

A U S T R A L I A N

Presbyterian

THE MAGAZINE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

september 2000



Justification

God's greatest gift

A beautiful faith • On purpose • A good sport

To the Jew First in the NEW MILLENNIUM A Conference on Jewish

Melbourne, October 13-14, 2000

Celebrate Messiah Australia, together with an international ministry, Chosen People Ministries, will be hosting a missions conference on Jewish evangelism. This is the first conference of its kind to be held in Australia.

This historic conference will explore the Biblical mandate for Jewish evangelism as well as incorporate a seminar on how to witness to Jewish people. The highlight and conclusion of the conference will be an evangelistic rally and Feast of Tabernacles celebration.

This exciting event is also sponsored by the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism.

* Friday 13 October - 9am - 5pm -
Speakers

on the topic "To the Jew First in the
New Millennium."

* Friday night - 6pm - Shabbat Dinner

* Friday night - 8pm - "The Sons of
Korah" concert and speaker.

Registration not necessary - free
admission. (offering will be taken).

* Saturday 14 October - 9am - 4pm -
Seminar on how to share the Gospel with
Jewish people.

* Saturday night - 7pm - Feast of
Tabernacles celebration and rally. Registration not
necessary -
free admission. (offering will be taken).

Venue for conference:

Blackburn Community Church, 184 Surrey Road,
Blackburn, Vic.

Venue for Feast of Tabernacles Celebration, Saturday

PO Box 5006 GLENFERRIE SOUTH VIC
3122 AUSTRALIA

Phone/Fax: 03 9819 2437

New Web page: [www.celebratemes-
siah.com.au](http://www.celebratemes-
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night:

Richmond AOG, 10 Griffiths Street, Richmond, Vic.



Celebrate MESSIAH

A U S T R A L I A

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God's greatest gift

In 1991, George Barna, an American church-growth analyst and pollster, published some disturbing findings in his book *What Americans Believe* (Regal). Among the most unsettling revelations were that 35 per cent of America's evangelical seminarians deny that faith in Christ is absolutely necessary, and 87 percent of America's evangelicals relate to God at a practical level in the same way as medieval Roman Catholics.

Twenty years earlier, in 1972, a magazine called *Present Truth* released some startling survey results about the "Jesus People" and church-going Protestants. They had conducted a five-point questionnaire with them which dealt with fundamental issues dividing Roman Catholic teaching from the views of the Reformers.

Their results were unnerving, to say the least. 95 per cent of the "Jesus People" showed that their views on relating to God were definitely medieval and anti-Reformation. A similar percentage of church-going Protestants said the same.

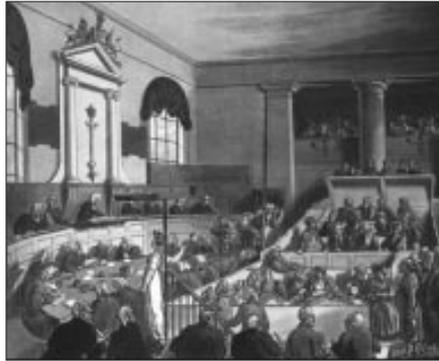
It seems that the so-called evangelical revolution which swept through the United States in the 1970s and 1980s did little to arrest the trend towards a Roman Catholic view of justification among ordinary evangelicals.

This raises the question: have we entered a new Dark Ages in the life of the western church? Have we reached a point where spiritual truths vital to the church's recovery are in a state of eclipse? Developments over the past decade provide little confidence that the problem will be easily resolved.

The publication in 1994 of the Roman Catholic Catechism shows that Rome's position on justification has not changed since the 16th century. Rome still believes that Protestants who affirm the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith are under the anathema of God.

However, even more disturbing is the self-doubt which is beginning to emerge in the evangelical camp as scholars like James Dunn, Tom Wright and Alister McGrath move away from the Reformers' understanding of Paul's teaching on justification. The issues are momentous.

As Martin Luther said of the doctrine of justification: "Upon this article the church



The Old Bailey, Britain's main court, 1808

is standing or falling." Calvin said: "Justification" is the main hinge on which religion turns ... for unless you first of all grasp what your relationship with God is, and the nature of his judgment concerning you, you will have neither a foundation on which to build your salvation nor one on which to build piety towards God."

For this reason Calvin devoted eight chapters of his *Institutes* to the believer's life of faith and eight more to the doctrine of justification. In comparison, he deals with predestination in only three chapters. This shows where his emphasis lies. And it demonstrates where the emphasis in preaching and practice should lie today.

The Reformers rediscovered the doctrine of justification by faith through intense study of the Greek New Testament. Luther was indebted to the Renaissance scholar Erasmus, who discovered the discrepancy in the Latin Vulgate's translation of the Greek verb "to justify". Jerome, in the fourth century, had translated the original Greek word "dikaioo", which means: "to declare righteous", with the Latin verb "justificare", which means "to make righteous".

As a result the medieval church had understood justification as a process of becoming or being made righteous rather than a declarative act from a judge. This mistranslation in the Vulgate had led the church to believe that salvation involved cooperating with God's grace to produce a new and essentially righteous person. Justification and sanctification were merged.

But as Luther studied the Bible, he realised the wonderful truth that righteousness was not a demand of God; instead it was a gift. Justification was a legal change, not a moral one. He saw that Paul taught

two basic truths: (1) God cannot accept imperfect righteousness, and (2) He imputes (or credits) to the Christian the "righteousness" of Jesus Christ, which is perfect. Therefore, the Christian has a perfect legal standing and confidence before God, while still remaining a sinner.

The good news of the Reformation lies in the rediscovery that the gospel lies entirely outside of ourselves. Our hope before God lies in the doing and dying of Jesus: it is his righteousness that saves us, not our own. We must resist the temptation to ground the verdict of God's acceptance of us within ourselves. Only the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness will give us hope to face God.

Sadly, not all those within the evangelical camp rest easily with the legal understanding of justification. In an earlier generation, the revivalist Charles Finney commented: "The doctrine of an imputed righteousness, or that Christ's obedience to the law was accounted as our obedience, is founded on a false and most nonsensical assumption."

Today, so-called evangelical theologians like Clark Pinnock, are dismissive of an objective justification. This has led him to say that he is open to "the possibility of a doctrine of purgatory". This issue of *AP* is dedicated to exploring the issue of justification by faith in the modern world. Whether the church stands or falls depends on how we understand this issue.

Peter Hastie

From the Convener

James Montgomery Boice was a marvelous minister, teacher, pastor and author. Despite his magnificent achievements, one might be tempted to say with Shakespeare that "nothing in his life became him like the leaving it". Cancer took him in eight short weeks from diagnosis to death. If anything, his ministry deepened. You will find his last words to his church on page 18.



Robert Benn,
Convener, National Journal Committee 

Justice and mercy

Only God could resolve the insoluble paradox.



Mt McDonald, near Cowra, was once a thriving mining town. Now it is only a few pieces of ruined foundations, and innumerable mine shafts. Over the years it has become less than a ghost town.

It sometimes seems the doctrine of justification by faith has suffered the same fate. For Martin Luther, it was the wonderful, gleaming treasure of the gospel, the grand announcement of God. His account of the moment he understood justification by faith is justly famous. He tells how he had struggled with Romans 1:17, in which the revelation of God's righteousness had seemed to spell his condemnation. For he could never reach God's righteousness.

Then, he tells us, "I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith... the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely the passive righteousness with which God justifies us by faith."

With that he saw that he was not a condemned sinner, desperately trying to satisfy the impossible demands of God's righteousness; rather, by faith, he was a justified sinner. He says: "Here I felt that I was also-



John McClean

gether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates."

But what so excited Luther seems a poor, deserted truth today. So often people sit in my lounge room, and I explain to them this overwhelming truth, and they shrug their shoulders. To most Australians, God's forgiveness seems normal, routine and unexceptional. It is as if we say "what else do you expect – forgiving is God's job".

Even in churches today justification is a rather tarnished, unimpressive piece, tucked at the back of the theological trophy cabinet. We get far more excited about so many other things.

What has happened to justification by faith? I want to explore some of the ways

we misunderstand justification by faith, hoping that if we rediscover its real truth, we will once again experience its wonder.

Faith in what? "Only believe" says the preacher "simply have faith, and you will know God's forgiveness". Have you heard words like that? Often the speaker has not told us in what we are to trust, nor in whom. Justification by faith does not mean that we simply must "have faith" in anyone and anything. No, our faith is to be in the Lord Jesus, who died and rose again. For it is not faith itself which has any power to make us right with God, but the crucified and risen Lord who justifies us. Faith means faith in him.

Yet so often Christians speak as if it is "faith" which has the power. People tell me that they have great faith. They mean that in a difficult situation they are sure things will turn out well. Indeed, they are convinced that it is their faith that will ensure a happy ending. This is ill-founded faith, for it claims from God things he has never promised, and it has no reference to the Lord Jesus. It is, in the end, faith in faith. This "faith" does not bring justification.

Another misunderstanding of justification by faith, is to reduce faith to agreeing

that something is true – in this case something about Jesus. So people hear the gospel explained, it seems true to them, and they agree that they believe that. They don't understand that "faith" means "trust" or "reliance". It means throwing yourself on Jesus' mercy, and abandoning any other hope. Paul's powerful words in Philippians 3:7-9 express the reality of faith: "But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord ... I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ."

That is why "religiosity" is not the same as genuine faith, and in fact is often a counterfeit. Religious people may trust all sorts of "religious" things and hope these will make them acceptable to God. So while they may accept the Apostles' Creed, and accept what the Bible says about Jesus: they may not genuinely trust Jesus.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer coined the phrase "cheap grace". This is how he described it:

"Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ."

This is a poor substitute which replaces genuine faith with a weak acceptance which makes no demands on the believer.

Real faith is relying on Jesus, and Jesus is the risen and ruling Lord. If you trust Jesus then you must obey him as Lord. This doesn't mean that you are forgiven because you repent, or that in some way you earn your salvation. Justification is based on Jesus' death on our behalf; it is all from God's grace. But when you take God's grace seriously, and trust yourself to the true Jesus – there is nothing cheap about this grace. John Calvin summarised the relationship between faith and obedience in this way: "Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify. These benefits are joined by an everlasting and indissoluble bond ... Do you wish, then, to attain righteousness in Christ? You must first possess Christ; but you cannot possess him without being made a partaker in his sanctification ... it is clear how true it is that we are justified not without works yet not through works ..."

It is perilously easy to turn the gospel into cheap grace. When we talk to people about "faith", and don't focus them on Jesus and who he is and what he offers and

calls for; then we can easily give the impression that faith (and justification) can be separated from a life of discipleship.

The distortion of cheap grace explains why some people claim the message of justification by faith is dangerous. To tell people that there is nothing we can do, that we can add nothing to salvation by our efforts and that all we can rely on is God's grace in the Lord Jesus: that sounds to them like a recipe for Christian slackness. "Surely," they protest, "if we tell people this, then they won't try anymore, they will indulge in sin."

This concern may come from having heard justification by faith taught as cheap grace. Often, however, the suspicion comes from not understanding the reality of Christian living. The Bible does mention the thought that God's grace could be an



excuse for sin (Romans 3:7-8, 6:1), but that thought is immediately dismissed. Instead, God's grace is the great motivation for authentic discipleship. Romans 12:1 urges us, in view of God's mercy, to live our lives as sacrifices to God. When we realise that God has freely forgiven us, and freed us from the guilt and power of sin, then our response should be lives devoted to Jesus.

When I was growing up someone told me this story to explain justification. "A boy at school misbehaves, the teacher knows someone has done the wrong thing and is trying to discover the culprit. Before the investigation is complete, a friend of the boy confesses to the misdeed, and receives the punishment instead."

This, it seemed, was how God worked. I deserved to be punished, but Jesus was punished instead of me; and I could be treated as if innocent (that is, I was justified). The problem is the massive injustice in the story. Why should an innocent party be punished, and how would that help the guilty? (Especially since God is not as easily tricked as the teacher!) If this is how we are justified, is it profoundly unjust?

The answer is in seeing the relationships Jesus has. On the one hand, he is God: one with the Father. So he is not another, inno-

cent party (simply a friend), but the God who has been offended and is justly angry at sin. God the Son takes on himself divine anger. Moreover, in giving his Son, God the Father pays the price of atonement. As Karl Barth expressed it, "the judge judged in our place".

That still leaves the question of how we can benefit from Jesus' death. Is it a "legal fiction", a judicial con for God to treat us as absolved for Jesus sake? Has God simply indulged in some creative accounting, moving things between our account and Jesus'? That is certainly the way justification sometimes sounds, and so people are critical of it.

Again the answer lies in Jesus' relationship. He, God the Son, became one of us, and one with us, by sharing our human nature. When we come to faith in him, we are bound to him and united with him; so that what he has now becomes ours. Paul says to the Corinthians, "you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). We have a new relationship with Christ, an intimate connection and sharing. We are in Christ, united with him. Because of that, what he has – wisdom, righteousness, holiness and redemption – becomes ours.

There is one misunderstanding that seems to be the root of many others. When we do not take God's holiness seriously, we then won't see how serious our own sin is. If we fail to grasp the sinfulness of sin, then God's anger at sin will make no sense. If we no longer believe that God is justly angry and do not fear his wrath, then we will never understand what happened when Jesus died. If you do not understand holiness, sin, judgement and the cross: then justification by faith will seem like such an absurdity. If there is no fear of the judge, and no sense of guilt, what joy will there be to hear of our acquittal?

That is the difference between us and Martin Luther. If he knew nothing else, Luther knew that God would call him to account, and that God's righteousness would demand more than he could ever meet. What a wonder, then, to discover that God's righteousness was not, in fact, a demand. But that it was a gift, by which he made righteous those who entrusted themselves to him.

Australians, both Christian and non-Christian, have so little sense of God's holiness and our sinfulness, consequently we have no sense of the wonder of God's mercy. If God will bring us back to those realities, we may, with Luther, seem to enter into paradise through open gates.

John McClean is minister of Cowra Presbyterian Church, NSW.

A legal will

Calvin shows justification is loving and legal acceptance by God.

The great French reformer John Calvin, in accord with the other Reformers, emphasised the centrality of the doctrine of justification by faith. Calvin explained justification as “the acceptance with which God receives us into his favour as righteous men. And we say that it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness”.

It is clear that justification is at the heart of Christian faith for Calvin. For example, in his great work *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, in the introduction to the section on justification, Calvin writes that “this is the main hinge on which religion turns”. In his sermon on Luke 1:5-10 Calvin states that justification is “the principle of the whole doctrine of salvation and of the foundation of all religion”.

In the meticulously written *Institutes*, Calvin deliberately discussed the doctrine of regeneration before the doctrine of justification. He did this to underscore the grace and mercy of God. He also did so to prevent any viewing of “faith” as a “work”. In his mercy, God works in a person’s heart (Ezekiel 11:19-20) to bring him or her to faith in Christ alone. Such a person is described by Calvin as those “regenerated by God’s Spirit, they make true holiness their concern”.

Calvin thus first discusses repentance and forgiveness of sins, and considers justification in the context of a personal relationship with God.

His definition of justification (cited above) shows that Calvin sought to explain justification in terms of acceptance with God (Acts 10:34,35). This acceptance with God entails both the remission or forgiveness of our sins as well the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to us.

Here we see the gospel in a nutshell. On the one hand, Christ’s perfect sacrifice on the cross is the only basis by which our sins are forgiven. It is the only means by which sin and the consequences of sin are dealt with. On the other hand, Christ’s obedience to the Father through his perfect sacrifice on the cross is the basis for the imputation of his righteousness to us. What is meant by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to us is that “Christ’s righteousness is credited to our account”. Because



Joe Mock

our sins are forgiven and Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us we are accepted by God and received into his favour as righteous men and women.

Justification is not just the declaration that we are righteous. Justification means that we are accepted by God as righteous. Despite our total inability because of our slavery to sin, God has provided in Christ a means by which we can be accepted by him as righteous. This is nothing but the grace and mercy of God in action.

An understanding of the grace and mercy of God in justification should spur all disciples of Jesus to make the proper response. Thus Paul exhorts us to “be who you are in Christ”. Calvin writes that “God’s children are pleasing and lovable to him, since he sees in them the marks and features of his own countenance”.

It is in this connection also that Calvin speaks of “a double acceptance of man before God”. The first “acceptance” is justification. The second “acceptance” is “that ‘acceptance’ which Peters mentions (Acts 10:34 cf 1 Peter 1:17) whereby believers are, after their call, approved by God in respect of their works (cf 1 Peter 2:5). For the Lord cannot fail to love and embrace the good things that he works in them through his Spirit. But we must remember that God ‘accepts’ believers by reason of their works

only because he is their source and graciously, by way of adding to his liberality, deigns also to show ‘acceptance’ toward the good works he has himself bestowed”. At every turn we see the grace of God.

John Powell rightly points out that we all relate to one another by putting on masks. On the one hand, the mask serves to cover up our real selves. On the other hand, we put on the mask that we want others to relate to. Our aim is that others will relate to a perception of us rather than to the real us. Why do we relate to one another with masks? It is because we are afraid that if others see us as we really are, then they will reject us. We are all afraid of having to handle rejection.

Justification means that God truly accepts us. He knows that we are disobedient, rebellious sinners. But he accepts us on the basis of Christ’s perfect work on the cross. The result is that we have freedom to come directly into God’s presence unveiled (2 Corinthians 3:16,17). That is, we can completely remove our masks in the presence of God. Moreover, we can approach God’s very throne with confidence (Hebrews 4:16; 10:19-22). This is what it means to be accepted by God. Our response to this ought to be to strive, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to live lives characterised by righteousness.

Our denomination looks with pride at our direct connection with the great Reformers such as John Calvin and John Knox. We believe that they were faithful in seeking to expound Biblical faith as well as living it out. At the heart of Biblical faith is the doctrine of justification. This is the doctrine that our denomination must continue to faithfully expound and live out in this new millennium.

We must not only proclaim the Gospel which is the means by which we are accepted by God. We need to show to the world the Gospel in action in our churches by accepting one another.

“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God” (Romans 15:7).

Dr Joe Mock is a minister at the Chinese Presbyterian Church, Surry Hills, Sydney, and previously served in Indonesia and Singapore.



Was Paul right?

Phillip Evesen warns Peter Hastie that the modern re-evaluation of justification is dangerously flawed.

Are there important spiritual implications in the doctrine of justification?

There might be some people who would like to treat it as an academic issue, but it's a very important issue with enormous implications for Christian living.

The doctrine of justification by faith lies at the heart of a person's relationship to God. It tells us how sinful people are made right with God. Essentially, it says that God declares the ungodly righteous, not by their good works, but solely through their reliance on Jesus Christ. Actually, that's why the doctrine was such a great relief to Martin Luther. When he discovered it in Paul's writings, he said, "Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates."

What difference did it make to Luther?

A huge one. He had grown up with the idea that to be right with God he needed to fulfil the requirements of the church. Specifically, he had to participate in its rites such as baptism and the sacrament of penance. He could also pray, do the works of merit and buy indulgences. These were meant to help him escape from the punishment of purgatory.

But through his study of the Bible he began to see that forgiveness and a right status with God were not the result of putting one's trust in penances and rites. Rather, his justification with God came about through God's grace.



Alister McGrath



Phillip Evesen

Why do Catholics find the doctrine of justification by faith so hard to accept?

Interestingly, some of their leading scholars today, like Raymond Brown, Joseph Fitzmyer and Hans Kung have agreed with the Reformers that Paul used the term "justification" to mean "to declare righteous". But Catholics are reluctant to let go of their views on the sacraments and other teachings like indulgences and purgatory.

I suspect that Catholics feel there is too much at stake if they acknowledge the biblical teaching. The doctrine of justification by faith challenges some of their most fundamental traditions and practices. That's why they find it so hard to recognise the legal or forensic meaning of justification, which means to "declare righteous". It challenges their traditional understanding of the word which they interpret to mean "to make righteous". Obviously, if they accepted the biblical meaning, they would have to make huge changes to church practice.

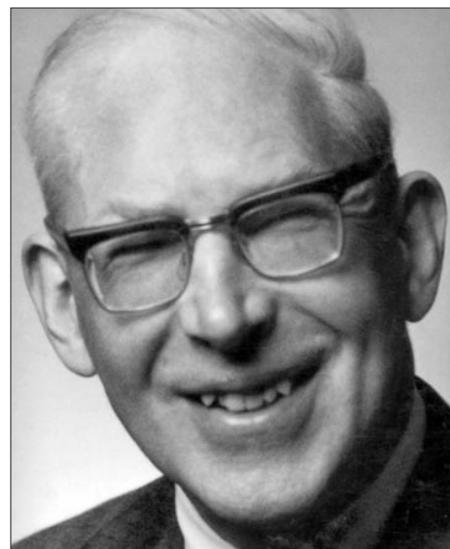
What did the Reformers understand?

Both Luther and Calvin saw that Paul's doctrine of justification had been distorted by the Catholic Church. Augustine understood the verb "dikaio" to mean "to make righteous" rather than "to declare righteous". So the idea developed that when God justifies the sinner, he actually makes him righteous. On the contrary, Paul taught that when God justifies us, he declares us righteous even though we still remain sinners. The Catholic teaching confused justification (the act of declaring someone righteous) with sanctification (the process of actually making them righteous). The Reformers saw the true meaning of justification "in" Paul. It became clear to them that justification was a forensic or legal declaration made by God concerning sin-

ners who believe in Jesus. Luther taught that God is seen to be righteous not only when he condemns the guilty, but also when he justifies the ungodly, that is, accounts people righteous. Calvin saw that justification involved two aspects: first, it consisted in the pardon of the sinner's guilt. Second, it meant that Christ's own righteousness was imputed or credited to the sinner. So you can see that the Reformers made a clear distinction between justification on the one hand and regeneration and sanctification on the other. The medieval church had confused these concepts and taught that justification included all of them.

What is the nature of the saving faith?

This is a vital issue. Since the Bible teaches that we are justified by faith alone, and that faith is the instrument through which we receive salvation, it's essential that we understand the nature of saving faith. The Reformers understood this, which is why they gave careful attention to the definition of faith. They defined it as including a number of basic elements: content/information (notitia); intellectual assent (assensus) and personal trust (fiducia). The Roman Catholic Church taught that true faith consisted only in information and giving one's assent to it. The Reformers' view, which was based on the new Testament, went one step further than the Catholic position. They said that the



J.I. Packer

Catholic definition was inadequate. It omitted the idea of trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ. So the Reformers made it very clear that true faith is not merely the faith of assent to the facts of the Gospel. Nor is it a willingness to accept what the church believes. It involves a personal reliance on the Lord Jesus Christ. The Roman Church, on the other hand, isn't too worried about whether the individual understands the gospel – a nodding acceptance will do. I think I should also add that faith is not the ground of our justification. The reason why we are justified is that Christ has fulfilled all righteousness and has died an atoning death for our sins. He fully satisfied God's justice in the deed. Faith is simply the hand that takes hold of the gift. Faith is not a work which earns merit.

How does the Pauline view differ from some ideas of faith popular in modern evangelicalism?

I suppose that one of the most noticeable tendencies in modern evangelicalism is to ignore the content of the Christian faith. This sometimes happens in mass evangelism, but it can also happen in other settings too. People are called upon to "decide" for Jesus. But little is said about the person or work of Christ in the gospel presentation.

What these preachers forget is that saving faith must be based on content. Jesus is more than just a vague being to whom you commit your life. The Bible teaches that it matters profoundly what we believe. We are not justified by sincerity alone. We might be sincerely wrong. So knowing about the person and work of Christ is crucial if we are to exercise the sort of self-despairing faith that Luther says we need. Again, I'm concerned when I hear evangelicals talking about faith as though it simply means agreement to doctrine. Faith certainly included believing in God. But the demons do that too, as James reminds us (James 2:19). It's one thing to believe in God; it's another thing to believe him so that we trust him with our lives. It's the idea of self-despairing faith in Christ that evangelicals must affirm.

What is the relationship of works to faith?

Of course, there is a sense in which the gospel calls us to obedience. We are meant to repent and believe in Christ. But the Bible never sees this as a meritorious act. In this sense, good works play no part in our justification. However, the apostle Paul does teach that works are important in the life of the believer. They are not meritorious, but they are the fruit and signs of justification. The believer cannot earn salva-



John Calvin

tion by works nor can he gain final acceptance on the day of judgment. But works follow on as the fruit of a believer's faith.

Can Christians find assurance?

Yes, they can. The Bible calls us to make our salvation a matter of certainty. (2 Peter 1:10) The primary way to find assurance is to look to Christ. If we are distressed by our spiritual state, then we must consider him. He alone is the object of faith. He is the Saviour. It is Christ who brings us to God.

What spiritual effect will the doctrine of justification by faith have in the believer's life?

I think the main effect will be one of tremendous joy. It's a wonderful thing to wake up each day and realise that although I'm an unworthy sinner, nevertheless, I am accepted in Christ. Further, I don't have to work for my acceptance. Life is not about keeping God happy by performance. It gives me enormous joy to know that the most important person in the universe accepts me as I am because of the merits of Jesus Christ credited to me. Again, it's an amazing relief to know that God has dealt with all my sins and faults. He's taken my guilt away. I am accepted in Christ. I know that if I were to die tonight, I would go to be with my Lord in heaven.

What will happen if the church loses the doctrine of justification by faith?

The first thing that will happen is that the Church will no longer have a gospel to declare. There will be no good news.

Second, believers will lose their sense of assurance. We will wonder if we have ever done enough to please God. "Are we good enough?" we will ask.

On the other hand, if we believe this doctrine, it will have a significant impact on our lives. First, we will have peace with God. This means that we will be able to approach God as a friend. Second, it also means that we will have a totally different attitude to sin. When I think of all that God has done for me in Christ, I should hate sin with all my heart. When I reflect on what it cost the Son of God – damnation upon the cross, punishment



Martin Luther

in body, mind and spirit – I should loathe sin with every part of my being. When I know that I have been justified by grace through faith, I should delight in obeying the One who loved me and gave himself for me.

What developments in this doctrine cause you alarm?

I am alarmed at the way Evangelicals are co-operating with Roman Catholics in evangelistic projects where the aim is to present the gospel to people. If we cannot agree on the way in which a person is made right with God, how can we have an authoritative gospel to preach?

I cannot see how we can meaningfully join with Catholics in such an important enterprise when we are not agreed on the most fundamental matters. Of course, that doesn't mean that we cannot join with Catholics, or even Muslims for that matter, on other issues like abortion. There are some social issues where Catholics and Protestants can speak with a united voice. But we cannot compromise the gospel. If we are going to preach the truth to an ungodly world, we must not compromise it in the first place. People often fail to remember that the Reformers could have very easily joined up with Rome in the 16th century to fight Islam. But they didn't. They wouldn't compromise the gospel. Luther refused to enter any alliance where the doctrine of justification by faith was compromised. And we ought to be glad that he made his stand.

Otherwise, the truth might have been lost to us.

Should evangelicals be trying to find more common cause with Roman Catholics today?

I think it is good that evangelicals and Catholics already agree on many things. For instance, we share a common Bible storyline, we are opposed to pluralism and we think of salvation in reasonably similar ways. But all this was true for Luther and Calvin too at the time of the Reformation. They agreed with Catholics on the doctrines of the Trinity and the person and work of Christ in an age where many people were questioning these things. However, they refused to compromise what they believed was the essence of the gospel – the doctrine of how a person is made right with God.

Why are people like James Packer and Charles Colson urging religious cooperation with Roman Catholics?

I think they believe that a united Christian front against secularism will yield more results in the modern age than our own individual efforts. They think there is room for cooperation with Catholics who have a high view of the Bible, God and Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, they haven't been able to get around the problem of Rome's denial of the Pauline doctrine of justification. That issue won't go away. I think I should also point out that Protestants in countries such as Spain and Portugal, where Roman



Tom Wright

Catholicism is the dominant religion, are amazed at Packer's stance. They find it incredible. They see only too clearly the spiritual and cultural impact of denying justification by faith. These people experience the religious superstition, idolatry and darkness that inevitably follow where justification by faith is denied.

Some scholars today say Luther misunderstood the gospel and sent the Church down a false trail on justification.

You are obviously referring to scholars who belong to the "New Perspectives on Paul" group. This term owes its origins to James Dunn, who was referring to a landmark book by the scholar E. P. Sanders called *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*. Sanders claimed that Luther misunderstood first-century Judaism as a legalistic religion based on the idea of earning merit with God through keeping the Law. He said Luther failed to realise that Paul was trying to counteract a fiercely nationalistic religion which sought to confine God's grace to those who had the covenant signs of the Jewish faith. According to Sanders, first-century Jews did not really believe that salvation was by works. Consequently, Luther's doctrine of justification is based on a misunderstanding of the spiritual problem that was troubling the Jews. Tom Wright, a leading evangelical scholar, is now promoting this new perspective on Paul which challenges the Reformers' understanding of justification by faith. But not everyone agrees with this new perspective. For instance, Don Carson has shown that there are elements of merit theology in first-century Judaism. And the evidence for this works-based salvation can be found in Ephesians and the Pastoral Letters, as well as in Romans and Galatians. Personally, I think Wright is wrong in his assessment of Luther. Luther did understand the problems of first-century Judaism,



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Applications close on Friday 29 September 2000

Reformed council meets in Indonesia

and he rightly identified Paul's doctrine of justification by faith as the solution.

Alister McGrath has suggested that the Reformation teaching on justification by faith needs modification today. Does it?

No, I don't think it does. McGrath seems to be agreeing with Tom Wright in his desire to reassess the doctrine of justification by faith. He agrees that there is a biblical concept of justification, but he sees no developed doctrine of justification by faith in Paul. He thinks the Reformation doctrine of justification is too narrow; it is not elastic enough. He wants to expand the concept of justification to include regeneration and sanctification in line with Augustine. He thinks the Council of Trent's definition of justification is "brilliant".

Further, he has said that he believes that we should move away from the forensic language of the 16th century because it is not sufficiently attuned to the modern world. Frankly, I can't understand his position. Courtroom imagery is very much a part of life in today's world. Lots of movies are based around courtrooms, trials and judges' verdicts. I cannot see that the legal imagery in the concept of justification is irrelevant to a modern audience. We all understand it.

Why is McGrath going in this direction? One can only guess. I know he is interested in ecumenism and the bringing of churches together. Perhaps he would like to see Protestants and Catholics in one church. But it must not be at the expense of justification by faith.

What doctrines do Roman Catholics still hold that deny the doctrine of justification by faith?

They still believe that some Christians, like Mary, have done so many good works that they have earned excess merit with God. All these works are stored in the "treasury of merit" and can be given to other believers. This doctrine is still taught in their recent Catechism. The Church also teaches that Christians can obtain indulgences for sin. And the teaching about purgatory is still in force. It's all in the latest edition of the Catechism.

Are you sure about indulgences?

Yes, I am. Recently Rome has been offering plenary indulgences to faithful Catholics to mark the new millennium. You can get full remission of sin and escape purgatory if you go to Rome on pilgrimage or to some other recognized Catholic pilgrim sites. You can also obtain a plenary indulgence at the moment by giving up smoking. The whole system is rather farcical in the way it treats sin.

*Rev Philip Eveson is principal of London Theological Seminary and author of *The Great Exchange – Justification by Faith Alone in the Light of Recent Thought*.* ap

The General Council of the Reformed Ecumenical Council met in Yogyakarta, Java, in July. The hosts, the Javanese Christian Churches and the Central Java Indonesian Christian Church, ensured that there was time to allow assembly members to enjoy cultural visits.

All went smoothly apart from the first day, when the outgoing President, Dr Henk De Waard, had to field questions from 18 reporters such as "why did you decide to hold the Assembly in Indonesia in the present political climate?" Sundays were very interesting and very full, with some participants going to four different churches and eating four or five times!

The PCA was represented by Bruce Christian as Moderator General, John Nichol, Allan and Mairi Harman, and David Assender as a youth delegate. David was accompanied by his wife Tanya and 18 month old Abigail. It was no understatement to say that Abigail was the star of the show. On the second week Robert Benn joined the proceedings and was very much at home.

One of the main advantages of attending such an assembly is meeting others from diverse backgrounds and countries, and thereby being able to pray more effectively for others. There were more than

190 people at Jogja from 37 countries.

But one area that continues to cause concern became evident during workshops in the second week. During the first week, while the papers read were on the whole good and biblical, there seemed to be much less evidence of biblical teaching in the workshops. No longer was the emphasis on Jesus as the only way by which one can be saved, instead it was on "multi-faith" and "dialogue". Dialogue seemed to incorporate talking without witnessing, and some participants recalled how they were asked to pray in a multi-faith situation and were expressly told not to mention the name of Jesus. This they seemed to think was quite in order.

The Australian contingent and others tried to tell them otherwise. Some others did not speak out publicly, but were quick to shake our hands afterwards and tell us that they agreed with us.

It was great to talk to delegates like those from Myanmar or north-east India, who are carrying on very clear witness to Christ in hostile situations. Member churches in Central Africa were well represented, and clearly they now have very able younger leaders.

Mairi Harman



Speakers sit beneath the banner proclaiming the council theme

Hunger in Myanmar

Stuart Bonnington recently returned from Myanmar (Burma) where he represented the Australian Presbyterian World Mission.

He taught from 2 Timothy to Christian people both old and young. A clear focus in the faith of those he met was the theology of the Westminster Confession, and he heard reliable reports of large numbers of people turning to the Lord Jesus Christ in country areas and of new church planting work in Yangon and in other parts of the country.

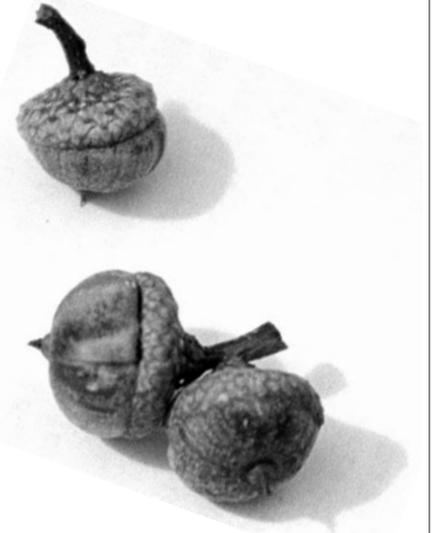
Stuart reports: There are a number of churches emerging which are trying to be faithful to the Bible. The size of the Christian church in Yangon may be a surprise to some. I have a copy of the 1999 Yangon Church Directory before me – it lists 259 Protestant congregations and 43 Bible schools in a city of 2 million people, not a bad ratio when placed alongside other nations in this part of the world. The Baptists are particularly numerous and prominent, as one would expect given the apostolic labours of Rev. and Mrs. A. Judson.

There would be around 10 faithful Reformed-Presbyterian congregations in Yangon, one or two with 100 or more in

regular attendance, but most smaller. Growth seems to be slow but steady. I preached in one congregation where the week before, a wonderful baptismal service had been conducted. The Bible schools are varied in theological outlook – most are conservative and some quite large. Others are clearly Reformed. I met a number of visiting Christian teachers, good men some Calvinistic, who were lecturing to classes of up to 300 students each day from 9am to 9pm, such was the hunger for the Word of God!



A small group of worshippers in Yangon



Planting God's garden

It's about now that many consider their gardens.

Some may care to plant the following varieties:

Plant three rows of squash

1. Squash gossip.
2. Squash criticism.
3. Squash indifference.

Plant three rows of peas

1. Purity.
2. Patience.
3. Perseverance.

Plant six rows of lettuce

1. Let us be unselfish and loyal.
2. Let us be faithful to duty.
3. Let us search the Scriptures.
4. Let us not be weary in well doing.
5. Let us be obedient in all things.
6. Let us love one another.

No garden is complete without turnips

1. Turn up for church, prayer meeting and Bible study.
2. Turn up with a smile, a prayer and a word of cheer.
3. Turn up with determination to do your best for God.

After planting, pray that you may grow in grace and in love and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

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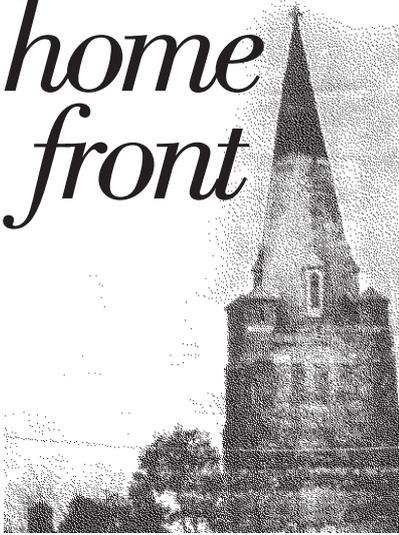
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home front



NSW Assembly

The 2000 NSW assembly elected **Charles Pass**, minister at Peshurst, as its moderator. The assembly also congratulated the **Rev. R. N. Riek** on reaching the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the ministry and **Mr G. Paton** of Toukley on reaching the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the eldership, and welcomed seven new ministers: **Rev. P. Harris** (Grenfell), **E. Hukkinen** (Westlakes Home Mission Station), **S. J. M. Kim** (Ho Ju Young Rak, Korean), **R. J. O'Brien** (Armidale), **M. Powell** (Wee Waa), **J. N. Read** (Chatswood) and **L. G. Sims** (Walcha).

In matters involving Government, the assembly commended the Federal Government's drug offensive and disagreed with the NSW Government establishing supervised injecting rooms as intended. It called on the Federal Government to proscribe the mandatory sentencing laws in the Northern Territory, and advised the NSW Parliament that the Bible sanctions the use of corporal punishment in the discipline of children.

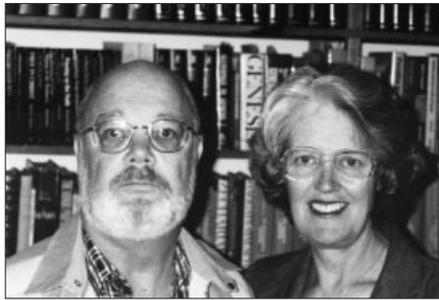


Newly elected moderator Charles Pass

Logan's Indian appointment

Dr George Logan, pastor of the Wynnum Presbyterian Church, has been appointed Australian Coordinator and Visiting Professor of Practical Theology by the **Presbyterian Theological Seminary, India**. He has also been appointed Professor of Pastoral/Practical Theology of both the **Reformed Theological Seminary in Yangon, Myanmar** and the **Reformed Presbyterian Church of Myanmar**.

Further, he has been for the past four years the Australian Field Director for the **Whitefield Theological Seminary** in Florida, USA and is the Vice-President of that Seminary for Theological Education by Extension to cover India and Myanmar. The above are all "honorary" positions.



George and Lucille Logan

Timor turmoil

Rev. Robert Benn, director of **Australian Presbyterian World Mission**, has just spent three weeks in East Timor before attending the Reformed Ecumenical Conference at Jogjakarta in Java.

He reports: While in East Timor I attended the Assembly, taught English (good ulterior motive – getting to know 25 students, speak plenty of Indonesian, teach Catechism, Luke's gospel, and English Christian songs!), spent good time with the Commission of Assembly and many, many hours talking to leaders, turning their attention to the Scriptures and praying with them. The result is that:

- We are sending a surveyor in to study ways and means of helping in rebuilding schools (Scotch College),
- We are inviting an experienced Indonesian missionary from Melbourne to go in as soon as she can in 2001,
- We expect to send short-term English teachers,
- We helped financially to provide transport and accommodation for ministers and home missionaries to attend the assembly,
- We provided computer, printer, and amplification equipment for assembly,
- We are invited to look for a youth worker for the main church, Hosana ... must speak Indonesian, or be willing to learn,

- We anticipate that two young ministers will come here for spiritual refreshing and English studies through our Sydney PTC in 2001.

Both church and nation face a challenge that would make you wilt. Where can they begin, with a nation and church shattered and much destruction? The Protestant Church had 35,000 members last year, this year 15,000; 32 ministers last year, now 12.



Jorge Lievano, Coorparoo, with two scholarship recipients in Dili



Opening service of the Dili Assembly

New web sites

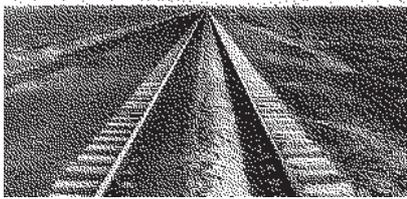
The Presbyterian Church in Queensland now has various web sites. Visit the Presbyterian Church of Queensland site at www.pcq.org.au, the Presbyterian Youth Queensland site at www.py.pcq.org.au, and the Presbyterian Christian Education site at www.pcq.org.au/pce/. These sites are only new and will be updated frequently over the next few months.

Queensland patrols

The **Presbyterian Inland Mission's Pastor Bill Gray** led in prayer at the opening of Beef 2000 in Rockhampton, the first time the Church had been asked to attend. Plans are already under way to have a larger impact next time.

Terry and Judy Sadler's presence was missed at the recent PIM conference as both have suffered some serious health problems over the past months. Please continue to pray for their recovery. Prior to Terry's illness he had the privilege of arranging for the baptism of a new believer during a station service. She is very excited about making a public profession of her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Her husband has also become a believer but was baptised as an infant.

across australia



MERF – Australia

Rev. Les Percy, coordinator of **Middle East Reformed Fellowship Australia**, visited Egypt, Khartoum and Nairobi before attending the MERF's international council meeting in Larnaca.

Mr Percy is encouraged by the commitment of believers in the Middle East and North Africa to outreach, but is shocked by the lack of resources and the difficulties that the Church faces. Vital needs are to equip the next generation of leaders and to encourage the church. Two of the most pressing difficulties are Islamisation in the education system and emigration from the region.

At MERF-Australia's annual meeting, **Rev. Graham Nicholson** was appointed chairman, **Rev. Lindsey Timms** vice-chair-

man, **Rev. Paul Seiler** treasurer, and Les Percy secretary.

IVF debate

Brian Houston, president of the **Australian Christian Churches** released a statement on IVF treatment for single women and gay couples, commending Prime Minister John Howard on his stand on behalf of the needs of the unborn children.

"While our society has numerous single parents who are doing an admirable task in bringing up their children, we believe every child deserves the opportunity to have a father and a mother in shaping their life," Mr Houston said.

"The family is and always has been the nucleus of society and of every culture all over the world."

Amber light on greens

A new report by conservative thinktank the **Centre for Independent Studies** warns that churches should be very careful of over-involvement with the environmental movement. The report, *Beyond Romanticism: Questioning the Green Gospel* argues that extremist environmental thinking is becoming commonplace in some Christian circles. "This view is giving nature an exaggerated place in the Christian understanding of the world. In some instances it verges on pantheism and paganism," says author **Samuel Gregg**.

Mr Gregg says churches have failed to recognise several areas in which they could be critical of the environmental movement. "Arguments often put forward by environmentalists, for example that we need to halt or stabilise world population growth to protect the environment, are frequently based on outdated and questionable premises," he says. "For too long, many in the churches have been silent in the face of some of the more outrageous anti-human proposals advocated by environmentalists."

Jewish evangelism

The Jewish people are the oldest non Anglo-Celtic immigrant minority group in Australia. Eight Jewish convicts arrived at Sydney Cove with the First Fleet in 1788. Later, a total of 800 Jews were transported, and by 1830 there was an organised Jewish community in Australia.

In the past five years there has been a continuous flow of Jews from South Africa, Russia and the Ukraine, and some from Israel. The official estimate is a Jewish population in Australia of between 110,000 and 120,000 people, mostly in Melbourne and Sydney. About 0.2 per cent of these Jewish people believe in Jesus.

Celebrate Messiah Australia is a mission organisation on the cutting edge of Jewish evangelism. Its director, **Lawrence Hirsch** reports: "In the past three to four years we have seen more than 120 Jewish people come to faith in Jesus. When God is active, so is opposition. In the last few

Cooloola Christian College Gympie

Applications are invited from suitably qualified and dedicated Christian teachers for the following position to commence in 2001.

English teacher – Secondary

The College is a ministry of the Baptist, Church of Christ, Wesleyan Methodist, Presbyterian Churches of Gympie.

Closing Date: 4:00pm Friday Sept 8, 2000

Application packages are available from the school office

months, we have begun to see organised opposition to this work.”

The Australian Jewish News reported earlier this year that the Jewish community had organised a taskforce to combat evangelism of Russian Jews. Mr Hirsh says opposition has also come from Christians who believe that Jews don't need Jesus to be saved. Celebrate Messiah is hosting a missions conference in Melbourne next month called *To the Jew First in the New Millennium*” (See advertisement, page 2).

world news



Cuba's Christians grow strong

Cuba's Christians are tough, lean and zealous, according to church leaders, due to decades of persecution. Ordinary Christians are taking the good news of Christ to homes, hospitals, schools and prisons. The new government openness to Christianity is encouraging, but they still discriminate against churches.

Sri Lanka prepares for persecution

In Sri Lanka, 220 pastors met in early June for a conference devoted to preparation for persecution of the country. Although Christianity is only 0.5 percent of the population of 19 million, the churches have been growing rapidly. It is partly a result of this growth that 34 churches have been burned down in the past two years.

Captives released

In an Ethiopian prison 10 people have become Christians. Preaching and sharing the *Jesus* film has led to nine prisoners and even a policeman becoming Christians.

More Indonesian violence

Muslim bomb attacks have injured 33 people, and destroyed two churches in Medan, Sumatra. Official figures claim the death toll in Maluku Province is now 3000. Unofficial figures claim at least 10,000 have died and as many as 300,000 have been forced to leave their homes and country.

In Ambon, the bombing of two residences of Mobile Brigade Troops has led the Mobile Brigade to withdraw completely. Christians fear that more Christian villages will be bombed with the village of Passo a likely target of Jihad Muslims. Many Christians continue to flee but this is very dangerous because of sniper fire and bombs.

Christian books in China

Christian books are rare in China, but a town in Southern China has a bookstore with a number of Bibles, Bible story books and books from Hong Kong. *The Voice of the Martyrs* has funded, published and carried these books into the province.

Volgograd boat song

A second chapel boat is about to enter the service of the Orthodox Church in Russia. The chapel boat has been renovated by the international Catholic Charity Aid to Church in Need. The chapel boat will carry a team of priests and minister to communities along the banks of the Don River, near Volgograd.

Breaking the silence on AIDS

Dr Sekai Shand from *World Vision* recently attended the International AIDS conference in Dublin, South Africa. Dr Shand said “In Africa, 34.5 million people are too poor to afford available treatment. The most vulnerable are women and children”. She appealed to Australian Churches to support the fight against AIDS through provision of adequate and affordable drugs.

New Testament for Vietnam

The Voice of the Martyrs is supporting the printing of the Mnong New Testament. VOM will use money from its Bibles for Captive Nations fund to support the first printing. There are about 70 Mnong churches in Vietnam but few pastors, and they are under constant threat and most have been jailed at some time.

Chinese ministry continues

In China Pastor Li continues in ministry despite having been put in prison. The

meeting at Hua Du cannot continue but many house churches continue to meet despite constant threat from authorities. And in Beijing, hundreds of new believers have been baptised in a river near Beijing by Pastor Allen Yuan.

Campus Crusade succession

After nearly five decades of leading one of the world's largest international ministries, **William R. Bright**, founder and president of **Campus Crusade for Christ International**, announced the man chosen to succeed him as president – **Steve Douglas**. Bill, who has worked with Steve over the past 30 years, said he counted it a privilege to see such a strong and devoted man succeed him as president.

Film notches 600

The 600th translation of the *Jesus* video was completed recently. The **Kiyombe** people, who live in the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), will hear the gospel of Luke in their own language for the first time. The Kiyombe people speak a language for which no printed Scriptures – not even evangelistic materials – exist. **Paul Eshleman**, director of the **Jesus Film Project**, expects the video will be available in 700 languages by 2001. He says that on average a new translation is completed every three to four days.

Apartheid in Pakistan

General Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's military dictator, has created an apartheid system, distinguishing Muslims from non-Muslims. He has re-instated provisions of Pakistan's suspended constitution that will allow Muslims to subjugate Christians and other non-Muslims. General Musharraf succumbed to demands from Muslim extremist groups by announcing that his regime will restore and enforce procedures of Pakistan's constitution that had not been enforced by Pakistan's previous governments.

Free: 51.8 million Bibles

Last year, the 220,000 Gideons distributed 51.8 million New Testaments and Bibles world wide – the largest number in its century of ministry. The organisation was founded in 1899 by a group of traveling salesmen in the USA. Today the Gideons are represented in 173 countries. The Bibles, produced in 79 languages, are especially familiar to travelers because they are found in hotel rooms all over the world.

MAF aircraft robbed

On July 10 Missionary Aviation Fellowship pilots Tom Blacklock and Scott Gamiandu, and cabin attendant Luke Meiko, along with three passengers, were robbed at gun point while they were preparing to depart from Garaina airstrip, in the Morobe Province of PNG.

The MAF staff are based at Goroka and were not harmed, nor was the aircraft damaged.

Porn pushes Net

Pornography is the motor of the Internet, according to the information service Media Tenor. British studies show

that in 1998, about \$US1 billion were spent at pornographic sites. For the year 2003 a turnover of more than \$3 billion is expected. Other Internet sites did relatively little business in 1998. Online games constitute some \$57 million, sports news \$25 million, and music sites \$8 million dollars.

Laotian Christians' dilemma.

Laotian Christians are being forced to deny their faith by government officials. Officials detained 12 Christians and forced them to sign an affidavit recanting their faith.

Indian persecution

Many attacks have been reported of Christian workers in India. The Voice of The Martyrs reports that Ashish Prash, a young evangelist in Punjab State who worked for Compass Crusade showing the Jesus film, was stabbed to death on June 11.

Baptists meet in Cuba

The Baptist World Alliance met in Cuba and brought with it great encouragement for evangelism. More than 4000 Baptists met in a sports ground to hear preaching, sing, and claim the island for Jesus. Billy Kim, the new BWA president said "pray for Cuba every day that this nation will be evangelised and through it all of Latin America".

Berlin: cult capital

The German capital Berlin is developing into a cult centre of European significance, with more than 500 religious groups and fellowships now found there. An indication of the existence of numerous religious small groups is the enormous growth of esoteric shops in former East Germany, where religious items such as magic crystals and tarot cards sell very well.

EHC conference

In Colorado Springs, USA, Every Home For Christ is holding its National Conference "Completing the Commission 2000." The aim of the conference is to highlight its global progress in sharing the good news. Their goal is to reach every home in the world with gospel by 2010.

Year Book Updates

General Assemblies Committees – Victoria

Page 79

Maintenance of the Ministry Phone: Work: (03)9887 8533 Home: (03) 9803 6715
E-mail: jhs@searlecomputer.com.au

Directory of Churches – New South Wales

Page 106 **Bowenfels**, PO Box 3031, South Bowenfels NSW 2790

Page 109 **Drummoyne**, Minister: **Rev Craig R Tucker** was inducted to the pastoral charge on June 29, 2000 (see page 208)

Page 114 **Korean, Rainbow** 203 Marsden Road, Carlingford NSW 2118 delete parish of Plumpton, demitted June 12, 2000

Page 122 **Terrigal**, PO Box 733, Terrigal NSW 2260

Page 122 **Tocumwal**, Phone (03) 5883 1283

South Australia

Page 139

Naracoorte Minister: **Rev Rudi Schwartz** (08)8762 1035

Victoria

Page 148 Kerang (V3) PO Box 828 Kerang VIC 3579

Directory of Ministers

Page 161 **Barwise**, Colin Edward 18 Miranda Circle Annandale QLD 4814
Home: (07) 4728 4224 Office: (07) 4752 2508

Page 163 **Broadwater**, Donald Email: broadwater@one.net.au

Page 164 **Bruce**, James – deceased

Page 166 **Chang**, Philip B 70 Darley Street, Killarney Heights NSW 2087

Page 167 **Clark**, Percy (Pat) M – deceased

Page 167 **Clements**, Stuart J – Minister Emeritus

Page 172 **Elliott**, James McDonald Ph/Fax: (02) 9706 3499

Mobile: 0414 453 935 Email: elliotjim@hotmail.com

Page 180 **Johnson**, Victor J Fax: (02) 6785 0174

Page 190 **Milne**, Douglas J W 49 Worthing Ave East Burwood VIC 3151
E-mail: djwmlne@netspace.net.au

Page 193 **Newell**, George A I PO Box 5221 East Lismore NSW 2480

Page 195 **Oh**, Andrew 8 Coles Street, Jesmond NSW 2299 (02) 4950 9850

Page 196 **Pass**, Charles R Fax: (02) 9580 2247

Page 201 **Schwartz**, Diederick (Rudi) R Church St Naracoorte SA 5271 (08)8762 1035

Page 202 **Sims**, Lyle (Kathie)
22 Friarbird Cres, Glenmore Park NSW 2745 (02) 4733 5413

Ordnained and inducted into Walcha Parish June 3, 2000 (see page 124)

Page 206 **Thatcher**, Darrell B c/- 11 Hackett Road, Dalkeith WA 6009

Page 208 **Tucker**, 63 College Street, Drummoyne, NSW 2047 (02) 9181 2185

Page 209 **Vanderwert** Gerald M 26 Snow Gum Road Doncaster East VIC 3109

Page 211 **Whitney**, Peter James 70 Ellen Street Woody Point QLD 4019
(07) 3284 2578 Email: pwhitney@star.brisnet.org.au

Page 212 **Woods**, John R 138 William Street Earlwood NSW 2206 (02) 9521 2361
Email: bejow@usa.net

Licentiates

Page 222 Sims, Lyle delete (add to page 202, see above)

To have and to hold

No, says John Piper, possessions are not the secret.

Consider a few startling facts: Fact 1: During the 1980s the Irish had half the income and purchasing power of the West Germans. Yet year after year (according to national polls), the Irish were happier.

Fact 2: People on Forbes's list of wealthiest Americans reported only slightly greater happiness than other Americans; 37 per cent were less happy than the average American.

Fact 3: (In 1992) compared with 1957, we have twice as many cars per person; we have microwave ovens, color TVs, VCRs, air conditioners, answering machines, and \$12 billion a year of brand name athletic shoes.

Nevertheless, in 1957, 35 per cent of Americans told the National Opinion Research Centre they were "very happy". In 1991, with doubled American affluence, 31 per cent said the same.

To judge by soaring rates of depression, the quintupling of the violent crime since 1960, the doubling of the divorce rate, the slight decline in marital happiness among the marital survivors, and the tripling of the teen suicide rate, we are richer and unhappier. How can we avoid the shocking conclusion: Economic growth in affluent countries gives little boost to human morale.

These facts are less shocking when compared with the truly stunning stories about God's people who have learned that "a man's life does not consist in the abun-

IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD



dance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15).

For example, Richard Wurmbrand tells the story of a family among millions in Sudan where the Muslim majority want to impose Islam on the Christians. Some Christian parents said to their small child, "We will be deported for our faith and will die of starvation if we maintain it, but do not mind. We will be crowned martyrs in heaven." Then this child went to other children and gave them his "toys". (He had never had what we call a toy, but simply a ball of rags on a stick which he "rode" like a horse.) He said, "I do not need these anymore. In heaven I will have toys better than these."

Having is simply not the key to happiness. The biblical Proverbs make the point again and again. We must be wired to dis-

believe this, or God would not insist on it so often.

"Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it" (Prov. 15:17).

"Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice" (Prov. 16:8).

"It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud" (Prov. 16:19).

"Better is a dry morsel with quiet than a house full of feasting with strife" (Prov. 17:1).

"Better a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is perverse in his ways" (Prov. 28:6).

"Happy is he who is kind to the poor" (Prov. 14:21).

"Happy is he who trusts in the LORD" (Prov. 16:20).

It is a great mercy that having does not make us happy, for if it did we would be hopelessly deceived into thinking that things are God. As George MacDonald said, "Happily for our blessedness, the joy of possession soon palls." When it does, it may be that by grace we will follow the apostolic example and "look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).

This excerpt is taken from A Godward Life (Multnomah Press, 1997). Reprinted with permission.

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To God be the glory

Terminal illness highlighted the beauty of a minister's faith.

James Montgomery Boice, the noted pastor, teacher and author, was diagnosed with an aggressive liver cancer on Good Friday this year. He died on June 15. He was ministering within his pulpit within two hours of receiving the diagnosis. On May 7 he gave this short address to his congregation at Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia.



James Montgomery Boice

I do want to bring the call to worship this morning. But before I do that, I thought you might be interested – and it might be helpful to all of us – if I took a moment to fill you in on some of these medical problems. There are several reasons for that. You need to know it, and I covet your prayers. But also all kinds of rumors have been circulating around and, in fact, around the world. We're getting e-mail from practically everywhere, and some of the reports are quite bizarre.

Let me just give you a summation of what has happened. I had been feeling quite good until recently. But about the time of the PCRT's, I was not feeling well. And when I came back from Chicago, I went to the doctor and had a number of tests. And the bottom line of that is that they diagnosed liver cancer.

Then it takes a little while to figure out exactly what kind of treatment you need. I have consulted a number of eminent physicians – C. Everett Koop, of course, who has been a family friend for at least 30 years, another man at Mayo Clinic, who providentially had come through here to meet me just a few weeks before. He's the man that screens everything out there and gets patients into the hands of the specialists.

So I feel that I have very good guidance, and the bottom line of the treatment is that I'm at Fox Chase Cancer Center. I'm in the care of a man named Dr. Paul Engstrom. And what I am receiving at the moment, beginning last Thursday, is standard chemotherapy for cancer. It's hard to tell where that comes out. Liver cancer is a very serious thing. They do get response from treatment in a percentage of cases, but it's relatively small. And as far as I can tell, we're doing the best thing we can.

A number of you have asked what you can do, and it strikes me that what you can do, you are doing. This is a good congregation, and you do the right things. You are praying

certainly, and I've been assured of that by many people. And I know of many meetings that have been going on.

A relevant question, I guess, when you pray is, pray for what? Should you pray for a miracle? Well, you're free to do that, of course. My general impression is that the God who is able to do miracles – and he certainly can – is also able to keep you from getting the problem in the first place. So although miracles do happen, they're rare by definition. A miracle has to be an unusual thing.

I think it's far more profitable to pray for wisdom for the doctors. Doctors have a great deal of experience, of course, in their

expertise, but they're not omniscient – they do make mistakes – and then also for the effectiveness of the treatment. Sometimes it does very well and sometimes not so well, and that's certainly a legitimate thing to pray for.

Above all, I would say pray for the glory of God. If you think of God glorifying himself in history and you say, where in all of history has God most glorified himself? He did it at the cross of Jesus Christ, and it wasn't by delivering Jesus from the cross, though he could have. Jesus said, "Don't you think I could call down from my Father ten legions of angels for my defence?" But he didn't do that. And yet that's where God is most glorified.

One other thing many of you have done has been sending cards, and I want to say how much I appreciate that. My wife and I have been reading them all. There are far more than I would ever have believed could come. One person in the church said that he has taken out a special prayer concern for the postman that delivers the cards that he won't develop a hernia, and I think that's thoughtful. Many prayers should be made along that line.

I think, although I want to assure you that I'm reading the cards, I don't envision ever being able to answer them all. And then some of you who are in a position to do so have said, "We would like to be of help in any way we can." And many have been already. Again, we're overwhelmed with offers. We'll never be able to take advantage of them all, but we appreciate all of those offers.

If I were to reflect on what goes on theologically here, there are two things I would stress. One is the sovereignty of God. That's not novel. We have talked about the sovereignty of God here forever. God is in charge. When things like this come into our lives, they are not accidental. It's not as if God somehow forgot what was going on, and something bad slipped by. It's not the answer that Harold Kushner gave in his book, *Why Bad Things Happen to Good People*. God does everything according to his will. We've always said that.

But what I've been impressed with mostly is something in addition to that. It's possible, isn't it, to conceive of God as sovereign and yet indifferent? God's in charge,



On purpose

*It is God who provides life's meaning,
says William Lane Craig.*

but he doesn't care. But it's not that. God is not only the one who is in charge; God is also good. Everything he does is good. And what Romans 12:1 and 2 says is that we have the opportunity by the renewal of our minds – that is, how we think about these things – actually to prove what God's will is. And then it says, "His good, pleasing, and perfect will." Is that good, pleasing, and perfect to God? Yes, of course, but the point of it is that it's good, pleasing, and perfect to us. If God does something in your life, would you change it? If you'd change it, you'd make it worse. It wouldn't be as good. So that's the way we want to accept it and move forward, and who knows what God will do?

I do want to say one thing about my symptoms. My chief symptom is fatigue. I'm very, very tired. And what I'm trying to do is retain as much strength as I can. And the reason I mention that right now is that I'm going to slip away during the middle hymn and go home. So if I do that, don't think, "he's passing out." It's something that has been planned beforehand.

Now our call to worship: I'm going to read from 1 Chronicles chapter 16:

"Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among the peoples. For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy is his dwelling place. Ascribe to the Lord, O family of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength, ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come before him and worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness. Tremble before him, all the earth!"

*Dr Boice's speech can be heard at the website of the Tenth Presbyterian Church,
<http://www.tenth.org/boiceupdate.html>* 

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If death stands with open arms at the end of life's trail, then what is the goal of life? To what end has life been lived? Is it all for nothing? Is there no reason for life?

And what of the universe? Is it utterly pointless? If its destiny is a cold grave in the recesses of outer space, the answer must be yes – it is pointless. The litter of a dead universe will just go on expanding and expanding – forever.

And what of man? Is there no purpose at all for the human race? Or will it simply peter out someday lost in the oblivion of an indifferent universe?

The English writer H. G. Wells foresaw such a prospect. In his novel *The Time Machine*, Wells's time traveler journeys far into the future to discover the destiny of man. All he finds is a dead earth, save for a few lichens and moss, orbiting a gigantic red sun. The only sounds are the rush of the wind and the gentle ripple of the sea. "Beyond these lifeless sounds," writes Wells, "the world was silent. Silent? It would be hard to convey the stillness of it. All the sounds of man, the bleating of sheep, the cries of birds, the hum of insects, the stir that makes the background of our lives – all that was over."

And so Wells's time traveler returned. But to what? To merely an earlier point on the purposeless rush toward oblivion.

When as a non-Christian I first read Wells's book, I thought, "No, no! It can't end that way!" But if there is no God, it will end that way, like it or not. This is reality in a universe without God: there is no hope; there is no purpose. It reminds me of TS. Eliot's haunting lines:

This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.

What is true of mankind as a whole is true of each of us individually: we are here to no purpose. If there is no God, then our life is not qualitatively different from that of a dog. I know that's harsh, but it's true.

As the ancient writer of Ecclesiastes put it: "The fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the

same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. All go to the same place. All come from the dust and all return to the dust" (Eccles 3:19-20).

In this book, which reads more like a piece of modern existentialist literature than a book of the Bible, the writer shows the futility of pleasure, wealth, education, political fame, and honor in a life doomed to end in death. His verdict? "Vanity of vanities! All is Vanity" (1:2). If life ends at the grave, then we have no ultimate purpose for living.

But more than that: even if it did not end in death, without God life would still be without purpose. For man and the universe would then be simple accidents of chance, thrust into existence for no reason. Without God the universe is the result of a cosmic accident, a chance explosion.

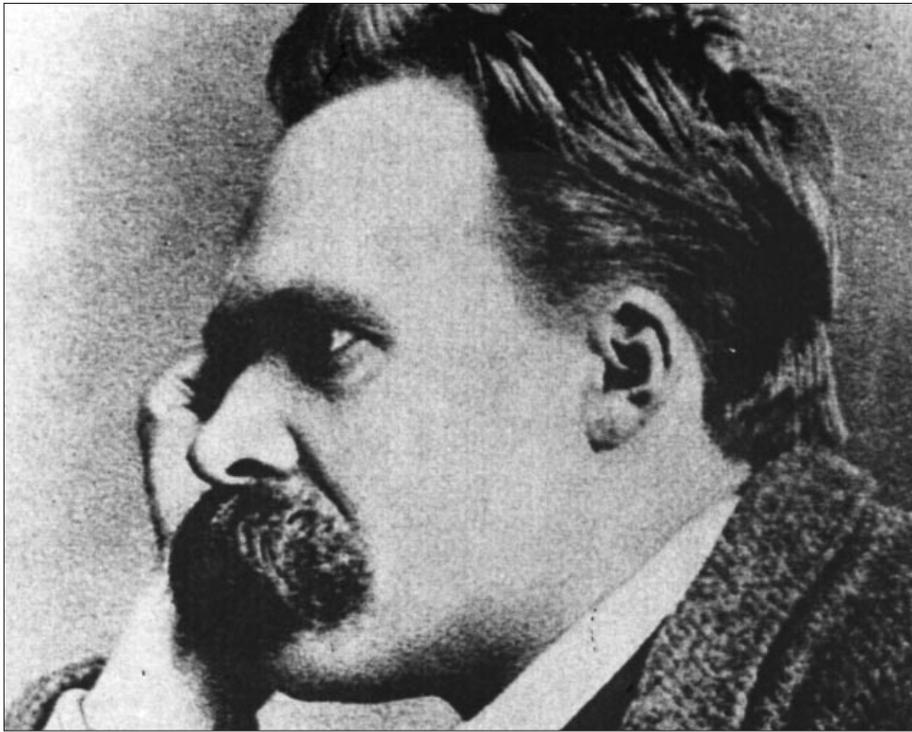
There is no reason for which it exists. As for man, he is a freak of nature – a blind product of matter plus time plus chance. Man is just a lump of slime that evolved into rationality. There is no more purpose in life for the human race than for a species of insect; for both are the result of the blind interaction of chance and necessity.

What is true of the universe and of the human race is also true of us as individuals. Insofar as we are individual human beings, we are the results of certain combinations of heredity and environment. We are victims of a kind of genetic and environmental roulette.

Psychologists following Sigmund Freud tell us our actions are the result of various repressed sexual tendencies. Sociologists following B. F Skinner argue that all our choices are determined by conditioning, so that freedom is an illusion.

Biologists like Francis Crick regard man as an electro-chemical machine that can be controlled by altering its genetic code. If God does not exist, then you are just a miscarriage of nature, thrust into a purposeless universe to live a purposeless life.

So if God does not exist, that means that man and the universe exist to no



Friedrich Nietzsche

purpose since the end of everything is death – and that they came to be for no purpose, since they are only blind products of chance. In short, life is utterly without reason.

Do you understand the gravity of the alternatives before us? For if God exists, then there is hope for man. But if God does not exist, then all we are left with is despair. Do you understand why the question of God's existence is so vital to man? As one

writer has aptly put it, "If God is dead, then man is dead, too."

Unfortunately, the mass of mankind do not realize this fact. They continue on as though nothing has changed. I'm reminded of Nietzsche's story of the madman who in the early morning hours burst into the marketplace, lantern in hand, crying, "I seek God! I seek God!" Since many of those standing about did not believe in

God, he provoked much laughter. "Did God get lost?" they taunted him. "Or is he hiding? Or maybe he has gone on a voyage or emigrated!" Thus they yelled and laughed.

Then, writes Nietzsche, the madman turned in their midst and pierced them with his eyes.

'Whither is God?' he cried, 'I shall tell you. We have killed him – you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What did we do when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night and more night coming on all the while? Must not lanterns be lit in the morning? Do we not hear anything yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? ... God is dead ... And we have killed him. How shall we, the murderers of all murderers, comfort ourselves?'"

The crowd stared at the madman in silence and astonishment. At last he dashed his lantern to the ground. "I have come too early," he said. "This tremendous event is still on its way – it has not yet reached the ears of man." Men did not yet truly comprehend the consequences of what they had done in killing God. But Nietzsche predicted that someday people would realize the implications of their atheism; and this realization would usher in an age of nihilism – the destruction of all meaning and value in life.

The end of Christianity, wrote Nietzsche, means the advent of nihilism. This most gruesome of guests is standing already at the door. "Our whole European culture is moving for some time now," wrote Nietzsche, "with a tortured tension that is growing from decade to decade, as toward a catastrophe: restlessly, violently, headlong, like a river that wants to reach the end, that no longer reflects, that is afraid to reflect."

Most people still do not reflect on the consequences of atheism and so, like the crowd in the marketplace, go unknowingly on their way. But when we realize, as did Nietzsche, what atheism implies, then his question presses hard upon us: how shall we, the murderers of all murderers, comfort ourselves?

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Movie Watch

X-Men

Reviewed by Bryson Smith



I was raised on Marvel Comics. Captain America, Iron Man, Spiderman, Thor, the Hulk, Daredevil, The Fantastic Four; these were the heroes that I grew up with. It was therefore with a mixture of anticipation and dread that I took my seat in the theatre to watch *X-Men*. Anticipation because I was about to reacquaint myself with some of my childhood heroes. Dread because I feared the movie would go the way of all previous superhero movies – dud!

I was right on both counts.

X-Men takes you into the not too distant future when humankind has reached the next level of evolution. Powerful human mutants are now appearing. And I mean powerful! Some mutants have enormous physical strength, others can bend metal objects at will, still others can control the weather. Having all these mutants now appearing on the scene whips the general public into a mild panic. Mutants are seen as freaks to be treated with fear, suspicion and antagonism.

The adverse public reaction to them polarises the mutants into two main groups. One group led by the evil Magneto reacts by declaring war against humankind. However another mutant group, led by Prof Xavier and his X-Men, honourably seek to protect the very public who treat them so poorly.

The good news about *X-Men* is that it's not nearly as bad as the Superman or Batman movies. And it's not just that the special effects (\$75 million worth!) are better, the characters are also more multi-layered. For example, the main character of the movie is a mutant named Wolverine played by Australia's own Hugh Jackman (if you've seen Jackman in *Oklahoma* it's virtually impossible to take him seriously in the role). Wolverine is a brooding, moody sort of guy who's constantly having a really bad hair day. He's an anti-hero

who isn't so much interested in helping the general public as he is in coming to terms with who he is.

This complexity to the character helps lift the movie above your average super hero flick where most of the issues are seen in black and white. Even the villainous Magneto is not without some shades of grey. Himself a victim of the Holocaust, it's not hard to see why Magneto would react so harshly to the public's prejudice and hatred of mutants.

Unfortunately the bad news about *X-Men* is that the potential of the movie is crushed under the weight of Hollywood science fiction predictability. Everywhere you look it's shiny metal and black leather. There's hardly a primary colour to be seen. Genuine chemistry between the characters is sadly lacking and every female to grace the screen is toned, firm and beautiful (why is it there are no fat mutants?). I had expected so much more from the director Bryan Singer. Singer's other movies (eg *The Usual Suspects*) had given me hope that *X-Men* might be less cliched than it was. But alas, ironically it seems the bigger the budget the smaller the creativity.

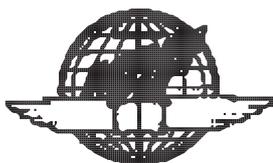
X-Men is an M-rated movie with the usual mix of excessive violence and sexual tension and innuendo (at least there are no sex scenes). From a Christian perspective, the main redeeming feature of *X-Men* is that if you watch it with non-Christians there is good opportunity to turn the post-movie conversation to Jesus for the way



people treat mutants in the movie is very similar to the way Christ was treated in Palestine. The public couldn't control Jesus, they couldn't tame him or domesticate him and so they treated him with suspicion and fear.

I guess in one sense then the *X-men* are a (very) pale reflection of Christ – seeking to help a world which actually rejects them.

Bryson Smith leads the ministry team at Dubbo Presbyterian Church., NSW. 



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Up front

On music and ministry, grace and glory.

Dear “em”,
So they’ve asked you to join the “worship team” at church. Does that mean you’ll be leading the singing from now on? Just kidding! I know you prefer playing the saxophone. It’s funny though, how people seem to equate worship with music. It’s great to praise God in song, but there’s more to worship than that. In one sense, we are to worship God in everything we do!

Some churches split their meetings into the worship time and the teaching time. It’s really an artificial distinction. Singing can be a great means of teaching God’s word. I wonder how much of our theology we pick up from songs.

I reckon when you’re old and grey (and still playing your sax) you’ll still remember some of those songs you learnt back in Sunday School. I don’t just mean *I’m in the Lord’s Army* or *God said to Noah!* As for preaching, anyone who thinks preaching isn’t worship hasn’t been paying attention. As we hear God’s word proclaimed, it should prompt us to praise God and live for him.

You asked for a few tips on fitting into the music team. First, see your role as a servant. I know you’re a good musician. God wants you to play skilfully. Psalm 33:3 says: “Sing to him a new song; play skilfully and shout for joy.” Even more important than that is a servant heart.

I know a lady who never claimed to be a great musician but she was a great servant. She was appreciated by the congregation



Colin Spragg

and those who led the services. They knew her heart was in it. She was faithful and gracious in what she did. She prayed for the preacher. She cared about the other people. She played in a way that helped people sing from the heart. It wasn’t all about what she was doing or her glory. That’s the attitude Jesus wants his disciples to have. If you want to be great in the kingdom of God you’ve got to be a great servant. That’s more important than being a great musician.

A second tip is to work on relationships in the team. Musicians can be sensitive people. It comes with the territory! I can just hear you saying: “it takes one to know one”. Sensitivity enables a musician to express the mood and texture of a piece of music. It’s a great strength but a terrible master. For some musicians, criticising their playing is like telling a mother her baby is ugly! They’re emotionally attached. You may know the feeling. So you need to work at relationships within the team.

Sometimes ego and sensitivity go hand in hand. To borrow a line from the ’70s, ego can be a dirty word. I know you play out of a sense of enjoyment but some people are trained in performance. Playing in church isn’t about performance. That makes it hard for those who are accustomed to that. It’s best to see yourself as an accompanist rather than the star performer. Work at bringing out the best in others through your playing.

So work on relationships in the team. Encourage others to see it as a team – a partnership in the Lord. Be involved in a small Bible study group with others in the team. Be accountable to each other. Spend some time just hanging around together as well. Make sure you pray together.

My third and final tip is: keep things in perspective. Even sax players get their share of the limelight. You will be up the front. That brings its own temptations. Even when you’re not up the front you’ll still be on show. Your attitude and example will influence others, whether you like it or not. For some reason, young people and older ones too, aspire to being up the front. It’s that thing about 15 minutes of fame. I don’t know whether I’ve had my 15 minutes yet but I reckon it’s over-rated.

Perhaps the desire to be up the front has something to do with acceptance and self esteem. Remember, your value in God’s eyes doesn’t depend on being up the front. If you keep that in mind it will help you take the knocks when they come, and they will. I always feel sorry for drummers. They may be cool but everyone has an opinion on whether they play too loud or not! So keep things in perspective. God loves you whether you’re up the front or not. You know God loves you because he sent his Son to die for you. God’s grace isn’t limited to the members of the “worship” team.

I’m glad they’ve asked you on to the team. You have a lot to offer. It’s great to be involved. Music makes an incredible difference to a church service. God wants us to use our gifts and talents. Whatever you do, do it all to his glory.

Regards, tdd.

Colin Spragg is Presbyterian Youth Training Development Director (NSW) 

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Mum, you're needed

Parents may get discouraged, but they're still the best thing for their children.

An eight-year-old boy got up as he did each morning, helped his younger brother and sister get dressed, served them their cornflakes and took his mum a cup of tea in bed. Only this morning he could not wake her. Frightened, he ran to neighbours for help but it was too late. His mother was dead from an overdose of sleeping pills.

Barbara Holbrow, retired Children's Court Magistrate from Sydney, tells this story in her book *Kids, Loving For Life*. The Brown family came before her regularly – the mother, Gina, and her three kids. Gina seemed to need the formality of the court every now and then to focus her attention on taking care of her three kids. "I'd talk to Gina and give her a gentle stir about the responsibilities of motherhood, and then she'd toddle off like a large mother duck, her brood in tow ... I liked her kids ... They would sit there quietly as I spoke to their mum, taking it all in ... All reports indicated that Gina was not a threat to herself or her children and, given time and direction, could be an adequate mother."

Neal was the eldest and helped his mother take care of two younger children. He had assumed a lot of responsibilities that his mother should have taken on. After she died, he blamed himself for his mother's death. He had deep feelings of depression about having let his family down. The psychologist was worried about Neal committing suicide, even though he was now being cared for by competent foster parents.

Mrs Holbrow says how angry she felt at first. How dare Gina abandon her family? "But when I calmed down, I thought, well, maybe Gina thought her family would be better off without her. Maybe she could see her inadequacies ..."

Neal's mother meant more to him than



Marion Andrews

her inadequacies. It did not matter to him that he was doing her jobs. She was still his mother, his security, his focus. Without her, he was lost and confused, no matter how well others took care of him and his siblings.

Little Neal Brown's family circle was imperfect and incomplete but still better than any alternative. Dr. James Dobson gives four reasons to account for this:

"Firstly, children thrive better when they enjoy one-on-one relationships with adults." This applies to children of any age. Researchers in Australia interviewed 1100 adolescents (1996) and found that lack of emotional support by parents, including physical availability, leads to adolescent delinquent behaviour. They "found no indication at all that having more money or belongings made the teenagers any less inclined to delinquency".

"Second, you can't pay an employee enough to care for children like their own mothers do. Children are a mother's passion, and it shows." In sickness and in health, mother is the best carer. Susie was a young school teacher I knew. She was convinced that this "lovely Christian lady" she hired would do a much better job of raising her child than she could. That's just not true.

"Third, research verifies that kids at home are healthier than those who are regularly exposed to diseases, coughs and sneezes from other boys and girls." Our grandparents had strict quarantine rules for

infectious diseases. Perhaps we have swung too far the other way and rely on antibiotics to help us and our children "soldier on".

"Fourth, families should be there when the first step is taken and the first word is spoken and when fears and anxieties arise." These are surprise rewards – not to be missed. My daughter has been walking by herself for many years now, but it still makes my heart glow when she rings for a bit of comfort or reassurance.

Then there is the imperative of the spiritual dimension. Little children need their own parents to bring them to Christ. They won't be young for long and they won't listen with open ears and soft hearts if we leave it too long. Who else is passionate about their eternal welfare?

Parents have opportunities to lead children gently, at any time of the day or night, to the feet of Jesus, and parents will have to give account before God for training their little ones in righteousness.

Tina and Rob Mackay were missionaries in a Third World country. When their first child was born, the mission supervisor urged them to hire a local nanny so that Tina could get back to ministry. Tina and Rob objected. They noticed some other missionaries' children who had learned local superstitions and stories of idols and spirits from their carers before they knew the stories of Jesus. The Mackays knew that they had a work of ministry to do with their little son before he would be strong enough to confront the surrounding culture. This principle applies as much in Australia as any other country.

No one is more passionate, more qualified or better fitted than a mother, especially with the support of a father, to provide all that children need. Never think, like Gina or Susie, that they'd be better off without you. ap

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letters



A meeting of minds

As a novice observer to the recent Presbyterian Assembly of Queensland, may I make a few observations?

1. I have attended many church services in years gone by but never one where the whole congregation was *all* ministers and session clerks. It was a moving experience.

2. The tone of the meeting that I attended was truly godly. People made their point, some disagreed, but the matters were dealt with in a tone of love, i.e. love does not insist on its own way.

3. I recommend that the ordinary church member go along to an assembly at least once in your life. I hope that you find it a memorable experience and as uplifting as I did.

*Peter Thomson,
Goondiwindi, Qld*

Jewish indeed

Rev. Lou Ollett writes (*AP*, Letters, May): "Let's be honest and admit the Bible, our Bible, is a Jewish Book from cover to cover." It was interesting to read such a comment and to note that it came from a Presbyterian source.

This understanding of the scriptures should be at the forefront in all serious bible study. Unfortunately, I have rarely heard the Jewish nature of the Scriptures mentioned in Bible studies or from the pulpit.

Biblical scholars are now exploring the Jewishness of the Bible and their writings are very illuminating. In the past, we have generally looked at the Bible with Western culture and interpretation. We need to be aware of Jewish Midrashic style of writing and how it has shaped the narratives in the Scriptures.

Particularly is this so when we come to the New Testament and especially when we consider the synoptic Gospels. We need to keep in mind the sequence of the new testament writings. Paul was the first writer in the New Testament and was followed by the Gospel writers quite some time later. We tend to read Paul's letters through the eyes of the Gospels (reflecting the chronological order of events) rather than the other way about.

Christianity's roots are firmly in the Jewish system, much more than is commonly realised. Yes indeed, the Bible is a Jewish book.

*Glen Witham,
Hamilton, Vic*

Young readers

I would like to encourage Dr Woods (*AP*, August) that there are teenagers who read *AP*. I know of young people as far apart as Roma in Western Queensland, Tamworth in NSW, Cleveland near Brisbane and Ashfield in Sydney who read *AP* – and even keep each other up to date on what's in it. They may not let their parents see them reading it very often, but believe me, they do!

*Marion Andrews,
Tamworth, NSW*

Nearly right, for once

I could not believe it. What a breath of fresh air for ordinary people like myself. I sometimes wonder if we have lost the art of communicating with Christian dads, mums and youngsters ... you know ... the ordinary garden-variety ... those of us in Presbyterian church-pews.

So when I emptied my letter-box and the front-cover of the August edition of our national magazine promised – so I thought – some articles addressed to teenagers, our tender treasure, I could not wait to take the unusual step of ripping off the plastic cover, sit down and read the mag before dealing with my other mail.

I read every article, and again – as so often over the years – asked the same two questions: To whom were the articles addressed?

Who do contributors have in mind, when putting their learned fingers to their computer-boards? Clergy? Theological students? Professors? Lecturers?

As I said: What a breath of fresh air! Thank you, Glenn Samuel, for addressing my simple heart.

*Henk van der Pols,
Broadford, Vic*

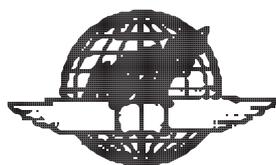
Issue to treasure

Thank you for the Tender Treasures edition of *AP* (August). The wholehearted loving perspective toward our teenagers in each of the articles surprised me.

I struggle to mother my three teenagers away at boarding school – saying "no" over the phone and the resulting tears is a horrible experience. So I feasted on the wisdom and experience of others in August's *AP*.

Distance precludes weekly attendance at church, so it is good to read the range of theological and practical articles in each edition. Thankyou again.

*Barbara Clark,
Roma, Qld*



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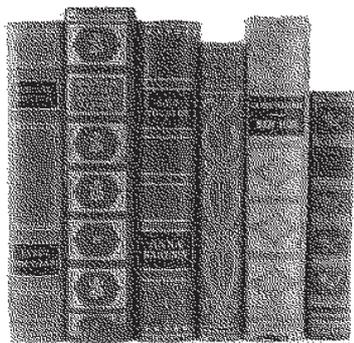
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books



The New Covenant – The Synoptics in Context

William J. Dumbrell
Singapore: Bible Society of Singapore, 1999
Reviewed by David Burke

This one-volume commentary on the first three Gospels is written for the serious-minded church member, along with theological students and graduates. It is the first of a projected series.

Dr Dumbrell taught Biblical studies at Moore Theological College & Sydney University's School of Divinity (Sydney), Regent College (Vancouver) and Trinity Theological College (Singapore). Dr Dumbrell holds that each part of the Bible should be read in the context of the whole and that theological context needs to be considered, as well as historical and linguistic matters.

A particular theological perspective shapes the commentary. Each section of the Gospels is set against the background of a Lord whose purpose is to gather an Israel to himself. As such, the whole Bible is visible in each of its parts and the kingly salvation of God gives a connecting thread.

The book comments on each Gospel separately and assumes limited familiarity with theological concepts and literature. It seeks to explain, rather than apply, the meaning of Scripture. Readers need to put some work in and the book will not suit those looking for exegetical fast food. However, those prepared to study to show themselves approved will be rewarded.

David Burke is minister of Orchard Road Presbyterian Church, Singapore

The King's Castles

Kitty Anthony
Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000
Reviewed by Peter Barnes

This is the story of Norman ('Normy') and Lily – brother and sister – and their adventures with the castle keep, the castle knight, the castle kite, and the castle king. It invites comparison with C. S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*, and that is not to its advantage.

The plot is somewhat lacking, the king is introduced too late in the story (there is no air of expectation of his coming, as there is, for example, when Aslan is referred to in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*), and the gospel is rather artificially tacked on at the end of the book. Finally, there are no memorable passages of purple prose, such as we find in Lewis' work.

All in all, it did not quite work for me, and I am sorry that it didn't.

Peter Barnes is books editor of AP.

Authentic Christianity: Sermons on the Acts of the Apostles, vol 1

Martyn Lloyd-Jones
Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1999.
Reviewed by Peter Barnes

This is the first volume in a projected series which will publish Lloyd-Jones' sermons on the book of Acts. To him, Acts told of unique events, yet the substance of it is repeatable. As such, the book is both descriptive and prescriptive, and so Lloyd-Jones always drew much comfort and inspiration from it as a book – what God has done in the past He could do again in the present and the future.

This is all done in Lloyd-Jones' inimitable style. There is a tendency to take a verse, and fly though related texts in the Old and New Testaments, and give an overview of Church History, but it is all helpfully and energetically done.

To Lloyd-Jones, "The message of Christianity is not about improving the world, but about changing people in spite of the world, preparing them for the glory that is yet to come". The greatest enemy of

true Christianity has always been religion – christenings, dignified marriage services, national days of prayer, ceremonial occasions, and the like. The doctor was a fierce opponent of Thomas Arnold's view that religion was "morality tinged with emotion".

No, it is truth on fire, with the glory to come ever in view. Politics, philosophy, psychology, morality and the like took second place to this all-consuming desire to see God in the face of Jesus Christ.

There is an error regarding the hymn with its lines Be Thou my shield and hiding-place. Its author was John Newton, not Philip Doddridge. But this is a minor blemish on a work which should do much to encourage and fortify Christians today.

Remember Him

J. W. Alexander
Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1854,
reprinted 2000.
Reviewed by Peter Barnes

This short work of 56 pages is full of warmth and spiritual discernment. It is especially written with the young communicant in mind.

Alexander writes simply, and is very direct in his applications without being heavy-handed and contrived. Reformed communions today are debating the warrant for admitting baptized children to the Supper. This work assumes the traditional Westminster view that the communicant professes saving faith in Christ. It manages to be delightful and challenging at the same time.

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Is my lifestyle justified?

To some people sunglasses have become an expensive fashion statement. However, to others they are just plain good sense because they shield the eyes from glare. Either way, they change the way we look at the world. They colour all that we see.

Justification is to a Christian life what sun glasses are to outdoor living. It is a doctrine that is to colour our whole life perspective. It is a doctrine through which Christians must view the world, and the life they live in that world. Sunglasses may be an option for the believer, but he can never view life apart from this pivotal doctrine of justification.

Justification concerns our standing and status before God. Calvin described justification as “the main hinge upon which religion turns” (*Institutes* III, 11, 1). Calvin correctly saw that unless we understand our relationship to God we will neither know the foundation upon which our salvation is built, nor will we know how to build our relationship with God. In other words, we will not know how we stand with God, nor how we are to live in God’s world.

Justification teaches us that though we are sinners, we are declared acceptable to God on the basis of the work of Christ for us. Jesus’ death on the cross is the means by which the righteous God is able to declare us, the unrighteous, righteous in his sight (Romans 3:21-26).

Such an acceptance is received by the believer through faith, which is the gift of God. Justification is the verdict of God the judge that we are in a right standing with him because of the work of his Son on our behalf. It is this great truth upon which the whole of our Christian life turns, and which should colour our living. How, then, should it affect our living?

Justification is a motivation for obedience and godly living. It should lead to our sanctification, which is the process of becoming more like Christ. Paul says in Romans 12:1 that we are, in the light of God’s mercy, to place our life totally at God’s disposal. The “God’s mercy” to which Paul refers is wide and deep but includes God’s grace by which Jesus died for us and thereby provided for our justification.



Paul Cooper

In the light of this mercy of justification, Christians are to serve with the gifts God has given to us (Rom 12:3-8); to love one another (Rom 12:9-13); to respond appropriately to persecution (Rom 12:14-21); to submit to authority and pay our taxes (Rom 13:1-7); to clothe ourselves with Christ (Rom 13:8-14), and to care for the weak (Rom 14ff).

If we are having difficulty with obedience, then we need to look once again at God’s justifying mercy in Christ. As we contemplate this truth, it is a motivating force upon the will of the believer. The gratitude that will flood our thinking when we correctly comprehend the justifying grace of God will compel us to obedience.

Justification also colours our own understanding of our performance as a Christian. Justification tells us that God chooses to regard us as what we are not. We are regarded as righteous, not because we possess a personal righteousness of our own but because God accepts Christ’s righteousness on our behalf.

With justification the slow and painful process of sanctification, becoming personally righteous, begins. We are, to paraphrase Luther, at one and the same time righteous because of Christ’s work for us, and a sinner. If you, as a Christian, experience the pull of sin and you fail to live always as God wants, then such an experience is normal. Our acceptance is, however, not based on our performance but upon the performance of Christ on the cross. So be encouraged, meditate on Christ and his work and continue to press on to be what we are in God’s reckoning but not yet in ourselves – righteous.

Justification tells us that our value to God as a person does not depend on what we do. God does not value us for our con-

tribution to his well-being nor on the basis of what we can contribute to our justification. On the contrary, Paul tells us that when we were powerless and ungodly Christ died for us. Furthermore, it was when we were enemies that we were reconciled to God. In short, “God demonstrated his own love for us in this; while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).

The doctrine of justification means that our status in God’s sight is something that is given from God and not something we have earned. The esteem in which God holds us, and thus the esteem in which we hold ourselves, is, and should be, grounded in the grace of God and not in our own achievements.

This is very liberating for the Christian. God is not a God who changes as we do. He has, as a reflection of himself and his character, fixed his love upon his people and this is a love which is undiminished and unwavering. God, through the doctrine of justification, is affirming that our value resides in him and not in ourselves and our performance. If this is the attitude of him on whom all things depend, then this is the only opinion in the universe that ultimately matters. For what shall it profit us if we should gain the esteem of the whole world, but not be esteemed by the living God?

Rev. Paul Cooper lectures in Practical Theology at the Presbyterian Theological Centre, Sydney. 

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A good sport

Heaven's perspective has neither hype nor horror.

The Olympic Games, which were abolished by the emperor Theodosius in the late fourth century, have been well and truly revived in modern times, beginning with the games in Athens in 1896. As anybody who has visited the planet recently knows full well, in the year 2000 they are coming to Sydney.

It is thus as good a time as any to ask what God has said on the issue of sport and games.

For some – modern Australians in particular – sport often takes on the dimensions of a religion. In fact, a few years back one Richmond fan had his ashes scattered on the half-forward line of Richmond's home ground. I've read that the hair of the boxer Les Darcy has been carefully preserved in a Sydney bank vault – like the relics of some medieval saint. In modern day Australia, Dawn Fraser or Greg Norman would be better known than Sir Howard Florey (who developed penicillin) or Rev. John Flynn (who did so much for the outback).

I think it was Rousseau who put forward the notion that sport develops character – a cliché which is widely accepted as a truth but which is surely somewhat tenuous. Sir Henry Newbolt waxed eloquent on the virtues of the captain placing his hand on the shoulder of the last batsman, and telling him "Play up! play up! and play the game!" Nowadays that seems corny and trite.

Sport does not seem to do much to develop character; it probably only reveals the character that was already there.

On the other hand, George Bernard Shaw, a socialist snob who mistook the Soviet Union for paradise, declared that "Games are for people who can neither



Peter Barnes

read nor think." Thomas Arnold, another earnest moralist, also thought that games were a waste of time, while George Orwell once described serious sport as "war minus the shooting".

The biblical position surely is that sport is simply sport. The apostle Paul occasionally draws on sporting imagery to make a point, as when he writes of the need for Christians to be self-disciplined, as are (in different ways) runners and boxers (1 Cor.9:26-27). The Christian is to press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil.3:14). As the athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules, so neither is the Christian (2 Tim.2:5). There is no hint anywhere that sport is intrinsically evil.

However, it is all a matter of perspective. We need to remember that the athlete competes to obtain a perishable crown, but the Christian for an imperishable crown (1 Cor.9:25). The award in the Isthmian Games which Paul had in mind was originally a pine, but by Paul's day it was probably withered celery, which sounds even less exciting than the duck corkscrew I won once at squash. Yet even the gold medal of more modern times cannot compete with the crown of life.

It is not only the prize which cannot compete with the Christian prize, but the activity too hardly bears comparison. "For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). Squash is okay – although Noel Coward said it was not sport but flagellation – but it is more important to study the Scriptures, to pray, and to be useful as a Christian.

It is that perspective which has led Christians down through the ages to seek to order their priorities aright. We all have heard of Eric Liddell who passed up his opportunity to win the 100 metres race at the 1924 Games because he refused to run in the heats as they were being held on a Sunday. Liddell went on to win the 400 metre race, but, more importantly, became a missionary in China, dying finally in a Japanese internment camp.

C. T. Studd was an outstanding cricketer, but left it all behind in order to serve Christ in China, India, and Africa. Studd's view was the unarguable one that "If Jesus Christ be God, and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for him!"

Sport is a poor religion, and it does not seem to do much for character either. Yet neither should it be demonised as something to be shunned as evil.

It has its place, but we are to ever remember what the true way and the true prize are all about.

*Run the straight race through God's good grace,
Lift up thine eyes and seek His face;
Life with its path before thee lies,
Christ is the way, and Christ the prize.*

Peter Barnes is minister of Revesby Presbyterian Church, Sydney, and books editor of AP.

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