

Coping With Change in the Age of Technology

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In the late 1700s, a man by the name of Ned Lud broke into a house and smashed to bits two machines for knitting hosiery. His mad fit of rage soon inspired others, and shortly thereafter, stocking frames all over the north of England were being left in a shambles. Whenever the wreckage of one was discovered, the locals would stroke their chins and say, "Lud must have been here." By 1812, good old Ned had been transformed into an icon for an anti-machine, back-to-the-basics movement, fueled by the collective rage of textile-workers who saw their pleasant way of life—working in their own homes, at their own looms—being devoured by the industrial might of England's "dark, satanic mills." These *Luddites*, as members of the movement were called, went about in organized and anonymous bands, smashing textile machines wherever they could, pledging allegiance to no king but "King Ludd."¹

Now, as much as we deplore mob violence, is there a soul here so completely devoid of the romantic spirit, so completely enamored of the new technologies, as to feel no answering twinge of pleasure at the thought of machines being smashed into useless heaps of hardware? Why does David Letterman drop TVs from the fifth floor of his theater? I must confess a feeling of great weariness comes over me every time another one of MCI's millennial pronouncements appears on the television screen. "There are no genders, there are no races, there is no old, there is no young. There is only mind." Such rubbish!

The point is, coping with change is difficult, as those textile workers in northern England knew only too well. Those machines took more than their livelihood away; the Luddites felt stripped of their lives. A comfortable world had now become menacing and alien. That's how it is when we are confronted with great change: we feel threatened. We howl and rage. We run for cover. We look for our place to make a stand.

And is there anyone here who hasn't felt it? For those of you already fairly familiar with some of the new technologies, are you never worried that you won't be able to keep up? Have you never felt the desperate sense that you're running as hard as you can just to stay in one place? There's always something new: some new upgrade, some new software, some new hardware. "OOPS! Nice talking with ya, but gotta go, gotta check my e-mail, see what's new. I'm so busy saving time, becoming more productive, I've got no time left just to sit and think."

¹Pynchon, Thomas. "Is It O.K. to Be a Luddite?" *New York Times Book Review*, 28 October 1984.

<http://www.pomona.edu/pynchon/uncollected/luddite.html>, accessed on 2/27/97. In the same article, Pynchon also mentions a ballad Lord Byron wrote to celebrate the deeds of the iconoclasts, of which Pynchon includes the following lines:

*As the liberty lads o'er the sea
Bought their freedom, and cheaply, with blood,
So we, boys, we
Will die fighting, or live free
And down with all kings but King Ludd!*

The "liberty lads" are, of course, the Americans. Passing strange, isn't it, to consider that there was once a time when our country could be held up as an example of the simple life, free from the ills of industry and a technology gone mad.

Or let's say you belong to the hardy band which has steadfastly resisted the constant barrage of hype raining down like meteor showers from cyberspace. You know what they say about you, don't you? You're not computer-literate. Sounds bad, doesn't it? Condemned to live on the margins. Face forever pressed up to the window, ah, but you can only look. You can't go inside. Being able to work with those little boxes is the price of admission. Confess it: don't you feel a bit uneasy when it looks like the whole world is on the move, and you're one of those being left behind? Where do you want to go today?

So we look to the future and feel fearful and anxious about what it holds, wondering whether we can contain it. Or we look to the past and feel resentful and angry because of the many disruptions we have experienced, the many destructions of routine. Or maybe we just feel despairing because of the chaotic flux our life seems to be in at this present moment. How can we cope? More than anything, more than anything, we need hope to survive. Hope that will deliver us from fears that the world is crashing down around our ears. Hope that gives us a quiet and sure expectation of a better tomorrow. Hope that saves from the panic of the present, and that gives the calm equanimity needed for making the right decisions in the here and now. Hope that can replace both the passion for change, and the rage against it, with some kind of peace.

It seems to me that the great dilemma we always run into whenever we try to find a lasting hope in a world full of change has nowhere been better stated than by the Preacher, "God has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). The world is beautiful, but time flows swiftly, and our time is short. There are so many new and wonderful things to see in this world, but they all are bound to change, to fade, to rust, to crumble and decay. There are so many new and lovely things to experience in this world, but sooner or later, we all must die. And what makes this fact so much the worse for us is that we have this sense of perfection within ourselves, this desire for eternity in our hearts. We have the longing to capture the moment of joy, and to keep it safe from time forever.

Through the ages people have come up with dozens of ingenious ways to defeat the passing of time and to cheat their own mortality. Some try to live in the future, putting their faith in the myth of progress. Others immerse themselves in the present moment, heedless of the past and careless of consequence. Then there are those who spend their days longing for a past time, when life made sense and days flowed quietly. Finally, there will always be some who, like little boys carving their names into a tree, believe in leaving their mark upon the world and in making a name for themselves.

Dreaming of the Past

We begin with the ones who try to slow time down by creating a cult of the past. These are pretty rare birds nowadays, but you will still find a few who long to escape all the noise and glitter of our own graceless age. When a person looks at the ancient world, however, quite a different picture emerges. For the ancients, the golden age was usually located in the past, long before the age of iron, a term of contempt which the ancients reserved for their own hard times. Of that better era, Hesiod (a Greek poet living c. 700 B.C.) wrote,

The first race of speaking men, the deathless gods
 who dwell on Mt. Olympus made golden.
 Now they lived at the time of Cronos, when he ruled in heaven.
 Like gods they were, hearts free from care,
 Lives free from toils and misery. Nor did grim
 old age weigh down on them, no palsied limb,
 No fading strength, but ever and always delighting
 In good cheer, beyond the reach of sorrow.

Death came over them like sleep. Every kind of food
Had they, and the fruitful earth bore to them its produce
In abundance, freely and unsparingly.²

But of his own times, he lamented,

O, that I had never been a part of that fifth
Kind of men, but had either died before, or been born thereafter!
For now the race is made of iron, nor ever by day
Is there rest from toil, nor by night a space free
From decay. Harsh cares the gods will ever give them.³

Not all the ancients felt that they had to go back to a completely mythical past to find this golden age. Many of the senators who wrote Rome's history felt the rot had only begun to set into the old Republic once the Carthaginians had been eliminated as a threat to Roman supremacy. It was then, they felt, that lust for money and power began to rule the hearts of those who ruled the world. Before that, Sallust opined, "Good morals were cherished both at home and on campaign. Harmony was at its peak, and of avarice there was little. Justice and goodness were alive and well among them, not because of laws so much as men's nature."⁴ By the time of Augustus, though, things had gotten so bad in Rome that, as Livy put it, "We were able to endure neither our vices, nor their cure."⁵ Little wonder, then, that, to such staunch traditionalists as these, even the words "new things" had an evil ring to them.⁶

Respect for the old ways, we know, was not confined to the senatorial classes at Rome. We recall that it was also one of the important points at issue between Christ and the Pharisees: "Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, 'Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!'" (Matthew 15:1-2). What had been a healthy respect for the Word of God among the teachers of Israel had degenerated into a cult of the past and a preoccupation with the letter.

It would be wrong to think, however, that those who try to fashion their hopes out of bygone days must all be stodgy and unoriginal. Some of them can be, well, downright revolutionary. Take Jean Jacques Rousseau, for example. One could hardly consider him a man lost in nostalgia. His idea of the noble savage was not really a call for everybody to go back to roasting their meat over open fires. He rather had in mind to create a new society in which people could live more harmoniously with one another. His appeal to the past was only his way of validating his call to change the present state of affairs, a state which he found unacceptable. I mention Rousseau because it seems to me that the modern neo-Luddite movement—the movement most prominent in opposing the new technologies—owes him more than a small debt.

²Hesiod, *Works and Days* 109-118.

³Hesiod, *Works and Days* 174-178. Ovid, the Latin poet, also relates this same myth in *Metamorphoses* I:89-150. In a characteristically Roman addition to the myth Ovid mentions that this golden race cherished faithfulness and justice without any law to command it (I:90).

⁴Sallust, *Catalina* 9.1.

⁵Livy, *Praefatio*.

⁶*res novae*, Constitutional changes, revolution; (of plans, activities, etc.) subversive, seditious," entry number 10 under *novus, -a, -um*, in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, P. G. W. Glare, ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.

This "bias for the old" seems to have remained fairly constant in Roman society. As late as 230 A.D., Tertullian (or someone else very much like him) complained in a preface to *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitates* that people in the church were likely to reject new stories of God's work because of a *praesumptam uenerationem antiquitatis* "an assumed quality of sanctity attached to things which are old" (1.1).

One of the most prominent of the neo-Luddites is a man by the name of Kirkpatrick Sale. Among the lessons he urges us to learn from the Luddites are these:

- Technologies are never neutral, and some are hurtful.
- Industrialism is always a cataclysmic process, destroying the past, roiling the present, making the future uncertain.
- "Only a people serving an apprenticeship to nature can be trusted with machines."
- Industrial capitalism must be opposed by an ecological and sustainable economy built upon accommodation and commitment to the earth.⁷

If you saw the colors Green, and maybe even a tinge of Red, you wouldn't have been mistaken. And lest you think dream-weavers like Sale are completely harmless, consider this: in a recent article Sale, while deploring the man's methods, defended the Unabomber's logic as displayed in his manifesto. He called it "a reasonable enough argument-the Unabomber is not irrational, whatever else you can say about him-and I think it is even to some extent persuasive."⁸

Drowning in the Present

When I was still in prep school, I used to go down to an island near the campus I called home. Truth is, I went down there to smoke (you're only young and stupid once, right?) But I also found myself whiling away more than a few minutes just staring at the rushing water of the Rock River flowing past my feet. It was amazing to me how its chaotic flow could be so constantly new, and yet so much the same from moment to moment. The same, constant ripple caused by that submerged log over there, that same bulge in the current here. Yet, obviously, the water I saw passing by was always different. As Heraclitus once said, "You can't cross the same river twice." The sight was more than fascinating; it was mesmerizing. Often I would stare at it for a full ten minutes, hardly conscious of the passing of time.

Well, I'm proud to say I grew out of both habits: smoking and staring at the water. But I doubt the same is true of others, from what I can tell. I see more than one person hooked on novelty, cramming as many new things into one moment as they possibly can. Call it being on the cutting edge, life in the fast lane, pushing the envelope—it doesn't much matter. It seems to be just another way to foil time's passing, to avoid the thought of dying. "You see, if I can always fill my eyes and ears with something new, I'll never get old. I just won't have the time for it."

As bad habits go, that one has been around awhile. Wasn't it Luke who described the Athenians as people who liked nothing better than "talking about and listening to the latest ideas" (Acts 17:21)? And later,

⁷From Bret Pettichord's HTML adaptation, based on "Setting Limits on Technology," *The Nation*, June 5, 1995, pages 785-788. Kirkpatrick Sale is the author most recently of *Rebels against the Future: The Luddites and Their War on the Industrial Revolution: Lessons for the Machine Age* (Allison-Wesley). <http://fas.sfu.ca/comm/cmass/issuel/cultofhtm>, accessed on 2/27/97.

⁸Kirkpatrick Sale, "Unabomber's Secret Treatise: Is There Method in His Madness?" September 25, 1995. http://www.eff.org/pub/Censorship/Terrorism_militias/sale_unabomber.analysis, accessed on 2/27/97.

For antiquarians and for others who enjoy making connections between ideas, it's worth noting here that the myth of the golden age carried with it, at times, an antitechnological bias. Certainly more than one Latin poet seemed to have a bad conscience about the insatiable greed of mankind. Ovid, for example, laments the *amor habendi* (the lust to possess) at work in the iron race, leading them to strip the high mountains of timber so that their ships could go where no man had gone before and to dig into the living flesh of the earth (*viscera terrae*) to produce more *inritamenta malorum* (goads to evil) (*Metam.I.* 131-142). That this thought was a commonplace can be seen by sparing a glance at Horace's first satire.

Paul had to warn Timothy about the kind of folks who, bored with the truth, always want to have their ears tickled by something new (2 Timothy 4:3). And if I think about it for a moment, there's more than a little lust for novelty operative in my fascination with the latest high-tech contrivances. Why do I find it so hard to pass by unentered those stores crammed with the latest big-boy toys? And as long as I'm being honest, I'm afraid I'll have to admit that I haven't quite gotten over my bad habit of staring at flowing water either. Not that I actually waste loads of time going down to Tivoli Park to gaze at the Rock River, but I have been sucked in by other black holes that have deprived me of whole months of my life rather than mere minutes.

What I'm talking about is the Internet. More than once I have stared at that flickering screen well past the midnight hour, unconscious of the time. Nor am I alone in this experience. When, earlier this year, Internet access was provided for the entire student body at Martin Luther College, computer labs that had previously been tomblike in their silence suddenly became hives of cyber-activity. Surfing the 'net has become the new drug of choice, our latest anodyne to the pain we feel as prisoners of the 20th Century.⁹

Lost in Space

Novelty has more uses than one, however, so far as providing people with a means of escaping the ravages of time. Just as the ancients used to base their hopes on the old ways and old days, so the thrill of the new and the promise of the future is the star that guides this generation. Here novelty becomes more than just a means of killing time, it is vested with the transforming power of a most holy faith, and its acolytes are true believers.

The myth of progress has its roots deep in American culture. Our Founding Fathers believed that they were creating something truly different in this new world, and the idea of America's glorious, God-given future on this continent—our manifest destiny—has been used to justify many a bloody deed in the past. Lately it has been most closely associated with the new technologies that have enabled us to leave the planet altogether and to soar to worlds unknown. There is a reason why Star Wars and Star Trek have a greater hold on the minds of our contemporaries than the Western.

It is in the future, and ultimately in outer space that our true hope lies, hidden somewhere behind the stars. Such is the new faith. So powerful is this upward gaze that all people's expectations—for good or ill—seem equally to find in it their focus. We lift up our eyes unto the stars, whence cometh our . . . what? Well, among other things we are told to expect new forms of life to come from above, more intelligent, having figured out how to manage their godlike powers (unlike us). But then again, perhaps there will rain down from the heavens vengeance and destruction in the form of hostile aliens or asteroids. No doubt our just deserts for having so polluted our own planet, or for having failed to evolve quickly enough into what we could have been, and should have been.

This myth of progress is so powerful that I have heard an ethicist argue recently that it is pointless even to discuss whether or not we should use new technologies. If it can be invented, he said, it will be used. He made his remarks as part of a television discussion group on the *Newshour with Jim Lehrer*, in which they were talking about Dr. Ian Wilmut's recent success in cloning a sheep. As the ethicist himself put it,

⁹In a review of Clifford Stoll's book, *Silicon Snake Oil: Second Thoughts on the Information Highway*, Michael Hancher of the University of Minnesota remarks, "For me, however, Stoll's most compelling point is his observation that 'every hour that you're behind the keyboard is sixty minutes that you're not doing something else' (14). Real life often gets left behind in the obsession with virtual interactions, as people sift through more and more information each day, taken from the Web, email messages, online publications, news groups, bulletin boards, etc." <http://www.umn.edu/nlhome/m059/mblebibks3.htm>, accessed 2/27/97.

I think the ethos of our community, that is, its character, is a progressive ethos. That's what characterizes American society at the end of the 20th century. And I don't think [the use of any technology] is going to stop because of the potential ethical problems that could emerge from [it].¹⁰

And so we daily hang upon the pronouncements of the futurists (the modern prophets) to get the latest word promising hope or doom to our world. "Peter Drucker Says `Universities Won't Survive.'"¹¹ (Oh, woe is us at MLC! Quick! Let us be about the Future's business, and forestall through change our own demise.) Should anyone dare to point out that the language of the futurist is more than a little inflated—hyped—we'll hear hype itself defended as the tool of choice for this new kind of prophecy:

Hype is... a valid rhetorical tool used to move masses of people in certain directions. Like any tool, it can be used for good (helping people see the good possibilities of a new technology) or evil (demagogic manipulation of masses to enforce prejudice and fear).¹²

Lying? Not at all. These folks see it merely as a means for combating "institutional myths," which, like all beliefs, are too powerful to be affected by reasonable argument.¹³ Kind of a frightening philosophy when you consider that any bozo can put out a web page!

Rebuilding Babel

Finally, we come to a way people try to cheat death that needn't detain us long, since we are so very familiar with it. It's as close to us as the pride and envy we see at work within our own natures. "Let us found a city, with a tower to the heavens, and let us make ourselves a lasting name," men once said to one another on the plain of Shinar (Genesis 11:4). And they've been trying to build their babel-towers every since. What price glory? Athletes have run themselves to death in pursuit of it, explorers have hazarded the unknown, and soldiers have stepped out into a leaden downpour. Writers, too, have painstakingly constructed their monuments of poetry and prose—all for what? To be able to make the same boast, "I shall not wholly die, and one great part of me shall elude death's chill embrace."¹⁴ For most, the only practical hope of immortality that exists is the promise of undying glory and fame. We seek to cheat death through the hope of being cherished in the hearts of generations yet unborn.

The great problem with these and other hopes people make for themselves is that they are all fashioned from the mutable materials of this universe. So they are cursed with the same weaknesses all flesh is heir to. Once our world did enjoy a golden age, and once our race did know a time of blissful innocence in the garden. But sin and its curse put an end to all that, and with it the entire created universe was made subject to futility-to change and decay. "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them. Surely the people are grass" (Isaiah 40:6,7).

I suppose we can, at least, understand it when unbelievers try to dream hopeful dreams by pining for the past, or by drowning themselves in the present, or by getting lost in space, or by endlessly trying to rebuild

¹⁰Dr. Mark Ziegler of the University of Chicago, transcript entitled "Multiplicity" of a program first broadcast on February 24, 1997. Downloaded on 2/25/97 from <http://wwwl.pbs.org/newshour>.

¹¹A oracle of his recently republished by Eric Crump, "Universities—RIP." RHETNET-L@lists.missouri.edu (February 28, 1997).

¹²Eric Crump "Hype the Hype." RHETNET-L@lists.missouri.edu (February 25, 1997).

¹³Eric Crump "Apocalyptic Rhetoric." RHETNET-L@lists.missouri.edu (March 1, 1997).

¹⁴Horace, *Odes* 3.30.6.

Babel. This world, doomed though it may be, is for them all that they have. And so, as Paul says, they must grope in darkness, without hope because they are without God in the world (Ephesians 2:11).

Our hope, however, is a living one, the hope of an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for us (1 Peter 1:4). It is a hope not fashioned from perishable things, but purchased with the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18,19). It is about that hope, and about its implications for us who live in a world filled with change and decay, that we speak next.

Built on the Rock

One of the central truths of our faith is that the same God who put a longing for eternity into our mortal frames entered space and time and took on human form in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He willingly made himself subject to sin and time, to change and hard circumstance. He drank the cup of human woe to the dregs. Why? No other reason but love, love for us poor sinners. That love moved him to leave the bliss he once knew in the place where all the morning stars dance for joy. He gave it all up—for what? To share our gloom inside this hall of death. He did it so that we could possess as his pure gift his new and deathless life. Luther once wrote, "It is the nature of God that he creates out of nothing Men, on the other hand, change one thing into another, which is a futile occupation."¹⁵

The unique nature of that gift is described for us by Martin Franzmann:

There (came) into the world that which is not of this world (John 18:36), something which no longer fits into the framework and the categories of normal human history. [It was an] act beyond human capacities and beyond human grasp. The Kingdom . . . is absolutely transcendent, not a development from below, but an intervention from above.

[The gift] is, compared with the world's powers, not an impressive entity. . . . When God Himself acts, he acts by contraries. He chooses the things which are base, despised, the things which are nothing in this world. He chose the least of all people to be the bearers of His promise . . . and the history of that people culminates in insignificance: a child is born in a stable; a sower goes out to sow, and the seed grows silently—and that is the beginning of the kingdom of God, the beginning and the guarantee of the new world of God.¹⁶

Once grasped to our hearts by faith, that new thing which Christ has done for us transforms every day, every minute, every hour into God's golden moment, utterly charged with hope and opportunity because it is so utterly filled with God's grace. "I am making *everything* new!" he tells us (Revelation 21:5).

Transforming Our Past

Since he has grafted us by faith into Israel of old (Romans 11:17), with Israel of old we look at the past as the record of what our God has done to save us. All of Israel's defining moments—from the choosing of Abraham, to the Exodus, to the Exile and return—become our defining moments. This is more than a wallowing in nostalgia, a pining for the good old days. When we remember what God did for us, we proclaim the glory of the saving God who is living and active in all of history, and in this present moment to do us good.¹⁷

¹⁵WA 1.183.

¹⁶*Follow Me: Discipleship According to Saint Matthew*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961, pp. 22,23.

¹⁷Look at the fervor and joy with which Israel remembers the mighty deeds of God in Psalms 77 and 78. These are the deeds that defined them, as Psalm 100:3 declares, "It is he who made us, and we are his." That is why Israel is encouraged to "remember the wonders [God] has done" (Psalm 105:5), and precisely why they so tirelessly did just that (see Psalm 106 and 107; 135 and 136). Far

Paul informs us that all these matters were recorded "so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4). Peter takes this one step further by telling us that when the prophets kept their sacred records, they were *not* "serving themselves, but us" (1 Peter 1:12), in whom all past ages have reached their culmination (1 Corinthians 10:11). And can any of us forget in this connection the meal of remembrance our Lord has given us? Far from being the sterile recollection of things forever gone, in the Lord's Supper we are engaged in remembering a Savior who himself is present with his own body and blood "given for you . . . shed for you" (Luke 22:19,20). In such a way we "proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

This kind of remembering enables us to look at our own past without blinking as well. We don't need to recreate in soft pastels a fond picture of a past that never was. Nor do we need to bury deep within our souls the pain of grief or of some old sin, hoping that it will never again rise to haunt us. Christ has redeemed my whole life, and gives me the heart to believe that in *all* things, in all things God works for my good (Romans 8:28). If I ever have difficulty believing this truth (and who of us poor sinners *doesn't*), I simply remember that strange Man suspended between earth and sky, and my restless soul is quieted. Right *there*, where God's power seemed most hidden, he was, in fact, most powerfully active to save. Right *then*, when darkness had its little hour, the love of God was shining with the brilliance of a thousand suns.

Changing Our Future

The *real* future of mankind is not going to come down from the rafters like some *deus ex machina*. God will not redeem the world by means of machines, either our own or extra-terrestrial. People will just go on with a pathetic futility changing one thing into another, until finally the curse works itself out to its deadly fulfillment, "Dust you are, and to dust will you return" (Genesis 3:19). The eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels is the lot (though never intended by God to have been the destiny¹⁸) of those who stubbornly persist in fashioning their dead hopes from the stuff of a dying universe.

For us, however, hope born in the One who makes all things new has forever altered our prospects. Our real life is not here; our true time is not now. Jesus went to heaven, and he took our hearts with him when he left. "For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:3,4).

This is our bedrock reality, the foundation of our being—and all of it is most completely unseen (1 Peter 1:8). This is the reason why we cannot invest our ultimate hope in anything we perceive around us. We neither expect a Savior to rise up from these streets, nor do we look for a salvation to emerge gradually out of the currents of time (1 Peter 1:8,9). What we do long for—with an expectation so fierce and compelling that we sense all creation groaning for it along with us—is the new heavens and the new earth where at last all will be right: "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4).¹⁹

Converting Our Present

This hope is a powerful thing in us, a "living, busy, active, mighty thing," as Luther reminds us. It is so dynamic because it represents the power of God himself, the power of the new age breaking into our hearts—

more than a mere act of recollection, this remembrance was an act of proclamation by which faith was stirred to praise the One whose mercy "endures forever" (Psalm 136: *passim*).

¹⁸Notice that Jesus says the eternal fire had originally been prepared "for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41).

¹⁹For the other Scriptures alluded to here, see Romans 8:22-23 and Isaiah 65:17, 2 Peter 3:13.

right now—with Christ's new life.²⁰ Right now we are receiving "the goal of our faith, the salvation of our souls" (1 Peter 1:9). The one who knows the Lord possesses everything: the Spirit, eternal life, past, present, and future.²¹ God has determined to sum up all the ages in Christ.²² To him all the threads of history lead, from him they all proceed to their goal. Without him, men see nothing but "incidents and accidents hints and allegations."²³ Without him life is a wretched business. But with him, it all makes sense. With him every second counts. In Christ, my now has been converted into God's *καιρός*, the golden moment, the acceptable time, the time of salvation.²⁴

It is the nature of us whose lives are charged by this hope that we discern the times, and see the true purpose of life.²⁵ Far more important than our own plans and actions are the prayers by which we ask for God's will to be done and God's kingdom to come. It is precisely this detachment that so infuriates the world about us Christians. We are walking indictments of all its false hopes and lying promises.²⁶ Yet we gladly bear this cross, because "though outwardly we are wasting away, inwardly we are being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16). And it is this hope, furthermore, that teaches us to grasp very lightly the things of this life. We don't have to clutch them to ourselves as if they were our only comfort.²⁷

And it is the nature of us whose lives are charged by this hope to live free, freely laying our life down for others as Christ laid down his life for us. Unencumbered by dead hopes, not needing to hold fast to the things of this world, we freely submit to any change if it will help us better serve our neighbor's need. We freely use any new tool that God has provided for us in this world to reach a world that's dying without Christ. We gladly let go any old way that has become a hindrance to the gospel. We are moved neither by any special fondness for the old, nor by any partiality for the new. As workers in the kingdom, we have learned how to bring out of Christ's riches "new treasures as well as old" (Matthew 13:52).

In this hope, we more than cope with change. We triumph.

²⁰See, for example, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:4-6, 2 Corinthians 4:6,10-11,16 and 5:17, Hebrews 6:14,15.

²¹John 5:24, Romans 8:15, 1 Corinthians 3:22,23 and Romans 8:38,39.

²²Ephesians 1:10—from the Greek.

²³Paul Simon, "You Can Call Me Al." *Graceland*. Warner Brothers, 1986.

²⁴2 Corinthians 6:2.

²⁵Romans 13:11; Matthew 24:32-51.

²⁶John 15:18ff and 1 John 3:12.

²⁷1 Corinthians 7:29-31.