

# Good News Unlimited

Solo Christo — Sola Scriptura — Sola Fida — Sola Gratia



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## Editorial



Here we are again at the *end* of the old (1985) and at the *beginning* of the new (1986). Endings and beginnings are not always easy. Indeed, they can be quite difficult. Sometimes we find it difficult to let go of the old and embrace the new. It's so easy to become a captive to our history, to the old, to that which is past and gone. Beginnings confront us with the new which is often difficult to accept because we tend to be comfortable with the old and familiar. The transition from the old to the new is complicated by the fact that there is always something of value in the old. Something to be cherished, remembered and revered.

The old has one advantage over the new — it is tried and tested. I heard one pragmatist say, "It's worked for me in the past and so I guess I'll keep doing it that way in the future." But what if there is a new, better way?

Throughout biblical history there have been times when God has spoken through the voice of those who have made a passionate plea for the *old*. Consider Jeremiah's cry: "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the *old* paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls . . ." (Jer 6:16). Yet the same prophet under different circumstances gave expression to a vision of something new. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, That I will make a *new* covenant . . . I will put my law in their inward parts . . ." (Jer 31:31,33). To the same prophet came God's promise of a new initiative, a new covenant, unlike the old, with the law being written upon the heart. The new, of course, would have some continuity with the past, yet there would be something distinctively novel about it. Isaiah, too, challenged the generation of his day with a fresh vision. "Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a *new* thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? . . ." (Is 43:18,19). But the "new thing" was patterned on the past (Exodus).

This tension between endings and beginnings, between the old and the new, has sometimes been expressed by the polar words, vision and revision, form and reform, continuity and discontinuity. The transition from B.C. to A.D. was a time of vision and revision. It was a time of endings and beginnings. It was a difficult time, for the early Christian communities found themselves tugged between the old and the new, between vision and revision. The life of Christ brought a fresh perspective on many things. Matthew's Gospel records something of the tension between the polarities of vision and revision: "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to *abolish* them but to *fulfil* them. . ." (Mt 5:17-20). ("Fulfil" is not the opposite of "abolish"!)

Some Christians were unable to make the transition without losing patience with those who emphasized the new. "There is impressive evidence" writes Raymond Brown, "that ultraconservative Jewish Christians criticized, propagandized against, and endangered Peter and Paul in the 40's and 50's, especially in Jerusalem" (*Antioch and Rome*, p. 126). Some scholars believe that a conservative Christian party manipulated the deaths of Peter and Paul.

Yes, endings and beginnings are difficult times. But they are also challenging and exciting. The Christian church, indeed every Christian community, needs a conservative like James and a progressive like Paul. The church must learn to live in the tension between the old and the new, between vision and revision, form and reform. We can't travel very far in a car that only has a brake, and who would risk driving in one that only had an accelerator? There are times in any journey when a motorist needs both to survive!

Today, 1986 lies before us with all its openness, potential and its possibility for revision and reform. But inevitably we shall take something of the past (1985) with us. No one, not even the most fanatical iconoclast has been able to destroy the past. May God give us the patience to cope with the new as we cherish the enduring wisdom of the old.

—Noel Mason



# STARTING OVER

**A**nn lost her ten-year-old daughter, Amanda, in a bicycle accident. She fell apart. For months she withdrew into a solitary cocoon of grief. Despite professional counseling, Ann could not accept Amanda's death.

Finally, one therapist took a risk. Without giving Ann any advance notice, he played Amanda's favorite record and then placed Amanda's picture on the table. Gently he encouraged Ann to listen and look. Ann's trembling hands cautiously caressed the picture. Her eyes slowly focused on Amanda's face for the first time since the accident.

"Ann," he said, "Amanda is dead. See her picture? Your relationship to her will never be the same again. She is dead, Ann. You will never play with her again. You will never hold her again. You will never sing with her again. She is dead. But you are alive. Your life, Ann, must continue without Amanda."

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*by Brad McIntyre*

Suddenly Ann exploded in a burst of tears. She hugged Amanda's picture to her breast, crying, "She's dead . . . she's dead . . . she's dead."

"Ann," the therapist continued, "I want you to talk to Amanda and tell her goodbye."

Ann's face tightened, she swallowed hard and sat frozen before the picture. Five silent minutes passed.

"Amanda, honey," she began, "I've missed you so. I want you back but you can't come back. Now I have to say goodbye. Mommy loves you, Amanda, but I have to get on with my life. Goodbye." Ann placed the picture back on the table and dried her eyes. She was quiet now — even relaxed — and ready to start over again because she had learned to say goodbye.

## Starting Over Again

Starting over takes time. There is so much junk from the past to discard, so many memories and

emotions to process. Every time we start over we leave a part of ourselves behind. Sometimes, like Ann, we can't bear the pain of starting over, so we remain fixed in the past, unable to get on with our life.

Perhaps you have changed jobs recently. How did the anxiety of this experience affect you? Certainly it took some adjusting on your part to learn a new trade or to relocate or to fit into a new work schedule.

Perhaps you are divorced. Was starting over easy? Did you feel whole again overnight? It takes years for most people to process the pain and upheaval of a divorce. Only time can heal certain wounds.

Maybe you have recently decided to go back to school. Hitting the books again can be depressing, especially if you have a family. There will be times when you wonder if you're crazy, times when you question if the price is worth it. But one thing is certain: in time you will know if it's worth it.

Whenever we lose a loved one we start over again, learning to live without him or her. Nothing is the same any more and it takes time to adjust. Every widow or widower is, in a sense, starting over again. Every grieving parent gathers the remaining pieces of his or her life and begins the long process of rebuilding.

How about your dreams? Have you ever lost a cherished dream? Backup dreams are rare. So for a while we scurry around searching for a new dream or we float, not knowing what to do or where to go.

Starting over is never quick or easy. It always costs us something and we are never the same afterwards.

## Learning to Say Goodbye

In preaching class I was told, "You must have a great beginning and a great ending. Even if the body of your sermon is weak, a great beginning and ending will cover a multitude of sins!"

The same is true of life. Endings and beginnings are the most important moments in our development. These are the transitional phases marking life's major turning points. But how many



of us know how to say goodbye properly? Most of us hate goodbyes. We feel embarrassed or ashamed or hurt. Yet the art of closure can help us weather even the worst tragedies.

I remember a certain group of slaves who revolted and escaped from Pharaoh. They wanted to say goodbye to Egypt, but one wonders if most of them did. When things got rough, they complained, "Why did we ever leave Egypt?" (Num 11:20). They couldn't endure the hardship of starting over because they had never said goodbye to Egypt once and for all.

I've met women who are stuck in bad love relationships but who are afraid to break them off. They treasure the good times from the distant past when love was new and feelings were warm. Their present affair is killing them, but they refuse to say goodbye to the past. They are not decisive enough to start afresh. And so they waste years and precious opportunities for building healthier relationships by dragging their feet.

You can't start over again until you say goodbye with all your heart. The past must remain the past. Our trouble is that we try to begin again without saying goodbye to the past. We want to stay in touch with our past, like a security blanket. This is necessary to some extent, but we will never have the courage to forge a new tomorrow until we make our peace with the past and bid it farewell. The first step in starting over is learning to say goodbye decisively.

### Learning to Wait

The second step in starting over is learning to wait. Ann waited too long to say goodbye to Amanda. The opposite danger is to not wait long enough. People who do this are usually trying to deny the pain of parting. They rush through goodbyes awkwardly, as if preoccupied with more important things. They pretend that goodbye doesn't hurt. But goodbye always hurts, even fast goodbyes.

Instead of processing the pain of a divorce, a person may jump immediately into another relationship

wholly unsuited to his or her needs. Instead of dealing with the pain of losing a son, a father may become a workaholic, hiding his sorrow beneath his paperwork.

There is a wilderness between Egypt and the Promised Land, a wilderness of intense self-examination. There is no shortcut to Canaan. Saying goodbye is one thing; knowing where you're going and why is another. Give yourself time to start over.

The Israelites expected to pull into the Promised Land on the first train out of Egypt. They counted on traveling the express route nonstop to the land of milk and honey. Moses\*himself\*never foresaw a forty-year layover in the desert.

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***Starting over is never quick or easy. It always costs us something and we are never the same afterwards.***

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We are told God never intended a nonstop trip to Canaan. Instead, God planned a gradual takeover. He promised to drive out the residents of Canaan, but not in a year,

... because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land. (Ex 23:29-30)

God's plan didn't include a blitzkrieg of Palestine. His plan was based on a time-consuming process of gradual domination. "Little by little" — this was God's motto.

We learn to start over again little by little. Little by little our pain subsides, our confidence increases, our goals crystallize, our plans take shape, our courage returns and our heart opens up again. You can't rush this process, but you can aid it by staying in touch with your feelings and by participating in some sort of nurturing community.

Even one close friend is enough to help you work through your transitional phase. The important thing is to stay in touch with God, with yourself, and with a support group. Don't rush into new commitments on the rebound. Take time to journey before settling down.

### Credit Mania

Yet let's face it, our culture doesn't nurture thoughtful self-examination. If God's motto is "Little by little," America's motto is "Give me all of it now!"

A recent article in Newsweek magazine described the mania in our society for credit cards. Each year Americans charge billions of dollars of merchandise. Those tiny and colorful plastic cards symbolize economic power and such power is easily abused.

But what's the main reason behind our mania for MasterCard? Desire. The article said that Americans want things "now" without having to wait. It takes too long to save enough money to buy a weight-lifting set, so charge it. It takes too much time to afford a new sofa or a stereo, so charge it now and pay later — with interest. Credit mania feeds the prevailing atmosphere of impatience. Why wait and work for something when you can have it now and pay later?

At the same time, why expend energy evaluating your past, present and future? Just live for today, conceal your pain, and get whatever you can now!

In our society of force-fed cattle and fast-food people, we are trained to expect immediate results. The girl at Taco Bell slings a bean burrito at me as if I'm holding a gun to her head. The light turns green and two seconds later the guy behind me beeps his horn. A friend tells me she can get over a hundred TV channels on her new satellite dish. "The only problem," she says, "is by the time I check all the channels I've missed the show I wanted to watch!" And of course, who can ignore the simple delights of self-service gas stations, those idyllic havens of patient courtesy?



Like the Israelites, we want to conquer the Promised Land in the first assault. We want to say goodbye quickly and get on with our unexamined and harassed lives. We are unaccustomed to a sustained process of self-examination.

But part of starting over again is taking the time to find yourself. This means exploring your interests, talents, opportunities, values, hopes, assets, liabilities and inner necessities. It also involves a compassionate understanding of your social obligations, such as family and community. Starting over means learning to wait.

### Learning to Recommit

The third step in starting over is recommitment. Somehow a person needs to take the leap again and commit himself or herself to someone or something. Commitment is the glue that holds our lives together. Without commitment there is safety but also death. An uncommitted life is a life of secure death.

The theme song from the movie "Foul Play" has these lines,  
" . . . I live in a shell, safe from the past  
and doing OK, but not very well.  
No jolts, no surprises, no crisis arises,  
my life goes along as it should,  
It's all very nice, but not very good."

This is the language of the uncommitted life. But the song continues,

"And I'm ready to take a chance again,  
ready to put my love on the line for you.  
Believing with nothin' to show for it . . .  
You get what you get when you go for it."

This, on the other hand, is the language of recommitment. "Go for it!" Take the risk of starting over. Nothing worthwhile is accomplished without a risk. A risk-free life is a life of squandered potential. To be all that you can be means sticking your neck out and risking failure and hurt. But that's the only way to start over



again. Living in a cocoon may be safe, but you only cheat yourself from what the world has to offer and you cheat the world from what you have to offer.

### Conclusion

Ann made a choice. She decided to start over again. She took the risk to carve out a new life without Amanda. It wasn't easy, but then starting over never is.

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### *Endings and beginnings are the most important moments in our development.*

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The many endings we experience can do us in if they are the last word. But when our lives are forward-looking there is hope. The moment we decide to stay in the past, we're dead. The moment we allow past achievements, hurts, or failures to limit our vision, we dry up. We are then like an actress who lives off the fame of her first picture only. Or we are like spurned lovers who refuse to love again because we don't want to be hurt.

But is this the way God meant us to live? Are we to be content with past achievements? Are we to

be paralyzed by past hurts?

Faith in Christ should give us the courage to start over again. Our God is certainly the God of comfort who comforts us in all our sorrows (2 Cor 1:3-4). He draws near and weeps when we weep.

But I believe the same God who comforts us also strengthens us to rise above the hurtful endings of life. God calls us to new beginnings. "Don't be content with the past," he says. "Don't be fixated on your pain. Rise up in my strength and move forward in faith, and I will give you a new tomorrow."

This new year, as we start over, let's take hold of God's power and say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Php 4:13).



**BRAD MCINTYRE**

# TO HELL WITH STANDARDS

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***The twentieth century has witnessed the violent deaths of more people than in all preceding centuries combined.***

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*by Desmond Ford*

**T**o hell with standards! That has been the motto of millions of people in the democracies in recent decades. During the 1930's, when most were preoccupied with the struggle for bread because of the great depression, moral standards still prevailed to a considerable degree. But with post-war prosperity came moral decadence. When men and women no longer have to fight for food, when they are well clothed and warm, then their inquiry is "What can I do to avoid boredom?" It is at that point we are likely to hear the cry — "To hell with moral standards."

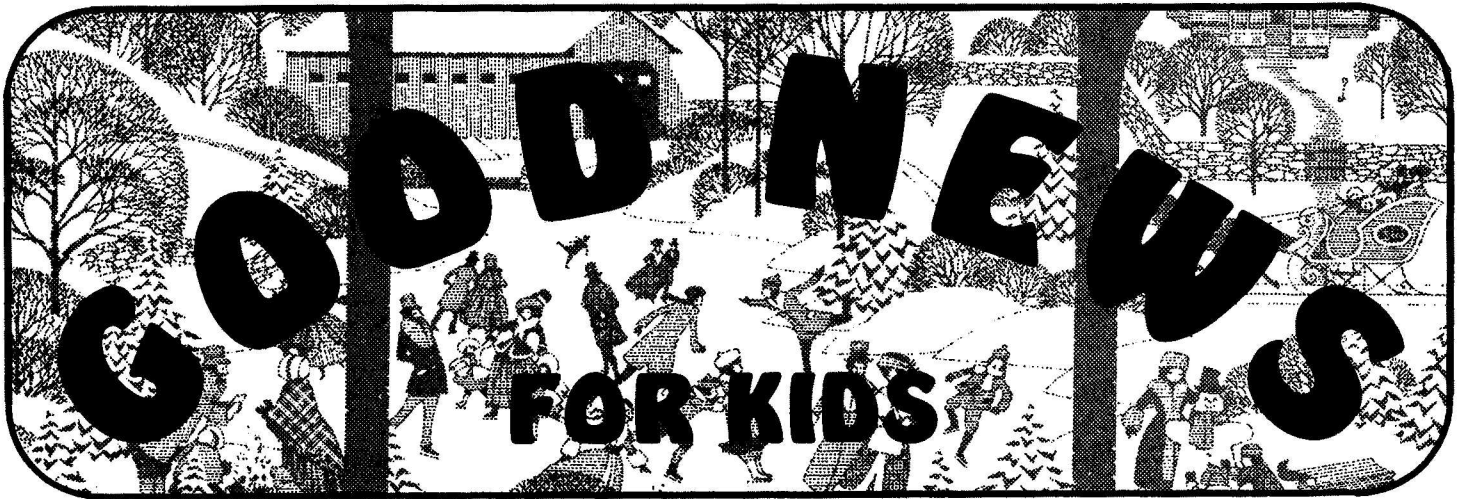
## **Declining Standards**

Let's review quickly the twentieth century. It has witnessed the violent deaths of more people than in all preceding centuries combined. Over one hundred million people have perished violently since 1900. Hitler's murder of six million Jews, Stalin's execution of ten million Russian land owners — these iniquitous crimes were repeated by multiple dictators of the Third World such as the cannibal, Idi Amin, who cut up his own wife and stored the parts in his refrigerator to be consumed at leisure.

Turn for a moment to that bastion of Christianity and democracy — the United States of America. Post-war prosperity led millions in this land of the free to act as though anarchy were king and chaos the objective. In the

sixties, racial riots and student upheavals precipitated the igniting of innumerable city fires, looting, the dynamiting of the university buildings and death. Simultaneously, family morality faltered and fell. William Manchester, in his review of over forty years of American history (*The Glory and the Dream* — 1932-1972) has a section entitled "Reaping the Whirlwind," covering the years 1961-1968 and climaxing with the chapter entitled "The Year Everything Went Wrong." He tells of rioters running amuck in 114 cities in 32 states, involving scores of deaths and thousands of casualties. In Detroit alone, where the extent of the arson was almost unbelievable, there were 1600 fire alarms in 11 days. This was the decade of the assassinations of President Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy; the decade of the Ku Klux Klan acting with senseless violence; the decade when sexual morality was rejected by most of the teenage generation and many of their seniors; the decade of the hippie, the drug culture, the My Lai massacre. Thousands upon thousands belonging to the most prosperous country on earth acted like animals.

There were gods aplenty on the American scene. Take commercialized sport for example. "It turned millions of men who ought to have been active outdoors — for their own benefit, if nothing else — into beer-drinking, flatulent spectators, watching young athletes romp joyously in gilded playpens."<sup>1</sup> No wonder Vance Packard referred to this generation as



# THE MAN WHO THINKS HIMSELF GOD AND THE GOD WHO MAKES HIMSELF MAN

## Daniel 7 & 8

Gillian Ford

Last time, we talked about the four beasts of Daniel — you'll remember the lion, Babylon, the bear, Medo-Persia, the leopard with four heads, Greece and the terrible-looking beast which many think was pagan Rome. All the animals in this dream represented nations who were the enemies of God's people. They were idolatrous, blasphemous and persecuting, which simply means they worshiped false gods, spoke evil against the true God and treated God's children very cruelly.

Out of that fourth beast — that terrible-looking beast with iron teeth, seven heads and ten horns, grew a little horn. You'll remember that these wild animals represented nations and that their horns were kings of those nations. Even though this little horn was smaller than the others, he was worse than all the rest. Why, he even tore up three other horns or kings as he rose to power.

When we come to Daniel 8, the next chapter, there are two more animals. First a powerful ram (a he-sheep) comes charging to the west, the north and the south. He has two large horns but one is bigger than the other. Verse 20 tells us exactly who those horns were — the kings of Media and Persia. So this ram is the same as the bear in chapter 7.



*Ram*



Then Daniel sees a mighty he-goat coming swiftly from the west over all the earth. He has one large horn between his eyes (which the same chapter says is the king of Greece — his name was Alexander). When that horn is broken and the king is dead, four other horns pop up and out of one of them comes the little horn. So this goat with the prominent horn is the same as the leopard with four heads in chapter 7 — they're both Greece.

There is a slight problem here. I wonder if you can see what it is. Here's a clue.

#### Daniel 7

Lion/Eagle's wings =  
Babylon

Bear, raised up on  
one side =  
Medo-Persia

Leopard — 4 heads  
= Greece

Terrible beast = Rome?  
with ten horns

Out of one of **these**  
comes the LITTLE  
HORN

#### Daniel 8

Ram with two horns  
= Medo-Persia

Goat, 1 horn broken  
= Greece

4 horns

Out of one of these  
the LITTLE HORN



*Antiochus  
Epiphanes*



*He-Goat*

Did you see the problem? The little horn is mentioned in both chapters (Daniel 7 and 8). There could be two separate little horns, but they seem by the description to be the same king. Yet in Daniel 7, the little horn comes out of the fourth beast (Rome) and the ten horns and in Daniel 8, it comes out of the goat (Greece) and the four horns. Because of this, some people have thought there were two distinct little horns, but I don't think so.

It helps to ask what the Jews who lived from the time of Daniel till the coming of Jesus thought of this fourth beast and the little horn. They thought at first that the little horn was a king called Antiochus Epiphanes IV and that the fourth beast was Syria, not Rome. You see, Antiochus Epiphanes was a Syrian, and if the fourth beast was Syria, he could have come out of the ten horns. On the other hand, one of the four kings (horns) that came out of Greece after Alexander died, became king over Syria. So Antiochus could also have come out of the four horns. So you see, the Jews living at that time could make "both" little horns in chapters 7 and 8 come out of the same nation, Syria.

Daniel 7

LION

BEAR

LEOPARD

TERRIBLE

BEAST

(Syria)

LITTLE

HORN

(Antiochus

Epiphanes)

And even if you make the fourth beast Rome, some history books tell us that Antiochus Epiphanes had been captured by the Romans and was a "puppet king" which meant that Rome pulled his strings. So you can make the little horn, Antiochus, come out of Rome and the ten horns anyway.

You've probably never heard of Antiochus Epiphanes and yet to the Jews he was the worst of enemies. It happened like this. The kingdom of Greece grew to power under Alexander the Great, who died at the same age as Jesus. When he, the goat's notable horn, died, four kings sprang up and each claimed some part of the huge Greek empire. One of these four "horns" was Seleucus and he became king of Syria. From his line of kings of Syria, came a man called Antiochus Magnus. He tried to extend his kingdom, but was captured by the Romans as they began to come to power.

Antiochus Magnus had to give hostages to Rome, including one of his sons, Antiochus Epiphanes IV. So that's how after about fifteen years at Rome, Antiochus Epiphanes was made a puppet king over territory including Palestine. So he was only half a king because he was under Roman power. Yet, in his own little world, Antiochus Epiphanes tried to conquer as much land as possible. To strengthen his hand, he tried to unite his captive lands under one language, Greek and one religion, the worship of the Greek god, Zeus.

This was the first truly religious persecution the Jews had ever experienced. Previously, they had had many enemies, but only for political reasons. When Pharaoh warred against Moses and his people many centuries before, it was because the Israelites had grown in such large numbers that they were a physical threat to Egypt. So that was not what you'd call a religious war. But now, for the first time in history someone (Antiochus) tried to stamp out the religion of the Jews. He robbed the temple, placed in it a statue of Zeus or Jupiter as the Romans called

Daniel 8

RAM

HE-GOAT

4 HORNS

(1 = King of Syria)

LITTLE

HORN

(Antiochus

Epiphanes)

it, and had the Jews burn all their sacred books. Jewish customs were forbidden and the Sabbath could not be kept. Instead of sacrificing animals that were listed in the Scriptures as clean, Antiochus Epiphanes forced the Jews to sacrifice pigs. These were animals absolutely unclean to them and forbidden by God.

Added to this, Antiochus collected heavy taxes, stole the Jews' animals for food, stripped Jerusalem of her treasure, set the cities of Judea afire, destroying homes and property, massacred many of the inhabitants and drove many women and children into slavery. The Jews resisted strongly and eventually a family surnamed Maccabaeus rallied them to resist their enemy.

Eventually, the temple was recaptured and as Antiochus returned from warring abroad he was killed on the way. Though today little is really known about Antiochus Epiphanes, at the time, the Jews found him a greater threat than any other enemy of theirs in history. When they recaptured the temple, they began a yearly feast called Hanukkah which Jews today still celebrate around the time of Christmas. It is also called the Feast of Dedication and is mentioned in John, chapter 10.

From the time of Daniel till before the coming of Jesus, Jews commonly believed that Antiochus Epiphanes was indeed the terrible little horn of Daniel 7 and 8. But when Rome came to power around the time of Jesus, and the Jews were repeatedly pressed under religious persecution by pagan emperors, they applied the little horn to pagan Rome. Christians in later centuries applied it to papal Rome which persecuted Christians for many hundreds of years. So it was that Christians came to believe that the little horn was a type of person or institution, not just one individual. They saw the characteristics of that little horn repeated throughout history. If you want to give the little horn a name, call it Antichrist, for each time the little horn is seen in history, it shows the character of Satan. It's proud. It thinks of itself as equal with God. It persecutes the children of God and worships false idols.

You'll remember that Daniel lost a lot of sleep over this fourth beast and the little horn. Though it was just a little horn, it seemed so evil and so cruel that it became very big in Daniel's mind. The angel Gabriel had to come back repeatedly to assure Daniel that everything would be all right, for didn't he remember that the Son of man came after the little horn and set things straight.

If we refresh our minds again, there were four beasts, the little horn and then the Son of man coming to the Ancient of Days to save his people who were being persecuted. The order is just the same as Genesis 1 where you have the seas being parted, then a list of animals and then comes Adam. In Daniel 7 the seas are parted, a variety of animals appear and then comes the second Adam, called the Son of man. The Jews in Daniel's day believed the Son of man was God's Messiah. When Jesus came he called himself the Son of man and took the name directly from the book of Daniel. Now, Christians looking back at the book of Daniel, see Jesus there in chapter 7 and 9, even though Daniel himself could not have seen it that clearly.

So Daniel 7 is full of good news because although it tells us that there will always be a lot of trouble in this world for people who love God, it also says that God is in control. For Daniel 7 pictures Jesus (the Son of man), coming to God the Father (the Ancient of Days) and begging him to help the people who are being tormented by the little horn (Satan in his many disguises). In the dream, God gives the kingdom of this earth to Jesus and it means that whatever evil the little horn can do, in the end things will turn out well for those who love God, because Jesus is in control.

Daniel is an amazing book. It tells of a little horn

who is a man who thinks he is God and a God who has made himself into the Son of man. And though this book was written long before Jesus came, it told of this coming. Daniel 9 gives an amazing timetable about the *first* coming of Jesus, even predicting he would be "cut off" or murdered. And in chapter 7, when it portrays the Son of man coming in the clouds, it is telling of the *second* coming of Jesus at the end of this world.

It was at Jesus' first coming that God gave him the kingdom and made him ruler over this earth. But it will be at Jesus' second coming that we'll be able to see it all clearly. These things will be much more real to us when Jesus comes again than they are now. For there are still wicked people and wicked nations that hate God and do evil to God's people. And there is still sin and sickness.

How often we are like Daniel. We see evil things happen and we feel so overwhelmed. Men who make themselves like God seem bigger than the world and we forget to look at the power of the God who made himself man. But one day, Jesus will return and all evil things and people will be finished with. Daniel and countless millions of others who love God have longed for that day. How wonderful it will be to see Jesus, the Son of man in person. I can't wait, can you?

## Little Things Mean A Lot

For a baby's cry, the chirp of a bird, the giggle of a girl,  
the familiar step of a friend on the porch, for the noise of healthy children,  
Thank you, Lord.

For the fur of a kitten, the softness of rain, the stiffness of batter,  
the plumpness of pillows, the sure touch of my hand on another's,  
Thank you, Lord.

For the incense of clean linen in the sunlight, for cool waters on a hot day,  
for the smell of a baby, for the taste of a newly tried recipe,  
Thank you, Lord.

For children's growth, before our eyes, for seasons changing colors,  
bringing hopes, for the sight of a new friend, and beloved familiar faces.  
Thank you, Lord.

Mary Ann Bohrs  
Hightstown, New Jersey



the generation of the Waste Makers. Everything now was "throw away" — not just diapers, kitchen implements and containers, but morality, marriage, human life and all the principles of the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount. The very best things had become trash.

The badge of the new morality was reflected in the attitude toward sex. "... the sexual balance between the sexes had been altered, probably forever. . ."<sup>2</sup> With reference to women, Manchester states that "More of them were sharing men's vices, . . . public drunkenness, juvenile delinquency, and assault and battery. Women's Liberation leader, Ti-Grace Atkinson called marriage 'slavery', 'legalized rape' and 'unpaid labor'."<sup>3</sup>

Each season's X-rated movies went farther than the last. Soon they wanted bestiality, cunnilingus and fellatio. If a little old lady wished to buy a magazine at a stand, she had to reach over three rows of smut magazines to get it. One reporter wrote of going backstage in Manhattan and seeing chorus girls, naked, shooting heroin behind their knees while their illegitimate toddlers watched.

In the years between 1940 and 1960 illegitimate births doubled and forty percent of the mothers were in their teens. Venereal diseases vanished (with the new miracle drugs) only to reappear as a national epidemic yielding in our own decade about twenty million cases of genital herpes and the new scourge AIDS which will take the lives of perhaps millions in the remainder of the century. This "anything goes" generation endorsed wife swapping and wife testing. During the sixties, the New York Hilton, Manhattan's largest hotel, rented rooms by the hour.

Sex unlimited became the leading sport and tripping on drugs ran a close second. The music matched the mood of these youngsters "blowing their minds" on driving, drowning, acid rock: (In *USA Today*, of December 9, 1985, one AIDS' victim who had had 2,000 partners testified to the fact that it was rock music which inflamed his sexual desires

beyond control. The beginning of all that was the erotic music of the sixties.) In 1967, ten thousand boys and girls got together in New York Central Park's Sheep Meadow to honor love. A physician who opened a free clinic was immediately overwhelmed by pregnancies, venereal disease and hepatitis caused by filthy syringes.

Those who talk against the upholding of moral standards are sowing to the wind. They will reap the whirlwind. The most meager knowledge of history makes it plain that human nature is so depraved that without continuing and constant education in morality it sinks to the level of the brute.

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***It seems mysterious that some people can read the first half of every letter of Paul about salvation by grace alone and yet ignore or misunderstand the second half . . .***

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#### **Extreme Theological Views**

What is surprising is not that men and women who know not God should ditch standards but the fact that many professing Christ have done the same — at least in their theology. Standards have been equated with legalism and ridiculed. The tragic record of history is that with every revival of the gospel has come a revival of antinomianism — opposition to law. It happened in the days of Martin Luther, when in the Peasant's Revolt multitudes raged without control, bringing devastation in their wake. It is true to say that literally millions of professed Christians will go to hell with puny standards. The fact that those who claim to believe in the imputed infinite righteousness of Christ, have simultaneously cherished in their own lives a shocking low-level of practical righteousness is a proof of the deceitfulness of

sin. Our Lord warned us of all this in the ordination sermon which we call the Sermon on the Mount (see Mt 7:21-27).

Human nature is proverbially one-eyed. It seems mysterious that some people can read the first half of every letter of Paul about salvation by grace alone and yet ignore or misunderstand the second half of those same letters which call for the dedication of body, soul and mind to the Redeemer.

#### **Some Errors**

The New Testament teaches that we are free from the law and dead to it as a means of salvation. It declares that if I shoulder again that yoke of bondage I am severed from Christ (See also Lk 6:46; Jn 14:15; Rom 7:12,14; 8:7; 13:7-9; 1 Jn 5:3; Rev 12:17; 14:12; 21:8).

Quite often confused behavior has its roots in confused thinking. This is certainly true in the case of professed Christians who live with low moral standards. Their grace is a cheap grace, not true grace. They may mouth New Testament texts against the law but reveal a colossal ignorance of what the texts are really affirming. Comparatively few who read the New Testament in the popular churches are aware that the word "law" has a wide variety of meanings and that the Decalogue is not one of them. The Hebrew and Greek words translated "law" imply a standard of truth and behavior but they are usually applied in a much broader sense than modern Christians apply the term. Precise exegesis of law passages in both Testaments show that the word is often a synonym for the Jewish religion or the Scriptures of that religion. Only one text in the whole Bible, beyond possibility of controversy, uses the word law as a synonym for the Ten Commandments (see Ex 24:12).

Positive texts used by Christians to support the Ten Commandments can be so employed because the greater includes the lesser, not because one is a synonym of the other. The fact is, the New Testament is much more demanding than the Old as regards conduct. It calls for a life charac-

terized by prayer without ceasing, continual thanksgiving and a single eye to the glory of God in every choice of life. While it protests against pharisaical, external righteousness, it makes no compromise in its antagonism to "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" (1 Jn 2:16). That the Decalogue itself remains as a skeletal moral summary for Christians is made clear by our Lord's endorsement of it just a few days before the cross (Mt 19:18,19); Paul's continual reference to it as a standard for Christians (see for example Eph 6:1-3 which recognizes the Decalogue as a unit well known to those to whom he wrote); and the reference to the ark of the testimony in the Bible's last book (see Rev 15:5 — the word "testimony" when coupled with the ark always means the Decalogue and nothing else in both Testaments). In this age of the plenitude of the Pentecostal spirit, the revelation of Christ as explained and enlarged in the Epistles, the transition from the Old Covenant to the New and from national to personal religion, truth and morality have dimensions that are infinite when compared to a mere superficial reading of the Decalogue. Nonetheless, because the majority of people in our churches are spiritually immature, without some thumbnail sketch of prescriptive Christian behavior, masses of professed Christians unable to wrestle with the paradoxical dialectic of Paul will inevitably go the way of the flesh.

Another reason for the decay in moral standards in professed Christians today, apart from the confusion of the word law, is ignorance concerning the doctrine of sanctification. Sanctification is indeed distinct from justification but it should never be separated from it. Too few have contemplated the meaning of such New Testament expressions as "grow in grace," "rich in good works," "created unto good works," "cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit," "render your members as instruments of righteousness," "present your body as a living sacrifice," "I keep under

my body lest . . . I should become a castaway," etc.

It cannot be said too often that the New Testament is not anti-nomian. It is not opposed to obedience to the commands of God. It does protest against such concepts as: (1) that a person must become a Jew before becoming a Christian; (2) that a person should behave as though the age of shadows, type and ceremonies has not come to an end; (3) that one should imagine that duty's primary motivation springs from tables of stone rather than the cross; (4) that the depth of God's will is found in the Old Testament rather than the New, (5) that obedience is self-initiated rather than the fruit of the indwelling spirit.

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***The fact is, the New Testament is much more demanding than the Old as regards conduct.***

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A third misunderstanding, following those concerning law and sanctification, concerns the significance of the term salvation. The first reference to this term in the New Testament is found in Matthew 1:21 where we read that Jesus would save his people from their sins. Salvation then is not just a fire escape. It is not just deliverance from guilt and death. Salvation is more, not less. Can it then be thought for a moment that the Christian is less concerned with obedience to God than the Jew at the foot of Sinai?

**The Greatest Failure**

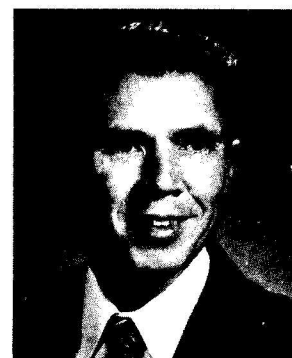
I suggest that it should be obvious to the most undiscerning, that apart from death the main thing wrong with this world's behavior is the lack of right standards. The multitudes think murder, even mass murder which we call war, is okay; rape is okay, including rape of the mind and soul by propaganda and pornography and twisted media; theft is

okay — from family, employers, neighboring territories or people. I submit, also, that this lack of standards springs out of the failure to worship God, the failure to see the priorities of reverence, adoration, holiness and abhorrence of all idolatry. I further suggest that these failures are a *result of the greatest failure of all* — to meditate upon the cross and the reasons for that most terrible of all tragedies and yet most glorious of all triumphs. The words of Griffith Thomas are most appropriate to our study:

Conduct as Matthew Arnold says, may be 'three-fourths of life,' but the other fourth is the motive power of the three. A train is much longer than the locomotive, but the locomotive provides the motive power. A building is much higher than the foundation, but foundation is very necessary. A tree is much larger than the root, but it is the root which gives life to the tree.<sup>4</sup>

The cross of Christ is the "locomotive" that provides the power, the "foundation" that secures the building and the "root" that gives life. All Christian behavior springs from a heart that is daily transformed by the vision of the cross.

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1. W. Manchester, *The Glory and the Dream*, p. 1089
  2. *Ibid*, p. 1105
  3. *Ibid*, 1106
  4. W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Grace and Power*, p. 120



**DESMOND FORD**

## Odds and Ends

### SAN DIEGO SEMINAR

You and your friends are invited to spend a day of happy Christian fellowship...

**SPEAKER:** Dr. Desmond Ford

**WHEN:** Saturday, January 11, 1986, at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

**WHERE:** San Diego Seventh Day Baptist Church  
4330 Moraga Avenue  
San Diego, CA 92117

**TIME:** "Judgment: Future or Present?" (10:00 a.m.)  
"Blindness: Epidemic in Religion?" (2:00 p.m.)  
(Between these two meetings there will be a joint Sabbath School for adults for questions and answers and for open discussion, followed by a luncheon.)

**FURTHER INFORMATION:** Pastor George Calhoun, Phone 562-9133

### RIVERSIDE SEMINAR

**WHEN:** Saturday, January 25, 3:00 p.m.- 5:00 p.m.

**WHERE:** Riverside Convention Center  
3443 Orange Street  
Riverside, California.

**SPEAKERS:** Dr. Ford,  
Brad McIntyre and  
Noel Mason.

### PORTLAND SEMINAR

**WHEN:** Friday, February 14, 7:30 p.m.- 9:00 p.m.,  
Saturday, February 15, 3:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

**WHERE:** Lloyd Center,  
Portland, Oregon  
(between 9th-15th  
Streets East and West  
and Broadway and  
Multnomah North and  
South on the east side  
of the Willamette  
River).

**SPEAKERS:** Dr. Ford,  
Brad McIntyre and  
Noel Mason.

### TALK-BACK RADIO

On Monday, at 4:00 p.m., February 10, 1986, Dr. Ford will be hosted on a talk-back show on KFIA, Sacramento. This will be the third time that Dr. Ford has been involved in talk-back programs. "Coping With Tragedy" will be the theme for the program on February 10.

**O** God my Creator and Redeemer, I may not go forth to-day except Thou dost accompany me with Thy blessing. Let not the vigour and freshness of the morning, or the glow of good health, or the present prosperity of my undertakings, deceive me into a false reliance upon my own strength. All these good gifts have come to me from Thee. They were Thine to give and they are Thine also to curtail. They are not mine to keep; I do but hold them in trust; and only in continued dependence upon Thee, the Giver, can they be worthily enjoyed.

Let me then put back into Thine hand all that Thou hast given me, rededicating to Thy service all the powers of my mind and body, all my worldly goods, all my influence with other men. All these, O Father, are Thine to use as Thou wilt. All these are Thine, O Christ. All these are Thine, O Holy Spirit. Speak Thou in my words to-day, think in my thoughts, and work in all my deeds. And seeing that it is Thy gracious will to make use even of such weak human instruments in the fulfilment of Thy mighty purpose for the world, let my life to-day be the channel through which some little portion of Thy divine love and pity may reach the lives that are nearest to my own.

In Thy solemn presence, O God, I remember all my friends and neighbours, my fellow townfolks, and especially the poor within our gates, beseeching Thee that Thou wouldst give me grace, so far as in me lies, to serve them in Thy name.

O blessed Jesus, who didst use Thine own most precious life for the redemption of Thy human brethren, giving no thought to ease or pleasure or worldly enrichment, but filling up all Thine hours and days with deeds of self-denying love, give me grace to-day to follow the road Thou didst first tread; and to Thy name be all the glory and the praise, even unto the end. Amen.

—John Baillie, *A Diary of Private Prayer*, p. 13



# Warts And All

BY JIM REIHER & OWEN SALTER

There's a rumor going around the church that Christians can be perfect.

Like many rumors, it's bunk.

But it's more than bunk. It's positively dangerous. Believing that Christians can be perfect sets people up for massive disillusionment and, at worst, despair.

Why? Because it just doesn't work that way.

Of course, we're not saying Christians won't be perfect One Day. But note the capitals.

The Day when Christians will be perfect is the Day Christ returns. Then God, by a miracle of transformation, will change us to be like Jesus (1 John 3:2-3).

Our complaint is not with the idea that Christians *will* be perfect, but with the idea that they can be perfect *now*. All the New Testament's analysis of the human condition is against this conclusion – to say nothing of human experience.

Where, then, did the rumour start?

Like many theological rumours, it started with the Bible. The culprit verse is Matthew 5:48, where Christ is recorded as saying: "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Seems conclusive. In fact, it's anything but.

A moment's thought shows how silly the idea is. Us be perfect as *God* is perfect? Who can be perfect in the way God is?

Jesus Himself taught, "There is only One who is good" (Matthew 19:17). He stressed that, even when men have done everything they should, they are still unprofitable servants who have only done their duty (Luke 17:10).

So what does Matthew 5:48 mean? Like all Bible verses, this one has to be seen in its context.

It comes as the summary of Jesus' teaching about loving everyone, including your enemies so that "you may be sons of your Father in heaven who causes the sun to rise

on the evil and good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

The 'perfection' of God in this context obviously refers to the fact that He shows kindness to all people without exception. That's what the disciples are being told to copy.

But there's more. The Greek word translated 'perfect' here is *teleios*. And *teleios* doesn't mean 'perfect' in a moral sense at all.

In ancient Greek papyri, according to Kenneth S. Wuest, *teleios* is used of heirs being 'of age', of women who have 'attained maturity', of 'full-grown' roosters, or acacia trees in 'good condition', of a 'complete' lampstand, or of something in 'good working order' (*Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*).

The meaning of *teleios* "includes the ideas of full-growth, maturity, workability, soundness, and completeness." Wuest writes.

"When applied to a Christian, the word refers to one that is spiritually mature, complete, well-rounded in his Christian character."

That's the New Testament's expectation for this life. As Francis Schaeffer put it, we can expect *substantial* but not *complete* healing now.

We can be mature, even though we know we won't be fully Christ – like until Jesus comes again.

The New Testament is a stunningly realistic book. And there's no way you can read it without realising that it understands clearly that Christians vary markedly in maturity.

Paul was quite definite that some Christians were 'weak' (Romans 14:1, 15:1, 1 Corinthians 8:7ff).

The writer of Hebrews stated: "... though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by

constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil" (5:12-14).

In other words, we can picture a sort of 'scale of maturity.' At one end is the brand new Christian, just repentant, who probably doesn't know where the gospel of Matthew is. At the other end is Christ Himself, the one all Christians should be aiming to imitate.

Now there are some very important things to realise about this scale.

First of all, no matter where you are on it, you *are* a Christian. Even if you never grow much towards maturity before you're knocked over by a lorry, you're still one of His children.

Secondly, no one should be content with where they are on the scale. "Let us press on to maturity," says Hebrews 6:1. There's always further to go.

Which suggests another thing to note: no one has made it to Jesus' end of the scale yet.

John made this clear when he wrote: "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us ... If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word has no place in our lives" (1 John 1:8,10).

And he wrote that to Christians!

What John understood, of course was that though Christians are still sinners, they have a way to deal with it – through the forgiveness God offers in Jesus (1 John 1:9, 2:1-2).

That's the glory of what God is doing in His children. We are saints and sinners, both at once!

Paul adds some more colours to the painting.

In Romans 6-8, he outlines the astounding truth that God has freed us from the power of sin to enslave us.

Christians are simply human beings who – unlike most of humankind – don't *have* to sin. Everyone else does, because they're slaves to sin. But Christians are gloriously free to not sin.

But being free to not sin isn't the same as *actually* not sinning. It's like being free to not pay tax; if we choose to, we can still go on paying it.

The problem, according to Paul, is that though we've been freed in our 'inner being,' from slavery to sin's power, we still live in bodies that haven't.

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 dead (Romans 8:10).

That's why, after around 20 years of following the Christian way, Paul has to admit plainly that he still sins (Romans 7:15-23). He isn't yet perfect – and in his view, neither is anyone else (Romans 3:10).

But that knowledge doesn't stop him aiming at maturity.

"Not that I have already attained all this, or have already been made perfect," he stresses in Philippians 3:12. "But I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus."

Knowing that we won't be fully perfect – in a moral sense – until Jesus returns is no excuse for stopping our efforts to live the way God wants.

In fact, the hope that comes from knowing that Jesus is coming back is a strong part of the reason we keep trying to please Him. As John put it, "Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him, purifies himself, as He is pure" (1 John 3:3).

There are all kinds of consequences of believing the rumor that Christians can be perfect here and now.

One is the terrible guilt that arises from false expectations.

Of course, guilt is healthy – if it comes as the result of the Holy Spirit's conviction, and if we deal with it in the right way (by confession and repentance).

But the realisation that we just aren't getting anywhere near perfection can be horrendously

discouraging if perfection is where we think we should be.

The Bible's realistic view of each Christian being a battle ground between good and evil – with us being called to let the good triumph as consistently as we can – liberates us from being bound by false expectations of sinlessness.

And it means that we can celebrate every movement towards Christ-likeness, big or small, without being bogged down by the fact that we haven't made it yet.

Another dangerous consequence is in the expectations we have of other Christians – particularly Christian leaders.

It's extremely easy to be impressed with Christian leaders – particularly with those God seems to be using powerfully. And it's only a step from being impressed with someone to starting to think of them as never putting a foot wrong.

"Look at his ministry!" we cry. "Thousands are coming to the Lord because of his work! He's such a godly man! What he says is always so true."

Now, it may well be true that God is using someone in an exciting way. But that is only because they are available to Him, and He is sovereign.

A powerful ministry is a function of the Holy Spirit's work, not of a sinless life. Just because some Christian leader has an exciting ministry – or a good media profile – doesn't mean that everything they say or do will be right.

Even 'great' men and women of God have areas in their lives where there is sin and immaturity. No one follows Jesus fully.

Paul understood this well. "It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill," he wrote in Philippians 1:15-17. "The latter do so in love ... The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely."

Paul realised that different people operate in ministry with varying degrees of maturity. Some have good motives; others bad.

But does he say that those with impure motives won't have an effective ministry? No. Rather he concludes: But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached."

God is greater than our limitations and mistakes. And He doesn't stop using us because we aren't perfect.

We can never legitimately justify something solely on the basis that some 'big name' with a 'successful ministry' does it or advocates it.

At the end of the 'scale of maturity' to which we're headed is Jesus. He's the bull's-eye in the target – not other Christians.

When Paul said "imitate me", he meant "imitate me as *I imitate Christ*" (1 Corinthians 11:1). His implication is: if I fail to reflect Christ in anything, then at that point you should *not* copy me!

What does it mean to imitate Christ? As Stephen Travis says in his book *The Jesus Hope*. "Turn up almost any page in the New Testament and you have food enough for thought – and action".

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