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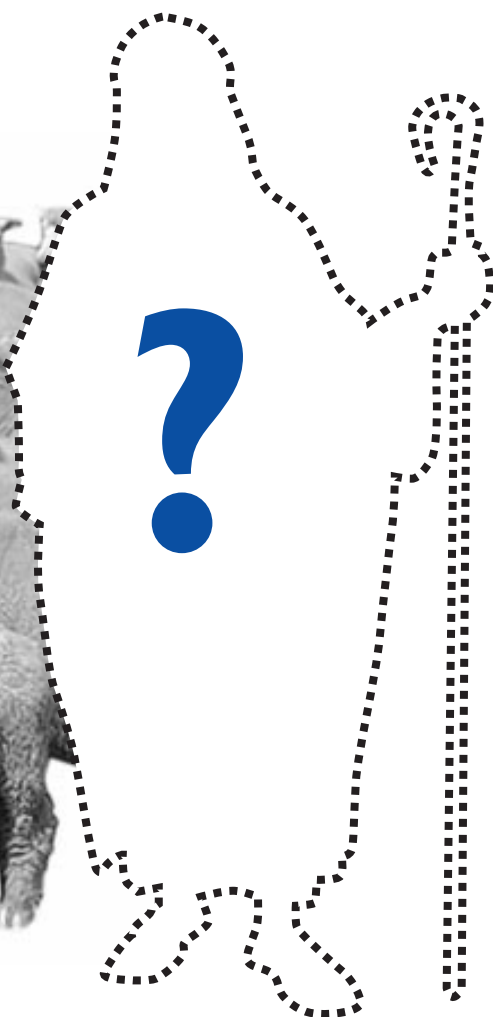
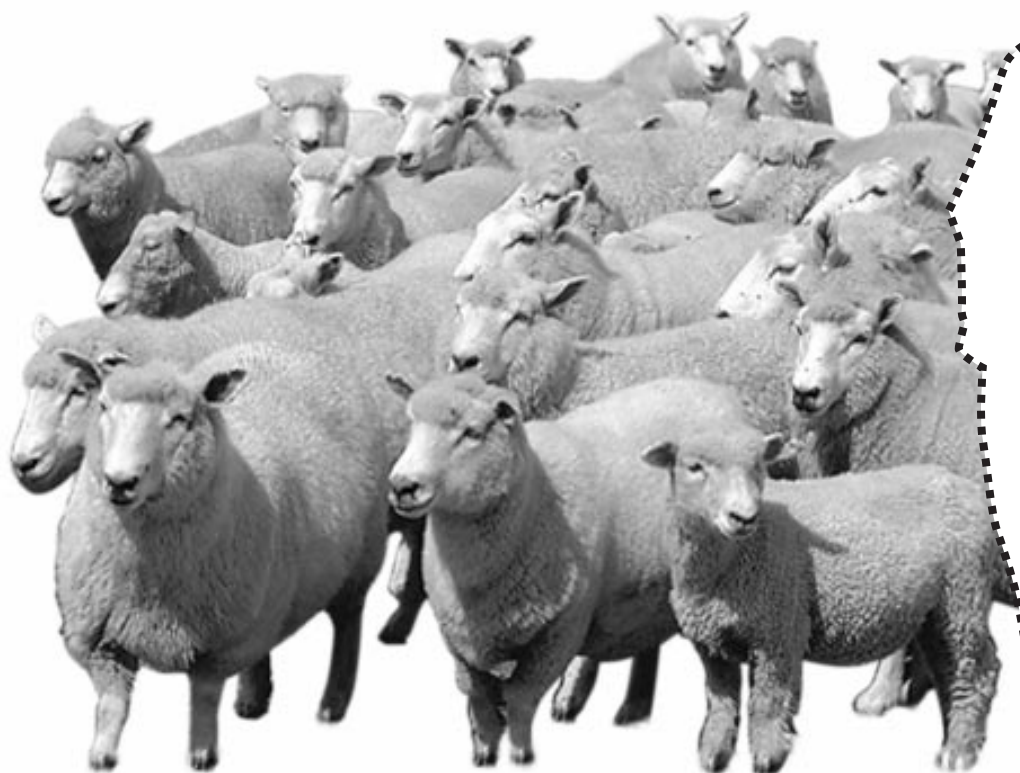
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THE MAGAZINE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

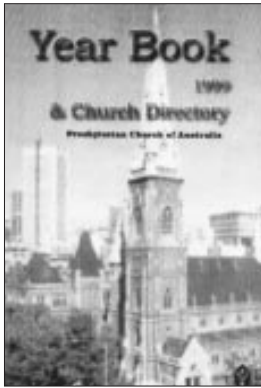
july 1999

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the perplexed profession



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Page 99 Korean

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More than shopkeepers

Somewhere in the middle of the 20th century the Christian ministry went through an identity crisis. Back in 1954, H. R. Niebuhr, while writing about the church and ministry, called the pastorate “the perplexed profession”. Why? Because in the new secular culture of the post-war era there seemed to be no place for those whose interest was in God. According to John F. Kennedy, (quoting Protagoras, the 5th century BC Greek philosopher) “man is the measure of all things,” and in such a world the ministry is obsolete – a testimony to a bygone age.

Living in the world where it is no longer politically correct to talk about God, and where Christians are found increasingly on the margins, we must ask ourselves afresh: What is the task of the leadership of the church, and does it have a distinctive identity?

Unfortunately, even among the worldwide evangelical community, there is no agreement on these issues. We look in vain for an accepted theology of the ministry. Instead, the practice of ministry has become the theology. Pragmatism is the driving force. Pastoral theology, which provides a unifying theory to the office and work of the ministry, is essentially dead. In its place is “practical theology” – the “how-to” of pastoral training. Various functions



Robert Benn

of ministry are being taught, but there is no clear understanding of the identity and role of the Christian pastor.

Therefore, it’s not surprising that pastors often struggle with the questions: Who am I? And what should I do every day? Some pastors have tried to find solace in a psychological/sociological identity. For them, “shepherding”, the ancient practice of the cure of souls, is essentially a therapeutic, counselling role. They often talk about clinical pastoral education. Others like to think of themselves as administrators or chief executives who “run” churches. For them, the church is in the business of selling God and gathering larger numbers of followers.

But it is a dangerous business to look to the world for our identity. Didn’t Jesus say to His apostles as they tried to model

themselves on current political leaders: “It shall not be so among you.” (Matt. 20: 26; Mk 10: 42)? Yet today many Christian leaders have abandoned their God-given identity. They are not quitting their positions and getting other jobs. Rather, they are abandoning their calling. What they do with their time has little to do with what true pastors have done throughout the past 2000 years.

According to Eugene Peterson, “many of toady’s pastors have metamorphosed into a company of shopkeepers, and the shops they keep are churches. They are pre-occupied with shopkeeper’s concerns – how to keep customers happy, how to lure customers away from competitors down the street, how to package the goods so that the customers will lay out more money. Some of them are very good shopkeepers. They attract a lot of customers, pull in great sums of money, develop splendid reputations. Yet it is still shopkeeping; religious shopkeeping to be sure, but shopkeeping all the same. The marketing strategies of the fast-food franchise occupy the waking minds of these entrepreneurs; while asleep they dream of the kind of success that will get the attention of journalists.”

Peterson has struck a nerve here. As he says : “The biblical fact is that there are no successful churches. There are, instead, communities of sinners, gathered before God week after week in towns and villages all over the world. The Holy Spirit gathers them and does his work in them. In these communities of sinners, one of the sinners is called the pastor and given a designated responsibility in the community. The pastor’s responsibility is to keep the community attentive to God. It is this responsibility that is being abandoned in spades.”

In this issue of *Australian Presbyterian*, we have tried to show how the problem of pastoral identity is not simply a vocational problem for the minister and his family. It is broader than that. It is having a profound impact on the wider church too. We need to rediscover the historic Christian conception of the pastoral office, and encourage our leaders to be faithful to their calling in the face of an unbelieving world.

Robert Benn,
Convener

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Identity crisis

As models for ministry keep shifting, what should theological colleges do?



On a recent flight, I saw a full-page advertisement for a computer typeface in the airline's magazine. It proudly announced, "The Right Typeface Can Make Even Bad News Look Good."

The visual focus was on an attractive, formal invitation – to an audit by the tax office.

I thought, "Now there's a tip for ministry."

Both churches and the tax office struggle with getting across a message. The most difficult element of the gospel message to communicate in our therapeutically oriented and success-driven culture is probably repentance, the call to a moral accounting. Any clear statement of God's law, any reminder of our moral accountability, arouses in most people feelings akin to those experienced in response to a tax office audit.

This environment inescapably affects the educational preparation of ministers. Under the influence of mass media and the breakdown of institutional authority, churchgoers are becoming religious con-

Bruce Shelley

sumers. They are choosing their own private forms of faith rather than relying on the authority of a tradition or a religious community. Popular taste is the father of religious expectations. Within evangelicalism, seminaries and large churches have had to face squarely this new market orientation.

The so-called megachurches represent perhaps the clearest example of churches adapting to religious populism. While they maintain a conservative theology, these churches have grown rapidly because they appeal to the religious tastes of the unchurched.

In 1984, only 100 American churches averaged more than 2000 Sunday worshippers. Today that number has more than tripled, according to church-growth researcher John Vaughn of South West Baptist University.

How do seminaries, created to meet the standards of orthodoxy, serve churches,

especially large churches – in a day of pop religion? I do not approach the question theoretically. I have spent my adult years as a member of a theological faculty, and I am a member and sometime preacher in a budding megachurch. I do not have the answers, but a number of questions.

Many of these arise from a look at the ways seminaries have served the churches in the last two centuries. As is so often true, history illuminates the present. Many ministers did not – and still do not – attend seminary. But seminary education influences ministry for these as well. So I consider three images of ministry that have shaped the identity of theological colleges, in America and elsewhere.

The pastor-theologian

The image of the pastor-theologian is the ideal for most theological faculties. It survives to this day in ministers like Eugene Peterson and John Piper, but it is no longer widely popular.

We catch a glimpse of the image in 1857 when James Henley Thornwell, professor of didactic and polemical theology at the

Presbyterian Seminary in Columbia South Carolina, delivered the school's inaugural address. He had surrendered the presidency of South Carolina College to assume the theological chair. The seminary faced a crisis, and everyone there knew that Thornwell had come to save the school. So he stood before a grateful and expectant audience.

The address was typical of seminary addresses in the first half of the 19th century. It attacked deists, transcendentalists, and assorted liberals. Thornwell made clear his purpose in coming to the seminary: to enter the battle for the minds of men. His calling was the defence of rational orthodoxy.

"The great work of seminaries and theological professors now," he said, "is to meet the altered aspects of infidelity; and not only to vindicate the external evidences of Christianity, but the internal, by showing the complete harmony of sound philosophy and theology."

It is hard to imagine an address like Thornwell's in our time. Few of us – pastors or professors – believe that the "great work of seminaries and theological professors" is harmonising "sound philosophy and theology".

Seminaries emerged and grew, however, with this image. The Puritans called it a "learned ministry" and brought to New England an English educational approach centred in colleges designed to produce public servants.

Once Harvard and Yale were established, students gained enough theology to serve as public leaders, but technical study of theology and preparation for the ministry were left for the years after graduation. Ministers had to pick up their theological studies by apprenticing themselves to an experienced pastor. In effect, these teachers created small, private divinity schools for what we might call "the gentlemen and scholars", though this pattern did not include Baptists and Methodists, who often eschewed seminary education.

By the beginning of the 19th century, many people were unhappy with the haphazardness of this system. And they raised troubling questions about the "enlightened" notions sweeping through the colleges, making them unfit places for future spiritual leaders.

After Unitarians got control of Harvard in 1805, more orthodox Congregationalists organised the first American seminary at Andover in 1808. As pioneers in seminary education, Andover's founders fashioned the essentials of the seminary experience for the next two centuries, right up to our own time. They stressed adequate funds, scholarly study of Christian theology, a

professional, specialised faculty, and a sizeable library. The three-year curriculum focused on three areas of study: Bible, church history, and theology.

Four years later, Presbyterians established Princeton Seminary. Unlike Andover, with its independent board of trustees, Princeton was created by a denomination. The general assembly not only elected its board and faculty, everyone associated with the seminary – board, faculty, students – had to swear oaths of allegiance to the seminary's version of confessional Calvinism. The church had the truth, so the seminary was responsible to protect it and pass it along to the next generation of Presbyterian leaders.



A passion for theology united the founders of seminaries for the half-century before the Civil War. They sought to defend a particular theological position against all rivals. While they tried to create an elite corps of educated and cultured ministers acceptable to the growing number of cultured middle class churches, they emphasised learning to think theologically.

The professional

A second image gained prominence after the Civil War, when significant shifts in American life changed the cultural context. The country that entered the war was rural, small-town, and agrarian. The country that emerged was becoming more urban and industrial. In place of the pastor-theologian there appeared the professional minister – often a staff member of a congregation or some specialist in the broader mission of the church.

Religious sociologist Herbert Wallace Schneider looked back in 1952 to his childhood at the turn of the century and described the professional minister in America's villages and small towns: "The church building was physically the centre of a community and the parish was the central, vital institution of religious activities." A typical village church embraced well-to-do town residents and the more prosperous farmers from miles around. More members

in the church made possible a more "professional" type of service. Larger congregations had a staff of a minister, assistants, a paid choir, and educational and social workers.

The most significant symbol of the new professional status was the degree. Early seminaries were groups of students who shared meals and quarters. Degrees were rare. But around the turn of the 20th century, seminaries began granting them because degrees were socially acceptable symbols of professional rank.

By the 1920s, theological students were still expected to know the Christian faith, its history and its Scriptures, but now they were supposed to learn from experiences in "field education" and theological clinics. Theological education and vocational preparation became almost identical.

The Protestant minister spent less time in his study and more time in active ministry. Washington Gladden said in the 1890s that people wanted the minister to be a confidant and friend. His sermons were expected to be shorter.

A parallel development, new lay activism, appeared in the Sunday schools, missionary societies, and city mission societies. This generated interest in Bible institutes, where lay people could be trained as Sunday school workers. Around the turn of the century, Moody Bible Institute and the Bible Institute of Los Angeles led scores of smaller schools into offering preparation for parachurch ministries, though they trained many pastors as well. The rise of these Bible schools likely influenced seminaries to create new practical courses and new degree programmes for specialised ministries.

The enterprising healer

In the last four decades, ministry is probably best described by the image of the "enterprising healer". The adjective is necessary because America's success-driven culture now demands church growth, and entrepreneurial leaders are the key to growth. Healer is appropriate because that is a dominant image for church-going Americans.

The ministry is now considered a healing profession. Defending religious truth or tradition is largely out of fashion. Churches and ministers are expected to meet the "felt needs" of the religious public. Within evangelicalism, evangelist Robert Schuller is probably the best-known advocate of the entrepreneurial healer. But you can find the influence of the ideal almost everywhere.

Ministries appeal to self-interest because they know that is what moves people. But in such a climate, how can people possibly repent? If church members themselves breathlessly pursue happiness, when will

they discover the meaning of “taking up your cross” or find that God’s strength is, in fact, “made perfect in weakness”?

As early as 1959, social critic Philip Rieff observed that the symbolic centre of our cultural landscape was no longer the church building or the legislative hall, but the hospital. By the late ’60s, therapeutic thinking had shaped popular vocabulary. Clinics, agencies, therapy centres by the thousands created a new growth industry. Traditional self-restraint governed by the standards of religious institutions was no longer healthy; it reflected hypocrisy or enslaving conformity. People needed to be freed from their past. Evangelical Protestants in the tradition of pietism were especially vulnerable to these appeals of the therapeutic image.

If images of the pastor-theologian and the professional minister centred on truth and competence, new expectations pressured seminaries and the churches to meet “felt needs”.

The most obvious resulting change in seminaries was the demand for training in counselling. Most professors of counselling accepted the new therapeutic ethic and considered themselves critics of traditional authoritarian churches and their “moralisms”. The new ethic, however, was not limited to counselling classes in seminaries or services in churches. It also appeared in a new style of preaching, in the design of worship services, and in the educational programmes for the young.

A second expression of religious populism affecting churches and seminaries is the rise of the megachurch. With the decline of the denominations in American public life and the increasing privatisation of religion, these large churches have gained an increasing share of the “religious market”. They have become the successor both to the neighbourhood church and the parachurch ministry, something of a shopping mall that offers the religious consumer a host of specialised ministries at one location.

These developments raise several issues for evangelical theological education at the end of the twentieth century.

1. Does the traditional image of the minister as a shepherd of souls arise from normative biblical roots? If so, how do we relate the seminary’s traditional image of the theologian and the megachurch image of the “enterprising healer” to the biblical image?

2. What about practical training? Early seminaries felt little obligation to provide training in the actual practice of ministry. Most modern evangelical seminaries do. But “consumer demand” has broadened the range of religious services and raised the question of a seminary’s ability to supply specialists or technicians for the diversified market.

In our day of specialisation, can some highly endowed churches themselves do a

better job of teaching specialised ministry skills? If so, who will be responsible for the “quality control” of these specialists? Can seminaries become better partners with the churches in teaching and maintaining the standards for ministry?

3. What role should “market concerns” play in shaping seminary programmes? In their early days, seminaries had little interest in “market conditions”. This explains why so many of them were small and often on the verge of collapse. Equal concern, however, should arise from the fact that market pressures tend to overwhelm all other considerations in a church’s or a seminary’s mission, including the norms of truth and ethics. If ministry is determined by demand, who supplies the principles, objectives, theology, and ethics for ministry?

As guardians of the truth, seminaries may need to be more relevant. As colonies of the kingdom, congregations – including megachurches – may need to be more responsible. Both evangelical seminaries and large, market-sensitive churches would be stronger if they found each other.

*Bruce L. Shelley is professor of church history at Denver Seminary and author of *Church History in Plain Language* (Word). This article is reprinted from *Christianity Today*. ^{ap}*

plc

Feed my sheep

The shepherd is the main biblical metaphor for leaders.

Rowland Croucher reports that in Australia there are just as many people who have left full-time Christian ministry as there are still active. Behind these figures lie painful stories of burn-out and disappointment. At the same time, churches often seem short of able local leaders – people do not want to become elders, they balk at taking on youth group, or Sunday School or a Bible Study group. Leaders find it hard to know where to lead; ways that used to be very effective don't seem to work any longer, and there are so many new suggestions.

Leadership in Australian churches is under pressure. Part of it is an identity crisis. Take Graeme, for instance, who has been a minister for nearly 30 years. Throughout this period, Graeme has watched the growing secularisation of our culture. As the Christian faith has moved increasingly to the margins of Australia's life, he has wondered whether he, as a Presbyterian minister, along with koalas and wombats, is on an endangered species list.

When Graeme first started in ministry in the late '60s, he joined a group of men in what H. R. Niebuhr had called "the perplexed profession". The ministry was in crisis because it had lost its identity. Graeme soon learned all about that in his first parish. His job seemed to cover everything. Not only did he have two sermons each week to prepare, but he was the church gardener and secretary to boot. He was also expected to visit members in their homes, give pastoral advice, chair the board meetings, teach in the local school, visit the hospital, counsel the emotionally disturbed and take part in civic events. He was also chief celebrant of the community's weddings and funerals, although all that's changed in the past 10 years.

Today, Graeme is feeling increasingly uneasy. He doesn't like being defined by other people's expectations, and especially by the title "Reverend". He knows he's meant to be a leader. But what sort of leader does he need to be? For those in leadership, what do they aspire to? Let's see what the Bible says.

God always provides leaders for his people. The story of the Old Testament is full of the leaders God raised up: from Joseph, the great administrator of Egypt, and



John McClean

Moses, Israel's saviour and prophet; through the judges and the kings to Ezra and Nehemiah.

These were Israel's "shepherds" (Num. 27:17; 2 Sam. 5:2). In the ancient world, a shepherd was responsible for a small flock. He would lead it to grass and water; and protect it from predators. He had to rescue the strays (Ps. 23:2; 1 Sam. 17:34-36). So the shepherd was a powerful image of a responsible, careful leader. Like a shepherd, God's leaders had to provide and protect their flock. When we see a need for leaders for God's people, we need to ask him to provide shepherds, as he always has.

Even the great Old Testament leaders were flawed. Moses did not trust God as he should have. The conquest led by Joshua was not complete. The judges failed as often as they succeeded. David's sins destroyed his family and troubled the nation. And these were the best of Israel's shepherds.

Many of Israel's other shepherds were far worse! They only took care of themselves, not the flock. However, it was not always obvious that they were bad shepherds. The nation sometimes seemed to flourish under their leadership. Omri and Ahab, kings of Israel in the 9th century BC, gave the nation a flourishing economy, and military success. Yet no one deserved condemnation as false shepherds more than these men (1 Kings 16:22).

Strong, apparently successful leaders can be the worst. Hitler and Mussolini came to power in nations that were desperate for leadership. They seemed to return their nations to strength and prosperity – yet they allowed terrible evil. Religious leaders can be the same. Jim Jones began as a respected, successful pastor of a flourishing evangelical church in Los Angeles. Yet he finished by leading 900 people to commit

suicide by drinking Kool-Aid laced with cyanide in Guyana in 1976.

It is quite possible to have strong but flawed leaders in our churches, and not be aware of it. A youth group, or a whole church, may flourish under a certain leader. There is a crowd in the hall every Friday night and plenty of activity, yet there is no substance to it. The church grows in numbers and prestige, while there is a great building program, but no genuine spiritual leadership. Years later, when the bubble bursts and few remain Christians, we realise that it all did more harm than good. These leaders are condemned by the prophets: "I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock" (Ezek. 34:8).

Ministers can view their "ministry" as their career and their livelihood. They can use people to make money and grow secure financially. They can exploit people so they can climb the denominational ladder. They are false shepherds, who use the flock, and don't care for it. Local leaders can also use church as their power game – in it they enhance their prestige and enjoy recognition. But they do not care for the sheep; they simply want people to fit their agenda.

As well as revealing the flaws in leaders and condemning false shepherds, the Old Testament also tells us that God has always been the true shepherd of the flock (Ps. 23:1, 80:1, Is. 40:11). When he sees the failure of Israel's leaders, he declares that he himself will shepherd his people (Ezek. 34:11-16; Jer. 31:10).

Israel is God's flock, and their shepherds must lead them to him, teach them to worship him and keep his laws. They will serve him, and will remain aware that their leadership is under his rule.

The promise that God himself will shepherd his people is fulfilled when Jesus comes as the good shepherd. Jesus is the true shepherd, recognised by the watchman and by the sheep, so when he calls the sheep they follow him (v2-5). He ensures that they are well fed and have life (v10). Jesus lays down his life for the sheep, so great is His love for them (v14-15, 17-18).

All human leadership is flawed; and some is terribly destructive. Christians must never invest their hope in a human leader. Instead we must look to Jesus as our

shepherd. We live in a world where people long for leaders, and companies invest huge amounts in attracting and developing the right kind of leaders. Churches can do the same, and focus totally on people as the key resource for church life. Christian leaders have their role, but we must always remember that Jesus himself shepherds the sheep. We must trust him to do his work. Church leaders are to direct people to Jesus, as their shepherd. They must develop in their church a spiritual dependence upon Christ, not themselves.

It is no surprise that Christian leaders are called shepherds (John 21:16-17; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2-4). They are appointed to care for God's flock, and to work for him. They have no right to take God's people any where, but where he wants them. They are accountable to him for their work.

No one should be appointed to any position of Christian leadership unless he or she clearly knows Christ and is following him. It is impossible to lead people to follow Christ unless you are doing it yourself. This may seem obvious, but it is easily forgotten. It is too easy in church life to find a local school teacher and ask him to teach Sunday School, or to recruit an able young woman to lead youth group, or to appoint a successful businessman to session without considering their commitment to Christ. When these people have no clear Christian faith, this is a recipe for disaster. Christian leaders must know Christ. Otherwise, how can they point others to Jesus so that He will meet their needs?

Jesus says that his sheep will hear his voice and follow Him. Christian leaders are not to be heard for their own sake. They must strive to echo Jesus' voice. That is the best of Christian leadership: do people hear Christ, as God's word is taught faithfully? Leaders are followed, not because of their office or their power; but because people genuinely hear God's word from them. When Christian leaders deviate from God's word, they forfeit their authority.

The way in which God's people are led is never by emotional manipulation or clever advertising strategies, but by teaching God's word – echoing the word of the Good Shepherd. So it is no surprise that an important qualification of elders is that they know, guard and teach the truth of the gospel (1 Tim. 3:9, 4:13-16; 2 Tim. 1:13-14, 4:2; Tit. 1:9).

So what do you look for in a minister or a youth group leader? There are all sorts of things people focus on in choosing a leader: "Are they attractive and popular?" "Do they speak powerfully?" "How successful are they?" The first question has to be: "Will this person teach God's word truthfully?" The second question will be

do they live out the truth they speak? Godliness is the main thing that Paul lists as a qualification for eldership (1 Tim. 3:2-7; Tit. 1:6-9).

Modern Christian leaders are often confused about their role. A minister is expected to be a counsellor, organiser, friend, trainer, evangelist, strategist, building manager, social coordinator, teacher, financial planner, music leader and the list goes on. Faced with all these expectations, ministers and other leaders become very self-conscious about their leadership. They often ask themselves (and others) how effective they are, and if their leadership is accepted. So they take people's assessment of their leadership as the main issue. As shepherds, serving the Chief Shepherd, the real test is before God. Paul's greatest defence of his work with the Thessalonians is not what they think of him, but what God thinks (1 Thessalonians 2:4-6). I suspect that lots of us have, in practice, lost a sense of first being responsible to God.

Because Christian leaders are under-shepherds of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus is our example. Just as Jesus knows his sheep, Christian leadership is personal and often very intimate.


The shepherd leads his flock to good safe places, feeding them on the best pasture he can find. So our leaders must provide for us, showing us the truth of God's word, and how to live for him. Instead of expecting ministers to do lots of organising, we should try to free them as much as we can, so they can find the best grass. It takes time to know God's word deeply and be able to teach it well. That's why ministers should be involved in ongoing study of the Bible and theology. We need to encour-

age elders, youth group leaders and home group leaders, that bringing people to know and live God's word is the best way to care for them.

The shepherd is concerned for the good of the sheep and protects them from attack. This is a specific call for Christian leaders (Acts 20:28-31; Tit. 1:11). False teaching, which misleads and confuses people is a threat. At the end of the 20th century, there is more variety in teaching than ever before; and yet people tend to feel that the differences do not matter. So we need now, more than ever, leaders who are discerning and bold, and can lovingly and gently point out error and teach the truth (2 Tim. 2:25).

The Good Shepherd is committed to saving people. He lays down his life for them, and calls his sheep from all over the world (John 10:16). Christian leaders need to have the same focus on evangelism and missions. There is no competition between pastoral care and evangelism. Both are part of the shepherd's role (1 Tim. 4:5). This is not just true for ministers; everyone who takes on Christian leadership must have an evangelistic concern.

Christian leadership, in all its forms will always be a difficult task. If we are clear about its purpose and power, then it will not be overwhelming. Leaders who are not clear about this will be destructive false shepherds. The purpose of Christian leadership is to lead for Christ, teaching people His word and showing them how to live for Him. The power of Christian leadership is that of the Chief Shepherd who enables His servants to endure and serve as He did (Colossians 1:29).

John McClean is minister of Cowra Presbyterian Church, NSW. 

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D I V O R C E I S A G R O W T H I N D U S -
T R Y

Lessons from Nehemiah

A leader today takes Israel's visionary as a tutor.

When I became principal of The Scots College, Sydney, I did so with the clear knowledge that God had led me into that position. At the time I considered that I had been reasonably well prepared for such a task. I had worked with a number of principals in the past and, most recently, with a clear-sighted and committed Christian principal from whom I had learned much. I had studied the role of school principals as part of my doctoral work. Although I was coming to a new school from interstate, I was not unduly concerned. However, although I'd had a professional association with schools for more than 25 years, I was largely unprepared for the pressures and stresses of the principal's leadership role.

Early in my principalship, God reminded me very clearly that I could only perform my task successfully if I learned to rely constantly on his wisdom, guidance and empowerment. Alone, my human resources were totally inadequate. One of the many ways in which God has helped me to face the challenges of leadership has been in providing Nehemiah as a tutor.

Nehemiah had a mission to which he was faithfully committed because it had been given to him by God. He was passionate about faithfully fulfilling the task of restoring a God-honouring way of life to the people of Jerusalem, of which the rebuilding of the city wall was but the first stage. I too needed to be equally committed to the task that God had given to me of building a school that would be honouring to him in all aspects of its life. In other words, the big picture had to be right in terms of ultimate purpose.

As I have reflected on the college's Christian goals and objectives, I have become increasingly aware that if these are correctly in place, the myriad of daily decisions and happenings starts to assume direction and coherence.



Robert Iles

Before Nehemiah and I became acquainted, I had already realised that a strong prayer life was going to be essential. Otherwise, I was not going to cope with the sometimes overwhelming demands of the principalship. However, Nehemiah has tutored me time and time again on this matter. His work was surrounded with prayer from the very beginning and continued to be throughout the whole of his long period of public life.

Being school principal has forced a deepening of my prayer life. I, like Nehemiah, have found that I face many difficult situations for which I lack insight and wisdom. Over these past six years, I have repeatedly discovered that the Lord gives me guidance and strength when I wait on him in prayer. Nehemiah has taught me the importance of prayer not only in the crises when I have no other counsellor, but as my fundamental daily-planning tool.

As a 10-year-old, I had learned the first question and answer of the catechism. In response to the question, "What is the chief purpose of life?" I could recite, "The chief purpose of life is to know, love, and worship God and to do good to one another". I think Nehemiah would agree. I think that he would argue that this is also the chief purpose of the leader. I am reminded constantly that Christian leadership is about the praise of God and the service of others. But as Nehemiah also found, there is constant pressure on the Christian leader to replace such

purposes with other worthwhile but lesser purposes, so the good becomes the enemy of the best.

However, specific aims and goals are important in their place. Nehemiah clearly spent much time identifying such goals. He then used them in the process of motivating and organising the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Nehemiah poured a lot of energy into planning. When I have sometimes been unhappy with my leadership, I have remembered the importance of Nehemiah's example in these areas. I have found that there are no short-cuts here. For the Christian leader, a willingness to invest time and energy at the level of the practicalities is essential.

For example, having set the directions, the Christian leader must communicate and explain these as did Nehemiah (2: 17-18). Others in the organisation will need to be consulted in the process of operational decision-making. In this regard, the importance of attracting and nurturing staff committed to the organisation's goals and who are supportive of and loyal to the leader cannot be overestimated. No doubt, along with others, Nehemiah's co-workers Hanani, Hananiah and Ezra were men of integrity who feared God (7: 2).

Nevertheless, despite my efforts to organise the college, causes of discouragement and frustration are never far away. Nehemiah found his plans opposed by Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshelem (6: 1). In his book *A Passion for Faithfulness*, J. I. Packer groups these spiritual challenges to Nehemiah under four words – incrimination, intrigue, innuendo, and intimidation. He goes on to say "it is a rather grim law that the higher one's exposure and the greater one's influence as a leader of others, the more one's personal standards and political wisdom will be put under attack."

And as Nehemiah knew, when a leader fails at this level it has disastrous conse-

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quences for an organisation and its people. Christian leaders in schools need to be well aware of such attacks. These will come in many forms: misguided parental pressure, character assassination, malicious gossip, discouragement through actions of negative cliques, pressure for instant decisions that may compromise important principles, and an insecurity about trusting others – all await the Christian principal.

Nehemiah's example in dealing with these attacks is instructive. He knew that the answer to these challenges did not lie in greater leadership skills and techniques as some modern writers would have us believe. Rather, he tackled the problems by modelling certain qualities of character. He demonstrated zeal for godly purposes, goodness in his dealings with others, steadiness under pressure and showed wisdom derived from his walking with God. Paul says much the same in Ephesians 6: 10-18 where he outlines the resources available to Christians for spiritual warfare.

As a principal, I know how vulnerable I can be to spiritual attack and how inadequate my own resources are to deal with it. Like Nehemiah, I'm convinced that the Christian leader needs to stand firm, seek the courage inherent in Nehemiah's prayer "Now strengthen my hands" (6: 9), and be willing to use all the resources of God's armory.

Ultimately, the reason why leadership is so important is that people need to be nurtured, guided, disciplined and encouraged. Again, Nehemiah has much to teach us. His involvement of others and his willingness to invest time in them is instructive for every leader. He always gave clear guidelines and constantly restated his aims. In this area, as in all areas of life, Nehemiah sought to be faithful rather than successful, and to exercise "responsible leadership rooted in radical godliness".

In summary, what have I learned from Nehemiah about leadership?

I need a clear vision and a disciplined mind. I need a faithfulness to the job to which I have been called. I need wisdom derived from my walk with God. I need to have courage to speak out and to take a lead. I need to be willing to cross swords with powerful people and, in the words of Harry Truman, "to stand the heat in the kitchen". I need Nehemiah's prayerful confidence that my God will see me through every conceivable leadership challenge. Like Nehemiah, I aspire to hear the Master's "Well done". There is no greater leadership reward.

Dr Robert Iles is principal of The Scots College, Sydney

Guess who's coming to dinner?

Well, maybe coffee – but the elder must be a regular visitor.



*Derrick Brierley
Jock Mackillop*

One of the most important functions of a Christian leader is to visit those for whom he or she has pastoral care. The idea of visiting comes from God Himself. The Bible writers often use the Hebrew word *paqad* "visit" and its Greek equivalent *episkeptomai*, to describe how God remembers people or nations, and then looks into and does something about their affairs.

At the heart of the idea is the recognition that God shows initiative in his relationships with others because he knows and cares for them. More often than not, God visits people because his aim is to rescue and bless. That's why Zechariah sings for joy: "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and redeemed his people." (Luke 1: 68)

"Visiting", or looking into another's affairs with the aim of blessing that person, is an activity for which elders ought to be prepared. It's a very important New Testament ministry (Mt. 25: 36, 43; Acts 15: 36; James 1: 27). That's why in the late 20th century, an elder should be trained in the pastoral care and visitation of God's people.

The elder's visit is, first of all, a friendly visit. We must begin on the level of making friends, so it's a good idea to have a few opening gambits ready, such as the person's health, family life, job and hobbies.

Elders shouldn't be afraid to ask questions if they do it sensitively. People like

to talk about themselves. It's not a matter of prying into their affairs, but of offering friendship and interest that are real. It's essential to make every effort to understand the environment and outlook of the person you have come to help. Every new situation in a family's life – birth, marriage, death, sickness, leaving school, a change of job – is an opportunity for forging another link in the chain of trust and understanding between elder and member. Such a relationship must be a growing thing and, after the first hurdles are crossed, one thing leads to another with the ease of any human friendship.

It's important for elders not to rely on memory. Keep a notebook with a couple of pages to each family. Write down the names of the family, the ages of the children, whether attending Sunday School or the youth group, Boys or Girls Brigade, and where they go to school.

After you leave, note down any significant details – what the boy hopes to do when he leaves school, where the married daughter is living and the name of her husband. Put down any important information about the family while still fresh in your mind so that you can pray for them and ask them about it on subsequent visits. Note any particular points you need to follow up that emerged during the visit.

Elders need to be particularly sensitive about the length of their visits. Don't let it go too long; half an hour is usually enough. Two hours may be an imposition, and five minutes is useless. When you have decided that it's a good time to leave, do not hesitate to say, "I must go now", and rise and look like you are going. On the other hand, try to be sensitive to "undercurrents". These are often the things that come out when you are on your feet to leave. In that case, you must give more time.

Again, in your visit, it's important to take in the whole family. An elder should be especially interested in children; after all, Jesus was (Mk 10: 13-16). Taking

along a small present of lollies is quite an effective way of showing that you care for them and of making them feel included in the visit. One of the elder's aims should be to show friendship to any men in the family. If you are genuinely interested in them, they won't disappear into the garden. Above all, be strict in respecting anything told you in confidence.

So far we have been talking about making contact, contacts which we hope in time will develop into real Christian fellowship. But this is only the first stage in pastoral visiting. The elder is not merely a social visitor. He is there to represent the Church and the Lord Jesus Christ. How do we go about deepening the visit?

First, we deepen the visit before we enter the home by praying regularly for the people in our congregation. The sure test of your pastoral concern for people will be the urgency with which you bring them before God's throne of grace. Some elders remember one family by name every day, others will try to cover all families once a week. Methods may vary, but the beginning of any effort to serve the members of a district in God's Name must be knowing them in God's presence. And in God's presence, new ways of service will surely open up.

In the actual visit, an elder will sooner or later bring the conversation around to the subject of the fellowship of the church. You are meant to be a "link" between the members and the session, so you will tell them about any new developments in the life of the church that are being planned or carried out - ministry opportunities, a parish visitation, a new organisation being started for young people, Sunday School, or congregational special needs. In any case, know your congregational paper and your denominational magazine or newsletters, and have a few topics from them up your sleeve. "What do you think of this

that appeared in the session news last month?", "Did you notice that interesting article in *Australian Presbyterian*?"

Try to get across the feeling that the church is one big family. "Do you know so-and-so in this district? I've just been visiting her." Try to promote friendship or, at least, acquaintance between the members of the church in the same district. The ideal thing would be for two or three elders and their spouses to invite the members of their districts to an informal social evening once every so often.

Some congregations still find communion cards to be a useful tool. A visit is a good time to discuss them, and maybe raise the question of church attendance.

Elders should also have a good memory for where people sit in church. Look out for them there. Try to make a point of talking to one family at the end of each service. It's a really good idea to arrange for a cup of coffee to be served in the hall after the morning service and to invite the members of a few districts in turn to remain for it. Or why not everyone? How much fellowship is there in just attending the church if the members are all in a hurry to get home immediately after the service? And, of course, one of the first duties of an elder is to be regularly present with your family at the services of worship. If the elder doesn't attend faithfully, how can he expect the ordinary members to do so?

An elder's first concern, after he has shared his interest in a person's general well-being, is his or her spiritual state. As the Apostle John says, elders should be concerned that a person's "soul is getting along well". (3 John 2) This is the time that you might share some lessons that God has been teaching you, or you might find it useful to answer questions that lead you into the Bible. Your aim here is to encourage people to grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3: 18)

Do not be afraid to talk about God and the spiritual life. We ought to use plain terms about fundamentals. Don't be vague or embarrassed. Be ready to listen, but also be ready to give your personal witness. You will have to judge for yourself whether a Bible-reading or a prayer would be appropriate before you leave. In any case, it is courteous to ask if they would like to have it. Some older people would be very glad to have someone pray with them, especially when they cannot get out to church themselves. Also, prayer can be a real summing-up of the visit, when you bring the whole family and their concerns into the circle of God's care for them.

A very effective way for an elder to express his pastoral role is to offer to become a volunteer chaplain in a hospital, hostel or nursing-home. In this way, he can assist the full-time or part-time pastoral care workers. Some institutions may not have a pastoral care team at all. Elders are welcomed by chaplains in these situations, as extra visiting complements the work of the pastoral team and may even lighten the load of an overworked department.

Elders, especially if they are no longer in the full-time work force (like ministers emeritus), may visit for half a day or a whole day each week, or more frequently as time permits.

In hospital situations, visiting on one day a week makes it difficult for a volunteer chaplain to build up rapport with patients. They usually only stay for a few days. In hostels and nursing-homes there is a greater opportunity to build up a relationship with the residents over a longer period of time. This makes them more fruitful places for ministry.

These days hospital patients rarely request a prayer or Bible-reading, but never be afraid to raise spiritual issues if you sense that a person is open. However, it's different in hostels and nursing-homes. There, the frequency of visiting the same residents allows a deepening of the fellowship and the possibility of building up a spiritual relationship.

Our hope in this brief article has been to show how important it is for the elders of the church to visit people. As Christ's under-shepherds, we have a responsibility to show that God cares and comes to bless His people. That's why elders should be regularly visiting so that they can show Christ's grace, his active concern and his desire to address us with his life-giving Word.

Derrick Brierley and Jock Mackillop are elders at Concord and Mosman Presbyterian Churches respectively. They have been active in the General Assembly, Presbytery and their sessions for many years.

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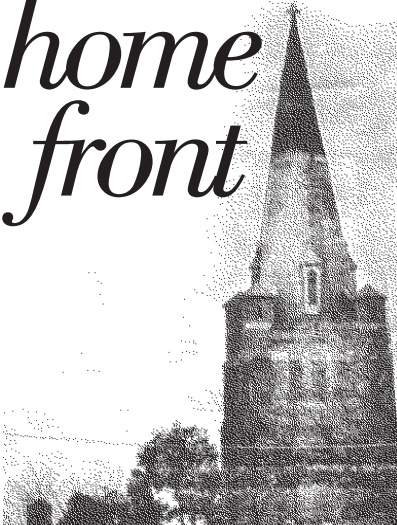
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Presbyterian honoured

Mr Stanley Collin Gillmore, Roseville, NSW, has been honoured in the Queen's Birthday honours list. The award was for service to the Presbyterian Church and to the Uniting Church in Australia through the provision of leadership in the advancement of financial management and administration.

People and places

The home mission parish of **Bombala-Cooma-Delegate** has arranged for the Cooma congregation to hold services in the Lutheran Church. Home missionary **John Peet** and wife **Joke** have been working in the parish since January. Two new elders were added this year, **Geoff Bowland** and **Wally Mills**. Cooma celebrates 150 years of Presbyterian worship this year. The moderator of the charge is Queanbeyan minister **Rev. Andrew McConachy**.

In the Presbytery of Tasmania, four new elders have been ordained for the charge of St John's Hobart: **Messrs Ed Kleywegt, Fred Lethbridge, David Leitch, and Johnny Tasirin**. The S.A. General Assembly declared **Rev. John Campbell** to be Minister Emeritus on 13 May, just after the 40th anniversary of his ordination.

The Warrnambool charge in southern Victoria has appointed **Rev. Philip Burns** as an assistant minister, also assisting the Koroit-Port Fairy charge.

Vanuatu missionaries Darrell and Margaret Thatcher from **Talua**, have returned to the field after two months at home in Australia. They request prayer for their work, and for progress among the students at the college in Talua.

The Presbytery of the Hastings has elected a new clerk, **Mr J. Rooimans**, P O Box 209, Wingham NSW 2429.

PWA conference

The PWA Queensland conference, held during Assembly week, had as its theme "the Lord reigns". Federal president Mrs Fay Schinkel spoke of Christ's reign and his glory – found even in such places as the desert where there are magnificent specimens of flora. She encouraged hearers to express their joy at knowing the Lord who reigns. **Mrs Lillian Kennedy**, convenor of the Christian Education Committee, reflected on those who live on the edge of life in some way. She spoke of the apostle Peter who in his letter gave advice in issues such as holy living and leadership. The committee has a new publication called *Living on the Edge*, with 10 studies from Peter on this topic. Contact address 269 the Esplanade, Wynnum, Brisbane 4178.

Coonabarabran invasion

On 1 May, 20 students, three wives and two lecturers from the Presbyterian Theological Centre in Burwood descended on the rural town of **Coonabarabran** for a college mission to find that they were overlapping with 400 Jehovah's Witnesses at a convention there!

The minister and his wife, **Russell and Liana Vandervelden**, had prepared a full programme. The events were spread from Bundella to Coonamble (a distance of about 240 kilometres), with Coonabarabran, Baradine and Binnaway in between. Services were conducted at all centres, nursing homes visited, school Scripture classes conducted, Kids' Clubs run, and door-to-door visits made. There was a men's dinner and a women's coffee and dessert evening. Contacts were made in the local Chinese community and very good feedback received from the broader community that a local church is making an effort to speak on relevant issues eg; stress and "a man and his shed" and is providing ministry to young and old.



Phillip Wiedemann and Naomi Gorton in the Coonabarabran church

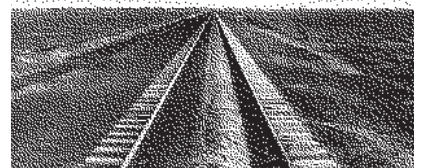
In all, more than 1000 people were reached in some way or another, and good reports are coming from the parish about the Sunday School starting again after 2 years of no children, and about people coming to church who had not been regular previously.

The gospel was faithfully preached in these varying situations, the local people ministered to in a number of ways, the local church members were encouraged, and the students gained invaluable experience of the life of a country minister. All in all, the mission was a great success. Parishes interested in having a mission should contact **Rev. Paul Cooper** at the PTC Sydney, Ph. (02)9744-1977.

Church heritage

The Australian Heritage Commission has listed the 141-year-old **Anne Street Presbyterian Church** in Brisbane on the nation's premier heritage list. The citation said the church's location "among larger and more modern buildings is a powerful reminder of the long-standing traditions of the city's Presbyterian community". In Victoria, the former Free Presbyterian Church in St Kilda was listed, along with several other Christian churches.

across australia



Stand for creation

A leading Australian molecular biologist, **Dr Ian Macreadie**, has taken a stand for his faith, and has received radio and press coverage in Australia and New Zealand as a result. An interview with *Creation* magazine attracted media attention. Dr Macreadie is a principal research scientist seconded from the CSIRO to the Biomolecular Research Institute, and is national secretary of the Australian Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. As a committed Christian, he does not see any conflict between what he knows as a scientist and what he understands about the Bible. He said he no longer believed evolution to be a viable theory for the origin of life because it was at odds with much

of what he knew from his own fields of research.

Dr Macreadie does not believe viruses were created by God as separate entities. He sees viruses as originally part of DNA in cells but which have escaped from cells as genetic garbage – a result of genetic mutation or environmental damage. “They are part of the curse on creation in Genesis 3. I would predict from that theory that that we should find pieces of ‘virus’ DNA in the human genome (DNA), and that’s starting to be found.”

Creation is on sale at newsagents in the five largest capital cities.

Farewell, an old friend

Ancient Times House in Little Bourke Street, Melbourne, is packing up its treasures. The Christian-based archaeological study centre is having to move after 45 years. At present there is no new home for the unique collection of Bible-centred artefacts and information, which have benefited generations of Melbourne Christians.

A Charismatic voice

A new grouping of churches known as **Australian Christian Churches** has been launched, as an umbrella organisation for pentecostal and independent churches. The development is an initiative of the Assemblies of God national executive. The objective is to present a unified voice to the nation, “representing the increasing number of thriving, growing churches in Australia”.

Postmodern witness

Fire on the Mountain was the fifth annual Christian World View Conference, held at Tambourine, with **Dr James Montgomery Boice** as main speaker. The event was life-changing for some who heard the expositions of Romans 12. The conference dealt with a Christian mindset, faith and reason, and communication of the gospel to postmodern people. Tapes and videos are available from PO Box 173 North Tambourine, Qld 4272.



Kim Dale, Kim Hawtrey, Kirsten Birkett, Frank Stootman and Ian McIver at *Fire on the Mountain*

Doulos docks again

The *MV Doulos* docks again in Sydney, from 4 to 25 July, at Circular Quay. The *Doulos* is said to be the oldest ocean going passenger ship in the world, having been built in 1914, just two years after the **Titanic** sank! The ship provides a Christian

bookfair, ship tours, student evangelistic nights, mission expo, and an international night of music dance and drama. The *Doulos* office is at Scripture Union.

CARE service

The Governor General, **Sir William Deane**, attended an ecumenical service to pray for CARE workers **Steve Pratt**, **Peter Wallace** and **Branko Jelen**, all jailed in Serbia. The Foreign Minister, **Mr Alexander Downer**, Opposition Leader **Mr Kim Beazley**, and ATSIIC chairman **Mr Gatjil Djerrkura** were among the worshippers. The service was held in Canberra’s All Saints Anglican Church.

Poverty gap

The **National Council of Churches** applauds the news that fewer Australian children now live in poverty than in the early ’80s. The change is due to increases in social security payments, and in the number of two-income families. Yet the council notes that the demands on churches and welfare organisations continues to grow, a phenomenon it attributes to an increasing gap between rich and poor.

Artists network

The **Australian Christian Artist Network** is a new organisation formed to help Christian artists to become established in their fields, and to provide information about what Christian artists are doing. It aims to establish a healthier Christian music industry, and provide an interactive support network for Christian artists in their ministries and careers. It is assembling a comprehensive list of Christian artists. For more details, write to PO Box 2359, Rowville, Vic 3178.

ARPA convention

The **Australasian Religious Press Association** is holding its annual convention in Adelaide from 6 to 8 August. Details from Grace Brock on 08 8267 7300.

L’Abri conference

The **L’Abri Fellowship** founded by **Francis Schaeffer** holds its Australian conferences in July, ending in Melbourne on 19 and 20 July. The conferences in several states explore the Christian response to the world views of our time. For more details, contact Nigel Jarvis 03 9773 4189.

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Registration is essential for all Daytime lectures and closes on **16 July 1999**.

Evening Lecture on Wednesday 18 August 1999 at 7.30pm

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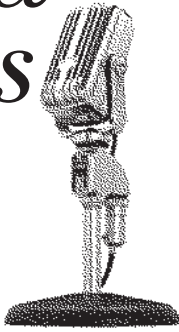
The lecturer will be **Dr Mark Hutchinson**.

This is a public lecture and is open to all who wish to attend. Bookings are not necessary.

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world news



Ecumenical organist

The Dean of Westminster Abbey has appointed a Roman Catholic to the prestigious post of organist and Master of the Choristers at the world-famous abbey. The new organist is the first Roman Catholic to hold the post, and comes from Westminster Cathedral.

Catholic and reformed

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Peter Carey, on tour in Uruguay has emphasised that the Anglican communion is both catholic and reformed. He stated that the Anglican Church bases its teaching on Scripture, tradition and reason. "But this is not an equal three-legged stool; the Scriptures remain the definitive guide, anchor and abiding source of revelation – pointing to Christ, the living Word," said Dr Carey.

Princely values

Prince Philip of Prussia has told members of the Free Evangelical Church in Siegen that many aristocrats are ruining themselves because they are more interested in glory, power and money than in eternal values. The 30-year-old manager of a debtor's protection agency is a direct descendent of Kaiser Wilhelm II. The Prince quoted Jesus words, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also". The Prince, who is studying Protestant theology at the University of Kiel, said, "We need to tell people about Heaven and Hell."

Lutherans, Catholics agree

The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification between the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic

Church seems to be making progress. The declaration can now be the object of joint action of confirmation by the two religious bodies. An understanding has been reached by both parties as to what signing the declaration actually means, and we are led to expect an "official common statement", and a short explanatory annex.

\$100m for missions

The Southern Baptists finished receiving their Christmas 1998 Mission offering at the end of May. The total received is a record for the sixth successive year, being \$101,713,066.69. President of the International Missions Board said the amount fell short of the goal of \$110 million, but that it was an increase of \$1.6 million over the previous year. Every dollar goes into the overseas budget. The denomination has also experienced unprecedented missionary appointments.

Auschwitz crosses removed

Crosses put up on land next to the Auschwitz concentration camp, considered an offence by the Jewish community, have been removed. A large cross commemorated 152 Polish fighters who were killed in 1940 before the start of the Holocaust. The cross was said to be erected by a businessman who rented the land, with a view to provoking a national incident! He succeeded. The Polish Parliament has enacted a law establishing a 100-metre reserve of "respect" around all former Polish concentration camps.

Carey sequel

Now that the new movie on William Carey, *Candle in the Wind*, has been launched, it is followed by a new movie edition of a book on the pioneer missionary, entitled *Faithful Witness*. Together the two releases should help raise the profile of this outstanding saint of the Lord and creative thinker in world evangelisation. Carey became a master of Indian languages, training preachers, establishing churches, and more than 100 Christian schools.

Witness to Serbs

Serb Christians are reported as having gone to the basements and shelters during the bombing to hand out Christian tracts. Some Serbs have fled to Hungary and Romania, where Christians are seeking to minister the gospel and to their daily needs. Refugees sheltering in one church in Romania were reported in tears over the

love of Christ shown to them through the Christians' desire to give them their best and the acts of love around them. In a church in Tirana, Albania, refugees supplied with food and clothing were invited to watch a Christian video while they ate, and the response has been good. The pastor reported: "Today one man asked to get his food later so he and his son could watch the video first. Many bow their heads to pray at the end of the video."

Christians flee Chechnya

In Chechnya, an ongoing rash of kidnappings and murders is troubling the Christian community. Brutality in the town of Grozny has forced the last Christians to flee into southern Russia for resettlement. The disappearance of Christians is severing the link to humanitarian work in many parts of Chechnya. It is believed abductions are seen as a source of income, in the form of ransoms, for both local warlords, and high-ranking Chechnyan government officials. Church leaders, journalists and international workers have been prime targets. Because of the turmoil, church leaders in Moscow advised Christians to leave the disaster-struck province.

Daily toll

Voice of the Martyrs estimates that 500 Christians die for their faith every day throughout the world. In more than 60 countries, Christians continue to suffer for their faith, through harassment, persecution, discrimination, beatings, imprisonment, and death.

From the ashes

In Mexico, evangelical churches which were destroyed by militant Catholic mobs have been rebuilt, in the town of Ejido Nuevo Leon, Chiapas. Some of the offenders were eventually jailed, and ordered to rebuild the churches. In a strange turn, the men imprisoned for their part in the violence have started to recommend that people attend the evangelicals' churches, and one church has doubled in attendance. In another town, Coaxhuaco, a group led by town authorities destroyed an evangelical church in February. A town assembly decided that the evangelicals must return to their catholic church, or their homes will be confiscated and they will be expelled from the town. The Christians are not even allowed to hold prayer meetings in their own homes.

The transcendant O

Why an exclamation is our most important utterance. A.W. Tozer explains why.

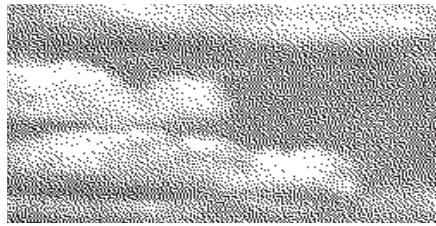
We who speak the English language have in that language a most remarkable instrument for the communication of ideas.

Emerson said of Shakespeare that he more than any other man had the ability to say anything he wanted to say; any idea his mind could entertain, his mouth could utter. What Emerson did not remember to say (if my memory serves me) was that Shakespeare's genius was indebted greatly to the fluidity and fullness of the English tongue. Without such a free and abundant vocabulary as English affords, even the mighty Bard of Avon could not have risen so high nor soared so far. However great his mind, he required a language capable of receiving and expressing what his mind conceived. And that he had in his beloved English.

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary lists 550,000 words. And it is a solemn and beautiful thought that in our worship of God there sometimes rush up from the depths of our souls feeling that all this wealth of words is not sufficient to express. To be articulate at certain times we are compelled to fall back upon "Oh!" or "O" – a primitive, exclamatory sound that is hardly a word at all and that scarcely admits of a definition.

Vocabularies are formed by many minds over long periods and are capable of expressing whatever the mind is capable of entertaining. But when the heart, on its knees, moves into the awesome Presence and hears with fear and wonder things not lawful to utter, then the mind falls flat, and words, previously its faithful servants, become weak and totally incapable of telling what the heart hears and sees. In that awful moment the worshippers can only cry "Oh!" And that simple exclamation becomes more eloquent than learned speech and, I have no doubt, is dearer to

IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD



God than any oratory.

It is not by accident that the idiom of the Christian religion abounds with exclamations. Christianity contemplates things transcendent and seeks to engage the infinite and the absolute. It approaches the Holy of Holies and looks with astonished wonder upon the face of God; then language, no matter how full or how facile, is simply not adequate. "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out" (Rom. 11: 33). The exclamation "O" could not be omitted from that rhapsody. It is the fountain out of which everything else flows.

Many of our Christian hymns reveal the same exclamatory quality, chiefly because they embody an intensity of feeling that rises above rational meanings and definitions into the realm of the numinous. The Moravian Hymnal, for instance, lists about three hundred verse lines that begin with "O". While it would not be wise to press this too far (since literary custom may dictate the use of emotional language where no particular emotion is present) still the fact that there is such a large number of exclamations among the hymns surely does have real meaning for us.

In the inspired Scriptures, where no imperfection is to be found, the exclamatory vocable occurs constantly. Prophets and psalmists continually find themselves on the brink of the infinite gazing into an abyss of divinity that quite overwhelms them and squeezes from their hearts such bursts of feeling as mere words cannot express. It is then that "Oh!" and "Ah!"

come spontaneously to their lips, as when Jeremiah, upon hearing the voice of the Lord, responds, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child"; or when Ezekiel standing in the valley of bones cries out, "O Lord God, thou knowest."

In theology there is no "Oh!" and this is a significant if not an ominous thing. Theology seeks to reduce what may be known of God to intellectual terms, and as long as the intellect can comprehend it can find words to express itself. When God himself appears before the mind, awesome, vast and incomprehensible, then the mind sinks into silence and the heart cries out "O Lord God!" There is the difference between the theological and spiritual experience, the difference between knowing God by hearsay and knowing him by acquaintance. And the difference is not verbal merely; it is real and serious and vital.

We Christians should watch lest we lose the "Oh!" from our hearts. There is the real danger these days that we shall fall victim to the prophets of poise and the purveyors of tranquillity, and our Christianity be reduced to a mere evangelical humanism that is never disturbed about anything nor overcome by any "trances of thought and mountings of the mind." When we become too glib in prayer we are most surely talking to ourselves. When the calm listing of requests and the courteous giving of proper thanks take the place of burdened prayer that finds utterance difficult we should beware the next step, for our direction is surely down whether we know it or not.

Churches and missionary societies should keep always before them the knowledge that progress can be made only by the "Ohs" and "Ahs" of Spirit-filled hearts. These are the pain cries of the fruitful mother about to give birth. For them there is no substitute; not plans nor programmes nor techniques can avail without them. They indicate the presence of the Holy Spirit making intercessions with groanings that cannot be uttered. And this is God's only method in the local church or on the mission field.

A.W. Tozer was called a "20th century prophet" in his own lifetime. For 31 years he was pastor of Southside Alliance Church, Chicago. He was also editor of Alliance Life until his death in 1963.

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Spun out

There is a moral gulf between pokies and the share market.

"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will become lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud..." I Timothy 6:6,7

As the millennium draws to a close, there are many things that are threatening our society. Some of the more obvious of these are the arms trade, as well as the many regional wars which appear to flare up at just at the right time to test and consume the latest suite of deadly munitions. Another that looms large is the economic imperialism of the USA – the undisputed master of the world's new technologies. But there are a host of others – the menace of pollution, the seemingly intractable spread of AIDS, rising levels of youth suicide, the break-up of the family unit, addiction to a broadening array of narcotics, a growing acceptance of violence and, last but not least, increasing opportunities for gambling.

I mention gambling last, not because it is the least in this catalogue of troubles, but it is a vice that has definite links with some of the other evils. So many countries have embraced the development of casinos that they now flourish the world over. In Australia, each of the state governments has betrayed its electorates by accepting huge up-front payments from casino developers for the rights to build their neon palaces and by helping themselves to between 10 and 20 per cent of casino takings.

I have never seen a cost-benefit analysis for society as a whole for a new casino. However, I can imagine the sort of arguments which would be used to support casino development – casinos operate in many countries and are a mark of a sophisticated society, they create jobs, are places of light entertainment and fun, produce state revenues for the good of the country and promote in-bound tourism. In NSW we've seen the added sweetener of grants to families disadvantaged by the losses of compulsive gamblers!

Australia now has large casinos in Cairns, the Gold Coast and Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth and little-brother versions in Townsville, Canberra, Hobart, Adelaide, Alice Springs and Darwin. Casinos rely on the local clientele known as "the grind" as well as high-rollers, many of whom are enticed to come down



Russell Lander



PHOTOGRAPH: RAY KENNEDY, THE AGE

Crown Casino

from East Asia by cheap or even free fares and accommodation.

Casinos throw in the provision of minders for the top echelon, kid-glove treatment at airports, and kick-backs on turnover. I have visited most of these casinos, mercifully not as a combatant, but as an analyst in a stockbroking firm. Prospectuses for floats such as the glitzy Sydney Harbour Casino (now Star Casino) and the egregious Crown Casino in Melbourne conjure up an atmosphere of fun and laughter and a great time for all. Nothing could be further from the truth. Laughter is seldom heard in these cavernous pavilions, and you rarely see a smile. Blackjack, roulette and two-up are deadly serious games which seem to generate an atmosphere of melancholy. The lighting is reminiscent of those ultra-violet devices designed to fry insects at a barbecue. The sound system featuring crashing coinage evokes the idea that winning is a cake-walk. Casino operators like to be thought of as

squeaky clean and heavily regulated; in the words of Robert McNamara, "cleaner than a hound's tooth". However, they are always looking for ways to lift earnings. They want to introduce gaming machines which have more games on them, which can accept money faster (via innovations such as bill acceptors), and look more exciting. Casino operators are constantly refining the configuration of their gaming rooms to maximise revenue, as if enough were not enough.

But casinos are not the only gambling pressure on Australian households. Gaming machines are proliferating in hotels in a number of states, notably NSW and Victoria. This is great news for hotel valuations but an insidious guest for your average drinker. It is as though our society is bent on creating new temptations!

And what of the cost to households? Tom Dusevic writing in a recent issue of *Time* magazine (17 May 1999) draws on figures produced by the Tasmanian Gaming Commission to point out that Australians wagered \$A95 billion in 1997/98 in various forms of gambling, equivalent to \$6835 an adult. The losses, net of winnings, came out at \$A11.3 billion or \$818 an adult. State and territory governments walked away with an effortless \$A3.8 billion. What a meal ticket! During the 1990s the cost of gambling in Australia moved up from 2 per cent of disposable income to 3 per cent.

Another area of gambling where there has been enormous growth in Australia in recent years is stock and index warrants. The euphemism "trading" is used to describe dealing in this suite of investment derivatives, implying that one can make a decision to buy or sell based on sound fundamental criteria. The opposite is generally the case as these are geared securities akin to options where the rate of decay of time-value can be deceptive. Most who deal in these products are not using them to offset an existing investment risk. Listed warrants were introduced in 1991 and turnover has risen from 2.7 million units in that year to over 4 billion in 1998, worth some \$2 billion. Since June 1996 the number of warrant series has gone up from 51 to over 400. And now we are facing a new siren in the form of internet gambling.

Why do Christians decry gambling

when there is so much excitement about the opportunities available? "To gamble" is described by the Collins English Dictionary as "to play games of chance to win money". Essentially, the Bible teaches that we must not make money our god. This is because love of money can become so intense that we lose sight of God our Creator who provides for our every need (as opposed to every want!)

The worship of money holds out no lasting joy but rather disappointment and spiritual exile to boot. In James 5:1-3 we read: "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted and your garments moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days." (New King James) Paul picks up this theme in 1 Timothy 6:9,10: "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

"It's my money and I can do what I like with it!" This may well be a gambler's response to these passages and of course he can dispose of it as he wishes. However, this misses the point that we must be responsible to God and our families. In a broader context we must use our resources wisely for our community and the wider world. The Book of Proverbs contains a number of passages worthy of careful



PHOTOGRAPH: JERRY GALEA, THE AGE

thought by anyone who sees gambling as a harmless form of entertainment:


- "He who is hungry for greed troubles his own household..." 15:27
- "He who troubles his own house inherits the wind." 11:29
- "There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing, and one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches." 13:7
- "Do not overwork to become rich; because of your own understanding, cease! Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings. They fly away like an eagle toward heaven." 22:4,5
- "Hell and Destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied." 27:30

Yes, we're now saddled with the proliferation of gambling instruments that our short-sighted governments have so graciously bequeathed upon us! But let us be the more definite of our position as Christians – we need to leave all forms of gambling well alone and become equipped ourselves to be ready to explain to others where to find the appropriate verses of Scripture.

Finally, I am often asked if there is a definite line which can be drawn between investing in shares and gambling on the sharemarket. It all depends on the motive of the investor at the time. Every investment has an element of speculation in it which is part of the risk profile which applies to real estate and art, or coin collections, just as much as to shares. To take a calculated risk in buying a share is not, in my opinion, even remotely like playing a slot-machine. This is because the motive is to get into an investment at the early stages and to bear risks in order to reap rewards in terms of eventual dividends and capital growth.

Seed capitalists likewise take positions in unlisted vehicles, putting up funds at an earlier stage, but still with the same long-term objective of participating in a sound investment, albeit shouldering more risk. That is not to say that these investors will actually wait for their investments to reach maturity. Slot-machines hold out no such outcomes but rather entice us with the remote chance of an early big drop, or perhaps a linked jackpot with the absolute certainty of eventual losses on purely statistical grounds. Such players are not putting up funds which could build a business, rather they are just nourishing the day's takings in the hopes of striking it lucky.

In conclusion, let me give a parting word on using options or warrants. Most participants in these markets are gambling, whether they acknowledge it or not. However, there is a legitimate use for derivatives which is to offset risk. Hence, wool producers can set their revenues for the year ahead by selling wool futures against which they may choose to deliver physical wool, while the mills can conversely establish the cost of purchases. If exchange-traded options or warrants are bought or sold to protect a portfolio against market fluctuations, they are not instruments of gambling. On the contrary they have the effect of reducing risk. It all depends on one's motive. The danger is wanting to get rich quickly, taking from others without giving anything back in return.

Russell Lander is an investment analyst with Dicksons, a Sydney stockbroker. He worships in Wahroonga. 

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Movie Watch

The Matrix

Reviewed by Katrina Ramsay



Keanu Reeves and Hugo Weaving

The *Matrix* is an exciting, technically excellent science fiction film, based on the premise that our entire world is actually a giant virtual reality game. Neo (Keanu Reeves) is a reclusive computer programmer who discovers that the reality he has always known is nothing but a computer simulation. Artificially intelligent machines have defeated the human race and taken over the earth. Neo's real self exists in one of billions of goo-filled capsules where he, along with the rest of humanity, is permanently plugged into the matrix.

The film is suspenseful and well-paced, thereby separating it from many sci-fi films, like (dare I say) the more hyped *Star Wars: Episode One*. *The Matrix* is a movie that tells you just enough, at just the right time, and so maintains the audience's interest.

The film's roots in Cartesian philosophy are obvious. What should we believe actually exists of what we see around us? One character asks Neo (who is understandably disoriented by this new revelation), "What is real? How do you define real?" Our senses cannot be trusted because our brains are merely reading electrical signals, and how can we know where those electrical signals come from? Everything that seems real is only "real" in the sense that we believe it to be so. Our brains are convinced that we are eating a juicy steak, or sitting in a leather armchair, or falling from the top of a 40-storey building, and so it must be.

For those of you who are *X-Files* fans, your disbelief is probably already suspended, and you have accepted the film's parameters. For the rest of you, here are my...

Top five reasons to see *The Matrix*

1. Keanu Reeves looks good in black. Lawrence Fishburne also looks good in black. In fact, they all look good in black. The beauty of futuristic sci-fi flicks is that the art directors get to knock themselves out with the costuming. Everyone, includ-

ing the bad guys, looks very sharp. Even before the action starts, you just know it's going to be a fun ride because everyone's wearing funky clothes.

2. You can play Spot the Australian extra/landmark. *The Matrix* was filmed right here in Australia at Sydney's Fox Studios and so some of the people and locations are very recognisable. Every now and then I was whispering to my friend: "There's Centrepoint Tower! There's Katerina from *Heartbreak High*! There's the MMI building! There's that guy who played Betty's boyfriend in *Hey Dad!*" Sydney looks great, and the actors do well – mostly. (*The Matrix* is a good thing for the Australian film industry. Our actors get international exposure, and we get a good reputation as a relatively cheap shooting location. Our special effects and post-production teams are among the best in the world, and Sydney makes a good urban location that is not as easily recognisable as American cities – at least, not to the American public, who, to be honest, are the people who matter most in the film world. Witness the recent protests in Hollywood over the number of film makers going to other locations, such as Sydney, to make cheaper, more realistic-looking films.)

3. Hugo Weaving is satisfyingly creepy. This superior Australian actor makes a very good bad guy. His delicious accent, part Scottish, part urbane American, is meticulously enunciated, giving his Agent Smith a degree of invincibility that befits a machine. There's nothing quite like a well-spoken bad guy. For me, an action film can stand or fall on the strength of its villain. A good one makes its heroes seem more heroic in contrast. And let's face it – a relatively wimpish post-Speed Keanu needs all the support he can get to look heroic (although the black clothes help).

4. The action sequences are fast and frenetic, well-shot and convincing. Ever watch a film that you couldn't quite enjoy because that leap on to the roof of that speeding train was just too unbelievable? It doesn't happen in *The Matrix* because the audience is allowed to suspend disbelief. Gravity-defying acts of ludicrous proportions seem totally realistic because they take place in a virtual-reality world. So, I believe that a character can run along a wall, her body parallel to the ground, without falling to the floor, because the wall is not actually there, gravity is not actually there, and she is not actually there. It's all just a computer program. And more than being just contextually legitimate, the action is visually stunning. Everything looks good. The whole thing is an enormous rush.

5. It makes for good sermon illustrations. The whole structure of the story has some interesting parallels with Christianity.

The Matrix is described as "the world that is pulled over our eyes to blind us from the truth". Morpheus and his crew know that there is a reality outside of the Matrix, and they try to convince Neo that he has actually been born into slavery. His disbelief is like non-Christians who are told that they are in servitude to sin, and need to be rescued from their helpless state. We think we understand the world around us, and it is discomfiting to learn that the universe is quite different. Like C.S. Lewis' *Shadowlands*, the physical world around us is not the "real" reality.

Neo is lauded as "the one" – the messianic figure who will save the whole world from their bondage to the machines. Like Christ, he is prophesied about, and he demonstrates his uniqueness by performing extraordinary feats. He is not bound by the apparently "natural" laws of the matrix, and he can operate outside them. By exerting his power over the matrix, he frees the human race from their pretend lives and shows them the way to real life. Interestingly, the film does not show us what this "real life" will look like. Perhaps it is too caught up in the matrix to deal with actualities?

Morpheus offers Neo nothing more than the truth, but that truth will set him free. By changing his belief, Neo's behaviour and relationship with his world changes. As Christians, we grow as our understanding of the gospel infiltrates our thinking more deeply. It's not that Neo grows more powerful than the matrix, rather that the truth of his status becomes clear to him – it really is as Jesus said: "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."



Keanu Reeves in *The Matrix*

A persevering veteran

How 63 years of evangelism bore fruit in Venda.

Venda Reformed Church pioneer Mr A.J. Machaba, 95 in April, is still preaching the gospel as he has done without pause since 1936. What a delight for my son Andrew and me recently to meet again this dear old man and find him still walking to church every Sunday, still digging the chief's large garden and still preaching of Christ in south Venda.

Where on earth is Venda? It's tucked away in north-east South Africa, but Australians might have got a glimpse in a recent Kellogg's Corn Flakes ad which started with Inca ruins in Machu Picchu, then flicked to Venda women pounding corn.

Steeped in witchcraft, Venda seemed barren soil for early missionaries. In the Depression years Johannes van der Walt found church planting in the south hard work. Here he met Mr Machaba, and a great friendship blossomed as the two took up the task.

Reverend van der Walt was pressed from two sides. On one was the Reformed tradition confining the pulpit to ordained ministers alone, and on the other his dire shortage of preachers. Mr Van der Walt had grown up in the strict Reformed Church of Paul Kruger – in which no one may preach but a “dominie” (reverend) – when the dominie is away an elder reads an old sermon of the dominie.



A.J. Machaba



Ken Martin

But having no ordained black ministers to help him, Mr van der Walt gained dispensation to appoint full-time laymen. Mr Machaba became one of his first pair of evangelists 63 years ago, declaring the gospel to poor farmhands' families east of Louis Trichardt.

Mr van der Walt not only gained more preachers to fill pulpits, he not only gained men who understood their own people's language and customs, he gained something more. In the 1930s there were few people on this earth lowlier than South Africa's blacks, especially the isolated hill-billy Venda. When Mr Machaba began to preach, the congregation encountered the God who exalts the lowly and empowers the feeble (Luke 1:51-53). To see one of their own men of modest education stand up and nervously declare the sublime message drew forth their loyal support. Then was kindled in the congregation the hope that even they, illiterate peasants, maids and fruit pickers, might also be ambassadors for Christ.

The church in Venda has grown to 15,000 members by prayer and the hard work of church planting. Every parish has a mission committee which young and old men and women, boys and girls are welcome to join. Members are required to pray, study and work. An unevangelised village is prayerfully chosen, the mission committee comes to camp in a friendly home and the gospel is offered house by house. Thus a new church is begun.

Three generations of lay preachers have followed Mr Machaba. Some have been confident school teachers, others carpenters and tailors with primary education. Among them is Wilson Mandende, a school teacher who has been the anchor preacher to start more than a dozen fledgling churches. God gave this smallish, wiry man the patience to study Scripture daily, a

huge, booming voice, and a passionate love of Jesus. God used such toilers to teach the church in Venda that the gospel is committed to all the people to share.

Not content after planting many new congregations among neighbouring South African language groups the Reformed Church in Venda is now preparing long-term outreach in the neglected-central north of Mozambique. This initiative comes from a church so poor that some pastors do not own a car; yet in Mozambique they perceive a need greater than their own.

Long years of fascist and communist rule were followed by 16 years of unspeakable civil war, and through it all the gospel has somehow spread across most of Mozambique, though the far north has heard little of Christ.

Yet the Word of God and the way of salvation are hardly understood. The synod mission committee led by Mr Mandende has funded six recent exploratory visits into Mozambique, while young people provided short-term mission for orphans.

Next year they plan to send a young minister to work in the north alongside Dutch missionary Willem van'T Spyker, who travels over awful roads to visit and teach a thousand pastors. Surely here is strategic work for one who can learn the lingua franca, Portuguese.

This advance into Mozambique comes from a vigorous church whose missionary drive owes a vast debt to God's use of lay preachers in Venda.

Ken Martin is minister of Cranbourne Presbyterian Church, and convener of Australian World Presbyterian Mission in Victoria.



Machaba and Martin

Drawing the line

Censorship is the task of every individual, every family.

‘Boring!’ was the reaction of a young friend who went to see *Lolita*. “I don’t see what all the fuss is about.”

It’s not easy for many to see what the fuss is about. The Christian media has urged us to contact Senator Richard Alston to have this movie banned (email: richard.alston@dcita.gov.au) even though Christians wonder at times if all the letters they write and protests they sign do any good. Why should we bother trying to influence the censors? What is it about this movie in particular that has made it notorious?

Censorship is considered an ugly word in the English language, suggesting of the strong hand of power silencing the dissenting voice. Many believe it has no place in a democracy. Surely it is the antithesis of liberty and freedom. Yet, experience teaches that a line has to be drawn somewhere with freedom of expression and communication. Harvard philosopher W.E. Hocking captured the dilemma: “Are all thoughts equally worthy of protection? Are there no ideas unfit for expression, insane, obscene, destructive? ... Is non-censorship so great a virtue that it can denounce all censorship as lacking in human liberality?”

Why is *Lolita* more demanding of our concern than hundreds of other immoral and violent movies? Vladimir Nabokov wrote the story of a British academic, Humbert Humbert, who migrates to America after the war. He travels to the address of friends, finds them no longer there, and is offered a room by the present occupant, a widow, Charlotte Haze. He looks out the window for his first glimpse of this woman’s 12-year-old daughter, Lolita. He re-creates a past, tragic passion for this girl in place of the one he had lost: “Light of my life. Fire of my loins. My sin. My soul. Lolita.” He stages a sham marriage with Charlotte, who is later killed in a road accident. Humbert and Lolita spend the next few years travelling around America, sharing motel rooms, pretending to be father and daughter. Eventually, the girl disappears. He searches for her unsuccessfully. Then a letter arrives: “Dear Dad, how’s everything. I’m married. I’m going to have a baby ... This is a hard letter to write ... Are you still mad at me? Please send us a cheque, Dad...”



Marion Andrews

Most industry reviews are protective of the film, especially the acting. “It’s interesting and well done, but not for everyone,” says one critic. He argues that Humbert is a flawed human being caught in a self-destructive obsession, contrasted with the insidious monster who eventually lures Lolita away from him. “The skills of the producers and actors combine in the final scene to leave viewers feeling a poignant sympathy for Humbert.”

It is on this point that the Christian must object. The deeds of the sinful flesh must never draw our sympathy. One may be drawn in by the beautiful scenery, the winsome characters, the skilled photography or the talented acting. This will not do. “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil” (Isaiah 5:20). Is this a new practice of our postmodern society? I don’t think so.

In the ’60s many good people were overwhelmed by the beauty of the film *Dr Zhivago*. How haunting was the song

Somewhere My Love! No one at that time, or now, would call for this film to be banned, yet underneath this too was an immoral movie. It set out to change people’s perceptions of the sin of adultery – to make evil look good, and darkness light. The danger of these films is that they may change our view of sexuality. Illegitimate sexual roles are portrayed as acceptable, boundaries are transgressed.

Entertainment is a massive global industry, and can only flourish in its present form when society is prosperous and at peace. This is also the time when the church is far more in danger of losing her integrity than in times of war or persecution. The subtle changing of perceptions of good and evil is the silt of sin that accumulates gradually. Before we know it, the channels of truth and righteousness are clogged up, ineffective, inoperable!

It is not possible that all wrong movies will be censored, and many that should offend Christians are too subtle. Real censorship must be practised on a personal level, the level of the local church, the family, and the individual. An Eastern sage said: “The first look may be an accident; the second look is sin.”

Liberty can never be absolute, censorship can never be absent. It is the business of every individual and every family. May it also become the business of our government! AP



Jeremy Irons and Dominique Swain in *Lolita*

The perfect balance

Grace and truth need each other.

Two young friends were enjoying a bag of hot chips together. One was a Christian, the other a sceptic. They had been friends for a long time. As they talked the conversation drifted into the meaning of life.

The Christian started to get excited – here was an opportunity to tell her friend the gospel. And the Christian did with great gusto and careful argument. But her sceptic friend just said, “So what? I don’t see it that way. There is no meaning to life. For me the best I can do is to get as much out of life as possible, as fast as possible, before some idiot launches a nuclear missile to finish us all off.” The Christian was totally frustrated and in an exasperated tone replied, “But you just *have to* believe it because it’s TRUE!!!!”

Do people *have to* believe the gospel because it’s true? Well, yes and no. We know that ultimately every knee will bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. But we also know that God has given people the ability to make their own choices in life. The problem is that from the our Christian



Karen Astles

perspective we are so convinced of the truth of the gospel that we can tend to miss the point of the truth. A Canadian writer once commented, “No one was ever encouraged to love the truth simply by being bettered in an argument.” We need both G & T in our lives.

Our Christian friend above had the T right but seemed to lack the G. The T is truth. Christians who study the Bible and are taught faithfully from it regularly will most likely have a good grasp of the truth. But somewhere along the line we can lose sight of the G. The G is grace.

In John 1:14-18 Jesus is described as being “full of grace and truth”. The gospel is about the truth of Jesus dying for us and rising from the dead. But it is also about the grace of God the Father redeeming us through Jesus. That’s why Jesus was full of both grace and truth – G & T.

In John 1:17 the writer makes it clear why these two aspects of God need to be coupled. The law has shown us the depth of our sinful nature. But in Jesus we are shown grace and truth. Someone has noted that truth without grace becomes legalism. And grace without truth becomes liberalism. We need both – G & T.

When God came to redeem us in Jesus he came to redeem our whole person, not just our brains. The truth of God is not only *about* grace, it is also *embedded in* grace. That’s why our whole lives as Christians need to reflect this coupling. God wants us to live our lives – thinking, working, playing, talking and believing – in both grace and truth. And when we share God’s truth wrapped in grace with our non-Christian friends, perhaps then, by God’s grace, they will see the point of the truth.

So keep G & T together in your life.

Karen Astles is the convener of the Presbyterian Youth Committee in NSW. ^{ap}

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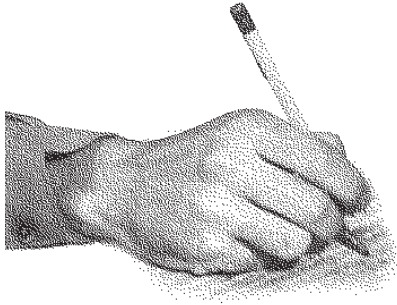
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letters



Message misunderstood

I am writing about some serious difficulties with an article about my work in the April edition of your magazine, written by Marion Andrews. Marion phoned me on my home number one evening seeking an interview; she seemed warm and non-judgmental, and I gave about 90 minutes time to her. Naturally, I was deeply alarmed to see the result in print.

My work, although written to be accessible to every parent, is based in good science and documented with extensive references. I welcome discussion and disagreement, but when my ideas are misrepresented or inaccurately presented with a motive of discrediting them, then I always feel it important to respond vigorously. I invite your readers to re-read Mrs Andrews piece, and they will note that she came to my work with a prejudice against it (which she did not mention in the interview), and concluded with a smug dismissal of it as not being based in the correct theology.

The most serious problem is one of misrepresentation. Specifically Mrs Andrews writes: "He builds his case for sexual differences on the assertion that there is a difference in the size of the central bundle of fibres (corpus callosum) in the brain for boys and girls."

She then proceeds to debunk this through various unreferenced sources.

This grossly distorts the message and purpose of my book *Raising Boys*. In the book gender differences are described as being a combination of parenting, social interaction, culture, hormonal timing of puberty, individual differences, as well as some contribution from brain structure, of which the corpus callosum is only one example.

Secondly, the corpus callosum evidence I present relies not merely on post-mortem work as she states, but especially on magnetic resonance imaging of the living brain at work, as well as neural density, which is more important than size.

By caricaturing my message in these various ways, Marion is doing what she accuses me of – being simplistic. She is also behaving in an un-Christian way, and being careless of a reputation based on hard work with struggling, usually low-income parents, over 20 years, in many parts of the world.

The second problem is of theological judgmentalness. At no stage in her phone interview did Marion Andrews enquire as to whether I was a Christian, which seems to have been the real subtext of her piece. My books are read by people from at least 30 different religions, and it seems good manners to keep my theology separate from child development information. I never claim in my books either to have the last word, or even the complete picture on child rearing.

Finally, at no stage did I state in the interview that I "do not take sin seriously, or even deny that it exists", as Marion Andrews claims. What I do understand, is that in looking at child development it is rarely necessary to invoke the idea of demonic forces to explain toddler behaviour. Little children are capable of heartfelt compassion – when they see a mouse in a mouse trap, as well as thoughtless cruelty, in hitting the pet cat with a wooden toy for instance. These are very adequately explained by the child's lack of understanding, and the need to learn self-control that is the essence of toddlerhood.

Marion Andrews describes her central belief in children as "thoroughly infected with sin". I have real fears about making this the core of one's parenting, and the unintended consequences this can create. Its a matter of emphasis, and Christ's teaching of love, redemption, and "suffer the little children to come unto Me" seems a healthier emphasis to take.

These are matters of individual judgment. What is required, though, of everyone who sets pen to paper is the need to be honest, accurate, and responsible, and in this case I think Marion Andrews failed badly.

Steve Biddulph
Patron – St Francis Childrens Society, UK
Ambassador – Playgroups Australia
Patron – Young Media Australia.
Consulting Psychologist.

Marion Andrews replies: Steve Biddulph claims that I have seriously misrepresented his work in my article *Boys Are Different*. It is true, as he asserts, that he attributes gender differences to a number of causes. But it is clear from his book *Raising Boys* that the organisation of the male brain is probably the principal factor behind these differences (see Chapter 4). I have no problem with this assertion. Increasing numbers of scientists are making similar observations (eg Anne Moir and David Jewel in *Brain Sex*). However, I believe that it was right to point out that not everyone in the scientific community is convinced. (Sizing Up the Sexes, *Time* magazine, 20 January 1992, C. Gorman; Our Brain, *Creation*, Vol. 21 No. 2, March-May 1999, C. Weiland.)

As far as our telephone conversation is concerned, Mr. Biddulph's memory has failed him. I rang him in the morning at 9.01 am, not the evening. Our conversation lasted for 20 minutes and 35 seconds, not 90 minutes as he alleges (I have the Telstra bill to prove it). I took written notes of the conversation, and I stand by every word that I wrote. His comments on sin were a verbatim record. (I have a written copy of the interview.)

I still believe that Mr Biddulph's book on *Raising Boys* has some very helpful

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developmental insights, but Christians need to know that he does not share some fundamental assumptions about what we believe about human nature.

Fair representation

In the last two copies of Australian Presbyterian which I have seen, there have been copies of photographs which have had no identification as to the photographer.

As an amateur photographer, I feel this is bordering on stealing, as the three images I noticed in particular are very famous images. Not only that, but two of the images were modified by computer before being printed, and this to me is totally dishonest if no acknowledgment of permission to modify is not made. The two images with flags, with the only distinguishing feature on the flag, an image of a cross, are both stolen modified images. There was no cross on the original images as taken. I do not believe this is a good Christian witness if permission to both modify and then reproduce was not obtained and acknowledged. I hope it was.

*Fred Mitchell
Melbourne PC User Group.*

The editor replies: *AP* believes the photographs to be in the public domain. We certainly wish to follow ethical practice.

Planted by God

I refer to the letter from Sue Osborne (*AP*, June) in which she accuses the authors of the church planting articles in the March issue of being “charged with worldliness and human effort”.

Sue Osborne has obviously missed the point of the articles in which the bottom line is: “we plant churches under God with the glory going to Him”. Of course God builds his church – how else can it be built?

I searched the articles looking for the “hyperbole and sensationalism” that she accuses the writers of and I could find none. When she accuses David Thurston of being “market and numbers-orientated” I shake my head in disbelief! Does she have the same edition of the magazine as me?

Her accusation that we are engaging in business deals like Amway salesmen is offensive and I ask that she provide proof of this.

I suspect that she has confused the “church growth” movement with church

planting and has consequently read far more into the articles than is warranted. The very churches that she commends in her letter, and the church she now attends were once church plants themselves.

*Kevin Murray
Chairman,
NSW Joint Task Force for Church Planting*

In God’s strength

A real sense of bewilderment gripped me when I read Sue Osborne’s letter. Yes, I read the March issue of *AP*, yes, I read the report of the interview with David Thurston. But what in that article mentioned such condemnation?

Sue Osborne criticises articles on church planting for not mentioning clearly “our dependence on God to build his Church”, singling out David’s for special comment. I quote his words in the interview: “There’s always the question, am I doing it in God’s strength or my own strength?” and – “But at the end of it all it’s bigger than me, and it’s bigger than us together. It’s all about God’s kingdom!”

Well, that spells out clearly enough for me that David is a man who does not depend on his own strength, nor does it sound puffed-up.

I did not get the impression that David is numbers driven – but I did see an emphasis on gathering together a group of vibrant Christians “living out the gospel in their lives” and “learning to bring other people to the Lord.” What is wrong with that? Does not the Great Commission require each one of us to do that? I really cannot see what Sue Osborne is so het up about.

I commend David’s commitment, energy and enthusiasm. We should pray for the Lord’s encouragement for our young ministers and build them up, not knock them down.

*Anne Wotherspoon
Maroubra, NSW*

permanent trustee

Reply Requested

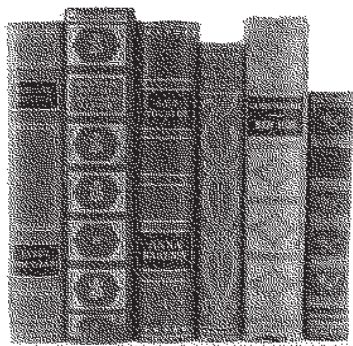
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books



The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership

John C. Maxwell
Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998
Reviewed by Ian Brown

John Maxwell's bestselling book on leadership, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, has something positive to say, but there is much more that it does not say, and ultimately the omissions outweigh the good.

David Wells, in *No Place for Truth* has argued that evangelical Protestantism has lost its historical and theological roots. He argues that for a church to be biblical it must have three elements of theology: a confessional element, reflection on this confession and the cultivation of a set of virtues that are grounded in the first two elements.

The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership is a clear illustration of Protestantism losing its way. While Wells sounds a warning and call for corrective action, John C. Maxwell seems to add another path to the inroads of secular thinking into the church.

The book reminded me of the training in management and leadership I had to endure when working in local government. It sits comfortably with much of what I recall of secular training. Indeed, if I had bought it at a secular bookseller at the local shops, I would not have been surprised at its content.

But this book is promoted as Christian literature and as such one would expect to find certain features, such as examples of leadership from Scripture (confession), consideration of these foundational tenets (reflection on the confession), and an application of these to leadership today (cultiva-

tion of the virtues). But these are absent. In the 21 chapters there is only one example from Scripture, a rather doubtful exegesis of David and Goliath!

Why doesn't Maxwell, the son of a preacher and pastor, employ the Scriptures more. Perhaps he gives away a secret when he says that he developed himself "through a personal growth plan and paying the price of leadership". Further, he says: "I've learned from business people, pastors, politicians, generals, ball players, entrepreneurs – you name it." He speaks of his career rather than God's calling or leading and vocation of ministry.

If I have understood Maxwell rightly, he is moving away from leadership by a plurality of elders in favour of executive management in the church. There appears to be little room for voluntary workers in his scheme. In telling of his third church, he says he sacked some of the staff, even though they were doing their respective jobs well, and appointed new staff who were leaders (as opposed to followers). In acting executively, he is acting as a manager, taking positional authority, which he opposes throughout the book. Applying business principles to church management (government) to my mind lays aside the biblical principle of management by elders as a body. Maxwell seems to want the pastor as a manager/director of others.

He seems guilty of a certain arrogance. For example, in chapter 11, he says he took his third church from a congregation of 1000 to 3000 in 10 years and the budget from \$800,000 to \$5 million. All this is due to "the inner circle" of leaders within the church. The Scripture reminds me that Christ said he would build his church but, sadly, Maxwell makes no mention of the Lord in this growth.

In the same chapter he tells how a company he set up became, in three years, the second largest company of its type in the world. It is to his credit that he has been successful in business, but I have difficulty with the notion that a man called to ministry of the gospel is able to leave that vocation and go into business. Does this mean that his congregation had become nothing more than a business where people are simply processed for the sake of growth? The book gives no place to Scripture in leadership development or thinking, and contains no praise of the Lord.

The book is a marvellous source of information about companies and individual people. He tells why US Presidents were successful and why the original McDonald brothers "failed" in their enterprise of hamburger stores, and why some generals failed and others succeeded in warfare. Oddly, he uses President Carter's timing as illustration, but seems to deny Carter

any success other than to be elected according to his timing.


Maxwell's understanding of the Christian life is one of growth and elevation over time whereas the Scripture surely points in the other direction. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:1-10, describes the body as declining over time, because of spiritual warfare, but our spirit looking toward the goal of salvation.

His final comments are "that we are to pursue our dreams, desire excellence—become the person we were meant to be, accomplish what we were put on earth to do. As you reach the highest levels, don't forget to take others with you to be the leaders of tomorrow."

The book is very readable. Most, if not all, of what is proffered can be positive in secular spheres of life. In learning from great leaders, Maxwell has given us a certain encouragement to go and do likewise. It is true that we need good examples upon which to model our own ethics and standards, particularly as young people. To that end, the book has something to say to us all. But the idea that the Christian can learn a few rules of leadership and do what he wants is a far cry from the idea of God's sovereignty and calling. The book fails at this point.

Further, it reminds me of the various network marketing schemes that abound today, along with various forms of prosperity doctrine, whereby you find those who will run with you and discard those who aren't so responsive.

Certainly the church must relate to society. But that does not mean that society should dictate the way the church conducts and orders its life. As Christians, we look for biblical methods, then go and do likewise as the Lord leads.

Ian Brown is a student at the Presbyterian Theological College in Melbourne. 

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prayer

JULY

- 21 Hugh and Hannah Price, APWM, missionaries in Japan, returning to Victoria for an extended period pastoring the Japanese congregation, Canterbury.
- 22 The aged residents at Kirkbrae (Kilsyth and Whittington) and St. John's Retirement Centre (Somerville), Vic. and the staff providing care.
- 23 Robert and Leonie Betts from Ashburton and Canterbury, Vic, WBT, missionaries in Nairobi, Kenya, in Old Testament and Hebrew advising and administration.
- 24 The vacant Hawkesbury district home mission station, Windsor, NSW; about 30 communicants and 5 elders; Paul Nellies moderator.
- 25 Wendy Eyles from Camp Hill, Brisbane, OMF, missionary at Ujung Pandang, Indonesia, teaching English.
- 26 Presbytery of Torrens, South Aust, 3 parishes, 3 home mission stations, totalling 10 congregations with 370 communicants, 70 adherents, 75 children and youth and 35 elders; 3 retired ministers, PIM patrol minister, Mary McGregor clerk.
- 27 Chinchilla parish on the Darling Downs of Queensland; about 75 communicants, about 10 children and youth and 6 elders; David and Dianne Knott.
- 28 Gladesville-Hunters Hill parish, Sydney (2 congregations), about 70 communicants, about 10 children and youth and 12 elders; Malcolm and Jenette Cram.
- 29 Anna Sutherland from Glasgow and Penshurst, NSW, engaged in personal evangelism and literature distribution among the 40,000 Jews of Sydney with Christian Witness to Israel.
- 30 The effective witness of the Operation Mobilisation vessel Doulos crew during their stay in Brisbane until 17 August.
- 31 Clayfield parish, Brisbane, about 75 communicants, about 10 children and youth and 9 elders; Keith and Merle Savage.

AUGUST

- 1 Christian life in Luxembourg; 370,000 people – 95% RC, 2% non religious, 1.3% Protestant (including 5 Reformed congregations).
- 2 The vacant Kiama parish, south of Sydney including Jamberoo, about 70 communicants and 6 elders; Norman Secombe interim moderator.
- 3 Presbytery of North Queensland; 8 parishes, 3 home mission stations, totaling 17 congregations with 880 communicants, 160 adherents, 420 children and youth and 72 elders; 2 retired ministers, 2 defence chaplains, 1 PIM patrol worker. Gordon McDonald clerk.
- 4 Bible Society work in Mongolia (2.5 million people, 9 languages) – praise for Scripture distribution to 10% of the population, and pray for the others and completion of Bible translation into Mongolian.
- 5 Darrell and Margaret Thatcher from Strathfield, Sydney, APWM missionaries at Talua Ministry Training Centre, Vanuatu – recovery from cyclone damage, wisdom for Principal Kalsakau, new lecturer Johnny Naul, and visiting lecturers, and financial pressures.
- 6 West Wyalong parish home mission station, including 4 other centres; about 100 communicants, about 18 elders; Lance and Daphne Jackson ask for prayer for energy and wisdom for their two-year appointment (from March).
- 7 Brett and Ruth Richardson from Parramatta City congregation, Sydney, European Christian Mission missionaries in Spain.
- 8 Siloam Korean parish, Strathfield, Sydney, about 70 communicants, about 80 children and youth and 2 elders; Byeong Ryu; and the vacant Ho Ju Young Rak Korean congregation, Homebush; Robert McKean interim moderator.
- 9 Julie Mbaisa (nee Kettmiss) from Ascot congregation, Brisbane, and her husband Jimmy, working among youth at Windhoek, Namibia (SW Africa) associate missionary with Africa Inland Mission.
- 10 God's blessing on patients and hospital staff through the work of chaplains

- and church visitors.
- 11 Bicton parish, Perth including "New Life", Rockingham, with about 70 communicants, about 15 children and youth and 3 elders; Stuart and Sharon Bonnington.
- 12 St. Giles parish, Hurstville, southern Sydney, about 220 communicants, about 80 children and youth and 20 elders; Kevin and Julie Murray (associate); Russell Stark (interim moderator); and the Hurstville Indonesian congregation – Rudy Djajadi.
- 13 The vacant Gladstone parish, Central Coast of Queensland, including 4 other centres, about 120 communicants, about 20 children and youth and 12 elders; Jon Chandler interim moderator.
- 14 Waverley-Knoxfield parish Melbourne, about 35 communicants, about 25 children and youth and 2 elders; vacant – Ken Brown interim moderator.
- 15 Presbytery of Sydney South; 15 parishes, totaling 18 congregations with 920 communicants, 220 adherents, 315 children and youth and 104 elders; 2 ministers in special appointments and 2 retired. Russell Stark clerk.
- 16 A deep spiritual impact through the use of the well-produced leaflets and booklets of Scripture Gift Mission in many languages – particularly through our own congregations.
- 17 St Georges parish, Geelong, Vic, about 140 communicants, about 20 children and youth and 13 elders; Graeme and Marilyn Weber.
- 18 Southern Presbytery of PCEA ("Free Church") with churches at Wantirna, Glen Huntley, Narre Warren, Geelong and Hamilton (Vic.) and Ulverstone (Tas.); George Ball clerk.
- 19 David and Joanne Bell from Donvale, Melbourne, aircraft engineer with MAF at Nhulunbuy, NT, missionaries seeking to witness to indigenous and European communities.
- 20 A deep commitment in parents, grandparents and church leaders to bringing up children in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, who loves little children.

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Unequally yoked – what now?

How should Christians deal with an unbelieving spouse.

It's not always by choice that you find yourself in a mixed marriage. Last month we addressed the case where choice plays a part – and we considered the strong biblical advice not to form close or intimate relationships with marriage in mind. Entering marriage unequally yoked is courting disaster.

This month we consider the lot of those who are unequally yoked because they were converted after marrying.

There are many cases where there is no option to avoid being unequally yoked. There are still couples today who are married by arrangement. Other cases are those who marry while both unbelievers but later one of them is converted. The question is, when found in such a situation, "How do I respond?"

Monica is a great example. Her marriage was arranged, we presume by her parents. Monica's husband, who was thrust upon her, was not a Christian. Though he was a kind man, he was not a child of God and was the subject of much of Monica's prayer life as she earnestly approached God for his conversion. He possessed a mean and angry temper, and to add to Monica's heartache, he was unfaithful to her.

Monica's wise choices stand as a model for others:

- She did not opt for an out, but maintained a steady commitment to the marriage; she considered her relationship to her unbelieving husband as unalterable – as a covenant made in the presence of God.
- She knew when to be silent on subjects that irritated him; she did not resist him when he was angry; she preferred to speak later, when he was more calm and reasonable, to explain her actions and commitments.
- She patiently continued to live with him even after he had an affair, praying for the Lord to show him mercy.
- She helped other women in her situation, and when the rumour-file was at its hottest, and the tongues wagged about their husbands' faults, Monica rebuked them for their ungodly use of the tongue.
- She continued to serve her husband, to love and care for him, regardless of his attitude, with a consistent gentleness and uncomplaining spirit.



John Wilson

1 Peter 3:1,2 says: "*Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.*"

There lie the keys: the twin keys of purity and reverence of living. Purity and reverence are essential marks of a converted life. Christian wife, is your witness to your unbelieving husband one of gentle consistency of a converted life?

Similarly, for situations where the mix is reversed, there is a word to husbands. We read verse 7: "*Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*" Christian husband, it may be that your prayers for your unbelieving wife are "hindered" because you are failing to live considerately and lovingly with her.

Monica was rewarded with the conversion of her husband, just before his death, and she rejoiced with him in his new-found faith during those last days together.

She is also known to us through God's gift to them of a very famous son: the great Christian theologian of the fifth century, Augustine. Writing in his autobiography, Augustine rejoices at the thought that both his parents, Monica and Patricius, were together serving God in heaven (*Confessions*, Book IX, chapter 9).

Obviously, I cannot guarantee such a happy ending for you. There is no such promise given by God in Scripture. But there are guidelines to live by, and a lifetime of prayer to engage in. To those who find themselves unequally yoked, there is hope. Hope in God for a change of heart in your partner. God can break down the most insuperable barriers and soften the hardest of hearts. There is hope in the gospel of grace – grace that can melt stubborn resistance and bring faith to the coldest heart. But this does not come by nagging, or pressure or manipulative tricks. It comes through obedience and prayer. Obedience is the best pathway. As Eugene Peterson says: "What is required of us is a long obedience in the same direction."

John Wilson lectures in practical theology and church history at the Presbyterian Theological College, Melbourne. ap

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An open mind

It's time for a just hearing for creation, suggests Clarrie Briese.

As a former magistrate, I have a number of concerns. One of them, about which I feel very deeply, is the need to keep an open mind. In my experience as a magistrate, the only way to get to the truth of a case and to make a correct decision is to hear both sides fairly. From long experience, I found that it was only after I'd heard both sides of a case that I could ever give a fair judgment and the reasons for my decision.

That's why Australian courts have established procedures for giving evidence. At the heart of these arrangements is the desire to be fair, to provide justice, and to reach right judgments. The procedures may not work perfectly in each case, but they do at least allow both sides to be fairly heard.

Unfortunately, there are no such procedures in place when Christians disagree among themselves about some of the big issues in life. While in theory we may subscribe to the democratic ideals of free speech and fair-mindedness, especially in relation to the media, in practice we all fall far short.

Living in a democracy doesn't mean that everyone necessarily gets a fair hearing. In fact, fair hearings have always been hard to get. For example, take the field of medicine. There are lots of sad stories about medical disasters that have occurred when doctors have jumped to wrong conclusions by ignoring evidence.

A classic case involves the treatment of puerperal fever. In 1795, Alexander Gordon provided new evidence to show that if doctors and midwives observed simple rules of hygiene when delivering babies, the incidence of puerperal fever would be greatly reduced. Although Gordon's work was well known at the time, few doctors paid attention to it and thousands of women continued to suffer and die.

In the 1840s, Oliver Wendell Holmes, a professor of anatomy at Harvard University, and Ignaz Semmelweiss, a physician in Europe, showed that if doctors washed their hands in chlorinated water before attending childbirths, the death rate among mothers dropped quickly from 18 per cent to 3 per cent. However, the medical establishment rejected their evidence,

and Semmelweiss was ridiculed and persecuted for his claims.

Today there is a similar failure to take into account all the evidence on the crucial issue of origins. Is the universe an accident, or did God create it? If it is the latter as Christians believe, did that creation take place within six days as a natural reading of Genesis 1 and Exodus 20:11 suggests, or did it occur through the processes of evolution over billions of years which Darwinian theories require?

The secular world has resolved these issues by accepting that Darwin was right. People believe that everything originated through random change and natural selection. Today this is taught as fact, not merely theory. Naturalism, the doctrine that nature is all there is, has become the foundation for our secular culture. The ramifications of naturalism are to be observed in every area of our society, particularly our ethics. The intellectual edifice of naturalism, built by the ingenuity of man via Darwinian theories, has emerged as the modern Tower of Babel. Scientists and others who point to contrary evidence are ridiculed or marginalised.

Nevertheless, among scientists there are those who are honest and courageous enough to publish new research which casts serious doubts on the likelihood of macro-evolution.

For example, Dr Michael Denton, an Australian molecular biologist, published a book in 1986 called *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*. He is not a Christian. Denton's point is that "rapidly accumulating evidence is threatening the basic assumption of orthodox Darwinism ... Not only has palaeontology failed to come up with the fossil 'missing links', which Darwin anticipated, but hypothetical reconstructions of major evolutionary developments – such as linking birds to reptiles – are beginning to look more like fantasies than serious conjectures ... The discoveries of molecular biology are increasingly showing that at a fundamental level of molecular structure each member of a class seems equally representative of that class, and no species appear to be in any real sense 'intermediate' between two classes."

In 1996, Dr Lee Spetner from Israel, published his book *Not by Chance: Shattering the Modern Theory of Evolution*. Spetner has a PhD in physics from the MIT, USA. He shows why chance mutations are theoretically and experimentally incapable of adding the new information which evolution demands. If his calculations are right, they completely undermine the accepted mechanism for the development of life through evolution.

Why is it that this sort of evidence from reputable scientists is usually given no weight? Could the reason be the one given 70 years ago by Professor D. M. S. Watson, a leading biologist and science writer? He said, "Evolution (is) a theory universally accepted not because it can be proven by logically coherent evidence to be true, but because the only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible."

The bias of today's secular world is such that no matter how strong the evidence contrary to evolution is, it's always dealt with in such a way that people's faith in evolution remains undisturbed. What I find particularly disturbing is that so many Christians have closed their minds on this issue too. But surely Christian churches shouldn't be guided by a bias of that kind. If churches are concerned with fairness and truth, as I believe they should be, should not they welcome evidence supportive of a plain reading of Genesis 1 and Exodus 20:11? Why do so many Christians cling to evolutionary theory and dismiss research like Denton's and Spetner's? If, for example, Spetner's analysis is correct, it suggests that many theologians need to rethink how Genesis 1 – indeed the whole Bible – is to be interpreted.

Certainly churches wanting to know "the mind of God" via the Bible, should not be disturbed by their research and the accumulating evidence against evolution. Jesus had to inform the Pharisees that they did not know the Scriptures or the power of God in regard to the resurrection. Could it be that Darwin's theory of evolution has so blinded many Christians that we no longer know the Scriptures or the power of God with regard to creation?

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