

# GOOD NEWS

## A U S T R A L I A

Editors: Paul A. Porter and Robert C. Cooper

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## Christian Freedom #1

by Ron Allen

**I**n his book The Gulag Archipelago, Alexander Solzhenitsyn details the horrid excesses of the Soviet interrogators known as the Blue Caps. These men had sufficient personal authority to frighten their fellow Russians into signing confessions of guilt. This with the effect of their being banished to the Archipelago, most of them never to return. Here is an excerpt:

"In fact, there's no reason for you to feel shy with anyone. And if you like the broads - and who doesn't? - you'd be a fool to make use of your position. Some will be drawn to you because of your power and others will give in out of fear. So you've met a girl somewhere and she's caught your eye? She'll belong to you, never fear; she can't get away! Someone else's wife has caught your eye? She'll be yours too! Because after all, there's no problem about removing the husband. No indeed!" To know what it meant to be a Blue Cap one had to experience it.

### **Pride grows in the human heart like lard on a pig.**

Solzhenitsyn goes on to reflect that this disgusting abuse of power and privilege was an all too familiar manifestation of the pride that exists in humans generally: "Pride grows in the

human heart like lard on a pig."

When Paul wrote his first letter to the church at Corinth, evidence of this pride was to be seen in the behaviour of many of its members. Well skilled in the gospel, they had begun to abuse their Christian privileges. There was a saying, which they used: "All things are permissible for me." Or in other words, "I am free to do what I please," or "I have the right to do all things." Thus did they assert their Christian liberty. And in so doing they justified all kinds of behaviour, including their participation in the heathen practice of temple prostitution.

### **Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.**

The slogan, "All things are permissible for me," indicates that their licentious behaviour was compatible with their view of Christianity. Paul's letter was an attempt to correct this perversion. He does so in a way that does not deny Christian freedom but affirms it, carrying it forward much further than even the Corinthians might have expected.

In 1 Corinthians the Greek word for "freedom" is EXOUSIA. It can be variously translated as "liberty," "freedom," "authority,"

"power" or "right." The words "right" or "authority" capture the sense best. An example of the use of the word in other places is to be found in the well-known words of Jesus in John 1:12: "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." Another example is Matthew 28:18: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me." The individual with EXOUSIA is free to act by reason of certain privileges. He has the right! This is what the Corinthians are claiming. "I have the right to do all things." I Cor 6:12.

### **By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. Do you know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?**

But Paul counters this perversion by insisting on a genuine doctrine of Christian liberty. In the remainder of this article we will observe Paul's view that Christian freedom is based on the EXOUSIA of Christ himself.

"By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!" 1 Cor 6:14,15. These verses demonstrate the impossibility of

separating the resurrection of persons from the resurrection of the Lord himself. Christians and the Christ are in dynamic union with one another. Believers have dignity in glory because they are joined to the glorified Lord. Paul's view of the church is astounding. The church is not attached to Christ; not annexed to Him. Christ and the church are body corporate. What is true of Christ is true of His people.

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***For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.***

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**The Spiritual man is not subject to any man's Judgment**

Let's look at another passage. "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he is not subject to any man's judgement. For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." 1 Cor 2:14-16.

There are two separate humanities: the spiritual man and the natural man. The spiritual man is the man in whom the Spirit of God lives - the Christian. The natural man is the non Christian - bereft of the Spirit. Paul reasons that while the man without the Spirit is unable to understand the spiritual man, (because spiritual things need the spirit to discern them), the spiritual man can discern all things because he mysteriously partakes of the mind of God. "We have the mind of Christ." It is a bold assertion. The Christian shares in the divine by reason of solidarity with Christ. The rights of Christ are the rights of the believer.

**It is the Lord who Judges**

Take another example: "I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me." 1 Cor 4:3,4. The apostle here exhibits a holy

disrespect for the tribunals of men. He rules out the judgments of his fellow Christians and even discounts his own conscience as a measure of his real situation before God. "It is the Lord who judges me." This reflects Paul's view of Christian authority. It rests squarely on the Lord's judgement which takes place for him in and through the person of Christ. It is separated absolutely from the realm of human opinion. It consists only in God's verdict. Christ himself is Paul's authority.

A final example occurs in 1 Cor 10:25,26. "Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience for the earth is the Lord's and everything in it." Paul's purpose in reminding his friends that the earth is the Lord's is to help them recognize their right to eat the food placed before them. The meaning is, that if the earth is the Lord's and everything in it exists for him, then everything in the earth is there for the Christian as well. This same thought is implicit in the early Christian confession, "Jesus is Lord."

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***God gives freedom - freedom to be a member of Christ. Christian freedom can only ever be an expression of Christ.***

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**A Derived Freedom**

And so, the Lordship of Christ, so confidently affirmed by Paul in 1 Corinthians, undergirds his affirmation of Christian freedom. Christ determines those who belong to him. If there is Christian freedom for believers it is a derived freedom. It is not a condition of limitless autonomy. It is a standing which can only be defined theologically, Christologically. The position that Jesus holds in the universe is the key to an understanding of Christian rights. God gives authority to his people - but only through Christ. God gives believers liberty - but only Christ is its sum. God gives freedom - freedom to be a member of Christ. Christian freedom can only ever be an expression of Christ. Apart from Christian freedom there is only the lesser freedom exercised by the Blue Caps. □

*Next month: Christian freedom in practice.*



*From  
the  
Editors*

*Welcome to the second 1988 issue of Good News Australia. This is your magazine, and we hope, throughout the year, to publish your articles. So don't be slow in coming forward. We desperately need stories from people who have lived. If you are a lettuce farmer or a jockey, and you have something to say, we still want to hear it. Your hubby is an inveterate boozier? Then how about an anonymous article on how you've coped? Just imagine: "Thirty Years With A Red-Nosed Bar Fly." Hopefully, we've made ourselves clear. Good luck! And if you're nervous about writing, just send in a rough draft, and we will help you with the rest.*



**P**arenting teenagers is not without its traumas: bent cars, late nights, incessant phone calls, and no money, just to name a few. And like many parents in my

resolved issues. Our education system appears anxious to dampen their hopeful enthusiasm by burdening them with the perplexities of life. This is where I find that the

# Those Terrible Teenagers?

by Neville McKenzie

**Young People offer a challenge to recapture the zest for living.**

position, I wonder if the days of tranquility will ever return. Perhaps our teenagers ask the same question! Still, as I have contemplated in the few quiet moments I sometimes manage to salvage, there are also great privileges in the experience of close proximity to those on the threshold of adulthood.

## **The Enthusiasm of Youth**

The typical adolescent's enthusiasm for life, his spontaneity and uncomplicated hope are wholesome characteristics which many of us have lost. Young people offer their seniors a challenge - the challenge to recapture the zest for living. This valuable quality is frequently lost - strangled out by the cares of life that seem to constantly invade our waking moments. The young people closest to me have reminded me of a great truth: life is for living, not just for making a living. For this I am their debtor and thank God that he has given me the privilege of being the father of these young adults.

Surely God never created mankind to age and bow down under the uncertainties and fears of life! We were intended to live forever with the enthusiasm and energy of youth. Perhaps, then, your teenage children are more normal in the eyes of God than we are! A sobering thought isn't it?

## **The Unresolved Issues**

I have enjoyed discussing with my son the questions that arise from his study of English literature. Many of these authors are studied because the issues they raise are timeless. They have to do with reality - the common lot of mankind. This reality, however, is often disgustingly stark and too frighteningly real for comfort. Strident questions are asked, but satisfactory answers are scarce. Our children are left to ponder the un-

scriptures, (if not the church), are able to address questions basic to our existence in a way that gives hope, yet does not deny the reality of our imperfect world. I once read, "A fool can ask a question that the wisest of men cannot answer." And so I conclude that the riddles of life will never be resolved by continually raising questions!

## **The Uncertainties of Life**

If we dwell too much on the uncertainties of life we may become discouraged to the point of despair. This can easily lead to a grand "cop-out" where life is squandered in the fast lane. On the other hand, if we are too cautious, we can become so preoccupied with the quest for security that life becomes a dreary burden and we become boring people.

Real joy, then, is not found in a nice home, a large bank balance, a good share portfolio, or a secure income. These could all be lost overnight, as many have recently discovered. Perhaps when Christ said we were to be like children, he was upholding before us many of the good attributes we see in our children and youth. Things like enthusiasm, spontaneity, openness and trust in parental love which gives freedom from the fear of insecurity. Added to this, joyful peer relationships which move in the direction of unconditional acceptance and love - the essence of true community.

## **Become More Like Children**

Finally, I think when Jesus taught us to address God as our Father he was also telling us that many of the attributes we see in our children and youth are more pleasing to God than the skeptical sophistication typical of the adult years. May I suggest, then, that we should seek to make ourselves more like our children, rather than make them more like us! ☐

**Seek to make ourselves more like our children**

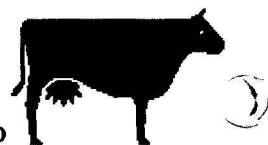
**L**AST MONTH I said that there are two kinds of cranks and crackpots in the Bible: the genuine fools and the smart eccentrics. Wouldn't it be nice if the kooks

that it is only Noah and the animals who listen to the voice of God. Nobody else does! It's as if the animals are smarter than the rest of the humans.

## Cranks and Crackpots #2: *Noah*

by Paul Porter

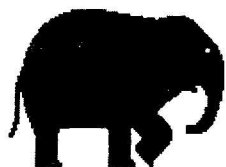
And in some ways, they are. Intellectually, of course, we humans have outstripped the animals by far. But in other respects, the situation is quite the reverse. Take child abuse, for example, and think of the cows you saw the last time you visited a dairy. Do you remember how hard it was to separate the mothers from their calves? Sometimes a cow will smash a gate



in your local church were all of the latter sort? Unfortunately, they probably aren't. We are, in fact, all a bit batty most of the time we are awake. "They are all queer except me and thee, my dear; and even thou art a little queer, I fear." How true!

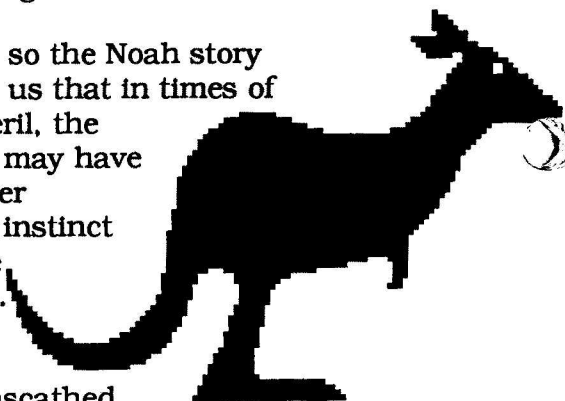
or break a fence if her calf is on the other side. Beautiful, bumble-footed cows! Can you imagine a cow starting a nuclear war? If only there were a cow in the White House or in the Pentagon!

This month, I want to talk about Noah, who comes across as a bit of an oddball, no matter which way you look at him. At the behest of God, Noah builds a huge, ramshackle boat to save the animals from a flood. We generally smile when we read the Noah story. Sometimes we sing about it:



The animals walked in two by two,  
There's one more river to cross.  
The elephants and the kangaroo,  
There's one more river to cross.

And so the Noah story reminds us that in times of world peril, the animals may have a stronger survival instinct than the humans. If we wish to move unscathed into the twenty-first century, perhaps we should take another look at the story of Noah.



But the interesting thing is

*to be continued.*



# The First Miracle

by Muriel Ferris

**C**OMFORTABLY NIBBLING my way through Matthew Henry's commentary of the Gospels, I almost cracked my teeth on an unexpected nugget. Let me share it with you:

As soon as Christ began to preach he began to work miracles for the confirmation of his doctrine, and they were such as intimate the design and tendency of his doctrine, which was to conquer Satan and cure sick souls.

Did you get it? Jesus, the miracle-working Physician, was more than a mere dispenser of kindly deeds. He was also a teacher—the Teacher. And his works confirmed his words.

Think, for example, of the nobleman who came with the reservation: "If he heals my son, I will believe he is the Messiah!" First of all, the Teacher puts his finger on the father's doubt: "Unless you see miracles," he retorts, "you won't believe!" And then the Physician sends him on the road of faith in the Unseen: "Believe and you shall see!"

May I then suggest that Jesus' first announcement of his teaching corresponds with his first recorded miracle? Mark, you will recall, introduces Christ as a preacher who comes with the message: "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand." Mark 1:15. John, on the other hand, understands that the Word is to be seen as well as heard—that the One whom his hands have handled, his ears have heard and his eyes have seen—must be clearly recognized. And according to John, the first miracle of Jesus occurs at a wedding feast.

If you or I were to launch the

Master's ministry with a miracle, which one would we choose? The transfiguration, perhaps, or the giving of the Law? The stilling of the tempest? The mind boggles at the possibilities.

But John, with Spirit-indited skill, pictures his Lord at a wedding! What better way to portray the Word made flesh among his people? Here, at this simple festival, is God pitching his tabernacle among the tents of men, sharing their joys and providing their needs. Now the light overtakes the darkness. Now there is beauty, joy and praise.

Turning the water to wine, Jesus relieves his embarrassed host and confirms the faith of his infant disciples. Picture, if you will, the guests' faces as they delight in the sweet flavour of the new wine; the scarcely concealed pride of an admiring mother; the governor's audible remarks; the servants' awed whispers and Christ's silence! And then the questions. Like the rising of the morning, light shines on the disciples' wistful hopes and dreams: "The Creator's hand is here! He who turns the sunshine and rain into the purple juices of a thousand vineyards is in our midst!" Instinctively they recall the words of the Psalmist:

Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, thou art very great! God watereth the hills. He sendeth springs into the valleys. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man.

**"The time has come! The Messiah has come!"**

Turning back to Mark, Jesus' first sermon contains the directive: "Repent and believe the gospel." Is the miracle at Cana also a call to repentance? Writers such as F B Myer believe so:

In the entrance hall, six water-pots are standing. Their superstitious dread of uncleanness made it necessary to have large supplies of water on hand. Without washing no one ate; the feet of each guest were washed on arrival, the washing of utensils went on all day. Here we have the symbol of that religion which consists in external rites, and is content if only these are maintained . . .

And here our Lord in this striking miracle seems to say: "The days of ceremonialism are past; the system which was sent to teach spiritual ideas by material substances and external rites is at an end" . . . The Gospel of John, 49.

## The Water & Blood at Calvary

Finally, is this the long-awaited cry: "Ho, everyone that thirsts . . . come buy wine and milk without money and without price"? If so, there is a sombre undertone: the water and the wine at the wedding also remind us of the water and the blood that freely flowed at Calvary—water for the washing of regeneration and blood that will pacify the conscience and refresh the soul. Here at the cross, the Saviour treads the winepress alone before placing the cup of life in the hands of his redeemed.

And so this, the first of Jesus' miracles, declares him to be the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. Here lies his glory—the glory of the only begotten of the Father. □

# Down Capers #5

**A**S USUAL, the Down family sat down to breakfast just as the sun slid from under the horizon.

Mo rose at the table and began to sing:

"War Sigma Tilda,  
War Sigma Tilda,  
Yool cumma War Sigma  
Tilda wimme . . ."

There was an audible groan from the rest of the family as they endured the monotone drone. "Why do you have to sing the national anthem every morning?" grumbled Stan.

"Isnunner your business wad-eye do," came Mos' retort.

"Yes, it is part of my business," Stan answered, "because we all live together and whatever one person does affects the rest."

That triggered father Downs' memory. "I had a weird dream last night," he said, ". . . about a very stern-looking angel in a long black cloak who kept jabbing his

finger at me . . . and he kept telling me what to do and what not to do. One thing I remember him saying was, Thou shalt not use gelatine and baking-soda in your cooking."

"Sounds like me flat-mite in Sinny," chipped in Mo. "He was a Fetchterian and was always telling me not to eat airmen pickle semmitches."

Father Down raised his voice. "Another thing the angel said was, Thou shalt wear a hairy growth on thy chin and upper lip if thou wist to be a padre."

"Now, that sounds suspect," Ida Down chuckled. "That would allow only the men into the ministry . . . Well, most men."

But father Down continued. "Then the angel said, Thou shalt not swim or raise a perspiration on the Sabbath day because all Sabbath exercise must be at amble pace without much pleasure and while wearing a sombre-looking Sabbath necktie."

"I can understand the bit about swimming," Stan deadpanned. "It's very hard to tell how much you're perspiring when swimming."

"E scone office rocker," muttered Mo. "It's harps ite already. We're lite for work. Let's go."

"I only told you the dream to entertain you during breakfast," admitted Father. "I don't place any stock on dreams. I believe in health principles and accepted customs and Sabbath-keeping, but I'm not one for legalism. Surely Christians can express their Christianity in varied hues and make some ethical decisions for themselves. We wouldn't want to be like Chinese tunics - all grey every day. Even though Christ maintained the highest standards, he expressed very few Thou Shalt Nots. He majored in the positives- "Blessed are the peacemakers, blessed are the ..."

Good News Christian Ministries announces:

## The Gospel and Relationships The 1988 Congresses

In response to many requests, the 1988 Congresses will seek to bring human relationships under the Gospel spotlight. Dr Desmond Ford will be the principle guest speaker in company with Dr Paul Porter, Pr Neville McKenzie and Pr Ron Allen. At Congress you can expect to hear sermons on subjects such as:

The Gospel & Family Relationships  
Relating to Other Churches  
Relating to My Former Church  
The Christian Relationship to Secular & Social Issues

plus many more. Keep these dates free:

Sydney	March 25-27	Melbourne	April 22,23	Brisbane	May 6,7
Perth	April 8-10	Auckland	April 24	Rockhampton	May 8
Hobart	April 11,12	Christchurch	April 30	Cairns	May 11
Adelaide	April 15,16	Cooranbong	May 4		