

GOOD NEWS UNLIMITED

Solus Christus — Solo Scriptura — Sola Fide — Sola Gratia

Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως
πάλαι ὁ θεὸς λαλήσας τοῖς
πατράσιν ἐν τοῖς προφήταις
ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν
τούτων ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν
ἐν υἱῷ.

Hebrews 1:1-2a

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by his Son.

—English Translation

"It's My Life, Isn't It?"

—Desmond Ford

The Speaking of God

—Ron Allen

May 1987

Word to the Wise

Jonathan took a nip at the left sleeve of my best preaching shirt, and I have the mark to prove it. Not Jonathan, our 17-year-old son, though Jon is affectionate. Rather, Jonathan the llama.

The first weekend in April my sister Doris, and her husband David, came to Auburn to visit our family. The spring weather was breathtaking. Young grass was electric green, and the orchards tucked into the bosom hills were "wearing white for Eastertide." It felt a crime to stay indoors, hidden from the blue enamel sky.

We drove to the local farm. (According to Marie, who owns the Snooty Llama Company's 170 animals, that's pronounced "ya'-ma." A "lama" is a Tibetan monk.)

Marie loves llamas so much that when she found a flicker of interest in our party, she gave us the royal tour. To begin, she called "Jonathan! Jonathan!" He's the most friendly and demonstrative llama of the herd, and came quickly over to the gate. His coming brought all the others.

While we stood at the gate and stared at the llamas that stared at us, Marie gave us all kinds of llama facts and figures. Llamas are naturally curious and love humans; they have no top teeth; they spit, but not unless provoked, and then only when there is some violation of their strict hierarchy; they have strong memories, long remembering both kind, and unkind, acts. Their long eyelashes and huge black globe eyes make them look most intelligent—which they are.

Frankly, I was more fascinated by the fact that llamas are such handsome and dignified creatures, and love to have you vigorously rub their woolly necks. No one would ever accuse me of being excessively fond of animals, but I thoroughly enjoyed those proud, affectionate llamas. Admittedly, none of them kept trying to kiss me as they did Doris, so I never had the misfortune of smelling llama breath. But I don't think I'd have enjoyed the visit any less if Jonathan had breathed all over me.

That memorable sunbright weekend was a real encouragement to me. Walking amid gamboling llamas, rubbing woolly necks, laughing with visiting family, savoring blossom-scented air—cheered my soul. My spirit inhaled, and life breathed fresh and fragrant.

Everyone needs encouragement. Even people we consider strong, mature and deeply experienced, may be in need of a little encouragement.

It wouldn't surprise me if you have the gift of "encouraging" (Rom 12:8) the apostle Paul wrote about. He, himself, must have possessed it when he tirelessly traveled through Macedonia "speaking many words of encouragement to the people" (Acts 20:2, NIV). The synagogue leaders in Pisidian Antioch recognized it in him when they asked, "If you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak" (Acts 13:15 NIV).

What encouragement Paul preached that day! "A message of salvation" that "fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath.... We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus from the dead.... Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:26,27,32,38,39 NIV).

Thank God for friendly little episodes that encourage us on life's journey. Yet, not even woolly llamas—nor holy llamas—can invigorate us with the rich encouragement we gain from the gospel of our Lord Jesus!

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Roy Gee

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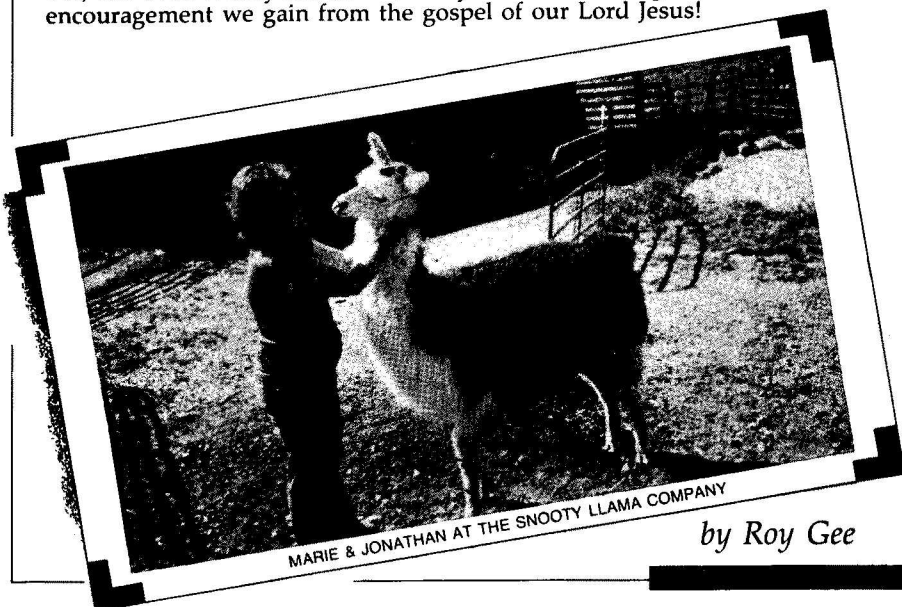
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COVER: God has spoken through the Scriptures, and the Scriptures speak of Jesus. This month's cover was created by Timm Erickson, and the clever women at Auburn Oaks Printing (Timm is son of the owners). Timm graduated from the University of California, Santa Barbara, 1986; married Erine, February 1987. Timm and Erine will be going to Colombia ("for the next thirty years") as missionaries to the Amazonian tribe, the Hupda. Timm and Erine serve with Wycliffe Bible Translators, Intl., and will translate the Bible into Hupda once they have learned the language, and created a writing system.



by Roy Gee

[Dr. Ford answers the question, "Can't I do what I like with my own life?" The fact is we are not our own. On the bases of the gift of life, the preservation of life, and our redemption on Calvary, we belong to Another. This preview article is taken from Dr. Ford's upcoming book *Worth More Than a Million!*]

WHY BURDEN PEOPLE with unwanted warnings or restraint? Why urge upon free-willed beings any course that contrasts with their own desires and habits? Why shouldn't a man curse, fornicate, drink, smoke and live only for his own pleasure? Why not? It's his life, isn't it?

Why urge a son or daughter to be pure, to take God into account, to treat others not only as neighbors, but as brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers? It's their business, isn't it? Not yours or mine. It IS their life, isn't it?

Pride and Amnesia

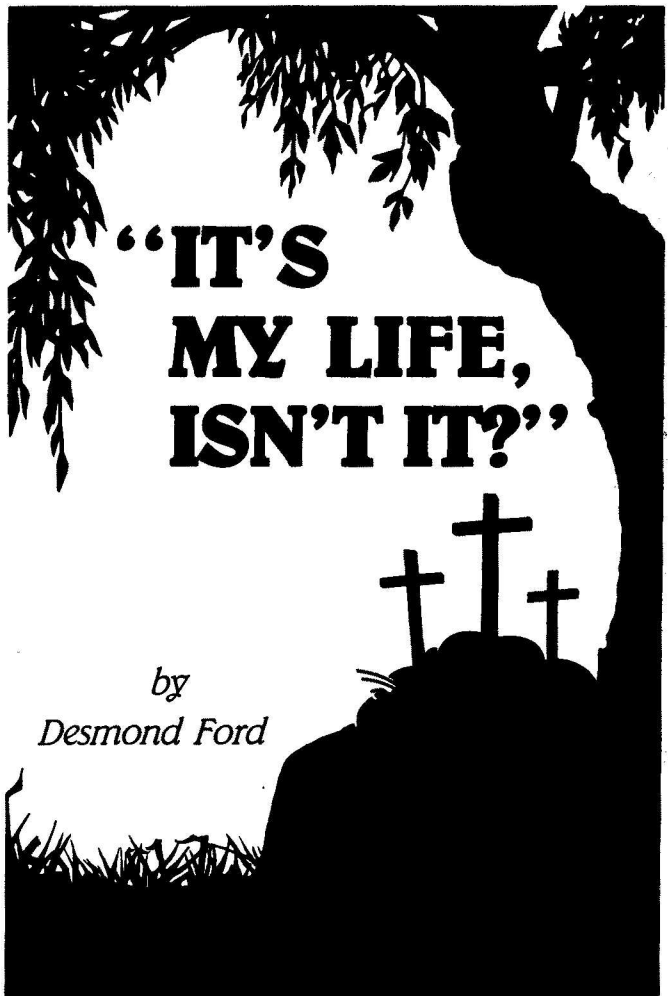
It takes not only a great deal of pride to claim sole right to one's person, but also a colossal amount of either thoughtlessness or ignorance. For example, do not all of us take memory for granted, until some accident occurs which reveals to us how dependent we are upon this faculty for identity and survival? Ever parked your car at the airport of a huge city, gone away for a week, and returned to find you are not sure where you parked? Memory is a very ingenious contrivance containing detailed files reaching back to our infancy. Not only did we not invent this vital device, we could not have done so given all eternity.

Must not the angels laugh at the arrogant strutting of human beings who have forgotten they could not manufacture even a faint resemblance of any of the body's 50 trillion cells? Did ever any king with as little reason claim sovereign rights over a territory as foolish mortals claim autonomy over themselves? How gentle is our God who could, if he wished, visit us with amnesia with embarrassing regularity. Suppose in an endeavor to cure amnesia, scientists forgot what they were about, why they were so engaged and who it was that was

striving so. One thing is certain, they would neither know much about, nor be able to do much with, the kingdom they belligerently assert to be theirs.

You Have Been Bought!

The answer from Scripture to man's claim of self-ownership is clear, unequivocal and final. "You are not your



own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Cor 6:19-20 RSV). Twice in these words the truth is told that we are God's, not our own.

How can it be? The text tells us. We were bought. We were delivered, if we will accept it. God's own Son valued us so highly that he would not leave us in the darkness of the shadow of condemnation and death. By his own agonies he saves us from our agonies, if we will let him.

We Did Not Create Ourselves

Did I conceive myself, bear myself, care for myself in the first days, months, years of life? Did I carefully contrive

"You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

my own IQ, select my particular talents, ordain my race, color, country and my parents and siblings? Let us go further. Can I guarantee one day of my life? Can I be certain of survival in the storm of fear, or enticement, or anger? How much power do I have to pursue what seems to me good? How much power have I to even select what is truly good?

The old Book is right. We are not our own, either by origin, preservation, nature, privileges or destiny. All that I can call my own are my mistakes, my sins, my failures, my innate abysmal selfishness and poverty.

If all my "pluses" are given to me, and the outcome of every hour (if it is to be the best), must also be a "given," then is it so strange that I should behave as one not my own? Is it so strange to act as one who has responsibilities as well as privileges, duties as well as pleasures, obligations as well as indulgences? No, it is not strange. It is sanity. For "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal 6:7,8). That is no stern, loveless threat, but a merciful warning about the immutable nature of the universe.

And something else. Probably I (you) can be numbered among the privileged elite of earth. We are not among the half who live without enough food. We have shelter, and our environment is not shadowed by infectious diseases. Most of us have sight and hearing, and ability to move and do, to speak and sing. What shall I do with these advantages in view of the disadvantages of so many? Especially as I remember that there is no known reason why I am not among that oppressed many.

How can I discharge my obligations to those less fortunate? One way only exists. Only "in Christ," by trust and obedience, can my way be wise, safe and useful. Christ will lead me in the path of stewardship. My life is not my own, nor are my moments, talents, opportunities or health. They are all held in trust. To rightly use them is the rent for the space I occupy down here.

The Cross and Our Selfish Individualism

When a man says that he has a right to do what he likes with his life, his body, his

all, what he really means is that he doesn't want to get involved. He has no wish to leave a bequest to humanity as humanity has to him. In other words, he wants to be a selfish pig—so there! But:

Each of us is a social product, nurtured by the whole family of man, loved by parents and grandparents, taught by teachers and clergy, protected by policemen and soldiers and judges, encouraged by universities, inspired by artists and poets. Each of us contains the cumulated investment of thousands of years, and is the product of a multitude of hopes. We have no right to squander this long-term inheritance...¹

Much more motivation exists than Evans Hill has listed. Stand under the shadow of that ancient cross and hear the plaintive cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The answer is: He was forsaken that we might forsake our habit of fleeing from life's cross, and the cross of the gospel, crosses which, if lifted, ultimately will lift us. For the cross of service and stewardship, when embraced, becomes as wings to a bird and as sails to a ship. The sighs of Calvary, through the magic alchemy of our loving, Heavenly Father, ultimately become transfigured into the songs of Paradise.

Therefore sing it gladly: "We are not our own, for we have been bought with a price. Therefore will we glorify God in our body and in our spirit which are God's." Hallelujah!

SUMMARY

We belong to God, every cell, every talent, every capacity for thought, feeling, and action.

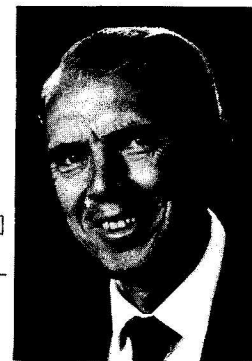
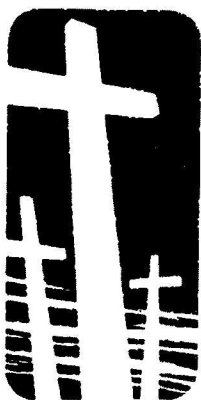
Life consists of responsibilities as well as privileges, duties as well as pleasures, obligations as well as indulgences.

The immutable nature of the universe is that of a cause-effect relationship. What we sow we reap inevitably.

We take many things for granted, including the many blessings of life, such as our senses and a marvelous mechanism of memory. Those who accept the sacrificial principle of the cross will find that instead of weight it will become wings. □

1. Evans Hill, "It's My Life, Isn't It?" *The Reader's Digest*, January, 1969.

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DESMOND FORD

[Ron Allen is head of **Good News Unlimited**, Australia, and lives in Brisbane.]

IN THE PAST God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by his Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. (Heb 1:1-4 NIV)

It would be a bleak life, indeed, if God had not spoken to us. But God has spoken to us. This is the underlying assumption of the book of Hebrews. God has spoken to us in two stages. In the past he spoke through prophet, priest and providence. Now, finally, in these last days he has spoken to us by Jesus Christ.

The revelation of God in his Son is infinitely superior to anyone or anything. The author of Hebrews stated seven things about the Son: 1) He is heir of all things. God has given everything to him. 2) The universe was made through him. 3) The Son is the radiance of God's glory. 4) The

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—English Translation

THE SPEAKING OF GOD

by Ron Allen

Son is the exact representation of God's being. 5) The Son sustains everything with his powerful word. 6) The Son has provided purification for our sins. 7) The Son is at the right hand of God.

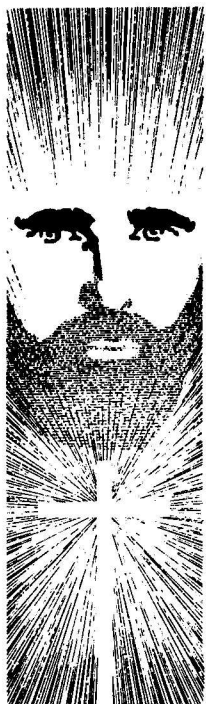
It is clear from this list of credits, that the Son is admirably suited to be God's spokesman. If God speaks through him, then the speaking of God in the past will certainly pale in comparison to the worth and splendor of the word of God through the Son.

The letter to the Hebrews was written

to Christians who were in grave danger of treating the speaking of God in Christ as being of no greater consequence than his speaking in the past. There was a tendency among the recipients of this letter to retreat back into the more familiar territory of the Mosaic tradition. It was the purpose of the author of Hebrews to encourage them not to do this.

Fulfillment-Continuity

There are two important perspectives in the book. The first is the



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perspective of fulfillment. For example, in chapters 3 and 4, Moses and Christ are compared. The author recalls the disobedience of the Jews to the word of God by writing about Moses and the wilderness experience. The rebellious Jews could not enter into the rest of Canaan because of their unbelief. Because Jesus is worthy of greater honor than Moses, the result of disobedience to him will correspondingly be much worse than that resulting from rebellion against Moses. If it was dangerous to trifle with the word of God when spoken through Moses, how much more dangerous for Christians should they dare to draw back from the word of God through Christ.

Examples of Fulfillment-Continuity

The experience of God's people under Moses is a parable for the Christian age. Moses himself is a forerunner of Christ. The gospel that was preached to the Jews in the wilderness was to find its fulfillment in the Christian gospel. The rest offered the Jews in the land of Canaan, was a sign of the rest in God's presence, that would come in Christ. Joshua, who led the Jews into the land of Canaan, was but a shadow of the Christ. It can be seen that the experience of Moses and the children of Israel was prophetic and was to find its fulfillment in Christ and the Christian gospel.

As another example of this perspective of fulfillment, let us examine Hebrews 6:13-20. Here the author recalls Genesis 22 where God made his covenant promise to Abraham. The promise was that Abraham would have many descendants and that the whole world would be blessed through his seed.

In verses 18 to 20 the author shows how this promise, which was originally addressed to Abraham, is fulfilled in the experience of those Christians who through faith in Christ enter within the veil into the very presence of God. Jesus himself was the seed of Abraham with whom the promise was lodged. God did indeed speak with Abraham. God did indeed announce his purpose to Abraham. But it was

only dimly described, and Abraham enjoyed only by promise what people in the Christian age enjoy by fulfillment.

The word of God spoken in ancient times anticipated the word that God would speak through Christ. The prophecies and pronouncements of the Old Testament have no controlling point, no anchor, apart from Christ. A promise to Abraham is like a guided missile that powers its way through the ages. No one really understands where it is going until it finds its mark in the Messiah.

The Old Testament is a study in progression up to Christ. The word spoken in many ways, at many times and through many individuals, finds its apex in Christ. We could say that the New Testament is continuous with the Old in that it fulfills it.

Fulfillment-Discontinuity

We now come to the second perspective of the book of Hebrews. If the first perspective illustrated continuity between the new and the old, the second perspective illustrates **discontinuity**. Christ is not only a conjunction between the old and new orders, but he also forms a disjunction. While there are similarities between the Aaronic priests and Christ, there are massive dissimilarities. This is because of the distinct superiority of Jesus over everyone and everything. The surpassing worth of the Son is the reason for the disjunction between the old order and the new.

This discontinuity between the new and the old is of more importance to the purpose of the book of Hebrews than the perspective of continuity or fulfillment. There are at least thirty-five instances in Hebrews where the writer deliberately shows the difference between Christ and what went before. It is not the author's purpose to make Christ conform to the details of the Levitical system. This is because the new is better than the old. The new cannot be contained by the old; it cannot be straight-jacketed by the old. The old wineskins will not hold the new wine.

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THE ACCUSATION

Chapter 10

by
Gillian Ford

[Our story began with a conflict between Marley the Mole and his cousin, Sam Shrew. They had argued about whether the story of creation in the Bible was true. To help Marley in his quest for understanding, Marley's father had used the *Annals of the Adventures of King Maon the Magnificent*, with its ancient tales illustrating creation themes. Marley had found himself continually at odds with Sam (a non-Christian), who sought in every way to humiliate and ridicule his mole cousin. Sam had Marley implicated in the disappearance of Willy Wolverine. Sam, and friend Freddy Ferret, accused Marley of viciously pushing Willy into a flooding stream, with intent to drown. In our last chapter, while Marley was awaiting trial, his father had taken him to a local museum, and shown him where much of the battle symbolism in the Bible came from, and its connection with the creation story. They read the tale of how King Maon routed the Shrewds in battle. In this chapter, the Shrewds continue causing trouble, but this time the trouble comes from within Maon's kingdom. Enter Marsi, the spy!]

IT WAS MAON'S wife Mica who, seeing her husband wearied with too much serving of the people, suggested he find a loyal man to be his prime minister. And it was she who suggested Mishma, which pleased Maon greatly. They decided to keep the idea to themselves so that Maon could work with Mishma closely for a period of time to see if this would be a sound idea. From then on, Maon took Mishma into his

confidence more and more.

Marsi, whom you will remember came to find the king after the Flood, on his return from the mountain, sensed that Mishma was being favored by the king and was smitten with jealousy. Marsi had served the king as long as Mishma had, and resented being left out of the royal councils. Marsi sought the occasion to talk to Mica, who instinctively did not like him (though she did not know why).

The jailer had prepared a special cell for Mishma, a deep pit, in which he had put half a dozen vicious scorpions, mean insects with an incredibly painful sting, whose bite could easily kill a mole because of its small size.

By clever questioning, Marsi discerned that King Maon was about to elevate Mishma into some high position in the kingdom. From then on, he plotted the

downfall of Mishma.

You will remember that Marsi had reported to Maon after the Flood that some spy must have informed the Shrewds of his absence. Marsi knew this was so because he was that spy! He was an extremely clever and calculating mole who hoped by this suggestion to exempt himself from being the spy. It had worked. He was above suspicion. Now his evil mind decided that his only hope of keeping Mishma from power was to destroy his reputation in the eyes of the king. And, if he did it in the right way, it would be he, Marsi, who would become prime minister, and not Mishma.

After questioning the queen, Marsi had a sleepless night, but it was well worth it, he thought. For overnight he had perfected a plan. If he contacted the Shrewds, the cruel shrew neighbors, and explained to them the advantages of his becoming prime minister, they might help him. Once that happened, he could work to depose Maon and become the puppet-ruler of the Molks on behalf of the Shrewds.

It would be simple enough to

fabricate the evidence against Mishma. One or two Shrewd spies could be caught over the border of Molkdom with dispatches addressed to Mishma. Molk soldiers, worthless friends of Marsi's, could be bribed to give false evidence against Mishma. Then there was his own platoon, one of whom had told Marsi how they had all fled and deserted the king on the night of the Flood.

Within a short time, the Shrewds were contacted and they agreed to Marsi's suggestions. The spies were chosen, and the false documents prepared. Marsi tutored his false Molk witnesses. Then as the scene was set, it was just a matter of waiting for the right time, which soon came, since the Shrewds engineered it.

Maon received a request to come and discuss terms for peace between the Molks and the Shrewds, and it was suggested that the discussions be held on neutral territory over the southern border of Shrewdom. This ensured the absence of the king for about ten days at a large enough distance to prevent news leaking through to him of what was to happen simultaneously in Molkdom. Maon, fearful of vacating the country and being duped by the Shrewds, decided to leave Mishma in charge.

Marsi, in a way which made it look as though he hadn't arranged it, worked things out so that his own platoon would be on border patrol in Maon's absence. Shortly after Maon had left Molkdom, Marsi "captured" a Shrewd spy carrying an incriminating document addressed to Mishma. Marsi was careful not to interfere with the evidence and had two soldiers accompany the Shrewd to the palace with instructions to have him inquisitioned by the Molk generals. A day later, another spy was caught with further evidence, again sent to the generals, and Mishma was called in for questioning. Of course, he denied it all, but when the Molk witnesses stepped forward, the case seemed so watertight that the generals called for Mishma's arrest and imprisonment.

A dispatch was sent to Maon immediately, but Marsi had prearranged that it would be inter-

cepted and delayed. He had also arranged a most unpleasant stay for Mishma in prison, one which he hoped Mishma would not survive. The keeper of the jail had been friends with Marsi for many years. He was of poor character and should have been in prison himself. Only an excellent recommendation from Marsi and a lack of knowledge about the jailer on the part of everyone else had secured him the job. He was a callous and cruel villain, who took great delight in torturing his victims, though he was careful and selective. The results were always blamed on jail fights, or never came to light because of the unfortunate and well covered-up deaths of a number of prisoners. The king was not aware of this cruelty.

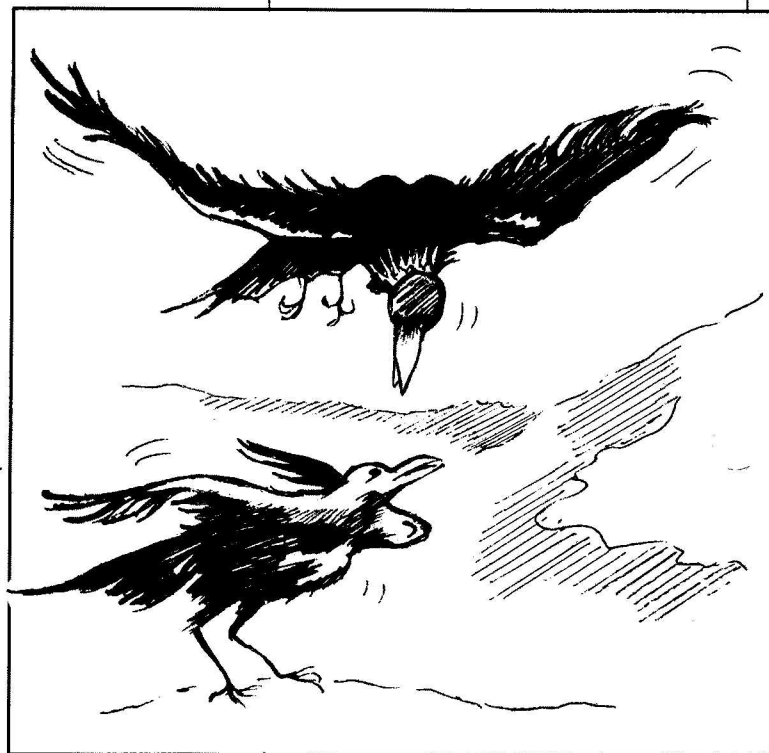
The jailer had prepared a special cell for Mishma, a deep pit, in which he had put half a dozen vicious scorpions, mean insects with an incredibly painful sting, whose bite could easily kill a mole because of its small size. After his imprisonment, Mishma was lowered into the pit to the waiting stings of the scorpions, a stone was placed over the pit to seal it, and he was left there in total darkness. Of course, Marsi and the jailer expected his death by morning. The insects would be removed, the death made to look like suicide from poisoning, and only the name of Mishma would remain, besmirched and ruined by the unanswerable evidence against him.

It was then Marsi made his great mistake. Oversure of himself and the outcome of his plan, he went home with the jailer and got

drunk. Mica, Maon's wife, came to the prison to make inquiries about Mishma that night and was not allowed to see him. Not seeing the jailer, she found out inadvertently by the information of a careless soldier that Marsi was out drinking with him.

Mica could never say exactly why, but suddenly a great fear came over her and she became cold and began to tremble. Something was wrong. Mishma was in terrible trouble and she did not believe he was guilty. Maon must be told, for the dispatch would not reach him soon enough. But he was so far away, what could she do?

A strange insight flashed into her mind. Some months before, a most unusual event had taken place. A servant had come to her telling her that a bird had been found fallen from a tree and its wing was damaged. It was unable to move and could not feed itself. They were afraid it would die. Mica was a gentle and kindly soul, known for her nursing ability. She



went along to supervise the treatment of this bird personally, taking along her physician. Of course, he didn't know much about birds, but said it didn't look too serious and would soon heal if the bird was fed and watched over.

One thing that birds and moles share is a voracious love for worms, so feeding it was no problem. They both could eat more than their bodies' weight each day, so the bird could have done no better and had no more sympathetic nurses than a bunch of moles. They fed and sheltered him. He didn't like it when they tried to drag him underground after their custom, but they eventually let him stay in the fresh air and after a few days he could feed himself again. Shortly afterwards he was able to fly.

Before he left, he expressed his great gratitude to Mica and said that if there was ever anything he could do for her in return, to let him know. Birds, like animals and fish, have territorial instincts. That means they usually live within a certain small district, except when migrating. So the bird was never far away. They had not needed to call on him before since he flew by day, and they were night creatures, but now it was close to daybreak and Mica was desperate for help.

Mica went up to the surface of the earth and looked around waiting patiently for the bird to awake. Soon his song throbbed hauntingly across the silent morning skies. She made her way to the base of the tree. Seeing her, he flew down.

"What is it, your majesty?" he warbled. "Is there something wrong?"

"My head is not sure, bird, but my heart is cold and fearful that my people are in great danger, and my husband, the king, is far away from here," she said.

"How can I help you ma'am?"

said the bird respectfully, his head tilted to one side as he listened to her intently.

"My husband is across the border, south of Shrewdom, and I need a message taken to him. But even so," she said, her paws waving in agitation, "it will be too late. How can he get back in time?"

The bird cocked his head and said, "I'll get him home. Leave it to me." He asked a few questions,



thought a little more, and said farewell. Mica went back silently into the earth to the palace and spent an agitated and sleepless day worrying about Mishma in the prison.

What had taken Maon days to cover underground, the bird flew over in a matter of hours. He was way out of his territory, but met many helpful birds who gave him directions, one or two of them flying part of the way with him. Soon he flew over the border of Molkdom and headed south. When he arrived at the place where he

expected Maon to be, he had the difficult task of finding his exact location. He could not see any sign of activity but finally was fortunate enough to find a local hawk who had been watching the event closely in hope of catching a shrew or two for breakfast.

The hawk was able to show him the exact spot he was looking for. Then came a bigger problem. As soon as the Shrewd sentries saw

a bird lunging down towards them, they disappeared dramatically beneath the soil. But our bird was not easily put off. He put his beak down close to the ground and began to sing over and over again, "Maon, king of the Molks, Maon, king of the Molks, I come from Mica."

Inside the tunnels, the singing woke everybody up and the Shrewds were furious. It was such a strange occurrence that they knew at once that their plot was in danger and tried to prevent Maon from hearing the song. But that was impossible,

and Maon insisted on going up to the bird. As he came to the tunnel entrance, he recognized the bird as the one Mica had helped. The bird bowed low, and raising its wing said, "Sir, come under my wing and let us draw aside. I have a message for you from your wife."

They moved some distance away, the bird protecting king Maon as though he was holding an umbrella over him to keep the sun away. Meanwhile the Shrewds had decided to rush in and capture Maon to prevent his leaving, if that were to happen.

"My Lord," said the bird in a whisper. "Mica has sent me. Your people are in great danger and you are needed home right now." He told him of Mishma's plight.

"Trust me, I will carry you in my claws and we will be home in a few hours.... So he ignored the thumping of his heart and allowed himself to be picked up and carried off."

"I see why I was lured here," said the king. "Evil is plotted against us. But it is many days' journey from here. How can I get home?"

"Trust me," said the bird. "I will carry you in my claws and we will be home in a few hours." It was truly brave of King Maon to agree. While human children have nightmares about being stolen by a robber, mole children have nightmares about being carried off in the claws of some predatory bird. It was as brave of King Maon to assent to be carried as it would be for you to fly to the moon. His father probably would have said, "If the Lord wanted moles to fly, he would have given them wings in the beginning." But Maon was of a different generation, and the desperate circumstances made him throw caution to the wind. So he ignored the thumping of his heart and allowed himself to be picked up and carried off. It was none too soon, for the Shrewds were even then swooping out of their tunnels intent on his capture.

The bird moved from the ground with great speed, shooting up dizzily towards the sun. Maon felt terribly airsick, and closed his eyes as the friendly earth got further and further away. But as the bird leveled out, the king took courage and opened his eyes. Of course his eyesight was never

good, but he could see that the ground looked a little like the patchwork quilts his mother used to work on. Here was a square of brown, ploughed earth, and there was one of green oats. In another place was a square of golden corn, and embroidered on top of each of them were irregular shapes of trees, barns, and houses. Now they were over a shimmering blue lake, and soon heading over the border range of mountains. These were not very high, but the air was cold and Maon shivered. Maon was used to sleeping in the dark, earthy tunnels by day, and this was vastly different terrain. Yet, despite his fear of heights, and his worry about what he would find on his arrival, the rhythmic flapping of the birds' wings, and the swinging from side to side, lulled him to sleep. He only awoke when they made their descent just as the sun went down in the west.

The ground looked a little like the patchwork quilts his mother used to work on. Here was a square of brown, ploughed earth, and there was one of green oats. In another place was a square of golden corn....

The bird was exhausted, but too polite to say so. The king was extremely grateful, and apologized for having to leave straight away. Maon passed quickly through the royal gates, past the astonished sentries, and hastened to the palace to see Mica. He had to eat, for moles cannot go without food for long without great danger of dying. As he hurriedly ate, Mica told him all that had happened, and how Marsi was known to have been revelling and drinking with the jailer. "There is something really wrong," she said.

As soon as Maon's appetite was satisfied, he left the table and headed for the jail. Once there, he demanded that Mishma be

brought to him. "On second thought," he said, "take me to him." So they took him to the stinking hole in which they had thrown Mishma and removed the seal, expecting Mishma to be dead. The jailer was shaking with fear, for surely Mishma was dead by now, and the king was no fool. He would know straight away that while one scorpion might stray into a pit, six weren't likely to.

As the stone was rolled away, the king called, "How are you, my faithful Mishma?" A cry came back, though subdued, "I'm safe, my king. The Lord has delivered me from the sting of the scorpions." Soon he was lifted safely out of the pit. But the jailer was so nervous he tripped and fell into the pit, and the scorpions made short work of him. Then the king called for Marsi and when he did not appear, sent out a search party for him. They found him trying to sleep off his drinking from the previous night, and brought him to the king. □



Gillian Ford

We must not make the mistake of trying to make the ministry of Christ fit the myriad details of the Aaronic ministry. There is enough that is similar to that of the Levites to show that Christ does fulfill the old. But that is all. The old must be subservient to the new. It is the new that gives meaning to the old. The old must be interpreted by the new. The old must yield to the new. The old must yield to the purpose, design and substance of the new. Christ himself is the key to understanding the Old Testament. All the rays of light that shone from the many and various prophetic instruments only make sense when they find their focal point in Christ.

Consider the following passages in which the author contrasts the old with the new:

By calling this covenant "new," he

has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear. (8:13 NIV)

They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order. (9:10 NIV; see also 10:1,5,9)

These passages state very clearly that Christ's fulfillment of the old means he has outmoded the old. Jesus Christ, God's final word, imbues the first stage of God's revelation with meaning, by superseding it. The old order effectively proclaims the finality of Jesus by giving way to him. Christians can now know without a shadow of doubt (thanks to Hebrews), that in contrast to the continual offerings of the old order, Jesus has truly provided, once-for-all, "purification for sins." □

* VIDEO * VIDEO * VIDEO * VIDEO * VIDEO

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During Dr. Desmond Ford's recent Australia/Phillipines preaching tour, he was shown this article by Neville, its author. Dr. Ford was impressed, and urged it be sent to us here in the United States. Neville lives in Bonnells Bay, New South Wales, and is a pastor.

WHEN YOU are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of man comes (Matthew 10:23, NIV).

Introduction

This verse is a puzzling one. From our viewpoint in the twentieth century it is an embarrassment. But from a first-century apocalyptic viewpoint, the passage becomes a glorious tribute to the sovereignty of Jesus.

The verse fits into the context of the passage, which is one of mission, not prophecy. It harmonizes perfectly with the events that did occur before the first disciples finished going through the cities of Israel. (The term Israel, as applied in the time of Jesus, does not seem to have been used in either a geographical or political sense. It appears to refer to the people of Israel.)

The Problem

William Barclay, in his commentary on Matthew, makes note of the problem that arises from a simple reading of the passage:

Matthew depicts Jesus as sending out His

JESUS— Name Above All Names

by
**G. Neville
McKenzie**

men, and, as He does so, saying to them, "You will not complete your tour of the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man shall come." On the face of it that seems to mean that Jesus said that before His men had completed their preaching tour, His day of glory and His return to power would have taken place.¹

If Jesus meant what the passage appears to mean then, quite simply, he was mistaken. Jesus has still not come back in power and glory. Jesus foretold something that actually did not take place.

Moreover, a surface reading of the passage is even at odds with the integrity of other parts of Matthew's Gospel:

The "coming" of the Son of Man is a phrase which usually seems to stand for the moment when world history will come to an end, the Last Judgement begin, and the righteous be fully vindicated; and the saying looks at first like a prophecy of Jesus which was soon proved false. Yet Matthew, half a century later, deliberately included this saying in his "manual for the church."²

Matthew understood the Christian mission to include far more than the "cities of Israel." He wrote that the gospel must go to all the world before the end could come (Mt 24:14), "to every nation, and

kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev 14:6).

The Viewpoint of the Reader

Matthew 10:23 is only a problem for twentieth-century readers who possess a "prophetic," end-of-the-world bias. This bias brings to the words of Matthew an understanding he never intended. To do so is to display folly and run the risk of losing personal faith in the grand theme of Christ and his completed atonement:

The famous Albert Schweitzer took the direct, literal meaning to be the intended one, was convinced that Jesus had made a fundamental mistake, proving himself to be a false prophet in the process, and so gave



up historic Christian faith and devoted himself in a self-sacrificing life to the black people of Lambourene.³

It is preferable to read the passage bearing in mind the time when it was written, the people for whom it was written, the purpose Matthew had in writing the Gospel, and the immediate context of v. 23.

The time was at least 30-40 years after Jesus' resurrection. The people were Christians living two or three generations beyond the eye witnesses. Matthew's purpose was the strengthening of the faith of those Christians. The living context was the first Christian commission to proclaim the gospel.

Let us examine some of these in greater detail.

The Time and Times

Not only must the time of writing be noted, but also the times. Christians of the late first century faced civil and religious unrest on all sides. The times had a decided apocalyptic flavor. The climate was one that anticipated an imminent end to the present age and the beginning of the Messianic Age, which would be ushered in by the appearance of the Christ in power and glory:

(a) Social and religious conditions were such that any proclamation of a Messianic Kingdom as an impending, soon-to-be-fulfilled reality would bring sharply into focus, and into conflict, all the loyalties of Jews, both sectarian and orthodox.

(b) Roman authority could not remain indifferent to such stirrings of passion, whatever the status of Judaism as *religio licita* (lawful religion)....

(c) The language of this section [Matthew 10—Ed.] is wholly in keeping with apocalyptic sayings about the last days...⁴

The first century milieu was one of tension, charged with apocalyptic fervor.

"The Son of Man comes" is an echo of the language of Daniel 7:13, which does not speak of the 'son of man' coming to earth, but rather coming to God to receive authority.

Are there any apocalyptic motifs in Matthew 10:23 which would have sounded a resonant chord in those days? The "Son of Man comes" is one such motif:

The Son of Man comes is an echo of the language of Daniel 7:13, which does not speak of the 'son of man' coming to earth, but rather coming to God to receive authority, and Jesus' frequent uses of such language show that he applied it to his own future glory in times and situations varying from his vindication after the resurrection (26:64; cf. 28:18, echoing Dn. 7:14) to the final judgment (25:31; cf. 19:28).⁵

If R. France, author of this quote, is correct in observing a link between Matthew 10:23 and Daniel 7, then what bearing does this have on the overall meaning of the chapter?

The Immediate Context

Matthew 10:23 makes better sense if Jesus is understood as saying, "You will not have finished your first tour before I come to the Ancient of Days to receive authority, glory and sovereign power" (Dan 7:13,14).

At the time Jesus sent out his first disciples, his hour had not yet come. The cross was still before him. Jesus had not yet been received by the Father as triumphant redeemer (Jn 20:17). He had not yet been seated "at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven" (Heb 1:3 NIV). The hour of God's judgment on this world was yet to come.

The events recorded in Matthew 10 anticipated this judgment. Judgment of the world was soon to take place; the hour of God's judgment came at Calvary.

Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.⁶

The power of love confronted the love of power, and triumphed. The prince of this world was cast out. No longer was sovereignty over planet earth in question.

Jesus is the rightful ruler of humanity. To him belongs the worship of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples.

Matthew 10:23 anticipated that this even would happen before the disciples had finished going through the cities of Israel, on the first leg of the Great Commission to take the gospel to all the world.

The Mission Today

The proclamation of the fledgling church was "Jesus is Lord!" (Acts 2:36; Rom 10:9). The disciples were to go to every nation, tongue and people proclaiming the ultimate sovereignty of Christ. He has redeemed the world and all that is in it, therefore be reconciled to him. What a powerful message! Jesus is Lord!

The mission of Christians in every age is to proclaim the Lordship of Christ. All creation is now subject to him, wrested back from the hand of the usurper. The hour of God's judgment has come (Rev 14:7). It came in A.D. 31-2. Christ is now sovereign Lord of creation. He calls his disciples today, just as he did two thousand years ago, to a mission of sacrifice and rejection.

Jesus is the rightful ruler of humanity. To him belongs the worship of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples.

He calls them to proclaim his sovereignty, and he promises to be with them to the end of the age as they call mankind everywhere to worship him whom God has

exalted to the highest place, and given the name that is above every name.

He who finds his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake, will find it.

...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of

God the Father.⁷

As Christians unite in his mission, so they unite in his destiny. Just as Jesus came before the Father to be exalted for his faithfulness, so he will acknowledge before the Father those who acknowledge him before men. "He who finds his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake," Christ said, "will find it" (Mt 10:39). In this promise those faithful witnesses who have lost much will find their comfort.

Conclusion

Matthew 10:23 is only a

problem when we read it out of its first-century context. "The Son of Man comes" (see Dan 7:14) refers to Jesus assuming judgment and authority at his death, resurrection and ascension. The disciples would not have even completed the first stage ("cities of Israel") of world evangelization before then.

A rich blessing pours forth from Matthew 10:23 when it is read through the eyes of those for whom it was first written. It is important to come to the Scriptures in

this way, if we are to enjoy the same triumphant faith that sustained the first disciples throughout the violent days of the first century. □

1. William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1956, pp. 391,392.
2. A.E. Harvey, *Companion to the Gospels*, 1972, p. 50.
3. H.P. Hamann, *Chi Rho Commentary Series: Matthew*, 1984, p. 117.
4. *Anchor Bible: Matthew*, 1971, p. 125.
5. R. France, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Matthew*, 1985, p. 184.
6. John 12:31,32, RSV.
7. Philippians 2:10,11, RSV.

"Gospel," I pronounced the 10th word slowly. Becky bent over her paper and wrote her last spelling word for the week. I left her to finish and went to the kitchen to prepare lunch. After eating, we had "quiet time." I sat at my desk and corrected the morning homeschool assignments. "I'll just zip through this spelling list, then we can all take a walk before we go shopping." Big red "C"s paraded down the left margin of Becky's paper until I came to the last word. "Gospel?" There, beyond a smudged erasure was a neatly lettered J-E-S-U-S. I smiled at her original improvisation. Yet I wondered. In her nine-year old directness at problem solving had she not reached right to the heart of the matter? Jesus is the Gospel. It's just that simple. And even children can understand!

—Kathi Creech

Andrew loves cars, mud, music and being close to Mom. That's why he carried his handful of sticks to my kitchen and dropped them at my feet. Having gotten my attention, he announced, "Let's play church!"

"All right," I said, "but you'll have to show me how."

I watched as Andy carefully positioned all of his sticks. "There!" he said, "Here's the walls and this is the roof and that is Jesus' cross on top!"

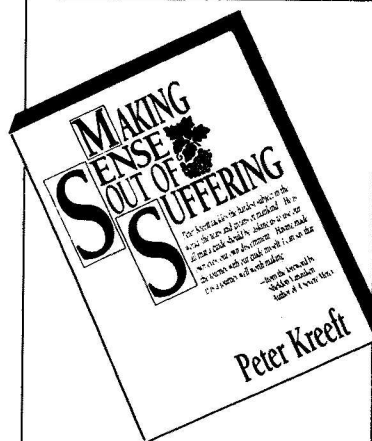
"What a good church you've made! But there's no floor," I pointed out.

Andy looked around, but found no more sticks on the floor. Unperturbed, he said, "We don't need a floor!" We have Jesus' cross, and that makes it a church!" And he's right. Maybe when we adults "play church" we need to remember what "makes" a church...

—Kathi Creech

Kathi Creech writes from Kirkland, Washington, just east of Seattle. Kathi is widely published, though she only began writing in 1985. She homeschools children Becky and Andy, while husband Roger teaches high school. They all live in the home they built high above Lake Washington, overlooking Juanita Bay.

Books in Review



Making Sense Out of Suffering, by Peter Kreeft (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books) 1986. 184 pages, \$6.95. Foreword by Sheldon Vanauken.

Reviewed by R. T. Gee

RTG: It's silly being jealous, but I am.

Reader: It is. You are?

RTG: I am. Jealous. Rotten jealous.

Reader: I'm sorry. What brought all this suffering on?

RTG: Peter Kreeft's book on suffering. I slave away all month, plodding along with words, struggling to get this magazine produced. And when I'm done the magazine's all other people's writing! But this Kreeft has polished off four of his own books before this, is stunningly bright and clever, and an insufferably good writer.

Reader: Poor baby!

RTG: It's all right for you, you're just reading this, but I'm having to write it. Mind you, Peter's a humble man (unlike some I know). He joins with C.S. Lewis, who admitted in *The Problem of Pain*, that he did not live up to his own principles! Peter also identifies with G.K. Chesterton, who wrote to the *London Times*. The *Times* had asked a number of writers for essays on "What's Wrong with the World?" and G.K. wrote:

Dear Sirs:

I am.

Sincerely yours,
G.K. Chesterton

Reader: Tell me about the book.

RTG: It's by the professor of philosophy at Boston College, and is brilliant.

Reader: It's really that good, eh?

RTG: I think so. Oh, once in a while his ideas rush on so fast he seems to ride a little roughshod over the opposition. Still, I'm willing to put up with some **aplomb** for the benefit of his spine-tingling thinking.

Reader: Spine-tingling? **Aplomb**?

RTG: Look, you don't have to be here, you know.

Reader: You forced me to be here!

RTG: Shhh! Behave yourself! You're only here because I'm copying the dialogue style Peter loves to use (in honor of Socrates). The conversational approach certainly helps when the intellectual going gets rough.

Reader: Is the intellectual going going to get rough in this review?

RTG: Not really. It's only me that's writing. But Peter does say the problem of suffering is summed up in four difficult propositions:

- I. God exists
- II. God is all-powerful
- III. God is all-good
- IV. Evil exists

Reader: The going is getting rough! There seems to be a logical problem there. How does he solve it?

RTG: Well, he does and he doesn't. He first gives the ten "easy" answers of philosophy and religion, including Rabbi Harold Kushner's denial of II, in his *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*.

Reader: Brad McIntyre wrote an excellent article about that in last month's magazine.

RTG: Yes, he did. And Peter has some of the same comments Brad came up with. But then Peter sort of changes gear. He stops calling evil and suffering a "problem," because problems can have solutions. He starts to use the word "mystery."

Reader: You mean we can't

understand the mystery of suffering?

RTG: Well, really, yes. Peter believes suffering is not a problem, as such, because we are in it, thus we cannot "solve" it. He reminds again of the teaching of Socrates: **We are not wise!** Peter thinks that's the whole point of the Book of Job. In the end, God asks the suffering Job, "Who do you think you are, anyway? Are you the author of this story that is your life?" Because we really can't answer God's questions, Peter thinks suffering is a mystery—we seek to understand, but shall not fully, until God reveals the mystery to us.

Reader: That's very humbling, but not very helpful. Does Peter have anything more useful to say?

RTG: Don't be cynical. He has lots to say. He ransacks the philosophers, the artists and the prophets for clues. And all the clues point to Chapter 7.

Reader: Chapter 7? What's that?

RTG: That's the chapter Peter recommends we read even if we skip the rest of the book. And I agree. Any gospel believer will love Chapter 7.

Reader: Why?

RTG: Because it's a chapter Rabbi Kushner did not, would not and perhaps could not write. It's the chapter, "Jesus, the Tears of God."

Reader: You enjoyed it.

RTG: Enjoyed is not quite the correct word. **Thrilled** would better describe my reaction. Peter says the existence of evil is a strong argument against a good God existing. God has answered that argument, not with words, but with deeds and tears. God became human and hung upon the cross. God weeps with us in our suffering.

Reader: I'm deeply satisfied that Peter's apologetic writing centers in Christ. However, I'm a little tired now, and must be going.

RTG: I'm not surprised, I've kept you so long. But suffer

me a little longer. There are some of Peter's thoughts I'd like to leave with you.

Reader: Well, all right. But only because it's you, and you are so nice.

RTG: Thank you. I was just about to say that for the sake of this review I could keep you here as long as I wanted, just as God sometimes permits us to suffer for the sake of the story he is writing. We do not fully see that story. If we **did**, and could truly enjoy all the fascinating characters, rich action and satisfying meaning, as God intends, we would not hesitate to be in it.

Reader: I told you I chose to stay, because you are so nice!

RTG: Yes, you did, and I appreciate it. I was going to share some of Peter's thoughts with you. He repeats over and over that the prevalent philosophical view is we live in a world with pools of light, surrounded by darkness. But for the Christian we live in a world of darkness surrounded by light.

Reader: I like that—I think. Let me spend some time...

RTG: Here's a clever quote, "Conservatives often seem afraid of questions and liberals afraid of answers—which is even sillier, because that's like being afraid of food. Being afraid of questions is like being afraid of hunger. That's only cowardice."

Reader: Huh?

RTG: I'm sorry, I've made you suffer. I should have stopped when your eyes glazed over. I'll leave you with a recommendation to read this book, which is as wise as Sheldon Vanauken says it is in his Foreword; and a final quote. It's from Corrie ten Boom, and was written in a Nazi concentration camp. "No matter how deep our darkness, God is deeper still."

Reader: I believe it.

RTG: Because of the cross of Christ, we all do. □

Letters

Ready at Last

Dear GNU and Staff,

I have a lot of good things to say to you about your articles, tapes and TV broadcast. But time and space do not permit. However, to top them all: I've found someone that believes what I have had in my heart for a long, long time. I left the church I was raised in because I felt so unworthy. Everything I did to become worthy (works) only made it worse and worse. The harder I tried to "get ready" the more unready I felt. I'm sure you know what I'm referring to. If there had been a "Fundamentalists Anonymous" then as there is now I would have been a charter member.

Thank you, thank you for coming into my life! What a wonderful Savior and Heavenly Father we have!

V.H. Sutter Creek, CA

GNU - Only Servants

Dear Roy,

How I praise God for the way he is using GNU in spreading this beautiful gospel message to the world. I for one have never thought of 'feet' as being very beautiful, but when I read in Romans 10:15 "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news," then I say 'Amen.' How beautiful are those feet that are so swift to go and come with the gospel—as you folk are doing!

As I read 1 Corinthians 3:5 I cannot help but paraphrase it: "What after all, is Des? And what are the rest of

those servants of GNU? Only servants, THROUGH whom I came to believe. The Holy Spirit used them to lead me to Christ, and his gospel. Each of you planted, but the Holy Spirit watered, and made my understanding grow."

And that is the way I feel, when I am accused of being a 'Ford follower.' Des led me to Jesus Christ and continues to instill in me the desire to want to know more and more of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for which I praise God.

God bless!

G.C. La Junta, CO

Missing Fellowship

Dear Brother,

I still stand alone here. Normally I play religious music during the Sabbath hours, and a sermon on Sabbath mornings. For myself I have the determination not to be influenced by false teachings; but it is more difficult... for fellowship.

Last weekend we spent in Kruger National Game Park. One sight which was most unusual was seeing baby hyenas with a pack of eleven adults. Normally the babies are kept hidden until they are several months old. The reason why we were so fortunate is because the hyenas had used as their lair the storm water pipe which passed under the road. One of the adults kept trying to drive the pups back in the pipe by pushing their rear ends with a front

foot. As soon as the adult came back to the center of the road, the pups would return and climb all over the aunts and uncles.

One thing has me puzzled. Genesis 1:3 (Day One) and 1:14-19 (Day Four) both talk about God saying "Let there be light." Can you explain this? Think of us in our isolation.

May God bless you in your work,

T.C. Dunnottar, Transvaal, RSA

[We do think of you, TC, and the many others who because of faithfulness to the gospel find themselves "cut off" and alone from former fellowship. We pray for you, and assume that God must have something very special in mind for so many to feel so alone so much of the time. Day One saw the creation of light; Day Four the creation of "lights," that is, sources of light, light holders, luminaries. How could there be light **before** the sun, moon and stars? One **theory** is that the Creation story was written from an earthbound viewpoint. Light appeared on Day One, but the sun could not be seen because of heavy overcast. On Day Four, the overcast was parted, and the sun, moon and stars became visible.

—Ed.]

Sinless Perfection in Christ

Dear Friends at GNU,

My husband and I have been through some spiritual struggles on the issue of whether or not God requires us to totally stop sinning

before Jesus returns. This has been a real troublesome issue in our lives for some time. We have come to understand that our perfection is only in Christ as long as we are in this world.

We need your prayers that we may remain strong in faith. If you have any tapes that you would suggest on this subject we would greatly appreciate knowing about them.

We also very much long to minister the TRUE gospel to others we know, who are laboring under this bondage.

Yours in Christ,
G.D. Zephyrhills, FL

[While I'm sorry that you have had spiritual struggle and trouble on the sinless perfection issue, I'm heartened that you care enough about the gospel that you want to shun sin! For too many, sin is a matter of little consequence. Better to be sensitive to sin, with attendant anguish, than insensitive enough to think we could approach God without Christ's righteousness. It sounds to me that you have persevered your way through to the correct gospel answer: "our perfection is only in Christ." The most popular tapes we have on this topic are Dr. Ford's "Christ's Greatest Gift," (2024); and a "golden oldie" by Smuts van Rooyen, "The Condition of Eternal Life" (SVR81-1), \$3.50 donation each. GNU, 11710 Educational St., Auburn, CA 95603-2499.

—Ed.]