

A U S T R A L I A N

Presbyterian

THE MAGAZINE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

may 2002



Deep water • Meet APWM's director • That loving feeling



Hear *The Bible Teaching of John MacArthur* on these Radio Stations:



| | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| VIC | | |
| Eastern FM Melbourne | 98.1 FM | 5.55am M-F; 6.30am Sun |
| ARK-FM Bendigo | 87.6 FM | 8.00pm M-F; 8.00pm Sun |
| 3CCC Bendigo | 89.5FM | 8.00am Sun |
| Good News Radio Ballarat | 103.9FM | 9.00pm M-F; 9.00am Sun |
| 3WAY FM Warrnambool | 100.9FM | 11.00pm Sun |
| Freshstream FM Yarra Ranges | 106.3 FM | 9.00am Sun |
| NSW | | |
| 2NBC Narwee, Sydney | 90.1FM | 12.30pm M-F |
| Rhema FM Tamworth | 89.7FM | 8.30pm Sat |
| 2GCR FM Goulburn | 103.3FM | 8.30pm Wed |
| QLD | | |
| 4RPH Information Radio Brisbane | 1296AM | 8.30pm M-F |
| Rim FM Boonah | 100.1FM | 8.30am Sun |
| Rhema FM Sunshine Coast | 106.5FM | 6.30pm M-F |
| Live FM Townsville | 99.9FM | 1.00am M-F |
| Rhema FM Mt Isa | 105.7FM | 7.30am & 8.30pm Sun |
| One O One FM Logan City | 101.1FM | 9.00pm Sun |
| SA | | |
| Freshstream FM Nth Barrossa Valley | 99.5FM | 8.30am Sun |
| NT | | |
| Rhema FM Darwin | 97.7FM | 6.00am M-F |
| TAS | | |
| 7RPH Hobart | 864AM | 9.00pm M-F |
| Web Page Broadcast | www.gty.org | |

Grace to You is the Media Ministry of John MacArthur, Pastor-teacher at Grace Community Church, Sun Valley California. A free tape is offered to first time contacts Write to: Grace to You (Australia) Ltd, PO Box 225 Holland Park, QLD 4121. Ph: 07 3847 6843; Fax: 07 3847 6853; Email: letters@gty.org.au Web: www.gty.org.au

GAA CHRISTIAN EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTRE

621 Punt Road
South Yarra 3141
03 9867 4637
southyarra@pcvic.org.au

(Please make all cheques payable to GAA Christian Education Committee)

THE CERTIFICATE OF CHRISTIAN STUDIES

Old Testament (G. Goswell),
New Testament (K. Martin),
Church History (P. Barnes),
Biblical Theology (D. Geddes)
being offered in 2002
at \$60 each.

The best selling WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH FOR THE 21ST CENTURY – STUDY EDITION

\$15 + \$3 pp –
prepared by DJW Milne,
Principal of the PTC
Melbourne.

Rejoice!

The Hymnbook for today's church.

- contemporary
- Christ-centred
- suitable for all ages
- more than 43,000 copies sold since 1987...

Editions available:

| | |
|-------------------|---------|
| Organist: | \$40.00 |
| Words Only: | \$16.00 |
| Melody Line Only: | \$16.00 |

Also available:

| | |
|----------------------|---------|
| HymnBase for Windows | \$80.00 |
|----------------------|---------|

All prices quoted in this advertisement are inclusive of GST.
All orders plus postage and handling.

Worship

The Book of Common Order
of the Presbyterian Church of Australia

- **Book** \$29.95
- **CD-ROM Version** \$34.95

(CD-ROM includes *Worship* Book in Adobe Acrobat format and all RTF type files that allow editing of text to suit individual needs. Suitable for PC and Mac users.)

Available From:

Miss Mary Beavan, 58 Williwa St, Portland, 2847 Phone (02) 6355 5063 Fax (02) 6355 5783
Email: pcooper@ptcsyd.wow.aust.com
Victoria: Presbyterian Resource Centre
156 Collins St, Melbourne, 3000 Phone (03) 9527 3270 Email: prc@pcvic.com.au

GOSPEL PERVERSIONS

Refuge for heresy: Michael Horton 4
Liberal fascism: Peter Barnes 8
Strategic blunder: David Thurston 10

CULTURE WATCH

Losing the plot: Joan Vennoch 12

BIBLE STUDY

The confronting Christ: Mark 6-10 13

NEWS

Home Front 17
Across Australia 18
World News 19

THE FLOOD

Deep water: Murray Adamthwaite 21

MISSIONS

Full steam ahead: APWM director Bill Lutton 24

PRAYER 26

LETTERS 27

DEVOTION

That loving feeling: John Piper 28

editorial

One of the most dangerous tendencies of the human heart is the deep-seated desire to “make a name for ourselves”. This longing, which corrupted the ancient culture of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9), is a source of continuing temptation for the modern church. History has shown that Christians can be just as intoxicated as the citizens of Babel with the trappings of power and the desire to be known. We justify our position by saying that we need the power and reputation to ensure the advance of the gospel in our culture.

For example, consider the German Church during Hitler’s rise to power. On 13 November 1933, 20,000 German Christians, who included church leaders, gathered in the Berlin Sports Palace. There, amid a fanfare of trumpets and high drama, German Christians acquiesced to the nazification of the church in exchange for political recognition and ecclesiastical privilege. They lamely agreed to the expulsion of Jewish Christians from church office, the purging of everything un-German from worship and the removal of all Jewish elements from the New Testament. By doing so, they traded their spiritual birthright for the promise of being part of something that was respected and exalted by their nation.

Again, consider how susceptible modern evangelical leaders have been to politicians who have shamelessly exploited their same weakness. Charles Colson tells the story of how a prominent Christian leader was wined and dined on the presidential yacht, *Sequoia*, during the 1972 re-election campaign in an effort to capture several key Midwestern states. The ploy was successful. The leader got what he wanted – access to power and influence. And Nixon got what he was looking for – a landslide win with 58 per cent of the vote.

The same tendency is at work in the evangelical movement today. While we long for spiritual power that will cause our society to receive the gospel, we can also yearn to be recognised for our impressive enterprises, large gatherings and political clout. There is something gratifying about belonging to a group that is instantly respected by society. But therein lies the danger: we can easily compromise the truth of the gospel. This is the warning of history and the sad experience of the modern evangelical movement. We ignore this lesson at our peril.

Peter Hastie ^{AP}

Unfaithfully His

Evangelicalism is increasingly a refuge for ignorance and heresy.



How did you become involved with the contemporary call to reformation in the Church?

I started to get really involved in this issue when I began to seek an answer to the question: how can someone as depraved as me find peace with God? That search led me to Paul's letter to the Romans. That was when I came to see that Romans was the key to understanding all the Scriptures. Then through God's good providence, I was introduced to a lot of people who were already labouring to spread the message of Reformation theology. With their encouragement, I have, in some small way, been able to help spread this message around too.

The Reformers called themselves "evangelicals". What did they mean by this term?

Well, the Reformers — Luther and Calvin — didn't want their movements to be known by their names. Luther said: "Whatever you do don't call people Lutherans". Likewise, Calvin said: "Don't call yourselves Calvinists, and don't let



Michael Horton talks to Peter Hastie

other people call you by that name". What they both preferred was the term "evangelical" because their movements were not trying to form a distinctive ecclesiastical pressure group; rather, what they were trying to do was to follow the gospel. And that's what the "evangel" is; it's the gospel.

So from the time of the Reformation on people wanted to be known as "evangelicals" or "gospellers". A person who is an "evangelical" is really interested in two things 1) getting the gospel right, and 2) getting the gospel out. And I believe that the Reformers were rightly concerned that the content, nature, and definition of that gospel message is not incidental to the missionary work of the Church.

The problem today, of course, is that the term "evangelical" can now be understood in two senses. One meaning has to do with the distinctive theological move-

ments that arose out of the Reformation — the Lutheran and the Reformed — and the churches that emerge out of those two traditions. However, the term is often used to refer to those belonging to the theological tradition of John Wesley and the Evangelical Awakening. And, then, subsequent to that, Charles Finney and Revivalism — especially in the United States.

So the real question today is this: can the Reformation stream of evangelicalism and what I call the Counter-Reformation stream of evangelicalism continue to coexist? And I think we are beginning to see that it's impossible to maintain that coexistence. The simple reality is that in order to be "evangelical" in the earlier sense, it's increasingly difficult for us to identify being an "evangelical" in the second sense.

What do you mean by the Wesleyan-Finney position being a Counter-Reformation movement at work today?

Well, I think it really begins by recog-

nising the fact that John Wesley had a different understanding of grace and human nature to the Reformers. Certainly Wesley shared a lot of the same concerns as the Reformers. He certainly wanted to defend the importance of grace and the doctrine of the new birth. But he took a mediating position and followed Arminian theology.

By the time we get to Charles Finney in the early 19th century, we have someone who is remarkably anti-supernatural in his understanding of salvation. He is “Pelagian”, one who believes that man has unfettered free will and the power to save himself. That’s a pretty serious charge to make against Finney, especially when he is regarded by everybody, all the way up to Billy Graham, as the greatest evangelist America’s ever produced.

What people forget, however, is that Charles Finney denied original sin. He also denied the substitutionary atonement. He said that it was legally impossible and absurd. He also claimed that the doctrine of justification by imputed righteousness is not the gospel. He even denied the necessity for a supernatural rebirth.

I think that theology in the evangelical movement around the world has now developed to the point where, if you have the right techniques, if you can draw the greatest number of people, and if you can just find the right buttons to push, then you can have all the results you need.

Charles Finney would have loved living in the modern polling era. I think he would have been very happy and satisfied with the Church growth movement, the contemporary Christian music movement, and a lot of other efforts that seem to say: “Hey! Salvation really is the work of man; revival is really the result of human effort and the growth of the Kingdom really depends on how cleverly human beings can organise evangelistic crusades.”

Some evangelical leaders today are critical of the Reformation; some, like Tom Wright, have even claimed it’s an aberration.

Everywhere I look I see people, including those in Reformed circles, talking about the Reformation as a tragedy. And I think that’s quite remarkable because even some Roman Catholic theologians are now saying that the Reformation wasn’t a tragedy; instead, they say that the real tragedy was that the Reformers were silenced even though there were some leading Roman Catholic theologians, including cardinals, who were sympa-

thetic to them. The real tragedy was that in 1564 the Roman Catholic Church officially condemned the gospel — that had never been done before! It was an official condemnation of the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone.

So the Reformation wasn’t the tragedy; the tragedy was Rome’s condemnation of the gospel and the subsequent expulsion of those who held the gospel from their churches and from the ministry.

I guess it all depends on whether you believe the Reformers really did recover the biblical emphasis on salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, because of Christ alone. If you don’t consider this the gospel, of course you’ll see the Reformation as a tragedy.

Over the past decade, you’ve played a significant role in alerting the evangelical movement to heresy in its ranks. What’s the movement in danger of losing?

I guess heresy-hunter is not the greatest title of distinction. I don’t think I’d be thrilled to have someone write on my tombstone, “Michael Horton – A Great Heresy Hunter!” However, having grown up in evangelicalism and having been convinced of the reformed faith, I am increasingly concerned that my brothers and sisters don’t enjoy the freedom — the wonderful liberation that there is – in gospel truth.

People tend to get the impression from us sometimes that truth is a drudgery; it’s some legalistic, narrow-minded ‘i’-dotting and ‘t’-crossing operation. But it’s really a liberating thing when we find out that our salvation is completely achieved by someone else outside of us — Jesus Christ. That’s a liberating truth.

It thrills my soul to know that the Lord perseveres with Michael Horton, the sinner, even when my faith and obedience seem practically non-existent.

But tragically, these truths are in question today even in evangelical circles. In fact, we’re not even sure in the evangelical movement today whether God knows the future in a comprehensive way.

Are you referring to the openness of God controversy?

Exactly! One of the great issues evangelicals are struggling with at the moment is the question: Is God changing? Is he in some sense a “victim” along with the rest of us? Evangelicals are shying away from the sovereign, transcendent God of the Bible. Instead, God now seems like one of us. He’s no threat. The “*I-feel-your-pain*” theology is very prominent in evangelicalism.

The movie *Oh God!* with George Burns, portrayed God as a kind of old man who walked around trying to correct people. God took himself seriously, but no one else did. And that really is the god of most Americans. Indeed, and I am sad to say this, it’s become the god of most evangelicals. Many evangelicals would prefer to have a god who feels their pain to a God who does something about it because he is sovereign.

Evangelicals have difficulty believing in an all-knowing God who is benevolent. Further, evangelical practice has been undermined by a moralism that supplants Christ-centred preaching and also by an obsession with entertainment in our churches. All these things are serving to undermine the Christian faith in our time.

Some people in mainstream evangelicalism look on you as a “wise-guy”. You keep throwing stones at colleagues who are actively preaching the gospel to the unchurched.

Well, first of all, it wouldn’t be the first time that somebody called me a “wise-guy”; my own family have done it a few times. I acknowledge that Christians have to be careful about the way they interact with their brothers and sisters. There are a lot of people watching and a lot of Christians who can be easily confused. So we do have to be concerned about the way we talk about our fellow Christians. I accept that.

At the same time, when someone puts a book into print publicly, anyone should be able to critique it openly. Most people who write books at a sophisticated level are used to that. The problem is that we have a lot of evangelical celebrities who don’t like other people reviewing their work. What they want are people who will surround and flatter them. And these are the people who have been particularly upset with any kind of public criticism. But Christians have a duty to be self-critical because none of us has a handle on everything that the Bible teaches. We have to listen to each other — and I include myself in that.

The problem is that too much is at

stake to remain silent. We're talking about millions of people who are hearing a false gospel. I would rather have fewer people talking about Jesus Christ than a lot of people misrepresenting Christ.

The problem today is that modernity has had a tremendously corrosive effect on the Church. Marketing, consumerism, pragmatism all treat God as though he is a kind of therapy. Many of the emphases that have contributed to the man-centred

The average lay-person without a degree who was properly catechised knew the Bible better than most pastors today in the US.

aspect of contemporary evangelicalism are getting a lot of short-term results, but what will be the long-term fruit?

I think we are already beginning to see that: statistics show us that the big mega-churches aren't

actually bringing unbelievers to church. The mega-churches mainly consist of people, who for one reason or another, dropped out of church for a while, or have been pulled out of some smaller churches where they grew up. People go to them because they find them more fun, more exciting, and more entertaining. There's more for the kids to do and so forth. However, these mega-churches aren't, for the most part, bringing great numbers of people to Christ. They are collecting people who are not very rooted (because we live in a rootless society anyway), and giving them a church that lets them be rootless; a church to which they are not accountable. This means that they can fly in and out of church in exactly the same way as they do in business meetings. Obviously, there's a very low level of commitment here.

Sadly, that's what a lot of people are looking for in America in every relationship. So it's not surprising that those churches are full. What is surprising is that they think that this is evangelism. My great fear today is not that we're losing the lost or failing to reach the unreached; our problem is that we are not reaching the reached. We're going to have a generation that doesn't know what it believes or why it believes it, and has come back to church with the tantalising offer that they can believe whatever they believe and act however they want to act, regardless of the consequences.

Many of the ministries you criticise have large numbers and enormous

influence. How can so many sincere and generous people be wrong?

The fastest growing organised religious movement today is, of course, Islam. So I guess that answers the question. Mormonism is also growing rapidly. I'm not at all surprised! If you believe that the human mind is an idol factory, and we are constantly trying to create religious viewpoints that justify our own unbelieving assumptions, it doesn't surprise me at all that what we have now in the evangelical world is attracting large numbers of people.

What price has the evangelical church paid for tolerating ignorance and shallowness?

Well, one of the consequences is that we now have a generation in the leadership of many of our churches that is remarkably illiterate in Scriptural knowledge and doctrine. Many evangelicals have a poor knowledge of church history — even the basic knowledge of where we came from and who we are and what we believe. The average lay-person without a college degree who was properly catechised in our churches — while our churches still taught from a catechism — knew the Bible better than most pastors today in the United States. Unfortunately, that kind of catechesis is an endangered species in churches today.

What is interesting is that the so-called boomer generation, which has been identified by all kinds of studies as a selfish generation, is now being followed by a very different generation, Generation X, which is more cynical and less interested in being told everything is going to be OK. Perhaps the message of the Reformation will resonate more with Generation X who are more likely to accept the message "You're not OK! I'm not OK!"

The fact is that a lot of younger people today are looking for truth and wanting answers. They are tired of being told: "Don't worry! Be happy!"

Some of your critics say the church's problem is not that we don't have the right doctrine, but that we're not living it.

I think the problem is precisely the opposite. I think we are living out our beliefs! I think that's what we see all around us. Evangelicalism is living out exactly what it holds to be true.

Evangelicalism, for the most part, at least in the United States, believes that man is basically good by nature.

According to a recent survey, 77 per cent of American evangelicals said that man by nature is basically good; 86 per cent said that God helps those who help themselves; and over half of the evangelicals surveyed said that that was a biblical quotation. So this is our theology, this is the operating theology of the evangelical world today: man is basically good and God is there to make us happy.

Well, what kind of lives will that generate? What kind of effect will that have in our behaviour and culture? Exactly the kind of culture I think we have in the United States at the beginning of the 21st Century: a narcissistic, hedonistic culture in which people just care about themselves. They don't look to the long-term. We don't care very much about our descendants or our ancestors. What we really care about is ourselves.

What I think is really quite remarkable is that some of the most vocal, right-wing, Christian political organisations in America today are headed by people who hold, on the theological side of things, a number of basic ideas about life that are not too different from the flower people of the '60s. They have a very conservative view of how the country should look ethically, but paradoxically they promote a theology that continues to be very self-indulgent — and in many respects grows out of the very ethical world that they're trying to outlaw.

Who are some of these prominent leaders?

I think of people like James Dobson. I guess I can't mention Bill Hybels anymore, because Bill Hybels has become a buddy of ex-President Bill Clinton! But there are others like Robert Schuller.

Actually, Robert Schuller is a great example of somebody who doesn't believe in a radical human fall, nor sees our desperate need for divine grace and forgiveness. Schuller believes that people are basically good by nature. And yet he calls himself an evangelical, is politically conservative, and wants to stem the tide of immorality in our country.



Robert Schuller

The Bible talks about false prophets. How do we distinguish them? And how great is their threat today?

That's a good question. Someone once said that the best way to tell a counterfeit is to know the real thing. And the best way, I think, for us to discern between true and false prophets is for us to know the Word of God so well that when something just doesn't ring true, a bell goes off. The problem today is that the bells aren't going off because we don't really know the Bible.

For instance, if we are talking about a particular view of human nature, can we critique it against the whole biblical witness in order to explain what we believe human nature to be? I think that's how we'll be best prepared to spot false preaching.

Here's another thing to think about in relation to false prophets: if the preaching that you're listening to flatters the congregation, then get nervous. People today like to call flattery encouragement, but it amounts to the same thing. Of course, I'm not suggesting that there is no place for comforting people. God tells Isaiah, the true prophet, to "comfort my people" after they have been levelled by the law. A true prophet knows that people need to

This is the operating theology of the evangelical world today: man is basically good and God is there to make us happy.

be encouraged by the gospel. But that's quite different from flattery.

So I think people should suspect any preacher who has a confused message about law and gospel. If anyone comes and suggests to you that things aren't as bad as the Bible portrays, or the gospel isn't as wonderful as the Scripture says, he should be viewed with suspicion. He's probably a false teacher.

Again, I think we have to beware of false prophets who draw people after them instead of bringing them into the Church where they themselves are under authority. Preachers should be glad to be directed by the creeds and confessions of the Church. They should also be willing to be subject to its discipline. At the end of the day, we can't all be shepherds. We have to commit ourselves to shepherds but we should only commit ourselves to people who are reliably sent by God through his Church.

You've charged many of the televangelists with serious distortions of the gospel. Which constitute the most threat?

I don't know who you have on television in Australia. You probably have a lot of the same ones we have over here. Let me think ... I'm trying to remember the ones who haven't gone to jail. They seem to change so often. They're in and out of prison all the time!

Well, I'm sorry to say that Jimmy Swaggart is back on cable in the States. Then there's Benny Hinn, Kenneth Hagan and Kenneth Copeland. My own personal view is that Kenneth Copeland and the "faith teachers" (as they're called) are the most dangerous because they have the appearance of preaching the Word. Everything they do is Word-centred, at least in name. Their teaching is called "Word of faith" or the "Word-faith teaching". But they're not interested in what the Word actually teaches; they just want you to believe promises that have been wrenched out of their context and that can be mouthed as an "*Abracadabra*" to get the genie to do whatever you want. I think their health and wealth gospels are a very dangerous message in our day.

I don't think Robert Schuller is quite as dangerous because he doesn't say anything. He just repeats the sort of sentimental stuff that you find in Hallmark cards.

But doesn't he soothe and flatter?

Oh, yes! He's a master at it. He certainly soothes and flatters! But I wonder, at the end of the day, how much damage Robert Schuller really does. I guess I'm gradually coming to believe, more and more, that people like Schuller are not really the problem.

The real problem is that our churches are not faithfully preaching Christ week after week. If the churches that these people were coming from were doing their job effectively, then we wouldn't have the problem. If pastors were engaged in faithful preaching and teaching and were grounding people in a Word and Sacrament ministry along with effective discipline, then there wouldn't be a market for Robert Schuller and Kenneth Copeland. The problem is that there's a huge market today because the Church has been so irresponsible in the past. This is the result of the Church getting off-track and doing its own thing instead of what Christ commissioned it to do.

You're on record as saying: "The gospel as heralded by some of the TV-preachers is even more perverted than that proclaimed by Tetzels when he was selling his indulgences at the



Kenneth Copeland

time of Luther. It is overtly blasphemous and anti-Christian!"

Did I really say that? Goodnight! This is why you should never write anything when you're still young. However, I still agree with it. At least Tetzels really did seem to be

doing what he was doing out of a concern for the people to whom he was selling the indulgences. And, yes, it was for the building of the world's largest cathedral. I think he was genuinely concerned to give people an opportunity to get their friends and loved ones out of purgatory for rather a small charge. Today, I think it's more insidious because the profiteering is more shameless. It has now reached the point where it is creating quite a cynical, unchurched audience.

Personally, I believe that if all these evangelistic ministries collapsed, there would probably be more long-term effective evangelism going on, at least in the US. Here people have become quite hardened against Christianity, not because they've run into actual Christians, but because the only contact they have with Christianity any more are these crazy public manifestations.

Dr Michael Horton is associate professor of historical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, California, president of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, editor of Modern Reformation magazine, and a noted author of more than a dozen books.

Peter Hastie is issues editor of AP.



LET'S GET MARRIED!

– or should we just move in?

\$5.50 (incl. GST) plus \$1 post

**Church and Nation Committee
49 Worthing Ave, East Burwood 3151
phone (03) 9886 7670
(postage varies on multiple orders)**

OTHER BOOKLETS: Abortion, Euthanasia, Homosexuality, Freemasonry, Fractured Fellowship available at the same price

Liberal fascism

The failure of the German church under Nazism offers lessons for today.

It is the received wisdom in many circles that fundamentalism in religion is somehow linked to fascism in politics. The theological “right” is supposed to be linked to the political right. Islamic extremists are referred to as fundamentalists, and the inference is often drawn that there is a parallel between Christian extremists and fundamentalists.

In the public mind — or the journalistic mind, if such a thing exists — Hitler, Osama bin Laden, the Ku Klux Klan, and fundamentalist churches are somehow lumped together. But do the so-called religious right and the extremist political right go together?

It is both interesting and instructive that in Sydney, Professor Samuel Angus, an extreme liberal in theology, was known to express pro-Nazi sentiments in politics. The genial apostle of Christ-likeness repudiated fundamentalism with great vehemence but supported Hitler’s regime in Germany.

It is worth our while to ask some questions: How common was this among theological liberals? And what about the Protestant resistance to Hitler? How strong was it? Was it liberal or evangelical? And what conclusions can we draw that can help us today?

Hitler came to power as Chancellor of Germany in January 1933. Almost immediately the Evangelical (Protestant) Church went through a crisis. In July the German Christians group won the Church elections comfortably against what became known as the Confessing Church (despite the inclusive name, the German Christians simply incorporated the Nazified Protestant Churchmen who were opposed by the Confessing Church).

Hitler hailed the German Christians as that which was “new” in the Church. By the mid-1930s the pro-Nazi group claimed about 600,000 adherents, although there were many internal disputes and splinter groups. About one-third of Germany’s 18,000 Evangelical pastors were formally connected with the German Christians.

After elections in the regional churches in July 1933 Ludwig Müller became



Peter Barnes

Germany’s first and last Protestant Reich bishop. At the national synod at Wittenberg (the so-called “brown synod”, due to the number of men in SA uniforms), Müller declared: “The old has come to an end. The new has begun. The political church struggle is over. The struggle for the soul of the people now begins.”

Müller was a man of modest intellect, with a coarse and earthy manner, and a member of the Nazi Party. He died of a heart attack — apparently - at the war’s end, and his widow was forced to deny that he had committed suicide.

Professor Samuel Angus, an extreme liberal in theology, was known to express pro-Nazi sentiments in politics.

In opposition, the Confessing Church grew out of the Pastors’ Emergency League, which was established in 1933 by the Berlin-Dahlem pastor Martin Niemöller. Niemöller was anti-Semitic, but would not exclude Jewish converts from the ranks of the Protestant clergy. The Confessing Church ran its own national synods in 1934, 1935 and 1936, and came to run illegal seminaries (Dietrich Bonhoeffer headed up the seminary at Finkenwalde).

The Confessing Church suffered at the hands of the Nazi government. By 1935 there were 21 Protestant pastors in concentration camps. Martin Niemöller spent eight years in concentration camps, Paul Schneider was virtually beaten to death at Buchenwald for refusing to accept his banishment from the Rhineland and refusing to salute the Nazi flag, Hans Ehrenberg was incarcerated in Sachsenhausen in 1938 and finally fled to England, while Dietrich

Bonhoeffer became involved in the plot to kill Hitler and was hanged in April 1945.

The Confessing Church should not be seen as comprehensively opposed to National Socialism. On the Nazi side, Bormann and Himmler certainly saw Christianity and Nazism as incompatible (it is one of the Lord’s ironies, surely, that Bormann referred to Christianity as “that poison”, but seven of his nine children became Christians, and one became a missionary). On the Christian side Bonhoeffer agreed that Christianity and Nazism were contrary to one another, and went on to refer to Hitler as “anti-Christ”.

However, Bonhoeffer well realised that not all the Confessing Church was as convinced as he was of the evil of Nazism. He wrote: “Dreamers and the naive like [Martin] Niemöller still believe they are true National Socialists, and maybe it is kindly Providence that preserves them in this illusion.”

Nor should the Nazis be seen as consistently pro-German Christian. They usually did not return the favours that the German Christians showed them. Whereas the Soviet Union softened its attacks on Christians during World War II, Nazi hostility to Christianity became more obvious in the war.

The German Christians were certainly anti-Semitic. One of the most notorious episodes in the history of the German Christians came with the Sport Palace rally in Berlin on 13 November 1933 when a German Christian schoolteacher, Reinhold Krause, lambasted the Old Testament, ridiculed “rabbi” Paul, and repudiated the cross. He called for the “rapid, unqualified implementation” of the Aryan Paragraph (the removal of Jews from public service and church).

In 1934 there were about 582,000 Jews in Germany, and about 30 to 35 of Germany’s 18,000 Evangelical pastors had Jewish ancestry. The state forbade mixed marriages and excluded non-Aryans from the civil service, and the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 deprived Jews of citizenship. By September 1941 Jews

were forced to wear an identifying star of David.

The German Christians adopted the same attitudes. In 1935 the Combat and Faith Movement required of its members this declaration: "I declare that I am of Aryan blood, as well as that both of my parents and my grandparents are of pure Aryan blood." The Godesberg Declaration of April 1939 established the Institute for Research into and Elimination of Jewish influence in German church life.

The German Christians sought to exclude baptized Jews from the Church. The bishop of Bremen, Heinz Weidemann, declared that his church was "officially anti-Jewish" and purged it of Old Testament terms.

Germany's liberal theologians had traditionally repudiated the Old Testament — Schleiermacher and Harnack, for example, would not preach from it. Terms like Jehovah, Hallelujah and Hosanna were to be purged from German Christian hymnbooks. The Protestant Soldier's Songbook omitted any references to Old Testament characters, and did not use the terms Hallelujah or Hosanna.

German Christians often claimed, following the lead of the religious philosophers Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Emanuel Hirsch, that Jesus was not Jewish, and that John 4:22 ("salvation is of the Jews") was not authentic. Hirsch rejected the virgin birth, and considered that Jesus probably was not of Jewish blood.

In 1942 the German Christian bishop of Bremen concluded: "Today every German can learn the freedom from the law, for example, from Nietzsche; he does not need a Paul for that, and thereby avoids the danger of being infected by dreaded Jewish-rabbinical doctrines."

Karl Barth in 1933 attacked the German Christians as those who believed in "another God". It was common for the German Christians to attack the Confessing Church as Jewish, and in 1935 one German Christian pastor from the Ruhr wrote to Julius Streicher's anti-Semitic newspaper, *Der Stürmer*, and called for measures against the Confessing Church.

The German Christians saw themselves as the people's church, in which national ambitions dominated. A woman asked Bishop Friedrich Coch of Saxony whether the Christian or the National Socialist comes first. Coch replied that the

National Socialist came first: "In order to be a Christian, I first have to be born and if I've been born in this country, I'm a German and every German today, if he is a decent guy, is a National Socialist." In 1933 Joachim Hossenfelder maintained that "A godless fellow member of the Volk is closer to us than an alien, even if that alien sings the same songs or prays the same prayer."

Bishop Ludwig Müller had little interest in doctrine, but much in the Volk. In 1942 he declared: "There is only one God and there is only one Germany." German Christians would even speak of "eternal Germany". Pastor Kurt Frör of the Confessing Church had good reason to lament in 1937: "The German Christians do not know what the church is. They do not know the difference between the people of God and the kingdom of the world."

In a particularly revealing link with aspects of Christianity today, the German Christians were anti-doctrinal. The absence of clear biblical belief left a vacuum for the Nazi worldview to fill.

Pastor Georgi in 1937 declared: "For us, what Jesus said is not decisive. And church councils too err and have erred. We gladly let ourselves be labelled heretics for this knowledge, for it has always been heretics who have saved the church's life."

Religion became identified with life, not doctrine (again, the echoes resonate in many churches today). The German Christians emphasised ritual, responsive readings, hymns, and biblical texts mixed with passages from German heroes. Worship services were replaced with "divine celebrations". Baptism was "into the community of the Volk".

One former Roman Catholic priest became a German Christian pastor in Kulmbach in Bavaria, and repudiated what he called the paper pope and the human pope. This was typical of theological liberals — then and now — who repudiated infallibility of any kind, whether in the Bible or the papacy.

In the Rhineland in 1935 the German Christians announced that "whereas the Jews were the first to write out their faith, Jesus never did so". The superintendent of chaplains during the war, Heinrich

Lonicer, rejected any recitation of the confession of faith as "no one understood it any more", but enforced services to honour Hitler's birthday.

It is small wonder that historian Doris Bergen writes of the "doctrinal nihilism" of the German Christians! She also warns that "it would be an oversimplification to equate liberal theology and German Christianity", but Robert Erickson observes that "many of the most enthusiastic supporters of Nazism were among theologians in the 19th century liberal theological tradition".

Harnack died in 1930, but Martin Rade, one of his students, was vocal in his opposition to National Socialism. We will never know how Harnack would have responded to Nazism, but it ought to be remembered that the spokesman for "liberal Christianity" saw Christianity as utterly opposed to Judaism and would have been happy for the Church to drop its adherence to the Old Testament.

To be fair, Paul Tillich and Rudolf Bultmann found themselves at odds with aspects of Nazi teaching. Yet it is sadly true that liberal theologians had become too used to re-creating Jesus in their own image and the image of their own age.

After the war, in October 1945 the Evangelical Church issued the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt, which expressed the Church's repentance "for not witnessing more courageously, for not praying more faithfully, for not believing more joyously, and for not loving more ardently". It was a noble statement, but the German Christians were so lacking in doctrine that they were usually reabsorbed fairly quickly into the Church by the 1950s.

When all due qualifications have been made, it seems that the German Christians were more liberal than evangelical. They drew their inspiration from the world, not the Word; they repudiated doctrine; and they interpreted Christianity in a way that was supposedly relevant to their culture.

The facile equation of fundamentalism and fascism does not bear up so far as Nazi Germany is concerned.

Fundamentalist claims of authority can arouse the world's suspicions — sometimes rightly so. However, to remove biblical authority simply makes the world the authority, which is far more damaging.

The main lesson should be clear: those who seek to be relevant rather than faithful end in bondage to the world rather than liberated by the Word.

"There is only one God and there is only one Germany."

Strategic blunder

Pragmatic planning leads us to Christian compromise.

Chris was neither very poor nor very rich but this did not make him content with his lot in life. Once, long ago, his family had been fabulously wealthy and powerful but they had since fallen on hard times. Late at night, Chris's Nanna would tell him wonderful stories of the glory days. On those nights, his sleep would be filled with images of days gone by.

One day Chris was rummaging among the boxes in the attic and he came upon a small chest. He opened it up and it contained nothing but an old bronze lamp, or was it gold? He rubbed it hard and there before his eyes was a genie. "You have three wishes", said the genie. Chris' eyes glazed over...

Well, you know how the story will end; Chris will get his first wish, then spend the next two wishes trying to undo the disaster brought about by wish fulfilment!

Chris is in the situation Christianity finds itself — once influential within western culture but now very much the poor cousin, occasionally referred to but increasingly ignored when it comes to the decisions that matter. We remember the times when the lines of church and state were blurred; the halcyon days of Geneva and Scotland, if we are Presbyterians, and Elizabethan England, if we are Anglicans. While we cannot expect a reversal that will bring about a structural power and influ-



**David
Thurston**

ence we long for, we dream of de facto power and influence — we want to belong to something successful.

And we are anything but successful according to the world, or even according to our longings. Generally, we are confronted with lower numbers in attendance at our churches. An increasing number of those involved in full-time ministry are resigning due to burnout, disillusionment or marriage breakdown. Congregations of all denominations are becoming unviable and church buildings are sold only to become craft shops, restaurants or houses.

We are facing a crisis. It is in this crisis we will be offered old brass lamps containing genies who will offer us three wishes. In our present situation, it is easy for our desire for significance and influ-

ence to betray us.

What are we most likely to be attracted towards? My guess is strategies for growing, getting stronger and developing influence so that as a congregation, minister or denomination we can feel good about ourselves. Now of course there is nothing intrinsically wrong about growth, but neither is there anything intrinsically right. Cancer is remarkable cell growth.

In our longing to grow, it is possible that we will accept any growth and only find out later that it was cancerous because it owed more to the world than to the Word. It is Chris's first wish gone wrong.

We live in a technological society where the defining criterion is pragmatism. That is: does it work, is it successful? To think that we can live in such a society and not be influenced at a foundational level displays an unhealthy naiveté that can only lead to carelessly adopting tools and programs that are antithetical to what God calls us to be. The tool shapes the hand, and our obsession with strategy is unhealthy. It will shape us, and our final condition will be worse than when we began.

Strategies are normally the fruit of a work of God. The success in one place is analysed. General principles are distilled from the experience as if it were planned, and then a plan, process or strategy is manufactured. Real growth or life is never like that.

The problem with any strategy per se, is that it simplifies complex issues down to the level of an equation. They say, "These are the elements you have to work with, this is how you put it together and if you do it properly it will work!" The only problem is that for the equation to work you must remove all the variables and God would have to be the most difficult variable there is when it comes to strategy.

Strategy, pragmatism or success do not always have to be godless but it will always tend toward that in our culture. In the New Testament, there are examples of strategy, such as Paul's missionary strategy — going to the main towns and speaking first to the Jews and then the Gentiles — but even this was theologically (God-

There is nothing intrinsically wrong about growth, but neither is there anything intrinsically right. Cancer is remarkable cell growth.

**a position
for a
visionary
with
drive**

Warnervale Regional Uniting Church, Central Coast, NSW, invites applications for a full-time position as a Community Builder. The chosen applicant will create and develop ways of reaching, in a relevant way, a fast-growing community with the Good News. The Warnervale region is predicted to reach a population of around 72,000 within 20 years. This person will work with the Minister and be accountable to the Church Council and congregation. The main thrust of this position will be to interact with the community in exciting, creative ways. This is a specified ministry position but an appropriately qualified lay person may be considered.

FURTHER INFORMATION FROM MRS JAN MCGRATH
PO BOX 6111 GOROKAN 2263 PHONE 02 4393 3217
Email: chezjan@ccns.net.au



Under the Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998 it is illegal for prohibited persons to apply and a "Working with Children Check" will be required.

thought) driven.

We are the inhabitants of a culture where making life manageable, and fixing it when it is not, is the substance of our existence and all this is done in the absence of God. Even in our church growth strategies, all too often he is defined out of the dynamic of growth and becomes the silent partner.

Evangelicalism is being confronted with the lamp and three wishes. Is there any way we can avoid the weakness of strategy? Yes, by being weak.

God gives his people a strategy, but it is not a strategy that will give us power or influence, so we can arrive at the magic number of 10 per cent of the population, and finally be a force to be reckoned with. The strategy God calls us to is one that avoids the pitfalls of pride, arrogance and power – it is the strategy of weakness.

To see this strategy being worked out in its most complete form we need only turn to 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5. Paul's aim (a strategy) is stated in 1.31: "Therefore, as it is written, 'Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.'" and 2.5: "so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom but God's power".

Paul's strategy is to honour God and at the same time undermine man's godless confidence in himself and provide believers with a confidence that is not in man but God.

For Paul the message determined the method and made the man as well as the church.

The message, v23: "but we preach Christ crucified a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles." The cross is God's determined strategy to demonstrate the foolishness and weakness of man because what truly saves – the death of Jesus – is evaluated as useless.

The method, 2.1-4: "When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power."

There was a perfect match between the message and the method – the man who preached the message. There is no doubt that Paul could have used eloquence and wowed them with logic – he is not lack-

Is there any way we can avoid the weakness of strategy? Yes, by being weak.



ing in these things. However, we see that Paul's life is a study of weakness, not power, of giving up, not taking – a life modelled on the Saviour.

The Church, 1.26-29: "Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him."

A principle of fishing is that you catch what you fish for. Whatever bait you put on the line will determine what you catch. So, if you put a cross on the hook don't expect to catch the big fish! And the church that grows from God's message through God's power in God's man is likewise unimpressive to the world.

As you can see above, Paul models his ministry on Jesus, and it is Jesus whose ministry was a strategy of embracing weakness and undermining the powers of

the day, and so brought salvation.

It is Jesus who describes his ministry as the smallest seed that grows into a fair-sized tree. It is Jesus who says the first will be last and the last first. It is Jesus who rebukes his power-hungry disciples by putting a child in their midst and saying they needed to become like this little one. It was Jesus who said that he did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. It was Jesus who said that in losing our life we gain it. It was Jesus who called his followers to take up their cross and follow him.

If we want to follow Jesus in the message he proclaimed and lived, with the strategy he demands, we need to see that it is the strategy of weakness, of dying to self, and nothing less than that.

I take it that that will mean we will assess the strategies we are tempted to use – the wishes we are tempted to make – by the cross. That means we must not only entrust our sin to the crucified Saviour but follow in his footsteps.

Speaking about temptations, Jesus was confronted with a genie in the desert who offered him three wishes – he didn't use one of them. He walked all the way to death, and found life at the end of it.

Rev David Thurston is the Minister of Central Sydney Presbyterian Church and the newly-appointed Chaplain at St Andrews College at Sydney University. He has a keen interest in church-planting and was the founding pastor of Parramatta City Presbyterian Church and also of Central Sydney.



Sutherland Shire Christian School

Teachers • Physics and Junior Science

Applications are invited from enthusiastic and committed Christian teachers of reformed persuasion, for the above full time position available from the beginning of fourth term 2002. The position involves teaching Science in the junior secondary and Physics in the senior secondary. There are three full time teachers in the Science area and the curriculum is well developed.

Sutherland is a Christian parent-controlled Kindergarten to HSC, Protestant, coeducational school with enrolment in 2002 of 750 students and a staff of over 70. Buildings and facilities are all modern and well equipped. In 2001 we celebrated our 25th year of operation. The school is located at Barden Ridge in a delightful bush-land setting 25km south of Sydney.

Interested teachers should write (with full details of teacher training and teaching experience) to:

The Business Manager
Sutherland Shire Christian School
P.O. Box 390 Sutherland NSW 1499

Enquiries are welcome by phone on 02 9543 2133 or by e-mail sscs@sscs.nsw.edu.au or visit our web site www.sscs.nsw.edu.au.

Losing the plot

Cynicism starts young – but it's not terminal.

‘What a loser!” The blunt words come from the red-haired, freckle-faced boy whose quick wit and sly irreverence always make me laugh out loud at least once during our weekly religious education class. This time the seventh-grader with the slightly devilish, totally irresistible sparkle in his eye catches me off-guard.

When he blurts out that sentiment, he is talking about Jesus Christ. We were just finishing a section in our book about how crowds in first-century Galilee came from miles to hear Jesus teach and how he, in turn, was kind and patient to all who approached.

The whole point of the lesson was to show the generosity of spirit and message that Jesus displayed during his life on earth. Yet the very qualities celebrated in this chapter elicit quite a different reaction than the author of the text likely had anticipated.

A person who treats everyone politely regardless of wealth or social status, who walks away from fights, who is humble and forgiving? Someone who welcomes beggars and lepers? That person is a role model? That they find amusing. And the notion that such a person could entertain and indeed inspire others for hours is incomprehensible to these middle school boys, grounded in the values of 21st century America — not to mention the mesmerising influence of Playstation and Nintendo.

Their reaction is not shocking as much as sobering. It should be no surprise to any adult that Jesus is way too uncool to appeal to average pre-teenage boys. Their role models, after all, are athletes, actors

**Joan
Vennoch**

and music video stars, and anyone who makes lots of money fast.

Jesus never dunked a basketball, scored a goal or belted the ball over the fence. He didn't snowboard or skateboard or do anything that anyone on ESPN would ever do a feature on. He had no fancy digs, splashy sports cars, or bevy of babes prancing around him. Mary Magdalene is not an adolescent's idea of a hot chick. Jesus didn't do rap or hip-hop. He didn't

*It should be
no surprise to
any adult that
Jesus is way
too uncool
to appeal to
average pre-
teenage boys.*



start a company, cash in his stock options and get out with big bucks just before the venture crashed. Beyond athletes and random acquirers of Bill Gates-like wealth, young people's heroes today are a somewhat confusing mix of fantasy and reality.

On the big screen, the stars of action movies definitely qualify. In real life, especially after September 11, they run the gamut from firefighters and police who died trying to save others to bond salesmen who just happened to be in

America's tallest building when it collapsed around them. (After the Clinton presidency, even boys know that politicians are far too human to be put on a pedestal.)

Forgiveness is not big on their list of virtues, whether the wrongdoer is Osama bin Laden or an annoying classmate who doesn't quite fit in.

Their idea of a miracle is an underdog win in a Super Bowl or World Series. That they are willing to accept as an act of God. Talk to them about multiplying loaves and fishes or a paralysed man getting up and walking away and they are harsh in their assessment. They don't believe such events ever happened. If they did, they must have been tricks.

Tell them the miracles are recounted in the Bible and they will tell you the Bible is made up. They are hard-pressed to believe in something on faith alone. They want you to hold it in your hand and show it to them.

But, please, don't be too hard on my pre-teen cynics. They are basically sweet boys, on their way — let's hope — to becoming good-hearted men. They are coping with changing voices and bodies, juggling their interest in girls with the stuffed bunnies some of them still sleep with at night.

And let's be honest rather than self-righteous. They can know only what they see around them. Today's headlines brim with stories of greed, corruption, and violence. A disgraced corporate chieftain pleads the Fifth Amendment rather than tell the truth about his company's collapse. Olympic judges are being questioned about the gold medal figure skating award. A former head of state is accused of medieval savagery before an international tribunal.

But what about closer to home, you wonder? There the picture must be very different. Apparently it is not different enough. When asked if anyone they know reminds them in any way of Jesus, they fall uncharacteristically quiet. They cannot think of a soul.

Joan Vennoch is a writer for the Boston Globe, from which this article is reprinted. ^{ap}

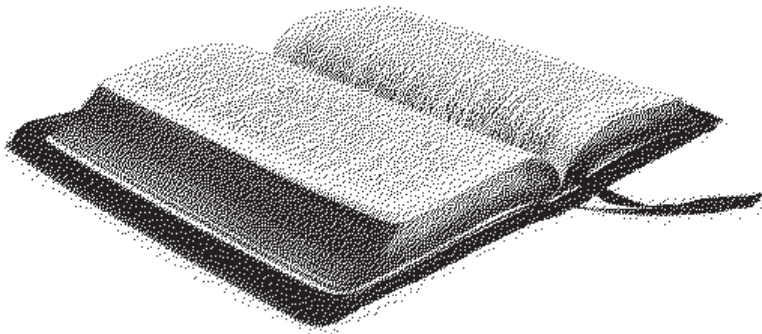
Arncliffe Studios

Third generation since 1906

Stained Glass • Windows/Leadlights • Design and Restoration

*K J Little, 17 Barden St, Arncliffe, NSW, 2205
Phone (02) 9567 7348*

Word for the wise



*The theme this month
is 'The Confronting Christ'
(Mark 6-10).*

Last month we looked at the first five chapters of Mark's Gospel under the theme of Jesus' call, "Come, follow me." Jesus never said following him would be easy. He is a very confrontational and challenging figure.

This month we will go through the next five chapters of Mark and find him confronting people, situations, authorities, traditions and evil spirits. We will also find him confronting us with the challenge to recognise him as the Son of God who came "not to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). He will call us to face up to the fact that in his kingdom "anyone who wants to be first must be the servant of all" (Mark 10:44) and "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34). We need to be confronted today. God tells us that his Word "is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). That is why we ought to read it daily. We hope that these notes will help you to discover more of the power of God's Word to challenge and change your life.
Bruce Christian

DAY 1 *Familiarity breeds contempt*

THE PASSAGE MARK 6:1-6

THE POINT The divine side of Jesus' nature was offensive to those most familiar with his humanity. It became a stumbling block to them.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus was committed to regular Sabbath synagogue attendance.
- The wisdom shown in Jesus' teaching and the power of his miracles demanded a response from those he confronted.
- The people from Jesus' home town who had watched him grow up as a child were so convinced about his humanness they were unable to see the clear demonstration that he was God.
- The people's lack of faith didn't stop Jesus from teaching, but his healing ministry was affected and only a few benefited.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Are you so convinced about Jesus as a man that you have trouble believing the evidence that shows he was also God?
- How can we keep a good balance between these two sides of Jesus' nature? Does it matter if we don't?
- Are you excited about the uniqueness of Jesus? ... and about his power to bring real healing to broken people?

DAY 2 *Christianity confronts*

THE PASSAGE MARK 6:7-13

THE POINT The mission of Jesus' Church is a single-minded taking of the Gospel of repentance-and-faith out to a lost world, depending on him alone to provide the resources and achieve the results.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus called his disciples in, then sent them out.
- Jesus sent his disciples out on their mission in pairs.
- The missionaries were not to be weighed down by unnecessary baggage that would hinder their progress or detract from their total and constant dependence on God to supply all their needs.
- They were not to waste time on people who weren't interested.
- God's power was clearly evident in them and brought results.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Have you COME to Jesus? Are you prepared to GO for him?
- Is there anything you could trim off your lifestyle that would enable you to be more focussed as a follower of Jesus?
- Is the need for repentance a basic part of your understanding of the Gospel? Why is it unpopular today? Does this matter?

DAY 3

Heads you lose

THE PASSAGE

MARK 6:14-29

THE POINT Obedience to God and making a public stand for what is right can be very costly — even to the point of death. God sometimes allows the evil in men’s hearts to run its course — for a time.

THE PARTICULARS

- John the Baptist’s ministry had a profound effect on Herod.
- The blatant sin of Herod and Herodias, left unchecked, had a devastating effect on the lives of many other people.
- Becoming intoxicated with partying caused Herod to make an unsound judgement with far-reaching consequences.
- It is a sad and sobering fact that the sinful heart of man is capable of unimaginable evil (see Jeremiah 17:9).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Have you ever had to make a public stand for truth (at school, work, sport, etc) and then had to suffer hurtful consequences?
- If God is sovereign in all things, why does he let things like this happen? Does Jesus’ death help us to answer this question?
- Do you pray for Christians who are being severely persecuted today because they are making a stand for Jesus?

DAY 4

Feeding shepherdless sheep

THE PASSAGE

MARK 6:30-44

THE POINT Jesus’ overriding passion was his concern for lost souls, but he also saw the need for rest and refreshment. As man he understands our needs — as God he can always meet them.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus recognised the need for time out with his disciples.
- Jesus put the pressing needs of others ahead of his own needs.
- Jesus saw the people as sheep without a shepherd. He saw their most urgent need was to be fed from God’s Word (34).
- Meagre resources in Jesus’ hands can achieve great things.
- Jesus acknowledged God as the provider of all things (41) then showed himself to be God by multiplying the loaves and fish.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- How can we balance our time out with God with the pressing needs of people God sends to us for help? (see also v.46)
- Do you trust God by handing all your resources over to him?
- By reporting this event, what does Mark expect us to believe about Jesus? Why do people try to explain this miracle away?

DAY 5

Another lesson for slow learners

THE PASSAGE

MARK 6:45-56

THE POINT The disciples’ experience on the lake should have convinced them beyond doubt that Jesus was God but their hearts were hard. The crowds flocked to Jesus, but for the wrong reasons.

THE PARTICULARS

Jesus still sought time alone with God in prayer. Jesus’ divine nature was clearly demonstrated by:

- his ability to walk on the lake;
- his appearance to the disciples as ‘passing by’ (Ex. 33:19-22);
- his use of the phrase ‘It is I’ — literally ‘I am’ (see Ex. 3:14);
- his power to control the storm.

The disciples’ hard hearts kept them from seeing the obvious, even after their amazing experience with the loaves and fish.

Across the lake Jesus was in ‘Gentile’ territory but the crowds still came to him because his miraculous power met their needs.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Is your heart still hard concerning Jesus’ being God the Son?
- Are you willing to trust Jesus completely in all circumstances?
- Why are we all such slow learners regarding spiritual truths?

DAY 6

Clean cups, murky minds

THE PASSAGE

MARK 7:1-23

THE POINT God is interested in the purity of our hearts & minds, rather than our outward appearances & religious practices; it is easy to let ritual become a cover-up for impure thoughts & attitudes.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus spoke very strongly against those who were very fussy about keeping man-made rules and traditions about outward cleanliness but had hearts & minds full of ungodly attitudes.
- Worship of God is useless if our hearts are not right with him.
- The Pharisees worked out clever religious rules & rituals to get around keeping God’s commandments in the way he intended.
- Jesus brought an end to religious food laws.
- Jesus has left us in no doubt about the things God disapproves.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- What steps do we need to take to make sure we are not guilty of the same sins as the Pharisees? What rituals today can become outward performances done with hearts that are not right?
- Carefully go through the checklist Jesus gives in verses 21-22. What part of your life needs a good clean-up operation today?

DAY 7

Dogged faith

THE PASSAGE

MARK 7:24-30

THE POINT Jesus is more accepting of a person who recognises her own unworthiness but pleads for help in spite of it, than of people who think they deserve his attention because of their standing.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus’ ministry took him to many, even non-Jewish, situations.
- Jesus used this woman’s faith to teach something very important about the scope of the Gospel — it is for the whole world.
- Jesus’ power over demons proved he was God’s Son who could conquer evil & make it possible for us to become God’s friends again. We each become God’s friend by putting our faith in him.
- Jesus was not yet ready to reveal his true identity openly.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- How is this woman’s attitude different from that of the Pharisees in the first part of the chapter? What made the difference?
- What are you depending on to be accepted into God’s heaven for all eternity? ... your family tree (“My grandfather was a minister.”)? ...your good behaviour (“I’ve always been kind, never hurt anyone”)? ...your church membership? ...God’s amazing and undeserved grace that sent Jesus to die for your sin?

DAY 8

Opened ears, loosened tongue

THE PASSAGE

MARK 7:31-37

THE POINT The Decapolis man’s physical state is a picture of our spiritual condition without the healing power of Jesus. God made us in his image, to communicate with him. Sin has made this impossible and only Jesus can ‘open’ the lines of communication again.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus continued his healing ministry in ‘Gentile’ territory (the Decapolis), still seeking to avoid recognition at this stage.
- Jesus restored the man’s loss of hearing & speech in a way that made it clear it was a deliberate exercise of his divine power.
- The effect of Jesus’ power on the people was to make it impossible for them to keep their mouths shut about him.
- The people said concerning Jesus, ‘He has done everything well’; this reminds us of God’s view of creation in Gen. 1:31.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Has Jesus opened your spiritual ears so that you are ‘hearing’ what God is saying to you in his Word as you read it each day and hear it preached week by week?
- Has Jesus ‘loosened’ your tongue to tell others the amazing things he has done (and is doing) in your life?

DAY 9 *Spiritual blindness*

THE PASSAGE MARK 8:1-13

THE POINT Jesus repeated the feeding miracle in Gentile territory to show that the 'Bread of Life' was for all people, not just for the Jews. The Pharisees, who should have been the first to recognise him as the Messiah when they saw the miracle(s), remained 'blind'.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus again confronted the crowds with a clear demonstration of his power to create something from nothing, showing that he was truly God.
- The needs of the people were fully satisfied by Jesus.
- In Gentile territory 7 basketsful were left over compared with the 12 left over in Israelite territory. This seems symbolic in the light of the conquest of the 7 nations of Canaan by the 12 tribes.
- The Pharisees asked Jesus for a sign from heaven that he was the Messiah when the feeding miracle was clearly such a sign.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Why were people so unable to see God's power at work in Jesus? Do you think there is this same reluctance to face up to the evidence for the truth of the Bible today (see Romans 1:20)?
- What is the significance of the 7 basketsful of left-overs?

DAY 10 *Subtle subterfuge*

THE PASSAGE MARK 8:14-21

THE POINT The Pharisees & Herod (via the Sadducees — see Matthew 16:6) were a dangerous influence on the religious and political life of the Jewish people. Their teaching & attitude infiltrated every part of society like yeast in dough. It needed to be recognised, exposed and resisted — which is what Jesus did.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus exposed and refuted false teaching; if left unchallenged it could slowly but surely totally undermine truth.
- The disciples were very slow to understand what or how Jesus taught. It was different from anything they had experienced.
- Jesus was critical of their spiritual deafness, blindness, and hardness of heart, seeing it as the fulfilment of Isaiah 6:9-10.
- Jesus' reference to both the feeding of the 5,000 and of the 4,000 shows that these are not just conflicting accounts of one event.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Are we patient with people who come into the Church with little or no Bible background? Do we explain things simply and take time to help them to grow in spiritual understanding?
- Are we taking care to recognise and expose subtle error today?

DAY 11 *Gentle Jesus*

THE PASSAGE MARK 8:22-26

THE POINT Jesus' divine power to heal is tempered by his kind sensitivity to individual needs. He seems to have allowed for this blind man's timidity by removing him from the gawking crowd & restoring his sight gradually, giving him time to adjust to the light.

THE PARTICULARS

This healing miracle has unique or uncommon features:

- Jesus performed this miracle away from the crowd;
- the full healing was not achieved in one action;
- Jesus asked the man if he could see after the first touch.

If this was the only recorded miracle we had we might conclude that Jesus' healing power was limited & uncertain. However, we have many powerful accounts of instantaneous healing and only this one of a gradual healing, leading to the conclusion that special requirements were to be satisfied here.

This account, joined with the healing of the deaf mute in Mark 7:31-37, points to Jesus fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 35:5-6.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Are we always patient & sensitive to individual needs, taking it one step at a time, when sharing Gospel truths with others?

DAY 12 *Right man, wrong model*

THE PASSAGE MARK 8:27-9:1

THE POINT Peter got it right about who Jesus really was, but he got it all wrong about what that meant in terms of Jesus' strategy.

THE PARTICULARS

- People generally saw Jesus as another prophetic type of figure: Peter saw him as the Messiah, fulfilling all God's promises.
- Jesus made quite clear to his disciples what had to be done to establish the Messianic Kingdom in God's way — the path of suffering, rejection & death. Only then could there be resurrection to life eternal. This was not human logic or strategy.
- Satan wants us to operate by acceptable human logic.
- Following Jesus means adopting his method — true life through sacrifice and complete abandonment of everything to him.
- The final coming of God's Kingdom in power was heralded in history by the crucifixion and bodily resurrection of Jesus.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- What stops people from recognising Jesus as the true Messiah?
- Why do we have trouble handing everything over to Jesus? Why are we so attached to an evil world that is falling apart?

DAY 13 *Confronted by glory*

THE PASSAGE MARK 9:2-13

THE POINT Three disciples were allowed a glimpse of Jesus' eternal glory as God the Son. They saw that he was associated with, and that he superseded, the Old Testament revelation. They witnessed him renew his commitment to take the way of the cross.

THE PARTICULARS

- The transfiguration showed that the option was always available to Jesus to bypass the cross and go straight back to heaven.
- The presence of Moses & Elijah showed that what Jesus had come to do was continuous with the Old Testament; verses 7-8 show that Jesus is God's special & final revelation to man.
- The disciples had to learn that the promised 'restoration' could not be achieved without Messiah's suffering and rejection.
- Jesus implied that John the Baptist was 'Elijah' of Malachi 4:5.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Jesus' renewed commitment to the way of the cross at his temptations in the wilderness and now at the mountain of transfiguration shows us again how much he loves us. Do you ever find yourself preferring a path that leads to honour & glory rather than one that involves suffering for Jesus' sake?

DAY 14 *Confronted by evil*

THE PASSAGE MARK 9:14-32

THE POINT The significance of Jesus' decision to turn his back on glory at the transfiguration & pursue the path to the cross is confirmed by his immediate confrontation with evil, impotence & unbelief. The victory of the cross is anticipated by his power over evil.

THE PARTICULARS

- The sad & sorry scene Jesus came upon involving the lawyers, the disciples, the crowd, the boy, the father, the evil spirit & the general feeling of helplessness shows how much we need him.
- Jesus alone has power to deal with the evil and suffering that grips human society with such devastating effects.
- We can be encouraged by the fact that Jesus responded to a cry of struggling faith: 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!'.
- 'Everything is possible for him who believes'.
- In spite of this powerful & convincing attack on Satan's domain & the resounding victory, Jesus was still committed to the cross.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Why do we still seem so powerless in the face of evil today? What does verse 29 teach us? Do we truly believe in God's power? Are we really committed to earnest, persistent prayer?

DAY 15 *Confronted by sin within*

THE PASSAGE MARK 9:33-37

THE POINT In spite of Jesus' clear teaching and example, the Twelve still failed to understand the very basis of Jesus' Kingdom — the way of a humble servant, more concerned for a vulnerable little child than for status and self-image.

THE PARTICULARS

- The disciples were embarrassed when confronted by Jesus, showing that they had a guilty conscience about wanting to be the greatest.
- The ground rules of Jesus' Kingdom are the exact opposite of the way the world thinks — we make our way to the 'top' by seeking out ways to be slaves in the service of others.
- Jesus reflects the position of the whole Bible in showing the greatest concern for the most vulnerable in society.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Do you ever excuse certain attitudes or actions in your own mind, then feel guilty when confronted by God's Word about them? What does this tell us about the condition of our hearts?
- In the fellowship of the Church, do you look for positions of status or for opportunities for (even unnoticed) service?

DAY 16 *Soft line, hard line*

THE PASSAGE MARK 9:38-50

THE POINT Jesus took a soft line with those who were outsiders or whose actions showed evidence of Christ-likeness, but he took a hard line with those in positions of leadership & influence. He required total commitment & disciplined living from his followers.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus was very accepting of people who were keen to be identified with him and actively involved in his work, even though they were not directly taught, or even 'commissioned', by him. They were to be given the benefit of the doubt (40).
- Jesus put his seal of approval on acts of mercy done in his name.
- Jesus strongly condemns anything in our lifestyle that may lead others, or even ourselves, astray. We must never entertain such a thing, even if it is something that seems right in itself.
- Our lives must always influence others for good, and for peace.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- What can you do today to encourage someone outside your own Church group who professes to be a follower of Christ?
- What is there in your life that's overdue for ruthless pruning?

DAY 17 *Let's do it for the kids!*

THE PASSAGE MARK 10:1-16

THE POINT Jesus took a very strong view of marriage and its permanence. He spoke very strongly against divorce & it is significant that he showed his great love & concern for children in this context.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus kept up a popular teaching ministry everywhere he went.
- Jesus spoke out against the way the Jewish leaders manipulated God's laws to suit themselves and affirmed the sacredness and permanence of marriage in God's plan for creation. He strongly condemned divorce. (We cannot escape this conclusion here, although other Scripture allows limited grounds for divorce).
- Jesus was most concerned for the welfare of (little) children & the fact that he expressed this in the context of his denouncing of divorce needs to be noted carefully.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- What reasons can you think of for Jesus to be so committed to the 'till death us do part' aspect of the marriage relationship?
- What effect is divorce having on our society today? What effect can you see it having on the well-being, stability & behaviour of children? What can we do to make marriages more healthy?

DAY 18 *Not hard ... impossible!*

THE PASSAGE MARK 10:17-31

THE POINT The most unlikely thing can stand between me and peace with God. It is impossible for me, in my own strength, to deal with it. But if I have made a commitment to follow Jesus, he will more than compensate for any treasure or status it may have cost me.

THE PARTICULARS

- In a subtle way Jesus showed the man that he had unconsciously recognised Jesus as who he really was — God! (17-18)
- Jesus used the 10 Commandments to show the rich man that the very thing he trusted in for his salvation (his good works) was his downfall. His unhealthy attachment to his money broke the first 4 and the last commandments (the ones he didn't mention!).
- Only God can change us into the people he wants us to be.
- God is no man's debtor.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Is there anything in your life (an attitude? a possession? a person? an ambition?) that still comes between you and God?
- How does the story of the rich man show the truth of Jesus' statement, 'Many who are first will be last, and the last first.'?

DAY 19 *Clawing their way to the bottom*

THE PASSAGE MARK 10:32-45

THE POINT Jesus' mind was focussed on the cross: he made the details of his imminent suffering quite clear to his disciples. The disciples' minds were focussed on the glory that would follow: for them, only the words "Three days later he will rise" sank in. They were concerned about status and glory for themselves; Jesus was concerned about obedience and suffering for others.

THE PARTICULARS

- Jesus prepared the disciples by telling them everything that would happen when they reached Jerusalem.
- James & John had no concept of a suffering Messiah. Their ambition, shared by the others (41), was for fame & power for themselves; they were even willing to 'pay their way!' (38-39)
- Once again, Jesus had to explain his 'upside-down' Kingdom.
- Jesus paid the ransom price to redeem all his Elect ('the many').

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- As you do things today, will your focus be on the future glory Jesus has promised, your present status in the Church, or self-sacrificing, obedient service that only has the welfare of others in mind? How will Jesus' example influence you?

DAY 20 *Simple faith rewarded*

THE PASSAGE MARK 10:46-52

THE POINT In this chapter Jesus has confronted spiritual blindness in the form of unfaithfulness, materialism and selfish ambition. He is about to enter Jerusalem to confront the powers of evil at the cross. The healing of blind Bartimaeus is a picture of the light that he brings as he confronts these various forms of darkness.

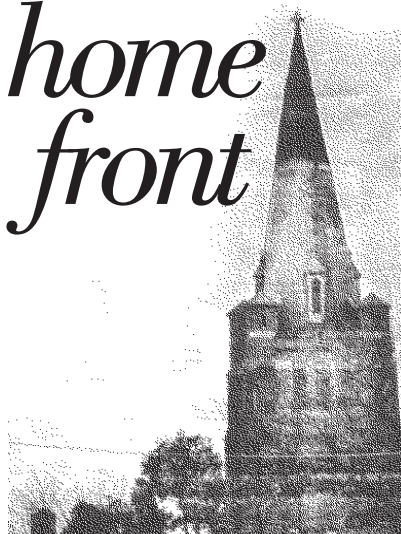
THE PARTICULARS

- Bartimaeus had heard of Jesus' fame, was convinced he was the Messiah ('Son of David') & knew that he could give him sight.
- Bartimaeus was not embarrassed to keep on crying out for help even while many were telling him to be quiet.
- Jesus knew what Bartimaeus' needs were, but he still wanted him to ask as a test of his faith.
- Jesus restored Bartimaeus' eyesight immediately & completely by a simple spoken word. He didn't always do things the same way (see Mark 8:22-26, DAY 11) but he always succeeded.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Why does God want us to ask him for things (Matthew 7:7) if he knows already what our needs are (Matthew 6:31-32)?
- Are you persistent in asking God for things?

home front



Pay rise for ministers

The Commission of the Victoria Assembly, which met on 2 April at PLC Melbourne, granted ministers a pay rise and an extra week's leave. From 1 July, the minimum remuneration will be \$37,236 a year. The minimum stipend component of that sum will be \$21,408, and the minimum non-cash benefit component will be \$15,828 a year.

The minimum annual leave for ministers will be five weeks a year, including five Sunday's paid supply, and ministers are encouraged to take at least three of those weeks at one time.

For car expenses, the commission declared the extra sum for every 1000 kilometres after 6000 kilometres of the distance agreed between the minister and his parish as his annual distance of travel on all church related matters to be \$235.

The meeting, presided over by the Moderator, the Rt. Rev. Bob Thomas, also approved letting academic staff of the

Presbyterian Theological College of Victoria, the home mission director and evangelism officer, take a proportion of their remuneration as non-cash benefits.

Evangelism office

The commission approved the job description of the proposed Evangelism Office, which it hopes will strengthen work, especially among young people.

Deepening relationships with other like-minded reformed-evangelical churches is firmly on the PCV's agenda, and the Commission of the Victoria Assembly plans a fellowship day in October to which friends in other communions will be invited.

Newly retired theological college principal Dr Allan Harman was also asked to edit a leaflet for use in October to assist congregations in marking and understanding the Reformation.

New committees

The commission approved an overture dealing with matter of Presbytery bounds and another concerning a Christian school development committee. Committees dealing with these – led respectively by Rev. John Wilson and Rev. Peter Owen – will report to the next general assembly. Commissioners were also introduced to Melton member Luke Nelson, the new editor of the state newspaper which has been renamed epistle!

It also approved a GMP budget of nearly \$290,000 to assist ministry in a wide range of areas including campus and youth work, health and community chaplaincy as well as the important tasks of Christian and theological education.

New moderators

Rev. John Wilson, dean and lecturer at the theological college, is Moderator-designate for Victoria.

Following the resignation of elder Daryl Spink as Moderator-elect the Queensland Commission of Assembly appointed Rev. Professor Ian McIver, principal of the Reformed College of Ministries, to be Moderator-elect. He will be inducted during the opening of the 2002 Assembly next month.

A 40-year ministry

Research is being done on Rev. R. J. H. McGowan, minister of Ashfield for more than 40 years from 1907. If anyone has personal reminiscences of him or his ministry, would he/she please contact Rev. Dr Peter Barnes on (02) 9774 5740, or PO Box 594, Revesby 2212.

A fond farewell

Rev. David McDougall of Creek Road Presbyterian Church (Qld) conducted the final service in the historic



Creek Road

SOUTH YARRA CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

Christian Growth Day

Saturday 11 May 2002 • 10am-3pm

"A Family Tree and a House of Prayer. I & II Chronicles: Then and Now"

REV. ANDREW STUART

of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Geelong

(Author of "The Message of Chronicles" and "The Message of II Chronicles" in the Welwyn Commentary Series published by Evangelical Press.)

"Chronicles in Bible History"; "The Message of Chronicles"; "Christ in Chronicles"

SOUTH YARRA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 621 PUNT RD. PH: (03) 9867 4637

Registration from 9:30am. Book table, bring and share lunch, question and answer sessions, offering to cover costs, free tea, coffee and parking, meet new friends.

CHRISTIAN BOOKS

FOR SALE/WANTED

WE STOCK A WIDE RANGE OF NEW & SECONDHAND EVANGELICAL & REFORMED TITLES CATALOGUES AVAILABLE

HOURS:

OPEN MON-FRI 2:00PM-5:30PM & SAT 10:00AM-1:00PM

ROCKDALE CHRISTIAN BOOKS

11 WATKIN STREET
ROCKDALE NSW 2216

TEL (02) 9568 2813
FAX (02) 9590 3268

EMAIL plant@rivernet.com.au

OR VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT:

www.rcb.com.au

RCB IS SUPPORTED BY BEXLEY-ROCKDALE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

George Watt 1915 - 2002

Broken Bay elder emeritus George Watt was called home on 20 February, reports session clerk *Keith Chapple*. He moved to the Central Coast in 1973 from Mortdale-Oatley parish, where he was an elder. Later that year he was inducted into the joint parish of Broken Bay which included the Parish of Woy Woy.

Diligent in all aspects of church life, George was elected session clerk in 1977, serving in this post until 1986. He was made elder emeritus in December 1995, and continued to attend and support the church faithfully, including many session meetings.

A thanksgiving memorial Service was held at St. Davids, Woy Woy, on 27 February.

Cannon Hill Presbyterian Church on 18 November. Among the worshippers were three elders from the Creek Road Charge, **Keith Stewart**, **Preston Walker** and **Donald White**, to remind those present that Cannon Hill and Creek Road have been a single charge for some time.

Older members remembered how the Lord used the **Hawthorne** and **Bulimba** churches as the catalysts to pioneer and sponsor Cannon Hill. The sessions and presbytery had regretfully concluded that the charge should be integrated into the ministries of nearby fellowships.

Carina church opens

The new **Carina** church in Brisbane will officially open on 25 May. It seats 560 on the lower level and a further 100 on a mezzanine floor, but more seating can be added by retreating into the hall

at the rear of the auditorium separated by sliding glass doors. The high ceilings have been constructed to allow for multi-purpose usage from Sunday worship to conferences to small productions, etc. There is a cryroom, creche and covered play area, plus room for a future recording studio, as well as a main office, various meeting rooms, kitchen, toilets. The building is air-conditioned.

Appointments

Laurie Cree and **Mark Bruncker** were inducted on to the session of **Chatswood (NSW)** at a service in St Andrews on 17 March.

On 21 April, **Richard More** was commissioned as pastoral worker for the **Donvale Presbyterian Church**, Melbourne.

Barry Rossiter has been appointed to the **Presbyterian Inland Mission's Flynn Patrol** in South Australia, replacing the newly retired **Rev. Laurie** and **Gwen Peake**.

Born in Britain, Barry emigrated to Australia, and became a Christian here in 1987. He married **Cheryl** late last year. For more information about PIM, phone (07) 32521114 or e-mail Lillian Kennedy lillian@pcq.org.au to receive regular issues of the *On Track* newsletter or e-mail updates.

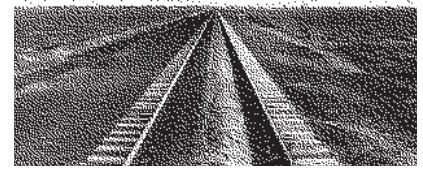
Mildred celebration

All former residents of **Mildred Park College**, Sydney, and all who trained as Presbyterian deaconesses, their friends and associates are invited to a celebration meal on Friday 4 October at the Crypt, Wesley College, University of Sydney. For further enquiries and bookings contact Nolene, email: woolynde@hotmail.com or Barbara, phone/fax (02) 9982 3062

Correction

In "Shaping Australia's future" (*AP* news last month) the ACL's website should read: www.acl.org.au

across australia



2002 Year of the Outback

Outback legends

Christians and churches from all over the Outback will gather in Longreach from July 12-14 for a weekend of celebration and training.

The Christian Spirit in the Outback weekend, a national Christian event to celebrate the Year of the Outback, will also feature the launch of **Scripture Union Queensland's** Outback regional office.

SU regional coordinator and event organiser **Dave Peake** says the weekend will recognise the contribution of Australia's awesome Christian pioneers – such as **Rev. John Flynn**, the founder of the **Royal Flying Doctor Service**. "It's a time for the people of the Outback to reflect on what God has done for and through them," he said. "And it's for people to come to the Outback and see what God has done."

For details, look up www.su.org.au/qld or phone Dave on (07) 4658 0471.

Embryo debate

Australia has the opportunity to take a strong ethical stand and ban the use of embryonic stem cells without sacrificing the potential future benefits of stem cell research, according to the **Australian**

Bethel Funerals The caring Australian alternative

A unique Christian Funeral Company supporting the work of missions
24 hour 7 day service Pre-arranged and Pre-paid Funerals

Phone: 03 9877 9900 (all hours) fax: 03 9877 0544



SERVICING ALL SUBURBS

Christian Lobby.

"All the exciting potential benefits of stem cell research are accessible without the need to kill a human embryo or use the cells of a previously killed embryo," said ACL president **Jim Wallace**.

"Although the potential of stem cells is yet to be realised, it is clear that stem cells extracted from adult patients and from placentas and umbilical cord blood show all the promise of embryonic stem cells without the ethical concerns. Furthermore the use of adult stem cells has been shown to be safer in therapeutic treatment with less chance of side effects and rejection."

Stott tour

These are the dates for the Australian tour by Christian leaders **John Stott** and **Chris Wright**.

Perth: Saturday 6 July. Contact: Rev Kanishka Raffel (St Matthews Church), 08 9381 2640.

Adelaide: Tuesday 9 July. Contact: Rev Tim Harris, 08 8332 7715.

Melbourne: Wednesday 10 July. Contact: Annette Cook, 03 9836 4243 or Rev Richard Trist, 03 9882 3776.

Canberra: Thursday 11 July. Contact: Rev Malcolm Richards, 02 6242 0734, Elizabeth Scrivener, 0422 929 319, or Pam Cox, 02 6288 5386.

Brisbane: Saturday 13 July. Contact: John Buckle, 07 3366 2066.

Sydney: Tuesday 16 July. Contact: Jane Mathieson, 02 9265 1501, or Jos Dudley, 02 8900 4721.

Ministry in waiting

If Jesus were to receive a phone call from a desperate and fearful young man seeking help to overcome addiction, what do you think his response would be? "Come to me and I will give you rest, and set you

free from your bondage" or something similar. **John Breadsell** receives phone calls like that at least once a week.

John, the manager of **Mustard Seed Valley**, a Christian recovery program north of Taree, for men seeking freedom from addiction to alcohol or other drugs, cannot respond as Jesus would because he is yet to find Christian staff to support him!

John explains, "Since our first staff couple left almost two years ago, we have been searching and praying for another married couple and a single man to come and join us." (Mustard Seed Valley advertised in AP in December).

If you believe God would have you throw your support behind this essential ministry or be calling you to consider a staff position, phone John for more details on (02) 6556 7744 or write to Mustard Seed Valley PO Box 93, Cundletown, NSW 2430.

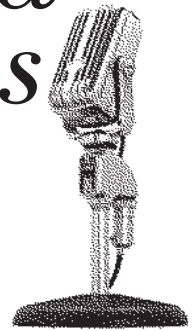


Mustard Seed Valley

A new song

A finale song is wanted for the **Youthforce Christian Rock Eisteddfod's** 2003 production. The song must reflect the Book of Proverbs, be three to five minutes long, and include a chorus for the cast. For more details, contact the Bible Society, 95 Bathurst St, Sydney, NSW. (02) 9267 6862 email: chris@biblesociety.com.au.

world news



Pope's global warning

John Paul II has appealed to political and economic leaders to take creative measures to ensure that globalisation will not widen the gap between the "haves" and "have-nots". He was receiving the members of the Pontifical Academy for Social Sciences, who met recently in the Vatican.

John Paul II has explained repeatedly that globalisation presents positive aspects as well as "disturbing threats", particularly the "exacerbation of inequalities between powerful economies and dependent" ones.

Westminster Presbyterian Church Bullcreek
(Perth, Western Australia)

Seeks an

Associate Pastor

committed to the Westminster Standards to work as a team member with our experienced Pastors and Session.

The Associate Pastor will be engaged in a wide range of pastoral duties including expository preaching, teaching, visitation and counselling.

W.P.C. Bullcreek is a multicultural church servicing 2 daughter churches.

Application Packages available from:

M. Mayhill
Committee Secretary
Westminster Presbyterian Church
32 Bullcreek Drive
Bullcreek WA 6149

Visiting Melbourne?

Worship with us at
South Yarra Presbyterian Church
621 Punt Road
Every Sunday 10 am. & 6.30 pm.
Minister: Rev Stuart Bonnington
Phone: (03) 9867 4637
(Less than 3 kms from CBD)

CHRISTIAN SINGLES

Any nice singles can join!

Send for **FREE** colour brochure:

PO Box 122

WALLSEND 2287

Ph/Fax: 02 4955 5445

www.christiansingles.com.au



Bush opposes cloning

While the US Senate is sharply divided over whether to restrict human cloning experiments, **President Bush** is inviting opponents of the research to the White House to rally support for legislation that would prohibit all types of human cloning, either for reproduction or medical research, and calling for "biomedical research through more ethical means".

Recently Senator and heart surgeon **Bill Frist**, the Tennessee Republican, told his fellow senators that he, like President Bush, opposes cloning because the research involves the creation and destruction of human embryos. Senator Frist's statement was not a surprise, but it is important because he is the Senate's only doctor and lawmakers look to him for advice on medical matters.

NY Times

Philippine terrorists' offer

The **Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)** has offered the Philippine government the last option to negotiate with them for the safe release of American missionary couple

Martin and Gracia Burnham and Filipino nurse **Ediborah Yap**. But a spokesman for Southern Command, **Captain Noel Detoyato**, ignored their radio appeal, saying the government would stand firm on its no-negotiation policy with terrorists.

Assist News Service

Ethnic abortions

The **Planned Parenthood Federation of America** and **Planned Parenthood of St. Louis** face a major class action over alleged medical malpractice, wrongful death, civil rights violations, mass fraud and genocide by specifically targeting minority women for abortions. The lawsuit centres on two major allegations of systematic "mass fraud" and "genocide". It contends that Planned Parenthood has systematically failed to inform women or lied outright to them about the risks, physical and emotional, associated with having an abortion. It also claims the organisation has engaged in genocide through the systematic targeting of low income and minority women for abortions.

Assist News Service

Violence in France

The French Government has reacted sharply against a growing number of anti-Semitic violence following the destruction of a synagogue in Marseille by arson and damage to another in nearby Belgium. Prime Minister **Lionel Jospin** has announced that 1110 extra police officers would be deployed to guard France's synagogues and Jewish schools.

"Any act of anti-Semitism, no matter what the pretext, will be extremely firmly pursued and cracked down upon by the justice system," he declared. Attacks on Jews and Jewish buildings have soared in the last 12 months. They appear to reflect the growing radicalisation and anger of France's 5 million-strong Muslim population over events in the Middle East.

Clarification

In April's *AP*, in "Mormons on rise", we said the United Methodists were the only mainline Protestant church among the top five denominations in the US. In fact, the Southern Baptists (listed as number two) are of course also a mainline Protestant church.

'THE APPLICATION OF REDEMPTION'

13TH ANNUAL BIBLE CONFERENCE • BIBLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ADELAIDE

June 7th – 10th 2002

Speaker – **Rev. William MacLeod**

MINISTER, PORTREE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND CONTINUING EDITOR, FREE CHURCH WITNESS

SESSION TIMES & THEMES

FRIDAY JUNE 7TH

7.30pm Total Depravity – the need

SATURDAY JUNE 8TH

11.00am Effectual Calling
2.00pm Regeneration
7.30pm Faith and Repentance

LORD'S DAY JUNE 9TH

11.00am Justification
2.00pm Adoption
7.00pm Holiness of Life

MONDAY JUNE 10TH

11.00am Perseverance
2.00pm Union with Christ
7.30pm The Blessed Future

*Meals will be available between sessions.
Light refreshments after evening meetings.*

ACCOMODATION is available at nearby motels:

Flag: Flinders Lodge Motel – Phone (08) 8332 8227
Dequettville Tce, Kent Town
Single or Double \$88.40

Budget: Kent Town Lodge Motel – Phone (08) 8332 757122
Wakefield St, Kent Town
Single \$65.00, Double \$75.00 (less 10%)

(Of course there are other Motels/Caravan Parks etc.)

*(The Church will provide bus transport to and from these motels,
please advise if you need transport to and from the airport.)*

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Write to PO. Box 316 Magill SA 5072 or Phone (08) 8377 1941

Bible Presbyterian Church of Adelaide Inc.
496 Magill Road, Magill 5072
P.O. Box 316 Magill 5072



These premises are fitted with a hearing aid induction loop.

Deep water

There is a deluge of good arguments for a global flood.

The story of Noah and the Flood, insofar as people know it at all, has become for many no more than a quaint children's tale. Cartoon-type pictures and models of Noah's ark provide amusement for the kids, while sentimental references to the animals going into the ark with Noah and family following behind give the atmosphere of a fairy tale to what is properly an account of the extinction of the early world. There is the rub: a story of fearful divine judgment has been sanitised into an Aesop-type fable at best, a story-with-a-moral.

The more serious reader will, however, ask a number of questions. Is the flood that's described local or universal? How could all those animals fit into an ark? Did Noah take on board dinosaurs from North America, kangaroos from Australia, moas from New Zealand, and dodos from Madagascar? For that matter, how did he get them on board anyway? How did he feed them? Where did all the water come from, and more particularly, where did it all go?

Then there is the issue of the Babylonian Flood story (Gilgamesh Epic): is the biblical story just another myth on the same level? These and a series of other issues are questions on a similar level to the old chestnut, where did Cain get his wife?

The short answer to all these questions is that the story of the Great Deluge involves at once the elements of miracle, special providence, and normal providential processes, or "natural law" if one prefers. In similar vein, our Lord's birth involved both the miraculous and the normal: the conception was indeed miraculous, but the gestation and birth were along the normal biological lines.

The question whether the flood covered the whole earth or whether it was restricted to the Mesopotamian valley is a relatively recent issue in terms of church history. If one looks at the older commentaries, e.g. of Luther, Calvin, Poole, Henry, and Scott, they all affirm a universal flood. Of these, Poole alone seems to be a little hesitant, because in his commentary on Genesis 7:19 he entertains some limitation as a possibility (i.e. to the



**Murray
Adamthwaite**

sphere of human and animal habitation), only to dismiss it when he considers the universal flood legends known in his day. Many more such legends are now known from tribal cultures the world over.

The origin of the modern debate can be traced to John Pye Smith, who in 1839 wrote a treatise advocating that the flood was restricted to the Mesopotamian Valley. While it caused a furore among evangelicals at the time, after a while yesterday's heresy became today's orthodoxy, an all-too-familiar story. Local flood advocates have repeated Pye Smith's arguments without much refinement to this day, even those who have never heard of him.

There are many arguments from both the flood narrative itself, and from later Scriptural references, that establish that the deluge was indeed universal. I cannot list them all, but here are some of the more important ones:

- The cosmic scope of the narrative itself, and of the context in Genesis 1-11, indicates that the "heavens and earth" which the flood wiped out was *the same as that created in the beginning*. This should be clear from Genesis 6:7, 11, 17; 7:21-23, where "earth" and "heavens" are

combined to describe the total event, a pair of terms which in conjunction denote "world system". Interestingly, Pye Smith saw this point and proposed in harmony a "local Creation" view of Genesis 1. The mind boggles as to whether Genesis 3 likewise teaches a "local Fall" with localised consequences! His concession here really gives the game away.

- The writer uses universal language consistently throughout the entire narrative.

While it's true that such language can be restricted, e.g. in Luke 2:1, where "all the world" clearly did not include either China or Scandinavia, nevertheless the context will indicate if such restriction applies. However, no such indication is evident in Genesis 6-8. Moreover, if this universal language is to be explained away here, the Genesis author is put in a "catch 22" situation: with the vocabulary and idiom available he could not have described unequivocally an earth-covering Flood even if he had wanted to!

- Water finds its own level, and this natural/supernatural event is no exception. According to Genesis, the mountains were covered, at least to the depth of the Ararat range (8:4). It is impossible to have a year-long, mountain-covering, local flood, unless one invokes a miracle, something these advocates want to avoid.

- The rainbow covenant is made with the earth and all its inhabitants that no similar flood will ever again cover the entire earth (Gen. 9:9-11). If, however, the flood were local, God breaks his covenant every time a local flood occurs, and there have been many over the centuries. That rainbow hanging over a flood-devastated ravine in Peru, or a swollen Ganges basin, is on this view nothing but a monument to divine hypocrisy, a blasphemy indeed!

- Finally, 2 Peter 3:5-7 should be quite clear: a contrast is made between the "kosmos" or world system before the flood and that which now exists. The agency that destroyed the former was the deluge which overflowed it. Peter is surely talking of the total world system in each case: the water overwhelmed it last time, the fire will consume it next time. Furthermore, if the flood was localised we hand the unbeliever the perfect excuse for his unbelief: his rigid adherence to the principle of uniformity (2 Pet. 3:4) goes unrefuted. Well may he insist, "There never has been a world-wide, God-sent catastrophe; there never will be", courtesy of the Christian preacher himself!

The exploration of Mars has now begun in earnest, and many scientists are freely speculating about a Mars once covered completely by water, or nearly so. Mars is now devoid of liquid water, and seems to have precious little either in its

A story of fearful divine judgment has been sanitised into an Aesop-type fable at best, a story-with-a-moral.

If the flood were local, God breaks his covenant every time a local flood occurs, and there have been many over the centuries.

rocks or in its polar caps, yet this unproven speculation meets with the approval of the scientific community. When, however, Biblical creationists insist that the Earth's surface, which has liquid water in abundance, was once flooded for a year or more, there is an outcry of abuse and derision. One can surely be forgiven for alleging prejudice.

While these arguments have appealed to many Christians, some have still sought to have it both ways with uniformitarian geology and Scripture. Thus certain scholars have come up with a "tranquil theory", whereby water slowly and gently rose, covered the mountains, and then sank again, leaving everything as it was, save for a layer of mud. This notion, which had a vogue in the 19th century, has undergone a revival in recent years.

However, both Scripture and the laws of hydrodynamics would deny such a scenario. The flood destroyed the world of that time, and Noah's family emerged from the ark into a different world, one that has been with us ever since. This came about through the break-up of "the fountains of the great deep", combined with the rain from above, the two sources of water according to Gen. 7:11-12. These would certainly have involved massive geological and tectonic movements, releasing water trapped beneath the earth's crust, and also involving all manner of major convulsions.

Then there is the hydrodynamic aspect: water in motion has awesome power. Recent television documentaries have drawn attention to the destructive power of tsunamis, immense waves generated by underwater seismic movements.

The recent movie *Deep Impact* purported to show a damaged but eminently recognisable Washington after the Atlantic impact of the asteroid and the associated tsunami. However, if that ever did happen, all of the cities of America's East Coast *would cease to exist entirely*. One would be hard put to *find* them, let alone repair them.

Therefore, given the volume of water of Noah's Flood even in its early stages, tsunamis would have occurred simultaneously on a massive scale, destroying everything in their path. Such global upheavals

render any tranquil theory as all too facile.

Where did the water go? The answer quite simply is: it's still there! The oceans cover some two thirds of the Earth's surface, and to a very great depth. The average depth of the major oceans, beyond the continental shelves, is between 12,000 to 20,000 feet, while some trenches are as deep or deeper than Mt Everest is high. This entails that the pre-flood earth had shallower seas, and possibly a single continent (cf. the "one place" of Gen. 1:9), although the evidence for that is a bit thin. Whatever, that world was very different from the one which now exists.

Let us suppose for the sake of argument the theory of a single continent in the pre-flood world. On that view, there were no isolated islands in mid-ocean like Japan, Iceland, or Madagascar (or Australia, for that matter). The land ani-



Tablet XI of the Gilgamesh Epic, in which Utnapishtim tells his experience of the Great Flood.

mals are therefore restricted to that one land-mass, and hence "Aunt Sally" scenarios of Noah travelling to New Zealand to gather a pair of moas, or to the Galapagos to gather finches, are really quite foolish. For all we know, most or all species could well have lived within range of Noah's residence.

In all, there is much we don't know about biological diversity and distribution in that former world, and to infer conclusions about it based on the present world is to compare apples with oranges.

According to Gen. 6:20, God announced that the animals and birds would come to Noah, while Gen. 7:14-15 indicates that they went in with Noah on the day the flood began. So God brought the animals to Noah; Noah did not go scurrying far and wide, trying desperately to coax or cajole lions, leopards, armadillos, eagles, kangaroos, and ostriches to go

with him into the ark.

For that matter, there was no necessity to take fully-grown adult members of each kind, but only younger specimens. Likewise with the dinosaurs: since those monsters kept growing throughout their lives, only young and small members were necessary to take on board. Here, however, we can see the supernatural element in the narrative: from elephants to egrets, leopards to lorikeets, all kinds came to the ark, and were kept together harmoniously, by God's special providential control.

As to feeding them, while some animals would have required this (cf. Gen. 6:21), others would, I believe, have been put into extended hibernation for the duration. Admittedly, this invokes a miracle not explicitly in the narrative, but something like this must have been the case, otherwise Noah's feeding schedule would have been akin to painting the Sydney Harbour Bridge!

When Noah emerged from the ark, God commanded him to bring out also the birds and animals (Gen. 8:17) to "multiply on the earth". This entails that from somewhere in Eastern Turkey (whether the traditional Mt Ararat or the Ararat region), all animal life dispersed, ultimately to fill not only the major post-flood continents, but also the oceanic islands, many of which are volcanic and whose form changes to this day.

Most likely a land bridge existed in the early stages, linking Australia to Asia through the Indonesian Archipelago, which subsequently broke up through subsidence. Isolated islands would have gained their animal populations partly through human agency (as they have in modern times), and partly through natural transportation, although accounting for moas, kiwis, and tuataras in New Zealand remains a knotty, though not insoluble, problem.

Less serious a problem is the range of marsupial animals in Australia. While these are now unique to our country, fossil marsupials have been found elsewhere, e.g. in South America. Kangaroos have survived only in Australia simply because here there are no natural predators for them. It is reasonable to suppose that these animals had migrated here before the subsidence of the land bridge to Asia, but were then cut off from the outside world. The isolated environment created an ideal breeding ground for marsupials.

We know at least three stories of a great flood from Ancient Mesopotamia: the Gilgamesh Epic, Atrahasis, and Ziusudra.

The flood-story component, which circulated independently in antiquity, has been incorporated into each tale with some variations.

The Epic is in essence not about the flood, but the quest for immortality on the part of its hero, Gilgamesh. When his friend Enkidu dies, he embarks on a long series of adventures, and finally contacts Utnapishtim, the “Noah” figure of the story, who received eternal life from the gods for surviving the great flood. Utnapishtim then recounts to Gilgamesh the story of the flood.

For reasons not entirely clear in the epic, the gods decide to send a great flood to wipe out mankind. However, Ea, the water deity, obliquely reveals the plan to Utnapishtim in a dream, and the latter builds a boat to save himself, his family, relations, craftsmen, birds, and “beasts of the field”. When they had all embarked, a great rainstorm flooded the world “for seven days and nights”, after which their boat landed on Mt Nimush.

On the seventh day Utnapishtim began releasing a series of birds to ascertain the water level, then after an unspecified time he and the others emerged from the boat. The god Enlil, initially angry that anyone had survived the flood, at Ea’s intercession, conferred upon Utnapishtim and his wife immortality.

Obviously there are close parallels

between this and the biblical story, many more than with the creation story. However, it is all too easy to jump to the conclusion that the Genesis author “borrowed” his version from the Babylonian story, and therefore that they both belong to the category, “myth”. That indeed has been the standard critical explanation for many years, even though others have pointed out serious difficulties with this simplistic outlook. Some of the sharp, even fundamental differences are below (see Table).

In seeking to explain the similarities, we should bear in mind that these ancient Mesopotamian stories are just part of a large number of flood traditions in tribal folklore around the world,

although, as we might expect, they become in general more garbled the further away from Mesopotamia they occur.

Quite striking stories occur in Aboriginal lore even here in Australia. Although efforts have been made to derive these from the work of Christian missionaries, that explanation fails since in many cases secular anthropologists gath-

ered the stories before missionaries reached these tribes with the Gospel. In other cases, missionaries have related how they indeed told the story of Noah, only to find that the tribal folk already had a similar tale in their own legends. Therefore the best explanation is of a common tradition emanating from a firm historical event, but the versions becoming more garbled the further they move away in time and geography.

One other factor emerges from these comparisons: the most ancient stories all stress heavy rain as the principal source of the floodwaters, a fact noted by ancient historians. Yet this is at odds with the common modern explanation in terms of an embellished tale of a river flood. Even Christian scholars have become over-excited about flood layers at various ancient sites in southern Iraq, but they do not correlate with each other, and are clearly due to river floods at different times in early history. They have nothing to do with Noah’s flood.

Think of Noah and his family in that ark, with torrential rain bucketing down over them continuously for six weeks, torrents gushing from the ground, plus huge waves driving the ark to and fro. It would have been terrifying, especially as the Lord had locked them inside, while observation to the outside was limited (cf. Gen. 6:16). What comfort did they have as their world literally disintegrated around them?

The same God has warned us of a coming fiery conflagration which will also consume the entire world.

Comparing two accounts


Genesis : Gilgamesh

1. Monotheistic: God is the sovereign and righteous judge.
2. God sends the flood as judgment for human violence and general wickedness.
3. Noah’s ark has perfectly reasonable dimensions, and would be eminently stable in the heaviest of seas.
4. Noah sends out in order a raven, then a dove 3 times at weekly intervals. The logic is correct: after the raven, the dove’s return carries further information.
5. Noah’s sacrifice after emerging from the ark has a sober tone: it is to give thanks, and to expiate sin.

1. Polytheistic: the divine assembly resolves to send the flood, but not unanimously. The gods lie to and quarrel with each other, especially Ea with Enlil.
2. In Gilgamesh the flood comes by caprice of the gods; in Atrahasis the gods send a flood because men are making too much noise. Any moral dimension is lacking.
3. Utnapishtim’s ark is a perfect cube with 7 decks, and would capsize almost immediately when launched.
4. Utnapishtim sends out a dove, and then a swallow. Finally, and illogically, he sends a raven: as a carrion bird its failure to return is uninformative.
5. The sacrifice episode is crude: when Utnapishtim offers sacrifice “the gods gathered like flies over the sacrificer”.

God had warned Noah concerning things not as yet seen (Heb. 11:7), and now they were here — all part of an overwhelming flood. But he had promised to “remember his covenant” (Gen. 6:18), as well as to “remember Noah” (i.e. take special care of him, Gen. 8:1). The Word of God alone was the consolation, and by receiving the Word in faith, and entering the ark upon those promises, Noah was carried through to the new world.

The same God has warned us of a coming fiery conflagration which will also consume the entire world (2 Pet. 3:7). Sceptical scientists and others tell us it can’t happen; they point to the uniformity of nature, just as Peter said they would. But we are dealing here also with things not as yet seen; the only reason it hasn’t happened yet is due to God’s patience. Again, he has provided an ark: Jesus Christ! He has promised to carry through to the world to come all who trust themselves to him.

Dr Murray Adamthwaite lectures on ancient near-Eastern history. 

Full steam ahead

Bill Lutton's is the new hand on the APWM tiller.

Bill and Jenny, tell us about your backgrounds.

Bill: We both were teachers. We married in 1970, spent the next seven years in Rockhampton, teaching and doing things in St Andrew's Church, where I'd grown up with the blessing of a Christian home. I had responded to the gospel in repentance and faith as a pre-teen.

Jenny: I grew up in Brisbane, and was an active Anglican, but Bill was the first person I'd ever met who spoke about having to become a Christian. God began to deal with me through his Word, and brought me to salvation.

Bill: In 1976, we both sensed the Lord's leading to train for wider ministry. I hankered for cross-cultural mission, but we found ourselves in Brisbane at the Theological hall, in Brisbane, training for parish ministry in the Presbyterian Church.

Jenny: We were a family of five when we finished college.

Bill: After five years of house church planting in Logan, we accepted a three-year appointment to the Adelaide Team Ministry. That was a steep learning curve for a young, inexperienced ministry couple, and a valuable experience. Then, to our surprise, we were called to St Andrew's,

Bill & Jenny Lutton talk to Stuart Bonnington

Rockhampton, where we had been members nine years back. We had 10 profitable and enjoyable years in that historic church, before being called to John Calvin, Thuringowa, near Townsville. After five and a half richly rewarding years, here we are at the APWM but still on that steep learning curve!

How did you get involved in mission?

Bill: It started with the godly influence of a mission-minded father, then I was greatly stimulated by Paul White's *Jungle Doctor* stories. I was very encouraged as a youngster by a personal letter from him. So my mission interest grew. My first long service was spent having first hand mission experience, firstly in Kenya, where my sister and brother-in-law were working, and then with Operation Mobilisation in Ukraine. I was hooked ... it was so satisfying and exciting to be part of spreading the gospel throughout the whole world in obedience to the mandate that the Lord

Jesus left us. My second long-service leave was again spent experiencing cross-cultural missions, this time Jenny was able to accompany me.

Jenny: It was a wonderful experience for me. In December 2000 we began with two weeks working with the OM Moldova team, first speaking at their annual retreat in Romania, and then returning to Moldova with them to have the privilege of working with the teams in their local communities. New year 2001 was spent in Korea working with SIM in teaching English to prospective Korean missionary candidates. This is a very worthwhile experience and it can be undertaken by any committed Christian who is willing to step out of his comfort zone to assist others in preparing for mission service.

What is APWM and how does it work?

Bill: APWM is the Presbyterian Church of Australia's missionary organisation. It is responsible to the GAA through the federal committee of APWM, which is based in NSW. The committee has a very able convener in Dr David Pilgrim and employs myself and other three part-time staff - personal assistant Merrelyn Dunkerley, finance officer Jenny Cranston and projects officer Sharon Gordon, who really keep things rolling at the Picnic Point office.

The six state committees play a large and vital role in the work of missions. It is they who often make the first contact with someone interested in mission service, they are responsible for the initial approval of a missionary's application and they share the pastoral responsibility for our missionaries, with the director.

What's it like being director of the APWM?

Bill: I'm tempted to say after only a few months on the job, that I'd rather answer that question when I fully understand what the job is! I'm on a very steep learning curve, obviously. However, it's very encouraging to feel at home in the job even at this early stage. It's as if the last 24 years of parish work have been the Lord's preparation for this new ministry.

Jenny: I miss the defined role of minis-

K. M. SMITH

Funeral Directors — since 1877

53 BROOKES STREET, BOWEN HILLS

TELEPHONE (07) 3252 2031

1- 1/182 Bay Terrace, Wynnum, (07) 3548 4133

For prompt courteous and considerate attention to your Funeral requirements we are available 24 HOURS A DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK.

Our Head Office is located at 53 Brookes Street, Bowen Hills — with ample off-street parking available. If it is more convenient, our trained staff will make funeral arrangements in your home. If you prefer, the arrangements can be made by telephone.

FREECALL 1800 819 938

To: K.M.Smith, **Freepost 202**, PO Box 2170, Fortitude Valley, Qld, 4006

Please send me information on pre-arrangement of Funerals.

Name:

Address:

... ..

... ..

ter's wife in a parish and I expect our frequent absences will make it harder to establish those warm friendships that parish life gives. However, I'm committed to missions and excited to share with Bill in the task. Also I help the office staff to keep Bill organised!

Bill: And I need all the help I can get!

What is your vision for APWM?

Bill: Before I give a definitive answer on that I'd like to spend more time on the field and around the different congregations. However, I would love to see our church develop into a community in which every member, every elder, every minister shares Christ's desire to see the gospel go all over the world. Acts 1:8 gives us a pattern for moving out progressively from our comfort zones to share Christ with those who don't know him. Part of my emerging vision for missions is to see churches everywhere engaged as a core activity, in training their people in discipleship and sharing their faith. This has to involve our church leadership actively and eagerly providing opportunities for young and old to share their faith with those near at hand and those far away.

My broad vision is for us to see mission not as an optional extra, but as a core activity echoing the heartbeat of a missionary God.

How can the ordinary Presbyterian get involved in mission?

Bill: Briefly, if my view of missions is accepted – that is, that mission begins wherever we are when we step outside our comfort zone to share the saving Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ – then when we open our mouths to speak to unsaved workmates or friends we are involved in mission. When a youth group trains a team in creative ministries, sharing their testimony and giving a simple gospel outline, they are engaging in mission. And when that youth group takes the gospel program to a local school, a community festival, or to another town nearby where the Presbyterian cause is struggling to have an effective witness, then they are really getting engaged in mission. If someone young or old is willing to give up their annual vacation, or long service leave to join with others in short-term mission assignments, their world mission involvement is expanding. If anyone needs specific help in getting into this continuum of mission, their pastor or state mission committee would be able to help, or please feel free to contact me direct at 8 Sylvan Grove, Picnic Point, on ph: (02) 9792 1373; fax: (02) 9792 1374 or email: apwmdirector@optusnet.com.au

How can a local church set up a mission committee?

Bill: That's a question I hope a lot of our readers and church leaders are asking! I'm hoping to produce a booklet on this subject drawn from my experience and the lessons that I am learning as I move around the church. I also hope to include in the website that we are starting to put together simple guidelines and



practical tips for setting up and maintaining the parish mission committee. Stay tuned.

In the mean time, the best advice that I can give is in the words of Nike: Just do it! If someone has a concern for missions and the church he belongs to could do with a little help in getting more organised in that area, get session's approval and meet with like-minded people.

Perhaps a pulpit announcement will uncover more mission-minded people than you suspected. This little group can pray for current Presbyterian mission activity.

Around Australia PWMU and state mission committees are faithfully disseminating missions information for prayer. Together with magazines from mission societies and missionaries' personal prayer letters, these are an excellent resource for learning about what's happening in missions and encouraging mission prayer within the church. Any readers who are straining at the leash to get a missions committee started could always contact me and I would be very happy to help in any way that I can!

Tell us about the Meal for Mission program.

Bill: Meal for Mission is the one real "fundraiser" that APWM conducts. It's an annual event and in 2001 it raised about \$53,000, which is 18 per cent of APWM's annual budget. According to the Year Book we have 55,847 members, adherents and young people in the Presbyterian Church of Australia, so that indicated that Meal for Mission giving is equivalent to just under \$1 per person.

Each year certain areas of APWM's activities are highlighted by Meal for Mission and the special giving that results allows us to continue our support to these highlighted areas, along with other people and projects. I'd like to encourage groups in the churches to think creatively about how to multiply the amounts that they can give by putting their original gift to work to earn more. AP

HILLS FAMILY FUNERALS

Offering Christian Care & Concern

- Christian Funeral Directors
- David is an Ordained Minister of the Presbyterian Church
- Australian family owned and operated
- Kindness and understanding
- Bereavement counselling
- Serving all Sydney suburbs
- 24 hour service
- Pre-Paid and Pre-Arranged Services



David & Josie Brand

(02) 9838 7711

Email: info@hillsfamilyfunerals.com.au Web: www.hillsfamilyfunerals.com.au

prayer

MAY 2002

- 21 Ronald and Maryann Fowler from Tuggeranong ACT and Burwood NSW congregations working at WEC International Headquarters, Strathfield NSW.
- 22 The residents, staff and oversight of the church's aged care facilities in your state — there are 30 throughout Australia — and especially spiritual ministry in them.
- 23 Annerley parish in Brisbane's inner south; about 50 communicants and adherents, and 3 elders; Paul and Carol Seiler.
- 24 Presbytery of Melbourne North, Vic; 8 parishes and 3 home mission stations totalling 13 congregations with about 580 communicants and adherents, 1 hospital chaplain, 1 theological lecturer; Reg Butcher clerk.
- 25 The opening today of the large new building of the Creek Road congregation, eastern Brisbane (formerly Camp Hill and Cannon Hill), and the associated outreach into the community of the surrounding district in July with Peter Woodcock — Peter and Joy Barson, David and Elizabeth McDougall. 15 elders, 285 communicants and adherents, 70 younger folk.
- 26 The boys, teachers and other staff and school council of Scots School, Bathurst, NSW, Mr A. Lamrock principal.
- 27 Alan and Faye Canavan linguists/translators for the Bwanabwana language of Tubetube Island, Milne Bay Province, PNG and their three children, studying elsewhere; they come from Warburton, Vic. and have been in PNG for 16 years.
- 28 The historic North Sydney parish (St Peter's) including Greenwich congregation; about 135 communicants and adherents, 18 younger folk and 14 elders; Paul and Margaret Logan — and his work as clerk of the NSW assembly and GAA.
- 29 Belgrave Heights appointment parish eastern Melbourne; about 10 communicants and adherents, 25 younger

- folk and 2 elders; Mark and Alison Tonkin.
- 30 The students and staff of the Presbyterian Theological College, Box Hill, Melbourne including the new Principal, Douglas Milne and Old Testament lecturer Greg Goswell.
- 31 Martin and Judith Duffield and the 3 elders of Wavell Heights parish northern Brisbane; about 65 communicants and adherents and 15 younger folk.

JUNE

- 1 The peoples of India numbering well over 1 billion, 80% being Hindu, 12.5% Muslim and 2.4% Christian; good government, justice and peace with its neighbours.
- 2 Presbytery of Wagga Wagga, NSW; 9 parishes and 3 home mission stations totalling 35 congregations with about 1650 communicants and adherents, 1 ministerial candidate, 2 retired ministers, 1 under jurisdiction, 1 deaconess; Peter Greiner clerk.
- 3 Cairns parish, Queensland; about 170 communicants and adherents, 70 younger folk and 8 elders; Russell and Laurel van Delden, Donald and Gloria Broadwater.
- 4 Epping-Lalor parish, North Melbourne (two congregations); about 45 communicants and adherents, 15 younger folk and 8 elders; Kyung Rae Ee.
- 5 Esk home mission station near Ipswich, Qld, including Coominya and Toogoolawah; about 30 communicants and adherents and 3 younger folk; Paul and Linden Blake.
- 6 Closer relations of our Church with other similar denominations such as the Christian Reformed Churches and the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia ("Free Church").
- 7 Brett and Ruth Richardson from Parramatta City congregation, NSW, as they serve with European Christian Mission in Spain church planting in Cabra and Montilla near Cordoba.
- 8 Two Korean churches at Strathfield NSW; Antioch (about 250 communicants and adherents and 105 younger folk; Ki-Ok and Sun-Ok Jung) and

- Siloam (about 170 communicants and adherents, 85 younger folk and 2 elders; Byeong Jae and Yeorang Ryu).
- 9 Granville and Denny Pillar as they go to do Christian work in a medical university in Hungary with the International Institute of Christian Studies.
- 10 Honesty and integrity in the electronic and print media, and Christians working in them.
- 11 Bicton parish, Perth; about 110 communicants and adherents, 30 younger folk and 3 elders; Andrew and Kathleen Robinson.
- 12 Presbytery of Gippsland, eastern Vic; 4 parishes and 2 home mission stations totalling 8 congregations with about 645 communicants and adherents, 1 retired minister; Jared Hood clerk.
- 13 Gladstone parish, central coast of Queensland including also Benarby and Calliope; about 135 communicants and adherents, 20 younger folk and 8 elders; David and Margaret Secomb.
- 14 A solution to the conflicts and bloodshed in the "Holy Land"; restraint on both Palestinian and Israeli sides.
- 15 Croydon Hills appointment parish, Melbourne; about 85 communicants and adherents, 10 younger folk and 2 elders; John and Elizabeth Diacos.
- 16 The 25 million Christians of India — steadfastness and protection in persecution and an effective Christian witness.
- 17 Patrick and Jennie Fung at Overseas Missionary Fellowship headquarters, Singapore. They come from Sydney Chinese Presbyterian church, and formerly served in Pakistan and Hong Kong.
- 18 John and Lynne Webster and the 24 elders of the Newcastle suburban parish of Hamilton, NSW; about 290 communicants and adherents and 15 younger folk.
- 19 Susan Sandral from Surrey Hills, Melbourne, in the middle of a two year term in East Timor teaching English with APWM and WEC; she served 35 years in Indonesia with WEC.
- 20 All Christian ministry in primary and secondary Schools by Christian staff and students, visiting RE teachers and chaplains.

AUSTRALIAN
Presbyterian

Subscription form

Please send me *Australian Presbyterian* magazine ...

- 1 year subscription (\$32+GST)
- 2 year (\$55+GST) 3 year (\$75+GST)
- Overseas: \$A43per year. Donation.

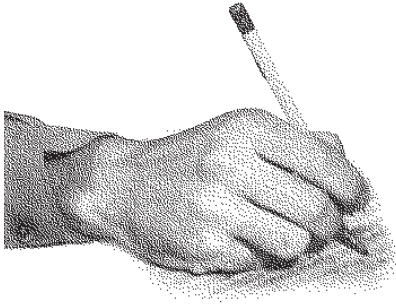
Deliver to:
 Name
 Address
 City/Suburb
 State Pcode
 Country
 Phone

Payment Details

Please find enclosed
 Cheque/money order to *Australian Presbyterian* for: \$ _____
 Please debit \$ _____ from my
 Visa Bankcard Mastercard
 Account number:
 Expiry date: ___/___/___ Name on Card _____
 Signature _____

Please send completed forms to:
 Australian Presbyterian PO Box 375, Kilsyth VIC. 3137
 Phone: (03) 9723 9684. Fax: (03) 9723 9685. Email: austpres@bigpond.com.

letters



Anointing and sin

Some exegetical data would assist the “well oiled” historical comments on James 5:13-20 by Peter Barnes (*AP*, April). The fact that elders (not doctors) are called already implies a spiritual problem. Sin lies behind this sickness. Indeed everything in the text points to sin. Verse 15 is best translated “And the prayer of faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. Though (not ‘if’) he has sinned, he will be forgiven.” The next verse begins with the crucial link “therefore”. “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed”.

So this man needs to own his sins in the presence of church leaders. It is a case of temporal judgments in the church as at Corinth (1 Cor. 11:30) where many were weak and sick. It’s not just any sins (or we’d all be constantly sick) but those more scandalous sins affecting the integrity and welfare of the whole church. That’s why James insists that the church be called via its overseers. The cure is obviously spiritual, not medicinal. The sick man must confess the damage done to the church. Until then, all the medicine in the world is useless.

James sees it as a particular case of a general rule: “Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover a multitude of sins” (vv 19-20). And we must not soften the absolute certainty of recovery: “the Lord will raise him up”. James does not just “expect the sick person to recover”: he asserts it. That’s why the text does not apply to cases like Francis Schaeffer with terminal cancer.

This recovery is not figurative, poetic, or hyperbolic, but literal. It confirms a temporal judgement has been sent by God to drive a man to repentance. Once that purpose is achieved the goad is removed. God’s integrity is involved. So James is

certain of recovery in that context only.

Several facts urge extreme caution before assuming a James 5 scenario. First, while I can put the text on the bench for rigorous examination, I cannot exegete humans so easily. Second, how do we distinguish natural consequences of sin from divine judgements? If a preacher scandalises the church by immorality and gets AIDS, how do we know if it is a Corinthian (James 5) scenario? Is the prayer of elders a cure for AIDS? Third, there is mystery in providence. The wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. Job’s counsellors are perfect examples of the how appearances can deceive.

*Rev. Peter Bloomfield,
Bald Hills, Qld*

Love and the catechism

The first catechism question asks, “What is the chief end of man?” And answers, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.” That answer is most assuredly God-glorifying but, in my opinion, it is not quite adequate.

I came to this position one day while considering the first commandment. Our Lord, asked which is the first commandment, replied: The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment (Mk 12:29f).

The first commandment surely should be our starting point. Love is the essence of Christianity, the foundation upon which it is built, that which distinguishes it from all other religions in the world. “God so loved the world that he gave –” and the primary response he is looking for is surely love.

How can we worship him fully, effectively, if we don’t love him first and foremost? Thus, I believe God’s first and foremost requirement of us all is that we love him more than anyone or anything else. If this is true, surely the first catechism should read: “Man’s chief end is to love and to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”

*Phil and Jan Storrs,
Eumundi, Qld*

Sick at heart

As a psychiatrist, I was concerned about several statements in “Sick at heart” by Edward Welch (*AP*, February), originally published in the *Journal of Biblical*

Counselling (Vol 18, no 3, 2000).

Welch says: “Even in cases of severe depression, careful analysis of the evidence does not demonstrate the superior effectiveness of medication over counselling.” It is true that in mild depression, therapy such as cognitive behavioural therapy can be as effective as medication, but many studies have confirmed that in more severe depression, medication is significantly more effective.

He also suggests that if those who are depressed ask about medication, they should “consider first a season where they allow their hardship to challenge and increase their faith, in which they say, ‘Lord, search me’, and they meet with a spiritual mentor”. This may be reasonable with mild depression; but with a more severe depressive illness it is very unlikely that the sufferer will improve without medication, and may have to endure prolonged and needless suffering. Furthermore, the risk of suicide is increased.

Welch does not appear to recognise severe depression as a physical illness, although he acknowledges that it has physical symptoms. He nowhere allows that God may use medication, as he does in other illnesses, to bring relief from depression.

*Dr Joanna Barlow,
Elernmore Vale, NSW*

Dr Welch replies: The effectiveness of antidepressants is presently being re-evaluated. Meta-analyses of data show that the positive effect is smaller than the manufacturers lead us to believe. We are moving into an era when people will be looking for more alternatives to the traditional anti-depressant treatment. I am not opposed to medication. To take such a stand would be legalistic in that we would be looking for Scripture to make prohibitions where the issue is wisdom rather than right or wrong. My concern is that psychiatric diagnoses can help us see certain problems but they can blind us to others. When someone is labelled “clinically depressed” we can miss the fact that such people often feel guilty, hopeless, purposeless, angry, fearful, ashamed and powerless. Medication can’t address these issues. These are issues of the heart, and in the gospel of Christ we are sitting on a gold mine of answers and hope. I find the distinctions among mild, moderate and severe to be on a continuum rather than separate categories. As such, I tend to emphasise the continuity among them, and I believe that what is helpful to one end of the continuum is helpful for those at the other end.

That loving feeling

Emotions are part of our Christian duty, insists John Piper.

It is astonishing to me that so many people try to define true Christianity in terms of decisions and not affections. Not that decisions are unessential. The problem is that they require so little transformation. Mere decisions are no sure evidence of a true work of grace in the heart. People can make “decisions” about the truth of God while their hearts are far from him.

We have moved far away from the biblical Christianity of Jonathan Edwards. He pointed to 1 Peter 1:8 and argued that “true religion, in great part, consists in the affections”. “Though you have not seen him, you love him, and though you do not see him now, but believe, in him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8).

Throughout Scripture we are commanded to feel, not just to think or decide. We are commanded to experience dozens of emotions, not just to perform acts of willpower.

For example, God commands us not to covet (Ex. 20:17), and it is obvious that every commandment not to have a certain feeling is also a commandment to have a certain feeling. The opposite of covetousness is contentment, and this is exactly what we are commanded to experience in Hebrews 13:5: “Be content with what you have.”

God commands us to bear no grudge (Lev. 19:18). The positive side of not bearing a grudge is forgiving “from the heart”. This is what Jesus commands us to do in Matthew 18:35: “Forgive [your] brother from your heart.” The Bible does not say, make a mere decision to drop the grievance. It says, experience a change in the heart. The Bible goes even further and commands a certain intensity. For example, 1 Peter 1:22 commands “Love one another earnestly from the heart”. And Romans 12:10 commands “Love one another with brotherly affections”.

People are often troubled by the teaching of Christian hedonism (that is, finding one’s highest pleasure in God) that emotions are part of our duty — that they are commanded. This seems strange partly because emotions are not under our immediate control like acts of willpower

IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD



seem to be. But Christian hedonism says, consider the Scriptures. Emotions are commanded throughout the Bible.

The Scriptures command joy, hope, fear, peace, grief, desire, tenderheartedness, brokenness and contrition, gratitude, lowliness etc. Therefore Christian hedonism is not making too much of emotion when it says that being satisfied in God is our calling and duty.

It is true that our hearts are often sluggish. We do not feel the depth or intensity of affections that are appropriate for God or his cause. It is true that at those times we must exert our wills and make decisions that we hope will rekindle our joy. Even though joyless love is not our aim — “God loves a cheerful giver!” (2 Cor. 9:7); “[Show] mercy with cheerfulness,” (Rom. 12:8) — nevertheless it is better to do a joyless duty than not to do it, provided that there is a spirit of repentance that we have not done all of our duty because of the sluggishness of our hearts.

I am often asked what a Christian should do if the cheerfulness of obedience is not there. It’s a good question. My answer is not to simply get on with your duty because feelings don’t matter. They do! My answer has three steps.

First, confess the sin of joylessness.

(“My heart is faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I,” Psalm 61:2.) Acknowledge the coldness of your heart. Don’t say that it doesn’t matter how you feel.

Second, pray earnestly that God would restore the joy of obedience. (“I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart,” Psalm 40:8).

Third, go ahead and do the outward dimension of your duty in the hope that the doing will rekindle the delight.

This is very different from saying: “Do your duty because feelings don’t count.” These steps assume that there is such a thing as hypocrisy. They are based on the belief that our goal is the reunion of pleasure and duty, and that a justification of their separation is a justification of sin.

Yes, it becomes increasingly evident that the experience of joy in God is beyond what the sinful heart can do. It goes against our nature. We are enslaved to pleasure in other things (Rom. 6:17). We can’t just decide to be glad about something we find boring or uninteresting or offensive — like God. The making of a Christian hedonist is a miracle of sovereign grace.

This is why Paul said that becoming a Christian is the same as being raised from the dead (“even when we were dead in our transgressions, [God] made us alive together with Christ,” Eph. 2:5).

It’s why Jesus said it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to stop loving his money and start loving God (Mark 10:25). Camels can’t go through needles’ eyes — just as dead men can’t wake themselves from the dead. So Jesus adds, “With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God” (Mark 10:27).

So Christian hedonism breeds an utter dependence on the sovereignty of God. It teaches us to hear the command, “delight yourself in the Lord,” and then to pray with Saint Augustine, “command what you wish, but give what you command.”

This extract is taken from The Dangerous Duty of Delight by John Piper (Multnomah Press, 2001).