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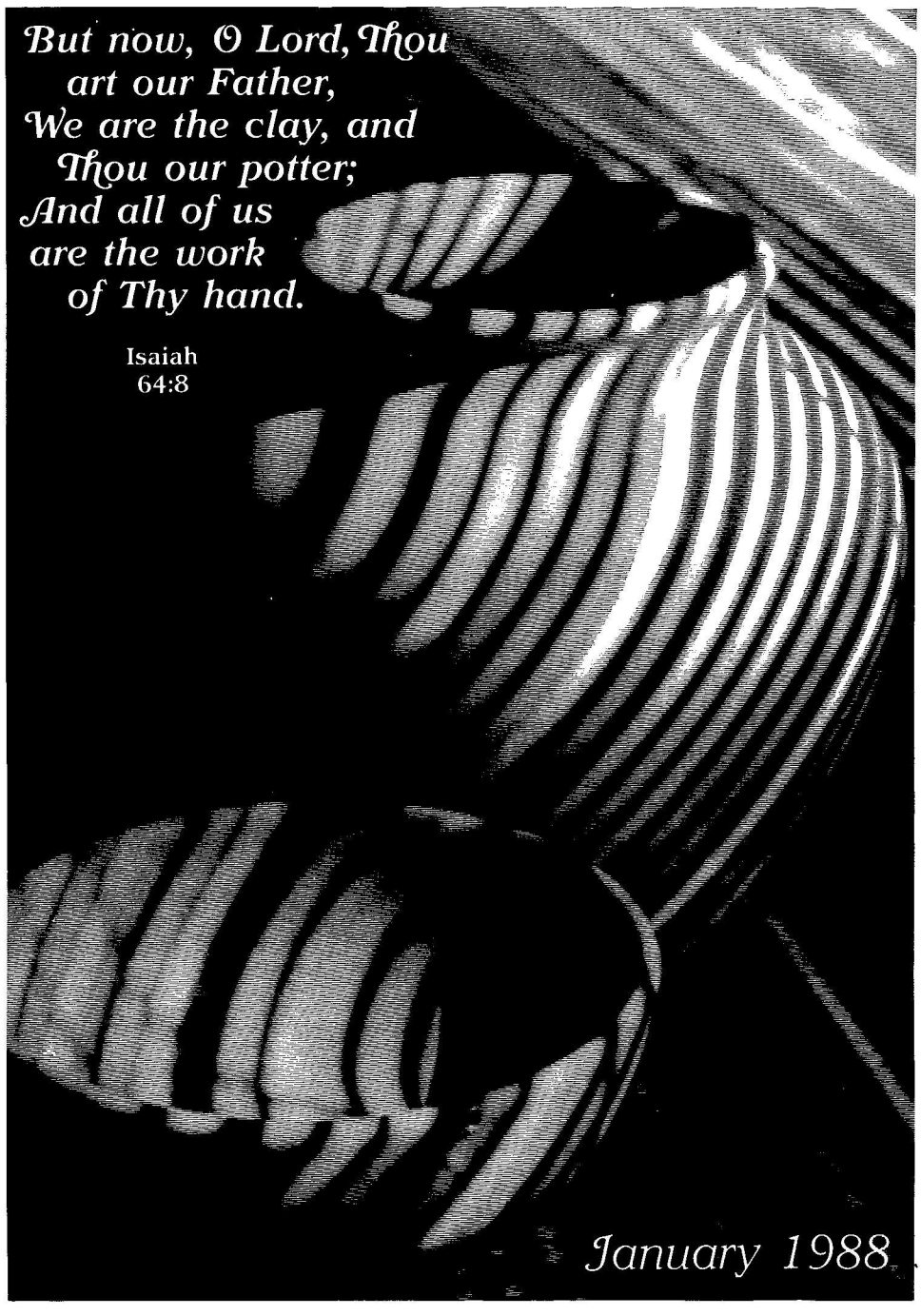
GOOD NEWS UNLIMITED

Solus Christus — Sola Scriptura — Sola Fide — Sola Gratia



Word to the Wise

GREY NOVEMBER RAIN chilled the campus. The classroom buildings at Placer High School (Auburn), built in California Spanish style, built for sun, looked ill at ease, awkward, besieged, at the top of their steps.

Inside, Room 303 was warm and bright. A wall full of freshly colored face masks grinned and grimaced at the young people pressing into the studio for Ceramics 1. Radio music gave a bounce to the 9:30 a.m. crowd. Toby Covich, looking only one or two year-books older than his students, gave a few quick instructions, and everyone settled quickly into their various projects.

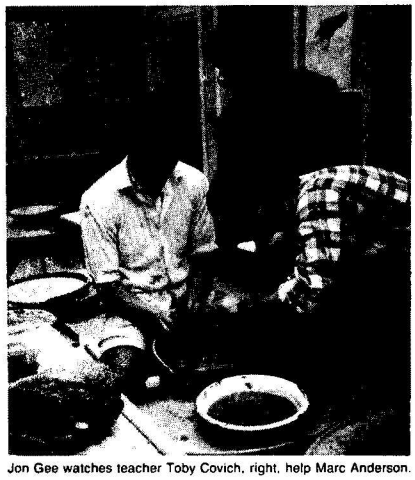
Rick Ford was at the same table as Doug Novelly and Jon Gee. Rick was shaping an incredibly detailed . . . "What is that, Rick? A snake monster?" Doug's project was less terrifying: a highly decorated bottle. Jon was back-and-forth from table to sink, staining what looked like a curly cup, with a spaceship design on one side. At another table Alvin Fong was completing a pink face mask.

Marc Anderson and Troy Nash were at the potter's wheels, throwing clay. Mr. Covich hovered nearby, ready to help. Marc and Troy had already completed two pots earlier in the course, and inscribed them, "No one comes to the Father but through me" (Jn 14:6), and "The pot doesn't ask the Potter 'Why have you made me like this?'" (Rom 9:20).

God is molding and forming us. If God is not, life's spinning wheel can only confuse us, and make us sick to our stomachs with dizziness. But God is bent over the wheel, shaping us, slowly, into a beautiful vessel that will bring joy and satisfaction to him—and to us. God will continue to shape and fashion our lives in 1988. Though we rarely comprehend God's design and craftsmanship, we will submit to the skill of the divine Potter. Though we will, sometime during the next twelve months, find cause for complaint, we know God means us only good.

We are assured of God's good resolve in the gospel. When we look at Jesus we see what God intends for us. Though we might die, we shall live. Though we might be abandoned, we shall dwell at the right hand of God. Though we might have to stand alone, we belong to the great host of God's people.

The world is a classroom. All students are present. God is the good teacher. We delight in the course; there is much to learn, and it stretches our creativity to the limit. We work hard, and often, thrillingly, surpass ourselves. We can afford to. We know that in Christ we are already assured an A plus.



Jon Gee watches teacher Toby Covich, right, help Marc Anderson.

Jon Gee decides to try the wheel, with teacher's help.

by Roy Gee

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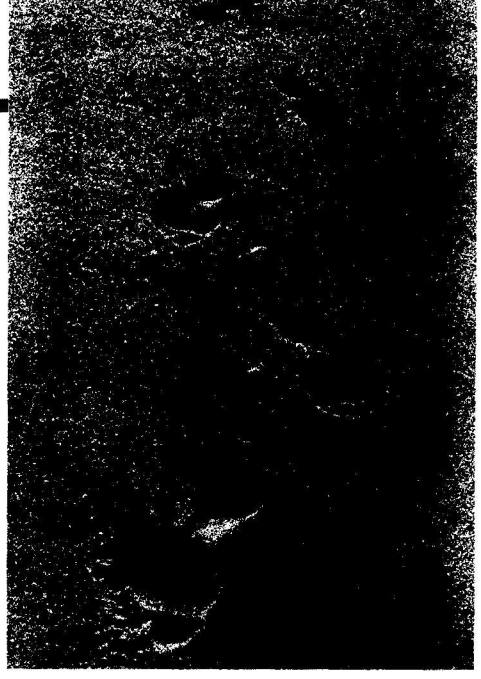

FIRST OF ALL

1 Corinthians 15:3

by Desmond Ford

IN ONE MOVIE version of Dicken's *A Christmas Carol,* Scrooge, the old miser, visits his dying friend Joseph Marley. A dignified figure is sitting on the landing. "Are you the doctor?" asks Scrooge. "No, sir, I am an undertaker—ours is a very competitive business."

So is the whole of life. Especially on the first day of the New Year many try to estimate where they are placed in life's race.

New Year's Philosophizing

It's a very natural tendency to philosophize at this time when we are challenged to make new resolutions and set new goals. *What* should be first competes with the more constant inquiry as to *Who* should be first. Many decide the answer is the same. Is it really so?

Because the New Year always carries with it not merely the promise of better things, but also the reminder of mortality, only the fool never rechecks his answers to the old philosophical chestnuts: Whence? Why? Whither? Camus, the modern French philosopher, once said that the main issue is why there is something rather than nothing. Another author, surveying the rushing host of his contemporaries, whispered, "What is it all but the murmur of gnats in the gleam of a million million suns?"

. the obvious is not always the correct response

Humanity Is a Riddle of Riddles

One thing is certain. Humanity, that has always asked the riddles, has now become a riddle to itself. Recent history has demonstrated that humanity's deepest problems lie within. Enslaved by self-centeredness, greed, lust, jealousy and pride, poor humanity splutters about liberty. Perhaps Camus was correct when he wrote: "A single sentence will suffice for modern man: he fornicated and read the papers. After that vigorous definition, the subject will be, if I may say so, exhausted."

It is the rapid passage of New Years which makes our inquiry urgent. "Death makes mankind absurd, unless . . ." and people wonder how to complete that sentence. Nietzsche, confronting the human dilemma, asked, "Is there still an up and down? Are we not wandering aimlessly through an empty void? Does not an empty space breathe upon us? Has it not grown colder?"

Two generations earlier Wordsworth, in his poem "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" [1798] had referred to "the burthen [burden] of the mystery, / . . . the heavy and the weary weight / Of all this unintelligible world." None can confront the challenge of the New Year without trying to deal with such basic concerns.

The World Changed Is Changed by Ideas

Charles Darwin, over a hundred years ago, did most to change our modern world philosophically. He reechoed the materialistic premise that thought is just a secretion of the mind and no more wonderful than gravity. He wrote in one of his notebooks:

Plato says in Phaedo that our "imaginary ideas" arise from the

DESMOND FORD

preexistence of the soul, are not derivable from experience—read monkeys for preexistence.[1]

No wonder Karl Marx offered to dedicate volume 2 of *Das Kapital* to Darwin.

Answers to Life's Questions Affect Our Destiny

Groucho Marx always teased audiences with such outrageously obvious questions as "Who's buried in Grant's Tomb?" But that which can seem obvious can be deceptive. It was John Quincy Adams who framed the Monroe Doctrine, not James Monroe. However, our questions this New Year do not belong to the category delighted in by Groucho. Upon our answers our choices depend, as do our happiness and destiny. And not only our own, but also the happiness and destiny of those who live in our shadow.

As suggested, the obvious is not always the correct response. John Ciardi asked:

> Who would believe an ant
> in theory?
> A giraffe in blueprint?
> Ten thousand doctors of what's
> possible
> Could reason half the jungle out
> of being.

Clues to the Mystery of Existence

Briefly, we suggest clues to the mystery of existence. One of the best has always been the argument *to* (not *from*) design. Consider Darwin's words:

> To suppose that the eye, with all its inimitable contrivances for adjusting the focus to different distances, for admitting different amounts of light, and for the correction of spherical and chromatic aberration, could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I confess, absurd in the highest degree.[2]

We find that confession more impressive than his approximately 800 usages of "We may well suppose" in two of his chief books.

The Clue of the Conscience

But there is another argument which leads to the answer to our first inquiry. Consider these words of Peter Forsyth about conscience (the "I ought" that dogs all sane people, believers and nonbelievers alike):

> Man is more than a consciousness, he is a conscience. He is not only aware of himself, he is critical of himself. Everyone who believes in morality believes in the conscience as the power we have of passing moral judgment upon ourselves.
>
> There is a self we cannot kill. We cannot get rid of this judge. He is not in our power. We cannot unmake him, though he be against ourselves. What a strange thing we are—two, yet one! Two that cannot agree—one that cannot be severed. Neither of us can go out of the other's hearing.
>
> Who is this judge that follows us like our shadow? We did not appoint him. We did not give him his place. He is there in spite of us. He is no fiction of our imagination, else we would not be so afraid of him. The place which we cannot help assigning to conscience is a place given it by another power than ourselves.[3]

The cross-resurrection event assures us that evil can never have the last word. Though we may seem forsaken by God and without hope, Calvary clearly teaches that God is present even when he seems most absent.

Yes, every sane person's experience is awareness of the centrality of moral reality. That awareness, linked to the knowledge of mortality, calls urgently for a remedy, inasmuch as all find themselves sick when confronted by the moral standard. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb 9:27). Thus, the best of books unites the cardinal dilemmas of sin and mortality.

Making The Gospel Key First

If, after trying a thousand keys in a very complicated lock, only one is found to fit, then one might well conclude that the key was manufactured by the same being who made the lock. So it is with the gospel key to life's lock. Humanity's need for meaning, guidance, forgiveness, and moral strength are provided for in the Christian gospel, and nowhere else. Wisely, all should make the gospel first in their thinking and doing. Paul saw this and wrote:

> Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast—unless you believed in vain.
>
> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures (1 Cor 15:1-4 RSV).

Observe the words, "of first importance." Because our chief burden is not even that of mystery but of guilt, the gospel must be first. Human nature could never have invented this key to life's lock. That God should become human, and by himself bear the penalty of the race's guilt both upholds the right and justifies the transgressor—what a glorious solution to the world's fatal disease! Had humanity atoned for itself it would have destroyed itself. God suffering as God alone would have been irrelevant to *humanity's* sin problem. But God incarnate expiating guilt is self-authenticating in its appropriateness. Read again Romans 5:10,18 RSV:

> For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.
>
> Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men.

The Glad Word of an Objective Reality

How few, even of professing Christians, understand these words! These verses clearly affirm that the

atonement of Christ restored the whole human race to favor with God. Christ is our peace, having broken down the wall between God and humanity. By his own blood Christ signed the ransom papers for the race. Unlike most of the panaceas offered to humanity this one has to do not with a subjective experience but an objective reality: salvation was accomplished historically, outside of, and independent of ourselves. And the gospel is the glad word of that event.

Calvary is of sin the double cure. It takes away both sin's guilt and power. The revelation of the atoning God breaks the believer's heart, emancipating it from the bondage of self-centered existence. Looking on the cross the believer sees the holiness of God, and repents; sees the love of God and believes; sees the power of God and is born again.

Evil Cannot Have the Final Word over the Gospel

The cross-resurrection event assures us that evil can never have the last word. However bad Friday seems, Sunday (the day of resurrection) is a comin'. Though we may seem forsaken by God and without hope, Calvary clearly teaches that God is present even when he seems most absent. The boy who gazed at a painting of Calvary and cried, "If God had been there he would not have let them do that," had much to learn.

And so have we. For example, there is the second look at the cross-resurrection scene. First, we see what God did *for* us. Secondly, we see that in God's reckoning (and ideally in our own also), we too were crucified and resurrected (see Gal 2:20; Col 3:1).

So what? So now we are able to contend with the conflict of life. Not only the conflict with its mysteries, but with its pain both internal and external. We need a philosophy that will enable us to endure "The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" through each new year. We have that philosophy in the gospel and nowhere else.

Spurgeon's Gospel-Filled Philosophy

No one has summed up that glorious philosophy of living amid trial better than Spurgeon. In his own illnesses he endured hellish pain. To strengthen you for whatever lies ahead in this New Year we offer you his words of commentary on 1 Corinthians 3:21,22, "For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours:"

> If the clouds which threaten us in the future are darker than any we have hitherto experienced, the covenantal rainbow shall span them all.
>
> The leaves of the book of destiny are folded; the volume is sealed with seven seals; thou needest not desire to read a single line, however, for the Lord tells thee that, whatever may be recorded in it, it is all thine; it must all work for thy good; it must all promote thy highest happiness.
>
> As Christians, we dare not, and would not murmur at providential appointments. Life to us has had its sorrows, but goodness and mercy have followed us hitherto, and they shall with equal certainty follow us all the days of our lives. Though this is not our rest, and we are strangers and foreigners, as all our fathers were, yet for all this, "he maketh us to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth us beside still waters." "The lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage;" we will not speak ill of God's name who daily loadeth us with benefits, but we will sing, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." We have reason to expect that in the future our lot will include a fair measure of joy, even as the past has done. Summers will bring their flowers, and autumns their mellow fruits; days shall be bright with sunlight, and nights gorgeous with moon and stars.
>
> In the future, without any foolish forebodings, you may expect troubles. Necessarily and unavoidably, if you and I shall be spared to live to an old age, there are certain trials that must happen to us. Changes in circumstances may arise, poverty may supplant wealth, and slander injure fame; where barns were filled to bursting, there may arise a famine; and those whose broad acres could scarce be traversed in a day, may come to a scanty plot of ground, or none at all. But if that do not happen to thee, yet at any rate, thy friends must die, if thou do not.
>
> These things must come; to all men are such trials measured out. And there must come temptation, and inward conflicts, and outward afflictions, in all which we shall have need to possess our souls in patience, lest we be overcome of evil. Trials will arise from our own household, even more severe than if our Absalom had been cut off by death. Alas! how often is the living cross far more heavy and galling than if it had been dead; and certainly to us all there must come (unless Christ shall soon appear) the valley of death-shade, the passage of the black river, the clammy sweat, and the mortal anguish of the last dread hour; "for it is appointed unto men once to die."

"Every wind that rise, whether soft or fierce, it is a divine monsoon, hurrying in the same direction as your soul's desires..."

Let our text encourage us, for it declares to us that all these things are ours. There is not in the whole area of our future life a single plot of stony ground which shall not yield us fertile harvests of joy. As Midas of old touched even the most valueless objects and turned them into gold, so does the hand of divine love transmute every trial and affliction into everlasting joy for his people.

No evil can happen to me, and seeming ill is but another form of benediction. If all events shall aid me, what matters in what dress they come, whether of scarlet and fine linen, or sackcloth and ashes. Trial may be very

(Continued from previous page)

hard to bear for a time, but since in the very hardness of the endurance lies the blessing, the bitter is sweet and the medicine is food.

Courage, men and brethren, ye shall meet nought but friends between this and the pearly gate, or, if you meet an enemy, it shall be a conquered one, who shall crouch at your feet, and you shall put your foot on his neck, and win a brighter victory, and a heavier crown, because of the encounter; so that even the foe advances your honour. Courage, men and brethren, the winds which toss the waves of the Atlantic of your life, are all sworn to waft your bark safely into the desired haven. Every wind that rise, whether soft or fierce, it is a divine monsoon, hurrying in the same direction as your soul's desires are aiming at. God walks the tempest, and rules the storm; order reigns supreme in the uproars of elements or men, for the divine hand compels the most rebellious creatures to obey without fail the divine and all-wide decree. What cheer is this for the saints of God![4] □

1. Cited by Stephen Jay Gould, *Ever Since Darwin*, p.25.
2. *Ibid*, p.103.
3. Selections from P.T. Forsyth, *The Cruciality of the Cross*, pp.127-131.
4. C.H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* Volume XV, pp.325-328.

Tape of the Month

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. FORD

Dr. Ford, what is the Tape of the Month?

A regular **GNU** service to subscribers that contains two gospel messages on a high-quality audio-cassette. Monthly, of course.

How long has Tape of the Month been active?

Since 1982.

How often is the TOM sent out?

Are you trying to see if I'm awake? Who's buried in Grant's Tomb? Each tape is sent out once, unless someone sends it back. We send out a new one each month.

Twelve times a year?

Now you're beginning to understand!

How many are sent out?

About 360 a month. 4,000 annually.

How many countries?

Ten. The office distributes most of them, but we send master tapes to Australia and Canada and they make copies and mail them.

What is the philosophy behind TOM? Surely you travel and preach, and people can hear you then?

Yes, we do travel and preach, but we usually only get to a given area once a year, and there are many places we don't get to at all. So we supplement our traveling and preaching by sending out tapes.

It is apparent to many that the twentieth century is different from previous centuries. Formerly, when people returned to their homes there was usually just the family to talk to. Now we are surrounded by radio and TV. Much of what we hear and see is not especially Christian. Much does not fortify us spiritually. The TOM can help counteract that bombardment.

Others are not able to enjoy regular Christian fellowship. These tapes are a special help to such folk, reminding them of the good news, and Christian privileges and responsibilities. Each tape contains a positive gospel presentation. From time to time a problem common to our present age is dealt with.

Such as?

Meaninglessness, loneliness, temptation, seeking the will of God for one's own life, tragedy, the battle for health.

Can you give me some examples of titles in the past? To come?

"The Book of Praises," "The First Words of Jesus." Pastor Gee had "The Fear of Death and the Death of Fear" and "Divine Double Talk" during 1987. December's TOM was my "Bethlehem—Down Payment on Calvary," and Roy's "Wisdom from the Wise Men." January will have the messages "The Bible's Most Mysterious Prophecy," and "The Siege Is Lifted!". These titles are representative of regular TOM's.

How can people receive TOM?

Any one of three ways (see envelope insert):

1. A monthly donation of $25 or more to **GNU** will bring the TOM automatically ($50 will bring two tapes if requested).
2. An annual subscription of $60.
3. $5. for any specific tape.

Are you satsified with the service?

On the whole, yes. I wish we could increase the circulation numbers.

A deep-sea diver would be crushed by the pressure of the water were there not a counter-pressure in the suit. We are surrounded by a barrage of propaganda, that often is so worldly, and appeals only to the flesh. Believers need to have a counter-pressure, just like the diver. We need a message from heaven that is brought into our daily lives to offset the world while driving, dressing, working in the garden. Books on tape are very popular right now. We provide a "Gospel on Tape" service—every month.

Thank you, Dr. Ford.

by Roy Gee

TUNE IN WITH GOOD NEWS UNLIMITED!

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Little Rock, Arkansas Monday-Friday Saturday	KITA 1440AM 10:45 a.m. 6:00 a.m.
Holtville, California Saturday & Sunday	KGBA 97.7FM & 100.1FM 7:30 a.m.
Riverside, CA Monday-Friday	KPRO 1570AM 7:15 a.m. 1:00 p.m.
Sacramento, CA Monday-Friday	KFIA 710AM 12:30 p.m.
Sacramento, CA Monday-Friday	KFIA 710AM 12:30 p.m.
Indianapolis, Indiana Monday-Friday	WXLW 950AM 12:00 noon
Black Mountain, North Carolina Monday-Friday	WMIT 106.9FM 9:15 p.m.

RADIO LOG—CANADA

Wetaskiwin, Alberta Sunday	CJOI 1440AM 4:00 p.m.
Langley, British Columbia Sunday	CJUP 800AM 8:00 a.m.
100 Mile House, BC Sunday	CKBX 1240AM 8:30 p.m.
Penticton, B.C. Saturday	CIGV 100.7FM 8:06 p.m.
Quesnel, B.C. Sunday	CKCQ 920AM 8:30 p.m.
Williams Lake, B.C. Sunday	CKWL 570AM 8:30 p.m.
Fredericton, New Brunswick Sunday	CFNB 550AM 6:30 p.m.
Leamington, Ontario Saturday	CHYR 710AM 6:30 p.m.
Mississauga, Ont. Sunday	CJMR 1190AM 8:00 a.m.
Oshawa, Ont. Sunday	CKAR 1350AM 7:30 a.m.
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Charlottetown, Prince Edward I. Sunday	CHLQ 93.1FM 9:30 p.m.
Estevan, Saskatchewan Sunday	CJSL 1280AM 9:00 a.m.
Weyburn, Sask. Sunday	CFSL 1190AM 9:00 a.m.

TV LOG—USA

Concord, CA Monday Wednesday	KFCB TV 42 9:30 a.m. 5:00 p.m.
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Los Angeles, CA Sunday	KVEA TV 52 broadcast TV 18 cable 7:30 a.m.
San Diego, CA Sunday	KVEA TV 57 broadcast TV 48 cable 7:30 a.m.
Alamogordo, NM Sunday	TV 63 cable 9:30 p.m.

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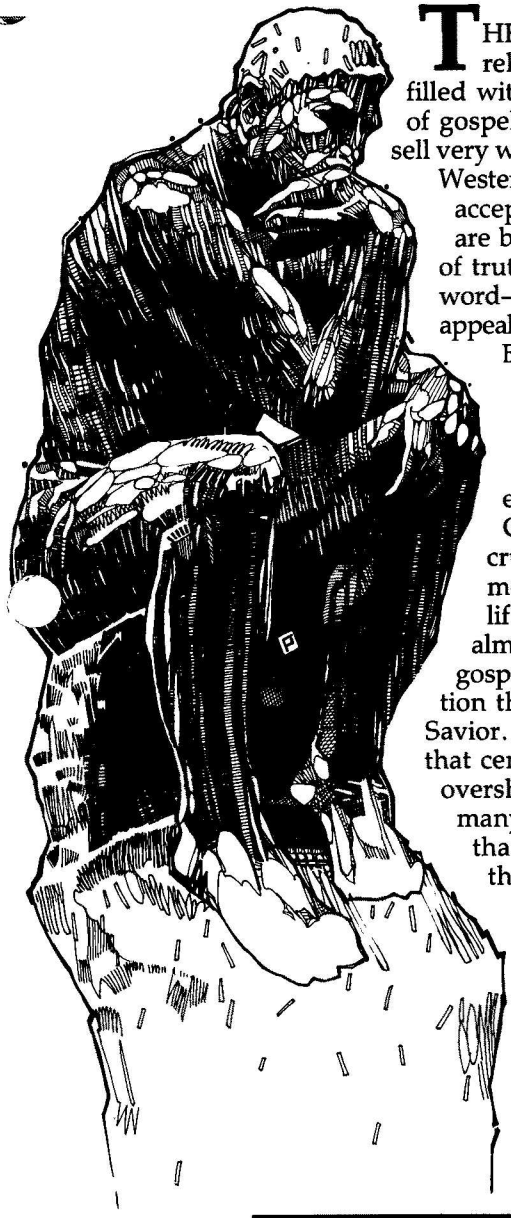
MODERN FALSE GOSPELS

by Richard A. Wiedenheft

[Richard lives in Pennsylvania with wife Darlene, and children Dick and Marlene. Since 1984 Richard has been editor of The Sabbath Sentinel, *a monthly journal of the* The Bible Sabbath Association, *that serves the seventh-day Christian community (BSA, RD 1 Box 222, Fairview, OK 73737, $10). He is also pastor of the United Church of God in PA and NJ. As we print Richard's gospel article in the* **GNU** *magazine, he is publishing an interview with Dr. Ford in the January* Sentinel*—Ed.]*



THE MODERN religious scene is filled with a wide variety of gospels that seem to sell very well in our wealthy Western world. They are accepted because they are based on elements of truth from God's word—and because they appeal to human desires.

But these gospels are not *the gospel.* They fail to emphasize the overarching preeminence of Jesus Christ and him crucified as the means to eternal life. To be sure, almost all these gospels proclaim salvation through Jesus, the Savior. But they allow that central fact to be overshadowed by so many other teachings that they clearly miss the mark. Consider several of these modern gospels.

THE GOSPEL OF WARNING THE NATION

This gospel sees God's primary concern as being with the people of a particular nation or race—usually white Americans (considered by many to be the descendants of ancient Israel). While most advocates of this message allow for the salvation of people of other races, their main focus is on warning America of impending doom. They see themselves in the role of an Old Testament prophet—especially Ezekiel, who was set as a watchman by God to warn Israel (Ez 3:17;33:2-9).

On a physical level, there is certainly nothing wrong with warning a nation of its sins, of dangers from within and without. Those who expose evil anywhere are to be commended. But the *primary* concern of this gospel is physical: warning a particular physical nation of physical destruction.

The True Gospel Is for All Peoples

The gospel of Jesus Christ is for all people in all nations in all generations (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15; Acts 1:8; Rev 7:9). Those who claim to preach the gospel should be equally concerned about the salvation of all nations, races, and colors. The message of the true gospel is just as relevant to the human condition in Malawi and Malayasia as it is in Metropolis, USA. It is good news for all human beings!

The gospel of Jesus Christ is for all people in all nations in all generations

THE GOSPEL OF "THE TRUTH"

Many Christians seem to have an insatiable desire to know the truth about every aspect of religion—about theology, tradition, history and practice. Many churches and preachers appeal to this desire by claiming to have "the truth," by which they mean a *theological package,* which includes a set of rules that reveals "God's will" for just about every situation.

Those who accept this package

see their relationship with God in the context of the package. They tend to look down on those who don't "know the truth," condescendingly referring to them as deceived, blinded, or ignorant. Some even go so far as to make statements such as: "The truth of the Bible is that Jesus didn't have long hair. If you believe in a Jesus with long hair, you believe in a false Messiah."

Our security and identity as Christians must rest in our relationship with God, not in a body of doctrines we call "the truth."

Jesus Is the Truth

A quest for truth is a commendable and noble pursuit. But when the truth about a whole host of doctrinal, theological, and historical questions becomes "the truth," the central truth has been missed. Jesus Christ and him crucified is the central truth. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6). He is the truth that leads to eternal life. Christianity is to be seen in terms of acceptance of that central truth, not in terms of acceptance of a certain body of doctrines and rules.

Those who accept the truth of eternal life through Jesus should certainly seek to learn as much as they can about the truth of God's will, the truth of theology, etc. In humility, however, they will also recognize the truth that there are weightier matters of the law (Mt 23:23): the truth that we are not to judge our brothers and sisters for whom Christ died (Rom 14:10); the truth that we see through a glass darkly (1 Cor 13:12).

Weaknesses of "the Truth"

Those who proclaim the gospel of "the truth" frequently tend to be self-righteously judgmental toward those who don't accept the same body of truth. Frequently they are unwilling to admit error, or listen with an open mind to those who understand Scripture differently. Frequently they tend to emphasize truth about theological matters more than the truth about love, joy, peace, meekness, and humility. Worst of all, they fail to recognize the *primacy* and sufficiency of salvation through the grace of Jesus Christ, who is *the truth!*

Our security and identity as Christians must rest in our relationship with God, not in a body of doctrines we call "the truth." Our minds must be open to learning new insights from God's Word as he leads us (over a lifetime of growth) into all truth.

THE GOSPEL OF "WHAT YOU MUST DO"

There is no question that God expects something of those who have been saved by his grace. As children in God's family, Christians are expected to live according to the will of their heavenly Father. But that will is best seen in terms of developing divine character, not in terms of obeying a set of rules. The gospel will focus not on what we must do to merit God's favor, but on what he has already done for us—before we knew him. "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8 NIV).

Rules are important. Of course. Remember the Sabbath, Honor your parents, Thou shalt not commit adultery—and other laws of God—are for our good. They are repeated in both Old and New Testaments. They are the will of God and help us understand God's character. But obeying rules in not enough. Obeying rules is certainly not the gospel!

Examples of the Gospel of Obedience

The Pharisees kept all the rules; but missed out on God's character. In fact, Jesus said the righteousness of his disciples must exceed that of the Pharisees (Mt 5:20). He did not mean that they would have to be better at obeying rules than the Pharisees. Rather, Jesus meant his disciples would have to seek righteousness on a different plane.

The rich young ruler said he kept all the commandments—at least the ones which were easily quantifiable. Jesus searched the young man's heart, and asked him to do something which no rule, ordinance or statute required (to sell all and give to the poor). Jesus' instructions revealed the ruler's covetousness, and unwillingness to put God ahead of everything (Lk 18:18-22).

What We Do Versus What God Has Done

Any gospel that proclaims salvation through works is false. But few modern preachers would be that blatant. Rather, they proclaim salvation by grace, then go on to emphasize obedience to rules as their primary focus. One church publication I recently studied listed topics of sermons given in many different congregations over several months. Practically all had to do with obedience to God, overcoming, making oneself acceptable to God, the perfection of God's law. All titles focused on what we must do. Not one dealt with what God has done, and is doing relative to our salvation and our sonship. None mentioned grace, love, forgiveness, or the righteousness of Jesus Christ. None focused on Romans 8:1, or on the joys of being seated in the heavenlies with Christ (Eph 2:6).

One preacher boasts that his church is the only one that teaches obedience to all of God's laws—all 613 of them! Another insists that God will not induct into his kingdom anyone who is selfish and miserly when it comes to giving to the church. Where is their focus? Sadly, on works, on what we must do.

A gospel that preaches Jesus only as Savior, but not as Lord and King, misses the mark. But so does the gospel that focuses primarily on what we must do to measure up to God's perfect will.

THE GOSPEL OF SUCCESS AND WEALTH

This gospel sells only in wealthy, Western nations, among people who already have a measure of wealth or who aspire to attain much more. It just would not do well in Uganda, Romania or Indonesia. This gospel focuses on comfort in this physical world, taking principles mentioned in Scripture and turning them into absolute promises. It could be called the "contract gospel" because it seeks to make a business deal out of a relationship with God: I accept Jesus and obey God's laws, and God promises to bless me. If I tithe, I'll be blessed financially; if I obey God's physical and spiritual laws, I'm promised good health and success. This gospel claims to be the means to success and happiness in this world, and sees the same as proof of God's pleasure.

There are certain elements of truth in this gospel. A person who lives in harmony with God's laws will escape many of the physical curses of sin. However, there are major fallacies in this gospel. It takes Old Covenant promises out of the context of God's relationship with Israel (Dt 28,29) and makes the gospel out of them. It teaches that if we obey God, he is bound by his Word to bless us physically.

Believing the end is near can keep us on our spiritual toes.

From the New Testament, a simple greeting to Gaius is taken to be a general promise to all Christians (3 Jn 2). Jesus' statement about having life and life more abundantly is taken out of context and used as a promise of physical wealth and health (Jn 10:10).

Saints Without Success!

Too bad so many of Jesus' early disciples didn't get in on this good deal! Consider James—beheaded. Peter—imprisoned and martyred. Stephen—stoned to death. Paul—imprisoned, tortured, stoned, shipwrecked, martyred. Consider many of the saints mentioned in Hebrews 11—stoned, sawn asunder, tortured, destitute, persecuted, maltreated, living in caves. Somehow, those faithful saints missed out on the good life.

Please do not misunderstand me. God is not against health and wealth. As a rule, those who live in harmony with God's spiritual and physical laws are going to benefit in a material way. Certainly, they will avoid the curses that automatically come to those who sin. But some who accept the true gospel suffer throughout life as a direct result of choosing Jesus as Savior, Lord, and King. Paul, who himself suffered, wrote, "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Ti 3:12). The primary message of the New Covenant is one of spiritual benefits, of freedom from the wages of sin (which is eternal death).

True Health and Wealth Is Forgiveness and Eternal Life

The gospel of health and wealth is really an extension of humanity's quest for happiness through materialism, except that now the God of the Bible is used as a means to gain physical wealth. This gospel puts the primary focus on "making it," here and now. It is contrary to the true gospel which proclaims a spiritual kingdom, and a message of "making it" for all eternity.

Jesus Christ's *primary* purpose in coming to this world was not to provide a means to health and happiness. Rather, he came to be the means to forgiveness of sins and eternal life. The gospel of health and success, though based on elements of truth, misses the mark.

THE GOSPEL OF ESCHATOLOGY (ENDTIME EVENTS)

Peter warned of scoffers who would say that the end of the age would never arrive (2 Pe 3:3,4). Another extreme has plagued the church from its beginnings down to this day: preoccupation with the presumed imminence of the end of the age. Dates have been set for the return of Christ time and again throughout the history of the church. So far, all such dates have been incorrect.

The church today has it full complement of prophets of gloom and doom. Some of them have been reading the "signs of the times" and preaching "the end is at hand" for many decades.

False Eschatology Can Create Fear and Disillusionment

Believing the end is near can keep us on our spiritual toes. But a preoccupation with eschatology can detract from the *primary* message of the gospel, which is eternal life through Jesus Christ (Jn 3:16; Rom 6:23). The gospel of eschatology, with its preoccupation with prophecies, dates and signs, tends to divert attention from the primary importance of salvation from sin and eternal death. It encourages concern with protecting oneself physically, rather than spiritually, with being raptured to a place of protection in order to escape tribulation. It creates motivations based on fear.

In addition, when endtime scenarios do not work out (all but the current crop have already proven false), when decades go by and the end still has not arrived, people motivated by this gospel tend to become disillusioned spiritually. The very message intended to stir people to zeal (or perhaps to get them to contribute to the church) can end up causing them to backslide. The gospel of eschatology is vital only as long as its proponents can keep people convinced that they are living in the end. The real gospel is vital at all times and for all eternity.

The True Gospel and Commitment

All the false gospels mentioned above do contain elements of truth that should not be ignored. But these elements are not the gospel. They must not in any way be allowed to overshadow the message that citizenship in the kingdom of God, and relief from sin and eternal death, is available only through the person and work of Jesus Christ alone.

Paul told the Corinthians he resolved "to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2). Oh, that there were such single-minded commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ in our day! □

Potpourri

EXCEPTIONAL RADIO RESPONSE IN CAROLINAS

GNU meetings in Hendersonville, NC, November 13-14, 1987, were the largest ever. Over 100 crowded into the social hall of the Christian Missionary Alliance Church to hear Dr. Desmond Ford conduct five meetings on THE CROSS AT CORINTH. Many first-time attendees were present in response to Dr. Ford's 9:15 p.m. Monday-Friday radio program on WMIT 106.9FM, Black Mountain, NC. People attended from Georgia, Tennessee and Virginia, as well as North and South Carolina.

The meetings were characterized by an excellent spirit, and the gospel emphasis of Dr. Ford's presentations was much appreciated by all. A Question-Answer period was included. A sixth meeting, Communion, completed a long and rewarding Sabbath.

Gillian Ford was present by special invitation. A group member paid her fare. People love to have Gill travel with her husband because she's a lot of fun, and because of her PMS expertise.

Videotapes of the weekend have been copied and circulated by a local supporter, to the enjoyment of many. Meetings are being planned for next year, and early June has been tentatively selected.

Dr. Ford preaching at Hendersonville, NC. Standing at the video camera, Bill White; sitting beside him, Doug Wood, both from Wofford College. Doug sang for the group.—Photo by Ann White.

NEWS FROM TORONTO

—From Bev Connors

"Good News indeed. Groups and families from Michigan and New York State joined more than 100 Ontarians for the series on Corinthians given by Dr. Desmond Ford in Toronto, October 23 & 24, 1987. Comments were positive and enthusiastic even from visitors who haven't heard him in several years:

'That man really knows the gospel.'

'I like two things especially: he knows the gospel, and just loves the Lord.'

"Over the weekend, Dr. Ford outlined Paul's anguish over the worldly church at Corinth whose problems were in many ways those of this generation of believers. What a spiritual banquet was served, with a dazzling array of morsels to be savored and relished. (Oh, what food these morsels be!) Jampacked revelations of Christ; and the sweetest of messages: that none who eat at Jesus' table will ever get their just des(s)erts.

"The feast was followed by a potluck prepared by the ladies of the Toronto Good News Fellowship. This meal gave an opportunity for a good visit, and for many to engage the indefatigable Dr. Ford in conversation.

"There was a new wrinkle this trip. Dr. Ford arrived a few days early and visited in private homes in Oshawa and Oakville with groups of twenty or so, and the conversations in each place were heartening.

"Thirty-four copies of Dr. Ford's new book *Worth More Than a Million* were quickly sold. WMTM is available from the Toronto office of **GNU**, and copies of all five sermon presentations from this series are also available.

"Dr. Ford's next visit to our area will likely be in June, 1988. We'll notify you in plenty of time to allow you to make plans to be with us then."

SPECIAL DAY AT GNU FELLOWSHIP

November 21, 1987, was one of those extra-special days at the **GNU** Fellowship in Auburn, CA. Regular plans for the Lesson Study and Worship Service were the same, there was no potluck, but somehow everything came together in a unique way, and everyone was especially enriched.

Dr. Ford preaches at the Auburn, CA **GNU** Fellowship, and records the January Tape of the Month at the same time.

The occasion began with good attendance. Fifty were present (including the babysitter) which is very good for small-town Auburn. Christians get encouraged when others attend. The sun was shining after several grey days, and everyone sang their hearts out at Song Service. During Announcement/Sharing Time, people began to speak up, openly and honestly. Person after person expressed their close interest in the Fellowship—their part in it, their joys in it, their hopes for it. Roger and Millie Wolcott were visiting from Tacoma, WA, and brought a wonderful cheering spirit with them. They were thrilled with the group, wishing they had one of their own to attend.

Dr. Ford preached on "The Most Mysterious Prophecy in the Bible," an intriguing sermon on "the abomination that desolates" (to be released on the January Tape of the Month). Dr. Ford's Ph.D thesis on that topic is the only book in the English language in that category!

The refreshing spirit continued after the service when many were able to eat together and fellowship.

An excellent, memorable day. No doubt, something special cannot happen every time. It is the blessing of God that it does happen at all.

ATTEND BRISBANE GOSPEL CONGRESS!

Space is still available for those wishing to travel to Australia/New Zealand with Dr. and Mrs. Ford, April 23-May 10, 1988. Plans now include special opportuntity to attend the Gospel Congress at Brisbane, May 6-7. If you have not yet made your final decision, please communicate with Marilynn Badzik immediately. By mail: 170 Twin Ponds Lane, Lincoln, CA 95648. By phone: (916) 645-8208.

GNU 1988 MEETINGS AND APPOINTMENTS:

CONCORD, CA
January 19, 1988
"California Tonight"
8:00-9:30 p.m., KFCB TV 42

SACRAMENTO, CA
February 10, 1988, 7:30 p.m.
National Health Federation

RANCHO CALIFORNIA
February 19-20, 1988
1st. Baptist of RC
42101 Moraga Rd.
Temecula, CA 92390

CLEBURNE, TEXAS
March 11-12, 1988

HENDERSONVILLE, NC
March 11-12, 1988
(Roy Gee)

AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND
March 20-May 12, 1988

SPRINGFIELD, MO
Drury Inn
May 20-22, 1988

CAROLINAS
June 3-4, 1988

TORONTO, ONTARIO
June 10-11, 1988

WILLIAMS LAKE, B.C.
July 1-2, 1988

SANTA ROSA, CA
July 15-17, 1988

CHATTANOOGA, TN
July 29-31, 1988
Southern Inn

ITASCA STATE PARK, MN
September 16-17, 1988

CAROLINAS
October 14-15, 1988

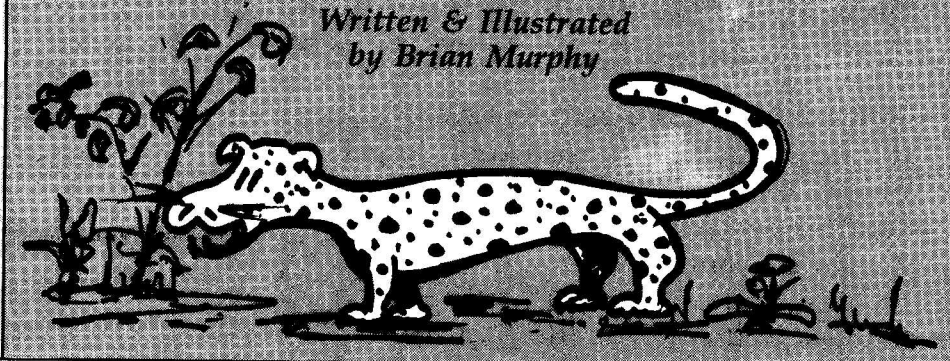
WASHINGTON, D.C.
October 21-22, 1988

Good News for Kids

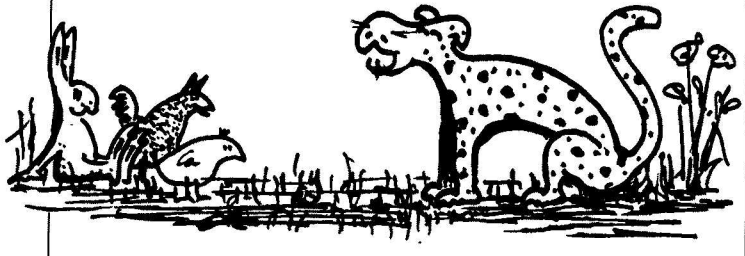
This month's issue of ***Good News For Kids*** *is all about spots. Our first story is by Brian Murphy, our New Zealand expert on spots (the best spots to go fishing in the South Island, that is). There are no leopards in New Zealand, as there are no snakes or mosquitoes, and I don't believe Brian has been to Africa, so he is no expert on leopards. As to this story, I believe he made it up, probably after he got covered with spots of paint at his work as a commercial painter.*

LENNY THE LEOPARD
Who Popped His Spots

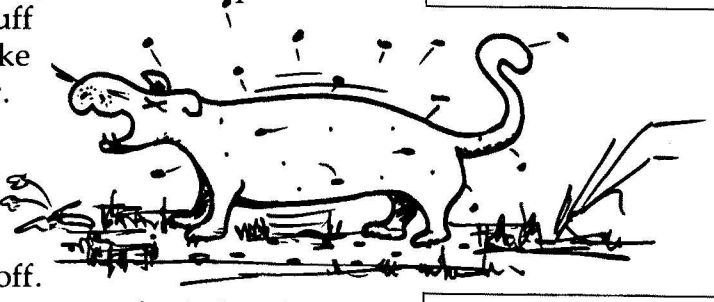
Written & Illustrated by Brian Murphy

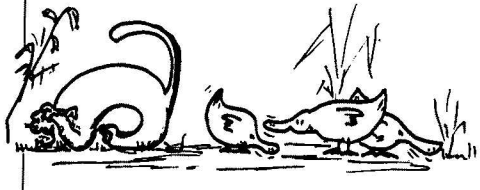


LENNY WAS A VERY fine young leopard. His coat was sleek and yellow, and he was covered in lovely black spots.

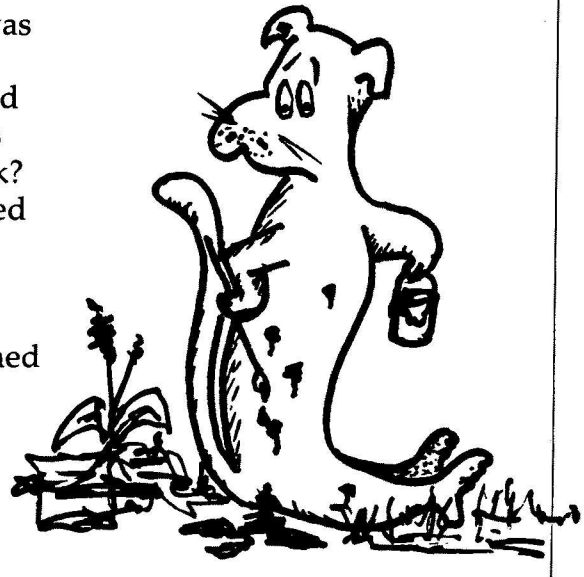


He was very proud of his spots, and when he could get someone to listen, he would boast about his beautiful spots and then he would puff himself up to make them even bigger. But one day he puffed too much, and stretched his skin so tight that his spots popped off. Lenny covered his eyes and cried. What was he to do now? How could he put his spots back on? While he was crying, some ducks came along and ate all his spots up.



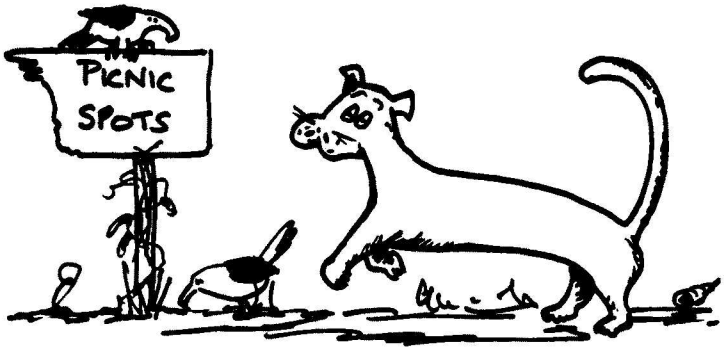


What was he to do? How could he get his spots back? Lenny tried painting some on, but they only washed off in the rain.



He tried catching the measles.

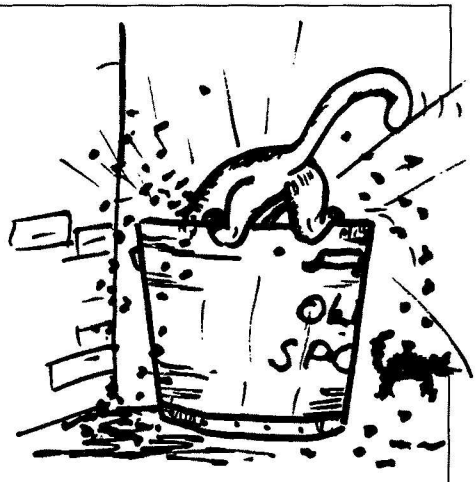
But ended up with the mumps instead.



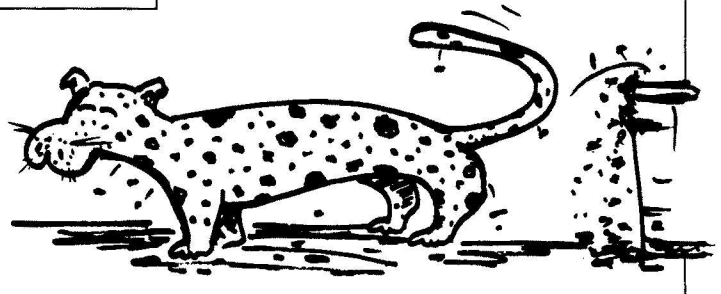
One day he saw a sign that said, "Picnic Spots," so he rushed off to get some of them.

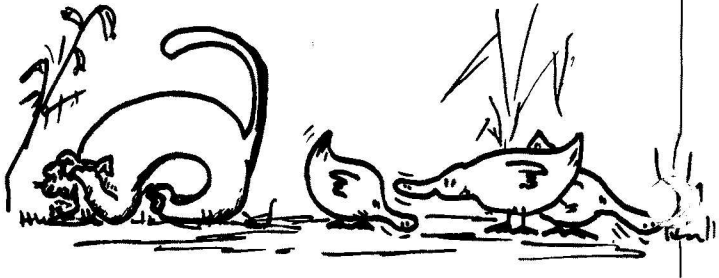
But no one seemed to want to tell him where they were, and all he could find was ham sandwiches.

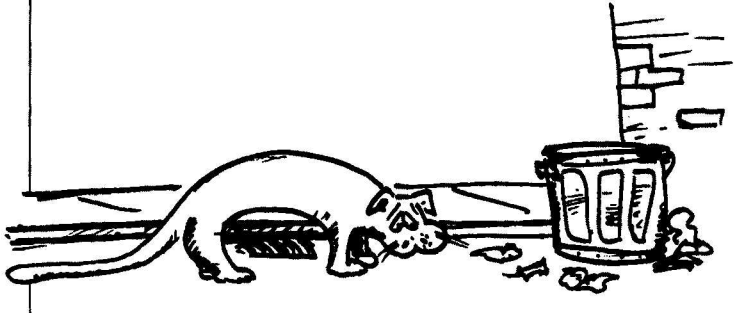
"At last," shouted Lenny, "some spots, some spots!" and he dived head first into the big tin. He rolled over and over inside, then jumped out and shook himself.



My, wasn't he pleased. His new spots were bigger and brighter, they were all different colors, and there were more of them than he had before.







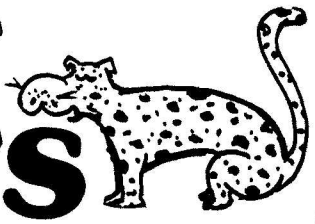
Poor Lenny. How could he get some spots? Why, a leopard wasn't a leopard without spots. He even went into the city to see what he could find—and then he saw it!

In the backyard of a dry cleaner's, a big tin filled with old spots the cleaners had removed.

And if you were to go into the forest today, you would probably find Lenny telling all who will listen how he got rid of the old spots (that he didn't really like) and replaced them with better ones! Which of course he deserved—Hmm!

The End

SPOTLIGHT ON SPOTS



by Gillian Ford

NEVER MIND, Lenny. It's not so bad to be without spots, or at least, WITHOUT SPOT. The Bible says so. Using a King James Version Bible, match the passages below with the book, chapter and verse listed. Ask someone who knows their Bible well to help you. Look up the books and trace a line to the text with which it belongs.

Numbers 19:2	How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself WITHOUT SPOT to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.
Job 11:15	Thou art all fair, my love; there is NO SPOT in thee.
Song of Solomon 4:7	That he might present it to himself a glorious church, NOT HAVING SPOT or wrinkle, or any such thing
Ephesians 5:27	Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, WITHOUT SPOT, and blameless.
1 Timothy 6:14	That they bring thee a red heifer WITHOUT SPOT.
Hebrews 9:14	For then shalt thou lift up thy face WITHOUT SPOT.
1 Peter 1:19	But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and WITHOUT SPOT.
2 Peter 3:14	That thou keep this commandment WITHOUT SPOT, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What do you think it means to be WITHOUT SPOT?

Gillian Ford

HOW TO CURE A BAD SKIN CONDITION

by Brian Murphy

ONCE GOD SAID to me (I'm a holy man, by the way), "Go and buy yourself a linen belt and put it round your waist. And, whatever you do, don't get it wet!" I did as I was told.

Then God came round again a second time and told me to take it and hide it for him in a crack in a rock. He told me exactly where. Again, I did it.

Things were quiet for a while till God came round again. "You remember that nice belt you hid in the rock for me. Would you mind fetching it for me again."

I cried a lot over my people—they were a bunch of silly sheep. God told them what would happen to them if they didn't change their ways.

At first, I didn't understand why I had to do all these things, but I obeyed God anyway. When I went and found it, it was a real mess, just ruined. "What a shame!" I thought. I began to suspect it was

all done to make a good parable and I was right. God said to me, "These people you preach to in Judah are supposed to be like a fine belt I'd tie to myself and hold close. They were supposed to be a nation who stuck to my ways, followed my words, and loved my wisdom. But they hated wisdom and wouldn't listen to me and they ended up completely useless—like this ruined belt."

You may have gathered by now that my name is Jeremiah, you know, the prophet who everyone thought was a grump. Yes, I wrote a book called Wails—you know it as Lamentations. I cried a lot over my people—they were a bunch of silly sheep. God told them what would happen to them if they didn't change their ways. They'd go into captivity to a cruel nation. "Oh," God said, "if you do not listen, I will weep in secret because of your pride. My eyes will weep bitterly, overflowing with tears because you'll be taken captive." He said, "My people will say, 'why has this come upon us?' It comes upon them because of their sins."

We'll have to leave Jeremiah here. I'm afraid he's crying again. You can see why Jeremiah is a sad man, and why his book is so sad.

It's right in the middle of all this, that you can read the verse about Lenny and his spots. Don't laugh, I'm serious. It says in the book of Jeremiah, chapter 13 and verse 23: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil."

I like the version, "Can the Ethiopian change his spots, or the leopard his skin," but the editor of the big folks' magazine threatened to cut it out, so I won't use it.

• • • • •

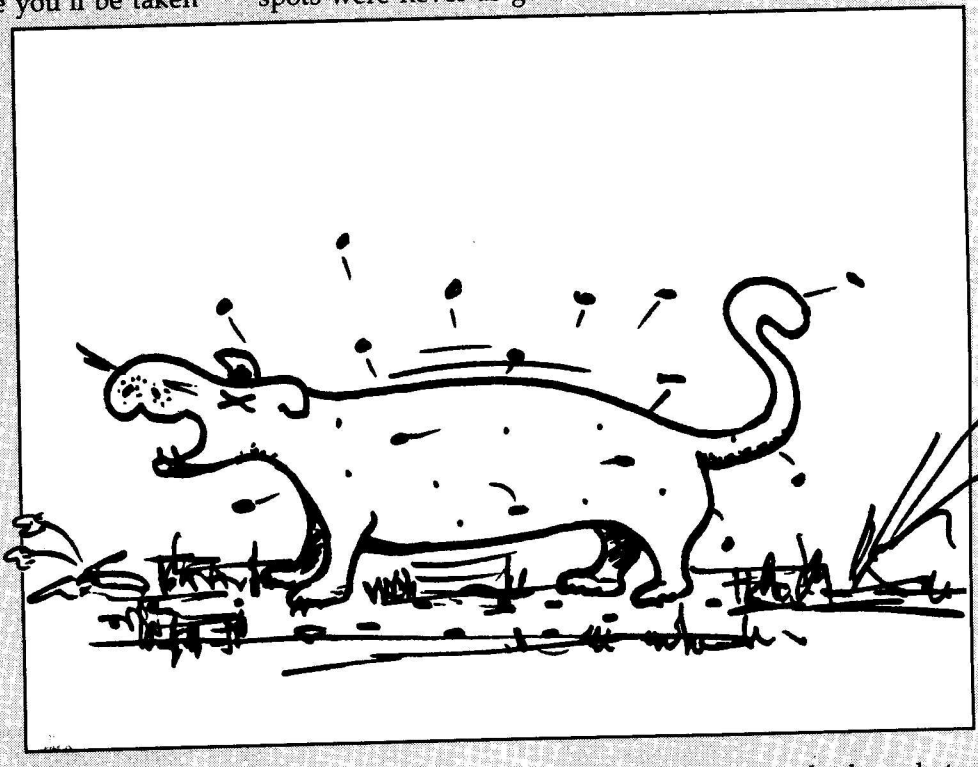
It's as difficult for people to stop sinning as it is for a leopard to change his spots.

• • • • •

The text means that it's as difficult for people to stop sinning as it is for an Ethiopian man to change his black skin or a leopard his spots. That makes it impossible (Lenny's substitute spots were never as good as the lot he was born with.) But what is not possible with humans, is possible with God. By believing the good news about Jesus' life and death, and with God's grace to help us, we can stop doing evil. When we accept Jesus, we take part in his death and put our sins to death. Not in a final way—we still fail, and our lives are by no means perfect. But our hearts are set in a different direction. We want to please God and do his will, for Jesus' sake. We learn to hate sin.

If you've become a Christian, don't think fighting sin is no longer like changing skin or swapping spots. It's still a battle. And it can be very painful—ouch, pull that skin off, graft another bit on, Ooh! Cut out that spot and sow another in. Stick-ons don't work. Don't think it won't hurt!

Don't think because you're a Christian you will always make the right decision or always be right in an argument. Don't think you can never do anything wrong. If you do, you're going to surprise yourself one day. Many Christians think God must be on their side and if they mouth the right words, they can't make mistakes. That's why Christians can be so touchy, so determined to have their own way, so insensitive to other people feelings, so sure they are always right in an argument.



We don't want to be like that, do we? Of all people, those who claim to love Jesus should bend over backwards to have his attitude, to be kind and patient and self-forgetful. Let's ask Jesus to give us his mind, to change our skin, our spots and our sins, and put all of us in good condition. □