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The Rock That Is Higher Than All

How Nepal's Everest Trek Led Me To The Stars Of Higher Ground

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In December 1979, Werner Baumgartner and I were in Kathmandu, Nepal, and having completed the Pokhara-Muktinath Trek in the previous month, we were eager to next begin the Everest Trek. The Everest Trek for us would begin at Lukla, and we would continue on foot until we reached Everest Base Camp; then our trek would require that we journey on foot back to Lukla. We knew that the entire trek would take at least a couple of weeks or more. We then met up with a couple of fellow travelers who shared our desire to do this famous activity called the Everest Trek. They became our partners in this aspiration, and we formed a trekking party of four.

Pierre Maeder was Swiss, like Werner, and he was formerly a Physical Education instructor in Switzerland. Roberto Mainardi was a computer science technician of some sort, if I recall correctly, and he was from Milan, Italy. Both of them had already done some prior mountain-climbing— in the Swiss Alps and in the Italian Alps respectively. My long-time traveling partner was Werner, a former baker from Switzerland whom I had met earlier when we were both visiting the Philippines, and he also had done a lot of prior mountain climbing. He had become my best buddy during the many weeks that we had been traveling together. I myself was just a former public elementary school librarian, a U.S. citizen who had gone out to see the world, and of us all, I was the least accomplished. I had less climbing experience than anyone in our group, but I was still eager to tackle the Himalayas.

I guess I was a rarity among the travelers back then, a southerner of the U.S. who had actually gone out to see the far distant parts of the world. My own observations indicated that there were not many southerners of the U.S. who had gone out traveling during the months that I was doing so. In many months of exploration, I had met a lot of travelers who were Canadians, Australians, Germans, Swiss, etc., but not many southern Americans.

The four of us purchased tickets for a small-plane flight from Kathmandu to a dirt-road landing strip at Lukla. We landed safely at Lukla on Dec. 11, disembarked, and we immediately got our new trek underway.

Our plan was not excessively audacious, I thought, since we would try to trek only to the very bottom of Mount Everest... yet even that elevation would still be higher than almost all other mountains on Earth!

I was extremely excited about the prospects of the Everest Trek, and indeed it turned out to be possibly the greatest adventure I've ever had during my lifetime.

At that time I was still an evolutionist and a humanist, not a genuine believer in Jesus Christ. I was thrilled by the thought of hiking to some of the higher elevations in the Himalayas, because at that time I had convinced myself that Man's purpose in our Universe was simply Ascent. As we ascend to higher elevations, I told myself, human beings gain a Godlike

perspective on the Earth, and thus get a lot closer to Godlike consciousness. I thought humanity was destined to Ascend in our Universe, and that by doing so, we would start to gain Godlike powers. I was a big science-fiction fan and a New Ager back then, so I had a lot of really strange ideas.

My European friends were concerned about the fact that it was already December 11 as we began the Everest Trek, and a severe cold spell could bring extremely hazardous conditions and could come upon us suddenly, at any moment, while we were right in the middle of the trek's route. They decided that we must move hurriedly during all of the next week, in order that we might get to Everest Base Camp as quickly as possible. This way, they thought, we would get to our destination before any December cold spell might descend

upon us. We needed to get finished with the trek before any such occurrence might happen, as that event could be extremely dangerous for us and maybe even lethal.

We therefore moved rapidly upward through the Himalayas, with our packs strapped to our backs, in order that we might more speedily get to the desired destination at Everest Base Camp.

On Dec. 11, we hiked from Lukla to Phakding, at 8,700 ft. On Dec. 12, we hiked from Phakding to Namche Bazaar. The next morning we were up bright and early, and we rented from a little trekkers' supply store in Namche Bazaar the cold-weather clothing we required and all the heavy snow-boots we would need in order to continue our ascent. Within an hour or

two we were again hiking upward into the Himalayas. We were committed to the skyward track of the Everest Trek and were pushing ourselves hard, going just as fast as we could. We would hike all day, every day, and we only rested during the nighttime hours, after we had achieved the desired level of the day.

On Dec. 13, we hiked from Namche Bazaar to Tyangboche. We got a quick tour of the inside of the Tyangboche Monastery, then spent one night in the little inn that was managed by the Tyangboche monks. On Dec. 14, we hiked from Tyangboche to Pheriche. On Dec. 15, we hiked from Pheriche to Lobuche.

In this way, we ascended rapidly; we were increasing our elevation with a new level achieved after every day of hiking. The snow was coming down hard as we made our progress, and Werner and I saw as we marched that there was snow and ice frozen inside our beards. We marched on, hour after hour, even in the conditions of extreme cold.

Eventually we had all gotten to a way-station at Lobuche, situated at an elevation of 16,150 ft. We would rest there for a single night before starting out again the next morning. Everest Base Camp was then at just a short distance from us; we would achieve Kala Pattar and our destination at Base Camp with the next day's march, which would require an ascent of perhaps another 2,000 feet or so. We could do that the very next day.

That night I stepped out of the lodge and found myself standing upon the table-top plateau of Lobuche, where I was completely encircled by the mountaintops that surrounded me... even though I could only see their tips from my position upon the Lobuche dais. I looked up at the night sky, and I saw the most intense and brilliant starscape that I have ever beheld. It was a miraculous sight, and as the vapor of nebulous clouds drifted by just a few feet above my head... I marveled at the vast field of stars that hovered above me. I was thinking that this infinite field of stars seemed to be only the tiniest distance behind those nearby clouds.

That ceiling seemed so close to me that I was sure I could push myself upward just a bit more, and by reaching out my hand, I would be able to touch the stars with my fingertips. At

that high elevation, I might be able to grab a few stars in my hand without much difficulty. I might even reach up and touch the face of God. A small jump could easily have me breaking all the existing boundaries of my world and bursting through the atmosphere into the realm of starry space.

I was so impressed by this sight that I felt compelled to compose a little rhyme in honor of this spectacle. I pulled out my notepad and scribbled on a tiny page of the pad:

*The stars of Lobuche,
Floating with clouds
of star-gas and star-dust,
Over the iceberg mountains,
Floating with clouds
of earth's gases and earthdust.*

It was the shortest poem I had ever written, composed at the highest elevation I had ever attained. I wasn't sure that its format would let it qualify as a real haiku, but I proceeded in any case to label this one as "Lobuche Haiku."

Then I went back inside the lodge and tried to go to sleep. It was the coldest night that I had ever experienced anywhere on Earth. My North Face sleeping bag, filled with goose down, was not enough to keep me warm. Neither were my multiple layers of clothing, which I kept on as I struggled to get some sleep. Finally I got a couple of hours of uncomfortable sleep, but it was more like passing out from exhaustion, after a great deal of shivering.

The next morning I awoke with a splitting headache, a fever, and dizziness; I went outside the lodge for a minute, staggering a bit, and when I spit on the snow I saw that I was now spitting up blood!

I had gotten Altitude Sickness from a too-rapid ascent of the Himalayas, because my friends had wanted to get us to our destination as quickly as was humanly possible. I learned later that we had been exceeding the Nepalese government's safety regulations, and were not allowing enough time to acclimatize as we reached each new level.

My European friends had enough mountain-climbing experience that they could cope with that kind of regimen, but it seems that I could not. Lobuche was the highest elevation

that I would ever attain during my time in Nepal. I was forced to go back down the mountainside at once, descending to a lower level. To remain at my present elevation would be fatal, so I had no choice in the matter.

Pierre helped me go back down to Pheriche, where I spent the rest of the day, while he went back to rejoin the rest of our trekking party at Lobuche. The next day I hiked back down to Tyangboche, the Altitude Sickness forcing me to descend yet another level in the necessity to improve my health. I was going downward while Werner and the other two guys had marched upward to Kala Pattar and Everest Base Camp.

But by then I mostly just wanted to hasten a return to normal health... and to put my sleeping bag down on a much softer

surface than I'd had lately. I needed to find something that resembled a real bed and a room with a warm fire, this being a luxury that was only available at the Tyangboche Inn. There I could await the return of my trekking partners. We would go down from the mountaintops a lot more slowly than we had gone up, no longer so worried about a climate change. Our agreed plan was that we would spend our Christmas with all of us together in Namche Bazaar, and that's just what we did.

When my pals got to Everest Base Camp, they planted there a small Swiss flag that all four of us had signed. We had prepared it a few days earlier, as the Everest Trek was just getting underway. In the top section of the white cross on the Swiss flag, I had printed the words "Man must always ascend, until he reaches the stars."

Lobuche is the highest elevation to which I have ever climbed during all of my lifetime on Earth, and the starry spectacle which I saw at that level was somehow worth all the arduous hiking and the extreme difficulty of my experiences in the Everest Trek.

I thought I had reached the perspective of Higher Ground when I achieved Lobuche on that cold night in December 1979. In reality, I had not. That thrill would not come until a later time, when I had progressed to the place where God wanted me to be.

Pride in my own performance, I found, had brought me nothing but a sudden downfall, and it had left me with a slightly bruised ego.

Humility, however, would at a later date obtain for me the grace of God and a much better comprehension of His wide Universe.

Despite all the inspiration I got from my brief visit to Lobuche, the highest elevation in the Himalayas to which I ever ascended, I did not really reach “higher ground” at that time. But I did reach Higher Ground about 6 months later, when I had arrived on the Pacific Isle of Guam and soon afterwards came to faith in Jesus Christ as the Lord of Heaven and the Savior of Humankind.

What I didn't know when I was in Nepal was this: Human beings will never get any vast wisdom just by the process of ascent, nor will they ever get any kind of genuine

enlightenment just by the simple process of climbing big mountains. Even when flying upward in an airplane, a space shuttle, or an interplanetary vehicle, a human being is not ever going to get any real understanding of the mind of God. You can reach God, but it takes more than just a physical movement upward that carries your brain along for the ride.

Even if the human race tries to build better space ships and tries to travel to the stars, it won't bring us any closer to a Godlike status. Human beings can never become God, and we can't even get close to God as long as we are sinful human beings. God is so Pure and Holy that He finds sin repulsive and He can't even get close to it. He is Light, and there is no Darkness in Him.

Human beings can never become God. *But God was able to become a human being, and He did that for our benefit, when He was born of the virgin Mary and placed in that manger at Bethlehem.* This is how a God of Light and Love was able to rescue the embattled residents of the Earth from their own evil ways.

We can only begin to understand the mind of God when we become very familiar with the life and words of Jesus Christ, and we can accomplish that goal only by a very diligent study of the Holy Scriptures in the Christian Bible.

Once you start to see the face of Jesus clearly and correctly, you'll recognize Him as the Divine Superbeing that He truly is, and you'll start to pay a lot more attention to all the words that

He has already spoken. When you've thoroughly studied the words of Jesus, you start to understand the Mind of Jesus Christ, and that lets you understand also the Mind of Almighty God, Who is the Father in Heaven Above.

But just climbing upward, or even flying upward, will never bring any human being up to the level of God! It is equally impossible to get to Heaven simply by your own actions and your own good works, because you are a person who has already sinned far too many times to ever qualify for a lifetime in the Holy Presence of Almighty God.

Sin is repulsive to the Holy God of Heaven, and He will not allow it to enter His Presence.

Unless you are still a little child who has not yet reached an age of responsibility for your behavior, God figures you don't qualify for a pass to Heaven. He is not going to get close to any adult human who is unholy and unrighteous, even after that human has through earthly death left the old physical body behind. The admission of wicked spirits into Heaven would quickly turn Heaven into Hell, and God's Righteousness would never allow that.

You just can't get to Heaven that way, no matter how hard you try!

In ancient times, even in Israel, there were plenty of people who climbed up to the high reaches of the mountains... but what did they do when they got there? They usually got busy

erecting altars to false gods, and they even brought their old idols and set them up for worship in these high locations. The true God of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus then started to get extremely angry about all these altars and idols that were being placed in "the high places" of Israel.

I had thought that ascending to high elevations would give a person also a higher perspective and a higher level of consciousness. I had thought that getting a Godlike view of things would give a person Godlike consciousness, bringing any human being a lot closer to the level of God.

I didn't know then that human beings can never climb up to God by their own power— no matter how much determination they have, and no matter how much strength they put into their

effort. A human being often thinks that he can try to climb upward until finally he reaches God by his own effort. But the truth is that NO HUMAN BEING can ever climb up to the level of God and become like God. In fact, no human being can ever even gain a meeting with God just by trying to climb upward to the highest elevations.

For a human being to meet God, He has to first come down to us. God becomes accessible to human beings ONLY when He chooses to come down to our level.

That's why God came down to Earth more than 2000 years ago in the human body of Jesus Christ. God The Son was incarnated in Jesus Christ, the Holy Son of God, when He was born of a virgin in the little town of Bethlehem. Jesus Christ

makes it possible for us to meet the Father God on our own level.

Since we couldn't ever succeed in our desire to climb up to God, He came down to Earth and showed us an easier way to Heaven, a route that would work a lot better than all those vain and useless years of climbing. He provided an easier way to His Divine Presence, a Way that would not require all that egotistical climbing. It is a path that requires only humility and the genuine desire to get your heart, mind, and life right with God.

God comes down to Earth again every time a human being trusts in Jesus and prays for salvation from sin through the blood-sacrifice of Jesus Christ. You may ask, "How is this

possible? God is still coming down to human beings here on Earth, every day—even now?”

That’s exactly right. God does this through His Holy Spirit, Who is a Third Person in the Divine Trinity of God. Every time a person trusts in Jesus Christ as the Savior of Humankind and prays for Him to become the Lord and Ruler Who will reign over his life, that person is gifted with the indwelling presence of God’s Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit then comes down to Earth and enters the believer’s heart, lifting him or her up to a divine elevation which is the level of Higher Ground. God The Spirit stays inside you after that, always working within you to train and teach you...

so that you may more often spend time upon that level of Divine Inspiration which is Higher Ground.

God’s Holy Spirit thus gives you a genuine form of Godlike consciousness that will allow you to better understand all the truths of God’s Word as found in the Holy Scriptures of the Christian Bible.

The Holy Spirit of God, one Person of the Divine Trinity which includes God The Father and God The Son, desires to lift you up to the Higher Ground which is the Mind of Jesus Christ—the Holy One Who is “the Rock that is higher than I.” From your new position atop the Rock of your Salvation, you gain a new perspective on the Earth and become a New Creature in Christ.

Once you are saved, you will know that Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Universe and the Rock of Your Salvation. It's a lot more important to climb that Rock of Salvation than it is to reach the heights of the Himalayas... or even to accomplish some grand dream about reaching the summit of Mount Everest.

Jesus Christ is the Rock of Salvation, and it's a Rock that can lift you a lot higher than you've ever been before. He is a Rock that will lift you up high in the sky and actually let you become familiar with the Mind of God!

I marveled when I saw the wonderful starscape that was above my head as I stood there on that platform at Lobuche, high atop the Himalayas.

But the Holy Spirit gives you an even better view when it lifts you up to see the Mind of Christ and all the Truth that is found in Holy Scripture!

Did you know that the Holy Bible refers to the angels of God as "the stars" of Heaven?

When God's Holy Spirit lifts you up to Higher Ground, you kneel upon the Rock of Salvation, Jesus Christ, and you realize that He is a lot more than just the Lord of your heart. He is more than the Lord of the Universe and the Light of our world.

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ existed as God The Son long before He was ever incarnated as the human infant born

of the virgin Mary. It says that all things in our Universe “were created through Him and for Him.” As one of three Persons in the Divine Trinity of God, you can see that God The Son is actually the Creator of this Earth and of the entire Universe in which we reside!

That means that Jesus Christ is truly a Solid Rock, because He is the very Foundation of the planet Earth!

And once you understand all this, it becomes a lot easier for you to begin to understand the heavens of God. As you begin to study the Holy Scripture in depth, you may begin to notice not only the stars in the night sky over your head...

You may notice also the activity of angels in your own life.

You will definitely start to realize that there is a lot of angelic warfare going on in our world, and you will be forced to understand that you are a crucial element in the campaign to save the people of planet Earth. This will become evident to you soon after you have become saved. It's a great blessing to find Salvation in Christ, because He rescues your soul from the threat of Hell and ensures that you will have Eternal Life with God. But there will be struggle in your life afterward, even when you have become a Christian, a True Believer in Jesus Christ.

Spiritual warfare devastates this planet until Christ's Kingdom comes... and you will be called upon to assist in God's struggle to save the inhabitants of the Earth.

To gain Eternal Life with God The Father and His Son Jesus Christ, you have to be made acceptable to God, so that He can look on you and not see all the sin and filth with which you are contaminated. There is only one Way by which you can ever enter the Holy Presence of God: You have to have all your sins forgiven in the name of Jesus, and you have to be washed in the blood of Jesus Christ, so that you have the “white clothing” that God requires of you.

In this way, God will credit you with the Righteousness of His Son Jesus Christ, even though you have done nothing special to earn it... except to simply believe in Jesus and His blood-sacrifice, trusting in Him for your salvation. You *can* get to the level of Heaven, but there is only one Way by which you can

ever get there. You have to be linked to Jesus Christ and joined to Him as part of the church of Jesus, which the Holy Bible calls “the Bride of the Lamb.”

God Almighty then considers you to be “married” to Jesus Christ, the Sinless and Righteous Son of God. In a certain sense, you become “one flesh” with the Holiness of Jesus, so that God ascribes to you the Holiness of His Son.

Jesus underwent torture and execution as punishment for your sins, even though He was the Only Sinless and Righteous Person Who ever lived on this Earth. That was the crucial and critical event of human history: the moment of God’s Divine Intervention in the affairs of humankind. It was a miraculous

event, and it was followed by the miracle of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

When you become His follower and make Jesus the Lord of your life, another great miracle occurs. God gives you a covering that will hide all your sins from His eyes, seeing you as purified with the Holy Blood of His Son.

Jesus Christ received the Punishment for all your sins when He died on that wooden cross at Mount Calvary, even though He was the Sinless and Righteous Son of God, innocent of any wrongdoing. He didn't deserve that torture and mistreatment, but He endured all that and more, taking the sins and guilt of the whole world upon Himself. He received the punishment for your sins so that you wouldn't have to bear it!

Now you can receive the Reward of His Suffering and have the Righteousness of Jesus credited to your own lifetime, even though you have done nothing to deserve it... even though you are just a sinful human being, no better than so many billions of other sinners who are alive today on the Earth. It's a miracle that you don't deserve, but it's a free gift from Jesus Christ and His Father in Heaven, with a little help from the Holy Spirit of God.

You can pray now for salvation and get it through Jesus Christ as a free gift from God.

Then God The Father will blind Himself to all the sins of your lifetime on Earth. And God The Son, when He comes again as the Righteous Judge Who will rule over all the inhabitants of

the Earth, will claim you as His friend and brother (or sister), rather than saying that He never knew you.

To get this reward, a treasure of priceless value, you need to make Jesus Christ the Rock of Your Salvation. I did so on June 16, 1980, when I settled down on Guam and became a True Believer of Jesus Christ. My trekking friend Werner did so in the very same year, when he went to Egypt and climbed to the top of Mount Sinai, where he opened and read from the Holy Bible, then made Jesus the Lord of his life.

You have to reach Higher Ground.

You can pray now for God's guidance, asking that His Holy Spirit will lead you to the Rock that is higher than you.

You can go now to the Rock that is higher than all.

You gain Eternal Life with God by placing Jesus Christ, **Who in the Trinity of God created our Universe**, upon a throne at the center of your heart! *He deserves that position and that kind of respect.* He was first **God The Son**, but when born in human flesh He became the only sinless and righteous person who ever lived. Yet He sacrificed Himself on a cross for your sake, taking all guilt and sins upon Himself—for you and for me, and for all people everywhere on Earth— **that whoever wishes for salvation might be rescued from the due punishment of sins.**

If you will do this, you will gain a new contentment and peace as you accept God's organizational plan for the Universe. . . because you'll be letting God be the Ruler of All Things in this world. . . and in your own life.

All it really takes is a simple but sincere little prayer—one that you should make up in your own words. The prayer for deliverance and for God's leadership should come from your own heart!

Some important elements that you might include are:

- 1) your desire to turn away from the wrongness or evil of your past life, and your remorse over the sins of your previous life,
- 2) your desire for God's forgiveness and mercy through the act of sacrifice of His Only Begotten Son (Jesus Christ),

- 3) your desire to know God's leadership in your life,
- 4) your desire to learn more of God's truth through Bible study,
- 5) your desire to find fellowship with genuine believers.

When you're saved, you'll know Jesus is King of the Universe and the Lord of your life. You'll know the three faces of God Almighty: God The Father, God The Son, and God The Spirit. His Holy Light will start to be visible in your own face and actions!

Jesus said of the people of God that "The kingdom of heaven is like a **net** that God has cast into the sea, and it gathers of every kind: When it is full, it will be pulled up on the shore, where they will sit down to sort the catch, and they will **collect the good fish in baskets, but the bad things will be thrown away. This is the way it will be at the end of the**

world: The angels shall come forth, and they will **separate** the unrighteous persons from among those justified by God..."

Excerpt from the Book of Matthew, who was a constant companion of Jesus and his devoted disciple [13:47-50].

Jesus spoke of the people of God as being like a seed that is growing secretly, saying, "As for the kingdom of God, it is as if a person should cast seed into the ground; and then he sleeps, and he rises up night and day to see that the seed is springing forth and always growing up, although he knows not exactly how. The Earth is bringing forth fruit from itself; first the blade, then the ears of corn, and after that the fullness of the ears of corn. And when all the **fruit of the Earth** has come forth, immediately God will use the sickle to reap the fields, because the **harvest-time** has come."

Excerpt from the book of Mark [4:26-29].

It's also important for all of us to remember this:

- 1) **WE SPEAK TO GOD** by our prayers.
 - 2) **GOD SPEAKS TO US** by the words of Holy Scripture.
- So we must try to read His words and His Book just as often as we possibly can!!

God wants to bless you for all your long efforts to understand this very confusing and difficult Universe in which we live— so let Him reward your search with the grace of His forgiveness and enlightenment!

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God is continuously harvesting the Earth... as His long-range plan for the Earth's transformation goes ever forward...!