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Solo Christo—Sola Scriptura—Sola Fida—Sola Gratia



Finding God In a
Godless Age

Brad McIntyre

Getting the Big Picture
Part III

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Editorial

Being there. Do you know what I mean? Maybe not, so let me explain.

When I was a hospital chaplain I learned about being there. I learned that being there was even more important than saying anything. Most of the time I didn't know what to say anyway, but at least I was there when tragedy struck. I remember those terrifying moments in the emergency waiting room. I can still hear the ventilator fan, the ringing in my ears, the sound of kleenex yanked from its box, the sniffing, the knuckles cracking, the easy-listening music piped in from the ceiling speaker, the Carpenters singing "Close To You." I had no pat answers but I was there. Being there seemed enough.

Dee and I are trying to teach Gloria to go to sleep by herself at night. She's three. Often a few bedtime stories aren't enough. She wants us to snuggle next to her until she falls asleep. This can be time-consuming. It can knock a whole hour out of your evening. Because I'm gone all day I'm usually the one to "put her down." I suppose I could say, "Gloria, big girls go to sleep by themselves. Now Daddy's going to leave, so you go night." But there's something about being there. A hostile and dark bedroom becomes a friendly place when Daddy is lying next to you with his arm around you. Things are OK. The shadows from the night-light are mere shadows then and nothing more.

We have a hard time being there. We're too busy to be there, too preoccupied, too absorbed in other necessary things. But down deep there is a little Gloria in each of us. Life can be like a dark, mysterious bedroom crawling with sinister shadows. We too fear loneliness and abandonment. And there is a severe shortage of reassuring arms to envelop our trembling shoulders. Most of us no longer have a Daddy or a Mommy to read us stories or stroke our head. Some of us never did. So we are alone and not there, largely because no one was ever there for us. We don't even know how to be there.

Once there was a time when at least you could count on God being there. Those were the days when God's number was still in the phone book. Now it's unlisted. Those were the days before Darwin and Marx, before Verdun, Auschwitz, and Hiroshima, before heavy metal and video movies, before mass urbanization and instant media blitzes. Today God's being there is no longer a given. In fact, the only given is that no one knows who is anywhere anymore.

It is my conviction that being there is the essence of life. Presence is therapeutic. It is not good that we should be alone. And we are not. God is there even though we have lost sight of him. It is his being there which undergirds our being — period. And if, as a society, we have lost our sense of the Holy, it is time we put out an all-points bulletin to find it again. Otherwise we will continue living alone and sleeping alone in a storyless bedroom, inhabited only by stationary shadows of gloom.

—Brad McIntyre

FINDING GOD IN A GODLESS AGE

by Brad McIntyre

God died in the mid-1960's — at least that's what I've been told by some people. Of course, the 1960's were bad enough to kill anyone, including God!

But according to Friedrich Nietzsche, God was already dead in the nineteenth century:

The greatest event of recent times — that "God is Dead", that the belief in the Christian God is no longer tenable — is beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe.¹

For Nietzsche, the death of God was an historical event! Yet not everyone realized that God had passed away. Some things take awhile to sink in.

Now who are we to believe? Did God die a hundred years ago or twenty years ago? Well, it really doesn't matter. If God is indeed dead, we're all in big trouble regardless of when he died. We are then alone in a strange universe, left to fend for ourselves, with no certain beginning and no meaningful end.

Trading the Transcendent

As a Christian, I don't know what to make of this death-of-God talk. It sounds silly. After all, how can God die and who has the authority to pronounce him dead?

I remember Billy Graham's response, "Maybe your God is dead, but my God has never been more alive!"

Still, I am haunted by the specter of God's funeral. The older I get the more I realize that for the vast majority of people, God is dead! Like an inherited tool from some distant great-great-grandfather, God hangs on the wall of the back shed, dusty, unused and irrelevant. Or, God is like a fairy tale pulled down off the shelf now and then "for the sake of the kids," then replaced and forgotten. Let's face it, throughout our industrialized and technological world, God is a museum piece. Encased in stained-glass myths, God is guarded by the aging protectors of religion who visit God's gravesight regularly, hoping for a miraculous resurrection.

Most people do not consciously reject God. They have never known enough about God to make an intelligent choice. Instead, they bloom where they're planted; they go with the flow of their culture; they become used to living in a society without God. The absence of God is taken for granted. God is not missed because society as a whole functions without God. Godlessness becomes part of life's rhythm, part of the social fabric. Godlessness, then, is absorbed as unconsciously as Wendy's motto

"Where's the beef?"

During the Middle Ages, when even the cats and dogs were religious, God was everywhere and in everything. Nothing happened apart from God. You couldn't sneeze without reference to God ("Gesundheit!"). A man would stub his toe and wonder what God was saying to him. Angels and demons battled on the stage of daily events. Planets and stars had divine attributes and the entire universe revolved around the earth. Humankind was the favorite child of divine love and the focus of God's special care. Back then society was drunk on the supernatural.

Nowadays, society is just plain drunk. We stagger about our Silicon Valleys dazed by the pace of our technology and our despair. What happened? To put it simply, we have traded away transcendence. Our generation is suffering from a massive hangover caused by the scientific revolution the night before. We are feeling both the positive *and* negative effects of the seventeenth century when "natural law" began to replace God. Today's market is rough on angels. They're just not in demand like they used to be.

But I'm not sure I like the trade we've made. I don't want to go back to the Middle Ages any more than you do, but sometimes I miss

God. I miss God on TV and in public education; I miss God in popular music and in today's best-sellers. It's hard to pray to a natural law or worship some all-pervasive yet impersonal "Principle of Being." I feel I'm part of a minority group, residing in a religious zoo with the sign "Vanishing Animal" hanging outside my cage.

I suppose I could join the majority and bid farewell to the supernatural altogether. "Bye, God. Sorry, but you are outdated. You're as obsolete as girdles." But I can't write God off that quickly. Girdles may make a comeback!

From Meaning to Machine

I am not against scientific progress. I enjoy the benefits of science as much as anyone else. Every time I flush a toilet I thank its inventor. Flying amazes me; VCR's are the neatest invention since the camera; and I have fallen in love with my word processor. In this regard, I'm not behind my times.

Then why, I ask, must our scientific age undermine our sense of the supernatural? Why does technology inevitably replace God? Does God hold a grudge against space travel or laser recordings? Are scientific discoveries naturally opposed to God? Is God anti-intellectual? Must intellectuals be anti-God?

I agree with W. T. Stace, former Professor of Philosophy at Princeton University. He points out that during the seventeenth-century scientific revolution "no idea was put forward which, from the point of view of logic, should have had the slightest effect in the way of destroying belief in God"² Did you catch that? Scientific discoveries do not *logically* cancel out belief in God! Just because we now know that the earth revolves around the sun or that $E=MC^2$ or that cholesterol buildup can cause heart failure, we need not jettison faith in God. To assume that scientific discoveries automatically destroy the supernatural just doesn't make sense.

Then how did we get to where we are today? How has the existence of God become a mere rumor?

Scientific discoveries alone do

not oppose the supernatural. But the scientific "worldview" does. What is a "worldview"? It is a way of looking at things. When you look at the stars or the birth of a child or the weather patterns or aging or war or anything, how do you explain it? There are two choices, and both have truth in them.

The religious worldview tries to find *meaning* in things. Religion believes there is an underlying purpose to all things. Everything around us exists for a purpose; all history flows according to a divine plan. The most important question asked by the religious person is "What is the hidden purpose behind everything around me?" Wherever we find this sense of purpose we can know the religious vision is at work. So the religious worldview interprets life in terms of God's overall purpose. The supernatural has a central role to play in human history and in nature. God is not left out.

Why does technology inevitably replace God? Does God hold a grudge against space travel or laser recordings? Are scientific discoveries naturally opposed to God? Is God anti-intellectual? Must intellectuals be anti-God?

But science comes along and says meaning doesn't matter as much as mechanics. The universe rolls along by natural law — cause and effect — quite apart from God. Everything can be explained from this mechanistic angle. God doesn't cause an eclipse of the sun, for example. There is no "hidden purpose" at work here. There are hard-core scientific facts which fully explain the reasons for a solar eclipse. The question of meaning is irrelevant. The only true knowledge we have about anything is what we can observe, test and prove in a scientific manner. And once we explain it, God is no longer necessary as a hypothesis. So the scientific worldview has squeezed God out

of the picture. All events have natural causes (even the Bible), and God has nothing to do with them.

It isn't the discoveries of science, then, that trouble me. It is this basic assumption of science that we live in a closed universe. Not even God can peek his nose into things anymore without getting slapped by some upstart intellectual! Everything supposedly keeps ticking away by natural law. By viewing the universe as a machine and neglecting the meaning of things, we have traded away transcendence. Now we are a crippled generation, one-dimensional, spiritually handicapped, overwhelmed by spastic desires, unregulated, gone wild and graceless.

Is That All There Is?

No taxis in sight. Typical. He starts walking toward his apartment twenty blocks north. Last night is a fog. When did he pass out? How did his date get home? Who'd he loan his car to? The streets are almost deserted except for a few Sunday morning vendors selling pretzels and mustard. Gosh, he thinks, who could eat mustard at seven-thirty in the morning? A crisp, cold wind off the lake hits the right side of his head as he crosses an intersection. Sunshine blinds his bloodshot eyes. It's the morning after and he's not ready for it. Isn't there some cozy dream to hide in for a few more hours? The party's over and the jet set is in bed or on a couch or on the floor. The glasses are empty and so is he.

In one way or another, we've all experienced a morning after or two, a fleeting moment of truth once the maddening crowd goes home, a temporary interruption of our daily programming: "We now interrupt this broadcast to bring you a special report. You are empty. There is more to life than this." Perhaps it comes at a red light or in the bathroom as we're combing our hair. Maybe it was the look in that man's face who sold you your morning paper. He knew. He knew your emptiness. Or was it that his haggard style reflected the real you, the you no one else sees?

And so it goes. We've traded away the transcendent yet we're still stuck with it. If natural law is "the way, the truth, and the life," why doesn't natural law satisfy us more? If life is truly one-dimensional, why do we so often feel drawn toward some other dimension?

Back in the 60's Peggy Lee sang:

Is that all there is? Is that all there is?

If that's all there is my friend, then let's keep dancing;

Let's bring out the booze and have a ball,

If that's all there is.

This is true. If natural law is all there is, why not live it up? Why not forget about morality and meaning? Why not become a machine just like the universe itself — an unfeeling, unintuitive machine?

After all, where do we find forgiveness or compassion or love or self-sacrifice in natural law? Nature doesn't teach us to go back into the battle to save the wounded, or to pay our taxes on time, or to say "I'm sorry I hurt you." Natural law knows nothing of convictional experiences which defy explanation but which still change lives for the better. Science can't fully explain why a man or a woman surrenders to a fleeting moment of truth and is immediately transformed. In fact, science can't explain the stubborn persistence of the religious spirit in an age of godlessness. Science has its limits.

God, Where Art Thou?

According to Genesis, God came looking for Adam. Now we need to start looking for God. But how and where? Is it possible to find God in a godless age? Can we rediscover the supernatural? I believe we can. Here are a few suggestions.

1. Accept doubt but don't sleep with it. Doubt is here to stay, like a bad relative! Face it. But once you admit that doubt is here to stay, doubt loses its hold on you. The key is to learn to live with doubt but not be paralyzed by it. Therefore, leave space for your doubts but don't invite them into your bedroom and make love

to them. Learn to doubt your doubts!

Too many people feel they can't believe until they have answered all the possible objections to faith. This is a mistake. Faith is a decision. You don't see in order to believe, you believe in order to see. God exists whether or not you can prove it. If you are waiting for unshakable scientific evidence that God exists, forget it. There is none, especially if you don't want to believe in the first place. But to those willing to believe, there is plenty of evidence both within and without. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (Jn 20:29).

2. Be open to the possibility of God. Wait before you toss God out the window. Can you be certain that God does not exist? Then why not be open to the possibility of God? This to me is the only fair and open-minded response we can make. To do less is to be hopelessly narrow-minded. To be really open, don't write God off too quickly.

A young man came to Harry Emerson Fosdick and said, "Reverend Fosdick, I no longer believe in God." Fosdick replied, "Tell me about your God. Maybe I don't believe in him either!" To be open to the possibility of God means we not only try to absorb all we can know about God, but that we let go of all false concepts of God as well. It is terrible to force yourself to believe in a God you've outgrown. But don't throw out God. Find a bigger God!

3. Look for God in the ordinary. I believe God is all around us and active in the minutest affairs of life. God shines in the ordinary if we'll open our eyes. He is there in the mundane if our spirits are sensitive to his presence.

Recently I've taken up trout fishing in the high Sierras. Before this, however, I drove by shallow, rocky mountain streams without realizing they were teeming with fish. Then one day I read an article on how to find fish in brooks and streams. To my amazement, the author pointed out that in a 150-yard stretch of a nearby stream, officials counted 87 Brook trout alone, 57 of which were "keepers." Suddenly, I went

trout-crazy!

The same is true in the spiritual realm. Ordinary life is filled with what Peter Berger has called "signals of transcendence."³ God is always wearing his heart on his sleeve. Think for a moment of our innate need for order, trust, unity, love, play, joy, hope, justice, humor and worship, to name a few. Are these not really "signals" which tip us off that God is working among us? Are such things merely a fluke of the human species? Get serious!

4. Give the Bible a chance. Make an honest effort to study the Scriptures with a view to hearing God's voice speaking to you. But let me warn you: be prepared to hear! In fact, I challenge you to say, "God, if you're there, speak to me loud and clear through the Bible." I believe the Spirit of God will gladly roll up his sleeves and go to work immediately, and soon you will have ample evidence that God is alive and interested in you as a person.

I was converted through Bible reading. I have experienced the internal power and conviction that comes when God addresses a person through written Word. God has something to say to you. If you give him a chance, the message will come through. The Bible is a witness aching to speak to your heart. Give it a chance — and I might add, start with the Gospels which describe the life of Christ.

Where Are You?

In this scientific age the real question is not "Where is God?" but "Where are you?" Are you still a slave to your doubts? Are you still closed to the possibility of God? Are you still looking for supernatural fireworks before you believe? Are you still ignoring the Bible?

Finding God in a godless age is not God's problem. It is ours. And finding God in a godless age is not a lucky twist of fate. It is a deliberate choice, but a choice that has a price tag on it, like all choices — even the choice to not choose.

1. Quoted by Paul Johnson, *Modern Times*, p. 48.

2. W.T. Stace, *Religion and the Modern Mind*, p. 90.

3. Peter Berger, *A Rumor of Angels*, p. 52.



GETTING THE BIG PICTURE?

Does God Exist?

by Noel Mason

Does God exist? Yes, No, or I don't know are the only possible answers to this momentous question. The consequences are stupendous regardless of whether we choose to answer Yes (theism), No (atheism), or I don't know (agnosticism). Think of how much depends upon there being a reality behind the simple little word "God." On July 22, a Mariner I rocket, rising from the launching pad at the start of a mission to Venus, veered so wildly off course that the ground controllers had no choice but to destroy the errant missile. The experts later

discovered that a trivial symbol (" - ") was omitted from the program controlling the navigational computers. Without this crucial symbol the instructions became confused and the rocket went out-of-control. The omission of this one tiny symbol cost the American taxpayers 18.5 million dollars! The three letters G-O-D form a tiny symbol but one that is crucial to an adequate worldview. Without God, without immortality life can have no ultimate purpose or meaning. Indeed, would it really matter if we ever existed? So before we answer this question: Does God

exist? let us appreciate at the outset that the stakes are high.

Is Atheism a Viable Alternative

In recent months I have spent many hours studying the modern forms of the traditional arguments for and against the existence of God. It is almost impossible to stay up-to-date, for the literature is so vast. However, after surveying many recent arguments for an atheistic, secular worldview, I have concluded, that, granting the secularists some rather large assumptions, the event of life and the universe coming into existence

by chance, may be *possible* but not *probable*. Let me explain. Suppose you and I lived next door to two quarrelsome neighbors, Mr. Jones and Mr. Brown. You were close friends with Mr. Jones, I with Mr. Brown. Over the years I argued that it was Mr. Jones who was the difficult person and the cause of all the disputes. You took the opposite view, believing that Mr. Brown had a number of personality problems. One day as we were walking up the street, we saw a large group of people gathered around Jones' house. There was an ambulance and a number of police cars. Amidst all the confusion we could not find out what really had happened, but we overheard the following argument between two policemen — A and B:

A. Brown has stabbed Jones to death.

B. Prove that.

A. Brown had a motive.

B. That does not prove that Brown stabbed Jones. Many people had a motive for killing Jones, nobody liked him.

A. Brown was found at the scene of the crime.

B. That fact is compatible with his innocence.

A. Brown was found standing over Jones holding a blood-stained knife.

B. He may have picked it up after the murder was committed.

A. Brown says he stabbed Jones.

B. He may be trying to cover up for somebody.¹

An increasing number of scientists and philosophers are beginning to question the secular worldviews.

Now B's points, taken individually may be correct. But when A's points are taken together, I think any reasonable person would conclude that Brown was guilty beyond reasonable doubt. In other words, while it is *possible* that Brown is innocent, it certainly is not *probable*. I feel the same is true about the atheistic,

secular accounts of the origin and formation of the universe — possible, maybe, but certainly not probable.

An increasing number of scientists and philosophers are beginning to question the secular worldviews. For example, the biologist, Lecomte du Nouy has calculated that according to the laws of probability, the emergence of living organisms from inorganic molecules would have been less than one in a hundred billion. In his book, *Human Destiny*, Lecomte du Nouy concludes that life could only begin through an act of purposive intelligence. More recently, Fred Hoyle, a former atheist, has stated that "the idea that life was put together by a random shuffling of constituent molecules can be shown to be as ridiculous and improbable as the proposition that a tornado blowing through a junk yard may assemble a Boeing 747."² Hugh Montefiore in *The Probability of God* lists eleven "remarkable events" that have occurred according to modern scientists, in the development of the cosmos. Montefiore, like Lecomte du Nouy, believes that these extraordinary "events" could not have just happened. He concludes:

I would hold that on the evidence atheism is wildly improbable . . . In my judgment, the convergence of all the factors make it far, far more probable that God does exist than that he does not.³

At rock bottom, atheism is a bold judgment of faith, "a whistling in the dark" for the probability of life on this planet just happening is, statistically, extremely remote. I say a judgment of faith advisedly, for the atheist who feels no necessity to hypothesize an omnipotent Deity to account for the existence of life and the universe is making an observation as fully as ultimate, and fully as religious, as the theist who protests that the universe cannot be understood apart from belief in God. Atheism, in my opinion, is not a viable alternative.

Is Agnosticism a Viable Alternative?

Does God exist? Many who are reluctant to make the bold assertion "there is no God" embrace agnosticism as an honest compromise. But is agnosticism a viable alternative? According to Andrew Greeley, agnosticism is a difficult faith to put into practice.

Most agnostics choose to live as though life has a purpose and become respectable, responsible members of the upper middle class.

He writes:

It is possible to be an agnostic for a generation, I think (particularly if your father was a Protestant minister). But the lesson of history is that agnosticism is not a durable compromise. One either has the faith or the fun: one is either a believing puritan or an unbelieving pagan. Agnosticism as a compromise between faith and unbelief may be tenable philosophically but it is untenable humanly. Most agnostics choose to live as though life has a purpose and become respectable, responsible members of the upper middle class. I do not know whether I should believe an agnostic's principles of unbelief or his practice of belief.⁴

The atheist and agnostic are just as vulnerable to the charge of hypocrisy as are those who merely profess to be Christians for they hardly ever practice their faith. Who can live paralyzed in the shadows of doubt and pessimism? A young agnostic came to a rabbi and said: "Rabbi, I don't believe in anything; and it's *killing* me!" It is extremely difficult to live without some degree of faith and optimism. There is within all of us, even in the most passionate skeptic, a powerful, instinctive human impulse to deny the absurdity of things and to assert the purposefulness of life. Agnosticism is not an attractive alternative.

Does God exist? How shall we decide; with reason or faith or a bit of both? Most Christian apologists believe that the Christian worldview is more *reasonable* than any alternative. This conviction is seen in the skill with which they continue to sharpen the traditional arguments for the existence of God. However, all rational arguments for the existence of God have one serious drawback: They are always vulnerable to an atheist who may have greater powers of reason.

Once there lived in the ancient city of Afkar two learned men who hated and belittled each other's learning. For one of them denied the existence of gods and the other was a believer. One day the two met in the marketplace, and amidst their followers, they began to dispute and to argue about the existence or non-existence of the gods. After hours of contention they parted. That evening the unbeliever went to the temple and prostrated himself before the altar and prayed the gods to forgive his wayward past. At the same time the other learned man, he who had upheld the gods, burned his sacred books. For he had become an unbeliever! The lesson is clear: Do not put all your eggs in the basket of reason.

For Hans Küng the bottom line is *fundamental trust* or *fundamental mistrust*. What does Küng mean by these fundamental attitudes? He is referring to our basic response to reality. A "Yes" to reality, with all its contradictions and ambiguities implies that I choose to believe that God exists and that life has meaning and purpose in spite of the negatives. A "No" to reality means I choose to believe in the nonexistence of God, and that life is basically meaningless and without value.

According to Küng, fundamental trust is a "gift" and a "task." If I exercise this gift I get it back filled with meaning and value. My own existence is given to me from the start; if I commit myself trustingly to it, I can experience the meaning of my life.⁵

Perhaps a belief in God resting on an attitude of fundamental

trust sounds a bit risky to some who long for certitude. But fundamental trust is not a leap in the dark. Küng believes that an attitude of fundamental trust stands justified at the bar of reason.⁶ Fundamental trust is a *reasonable* risk. Reason may indicate that the probabilities of the existence of God far exceed the probabilities of his nonexistence, but it can never eliminate the necessity of faith.

In some religious literature of today, faith is divorced from reason and knowledge. Many people tend to think that faith is *uncertain* whereas reason and knowledge are certain. Faith operates with a lot of assumptions, whereas reason is free from all such "weaknesses." O.S. Guinness puts the matter succinctly:

The way people talk about faith, you would think that rationality, inquiry, investigation, understanding and proof had all joined hands to form a circle of knowledge, leaving faith outside in the cold. Faith is treated as the odd man out, the misfit, the black sheep.⁷

*... without faith there
is no knowledge.
Knowledge and faith are
inseparable. Reason,
knowledge and faith are
blood brothers.*

But as Guinness goes on to say, without faith there is no knowledge. Knowledge and faith are inseparable. Reason, knowledge and faith are blood brothers. They are like Siamese twins, they are born together. Faith doesn't begin where reason ends, rather it begins where reason begins, for we must have faith in our reasoning powers before we accept the results of reasoning. As Guinness says, "There are some things we have to assume in order to know anything."⁸

In some evangelical circles today, popular speakers give their audience the impression that Christians have the answers to all the problems. Implicit in their appeals is the assumption that if you

become a Christian, you will never doubt again. But such an assertion is not part of biblical Christianity. Paul, in spite of all his visions and gifts of the Spirit, said, "we walk by faith and not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). The New English Bible translates it: "faith is our guide, we do not see him" (God).

We must not mistake our own self-confidence for the humble gift of faith. There are plenty of knotty problems today that cause even the most gifted Christian to fumble for explanations. According to Paul, salvation had to be by *faith* and not by works that no one should *boast* (Eph. 2:9). Coming to God by faith rather than by reason alone preserves us from some of the most terrible temptations of pride and conceit. Most of the greatest evils that man has inflicted upon man have come through people in positions of power who have felt quite certain about something which, in fact, was false. Faith does not brag and is not arrogant.

"For anyone who comes to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who search for him" (Heb. 11:6 NEB). Does God exist? The gifts of faith and reason combine to assure us that he does. (To be continued.)

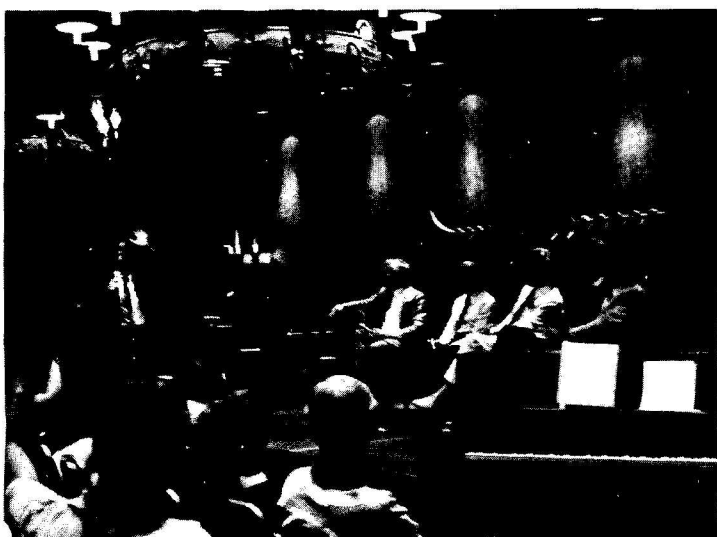
1. While I have used this illustration for different purposes, I am nevertheless indebted to Brian Davies. See *Introduction To The Philosophy of Religion*, p. 58.
2. F. Hoyle, *The Times*, December 15, 1981.
3. H. Montefiore, *The Probability of God*, p. 173-4.
4. Andrew Greeley, *Death and Beyond*, p. 50.
5. Hans Küng, *Does God Exist?*, p. 451.
6. *Ibid*, p. 450.
7. O.S. Guinness, *Doubt*, p. 29.
8. *Ibid*, p. 30.



NOEL MASON

GNU's GOSPEL CONGRESS

(Solvang)



more than 50 million dollars for Africa's hungry, Rob stressed how God sometimes bypasses the so-called orthodox channels in order to accomplish his purpose.

With power, simplicity, directness and a touch of humor, Pastor Ron Allen, from Australia, stressed the universal nature of God's grace. The implications of his message for our day were quite clear. God's universal grace is nonsectarian. In the light of God's eternal purpose — "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" — Christians of all backgrounds must actively pursue the destruction of all barriers which inhibit the grace of God.



"The Sounds of Paradise" quartet from Paradise, in northern California, along with Brad and Dee McIntyre and Carolyn Bisel, drew us all nearer to the heavenly paradise with their inspiring musical gifts. Special thanks to the members of the quartet, Toby and Mimi Harris, and Conrad and Bonnie Craft, who traveled a considerable distance to minister to us in song.

The Gospel Congress is not just a memory locked up in history for all the studies have been recorded and readers who would like to share in the blessings via tape can easily do so by request. Just ask for the series "The Riches of His Grace" (cost is \$18 US).

The 1985 Summer Congress at Solvang is now a memory. For me, it all seemed to happen so quickly I didn't get time to fully appreciate the "peak experiences." In retrospect, there were many things that made the weekend at Solvang interesting, enjoyable and successful. We (GNU staff) were glad to meet once more many of the dedicated supporters of GNU's ministries. We are thankful for the courageous, sacrificial support and for so many expressions of encouragement.

It is sometimes difficult to assess the success of a congress. However, the large number of orders for tapes of the meetings indicates that many found the studies in Ephesians of great interest. Some felt that it was one of the best congresses they had attended.

We deeply appreciated the support of our guest speakers and singers. In 1980, Pastor Rob Thompson resigned from the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. With the help of some close friends Rob and his wife, June, began a number of home Bible study groups. Today, Rob, June and assistants minister to more than 800 in the Sonrise Christian Fellowship at Fresno. Drawing our attention to the fact that the recent Live Aid Concert raised

GOSPEL MEETINGS

Brisbane and Sydney readers will be glad to learn of GNU Gospel Seminars planned for those cities, each month from September to December '85.

The Brisbane venue is: Rochedale State High School. Priestdale Rd. Rochedale, second Saturday of each month at 3p.m.

In Sydney, Normanhurst Uniting Church Hall, Hinemoa Ave Normanhurst, first Saturday of each month at 2p.m. Come and bring your friends.

A THING WORTH DOING . . .

Since the launching of GNU in Australia, its existence under God has been due to your love for the Gospel and your wholehearted support for its promulgation. Each month the GNU magazine now finds its way to 2000 addresses. As well as this, hundreds of people rejoice to receive the Tape of the Month. Allow us to share some of our correspondence with you.

"I have been thrilled with your preaching of the unfettered Gospel of Jesus Christ and would like to be a part of your ministry."

"A short quick note to thank you people for all you are doing for us. We are looking forward to your visit shortly."

"A big thankyou to GNU for a tremendous day on Feb 9. What more could be asked for? Top talks, great food and good fellowship."

"Thank you for the beautiful tapes you have sent me. I listen and praise God for His wonderful love. I have been starved of having Jesus preached."

Letters such as these come to us every week. We cannot help but think, after reading them, that what we do is worth it. What do you think?

For some time now the GNU board has investigated the feasibility of purchasing a property for the GNU office. Rental on office accommodation has proved a big drain on our finances. It is believed that we would not be responsible stewards of the means entrusted to us if we did not plan to retain the greatest possible amount of monies for direct use in evangelism.

The kind of building envisaged would probably cost about \$150,000. We are reluctant to borrow heavily for such a project. Neither do we think it wise to delve deeply into capital reserves. So we turn to you for guidance. We ask you to consider prayerfully the worth of this proposal. Is what GNU does worth doing? Is it worth doing well? If you wish that GNU be established in its own premises, we ask you to donate some of your means for that purpose. Remember, we are endeavouring to finance a project over and above normal GNU expenditure. When you send your gift please indicate clearly that you want it to go to the building fund. Thank you.

☐ I want GNU to have its own office building. I enclose for this purpose.

☐ I am unable to give money for a GNU office building now.
However I pledge..... which I will redeem by Nov 30 1985.

Name _____

Address _____

Wrestling with the Word

by Brad McIntyre

Though he slay me, I will hope in him. Nevertheless, I will argue my ways before him (Job 13:15 NASB).

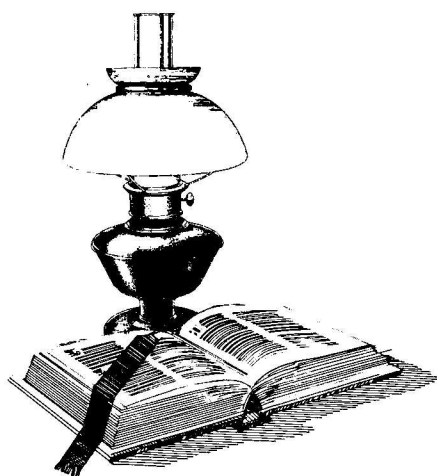
Behold, he will slay me; I have no hope; yet I will defend my ways to his face (Job 13:15 RSV).

Which of the above translations of Job 13:15 do you prefer? I can probably guess! We are all familiar with Job's famous affirmation of faith, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!" What a confession of self-abandonment to God, even a mysterious God whose ways are past finding out. We have all known moments in our own lives when God seemed hidden amidst our sufferings, yet we courageously launched out on the sea of faith and trusted in God despite our misery. This is true faith. Unfortunately, it's questionable if this is what Job meant. In fact, it appears he meant the exact opposite!

Due to textual and contextual considerations, the RSV seems to be the more accurate translation of this verse. Note also the NEB rendering:

If he would slay me, I should not hesitate; I should still argue my cause to his face.

In other words, Job is saying that he's determined to register his complaint before God even if it kills him. At the risk of death Job will still defend, argue and plead his innocence in the heavenly courtroom. As Marvin Pope says,



"His concern is not with his life, to be delivered from suffering or restored to prosperity, but to maintain his integrity and be vindicated before God and man" (Job, Anchor Bible, p.100).

Perhaps this would be easier to understand if not for our misconceptions about Job himself. There is a sense in which we have been misled by James 5:11 which says, "You have heard of the steadfastness (patience) of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful." This verse emphasizes the patient endurance of Job, the man of God. We get the feeling that Job is the epitome of patience. How many times have you heard the phrase "the patience of Job"?

But those who harp on the patience of Job show how little they know about the Book of Job! I was stunned to find that Job is anything but patient. Job is quite a complainer and in certain places he sounds downright arrogant. Some of his words border on blasphemy. Listen to these verses in which Job contends with God:

I am in despair, I would not go on living; leave me alone, for my life is but a vapor. What is man that thou makest much of him and turnest thy thoughts towards him, only to punish him morning by morning or to test him every hour of the day? Wilt thou not look away from me for an instant? (Job 7:16-19 NEB)

Job is saying, "God, get off my case! Give me a break and leave me alone. Go bother someone else." In another passage Job asks God if he enjoys afflicting people:

Does it seem good to thee to oppress, to despise the work of thy hands and favor the designs of the wicked? (Job 10:3 RSV)

Here Job, in a sarcastic spirit, wants to know if God gets a kick out of punishing the righteous and blessing the wicked. And then in chapter 10, Job summons God to court:

I would speak to the Almighty, and desire to argue my case

with God. . . . Let me have silence, and I will speak, and let come what may. . . . I have prepared my case; I know that I shall be vindicated (vv. 3, 13, 18 RSV).

It is in this feisty context that Job exclaims, "If he slays me, I will have no hope. Nevertheless, I will defend my behavior in his very presence!" Job is convinced of his innocence, deeply hurt by his suffering, and willing to lay his life on the line in calling into question divine justice.

The textual evidence behind this interpretation of Job 13:15 is too complex to be of any interest to most readers. Those who want to dig deeper are referred to Samuel Terrien's fine discussion of this verse in the *Interpreter's Bible*, 3:1004-5.

Job represents us. Like us, he complains to God; like us, he gets mad about unjust suffering; like us, he claims to be innocent and undeserving of his woes. I'm glad Job is human and that in his humanness he feels the freedom to lash out even at the alleged irresponsibility of God. But finally Job is silenced (as we all are) by the difficult problem of evil. And in his despair he acknowledges that he doesn't really know what he's talking about (Job 40:3-5).

Isn't this true of us whenever we speculate on the issue of suffering? Like Job's friends, we can come up with some novel theories about why the innocent suffer. But in the end, like Job, we are thrown back on faith. For when God revealed himself to Job (Job 38:1-42:6), he ignored Job's questions entirely. The Book of Job doesn't solve the problem of suffering at all. It resolves nothing. Instead, it shows the failure of human wisdom to comprehend the mystery of human suffering. Further, it directs us to God who somehow is still there and still runs things despite our present sufferings.

There is no adequate way of explaining unjust suffering apart from faith and resignation. This is the message of Job.



The King Who Was A Birdox

Gillian Ford

"This is Nebuchadnezzar, Neb, as you've been calling me. I'm writing to everyone in the world. I thought you'd like to hear about my dream. Yes, I know I had one in chapter two, the one I couldn't remember, but this one's different. This time, I know exactly what I dreamed.

"There I was, resting and flourishing, and I dreamed there was a huge tree in the middle of the earth. It was so high, it reached right up to heaven and it could be seen right around the world.

"It had beautiful shady leaves and lots of gorgeous fruit — there looked enough to feed everybody who lived on earth. Huge flocks of animals rested in its shadow and there were layers of birds on every branch. It was such a pretty sight and so restful.

"But that's when the angel came down in my dream and made a speech. 'Cut it down,' he said. What a shock! And then he changed from saying 'it' to 'him,' so I sensed the tree must have been a person. 'Cut it down,' he repeated. 'Cut off **his** branches and shake off **his** fruit and leaves. Shoo the beasts away from **his** shadow and flick the birds off **his** branches. But leave in a stump and put a band of iron and brass around the roots.'

"You know that funny things happen in

dreams. The "him" the angel talked about meaning the tree became a beast and the angel kept on making his speech. 'Let him get wet with morning dew. Give him a heart transplant and make him an animal instead. For seven years are going to pass during which this "tree" becomes a beast. This is decreed by all the holy angels so that all the living may know God.'

"Now, you have to admit that that's a strange dream. But at least I remembered it. Despite that, when I asked all my magicians what it meant, they didn't know — even though I told them all the details this time. So I called in Belteshazzar — that's the name I gave to Daniel when he came to Babylon. But I'll call him Daniel for your sakes since it's half as long.

"Daniel sat as still as a stone for about an hour as though he were in shock and I almost had to tear it out of him — he was scared to tell me what it meant because it was about me. 'Neb,' he said, 'that tree is you. You've grown really great and nearly filled the whole earth, just like that tree. You've provided shade for the animals and branches for the birds. It means you've provided food and shelter for everyone on earth.'

'It's not **just** you, Neb — it really means all the pagan kingdoms of the world. You see, when it's cut down, the roots are still left and the iron and

brass band put around it is probably the same as the brass stomach and thighs and the iron legs of the statue in chapter two. Just as you were the head of gold in that image, you're also the branches and leaves of the tree. You see, Neb, the image and the tree represent all the pagan nations that rule the world until the Messiah will come. (The "Messiah" would be God's anointed one — Jesus — but nobody knew that then).

'These nations are all like you. I hesitate to say it, but when the angels were asked to write down three things about all the human beings on the earth, they put down "proud," "Idolatrous," and "persecuting." Those words describe the heart of all the nations featured in the statue and the trees. And they especially describe **you**.

'Now, I hate to tell you this,' continued Daniel — 'but the angel came to pass judgment on you because you've been proud, mean and you've worshiped yourself. So you're going to become a beast. You've been very beastly and you'll finally become an animal. Probably an ox.

'They'll push you out of the palace and drive you from town into a field. You'll have to eat grass and you'll wake up each morning drenched with dew. For seven years you'll wander around the field looking down at the ground like a bull does — it'll help you to be humble. Now the stump tells us that your kingdom will remain and if you are sorry and start worshiping my God, you'll get it back.

'Now, O Neb,' said Daniel, 'do yourself a favor and change so that it needn't happen. Stop doing cruel and naughty things and be kind and merciful to the poor.'

"But I didn't listen." (Neb's back again.) "Why should I? I mean, the last dream hadn't come true either, so why should I worry? Do you know, it took a whole year to happen. How patient God is. But one day I was out walking in the palace

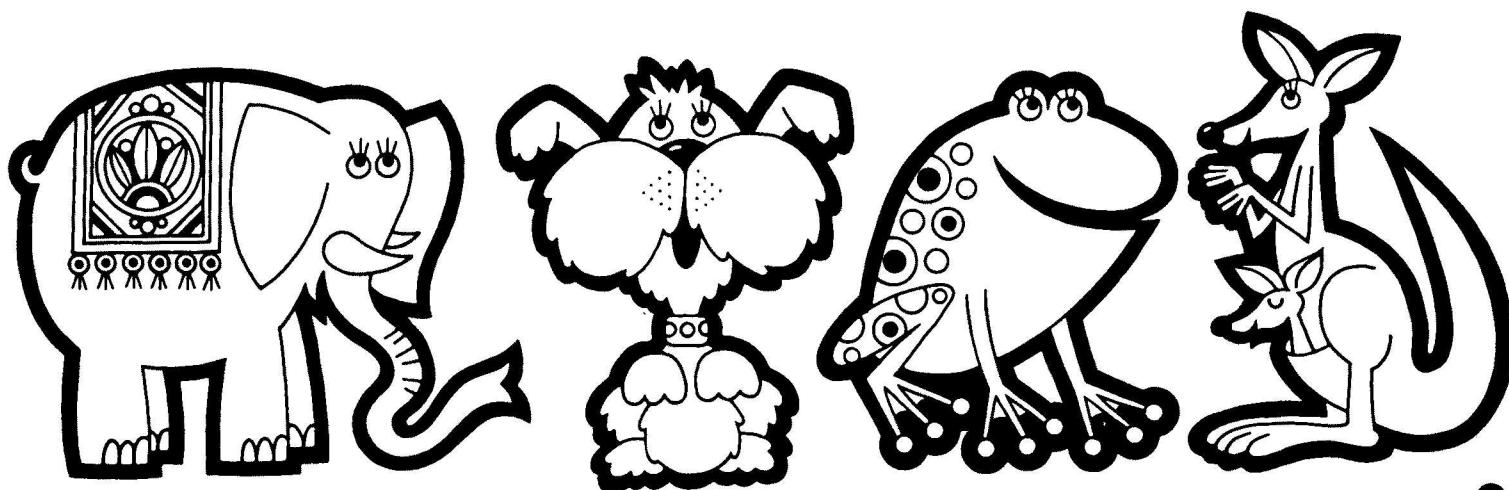
and feeling pretty good. I was sort of patting myself on the back. I'd designed the palace and ordered all the materials and had it built. It was the best one in the world at the time and it looked pretty neat. So, on thinking about it, I said, 'Is not this Babylon the great, which I MYSELF have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?'

"Just as I said it, blow me down, if a voice didn't boom out from heaven. 'King Neb, that's it! Your rule has been taken away.' Apparently that was the last straw. Well, I started to chew at some grass nearby and my servants nearly had a fit. They ended up putting me in a paddock. Daniel was right. I did get wet with the morning dew and my hair grew like a bird's feathers all over my body. My nails became like birds' claws. It was so embarrassing. I looked like a cross between a bull and an eagle — you might say a bird-ox.

"Seven years later, I sort of became fed-up with myself. One day I was so weary that I just lay down on my back and put my hooves up in the air. And do you know that as I did, I raised my eyes to heaven and somehow my right mind came back to me. I was able to praise God and I laid there and did just that.

"Well, after that, everything came back to normal. It was a wonderful lesson. I found out that Daniel's God is greater than any king on earth and he can juggle lives so that those who walk in pride are humbled. I see so many things differently now, but I always feel uncomfortable around oxen and I don't like birds.

"I hope you've learned the lesson quickly that it took me seven years in a wet field to learn. Don't be proud, for everything you have and everything you do comes from God and if you don't put God first, he will have to humble you to stop you hurting yourselves and others."



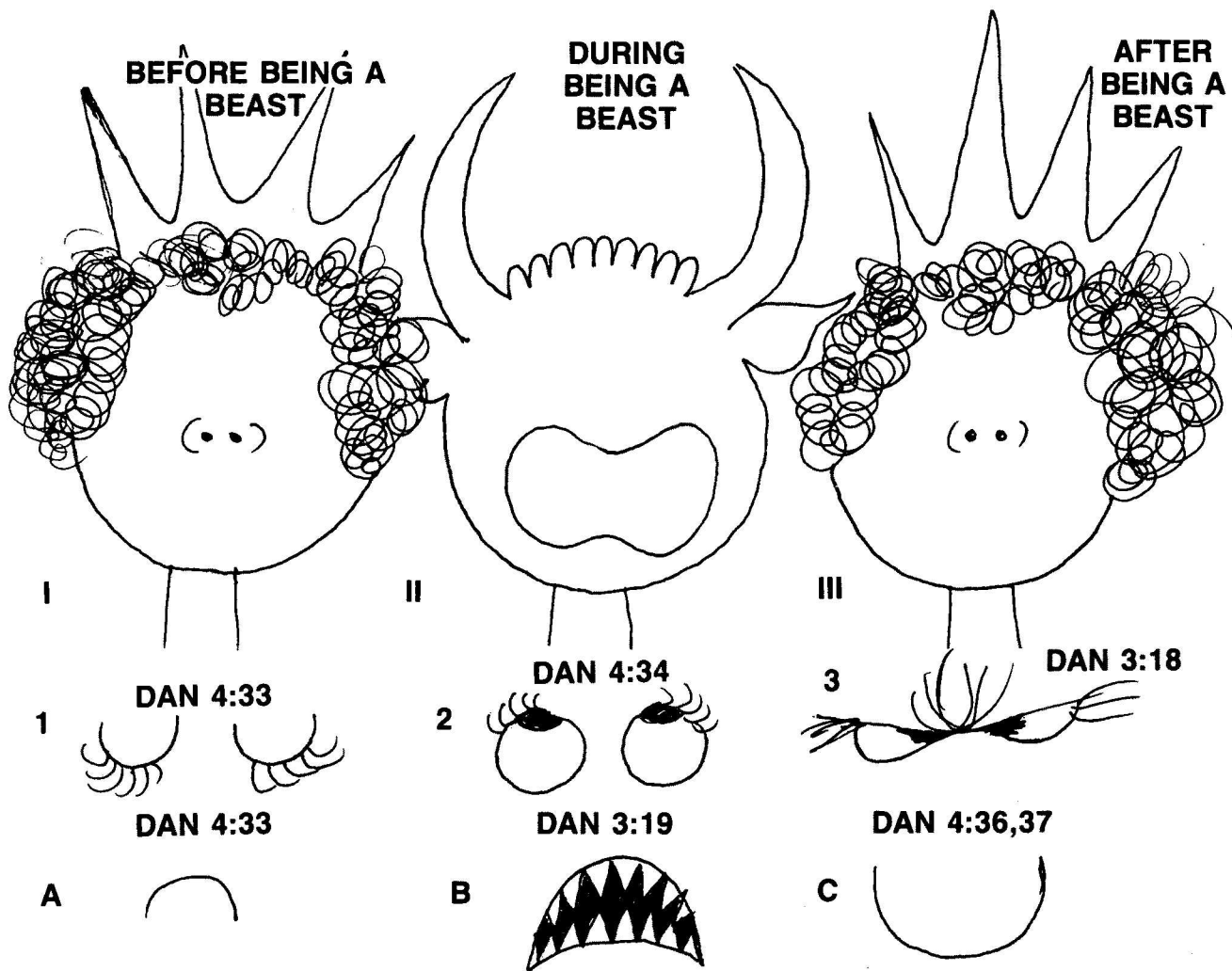
HOW TO BECOME A BEAST

Look up the texts and fill in the gaps. Use the King James' Version.

1. BE PROUD. Daniel 4:30. Is not this great Babylon, that __ H__ __ B__ __ for the house of the kingdom, by the M__ __ of M__ P__ __, and for the honour of M__ M__ __?
2. BE UNFAIR. Daniel 2:5. If you will not make known unto me the D__ __ with the I__ __ thereof, ye shall be C__ __ in P__ __.
3. FORCE PEOPLE TO DO WHAT YOU WANT. Daniel 3:1. Nebuchadnezzar made an I__ __ of G__ __ and (v.5) told the people to F__ __ down and W__ __ the G__ __ image, and said that if they didn't (v. 6) they could be C__ __ into the M__ __ of a B__ __ F__ __ F__ __.
4. BE ANGRY. Daniel 3:19. Nebuchadnezzar was F__ __ of F__ __.
5. BE CRUEL. Daniel 3:19. He commanded that they should H__ __ the F__ __ one S__ __ T__ __ more.
6. LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD, ACKNOWLEDGE THE POWER OF GOD, BUT DON'T MEAN IT AND DON'T CHANGE. Read Daniel 2:47; 3:28,29; 4:27.

I hope you've realized that it's not a good idea to become a beast.

Here is Nebuchadnezzar's face, before, during and after being a beast. Look at each pair of eyes down below and fit them with the face that most suits them. Do the same with the mouths. Then copy them and fill in the blank faces. If you look up the texts, they'll help you and the answers are below, if you have trouble.



ANSWERS: I-3-B GO TOGETHER, II-1-A GO TOGETHER, III-2-C GO TOGETHER

THE CLOCK THAT WOULDN'T TELL THE TRUTH

Desmond Ford

As you know, boys and girls, every clock is meant to tell the truth about time. Every clock is meant to tell us how long it is until the next meal, the next appointment, or to going to bed, etc. Let me tell you of one clock that wouldn't do this, a clock that refused to tell the truth about time.

It happened long ago in a small town in Europe. Everybody depended upon the town clock, for it had never gone wrong, and its chimes could be heard all over the town. But the worst thing happened. It stopped. It no longer told the truth. The mayor of the town called in all sorts of clock makers and clock repairers but none of them had any success. So they gave up and just frowned everytime they looked at the clock that refused to tell the truth. But one day a stranger came to town.

As the stranger passed by the clock he too looked at it. And he too frowned. He went inside the building and called for the janitor and then asked permission to go and look at the clock and see if he could start it again.

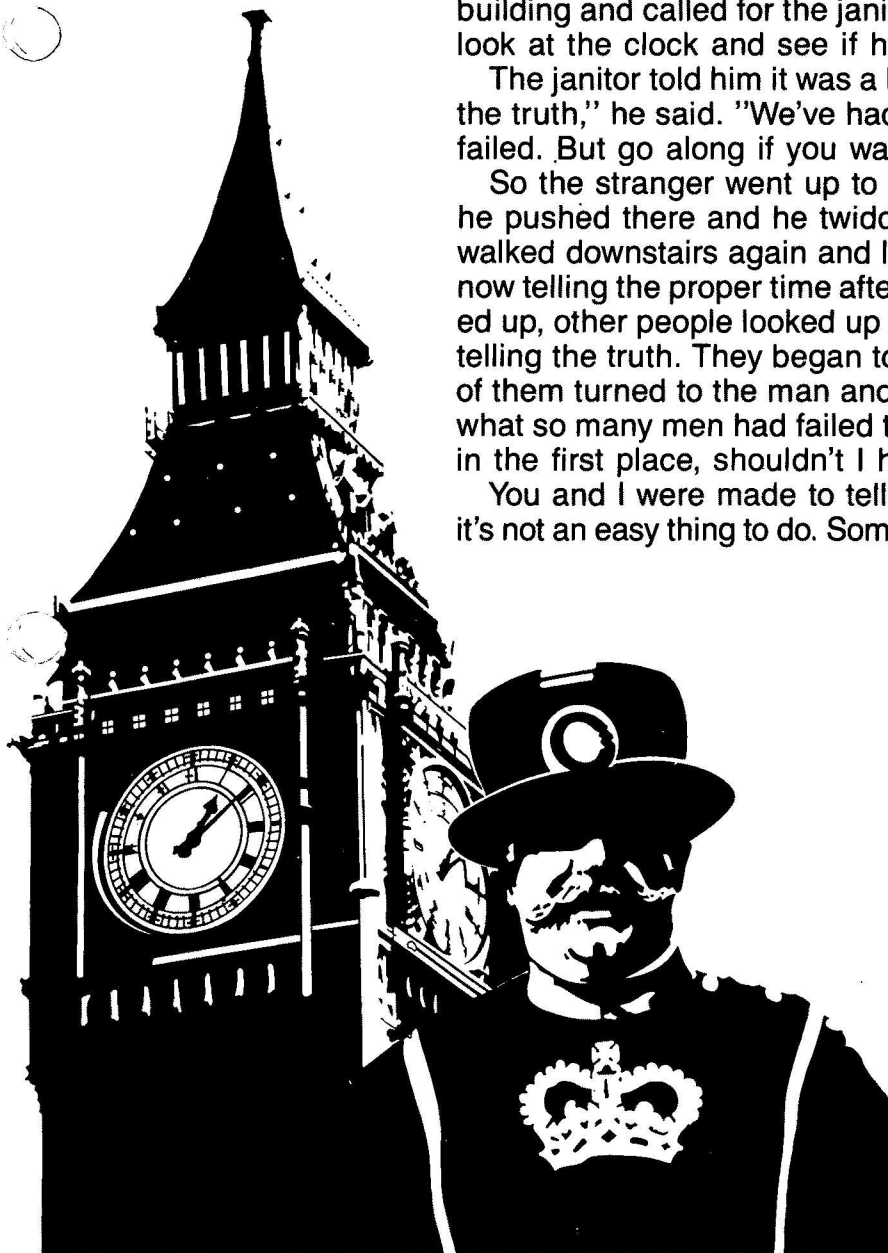
The janitor told him it was a hopeless case. "That clock will never tell the truth," he said. "We've had all sorts of people try and they have all failed. But go along if you want to."

So the stranger went up to the clock tower and he pulled here and he pushed there and he twiddled another place. And after a while he walked downstairs again and looked up at the face of the clock. It was now telling the proper time after many, many days. As the stranger looked up, other people looked up too and they saw that the clock was now telling the truth. They began to shout and rejoice but suddenly several of them turned to the man and asked him how he had been able to do what so many men had failed to do. His answer was: "I made the clock in the first place, shouldn't I have been able to repair it?"

You and I were made to tell the truth as certainly as any clock. But it's not an easy thing to do. Sometimes we forget about God so thoroughly

that we stop telling the truth. We can't tell the truth because we're no longer living the truth. And no one on earth can help us very much. What we need is the help of the one who made us in the first place. This is what true religion is all about. True religion invites us to read in the Bible about the Son of God who loved us and who gave himself for us in order that he might make us true again. To learn of the Savior is to love him. And to love him is to reflect him.

And so the clock that wouldn't tell the truth has a lesson for us. It needed its maker to help it give the proper time. And we need Jesus to help us tell and be the truth. Ask him to visit you today and put you straight. He will.



Odds and Ends

Anonymous Donors

GNU Acknowledges receipt of these anonymous donations:

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New Pastor

Auburn Christian Fellowship is a congregation attached to the American office of GNU. Recently they hired their first full-time Pastor. His name is Rich Baldwin. Rich is looking forward to a time of enrichment and growth at Auburn.

U.S. Visit

GNU Australia Director, Pastor Ron Allen recently spent two weeks in California. He had been invited to participate in a Gospel congress there. The venue for the meetings was Solvang, a delightful town with all of its buildings reminiscent of Danish village in style. The congress was attended by 150 glad and eager souls.

Pastor Allen spent several days visiting and consulting with the GNU Pastoral staff at their Californian office. At weeks end he was privileged to attend worship services and to preach at the Auburn Christian Fellowship.

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