

A U S T R A L I A N

# Presbyterian

THE MAGAZINE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA  
july 1998



## Youth crisis? sex & drugs & rock'n'roll



Special issue on youth • Our spiritual enemy • The wisdom of Solomon

# prayer

## JULY

- 21 Sandy Wade-Ferrell from Epping, Sydney, with Overseas Missionary Fellowship. She plans to work in China.
- 22 Residents and staff of Dunbar Homes for the Aged, Salisbury, and new units at Naracoorte, SA.
- 23 Camp Hill parish, Brisbane, including Marsfield, 250 communicants, 70 children and youth, 15 elders, Peter Barson.
- 24 Welfare work and friendship evangelism of the Missions To Seamen in ports around the land, ministering to those of many nationalities.
- 25 Suzanne Harris from Annerley, Brisbane, O.M.F. missionary in Indonesia since 1970, teaching English at Malang University.
- 26 (National Bible Sunday) Pray that preachers will carry out a systematic expository ministry, and that church members will personally study and obey God's Word.
- 27 Bell home mission station, Queensland's Darling Downs, including 6 congregations, 75 communicants, 70 children and youth, 12 elders, R. Evans.
- 28 Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union, Victoria – Anne Innes president, Winifred Allen secretary, and all leaders and branches.
- 29 Presbytery of Bendigo, 5 parishes, 2 home mission stations, totalling 11 congregations with attendance of 400, 1 retired minister, Andrew Clarke clerk.
- 30 Church of St Andrew, State Circle, Canberra, including Weston Creek, 580 communicants, 50 children and youth, 50 elders, Gordon Fullerton.
- 31 Wilston-Newmarket-Windsor parish, Brisbane, 100 communicants, 20 children and youth, 7 elders, Eric & Heather Noble.

## AUGUST

- 1 Ian and Denise Scott from Bald Hills, Brisbane, Australian director of The Leprosy Mission.
- 2 The new Bible Society work in Cambodia (10 million people) and the newly translated Khmer New Testament.
- 3 Malcolm and Mandy Durham from Ipswich, Qld, working in the Middle East under WEC.
- 4 David and Maxine Cook (Principal),

- Neil and Jayne Chambers and all staff and students of Sydney Missionary and Bible College, Croydon.
- 5 Philip and Sandra Burns from Warburton, Vic, lecturing at Talua Ministry Training Centre, Vanuatu with APWM; also Joanne Cutler, English teacher at the same college.
- 6 State moderators as they minister throughout their states: Wally Zurrer (SA), David Secomb (Qld), David Tsai (NSW).
- 7 Camperdown-Terang parish, Vic., including Garvoc, 23+37+7 communicants, 40 children and youth, 6 elders, Paul and Gaye Ridgewell.
- 8 Annual meeting and Aboriginal conference of Australian Presbyterian World Mission this weekend in Sydney.
- 9 West Footscray home mission station, Melbourne, 55 communicants, 6 children and youth, 12 elders, John Bremman.
- 10 Presbytery of Brisbane, 11 parishes, totalling 13 congregations with attendance of 1110, 8 retired ministers, 1 deaconess, 1 defence chaplain, 1 mission representative, Guido Kettmiss clerk.
- 11 Joondalup home mission station, Perth, 15 communicants, 25 children and youth, no elders.
- 12 Cronulla parish, Sydney, 50 communicants, 10 children and youth, 3 elders, Russell and Therese Stark.
- 13 Michael and Ulicke Safari from Burwood, Sydney, carrying out an ethnic ministry in Sydney.
- 14 Staff and students of Queensland Theological Hall, St. Lucia, Brisbane, Professors I. McIver and F. Nigel Lee, Dr. Matthew Kim and part-time lecturers.
- 15 Mt Isa home mission station, 10 communicants, 16 children and youth, no elders, Malcolm and Leonie Pierce.
- 16 PIM full-time patrol workers, Terry Sadler, Bill Gray (Qld), Ray Rutland (WA), and Laurie Peake (SA).
- 17 Rohan Butler from Parramatta, Sydney, serving as an electronics engineer in Nepal with Interserve.
- 18 Presbytery of Central Coast, NSW, 5 parishes, totalling 6 congregations with attendance of 670, 9 retired ministers, Neville Wilce clerk.
- 19 Ralph and Anne Latimer from Qld, Gold Coast (Arundel), handyman and teacher at Cheefoo School for missionaries' children, Malaysia.
- 20 Riverwood-Punchbowl parish, South West Sydney, 50 communicants, 20 children and youth, 7 elders, Steven and Carolyn Marquet, Ki Ok and Sun Ok Jung.

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July 1998  
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A U S T R A L I A N  
**Presbyterian**

THE MAGAZINE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

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# Adrift – but with an anchor

Robert Benn

Our family had just witnessed some very graphic images of the Sydney Mardi Gras on a TV news flash. The raw energy and slick packaging of this movement amazed me, but what especially unnerved me was the large number of young people who seemed happy to be identified with it.

As a Christian father, I felt concerned that my children were exposed to such blatant immorality. I still sensed a twinge of guilt in having brought them from the relative security of provincial Queensland into the brashness of city life. “Kids,” I said, “I want to apologise for the kinds of things to which I’ve exposed you while you’ve been growing up.” It was a solemn moment in our family, and I meant what I had to say.

Our children are growing up in a different world to the one I knew. I was raised in an almost idyllic Christian environment as a country boy, and I knew nothing of the ideals and attitudes that are so common amongst teenagers today. There seemed to be something so very healthy about the moral climate in which I was raised, even though I was ignorant of so many of the things that my own children knew.

As youngsters of a generation or two ago, we could confidently sing: “God said it. I believe it. That settles it.” Of course, not every child could say that, but certainly lots more than can say it today. The ques-



tion is, what has happened to bring about this change?

The Christian faith is no longer the dominant force that it once was in Australia. In an earlier period, people were happy to support Christian beliefs, ethics and traditions. But not today. If we want our children to grow up with strong convictions about God, and to “hold the line” on Christian morality, we are going to have to take some very deliberate action to do it.

This issue of *Australian Presbyterian* is meant to be a wake-up call — to parents, to youth, to the Church and to Presbyterian and Christian schools. We can see we are slipping away from our Judeo-Christian moorings. What are we meant to do?

My discussion with my children was to

help them work through all the things that were happening around them. I didn’t want them to bury their heads in the sand. Instead, I wanted them to face reality in a secular world with a distinctively Christian mind. I was also concerned to help them realise that without Christ as the centre of their life and thought, they would be helplessly adrift on a dangerous sea of relativism.

While the youth of today are growing up in a vastly different world from the one that many older people have known, they are really no different to the young people of yesterday. They are not inherently more rebellious; they are just facing more invasive pressures. That’s why they need excellent mentors who will offer them wise guidance at such a critical point in their lives.

Here is the challenge for parents and educators: to live and explain the Gospel to our teens in a way that makes sense in the modern world. Our young people need to know that we understand them and we are sympathetic to their struggles as they come to terms with life. This is a special challenge to Presbyterian and other Christian schools. Parents need their support more than ever in reinforcing the truth of the Bible’s message and moral guidance. Indeed, parents have a right to expect it.

Actually, none of my children has regretted our move to the city. Two of them have married and live here, and the other one has found a most satisfying job. They are aware that their lives are remarkably different as a result. They have also matured through the spiritually testing times that their dad knew nothing about at their age. They are possibly more resilient as a result.

The call today is for parents, educators and preachers to be more vigilant in caring for the spiritual needs of youth. We should be unafraid in taking a definite position on the absolute truth of the Bible. Our society is falling apart at the seams because it has lost the truth, and it needs to hear that God has spoken reliably and meaningfully in His Word. This certainly is not an age in which we can afford to compromise. Our youth are depending on us.

Robert Benn

Convenor, National Journal Committee



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# Doing drugs at school

*Rachel Norman asks, are you being taught the truth?*

**Y**ou're sitting in personal development class on Friday arvo and not really listening — much as you love the subject. Your mind wanders to the weekend, when suddenly you hear your teacher giving some advice: "If you're dancing and taking ecstasy, make sure you have heaps of rest breaks and drink lots of water."

Surprised? And yet this could be happening in a school near you. The reason behind it all is an idea called "harm minimisation", which assumes that most of you will experiment with drugs (and have sex before you're married, and accept a homosexual relationship as normal, etc). It doesn't try to stop you, just tries to make it safer — which is a good thing up to a point, but why get involved in the risky behaviour in the first place?

Try the quiz on this page. Were some of the answers a surprise? If you're worried about drugs, or protecting your friends from drugs, look first at the two drugs that are most available and acceptable. Accidents caused by alcohol abuse are the number one killer of young people in Australia, and tobacco is the second most abused drug. Don't be fooled by society or the advertisers. These drugs are dangerous because they are socially acceptable and even encouraged.

Drugs aren't simply those things that "street kids" steal for and buy in dark alleys. A drug is *any* substance (except food) that alters the way that the body functions or works. Alcohol and tobacco are drugs, so is coffee, aspirin and cough mixture, as well as marijuana, heroin and ecstasy. Not all drug use is bad or illegal, but it is all open to abuse.

So what kinds of things can you expect to learn about drugs in school? You'll find out the patterns of drug use (who takes it, when, how much); short-term and long-term effects; social, physical and legal consequences; reasons why people take drugs; alternatives to drug use; physical and psychological tolerance to drugs; and drug-related issues — drink-driving, alcohol and violence, unplanned sex and that sort of stuff.

It seems to cover just about everything that you would need to know about drugs. The big mistakes fall into two groups: the things that they don't teach you, and the



wrong things that they do teach.

Often teachers will miss out, or not have much time for, the legal aspects. You'd think that most of us would know what the law says about drugs: don't drink until you're 18, 0.05 is the limit for driving (0.02 if you're on your Ps), marijuana is illegal (you go to jail, or pay a fine or something). The problem is that few people emphasise it as important. The law is not a joke; it's there to protect us, and breaking it has consequences.

You probably won't get a biblical perspective either. This is God's world, but your teacher will ignore what He has to say about it, and what rules He's given us to live in it. You may not even hear much about not taking drugs (abstinence). Or you might hear it as a bit of a joke, an option that you're not expected to take. If you take a stand and say "no" to drugs, you may not get a lot of support at school.

Sometimes you could hear the wrong thing being taught — for example, if your teacher talks about drinking as if everyone does it, or gives you advice about a safer way to take illegal drugs. The biggest problem is that the things you talk about in class are issues that involve values and personal opinions, and your teacher is required to teach it in a "values vacuum" — that is, where nothing is absolutely wrong, and nothing is absolutely right. Each person is on an individual journey, and what's right for me and my journey is not necessarily what's right for you.

When Jesus said "I am the way, the truth and the life" He didn't add a "maybe". Jesus is the only way to be right with God — that is an absolute fact. The Bible tells us that

there are rights and wrongs — we are not made to live in a values vacuum. We need to apply the Bible to every part of our lives, trying to follow God in all that we do.

You could be thinking by now, "this girl is really off the planet — my personal development teacher is really cool and we learn pretty normal stuff". Most people

## How much do you know about drugs?

— True or False? —

1. All drug users become dependent on drugs.
2. You can die of alcohol poisoning if you drink too much.
3. A bottle of white wine is the equivalent of 7 or so middies of beer.
4. The abuse of illegal drugs is more harmful than legal ones.
5. Amphetamines are called 'speed' because they give quick relief from pain.
6. Natural drugs are safer than manufactured ones.
7. Marijuana stays in the body for about 5 hours.
8. Having the same amount of cocaine each time means you know how much you're having.
9. Alcohol causes more deaths of adolescents than heroin.
10. Females use more analgesics than males.
11. Fewer than 1% of young people have tried heroin.
12. More than 50% of 17-year-olds drink alcohol at least weekly.
- 13 You can smoke 3 joints of marijuana for the price of a CD.

— Answers on Page 6 —

who teach you about drugs will be quite sensible and sensitive. The things that they tell you are important to know — especially if you're not finding it out from anyone else. What's the fuss about? There is one huge problem. If your teacher is not a Christian, then the facts that you get are incomplete because they're not taking into account the truths that God gives us in the Bible.

At school you should respect your teachers — they are there to help you. But that doesn't mean that they are always right. A non-Christian simply doesn't know any better. Make sure you test everything against the Bible. If you want to talk to your teacher, don't be abusive but state your beliefs with love, and put them into action in the classroom and around school.

So what are some practical things you can do that will help you when you learn about drugs in school?

- *Pray* for your teacher, your school, your friends and even the people who make the decisions about what we learn. Pray that you will be able to tell right from wrong and that you will know when to speak and what to say.

- *Read the Bible.* We are encouraged to test "Christian" things we hear (for example, from the youth group leader) — how much more should we be checking out the stuff we hear at school!

- *Talk* to someone you trust and feel comfortable talking to. Tell them about things that confuse you or seem wrong. Question everything against the biblical point of view.

- *Act* — if you're not happy, say something. Remember the way that Jesus spoke out. Be honest, firm and loving.

Maybe your school isn't as dramatic as the one that I started with. But it can still be challenging God's truth by the things it doesn't say, or by the issues it forces you to address in the classroom. Even if your teacher isn't hassling your beliefs, your peers could be.

Discussing situations or choices that depend heavily on values and beliefs is a challenge to the Christian put in a classroom with peers who pay them out or ignore them. These periods can be pretty tough, as well as confusing. Pray that God will give you the strength and the support of other Christians to get through them.

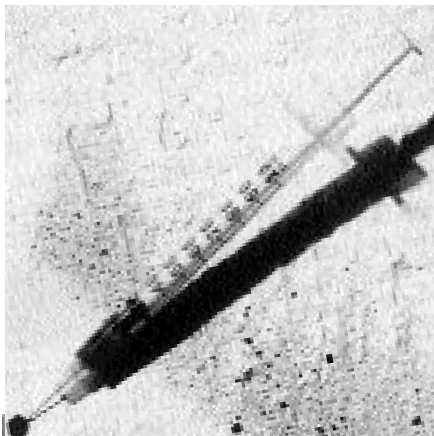
*What happens in your state? Have you*

*ever had to tackle this problem? Is there something you heard at school that you don't understand? You can email Rachel at [pyprojm@ozemail.com.au](mailto:pyprojm@ozemail.com.au).*

*Rachel Norman is in her fourth year of Human Movement Education (PE teaching!) at Sydney Uni. She is married to Murray, and they go to Hurstville Presbyterian Church.* ap

## How much do you know about drugs? Answers

1. False. Some drugs are medicinal and some are recreational. All are open to abuse.
2. True. Alcohol is a poison that attacks the liver.
3. True. The alcohol concentration in wine is much higher than in beer, so it takes less to affect you.
4. False. All drug abuse is harmful.
5. False. Amphetamines are stimulants — they speed up the body's processes.
6. False. The danger of a drug depends on its concentration and the amount that you take. Just because a drug grows naturally doesn't make it less harmful.
7. False. The effects of THC (the chemical in marijuana) last for about five hours if you smoke it. However, THC can be stored in the body for up to a month.
8. False. Cocaine manufacturers put in a small dose of the drug and the rest is whatever they can find — talcum powder, sugar, chalk dust. The amount of actual cocaine depends on the dealer and the availability of the drug.
9. True. Alcohol causes 60% of drug-related deaths in young people, opiates (eg heroin) cause 23%.
10. True. Females aged 13 to 17 use more pain killers than males. These figures are rising.
11. True. Heroin is a dangerous drug, but it is not high up the list of drugs used by young people.
12. False. Alcohol abuse is a serious problem in males and our society, but only 40% drink weekly. However, many binge drink or drink less frequently.
13. True. A joint can be as little \$10 on the street, and the price is dropping. It can be cheaper to smoke marijuana than to drink the amount of alcohol it would take to get similar effects.



# Unmixing the message

*Rachel Norman asks Bronwyn Greive about sex and values for life.*

## **Bronwyn, what do you do?**

I work for an organisation called Care and Communication Concern. It is an Australia-wide group that was started up 25 years ago by John Smith, of the God Squad. I work for the NSW branch with three others, and we are based in Newcastle. We go into schools all over the state and give seminars called "Values for Life". Most of the time this is within the personal development syllabus, but we also work with religious education teachers.

## **What kind of training have you had?**

I'm a mother of four, with a youth work and nursing background. The others have backgrounds in teaching, performing arts and youth work.

## **What kind of schools do you go to?**

We will go to any school that asks us, but we mostly work in state schools. We have pushed this ministry the hardest because this is the biggest area of need. When we go into a school, the school knows that we are a Christian organisation, and that we will quote the Bible, or Jesus or both. They also know that we will quote magazines, movies and song lyrics. This ministry is pre-evangelistic — we always give students an opportunity to find out more if they want to.

## **What are the messages that young people are getting about relationships and sex from the culture around them?**

Mixed ones! They have and they see (on TV, in magazines and songs etc) a desire for long-term relationships, but this is often not what they see described or portrayed. A long-term, loving relationship is what they want, and it's hopefully what a biblical relationship will give. When we do seminars on love and relationships, we go through 1 Corinthians 13. I am yet to see students or teachers say that it is a bad definition of love. It describes both God's love for us, and the love we should have for one another.

## **What kind of skills do we need as Christians and parents to deal with this culture?**

We need to be finding out what young people are learning. Read what they are reading, watch what they are watching. Talk

with them about it. Ask them what they think the people are saying. Go through the issues. Don't just ban everything — this pulls the kids away from their peers. Discuss what is happening, and why, with your kids. Share your ideas and feelings with your kids — especially some of the hard stuff.

We need to be open and honest about relationships and sex, and about our own relationships as Christians. Young people need to know about Christian relationships and the biblical perspective, to counteract what they are hearing about secular relationships. It is important to teach the "why" as well as the "no".

Kids need to know that it will be tempting to forget rules and go for it, and in the short-term it might feel good. You need to give them good reasons to fight against this — why God says that sex must be saved for marriage, and the mess that occurs when we go against God's way. Encourage them to look at the world around them and see that God's way makes sense. Ask them which way is better, and what are the consequences that they can expect — not just the immediate effects, but also the long-term outlook.

## **If a parent were to ask you, "It's all too big, what can I do?", what would you say?**

The first thing is to know what your child is hearing and learning. Read the magazines and realise what is being said. Sit down with your child and critique it together. Talk it through and paint a picture of God's world. It is really important for par-

ents and adults to listen to the messages within youth culture — some of them are cries for help. We can write to the magazines and tell them that what they are saying is not okay or encourage them if it's good. Magazines have a major influence on kids and a big budget — find out what messages they are giving.

Parents have a responsibility to find out what their child is learning at school. Get the information and go through it, looking for the bits that you agree with. You will get a more positive response from the teacher if you start with encouragement, and some affirmation of the work that the teacher is doing. Teachers will respond because they know that the stuff they are teaching isn't working.

Many of them will realise there is a mismatch between what they are teaching and what the kids are doing, but they don't know why. You don't need to jump down their throats to tell them something's wrong; tell them the way it could be (God's way), and how to get this across to the kids. Most importantly, pray. Pray for wisdom in what you say, pray also for the teacher.

## **Any last words?**

I can't stress enough that young people are crying out to live in the world in the way that God intended. These cries are reflected in the youth culture, if only we are willing to look for them. Talking to young people, with love, can bring this out.

*The head office of Care and Communication Concern is at PO Box 463, Boronia, Vic 3155.*

ap

## **Bronwyn Greive**



# Rocking our souls

*Music is the battleground where the war for our teens is fought, reports Jonathan Howes*

**E**vangelical Christians in our society do not always do so well at relating and responding to popular culture. Some take the ‘monastic’ approach, cutting themselves off from it all. Many seek to engage with it, but are not sure what to make of it. We try to be discerning, but we can be so naive, often straining out the gnats and swallowing the camels. Let’s take a look at the camels of youth music.

Beyond question, music is the most powerful force in teen culture. It is also the most powerful shaper of that culture. Much attention has been drawn to the lyrics of teen music, but an even more fundamental issue is often ignored: the music itself. This is because Christians tend to see music as a “neutral medium”, neither good nor bad, which can be harnessed to carry any message. The message is in the words.

But musicians, and in particular rock musicians, know better. And if you think about it, you know better too. Music speaks. It is a language of its own, communicating powerful messages. The reason we forget this is because it usually happens sub-consciously. Music doesn’t speak primarily to the mind, but to the heart, to our emotions. It moves our souls.

Take the human voice as an example. Have you ever heard your next-door-neighbours having a yelling match? Maybe you couldn’t hear the words, but you knew what was happening. Non-verbal information reached you. They were angry, furious. The volume and tone speak as powerfully as the words. And it’s not only human voices that affect us. All sounds do.

Think of the sound of an electric drill, compared to the sound of the surf. One is irritating, stressful, while the other is peaceful or refreshing. Sound affects the way we feel.

Music is the language humans use for this sort of communication. It is a powerful force, all the more so because it is not rational. We cannot control its effects with reason. That is why it is the driving force in teen culture, even more than TV or magazines.

This power has been understood since ancient times. The Greek philosopher Plato taught that music could be used as a tool for shaping the moral character of youth. He assumed that music is a moral influence. He identified various kinds of music as being



either soft or strong, ordered or wild, sober or licentious.

Plato argued that continued contact with one sort of music would guide the development of the character, for good or evil. In *The Republic*, he wrote: “More than anything else, rhythm and harmony find their way to the inmost soul and take strongest hold upon it, bringing with them and imparting grace, if one is rightly trained, and otherwise the opposite... And is it not for this reason...that education in music is most sovereign?”

This makes good educational sense. John Calvin, the educator of the Reformation, agreed. “There is scarcely anything in the world which is more capable of turning or moving this way and that the morals of men... And in fact we experience that [music] has a secret and almost incredible power to arouse hearts in one way or another,” he wrote in *Epistle to the Reader in the Genevan Psalter*.

This is true to our experience also. And if it is true, it leads inevitably to the question of what sort of musical environment our young people are growing in. What sort of music is shaping teen culture? The answer is plain: rock music.

Since the ‘50s, when Bill Haley and the Comets exploded onto the scene, rock ‘n’ roll has been teen music. Adults shuddered and shook their heads at the loud, brash, wild music. But the young people loved it. They were attracted to exactly those same qualities. Rock’n’ roll was exciting, liberating, and danceable, with its driving back-beat. In both music and words, it expressed their feelings: the exuberance of youth, sex-

ual desire, rebelliousness, etc. Youth and rock began a relationship which has only deepened over the decades.

Rock is about doing what you feel, not what you should do. As such it has always been anti-authoritarian and subversive. Rock is the music of rebellion. The traditional enemies in the rock culture are parents, teachers, the establishment, anyone who imposes rules or discipline:

*You bought a guitar to punish your ma, You didn’t like school, you know you’re nobody’s fool.*

## *Pink Floyd, Welcome to the Machine*

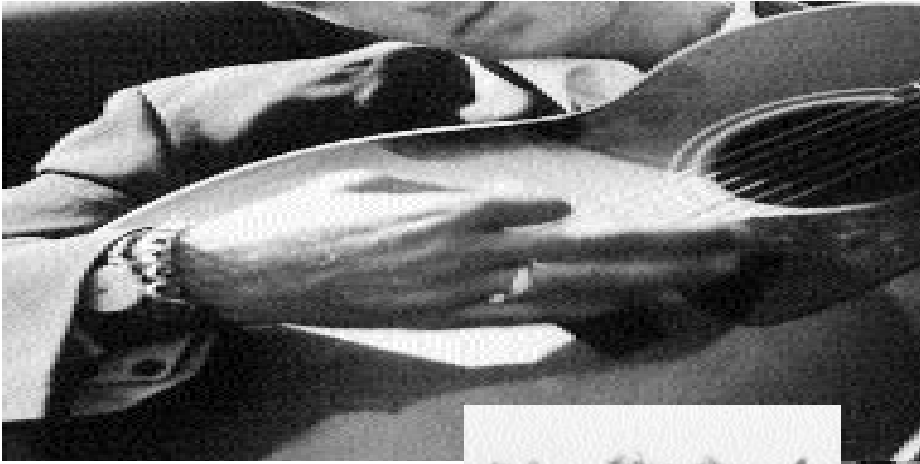
Thus rock draws teens into a hyped-up youth “brotherhood” by alienating outsiders, especially adults. Over the decades this has solidified into a distinct sub-culture, which consciously sets itself apart from the society at large. As young people increasingly find their identity in their music, they join a great club across the Western world which shares the same cultural experiences. And that culture is supplied to them through the electronic media over vast distances.

Teens become more interested in the events and fashions of their electronic world than they are in the real world around them: their family, neighbourhood, ethnic group, etc. So it is a two-way relationship: rock belongs to teens, but it entices them to live a rock version of life: they belong to it also.

What is the character of the music itself? The genre has developed and expanded. It now comes in many forms: heavy metal, grunge, pop, rap, etc. All of these, however, share some basic characteristics. The back-beat is the one essential element in all rock. It establishes the physicality of the music. It pulsates in a way that affects the listeners at a bodily level. When it is loud (and rock is loud) you feel it in your body. This insistent pulse determines many of rock’s other qualities: its repetitive nature, lack of movement (it doesn’t go anywhere), its simplicity.

Being essentially physical music, rock doesn’t aim at the mind but at the emotions. It’s about the senses, feelings, desires...hormones. Rock can be passionate, but rarely intelligent or thoughtful. It can occasionally be clever verbally, but the music itself is about instinct, not intellect. In any case the words are definitely of secondary importance: the music is its own message. Often





the words cannot be clearly heard, but this makes no difference to the effect.

As physical music, rock focuses on two of the most basic instincts: aggression and sex. It is no accident that it has always generated licentious, angry lyrics and “heroes”: the music itself is explicit enough. Rock dancing, of course, combines both these instincts. The music’s vocal quality is often harsh, with plenty of shouting. The classic sound is of distorted guitars, especially in the harder varieties. In rap, the ‘singers’ spit out their angry words as aggressively as possible: that’s the rap sound. Rock musicians are under no illusions that their music is morally neutral. Mick Jagger says: “The best rock and roll...encapsulates a certain high energy — an angriness...[it] is always brash...Violence and energy...that’s really what rock and roll’s all about.”

At the pop end of the spectrum, love (which means sex) rules. The tone is sweeter, more hypnotic and seductive. Rock finds it difficult to convincingly venture beyond this very instinctive emotional territory. It is unrestrained music, and doesn’t cope well with the rigours of maturer emotions.

This is the music teens live and breathe day by day. It is generally the only music they will tolerate. Now let’s be realistic. There’s nothing wrong with a bit of teen hormone and aggression. Nor with chocolate ice cream. But would you bring your kids up exclusively on chocolate ice cream?

If the main moral input our youth receive comes from music that glorifies emotion, lack of restraint, sex and anger, it doesn’t take a prophetic gift to see how they’ll turn out. Don’t expect them to become emotionally mature, intelligent, reliable or happy people. Look around you. The results are everywhere.

Though this article has not presented an extreme view of rock, its implications call for radical action from parents.

If you want an ongoing say in the moral development of your kids, exercise control over the music they listen to. From an early age, expose them to all sorts of music. Get them making music themselves and with you, playing instruments and in choirs.

Music can be a powerful positive force in



education and in relationship building. When I was a kid I started learning guitar, and my Dad started learning it with me. That’s a Dad! Of course young people need some freedom of choice, but within your guidelines. And don’t give up in the crucial teen years, when they start to resent control.

Music is where the war for your teens is on. If you don’t parent them, there’s a multi-billion dollar media industry ready to take your place.

Rock music is far from being a neutral medium. Christians wanting to ‘redeem’ it for Christ and for evangelism have a lot of problems to work through. You can change the words, but the music still speaks its same old message. Its character is far removed from the character of the gospel. You can’t do a rap version of the Beatitudes without radically altering their spirit: rap is not meek.

If you can make rock music that encourages reverence for authority, trust, putting to death the desires of the flesh, discipline and joy, you’ve come some way to resolving the problem.

If you can make rock that doesn’t rely on worldly wisdom, (eg seeming hip or cool) it’s looking hopeful. Because Christianity is not ‘cool’, and doesn’t try to be. If you can make rock that speaks to the mind, not so much the body, great. These are only a few of the issues to be resolved.

But I just don’t see how it can be done. Music like that will simply not be rock. It may, however, be good music which young people can relate to.

Using rock music to attract young people into the Church or to an evangelistic event, seems to me a bit like starting off a peace rally with a boxing match. You under-

mine your own message. It’s time we stopped it.

And if you want to know where I’m coming from, I’m a twenty-something musician: guitarist and song-writer.

*Jonathan Howes obtained a B.Mus from Sydney University and has taught music at St Patricks College, Strathfield. Jonathan also leads a Christian student group, the University Bible Study, at Sydney University. He worships at Smithfield, Sydney.*

# Past the post

*Postmodernism is playing in a school near you, reports David Burke.*

**T**hink about the kind of TV ads we used to see (and still sometimes do): A hair shampoo is promoted by a figure in a white coat who sits in a laboratory talking about chemical and acid balances and their technical benefits. A Volvo car is sold with talk of safety features and endurance qualities.

Now think about these current ads: A James Dean look-alike walks along a 1950s street scene with a punch line promoting a 1998 McDonalds burger. A Coke bottle changes shape and dances with people in a 1960s setting. A new-model Volvo is sold through the imagery of stylish design and young people away for a fun weekend. KFC fast food is sold with the line "that's the way I like it".

The second group of ads are examples of postmodern communication. Reality is suspended, its boundary with fantasy is collapsed, life is a game not to be taken too seriously and individual choice is king.

Postmodernism has affected our minds and schools for about the past 25 years and is still going strong. It is a swirling, changing rush of ideas that readily confuses and defies easy definition. One of its main features is a strong tendency to the view that things are not externally fixed, real or true. Rather, reality, truth and values are internal, individual and a matter of perspective. Postmodernism allows me to "construct" my own reality, truth and values.

How does this affect Australian schools? The effects of postmodernism on education are visible in three areas.

First, it affects views of reality. Good writers use imagination, although imagination had a tougher time in the modernist world of technology. Historically however, there was a clear and important boundary between external reality and the inner world of imagination.

Postmodernism blurs that boundary by making electronic images and mental concepts seem as authentic as the real world. The term "virtual reality" hints at this and implies a new understanding of reality: "If it's real to me, it's real." Meanwhile the world that we can see and touch may seem unreal to the extent that we personally don't experience it or engage with it.

As a developmental stage, very young children may have trouble distinguishing between the world of imagination and real-



ity. In a postmodernist culture, some older children and adults may relate better and have more sense of belonging in the world of their computer screen rather than their real families and friendships. How do you teach children who long to flee the classroom or family for their "real" world of cyberspace? How do they learn that actions and relationships matter and should be taken seriously, when "dead" people in cyberspace spring back to life for the next round of the game?

Such a view of reality threatens to separate people from each other, as each inhabits his or her own world. In a recent newspaper interview, the co-founder of the Melbourne band *Paradise Motel* said of his life: "It's very insular and you find it hard to interact with other people because you develop your own world. So much of my life is around that now and it sort of vacillates between being in a van and being in my room reading books or plugged into a computer. It's easy to forget how other people live their lives."

Second, postmodernism changes our understanding of knowledge. People once generally agreed that truth about an external world existed and was knowable. Opinions differed on the order and extent to which knowledge was gained by revelation, reason, observation or intuition, but there was confidence about knowledge and the ability of language to express it. Further, people believed a unified and consistent worldview was possible, however much they differed in the details.

When people think from a postmodern perspective, their idea of knowledge is

changed from truth towards opinion. I construct my interpretation and you construct yours. The effect of this shows in any text-based discipline, such as the study of English literature. A text's meaning is no longer determined or even initiated by what the author intended. Rather, it is created by each individual reader. The title of a 1993 Christian book on postmodernism, *The Culture of Interpretation*, captures this well.

Further, knowledge is fragmented. Increasingly people have blocks of knowledge on various matters, but with limited connections or consistency between these blocks. Vast quantities of information exist like the beads for a necklace without the string that connects them and brings order to their arrangement.

Listen again to a member of *Paradise Motel*: "I'm finding it harder and harder to, like, tell the truth. I don't know what the truth is any more. It's so complicated."

How can there be teaching and learning when our idea of "truth" moves towards one of opinion? Under this view of knowledge, even discovery-based approaches collapse, for there is nothing to discover except opinion, ours or others'.

**T**hird, postmodern thinking undermines traditional understanding of values.

Schools are communities which depend on common values to operate. As educating communities, they have a responsibility to teach and reinforce values that will enable students to take a positive place in family, church and society.

By allowing everyone to think what they like, postmodern thinking has a destructive effect on values. Artistic values are all in "the eye of the beholder" This leads to artworks that are deliberately offensive, such as the recent exhibition of a crucifix in urine. The same holds for ethical values of right and wrong. My "right" may be your "wrong".

Quite apart from the collapse of school as community, postmodern values leave a hole at the centre of education. What is the inner spring that shapes learning? Where is a sense of the important that deserves prime attention in the classroom?

The following words capture the bleakness of postmodernism and are chilling when applied to schools: "There is no light-

house keeper. There is no lighthouse. There is no dry land. There are only people living on rafts made from their own imagination. ... We are alone, adrift in a postmodern world." (John Crossman, quoted in *Truth is Stranger Than It Used to Be*, by Middleton & Walsh.)

Christian responses to postmodernism are similar to any other cultural shift. Some embrace it and compromise the faith. Others attack it. Some deny it and try to live in a nostalgic world of their own construction. Others again engage with it, seeking to know it, sift through its strengths and weaknesses, and try to adapt their teaching in ways which explore and challenge the emerging culture.

The most sensible thing for Christians to do is to engage with postmodernism, because it is there whether we like it or not. Government, Church, Christian and other private schools are all affected by it. So is our general culture, for those born after the late 1950s have been educated and entered adult life in an increasingly postmodern culture.

Further, postmodernism is neither all bad nor all good and Christians need to avoid the trap of moaning about all aspects of postmodernism and longing for the "good old days". For example, postmodernists recognise spiritual values and it is easier to talk about them now than in the days when many assumed that science and its allies had replaced religion. (Of course, the tendency of postmodernism to treat all religions as equal options chosen according to individual convenience is less welcome.)

Again, postmodernism challenges the view that all human problems can and will be solved by technical and scientific means. That is a welcome humility and creates room for Christian talk of the basic human problem being sin and the principal remedy being God's grace in Christ. Yet again, postmodernism challenges simplistic views of life by giving attention to the complexity of truth and reality and by seeing shades of grey.

Several matters need attention when Christians engage with postmodernism.

First, information. Christian educators need accurate and substantial information about postmodernism, rather than platitudes and prejudices. This information could be shared through in-service seminars for staff, parents, church and community members.

Second, discernment. Wisdom is needed to separate the good and the bad in postmodernism. It is also needed to avoid presentations of the gospel that appeal to postmodernists, but "go below the line" and surrender vital Christian truths. An example of this would be to commend the faith

simply because "it works for you".

Third, perspective. A child may come to school or home with green hair and nose rings, claiming this as individual self-expression. As a wise mother said, "it is not worth ruining a family for a hair cut". Educators may need to grit their teeth before some such things and focus on the key issues of reality, truth and values mentioned above.

Parents and teachers can help children in simple ways. In our home, we sometimes play 'Spotto', with family members competing to spot postmodernisms in TV advertising or programmes. By this, we are helped to stand outside of our culture, rather than being bathed in it. But be warned: turning off the TV does not make a family immune to postmodernism.

Above all, parents, churches and schools can show and offer real and loving relationships with other people and with God. This will touch the raw nerve of loneliness and

the shallowness of relationships that is created by postmodernism. We can commend Christianity as making sense of life and enabling individuals and society to function, because it fits with the way the things are. (This is the same as claiming that Christianity is true, but it minimises language alien to postmodernists).

We can never surrender Christianity as a matter of objective, supernatural, historic facts. However, we can present it in a way that is intelligible to a culture that lives by its feelings and thinks that history is bunk.

Postmodernists claim to liberate education from the tyranny of brainwashing in the modernist classroom. They may have a point there. However, in education as elsewhere, "the truth will set you free" only in discipleship to Jesus (John 8:32).

*David Burke is NSW director of Christian Education and a part-time lecturer at the Presbyterian Theological Centre, Burwood.*

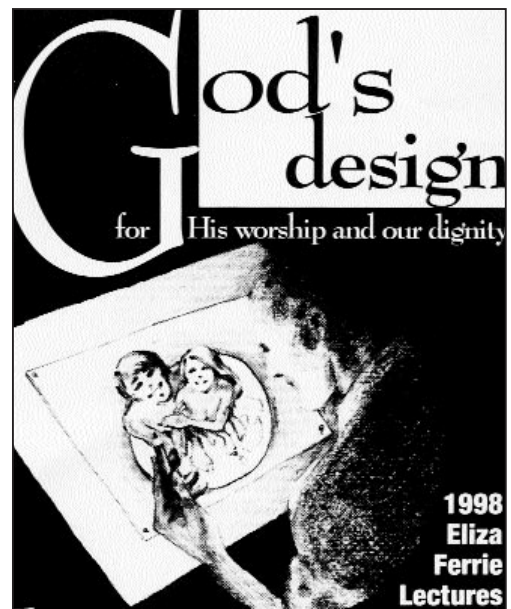
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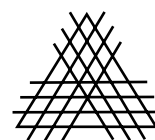
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Presbyterian Theological Centre

# Why Johnny can't tell right from wrong

*Neil Benfell suggests it's partly because we have gone wrong.*

**I**n the struggle for the hearts and minds of our young people, what can Christians and parents do to fight the moral confusion among our youth? I want to look at four different strategies.

First, we need to recover moral certainty ourselves. The time has come to recognise that moral confusion is not only out in the world, but affects Christian homes and schools as well. We have lost much of the moral confidence that is central to the faith. As a damaged nerve saps our strength, so lack of moral clarity leaves us dangerously exposed in raising children. The young have eyes as sharp as eagles in spotting our uncertainties.

The nerve of character building has been damaged by the idea that it is not fair — even for Christians — to try to have children follow what their parents believe! If we have a crisis of convictions while Johnny is a child, don't be surprised if he has a moral crisis as a teenager. If a school teaches spiritual and moral truth as matters of personal choice, it undercuts the authority of God.

Second, let's not underestimate the difficulty for children. At the early age of nine or 10, the focus of a child's life moves quickly from the family to the world. Peer influence increases. Children listen to other moral voices.

Most prime-time TV shows are an outrage to Christian virtue, but access to these is the rule, not the exception. The secular schools present a view of life begun by chance, lived in a meaningless world and an impersonal universe. Drug and sex "education" reduce sin to expected behaviour which can be "safely" managed. Rock/pop music culture, which is so full of moral rebellion, completes the unhinging process.

We can make the struggle easier for our youngsters by taking the initiative to control these factors at home and school.

Third, we must stress in our teaching that actions have consequences. A big part of moral growth is learning about what follows from our actions. At first base, we must teach the eternal consequences of life.



There is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun. We are squeamish about eternal judgment, and this note is vanishing from much preaching. We can expect little change in the moral crisis among our children if we are unfaithful to Scripture at this point. Restore the eternal consequences in the minds of your family, and your school and Sunday school students.

Actions have consequences in this life too. But a problem in teaching morality to young people is that they lack the experience of life to be able to work out consequences of actions for themselves. Moral teaching has to go well beyond "do this and don't do that". We must explain the reasons. Take the wisdom of Solomon for example. The Book of Proverbs is written to provide moral and spiritual wisdom for immature young people.

Fourth, we must rediscover the purpose of the Christian life. Too many Christians have become self-focused, seeking out personal peace and fulfilment. "Follow Jesus and you will have a happy life," we often tell the children.

If we imply this is what the faith is about, we sell them short and contribute to the crisis. We must teach the Bible in its full flowing context of God's plan moving forward in the Kingdom of Christ. We must call children to honour the King and all his laws, and prepare for a life of loving service in his Kingdom.

But young people need help to see what


God's Kingdom means for them. We have shrunk the idea of God's Kingdom so much that it has come to mean largely our personal enjoyment of peace with God. This strong tendency to push the Kingdom inwards saps moral energy from the personality, and undermines our capacity for discipleship.

Young people need to see the larger context of their personal Christian life. The Kingdom of God has been growing for more than 2000 years. Our life today is rooted in the events and experiences of the people of the Kingdom. Yet we and our young people are largely cut off from these roots.

The Hebrews carried Joseph's bones with them out of Egypt, as a tangible sign of their faith that God would keep his promises. It signified their continuity with Abraham, Isaac and Joseph, the context of their life, giving continuity and meaning. We 1990s Christians carry few "bones of Joseph" with us on our pilgrimage.

Losing our roots and a sense of continuity in the plan of God are morally destabilising. If we lack a vision of the great plan and purpose, there is no reason to restrain ourselves. There is no motive for sacrifice and service in a cause greater than ourselves. Most people have no idea of God's mighty deeds for our people, because their parents and teachers have not told them of the sacrifices and the revivals. In our moral confusion we are guilty of the charge of the prophets, "you have forgotten..."

Our children and students need to know how the Christian faith has shaped our society, our law and civil life; that our freedom is built ultimately on God's law and the gospel. They need to know of our saints and martyrs, reformers and preachers, our "heroes and heroines" of the faith. We must restore access to this heritage to our youth.

*Neil Benfell is a Presbyterian minister and principal of King's College, Warrnambool (Vic), who played a leading role in founding the college from 1983. Earlier, he lectured at a teacher's college in New Zealand. King's is a Christian school with 270 students.* 



# An evolving problem

*Carl Wieland blames some of the violence on a factor that sociologists don't recognise.*

According to neighbours in Springfield, Oregon, 15-year-old Kip Kinkel was a polite, even friendly boy. "He was an all-American kid who had a caring mother and father. This was not a red-neck family," said Dr Dennis Ellison. Nevertheless on Friday 22 May, Kinkel gunned down his mother and father and two fellow students at Thurston High School in cold blood.

There were some strange contradictions in Kinkel's make-up. He bragged about mutilating cats and squirrels and took a perverse delight in killing. Lindsay Parr, 14, recalled of Kip: "Other kids say 'I shot a deer.' Not Kip. He would say 'Yeah, but I sliced it open.'" Perhaps the violent streak was best revealed in his middle school year-book where Kip's classmates laughingly acclaimed him as "the guy most likely to start World War III".

Kinkel's crime is nothing new. It is part of an epidemic of violence by youngsters that is sweeping the western world. Rape, torture and murder by thrill-seeking teenagers has become so common that it is no longer possible to accept as adequate such answers as poverty or unemployment. Some of the offenders come from well-to-do families; some are high school honours students.

Those closely involved with such young offenders have noticed the chilling fact that they are less and less disturbed by conscience and remorse — youths brag about their exploits and shrug off their victims' pain.

In the days after Kinkel's atrocities at Thurston High School, a hand-painted sign appeared on the school's chain-link fence: "Will we ever learn?" In the midst of the grief in Springfield last month, these lessons were far from clear.

Ms Aletha Huston, a professor of child development at the University of Texas at Austin, suggested that violence on TV was probably the culprit. "It can feed the fantasies of disturbed adolescents." Understandably, the mayor of Springfield, Mr Bill Morissette, was keen to shift any blame from the local community. "This is not Springfield's problem; it is a societal problem."

While experts continue to search for the factors in tragedies such as the one in



Springfield, one potential culprit that is never put in the line-up is the teaching of evolution in our schools. Older readers can verify that at the same time as they have witnessed these and other symptoms of escalating violence among youth they have also seen (though most probably never made the connection) that evolution has become pushed as unassailable fact as never before.

You may be thinking, "surely he's not going to tell us that a 12-year-old learns about evolution and then decides as a result he's going to go out and mug someone?" Hardly. But children, as well as everyone else, have been deeply influenced by the general change in attitude all around them. Belief in evolution logically means to most people that the only claimed absolute standard of right and wrong (the Bible) is wrong. Children don't have to be able to spell "moral relativism" to be soaked in it everywhere they turn, and to act it out in their behaviour.

As evolution is more accepted, we see an increasing surrender to humanistic (man-centred) ethics. Surveys have shown that even many Christians now say they no longer believe in absolute truth.

Evolutionary humanism has even distorted the idea of "human rights". As embodied in the US Constitution, for example, people do have rights, based upon their essential dignity and worth as God's special creation in His image — though now fallen.

But these rights come along with a package of responsibilities — to God and to each other. Today people, including the very young, are more and more demanding

various "rights" without any responsibilities. The "right" to instant gratification of any impulse or thrill-seeking urge means, of course, that others get hurt. But why should that matter in an evolutionary world? It supposedly helped our ape-man ancestors to get ahead if they clubbed their rivals, didn't it? And if the Bible can't be trusted about origins in Genesis, there's no need to fear the judgment in Revelation. The standard becomes self-centred opinion.

Sin is, of course, the root cause. The family, the church and the state are all God-ordained means of partially restraining the expression and effects of human sin. *Time* magazine says that "society has generally been able to control and channel aggressive impulses through its basic institutions — home, schools and church. But these moral pillars are crumbling".

Why? Primarily because of the increasing abandonment of biblical truth spear-headed by school indoctrination of evolution. The "rules" now evolve along with society. Young people have no moral anchor to give even their rebellion any meaning — and they see no purpose in an evolutionary universe.

The grassroots "creation awakening" which is gathering force offers a ray of hope amid the darkness. More Christians are getting behind solid creation ministries which put the straightforward Word of God above the opinions of men (including the opinions of professing Christians who, trained in the humanist system, urge many varieties of compromise on Genesis). As this continues to happen, more and more other Christians will be reached in this way, strengthening their spiritual foundations (and those of their children) and becoming more able to effectively reach their unconverted neighbours.

God willing, we may yet see, as His people repent of their compromise with evolutionary teaching, a prayer-filled return to truth and righteousness throughout the modern world.

*Dr Carl Wieland is the chief executive of Answers in Genesis in Brisbane, and is a director of affiliated creation ministries in Britain and the United States. He is the founder and editor of Creation magazine, which now has subscribers in more than 120 countries.*

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# Colourful characters

*Character education is a vital part of the school's task, reports Robert Iles.*

**I**t was late one Saturday afternoon when an angry parent accosted me just outside my home. "Dr Iles, I want to speak to you. You are being very unfair to my son and I am very angry. I want this injustice corrected or I shall take the matter further."

The boy in question had been denied being awarded his colours even though he had played all season in a college firsts sporting team. I was accused of unfairness and, indeed, victimisation even though the Colours Committee had recommended that his colours be withheld due to his failure to fulfil good citizenship requirements.

Many students see gaining colours as the premier student achievement. It entitles the recipient to have a gold trim and the college crest added to his blazer. These awards may be received for outstanding achievement in the academic, sporting or co-curricular life of the college. But a number of general requirements must also be satisfied. One is that "students must be of good character".

The reason this parent was so upset that Saturday afternoon was the belief that a boy's conduct should have no bearing upon the award of colours. But at Scots we believe that it's not just winning that matters; it's how you play the game as well.

Training in the development of good character is, I believe, a primary responsibility of both home and school, especially a Christian school. While the Bible makes clear that "good character" will not ensure our salvation, it does continually stress the importance of character development (e.g. Psalm 15). It is considered an essential component for building fair and just human communities (e.g. the writings of the minor prophets). Most schools recognise the importance of developing character.

But all is not well in the area of character education. Over the past 30 years education in Western societies, including Australia, has, in large part, been captured by the values-clarification movement, which aims at helping students in their personal decision-making.

This is not a bad thing in itself. Of course we want students to think independently and critically, and to show commitment to personal values. But, as one educational researcher states, "produc(ing) individuals with greater social and political



awareness is not the same thing as producing individuals of character and integrity".

The effect of the rampant individualism that is encouraged by values clarification is to destroy any notion of what is traditionally seen as character education. The effects are all too obvious, as can be seen from the comments of a Canadian schoolboy. He wrote: "Moral values cannot be taught and people must learn to use what works for them. In other words, 'whatever gets you through the night, it's all right'. The essence of civilisation is not moral codes but individualism ... The only way to know when your values are getting sounder is when they please you more."

But such relativism and individualism do not and cannot provide an acceptable basis for the development of just and productive human societies. Certainly, the Bible warns us against such a pathway. It's a disaster when schools encourage it.

**C**haracter education has been defined as being "based on the idea that there are traits of character children ought to know, that they learn these by example, and that once they know them, they need to practise them until they become second nature".

Character development relates to doing everything to the level of your personal best and learning to accept the necessary external discipline as well as the required self-discipline.

Sometimes hard decisions have to be faced since character education is ultimately based upon developing a clear knowledge of right and wrong. Denying colours to a

student may be part of the much more important process of training in a knowledge of right and wrong. It also teaches that reasonable rules must be followed if a community is to be fair and just.

One can trace such educational thinking from at least the time of Plato. He spoke of the disciplined training of the character of the young in order that there be a moral citizenry.

In looking for a solid foundation upon which to build the character of our youth, what better starting-point can we have than the Ten Commandments which God gave to Moses and upon which so many of the moral values within our Christian heritage are based? We are talking here about honesty, integrity of purpose, doing all to the best of one's ability, the caring for others and the learning of good teamwork.

Obviously, fundamental character change only takes place when people repent and believe the Gospel. Nevertheless, schools do have a role to play. Character formation in the school is promoted largely through ethos and atmosphere, team sports, symbols, activities, assemblies, meaningful statements of school purposes and priorities and well-considered codes of conduct and responsibilities and their implementation.

In many societies, stories have been an important method of passing on values and understanding. Stories also help us make sense of our lives and the happenings with which they are filled. Parents can help children from a young age by reading to them and encouraging their children to continue the habit. Not only will they advance a child's literacy skills, but also an understanding of worthwhile virtues. Obviously, the quality and suitability of the literature needs to be appropriate both to age and values. Many of us know only too well how formative to our moral and spiritual growth were the stories read to us at a young age.

The Bible itself is pre-eminent for this purpose. It has the added benefit of making our youth "wise unto salvation".

*Dr Robert Iles has been principal of Scots College, Sydney, since 1994. Previously he was curriculum coordinator at PLC Melbourne. He holds a PhD in Educational Administration from the University of Alberta, Canada.*

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# Reform school

*Robert Burford suggests a model of Christian education.*

I was an educator before I became a Christian, and I confess I had little idea of what it would mean to be a Christian educator. The task of combining my Christian faith and teaching career posed many problems.

What would I do about the large number of young ones from Christian homes that, in my experience, seemed drawn to the world's moral and cultural standards with so little resistance? Why do so many, upon entering university, the later secondary years, or the work force, seem to be confronted with moral crises that they are unprepared to deal with.

"Max" was a classic example. A bright youngster from a Christian home, he began his secondary schooling with a flourish. Max's grades soon began to fall and some "pretty average" moral and social behaviour with his peers plagued his latter secondary years. Soon he had left school, home and Christian profession.

Max's problem is complex but common. Is there anything we can do, as Christian educators committed to the word of God, to prepare our young ones better for a God-honouring life? A life where they work to make every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. A life that will not yield ground to a culture that makes its own rules and that seeks minute by minute to replace God's sovereignty with man's.

Of course there can be no real solution without God first working His grace in them, but it is our responsibility as parents and educators to prepare the ground. God graciously includes the children of Christians in His covenant of grace. Along with this privilege comes parental responsibility to provide Christian education that equips children for all of life. The church and other organisations can help.

The Christian school is one such organisation. The reason I moved to teach at a Christian school was in part motivated by the sentiment expressed by J. Gresham Machen nearly 75 years ago. He said: "I can see little consistency in a type of Christian activity which preaches the gospel on the street corners and at the ends of the earth, but neglects the children of the covenant by abandoning them to a cold, unbelieving secularism."

Christianity embraces all of life. We want our children not only to survive in a



hostile world but to be genuine reformers in every realm of human endeavour. Surely we must be deadly serious about the way we educate them. In an age where the Christian home as an educational institution has largely ceased to function, the Christian school often bears more than its fair share of the burden of teaching that the Christian life cannot be lived on the basis of anti-Christian thought and influence.

Bayside Christian College is a parent-controlled college in Frankston, Victoria. By constitution it is bound to offer education that is biblical and in harmony with the Westminster Confession of Faith. The college's senior school has an interesting way of proceeding with the education of its students in the vulnerable 16 to 18 age group.

We believe that the student must come to view all of reality in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ and hence must develop a Christian worldview.

At our college we develop Christian worldview by using studies from within the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). Many VCE subjects are given broad, general guidelines that make them wide open to a Christian interpretation.

All senior students must undertake a compulsory core of three studies designed to develop Christian worldview. This gives them a Biblical framework or perspective from which they can approach many of the issues (often moral in nature) that arise in other studies and life in general.

The first of the core study units is a course in biblical theology where we present a Christ-centred approach to

interpreting the Scriptures (Luke 24:27, 44, Matt. 5:17 etc). We aim to open up the Old Testament and teach students to come to grips with the unity of the Bible.

The second core study is historical. Students study periods of history in the Christian era where they examine the events in the lives of those who have tried to think and live in a way that is consistently God-honouring, often in the face of terrible odds and persecution. At present this work is an in-depth study of the Puritans in England and America.

Finally, at year 12 level, students examine the impact of the history of Western thought on Christianity. This is a real "know your enemy" study and is particularly useful for those considering further study in our secular universities.

Christian educators need to rediscover two important emphases that should permeate all education if we are to address the problems, particularly the moral dilemmas, that face our youth.

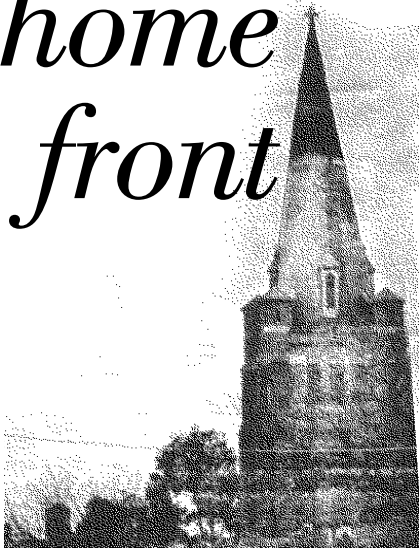
The first is ethical responsibility. Education is an ethical undertaking. Christian schools in particular must aim to see moral character develop in their students. Students need to know that the goodness or badness of an act is *not* determined by its possible consequences but by the word of God. No part of the curriculum can be immune to this principle.

The second involves training the mind. Recent teaching theories seem to follow lines of least resistance and cater to the natural indolence of youth by avoiding the hard labour of learning facts. In emphasising self expression and independent thinking, we have forgotten that in order to be an independent, original thinker in any area, we must first pay due attention to what is known.

An education based on the sovereignty of God, where God and man have their proper place, can prepare our youth for life. If the church, home and school cooperate in this task, our young ones can be greatly equipped to overcome the moral and social decline that many now experience.

*Robert Burford is head of senior school at Bayside Christian College, Frankston, Victoria, and an elder at Frankston Presbyterian Church.*

# home front



## Queensland Assembly focuses on care

Pastoral care and reaching out with the Gospel were a particular focus of the Queensland Assembly in May — attended by more than 150 commissioners from across the state — as well as addressing the usual assembly procedures. The guest speaker was **Dr Vishal Manglawadi**, associated with the L'Abri Fellowship, who is emerging as a Christian voice from India with a message to the post-modern world. He spoke on “the Bible and civilisation in the second millennium”. The assembly began with a rally on 17 May under the theme “Loving the Lord, loving the lost and counting the cost”, which drew a congregation of 1100 from throughout Queensland. Speakers included the Moderator General, the **Rt Rev Bruce Christian**. There were several testimonies and a special segment for children conducted by the Christian Education Department.



The incoming moderator, **Rev David Secomb** (above), minister of Toowoomba

South, was inducted at the opening service in St Paul's Church, Brisbane, on 18 May. His address focused on “the Gospel as the power of God unto the salvation of all who believe”. Five new ministerial Assembly members were presented to the moderator: **Rev G. Samuel** (Vision 5 Charge at Mudgeeraba), **Rev W. Redgen** (assistant at St Stephens, Ipswich), **Rev N. McKinlay** (North Pine Charge), **Rev T. Sadler** (PIM Charleville) and **Rev J. Lievano** (Coorparoo). Assembly demonstrations included Home Mission, Outreach and Nurture, and World Evangelisation Committee.

## Langbridge to be 1999 moderator

The Queensland Assembly voted as moderator-elect for 1999 **Rev John Langbridge**, senior minister of St Stephen's, Ipswich. The assembly also decided to replace the Department of Social Mission with a new body, **PresCare**, which will be governed by a board of five members, with skills in management, finance and social care. If sessions and presbyteries agree, the Committee on Training for the Ministry will be replaced by a **Committee of Ministries Training**, which will also control the proposed Bible college. The new structure allows for the part-time appointments of a director, promotion officer and administrative/financial staff.

## Eventful times at St Kilda

Presbyterian Youth, Victoria, hold monthly gatherings in the **St Kilda Church**, seeking to reach those in the metropolitan and near country areas of Victoria. Entertainers **Adrian Kebbe** of Ringwood-Heathmont Presbyterian Church and **Bill Medley** of South Yarra present a varied program of light entertain-

ment leading on to clear Gospel teaching. A musical group, **Sons of Korah** (pictured) from Geelong, sings Psalms in a pleasant contemporary style. The next “event” will be held at the church, on the corner of Alma Road and Barkly Street, St Kilda, at 5.30pm on Saturday 18 July. For more information, contact David Assender on (03) 9509 1494.

## Outreach teams for Brisbane's streets

Presbyterian churches in Brisbane have combined to plan a coffee shop outreach in the heart of the city. They want to bring the Gospel to the many who frequent the city on Friday nights. Plans include sending trained street teams into the city to talk to people and invite them to Ann Street Presbyterian Church, where they can play games and talk. Plans include entertainment with a Gospel presentation. The organising committee seeks volunteers to be trained for helping in the coffee shop. It asks for prayer for the venture and help in setting up and furnishing the building.

## The rounds at Circular Head

Presbyterians in the Circular Head district of north-western Tasmania are rejoicing in the ministry of **Rev John Mercer**, minister emeritus from Queensland, who has answered the call of his son, **Rev Philip Mercer**, for assistance in the isolated Stanley-Rocky Cape-Mawbanna Parish. The saints of Circular Head were almost all born and bred in the area, and although their parish is small and distant, their faith is warm and strong. The Bible study group of nine at Rocky Cape/Mawbanna and another group at Stanley are studying “growing in the Christian life”. A weekly ladies' Bible study and prayer group has been meeting since





1996. The church plans to add two elders to the session. Last year the members of the three congregations were joined by Christians from other parts of Tasmania who formed the Mobile Mission Maintenance Team, which repaired the buildings and painted them white with Presbyterian blue trim. John and Phyllis Mercer write: "Our manse is opposite the Stanley church and hall. It is a delight to look out and see the acceptably kept grounds and well preserved buildings with the seas of Bass Strait behind them. Please pray for the church folk to reach out to their neighbours, friends and family, that these buildings might be regularly filled with those who are seeking the Lord while He may be found."

## MYF/PFA Reunion

A reunion of **Methodist Youth Fellowship** and **Presbyterian Fellowship of Australia** members from 1940 onwards will be held on Saturday 24 October at Halls Gap in the Victorian Grampians. Morning and afternoon teas and lunch will be provided for \$10, tea is an additional \$6, and those wishing to stay over may arrange accommodation with Ian Baker, 36a Wavell St, Horsham 3400. Please bring memorabilia, photos, stories etc. Further details are available from Ian Westerland (03) 5385 7340 or Monica Gaulke (03) 5389 1223.

## A fresh Perspective

**Perspective** — *A Journal for Bible Teachers* is produced by a panel of Presbyterian ministers in NSW. The latest issue contains articles on office politics, a fresh look at church leadership, discussion on how much of himself a preacher should share with his congregation, and "Postcards from Paul," first in a series of sermons on Paul's second missionary journey, as well as book reviews and computer advice. The publisher is **David Thurston**, the NSW director of evangelism; the editor is **Phil Campbell**, minister of Maclean, contributor to the computer section of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and Culture Watch editor of *Australian Presbyterian*; and the subscription manager is **Luke Tattersall** (minister of Mullumbimby). Send all enquiries and subscriptions to Luke Tattersall, 16 Chinbible Ave, Mullumbimby 2482, phone (02) 6684 3618, email [luket@om.com.au](mailto:luket@om.com.au), or visit their Web-site at <http://www.perspective.ml.org>.

## Five decades of faithful service



**Wilfrid H. Crompton** (above) has resigned as session clerk after more than five decades at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Mt Barker (in the Adelaide Hills). Ordained an elder in June 1944, he has served for 53 of the past 54 years as Session Clerk, 40 years as Sunday school superintendent and 20 years as church treasurer. At a special lunch recently the minister of Mt Barker, **Rev Wally Zurrer**, expressed appreciation on behalf of the church for Wilf's devotion, and presented him with a book signed by all members. Mr Crompton has been succeeded as session clerk by **Mr Robert Love**, son of the late Rev J.R.B. Love.

## Women find their WINGS

The sun shone warmly on the palms, pool and sea at Darlington Park near Coffs Harbour for the first **WINGS** (Women IN Gospel Sharing) Conference, where 180 women from the top quarter of NSW gathered for this new ministry of the Evangelism Committee.

**Lesley Ramsay** from Liverpool brought insights into Jesus' ministry from John 14-16. Two other women from Sydney, **Sheila Spencer** and **Christine Jensen** joined Lesley and other local people to present 12 workshops on children, marriage, feminism, public education, women's ministry in the church as well as brushing up evangelism tools.

To organise a WINGS conference in your area or for more information about this ministry, phone Louise Campbell (Maclean) (02) 6645 2060 or Ngaire Moore (Coffs Harbour) (02) 6651 2301.

## New ministers

**Rev Jared Courtney Hood** was ordained to the ministry and inducted as minister of Moe-Yarram (Vic) by the

Presbytery of Gippsland on 23 May. **Rev Paul Raymond Sheely** was ordained and inducted as colleague and successor to **Rev Bryson Smith** at Dubbo (NSW) on 20 May.

**Rev Jamie Newans** was ordained and inducted to Woy Woy (NSW) on 15 May.



**Jamie and Jenny Newans** with their sons **Joshua** and **Timothy**.

## Sacrificial beast and sanctified giving

The good folk of **Garah** near Moree in north-western NSW knew their church needed a fair amount of work to fix some large cracks in the walls, replace tiles and spruce up the building. A local family was having some work done on their property, so the same man was engaged to do the work on the church, saving costs. "We weren't sure how we were going to pay for the work," the *Moree Presbyterian News* reports, "but through the sale of a beast and some funds made available to us, we were able to pay for most of the costs. The rest has had to come out of general funds, which we praise God for having."

## New elders

**Bruce Diggins** was ordained and inducted to the session of Bowral-Mittagong (NSW) on 19 April.

**William Francis James** was ordained and inducted to the session of Rutherford on the same day.

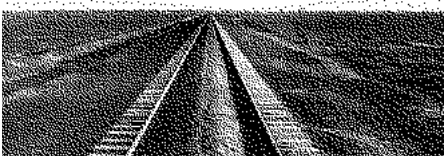
## With Christ

**Rev Gregory Paul Smith**, Minister of Ku-ring-gai (NSW), died peacefully at home on 16 May 1998 after a short illness, aged 42. Greg was born and raised at Taree on the north coast of NSW, coming to faith in Christ as his Lord and Saviour during his first year at Newcastle University, from which he graduated as a maths teacher in

1979. He ministered at Bondi, then Kuring-gai, and served as convener of the NSW Christian Education Committee and was keenly involved with Presbyterian Youth. Rev David Burke, director of Christian Education, says of him: "Greg was respected by his peers as a consistent Christian, a dedicated pastor, an encourager, a leader in strategic re-visioning of denominational youth work and an able chairman of meetings. He was a team player in ministry and sought opportunities to learn from others and share fellowship with them." The sympathy of the church is extended to his wife, Judy, and children Tracy, Matthew and Tim.

Mr Arthur Henry Ramsay, an elder of St Andrew's, Chatswood (NSW) passed away on 19 May, aged 82. Arthur had been a professional proofreader, a task at which he excelled and a gift which he brought to the service of the church, including proofreading *APL* for some five years from 1980. He was also a Sunday school teacher for more than 50 years and a lay preacher. "A kind, gentle, yet forthright man, Arthur will always be remembered with respect and affection. He walked very closely with his Lord," writes Barrie Breeze, session clerk of Chatswood. Sympathy is extended to Marjorie, his wife of 54 years.

## across australia



### Gathered at Canberra

The 10th anniversary of the National Gathering in Canberra on 30 May coincided with the Global March for Jesus. Christians rallied from across Australia to come together as one and witness for their Lord, pray for the nation and its people and for the suffering church around the world. Among them was the Presbyterian Church of Australia's Moderator General, the Rt Rev Bruce Christian.

Rt Rev Bruce Christian, left,  
with Rev Fred Nile

### Help fight drug abuse

Christians concerned at the descent into drug and alcohol abuse by so many Australians may get notes to help them in concerted prayer against these evils. Graeme Rule, director of Drug-Arm (formerly the Temperance Alliance), says Christians need to recognise this as a deep spiritual problem, and to mobilise spiritual weapons in the warfare against it. "We need to petition our Heavenly Father for significant changes in our community," he says. "We need to pray for wisdom and authority for all working in drug and alcohol treatment and prevention. Secondly we need to pray for business and government, that our leaders will see that unemployment provides the culture for drug use to spread at epidemic levels. Thirdly we need to become targeted about our prayers, seeking out from organisations specific matters and, confidentially, specific people to pray for." For more information or prayer notes, contact Mr Rule, Drug-Arm, 9 Mason Street, Dandenong 3175, phone (03) 9794 9296 or fax (03) 9793 1006.

### Congregationalists open Chinese church

The Fellowship of Congregational Churches is rejoicing at the opening of the new Chinese Congregational Church at Ryde in Sydney's north-western suburbs. *The Australian Congregationalist* reports that more than 200 adults and 60 children gathered at the Ryde Church on Sunday 8 February for the inaugural service led by Mr Barry Berryman, president of the FCC. Rev Samuel Chan and Pastor Samson Chu will serve as the pastoral leadership team for the Padstow, Campsie and Ryde Congregational Churches.



PHOTO: RAMON WILLIAMS

### Stones cry out on the Net

Dr Tas Walker, of Chapel Hill (Qld), has set up an Internet site about geology and the Bible. For more than 20 years he has been involved in planning, design and operation of power stations. He has developed models for various aspects of the power industry and has assessed the cost impacts of geology on power station earth works. Dr Walker believes that relating geology to the Bible involves a classic problem of linking data from different sources — to make a successful connection we must be familiar with both sources. Dr Walker hopes the model will become widely understood and applied to everyday problems in earth science and mineral exploration. The address of the site is:

<http://student.uq.edu.au/~s938345>.

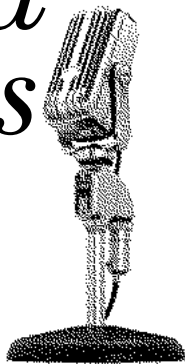
### Congregational leader called home

Rev Ray Best, one of the stalwarts of the cause of continuing Congregationalism after 1977, was called home on 22 March after a short and difficult time of illness. A thanksgiving service attended by 500 people was held on 26 March at Miranda Congregational Church where Ray had ministered from 1964 to 1989. He had been president of the Congregational Union of NSW in 1969-70 and of the Fellowship of Congregational Churches in 1977-78 and 1990-91.

### Beware bond frauds

Members of church groups have been targeted by frauds promoting international bond scams, with some church members losing much of their life savings. Scheme promoters suggest these investments as ways to substantially increase funds for church ministry. As a result, funds set aside for tithes and ministry support have been lost. Members of the Baptist Church, Assemblies of God and Mormons have come forward to the Australian Securities Commission when the promised returns never arrived. The ASC warns all Australians that when thinking of investing in any scheme they should invest only if they get a prospectus registered with ASC (phone 1300 300 630). If in doubt, avoid any scheme which asks you to keep details confidential, and invest only through licensed or properly authorised investment advisers.

# world news



## Pitter patter of tiny feet

**D**arrell and Margaret Thatcher, missionaries of our church at Talua Ministry Training Centre in Vanuatu, report: "Since I last wrote we have had a four-week holiday in Australia, were caught in Vila due to the January riot, have gone through a state of emergency and a general election resulting in a change of government, had a great visit from one of our friends, welcomed four new staff members, joined the internet (email: talua@vanuatu.com.vu), started Luke at kindergarten and saw Nicole start to walk. A busy start to the year!" Just for good measure, four cyclones have threatened Vanuatu this season, and their home has been invaded by centipedes, some up to 15 centimetres long!

## New UBS secretary

**R**ev Fergus Macdonald, a minister of the Free Church of Scotland, was commissioned as the new general secretary of the United Bible Societies on 29 March in Sao Paulo's Independent Presbyterian Cathedral, Brazil, at a service which also celebrated 50 years' service of the Bible Society of Brazil. Mr Macdonald is no stranger to South America, having spent several years as a missionary in Peru.

## Cook provides daily bread

**R**ev David Cook, the principal of Sydney Missionary and Bible College and a Presbyterian minister, led the Bible studies at the European Christian Mission's biennial conference held recently in Salou, Spain. *ECM News* reports that he gave a superb series of daily Bible studies on Ephesians and his wife, Maxine, shared three seminar sessions with the ladies. **Jim**

**Bosma**, Australian director of ECM, reports that the main focus of the conference was on developing a healthy, growing body of Christ.

## Funds help TEAR projects

**I**n thanking the Presbyterian churches throughout Australia who support **TEAR Australia's** annual Christmas appeal, the director of TEAR Australia, **Steve Bradbury**, advises that \$171,695 was raised from the latest appeal (up from \$170,301 the previous year). Steve advises that this money has helped the following projects:

- SERVE's relief and rehabilitation programme in Afghanistan among refugees. This evangelical mission has been serving the Afghan people for more than 20 years.
- United Mission in Nepal's long-term development programmes.
- The Javanese Christian Church's technical programme for youth in central Java.
- The Reformed Church of East Africa's agricultural development project in Eldoret, Kenya, providing essential "know-how" to farming communities in the west of Kenya.

## Church of Scotland accepts lottery cash

**T**he Church of Scotland General Assembly voted in May to drop its ban on the use of lottery funds for church projects. *ChristianNet News Service* reports that the ban was introduced when the lottery was launched and has been seen as limiting the Kirk's ability to take part in community projects where such funding is already used. The change was made with a narrow majority of 11 after a long and vigorous debate.

## Braid's Indian adventure

**R**ev Greg Braid, a PCA missionary working with Wycliffe Bible Translators, preached to 5000 people in the open air at the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of India in April. He reached the assembly at Nongbah just in time to be welcomed as an official guest at the morning session. There were 410 delegates, including **Rev. B. Rai** from the **Bible Society of India**. Greg reports that the

assembly proceeded like an Australian one but with shorter debate, leaving more business to be dealt with by executive committee. Each morning began with a Bible study and each evening a public service of worship. On the Sunday there were services at 7:30am, 10am, 1:30pm and 7pm. Greg was asked to preach at 1:30pm and to prepare to speak for two hours. The site for the Sunday services was in the open air with shelter for the delegates, choir and preacher. About 5000 people attended the service, but because of the cold and wet Greg only preached for 1.5 hours, and felt uplifted due to the prayer support and thereby God's grace.

## Victorian moderator visits India

**T**he moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, **Rev Keith Bell**, spent four weeks in February and March visiting missionaries in India, and found that Australians are comparative novices at multiculturalism. India has more than 1600 language groups, each with its own culture. He reports that the highlights included visiting a Bible translators writing workshop, and visiting **Carol Whipp** and the **Braid** family. Carol is completing Hindi language studies and is involved in a palliative care ministry in Delhi. The Braids are based in Mussoorie, where the children attend the Woodstock school, Rosemary is a librarian, and Greg is making valuable contacts with tribal Christian workers and other branches of the Church.

## Crisis for Trinidad church

**T**he 130-year-old **Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago** is still recovering from a \$1 million fraud apparently perpetrated by one of its lay ministers, who has been suspended. The moderator, the **Rt Rev Everson Sieunarine**, has confirmed that the money is missing but says the church is not broke, as has been rumoured. He says the bank has been providing assistance with loans at low interest rate. The larger concern is spiritual, as church members are appalled to think that a man who stood in the pulpit to pray and preach could so deceive them. The Presbyterian Church has only a small following among Trinidad's 1.2 million people, most of whom are Roman Catholic, Hindu or Moslem. AP

# The Fugitive

*Andrew Clarke describes the trembling, hungry hand of the flesh.*

In the Warner Brothers movie *The Fugitive* the main character, Dr Richard Kimble, is on the run. He has been falsely accused of his wife's murder. Exhausted and breathless, he flees an army of police to escape a gross injustice. In the true story of the Bible, you and I are on the run. We want to believe in our innocence, but as God closes in, His truth reveals that we are guilty offenders. Unlike Kimble, we deserve to be captured, tried, and punished for there is a stubborn rebel within us. This is what the Apostle Paul calls the "flesh." He says: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells" (Romans 7:18).

The flesh is our sinful orientation which refuses to submit to God. It is the soul, the mind, the body — the whole person — in a state of sin. The flesh runs from God because it has a constant urge to disobey. It is the relentless drive behind all our sins. Like a drug-addict, it extends a trembling, hungry hand to accept temptation.

The flesh is one of three spiritual enemies identified by Paul in Ephesians 2:1-3. He writes: "We all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." Through Christ, the flesh has been struck a fatal blow in the life of the believer: "Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24). However, this dying enemy continues to wrestle with us until it is completely destroyed when we enter our heavenly rest.

As we look around for the underlying reason for the decline in spirituality amongst Christians today, we usually focus on external causes. We look at the influence of television and secular education. But the Apostle Peter tells us that we should look

within ourselves. Telling the Church how to be strong and effective, Peter does not focus on outward opposition but on an inward battle. He says: "Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11). These fleshly lusts are the source of our discontent, depression, and defeat.

The Bible calls us to discover the full extent of our sin. So often we are like the *Titanic* cruising along and defying the ice in the water around us. We want to believe that our small misdemeanours are nothing to worry about. However, they are but the tip of the activity of our sinful nature. The



flesh is far more subtle and pervasive.

The 16th century Puritans referred to the flesh as "pollution". They realised that it is present in our every motive, corrupting both our beliefs and our behaviour. A Puritan prayer shows how wide and deep sin is in our lives: "*Sin is my malady, my monster, my foe, my viper; born in my birth;*

*alive in my life; strong in my character; dominating my faculties; following me as a shadow; inter-mingling with my every thought; my chain that holds me captive in the empire of my soul.*"

Since the flesh is an internal problem, all the best external changes will not remedy it. Christians will still remain weak and ineffective until there has been an empowering by the Spirit of God. Paul writes: "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

A great counterfeit of our age is the horrible caricature of the work of the Spirit. His presence is often misrepresented as a variety of physical and mental sensations. But the true mark of the Spirit's work is the holiness He produces in our lives as He subdues the raging of the flesh in our hearts. This holiness is not gained through Spirit-induced laughter but through tears of repentance. We must draw near to God with a tender conscience confessing that we have been all too ready to allow the flesh to manipulate us.

Walking in the Spirit is about communing intimately with God. We must listen to Him as He speaks to us in His Word, and we must talk to Him seeking guidance and help in prayer. As we do this we will be better able to access the solution because we will more accurately identify the problem.

Many years ago there was a discussion in *The Times* in London about what was wrong with the world. Prominent personalities offered their comments. During this debate, *The Times* published the shortest letter it ever printed: "What is wrong with the world? I am. Yours faithfully, G.K. Chesterton." This man understood that the flesh was the real reason for the spiritual decline and the moral crisis of the 20th century.

When we complain about the decline in Christian living and the loss of vitality in the church, we should allow God's truth to search our hearts and assess the influence of the flesh in our lives. When we ask the question, "What is wrong with my life and with the Church today?" let's answer honestly and say: I am.

*Andrew Clarke is minister of Bendigo Presbyterian Church, and serves on the Victorian Church and Nation committee.*



**Friday August 7 1988**

**1800 640 250**



# The Plague

Andrew Clarke examines how the world can contaminate us.

The world in which we live is very unhealthy for our spiritual well-being. In the same way we strive to protect ourselves from physical ailments, we must be aware of the spiritual contamination that is all around us. It infects our Christian living and makes us spiritually sick and weak.

In the 17th century the bubonic plague came to London and killed more than 150,000 men, women, and children. In 1665, as people began to flee, the writer Daniel Defoe recorded: "It filled me with very serious thoughts of the misery that was coming upon the city, and the unhappy condition of those that would be left in it."

We live in the unhappy condition of those left in a world contaminated by evil. The problem is not found in the creation God has made, but in the way sinful people have shaped their lives within it. The Apostle Paul says that believers "once walked according to the course of this world" (Ephesians 2:1-3) and that the world continues to be our spiritual enemy.

The "world" is the combined effect of all people driven by the "flesh". It is the degraded values, lifestyles, and systems that make up the environment in which we live. The Apostle John warns us: "For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world" (1 John 2:16). Everything in the world is the opposite of the way God meant it to be.

One factor that explains why Christian spirituality has become vague and undefined today is that we have failed to draw a clear line between the church and the world. There is no longer a clear understanding of the Christian life. Secular under-currents have caused our thinking to drift a long way from our biblical moorings. We have reduced the Christian faith to religious worship and limited morality. We have abandoned the broad and comprehensive application of the Bible to all of life, especially our thinking.

The world confronts us whenever we pick up a newspaper or magazine, turn on the television or radio, sit in a classroom or cafe, or interact with anyone around us. As we consider these influences, Paul says: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"

(Romans 12:2).

This means that we need to be reprogrammed. The world distorts and corrupts the data of our minds in the same way that a computer virus creates havoc in a PC. Our minds need to be corrected through careful Bible study. This begins with listening to sound preaching in weekly worship and extends to engaging in discussions in small group meetings. It also involves regular personal attention to God's Word and a daily prayerful commitment to follow it.

This challenge is more difficult today



because many Christian leaders fail to promote the need for spiritual renewal and distinction from the world. Instead there is a strong emphasis on accepting the world and "not judging" others.

David Wells addresses this problem in his book *No Place For Truth* in which he

describes a conversation with a student after a theology lecture. The student asked: "Why should I spend so much money on a theology course when it is so irrelevant to my desire to minister to God's people?" This question reveals the popular idea that peoples' needs can be effectively met without God's truth being applied to their lives.

In many church programmes modern marketing techniques have far more influence than spiritual principles. Instead of contending for the "faith once delivered to the saints," church leaders survey unbelievers to find out what they want to hear and see when they come to a service. It is true that Paul went to the marketplace and was "all things to all men," but he carefully established the worship and conduct of the church on spiritual principles.

To build the church's life and witness on the values and priorities of the modern concert hall is to imply that Paul built the church on the model of the Roman theatre, which was clearly not the case. The old saying holds true: the Church must be *in* the world but not *of* the world.

In Shakespeare's *Henry V*, King Harry wants to defy the popular conventions of his day and says to Princess Katherine: "We are the makers of manners." In the same way the Christian must not be controlled by the patterns of this world. We must reign with Christ who has "overcome the world" (John 16:33) and have the commitment and the wisdom to "make the manners" and follow the lifestyle that honours and pleases God. "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

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# The Phantom

*The devil is real but defeated, writes Andrew Clarke.*

*Sing once again with me  
Our strange duet; My power over you  
Grows stronger yet.  
And though you turn from me,  
To glance behind, The Phantom of the  
Opera is there —  
Inside your mind.*

With a haunting melody the Phantom sings this to Christine in Andrew Lloyd Weber's famous production. But this is also a theme from our own experience. We all know what it is to be stalked by a tempter — someone who entices us and seeks to control us.

The Apostle Paul unmasks this very real phantom and reveals him to be "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:1-3). Better known as Satan or the devil, this evil being is our spiritual enemy.

In the first temptation (Genesis 3:1-5) the essence of the devil's activity is revealed to be deception. God is the author of truth. The devil is the father of lies. The basic guilt of all mankind can be traced back to the fact that we have "exchanged the truth of God for the lie" (Romans 1:25).

The devil's whole interest is to incite rebellion against God through false information. With his lies he sows the problems that either distract or divide the church. While the church has blamed cultural change for its decline, the devil has carried out his schemes unsuspected. He has worked silently as an enemy within the camp to undermine the church's effectiveness. And he has done so by convincing Christians of two different extremes.

The first extreme is the idea that the devil does not exist at all or is of little significance. The suggestion of a personal evil

and contending with us, but only as a retreating foe. Through Christ's victory on the Cross, the devil has been cast out of this world (John 12:31-33). His power is real but limited, and he is doomed to destruction.

The Bible's defence for the believer against the devil is careful detection and conscious rejection of his activity. James tells us: "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). But to do this we need to be ready to identify the different ways he undermines our faith.

Sometimes the most attractive personalities and proposals will prove the most damaging as the devil comes to us as an impostor, an "angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). Certain people will reveal themselves to be less than sincere and particular ideas and programmes will be found to be less than the truth.

At other times the conflict will not be subtle but intense as the devil walks among us "like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). He will give open opposition to the progress of the Gospel either from within the congregation or from outside in the community. He will encourage deceit and distrust as he seeks to divide and conquer.

Another key mark of the devil's work is his focus on Christian leaders (1 Chronicles 21:1). He will confuse God's people by convincing theologians of heresy. He will disillusion God's people by enticing pastors into sexual immorality. He will distract God's people by leading preachers into social work to the neglect of their Gospel witness. He will fill God's people with pride by persuading worship leaders that Church is simply a numbers game at the expense of biblical principles.

The 16th century reformer Martin Luther is remembered for translating the Bible into German and also for turning and hurling his ink pot at the devil in his room. This symbolises how we, too, must respond to the devil's attacks. It is the spiritual truth of the words written in ink in our Bibles that are our weapon against the devil and his lies. This was our Saviour's example for us when He successfully resisted the devil in the wilderness; however, we must always be on guard for the devil will only depart "until an opportune time" (Luke 4:13).



power behind temptation seems absurd to a rational age. Many Christians fail to recognise and reject the devil's advances and so become the ignorant servants of his purposes.

The opposite extreme is an over-estimation of his ability and power. Some Christians become *obsessed* with the devil and convince themselves that they are *possessed* by him or other evil spirits. They see spiritual warfare almost as a kind of holy witchcraft as they repeat key prayers and perform dramatic exorcisms. It is true that Jesus exorcised demons and commanded His apostles to do the same; however, when Jesus and His apostles instruct the Church on how to overcome sin, they focus on repentance and the power of God's Spirit, rather than on exorcism and the power of evil spirits.

In view of these extremes we need an alert and balanced view of the devil's involvement in our lives. He is still fighting

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# Turn off and drop out

*Television makes a bad master, and worse parent, suggests Marion Andrews.*

**B**art Simpson once hugged a television, then turned to his father and said: "It's done more to raise me than you have". How perceptive! If only real people saw the influence of TV so clearly.

I decided to get an eye-full of it recently so that I wasn't speaking out of ignorance. I watched a variety of programmes on all channels. It was an education.

At first, the advertisements presented me with more of a dilemma than the mindless sit-coms and soaps — Toyota drivers "mating" at the end of a hard day's cross-country driving as well as young lesbians pursuing a girl who showered with Lynx.

Then comes Sunday night — the end of the Lord's Day. We have been challenged at worship by the advice of King Lemuel's mother to her son — words of chastity, temperance, courage and justice. We walk into our home, and are presented with the aberration of Arnie carrying a child, and Rob Roy's buddies joking about sexual assaults on children. It is not hard for me to press the off switch, and take a good book to bed.

Concerned people raise occasional outcries against violence on TV. After the Port Arthur massacre, even the media did some soul-searching. Now we are having successive school-yard shootings in America, not by deranged adults, but by children. Children in America are taking power over the life and death of other people. This is a terrible judgment on a nation.

America's culture seems to cross the Pacific readily, and we need to be warned. "This could happen here — in our school-yards."

Then there is the increasingly blatant portrayal of sexual acts and perversions. We can't even see a major production of *Hamlet* on video without added bedroom scenes. But why? Wasn't *Hamlet* already Shakespeare's greatest tragedy before Hollywood got hold of it? I have been told that they have to put in a bit of sex to sell it at the box office! But if sex is the missing ingredient, why are children's movies among the biggest money-makers at the box office?

It is right for us to cry out against blatant sex and violence. But how many of us have been guilty of letting in the little foxes that spoil the vines? A programme like



*Heartbeat* could be classed as family viewing. Yet who turned it off when the star couple indulged in fornication.

The message of this episode was that celibacy until marriage is unnecessary, and those who promote it are kill-joys: that even the best people don't maintain chastity or pre-marital virginity. This is an example of Satan posing as an angel of light, to deceive even the elect. It undermines faith in Christ in a way that a fully-fledged bedroom scene cannot.

Many of us probably think that documentaries are harmless. Not so! One of Satan's most cheerful ploys is to have a respectable, ageing film star present documentaries that deliberately undermine belief in the Creator God. Twenty years ago, Lorne Greene told me that the turtle decided it needed the shell on its back for protection. How clever! Now, David Attenborough presents similar myths as fact.

**D**oes it matter that children watch everything and anything on television? Does the content of the programmes affect their behaviour? A whole generation has chosen to believe not. Now the most liberal-minded are asking what has gone wrong. TV and the video must take some share of the blame for changing accepted beliefs as well as behaviour.

The humorous sketch *For All Those Born Before 1945* sums up the move away from Christian standards: "We were before TV.. We got married first, and then lived together. How quaint can you be? ... We were the last generation that was so dumb as to think you needed a husband to have a baby..."

Apart from the moral effects of indiscriminate TV viewing, think of how

much time it wastes. Statistically, the average person could read the Bible 15 times in one year's viewing time. We can be like the man who took his master's money and buried it in the ground. One day we will have to answer to God for our use of His time.

Studies also show that children who watch too much TV have smaller brains, cannot play imaginative games and have difficulty relating to other people. Too much TV makes us lazy and wasteful of one of God's most precious gifts — time.

Being able to turn the TV off is an important discipline. Parents need to take the lead in this, firstly by being there. Children should never be left alone for extended viewing sessions. Parents can discuss a particular scene on the spot, as well as generating meal-time discussion of more general principles in a way that will win young minds to godliness.

Parents needn't be always academic and impartial, either. My mother's distress over sin and wickedness was a powerful influence on me. Self-righteous anger may not be so helpful. A godly emotional response is important.

Of course, one option is quarantine. Some families put the box away during term, or elect to do without one altogether. Other parents follow a course of inoculation rather than quarantine, seeing TV as a good servant but a bad master. In this case, the video machine is an important aid in choosing what is viewed and when. This is the course my husband and I have followed, though there are times when I worry that our children are getting overdosed. That is the point at which we turn to the Lord in prayer, and plead for His protection from dangers "seen and unseen"!

No one policy or plan will ensure our children's favour with God, or make them fit for the Kingdom of heaven. Many Christian parents in the '60s refused to have television. Some of their children followed the Lord, others did not. There is no easy answer, only a need to look to the Lord constantly for wisdom and for help in bringing up families in the nurture and discipline of the Lord.

*Marion Andrews, wife of Stuart, has been a member of St Stephen's Presbyterian Church, Tamworth, NSW, for 11 years. She is author of Recover the Family and publishes a regular women's newsletter.*

# Refined by suffering

*As before, turmoil has strengthened Indonesia's church reports Robert Benn*

At the end of May, President Suharto stepped down from his position with dignity. Indonesia heaved a sigh of relief. It could have happened in a way reminiscent of the torrid times between independence of 1945 and the eventual exit of the Dutch in 1948, with bombs and blood in the streets.

Again, Suharto's exit could have been orchestrated like the violent coup d'etat of 1965, when President Sukarno was overthrown. But it wasn't. Yes, there was some loss of life, but the present political crisis will not go down in history as a day like 30th September 1965, or the day of Tiananmen Square. It was much closer to a peaceful take-over.

I find the whole story of Suharto's life so very sad. President Sukarno had been the people's president. "Bung Karno", they called him. Adopting the Indonesian language as the national language, and presenting the Pancasila as the national constitution, he drew the very complicated country of at least 150 major ethnic groups into a unified nation. Nevertheless, despite his amazing charisma, he still led his country into economic ruin. By the end of the '50s the writing was on the wall. Sukarno reached out for help from the international community, but no one stepped forward with aid. At last communist China saw their grand opportunity for a very strategic base south of them, and entered into negotiations with Sukarno. But there's no such thing as "a free lunch". Sukarno now found himself in a position of obligation to his benefactor. Take the money, and the policies come with it! The communist coup was staged for the end of September 1965.

Enter Suharto. On the night of terrible tragedy for the nation, he and other strong men took over and quashed the coup. Standing with him were brave generals like General Nasution. He was targeted for death that night, but being warned, he fled with his small daughter. A shot rang out. When a few days later she was buried in the city of Bandung, her father amidst his tears cried, "My daughter, you saved your father and your nation!"

Mopping up began. There was a lot of blood-letting. The nation settled. Communism was routed. Now what better way to ensure that this kind of fiasco would not happen again? The answer? Educate the



nation in respect to God's reality! From 1965-1975, the church began an ambitious project of evangelism, including the evangelising the nation's youth through religious education. The Indonesian Christian community grew from 3 million in the mid-'60s to 10 million by the mid-'70s.

Indonesians never loved Suharto in the same way as they loved his flamboyant and spendthrift predecessor Sukarno. But they were grateful for the stability he brought and for the extraordinary economic development he delivered.

With the benefit of hindsight it seems clear that Suharto was God's man for the hour. He certainly worked a mighty transformation in the nation. However the maxim "Power corrupts, but absolute power corrupts absolutely" proved true with Suharto. In recent times, he appeared to be set on a course to outdo Marcos.

In February we heard of the national unrest. There was news of riots and the devastation of about 250 church buildings. In March we read of the "nation in crisis" with prices rising steeply, and more than 12 million workers losing their jobs. In April we watched as the IMF offered help to lift Indonesia out of its crippled state. Recently we read the account of Christians who saw "the dreadful destruction and bloodshed taking place almost simultaneously in various large cities of Java, or buildings destroyed, and hundreds of charred cars and buses".

The end drew near. Suharto stepped down. Dr B.J. Habibie, the first non-Javanese President, was sworn in. Habibie is committed to "political and economic

reform" but is viewed by most to be an interim president at best. Many political commentators have adopted an attitude of "wait and see". Meanwhile, opposition leader Amien Rais is calling for Suharto to be investigated for the nepotism, corruption and human rights abuses which marked his 32-year rule.

But what of the church? This is not the first time that the Indonesian church has been able to confidently acknowledge the strong hand of God in their midst. In preparation for the 1965 Communist coup, God stretched out his hand in what became known as the "Revival in Indonesia", and set a church on a path of exceptionally fruitful evangelism through the '60s, '70s and '80s.

Again today, through the reality of suffering and persecution, the church is realising a new touch of the hand of God. One Christian writes, "the Lord brought us to our knees as we poured out our hearts in intercession for our country, then for each other and ourselves. The unity and togetherness were blended with tears as we wept our prayers before the Lord." During these months of crisis, apart from the fervent prayer at the individual and local congregational level, Christians have responded to the situation by holding a three-day fast in more than 600 places throughout the country, in churches, offices, homes and universities, mainly organised through the National Prayer Movement.

I have heard of no missionary family which needed to leave Indonesia during the crisis, though some national Christian leaders have faced very difficult times, and indeed a few have lost their lives for Christ's sake.

Continue to pray for this great nation of nearly 200 million. They have been a missionary-receiving country over the centuries, but are now sending more missionaries into cross-cultural ministry overseas than they are receiving. The church has continued to grow rapidly, and in recent months has been walking through the refiner's fire. Ask the Lord to minister through His Spirit that the faith of the church will indeed be "proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1 Peter 1:7)

ap



# A hope hardly eternal

*Phil Campbell is less than impressed by TV scriptwriters' new openness to religion.*

## TV Watch

### Chicago Hope

For as long as I can remember, Christianity has been off limits in television drama. Even "religion" in the generic sense has been pretty much a no-go area. And whenever issues of personal faith or public religion have been touched, the treatment has been at best trite, and at worst, full of negative Hollywood stereotypes.

Suddenly, that's changed. In the past couple of weeks, I've watched Kate Austen teaching her daughter about heaven in *Chicago Hope*, a hardened New York cop mutter a prayer in *NYPD Blue*, and a young medico reading the Torah over a dead Jewish patient in Australia's own *All Saints*.

In their new commitment to populating TV drama with three dimensional characters, script writers have suddenly found religion!

Don't get too excited. Usually, they're a long way from actually getting to grips with the Gospel. But as a means of opening up conversations with workmates and friends, some of these programs are first rate.

Take, for example, the fast-paced American hospital drama *Chicago Hope*. Little Sarah Austen is visiting her doctor-mum Kate at work, when she pops the question every unbelieving parent dreads. "Mum — do we believe in heaven?" "Well, no honey," says Kate. "When we die we become nutrients." Sarah ponders for a while before she responds... "How sad."

Nice. Life issues, dished up on telly in a way that actually touches ordinary people. But follow the dialogue a little further. Dr Kate retreats to a safer position, and one that no doubt created a real resonance with the viewing audience. "It's okay honey. You can believe *anything you like*."

In other words, the great postmodern paradigm... "Hey, if it works for you, that's fine." And you can almost hear the collective sigh of relief all over the world. A religious feeling...the mystery of life and

death... resolved, by simply believing whatever we want.

Consider a few more gems from the same episode. When blood drips from the palms of a female patient, is it psychosomatic? Or is it spiritual? Do we treat her medically? Or does she need something medicine can't offer — absolution? "Mmm — absolution? Must have missed that day at med-school," says a cynical Dr Aaron Schutt. Ironically, though, it's Aaron who ultimately provides salvation in an eerie confessional scene viewed through the gauze of a hospital curtain. The girl is tormented by the emotional scars of an unwanted abortion — and it's only when she hears the words of absolution from Aaron that she's free.

Cut to the hospital goods-lift. Inside, Dr Jack MacNeil, little Sarah, a hospital porter, and a dead guy on his way to the morgue. "Dr MacNeil, is he really dead? My mum says there's no heaven, and when you die you just become nutrients," chimes Sarah. "Yeah, he's dead," says a pensive Jack. "But it's not what happens when you die that counts — it's what happens when you're alive." "But what about heaven?" asks a curious Sarah. "Well, that's a matter of faith," says Jack. "If you believe it enough, it's true for you."

Mmm... obviously the same philosophy tutor as Sarah's mum.

Speaking of Kate, she's upstairs in the recovery room, looking in on Uncle Walter, who has just survived open heart surgery by the skin of his teeth. Here comes Sarah from the goods lift. "Mum... I want to

believe what you do. But is it okay if I believe in heaven? I won't if you don't want me to..."

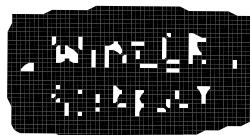
Listen to Kate's reply — just to make sure you got it right the first time. "Sarah, you have a really good heart — all you have to do is listen to what it says. Let's close our eyes and think something nice. That will feel like we're praying." Cue the soppy music for a touching mum-and-daughter moment.

We're almost ready to roll the final credits — but pause for a moment to listen in on Jack MacNeil again, talking to a colleague in the snow-custed park. "It's curious how doctors reconcile the god-thing — being a doctor and being religious are mutually exclusive, I reckon," she says. And here's the final word from Jack. "I know that I have a kind of faith — that I'm going to make it to the end of each day and it's going to be all right."

Sorry Jack... looks a bit more like wishful thinking to me. A dash, perhaps of "Chicago hope."

The bottom line? Don't celebrate the arrival of religious themes in your favourite TV dramas without thinking it through, because the message they're selling is usually a dangerous melange of postmodern tripe; relativism and sentimentalism winning over scepticism, but disregarding truth. On the other hand, welcome the opportunities for gospel conversations with your friends with real relish. "Did you see *Chicago Hope* last night? What did you think of the bit where Kate said..."

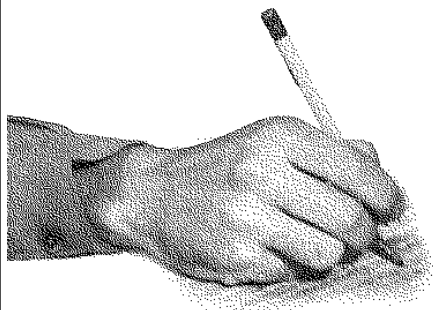
ap



**Friday August 7 1998**

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# letters



## A bouquet for AP

I would like to sincerely commend all members of the editorial staff of the *Australian Presbyterian* for the great improvement achieved in the new magazine.

I believe the new content, layout and general presentation and, in particular, the omission of cartoon-like illustrations which, in my view, only tend to trivialise our Christ-centred faith, must be encouraging to all your readers.

*R.S. Reid  
Wyoming, NSW*

## And another!

I have just finished reading the June edition of *AP*. Congrats to the editorial committee for bringing a high standard of articles, essays and information to the 'new look' magazine. I, for one, am really enjoying it.

*Pastor Martin de Pyle  
Swan Hill, Vic*

## Secular spirit no answer

John Langbridge has missed the main thrust of my letter, which was that the spiritual state of the churches in Australia is so critical that only a significant work of the Spirit of God in genuine religious awakening and revival will remedy the situation. No doubt groups like the Institute for Contemporary Christian Leadership contain helpful ideas and lessons — many organisations do which bear the Christian name. But the real issue is whether movements of this kind, which claim to offer answers to the present malaise of the churches and a way forward into the 21st century, reflect the standards, methods and goals of the New Testament.

The methodology of apostolic Christianity consisted of corporate prayer

by the churches and Spirit-filled preaching of the Gospel by its leaders, a two-fold strategy for numerical growth and Spiritual maturity that the Acts of the Apostles amply illustrates. It is just this same methodology and strategy that is so frequently absent from so many of the popular evangelical movements and seminars for church growth and Christian renewal. Sadly, a fresh outpouring and movement of the Holy Spirit in answer to the heart-felt and persistent prayers of the Lord's people, is hardly ever considered as a serious option for evangelical Christians and churches.

Methods of communication and management techniques based on models borrowed from the secular world, are no answer to the powers of darkness in the heavenly places with which the Church is really contending, nor are they substitutes for the models of leadership and popular communication provided in the Word of God.

*Rev Douglas Milne,  
South Yarra, Vic.*

## Worship

Thanks, Stuart Andrews (*AP* May) for responding to my article on worship (*AP* March). I agree with distinguishing "regulative procedure" from the "regulative principle" of worship. However, it is not I who first blended them. In numerous articles, updated worship is attacked as contrary to the "regulative principle". Carl Bogue stated: "Anything regarding elements of worship which are not by divine appointment, which are not commanded, are of necessity *things forbidden*." Such "elements of worship" included "procedures", which if not specifically commanded, were contrary to the second commandment, compromise, pragmatism and equivalent to the "strange fire" of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-2).

The "Regulative Principle" (WCF 21) of Reformation days, guarded against idolatrous Roman Catholic worship. Why is it a legalistic hamstringing device today? Theologically, surely it is founded on New Testament worship, (eg 1 Cor. 14 — decently and in order; for edification). WCF 1:6 allows that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God ... which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word. Since God's great purpose, and the Bible's central theme, is the gospel, if our worship focuses on that we cannot be guilty of doing things worthy of being struck dead and carried out in our coats like Nadab and Abihu. I have no qualms about using drama (carefully chosen) to illustrate gospel teaching. But exponents of the "Regulative Principle" such as Bogue get into a lather of horror at

the thought.

Once organs were regarded as "instruments of the world" in Presbyterian churches. We have a long history of resisting change in worship procedures, even that which can be justified as decent, in order, edifying, not contrary to general rules of the Word, and which clearly promotes the gospel.

*Rev. John Langbridge  
Ipswich, Qld*

## Beware analogy

*Australian Presbyterian* is to be applauded for focusing its recent issue on the theme of the Trinity. However, I would like to point out that both the illustration on the cover and the analogy used by Marion Andrews might unwittingly promote a Sabellian or Modal view of the Trinity. That is the belief in one God who sometimes reveals Himself as God the Father, sometimes as God the Son and sometimes as God the Holy Spirit.

I believe that any analogy that we employ to describe God should be one that is specifically mentioned in Scripture. Any other analogy, helpful though it may be, is in danger of the finite seeking to describe the infinite. This is in fact, the opposite to what John McClean explains in the opening paragraph of his article.

St Patrick tried to be helpful by using the analogy of the clover leaf. But, in the end, he was talking about three parts or three segments of one leaf. Each of the parts or segments is not the leaf itself. But Scripture is abundantly clear and emphatic that God the Father is God, that God the Son is God and that God the Holy Spirit is God.

The analogy of water is a very popular one. But it can never be used as an analogy of the Trinity unless we can have water, ice and steam present at the same time in the way the three distinct persons of the Trinity were present at the same time and place at the baptism of our Lord (Mark 1:19-11). It is true that water, ice and steam are present at the Triple Point of water but how many people have mastered undergraduate chemistry? This is not to mention that water, ice and steam are not present in equal amounts at the Triple Point of water.

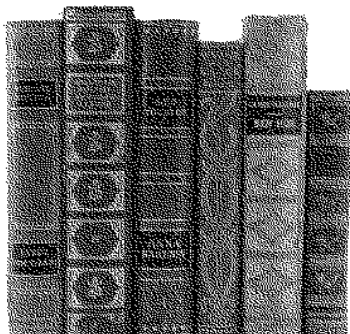
As difficult as it may be we should avoid using analogies to describe the Trinity. We believe in the Trinity by faith because that is how God has revealed Himself to us.

*Ester Aminawati  
Randwick, NSW*

*ap*

*Letters should be no more than 250 words, and must include the writer's full name, signature and address.*

# books



## Rebel with a Cause Finally comfortable being Graham

By Franklin Graham  
Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995  
*Reviewed by Sue Wharton*

This is an interesting, challenging and encouraging look into the life of Franklin Graham, eldest son of evangelists Billy and Ruth Graham. Franklin has made a point of making this his own story, thus keeping the lives of other family members, as private as possible.

Franklin shares some of the unreal expectations other people had for him because of his family, a problem for many years. This pressure, he says, always came from outside, never from his parents.

He takes a refreshingly honest look at his carefree childhood, followed by rebellious teenage years. After some serious personal struggles, at 22 he finally handed his life over to the Lord, realising that he needed to give up his rebellious ways and accept Christ as his personal Saviour.

"That night I finally decided I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. My years of running and rebellion had ended. I got off my knees and went to bed. It was finished. The rebel had found the cause." The reader is then taken through Franklin's experiences of study, marriage and ministry.

This refreshing and uplifting book demonstrates what God can achieve through lives dedicated to him. It is written by a man who is not afraid to recognise his humanity and consequent weaknesses. This is a book that every parent who has wayward children should read. It shows how our loved ones may at times be out of God's will but never out of his care.

*Sue Wharton serves at the Balaclava Presbyterian Church, Vic.*

## For the Advancement of the Kingdom

By Joan Pigram  
Brisbane: PCQ Board of Finance, 1994  
*Reviewed by Sheena Walsh*

This short and scholarly monograph aims to honour the work of Queensland's Presbyterian women from 1892 to 1992, highlight the achievements of the humble who seldom earn respect, and show "what can be achieved by ordinary people who [work] together with devotion and commitment". It does this by detailing the activities of the Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union and the Presbyterian Women's Association.

She covers the century in seven sections, grouped by subject rather than chronology, in a succinct and engaging style. The discussion is informative rather than analytical.

The author believes these bodies had considerable success, though their aims diverged over time. The Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union changed direction after World War II from a purely missionary focus to a coordinating role for many of the guilds in Queensland. It concentrated less on the overseas mission fields and Aboriginal settlements that were its initial concern to the immediate and local social needs and issues. The book is a useful reference work.

## The Australian Dictionary of Evangelical Biography

Edited by Brian Dickey Sydney:  
Evangelical History Association, 1994  
*Reviewed by Brian Rosner*

Some might be forgiven if they expect a work by this title to be just a leaflet or a paperback at best. Surely the evangelical heritage of a 200-year-old country which began as a penal colony and has experienced no major revival is none too illustrious. In fact the volume was written to begin to correct such perceptions.

The evangelical component to Australian history has for too long been

ignored, removed and, at times, slandered, even by Australian historical scholarship. The editor and the Evangelical History Association, the sponsoring body, are convinced that "the most powerful Christian tradition brought by the first white settlers to Australia in 1788, and a tradition which remained creative, energetic, dedicated to self-propagation and to the transformation of Australian society through the next two centuries, was evangelical Protestantism".

The dictionary covers almost 700 people who achieved some degree of distinction in Christian ministry, mission or influence in Australia, and only those now dead are included. Many denominations are covered (29 per cent Anglican; 13 per cent each Presbyterian and Baptist; 22 per cent Methodist, etc).

While the editor saved himself many headaches by not including the living in the Dictionary, it must be said that the survey is thereby greatly diminished. The past 50 years are effectively excluded, which is fully a quarter of Australian history. This is compounded by the fact that in the first quarter there were very few Australians, let alone evangelical Christians.

Nonetheless, the volume has many worthwhile stories to tell and does so in good style, most biographies taking 600 words or less. Indexes according to denominational affiliation and membership of missionary societies make it possible to trace the history of a particular group or organisation. The connection between Australia and the Chinese missions, the fortunes of the Presbyterians, and many other paths can be profitably followed.

One can read of Richard Johnson and Samuel Marsden, the first two chaplains to the colony. In virtually unprecedented and very difficult ministries both achieved a great deal, but were not free from severe opposition and controversy.

The story of Florence Young also stands out. Young started a faith mission to the Pacific Islanders working in Queensland when she was 30, the Queensland Kanaka Mission. She remained active for 50 years. Bible classes were conducted in Pidgin and the first 25 years saw almost 2500 converts. When in 1901 the Immigration Control Act led to the islanders being sent home the mission supported the repatriated workers in church planting in their homelands.

The dictionary is a valuable reference work. The editor is a scholarly historian of Flinders University in Adelaide. As historian Owen Chadwick has written, "this is a serious contribution both to church history and to the general history of Australia".

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# A Proverb a day

*Young people today need the wisdom of Solomon, David Cook is convinced.*

As a father, and as one who has pastoral care for many young people, I have long been aware of the importance of the Bible's wisdom literature for guiding youth through their difficult teenage years. This is especially true of the Book of Proverbs.

Indeed, I have become so convinced of our need of Proverbs that before I send Luke, our 11-year-old son, off to school each morning, we read a proverb together. In fact, I can't think of a better way to start the day than to work my way through a book that is conveniently divided into 31 chapters, one chapter for every day of the month.

Charles Bridges, in his commentary on Proverbs, calls it "a guide-book and directory for godly conduct", and that's what I want it to be for myself and for Luke. That's why we share it together as father and son.

It's interesting that when you begin to read Proverbs, you discover that it's written as a father-and-son dialogue. Solomon begins by taking his son aside and offering some invaluable counsel. "Listen, my son, to your father's instruction," he says. This is the sort of fatherly advice that every youngster needs.

In the flyleaf to the book (1:1-7), Solomon tells us that one group that he's really concerned for is the young. No doubt that's why, in the first nine chapters at least, he focuses on the young. He tells children and teenagers that if they take his words to heart, they will gain knowledge and discretion (1:4), and acquire a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair (1:3).

Proverbs is just made-to-order for teenagers. It's the one thing that will help arrest their continuing slide into hopelessness by directing them to true reality, the wisdom of God. And since the young tend to be both ignorant (because they have little experience of life), and indiscreet (because they have massive amounts of youthful energy unguided by wisdom), they need a small pocket-guide like Proverbs to keep them on-track.



Near the end of his section directed towards youth, Solomon warns them of the danger to which they are exposed because of their inexperience of life. He warns young people that life will bring them into contact with two powerful forces, much as a young man will meet two types of women. The first of these is wisdom (9:1-6); the other is folly (9:13-18). I call one "Lady Wisdom", and the other "Madame Folly". The great danger of Madame Folly is that she offers what is forbidden, and that strikes a responsive chord in our biased hearts. If we listen to her, we are as good as "dead" (9:18).

The reason that I mention "Madame Folly" is that one of her most successful ploys in destroying a teenager's character is her subtle use of peer pressure. Solomon is no fool. He knows how strong the influence of peers can be. That's why he issues the warning to the young: "My son, if sinners entice you, do not give into them" (1:10).

Normal kids will do the most amazing things because of peer pressure. They will smoke and drink because they want to look cool, or they'll wear the most ridiculous outfits because it's the "in thing" to do. Sometimes they'll even do destructive things like steal a car or rob a house because they've been pressured by their friends.

Why are they so vulnerable to peer pressure? Because young people are driven by the same powerful needs that we all have for love, belonging and acceptance. The trouble is that because of their inexperience in life, these desires overwhelm their better judgment.

I teach early church history at Sydney Missionary and Bible College. One of my favourite figures in the fourth century is the theologian Augustine. In his *Confessions*, which has become a Christian classic, he speaks quite frankly of the disastrous influence of peer group pressure upon him. In Book II iii(7) he says: "I went on my headlong way with such blindness that among my peer group I was ashamed not to be equally guilty of shameful behaviour when I heard of their sexual exploits ... yet I went deeper into vice to avoid being despised, and when there was no act by admitting to which I could rival my depraved companions, I used to pretend I had done things I had not done at all lest my chastity be taken as a mark of inferiority."

He also relates how he and a gang of adolescents set off one night to steal a huge load of pears (Book II iv(9)). They stole a man's pears and destroyed his trees just for fun. Peer pressure. It can make our children do terrible things.

Solomon warns us about it because it can corrupt the conscience of our kids. That's why I'm sitting down with my little boy each day and following an ancient prescription for keeping him wise unto salvation. I want him to live a disciplined and prudent life through learning one proverb every morning before school. It's the best way to preserve his moral conscience that I can think of.

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