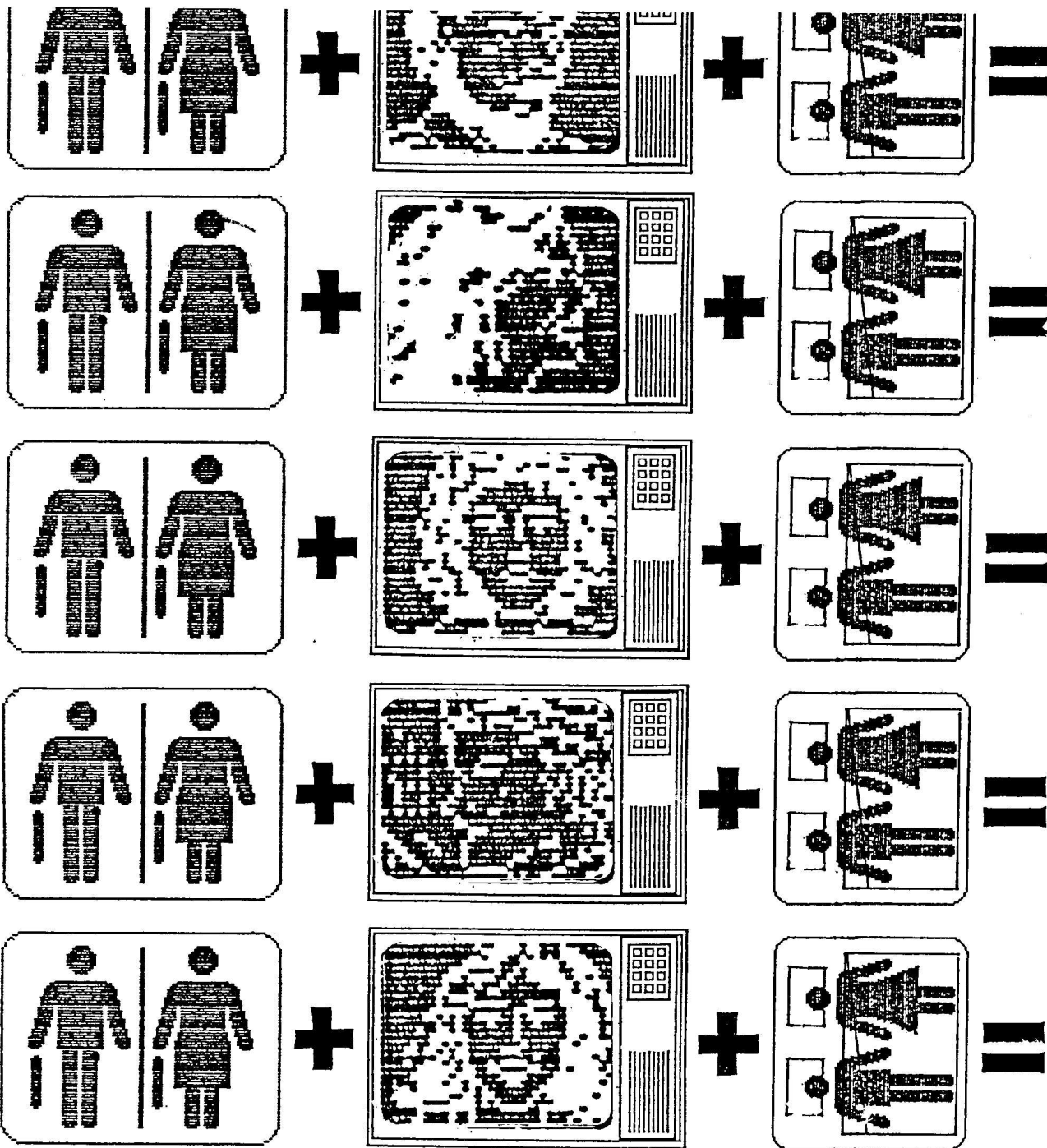


# GOOD NEWS

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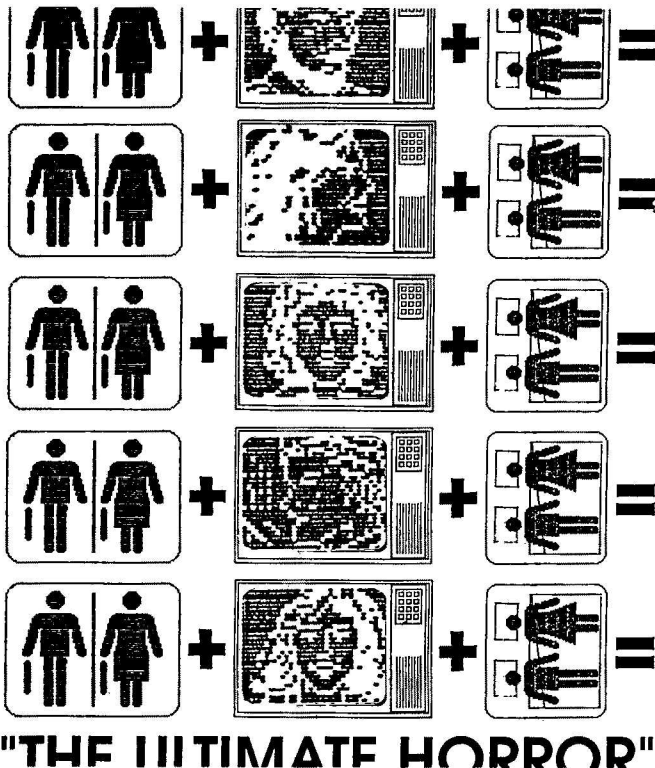
A U S T R A L I A



"THE INTIMATE HORROR"



# Editorial



## "The Ultimate in Horror"

Have you ever noticed how snippets from our childhood memories come flashing back after long years of neglect?

Recently I was reminded of a short radio filler I had heard back in the '60's: it was called "The Ultimate in Horror."

"Just imagine," intoned the narrator, "you are travelling alone through the night in a train, and you notice that it isn't stopping at any of the stations. And then you discover that the train has no conductor and no driver. But that, my friends, is not the ultimate in horror ...

"So imagine, if you will, that you are an astronaut circling the globe, and from your vantage point in the skies you witness below the commencement of World War III. But that is not the ultimate in horror ...

"And now, imagine: you are going off to work, and you come home to watch telly and you fall asleep and wake up and you go off to work and you come home to telly and you fall asleep and wake up and you go back to work and come home to telly and you fall asleep and wake up and THAT, my friends, is the ultimate in horror!" Aaaarrrggghh!

It all came back to me last Monday.

It was 8:45 in the morning and I was waiting in the office elevator with a colleague. As the doors opened at our level I murmured (half in jest): "Back to our boxes." From the look on his face, I realized it might have been kinder had I bloodied his nose.

Our generation is not the first to run the rat race. Long ago, the ancient Mesopotamians complained of the endless cycle of the seasons and life's seeming futility. Even the book of Ecclesiastes reads like the meditations of a modern 40-year old: ("All is vanity and chasing after wind").

I think it was Nietzsche who said: "He who has a *why* to live can bear almost any *how*." How true! And for the Christian, the *why* of life is really a *Who*. Touched by the eternal, even life's mundane tasks foreshadow God's coming kingdom.

Paul Porter

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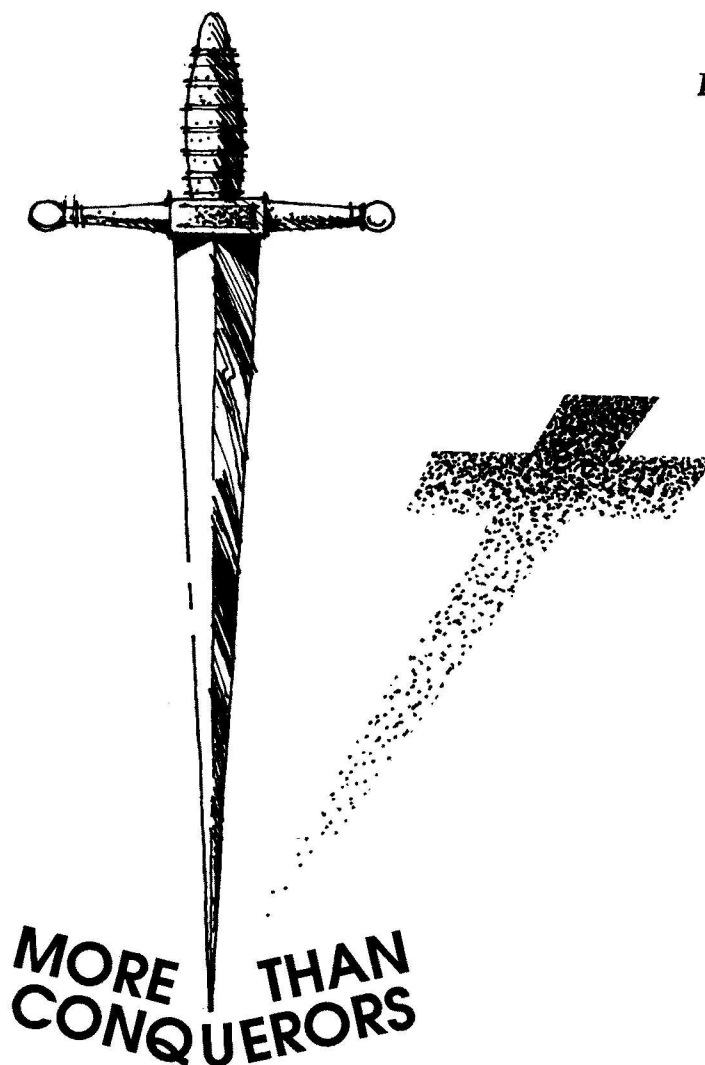
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*According to General Douglas MacArthur, "In war, there is no substitute for victory." This is true of the Christian conflict also.*

*"What?" Asks a concerned Christian. "Why this talk of war? War implies effort, struggle — works. I believe in salvation by faith alone."*

*Salvation is by faith alone. However, the evidence that we have received so great salvation is the experience of being more than conquerors in the daily clash with evil.*

---

#### Victory in Christian Warfare

**I**t was Paul, the apostle of justification by faith alone, who had so much to say about the Christian warfare. Read his comments in Romans 7:23; 13:12; 2 Corinthians 6:7; 10:4; Ephesians 6:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:8. Best of all are his words: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom 8:37). Conquerors! That's good. More

than conquerors. That's better. And not "so shall it be one day" but we are conquerors right now, this very day.

And the method of victory Paul offers is best of all. "Through him who loved us." That takes a lot of the strain out of it. The victory is not through us but through him. Even when discussing warfare Paul does not depart from his chief theme: Christ. The Saviour is Alpha and Omega not only in the accomplishment of the Atonement

but also in dogma and Christian experience.

#### Mature Christians know Success

How does this matter of victory while in conflict really work?

We wish to be very clear and very practical. Mature Christians know success in the war against evil. "Sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace" (Rom 6:14).

Please observe that Romans 8:37 is



no isolated promise. Consider the pledge given through Zechariah before the birth of Christ.

*"To rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days" (Lk 1:74-75).*

The word given to Titus amounts to the same. "Our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself up for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good" (Titus 2:13-14).

The second half of every Pauline letter stresses the same truth. True Christians, though not sinless or free from error, have put off the old corrupt manner of living. True Christians have adopted a new manner of living, (created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph 4:24).

What is the *modus operandi* ? How does "More than conquerors" work?

Here's the answer. *How we do depends upon what we are. What we are depends upon what we believe and receive.. What we believe and receive depends upon the pivotal matter of what we chiefly attend to and subsequently love.*

Read it again. It's another way of saying that in the ultimate everybody does what he or she likes. What we like depends upon whatever matters we allow to regularly engross our concentration ...

Now let's spell it out in detail.

### We Do What We Think

When Paul reaches the high point of his argument in Romans, he affirms that the justified walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Consequently, "the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met" in the believer (Rom 8:4).

Paul then adds: "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in ac-

cordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace" (Rom 8:5-6).

It is a general law that we eventually find ourselves doing whatever we think about (or dream about) all day. Whatever gets your attention gets you.

Let me be very blunt. If I regularly choose to feed my carnal nature by reading (or viewing) all that titillates, I can't hope to delight in purity and spiritual victory. If I delight in risqué anecdotes, or regularly dwell on the negative aspects of experience, how then can I be nerved to oppose evil?

We sometimes hear of the dramatic moral fall of someone previously noted for righteousness. It can be assumed that before the floodgates of the soul gave way, there was a subtle welcoming of questionable concepts or pictures over a long preceding period. To "resist beginnings" applies not only to practices such as smoking and consumption of alcohol.

On the other hand, if I regularly choose to feed my heart and mind with "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable" (Phil 4:8) - then the fruitage issuing in my life will correspond.

### Emotions are an Indicator

Can you tell how you are going? Are there indicators of the direction one is headed?

Yes. Our habitual emotions reveal us. Emotions are not something which come out of the blue. Each chooses his emotions by the regular cultivation of personal values. Emotions are the froth cresting the wave of regular thought.

This is what Abraham Lincoln meant when he declared, "Most people are as happy as they make up their minds to be." Our habitual feelings grow out of our habitual

thinking.

Colossians 3:2 in the King James Version speaks of setting one's affections on things above and not on things of earth. Modern versions replace "affections" with "mind" —and rightly so.

Many modern books on the topic of spiritual depression repeat this emphasis. Gloom and negativism are the fruit of faulty thought patterns. (Though sometimes they are physiologically triggered. This is the exception and not the rule.)

Long before the modern books affirming positive thinking, the Baptist preacher Alexander Maclaren had this to say:

*Though you cannot act on the emotions directly by the will, you can act directly on your understandings, on your thoughts, and your thoughts will act on your affections. If a man wants to love Jesus Christ he must think about Him. That is plain English. It is vain for a man to try to coerce his wandering affections by any other course than by concentrating his thoughts. Set your minds on the things that are above, and that will consolidate and direct the emotions; and the thoughts and the emotions together will shape the outward efforts. Seeking the things that are above will come, and will only come. when mind and heart and inward life are occupied with Him. There is no other way by which the externals can be made right than by setting a watch on the door of our hearts and minds, and this inward discipline must be put in force before there will be any continuity or sureness in the outward aim. We want, for that direction of the life of which I have been speaking, a clear perception and a concentrated purpose, and we shall not get either of these unless we fall back, by thought and meditation, upon the truths which will provide them both. (Maclaren's Expositions of Holy Scripture, 9:141, comment on Col 3:1.)*

### True Philosophy of the Christian Life

In Luke 10 the true philosophy of



the Christian life is skilfully presented. We first read of instructions to the seventy disciples, and of their joy in success. A warning follows. They should not rejoice primarily in their achievements. They should rejoice in the grace and mercy of God which has called them out from the world and given them heavenly life.

The succeeding verses deal with the practical philanthropy of the Good Samaritan. The climax comes, however, in the story of the overworked Martha and meditative Mary.

Commenting on this sequence, Charles Spurgeon warned:

*While we ought to abound in service, and to do good abundantly to our fellow men, yet we must not fail in worship, in spiritual reverence, in meek discipleship, and quiet contemplation. While we are practical, like the seventy; practical, like the Samaritan; practical, like Martha; we are also like the Saviour, to rejoice in spirit, and say, "Father, I thank Thee"; and we are also, like Mary, to sit down in quietude and nourish our souls with divine truth. (C H Spurgeon, The Treasury of the New Testament, 2:804).*

#### Legalistic Character Development

We are by nature such legalists that even after conversion we regularly slip into legalistic methods of character development. It is as though the crew of a sailing ship tried to get the becalmed vessel moving by pushing against the masts. Or like a drowning man trying to lift himself out of the water by pulling at the hair of his own head.

Paul taught us the better way. "We, who with unveiled faces all contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18).

Thus, we are changed. We do not change ourselves anymore than we can birth ourselves. "Do not conform any longer to the pattern

of this world, but be transformed" (Rom 12:2). We do not transform ourselves. We are transformed.

#### Everyone is a Mirror

Everyone is a mirror. According to Henry Drummond, that is one of the best descriptions of a human being. He wrote:

*Whether we like it or not, we live in glass houses. The mind, the memory, the soul, is simply a vast chamber panelled with looking-glass... men are not only mirrors, but these mirrors so far from being mere reflectors of the fleeting things they see, transfer into their own inmost substance, and hold in permanent preservation the things that they reflect.... All things that he has ever seen, known, felt, believed of the surrounding world are now within him, have become part of him, in part are him—he has been changed into their image. He may deny it, he may resent it, but they are there. He cannot alter or rub them out. They are not in his memory, they are in Him. His soul is as they have filled it, made it, left it. These things, these books, these events, these influences are his makers. In their hands are life and death, beauty and deformity. (The Greatest Thing in the World and Other Addresses, pp.136-140.)*

#### Chosen Mental Pictures

So it is not our wills that shape us but our chosen mental pictures. We grow like whatever we live with. According to their elected company of thoughts and pictures all humans adopt a scale of values. Subsequently, we are forever denying some options in order to give freedom to others. All know self-denial either coming or going. Just watch traffic. Some must be held back so as to let the rest through. So with the mind and will.

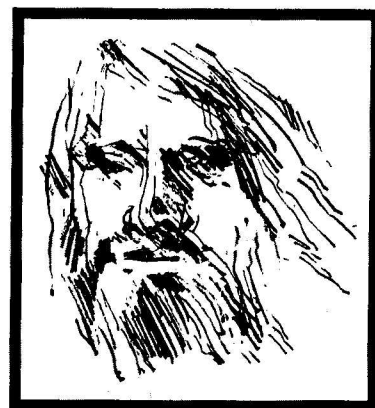
In the story of miserly Silas Marner, he was not changed because he willed it. He was changed because a child led him out of himself and opened new doors in

his soul. So it is always with the believer who admits Christ.

Now we see how it is that the gospel can be the power of God unto salvation to "whosoever" believeth. It is God's power, not ours, that accomplishes the miracle.

Long ago, an Eton schoolmaster would tell his boys, "It's your duty to be pure in heart. If you are not pure in heart, I will flog you." That is crazy. Law has no power. Law never runs anything. Fellowship with the holy and the lovely—that's another thing. That alone has power.

#### I'd Rather Have Jesus



More than conquerors! Yes, you and me. Not by gritting our teeth. Not by more resolutions. By regularly exposing our hearts and minds to the Chiefest among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely.

He has already crushed the head of the serpent. Instead of being a seven-headed dragon, that serpent has shriveled to a tiny snake with a death wound.

Christ has judged and cast out the prince of this world, and his victory is for us. Christ it is who puts enmity between us and evil. When the heart is filled with the most precious thing in the universe—Christ's love—then the alternatives offered by temptation appear in all their tawdry shabbiness.

In the face of even colossal enticements, we victoriously cry, "I don't want them! I'd rather have Jesus."

Desmond Ford is founder of GNCM.



Scripture: Psalm 63:1-8

**T**o whom do you pray? The old pagan who bowed down to his idol as it stared at him with wooden stare, knew well to whom he prayed. The Hindu, in many parts of the world goes into a temple and sees more than a hundred faces of gods. When I've been in Hindu temples I've noticed that every single face is snarling. But do you know the name of the one to whom you pray?

I heard of a boy who used to pray to Harold. Someone said to him: "Look, you don't call God Ha-

rold," and he said: "That's His name." The boy thought God's name was Harold and we couldn't understand that and we tried to find out how he learnt that God's name was Harold. Then it was pointed out that sometimes he'd heard people praying in church: "Our Father, who art in heaven, Harold is Thy name."

What is the name of your God? Do you know to whom you pray? Who is this person of prayer?

#### PRIVILEGE

It is a privilege to pray—"What a

privilege it is to carry everything to God in prayer."

The ancient Israelites knew it was a privilege to pray to God. They knew they had a God who heard and understood them. It was the one thing that the Jewish people grabbed hold of because it distinguished their God from all the other gods round about —because they believed they had a God who could hear their prayers. For example, Psalm 65:1-2 says "Oh God, it is right for us to praise you in Zion and to keep our promises to you because you answer prayers." If you follow through the Bible you

*Gordon Moyes*

## PERSON OF PRAYER





will see how people grew in their understanding of prayer. In the early days prayer was conceived as a conversation with God: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, all discuss the crises at hand with God who guides, protects and provides. You see it in the beautiful story of Samuel and Eli.

It is quiet in the temple, when suddenly the boy hears: "Samuel!" and he runs into Eli and says "Did you call me?" Eli said: "No, I didn't call you, go back to bed." He goes back to bed. "Samuel!" He goes back to Eli. "Did you call me? What can I do for you?" "Go back to bed." Three times. Then old Eli says: "If you hear the voice again say 'Is that you Lord?'"

Then prayer is seen as a crying out to God in time of need, of national despair: "Oh God, hear my cry. Hear my cry for my people. Save me." God is seen as one who hears the cry of the man whose crops are failing, when there are floods, when there is a dry and thirsty land. The people cried out to God in their need.

In the time of the prophets, prayer was seen as not something we just say to God but something God expects from us: "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Righteous living is expected from us if we are to be right with God.

Finally we see in the Old Testament the development of prayer as a liturgy where people said and sang prayers together in the temple or synagogue. Psalm 63 is like that:

"O God you are my God, and I long for you. My whole being desires you; like a dry, worn-out, and waterless land, my soul is thirsty for you. Let me see you in the sanctuary; let me see how mighty and glorious you are. Your constant love is better than life itself, and so I will praise you. I will give thanks as long as I live; I will raise my hands to you in prayer. My soul will feast and be satisfied and I will

sing glad songs of praise to you. As I lie in bed, I remember you; all night long I think of you, because you have always been my help. In the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy. I cling to you, and your hands keep me safe."

The Lord Jesus learnt to pray to God at His mother's knee, at the carpenter's bench, in the synagogue school at Nazareth and amongst His fisherman friends. Jesus did something to prayer more than any other man recorded in the Bible. He took a term He had learned as a little child and applied it to God. He called Almighty God "Abba"—a word that came out of the Jewish family. It meant 'Daddy, my dear Father.' In Israel's history God's name was so

campfire waiting to film a sequence. An Israeli member of our film crew was stoking the fire in readiness with a little help from his young son. I could not understand their language as the boy asked his father if he could put more wood on the fire, but I could understand the start of his question: for he was using the same word that Jesus used! "Abba — daddy, can I put this wood on the fire?" I asked them: "That word you said — 'Abba'— what does that mean?" The Israeli man replied: "It is a term of endearment between a child and his father and it means 'my loving father —Daddy.'"

#### PERSON

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*God is seen as one who hears the cry of the man whose crops are failing, when there are floods, when there is a dry and thirsty land.*

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sacred that people wouldn't even mention His name. They used to mention His name which we call Jehovah, from the Hebrew, and they would leave out the vowels because no one would even write or mention God's name. They would always say instead "The Lord." But Jesus used a new name and said 'Abba—My Father'.

Professor Joachim Jeremias, a great New Testament scholar, says there is not one example in all of ancient literature that shows anybody in Israel before Jesus ever used the word 'Abba' in relationship to God.

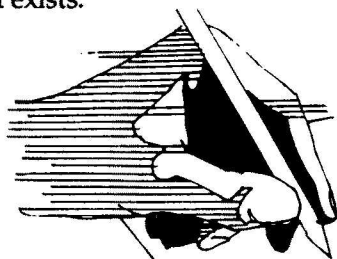
Some time ago I was with a film crew in the high, barren hills of the Judean mountains. It was night and we were around a Bedouin

As individuals we have to remember the Person of Prayer. It is our Father. The trouble is there are many who cannot accept the fact that God is a loving Father. Our minds are not big enough to comprehend that the Almighty, all-powerful God is also a loving God. God is the one who causes us to want to pray and He is the object of our prayers. He is the one to whom we pray.

There are people who do not know God and have no idea to whom they pray. It has been one of man's greatest philosophical quests to discover the person of prayer. Who is this God to whom we pray? As we look at scripture we see how the Jews and then the Christians developed their understanding of God.



They first spoke about God as Yahweh, the word we call Jehovah. This word appears 6,800 times in the Old Testament and it means 'to be'. It is the verb 'to be' in Hebrew. In a conversation Moses had with God, God says: "Moses, I want you to go down to Egypt and tell Pharaoh to let my people go." Moses says: "But Lord, who shall I say told me to do this?" And God said to him: "Tell him Yahweh says so. I am who I am." It is a difficult word to translate: it means, "I who am always, who has no beginning and no end. I who am eternal and unchangeable." It also means, "I who bring into being everything that exists."



*... the first  
recorded instance  
in writing of  
Hebrew people using  
the term  
"Yahweh"*

Sometimes the Jewish people used the words Yahweh Sabaoth which means The Lord God Almighty, the one who is in charge of all the forces of heaven and all the spiritual forces that exist. Sometimes He was called by other names such as El Shaddai and the God of the Covenant, the Great Judge, God Most High but from Jesus' time He was known as Father.

The New Testament writers always refer to God as "God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is also interesting that the names the Jews used about God the Lord were all the words which the early Christians used to describe Jesus. In 1980 archaeologists were excavating a tomb just outside the wall of the Temple of Mount Zion where they found a scroll approxi-

mately 9 inches high made out of silver. It came from the seventh century B.C. and contained the first recorded instance in writing of Hebrew people using the term "Yahweh". Jesus taught us to say: "Our Great God, Our Father."

There are some people who can't pray to God like that. Some have become humanists and that doesn't allow them to think of the Supreme Being. The Unitarians like to think of one God but over the years they have become more humanist and in the last ten years have become dominated by feminists. They believe God is a sexist name and have striven to take the whole name out of their articles of association altogether. The Unitarians now commence their prayers with 'To Whom It May Concern'. In 1983 one of their spokespeople, Rev Diane Millar, when asked whether it seemed odd they were voting to cast God out of their association principles commented, "We aren't sure that it matters to her anyway."

Christians do not pray to a vague, unknowable, sexless nothing. Our Person of Prayer is God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Almighty, all-powerful, all-knowing, always present, always loving, the immortal, invisible, unchangeable, personal Spirit who is perfectly good and who sustains and orders all of life. He is the great God, the Judge, the Creator, the beginning and the end. He is Abba, our Father which art in heaven.

#### PATTERN

Jesus taught His disciples "that they should always pray and never become discouraged." (Luke 18:1). When they said to Him: "Lord, teach us to pray," He taught them the prayer we call "The Lord's Prayer." This prayer was not given just to be recited, but to be used as a pattern for their own prayers. Jesus gave us a great example or pattern of prayer:

"Our" teaches us that prayer is

always corporate, never selfish. He is our God, the God of all races, colours and social classes. When I recognise He is our Father, I need to recognise that all others — regardless of race, colour or social position are my brothers and sisters. My prayers must also be for them and the world in which we live.

"Father" teaches us to speak bravely and boldly, for I now understand the nature of God. He cares for me, loves me and wants to hear me.

"Who art in heaven" teaches us too that God is nearby wherever I might be. Heaven is always at hand — see Psalm 139:9-12.

"Hallowed be Thy name" teaches us that God is holy, just, awesome and righteous and I must not approach Him in a frivolous careless manner. In Australia, we get the idea that God is an old mate who dwells away in heaven and is very little interested in us until the day when we die and before Him we hear His words of welcome "G'day mate. Howya goin?" But God is holy and we approach Him with awe and wonder.

What does this person of prayer want from us? Ourselves, our life, our all. When you pray you are praying to the great God Almighty who wants not your words, not your money, not your dreams, but your life in full commitment to Him. In return He forgives you of your sins, He promises you life everlasting and offers you a relationship with Him, which is a relationship of love so that He becomes your heavenly Father. Have you accepted that relationship? You find it through believing in Christ Jesus, asking Him to forgive you your sins, believing that God sent Him to save you from your sins through His death upon the cross and by believing that He can cleanse your life and give you new hope.

WORD TALK by Gordon Moyes



*My first  
conviction by  
the Holy Spirit  
came on a  
cold, windy  
day in 1962.*



## A PLASTIC MOTIF

*Geoff Reilly*

**I**t is a plastic world. Too many things are made of plastic. Yet many reactions to the word "plastic" are essentially negative.

Connotations related to pollution, fragility, non-durability, poor quality and falseness are typical.

Recently, a different type of plastic has made new. The so-called "plastic explosive" derives its meaning from the earlier meaning of plastic — "a putty-like nature". Terrorists use plastic explosives to down aircraft with massive loss of life. A small amount concealed in a transistor radio is sufficient to blast a hole in the side of an aeroplane with dreadful consequences.

The U.S. Army developed the Composition B explosive during World War 11 by mixing T.N.T. and R.D.X. and now commonly called "plastic explosive". However, it only became famous in the 1960's when the O.A.S. used them against the Algerian independence movement. This substance is so powerful that even without containment it can still cause massive damage. Its power is so great that even areas of apparent total resistance yield.

The typical explosion can be illustrated by a gunshot when an explosion takes place in the firing chamber, the bullets fire out in the direction of least resistance. During blasting, the explosive is contained in a hole in the rock where it is detonated. When it finds the point of least resistance, the blast fires back out of the drill hole with a big bang.

Many sermons have used the illustration of dynamite. The word derives from a Greek word DUNAMIS which is used about 25 times in the N.T. Its meanings vary but include "force", "power", and "done powerfully".

The power of the Holy Spirit is typified in Rom 1:16 "I have complete confidence in the Gospel, it is God's power to save all who believe..." (Good News Version). In my early years as a Christian, I was working in road construction using explosives. Dynamite did not seem an apt motif for my experience.

Instead, my first conviction by the

Holy Spirit came on a cold, windy day in 1962. The poor weather herded my fellow members and me back to the Club house of the Wanda Surf Club. In any group discussion two subjects predominated, Religion and Politics. This day, it was religions turn. Eventually many present decided to attend a church to see if Christianity was real. Most who said they would attend didn't. But four or five of us visited several churches over the next few weeks.

The first tangible result was that the Surf Club's vice-captain was converted and within a few months attended a Bible College and became a successful Congregational minister. At least two others in the group also became Christians. The power of the Holy Spirit was certainly felt in their lives.

However, I resisted. Indeed, I continued to resist for many years. Despite sensing the entreating power of the Holy Spirit, my conversion took seven years. The initial work occurred within my friends almost immediately. To me the power seemed to take the line of least resistance, by converting my friends. With my stubborn heart, the "plastic" power of Composition B was needed. How marvellous, that the Holy Spirit's power works according to people's many differing facets.

*Geoff Reilly is the Chairman of Good News Christian Ministries, Publishers of Good News Australia.*



# TOUCHED BY ZION

*Robert Cooper*



**R**ecently, I worshipped in an all black Baptist congregation in inner Philadelphia. With me were forty other Australian whites and one New York negro. I'm not sure when Zion Baptist Church had last hosted white worshippers. Nonetheless, we were welcomed enthusiastically within the sanctuary of the church. Not surprisingly, the harmonious choir and superb soloists lifted our souls and literally sent shivers down our spines. Essentially though, the power came with the sermon. Within it, we learnt that many of the congregation feared to venture more than two blocks from their homes. We learnt that drugs were regarded as a white-imposed blight upon the dignity of their race. More importantly, we learnt that this congregation planned to recover their neighbourhood's dignity by sharing Christ through education drug rehabilitation programmes and other social interaction. The biblical outreach formula of two by two was intensified to eight groups of two by two per block. Within their neighbourhood they meet only black. But black contaminated by drugs, alcohol, crime and despair equals danger even to the messengers of Christ.

As whites in the black neighbourhood we were welcomed. Greetings became less warm as we left the confines of Zion and hit kerbside. I don't resent that. Like my black brethren I sensed the danger and intense hatred that the neighbourhood imposed just short of Zion's doorstep.

Zion was visited on July 2. Two days later white America joyfully embraced Independence Day. Washington was mentioned only with disdain. July 4 had as much significance for Zion as Australia Day has to the Australian Aborigines.

It would be a grievous mistake to imagine that violence and drugs

are found only in black ghettos. New York offers a spectrum of racial hatred contrasting with insularity. Broadly viewed, New York is dazzlingly cosmopolitan. In reality it is a mosaic of insulated parochial neighbourhoods each with their own sets of problems. Zion represented my most hopeful experience on the East Coast. Here, Christians determined to confront the neighbourhood. Here, the black Christians reached into their own cultural and spiritual roots and worshipped with dignity and purpose. Joy, hope and determination were present in equal measure. As Good Samaritans they ministered to our souls - Samaritans brave enough to recognise their neighbourhood's needs - Samaritans courageous enough to ignore looking to self-serving Governments at all levels for solutions - Samaritans who risk personal danger and draw strength from a Saviour whose love historically sustained their slave ancestors. In Him, the blacks in the Philadelphia ghetto perceive self worth. In Him, they draw the courage to confront the cynical, uncaring attitudes of middle America and derive wholeness in His acceptance.

You may have guessed that much of Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Washington depressed me. One wonders at the fact that the U.S. tolerates such extremes of wealth and poverty and still claims to be Christian.

Zion refreshed me. I responded to

demonstrable courage, faith and fervent, joyful worship. I warmed to the sense of Christian community set in a neighbourhood polluted by modern civilizations worst excesses.

My black brothers and sisters accepted me in Christ. They shared their joy and their love. May they continue to confront the evils of their neighbourhood and may they continue to draw strength from our shared Heavenly Father.

But what about us? Do we confront similar evils in Australian society? If Christianity provides hope in the U.S.A.'s inner cities, equally it offers the only hope to solving Australia's social ills.

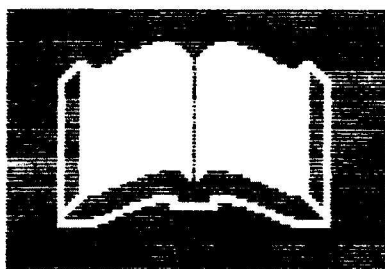
Redfern does exist. Alcoholism for Aborigines is analogous with crack for the Washington negro. How many political and social attitudes of Australian Christians are shaped by self-interest? How many Australian Christians behave as the Good Samaritan? How many agree with radio identity, John Laws, in dismissing Samaritans as "do-gooders" and remain silent about corrupt politicians, policemen or businessmen?

Do-gooders whose inspiration derives from Christianity historically have brought an end to slavery; to child labour; to mistreatment of the very young and the very old. Shaftesbury and Wilberforce weren't popular in their time, but posterity recognises both the Christian basis for their reforms and the justice of their cause.

Who defends the homeless kids in Australia? Who has the moral courage to confront the "anonymous" drug barons of Australia? In Zion, Christians confront their neighbourhood problems with the power of Christ. If Australian Christians deny the same power, then God help Australia.

*Rob Cooper is co-editor of Good News Australia.*





# *The Sectarian Strand*

by  
Micheal Hogan.  
Published  
Penguin Books 1987.  
316pp, index,  
paperback,  
\$15.00.

A REVIEW  
BY  
BRUCE WILSON

## AN ATHEIST SECTARIAN

**I**n my late teens it was just amusing, men dressing up in funny bits of regalia for a secret meeting. I knew most of them, they were the leading laymen of our Anglican Church. While we played games, flirted and were bored by the usual evangelistic harangue at the youth club in the big hall, they met in the little church hall. We knew they were called the Orange Lodge but we hadn't a clue what it was all about. The year was 1958, the place a now inner suburb of Sydney.

My own father was brought up nominally Presbyterian. His mother was born in Scotland and his father's father had come from Edinburgh to Sydney in the 1850's. So far as I am aware, Dad's parents never went to church but they were

Empire people—God, King and Country. Dad didn't bother about nominal Presbyterianism. If asked, but only if asked, he'd say he was an atheist. If I'd known something about the Orange Lodge then, it would have explained the puzzle as to why Dad the atheist was such a Protestant and anti-Catholic atheist. Of course he didn't belong to the Orange Lodge, Dad was a Mason. But he was, nevertheless and probably unknown to him, part of the Protestant ascendancy of the Australia that existed from the First Fleet to the 1960's.

Dad was a man of his age and it would be false to judge him from a modern point of view. Atheist or no, Dad was a sectarian. He was an ethnic, class and race sectarian.

Dad was pro-British, anti-Irish and in fear of Rome, he was for the middle class (though he wasn't one of them) and against the working class (Irish) rabble, he was pro-white and anti-Aboriginal and Asian. For him Protestant versus Catholic was a neat way of summing up an inherited identity. Those spiritually fervent, loyal Orangemen cloistered in the small hall of our church were sectarians too. Little did they realise that their meetings to defend Protestant truth against the wicked lies and machinations of Catholicism were as much a matter of ethnicity, class and race as they were of theology. Though he didn't believe in their God, Dad the atheist was on the side of the Orangemen because he



shared most of a world with them. Michael Hogan's book *The Sectarian Strand* subtitled 'Religion in Australian History' is about, as the cover page says: "The impact of religious rivalries on the development of Australian society from the First Fleet to the Festival of Light".

The book helped me make more sense, sympathetically, of Dad and his generation—the last generation of the Protestant ascendancy in Australia. Even more it helped me to understand what is happening to Christianity in Australia today, which is why it is a book that Eremos people should read.

### God and our History

Memory, personal memory, is the way we orient ourselves in the vast scheme of things, find an identity, have some sense of who we are. History is collective memory, memory on a larger scale. Through history we gain a deeper perspective of how we have been shaped and a new liberty to enlarge our sense of who we are, even to alter our identity. We experience, too, how others have been shaped, learn to think their thoughts a little and thus overcome prejudices and hates. The God who comes to us from the pages of the Bible is a God of history, a God who is present and absent in the farrago of human society over time, in history. This God is not so much a metaphysical (out there) God as a process God, one whose presence and absence we meet or miss in the cosmological and historical process of which we are a part.

One of the paradoxes of the story of Christianity in Australia as Michael Hogan tells it is that the more violent the clashes between Christians over where God was present or absent (for example Protestant or Catholic, church school or state school, Labor Party or conservative parties) the more

impact religion had on Australian society. The modern ecumenical spirit has lessened the impact of religion on Australian society but is not so much the eirenical spirit between Christians that has brought this about as the gradual dissolution of those ethnic, class and racial barriers which put Dad the atheist on the side of the Protestants and against the Catholics.

*The Sectarian Strand* demonstrates, as no other book has done, that Australian history itself cannot be understood without measuring the considerable impact of religion on our society. Most histories of Australia have not garnered accurately our collective memory. When re-

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ligion has appeared in the story as more than a passing reference in an odd paragraph or two, it has almost always been an account of the part Catholics played in the Labor Party split of the mid-1950's. In these accounts even the Catholics seem to appear out of a secular nowhere and, once Santamaria and The Movement have been explained, they disappear once more into a story that proceeds on its mundane non-sacred way.

I found myself somewhat amused that it has taken the research of Michael Hogan, a former Catholic priest turned political scientist, to show us that religion has had a pervasive influence on the whole of Australian history and that it is the Protestants who've been a more powerful shaping force than the Catholics. Hogan says: "The

middle class values of the Liberal and National Parties (and their forebears with different names) have for almost all of this century been Protestant values. Both are inculcated together in the elite private schools which have provided the vast majority of non-Labor prime ministers, premiers and ministers. Not till the second half of this century has there been any softening of an almost exclusively Protestant leadership." Hogan tells tales of sectarian bitterness commonly ignored even by historians who've acknowledged some place to religion in Australia's story. He recognises that for all their paternalism Christian mission stations helped the Aborigines to survive the rapaciousness of the men and women of rural capitalism. Yet the general attitude of most nominally Christian white Australians (harbouring a sectarian hatred second to none) was that Aborigines had no religion at all. There was a racial blindness which simply did not see that spirituality was more integral to the whole of Aboriginal life than it was for most Christians. Men of the enlightenment, championed by Manning Clark as bearers of light amidst the dark superstitions of religion, used their perception of Aboriginal atheism to justify the slaughter of a people they regarded as a beast-like non-human race. One of the worst examples of sectarian exploitation in Australian history is the nineteenth century spoliation of Aboriginal burial grounds for "scientific examples" of bones and ritual implements. "What would have been regarded as criminal offence in their European homelands was seen as a scientific duty" by the enlightenment men of the period. For me one of Hogan's most chilling stories of sectarianism, of which in my ignorance I was totally unaware, is the action taken by the Commonwealth of Australia against the Jehovah's Witnesses sect during the Second World War. The Labor government of the day



legislated to allow conscripts to serve overseas but in accordance with their beliefs the Jehovah's Witnesses were conscientious objectors. In January 1941 the Adelaide branch of the Jehovah's Witnesses was closed by the Commonwealth, their assembly room occupied by police and documents seized. The Jehovah's Witnesses appealed to the High Court of Australia but they lost their case. The High Court held that the Australian Constitution does not prevent the Commonwealth from making laws prohibiting the advocacy of doctrines which, though advocated in pursuance of religious convictions, are prejudicial to the prosecution of a war in which the Commonwealth is engaged. What is most chilling is that as Michael Hogan says: "In the supporting argument the High Court went even further. The stated opinion was that, even outside the emergency of war, the value of religious freedom has to yield, according to the Australian Constitution, to the majority core values of the community."

This judicial judgement may prove in the future to have fearful consequences for Australian Christians who are members of mainline but albeit, in a secular society, minority church groups. It is salutary to note that there appears to have been no outcry about this decision from the mainline churches of the 1940's.

#### **A Hidden Hand**

Michael Hogan says that the key to understanding the central position of the churches in the first part of the twentieth century in Australia, particularly the Protestant ascendancy, is the confluence of values between Protestantism and developing Australian capitalism. In the first half of this century the form of capitalism in Australia, according to Hogan, was production capitalism. This required a disciplined and dedicated workforce attuned to the Protestant work ethic.

Middle class capitalists and Protestants, though perhaps for different reasons, worked together to ensure the existence of a well-behaved working class. Consequently, legislators cooperated with the ascetic value scheme of Protestantism to implement moral legislation against the consumption of alcohol (the six o'clock closing swill), gambling, and to assure the modest asexual dress of women and the observance of the Sabbath day through prohibition of sporting activities and other forms of entertainment on Sundays. It didn't seem to occur to the middle-class Christians of this period that they were attacking the

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***"Christian morality" seems to most people to have little more application than to sex.***

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symptoms of working-class suffering rather than the disease of capitalistic exploitation of the workers through low wages, harsh working conditions and long hours. According to Hogan the dismantling of this whole barrage of wowsy legislation in the 1960's and 1970's had less to do with a new irreligious spirit amongst Australians than it had to do with the shift from production capitalism to consumer capitalism in Australia. After the Second World War Keynesian economic theory began to dominate capitalist thinking which meant that the new dogma encouraged people to spend and buy, not to save and be ascetic.

"Radio and then television enabled the central institution of the new capitalism, the advertising

industry, to introduce a permanent and ongoing revolution in consumer values. Advertising sells products by marketing dreams and manipulating popular values. In this respect it is in direct competition with religious institutions ... its dreams and values are unequivocally secular."

In Australia the Christian churches have always been in the minority but in the past this minority has had a significant impact on the shape of Australian society whether for good or ill. Understanding the story of Australian Christians within Australian society will help modern Christians to understand what is happening to them now. Hopefully it will stir us from our retreat into privatised forms of spirituality where the Kingdom of God has come to mean little more than the salvation of personal souls and where the term "Christian morality" seems to most people to have little more application than to sex. Australians are still about as religious and irreligious as they were one hundred years ago but the churches are much more marginal to the life of the wider society. If our God is the God of history then the proper arena of his disciples is as much the outer world as it is the inner one of the spirit. Our forefathers and mothers, whatever blinkers they may have worn viewed the Christian faith as a movement for the total transformation of human being both individual and social. We must not only criticise them for their shortcomings but allow their strengths to be a criticism of our own weaknesses. If Michael Hogan is right about the effects of consumer capitalism on the spiritual life then we will need to develop Christian perspectives that are as radical in this society as liberation theology is in the societies of the Third World. What we face is not so much material poverty but devastating spiritual poverty.

-Eremos Newsletter



# ESCAPING FROM FUNDAMENTALISM



## Releasing Prisoners not Attacking Jailers

*A Review*  
*Don Meadows*

Once upon a time two youthful Australian theologians went to England for further study. While in the far country they came upon a compatriot who was reading James Barr's Fundamentalism. The two youthful ones asked the elder what he thought of this rather disturbing book, and were taken aback to find that he considered it a generous treatment. After hearing this incident I commented to the elder that Barr seemed to know his fundamentalism and wondered whether he may have been one himself. The elder replied "Indeed he was; he used to be the head of a student group at a British university". I was not surprised; Professor Barr knows whereof he writes. We have all become accustomed to hearing the followers of the Ayatollah Khomeini described as Muslim fundamentalists. What many people do not realise is that the word migrated from another use to its present newsworthy position. It began as the title of a movement within Christianity and has in the last three decades become a widely recognised designation for a brand of Christianity which cuts across all the usual differences of denominations and traditions. Its distinguishing feature is that it regards the Bible as infallible or inerrant. Its results are usually authoritarianism and judgementalism, frequently together with intellectual inhibition and emotional impairment. These are the reasons why James Barr wishes to help those who are ready to escape from it.

Barr already has a name for writing in this area, and it is worth saying at the outset that this book is not the same type of book as his earlier large tome referred to above. The earlier book was written as a description, analysis and explanation of fundamentalism; it was a polemical book, although written in a most fair and reasonable spirit. This newer book is a pastoral book. It is not concerned to attack the fundamentalist position; it is not trying to argue anyone out of that set of beliefs. It is designed for those (and there are many in the Christian church - Eremos is continually coming across them) who have found their Christian growth and development cramped by fundamentalism, or who have entered Christianity through a fundamentalist avenue and are wary of going further.

Throughout the whole of the book Barr uses very little theological argument or terminology. He has in mind the general reader, not the specialist in doctrine or Bible study. His recurring theme can be very simply put: fundamentalism is not biblical. When the Bible is looked at closely enough, it does not support fundamentalist claims of infallibility or inerrancy.



## A Look at the Text

He begins with the texts which fundamentalists frequently use to support their claims that the Bible

is infallible: 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20-21. His careful examination of these texts shows that they cannot bear the weight they are made to carry in the fundamentalist system. The scripture is "useful" rather than infallible or inerrant, and its interpretation is a matter for the church as a whole rather than for any individual or single group within it.

The supposed support of Jesus for fundamentalist ideas fares no better. Barr points out that Jesus' main teaching method was the use of fiction ("indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable"), and that when he refers to incidents in the Old Testament, there are several occasions when his references contain mistakes (e.g. Mark 2:25-26; Matthew 23:25; cf. Mark 1:1-3). Does this in any way impair Jesus' teaching? Not as far as Barr is concerned. The errors "are small to the

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***"I should try a  
more mature  
version of the faith".***

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reader—who will commonly not notice them at all—for the same reason as they were small to Jesus: they were historical details, which made no difference for the religious purpose for which Jesus was using the passages ... Within the teaching of Jesus and within the main parts of the New Testament as we have it, the basic communication of the Christian gospel, and the basic criteria for the evaluation of Christian belief, do not lie in a written scripture at all".

And so Barr continues his careful analysis of what the Bible itself actually says. How is it, for instance, that we have come to talk of "the Bible" when what we have is actually a collection of 66 different books? How can the church's decision to call this collection "the Bible" be itself biblical? Obviously it cannot; although there is nothing to prevent the church from making such a decision. Indeed, there was reason to do so; but the decision cannot be called biblical.





### A System, not mere Emotionalism

Some will no doubt read this book and say that after all, it's only commonsense. That may be so, but as Mark Twain said, commonsense is not so common. Thus Barr says: "When it is supposed that an ethical question is settled by the simple existence of a biblical command, it is then highly likely that that biblical command has been selected and emphasized because of personal interests and prejudices" (123); others will simply say that the devil can quote the Bible to suit his own purpose. True as this may be, it is no answer to the full panoply of the fundamentalist system especially when it confronts the fairly new Christian who is tentative about theological matters. For it is a system, and a quite detailed one. This is not sufficiently understood by many critics who have dismissed it as mindless emotionalism. This assessment could hardly be more mistaken. Fundamentalism certainly has emotional roots, and they are not always seen by those who adopt it, but it is also an elaborate system of belief, both rationalist and intellectualist. As Barr points out, it is a scheme of interpretation imposed on the Bible, not derived from it. For some people *Escaping from Fundamentalism* still sounds a rather destructive book, pulling down people's ideas without offering anything to take their place. Barr is aware of this difficulty and begins to meet it with chapters entitled "Being Orthodox" and "Staying Evangelical". He is happy to recognise the honoured place of evangelicalism among the strands of belief which make up the Christian church. His target is not this tradition, but the vicious fundamentalist exclusiveness

which pronounces an anathema upon all who differ from its unbiblical insistence upon infallibility. Some have found it strange that a scholar of Barr's standing should spend so much time on such an unprofitable farrago of opinion as fundamentalism. It is fortunate for us that he has been prepared to do so. The problem is much more severe than is generally recognized. The appeal of these ideas for the student population, reinforced in many instances by US dollars and missionary zeal (the nerve!), is evident. Some of these students will go on to be the leaders (and the problems) of the church in the future. But the dropout rate is horrendous. Far too many young people arrive at post-tertiary maturity and come to the realization that the faith they have been espousing is after all rather immature. All too often the reaction is to decide that Christianity is ridiculous, and to give it away accordingly. How much better it would be if they could say, "This is ridiculous; I should try a more mature version of the faith". James Barr has placed us in his debt by bringing this possibility closer to reality.



### Escape to Where?

This brings us to the aspect of fundamentalism which for me is its most serious defect: It inhibits growth. Not only does it inhibit growth, but the person beginning to emerge from its constraints is threatened with the total loss of Christian faith.

It is perhaps in this area that Barr's book does not quite meet the need of the people he wishes to help. Even if the intellectual problems of fundamentalism are dealt with, and some alternative indicated, many such people feel that their faith is at risk and their salvation

under threat. In the face of difficulties at this level, what can be done? Why do people have such strong reactions?

The answer probably lies in the crucial role played by religion in Christians' sense of who they are and where in the world they belong. Our faith is an essential part of our being. To talk of leaving fundamentalism is not just a matter of changing one's mind, of adjusting a few opinions. It is much rather a matter of dismantling a whole identity, of taking apart one's very self. When this is realised, it is easily seen that the prospect of escaping from fundamentalism may be extremely threatening. The great point in favour of fundamentalism is that, even in a distorted form, it has the capacity to convey the new life of God. If those who have come to see it as a prison are to be set free from it, this will best be done by a faith which equally conveys that life without the distortions imposed by fundamentalism.

For the escape to succeed and the believer to understand it as a step of faith, there must be contact with an accepting community of Christians with a real faith in the living God, engaged in discerning the guidance of the Spirit, drawing on the resources of the written Word, enriched by the treasures to be found in the church's traditions, but not entrapped in ideas of inerrancy and infallibility. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, as experienced in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, is the key to continued growth.

There are congregations capable of providing such a nurturing environment. The main prerequisites are intellectual and emotional honesty, courage, and a willingness to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

*Don Meadows is a Founding Director of Eremos Institute and the Rector of St Stephen's Anglican Church, Newtown.*



**T**here's a new practical joke doing the rounds of the schools. It goes like this:

"I can prove we evolved from the dogs instead of the apes. Just feel my collar bone." (When your friend touches your collar bone you bark like crazy and snap at his arm. Try it and see what happens!)

What do you think about the book of Genesis? Are the opening stories real-life accounts, (like newspaper reports), or do you think they are symbolic, (like the parables of Jesus)?

Some people get upset when they hear questions like these. To ask questions about Genesis is like grabbing their collar bones. But it's good to ask questions, even of the Bible. The Bible writers asked heaps of them!

So let's look at the Bible itself. Have you noticed that there are really two creation stories in the opening chapters? You can read them for yourself in Gen 1:1-2:3 and Gen 2:4-24. And if you compare them closely, you will find quite a few differences. In the first creation story, God makes the vegetation on the third day (1:11-13); he makes the animals on the sixth (1:24), and only then does he create Adam and Eve (1:26-31). But in Chapter 2, the order of events is quite different! Man is made before the vegetation (2:5-7). Then God makes the animals (2:18-20), and finally God makes Eve (2:21-22).

What should we do when we find obvious discrepancies like these in the Bible? There are several



## DOG'S COLLABONES AND ADAM'S RIB

*Paul Porter*

choices: (1) We can pretend there isn't a problem; (2) We can say the Bible contradicts itself and therefore cannot be trusted; or (3) We can say that the passages in question are not meant to be taken literally. In this instance, I think that the third option is the most honest and also raises the fewest difficulties. It would be great, of course, if we could walk up to some other Bible writer and ask him directly: "What do you think about the Garden of Eden story? Do you think it is symbolic?"

Well, we are lucky, because the prophet Ezekiel has a bit to say about the Garden of Eden, and (what he says expands the mind, to

say the least!) According to Ezekiel 28:12-13 and 31:2,9,16,18, both the king of Tyre and the king of Egypt were once in the Garden of Eden, (I won't bother quoting the passages—you can read them for yourself).

Now let's go to the last book of the Bible and ask the author how he understands the first book. "John, what do you make of that story about the woman and the serpent in Genesis 3?"

(John): "I'm glad you asked me that. You should compare what I have written in Revelation 12. I've taken the woman from Genesis and placed her on the moon (Rev 12:1) and I've coloured the serpent in red and given him 7 heads and 10 horns (Rev 12:3). But I've still hung on to the main themes: serpent, woman, seed, and enmity. Look at Genesis 3:15 for yourself and see how I reuse it in Revelation 12:17."

Well. Do I believe in the Garden of Eden? I guess I do. Adam was there, Eve was there, the king of Tyre was there and so was the Pharaoh of Egypt. The serpent was also there and he not only talked but had seven heads and 10 horns. And the woman who left the garden finally ended up on the moon.

*What do you believe?*

(To be Continued)