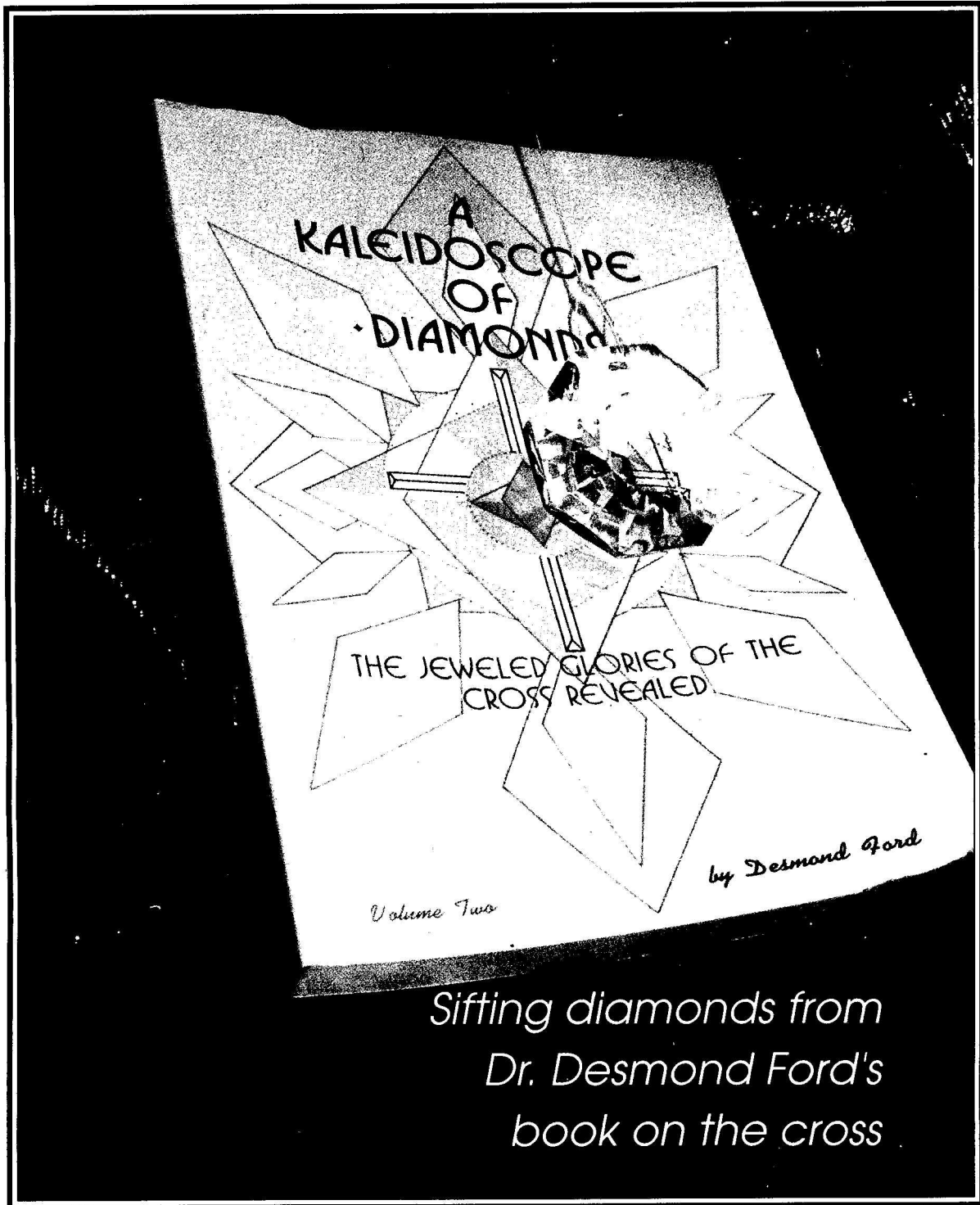


GOOD NEWS

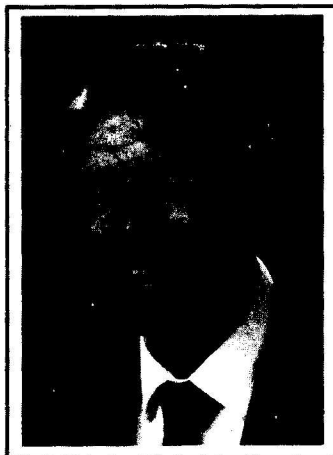
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Dr. Desmond Ford

Editorial

As I write (two weeks before leaving for "down under") the world is echoing with the media exposure of the immorality of Jimmy Swaggart. It is good news for millions whose consciences have troubled them recurringly. Now they are encouraged to tell themselves, "I'm no worse than these religious men."

The whole affair is both tragic and nauseating, particularly because it follows so closely on the heels of the Bakker scandal. It reminds me of the sober words of ancient Eliphaz:

"What is man, that he should be pure,
Or he who is born of a woman, that he should be
righteous?

Behold, He puts no trust in His holy ones,
And the heavens are not pure in His sight;
How much less one who is detestable and corrupt,
Man, who drinks iniquity like water!"

Job 15: 14-16 (NASB)

Pascal, father of the computer and wisest of Christian apologists, may have been stirred by Eliphaz to write what he did, or was it just his own experience? Here are his words about us all, couched in unforgettable paradox:

"What sort of monster then is man? What a novelty! What a portent! What a chaos! What a mass of contradictions! What a prodigy! Judge of all things. A ridiculous earthworm who is the repository of truth, a sink of uncertainty and error, the glory and the scum of the earth" (*Pensées*, 131).

No wonder Scripture forbids us to make human flesh our trust. The best of men are but men at best. In our wisest moments, none of us will trust ourselves further than we can throw ourselves because, as inspiration tells us, our hearts are fashioned alike. His or her weakness may seem to be my strength, but my potential follies, though different, are as many as theirs.

In his goodness, God rarely tells us the bad news without adding the good news, so that instead of being cast down we might be raised up. Take Jeremiah. Like the ancient Greek who hunted the city with a lantern looking for an honest man, he also sought unsuccessfully for such in Judea. Then he wrote:

Thus says the LORD,
"Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind
And makes flesh his strength,
And whose heart turns away from the LORD.
For he will be like a bush in the desert
And will not see when prosperity comes,
But will live in stony wastes in the wilderness,
A land of salt without inhabitant.
Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD
And whose trust is the LORD.
For he will be like a tree planted by the water,
That extends its roots by a stream
And will not fear when the heat comes;
But its leaves will be green,
And it will not be anxious in a year of drought
Nor cease to yield fruit.
The heart is more deceitful than all else
And is desperately sick;
Who can understand it?"

Jeremiah 17:5-9 (NASB)

(continued on page 7)

Editor, *Good News Unlimited*:

Roy Gee

Editors, *Good News Australia*:

Paul Porter
Robert Cooper

Editor, *Good News For Kids*:

Gillian Ford

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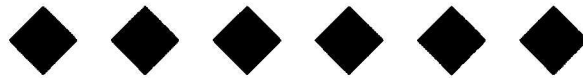
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Everything we do and say reflects what we are. Deeds and words reveal character. So it is with God. Uncorrupted nature was originally his garment, history is his story in parabolic acts, and, later, Scripture becomes his tongue. Even nature has a message to tell for anyone who has ears to hear and eyes to see. But it is Christ on the cross who unveils God's heart, for at Calvary heaven positively shouts.

Golgotha was hell, but a hell scintillating with diamonds. These diamonds have many facets and even a fast revolving kaleidoscope could catch only their partial beauty. Nevertheless we shall try. I know of no better

way to be awakened from our spiritual slumber than by considering the jeweled testimony of Calvary.

Like the Bible, the cross has an outer form and an inner meaning. For example, the New Testament uses the story of creation as an image of redemption (Gn 1:1; 2 Cor 4:6; 5:17). And is not the story of Israel's redemption from Egypt the story of every sinner saved by grace? Every believer has symbolically left the Egypt of idolatrous bondage by the blood of the Lamb and has set off for the Promised Land

nourished by the Manna of Heaven and the Water of Life. This symbolism of Scripture finds its most concentrated essence at the cross. The outer form of Calvary speaks merely of a man suffering a death penalty in the days of Pontius Pilate for the crime of disturbing the peace of both religion and state. The inner meaning, however, has many layers; only some of which we have space to touch upon.

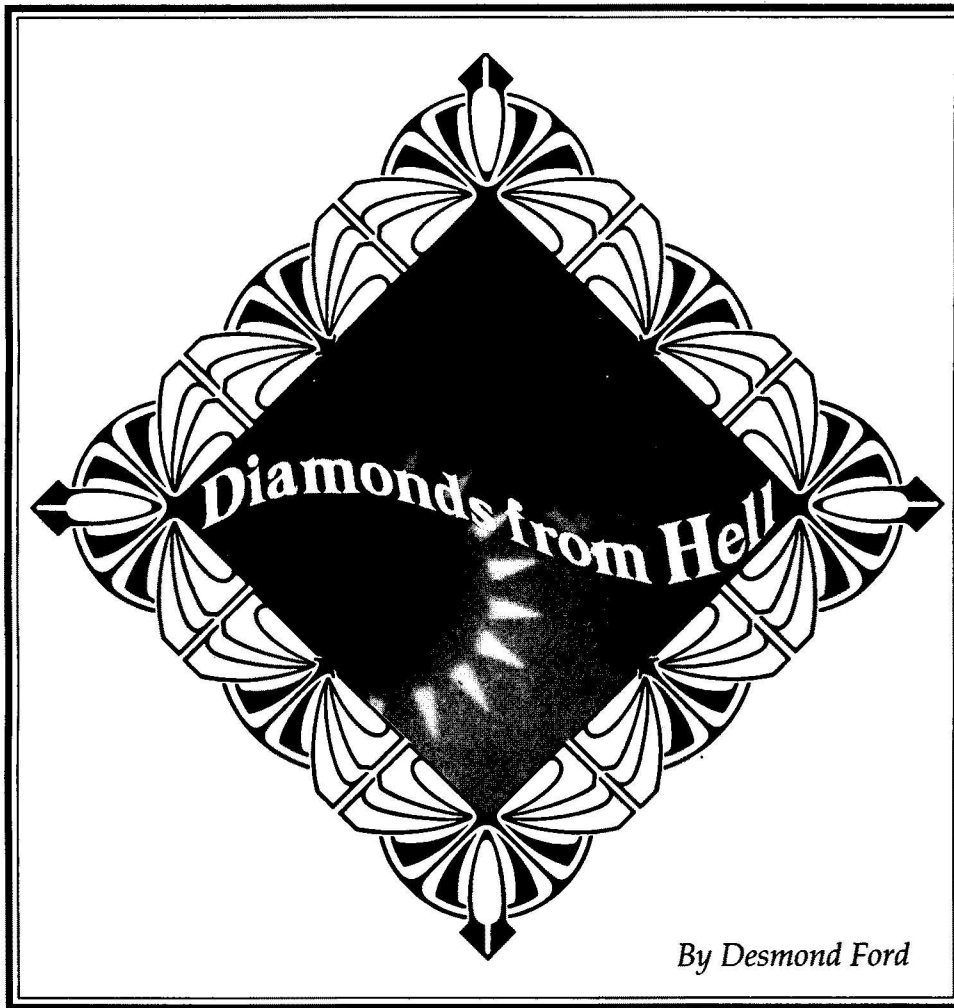
Calvary—A Diamond Mine

From the beginning of the Christian era there have been devout minds who have recognized that every detail of fact connected with the cross has transcendent significance. Alexander Maclaren when preaching on Luke 23:42 declared: "Everything of the future history of the world under the gospel is typified in the events of the crucifixion."

If at Calvary the message from heaven reached its greatest intensity, we would expect the decibel levels to

rise. God's revelation at this crisis point is accompanied by signs and wonders which are graphic and sharply etched, and which point to infinite truths—truths which can transform any life, however dejected, however apparently hopeless.

The events of that Black Friday were not coincidental. The sacred hill became a vignette of all time, all places, all people, and all truth. It may well bear the close scrutiny of a spiritual microscope, for the jots and tittles of heaven's proclamation at Calvary



By Desmond Ford

have a depth worthy of the Divine Author.

Let's take John 19:29 for an example. "A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth." Both the hyssop and the sponge offer significant hints of the comprehensiveness of Calvary's benefits. From some forest tree the cross had been taken, and at this moment of Christ's thirst, it is united with the hyssop shrub—the tiniest

green growth ever reckoned as a tree, usually being no more than a foot and a half high (1 Ki 4:33). On that cross was man—the greatest, most complex form of God's original creation—now linked with the sponge, the very lowest form of animal life. Thus the cross takes in all, even the entire created order. Tree, shrub, man, and sponge play out their respective roles in Golgotha's drama.

Some may question the appropriateness of this method of interpreting the symbols associated with the cross. Yet it is impossible to deny that deeper meanings exist, meanings often intended by the Gospel writers but which lie beneath the surface of the text.

For instance, when we compare the close of Christ's life with its beginning, we marvel at the purposeful symmetry of it. He begins in a sealed, virgin *womb*, cared for by a just man called Joseph. Forty days after his birth, he is presented at the temple in Jerusalem. At the end of that unique life, we find our Lord in a sealed virgin *tomb* cared for by another just man named Joseph. Forty days after his death, having emerged from the tomb, he ascends to the heavenly temple—the new Jerusalem above. This, also, like his first visit to the earthly Jerusalem, was for the purpose of dedication (Dan 9:24; Heb 9:11-14; 10:19, 20). The thoughtful reader of the Scriptures will find scores of other parallels which indicate the marvel of the inspired design. One finds not only a story of great wonder but also the wonder of a great story! It was not by chance that Christ was crucified rather than Barabbas, and that Israel had to choose either Christ or Caesar as king. Nor was it by chance that the crucifixion took place at the time of the Passover redemption festival, and that the Lamb of God was placed on the center cross

with a sign over his head proclaiming him king. Even the nature of his death by crucifixion with its linking of heaven and earth and the two extremes of the horizon, a bloody shameful death wherein he is stripped of his garments that his crucifiers might be clothed—all of this transcends coincidence and echoes with deep symbolic meaning. He who from eternity has been in the midst between the Father and the Spirit, came to the middle of the ancient world—Israel, the crossroads of the nations—in the midst of the ages in order to hang in the midst between two thieves. Only our own blindness

causes us to miss the centrality of Christ.

Similarly, there is darkness around the cross at the time when Christ felt his Father's face withdrawn, the scattering of that darkness when he spoke again, the rending of the veil between the holy and the most holy places of the temple, the opening of the graves when he died, and the twin fountains of blood and water from his riven side—all of these clearly constitute the dramatic enactment of the basic truths of the gospel.

The mighty earthquake, the intense darkness, the opened graves and the resurrection of some of the dead,

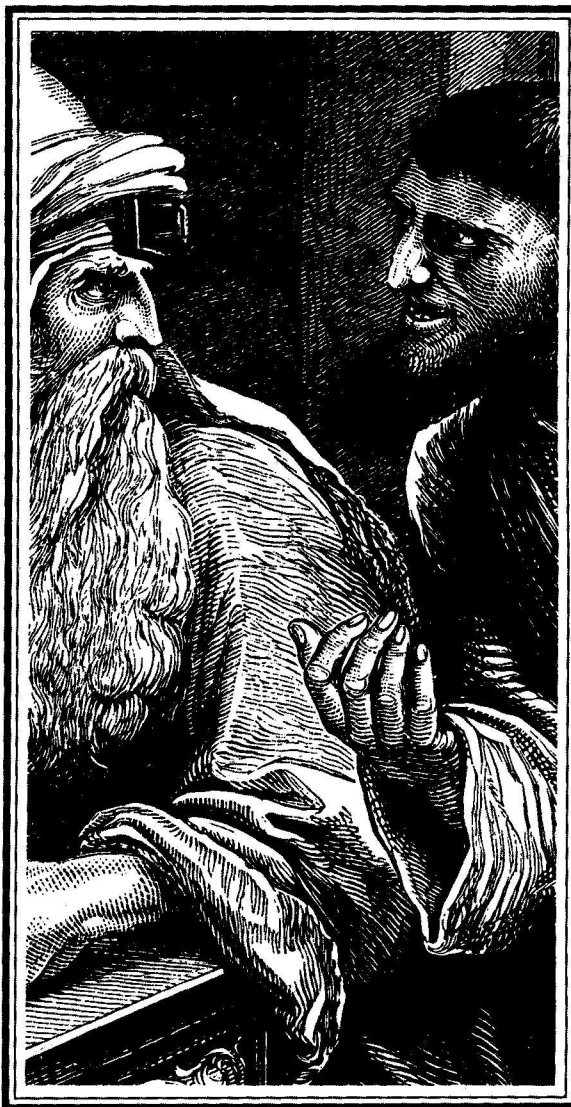
the King lifted up above his subjects, dividing them (as he did the thieves) between the lost and the saved—all these point to the last great day, typified by the judgment of the cross (Jn 12:31-32).

John, who gives more space to the Passion than the other Gospel writers, uses words and phrases with double meanings. When he speaks of the "lifting up" of Christ (Jn 12:32), he means not only the physical elevation of the Savior's body, but also his glorification before the universe. When describing the exit of Judas from the Last Supper, he adds, "and it was night." It is not difficult to discern that he was conveying more than information about the time of day. He sees that the sun has set in the soul of the betrayer.

It has been evident to various commentators that John had a double meaning in mind when he portrayed the feeding of the hungry multitudes in the desert and then went on to describe Christ interceding upon a mountain (Jn 6:1-15). Later, Christ descended the same mountain to save his endangered disciples from the storm at sea (vv. 16-21). All this the Spirit intended to be a depiction of the cross and the subsequent spreading gospel message to feed the hungry multitudes, while our Lord intercedes in heaven above.

He will return to rescue his threatened church from the storm at the end of the world, in the last watch of earth's dark night.

Symbols are prominent from the beginning to the end of John's Gospel. It is clearly appropriate that these symbols should increase in number and significance as John narrates the climax. In the early chapters of his Gospel, we perceive John's emphasis upon such figures as the temple and the lamb of sacrifice. It is not unexpected, therefore, to find him towards the close of the story stressing the conjunction of Christ's death with the



"... and it was night" (John 13:14)—more than just information about the time of day. The sun has set in the soul of the betrayer.

key temple event, namely, the Passover with its sacrifices of lambs commemorating the redemption from Egyptian slavery.

The above are merely random examples of the inner meanings found in the Atonement. We wish to use a spiritual kaleidoscope on Calvary, suggesting for our healing and strengthening some of the patterns which are there to be found. Certain of these patterns are clearly expressed in Scripture itself. Others illustrate the use of spiritual imagination devotionally employed and may help some but not others. If the reader is encouraged to meditate on the greatest event in time and eternity, and to seek to plumb its depths, his meditations will not be in vain. Nothing suggested here is original with this author, for all the facets of Calvary now discussed have been dwelt upon by many Christian writers over the centuries.

The Gardens of Life and Death

"The kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the bird for mirth,
One is nearer God's
heart in a garden,
Than anywhere else on earth."

According to John 19:41, "In the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb where no had ever been laid." This is a deeply significant stroke in John's painting of Calvary. Life is a garden, but it contains the inevitable cross and tomb. Most Christians know that the New Testament repeatedly calls Christ's cross a tree. But few have observed that John is particular to say that in the very place where that tree was planted, there was a garden. Just as the world began with a garden, it legally ends in a garden (Gen 2:8; Eze 28:13; Isa 51:3; Jn 19:41). In a replay of earth's beginning, the cross becomes God's testing "tree of knowledge" as well as the "tree of life."

Genesis 1-3 tells of the new creation with the paradise garden at its center. In that garden is shown a man in the image of God, a son of God, the head of the race, a naked Adam, who on the afternoon of the sixth day had his side opened while he slept, in order to have a bride—Eve. John is alluding to all this as he presents the second Adam, the son of God, the head of a new race who atones for Adam's garden sin in another garden, and who, like the Adam of Eden, falls asleep in order that he too might have a bride—the church (Jn 19:23-27,34,41;

Eph 5:25-33; Rev 19:7-9).

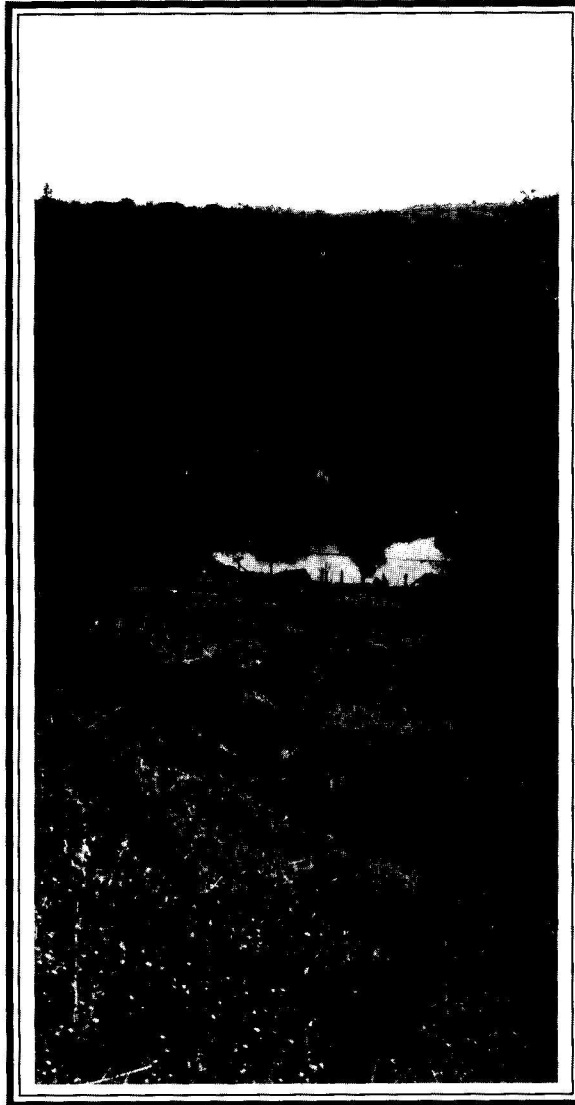
The Calvary event also takes place on the sixth day, and it is late in the day when Christ falls asleep and his side is opened. Immediately after, humanity's Head rested on the first Sabbath of the new age. The only whole day Christ spent in the tomb was the Sabbath of rest, thus commemorating the new creation and the finished redemption. Observe that the key word "finished," repeated in Genesis 2:1-3, appears again in connection with the close of the Redeemer's work and at the same time (Jn 19:30). In the beginning, Christ the Creator worked six days and rested on the seventh. At passion week he does the same. And on the cross itself, he endures satanic onslaughts for six hours and enters in to rest on the seventh.

The garden of Calvary continues the travail of the garden of Gethsemane where Christ's blood first began to flow. The two gardens of our Lord's sufferings thus make one, and it is fruitful to compare it with the garden of Eden where man was lost and cursed as a result of his failure to trust and obey. Arthur Pink is one of many who have summarized the relationships between Gethsemane and Eden:

"The contrasts between them are indeed most striking. In Eden, all was delightful; in Gethsemane, all was terrible. In Eden, Adam and Eve parleyed with Satan; in Gethsemane, the last Adam sought the face of his Father. In Eden, Adam sinned; in Gethsemane, the Saviour suffered. In Eden, Adam fell; in Gethsemane, the Redeemer conquered. The conflict in Eden took place by day; the conflict in Gethsemane was waged at night. In the one, Adam fell before Satan; in the other, the soldiers fell before Christ. In Eden, the race was lost; in Gethsemane, Christ announced, "Of them which thou gavest me have I

lost none" (Jn 18:9). In Eden, Adam took the fruit from Eve's hand; in Gethsemane, Christ received the cup from his Father's hand. In Eden, Adam hid himself; in Gethsemane, Christ boldly showed himself. In Eden, God sought Adam; in Gethsemane, the last Adam sought God. From Eden Adam was "driven"; from Gethsemane Christ was "led." In Eden the "sword" was drawn (Gen 3:24); in Gethsemane, the "sword" was sheathed (Jn. 18:11)."¹

¹ John (Grand Rapids, 1974), 3:157-58.



Just as the world began with a garden, it legally ends in one. "In the place where He was crucified there was a garden" (Jn 19:41).

The Trees of Eden and Calvary

Having compared the gardens, it is natural to compare the tree in the first garden, which was the instrument of the curse, and the tree of the cross where Christ was made a curse for us. Genesis 2:9 speaks of the first, and in Acts 5:30 and 1 Peter 2:24, we find the second. For centuries, commentators have delighted in contrasting and comparing the trees of Eden and Calvary.

Both trees are the trees of the knowledge of good and evil. At the cross we have a revelation of the goodness of God and the evil of man transcending all other disclosures. At the cross the believer finds a view pleasant to the eye of faith, and good for spiritual food, just as the tree in Eden was said to be pleasant to the sight and good for food. When the woman found the tree one "to be desired to make one wise," she plucked its fruit, and when we find in the cross the wisdom of God, we partake of it. Concerning both trees we find that they are located "in the midst" (Gn 2:9; Jn 19:18; cf. Rev 1:13; 5:6; 22:2).

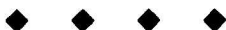
By this repeated phrase in connection with the trees of life and knowledge and with the cross of Jesus, we are reminded of the centrality of Christ and his sacrifice. The Savior at Calvary stands between God and man, between the Father and the Spirit, between life and death, between time and eternity, law and grace, judgment and mercy. The tree of life in the midst of Paradise also symbolized his cross, since to find Christ as one's sacrifice is to find paradise. Only if we can keep him in the center of all beliefs and practices can all be well.

By way of contrast, we observe that God planted the first tree and man the second. Man was forbidden to partake of the Edenic tree, but he is invited to eat of the second. In one case we have Satan saying in effect, "Take and eat and you will be blessed." At the communion service which prefigured his death, Jesus bade his disciples, "Take, eat" that they might be healed.

While a thief stealing from the first tree was expelled from Paradise, another thief, millenniums later, was promised entrance into Paradise *because* he partook of the second tree.

On numerous occasions, Scripture refers to the cross as a tree. This is most appropriate since trees provide food and shelter; they are places of rest and beauty, and have, in themselves, the seed of continued life. In all these ways, every good tree points to the cross of Christ.

In Genesis 18:4 the tree is pictured as a place giving rest, in contrast to the previous reference to a tree which depicted it as the place of the curse (Gn 3:17). In the next passage referring to a tree (Ex 15:23-25), we find it the symbol of transformation. In 2 Kings 6:1-7 a tree branch becomes the agent of resurrection and ascension. Thus to every believer the cross is rest, transformation, resurrection, and ascension (Eph 2:1-6). Calvary has transformed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil into a tree of life for all who believe.



The Cross as an Altar

Our Lord's first words from the cross were, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34). Here we see our Lord as *intercessory priest*. A few minutes before, when women had wept over him, he had filled his *prophetic office* to the full by a final prediction about the coming destruction of Jerusalem (Lk 23:28-31). He is also shown to be a *king* by the title placed on the cross above his head. Jesus as messiah is prophet, priest, and king. As soon as his blood spurted under the piercing nails, our Lord interceded. The cross became his altar.

The Cross as a Throne

"Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" was the title affixed to the cross. Earlier, he had been clothed in purple and given a mock scepter, while men had brazenly bowed before him. As a king, he had appointed the believing thief to Paradise and given directions regarding his mother and beloved disciple. We bow our knees before him, and our wills in submission, when we observe that even our King became obedient unto death. From the throne of the cross, he still reigns over the hearts of millions, for that throne is also a magnet (Jn 12:32).

The Cross as a Judgment Bar

Christ's second word from the cross appointed the penitent thief to Paradise, and the other (by omission) to perdition. Thus our Lord's cross was also his judgment seat from which he adjudicated between the saved and the lost. Wherever Jesus is, there is a division among the people because of him (Jn 7:43).

Those who believe are not condemned, but those who do not believe are condemned already. In John 12:31-32, Jesus described his coming crucifixion as the judgment of the world, and wherever that cross is proclaimed, men are either judged worthy of eternal life as they believe, or worthy of eternal death if they reject the appeal of infinite love. How strange, yet how significant, that he who could give sight to the blind and life to the dead, who could darken the skies and calm the waters, refuses to force men into his kingdom.

The Cross as a Mercy Seat

Paul refers to the cross as a mercy seat (Rom 3:25 original). The original word ("hilasterion") signifies also propitiation and expiation. As the blood-stained mercy seat of old came between God and the broken law in the sanctuary, even now the cross intervenes between the sinner and the great Judge. Blood was sprinkled on the golden cover of the Ark of the Covenant to acknowledge the righteous claims of God's eternal law. God can never take lightly its violation; yet through his own provision, he is able to shelter the sinner without excusing his sin or detracting from the sacred law by a hair-

breadth. The law remains a *perfect standard*, but because of our sin, it can never give us a *perfect standing* before God. At the cross (our mercy seat) mercy and fidelity meet, and righteousness and peace kiss each other (Ps 85:10). Thus God can be just, as well as the justifier of the sinner (Rom 3:26). He is not only faithful in forgiving, but also just, because in welcoming back the rebel, he in no wise lessens the claims of that law which reflects his character and rule (1 Jn 1:9).

The Cross as a Triumphal Chariot

In Colossians 2:15 the cross is said to be a place of triumph where Christ defeated wicked principalities and powers. The metaphor is borrowed from the well-known Roman parade of triumph for a returning conqueror.

The Cross as Trophy, Ensign, Rod, Etc.

As we continue to turn our spiritual kaleidoscope, the cross can be seen as many other things as well. It is the trophy of the Conqueror of death, like the staff of Elisha which resurrected the dead child after being laid upon him (2 Ki 4: 18-37). It is the ensign of the Captain of

our salvation, like the spear of Joshua stretched forth over the city of Ai before its fall (Jos 8:18). It is the rod of divine justice against sinners, for what befell Christ will befall all who reject him. Thus it is the axe laid at the root of the barren tree, foretold by John the Baptist (Lk 3:9).

Looking at the cross, we see Aaron's rod which budded denoting the true priesthood. We see the rod of Moses which resulted from taking the serpent by the tail and which parted the Red Sea of death, destroying Pharaoh and rescuing Israel. We see the ark of Noah which saved his family from the deluge of wrath. We see also the ark of the law enshrining God's sacred rule of right.

The Cross as a Pulpit

The cross was also a pulpit from which Christ gave his greatest sermon, just seven sentences apparently detached from one another, but actually forming a beautiful unity and a spiritual masterpiece. For that sermon, see March, April, 1988 magazines.

This first chapter is taken from Desmond Ford's second volume of *Kaleidoscope of Diamonds*, subtitled, *The Jeweled Glories of the Cross Revealed*. □



(Editorial, cont. from page 2)

Observe how that passage both begins and ends with the warning that the flesh God made of mud is desperately sick and incapable of adequate functioning unless in intimate dependence upon him. This truth to Jeremiah was a stay in days like our own when iniquity was like the waters of Noah, apparently enveloping all. So he repeatedly returns to the same theme in order that we might not be surprised by the weakness of mankind.

Part of the good news of the gospel is that though the believer still carries within him or herself a sewer, a sink of iniquity, and though the promises of the flesh are like ropes of sand, yet God is still able to make us stand--and withstand--victoriously. Where are we looking? That's the issue. Don't look within, except momentarily to be impelled to the Saviour.

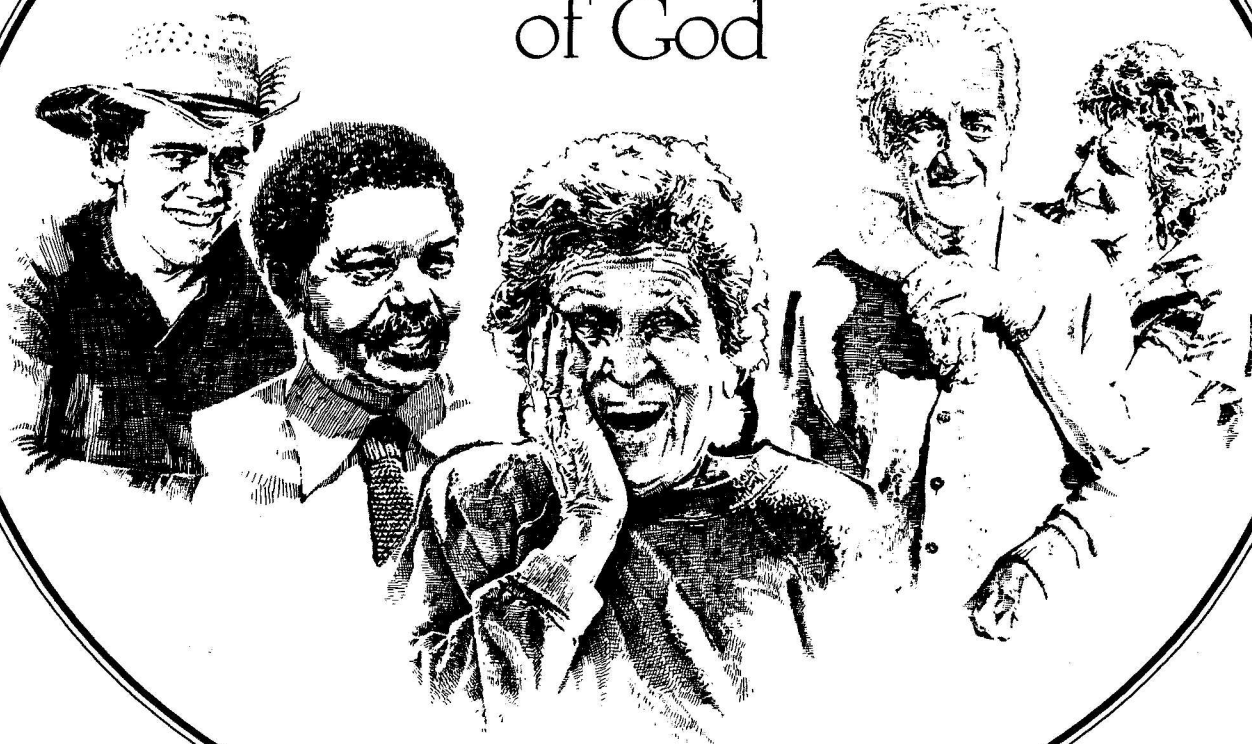
Not only should we not dwell upon our own carnality, but neither should we make idols of others who have like frailty. How wise the New Testament admonition against leaning too hard on church leaders--"Let no man glory in men." Obedience to that could save us many a heartache. It's no new message. A thousand years before Paul, the Psalmist warned, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help" (Ps 146:3). It is idolatry to give any person the confidence that God alone should have.

The Swaggart affair cannot be seen in proportion unless we remember some other things. While sexual sin is both stupid and abhorrent, selfishness and pride are worse. Camus could ask, "What madness draws men into the house of passion?" and David was rebuked with the words, "Thou has caused the enemies of God to blaspheme," but even more important

are the searing, searching, incisive words of the Saviour to those in his day who professed great religious light, yet were proud. "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you" (Mt 21:31).

We are sickened by the lapses of Bakker and Swaggart, but God save us from aping the Pharisee who thanked God he was not like other men. The truth is we are--potentially at least. No man is safe from temptation until he is dead. No woman either. Only one attitude will suffice--self-distrust, with complete confidence in the Saviour above, the Spirit within, and the imputed righteousness of Christ. Those who refuse to listen to, or gaze upon, the siren harpies offered by the world, the flesh, and the devil, and who instead "trust and obey" the Redeemer, will walk securely till the dangerous pilgrimage ends and temptation is no more. □

The Laughter of God



by Desmond Ford

In an ancient book we have the invitation "acquaint now thyself with him and be at peace" (Job 22:21). Centuries later, Jesus of Nazareth echoed these words when he said, "Come ... learn of me ... and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Mt 11:28, 29). Some degree of knowledge is indispensable for every living person in order to survive and achieve, but have we considered sufficiently that in terms of our higher nature and potential, it is the knowledge of God that we chiefly need?

If that be so, we might anticipate that the great adversary would do all he could to give us a false picture of God. How well he has succeeded! Think of your early childhood pictures

of God and analyze your present ones. Poor God often comes out looking like a policeman in a white shirt, with his brow furrowed and his finger raised warningly. Such immature and inaccurate pictures, of course, conflict strangely with such biblical passages as, "Do not I fill heaven and earth saith the Lord?" (Jer 23:24). "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" (Ps 103:13). "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you" (Is 66:13). "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth ... forgiving iniquity" (Ex 34:6,7). Should we not strive to have a more biblical and a more accurate picture of our Maker, Re-

deemer, and Judge?

Consider the challenge of Jeremiah 9:23-24, RSV, "'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories, glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practice kindness, justice, and righteousness of the earth; for in these things I delight,' says the Lord."

God Revealed in Nature

Everything that God has made tells us something about him. But the catch is that nature has gone awry. It no longer has all its original perfec-

tions. Though life is the dominant strain of existence, death has entered in as a cruel intruder. While originally, according to Genesis chapter 2, animals cooperated with man and were nonthreatening to him, such is not always the case since the Fall. Nature, therefore, speaks with two voices, and we need to keep in mind what the early Reformers said when they affirmed that the revelation of nature could only be read by the believer who was using the reading glass of biblical revelation.

Despite its vitiated record, for believers there is still much to learn from the natural record. I was thinking that recently when out walking with Ebony the dog. Ebony was cavorting, not walking, along the road. She darted hither and yon, with excitement pursued any living thing, sniffed at this and at that, and all in all was having a fine time. That was grand, for she was a lovable puppy, only a few months old. "But," I thought, "does not this puppy tell me something about the great creator?"

If we sad mortals cannot watch puppies and monkeys, and kittens, and calves without a warm glow of joy and half amusement, we are missing what the Creator intended. His happy creatures reflect some of the sweetest bars of the great melody of which he is the composer.

There can be nothing originally in any created thing which does not reflect something of its maker. Because personality is the highest thing we know in the universe, we can be sure that the Author of all things is personal. Because it takes a mind to invent a mind, God must also be rational. Because our highest values are faith and love and hope, accompanied by sympathy, empathy, etc., we can be certain that all these but reflect the heart and mind of God. In view of the biblical revelation, we should gaze at the wide expanse of heaven above and realize it is a parable of the infinite mercy that is over every living thing, even sinners. We should see in the abundance of sunshine the riches of God's free grace intended for all.

Happy Communities

Sociologists and epidemiologists have much to teach us. Their books tell of communities (rare for the 20th century) where life is relaxed, where family ties are exceptionally strong, and there is respect for the aged. There, despite tobacco and alcohol in moderation, longevity is the rule and not the exception, and general health is miles ahead of typical Western society. Always an integral part of such favored communities is joy and laughter.

Of course, the Author of Scripture said it long ago through the mouth of Solomon: "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones" (Pr 17:22).

Recently researchers into type A personalities discovered what they believed to be the chief flaw in such personalities. It is not the time-consciousness, the haste, the driving activity, but the negative, unhappy cynical thinking which is responsible for the devastating physi-

cal impact of type A personality and the shortening of life.

Fatigue in Modern Life

Experience should teach us the same. Most moderns suffer from recurring fatigue. This fatigue is not physical in its origin, but psychological. Dr. A.A. Brill, who was one of America's most distinguished psychiatrists, had this to say: "One hundred percent of the fatigue of the sedentary worker in good health is due to psychological factors, by which we mean emotional factors."¹

Another expert, J.A. Hatfield, in his book *The Psychology of Power*, said, "The great part of the fatigue from which we suffer is of mental origin. Exhaustion of purely physical origin is rare."

Mental conflict and negative emotions cause most of our fatigue. Oh, if we could only believe that "All things work together for good to them that love God" (Ro 8:28)! If we really believed that God loves us and intends to do us good, then we would trust him as a child trusts a loving father, and our ills and torments would be swallowed up in the glorious will of God. It was Dante who said, "In His will is our peace."

God Is Better Than We Think

We have slandered God so often in our thinking. He is much better, infinitely better, than we have ever dared to imagine, despite the fact that we ourselves are much worse than we have ever suspected. He's not only the God of sunshine and life, of the dancing spray, and of puppies and birds, but he is the creator of melody, and song, and laughter. He's a God who delights in the aesthetic as well as the pragmatic and useful. He's a God who so made us that we actually rest more than we work—usually about eight hours at night and several hours without appointed chores during each day. Even the heart rests more than it works. The really arduous things of life, including most trials, are usually short-lived rather than protracted. But eating and drinking, resting and sleeping, fellowship with one another, laughter, all of these are continually recurrent. Arch Paley was right when he wrote, "Nightly rest and daily bread, the ordinary use of our limbs and senses, and understandings, are gifts of no comparison with any other."

The Laughter of Jesus

And what about our Lord himself? We think of him as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and thereby we think rightly. We would never find solace in a man who knew only laughter. That Australian painting of a laughing jackass sending forth its song from a tree branch over the carcass of a dead kangaroo, strikes us as incongruous because laughter and death clash so severely.

Thus we're not told about the laughter of Jesus and yet Scripture does say that he was "anointed ... with the

oil of gladness" (Heb 1:9). Elton Trueblood, Quaker philosopher, wrote a volume called *The Humor of Jesus*. He invites us to consider the humor implicit in such sayings as: "Why do you see the sawdust in your neighbor's eye and not the log in your own?" "If the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into the ditch?" "They strain out a gnat, and swallow a camel." The only reason we do not laugh at such Scriptures is because we have a feeling that it would be irreverent. Either that, or we do not dwell upon them with our imagination to perceive all that is intended.

I venture to predict that in the preventive medicine of tomorrow there will be a special emphasis on healthy humor. Already we know that 70 percent of diseases are diseases of choice caused by our own aberrant life-style. Unnecessary disease costs every government a very large slice of its budget.

Human beings were intended to laugh. We've been told since childhood about how many less muscles it takes to laugh than to frown. Should we not cultivate the laugh of faith, rejoicing in the assurance that God is good and more than good? He delights in our joy and has made provision that it should be a joy unceasing. Should we not see in the experience of release that comes with laughter an indication of the wellspring of joy that the gospel furnishes? What greater joke could there be than that the king should transform his rebels by sheer love and grace instead of in rage sentencing them to a firing squad? Let the straws of humor in our daily experience indicate to us which way the wind of divine grace is blowing. □

1 Cited in D. Carnegie's *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*, pp. 207-208

???????????????????? Questions and Answers

—Desmond Ford

Q. Must I be baptized to be saved?

A. We should carefully distinguish between salvation and "the things which accompany salvation" (Heb 6:9). The experience of being united to Christ by that faith which is essentially trust, is salvation. All other good things merely accompany that primary relationship.

Centuries ago Henry Scougal wrote a book entitled *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* in which he pointed out that religion was nothing other than the union of the heart with God. Religion is not primarily church-going or hymn-singing or missionary work though all these may "accompany" it. Religion is a oneness between the sinner and the Savior. The Scripture saith, "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed" (Rom 10:11). First, observe the "him." We believe not primarily in a church or a doctrine but a Person. Second, observe the "whosoever" of this passage. Whatever your past, whatever your besetting sin or sins, whatever your difficulties—whosoever you are, salvation is yours by trusting Jesus Christ. You have eternal life the moment you believe (Jn 5:24). You are already counted as being in the heavenly places with the redeemed (Eph 2:6). Christ's life and death is put to your account (Rom 5:13,19 and 2 Cor 5:21). "There is now no condemnation" (Rom 8:1).

Christ's atoning work and our taking hold of it by the empty hand of faith accomplishes salvation. Faith is not a work, but the simple acceptance of a gift. Breathing does not of itself create life, but makes life possible. Similarly with eating and drinking. Faith is but spiritual breathing and drinking and eating. It is the grateful embracing of Christ's work.

What about baptism? The thief on the cross who was guaranteed Paradise was never baptized. And what about the Lord's Supper? The Salvation Army does not keep it because of their special work for alcoholics. And the Sabbath? Many Christians have not seen the need for a special day of rest and worship. Keeping these institutions is not the cause of our salvation. On the other hand, worship can easily break-down in the absence of these reminders—baptism, the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection in our behalf; the Lord's Supper, the memorial of his body broken for us; the Sabbath, the memorial of divine creation and redemption in Christ.

Christianity, like other ideologies, includes spirit and form. Its essence is the spirit, but without the form the spirit can be lost. In other words, form without spirit is dead, but spirit without form may fade. Therefore, we need these institutions that accompany salvation, but we must never confuse them with salvation itself.

The person that has become one with Christ desires to please the Savior in all things. As far as the believer's spiritual growth permits, they are one in ideals and objectives and methods. As light dawns on duty it is the Christian's delight to walk in it. He or she knows it is written, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15). Therefore, whether the issue be large or small, the chief inquiry of the believer is: "What is God's ideal will for me in this matter?" Having answered that, by the grace of God, obedience is spontaneous and glad-some.

Q. What was the meaning of the ceremony with the red heifer discussed in Numbers 19?

A. After the rebellion at Kadesh-Bar-

nea, there is no evidence that Israel carried out the Passover, circumcision, or the regular system of sacrifices outlined in Leviticus, until Canaan was reached (Num 15:2). Cereal offerings were to accompany most sacrifices, and this was impossible while leading a nomadic existence. The purpose of the red heifer's ashes was to provide for a means of purification that would not require continual sacrifices. The animal was a symbol of Christ. Its redness pointed to his blood and likewise its being without defect symbolized his perfection. The fact it had never known a yoke pointed to the voluntary nature of the sacrifice of the Son of God. The red heifer suffered without the camp, as did our Lord. Calvary was outside the city walls. Thus was symbolized that he died not just for the religious Jews but for all mankind.

The ashes of the burned heifer were placed in a container holding water from a running stream. Then one who was ceremonially clean took a stick of cedar and scarlet cloth and hyssop, sprinkling the vessel's contents upon both the tent and the people. Thus was indicated that only through the virtues of the death of our Substitute could sin be cleansed away. It is significant that the cleansing water was sprinkled more than once to cleanse the defiled person. We need the virtues of the Atonement continually. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 Jn 1:7). Observe the blessed present tense. Because of our sinful natures, incomplete sanctification and a glorification that is still longed for, we ever "fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). But we still stand spotless in his sight because of the imputation continually of the merits of Christ. As we truly believe, we are always perfect in the merciful reckoning of God.



Ebony Attends Her Own Funeral

by Gillian Ford



Ebony desperately wanted to stay awake, but she knew Lucy would bite her foot if she fell asleep and that would hurt. You see, Ebony was being forced to listen to Lucy's reading and it had gone on for a long time.

Lucy, on the other hand, loved the sound of her own voice and found the book fascinating. She wasn't about to stop. The story was *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder, and she was near the end of the book where it tells of Emily's funeral.

Lucy, seeing Ebony's flagging energy and stifled yawn, decided to change the name Emily to Ebony. The ploy worked. Ebony, hearing her name in the story, suddenly woke up. It was a bit of a letdown to realize that in the story she was attending her own funeral, but it was still interesting.

"Everyone knows that *something* is eternal. And it ain't houses," read Lucy "... and it ain't names, and it ain't earth, and it ain't even the stars ... everybody knows in their bones that *something* is eternal and that something has to do with human beings ..."

"Lucy," interrupted Ebony, politely, "could we get back to the bit about me?"

"Oh, Ebony," Lucy said impatiently, curving her paw ostentatiously, "this is deep philosophy—ideas about life and death and eternity—not just a mere dog. It creates the mood behind the story."

"Oh, I see," said Ebony, who didn't have any idea what Lucy was talking about.

To avoid more interruptions and to keep Ebony awake, Lucy skipped several pages and read about the people who had known Emily on earth and had died before she did. They were there to welcome her after she was buried, but in the story the living and the dead were sort of side by side, their own separate dramas going on simultaneously. Remember, it was a story, not reality.

Lucy continued, "Suddenly Ebony [Emily in the book] appears from the umbrellas. She is wearing a white dress. Her hair is down her back and tied by a white ribbon ..."

She read this very fast, hoping that Ebony wouldn't have time to ask questions about how oddly she was dressed in the book. Then Lucy skipped another couple of pages and sort of read and partly summarized where Ebony [Emily] goes back after her death to revisit her family on her twelfth birthday. The dead people warn her not to go, but she wants to.

"Watching the past as an observer, Emily, I mean Ebony," Lucy corrected herself, "sees her mother getting her breakfast, finding her hair ribbon, giving her her birthday presents. But despite her mother's kindness, Ebony feels her impatience. She finds those living don't appreciate life—they take it for granted. They took her for granted. She says, 'I can't look at everything hard enough.' While her mother talks to her absentmindedly and kisses her in a distracted fashion, dead Ebony says, 'Oh, Mama, just look at me one minute as though you really saw me.'

'Mama, 14 years have gone by. I'm dead ... Just for a moment now, we're all together. Mama, just for a moment we're happy. Let's look at one another.'"

Ebony was enjoying the story, but thought it didn't really sound like her. "Lucy, are you sure this story is about me?" But Lucy ignored her and continued reading loudly.

"'I can't, I can't go on,' said Emily, I mean Ebony. 'Oh! Oh, life goes so fast. We don't have time to look at one another.'" In the story Emily broke down and sobbed here. Lucy was sobbing so hard she could hardly read. The page had big wet blotches on it.

"'Oh,'" Lucy read weeping copiously, "'I didn't realize. So all that was going on and we never noticed. Take me back up the hill to my grave. But first wait! One more look. Good-by, good-by, world ... good-by Mama and Papa ..., to clocks ticking and Mama's sunflowers. And food and coffee. And new-ironed dresses and hot baths, and sleeping and waking up. Oh, earth, you're too wonderful for anybody to realize you.'"

Lucy was overcome with weeping and couldn't con-

tinue the story.

"Oh, it's too, too beautiful, Ebony."

"Now, now, Lucy. You mustn't carry on so," said Ebony, baffled by Lucy's crying. "You're such an intense little thing." Ebony reached over with her paw and closed the book.

That night, Mrs. Ford came home and told Dr. Ford a sad tale about two cats. Two little white ears were listening under the windowsill outside.

"Sandy at work told me the other day that her daughter Whitney went and selected a kitten from the pound. Whitney is at college in San Jose and she's missing her other cat who is still living at home near here. She called the new kitten Tali and was so excited about her. But the other night, she let her outside and she didn't come back. She put notices around the street where she lives and a lady called her. Apparently, Tali had crawled up inside her car and was sleeping there when the lady started up the car. Tali died and Whitney is so upset. And as if that wasn't enough, Sandy's sister-in-law called today, very upset because her cat was acting strangely. Sandy went over to see what was wrong and by the time she got there, the cat had died. They

took it to the vet and he didn't think it was poisoned. He thinks it had a heart attack. The owners were so sad. They loved him and he was just a young, healthy cat."

Lucy was upset. She went round to Ebony. "What does 'died' mean, Ebony?"

Ebony said, "It's what happens when you chase those innocent little birds, Lucy. One minute, they're flying around happily. The next, the life's gone out of them and they've died. Died is dead, not alive."

Lucy started crying. "I don't mean to kill them. It's just something wild inside me. I start playing with them and get too rough and hungry and overdo it a bit. But, Ebony, from what I just heard, being dead happens to cats too."

"It happens to everything living, Lucy," said Ebony. "One day, it will happen to you and me."

This was an astonishing new thought to Lucy. "You mean I'm going to die. I thought I was going to live forever."

"Fraid not," said Ebony, unsympathetically.

Lucy walked over and sat on the railing of the deck. "Fancy that! One day I'm going to die. I don't think I like that idea. No, I don't like that idea one bit." □

Lucy Looks Death in the Face

by Gillian Ford



Lucy tightened her paw around the pencil and painstakingly wrote a sympathy card to Whitney.

Dere Widnee:

We, Ebony and I (Lucy), wer verry sorry to here about yor kitty cuming to a ~~mekanical~~ stikky end.

Ebony helped her rewrite it.

Dear Widnee:

We were sorry to hear of the sad loss of your kitty. Sympathetickly,

~~Ebony and Lucy~~

~~A cat and a dog~~

Lucy hadn't stopped talking about dying since she'd read about Emily and heard the sad tale of two cats who

died while young. Ebony could tell that Lucy was scared of dying. "What do you suppose dying is like?" she asked Ebony.

They were interrupted by a conversation in the house.

"Please can you give me my passport before you go to Australia?" asked Mrs. Ford.

"I don't think I've got it," replied Dr. Ford positively.

Mrs. Ford's brow knit. "No, I'm sure you've got it. Two years ago you said to give it to you to keep."

"I haven't seen it," said Dr. Ford, but went to look for it among his papers anyway.

"Whatsa passport?" questioned Lucy.

"It's a travel document you need when you go overseas," answered Ebony.

"Where are they going?" asked Lucy.

"He's going to Australia soon, and I think she's going to see her mother in New Zealand, but not for a few weeks."

Lucy wondered if they had to go through quaran-



from the compost heap. Lucy, however, darted recklessly in and around the flames. Every so often she got zapped by the water from the hose and jumped away—a little flash of white among the scarlet embers.

"Lucy, stop being so foolish," Ebony shouted. "Anyone would think you had nine lives." But Lucy was having too much fun to listen.

It took over an hour to get the fire completely out—it seemed to be burning underground. Clouds of smoke poured out as the water was applied, but underneath there were small pink fiery pockets, tiny roaring furnaces under the surface. It was scary. Mrs. Ford called Mr. Murphy next door, and he came and helped by digging out all the dry brush out and letting it burn.

Next day, Mrs. Ford was very tired but she had to go to work. Several times in the night, she had looked over the deck at the fire site, but there was no more smoke.

Lucy had slept like a log. When she woke up, Ebony was waiting to give her a lecture.

"Don't you know how dangerous fires are—they can kill people, and cats! Don't you remember when you jumped on the wood stove and burned your pads off? Anyway, I thought you were scared of dying."

Lucy didn't like being criticized. She tried to change the subject. "Ebony, what happens when you die?"

Ebony sighed. "I've heard it's like a dreamless sleep. You don't know anything—it's sort of dark and quiet. You stop breathing and start to decay and you end up as dust."

"How awful," said Lucy. "I don't want to die. No, not one bit! I don't want to end up a pile of dust."

"Ah," said Ebony. "That's not the end. The Bible says we'll be with God if we believe in Jesus, his Son. We're mortal. That means we'll all die. But God has given up his Son at the cross. And eternal life is in Jesus. When you believe in Jesus, you have eternal life. One day, God will raise those who believe back to life again. The Bible says, 'He that believes in me will live even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.' It doesn't say in the Bible whether animals will be raised, by the way, but Mom Ford hopes so."

Lucy hoped so too. She still didn't like the idea of dying, but decided it wouldn't be so bad if she believed in Jesus. Then she'd live again.

"Do you suppose Tali was a Christian?" she asked Ebony. "If she had nine lives, she must have had a few dangerous escapes at the pound—no doubt a short, but interesting life. And what about Nameless, the cat who had the heart attack?"

"You know, Ebby," Lucy continued. "It pays to think about dying—it makes you appreciate life. Remember Emily and how everybody took the wonder of life for granted?"

She sniffed at the wind and inhaled a deep breath. "Maybe I'll be a Christian," she said quietly.

As she walked off the deck, she suddenly had an afterthought. She stopped and turned to Ebony.

"I guess that means I'll have to give up birds." □

tine, but Ebony said no.

"We'll miss them," said Ebony, who missed them when they went to work for the day.

"I hope they'll come back," said Lucy.

"Of course they will," said Ebony. "What made you say that?"

"Haven't you ever heard of plane crashes?" asked Lucy.

"Boy, you're a bundle of joy," said Ebony who didn't like that thought at all.

A few days later at sunset, when Mrs. Ford came home, she went down the yard to burn rubbish. She was having a big clean-up while Dr. Ford was away. It was early in March and most years there were no strict rules about burning until May. This year there were, because it was so dry, but she didn't know.

Lighting the fire, she watched its bright yellow fingers consume the papers greedily. She burned about ten old cardboard boxes and two bags of paper rubbish. Three firestruck cows stood staring just yards away on the other side of the fence. Perhaps, she thought, they'd cold hooves and liked the heat. After waiting patiently till the fire died down, she headed for the house.

About an hour and a half later, while she and Luke were chatting by the sink, Mrs. Ford suddenly noticed a sheet of flame. "Goodness, Luke," she cried out. "a tree's caught on fire." It gave her such a fright that she couldn't think for a moment.

"Didn't you watch it?" said Luke. "Didn't you hose it down?"

His mother was embarrassed. She had done everything wrong. She had burned near a dead tree. She hadn't cleared the ground around the fire. And she hadn't taken the hose down to the bottom of the yard in case it spread. Running round in small circles, she frantically tried to put her shoes on. Luke walked calmly outside, and took charge. He hooked the hoses up and switched the water on. Racing down the hill, he dragged the hose snakelike behind him. When Mrs. Ford came down, he gave it to her and went up to fetch a scythe to cut the grass down around the fire.

Ebony sat nearby contentedly chewing old bread

For Saints and Other Sinners

A Gospel Bible Study for Adults by Gillian Ford



The work and character of Christ are to be the center of every truth. He is the chain on which the jewels of doctrine are to be linked. Every promise, every character, every ritual finds its "yea and amen in him."

Q. Who is the first type of Christ in Scripture?

A. Adam. Romans 5:14b says, "Adam ... was a type of the one to come." In 1 Corinthians 15:45, Christ is called the "last Adam."

Q. How does the pattern of creation week follow that of redemption week?

A. On the sixth day, Adam fell into a deep sleep (Gen 2:21).

On the sixth day, Christ goes to sleep at Calvary (Jn 19:30).

A bride is taken from Adam's side (Gen 2:22).

Christ's side is pierced (John 19:34). The blood and water that flow from his side (v. 34) represent his bride, the church (in particular, the way he symbolically cleanses his people) (1 John 1:7; Eph 5:26).

Adam rests over the Sabbath to celebrate God's finished work of creation (Gen 2:1 - 3).

Christ rests in the tomb over Sabbath (Jn 19:42; 20:1), after he finishes God's work of redemption (Jn 19:30).

Q. How was the temptation of Eve similar Christ's?

A. Eve was tempted in three areas of appetite (Gen 3:6; 1 Jn. 2:16). She told Adam to "take, eat." He did, bringing on mankind as their representative, the curse of death (Gen 2:17).

Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by Satan in the three areas where Eve failed (Mt 4:1-11). Contrary to Eve, Christ was successful in overcoming sin. He gives humanity the blessing of life by taking the curse of death on himself (Gal 3:13,14). He tells us to "take, eat " (Mt 26:26).

Q. How did Adam and Eve try to make their own righteousness?

A. Sensing their guilt and nakedness, they made themselves a covering of leaves (Gen 3:7). They hid from God in the garden, but he comes seeking for them (v. 8) and promises them a redeemer who will crush the serpent of sin (v. 15). God provides them with clothing from a slain lamb (v. 21) In Scripture nakedness describes our lost condition. Clothing symbolizes righteousness. Isaiah describes man-made righteousness as filthy rags (Isa 64:6). Only God, says Scripture, can provide an adequate righteousness for us. The clothing Adam and Eve received is only symbolic of righteousness; it depended on the coming of Christ as redeemer. God would hide from him as Adam and Eve hid from God (Mark 15:34). Christ died naked, so that men might be clothed with his righteousness—a sacrificial death like that of the slain lamb, so that men might not suffer eternal death.