

A U S T R A L I A N

Presbyterian

THE MAGAZINE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

september 1998



Family

...ripped apart

God and the scientists • Presidential peccadilloes • Church directory

prayer

SEPTEMBER

- 21 Scottsdale parish, Tasmania, including 3 congregations; about 55 communicants, about 30 children and youth and 12 elders; vacant — Philip Mercer moderator.
- 22 Gunnedah parish, NSW, including Boggabri; about 120 communicants, about 55 children and youth and 6 elders; vacant.
- 23 Presbytery of North Brisbane, 5 parishes, 1 home mission station, totalling 7 congregations with 460 communicants, 130 adherents, 210 children and youth and 33 elders; 3 retired ministers; Gary Fintelman clerk.
- 24 World Presbyterian Mission director Robert Benn visiting missionaries overseas; successful outcomes to his visits just completed in Africa, his coming meetings in the Netherlands and to MERF in Cyprus.
- 25 Kerang parish, Vic., about 30 communicants, about 5 children and youth and 3 elders; vacant: Martin de Pyle moderator.
- 26 Balranald home mission station in south-western NSW, about 15 communicants, about 20 children and youth and 4 elders; Ross and Lyn Brinkman, and the patrol work he does for PIM.
- 27 Graham & Irene Haywood from Hurstville, NSW, Bible translators into Kilege-Maleu (PNG) with Wycliffe BT since 1972.
- 28 Stability and prosperity and continued Gospel witness among the 156 million people of Russia in spite of the restrictions imposed by the Orthodox church.
- 29 Chatswood-Lane Cove parish, Sydney; about 90 communicants, about 10 children and youth and 14 elders;

John & Joy Britton.

- 30 The Presbyterian Theological College, Box Hill, Melbourne — the professors, lecturers and students.

OCTOBER

- 1 Mt Gambier parish, South Australia, including 5 congregations, about 130 communicants, about 50 children and youth and 11 elders; Rod & Sandra Waterhouse; Philip & Sharon Daffy.
- 2 Presbytery of Murrumbidgee, southern NSW, 2 parishes, 4 home mission stations, totalling 9 congregations with 315 communicants, 140 adherents, 150 children and youth and 35 elders; Philip Strong clerk.
- 3 Liz Taylor from Strathfield, missionary in India with SIM.
- 4 Epping-Lalor parish, northern Melbourne; 2 congregations, about 60 communicants, about 20 children and youth and 7 elders; Geoff & Trish Spedding.
- 5 Darrell & Margaret Thatcher from Perth and Sydney, APWM missionaries at Talua Ministry Training Centre, Vanuatu.
- 6 Temora parish, southern NSW, about 70 communicants, about 5 children and youth and 8 elders; vacant: Fred Monckton interim moderator.
- 7 Graham & Sue Single (from Epping, NSW), missionaries in Spain with WEC.
- 8 Those recovering from floods in NSW and the vast floods in China.
- 9 Granville & Denny Pillar from Gosford, missionaries in training at SMBC for service to Africa.
- 10 Progress of the Gospel and Christian maturity among the 400,000 people of the Solomon Islands — 73% Protestant, 19% RC, 6% animist or

cargo cultists.

- 11 Robyn Davies from Strathfield, NSW, and Lizbeth Fritzell, Bible translators for the Ramoaina language (PNG).
- 12 The 2830 ruling elders in our denomination — their spiritual growth and effective ministry and leadership.
- 13 Presbytery of Geelong, Vic.; 6 parishes, totalling 11 congregations with 465 communicants, 125 adherents, 255 children and youth and 66 elders; 6 retired ministers; Graham Hamill clerk.
- 14 Charlestown-Eastlakes parish, south of Newcastle, NSW, including 4 congregations; about 130 communicants, about 30 children and youth and 11 elders; vacant: John Seaton interim moderator.
- 15 Dennis & Glenys Tranter from Victoria, new workers under the Aborigines Inland Mission at isolated Borrooloola, NT.
- 16 Castle Hill parish Sydney; about 145 communicants, about 40 children and youth and 10 elders; Ron & Jackie Keith.
- 17 Geelong North parish, Victoria, including North Shore; about 35 communicants, about 12 children and youth and 4 elders; Alan & Narelle Lendon.
- 18 That all our congregations will have a vision for the evangelisation of their communities, as well as the glory of God and the spiritual growth of their members.
- 19 Sandgate parish, northern Brisbane; about 75 communicants, about 20 children and youth and 8 elders; John & Deanne Gilmour.
- 20 The Christian presence in public primary schools through Christian teachers and visiting instructors.

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THE MAGAZINE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

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Family – where you can belong

Family! The very word spells comfort and conjures up a wide variety of thoughts and memories. It gives us a sense of belonging, of being nurtured, of feeling supported.

Families are the building blocks of society — and that’s the way God meant it to be. So this month we focus on the family, because we reckon that if we can improve family life, we can improve the whole life of society.

You might think that’s a big task, and you’re right. But just because a job looks big, or beyond our resources, or even impossible, is no reason for us not to try. What we want to do in this issue is to help us all as members of “the family and household of faith” to put God’s will for us into practice in our ordinary, every-day family life. After all, God wants what is best for us. He is our Father in Heaven. And He knows best.

Some families seem to be relatively trouble-free. Mum and Dad love and respect each other, this love and respect flows over



Robert Benn

to the kids, comes back to them and everyone is blessed. There’s probably not much we need to say to families like that, except “Keep it up! You’re setting a great example and modelling the family life God intended for everyone.”

Others face one problem and difficulty after another. Fractured relationships turn into generation gaps. Nothing goes right. Everyone goes their own sweet way. Nobody seems to care. That’s why John Langbridge is writing about ‘When Children Rebel’. That’s why we’ve borrowed the article ‘Family Fiasco’ from

Moody Monthly. These articles give practical help to those in difficulty.

I want to add two more words for any parent concerned about a wayward child: “Remember Monica.” Who was Monica? She was the mother of a little boy called Augustine, and she gave him a Christian upbringing (See *AP*, May). As a young man, he rebelled and turned to worldly ways. For years Monica never ceased to pray for him, until eventually he returned to the Lord. His was one of the greatest intellects the church — even the whole world — has seen, and when he finally became a Christian he used that intellect to expound and defend the Christian faith in a mighty way. Augustine was Bishop of Hippo, in North Africa, in the 4th century, but he would never have been a Christian, much less a bishop, if Monica had not been constant in prayer.

If you’ve got an Augustine, make sure you’re a Monica!

Robert Benn,
Convener, National Journal Committee

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When Children Rebel

John Langbridge knows the pain of 'parental failure'.



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I'd been out all day — home, dinner and peace at last. But as I parked, I heard the all too familiar sounds of shouting and anger. I retreated into my study, not wanting to face the latest crisis. But I went in — Jan didn't deserve to face it alone.

The truth was, our family was dysfunctional. Our eldest son, a gift from the Lord, for whom we had so many hopes, was rebelling angrily and violently against everything we held dear and believed in. I was a minister; we had both been teachers, but we had no answers. We were filled with despair and shame; and, when we were alone, tears too.

Not every Christian family has a completely happy story to tell. Probably in any church there are some like ours, doing it tough. Often, fearful of the stigma that others are quick to apply, they hide it, even from their minister. Jan and I have long since given up concealing our problem, or even apologising for our eldest son. I hope one day to write a small book about our experiences. Every point I make briefly in this article, is worthy of a chapter. So if anyone who reads this is hurting as we have



John Langbridge

been hurt, and wants a listening ear (and perhaps some advice), we are here.

I can offer no comfort to those who willfully disobeyed biblical principles in bringing up their children. That is between you and the Lord. Consequences and forgiveness are in His hands. But for those who tried so hard (even as imperfect parents) to rear their children in love, Bible and faith; yet even so saw a child go wrong — this is for you. It's also for those who want to understand parents going through this GRIEF (for that is what it is, grief that doesn't go away).

Living as a family: Like us, you probably worry about the effect of your rebellious child on the other children. We tried never

to run down the bad one before the others, but to focus on bad behaviours. We neither wanted our children to learn to hate, nor to accept uncritically. Don't force your children to choose between parents or sibling, but demonstrate unconditional love.

Knowing of marriages that have been split by problem kids, we turned to each other in our hurts, and then presented a united front. Your marriage can actually grow stronger through this pain.

Parents have the right before God to make reasonable rules for the home, and to enforce them. For even the worst child, *"let your yes be yes and your no be no"*, clear and unequivocal. And I give advice that may stun you; yet I believe it to be biblical. When your rebellious child has reached the age where you can no longer discipline, then there remains but one sanction — 'Live here and accept the rules, or live elsewhere!' But even that must not be rejection. When they go, maintain the love, have them back weekly for a meal. Keep the communication going.

Books didn't help — well not much. There's a theory about child rearing and education, that if you do certain things, it will produce certain outcomes. It is called

It is written...

Don't leave your treasure buried.

Share it with your children.

behaviourism, and it is a pagan philosophy. Yet many Christian books are founded on that theory (perhaps unknowingly). We read many; followed the advice; and only added to our guilt as we failed yet again. If good Christian parents doing the right Christian thing produce good Christian offspring, whose fault is it when a child does not turn out that way? Obviously the parents. Failure and guilt, guilt and failure!

Even books written specifically about rebellious children simply taught a special set of instructions which would lead (finally) to happy ever after land. (I offer no such promises — our son at 29 is still far from Christ.) The only book which we found really helped us was *Parents in Pain* by John White.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. If we had a dollar for every time Prov. 22:6 was laid on us, we would now be rich. It is used as a behaviourist manifesto: good Christian parents equal good Christian kids.

Judgmentalism by others is one of the hardest burdens for parents with wayward children. That verse is used as a sledgehammer of judgment. But it comes from Proverbs. It is a wise statement, not a commandment. It is like Prov. 31:10-31 about the good wife. It is impossible for any woman to live that out as commandments. Rather it is a wise collection of good wifely attributes. Don't lay an unnecessary burden on yourselves, or listen too much to those who want to. Before God, do the best you can. It is all He demands.

My friends, Jan and I experienced the worst of judgmentalism from both colleagues and other church folk. The pain is still with us. But we also experienced some wonderfully loving, caring responses from colleagues, elders and others that still bring tears to our eyes. If you are a Christian friend of someone with a wayward child, encourage, listen to, pray with, and even cry with them. They are grieving so badly!

Our conclusion: We rejoice that by God's grace, most Christian families turn out so wonderfully. We can now look on successful Christian families without that pang of envy. We can even compliment parents as to how well their children have turned out, without feeling personal pain. But we cannot box God up to our definition and demand that it must always be so. It was not so for one of our children; but we love him as much as the others (who are a joy to our hearts). It may not be so for you, or for someone you know. God's own son Israel rebelled. He understands.

John Langbridge is minister at Ipswich Presbyterian Church.

AP

Stepping back she knelt, then lay down flat and inched her way forward until her head was over the edge. What she saw made her sick with fear. She could not see the bottom. The sheer walls of the chasm seemed to stretch down endlessly ... Tremblingly, she pulled herself back and stood up again, well back from the chasm's mouth. How was she to get across?*

"That's it for tonight. We'll find out what happens tomorrow. Prayer time now — and then it's lights out!"

You can imagine the groans from the avid listeners and the pleas for another chapter before precious story-time is over for another night. And it becomes quite impossible to put the book down yourself without reading ahead to see what happens.

Surely there is nothing more satisfying than the memory of good books shared in such a way, as each generation of parents passes on the joy of reading to their children. There is nothing in our electronic age that quite compares with the remembered treasures from the many books that have contributed to our store of knowledge, equipped us for our life's calling and helped us in our living and witnessing for Christ.

In my own life, I am most grateful to my parents and other relations, who encouraged me to read and to understand the best book of all — the Bible. My first Bible was a very prized book. And I am also thankful that as the Holy Spirit began His work in me, there were always good Christian books given to me to deepen my desire to know God and His Son Jesus better.

I look back with joy to stories like *Pilgrim's Progress* read by my father as we sat around the heater on winter nights. Every day there were family worship times, with stories read from a dear old devotional book. Many are the memories of Sunday School prize books, with exciting adventures to finish before the light was switched out.

As a fully-fledged bookworm, I was given biographies of fine Christian lives, such as Amy Carmichael (mother to many young children saved from slavery in India's heathen temples) and Peter Marshall (silver-tongued preacher of the Gospel in American halls of power). What role models these were for a teenager keen to serve



Virginia Kettmiss

the Lord, and looking for a man of His choice!

Helpful books were recommended to me as I contemplated marriage; others were available to open up the mysteries of bringing babies into the world, and then to guide the little feet into true patterns and into the straight and narrow way.

My memories and experiences are backed up by something I read in the *Idea Book for Mothers*. The author discusses a mother's awesome responsibility of teaching children how to program positive thought patterns, which will essentially affect everything they are or do in life. She wrote: "For reinforcing biblical principles, for stimulating imagination and increasing language perception, a great deal of reading is essential ... By carefully choosing reading material, we can help our children keep their thoughts on whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy ... As obscene literature proliferates, I believe the best way for us to fight it is by bringing good literature into our homes. Give children a love for good reading from the beginning of their story-listening years and you won't need to be concerned about the books they choose as young adults ... I have found books the greatest time-saver of all. If you have a book handy, you will never waste those precious minutes that slip away so quickly. Keep books in every room! ... If books are laid around the house invitingly, you and your children will read much more than if they are kept only in neat rows in the bookcase."

So it was my turn to pass on what had been precious to me. Meal times became special with family worship enjoyed morning and evening; and bed times were eagerly awaited, with serialised stories shared, and precious prayer times. Good books were made readily accessible, and our daughters became bookworms very early,


with the resultant blessings — especially that the Bible is an open book to them — a guide book for every pathway in their lives.

A Christian home should be full of good books. We should be able to breathe the fragrance of the Lord Jesus through the literature that sits ready to be read by anyone inhabiting its rooms. I feel sad to see households starving their children intellectually, morally, emotionally and spiritually by allowing them liberal access to the television, and letting the programmes shape their thinking and fill their leisure hours. If this is their main entertainment, or even their main occupation, they've been let loose in a worldly wilderness!

So let's have devotional books in our kitchens with the recipe books. Let's have bookshelves in the bedrooms for the kids to collect favourite books. How about good Christian magazines in our reading racks instead of the popular magazines of the day promoting everything but the way of Christ? It's not necessary to go on expensive buying sprees of all the latest in fine literature. A careful gleaning through our parents' and grandparents' shelves unearths many treasures; and many are recycled at ridiculous prices in different book fests.

Let's save our favourite literature to pass on to our children for their children. In this way we can encourage good role models for our young people as they read about fine Christian men, modest ladies, teenagers committed to purity, and children who cherish their parents and like their little brothers.

May I encourage all Christian people to look at the book content of our homes and see if we're using every opportunity to feed our minds with wholesome food? After the rubbish is cleaned out, there's room for a proliferation of good books!

Virginia Kettmiss is married to Guido Kettmiss, minister of Gateway Presbyterian Church, Qld. 

**The opening sentence is taken from The Tower of Geburah, John White, IVP, Illinois, 1978, p. 174. Please read on for a very special description of a girl's welcome into the arms of her Saviour and into the family of the living God.*

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Happy families

Loving your spouse is the best way to love your children

One thing my wife Virginia and I have always believed is that our love for each other is the most important gift that we have given to our family. We have wanted our children to know that we are deeply in love as husband and wife, and that our first commitment is to one another. We are husband and wife first, and father and mother second.

But wives and husbands today often see their main role as carers of their children. Evidence of this is the fact that we celebrate mother's/fathers' day and not wife's/husband's day (perish the thought of another excuse for the commercialisation of something so important as the marriage relationship!).

It is interesting that sociological research shows most women put their role of mother above the role of wife. A common comment was that their children were the most important persons in their lives. Asked how they viewed their spouses, their first response was "provider"; husband was half way down the list.

Certainly, the role of a mother in disciplining her children is important (Prov 31:28; 2 Tim 1:5), and our Lord is truly glorified when children learn about the love of Jesus from their mother. Similarly, the role of the father must be more than that of provider and occasional child-minder. But both fulfil another role which in some ways is more vital and essential — that of being a



Guido Kettmiss

wife and a husband. This is the role which has not received due emphasis.

The Bible continually highlights the husband-wife relationship. In the Old Testament, men were urged to leave their parents and cleave to their wives, thus becoming one flesh (Gen 2:20-24). In Proverbs, a mother's good influence on her children is set in the context of being a good wife (ch 31). The New Testament call to bring up children in the discipline and nurture of the Lord, naturally follows after the call to husband and wife to love and to submit to each other (Eph 5).

Unfortunately, we have not always followed this priority, and as a result we have created many problems. When wives or husbands do not view their partner as the most important person in their life (beside the Lord of course), and when the marital relationship isn't seen as central, then the Lord's purpose for the family may well disintegrate. The couple will be less happy and therefore have less interest in spending time together as a family and encouraging one another to follow Christ.

We see the results of this in different ways. When young wives spend all their time on the children, to the neglect of the husband, jealousy and resentment can easily occur. Sometimes this makes a husband reluctant to do his rightful share in teaching and disciplining the children, and he misses out on much precious caring time. Children see and feel (no doubt also hear) the tension and unhappiness that pervades the household. This can make them feel insecure and unhappy. Furthermore there is little preparation of the "soil" to cause the Gospel to grow and bring about fruit in their lives.

When the husband concentrates only on being the provider, often falsely believing that greater wealth will bring about greater

security, he cannot be a true father, and certainly not a loving husband. When husbands focus on working hard and being successful, they can become preoccupied with their work, neglecting wives and children. Some husbands become so involved in different organisations, clubs, sports and even church meetings that they are unable or unwilling to give the love and companionship that every wife requires.

This is in stark contrast to the love of Christ ruling the marriage in every aspect. When the wife's and the husband's spiritual, emotional and marriage needs are met, then there is a far better foundation for the children's needs to be met. The fulfilment of all these flow down from the husband and wife to their children and not upward from the children to the married couple.

In a home where Christ's love and principles rule the marriage, the children will have a better chance of seeing His love being demonstrated and have that grounding for a happy and God-honouring marriage of their own in the future. This also provides the foundation for a loving and strong marriage to continue when the children leave home.

It must be remembered that most women and men are mothers and fathers (in the operative sense of the word) for only 18 to 25 years. They can be wives and husbands for 40 or even 60 years. How carefully couples prepare for the time when children leave home will determine whether the marriage will be a time full of joy, excitement and fulfilment, or whether it will become a nightmare of loneliness, frustration, resentment and finally divorce.

Being a good parent is a high and holy calling. But being a good wife and husband lays the foundation for being a good parent. When women are wives first and mothers second, and husbands "love their wives in the Lord" (Eph. 5) then the marriage is as God intended it to be, and the lives of the husband, wife and children are enriched and blessed. The unification of marriages and families from the top down, will ensure that children receive the Christian nurture, love and security the Lord intends for them. This will surely overcome many of the problems which families and marriages face today.

Guido Kettmiss is minister of Gateway Presbyterian Church, Brisbane.

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The Sunday family fiasco

Just get me to the church on time, pleads David Beckwith.

The chance of things going haywire on a Sunday morning are at least seven times greater than on any other morning of the week. Dead car batteries, hot water that is cold, milk that is sour, wet underwear, clogged toilets, stuck zippers, stained suits, cologne mistaken for mouthwash, lost Bibles, curling irons that hiss, nylons that run, sick puppies, power failures, touchy tempers, grumpy attitudes and daylight-saving time. Thieves break in on Saturday nights just to steal one of a nicely matched pair of socks.

I chuckle at my childhood memories. We lived only one block from church, but it took three and a half hours, 97 gallons of water, and three cars to move eight Beckwiths from their beds, through the shower, and to the front door of the church. Moving the children of Israel from Egypt to the Promised land was a piece of cake in comparison.

To begin with, Sunday mornings were marred by a notable family tradition, a sista soak in the tub. Leisurely draw the bath water, lock the door to the only bathroom in the house, and soak while reading the jokes in *Reader's Digest* or clipping your nails. How the bathroom door survived the brutal beatings I'll never know. Tempers flared at the thug in the tub -

"Aren't you done in there yet? Come on, open up!"

"Hurry up! Church is going to finish any minute now!"

"Do you want dinner served in there?"

Church started at 9:45. A Beckwith normally arrived every 10 or 15 minutes between 9:30 and 10:30. Nice schedule for an airline terminal, but not a church.

Let's sharpen the focus on the Sunday family fiasco. What really is happening?

First, God is not honoured. Attitudes for proper worship are formed in advance. Isaiah spoke of those who worshipped the Lord with their lips while their hearts were far from God (Isa. 29:13). It is next to impossible to worship God with the latest family feud still on your mind.

Second, God's Spirit is hindered. Enthusiastic song leaders or ministers grow discouraged trying to lead people who are still steaming over cross words fired 15 minutes ago. My family's late arrival was discourteous and disrupted the service.

Third, hypocrisy is promoted — harsh words one moment followed by blessing God the next. "Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be" (James 3:10).

So what can be done to arrive for church on time with a minimum of frustration? Have the kids sleep in the car? Camp out in the church parking lot? Here are some ideas that may help.

- Call a family conference to discuss the problem and discover solutions. Allow each person to explain his or her Sunday frustrations and offer suggestions, but don't allow accusations to fly: "Yes, but you are always ..." Write the plan down.

- Guard Saturday night functions. Late Saturday nights are the prelude to a chaotic Sunday morning. Plan to get to bed early: "Early to bed, early to rise, makes Sundays a pleasant surprise."

- Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark. Set out clothes, shoes, socks, nappy bags, strollers, and Bibles ahead of time. Set the Sunday breakfast table on Saturday night. If hot water is a problem, schedule some family members for Saturday night baths.

- Dad, help Mum get the kids ready and breakfast prepared. This is particularly important when the children are small. She'll love you for it.

- Start the day with some Christian music. It really makes a difference.

- Set a departure time that doesn't require split second timing and race-car driving. Plan to arrive five to 10 minutes early. At our home, we set a departure time five minutes before the time we must leave. Anyone not in the car five minutes after scheduled departure time does the dishes for the next meal. So far Dad has done the dishes more often than anyone else.

- Expect the unexpected. Satan will do his utmost to hinder your worship of God.

- Reaffirm your commitment to fellowship with God's people. "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:24,25).

When you arrive for church early, spend those moments in prayer and reading your Bible. Ask God to speak to you. He will!

I should add, if you find yourself running late on a Sunday don't stay away. Just quietly slip in, smile at the usher, and hold up your watch and shake it. He'll understand. We've all been there.

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4P

Presbyterian Church of Victoria

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Instant families

Carol Daniels Boley has 10 tips for step-mothers.

You're not my REAL mum! You can't tell me what to do!" 12-year-old Kelly shouted. The door slammed as the words pierced her stepmother's heart.

Such screams echo in thousands of homes everyday, including — more and more often — Christian homes, splintering relationships and shattering dreams of blissful family life.

By 1990, one in every six children in the United States was living in a reconstituted or "blended" family. If the trend continues, within a few years families with stepchildren will outnumber families raising their own children.

As in nearly all families, the bulk of the child rearing falls upon the stepmother. "If anybody had told me it would be this difficult, I never would have gotten into it," Kelly's stepmother said with a sigh.

While not all relationships include such stormy scenes, the role of step-mother is draining and demanding. As one Christian stepmother said, "Being a step-mum is harder than biological parenting, and the delights are fewer."

So how does a Christian stepmother cope?

When I first joined the ranks of step-mothers several years ago (I married a widower with a five-year-old daughter), nothing had prepared me for the daily realities of being a stepmother. I learned in a hurry.

Like Nehemiah of the Old Testament, I "consulted with myself", searched Scripture, interviewed pastors and family counsellors, and compared experiences with dozens of others raising their spouse's child. Here are 10 practical guidelines that apply the grace of Jesus Christ to the hard work of step-parenting.

First, keep a close, open relationship with your spouse.

While it's true that marriage and children arrive at the same time for a blended family, the marriage is still the primary relationship and therefore must be nurtured. The failure rate for second — and third — marriages tops the divorce rate for first marriages. Often the strain of raising children is too much for a remarried couple.

"It was the children — not my husband — that I wanted to divorce," one Christian step-mum told me. "They continually drove a wedge between us at home and nearly destroyed our marriage and each other."

Seek counselling, if necessary, to build skills in communicating feelings. Clarify and deal with issues before they become full-blown problems. Make decisions together.

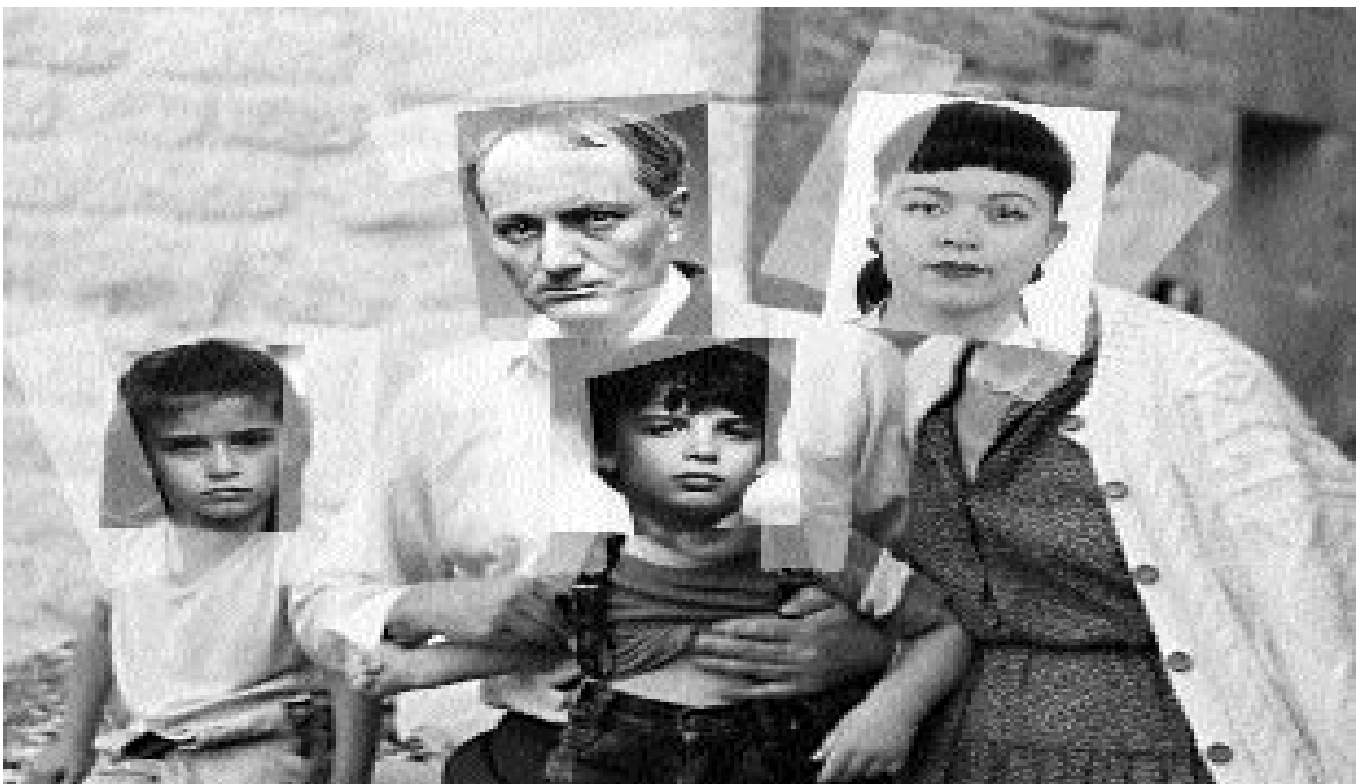
Second, lower your expectations.

Dreams of "one big happy family" often set up stepmothers for a big downfall, resulting in bitterness, jealousy and guilt. It takes from two to five years for a stepfamily to begin to emerge. Be patient. Start out by trying to establish a friendship based on trust. As respect for you grows, your authority will become an earned privilege, rather than an instant right, as it is in biological parenting.

Third, agree on a plan of discipline.

Alone with your mate, develop a plan, then present a united front to the children. At least initially, the major part of discipline should be administered by the natural parent, who must clarify to the children that the step-parent possesses authority to discipline in his or her absence.

In the case of divorce, children suffer greatly by bouncing between households where standards of behaviour differ. When co-parenting with the "ex", try hard to



maintain consistency and avoid an emotional tug-of-war.

Discipline in a blended family includes combating an almost universal phenomenon: the "poor little thing" syndrome. This occurs when children are not held accountable for their behaviour in an attempt to "make up" for the painful realities of life.

As one Christian step-mum relates: "At a large family gathering soon after our marriage, my husband was criticised by a relative for landing a well deserved slap on the hand of his misbehaving child. That same relative later told me it seemed harsh — even cruel — to discipline a child who had 'been through so much'." If left unchecked, such an attitude guarantees the creation of a spoiled youngster.

Fourth, accept your children and the reality of your situation.

A difficult aspect of step-parenting is accepting a child's looks, personality, habits, manners, behaviour, style of dress, speech, choice of friends and feelings — all of which you had nothing to do with. You might not even like these children, who may resent and reject you. But you have accepted some degree of responsibility for their care.

"When I first dealt with unacceptable behaviour in my stepchild, I caught myself thinking, "If I had reared him from birth, I wouldn't have allowed this in the first place," one stepmum recalled. "But I discovered only resentment and a 'poor me' attitude result from that kind of thinking."

Another stepmum advised, "Don't expect to 'live happily ever after'. No family does. Time spent wishing you were in a 'normal' situation, or that your family were like the Brady Bunch, is wasted."

Fifth, let an attitude of love — not merely feelings — direct your behaviour.

"I thought I should be able to love my husband's children just because they were his children," one Christian stepmum told me. "It relieved me of so much guilt to realise it wasn't my feelings so much as my actions and attitudes toward them that mattered."

An intense feeling of love for step children may never come. That's okay. Keeping a child's best interest at heart and acting in loving ways represents the best of parenting.

Sixth, view your role of stepmother as a ministry.

Motherhood in any dimension can be the purest form of discipleship — nurturing and guiding a young life in your own home.

Jesus said, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me" (Matt. 18:5). When loving is hard, treat the child as though Jesus Himself stood before you. Imagine Christ asking you to love this child

for Him. "I'll do this for You, Lord" has helped many a stepmother over a rough spot.

It also helps to find something to admire in each child daily. Tell him or her about it, too. "Some days I was reduced to commending my stepson for his colour choice in clothing" one stepmum said with a smile, "but I always found something positive to say."

Seventh, practise forgiveness.

You will have to learn to forgive your stepchildren, your husband, the other influential adults in your blended family, any interfering in-laws, those who gossip about and criticise you, yourself, and — in short — everybody.

Yet forgiveness does not keep you from stopping continued disruption of your family. Confrontation may be necessary.

"At one point we were forced to tell my husband's parents that we could not allow them to continue to question our calls from the side-line," one stepmum said. Stage such a confrontation with love and respect, acknowledging the contributions made to the child's life up to this point, but insisting that the future relationship will be determined by their fitting into your family.

Realise that all the responsibility for the success of your blended family does not rest on you alone. Every problem your stepchild faces does not stem from the fact that he is a stepchild. "Don't take all the credit; don't take all the blame," a wise mother once said.

Sometimes, no matter how hard you try, a relationship between a stepmum and a child will go sour. Be assured that you gave it your best effort before God and leave the result to Him.

Eighth, take time for yourself.

Your life involves more than your role as a stepmum. The pressing needs of a blended family can sap you physically, emotionally and spiritually. Refresh yourself in time alone with God, with special friends and with a hobby or sport you enjoy.

To increase your confidence and broaden perspectives, take a class, read all the books by a favourite author, volunteer at a hospital or start a stamp collection. Choose a relaxing activity that will reduce stress in your life. Balance is your goal.

Ninth, seek support.

Pastors and counsellors agree: "It's a tough ball game; it's going to be hard. Expect a struggle."

You will need support, someone in whom you can confide, someone who will listen non-judgmentally and accept you unconditionally. Step parenting can be a lonely job. A support group will help fulfil Paul's admonition in Galatians 6:2 to bear one another's burdens. "I have an ongoing support group of four women that hold me accountable and love me through the tough times" one stepmum confided.

Tenth, build a strong relationship with God and other believers.

Saturate yourself in Bible study and prayer. Ask God to fill in the gaps for you. He alone understands all your feelings, triumphs and defeats. He alone guides you over those rocky spots. And He alone keeps your secrets.


Involvement with other believers helps in a practical way. If you're part of a loving Christian community, helping to meet the needs of others, it will be more natural to take responsibility for the nurturing and care of children other than your own.

One stepmum quoted her favourite Scripture: "And it came to pass" — not stay! Time passes, children grow up, circumstances change.

My husband asked me the other day if, knowing what I know now, I would do it all over again. I know some people, like Kelly's stepmum, who would not.

I thought about it just long enough to scare him, then answered with great certainty, "Oh, yes!"

Then a flood of memories hit me: some of the questions about my stepdaughter's early childhood that I couldn't answer; the close scrutiny of our relationship by curious, sometimes judgmental observers; and the odd sensation of being both bride and instant mother. But I have also learned that life in a blended family can be just the instrument God uses to make you a "real" mum, in every sense of the word.

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FOCUS ON THE FAMILY AUSTRALIA

Training in godliness

Our purpose as parents is to give our children tools for life.

Sometimes I hear people criticising Sunday Schools for failing to produce a new generation of Christians to fill our churches. In the 1950s and '60s children thronged to our churches and halls. Many churches had groups of 200 or more children.

But the numbers are missing now. Have the Sunday Schools failed? Not really. Any failure was in the purpose of such groups. They were expected to fulfil a role that properly belongs to parents, and only secondarily to other agencies. Sunday Schools have always been extra to the daily feeding on God's word in the home. As parents we are responsible for teaching our children the Word of God and we ignore this at our peril. (Deut. 6:7, Hosea 4:6)

The training of our kids in godliness is the most important thing we do as parents — more important than feeding, clothing and giving them a good education. It's a costly choice that takes a lot of time. Our



Marion Andrews

generation lives in the fast lane and family members pass like joggers in the park.

Daniel Petre, a former executive of Microsoft, recently questioned just how much he was prepared to be a corporate slave, torn between career and family. He decided to change jobs in order to have more time for family.

Making time for training in godliness does not mean we become less efficient. Actually, finding a part of the day to spend together around God's word has the effect of fitting everything else into place. God blesses Christian parents who make this a priority.

The best time to set a pattern for spiritual growth in your family is before your children arrive. If a couple establishes this practice as soon as they are married, the programme is up and running, and each child is integrated gradually. Children are with us for a short time. They arrive, and one day most will leave. We only have them on lease, and so we have to make the most of the time that they live with us.

Some parents don't know where to start. A combination of both direct and indirect teaching is appropriate. A good base for family worship is the systematic reading of scripture and prayer together. (I hope to discuss this in another article.) We can enrich this with books, shared experiences, conversation, music and singing, each at a level appropriate to the age of the children. This is where a basic knowledge of children's developmental psychology is helpful.

Between two and six, children rejoice in chanting rhymes from "The cat in the hat came back" to "Yes, Jesus loves me." They can readily learn scripture and songs at this age.

One way to start scripture memory with toddlers is to select a series of statements

made in the Bible. The parent asks: "What did Jesus say to Philip?" The child replies: "Jesus said to Philip, 'Follow me' and so on.

Children at primary school can remember whole passages like the Ten Commandments and Psalms. As children progress towards teen years, parental training moves beyond rote learning.

A seven-year-old boy announced one Sunday morning that he wanted to go to his friend's church, rather than his family's church. Good reasons, given calmly by a parent, were like sugar to help the medicine go down. Reasons need to be tailored to the age of the child — the younger the child, the simpler the reasons given.

In later primary school children may start to contradict and answer back. Then in high school, they throw up conundrums — "where did Cain get his wife?" — or argue about creation or Jonah. Parents can show logically and calmly how to check what the Bible really says and where to find answers.

Teenagers yearn to express themselves. Many take up guitar playing. Others write very private journals. Do not be surprised if your children no longer want you to know their innermost thoughts and feelings. Be satisfied if they share these with God, even though you feel a little hurt that they won't share with you. This age tests the patience of parents. Take heart! Make it the bridge to real fellowship between parent and child.

By 15, our children should have a rich store of Bible knowledge with developing theological understanding. We can now encourage them to look outward to others. Missionary letters and interesting articles may supplement Scripture reading and prayer. We need to discuss ways of telling people about Christ and His salvation. This will fit our children to express their faith in a way that is both reasonable and attractive.

Our purpose as parents is to give our children tools for life, and train them to use them. By the grace of God, we then send from our homes young adults who are equipped and skilled to do God's will.

Marion Andrews, wife of Stuart, has been a member of St Stephen's Presbyterian Church, Tamworth, NSW, for 11 years. She is author of Recover the Faith and publishes a regular women's newsletter.

AUSTRALIAN Presbyterian World Mission

Expressions of Interest are invited from suitably qualified persons for the following position at:

Talua Ministry Training Centre
Santo Island, Vanuatu
Lecturer in Old Testament
to commence in first term, 1999

Applicants must have either BD or BTh with a minimum of 3 years ministry experience.

The Appointee will be part of the Australian Presbyterian World Mission team already working at Talua.

For more information contact:

Rev. Robert Benn
APWM National Director
8 Sylvan Grove,
Picnic Point NSW 2213.
Ph. (02) 9792 1373
Fax (02) 9792 1374



With Christ

The Very Rev Dr Neil MacLeod, AM, MA, BD, DD, died in Sydney on Friday 10 July 1998 after a short illness, aged 93.

His close friend and colleague Mr Hector MacFarlane, AM, former general secretary of the Presbyterian Church in NSW, writing in *The Presbyterian Banner*, magazine of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, says of him:

A man's man in every respect, Neil MacLeod saw service in New Guinea, Morotai and Borneo as chaplain to the 2/14 Infantry and 2/1 Machine Gun regiments and was mentioned in dispatches for conspicuous bravery in the field.

Born in the Hebridean Island of Lewis into a Gaelic-speaking crofting family in 1905, he was influenced as a lad by his minister, and later studied divinity in the Free Church College, graduating as Master of Arts from Edinburgh University. Anxious to serve overseas he was ordained in Glasgow in 1929 for service in Australia and, at the time of his death, was the longest serving minister of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

He served as Free Church minister at Taree and at St George's, Castlereagh Street, Sydney. In 1944 he was moderator of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.

After the war he became a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, serving at St Andrew's, Perth from 1946, then St Andrew's, Hamilton (Vic) from 1952 and at Hurstville (NSW) from 1960 until his retirement to Bateau Bay in 1974.

Neil MacLeod was moderator of the Presbyterian Church in NSW in 1974. He is fondly remembered by many far beyond the church family for his strength of character and warm personality.

As a churchman he was ecumenically-minded, playing an important role in the NSW Council of Churches. In recognition of his service to the community and as a prominent churchman, MacLeod was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 1973. He was honoured by a Doctorate of Divinity by the Central School of Religion, London, and was one of the first Bachelors of Divinity to graduate from Sydney University, in 1942. One of his professors, Samuel Angus, was a close friend despite their different theological positions.

His first wife, Marjorie, predeceased him, as did his daughter Margaret. He is survived by his second wife, Grace, by two daughters, Catriona Kentish of Adelaide and Janet Honig of London, and by one son, Dr Jim MacLeod of Melbourne.

home front



A fair go for all

The annual Presbyterian market will be moved this year to the new Sydney Showground at Homebush Bay. The PWA publicity officer, Marie Jux, reports that everybody is excited about the new venue, which is easily accessible by train and bus.

This year's market, which is always a mammoth event and one of the most exciting days in the calendar of the NSW Church, will raise funds for the support of the archivist at the Ferguson Memorial Library. For more information, call (02) 9398 4847 or (02) 9625 6292.

60 years at Seymour

Presbyterians in the Central Victorian town of Seymour recently celebrated the 60th anniversary of their church building. The foundation stone for St Andrew's was laid on 3 September 1938, and to celebrate this event a thanksgiving service was to be held on Sunday 30 August at 11am, followed by lunch.

Influx in Hobart

St John's, Hobart, recently rejoiced in the profession of faith of 14 university-aged young adults. Nine were baptised, and all but one had become a Christian in the past 18 months. The changes observed in their lives since they came to know Christ have been a witness and an encouragement to the congregation. Their witness has not been restricted to church, with several family members having become Christians as a result. These young people are a vibrant part of the youth work of St John's, which now numbers about 150 meeting in a secondary college premises each Friday night.

The ministry of Evangelist Peter Woodcock at the university, and through

other youth work, has been instrumental in the growth to date. Unfortunately, Pete will return to London at the end of 1998, but the work on the university campus will continue under Samuel Green. St John's is also actively seeking an associate minister to assist Rev David Jones with the workload in 1999.

Awe-struck in Ipswich

The awesome power of God was clearly demonstrated last Good Friday, 10 April, when following clear morning skies, a mini-tornado ripped through Ipswich (Qld) at 3pm, twisting the lead-clad steeple of St Stephen's Church from its brick base, making the whole building unsafe. Repairs are now well under way, and it is expected that the congregation can move back in November. In the meantime, reports the minister, Rev John Langbridge, they are grateful to the local Seventh Day Adventist Church for the use of their building.

Dalby edges forward

Edge House, a recently acquired property opposite the Dalby (Qld) Church, was dedicated as a centre for youth work in the parish on Sunday 10 May by the minister, Rev John Morrow. Session clerk Peter Allen reports that the youth group see this not only as a home for their regular meetings on Fridays and Sundays but also as an after-school drop-in centre, a gym and monthly Edge Cafe outreach. Dan Neville, Dalby's youth pastor, looks forward to developing new outreach ministries with the encouragement and help of two new elders, Greg Cripps and Stuart Hoadley.

People in the news

Mr T.A. Dawson has been granted the status of elder emeritus after many years of faithful service on the session of Kempsey (NSW) Charge. Mrs Elva Gray, wife of the Rev Charles Gray of Wavell Heights, Brisbane, was called Home recently. Sympathy is extended to Mr Gray and his family.

Rev Martin Levine, formerly of Scots Church, Sydney, was inducted as minister of Beecroft (NSW) on 14 July.

Rev Neville Wilce has no problems keeping busy in his retirement. *St Andrew's Record*, magazine of Chatswood (NSW) from which Mr Wilce retired in 1990, reports that he has spent the last year supplying The Entrance and Cessnock, with more appointments to come. He's also clerk of the Presbytery of Central Coast. Mr Wilce probably appreciated the remark of the Chairman of Trustees, Mr John Mill

With Christ

Rev Douglas Bruce Fraser was born in New Zealand in 1922. An only child, his family came to live in Western Australia when Bruce was six. He grew up in Nedlands, completing his secondary education at Perth Modern School before attending the University of WA where he graduated Master in Engineering. He married Rae and worked with CSIRO in Sydney and Melbourne. During this demanding time of professional development and busy family life (Bruce and Rae had four active children), the Lord was leading him increasingly into Christian work.

After being a nominal Christian for much of his early life, Bruce became a committed believer in his early 30s and began to actively seek out where the Lord would use him. Bruce was one of the initiators of the Melbourne Christian Business and Professional Men's Fellowship. He also started the Civil Aviation Christian Fellowship, as well as serving as superintendent of the Sunday school at Montmorency Presbyterian Church, and in the eldership.

He also cultivated an increasing interest in missionary work, being involved with the APCM and MAF, and spent his long service leave in a remote part of Papua-New Guinea, relieving a missionary couple there. In 1964, aged 42, he felt called to work in Western Australia and was accepted immediately as a Home Missionary (full-time student and minister) at Bassendean, where he completed three years of training and gained many life-long friends. Once he was ordained in February 1968, he took an appointment with the AIM, in the Southern Patrol based out of Albany, where he worked with 11 small congregations spread over hundreds of miles. His ministry was both spiritual and practical, as a number of farmers benefited from Bruce's engineering training.

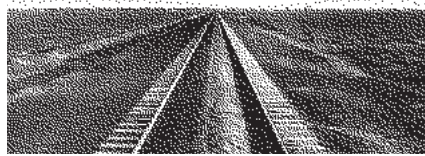
During his time in Southern Patrol Bruce took a leave of absence in order to complete a Master of Theology at the University of Edinburgh. In 1972 Bruce and Rae began their long association with Bicton Presbyterian Church, where Bruce became leader of those who stood for the Reformed and Evangelical Christian faith. Bruce Fraser was the only minister of the Presbyterian Church in WA who remained with the denomination at church union. His faith, work and witness at this time secures for Bruce a permanent place in the history of the Presbyterian Church. His ministry at Bicton bore much fruit, and its effects, by grace, will last into eternity.

(a retired accountant), to the NSW General Assembly: "Old accountants never die ... they simply lose their balance."

Julie Kettmiss, daughter of the **Rev Guido** and **Virginia Kettmiss** of Gateway Presbyterian Church in Brisbane, has started to work with youth at the Evangelical Bible Church in Windhoek, Namibia, with Africa Inland Mission. Her support base has been strengthened recently with a commitment from St Andrew's, Townsville to provide \$2000 a year for her work.

Recently inducted elders include **Bruce Willson** at Kempsey (NSW) and **Martin Huisman** at Stanley-Rocky Cape (Tas); **Greg Cripps**, **Brian Cullen**, **Stuart Hoadley** and **Trevor Cummelow** at Dalby (Qld).

across australia



Moyes to stay

The Sydney Presbytery of the Uniting Church has voted to renew the settlement of **Wesley Mission Superintendent, Rev Dr Gordon Moyes**, who will continue as the head of the largest parish of the Uniting Church. Dr Moyes said he was delighted by the decision because the mission had experienced 20 years of continuous growth under his leadership, with the past six months seeing the most vigorous growth in its 186-year history. Expressing thanks to those who had supported and prayed for him and his family over the past year, Dr Moyes said there was plenty of work still to be done.

On the big screen

The Jesus film, available readily in video and 16mm formats throughout the world and in numerous languages, has hit the big screen with a premiere in Hoyts Theatre Complex, George Street, Sydney on 27 July. More than 400 guests paid \$30 each to attend the gala function, proceeds going to support an orphan in Bangladesh.

The special 35mm print on the wide screen, including the final five minutes when the narrator explains the Gospel and presents an appeal, has been endorsed by Hoyts management, who are screening the film on Wednesdays at 6.30pm and Sundays at 3pm for as long as public interest holds. Screenings are also being held in Auckland, Brisbane and Perth, with Melbourne to follow when another 35mm print is available.

More than gold

Church leaders are being encouraged to use "more than gold" Sunday on 13 September 1998 to inform their congregations of the many ministry opportunities available at the upcoming Olympic and Paralympic Games. A video, *More Than Gold*, is available, and Christian athletes and sportsmen could be invited to give their testimonies. For more information contact:

Quest Australia More Than Gold, PO Box 674, Sydney Markets 2129, phone (02) 9763 2800, e-mail: questdav@ozemail.com.au.

Bible Society moves

The Victorian state headquarters of the Bible Society has moved for the third time in recent years — from the eastern Melbourne suburb of Burwood to nearby Blackburn — where it is now sharing office facilities with the Victorian office of Trans World Radio. **Tony Crook**, state director of the Bible Society, extends an open invitation for friends and supporters to visit the new office any time, at 2-6 Albert Street, Blackburn.

Doulos visits again

The Good News ship Doulos is headed for another visit to Australia. Staffed by 300 Christian volunteers from 35 different countries, this floating bookshop plies the world's waterways taking her unique form of Gospel outreach to spiritually needy lands.

The dates for her visit to Australia are: Fremantle 25 January 1999 to 9 February; Albany 11 to 22 February; Adelaide 26 February to 16 March; Melbourne 18 March to 4 April; Hobart 8 to 18 April; Sydney 29 June to 22 July; Brisbane 24 July to 11 August.

At the moment, however, the *Doulos* needs engineers, and will not leave South Africa without a full complement.

Enquiries about serving on *Doulos* or involvement in her visit may be directed to *Bitten Schriver*, *Doulos Project Manager*, PO Box 32, Box Hill 3128, phone (03) 9898 9348 or email: bittens@csi.com.

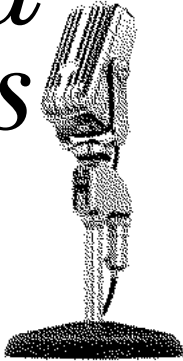
PNG aid

The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia has made \$5000 available towards the relief effort of victims of the tsunami in PNG, according to the missions convener, Rev Peter Gadsby. The money is being channelled through Mission Aviation Fellowship, an evangelical organisation which became involved in the very early stages after the disaster struck.

Alliance in NT

The Evangelical Alliance of the Northern Territory and the associated Darwin Regional Centre for World Mission were inaugurated recently. Founding members represent a wide range of churches and parachurch organisations in Darwin, Katherine, Alice Springs and Nhulunbuy.

world news



The saints in prison

Persecution of Christians is still rife in the world today, with news reports to hand of imprisonment of Christians in Saudi Arabia, especially of Filipinos who have gone to work there, and imprisonment then deportation of Christians from Morocco.

Harvie Conn retires

Harvie Conn has retired as Professor of Missions at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, a position he held for 25 years. His ministry began as a home missionary of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Stratford, New Jersey. After ordination he spent 12 years as a missionary in Korea before returning to Westminster. During his time in Korea he spent 10 years lecturing in New Testament in Seoul and maintained a ministry of evangelism among prostitutes and pimps, sometimes being beaten up for his faith and witness. Back in Philadelphia, he has been the driving force behind the Centre for Urban Theological Studies, a seminary for black pastors, for whom Harvie had a particular concern.

Never too late

David Brown, who recently retired as Rector of Dunfermline High School, has wanted to work overseas ever since his student days, but the opportunity never came along. However *Life & Work*, National Journal of the Church of Scotland, reports that his wish has at last been fulfilled — he has just left Scotland to teach English at Dali College, Yunnan, China. No doubt he is one of a growing band of Christians who find themselves retreaded instead of retired as opportunities open up in developing countries.

Intercommunion in USA

Full communion between the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America was approved by both churches in June. *Southern Cross* says this means that affiliated congregations (as well as the United Church of Christ and the Reformed Church in America, who are already in communion with the PCUSA) will be able to run joint parishes and share clergy.

Unrest in Muslim countries

Middle East Reformed Fellowship reports that regional political analysts in the Sudan predict more strife and bloodshed now that Muslim militant groups have vowed to use military means to impose Muslim Sharia (law) on the country and turn it into a Muslim republic. In Algeria an Arabic-language-only law has sparked violent protests.

Indonesian Christians

Rev Paul Cooper has received this plea: "Please show our solidarity and sympathy for the victims of the riots and chaos in Indonesia last May 13-15. Many Chinese Indonesian citizens were abused, tortured and killed. Their houses and stores were looted and burnt. Hundreds of Chinese Indonesian girls and women (aged 10 to 55) were sexually harassed and gang-raped brutally. Some victims were even raped in front of their family members or in front of an inhuman cheering crowd. Some of them were even thrown into the fire and burnt to death after being raped. As yet, not many actions seem to have been taken to investigate all this or to help the victims, and not very many people seem to know or care about what happened. Please help to spread the news and let the world know. Show that we care, and may God help us!"

Ride to glory

Billy Graham's World Wide Pictures organisation has released a new film, *The Ride*, which has premiered on American television and is about to be shown on some American Airlines flights. Using some of Hollywood's top professionals, it has already ranked highly in movie houses in comparison with some of the top secular movies. Billy Graham says: "We are enlarging the scope of our film ministry, and we've received reports of thousands becoming Christians as a result."

Medical project for Sudan

Dr Istafanous, MERF's chairman, has appointed a committee of four Egyptian doctors to carry out a plan for medical care to the Christian communities in the Sudan. It involves setting up an association of Arab and other Reformed doctors to provide medical teams (male and female) for short-term service in Sudan. Teams of two to four volunteers would work for three or four months. Each team would serve in one particular region, under the oversight of local church committees.

Gospel radio

With expansion of the MERF Gospel broadcasting team comes an expansion of the outreach itself. As of 1 October 1998, the team hopes to add another weekly broadcast over the Middle East transmitter of Radio Monte Carlo, on Wednesdays at 19:35 GMT. A new series composed of redemptive historical conversations on short readings from the Book of Proverbs is being prepared by Rev Victor Atallah for this additional air time slot. It is now estimated that about three and a half million Arabic-speaking people listen to each of MERF's weekly broadcasts over Radio Monte Carlo transmitters. ap

Submissions Welcome

Please send your news and pictures to:

Rev Bob Thomas, AP News Editor,
PO Box 6456
St Kilda Road
Central Victoria 3004

Phone: 0411 084 970

Email: onespres@ozemail.com.au

Challenge of Islam

A foreign adventure reminds Russell Lander of biblical priorities.

We're all going to meet on Judgment Day and then we'll find out who's right and who's wrong!" These words concluded a discussion on salvation I had with our guide, whom we shall call Mehmet, on a bus tour around Turkey in May.

It started when we were visiting a sultan's 13th century tomb in Bursa and our guide had sat down to tell us about the principles of the Moslem faith. According to Mehmet, the most important of these is the need to pray at the appointed five times a day (announced by loud speaker from more than 2000 mosques in Istanbul alone!), facing Mecca and observing a number of prescribed positions including bowing the head to the floor. Other obligations include observing 30 days of day-time fasting during Ramadan, avoiding pig meat, take-away foods or other toxins such as alcohol, donating a 40th of one's net worth each year to the poor and making a pilgrimage to Mecca once in a lifetime. (This assumes that one's family has been adequately provided for.)

As an aside, Mehmet told us that, although he was certainly a believer, he thoroughly enjoyed pork and just loved Raki (a spirit distilled in Turkey from grain flavoured with aniseed). He is also hope-



Russell Lander

lessly addicted to cigarettes as is the vast bulk of the Turkish nation! Yes, he prayed, but one does not have to go to a mosque to pray.

Strolling back to the bus, I asked him if he expected to go to heaven when he died. "Yes", he said confidently.

"On what basis?" I asked.

"Because I've been a good man and Allah will honour me for this," he replied.

"Wouldn't you have done many things you're thoroughly ashamed of?" I asked. "I certainly have."

"Of course," he said, "but I believe that the good will outweigh the bad! Only Allah knows; we have to wait and see."

In the short time available I shared with him that the Bible teaches that no credits are available for good deeds, as these are expected of us; Luke 17:10 — "So, likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'"

"So", I said to Mehmet, "on a point-score system, Christians do very badly, having only minuses. Therefore we need a Saviour to deal with these, if we are to be fit to enter heaven. My Saviour is Jesus whom I believe paid for my sins on the cross."

One item in particular among these Moslem goals fascinates me — to give one 40th of one's net worth away each year! While many Christians in Australia would consider that they're doing very well if they're donating one tenth of their after-tax income to the Lord's work, the very thought of shelling out 2.5 per cent of net worth a year would make most of us weak at the knees.

Nevertheless Bible passages such as "The earth is the Lord's and all its fullness ..." (Psalm 24:1) and "For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours." (1 Chron. 20:11)

bring out that we are merely stewards of the assets we would claim as our own. In fact God owns them. Why not, then, raise the bar on our church giving, even if we cannot swallow the 2.5 per cent of net assets rule? Perhaps a compromise for Christians who cannot jump this high would be to provide lavishly for the Lord's work in their wills, something few seem to do today!

The Turkish people seem to be more cheerful than we are in Australia, judging from facial expressions and general demeanour. Could this be because they have far, far less material wealth than we do?

Also, they seem to be very tolerant of others doing menial tasks for a meagre living. For example, at meal breaks during my recent bus adventure, someone would always appear out of the blue to wash down the windows. The bus company could probably have saved money by getting the driver to do this, but they didn't.

Corporate Australia is now so obsessed with cost efficiencies that as a nation we are losing the ability to live and let live. Paul's words in Philippians 2:3 ring out here as a warning to us: "Let nothing be done out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself."

If you have never done so, consider taking a holiday in Turkey. It's full of history, magnificent architecture, art, enchanting scenery and friendly locals. One can tread in the footsteps of St Paul at Perge, Konya (Iconium) and Ephesus, marvel at the Roman public works of old Constantinople (Istanbul) and see first hand how daunting was the task of the invaders at Anzac Cove in 1915.

The embattled Australian dollar does quite well in Turkey where a cafe meal is about on a par with Sydney. If you do go, make sure you're ready to give an account of your Christian faith because, although there is a great deal of Christian history lying around Turkey, most have not heard the gospel, with an estimated 98 per cent belonging to the Moslem faith.

Russell Lander is an investment analyst with Dicksons, a Sydney stockbroker, and is a regular contributor to the Bulletin magazine. He worships in Wahroonga, Sydney.

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One big happy family?

Christ, not Pauline Hanson, has the answers for Australia, suggest Murray Norman and Graeme Napier.

Is Australia one big happy family? What is happening? People are being judged by their skin colour. We keep seeing violent student protests condemning racism. What happened to the good old days that our grandparents tell us about — the lucky country, where the great Australian dream was to get married, to buy a house on your own patch of Australia, have a family and live the good life? There is real pain in the community that needs to be answered.

One group which claims to have the answers is Pauline Hanson's One Nation party. But what sort of solution does it offer?

How is Pauline Hanson looking to address the issues facing Australia today? Problems like unemployment — will I be able to find a job when I leave school? Or rising crime rates — will I get mugged while walking home from school by someone wanting my Nike shoes? The One Nation Party has been very successful in verbalising much of the pain that everyday Australians like you and me are going through.

The support One Nation has gained shows it expresses real heartaches of real Australians — things like immigration, unemployment, political correctness, government red tape, government interference in everyday life and the level of foreign ownership.

These hurts have been brewing for many years with major political parties unable or unwilling to solve them. Pauline Hanson has emerged as a champion to fight for the everyday Australian. But when these people share their hurts, rather than addressing them, they increase the problem. The lack of a real solution boils over into racism: Asian migrants are being blamed for taking "real Australian" jobs, and "all Aboriginals" want to take back most of Australia and destroy "our" livelihoods.

Rather than addressing the issue, people get more and more worked up and want to blame others to ease their frustration. As yet, Pauline Hanson has not offered any real solution to the problems of unemployment or crime — what she offers is the politics of blame.

The Bible talks about a time when Jesus



Murray Norman

was confronted by a woman who was rejected both by Jesus' nation (the Jews) and her own people (the Samaritans). You can read about it in John 4. This woman was living with a man who was not her husband (and this was not the first time she had done this), and she was unrepentant.

How did Jesus react to this situation? He spoke to her, knowing that she had rejected God's ways, and He showed her love by offering her forgiveness and eternal life. He was able to look past the surface problem — that the woman had had five husbands and was living with another man — and see that her real problem was that she needed to be forgiven for her sins against God. It's not that Jesus didn't care about the adulterous relationship, but rather that He knew that the only thing that could free that woman from her past of adultery was forgiveness for her mistake and an opportunity to have a personal relationship with him.

A key lesson that this passage teaches us is that it is wrong to look to blame and criticise others for their shortcomings, to make ourselves feel better. Jesus calls us to serve others, fight social injustice, look after the poor and the sick and those who can't help themselves. All people need to know the forgiveness of Christ. It is our responsibility, not only to tell others about Christ, but to love them as Christ did, leading them to seek forgiveness from the Father for their sins.

As yet Pauline Hanson has not offered real answers to Australia's problems, ones which address people's hurts in a lasting way. In the end, faith in Jesus is the only remedy for a world which is motivated by greed and self interest. Jesus is the only one who can give true peace. No politician can solve the real issues, or change the fact that we need forgiveness from our sins.

It is our responsibility as Christians to not blame or judge others. We need to be solving the problems so that all Australians can find jobs, all Australians can live free from racism — regardless of background. Any political party that isn't doing this is missing the point.

If you are not Aborigine then your history here would not be much more than 200 years. In the big scheme of things we are all newcomers to this great country. The challenge to us is whether or not we want Australia to really be "one nation", working together for the benefit of not only Australia but all of mankind. If you are a Christian then you should seek to solve the real issue: all Australians, regardless of colour or background, need to know Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour. Our goal as Christians is to tell others about the gift of eternal life made possible by the death of Jesus Christ. Our job as Christians is to work towards transforming society, loving the 'rejects' of society. That means not running around blaming others for our problems. Rather we should be praying that God might help us to love those around us, making a difference in our school, suburb, country. We need to pray for our politicians and our government, that they would be governed by God's word.

Two wrongs don't make a right. If we disagree with groups within the community we must first pray about the issues and then act in the same manner as Christ did. We shouldn't go with the bandaid solution, but rather go to the heart of the problem, not adding to it by violently opposing people, but by winning them over for Christ.

Murray Norman is AP's youth editor. Graeme Napier is a politics graduate. He worships at Tuggeranong Presbyterian Church, Canberra.

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Presidential peccadilloes

Video Watch

Primary Colours

Reviewed by Phil Campbell

By the time you read this, the saga of the Presidential peccadilloes may have faded from the news. I hope so. In any case, the eve of Bill Clinton's testimony to an American grand jury seemed like the ideal time to take a look at *Primary Colors*, a movie that claims to be loosely based on the presidential campaign of someone more-or-less like Bill.

A greyed John Travolta is superbly Clintonesque as southern governor Jack Stanton, setting out on the election trail with the help of campaign manager Henry Burton (Adrian Lester). Henry is an idealist; he's black, he wants to help the underprivileged, and he believes Stanton really cares. When Stanton is moved to tears by the success of an Adult Literacy Program, Henry dabs his eyes too.

But there's a lingering question — and I'm not sure it's resolved by the end of the movie — are Stanton's tears real tears, or are they merely tears of convenience?

As *Primary Colors* meanders through the intricate "primary" process of choosing a presidential candidate, Burton's naïve

convictions are constantly put to the test. Is politics simply the art of doing what you like, and learning how not to get burned? Does Stanton's sense of "history-in-the-making" justify his infidelity?

Right from the start of the campaign, there are allegations of illicit affairs — and Stanton's closest advisers realise it's his Achilles heel. "The woman thing ... that's what's going to bring him down." So — as they're doing in real life today — the team hunkers down, and works on a strategy.

The first allegations are easily disproved; fake tapes of an alleged conversation with a hairdresser. But Stanton's team don't celebrate for long ... after all, chides adviser Libby Holden, "it's not like you're innocent just because that tape's faked."

She's right. There's more to come — like the 17-year-old daughter of a close supporter, who claims Governor Stanton is the father of her unborn child. Naturally it's all kept under wraps, and Stanton denies the allegations. He even provides a blood sample to prove he's not the dad. Easy — except the blood sample he provides for testing belongs to someone else.

Somehow it doesn't matter. And that's the essence of the Clinton mystery, too. Stanton is exhilaratingly charming. He's profoundly likeable. He always takes the positive. "Just what are you against?" asks

an opponent in a televised debate. It's the ultimate question ...

But Stanton is a people person, not a policy person. And ultimately, the American public are more concerned about Susan Stanton's hairstyle than her husband's infidelity.

Finally, adviser Libby Holden calls Stanton to account — and ultimately, she only gains his attention when she takes her own life. And how deep is his remorse? Well, that's the question that's left hanging at the end of the movie. I guess at that point you'd have to switch to real life, and ask Monica Lewinsky.

So just how believable is the scenario presented by *Primary Colours*? A President whose life is a series of great media performances alternated with sleaze ... a devastated wife, driven by an equal ambition? An American public that simply doesn't care? How believable? When I finished watching *Primary Colours*, I flicked over to the late night news. Listen to these sound-bites from two typical Americans as they were asked about Clinton: "It's really nobody's business what he does in his spare time ... No matter what he does, we like him."

Sadly, as we watch the ideals of Henry Burton turn to dust, ours go with them. "The trouble with Henry," says a more cynical aide, "is that he's a genuine TB. He's suffering from True Believerism — looking for someone authentic to believe in. They don't exist." In the context of this world, of course, that's exactly right. And ultimately, it's a great reminder that the kings and rulers of this world will always be a disappointment, will always fail, will always lack integrity.

What the world really needs, of course, is a leader worthy of True Believerism. As far as I know, there's only one who qualifies.

Primary Colours is rated M15+, mainly because of offensive language. The F-meter went off nearly 20 times, with profanities coming most often from the lips of straight-talking Libby Holden — an unfortunate irony, as she was the only character with any real integrity. Significantly, though, I'd be far more comfortable having my kids sit through this movie than hearing yet another description of Bill Clinton's exploits on the 6pm news.

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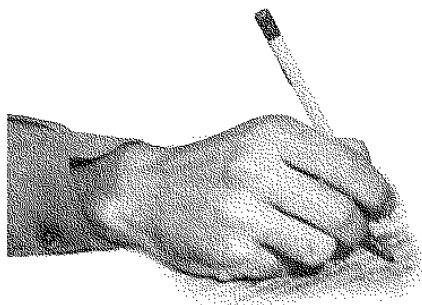
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letters



On this rock

Does Jonathan Howes realise that he has been “straining out the gnats and swallowing a few camels” himself in his article *Rocking Our Souls* (AP, July)?

With one broad brush-stroke, he condemns rock music in the service of the Gospel. Unfortunately, he has failed to see that many of his criticisms of rock music can be applied to a variety of musical genres, whether rock or otherwise.

To hold rock music as the primary cause of youth corruption is to totally ignore the fact that sin, not musical taste, is the cause of youth rebellion (Rom 3:9-20).

Let’s look at some of his criticisms of rock:

- “Adults shuddered and shook their heads at the loud, brash, wild music. But young people loved it ...” The same was said of jazz and swing when they gained popularity in the 1920s. Jazz was also “exciting liberating and danceable”. Has Jonathan ever been in a black church, where jazz is used effectively in both worship and evangelism?

- “Its repetitive nature, lack of movement, its simplicity.” Popular songs of the 1930s and ’40s fitted this description. And as for Simplicity, Jonathan has obviously never tried to play or produce some genres of rock such as funk soul/R&B or Thrash!

- “Rock focuses on ... aggression and sex.” Maybe, but some operas have themes of sexual promiscuity, violence and murder! Would Jonathan condemn opera?

- Rock “doesn’t cope well with the rigours of mature emotion ...” — It was the youth and the rock musicians who addressed the issues of war, racism and environment in the ’60s and ’70s, not “mature intellectuals”!

Jonathan’s suggestion that a back beat expresses sexual desire is absurd. A back beat is simply a rhythmic expression placing the emphasis of the rhythm on the 2nd & 4th beat of the bar. While it is used by some to express sexual connotation, it is just a rhythm. All music has individual

rhythmic expression, the back beat just happens to be that of rock.

If it is unacceptable to “redeem” rock music, using it to convey Christian ideals, how is it that William Booth and Charles Wesley took many popular tunes and turned them into hymns? Songs meant to be sung in pubs became vehicles for communicating theological truths. Whether Jonathan likes it or not, the fact cannot be denied that rock music of all styles has become a highly effective and successful tool in communicating the gospel to young people!

If you want to know where I am coming from, I am a theology graduate and performing rock singer/songwriter/musician.

*Tarun Stevenson
Ashfield, NSW*

The rock’n role

Jonathan Howes’ article had many good things to say, but seemed to deal in generalisations and over-simplifications. He notes that music “doesn’t speak primarily to the mind, but to the heart ... it moves our emotions.” Yet when he comes to rock, this is seen as a negative. It’s about “doing what you feel”, and it “doesn’t aim at the mind but at the emotions”. What he holds up as a positive for all music is evidence to crucify rock music. It seems to be the “physicality” of rock that Jonathan focuses on. “Its insistent pulse” results in it being “passionate”, and about “desires and hormones” — read evil! Does this mean that marches, waltzes, samba, country and western, foxtrots and Irish jigs, which are similarly designed to be physical and have insistent pulses, are also about desires and hormones? It is not the form of music that makes it bad, but the attitudes of those performing it and listening to it. It is this misapprehension which leads to the simplistic, comparison that linking rock music and evangelism is like mixing a boxing match and a peace rally. To criticise the moral laxity, anti-authoritarianism and anger of the rock culture, while appropriate, doesn’t imply that the form itself is worth throwing out. To follow this line of reasoning, the Church wouldn’t use any forms of the media or technology because of the way it is used by non-Christians. Let’s be careful not to throw the baby out with the bath water. Let’s continue to make rock music that is intelligent, uplifting and godly, in a form which teenagers will listen to. It’s a very powerful medium, which can be used effectively. Let’s be shrewd in using the things of this world for eternal benefit!

*David Balzer
Bangor, NSW*

Rock and rebellion

Mr Howes’ argument against rock (AP July) is most educated but unfortunately misleading. Anger/rebellion is only a small, specialised style of rock usually limited to heavy metal. Generally rock deals with love/relationships, using a diverse range of music. At times the back-beat excites — so does sport!

Rather than accuracy, I fear this article was an exercise in classical-snobbery and parent-paranoia. As such Mr Howes and other July articles have supported a myth many believe: “Rock (or some other outside influence) is why my child is rebellious!” Thus parents are encouraged to control their youth.

The Bible teaches that youth are kept pure by living according to the word and wisdom of God (Psalm 119, Proverbs 1-9) — an education that must start at home. Unfortunately this message was brief in AP July. Is it assumed that Christian parents raise their children in the knowledge of God? In my experience only 10 per cent of Christian homes conduct daily family devotions.

As secular education is left to schools, so spiritual education is left to the church. This amounts to expecting someone else to feed your children.

A youth’s world can be a dark place. However all cultures have both good and bad, and the difference is often more subtle than general. We cannot control or cut youth off from their culture, for we are all in the world ... just not of it. As such we need to teach young people the skill of analysing their world through the Word of God.

*Phil Wiedemann
Concord West, NSW*

Howes’ top 10

Jonathan Howes misses the point about rock. Here are his top 10.

1. “Rock is the music of rebellion.” Parents, teachers etc. aren’t rebels — unless of course rebellion has more to do with sin against God and less to do with music.
2. “That backbeat.” Unforgivably Eurocentric. African Christians may have a thing or two to say about the physicality of music.
3. “If you can make rock music which speaks to the mind and not so much the body.” Platonic theory gets a plug! Such dualism is totally refuted by the gospel.

4. "Rap singers spit out their angry words." Not that black Americans have anything to be angry about!
5. "Exercise control." Yeah — make sure your kids think that songs which vilify parents for not listening have summed them up well!
6. "Don't expect them to become emotionally mature ..." Unlike other music lovers?
7. "Rock can be passionate, but rarely intelligent or thoughtful." Just ask U2, REM, Counting Crows etc. The same charge can be levelled at much Christian music unfortunately.
8. "Rock music is this ... rock music is that (etc)." Please define where safe music stops and rock starts — then we can put a hedge around it to avoid it.
9. "Rock music is far from being a neutral medium." Elevator musak is neutral — bought any lately?
10. "I'm a twenty-something musician: guitarist and song-writer." Just as well you live in 1998 rather than 1898 with that evil instrument, Jonathan!

*Steve McAlpine
Bassendean, WA*

Dramatic disagreement

John Langbridge (*AP July*) says he has "no qualms about using drama (carefully chosen)" in worship services. Granted we have freedom in the Spirit and Ezekiel prophesied in drama — but Christians are

told: "Let us have grace which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear ...for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28,29).

I've never seen a drama in church in which the theme could not be better expressed in 10 words, yet I have seen immodestly dressed actors joking, screaming and drawing great laughter from the audience. In such cases, if there was any praise and glory to be had, it went to the actors.

It is God, not performers, who dwells in the praises of men. Maybe that is why it has pleased God to save men through the foolishness of preaching.

*Neil Cadman,
Norman Park, Qld.*

Well done ...

At the recent meeting of the Board of Finance, the report from the National Journal Committee was tabled and discussed. The members were really impressed by the progress that has been made in recent times, not only in a financial sense but also in the more readable publication which you are now distributing.

I have been instructed to congratulate you for your achievements and to assure you of our prayerful support for your future endeavours.

*Gordon Dunkley general secretary,
Presbyterian Church of Queensland*

Home comforts

This is to express my appreciation of the calibre and distinctly reformed stand of most articles and writers of *AP*. It means much to me as an expatriate Aussie from Melbourne who has been a resident of the Cape Peninsula of Cape Town for 2 1/2 years. *AP* has been like a lifeline, keeping me in touch with Australia and the world. When South Africans ask questions about current events in Australia, I have sound information from *AP* to share. It makes *AP* even more special seeing mentions of many old friends. Thank you.

*Kathleen Hendrikse (nee Lacey)
Cape Town, South Africa*

Fine style

Thanks for the "new style" *AP*. Its content is relevant to Christian living today, and the different layout gives it that "professional" touch and look. Even though being 'professional' about things is not everything, we must remember we do in some senses, compete against a well-funded and well-organised secular publishing world, and we need to keep up there with them. In my opinion, *AP* can now very easily take its place on the shelves of public and school libraries, and catch the attention of all those who are magazine readers.

Bruce Finlayson
ap

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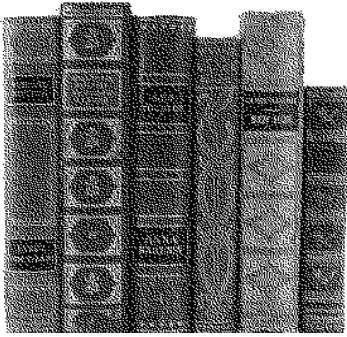
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Princeton Seminary The Majestic Testimony 1869-1929, vol 2,

By David B. Calhoun Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1996.
Reviewed by Peter Barnes

This is a most important book. In 1869 the Princeton Old Testament scholar, William Henry Green, affirmed that Princeton Seminary stood where it has always stood – “for fidelity to the Word of God and the standards of the Presbyterian Church”. Within 60 years this had changed, and J. Gresham Machen, Robert Dick Wilson, O. T. Allis, and Cornelius Van Til felt obliged to leave the Seminary in 1929 because they considered that its commitment to Reformed orthodoxy could no longer be guaranteed.

With great empathy, erudition and perception, David Calhoun traces the story of this declension.

Modern theology was emerging at this time, riding on the back of biblical criticism. The problem was, as B. B. Warfield put it, that modern theology was not stating Christian belief in terms of modern thought but modern thought in terms of Christian belief. Hence Machen’s provocative but true comment that “the greatest menace to the Christian Church today comes not from the enemies outside, but from the enemies within”.

In 1924 more than 1200 American Presbyterian ministers signed the so-called Auburn Affirmation which claimed that there were a number of acceptable theories about the incarnation, the atonement and other essential doctrines of the Faith. It was, in effect, a statement that evangelicalism and modernism were only two permis-

sible variants of the one religion. Machen, however, saw clearly that they were two contradictory religions.

One lesson to be learnt from Calhoun’s volume is how peace-loving evangelicals like J. R. Stevenson and C. R. Erdman can open the door to the triumph of rank liberalism. The road from the orthodoxy of the Hodges and the Alexanders to the apostasy of homosexual and lesbian ministers in recent times was not traversed in one leap. Liberal evangelicals — mild, vacillating, peaceable men — played a crucial, if unwitting, role.

For the Reformed faith to recapture its power and influence, it is going to have to learn the lessons of the past. The study of what happened to the “majestic Testimony” of Princeton Seminary is most informative. Calhoun has put us all in his debt with this fine piece of work.

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

Democracy Down Under Understanding Our Constitution

Melbourne: Church and Nation Committee, PCV, 1998
Reviewed by Bruce Christian

This recent 56-page book, published by the Church and Nation Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, is a very helpful, readable and timely handbook for those of us who have a hunch that there is something wrong out there but have neither the time, expertise nor background knowledge to do anything about it.

All my basic education was in the maths and sciences and I am way out of my depth in politics and law. I also have a sneaking suspicion that the issues facing Australia today are so complicated and difficult that I am not really very far behind many of the ‘experts’ giving advice to the government. This booklet has presented its case in a clear, easy to follow way.


We are certainly at the crossroads in terms of the sort of society we are going to leave for our children and grandchildren. Unless as Christians we are informed biblically concerning the complex issues involved we could quite easily find ourselves voting in ignorance to surrender our individual consciences to the centralised power of a humanistic state that has no absolute values.

I’m glad I read this book. It has made me realise four important things: how good our Presbyterian system is in protecting the voice of individuals and small groups while drawing on the benefits of collective action (federalism); how essential it is in our post-modern, relativistic world to insist on the existence of absolute values of right and wrong and the importance of our Biblical heritage if this is to be done; how much ground we have already lost in these battles by adopting UN treaties (see especially David Mitchell’s disturbing assessment of this on pages 42ff); and how the moderator general is definitely not the equivalent of the pope in the Presbyterian Church!

I recommend that this booklet be read by every concerned Presbyterian as a matter of urgency — and that it be shared with our friends and neighbours as well. It could even become an evangelistic tool for the Presbyterian Church.

There are a few minor errors (mostly in the references) but these in no way detract from the substance of the book. I’m sure most of us know that William Wilberforce’s campaign was for the abolition of the slave trade (p.50). The editors assure me that an Erratum will be provided and the corrections made for the second printing which will obviously be needed following this review!

Andrew Clarke, Nicholas Aroney, David Mitchell, Peter Barnes and Greg Fraser are to be congratulated on making the present constitutional labyrinth more traversable to the ordinary Australian through this publication. They don’t give us all the answers but they do make us aware of the issues and give us some very helpful tools for decisions, debate and action in the future.

Bruce Christian is moderator general of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. 

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A nation celebrates

Jenni Smith describes a glorious weekend in Vanuatu

June 13 and 14, 1998 were exciting days in Vanuatu. On those days, in separate ceremonies in different parts of the country, the Baebol long Bislama (Bislama Bible) was dedicated and put into the hands of the people.

Why was this so significant? The Bislama Bible is the culmination of many years of hard work by a group of translators led by an APWM missionary, Pastor Bill Camden. He began in the late 1960s, first by putting the Bislama language in writing, then by translating the four gospels.

In a country of about 170,000 people and with 105 distinct languages, Bislama was then and is still the only language that everyone speaks. For years, Christians had struggled to understand God's Word in a foreign language (English or French). But when people read the Gospels in Bislama, their hearts sang, people became converted and a time of renewal in the church began.

The New Testament was published in 1980, the same year that the New Hebrides became the independent nation of Vanuatu. A team of translators, representing three nationalities and four denominations, was then formed to work together to translate the Old Testament.

This team effort was funded and supported by the Vanuatu Christian Council as well as by APWM. The final translation was completed in March 1994 but revision, checking and printing took another four years.

The dedication of the Bislama Bible was celebrated enthusiastically and joyfully in true Vanuatu style. On Saturday morning at 7.30, Christians began gathering in Luganville, the town where the translation took place. They marched under the banners of their various churches to the main park for an open-air service.

It was a beautiful setting — a perfect day, a park by the seashore, hundreds of God's people gathering together, uplifting singing and rejoicing. The atmosphere was of thanksgiving to God for his Word, made available to the people in their own language.

Each denomination had the opportunity to present a choral item and thanksgiving gifts (both cash and in kind — pigs, yams, chickens etc). There were speeches and a sermon, the translation team were thanked and given gifts, and the Bible was dedicated in prayer.

The service lasted more than three hours, during which we were sitting in the hot sun, but the people of Vanuatu had waited 150 years for this moment and they were in no hurry. Following the service there was a rush to purchase Bibles, and sales were very brisk!

No celebration in Vanuatu is complete without a communal feast and so hundreds of people settled around the waterfront, sharing their food together and reading their new Bibles.

The following day, Sunday 14 June, a dedication service was held in Port Vila, the capital of Vanuatu. Thousands of people dressed in their Sunday best gathered by the seaside early in the morning and marched through the town to a central park for an open air service. Many churches had prepared banners and floats for the march.

There was a massed choir of about 1000 people from the Presbyterian churches in Vila, who led the march singing a hymn that had been written for the occasion. The service lasted about three hours and was marked by expectation and joy. There was also some sadness, for Pastor Bill Camden died in December 1994 and his absence was keenly felt.

This was a state occasion, with the President, Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister taking part in the service. The President also presented the translation team, including Mrs Sue Camden, with the Vanuatu Medal of Honour in recognition for their services to the life of the country.

Someone said to me: "This is the final end of colonialism in our country, for now God speaks to us in our own language."

The service was broadcast live on national radio, and many churches in outlying islands held dedication services simultaneously. Again there was a brisk trade in Bibles, with a container load being sold that day. There were many guests that weekend, including Bible Society consultants from Australia and Fiji as well as family and friends of the translation team.

It was an unforgettable weekend. In Australia we have so much — numerous Bibles in various translations, commentaries, study aids, Christian bookshops, conventions and so on. We soak up the resources and we expect them to be there for us, to help us grow in our relationship with God and in our Christian life. It was an overwhelming experience to be surrounded by thousands of Christians who are rejoicing and praising God because they now have in their hands the Bible in their own language.

Please pray for our brothers and sisters in Vanuatu, that they will read the Baebol long Bislama, that they will obey God's Word, that they will become stronger in their faith and that more people in Vanuatu would come to know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour.

ap



Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is God"; "The Holy Spirit is the third Person"; "The Holy Spirit lives in us"; "We walk in the Holy Spirit"; "The Holy Spirit governs the church"; "The Holy Spirit is a mystery".

Are all these statements correct? As children we imagine the Holy Spirit as some sort of ethereal being in the realm of angels and fairies. As adults we inwardly admit confusion, but outwardly sing to Him, pray to Him, and try to be led by Him, all the while wondering exactly where He is and how He can be "in" everybody. Be honest now.

In recent years I have heard much discussion about the Holy Spirit, and stacks of books have appeared. Although we are allowed to ask questions without feeling blasphemous, yet the Holy Spirit still remains elusive to many of us who sincerely believe in Him and acknowledge that He plays a real part in our lives.

Some of us are content with being unable to explain Him, while others settle for an invisible power source, a sort of religious Superman, or just a Force. Manifestations of the Spirit are becoming popular in some circles. Last year I visited a charismatic worship service where, after much repetitive singing to a loud hypnotic beat, "the Spirit moved". I haven't been back!

Before Jesus' crucifixion the disciples really didn't have a clue about what was going on, but Jesus promised that after He went away He would send a comforter, and this Holy Spirit would teach them and glorify Him (John 14:26; 16:14).

After the resurrection Jesus breathed on the disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22), though not a lot seemed to happen at that moment.

However, at Pentecost, Peter announced that the Holy Spirit had been "poured out" as prophesied by Joel (Acts 2:16,17). The disciples were suddenly fluent in many languages: different people from many nations suddenly heard and understood the gospel. Fishermen became authoritative preachers. This was powerful stuff. The Old Testament Spirit of God came with all the force of a wind-



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storm, sweeping over the church and bringing new life and power to the disciples.

After the threatenings against Peter and John the disciples were gathered, "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31).

So it seems that God might re-charge us from time to time, perhaps even daily if we ask.

The apostles and early disciples were frequently led by the Holy Spirit to do things or go somewhere. Acts 15:28 mentions, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit ..." Would anyone dare use that phrase today? Yet the disciples planned their lives along these lines. They believed that the Spirit was a Person who led them.

Before going to the cross to reconcile us to God, Jesus explained, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain" (John 12:24). God's own son took on human nature. God prepared a new life in Him, a life which He can implant into every one of us who is lost to God, so that we can be made anew.

Perhaps a useful way to understand this process of implanting (or regeneration) is to appreciate the mysterious art of grafting, which incidentally can't be done without wounding the parent plant. Grafting is a popular hobby, but it is carried out commercially to grow fruit trees, vines, citrus, many ornamental trees, and roses.

The nursery worker first grows the wild root stock which, on its own, would grow vigorously but not produce anything of value. Next, a budding shoot of a selected variety is grafted onto that wild

trunk. It taps into the sap, begins to grow, and, in time, will produce the required tree with its choice quality fruit or flowers.

One more step is essential: once the graft has healed and is successful, the old growth must be cut away, and if any shoots appear on the old trunk below the graft, these too must be removed until the tree has settled.


An even more fascinating way to grow roses is by budding. The tiniest piece of bud-wood (just one of those little "bumps") from the chosen variety is inserted beneath the "skin" of the wild rose, and wrapped with budding tape, like a bandage around the wound. Amazingly, this tiny particle has the life and all the characteristics of the parent plant to transform that old rose briar into an image of the beautiful parent.

Being born again isn't just a descriptive label for those who "make a decision", but an operation performed by the Creator on His creatures who repent. Being filled with the Spirit and producing "fruits" isn't just an emotional experience, but a deliberate implanting of the Spirit of our Lord Jesus into us. This is life, life which must, by definition, grow and produce; and this life from God is eternal. It is not a hazy phenomenon, but an active process in our very being.

To the degree that we are willing to submit, the Holy Spirit gradually renews us, rids us of "fleshly" deeds and desires, corrects bad habits, points out sins, comforts and teaches us. He enables us to communicate with our Heavenly Father by leading us to pray; He even prays for us when we don't know what to say (Romans 8:26).

It isn't our love of God, our hatred of sin, or our feeble attempts to be righteous which changes us, but the working of the Spirit of Jesus in our minds, by the grace of God.

Did He not say, "I will never leave you", child of God?

Daphne Maslin, lives at Gumly Gumly, near Wagga Wagga in NSW. She is a grandmother, owns a family nursery, and teaches scripture at North Wagga Public School. She attends the monthly services at St Ninian's Presbyterian Church at Gumly Gumly. 

God and the scientists

Religion and science are natural allies, not enemies, suggests Colin Gauld

About 100 years ago two popular books were written which helped to establish the public image of the relationship between science and Christianity.

The first, written by a professor of chemistry, John William Draper, was entitled *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* and was published in 1874.

The second, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology*, was written by a historian and president of Cornell University, Andrew Dickson White, in 1896.

Both these books fostered the idea that science and Christianity had been at loggerheads for centuries, and the notion that these two ways of thinking are irreconcilable opposites survives strongly today.

However, this powerful image of science and Christianity forever at one another's throats, engaged in a fight to the death, conceals the fact that, for many Christians through the ages, science has been something which they did because they were Christians. Science, carried out appropriately, was fully compatible with their faith rather than in conflict with it.

In the 17th century there was a dramatic increase in the number of people actively involved in science and the first scientific society - the Royal Society - was established in England in 1663. At that time Puritan Christians were only a small minority of the English population but they made up two thirds of the founding members of the Royal Society (which still exists today). What was it that led these scientists into a career which White insisted should have been contrary to their most basic religious beliefs?

The scientists of the Royal Society believed that the God they worshipped was not capricious, and that the orderly world which he had created could be studied to find out the laws he had built into it. It was not sufficient for them to sit in their studies and read what the ancient scholars had



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thought the world was like. Instead their faith encouraged them to study nature itself, at first hand, through experiments.

Johannes Kepler, a Lutheran on the continent, described his scientific activities as 'thinking God's thought after him'. John Ray, in a book entitled *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation*, saw his task as helping people to see the world around them as God's handiwork. Even the word 'law' applied to nature carried with it the idea that they were the result of 'legislation' by God - they were His decrees and not just something which somehow existed by themselves independently of Him. God did not just create the world and then cut it adrift and allow it to function on its own as the deists believed. Instead, He continues to be active in upholding, maintaining and caring for what He has created.

In describing their purposes as scientists, many of these natural philosophers wrote about their faith that God's glory was to be seen in his works, and they saw their investigations as a way of demonstrating that glory to other people. In this attitude they echoed the words of the psalmist: 'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands' (Psalm 19:1).

For many writers of this time their studies and experiments had revealed a world so marvellous that one could only attribute its existence to an all-knowing, all-powerful Creator.

A favourite theme of these early scientists was that God had revealed himself

through two books - the book of Scripture and the 'book' of nature - and there was information about Him to be obtained from each book which was not contained in the other. Because of this many argued that, just as they were under an obligation to study the Bible to understand God's written word, so there was an obligation to study the world to become aware of what He had revealed in His creation.

The notion that the Christian faith and science are, in significant ways, incompatible with each other is also belied by the fact that many modern scientists are believers in the same God who was glorified by those early scientists. The following comment in 1960 by Malcolm Dixon illustrates this well:

I have been rather struck, while looking through the recent Obituary Notices of Fellows of the Royal Society, by the number of Fellows who are specially mentioned as having a deep Christian faith. One can hardly pick up an issue without finding at least one, and in the latest number, out of seventeen who died during the year, three or perhaps four are mentioned in this way. This is rather remarkable in notices which are primarily concerned with scientific work.

A number of such scientists briefly tell their stories in a booklet, *God and the Scientists*, compiled by Mike Poole in 1997. For these scientists, as for many scientists in Draper's and White's time, their vocation was a task to which God had called them and which they carried out with the intention of bringing him glory. Their work as scientists was a natural implication of their faith as Christians.

Dr Colin Gauld is director of the Board of Studies in Professional Studies at the University of New South Wales, Sydney. He is session clerk at Randwick Presbyterian Church where he worships with his wife Hazel and daughter Jenny.