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Finding the Road Again — p. 3

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—statement of faith—

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

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

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

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

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

editor: calvin w. edwards

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—editorial—

One of the things that strikes me about Jesus Christ is his utterly realistic approach to life. While he spoke of life as it could be, he also spoke of life as it was. He constantly selected a slice of life and used it to illustrate a spiritual truth. The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed that sprouts forth large enough for the birds (foreign nations) to roost in. A true disciple is one who is like the despised Samaritan, one who heals though it breaks all social conventions. Jesus' followers relate to him like branches to a vine, there is unity and yet dependence one on the other. Isn't Jesus telling us in all of these illustrations that his religion is a rather down-to-earth thing?

Jesus didn't frequently resort to sophisticated philosophical multi-syllabic terminology. John's Gospel portrays Jesus as more of a philosopher than the other three, but one never finds on Jesus' lips the kind of expressions that John himself uses. Jesus is not seen to use profundities such as, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word) God" (Jn 1:1). Even in this Gospel Jesus uses such everyday concepts as being born and drinking water to describe spiritual truths.

Jesus never kidded people. He told them to pray for their daily bread; life was not going to be just so simple that every need would be immediately supplied. He told his disciples to forgive those who offended them; personal indignities would be a part of human existence. There would be times when one would have to forsake family members for the sake of the gospel; emotional ties may have to be smashed for Christ's sake. Jesus told it how it was.

On the eve of his crucifixion, Jesus again broke the news to his disciples that he would be departing from them. Then he told them straight: "You will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy" (Jn 16:20). I suspect that I may have hedged a little and focused on the ultimate joy, but Jesus twice says that the disciples **will** endure pain and sorrow.

I've come to like this candid, up-front character of Jesus' teaching. We all know that life is riddled with agonies of varying degrees. Jesus never promises us that these will be dissolved, only that there will be an ultimate joy. On the other side of the cross is the resurrection. Spring ever reminds us that life bursts forth from death.

The very fact of Jesus' constant contact with the real world helps me believe in him. The correspondence between what he says and the way life really is, strikes me as giving him authenticity. As Christians we believe that this tremendous insight into the way things are is not simply because Jesus was a bit more shrewd than other men, but because he was God incarnate. It is this kind of **God**, one who intimately perceives the realities of living as **humans** on this planet, that we can trust and look to as the provider of the key to life.

Calvin W. Edwards

Finding the Road Again

Perplex in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.
There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gather'd strength,
He would not make his judgment blind,
He faced the specters of the mind
And laid them; thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own,
And power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone.

— (from "In Memoriam" by Alfred Tennyson)

There are people in life who have been cursed with such a peculiar scrupulousness, such a honed honesty, that they seem doomed to spend their lives engaged in a titanic struggle with doubt. For them an answer is never enough, only the answer will do. They are, to coin a word, utterly "ungullible."

Honesty, Even About Doubts

Such a man came to Jesus one day. He was desperate. His boy was dying. Somewhere he had heard that Jesus could heal the child but he did not really believe that Jesus was able to. Yet more than anything else in the world he wanted the boy well again. And so, fighting his mind, he went to Christ.

Where doubt abounds grace does much more abound. Honest questions have never disqualified anyone from God's favor.

Can you imagine the journey there? His friends walk with him and fill his ears with strong admonitions. "Say nothing of your unbelief. This is your only chance. It's for the lad. Don't reveal too much about your own convictions and remember that a little pretending can go a long way."

Then he is face-to-face with Jesus who confirms his worst fear by saying, "If you can believe, all things are possible." Oh no. What now? Can he repress this cursed doubt and save his child? Can he just this once affirm what his mind denies? But he will not. He exer-

cises his terrible honesty and cries out, "Lord I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mk 9:24).

Miracles for Doubters

The response of Jesus to such intellectual anguish is profoundly moving. All discussion stops. Jesus is satisfied. The child is promptly healed. And what does this demonstrate? It proves that double-mindedness does not shut us out of God's concern. It shows that God does not demand that we give up our intellectual honesty as the price for his love.

Nevertheless we would miss half the story if we did not see that two people were healed that day — the boy and the father. Unbelief, doubt, is an extremely painful condition. Mix insecurity, guilt and confusion together and you have the essence of doubt. Jesus did not leave him there.

What then can we do to help us in our struggle for faith? How can we believe again? How can we control our doubting?

A good place to begin is at the point of God's grace. Don't write yourself off simply because you are doubting. God has not. Jesus was consistently patient with people like you. He accepted your kind. Thomas, John the Baptist, Phillip and Nicodemus, who were all Knights of Doubting Castle, received sensitive treatment at his hands. These all discovered the astounding truth that where doubt abounds grace does much more abound. Honest questions have never disqualified anyone from God's favor.

Honest Doubt

After accepting your acceptance in spite of your unbelief you might want to evaluate the nature of your doubt. Doubt comes in two varieties. There is the constructive sort and the destructive sort. Or to put it another way there is an honest and a dishonest brand. The good honest stuff is characterized by an unwavering commitment to evidence. This doubt simply refuses to sweep any facts under the rug. All the facts simply must be faced. Such doubt has been the frustrating possession of virtually every great man who has influenced the course of history. Galileo doubted that the earth was flat. John Woolman disbelieved an Old Testament argument favoring slavery. The Wright brothers rejected the flightlessness of man. Martin Luther agonized over the corruption and teaching of

About Doubt and Belief

Smuts van Rooyen

his church. Thank God a thousand times that they doubted.

4 For many of us as well the process of doubt is God's way of saving us from the error of our traditions. We sometimes strive for the status quo with the intensity of horses struggling to re-enter their burning barn.

It is possible to keep an answer we fear at bay forever by a plethora of questions.

Then only one thing helps. God must take the bridle of doubt with its iron bit and inflict such pain that our urge for a fatal stability is overcome. By such constructive doubt we are redirected to life.

Dishonest Doubt

Destructive doubt is a totally different matter. Such doubt is characterized by the fact that it is dishonest. For example, moral difficulty often masquerades as doubt. Donald Harbuck, to whom I am indebted for this insight, says:

"A person, having failed to square his life with the moral demand, finds himself rejecting the creed of Christianity, not because it is unsound, but as a means of justifying his own dereliction. The mechanisms of personality sublimate this process to the point that an individual may be unconscious of what gave birth to his doubts . . . When doubt only serves to camouflage the shabbiness of conduct, it needs to be recognized as such." (The Dynamics of Belief, p. 73)

Life's tragedies may also masquerade as doubt. A seismic injustice rocks your equilibrium or a sudden death wrings your psyche. Suddenly you are in doubt. When this happens it is imperative that you evaluate your experiences before you begin to abandon your ideas. Doubt your doubts. Has the evidence changed?

Doubt is also destructive when it becomes a mechanism we deliberately use to keep ourselves from arriving at a conclusion. The rich young lawyer knew that he could not keep Jesus away with a stone or with a stick. But he could do so with a question mark. And

We sometimes strive for the status quo with the intensity of horses struggling to re-enter their burning barn.

so he tempted Jesus with his questions. When he saw Christ reaching for his soul he would rub theology like soap over himself so that he could slip from the Savior's grasp. It is possible to keep an answer we fear at bay forever by a plethora of questions.

Study the Evidence

So, as we were saying, investigate the nature of your doubt. True doubt will lead you through the door of conscience to freedom. False doubt will lead you through the door of rebellion to the illusion of freedom.

When you have determined that your doubt is the honest variety springing from the facts you will have

only one option for resolving the matter left to you. You must explore, discuss, search, question and read on both sides of the issue. When John the Baptist doubted Jesus, Jesus gave him evidence to help him. He reminded John of the contents of a section of Isaiah. If you doubt the existence of God don't just sit there and fret. Buy some books. Read, discuss, pray. You will find that some of the world's greatest minds have been orthodox Christians who faced your issues squarely and with the same agony of soul.

But what if you find strong evidence on both sides of the issue? Then you can do one of two things: a) throw up your hands in confusion; or b) make a decision on the weight of evidence. There is no such thing as 100% proof. Draw a conclusion on the basis of what is most right. Force yourself to make an informed decision. Totally black or white answers are only for children. The real world is far more complex. Dare to be the adult you are.

There is no beauty or sanity in a life that hears only the scratch on the record and not the music. Chronic cynicism is a devastating disease.

Hold On

But perhaps the most important thing to say in dealing with doubt is, live by what you do believe and not by what you question. Unbelief is not a home, no one can live in it. What you accept, no matter how small, is a hundred times more important than what you reject. A life cannot be built on negations. Caught in an Alaskan winter a man can stay alive with a fire the size of a cup. Nurture the flame and try to ignore the frozen night. Stay alive. If you cannot accept God as a person but only as a Power then hold on to the Power. If you reject Christ as divine but affirm a remarkable humanity then cling to that. Start with the affirmations you can make. There is no beauty or sanity in a life that hears only the scratch on the record and not the music. Chronic cynicism is a devastating disease. Refuse to simply cry, "Lord I don't believe." For the benefit of your own mind shout the whole truth, "Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief!"

And when you have done these things and some doubt yet remains, then accept the reality of life. The reality that sin, sickness, death and doubt will not be totally abolished until Jesus comes. Then determine that as you wait for that day you will not permit the urge to believe to extinguish the urge to doubt. Also determine not to allow the urge to doubt to extinguish the urge to believe. Possess your soul in patience for in the presence of your struggling faith Jesus is your righteousness, your sanctification, your redemption and your wisdom (1 Cor 1:30). □



Smuts van Rooyen

Christ and Him Crucified

Victor V. Bryditzki

One of the most important cities in ancient Greece was the celebrated city of Corinth. This "New York" of its day, luxurious Corinth, was the center of philosophical thought and brilliant orators.

To this city the Apostle Paul could have introduced himself as an equal.

Paul was a man of profound learning, educated at the feet of the great Gamaliel, the greatest teacher of all Israel. As an orator Paul could have challenged Corinth's best.

If Paul had wanted to, he could have won the minds of the

Corinthians by presenting the evidence of Christ in an eloquent way. He could have wrung from

them a unanimous verdict of "Yea!" by the emotional appeal of his eloquence. Instead, Paul chose the

ordained and decreed way of God. "If any are led to believe in Christ, their belief shall be the result of hearing the **gospel** and not because of my eloquence of speech" (1 Cor 1:17). "If these philosophical Corinthians are to be transferred into the Kingdom of God, it shall not, it cannot be, by the wisdom of men, but by the power of God Almighty" (1 Cor 2:4-5). The gospel of grace stands or falls on its own merit, it needs no help, no assistance from a mere man.

Such was Paul's thinking, and so is the thinking of true ministers of God in any age. The message is **Christ, and him crucified**, for the remission of sin. There is no other message. Salvation comes by God's grace, and not by human effort.

The theme of Revelation chapters four and five is God — the Father, the Spirit, but especially the Son. We need to keep in mind that it is not heaven itself that the prophet is reproducing, but the symbols of it shown to him. If we get lost in the drapery and minutiae of the vision, its true meaning will escape us. Not the twenty-four elders, not the four living creatures, nor the glassy sea, but the Redeemer is the focus.

God Is in Control

These chapters are a commentary on the words of the departing Christ, "Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me." Chapter four points particularly to God the creator, and five to Christ the savior. Jesus is saying, "Be of good cheer, the Father himself loves you, and because I live, you shall live also." How appropriate this God-centered setting is for the revelations which follow — revelations of the messianic woes set forth in terrifying imagery.

It is not tragedy which humans cannot endure, but tragedy without meaning. These chapters shout the truth that there is nothing without meaning, that there is neither chance nor accident, for God is on the throne, and with him the One who suffered on Calvary for his rebel children. This is a far cry from the fears of Thomas Hardy about, "The dreamy, dark, dumb Thing, that turns the handle of this idle Show." Here we are introduced to the drama of redemption.

The fourth chapter presents the throne of the Father, and then the fifth reveals that Christ shares that throne. "Throne" is one of the key-words of this book. Seventeen times it is found in these two chapters which introduce the rest of the book. Not Domitian, the threatened church is assured, but God is the supreme sovereign.

"Under the shadow of thy throne thy saints have dwelt secure; Sufficient is thine arm alone, And our defense is sure" (Isaac Watts).

A Study in Revelation Chapters Four and Five

Desmond Ford

Before the winds of strife are loosed, before the apocalyptic horsemen ride forth, before the trumpets are blown, before the great tribulation is pictured, we see the throne, not only of our creator, but of him who is also redeemer. Thus the afflicted churches of John's day, and their successors in our time, were assured that at the heart of the universe there is neither chaos nor steel, but a heart; not only divine but human, and full of sympathy.

... That heart of his is full of human sympathies, but they are the sympathies of a God, and not powerless, like the tears of a mere man. Where Jesus weeps, death itself lets go its grasp, and Lazarus comes forth. He loves you with all the tenderness, and gentleness, and warm affection of his human heart, but with all the force of that divinity to which it belongs.

(J. B. Ramsay, *Revelation: An Exposition of the First Eleven Chapters*, p. 310.)

Because love rules the universe, these chapters are filled not only with mystery, but with serenity. Three great doxologies assure us that one of the main businesses of heaven is praise. That praise is as much a duty as prayer has not fully registered with any of us. Praise commensurate with its Object remains a virtually unknown tongue to all of us.

The Throne of Judgment

The first thing John sees in the vision is a throne — but it is clearly a throne of judgment. From it flare flashes of lightning, and peals of thunder. The whole scene is reminiscent of the judgment scene in Daniel 7:9-13 where "the thrones were placed and the judgment was set." Revelation is a book of judgment, and he who forgets it loses the key to interpreting the Apocalypse correctly. The seals, the trumpets, and the bowls are all judgments, the well-known messianic woes, the birth pangs of a new world.

It is clear that the themes of John, as well as those of Jesus, are not new, and it is likewise clear that they are chiefly themes of judgment — the judgments associated with the coming of the Messiah, and his counterpart, Antichrist, and the subsequent deliverance of the elect. Particularly did "the Son of Man" figure as an emblem of vindication for God's people but punishment for their oppressors (cf. Rev 1:7, 13; 14:14; and Mt 24:30; Lk 18:8; Mk 14:62).

How can a book be so full of the crucified Christ, so permeated with references to the Lamb (twenty-eight references), and yet be shrill with judgment? The ideas are not really disparate. Privilege determines responsibility, and to whom much is given, much is expected. And God has given much — in his Son. Thus the one who wrote Revelation could also write: "He who believes in the Son has eternal

life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him" (Jn 3:36).

It is fashionable to avoid talking of the wrath of God. Karl Barth for years neglected the theme and likewise most contemporary theologians. But this book knows no finicky reserve. Moderns have forgotten that the greatest text of the Bible, the one telling us that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, also warns that all who do not respond to him shall "perish." The sun which melts wax also hardens clay. No one can be the same after hearing the gospel. They are either better or worse — much better or much worse.

**The afflicted churches of John's day,
and their successors in our time,
were assured that at the heart of
the universe there is neither chaos
nor steel, but a heart.**

The fact of the judgment emphasis of this book is vital for its interpretation. We are reading about a summary, dark with woe, of eschatological events. Revelation is not intended to sketch a successive outline of many centuries of light and shadow. It is almost all shadow because it pertains to the very last days. But these last events in the attenuated fulfillment have cast their shadows before, century after century, and thus the book does have significance for all ages.

The Lamb and the Book

Let us pause to think on the symbolism of the Lamb taking the book from the hand of God amid anthems of praise from all in heaven. What does this mean? It is all too grand to be merely pointing to events of limited historical importance. The doxology that marked the Lamb's possession of the scroll indicates the great significance of that event.

They sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and has made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth." (Rev 5:9,10)

The theme is not the history of governments, but the redemption of the world. The sealed book has to do with all power in heaven and earth being given to the Son. It is a commentary on Daniel 7:13, 14, 22, 27, and Matthew 28:18.

The sealed book has been variously understood, but note this statement from Seiss:

It is not ecclesiastical history, which this book is introduced to foreshow, but something to which all ecclesiastical history is only the prelude and introduction, and which the Scriptures call "The redemption of the purchased possession."

The word redemption comes to us, and takes its significance from certain laws and customs of the ancient Jews. Under these laws and customs, it was impossible to alienate estates beyond a given time. Whatever disposition one may have been forced to make of his lands, and whoever might be found in possession of them, the year of Jubilee returned them to the

lawful representatives of their former owners. Upon this regulation there was founded another, which made it the right of the nearest of kin to one who, through distress or otherwise, had alienated his inheritance to another party, to step in and redeem it; that is, to buy it back, and retake it.

There has been an inheritance forfeited and disposed away for these thousands of years. . . . The sealed book, the title-deeds of its forfeiture and mortgage, are in the hands of God, and strangers and intruders have overrun and debased it. And from the days of Adam until now, those deeds have lain in the Almighty's hands, with no one to take them up or to dispossess the aliens.

Sin cannot vitiate any of the rights of God. Satan's possession is a mere usurpation, permitted for the time, but in no way detrimental to the proprietorship of the Almighty. The true right still lives in the hand of God, until the proper Goel [kinsman-redeemer] comes to redeem it, by paying the price, and ejecting the alien and his seed. (See *The Apocalypse*, VI, pp. 267-280.)

The one in Old Testament times who redeemed lost property or persons was called the goel. The term signified both a redeemer and an avenger, for in those crude times, when no police force existed, it was the near-kinsman who executed vengeance. However strange the idea may be to Westerners, the goel concept pointed to both redemption and vengeance. Thus in the prophecies of Revelation we see Christ portrayed both as the Lamb of God, the compassionate redeemer of the saints, and as the Lion of the tribe of Judah to those who reject his grace.

In apocalyptic imagery a lamb with horns of strength is a well-known emblem. Though Christ is the gentle, harmless, innocent Lamb, he is also a Warrior-King. In Revelation 8:4 we are given a view of Christ as

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lawsuit with the world, and teaches
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Advocate, and this also has reference to the ancient goel who often represented the oppressed as advocate in the gate of judgment.

All of these — redeemer, avenger, advocate — are legal, forensic terms in keeping with the many other such images in the book. The thought is that all that God does is done on the basis of right. He is not arbitrary nor unfair, but true and righteous in all his judgments.

The book of Revelation, as surely as the Gospel of John, shows God's lawsuit with the world, and teaches that only those hid in Christ can find justification from the accusations of the great adversary. The sealed book of Revelation five contains the history as well as the destiny of every man, for the judgment bestowal of inheritance will reveal our works as evidence or not of saving faith. □

This article is adapted from Desmond Ford's *Crisis* volume 2, chapter 18.

Q. I often meet Christians who constantly talk about the "miracles" God is doing for them and yet I never seem to be able to discern anything supernatural in my past life. Am I too skeptical?

A. Much depends on how your fellow Christians define "miracle." If they mean that God is constantly intervening into the course of nature or interfering with the "laws" of nature then I too would be very skeptical. Note the following observation by Lewis: "God does not shake miracles into Nature at random as if from a pepper-caster. They come on great occasions: they are found at the great ganglions of history — not of political or social history, but of that spiritual history which cannot be fully known by men. If your own life does not happen to be near one of those great ganglions, how should you expect to see one?" (C.S. Lewis, **Miracles**, p. 171).

The religious world has never been short of "miracle mongers." Jesus met his share of them. I think God honors and values his created order much more than the "miracle mongers" realize.

However, the kind of miracles these Christians are referring to may be what I call "providential miracles." To illustrate such, consider the following story from World War II:

"During the war a young chaplain stationed at Guadalcanal had this extraordinary experience. He writes, 'One day I was allowed to make a trip on a bomber. We ran out of gas, and were forced down on an island held by the Japs. We landed just at sunset and fortunately were not observed, but the Staff Sergeant said to me, "Chaplain, you'd better start praying! Unless we get some gas before morning, we're done for." So I did start praying, and then what happened? About 3 a.m. something woke the Staff Sergeant and prompted him to walk to the shore of a nearby

inlet. There, drifting in with the tide, was a 50-gallon drum of aviation-gasoline. Had the Sergeant reached the shore even one minute later, that drum would have been out of sight beyond a bend. Hastily he dragged the drum ashore and then waked all of us. We filled the fuel-tank of the plane, and at dawn made a successful get-away.

"Subsequently we learned where that drum of gasoline had come from. Two months previously one of our supply-ships, towing a string of fuel-barges in another part of the Pacific, had been attacked by Jap planes. To save his vessel the Captain cut the fuel-barges loose, and then steamed away at top speed. One of those barges then drifted some 900 miles and struck a reef. As the barge broke up, the drums of gasoline on board were set loose and floated away. One of them was washed toward the inlet near which our plane was subsequently to land. There the action of the tide carried it into the inlet at the very moment when our Staff Sergeant, mysteriously roused from sleep, reached the shore. For perhaps one minute, no more, that priceless drum of gasoline was visible from the particular spot where the Staff Sergeant stood. Who had guided that drum for sixty days, and across nearly one thousand miles of open ocean? Who had finally brought it to the exact spot where it was desperately needed? Who had made it arrive there just at the moment when our Staff Sergeant was able to see it? Let the skeptics and the scoffers answer these questions!" (James Gilkey **Gaining the Faith You Need**, pp. 100-101).

I believe the extraordinary events of the above story could have happened without any spectacular supernatural act of God. Nevertheless, I still believe God answered the young chaplain's prayer. It seems to me that God works in a way far more profound than in the naive way

the peddlers of "raw miracles" would indicate. To me God is like a brilliant chess player — he seems to be always three or four moves ahead. God wins or gets his way by an exciting combination of moves and yet he does not break the rules of the game. God often seems to work from "within" rather than from "without." If your friends are referring to this sort of "happening," then I think your skepticism may be unwarranted.

— Noel Mason

Q. Is it right to call people "saints"? What does the New Testament mean by this term?

A. The word for "saint" in the New Testament is related to the word in the Greek language for "sanctify," "sanctification," etc. The basic meaning is that of holiness and separateness. A saint is a holy person, one set apart by his or her relationship to Jesus Christ.

But is anyone really holy? When we consider Christians we must always consider them from God's perspective and from the human. As children of Adam we are in ourselves sinful, unholy and unrighteous. As children of the Second Adam we are perfect and righteous altogether. In addition, Christians grow in Christ, they become more like him, they nurture Christian graces and do battle with sin.

So in reality Christians are partially saints. But in Jesus Christ they are wholly saints. Thus Paul could call the members of the Corinthian church "those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (1 Cor 1:2). And this, despite the fact that the community was racked with very serious problems.

In our own eyes we are not saints. In our eyes, if we accept God's verdict, others are saints. In God's sight we are all saints. So saints, be of good cheer!

— Calvin Edwards

The Edges of Seventh-day Adventism

reviewed by Calvin W. Edwards

The Edges of Seventh-day

Adventism, Lowell Tarling, published by Galilee Publications, Bermagui South, NSW, Australia, 249 pages, \$A11. Available in the USA from Calvin Edwards, 13021 Lincoln Way, No. 82, Auburn, CA 95603, \$15 including postage.

Tarling, an ex-Seventh-day Adventist, makes no pretense at being a theologian. Rather he writes a fascinating history of the movements in and around the denomination and shows their inner thinking - covering groups from 1844 to the present day.

One may ask, What on earth is the value of reading an historical account of all the off-shoots from a rather small and obscure denomination? It is true that to many people the book will not be terribly valuable. But, to Adventists, it gives a helpful insight to the diversity that exists in and at the edges of the church. Tarling says, "A study of all the breakaways can give a very clear understanding of the Seventh-day Adventist mind. . . . The sum of the parts of the offshoot movements is equal to the corporate identity of the mainstream church" (p.2). Since each group usually claims to either represent true Adventism, or to be reforming some aberrant movement in the church, to gain an insight into what makes it tick is to gain an insight into what makes the parent church tick.

Does the book have any value to a non-SDA, one who has virtually no interest in the peculiarities of a nineteenth century "millennialist sect"? (p.2). It certainly could be of value to one who is interested in the sect-denomination process that virtually every religious group undergoes as it comes of age. It also amply demonstrates that in general the "offshoots" from a parent church are even more bizarre and eccentric than what they leave behind. This is especially true of the reform movements, those who wish to make the theological stance at a

particular point in church history normative and determinative for all Adventism at all times.

Tarling would not view "Reformation movements" who seek to come nearer to positions held by Protestant churches, as suffering from this same ailment. It is also fascinating to see the way the weaknesses and inadequacies of the main body are often transferred to the offspring. Finally, for the person who considers him or herself disinterested in such a topic, it must be said that **Edges** simply makes fascinating reading for anyone who is interested in the history and development of religious movements.

For example, Tarling tells the story of Margaret Rowen, a self-styled "prophetess" who engaged in fraud and deception to convince her would-be followers that she had light from heaven. The Herbert Armstrong (Worldwide Church of God) movement is described in some detail, including the much publicized split with his son, Garner Ted. Fred Wright, a builder without formal theological training, started his own church and it still survives. Though he has only a handful of "converts" he conscientiously believes that God will use his theological system as the center of the "loud cry" and that his movement will triumph in God's plan while others collapse. Another believes that the SDA church was typified by the repentant thief on the cross; presently the church is wayward, but at the last hour it will repent, reform and be saved!

Some portions are downright hilarious. Ben Roden considered himself to be a prophet-priest-king and started a movement called "The Branch." Tarling comments, "When Roden was in his mid-seventies, the question of new leadership was no issue. It was claimed that this man would never taste death. . . . When Roden was seventy-five years old, Shaw (who had seen him) claimed

that whereas the rest of humanity was getting older, Ben Roden was actually getting younger and younger with age. Ben Roden died in 1978" (p.135).

But the portion that will possibly be of greatest interest to many readers is the account of the moves within and outside Adventism since the 1950s to bring it towards a truly evangelical and Protestant position. Some may wish that the era from the interaction with Barnhouse and Martin (two Protestant clergymen interested in the study of cults) through to post Glacier View events were dealt with in greater detail.

But the book has performed an impressive task. It has sought to give a very extensive coverage of offshoots, (and one that insisted on being called an "upshoot") in a way that certainly has never been done before with Adventism. The book is loaded with documentation in footnotes that sometimes turn out to be more interesting than the main text! The author's style is objective, descriptive and non-evaluative. He simply tells the story. Never does Tarling indulge in any criticism or hostility against his former church.

Three things stand out in my mind after reading such a work. The parent church seems to have done little to retrieve those who moved away or to develop a flexibility that would tolerate even those with reasonable variant views. Most denominations, cults and sects are the result of dissatisfaction with a major denomination. What a tragically fragmented Christendom has resulted. Finally, the weird aberrations that predominate in many of the reform movements make one cautious about human nature and its ability to believe almost anything, given the right circumstances. I am reminded of one of Lewis Carroll's creations who said, "I can believe six impossible things before breakfast if I try hard enough." □

New Office Building

Work has begun on the new GNU office. Or at least the lot is being graded and preparations made for laying the foundations. Noel Mason is coordinating the overall job. Richard Dana, from Oregon, has moved into Auburn as the contractor and foreman. Richard has much experience in the building industry and is renowned for his finesse in craftsmanship.

We are also extremely grateful to several who have offered their services on a volunteer basis to help at various points in the project. We hope to be comfortably installed early in the new year, assuming the weather obliges!

Tape of the Month

This month donors of \$25 or more (or an equivalent) will receive the Tape of the Month: "The Greatest Heresy" by Desmond Ford and "When the Tide Is Out" by Calvin Edwards. If you don't donate \$25 per month but would like to join the growing number of persons who are receiving the Tape of the Month regularly, simply request us. There is a suggested donation of \$36 per year (12 cassettes, usually with two sermons on each).

Growing Together

Good News Unlimited is on the move. And we want you to be a part of it. Our mailing list, the life blood of our organization, is growing constantly. Maybe you have friends or contacts whom you would like to see receive the **Good News Unlimited** magazine.

If you wish to share the gospel and your love for the Lord through this medium, we are ready to help you. We suggest one of three things. Write requesting certain names and addresses to be added to our permanent mailing list. Or, request that persons be sent a sample copy of the magazine with a subscription

card to be returned only if they want a regular subscription. Or finally, ask us for multiple copies of recent issues for you to distribute as you please (we will enclose subscription cards if you like).

One last thing. The December issue of **GNU** will be a very special Christmas one. It will have an attractive full color cover, and four Christmas messages, one from each of the GNU ministers. So why not send us the names and addresses of those you would like to benefit from this gospel publication. Come on, let's grow together.

Office in South Africa

In conjunction with the recent visit of three of the GNU ministers to South Africa, an office was set up in Bloemfontein in the Orange Free State. It is hoped that this will help serve the needs of gospel believers and further the work of Good News Unlimited in South Africa and perhaps other African nations.

To commence, this office will serve primarily as a distribution and service centre to make available materials from Good News Unlimited. This will alleviate difficulties in obtaining foreign exchange and time delays when ordering from the USA. Inquiries and requests may also be directed to this office and will be passed on to the main office in Auburn, California if necessary.

We greatly appreciate the kindness of Dr. A. J. Vermaas who has kindly offered space, and secretarial assistance from his staff. The address of the office is: Good News Unlimited, P.O. Box 11096, Universitas 9321, Republic of South Africa.

For The Enrichment of Life and Service

Many of us concern ourselves for years about a problem that an hour's reading could have solved. Likewise, "the labour of the foolish wearieth, because he knoweth not how" (Ec 10:15), and our Christian service has often been comparatively fruitless because of inadequate knowledge. Desmond Ford Publications offers the following as part of the answer to these universal problems.

The Adventist Crisis of Spiritual Identity, by Desmond and Gillie Ford.

Just published. Chapters review the present crisis in Adventism, the causes, and the remedy. Frank statements about Glacier View, traditional prophetic interpretations, E.G. White, the Sabbath, contemporary confusion on righteousness by faith, etc. \$10.50, plus \$4 postage and handling.

This is a book that should have wide circulation. Why not buy two copies — one for yourself and one to share with others?

Price \$10.50, plus \$1.70 postage and handling. (Two to four copies, \$4.50 postage and handling.) Stocks are selling quickly; get your order in now.

Crisis! Three volume set on Revelation, showing how the gospel is the key to the prophetic delineations of the future, and even the customary questions on 666, Armageddon, the mark of the beast, etc. Condenses a whole library on prophetic themes, summarizing the best of 2000 years of Christian research.

Cyclopaedic index. \$34.50 the set. Index only, \$5 plus \$1.70 postage.

Daniel 8:14 — The Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgment. Desmond Ford's Glacier View manuscript with post-Glacier View preface. Comprehensive review of Adventist doctrinal

issues — sanctuary, inspiration, E.G. White, righteousness by faith, etc. Fascinating history reviewing prominent Adventists of the last hundred years and their protests. Many hitherto unpublished letters from church leaders and committees.

\$15 plus \$4 postage.

The Forgotten Day. The most complete doctrinal discussion of the continuing validity of the seventh-day Sabbath written this century. The Sabbath's relationship to the gospel is stressed. Common objections to the Sabbath (over sixty of them) are answered in detail. Exegetical-philosophical-historical, but easy to read. \$9.50 plus \$1.70 postage.

For any of the foregoing books, please make cheques payable to Desmond Ford Publications, and post to P.O. Box 65, Chadstone, Victoria, 3148.

Radio Broadcasts

Good News Unlimited's thought provoking messages continue to go from strength to strength in the USA. Fourteen States air the program, sometimes over multiple outlets. California, for instance, has 13 stations which run it — 11 on Sunday

and 12 on Saturday. A recent report tells us that the management of WWWW in Columbus, Indiana, considers the Good News Unlimited radio program to be more popular than any other spoken religious program. Dr. Ford's half-hour weekly broadcast apparently generates more positive responses than other programs.

Canada and New Zealand, and Sydney here in Australia, also put the program to air.

A number of folk have indicated to us at various times that they are interested in getting it on a station in their area. We would like to hear from these folk again; to know if they have made approaches to station

management, and what the response has been. We have tapes with the appropriate Australian introduction and other necessary dubbing now available, and invite enquiries from interested supporters.

Gospel Fellowships

Most Australian capital cities now have gospel fellowship groups that meet together regularly for mutual encouragement from the study of the Scriptures. While these fellowships are not sponsored by or connected with GNU, many of our readers support them. In Victoria, a discussion group meets regularly every Saturday afternoon at Blairgowrie House, 168 Manchester Road, Mooroolbark, generally commencing at 3 p.m. All seeking such fellowship are assured of a warm welcome. Further details may be obtained by phoning 876 1898.

We would appreciate details of other such groups to share with those who write to us seeking such information.

As a "year end special" we are offering copies of the GNU Australian Syllabus at just \$2 each (plus \$1.50 for postage and handling). This would make a good basis for discussion. (Bulk mailings could be arranged at a reduced mailing cost.)

Give Your Children a Treat

Christmas is approaching. As you contemplate gifts for family, friends and relatives, why not consider something that may have eternal value. **Good News for Kids** is a twice monthly magazine for children 6 to 12 years. It is dedicated to the spirit and message of the gospel of Jesus Christ as Saviour, Friend and Helper. Less than five cents a day gives your children their very own gospel magazine. Send your \$18 today to P.O. Box 65, Chadstone, 3148 — this subscription could make a worthwhile Christmas present for your child — or a little friend.

Tracts, and More Tracts

There's probably nowhere else you can get 100 pages of reading material on key gospel related topics than in the recent series of Gospel Tracts published by Good News Unlimited. Here you have a compact, attractive series of eleven brochures by six authors.

Read about Jesus' rather unconventional view of the last judgment. Discover the free and unconditional nature of God's love. Dig into some of the exciting implications of justification by faith. Understand the relation of the law and the cross. Come to grips with the various ways that the New Testament describes the gospel. And there's lots more.

They have been designed to be mailed easily in a regular business envelope. Professionals may wish to leave supplies in waiting areas. Churches may wish to study them

Don't hesitate to obtain your sets. Suggested donation: \$2.50 per set. \$2.25 per set for twelve or more sets. (Postage is included in these prices.)

NEWSFLASH

As this magazine is about to go to press, we have received word that the February 1983 itinerary announced last month has had to be postponed. No details are yet to hand, but a further announcement will be made next month.

And please don't forget to send us more names and addresses to add to our mailing list — do it today, in time for your friends to receive the Christmas issue.

Festive Gift

Sirs:

Thank you! You've solved a big problem in our marriage — it's so good to see my husband interested in the gospel once again. Both of us have been very cynical. I'm an ex student of the Jehovah's Witnesses, and he has been a "lukewarm" Seventh-day Adventist for thirty years. It's just as though we've had a lovely festive gift to receive your answers to our questions and all the helpful literature you sent.

My husband has been an admirer of Des Ford's for years, but because Barry is an outspoken man, most friends shrink from discussing certain matters with him. However God, through you people, has seen fit to comfort him at last! We are very grateful for your ministry.

Please find enclosed a cheque. Would you kindly send two cassettes of "Visions of Patmos". The rest is our donation for this month. We will send another cheque next month.

By the way, we hope to visit America early in 1983 and pay a visit to the GNU office.

Michelle & Barry Ford,
via Tumut, NSW.

Ecumenically Minded

Sirs:

My wife and I are spending an extended holiday in Australia. We have been receiving the magazine "Good News Unlimited" at home in England, and as we shall not be going home until some time next year we wondered if it would be possible to have some copies sent to us at the above address. I am a retired minister, and so enjoy the freshness of the magazine.

We had the privilege of hearing Dr. Ford in England earlier this year and it was good to hear the gospel presented so clearly. In fact, as I understand the situation, Dr. Ford has made clear aspects of truth which I had thought through over twenty years ago. Much of my enlightenment came through a book by W. W. Fletcher entitled "Reasons for My Faith", published about 1932. This book was given to me by a Seventh-day Baptist pastor in London.

Good News Unlimited

P.O. Box 65, Chadstone
Victoria, 3148

While here in Australia we have been attending a local church in the area where we are staying and have had good fellowship. We are very ecumenically minded, believing that the body of Christ is found in all communions. May God bless your good work.

Name withheld

Tapes Well Received

Sirs:

Enclosed is my donation to help support the Good News program. Many thanks for the tapes you have sent me and the monthly Bulletin. They are eagerly looked forward to. It's so good to hear the gospel! I have lent some of the tapes to friends and they have been well received. My prayers are with you all and may God bless you in your outreach program.

Mrs S. Wallace,
Ipswich, Qld.

Thanking God

Sirs:

Please find enclosed a further donation to the cause of preaching the everlasting gospel undiluted. We loved the Calvin Edwards article "The Function of the Church — 1". I just want to belong to a church with those ideals.

Thanks for the van Rooyen cassette, "But Now Righeousness . . .". Wonderful!

The article on "Esther and the Gospel" by Herb Sorensen must be the most scintillating Old Testament typological gem that I have ever read. Please ask him to write some more.

Must away. I keep thanking God for continuing to bless the work of GNU; I don't feel I need to ask Him — he is already doing it.

Minister's wife,
New South Wales.

Excellent

Sirs:

Enclosed is my tithe donation for last month and this month. Keep spreading the good news. We have been greatly blessed by the monthly tapes. The last two magazines have been excellent.

Juanita Bissell
Lincoln, Nebraska

Ford Hedges

Sirs:

I am in receipt of your paper "Good News Unlimited."

In your August issue, Desmond Ford poses the question, "Should we leave our local church?" Mr. Ford is begging the question. He **hedges** too much! He describes a situation where the church is teaching false doctrine; and makes the performance of Christian duty impossible; and destroys true worship and fellowship with God.

In such circumstances, Des Ford "indicates," (not very specifically) that a person would be justified in **leaving** his church. He then goes on to suggest that one should seek out a church where the "gospel is freely preached."

Question: — Where is such a church? I would venture to say one would be hard put to find such a church in Australia. Why doesn't he establish a Gospel Church? Success is assured!

C. Alan Bernoth
Liverpool, NSW.

Salvation by Tape!

Sirs:

A weekend such as this last one impels a response on my part — one of many you will no doubt receive. It was so good, at last, to meet the faces behind GNU — to hear your voices live. You know salvation by tape is satisfying only up to a point! To experience evidence of your total commitment to him, to get carried away with your enthusiasm for the gospel and to have some of it rub off on me was very rewarding.

Your warmth and sincerity and the simplicity of your presentations were especially endearing and so much appreciated.

I hope you enjoyed South Africa all over again as much as South Africa was the richer for your visit. She adds her entreaties to ours and bids you not leave her too long before you come again. There will always be a very warm welcome for you all.

Daphne Berrange
Durban, South Africa

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Address Correction Requested

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