

# He Pushed Newton



*Edmund Halley*

Every young student knows of Isaac Newton's famed encounter with a falling apple. Newton discovered and introduced the laws of gravity in the 1600s, which revolutionized astronomical studies.

But few know that if it were not for Edmund Halley, the world might never have learned from Newton.

It was Halley who challenged Newton to think through his original notions. Halley corrected Newton's mathematical errors and prepared geometrical figures to support his discoveries. Halley coaxed the hesitant Newton to write his great work, *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*.

Halley edited and supervised the publication, and actually financed its printing, even though Newton was wealthier and easily could have afforded the printing costs.

Historians call it one of the most selfless examples in the annals of science. Newton began almost immediately to reap the rewards of prominence; Halley received little credit. He did use the principles to predict the orbit and return of the comet that would later bear his name, but only *after* his death did he receive any acclaim. And because the comet only returns every 76 years, the notice is rather infrequent. Halley remained a devoted scientist who didn't care who received the credit as long as the cause was being advanced.

Others have played Halley's role. John the Baptist said of Jesus, "He must become greater; I must become less." Barnabas was content to introduce others – including the Apostle Paul – to greatness. Many pray to uphold the work of one Christian leader.

Such selflessness advances the mission. It's true in health care, just as it is in the Kingdom of God.

– Beecher Hunter