

---

## PROLOGUE

---

The whole thing was most peculiar. Spooky even.

Late one night my friend Jake was driving me down from Lancaster to Salisbury. Just south of Worcester we were both feeling drained with exhaustion and decided to pull over to the side of the A38 for a nap. When I awoke we were on the move again, but somewhere along the way Jake must have taken a wrong turning. I noticed a sign saying that we were heading for a place called Great Malvern. Jake was still yawning loudly, but he pulled over and stopped when I pointed out that we were probably going in the wrong direction.

‘Let’s ask,’ he said. ‘You ask. Go and ask someone.’

‘That’s all very well,’ I complained, ‘but who? Where? It’s so late.’

‘Try up that drive,’ he said, cosying down in his seat and closing his eyes.

I did. The drive that Jake had indicated with a flick of his thumb curled away from the main road between ranks of magnificent horse chestnut trees, broadening into a wide, floodlit parking space in front of a Victorian red-brick house of impressive dimensions. Through the uncurtained window of a brightly illuminated room to the left of the front door, I could see a man working at a desk. I decided to chance it. Rapping rather nervously on the massive portico with my bare knuckles, I noticed a wooden frame at the side of the porch bearing the following legend:

SITUS USUSFRUCTUM ADDIT

My knowledge of Latin is nil, but later, as you will discover, I was to learn the meaning of these words.

The door was opened within a few seconds by a tall, handsome man, blonde-haired and dressed entirely in white. He delivered his greeting in suave, mellow tones.

‘May I be of assistance? My name is Professor Peter Caws, and I am the principal of the College of Churchmanship here at Churchmanship Headquarters.’

I explained a little nervously that we were on our way to Salisbury and had missed a turning. We were now facing in the direction of Great Malvern.

‘Simple,’ he replied. ‘Turn your car, go back through the villages of Bowling Green and Powick until you come to the roundabout. Turn right on to the A44, then right again at the next roundabout, and the A38 will take you south.’

‘Thank you very much,’ I responded, ‘sorry to trouble you so late.’ About to turn away, I paused. ‘By the way, what is the – you know – the College of Churchmanship?’

The man raised an elegant eyebrow.

‘We do not advertise ourselves unduly,’ he said, ‘but I would be happy to give you a copy of this year’s annual report if it would interest you. The printers delivered them only this morning.’

He disappeared and returned a few seconds later with a thick, paper-backed volume.

‘Take this with my compliments. Perhaps you would be interested in signing up for one of our courses.’

‘I really dislike going on courses,’ I said.

‘Interesting. We have a two-week foundation course especially designed for those who dislike going on courses.’

‘Yes, well, I must be – you know. Thank you again.’

Suddenly, unaccountably frightened, I turned and fled into the night and down the drive. I threw myself into the passenger seat of Jake’s car, flinging the report into the back as I slammed the door shut. Following the professor’s instructions we turned the car and set off in the direction of the roundabout that would put us back on track.

Soon after that I must have fallen into a deep sleep. I woke to find the car stationary and Jake asleep beside me. The extraordinary, baffling thing was that we seemed to be at exactly the same spot on the A38 where we had stopped for our nap in the first place. Impossible, surely.

*Prologue*

Had it all been a dream? I supposed it must have been, but something prevented me from sharing the experience with Jake. In fact, I hardly said a word all the way to Salisbury. It was only when Jake dropped me off at home a couple of days later and called out, ‘Don’t forget your book!’ that I realized, dream or not, Professor Caws’ report had been lying on the floor of the car for the previous two days.

I’ve had a chance to read it now. You read it. It is a most extraordinary document. I have often wondered why progress seems to be such uphill work in the Christian church. Can it really be that there is an organized body of people whose express aim is to – well, you read the report and see what you think.

Incidentally, I did try to locate a telephone number or some other form of address for Churchmanship Headquarters, but I was unsuccessful. As you will see in the report, Professor Caws includes an address intended for the use of applicants to his Question and Answer section, but my letters have been returned and I am unable to verify that it exists. One day I might go back to Great Malvern and search for the horse chestnut avenue and the big house, but I have a more than sneaking suspicion that it will not be there.

Who is Peter Caws? I have no idea, but there is something about the name that troubles me. Something teasingly reminiscent of a different character altogether. I keep thinking I’ve got it, but then it slips away. I cannot quite remember . . .



—LOOKING GOOD—  
BEING BAD

THE SUBTLE ART  
OF CHURCHMANSHIP

***Annual Report for 2009  
by Professor Peter Caws***

It is a pleasure and a privilege for me as principal of the College of Churchmanship to present this report for 2009. The past year has seen our movement graced with so many new triumphs and fresh innovations that we are encouraged and confirmed in our assertion of the central tenets of Churchmanship. We continue to insist that a complete lack of faith or belief, and an unwillingness to contribute time, energy or money to any aspect of Christian living need never be a barrier to membership in and involvement with the church. However, we must always bear in mind that our art is intended to be a subtle and undiscovered one. In the pages of this special anniversary report we celebrate those from the present and the past who, by their example and expertise, are able to assist and educate us in this respect. I commend this report to you.

## Section 1

# PRAYERMANSHIP

### —PRAYING FOR HEALINGMANSHIP—

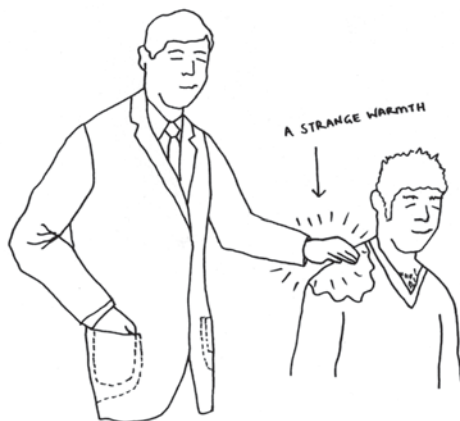
I need hardly say how very proud we all are of the fine work that has been done in this area by past students of the college. I will not mention names as many of these folk are so well known now, and this report might fall into the wrong hands, but it is a great joy to see so many familiar faces and hairstyles at meetings and conferences, and on the television. Their signed photographs line the corridors here at Headquarters. It is a source of deep satisfaction that these great Churchmen and women continue to use the ploys and practices that were taught to them at Frome in days of yore, or, more recently, at our fine new building here in Great Malvern where our experts train students in the use of state-of-the-art concealed communication devices.

Take heart! That is my message to all involved in Praying for Healingmanship. Genuine healing ministries may come and go, but our operations in this section of the church seem to go from strength to strength. Churchmanship Headquarters continues to offer support, advice and practical assistance to students in the field. Take, for instance, the phenomenal success of one of our very latest innovations.



### ***Handy Healing Handwarmers***

These cheekily titled aids to impressive prayer for healing are completely safe to use and virtually impossible for the outsider to detect. The set consists of a pair of battery-operated pocket handwarmers (*available from Churchmanship Headquarters, price fifteen pounds per set, including postage and packing – see illustration*) ideal for use in situations where those who seek healing are anticipating that the hands of the person praying for them will give off a strange warmth. The good news is that they will not be disappointed. Simply place both hands in the side pockets of your coat or jacket or handbag as you go through the what-can-I-do-for-you? chat before laying on hands, switch on the handwarmers and wait for two and a half minutes or until the palms of your hands are gently glowing with the heat. Repeat as necessary.



This is one of our most creative new ideas, and we are confident that this product will continue to simply fly off the shelves. If you haven't already, be sure to get your hands on a pair as soon as you can!

### ***Begging Lettermanship***

Churchmen and women must eat like everyone else, and the Churchman who takes up Healingmanship is no exception. His needs are just as great or greater (because naturally more hedonistic) than those of

the man or woman who has a genuine healing ministry. To this end it is essential to grasp the basic principles of Begging Lettermanship, one of the easiest ways to ensure a steady flow of income throughout the year. We remind readers of the five main principles.

***(1) Always ask for prayer above everything else***

Make it clear very early on in your letter that prayer is the *first*, and money the *last*, thing on your list of requirements. Allow the need for cash to emerge or slip out accidentally, as it were.

I have been called to minister God's healing power to the Matshawake tribe in the Carrabunda area of the Amazon Basin, and this will happen in September assuming that finances work out okay. Please pray for the suffering folk of Carrabunda that petty considerations concerning rent and transport in the intervening period will not stand in the way of their needs being met.

Make a point of enthusing with pathetic optimism about the severely limited resources that are available. This is vastly more productive in financial terms than complaint or self-pity.

I never cease to marvel at the way in which all my needs are provided. Lots of reasons for giving thanks. Excitingly I have been able to heat one of the rooms in my house since a gift arrived in the post on Wednesday, and, marvel of marvels, I discovered a whole, unused candle in a drawer last week! Who needs electric light when miracles like this are happening every single month? God is in this. Forgive my childlike excitement, but I intend to save the candle up for a special occasion. How privileged I am to receive such bountiful provision!

Make a point of listing your own favourite charities and insist that people should give to these before they even think about financing you. In a stroke of genius, Prentice Basset of Streatham

*Prayermanship*

once offered to *send money to his own supporters* if they fell on hard times, explaining that although his resources were few he was determined that ‘no one will go short if I can help it’. The money flowed in, and Basset ministered in Barbados that year.

**(2) *Keep it distant***

If you are not planning to go anywhere at all make sure that most of your apparent destinations are in obscure parts of the world – countries so distant or inaccessible that nobody who reads your letter will ever be likely to go there. Include a smudgy little map in the bottom right-hand corner of the back page with a large arrow almost covering over a fuzzy-edged pink blob called ‘Mandarak’, located somewhere in the huge vagueness of Central Asia (*see illustration*). If anyone should express a desire to visit you on the mission field, simply arrange to have Mandarak overrun by a neighbouring state, or subjected to such a drastic natural disaster or pandemic that the cost of travelling there would be much better spent on relief, with the funds passing through your competent and capable hands.



If you are planning to report a specific miracle, make sure that it happened in a small, crumbling hut halfway up a dangerously live volcano in some remote corner of Pakistan where there is no telephone and no possibility of sending or receiving e-mails.

***(3) Always tell the truth about local events***

If you feel it necessary to recount 'ministry' exploits nearer to home, always adhere strictly to the truth. Patrick Gift, graduate of this college, is a long-term expert in this area. Consider, for instance, this extract from his newsletter for July 2004.

Something thrilling to share with all my partners and supporters. One Friday morning I received a phone call asking me to visit the house of a man already known slightly to me. It was clear not only to me but to everyone else involved in the situation that this man (I shall call him Mr Sefton) was going to die. I did all that Mr Sefton asked and expected of me and left, debating inwardly if I would ever see him again in this world. On the Saturday morning I received a second call to the same house. Arriving there I found Mr Sefton out of bed, fit and well and anxious to show me just how much could be done by a man with a strong body and a will to work. Praise God for what he has done in Mr Sefton's life!

A masterpiece. It was quite true that Gift was contacted that morning. The man called Sefton, who was not only superbly fit but had run his eighth three-hour marathon in that same year, was short of time and had some digging that needed to be done in his back garden. He was offering seven pound fifty an hour to anyone who would do it while he was at work. It was also true that Sefton was going to die. We all are. Gift did a bit of half-hearted poking at the earth, pocketed all the money that Sefton had misguidedly left on the kitchen table for him, and went home. It was entirely true that Gift might not have seen Sefton again in this world, but it was equally true that he might. And he did. The next day, when Sefton phoned again, Gift assumed there was more work on offer and went round, only to find that Sefton (out of bed because he gets up in the morning like everybody else, only with more alacrity because he is so hideously fit) was furious because only a tiny bit of the garden had been dug

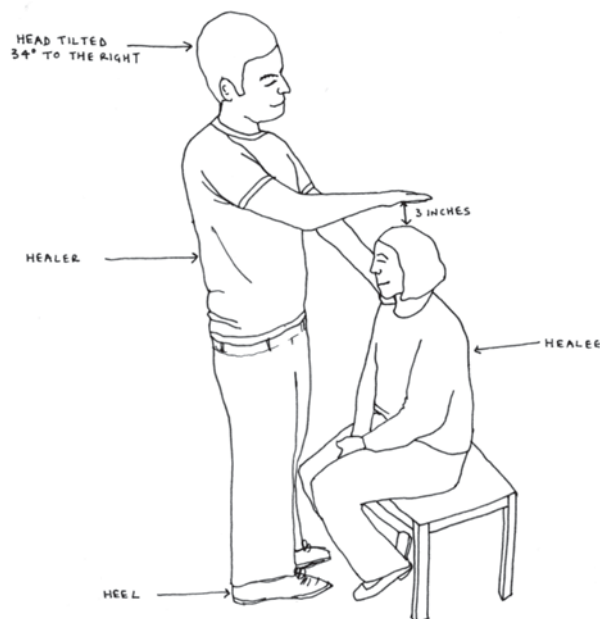
*Prayermanship*

(badly) on the Friday. Sefton stood over Gift until the job was done properly and refused to pay him any more money.

One can only admire the way in which Gift turned a disaster into an advantage. Good Churchmanship often depends on creativity, and there is unanimous agreement here at Headquarters that Gift is full of it.

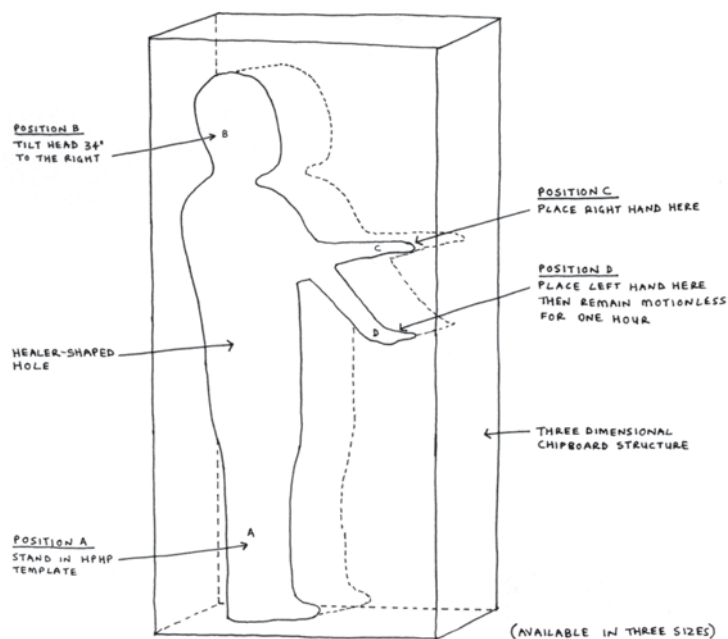
***(4) Perfect the High-power Healing Posture and include illustration***

Your letter should always prominently display a photograph of you, the healer, doing the business. Strict guidelines apply to the use of the *High-power Healing Posture* (see illustration). May we remind you that, ideally, it should be executed as follows.



- (a) Rest the left hand lightly but caringly on the right shoulder of the healee.
- (b) Tilt the head to the right at an angle of thirty-four degrees.

- (c) Adopt an expression of listening concentration, together with a small smile of confident intimacy, as though friendly instructions are being passed on from a different spiritual dimension.
- (d) Raise the right arm until the end of the longest finger is three inches above the top of the head with the palm facing inwards and towards the left.
- (e) A slight but very rapid bouncing motion on the heels may be indicated, but please be aware that the FGBMFI (Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, in case you were wondering) has patents pending on this particular ploy.
- (f) The photograph itself should be taken from the front, slightly left of the healee, with as many would-be healees queued up behind as possible.



For those who are experiencing difficulties in successfully adopting the *High-power Healing Posture*, we are pleased to announce our brand-

new product, the HPHP Template (*available from Churchmanship Headquarters, price twenty-four pounds per self-assembly template in mint green or distressed orange, including postage and packing – see illustration*). This slightly larger than life-sized model of a High-power Healer is constructed from especially hardened chipboard and allows the user to actually stand inside the figure, thus automatically conforming to the correct posture. Research indicates that an hour spent motionless inside the HPHP Template every day for one week will establish neural patterns that are not easily dispersed.

***(5) The little bit in biro at the bottom***

Always add a handwritten note at the bottom of the final page of your letter. The style should be one of informal intimacy, as though the person you are writing to is the only one in the world who really understands what you are going through. Patrick Gift provides a model for us all in this respect.

*Hi, Chris, my old muckeroo! Sorry about sending you all the blurb and stuff. You of all people connect with what I'm doing without the need for loads of words, words, words... You've been there. I know that. I would only share this with you, my dear brother, heart to heart, but I'm in pain here, and it does me good just to know that you're standing with me in prayer as the work goes on. One day we'll meet and have some proper talk. That'll make my day, big-time!*

The truth was that Gift had met his 'old muckeroo Chris' once fleetingly at a promotional party but had somehow managed to drag contact details out of him before they parted. He received a cheque for a hundred pounds by return of post.

***(6) The turn away smile***

And finally, here's another useful tip from Patrick Gift and a bonus sixth point to add to our five basic principles. If you, the Churchman or woman, are called upon to pray for somebody's healing, it is good practice to conclude the prayer by turning quickly away from the

prayer with a quiet but beatific smile of confidence on your face. The implication of this serene smile should be that you have fulfilled your duty to God and the suffering person to the very best of your ability, leaving the success or failure of your prayer totally dependent upon the inner response of the person who has been prayed for. To use Gift's own words:

The skilled Churchman will never expose himself to the risk of taking responsibility for the outcome of any prayer that he has offered.

In this connection, we receive continual requests from members and students for guidance on how to deal with queries that arise from the (inevitable) non-healing that results from prayer by Churchmen and women. Gift suggests a number of sub-ploy responses. We include several of these below (*full list available from Churchmanship Headquarters, price two pounds including postage and packing*).<sup>1</sup>

- (a) 'It depends what you mean by healing.' (*Say this with a coy, meaningful smile, but in the case of someone whose leg is hanging off select another response from the list below.*)
- (b) 'It doesn't always happen immediately.' (*Yes, right . . .*)
- (c) 'You will be more useful to God and other people in an unhealed state.' (*Really?*)

---

<sup>1</sup> We are, incidentally, fully aware of the fact that many of these responses are not exclusively utilized by Churchmen and women, and they may even have some validity among the ranks of the sincere. That is not our concern and should never be allowed to distract us from the important work that lies ahead. We can do no better than to quote the great Vernon Poole on this very theme.

Allow the light of verity  
To guide your insincerity  
Thus may a clear and heartfelt lie  
Be termed exactness by and by.

Surely nothing beyond these moving words remains to be said on the subject.

*Prayermanship*

- (d) ‘There may be some sin in your life that needs sorting out.’  
*(The sin of extreme credulity perhaps.)*
- (e) ‘You lack sufficient faith.’ *(You’re Moses compared to the person who’s praying for you.)*
- (f) ‘Death is the greatest healer of all.’ *(Good news, eh?)*
- (g) ‘I wonder – do you really want to be healed?’ *(Er, yes.)*
- (h) ‘You have been healed, but you need to claim your healing.’  
*(Interesting to note the continual success of this sub-plot, despite its portrayal of healing as something you have to apply for like a prize in a Reader’s Digest draw.)*
- (i) ‘There are some mysteries we are not allowed to understand.’  
*(Best emphasized by a sad shake of the head.)*
- (j) ‘God’s reply to prayer can be “yes”, “no”, or “wait”’. *(God clearly opens the batting for some cricket team or other.)*

***The Art of Speaking in Tongues***

It is, of course, highly unlikely that any serious student of Churchmanship will genuinely speak in tongues, but for that very reason it is as well to be prepared. There are bound to be situations where the apparent use of this gift becomes strategically important. J.N. Vallant of Ipswich has supplied us with an invaluable aid to our efforts in this respect. Quite simply, all that is required is a copy of the Sri Lankan cricket team list from the early nineties. After exhaustive tests carried out here at Churchmanship Headquarters and in the field, we are pleased to report that Vallant’s claims are entirely justified. Whether muttered in a dull monotone in the course of a prayer meeting or delivered boldly but with a slight slurring (obviously in the presence of those who have no knowledge of or interest in cricket), the repetition of these names is remarkably effective.

A colleague and acquaintance of mine actually had his recitation of the Sri Lankan cricket team interpreted by the lady next to him as a call from God to build a community launderette in the village of Cowfold in Sussex.

We include the list below for your use. Practice, as always, is helpful, and do bear in mind that, in vocal terms, a mystical dying fall or vocal twist is required at the conclusion of the final name.

Marvan Atapattu  
Sanath Jayasuriya  
Hashan Tillakaratne  
Suresh Perera  
Aravinda de Silva  
Romesh Kaluwitharana  
Pramodya Wickramasinge  
Muthia Muralitharan  
Kumara Dharmasena  
Artuna Ranatunga  
Mahela Jaywardena

A further word about the gift of Speaking in Tongues. There are two useful and contrasting stances for Churchmanship practitioners to take in this area, depending on the prevailing wind of opinion at the time and the place in which they find themselves.

First is the *Thank Goodness We've Got Away From All That* ploy, in which the Churchman or woman talks lightly and with an air of tolerant derision of the bad old days when charismatic churches were suggesting or insisting that genuine conversion is invariably accompanied by the gift of Speaking in Tongues. Point out that, in the twelfth chapter of the second book of Corinthians<sup>2</sup> Saint Paul asks the question, 'Do all speak in tongues?' Cite this as logical, incontrovertible evidence that the early church had no such foolish expectation. This ploy is particularly helpful in situations where a balanced, sensible interest in the spiritual gifts is developing and needs to be curbed.

If, on the other hand, you find yourself in a church setting where the general feeling is that folk are not yet ready or needing to prioritize gifts of this kind, use the *That Seems to Be What Happened Then* strategy, a sub-initiative, as we all know, of the *Don't Have a Go at Me I'm Only Quoting What the Bible Says* ploy. In this case say seriously and with an air of caring responsibility:

---

<sup>2</sup> This is one of those rare examples of a situation where it is strategically desirable for the Churchman or woman to take the trouble to learn words from the Bible and their exact reference.

*Prayermanship*

Forgive me, but I really am only trying to understand what the Bible teaches us in this area. My question is this – can we read the first six chapters of the nineteenth chapter of the book of Acts and in good conscience continue to maintain that tongues or tongues and prophesy were not regarded as clear and common signs of authentic baptism at a time when patterns were being set for future Christian generations? It's only a question. 'When Paul placed his hands on them the Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.'<sup>3</sup> That's what my Bible says, and (*gravely*) I am bound to be faithful.'

---

<sup>3</sup> Another of those rare instances where it might be advisable to know some Scripture.