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The Dawn of Faith, Hope and Love



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—statement of faith—

This magazine is dedicated to three principal reference points of the Christian faith:

1. **The centrality of the gospel of Jesus Christ:** The gospel centers on the person and work of Jesus Christ in history. Its principal modes of expression are those of law and covenant. In Jesus Christ God's final verdict on man has been rendered, and therefore the gospel anticipates fully God's decision in the final judgment. It is the window through which all life and history is to be seen and understood.

2. **The authority, sufficiency, and clarity of the Bible:** The Bible is exclusively authoritative in all matters of faith and practice. While its writers reflect their respective contemporary world views, these do not compromise the integrity of their witness. While we admit that all Scripture does not enjoy uniform clarity, we affirm that the Bible is essentially clear in its central message — the gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. **The priesthood of all believers:** The gospel, through the Scriptures, is the central means by which God expresses himself in the world, and constitutes the basis on which all Christian fellowship is built. We believe that true fellowship is best expressed and preserved in a congregational setting. The primary purpose of church government is the orderly preservation, teaching, and promotion of the gospel message on the sole authority of Scripture alone, and we affirm all forms of government that prove compatible with this objective.

Our support of these objectives is without antagonism or prejudicial exclusiveness toward any individual or group. We feel a kinship with all who have embraced the good news of the cross, regardless of human distinctions such as race, color, denominational ties or forms of church government.

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—editorial—

The New Testament contains the music of a beautiful trio. A trio whose voices blend together in melodious harmony. Like every successful musical group each voice possesses its own haunting resonance, but combined they form a symphony of sound much larger than the sum of the parts. The Apostle Paul called upon this trio to soften the harsh feelings in the church at Corinth.

The church there was racked with strife — legal battles, sexual promiscuity, unruliness in church, strife and desire to dominate, false views on the resurrection, and much more. To put it simply, the church was a mess. Then the Apostle called in this trio to burst forth in beautiful harmony and sweep away the ugliness in the congregation.

"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13:13). Here is the trio that outsings all trios. The magic song whose words, if only we could learn them and have them stored deep in our hearts, would solve all our ills and set all our priorities straight. So simple, yet so difficult to do. So close, and yet so far away. So real, and yet so intangible. If only that trio could sing tirelessly in our hearts, both day and night.

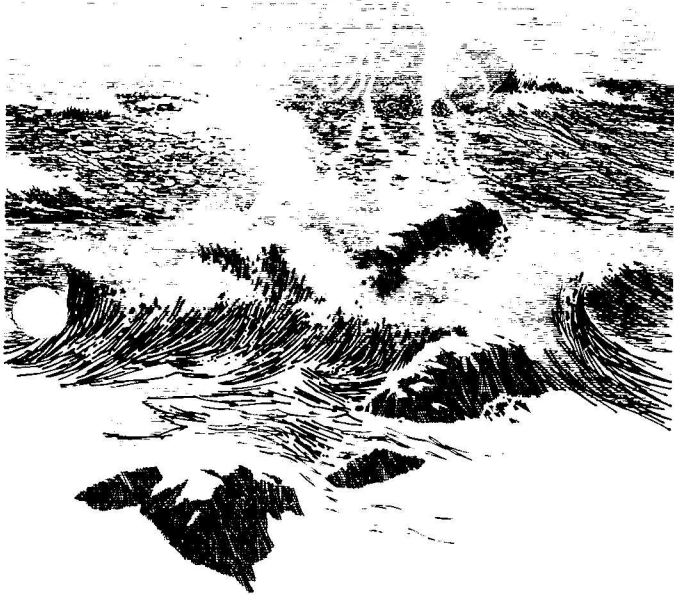
This issue of Good News Unlimited is committed to these three great voices that should sound in our lives — faith, hope and love. Our two major articles deal with the themes of hope and love.

Faith in the Christian sense has a peculiar aspect to it. In the original language of the New Testament there were not two words for "faith" and "belief." To believe was to have faith, and vice versa. But the Greek language did not know the idea of believing **in**. True, one could believe **that** One could believe facts. And Christianity certainly retains that idea in its concept of belief or faith. We believe certain crucial historical facts about Jesus Christ. But we believe more than that, we believe **in** Jesus Christ.

A person and all that he stands for is the object of this commitment we call faith. We are attached to that person. We have a relationship with him. We have confidence in him. In the New Testament, faith is integrally tied up with the ideas of knowledge and trust, knowledge **about** Jesus, trust **in** him. When all is said and done, belief **that** Jesus . . . is not sufficient. Belief **about** Jesus is inadequate. We are called to a far more radical, more demanding faith than that, a faith **in** Christ, a faith in **Christ**.

And herein the harmony in the trio is guaranteed. For faith, hope and love each sing of he who is worthy of the songs of ten thousand times ten thousand angels. We may argue the intricacies of theology until we are hoarse, but unless the harmonies of this trio are found in our lives, we have never done that which alone is important. Let us place the things of the Spirit in their proper place, and we will discover that Jesus is the refrain of the melodious song of faith, hope and love.

Calvin W. Edwards



Hope and the Promise of Jesus

Noel Mason

It was 12:00 noon, Saturday, December 17, 1927. In Provincetown Harbour, on the northeast coast of the U.S.A., Lt. Commander Roy K. Jones boarded the Semaphore-4, a U.S. submarine. The S-4 had just been refitted at Portsmouth, New Hampshire Navy Yard and was ready for trial runs. The day was cold and the sea was choppy. On board the refitted submarine were forty men — four officers, two observers and a crew of thirty-four. For a few miles the S-4 cruised on the surface, easing out of Provincetown Harbour. The control room was alive with activity, each man at his post and alert to his individual assignment. As the S-4 reached the measured-mile course it submerged for the first run.

The first trial runs went smoothly, but at 3:37 p.m. as the S-4 planed upward to the surface there was a stunning impact, a screeching rip of metal. The submarine reeled heavily and in a matter of seconds the sea was churning into the battery rooms. The ill-fated vessel had collided with a U.S. Coast Guard destroyer. A few minutes later, the S-4 shuddered

drunkenly nose first into the mud and then settled back on an even keel 110 feet below the surface.

What the forty men entombed within the submarine did not know was that for the next forty-eight hours every effort to save them would be frustrated. A storm arose whipping up the sea making the rescue work difficult. Down below in the submarine the men were huddled together to keep warm and to use less oxygen. From time to time Captain Fitch climbed the short ladder rising up the forward bulkhead to the small hatch plate above. Using a wrench he tapped out messages to the rescue workers above. One of the last messages Fitch relayed to the rescue workers above was the question — "Is there any hope?"

A Modern Endemic

"Is there any hope?" is the quivering cry of humanity today. Behind the macho facade of modern man there is a heart that is gripped with a sense of hopelessness. Jurgen Moltmann, speaking at the Conference on Hope and the Future of Man in New York City in 1971 said:

The hopes of the 1960's have "gone with the wind." We hear everywhere words like "frustration" and "betrayal," words that are apparently becoming keywords of our present Lebensgefühl. Everywhere people feel deceived, abused, dispirited, exploited and estranged so that they no longer trust the inbuilt goals and hopes of our progressive societies, universities, churches, and sciences. They refuse to live goal-oriented and future-conscious since they refuse to freeze that future in its present image. **They sense the messianic crises of those hope-movements which overshoot their mark and leave man alone in his disappointment.** The theology of our present sensibility thus tends again toward apocalyptic sentiment, as expressed in the phrase from a song by Bobby Goldsboro which Hans Koekendijk sent me in anticipation of this conference: "It's time for him to come back home, because the time is running out and the world is slowly dying. . . (Ewert Cousins, **Hope and the Future of Man**, p. 90)

Millions who have exhausted themselves pursuing happiness with drugs, sex, sport and money sense a truism in the graffiti on the wall of a public restroom — "Life stinks." "So tired of buttoning and unbuttoning" were the last words of an elderly lady finishing her treadmill existence in suicide. Albert Camus' novel, **The Stranger**, is an apt reflection on the decade of the eighties. The central figure in the novel is a "nothing - man" a man with no purpose, no ideals, no love, and no hope. A man who finally finds some sense of fulfillment in the thought that at his execution men will hurl abuse at his jerking body. Our world is filled with "nothing - men" who have failed to realize that God and moral values are indispensable ingredients of a meaningful life.

Not long ago I watched the funeral procession of a famous rock star in Sydney, Australia. As the shiny black cars made their way through the graveyard, a bearded man emerged from the old tombstones waving a placard which read, "But is there life **before** death?" Millions seem to be in the grip of hopelessness.

We have all heard the old proverb "Where there's life, there's hope." According to Karl Menninger the opposite is even more true. The point of his book **The Vital Balance** is "that life is sustained by hope — that where there is **hope** there is life." Victor Frankl, the European psychiatrist who spent three grim years in the Nazi prison camps, gives a vivid testimony to the life-giving power of hope. Having lost his father,

mother, brother and wife to the gas ovens, Frankl found himself "stripped to naked existence." With every possession lost, every value destroyed, suffering from hunger, cold and brutality, Frankl discovered the truthfulness of Nietzsche's statement, "He who has a **why** to live can bear with almost any **how**." Frankl observed that those who retained hope in spite of their physical condition lived longer than those who lost hope and yet had stronger physical resources.

Where Is There Hope?

But where does a world without hope get hope? Who can answer this quivering cry for hope? There was a time when all Christians would have answered with the promise of Jesus "I go to prepare a place for you,... I will come again and take you to myself." (Jn 14:3). But today many Christians are deeply troubled by the "delay" of the return of Christ. One writer has stated that "Jesus and the early Christians expected the kingdom to come in their lifetime, and since it didn't, they were proved wrong. So we can dismiss their unrealized hopes as a mistake." "History is not running on apocalyptic tracks" writes another. One scholar, who had just returned from Tubingen, Germany told me that Matthew 24:34 "Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all these things take place" is responsible for more atheists than the Nazi pogroms of World War II.

Are Christians, too, without hope? After two thousand years can we go on believing and waiting for the Second Advent?

Christ's Imminent Return

Let us agree at the outset on the assertion that the early Christians believed in the possibility of an imminent return of Christ. The texts are too numerous to avoid. Consider the following:

Besides this you know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, **the day is at hand**. (Rom 13:11)

I mean, brethren, **the appointed time has grown very short**; For the form of this world is passing away. (1 Cor 7:26, 31)

Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it until it receives the early and the late rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of **the Lord is at hand**. Behold, **the Judge is standing at the doors**. (Jas 5:7-9)

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and **all the more as you see the Day drawing near**. (Heb 10:23-25)

For yet a little while, and the coming one shall come and shall not tarry. (Heb 10:37)

The end of all things is at hand. (1 Pe 4:7)

Children, **it is the last hour**; and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come; therefore we know that **it is the last hour**. (1 Jn 2:18)

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants **what must soon take place**. Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written therein; **for the time is near**. (Rev 1:1,3)

Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, **for the time is near**. Behold, **I am coming soon**. (Rev 22:10, 12)

Surely **I am coming soon**. (Rev 22:20)

In his last great discourse, which pictured the destruction of the temple and the end of the age, Jesus

said "This generation will not pass away until all these things take place." Notice that he says "all these things" not just some of them. One thing mentioned in the context is the coming of the Son of Man. Jesus certainly believed in the possibility of a speedy return in judgment within the time span of that generation.

It is interesting to observe the various reactions to the problem of the "delayed" advent as posed by the above texts. Some liberal Christians believe that Jesus was too influenced by popular Jewish apocalyptic and was therefore mistaken. Some die-hard fundamentalists in order to "save" Jesus and the New Testament writers from a "prophetic mistake" interpret the above texts as referring to Jesus' coming in judgment with the attack of the Romans upon Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Others try to dissect Jesus' last sermon into two pieces. One piece of Jesus' prediction is then applied to the destruction of the Jewish temple in A.D. 70, the other is left to apply to the end of the age. The problem with this expediency, as a simple reading of Mark 13 will confirm, is that the text does not permit such a neat dissection.

It is better to accept the above texts just as they read. Jesus obviously believed in the possibility of a speedy return, within a generation, with great power and glory. What then of the delay? Was Jesus mistaken? Is the promise of Jesus credible today? What of "the blessed hope"? Can we still hope?

Biblical Phenomenon

Before one hastily concludes that Jesus and the New Testament writers were mistaken and gives up the "blessed hope," one ought to realize that the problem of a delayed fulfillment is not just a New Testament one. Numerous Old Testament prophets uttered promises of salvation and judgment believing they would be speedily fulfilled. J. Goldingay summarized the evidence when he wrote:

But descriptions of an imminent consummation of God's final judgment and salvation do occur rather often in the Bible. In Genesis God declares that Adam will die on the day he eats the fruit of a certain tree. In Exodus God says he is about to fulfill his promise of such material and spiritual blessing that the whole world will be aroused to envy. Amos declares in the northern kingdom that Yahweh's day of judgment is imminent; Zephaniah asserts the same in the south. Jeremiah promises Judah a new covenant. Ezekiel promises the exiles a new heart. Zechariah says the world will flock to Jerusalem. Daniel sees the kingdom given to Israel. Jesus declares God's kingdom is here. Paul says the eschaton is round the corner.

In the literal final sense, these expectations are not fulfilled. (J. Goldingay, *Themelios*, 2.2. 47)

Thus we see that the problem of a delayed fulfillment is not peculiar to the predictions of Jesus but rather is a biblical phenomena. It is found right through biblical prophecy and apocalyptic. Therefore, to label the predictions of Jesus as mistaken seems too simple a solution.

It is important to see that alongside the texts which speak of the soonness of Jesus' coming are texts which speak of a possible delay. Thus imminency and delay are held in paradoxical tension in New Testament apocalyptic. There is a suggestive hint of delay in the four "watching parables." As they exist in Matthew and Mark the point of these parables seems to be, "be ready even if the Lord delays!" (See Mt 24:42-51, note v.48; Mt 25:1-13, note v.5; Mt 25:14-30, note v.19; Mk 13:32-37, note v.35.)

Jesus made it clear that God can shorten the time of distress for the sake of the elect who cry to him day and night (Lk 18:7f; Mk 13:30). He can also lengthen the period of grace. Consider the following parable:

And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, 'Lo, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down; why should it use up the ground?' And he answered him, 'Let it alone, sir, this year also, till I dig about it and put on manure. And if it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'" (Lk 13:6-9)

"Let it alone, sir, this year also. . . ." Jesus knew it was possible for God in his mercy to rescind his holy will and lengthen the interval of grace (cf Jer 18:7f, J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, p. 140). God can make fresh decisions. This is precisely the way 2 Peter 3:9 understands the apparent delay. For the NT writers, the incarnation-crucifixion-resurrection-ascension, on the one hand, and the second coming, on the other, belong essentially together and are in a real sense one Event, one divine Act, being held apart only by the mercy of God.

It must be remembered, too, that in response to his disciples' question "when will this be?" (Mk 13:4), Jesus explicitly states that neither he nor the angels in heaven know the precise time of the day of judgment (Mk 13:32).

Recognize the Tension

It seems a pity that well-meaning but misinformed Christians have overemphasized the **imminency** texts to the neglect of the **delay** texts. The fact that Jesus will return is sure. However, the subordinate element of **when** is apparently conditional, left to the discretion and wisdom of God alone.

The prophecies of Jesus are often interpreted in a wooden, inflexible way. Christians with a fundamentalist mindset interpret the prophecies of Jesus in a way that leaves the impression that God has pre-determined all history — written it up precisely in advance in the name of prophecy.

None of the prophets has a deterministic view of history. The exhortations to loyalty and obedience, scattered as they are throughout the apocalyptic literature of the Bible, reveal a certain openness and freedom in the prophets' view of the future. Would we be peeved as Jonah was, if the Jewish nation had turned in repentance as did the Ninevites, thus averting the predicted judgment of Jesus? Would we then declare Jesus a false prophet? Perhaps Jesus uttered his prediction of judgment upon Jerusalem in the hope that Israel would repent and avert their doom.

Understanding the phenomenon of a delayed fulfillment throughout the Bible, and the perception of the paradoxical tension between imminency and the delay prevents us from losing confidence in the promise of Jesus.

The End Has Come

There is one more reason why we are sure that Christ will finish the work he began. In the sayings of Jesus we find ample evidence that he thought of the Kingdom of God as both **already present** (e.g. Mt 11:2ff; Mk 3:27; Lk 10:18; 11:20) and **not yet consummated** (e.g. Mt 6:10; Mk 1:15; 8:38; 9:1; 14:25). The tension between these two sets of sayings — each

of which presupposes the other — is the really new, distinctive thing in Jesus' eschatology. Part of the Kingdom of God is **already** here. The end has already begun. Daniel looked forward to a great resurrection in "the time of the end" (Dan 12:1-4). The New Testament writers declare that Daniel's resurrection has already begun in the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus is

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called "the first born from the dead" (Col 1:18). This means not only that Jesus was the first to rise from the dead (Acts 26:23) but as such, he stands at the head of a new order of existence — resurrection life. The Pharisees and Sadducees were "annoyed because the disciples of Jesus were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:2). G.E. Ladd points out that their annoyance was because the disciples were not preaching a **mere** hope for the future. "They were proclaiming an event in the present which **guaranteed** the future. They were preaching in **Jesus** the resurrection from the dead. Now resurrection was no longer merely a future event, a doctrine, a hope; it had happened in their midst." (G.E. Ladd, "The Eschatological Resurrection," in *End Time*, edited by W. Griffin, p. 82).

Paul sees the resurrection of Jesus as belonging to the final resurrection when he states that the resurrection of Jesus was "the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:20). The great eschatological resurrection has already begun and is guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus. Already we enjoy the powers of the age to come (Heb 6:5)! Whether the consummation of the Kingdom of God is near or distant, hope remains firm and sure, for the Holy Spirit resides "in our hearts as the guarantee of all that God has in store for us" (2 Cor 1:22).

The promise of Jesus, the Second Advent, prevents us from giving up in despair even though we watch the super powers running hell-bent in an insane nuclear armament race. In the words of William Barclay:

The great value of the doctrine of the Second Coming is that it guarantees that history is going somewhere. We cannot tell how it will happen, and when it will happen. . . . What the doctrine of the Second Coming conserves is the tremendous fact that there is one divine, far-off event to which the whole creation is moving: there is consummation; there is a final triumph of God (W. Barclay, *The Mind of St. Paul*, p. 229.)

In the awareness of the delay of his advent we need not despair, but look confidently to the time when we will proclaim "Hallelujah! for the Lord God Almighty reigns" (Rev 19:6)! Yes, there is hope.

For further reading:

1. Stephen H. Travis, *I Believe in the Second Coming of Jesus*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1982.
2. Stephen H. Travis, *Christian Hope and the Future*, IVP, 1980.
3. J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, pp. 122-141, SCM, 1971.

I am indebted to all three sources.

The Saving Love of God

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16, NASB).

The golden text of the Bible, these words have been called — and for good reason. God's love for sinners is unfathomable — miracle and mystery alike. Yet this one sentence has communicated that love to millions with life-changing and lasting power. Three chapters later Jesus himself deepens our understanding of God's love. By a miracle reminiscent of Israel's manna in the wilderness, the Lord feeds more than 5,000 with a little boy's lunch. He follows the sign with a sermon. Presenting himself as the true bread from heaven, Jesus adds detail to the divine love of John 3:16.



"Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst. . . All that the Father gives me shall come to me; and the one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that of all that he has given me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who beholds the Son, and believes in him, may have eternal life; and I myself will raise him up on the last day. . . No one can come to me, unless the Father who sent me, draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught of God." Every one who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to me. . . Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. . . Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in yourselves.' "

As we listen to Jesus' words again, and remember John's golden summary of the same truths, six words describing such a love come to mind.

God's Love Is Passionate.

God "so" loved that he gave his Son. Even more, God loved us first. Our love to him can never be more than a response (1 Jn 4:9, 10). God is the Great Initiator — man can never get "one up" on him. All we can ever do is love God in return. "See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us," John writes, challenging our imagination even as he fills our hearts (1 Jn 3:1).

Of course, God's great gift was also Christ's (1 Jn 3:16). But Jesus always pointed to the Father, never to himself, and he did so here as well. "It is my Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven," the Lord explained, as he began his after-dinner speech to those he had just filled with barley-bread and fish (Jn 6:32).

God's Love Is Personal.

God so loved "the world" — not just Jews, or males, or freemen. Not just the wealthy, or pious, or wise. He loved men and women of every tribe and tongue and people and nation — without regard to any fleshly distinction or pride of place. Yet Scripture does not teach universalism. Not all sinners will be saved. Evangelicals agree, therefore, on a "limited atonement," although they differ on whether it is limited by man's resistance or God's design. Nevertheless, we all may be quite sure that "the world" will be thoroughly represented in glory.

The marvel is that a love so far-reaching is not diluted in the process. Indeed, God's love is intensely personal toward all whom it saves. That is Jesus' point here. "All that the Father gives me shall come to me," he promises (Jn 6:37). This is the Father's will, Jesus continues, "that of all that he has given me I lose nothing" (6:39). The Lord used similar language later to describe his "sheep" (Jn 10:14, 26-28), and in entrusting his own to the Father as he approached the cross (Jn 17:2, 24). Jesus did not come to save a faceless mass of sinners. He died to redeem specific human beings, who were his already by divine inheritance (Ps 2, 8 Eph 1:18).

Again orthodox Christians fully agree. The "elect" and the "whosoever wills" are one and the same.

Those who stress the first word look behind the curtain of human experience. Those who stress the second are intent on the here-and-now. The first group wants to be sure God receives all credit for the saved. The second group wants to ensure that he is not blamed for the lost. We need not think of it as an either/or proposition. We may happily see that it is **both/and**, for Scripture makes both points clear in

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turn. We, too, must make it plain that sinners are truly responsible for their "No" to God's grace, while their "Yes" is itself that grace in action (Ph 2:13; Rom 9:16; Ps 110:3).

We view the larger picture and say with Paul, "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it" (Eph 5:25). But we may freely join the same apostle as he makes that truth his own. "Christ loved **me**, and gave himself for **me**" (Gal 2:20). God's love is intensely personal.

God's Love Is Powerful

Christ's work will have its intended effect. God so loved (the extent) that he gave his Son (the expression) "that whoever believes . . . should have eternal life" (the result). Not one of those whom the Father gave to Jesus will perish. Every one of them will enjoy eternal life. "He shall see his seed," the prophet had foretold; "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands" (Is 53:10).

Jesus was not afraid of such superlatives. He did not hesitate to express himself in the most astounding extremes. "All that the Father gives me shall come to me" (Jn 6:37). And little wonder — for God himself will be their teacher, as Jeremiah had foretold (Jn 6:44-45; Jer 31:34). Jesus is therefore bold to say what no mere man could dare. He makes two statements with opposite perspectives, neither of which allows any exception. "No one can come to me," exclaims the Lord, "unless the Father who sent me draws him" (Jn 6:44). But "every one who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me" (Jn 6:45). Here is no room for error, for miscalculation or for loss. Jesus drives a peg from both sides, firmly anchoring our hope in the infallible sovereignty of God. How we may praise the Father that his love is accompanied by power so effective!

"Whosoever will" — indeed — and praise God for the fact! Jesus turns away none who comes (Jn 6:37). But God be doubly praised that he draws without fail every one he has given to the Son, without exception and without mistake! "Do you wish to come to Jesus?" we must ask sinners indiscriminately. "Then come! He will never turn you away!" Let us be aware that such certainty is enhanced, not threatened, by the fact that none can come except those whom the Father draws.

Here we approach a holy mystery — to us an enigma and a paradox. Yet we knew all the time that God's thoughts are higher than our own. On this subject, Scripture speaks from our right hand and from our

left. Let us be careful not to ignore either, but rather immerse ourselves in the richness of the harmony with all its variations! Let us set aside all thought of traditional debates and sectarian wrangles, as we stand together on the very words of God incarnate!

8

God's Love Is Perpetual

The God who gave his only begotten Son will not forsake us halfway to heaven. His plan all along has been that the believer "should not perish," and God always accomplishes what he sets out to do. On this we

What love the Father has shown us sinners! Passionate, yet personal. Powerful and perpetual and profuse. Yes, and perilous! At such sayings, many of those who heard Jesus that day turned and walked away.

have Christ's own promise. "This is the will of him who sent me," Jesus affirms, "that of all that he has given me, **I lose nothing**, but raise it up on the last day" (Jn 6:39). The same God who called us will also confirm us to the end (1 Cor 1:8-9). He who began a good work in us will also bring it to completion (Php 1:6). Because God is faithful, we can be confident. In these verses Paul freely uses both those words.

The cross shows us God's deepest heart toward sin and toward sinners. The resurrection shows us God's final verdict on Christ and those who belong to him. Because of these gospel facts we may know that God will never change his mind about what Jesus had accomplished. And we may also know that he will never change his love toward those whom Jesus there purchased for himself.

God's Love Is Profuse

The overwhelming flood of divine love sweeps away every pebble of human merit or worth. Jesus does not save the deserving, but sinners. He gave himself for the helpless, not the self-sufficient. He died for enemies, not associates (Rom 5:6,8,10). On the cross, Jesus removed our sin, made our propitiation and accomplished our redemption. Because Jesus fully completed the saving work — in his own perfect doing and dying — nothing we ever perform, experience or accomplish is any part of the work which saves. That work was finished almost two thousand years ago — outside of us, for us — by the eternal God who came to dwell among us. All we can do regarding the saving work is to believe it — accept it, rely on it, trust in it, commit ourselves to it — without reservation and with absolute confidence. It is completely solid and it can never fail.

John 3:16 speaks to this point as well. "Whoever believes" may have life. We may not have any power and we may not have any answers. But even the weakest and most unwise sinner can have full salvation and eternal life through trust in the Son of God. Jesus tells us this twice in his discourse on the bread of life. "Every one who beholds the Son, and believes in him, may have eternal life" (Jn 6:40). Then

he underscores this truth with his double "Amen." "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life" (Jn 6:47).

Like some who heard Jesus then, we may find difficulty accepting love so profuse. "Surely we must contribute something," our flesh cries out. But, no, "this is the work of God, **that you believe in him whom he has sent**" (Jn 6:28-29). We can bring nothing to God's feast. The table is spread already. It is free for all who come!

God's Love Is Perilous!

Let us make no mistake here. Jesus came to **save**, not to **condemn**. Yet as someone has observed, "the primary purpose of the sun is not to cast shadows — but it does!" The wrath of God is the shadow cast by his love. The person who willfully rejects God's boundless love in Jesus Christ has not simply missed an opportunity, or turned down a good deal. That person has despised and insulted the supreme sacrifice of infinite love! "This is the condemnation," John continues, "that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light" (Jn 3:19). In the day of judgment, no sinner banished to hell will cry "unfair" at God. Even the lost will admit that their condemnation is "just" (Ps 51:4; Rom 3:4-8).

God is very clear about the fate of the lost. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). The wicked come to "corruption" (Gal 6:8). Sinners "perish" (Jn 3:16). They are cast into the "lake of fire, which is the second death" (Rev 21:8). There they shall be "punished with everlasting destruction" (2 Th 1:9). The gospel message therefore puts man on the spot. It sets him in the judgment dock even now. It calls for **his** verdict on Jesus Christ. But in giving that verdict, man calls down God's verdict on himself. By his own words he is justified or condemned.

"You have no life in yourself," our Lord warns (Jn 6:53). For, as John states in his prologue, "All things came into being through him" (Jn 1:2). "In him was life" (Jn 1:3). It must follow, therefore, as John later reminds his believing community, that "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son or does not have life" (1 Jn 5:11-12).

What love the Father has shown us sinners! Passionate, yet personal. Powerful and perpetual and profuse. Yes, and perilous! At such sayings, many of those who heard Jesus that day turned and walked away. It is possible for us, too, to be offended at language such as we have been considering. May we instead, like Peter, have grace to say, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:66).



Edward Fudge is an evangelical pastor, scholar and author living in Houston, Texas. He is presently managing editor of **The Good Newspaper**.

Q. Galatians 4:4 speaks of Christ's coming at "the fullness of time." Does not this have some bearing on the issue as to whether the world could have ended in the first century?

A. Indeed it does. The age in which Christ and the apostles lived was "the last time," "the end of the world" according to 1 Jn 1:18; Heb 9:26; 1 Cor 10:11; etc. The Old Testament never distinguishes between the two advents of Christ. The inspired prophets saw in the coming of the Messiah the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Had the Jews accepted Jesus there would have been millions of evangelists rather than the tiny group of disciples who received the Great Commission. If the gospel had been understood and cherished by those to whom Christ first came, the end of the age could have come in that generation (see Mt 24:34; Mt 16:18; Act 3:19-21). The New Testament never pictures this dispensation as necessarily predestined to a lengthy two millenniums. Instead it pictures the church running alongside the river of eternity and able to cross over at any moment.

These truths have far-reaching implications. For example, they testify that to construe time-prophecies as necessarily embracing 1260 or 2300 years is unscriptural. That after the long delay in Christ's return men began so to construe them had pastoral value but not exegetical. But more importantly, recognition of the eschatological nature of the whole Christian era reminds us that the supreme duty of all Christians is to be clear on that gospel which, when proclaimed in power, will bring the return of Christ. (Mt 24:14; 2 Pe 3:12). For Christians to argue interminably on prophetic minutia and ignore the grand themes of grace and justification is to copy Nero who reputedly fiddled while Rome burned.

—Desmond Ford

Q. Since virtually every church is preaching the gospel, more or less, doesn't God require the proclamation of a special message prior to his return? What should the distinctive message of the true church be today?

A. Jesus came into this world proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom. He claimed that this was the purpose for which he came (Lk 4:43; 8:1). He also declared in his discourse on the end things, "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come" (Mt 24:14). His command to the disciples as he left them reflected the same ideas, "Go . . . and make disciples of all nations, . . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19, 20).

What is striking here is that Jesus very clearly sees the mission of the church as the continuation of the preaching of the kingdom that he taught. He proclaimed the Kingdom of God in word and deed and the church he establishes is to do likewise. Notice that it is "this gospel of the kingdom" that is to be proclaimed to the world.

Interestingly, Jesus is not pointing back to some esoteric ideas from Judaism as the heart of his message. He is not looking back at the Old Testament and prescribing it as the formula for the church's proclamation. While it is clear throughout the teachings of Jesus that he implicitly accepts the Old Testament, he also radically modifies much of its teaching (see for example his sweeping away of the significance of holy places, Jn 4:21). So Jesus does not come into the world simply trying to create a perfected, theologically precise Jewish community — he brings into existence a whole new community of faith that accepts its Jewish roots, but is not tied to them in a rigid and wooden way.

Notably Jesus uses the kingdom

concept, right out of Judaism, to describe his mission, but he fills it with new meaning. Time and time again he tells parables to explain the nature of this kingdom, and invariably his views conflict with those prevalent in Judaism. Never do we hear from his lips the idea that the mission of Christians is to promulgate Jewish religious rites, cultural concerns, prophetic pictures, eschatological views, etc. In the New Testament the religion of the Old Testament is accepted, but then transformed as it passes through the prism of Christ.

Just as Jesus does not look back into the past to get his message of the kingdom, neither does he look way off to the future. He does not anticipate a future time when greater light will shine upon the church, when a new message will be added to his teachings to complete them and round them out. It is true that he anticipates clearer understanding of his teachings and particularly the meaning of the cross as the Holy Spirit is poured out (Jn 16:12-14). But the discovery of a distinctive message sometime later in the history of the church does not seem to be on Jesus' mission agenda.

The gospel Jesus would have his disciples teach was the **same** gospel of the kingdom that he proclaimed. Not something that forsook that to either go back into Judaism unenlightened by Christ, or to add to it some arcane idea that was to be "revealed" in the future. He thought that the duty of the church was to continue **his** work, **his** teachings.

Then it is not surprising that most churches are preaching essentially the same message. Praise God! The distinctive feature of the true church of God today is that it preaches in an uncompromising way the gospel of the kingdom. It treats the teachings of Jesus with the utmost respect and integrity.

—Calvin Edwards

Apology

This magazine is late, and I am to blame — the editor, that is.

It wasn't held up at the print shop, nor in the mail. I just didn't get my job done on time. Please accept my apologies. We were moving offices the very week I should have been at this typewriter. Somehow in the hectic rush of finishing all the small details on the new office and then actually moving in and sorting things out, the magazine just couldn't fit in. I'm sure you'll forgive me, won't you?

Smuts Travels Overseas

Smuts van Rooyen is returning to South Africa early in June, 1983 for a brief visit to the major cities there. This tour, initiated by local persons in South Africa, has been arranged in conjunction with the South African office of Good News Unlimited. This is a visit home for the South African-born Smuts. We pray that his meetings will bring blessings to many.

Smuts will return shortly before the Sacramento Summer Congress where he will present the keynote sermon on Friday evening "A Touch on the Master's Wound." He will then be participating fully over the weekend and again in Chattanooga the following weekend when the program is repeated.

From Chattanooga he flies directly to Europe where he will hold series of meetings in Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and England. His theme there will be "The Benefits of Divine Grace." Pastor van Rooyen will rejoin us back at Auburn, California late in August. Please seek the Lord on behalf of these important meetings in scattered lands.

A P.S. to the above notes. I simply can't resist saying that Smuts is visiting South Africa, Scandinavia and England at the initiative of some wonderful gospel believers who have met the costs and made all the

necessary arrangements. This initiative, that furthers the cause of Christ, is greatly appreciated by Good News Unlimited. There truly is a bond that unites those who have committed themselves uncompromisingly to Christ, even though they are separated by thousands of miles.

Denver Meetings

On May 22 Desmond Ford began a series of gospel meetings in Denver, climaxing the series with morning and afternoon services on the 28th. Pastors of the Church of God (Seventh Day) made their churches available and eager worshippers came from distant cities.

Crises of the Christian life constituted the general theme including suffering and fidelity to the gospel amid divisions and strife. The speaker suggested that any presentation of the Christian life as unbroken serenity was as much a heresy as the affirmation that the Christian could never know peace of soul. Darkness and sorrow are sometimes the lot of the believer but Scripture assures us that even darkness has its treasures (Is 45:3; Ex 20:21).

In Australia & New Zealand

The Children's Section

Do you like it? We would like some feedback from our readers about it. As we mentioned in our March issue, in America it is appearing as part of each magazine. Because of costs, here in Australia we originally thought we would just make it available to those requesting it — assuming these would be the ones with children.

However, we who get to read the American edition enjoy the Children's Section so much ourselves that it seems a pity not to let everyone else enjoy it too. We like its

New Office

Well, we're in at last. Our move went quite smoothly with no broken bones or severe casualties. We are still taking time to sort, tidy and organize, but real progress is being made.

We are extremely grateful to the Lord and to those of you he has used to help make this office a reality. We believe that as months go by it will enable us to grow and develop, to minister more effectively both to you, our present subscribers, and also to thousands more we hope to reach with the good news.

Visitors to northern California are welcome to visit our new facility, and an open house will be declared on the Sunday afternoon following the Sacramento Gospel Congress, July 24. Auburn is a pleasant drive, less than half an hour, up into the foothills from Sacramento.

Our hearts overflow with gratitude to so many who have helped bring this important project from a dream to a reality.

pithy, simple illustrations and right to the point messages. But what do you think? Do you want us to keep it in, or don't you even bother to read it? *Please drop us a line and let us know.* Don't assume everyone else will write. We want to hear from YOU.

San Francisco Papers

Enquiries for these continue to come in, and we are expecting further supplies shortly; we started to tell you about these last month but ran out of space.

Paper (1) is documentation of negotiations between the GC and GNU leading up to the January talks. The remaining papers are doctrinal in nature, as follows.

(2) The Nature of Old Testament Prophecy and Hermeneutics, by Dr. Ford. Sub-heads include: What are biblically valid methods of prophetic interpretation? To what events did Old Testament prophecy point? New Testament prophecy? Could the second advent have taken place in the first century? At the conclusion are some interesting Appendices. For instance, Appendix III lists 78 points: "Interpretative Pillars of the Investigative Judgment Doctrine and Related Matters Which Cannot be Sustained by 20th Century Hermeneutics." Appendix IV: "Typical Doctrinal Positions Once Held by SDAs But Now Rejected by Most Adventist Scholars". (30 items listed here.)

(3) What Is Eschatology? and Why Is It Important? — We have had the privilege of reading and enjoying this as a two-part article by Smuts van Rooyen in the March and April issues of our magazine.

(4) The Role of Scholarship in Arriving at Doctrine, by Calvin Edwards. A topic dealt with under five headings: The scholar's obligations to himself; the scholar's obligations to the text; the scholar's obligations to his colleagues; the scholar's obligations to his church; and the scholar's tools. No doubt many ministers will find this a helpful presentation.

(5) How Do We arrive At Christian Doctrine? What Is the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments? by Noel Mason. In this paper, Noel hones in on Jesus' use of the Book of Daniel. Students of prophecy will find much food for thought here.

Available from P.O. Box 65 Chadstone, Vic. 3148, for \$10.

Ford on Video Tape

Two of Dr. Ford's sermons presented at the GNU Seminar in Brisbane in March this year were recorded on video tape by the gospel fellowship group up there. These folk have kindly supplied us with a copy and we are happy to make this available for hire to interested individuals or groups. The sermons are: 'The Gospel that Unites and Divides' and 'A Sense of Proportion and a Sense of Humour'. For use on VHS equipment, the cost of hiring (including postage) is \$8.

The John Ankerberg Show

These video tapes have been in demand. Recently in Cooranbong, then due in Western Australia, they will soon be available for anyone else wanting them. Also for use on VHS equipment, \$15 to hire.

Tape of the Month

The July Tape of the Month contains two sermons: 'Love's Provocation' by Desmond Ford and 'Escape from the Purple Room' by Smuts van Rooyen. The blessing others receive from these expositions of God's Word can be yours also. All who donate \$25 or more during July will receive this tape. Or you can order it for just \$3.50.

August's sermons will be 'If I Be Lifted Up' by Calvin Edwards and 'The Anchor' by Smuts van Rooyen.

Broadcast Time Change

Dr. Ford's programme on 2SER-FM in Sydney (107.5 on the dial) is now heard at noon on Tuesday, replacing the Sunday night schedule.

Theological Discussion

The San Joaquin Valley (USA) Chapter of the Association of Adventist Forums recently had a discussion on the 'investigative judgment', involving Dr W. Shea, Chairman of Old Testament at Andrews University, Pastor Alex Ortega of California, and Dr.

Desmond Ford and Pastor Smuts van Rooyen. Those who have heard this tell us it is very interesting indeed.

Unfortunately we are unable to offer the tapes; this right is held by the American Forum group. However, no doubt many of our readers will want to write to the States for them. There are four tapes and the set is being advertised in the USA for \$14. We suggest you send a Bank Cheque in American dollars to the value of \$20 Australian, if you require airmail postage (and ask for them to be sent airmail). The address to write to is: San Joaquin Valley AAF, 1702 N. Temperance Ave., Fresno, CA 93727, U.S.A.

Late Magazines

We wish to apologize for the somewhat erratic arrival times of our magazine. Until such time as GNU is fully and officially organized in Australia, much of the work is being carried on by helpers who have to fit this extra into already busy schedules. There are a number of hands the magazine passes through from being written in America to reaching you somewhere in Australasia. A hold-up at any one point causes the delay. Please be patient with us. We are doing our best. Things will improve in time.

The July magazine will be very late because your Australian editor will be on annual leave for that month. Don't think you have missed out; it will come sometime in August.

Enjoy Magazine

Sirs:

I want to say a very big and warm thank you on behalf of my wife and myself for that worthy paper 'Good News Unlimited'. It is a real joy to appreciate the gospel story in such clear and strong tones. My two married daughters and their husbands enjoy it also, and we all look forward to it coming into our homes regularly, and our thanks and appreciation go out to every member of the staff of GNU at home and abroad. Our prayer is that may our Saviour continue to add His blessing to your labours.

I am enclosing some names that I would appreciate you adding to your mailing list. I would also like the Tape of the Month and enclose my cheque for that and some other tapes as listed.

Once again thank you for such a worthy paper, and our prayer is that it might enjoy an ever-widening circulation of readers in this country as it is overseas.

Greenwood, W.A.

Knowing & Growing

Sirs:

Thank you for your continuing program on 2SER (Sydney) — it is very encouraging to me.

Many weeks ago you had a talk by Dr. Ford on 'Today, Forget Tomorrow'. This tape I gave to a junkie friend who found it very, very moving. Would you send me another please? Also, on the other side of that particular cassette was 'The Answer to Stress — 1'. May I have a copy of any more of Dr. Ford's talks on this subject?

I have come only a little way with this new way of life — doubts attack me a lot (seven

years at universities give me a lot of 'lightweight ammunition'). So, I feel I need a lot of help to become stronger in my belief and knowledge of the new ways.

Soon I go back to my family from this drug rehabilitation program I am doing, but not yet. I hope to go and do what God requires of me, but for today I am here.

Thank you very much for your help. Please tell Dr. Ford that his voice is beautiful — no other word I can think of — so expressive and encouraging.

Marcelle Mooney
Surry Hills, NSW.

Great Pleasure

Sir:

It has given me a great deal of pleasure to read the recent letter from Calvin W. Edwards, April 15, 1983. I am a former Adventist elder. As a result of my views on the 1844 doctrine, I have been dismissed from all my offices in the SDA church. We are at the moment attending other churches in the Colac district. We have also attended the GNU seminars in Melbourne.

May I say that we do enjoy your publication. Thank you for presenting such a clear gospel. I am including a cheque for 40 dollars — \$30 donation and \$10 for documents relating to the recent GC-GNU meetings. I would also like to be included in your special short-term ministry for the benefit of SDAs. May God bless you all in your good work.

Harry Springer
Elliminyt, Victoria.

Spurners of Truth

Sirs:

"Silver and gold have I none but such as I have give I unto thee."

Counsel: Will you all be real comfortable when probation closes and you have spurned the truth? Think about it!

Carroll Culver
Panora, Iowa

Moderation

Sirs:

I want to congratulate you for maintaining moderation in your journal.

Good News Unlimited and for the fine Christian spirit manifested by your organization.

I am happy for the definite effort made to provide "soul nurture" for your re

May the blessing of the Lord be upon you.

Ian Green
Trinidad, West Indies

Wants to be Involved

Sirs:

I have enjoyed Dr. Ford's presentations on 2SER-FM Sydney on Sunday nights. As a committed born-again Christian and former member of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, I am keen to join any Good News Unlimited group that may be meeting in the Sydney area. If no Good News Unlimited groups are meeting regularly in Sydney, do you have any plans to establish some? I would like to be involved in spreading the Good News through Good News Unlimited in the Hawkesbury District.

Peter Bryce
Richmond, NSW.

Good News Unlimited

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