

# GOOD NEWS

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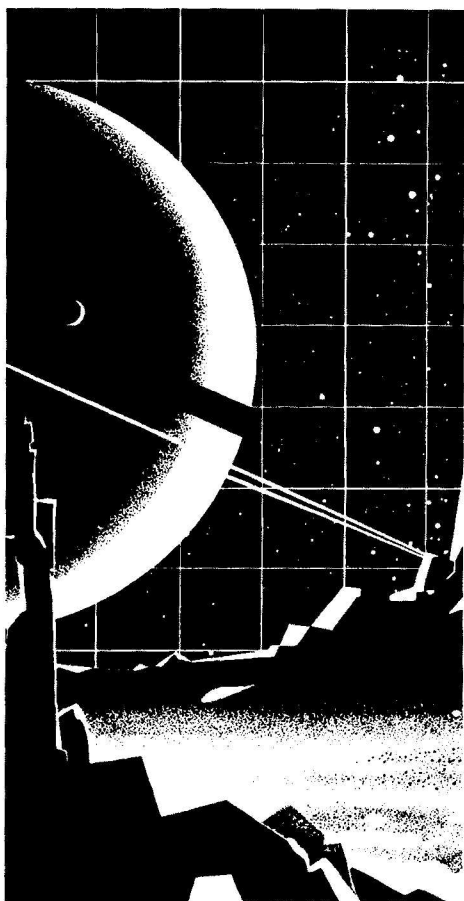
1992 Issue No 1

A U S T R A L I A



CREATION and the  
Distribution of Populations

page 3



# Editorial

## Christmas Retrospectively

*Christmas is the season where the birth of Christ is remembered and thanks is given for the chain of events which flowed from it. At another level though, it has become a season which sharpens distinctions between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'.*

*Those with families re-unite and re-forge the links which bind them. Present exchanges, sumptuous meals, relaxed conversation, reminiscing and convivial fellowship all abound within the family Christmas.*

*But what about those who are homeless? The joy of the 'haves' may act as a whip to the lonely and disenfranchised soul, reminding them by contrast of what they go without.*

*Each visit to large cities in the USA sharpens my appreciation of the plight of the homeless. Yet, those who work for the inner city residents of Australian cities tell of a similar plight here in Australia.*

*It is instructive to recall that Christ's birth in a sense emblemizes an insecure, homeless origin. Jesus was born into the most humble of circumstances caused, in part, by an oppressive conqueror. While Jesus had the security of a family it was nonetheless a somewhat divided family. The age gap between his father and mother, and his status as a 'step-brother', were both domestic pressures which made his early life less secure than most. The flight to Egypt further aggravated the uncertainty of his early life and offered him the experience of the emotional dislocation which many of today's homeless people feel.*

*Christians remembering the warmth and fellowship of their families at Christmas might reflect upon these aspects of Jesus' childhood. Furthermore, they might consider the degree of contentment a Christian is entitled to feel whilst living in a society which has turned its back upon early teenagers prostituting themselves and older homeless persons such as 'bag ladies' wandering without purpose or hope.*

*As Christians, can we allow ourselves to be silent when the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' has increased alarmingly. Just as Jesus offered salvation to all irrespective of class and colour, Christians ought to be at the forefront of those seeking a more just society. Silence in the face of the social iniquities observed in Australia today is tantamount to denying the power of the gospel to free from bondage.*

*At the same time, the impetus for such a Christian response is unlikely to be prompted by anything other than a full appreciation of what Christ's birth, life, death and resurrection means to our being. Enjoy fellowship with family and friends. Re-charge the batteries of belief. Then be empowered to address an unjust world with the example of Christ's life and to share the joy his victory over the grave also brings.*



Rob Cooper

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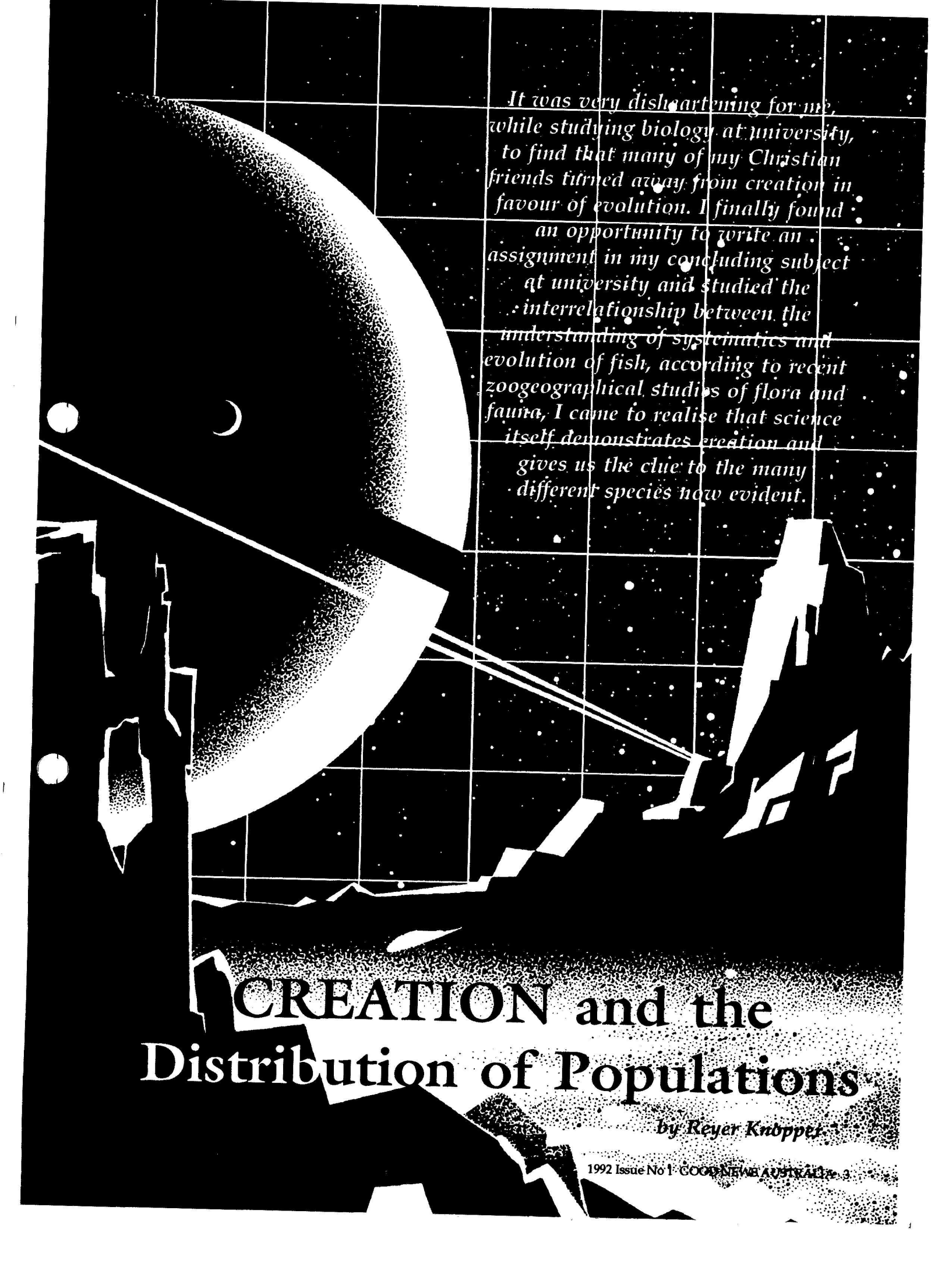
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*It was very disheartening for me, while studying biology at university, to find that many of my Christian friends turned away from creation in favour of evolution. I finally found an opportunity to write an assignment in my concluding subject at university and studied the interrelationship between the understanding of systematics and evolution of fish, according to recent zoogeographical studies of flora and fauna, I came to realise that science itself demonstrates creation and gives us the clue to the many different species now evident.*

# CREATION and the Distribution of Populations

*by Reyer Knopper*

**H**umans have a deep-seated need to interpret the nature of, or systematise everything from protozoans to galaxies (Archer, 1982:125). A number of attempts were made to classify animals, but all were limited in scope until Linnaeus introduced his 'two name' binomial system in the eighteenth century. Linnaeus recognised species as being the basic unit of nature. Each species was considered to be an immutable entity, descended, presumably, from the original pair created by God. This meant that it was only necessary to describe one individual when describing an entire species. While this practice worked most of the time, Linnaeus and his successors did encounter natural variation within species and were forced to recognise 'varieties', central to which is reproductive isolation, but in order to test this, many possibilities were examined (Moyle and Cech, 1982: 369,375-8).

***Darwin assumed that evolutionary changes were produced by small continuous variations which were able to accumulate in populations through natural selection***

Darwin has been credited with the theory of Natural Selection as a basis for evolution, now a fundamental concept in modern biology; it shows that evolutionary change is possible through natural selection, although it does not predict or explain any specific evolutionary phenomena. Darwin assumed that evolutionary changes were produced by small continuous variations which were able to accumulate in populations through natural selection. Darwin's concept operates by means of differential mortality, promoting sur-

vival of a species, but it has been challenged that this would only eliminate the extreme misfits and does not necessarily lead to the selection of the fittest (Tuomi, 1981:22-26) possibly leading to competitive weakness of a population making it highly vulnerable to extinction (Briggs, 1974:448).

***The concept of phylogeny as a mere genealogy should be terminologically distinguished as cladistics, which deals merely with the branching of phyletic lineages***

Pre-Darwinian classification was a method of pigeon-holing information, Linnaeus' classification was primarily a method of expression of what we know of the nature and relations of living populations, whereas the guiding principle of modern classification has resided in the common effort to express the relationships of populations (phylogeny), insofar as these relationships are demonstrable, or inferred, by a process of extrapolation (Myers, 1952:106-108). The concept of phylogeny as a mere genealogy should be terminologically distinguished as *cladistics*, which deals merely with the branching of phyletic lineages (Mayr, 1985:97,98). It is this concept that allows the creationist a means of classifying without using an evolutionary history.

Similarities between individuals of two populations may be the result of convergence, or common retention, of primitive features. Two types of explanations that zoobiogeographers use to explain similarities are: dispersalism and vicariance.

**Dispersalism** takes for granted that organisms have the ability to

disperse (or be dispersed), and regard the tasks of biogeographers as being to specify the centres of origin of taxa and the routes they followed in achieving their past and present distributions. For dispersalists, barriers are pre-existing.

**Vicariance** assumes that the barriers formed after dispersal. The subsequent separate components would necessarily undergo separate diversifications, becoming each other's ecological *vicars* (hence vicariance). Vicariance feeds on the evidence from historical geology for rather dramatic changes in the configurations and connections of continents and oceans (Archer, 1984:109,112,126).

The continental drift theory, first developed in the nineteenth century, not unlike the Pacifica model of Nur and Ben-Avraham (1981), who proposed the existence of an early continental mass (Pacifica), which broke up and drifted away in various directions, is similar to that reached by current research (Moyle, 1982:352).

***When a new barrier forms across the area of distribution of a species, splitting it into two separate populations, divergence occurs***

It was recognised that continental drift was a reality and that radically different configurations of land masses had occurred recently enough to affect modern organisms. When a new barrier forms across the area of distribution of a species, splitting it into two separate populations, divergence occurs (Archer, 1984:113).

Given sufficient time, divergence will continue until a population is able to retain its genetic identity even



after it comes in contact again with other similar derived populations, even if some hybridization occurs. The question associated with divergence, is how long must a population be isolated physically, before it achieves species status? (Moyle and Cech, 1982:331, 379, 380).

### ***Continental drift theory also explains one of the recurring patterns in marine zoogeography ...***

Barriers recognised were:

1. A trans-Atlantic connection between Africa and South America;
2. The grouping of Africa, Madagascar, India and Australia into a southern supercontinent, Gondwana;
3. The composite nature of New Guinea;
4. The continental origin of part of New Zealand as a fragment of Gondwana (Craw, 1984:6).

Continental drift theory also explains one of the recurring patterns in marine zoogeography, the presence of species, genera, and families that are absent from the tropics but present in regions on both sides (Moyle, 1982:368). Distributions of fish may also be according to the four great continental shelves:

1. Indo-West Pacific;
2. Eastern Pacific;
3. Western Atlantic;
4. Eastern Atlantic.

These regions are all separated by very effective barriers, since each region possesses highly endemic fish at the species level (Briggs, 1973:248).

Competitive displacement is tied in with centres of distribution of origin, emphasised as places where competitively dominant animals were produced. It has been observed that the dispersal of animals seems to be primarily the history of successions of dominant groups, which in turn evolve, spread over

the world, compete with and destroy and replace older groups, and then differentiate in different places until overrun and replaced by succeeding groups. It was concluded, after amassing formidable amounts of data, that all animal groups originated in the Old World Tropics and gradually dispersed to high latitudes and to the New World (Briggs, 1973:253,254).

The study of zoogeography has definitely changed the study of Systematic Biology in that it is not simply a method of comparing morphology, as in a simple Darwinian classification, but an all encompassing system allowing all aspects of biology, geology, archaeology, physiology and geography to be considered in the determination of a binomial name for a new species. Zoogeography has changed the interrelationship between evolution and the understanding of systematics in Biology.

### ***Cladistics allows the creationist to classify systems without an evolutionary history, giving the evolutionist a problem justifying evolution by natural selection only***

It is clear then that the study of systematics has pointed out a single point of origin of life, at least in fish, but I'm sure this can also be demonstrated with other animal groups.

Cladistics allows the creationist to classify systems without an evolutionary history, giving the evolutionist a problem justifying evolution by natural selection only. Vicariance and the shifting of continents has been demonstrated in various ways and it may be an interesting exercise to determine a possible relationship between continental shifts and the biblical

flood. Once again creation has been vindicated through science.

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**L**ife in general is a challenge to human beings. At school, at work, in choosing a profession, in relationships, in spiritual issues, in marriage – we have been widely challenged everywhere and in everything.

Everyone dealing with marriage, whether as a professional counsellor or as someone who is married, will agree that marriage is something that is not easy to deal with.

For teenagers, the relationship between sexes is an exciting new adventure, but for people married for some years, the relationship becomes a real challenge.

When one faces a challenge, there are only two possible results: to win or to lose. This is also true about marriage, once it becomes a real

## LIFE STYLE

tion, loneliness, bitterness and a series of other negative feelings.

Most of the time people don't expect problems in their marriage and the shaking of the relationship comes as a surprise to them. As a matter of fact, sooner or later all marriages will be shaken (are there exceptions to this rule somewhere?). If the couple are not prepared – and usually they aren't – they will get into a convulsive and stormy relationship. Their life takes the path from love to hate, from heaven to hell. They move towards separation rather than union.

All marriages suffer tensions. There are several factors causing this – for example: illness, shortage of money, work addiction, life's rou-

know what can affect a marriage negatively. What can wear out the feelings. To know what this may be is not simple. It doesn't happen by itself. One has to always be alert to the quality of one's relationship, analyzing all the available sources that can help. Some of these sources are: the spouse's feelings, good marital books, counsellors, experienced people, ministers, etc. But the best source available is one's spouse. Your spouse is your best friend and someone who can give you the clues about the actual situation of the relationship.

Asking your spouse frequently about their feelings will help you to know exactly what one needs to improve and what aspects need to be changed or corrected. This procedure requires humbleness and the

## MARRIAGE REQUIRES BIGGER INVESTMENTS

*by George Tichy*

struggle for the people involved. There are many difficulties to overcome in any kind of human relationship. How true it is for marriage!

On the wedding day, in front of the altar, couples feel that they are entering into a forever, happy new life. After being married for some hours, days, months or even years, problems arise between the couple. Frequently they aren't prepared, as a couple, to deal with the disagreements and struggles they face. They start to fight as individuals, rather than acting as a couple. They fight against each other instead of fighting the very problems at their roots. Again, they have only two options, to win or to lose. In their struggle to win as an individual, they discover that such attitudes of fighting each other only causes loss, destruction, depression, unhappiness, frustra-

tion, selfishness, frustration with life in general, non-accomplishment of professional ambitions or different religious beliefs.

The couple's relationship can also suffer because of their involvement with child raising. Children require a full-time dedication from their parents and after some years of this dedication, the couple suddenly realise that they forgot to take care of themselves and of their mutual needs. It is important to be dedicated to the children, but it is of no value if such dedication deprives a spouse of attention, practical love and deep kindness.

Couples have to realise that at any moment they can have a relational crisis. They need to prepare themselves for such a time. They need to be aware of this possibility and make efforts to understand all the factors involved. It is very important to

first step towards success is to be open and willing to make changes in your own nature, behaviour, feelings and philosophy of life.

Crisis will assault every marriage sooner or later – no exceptions – and not only once. There are different moments in married life when a crisis is likely to occur. Couples have to be prepared for such times, in order to overcome the difficulties and keep the family's unity. It is possible, but requires resignation, dedication, willingness, awareness, spirituality, self-emptiness and a strong commitment to each other. In fact, it is a matter of a personal choice – the choice of winning or losing the war against the challenges which frequently threaten the marriages of all people on this earth.

*[George Tichy (Master of Psychology) is a Brazilian recently emigrated to the US.]*

There was a moment in the life of Jesus, which seems to have been fraught with enormous consequence. It was when Peter had stated his conviction that Jesus was the Messiah the Son of the living God. In responding to Peter, Jesus said that it was his intention to build his church. This revelation must have interested many who first heard it. What sort of assembly would it be? What form would it take? How would it be governed and who would be its members? Jesus did not immediately answer such questions and the fact that he did not, was probably because the answers would be given over time, as his Messianic task unravelled.

When John the Evangelist describes the thrilling scene on the Temple stairs in which Jesus offered himself to the multitude as Living Water (Jn 7:37-39), he comments that Jesus had been speaking of the Holy Spirit which believers were to receive. But the Spirit was not yet given because something important yet had to happen – Jesus had not been glorified. Later John tells what he means by ‘glorified’. He means that Jesus had not yet suffered and died to be resurrected into the presence of God (Jn 12:16,23-24; 13:31-32; 17:1).

Before mankind could be granted the rich bestowal of the Spirit of God, Messiah must become one with his people. And as their representative, bear away sin, condemnation and death. Then, having been ‘made a curse for us’, He must rise to God and be everlastingly and lovingly received by him in order to Himself receive from God the Spirit whom he could share with all his brethren. Only when all these things had been accomplished, could the Spirit come upon humans in a redemptive way.

The coming of the Holy Spirit is tied absolutely to the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is part of a grid of happenings which all belong together and which are all aspects of the one event – which was Jesus Christ.

At Pentecost, Peter stood up to interpret the outpouring of the Spirit and in so doing, preached a sermon about Jesus (Acts 2).

‘God has raised *this Jesus* to life . . . exalted to the right hand of God he was received from the father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you *now* see and hear’ (Acts 2:32-33).

Peter did not view Pentecost as separate from Christ’s death and exaltation. His language shows that he believed the crucified Lord had continued to be active in the world by his Spirit.

‘God has made *this Jesus* . . . both Lord and Christ’ (2:26).

At Pentecost it began to be apparent what Jesus meant when he said, ‘I will build my church’. He intended

- The Spirit equips the church for service (1 Cor 12:7-11).

When Peter came to the end of his Pentecostal sermon he was asked by the crowd: ‘What should we do in view of Christ?’ He replied: ‘Repent and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, that your sins may be forgiven and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all whom the Lord will call’ (Acts 2:38-39).

A telling note of universality was struck by Peter. The promise of the Holy Spirit is for *all*. And if for *all*, then there can only ever be one Church.

The gift of the Spirit is locked together with the gift of Christ himself. Just as there is only one Jesus;

# This Jesus

## THE GOSPEL AND THE CHURCH - PART ONE

by Ron Allen

to establish a permanent presence in the world by his Spirit.

The New Testament epistles expand the idea:

- The church is called the temple where the Spirit dwells (1 Cor 3:16);
- The Holy Spirit is the church’s Lord (2 Cor 3:27-18);
- The Spirit inhabits individuals in the church (Eph 3:16; Rom 8:11);
- The Spirit directs Christians, setting them free from all bondage (Rom 8:2; 2 Cor 3:17-18);
- The Spirit strengthens the church which is by nature weak (Rom 8:26);
- The Spirit in the church is the guarantee of future redemption (1 Cor 1:22);
- The Spirit creates the church. It creates fellowship (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 2:18);

only one sacrifice for sins; only one mediator between God and man, so there is only one gift of the Holy Spirit; only one Pentecost and therefore only one church. While there are thousands, perhaps millions of separate fellowships in the world which we now call churches, they always belong to that larger communion brought to life by the Spirit and indwelt by him.

‘There is one body and one spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called. One Lord, one faith, one baptism’ (Eph 4:4-5).

In its manuscript form, John 7:39 reads: ‘It was not yet Spirit because he was not yet glorified.’ Not yet has passed. *Now* it is Spirit. The toils and triumphs of Christ have made it so. Since it is now Spirit, it is also now, Church. Believers therefore have a high privilege and responsibility to know and be the church.



A great king gave all his citizens an invitation to a royal banquet at the palace. For admission the guests had to bring what they thought was the fairest flower that ever bloomed.

The citizens thronged to the palace but were turned away by the thousands. Only a few found entrance. Many brought the deadly nightshade of superstition and offered that at the door. Others arrived flaunting poppies of denominational pride. Still others brought the hemlock of self-righteousness.

The few admitted had chosen the Lily of the Valley, the Rose of Sharon, the blood-red Rose of Calvary. Jesus is the price of heaven, and nothing else is acceptable to infinite Holiness.

### ***Jesus is God's Unspeakable Gift***

Jesus is God's 'unspeakable gift' (2 Cor 9:15 KJV). Though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich. In Christ we have all else as well: righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, and redemption.

Have you heard of Chinese boxes? You lift the box and – look! – there is another one inside. You raise the second, and there is yet another; and so on, with each box of rare beauty and usefulness. Right down to the smallest box.

So it is with Jesus. Within him is found all the fullness of God and Heaven. God be praised; there is such a thing as all fullness available! Humanity has a heart that is bigger than the world. God 'hath set eternity in their hearts' that we might be contented with nothing less than Jesus.

### ***Old Testament illustrations***

It is written of the Queen of Sheba that when she saw the provision for Solomon's servants, 'there was no spirit left in her' (1 Kings 10:5 KJV). When any person really perceives the wealth in Christ, the sight is overwhelming.

Let me illustrate. See that young lad Benjamin? His first name was Benoni, 'the son of my sorrow'. He

represents every sinner born in corruption and deserving of the wrath of God. But he became Benjamin, 'the son of the right hand,' and by Joseph was given a blessed table portion ten times larger than normal. This is the way our Joseph, the Father's special Son, deals with us. Jesus gives us a portion ten times larger than our fondest hopes might anticipate.

### ***Ruth, the Outcast***

Consider also Ruth, the Moabitess, the outcast. By law she had no right to enter the fellowship of Yahweh's people. But the gracious lord of the harvest, Boaz, the mighty man of wealth and valour, invited her to his table. We read that 'she did eat, was sufficed, and left' (Ruth 2:14 KJV).

This does not mean that after she ate, she left in the sense of departed. No. It is saying that when she had taken all she needed there was an abundance still left over. The provision was that munificent.

So it is with our kinsman Redeemer, our Boaz, the Lord of the harvest who invites us to his banquet, and speaks tenderly to us. He orders his angelic messengers to 'drop handfuls . . . [on] purpose' (Ruth 2:16) for us that we might ever glean and be blessed. We eat at his table, and are satisfied, and there is still an abundance over.

### ***Mephibosheth, a Cripple***

Now look at Mephibosheth (2 Sam 4:4). He was the descendant of a rebel against the king. Lame in both his feet by a fall in infancy, he represents all of us crippled by Adam's fall. We just cannot walk straight. But our David (the name means Beloved) invites us to his palace and restores our lost inheritance. Our heavenly David gives us a new robe whereby we are completely covered. Ancient robes of privilege extended to the feet, not the knees. When we are seated with him, none can see our lame feet – they are covered. We are complete in him.

### ***Lazarus who was dead***

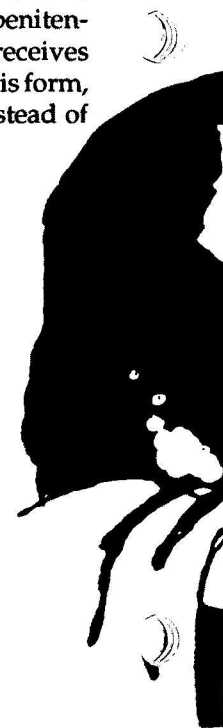
Remember Lazarus? John 12:2 says that he sat at the party with

Jesus. Lazarus who had been dead, who had been wept over by Christ and then raised from the dead, now dines with his Life-giver.

So it is with us. We are all dead in trespasses and sins. But Jesus wept over us, and then bled for us, thereby raising us from the grave of condemnation and spiritual death. Now we feast with him 'in heavenly places' (Eph 2:6).

### ***The Prodigal Son***

So also the prodigal son of Luke 15:11-32. The father is more prodigal – prodigal in forgiving love. The son is not allowed to get his rehearsed speech fully out of his mouth. Love interrupts the penitential flow, and, instead, he receives shoes on his feet, a robe for his form, and a ring for his finger. Instead of



# **GOD'S UNSPEAKABLE**

by Desmond

***God's incomparable  
Old Testament  
examples of the rich  
justification, sanctifica***

dining on the husks of the pigsty, he is invited to a banquet.

It was a banquet indeed. Father and son did not share an undernourished chicken, but a fatted calf. They ate contentedly amid the laughter and rejoicing of many friends.

### *The Gospel of Forgiveness*

God gives, forgives, abundantly. God does exceedingly abundantly above all that we could ask or think. God does it justly because the penalty of our sins has been discharged by the substitutionary death of our Representative.

We were ruined without asking for it by the first Adam; similarly, without any intent of ours we were redeemed by the second Adam (2 Cor 5:14).

The claims of the broken, infinitely sacred law of the universe have been honoured more by the death of the Son of God than had all humanity kept the law perfectly.

Faith does not make void the law; faith establishes the law. Now God can be just as well as the justifier of the person who believes in Jesus (Rom 3:26).

### *Abraham, the Righteous One*

See how it worked for Abraham. The first time 'righteousness' is mentioned in Scripture is in Genesis 15:6. This is also the first verse containing the word 'believed'.

'Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness' (Gen 15:6 NIV). That's the pattern for all of us. Abraham was not declared righteous because of any of his good works, although he had done many.

He had obediently left his father's house not knowing whither he went. He had refused to enrich himself by the spoils of Sodom. He paid tithe to Melchizedek. But none of these things justified him.

Neither did ceremonial nor ritualistic works justify him, for he was declared righteous before his circumcision.

Nor was he justified on the ground of his faith, for it was yet imperfect. Had he not, prior to this, distrusted God and lied concerning Sarah? Did he not, after his justification, fail as regards Hagar? Abraham was not justified as a result of his fragile faith.

Abraham was justified as a result of the coming Seed, Jesus. Faith was but the hand that received. Faith is not the basis of God's gift. All are justified by means of faith, that is, through faith; but not because of, or as a result of, faith. Justification through faith means justification through Jesus.

### *Our Need of Justification*

And how we all need justification! Not one of us is what we should be, could be, or would be. The perfect law demands not merely perfect outward performance but perfect attitude of heart, perfect mo-

tives from a perfect heart. These we have not to offer.

Even the development of a perfect character could not justify us any more than a penitent murderer's reformation could render him not guilty of his cruel crime. The reward has to be all of grace. Therefore, it is through faith and faith alone. It is the ungodly whom God justifies (Rom 4:5).

Christ was counted as being what he is not that we might be counted as being what we are not. He was not a sinner, but was treated as one. We are not righteous, but are treated as righteous.

The righteousness of justification is 100 percent, but it is not inside us – it is in Jesus, only, who is by the throne of God. The righteousness of sanctification is inside us through the indwelling Holy Spirit, but it is not 100 percent for we as yet have a sinful nature.

Sin remains in the regenerate though it does not reign. Ultimately, at the return of our Lord, we will experience the righteousness of glorification. Then, and then only, will we know righteousness as both 100 percent and within us.

### *Summary*

In summary, we are justified meritoriously by the blood of Christ; instrumentally by faith; and evidentially by works. All this is possible only because of God's unspeakable gift, Jesus. What shall we withhold from him who has given us all heaven, and made all things on earth work together for our good?

The Christian's chief duty is adoration. Faith does not make us see Christ. Seeing Christ gives us faith.

Repentance is not something to do in order to take hold of the Saviour. Taking hold of the Saviour gives us repentance. He is all we need.

Let us choose that better part and sit ever at the Master's feet beholding him, hearing him, loving him, and then spontaneously obeying and serving him. Let us consider, anew, God's unspeakable gift – the incomparable Christ.



## **UNUSPEAKABLE GIFT**

by J. I. Packer

*The gift is Jesus.  
and women are  
as we have through  
on and glorification.*



## BOOK REVIEWS

# OUT OF THE DEPTHS

The autobiography of a man who was converted from slave trader to noted minister, writer and author of the beloved hymn *Amazing Grace*.

**John Newton**  
Introduction by Herbert Lockyer

### Out of the Depths

The autobiography of a man who was converted from slave trader to noted minister, writer and author of the beloved hymn *Amazing Grace*

by **John Newton**

Introduction by Herbert Lockyer

157 pp \$9.95 plus \$3.50 PP&H

John Newton was born in London and served for six years with his father who was a shipmaster in the Mediterranean. He lived a life of utter disregard for God and was involved in the African slave trade for ten years.

Newton eventually became Rector of St Marys Woolnoth in 1779 where he remained until his death.

In *Out of the Depths* John relates in his own words the story of his life in the bondage of sin and his transformation by God's grace. The reader will discover in this little volume, an inspiring account of what God can do for a human being.

### Understanding The New Age

by **Russell Chandler**

(religion writer of the *Los Angeles Times*)

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In any religious bookstore you will find volumes on the subject of the New Age. Many of them are ill-researched and a bit too fantastic to be believed.

Chandler's book on the New Age lacks the frenzied and superstitious elements that appear in some books on the subject. He is the religion writer for the *Los Angeles Times* and holds the Master of Divinity degree from Princeton University. He is a winner of the John Templeton Reporter of the Year award and he has been described as one of the finest voices in American journalism.

Chandler has done exhaustive research and his information is well documented. If you are looking for a book that informs without becoming waylaid by the need to constantly attack the New Age from the Christian position, then this is the book you should read. After having read it you will be familiar enough with the New Age to be able to converse intelligently about it. It is interesting and easy to read.

# UNDERSTANDING

THE  
NEW  
AGE

**RUSSELL CHANDLER**

Religion writer of the  
*Los Angeles Times*

# Life-Style Evangelism

Crossing Traditional  
Boundaries to Reach the  
Unbelieving World



## Life-Style Evangelism:

Crossing Traditional Boundaries  
to Reach the Unbelieving World

by Joseph Aldrich

244pp \$5.20 plus \$3.50 PP&H

Have you ever wondered as a Christian and as a church member, just how you fit personally into God's evangelistic program? Just what is your message? Is it a list of straight-jacket rules, outlining a set of behaviours for the new member? Is it a collection of doctrinal perspectives to which the potential convert must give his assent? Or is it a new life which you hope to share by cultivating relationships with those who do not know Jesus?

Aldrich has written a tremendously simple and practical book for Christians. His point of departure is the Gospel – God's love for the world expressed in Christ. Throughout the book he brings this perspective to bear on the way Christians go about the business of witnessing for Christ. One of his best insights deals with the way many Christians are prevented from meaningful human contact with unbelievers because they are so concerned to protect the 'Truth' and to witness by standing firm in their 'Christian way of life'. Aldrich points out that many behaviours that are thought to be Christian, are not rooted in the Gospel but are cultural in their origin. Too often opportunities for the practice of love go unused because the believer is intent on 'avoiding the appearance of evil'.

*Life-Style Evangelism* is a book which will bring relief to many Christians who have long felt inadequate and guilty because they have not been able to evangelise in ways that have been traditionally upheld as musts for all believers.

This is an excellent book. It will help anyone.

## The Real Enemy

by Eva Paul

The little Wagtail calls several times a day, scouring the verandah for anything edible. Perhaps he also likes to dare humanity by wagging furiously at the glass door, coming as far as the mat to be sure he is noticed.

He knows we are inside watching him and with infinite cheekiness tips his head to one side to look up at us, all the while swaying to the rhythm of his wagging tail.

He has marked out his territory, and its boundaries are well defined. It runs from the red flowering eucalypts at the bottom of the hill up to the house and across to the rocks in the next paddock. He does not go beyond his own boundaries. Equally, if another Wagtail should cross into his territory the fight is on.

Once, seeing himself reflected in the glass door, he thought he faced an intruder. The battle was fierce. He exhausted himself attacking the sheet of glass, not understanding he had the wrong enemy.

And the next day revealed where the real danger had been.

When he had exhausted himself fighting the wrong enemy, then the real enemy pounced. We do not know what happened. We can only speculate on the disaster, but when Wagtail arrived on the verandah the next morning we could hardly believe what we saw. He had no tail. Every glamorous and cheeky waggle was gone. He was a Wagtail without a tail to wag.

The real enemy waited until he was tired, waited until he had expended himself in inconsequential battles, waited until he was discouraged and confused, waited until he was down.

Instead of conserving himself to meet the real challenge, Wagtail had majored in minors. It nearly cost him his life.



## Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor

I was interested to read the article 'Is the church a hole in the head?' in *Good News Australia* 8/1991. It is not very often that the topic of whether to belong to a church or not is written about as it is generally assumed that it is the right thing to do and enormous guilt is felt by those who have a Christian background and do not belong or attend regularly. I am glad that the author has opened this up for debate and would like to reply from my point of view in the hope that others will also do so.

I liked the idea of the church as a living organism, but I feel that this is an ideal for the church in its broadest sense. That is, that the whole group of believers in the world who are advancing the knowledge of God can certainly be seen as a living organism, but the church as a functional identity – administering and serving congregations is an organisation. It cannot be seen any other way and I think it is a mistake to try. In fact, it is this lack of recognition, by both administration and congregation, of what the organised church's role and functions in society is that causes people to actually leave. Some major problems can arise when people trained for ministry take on administrative and organisational tasks for which they are not trained. There are inherent problems with the view that no matter how unsuited to the job you are God will guide and all will be well. We have been given intelligence, gifts and abilities and not to use them in the appropriate situations, or to take on tasks without suitable attributes and training makes the most gross presumptions about how God works.

### Editor's note:

*An exciting moment for an editor comes, when a reader takes time to engage with an article or editorial from a previous issue. Smuts van Rooyen's 'Is the church a hole in the head?' has produced one such response from Merolyn Coombs, a Sydney-based sociologist. After attempting to 'edit' it to the normal length of a letter to the editor, I concluded that it deserved to be written in full. It does not constitute the position of GNA, rather it is one intelligent reader's response to an important topic. The editor welcomes any further responses to this or any other article and within the space limitations available, will publish those which similarly probe the mission of the church. Concurrently, we are pleased to print the first of Ron Allen's series on the Gospel and the Church and a book review on Life-Style Evangelism which canvasses at least some of the issues raised by Merolyn Coombs.*

The church as a functional identity must be administered as an organisation to succeed in its goals.

In this way, involvement and survival in the church can take on another dimension, particularly for those who have doctrinal and theological problems with the church they are most familiar with. The person who can separate their beliefs and relationship with God from the activities of the church they attend will survive and be relatively comfortable and it is my understanding that increasing numbers of people do just that. They keep quiet about beliefs that do not fit in with the group they worship with and yet get great benefit from the worship and socialisation with that group.

This echoes the general gist of what the author seems to be saying in the article, however, I would like to comment on each of the points he puts forward for survival in the church.

**Point 1.** The author seems to be saying that if you can put creeds and statements in perspective you can live with them no matter what they say. I see creeds as the guiding vision of the church. They are very like the mission statements that organisations are making when setting down their strategic plans. It is a view of what that organisation sees itself doing and where it is going. If then you do not wholeheartedly

believe in that statement you will be working and living in a different paradigm or world view than others who do. It is difficult to survive in these circumstances as you will be seen as different quite quickly and will be marginalised either gently or brutally depending on the group.

**Point 2.** I agree with the author's point that it is easy to take on an attitude with a particular belief. Unfortunately, I don't see how the two can be separated. When you are convinced of something or persuaded it is true you behave in a way that demonstrates that belief. Some churches beliefs attract attitudes that are negative, such as arrogance, more than others. If you believe you are part of an elite group with special authority and a special inheritance you will act towards others with little humility but great confidence and dogmatism. If you see this in your church and dislike it, once again you are eventually marginalised because your tolerance is seen as detrimental to 'the truth' and to the survival of that group who holds it.

Just a point on the author's use of words here, he seems to be equating doctrinal content with 'truth' in paragraphs two and three. This I see as an arrogance in itself.

**Point 3.** A good many churches say that if you are not a member you are not saved. It is often not said directly

but is implicit in all doctrines and activities, particularly in those churches which claim a special mission. These churches do in fact have enormous control indirectly over the activities and behaviour of their members. If you belong to one of these churches and do not accept this control you will be marginalised or rejected very quickly. An example is, people going against dress codes or lifestyles (eg choices of music, food, entertainment).

**Points 4 and 5.** This matter of keeping an individual identity is most important – but very difficult in particular types of social groupings. The Bible teaches that every person is born a special and worthwhile individual. However, if your attributes and characteristics do not fit easily within the group you have joined you will probably never be

allowed to express them fully or use them for the benefit of the group – they will not see them as relevant or helpful. This is a stunting experience for you and a threatening experience for them. All established groups are looking for similar personalities regardless of their real needs or the gifts and abilities available to present a new view or experience. This works to the detriment of all churches as people with something to give are turned away so that the person is discouraged and the congregation is diminished. This has particular meaning for women who have gifts but are not encouraged or allowed to use them. It is also of consequence for people with few choices of congregation, for example, people in country areas.

You can see that the above points,

as I see it, far from being ways to survive in churches, are actually reasons that people leave organised churches. The rest of the article did not present me with any answers as to why I, or anybody else, should be a member of a church and attend regularly. I do not have any magical answers – I can only say that I and many of my friends have worked out a compromise that we can live with and in a good number of cases it is to have as little to do with the organised church as possible. As I said earlier this occasions feelings of guilt and loss but seems preferable to the frustration, rage and other negative feelings brought about by attending a church where you don't fit.

– Merolyn Coombs

PS: I hope there will be more discussion on this and related topics like the mission of 'the church'.

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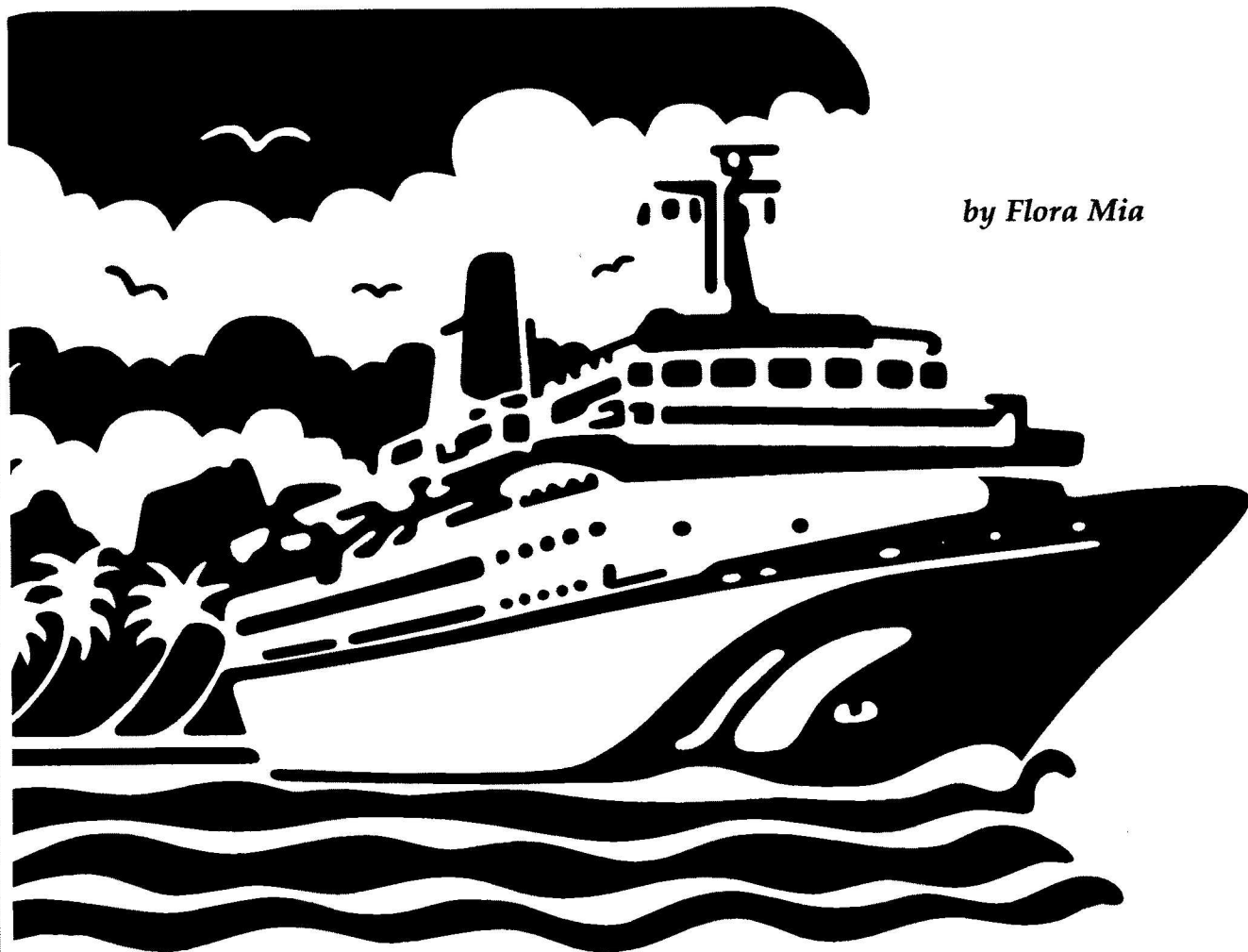
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by Flora Mia

## Tiny, the Lighthouse

**T**he story is told of a tiny lighthouse built on a sharp point of the shore of a river. He was round and fat and jolly. Not very tall but very proud.

The river rolled down a mountain and kept on rolling till it found the sea. All day long the boats that sailed up and down the river would talk to Tiny. Steamers with big booming voices would say: 'Hoot, hoot, little Tiny. Glad to see you. How are you today?' Little sailing boats would lisp: 'Splash, splash, splash, Tiny, the water is cold.' But all day long Tiny said never a word.

But at night a man would open a side door, climb up the stairs and turn on the gas. Then Tiny would talk. 'Flash, flash, flash; look out for rocks, rocks, rocks.' Boats heard

what Tiny said and took care. If there was a fog, the keeper would wind a clock, which would ring a bell. 'Clang, clang, clang,' went the bell. 'Flash, flash,' said the light. 'Danger, danger, danger,' thought the boats. Tiny, the lighthouse was proud. 'I'm in charge of this river,' he thought.

Soon, workmen built a grey bridge over the river. It was big, strong and tall. At night a light flashed from the tall tower up, up, up into the sky. 'Flash, turn, flash' said the tower. Planes saw the light and flew higher, higher, higher. Tiny saw the light and was sad. 'They don't need me any more,' thought Tiny.

One night a big storm blew a thick fog up the river. A huge, black tug came chugging along. It couldn't see

the rocks. There was no bell to hear. Crash! Crash, went the tug. It was badly broken. 'Hi, Tiny, what's the matter with you mate? Where's your light? Where's your bell?'

'Am I still your mate?' said Tiny. 'After I saw your light, I didn't think they needed mine.'

'Come on,' said the tower, 'we both have a work to do. I shine for the ships in the sky. You shine for the boats on the water. Both of us have a work to do.'

'Flash, flash and clang, clang, clang,' said Tiny that night. 'Flash, turn, flash,' said the tower. Ships in the air and ships on the water were all happy and safe.

Whether we are big or little doesn't really matter. We each have a work to do.



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