

Lusting for the apocalypse, really?

By [Ed Sunday-Winters](#)

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To be honest, [his letter to the editor](#) startled me. He wrote in what I imagine he thought were frank and honest words, emphatically suggesting that Christianity was a “doomsday cult” that thrived among “illiterate peasants.” While I am troubled not at all by being associated with illiterate peasants, his description of Christians as members of a doomsday cult struck me as over the top. He argued that since Jesus has not returned, Christianity has failed. With dismay, he expressed his frustration that so many Christians are still waiting. They “eagerly lust for the apocalypse” was how he described those who are still looking for Jesus to return. While I have known Christians who have lusted, I do not recall any of them lusting for the apocalypse. In making his conclusion that Jesus was dead and never coming back, he asserted that, “We’re on our own here.”

The words “We’re on our own here” were the saddest part of the whole letter to me. Of all the dimensions of my faith in Jesus Christ, few of them are dearer to me than the reminder, “I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Yet, the writer of this letter has concluded that we are on our own, without the presence of the One who promised to never leave us nor forsake us. Even as I grieve for him, I am reminded that faith is indeed a gift. Those who have received it ought always to be grateful for it. If anything is evident from this letter, it is that its writer has not been given the gift of faith. His conclusions about life and how to live it have not brought him to a positive understanding of what God has done in Jesus Christ, but rather have left him hostile and antagonistic.

Where does a newspaper originate that publishes a letter so antagonistic toward God and religion? Is it to be found in some atheistic state where the letter writer would have his views reinforced

at every level of society? No, it was published here in Knoxville where it is not much exaggeration to say that there is a church on every corner. How could someone surrounded by so many people who profess faith in Christ have such a negative view of Christianity and Christians? Did something happen? Did someone who professed to be a Christian do something to hurt or harm him in some way? I hope that is not the case. I hope that for some inexplicable reason the writer of this letter has yet to see the love and compassion of Jesus Christ embodied in such a way that would bring him to faith; and when that happens, he will believe.

I am aware that there are many people in the world who are indifferent to the teachings of Jesus. At the same time, I know that there are many people who affirm some or even all of the basic idea of Christianity, yet do little to let those ideas influence how they live their lives. What is surprising to me about this letter writer is not what he wrote — that has been written many time in many places — but that I might have stood behind him in the checkout line at the grocery store.

His letter reminds me of how important it is for us to share with gentleness what has been freely given to us. The rich gift of God's gracious presence with us is not merely ours to receive, but also to share. Nor is it just ours to share but ours to live; so that in our living, it is visible in us for all to see.

The writer of this letter seems firmly convinced of the correctness of his opinions. To convince him otherwise would be difficult, if not impossible. He will have to see Jesus to believe. Perhaps it will be the Christ in you that warms his heart to the reality of God. Maybe it will be the tenderness of Christ in your words and deeds that breaks through his wall of unbelief. Seeing the mercy and compassion of Christ in you, he may yet discover the joy of being in the arms of the One who has made him.

Let us not stop at being careful that the writer of this letter and those who share his viewpoint see something of Jesus in our lives. Jean Vanier says, "The very way you look at people can help to transform

them.” When we look at those who are indifferent to, opposed to, or even hostile to the gospel, let us always see a human being who bears the image of God no more or no less than we ourselves do.

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