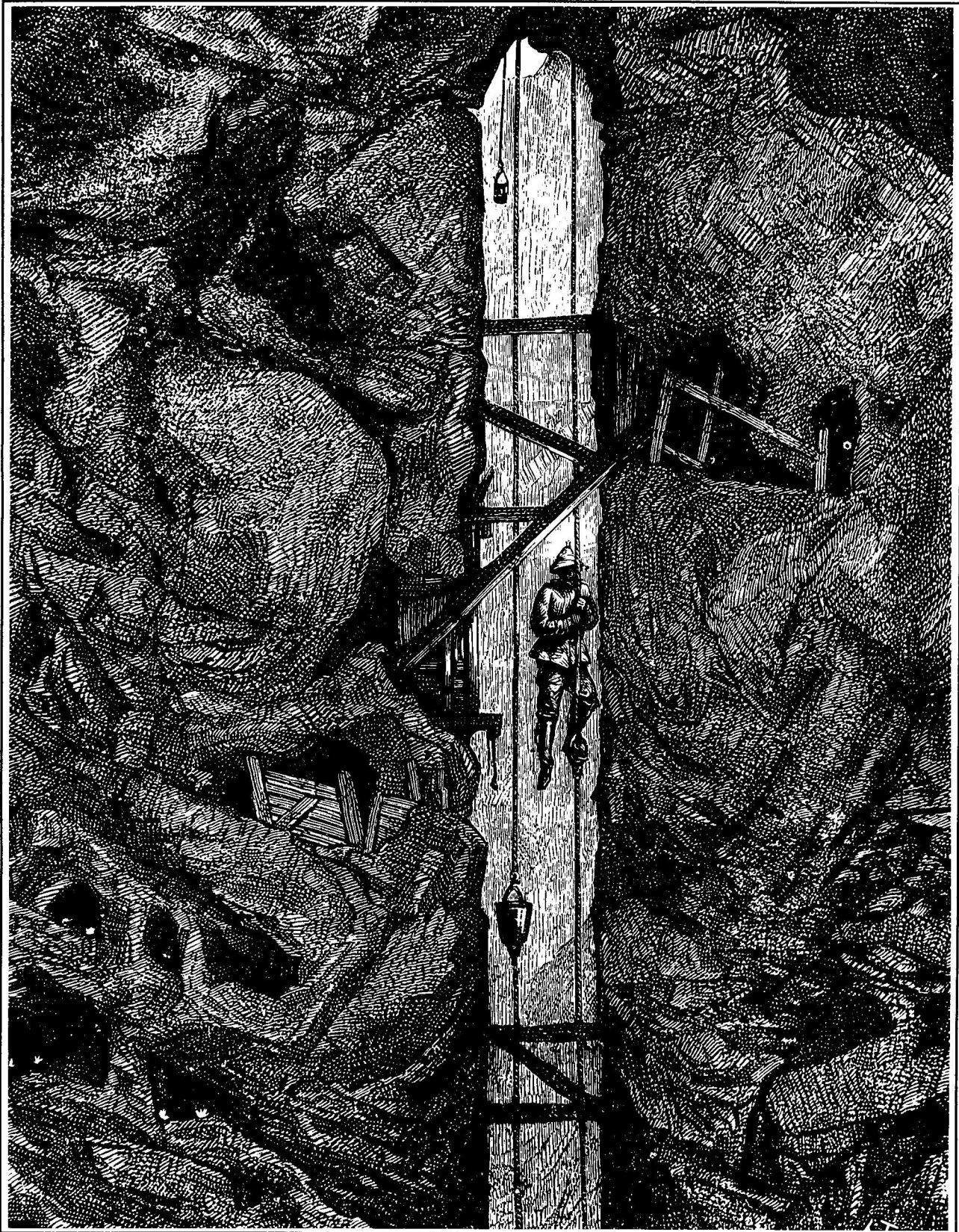


GOOD NEWS

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Australia





Our cover: "Gold mining at Ballarat." Courtesy, National Library of Australia. Reproduced with permission.

Editorial

"Put it away, Mr Clarke, or we shall all have our throats cut!"

The year was 1844. Mr Clarke, a clergyman, had found gold near Hassans Walls, NSW. Fired with his discovery, he brought specimens of the precious metal to Governor Gipps and the NSW Legislative Assembly. But they did not want to see it!

Although gold was known to exist in Australia long before the 1851 goldrush, the authorities used every means available to keep the news from the public. It was feared that a goldrush might have grave social consequences in what was still a penal settlement.

But by 1850, the convict element in the population was rapidly dwindling; both NSW and Victoria felt a vital need for gold, so in the following year the doors of opportunity were thrown ajar.

Short months later, public servants and former bank managers vied with lamplighters, chimney sweeps, women, children and foreigners for a chance to stake out a claim at Mt Alexander (Castlemaine), Victoria. Individuals soon learned to work in groups. Although parties of two could work on the surface, three or four were needed to sink a shaft: one dug, one handed up the earth, one cradled, and one prepared the meals. Although most could not stomach the flyblown butcher's meat sold at the diggings, they nonetheless were on the richest gold field in Victoria.

The discovery of gold in Australia had enormous and far-reaching effects on the country's development. Indeed, it precipitated us into nationhood. Wealth long-hidden from convicts became the property of free men.

Jesus once likened the kingdom of heaven to "a treasure hidden in a field which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has; and buys that field."

Is Australia ready for a *Godrush*?

Rob Cooper
Paul Porter

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SOCIAL TO SAVE

Desmond Ford



Our Lord Jesus cared infinitely for individuals. In John's Gospel we have no public sermon of the length of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount but we do have approximately nineteen interviews with individuals. Such encounters with the master are in their records a repository of great riches. Let us consider just one of them--the encounter with the Samaritan woman.

Opposition and Narrowness

Have you noticed the series of contrasts between John 3 and John 4? One is the story of an encounter with a Jew, the other with a Gentile. In one instance Jesus speaks with a man, in the other it is a woman. The first occurs by night, the second by day. Nicodemus is of spotless reputation but the woman is despised even by her own kind. With the Pharisee Jesus seems hard and abrupt in the vein of the law of Sinai, but with the Samaritan outcast he is distinctly different in approach. He does not tell her

that she should be born again but instead offers her a great gift. The emphasis is clearly grace, not law.

As we approach this story let us keep in mind that the Gospel as a whole is an indictment of the unbelieving Jews. Every miracle in the book tells of their lost estate. They were without joy (Jn 2); without health (Jn 4); without strength (Jn 5); without spiritual nourishment (Jn 6); without security (Jn 6); without the light of truth (Jn 9) and without life (Jn 11). In 1:19,26 we see a blinded priesthood, in 2:3 a joyless nation, in 2:14 a desecrated temple, in 3:7 a lifeless Sanhedrin. Now in chapter 4 we read the tragic words, "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (v 9). Intended by God to be priests to the whole world they had hardened into an elitist society proud of their barriers. Their song might well have been:

*We are the chosen few
All others will be damned,
There's no room in heaven
for you,
Heaven can't be crammed.*

Too many Jewish prayers, however high-sounding they were, by the time they reached heaven could be reduced to this vein:

*God bless me and my wife,
My son Jacob and his wife,
Us four, and no more,
Amen.*

Let Christians beware. John, while describing Jews, is addressing believers in Christ. He is saying in effect: "The greatest religionists of history failed. Beware lest you follow in their wake." All four gospel writers make it clear that Jesus and the Jews were almost totally agreed about doctrine, but they had a different view of God. The Pharisees had made God in their own image: cold, austere, legalistic. But Christ's God was in his image, the image of the man who received sinners and ate with them. The beloved disciple in chapters three and four of his Gospel accordingly illustrated approaches that can be made to Jew and Gentile according to their spiritual estate and after Christ's manner. Let us now look more closely at the

manner in which the nonreligious are to be sought.

Jesus Meets an Unbeliever

Observe that the chapter opens by telling us emphatically that Jesus himself did not baptize. He commanded baptism and endorsed it, but left the work to others. Right at the introduction to this encounter we are thereby reminded that outward ordinances and theoretical creeds are not the primary things about the gospel of Christ. No outward form guarantees salvation.

How beautiful to read that the Creator of all things was weary with his journey (v 6). We should always remember that Jesus was just as much man as though not at all God, yet just as much God as though not at all man. It is interesting that John who has so much to say about Christ's divinity also stresses his humanity. Do not, however, identify humanness with sinfulness. Sin was no part of original humanity. It is an intruder and no stain of it marred the perfect nature of the second Adam.

The well reminds that water is ever made the symbol of the blessings of Grace. Yet Sychar means "purchased." That which comes to us "without money and without price" was purchased by the blood of Christ. By the symbolic waters Christ offers the gift of eternal life to one who apparently did not even merit continued existence in this life. And Christ is there purposely in order to make the offer of grace. That

is why he is first at the well, and why he also is first to speak. Unless he draws us, we can never leave the old life. "We love him, because he first loved us."

The encounter took place at noonday. The wise Bishop Ryle cannot resist warning ministers at this point to heed this "beautiful carefulness to avoid even the appearance of evil." The woman, unlike Nicodemus, is not interviewed in the isolation of darkness. Too many men pray "lead us not into temptation" and then speedily make off in that direction.

But even more beautiful is Christ's tact in asking a favour. "Give me a drink," he requests, startling a woman to whom no decent Jew would speak. In the verses that follow, observe the Master soul winner at work. He uses all the laws of the mind that he himself instituted. We see him using the psychological principles of attention, interest, desire, conviction, visualization, action. All of life is composed of warp and woof, the former being the situation as it is thrust upon us and the latter our own weaving of change into that situation. From the woman's own thoughts and needs Christ selected the images and concepts that would weld desire and conviction into ultimate saving choice.

The heart of Christ's revelation must be given our chief attention. "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him

will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (vv 13-14). Scripture says God has placed eternity in men's hearts. (We use men, of course, generically. Women in fact responded much more fully to our Lord. Not once in the Gospel record does a woman speak against Christ. Would it were true of the other sex as well!). Augustine referred to this when he said: "Thou hast made us for thyself and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee."

Read Ecclesiastes which is one long commentary on the truth Christ gave about the thirst of the soul. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," declares the opening of the book. This is the truth when we live "under the sun." It is wonderful to find the parallel introductory passage in Solomon's succeeding book. It reads: "The Song of Songs" (Song 1:1). In that volume we find the reason for the new song. "My beloved is mine and I am his;" "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine;" "I am my beloved's and his desire is for me" (2:16; 6:3; 7:10). For life with all its weal and woe is just our chance of learning love.

Christ is here affirming that satisfaction can only come from the gospel. All else, unless subordinate to the good news of grace, cheats us. The soul finds possession brings indifference. Nothing is as good in the hand as in the head. It is sad that we take a lifetime to learn this lesson, that only after dissatisfaction, frustration,

and despair do more sinners turn to drink of the heavenly fountain. In ancient times God had taught the same lesson from Sinai when he warned men of the precipices of life by the Ten Words which began with our relationship to him and finished with our relationship to things. When we put first what God puts last we invite sorrow and pain (Mt 6:33).

Conviction of Sin

The woman of Samaria would rather argue doctrine than have her soul surveyed, and so it is today. We mistake creeds for deeds, and beliefs for love. For that reason, the Master showed the woman her sin and then her Saviour. "You have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband," but nevertheless, "I who speak to you am he"--the Christ (Jn 4:18,26). None can drink of the water of life until they have known the convictions of sin, guilt and grace that this ancient Samaritan experienced. "For there is no difference. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom 3:22-23). But put with that indictment the passage which begins with the same words: "For there is no difference...the same Lord is rich unto all them that call upon him" (Rom 10:12).

Is not the recurring conviction of sin part of that thirsting to which Christ alluded? Those who find nothing without wherewith to fill and satisfy their souls also find the same story when searching

within. We are as bereft of value as the world itself. One old writer commented on John 4:13,14 as follows: "Let me say in a word what I feel. You will find nothing either in heaven or in earth, with which you will be satisfied and feel supplied, except Jesus Christ alone, with all that fulness of the Godhead which dwells in him bodily."

And Poole adds to the words of Rollock thus: "He who receiveth the Holy Spirit and the grace thereof, though he will be daily saying: 'Give, give,' and continually desiring further supplies of grace, yet he shall never wholly want, never want any good thing that shall be needful for him."

The first draught of the living water the woman requested of Christ was conviction of sin. None can value the physician until he feels his disease. Until time merges into eternity and until this corruptible puts on incorruption we need that ministry which Paul described in Romans 7: "It was sin, working death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure." "If it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin" (Rom 7:13,7).

Christ frequently upsets before he sets up. He afflicts before he comforts and convicts before he converts. Some want another way like the pilgrims who in *Pilgrim's Progress* climbed over the wall only to be lost at last. How could we ever enjoy solace unless we

had sorrowed, rest unless we had worked, justification unless we had known guilt?

The Universals of Christianity

Notice how Christ's thrust towards the close of the conversation summarizes the relationship between old and new truth. "The hour is coming when neither on this mountain (Gerazim) nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father...salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (Jn 4:21-24). Salvation is of the Jews, yet the sacred Jewish places are no more. Whatever is limited to geographical sites has no meaning in the Christian era for Christ has taken away the sin of the world, not just of Judea.

Christianity is a universal religion and only "universals" can prevail in it. Worship, spirit, truth, law, sin, salvation--these are the "universals" Christ sets forth in his sermon for the new age. Judaism contained all of them, but in addition it had typical rites limited to the temple. The former remain, but the latter have passed. Christ by fulfilling fills full. Not the oldness of the letter but the new wine of the Spirit characterizes the everlasting gospel. It does not diminish one jot or tittle that which has always been truth

but it offers now through Calvary the only lever which can move the world.

From Christ's insistence upon the themes of sin and salvation and from his refusal to be drawn into controversies over secondaries we may learn much. Arthur Pink summarizes admirably at this point:

"What a lesson is there here for every Christian worker respecting the manner to deal with anxious souls. When we are speaking to such, let us not occupy them with questions about sects and parties, churches and denominations, creeds and confessions. It is positively cruel to do so. What they need is salvation--to know God, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us shut them up to this one thing, and refuse to discuss anything else with them until they have received the Saviour. Questions about church membership, the ordinances, etc., have their place and interest; but manifestly they are not for convicted sinners. Too many are so foolishly anxious to swell the ranks of *their* party, that they are in grave danger of thinking more about getting people to join them than they are about leading anxious souls simply and fully to Christ. Let us study diligently the example of the perfect Teacher in his dealings with the woman of Sychar" (*Exposition of the Gospel of John*, vol. 1, p. 205).

And so say all of us! □

Desmond Ford is founder of GNCM

The Australian Pulpit



PANTHEISM AND WORLD RELIGIONS

John Cox

Last month, my main concern was to focus on the issue of what the attitude of Christians should be toward people of other world religions such as the Eastern religions of Hinduism and Buddhism and the other major religions of Islam and Judaism. This is an especially important issue since Australia is now a multi-cultural society in which a variety of world religions are adhered to by Australian citizens. In more senses than one, Australia is no longer a Christian country, even if it is still nominally so.

Although it is painfully and embarrassingly obvious that often in practice it has not been so, the true Christian attitude to people of other world religions ought to be one of loving respect or respectful disagreement, following the ethic of loving one's neighbour.

Five Common Characteristics of All Religions

Having said that, I want to indicate that in *form* all religions share certain broad common characteristics. There are five.

First, all religions share belief in and/or awareness of the Great Other or Others. Put over-simply, religion has always been regarded as involving belief in some sort of God or gods. What is meant by "god" varies considerably as do people's ideas of what "god" can do. In each religion the particular conception of God affects the way in which people think of themselves and their world.

Second, all religions in their own way respond to the question, What should life be? All religions are dissatisfied with the present, with human beings as they are, and with the world as it is currently known. Religion arises out of a sense of incompleteness and unfulfillment. It is concerned therefore with ultimate questions like, How can we realise the fullness of our nature? What can be done about the discord of human life? Answers to these questions vary greatly.

For example, for Christianity the basic problem is human rebellion against God, which is called sin. For Hindus and Buddhists the problem is with human attachment and enslavement to the world and imprisonment within it.

Third, all religions influence, or hope to influence, the society in which they are set. Belief of any kind involves living in accordance with some sort of morality or code of ethics which is regarded as right, true, and God-given. The way people think of God shapes the ideals by which they endeavour to live. For example, a person with a fiery temperament would have a hard job being a Buddhist, for above all, Buddhists cultivate gentleness of disposition and avoid clamour and violence. In contrast, Muslims have been aroused to holy war (*jihad*) against unbelievers (*infidels*). This requires fearlessness, courage and aggressiveness as virtues. This is clearly reflected in the current and continuing unrest in the Middle East.

Fourth, all religions have various beliefs and doctrines. In some, these are set out systematically in detail (as in the Christian Church), based on an authoritative book (the Bible) and/or as defined by a divinely inspired institution (the Church). In comparison, in Hinduism it is difficult to find any statement of belief which could be described as "orthodoxy." In fact, the "genius" of Hinduism is that it incorporates an endless diversity of belief into itself. For example, Mahatma Gandhi, a Hindu, albeit educated in the West, had a real reverence for Jesus and was greatly influenced by the Sermon on the

Mount. Hinduism is the most syncretistic of all the world religions.

It needs to be realised that there is always a great diversity of belief and doctrine *within* any major religious tradition. We know this through the denominational proliferation of Christianity since the Reformation especially. But also there are various forms and schools of Buddhism, for example.

It also needs to be recognised that the adherents of any religion may be ignorant of all but the basic beliefs and doctrines, religion for them being primarily a matter of the heart.

Fifth, all religion is transmitted from generation to generation through participation in a community of fellow-believers. The sacred writings of each religion are kept alive in and by the community. The Old Testament (which is the Christian name for the Jewish Scriptures) for the Jews, the Vedas for Hindus, the Quran for Muslims, and the Bible for Christians are interpreted and re-interpreted so that their words are seen to be spiritually significant for each generation.

In addition, each religion has certain ways of doing things: rituals, ceremonies and rites. These focus religious identity. For Christians, baptism is one of those rites, holy communion another. Muslims turn toward Mecca at the hour of prayer and confess that God (*Allah*) is one and that Mohammed is his prophet.

These then, are five characteristics common to the forms of all religions which to varying degrees are true for each different religion. However, while the *forms* of the various religions have strong similari-

ties, often the *content* is very dissimilar. The content of the different religions often is quite distinctive and indeed, sometimes the differences are plainly irreconcilable.

Pantheism and Theism

As an illustration of the distinctiveness and even irreconcilable differences between the content, or substance, of different religions let me present a framework in which the major Eastern religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, can be compared with Islam and the Western religions, Judaism and Christianity. I'm going to present this framework in relation to how God is seen, which of course is fundamental to any religion.

Broadly speaking, Hinduism and Buddhism hold to a *pantheistic* view of God. Islam, Judaism and Christianity are connected through their respective adherences to what Christians call the Old Testament, or parts thereof. To Christians, Abraham was the first person of true faith, while to Muslims he was the first Muslim. These three religions hold a *theistic* view of God.

What then, is pantheism? The word "pantheism," from the Greek *pan* ("all") and *theos* ("god"), means literally "all is God." Pantheism is the view that all things, everything, the whole world, the universe, the cosmos, is the mode or the appearance of one all-encompassing Reality, and that underlying Reality is God. The pantheistic view sees God as Ultimate Being, and therefore impersonal.

This view implies that since all is God, nature and God are one. Not only, in this view, is God *in* nature; God *is* nature.

Are those people who say: "I can worship God better in the bush," pantheists, therefore?

In contrast to the pantheism of the Eastern religions, then, is the *theism* of Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

Theism and pantheism are in direct contrast, for theism is the view that God is discrete, self-contained and all-sufficient. Let me quote from the volume *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, under the entry "Theism." It says:

"The doctrine that there exists a God, in the sense of a being who is personal without a body, omnipresent, perfectly free, perfectly good, omnipotent, omniscient, creator and sustainer of the universe, the proper object of human worship and obedience, eternal and necessary. Christians, Jews and Muslims are all theists, though each group holds further beliefs about God's nature and activity, in which they differ from each other."

Relationship between God and world

Let me try to explain pantheism and theism further by stating how they each see the relationship between God and the world, or in different terms, spirit and matter. The pantheist sees only God as ultimately real. This reflects the pantheistic view which says that God is the total reality. This implies that the world is unreal: that is, the world ultimately is merely an appearance, an illusion, *maya*, as the Buddhist calls it.

The theist sees *both* God *and* the world as real, *both* spirit *and* matter as real. In the theistic view God is distinct from the world and the world is

separate from God, while at the same time God and the world, both real, are related as Creator and creation.

The atheist or materialist, by the way, is opposite to the pantheist. The pantheist believes that God is real, the world is not. The atheist believes God is *not* real, and only the world, or matter *is* real. So, the theistic view lies in between the pantheistic and atheistic views seeing both God (or spirit) and the world (or matter) as real.

Pantheism is therefore world-denying. Theism is world-affirming. Atheism is neither world denying nor affirming. To the atheist matter just *is*, and that is *all* there is!

Monism and Absolute Dualism

Let me try to further explain what is involved in pantheism and theism in another way. From this angle pantheism is a kind of nomism, and theism is a kind of dualism, though a certain kind as we shall see.

Monism, from the Greek meaning "alone" or "single," is the view that all is one, which view runs parallel with the view that all is God. Monism obliterates the distinction between God and the world. Dualism maintains a distinction between God and the world, although in theistic religions it is not an absolute dualism. If the dualism were absolute it would mean that God only is good and the world in and of itself is evil. This is a heresy which has arisen in different forms in Christianity, notably in Manichaeism. However, Genesis 1:31 affirms: "And God saw everything he had made, and be-

hold, it was *very good*." (The problem of evil is a subject beyond the scope of this article).

The dualism of the theistic religions is a *qualified* dualism in which God and the world are related, as one commentator says, "by an irreducible difference through an indissoluble bond."

In relation to monism as a characteristic of Eastern religions, let me quote Michael Green from his book *I Believe in Satan's Downfall*. He says:

"All that differentiates us is due to depart. We shall be absorbed into the one. There is no real creation, only the illusion of it in the soul overpowered by ignorance and in desperate need of illumination by the Divine. People are constantly deceived by illusion. Neither the world around us nor ourselves have substantial reality. The only reality is...Ultimate Being...(This) has enormous consequences. Naturally it tends to break down the divide between the perceiver and the object, between the human and the divine, between matter and spirit. Naturally it is uninterested in natural science for this belongs to the world of illusion. And naturally, too, it does little to assuage suffering or to promote love. In the long run, neither are important, for our human individuality is not important. It is due to be absorbed into the Ultimate."

"The monistic pantheism of the Eastern religions is reflected in this comment by an Indian Christian, India being a predominantly Hindu country. He says: '...people are very "spiritual" in India, yet our country is the dirtiest I know in the whole world. Because you withdraw from the world, you

can sit next to dirt and decadence and still be "spiritual."'"

"New Age" Movement

There is an immediate and practical reason for Christians to understand and appreciate what is distinctive about Eastern pantheistic religions and what is distinctive about the theistic religions, Islam, Judaism and Christianity. This reason is that there is abroad in the West what has been called the "New Age" Movement. John Wimber in his latest book *Power Healing* defines the New Age Movement in his glossary of terms:

"A large and diverse group of organisations, religious groups, publications and individuals influenced by Eastern religions and the occult, and who in turn are influencing Western culture and many Christians. Most members of the New Age Movement believe in monism, (the idea that all is one), pantheism, (the idea that all is God), enlightenment, the idea that humans must realise that they are divine), syncretism, (the idea that all religions are one), and cosmic evolution, (the idea that this age is heading toward a 'new age' of consciousness and unity)."

I simply want to present this as a fact, for us to be aware of and to be reckoned with. I hope I'm not paranoid or hysterical, because there is a clear reason for it: the Western world and in particular for the most part, the Christian Church in the West is spiritually bankrupt. Just as in the physical world nature abhors a vacuum, so the spiritual world does too. While the West is nominally Christian, in reality

it is secular, materialistic and rationalist, dominated by the gods of science and technology. No wonder that young people in the West in confused disillusionment have turned to Eastern religions, consciousness-changing drugs and the occult in search for spiritual reality. Bishop Bruce Wilson, assistant Anglican Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn, in his book *The Human Journey*, says:

"It seems to me that the first task of Western Christianity is to disentangle itself from the mindless trivia, consumer greed, selfish pleasure seeking and "profits before people" mentality of Western secularism. Christian theism has lost its cutting edge in Western countries because it remains over-identified with the hollow secularism which has thrown off its spiritual mantle."

The centre of gravity of world Christianity is no longer in the West but in the Third World and developing countries. We Western Christians can learn much from our fellow Third World Christians. And more relevant to our subject, we can also learn from people of Eastern religions. By that I don't mean we should take on their underlying philosophy and world-view. But what I do mean is that Western Christianity needs once again to take God and the realm of the spirit just as seriously as the Eastern religions in their own way do. It is not that Western Christianity must *holus bolus* adopt Eastern views of God and Eastern modes of spirituality. But it does need to re-discover and re-appropriate its own authentic and distinctive view of God and modes of spirituality.

With the new awareness and renewed emphasis on the Holy Spirit, Western Christianity has begun to do this in recent years, but we have yet a long way to go!

Conclusion

My main task has been to point out the fundamental, and I believe irreconcilable differences between Eastern pantheistic religions and the theistic religions of Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

I've only hinted, if that, at the distinctives and differences of these three theistic religions. So, let me conclude with this brief observation. Primarily, as I see it, Islam sees the one God as a mighty God, a God of strength and power. Judaism sees the one God as a holy and just God. Christianity, through the revelation of Jesus Christ, sees the one God as a God of love whom his followers may address as "Father"--not Father in formal, distant Victorian terms, but in the close, intimate and unself-conscious way in which a child would address a loving human father--as "Daddy"!

So, in the New Testament, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, addressing God: "Our Father in heaven...." And Paul in Romans 8:15-16 proclaims: "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God."

□

Until recently, John Cox was Minister of the Uniting Church, Curtin, ACT.

SECOND CHANCES

Keith Sandars

"Oh, just give me a second chance, please." How often has this plea been spoken by young and old alike? At other times, it is that certain plaintive look that is sufficient to convey the same request. Indeed, how much many of us owe in our lives to the fact that we have been given a second chance!

It was many years ago on a cold wet winter's night which preceded the battle of Waterloo, that a French corporal mounted guard in the camp of Marshall Ney. In the distance, the reflection of the flames from the English lines punctuated the ominous darkness. The sentry was tired and weary after the enforced march of that day. Physical fatigue was beginning to engulf him. If only he might have two minutes' respite, he would then be all right. Everything was still now and nobody appeared to be about. So propping himself up by his sentry post, he shut his eyes. Suddenly the sentry awoke, for instinctively he felt that he was not alone. Shouldering his arms, he challenged: "Who goes there?" Out of the dark emerged a figure, stooped, broad-shouldered and square-jawed. It was the Emperor Napoleon himself! "My God, I have betrayed you!" exclaimed the petrified guard. "Take my bayonet and kill me here and now for this is what I deserve and the punishment that befits my crime." There was a moment of silence, Napoleon stared at the corporal's service medals, and, conscious of his youth, said quite unexpectedly: "Corporal, I have kept watch for you while you slept; you have learned your lesson. You have a second chance. Resume your guard and watch." The young guard saluted the Emperor and did as he was commanded. The second chance was given and the opportunity was not neglected. "The second chance"--many of the greatest people owe their fame and success to the second chance that has been given to them and similarly, many of the noblest achievements are

the results of a second chance. The Bible has much within its pages to teach us and one of the great underlying themes through both the Old and New Testaments is that of the second chance. In God's plan and dealings with men, the second chance to correct mistakes, reform lives and amend weaknesses and errors is clearly given and without restriction.



One remembers clearly the life and work of Jacob--the Supplanter--who became the great national Patriarch and leader of the Hebrew nation some 4000 years ago. He was one whose indolence, selfishness and greed, combined with his open deceit, forced him to flee from Canaan. But in Bethel, Jacob had that divine vision of the ladder into heaven and there he faced up to his need. God gave him the second chance and, conscious of this privilege, Jacob took it and subsequently became the father of a great family--the founders of the great Hebrew nation itself.

One too recalls the courageous and inestimable worth of the leader of the apostolic band--Simon Peter. If ever there was a character who testifies to the validity and effectiveness of

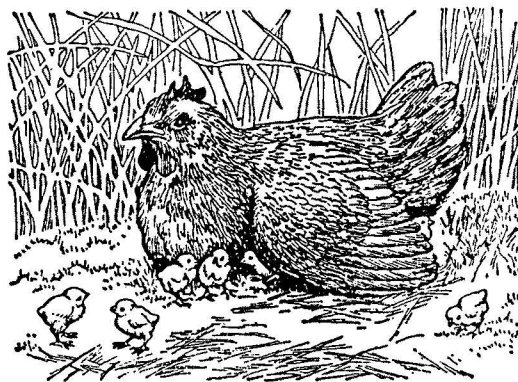
the second chance, it is he. Despite all his vows and protestations of loyalty to Jesus, it was Peter who in the crucial moment of testing made a complete mess of things and denied his Lord not just once but on three occasions. Yet Jesus saw in Peter that tremendous potential. In St John's Gospel we learn of that personal meeting and encounter Peter had with Jesus following his Resurrection. Yes, Peter was given the second chance and the opportunity to start again. The simple Galilean fisherman became the great "Apostle of the Second Chance."

How true and wonderful this is for us all. Most of us have our dreams, our ideals and aspirations; and yet, as we set out to achieve them day by day we experience failure, frustrations, and devastating mistakes. At times we feel completely dejected and forlorn at the mess we have made of things. This is that point where one's faith is gauged and tested. The great core of the Christian faith is found in this fact that no matter how far we have failed in our duty to God and one another, God still cares for us. His pardon and forgiveness are limitless and his help and power inexhaustible. God offers us all daily the opportunity and benefits of the second chance--the chance to start afresh as well as the means withall to accomplish those things and goals for which we are striving. All we have to do is to humbly and simply ask for forgiveness and when we so do, God gives us the second chance we need: "Come unto me all those of you who are weighed down and depressed and I will give you renewed strength and the opportunity to start again." This is the promise of God and such promises are never broken. The second chance is given to us all. May we with God's help avail ourselves of this invaluable opportunity. □

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

LEARNING HOW TO LOVE

Gordon Moyes



I can remember reading about a young teenage girl who was very shy. She went into a library to get a book to help her with her problem. She chose the book entitled *How to Love*. She thought that was exactly what she wanted but she did not read it, just took it rather embarrassedly and gave it to the librarian to check out.

The librarian said to her: "You can't take out this book. It is on the restricted list." The girl, of course, thought: "Well, that is the very kind of book I need."

The librarian said to her: "Have you had a close look at this book? You can't take it out." The girl admitted she had not looked at it. She said: "Why?" "Look at this here. Do you realise this is volume 3 of a five-volume dictionary. It covers all the words from "how" to "love"!"

There are people everywhere who are seeking security and possessions, wealth, status and fame in order that they might use these things to acquire love, to gain love, to possess love, to be loved.

Eric Fromm, a great psychologist of the United States, makes this interesting statement: "Man's happiness today consists in 'having fun'...and the world is one big object for our appetite, a big apple, a big bottle...we are just the suckers, the eternally expectant ones, and the eternally disappointed ones."

But the problem of the world is not a drought or shortage of food. The problem of the world is getting hearts big enough to love the people in need, to share out of our abundance.

W.H. Auden, the poet, said: "Hunger allows no choice. We must love one another or die!"

It is interesting that in the sensual, pleasure-mad city of Corinth, when Paul knew they had all the lust in the world, he told them what they needed

was love. In the sophisticated commercial city of Ephesus, Paul wrote and told them what they needed was love. Ultimately what people everywhere need is love.

As you look through the words of Ephesians you see again and again the emphasis upon God's love for us and our love for one another.

There are three things about this love I would have you remember.

The World Needs Love

What the world needs now is love. Burt Bacharach taught us to sing it. Have you thought of those words lately? Burt Bacharach said:

What the world needs now is love, sweet love.

It's the only thing there's just too little of.

What the world needs now is love, sweet love.

Not just for some, but for every one.

The insight in that song is shared by great psychiatrists, psychologists, philosophers and poets.

The quote that has always appealed to me most came from Dr Viktor Frankl. I read in his book *Man's Search for Meaning* his own experiences of the discovery of how essential love is. He put it like this:

"A thought transfixed me: for the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth that love is the ultimate and highest goal to which a man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and thought and belief have to impart: the salvation of man is through love and in love."

Our world does not need more oratory and eloquence:

"I may be able to speak the languages of men and even of angels, but

if I have no love, my speech is no more than a noisy gong or a clanging bell" (1 Corinthians 13:1).

Paul made the point that when love is there, even silence can be eloquent.

Our world does not need more education. Paul again said:

"I may have the gift of inspired preaching; I may have all knowledge and understand all secrets; I may have all the faith needed to move mountains--but if I have no love, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:2).

Love is the power that transposes people from existence to life. We call it conversion in spiritual terms. We call it coming into a sense of our own personal well-being in psychological terms. It simply means love is the power everybody needs.

Christianity is Based on Love

It is not enough that the world needs love, but I want to suggest to you that the Christian lifestyle is based upon love.

Dr E. Stanley Jones, known to many of us as one of the greatest missionary statesmen in the 20th century, said to the great Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi: "Sir, I want to see Christianity nationalised in India, so that it will no longer be a foreign thing identified with foreign people. What would you suggest we do to make that possible?" The wise Gandhi said: "I would suggest first that all Christians should live more like Jesus Christ; second, that you practise your religion without toning it down; thirdly, you should place all your emphasis on love because love is the centre and soul of Christianity."

Gandhi put his finger right on the point. Love is the centre and soul of Christianity. Jesus taught love both by his words and his deeds. In Matthew 22 he was asked: "Teacher,

which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus said quite simply:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and the most important commandment. The second most important is like it: 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself'" (Matthew 22:37-39).

The early church understood that love was the centre of all they did. Therefore, when they met for holy communion they first of all had a shared meal which they called a "love feast." When they met one another they called each other "brother" and "sister" because they belonged to the loved family. They greeted one another with what the apostle Paul called the "holy kiss" or the "kiss of love."

Love was the centre point that marked out what the Christians were like.

Even James and John who were known as the Sons of Thunder because of their bad temper, were so changed by Jesus Christ that John became known as "the great apostle of love."

Right through the writings of the early church, we have been taught to love God. John put it beautifully:

"Love comes from God. Whoever loves is a child of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:7,8).

We were taught to love one another. Do we have faith and see our brother in need and not help him? Our love must be love in action. We were taught to love other people, we were taught to love believers. Jesus said: "If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples" (John 13:35).

We Must Learn to Love

How to love? That is the essential question. How you love a person does not depend at all upon what the other person is like. It does not depend upon their qualities, their attractiveness, their beauty. When you learn to love a person, it does not depend upon the other person at all.

The first thing you must do is *you must be lovable yourself*. You love by loving. You have to be lovable. It means that you have to show forth the

characteristics of a loving person in your life. You have to have words and deeds that are fair dinkum, sincere and caring.

Secondly, *you must be obtainable*. There are too many people who are remote, who are removed from people. They are isolated. They do not get into contact with people. The strange thing is that in our large cities the more and more we crowd people together, the more and more people are alone, isolated and alienated.

And *you must be vulnerable*. That means that you can be hurt. If you are ever going to learn to really love a person in depth, you have to open up yourself sufficiently to be hurt. The trouble is there are too many of us who are cold like the frog, who are emotionally frigid and withdrawn, who do not want to be hurt, who put up all sorts of barriers and protections and prickles to keep people away. But if you want to learn how to love you have to learn to be vulnerable.

You must be enjoyable. The essence of love is that you enjoy the company of another person, and at its depth, true love means that you share in joy one with the other. The Bible says God loves a cheerful giver. Love cheerfully. Another translation is: "Love gives gladly." Joy is always associated with love. There is an enjoyment about sharing.

When you share in love with another person, the joy you get is the goal; the love is a by-product that just comes with the joy.

The final word I want to mention is that *you must be dependable*, because love can only flourish and blossom and bloom as the individual is dependable and reliable and faithful. It does not matter what happens in this life, true love will stick it out and be faithful, even to the end.

As the apostle Paul says in Corinthians: "Love endures all things, believes all things and hopes all things; love never ends." It is dependable. "Who, then, can separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble do it, or hardship or persecution or hunger or poverty or danger or death?... No, in all these things we have complete victory through him who loved us! For I am certain that nothing can separate us from his love, neither death nor life, neither angels nor other heavenly rulers or powers,

neither the present nor the future, neither the world above nor the world below--there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39). His love is dependable.

There I have spelled out for you LOVED:

"L" is for lovable,
"O" is for obtainable,
"V" is for vulnerable,
"E" is enjoyable and
"D" is dependable.

That spells LOVED. The Scripture says it is when you realise you are loved by God that you can love others.

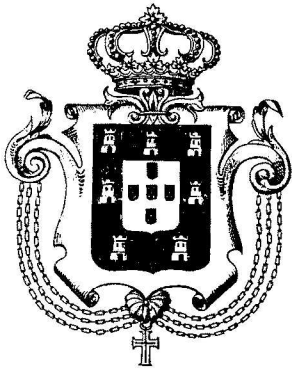
We love God because he first loved us. Once you discover you are loved, that enables you to express the nature of love. Ultimately you cannot learn to love. Love is not learned; love is not taught; love is caught.

That is what John meant when he put it so bluntly and beautifully:

"Dear friends, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Whoever loves is a child of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. And God showed his love for us by sending his only Son into the world, so that we might have life through him. This is what love is: it is not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the means by which our sins are forgiven.... We love because God first loved us. If someone says he loves God, but hates his brother, he is a liar. For he cannot love God, whom he has not seen, if he does not love his brother, whom he has seen. The command that Christ has given us is this: Whoever loves God must love his brother also" (1 John 4:7-19).

You can learn to love, but you learn to love by being lovable, obtainable, vulnerable, enjoyable, dependable. When you are those things you realise you are loved, and once you are loved you can love others. □

Gordon Moyes is Superintendent of the Wesley Central Mission, Sydney, NSW.



STATUS CYMBALS

Paul Porter

*Playing on the status
cymbals*

*Laying out the ready cash
Bigger, better, newer, faster
Hear the status cymbals
clash!*

*Hell has just been taken over
By a friend of Charlie Claus:*

*"We've acquired a private
furnace
Bigger, hotter far than
YOURS!"*

--Flanders and Swann

Scarcely a week goes by without some reminder in our national papers of the exploits and excesses of Australia's Big Spenders.

But these are small beer compared to the Conspicuous Consumers of the nineteenth century.

Take the Rothschilds, for instance. These Jewish bankers were among the wealthiest and most powerful families in history. A Rothschild palace, (and there were several), was not primarily a place of habitation, procreation or recreation. Its main purpose was to proclaim the worth of its occupants. Heinrich Heine recalled a visit to Baron James Rothschild's house in Paris: "I saw a gold-laced lackey bringing the baronial chamber pot along the corridor. Some speculator from the Bourse, who was passing, reverently lifted his hat to the impressive

vessel." Visitors to Baron Alfred de Rothschild's mansion in England described it as follows: "Senseless and ill-applied magnificence...lavish wealth thrust up your nose!" Even the Baron's tea was served in a pretentious manner. A servant would inquire of a quest: "Milk or lemon, sir?" If the guest's reply was milk, he was then asked: "Jersey, Hereford or Shorthorn, sir?" (D. Wallechinsky and I. Wallace, *The People's Almanac* #3. [1981]. 152-153).

Recently, an Australian beer merchant has sought respectability by building his own university on Queensland's Gold Coast. The idea is not new. Long ago, the American robber barron William K. Vanderbilt adopted what became Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. William K. went one step better, however. For the sum of around \$10,000,000, he married his daughter, (against her wishes), to the Duke of Marlborough, who belonged to one of the most honoured families in British history. The results were excellent. The Duke's palace Blenheim, (one of England's grandest), was given much-needed repairs. The Vanderbilts, for their part, were legitimized. All descendants, and, retrospectively, all antecedents, became people of the highest repute.

A cursory reading of the New Testament shows that Jesus belonged to a society well experienced in the twin arts of money making and the pursuit of status. In his Gospel sayings we meet the Rich Fool as well as the camel that strives to pass through the eye of a needle. Even Solomon in all his glory is knocked down to size: he doesn't compare with the lilies of the field. Clearly, Jesus recognized that the Poor, given the opportunity, were all too ready to emulate the Rich. The social virus of one-upmanship even infiltrated Jewish religion. Why else should Jesus urge people to seek the lowest seats in the synagogues? The disciples, not content with merely making it into God's kingdom, argued incessantly as to who should be the greatest there (shades of Muhammed Ali!). Even the temple was infested with money makers.

It's a strange business, this desire for extra wealth. Come to think of it, I could do with some right now. It would be nice, would it not, always to have a thousand or two in spending money, tucked away in the back pocket?

But the danger, of course, is that we trade our own worth for the worth of our possessions. And that, surely, is the most foolish deal imaginable.



HAVE YOU BEEN TO CHURCH AT ANTIOCH?

Vern Heise



A casual glance at the map would indicate that Jerusalem and Antioch (in Syria) are approximately 400 kilometres apart geographically. An equally casual glance at the book of Acts would suggest that some of the members in these churches were poles apart religiously. These differences that plagued the early church nearly 2000 years ago are still alive and well. In almost any church, and particularly in groups that feel that they are the sole custodians of truth and have a bonded franchise to determine who shall and who shall not inherit the kingdom of God, these differences tend to become more pronounced. The result is often fragmentation and factional fighting that can destroy the witness of the church and confuse many of the members.

Beginning in Jerusalem

There is no doubt that it was in the plan and providence of God that the Christian church should begin in Jerusalem. That it was the outgrowth and culmination of the Hebrew faith is confirmed throughout

Scripture. Jerusalem had been the centre of worship for over 1000 years, and a remnant of physical Israel recognised and accepted Jesus as the Messiah. It was in this city that the ultimate Sacrifice was offered for the sins of the world. It was here that Jesus triumphed over death and the grave. It was on a nearby mountain that he ascended to heaven, but not without first commanding his motley group of followers to preach the Gospel to all the world "beginning at Jerusalem." It was here that they were to tarry until Pentecost when they would be endued with power for the accomplishment of this staggering assignment. And there can be little doubt that for some time the early Christians congregated at the temple and participated in some of the ancient ritual. Herein lay the chief danger to the infant church.

How long would it take for these fledgling believers to sever their ties with Judaism and realise that the New Age--the Age of the Messiah--had fully dawned? How much of the past did they need to perpetuate? How much tradition

and ritual--much of Divine origin--did they need to lay upon Gentiles who responded to the Gospel of God's free grace in Jesus Christ? It is obvious that in the Jerusalem church there was division of opinion on some of these matters, and the Judaisers were determined to preserve "the landmarks" at all costs. Acts 15:24 says: "They went out from us (the Jerusalem church) troubling you (the church at Antioch) with words and subverting your souls saying, 'You must be circumcised and keep the law.'" While the leadership of the church in Jerusalem dissociated themselves from these troublemakers, the subsequent history of this sectarian party shows that they revelled in disputation and debate and would not rest until every other Christian wore "a yoke that neither they nor their fathers were able to bear."

Gospel Freedom at Antioch

Under the leadership of Paul and Barnabas the church in Antioch was rejoicing in the Good News of the Gospel and the large influx of non-Jewish

people to their ranks. These leaders were determined to demolish the barriers--the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles--and open the doors to all-comers who professed faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. They were celebrating the liberty of the Gospel, and it was obvious that the Holy Spirit was guiding in the decision-making process. It was from Antioch that the Gospel spread throughout Asia and eventually into Europe itself. One gets the distinct impression that this would be a church where fellowship, acceptance, praise, thanksgiving and witnessing would permeate the lives of the believers. They were too busy majoring in the weighty issues to be concerned with the minutiae of "touch not, taste not, handle not."

In his book *A Man in Christ*, J.S. Stewart says:

"The spirit of legalism--which was the thing Paul was concerned about--is by no means extinct. The idea underlying the words "righteousness by law" still commands the tacit assent of multitudes, even within Christendom. Still the old error takes a new lease of life in every generation....The shadow of Pelagianism--which is really just Jewish legalism in another form--has fallen across the Christian centuries and wherever it has come it has blighted hope and peace.

"A Christianity cramped in its action by the accoutrements of legalism was as little fit to face the world as David, in Saul's hampering armour was fit to face Goliath. Any Christianity which hankered after the Law was virtually denying the finality of


Jesus....Has Christ done all or has he left something undone? You say he has done all--then go and draw the obvious conclusion--the Law can add nothing!

"To be 'in Christ,' to have Christ within, to realise your creed not as something you have to bear, but something by which you are borne, this is Christianity. It is more, it is release and liberty, life with an endless song in its heart"(pp. 84,168).

There were those in the church in Jerusalem who wanted to make Christianity hard work. They were enjoying their masochism--their self-imposed penances. They

were like some today who will perform their religion even if it kills them!

On the other hand, the church in Antioch rejoiced in and celebrated the finished work of Christ. Is it any wonder it was here that the disciples were first called Christians? This was not only because their lives bore a striking resemblance to the Galilean; their teaching, like his, was also radically different on the great central theme of how a man is put right with God.

Have you been to church at Antioch? 

Vern Heise writes from Port Macquarie, NSW.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Paul Porter

"Lead us not into temptation"

What a strange request! Imagine a child telling his father: "No tricks today, Dad."

People have argued over this passage for centuries. Who is our tempter: God or the devil?

Perhaps it all depends on your viewpoint. If you proceed from the belief that God is all-holy, then obviously he cannot tempt anyone. But if you think of God as all-powerful, then there may be a sense in which he is ultimately responsible for everything--the good and the bad. Jesus' disciples, it seems, were inclined towards the latter viewpoint, and so the Master taught them to pray in a language they could readily comprehend.

Both viewpoints are represented in the Bible. But they remain models or conceptual tools, providing useful albeit selective insights into a problem ultimately beyond our grasp. In the meantime, two things seem clear enough: (1) evil is a reality in the world; (2) Christian prayer can prevail against it.

KIDS' COLUMN

THIEVES AND ROBBERS

Flora Mia



As a child I lived in India. We had many servants to help us with the housework. One day, one of the servants stole something valuable from the house. To catch the thief, Dad made a box with a large hole in the lid. He then covered a tennis ball with soot and put it in the box.

Five servants stood before my father. He said: "There is a ball in this box. I want each of you to put your right hand in the box and grip the ball; then let go of it. If you are honest, nothing will happen to you. But if you are the thief, a devil will get hold of your hand and not let it go." (These people

were afraid of devils).

After they had put their hands in the box each one stood with his hand behind his back. Father checked them. Four hands were sooty; one was not. Can you guess why? Sin makes one afraid.

In Bangladesh, a long time ago, I had a friend who had been a robber. Haldar led a small gang of strong men. When they planned to rob a village, they would warn the villagers in advance. Those poor people would run away and hide in fear. The robbers would carry away bags of rice. This went on for a long time. One day, Haldar heard that Jesus loves robbers and died to save them. Haldar believed in

Jesus. He no longer robbed villagers. Instead, he began, little by little, to pay back the rice he could remember he had stolen. It took a long time. He paid back until he died.

"God so loved robbers that he gave his only son to die for them, so that, if any robber believed on him, he would not die, but have everlasting life."

What is the difference between a thief, a robber, a brigand, a burglar, a dacoit and a highwayman? Which of these can't Jesus save? ☐

Flora Mia writes from Sydney, NSW.