GOOD NEWS

AUSTRALIA

Registered by Australia Post
Publication No. WB 30048

OCTOBER 1989

"All our muddled and ever - changing ambitions wash up and round it, but it remains impassive," page 7.

Editorial

Misplaced Commas

Never despise the humble comma.

Misplaced commas have resulted in curious misunderstandings. In several editions of the King James Bible, Luke 23:32 is completely changed by the absence of a comma. In the passage describing the two thieves crucified with Jesus, the erroneous editions read: "And there were also two other malefactors." Instead of counting Jesus as a malefactor, the passage should read: "And there were also two other, malefactors."

Commas sometimes have the power of life and death. It is said that an ancient Greek, who was considering going to war, consulted the Delphic oracle. The oracle replied:

Thou shalt go thou shalt return
never by war shalt thou perish.

Optimistically placing commas after 'go' and 'return' the Greek went to war and was promptly slain. (He should have placed the second comma after 'never.)'

But my favourite story is told by Fern Bryant:

"Czarina Maria Fyodorovna once saved the life of a man by transposing a single comma in a warrant signed by her husband, Alexander 111, which exiled a criminal to imprisonment and death in Siberia. On the bottom of the warrant the Czar had written: 'Pardon impossible, to be sent to Siberia.' The Czarina changed the punctuation so that her husband's instructions read: 'Pardon, impossible to be sent to Siberia.' The man was set free." (The book of Lists, Vol 3[1893] p 176).

"Impossible to be sent to Siberia." How true! As another writer has put it: "I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:38-39).

Paul Porter

Good News Australia is published each month by **Good News Christian Ministries Limited** (Inc. in New South Wales and Queensland), PO Box 1603, Hornsby Northgate NSW 2077. Phone: (02) 653 1052
Editors: Paul Porter, Robert Cooper. **Design and Layout**: Darryl Lock. **Typographer**: Lesley Heydon **Printer**: Spartan Press, WA.
Good News Christian Ministries Limited is an interdenominational organization comprising a variety of Gospel ministries. This magazine is dedicated to proclaiming the message of Jesus Christ and His kingdom of grace. It also seeks to keep subscribers up to date on all aspects of other **Good News Christian Ministries**: pastoral ministry, preaching appointments, radio broadcasts, public seminars, congresses, audio and video cassettes, and printed publications.
Good News Christian Minitries Limited is a non-profit religious corporation supported solely by donations from those who believe in its ministries. Gifts are tax deductible in Canada, New Zealand and the USA.
Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome, but without guarantee of return. Please send typed (dot matrix OK), double spaced MSS of interest to Christians of all denominations to: Editor, GNCM, PO Box 1603, Hornsby Northgate NSW 2077.
GNCM is audited annually by a certified chartered accountant in Hornsby NSW. All regular donors may contact the **GNCM** office and request the audited financial statement.

TRUTH OR TRADITION, The Battle of Every Age

Desmond Ford

He was a teacher, writer, and preacher, well known to many. Not yet fifty he struck at traditional prejudices and refuted a long-cherished traditional doctrine. He did it in a sacred place cherished by the faithful, and in the presence of the faithful. In so doing, he awakened a storm which was to continue for years. Strangely, few, if any, of the real scholars of his communion "muttered or peeped". At least 99 percent of them saw no reason to reject what some administrators and many of the laity classified as heresy. The reverberations crossed the broad waters and stirred the minds of believers around the world. The preacher was maligned and classified among those who sought to destroy the most holy faith.

Yet he continued to minister for years. The latter end of his ministry

was more blessed than the first, and had much wider impact.

Frederic William Farrar

Who? Frederic William Farrar, Doctor of Divinity. The place of his heretical proclamation? The historic Westminster Abbey. The time? November 11, 1877. The subject? His title was: "Hell–What It Is Not". And a little later came his book *Eternal Hope*, enlarging his thesis and including his sermon of November 11.

Hitherto, Farrar had been regarded as a minister of unquestioned orthodoxy and integrity. Now, if one listened to gossip, one would readily have concluded that he had entered into a covenant with the demons of hell, and sold his soul like Faust of old. He was accused of many things that those who knew him well knew to be false. His real words were twisted and perverted and given a meaning he had never intended. So he wrote his book. He reasoned that if anyone really wanted to know what he believed, they could find it by reading rather than by listening to rumours.

"Only first you must go to the inspired original..."

The story has often been told, and his own account is found in the volume *That Unknown Country* to which he had contributed Chapter Thirteen. There he tells what happened on that dull, drizzling day. He had walked in the rain from his home to the church, fully conscious of the gravity of what he was about to do. Here are his words:

"I had to repudiate a doctrine which had been more or less universally preached by the majority of Christians for fifteen hundred years. I knew that to do so was an act which would cost me dear. I knew that during six centuries of the history of the present Abbey it was probable that no sermon had been preached which even greatly modified much less repudiated with indignation, that popular teaching about hell which seemed to me a ghastly amalgam of all that was worst in the combined errors of Augustinianism, Romanism, and Calvinism."

Farrar's Heresy

In essence, he was to assert that he did not believe and "no Christian ought to believe,–in any Hell, which can be proved to imply something very much more inconceivable, and something very much more revolting to the reasoned conscience, than anything which is alluded to in Scripture" (*Eternal Hope*, p. xiii).

He would not assert the heresy of Universalism, though he did hope that a majority of mankind might be saved. (Sadly, the present writer does not share his hopes.) Neither was he to deny the possibility of continued misery for those who willfully persisted in impenitence. The essence of his message was that the popular view of present and eternal hellfire for the lost is not a biblical teaching. He quoted Jonathan Edwards to disagree with him–"The view of the misery of the damned will double the ardour of the love and gratitude of the saints in heaven." He repudiated the popular notion that "hell is a vast and burning prison in which the lost souls of millions and millions writhe and shriek forever, tormented in the flame that never will be quenched." Farrar repudiated the infamous words from Jonathan Edwards:

"The God that holds you over the pit of hell much in the same way as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you and is dreadfully provoked.

"The world will probably be converted into a great lake or liquid globe of fire, in which the wicked shall be overwhelmed, which shall always be in tempest, in which they shall be tossed to and fro, having no rest day or night, vast waves or billows of fire continually rolling over their heads, of which they shall ever be full of a quick sense, within and without; their heads, their eyes, their tongues, their hands, their feet, their loins and their vitals shall forever be full of a glowing, melting fire, enough to melt the very rocks and elements. Also they shall be full of the most quick and lively sense to feel the torments, not for ten millions of ages, but forever and ever, without any end at all."

In his own sermon Farrar asked his congregation to "conceive an everlasting toothache, or an endless cautery, or the incessant scream of a sufferer beneath the knife, that would give you but a faint conception of the agony of Hell." And, of course, he believed in no such place.

The Horror of Hell

The preacher's words were strong. Talking about the popular descriptions of hell, he declared:

"I repudiate these crude and glaring travesties of the awful and holy will of God; I arraign them as ignorantly merciless; I impeach them as a falsehood against Christ's universal and absolute redemption; I denounce them as a blasphemy against God's exceeding and eternal love! And more acceptable, I am very sure, than the rigidest and most uncompromising self-styled orthodoxy of all the Pharisees who have ever judged their brethren since time began–more acceptable by far to Him, the friend of publicans and sinners, who, on His cross, prayed for His murderers, and who died that we might live–more acceptable, I say, by far, than the delight which amid a deluge of ruin hugs itself upon the plank which it has seized–would be the noble and trembling pity–so fearfully unlike the language of divines and schoolmen,–which made St Paul ready to be anathema from Christ for the sake of his brethren; which made Moses cry to his God at Sinai, 'Oh, this people have sinned: and now, if Thou will

Hieronymus Bosch. *Hell*, right panel of the *Garden of Delights* triptych.

forgive their sin–; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written'" (*Eternal Hope*, pp.72-73).

In the preface to his book, written within less than a year of the preaching of the famous sermon, he poured out his heart to all:

"How any man with a heart of pity in him–any man who has the faculty of imagination in even the lowest degree developed–can contemplate the present condition of countless multitudes of the dead and of the living viewed in the light of such opinions; how he can at all reconcile them either with all that he learns of God and of Christ in Scripture and by inward experience;–how–as he walks the streets and witnesses the life of our great cities–he can enjoy in this world one moment of happiness however deeply he may be convinced of his own individual salvation–is more than I can ever understand" (*Eternal Hope*, pp. xxxii-xxxiii).

Farrar also pointed out there were few among the clergy he knew who actually preached the orthodox doctrine. He declared it was chiefly ignored even if occasionally given lip service by a word or a phrase or two. Indeed, he claimed that most of the learned in their beliefs were very close to himself.

"Between me and the great majority of our most learned clergy and theologians,–between my view and that of many of our wisest and most respected bishops,–the differences are very small; and only lie within that range of opinions in which such differences are absolutely permissible" (*Ibid.*, p.xxx).

Three Dangerous Words

In his sermon at Westminster Abbey, the learned preacher's chief complaint was that the popular understanding of three words found in the King James Version, namely, "damnation," "hell," and "everlasting" was erroneous. Said he:

"I say, unhesitatingly,–I say, claiming the fullest right to speak on this point,–I say, with the calmest and most unflinching sense of responsibility,–I say, standing here in the sight of God, and of my Saviour, and it may be of the angels and spirits of the dead that not one of these three expressions ought to stand any longer in our English Bibles, and that, being–in our present acceptation of them–in the notion (that is) which all uneducated persons attach them–simply mistranslations. ... The verb "to damn" in the Greek testament is neither more nor less than the verb "to condemn," and the words translated "damnation" are simply the words which in the vast majority of instances the same translators have translated, and rightly translated, by "judgment" and "condemnation". The word *aionios* sometimes translated "everlasting" is simply the word which, in its first sense means age-long...; and which is in the Bible itself applied to things which have

utterly and long since passed away; and is in its second sense something "spiritual"–something above and beyond time, as when the knowledge of God is said to be eternal life. So that when, with your futile billions, you foist into this word *aionios* the fiction of endless time, you do but give the lie to the mighty oath of the great angel, who set one foot upon the sea, and one upon the land, and with hand uplifted to heaven sware by Him who liveth for ever and ever that "time shall be no more". And finally in the Gospels and Epistles the word rendered "hell" is in one place the Greek *"Tartarus"*, borrowed as a name for the prison of evil spirits, not after but until the resurrection; in five places *"Hades"*, which simply means the world beyond the grave; and in twelve places *"Gehenna"*, which means primarily the Valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem, and which, after it had been polluted by Moloch-worship, corpses were flung and fires were lit; and is used, secondarily, as a metaphor, not of fruitless and hopeless, but–for all at any rate but a small and desperate minority–of that purifying and corrective punishment which, as all of us alike believe, does await impenitent sin both here and beyond the grave" (*Ibid.*, pp. 77-80).

Dean Farrar often quoted from those who believed in conditional mortality. He was not in total accord with such, but was very sympathetic. He fully agreed with them there was no present burning hell for the lost. He had a considerable understanding of human nature and was able rightly to speak of "that inveterate prejudice, passing into second habit by centuries of tyrannous tradition, as invincible to all but the noblest soul." He knew also that the fear of hell is not the source of virtue and high motives for a noble life. Instead it is useless as a long-term deterrent. In our own time those trying to warn about the perils in promiscuity have found that fear acts like a drug. Like a drug its influence is temporary only.

Farrar believed that the doctrine of hell brought infidelity and temptation and misery to men. Hell appealed to the lowest motives and the lowest characters, making people the willing subjects of sad and "often puerile superstitions" (*Preface*, lxi).

Proof-Texting and Hell

We have one more admonition from Farrar, and our list from him is complete.

Phrases which belong to metaphor, to imagery, to poetry, to emotion, are not to be formulated into necessary dogma, or crystallised into rigid creed. Tested by this rule, nine-tenths of the phrases on which these views are built fall utterly to the ground. But even were this otherwise, yet, once more, in the name of Christian light and Christian liberty;–once more in the name of Christ's promised Spirit;–once more in the name of the broadened dawn, and the day-star which has arisen in our hearts;–I protest at once and finally against this ignorant tyranny of isolated texts which has ever been the curse of Christian truth, the glory of narrow intellects, and the cause of the worst errors of the worst days of the corrupted Church. Tyranny has engraved texts upon her sward; Oppression has carved texts upon her fetters; Cruelty has tied texts around her faggots; Ignorance has set knowledge at defiance with texts woven on her flag. Gin-drinking has been defended out of Timothy, and slavery has made a stronghold out of Philemon. The devil, as we all know, can quote texts for his purpose. They were quoted by the Pharisees, not once or twice only, against our Lord Himself, and when St. Paul fought the great battle of Christian freedom against the curse of Law, he was anathematised with a whole Pentateuch of opposing texts.

"But we, my brethren, are in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. Our guide is the Scriptures of God in their broad outlines;–the Revelation of God in its glorious unity;–the Books of God in their eternal simplicity, read by the illumination of that Spirit of Christ which dwelleth in us, except we be reprobates. Our guide is not, and never shall be, what the Scriptures call "the letter that killeth";–the tyrannous realism of ambiguous metaphors, the asserted infallibility of isolated words. But if this must be made simply and solely a matter of texts;–if, except as a dead anachronism, we mean nothing when we say, "I believe in the Holy Ghost!"–if we prefer our sleepy shibboleths and dead traditions to the living promise, "I will dwell in them and walk in them";–then by all means let this question be decided by texts alone. I am quite content that texts should decide it. Only, first, you must go to the inspired original, not to the erroneous translation; and secondly, you must take words, and interpret words in their proper and historical significance, not in that sense which makes them connote to you a thousand notions which did not originally belong to them; and thirdly, you must not explain away, or read between the lines of the texts which make against the traditional view, while you refuse all limitation of those on the misinterpretation or undue extension of which that view is founded.

"Now I ask you, my brethren, where would be these popular teachings about hell–the kind of teachings which I have quoted to you and described–if we calmly and deliberately, by substituting the true translations, erased from our English Bibles, as being inadequate or erroneous or disputed renderings, the three words, "damnation", "hell", and "everlasting"?" (*Ibid.* pp.71-77).

Desmond Ford is founder of GNCM.

'THIS TENT WE LIVE IN.'

Finding God's creative love in the suffering around us.

Susanne Garnett

When I was in High school for a year in America, the best looking boy in our class was Jim; blond, blue-eyed and tanned, who could do 200 perfect press-ups in one go, and who took the lead in the drama club 'Hamlet'. Jim died before his twenty-sixth birthday, having lost his hair from chemotherapy, riddled with cancer in every part of his body.

The second best looking guy was Dan Gibbons, with a legendary skill on the surfboard. He died three days after I left, in a diving accident at his eighteenth birthday party.

Jenny had been in school with me for thirteen years. A young doctor, she died walking in Snowdon with her husband, falling 400 feet into a chasm. She, too, was only 25.

Early this year, we lost a very dear friend and parishioner called Colin, a professional and talented singer, who lived with inoperable cancer for nearly twelve months, working to support his family right to the end.

It amazes and appals me when people speak of death as something remote and scarcely mentionable. It is all around us, and not just for those poor old clergy families who have to look out of their kitchen windows onto large and mouldering cemeteries of high victoriana.

The stark and awful strength of death stands like a rock in the sea. All our muddled and ever-changing ambitions wash up and round it, but it remains impassive. What Christians should surely do, rather than try to 'pray it away', is to use it as a base for the lighthouse of Christ's love, shining out over the dark water to guide our fragile vessels home.

This is why I am made increasingly impatient by the blather about so much cut-price healing, which tends to turn spirituality into some dreadful quiz show.

'I sense there is someone here with a bad cold,' said a well known preacher to a packed audience in the Manchester Free Trade Hall one winter's evening. His words were half drowned by the coughs and snuffles.

'The Holy Spirit tells me that you will be healed...There is someone here, yes, a lady perhaps, with sore feet...'.

GOD'S CREATIVE LOVE

All right, I know that is an extreme and easily ridiculed example. But it angers me because it so easily deflects the Church's attention from real suffering, and real miracles. The healing which comes from genuine wholeness is a far greater revelation of God's creative love than such shallow nonsense as this.

Death and decay are everywhere. Here in our new, country parish the graveyard resembles a housing estate, rather like 'Our town', by Thornton Wilder, and new avenues are being built all the time. Among them, sadly, lie the previous rector, and his only son, who both died last year, and the graves of two little children, buried within the last three months.

But wholeness, surely, has little to do with physical form or strength, and 'life-span' has scant meaning set against the circling aeons of the universe. It is enough that we are here, specks of dust perhaps, but sparkling with light and possessors of such vast potential as we balance on the prism of Divine Creativity.

For the last seven years my husband, David, has been chaplain to the largest hospice in the north of England. 'An annexe to heaven', someone called it; and he shared there in every kind of suffering, death and bereavement.

It was there too, though, that sometimes he found the deepest kind of healing, at the very end, when all the struggling had been driven away, and when both the trivia of false ambitions, and the very finest human aspirations were removed. Then the veil was lifted and the soul drawn up to God.

Last night we came home from holiday to find we'd been sent a tape of a Radio 2 tribute to our friend Colin, recorded just after his death last Spring. It used two of his songs, recorded at an Albert Hall concert. The lovely music surrounds me now, and I know that, whole and healed, somewhere Colin is still singing, more fully in tune with the mind and purpose of his creator than we can here imagine.

SUSANNE GARNETT
is an area secretary for Christian Aid and a writer, her most recent publication being a children's novel. She is married to a clergyman and has two sons.

My Cancer and the

Charles Colson,Director, 'Prison Fellowship.'

Coming out of the anaesthesia, I first saw the smiling faces of my wife, Patty, and daughter, Emily. 'Did they get it all?' I asked. Patty gripped my hand, 'Yes.' 'Was it malignant?' I asked.

'Yes daddy — it was cancer. But they got it all and you are going to be okay.'

Cancer

I had always wondered, in secret fear, what it sould be like to be told I had malignant cancer. I thought I would be shattered. But I had prayed for the grace to withstand whatever the doctors found. And, as many have discovered before me, I saw in my confrontation with fear and suffering that there is nothing for which God does not pour out His grace abundantly. I felt total peace — and great thankfulness that a merciful God had brought me to that recovery room.

My stomach problems began last November during a ministry trip to the Philippines. I flew home. My doctor told me that I was badly run down, that I had a bleeding ulcer, and to stay away from airports for a while. With rest and a proper diet the problem could be cured. Just when my stomach seemed fine, I talked with a dear Christian brother, Dr Joe Bailey of Austin, Texas. Joe urged me, as my own interest had already done, to have a gastroscopy. The idea of inhaling a tube so that doctors could view the scenery inside my stomach was not particularly inviting. Beside, the ulcer had already healed. But Joe kept insisting.

So I submitted to the horrors of the gastroscope. The doctor told me, as I had expexted, that the ulcer was gone. Then came the unexpected: he had discovered a tumor in my stomach lining.

After weeks of additional tests, experts concluded that the growth was benign. There was no reason to have it removed. Once again Joe Bailey called. ' Chuck,' he said in his Texas drawl, 'get that thing out, and get it out as quick as you can.' 'I can't,' I told Joe. 'I'm writing a new book. I have ministry commitments, speaking obligations.' But Joe would not be moved. And, since by then I suspected that God was speaking through him, I scheduled the operation for early January. To everyone's surprise the tumor was a low-grade malignancy. Because it was caught early, however, doctors have assured me that my prognosis is excellent. If it had gone undetected, the outcome could have been far different. Last fall's nagging ulcer served as a warning by which God got my attention —and then used Joe Bailey's stubborn concern to get me into hospital.

God's grace provided not only peace and protection, but new purpose. I had, as some friends know, begun to burn out through too many writing, speaking and ministry commitments.

But as I lay in my hospital bed, I thought through my real priorities. Had I unconsciously boarded the evangelical treadmill? Trying to do all those worthy things that everybody wanted me to do, had I become beholden to a tyrannical schedule rather than to God's will? Several weeks tied to hospital tubes is a good time to reflect on the larger perspective of God's design in our lives.

My suffering provided some fresh insights as well into the health and

Good Health Gospel

wealth gospel. If God really delivers His people from all pain and illness, as is so often claimed, why was I so sick? Had my faith become weak? Had I fallen from favour?
No, I had always recognised such teaching as false theology. But after four weeks in a maximum care unit, I came to see it as something else: a presumptuous stumbling blosk to real evangelism.
During my nightly walks through hospital corridors, dragging an I.V. pole behind me, I often met an Indian man whose two year old son had had two failed kidney transplants, a brain aneurysm, and was now blind for life.
When the father, a Hindu, discovered I was a Christian, he asked if God would heal his son if he, too was born again. He said that he had heard things like that on television. As I listened I realised how arrogant health-andwealth religion sounds to suffering families: Christians can all be spared suffering, but little Hindu children go blind. One couldn't blame a Hindu or Muslim or agnostic for resenting, or even hating, such a God.
I told my Hindu friend about Jesus, Yes, He may miraculously intervene in our lives. But we come to God not because of what He may do to spare us suffering, but because Christ is truth. What He does promise us is much more — forgiveness of sin and eternal life. I left the hospital with my friend studying Christian literature, the Bible, and my own account in 'Born Again.' if he becomes a Christinan, it won't be on false pretences.
I thought often in the hospital of the words of Florida pastor, Steve Brown. Steve says that every time a non-Christian gets cancer God allows a Christian to get cancer as well — so the world can see the difference. I prayed that I may be so filled with God's grace that the world might see the difference.

"As I listened I realized how arrogant health- and wealth religion sounds..."

Steve's words represent a powerful truth. God does not witness to the world by taking His people out of suffering, but rather by demonstrating His grace through them in the midst of pain.
He allows such weakness to reveal His strength in adversity. His own Son experienced brokenness — and died— that we might be freed from the power of death. But we are promised no freedom from suffering until we are beyond the grave.
Thus I can only believe that God allowed my cancer for a purpose — Just as He allows far more horrific and deadly cancers in fellow Christians every day. We don't begin to know the reasons why. But we do know that our suffering and weakness can be an opportunity to witness to the world the amazing grace of God at work through us.

Australian Presbyterian Life — August 1987

Why does grandma spend so much time reading the Bible?

STUDYING TO PASS?

Geoff Holland

A little girl asked her brother, "Why does Grandma spend so much time reading the Bible?" He replied, "I think she's studying for her finals."

I think that Grandma must have been a Baptist. We have, quite rightly, made the Bible the foundation for our doctrine and beliefs. We encourage our people to read it regularly, even to the extent of implying that without a daily reading we may not be fair dinkum Christians. Perhaps it is not so unreasonable for that young lad to think that entry to heaven depended on Bible knowledge.

Could it be that we have substituted a doctrine of salvation by knowledge in place of the doctrine of salvation by works against which the reformers preached? Does our salvation depend on understanding and accepting a series of theological statements?

It may be that, in our reaction against the Roman Catholic legalists who insisted that our place in heaven was dependent on right behaviour, we have swung to being dogmatists who insist that salvation is dependent upon having the right beliefs. Taken to its extreme this would mean that it doesn't matter what you do as long as you know the right things.

My thoughts have been prompted along this path because of some comments made to me by mentally disabled people who told me how difficult it had been for them to find a church where they felt at home. So many of our churches place such an emphasis on the printed word and the understanding of fairly difficult concepts, that they felt out of place in small group activities. In some worship services which had a printed liturgy they were unable to read quickly enough to keep up.

From these conversations, I came to see that they put more store on their relationship with God and with other people than they did on whether or not they had all the theological niceties sorted out in their heads.

I know of churches which have wrestled with the problem of whether or not to baptise someone who is either mentally or physically handicapped and so unable to talk. Should that person be baptised even though the church cannot ascertain the extent of their understanding of the Christian faith? Put more crudely, can a person be a Christian if he can't understand all the basic beliefs of Christianity?

Another incident which prompted my thoughts along this line was hearing of an address given at a Baptist church with a long history. The speaker said that this church in the last century had been very effective in winning people to Christ. They had a strong community outreach and service to the less fortunate members of society. The evening services were crowded and each one saw people coming to know the Lord.

Then the church joined the Baptist Union, began a Christian education program, dropped some of its community outreach work, and began a steady decline in numbers and effectiveness.

As an ex-teacher and a former Sunday School Superintendent, I find this very challenging. Do we put so much emphasis on knowledge of the Christian faith that we ignore the importance of relationships within the fellowship and caring for others?

In Romans 2:13-16, Paul implies that it's not the knowledge of the Law which saves but what we do with what we know. In James 3:1 we read that teachers, who know more than others, will be judged more harshly by what they have done with the knowledge they have.

As I travel around the state, I am struck by the fact that it's not necessarily the most learned people whom God uses to reach others or to build His church, but people who have a loving heart and a caring spirit.

It made me think about what I was doing with the knowledge that I have. I'd like to ask you the same questions I have been asking myself.

If you know a lot about Christ and his way what are you doing with that knowledge? Do you use your knowledge as a club with which to beat others down, or do you use your understanding to bring others to know Christ and his love?

This article was published in The Victorian Baptist Witness, *April 1989. Used with permission.*

SIMON SAYS

RON ALLEN

It was Nietzche who bitterly accused Christians by saying, "You must look more redeemed to me if I am to believe in your redeemer". This raises a question of some interest. What did Nietzche expect? What should be characteristic of redeemed people?

An incident recorded by Luke the evangelist gives us some idea. It is in Luke's seventh chapter, verses 36-50, the story of the sinful woman and Simon the pharisee. Both these figures represent two possible examples of the redeemed personality. The story shows that one alone was redeemed. But for the moment we will allow them both to be claimants of the redeemed life.

The woman who was a notorious sinner had come into the room when Jesus was guest at the feast. Approaching Him from behind she fell at His feet and with tears kissed Him repeatedly, lavishing upon Him expensive perfume. Her actions were excessive and nothing short of scandalous in the present company. We are wrong if we think that this woman's tears were of anguished guilt and sorrow. Her appearance before Christ at the feast was not staged for purposes of acquiring His mercy. No indeed! She was there to give thanks. Her emotions were akin to those of a lost child who at once had been found and now is home in the arms of its parent.

Simon, who had invited Jesus to the feast, watched the crude antics of the woman and thought to himself that Jesus could not be a prophet, else He would not allow this defiled woman to touch Him. Simon cannot understand Jesus and he cannot understand the behaviour of the woman. Such extravagances are not for him. He knows what is proper. He lives a life of sober rectitude. His religious life leads him in a path of intelligent enquiry of the scriptures and scrupulous attention to their precepts. There is no need for him to be so grossly demonstrative. Such religious exuberance is uncalled for.

Simon knows how God should behave. Jesus is not meeting his expectations. There are doubts in his mind concerning Him. Simon also knows how people ought to behave. In short, God must dance to his tune and so must other people. Because of this, Simon is shut out of the joy that the woman has. He is excluded from the great mercy. The woman knows that God does not have to answer to her; that she has to answer to Him. She has submitted to Him for judgement—and found grace. Her thanksgiving is like the criminal who has seen his death sentence torn up. She rejoices like the prisoner whose chains have been taken off. She was not a person well schooled in religion. She knows little of dogma but she is filled with the love of one who has sat in the deepest gloom and suddenly has seen the hand of deliverance.

I suggest that the behaviour of this great sinner is the behaviour of a redeemed person. Simon is awfully correct—and thoroughly lost. But the woman is alive with passion. Hers is the joy of liberation. From henceforth her life will progress in this joy. Such progress does not mean an increasing ability to love. It rests rather on the fact that Christians are increasingly forgiven. We never increase before God. He alone increases. The more Jesus Christ humbles us the greater will be our joy and the more jubilant our thanks.

Ron Allen is **Director** of *Good News Christian Ministries*

HEALING AND THE CHURCH

Soon after I became Principal of All Nations Christian College in England, the vicar of a small parish church nearby invited me to speak on the subject of healing. A growing conviction that healing services should be part of his church's ministry had led him to make a start, however tentatively. He came to me knowing that I was a medical doctor and that I had introduced healing services in the college. The vicar sensed no special gifting for this ministry either in himself or in any of his parishioners. Nonetheless he had been inviting people to come to the vicarage for healing prayer and was preparing to launch regular prayer times to follow services of worship.

AN AWAKENING

I discovered that this was typical of the awakening sweeping through the established churches. The charismatic renewal movement had led the way, but now non-charismatic churches were beginning to recapture their God-given role in the healing ministry. It was not necessary to bring across from the USA some famous healer with an authenticated public ministry; gifts of healing were given to the local parish priest, the elders of the church, and other laymen. The Holy Spirit was being poured out on all flesh (Acts 2:16-21)!

I hope that the current emphasis on signs and wonders will not suggest that nothing less than instant, miraculous healing of physical disease is divine healing. I trust that Christians who believe that their local church should have healing services will not be deterred from introducing a quiet, and possibly unspectacular, ministry of healing prayer as a regular feature of their corporate life and witness. Paul makes a clear distinction between the gift of signs and wonders and the gifts (plural) and healings (plural) (1Corinthians 12:9-10).

At the start of the 20th Century there was no major denomination practising a theology of healing. The church took care of the spirit and led the medical profession to care for the body. The practice of anointing with oil, along with prayer for healing, had been diminished to administering the last rites to the dying.

After World War 11 we saw the emergence of faith healers who held revivalist-type meetings featuring instant, miraculous healing of physical diseases as the high point of the service. No doubt many were genuine. Others were patently spurious, with claims which had little substance in terms of medical evidence.

This descredited faith healing for young doctors like me, trained in a scientific discipline. The claims seemed to be mostly for people cured of inoperable cancer.

Before going to India as a medical missionary and in my early years there I rarely prayed that God would intervene in a supernatural manner. I believed that all healing comes from God. I offered my training, what I had learned in diagnosis and therapy, the medicines I had learned to prescribe, the operative procedures that I had been taught. But I accepted that ultimately it all depended on His will. (Not, it might be noted, on His power — that was yet to be learned.)

We prayed at the start of each day that all who came to the mission hospital might meet Christ and receive healing both for their spiritual need and for their physical ailments. I prayed before every operation that God would guide my hand and my mind; that I might have both skill and sound judgment to do what was best for the patient. But... I did not pray for miracles.

In 1966 I went to work in a small rural hospital at Herbertpur. The missionary doctor there helped me to see that the simple village folk came to our hospital mainly because they had heard that our God had special power to heal. They had been to their local healers and to Government hospitals first. 'It is not our reputations that are on the line', Dr Lehmann said. 'It is the Name of our LORD. Surely that should move us to pray that we will see miracles of healing.'

That made a lot of difference. But I was still programmed to western scientific medicine and my level of faith differed little from that of the father who answered Jesus: 'Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief.' (Matthew 9:24).

A PERSONAL TESTIMONY BY DR RAYMOND WINDSOR

Lord, I really do believe; help me to believe more, Increase my faith.

PRAYERS FOR HEALING

The Lord led me out of medical practice in 1970 to leadership of the mission society. A growing understanding of the pastoral needs of missionaries gave me a new awareness of the mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions of health. Close involvement in the awakening of evangelicals to the social implications of the gospel led me to a wholehearted commitment to wholistic mission.

And then, in 1982, the Lord sent us to All Nations Christian College in England where pastoral care and

counselling is a solid core course. I learned so much in this inter-cultural community of 200 people form over 30 nations. All were involved in local churches, but most were away from their home churches.

We recognised that we were not a local church. Nevertheless the closeness of our community life over each term of 10 weeks meant that we judged it appropriate to introduce prayer for healing as a corporate activity. The Holy Spirit ministered to us, and I offer in the remaining part of this article a summary of what He taught us.

1. Healing may be a gradual process

We should not give up after praying once for physical healing. Most of us have to come back to God time after time to ask for renewed cleansing of our minds and for healing of past hurts.

If God does not intervene immediately and completely, we should not give up praying. It should cause us to examine ourselves, our motives, our need for more patience for taking more time to wait on God. It may indeed be a lack of faith on our part or on the part of the one who is sick. It may be unconfessed sin or an unforgiving spirit — the need to put certain things right.

It may also be that God wants to teach us to persevere in prayer. Francis MacNutt's concept of **soaking prayer** is most helpful. He found in certain chronic bone and joint problems that the initial response might be the removal of pain. Later as the team persevere in prayer, stiff joints regain movement and there is a steady recovery of function.

2. Illness may be more than physical

Since Hans Selye first described psychosomatic symptoms (physical symptoms arising on the basis of emotional stress, for example) we have gained an increasing awareness of health as a positive state of well-being and not the mere absence of disease.

The result of healing prayer may be not so much that physical disease is cured, as that restful sleep patterns are restored, hurtful memories healed and resentments lifted. Often we find that physical symptoms are unrelieved until these deeper issues have been dealt with.

IT IS THE CHURCH WHICH HAS THE THERAPEUTIC INSIGHTS THAT OFFER PEACE...FORGIVENESS... AND A CARING COMMUNITY

THE CHURCH'S ROLE

David describes, in Psalm 32, the deep malaise of unconfessed sin and the healing power of forgiveness. These are areas outside the sphere of the health care professionals. It is the church which has the therapeutic insights that offer forgiveness in place of guilt, peace instead of fear, and a nurturing community in place of loneliness.

3. Formulate a theology of suffering

Even the more charismatic members of our staff did not believe that it is always God's will to heal in response to the prayer of faith. Doctors become incensed by the mental anguish, and indeed disasters, which can result from the stress laid on a patient by the accusation that the lack of divine healing stems from a lack of faith.

Without an understanding of the place of suffering in the life of a disciple (not equating suffering with physical sickness, but surely not excluding it) we are prone to give up praying if we do not at first see miraculous results.

4. Practise waiting on God first

We learned to spend the week before a scheduled healing service waiting on God to reveal how He wanted to be glorified through the people seeking healing. Not that we would rule our praying spontaneously for the sick on any occasion, but through waiting on God we found that the sick person often changed the nature of the request, as the Holy Spirit revealed other problems that were affecting the lack of well-being.

5. A team ministry is important

Several of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are significant in the ministry of healing prayer. They have a complementarity, and people with a variety of gifts may minister together more effectively.

6. The healing power of community

We recognise the validity of the elders of a church visiting a sick person at home or in hospital for healing prayer. However, the case for healing in the presence of a loving, supportive congregation is persuasive. The climate of faith, the atmosphere of caring and the physical presence of concerned friends contribute greatly to the ministry of healing.

Dr Raymond Windsor

DAVID MORLEY

FROM THE BONDAGE OF JOY

She sat in the pastor's study, head bowed, the tears pouring down her cheeks.

Her problem was not marital discord, a child's rebellion, or the loss of a loved one. It was *guilt*. For many months she had refused to acknowledge its existence; but now, at last, it was out in the open. She was weeping tears of sorrow, but also of joy.

A great sense of relief, and of release, flooded her heart. She was taking the first giant step on the road to forgiveness, recovery of self-respect, and peace with God.

A CONFLICT WE CAN'T AVOID

We are all confronted by conflicts in life, and one of the most critical — and unremitting — of these is the conflict between good and evil, between right and wrong. This has been going on ever since man sinned and hid himself, ashamedly, in the trees of the garden of Eden.

Living in the stream of humanity, none of us escapes this conflict and struggle. We are part of it, in fact; for we find sin in our hearts, in our minds, and in our actions and attitudes. **It is when we become aware of these sins in us that we have feelings of guilt.**

There are two kinds of guilt feelings; healthy ones and unhealthy ones. Generally when we speak of a guilt complex we are thinking of an unhealthy guilt. This is an inordinate feeling of guilt — the kind we often meet in a depressed person. You find it in a person who feels that he has sinned so deeply that there is no place of forgiveness.

In extreme cases, such people feel that they have committed the unpardonable sin.

WHEN THE PROBLEM LIES DEEPER

Often, unfortunately, people confuse sick feelings of guilt with the healthy ones. There are unrealistic, psychological guilt feelings which cannot be resolved simply by confession, and the assurance of forgiveness.

To come to people who have sick — or neurotic — guilt feelings with promises of forgiveness is as useless as trying to cure pneumonia in the same way. They have an illness in their emotional life which makes it impossible for them to take hold of the forgiving love of God in Christ, much as they may desire it or seek it.

Deeply burdened souls who say, 'I'm afraid that I have committed the unpardonable sin', are emotionally ill. They can never have committed the sin that is described in Matthew 12. If they had committed that sin, they would never feel sorrow for it, nor would they seek for a way of escape.

Often a series of prescribed treatments will relieve these symptoms.

UNRESOLVED GUILT FEELINGS

Not all guilt feelings are of this nature, however. There are many people who have real feelings of guilt. It is surprising, when we get an intimate look into the lives of people, how many there are today who live with unresolved guilt feelings. They often feel miserable, lack real peace of soul, and may even experience various physical complaints.

Israel's King David graphically describes this condition in his own

Rev. David Morley, is editor of "The Australian Evangelical" and Victorian Director of Campaigners for Christ.

GUILT TO TEARS OF AND RELIEF

life. He tells us, in poetic language, what went on within his soul when he tried to hide his guilt from himself and from others: 'When I keep silence, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer' (Psalm 32:3).

Covering up sin — trying to hide it from God and man; trying even to conceal it from our own consciousness — is a dangerous business. It leads to unhealthy conditions and breaks out in a variety of symptoms in a person's life. It has incapacitated many people. It takes its toll in emotional and mental stress. Doctors often notice that patients do not seem to recover from an illness until they get their sins off their minds. This is natural. *The mind can be so haunted by memories of past sins — moral indiscretions; feelings of having wronged someone; acts of dishonesty; secret hostilities—that these become like a deep festering cancer in the emotional life.*

UNCOVERING HIDDEN GUILT

It is for this reason that psychiatrists and pastoral counsellors often probe into the background of a person's life. Their purpose is not to dig up all the mire that lies hidden there. It is a known psychological fact that when these things are brought out into the open, we can find release. Such confession can often be the turning point on the road to recovery.

This is an insight that is receiving emphasis today. It has long been known that the fact of sin in the life is too great for man to cope with. But today, more than ever, psychiatrists recognise that they must deal with the problem of sin and guilt. This is not a simple problem, and there is not a simple solution for it.

THE UNFAILING SOLUTION

Even in such cases it is still true that there is only one satisfying remedy for sin. This makes it possible for psychiatrist and pastor to work together to bring relief to a troubled soul.

Jesus saw this in the life of the paralytic who was brought to Him. He first said to him, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' Then He added, 'So that you will know that the Son of Man has power to forgive sin, I say to you, Rise, pick up your couch and go home' (Matthew 9:2-6). It is this that brings true wholeness, healing of both body and soul.

Many people, it seems, find it hard to experience the joy of forgiveness because they have not really learned to forgive themselves. They cannot get rid of their feelings of guilt, and they are punishing themselves because of past failures or sins. These fester within them. This also is a deep-seated problem that requires careful, and earnest examination. If God is able to forgive us, should we then not also be able to forgive ourselves? Forgiveness must be practised as well as received. It is the gift of God's marvellous love, but it requires that we take hold of it and believe it with all our hearts.

Recall our Lord's story of the return of the prodigal. The father did not say to the returning squanderer. 'We'll put you on probation for a while, and see how things go.' He freely forgave him all, and as he embraced him he said, 'This, my son...' The past sin was wiped away completely.

To find real wholeness we need that healing power, the atoning work of Jesus Christ, that removes our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. As we put our trust in Him, this experience becomes ours.

This is the key to peace with God, self-respect... and true mental health.

AUTRALIAN EVANGELICAL
NOV-DEC '86

KIDS

Flora Mia

ELEPHANT TALK

From the time, when as a little girl, I rode on the back of an elephant, in a howdah, (a saddle with wooden seats), I have loved elephants. Though they look tough and clumsy they are really very gentle and careful.

There are two species of elephants alive today — the Indian and the African. In most ways, the African animal is superior.It is taller, heavier, grows longer and thicker tusks and has a double lip to its trunk. It also has larger ears. Both male and female African elephants have tusks, but only the male Indian elephant has them. Both species have small eyes and large ears.

An elephant's trunk is a very useful limb. With it an elephant picks up its food, breaks off branches, sucks up water to squirt into its mouth. It also sucks up water or dust for a bath. The trunk is also its nose, smelling out where food, water or even danger lie.

A desert elephant can smell where under-water lies, bore a hole there with its tusk, scoop out the dirt with its trunk and make a narrow well about 15cm deep. Desert elephants can go without a drink for four days, while trekking 30-40 km to a waterhole. An Indian elephant lives to about 70 years, while its African cousin lives twenty years less.

While the male elephant usually lives alone, female elephants live in herds with the oldest as its leader. Mothers, grandmothers, aunts and cousins all help to care for the babies. Mothers have babies about once in four years. Elephants care for their sick and old by walking close on either side of them, supporting them.

Elephants, in India, are often tamed, mostly by young lads. The boy builds a bond between them by feeding and bathing the animal and keeping its hut clean. He teaches the elephant to carry heavy weights and even to join in a tiger hunt. The lad is called a mahoot and usually sleeps at the feet of his pet, at night.

The story goes that a village elephant used to take a walk through the village on its way to the pool for its daily bath. As it passed the tailor's shop, the tailor usually handed it a piece of bread. One day the tailor was ill and the new worker angrily pushed the elephant's trunk away and ended by giving it a prick with his needle. The animal walked slowly down to the pool, filled its trunk with water and coming back squirted the lot in the face of its enemy.

What does Jesus say about returning evil for evil? Read Luke 6:27-36.