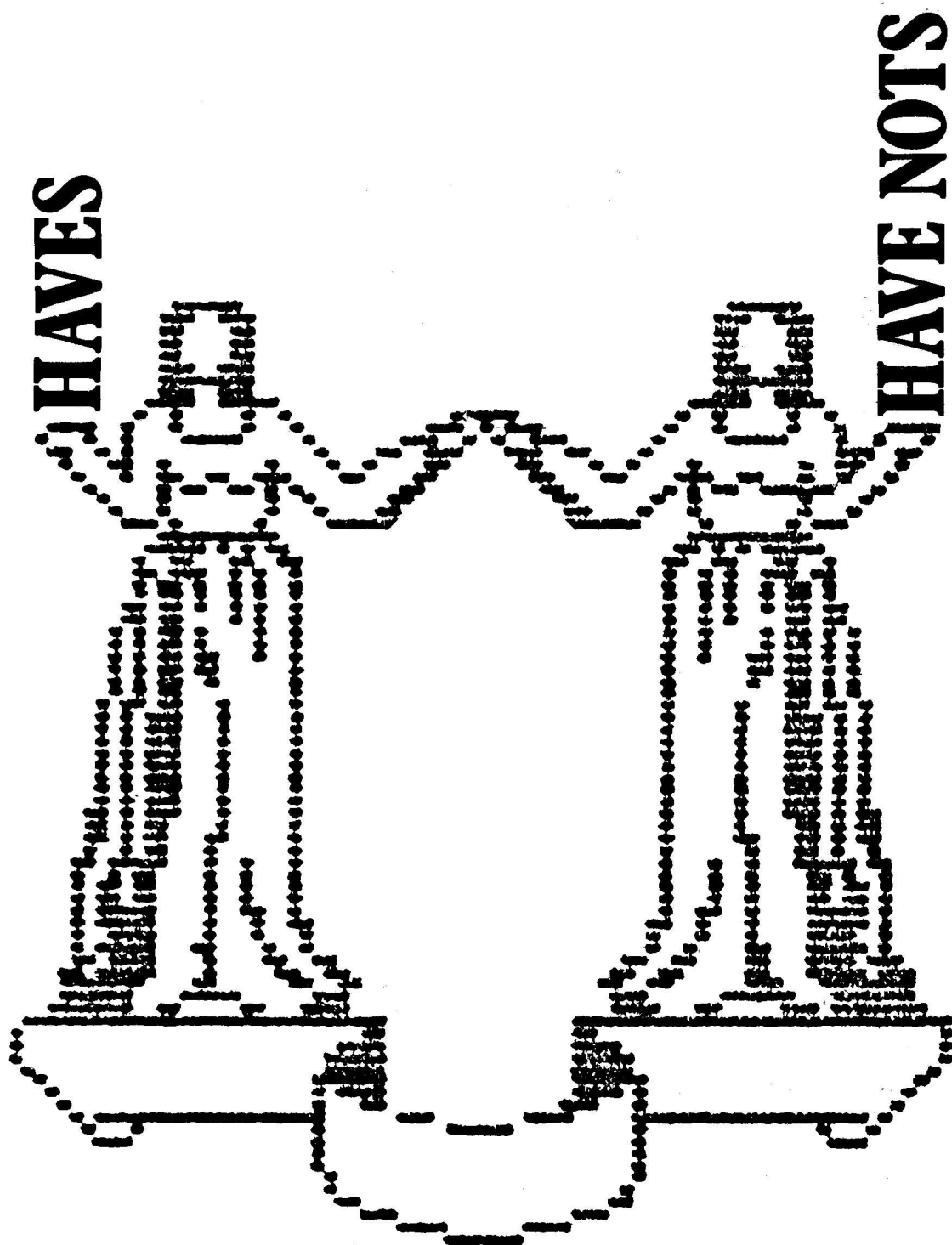


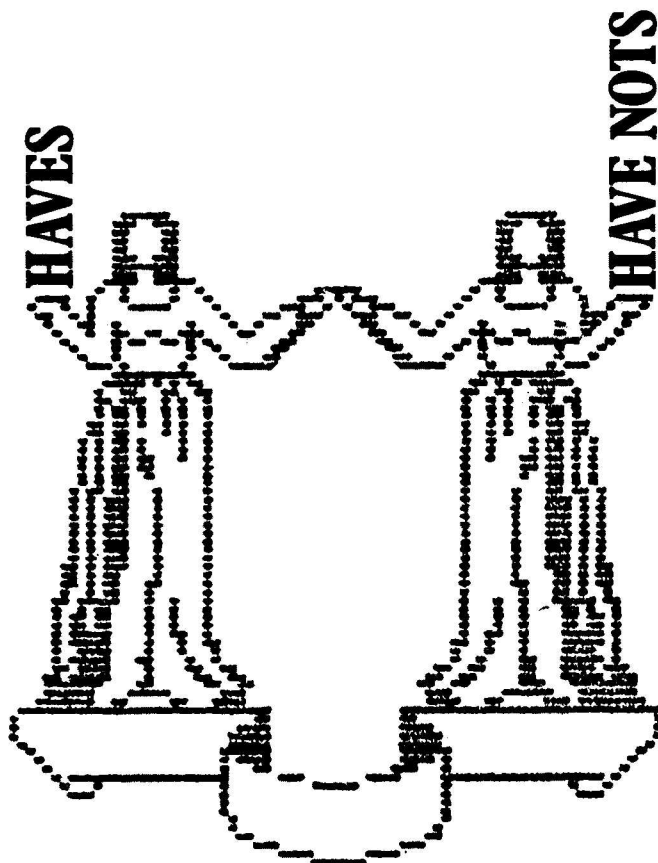
GOOD NEWS

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A U S T R A L I A





Editorial

"Winston, you're drunk," said Labour MP Bessie Braddock, and she must have regretted it immediately, for Churchill's reply was: "Bessie, you're ugly. And tomorrow I shall be sober."

"They are full of new wine." (Acts 2:13) Peter's retort lacks the Churchillian rudeness, but is nonetheless instructive: "These men are not drunk as you suppose, but are filled with the Spirit." (see vv. 15-16).

The mockers at Pentecost could scarcely escape the force of Peter's words. He had likened those first charismatic Christians to their Old Testament forerunners—the Nazarite warriors.

Filled with the Spirit, the Nazarites eschewed strong drink. (Num 6:4) Samuel was probably a Nazarite. So was Samson. Sporting long hair, they were scarcely effeminate. Men such as these were heroes on the battlefield.

Whatever we are to make of the miracle of Pentecost, one thing seems clear enough: it was not an occasion for introspective navel gazing. The outpouring of the Spirit was a summons to war. Little wonder that the Spirit withdraws himself when the church militant forgets her marching orders!

Articles in this issue by Des Ford, Ron Allen and Paul Porter are based on addresses given at the recent GNCM Gospel Congress entitled "By My Spirit." They do not pretend to be the last word on a controversial topic. But if they serve as a springboard for renewed thought, discussion and commitment, their goal will be achieved. In addition to the above, we are pleased to include articles by some of our regular contributors: Keith Sandars, Dave Wood and Flora Mia.

Paul Porter.

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A lot of people in USA make money by helping people come into ownership of possessions they never knew they had. This article may do the same for you. Remember the OT verse about possessing your possessions? That's what we are about. Millions of Christians regularly pray "Our Father" and then act and mourn like orphans. We need not. Jesus said, "I will not leave you orphans." Jn 14:18. What then did He leave us? We know he left his mother to John, his clothes to his crucifiers, his peace to the faithful eleven, and his spirit to his Father. What did he leave us? Himself! For the next sentence in Jn 14:18 is "I will come to you." He comes through the invisible but omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent Spirit.

Christianity is a unique faith. Some religions are too transcendent-making God seem ever so distant. Other faiths are too immanent-pretending that in the natural heart God already resides. Christianity offers a God who is both immanent and transcendent. We have God over us-the Father; God for us-the Son; and God in us-the Holy Spirit. How rich we are! We need never feel inadequate, lonely or fearful. What a heritage! This is the meaning of Christ's premier promise made on that dark night when all seemed gloomy-work given, but the conquering Captain departing-the commission issued, but power apparently withdrawn. Apparently! In reality the real power henceforth would be wherever any single disciple worked and prayed and trusted.

You have heard of the meaning of the word "Comforter": one called alongside to help. It means that God is alongside the believer to help him or her under any and every emergency, trial, or mundane activity. Never left to our own resource! Always having the necessary strength, wisdom, power and love. What a treasure!

CHRIST'S PREMIER PROMISE

Desmond Ford

Have you noticed that the richest chapters on the Holy Spirit in the Gospels are John 14 and 16? Between them is the chapter on the vine. But this too is about the Holy Spirit. We are the branches but the Holy Spirit is the sap. "Apart from me you can do nothing" says verse 5. But the opposite is also true. With him we can do all things—all things in the will of God. As we feel our great need, and believe in his ability to supply our need, the vacuum is filled by the Spirit.

Never forget it—our supreme qualification is our great need. Acknowledge it, and the riches of heaven are yours. After Saul the persecutor walked in darkness for days, he was ready for the baptism of the Spirit. After Peter came close to suicide following his great folly—then it was he was ready to be the preacher of Pentecost. "How ready is the man to go, Whom God hath never sent. How timid, diffident and slow, God's chosen instrument." Yes, timid in ourselves but not in God. Pentecost was the Bethlehem of the third member of the Godhead. He

*We have God over us—
the Father;
God for us—the Son; and
God in us—the Holy Spirit.*



came down from heaven never to return. He is as verily on earth now besides each of us as Christ was besides the apostles in the days of his flesh. Closer still—nearer than breathing and closer than hands or feet. He has come! He is here! Call upon Him. Claim him. He is yours if you are his. But for many as in Joshua's day, there is much land yet to be possessed. For many? No. For all. None of us has yet fully attained.

See Hagar. Her waterbottle is spent. And so is her strength and hope and almost her life. But suddenly she is aware that God is there and all is changed. Then she calls him, "Thou God seest me." Not in the sense of a watching policeman but as an ever present friend desirous of being our continual help.

See the Israelites at Marah. Bitter waters. Oh, so bitter! But the remedy is there. The tree thrown into the bitter waters makes them sweet—the branch has become a tree of life again—emblematic of the tree of the cross inserted by faith into all our bitter experiences bringing sweetness and joy and health.

See that young servant. "Alas," he cries. "We are surrounded." But the prophet prayed, "Lord, open the young man's eyes." And then he saw. Oh, then he saw truly. For the mountains and the hills were filled with the protecting angels of God.

Dear friend, what was wrong with Hagar? What was wrong at Marah? What was wrong at the besieged city? It was not what seemed to be. The only thing wrong was the unawareness that God's remedy was available. Blind eyes were the problem, not the apparent difficulty. So it is often with me, and perhaps with you too. Let us ask God to open our eyes, that we might see our possessions through the Holy Spirit, the fruit of Calvary, and claim them—today!

Desmond Ford is founder of GNCM.

PENTECOST AND THE BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT

Desmond Ford

He came early in the morning, early in the week, early in the year. He came and sat upon the believers. And they spoke with tongues of flame which set the world alight and infused a warmth into cold hearts everywhere.

And so He is still willing to come. **EARLY!** And he comes to "sit"—to rest upon us—to reside for ever. He is not standing eager to depart as I am when I say to my wife, "Come, let's go." Thus he signifies that our Saviour has completed his atoning work and has sat down as a king at the right hand of God from whence he sends to us the angels and the Spirit.

Yes, Christ is not standing, ever toiling like the levitical priests. No, his work is done. It is finished! What is? The reconciliation of the world. See Rom 5:10. It was while the Jews were still in Egypt that the passover lamb was slain and it was while we were yet sinners that Christ died for us. Halleluia! And they spake in tongues. Thus the divisions of Babel were healed. Instead of the disharmony which results from sin and breaches social harmony, now all is the reverse. Now we can talk to one another—in tones of love and grace.

Remember how Christ breathed upon his disciples before he left this world? Read the record in Jn 20. This was reenacting Gen 2:7. When man was first made, he was filled with the Spirit of God with his physical breath. At the Fall man lost the indwelling Spirit but with the rebirth he comes again—purchased for us by the redemption of the cross.

Acts 1:8 gave the table of contents for Acts and the program for the church in all ages. Believers receive power and go forth to witness—not to argue like lawyers

but to tell what they know, what they have witnessed. We have seen that he is good and that he is love. We witness to that.

The first verse of this book spoke of all that Jesus began to do and teach. Now we have what Jesus continues to do and teach—through his disciples and through the Holy Spirit. Read Acts 14:27 onwards for about seventeen verses. See how God is declared to be the author of all good things. God opened the door of faith. God chose Paul. God gave the Holy Spirit. God cleansed hearts by faith. God did signs and wonders. God visited the Gentiles, etc. Yes, God is the great doer. He is the one great circumstance of life and he either matters supremely or not at all.

See the message the Spirit gave. Always about Jesus. Read 5:42; 2:22-36; 13:38ff; 10:43. Did the apostles proclaim merely the demands of the Sermon on the Mount? Did they present only Christ's holy character and matchless life? If this had been the case, then Christ himself, in the days of his Judean ministry, should have gathered his followers by the thousands. His later followers in preaching would have gathered only hundreds by comparison inasmuch as the reality should have been more powerful than the mere report. But the opposite is true. The disciples won the thousands, not Jesus. Why? Because the apostles, filled with the Spirit, preached the significance of Christ's life and death in a way that had not been possible before Calvary and Pentecost. They told of the forgiveness of sins, of the resurrection of the body, and of the life everlasting—all made possible by the atoning death of God's Son. "To him give all the prophets witness that everyone who believes in

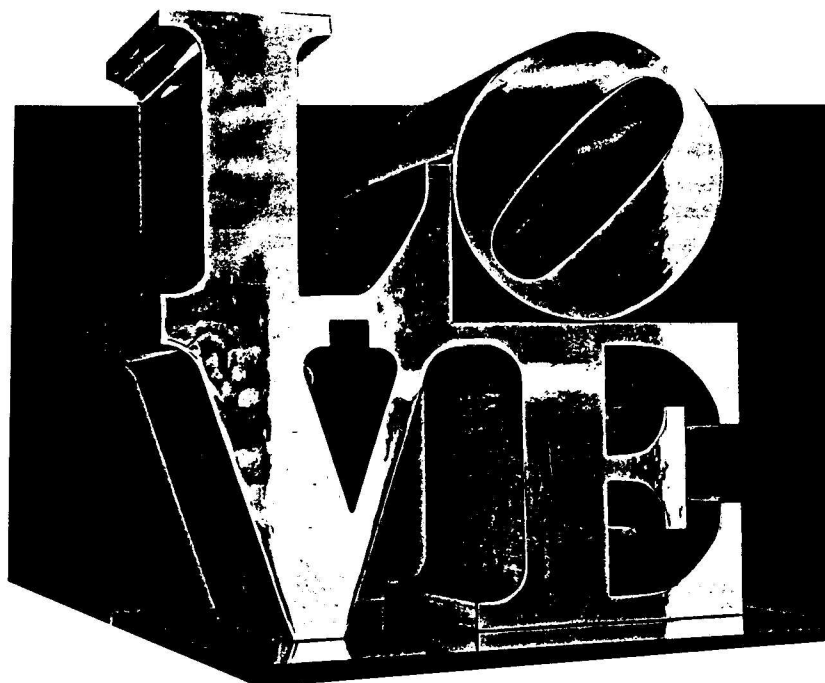
him receives forgiveness of sins" (10:43).

The apostles under the influence of the pentecostal Spirit saw that objectively, Christ is all, and that subjectively, faith is all. Man's salvation and acceptance with God are not something we attain but something we obtain. See Rom 5:17—"we who received"—not "we who achieved."

The pentecostal Spirit is all through Acts. He is named about seventy times. In chapter one, he is the Spirit of promise. In two, he is the Spirit of power. In three, he is the Spirit of healing. In four, he is the Spirit of boldness. In eight, he is the Spirit of judgment. In nine, he is the Spirit of comfort. In ten, he is the Spirit of guidance and in eleven, the Spirit of prophecy. And so on.

1 Cor 12:13 asserts that all believers have received the baptism of the Spirit. He does not always come as to Paul, with lightning and cataclysm. No, more often he comes as to Timothy who from a child had known the holy faith. But he comes to all who believe. We cannot even believe without him. Scripture says, "It is given to you to believe." The fact you trust in Jesus means he has come to your heart already by the Spirit.

Do not be so preoccupied with the mantle that you take your eye off the Master. Elisha got a double portion of the Spirit by watching intently the Master and refusing to permit anything to divert his gaze. Thus he received the double portion. So it can be with us if we focus supremely on Jesus—not on self, or our brother or sister in the church. Jesus only. Only when Elisha had gone over Jordan was he allowed to make request. See your death in Christ's death, for you were crucified with him. Then the pentecostal Spirit is yours.



WHAT ABOUT TONGUES, HEALINGS AND OTHER SPECTACULAR GIFTS?

Despite the record of the experience of Elijah in the desert, we still too often long for the lightning and the thunder. Who wants a still small voice? Nothing dramatic about that. But the strongest thing in the world is the sunrise. Nothing can stop it. But so silent. So with the coming of the Spirit. So with the working of the Spirit. Only occasionally does he work with thunder and lightning. Therefore do not long for the spectacular gifts as though they were the most important. They are not. We live in an age dying of boredom. Thus the mad preoccupation with sex, movies, drugs and gambling. Hungry dogs will turn over any garbage can and now as in the days of besieged Samaria many feed on offal.

Miraculous gifts and clusters of miracles work by way of attestation to a new era of divine work. Thus it was at the Exodus, the days of Elijah and Elisha, the Babylonian captivity, and the launching of the Christian church. Apart from these four eras miracles are scarce in Scripture. Heb 2:3 indicates that in profusion they were things of the past by the second

generation of Christians. They are meant for times of crisis. We have a God who can work miracles at any time, and it is right to pray for God's miraculous intervention, provided we, like the Saviour, always add, "Not my will, but thine be done." In non-crisis eras, God usually answers prayers by miracles of providence rather than by violating his own laws. What shall we say of tongues? There were two types—those that needed interpreting as in 1 Cor 14, and those that didn't as in Acts 2. The first section of 1 Cor 14 is clear that tongues-speaking was for the individual's heart rather than his mind, and the latter verses of the chapter hedge about its public use with restrictions—restrictions often ignored today. Much that poses as tongues-speaking today is not the genuine article. "Seek not, forbid not" is the Scriptural counsel. For there is a far more excellent blessing— even that of unselfish love. Read carefully the last verses of 1 Cor 12 and then the opening ones of 1 Cor 13. They speak for themselves. Satan wanted God's power but not his character. Many professing

Christ also seek his power and not his love.

Since the apostolic age none of the great eras of soul winning has ever been marked by tongues on the part of God-moved evangelists. The Reformers did not speak in tongues, nor Wesley, not the great missionary leaders, nor Billy Graham. The world is not converted by tongues-speaking but by speaking the truth intelligently and in love. So it is not surprising to find that the Gospels are silent as to tongues. (The last verses of Mk 16 in the KJV are not in the original manuscripts.) And only one epistle refers to tongues and there with somewhat of a douche of cold water.

Yes, tongues shall cease, says the apostle, (1 Cor 13:8); riches will perish, laurels wither, beauty will fade, the fires of genius are soon extinguished, the proudest of human monuments crumble but love never faileth. Love is forever. Therefore seek love. His name is Jesus. He is love. To have Him in the Spirit is to have true love.

Desmond Ford

Desmond Ford is founder of GNCM.

THE GIFTS AND THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IN THE 20TH CENTURY

There are five lists of spiritual gifts in the NT. See 1 Cor 12:4-11; 28-31; Eph 4:7-12; Rom 12:3-8; 1 Pet 4:10-11. About twenty gifts in all are mentioned but strangely no one is found in all five lists and thirteen of them are mentioned only once. For example, evangelists are only listed once.

So what? It means that the lists are not complete—they are representative only. All natural faculties are capable of becoming under the blessing of God spiritual gifts. Charles Wesley's song writing was as much a spiritual gift as the preaching of his brother. And you will notice that some of the gifts are very mundane such as helps, giving, speaking, etc.—mundane, but not cheap or unnecessary or unimportant. The God who called Jeremiah and Paul from the womb so knew all of us too, and gave us our native talents which become newly directed and intensified when we receive the Spirit of God. It is obvious from reading Romans 12 that some of the gifts like giving and showing mercy are also known in unbelieving communities. But when one receives the Spirit there is a heightening of all our abilities and they are directed

in fruitful paths that transcend anything we have hitherto known.

I well remember writing fictional stories for *The World's News* and *The Daily Sun*, but how much better to write about the gospel!

The record is clear that every believer has gifts and equally clear that the gifts are to be exercised for the common good. In one well-known story about a prisoner in

we owe for the space we occupy and some of us are behind with the rent.

But more important than the gifts are the fruit of the Spirit. The gifts can be counterfeited but not the cluster of fruit. The fruit of the Spirit is love. Yes, all the fruits named are aspects of love. Joy is love in ecstasy. Peace is love at rest, patience is love holding the reins, kindness is love at work and

so on. The best evidence you are a Christian is your reflection of the love of God. A saint is someone who makes it easier to believe in God.

I know an old lady who could not even spell many of the words I use, let alone understand them, but her loving heart compared with mine is like an ocean compared to a puddle. And she helped lead me to Christ.

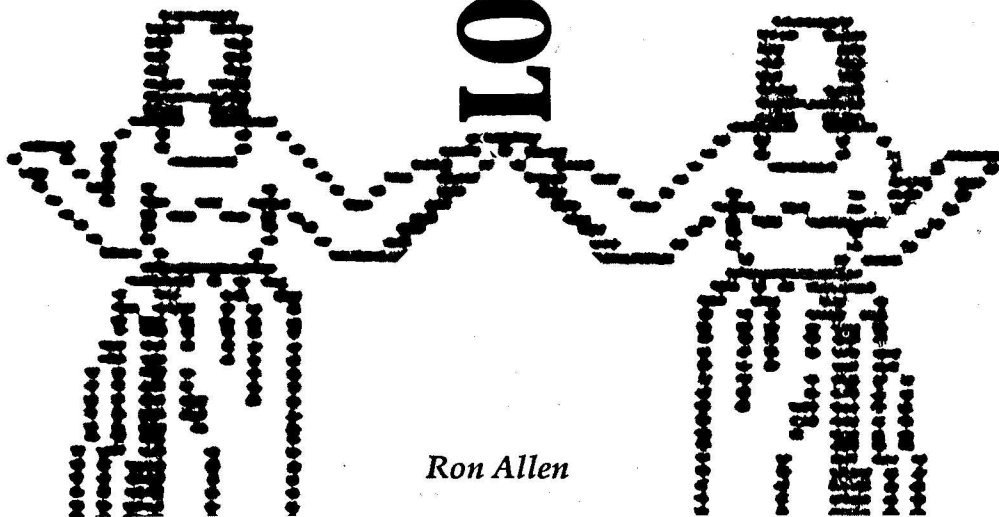


Desmond Ford

solitary in Devil's Island there is a significant dream. The prisoner dreams he is in court and the judge solemnly affirms, "You are guilty of the most terrible of human crimes—a wasted life." We were born to serve. Service is the rent

We face an unbelieving world. It will not always be persuaded by our sermons or our admonitions, but some will be convinced by glimpses of heaven seen in the everyday lives of the sons and daughters of God. To this end let us seek the renewed filling of the Spirit each day. He can and will do what otherwise we could never accomplish, for with God nothing is impossible.

LOVE



Ron Allen

THE MOST EXCELLENT WAY

Chapters 12 to 14 of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians indicate that there were people in the church who were quite "revved up" about tongues. It is apparent also that others in the church did not exercise this gift and were less than enthusiastic about its use by others. So there were what can be called a "tongues party" and a "non-tongues party". We can refer to them easily by using the names "haves" and "have-nots."

It appears that the "haves" were wanting to elevate their gifts to the point where it became the exclusive evidence for spiritual life. This would have distressed the "have-nots" because it amounted to a judgement against their Christianity.

In 1 Corinthians 12:3 the apostle lays down a principle that both parties can use. He says that a person who speaks by the Holy Spirit will never repudiate Jesus. The Holy Spirit always makes a person receptive to Christ's lordship. A spiritual person will be ruled by Christ. The acid test, revealing who is subject to Christ's rule, is not to be found in spiritual manifestations. Rather, there is a fail-safe way to prove genuine spiritual life—the way of love.

In ch. 13 verses 1-3, Paul shows that exotic speech, prophecy, philanthropy and even martyrdom can all be practised without love. In

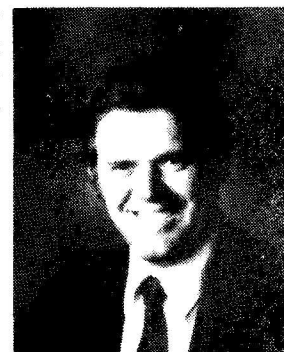
love's absence, all of these things amount to nothing. To the "haves" and the "have-nots", Paul is saying that these things by themselves tell nothing about a person's experience with God. Without love a person might manifest all kinds of powers and still be spiritually bankrupt.

If Paul were addressing the modern church, he might say, "You who claim a supranormal presence of the Spirit because you felt your body tingling at His coming in—You who have found that you have healing powers—You who say that God is in your meetings because the singing and the music is so alive and full of spontaneity and joy—You who think that God must be in your life because you were knocked flat on your back, so what?! These things are indifferent. They tell nothing. That which must be in your life or your fellowship as evidence of God's presence and power is love. Love is the most important of the gifts. Love gives depth and meaning to all the gifts." It is quite easy to minimise the strength of Paul's argument in chapter 13 because we think we

know what love is. But Paul is not discussing love as it is commonly practised. He is speaking of a love that is patient, kind, never envious, never rude or boastful. He speaks of a love that is not self-seeking, nor easily angered—that keeps no record of wrongs. A love that always protects, trusts, hopes and never gives up! Such a love as this is unique. It is not common in the world. In fact, it is nowhere to be found except in the history of Christ and—to a far lesser degree—in those who belong to Him. Those who confess Jesus as their Lord begin to learn this love, and it is the one infallible test of Christian life.

Tongues, healings and other gifts can all be duplicated in paganism. But a love such as this can never be duplicated. It is central and irreplaceable in spiritual life.

It takes the dynamism of God to stem the flow of human selfishness and teach people to love. Why look for evidence of God's mighty presence in signs and wonders such as dreams, visions, tongues and prophecies? When it comes to what is essential in spiritual life, love is indispensable but gifts are not.



THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING

Ron Allen

Sunmyung Moon is a self-styled messiah who claims he is God's messenger. Many people regard his words as the words of God. Perhaps you have also heard of David Berg, leader of the Children of God. He refers to himself variously as Moses, David or a latter-day prophet. The Mormon church believes the writings of Joseph Smith were transmitted to him by an angel of God. The Book of Mormon is said to be more reliable than Scripture because its origins are more recent. Instinctively we are suspicious of such claims, and rightly so. However, similar things are becoming commonplace in mainstream Christianity today. All over the world there are Christians who say that they receive messages from God, either through dreams, impressions, or directly-spoken words. But if these modern revelations are genuine they present a problem. What is their relationship to the Bible? Is the revelation that broke into the world in the history of Jesus Christ and His apostles still in progress?

In the first three verses of John's first letter we read, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ."

"That which was from the beginning." This is a formula repeated by John several times in his letter. It is clear that he means Christ and the proclamation concerning him: "we proclaim to you what we have seen and heard."

John establishes an important principle supported by other New Testament writers: what the apostles received from Christ is foundational, revelatory, and unique. The witness of those who were with Jesus before and after his resurrection is unrepeatable. In the book of Acts the twelve apostles are displayed as witnesses to the world of Christ's resurrection. They are entrusted with the message. Eventually Paul is included in the apostolic function and with him the Gospel makes its way to the Gentile world. All the time the apostles are the custodians and controllers of the message of life.

The apostles were the primary eyewitnesses to the career of Jesus. They had a special role in salvation history. Paul himself says that the church is "founded on the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone" (Eph 2:19,20). What the apostles taught is linked to the Christ event. Similarly, the author of Hebrews (chapters 2,3 and 4) speaks of the "salvation that was first announced by the Lord and confirmed by the apostles who heard him." The supreme revelatory event was Christ. That revelation was eschatological. That is, it was consummate, final. What the apostles taught and wrote was indissolubly bound up with that revelation. So attached is it that it too is authoritative and final.

In the Gospels, Jesus linked the

disciples to himself eschatologically. For example, the twelve are represented as the nucleus of the new people of God. They would "sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Mt 19:28). They, too, were to be baptized with the eschatological terrors that will be unleashed upon Messiah (Mk 10:38,39). Their names would be inscribed on the foundations of the new Jerusalem.

Paul also saw himself as an eschatological figure. He believed his mission to the Gentiles was part of God's program for the last days (Rom 9-11). The finality of Christ invested the work of the apostles with the same finality. The once-for-allness that is the salvation revealed by Christ, applies also to the witness by the apostles to that salvation. Consequently, the New Testament remains the authoritative revelation of Christian truth. When the last apostle died the time had come for the Christian revelation to close. The historical deed of Christ and the inspired exposition of that deed by his apostles constitute the "faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Paul calls this body of truth the sacred deposit; sound doctrine; the message (2 Tim 1:14; 4:3,17). John calls it the "Word of life", "that which was from the beginning."

In the churches of the New Testament era people with revelatory gifts such as prophecy or knowledge were not allowed to speak unchallenged. Their messages were to be weighed by the church and were bound to be subordinate to the authority of the apostles (1 Cor 14:29-37). Individuals in the Christian body today, who are not willing to be subject to the same

THE STRENGTH OF WEAKNESS

Ron Allen

strictures and who claim divine authority for their pronouncements, challenge the all-sufficiency of the New Testament gospel.

According to John the apostolic proclamation was the Word of eternal life. Believed on, it was able to bring a person into fellowship with God (1 Jn 1:3). The saving event that brings God and man into spiritual union cannot be excelled. The message that announces that privilege cannot be excelled either. Those who claim that God has spoken to them, informing them of things in addition to the apostolic word, must be regarded with some suspicion. The revelation that is sufficient to grant persons passage from death to life needs no supplement. We need no other controlling revelation than the one that brings us life eternal.

"See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us—even eternal life" (1 Jn 2:24,25).

Startling things are reported these days in some Christian circles. Miraculous healings appear to be common. Christians tell of supernatural happenings such as prophesyings and words of knowledge. Still others speak of receiving messages direct from God, which transmit to them information about people's lives, health or sins. Those involved in this super-Christianity explain it by saying that the power of God has come upon them. Almost without exception, they say that before they graduated from ordinary Christianity to a life of spiritual power, theirs was a boring, flat, Christian experience. They had been waiting and hoping for "something more" from God!

There was a time early in the history of the pentecostal movement when speaking in tongues was accepted as the sign of the presence of God's Spirit. But nowadays tongues are only one among many signs and wonders. Exponents of signs and wonders claim that they are a necessary ingredient in successful evangelism. A recent spokesman declares: "Traditional evangelistic witness presents the Gospel primarily through rational arguments. Such a presentation is incomplete because it lacks the demonstration of the kingdom of God in signs and wonders. In message-centred evangelism people do make decisions for Christ but they do not encounter His power and frequently they do not move on toward a more mature faith." Apparently for such Christians the power of God is known to be operating only where supernatural events are taking place. Those who are not in the sphere of signs and wonders are immature

and weak. Is this true?

In the introduction to his letter to the Romans, Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Rom 1:16). He says he is *not* ashamed precisely because the gospel in Paul's world was a shameful thing. The centrepiece of the apostle's proclamation was "Christ crucified" (1 Cor 1:23). There would have been no shame in preaching "Christ". The world then and now loves a messiah. But Christ crucified? The two words are a contradiction. Who hails a messiah who has been subjected to public disgrace? Who thinks of Richard Nixon as a potential world leader any more? Paul says that the message of the cross is "the wisdom of God and the power of God" (1 Cor 1:18). A man lashed to a wooden stake with spikes in his hands and feet does not appear very powerful. His condition bespeaks abject weakness. Everyone looking on thinks it is weakness and shame. But there is something unique about the weakness of Christ crucified. It is the "weakness of God" (1 Cor 1:25). And "the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength" (1 Cor 1:25). On the Cross, God showed his power by showing his weakness. There is immeasurable power in the weakness of God. This is a great mystery. The gospel which is powerful to save has as the engine of its might the manifest weakness of the crucified One.

In the experience of Paul the Christian life was not "powerhouse, superman" spirituality. Being Spirit-filled did not mean that somehow he became more than a match for the forces that troubled

ARE PROCLAIM TO YOU
MAY WE HAVE SUCH AND HEARD



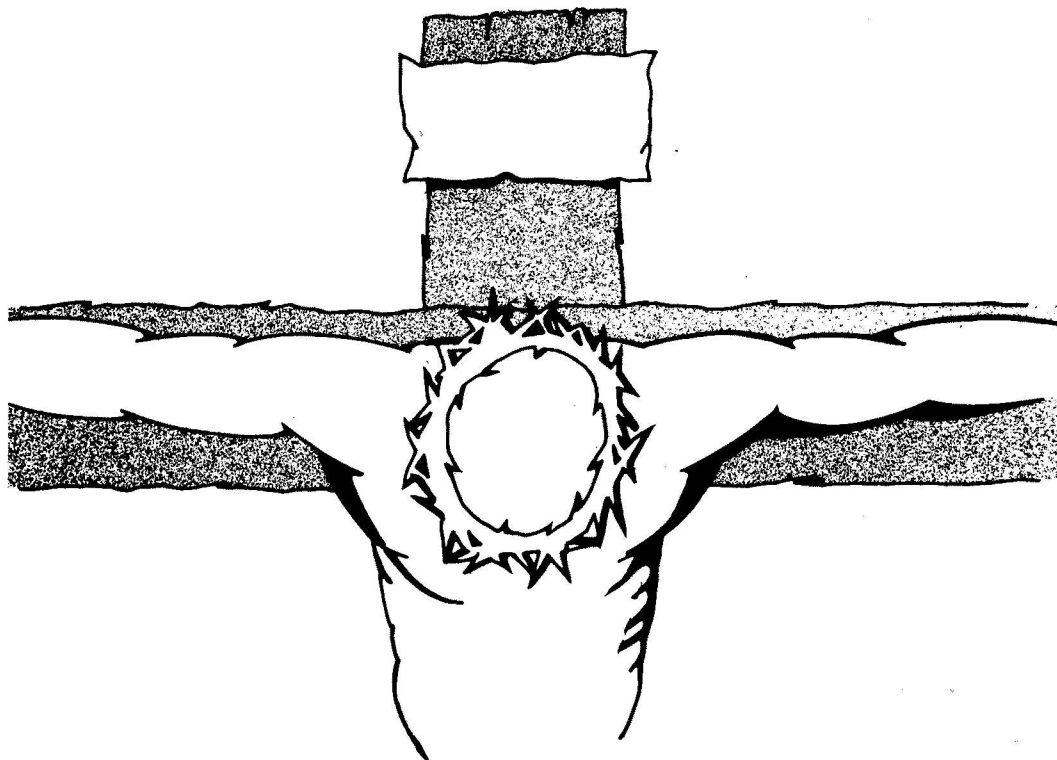
the human race. The opposite seems to be the case, in fact. Take as an illustration 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 where Paul remembers his first days, preaching to the Corinthians. He had come to them not using the skills of public address they so highly esteemed. Indeed he had come among them knowing nothing except Christ and Him crucified. He had come in weakness and fear. His message was not with brilliant rhetoric but it was a demonstration of the Spirit's power. This was in order that the faith of the converts might not rest on human wisdom but on God's power. The message was Christ crucified and the weakness of the human instrument meant a more convincing demonstration of the power of God. There are many who think they haven't heard a powerful sermon unless the speaker was loud and animated—and they had goose pimples. Paul

repudiated the standard "power tools" in order that the real power not be lost.

A similar truth is taught in 2 Corinthians 4:7-12 where Paul sees himself as an earthen jar carrying the Gospel treasure. For him there is a broad discrepancy between the treasure and the jar containing it. He explains this discrepancy thus: "We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our bodies." We know from this passage what kind of life that was. It was a life of persecutions and perplexities, of being struck down and given over to death. The life of Jesus revealed in Paul's body was in truth a living death. Just as the death of Christ set the scene for his resurrection, so the weakness of Paul—the struggling, humiliated, inglorious dying life—was the vehicle for the expression of resurrection power. Elsewhere Paul says

that he died daily. Christianity is a constant experiencing of the resurrection because it is a constant dying. Being a Christian is to hope in the midst of despair; to be hard-pressed but not crushed; persecuted but not abandoned; it is light in the dark and songs in the night; it is grace abounding where sin abounds; beauty springing from the breast of pain; strength in and through weakness. Such will be the experience of one who is in the power of God. To be a believer is to be in fellowship with the weakness that is stronger than strength. Unbelief says, "No, I want more than this. I want power to flatten all my foes and obliterate all difficulties." Such ambition takes a person away from the cross. The power of the cross cannot be excelled.

Ron Allen is Australian Director of GNCM.



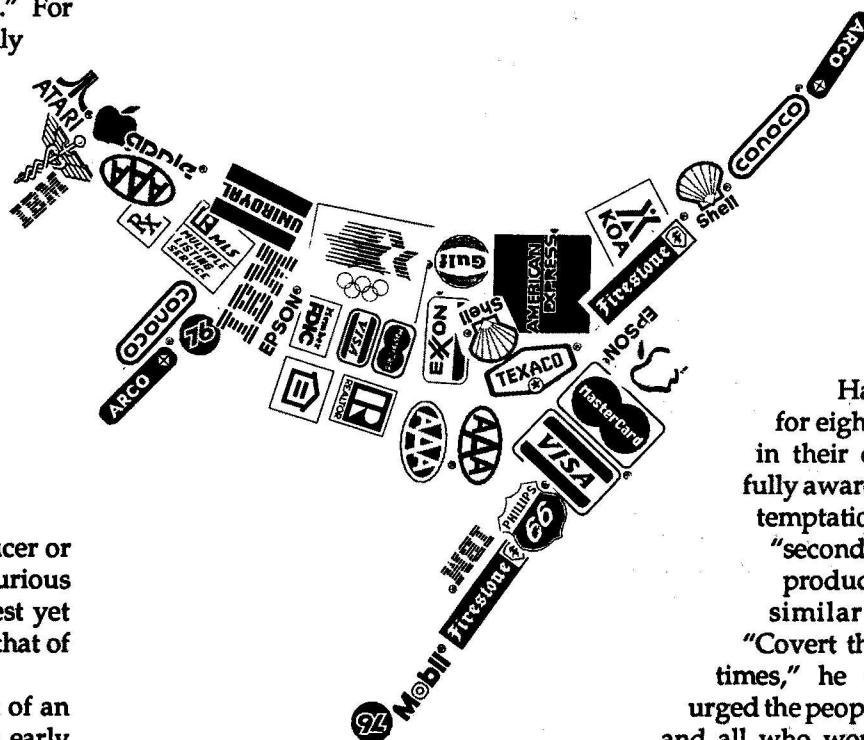
*Everyone looking on thinks
it is weakness and shame.
But there is something
unique about the weakness
of Christ crucified.*

Keith Sandars

Josiah Wedgewood, the son of an English potter, lived in the early 18th century, and after an assiduous apprenticeship and years of endless toil as a potter, he discovered a mixture of clay and flint which produced the fine pottery which bears the family name even to this day. The story is told how Josiah moved about his factory carrying a small metal hammer. Any article in which some flaw or defect was detected by his expert observation was taken from the shelf and with one tap or blow the pottery object was smashed into a hundred pieces with the same exclamation, "Only the best is worthy of the name and mark of Wedgewood." This was the standard set, and consequently only the best was and is produced from those potteries which bear his name. When you come to think about it, those people who have achieved their goals, their ambitions and their dreams are those who have aimed high and have made their mark the best. The person whose aims and goals are below standard may also achieve, but the result is

When St Paul wrote to his friends in the ancient city of Corinth, he bore in mind the great temptation

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My wife and I were talking about the book of Genesis the other day, and she remarked that it's just as well that the opening stories are symbolic rather than literal because they don't make a lot of sense psychologically. For example, if you want your child to behave, you don't put an unopened parcel in the middle of his bedroom, shut him in the room and then tell him not to open the parcel! But that's what God seems to do when He plants the tree in the middle of the garden. A literal reading of the story makes it hard not to sympathize with Adam and Eve.

(I go to an Asian church every Sunday and someone there remarked it's a pity Adam wasn't Chinese. A Chinese Adam would have eaten the snake instead of the apple!)

I have just suggested that the story of the tree is not psychologically sound, but maybe it is at a deeper level. The tree is made by God, and in this regard it is holy, just and good. But this seemingly good thing leads men and women into sin.

We all know of preachers' kids who have gone bad, or of sheltered country teenagers who are seduced by the city lights. Similarly, the apostle Paul spoke of the Jew who boasted in his knowledge of the law but who caused the name of God to be blasphemed among the gentiles. These are his words: *But if you call yourself a Jew and rely upon the law and boast of your relation*

to God and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed in the law, and if you are sure that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—you then who teach others, will you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law, do you dishonour God by breaking the law? For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you" (Rom 2:17-24).

What Paul is describing is the legalistic mindset. The paradox of legalism is that regulated worship and morals can actually propel a person in the wrong direction. The British actor Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree intuitively sensed this when he was introduced to a certain Jewish novelist. This is how he described him: "His face shining like Moses, his teeth like the ten commandments, all broken."

An old anti-Catholic joke describes the same phenomenon. Young Patrick Doolan visits the parish priest to make confession!

Patrick: "Father, I have a great sin on my heart."

Father: "Was it Mary O'Shannesy?"

Patrick: "Nay, Father."

Father, voice lowered: "Was it Brigit O'Hara?"

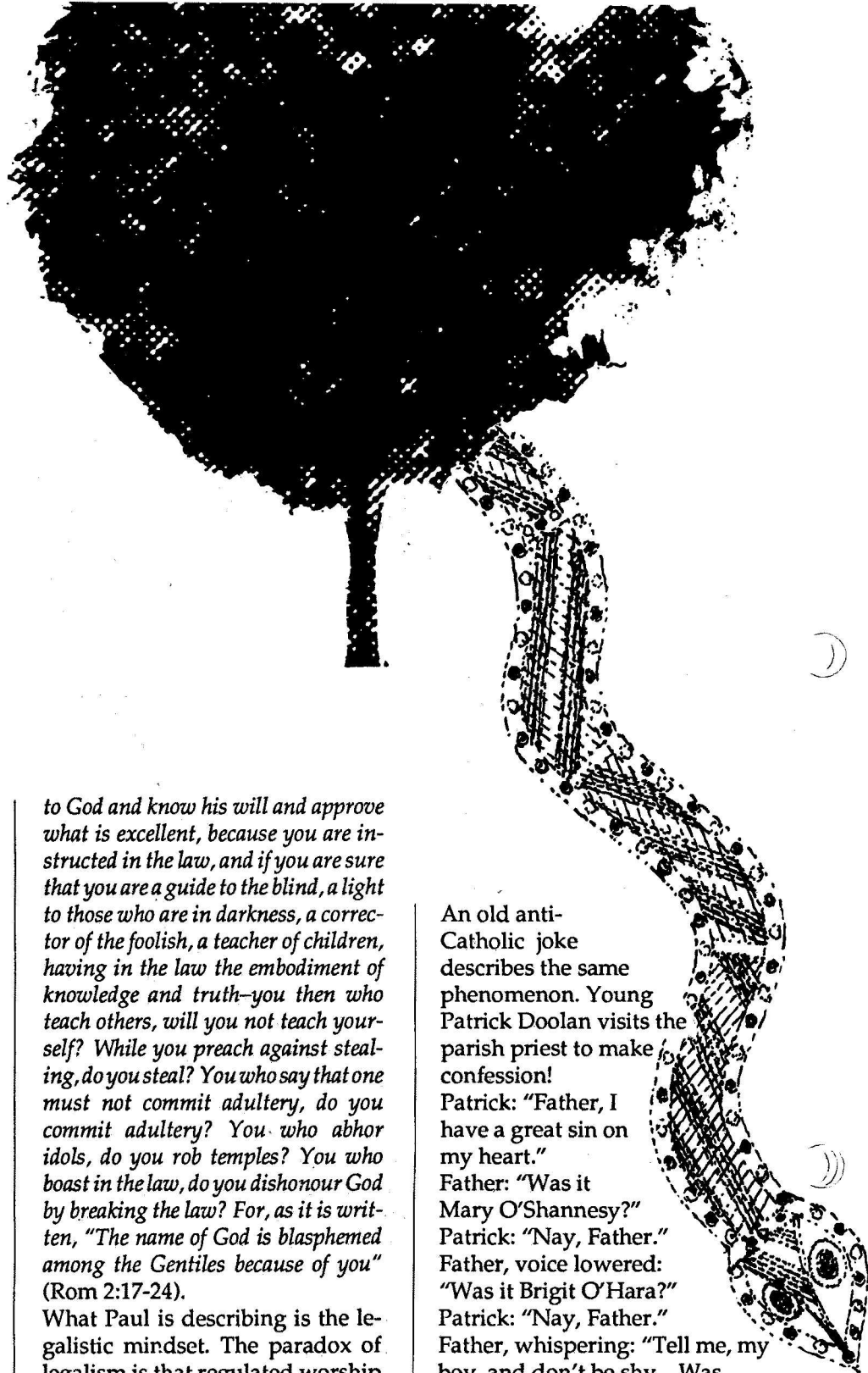
Patrick: "Nay, Father."

Father, whispering: "Tell me, my boy, and don't be shy... Was it... was it Bernadette O'Reilly?"

Pat's chums are waiting outside the church. "Well," says one, "did ye confess to Father?"

"Aye," says Pat, "and I got three good names."

If the confessional gives Pat "three good names", the decalogue gave the Jews "ten good sins". The Jews



later expanded the commandments to 613 laws. That makes 613 good sins.

We generally think of a legalist as someone who tries to do the right thing for the wrong reason. And it is also commonly believed that when Paul contrasts the "letter" of the law with the obedience of the "spirit," he simply means that Spirit-led Christians keep the letter of the law out of love for the gospel. I have held that view for many years, but I doubt if it's correct. I changed my mind after examining the three instances in Paul where the "letter"-"spirit" antithesis actually occurs. The passages in question are Rom 2:29, Rom 7:6 and 2 Cor 3:6.

Let us now examine these three passages, one at a time.

(1) Romans 2:29

But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the SPIRIT, and not in the LETTER.

This passage seems clear enough. When Paul speaks of circumcision "in the SPIRIT, and not in the LETTER," he simply means that Christians in the age of the Spirit are not obliged to be literally circumcised. He has, in other words, thrown the letter of the law, (i.e. literal circumcision), out the window. If Rom 2:29 is indicative of the apostle's thinking, it is clear that Spirit-led believers are not obliged to keep the letter of the law—not even for gospel reasons.

So far so good! Nobody goes about these days telling Christians they should be literally circumcised! But the fascinating thing is that

(2) Romans 7:6

But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of SPIRIT, and not in the oldness of the LETTER.

Here "spirit" and "letter" are again contrasted, and the two terms are explicitly related to two different eras: the "oldness of the letter" has given way to the "newness of the spirit." More specifically, "letter" and "spirit" describe different ways of rendering service in the old and new dispensations respectively.

Does Paul have the decalogue in view when he says that we no longer serve in the oldness of the letter? Most certainly: in the following verse, (7:7), he refers directly to the tenth commandment. And he adds that the command actually provided sin with the opportunity to rouse in man the lust for what it forbids (7:8-11). The decalogue, in other words, provided Israel with "ten good sins."

(3) 2 Corinthians 3:6

Who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the LETTER, but of the SPIRIT; for the LETTER kills, but the SPIRIT gives life.

Again Paul has the decalogue in view: in the following verse, he refers to the "letter" which "kills" as a "ministration of death, carved in letters of stone." The two expressions are clearly synonymous. In the NT dispensation of the Spirit, however, believers are free from the restrictions of the letter.

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and

is, of course, "holy, just and good"; it was to be obeyed by those living "under the law". On the other hand, Israel's attempts to fulfil it could never lead to justification, nor were they so intended. Rather, the law acted as a harsh guardian by defining sin and increasing its sinfulness, until Jesus came to redeem those under its yoke (cf. Gal 3:23-4:5). New Testament believers, however, serve God not by complying with the "letter" but by deriving guidance and strength from the divine Spirit within.

Does this mean that Christian morals are merely relative? I do not believe so. While I believe that Christian behaviour cannot be formulated in any written code, I believe also that it springs from contact with the God who, as Christians hold, is revealed in Jesus Christ: and he is the same, yesterday and today and forever. Christian moral judgements are, after all, the judgements of those who believe the major affirmations of the Christian faith to be true; and such belief includes an appreciation of the values of Hebrew-Jewish morals. In this regard, Moses is presupposed, but not as a legal system.

Acknowledgements:

A more detailed yet highly readable discussion of this topic occurs in Stephen Westerholm, "Letter and Spirit: the Foundation of Pauline Ethics," *New Testament Studies*, vol 30, 229-248. My own view is largely derived from Westerholm. For the conclusion I

"LETTER" AND "SPIRIT" IN ST PAUL

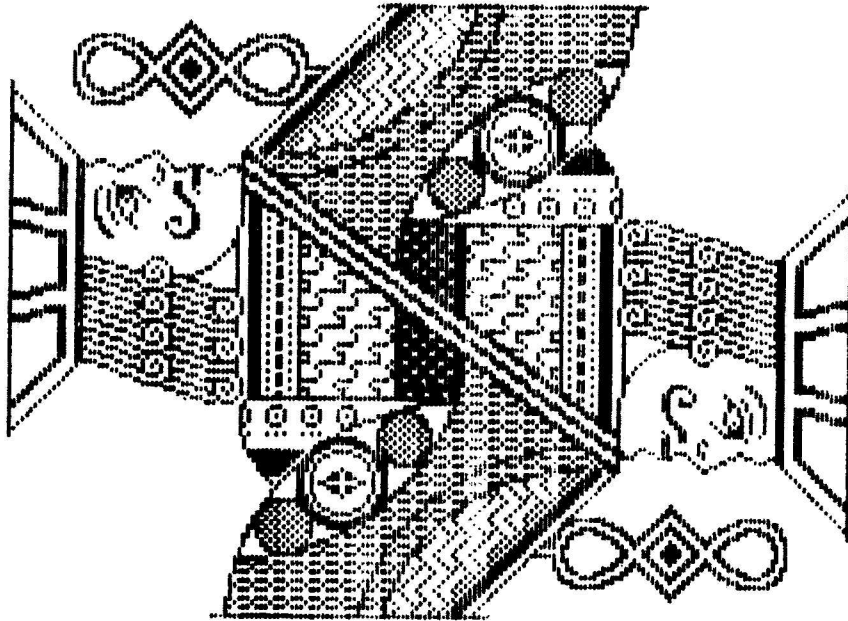
when Paul employs the "letter"-"spirit" contrast elsewhere in his writings, he clearly has the decalogue in view. And at this point, our natural reaction is to cry "foul." Surely the decalogue is sacrosanct! Here we need to do some slow, hard thinking.

where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (v.17).

Here we may conclude our study of the Pauline texts. In each instance, the apostle uses the "letter" to represent the law of God in its written form, consisting of concrete commands. As God's law, it

have made liberal use of C.F.D. Moule's "The New Testament and Moral Decisions," which appeared many years ago in *Expository Times*.

Paul Porter is manuscript editor for Good News Australia.



"It takes all sorts to make a world." So the old saying reminds us. As one looks about one's home, place of work, the club, society or church to which one belongs, we must readily admit that this is so true. All sorts and conditions of men. We are all so different in opinion, temperament and outlook, aren't we? And mind you it is just as well that we are for it would be a peculiar world if we were all cast in the same mould and were identical in our ideas and opinions, to say nothing of our behaviour. No it is individuality that gives life its real colour and character. But the key to happy and successful living is the ability for each one of us to realise that whilst our ideas and opinions are right, the opinions and view-points of others can be equally so. For many of us there is only one point of view, one answer and one solution and that is our own. We forget the other person and our whole approach becomes one-eyed and biased. We become virtually blind to the other man's point of view.

There is a quaint but true story that bears this fact out very clearly. There stood in the market place of a small town in the Midlands of England a statue of an armed warrior resplendant on horseback.

POINTS OF VIEW

Keith Sandars

Two visitors had come to the town and had approached the market square from opposite directions. Both met at the statue and gazing up at the imposing statue of the warrior with his shield and sword, one visitor commented, "What a fine statue! Such a magnificent shield of gold it is!" The other tourist looked puzzled. "I beg your pardon, but you are mistaken, the shield is not gold but silver." "I beg your pardon," retorted the other, "it is gold, you are blind." The difference of opinion as to the surface of the shield soon led to a heated argument and almost resulted in physical blows. At this point a local town identity stepped up and hearing the context of the argument quietly invited each of the visitors to change places. This they did and from their new vantage point they looked up to the shield. Each was silenced. For it was only then that they realised that each was correct, for the shield was two sided—one gold, the other silver. They shook hands and parted each

having learnt that invaluable lesson—there are two sides to all questions, even shields.

Jesus Christ constantly spoke of the acute danger of being one-sided or one-eyed. From the beginning of His teachings on the Sermon on the Mount to the close of His life, He stressed this great truth, "as we judge so shall we be judged." Throughout the course of His ministry, Christ demonstrated by his daily actions and dealings, the godly quality of Tolerance. In the Gospel accounts and Apostolic writings the constant reminder is clearly spelt out. Our standard and tolerance of others and their views is the one that God will ultimately assume and apply to ourselves.

May God help each of us at all times to realise that there are always two sides to every question and problem. Whilst formulating our own opinions and establishing our convictions, let us not be blind and intolerant to those others about us. It takes all sorts to make a world, but only one spirit to preserve it and that is the spirit of tolerance and respectful understanding.

For many years, Keith was Master of Trinity Grammar Preparatory School, Strathfield, NSW.

Dave Wood

Scott was just one of those kids that we teachers write off as a lost cause. He was pleasant enough—quite friendly in fact—but downright unteachable! Scott was the classroom clown, always ready for a practical joke or some other disruptive diversion. As an Industrial Arts teacher there was one thing of which I was certain: Scott wasn't going to make a good metal- or wood-worker. In fact, Scott was an accident waiting to happen! And it did!

I can still remember the day Scott brought the rather weighty blacksmith's hammer down on the bare face of the large anvil in the metal shop. The rebounding hammer caught him on the nose, and Scott wore a large bandage for several days; much to the delirium of his mates! Of course hitting hammers on the bare face of the anvil was one of the definite "no-nos" that all kids learnt in their introduction to the workshop.

The other occasion that sticks in my mind was the last day of Scott's woodwork career. He was attempting to devise an instant method of joining together the 8 pieces of timber which represented his year's work (and a year of my wasted effort as his teacher) with 75 mm nails. Everyone else had painstakingly cut mortice and tenon joints to make their coffee tables!

So ended Scott's High School career; no high grades, no accolades, no impressive reference, and cer-

tainly as far as I was concerned, no future.

Several years went by and I had other "Scotts" to worry about, although I often used this Scott as an example of a kid who had wasted all his opportunities at school, and to my knowledge had probably shared the fate of many of his contemporaries resigned to the fact of unemployment benefits.

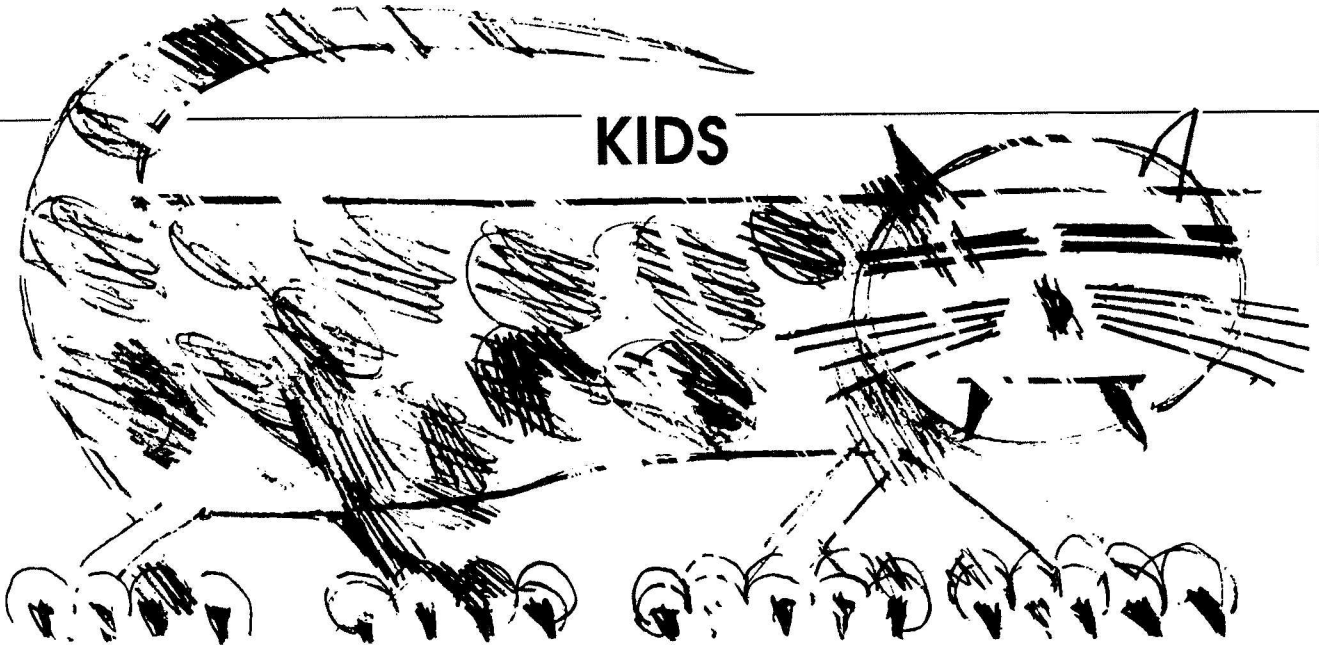
I can distinctly remember the night a tall strapping youth greeted me in the local milk bar. There was no mistaking the friendly smile; the earring and the mop of blonde hair—not to mention the misshapen nose. Indeed this was to be

a moment of truth for me, as I look back on it, for as we fell into casual conversation I discovered that this "lost cause" whom I had been so quick to "write off" had in fact not been sitting idle since his inglorious departure from school; but had just completed an apprenticeship in panel beating and spray painting. What's more he had topped his year at Tech. and been awarded "Apprentice of the Year" for his trade!

I walked out of that milk bar that night much humbled and perplexed that I had been so hasty to judge "case closed". Perhaps one of my greatest lessons for me as a teacher was that there is hope for everyone. Lost opportunities perhaps; wasted school days maybe; but there is always the opportunity to change and excel in some area in this life. Scott had found his niche. May God help you young person to find his purpose, his niche for you in 1989.

Dave Wood writes from Culcairn, NSW.

KIDS



BIG CATS

Lions, tigers and leopards are the real Big Cats. Like little cats, they make the pupils of their eyes become like slits to protect them from the sun. They hunt like cats, stalking carefully and silently. They have five toes on their fore feet and four on their hind feet. All have very sharp claws that can be pulled back into their paws. They are good parents, looking after their cubs, playing with them and licking them clean. All Big Cats pur-r-r when they are contented.

Of these three Big Cats, the leopard is my favourite. The lion has a plain tawny coat but the leopard's is a rich yellow-brown, with spots in the shape of a rosette. This makes it very difficult for anyone to spot it in the jungle because it looks like sunshine and shadows.

Although the leopard is the smallest of the three—just six feet from its nose to the tip of its tail—it is the most troublesome. Firstly, because it is so hard to spot in the bush, and secondly, it is so powerful for its size. It is also agile, alert and wary.

Leopards roam through the Himalaya Mountains in North India. Though they eat nothing but the flesh of other animals, they are not man-eaters. I have often walked up and down on those mountains at night, but

have never been attacked by a leopard. Nor have I heard of anyone who has been. I must admit that my heart almost jumped out of my skin every time I heard a rustling in the bushes! The Indian leopard eats mostly pig and monkeys in the wild. When the poor baby monkeys know the leopard is near, they cling to their mothers. All the monkeys set up a loud howl and chatter as they climb higher and higher up into the trees. They know that leopards can climb trees! Lions and tigers can't.

Leopards love the taste of dog best of all. A friend of mine let her German Shepherd out for a few minutes before locking it up for the night. The leopard took the dog but we didn't hear a sound.

When food is scarce, leopards raid the villages for sheep, goats and cattle. Usually, the villagers are happy to know that a leopard is around to kill the pigs and monkeys which destroy their crops. But when the leopard steals their own animals, they keep a fire burning all night because wild animals are afraid of fire. Sometimes the villagers keep up all night to beat their drums, loud and long, to scare the thief.

Leopards will roam through the

higher mountain ranges as long as they can find food. I have often seen 'pug marks' (footprints) in the snow. When the smaller animals hibernate and food gets scarce, they go down to the lower ranges and are sometimes even seen in the plains. One knows they are there because cattle have been stolen but very seldom has anyone seen one. On rare occasions, it has been said that they have even walked into huts at night and carried away little children. In the Himalayas, a hungry leopard, looking to make a kill during day-light hours is usually out of luck. There is a particular bird there, which the locals call the "Phe-ow Bird." This bird is usually silent; but once it catches sight of a leopard, it follows the beast, flying from tree to tree and calling out very loud, "Phe-ow! Phe-ow! Phe-ow!" again and again. It doesn't stop till the leopard leaves the area. When the little animals hear that call, they know what it means and run for shelter.

Do you know a "Big Cat" is out to get you? Do you know where to find shelter?

Read 1 Peter 5:7-10.

Flora writes from Sydney, NSW.