



June 2015

**FREE!**

# GOOD NEWS

## *Unlimited*

## Chocolat

By Ron Allen

Chocolate lovers will nod knowingly at the mention of an old movie called *Chocolat*—set in a French village. A single unmarried woman and her daughter moves into town and opens a chocolate store just as the villagers are beginning to observe the forty days of Lent. She does not go to church and is not a good fit for the devout village folk. At least, that is what the Mayor, Count Reynaud, thinks.



The Mayor insists on regular meetings with the village priest. He writes sermons for him; filling them with stern admonishments concerning the need to reinforce the soul against apostasy by raising strong bulwarks against the flesh. He inserts pointed warnings about the power of chocolate to take a person away from God.

Despite the Mayor's best efforts, the townsfolk find their new neighbor very friendly, and many of them decide to help her stage a chocolate festival on Easter Sunday. In a fit of outrage, Mayor Reynaud takes drastic measures against the chocolate lady by breaking into her store and trashing the treats she has been preparing for the Easter celebration. As he stumbles about amongst the chocolate ruins, some touches his lips and he tastes it. Soon he is seen stuffing himself with various varieties of chocolate truffle. As morning breaks over the town, villagers gather in amazement at the chocolate shop window to stare at Count Reynaud who has fallen asleep inside, his head and body smeared with chocolate.

The movie concludes with a Sunday homily delivered by the priest—this time written by himself—suggesting it is far better for Christians to be known for things they embrace, live and strive for rather than things they are against.

The question presented by this story is this: Which ethos of the two is more likely to bring out the best in human beings? While the cinema is not the best place in the world in which to discover how to improve ourselves, it is nevertheless the case that many novels and films are powerful in their portrayal of the human situation. Count Reynaud is an example of an idea which has been around for a long time. Namely, that it is possible to *cause* men and women to be good; that they can be coerced into decency; that righteousness can be regulated into being.

The first half of Romans chapter five informs us that what God has done in Jesus is so potent, it has consequence back

and forth across the entire spectrum of human experience. So: *“Since we have now **been justified** by his blood, how much more **shall we be saved** from God’s wrath through him” (Romans 5:9)* The ‘righteousness from God’ brought by Jesus is decisive for this world and the next.

In order to bring out the universal significance of Jesus, Paul draws an analogy between Christ

and Adam. These are the two central figures in the human story. They are similar to each other in that they each have a relationship of solidarity with the rest of the race.

Twenty-first century folk are taken up with the idea of individual freedom. Ancient society thought of all posterity as contained within its tribal progenitor. *“Sin entered the world through one man,”* Paul says. *“And death through sin, and in this way death came to all men because all sinned” (Romans 5:12).*

In Genesis, Adam tries to extend his freedom by forging life for himself from his own resources. Instead of finding his selfhood in God and in God’s ample provision for him, he chooses his own course. By means of that revolt, a temperament of mutiny and unbelief entered Adam—and all humanity. Subsequent generations, having rebelled collectively in their forefather, also shared in the death that overtook him. *In this way, death came to all men.*

Adam is humanity in germ. The chief features of his story are re-enacted in the lives of everyone. All of us are born into families, belong to social networks and are part of a culture that enshrines estrangement, suspicion, resentment, jealousy, and defiance of God. These human distortions are repeated and nauseam along with the blood and sorrow that goes with them. A person seeking an understanding of society in our time could do worse than consider the Bible’s idea of sin. Sin is the disposition of human beings to exalt themselves against God. Who could seriously argue that our race does not share in a debacle like that described in Genesis 1-3. We need only—if we have the courage for it—contemplate the bloodbath that is Syria, the inhumanities in Gaza, Sudan, and Paris. What of the proliferation of refugee camps around the world; the slow, quiet dying of the malnourished, while in other lands people

*Continued on Next Page*

CHRIST ALONE • GRACE ALONE • FAITH ALONE • SCRIPTURE ALONE

[www.goodnewsunlimited.org](http://www.goodnewsunlimited.org)

# EDITORIAL . . .



Pastor Ron Allen

*“This fellow never stops speaking against the holy place and against this law. For we have heard him say that Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us” (Acts 7:13, 14).*

When Jesus chased the money-changers from the temple forecourt, he presumed an authority greater than the temple itself. Confident of higher accreditation, he had gone over the heads of the priests. Temple officials, religious experts—otherwise known as teachers of the law—were quick to realize they would soon be irrelevant if Jesus was not silenced. Their influence, and their living, was at stake.

After the Resurrection, Jesus’ disciples met in the temple precinct. There must have been interest and even some excitement when they were joined by some of the priests. The believer’s hopes that the Sanhedrin might convert to Jesus may have run high when Stephen was arrested. Perhaps Stephen would explain on their behalf that they were not really enemies of the temple, but friends; friends of Moses and the law, but Stephen unambiguously associated himself with Jesus’ own attitude to the temple. As a result he shared Jesus’ fate.


In his defense to the Sanhedrin, Stephen pressed ahead with a reasoned argument in support of Christ’s ascendancy over the temple. In this way, he validated the accusations brought against him. Displaying a masterful grasp of sacred history, Stephen demonstrated that God had at not stage tethered himself to one land and one people. He cited examples of God’s activity among other nations, outside Israel, away from Jerusalem, and away from its temple. He pointed to God’s

engagement with people in the world before Israel existed, before the law, before priest and altar—before the temple.

The Sanhedrin had charged Stephen with speaking against ‘this place’ (Jerusalem and its temple). His repeated mention of God’s involvement in humanity, with no connection to Abraham’s descendants, removed the basis of those allegations.

According to Stephen, what the Golden Calf had been to Israel of the Exodus, so the temple and its law had become to his accusers. Judaism had become an idol; ‘*the work of their own hands*’ (Acts 7:41); a god they could see and control; one they could manage. The temple’s custodians believed they had God in its bricks and mortar, in the superstructure of its rituals and teaching. They had no room for Christ. They had already taken ownership of God, trapping him in their religious museum.

God cannot be contained or owned by anyone, any group or any place. If we think to preserve God within our accustomed ways of thinking about him or presenting him, we risk missing out on God’s richest and best revelation of himself—Jesus.

Jesus gives a God who cannot be set in stone or creed or tradition. The One he called father is not a hidebound, petrified, impersonal idol-god. He is the living God; bristling with creative unexpectedness; continually setting before us new obligations and fresh duties. A God with plans and purposes for his people; “*to give you a hope and a future*” (Jeremiah 29:13). 

*Continued from previous page*

die of over-eating? The Adamic solidarity is disastrous for humans.

But Adam’s far-reaching effect on his offspring is analogous to Christ’s impact on mankind. Bear in mind that Adam is only brought into the discussion for purposes of illustration. Christ is the real subject. The essence of Paul’s thought is that Christ’s impact is far more significant and powerful than Adam’s. If Adam’s legacy is widespread and injurious, Christ’s is infinite and constructive. The two figures are similar only in the fact that their influence reaches beyond themselves. As to the comparative

proportions of their influence... there is no comparison!

*“But the gift is **not like** the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how **much more** did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many.’ Again, the gift of God is not like the result of one man’s sin: the judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification” (Romans 5:15, 16).*

The solidarity all men and women have with Adam is solidarity of sin or trespass. The solidarity for those that trust in Christ is solidarity with an overflowing gift, the solidarity of justification. →

## GOODNEWS *Unlimited*

Good News Unlimited magazine is published every month by Good News Unlimited, P.O. Box 6687, Auburn, CA, USA 95604-6687.

Good News Unlimited is an interdenominational Christian organization proclaiming the good news about Jesus Christ and his kingdom of grace. Special emphasis is placed on the message of salvation by grace through faith in Christ’s righteousness alone. GNU also links the gospel to the needs of the whole person, to life-style, and preventive medicine.

Good News Unlimited magazine also seeks to keep readers up-to-date on all aspects of GNU’s ministries. This includes news on national and international radio broadcasts; public seminars, congresses, and Bible schools within the USA (as well as

public meetings in Canada and overseas); and the dissemination of literature, audio and video material. (A comprehensive catalog is available free on request.)

Good News Unlimited is a nonprofit religious corporation supported solely by donations from those who believe in its ministries. Gifts are tax deductible in the USA and Canada. An annual review of GNU’s accounts is made by an external auditor. All regular donors to GNU may receive a financial statement on request.

Good News Unlimited is reached by phone at 530.823.9690. E-mail [gnu@goodnewsunlimited.org](mailto:gnu@goodnewsunlimited.org).

**This magazine is free upon request.**

June, 2015  
Vol. 34, No. 6

Published by Good News Unlimited

Copyright © 2015

Editor

Ron Allen

Graphic Designer

Debbie O’Brien

Proofreader

Philip Rhodes

Molly Jordan

AFFILIATE ADDRESSES:

Canadian office:  
222 Olive Avenue  
Willowdale, ON M2N 4P6  
Canada

The two relationships of solidarity open to men and women are not equals. Christ does not simply counterbalance Adam. He is not the equalizer who evens the score. The truth is, the gift vastly overwhelms the trespass. On the one hand, judgment-condemnation-death; a grim, strangulated, and sad situation. On the other hand, is righteousness. The gift of rightness with God (otherwise called justification) brings eternal life. Seen in relation to Adam, we are a compromised race, mired in hubris, distrust and hatred—all tending to death. In relation to Jesus Christ, we see a new humanity; right with God, forgiven, grateful, penitent, learning to love like God, tasting eternal life. The gift is certainly NOT like the trespass!

Paul is aware that fellow Jews will say that his dualism is too simplistic, failing to recognize the importance of the Law of Moses. Was not the giving of the law an event of cosmic importance? Was not the arrival in the world of that body of refinement and moral principle a new beginning for humanity? Was not the religion of Israel God's answer to the unchecked wickedness of the nations?

After the sad death of Robin Williams last year, a church group scheduled a special service to coincide with his funeral. A spokesman for the church, mindful of the entertainer's role as a gay man in at least one of his movies, said that the purpose of the planned ceremony was to get the message out: 'Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.'

This kind of response to the manifest vexedness of the human condition is far from rare. It is the go-to policy of many churches, faith movements, political parties and moral activists of every stripe.

In the world of St. Paul, 'law' is the religion in which he was raised: the religion of Israel. Today, law, in a more generic sense can be the Judeo-Christian heritage as acknowledged and promoted by any one particular group within that broad tradition. It can be the moral order as understood by zealots on the religious right, or the Tea Party doctrine. It could be the dogma of some sections of Islam whose catch-cry is, 'convert or die.' Law can be any philosophical, moral or religious system raised as a bulwark against the world's evil, because, in principle, they all function the same way as law in Scripture.

Contrary to expectations, and shocking to many of its advocates, law does not initiate a new humanity. Indeed, it has precisely the opposite effect. *"The law was brought in alongside, so that the trespass might increase"* (Romans 5:20).

In the brown earth that surrounded my first grade school, there were little mounds of earth. They were ant-hills and I was fascinated by them. I would sit over the hole and watch the busy creatures going in and out. Sometimes I plugged the entrance with a stick to see what would happen if they were not allowed to come out. The result was clear: ants came boiling up out of the earth through more holes than I knew were there. When a wooden stick was applied against the ants to make them stay inside, they became all the more determined to get out.

Such was the effect of the law on the human race. Law did

not calm the revolutionary spirit; it stirred it up. So it was; so it remains. Every time law shines its pure light on a moral failure, the instinctive response is to raise more stringent legal barriers against it. These are in turn met by more inventive forms of negligence.

Nowhere does antipathy to the law of God appear so inherent and innovative, as in those human groupings with the longest and proudest traditions of civil and religious enlightenment. Dishonesty, impurity, oppression and inhumanity are terrible when they are customary in benighted paganism, but they are even more monstrous when practiced by people who know the law.

Far from curbing transgressions; far from cornering, capturing, and taming rogue human nature, the introduction of Moses' law only caused transgression to increase. It became even more aggravated and luxuriant; more sophisticated in cunning. For Paul, the climactic event in the increase of transgression occurred when his own people, refusing to submit to the claim God made upon them through Jesus, exploited the law, making it a tool with which to reject him.


*"The law was brought in alongside so that the trespass might increase; but where sin increased, grace increased all the more"* (Romans 5:20).

The law was intended to be subservient to the two realities represented by Adam and Christ. In particular, the law was subject to the agenda of the most powerful of the two figures—Jesus and his purpose of grace.

The law makes the trespass increase. It is not as if the law is a facilitator of trespassing. Rather, the law is an agent of grace. Grace is effective against evil. The law is not.

We need a great deal more than law can offer us. As sons and daughters of Adam, we are fractured and broken. Freedom, truth, and justice are always just out of our reach. Each new piece of legislation we come with—no matter how enlightened—only serves to lay bare the vigor of our wiliness and our innate resistance to the law's values. Law only helps us see the depth and subtlety of our problem with evil.

Jesus is so much more than law. The tide of wrong rises ever higher under the tutelage of the law. It becomes even more grotesque, but grace—God's abundant provision—includes not only his patience, but kindness, mercy, good will, forgiveness, and the gift of his own righteousness to see us through this world into the next.

It is for us to join Paul in entering with enthusiasm and joy into solidarity with Jesus. Let not our living be organized on a basis that is provisional and ultimately impotent. Better to let life be put at the disposal of grace. Then, in dealings with fellow men and women, we will not be making them feel guilty, dirty, or unacceptable. We might possibly rather leave them with an impression of a kind God, one whose good intention fills the universe. They could even begin to believe that the worst degradations of human beings are not so abominable that they can never be outflanked and overwhelmed by the excessive grace of God. 



# Christian vs. Humanistic Pessimism

By Dorothy Sayers

A young and intelligent priest remarked that one of the greatest sources of strength in Christianity today lay in the profoundly pessimistic view it took of human nature. There is a great deal in what he says. The people who are most discouraged and made despondent by the barbarity and stupidity of human behavior at this time are those who think highly of *Homo Sapiens* as a product of evolution, and who still cling to an optimistic belief in the civilizing influence of progress and enlightenment. To them, the appalling outburst of bestial ferocity in the Totalitarian States, the obstinate selfishness and stupid greed of Capitalist Society, are not merely shocking and alarming. For them these things are the utter negation of everything in which they have believed. It is as though the bottom had dropped out of their universe. The whole thing looks like a denial of all reason, and they feel as if they and the world had gone mad together.

Now for the Christian, this is not so. He is as deeply shocked and grieved as anybody else, but he is not astonished. He has never thought very highly of human nature left to itself. He has been accustomed to the idea that there is a deeper interior dislocation in the very center of human personality,



and that you can never, as they say, “make people good by an act of parliament,” just because laws are man-made and therefore partake of the imperfect and self-contradictory nature of man.

Humanly speaking, it is not true at all that “truly to know the good is to do the good”; it is far truer to say with St. Paul that “the evil that I would not, that I do”; so that the mere increase of knowledge is of very little help in the struggle to outlaw evil.

The delusion of the mechanical perfectibility of mankind through a combined process of scientific knowledge and unconscious evolution has been responsible for a great deal of heartbreak. It is, at bottom, far more pessimistic than Christian pessimism, because, if science and progress break down, there is nothing to fall back upon. Humanism is self-contained—it provides man no resources outside himself. The Christian dogma of the double nature in man—which asserts that man is dis-integrated and necessarily imperfect in himself and all his works, yet closely related by a real unity of substance with an eternal perfection within and beyond him—makes the present parlous state of human society seem both less hopeless and less irrational.

-Dorothy Sayers: CREED OR CHAOS. 



***I know that right is right  
And givers shall increase;  
That duty lights the way  
For the beautiful feet of peace;  
That courage is better than fear  
And faith is truer than doubt.  
And fierce though the fiends may fight  
And long though the angels hide,  
I know that truth and right  
Have the universe on their side,  
And that somewhere beyond the stars  
Is a love that is stronger than hate.  
When the night unlocks her bars  
I shall see Him, and I will wait.***

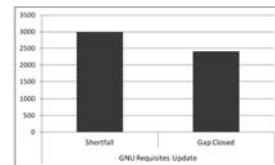
-Washington Gladden

**GOOD NEWS UNLIMITED**  
**Southern California Fall Gathering**  
With Pastor Ron Allen  
**Friday, Sept. 11—7:15 pm**  
**Saturday, Sept. 12—2:30 pm & 3:30 pm**  
Campus Hill Seventh-Day-Adventist Church  
11057 Hill Drive • Loma Linda, CA  
Contact (909) 954-6688

**A GOD—UNLIKE US! How to be Christian—but not dangerous.**  
Topics: *Firm Ground for your Feet • Not being Elvis • Things worth caring about*

## GNU FINANCIAL REQUISITES —UPDATE

In recent times we have undertaken to keep Good News Unlimited readers informed of the ministry's fiscal position. At this year's beginning there was a monthly shortfall of approximately \$3000. We noted that an increase of \$8 per month in donation by each subscriber would close the gap. Your response to this frank appraisal of our need has been immediate and heartwarming, and we thank God for it. Though there is a significant repair in our monthly lack, the deficit remains a problem that needs to be rectified. The accompanying graph illustrates our trajectory.



Attorney for the family of Freddy Gray made an impassioned speech in which he recalled the lesson taught by men such as Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela: The only enduring response to evil—is love. Jesus followers know how true that is. Our nation, our world has a vested interest in their commitment to his values. We invite our friends and partners to continue their sacrifices for that which is worth more than anything else in the world.