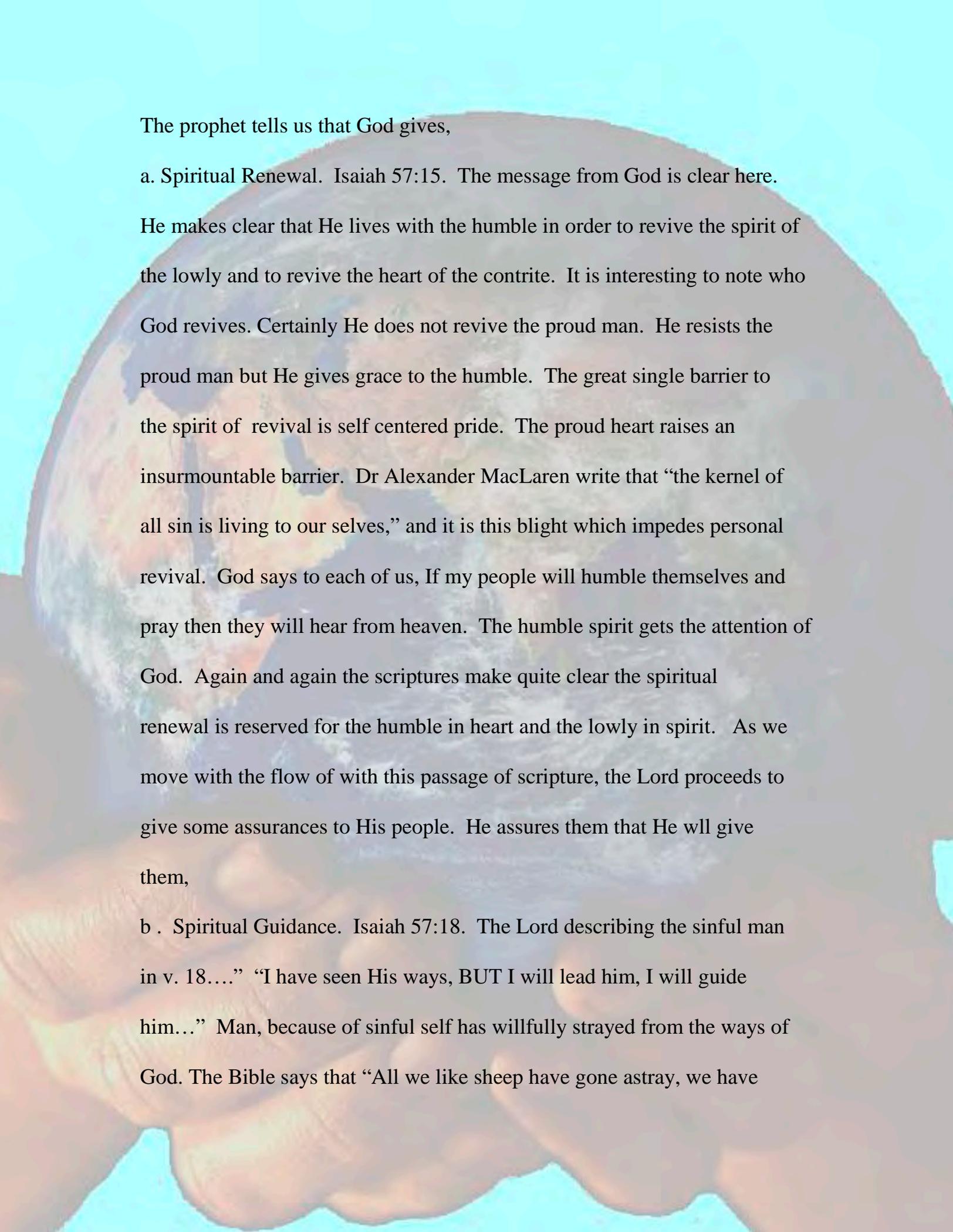
There is something we cannot avoid in this passage of scripture. God tells us that His abiding presence in our hearts is conditional. He lives in those who have a “contrite and lowly heart.” This is a vital truth for it describes the kind of people with whom and in whom God is pleased to live. Contrite is a very strong word. It means crushed or broken. Literally it is “ground to powder.” It describes the way in which stone is pulverized to reduce it to



dust. This is how God must deal with us before He take up His place within. Every scrap of resistance has to be battered out of us. Blow after blow is struck by the hammer of the word until our sinful reliance has been pounded away. The result is a humble spirit. The humble spirit is not simply that which puts itself last. It does not allow sinful self any place at all. It is the recognition God is everything. We are no longer the center of reference in our lives. We are content to decrease, even to the point of disappearance, so that God in Christ may increase in our lives. I can hear someone say “Pastor that won’t work in this culture.” I would suggest to you that this sentiment has been expressed in every culture, down through the centuries. It is not any age that rejects this, it is the carnal self in each of us that resists it. But if we are serious about a relationship with God we have to face this process. The Word of God tells us that “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.” The instrument which deals with the proud self is the Cross. Paul said “I am crucified with Christ.” If self is lord, God cannot be. If pride rules, the Holy Spirit will not. God lives with him “who is contrite and lowly in spirit.” Note finally,

3. THE PURPOSES OF HIS WILL. Isaiah 57:15,18-21.

In verses 15,18-21 God Himself reveals what His intentions are. He outlines what His purposes are. His purposes are His will for His people.

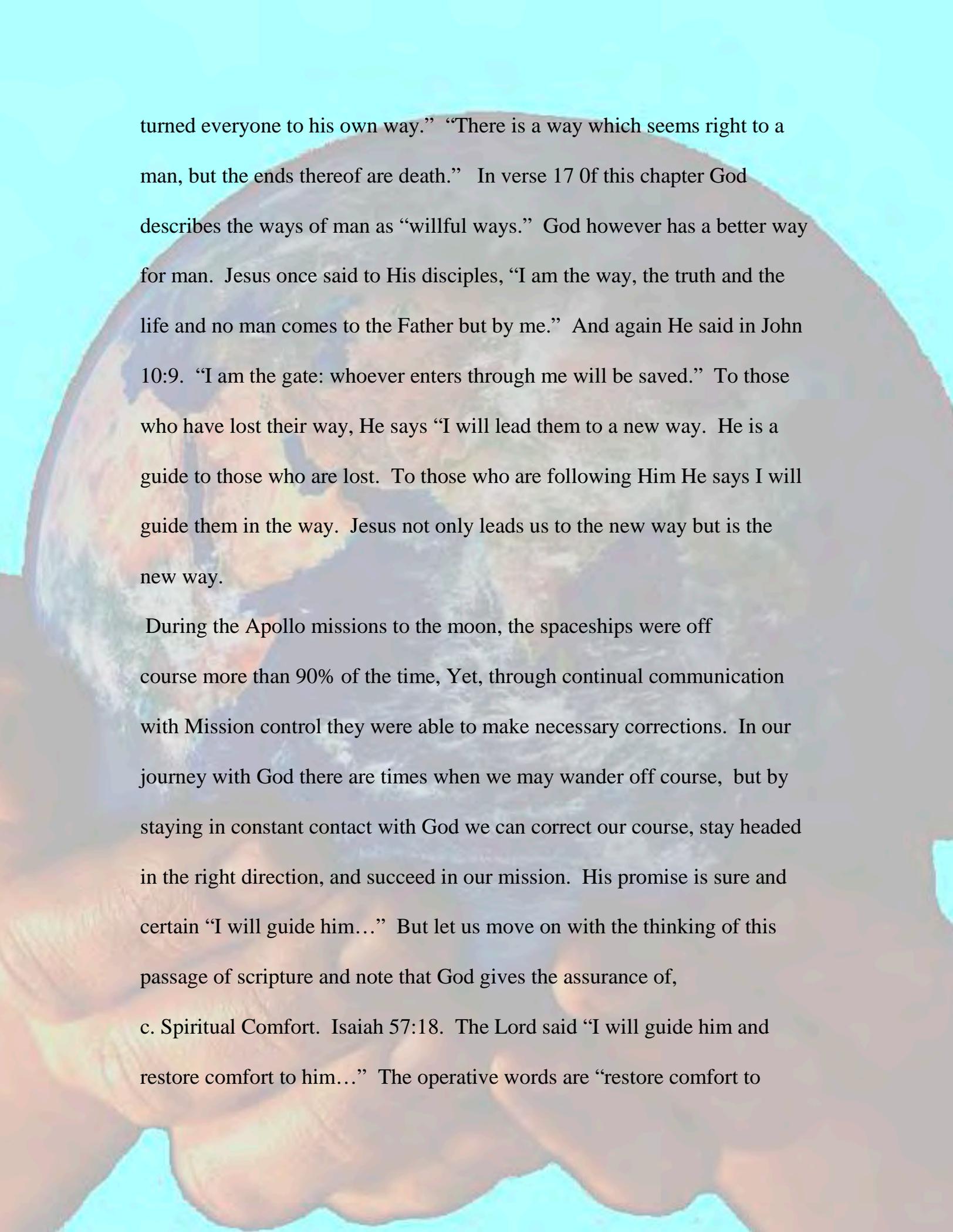


The prophet tells us that God gives,

a. Spiritual Renewal. Isaiah 57:15. The message from God is clear here.

He makes clear that He lives with the humble in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite. It is interesting to note who God revives. Certainly He does not revive the proud man. He resists the proud man but He gives grace to the humble. The great single barrier to the spirit of revival is self centered pride. The proud heart raises an insurmountable barrier. Dr Alexander MacLaren write that “the kernel of all sin is living to our selves,” and it is this blight which impedes personal revival. God says to each of us, If my people will humble themselves and pray then they will hear from heaven. The humble spirit gets the attention of God. Again and again the scriptures make quite clear the spiritual renewal is reserved for the humble in heart and the lowly in spirit. As we move with the flow of with this passage of scripture, the Lord proceeds to give some assurances to His people. He assures them that He will give them,

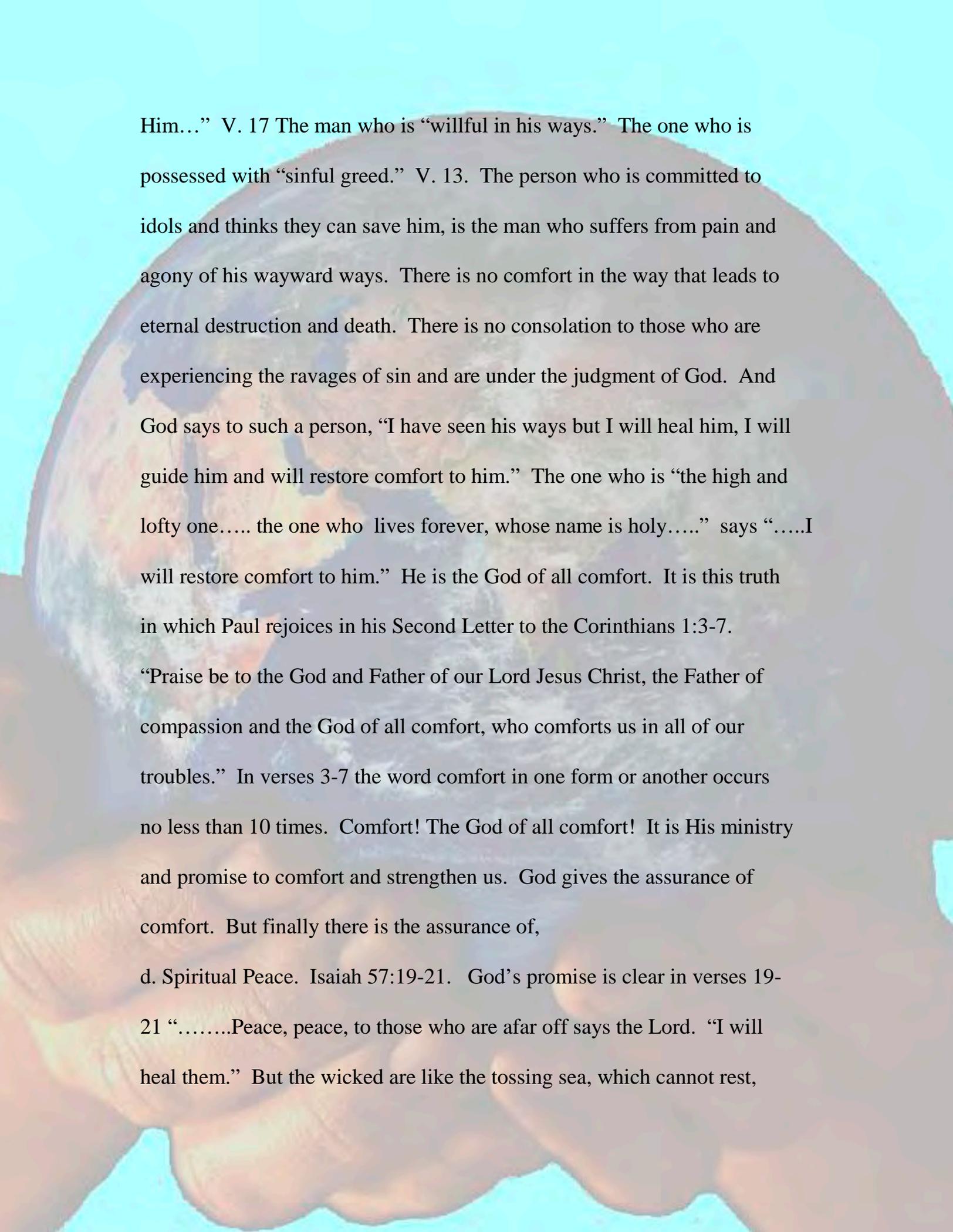
b . Spiritual Guidance. Isaiah 57:18. The Lord describing the sinful man in v. 18....” “I have seen His ways, BUT I will lead him, I will guide him...” Man, because of sinful self has willfully strayed from the ways of God. The Bible says that “All we like sheep have gone astray, we have

A background image showing a hand holding a globe of the Earth. The hand is positioned at the bottom, with fingers wrapped around the globe. The globe shows the continents of North and South America. The overall image has a soft, slightly blurred appearance.

turned everyone to his own way.” “There is a way which seems right to a man, but the ends thereof are death.” In verse 17 Of this chapter God describes the ways of man as “willful ways.” God however has a better way for man. Jesus once said to His disciples, “I am the way, the truth and the life and no man comes to the Father but by me.” And again He said in John 10:9. “I am the gate: whoever enters through me will be saved.” To those who have lost their way, He says “I will lead them to a new way. He is a guide to those who are lost. To those who are following Him He says I will guide them in the way. Jesus not only leads us to the new way but is the new way.

During the Apollo missions to the moon, the spaceships were off course more than 90% of the time, Yet, through continual communication with Mission control they were able to make necessary corrections. In our journey with God there are times when we may wander off course, but by staying in constant contact with God we can correct our course, stay headed in the right direction, and succeed in our mission. His promise is sure and certain “I will guide him...” But let us move on with the thinking of this passage of scripture and note that God gives the assurance of,

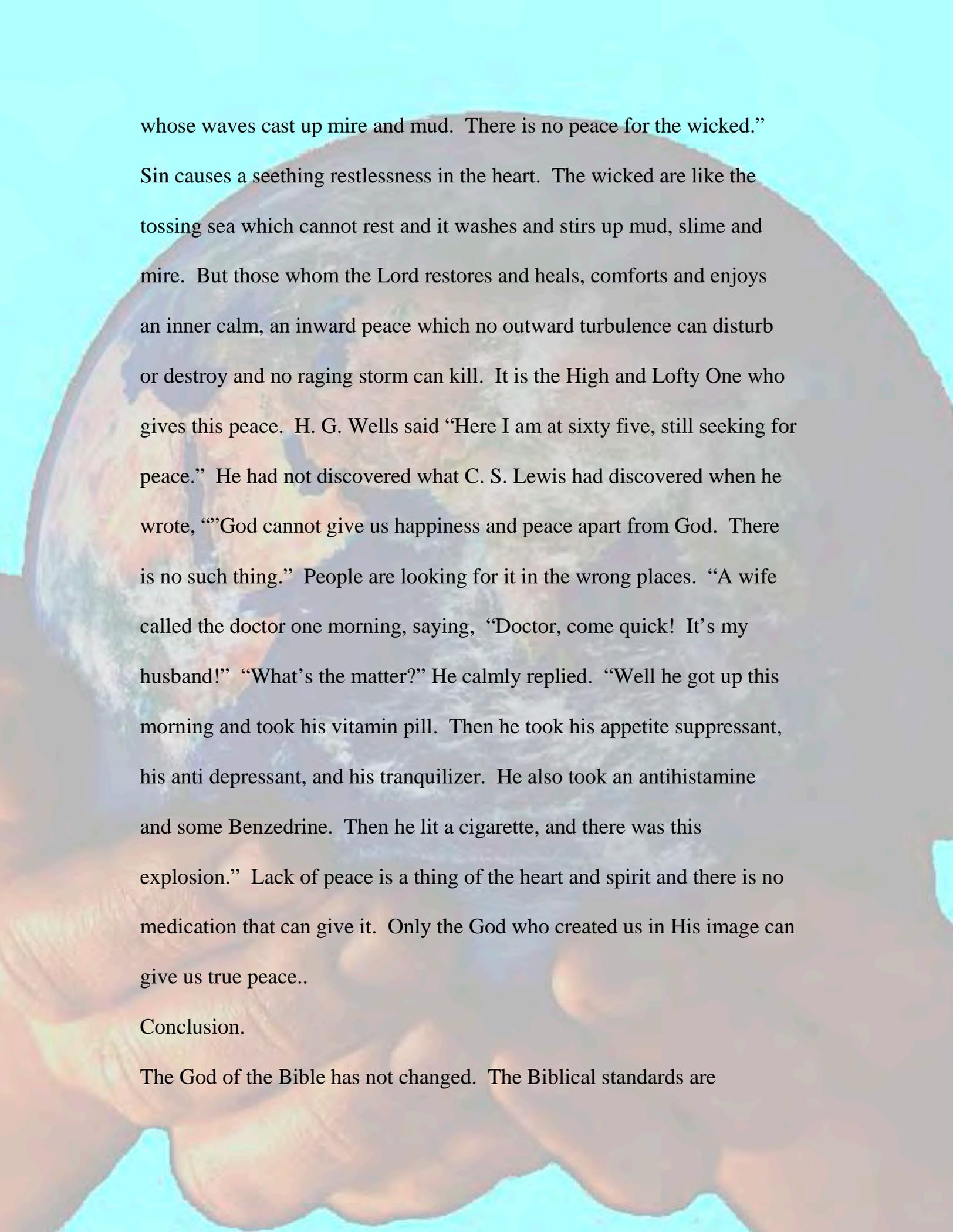
c. Spiritual Comfort. Isaiah 57:18. The Lord said “I will guide him and restore comfort to him...” The operative words are “restore comfort to



Him...” V. 17 The man who is “willful in his ways.” The one who is possessed with “sinful greed.” V. 13. The person who is committed to idols and thinks they can save him, is the man who suffers from pain and agony of his wayward ways. There is no comfort in the way that leads to eternal destruction and death. There is no consolation to those who are experiencing the ravages of sin and are under the judgment of God. And God says to such a person, “I have seen his ways but I will heal him, I will guide him and will restore comfort to him.” The one who is “the high and lofty one..... the one who lives forever, whose name is holy.....” says “.....I will restore comfort to him.” He is the God of all comfort. It is this truth in which Paul rejoices in his Second Letter to the Corinthians 1:3-7.

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all of our troubles.” In verses 3-7 the word comfort in one form or another occurs no less than 10 times. Comfort! The God of all comfort! It is His ministry and promise to comfort and strengthen us. God gives the assurance of comfort. But finally there is the assurance of,

d. Spiritual Peace. Isaiah 57:19-21. God’s promise is clear in verses 19-21 “.....Peace, peace, to those who are afar off says the Lord. “I will heal them.” But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest,



whose waves cast up mire and mud. There is no peace for the wicked.” Sin causes a seething restlessness in the heart. The wicked are like the tossing sea which cannot rest and it washes and stirs up mud, slime and mire. But those whom the Lord restores and heals, comforts and enjoys an inner calm, an inward peace which no outward turbulence can disturb or destroy and no raging storm can kill. It is the High and Lofty One who gives this peace. H. G. Wells said “Here I am at sixty five, still seeking for peace.” He had not discovered what C. S. Lewis had discovered when he wrote, ““God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from God. There is no such thing.” People are looking for it in the wrong places. “A wife called the doctor one morning, saying, “Doctor, come quick! It’s my husband!” “What’s the matter?” He calmly replied. “Well he got up this morning and took his vitamin pill. Then he took his appetite suppressant, his anti depressant, and his tranquilizer. He also took an antihistamine and some Benzedrine. Then he lit a cigarette, and there was this explosion.” Lack of peace is a thing of the heart and spirit and there is no medication that can give it. Only the God who created us in His image can give us true peace..

Conclusion.

The God of the Bible has not changed. The Biblical standards are

compatible with who He is. Because He has not changed they have not changed. He is still the exalted eternal holy God who resides in heaven. But because of His amazing grace and unconditional love he has come to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. The lofty God becomes our Savior as we repent of our sin and accept Him into our hearts.

