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POLITICS

Blessed state: Charles Colson 4
Onward Christian Soldier: Jim Wallace 8
More salt please: Alasdair Webster 10

DEVOTION

Friends in high places: John Piper 12

NEWS

Home Front 13
Across Australia 14
World News 15

FAMOUS CONVERSIONS

Jonathan Edwards 17

ELECTION SPECIAL

Liberal Party 19
Australian Labor Party 21
Australian Democrats 23

CULTURE WATCH

Terror goes to Hollywood: Phil Campbell 25

PRAYER 26

BOOKS

James Forbes of Melbourne 27
A Sad Little Dog 27

LETTERS

Responding to the Culture of Death 27

ESSAY

Providence and pain: Peter Barnes 28

editorial

What is the role of the state? What is the extent of its power and responsibility? Do Christians have special duties towards government, and if so, what are they?

To answer these questions, there are several prior issues which we need to keep firmly in mind. The first relates to the human condition. Is man good or evil? If he is evil, is his condition hopeless? Or is he perfectible? And does his condition as an individual have any impact on his role in wider society?

Our view of the world and the presence of evil are also crucial issues affecting our understanding of the role of government. We are members of a fallen race and we live in an evil world. This means that Christians, particularly, must not overestimate the potential of government. While government may restrain or punish certain types of conduct, it lacks the power to change people fundamentally. Only the church has this capacity through the gospel.

It may therefore come as a surprise to realise that utopian tendencies still run deep in every generation. Political visionaries always have a ready-made audience which believes that society, being corrupt, must be purged and then moulded into the shape of some economic or social ideal. Whether it is a violent overthrow or a Christian "moral majority" capturing the vote is beside the point. The underlying belief is that society can be perfected through the political process.

Sadly, even a strong Christian population can succumb to this utopian delusion. Twice in the 17th century, Bible-believing Puritans who were notionally convinced of the gravity of sin tried to create a perfect Christian society – one in Britain, another in America. Although their ideals were lofty and their motives sincere, their failures were absolute and humiliating. They remind us that political processes and social engineering cannot solve society's deepest problems.

However, if Christians must renounce utopianism as a diversion from God's true work of reform, we still have a duty as citizens of the world to work through the state to advance the cause of justice and human good. We now face a federal election. To help you determine which government will pursue justice for all Australians, we publish an issue guide from the Coalition, Labor and Democrats.

Peter Hastie 

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Blessed state

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You played an important role in politics in the Nixon administration. What led you into politics?

Well, I've always had an interest in politics. I studied political philosophy as an undergraduate and did my honours degree in it. I also studied law. A number of years later, I came to Washington after I got out of the Marine Corps and began working in government. I became fascinated with politics, and ended up on Capitol Hill. I was the youngest administrative assistant to a US Senator at the time and ran his campaign in 1960. I was 28. Afterwards, I went back to practising law.

Around this time I developed a friendship with Richard Nixon, who was then Vice-President. He asked me to work with him on a number of things through the '60s – so I was in and out of politics while continuing my practice of law. And then, when he became President, he invited me to come to the White House to be his Special Counsel. I felt that that was my duty, so I went.



**Charles Colson
talks to
Peter Hastie**

But I also loved politics – I enjoyed the thrill and intrigue of it. I was also idealistic as well. I thought I could affect how people lived by exercising my influence as a political conservative on the processes of government. And so, to me, politics was a natural outlet for that idealism. But there was also the thrill of the hunt – the battles, and cut and thrust of politics.

What did you think you could achieve through the political process?

In those days, I was not just a conservative but something of a utopian, too. I really believed that if you could change the government, then you could also change how people lived. But now I realise that it works the other way around – people change how they live, and this changes the government. Government is more an

expression of the people, at least in a free society. And the law in Western-style democracy is certainly more an expression of people's values.

Anyway, I grew up as a political conservative in a fairly liberal time in American politics. And I thought at the time that this would be a chance to bring conservative principles into government. But it didn't work that way.

Of course, when I fell from power and ended up in prison, I also saw our administration tumble and collapse. I saw how fleeting the kingdoms of this world really are. It's one reason I have such a passion today for keeping my focus and allegiance to the kingdom of God. That allegiance must always have priority over our allegiance to the kingdoms of man. To learn how to live with this tension as a citizen in the city of God while living in the city of man is a tough balancing act. I wrote a book on this subject called *Kingdoms in Conflict*.

You've written that the Nixon

Administration was very vulnerable because it had several senior officials who didn't believe in sin. How did that affect decision-making?

Quite significantly. We had a couple of Christian Scientists in the White House at a senior level – notably Bob Haldeman and the late John Ehrlichman. They were the President's closest advisers during the months following the Watergate break-in and cover-up. And they couldn't see the reality of sin. And so, when they were confronted with evil, they didn't know how to cope with it. That's because they had first denied it in their own lives.

This is one of the problems that people face when they fall for the great myth of the 20th century – that people are essentially good. When you banish evil from the dictionary, you also eradicate the ideas of human sin and responsibility. You end up being unable to deal with evil when you encounter it at a personal level. And some of the people I worked with in the White House – Bob Haldeman in particular – were paralysed once they were faced with evil, because they didn't know how to cope with it. They didn't have the conceptual understanding.

How have you modified your views since those days?

Well, I hope they've been radically transformed since I turned to Christ. I now try to think as a Christian from a biblical perspective about all of life, rather than from a political perspective. I try to ensure that my biblical understanding informs how I think about politics, the family, culture, the work-place, music, art and many other things. When you have a biblical worldview it means that you should have a biblical understanding of all of life. And I don't think we do that very adequately in the Christian world. But I've tried to do it in my life and I've written about it, of course, in *How Now Shall We Live?*

What led to this profound change in your life?

Well, I was converted, of course, in my friend Tom Phillips' driveway in 1973. I've told the story in *Born Again*, which is 28 years ago. And that was a dramatic experience. I really came face to face with Christ. I realised who he is and I called out to him. I then asked him to come into my life. And he has, which is life-transforming.

I've discovered that the more you study Scripture, the more you realise that

you've got to think Christianly and behave Christianly in all of life – to be the salt and light. Christianity is not a private transaction. It has profound implications for your behaviour and for the culture around you.

Then in the '80s I began to study the late Francis Schaeffer quite closely. I also became increasingly interested in the former Dutch Prime Minister and Reformed theologian Abraham Kuyper. Presbyterians should know about both of them. Through their writings, I realised that Christianity has to be seen more in terms of God's sovereign authority over all of life. And so about 10 years ago I began talking a great deal about the importance of having a Christian worldview. And now, of course, my latest book, *How Now Shall We Live?*, which I co-authored with Nancy Pearcey, deals with that at some depth.

What is the role of the state? Should it take an interventionist role by helping certain groups or activities?

Yes, in some circumstances. The state is one of only three institutions ordained by God. These are the family, the church and the state. The state, or what we might call government, is ordained by God to preserve order, provide justice, and to restrain sin. These are its essential functions.

The Bible says that the state "wields the sword" for the protection of its people. Therefore, I believe in the classical Christian view of the state – that is, that the absence of government is worse than bad government. However, I believe that the government's role is limited. I believe in the concept of "sphere-sovereignty". This is the idea that Abraham Kuyper articulated. Actually, the idea of "sphere sovereignty" is really a Calvinistic concept. It's the notion that God exercises his rule over the created order through a number of different spheres – for instance, the spiritual, social, political, legal and economic to mention just a few, and that he does this through a variety of intermediate structures.

This means that the family and other institutions have their own distinct roles to play in society which government must not supplant. The government's job is to support these structures, not to take over all their functions. If the government did this, it would be stepping outside its sphere of sovereignty. Therefore, in my opinion, the totalitarian state or the modern "nanny state" are not biblical. The true function of government is to see that all

the other institutions are able to do their job.

Are most politicians too utopian in their hopes for political reform?

I think most politicians get affected by unrealistic hopes at times. Christian politicians have to fight the tendency constantly. Even they can get affected, but I think they fight it pretty effectively most of the time. Most of the men and women I know who are serious Christians have a pretty balanced perspective on what government can do.

However, many of the politicians who aren't Christians get carried away into thinking that government can solve all society's problems. The former President, Bill Clinton, was a prime example. He represented a group of politicians who believe that we can bring about

When you banish evil from the dictionary, you also eradicate the ideas of human sin and responsibility.

lasting reform by micro-managing tax-cuts, implementing new programs and creating all sorts of incentives and disincentives for change. It's a very utopian view of government. And it's not a realistic view. But it's the problem you face when you get the power – you hear the band playing "*Hail to the Chief!*", and so you start to get this inflated idea about your own ability to bring about lasting change.

Has the liberal dream of creating the great society been realised?

No, I think it's failed. And I believe it's failed for the very reasons I just gave you. You simply can't micro-manage human behaviour that way. The law is only a moral teacher; it doesn't change human nature at a fundamental level. Of course, government can restrain sinful behaviour and use force to do so. Government can defend and promote the common good, but government can't regulate how people fundamentally behave. Culture is more important in forming government than government in forming culture. Both forces are always at work in society at any given time. But I think the cultural one outweighs the political one. Of course, that doesn't mean that government doesn't have a very important role to play.

Is there anything wrong with the

notion of reforming society through government programs?

No, there are some things you can do through government programs that do improve a society's quality of life. Take the penal system, for instance. It would be wonderful if it reformed society, but it doesn't. It fails because it can't rehabilitate the offender at the deepest level. But it can restrain offenders to some degree. It does restrain; it incapacitates. So, there are some things that govern-

The true function of government is to see that all the other institutions are able to do their job.



John McCain

ment programs can achieve, but I think the mistake we make is thinking that government can do more than it can actually do.

What do you think is the most fruitful means of bringing about social renewal in our society today?

I think Edmund Burke was right when he said that the best way for bringing about social renewal was to reinvigorate the intermediate structures of society. That's why I'm supportive of George W. Bush's faith-based approach to social reform. Basically what he's saying is that instead of getting the government to bring about social change, we're going to allow all these people involved in the intermediate structures to do it. They're the ones best placed to change the culture and the moral climate.

This means getting people at the grass-roots active so that they can begin to own some responsibility for their neighbours and their needs. When you do this, you restore what is one of the most fundamental virtues in a free society, that is, civic duty or civic responsibility. People need to realise the importance of caring for one another's needs rather than waiting for somebody else to do it. Rather than writing a cheque, paying our taxes and letting the government do it, we should be doing it ourselves. And this ought to be something that the

church pursues aggressively by setting an example.

You've spoken frequently about the importance of duty, something lost on the present baby-boom generation. How fundamental is a sense of duty to good citizenship?

I think that a sense of duty lies at the root of good citizenship. Duty flows out of gratitude; and gratitude is the mother of all virtues. If you have a sense of gratitude for what God's done in your life, than you're going to serve God. If you have a sense of gratitude for living in a free country, than you're going to defend the freedom of that country. You will always do your duty for your country and for God so long as you are mindful of what has been done for you. Duty is simply the human response, out of gratitude, for what someone else has done for you.

For example, if you save my life when I'm about to step out on to the street by grabbing me and pulling me back, then I owe you my life. I now have a duty to help you. That's how we should respond to Jesus. We owe him our lives. Similarly, living in a free society means that I have a duty to protect it. Duty is the fundamental virtue of society.

Do you know people who embody this concept of duty?

Oh my, yes! One is a Catholic priest I met in 1991 in the Czech Republic called Vaclav Maly. The Communists defrocked him in 1981 for preaching the gospel. They made him work in the subway public toilets. But on Christmas Eve in 1989, when the crowds moved into the streets, they started calling "Maly, Maly!" He came up out of the subway to lead 800,000 people in what's called the Velvet Revolution against the communists in Czechoslovakia. Maly administered a service and preached full forgiveness to the communists. Hundreds came forward in repentance. When I told him what a hero he was to me, he said: "I'm not a hero. A hero is someone who does something they don't have to do. I just did my duty."

Another person I admire for his sense of duty is Senator John McCain from Arizona. During the Vietnam War, McCain's fighter plane was shot down and the North Vietnamese captured him. He was starved and tortured in the Hanoi Hilton and kept in a bamboo cage. Because his father was commander-in-Chief of the US Pacific Fleet, the

North Vietnamese offered to let him go. But his response, which he wrote for *Life* magazine, demonstrates his high sense of duty. This is what he wrote: "The way we got into prison wasn't because of God. It was because we were rendering unto Caesar what was Caesar's because our countries were at war. It wasn't right to ask God to free me. I thought I should leave that situation only if it was in the best interest of my country. In 1968, the North Vietnamese offered me the opportunity to go home. I had a broken arm and a leg I couldn't walk on without crutches, and I weighed about 100 pounds. I wanted to go home more than almost anything in the world, but our code of conduct says the sick and injured go home in order of capture, and there were others who had been there longer. I knew they wanted to release me because my father was Commander of US Forces in the Pacific. It would have given them a propaganda victory. I prayed for the strength to make the right decision, and I am certain those prayers have helped do what I had to do. I had to stay there."

I often run into many people who, out of a sense of duty, do what I consider heroic things. But it's not really heroism because it's just doing what you have to do. John McCain is a fine example.

President Bush plans to look to faith-based ministries to help with social problems. Is it dangerous for the church to collaborate with the state?

Yes. But the church has to collaborate with the state in many areas. It's a question of how you collaborate. For instance, it would be wrong for the church to compromise anything it believes in order to work with the state.

Does that mean in the appointment of people in its ministries?

Oh, yes!

So if the government says, "As a condition of delivering this system..."

Then you turn it down. We had that case in Michigan. We were offered a million dollars if we would take state funds to run an after-care program that was very successful. We were running it. And they wanted us to expand it. We had cut recidivism by almost two-thirds. And they said to us: "You can have a million dollars for your Prison Fellowship program but you can't have a religious test in hiring." We said, "Keep your million dollars." It can be dan-

gerous, just depending on how you do it.

How should Christians approach state-aid?

You've got to look at this issue at several levels. Most of the debate in America has centred on whether charities or Christian ministries should take money from the government. This is the first level of the issue. My answer to that is, "No, certainly not if there are any strings attached which compromise your position." But if there are no strings attached, then the government is simply buying your services.

In other words, at that point you're running a half-way house. It's a Christian half-way house. You're free to promote the gospel message in that half-way house because it belongs to you. Now the government wants to house people there because they have to. They're bound by legislation to assume responsibility for people. Fine! No problem, as long as they don't expect us to compromise our beliefs and standards.

I understand that the Salvation Army has been doing this in Australia, the USA and around the world for 150 years, and they're very successful. They had a budget last year of \$2 billion, and they take a lot of government money. But any time the government has come along and said, you have to do this or that to meet some staffing or personnel requirement, the Salvation Army has backed away and said: "Keep your money." They did it in New York. They turned down, I think, \$75 million in running shelters in New York. So, it's up to the church and each faith-based group to remain honest and not to compromise its own beliefs.

But if the government wants to borrow their services, that's fine. If we are doing a better job, for example, in reducing recidivism, and they want us to help them and are willing to pay because they see we've got the results, that's great. However, as soon as they start to tell us how we have to function, we won't do it. Our Christian integrity is on the line.

Is it right for a ministry like Prison Fellowship to seek government money?

I don't think, realistically speaking, that Prison Fellowship will ever be in the business of taking federal money because there is very little we would want to take from them. I mean, we run a ministry. It's an evangelistic ministry and it will stay that way. If we run prisons and facilities, we run them as Christian prisons. And if

they want to pay daily costs for our programs, that's fine. But I doubt that we're ever going to be in the business of taking much federal money.

The place where President Bush's initiatives are really important is in increasing the tax credits and deductions for charitable gifts. That encourages private giving. He also is talking about removing restrictions, which make it tougher for ministries to function. That's the next level.

The final level of the initiative for using intermediate structures involves the President advancing the notion of com-



George W. Bush

The church has to collaborate with the state in many areas. It's a question of how you collaborate.

munities having their own people to do this kind of work. In other words, the President believes that ordinary people should be getting in, rolling up their sleeves, and helping their neighbours rather than waiting for the government to do it. This is the most fundamental aspect of his faith-based proposal.

The core of the President's plan – and I have discussed this with him in the White

House – is to shift the responsibility for where social services are delivered. He wants to shift the delivery of social services from the big, "nanny-state" government back to local communities. And that's a profound change. Most people in this country have missed it.

In fact, all the discussion seems to involve quibbling over peripheral issues: should you take money, does it violate church and state? They're mere details compared to the major thrust of what the President is doing. They are concentrating on the peas and corn and missing the steak.

The President is saying: "Let's take the delivery away from the state and put them back where they work best – with the people through intermediate structures, faith-based ministries and community agencies that have proven track-records. This is a fundamentally conservative concept, but it's an important one. It has strong biblical support.

Charles Colson is the chairman of Prison Fellowship Ministries, an international organisation involved in Christian service to prisoners and their families. An award-winning author, his best-sellers include Born Again, Life Sentence, Loving God, Kingdoms in Conflict, The Body and How Now Shall We Live? In 1993 he was awarded the prestigious Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion.

Peter Hastie is minister of Ashfield Presbyterian Church, Sydney, and issues editor of AP.

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Onward Christian soldier

There is a just war, but there are rules.

How should Christians resist violent evil? Is it sometimes right to use physical force, or are we restricted exclusively to spiritual means?

Again, is it ever right for a Christian to go to war? Are there some wars that are “just”? This is an intensely personal question for me since I am a professional soldier and a Christian, and I am satisfied that the Bible provides sufficient support for the idea of a just war.

This explains why I’ve never experienced any conflict in being a soldier and a Christian. After all, John the Baptist didn’t tell the soldiers who came to him for baptism to stop being soldiers. He told them not to abuse their power. My confidence lies in the fact that I know Christ governs my Christian walk, and I trust that he will lead me only where he wants me to go.

Nevertheless, a Christian soldier is faced with a paradox. He must learn to exercise controlled anger in battle, and then be able to temper it with compassion afterwards. He has to be “salt” on the battlefield.

Take, for example, the notable Australian victory in the Vietnam War – the Battle of Long Tan. The Australians lost 17 men but the enemy lost more than 300. After it was over, an army chaplain found some of our men, still affected by the battle, treating the enemy dead disrespectfully. He intervened, helping them to make the transition from the necessary controlled anger of battle to a state of compassion. For me, this is an excellent example of one Christian soldier who was able to be the “salt” because of his very presence in the army.

There are, of course, examples of pacifism based in faith, which have produced some dramatic results. Occasionally pacifists justify their position by pointing out that through a policy of non-resistance, the early Christians overcame Rome. It’s true that many early Christians refused to fight against Rome. They exercised a passive resistance, putting their faith in God, and although it took some 300 years, the Roman Empire became Christian under Constantine.



**Brigadier
Jim
Wallace**

However, I must admit to some reservation in accepting this argument.

The pacifist must accept the proposition that if he will not engage the enemy in battle while the enemy is distant and the threat general, then he cannot suddenly compromise that belief when the threat is specific and aimed at him or his family. Any pacifist who is prepared to deny recourse to violent action when an enemy enters his home and threatens his family is certainly staying true to his pacifist principles. However, I doubt whether the majority of us could do it. Whether we physically resist evil as a natural reaction, or do so as a spiritual response, is difficult to know. We will probably only ever receive the answer in Heaven.

As for war, most Christians have accepted that war is an inevitable element of our fallen world. The best we can do, it would seem, is to apply Christian principles, morals and ethics, in an effort to ameliorate its effects. However this still leaves open the question of when is any war a just one?

Christians must first ask themselves whether the objective of the war is justified, and then, whether the war is being conducted in a just manner. Every conflict



must be judged on its own merits, because undoubtedly there are many instances when war is waged for less than good, let alone just, reasons. Where this is the case, the Christian is placed in a moral dilemma and one that only the conscience can answer. In that situation, and particularly because most wars are at least initially popularly supported, to decide not to go to war would require as much courage as fighting – if not more.

It is perhaps not surprising that the question of defining a “just war” is one that has perplexed even the ancient world. It was Cicero, a pagan, who prescribed a still useful list of the criteria for a just war. He said that the only just cause for war is the defence of national honour or safety.

He also elaborated a number of other conditions that had to be met for a war to be just. He insisted that war is a last resort when all negotiations fail; that it must be formally declared, in order to give due warning; that the purpose for war may not be conquest or power, but the securing of a just peace; that prisoners and all who surrender should be spared; and that only those who are legally soldiers should be involved (*De Republica* 3:22-29; *De Officiis* 1:1-12).

While few would argue with national safety as a criterion, national honour is more difficult. Honour at the national level is analogous to pride at the individual level. It is a major factor in some of the world’s most intractable and bloody conflicts, and something that the Christian must be able to see beyond in determining the justness of a war.

Cicero’s view that a just war should only be fought by soldiers also needs comment. In an ideal world that would be the case – though, of course, in an ideal world there wouldn’t be any war. Various circumstances – historical, political and geo-political – can cause civilians to become guerillas, or partisans, and it is difficult to say that such a war is by definition “unjust”. It might be that it’s quite just, but that at least one side doesn’t have the means to wage war in the conventional way. So it’s the old truism that “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter”.

However, war is covered by conventions set out by the UN and these are equally applicable to guerrilla warfare. Too often the guerrilla is willing to endanger the civilian population to win a military advantage. This is unacceptable. We are seeing this in Afghanistan now, and I've seen it at first hand in Southern Lebanon.

Terrorist organisations almost invariably hide their means of war among the civil population. In southern Lebanon, guns and headquarters were placed right up against schools and medical centres in the hope that this would save them from attack. The Geneva Convention stipulates that no military installations are allowed within a certain distance of any civilian facility. If both sides actually held to the Geneva Convention, then the conduct of war could be a lot more just. However, if even one side breaks those conventions, it's simply not possible to limit the effect of war to combatants.

At the other end of the spectrum of warfare, the issue of nuclear weapons raises a vexing moral issue. Should an advanced nation be denied the advantage of its industrial and economic strength in waging a just war, when the alternative is to sacrifice the lives of more of its sons and daughters?

The answer in both types of conflict lies in the concept of just war. If, as Cicero has stipulated, the object of war is not power or conquest, but just peace, then the means of waging war and the method of its conduct, become crucially important. Justice can never be achieved in peace if the memory of the conduct of the war fuels hate and a determination for revenge.

Throughout conflict, the objective of just peace must be upper-most in the minds of the combatants. We have already seen how easily the perception of a humiliating peace settlement led directly to World War II. In the conduct of war, this means that the principles of proportionality and discrimination must be scrupulously applied, even though they will never be as easy to guarantee in conflict as they are in civil law.

Sadly, the TV images of laser-guided munitions in recent conflicts have left the public with unreal expectations about just how discriminating military action can be. Technology is never foolproof. Its successful application depends on perfect information, which unfortunately is never available in war.

Therefore, the strategies employed in

conducting war are difficult to use to determine its justness, at either end of the spectrum of conflict. However, any side that compromises Cicero's injunction to spare prisoners and all those who surrender, automatically forfeits the moral high ground, such as it exists in war. The UN is pursuing war criminals from the recent Balkans' conflicts, not for the objects for which they fought, but for the lack of humanity they showed in the way that they conducted themselves.

Certainly I believe that to wage war against the Taliban is "just". They have used indiscriminate weapons and targeted them ruthlessly against an innocent civil population. While there may be some jus-



The question of defining a "just war" is one that has perplexed even the ancient world.

tification in their cause, given the years of neglect of the world's displaced and impoverished, their means are inconsistent with a just war. Their motivation is more ideology and hate than justice, and both sound military strategy and justice demand that the perpetrators of the terror be identified and dealt with.

Seeking to ensure that our object is

"just" demands that we do everything in our power to target only those guilty of this crime. We should not forget that the population of Afghanistan lives under both a spiritual and secular delusion. The control of information, both secular and spiritual, leaves them incapable of making right decisions. God loves each of them no less for this. Were it not for the accident of our birth in a "Christian" democratic country, we may well be in the same position ourselves.

William Temple, a former Archbishop of Canterbury, once said, "Our moral antagonism to the spirit of those who oppose us is so much mixed up with the emotional reaction of our offended self-concern that we are almost incapable of impersonal anger – the dreadful anger of perfect love at hate or selfishness." Nevertheless, it is this controlled anger which a Christian soldier must cultivate in war and which he must set aside in favour of compassion when hostilities are ended. The army needs Christian soldiers who, with God's help, can attempt this. In the end whether a war is just or not is determined both by its purpose or object, and the humanity with which it is waged.

Brigadier Jim Wallace AM has spent most of his army service in the SAS, rising to its commander. He commanded Australia's Special Forces for three years as a Colonel, and as a Brigadier commanded the Army's Mechanized Brigade in Darwin. He served with the UN in Lebanon and the Golan Heights, and was once captured by terrorists. He serves as a deacon of Hughes Baptist Church, Canberra. ap

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Christians have an active duty to get involved in politics.

In recent times it has not been uncommon to hear Christians and others saying Christians should not be involved with politics.

When Christians make these sort of claims, it's often not clear what they are trying to say. Do they mean that Christians shouldn't vote or hold political office? Or are they suggesting that Christians shouldn't support political parties or act as advisers to party leaders?

Of course, if this is the case, are they willing to concede a number of hidden assumptions that lie behind their position, namely, that the Bible has nothing to say about politics; that Christians are not suitable to govern a nation; that atheists, humanists and socialists make better political leaders; and that the Bible offers no advice to rulers and those in government? When Christians express sentiments such as these, they have a responsibility to make clear to the rest of us precisely what they mean.

In my experience, those who advance the proposition that Christians should not be involved in politics usually offer a number of well-worn excuses to justify their position. I must confess that I don't find them particularly convincing, especially when they seem to stand in contrast to Christ's clear command in Matthew 5:13-16 that we are to be shining lights and high-quality salt in all aspects of society. Let's look at some of these excuses.

First, some claim that religion and politics don't mix. However, the reality is that politics and religion are already mixed, whether we like it or not. Political systems are simply the expression of a culture's most deeply-held beliefs about human life and the means by which a society can best achieve its ideals in the realm



Alasdair Webster

of government. The question should rather be 'Which religious or ethical principle should form the foundation of politics?' If Christian values and principles do not form the foundation of politics, then rest assured someone else's values and principles will!

Second, some say you cannot legislate morality. But Charles Colson reminds us of an important truth when he says: "All law implicitly involves morality; the popular idea that 'you can't legislate morality' is a myth. Morality is legislated every day from the vantage point of one value sys-

The question is not whether we will legislate morality, but whose morality will we legislate?



tem or another. The question is not whether we will legislate morality, but whose morality will we legislate?"

Third, some suggest that politics is an inherently "dirty" game. This is not surprising in view of the fact that a considerable number of humanists, socialists and

atheists have applied their values as the basis of their legislation and behaviour while many Christians have made excuses as to why they (Christians) shouldn't be involved. As long as this continues, other "isms" will dominate political life, Christian principles will be watered down and assume second place, and politics will remain a "dirty" game.

David Holloway in his book *A Nation Under God* describes Lord Shaftsbury's experiences when he saw Christian principles and politics going hand in hand: "(Lord Shaftsbury), of course, saw these two things going hand in hand – politics and the Christian faith. He suffered for allowing his Christianity to affect his politics." Lord Shaftsbury was victorious as was William Wilberforce in his long political fight against slavery.

Fourth, some are adamant that you can't use the Bible to impose your ideas on those who don't believe it. The question is, if the Bible is not appropriate as a source of political and social policy, then who decides whose ideas and philosophy are relevant? It is certainly not out of order to seek godly wisdom when debating in Australian parliaments. The reason for this is that each day the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate offer prayer asking for Almighty God's blessing and directions to enable the Parliament to advance God's glory and enact legislation that will be for the welfare of all Australians. Here is an implicit recognition that our nation looks to the Bible as an authority for moral values.

Objectively, these values can be judged as desirable for the common good of society.

Fifth, some argue that Christians are called to preach, not to engage in political

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protest or to contest elections! The fact is, of course, that Christianity impacts every part of life, and a political campaign is an opportunity to declare the relevance of the Bible and its message for the prosperity and peace of the nation. John Eldredge, in a "Focus on the Family" publication called *Why You Should Be Involved*, says: "When our Christianity fails to address all aspects of life, it appears to the world too trivial to be true."

I will remember my own experiences as a Federal MP in the late '80s and early '90s when I was vice chairman of the newly formed National Parliamentary Pro-life Group. It was my task to introduce a Private Member's Bill to limit the public funding for "abortion on demand". At the time, there were about 90,000 publicly funded abortions a year.

I have to say that I was appalled by the unwillingness of some of my Christian colleagues to support the bill (mainly through fear of electorate backlash.) Even more concerning was the deathly silence of the majority of church leaders who had been well informed of the details. Sadly, it doesn't seem that much has changed today.

In many churches where I am invited to speak on 'Christians in politics' or on general moral and family issues, I am invariably told that "our society is going down the plughole". People ask: "What can we do about it?"

I have a stock answer: "Yes, society is going down the plughole. To find out why, the first thing to do is to put on your raincoat, your waterproof boots, trousers and sou' wester and go down the plughole into the 'S' bend. That's where you'll find all the churches and Christians!"

An impotent and decadent church always precedes a society into serious moral and social decline. The well-known words of Matthew 5:13-14 are relevant here: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything... You are the light of the world...let your light shine before men."

The important thing to note is that the call is not to promoters of evil in our society to "pull up their socks", but to God's inactive children (that's us) and his church (also us) to live distinctive Christian lives. The call is for us to get to know God in all aspects of his character. To get to know his holiness and compassion; to know his heart and his word; to begin to learn his compassion for the

world and to rise up, without excuses, and act accordingly.

If we genuinely "turn up our wicks and increase our saltiness in society" as this verse implies, then our presence will make a distinctive difference.

Should Christians be involved in government? Proverbs 29:2 says, "When the righteous are in authority, the people



When our Christianity fails to address all aspects of life, it appears to the world too trivial to be true.

rejoice but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn."

It seems to me that these words make it patently obvious that it is perfectly legitimate for Christians who are also citizens to be actively involved in the political process – in fact I don't think they have a choice. In my opinion, any

Christian who has the capacity to engage in political office and does not do so is not fulfilling his or her obligation as a Christian and a citizen.

Francis Schaeffer in *A Christian Manifesto* has some strong words: "A platonic concept of spirituality which does not include all of life is not true spirituality. True spirituality touches all of life; including things of government and law, and not just religious things."

US Senator William Armstrong is correct when he writes about Christian responsibility and public life: "I am convinced that only the Bible can provide the ultimate standard, the bench mark by which we may hold our public policy and our political leaders accountable. It is the only standard that has the authority, relevance, precision and power by which we may reform the thought life of this country. What is the battle plan if we are serious about doing something about pornography, drugs, abortion, and low ethics in high places? The plan is the Bible!"

Alasdair Webster was federal Liberal MP for Macquarie (NSW) from 1984 to 1993. He serves on many Christian organisations, and is an elder at Fraser Memorial Presbyterian Church, Springwood, Sydney. ap

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(Trowel & Sword, May, 2000).

Friends in high places

John Owen knew what it was to commune with God, reports John Piper.

Not many books have taken me deeper into fellowship with God than John Owen's *Communion with God*. It was written in 1657 by the greatest Puritan pastor-theologian of the 17th century.

J.I. Packer says, "For solidity, profundity, massiveness and majesty in exhibiting from Scripture God's ways with sinful mankind there is no one to touch him." It is true that Owen is not easy to read, but Packer is right. "The reward to be reaped from studying Owen is worth all the labour involved."

Owen defines communion with God like this: "Our communion, then, with God consisteth in his communication of himself unto us, with our [return] unto him of that which he requireth and accepteth, flowing from that union which in Jesus Christ we have with him" (Works, 2.8).

One unique and remarkable thing about this book is Owen's careful illustration of how Christians may have communion with each of the three divine Persons in the Trinity individually as well as with all of them corporately. He says: "There being such a distinct communication of grace from the several persons of the Deity, the saints must needs have distinct communion with them."

First he takes us into the pleasures of communion with the Father: "I come now to declare what it is wherein peculiarly and eminently the saints have communion with the Father; and this is love, free, undeserved, and eternal love ... Indeed our fellowship is with the Father" (1 John 1:3).

In summary he explains how we enjoy this communion with the Father: "Communion consists in giving and

IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD



receiving. Until the love of the Father be received, we have no communion with him therein. How, then, is this love of the Father to be received, so as to hold fellowship with him? I answer, By faith. The receiving of it is the believing of it." "We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us" (1 John 4:16).

What is this faith? It is "a comfortable persuasion and spiritual perception and sense of his love" by which the soul reposes and rests itself in God. This is what I have tried to express in the phrase, faith is "being satisfied with all that God is for us in Jesus".

Then Owen takes us into communion with the Son. "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9, RSV). The most delectable verse on this fellowship with Jesus is Revelation 3:20: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will eat with him, and he with me."

Owen takes very seriously Jesus' table fellowship with us. What does each of us eat at the table of our hearts? We feed on

the spiritual truth and beauty and power of all that Jesus is for us. What does Jesus himself eat at the table of our heart? Owen says: "He refreshes himself with his own graces in [the saints], by his Spirit bestowed on them. The Lord Christ is exceedingly delighted in tasting of the sweet fruits of the Spirit in the saints."

Finally Owen takes up our communion with the Holy Spirit, the great Comforter (John 16:7). He says that "the life and soul of all our comforts lie treasured up in the promises of Christ", but he admits that these promises of Christ are "powerless ... in the bare letter, even when improved to the uttermost by our considerations of them".

However, "sometimes [they] break upon the soul with a conquering, endearing life and vigour," and just at this point "faith deals peculiarly with the Holy Ghost. It considers the promises themselves; looks up to him, waits for him, considers his appearances in the word depended on, owns him in his work and efficacy. No sooner doth the soul begin to feel the life of a promise warming his heart, relieving, cherishing, supporting, delivering from fear, entanglements, or troubles, but it may, it ought, to know that the Holy Ghost is there; which will add to his joy, and lead him into fellowship with him".

O how we need to learn what it is to commune with God – to fellowship with him, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is clear from Owen's insights that the Word of God is the place of communion. God stands forth from his Word. What we long for is God himself. Where shall we meet him? Where does he reveal himself? The answer is given in 1 Samuel 3:21: "The LORD revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD." The Lord himself is met, and known, and loved, and enjoyed "by the word of the Lord".

For your own soul, come to the fountain of the Word and drink. You will not be alone.

From John Piper, A Godward Life (Multnomah Press, 1997).

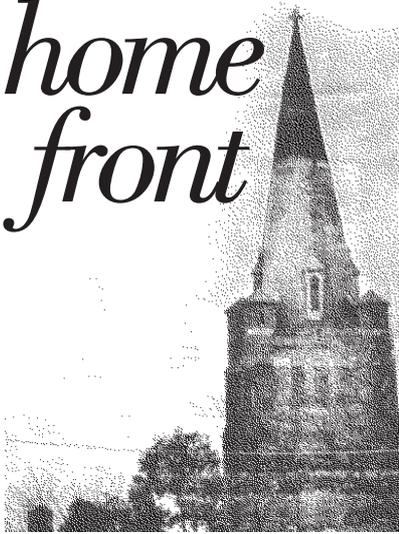
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Terror victims service

The Rt. Rev. Jack J Knapp, Moderator General of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, took part in a memorial service in Canberra for those killed in the world's worst terrorist attack. Mr Knapp joined about 2000 people who filled the Great Hall of Parliament. Anglican Bishop Tom Frame led the hour long service in which the Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, delivered the reading from Romans 8 and the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Kim Beazley, recited the 23rd Psalm. Mr Knapp led the pastoral prayer.

Thomas reappointed

One of the highlights of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria last month was the induction of Rev. Bob Thomas as moderator for a second time, reports *John Wilson*. It is only the third time in 142 years in which the PCV has had a "second-time" moderator. The moderator led the assembly into the week's theme, "glorifying him", preaching from John 17.

Funds were voted for Mr and Mrs Thomas to visit some serving missionaries. Bob Thomas will also visit all churches in the Presbyteries of Bendigo and Melbourne North. The assembly provided a safeguard for the moderator, directing him not to attend the increasingly popular "inter-faith" services on behalf of the church.

60 years of ministry

The assembly celebrated with thanks the 60th anniversary of Dr Graham Miller's

ordination to ministry; and the 50th anniversary of both Stan Halford and Jim Bain.

New PTC principal

Dr Douglas Milne has been appointed Principal of the Presbyterian Theological College at Box Hill from 1 January. The assembly also endorsed the theological education committee's thanksgiving service to mark Dr Allan Harman's retirement after 27 years' teaching – to be held at Presbyterian Ladies College at 2.30pm on 2 December – and the vision to eliminate the debt on the college premises.

Update editor needed

The assembly thanked Rev. Michael Wharton for his eight years as editor of the *Update* newsletter, and resolved to search for a new editor (honorary and part-time). Another position to be advertised is that of project coordinator for the production of a new series of Bible study material.

Booklet on marriage

In other assembly highlights, the Church and Nation Committee launched another booklet, this time on the question of marriage vs cohabitation – *Let's Get Married*. Approval was given to the proposed new code book for the PCV, the revision to be sent down to all the Presbyteries for their approval. The sale of the land at Belgrave Heights was approved.

The assembly clarified the code that now allows Presbyteries to agree to a part-time ministry – provided that the welfare of the parish is served by this arrangement and that the minister will not suffer hardship. It warned all sessions to be careful to determine a policy regarding the appointment of workers involved with children (*Breaking the Silence* available).

Rev. Peter Owen encouraged prayer for and participation in a Christian witness at the Mind, Body and Spirit Festival in 2002. The new Home Mission director, Rev. Bob Carner, who has recently arrived with his family from Queensland, was introduced to the assembly.

APWM's new director

Rev. Bill Lutton, the new national director for Australian Presbyterian World Mission, has a background in school teaching and parish work, having spent

Francis White

1911 – 2001

Francis William Fielding White was born on 13 September 1911, to Frank and Jane White, in the family home at Norman Park. His father was superintendent of the Sunday School at the Ann Street Presbyterian Church and a street evangelist with the Young Men's Christian Association, reports his son, Rev. Frank D. White.

In 1936, he believed that the Lord was calling him to missionary service in China. In preparation for such service, he moved to the Melbourne Bible Institute for two years of study. In 1939 he departed for China and service with the China Inland Mission, undertaking evangelism and pastoral care in an extremely remote area of north-west China.

With the progress of Japanese forces across China and Asia, Francis believed he had a duty to serve in the defence of his own country and sought passage to Australia. The British authorities declined. He then took the King's shilling and was commissioned as an officer in the 6th Gurkha Rifles Regiment, Gurkha Brigade, British Indian Army. He was not demobbed for almost two years after the end of hostilities, due to his language skills and knowledge of the country from India through Burma, China and Indo-China.

Soon after this, the mission posted him to the Bordon Memorial Hospital, Lanzhou, Kansu Province, as evangelist and business manager. Here he met, proposing three days later, Isabella Marion Davidson, a registered nurse and midwife with the China Inland Mission. They were married in the Shanghai Anglican Cathedral. With the Communist victory in China in 1949, they returned to Australia. They had seven children: Marion, Joyce, Jane, Barbara, Annette, Christine and Frank.

He soon joined the Presbyterian Church as a home missionary and undertook University studies prior to Theological Training, while serving at Nanango, Gatton and Bald Hills, before being ordained. He served at Miles, Windsor and Devonport, and retired in 1977.

time ministering in Brisbane, South Australia and Rockhampton, as well as for the last five and half years at **John Calvin Presbyterian Church** at the Willows, in Thuringowa/Townsville, North Queensland.

Bill and his wife **Jenny** took two months away from parish work last Christmas, visiting and ministering in various places in Eastern Europe and Asia. At the end of the long service leave, at the urging of then APWM national director **Robert Benn**, Bill and Jenny made a short visit to the Presbyterian church in Japan and got an insight into the work there. When Robert retired, Bill was confirmed in the position by the General Assembly of Australia in August.

Bill's setting apart service was held on 14 September in the parish from which he was sent. APWM federal convener **Dr David Pilgrim** and his wife **Devona** traveled from Sydney. Federal executive member **Rev. Jim Elliot** preached.

Bill & Jenny Lutton can be contacted at 8 Sylvan Grove Picnic Point, NSW 2213, or by email APWM@mas.nsw.edu.au.



Bill and Jenny Lutton

Korean minister inducted

Rev. Won-Hyoung Moon was inducted as minister of the **Korean Canaan Presbyterian Church** in Petersham at a service on 21 September. Worship was led by the moderator, **Rev. Johnnie Li**, and **Rev. Byeong Jae Ryu** preached. Rev Won-Hyoung Moon can be contacted at 72 Fricourt Ave Earlwood, 2206; phone (02)9558 9995

Elder emeritus

Stan Laver has resigned as an active elder from the session of **St Andrews, Port Macquarie (NSW)**. Stan was ordained an elder of the **George McCredie Memorial Presbyterian Church**, Guildford, NSW, in the early 1960s, but transferred to the

Macquarie Church at Marsfield with his late wife, **Margaret**, in 1968. He resumed his eldership in 1987 when he retired to Port Macquarie in 1987.

across australia



ADF in Afghanistan

The Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, Dr Peter Jensen, has released a statement backing sending Australian forces to Afghanistan but calling for more Afghan refugees to be admitted to Australia.

Australia has arrived at a sober moment in the present global action against terrorism, with the Prime Minister's announcement that 1550 Defence Force personnel will be deployed in the US led campaign, the statement said.

"There is no doubt that action must be taken to deter terrorism and ensure the peace and security of ordinary people from all parts of the globe. It is right and legitimate that the United States seek justice in response to the terrorist attacks conducted against its citizens. But such actions must be both measured and effective ... human agents must be entirely fair. They must not punish the innocent or act from ill-considered rage.

"As we seek vindication, we need to remember that we too are guilty before God. With this in mind there is now even more onus on the Australian people to assist the refugees fleeing Afghanistan. Pakistan needs help to cope with the hundreds of thousands of people coming across its land border."

Archbishop Jensen asked Australians to pray for the safety and security of Australian forces and the people of Afghanistan, wisdom for our leaders, and that the conflict be brought to a speedy conclusion.

Fire on the Mountain

Nearly 300 people attended the Fire on the Mountain 2001 weekend from 7 to 9 September at Mount Tamborine in south-east Queensland. This was the seventh year for this annual Christian-worldview teaching weekend. **Dr Peter Lillback** taught on the necessity of having a Christian worldview in the five plenary sessions. Local artist **Meredith Plant** considered a Christian approach to understanding the nature, function and current cultural interpretation of the visual arts; **David Wauchope**, vice-president of **Christian Solidarity** brought a sobering, factual assessment of the plight of persecuted Christians around the world; **Rev. Steve Teale** developed a biblical approach to the meaning of worship and music in worship; and **Dr Noel Weeks** untangled some of the problems associated with the historical reliability of the Bible.

Out of the mouth of babes...

One Sunday a young child was misbehaving during the morning worship service. The parents did their best to maintain some sense of order in the pew but were losing the battle. Finally, the father picked the little fellow up and walked sternly up the aisle on his way out.

Just before reaching the foyer, the little one called loudly to the congregation, "Pray for me! Pray for me!"

Arson attacks

Christian leaders in Australia have expressed outrage at the recent arson attacks to both Christian and Muslim places of worship since the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September. There has been an ugly backlash against the Muslim communities and Arab Christians, and arsonists have attacked the buildings.

On 8 October, there was a forced entry into the **St Ephraim Syrian Orthodox Church** at Lidcombe, Sydney, and the floor, chairs and the altar were severely burnt. In the main church building, graffiti was written on all walls, supposedly in support of Osama bin Laden and against Jews and Christians.

On 11 October, the **Bass Hill Uniting Church**, 23 kilometres south-west of Sydney CBD, had bottles thrown through several windows, in the front wall of the building and the main entrance. A

team of workers repaired all windows on 13 October, but the next day debris on the porch from the previous was ignited, and the damage was more severe. This time windows, the ceiling and the roof were severely scorched.

On 13 October, St David's Presbyterian Church at Campbelltown, 55 kilometres south-west of Sydney, had its weatherboard hall at the back of the church damaged by fire.

Justice march

More than 3000 Christians marched through Sydney on 1 October, proudly remembering the Christian heritage of the nation and showing their concern over world activities, especially terrorism. A three-hour rally was held in Hyde Park for justice, safety and peace.

Led by Rev. Fred Nile MLC, a group of Christian motor cycle clubs and a Four Square Church band dressed in their national Vietnamese costumes, the procession included representatives from the Arabic Church to the Assemblies of God; Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Congregational, Coptic Church, Orthodox Greek Church, Presbyterian, The Salvation Army and the Uniting Churches.

The Christian Heritage Thanksgiving Centenary Celebration began with musicians Esther King and Warwick Marsh leading the national anthem *Advance Australia Fair*, complete with the fourth stanza, "With Christ our head and cornerstone..."

The Rev. Charles Pass (Presbyterian), opened in prayer, followed by the reading of a statement of support from the Prime Minister John Howard, read by the Hon. Alan Cadman MP. Appreciation for the rally's concern for the United States at this time was presented by Donald E. Sletcher representing the US Consulate.

Musical items included bands from various churches and cultural groups. The Egyptian Coptic (Christian) Church presented a series of their chants, declaring Jesus as Lord. A Sri Lankan dance group used a variety of musical instruments in their presentation, which also indicated how they worshipped the Lord.

A call to prayer, for stability in world affairs and the nation, was led by Ray Hoekzema, president of the NSW Council of Churches, and Pastor Bill Simons of the Aboriginal ministry in Redfern closed the rally in prayer.

world news



Arafat thanks Archbishop

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has praised the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, for his endeavours to promote peace in the Middle East. Meanwhile, *The Scotsman* newspaper reports that the Church of Scotland has become the first Christian denomination to voice outright opposition to the military offensive, predicting that the action would create a "new generation of martyrs rising up to die for their cause".

Hundreds of Christian missionaries have been evacuated from countries throughout Asia and the Middle East after the 11 September terrorist attacks in the United States and the subsequent bombing of Afghanistan, with many seeking refuge in "neutral" countries like Australia.

In England, the *UK Times* reports on the anxiety being felt in Britain following recent terrorist actions. Church attendance is up, as is attendance at psychiatric and medical centres, while holiday bookings have collapsed and the number of people using public transport is significantly down. And *FOX News* reports that Christians in Pakistan fear they may become the targets of vengeance and harassment.

Kabul trial resumes

Meanwhile, the trial of eight western aid workers – including two Australians – arrested in Afghanistan on charges of preaching Christianity had entered its final stage, with lawyers submitted closing argument to the Kabul court in late October and saying they were optimistic about the outcome. However, later reports indicated that the trial was delayed when the court refused to receive the closing arguments in Arabic, insisting that

they be submitted in a recognised local language. The trial has now resumed, though it is not clear how it will proceed.

Compass reports that Taliban authorities arrested 35 more Afghan aid workers, bringing the total to more than 50 Afghans jailed by the strict Islamist regime since early August on suspicion of aiding covert Christian missionary work. The 35 Afghans were employed by the recently banned International Assistance Mission (IAM).

Bin Laden persecution link

One of the world's leading authorities on religious persecution sees a connection between the Osama Bin Laden terror network and persecution directed against Christians in a host of countries.

"He's tied in with a lot of persecution," says Dr Paul Marshall, a senior fellow at the Centre for Religious Freedom in Washington, D.C. "In many settings it's radicals within his network who are carrying out persecution," he says. "This is going on in the Philippines, Indonesia, and to some extent Malaysia, Bangladesh, Pakistan – and, of course, Afghanistan."

Marshall says Bin Laden is allied with other terrorist groups in Algeria and Nigeria that have been killing Christians. "Bin Laden's had a lot of cooperation with Sudan – a major country in the world killing Christians," Marshall says. "The death toll in Sudan since 1998 is 2 million; that is more than every war in the Middle East in this past century. Most of these victims are Christians."

Compass Direct

Arrests in Saudi Arabia

Compass reports that at least 13 foreign Christians have been arrested since mid-July in Jeddah. The detained Christians, all nationals from India, Ethiopia, Nigeria, the Philippines and Eritrea, are members of house church groups within Jeddah's expatriate community. A gathering of about 400 Christian foreigners in a rented hall in late June may have triggered the wave of arrests.

Clashes in Nigeria

Thousands of people fled their homes, and scores are believed to have died, in clashes between Muslims and Christians in Kano in northern Nigeria, reports *The Church Times*. Meanwhile, the BBC reports on a woman in northern Nigeria who will appeal against the first death sen-

tence passed since the state adopted strict Islamic Sharia law last year.

Jihad kills 16

CSI reports that the government of Sudan killed 15 black, non-Muslim children and one elderly woman in bombing raids on Sudanese villages on 7 October, as part of a jihad against black non-Muslim communities that resist Islamisation.

Marriage upheld

A Canadian Supreme Court Judge has handed down a decision which – if upheld on appeal – will make it difficult for same-sex couples in Canada to win the right to marry. Canadian-based *Christian Week* newspaper reports the decision as “a solid victory for pro-family advocates and faith groups seeking to maintain the traditional definition of marriage.”

Church without Christ

Seeker-friendly services are one thing, but an Episcopal Church in the USA has decided – after using market research and focus groups – to design weekly services that “deliberately de-emphasise Jesus Christ”. “We’re enabling people to discover God themselves, maybe through Jesus, maybe through Buddha, maybe through any number of ways,” said **Rev. Harry Brunett**.

Luke tests positive

New DNA analysis has given tentative support to the belief that the remains in an ancient lead coffin are those of **St. Luke**, the author of the third Gospel and the book of Acts, the *New York Times* reports. “I think we should accept that there is no way to tell if it was the Evangelist Luke, but the genetic evidence does not contradict the idea,” said a scientist working on the project.

Graham’s last crusade

Billy Graham’s recently completed Central Valley Crusade in California may be the final crusade for the veteran evangelist. But it’s not because Graham is planning to end his preaching days – in fact plans are well under way for next year’s series of meetings in Cincinnati. Rather, the *Fresno Bee* reports that the term “crusade” will be dropped as a point of “cultural and religious sensitivity” following the 11 September terrorist attacks. Billy Graham’s website also featured a report on the Central Valley event, held from October 11-14.

Islam forces missionaries

Military intelligence has disclosed that an American missionary couple held hostage by Muslim extremist group **Abu Sayyaf** is being pressured by their captors to convert to Islam, while the

Philippine army move to attack the group. According to *Assist News Service*, **Abu Sayyaf** rebels, who kidnapped **Martin and Gracia Burnham** along with 18 others from a resort off the island of Palawan in May, are forcing conversion on the members of the *New Tribes Mission* and a number of Christian Filipino hostages.

A Philippine newspaper reported that **Reynaldo Ariston** and **Joel Guillo** were forced to embrace Islam, otherwise they would be beheaded. The Christian farmers were able to escape unharmed last week, but the two admitted that the **Abu Sayyaf** “converted” them to Islam. Guillo maintained: “I still believe in Jesus. Jesus was the one who set us free.”

Abu Sabaya, a rebel leader, has vowed to kill the Burnhams before Philippine president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo’s planned 20 November trip to meet President Bush.

Religion Today;
Charisma News Service

Columbian pastor killed

Two men on a motorcycle shot dead a Christian pastor – a former narcotics trafficker – as he was leaving a meeting at his Cali, Colombia, church on 25 August. **Guillermo León Hernández Gutiérrez**, 52, became a Christian in a United States’ prison where he was serving time for drug crimes. Five years ago he started Genesis Christian Church.



SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES WITH missionary aviation fellowship

Missionary Aviation Fellowship has a number of positions vacant within its Finance Department.

The main finance office is based in Cairns, Queensland with branch offices in Papua New Guinea and Central Australia. The Finance Department is responsible for all the financial affairs of MAF in PNG, North Australia, Central Australia, Cambodia, Ballarat and Melbourne.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTANTS

- Financial Accountant (MAF Aviation Services) Based in Cairns
- Financial Accountant (Papua New Guinea) Based in Mt Hagen

These are full-time, salaried positions. The successful applicants will have completed a tertiary degree in accounting and have some previous experience in either a finance or management accounting role. You will be working closely with the Financial Controller and Finance Manager (PNG) and will be responsible for the day to day finances of the Branch.

ACCOUNTING ASSISTANTS

- Assistant to the Financial Controller Based in Cairns
- Finance Assistant Based in Alice Springs

These are full-time, salaried positions. The successful applicants will have completed a tertiary degree in accounting, although previous experience is not essential. You will be working closely with the Financial Controller and Finance Manager (Central Australia) and will have a wide exposure assisting with all aspects of the Finance Department.

CLERICAL POSITIONS

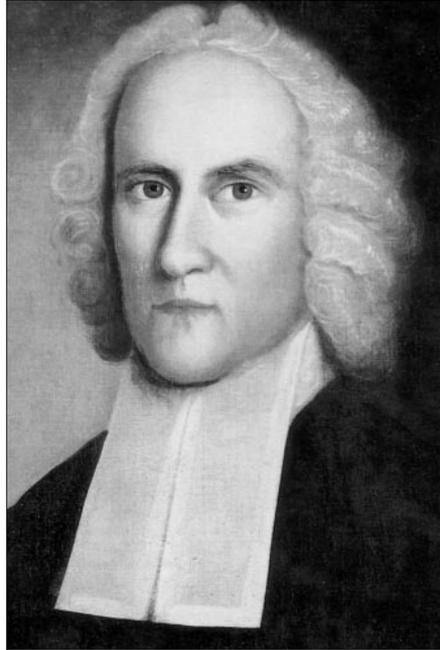
- Accounts Payable Clerk
- Accounts Receivable Clerk
- Payroll Clerk

These three positions are all based in Cairns and the successful applicants would be expected to pay any relocation costs. They are part-time positions each equivalent of 16 hours per week. Previous experience in a similar role is desirable, but not essential. Normal award conditions apply.

Further information on any of these positions, including job descriptions, is available from:
Laurie Hughes, Personnel Manager – PO Box 211, BOX HILL, VIC 3128
Phone: (03) 9890 4009 E-mail: laurie_hughes@maf.org.au

Jonathan Edwards

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) was an intellectual and spiritual giant, one of the few truly great theologians of the English-speaking world. Living in an era when Enlightenment rationalism was beginning to eat away at Christian doctrine, Edwards wrote and preached on every aspect of the faith, defending it with Scripture, reason and the church's tradition. He left to the church such matchless writings as Freedom of the Will, A Treatise on the Religious Affections, The Nature of True Virtue, and many more books and sermons. In these he brought Protestant orthodoxy into the modern world, defended the revival movement known as the Great Awakening, and taught a balance between emotion and reason. Martyn Lloyd-Jones has said of him: "No man is more relevant to the present conditions of Christianity than Jonathan Edwards ... He was a mighty theologian and a great evangelist at the same time."



thing spiritual, or of a saving nature in this.

From about that time, I began to have a new kind of apprehensions and ideas of Christ, and the work of redemption, and the glorious way of salvation by him. An

inward, sweet sense of these things, at times, came into my heart; and my soul was led away in pleasant views and contemplation of them. And my mind was greatly engaged to spend my time in reading and meditating on Christ, on the beauty and excellency of his person, and the lovely way of salvation by free grace in him ...

On January 12, 1723, I made a solemn dedication of myself to God, and wrote it down; giving up myself, and all that I had to God; to be for the future, in no respect, my own; to act as one that had no right to himself, in any respect. And solemnly vowed to take God for my whole portion and felicity; looking on nothing else as any part of my happiness, nor acting as if it were; and his law for the constant rule of my obedience: engaging to fight, with all my might, against the world, the flesh, and the devil, to the end of my life. But I have reason to be infinitely humbled, when I consider, how much I have failed, of answering my obligation ...

I have loved the doctrines of the gospel; they have been to my soul like green pastures. The gospel has seemed

The first instance, that I remember, of that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things, that I have lived much in since, was on reading those words, 1 Tim. 1:17. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen. As I read the words, there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from any thing I ever experienced before.

Never any words of Scripture seemed to me as these words did. I thought with myself, how excellent a Being that was, and how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be rapt up to him in heaven, and be as it were swallowed up in him for ever! I kept saying, and as it were singing, over these words of Scripture to myself; and went to pray to God that I might enjoy him, and prayed in a manner quite different from what I used to do; with a new sort of affection. But it never came into my thought, that there was any

Evangelist/Church Planter

Required for an exciting opportunity to plant a church in the Margate area 12 kms south of Hobart. Candidates need to have strengths in the areas of leadership, teaching, and evangelism.

Responsibilities will include:

- Evangelism work in the Margate area
- Biblical-based preaching & teaching
- Identifying and training emerging leaders
- Encouraging people to use their God-given gifts
- Building a new community of believers

The successful candidate will be working in a team with other Reformed/Presbyterian leaders on the wider ministry of bringing the gospel to people in Hobart and Southern Tasmania.

For further information please contact:

Pastor Brian Vaatstra
Christian Reformed Church of Kingston, P.O. Box 64, Kingston Tasmania 7051
Ph 03 6229-2268 email: brianv@ozemail.com.au

to me the richest treasure; the treasure that I have most desired, and longed that it might dwell richly in me. The way of salvation by Christ, has appeared, in a general way, glorious and excellent, most pleasant and most beautiful. It has often seemed to me, that it would, in a great measure, spoil heaven, to receive it in any other way. That text has often been affecting and delightful to me, Isaiah 32:2 – A man shall be an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest.

It has often appeared to me delightful, to be united to Christ; to have him for my head, and to be a member of his body; also to have Christ for my teacher and prophet. I very often think with sweetness, and longings, and pantings of soul, of being a little child, taking hold of Christ, to be led by him through the wilderness of this world.

That text, Matthew 18:3, has often been sweet to me, Except ye, be converted, and become as little children, etc. I love to think of coming to Christ, to receive salvation of him, poor in spirit, and quite empty of self, humbly exalting him alone; cut off entirely from my own root, in order to grow into, and out of Christ: to have God in Christ to be all in all; and to live by faith on the Son of God, a life of humble, unfeigned confidence in him.

Once, as I rode out into the woods for my health, in 1737, having alighted from my horse in a retired place, as my

manner commonly has been, to walk for divine contemplation and prayer, I had a view, that for me was extraordinary, of the glory of the Son of God, as Mediator between God and man, and his wonderful, great, full, pure and sweet grace and love, and meek and gentle condescension.

*I have loved
the doctrines
of the gospel;
they have
been to my
soul like green
pastures.*

This grace that appeared so calm and sweet, appeared also great above the heavens. The person of Christ appeared ineffably excellent, with an excellency great enough to swallow up all

thought and conception – which continued, as near as I can judge, about an hour; which kept me the greater part of the time, in a flood of tears, and weeping aloud.

I felt an ardency of soul to be, what I know not otherwise how to express, emptied and annihilated; to lie in the dust, and to be full of Christ alone; to love him with a holy and pure love; to trust in him; to live upon him; to serve and follow him; and to be perfectly sanctified and made pure, with a divine and heavenly purity. I have, several other times, had views very much of the same nature, and which have had the same effects.

I have, many times, had a sense of the glory of the Third Person in the Trinity, in his office of Sanctifier; in his holy opera-

tions, communicating divine light and life to the soul. God, in the communications of his Holy Spirit, has appeared as an infinite fountain of divine glory and sweetness; being full and sufficient to fill and satisfy the soul; pouring forth itself in sweet communications, like the sun in its glory, sweetly and pleasantly diffusing light and life.

And I have sometimes had an affecting sense of the excellency of the word of God as a word of life; as the light of life; a sweet, excellent, life-giving word; accompanied with a thirsting after that word, that it might dwell richly in my heart ...

Though it seems to me, that in some respects, I was a far better Christian, for two or three years after my first conversion, than I am now; and lived in a more constant delight and pleasure; yet of late years, I have had a more full and constant sense of the absolute sovereignty of God, and a delight in that sovereignty; and have had more of a sense of the glory of Christ, as a Mediator revealed in the gospel.

On one Saturday night, in particular, I had such a discovery of the excellency of the gospel above all other doctrines, that I could not but say to myself, "This is my chosen light, my chosen doctrine," and of Christ, "This is my chosen Prophet." It appeared sweet, beyond all expression, to follow Christ, and to be taught, and enlightened, and instructed by him; to learn of him, and live to him.

*From the Works of Jonathan Edwards,
Volume 1 (Banner of Truth, 1834).* ap

Halls Creek People's Church Aged Care Facility
MENKAWUM NGURRA

Applications are invited for the following positions:

1. ADMINISTRATOR

- Duties:**
- Responsibility for the day to day management of the facility
 - Financial Management
 - Staff management and planning
 - Liaison with community and government agencies
- Essential:**
- Experience in financial management and staff supervision
 - Computer literacy (MYOB)

2. REGISTERED NURSE (SECOND IN CHARGE)

- Duties:**
- Supervision of Pastoral Care staff
 - Responsible for ensuring high quality care
- Essential:**
- Registered nurse in WA (or registerable)
- Preferred:**
- RCS documentation and aged care experience

FOR JOB PROFILE, APPLICATION FORMS AND FURTHER INFORMATION:

please contact the administrator on (08) 9168 6524, Fax (08) 9168 6535 or email agedcare@westnet.com.au
For both positions an essential requirement is a sympathy toward the evangelical Christian values of the Halls Creek People's Church.

Policies: party by party

Australians go to the polls on 10 November.



Prime Minister John Howard

Liberal Party

1. What will you do to reduce unemployment and increase full-time jobs?

The Coalition Government has made sure that the Australian economy is better managed. We have delivered five surplus budgets and taken necessary decisions to reform our taxation and workplace relations system and introduce work for the dole and provide better employment services. These policies have contributed to 830,000 new jobs since 1996 – in full time and part-time/casual employment. New jobs have been created twice as fast as under the previous Labor government. Unemployment, while still too high, is down to 6.7 per cent compared to 10.9 per cent when Mr Beazley was Employment Minister. Youth unemployment is down by a third.

The Coalition will provide extra Job Search, literacy and numeracy training places and more work for the dole places, and introduce a new transition to work program.

2. Will you do anything to help long-term unemployed people find work without facing harsh penalties?

The Coalition has ensured that the employment services system provides targeted assistance to the long-term unemployed. Centrelink will improve its

To help Presbyterians as they prepare for the federal election, AP asked the Coalition, Labor and the Democrats to outline briefly their policies in 14 key areas of social policy justice. At time of production, the parties had not released all their policies.

assessment of job seekers and, where appropriate, refer them to the Job Network. Intensive-assistance providers will assist long-term unemployed people find a job. New training credits will also be available for eligible job seekers, and working credits will reward paid work.

3. How will you help people retrain and undergo education without falling into poverty?

The Coalition announced in the Budget that it will implement a number of new measures to assist young people move into post-school life, including:

- \$3.7 million in 2002 for around 18 innovative pilots to test ways to achieve successful integrated community support for young people in transition, including pilots for outreach education models;
- \$3.6 million in 2002 to pilot the provision of around 30 career and transition advisers to work with schools, local communities, young people and their families;
- \$9.7 million over four years to expand the coverage of the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation (ECEP) workplace coordinators into remote parts of central and northern Australia;
- expanded funding to the Job Placement, Employment and Training Programme (to \$74.4 million over four years) and the Jobs Pathway Programme (to \$95 million over four years).

4. Given our aging population, what will you do to encourage young couples to have larger families?

The introduction of Family Tax Benefit in July 2000 increased funding for Australian families by over \$2 billion a year (more than 20 per cent in real terms), lifting family assistance by \$140 a child a year. In addition, single-income families with a child under five were given an

increase of \$350 a year.

Family Tax Benefit decreased the taper rates for family assistance from 50 cents in the dollar to 30 cents in the dollar, allowing families to keep far more of each extra dollar they earn.

The Coalition has also cut income tax rates across the board so that those on average incomes pay a top marginal rate of just 30 per cent compared to 38 per cent in 1996.

5. Will your health care policies encourage bulk-billing for medical services? How will you make dental care more affordable?

Under the Coalition bulk-billing rates are higher than they ever were under the previous Labor Government. The Coalition is fully committed to Medicare and bulk-billing.

In the last full year of the Keating Government (1994-95), the number of all bulk-billed services (general practice and specialist) was 130.8 million. In 2000-01 under the Coalition, the number of all bulk-billed services was nearly 153 million – a significant increase.

Similarly, GP bulk-billed services were 77 million in 1994-95. This year they were 78.1 million. For specialist services, 53 million services were bulk-billed in 1994-95 while nearly 75 million such services were bulk-billed in 2000-01 (an increase of 40 per cent).

The Coalition has also enhanced Medicare to allow it to immunise Australia's children. The Coalition has extended Medicare to reward GPs who offer better care to patients affected by diabetes, asthma, cervical cancer and mental illness with record funding of \$750 million for those initiatives.

It is the responsibility of the states and territories to provide public dental services and the Howard Government has provided them with a real and growing source of funding through the GST receipts each year to do this.

6. How will you further reconciliation with indigenous Australians?

The Coalition is committed to reconciliation and believes that the best contribution governments can make is to reduce indigenous disadvantage.

In the 2001/02 budget the Coalition Government committed a further \$327 million over four years to reduce indigenous disadvantage. The Coalition now spends a record \$2.39 billion, most of which is directed to the priority areas of health, housing, education and employment.

Most of the indigenous specific programs are in fact delivered by indigenous-controlled organisations. For example, the Coalition has provided ATSIC with \$1.1 billion for 2001 / 2002. This exceeds ATSIC's budget under the former Labor Government by 20 per cent in real terms.

7. How will you help older people remain independent in their own homes?

The Coalition is committed to ensuring older, frail Australians can remain at home.

Labor previously supported institutional models that entrenched dependence and had created only 4000 Community Aged Care Packages (CACPs).

The Coalition Government has released 19,496 new CACPs over five years, an increase of more than 350 per cent.

As at July 2001, there were almost 25,000 operating CACPs operating across Australia. The Coalition has provided an extra \$169.9 million to support the wishes of older Australians to be cared for in their own homes.

The Prime Minister has just announced the "Choosing to Stay at Home" initiative. This is an \$82 million package tailored to the needs of frail, older Australians to enable them to choose to stay at home.

8. What will you do to meet the demand for places in aged care facilities?

The Coalition has released more than 42,000 new aged care places since 1997. Aged Care providers have advised that an additional 4 600 aged care beds are expected to become operational by the end of this year. By contrast, only 5000 aged care beds came on line under Labor in its last five years in office.

The Coalition has also introduced a number of anti-hoarding reforms to ensure that beds are brought on stream quickly.

9. Do you intend to maintain present funding levels of all independent schools (currently 31% of students nationally)? If not, which schools will you target for increased funding?

The Coalition has increased spending on public education over the last five years at almost twice the rate of the Hawke/Keating governments during their last five years.

Legislated increases in funding will be guaranteed for non-government schools under the phasing in of the new SES arrangements.

Government schools get \$14.3 billion from taxpayers for the 2.2 million students in government schools. Non-government schools get \$4.1 billion for the 1 million students in non-government schools. Government schools educate 69 per cent of the students and get 78 per cent of all government funding.

10. What will you do to meet the housing needs for homeless people and victims of family violence/breakdown?

The Government considers that the Supported Accommodation Assistance Programme (SAAP) is very effective, helping more than 90,000 homeless people a year. The Government is committed to the growth of SAAP and has allocated \$800 million over five years, including an 18 per cent real increase in annual recurrent funding of \$23 million.

11. What will you do to overcome the critical shortage of teachers in Australia?

The Howard Government created the Commonwealth Australian Teachers' Prize for Excellence to recognise the work of highly skilled and caring teachers in Australian schools.

Around 14 per cent of the 2000 new university places each year announced in *Backing Australia's Ability* will be used to provide programs in teacher education. Next year 280 places will be available to students studying teaching in priority areas of mathematics, science and information technology, rising to more than 750 over four years.

The Government is supporting the increased status of teachers by investing \$80 million in teachers for the 21st century program to help primary and secondary teachers to upgrade their skills.

12. How will you ensure that our tertiary institutions remain internationally competitive?

The Coalition's investment in university education at 1.09 per cent GDP is higher than the OECD average of 1.06 per cent, and also higher than Germany or the UK.

Between 2001 and 2003 Federal university funding will grow by more than \$256 million (4.4 per cent).

University revenues have grown to a record \$9.5 billion this year – more than \$1.2 billion higher than in 1995.

Payments to universities from the Coalition Government have remained

stable in real terms over 1996-2002, both in total payments at some \$5.85 billion and payments per fully-funded student place at some \$12,000.

Combined public and private investment in university education, at 1.59 per cent of Australia's GDP, is significantly higher than the OECD average of 1.33 per cent. As a share of GDP, our investment in tertiary education is higher than the United States, Germany, Japan, Canada and the United Kingdom.

In addition the Coalition will provide an additional \$34.8 million to universities over four years from 2002 to add 670 new places to our regional universities and campuses, rising to over 5000 places over the period.

The Government has also provided \$259 million over three years in additional salary supplementation to those universities, which demonstrate their commitment to improving their workplace relations and management practices.

13. What will your attitude be towards accepting refugees?

On a per capita basis Australia is one of the most generous resettlement countries in the world.

Australia is one of only nine countries in the world with a regular planned program for the resettlement of refugees.

Our humanitarian programme intake has over three years consistently been at 12,000 and continues to be for 2001/02.

In the offshore program in 2000/01, Australia resettled 7992 people, out of a total Refugee and Humanitarian Programme of 13,733 places. Of the others, 5577 places went to people granted temporary or permanent protection visas onshore in Australia and 164 people were granted temporary humanitarian stay visas.

14. How will you strengthen Australia's defence forces given our increased security needs?

The Coalition wants a more combat-focused, better-equipped, more mobile and more operationally ready Defence Force. We plan to deliver the biggest increase in defence funding for more than 20 years – \$27.6 billion in real terms over the next decade.

Our major priority for a third term will be to implement *Defence 2000*, which will provide long-term direction and support to the ADF. As part of this White Paper, the Coalition will implement a defence capability plan, enabling the ADF to face a wide range of security concerns, from conventional war and peace enforcement to terrorism and border protection.



Opposition Leader Kim Beazley

Labor Party

1. What will you do to reduce unemployment and increase full-time jobs?

Policy not fully released at time of AP production.

Labor has a comprehensive workforce planning strategy as part of our Workforce 2010 suite of policies to help identify and plan for the jobs of the future. Labor will also have a comprehensive national infrastructure planning effort through a new National Infrastructure Council.

2. Will you do anything to help long-term unemployed people find work without facing harsh penalties?

Policy not fully released at time of AP production.

Labor recognises that the Job Network's performance needs to be better when it comes to more disadvantaged jobseekers, particularly the long-term and mature-age unemployed. Labor will consider the results of the Independent Review in devising reforms to make the system fairer.

3. How will you help people retrain and undergo education without falling into poverty?

Policy not fully released at time of AP production.

Labor has consistently argued for capacity building programs, and incentives to assist people to move from welfare into work. We have indicated that, as fiscal circumstances allow, such programs will be a priority for a Labor government.

4. Given our aging population, what

will you do to encourage young couples to have larger families?

Labor understands the insecurity felt by countless Australian families. We all know that these days jobs can be hard to find and sometimes harder to keep. Pressures from work and also the lack of support from friends and family can make couples think twice about starting a family.

The Labor Party is committed to creating an environment where couples can feel secure about starting a family. Labor has already announced its promise to invest \$266.5 million, for young families and their children, as part of its Headstart for Families. This program will be to families what Medicare is to health care – a platform of services for young Australian families and their children. It has four key elements:

- Parenting education – before and after the birth of a child.
- Family care – comprehensive home visiting and outreach services for families with young children.
- ParentLine – a phone hotline that links families to information and services.
- Early childhood activities – playgroups, toy libraries and other activities to stimulate young children and improve links between parents.

A Labor government will explore ways to help parents achieve a balance between work and family life. Labor realises that people with larger families have been hit the hardest by the GST, and will make the GST fairer by removing it from some essential household items. Labor will also examine ways to restructure family payments that help families.

5. Will your health-care policies encourage bulk-billing for medical services? How will you make dental care more affordable?

A Labor Government will negotiate new arrangements to follow the current GP agreement which expires in June 2002. A principal concern will be to increase bulk billing and increase the number of doctors in rural and outer urban areas.

Labor will ensure that access to dental care is restored for low-income families. Labor will introduce a new National Dental Health Scheme to ensure that Australians who need it most can get access to dental treatment.

Labor will provide \$100 million over the next four years to cut waiting times and provide the 4.3 million Australians with a health care card or a pensioner concession card with access to decent dental care.

6. How will you further reconciliation with indigenous Australians?

Labor will provide a comprehensive response to the *Bringing them Home* report, including a national apology in the first sitting week of a Beazley Labor Government; a national conference with all stakeholders to examine alternative methods for dealing with the consequences of the policy of removal; and annual monitoring and evaluation of responses to the *Bringing them Home* report by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

This response will facilitate reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. It will provide acknowledgment of the past and an opportunity to move on together. It will end division and costly litigation. There can be no certainty that past errors will never be repeated unless that past is honestly acknowledged and the errors repudiated. We can move on with a common acceptance of our history, with a common purpose, to a better reconciled future.

7. How will you help older people remain independent in their own homes?

Policy not fully released at time of AP production.

While Labor's commitment to improving the quality of – and access to – residential aged care is absolute, we are similarly committed to supporting the health and well-being of older Australians who choose to remain in their own home.

Labor will build an integrated network of care services, which can respond to the diverse and changing support needs of older Australians. It is a model that is unashamedly centred on the care needs and preferences of older Australians.

Labor will build a consolidated and coordinated community-care system.

Labor also understands that many older Australians are only able to remain in their home with the support and care of friends and relatives. Labor believes it is important to provide better support for carers and we will release our carers policy during the campaign. We will ensure that our aged and community care services are responsive to the care needs of older Australians, and that carers are provided with the information and support services they need to maintain their own health and well-being. We will also promote carer-friendly employment policies and flexible services that enable individuals to combine caring responsibilities and paid work.

8. What will you do to meet the demand for places in aged care facilities?

Policy not fully released at time of AP production.

There are currently 15,000 aged care bed licences issued for beds that have never been built. Labor will make these beds available and ensure that the people who use them are given appropriate care and support.

9. Do you intend to maintain present funding levels of all independent schools (currently 31 per cent of students nationally)? If not, which schools will you target for decreased funding?

Labor believes that every child should have access to a quality education and will redirect funds from Category 1 schools to schools that have much greater need. No other non-government school will be affected.

10. What will you do to meet housing needs for homeless people and victims of family violence/break-down?

The central aim of Labor's housing strategy is the prevention of homelessness.

Labor will ensure that housing programs have clear and planned links with

the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). We also want to explore housing programs that have the flexibility to offer a range of housing options suited to those at imminent risk or chronic risk of homelessness.

Labor believes that the Government's work on domestic violence is too focused on pilot studies and research and leaves little funding for ongoing support for those who experience domestic violence.

While good research and new ideas are important, it is also essential to ensure that those who experience family violence are adequately supported when they need help. Labor will make sure that those who need support receive it.

11. How will you overcome Australia's critical shortage of teachers?

The latest research shows that the best way to improve students' results is to improve the quality and subject expertise of their teachers.

Labor will provide 1000 HECS-free scholarships to attract high achievers to teaching, and also offer 4000 training places a year to existing teachers to improve and update their subject knowledge and professional skills.

12. How will you ensure that our tertiary institutions remain internationally competitive?

Policy not fully released at time of AP production.

Labor will tackle the university "brain drain" by doubling the number of research fellowships for Australian academics and creating a new category of prestigious fellowships to bring leading expatriate researchers home. In addition, Labor will provide an extra 400 research training places for regional universities and an extra \$10 million will be provided to regional universities, to improve access to high-bandwidth telecommunications links.

Labor will end the university and TAFE funding crisis.

13. What will be your attitude towards accepting refugees?

There are 85,000 migration places every year in Australia plus 12,000 extra places allocated to refugee and humanitarian applicants. Labor is committed to the maintenance of 12,000 places for our refugee intake every year. Labor will also make targeted aid contributions and provide settlement support to countries of first asylum. This will help to reduce the number of people who illegally make their

way to Australia. A Labor Government will further increase Australia's contributions to assist the UNHCR in processing Afghani, Iraqi and other refugee applications in transit countries, such as Indonesia and Pakistan.

Although we are committed to maintaining our level of 12,000 refugees a year, we cannot afford to be an easy target for people smugglers. We must not let our immigration policy be subverted by unchecked illegal arrivals. This means having an Australian Coast Guard, and it also means recognising you can't protect your borders without working with your neighbours. The Labor Party will make further decisions about our immigration program, in the context of our total population needs, by establishing a new Office of Population. However, any strategy must be able to deal compassionately and realistically with emergencies such as the tragedies in East Timor and Kosovo. We must be able to respond rapidly to crises in order to assist people when the situation demands.

14. How will you strengthen Australia's defence forces?

The Labor party is committed to increasing Australia's security. Labor is committed to the 10-year funding for the Australian Defence Force announced last year. Additionally, Labor is committed to further national security reforms, which cover the areas of improved border security (so that we can protect Australia's sea, air, immigration and electronic borders better than we ever have before), combating terrorism (so that we can track and disrupt global terrorist networks more aggressively than we ever have before), and better national security planning (so that we can improve the way our national government deals with issues of national security).

The main measures in this program are:

- The new Australian Coast Guard;
- The new Federal Protection Service;
- Enhanced Australian Defence Force (ADF) counter-terrorist forces;
- The new Australian Federal Police (AFP) Anti-Terrorist Unit; and
- A powerful, Cabinet-level Ministry of Home Affairs.

After the attacks of 11 September in the United States, no one seriously questions the need to confront the new threats to our national security and fight global terrorism.

On 13 September, Labor announced a proposed national anti-terrorism program, partly drawn from work Labor had undertaken before the attacks.

Position Vacant

Youth Pastor

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 3 days per week

**Enquiries: Ole Petersen
 (02) 9524 7124**



Democrat leader Natasha Stott Despoja

Australian Democrats

1. What will you do to reduce unemployment and increase full-time jobs?

2. Will you do anything to help long-term unemployed people find work without facing harsh penalties?

The Democrats would make cutting unemployment the number one objective of national economic policy, ahead of cutting the budget deficit or delivering ridiculously low inflation rates to please the financial markets. Australia's chronic unemployment is a national disgrace, and economic policy needs to be restructured to make jobs growth the number one priority.

Youth unemployment remains too high in many of our communities. The problem is not just young workers. Mature-aged unemployed, once they lose a job, face the real prospect of never working again.

Unemployment is a major social ill. On the one hand, almost 7 per cent of Australians are unemployed and a third are under-employed. On the other, a quarter of Australians are working very long hours and the length of the average working week is increasing. The solution is obvious: redistribute the work and create more of it. Among other proposals, the Democrats suggest new, accurate measures of unemployment and under-employment; abolition of work for the dole, replaced by programs offering real work and real training; expanding labour market programs and a guaranteed right to education, training and skills develop-

ment for the unemployed so that they are better prepared for the jobs available; moving away from privatised employment services; increasing incentives and training for the unemployed to establish their own businesses by expanding the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme; reforming the tax system, particularly payroll tax, to make it more attractive to employ workers and to invest in new job-generating business opportunities; increasing the incentives for employers to create apprenticeships and traineeships and new employment; creating 40,000 jobs in the community service sector through additional public funding that uses the extensive life skills of the mature aged unemployed,

We support working towards a better sharing of existing work by attacking unreasonable hours and anti-social excessive overtime; and recognising that work performed in the home or in the community which is not paid work has a significant value to our society and our economy.

3. How will you help people retrain and undergo education without falling into poverty?

The Australian Democrats believe that disadvantaged Australians cannot participate socially or economically while living in abject poverty. Youth allowance (for students up to 25 years of age) and Austudy payment is presently up to 40 per cent below the poverty line. We know that students currently go without food to pay rent.

The Australian Democrats will raise youth allowance and Austudy payment to the pension rate and we will do this progressively over five years. We will also pay rent assistance to students.

These and other poverty-breaking measures will be funded from economic growth and equitable taxing of private trusts and companies.

4. Given our aging population, what will you do to encourage young couples to have larger families?

The Democrats believe that young couples should be allowed to determine the size of their own family without any encouragement or penalty being imposed by government.

Even if it is accepted that the population is ageing and that this will impose additional financial strain on younger generations, it is not necessarily the solution to simply encourage young couples to have larger families.

The answer lies in putting in place

appropriate health care, aged care, incentives to encourage superannuation and retirement incomes policies.

5. Will your health-care policies encourage bulk-billing for medical services? How will you make dental care more affordable?

The Democrats support the development of an equitable, efficient and high quality health care system that is accessible to all Australians.

We support Medicare as the fairest and most efficient way of delivering health care. We believe the Medicare levy should be increased for high-income earners, to raise additional funds directly for health. Private health services are an important part of the system, but no one should receive a lower standard of care because they cannot afford private health care. The Government's first responsibility is to ensure that the public system is properly funded. The Democrats recognise that access to dental care is a fundamental health and quality of life issue. Australia's system of dental care is in desperate need of reform. The Commonwealth must develop a national strategy with the states. The Commonwealth cannot justify spending approximately \$350 million subsidising dental services for middle and high-income earners through the private health insurance rebate, while denying the most disadvantaged groups in the community access to basic dental health services.

6. How will you further reconciliation with indigenous Australians?

The Democrats are committed to the full achievement of reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, characterised by equity, justice and harmony. We pay tribute to the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, for having moved the issue of reconciliation from the periphery to the very heart of the national social and political agenda in Australia. However, we acknowledge that reconciliation remains to be accomplished. We regard the *Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation*, the *Roadmap for Reconciliation* and the recommendations contained in *Reconciliation: Australia's Challenge, Final Report of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation* to the Commonwealth Parliament as the appropriate documents to steer the national reconciliation process.

We advocate amending the Constitution to recognise Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders as the

first peoples of Australia. This special status has associated with it unique civic, political, economic, social and cultural rights and responsibilities, which also require acknowledgment and protection under Australian law as a matter of urgency. The negotiation in good faith of an agreement or treaty to acknowledge and resolve this “unfinished business” is required to facilitate the process of reconciliation. Full and just reparations must be delivered to the stolen generations, their families and communities in accordance with the recommendations of the 1997 *Bringing Them Home* report.

7. How will you help older people remain independent in their own homes?

8. What will you do to meet the demand for places in aged care facilities?

The Australian Democrats support community-based and home-based aged care services and programs which assist people to stay in their homes, rather than forcing them prematurely into residential care. We do, however, recognise the importance of residential aged care for all who need it, regardless of their ability to pay.

We will actively work towards the provision of specific funding for dementia units to enable people to be cared for in facilities near their families and communities; immediate wage parity for aged care nurses together with school-based and vocational programs to encourage young people into nursing, or to attract former nurses back into the industry; and more community-based aged care services.

The Democrats will work to expand and increase existing payments to carers and provide guaranteed income support for persons engaged in unpaid caring activities for an older person at home.

9. Do you intend to maintain present

funding levels of all independent schools (currently 31% of students nationally)? If not, which schools will you target for decreased funding?

The Democrats commitment is an additional \$1 billion a year for government schools, now; increased funding for preschool, primary and secondary education to at least the OECD average; and a new national board of education to review government and non-government school funding.

10. What will you do to meet housing needs for homeless people and victims of family violence/breakdown?

Australia is facing a housing affordability crisis. More than a quarter of a million of Australian households spend more than a third of their income on housing. The Australian Democrats support the views of the Housing Industry Association that practical planning reform would reduce delays and uncertainties and the resulting unforeseen cost increases in housing, and we endorse the HIA national six-point integrated plan.

We strongly support the continuance of the first homebuyers’ housing grant, but believe it must be targeted at greater social and environmental outcomes, including accessibility. The Democrats are particularly concerned that housing strategies must link public housing policy and must take into account the need for integrated services for mental health, disability, long-term unemployment and other groups.

11. How will you overcome Australia’s critical shortage of teachers?

The Democrats’ commitment is 5000 more teacher undergraduate places over the next three years; HECS fee exemptions for teacher training, including one-year graduate diplomas; an extra teacher for every 100 students, giving schools the flexibility to reduce class sizes and provide better subject choice; generous incentives to encourage more maths, science and IT graduates and people from rural and remote areas to take on teaching and commit to staying in schools for, say, five years; succession planning for school leadership; scholarships for male students to train as teachers; improved professional development, career progression and mentoring opportunities for teachers; and implementing the recommendations of the Senate inquiry into the status of teaching.

12. How will you ensure that our ter-

tiary institutions remain internationally competitive?

The Democrats believe that access to publicly funded education is crucial to overcome systemic disadvantage and should be available to all regardless of sex, age, health, socio-economic background, racial or ethnic origin or place of residence.

Our policy, among other things, is to significantly increase operating grants of universities; abolish financial barriers to higher education such as HECS, while in the short-term, reducing HECS repayment threshold to average adult male earnings; wind back the ideological commitment to marketisation of education; and peg all forms of student income support including Austudy and New Start Allowance to the age pension with a view to minimising student poverty.

We also will launch a major capital works program.

13. What will be your attitude towards accepting refugees?

The Australian Democrats favour increasing the current refugee and humanitarian intake. We have consistently argued that asylum seekers should be informed of all their legal rights, including the right to representation and legal advice, and therefore support moves to increase funding to community legal centres providing this advice;

We believe asylum seekers should have adequate access to interpreter services; call for the abolition of temporary refugee visas; and advocate the replacement of detention centres with reception or processing centres where health and asylum claims are processed over a short time period.

14. How will you strengthen Australia’s defence forces?

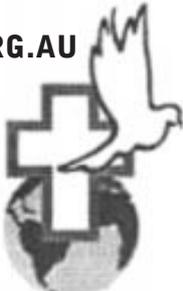
The Australian Democrats are committed to ensuring Australia ratifies the Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings 1997 and the Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism 1999. We also call on the Australian Government to ratify the Rome Statute for an International Criminal Court.

The Australian Democrats believe that Australia’s security depends on building confidence in international institutions and the rule of law. The Democrats will work towards rebuilding our reputation, meeting our nation’s obligations, and restoring confidence in the international institutions upon which our prosperity and security depends.

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MISSION WITHOUT BORDERS



Terror goes to Hollywood

Is it life imitating art, or is it the other way round?

With Hollywood's twice-delayed Emmy awards finally rescheduled for 4 November, it's back to business as usual for Tinsel Town. Or is it? Originally planned for 16 September, the US television awards show was postponed after the World Trade Centre attack. The new, toned down awards have been relocated to an auditorium that will only seat half the originally invited guests, and were expected to be "subdued". Typically, the production is now promoted as "a tribute" to emergency services and military personnel.

Meanwhile, a number of movies featuring views of the World Trade Centre have been either edited or delayed. Spiderman, for example, was to have been seen dangling from his web between the twin towers. That's now considered a little tasteless, and the expensive footage is now on the cutting room floor. Disney's *Big Trouble*, which uses terrorism in its story, has also been delayed, as has Warner Bros.' *Collateral Damage*, which features Arnold Schwarzenegger seeking revenge for a terrorist bombing of a Los Angeles office building.

Among other losers in the wash-up of the World Trade Centre disaster, spare a passing thought for author Tom Clancy. For almost two decades, Clancy has thrilled readers with immensely detailed "end-game scenarios", pitting hero Jack Ryan against every conceivable war and terrorist attack. In the light of a greater reality, who'll read Clancy novels now?

Clancy stands to lose not only readers, but movie royalties too. The jury is still



Arnold Schwarzenegger in *Collateral Damage*

Phil Campbell

out on the fate of the movie version of *The Sum of All Fears*. Recently completed, the movie features a terrorist-supplied nuclear device exploding next to a packed Super Bowl stadium in Baltimore. The resulting scene of death and devastation is many times worse than the one volunteers are still sorting through at Ground Zero. Want to go see it?

Even so, while Paramount weighs up when – or even if – the movie should be released, American movie commentator Geoffrey Wells argues *The Sum of All Fears* will do good business. "This may sound insensitive in the midst of our current anguish and talk about how values are suddenly changing in the wake of last week's disaster," says Wells, "but seven or eight months from now there won't be a guy under the age of 40 who won't want to see this thing". Mainly, of course, because in the movies, the good guys always win, and the terrorists always lose.

But if the terrorist attack in *The Sum of All Fears* is a little close to the bone, who'll be queuing to make the movie version of Clancy's subsequent book, *Debt of Honor*? This time, the climax involves a hijacked Japanese airliner which rams into Washington's Capitol Building, wiping out the entire US Government administration.

So is life imitating art? Has Clancy unwittingly sown the seeds of the world's worst terrorist disaster? Do Muslim extremists pore over his every word looking for new ideas? According to one reader review on the Amazon.com website, it's likely. "It wouldn't surprise me at all to find out that our country's enemies have been reading Tom Clancy," says the anonymous reviewer. "Some of the plot issues in this book are just too close to what the country is now facing."

In any case, one of the abiding changes brought about by the events of



Tom Clancy

11 September is that expressing reservations about the effects of what we watch and read is no longer the sole preserve of a few crackpot Christians. It's tempting to say "we-told-you-so", as Hollywood rushes to churn out a new breed of soft family-centred

patriotic comedies to soothe the wounded heart of the nation.

Tom Clancy, though, sees it from another perspective, claiming he raised the idea of a commercial airliner being crashed into a government building with a US Army General well before he published *Debt of Honor*. The General thanked Clancy, and promised to include the idea in upcoming "scenario research". I wonder if it helped?

Phil Campbell is Culture Watch Editor. ^{ap}

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prayer

NOVEMBER

- 21 Those elected or re-elected to our national parliament; and wisdom for the government as it deals with domestic and world issues.
- 22 Residents, staff and committees of Dunbar aged care facilities at Salisbury, Naracoorte and Elizabeth, South Australia.
- 23 Graceville home mission station, Brisbane; about 20 communicants and 2 elders; David and Jane Johnston.
- 24 The Presbytery of Maroondah, eastern Melbourne with 8 parishes and 1 home mission station totalling 11 congregations with 815 communicants and adherents, a theological lecturer, 4 retired ministers and 3 others under jurisdiction; Doug. Fraser clerk.
- 25 Paul Logan, clerk of the G.A.A. and the convenors and members of all national committees as they implement the decisions of the meeting in July.
- 26 Pupils, principal and staff of Covenant College (Presbyterian and Reformed), Gordon, Canberra.
- 27 Sue Poynter from Canterbury, Melbourne, and the work of witnessing in Chiba, Japan through teaching English and music.
- 28 Rex and Beverley Swavely and the 11 or so elders of Macquarie parish, Marsfield, northern Sydney; with about 100 communicants.
- 29 Warwick and Kathy Vincent from Hurstville, Sydney, working in Melbourne with Youth Ministries Australia (Campus Crusade) coaching youth workers.
- 30 That church members and elders in Australia and Scotland will be following the example of Andrew the apostle in seeking to bring people to Jesus (John 1:40ff; 6:8; 12:20ff).

DECEMBER

- 1 Richard and Linda Buchanan from Redcliffe Peninsula congregation, Brisbane, in the youth ministries team of Wycliffe Bible Translators, Queensland.
- 2 Presbytery of Canberra, NSW/ACT; 6 parishes and 4 home mission stations totalling 22 congregations with 1640 communicants and adherents, 7 retired ministers; Peter Davidson clerk.
- 3 Tablelands (Atherton) parish, North Queensland; communicants and adherents and elders; John Trappett.
- 4 Wyndham (Werribee) parish, western Melbourne; about 40 communicants and adherents and 4 elders; Barry and Sharon Porter.
- 5 Ipswich parish, Queensland; 215 communicants and adherents, 60 children and youth and 13 elders; John and Jan Langbridge, Wes. and Evelyn Redgen and Paul and Linden Blake.
- 6 The vacant June home mission station near Wagga, NSW; 55 communicants, 32 adherents, 21 younger people and 7 elders; Derek Bullen moderator.
- 7 Camperdown-Terang parish (with Garvoc) western Victoria; about 80 communicants and 6 elders; vacant, Barry Oakes interim moderator.
- 8 Mirral Korean parish, Croydon Park, Sydney; the members and elders; Chae O Park.
- 9 Dr Jacquie McLeod, anaesthetist from Kogarah and Armidale churches, NSW spending 6 months at Bemberek hospital, Benin, west Africa (she has also served in nearby Niger).
- 10 School and tertiary students as they finish the year and prepare for holidays and different courses or careers in 2002.
- 11 Rockingham "New Life" home mission station, Perth; Paul and Dawn Bloomfield.
- 12 The 5 parishes and 2 home mission

stations totalling 10 congregations of the Presbytery of Bendigo, Vic; with 440 communicants and adherents; the moderator and clerk.

- 13 Emerald, the Queensland Project charge for 2001, and the ministry of the Christian bookshop which is in the front of the building used for worship; Bruce and Elizabeth Harrison.
- 14 The cooperation through Bible Agencies Australia of the Bible League, Bible Society, Language Recordings, Pocket Testament League, Scripture Gift Mission, Scripture Union and Wycliffe Bible Translators.
- 15 Glen Waverley-Knoxfield parish eastern Melbourne; 24 communicants and adherents, 24 children and youth and 4 elders; Trevor and Ann Cox.
- 16 John and Sharon Irvin, David and Hannah Pak, the 104 communicants, 36 adherents, 65 young people and 6 elders of Cherrybrook parish at Marsfield, on Sydney's northside.
- 17 Scots Church, Geelong West, Victoria; 56 communicants, 11 adherents, 23 young folk and 8 elders; vacant, Graeme Weber interim moderator; Jim and Fairlie Stewart (supply).
- 18 The suburban Newcastle parish of Scots Kirk, Hamilton NSW; 182 communicants, 105 adherents, 30 young folk and 24 elders; John and Lynne Webster.
- 19 The work of the Missionary Aviation Fellowship in Australia, Papua New Guinea and worldwide.
- 20 Increased usefulness of Camp Tinaroo, Atherton Tablelands, North Queensland, following upgrading – Ron and Lyn Joseph caretakers.

Requests for prayer for specific events or needs may be sent to 20 Roberts Cres., Holden Hill 5088 or lochend@tpg.com.au at least two months ahead of time.

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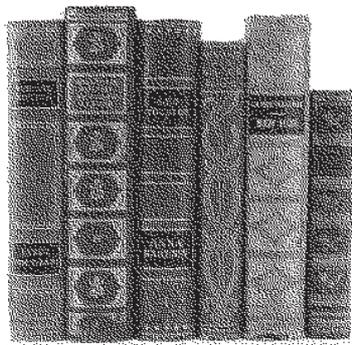
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books



James Forbes of Melbourne

Mairi Harman
Sydney: Crossing Press, 2001
Reviewed by Peter Barnes

James Forbes only lived for 38 years on this earth, but he is justly known as the first minister in a settled charge in the Port Phillip District. Converted himself in an Anglican church, Forbes had to struggle

hard in the colonies for the Presbyterian Church to receive equal treatment with the Anglicans from the government.

When he arrived in 1838, Forbes came to a Melbourne that was inhabited by white men who in many cases were still half-savage bachelors. The streets were paved with mud, while accommodation consisted often of tents and mud hovels. The population was less than 3500.

Forbes preached the gospel, set up Christian schools, disputed (as did many others) with the cantankerous John Dunmore Lang, agitated for the true welfare of the Aborigines ("these precious but perishing souls", he called them), and argued for total abstinence and self-government. In the Scottish tradition, the minister and the schoolmaster worked together, and Forbes sought to maintain this in what became the state of Victoria. As he put it: "Education is the cheap defence of the nations." (At least it used to be.)

This work is based on Mairi Harman's doctoral thesis, and it is good to see it in print. It is commended to all who are interested in the struggle to make known the gospel in the Australian colonies.

A Sad Little Dog

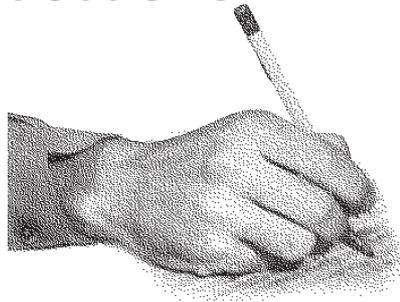
Jim Cromarty
Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2000
Reviewed by Peter Barnes

Jim Cromarty has now produced six books, each of 52 stories for family worship. This one, like the others, is full of biblical truth illustrated by a collection of good yarns. I particularly liked the stories of the faithful dog, the cranky bull and the smelly fish.

There are a few places which require a bit of tidying up. Galatians 2:11-21 is firstly about eating with Gentiles rather than the need to be circumcised, the result of Jesus' stilling of the storm was hardly peace of heart in the disciples, and the problem in Galatia was probably Gentiles who were out-Judaising the Jews rather than Jews who were sticklers for circumcision. These are all minor criticisms. We can be grateful yet again for this offering. It is warmly recommended as reading for all families.

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

letters



Intelligently designed

I congratulate you on your excellent magazine and in particular the October issue on the topic of design.

The Intelligent Design (ID) movement, of which I am a member, aims to present the scientific evidence for design in nature.

Since ID is not specifically religious, it is eligible to be considered as science. However, modern science is dominated by scientists whose personal philosophy of naturalism denies the reality of design, regardless of the evidence.

ID's strategy is to positively present the evidence for design in nature (which modern science is revealing in abun-

dance!) and negatively to expose the philosophical assumptions and weaknesses of Darwinism, which denies the reality of design.

In addition to the books mentioned, readers might wish to check out the leading ID websites <http://www.arn.org/> and <http://www.discovery.org/crsc/>.

*Stephen E. Jones
Warwick, WA*

Common mistake

In last year's annual report of our local church I wrote the following: "You may be wondering why I have inserted AD before the date. It was recently suggested in the *AP* magazine that we do this every time we write the date to show our commitment to the Christian practise of identifying the year, that is, by using Anno Domini (or in the year of our Lord) together with the year number.

This is to counter the unwelcome practice being widely used today of naming the year CE or Common Era. This denies the pre-eminence of Christ in world history."

I would be interested to know Douglas Milne's reason for using CE in his article on "Acts speak louder" in preference to AD. If, as I suspect, he intends it to mean

Christian rather than Common Era, would he not agree that only a Christian might know that? What message does it send to the non-believer?

*Anne Wotherspoon
Maroubra, Sydney*

What an opportunity

What a wonderful opportunity the churches have now, with all the difficulties we as a nation are having regarding the so-called boat people coming into our waters in ever increasing numbers.

We can look at it as a threat, as a great majority are doing, and it could well be the case – we don't know. Or we can seek God's will in the matter.

The Bible shows us time and again to seek the Lord and his ways in prayer. He alone can open and close doors and guide us in the way we should we go. I feel sure if our church leaders called their people to combined prayer meeting, or meetings in public places, we would see many blessings – not only regards the boat people, but in showing many non-church goers the church is relevant.

*L. Faulkes
Turrumurra, Sydney*

Providence and pain

Suffering encourages a heavenly perspective.

The terrible events of 11 September raise yet again the perennial question of how we are to understand awful acts of providence. How are we to understand the hijacking of four planes and the wilful and deliberate destruction of human life as the two towers of World Trade Centre in New York and then the Pentagon itself were devastated, with thousands of lives lost?

The question is not just how could 18 men armed with knives inflict such damage on the most powerful nation on earth? Rather, the question is, what was God – who is totally good and absolutely sovereign – doing on 11 September? Some might guess that he was punishing those who lost their lives, or that he was testing his people. Or perhaps he is chastening us.

Jesus raises these issues in Luke 13:1-5 where he deals with two disasters in his own day – one man-made, in that Pilate massacred some Galileans who were offering sacrifices, and the other “natural”, when a tower in Siloam fell down and killed 18 people. Christ draws some helpful lessons from such events.

First, disasters do not prove specific guilt. Some Galileans were apparently sacrificing down at Jerusalem, and there was some kind of disturbance. Pilate probably over-reacted, as he was wont to do, and called in the troops. The result was that a number of Galileans lost their lives. The second incident concerned what from the human perspective would be termed an accident.

In both cases our Lord clearly and specifically denies that the Galileans who were killed by Pilate’s troops or the 18 who perished under the fallen tower were any worse than other sinners of the time. Jesus is not referring to Pilate’s guilt in the killing of the Galileans, but to the guilt or otherwise of those who perished.

Of course, there is a general connection between suffering and sin in that Adam’s sin has led to our suffering and death. Job’s friends wanted to make a more direct connection. Hence Eliphaz asks (Job 4:7): “Remember now, who ever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off?” Later he is more



Peter Barnes

specific, and works backwards on the basis of Job’s intense suffering that he must have been thoroughly wicked, guilty of oppressing the poor and lacking any human compassion (Job 22:5-10).

Jesus’ own disciples made the same error when they saw the man born blind and asked: “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents?” (John 9:2). Jesus rejects the question, and answers “neither” – not meaning that the man and/or his parents were sinless, but that neither was being specifically punished for sin.

People tend to think there is no smoke without fire, and no suffering without sin. It is all too true that some suffering is a direct punishment of sin – the hangover follows the bout of drunkenness, AIDS may result from a homosexual lifestyle, or our pride may leave us friendless. But the connection is not automatic and guaranteed.



Every disaster – whether a car crash, a heart attack or a terrorist attack – should remind us of our mortality.

Second, disasters nevertheless point to judgment. Our Lord tells his hearers that unless they repent they too would all perish. Every disaster – whether a car crash, a heart attack or this recent terrorist attack – should remind us of our mortality. At best, life is a vapour that appears for a little time and then vanishes away (James 4:14).

I heard one of these modern counselling gurus on television recently. She criticised American schoolteachers for not talking about the terrorist attack with

their students. She was then asked what would she say to the children if she were a teacher. She said that she would reassure them that they were safe and secure. One would think that even an immature mind with limited experience of life would be able to see through such platitudes. Our expert counsellor surely knew that children have been killed in recent acts of terror, not least in American schools.

My mother groan’d, my father wept; Into the dangerous world I leapt. So wrote William Blake of his birth, and it is a sentiment which is rather closer to reality than the delusory comfort offered by our counsellor. We can find no true peace and safety in this world but only in Christ who has overcome the world (John 16:33).

Third, disasters demonstrate that we all need to repent. Philip Henry (Matthew’s father) once said that if he died in the pulpit, he would like to die preaching repentance, and if he died out of the pulpit, he would like to die practising it. This is the language of the true Christian. It runs all through Psalm 51 from King David. We find it too in the preaching of Peter (Acts 3:19) and of Paul (Acts 20:21; 26:19-20).

Something as terrible as the events of 11 September should cause us to reflect on our lives – on our selfishness, our neglect of God, our lack of concern for others, our distorted priorities, our failures in every area of life. This is a time to face the realities of life and death in God’s world. The events of 11 September do not prove specific guilt but are a reminder to us all of a yet greater judgment.

No one put this better than Augustine: “If punishment were obviously inflicted on every wrongdoing in this life, it would be supposed that nothing was reserved for the last judgment; on the other hand, if God’s power never openly punished any sin in this world, there would be an end to belief in providence.” If these lessons are not to be lost on us, we must bow before the mystery of providence, and repent before the mercy seat of Christ.

Peter Barnes is minister of Revesby Presbyterian Church, Sydney.

