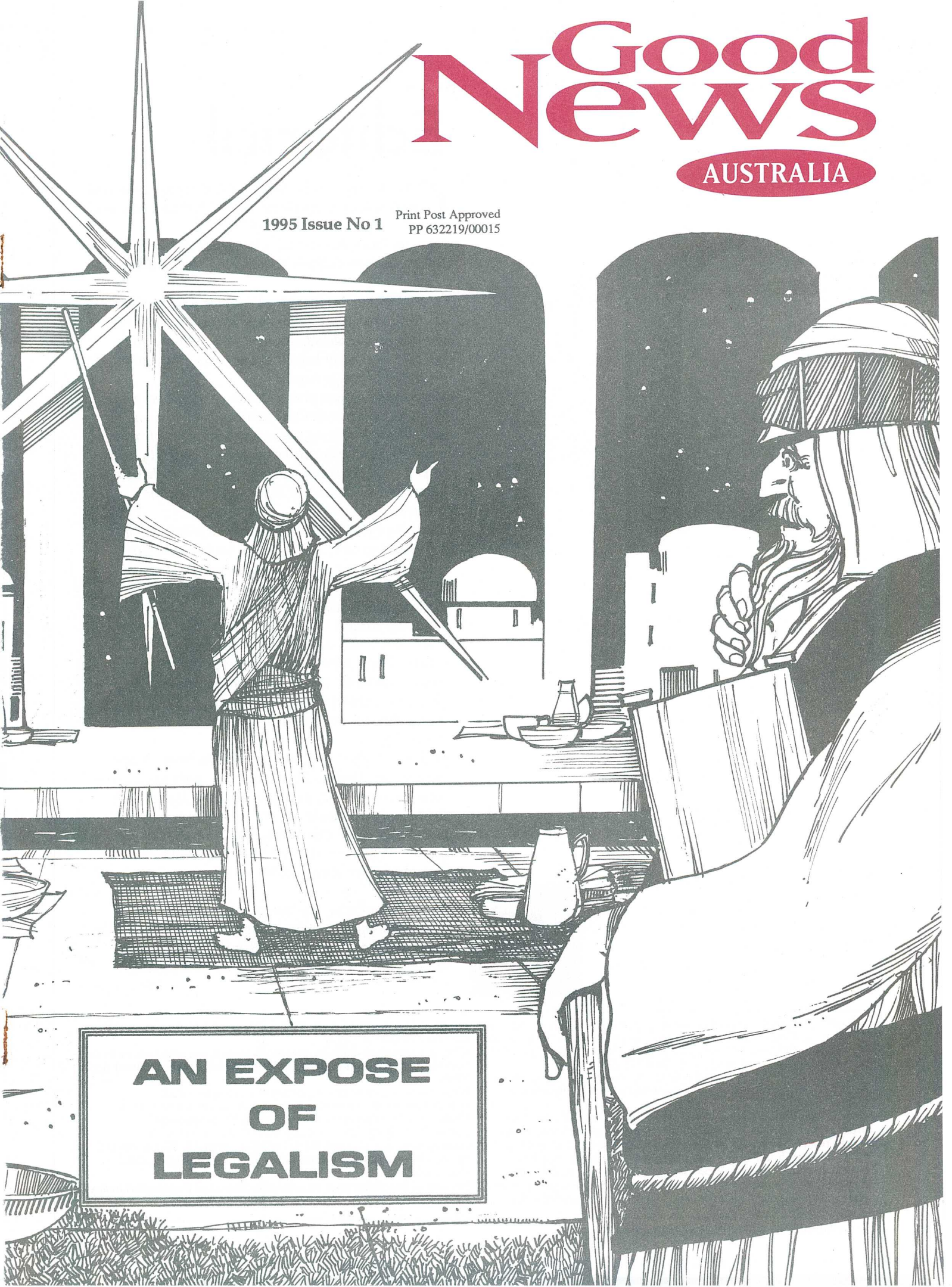


Good News

AUSTRALIA

1995 Issue No 1

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**AN EXPOSE
OF
LEGALISM**

Editorial

Good News Australia and Good News Unlimited has been a significant part of Rob and Heather Cooper's lives since 1984.

Our 'Its Time' has arrived. Our friend and colleague, Bruce Johansen outlines elsewhere in this edition the reasons why.

In general, our readers have been generous in their expressions of appreciation. Our aim always has been to encourage readers to explore their faith and to re-discover the joys of knowing that Jesus' life, death and resurrection brings hope.

Necessarily, human presentations of the gospel are modified by our individual humanity. Hence, an Australian flavouring has rarely been absent from our writings. Similarly, our belief that Christianity suffers from sectionalised and narrow presentations has led us to encourage tolerance of differences within the religious spectrum.

All of my efforts have depended upon others. First and foremost, my wife, Heather. Her faithfulness, sub-editing skills and desktop prowess practised within limited financial resources sustained my sometimes flagging enthusiasm.

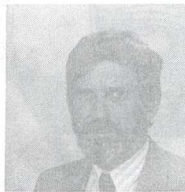
Then, my faithful Australian contributors. Elizabeth Price, Ron Allen and Flora Collett deserve special thanks. Each communicates the gospel in profound but simply expressed clarity. Each has been faithful and diligent without a hint of remuneration. Such unselfishness is unique these days even in religious publishing.

Earlier, I enjoyed working closely with former editor, Paul Porter. Various Board members and chairpersons have come but Bruce Johansen, Barrie Cooper, Geoff Reilly and now David Martin have been supportive and encouraging. Our printer Bill Sinclair and his team of volunteers, Pat and Dennis Tedman, and Darryl Lock are others whose contributions have been invaluable.

Most of all though, my thanks to our readers and financial supporters who with us have been inspired by the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Heather and I will remember you all with fondness.

— Rob Cooper



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Good News Unlimited is an evangelical, nondenominational, non-profit organisation, with headquarters at Tugun on the Queensland Gold Coast. GNU is dedicated to proclaiming the everlasting Gospel. GNU is not a church and does not seek to proselytise, but does believe in and encourage local church involvement. Its ministry includes radio presentations, preaching appointments, public seminars and the dispersal of audio and video cassettes and literature,

emphasising the atonement of Christ. Local supporters meet at the GNU fellowship at Tugun.

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Good News

AUSTRALIA

Annual General Meeting 1994



Chairman's Report

At this, the end of another year, I am pleased to report that while we cannot say we have had a record year, as far as income is concerned, I can say that we have been blessed in many ways. We finished the year virtually 'evens', with a slight loss due to our provision for depreciation: I believe that the Lord has led us in many ways through this past year. Often we are tempted to evaluate everything in dollars and cents, but this seems to be the way that our present materialistic society looks at things.

New property

Firstly, with regards to the house that we purchased a few years ago. We felt that we were directed to make this purchase, and I am even more sure that this was the case, for soon after we made that buy, interest rates dropped dramatically. The rental income has been constant and far in excess of what we would have received in bank interest on our money. This has helped us considerably over the past few years. Some were disappointed when we were prevented from using the house as we wished to, yet, even in this I can see God's hand. Only this month, the Board has made an exchange on a property, with a cash adjustment our way. The premises that we have now acquired are far more suited to our needs than the first. It is a new warehouse type building, in a very good position in the Tweed Heads area. We already have volunteers who have also obtained most of the material for fitting up office space, with a mezzanine floor for storage. There are no problems with doing what we plan, as it is in an area where we can do what we need to, without further permission from Council. As

well we have an area which we will not need to use at present, with a tenant, thus giving us a rental income. So this is a twofold blessing, for which we give God all the glory and all the praise. Again, I am encouraged to feel that there is still a work that he wishes us to continue for him.

Special thanks

It has for some time, been an embarrassment for us to have to depend on the use of the property of others for the storage of our equipment and for office space. This leads me to again say a special 'thank you' to Dennis and Pat, who have so graciously and kindly lent us their home for all these years. Not only that, but they have worked tirelessly for GNU. They are in every way very faithful workers, and this for the most part, is voluntary.

Professional approach

The second thing that we can rejoice about, is that we have Board members with enough foresight to accept the challenge and make some positive moves towards raising our image, with a view to giving us a far more professional approach in everything that we do.

With this in mind, we made an approach to Pilgrim International, a company made up of dedicated Christian people with similar aims to ours, the sharing of the Good News. These folk have the contacts and the expertise that we lack. We engaged them to prepare a Strategy for Communication, Marketing and Fundraising for us. After studying their proposal, the Board has decided to follow some of the ideas presented. We have engaged them to develop and manage a media relation campaign for next year's visit by Dr Ford. Also there are other exciting

ideas that we plan to follow up, which you will be kept informed of, as time goes on.

Thanks to our supporters

To all our supporters and to all members, again I say how much you mean to GNU. Without you we would not exist. Likewise, to all Board members who so willingly give of their time and expertise, I thank you each one. To Ron Dunning, who found it necessary to resign from the Board, I say thanks for all you contributed. To Rolf Kempf, who I look forward to getting to know as a new Board member, I say a special welcome and I look forward to associating with you, along with all other Board members.

Female Board members?

Another concern which has been expressed many times, is the fact that we have no ladies on the Board. In the past, we have had some ladies, but never more than one at a time. We have quite a number of ladies who are GNU members, which makes them eligible to stand for election. But this year again, no women put their names forward as a candidate. We cannot make you do this ladies, but we ask again that you consider doing so.

Next time we have an election I would like to see as many ladies as men put forward their names. So ladies, accept this as a challenge.

With you, I look forward to the continued growth of GNU. Above all, that we pursue a greater witness and a greater sharing of the Gospel that we all love so much.

I wish you all God's richest blessings in your own personal service for him.

Yours in His service,
Bruce J Johansen

From all over the eastern Mediterranean world, and beyond, people were flooding into Jerusalem for one of the three annual pilgrimage festivals. And Jesus came too. He had a special mission there (see John 5:1-18). On Sabbath morning, Jesus left Bethany where He was staying and went to the twin pools called Bethesda near the city's north-eastern gate. These pools were fed by a spring which would occasionally boil up and stir the water with bursts of activity.

The Bethesda pools were surrounded by four covered colonnades, with a fifth between them. In the shelter of these colonnades rested a num-

An Expose of **Legalism**

RITCHIE WAY

ber of people with incurable illnesses. They each clung to the superstitious belief that an angel would come down from heaven and stir the waters. Whoever was first in, after the waters were disturbed, would be healed.

Among these pathetic bruised reeds of humanity was a man who had been a quadraplegic for 38 years. If your age permits, try to recall what you were doing 38 years ago. Can you imagine being paralysed that long? This man had been waiting 38 years for healing, but others, more able than himself, always managed to get into the pool before him when the waters boiled up. When Jesus learned about this man he had pity on him. He knew he never had a chance, for it wasn't God's grace which reigned at Bethesda but the law of the jungle. Those who were best able to get into the water weren't the most sick, but the least sick. Whenever the water was disturbed, selfishness prevailed. God's grace, on the other hand, is so different from the superstitious and empty hope of the world where only the fittest survive and selfishness is

rewarded. The Lord, by contrast, gives life to everyone who will receive it. No one need wait for it, and it is there for the weak as well as the strong. Furthermore, it comes as a free gift from God and never as a reward for effort.

Jesus went up to the paralytic, ascertained that he wanted to get better, then said with power and authority, 'Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.' John's Gospel says, 'At once the man was cured.' New life pulsed through his body. His crippled and atrophied limbs unfolded and filled with healthy muscle tissue.

Gingerly, at first, hardly daring to believe that his hopes of 38 years had at last been fulfilled, he stood to his feet and took a tentative step. Then, with a, 'Yehaa!' he leapt into the air, rolled up his mat, flung it over his shoulder, strode to the left, then to the right, then around in a circle looking at his eager legs and swinging his free arm, smiling broadly at the gapes and admiration of the other invalids.

When he looked around for Jesus He had gone, so he took off for home to share the good news with his family.

The Gospel tells us, 'The day on which this took place was a Sabbath.'¹ It was more than just a weekly Sabbath — it was a high Sabbath, that is, a weekly Sabbath which comes in the middle of an annual festival. The city, therefore, was full of pilgrims and priests, scribes and religious lawyers. And there were Pharisees on every street corner with their little black books.

This man, who had just been resurrected from a living death, hadn't gone very far at all with his mat before he was spied. 'Who is that fellow carrying his bedroll on the Sabbath? Hey! Isn't that old Matthias² who's been lying at the pool for 38 years? It can't be! But it is! Boy! He's got a nerve walking through the city carrying his mat on the Sabbath.'

'Excuse me,' said one of them in an arresting voice, 'It is the Sabbath day and the law forbids you to carry your mat' (Jn 5:10).

Can you really believe this? Here was this transformed local identi-



ty, who had been a living vegetable for the last 38 years, skipping down the street, and all they could see was that he was breaking one of their laws which, by the way, wasn't one of God's.

A deliberate provocation

Have you ever wondered why Jesus asked the man he healed to do something which he knew would provoke the authorities? Why didn't he advise him to leave his bedroll with his friends and return for it after the sun had set instead of telling him to carry it home. To order this man to carry his sleeping mat through the city on a high Sabbath, in the sight of the religious authorities and the seething multitudes who had come to Jerusalem for the festival, was a deliberate and brazen act of defiance. Why would Jesus want

to do that? It is a very serious thing to deliberately set out to polarise the people — to turn them against their leaders.

What we need to understand is that the central issue here wasn't the breaking of one of God's laws. If the former paralytic had been in the business of manufacturing bed mats, and was on his way to deliver one to a customer, his accusers might have had a case. But it was nothing like that.

Grace versus legalism

The basis of the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders was legalism. Jesus came to Earth bringing God's favour as a free gift to sinners. The Pharisees, though, taught that it had to be earned. In their opinion, this former paralytic was a sinner under God's condemnation and, therefore, didn't deserve it.

Because the Pharisees didn't wish to experience the saving touch of Jesus themselves, their lives were blighted with guilt and condemnation. As a result they couldn't bear to see anyone else rejoicing in new life in Jesus. When they did see it they tried to put a stop to it. 'How dare this former paralytic prance down the street on a solemn day, with his mat bouncing up and down on his shoulder. Such behaviour belongs to the Greek theatre, not to our holy city, Jerusalem,' they consoled themselves. And so these religious killjoys turned this occasion for joy and celebration into grounds for condemnation and judgment. How incredibly sad.

It was thus that the people in Jerusalem were forced to make a choice: was Jesus right, or were the Pharisees right? They couldn't both be right.

The tragedy of legalism

It seems to be the lot of all established churches to be afflicted with a measure of legalism. It is the rust that grows on the steel of

Christianity. It has blighted every Christian denomination since the days of the apostles. And I would probably be correct to assume that your particular fellowship hasn't been immune from its deadly influence either. Legalism occurs whenever man takes over from God and makes the rules and sets the standards of eternal life and human conduct himself. And it is believing that living in conformity with these rules and standards will win, for those who are faithful, a place in heaven.

Legalists feel compelled to replace God's Word with *their* understanding of the truth. They judge people, not by God's Word, but by *their* traditional way of doing things. These people accept what the Bible says, but only where it supports *their* teachings and practice. They are selective in what they choose to believe in the Scriptures, which means that it is not Christ they believe in, but *themselves*. Ultimately they come to believe that salvation is the result of a commitment to *their* brand of religion, rather than a saving relationship with Christ. Legalism is man playing God.

Legalism is a serious threat to Christianity in all denominations. It is insidious and creeps into our midst wrapped in pages of Scripture, the creed of our church fathers, and the traditions of our denomination. But when this sheepskin is removed it is not Christ who is exposed but man. The core of legalism is man, not Christ.

The twin dangers of legalism

There are two dangers we face whenever legalism takes root among us and bears its ugly fruit. The first is that when the gospel is presented in its purity among legalists it results in a polarisation, such as happened in the conflict of Jesus with the Jewish leaders — a polarisation so great that it tore out of Judaism a remnant which became the Christian church.

Polarisations are always traumatic. The distress and heartache they cause lasts for years. We have known their pain. Unfortunately, they can't be avoided. Had Jesus avoided creating a polarisation legalism would have destroyed not only the Jewish nation but also his mission for the rest of the world. He had no choice but to expose it. And we, too, must expose legalism if we are to survive as an agency of the gospel to every nation. Our church can only be effective in soul winning if the everlasting gospel we proclaim is not compromised in any way by this fatal religious disease.

No one is saved eternally just because they believe 'the truth', or because they believe they have faithfully served the Lord for many years. That heresy was taught by the Pharisees. Like the repentant thief who was crucified with Jesus we are saved solely by faith in Christ. Our good works and faithfulness testify that we



have been saved, but they contribute absolutely nothing to our salvation. They never have, and they never will. Our salvation was won for us by Christ two thousand years before we were born. All we can do is accept or reject it.

Like the Pharisees of Jesus' time, the legalists' lack of peace is seen in their continual, frantic religious activity to earn God's favour, their desire to bring other Christians under the control of *their* petty rules and regulations, and their open and unashamed condemnation of those who celebrate life in Jesus through the Cross.

The second danger appears when legalism in the church refuses to respond to the Gospel. Those Jews who did not accept Christ ultimately ended up following human leaders into chaos and destruction. In the generation following Jesus the Jewish nation almost obliterated itself through internecine strife between opposing false christs, and war with Rome. All Jews in the holy land, who did not accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour, were either killed in these conflicts or were sold as slaves up and down the Mediterranean coast. That was the wages legalism paid.

Among us today there are people masquerading as servants of righteousness (see 1 Cor 11:15) yet who oppose the gospel of Christ. While they uphold truth and holiness with their words, like Jewish leaders in Jesus' time, they do not hesitate to exaggerate, misquote, misrepresent, lie or deceive to promote their cause. Their lives are a contradiction and their fruits bear witness that they are false shepherds. Regardless of their protestations to the contrary no person who does these things is a representative of Jesus. Their God is not Christ — their god is their cause. And it's a cause which history and prophecy tells us is both destructive and doomed to destruction. Beware of such causes, and turn away from those who promote them, for they are of man and not of God. □

1. All biblical quotations are from the NIV.

2. A pseudonym. The paralytic's name is not known.

JUST A COUNTRY BOY

Teen Angel

How a young man found religion with a little help from the prettiest girl in church

CAL COLUMBIC

I consider myself a reasonably religious person, but I really can't tell you why. In fact, I really don't know what a religious person is. I just think that I am one. Maybe it has something to do with my childhood. A good part of it was spent (many Sunday mornings, anyway) in Trinity Methodist Church. The church still stands on Main Street. It is an enormous brick building with a large bell tower that received a coat of white paint about 40 years ago, and sometime later, a coat of yellow.

All the paint is gone now — and so are the Methodists. After serving a lifetime stewardship, they moved on to higher places. Most of their children, like me, moved away. And their church now stands empty.

It wasn't always that way. You could easily fit a thousand parishioners into that sanctuary, and on Easter Sundays they often did. On most other Sundays, though, there were lots of empty seats. Mine, however, was not one of them. No, sir, I came every Sunday until I graduated from high school.

It's not hard to remember why. Some people were moved to come by the minister. Others were

moved to come by the choir. I, however, was moved by an angel. Her name was Judy Haag (rhymes with vague).

Judy was the best-looking girl my age in the whole church. And she always sat alone down in front. Now, that was a serious problem because I always came to church late, and if I walked all the way down the aisle to the front and sat down beside her, everyone would see what I'd done. They would see that I had walked all the way down the aisle just to sit beside Judy Haag because she was the best-looking girl my age in church.

Knowing that I was being watched was certainly enough to cause me to pause before making the trip. But I always told myself that there was just as much reason for everyone to believe that I walked all the way down the aisle to the front of the church so I could hear the sermon better. That position, together with Judy Haag's, was always enough to help me justify the trip. Of course, if I were going to be completely honest, I would have to tell you that Judy Haag's position carried more weight than how well I could hear the sermon.

Nevertheless, whenever you are

going to do something that is completely unjustified, it is important to try to justify it before you do it. And I always did before I walked down the aisle to sit in the front of the church near Judy Haag.

Actually, sitting down beside her was a lot tougher. It was not so easy to explain why the acoustics were better in that particular spot than anywhere else in the church. So I never did. The best spot, by the way, changed every Sunday morning and, amazingly, Judy always found it. All I had to do was find Judy. How do you explain something like that to the rest of the people in church? They would never understand, so I didn't even try.

I just tried to squeeze by Judy with a minimum of disturbance. She always looked up, said 'Hi,' and then smiled. What would you expect from an angel? Judy Haag never did anything wrong — except maybe grow too much.

She was really tall and I wasn't, and everyone could see that when we stood up during the hymns. I hated hymns because you had to stand to sing them, which was a stupid custom that should have been eliminated during the Reformation. I mean, if you are

going to reform things, you should certainly include a barbaric custom like that, which can subject a 15-year-old boy to that kind of humiliation.

Since they didn't change the custom, I had to take matters into my own hands — or should I say toes? I stood on them every time we rose to sing a hymn. Now, if you have never tried to stand on your toes during four full stanzas of 'Rock of Ages,' you might be surprised to learn that the 'Ages' are not the only things rocking by the time you are finished. Yes sir, it is pretty hard to keep your balance when the only thing between you and devastation is a set of 10 overworked toes.

To make matters worse, once a month the pastor passed out those pledge cards where you had to swear, with eternity at stake, that you never touched a drop of the hard stuff. How can you swear something like that, with those kinds of consequences, after teetering through four long stanzas of a hymn?

What a choice! I either had to look like a drunk or a dwarf. Considering all the consequences — including how things might look to Judy Haag — I chose to look like a drunk.

I never chose, however, to have my mother sing that loud. My mother sang in the choir, which was located in a loft above the pulpit directly in the front of the church. When she sang solos you could hear her over in the next county.

There is nothing more humiliating than having your mother make a public spectacle of herself, especially when you are sitting beside Judy Haag and everyone knows why. The only thing that I could ever think of doing on those occasions was slumping down in my seat so that no one could see me. Since they could anyway, and since they could now see that I was shorter than Judy Haag even when we were seated, deciding what to do was a difficult choice.

Now that I think about it, I guess that's what I learned back at old Trinity Methodist Church: Religion involves a lot of difficult choices, some real risk, a little humility, and some very hard work. I guess I also learned over the years that it involves something more than Judy Haag. ❖



HELL

and all that hot stuff

Toward an understanding of the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)

WAYNE G POBKE

Recently, someone I know said he believed in HELL as a real place of eternal torment, and that the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus proved it. However, a careful study of this story shows that it is not primarily a teaching on the afterlife, if indeed such a teaching at all. Certainly, Jesus was using the story for spiritual teaching, but what was he teaching?

As with all other stories or parables we must be careful not to literalise the characters or events of the story too much and certainly not beyond what was intended. Thus, in understanding a story like the Rich Man and Lazarus we must aim to form as clear an idea of what was originally intended by the speaker or writer as possible.

In another example, Jesus once spoke of the calling of sheep and goats before the judgment seat on the last day (Mt 25:31-46). In making this statement, Jesus was not literally saying sheep and goats come to judgment, rather he was using sheep and goats as symbols of certain types of persons. At other times, Jesus symbolised people as wheat, weeds, graves, a lost coin, fish and so on. Such symbolic references and interpretations abound in the gospels.

Similarly, the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus conforms to this genre.

To understand the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, we must be

aware of the context of the story, which includes the writer's intention. In looking at the writer's intention, we must ask what it is that the writer wants the story to teach and discern the clues surrounding the teaching.

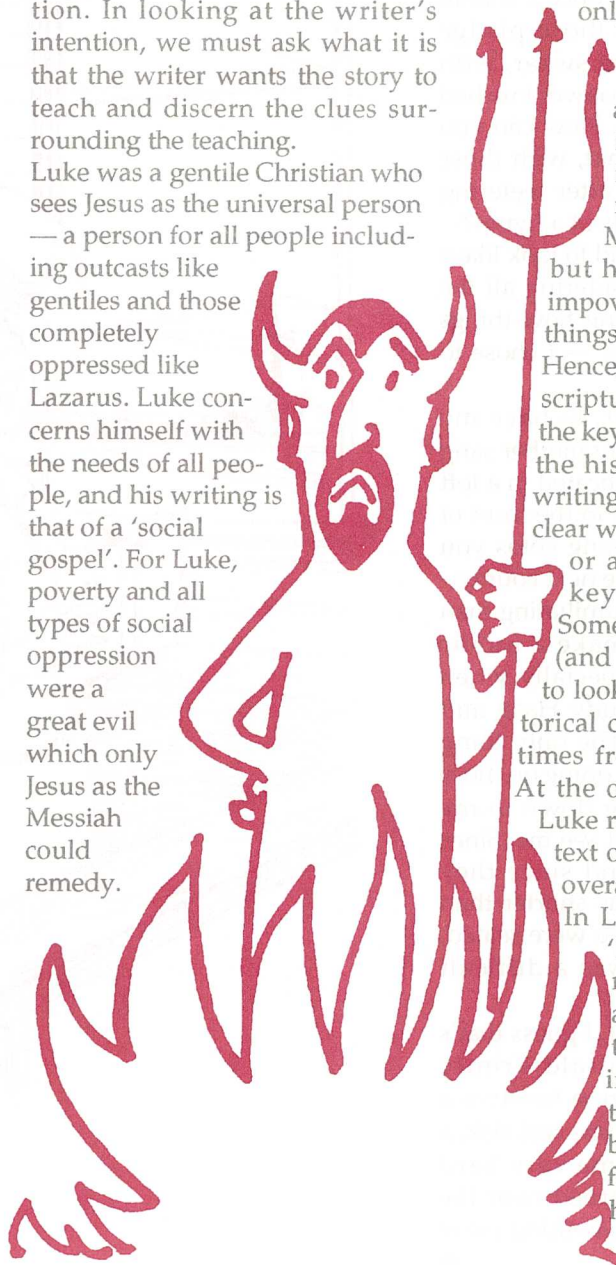
Luke was a gentile Christian who sees Jesus as the universal person — a person for all people including outcasts like gentiles and those completely oppressed like Lazarus. Luke concerns himself with the needs of all people, and his writing is that of a 'social gospel'. For Luke, poverty and all types of social oppression were a great evil which only Jesus as the Messiah could remedy.

The story of the Rich Man and Lazarus is a social statement and only Luke's gospel refers to it. Luke's account

offers an assurance about the Messiah ending the evil of social injustice. Moreover, not only does the Messiah end social evil, but he fills the previously impoverished with all good things.

Hence, we see, as with much scriptural interpretation, that the key lies embedded within the historical context of the writing. Often this context is clear within the writing itself, or as has been said, 'the key lies at the door'. Sometimes, it is necessary (and mostly advisably so) to look at the social and historical context of the writer's times from all other sources. At the outset of his writing, Luke refers to the social context of his gospel and to its overall message.

In Luke 1:51-53 we read, 'He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their innermost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the



hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.' This is our clue.

Great difficulties are presented by both the form of the story and any attempt to literalise it. The story was a folk legend of the day, just like we may speak of the allegorical story in *Animal Farm*, or other such folk stories. By mentioning Jesus' reference to the folk story of the Rich Man and Lazarus Luke intends to strike a note for social justice by showing the elevation of one once oppressed, and the discomfort of one who was once elevated. In this way, both the Rich Man and Lazarus become symbols representing types of persons and the Messiah's work among them. The link between Luke's Rich Man and Lazarus, and Matthew's sheep and goats becomes apparent.

Details of a so called afterlife in the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus are vague and crude, while at the same time paralleling contemporary Rabbinic teaching. That such details are vague and crude is not surprising when we recognise them as being mostly incidental to the story and its major focus.

Any literalisation of the early details of the story represent a great difficulty relative to all the rest of Scripture's teaching about the state of persons in death. Even allowing for the spirit of a person

ascending to the presence of God at death, the resurrection of the physical body at the return of Christ remains a clear New Testament teaching (see 1 Thes 4:16-17). The apparent physical nature of Abraham, the Rich Man and Lazarus in the Luke 16 story would contradict the New Testament teaching concerning the resurrection of the physical body. To impose such a physical element on the story is not what was intended. To focus on the after death details of this story is to miss the spiritual teaching of this story.

Firstly, the story is telling us that there is ample scriptural evidence on how to live one's life. The Rich Man's life, and perhaps that of his brothers, was a travesty of the right way to live. From Moses and the Prophets the Rich Man should have known how to live, and what his social responsibilities were. We also are challenged by scripture to live not for ourselves, but for God and others. Let us listen to that.

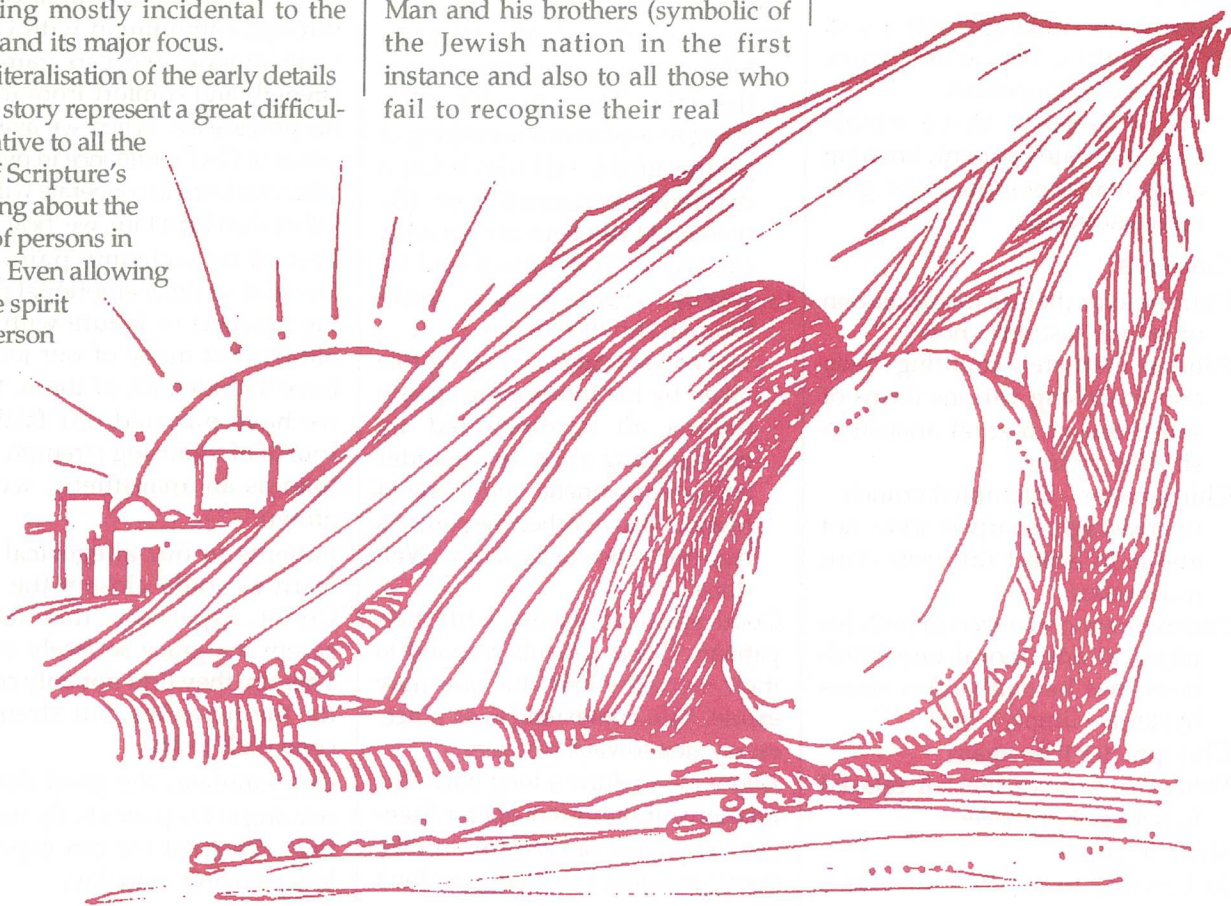
Second, Jesus is saying if the Rich Man and his brothers (symbolic of the Jewish nation in the first instance and also to all those who fail to recognise their real

spiritual needs) will not hear from Moses and the Prophets, nor would they be convinced should one rise from the dead. Jesus is here giving a veiled pointer as to Jewish national response to his rising from the dead. Jesus was stating that the Jews of his day would refuse to accept the fact of his resurrection. If the Jews, represented by the Rich Man of our story would not accept God's earlier work through Moses and the Prophets, nor would they accept God's greater work through the Messiah.

Believing in the resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate challenge for any person. In so believing, Jesus gives the ultimate good gift to the truly needy.

Jesus gives life. The life Jesus gives is love revisited again and again. The love of God is eternal togetherness with God. The Lazarus' of this earth will be God's people, and 'God himself will be with them and be their God'

(Rev 21:3). ♦



Patience

Mr Patient Man

ROB COOPER

Consider the following cameos from the life of Mr Patient Man.

Cameo 1

Dentist: 'Relax, this won't hurt a bit!'

Patient (mouth full of dental apparatus): Aargh! Hands gripped tightly and feet pushing downwards (or is it upwards?)

Cameo 2

ET Specialist (pressing implement upon patient's tongue): 'Relax and say aargh!'

Patient (near choking): Ugh aargh

ET Specialist (more sharply): 'Just relax!'

Patient (now choking!): A-a-a-a-a.

ET Specialist: This won't work unless you cooperate!

Scene repeats three times. Doctor berates patient, booking a hospital appointment for general anaesthetic.

Cameo 3

Chiropractor (before manipulation of spine): Just relax now!

Patient (alternately counting sheep and practising various forms of self-induced mental anaesthesia): I'm trying.

Chiropractor – attempted crunch (increasingly sharp in tone, not about to admit failure!): You must relax!

Patient (now convinced of both his physical and moral unworthiness that he can't relax nears hysteria – limply): Yes!

Chiropractor tries again

Patient in spite of himself relaxed in between grimaces.

Strike a chord?

In fairness to Mr Patient Man's

current dentist let him declare that Cameo 1 totally distorts his experiences with him. But earlier dentists ... well now!

Cameo 2 is a true story – October /November 1992.

Cameo 3 is a true story – repeated many, many times, mainly in the 1970s.

Cameo 4 is needed from a sense of fair play.

ET Specialist: 'Now this little camera has got to go up through your nose down into your throat so we can have ourselves a movie.

Patient: 'Is there room?'

ET Specialist: 'There will be! But let's lubricate with some spray to ease the pain.' Then, to wife, 'He's going to experience something of giving birth! Tell him what a defining experience it was!' (By now nasal passages are sprayed, camera on 'wire' has found its way up ... tight squeeze ... breakthrough and then down.

The movie begins ... leading role taken by his functioning speech organs all accompanied by encouraging arms on shoulder and a sympathetic undertone of humour that matched the patient's quixotic sense of humour. Well done Doc!

Good physicians work with their patients. Good patients respond to their empathy and the care they exude. Pain contextualizes as a necessary step toward recovery.

Allow me to draw a long bow. The relationship between doctor/dentist and patient can mirror our relationships with God. When we don't

trust God, when we don't work with him, peace eludes us. On the other hand, the symmetry of the ideal doctor/patient relationship mirrors successful Christian living.

Taking even painful steps while trusting God leads us toward a more mature faith. Seeing God not so much as a remote, authoritarian 'expert' but rather as an 'older brother/sister', a 'valued father/mother' leads to trust which in turn leads to growth and maturation.

God never promised a life without pain. Jesus' life evidenced this. However, he does promise that we can cope. Just as Jesus sought comfort through communion with God in Gethsemane, we can gain both strength and comfort from trusting his providence. When we avail ourselves of God's influence in our lives, when we learn to cooperate with God rather than fight him, we 'heal'.

Few of us welcome pain. Even fewer of us greet emotional pain or the prospect of failure with equanimity. Yet many of our journeys have included all of these. Where we have pursued our faith as a source of vitalising strength rather than as an anaesthetic, we have grown.

Patients in our allegorical sense learn to study closely the life of Christ. Especially, they learn to accept the grace so freely offered. Therein, they find not only comfort for the hereafter, but strength to cope with today.

God emulates the good doctor in relating to his patients. By responding with trust we can experience less pain and more joy. ♦

Farewell Rob and Heather

After a long association with GNCM and more recently with GNU, the time has come when our Editor, Rob Cooper and his wife Heather, who has done the layout of the Good News Australia magazine, have found it necessary to tender their resignations which are to take effect from early in the New Year. Their reasons being, and I quote from their letter, 'GNU (or GNCM as it was) has been an important part of our lives for over a decade now. Rob's health, our personal situation and a desire to have some time for each other and our family are our motivation.'

This I can fully understand, having been involved with both throughout the whole period. Also, in the many times I have been in the Cooper home, I have seen how involved they were and noted how much of their home was taken up with GNU files and equipment. Only dedicated people would tolerate this amount of intrusion both in their home and into their time.

We, as a Board, wish to sincerely thank Rob and Heather for their dedication and loyalty to GNU. This loyalty is again evidenced in the way that they have tendered their resignation, as they have stated that they will not leave us without a replacement. It would suit them to be freed from their duties after the second issue in 1995, but should we obtain a new Editor before then, they will not be offended. We do so much appreciate this wonderful Christian attitude and as we part we do so on the best of terms. Rob and Heather remain as friends who will continue their interest

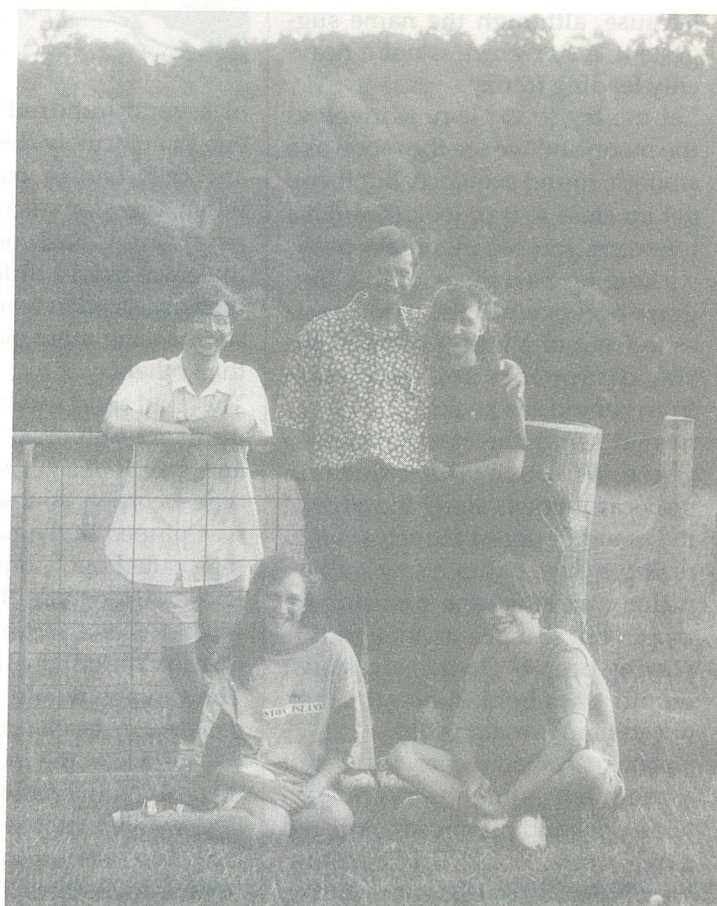
in GNU, both being Members. As well, prior to becoming Editor, Rob served on the Board for a number of years.

It will not be easy to replace them. Nonetheless we must press on realising that all of us have to be replaced at some time. We will be looking for someone to carry on the Editorship and to build on the foundation that has so ably been laid by Rob.

Might I encourage anyone with editorial skills to prayerfully consider applying for the position as advertised in this issue.

We wish Rob and Heather and their family much of God's richest blessing and trust they enjoy good health and many rewarding years together.

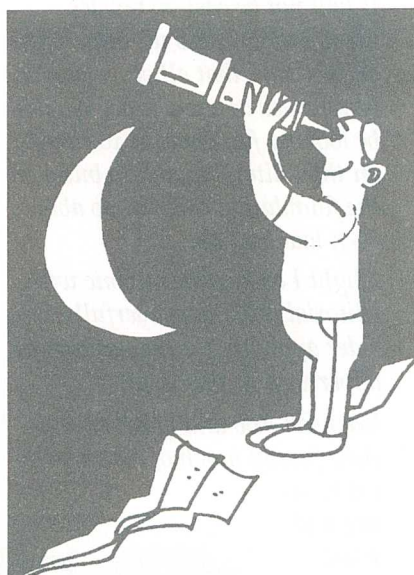
Bruce
Johansen



Rob and Heather Cooper with their three children – (l-r) Peter, Rachel and Simon

Good Timing

ELIZABETH PRICE



They were at a star graze and you are forgiven for asking 'a what?'. You can also be forgiven for mental images of stars eating their way across a paddock because, although the name suggests it, a star-graze is not a heavenly feeding frenzy.

Let me try to explain: it involves the moon and we see the moon as a smooth, round sixpence. But if you get up close to it or look through a telescope you see mountain peaks sticking up past the edges. A star-graze occurs when the moon passes in front of a bright star and the star disappears and reappears from behind the peaks.

In that sense the star appears to graze, or touch, the mountain peaks as it bowls along the edge of the moon. It doesn't touch at all in reality because it is a few million miles out in space behind the moon, but it looks as though it is playing peep-o. On this occasion it would pass behind about seven different mountain peaks.

So an Australian record number of some thirty-plus observers with telescopes and thermoses gathered along a couple of roads in south-west New South Wales to watch a bright star, Spica, disappear behind the mountains of the moon and reappear between the peaks. They had to spread out at intervals

of several hundred metres, each one in an acutely designated spot, and they had to accurately time when the star disappeared and reappeared. Each one would see the graze from a different point so each observation would be unique, some seeing more mountain peaks than others.

They had short wave radios to pick up exact universal time signals, and they spoke what they saw into tape recorders so that the time signals pipped in the back-ground as they called out 'Gone. Back. Gone. Back.' Afterwards the exact split-second of the recording could be measured from the time pips.

The timings would eventually be collated to more accurately chart the surface of the moon and refine its position in relation to the earth. The whole event would last less than five minutes so it was a mass organisation and activity for a few precious moments.

Some of the thirty-plus people would drive for up to five hours to get to the spot where the graze

could be seen at about ten o'clock at night, and a clear patch of sky was essential. It was late May, cold, and clouds had hovered for days.

The weather forecast was dismal. Cloud increased and there were showers. At the pivotal moment there was nothing but cloud, and God did not come into the equation at all except by one man. Standing in his place on an isolated road, he alone of them all thought, 'I believe in God, I'll ask him to help,' and he made a simple prayer.

Just as Spica was about to make its graze, the sky broke and stayed clear for the few minutes he needed, and then the rain came down again. Some of the observers along the line would also have the same clear space but others were beyond the clearing.

At the end of the exercise, most of the people had been clouded out and only about ten had seen the graze. As the tape recordings were played back telling everything that had taken place from the moment they were switched on, there was some amusement and jesting as a lone voice came through the speakers, 'Thank you, Father'.

And out through the distant stars I think I heard the lonely echo, 'But where are the nine?' Luke 17:17. ♦

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