

Good News Unlimited

Solus Christus — Sola Scriptura — Sola Fide — Sola Gratia

The Great Commission
and The Second Advent
Desmond Ford

An Interview
with John Calvin
on Original Sin
Brad McIntyre

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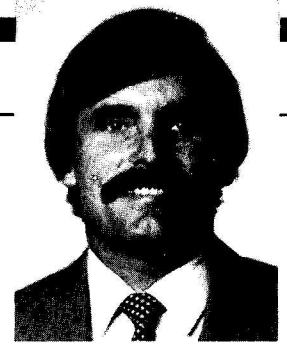
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Editorial



One of the distinctive characteristics of Jesus of Nazareth was the authoritative manner in which he spoke (Mk 1:22; Mt 7:29). Jesus was not like the rabbis who always felt compelled to justify their teachings by references to authoritative sources. In striking contrast to the rabbis of his day, Jesus spoke the will of God with a directness that compelled many to believe that he had a unique relationship to God. According to Matthew, Jesus claimed such a unique experience or relationship with God: "All things have been delivered to me by my Father, for such has been his gracious will. All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Mt 11:27).

In recent years, scholars have sifted the data of the four Gospels and have come to the conclusion that behind all that Jesus said and did lies a profound religious experience of God as Abba or Father. Edward Schillebeeckx believes that Jesus' original Abba experience is the source and secret of his being, message and manner of life. "Out of his Abba experience Jesus is able to bring to man a message of hope not inferable from the history of our world. Jesus' Abba experience is an immediate awareness of God as a power cherishing people and making them free," says the same writer (*Jesus*, pp. 256, 258). The founder of Christianity was not just a person with an acute understanding of the theology of the O.T. He was a person with a profound religious experience.

I am convinced that the authority and certitude with which Jesus spoke has its source in his own unique religious experience. There is no doubt that he believed that God had revealed himself in the O.T. But obviously he never allowed that revelation of God to the prophets of the O.T. to become a substitute for a personal experience of God. Neither should we.

There is an assurance, a certitude of faith, that comes only by a personal encounter with the Divine. The ultimate in religious certitude does not come at the end of a long, sophisticated argument for the existence of God, rather it comes with an existential encounter with the Spirit of God. This was true of Jesus and his disciples. In a recent scholarly work, Seyoon Kim demonstrates that Paul's understanding of the gospel originates in his religious experience on the Damascus road (*The Origin of Paul's Gospel*). Both Luther and Wesley were sustained by their own deep religious experiences.

One night, after many desperate years of searching with all his rational powers, Blaise Pascal (1623-62), was overwhelmed by the Spirit of God. For the rest of his life he carried the following description of his conversion experience in the pocket of his coat.

From about half past ten in the evening to
about half an hour after midnight.

Fire.

God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob,
Not the God of philosophers and scholars.

Absolute Certainty: Beyond reason.

Joy. Peace.

Forgetfulness of the world and everything
but God.

The world has not known thee,
but I have known thee.

Joy! joy! joy! tears of joy!

Pascal discovered that the "logic of the heart" was more reassuring than the logic of the mind alone.

"Religion begins when God outwardly argued is inwardly experienced," said Harry Emerson Fosdick. "God outside of us is a theory: God inside of us becomes a fact." Our greatest need today is not more knowledge or truth about God, rather it is to daily experience his presence. As of old, modern disciples need to listen to the invitation of Jesus, "Come ye aside and rest awhile."

—Noel Mason

THE GREAT COMMISSION AND THE SECOND ADVENT

According to Albert Schweitzer, the whole history of Christianity, down to the present day, that is to say, the real inner history of it, is based on the delay of the second advent.¹

The logic of Schweitzer's statement is plain when one considers the tantalizing question that has bubbled up in the thinking of Christians in every generation. If the death of Christ was the atonement for the world's sin, and the end of the old era as well as the beginning of the new, why did not the Second Advent come quickly on the heels of the first?

Christ has given his answer. "...the gospel must *first* be preached to all nations" (Mk 13:10). "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come" (Mt 24:14, see also Rev 14:6,7,14). In Jesus' last discourse the proclamation of the gospel to all the world is certainly one of the signs preceding the Second Advent.

Centuries ago John Calvin, in his comments on 2 Thessalonians 2, declared that the power restraining the eschatological manifestation of Antichrist was the missionary procla-

mation of the church. In our day Oscar Cullmann and others have echoed Calvin? The Bible's last book is emphatic that it is the worldwide spread of the gospel which provokes Satan's final onslaught on truth and the truth-bearers.

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come.

It is this fact which endorses what is known as the "harvest principle" (but not in the sense used by some perfectionists). There is, according to prophecy, to be a final flowering of good and evil on a worldwide scale. Loyalty and disloyalty will be displayed globally. The harvest metaphor is prominent not only among the Old Testament prophets and the synoptic Gospels but also in Revelation (Joel 3:13; Mk 4:26-29; Mt 13:39; Rev 14:14-20).

Armageddon: Climax to Gospel Proclamation

The final battle between good and

evil, the battle of Armageddon, will really manifest every person's attitude to the cross of Christ—for some a stone of stumbling. There is to be no reaping of earth until the harvest is ripe. It will take place when the fruit both of good and evil are fully matured. Apparently this little world is a lesson book to the universe. God loves not only this runaway earth, but also the ninety and nine other worlds which have never rebelled. He has permitted sin only in order to safeguard his infinite domains from any repetition of such an experiment. The church here below demonstrates to the principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God.

We are a theater to the universe, to angels, and to men (Eph 3:9,10; 1 Cor 4:9). The great controversy between good and evil on earth began in one place with one man and one woman.

Only when the whole globe with all its inhabitants has taken its stand for or against the Creator, only when every person has shown a response to the love of God manifested at Calvary—only then will the end come. Men will judge themselves as they hear the gospel, and their decisions will be confirmed by divine acknowledgement in the great Judgment Day. Armageddon is that day (compare Joel

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3:12 with the Rev 16 scenario).

Only this view can give sense to God's continuing permission of satanic activity, and particularly the phenomenon of the final Antichrist. Antichrist is to be the divine instrument for polarizing the world into two camps—one of which will reflect the likeness of Christ, (the seal of God), and the other reflecting their leader, Satan (with the mark of the beast). One company from every nation, kindred, tongue and people, will be threatened with a crucifixion like that of Calvary (not in its atonement sense, but as the flowering of fidelity to the law of Jehovah). The other company, by its murderous decrees against the saints (Rev 13:13-18) will reveal to the universe that sin leads to the ultimate development of satanic character.

There is, according to prophecy, to be a final flowering of good and evil on a worldwide scale.

Such constitutes the main burden of the final prophetic picture of Scripture. According to Revelation 16 there is to be a gathering of the "kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle." The scarlet whore is to reign triumphantly "over the kings of the earth," even all "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues." These give their power to the beast that it might "make war on the lamb" and "those with him." "...all who dwell on earth shall worship it" except the saints. But simultaneously, a message enshrining the everlasting gospel gives warning to the threatened multitudes (Rev 14:6-12).

From the opening of the Apocalypse this final conflict between the gospel of Christ and the false gospel of Antichrist is sketched. The opening vision is a key to the book as it presents us with a vision of light challenging darkness—the glorious irradiated king-priest on high attending to his lamps (the churches) and stars (leaders of the missionary bodies). The same imagery of light displacing darkness continually recurs throughout the book (see 6:1 the lustrous horse; 7:2 the sunrising);

10:1; 11:4; 12:1; 18:1; 19:17; 21:23; 22:25). The good news of the atonement is the most brilliant light this world experiences; but it ever arouses hatred and opposition, as well as gratitude and love.



Further Clues from Revelation

The chapters of Revelation have as their central theme the progress, trials and triumphs of the lightbearers who light the way for the returning Savior. In the heart of this prophetic history we find a significant question and answer that illuminates the problem of the delayed Parousia. Consider the following passage:

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne; they cried out with a loud voice, 'O Sovereign Lord holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?' Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren

should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been. (Rev 6:9-11)

Apparently this little world is a lesson book to the universe. God loves not only this runaway earth, but also the ninety and nine other worlds which have never rebelled.

The comments of Herman Hoeksema are illuminating for all seeking to plumb the anguished cry of the martyrs.

...this time that these souls must wait before their blood shall be avenged in the day of judgment publicly is also further defined, and defined materially. How long must they wait? The answer is: until their fellow servants and brethren, that should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled their course. This is plain language. It simply means that the time is as yet not ripe for judgment. The world has not yet shown its real character in all the hatred of its corruption. And before the world is ripe for that day of judgment, the Lord cannot and will not come. We find this phenomenon time and again in Holy Writ. The antediluvian period lasted about sixteen hundred years before the measure of their iniquity was full. And even when the climax was almost reached, the Lord still gave them one hundred twenty years in which they might hear the testimony of God through Noah, so that it might become fully evident that the day of judgment was a day of righteousness and justice. The same is true of the history of Israel. That history shows us that they had killed the prophets and stoned the messengers of God who had been sent against them. And it seemed as if the Lord would never visit them for their iniquity. But the time was not yet ripe. Not until they had revealed their hatred to the full, not until they had clearly shown that they rejected the Son of God, could the day of judgment come and

Jerusalem be destroyed. These judgments, so the Bible tells us, are but typical of the great day of the Lord that is to come. And therefore, also for that day the time must be ripe, and the measure of iniquity must be filled. The witnesses of Christ also in the future must let their testimony go forth. They must witness of the Christ. They must witness of the blood of the cross. And over against this testimony, the world must reveal its hatred still more plainly than already it has done in the past. In the past all these things were mere local affairs. In the future the Christian world in general, so-called, will rise up against the church. In the past the witnesses of Christ were butchered, but the enemy was not so directly conscious that they rose up against the name of Jesus Christ. In the future the enemy will do so fully conscious that it is the hateful name of Jesus Christ that is the great obstacle to all their plans for the world. And thus the world becomes ripe for judgment. There are still a certain number who must be killed for the Word of God and for the testimony which they hold. And when they are killed, then the Lord will come and avenge His holiness and truth and establish His kingdom forever.³

O Sovereign Lord holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?

Revelation 6:9-11 should be compared with 11:7ff.

And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war upon them and conquer them and kill them. . . . Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, 'Come up hither!' And in the sight of their foes they went up to heaven in a cloud. And at that hour there was a great earthquake. . . . This finishing of testimony is identical with the fulfillment of the gospel commission (Mt 24:14 is the key to

Rev 11:7). The beast cannot silence the church by its interdict until its task is completed. In this connection, we would warn readers against limiting the meaning of Revelation 11 to the events of the French Revolution. Revelation 11:7 with its warning of the resurrection of the beast parallels Revelation 13 and its portrayal of the healing of the beast's wound of death (see also 17:8,11).

God does not warn one generation and destroy another. Neither does he destroy without warning.

Dangers and Privileges of the Eschatological Church

It should now be apparent that the New Testament habitually places the final proclamation of the gospel alongside the final manifestation of Antichrist (see Mt 24:14,15; 2 Th 2:9-12; Rev 10-11;13-14;17-18). God does not warn one generation and destroy another. Neither does he destroy without warning. The generation that heard Noah's warning about the end of the world witnessed that event. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah who heard the testimony of Lot, experienced the fate he threatened. The Jews who rejected the message of the apostles of Christ after Pentecost perished in the maelstrom of A.D. 70. Similarly, when the whole world has been told of the Judgment Day of Calvary and thereby is divided, as the cross divided between the penitent and the impenitent thief,—*"then shall the end come."*

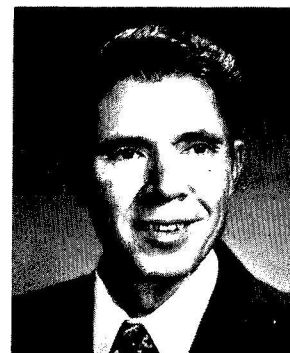
The words of G. C. Berkouwer are worthy of close thought:

The tie between eschatological expectation and mission call is essential and indissoluble. The church that fails to understand its mandate in this area inevitably becomes entangled in its own outlook on the meaning of the present dispensation. It is in imminent danger of wrapping itself up in an introverted, internal problematics that forfeits

the meaning of the present dispensation. The expectation cannot remain vibrant and operative if the overwhelming richness of Christ's grace in the coming age is not shown and if the peace to which we have access in the Father is not proclaimed. (Eph 2:7,17f.; cf. Is 57:19)⁴

And so in the final scenarios of Christian prophecy the Second Advent takes place after a worldwide proclamation of the gospel. What part are you playing in that grand work?

1. A. Schwietzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, p. 358.
2. See *katecho TDNT* 11:829
3. H. Hoeksema, *Behold, He Cometh*, pp. 230-231.
4. G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ*, pp. 132-133.



DESMOND FORD



AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN CALVIN ON

McIntyre: Dr. Calvin, you have the unfortunate reputation of being a pessimist when it comes to your opinion of human nature. You talk about original sin and total depravity. Sometimes you sound as if we're all a bunch of corrupt idiots. What is your response to this?

Calvin: I'm glad you asked. It's true I've been misunderstood by some and understood too well by others! We must first clarify what you mean by "human nature." Do you mean humanity as it originally existed before the Fall, after the Fall or after conversion?

McIntyre: Hmmm. You have a point there. Well, let's start with human nature before the Fall. What was Adam like?

Calvin: The Bible is very clear that Adam was created in the image of God and was "very good." By "image of God," I don't mean physically but spiritually. Man was given an uplifted face. By that I mean, Adam had a spiri-

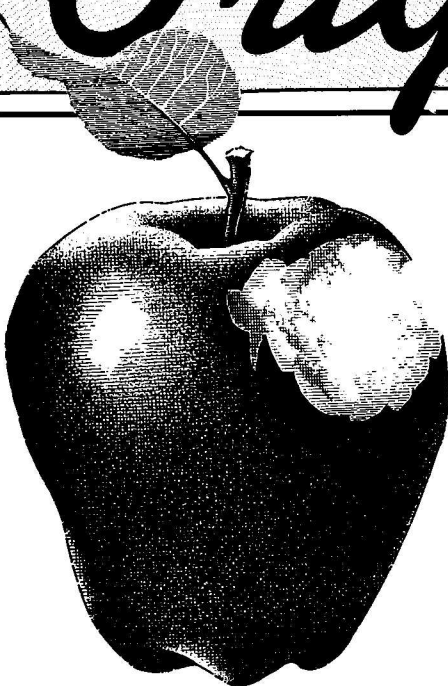
McIntyre: Let me see if I have this straight. Basically you're saying that human nature was perfect before the Fall. Adam had unbroken communion with God and possessed the power of spiritual discernment. So it's this spiritual dimension of Adam which reveals God's image.

Calvin: Yes. But let's remember, too, that the human soul consists of two things: understanding and will. Both of these faculties were perfect in Adam.³

McIntyre: Wait a minute. Run that one by me again, please.

Calvin: God has given us a mind and a will. We use our mind or our understanding to distinguish or evaluate things, such as right and wrong, for example. We reason out which course is best among various alternatives. You see? Then our will makes the final choice; our will decides what we will do. Now in Adam's case, his understanding was perfect and his will was capable of always choosing the good. His will obeyed his perfect understanding,

Original Sin



tual nature, the ability to transcend himself and enter into intimate communion with God.¹ McIntyre: OK. I'll buy that. I think you've also described the "image of God" as "an inner good of the soul." Is that right?

Calvin: Yes, you're correct. To clarify, "image of God" refers specifically to an inner quality of Adam's nature. The primary seat of the divine image was in Adam's mind and heart, or in his soul, even though all parts of Adam reflected God's image in one way or another.²

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you might say. The main point is this: before the Fall, man's mind and will worked in perfect harmony. Through the mind, man could distinguish right from wrong and the will was totally free to choose the right every time. But this isn't the case now.⁴

Editor's Note: John Calvin (1509-1564) was a famous Protestant reformer. A contemporary of Luther and Zwingli, Calvin spent most of his professional life in Geneva, Switzerland, as a pastor and scholar. His monumental work, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, is a summary of Christian doctrine and is one of the greatest works of religious literature ever produced. The following "interview" consists of paraphrased excerpts from the *Institutes*.



An Interview with Rocky Stone

Stan Lather talks to him about Jesus

Stan: Once you were simply Simon, but seemingly overnight you were discovered and became top of the twelve list (Matthew 10:2)—would you like to tell us about it Rocky?

Rocky: Sure—it was amazing as I look back on it. One day my brother Andrew brought me to the Master. Jesus looked me straight in the eye and seemed to read my innermost thoughts and feelings. I find it hard to understand now as I think about it because there's so much rubbish in my mind. He knew right back then the stupid and wicked things I would do. Yet I could tell he knew me, but still loved me. And when he said, "Come, follow me," it was the most natural thing in the world to do. I wandered after him like a devoted child following a beloved parent. I'd been a fisherman, you see, but I just dropped my nets and followed him.

Stan: Now that you look back, knowing all that happened afterwards, were you surprised he chose you as one of the top twelve?

Rocky: Oh yes, absolutely. Even back on that first day, he gave me two new names—Peter and Cephas. Peter was Greek for rock or stone. Cephas was Aramaic for the same thing. That's why you could call me Rocky Stone. I found out much later what he meant by it. When he built his church, he likened it to the temple in Jerusalem. He said he was going to be the cornerstone—you know, the foundation stone the whole thing rested on. Yet, he said to me, "Your name is Peter [Rock] and upon this rock I will build my church." He really was the rock, but in another sense I was to be the foundation stone because I would be largely

responsible for taking the gospel to the non-Jewish nations. What an honor! But when you see how I behaved later on, you'll realize just how amazing it was that he'd give that honor to me.

Stan: You seem to be very down on yourself. How come?

Rocky: Well, back at the beginning I was terribly enthusiastic and I meant well, but I didn't know myself. I had realized when I first met Jesus that here was the greatest man I'd ever met and gradually I came to understand that he was also God. But the glory of it got me all overexcited. I refused, yes, refused to face the facts he tried to tell me—that instead of the sort of greatness we think of here on earth, Jesus was going to have a life of suffering and death.

Stan: Can you be more specific and tell us what you did that was so terrible?

Rocky: I was so impulsive—I did things without thinking them through and that's dangerous.

There was the time when he took Peter, James and myself to a mountain and he was momentarily changed into the glorious form he had before he came to this earth. Moses and Elijah were with him there, if you remember (Luke 9:28-36) and as the three of them stood there, a voice was heard from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved son, my Chosen. Listen to him,"—just like at his baptism. You see, Moses and Elijah were there as witnesses that Jesus was God's son. We were all overwhelmed, but it was me who made the stupid comment, "Lord, isn't it nice up here on the hill. Let's build three booths up here and stay put." It was glorious up there, you see, with the wonderful view and the thin, fresh air flowing around me. It must have affected my brain.

Later, more than once, Jesus tried to help us understand what was going to happen. He wanted to save us pain. He told us very clearly that he was going to be put to death but would be raised to life



Stan Lather Interviews Rocky Stone

again. We all talked about it and wondered what he meant. We were so thick in the head—when it all started to happen, it came as a complete shock to us.

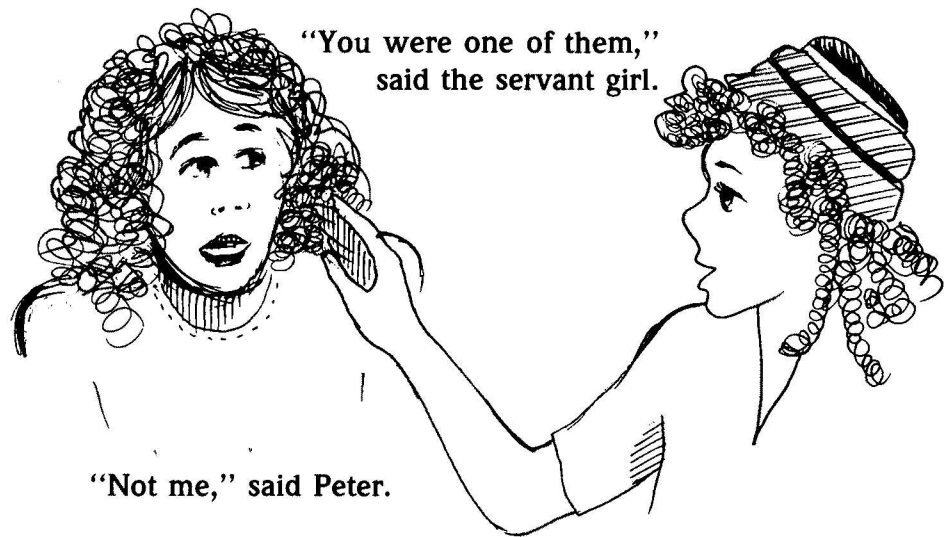
Then, of course, there was the little incident with the ear. We were in the garden with the Master when Judas brought the soldiers to capture him. Impulsive me, I grabbed a sword and cut off the ear of Malchus' servant. But Jesus told me to put the sword away and somehow invisibly stitched that ear back on. He was a man of peace, not violence.

Stan: What was the worst thing you did?

Rocky: Oh, there's no doubt about that. I had told Jesus that even if everyone forsook him, I wouldn't—another of my rash statements. Judas betrayed him for thirty pieces of silver but what I did was much worse. I betrayed him three times for nothing—I cared too much for the opinion of a servant girl (John 18:25-27). He'd even told me ahead of time that I'd deny him three times before the cock crew. When it did crow and I suddenly realized what I'd done—I was devastated. But at that moment, he turned and looked at me and it was the same knowing, caring look he'd given me the first time he called me to follow him. You see, he'd known it all back there, even at the beginning because he was God. Can you imagine that. Even though he knew I'd deny him worse than Judas, he loved me. That look of love saved me. I went through terrible mental agony from the guilt, in fact I went through my own Gethsemane experience. I only survived because I knew he loved me and believed in me despite all I'd done. There's never been a love like that.

Stan: You must have often been asked this question—why were you saved and not Judas? You've admitted yourself that what you did was in a way worse than what Judas did.

Rocky: Yes—Judas betrayed Jesus once and I did it three times. I guess you'd have to look at our



motives, whether we loved Jesus and how sorry we were afterwards. It's probably impossible to explain, humanly speaking. After all, Jesus said, "I have chosen twelve of you and one of you is a devil." (John 6:70,71) Jesus had said to me (Luke 22:31) . . . "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren." I thought I might be the devil he spoke of, but it turned out to be Judas. Jesus didn't count me as a devil, just weak.

It's a bit like the difference between Saul and David in the Old Testament. There was a couple of instances where Saul committed evils that don't seem so bad. In fact, early on, Samuel told him God had rejected him and chosen another (who turned out to be David). Saul seemed, like Judas, to repent afterwards. What David did when he was king seems so much worse on the outside than what Saul did (and I'm not excusing him—it was bad). You'll remember that David stole another man's wife and had him killed. The man, Uriah, was a very good type of man too. What David did was really terrible and it caused a lot of heartache—made God's people

look so bad.

You'll remember how Nathan the prophet came and told David the parable of the little lamb (2 Samuel 12:1-8) that a rich man stole from a man who only had one sheep and then told David, "You are that man." And David repented. In fact, he used the exact same words as Saul had—(Psalm 51:4; 2 Samuel 12:13; 1 Samuel 15:24).

Yet somehow, God knew the difference between Saul and David. Saul apparently died rejected. But of David, God said more than once that he was a man after his own heart, though in one place he said "except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite."

Stan: So would you say that God forgave you and David because of the quality of your repentance or sorrow for sin?

Rocky: Oh no! Not at all. Saul and Judas never really had a true love for God or Jesus. They were only seeking their own interests. They were only sorry for being found out and that their plans were thwarted. David and I were very weak at times, but we did love God. But it wasn't even that we loved God. It was that we genuinely gave up on ourselves and accepted his love, his ways and his forgiveness. To people looking on, it may not even seem fair for David and me to be saved and Saul and Judas to be lost. But I'd have to say there's a subtle difference that means

everything and only God can be the judge. The point is, however bad a person is, if they give up on their own goodness and accept Jesus, they are saved. Otherwise they are lost. It's a matter of belief. The strange thing is Jesus tried to tell me. He told me. He told us all we'd fall away, that when he was captured we would run like scattered sheep. But I said, "Even if they all do, I won't desert you." Too self-confident you see. Jesus answered me and said—"Yes, you will. You'll deny me three times." I even argued with him quite heatedly. "Even if I died with you, I won't deny you." From there we went to Gethsemane where Jesus writhed in agony over what he knew was coming. Yet we all fell asleep, not once but three times. Each time he said, "Couldn't you even watch with me for an hour?" and he warned me particularly in case I was tempted. He told me my spirit or mind was willing, but the flesh was weak.

You see, he knew. He saw it all, but I was self-confident. I had great faith but in the wrong place, myself. What a fool I was. Yet how tenderly Jesus dealt with me. Why, when the angel sitting in the tomb, empty because Jesus was now risen, announced what had happened, he said, "Tell all the disciples *and Peter*." It was a

special message so I'd know I was forgiven.

Stan: Now, Rocky, changing the subject a bit, I know many listeners would be interested in knowing if you ever saw Jesus do any miracles?

Rocky: Oh, yes. Why he healed my mother-in-law quite early on in the piece. Then there was the Transfiguration I told you about. That was very spectacular. You'll remember I was thrown in prison by Herod at one time, guarded by four squads of soldiers and chained between two prisoners. I was asleep one night there in the prison and, an angel came along and tapped me on the shoulder and the chains fell off. I felt as though I was dreaming. As I followed him out of the prison past the guards, through the iron gate as it creaked open by itself, it just didn't seem real. But it was. Everyone had been praying for me, yet they were surprised when God answered their prayers. And I was the only man apart from Jesus who walked on water.

Yes, I've seen miracles, but the greatest miracle of all is that God forgave and changed me. Everytime I see someone touched by the gospel, I sense a great miracle.

Stan: What influence did Jesus

have on your career? You had been a fisherman, hadn't you?

Rocky: Right. I was fishing when Jesus met me and after he was raised from the dead and I'd seen him, I went fishing again (John 21). I said to the others, "I'm going fishing and they said—"We'll come too." We got the boat out and headed for sea, but although we rowed and cast our nets all night, we got nowhere. Not one fish! Can you imagine? I'd fished all my life and had never had such a bad catch.

As the dawn came, we could vaguely see the outline of a man on the beach. Yes, it was Jesus, but it took a while for any of us to recognize him. The man spoke and asked had we caught any fish? "No, we said, "not even a piece of seaweed." He said, "Try throwing your net over on the other side." We did it though I almost didn't bother. But it seemed that as soon as the net touched the water, it was full of fish. You could have blown me over, I was so surprised. Then it was that John recognized Jesus.

I'd stripped off my shirt for fishing, but now I quickly grabbed my clothes, hurriedly dressed myself and jumped into the sea to swim to shore. It was about 100 yards away and the rest of the disciples came in by boat dragging that huge net of fish. When we got there, Jesus had made a charcoal fire and there was fish and bread for breakfast. We counted 153 fish in that net by the way. Yet it didn't break, which was unusual.

It was a parable you see. Jesus was going to heaven soon—he was on the distant shore and we would be toiling and rowing away on the sea of life, often not seeming to make much progress as we fished for men for his kingdom. He was trying to tell us that if we depended upon ourselves, we wouldn't get very far, but if we listened to his advice he would help us in marvelous ways.

Stan: Wasn't it shortly after that that Jesus reversed your denial?

Rocky: Yes. After breakfast he took me aside. "Simon," he said, using my old name, "Do you love me



Peter heads for the beach and Jesus.

more than the rest of these men do?" "Yes, Lord," I said, "You know I do." Didn't he know what was in my heart when he looked into my face? "Well, then," he said, "Feed my sheep." He asked the same question three times and I answered it similarly each time. I got quite frustrated in the end. "Lord, you know everything. You know I love you." And then he said, "Follow me."

Stan: I guess he was taking you back to the first time you met when he said, "Follow me."

Rocky: Yes, only now I knew myself better and I really understood what it meant to be forgiven. I did follow him, even though I still wasn't perfect. You'll remember that fiasco at Galatia?

Stan: You mean the time when Paul got angry with you because he thought you were so insincere?

Rocky: Yes, he was right you know. He accused me of preaching another gospel, because I started eating separately from the new non-Jewish converts. I did it because some Jewish Christians came along and said these Gentiles should keep the old Jewish food laws (we used to think it was unclean to eat with Gentiles in the old days). You see, it was the same old fault I'd always had—I was

afraid of other people's opinions. Everybody has weaknesses—this sort of insincerity was mine.

Stan: What do you think the recording of your life with all its good and bad points teaches our listeners?

Rocky: They should find it good news because it shows the love and forgiveness of God. If God could work with someone like me, he can help everybody. If someone ever tells you they're perfect and don't ever sin anymore, point them to me at Galatia. Of course, I'm not encouraging people to give into their weaknesses, but you see, if you fail, it's not the end. Every day is a new beginning with God.

Stan: Rocky, I want to thank you for coming and spending time with us today. I wonder if you would like to give us a few of your favorite verses from your own writings before you leave?

Rocky: Certainly!

I Peter 1:3-6 "All honor to God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; for it is his boundless mercy that has given us the privilege of being born again, so that we are now members of God's own family. Now we live in the hope of eternal life because Christ rose

again from the dead. And God has reserved for his children the priceless gift of eternal life; it is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And God, in his mighty power, will make sure that you get there safely to receive it, because you are trusting him. It will be yours in that coming last day for all to see. So be truly glad! There is wonderful joy ahead, even though the going is rough for a while down here."

Acts 2:21 "But anyone who asks for mercy from the Lord shall have it and shall be saved."

Acts 2:38 "And Peter replied, "Each one of you must turn from sin, return to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; then you also shall receive this gift, the Holy Spirit."

Acts 10:34 "Then Peter replied, "I see very clearly that the Jews are not God's only favorites!"

I Peter 4:8 "Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love makes up for many of your faults."

I Peter 5:8 "Be careful—watch out for attacks from Satan, your great enemy. He prowls around like a hungry, roaring lion, looking for some victim to tear apart."



McIntyre: Well, if things were so great before the Fall, why did Adam sin?

Calvin: Because he was free to choose the wrong if he wished, and he did.

McIntyre: So we can't lay the blame for sin on God's doorstep?

The primary seat of the divine image was in Adam's mind and heart, or in his soul . . .

Calvin: Absolutely not! Adam could have remained faithful if he had wished. But his sin was his decision and thus he's wholly responsible for it and its consequences. He fell solely by his own voluntary choice. It was a free choice, without compulsion.⁵

McIntyre: In other words, as long as Adam possessed the freedom of choice, there was always the possibility that he could sin.

Calvin: That's correct. The *possibility* but not the *necessity*. That's an important distinction. Since the Fall, we are all subject to the necessity of sinning, or to put it in different terms, sin is inevitable, yet we're still responsible for it.⁶

McIntyre: I guess, then, we're in a no-win situation!

Calvin: Apart from God's grace, yes.

McIntyre: This brings up a couple of tough questions. Why should I be punished for Adam's sin, and secondly, just how bad is sinful human nature anyway?

Calvin: First, let me say that Adam's guilt does not pertain to us at all. God doesn't nail us because of Adam's guilt. But the *consequences* of Adam's sin affect us all. It's not the guilt of Adam's sin that kills us but its consequences. He infected all his posterity with that corruption into which he had fallen, so that we're all implicated in his sin. You might say that we are born of impure seed, infected with the contagion of sin. Before we even saw the light of this life, we were soiled and spotted in God's sight. Just read Job 14:4.⁷

McIntyre: You mean that even little

babies are corrupt? Come on!

How can a new-born baby sin?

Calvin: Sin is not merely a wrong deed. It is a state of being. Even infants bear their condemnation with them from their mother's womb. A baby has certainly not committed an overt sin as yet, but every infant has the seed of sin enclosed within. Indeed, their whole nature is a seed of sin; thus it cannot but be hateful and abominable to God.⁸

McIntyre: I may be mistaken, but doesn't the Roman Catholic Church teach that infant baptism erases the effects of original sin?

Calvin: Oh, yes. It's an utterly foolish teaching. Not only do they teach that infant baptism erases original sin, they also say it restores to the infant the same righteousness and purity which Adam had before the Fall! Baptism certainly promises that we have been forgiven in Christ, but it does not take away our sinful nature.⁹

McIntyre: Now I'm going to put you on the spot. Could you give me a concise definition of original sin?

Calvin: Original sin is a hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature which affects all parts of our soul. It results in what Paul calls "the works of the flesh," and it makes us liable to God's wrath. In Ephesians 2:3, Paul says we are objects of God's wrath *by nature*.¹⁰

Is that concise enough?

McIntyre: Yes, too concise, almost cruel! You know, I can see your point, but there are still some things that bother me about this original sin thing. Just how, for instance, is this corruption transmitted? I mean, is it in our genes or is it biological or what?

Calvin: Original sin is not biological, although our bodies do reveal the weakness of sin, just like nature itself groans for deliverance from the bondage of sin, as Paul says in Romans 8. But no, original sin is not biologically transmitted through our genes. Rather, it was

ordained by God that Adam should represent the entire human race. When Adam sinned and fell out of God's favor, we all sinned in him. Paul implies this in Romans 5. Therefore, we are born into sin.¹¹ Let me put this another way. In the beginning, God entrusted to Adam gifts which he was supposed to pass along to us—gifts like wisdom, virtue, holiness, truth, justice, purity, righteousness and faith. When Adam sinned, he lost these gifts, not only for himself but for us as well. Thus we are born without these gifts. God's image is now almost wholly obliterated from us; whatever remains is frightfully deformed.¹²

McIntyre: Dr. Calvin, do you have any clear scriptural support for your views? Many of our readers will want to look up texts to check out what you're saying.

In the beginning, God entrusted to Adam gifts which he was supposed to pass along to us—gifts like wisdom, virtue, holiness, truth, justice, purity, righteousness, and faith. When Adam sinned, he lost these gifts, not only for himself but for us as well.

Calvin: Certainly. Let me list a few Bible passages which support what I'm saying. The clearest, of course, is Romans 3:9-20 and 5:12-19. Romans 8:20-22 also assumes that even nature groans under Adam's curse. There's 1 Corinthians 15:21-22; Ephesians 2:1-3 and 4:17-19; Galatians 5:19-21; Jesus implied the sinfulness of human nature in John 3:3-6 and Matthew 16:17. And the Old Testament is filled with verses which testify to the helpless, sinful state of our fallen nature, such as Psalm 51:5 and Jeremiah 17:9.

McIntyre: Well that's enough for starters! I'm wondering how the concept of "total depravity" relates to all of this. Total depravity sounds so

depressing! Just what is it?

Calvin: Many people are unclear about the meaning of total depravity. Basically it is this: the whole man is overwhelmed—as by a deluge—from head to foot, so that no part is immune from sin and all that proceeds from him is to be imputed to sin.¹³

McIntyre: So total depravity doesn't mean I'm as bad as I could possibly be, but that I am never what I should be and that everything I do is tainted with sin.

Calvin: Exactly. May I quote you in my next book?

McIntyre: Very funny! Something that's not so funny, however, is this question about the will and human responsibility. If I am "programmed" to sin from birth, how can I be held responsible for my actions? And doesn't this doctrine of total depravity undercut moral striving? I mean, if sin is inevitable, why try to be good?

Calvin: Well, you've thrown a lot at me at once. Let's start with the human will. How free are we to choose the good? Like Adam, do we stand before each moral choice, able to go either way? I believe that since the Fall, the will is in bondage to sin. Human will is now sick, inclined toward evil, disposed toward disobedience. By ourselves, we lack the power to choose the good any more.

Therefore, all this talk about the ability of man to achieve moral uprightness apart from God's grace is sheer nonsense. On our own, we are slaves to sin. If we are free at all, we are free only in regard to obeying evil.¹⁴

McIntyre: So you don't think we can choose to do what's right.

Calvin: Not of ourselves. No. The first part of any good work is will; the other part is a strong effort to accomplish it; God is

the author of both. He gives us the power to will the good and do it.

Paul says this in Philippians 2:13.¹⁵

McIntyre: But I see unconverted people doing good things. Many unbelievers are very moral and upright people.

Calvin: Moral uprightness is still God's gift, even in those who deny God. Such demonstrations of moral rectitude are not derived from human nature carefully cultivated, but are special graces bestowed by God on persons otherwise wicked. And let's not forget that all these outward signs of virtue in the unbeliever may impress the courts of this world but cannot stand before the judgment bar of God. They are worthless in acquiring righteousness before God.¹⁶

McIntyre: In other words, even the good we see in those who don't acknowledge God, has its source in God, yet at the same time it is always tainted with sin.

Calvin: Yes, that's right.

McIntyre: Let's move on to responsibility. Why am I accountable for my sin if I'm programmed to sin?

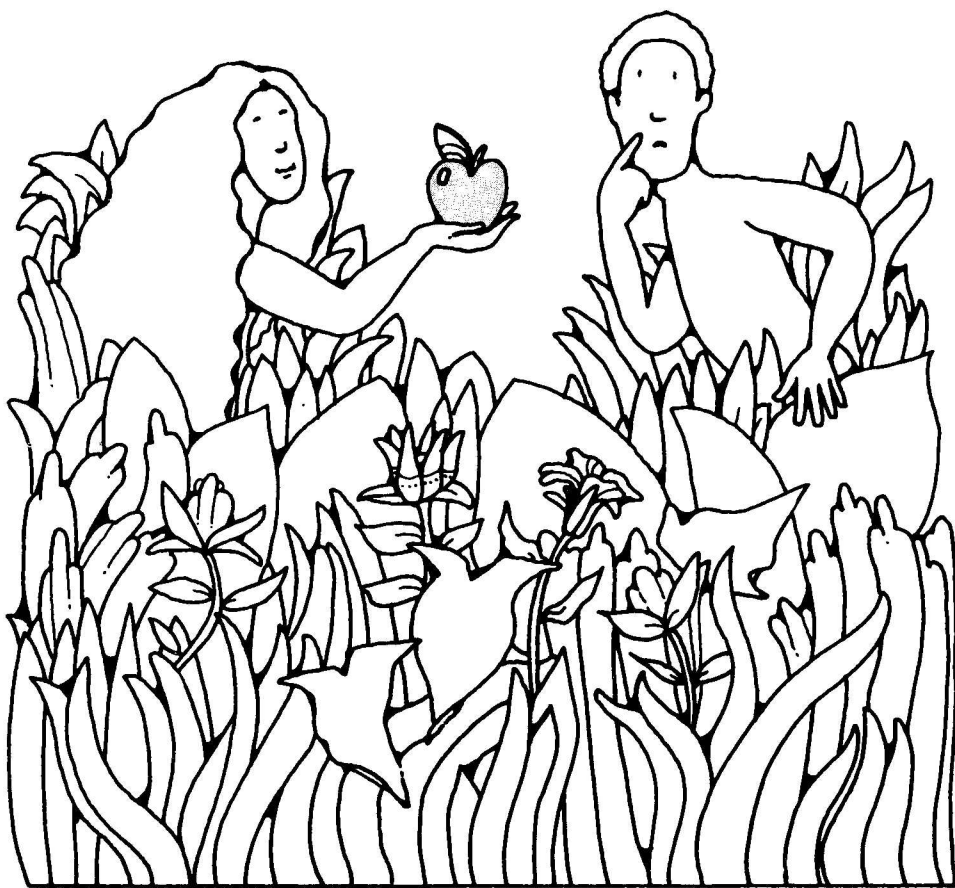
Calvin: Because your sin is still yours.

McIntyre: But sin is inevitable, you said. I can't help but sin.

Calvin: True. But you're still responsible for your sin. Though your will is no longer free to choose the good, your choice of evil is still voluntary, never forced. Therefore, you're accountable. The devil can do only evil, right? Yet he sins with his will and is accountable. The same is true of man. Man is so corrupt that, apart from grace, he can do only evil. Yet he sins willingly and is thus accountable. Many unconverted and ignorant people try to squeeze out of this tension, but they can't.¹⁷

McIntyre: Time's getting away on us here. How about human nature after conversion? Can we ever stop sinning? Do we ever regain the ability to choose the good?

Calvin: Let me approach it this way. Augustine said that, in regard to human nature, what we need is true confession, not false defense. I agree. The more time we waste



defending our own goodness or capabilities, the more blind we are to our need of grace. Whoever is utterly cast down and overwhelmed by the awareness of his calamity, poverty, nakedness, and disgrace has achieved the greatest knowledge of himself that is possible. The first rule of the Christian religion is humility; the second rule is humility; and the third rule is humility.¹⁸

McIntyre: That's very eloquent.

Calvin: More than that, it's true.

McIntyre: So you don't feel even the Christian can live without sinning?

Calvin: Christians are sinless only in the sense that God no longer counts their sins against them. They are never ethically sinless. The perversity of our flesh never ceases in this life, but continually bears new fruits just as a burning furnace shoots forth flames and sparks, or water bubbles up from a spring. This is crucial for every Christian to remember: lust never dies. So long as we remain cooped up in this prison of our body, traces of sin will remain, but if we hold fast to Christ, sin need not dominate us. At least this is how I understand

texts like Romans 7:14-25 and Galatians 5:17.¹⁹

McIntyre: And the will?

Calvin: Regeneration frees the will from absolute bondage to sin.

Through grace, we do have the power to strive after the good and choose the right—but only because of grace. To summarize, by the Lord's free mercy, the human will is converted to good and once converted perseveres in good. This is wholly dependent upon God's will, not upon any merit of man. Except through grace the will can neither be converted to God nor abide in God; and whatever it can do it is able to do only through grace.²⁰

McIntyre: Dr. Calvin, thank you for sharing these things with us. I'm sure we'll all find much to meditate upon. By the way, please give our greetings to Martin Luther if you happen to see him.

Calvin: Indeed I will. Thank you.

1. I, xv, 3. All references are from Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. The numbers refer to Book, Chapter, and

Section respectively. For example, I, xv, 3, means Book I, Chapter XV, Section 3.

2. Ibid.

3. I, xv, 7.

4. I, xv, 8.

5. Ibid.; II, iii, 5.

6. II, iii, 5.

7. II, i, 5-6.

8. II, i, 8; IV, xv, 10.

9. IV, xv, 11.

10. II, i, 8.

11. II, i, 7.

12. I, xv, 4; II, i, 5-7.

13. II, i, 9.

14. II, ii, 12; II, iii, 5.

15. II, iii, 9.

16. II, iii, 4.

17. II, iii, 5.

18. II, ii, 10-11.

19. II, i, 8; II, ii, 27; III, iii, 11; III, xi, 11; IV, xv, 11-12.

20. II, iii, 6-14.



BRAD McINTYRE

Coming Events...

Colorado

Where: First Church of God
Fourth and Hill Sts.
Grand Junction,
Colorado

When: Friday, April 18,
7:30 p.m.
Saturday, April 19,
9:45 a.m.,
11:00 a.m.,
2:30 p.m.
Sunday, April 20,
9:00 a.m.

Speaker: Desmond Ford

Just a Thought . . .

"The profoundest effects on our civilization have been produced by people who were not thinking of affecting the course of human affairs at the mundane level; they have come as the unanticipated by-products of lives that had really been intent on spiritual things."

—Herbert Butterfield

Justification and Sanctification

Justification and Sanctification, Peter Toon, Crossway Books, Westchester, Illinois, 1983, 162 pages.

Because some preachers and others fail to see that the New Testament writers employ a rich and diverse number of metaphors to express the good news, the words justification and sanctification have become stale to many Christians. Yet, despite this hazard, Peter Toon's *Justification and Sanctification*, will be of interest to all who are more than familiar with these theological metaphors. The book is divided into three parts. Part one examines the meaning of justification and holiness in the Scriptures. The second part focuses on the history of the doctrine of justification and its relation to sanctification. Part three discusses examples of recent Protestant and Roman Catholic expositions of the doctrine.

When Toon gets down to business, he is careful to avoid the pitfalls of much systematic theology. For example, on page 29, he states:

Not a little harm has been done by those preachers who have rigidly imposed upon Paul's teaching a division between justification (understood as what God declares in Heaven) and sanctification (understood as what God does in us here on earth). It is not quite so simple...justification and sanctification are two complementary ways of describing the gracious activity of God.

On page 31, he addresses the danger of forcing Paul's doctrine of salvation into a rigid, logical, sequential order (*ordo salutis*). Toon points out that the "adoption" metaphor is applied to the believer at two points in time—at the moment of conversion and again at the consummation (Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5, Rom 8:15,23). "So," he writes, "it is not a simple story—as in some popular accounts of Paul's theology—of justification being followed in an *ordo salutis* by adoption. The relation

of the theme of justification to that of adoption cannot be forced into any chronological or logical order, for they are complementary metaphors and models."

The author also warns against the danger of importing theological concepts of another writer and fitting them into Paul's scheme. "While there is a profound and deep unity in the teaching of the New Testament, there is also a diversity which must be respected" (p. 31).

With reference to the relationship of justification and sanctification, Toon offers the following important insight:

If we examine the relationship of justification and sanctification in the letters of Paul (or in the whole of the New Testament) we cannot simply conclude that we are first declared righteous and then made holy by God—justification followed by sanctification. The relationship is more subtle. First of all, the words gain their meaning from different contexts; justification is a forensic term, while sanctification is a cultic metaphor. Thus their meanings can often be parallel without being identical—sanctified in Christ and justified in Christ. Here the tense is past tense, for in the death and resurrection of Christ the people of God are already justified and sanctified. The one has reference to being declared in a right relationship with God the Father; the other has reference to being placed on God's side and consecrated to his service. (p. 41)

Toon is careful to maintain an important distinction between justification and sanctification: "Justification as an act of God, the judge, has no explicit reference to the actual making of a person righteous in a moral sense. An implicit reference, however, is

there since it is the one Lord who pronounces acquittal and calls for right relationships with the church and the world" (p. 42).

In part two, the historical section, Toon discusses the views of Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Cramner, Hooker, Wesley and others. Creedal statements such as, The Formula of Concord and the Council of Trent, etc., are also analyzed.

Part three introduces the reader to the views of Newman, Schmians, Tillich and Berkouwer. Those who found Berkouwer a little technical will appreciate Toon's comments on Berkouwer's defense of "sola fide."

I found Peter Toon's concluding remarks very rewarding. In response to Tillich's oft-quoted remark that "justification by faith is so strange to modern man that there is scarcely any way of making it intelligible to him," the author opines that too often "justification is presented as if it were the actual good news instead of the explanation of why the good news is the power of God unto salvation" (p. 141). Thus justification is only one word picture of many that could be used to make the gospel intelligible. Modern people should have no difficulty appreciating the metaphor if it is remembered the metaphor invites us to picture God as judge. Law courts and judges are surely not things of the past.

Toon's conclusion also contains questions that will jolt the reader into a new appreciation of an old gospel truth. "Have you noticed how often human beings engage in self-justification?" he queries. And the answer is assuring: "God's clear verdict of justification satisfies the craving of the human heart" (p. 143).

The average Christian reader, I suppose, would find *Justification and Sanctification* a little heavy in places, but for those who believe the harder the nut the sweeter the kernel, the book is well worth its selling price (\$6.95).

Questions and Answers

Q. What do you say to someone who is terminally ill?

A. It is difficult in the space available to give an adequate answer to this question. There can be no stereotyped approach to a terminally ill patient. Individuals vary so much that I think our ministry to them has to be to some degree "customized." Obviously the age of a patient is an important factor. Therefore, our approach to a child would be different to that of an elderly person. The patient's philosophical or religious beliefs must also be taken into consideration. One could hardly comfort an atheist with a promise from the book of Revelation. According to Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, the mental attitude of a dying patient is not static. She feels that most terminally ill patients move through five basic stages in the process of dying: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. If this is true, a visitor needs to be sensitive to the changing psychological attitudes of the patient. One or two pertinent questions can sometimes reveal the psychological state of a patient.

We should remember that we are all terminally ill and those who are able to face death with equanimity will be of greater help to the terminally ill than those who are constantly afraid of it.

Sometimes, as Kubler-Ross states in her book, *On Death and Dying*, just sitting holding a hand but saying nothing is the greatest comfort to the patient. Job's three friends may have been a greater comfort to him had they remained silent sympathizers (see Job 2:13). If the patient is a Christian, there are, of course, lots of good things in the Bible that can comfort those who are dying (e.g., Rom 8:23ff, Rev 21:1ff).

Q. Do you believe the story of Adam, Eve and the serpent in the garden is historical and to be interpreted literally?

A. If I say that I think it is a symbolic story and not to be interpreted literally some Christians will object. If I say it is historical and to be interpreted literally others will object. What both parties ought to keep in mind is that whether

we think of the story of Adam and Eve as history, or whether we think of it as a symbolic story or parable, etc., the religious truth which it conveys is the same in both cases. The devastation which sin brings in its wake has never been better depicted than in this ancient story, and in a religious sense the story is as true today as when it was first told centuries ago.

Q. How could Noah lapse so quickly into the sin of drunkenness so soon after his salvation from the flood?

A. I guess the quickest answer is one that underlines the weakness of human nature. However, some scholars maintain that the ancient Near Eastern cultures shared a common view of the close relationship of wine and fire to the sexual act. The warmth and glow of sexual union was paralleled by the proximity of fire and the indulgence of wine, so that this latter became, in the minds of the ancients, a means of replenishing the "seminal fire" that was lost through intercourse. Noah's drunkenness then, "did not stem from any deficiency of character, but from his wholehearted attempt to execute the command he received from God upon disembarking from the ark" (see *The Drunkenness of Noah*, H. Cohen, p. 7). The command was to replenish the earth (Gn 9:1).

Q. Do you think that archeologists will one day prove the Bible true?

A. No. Archeology has done much to shed light on the life situation of biblical characters and events, etc., but it will never be able to prove the Bible's repeated assertions that God has acted in history and spoken to prophets. Archeologists will never, for example, be able to demonstrate that God dried up the Reed Sea or that Elisha could make an axehead float on water. The great verities of the Christian faith, likewise, are not subject to historical in-

vestigation or scientific demonstration. Christians accept the death and resurrection of Jesus as saving events by a judgment of faith. Archeology, or any other discipline, will never be able to demonstrate that Jesus rose on the third day and obviate the necessity of faith. As Christians, of course, we do *not believe the Christian faith to be an unreasonable faith.*

Q. There is a little group in our church who have time charts based on Revelation. They are trying to get us to believe that the end of the world is near. Some of it sounds convincing. What do you think?

A. Any group that is using Christian prophecy (Mk 13; Mt 24; Rev, etc.) as a source for establishing dates for "the time of the end" or the end of the world itself is ignoring the explicit statements of Jesus (see Acts 1:6-8; Mk 13:32). Anyone who cares to compare Jesus' discourse on the last days (Mk 13) with Daniel of the O.T. and the Jewish apocalyptic literature of the intertestamental period cannot but notice the striking absence of all calculations in Jesus' vision of the end. This absence is even more remarkable when it is realized that Jesus borrowed much from Daniel in creating the prophecy of Mark 13.

The practice of constructing time charts with dates for the time of the end is a pernicious one because it arouses false expectations. The time of fulfillment passes and people are left bewildered and disappointed. Many never recover from this devastating experience. And those who watch and say, "See look what happens to those who leave 'the truth' will be held accountable in the day of judgment."

Students who use the symbolic numbers of the book of Revelation to construct timetables that embrace centuries are clearly wrong, for John, like every other N.T. writer, believed and taught that the Second Advent was near in his day (see Rev 1:1,3; 22:6,7,10,20; 1 Jn 2:18; 1 Cor 7:29; 10:11; Rom 13:12; Heb 1:1,2; 9:26).

—Noel Mason

Odds and Ends

Looking for Fellowship?

You are welcome to come to Good News Fellowship on the first Friday of each month at 7:30PM, Bonnell's Bay Hall, Station St. Bonnell's Bay. Pastor - Neville McKenzie. Ph (049) 73 3729

Good News Fellowship Normanhurst meets each Saturday at 3PM at the Normanhurst Uniting Church, corner of Pennant Hills Rd. and Hinemoa Avenue Normanhurst. Pastor - Neville McKenzie Ph. (049) 73 3729

Palm Beach Good News Fellowship meets each Saturday (except the second Saturday of the month) at 3PM at the Palm Beach Share 'n' Care Centre, 10th Ave. Palm Beach. Pastor - Ron Allen. Ph. (075) 39 5081

Brisbane Good News Fellowship meets the second Saturday of each month at 3PM at Rochedale State High School, Priestdale Rd. Rochedale. Pastor - Ron Allen Ph. (075) 39 5081

Error.

We apologise for an error on page 11 of the January issue of Good News Unlimited. In the article, Warts and All, a key phrase was missing from paragraph 3 on the page. The paragraph should have read: "Paul's picture, is of each Christian being the knot in the middle of a tug of war rope, being pulled in two directions by their spirit, which is alive, and their body, which is dead."

Radio Broadcasts

Gospel messages by Desmond Ford may be heard on these Stations:

2BBB FM Bellingen. Every Second Sunday, 8AM.

2CHY FM Coff's Harbour. Sunday 9:30 AM

3HA Hamilton. Sunday 8:15 PM.

5PBA FM Adelaide. Sunday 9:15AM.

Congress Tapes

The 1986 Congresses are over but you can still savour them by listening to the meetings on cassette. The series was entitled, "Since we Have Confidence". Six presentations are included. One each from Ron Allen and Neville McKenzie. Three by Dr Ford and one by Gillian Ford on PMS. The set costs \$10 post-paid. Order yours from the Good News office now.

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