

Fulness

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Fulness Volume 16

Editor Graham Perrins
Sub Editor Mick Inkpen
Coordinator Maurice Smith

Designed at Our House
by Mick Inkpen and Nick Butterworth
5 Erroll Road Romford Essex

All enquiries to Mike Blount
47 Copse Road Cobham Surrey England.

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Editorial

The spirit of the age is effectively described in Paul's letters to Timothy. In the first letter he writes, 'The Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.' His second letter catalogues the sort of behaviour that fittingly describes such demonic activity. 'Lovers of self, lovers of money . . . lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.'

In his letter to the Thessalonians Paul looks at the religious scene that will precede the coming of Christ. 'The mystery of lawlessness is already at work . . . Then that lawless one will be revealed . . . who exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, taking his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as God . . . whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan.'

It is evident that the spirit of this age is not an innocent or innocuous thing, but the result of demonic activity. Behind the spirit of the age are the spiritual forces of

wickedness. The world system lies in the hands of the evil one who immerses every area with his own spirit.

The challenge to God's people is tremendous. We are to manifest the Spirit of Christ, to introduce the kingdom of God to men. We are in the world but not of it, activated and motivated by another Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit we can release the age to come upon those who are blind to truth.

This battle is not at all one sided. The Church has often found itself to be more like Babylon than the world itself! In many areas its theology and practice have left much to be desired. In this issue we describe aspects of the spirit of the age and how it can permeate Christianity, affecting our personal lives, our homes and our work for God. Each article also looks at God's answers and encourages us in our commission to combat the spirit of the age and to release the Spirit of God to humanity.

Graham Perrins

This issue marks the transference of responsibility for distribution and correspondence from Canterbury to Cobham. You may have noticed the new address in our last issue. For many years Ron and Shirley Wing have ably handled our distribution with the full back-up of the fellowship in Canterbury. At times their home has looked like a warehouse, with *Fulness* stacked everywhere from lounge to bedroom. We want to express our grateful thanks to them and all at the Canterbury end for so efficiently and faithfully shouldering this responsibility, and also to Rowland Whitehead for handling the accounts.

The move to Cobham will link up the promotional, distribution and subscription aspects under one roof a few miles from our printers, and will help to streamline the organisation and production of the magazine.

We are also now publishing *Fulness* on a quarterly basis and subscription details have been amended to cover 4 issues per year.



Ron and Shirley Wing

REVOLUTION

George Tarleton

Revolution is said to occur when we destroy a system that has become unworkable or archaic and replace it with something that works. We are living in a world of continuous revolution.

There is nothing new about revolution; it has always been happening. What has changed is its rate. Take, for example, the political revolution that replaced the divine right of the kings of England with the democratic rights of the people. The king's power was first restrained by the barons in the 9th century, then by parliament from the 16th century onward. It finally ended with the enfranchisement of the people in the 19th century.

Compare this with the Russian revolution, which has changed half the world in half a century from a capitalistic system to a communistic one, and we begin to see how the whole thing has escalated.

Revolutions in technology

For over 3,000 years man travelled no faster than 25mph. All that changed only a century ago when trains reached speeds of 100mph. The next leap came just before World War II with planes travelling at 400 mph. After the war the speed at which man travels has

literally rocketed. This is also true of the military field. Since 1945 we have moved from 'conventional' to nuclear warfare, acquiring the ability to annihilate ourselves. The area of learning is no exception either. Well over half of all current usable information has been either changed or discovered since the war. And in the sphere of communications we find that our planet has shrunk to a 'global village'. News today isn't what has happened but what is happening.

The American Meteorological Society says that weather modification today is a reality. Imagine what chaos manipulating the weather could cause. Then there are the frightening possibilities now emerging in the field of genetic engineering. Our generation will be confronted with some mind-shattering moral choices!

Revolutions in life-style

We are undergoing the most extensive and rapid urbanisation the world has ever known, yet despite this a nomadic life-style is beginning to emerge, especially in the cities. The great migrations of people seeking employment have fostered a change in our attitude towards the place where we live. The things we possess are also becoming increasingly temporary, and manufacturers now produce things with planned obsolescence.

We can rent anything—I 'rented' a mechanic the other day! We are creating more and more temporary

structures to serve our temporary needs. We have developed a 'throw-away culture'.

Our relationships with people, particularly in urban areas, are undergoing fundamental changes. Owing to the increasing mobility of the population (the average person moves every five to seven years), we are being forced to relate only to those people who will be useful to us. Relating on a functional basis like this lacks any depth of commitment. Thus the family unit is under attack. We have trial marriages to see if it will work. Others choose to live together for as long as it works. Some think in terms of a series of marriages—our westernised form of polygamy—because they know it won't work.

Society is losing its established values. In our philosophical 'escape from reason', we have shied away from any moral absolutes into the morass of situational ethics. Anything claiming to be authoritative is viewed with great suspicion. This do-your-own-thing philosophy has produced anarchy both mild and militant.

Unbridled sex has become an expression of rebellion in our time. While we should not be prudish about sex, remembering there was nothing particularly godly about the Victorian attitude, we cannot help but deplore the exploitation of women as 'things'. The permissive society is reaping what it has sown in its children. Not only do we have child pornography, but we are also

UTION

planning sex clinics for children over the age of eleven!

Having cut ourselves off from old ways of thinking, we appear to be setting the stage for a new society. In it we will be constantly confronted by the unfamiliar and the unpredictable. What should we do in the face of all this? Bunk off down our religious rabbit holes? God forbid!

Jesus the revolutionary

Following Jesus has always had its revolutionary consequences, not just in the lives of individuals, but also in the life-styles of communities. His ways of revolution are more subtle than any other man's but far more effective. He wasn't satisfied with changing men's minds; his target was their hearts. So he poured his life and energy into twelve ordinary men. It all must have seemed a waste of time; until the twelve turned the world upside down—or, rather, the right way up.

In deradicalising Jesus christians have not only diluted his character, but have also put themselves on the defensive, pressing their theologians into finding escape routes like the secret rapture. However, now that we are becoming aware of the radical nature of God's revelation, there is a growing desire to work out our faith in the tumultuous crucible of this world. This is producing within us both a willingness to face reality, and a deepening conviction that the only real hope is a totally new kind of society.

A revolutionary community

The alternative society that God is creating will blow the non-christian mind: it is a society that will function without law because it has dealt with the more fundamental question of attitude. The world is already finding out that attitude cannot be changed by legislation. Both race relations and sex equality have been set back by laws trying to enforce them.

Being freed from legalism, we will not have to opt for either moral absolutes or situational ethics. Like Jesus, we will have both. When people came to him with their moral dilemmas, he invariably tossed the question back to them at a deeper level. Most people don't like the responsibility of making ethical decisions themselves. They desperately long for someone else to do it for them: a psychiatrist, a professor, a politician, Marjorie Proops—anyone! But Jesus refused to play the game by their rule book.

The quickening rate of change will pose no threat to the new community, for, by God's grace, we are beginning to be able to review what we have done, where we are and where we are going. We were initiated into this kingdom through change (repentance) and we are being brought to maturity by a series of divinely initiated changes which translate us from one degree of glory to another.

Being revolutionary

Being a revolutionary isn't some

new thing that we must try to get in on; it's simply being what *we are* in God and allowing God to be what *he is* in us.

Once we start stripping ourselves of christian cliches and pious platitudes, we begin to get a refreshing glimpse of what it's all about. The distinguishing mark between us and the world is not in the way we speak but in the way we live. When we open our mouths, non-christians should not have to decode our words; they will have enough difficulty with the mystery of the gospel. Everyone understood the parables of Jesus because of their simplicity, yet even the disciples could not interpret them because of their mystery. We do not live by a different set of standards but from a totally different source. Our spirit is joined to the Holy Spirit so that we become 'one spirit with him'. Now trying to explain this to someone who can't even locate their human spirit is like trying to explain colour to a blind man.

But if we dare go further than simply speaking, if we dare to actually kill a few of our denominational sacred cows, then we will find ourselves getting really excited by the radical nature of the good news, and the whole world will want to know. O Church of God, when you are as revolutionary on earth as your Father in heaven, then 'the nations shall march toward your light and their kings to your sunrise'.

The lie



Nick Butterworth

At the heart of every problem that this world has ever faced is a lie. It was a lie that first turned the magnificent harmony of God's original creation into discord. Most Christians acknowledge this fact and it has become an indispensable part of our evangelistic kit bag.

But whilst we are at pains to demonstrate the origins of evil, we often fail to discern the lie that permeates the atmosphere of our own day and age, and unwittingly the same lie infiltrates our lives. Like a fungus which thrives in dark, airless places, so the lie thrives amongst those who love darkness rather than light.

Jesus once said, 'You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.' Why did he specifically say *the truth* shall set you free? Because it is a lie which holds us captive.

What is the lie? In essence it is this: that we can make it without God. That is, that all our human aspirations can be met without God. Happiness, excitement, peace, love, freedom, purpose, all can be ours, and we needn't trouble ourselves with God at all.

The truth which dispels this lie can be expressed in many different ways. I particularly like the way that Augustine put it when he said, 'Thou hast created us for thyself and our heart is not quiet until it rests in thee.' In short, we cannot make it without God. In fact there is nothing *to* make without God. All our deepest desires are ultimately unfulfillable without God.

When the lie is exposed like this it loses its power. It becomes so obviously wrong that we may be forgiven if we think, who, at least amongst Christians, would be deceived by such a blatant contradiction of the truth?

But this is the nature of the lie. It has no substance, relying heavily on innuendo and connotation. When it is brought to light it evaporates. Satan, the father of lies, well knows this, and takes great care to disguise it in all manner of gift wrappings.

The lie is characterised by promises which are broken time and time again with no word of explanation or apology.

Advertising plays a very significant role in propagating unfulfillable promises. A man is promised that if he smokes a certain cigar he will be pursued by a harem of sensuous women. It doesn't quite work out that way. Oh, it wasn't a total failure—Gladys from the estimating department did say how much she enjoys the smell of cigars. 'Cigars and tangerines always remind me of Christmas,' she said.

It is not sufficient to explain the role of advertisers on the basis of their commercial motivation. Such motivation is only another, more basic, expression of the same thing, the underlying misconception that human fulfilment can be purchased.

Nor is it only advertising. Films, and particularly television, play an enormous part in spreading the lie. Here, we are met with a bewildering array of powerful, but unreal, images to choose from. From Coronation Street to Kojak. We are bound to find some particular image we would like to conform to. Just categorise yourself as near as you can. Forget who you are and be like them. Ena Sharples? Salt of the earth. Starsky and Hutch? Where would we be without such tough, upright, fun loving, handsome young men looking after the interests of society. Frank Bough? Everything a father should be. And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Meg Richardson, Bruce Forsyth, Magnus Pike, Esther Rantzen and Jimmy Savile...

The media present us with images irrespective of people's personal integrity. A villain in real life may be portrayed as a loving family man on the screen, and vice versa.

My point is that we cannot trust such images. We must not accept them at face value. Masks are too easy to assume.

Tony Blackburn is everyone's brother and son. But we must not accept his point of view as one of the family. David Dimbleby appears to be so fair and so impartial. But David Dimbleby cannot help having opinions based on a world view, and unless he has surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus he cannot be trusted.

In George Orwell's 1984 we are presented with the ultimate image. Big Brother is the figurehead of the Party, but no one is really sure whether or not he actually exists.

If Doris Archer were to be written out of 'The Archers' by the death of the character, the BBC would be snowed under with flowers and offers of sympathy to Dan and the family, from genuine mourners.

Politicians have become a laughing stock because of the frequency with which promises are broken, but strangely, people are willing to believe that the next set of politicians will do better. But how can they do better when it is the whole system which is at fault? When their manifesto—albeit unwritten—is to create a society in which people can be fulfilled without God, failure is inevitable. Nor does it make any difference whether we are talking about the left wing or the right.

Pete Townshend of 'The Who' wrote a song called *Won't get fooled again*. In it he comments on the superficiality of the system and compares politics to fashions in hairstyle: 'The parting on the left is now the parting on the right'. The song builds to a tremendous crescendo and the lead singer screams, 'Meet the new boss—same as the old boss!'

Until we make Jesus the 'new boss' every new boss will be the same old boss with a different hat on.

There is an outcry these days whenever there is a threatened decline in the standard of living. But such things as colour televisions, new cars and central heating are not the things that make for quality of life. It is not the lack of these that



we should be lamenting. A labour saving device which gives you more time to be absorbed by more images on television is not much help. Of course we will argue that we would use the time profitably. But will we? Let us not own more than we can rule over. Let us rather adopt a simpler life style which we are in control of.

The world is full of people who have believed the lie that something better is just out of reach. If only they could. . .

'If only I hadn't married so young.' Another divorce is on the way. 'If only we could afford a holiday for the kids. . .' Mum will soon be starting work and the kids will suffer because she's not there anymore when they come home from school.

Tomorrow looms ahead of most people like some great panacea of all ills. People live in their imaginations, never realising that today is yesterday's tomorrow. Blatant escapism has become more and more acceptable. Erotic and romantic fantasies have gained a place of prestige.

If we want to be free of these things it is important that we identify the lie, rather than desperately try to shut them out of our lives.

At the heart of eroticism is a lie which promises sexual fulfilment, but ultimately only produces frustration. The trouble is that if I am not walking in fellowship with the Lord when sexual temptation comes, condemnation can cause me to hide from him, and the darkness I have chosen to hide in is the atmosphere in which the lie thrives.

We need to face such temptation squarely. There is ample grace and forgiveness with God. But let us go a step further. What is it, exactly, that is being promised? Why can't the promise be fulfilled? Specific situations will differ, but ask these questions about the temptation. Do it in fellowship with God. He is marvellously understanding and totally unshockable. The truth will set you free.

Romanticism is superficially less gross than eroticism but the basic root of unreality is the same. There is the same illegitimate desire to experience some benefit without cost or responsibility. We are adamant about the evils of escaping into a fantasy world through the use of drugs without realising that to live in the dream world of our imagination is the same thing without the drugs.

It is good to repent and be forgiven, but it is even better, in fellowship with God, to identify the lie and be transformed from a dreamer into one who has vision and is prepared to long and yearn and work towards a fulfillable goal.

We have been told that we can experience tragedy without pain; love without giving; mystery without uncertainty. It's all so safe. We can enter into a love affair without getting hurt. If things aren't going the way we want them to we can start again with another book, or start imagining another illicit affair with someone else.

We have been lied to. Life is not safe. We need the security of our God if we are going to brave real life rather than the two dimensional stuff we are surrounded with.

I was visiting a farmer recently on the return journey after a few days away from home. After a very pleasant meal my host asked me if I would like to see his sheep which were being sheared. I hesitated to say 'yes' because I wanted to get home and avoid heavy traffic on the roads. Besides, I felt that I had seen it on television—I could imagine what it would be like. But, perhaps so as not to appear uninterested, perhaps for a deeper reason, I said that I would like to have a look.

We walked through a large out-building where the sheep were being sheared and at once I was struck by the strong smell. The sheep were being sheared by a New Zealand

expert, and I was tremendously impressed by how physical an operation shearing is. With great strength he up-ended a huge woolly ewe and skilfully manipulated the creature, using his legs to prop it up and hold it captive whilst it was divested of its coat.

It was so much more 'real' and 'live' than my imagination told me it would be. And that applies to every aspect of life that I think I know, but in actual fact have been inoculated against by dilutions on television and films.

How much time do we spend outside of the concrete and asphalt environment that we have made for ourselves? I am convinced that just to be where there are trees and fields, streams and wild flowers, is itself a nourishment to the soul. We have been tricked into believing that it's a non-essential.

If we are going to make a bid to live according to the truth we will have to swim upstream against the prevailing current. The areas of career and education will have to come into question.

Fulfilment is not to be found in career in the way that many seek it. Nor is education the key. God is our fulfilment, and the one whose heart is set on him will not be frustrated. A friend of mine was offered a place at Cambridge University to read English. After careful consideration he turned it down. This is what he said about it.

'Going to college would have meant severing friendships and this would have meant leaving behind something, very new in the making, which I knew to be born of God. I was beginning to realise with a deep thrill that there was no reason why these friendships, unlike so many others I could observe, should not be part of something much bigger than themselves—something permanent. I was only dimly aware of these things, yet somehow a college course posed a very real threat to it all. Consequently it was with a great deal of joy and relief that I realised



that my heart's desire was to stay. So even though the whole world seemed to have preconceived that for a person in my position the path to university was an inevitable one, I was really happy to be 'free'. It was not a matter of whether it was right or wrong to go to university, rather that its attraction at that time in no way compared with what God was promising for the locality. And neither could I take what God had imparted and apply it to a new situation at college because my part in his kingdom was already invested, not in easily portable principles, but in particular friendships with particular people.'

Satan's ultimate desire is to provide a complete alternative system to the way God intends things to be, ruled over by himself and his agents.

Religion is no exception. Satan is constantly devising new philosophical and religious systems in his benevolent, or should I say malevolent, desire to cater for everyone's needs. Satan is not committed to truth. He is not committed to Satanism or Black Magic in the way that Jesus is committed to the truth of Christianity. He doesn't much mind whether you are an atheist, a spiritualist, or a pantheist. We mustn't be surprised by the variety and lack of consistency amongst non-christian systems.

God once spoke to Bob Mumford saying, 'Mumford, you and I are incompatible, and I don't change!' But Satan is not nearly so unyielding. He will purpose to build you your own system if you can't find anything you like.

One of Satan's chief ambitions is to rule the Church. Here he must employ his most subtle devices. So many Christians think that because the word 'God' is included in their vocabulary they have avoided the lie of the world, but sadly there is much evidence of its infiltration. Christians continue to be largely independent of God and one another, each one mowing his own lawn and

cleaning his own car. They worry about the price of meat and whether they'll get a holiday this year. 'I wish you wouldn't invite people back after the meeting without warning me—I haven't hoovered the front room.'

Church meetings are conducted as if the Church was meant to be a democracy. One man, one vote, without deference to character or gift and without discernment of spiritual authority. A professionalism and formality run through the Church, promoting the lie that God cannot be known intimately or personally. But 'Abba' really does mean 'Dad'. Church buildings resemble court rooms, with odd vestries like solicitors' offices—hardly the setting for the family.

Satan's main tactic is not primarily to convince people in the Church that God doesn't exist. Rather, by constant lying about the nature of God he hopes to lure people out of their resting place in the free grace of God into thinking that they ought to be doing something for God. In this way seeds of independence are sown. A Church which is trying to offer worship or service to God independently of the enabling life of his Spirit is paving the way for Satan to play his trump card.

I believe that in the next few years we will see an escalation of people's interest in religion. But it will have nothing to do with the yielding of independence and acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord. It will be characterised by a confusion of ritual, supernatural signs and conflicting ideas. It will be a religious revival that serves to entrench people in their independence from God.

How can we hope to find our way through all the confusion? The answer is marvellously simple.

'If any man's will is to do God's will, he shall know . . .' Discernment between truth and error is not a

matter of intellect. It is a matter of open-heartedness to God. Although the lie is formidable it is not all powerful. It can take no more ground in our lives than we allow it. Satan does need our co-operation. If the lie has taken root in our society it is to the extent that we have been willing for it to do so. Romans 1 v 25 says, 'They exchanged the truth of God for a lie', literally *the* lie. There has been a willingness to depart from what truth we had for the sake of a lie.

Think of it this way. I find myself in a long dark tunnel. As I grope in the darkness I see a tiny pin-point of light. If I will move towards that light I will automatically qualify for more light until I emerge into full daylight. But if I flatly refuse to go that way because I don't want to find the light in that direction, I will remain in the dark and continue to bang my head against a brick wall.

By walking humbly with God and having a heart of integrity we will find that there is no lodging place for any aspect of the lie in our lives. We will find that it just doesn't fit. It's irrelevant. If we are used to talking to God moment by moment as we live and can share the simplicity of conversation with God with others, ritual and liturgy become irrelevant.

If I am satisfied in my relationship with God today, the promise of satisfaction tomorrow from a new car is irrelevant.

In Lamentations 3 v 24 we read, "'The Lord is my portion," says my soul; therefore I have hope in him.' If the Lord truly is my portion, such things as lust, romanticism, social prestige, materialism and false religion will find little acceptance in my heart. If my mind is being renewed daily by the Holy Spirit, growing more and more accustomed to thinking about life from his point of view, I will be increasingly less conformed to this world and the lie which runs through its heart.

In a word (werd) prep./adj./n. (colloq.) Regular feature (not all Gk.) in printed publication, lucid, free of obscurity, radical (of the roots), concise, enlightened, particular, source of which can be traced from original Jn. (abbr.) MacLauchlan.

IN A WORD

The Greek word 'aletheia' is most often translated in English versions of the NT by our word 'truth'. And many understand 'truth' to mean a body of doctrine, 'the truth of the faith'. However, such a meaning is far removed from 'aletheia', and the word is better translated as 'reality'. It refers not to a body of mentally-held doctrine, but to a realm of experience. It means the *experience* of what is real, and not a *knowledge* of what is true.

Reality by definition exists, whether or not it is recognised and realised. What Christ accomplished in his death and resurrection exists as reality, and did so long before we *realised* it and experienced forgiveness and submission to God's kingdom rule. What is needed amongst believers is not so much enlarged knowledge of doctrine, as increased experiential *realisation* of the reality of God's kingdom.

Translating John 8: 31,32 literally, we have, 'If you remain in my word, you are really (alethos) my disciples, and you will experience the reality, and the reality will set you free'. Some will argue that the basic rules of Greek grammar require abstract nouns to take the article, and that we should omit 'the' before 'reality' in translation. But a study of how the term is used in the NT soon convinces one that the reference is to a concrete realm of experience. 'The reality' is the realm of God, the realm of the Spirit, an invisible but real kingdom which we are to *experience*. Jesus' word, and our submission to him as his disciples,

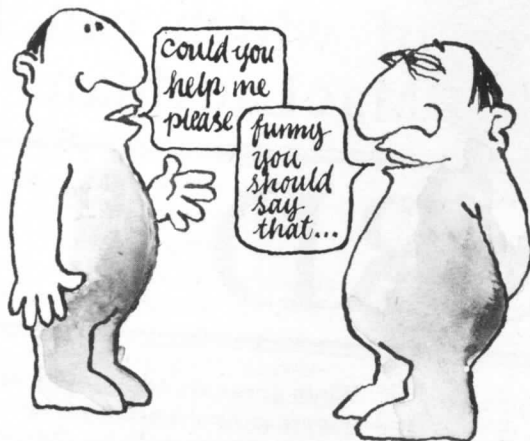
enable us to experience this realm.

This realm is the realm of God himself, for 'God is Spirit, and those who worship him must continuously worship in spirit and reality' (Jn 4:24). The connection between 'spirit', the realm of God's being, and 'reality' is clear. Our material dimension is an offshoot of the spiritual, created by God who 'is Spirit'. As believers, we are 'born of the Spirit' as well as 'born of the flesh' (Jn 3:6), i.e. we have natural, physical material life and also spiritual life. We are to develop our experience of the reality which is the spiritual realm, and so form a bridge between heaven and earth.

Jesus himself supremely did this; he brought heaven to earth, and perfectly expressed the invisible God. So it is no surprise that he called himself 'the reality' (Jn 14:6), for he embodied and expressed all that the term conveys. In promising the oncoming Spirit, Jesus said, 'When that one, the Spirit of the reality, comes, he will guide you into all the reality' (Jn 16:13). The Spirit opens to us the whole dimension of God, the heavenlies, and makes us partakers of 'the powers of the age to come' (Heb 6:5). He makes real for us Jesus' word that 'the glory you have given to me, I have given to them', and causes us to embody and express visibly the invisible reality of God. Indeed, in the same context (Jn 17:17-22), Jesus prayed, 'Separate them [to yourself] in the reality; your word is reality'.

When Jesus stood before Pilate, the governor could not understand his claims. Apparently he claimed to be a king, yet did not wish to lead an armed revolt against Roman power. Jesus spoke to him of 'the reality' of his kingdom, invisible to unaided human eyes, but manifest to 'everyone who is derived from the reality' (Jn 18:37). Pilate could not see this realm, and asked the most pathetic question in history: 'What is reality?' We have been ushered into this realm of reality in God, and our role is so to embody it that the world is confronted with the reality of Jesus as king.

There are many other verses to which we could turn, but I must leave the reader, in company with his concordance, to do the rest. Let me close by taking you to Ephesians. Paul calls the good news 'the word of the reality', for it declares the invisible but transcendentally real realm of God's kingdom. Response to this word is to be followed by receiving the Holy Spirit of promise, who guarantees our full inheritance (Eph 1:13, 14). Believers are then to enter deeply into the reality, forsaking all evil practices, for 'reality is in Jesus' (Eph 4:21). Indeed, our whole life is to be an embodiment of reality (Eph 4:15 is literally, '*experiencing* reality in love') and a speaking forth of reality (Eph 4:25). In this way our individual and corporate lives become an expression of heaven on earth.



...I really believe in it. And it's what you believe that really counts. In fact in a real sense, what a man believes is more important than what he does. 'No man shall be saved by works' Romans 3.20 - that's my motto and the world would be a far better place if there were a few more of us about who thought the same way. Helping people! I think about it all the time.



by the way - you don't happen to have a wheelbarrow do you...?



Pharisaism: David Matthews

'Pharisee'—the very word seems to leave a bad taste in the mouth. The name has of course become synonymous with hypocrisy and falsehood, and not without good reason if one is at all conversant with the gospels. Yet the Pharisees were not evil men, nor were they irreligious. They were the orthodox of their day, the 'fundamentalists' par excellence, the theological cream of Judaism. If ever a group strived to be true to scripture it was they—conservative to the core and rigid in their morality almost to the point of neurosis. Of all the different groupings in Christ's day, none received such condemnation from him as they did. Christ seemed perfectly at home with tax collectors and sinners, yet time and again was in head-on collision with these purveyors of religious exactitudes.

Perhaps his most poignant denunciation of their rigidity was in the house of Simon the Pharisee when his feet were washed by a prostitute, much to Simon's obvious disgust. How revealing is Christ's reaction. 'You gave me no kiss, but she, from the moment I came in, has not stopped covering my feet with kisses. You gave me no oil for my head, but she has put perfume on my feet.' Here is the root sin of pharisaism: 'You gave me no kiss'.

All the seemingly total orthodoxy and scriptural correctness of Simon's life was far outweighed by his blind lack of human warmth and love. It met with little approval from the Lord, and that kind of religion still has little of divine sanction upon it. We, like Simon, may feel that we are the last bastions of public morality; we may defend the scriptures with an equal zeal, but how we have lost the ability to love God with all our heart and to relate to the 'tax-gatherers' and 'sinners' of our generation.

Pharisaical religion not only made its adherents extremely uncomfortable, but what is worse, it put into the mind of ordinary men that God and religion were for the sour-faced and those who would not, or could not, enjoy themselves.

Hence 'evangelisation' became the exercise of brow-beating men into religious unreality in the name of salvation, circumventing the earth to gain one proselyte with totally disastrous results. Luke tells us that the Pharisees had rejected God's purposes for themselves by refusing the baptism of John. John himself called them a 'brood of vipers' and warned them that God's axe was already at the root of their tree. Jesus completed the final swing of that axe just before his passion. 'You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell?' In three years of the greatest apostolic and prophetic ministry that men have ever seen, the Pharisees saw and heard nothing.

Religious men, of whatever persuasion, are never entirely free of the danger of falling into pharisaism. The first sign of the onset of such a malady is a diminishing of warmth and love. This is often apparent in dogmatic assertions of 'scriptural truth' which are mistaken for real authority. It is interesting that the common people described Jesus as 'one having authority and not as the scribes'. Authority is never vested in fundamental orthodoxy. If it were, there have been enough sermons, tapes, books and magazines to have converted the world into a millennial utopia long before now. Authority is vested in living and that is why this Galilean carpenter had such sway with God and men. It was not simply that he had the truth, but that he could say, 'I am the truth'; and truth, if it is to be of any use, is to be lived.

One sure sign of pharisaical religion is an ever increasing output of words that define, defend and enshrine 'our position', accompanied by a corresponding lack of life and reality.

There was a certain sad blindness on the minds of the Pharisees. They had a totally disproportionate sense of values, 'straining out gnats and swallowing camels'. It is said that when the Turks were at the gates of Constantinople and that so-called citadel of christianity was about to fall, the theologians within the city were deeply discussing the pressing issue of

flies and 'holy' water. Their dilemma was this: if a fly fell into holy water, was the fly sanctified or was the water contaminated? I can't really believe that such a story is true, but it sounds true.

As our world rolls on to its death like a herd of Gadarene swine, the Church is again engrossed in religious trivialities. How is it that we get so blinded to reality? The arguments may have altered, but the pharisaical attitudes remain. For example, their sabbath has become our Sunday, and such heated and violent opposition as I have seen here in Northern Ireland over the opening of children's playgrounds on a Sunday is unbelievable. We of course would not insist on ceremonial hand-washing before every meal, but what about waiting for 'grace' until the dinner gets cold? There are endless other examples.

We are in danger of cleaning the outside of the cup only. We find ourselves tithing 'mint, dill and cummin' ad nauseam, yet unable to really hear the questions of this age because they are not couched in religious clichés. Is it any wonder that the world has largely rejected such saltless salt? We need to take a long hard look at our generation and reassess our priorities.

This wrong sense of values leads to an over-emphasis on words and teachings, without a corresponding growth in life and experience. Of this, the Pharisees were guilty—'they say things and do not do them'. It is always easier to intellectually assent than to morally act. If we would at least be honest about this then we might gain some respect. But most often this is not the case, and so to safeguard our own position we do all kinds of spiritual and mental gymnastics to prove that we are what we say we are, without actually being it. We support everything with appropriate scripture texts, but somehow the disguise is a very thin one, and the discerning pagan is left totally unimpressed.

When the disciples of John sought out Christ with their query concerning his Messianic role, Jesus

simply told them to go and tell John what they saw. No great theological arguments were offered; they weren't needed. Peter had some of this style himself. His reply to the beggar at the gate called Beautiful was, 'Look at us . . . what I have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk.'

We also have been quick to use that name, but, alas, with disastrous consequences. In his name we have bickered, divided, and accused each other, but how seldom have we said, 'Rise up and walk.' Talk, especially of the theological kind, is cheap. 'Which is it easier to say, "Your sins be forgiven you" or "Rise up and walk"?' Christ was not asking which was easier to do, but which was easier to say. And in all truth it is easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' because that requires no outward sign and leaves us safely in the realm of evangelical theory. So the Church has been relegated to the realm of the intangible and the unknowable where words are all important.

I am not advocating divine healing as the sublime antidote. The problem is much more basic than that. Christians must not only teach salvation; they must live it. Such a living salvation must be seen in men's bodies, finances, marriages, businesses, etc. Otherwise we also will be found to 'tie up heavy loads and lay them on men's shoulders'—loads which neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear.

The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Christ proclaimed, 'You cannot serve God and Mammon.' Luke records that the Pharisees, who were lovers of money . . . were scoffing at him. John Wesley faced the fact that, as converts left their old life behind, their affluence increased because they no longer spent their money in the same sinful excesses. However, this increase of resources often caused a corresponding lack of piety. His answer was straightforward: with typical common sense he urged his followers to earn as much as they could, save as much as they could, and then to give as much as they could. The 'pharisees' scoffed at him as well. In this world of rising prices and inflation, giving, not hoarding, is the christian answer to material insecurity.

Pharisaical religion will virtually always find it impossible either to show mercy or to enjoy giving. We

need to go back to the house of Simon the Pharisee and join our repentant prostitute sister and kiss the feet of Christ, for it is as we respond to him with the fervent glow of love that mercy and cheerful giving will become part of us. Perhaps we might also receive from the pharisees of our day the greatest of all tributes, 'These people receive sinners and eat with them.'

Had the Pharisees lived and died unto themselves alone, their attitudes would have harmed no one but themselves. Such legalism, however, was not only ardently observed, but was also fervently proclaimed to 'sinners'. Not that the Pharisees had any real love for such people; rather their 'evangelism' was the means of keeping themselves in proper standing before God and their religious peers. In other words it was self motivated.

Alongside this disdain for their less zealous fellows was a certain high handed attitude that if anyone was to enter the kingdom of God it would be via their teaching. This had the double effect of repelling men and of causing pharisaism to become more and more introverted and exclusive. As Christ so aptly put it, 'You shut off the kingdom of heaven in front of men, for you do not enter in yourselves; nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.'

How sad it is when men with whatever revelation they have from God think themselves to be the arbiters of those who can or who cannot approach God. Peter, at the house of Cornelius, had to learn that 'in every nation the man who fears him, and does what is right, is welcome to him'. It caused not a few traumas in the early christian community. Have we really grasped this fact that what a man is, is more important than what he believes?

As pharisaical religion becomes more and more ingrown with its own specialised vocabulary and initiation rites, we find a strange phenomenon occurring: 'they do all their deeds to be noticed of men.' Prayers on street corners, religious texts hung about their person, names published in all the best lists of subscribers to temple upkeep, and even different clothes. Perhaps this was the only way people would have known that they were God's special people.

Alongside this apparent public self-debasement was a love of the place of honour at banquets, and the chief seats in the synagogues.

Such religious austerity, as Jesus reminded them, always brings its own rewards. When in God's name you have everything but God, then the applause of men (or even, in a peculiar way, their opposition) is the only sun in which to warm yourself. But what a pallid sun it is, and how temporal is the warmth it gives. Pharisaism finally ends up as a charade to be enacted for the sake of all onlookers, in the vain hope that somehow God wants it this way.

Perhaps two of the greatest hallmarks of pharisaical religion are lack of mercy and love of money. Three times in Matthew's gospel Jesus reminds the Pharisees of a basic tenet that God desires mercy and kindness more than sacrifice or religious observance. This then is the first and basic principle for any religious body that wants to stay free from the pitfalls of pharisaism. Develop, express and maintain an attitude of mercy towards all men, for 'blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy'. Never let any man feel that he is beyond the sins of another. We are all, but for God's grace, capable of envy, greed, murder and adultery.

Christians across Scotland will be having their own Edinburgh Festival Bible Week from 19th to 26th August. Last year hundreds of people met together each evening to worship the Lord and receive ministry related to the present movement of the Spirit. The two featured speakers this year are Michael Pusey and Gerald Coates. Further details and literature can be obtained by writing to Edinburgh Festival Bible Week, The City Temple, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Satan's role: Muir Gebbie

Contrary to popular belief, Satan does not exist as a challenge to God, but to fulfil the purposes of God in our lives. We see this clearly in the life of Job, a man who was 'blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil'. He had a protective hedge round about him, and his experience was that of many Christians today: if he obeyed God everything went well for him and he prospered. But one day all this changed. God removed the hedge that was around Job's life and said, 'All right, Satan, you can have a go at Job.' God was after something in Job's life, and from that time everything went wrong for him and he lost all he had.

God wants to remove the hedge of protection from our lives too, and expose us to Satan's dealings, because this is what is going to help us grow into sonship, into being like God. Job had a greater testimony than most of us; God declared that there was no one on earth who loved him more. And yet God singled him out to expose him to Satan's dealings. When we find the going rough, it is encouraging to remember that God chooses to let Satan loose on those whom he is calling to move on into his likeness. Note also that when God exposes us to Satan he always sets limits (cf Job 1:12). Satan is commissioned by God to perform a specific task in our lives and is not permitted to go beyond that commission.

What is God after?

What God was trying to get rid of was Job's own righteousness. Job 13 v 15 is a key verse. It is interesting that most Christians know the first part of this verse by heart and quote it often: 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.' But few know the second half, yet it is this which most clearly reveals what God was after in Job's life. Job declares, 'Nevertheless I will maintain and argue my ways before him, even to his face. You can take everything away from me, Lord, except my righteousness; I will not let go of that.'

As Christians within the hedge, we establish a righteousness that is

really of ourselves. We read our Bible regularly, we have a 'quiet time' every morning, we tithe faithfully, and we think we are doing all right. Subconsciously there sneaks into our nature that satisfied feeling that we are fulfilling the law, that we are pleasing to God. We are doing something that makes us just that little bit better than most people.

But if we are going to have his righteousness, God has got to get rid of our own (cf Phil. 3:7-9). So he sends Satan, who comes to us through adverse circumstances, as he did to Job. We cry, 'What's happening? I was never like this before!' Of course not, because God does not intend us to be as we were before. He wants us to be different, to become people who have perfect security in his righteousness and not our own.

The person who is dependent upon his own righteousness is the most insecure person in the world. His righteousness is crumbling every day and he is always having to bolster it up. We rely so much upon our own reputation, success in ministry and acceptance by people. So God allows Satan to take them all from us until everything around us collapses. At last, when we recognise that only his righteousness is worth clinging to, God has accomplished his purpose in our lives.

Why does Satan do it?

Why does Satan continually fall for this? Why does he not realise that, far from destroying us, all his pressures and temptations are actually serving God's purpose in our lives? Every true man of God has gone through the test with Satan; Jesus in the wilderness (Matt. 4), Peter given to Satan for testing (Luke 22: 31-32), and Paul buffeted by a messenger from Satan (2 Cor. 12: 7). We give so much credit to Satan for being wise; and so he is, but it is a carnal, worldly wisdom. The astuteness and vanity of the world, with all its intellectual understanding, is Satan's wisdom but it is not godly wisdom.

1 Cor. 2 v 14 tells us that it is only by the Holy Spirit that the thoughts and purposes of God can be understood. And Satan and the Holy Spirit are not on speaking terms! Satan cannot understand spiritual principles; he can never see what God is doing. This is obvious from his involvement in the life of Jesus. Satan thought, 'I must get rid of this man,' so he got the political and religious powers together and incited them to crucify Jesus. But it was only when Jesus was on the cross and about to die, that it dawned on Satan, 'This is exactly what God wants me to do'. In desperation he cries, 'If you are the Son of God come down from the cross'. But it was too late. Satan always realises his mistake too late. Time and time again he has been used by God to get rid of the old nature in us and bring forth the image of Christ.

Unfortunately, many of us have no perception either. We see the circumstances and say, 'That's terrible.' We need to look beyond the circumstances, and see what God is doing through them (Rom. 8:28). He will show us if we ask him. Let's stop complaining, stop dragging our feet, and let God reveal to our hearts all that he is accomplishing. Thus will we move on into his image.



Muir has spent 12 years in Brazil as a missionary with WEC. He is now building a fellowship in Darvel, Ayrshire, where he lives with his wife, Jean, and their 3 daughters.

I.D.

Bernard Cope puts a face to the name of Graham Perrins

Before I got to know Graham a little better, one of the few things I did know about him was that he did nearly all his travelling, which is certainly not minimal, by train rather than car. However, in the last year he has taken to the roads, forsaking the reading opportunities that the railway compartment afforded.

I begin this way because during the time I spent with Graham interviewing him for *Fulness*, we talked for just a short while about his car, and he remarked that it was prone to be slow in warming up. Maybe it's just coincidence that when Graham comes to talk about himself, or for that matter on any theme, he needs to pull the choke out for a while until he has warmed to his subject. And he admits it.

Coincidence or not, one thing is for sure: you very soon realise that Graham has a wealth of knowledge and wisdom to draw on once he does get going.

So it wasn't until after his wife Sylvia had served a very welcome lunch of roast beef and Yorkshire pud, followed by a healthy slice of a sophisticated kind of cherry flan (the name of which I forget without forgetting the taste) and a couple of cups of coffee, that Graham really began talking about himself.

We went up to his study to apply ourselves to the task, and just entering the room taught me more about him. A library of about 1500 books, most of them with biblical connections of some sort, completely covered one of the larger walls, with the paperback section claiming more and more space on the side wall. (Apart from the books there were five boxed light bulbs in the middle of the commentaries section. I must ask him if that is significant.)

The library is well catalogued, but only in Graham's head, he told me. Tucked in a corner was a small selection of essential office equipment. There was a settee along another wall, with an armchair standing conveniently near the

books, and as we sat down the last few bars of music practice sounded a final encore up the stairs. (Graham and Sylvia have two sons, Stephen who is 13 and Mark, 11. All three men in the house are learning musical instruments, with Stephen on saxophone, Mark on piano, Graham on oboe, and Sylvia on tranquillizers!)

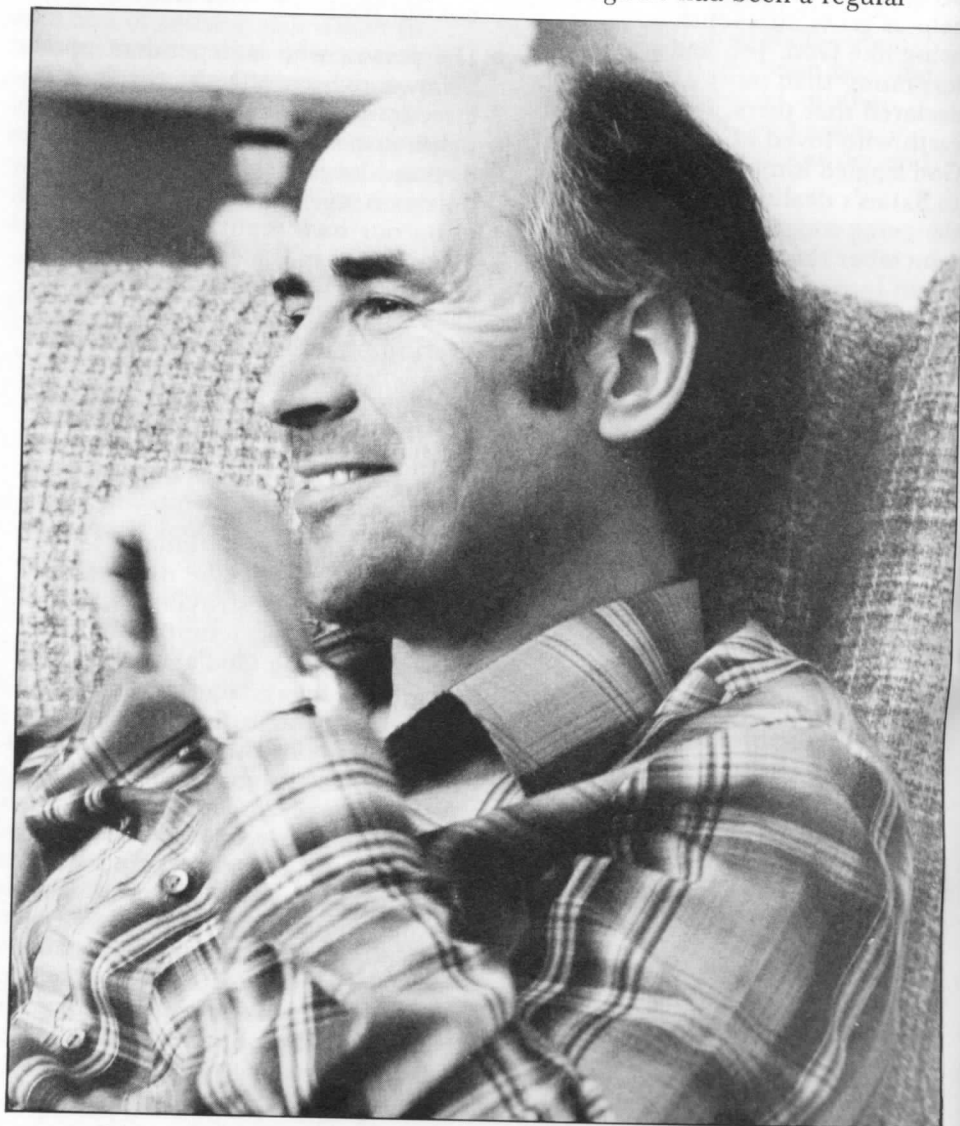
At last we began. Graham was born in Stoke-on-Trent in 1934, but the family moved to Cardiff when he was only two. So he is not far short of Cardiff born and bred, although he doesn't sound like a Welshman. Nor does he sound like a Potteries man. His accent probably belongs somewhere up the M6.

As a schoolboy Graham was very

much a sportsman—captain of cricket, captain of athletics, but only vice-captain of football (he was wearing the largest hat already). By way of compensation he is the proud owner of a Stanley Matthews autograph which he obtained by virtue of the fact that his grandad was chairman of Stoke City where 'the wizard' began his career.

Nowadays he is still keen on keeping fit, but he gets most of his exercise on the squash court. He and Sylvia play what Sylvia describes as erratic games of tennis (6-0, 0-6 etc.) and he does a bit of jogging too.

Conversion came for Graham in 1955, just after he had finished National Service in the Army. Although he had been a regular



churchgoer most of his life, the witness of a number of people persuaded him that he needed a personal encounter with the Lord more than a religious lifestyle. Among them were the fellow soldiers who knelt down to pray in the barracks, and a seemingly insignificant man in charge of the office boys where Graham worked as a clerk. It was at a lunchtime meeting led by an American evangelist, Dr. Gordon Carpenter (whom he has never heard of since) that he went forward to give his heart to the Lord, and from that time he began to look much more to the word of God for guidance than to Anglican church tradition.

Such a change in emphasis brought its battles, notable amongst them his representations to the vicar about baptism. A baptist minister near to his home got to know of Graham's feelings, and invited him to be baptised at his church—with no strings attached. Graham accepted, and as a result found himself getting involved with the baptist fellowship, to the point of becoming a deacon and Sunday School Superintendent.

On a beach crusade at Barry, Graham was asked to give his testimony. When he had finished he stood back feeling that it had been pathetically inadequate; and in his ensuing determination to do something about it, the Lord took him to the opening chapters of Ezekiel. They envisioned him; and with the vision came the feeling of responsibility. Graham responded by applying to go to Bible College.

At Bible College in Barry he began to see in embryo something of God's purposes for the Church, which were in startling contrast to what he had hitherto experienced in the denominations. He took his point of view to the principal, who graciously suggested that Graham should visit G. H. Lang, whose writings the student before him was enthusiastically quoting. Graham spent a week with him, and went on from there to a conference in Exmouth where he met, amongst others, Arthur Wallis and David Lillie. He describes this

conference as the starting point of the current move of God, the benefits of which we are now reaping.

This was in 1958, also the year of his marriage to Sylvia. After only one year at Bible College Graham went back to work, and he and Sylvia began attending the Brethren gospel hall across the road from their first home, with Graham taking as many preaching engagements as he could. At another conference in 1961 Graham was baptised in the spirit, and this inevitably had an effect on his preaching and his future.

His desire to go 'full-time' grew, and he took it to the elders at the Brethren assembly, who didn't stand in his way, but gave him no financial support either. So for three and a half years, from 1962-1965, Graham and Sylvia learned the hard way about living by faith. The chapter came to an end with Graham feeling under obligation to break with the Brethren over the issue of baptism in the spirit. How could he deny something that was so real to him? His preaching engagements dried up almost overnight, and he eventually resigned himself to a return to work, this time selling soft furnishings.

The next two years were perhaps the hardest and most frustrating of his life. If the Lord had given him a prophetic ministry which he was ready and eager to discharge to the Church, why was he selling cushion covers to dear old ladies in a Cardiff department store? But as Graham now pointed out, as we strolled towards his local park, a man must die to his ministry before he can serve the Lord with it.

Then out of the blue came an invitation to preach at an Assemblies of God church, at which he chose to minister on a passage from Romans. The pastor was so convinced that this was the very message his congregation needed to hear that he asked Graham to continue with a weekly series that was to last twelve months. And before too long came

a similar series at another AOG fellowship. With two regular preaching engagements running concurrently, Graham was as busy as ever, holding down a regular job at the same time. Towards the end of this phase Graham found himself ministering to a man who had asked him to minister to his wife. He led him to the Lord in the couple's home, and Graham plots the course of his present commitment to house fellowship ministry from there.

Bible studies were begun in the converted man's home, to which an increasing number of people came, and he recognised in this experience the potential alternative to denominational church life that he was looking for. A 'house group' was emerging, and through a host of other similar incidents and developments he now finds himself responsible for a fellowship numbering about 65 in Cardiff, not to mention several other groups around the country. As a result of it all he has been 'full-time' again since 1968.

Apart from his commitment to these various groups, Graham is of course very much involved with *Fulness*, which he started in 1968 as an occasional paper with the help and encouragement of Maurice Smith, Ted Crick and Hugh Thompson.

Graham is also immediately concerned with the development of team ministry, planning very soon to take with him when he travels, two brothers who are moving in particularly close fellowship with him in Cardiff. Likewise he sees as vital his relationship with the brothers who have emerged across the country with a similar ministry to his own.

Graham and his family live on a new estate in Cardiff with other members of the fellowship buying houses nearby as fast as they can. He hopes that by the end of the year the number they own will have doubled to twenty.

The effects of that first conference twenty years ago seem to be gathering momentum.

DO NOT DISTURB

by Gerald Coates

Insularity comes out of living in the dark. Those who oppose fellowship have generally got something to hide. Fellowship is not basically bible study, breaking bread, hymn singing or project planning. John, in one of his letters, made it abundantly clear that the only way to have fellowship with God and with friends, is to walk in the light. Insularity promotes separation, loneliness, narrow-mindedness and a seclusion that is totally opposed to the purposes of God.

John Noble and I were once lunching in the Spaceneedle in Seattle, Washington. We were the guests of the main leader of a large church in that city. The restaurant at the top of the needle slowly turned the full three hundred and sixty degrees giving a magnificent view over both land and water. At a certain stage our host remarked that we were now in a position to see where one of his church members lived. 'You know,' he remarked, 'that family travels thirty miles to our church two or three times a week. Man, that's commitment.'

Only a short while ago, we would all have been proud of such a

sacrifice of time, not to mention petrol. However, God asks us to be committed, not to a church, but to people, and that is a bit difficult when you live thirty miles away from those you worship with.

With the fresh light that is dawning regarding the church being a community, living, worshipping and, if possible, working in the same area, that particular christian leader is now breaking down his church into areas and encouraging people to live as near each other as possible. In our own church community we have at least ten families living in one road alone. They are a community within the community of that street. Their lifestyle is open for all to see. Marshall McLuhan made the well-known statement, 'The medium is the message.' With an emphasis on words we have failed to see that we must not only be concerned about what to say but how to say it.

The Word who became life in the earth is now causing words to become life in us. The large gap between belief and behaviour is closing, and slowly but surely, like creation opening up to the rising sun, God's people are opening up

to the life of God and to one another in a wholesome, beautiful way.

To enable us to adequately respond to this call for an open and caring local community, I want to enumerate a few points which will help us to grow out of isolation and into the purposes of God.

A sense of destiny

We are all a part of the historic purposes of God. No other generation will know the same opportunities or, for that matter, the same conflicts as our own. Many believers bury themselves in their rabbit warrens because the lordship of Christ is looked upon as something that exacts time, emotional response and money from them. However, with a sense of destiny such details take on an altogether new and exciting perspective. Many of our lifestyles positively detract from God's intentions. It seems to me that the majority of christians have no sense of destiny other than making for themselves a nice christian home, working well for their bosses and being a part of a blessed fellowship. May God open our eyes to the unseen spiritual realm being outworked in our

world of time and space. Only such a revelation will draw us out from ourselves into Christ himself.

A willingness to serve

In making specific relationships and opening up to one another, it is inevitable that we shall be hurt. God asks us to be not emotionally consistent, but morally consistent; and getting hurt is a part of life. The only way to avoid getting hurt is to never love anybody. As this is impossible for the spirit-filled christian, being hurt in 'the house of his friends' must be expected.

Jesus once said, 'Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant . . . just as the son of man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.' If ever a man had a right to be served it was that man, and if ever a man was wounded and rejected by those he came to serve, it was he. In it all Jesus said, in as many words, 'Despite my hurts, wounds and offences, I am here to serve you, to bless you, to lead you, to shepherd you and to care for you.'

Many of us need to repent of an attitude that demands that we are being continually ministered to by our leaders, fellowship, tapes, conferences, music, etc. We shall then be drawn out of ourselves and begin to bless those around us.

A commitment to leaders

We are not to support our leaders simply because the bible says so, but because we think they are worth supporting. If you cannot submit to your leaders, then you ought to move out of that particular expression of the body of Christ and get into another where you can gladly submit to the leadership.

Even as I was writing this article, some leaders of a nearby fellowship came to me and said they had an excess of money. Frankly, they did not know what to do with it. They 'laid it at my feet' for me to distribute as I saw fit. This was a case of leaders supporting their leader. I know of many fellowships who are struggling financially because they have many unemployed or poor and there are ministries to whom I am closely related who need finance for certain projects. In the last year I have been able to help denominational ministers who have been thrown out of their churches without home or finance simply because others have made money available to me.

Often in the Church, money is the greatest area of mistrust, but without trust progress is impossible. There is a saying, 'put your money where your mouth is', and this is what many are doing at the moment. The same principle applies at the local level with the sheep honouring their shepherds. It is possible for us to receive help from a leader for years without even expressing our thanks verbally, let alone responding in substance out of appreciation for him.

I don't want to promote the concept of a hierarchy where we can only relate upwards to leaders. But since much of our relationship consists of bringing our problems and difficulties to them, then let it all be bathed in gratitude and support.

A creative approach

We have become a spectator society. In Britain the average adult watches between 16 and 18 hours of television per week. Evening after evening of indiscriminate viewing goes by; no wonder husbands and

wives have problems with communication and children feel unloved.

A friend of mine carried out a little experiment. He disconnected his television and put it in the loft. This meant that each evening when he was not involved in fellowship meetings, he couldn't just switch on and sit down. He and his wife played games, invited friends round, threw a party or two, and began to read a lot more. Also he did a number of jobs on the house that previously he had not had time for. He had been an observer, but was now a participator in life. It totally transformed his family and blessed his friends.

I am not anti-television. I don't believe that christians should only watch documentaries and the news; I enjoy a few fun programmes myself. But if we let it, television can be an enormous influence on our lives, encouraging insular living: me, my wife, the dog and the goldfish, all happily settled down in the security of our home. So it is that some believers never visit each other unless it is 'official' for a meal or a meeting. Initiative is drained, creative thinking is discouraged and a false security emerges.

To a limited extent our past is our prison, but our future is the escape hatch. And in particular the next few moments; they will probably determine how seriously we take what has been written. The Church's ascent will be turned to a downhill slide and our plenty into a wasteland if lives, marriages and communities are perpetuated in isolation. Let us come out of the dark, the twilight zone, let's break down the barrier that divides what we agree to verbally and what our actual lives confess. In so doing we shall let our light shine before men and glorify our heavenly Father.

Q&A

For the past two years, John MacLauchlan has been responsible for Q & A in *Fulness*. He has attempted to answer questions from a theological standpoint, and we feel that this has been very well received. However, his role in *Fulness* will begin to change and

word studies, like the one in this issue, will appear on a fairly regular basis. Volume 17 will carry the final Q & A by John, and in Volume 18 we will be introducing a fresh approach. Gerald Coates and John Noble will be available to share from their experience on practical issues, and will want to tackle up-to-the minute questions concerning such issues as relationships in the family and the Church, gifts of the Spirit, and structural problems arising out of submission and authority. For instance, you may have difficulty understanding how you can submit to your pastor

when you are not completely happy with the way things are running in your church; perhaps you are the wife of a non-christian husband and don't know how to respond to the things that he asks of you; maybe you are confused about healing, or worried about depression?

Gerald and John would very much like to hear from you, if you have questions along these lines. So please write to Q & A, *Fulness*, 47 Copse Road, Cobham, Surrey. Your name and address will not be published without your permission.

VANDALISM

On the Saturday night prior to a water baptismal service, vandals broke into the pleasant little country church where two of my friends fellowship. The overnight sabotage was discovered by the horrified people who opened the doors on the peaceful summer Sunday morning. Annoyed at finding no money, the trespassers had flung all the hymn books, an oak reading desk and a brand new overhead projector into the brimming baptismal pool.

A young man in my own fellowship who helps tend our Havering parks and gardens told me how he arrived at work one day last year to find a massive hole in the centre of the 'sacred' bowling green. Covering the hole was a smashed up park bench.

Even the traditional British football match is no longer free from rashes of violence where rampaging fans, enraged by the slightest provocation, leave a trail of wrecked trains and broken bones in their wake.

One newspaper columnist caustically observed that 'after several thousand years, civilization has advanced to the point where we bolt all our doors at night, while the jungle natives sleep in an open hut'.

Why does it happen?

Why all the senseless destruction? Why the uprooted flower beds, shattered windows, ripped out telephone kiosks and mind-boggling graffiti?

As christians we know that the bible forecasts the appalling state of the world before Christ's return. . . a maelstrom of lawlessness, a

Phil Streeter

typhoon of revolt against the traditional structures of society. Paul decrees the disease to be 'the mystery of lawlessness—that hidden principle of rebellion against constituted authority'.

Neither the vandal, bludgeoning his way through early years of unrest, nor the psychologists who attempt to explain him, understand the source of the problem; but to the christian, the 'hidden principle of rebellion' is only too clear. Rebellion is anti-Christ in nature. Its seed was spawned from the proud mind of Satan before the birth of time, and now its fruit is discernable in all areas of society.

How should we respond?

'Birch 'em, that's what I would like to do, birch 'em!' was one bitter comment I heard. This seems to be the angry reaction of most people who have some sense of social responsibility.

The same feelings burn within me when I'm confronted with senseless acts of vandalism. But immediately I have to stop and remind myself that, if I allow such feelings to take root, then the damage will no longer be merely external but the very presence of God within me will have been violated also. If I become bitter against the vandal then I join him in promoting the spirit of anti-Christ.

To fight the devil on his own level, employing his weapons and tactics, is self-defeating. Too often, like James and John, we want Jesus to play the role of anti-Christ and call down fire on his enemies.

Scripture indicates that the person who demands justice from others is going to be disappointed. Never waste time looking for justice; if you do, you will be wounded and will soak up self-pity like a sponge. Our mission in life is not to extract justice from others, but to be watchful that our behaviour towards others is righteous.

The real enemy is not the establishment, a fatigued social system or even the rebellious individual, but the spirit of anti-Christ which is seducing people. This spirit increases in the earth as long as I entertain fantasies of revenge upon its victim, rather than recognising the real enemy. No one can cast out the anti-Christ with the anti-Christ.

So what can we do? Many would urge that we pray for the offenders, and though such exhortation is sometimes a glib and easy way out, one remarkable effect of earnest prayer is that it can change the heart of the person praying, which is just what is required when you find that call box telephone ripped out of its socket!

I wonder if wise old Solomon had the vandal in mind when he wrote, 'Do not be hasty in your spirit to be angry; for anger resides in the bosom of fools!' If we excite ourselves to exasperation over the vandal's bestial behaviour, allowing our minds to brood on what he is and all he's done, then when we have drunk this bitter cup the peace of God will seem a million miles away. Wisdom says that the man who can curb this spirit and control his feelings is a wise man, and is better than the man who can take a city. Bluntly speaking, it's a case of love or perish!

Instantaneous christianity

by Maurice Smith



Recently my breakfast table has been bombarded with free offers (or so they intimate) luring me into world cruises, brand new limousines and luxury homes. All I have to do is subscribe to a magazine, or buy some books, and I'm in the wheel of fortune. In fact, most offers seem to indicate that I am already in line for some instant prize, without doing anything, if only I'll rush to the post within a minimum number of days.

I can have what I want and I can have it now. So says the current philosophy. Why wait, when on every hand I am being offered something for nothing? Do you not find, along with me, that this 'easy come' manifesto somehow leaves you with a lack of accomplishment and a sense of cheating? Oh, I confess it's instantly attractive, but it's the end product of it all that causes me concern.

This wonderful world of credit cards and convenience foods purports to simplify our manner of life, yet somehow manages to make it more complex. Such a life-style doubtless enables a great speed-up of mundane activity and as a result we are guaranteed more leisure hours; but even here we are offered instant sport on TV and instant music on our stereo, with nothing demanded of us except that we turn a knob. It seems that with every technological advance, our own ability to be creative diminishes a little more.

One temptation is to escape to the back of beyond and let the rest of the world roll by. But forming an isolated community is not the answer. Jesus prayed to his father, '... that you will not take them out of the world ...' The whole tenor of his own life spells out a clarion call to involvement in the

hurly-burly of life and not to escapism.

We are meant to be 'in it, but not of it' to quote an adage we are all familiar with. Overcoming and not evading is our vocation. We need to recognise that the temptation to expect everything to be laid on for us, is part of the world spirit that is all around us. Then, in rest, without putting all kinds of legalistic constraint upon ourselves, we will be able to resist such dubious attitudes.

We can be completely realistic. After all, we are living in this particular society and we can thank God for, and utilise, anything that we feel able to reconcile with the peace governing our inner man. But directly we are aware that the instantaneous spirit of this age is calling the tune in our lives, then we should heed the alarm and, without condemnation, start having a serious talk with God. His spirit will soon begin to breathe moderation into the areas where our adversary is relentlessly pushing his instantaneous no-cost lifestyle.

Let us also give others room to live within their own peace with God and not set up for them a host of arbitrary standards. The fruit will determine the source of their life as it will of ours. If they are hooked by an instantaneous spirit, then it will certainly make itself known in the form of impatience with others, or demanding greed, or idleness, or some other unsound fruit. If, however, they are still living in triumph and peace then be assured that they are still in possession of the reins, and are not being ruled by the things that they are using.

Any fervent pursuer after righteousness knows that the invaluable treasures of God's kingdom are not

scattered lightly across the surface of life. No casual observer will stumble across the riches which God has in store for those that love him. We know that we have to seek in order to find. We often have to 'ask, ask, ask' in order to draw out the response we need. This is not because our Father is reticent to answer, but because he is drawing us into a growing relationship with himself. No one knows as well as he, that if we pursue and persist we shall be rewarded, and consequently treasure what we find.

Today most certainly is the day of salvation, if we are ready to receive it; but let us beware of any easy-come offers that promise everything while demanding nothing. The commencement of our new life is by a complete denial of our own selfish fulfilments, including 'I want it' and 'I want it now'. It is a glad submission to the practical authority of Jesus Christ in our lives. This authority extends to a willing acceptance of his timing as well as of his ways. God is in no hurry.

As we began, let us go on our happy way, in the full knowledge that if we persist to the end, we shall be wonderfully satisfied in sharing everything with God. The trials and tribulations of this life will have effectively worked patience. Overcoming the temptations we are now encountering will help to bring us to maturity, ready to handle our inheritance. We are alive in this present evil hour, so let us make the very most of it. Let us keep our eye on what God is doing in the midst of it all, and refuse to be overwhelmed by the constant pressure towards impatience. We have within us the wherewithal to reign and it can be brought forth by all the pressures of this hour.



The communication problem

Peter Lyne

Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?' . . . Later Sarah denied it, saying, 'I did not laugh,' for she was afraid. But the Lord said, 'No, but you did laugh.'

Have you ever laughed like Sarah? Not outwardly, but inwardly, being careful not to give expression to your true feelings. Some people spend a large part of their lives bottling up what they really feel inside.

Of course, Sarah was technically telling the truth when she said to the angel of the Lord, 'I did not laugh.' As she was eavesdropping behind the tent door, she carefully controlled her reaction to the angel's astonishing conversation with Abraham and laughed to herself. Having been barren all her life, it was inconceivable to think that now, with her husband almost a hundred years old, and herself ninety, they would have a child. And so within herself Sarah laughed, cynically, and perhaps

bitterly, as she thought of all the years gone by when she had longed and prayed for a child, but to no avail.

Her frustrations had been intensified by Abraham's insistence that God had spoken to him and had promised him innumerable descendants. Now it was impossible for this to be fulfilled, at least through their union. Nevertheless, she was frightened by the fact that this strange visitor seemed to know what she was thinking. He couldn't have seen her hiding behind the tent door, but somehow he had known that she was there. Perhaps there might be something in Abraham's pipe-dreams after all!

How many husbands and wives have found themselves in this position? Not with the same dramatic, supernatural details perhaps, but the same fundamental

communication problem. One of the partners is receiving revelation, hearing God's voice, obtaining promises, and the other is left behind with all sorts of inner feelings and attitudes that don't get expressed. When they do reach a deadlock over some situation that arises, it is often with surprise that they discover what the other partner is really feeling. Their relationship was still only superficial; they were not truly 'knowing' each other.

Because marriage is a picture of 'Christ and the Church' this problem is also often encountered amongst those who are building relationships with Jesus and one another. In Matthew 15 v 8 Jesus applies the prophecy of Isaiah to the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and says, 'This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me.' Our lips can sing familiar choruses, quote favourite texts of scripture, pray, prophesy and do everything that may appear satisfactory to the undiscerning.

But if our hearts are untouched, it is absolutely worthless as far as the purpose of God is concerned. Jesus is looking for thirsty hearts, who, having come to him and drunk of his Spirit, will experience rivers of living water being released from their innermost being.

Of the early Church Luke says, 'The congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul.' This was neither a mental exercise in doctrinal agreement, nor handshakes at the door; this was a joining at the very deepest level of their lives.

The Apostle Peter makes reference to Abraham and Sarah and lays down a fundamental principle for Kingdom living in 1 Peter 3, that we are to be 'fellow-heirs of the grace of life'.

There's no room here for Women's or Men's Lib! There is not meant to be competition in our marriages, but as we discover the respective roles that God has given us, we can release one another to fulfil all that God has particularly equipped us for.

In the case of Abraham and Sarah, things had evidently gone sadly wrong in their relationship by the time we reach the events recorded in Genesis 16. Sarah, frustrated by her barrenness, pressurised Abraham to have children by her maid, Hagar. Abraham, presumably to keep the peace, eventually gave in to her wishes. The resulting conception and birth, far from bringing peace and a healthier relationship, served only to deepen the conflict and create a new set of problems. Abraham listened to Sarah's voice, but had he heard her heart? He in his turn had never succeeded in sharing with Sarah the promises that God had given to him in such a way that she could find rest and fulfilment even in her barrenness, knowing that God was truly working out his purpose in their lives.

Abraham's response to Sarah's pressure was to abdicate his position of authority in the home. It seemed an easy solution, but in fact his capitulation on this issue not only failed to bring peace to the home, but produced further bitterness and resentment, resulting in Sarah treating Hagar with unwarranted harshness.

How often has a husband capitulated to his wife's demands against his own judgement, seeking an

easy solution to a conflict, or a wife suppressed what she really feels deep down, in order to 'keep the peace', and not appear obstructive? Sooner or later the effects of such compromises will surface and produce even greater aggravation. Larry Christenson has said, 'You can try to build the Church by avoiding confrontation, but what you produce will be totally unreal.' Similarly, any marriage that sweeps aside these issues will be unreal and unsatisfactory.

The chain of reactions in this incident is only halted when the angel of the Lord says to Hagar, 'Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority.' This command stands in stark contrast to the 'non-directive' counselling of much current psychology, but then the wisdom of God will inevitably be at variance with the wisdom of this world. Sarah equally needed to submit herself to Abraham's authority, and Peter makes it clear that she eventually attained that position. And Abraham needed to submit to the Lord and adequately cover his wife, to live with her 'in an understanding way, as with a more fragile vessel'.

There was need for a true *knowing* of each other, a heart-joining by the Holy Spirit, an ability to hear what the other partner was really saying, a mutual desire to be 'fellow-heirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered'.

The tragedy is that in many christian marriages the prayers are not being hindered because prayer has never been a part of the relationship! Yet Jesus said, 'If two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by my Father who is in heaven.' To 'agree' in this context means to 'harmonise together, make a symphony together'. Surely the marriage bond should be the place of greatest symphony, releasing the most powerful intercession.

Peter sums it up like this: 'You should be like one big happy family, full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds. Don't repay evil for evil. Don't snap back at those who say unkind things about you. Instead, pray for God's help for them, for we are to be kind to others, and God will bless us for it.'



for bakewell tart

Ingredients:

Pastry:

6 oz 81% plain cake flour
pinch salt
3 oz margarine
water to mix

Filling:

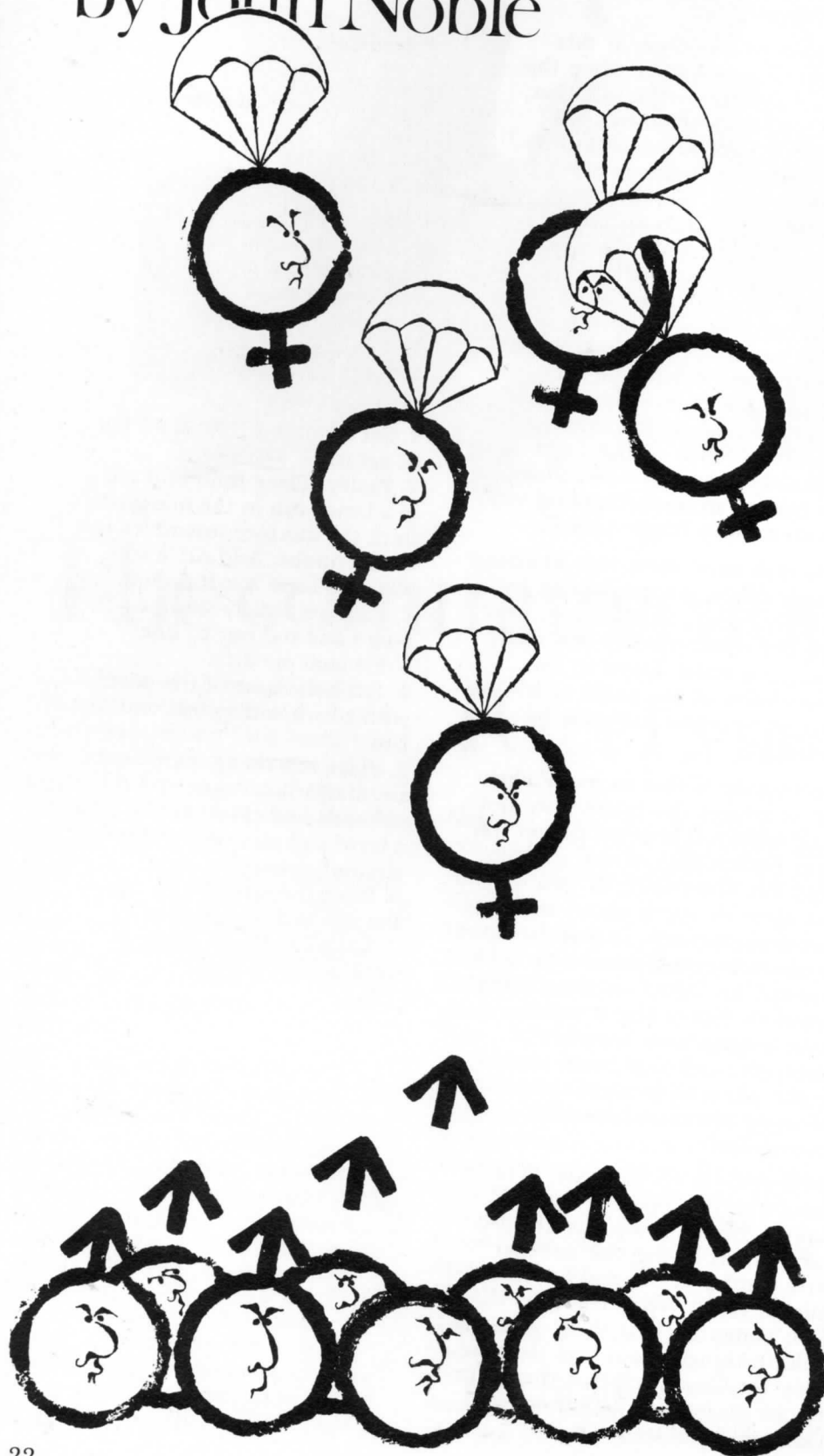
2-3 tbs raspberry jam
3 oz margarine
3 oz brown sugar
2 oz ground almonds
3 oz cake crumbs
almond essence

Method:

1. Set oven to 375°F (190°C) or gas mark 5.
2. Pastry: Place flour and salt in a bowl, rub in the margarine until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Add sufficient water to form a soft dough.
3. Place on lightly floured board and roll out to line 8-8½ inch pie dish.
4. Prick the base of the pastry with a fork and spread with the jam.
5. Place remaining ingredients, i.e. margarine, sugar, ground almonds and cake crumbs into a bowl and mix well. Add almond essence to taste.
6. Place the mixture on top of the jam and spread evenly.
7. Bake for 40-45 minutes until golden brown.

The battle of the sexes

by John Noble



The majority of communication difficulties that arise in marriage are due to a lack of understanding of the positive roles of husband and wife. If we are to solve these we must be willing to face our weaknesses. Let the men be first to do this here!

At his worst a man opts right out of his role as head of the home. He becomes irresponsible, incapable, idle and impatient. He drifts through life and is often frustrated when he doesn't get his own way. He is pining and spineless when forced to face situations he doesn't enjoy. He refuses to hear his wife and fails to protect her by dodging his role as decision maker on family affairs. A typical example: 'What shall we do for Christmas dear—your parents or mine?' Husband delays the answer in the vain hope that there will be divine intervention. It may snow two or three feet, or perhaps someone will die or . . . 'dearest, it's two weeks since the handle came off the bathroom door. Johnny's been locked in three times; I'm sure something will happen to him in there!' Husband replies that there are more important jobs in the house than door handles, and he meditates on the growing list of things to repair as he loads his golf clubs into the car. Now please remember I'm speaking to the men; this is *not* ammunition for the women!

All too often the husband is weak when he should be strong, and soft when he should be firm. The wife and the children will only ever be happy and secure when a man is able to bear responsibility, to make decisions and to discipline properly. (Remember too that he can decide not to decide—a positive decision to wait is not drifting!)

Another weakness frequently found in men is the failure to be really frank and open about their sexual needs. A man will sometimes sulk and behave like a guilty school-boy when his wife is not immediately moved by his advances, which are often half-hearted anyway. Certainly it's our job as husbands to be loving and to draw from our wives a response, but we must also be clear concerning our own appetites, otherwise they will not know how or when to co-operate. Some women are extremely sensitive in this area. They are easily aroused and also willing to initiate, but this appears to be the exception rather than the rule. So

a man must be prepared to take time to make his needs known to his wife. This can be quite difficult for us husbands as we somehow expect our lover to understand intuitively. For some it is a major step to even admit that such needs exist. So patience in this area is very necessary.

The scripture warns men not to allow a harsh or bitter spirit to come between them and their wives. This heavy-handed, sulky, attitude is a reflection of our masculine selfishness. Secretly believing that we are great lovers, we expect sexual compatibility without communication. If only we proud men could find it in our hearts to make the humble admission, 'Darling, I really need your love,' then more often our women would come to our aid with the affection and encouragement we require. Now we shall see how the women fare.

'Dominant, devious, dogmatic and dangerous' is an apt description of many women when they move out of the flow of the Spirit. Because women tend to have an intuitive insight, they seem able at times to muster the weapons of their warfare with a kind of super-intelligence—'soul radar' we could call it. The poor male, who probably already knows he's in the wrong, is completely confused and baffled by the quick turn of events. The fast changes from cavalry to infantry to cannon or perhaps the awful tranquility of siege, can reduce him to a gibbering wreck. He doesn't know if he's on 'foot' or 'horseback' and unless he draws immediately on the abundance of grace, he is doomed to fail either by withdrawing into himself or by using brute force and ignorance. Let's imagine a typical, tactical trauma.

Happy hubby finally decides to go to his mother for Christmas after tottering for days on the tight-rope of indecision. He has had a kind of sinking feeling; subconsciously he knows that whatever he has decided it will be wrong. Waspy wife immediately responds with true womanly submission. 'Fine dear, I'll phone my mother right away—or perhaps you would like to tell her we're not going there?' Slowly, but surely, she introduces the other side of the picture, until there is a full blown argument in session. When she sees that this is not working, a lightning switch to silence comes in and hubby is left

with steam pouring out of his ears, not knowing what to do with all the surplus shout he has stirred up within him.

Finally he readjusts and accepts the fact that there will be no speaking for the next hour when there is a sudden burst of sobs and tears. 'You just don't love me any more; I've seen it coming for months.' At this point she picks up the now screaming baby to comfort it as if father is totally responsible for the bawling. If he manages to hold through this far, we enter the 'sorry, but . . .' stage. Tired of cat and mouse games wifey wants to get back to normality now, but without taking any of the blame. 'I'm sorry dear,' she says sweetly.

If the husband is wise at this point he will ask 'What for?' and the reply may well be, 'I'm sorry that you got upset!' That kind of apology can never bring God's peace; only honest full-blooded repentance does that. Of course, all this is extreme. I'm sure the vast majority of my readers never experience anything like this, but if you're smiling (or crying perhaps) some would say you're identifying with the situation. Well, what's the answer?

Perhaps the simplest way for me to help is to list my ten commandments of love. These are not external laws to be obeyed, but internal principles to be lived. Have a peek in your heart and see if they're not there already, just bursting to come out after a good dose of humble confession.

1 Fully accept and thank God for your role as a man or woman with all its challenges and limitations; ask the Lord to help purge out any resentment over your sex—you're stuck with it anyway.

2 Determine, with God's help, to listen to your partner, and take time to convince him or her that you have heard and understood; shouting doesn't do it.

3 Don't be afraid to be really honest and share fully what you feel, but without trying to force your opinion. Thank God that unity of Spirit is not dependent on agreement.

4 Be angry without sinning! Whilst a peaceful spirit is far more convincing than a defensive one, we cannot separate ourselves from our emotions. At times anger can be as necessary as brokenness, but

uncontrolled emotion is like a city without walls. Don't stay angry too long—your frustration will turn to high blood pressure, apart from anything else!

5 Be prepared to back down immediately you are sure you're wrong. There's no loss of respect when you humble yourself. If you're always wrong, see your pastor!

6 Seek conviction when you are wrong. Ask the Lord to help you see how hurtful your sin is. I'm not talking about condemnation; condemnation is double sin, it's like worrying about the fact that you're worried. Conviction is healthy and with it comes the ability to change. It's not enough just to say 'sorry'!

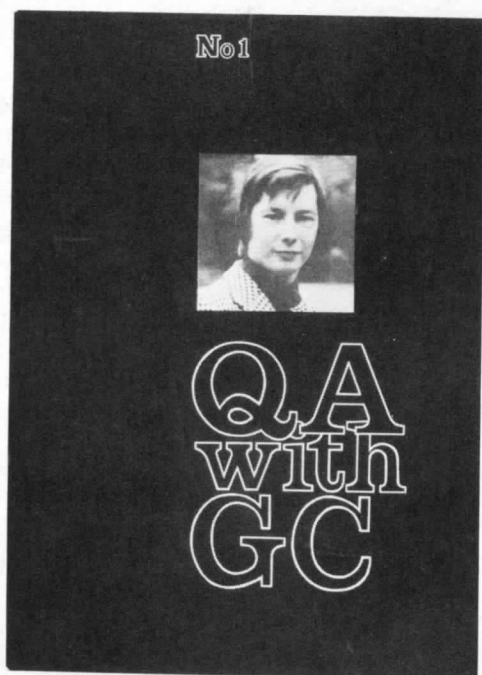
7 Regard all kinds of sin as black. Do not grade your sin. Disobedience of any kind is sin. Some forms of sin affect mankind more than others. For example, if you hate me it will not affect me as much as if you murder me; but all sin affects Jesus the same. It cost him all, and the cross is his only solution for sin.

8 When you ask for forgiveness, name your failure and be prepared to listen to any comeback. Don't respond if the other party wants to rub it in a little. They shouldn't do this, but you can now be gracious, having received grace yourself.

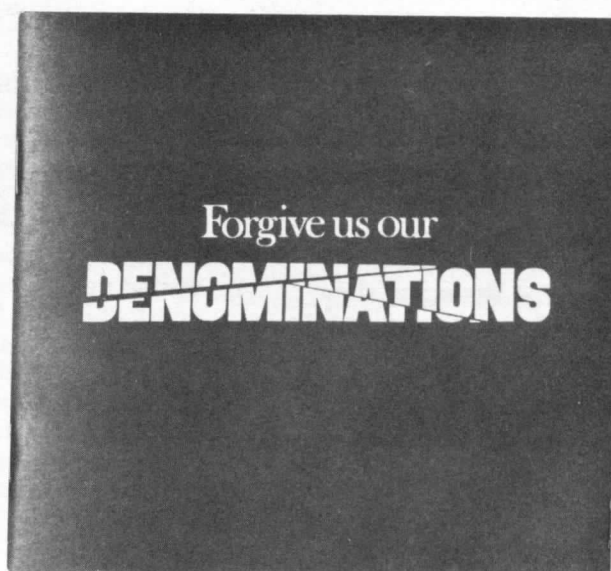
9 If you're not getting anywhere in your discussions, don't talk on endlessly, especially late at night or just before one or other of you has to rush off somewhere. Agree to leave it and come back to the subject again—it's surprising what can wait when it has to. If you still don't agree, the husband will have to bring a conclusion outside of agreement. Sometimes he will make a decision that goes against himself, sometimes not.

10 Praise and pray and thank God together every now and again. Not heavy, long drawn-out sessions, outlining your own personal opinion to the Lord, but sincere supplication with thanks that he will bring light and understanding into the situation. You may even find it in you to dance a little together—it's fun!

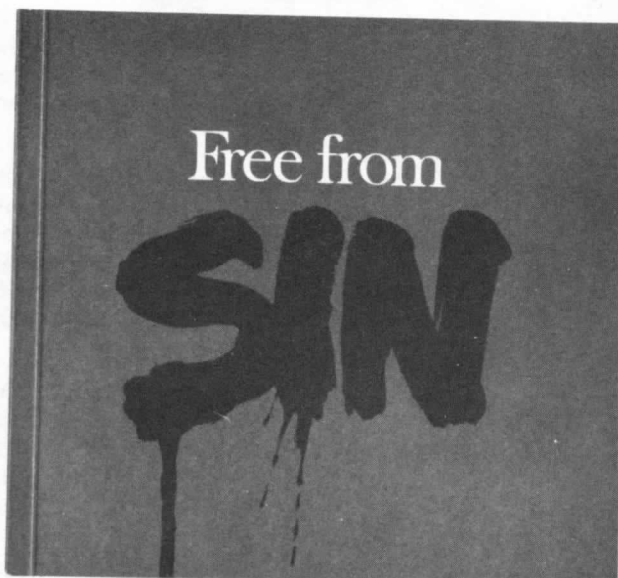
The above article is an extract from a forthcoming book by John Noble also entitled The Battle of the Sexes.



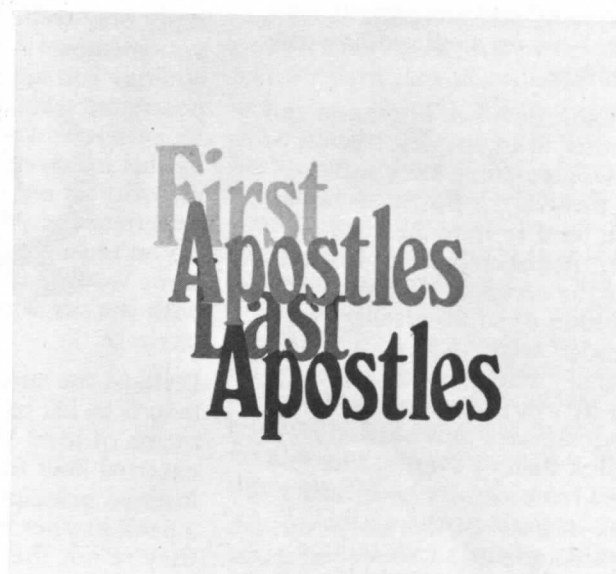
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