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What Is Eschatology?



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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—

Spring is in the air. Blossoms are in bloom all along the roadsides here in Auburn. There's that indescribable freshness in the air — one that puts me in a mood for reminiscing. And there's a special bud that's coming into bloom that I just have to tell you about.

The ministries of Good News Unlimited are growing and developing. If you'll pardon me, I want to share my excitement with you. For several weeks now all of us at GNU have been spending many hours devising plans for the future. As a conservative organization, GNU has no interest in making sudden switches in program. As we reflect back on the past two and a half years of ministry we are awed and astounded at the way God has led and made the proclamation of his gospel effective. We believe that we are doing the Lord's will and have no inclination to radically alter our theological or practical directions.

Every spring the earth bursts forth with new growth — but the new shoots are merely an outgrowth of that which has already been present. Last year the same trees broke into blossom in the same way, the same bulbs tentatively poked their green heads through the almost frozen ground. And so GNU is blossoming forth, it is breaking new ground, but it is the same GNU. In 1983 we stand for the same values that we have stood for in the past. Sound biblical exposition centering on the gospel of Jesus Christ is our perennial message for summer, winter, autumn and spring.

What is the GNU bud going to look like as it comes into bloom in coming months? Perhaps the thing that the office is most abuzz with is the fact that Smuts van Rooyen (who is **not** returning to South Africa) is starting a quarter-hour daily radio broadcast. This will bring the gospel before thousands of persons across the USA, and later around the world, on a daily basis. And it will help bring GNU into public prominence in a way not otherwise possible.

Then there are plans for special new publications, Bible study guides, more seminars and a carefully planned strategy to enter the wider evangelical world with our gospel materials.

I could also elaborate about our new office building which will enable on-site production of radio broadcasts. I could tell you about an important new ministerial staff member who is being added — an American, not an Australian! I could share with you significant plans to build and expand our mailing list. I could describe to you offers we have had to do a live two-hour special television program, via satellite simultaneously across the two major religious networks. I could relate invitations that have

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What Is Eschatology?

Smuts van Rooyen

Recently I called a religious bookstore and asked the lady if the store had a selection of books on eschatology. "Oh yes," she said, "we have several books on the signs of Christ's coming and the millennium, including **The Late Great Planet Earth** by Hal Lindsay."

Her reply reflected the popular association many Christians make with eschatology. What cup is to saucer, eschatology is to last day events. Nor is she to be blamed, because it is true that even the classical works on theology of the nineteenth century treat the matter in the same way. Moreover, anyone who realizes that **ta eschata** means "the last things" in Greek, also sees that **ta eschata** is built into the very word "eschatology." Eschatology must therefore be the study of what happens last, at the end. And what this amounts to is that eschatology is the study of the second coming of Christ and its surrounding events.

Nor is this view simply a hangover from nineteenth century scholarship. No less a figure than R. H. Fuller, the founder of Fuller Theological Seminary, argues that in eschatology there are only two options: The kingdom has come or it has not. Then of the two he defends the latter (R. H. Fuller, **The Mission and Achievement of Jesus**, pp. 25-32). Without fear of serious contradiction it can be said that the predominant view of eschatology among conservative evangelical Christians is one of future expectation.

And what, more precisely, is meant by future expectation? Here we run the risk of caricaturing, but it often seems to involve the drawing of detailed charts to map the future, living in a state of imminent crisis because of a zero hour mentality; and the plugging of entities such as the Middle East, Visa card, the World Council of Churches and Henry Kissinger into already overcrowded apocalyptic sockets.

Perhaps the above description is unfair. Perhaps what we have here is future obsession rather than future expectation. But even in its most sophisticated forms future expectation is a theological system that gives little or no eschatological significance to the arrival of the Messiah two thousand years ago.

This article is the first of a two-part series on eschatology. It is a slightly adapted version of a paper recently presented by Smuts van Rooyen to the GC-GNU study group.

Many scholars have treated eschatology in much the same way but some with much more definition. For some eschatology begins with "the time of the end" which began precisely in 1798. George McCready Price opens his book, **The Time of the End**, with a chapter entitled "Eschatology." The upshot of this chapter is the simple equation: Eschatology = Time of the End = 1798 and onwards. He is supported in this by virtually every book dealing with "last day events" within his tradition.

Eschatology as mere future events has had an erroneous impact on both the doctrine and the life of the church. Some whole denominations are fundamentally a people of prophecy with a "last warning message." It is not surprising then to find a great number of their doctrines cast in a futuristic mold. For example, for Seventh-day Adventists, the Sabbath is a final test. A correct understanding of the state of the dead is a protection against the great last spiritualistic deception. The reception of the Holy Spirit is a preliminary preparation for the future latter rain. A healthy body is part of surviving an imminent time of trouble. Every name must yet come into an investigative judgment to determine destiny.

But we must now ask the fundamental question, Is this slant on eschatology the biblical one? Is eschatology only forward-looking? Is this concept of eschatology not drastically limited or even made wrong by a disproportionate emphasis?

Is Eschatology Only Future Expectation?

Hebrews 9:26 reads, "But now once **in the end of the world** hath he [Christ] appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." A parallel to this is found in the epistle's very first chapter, "God who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the prophets, hath in these **last days** spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb 1:1,2). From these verses alone one could conclude that the New Testament writers saw eschatology as applicable to **their day**.

But how is it possible for them to view themselves as living in the last days? How could eschatology begin in their day? Their eschatology from our end of things was wrong. History has emphatically disproved their view. **We** live at the end of the world, **we** are part of

the last days, they were way too early! Two thousand years of hours, minutes and seconds pile up as empirical reality against them. Yet in saying this we already betray a basic misunderstanding of true New Testament eschatology.

How then did the early church view eschatology? How was it possible for them to view themselves as existing at the end of the world? How did they define eschatology?

Jesus Christ the Eschatos

It is an astounding discovery to one schooled along popular lines of eschatology to find that the New Testament writers did not see the essence of the eschatos in a time period but in the person and message of Christ. For them the time element was most decidedly a secondary consideration that paled beside Jesus Christ the eschatos. In other words the person category totally dominated the time category. The eschatos was a person. To them Jesus was the first and the **last** (**ho eschatos** Rev 1:17; 2:8; 22:13), the beginning and the **end** (**ho telos** Rev 1:17; 2:8; 22:13), the alpha and the **omega** (Rev 1:8,11; 22:13).

Adrio Konig has demonstrated that the above expressions do not mean that Jesus was the first to be created and will be the last one around at the end of time. They are designations of office, of exaltation. When Peter is called the **protos**, or first, in Matthew 10:2 it means that he is the chief of the disciples; it is not a matter of chronology. The same is true here, Christ is the Lord of the entire span of history, of the totality of creation. He is the **goal** of creation and of history. He is the eschatos. Thus when Christ comes the end has come. Christ is the eschatos.

This is not to say that time did not feature in the apostles' eschatology. It did. Christ is born in time. But the fact is that the Kingdom of God came not because time elapsed but because the Messiah appeared. Christ in his person created the new era, the new aeon. He is the eschatos.

Because the end is basically a person category and only secondarily a time category it is possible for the end to be reached (albeit in a limited way) **before** the natural history of the planet comes to a close. When Martha defined the resurrection as a simple last day event Jesus immediately expanded her limited view by proclaiming, "I am the resurrection." The future was present because he was present. Resurrection could occur by him without any necessary lapse of time. The eschatos was present in his person. Jesus will not come at the second coming as a mailman from God to deliver a belated gift lost in the mail. He himself is the supreme gift and it has already been delivered.

It is not surprising then to discover that the New Testament authors describe the **totality** of Christ's life in eschatological terms. His birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and second coming are **all** part of the great last day when Messiah would be present. Never do the inspired writers restrict the end to the second advent alone. The end is much more fluid than that.

To illustrate this we refer again to the passage found in Hebrews 9:26-28. Here the crucifixion, the judgment and the second coming are all referred to side by side.

In the popular scheme of things this threesome would include one regular event in the life of Christ (the crucifixion) and two eschatological events (the judgment and the second coming). But such a theological appellation is quickly overturned by the discovery that in these verses, in the very presence of the judgment and the second coming, it is the **crucifixion** that is eschatologically designated. The sacrifice of Christ occurs "in the end of the world." This of course does not mean that the second coming is excluded from the last day, but it does show that the second coming is not the whole eschatological story. A survey of each phase of Messiah's existence will confirm this fact.

Christ's Birth and Life Are Eschatological

"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal 4:4). With these splendid words the apostle Paul indicates that God had fulfilled the promise he made to Abraham and Sarah and thereby indicates the radically eschatological nature of the incarnation.

Christians are often inclined to grow the tree of eschatology in the soil of Matthew 24 where Christ gives his sermon on the signs. In this way eschatology remains mere future expectation. But Scripture does not grow its tree in Matthew but in Genesis. For Israel, and the New Testament writers, who were Israelites, eschatology began with Abraham and the promise of the seed, the land, and the presence of God.

This means that the New Testament writers viewed **their** day as a glorious time brimming with intense eschatological fulfillment and excitement. No wonder then that Peter declares that the lamb "was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Pe 1:20); that Paul tells the Corinthian congregation that they are the ones "upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor 10:11); that Luke rejoices that the acceptable year of the Lord has dawned (Lk 4:19, 21). Messiah was the heart of the Old Testament eschatology, and Messiah had come.

The incarnation was unmistakably eschatological. It is extremely interesting to note that John uses the same basic image to describe the coming of the holy city (Rev 21:2, 3) and the incarnation of Christ (Jn 1:14).

Perhaps the clearest evidence that the life of the Messiah was the eschatos is seen in connection with demonology. The Jews believed that when the Kingdom of God came Satan would be defeated and the end would come. Here was a deep eschatological hope. It is not surprising then that Matthew sees in Christ's treatment of demons a conclusive evidence that the Kingdom of God had **already** come. He records the startling words of Jesus to the Pharisees, "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, **then the Kingdom of God is come unto you**" (Mt 12:28). In this regard it is important to see not only the fact that Christ drives out the devils but also to observe their reaction when he does so. They scream in fear (Mk 1:23; 5:5-6), they collapse in total powerlessness (Mk 1:34; 3:11).

5:12), they sense his coming as their own doom, destruction and judgment (Mk 1:24; 5:7). The Eschatos has arrived.

It is utterly crucial to understand that when Messiah comes the Kingdom of God comes. The kingdom is no longer mere promise but reality. Nor is it a reality that exists only in the minds of men. It exists in human history. Jesus does not bring us the idea of the kingdom but the kingdom itself. God's special reign has begun. Messiah has broken into our world. Fulfillment is here — but consummation awaits.

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Christ's Death Is Eschatological

The Gospel writers describe the cross in unmistakably eschatological terms. Not only do the evangelists place Christ's sermon on the signs of the end directly before the crucifixion, but, they then reveal how many of these signs immediately take place in Gethsemane and Calvary.

- (i) Love will wax cold — his disciples forsake and deny him (Mt 24:12; cf Mt 26:69ff).
- (ii) Jesus appeals for watchfulness — in Gethsemane he expects it from his disciples (Mt 24:42; cf Mt 26:38).
- (iii) Betrayal is an end sign — Judas betrays Jesus (Mt 24:12; cf Mt 26:14-16).
- (iv) Signs will appear in nature — during the crucifixion the sun is darkened and an earthquake occurs (Mt 24:7, 29; cf Mt 27:51).

These prophecies fulfilled at the cross demonstrate how decidedly eschatological in character the crucifixion is. And who of us who read the Scripture are not seen the dramatic parallel between the "It is finished!" cried out on the cross, and the, "It is done!" cried out in Revelation. Both are the same eschatological cry.

With this difference, the first is fulfillment without consummation, the second is fulfillment and consummation.

Christ's Resurrection Is Eschatological

For Paul the resurrection of the believer and the resurrection of Christ are part and parcel of the same event. So close is the connection in his mind that he can state, "But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen" (I Cor 15:13). Notice that he does not argue that if Christ did not come from the grave then we cannot, but, that if we do not rise then Christ did not. The resurrections are the same eschatological thing. Nygren says:

"... for him (Paul) the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the dead are not two totally different things. In the final analysis they are one and the same truth. For Paul the

resurrection of Christ is the beginning of the resurrection of the dead . . . that which has happened to the head also happens to the body . . . the resurrection has thus already begun." (A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, p. 50.)

The future resurrection may not simply be separated from the resurrection of Christ. They are as much a part of the same thing as the first fruits and the rest of the crop are part of the same harvest (I Cor 15:22, 23).

The Ascension — Pentecost Event Is Eschatological

At the time of his ascension Jesus instructed his disciples to wait for power in Jerusalem. The giving of that power was to prove to be an astounding eschatological event. Fire, wind, tongues, near drunken excitement followed each other in quick succession. How was this drama to be explained? Why, said Peter, This is nothing less than the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, "And it shall come to pass in the **last days**, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh" (Acts 2: 17). From this remarkable event Israel was to know that the very Jesus whom they crucified was "both Lord and Christ." The last days had come because Messiah had come.

This was fulfillment in the clearest sense of the word. Yet it was fulfillment without actual consummation. But fulfillment nevertheless.

The Second Coming Is Eschatological

The second coming is the great eschatological day of consummation for which the whole creation groans, and we inwardly groan. For it is the day when this mortal puts on immortality, this corruption puts on incorruption (I Cor 15:51-54), when at last we are like him (I Jn 3:2). This is the salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last time (I Pe 1:5). This too is the last day (Jn 6:39, 54). What Christ had inaugurated is now consummated. But we emphasize again that it is the same last day that is consummated that had been inaugurated, because the same Lord reigns at both ends of the last days.

For this brief overview it becomes clear that the writers of the New Testament regarded the **whole** history of Jesus as the eschatological event involving his kingdom. Eschatology is therefore the study of every phase of the end of the world as it is revealed in the life of Christ. It begins with the inauguration of the Kingdom of God at his birth and ends with the consummation of the kingdom at his second coming.

It therefore is clear that eschatology is not merely the study of an end of time which lies in the future alone. Such a definition simply does not do justice to the eschatological presence of Christ during his earthly incarnation and during the age of the Spirit. The glorious truth is that no Christian has ever lived in an eschatological vacuum. No single believer from even the earliest times has spent even one moment in an empty concert hall waiting for the music to finally start. No, the grand symphony struck up in Bethlehem, accompanied by angels, and several of its magnificent movements have already been played. The church, now on the edge of its seat, awaits the great crashing crescendo, preparing to leap to its feet and give the conductor a standing ovation. □

When Good Men Differ

Part II

Desmond Ford



Last month we discussed the difficulty that even good men have in receiving new ideas. Using Leon Festinger's thesis our article set forth the usual sequence that transpires when a church is confronted by a theological position different from its tradition. Drawing upon such examples as Luther, Wesley, General Booth, and nineteenth century Adventists, it was shown that history continually fulfills our Lord's warning in Matthew 23:29-39. The church is ever prone to crucify messengers of truth in the present while idolizing those of the past.

Readers will recall that the same article warned against the error of supposing that **only** those who personally disagree with us have the tendencies warned against. The fact is that all of us, however "right" our theology, tend to reject that which is not comfortable to us. Only those aware of their weakness and who therefore look constantly to Christ for guidance, and who have become habituated to both learning and unlearning — only these are likely to keep advancing when heaven sends new light.

Theological Extremes

In this issue we wish to warn against an opposite extreme — the tendency to accept too readily new ideas which are false, or to destroy a valid concept by taking it to invalid extremes. Some unbalanced minds are ever seeking the new and the bizarre, forgetting that in most instances "if it's true, it's not new; and if it's new, it's not true." The saving gospel is described in Scripture as "everlasting". When Christ came among men he did not claim to be the herald of a mass of truth hitherto unknown. Rather he claimed to be a witness to truth already existing having been earlier

bestowed through patriarchs and prophets (See Jn 18:37; 5:46; Lk 16:31; Mt 5:17-19).

What we have said about truth not being new applies to **saving** truth. Like many other useful dictums, the principle is a rough rule of thumb and not a denial that God from time to time does reveal that which is both valuable and new. Most "new" truths, however, turn out to be a recovery of that which has long been lost or forgotten, rather than a gargantuan contribution to Christian theology. God is the same, yesterday, today, and forever, and so it is (at least as regards yesterday and today) with humanity and its needs. Thus Jude 3 can speak of "the faith which was once for all time delivered to the saints."

Arthur Pink, in an essay entitled "The Importance of Preserving the Balance of Truth," has warned us all about the human tendency to run to extremes:

If the preacher gives a disproportionate place in his ministry to the Divine Law, relegating the gospel to the background, not only are his hearers in danger of forming a one-sided concept of the Divine character but the Christian is deprived of that which is most needed for the establishing and growth of his faith in Christ. On the other hand if the Divine Law be virtually shelved so that its strictness, its breadth and its spirituality are not made known, light thoughts upon sin and superficial views of the holiness of God will be the inevitable result. Both the Law and the gospel must be expounded and enforced if souls are to be acquainted with God as 'light' (I John 1:5) and as 'love', and if they are to render unto him that which is his due. (Cited in Iain H. Murray, **The Life of Arthur Pink**, p. 225.)

An Illustration from History

A good example of the danger warned against in this article is found in the historical record of the relations between John Wesley and the Moravian preacher, Philip Molther. Not everybody is aware that the man who influenced the world more than any other in the eighteenth century had himself been influenced by the Moravians, a devout, gospel believing German group. They helped him to find "the everlasting gospel." It was at one of their meetings that he heard the words of Luther read and an assurance was given him that Christ had taken away his sins — even his, and delivered him from the law of sin and death.

From that point on Wesley trusted in Christ, and Christ alone, for salvation. Until that time he had been a legalist, ritualist, mystic, and ascetic by turns, failing in each to find either Christ or peace.

As significant in some respects as his conversion is the manner in which Wesley parted from his Moravian friends, a parting which meant the end to "a goodlier fellowship than that of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table" (W. H. Fitchett, **Wesley and His Century**, p. 310). John Wesley's biographer reminds us when he deals with this event:

Truth is often of a scale too large for the tiny curve of human vision; and in partial truth there is deadly peril. Heresy itself is often truth only half seen, or seen in distorted perspective. (Ibid., p. 305.)

The Moravian preacher Molther came to London in 1739 and began to dominate the Methodist (though that name was not yet used in the sense we now know it) society at Fetter Lane. According to the same historian:

Molther's errors represent only a want to equipose in his theology; but their practical results were gross, and even deadly. Christ, he taught, was for a believer everything; "all

beside was nothing." And in the catalogue of things dismissed as "nothing" — as irrelevant, or even evil — were . . . the simplest acts of Christian worship . . . The very means of grace to him were hindrances — not to say sins. (Ibid.)

Fitchett makes it clear that Molther erred also regarding practical morality, and it should be emphasized that we ourselves know none today who would follow Molther fully. Wesley hit the problem head on, lest his movement be shipwrecked. Zinzendorf, the Prince of the Moravians, came to England to discuss with Wesley, but matters of semantics and emphasis prevented any healing. Let us again quote Fitchett in order to find the moral for 1983:

Half-truths are often whole heresies; and Molther was led astray because he saw truth only in fragments, or in false perspective. Christianity, in a sense, changes the ethical order. It gives to obedience a new place, and equips it with new motives. A forgiven soul obeys because it is forgiven, and under the motives which forgiveness creates. But Molther was so eager to affirm that we do not purchase our forgiveness by our obedience, that he forgot to assert that we obey, and must obey, under the inspiration of forgiveness.

The mischief of Molther's doctrine was immediate and long-enduring. It poisoned the teaching of not a few of Wesley's own helpers. It taught them what Wesley calls "a luscious style of preaching." "They feed their people," he says, "with sweetmeats." They talked much of the promises and little of the commands. "What are vulgarly called 'Gospel sermons,'" he says again, "has now become a mere cant word; . . . Let but a pert, self-sufficient animal, that has neither sense or grace," he cries with angry energy, "bawl out something about Christ or his blood, or justification by faith, and his hearers cry out, 'What a fine Gospel sermon.'" (Ibid., p. 311.)

The historian of the breach between Wesley and the Moravians goes on to say that Christendom has been purged of the antinomian strain, and that the universal Christian conscience has arrayed itself on Wesley's

"Cheap grace" too often characterizes modern religion, and the candy-coated gospel frequently presented does little honor to God's holiness and law.

side. Here Fitchett may exaggerate a little but certainly his statement tends in the right direction. It is sadly true that since Fitchett wrote (during World War I) antinomianism has revived. "Cheap grace" too often characterizes modern religion, and the candy-coated gospel frequently presented does little honor to God's holiness and law.

Lack of Love

We turn now to another error which in situations of disagreement so easily besets the believer. Many proclaim the gospel of love in an unloving way and thus deny him who was love incarnate. Do we not need the continual reminder that when good men differ it is often the life-style that offers the most telling evidence? Part of that life-style is the manner in which religious controversy is conducted.

Christ himself was so forthright with his presentation of truth that he was condemned by the religious leaders as one who brought divisions (see Jn 8:43-49; 7:12; 9:16; 10:19; Lk 23:5). But undoubtedly

tears were in his voice even when he uttered his scathing rebukes. Before Pilate, Annas and Caiaphas, Christ was courteous. Indeed, Jude 9 indicates that he extended that same loving restraint even in disputation with the devil himself. The Molther error of antinomianism is nowhere more evident than when Christians feel free to violate the law of love in discussions with those with whom they disagree.

He who claims to follow the One who is the Truth must confess him again, knowing that the truth and glory of God are inseparable, and that it is impossible to honor God while cherishing erroneous opinions.

One hundred and twenty years ago the Reverend Charles Kingsley, author of *Westward Ho* and other great novels, publicly attacked the character of John Henry Newman who for conscience sake (though we believe in error) had left his church for another. The result was one of the great biographies of the world, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, which vindicated Newman and embarrassed Kingsley and his church. Kingsley was forced to make publicly semiapology after semiapology and the cause of Protestantism suffered. It can almost be taken as an axiom that when one side maligns the character of those on the opposite side, instead of refuting their arguments, it is because their own case is indefensible.

Conclusion

In these two articles we have reflected upon certain characteristics revealed in religious controversy. As messengers of the gospel of peace most Christians find controversy untasteful. But it must be acknowledged that the New Testament rings with it. The gospel, said Christ, brings not peace but a sword, because of the inevitable opposition to it. Unity is not uniformity, and the saints are forever forced to make afresh the decision of faith.

Christ comes to us not only in his offer of forgiveness and life but in every fresh revelation of truth and duty. At that point he who claims to follow the One who is the Truth must confess him again, knowing that the truth and glory of God are inseparable and that it is impossible to honor God while cherishing erroneous opinions. Time and again professed Christians have followed the ancient error of the Jewish rulers who believed in Christ but refused to confess him "lest they should be put out of the synagogue." "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (Jn 12:42,43).

As we strive to advocate "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) let us prayerfully seek to fulfill Peter's admonition regarding the need for gentleness and reverence as an "answer" is given to those who see things differently (1 Pe 3:15). Let us shun both bigotry and extremism and emulate him who alone did all things well because he did all things in love. □

Q. If Jesus had returned to earth soon after he ascended as the New Testament indicates was possible (Acts 3:19,20; 1 Jn 2:18; Heb 9:26; Mk 9:1), how would the 2300 day prophecy have been fulfilled? Also, do we have the knowledge yet to understand the 1290 and 1335 days of Daniel 12?

A. The book of Daniel, as with the rest of the Old Testament, was initially addressed to God's ancient people, the Jews, and sets forth events as they would have transpired had the priestly nation accepted their Messiah. Because of the Jews' failure, Jesus applies such prophecies to the worldwide Israel of the Christian Church. Daniel 8:14 and 12:9-13 are referred to by him in Luke 21:24 and Matthew 24:15.

The entire New Testament assumes that the great crisis of the second century B.C., when true religion was almost wiped out by the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes, sets forth a pattern of the end time. We find allusions to Daniel 8:13,13 and 12:9-13 in the Olivet discourse, 2 Thessalonians 2, and Revelation 13.

Wordsworth sums up the consensus of many commentators when he writes: "Some form of infidelity and impiety will be established by Law even in the Christian Church, as our Lord himself foretells (Mt 24:15); as a heathen altar was set up by Antiochus Epiphanes in the Temple at Jerusalem....The Church itself will be betrayed by some in high places in her ministry, and by means of their timid and treacherous concessions and compromises it will be polluted by a form of worship which will make it execrable in the sight of God, and will cause all good men to weep and hide their faces in shame and sorrow, and to forsake the courts of the Sanctuary" (Christopher Wordsworth, **Commentary on the Holy Bible**, vol. 6, p. 62).

As Antiochus set up an image in the sanctuary of old, so according

to Revelation 13 some form of idolatrous worship will be imposed on all the world in the last days.

The times of Daniel 8 and 12 are also analogous for the Christian era as the New Testament references make clear. The worst part of the crisis in the days of Antiochus lasted approximately 1260 days (the heart of an aggression which endured approximately 2300 days) and the symbolism of Daniel 12:11 indicates that the end time crisis will be like that endured so long ago but go beyond it in intensity.

The 1335 day period is reminiscent of the historical fact that within a few months of the cleansing of the sanctuary by the Maccabees from the defilements of Antiochus, news came to Israel of the death of their oppressor. H. Gunkel, nearly a century ago, came up with the theory that the times in Daniel 12 were all editorial redactions, but this is guesswork.

The chief point to keep in mind is this: the New Testament teaches that at whatever point of time iniquity fills its cup by rejecting the worldwide proclamation of the gospel (Mt 24:14,15,21,28) the chief characteristics of the second century B.C. crisis over false worship will be universally witnessed. All of this could have taken place in the first century of the Christian era had the Jews accepted Christ and the resulting Jew-Gentile Church been faithful in bearing its testimony to the whole world. Keep in mind that the Bible's last book, which repeatedly has Jesus saying "Behold I come quickly" (i.e. soon), was written when it seemed that the Emperor of Rome was about to follow the persecuting example of the old tyrant Antiochus.

Observe the following significant quotations from the well-known **New Bible Commentary Revised**. The first is found in the comments on 2

Thessalonians 2:4 and the second in the introduction to the notes on Revelation. "The language here echoes the description of the pre-Christian 'antichrist', Antiochus Epiphanes, in Daniel 7:25; 8:9ff; 11:36; cf. also **Rev. 13**" (emphasis ours).

"John was more than a poet setting forth in vague images the triumph of God over all evil. He wrote for the churches under his care with a practical situation in view, viz., the prospect of the popular Caesar-worship of his day being enforced on all Christians....On the canvas of John's age, therefore, and in the colors of his environment, he pictured the last great crisis of the world, not merely because, from a psychological viewpoint, he could do no other, but because of the real correspondence between his crisis and that of the last days. As the church was then faced with a devastating persecution by Rome, so will the church of the last days find itself violently opposed by the prevailing world power."

—Desmond Ford

God and the Astronomers

reviewed by Noel Mason

God and the Astronomers. Robert Jastrow, published by W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. New York, 1978, 136 pages.

For scientists, the twentieth century has been a century of violent intellectual revolutions (see Thomas S. Kuhn, **The Structure of Scientific Revolutions**, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1970). Contrary to the impression given by our old school textbooks, science does not accumulate infallible knowledge without having to dump bits and pieces of old-world views that have been shattered by new information.

Robert Jastrow in his book **God and the Astronomers**, uses language that all can understand to tell the story of how the "Big Bang" theory has virtually replaced the Steady State cosmology. This theory proposes that somewhere in the ancient past the universe came into existence by a massive fiery explosion (see p. 12).

The book has six short chapters, an epilogue and a supplement. The interest of the reader is enhanced by thirty-seven black and white illustrations, most of which are portraits of famous astronomers and seven color plates of galaxies and stars.

In the first chapter, "In the Beginning," Jastrow says he is fascinated by some strange developments going on in astronomy. He goes on to explain his reasons: "partly because of their religious implications and partly because of the peculiar reactions of my colleagues" (p. 11). Jastrow states that the scientific mind — "supposedly a very objective mind" — behaves very much like our minds when we discover our beliefs are in conflict with the evidence. "We become irritated, we pretend the conflict does not exist, or we paper it over with meaningless phrases" (p.16).

Chapter two introduces the reader to three scientists, Slipher, de Sitter and Einstein. At a meeting of the American Astronomical Society in 1914

Slipher projected a number of slides clearly revealing the telltale "red-shift." To trained eyes the "red shift" indicated a rapid motion away from the earth. "Something happened which I have never seen before or since at a scientific meeting. Everyone stood up and cheered" records John Miller, Slipher's professor. The assembled scientists had a gut feeling that the discovery must be of earth-shaking importance.

The work of Hubble and Humason and their success in converting Einstein to the concept of an expanding universe is the story of chapter three.

Chapter four enlarges on Hubble's law: the farther away a galaxy is, the faster it is receding. According to Jastrow "the Hubble law is one of the great discoveries in science: it is the foundation of the scientific story of Genesis" (p. 85).

Chapter five presents the story of the birth, life and death of stars according to the modern astronomer.

Having introduced the three lines of evidence that point to an expanding universe — the motions of the galaxies, the laws of thermodynamics, and the life story of the stars — in chapter six Jastrow publishes the reactions of many famous scientists. Confronted with the question "What came before the beginning?" some scientists like the British physicist, Edmund Whittaker, simply postulated a Divine will constituting nature from nothingness. Others, like Eddington, reacted in an emotionally negative fashion. "I have no axe to grind in this discussion" responded Eddington in 1931 but "the notion of a beginning is repugnant to me . . . I simply do not believe that the present order of things started off with a bang . . . the expanding Universe is preposterous . . . incredible . . . it leaves me cold" (p. 112). Commenting on this kind of reaction, Jastrow says that "there is a kind of religion in

science; it is the religion of a person who believes there is order and harmony in the Universe. Every event can be explained in a rational way as the product of some previous event; every effect must have its cause; there is no First Cause" (p. 113).

However, Jastrow goes on to assert that "science has proven that the Universe exploded into being at a certain moment. It asks, What cause produced this effect? Who or what put the matter and energy into the Universe? Was the Universe created out of nothing, or was it gathered together out of pre-existing materials? And science cannot answer these questions, because, according to the astronomers, in the first moments of its existence the Universe was compressed to an extraordinary degree, and consumed by the heat of a fire beyond human imagination. The shock of that instant must have destroyed every particle of evidence that could have yielded a clue to the cause of the great explosion. . . . The scientists' pursuit of the past ends in the moment of creation" (pp.114, 115).

Jastrow concludes with a statement that will probably convince many of his colleagues that he has "gone over the hill or going bonkers." He writes, "For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance! he is about to conquer the highest peak! as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries" (p. 116).

Jastrow's book helped me to experience once again the profound sense of mystery that pervades the universe. A sense of mystery that perhaps inspired the Psalmist to cry:

The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims
his handiwork.

Psalm 19:1

Smuts on Radio

As soon as the new office building is completed, Smuts van Rooyen will commence production of a new quarter-hour daily radio broadcast. Many of the details are yet to be finalized, but presently Smuts favors a "through the Bible" approach which will explain God's word and demonstrate the benefits for contemporary persons.

We will attempt to integrate the new daily program with Dr. Ford's weekly one, as well as with the magazine and maybe the Tape of the Month. We also anticipate that the exposure gained by Smuts and Des via this integrated media approach will lead to the holding of major seminars in areas where the broadcasts have been.

The new office will contain a recording studio which will greatly facilitate this project. It is a massive task to individually prepare 260 broadcasts each with its customized introduction and conclusion. While this project will place a considerable financial burden on us to commence with, we anticipate that it will largely cover its own costs after broadcasting has proceeded for several months.

Please pray for Pastor van Rooyen as he undertakes this large and important task. We are thrilled with this forward step and are confident that it will become a major means of reaching the world with the gospel in months to come.

Good News for Kids

Every organization has to make decisions that it finds difficult and would prefer not to make. In April last year we made a decision that we were very pleased with — to commence publication of a magazine dedicated to the message and spirit of the gospel for children ages six to twelve.

Recently the board voted to discontinue publication of **Good News for Kids**. This decision was

based primarily on the fact that we had not been successful in obtaining a sufficient number of subscriptions to cover the production costs. With a little under 300 subscribers we have been running at a loss of more than \$1500 each month. We could have broken even with about 1200 subscriptions, but this seemed a long way off.

We regret the necessity for this decision and apologize for the disappointment and inconvenience imposed on those who have been receiving the magazine regularly. We will notify subscribers soon and offer a refund of their subscription donation.

Address Change

The address of Dr. and Mrs. Ford and Desmond Ford Publications has changed. For personal correspondence or for book orders, please use the following new address: Desmond Ford Publications, P.O. Box 10, Newcastle, CA 95658.

Editorial

Continued from page 2

recently come in from some of the largest radio stations in the USA for us to broadcast Dr. Ford's program. I could let you in on a newly worded statement of faith carefully designed to reflect the biblical view of religion and not a particular denomination's distinctive view of doctrine. I could share all kinds of hopes and aspirations. And in coming months you **will** hear many of these things.

All of this is designed with **you** in mind. We want to be **your** agents in proclaiming the grace God to a world in need. Our urgent desire is to be both biblical and relevant. We are serious about this, and programs for the future will ensure that what is born in the spring will not die in the winter.

There is an important bud bursting into bloom. I hope you will enjoy its beauty.

Edwin W. Edwards

In Australia & New Zealand

We apologise for the lateness of our magazine this month. We have delayed mailing to include news of the visit of the GNU team.

Halfway through the March meetings, we can report all going according to schedule, good-sized audiences (including many new faces), and a thoroughly successful programme.

Between five and six hundred attended the Saturday afternoon meeting in Sydney, and this set the pattern for other centres. Here in Melbourne the warmth of the reception accorded to Dr. Ford was particularly noticeable, and he told me this had been the same in the other areas. It always seems to me that he is looked upon as a favourite cousin/uncle returning to the family circle, and the moment a meeting is

over he is engulfed by people. Everyone seems to have an urge to have a personal word with him. There was a happy atmosphere in our gathering as he presented one of his usual inspiring messages, and later answered questions on doctrinal subjects and current events within the church.

Our second speaker was George Masters, and he took two magnificent services. Friday night was a grand gospel meeting based on the parable of the Prodigal Son — a sermon on tape that will truly warm your heart and lift your spirits.

The second presentation 'My Two Pet Hates', was perhaps the most thought-provoking of the series and deserves wide dissemination. It dealt with (a) the problem of divisive factions within Christianity ('Christ is

the Divine Trumpet who can break down the sectarian walls of our modern Jerichos'), and (b) the scandal of a wrong sense of priorities within Christendom that sees millions of dollars spent each year on arguing points of doctrine one denomination against another, while a world of lonely, needy people with aching hearts goes largely unheeded. (In the USA, while the conservative/fundamentalist branch is the fastest growing section of the Christian church, the denominations making up this group have the least to do with providing help to America's poverty stricken.) These sermons are available on cassette, \$3.50 each.

Monday in the Victorian provincial city of Bendigo, Dr. Ford was interviewed live on radio for about twenty minutes and a wide spectrum of religious questions were discussed. The country TV station BCV8 also had an interview — this time recorded. The interviewer in this instance honed in on the subjects of Davenport and the doctrinal issues within Adventism. When the programme went to air, only the first half was presented; omitted were the positive things Dr. Ford had to say to balance the negative facts that came to light. This, however, did not deter an audience of 150 (135 non-Adventists) turning out to hear 'The Angel in Revelation'. This was a tremendous response in a country area on a Monday night.

Also in Australia, but not visiting Melbourne this time, is Noel Mason, and we know that his deeply studied presentations are being appreciated in the places he visits.

March Seminar Tapes

We will have full details next month of what is available. If you want a tape of any particular meeting, please contact us and we will endeavour to get a copy for you.

For the present we are offering 'The Prodigal Son' and 'My Two Pet Hates' by George Masters on separate cassettes for \$3.50 each.

Tape of the Month

For those who are not regular subscribers to our Tape of the Month, we want to announce that our March tape contained the following sermons: 'Comprehending His Love' by Smuts van Rooyen; 'Big, Shining Tears' by Noel Mason; 'The Religion that Transforms' by Dr. Desmond Ford; and 'The Certainty of God's Love' by Calvin Edwards.

The April tape has two messages: 'The Only Answer to Trouble' by Dr. Ford, and 'Love: Alienation's Antidote' by Calvin Edwards.

The Tape of the Month is mailed automatically to everyone who makes a donation of \$25 or more during the month (or an equivalent amount at an earlier time). Anyone wanting to receive the tapes for a full twelve-month period may do so for an annual donation of \$42, or any particular tape may be ordered for just \$3.50.

San Francisco Meetings

Those interested in the presentation given by the GNU men at the discussions with the GC in San Francisco may obtain them from GNU. The GC men did not present written papers so we

cannot make their lectures available. A donation of \$10 will secure a set of these papers including more than 140 pages of theological papers and correspondence preceding and following the meetings. Copies of the letters relating to the recent loss of ordination by Desmond Ford and Smuts van Rooyen are also included. Send requests along with a \$10 donation to cover photocopying and postage expenses to the GNU office P.O. Box 65, Chadstone, Vic. 3148.

Children's Feature

Because GNU is anxious to communicate the gospel to children, commencing with the April magazine, each issue in America will contain an additional four-page feature for children. It is suggested that those who do not have children can simply remove the centre page insert and pass it on to a child.

Here in Australia and New Zealand, we plan for the present just to include the insert for those requesting it — either for their own children or to pass on to someone else. So, if you would like it please drop us a line today and let us know.

Dr. Ford Still in Australia

Following a busy programme of meetings in Australia and New Zealand during March, Dr. Desmond Ford plans to stay for a few extra weeks in Australia. Some may wish to speak with him by phone, so on most weekdays (whenever he is not absent at further meetings) between April 4 and April 30 he will be available between 8 am and 9 am. The number is (079) 737 318. Out of courtesy to those making the phone available at this time, please *do not call at other hours*.

Meetings scheduled for April as we go to press:

ROCKHAMPTON

Monday, April 11, 7.30 pm

Engineering Lecture Theatre; Capricornia Institute, CAE

CAIRNS

Saturday, April 23, 5.00 pm

Tea and informal meeting, followed by a public meeting at 7 pm

"Tomorrow in the Book of Revelation"

Senior Citizen's Hall, 471 Gatton Street, Cairns

So Thankful

Sirs:

Thank you for the latest magazine. Marvellous! I really appreciate the gospel centred messages in Good News Unlimited.

Recently my husband and I visited two of our married children interstate. Both were brought up in the church, our daughter's husband being a minister's son. We have never been able to talk openly about religion to them since they left — probably because it just seemed a set of rules to them. Anyway, they would never listen to our pleas to 'Come back'. But this visit we found them both (with their partners) willing to listen to the gospel — and discuss it. Our daughter told us that the final thing that made her leave was because she thought if she had to have every sin confessed before the investigative judgement, and be right with God, it was an impossibility, therefore she might as well get out and enjoy this life because she certainly wasn't going to make it to the next!

So our assurances of God's love and forgiveness, and our own lack of a judgemental attitude, were appreciated. We already send this daughter your magazine, and she and her husband appreciate it. Now the son and his wife would like to have it too. It was a real blessing to us to be able to talk to them once again on things that really matter.

We also visited some friends — church members. The husband had fallen into deep sin and had not been to church for a long time. The home was desperately unhappy. We talked to them. He felt he went into sin deliberately and therefore God could not forgive him — the old unpardonable sin. I really have never before found anything so sad.

Anyway, the first thing we thought of to help them was to lend them Smuts' tape 'The Glory of Forgiveness'. They really appreciated it — in fact would not return it until the last minute before we left to come home. I would appreciate it if you would send them a copy. They both really want to find their peace with God again. I'm so thankful there is GNU to help them to do so.

Once again, thank you — and keep up your good work.

Aenid Pettingill
Dungay, NSW

Joy Without Perfection

Sirs:

I enjoy all the tapes I receive from GNU, but I've probably listened to Dr. Ford's message on one tape close to a dozen times and every time I get just as excited about it. It's just such fantastic news!

Satan knows well the easiest way to tempt me to discouragement is to remind me that I do not live the perfect life for God that I wish with all my heart I did. Before I understood the gospel he succeeded all too often. Having a sensitive soul, my daily mistakes and failings were all too obvious and the agony that even my best thoughts had mixed motives tormented me.

Then came Dr. Ford and GNU. I've been rejoicing for almost three years now. But after listening to a set of eight tapes about the "privilege" and responsibility I have to live a perfect life, and vindicate God so the great controversy could end, I felt a great need to hear the **good** news. So once again I listened to "The Last Message to The World." What a relief to hear again that the task of vindicating God has already been done by Jesus.

In reading Colossians 2:12 soon after, I was thrilled to read that I'm already qualified or fit in Christ for "the inheritance of the saints in the Kingdom of Light." And since my inheritance is kept in heaven for me (1 Peter 1:4) that must mean that in Christ I am fit for heaven now. That's a daring, startling thing to say, but I didn't say it — Peter and Paul did! And GNU is echoing it.

Not to say God is finished with me already, but when I fall, I fall right into the arms of Jesus and thank him for reminding me of how much I need not only his substitutionary death, but also his substitutionary life. What a wonder that it is so freely and unendingly offered! I'm sure it must be a joy and a privilege to live a perfect life for God. I want so to do it. I wish so I could. But in the meantime, while we are still on this earth, I'm finding much joy and privilege in daily living by faith in the Kingdom of Light.

Thank you, thank you, thank you, for preaching good news unlimited! In your talks with the General Conference, please don't compromise. The healing of a church is a worthy goal, but the healing of souls is your real mission.

Raylene Phillips
Red Lake Falls, Minnesota

Broadcasts Most Helpful

Sirs:

We regularly listen to Dr. Ford's broadcast's, which we find most helpful. We are leaders of a Home Cell Group in our Parish and find Dr. Ford's addresses very useful in our discussions. Please find enclosed a cheque to assist with your work.

R.J.H.
Blenheim, Sth. NZ

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