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THE MAGAZINE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

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

THE MAGAZINE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

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THE AUSTRALIAN PRESBYTERIAN: The national magazine of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. Acting editor-in-chief: Robert Benn. Editorial committee: Robert Benn (NSW), Stuart Bonnington (WA), Peter Hastie (NSW), Guido Kettniss (Queensland), Barney Zwartz (Victoria). Graphic Design: Sandra Joynt for A&J Moody. Advertising and subscription inquiries: Walter Bruining, 3 Durham Rd, Kilsyth 3137; Phone: (03) 9723 9684. Subscription: \$32 a year; bulk (minimum of five copies to one address) \$29 each. Overseas: \$A43. Office: 3 Durham Rd, Kilsyth 3137. Phone: (03) 9723 9684. Fax: (03) 9723 9685. Email: austpres@bigpond.com Printed: Newsprinters Pty Ltd, Melbourne Road, Shepparton 3060. Published: Monthly except January by the National Journal Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Australia; Convener Robert Benn. Opinions expressed are those of the contributor and not necessarily those of the PCA, the editor or the committee. Acceptance of advertising does not imply endorsement. Contributions: Submitted articles are welcome. The deadline is the first of the previous month. Donations are always welcome. Print Post approved 34918100384.

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# A modern monster

*Christians must be vigilant against genetic engineers and sociobiologists.*

**S**ydney's Jewish Holocaust museum stands in Darlinghurst Road, King's Cross. It is a stark reminder to Australians of the six million Jews and other ethnic minorities who were murdered at the hands of the Nazis. It is only one of many memorials that have sprung up all over the world to remind us of an awful truth – that the veneer of civilisation is only skin-deep.

Joseph Conrad and William Golding, two of the most famous novelists of the 20th century, were both right. The human race has a heart of darkness. Evil is always crouching at the door waiting for the moment of opportunity. And opportunity knocks when we no longer have a basis for regarding one another as wonderful creatures worthy of special care.

Opportunity is knocking in the present. Over the past 30 years in Australia the notion of a Christian consensus has gone, and the Australian Law Reform Commission, particularly under Justice Michael Kirby, has steered away from Christian moral norms as the basis for its recommendations on new legislation. Humanistic lawyers and philosophers have tried to make ethics independent of the Bible and more reliant on the so-called science of "sociobiology".

Sociobiology is a new discipline, which seeks to explain human behaviour in terms



*Robert Benn*

of biological factors, or to be more specific, the make-up of our genes. For the sociobiologist, everything is attributed to a person's gene configuration. Supposedly through the process of evolution, our genes work on a mathematical principle that calculates the genetic costs or benefits of helping those who bear many of the same genes. Thus, the reason why parents care for their children is that their own genes make them act to preserve their personal genetic form. According to sociobiology, there is no place for Christian morality. The new ethics is meant to reflect the fundamental biological reality: genes fighting for survival.

Of course, on this principle, evil has a wonderful opportunity to spring into action. Recently, the Human Rights Commissioner, Chris Sidoti, warned that our descendants will judge the present group of decision-makers in Australia as the most selfish generation in our history. In speaking to "The Meeting of the Generations" conference, he said: "I don't think there has been a generation like the baby-boomers, that has been so unwilling ... to ensure that everyone in the community has the support that's required and the services that are needed." When key decision-makers are guided by nothing more than self-interest and show no regard for Christian ethics, opportunity for evil is knocking.

**E**nter the genetic engineers. If Einstein's discovery of the theory of relativity was the scientific breakthrough of the 20th century, then the deciphering of the human genome, the 100,000 genes in our DNA, is shaping up to be the greatest scientific achievement of the twenty-first century. Once the human genome has been mapped, then genetic engineers will have

the potential to beat cancer, block the growth of blood vessels to tumours, create new blood vessels for the heart, make new organs from stem cells and even alter the biological clock that regulates the ageing of cells.

However, this amazing scientific achievement opens a veritable Pandora's box. The next generation will have extraordinary power over the future. They will be able to choose their children's personal traits: gender, eye-colour, IQ, height, weight, and athletic abilities. They will have the power to clone themselves, or their favourite child, or maybe even us after we have died. The question is: what will be their guiding philosophy?

No one doubts, least of all Christians, that the new genetic breakthroughs bear advantages. They will bring hope and relief to millions of people who now suffer because of some genetic weakness or disease.

**H**owever, there is a dark side to these scientific discoveries. Once society abandons its belief that people are unique because they are made in the image of God, evil is ready to strike. As soon as we accept the sociobiological myth that a human being is only a gene pattern which came forth on earth by chance, we have no reason not to treat a person as an experimental subject. Human embryos become no different from laboratory mice. If people are not unique, as made in the image of God, then we have no protection against those who want to use genetic engineering to pursue their own selfish goals – producing champion offspring, creating spare-parts banks for the human body and the like.

A line needs to be drawn in the sand. Jesus said: "In everything, do to others what you would have them to do you, for this sums up the law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12). Christians need to be in the vanguard of those who protect the rights of the individual, particularly the weak. We must lead the charge against those who regard people as nothing more than common genetic material – to be exploited, experimented upon and finally expended in the cause of science.

*Robert Benn  
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# Our bionic future

*Only a Christian approach can properly shape the momentous changes biotechnology brings.*



The times of Huxley's *Brave New World* are not only upon us, they are rapidly being surpassed. A recent copy of *Scientific American* magazine forecasts that within the next 10 years we will see a human clone, artificial wombs, replacement body parts, genetic vaccines, and foods that counteract various ailments. The longer term future holds out the prospect of a genome project of the human brain, human head transplants, computers with intelligence far beyond human capabilities, and the answer to ageing. This is our bionic future, the result of the fusion of technology and biology in the third millennium. It is the next great human revolution and it is already happening.

The changes expected in this brave new world of genetic engineering and human cloning are so momentous that they raise two of the most ancient human questions: What is man? Why are we here? These are questions about ultimate beliefs and values. Biology and technology are asking them but only philosophy and religion can



*Douglas Milne*

answer them. These questions need urgent answers for a number of reasons.

First, the ethical debate and the formulation of public policy in these areas is trailing far behind the scientific discoveries and breakthroughs that are occurring almost every day. Agreement about ethical norms is always going to be difficult in a pluralistic culture, and even when this happens they may be overtaken by events. People need to remember that science and technology are not self-regulating, and restraint is abhorrent to many scientists.

Second, the new technologies and their frontiers are developing at the very time that the values of applied medicine are changing. There is a new clinical medicine

emerging that aims simply at relieving suffering and enhancing and prolonging life without considering the techniques used to achieve these ends. The older Hippocratic-Christian tradition of medicine, based on trust and respect for the human person as an individual, is disappearing.

Third, most of the leaders in the field of medicine and bionics today are not Christians. Ethically they are utilitarians, which means that they make moral judgments solely on the basis of the utility/usefulness of practical outcomes. They do not believe that actions are right or wrong in themselves. They also believe in the scientific imperative, which says that if something is experimentally possible then it's morally permissible! This is the moral method that has led ethicists like Peter Singer to advocate infanticide and euthanasia.

Fourth, most Christians and churches are unaware and unprepared for the revolution that is already engulfing us. The churches are weak just when they need to be strong in their theological understanding, moral convictions and general knowl-

edge of developments. This is a time for religious commitment, ethical alertness and corporate action on the part of the Christian community. Otherwise the worst scenarios of the brave new world will become irreversible and our children and their children will suffer the consequences.

**H**ow should Christians respond to our bionic future?

First, Christians should avoid blanket condemnation of all experiments and applications of biotechnology. There is a bright side and a dark side to the new technologies. The bright side in the genetic testing of embryos, for example, means eliminating some very damaging genetic defects before birth; the dark side of this same procedure is the decision to eliminate the embryos instead of the genetic diseases. So Christians need to be informed about the real facts, then learn to be discriminating on the basis of their biblical and ethical values. Christian also need to be able to say what it is that scientists can do, as well as what they may never do.

Second, Christians need to be clear about their distinctive worldview and to hold fast to it. Eventually the debate over our bionic future and the use of modern technologies in medical science comes down to worldviews. The Christian worldview is a theistic one, centred around the Creator-creature distinction, with man choosing and acting responsibly under God, his Creator and Lord. The secular world view centres on man as absolute, with the natural world receiving its value and meanings from him, and with chance playing a leading role. Man may be God-like but he is not God and must not be allowed to play God.

Third, Christians need to affirm in a special way the following truths about the human person since the heart of the debate lies in a doctrine of man.

The human person is God's creature. In asking and answering the question "what is man?" the Bible positions human beings within the universe by relating them to a personal Creator God. This Creator God is amazingly generous toward us, and has entrusted us with lordly responsibility for the world (Psalm 8). Since the Enlightenment, people in the West have thought about themselves one-dimensionally and used the model of mathematics to quantify everything in their experience, including human beings. Strange as it may sound in this age of information overload, people actually need more knowledge, not less. By this we mean a different kind of knowledge, the real self-knowledge that comes from knowing God in Jesus Christ. We need wisdom (how to live) as much as

knowledge (that we live), if we are to control our bionic future and survive.

The human person is God's steward. At creation God told human beings to subdue the earth (Gen 1:28). There is a fine line between harvesting the natural resources of the world for God's glory and manipulating them for our own. There is much in our bionic future that threatens to step over that line. Cloning of humans would be an obvious example of this kind of transgressing. There must therefore be some self-imposed limits to what people should do, as distinct from what they may be able to do. "A man of serious conscience means to say in raising urgent ethical questions that there may be some things that men should never do" (Paul Ramsey).



The human person is the image of God (Gen 1:26f). What this entails exactly is unclear but what we do know is that this is the distinctively Christian way of defining what human beings essentially are. The practical implications of this are immense.

"According to the biblical revelation, human beings, like all of creation, were created in order to glorify God. But human beings were created with a distinct and unique capacity to know, reverence, worship, and glorify the Creator. God made human beings, male and female, of his own good pleasure, in his own image, and to his own sovereign purpose. Thus, human beings are not mere biological artefacts or accidental forms of life. The special, purposeful, and direct creation of every human being in the image of God is central to the Christian worldview. Modernity's rejection and refutation of that revealed knowledge has set the stage for the rise of abortion, euthanasia, genetic manipulation, infanticide, and even genocide, all in the name of social responsibility and personal autonomy" (Albert Mohler). Only this biblical view of human beings can save us from the

reductionist view that says that people are merely cells or genes.

The human person is sacred. If the human beings are God's image-bearers, even in their fallenness (Jas 3:9), then it follows that every human being is unique as an individual and innately valuable. Practically this means that no operation or experiment should be carried out without the consent of the individual concerned, and that does not actually benefit that individual. The sanctity of human life resides in our uniquely personal qualities since God himself is the absolute Personality. These begin when we are conceived and continue until we die (and even then they do not cease). The absence or loss of certain human powers before we are born or before we die in no way contradicts the sacred status of every member of the human family, nor removes their God-given right to life.

The human person is fallen. This shows itself in the use human beings make of their cultural instruments and skills. The story of the tower of Babel early in the biblical record (Gen. 11) illustrates this bias in human nature to compete with God and to dispense with his restraints. The Bible alone gives us a realistic doctrine of evil. Without it people will be lulled into false securities and allow the end (therapies and cures) to justify the means (destruction of embryos or the mixing of species) in bionic medicine. The new technologies present us with possibilities for deciding our own destiny and using God-like powers. Undoubtedly therein lies their appeal for some in the scientific community. The dark litany of horrendous events in the 20th century should warn us against a worse repetition in the 21st.

**I**n conclusion, "A pluralistic, secular world needs the moral sustenance that a transcendent God brings to it. It is this Creator God who makes human beings both valuable and responsible. Moreover, the pluralistic, secular world needs to be provoked and unsettled by a Christian perspective. Pure secularity can degenerate into 'whatever is happening ought to happen' or 'whatever we can do we should do'. A Christian approach to bioethics offers a needed transcendent perspective that protects us from the worst in our natures and our world, while explaining and encouraging the best" (Scott Rae & Paul Cox).

*For further reading: Nigel de Cameron, The New Medicine, (Crossway, 1991) Scott Rae & Paul Cox, Bioethics, (Eerdmans, 1999) Scientific American 10 / March 1999.*

*Douglas Milne is Professor of Systematic Theology at the Presbyterian Theological College, Melbourne.*

# Cursed by eugenics

*A belief that human intelligence could guide evolution led the world to concentration camps.*

At a time when science promises such dazzling advances in the practice of medicine, it may be prudent to cast a glance over the shoulder, back to an earlier era when scientists – or people who thought they were doing science – stirred hopes that better days were only a generation or so away. The rise and fall of the theory known as eugenics is in every respect a cautionary tale. The early eugenicists were usually well-meaning and progressive types. They had imbibed their Darwin and decided that the process of natural selection would improve if it were guided by human intelligence. They did not know they were shaping a rationale for atrocities.

The man who in 1883 coined the term eugenics, from a Greek stem meaning “good in birth”, was a cousin of Charles Darwin’s. Englishman Francis Galton (1822-1911) had a substantial inheritance and a Victorian range of scientific curiosity. He dabbled in a number of fields, including geographical exploration, but his passion was mathematics, particularly the infant field of statistics.

In Britain and the US, the great age of quantification had begun. An unforeseen consequence of industrialised democracy had been the mammoth increase in the measurement and survey of all sorts of things. Galton relished this new flood of data – “Whenever you can, count” was his motto – and eventually became absorbed in studying the mathematical distribution of what he called “natural ability” among a sample of British subjects.

Galton thought natural ability could be tracked down by reading the biographical sketches of eminent Britons in handbooks and dictionaries. When he did so, he discovered that a disproportionate number of these worthies were in some way related to one another. Ergo, he concluded, intelligence and talent were bestowed by hered-



ity. “Could not,” he wondered, “the undesirables be got rid of and the desirables multiplied?”

In fairness to Galton, he came to see the encouragement of “good” marriages as a better way to his eugenic heaven than discouraging or preventing “bad” ones. But the seed of a very dangerous notion had nevertheless been sown.

Interest in eugenics grew with the rediscovery and wide dissemination of an obscure Austrian monk’s experiments in breeding peas. Gregor Mendel’s discovery of genetically transmitted dominant and recessive traits seemed to many the key that would unlock the mysteries of human heredity. In the US, biologist Charles Davenport (1866-1944) established, with the help of a \$10 million endowment from the Carnegie Institution, a centre for research in human evolution at Cold Spring Harbor, New York.

A strict Mendelian, Davenport believed so-called single-unit genes determined such

traits as alcoholism and feeble-mindedness. The way to eradicate such failings in the human stock, he argued, was to prevent their carriers from reproducing. He hoped that “human matings could be placed upon the same high plane as that of horse breeding”. He declared that prostitution was not caused by poverty but by an “innate eroticism”. He advocated eugenic castrations.

Historian Daniel J. Kevles notes somewhat dryly in his *In the Name of Eugenics* (1985), an invaluable source for everyone interested in this strange movement, that “eugenicists identified human worth with the qualities they presumed themselves to possess – the sort that facilitated passage through schools, universities and professional training”.

Kevles’ insight helps explain the almost messianic fervour that eugenicists on both sides of the Atlantic displayed during the early years of this century. These were people who felt themselves and the future of their children threatened. In Britain, members of the upper middle class feared they would be swamped and taxed to extinction by the profligate overbreeding of the lower orders. In the US, members of the Wasp ascendancy looked with dismay at the flood of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. Italians! Poles! What was the country coming to?

Much of this public fervour looks comically ill-informed in hindsight. In the US and Britain, fairs and exhibitions regularly featured exhibits illustrating Mendelian laws of inheritance, often in the form of black-and-white guinea pigs stuffed and mounted to demonstrate the heritability of fur colour. Kevles quotes from a chart accompanying such a display: “Unfit human traits such as feeble-mindedness, epilepsy, criminality, insanity, alcoholism, pauperism and many others run in families and are inherited in exactly the same way as colour in guinea pigs.”

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Less amusing is the number of intellectuals, businessmen and political leaders who gave eugenics their blessing or fervid support. The list begins with Darwin, who in *The Descent of Man* praised his cousin Galton and decreed that genius "tends to be inherited". Other champions included the young Winston Churchill, George Bernard Shaw, Alexander Graham Bell, John Maynard Keynes, Theodore Roosevelt and the usually taciturn Calvin Coolidge, who declared during his vice presidency that "Nordics deteriorate when mixed with other races".

Eugenics was not just gassy theories. Impressed by the pseudo science, many US states enacted laws requiring the sterilisation of those held in custody who were deemed to suffer from hereditary defects. In 1927 the US Supreme Court heard an appeal of Virginia's decision in *Buck v. Bell* to sterilise Carrie Buck, an institutionalised 17-year-old whom the state had decreed a "moral imbecile", the daughter of a "feeble-minded" mother and the mother herself of a daughter who was found to be, at age seven months, subnormal in intelligence. The court, by an 8-to-1 vote, rejected Buck's appeal. In his majority opinion, Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote, "The prin-

ciple that sustains compulsory vaccination is broad enough to cover cutting the Fallopian tubes", and concluded, "Three generations of imbeciles are enough."

Nowhere, of course, were eugenic theories more enthusiastically codified into binding state doctrine than in Nazi Germany. In 1933 Adolf Hitler's government adopted the Eugenic Sterilisation Law. Formulated by the Reich Ministry of the Interior, this edict ordered the compulsory sterilisation of all German citizens – not simply those in custody or institutions – who displayed symptoms of a number of presumptively hereditary afflictions, including blindness, schizophrenia and offensive physical deformities.

Government officials countered potential objections about the cruelty of this measure by asserting that personal sacrifices would serve the common weal. "We go beyond neighbourly love," said one. "We extend it to future generations. Therein lies the high ethical value and justification of the law."

As Kevles notes, the Nazis' draconian eugenics program did not originally encompass the anti-Semitism that later so rabidly characterised the Third Reich. But as Hitler and his regime turned ever more fiercely against the Jews, the sterilisation of

"undesirables" escalated into genocide, a horrifying realisation of Francis Galton's vision of the world biologically cleansed according to one group's idea of human improvement.

Eugenics never recovered from the news of what had been carried out under its banner in Hitler's Germany. In truth, a number of people – including G.K. Chesterton, H.L. Mencken, Walter Lippmann and Clarence Darrow – had ridiculed and debunked eugenic theories well before the horrors of the Holocaust occurred and became widely known.

And the flaws, so obvious to us now, in the eugenicists' thinking – starting but by no means ending with their assumption of the immutable heritability of character and the attribution of complex human traits to simple Mendelian genes – did spur, among scientists who recognised the errors, valuable research in the actual science of human genetics. They were wrong, with unintended consequences for millions of people. But the legacy of the eugenicists may be instructive. The next time you hear someone promoting the scientific improvement of the human race, think of them.

*This article was originally published in Time magazine on 11 January 1999. Reprinted with permission.* ap

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<b>2:9ff</b>			
	7.30pm	Ebenezer	<i>1 Samuel 7:12</i>
Sunday Feb 27	11.00am	Christ our Propitiation	<i>Romans 3:25</i>
	2.00pm	The Resurrection of Christ	<i>J o h n</i>
<b>11:25-27</b>			



# God's physicist

*Reflections on a reWarding life.*

## How did your journey of faith begin?

During my last few years at Caulfield Grammar School in Melbourne, some fellow students spoke to me about their faith in a way I'd never heard before. They encouraged me to come on a Houseparty during my last year at school in 1935. It was there and during the following months that I began to seriously study the claims of Christ. Finally, at the age of 16, I committed myself to follow Jesus. I should also add that while I was a young boy, my mother had insisted that I go to Sunday School so I had some formal knowledge of Christianity.

After I became a Christian, I joined the Crusader movement which helped me to grow and gave me opportunities to share my faith in Christ with others.

## How did you become interested in science?

I've always had a practical approach to things, which is important for a scientist. But I also had an excellent science teacher at Caulfield Grammar School as well. He taught us as though we were young university students who took science seriously, and we didn't want to disappoint him. I remember one or two occasions when he invited a former student of the school who was working on MSc research to come and speak to us. Our teacher inspired us to think seriously of science as a career. When I left Caulfield Grammar, I knew what I wanted to do for the next step of my life.

## What was that?

I became a cadet engineer with the government and enrolled in Melbourne University in a science degree called Natural Philosophy, which is today known as Physics. 'Physics' is a humanistic term. Natural philosophy best describes what physicists are trying to do, which is to "explore God's handiwork", as Sir Isaac Newton once put it. I took four years to complete my first degree and graduated in 1939. That was the year war broke out.

## Did the war have much effect on your career?

Yes, it did. I became heavily involved in the war effort by working on the top-secret radar project. It was challenging work. Our projects were designed to manufacture

*Emeritus Professor James Ward BA, BSc, PhD, DSc (Honoris Causa) was Foundation Professor of Physics at James Cook University, Townsville. Earlier he was Reader in Physics at Melbourne University, Foundation Professor at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji and Pro Vice-Chancellor of the University of Samoa.*

*In 1959 he became an elder at John Knox Presbyterian Church, Gardenvale, Melbourne, and then at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Townsville, where he is still a member.*

*Professor Ward has had an important career in experimental radio science and electrical engineering. He helped develop radar in Australia during the Second World War, and over-the-horizon radar which provides important meteorological information for Australian coastal waters. Now he is working on a scientific/humanitarian project to produce a mine-detector, which will locate anti-personnel plastic mines and prevent widespread human suffering.*

*He shares with Peter Hastie some of his experiences.*

radars and direction-finding equipment that all the services could use to detect the enemy. Hopefully it saved many lives in the RAN and on the merchant ships. We designed radar systems that would go on armed mine-sweepers and aircraft which patrolled areas like the Arafura Sea. By the end of the war, Australian forces in South East Asia became quite dependent on the technology.

## What happened when the war finished?

During the war I'd met a couple of British scientists who encouraged me to study for a PhD in London. Fortunately, I managed to get a British Council Scholarship to attend Imperial College at London University, and I spent four years there doing doctoral research.

## What was happening to you spiritually

## during this period?

I started going to Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones' church, Westminster Chapel. It was a wonderful experience and I grew tremendously. I remember especially the Bible discussions that we had there. They were an illuminating experience, but they were also taxing as well because you could only speak if you could support what you were saying from Scripture. I went there for four years.

## Did many other students go?

Yes, there were lots of us there. It may be hard to imagine, but there were two to three thousand people there on Sundays. Dr Lloyd-Jones had two Sunday services, a morning one where he gave an in-depth expository sermon and one in the evening when he spoke evangelistically. The evening one was almost always full.

## Do you remember much of what was taught there?

Surprisingly, I do. It was so logical and so well put together that it was not hard to remember. A lot of people took down notes in the service. I didn't. However, after the service I would go back to my room and write down all I recalled of the sermon. I filled up several books this way. During my time at Westminster Chapel, Dr Lloyd-Jones preached through several books of the Bible. So my note-books were like books on biblical theology.

## What did you do after you finished your PhD?

I came back to Australia at the end of 1949. At that time I heard about the tremendous spiritual needs of the people in Borneo. I had some missionary friends who were captured by the Japanese who returned to Australia as well, and they told me of the opportunities to preach the

## CHRISTIAN SINGLES

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gospel there. They had a 15-year plan to plant churches and establish local leadership. They asked me whether I shared their vision to go with them to Borneo to teach and evangelise. It was a challenge to me and I decided to go out with the Borneo Evangelical Mission – an Australian inter-denominational faith mission founded in 1928.

At that stage, I was unmarried. However, I had already met my Scottish wife, Laura, who was a doctor. We got married in All Souls Church, Langham Place, London, where John Stott was the minister.

**Was your work in Borneo very challenging?**

Yes, two months after we married we set out for four years of teaching and evangelism in Sarawak and Sabah. The mission's policy was to evangelise people and teach them the gospel, rather than set up hospitals and schools. Of course, as we were doing that we also met people's needs where we could, especially in a medical sense.

We did lots of travelling in Sarawak and Sabah. We did some of the work in dug-out canoes shooting over rapids. I also walked

huge distances. I remember visiting a pagan tribal chief at least 10 times, and the round trip was about 80 kilometres each time.

We worked mainly with the Dusun tribe, and we would train them in evangelism by going out with them to witness in the villages and markets.

The mission's policy was very successful and led to the planting of 2000 churches. These are all run by indigenous leadership. People became Christians and joined the churches not because they were receiving gifts or money, but because they believed the gospel. At the end of 1955 we left the field and I took up my scientific career again.

**Is it hard being a scientist and a Christian?**

It's never been a problem for me, although I know it is for some people. I've noticed that people with a philosophical turn of mind often have difficulties, but those who are more interested in practical outcomes usually don't. I have always looked at science from a practical point of view. I'm interested in results. You start with a theory and then assess it in the light of the data. I've always seen Christianity in

a similar light. It's based on belief, but it proves itself by results. Personally, I think the Christian interpretation of life is the one that best fits the facts of human existence.

**Then why do so many scientists have difficulty with the Christian faith?**

I don't think that there are that many. While the press may have us believe that most scientists are prejudiced against Christianity, my experience is rather different. I know scientists all around the world who are practising Christians. I belong to an organisation in Australia called ISCAST. This is a group of senior professional scientists who are committed Christians. We have between 30 and 40 Fellows in our association. Our aim is to demonstrate through public lectures and forums the compatibility between true science and the Christian faith. Recently, we held a major conference at the Bible College of Victoria and a smaller version at the University of Queensland.

**Do you have any problems in accepting the narrative account of creation in Genesis when many scientists reject it?**

I find that as I study some parts of the Bible, and the Old Testament particularly, I come across passages that I cannot explain satisfactorily. But that's not a ground to reject them as some scientists do. It's convenient for them to throw out the Bible because they have a mechanistic view of life.

On the other hand, there are people who take such a literalist approach to some parts of the Bible that their conclusions seem inherently impossible to the mind of man.

I think there's another position for thinking Christian scientists to adopt. That's a "wait-and-see" approach. If you can't be sure about how to interpret the text, then I think it's perfectly permissible to be open-minded on that issue. We need to remember that the Bible is a revelation from God, and it's possible that God has not revealed everything that we might want to know. We have to accept the fact that some things have not been revealed to us and may never be revealed. If this is so, we have to be humble enough to accept it.

Scientists, in their researches, often have to wait for more information. When they reach the limits of what they can do, they wait until some further knowledge comes. Then they build it into the position to which they are aspiring. Christian scientists should not be afraid, when they are struggling with Bible texts, of reaching a position where they say: "I honestly don't know." Our confidence is in the God who does.

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With the imminent retirement of the present Executive Director, we now seek a person committed to the truth of God's word and with a desire to help communicate that truth through the tools of the ministry including radio broadcasts, audio tapes and books.

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### Are faith and science mutually exclusive?

No, not at all. I find it intriguing that scientists who reject the Christian position nevertheless work on the principle of faith even though they won't admit it. Have you realised that unless you have faith in a Creator, you can't do experimental science? Scientific experiments depend on the principle of consistency and repeatability. But you can't have them in a world of chance. They only make sense in a world that is ruled by God who is sustaining it all.

The other problem that unbelieving scientists have is that they don't or won't recognize their intellectual limitations in the light of the Fall. Not only is the human mind finite – which is why we need revelation – but it's also fallen. Our minds are defective as a result of sin. This affects our ability to think and reason. To sum up, I believe that we need a revelation from the Creator of the universe. I also believe that he entered our world and revealed himself in Jesus. I further believe that as an experimental scientist I am tracing out God's handiwork bit by bit. There are many things which we do not understand scientifically, and also some parts of the Bible which are hard to interpret, but we have everything in the Scriptures that we need to know for our own salvation. There's enough for every person to be brought face-to-face with the demands and promises of the Creator-God. If a person does that, he is doing the same as non-Christian scientists who exercise faith in the results of their experiments. When those scientists rely on the principles of consistency and repeatability in the universe, they're closing the door on the possibility of chance.

Since scientists can't know everything,

### can they be absolutely sure that God doesn't exist?

No, they can't. Scientists have been humbled in the last 30 years. They've realised afresh what a seemingly insignificant part we play in the universe. Cosmologists are taking us further and further into universes in outer space. We now realise how little we know. And if we know so little, it's arrogant to dismiss God. We could never be sure that he wasn't there.



James Ward

### How has your faith grown over the years?

I was very early on introduced to the idea of a "quiet time" through the Crusader Union. They taught me about the need to pray and read the Bible. I have tried to keep to that discipline throughout my life. I'm not naturally a great "pray-er"; I have to discipline myself. I study my Bible in a variety of ways. I've used Scripture Union notes at times. On other occasions I've read

through the Bible as a whole. I've also been stimulated to think by reading works on Christian theology.

### Any in particular?

I've enjoyed reading James Packer's books, the Westminster Confession, T. C. Hammond's *In Understanding Be Men*, and especially Iain Murray's biography on Martyn Lloyd-Jones. One of the best times of reading that I ever had was in Cambridge when I spent a term at Tyndale House under Leon Morris. He supervised my program before I went to Borneo. I really enjoyed reading reformed theologians like Charles Hodge, Benjamin Warfield and some of the Puritans.

### What are some of your greatest concerns as you reflect on life?

God has been very good to me throughout my 80 years of life. I thank him that I've never had a serious setback in that time. Now, as I get older, one of my greatest ambitions is to show complete confidence in God and to take every opportunity to speak about the Lord Jesus Christ when I meet people. If I get an invitation to preach, I'm glad for that. I also want to encourage the activities of Christian students.

I also like to encourage young people to consider a career in science. It's not well-funded at the moment, nor is it a way to make a lot of money as a career. But it's an important work for Christians to be involved in. I have found it very satisfying and still am able to make a small contribution. The progress of rigorous science is so great these days that I am humbled in the face of it all and can only give glory to God. I am learning more and more the great Reformation watchword "Soli Deo Gloria" (to God alone be the glory). ap

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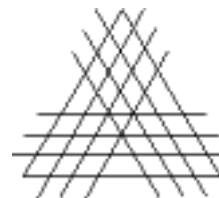
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# Music Watch

## Affirmation Savage Garden

Reviewed by Phil Campbell



“When you give up believing in the true God,” said G.K. Chesterton, “the problem isn’t that you’ll believe nothing. The problem is that you’ll believe anything.” Look around, and you’ll see Chesterton had it right. The world around us believes plenty – and with a passion. The title track from Savage Garden’s new album *Affirmation* is almost a credo for today’s generation – a mish-mash of passionate beliefs held together by a vague “karma” spirituality. Who cares what you believe, as

long as you’re passionate. It helps, of course, if there’s a catchy tune, so even if you don’t actually believe what *Affirmation* affirms, you’ll be humming it anyway!

Take a listen. There’s a glimmer of biblical wisdom in the very first line. “I believe the sun should never set upon an argument.” Or, in the words of Ephesians 4:26, “Don’t let the sun go down on your anger.” Then comes, “I believe we place our happiness in other people’s hands” – whatever that means. The next line is a little easier to decode, and probably true: “I believe that junk food tastes so good because it’s bad for you.” I’m almost sure Cadbury chocolate and a regular Big-Mac-and-large-fries diet would have been health foods back in the Garden of Eden. We live in a fallen world.

While “I believe your parents did the best job they knew how to do” may sound a little trite to some of the abuse victims I’ve counseled, “I believe that beauty magazines promote low self esteem” is helpful. But “I believe I’m loved when I’m completely by myself alone” is either senseless, or pure narcissism.

The snappy little chorus cuts in here. “I believe in Karma, what you give is what you get returned, I believe you can’t appreciate real love until you’ve been burned, I believe

the grass is no more greener on the other side, I believe you don’t know what you’ve got until you’ve said goodbye.”

Now for the big guns. Again, there’s a subtle blend of statements that are worth affirming, with the trite and the downright wrong. “I believe you can’t control or choose your sexuality” – the scientific jury is still out on that one – leads neatly into “I believe that trust is more important than monogamy.” Hold on a minute. How can you trust a person who can’t even control their sexuality? How can you ever build up trust with someone who is not committed to monogamy? It’s a cute line, but impossible to live with. And so the following lines are empty. “I believe your most attractive features are your heart and soul,” and “I believe that family is worth more than money or gold.” Trouble is, how many families are ripped apart by the belief that “you can’t control your sexuality”, and that somehow, “trust” can exist in a relationship where monogamy is absent. But hey, “I believe you can’t appreciate real love until you’ve been burned, I believe you don’t know what you’ve got until you’ve said goodbye.” Does that make it all okay?

Again, the final verse mixes genuine wisdom with wishful thinking. “I believe forgiveness is the key to your unhappiness” may well be true. Refusing to forgive is downright dangerous. “I believe that wedded bliss negates the need to be undressed” – well, maybe. But it’s also the only real context where it should be happening. “I believe that God does not endorse TV evangelists” – I don’t either. And the final affirmation. “I believe in love surviving death into eternity.”

Trouble is, according to the gospel writers, there’s more to it than that. Because the belief that really counts isn’t just intellectual assent. It’s trust. In a person. In the final analysis, we Christians are called to a belief that’s far more substantial than any set of trite affirmations. We’re called to a commitment to Jesus himself.

As the apostle John begins his biography of Jesus, he says, “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed on his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” A little further on, he says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him, shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

Clearly, it’s not the belief in “eternal life” that saves us. It’s our trust in the one who provides it! And a final word from John. “Jesus did many other miraculous signs that are not recorded in this book, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. and that by believing, you may have life in his name.” If you’re looking for something to affirm, try those!



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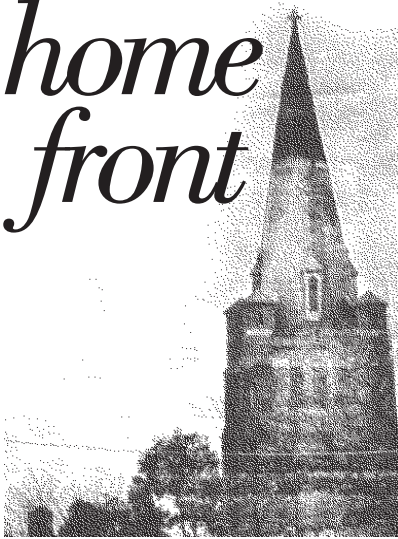








# home front



## Biblical counselling

The Presbytery of Central Coast is promoting biblical counselling courses for ministers and church workers, available through Westminster Theological Seminary and Biblical Seminary in Philadelphia. The courses are based on developments flowing from the 'nouthetic counselling' movement begun by Dr Jay Adams. Courses in subjects such as the dynamics and methods of biblical change, marriage and family counselling, counselling children, counselling and physiology etc, are available through the colleges and also through correspondence, video and internet. For more information, contact Rev. Phil Paul of the presbytery.

## Building for the Lord

St Andrew's Church in Williamstown, Melbourne, has started work on units for senior citizens to be built on its property in Hanmer Street. A ceremonial sod-turning was performed by the Mayor of the City of Hobson's Bay, Cr Dick Murdock, and church representative Charles Homewood.



Sod-turning at Covenant House, St Andrew's, Williamstown, Vic.

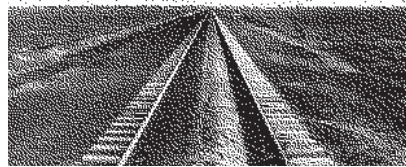
## Bartholomews called

The Presbytery of Wagga Wagga has agreed to the translation of Rev. J.F. Bartholomew as the minister and Rev. A.S. Bartholomew as the colleague minister as requested by the charge of St Andrew's, Canberra. The presbytery also appointed Rev. B.M. Gorton as interim moderator designate for the parish of Corowa where the Bartholomews were.

## Reservoir's Reformation Sunday

Reservoir Presbyterian Church in Melbourne celebrated Reformation Sunday with a special combined service, where four local churches joined to thank God for the Reformation of 450 years ago. The speaker was Dr Rowland Ward of the PCEA. Reservoir Baptist Church, Regent Baptist and St Mark's Anglican joined the celebration.

# across australia



## Parliamentarians at prayer

The National Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast was held in Parliament House, Canberra, in mid-October, and was attended by 350 guests including the Governor-General, Sir William Deane, and the Prime Minister, Mr John Howard. Guest speakers were jockey Darren Beadman and rugby league player Paul Stevens. The speakers presented their testimonies and shared how they used their Christian commitments in their sports. The gathering was chaired by the secretary of the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship, Bruce Baird, MP, of Sydney, and was organised by Harry Quick, MP, of Tasmania.

## Drug alert

With the school holiday period near, the Salvation Army has issued a warning to parents that there has been an alarming upsurge in marijuana use among young teenagers. Recently released figures show

marijuana use in Australia rose from 29 per cent of 14 to 19 year olds to 35 per cent in the period from 1995 to 1998. In the USA by contrast, only 8.3 per cent of teenagers admitted using marijuana in 1998. An especially disturbing factor in the statistics is that the numbers of young women using the drug has risen from 20 to 34 per cent in the same period.

The Army reports that involvement of teenagers in drug use is a main cause of family conflict, and a contributor to much youth homelessness. Despite marijuana's "soft drug" image, it has been widely linked to ill effects ranging from psychiatric disorders to infertility. There is also growing concern about the impact of marijuana use on Australia's disturbing youth suicide rate, with the drug linked with depression and schizophrenia. The report is available on [www.salvos.net](http://www.salvos.net), or at 02 9266 9814.

## Cannabis and suicide

Senator John Tierney (Lib NSW) told the Senate in August that "Australia has the dubious honour of the world's highest per capita suicide rate for ages 14 to 55, and also the dubious honour of being the largest consumer of cannabis in the world". Dr John Anderson, a psycho-physiologist who has done extensive research in Sydney's Westmead Hospital, found links between cannabis and psychiatric disorders. His research focused on patients with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder.

Dr Anderson reports that new forms of hydroponically grown cannabis such as "skunk", can have up to 30 per cent THC content, compared with 4 per cent in the cannabis available 20 years ago. THC is the active component in marijuana. Unlike alcohol, nicotine and heroin, THC is fat-soluble. It remains in the brain and other fatty tissues for up to 30 days. It slows brain development in young people, and 10 per cent of regular users become addicted. Among other harmful effects, Dr Anderson noted that cannabis destroys the liver enzyme cytochrome P450, lack of which can be fatal.

## Drug-proof children

A program called Drug Proof Your Children is being used in all Australian states in drug education and intervention. Focus on the Family, Dr James Dobson's organisation in Australia, has created the program in response to hundreds of requests from concerned parents, frightened about their own attempts to help their children. The program was launched in February this year to train parents on how to reduce potential risk factors, and help prevent the use of drugs by their children.

To date, more than 5700 families have been through the sessions. Government grants have boosted the work in Victoria. For more information, contact *Focus on the Family*, 1300 300 361.

### No gay gene

The respected scientific journal *Science*, (Vol 284, 4/99) published a study by **Dr George Rice**, disproving claims of the discovery of a "gay gene". **Dr Dean Hamer** claimed in an article published in *Science* in 1993, that homosexuality was the result of a "gay gene". Hamer made the claim that his study of 40 pairs of homosexual brothers had confirmed a biological basis for sexual preference. Dr Hamer is reported to be an active homosexual as well as a scientist. The new study by George Rice was reportedly larger and more carefully controlled than Hamer's, attempting to replicate his results, and found . . . nothing!  
*Report: Light, 68 Grenfell St, Adelaide, 5000.*

### Abortion linked to cancer

Speaking on Radio 5AA in Adelaide, **Dr Joel Brind**, Professor of Endocrinology at City University, New York, recently linked abortion in young women with breast cancer in later life. Interviewed on air by **Rev. Dr John Fleming**, Dr Brind cited long-term studies since 1957, which show a 30 per cent risk factor, averaged in "the most conservative way". "However, the only study done in Australia – on women in Adelaide – showed an increased risk of 160 per cent," he said. The first figures were published in 1988, without the abortion data. This information only "crept into the literature" seven years later in 1995.

Questioned as to why the statistics are often released without showing abortion links, Dr Brind replied: "Even those published papers that do find a risk tend to report it with a great deal of reluctance. These days there is a tremendous amount of credibility invested in the idea of 'safe abortions'. Research showing that abortion

is not really safe – that it is a lot more dangerous, considering the long-term cancer risk, than having a baby is – comes up politically incorrect."

*Report: SA Festival 'Focus', September 99.*

### Christian music

Cooma in the Snowy Mountains will again host the **Australian Christian Music Seminar** in January 2000. Christian artists of many different expressions and denominational backgrounds will gather from 9 to 15 January for the 22nd annual conference. With leaders such as **John Smith** and **Tim Uluirewa**, the program will be varied and challenging. Concerts each evening promise to feature some of the "best Christian musicians Australia has to offer".

*For more information, contact 02 9890 4450, or [www.acms.aus.nu](http://www.acms.aus.nu)*

### Next Generation Network

Australia and New Zealand are targeted by **Trans World Radio** to receive broadcasts on the Next Generation Network program from next year. NGN will be broadcast over a network of commercial and Christian radio stations in the two countries, especially targeting people aged 13 to 25. The proposal is initially for programs ranging from 30-second spots to 60-minute features, broadcast every day. They will feature testimonies and contemporary Christian music, a range of group discussions, and interviews with various experts. Trans World Radio is an interdenominational radio ministry broadcasting in more than 145 languages around the world.

*For more information, contact PO Box 390, Box Hill. 3128.*

### Teacher shortage

Throughout Australia, 165 Presbyterians are involved in the work of religious education in the nation's classrooms. The weekly classes in state primary schools bring the message of a God of love to thousands of

boys and girls who would otherwise never hear. The CRE *Religion in Life* material is government-approved, and wherever teachers are available CRE classes must be timetabled. Classes take a half hour a week. The work is sponsored by the **Council for Christian Education in Schools**, which provides training, help and support for the teachers.

*For more information, email CRE at [funds@cces.org.au](mailto:funds@cces.org.au)*

## world news



### Crusade in Bolivia

**Franklin Graham** is crusading in Santa Cruz in Bolivia, and organisers hope the crusade will help change the stereotypes many people in the predominantly Roman Catholic country hold regarding evangelical Christianity. Santa Cruz is one of the fastest growing cities in South America, on the southern edge of the Amazon Basin, with a population of over a million. The Bolivian executive director of the crusade, **Jose Luis Suarez**, was formerly a narcotics dealer, who became a Christian a decade ago in a Christian drug rehabilitation centre.

### To Russia, with love

**Russian Pastor Peter Rumachik**, who served as vice-president of the **Council of Evangelical Baptist Churches** coordinating the efforts of 2000 underground churches in Russia during communist rule, has issued a passionate plea to Western Christians. Imprisoned for more than 18 years in the Soviet Gulag, Pastor Rumachick told a congregation including Russian emigres not to lose their children to western materialism, but to train up their children in the Christian faith, and send them back to evangelise the former Soviet Union.

Rumachik said he knew Christians in the west were praying for him during his imprisonment because his wife had visited the prosecutor, and he had thrown a pile of

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letters and telegrams inches thick on the table from America and Europe. More than once, his jailers said, "deny your God and we will set you free". But he thought it would be better to leave this life than to leave his faith in God. Rumachik had this message for Americans: "Believe in a living God who is a worker of miracles. I understand that the American church did not live through those difficult times of persecution but the church can do a lot because you have Christian education."

*Assist Communications. For more information, contact mireland@usfamily.net.*

## Chileans rejoice

Evangelicals from all denominations in Santiago held a celebration on the anniversary eve of the Protestant Reform of the 16th Century, with a march into the central city Plaza. About 30,000 Christians from across the entire evangelical spectrum marched under the slogan, "A church united en route to the new millennium". Organised through the **Committee of Evangelical Organisations**, which represents 90 per cent of Chilean evangelicals, the march claimed to speak for about 20 per cent of the Chilean population. A very high number of young people showed the strength of the movement. During the ceremonies they gave thanks to God for the Religious Equality law, recently signed by the President, that recognises the legal equality of evangelical churches. The law permits, among other things, evangelical chaplains in the armed forces and police, and evangelical education in schools.

## No mistake

Pastor Gu, founder of the **Kunming Theological Seminary** in Yunnan Province, China, has the countenance of an angel. With a gentle smile on his 83-year-old face, he said in a recent interview, "Bring back to your brothers and sisters in the West the message that God never makes mistakes. I have undergone a lot of tribulation and suffering, but I have found out that the Lord never makes mistakes." Pastor Gu was detained in 1958, a year after his ordination, and spent 23 years in a labor camp, "which was not easy, especially because I was not allowed to have my Bible with me". He had to trust God to bring back to him scriptures that he had memorised before his arrest. Rom 8:28 was a particular comfort.

Pastor Gu believes that he probably would have been killed had he not been in prison. Many believers were killed during this turbulent period in China's history that was begun in 1966 by Mao Zedong to revitalise China's revolutionary zeal.

Radical students, organised and trained as Red Guards, staged demonstrations and led often-violent attacks on the "four olds": old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits. Pastor Gu was married with nine children when he began his long imprisonment, and two of his children died while he was in the labor camp. Now Pastor Gu is back in the thick of things. In 1989, he founded the **Kunming Theological Seminary** that specialises in training Christian leaders from the tribal people of Yunnan Province, estimated to hold more than a million believers. Said Pastor Gu "In the early times, the missionaries from the west came to evangelise China, and we should now do that also. The faith of the ethnic people is great, but their life is very poor and so we should help them understand the truths of the Gospel."

*Report: Dan Wooding, ASSIST Communications.*

## Evangelism in Ukraine

Two churches half-a-world apart are getting together in a "sister-church" relationship to evangelise an area of Ukraine in the former Soviet Union. **Cross of Glory Baptist Church** in Hopkins, Minnesota, and the **Evangelical Christian Church of Uman**, Ukraine, have formed a "sister-church" connection to bring the love of Jesus Christ to the city of Uman, a city

about three hours drive south of Kiev, Ukraine. Cross of Glory church has about 300 members and several more regular attenders. Its sister church in the Ukraine also has a congregation of 250 to 300. Now, **Pastor Ivan Melnik**, leader of the Uman church, has asked for support to send a missionary to an unreached area outside Uman. Less than 20 per cent of the Uman church has regular employment, and most of them are part-time. The Uman church isn't able to pay the senior pastor and the assistant pastor has a second job outside the church.

*Report: Michael Ireland, ASSIST.*

## The second billion

More than two billion people worldwide will be Christians in 2000. Researchers David Barrett and Todd Johnson estimate there are 1.99 billion this year, about one third of the world's population, according to the German Evangelical Alliance. The figures include Protestants, Anglicans, Orthodox, and Roman Catholics. Protestants constitute about 321 million. Islam is reported as the world's second largest religion with 1.19 billion adherents, followed by Hindu at 774 million, non-religious 768 million, Buddhists 359, tribal religions 252 million, atheists 151 million, new religions 101, Sikhs 22, and Jews at 14 million.

# belgrave heights

# 'Tis the season to save souls

*How to reach people at the Christmas service.*

“Is it Christmas already?” The answer is ‘Yes’. If this is the first Christmas at which you are preaching you will be full of ideas. If, like me, it is your umpteenth you may well be scratching your head trying to think of anything new to say.

For many of us, Christmas is still a great time for gospeling because we are presented with large numbers of people who go to church irregularly or at no other time. In the church I attend we have found, over the years, that carol services on the two Sundays before Christmas offer even better evangelistic opportunities. So I include such services in the ideas I am presenting.

For you, Christmas might be typified by good fun and much joy. For others it is a time of stress and family gatherings which are anything but joy. Often old wounds are opened, and old recriminations revisited. It is worth bearing this in mind before describing it in only happy terms.

For many people at church on Christmas day there is still much to be done. Many other things than their “pure devotion to God” may well distract them. Christmas dinner is yet to come. Children are supercharged, and the story of the baby in the manger is old hat by comparison with the latest toy, which they may well have with them. Really hard work is the order of the day for the preacher, who needs to be able to gain attention and keep it, if useful evangelism is to be done.

If we are serious about evangelism then we will want our service to be “user-friendly” in every way possible rather than just business as usual.

If it is a family service I would have a special children’s program during the sermon. When people come to church once in a blue moon their children are unfamiliar with what is going on. Their parents don’t quite know what is unacceptable behavior for their children or what to do, in this context, to discipline them. Either way they will be distracted. I know that many preachers believe that they will achieve more in the children’s address than in the sermon but I think it tends to reinforce in the mind of the parents that what is being said is really for children and not something adults need to take seriously.

When you look out on the sea of faces on Christmas day and there seem to be



*John Chapman*

more strangers than familiar faces, try to resist the temptation to scold them for not having been during the year. Rejoice in this wonderful opportunity. Remember it may not last for much longer. We need to take it and use it for as long as it is offered to us.

People often ask me about the length of evangelistic sermons and talks. I generally say “preach for five minutes less than usual”. Most non-churchgoers are unused to hearing anyone speak for more than a few minutes. For them, half an hour is an eternity. If you could clip five minutes of normal I bet even your wife would commend you!

Don’t use technical terms. Words like “sin”, “salvation”, “justification”, “guilt”, “heaven”, “hell” or even “forgiveness”, though in common use, are hardly ever understood as we use them. I would replace them expressions such as “rebellion against God”, “being right with God”, “being friends with God”, “being guilty whether we feel it or not”, “with God forever”, “separated from God and everything good forever” and “being totally acceptable to God”.

In the church I attend you are confronted with three books in the pew when you arrive at church: a Prayer Book, a Bible and a hymn book. To the newcomer to church they don’t look very different.

It is not difficult to have an order of service run off on your computer with the prayers, hymns and the bible readings all printed out. If this is not possible I would opt for the Bible passage on which you preach to be printed on the news bulletin and for the reader to draw attention to it and read from it.

If you have a church bookstall, I recommend that you have a few titles of evangelistic books and many copies of the titles you are recommending so that they can be

found at a glance.

Every one knows the Christmas stories.

This is both a problem and an advantage. Most people do know something about Christmas. If they have been to Sunday school or RI at school they will have heard of Mary and Joseph, the baby Jesus, the shepherds, the angel and the three wise men. They may have even played them in the pageant. Therefore we are not starting from scratch. However the whole Christmas story is so overlaid with sentiment that no one is shocked by God becoming human, to say nothing of the fact that this was so that we might be saved from judgment and hell!

Everyone loves the baby in the manger. The ones on Christmas cards are so clean and cheery that you can’t help liking them. However while we think of the Lord of Glory as only a baby we will be looking of ways to help him rather than seeking help from him. Babies need to be cared for and nurtured. It is hard to believe that this baby demands our life allegiance, let alone that he is now in heaven waiting to return to judge the earth.

I was struck recently by this remark by one of the first astronauts to set foot on the moon. James Irwin said: “The greatest miracle is not that man stood on the moon but that God came and stood on the earth.”

Yet, one of the real difficulties is that people think they know what Christmas is all about when in fact they hardly ever do. Sometimes people need to be shocked or jolted to rethink Christmas. For many, it has been overlaid by years of sentimentality and trivia. Last year I attended a carols in the park put on by my local council. Can you imagine my surprise when we sang that well-known carol *Puff the Magic Dragon*? We had already done *Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer*. These were interspersed with *Hark the Herald Angel sings* and *O Come all ye faithful*. To my great surprise, no one seemed to think that there was anything strange about this. They were all equally meaningless.

It might be true that what needs to be said has been said many times before. I think we need to resist the temptation to be novel. Who cares if the truth has been said before? The truth about Christmas is not well known at all. What is important is for

us not to reinforce any sentimental ideas about Christmas. Rather, we need robust statements about God coming to us as a human to rescue us from the consequences

of our rebellion against the living God. If Christmas evokes any feeling within us it should be profound shock that the incarnation was necessary in the first place, to say

nothing of the fact that only the death and resurrection of this person could solve our terrible problem.

**D**o you remember when you were expecting your first child or when your first brother or sister was born? Do you remember the discussion about what the baby would be called? Perhaps you got one of those books with names and their meanings. If you did you will have discovered that if your name is Nigel it means champion. If your name is Helen it means pleasant. Claire – bright. Agatha – good woman. I have friends working in the highlands of New Guinea. They found a tribe of natives who have heard some English words and although they don't know the meanings they like the sound of them. They have met a man whose name is Tinned Fish and another whose name is Second Gear.

My father gave me the name John. It means the gift of God. I think he may have wished to revise it as I grew up!

In the part of the Bible I am about to read, you will find that there are two names given to Jesus. If you understand the meaning of these names you will understand the true meaning of Christmas. See if you can identify them as I read the passage.

Matthew 1:18-23: This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you will give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will birth to a son and they will call him Immanuel – which means "God with us".

Do you find them? The first one is in verse 21. Jesus, which means Saviour.

Christmas is about forgiveness

She will give birth to a son and you will give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.

When I say that Christmas is about forgiveness I don't mean that I should

*Here is an evangelistic sermon that I have preached at Christmas. The text is Matthew 1:18-23.*

forgive you, or you me, however important that might be. I am talking about God forgiving you and me. That forgiveness!

There are two accounts of the birth of the Lord Jesus. This one tells us about how Joseph, the 'father' of Jesus, felt when he discovered that his fiancée was pregnant.

Marriage regulations differ all over the world. In first-century Palestine people entered into formal engagements before marriage. It was binding. It could not be dissolved or broken except through legal divorce.

In the part of the Bible that I read, we see that Joseph is in a bind. He is engaged to Mary. He loves her. He is a godly man. He always tried to do the right thing. He discovered that she was pregnant. We don't know if this is because Mary has told him or whether it has now become apparent. He can see for himself. He knows that he is not the father. He has only one option open. He will have to annul the engagement.

While he is thinking about this, an angel appears to him in a dream. The angel is a messenger from God. God tells him what is going on.

We don't know why Mary had not told him. Perhaps it was because she was too modest. Or it may have been that she just didn't think that Joseph would believe her. I don't blame her. Would you believe your fiancée if she told you that she was pregnant by the supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit? Whatever the reason we know that he had assumed unfaithfulness on her part.

However Joseph is caught up in something momentous. He is swept up into the plan of God to save the world. The village carpenter is to become the father of the Son of God. What a dream that was!

"You will call his name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins."

The Jews had waited a long time for their saviour to come. Thousands of years before, God had made them a promise that he would send them a king. This king would save them from their sins and rule in such a way that justice and peace would

always happen.

Joseph discovered that he was caught up in this wonderful process.

I need to interrupt this story with some explanations. If Jesus is to save people from their sins we will need to be clear on what we mean by "sins" and what we mean by "saving".

I remember reading about a man who read on a sign "Jesus saves". He said to himself, "What a good idea. I should be thrifty too."

Sin is as misunderstood as anything I know. When I say that we are sinful people I am not making a character statement. I am not saying that we are bad people.

What I am saying is that we have all said *no* to God as God over us. We have rebelled against God's right to rule over us. We set ourselves as rival gods to God himself. This is a damaging and destructive attitude and the Bible says that it is the source of all our troubles.

**B**ut the wonder of Christmas is that we can be forgiven and enter into friendship with God. The baby Jesus grew to manhood. He lived the perfect life. He always obeyed his heavenly father. He died on the cross and took the punishment that we deserved for our rebellion against God. This is how he saves us. If we turn back to God in repentance, acknowledge Jesus as our King and trust that his death is sufficient for our forgiveness God will forgive us.

Christmas is about forgiveness.

But Christmas is also about friendship with God. Verse 23: they will call him Emmanuel, which means "God with us".

Jesus fulfills this ancient promise of God dwelling with his people. That is who Jesus is. God in our midst. The little baby in the manger was none other than the Lord of Glory. As he grew to manhood he demonstrated again and again that this was exactly who he was. Christmas is not only about being forgiven but also about entering into a real relationship with God. This is why it is such good news of great joy for all people.

If you have missed out on these benefits at other Christmases then I hope you have a wonderful one this year. I hope for you that you know forgiveness from God and real friendship with God.

*This sermon can be found in John Chapman's book Setting Hearts on Fire (Matthias Media 1999).*

# Is theistic evolution credible?

There is a large number of evangelical Christians today who believe in both God and evolution. They are theistic evolutionists.

Theistic evolution is the idea that God used a random process of chance to create the world. For many people this is an attractive idea because it seems to offer the best of both worlds, the comfort of believing in God as well as the security of fitting in to some extent with the ideas of modern science.

What effect, if any, does the compromise of believing in God and evolution have for the doctrine of the Christian faith? Is it possible to accommodate the early chapters of Genesis with the theory of evolution without undermining the teaching of the New Testament?

Some years ago I came across an observation by Martin Luther concerning the interconnectedness of the doctrines of the Bible: "In philosophy a small error in the beginning is a very serious error in the end. So also in theology a slight error will destroy the whole doctrine . . . For the doctrine is like a mathematical point; it cannot be divided, that is, it cannot brook either subtraction or addition . . . Hence the doctrine must be one continuous and round golden ring, in which there is no break. If even the least break occurs, the ring is no longer perfect."



*Clarrie Briese*

These observations help to explain some of the wider meaning and scope of Galatians 5: 9: "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough." Paul gave this warning in the context of the gospel being denied by the false teaching of the Judaisers in the church. His point is that if an error is unchecked, it will corrupt our entire system of belief.

This is especially relevant to God's revelation in Genesis concerning the creation of the world. The teaching of evolution, like the teaching of the Judaisers in Galatia, acts as yeast on the whole body of Christian doctrine, gradually eroding it. One of Darwin's contemporaries shows very well how the yeast works: "The evolution of man from lower forms of life was in itself a new and startling fact, and one that broke up the old theology. I and my contemporaries, however, accepted it as fact. The first and obvious result of this experience was

that we were compelled to regard the Biblical story of the Fall as not historic . . . If there is no historic Fall, what becomes of the redemption, the salvation through Christ?"

Fortunately for their Christian faith, most theistic evolutionists are not as consistent in their beliefs as that person. They do not follow them through to their logical conclusion, as he did. It is possible to be inconsistent and embrace very contradictory doctrines. However, the history of the Christian Church shows that "felicitous inconsistency" is often superseded by an infelicitous consistency, with the gospel being badly corrupted, lost or abandoned.

Historic Christianity says that in the Bible we have a revelation from God, which gives the truth about the origins and purpose of life. It provides the Christian worldview, a "golden ring" with three high points of historical truth, all indissolubly connected: Creation, Fall and Redemption. Theistic evolution undermines all three.

## Creation

Genesis 1 and 2 declare that in a period of six days God supernaturally created a world of such beauty and perfection, that God himself pronounced it to be "very good" (1:31). Moses gives us a considerable amount of detail in those chapters which clearly reveal the character and nature of God. God is seen to be a God of great goodness, wisdom and power. There is no hint of evil, suffering or death in the world that God made.

Theistic evolution presents a different picture. It says that God was responsible for creating the world through the cruel and painful process of evolution, a theory that, if true, required billions of years of death, suffering, bloodshed, disease, etc to produce the world in its present state. If God, who all Christians agree has the power to create instantly, opted for a sadistic method like evolution in lieu of instant creation, are we not left with the extraordinary inference that suffering and death are "very good" (1:31) and consistent with the character and nature of God?

However, Christ reveals the Father and shows that God certainly does not regard suffering and death as "good". They are quite contrary to God's character and nature. So over against the knowledge of

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God we have in Jesus, I find it very disturbing to see Christians taking a position which, in effect, accuses God of using cruelty over millions of years.

## Fall

According to Genesis 3, when Adam, the first man (and father and representative of the whole human race) disobeyed God, the human family in its entirety fell with Adam into sin, sickness and death. This was the result of God's judgment on Adam's sin. The Apostle Paul in the New Testament treats Genesis 2 and 3 concerning Adam and his fall as an historical event which is pivotal to understanding why Jesus went to his death on the Cross. Two examples: "Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12); and, "For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gifts of righteousness reign in life through one man, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:17).

Therefore, both Moses and Paul provide a logical, reasonable and spiritually satisfying explanation for the presence of evil and suffering in the world. They were not part of Creation at the beginning. They appear as intruders in God's "good" world, brought about by God's judgment on Adam's fall into sin. Part of the good news of the New Testament is the promise that they will be removed upon Christ's return when God "restores" everything (Acts 3:17).

Theistic evolution, however, portrays God as using suffering and death to create the world, not as a judgment on Adam's sin. The New Testament calls death "the last enemy" and treats it accordingly, but theistic evolution regards death as the essential means whereby God created the

world. Moses' account and evolution are mutually exclusive.

## Redemption

The Bible tells us that God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to become "the last Adam" (Rom. 5:12ff). The last Adam came and paid the debt to God's justice, redeeming mankind through his death on our behalf, so that redemption became freely available to all who put their trust in him.

It is not possible to "spiritually discern" the message of God's redemption through Christ in the absence of God's revelation of the two Adams. The role and work of the last Adam, Jesus Christ, is meaningless if the first Adam and his disobedience are not historical. The "yeast" of theistic evolution, with its inherent anti-supernaturalism, eats away at the Biblical doctrine of redemption because, in compromising with evolution, it often leads to a denial of both the historicity of the first Adam and his fall into sin as described in Genesis 3. Obviously, this removes the need for the second Adam, Jesus Christ. In its extreme form, theistic evolution turns the Christian away from the Cross and the second coming of Christ, and points him to faith in the alleged ongoing evolutionary process which, it is said, will ultimately bring mankind into union with God.

If we wish to remain true to the New Testament, it is simply not possible to accommodate theistic evolution with Genesis. Opponents of Christianity have always been aware of this. They mock theistic evolutionists for their lack of consistency. For example, Thomas Huxley (1825-95), the greatest populariser of Darwin, gleefully ridiculed Christians in his day who tried to hold to New Testament doctrines which Christ and Paul teach, but at the same time abandoned Genesis as literal history. He took every opportunity to

show "the melancholy fact that the position they have taken up is hopelessly untenable".

Huxley insisted that "science" had proved that one cannot intelligently accept the Genesis account of creation to be true. He believed that theologians had to accept evolution over millions of years, but to be consistent, they also had to give up the teaching of the Bible totally. Compromise does not work. According to Huxley, "a child may see the folly of it".

It is time for all Christians to heed the call of Hank Hanegraaf. In his 1998 book *The FACE that Demonstrates the Farce of Evolution*, he reviews scientific developments and concludes: "Evolution is fighting for its life. Rather than prop it up with theories like theistic evolution, Christians must be in the vanguard of demonstrating its demise. While insiders in the evolutionary community are aware of their theory's desperate condition, the general public is as yet in the dark. That's precisely where you and I come in. We have the inestimable privilege to share the news that nothing could be more compelling in the age of scientific enlightenment than 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'."

*Clarrie Briese is a former Chief Magistrate of New South Wales. Last month he concluded a three part series on the inadequacies of the theory of evolution.* ap

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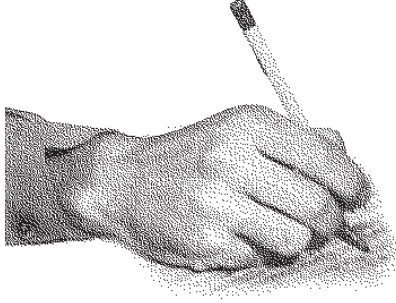
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# letters



## Flood of error?

Rowland Ward's Presbyterian vision for the future (*AP* October, page 11) seems to include contradictions. He wants us to be biblical, and yet to incorporate unbiblical ideas of the flood. He speaks disparagingly of "flood geology". He says the Bible is not a book of science. True. It is a book of history. The scientific method, using an experiment to test an idea, can not be used to prove or disprove any historical event, including the worldwide flood of Genesis 6-9. The same applies to all the other historical events the liberals denied, such as the six-day creation, the miracles of the Old Testament, the virgin birth, the miracles of Christ, the resurrection. The "larger body of scientific knowledge" to which Rowland appeals includes much that is highly unscientific. Since we can only experiment on the present, not the past, that means that for past events, all we can do is depend on eyewitness accounts, or reason from indirect evidence. That also means that any opinion of a scientist about the accuracy of a historical record

can only be tentative, and will be coloured by his presuppositions. If the scientist has been educated under evolutionary atheism, as most are, of course his opinions will not be inclined to agree with history as recorded in the Bible. Any statements such persons make are not "scientific knowledge", but only the personal opinions of fallible and unbelieving human beings.

This was part of the reason the Presbyterian Church became so liberal and unbelieving, according to the article by Peter Barnes (page 9). Does Rowland Ward want to take us back to evolution-based liberalism? How will this make us more biblical?

Rowland appeals for a more discriminating and accurate science and theology. Exactly. The indirect evidence for a worldwide flood is getting more overwhelming with every advance of true science.

*Frank Savage*  
Minister, Scots Presbyterian Church,  
Clayfield, Queensland

**Rowland Ward replies:** All Christians believe in creation by God and therefore must oppose naturalistic evolution. Many Christians, including myself, are also highly sceptical of macro evolution and I have published to that effect.

However, while the Bible's teaching on such matters as the miracles and the resurrection is unmistakable and fundamental, there are other matters, largely incidental to the big picture, where the Bible is less specific. We need both careful explanation and a sense of proportion.

The Bible does not give the age of the universe. The notion of 6000 or so years is based on certain (questionable) assumptions as to the meaning of the creation days and the

genealogical lists. Ancient Jewish writers, as well as the great 17th century Puritan commentator Matthew Poole, did not regard the flood as geographically universal. Most (not all) stalwarts of the Reformed and Presbyterian faith from 1840 to the present, men who oppose theological liberalism, hold the same. In general, even American fundamentalists have advocated six ordinary days and a geographically universal flood only since about 1970.

We are right to recognise the provisional character of all scientific endeavours, but we still have to use the brains God gave us. No one today supposes that Psalm 96:10 means that the sun circles a stationary earth, but most orthodox Protestant Christians were very dogmatic that it was so, and for a century after Galileo argued otherwise. In this case scientific observation helped to a better explanation of Scripture.

## 'Wicked' doctrines

I am perplexed and bewildered by Maia Russell's views (Nov. *AP* Letters) on hell, damnation and other religions. My question is this: what scriptural basis supports such beliefs?

When I read the Old Testament, my distinct impression is that God hates sin, false gods and religions, and all kinds of wickedness. He is a God of love, but also a God of judgment, and the consequences are often less than pleasant. In the New Testament, I read of Jesus who over and over again says that he is the only way to salvation, to heaven. He died on the cross, as the ultimate love sacrifice, but is also coming again to judge the living and the dead.

To me, the Bible is all about God's eternal love, but it is also about God's wrath, judgment and hell. The two cannot be separated.

Have I missed something?

*Alison Schofield*  
Stanmore, NSW

## And more

In response to 'Wicked' doctrines (Maia Russell, *AP*, Nov.) we must express our deep concern for those "thinking, intelligent, loving and compassionate people" who have been seduced by other cultures and religions – those who will never be convinced about "wicked, old-fashioned and damaging doctrines" (hell, eternal damnation, God's abiding wrath, etc.). This surely is a grave matter.

Although very disturbing to serious Bible-believing Christians, Mrs Russell's indignant comments sum up the attitudes of many people today. These are people about whom we should be more prayerfully con-

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cerned than, perhaps, most of us really are. Therefore we ought to be thankful for the writer, and for the Editorial decision to publish the letter. It is tempting to ignore this worldly point of view, or respond disdainfully, but we need to stand firm and speak up clearly for Biblical truth. This should be done reverently and with all humility. It is important that the only cause for offence be the gospel itself (2 Tim. 4:3,4, 1 Pet.3:15, 2 Tim. 3:16).

We may be forgiven for wondering what the writer was looking for in seeking a church to join? Surely not Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament? Praise God for "little" St David's in Woy Woy! However, someone there may now have some unfinished business ... perhaps.

*Neville Taylor,  
Elder,*

*Acacia Ridge Presbyterian Church, Qld*

### Caring first

I belatedly read with interest the articles on leadership in the July issue. 'Guess Who's Coming to Dinner' was particularly useful, and I'd like to reinforce the caring role of shepherds.

In Scripture, the oversight of the elders is primarily pastoral. They are shepherds, tending and caring for the flock, not just managers and teachers, ruling and teaching the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet.1:5, 1 Tim.3:5).

Talk of teaching elders and ruling elders (as we do) only obscures their primary role. Jesus' distinction was between the shepherd and the hired hand. The latter "does not care for the sheep" (Jn 10:11ff).

It is that "care" that is so lacking in our churches today. Outsiders used to say of the early Church, "See how the Christians love one another". But recently an "insider" struck down by illness said to me, "You feel like you've been forgotten."

We seem to think that if we've offered the occasional prayer or enquired about someone to a third person we've done our duty and shown our care. But what would we think of our Lord if that was the extent of his care?

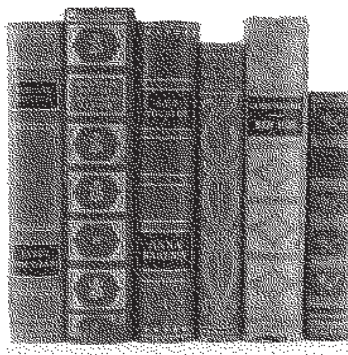
I know of one Home Missionary who contacts every absentee from Sunday services by the end of that week. Now there's a shepherd!

We (PCA) seem so preoccupied with teaching that we have forgotten that the sick, housebound, lonely or otherwise afflicted need more than solid food. They need some TLC.

It seems to me that good pastoring is at least as important to a Church as good teaching, and if one does not care effectively, neither should he rule or teach. For it is by our practice that we "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour" (Tit 2:9-10).

*J.A. Cuff,  
Via Yungaburra, Qld*

## books



### Conflict and Triumph The Argument of the Book of Job Unfolded

William Henry Green  
Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1874,  
republished 1999

*Reviewed by Peter Barnes*

William Henry Green was an outstanding Old Testament scholar who laboured at Princeton Theological Seminary in the days when it stood for the gospel. He resisted the marauding Graf-Wellhausen theory which turned the Old Testament back to front, and contended that the prophets came before the Law. In a fallen world, nonsense often gains more credibility than wisdom. Green's work on Job is not actually a commentary but an outline of the book's structure and argument. We are taken through the book from the first chapter, where Job's afflictions begin, to the last chapter, where he repents, and is vindicated and blessed.

As Green observes: "The depth of his humiliation is really the summit of his exaltation in piety, and in the fear and love of God." Job is a wonderful work of divinely-inspired literature, and Green proves himself to be a sure guide to some of its riches.

*Peter Barnes is minister of Nambucca River Presbyterian Church, NSW.*

### Hero Tales, Vol III

Dave and Neta Jackson  
Minneapolis: Bethany, 1998

This is a worthwhile series which seeks to introduce young readers to the biographies of some noteworthy Christians

from different nationalities. The chapters are given in sections which are suitable for family reading, and conclude with a Bible verse or two (from various versions) and some discussion questions. The main complaint is the lack of theological discernment. Billy Graham, Luis Palau, Mother Teresa, Brother Andrew, and St Patrick and more are treated with sympathy and little real examination by the Jacksons. The project is commendable; one only wishes it was better done.

### Why Y2K?

John Blanchard  
Darlington: Evangelical Press, 1999  
*Reviewed by Peter Barnes*

John Blanchard is one of the clearest preachers of the Christian gospel in the world, and he rarely loses an opportunity to present Christ to the world and the world to Christ. In this easily-read little book (128 pages) he tells us what the conclusion of the second millennium is really all about. As always, Blanchard writes simply and well, with conviction and with depth. The year 2000 should present some opportunities for Christians to share the gospel with unbelievers. They could do no better than arm themselves with some copies of *Why Y2K?* and go for it.

### Christmas Nativities and Stories

Elisabeth Van Mullekom-Cserép  
Horsley Park: Nativity House Publishing, 1999

This is a colourful presentation of how Christmas is celebrated in various countries, as far removed as Mexico, Russia, Denmark, and Ghana. A lot of work has gone into its production, and it will make some appeal to those at the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox end of the market. It is a reminder that there is an alternative to the rank secularism and materialism which characterises the modern Western celebration of Christmas. But others of us might wonder whether Jesus ought to be praised as "the one who made Christmas possible" (p141), or whether putting Christ back into Christmas can best be achieved by setting up a crib rather than a Christmas tree (p102). What is lacking is a few pages devoted to the Puritan celebration of Christmas.

# prayer

## DECEMBER

- 21 Short term missionaries (a few months): that their work may be effective, and interest their home churches in world mission.
- 22 Lower Clarence parish, northern NSW; 3 congregations including Maclean and Yamba, about 117 communicants, and 9 elders; vacant, Stephen Cree interim moderator; Mark & Lois Cooper-White assisting.
- 23 Seaford home mission station, southern Melbourne; about 11 communicants, and 2 elders; David & Tanya Assender; Andrew Campbell interim moderator.
- 24 Pray that Muslims (who believe in the virgin birth of Jesus and respect Mary) may also come to know that Jesus is the Son of the living God.
- 25 Ask that in all Christmas services worshippers may see the wonder of God the Son becoming Man "for us men and for our salvation".
- 26 Keith & Kathie Benn from Camp Hill, Brisbane, training national translators in South Asia (the India region) with Wycliffe Bible Translators. They were commissioned on 14 November.
- 27 Family missions around the coast and elsewhere – the workers, children and parents.
- 28 Tahmoor home mission station, south of Sydney; about 20 communicants, and 5 elders; vacant, Warren Hicks moderator.
- 29 Presbytery of Western Australia: 6 parishes, 4 home mission stations, 1 patrol totalling around 600 communicants, 230 adherents, 215 children and youth and 26 elders; 2 ministers under jurisdiction, 1 missionary, 2 ministerial candidates. Stuart Bonnington clerk.
- 30 Somerville parish, southern Melbourne; about 90 communicants

and 8 elders; Steven and Kathryn Giles.

- 31 Safety, mutual helpfulness and peace of mind as the "Y2K computer bug" could disrupt many essential services.

## JANUARY 2000

- 1 A strong sense of purpose this year among the leadership and whole membership of your congregation to glorify God, build up believers and win others to Christ.
- 2 All taking part in Christian conventions and camps over the holiday period – speakers, organisers and attenders.
- 3 Christian ministry in the more than 300 cities around the world with populations over 1 million – 89 of them in Asia, 47 in North America, 27 in Latin America, 23 in the Middle East and 21 in Africa.
- 4 Pittwater parish, northern Sydney (Newport), about 56 communicants and 8 elders; Philip and Helen Rawlings.
- 5 "Happy & Glad" Skinner from Kuring-Gai, Sydney – support workers with WBT – 30 years in PNG. and now in Darwin.
- 6 The maturity and gospel impact of the world's 500 million evangelical Christians (70% of them in the non-western world) growing annually at 4.5%.
- 7 Pray that many thousands of Muslims, as they near the end of the Ramadan fast, may realise that salvation is by God's grace in Christ, not our works.
- 8 Presbytery of Rockhampton Qld: 6 parishes, 1 home mission station, totalling 26 congregations with 720 communicants, 235 adherents, 305 children and youth and 66 elders; 2 retired ministers, 1 under jurisdiction, 1 ministerial candidate. Charles Kennedy clerk.
- 9 David and Lalit Clarke, serving in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and sharing the Gospel with children and students

under CMS.

- 10 Bible work in Sri Lanka (70% Buddhist, 14% Hindu, 8% Christian, 8% Muslim) with 18 million people – 6 languages.
- 11 Balga home mission station, northern Perth; about 20 communicants, and 3 elders; vacant, Michael Charles interim moderator .
- 12 The pastors, elders and members of quite a few Korean Presbyterian churches in Australia not affiliated with our denomination.
- 13 Andrew Letcher, missionary in Papua New Guinea with Missionary Aviation Fellowship.
- 14 Tenterfield parish, northern NSW; 3 congregations, about 24 communicants, and 3 elders; vacant.
- 15 Mackay parish, north Qld, including Sarina and Pinnacle, about 114 communicants and 4 elders; Jim & Judith Brown.
- 16 Revival among the Christian churches of the Caribbean, including Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Puerto Rico, a region with 38 million people, but where the occult and immorality are rife.
- 17 Dr. Ian Denness, Dorcas and family from Cookinburra, Vic. working among Muslim and nominal Christian drug addicts at Quetta, Pakistan with Red Sea Team International.
- 18 Presbytery of Northern Rivers NSW: 12 parishes, totalling 34 congregations with 1595 communicants, 415 adherents, 550 children and youth and 125 elders; 2 retired ministers, 1 deaconess candidate. George Ayoub clerk.
- 19 Malvern parish, Melbourne; about 70 communicants, and 9 elders; and the vacant Chinese home mission station (18 communicants, and 3 elders); John & Lyn Woodward.
- 20 Ralph & Anne Latimer of Arundel, Qld, on leave from OMF after working at Cheefoo School Malaysia since 1995.

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# Fat chance?

*Reject destructive media notions of beauty. God sees it differently.*

**B**arbie turned 40 this year! The blond doll of exaggerated proportions, arrayed in pink and purple, is still a great favourite with little girls. Novelist Jane Smiley says that if her daughters learnt about make-up, gowns, bikinis and pink chaise lounges it was from Barbie, not her. She thinks the "Barbie" experience is an important aid to help a girl make up her mind "about who she is and what she wants".

This may be so, but "Barbie" is also a symbol of the modern obsession with thinness of the last four or five decades. "If you are not slim – very slim – hairless, glossy, tanned and extremely beautiful, then you are not a real person," was the message of an article on "Why 1500 women a year are dieting to death" (*Sunday Telegraph*, June 1996).

This obsession has infected our children. Marlene Goldsmith, in her book *Political Incorrectness*, identifies eating disorders as part of a "doom and gloom" environment in which Australian children are being raised. Frances M. Berg, in *Afraid to Eat: Children and Teens in Weight Crisis* says, "Our children are afraid to eat. More are eating abnormally ... More fail to thrive because of the social shame they endure for being fat."

Many health care professionals are calling for a new approach to weight and eating disorders. "Overweight, eating disorders, dysfunctional eating and size prejudice aren't separate issues," says Berg.

James Dobson, the well-known child psychologist, expresses a similar point of view. "The extreme emphasis on physical attractiveness and body consciousness is having a terrible effect on children. It can even be life-threatening to them." He tells of older people who speak of their suicidal self-loathing in teen years because of perceived obesity. A primary aged girl justified dieting by saying she just wanted to be skinny so that no one would tease her. A study from the Body Shop reveals that "if shop mannequins were real women, they'd be too thin to menstruate".

It is futile to reject the way we are made. In a white Anglo-Saxon family, we may inherit our physical characteristics from a number of sources: from the short, stocky ancient Briton, the tall, fair Scandinavian invader, and many other combinations. The



*Marion Andrews*

reality is that a girl who inherited short legs and a wide bone structure can never, ever look like Barbie.

And why should she? One of our best-kept secrets is that many people, like the great artists Rembrandt and Rubens, prefer the fuller figure. Barbie is not every man's ideal, just as Ken is not every woman's dream.

Dr Dobson, in his book, *Solid Answers*, speaks of "the transcending worth of your humanness as a gift from God." He is concerned about the "false values" and "fads" that are making children hate themselves. This is not just a female problem. More young men and boys are joining the club. Doctors are giving teenage boys growth hormones with little regard to possible side-effects.

**W**hat sort of "new approach" will make a difference? We need to be fully assured from God's Word that our bodies are intrinsically wonderful and beautiful. "You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; ... my frame was not hidden from you..." [Note: Psalm 139:13-24 has been set to music by Philip Percival, Plainsong Music, Dubbo. I recommend this as a Psalm setting that is easy to memorise, and great for the soul.] God, the creative genius of all that is, carefully and lovingly fashioned each one of us as he determined. And he has a wonderful purpose for each of us. These are the values our children need to learn.

Garry Egger is on the council of the Australian Society for the Study of Obesity, and is a consultant to Weight Watchers. He makes some surprising and controversial statements, like "don't diet". He says that "your life-long battle against weight may be causing the very problem you are fighting". He asks, "Why are we

still gaining weight as a nation despite all our diets, weight control centres and gyms?"

Dr Egger is not speaking to people who have to diet for medical reasons. He is challenging those who try every new dietary fad that is presented in women's magazines. This habit means that a child never knows a regular eating pattern, because mother is always on some diet or another. He cautions parents of young children to set a regular, sensible and healthy eating routine.

How hard it is for human beings to live with a healthy attitude towards what we have! A missionary from a third world country always prayed for the hungry when she gave thanks for her meal. She had worked with people who had no choice but starvation. In our society, neither deliberate starvation nor gluttony can be justified. Either ties us up so that we are not free to love and serve Christ effectively.

Let's move beyond introspection with food and a superficial, prejudiced view of what beauty really is. Let's discover freedom in God's idea of true beauty, which does not come from outward appearance, but that unfading beauty of your inner self, which is of great worth in God's sight (1Peter 3). ap

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# The love/hate relationship

*In what sense does God love the unsaved?*

If God unconditionally elects whom he will save – as the Scriptures and the Confession clearly teach (eg Rom. 9:6-29; Eph. 1:1-11) – can we say that in any sense God loves those whom he has not chosen to save? John Murray and Ned Stonehouse think we can. In 1948 they affirmed: “There is in God a benevolent lovingkindness towards the repentance and salvation of even those whom he has not decreed to save.” This, in David Engelsma’s view, has done “incalculable damage to the cause of Jesus Christ and the proclamation of his gospel.” Engelsma considers that God’s call to all is only to render them inexcusable and to harden them.

There are others apart from Engelsma who assert that God cannot be said to love and hate the same person in any sense. Francis Turretin considered that to suggest any turmoil in the heart of God was to make his goodness and grace “vain and inefficacious” and “repugnant to his wisdom and power”.

Even Abraham Kuyper thought that the idea of two wills in God was gibberish, while Engelsma says that if God reprobates those whom he loves, he would become guilty of “insincere, deceptive behaviour”.

However, the God of the Bible is not Aristotle’s “unmoved mover”, but One who feels a tension between his mercy and justice. There are tensions in biblical theology, and even tensions within the Godhead. For example, God loves and hates the elect before they become Christians. The elect were once, like the others, “children of wrath”, but at the same time under “God’s great love with which he loved us” (Eph. 2:3, 4).

Matthew 23: 27 is Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.” Herman Hanko asserts: “It is immediately evident that there is nothing even faintly resembling a well-meant offer of the gospel.” Surely it is obvious that there is. Jesus yearns for the salvation of those who refuse his gracious offer of salvation.

Hanko goes on to claim that Jerusalem is not the people but “the city as the centre of all Israel’s political and ecclesiastical life”.



*Peter Barnes*

Such quibbling is hardly convincing. Calvin writes truly of God’s humble affection, and adds that, “although God does not have two wills, the will of God is exhibited to us in two ways”.

In the book of Ezekiel, God declares that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 18:23, 32; 33:11). Hanko says that God “has no pleasure in sin, but rather demands holiness of men”. This is true enough, but the text refers to the fate of the wicked, not their behaviour. God has no pleasure in the fact that the wicked come to judgment, not just in the fact that the wicked sin.

John Piper has written a book on *The Pleasures of God* which has the theme that God’s deeds are the overflow of his joy. Nevertheless, he is forced to acknowledge that God does not unequivocally delight in everything that he does. Deuteronomy 28: 63 does say that “the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing”. When this is set next to the Ezekiel passages, John Piper can only conclude: “The answer I propose is that God is grieved in one sense by the death of the wicked, and pleased in another.”

In Mark 10:21 we read that Jesus loved the rich young ruler who walked away sorrowfully from Him. Some expositors have felt awkward about this text, and the New American Standard even says that Jesus “felt a love” for the man – which is too weak, and not what the text says. Those who deny a well-meant offer of the gospel have sometimes resorted to the view that Jesus in his incarnation does not reflect the heart of God. This is precarious in the extreme. Jesus came to do his Father’s will (John 6:30, 38; Heb. 10:9). To see Jesus is to see the Father (John 14:9). If Jesus does not reflect the heart of God, we cannot know anything about the heart of God.

Others have claimed that the rich young ruler was elect, but that is unproven and unprovable. We simply do not know and cannot know. Calvin writes that “God is sometimes said to love those whom he does not approve or justify”.

For all that, in evangelism, our emphasis is not initially on the love of God. The sermons in the book of Acts, whether to Jews of Gentiles, seek to make known our accountability to God as our creator and judge, and then Jesus as the risen Lord and Christ (eg Acts 2:14- 39; 17:16-34). To tell an unbeliever that God loves him or her is not necessarily heretical, but it is likely to be misunderstood by the unregenerate. Evangelism is for the sake of the elect (2 Tim. 2:10), but Paul prays for all and – amazing love – says that he is prepared to be anathema to his fellow Jews (Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1) That is most moving, but it is only moving if it somehow reflects something of the mind and heart of God himself.

On one occasion Charles Simeon was preaching on Romans 10: 21 (All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people), when he was so overcome by the thought of God’s loving appeal to sinners that he burst into a flood of tears, and could not finish. If we don’t know something of this, we ought not to be preaching. Even though God does love the non-elect, this will not be the starting point for presenting the gospel to them.

Yet there has to be a wooing note, anchored in love to all. Richard Sibbes said that “The office of a minister is to be a wooer, to make up the marriage between Christ and Christian souls”. Those who wish to be Calvinists ought not to try out-Calvin Calvin.

*Peter Barnes is minister of Nambucca River Presbyterian Church, NSW.*

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