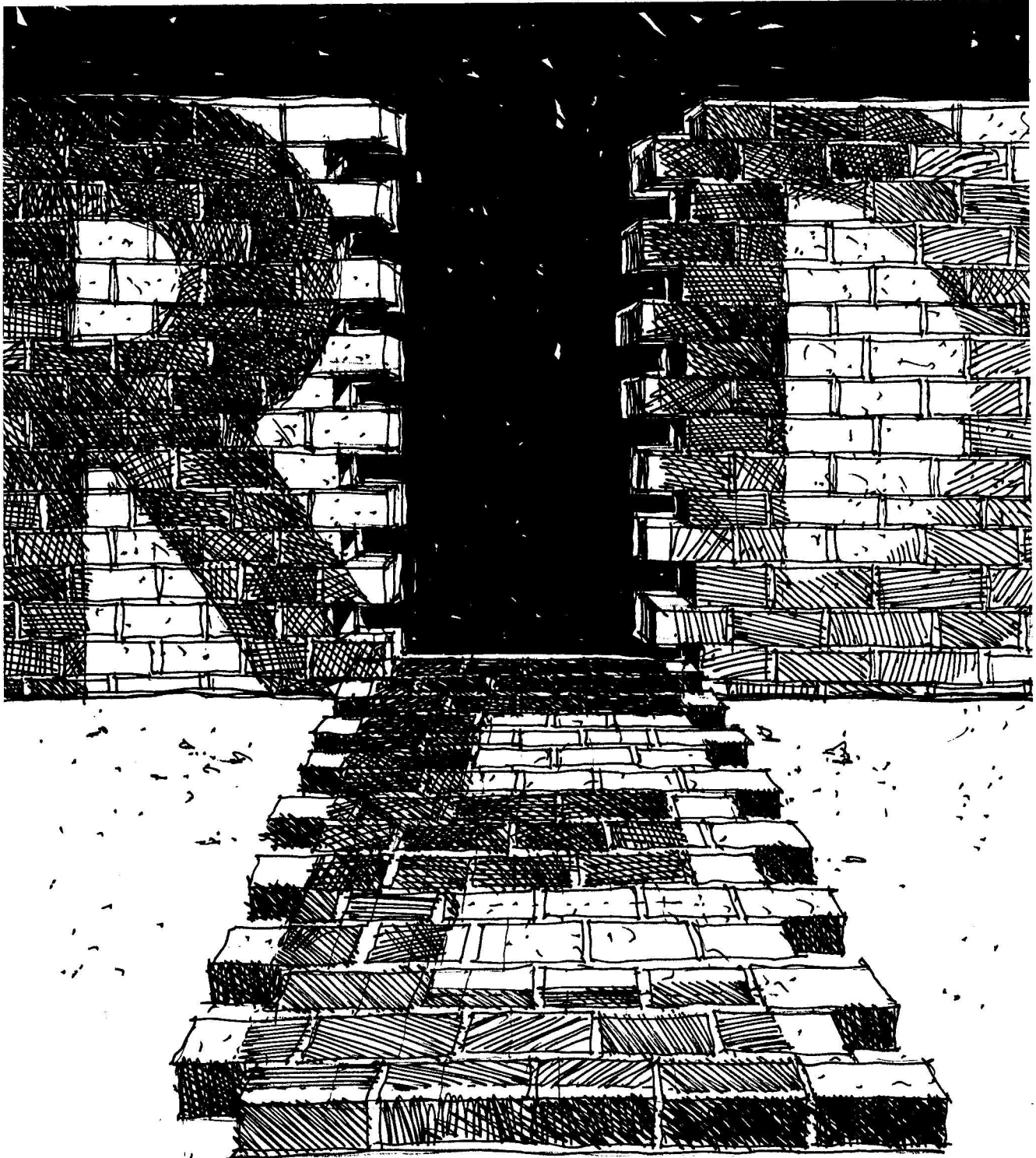


# GOOD NEWS

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A U S T R A L I A



# Editorial

## *Dancing On The Wall*

*It was 1977 and the late afternoon air was bitterly cold.*

*With my American friends I scaled one of West Berlin's viewing platforms to gawk across the 200 metres of no-man's-land separating the two cities. It was not a pretty sight. Anyone scaling the first barrier from the East had to reckon with cruel spikes, visible only from the West. And then there were the border guards in their towers, only metres away ... Who could resist the urge to cry and laugh and dance all at the same time when the East Germans suddenly threw open their country's frontiers? In one move, they effectively dismantled the most enduring symbol of the Cold War. As East Berliners danced on top of a Wall that had crushed their hopes for nearly 30 years, it seemed as if the rest of the world danced with them. As one reporter observed: "It was like a New Year's Eve, but the intoxicant was not alcohol, it was freedom."*

*This Christmas we remember a Baby who himself was born in a society torn by the divisions of class, race, gender and creed. But people with little else to unite them drew together at his birth. Gathered at the cradle were rich and poor, wise men and rustic shepherds, foreigners and locals, man and woman. This was to be the story of his life — and his death. As the apostle Paul later described it: "He is our peace. He has broken down the wall" (Ephesians 2:15).*

*Paul Porter*

*This is the last of the GNA Journals to be edited by me. My sincere thanks to all who have supported it. — P.P.*



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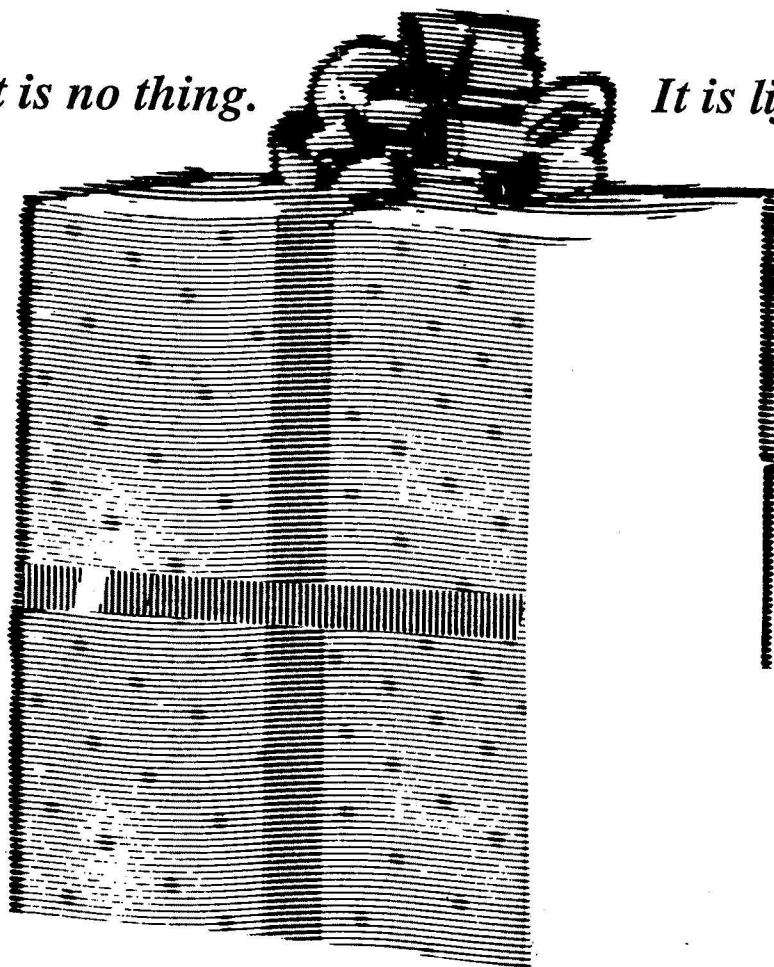
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*The chief gift is no thing.*

*It is life itself.*



## ARE YOU EVER TIRED OF CHRISTMAS?

*Desmond Ford*

**E**specially if you're tired, it happens. I mean that mood of semi-panic, even revulsion, on the eve of Christmas when you think of all the gifts left to buy, all the cards not sent, all the thank-you notes that will have to be written. It takes energy to plan and do good things, and in modern times energy is often sadly lacking, even for the saints.

At times we might even be tempted to murmur like Scrooge of old, "Bah, humbug!" But we don't mean it. In our heart of hearts we know well that as long as we are receiving, it is good and right (and a privilege) to also be giving.

### **C.S. Lewis A Giver**

I have been reading again about Clive Staples Lewis. Though this

great Christian was a university professor, he lived in poverty for decades. Partly because he supported people in need; particularly because of a selfish, cantankerous, unintellectual woman, Mrs Moore. She was the mother of one of Lewis' wartime friends who had been killed in battle.

Lewis took her into his home and treated her as his own mother. He provided for her until her death twelve years before his own.

Only when Lewis wrote *The Screwtape Letters* (1942) did his poverty end. He increased his gifts to the needy so much that his friends tried to rescue him and insisted on setting up a trust. Gifts for his petitioners could be taken only from that trust.

Soon he was giving two-thirds or

more of *all* his income to the needy. This from a man "*who feared poverty as he feared cliffs and spiders.*" While it is true that Lewis never lacked financially after his initial success, yet his life illustrates that no sacrificial giving, no loving service, is ever in vain. Today, over one million copies of *The Narnia Chronicles* are sold every year to children under 110 years of age. Millions of other readers are inspired by his books, including *Mere Christianity* (the title of his book containing what he believed to be the irreducible of the Christian faith). He is still giving, this man Lewis, though he died in 1963 (the same weekend as President Kennedy).

Giving does not get us to heaven, but it does bring heaven down to

us. We then begin giving heaven to all we meet. Admitting our remaining weaknesses (on which we are still working) we can say in our awareness of God's gifts of grace: "I'm not OK; you're not OK but that's OK." The soul who has received God's generosity and come to spontaneously reflect it, is not discouraged because sanctification is the work of a lifetime. Such a Christian agrees with the bumper sticker: "Christians aren't perfect

---

*I don't know  
how an atheist  
feels when  
feeling grateful.  
Who is there to  
be grateful to?*

---

— just forgiven."

#### **The Giving in Forgiving**

**Forgiven!** Notice that the word 'give' is right there in the bigger term. Forgiveness is a giving. A giving of mercy for sin, of love for hate, of imputed success for obvious and continued failure. That is the spring of all new life.

The only hope for someone in the grip of a devilish addiction is acceptance from another human being. When an alcoholic (or a drug addict or someone who, because of overwhelming forces of heredity and temperament, keeps failing) meets someone who knows and loves them still, new vigor is injected into the soul of the despairing. Unconditional love unleashes the strongest motive power the human psyche can know. Gifts are the sign of unconditional love — and that is the meaning of Christmas. "God so

loved the world that he gave" (Jn 3:16).

It is God's love that breaks our heart — and then remakes it. "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases" (Lam 3:22 RSV). What a text! What a message! What good news! **Never ceases. Never! Never! Never!**

What a God! Read the text and the other goodies with it in the heart of Lamentations 3. Read on until you read verse 57. "Thou didst come near when I called on thee; thou didst say 'Do not fear!'" (Lam 3:57 RSV). What joy comes to those in funereal mood who receive such a message from above. (Lamentations is a dirge accompanying the funeral of Jerusalem after its destruction by Babylon in 586 B.C.)

#### **Examples of Giving That Changed Lives**

Jacob, the crafty one, the Supplanter, the 'worm' addressed in Isaiah 41:14, had his heart broken by the continuous gifts of God, gifts he knew were not deserved. With tears Jacob confessed, "I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant" (Gen 32:10).

You remember Onesimus, the runaway slave. Paul interceded for him in a letter to Philemon. When Onesimus received the gift of freedom from his master, Philemon, he became a "dear brother ... in the lord" (Philemon 16). God does that for us. God turns us from bond-slaves to children of the palace, brothers of the king, faithful and beloved.

The Bible is full of giving. Remember Paul in prison, forsaken by Demas, deserted at his first trial before Caesar. There came to him as the fragrance of priceless perfume, the love of his friend Onesiphorus. "May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus," Paul wrote to Timothy, "because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me

until he found me. May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus" (2Tim 1:16-18).

#### **The Chief Gift**

The chief gift is no thing. It is life itself (or righteousness, which is the precursor of eternal life). Esther asked of a great king for the lives of her people. She had no right to approach the king according to the law. The law said she must not invade the royal presence, unless called. But she did approach the king, and the royal scepter was extended to her.

We have no right to invade the audience chamber of the King of Kings with our petitions for life. But through grace God not only invites us but tempts us to come: "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive" (Ps 86:5 KJV). God is more willing to give than we are to receive. What a God!

Because grace reigned over law, Esther received the gift of the lives of her people. That grace still reigns. That grace still gives life to the unworthy and the lost who come to the great King of the universe — whose name is love.

#### **The Gift of Gratitude**

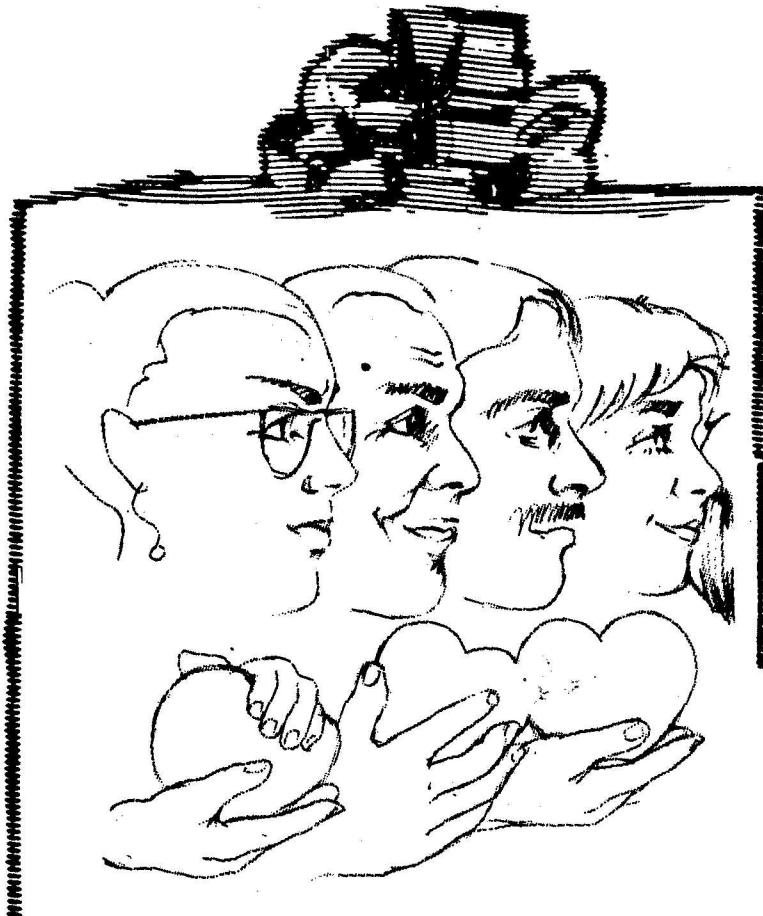
Let me mention one more of our many priceless gifts. The gift of gratitude. (I don't know how an atheist feels when feeling grateful. Who is there to be grateful to?)

Wisdom teaches us to be grateful for gratitude. Gratitude is one of those gifts which includes in its bosom many other gifts. To be grateful is to be joyous and happy. Gratitude even contributes to physical health.

Be grateful that such a thing as gratitude exists. If it had not, we would have been constrained to invent it, for it is such a needed stimulus to gladness and well-being.

To rightly understand the spirit of Christmas means to count what





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still remains during these days of tragedy and loss in which we live. Many children in Bethlehem were slaughtered at Herod's decree, but the Christ child escaped. The devil is our Herod. He is forever massacring some of our little but precious possessions; but he cannot touch the Christ interceding above us or destroy — while we have faith — the Christ-life within us.

#### **Counting What Remains**

Count what remains! See how many gifts you still have, whatever you may have lost. Remember that Christ is the unspeakable Gift carrying in his bosom all the other gifts needful for us. Are you blind? Oh, I am sorry. But perhaps, you can hear? Some who are deaf think it would be better to be blind. Deaf people are often treated discourteously as though they are only pretending deafness. For the blind, there is

ever appropriate sympathy. Are you deaf as well as blind? I'm so sorry. I don't know whether I could endure such afflictions. Perhaps you cannot speak, or are a stutterer. Stutterers feel condemned to a lifetime of verbal slavery, and many would prefer to be blind or deaf. Count what remains! You have lost a finger, but do not two hands remain? You have lost your hands in an explosion, but you still have your legs. Praise God! Count the gifts remaining.

#### **Everything Good A Gift**

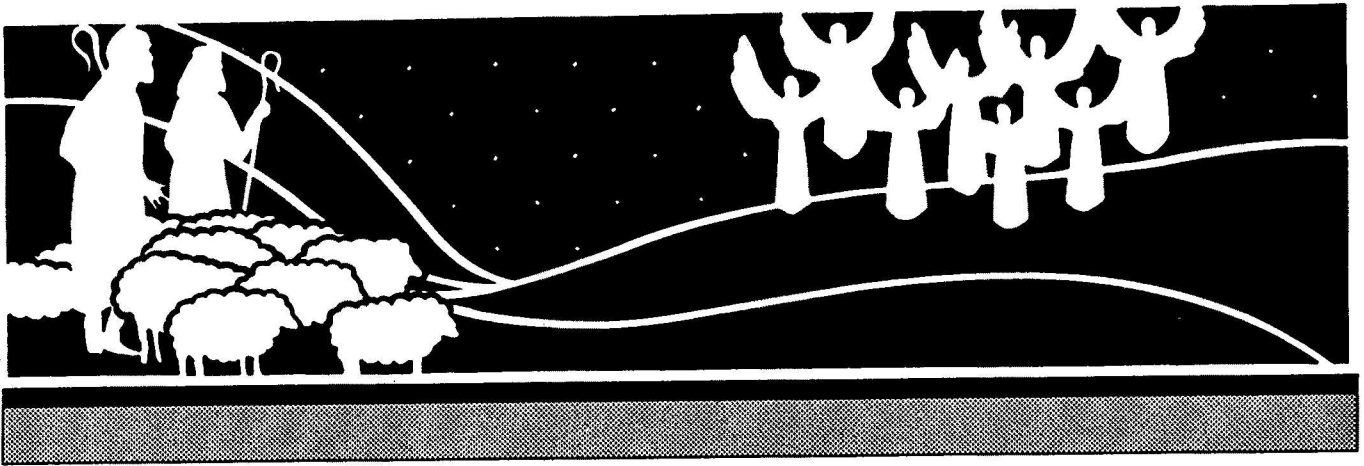
Everything good we have is a gift. We haven't earned anything except condemnation and death. Everything beyond that is sheer profit. Count it so: the wind that blows, the stars that glow, the flavors and the scents, human and divine love, opportunities to serve and to share. How rich we are!

Rita Snowden tells of visiting a poor sick child in the hospital. Rita emptied her purse to find things to talk about. There was not much money. But the child looked at her and said, "You are rich. You can walk."

Yes, most of us are shockingly rich and all of us are rich beyond our deserving.

The main gift God offers to all, this Christmas season, is the everlasting gospel, the good news of heaven's willing bankruptcy of itself that we might live. That gift received brings with it all other gifts, including the gift of learning to become givers.

To give is to be like God, for giving is loving, and God is love. "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love ... We know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him" (1 Jn 4:8,16).



Ron Allen

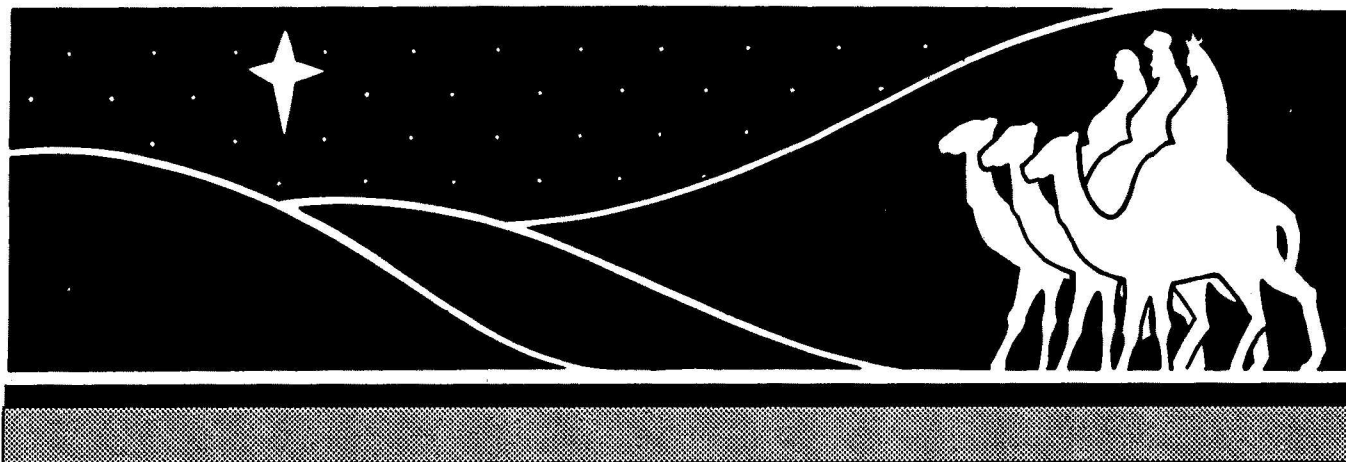
## THE BEGGARS REFUGE

**S**uddenly a great company of the heavenly hosts appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favour rests.'" Luke 2:13,14.

The singing of the heavenly host in the skies above Bethlehem was a replay of the time when "the morning stars came together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Job 38:7. So when they sang Glory to God, they sang what had been sung before. But when it was sung, "Peace to men on whom God's favour rests", they sang a new song. They were heralding the gospel, at the heart of which was God's forgiveness of sinful men.

Taken together, the two sentences, "Glory to God in the Highest" and "Peace to men", are a terse paradox. Both are wonderful. But how can they exist together? How can God be glorious and forgive those who oppose Him? George Bernard Shaw once said, "Forgiveness is a beggar's refuge. We must pay our debts." There is something about Shaw's remark that rings true. Life teaches us that we must pay our debts. We have to live with the burden of our own choices. There is nothing in the world that suggests that there is such a thing as forgiveness. The universe seems to

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be locked into the unyielding law of cause and effect. You make your bed, you lie on it! In human life, however, there is a relentless thirst for forgiveness. We are subject to pressures which drive us onward in search of release from moral tensions within. Although forgiveness seems impossible it is also highly desirable. Therefore the angelic announcement brings forth the question, Can God still be God and be favourable to us? Or is He doing something that is likely to demoralize rather than restore? It will be good for us to remember that, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." 2 Cor. 5:19. God was the chief doer in the drama of Jesus. In the death of Messiah we see not just a martyr with strong convictions witnessing for God. Rather we see one in whom God dies as a witness to Himself. The birth of Mary's child brings glory to God because He to whom she gives birth is God. (... whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Micah 5:2). The chief object of Christ's mission is glory to God. We are wrong if we think that Christ's first charge is the retrieval of lost humanity. There are theories abroad that consider the errand of Messiah as one which was designed to break down man's prejudice about God; to make such a display of love that man would be shocked and shamed into repentance. Such a view of Christ's work has man at its focal point and not God. It consti-

tutes a feeble gospel because its critical element is man's response to God. It is feeble because it says, God is ready to forgive you. The true gospel says, God has forgiven you. The Cross was not an impressive spectacle designed to make man sympathize with God. It was the "power of God unto salvation". Romans 1:16. It was not God's readiness to forgive but forgiveness itself. It was not His willingness to pardon but pardon itself. Not his aim to bestow favour but the very deed. Not His intention but His achievement. We need a gospel that brings us into favour with God at the same time as it glorifies God in the highest. We need an atonement for sin which finds reconciliation impossible without absolute satisfaction of God's holy nature. When the angels sang, Glory to God in the highest, they were singing about a forgiveness that was morally respectable. They were not talking about a mere amnesty. They were not singing about a pardon like the one received by Richard Nixon — a hollow pardon if ever there was one. Rather, they were singing about the holy, ethical forgiveness of God. Forgiveness that has as its first interest, Glory to God. We do not have a gospel that makes light of sin. Christ on the cross confirms what George Bernard Shaw said, and what we all suspected was true, we must pay our debts. Only if God exacts from humans the full measure of their debt, can they be

debt free.

The Good News is not that God hides His face from our sin; not that He winks and lets it pass. The Good News is that He does not. The message of Christmas is that God has forgiven us in a way that is morally respectable. He hasn't ignored or passed over any sins. On sheep properties the farmers dip the sheep to kill lice. Every animal has to be mustered. It is important not to miss one sheep. If any are missed they are likely to re-infest the entire flock. The sheep are driven into a yard and down a narrow race where they are forced to plunge into a narrow pool of water and as they swim its length the farmer pushes them under the water to make sure they are entirely wet. The farmer must do a good job. At Calvary God rounded up the entire flock. He didn't miss one. He did a good job. The whole human race that has ever lived or ever will live was herded onto Mount Calvary and made to pay its debt. The Good News of Christmas is that the whole debt has been paid. God is satisfied. Because of the absolute nature of the business that was done on the cross, He who knows debts must be paid is morally obliged to identify with the sufferer who has already paid them for him. Jesus is a beggar's refuge.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favour rests.

May God bless you at Christmas.

**M**ary would have an account of the appearance of the angel, her trip to visit Elizabeth, the birth itself, and the visit of the shepherds. Probably the early chapters of Luke give an account of those things as Mary herself told them. If we called the shepherds, they would give us many details not in the biblical narrative, perhaps a description of the angels or the result of their later testimony to other people.

Yet having gone through all that interrogation, we would still want to hear from the Lord.

The Lord's own story is in the Old Testament, in Psalm 40, and quoted in the New Testament by the writer of Hebrews:

'Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepare for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, Here I am — it is written about me in the scroll — I have come to do your will, O God.'" (Heb 10:5-7)

That is what I call the Christmas story according to the Lord Jesus Christ.

What does our Lord emphasise? First, that He came into the world for a purpose. That is important, for it is uniquely true of Him. It cannot be said of any other person that he or she came into the world to do something, although it is often true that there are purposes parents have for their children.

But Jesus was different. Our Lord says that He came (and was conscious of coming) for a specific purpose. Moreover, He spells out that purpose: 'I have come to do your will, O God.'

What was that will? God willed Christ to be our Saviour.

We often lose a sense of that purpose in telling the Christmas story. We focus so much on the birth of the baby and on the story's sentiment that we miss the most important things.

Actually, the story is treated quite simply in Scripture, and the em-



# THE CHRISTMAS ACCORD JES





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phasis is always on the fact that Jesus came to die. The Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, took a human body in order that He might die for our salvation. When our Lord speaks of His coming it is therefore highly understandable that He is thinking along those lines.

In Hebrews 10 the author contrasts the sacrifices that took place in Israel before the coming of Christ — the sin offerings and burnt offerings, by which believers testified of their faith that God would accept them on the basis of the death of an innocent substitute — with Christ's great and perfect sacrifice. It is in the context of that contrast, between the former things and that which has now come, between the shadow and the reality, that he brings in the quotation from Psalm 40.

The Lord Jesus Christ came into this world with a purpose: to be our Saviour. We miss the most important thing about Christmas if we fail to see that.

A second point emerges from these verses. It is not only that our Lord came into the world with a sense of purpose; He came with knowledge that He was the perfect one to fulfil that purpose.

It is possible to have a noble purpose and yet not be the one to fulfil it. Children, for example, are aware of what they want to do, but often they cannot quite do it. They will say: 'Let me do it! I can do it!' But they cannot do it, and after they have struggled a bit — wise parents let them struggle — they must be helped to fulfil the task.

That was not the case with Jesus Christ. As He came into the world, our Lord had His mind on His great purpose: to provide salvation for the human race. And He was aware that He was the One perfectly suited to carry out that purpose.

He was perfectly suited by virtue of who He was. Unlike anybody else who has ever been born, He was not only man: He was God as



well. Therefore, while as a man He could die upon the cross, as God He died in order to pay the infinite price necessary for our salvation. Harry Ironside used to tell about a young man who was a soldier in the Russian army. Because the young man's father was a friend of Czar Nicholas 1, the young man had been given a rather responsible post. It was his responsibility to see that the right amount of money was distributed each month to the soldiers in his barrack.

The young man meant well, but his character was not up to his responsibility. He took to gambling. Eventually, he gambled away a great deal of the government's money as well as all his own.

In due course the young man received notice that a representative of the czar was coming to check the accounts, and he knew that he was in trouble. That evening he got out the books and totalled the funds owed. Then he went to the safe and got out his own pitifully small amount of money. As he sat there and looked at the two, he was overwhelmed at the astronomical debt versus his own small change. He knew he would be disgraced.

At last the young man determined to take his life. He pulled out his revolver, placed it on the table before him and wrote a summation of his misdeeds. At the bottom of the ledger, where he had totalled his illegal borrowings, he wrote: 'A great debt! Who can pay?' He decided that at the stroke of midnight he would die.

As the evening wore on the young soldier grew drowsy and eventually fell asleep. That night Czar Nicholas 1, as was sometimes his custom, was making the rounds of this particular barrack. Seeing a light, he stopped, looked in, and saw the young man asleep. He recognised him immediately and, looking over his shoulder, saw the ledger book and realised all that had taken place.

He was about to awaken him and

put him under arrest when his eye fastened on the young man's message: 'A great debt! Who can pay?' Suddenly, with a surge of magnanimity he reached over, wrote one word at the bottom of the ledger, and slipped out.

The young man was sleeping fitfully. He awoke suddenly in the middle of the night, glanced at the clock and, realising that it was long after midnight, reached for his revolver. But as he did so his eye fell upon the ledger. There was his writing: 'A great debt! Who can pay?' But underneath it was the word the czar had written: 'Nicholas.'

He was dumbfounded. There must

***Suddenly with  
a surge of  
magnanimity he  
reached over,  
wrote one word at the  
bottom of the ledger,  
and slipped out.***

be some mistake. He went to the safe where material that bore the signature of the czar was on file. It was the czar's signature. He said to himself: 'The czar has seen the book. He knows all. Still he is willing to forgive me.'

The young soldier rested on the word of the czar, and the next morning a messenger came from the palace with exactly the amount needed to meet the deficit. Only the czar could pay, and the czar did pay.

Only the Lord Jesus Christ was able to pay our debt to God. We look at the moral requirement of God's righteousness spelled out in His law. We compare it with our own tawdry performance and respond: 'A great debt to God! Who can pay?' But then the Lord Jesus Christ steps forward and signs His Name to our ledger: 'Jesus Christ'

Only Jesus can pay, and He does. Third, Jesus delighted to do the Father's will.

We find in many places in Scripture that the Lord was satisfied in His ministry. Psalm 22 describes His death by crucifixion, and toward the end of the psalm He is praising God. Isaiah 53 perhaps better than any other Old Testament passage spells out the theme of vicarious atonement, the death of one on behalf of the many. At the end of the chapter we find Jesus looking upon the travail of His soul and saying: 'I am satisfied.' (v11) Hebrews 10:5-7 tells us He actually delighted to do the will of God.

Could Jesus be delighted to come to this earth from glory, to lay aside all the privileges and prerogatives He had enjoyed as the eternal Son of God, to take to Himself a human form, to become like us, to become poor, to suffer throughout life and then eventually to suffer upon the cross and die the death of a sinner, a malefactor, an evildoer? Yes, Jesus delighted in that, because it was His pleasure to do the Father's will to achieve our salvation.

We, too, should be joyful at Christmas, not because we give gifts to one another, not because there is a certain light-heartedness in the world, not because this is a pretty story that children enjoy, but because Jesus Christ was joyful as He came into the world to be our Saviour.

There is one more thing to notice. When the Lord says: 'Here I am,' He is speaking in the present tense. He intended to make this important point: 'I have come. But not only have I come; I have come never to depart again.'

Edmund P. Clowney, the former president of Westminster Theological Seminary, had been speaking about Christ to an individual. The person said: 'The problem I have with Christianity is that it all happened so long ago.'

Dr Clowney responded: 'Those events that happened so long ago have not ceased to be current.'

Rather, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came then, comes again and again through the person of His Holy Spirit to bring the accomplishment of His salvation to the individual.' That is the reason the Christmas story is alive and why it has gripped so many millions of people.

If the story were a fable or even an

event that merely had happened 2,000 years ago and then ended, it would have no hold upon us. What does it really matter that somebody died long ago in a far-off land?

But if the One who came then still comes, if He comes to the individual through His Spirit to bring the results of the salvation He accom-

plished 2,000 years ago, then this story lives and enables us to live also.

Have you found the Lord Jesus Christ, who came at Christmas, to be your Saviour? Have you placed your trust in Him? He has come.

He can be yours in this moment.

## OLD HEADS ON YOUNG SHOULDERS

**W**e all have our hobbies. Some collect stamps; others coins. My West Indian friend collects antique microscopes.

During my spare moments I collect stories about gifted kids.

Typically, Australians feel threatened by the idea of a child prodigy, unless, of course, the child's gifts lie in football, soccer, cricket, swimming, rowing, tennis, boxing, wrestling or swearing.

But the following stories are true, and they deserve to be told. Some of them were passed on to me personally by people whom I trust, while others are gleaned from books and journals.

Here is a letter written 4 weeks ago by a mother in California. It reads in part:

*Our son, at 5 years of age, is in the extremely gifted category. He began reading at 14 months. He is now Home Schooling in the eighth grade curriculum. His Math ability is very good but his English ability is even better. His I.Q. is estimated to be 230+. He is a happy, well-adjusted little boy who loves games, game shows and puzzles. If mother is telling the truth (and I believe she is) this little boy is among the brightest in the world. The record holder in the Guinness Book of Records is fellow American Marilyn Mach vos Savant, who as a 10-year-old achieved a ceiling*

*Paul Porter*

score for 23-year-olds thus giving her an I.Q. of 230.

Gifted children have been described as "old heads on young shoulders". Take, for instance, a young boy whom I met a couple of years ago in Sydney. When he started school, his teacher warned the children not to suck their fingers, in case they had "germies". This boy wanted to know if the "germies" were viral or bacterial! And when it was time to do arithmetic, the teacher told the class that zero was the smallest possible number. But the boy disagreed: he thought the smallest number was minus infinity!

Meeting a super-bright kid for the first time can be an unsettling experience. Dr Jerry Levy once met a 4-year-old prodigy and attempted to strike up a conversation with him. The boy just stared at her curiously until she stopped and asked him what was the matter. The following dialogue occurred:

*The boy: "Do you always talk in such a strange manner?"*

*Dr Levy: "What do you mean?"*

*The boy: "Well, your vocabulary is so limited. I thought you were on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania."*

*Dr Levy: "I thought you were a 4-year-*

*old boy!"*

*The boy: "I would prefer that you would talk to me as if I were a person."*

A zany, sophisticated sense of humour often marks a talented child. Researcher Linda Silverman tells the following story:

*While playing under his mother's bed, one child spontaneously knocked on the bedsprings and said, "Mommy, are you resting?" She replied, "Well, I'm trying to." He retorted, "Does this mean I'm under arrest?" The boy was only 2 years old.*

One of my favourite stories of precocious verbal development concerns Thomas Macaulay, who later became the most widely-read English historian in the 1800's. Three-year-old Thomas owned a sand tray with a model house fenced in with sea shells. One day his nurse (who I think was called Sally) was foolish enough to remove the shells. Thomas was visibly upset. "Cursed be Sally," he wailed, "as it is written: 'Cursed be he who removes his neighbour's landmark.'" As he grew up, Macaulay exhausted family and friends with a seemingly endless torrent of ideas and facts.

Are gifted children likely to develop into happily adjusted adults? The answer appears to be Yes, but only within certain limits. Researcher Leta Stetter Hollingworth be-

lieved that the "optimum intelligence" for a gifted child was somewhere between 125 and 155 I.Q. *Children and adolescents in this area are enough more intelligent than the average to win the confidence of large numbers of their fellows, which brings about leadership, and to manage their own lives with superior efficiency. Moreover, there are enough of them to afford mutual esteem and understanding. But those of 170 I.Q. and beyond are too intelligent to be understood by the general run of persons with whom they made contact. They are too infrequent to find many congenial companions. They have to contend with loneliness and with personal isolation from their contemporaries throughout the period of immaturity. There is thus an "optimum" intelligence, from the viewpoint of personal happiness and adjustment to society, which is well below the maximum. (Children Above 180 I.Q. [1942] 264-265).*

Abnormally gifted children are not uncommonly rejected by their peers. The playground traumas of these children are a microcosm of the intellectual purges that seem to take place with wearying regularity across the centuries and around the world. Many of the Beijing academics currently on the hit list of the Chinese government were probably social isolates as chil-

dren. According to Marvin Minsky, the pioneer robotics researcher, "what we call genius is rare because our evolution works without respect for individuals. Could any tribe or culture endure in which each individual discovered novel ways to think? If not, how sad, since the genes for genius might then lead not to nurturing, but only to frequent weeding-out" (*The Society of Mind*, [1985] 80).

Perhaps it is no coincidence that the world's most persecuted race (the Jews) is also its most intelligent. The Jews have produced more Nobel prize winners than any other people. Why are there so many smart Jews? Norbert Wiener, the father of cybernetics and himself a Jew, thought that the Jewish family structure had something to do with it:

*At all times, the young learned man, and especially the rabbi, whether or not he had an ounce of practical judgment and was able to make a good career for himself in life, was always a match for the daughter of the rich merchant. Biologically this led to a situation in sharp contrast to that of the Christians of earlier times. The Western Christian learned man was absorbed in the church, and whether he had children or not, he was certainly not supposed to have them, and actually tended to be*

*less fertile than the community around him. On the other hand, the Jewish scholar was very often in a position to have a large family. Thus the biological habits of the Christians tended to breed out of the race whatever hereditary qualities make for learning, whereas the biological habits of the Jew tended to breed these qualities in. (Ex-prodigy, [1953] 11-12).*

Even ignoring genetic considerations, it is obvious that the Jews have sustained for millennia a cultural bias in favour of learning. Whereas America's most popular president was a jelly-bean chewing actor, Jewish leaders in New Testament times were scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees — men with outstanding memories and colossal intellects. And it was in such company that Mary and Joseph found the boy Jesus at the Feast of the Passover: "They found him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them, and asking them questions. And all were amazed at his understanding and his answers" (Luke 2:46,47).

Jesus was a gifted Jewish kid. Judging from his impact on the course of civilization, he was a severely gifted kid. It's no wonder he was put to death.

But that's only half the story....

## "Let's put \$\$ back into Chri\$tma\$"

**A**s traditionally celebrated, Christmas remains one of the great contradictions of our age. Ostensibly to honour a boy born in a shack, we engage in a yearly orgy of spending, eating and drinking.

So let's put \$\$ back into Chri\$tma\$.

Wherever there is human need, there you will find Mary, Joseph and the Child.

Always in need of extra \$\$ during the Chri\$tma\$ season are the Smith Family, the Salvation Army and World Vision, to name just a few.

Merry Chri\$tma\$.

Paul Porter.





GOOD NEWS CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES ANNOUNCES  
**CONGRESS 1990**

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**The Gospel and the Christian Life**

**Auckland** March 9-11  
Waharau Regional Park

**Cooranbong** March 14  
Venue to be announced

**Sydney** March 16 & 17  
Thornleigh West Public School,  
Giblett Ave, Thornleigh

**Canberra** March 20  
Venue to be announced

**Adelaide** March 21  
Baptist Christian Centre,  
Church St, Norwood

featuring  
Desmond Ford  
Ron Allen  
Neville McKenzie

March 23 & 24 **Perth**  
Bayswater Uniting Church,  
Murray St, Bayswater

March 30 & 31 **Melbourne**  
Salvation Army Citadel,  
Wantirna Rd, Ringwood

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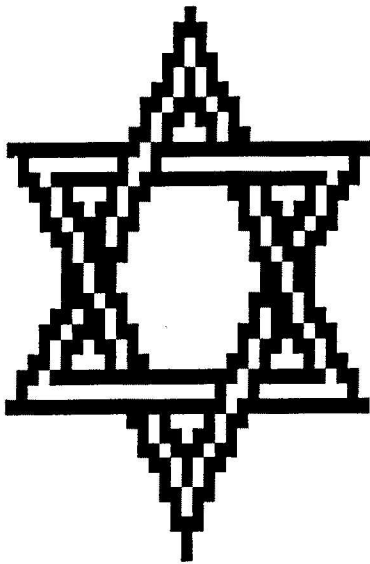
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## THE STAR THAT LEADS TO JESUS

**N**ow when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.' Matt 2:1,2.

If it should ever be that men should fail to preach the gospel, God can conduct souls to His Son by a star ... Now, when the Lord does use a star to be His minister, what is the order of His ministry? We may learn by this enquiry what kind of ministry God would have ours to be if we are stars in His right hand. We also shine as lights in the world; let us see how to do it. We notice, first, that star-preaching is *all about Christ*. We do not know what the colour of the star was, nor the shape of the star, nor to what magnitude it had attained; these items are not recorded, but

*Charles Spurgeon*

what is recorded is of much more importance: the wise men said — "We have seen *His* star. Then the star which the Lord will use to lead men to Jesus must be Christ's own star. The faithful minister, like this star, belongs to Christ; he is Christ's own man in the emphatic sense. Before we can expect to be made a blessing, dear friends, we must ourselves be blessed of the Lord. If we would cause others to belong to Jesus, we must belong wholly to Jesus ourselves. Every beam in that star shone forth for Jesus. It was *His* star, always, and only, and altogether. It shone not for itself, but only as *His* star: as such it was known and spoken of — "we have seen *His* star."

Though you be but a very little star, twinkling for Jesus; however feeble your light may be, be it plain that you are *His* star, so that if men wonder what you are, they may never wonder whose you are, for on your very forefront it shall be written, "Whose I am and whom I serve" ...

You must be consecrated and concentrated if you hope to be used of the Lord. If you have one ray, or ten thousand rays, all must shine with the one design of guiding men to Jesus. You have nothing now to do with any object, subject, design, or endeavour, but Jesus only: in Him, and for Him, and to Him, must you live henceforth, or you will never be chosen of the Lord to conduct either wise men or babes to Jesus.

See ye well to it that perfect consecration be yours.

Note also that true star-preaching leads to Christ. The star was Christ's star itself, but it also led others to Christ. It did this very much because it moved in that direction. It is a sad thing when a preacher is like a sign-post pointing the way but never following it on his own account. Such were those chief priests at Jerusalem: they could tell where Christ was born, but they never went to worship Him; they were indifferent altogether to Him and to His birth. The star that leads to Christ must always be going to Christ.

Oh, that all who think themselves to be stars would themselves diligently move towards the Lord Jesus. The star in the east led wise men to Christ because it went that way itself: there is a wisdom in example which truly wise men are quick to perceive. This star had such an influence upon the chosen men that they could not but follow it: it charmed them across the desert. Such a charm may reside in you and in me, and we may exercise a powerful ministry over many hearts, being to them as lodestones, drawing them to the Lord Jesus. Happy privilege! We would not merely show the road, but induce our neighbours to enter upon it.

We read of one of old, not that they told him of Jesus, but that "they brought him to Jesus." We are not only to tell the story of the cross, but we are to persuade men to fly to the Crucified One for salvation.

And so, though we have no arm of the law to help us, nor patronage, nor pomp of eloquence, nor parade of learning, yet we have a spiritual power by which we draw to Jesus thousands who are our joy and crown. The man sent of God comes forth from the divine presence permeated with a power which makes men turn to the Saviour and live. Oh! that such power might go forth from all God's ministers ... in every form of holy service.

# DOG'S COLLARBONES AND ADAM'S RIB

## Part two

Paul Porter

In a previous article I suggested that the Garden of Eden story is symbolic. This need not surprise us — just look at the LAST book of the Bible — it fairly bristles with poetry, metaphor and allegory. Even Jesus repeatedly spoke in parables.

But if the opening chapters of Genesis are like the parables, what are they supposed to teach? There is no easy answer to that one, since the author doesn't provide us with an interpretation. We have to work it out for ourselves!

My guess is that the Adam and Eve stories were written to warn the kings and queens of the world not to be arrogant.

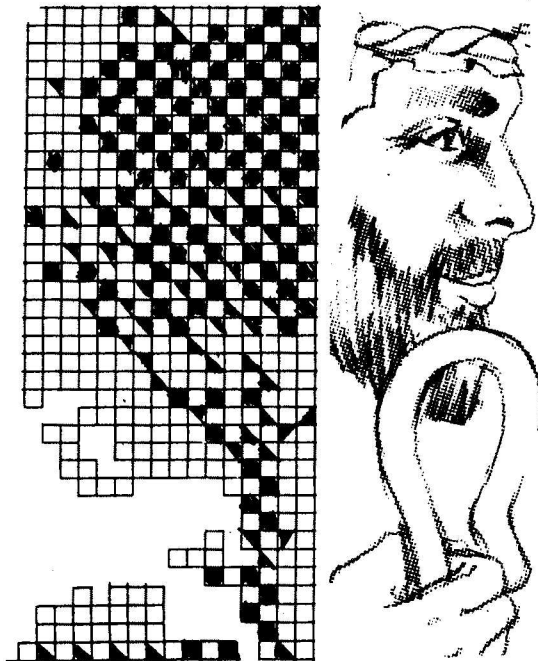
Hubris in the corridors of power is not entirely unknown even today. Just think of Mrs Marcos and all those shoes! Here in Australia we have The World's Greatest Treasurer.

But in Bible times, it was a miracle of grace if any monarch remained even passably human. Israel's neighbours generally viewed their leaders as demigods, while in Israel itself, more than one king got carried away with delusions of grandeur.

Put yourselves in David's shoes, for example, when he meets the woman from Tekoa: 'My lord the king,' she says, 'is like the angel of God to discern good from evil!' (2 Samuel 14:17). It is not hard to imagine David's thoughts on that occasion: 'Right on, sister, (heh! heh!), right on!'

'My lord the king' could be a fool at times.

In addition to being good looking (Absalom), tall (Saul), brave (David), or wise (Solomon), the king was also shepherd of the people, not unlike the popes, bish-



*The shepherd/tree  
was in fact  
one of the most  
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in the  
biblical world.*

ops and pastors of the Christian era. And so his authority extended over man and beast alike. He was the great tree (Zech 11:1-3) that provided shade and nourishment of all living creatures. And no wonder — just visit a field of sheep and cattle on a hot day and you will find them crowded together wherever there is shade.

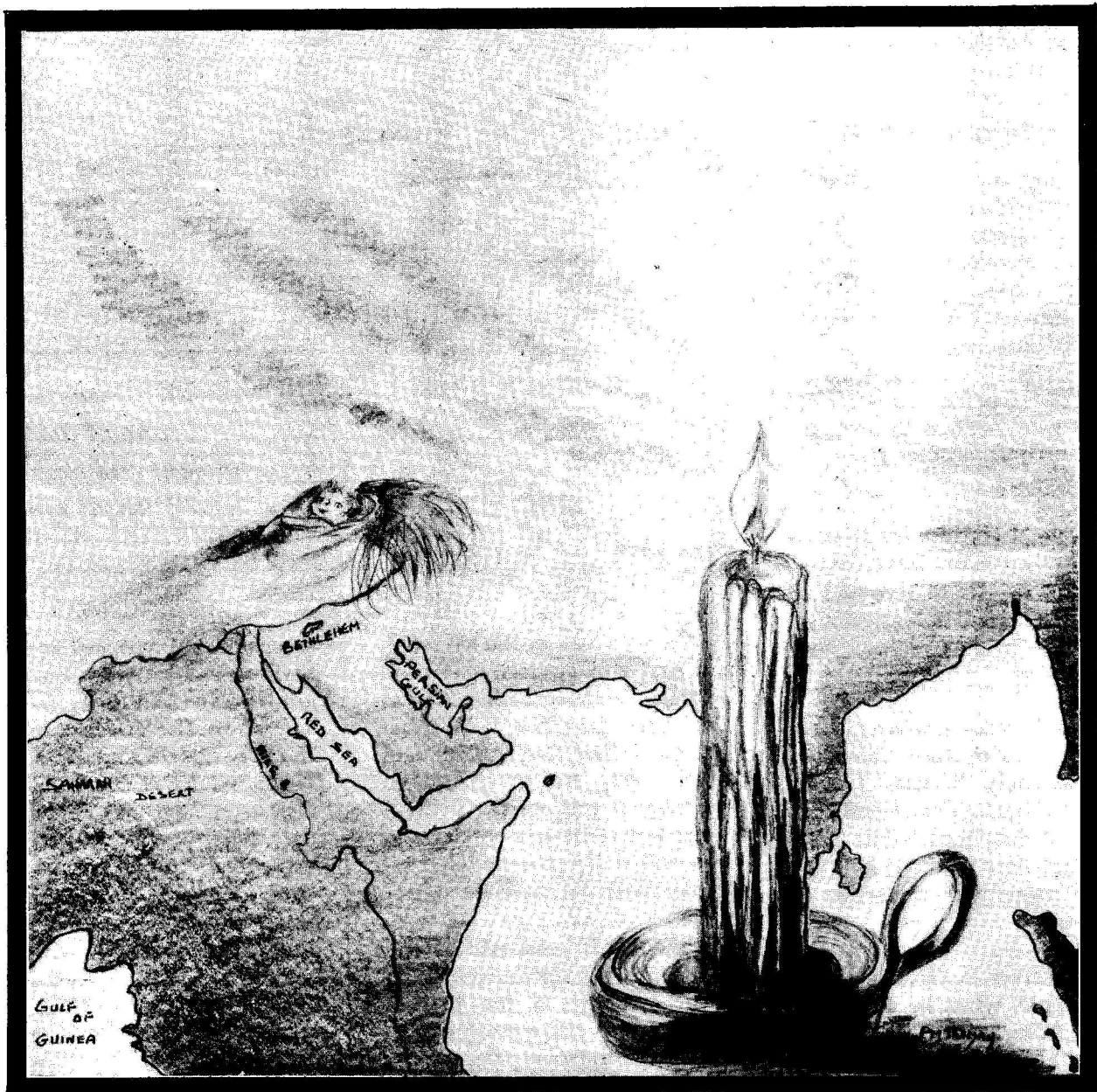
The shepherd/tree was in fact one of the most ancient and enduring royal symbols in the biblical world. It was also a flexible symbol — since the royal palace sometimes included a tree representing the king, the king himself could also be referred to as the royal gardener or caretaker of the tree. The two ideas were intimately related.

What does this have to do with the Genesis stories? Quite a bit, I suspect. In the opening chapters, you have a man and a woman who have dominion over all the animals — ie they are *rulers* (Gen 1:26,28). Like a shepherd, the man

names the animals, just as a *shepherd* names his flock (Gen 2:19 cf John 10:3). The man and the woman are also *gardeners* in Eden, and they sustain a unique relation to a special *tree*. But because of their arrogance, they are expelled from the garden and refused access to the tree.

Much the same cluster of ideas occurs in Ezekiel 31, where the kings of the world are portrayed as trees in the Garden of Eden (see verses 8, 9, 16, 18). Like Nebuchadnezzar, (the great tree of Daniel 4), Pharaoh (in Ezekiel 31) rules over man and beast alike (Eze 31:6 cf Dan 4:12,21; 2:38; Jer 27:1-9; 28:12-14). But because of his arrogance he is cut down, and his life in Eden is abruptly terminated.

While the parallels are not exact, the cluster of ideas emerging in Genesis 1-2 and Eze 31 is nonetheless striking. Adam, I suspect, symbolizes all rulers who get carried away with their own importance.



# Jesus, the Light Who Unites Us

Artist: Pam Tedman '89