

A U S T R A L I A N

Presbyterian

THE MAGAZINE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

october 1998



Freed

what justification means

A creed for the 21st century • An affair of the heart • Leaderless groups

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 Kilenge-Maleu (PNG) with Wycliffe Bible Translators 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 Borroloola, 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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Our race is a relay

Running a race has been a popular metaphor for the Christian life ever since Paul reminded young Timothy that an athlete does not receive the victor's crown unless he follows the rules.

The Christian life certainly is like running a race. But what kind of race is it? For a small number of people it's a sprint. Comparatively few people come to the Lord late in life, but those who do are generally eager to make up for lost time.

On the other hand it's a marathon for those who gave their lives early to the Lord. Childhood, young adulthood, middle age, senior citizenship are all laps in the long haul of 'living for Jesus a life that is true, striving to please Him in all that we do.'

Some people run as though it's a medley: at times giving their all in the cause of Christ, at other times loping along or cruising, sometimes even falling by the wayside, then regrouping at the end.



Robert Benn

But the long history of the church shows us that the Christian race is not only all of the above, it's a relay. "One generation shall praise Your Name to another," said the Psalmist, and it has fallen to us to run our lap towards the end of the 20th century.

There are four basic things for a relay runner to do: make a clean change with the baton at the start, keep in the allotted lane for the whole distance, run the lap with concentrated effort, and finally pass the baton on with another clean change.

Reformation Sunday gives us the opportunity, as heirs of the Reformation, to see how we run. Did we pick up the Reformers' baton of clear-cut Bible-believing Christianity? Are we remaining true to their teaching, which was nothing more nor less than a recovery of the Apostles' teaching? Are we focused on the great tenets of Reformation truth: salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone so that to God alone goes glory? Will we pass on the baton of Scripture alone as our only rule of faith and practice?

This month's issue is devoted to the outworking of these and related questions. Our prayer is that it will be used by God to confirm us all in our faith and strengthen us all in our faithfulness so that we will all "run in such a way as to get the prize" (1 Cor. 9:24).

Robert Benn,
Convener, National Journal Committee 

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Good Judgment

Justification is a burning issue today, but evangelicals aren't talking about it, Peter Jensen tells Peter Hastie.



What is the doctrine of justification by faith?

The best place to start in thinking about the doctrine of justification by faith is with the judgment seat of God. The Bible teaches that we are all going to appear before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged one day. Either we will be acquitted or we will be condemned. Those who are acquitted will be “justified”. In other words, God will hand down a verdict of “not guilty”. He will declare that we are righteous. And the question is: how does that happen?

Unfortunately, most people think it happens because of our good works. However, the Bible tells us that our good works have nothing to do with God's declaration of justification. In fact, we are justified through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. His righteousness is freely given to us. So the doctrine of justification by faith is the teaching that God declares to be righteous those who have put their trust in nothing else but Christ for their salvation.

How is justification by faith integral to Paul's Gospel?

Because it's the Gospel of the good news about Jesus Christ. When Paul preached the

Gospel, he focused on the death of Christ upon the cross. He preached that Christ had borne our penalty upon the cross, and had taken away God's judgment upon our sin. Now, since the Lord Jesus does that, we may put our faith in Him and be justified. So at the very heart of Paul's message lies this great truth of justification by faith alone, and it's integral because it touches every part of his message.

For instance, look at what Paul says about the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. All Paul's teaching about them presupposes that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone. The Supper proclaims that we are saved only by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. So justification by faith is a teaching that lays an axe to the root of human pride and arrogance. It says “No!” to the idea that we are justified by good works. This means that we must be sure that every aspect of our church life reinforces the fundamental idea that we are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ and not in any sense by works.

Why did Luther call justification by faith the article of a standing or falling church?

Because the church which does not preach the Gospel in a “justification by faith” way is a church that has lost the Gospel. It's as simple as that. And even though it may be a church with an impressive history, like the medieval Roman Catholic church, with all the panoply and glory of a great past and much wealth, as well as an extensive priesthood and a powerful sway over millions of people, yet if it is not preaching the Gospel in a “justification by faith” way, then it has lost the Gospel. It is preaching another Christ. And it's a miracle if some people are saved in the fellowship of such a church. So Luther rightly brought to bear the test of justification by faith upon the preaching of the church. Where justification by faith is being preached, the Gospel is being preached. Where it is not being preached, then the Gospel is being distorted and people are being sent back to their own works, which cannot save them.

Why did the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, recently say: “Justification by faith is hardly a common expression these days, even in the church”?

What he said is true. It's true about the worldwide Anglican Communion, and it is true of other churches too.

There are a number of reasons for it. First, people are not familiar with their Bibles. The phrase "justified through faith" is a Bible phrase, and it's only as you read the Scriptures that you'll be led to think about it. If you don't read the Scriptures, and the Scriptures are not taught and preached in the Church, then the phrase won't come up and you won't ever hear it. Over the past 30 or so years in the worldwide Anglican Communion, there has been a strong movement to celebrate a weekly Eucharist where the preaching is based only on the set readings mainly from the four Gospels. It sounds fine in theory, but what it has meant is that people don't know their Bibles, and they don't understand the truths of the faith, particularly the doctrine of justification. This is a serious problem.



Another reason why justification by faith is little known in the church is that preachers have tended to leave Bible language behind in their efforts to translate the faith for modern hearers. When they have put the Gospel into contemporary terms, they have tried to teach the general idea of "justification by faith", but it has been under a different guise and using other terms.

Now I can understand why preachers try to translate the Gospel for the 20th century, but in the end we do need to introduce the phrase because it's a biblical term. Otherwise, how can people understand their Bible properly? Preachers must remember that one of their tasks is to instruct their hearers so that they don't lose touch with the Word of God.

Why doesn't the doctrine of justification seem to grip people today the way it did during the Reformation?

The short answer to that, as usual, is sin. What we must realise is that the natural way that sinful people think is that God saves them because of their own decency and

good works. That's how we are born to think.

Now the news that God saves us despite our good works is not something that's easy to hear, and it requires God to first enlighten our minds by His Spirit. Otherwise we will never understand the extraordinary message of God's grace. That has always been the case, and it was like that at the Reformation as well.

But there is a further element that we need to explore in the question. Is there some reason why the doctrine doesn't seem to grip Christians or church people in the modern world? I think that the answer to that lies in the weakness of our teaching about sin and judgment, and ultimately about the holiness of God.

Tragically the theme of judgment is thoroughly muted in the church. Likewise, what used to be called the preaching of the Law is rarely done. Although the way some may have done it in the past was inappropriate, nevertheless I think that the commands of God and His holy demand upon our lives rarely get a mention these days. If people are not aware of God's holiness and judgment, then they can't really be aware of the depth of their own sin and their desperate plight when it comes to dealing with God.

Now if we are not preaching the Gospel in those terms, then we are not preaching the Gospel. And I fear that we are not preaching the Gospel as we ought to be doing.

Why has the subject of justification by faith become once more a topic of hot debate among scholars today?

This is an interesting question because it is a surprising phenomenon. Thirty years ago, it was not a subject for hot debate, but it has become so since 1977. I choose that date because that was the year that a New Testament scholar, E.P. Sanders, published an important but controversial book in which he challenged the conventional view that first century Judaism was a religion of good works.

Sanders was critical of the idea that religion in the time of Jesus was a religion of rules and regulations which would save you if you kept them. Up until Sanders' book, scholars assumed that when Jesus and Paul were preaching their doctrine of justification by faith they were preaching against a straightforward "good works" religion. However, Sanders blew the whistle on this simple idea.

Sanders believed that a major reassessment of first century Judaism was needed. As a result of his studies, he formed the view that grace played a major role in the Jewish faith of the period. According to him, it was wrong to claim that the Jews believed in salvation by good works.

Not surprisingly, Sanders sparked a theological row amongst New Testament scholars which is still raging today. So the current debate that is going on is not really provoked by issues like the sinfulness of man and the holiness of God; rather, it's all about a reassessment of first century Judaism and how Paul was reacting to it.

However, there is another element in the debate that I need to mention. Some scholars are also re-examining the meaning of justification by faith in the light of word studies on such significant terms as "righteousness" as it was used in the Old Testament. But again, none of this questioning is arising out of a sense of spiritual crisis prompted by the holiness of God and the sinfulness of human beings. I think popular Christianity has become far less interested in holiness than it used to be, and that the current talk about justification by faith has barely filtered down from scholars to the average believer.

Why are some New Testament scholars like Tom Wright saying that the doctrine of justification by faith is not a central Pauline doctrine?

I think that scholars like Wright are often reacting to the position of some German scholars earlier in the 20th century who treated justification by faith as the central Pauline doctrine, as the definition of the Gospel. In doing so they probably owed their thinking to Luther, and so this later reaction is not just a response to an earlier generation of New Testament scholars, but it is also a reaction to the Reformation itself.

Wright's basic position is this: when you look at Paul's writing you will notice that justification by faith doesn't turn up everywhere, and there are other doctrines which would easily be regarded as more at the centre of Paul's thought. He would say, I think, that the Gospel was more central. Some other people think that incorporation into Christ is the centre of Paul's theology. Wright makes the point that Paul is mainly discussing the future of Israel and the relationship with the Gentiles. Thus justification is about the nature of the church (who belongs?) rather than salvation (who does God accept?).

I simply make two observations about the broader issue, rather than Wright himself:

First, I think that the business of trying to find the centre of Paul's theology is a mistake. How can you ever be sure that you have found it? The idea of "finding the centre" of something is a very alluring metaphor, but it fuels the false hope that it can be done. Isn't it much more sensible to simply say how a particular doctrine relates to the others, rather than to say that it is at the centre? I think so.

Second, it needs to be said that many New Testament scholars don't believe that Paul wrote all the New Testament letters attributed to him. So the Paul they're talking about is not necessarily the man that we are referring to. The other problem that they have is that they are looking exclusively at Paul without taking into account how the rest of the Bible handles these issues.

My own view on all this is that justification by faith is absolutely integral to our whole doctrinal understanding because it has to do with what is so vital in the Bible: the judgment day, what Christ has done to save us from that judgment day, and what we must do in response to Christ's rescue of us from this coming crisis. After all, the reason for wanting to know who is in the church is to know who is to be saved in the coming judgment.

How are some of these modern scholars like Tom Wright and James Dunn redefining the doctrine of justification by faith?

Both Dunn and Wright are struggling to come to terms with the new perspective of E.P. Sanders, in their own way. Let me warn you that it is quite difficult to summarise these arguments briefly in a way that does justice to them.

Sanders, as you will recall, suggested that we have misunderstood the beliefs of first century Jews. The Jews of Jesus' day, he said, did not believe in justification by good works. Rather, they exulted in God's grace and believed that it was only by grace that they were in the covenant. However, Sanders went on to say that although Jews believed that they were saved by grace, they also believed that they stayed in the covenant by works.

Both Wright and Dunn in their different ways are trying to grapple with this, and they are trying to reassess the doctrine of justification by faith in the light of it. Both of these scholars are very attracted to the idea that Paul's "justification by faith" talk comes out of the relationship between Jew and Gentile in the church, which is undoubtedly a major issue in Paul's letters to the Galatians and the Romans.

Dunn's view for example is that Paul's term, "the works of the law", does not refer to the works we do in order to gain salvation through the law. Rather, these works are "boundary markers" or symbols of one's Jewishness. A person is not saved by having or doing them. They are merely intended to signal that you are Jewish. The real question before the Gentile churches was this: Do you need to perform "the works of the law" to be a Christian? In other words, do you have to become Jewish to enter the covenant? The issue has nothing to do with good works or building up credit for salvation; rather it is about whether you have to become a Jew to be saved.



Luther: Justification is the article of a standing or falling church

In the end, Dunn does specifically see justification as having to do with their relationship with God and dependence on God. But the initial point is this — you don't have to become a Jew to be a Christian. You can be justified as a Gentile through faith in Christ without keeping the Law. In other words, you don't have to convert to Judaism as a first step to being a Christian. But I am not at all convinced that he is right to say that works of the law are merely marks. I think that Sanders is wrong and

that there is sufficient evidence that some people did put their faith for salvation in good works. What is sometimes missed is that the mere fact that people appealed to grace does not mean that they did not also rely on good works.

Tom Wright is also interested in this matter. But for him the business of justification by faith is not so much a matter of God's verdict on the day of judgment. Instead, it's related to whether or not a person has a belief that Jesus is Lord and that God raised

Him from the dead. This shows that he or she is a Christian. Wright claims that this is evidence of the Spirit's work in a person's life, and hence proof that the person is already in the covenant. So what he is saying is that the doctrine of justification by faith is not about how God makes a person a Christian; rather, it is God's righteous declaration that someone is already a Christian.

For Wright, faith is not the instrument by which we grasp Christ, but the evidence that we are already in Christ. But this is not how Paul uses the term "faith" in my view. One of the effects of this way of approach is that it tends to dissolve the clear distinction between the Catholic and Protestant definitions of justification. I am concerned



about his emphasis on church rather than salvation.

Do these attempts at redefinition affect our understanding of Christian conversion?

Yes, they must. It's inevitable because it affects the way we preach the Gospel. Conversion is something that occurs in all religions, so obviously it doesn't mean the same thing in each one. Have you realised that it's possible to be converted out of Christianity as well as into it?

As far as the Christian faith is concerned, true conversion only refers to repentance and faith. Conversion involves the act of turning to God in repentance and grasping hold of Christ by faith. That's true conversion. The reason why true conversion saves us is because it's in the truth. When you are converted to Christ, He saves you, not because you've undergone a religious conversion or had a spiritual experience, but because you have grasped hold of Christ.

Now if the Gospel is something other than justification by faith in the way I've described it, then you might have all sorts of spiritual experiences in conversion, but they may not save you. You are saved by abandoning human effort and through trusting Christ who alone saves. So redefining the doctrine of justification by faith has major implications for our understanding of Christian conversion. That's why we have to be very careful about how we use words, and about the meanings we attach to them.

What's the danger of going down the new path? What do we lose?

Well, the first thing that we have to recognise is that this new path is attractive.

It's like all new things; it's exciting and therein lies its danger. Sadly, some Christians will go down it only because they're like the Athenians who were always interested in some new thing.

The other thing that makes this new path attractive is that it appears to give us a wonderful new way of looking at the New Testament that people haven't thought of before, almost as if for thousands of years we haven't known what the New Testament says. And now, suddenly, all is revealed. So it's quite attractive. The advantage of this new view is that it gives the appearance of drawing us into the historical circumstances of the day.

However, the danger of the new path is that it is inherently reductionist. That is to say, it certainly correctly draws us into the issue of Jew and Gentile relationships, but it doesn't seem to ask the obvious question: why is this issue so important?

I take it that the reason why the question was ever important in the first place was because it involved the crucial issue of how we shall stand before the judgment seat of God. Unless we realise that that is the real question, then the New Testament will be essentially trivial for us. It will be no more than the hobby horse of academic experts who happen to be able to read it in a new way.

So personally, I think that the new path is dangerous. I believe that it will obscure the doctrine of justification by faith, and it will make assurance of salvation very difficult indeed. Further, I think that if it obscures the doctrine of justification by faith, it will cut off the root of godliness because godli-

Reformers like Martin Luther and John Calvin thought that the doctrine of justification by faith was important enough to risk their lives for it, as have many Christians since the 16th century. Why?

Luther and Calvin read Paul's Letters to the Romans and the Galatians and came to the conclusion that the medieval Roman Catholic Church had been seriously wrong in its teaching on how a person becomes right with God. Ultimately they were forced out of the church of their day because of their understanding of the New Testament teaching on justification.

This Reformation teaching has reached us modern Presbyterians mainly through the Westminster Confession of Faith, which says in part that: "Those whom God effectually calls he also freely justifies. He does not pour righteousness into them, but pardons their sins and looks on them and accepts them ... for Christ's sake alone. He

does not consider their faith itself, the act of believing, as their righteousness or any other obedient response to the Gospel on their part. Rather He imputes to them the obedience and judicial satisfaction earned by Christ. For their part, they receive and rest on Christ and His righteousness by faith, and this faith is not their own but is itself a gift of God." (WCF 11.1, Professor Douglas Kelly's revision in modern English.)

The issue in the modern debate, as in the 16th Century, is whether God *pours righteousness into us* when we trust in Christ and are baptised (as the Roman Catholic Church teaches), or whether God *credits Christ's righteousness to us* when we turn to Him in faith (as Protestantism insists). In other words, when you trusted Christ for your salvation, did God actually *make* you righteous in His sight, or did He *count* you as righteous in His sight because of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

In God's

Chris Balzer explains wh

Presbyterians believe in the latter rather than the former. We believe in *imputed* rather than *infused* righteousness. As evangelicals we are convinced that this is what the Bible teaches, and the Bible is the only infallible source of information about God. In Romans 4:3-5 the Apostle Paul tells us that our justification is just like Abraham's. When Abraham believed God, God imputed or credited righteousness to him. That is, God declared that Abraham's status was that of a righteous man. He was forgiven, and God henceforth treated him as someone who had never sinned.

We read that when we trust in Christ for our salvation, we are at that moment "in Christ" (Phil. 3:8-9). As we stand

ness grows out of justification by faith as well.

Charles Colson and Os Guinness, among others, have been calling on evangelicals and Roman Catholics to bury the hatchet on their differences over justification. Should we do that? And should we treat the Reformation as a backward step?

I believe quite strongly that evangelicals and Catholics should bury the hatchet on justification by faith, and both of us should do that by submitting to the truth. And we can do that best by witnessing to the truth continually.

Sadly, many evangelicals no longer believe in justification by faith, as you can see from the neglect of it in their popular writings. Historically, this has not always been so. In an earlier period, evangelicals regarded justification by faith as enormously significant. However, in the broad evangelical movement today it is not seen in the same light.

So whether we are talking about evangelicals or Catholics, both of us need to rediscover the great teaching of justification by faith. I believe we have a responsibility to invite the Roman Catholic Church to do it. It hasn't done so yet, although I hope it will.

As far as the Reformation goes, I believe that it was a marvellous backward step. It is the sort of backward step that we ought to be taking all the time — right back into the New Testament. It's time we realised that going back to the New Testament is the only way to go forward. And we need to do it again today.

There's an American Episcopalian Bishop who has recently been saying that

we have to rewrite the Bible for every new age. I think he's completely wrong. What we have to do is to go back to the sources of our faith in the New Testament. Then we will discover afresh in each generation the wonderful truth of the Gospel in a "justification by faith" way.

I think that it's tragic that many today who call themselves evangelicals are ashamed of the Reformation or attack the Reformation. Some of them treat the word "Protestant" as though it's a vulgar term, and they want to distance themselves from the Reformation as much as possible. I would question the credentials of any person who calls himself an evangelical if he does such a thing. I am not ashamed of the word "Protestant". I think that one of the great losses of the last 20 to 30 years has been this term. It's a very important word that we need to reuse and rediscover.

To what extent then can evangelicals and Catholics work together, bearing in mind, for example, their collaboration on pro-life issues?

It's perfectly true that evangelicals and Catholics often work together on pro-life issues, and we ought to be grateful for it. I myself belong to an organisation which has evangelicals and Catholics working on these sorts of causes. There are definitely issues on which Christians who have a Trinitarian approach to life can work together effectively.

But if such cooperation obscures for a second the massive difference between us on the issue of how a person is saved, then we must stop doing it at once. Cooperation



N.T. Wright: Justification is God's declaration that one is a Christian

on secondary issues must never be used as an excuse for down-peddalling the crucial issue of how a person is justified.

People often don't realise the subtle impact of universalism. It explains why it's easier for evangelicals and Catholics to come together today. When we really believe that all will be saved, the differences between evangelicals and Catholics seem insignificant and trifling.

The popularity of universalism in the 20th century goes a long way to explaining why there is a fresh push for unity with

Judgment

Justification is important.

before God, we are clothed with a righteousness provided by God. We don't produce it ourselves. (Is.61:10). When God declares a sinner just, He does so because He sees that sinner standing "with" or "in" Christ. God did not declare me just because He looked at me and saw good works — nothing of the kind. When God justifies a believer in Christ, the moral righteousness of Christ is transferred to my account; God declares the believer to be "not guilty", "forgiven", and this is not because of anything the believer has done — it is all of grace. Christ's spiritual assets and my spiritual liabilities are merged. The just requirements of God's law have been fulfilled — by Christ — and so God may

declare me righteous. Thus I am legally right with God, yet still a sinner.

At the very moment when someone places his trust in Christ, God, the righteous judge, passes judgment on his sin. That is, God justifies him. This justification is a once-for-all act, in which God's final judgment is brought into the present. As in a court of law, so in this case: once God has declared me just in His sight, it is final for all time. It is a legal pronouncement that forever excludes me from receiving any punishment for the sins I have committed during my life.

That's why this question is so important. Involved in all of this is the question of whether you and I can cooperate with God (perhaps over the whole of our lives) to achieve a righteous standing with God. The Bible says "No". Salvation is all of God from first to last (Eph. 2:8-10). Also involved is whether a person who has been declared right before God can have that

sentence reversed. Again the Bible says 'No', because it all depends on God, not man (John 10:28).

Lest we Presbyterians think that the doctrine of justification means that we do not have to love and serve God, to obey Him consistently, we need to remind ourselves that after justification, our lives should become more and more like Christ as time passes. We need to endure to the end to be saved (Matthew 10:22). However, we have the wonderful confidence that the same God who justified us when we trusted Christ at first will also help us to live lives that please Him, and He will not let anyone snatch us out of His hand. (John 10:28).

Chris Balzer is lecturer in theology at the Presbyterian Theological Centre, Burwood, NSW.

AP

Rome. It's not because we really believe the same thing about justification by faith. Rather, it's because the issue of the judgment seat of God has been muted through universalism.

What will be the results in the Church if this doctrine is revised or compromised?

The Gospel will be thoroughly distorted, souls will be lost, and people will go to hell. I can't put it any more plainly than that. That's why these developments are so dangerous.

What will be the pastoral implications if Protestant preaching no longer focuses on justification by faith alone?

There will be massive pastoral implications which I can't really outline here. A number of us have done so elsewhere in the Moore College Explorations No 10, and readers should refer to that book for more extensive details.

The essential thing that people must grasp is that Protestant pastoral practice flows out of the doctrine of justification by

faith alone. If you look at Catholic spirituality, particularly Jesuit spirituality, you will find that inherent in it is the idea of free will and the capacity of human beings for a good life and good works. This is endemic in all Catholicism. It is an absolute and non-negotiable part of their teaching. Because Catholic teaching contains these ideas within it, Catholic spirituality takes a different form from Protestant spirituality.

Protestantism has different assumptions to Catholicism altogether. For a start, Protestants do take seriously the scriptural teaching that human beings are totally sinful, that is, that sin has affected every part of our being. There's no part of our existence which is untouched by sin's effect, and so we need to refresh ourselves again and again by coming back to the Cross of Christ and receiving forgiveness.

The Gospel tells us that we can have assurance of salvation by faith in Christ, and it underwrites this promise by showing us the greatness of the Saviour. The Christian

life begins and continues at every stage by faith. It's a life of faith that we live. We have faith in Christ, our great Saviour, and faith in Him gives us assurance.

However, in Catholic theology you are not permitted to have assurance. There's always the element of uncertainty. Assurance is never on the agenda, because the presence of free will and good works in Catholic teaching rules it out. Ultimately, your personal destiny hinges on your own ability, which gives us no confidence at all.

So when people become enamoured of a Catholic spirituality, even if they are Protestants, then you will get a different version of the Christian life, and a different pastoral practice altogether.

I think it should be obvious to everyone that these are terribly important issues, and they are important because in our age so many prominent Protestant authors are now calling upon Catholic "spirituality" to help them in their pastoral practice. This is a movement fraught with great dangers, and it shows how many Protestants have a defective understanding of human sinfulness and the Gospel. The way forward is to refresh our understanding of the Gospel in a "justification by faith way".

Peter Jensen is principal of Moore College in Sydney. He has a PhD in reformation theology from Oxford. Peter Hastie is minister of Ashfield Presbyterian Church, Sydney. **ap**



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Unreasonable reason

Postmodernism gives Christians a great opportunity.

A funny thing has happened to truth. No longer is it fashionable to talk about something being absolutely, always true. Now we hear people say: "It may be true for you, but not for me." Like it or not, this is the world we must interact with.

Over the past 300 years the mindset has been to place confidence in finding certainty through rationality and science. Often this has led to a total dismissal of God's existence and the authority of Scripture. It has tried to explain reality by keeping God out of the picture. The original series of *Star Trek* captured this mood well in the character of Spock, who rejected religious explanations as implausible and offered logical or scientific answers.

However, the modern mindset has not just jostled with Christianity, but has influenced the way Christians think. Christian historians like George Marsden and David Bebbington point out that both liberals and evangelicals are affected. Liberals like Bishop John Spong cannot believe in the resurrection because of rationalist assumptions. In other ways evangelicals have centred their theology in rationalist systems of thought. These days this can be seen in the way evangelicals dismiss non-Christian beliefs in the supernatural as "irrational".

Now we *are* creatures of reason and should use the brains God gave us. Yet maybe we have become too focused on rational systems of thought, so that we are impoverished in our emotional, spiritual and relational capacities in the church. Dean Inge once said: "A church that is married to the spirit of its age will find itself widowed in the next."

Whatever you think about the church, postmodernism is blooming. Post-



Philip Johnson

modernists say that the rationalist view of truth is wrong. It suppressed spirituality. It was not bias-free, but a product of European culture. In a global village, who is to say that modern rationalist views are valid? After all did not Europe colonise and oppress other cultures? Even if science has given us great inventions, it has also created weapons of mass destruction and polluted the environment. So the search for certain truth in science and rationality has failed.

Postmodernism has its good and bad points. On the good side, the search for meaning now has spirituality at the top of the list. New age spirituality is the mainstream expression of this search. They are searching for significant spiritual stories and authentic values to live by in the nine-to-five world. Some are very open to hearing about Jesus.

One downside is that morals are deemed to be relative to society. The debate over euthanasia is a signpost of postmodern attitudes: society cannot dictate over the individual's right to die. Another problem is that the world's religions are viewed as just a rich tapestry of alternative ways to find God, so the exclusiveness of Jesus as Saviour becomes a matter of contention between postmodernists and Christians.

I believe postmodernism is an invitation to mission; not something to fear. People are more open to spiritual things, and this gives us an opportunity to share. We must never lose sight of the fact that the Gospel is about Jesus. We can happily say the truth is a person. It is not just about abstract propositions, but is embodied in Jesus. It also means that we must embody Jesus as the truth in our lives.

But how do we share the Gospel with these people? If we confine ourselves to propositional statements, they will switch off. Yet they will listen to stories — and remember that Jesus told stories. Go and

read Genesis afresh. Apart from the covenant, what we find is a book full of family stories of dysfunctional people whom God uses. At times Abraham's morals are much worse than those of Homer Simpson! These stories resonate with today's seeker.

Finally, today's quest is about empowerment to live. People are seeking power to live through crystals, tarot cards and reincarnation. This falls far short of the joy and power of the risen Christ. The resurrection guarantees the power of the Cross and seals the validity of everything Jesus taught. In the risen Jesus we receive the Holy Spirit to empower us for life.

To contend for truth means living it and sharing it through the ultimate true story. My new book *Riding the Rollercoaster: How the Risen Christ Empowers Life* (Strand Publishing) shows what the resurrection means for us and how it relates to the postmodern quest. It's high time we told our story!

Philip Johnson is founder of the New Age Mission, and a lecturer at the Presbyterian Theological Centre, Sydney.

ap

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The Cambridge Declaration

A creed for the 21st century.

EVANGELICAL churches today are increasingly dominated by the spirit of this age rather than by the Spirit of Christ. As evangelicals, we call ourselves to repent of this sin and to recover the historic Christian faith.

In the course of history words change. In our day this has happened to the word “evangelical”. In the past it served as a bond of unity between Christians from a wide diversity of church traditions. Historic evangelicalism was confessional. It embraced the essential truths of Christianity as those were defined by the great ecumenical councils of the church. In addition, evangelicals also shared a common heritage in the “solas” of the 16th century Protestant Reformation.

Today the light of the Reformation has been significantly dimmed. The consequence is that the word “evangelical” has become so inclusive as to have lost its meaning. We face the peril of losing the unity it has taken centuries to achieve. Because of this crisis and because of our love of Christ, His Gospel and His church, we endeavour to assert anew our commitment to the central truths of the Reformation and of historic evangelicalism. These truths we affirm not because of their role in our traditions, but because we believe that they are central to the Bible.

Sola Scriptura: The erosion of authority

Scripture alone is the inerrant rule of the church’s life, but the evangelical church today has separated Scripture from its authoritative function. In practice, the church is guided, far too often, by the culture. Therapeutic technique, marketing strategies, and the beat of the entertainment world often have far more to say about what the church wants, how it functions and what it offers, than does the Word of God. Pastors have neglected their rightful oversight of worship, including the doctrinal content of the music. As biblical authority has been abandoned in practice, as its truths have faded from Christian consciousness, and as its doctrines have lost their saliency, the church has been increasingly emptied of its integrity, moral authority and direction.

Rather than adapting Christian faith to satisfy the felt needs of consumers, we must proclaim the Law as the only measure of true righteousness and the Gospel as the

In April 1996, the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, led by James Montgomery Boice, David Wells, Ervin Duggan and Sinclair Ferguson, met in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, to define the problem of creeping secularism in the evangelical church and to challenge the church to eradicate it from her work and witness. James Boice writes: “Believing that the evangelical movement is in crisis, we met to call the evangelical church in America to repent of its worldliness and seek to recover the biblical, apostolic doctrines that alone empower the church and provide integrity for its witness.” The resulting Cambridge Declaration presents a challenge to all Christians to continue faithful.

only announcement of saving truth. Biblical truth is indispensable to the church’s understanding, nurture and discipline.

Scripture must take us beyond our perceived needs to our real needs and liberate us from seeing ourselves through the seductive images, cliches, promises, and priorities of mass culture. It is only in the light of God’s truth that we understand ourselves aright and see God’s provision for our need. The Bible, therefore, must be taught and preached in the church. Sermons must be expositions of the Bible and its teachings, not expressions of the preacher’s opinions or the ideas of the age. We must settle for nothing less than what God has given.

The work of the Holy Spirit in personal experience cannot be disengaged from Scripture. The Spirit does not speak in ways that are independent of Scripture. Apart from Scripture we would never have known of God’s grace in Christ. The biblical Word, rather than spiritual experience, is the test of truth.

Thesis One: Sola Scriptura

We reaffirm the inerrant Scripture to be the sole source of written divine revelation, which alone can bind the conscience. The Bible alone teaches all that is necessary for our salvation from sin, and is the standard by which all Christian behavior must be measured.

We deny that any creed, council or individual may bind a Christian’s conscience, that the Holy Spirit speaks independently of or contrary to what is set forth in the

Bible, or that personal spiritual experience can ever be a vehicle of revelation.

Solus Christus: The erosion of Christ-centred faith

As evangelical faith has become secularised, its interests have been blurred with those of the culture. The result is a loss of absolute values, permissive individualism, and a substitution of wholeness for holiness, recovery for repentance, intuition for truth, feeling for belief, chance for providence, and immediate gratification for enduring hope. Christ and His cross have moved from the centre of our vision.

Thesis Two: Solus Christus

We reaffirm that our salvation is accomplished by the mediatorial work of the historical Christ alone. His sinless life and substitutionary atonement alone are sufficient for our justification and reconciliation to the Father.

We deny that the Gospel is preached if Christ’s substitutionary work is not declared and faith in Christ and His work is not solicited.

Sola gratia: The erosion of the Gospel

Unwarranted confidence in human ability is a product of fallen human nature. This false confidence now fills the evangelical world — from the self-esteem gospel to the health and wealth gospel, from those who have transformed the gospel into a product to be sold and sinners into consumers who want to buy, to others who treat Christian faith as being true simply because it works. This silences the doctrine of justification regardless of the official commitments of our churches.

God’s grace in Christ is not merely necessary but is the sole efficient cause of salvation. We confess that human beings are born spiritually dead and are incapable even of co-operating with regenerating grace.

Thesis Three: Sola Gratia

We reaffirm that in salvation we are rescued from God’s wrath by His grace alone. It is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that brings us to Christ by releasing us from our bondage to sin and raising us from spiritual death to spiritual life.

We deny that salvation is in any sense a human work. Human methods, techniques

or strategies by themselves cannot accomplish this transformation. Faith is not produced by our unregenerated human nature.

Sola fide: The erosion of the chief article

Justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. This is the article by which the church stands or falls. Today this article is often ignored, distorted or sometimes even denied by leaders, scholars and pastors who claim to be evangelical. Although fallen human nature has always recoiled from recognising its need for Christ's imputed righteousness, modernity greatly fuels the fires of this discontent with the biblical Gospel. We have allowed this discontent to dictate the nature of our ministry and what it is we are preaching.

Many in the church growth movement believe that sociological understanding of those in the pew is as important to the success of the Gospel as is the biblical truth which is proclaimed. As a result, theological convictions are frequently divorced from the work of the ministry. The marketing orientation in many churches takes this even further, erasing the distinction between the biblical Word and the world, robbing Christ's cross of its offence, and reducing Christian faith to the principles and methods which bring success to secular corporations.

While the theology of the cross may be believed, these movements are actually emptying it of its meaning. There is no gospel except that of Christ's substitution in our place whereby God imputed to Him our sin and imputed to us His righteousness. Because He bore our judgment, we now walk in His grace as those who are forever pardoned, accepted and adopted as God's children. There is no basis for our acceptance before God except in Christ's saving work, not in our patriotism, churchly devotion or moral decency. The Gospel declares what God has done for us in Christ. It is not about what we can do to reach Him.

Thesis Four: Sola Fide

We reaffirm that justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. In justification Christ's righteousness is imputed to us as the only possible satisfaction of God's perfect justice.

We deny that justification rests on any merit to be found in us, or upon the grounds of an infusion of Christ's righteousness in us, or that an institution claiming to be a church that denies or condemns *sola fide* can be recognised as a legitimate church.

Soli Deo gloria: The erosion of God-centred worship

Wherever in the church biblical authority has been lost, Christ has been displaced, the Gospel has been distorted, or faith has

been perverted, it has always been for one reason: our interests have displaced God's, and we are doing His work in our way. The loss of God's centrality in the life of today's church is common and lamentable. It is this loss that allows us to transform worship into entertainment, gospel preaching into marketing, believing into technique, being good into feeling good about ourselves, and faithfulness into being successful. As a result, God, Christ and the Bible have come to mean too little to us and rest too inconsequentially upon us.



Cambridge signatories Michael Horton (above) and James Montgomery Boice



God does not exist to satisfy human ambitions, cravings, the appetite for consumption, or our own private spiritual interests. We must focus on God in our worship, rather than the satisfaction of our personal needs. God is sovereign in worship; we are not. Our concern must be for God's kingdom, not our own empires, popularity or success.

Thesis Five: Soli Deo Gloria

We reaffirm that because salvation is of God and has been accomplished by God, it is for God's glory, and that we must glorify Him always. We must live our entire lives

before the face of God, under the authority of God and for His glory alone.

We deny that we can properly glorify God if our worship is confused with entertainment, if we neglect either Law or Gospel in our preaching, or if self-improvement, self-esteem or self-fulfilment are allowed to become alternatives to the Gospel.

A call to repentance and reformation

The faithfulness of the evangelical church in the past contrasts sharply with its unfaithfulness in the present. Earlier in this century, evangelical churches sustained a remarkable missionary endeavour, and built many religious institutions to serve the cause of biblical truth and Christ's kingdom.

That was a time when Christian behaviour and expectations were markedly different from those in the culture. Today they often are not. The evangelical world today is losing its biblical fidelity, moral compass and missionary zeal.

We repent of our worldliness. We have been influenced by the 'gospels' of our secular culture, which are no gospels. We have weakened the church by our own lack of serious repentance, our blindness to the sins in ourselves which we see so clearly in others, and our inexcusable failure adequately to tell others about God's saving work in Jesus Christ.

We also earnestly call back erring professing evangelicals who have deviated from God's Word in the matters discussed in this Declaration. This includes those who declare that there is hope of eternal life apart from explicit faith in Jesus Christ, who claim that those who reject Christ in this life will be annihilated rather than endure the just judgment of God through eternal suffering, or who claim that evangelicals and Roman Catholics are one in Jesus Christ even where the biblical doctrine of justification is not believed.

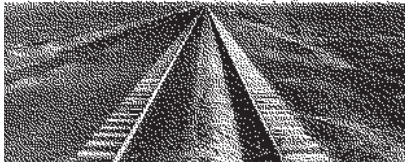
The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals asks all Christians to give consideration to implementing this Declaration in the church's worship, ministry, policies, life and evangelism.

For Christ's sake. Amen.

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AP

across australia



Morals watchdog

Fearing a relaxation of the laws on prostitution in South Australia, **Festival of Light (SA)** is urging the government to strengthen the laws in that state, revealing figures which show that prostitution is flourishing in Victoria, where it has also been "legalised".

Pro-life Sunday

The **Right to Life Association** asks that on Sunday 18 October 1998, churches throughout Australia remember those yet to be born and remember those who will never be given the opportunity to be born because of the scourge of abortion.

Internet gambling

The **NSW Council of Churches** says the NSW Premier, Bob Carr, has the perfect opportunity to make a public stand against legalising more gambling outlets in New South Wales by following the United States' lead in banning internet gambling. The council's president, **Rev John Edmondstone**, said: "Mr Carr can prevent internet casinos from being established in NSW through legislation preventing the state's internet servers from carrying NSW casino sites."

Christian broadcasting grows

The allocation of two new community radio licences, in Dubbo (NSW) and Townsville (Qld), brings to 11 the number of permanently licensed Christian community radio stations throughout Australia. **Kevin Hooper**, president of the Association of Christian Broadcasters, hails 1998 as the "year of the breakthrough", but calls for ongoing prayer as 20 other groups around Australia have been issued with temporary licences while they await allocation of permanent licences. **Triple 7** in Melbourne reports that it is holding a test broadcast from 12 October to 22

November on 89.9FM. Phone (03) 9899 1777 for more details and offers to help.

Weipa celebrates centenary

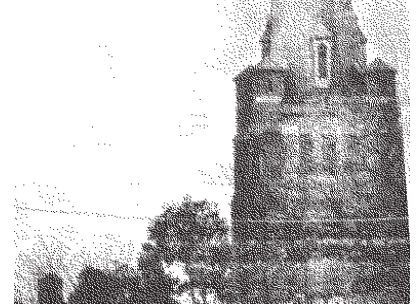
About 200 people attended the Weipa centenary commemoration at the old **Twenty Mile Mission** on Wednesday 10 June 1998. The event was a memorable occasion for people from both the Aboriginal and white community who joined together to remember and celebrate.

Alice Mark, who was born on the Twenty Mile Mission, was one of many guests of honour. Mrs Mark, who spoke to the gathering in both her traditional language and English, told of her happiness at seeing so many people show an interest in her birthplace. Dancers from the Jessica Point State School performed traditional dances they have been taught by Napranum elders. The commemoration concluded with a special church service held inside the ruins of the original house of worship constructed 100 years ago.

The injustices done to Cape Aborigines with the advent of white settlement were aired, and the decree to go forward together reiterated many times. A moving part of the service came when the **Rev Daimoni Davui** apologised on behalf of the church to the descendants of those absorbed into the Weipa Mission. Mr Davui told the gathering the church had acted out of love and goodwill but acknowledged that its actions had an irreversible and destructive effect on the way of life of the region's first people.

Ron and Jean Lyons, who patrol Cape York for the Presbyterian Inland Mission, were among those who attended. Ron gave greetings from the moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland, the **Right Rev David Secomb**.

home front



Mid-coast convention

More than 200 people from several churches and denominations traveled from Moree, Glen Innes, Inverell, Ballina, Yamba, Coffs Harbour, Laurieton, Port Macquarie and Kempsey for the inaugural NSW Mid-Coast Christian Convention at the Valla Beach Resort near Nambucca on the weekend of 8-9 August. Addressing the convention theme, "No Gospel but God's Gospel", **Simon Manchester** (North Sydney Anglican) and **Grant Thorp** (Ballina Presbyterian), well-known to participants at the Katoomba Convention, stressed that the answers to life's bottom-line questions are not found in human solutions but in the Bible. The vision of two young men for a regular Bible teaching conference in the Coffs Harbour

(Left to right) Geoff Piggott, Mark Davies, Grant Thorp, Simon Manchester, Peter Moore



area led to the establishment of the interdenominational committee which arranged the convention. The committee includes two high school teachers, a businessman, a graphic designer and pastors from Anglican, Baptist and Presbyterian Churches in the region. The chairman is **Rev Peter Moore** of the Coffs Harbour Presbyterian Church.

Planning has begun for next year's convention which will be held 7-8 August at Valla Beach Resort and feature internationally known Australian Bible teachers **John Chapman** and **David Cook**.

For more information, or tapes of the talks, contact the MCCC Secretary, P0 Box 8063, Coffs Harbour NSW 2450.

School ties

The close ties between **Blackheath College** and the Presbyterian Church in Charters Towers, 140 kilometres west of Townsville, were strengthened even further recently when the college made available all the facilities needed for **John Knox Church** to hold their annual congregational camp there during school holidays. Charters Towers became a preaching place within John Knox Presbyterian Church Townsville immediately after church union in 1977. As it did not have a building, Blackheath College offered its hall as a worship centre for the Presbyterians in the town, as well as 40 students! At each service, usually conducted by lay preacher **Stewart MacDonald**, 40 or so boarders attend. **Rev Hugh Gallagher**, minister of John Knox, Townsville, conducts college services at the beginning and end of each term, with 160 students of all denominations attending. Mr Gallagher also makes the 280-kilometre round trip for communion, baptism and funeral services.

Family planning

How do you get the congregation together to do some (church) family planning? The Mackay (Qld) congregation set aside time at their annual camp to review the past year's activities as well as to plan for developments in the life of the church. The minister, **Rev Jim Brown**, said that the idea originated when the congregation felt that very little could be accomplished along these lines during their annual meeting. "This family planning has proved a real blessing, enabling the elders to give more effective oversight of the church. It has also led to arranging programs to help the Lord's people grow in grace and to equip them for reaching out to the lost," he said.

Church split

Following several years of vacancy, Brisbane's **Ithaca** congregation rejoiced at the ordination and induction of **Robert Herrgott** on 2 September. The inner city congregation was packed for the service, and heard a challenging address by **Rev Jack Knapp** on the subject "Are you burdened for the lost, or have you lost your burden?" Mr Herrgott completed his studies at the Queensland Theological Hall last year. He was serving his licentiate appointment in the Ithaca charge when he received the call to become their minister. After the service, he ceremoniously cut the cake depicting the church building and grounds, saying "Look at that! I've just been inducted and I've split the church already!" But to the contrary, the congregation is reported to be enthused under Mr Herrgott's biblical preaching and pastoral approach to ministry. New people have started to attend, and the evening service has been restarted.



The former interim moderator of Ithaca, **Rev Dr Matthew Kim** (left), welcomes **Rev Robert Herrgott** (right) following the service. The moderator of Brisbane Presbytery, **Mr John McClenahan**, looks on.

Inverell hall

The church hall at **Inverell**, on the northern tablelands of NSW, has been enlarged and refurbished, thanks to a bequest, the value of which was doubled by the hard work of a team of volunteers led by elder **David Jones** and apprentice builder **Phil Paton**. The enlarged auditorium area has been carpeted and equipped with a movable podium, special lighting, retractable screen, 150 padded seats and a mother's room.

PWA shines

The retiring moderator of the church in NSW, **Dr Lindsay Ferrington**, challenged those at the PWA's annual conference to keep on shining for Jesus, and all the reports presented showed that the ladies are doing just that. Deaconess **Pam Vaughan** brought proceedings to a close with a meditation based on the old hymn *Jesus Bids Us Shine*.

Whitfords - towards 200

The Presbytery of Western Australia has resolved to unite the **Joondalup** and **Whitfords** congregations. The decision follows a detailed report by **Rev Alan Perrie**, who visited all those associated with the Joondalup congregation after **Rev Bruce Fraser** had to lay down the ministry there due to ill-health. The overwhelming majority of those attending worship at Joondalup indicated that they wished to merge with Whitfords. This means that Whitfords has gained around 20 adults and children. Meanwhile, the Whitfords congregation has developed independently so that the Presbytery of WA has raised its status from mission church to church and has granted it permission to call its own minister. Mr Perrie has challenged the congregation to work and pray for growth to 200 members and beyond.

WA women's ministry

Debbie Forbes, the newly appointed administrative assistant to the Presbytery of WA, has become the latest woman to take up an important ministry role within the Presbyterian Church in WA. She joins **Mrs Carol Robertson**, the treasurer of the General Assembly, and **Mrs Joy Parnell**, secretary of the mission and evangelism committee, both of whom have been making vital contributions.

Guildford closes

The session of Guildford (WA) has decided to close the church. After months of review, it decided that because of the declining numbers and the fact that people came mainly from outside the area it would be better to close Guildford now rather than face a slow, continuing decline. The last service at Guildford was held on 9 August 1998.

Growth at Peppermint Grove

The session of Peppermint Grove (WA) is praising the Lord for seeing many people growing in their knowledge and love of the Lord, for increased attendance at Bible studies, for significant growth in the number of children at church, and for great advances in the financial position of the congregation.

Portuguese ministry grows

The Portuguese congregation in Perth has moved from Leederville and is now meeting in the building owned by the Hamilton Hill Bible Church. Hamilton Hill has a very large Portuguese-speaking population. On 12 July, Julio and Celeste dos Santos hosted a successful evangelical outreach, attended by nearby adults and children.

PIM Christmas cards

The Presbyterian Inland Mission 1998 Christmas cards are available in packets of six plus envelopes at \$3 a packet. The cards feature Australian country scenes and can be obtained from PIM Christmas Cards, C/- 118 Barbour Rd, Bracken Ridge QLD 4017. All proceeds go to the work of the Presbyterian Inland Mission.

People in the news

Mrs Mavis McCaw has retired as organist of St Andrew's, Chatswood (NSW) after 21 years of service — "by far the longest serving organist in our history, and never a word of complaint or displeasure," writes Chatswood session clerk Barrie Breeze. **Jim Zuber** and **Lloyd Green** have been granted the status of elder emeritus by the session of Middle Clarence (NSW) after many years of faithful service. **Rev Rod Mallinson**, who had been colleague minister at Gosford (NSW), was inducted as minister of the parish by the Presbytery of the Central Coast on 21 July. Warburton (Vic) have welcomed their new minister, **Rev Ian Stewart**, and his wife **Sheila**. **Rev Cor Vanderhorn** was inducted at Sunshine (Vic) on 24 May. Sadly, his wife **Grace** was suddenly called Home on 5 June. The sympathy of the church is extended to Cor and his family at this time.

With Christ

Mr Reece Tonkins was called Home on 18 August 1998 after eight years' faithful service as treasurer of Scots Kirk, Hamilton (NSW). A memorial service was held on 31

July at The Entrance Church for **Rev Ray Walder**. The church was filled to overflowing with family and friends of this well-loved and faithful minister of the Gospel. The service was led by the Rev Colin Barwise, Bible readings given by Mr Walder's daughter Margaret Havyatt and his son David. Don Mitchell, welfare officer with The Entrance RSL, told of Ray's war-time service in the Pacific. In his eulogy, the Rev Peter Boase spoke of his long friendship with Ray and of Ray's commitment to his Lord and Saviour. Rev Ernie Noble led the congregation in prayer for Ray's family and friends. Ray Walder had long ministries in the parishes of Lakemba and Ryde-Meadowbank, and was moderator of the NSW General Assembly in 1986.

New Elders:

Lismore (NSW): Douglas Sydney Mewing and Peter Shaw (ordained and inducted), Alfred Bertram Smith (inducted) on 19 July. **Chatswood (NSW):** Jennifer Bowen, Fiona Perry, Peter Stuntz, Helen Thorpe (ordained and inducted), Donald McMillan and Murray Mansill (inducted). **Gardenvale East (Vic):** Lily Anne McDonald. **Clunes-Dunoon-Bangalow (NSW):** Ross Hunter McKinnon. **Dandenong (Vic):** Rev Henri Joyeux and Mr Shane Williams.

world
news



Missionary dies on Swissair 229

A young missionary, **John Wilson**, 22, was travelling on Swissair Flight 229 which crashed into the sea off Nova Scotia last month. The son of a prominent US Baptist pastor, John was working with YWAM among Muslim people and was flying back to Lausanne for further reachout activities. He had recently completed a prayer walk around Turkey.

Presbyterians help in Kenya

The Presbyterian Church of East Africa is in high gear in response to the terrorist strike on Nairobi in August. A trauma centre has been established at St Andrew's Church, Nairobi, which is serving as one of four ecumenical cooperative crisis centres. PCEA is providing the office, first line volunteers, trained supervisors, trained and experienced follow-up counsellors, while also trying to raise funds to pay for much-needed medical treatment of the bombing victims in Kikuyu Hospital.

MacArthur returns

John MacArthur Jnr, pastor of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California, president of the Master's College and Seminary, host of the broadcasting ministry *Grace to You* and member of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals is recovering from a life-threatening heart condition. He has returned home after five days in hospital and has cancelled travel plans for a month while recuperating.

Evangelical leads Rio poll

Anthony Garotinho, former mayor of Campos and a member of the Central Presbyterian Church, appears to be the strongest candidate to govern Rio de Janeiro, with 35 per cent of popular support. A 1991 census indicates that there are 13 million evangelical Christians in Brazil, up from 4.8 million in 1970. If this growth rate continues there will be 24 million evangelicals in Brazil by 2000.

Maldives boycott urged

Jubilee Campaign, an interdenominational Christian human rights group, has called on Christians to boycott tourism to the Maldives, a favourite holiday spot in the Indian Ocean of British tourists. A Muslim state, the Maldives Government has persecuted Christian converts from Muslim backgrounds and recently arrested a large number of people who were simply making enquiries about the Christian faith. A number of converts have been detained and put under pressure to convert back to Islam. "We call on all those who support religious freedom to refrain from visiting the Maldives until all the prisoners of faith are unconditionally released and the Maldivian Government respects the right of its people to choose their own religion," says Jubilee's representative, Wilfred Wong. The Maldives receives about 80 per cent of its income from tourism.

Schroetenboer called Home

Dr Paul Schroetenboer, first general secretary of the Reformed Ecumenical Council, passed away on 16 July 1998 after a long battle with cancer. He served for 25 years as general secretary and in the latter years also served on the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship.

Pakistan restores schools

The Government of Pakistan announced on 30 July that it is returning the management of 10 schools in the Punjab to the Presbyterian Church (USA). The schools were taken from the church in 1972. The Presbyterian Church in Pakistan is celebrating the event with joy, tempered by the reality that both the buildings and the quality of education have deteriorated during the 26 years through underfunding and government neglect.

Bill angers Kirk

The principal clerk of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, **Rev Dr Finley Macdonald**, warned this year's Assembly that the Human Rights Bill, then passing through the British Parliament, sought to incorporate the European Convention of Human Rights into the UK's legal systems. This would threaten the Kirk's long-standing jurisdiction over 'matters spiritual' if a complaint to a civil court alleged breach of convention rights. So far the Government has refused to amend the Bill to recognise the Kirk's historic position. The assembly urged the Government "either to give an assurance that the Human Rights Bill is entirely consistent with the 1921 Church of Scotland Act or to amend the Bill to ensure it will be so consistent". (Samuel Rutherford, where are you?)

Beating China's wall

Billy Graham's son **Ned**, the director of **East Gates Ministries**, believes in working within the law in China to build up the church there. Almost two million Bibles have been printed and placed throughout China, medical clinics and homes for the elderly have been set up, and churches have been built in rural areas. Under the House Church Library Project, 100 libraries of Christian literature have been distributed throughout China for \$12 a month per library.

PNG relief effort

Mission Aviation Fellowship reports the relief effort in Papua New Guinea continues after the recent tidal wave. But the volume of flying required has lessened, and the Vanimo base pilots have been able to return to more of their normal work in support of many small communities throughout the Sandaun and East Sepik Provinces and beyond. As one of the first agencies on the scene, and with a permanent base at Vanimo, MAF was in a strategic position to provide immediate assistance. Prayer is asked for the many health and aid workers, churches, volunteers and communities in the area who are supporting those affected. Prayer is also appreciated for wisdom in distribution of aid and funding. The NSW moderator, **Right Rev David Tsai**, launched an appeal in conjunction with the church's Social Service Committee, while the Presbyterian Church in the USA has sent a donation of \$50,000 through its Presbyterian Disaster Assistance agency.

Gospel in the Kremlin

As visitors to the Kremlin, Russia's historic centre of power, queue to buy tickets they can now see a range of Christian Scriptures published by the **Bible Society** on display and available for sale. For more than 70 years, from 1917, the Russian state

authorities espoused atheism as a basic tenet. During this time, worship in most churches was either restricted or banned altogether. Possession of the Bible was outlawed. Now, with the freedoms gained following a period of reform and openness, churches have re-opened and Bibles are freely available to the people. Inside the Kremlin walls, the five Orthodox chapels have been restored, although not all are used for worship.

Moslems denounce missionary

Nairobi police looked on as about 3000 Moslems crowded the streets of the inner city one Sunday recently, angrily denouncing American evangelist **Edward Andrew Stagl** for alleged blasphemous statements against the prophet Mohammed. As the boisterous demonstrators approached the US Embassy they threw a document prepared by the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims expressing their displeasure with the US evangelist and his activities. Stagl pleaded not guilty at a court appearance in Nakuru to charges of insulting Islam, while jeering Moslems congregated outside the courtroom. Police held Stagl in custody until 30 July to protect him from the mob. Pray for peaceful relations between Moslems and Christians in Kenya and around the world, but most of all pray that they will come to the saving grace of the Lord Jesus. ap

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News from Victoria

The following items were first published in *Presbyterian Update*, the newspaper of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria.

Carson, Searle at PTC

Two renowned speakers have visited the Presbyterian Theological College, Box Hill, recently. Dr Don Carson, Research Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Chicago, spoke daily at a week-long preacher's conference, and Rev David Searle, director of Rutherford House, Edinburgh, spoke at an elders' training day. He also delivered the W.R. Hopkins Lecture on 'The Preacher' at the college open night. Rev Dr Peter Barnes, minister of Nambucca (NSW) and lecturer in church history at the Presbyterian Theological Centre, Sydney, will speak at the annual graduation service on 27 November, when four Presbyterian candidates for the ministry are expected to graduate.

Elder's jubilee

Gilbert Bell, session clerk of Sunshine, in Melbourne's western suburbs, celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the eldership on 15 August 1998. His contribution to the Lord's work has been well rounded. In the local church he has served as a Sunday school teacher for 62 years, at presbytery he has been representative elder for many years and is moderator of the Presbytery of Melbourne West. He has represented Sunshine in the Victorian assembly for many years, serving on such committees as APWM and the selection committee, and he has been

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a commissioner to the General Assembly of Australia. He is also a lay preacher, and friend and counsellor to many.

Christian Neighbour

Andrew Bibby, who plays Lance Wilkinson in the long running television show *Neighbours*, was one of four special guests at a youth service in Scots Church, Drouin, recently. Andrew shared about his Christian faith with the 140 people present, telling particularly what it is like to be a Christian and an actor. He is also studying for the VCE and devoting some of his time to appearing on the Christian radio program *Solstice*, produced at the HCJB studios in Melbourne. Other members of the *Solstice* team, Greg Pretty (whose father, Keith, is Session Clerk of Drouin), Mark Fox and comedian Reuben Geddes also took part in a highly successful evening.



Andrew Bibby signs an autograph for Bethany Martin of Drouin.

Bundoora Reaches Out in Song

Bundoora Presbyterian Church, in Melbourne's north, held another successful coffee night/concert on 15 August featuring folk singer Nicky Chiswell from Sydney. It was staged at the local high school drama room, where the congregation usually meets for worship, and ample time was provided for conversation so that church members could use the questions raised in the songs to invite a response from their non-Christian family and friends. The minister, Rev Scott Lindsay, reports that about a quarter of those present were from outside the church.

St Andrew's expands

St Andrew's Christian College has recently moved to new premises as it continues to grow. In an agreement with the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind, the school has leased a large part of the property at 333 Burwood Highway, Burwood, in Melbourne's eastern sub-

urbs, with an option to buy. The extra space allows more students, and the beginning of year 7, progressing to a complete secondary college by 2004. The principal, Mrs Meryl McEwen, may be contacted on (03) 9808 9911.

Two new manses



A St Andrew's student

The congregations of Dandenong and Seaford are both rejoicing in the Lord's provision, which has enabled each to open a new manse recently. Rev Henri Joyeux is minister of Dandenong and David Assender, a student for the ministry, is providing supply ministry at Seaford.

Untangled web

The National Journal Committee has developed an Internet home page on the World Wide Web, thanks to Rev Michael Wharton, who had begun a web site for the PCV. Mike reports that the national site is growing in leaps and bounds. It is becoming a valuable resource and presence for the church, providing links to individual parishes who have a home page. Call Mike Wharton on (03) 9527 3270 or email him on mwharton@ozemail.com.au to establish your Church Home Page. Visit the PCA Home Page on www.presbyterian.org.au

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Email: onespres@ozemail.com.au

Pictures will be returned if requested.

A stamped self-addressed envelope would help us greatly.

On the slide

Cinema Watch

Sliding Doors

Reviewed by Craig Tucker

Sliding Doors is a very different kind of movie. In the first scene the main character Helen (Gwyneth Paltrow) is late for the train, and bumps into a little girl on the platform. The momentary delay makes her miss her train. Suddenly, the film freezes and we see the same scene played again, only this time the little girl is pulled aside by her mother, and Helen makes her train. From here the movie divides into two plot lines. From an insignificant moment running for the train, Helen's life takes two completely different courses — for one things begin to fall apart, and for the other — well I won't spoil it.

Sliding Doors is well acted, full of sharp dialogue, funny and engaging — but it requires concentration as the action flips between the two diverging plot lines.

A brief warning. While not overly explicit the film has a sex scene or two. However even here I liked the movie. It

consistently portrays adultery in a refreshingly negative way. The lies. The lies upon lies. The living with lies. The consequences of lies exposed. The breakdown of relationships.

Adultery isn't fun! The main characters do things and say things we might not approve of, and that is the point. The movie shows us the foolishness of adultery. This point is cleverly exposed by the nameless man in the pub. In brief appearances through the film, he provides a mocking commentary on the choices of Helen's boyfriend — his insightful wisdom, packaged with humour, is a real treat. If nothing else, this movie's thoughtful reflections on adultery make it well worth the price of admission.


But the great cleverness of this film is its playful exploration of fate. Imagine the consequences of a world run by chance — a world branching in infinite possibilities. Are we masters of our own destiny, or is the course of my life determined by a thousand tiny incidents each day? However, with equal cleverness it forces us to wonder whether fate matters little — in the end are people simply victims of their decisions (or failure to make them)?

Am I trapped less by chance, and more by my consistently foolish choices? We are even asked at some points to toy with the idea that "fate" may have a sense of humour. The movie brilliantly raises these and other questions, in a funny but profound way.

All of this makes *Sliding Doors* a great night out for Christians. It confronted me with the importance of God's sovereignty. I saw in a new way the scariness of living in a world without God — a world out of control.

I was warmed again by the promise that God has a plan and purpose for my life — that in the good and the bad he is transforming me into the likeness of his Son. If I get caught by the next red light, or even if I run it, God still has things in hand. I don't step "out of God's will" and into a world beyond his control and his good purposes for me.

The ugliness of a chance-world helped me see the beauty in believing that God has his hands firmly on the levers. In fact, walking home, it made me delight in it! Any movie that can do that gets my vote.

Craig Tucker is pastor of Western Blacktown Presbyterian Church, NSW. 

TV Watch

Ally McBeal


Reviewed by Phil Campbell

One thing I really hate watching is a TV drama that glamorises or justifies infidelity. Maybe it's because I see more than enough of it in real life.

Thankfully, the new hit show *Ally McBeal* doesn't justify or glamorise infidelity at all. Ally (played by the vulnerable Calista Flockhart) and Billy were star crossed lovers, childhood sweethearts destined for one another — until their lives parted course mid-way through their law degrees. They lost touch — now they're working in the same office. And the bad news? In the meantime, Billy got married.

Refreshingly, the show draws a lot of momentum from Ally's moral angst. This is

a TV world where right and wrong, fidelity and infidelity really count — where troubled consciences get all the best lines in the script. Sparks of the old romance fly in all directions, and the pain of the poor decisions of the past is constantly with them. So far, Billy is determined to be faithful to his wife Georgina, and Ally is determined not to break them up. But it will be almost a miracle if we get through the first series without Ally falling into bed with her old sweetheart — and the trouble is, we viewers feel her pain so acutely that we're secretly wanting it to happen.

If it doesn't, though, it's more a victory for "URST" than a new morality. After all, every script writer knows that Un-Resolved Sexual Tension is one of the biggest dramatic drawcards on offer. As diehard fans of *Moonlighting* and *Lois & Clark* know only too well — bring your star-crossed lovers together too soon, and your ratings take a dive. After all, what's a show like this one, without the frisson? 



Affair of the heart

Cardiologist Professor John Vyden invites us to dance with God.

Tell us about your earliest memories.

I can remember crying as I was being driven to Scots College, Bellevue Hill, on my first day, and shrieking with horror as my mother dropped me off in kindergarten. I remember the day war broke out in 1939, and there was terrible lightning and thunder at the time. My parents were really down in the dumps when France fell to the Nazis. Shortly after that, my parents divorced. Then Japan entered the war and my two uncles went off to fight. Many people thought that Japan was going to invade us, especially after the mini-submarine attack on Sydney. They fired a couple of shells into Bellevue Hill near where I lived.

What about your teenage years?

This was a very difficult and unhappy time in my life. My mother remarried. Tragically, her second husband died soon after of a heart attack at the age of 42. Then in 1947 I suffered a tremendous setback. I loved cricket and I had just made a good team, when I got a pain in my hip. I had to see a doctor who diagnosed a bone disease on the upper part of my femur. I was admitted to a private hospital in October 1947



Peter Hastie

and stayed there until May 1948. My leg was in callipers. But my school friends used to come in to see me, and that cheered me up. When I got out of hospital, I only had a few months to get ready for the Intermediate Certificate. I got through it successfully, but then I was dealt another terrible blow. My father announced to me that he wasn't paying for any more of my education at Scots, and that I would have to work as a message boy. He took me out of school and got me a job at two pounds per week. After each pay day he would take my money from me, and give me back eight pence a day for a sandwich. I had to do this for a year. He also forced me to carry stones each weekend on a property he owned in Bellevue Hill. I spent all Saturday carrying the stones down the hill, and on Sunday I carried them up again. He never intended to build a thing. He wouldn't let me see my Scots friends, either. If it wasn't for a relative and my mother, I would never have been rescued from my unhappiness. They got me back the next year to Scots which was like a home to me. However, by then, my mother's third marriage was disintegrating, and I was facing a big catch-up to get ready for the Leaving Certificate.

Did you learn any lessons from this suffering?

The lesson I learnt from all this is that you always push on, onwards and upwards. You keep going; you do the best you can. You never, never give up. That's what I learned from my time at Scots. I also learned not to hate. I don't have enough energy to do it. I just couldn't be bothered; hate is such a destructive and ugly emotion.

What happened when you left school?

I studied to be a chartered accountant. I was quite good at it, and I also had some entrepreneurial flair too. When I was 22, I was involved in starting the Eastern

Suburbs Wentworth Courier, and became the chairman of directors. I was involved in a few other small ventures as well.

So why did you change careers and start medicine?

That's a long story. While I was working as an accountant, I made friends with a senior colleague called Donald Cameron. He later became an Anglican bishop. He was a very able tax accountant. One day he gave me a book by a famous Christian writer, C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*. It was a brilliant and compelling read. As I discovered more about Jesus, I realised that He was either God or a raving lunatic. There was no middle ground; it was impossible that He was just a good man. I also realised that if Jesus was God, then somebody was looking over my shoulder, and that He'd obviously seen all of the mean, nasty little things that I'd been up to in my life. Interestingly, Stephen Hawking, the famous physicist, comes to pretty much the same conclusion, that one day our lives will flow in reverse, for everyone to see. Judgment!

Ultimately, I had to make a choice: Was I going to follow the truth and live life the way I believed it should be lived, or was I going to live the way others wanted me to? I knelt down beside my bed one night at ten o'clock, and I prayed for about half an hour. I said to Jesus: "Take me, just as I am." So began a new chapter in my life.

What happened then?

I slept well, and the next morning I went off to work in the city. I was totally and



On Life

'We know every man must die, but does every man really live?'

On God

'Think of God as a girl at a party. You've heard a lot about her, but perhaps your parents put her down. What will your friends say if you take her out? You feel attracted in a strange way. She may smile at you, and perhaps even wink, but unless you actually ask her to dance, you won't be dancing. I asked God for a dance when I was twenty-two and was transformed from accountant to cardiologist, from Bellevue Hill to Beverly Hills.'

utterly euphoric. I've never taken the drug ecstasy, but that's the only way that I can describe how I felt. My mind was fully engaged, but I had this incredible feeling. It lasted for six months non-stop.

So, why did you change to medicine?

Well, I had an appointment in an office that morning near the corner of Oxford and College Streets. Since I wasn't in any hurry, I decided to walk through Hyde Park from Martin Place. Halfway through the park, I was overcome with this incredible, overpowering sense that I had to study medicine. There was a furious dialogue going on inside my head. One part of me said: "Oh, no, I can't do that. I can't afford it. I'm not even sure I could get into the faculty. I don't have the brains for it." The other part of me disagreed: "I must do medicine. This my destiny."

I felt torn apart. There were no burning bushes around; I didn't see any angels or hear any claps of thunder, either. But I was overwhelmed by the force of this dialogue.

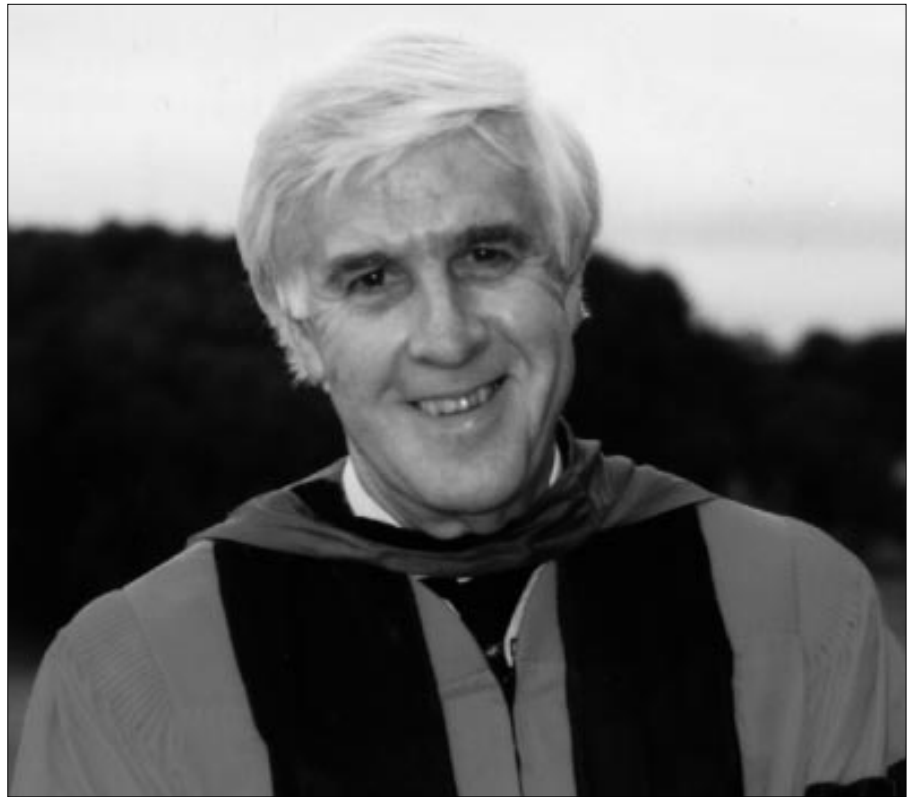
That night I looked through some old school papers, and some vocational testing that I had done in my last year at school. The test said that medicine would be an excellent choice for me. I rang Sydney University, and they said that I would probably qualify for entry to Medicine the next year.

Most people who knew me seemed very angry about my choice or thought I was psychotic. Even many of my friends thought it was sheer madness. But I felt that if the Lord wanted me to do this, then He'd take care of everything.

It was a tremendous struggle getting through medical school. I was living on the edge of real poverty for six years trying to get through and earning enough to keep body and soul together. But God was faithful, and He looked after me.

What happened when you graduated?

I applied for residency which would allow me to do some research at either Prince Henry Hospital or Royal Perth. I got an answer from Royal Perth, first, and I decided to accept it. Then Prince Henry offered me a job too. I was torn in two ways. But I felt I had a moral obligation to keep my word, and so I went to Perth. Since I had no social life in Perth, I did a lot of research and published some papers which came to the notice of Eliot Corday, the president of the American College of Cardiology. He asked me to join his research team at the famous Cedars-Sinai Medical Centre in Los Angeles, USA. So I became part of a research program that led the world in discovering about heart disease. All this taught me an important les-



son: if you do the moral thing, for the right reasons, God will guide your footsteps.

Did you ever think you were gifted?

No. I didn't do anything memorable at Scots. In all my time at the College, I never won a prize for anything. I know this probably sounds unbelievable, but I am not all that bright. In fact, in my family of five people, I know I'm the dumbest. I know all their IQs, and that's why I find it amazing that God should have taken me from Bellevue Hill to Beverly Hills, to be a Professor of Medicine.

So how have you achieved?

By God's grace, and because I work really, really hard.

Have you any advice on child-rearing?

The greatest bumper sticker that I've ever seen is the one that reads: "Have you hugged your kid today?" I really believe in hugging. I love to affirm my kids and show them how much I love them. As parents, we can barely do enough of it. At the same time, we have to teach them the importance of limits. I sometimes tell my medical students at UCLA to rent the video *Kramer v. Kramer*, just to watch the scene where Dustin Hoffman has a tussle of wills with his little boy over whether he is going to do what he's told to do. Parents have to face that moment when a contest of wills arises, and they have to draw a line in the sand. Once I thought I could reason with my children, but I soon realised I couldn't all the time. Sometimes you need to take firmer action. The other thing that I would add is that I think it's important to get

some vocational guidance testing for your children. When you realise where their strengths are, you can relate to them better. Rather than pushing them to do what you want them to do, you become free to encourage them in developing their strengths. Although medicine has been my life, I've never forced my children in that direction. I think that would be disastrous.

What's the greatest challenge facing you at the moment?

To be a faithful Christian in the field of medicine. I want to be God-centred in all that I do, and love people with all the strength that the Lord gives me. If I can do that, then I will be happy. I'd also love to come up with a cure for asthma and beat this wretched disease. I've been working on it for several years now, and I feel I'm on the brink of a major breakthrough. My ideas are now being tested in the National Research Centre for Respiratory Diseases in Denver. The Centre thinks they are quite revolutionary and are starting immediate double-blind clinical trials. So we will wait and see. ap

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Camp followers

Murray Norman leaves home, and enjoys himself.

Camps change lives. They influence the way we view life today, and have the ability to really impact the rest of our lives.

Being on camp takes us out of our own experiences to see a different point of view. I remember my first NSW state camp. I was going to a place I did not know, with 178 people that I did not know. I travelled down with a friend a few years older than me, and when we got there she introduced me to some people. For a young lad of 14, coming from a small country town, knowing most people, going to a place where I knew hardly anyone was very different. It was a shock!

That week-long camp dramatically turned my life around. I experienced a whole community of Christians who wanted to learn more about Jesus, to understand what the Bible was really about and how that related to them. Some of my best friends today went on the first camp: we have grown together in Christ, grown together as mates and been able to help each other through the good times and the bad times.

Since then I have been every year to the PY NSW summer camp. For 10 years I have seen young people coming to camp, experiencing the feelings that I first felt: being cared for, learning about God, meeting leaders who gave up their holidays to teach me about Jesus and to get to know me and encourage me.

At camp over the years we have been to amusement parks, great surfing beaches, watched fire works displays. We've had disco parties, pool parties, watched movies. We've heard good Bible teaching, met friends, worked through difficult issues. We've met missionaries from overseas, sung heaps of songs, seen great band talent. We've read God's word and found out how it applies to our lives.

Mark Trotter comes from country NSW and has been coming along to PY state camps for about four years.

Mark, why did you first come to camp? Some of the local girls in the Church were heading down to Sydney for a camp. They told me of a fun time where you learnt the Bible and met lots of other Christians and spent the week living together. For a lad who came from the country, with only a few



Murray Norman

young people in his church (besides sisters), this camp sounded worth trying.

So, why do you keep coming back for more? The opportunity to hang out with other Christian people of my own age. To worship together, catch up with mates, encourage each other to keep going in our Christian lives. A place to have relief from the outside world, where you can experience a glimpse of what heaven will be like.

Mark, what would you say to someone who has never been to a state camp? Go along — you will have an experience that will change your life. You will meet young people your age going through the same struggles that you are going through, from all different backgrounds. You get fun, music, activities and Christian community learning about Jesus.


The experience of living together with your friends — learning together, talking all night, sharing problems and joys — is one of the best aspects of community camping. Living in a community means sharing and being considerate of others (especially towards the end of the week!) — putting it into practice, not just talking about it.

On camp you find that there are people just like you, going through the same issues.

You meet people your age from the city and the country, from big families and little families, from Christian backgrounds and non-Christian backgrounds. You all come together to learn about God, see friends and have lots of fun along the way. Today I know people from all over the state.

As the years went on I realised that being a Christian was about being able to serve others and tell them about Christ. Camps provide a great opportunity for service: in the kitchen helping to prepare food, organising activities, leading Bible studies, helping the admin to go smoothly, or simply making sure that everyone on camp feels like they belong. This ministry has seen many young people come to the Lord, and seen many others strengthened in their faith and grow in Christ.

If you have been attending camp for years or see this as an opportunity to serve, get involved. The Bible commands us to tell others about Jesus, and disciple people to be like Christ. What a great way to serve young people, through camping with them! There are many ways you could serve. You might cook, be camp parents, help organise activities, lead a Bible study, or encourage people from your church to come as campers or leaders. For a camping ministry to be effective camps need people to help in the preparation and running of them.

The message from this article is simple: if you have never been to a camp go on one, if you have, think about how you might be able to serve at the next one, and encourage other young people to attend. Here are the dates and contact details of people organising church run camps in your state. 

State	Date of Camp	Age range	Contact Person	Contact Number
NSW	26 Dec 98 — 1 Jan 99	14 and up	Gavin Boyd	(02) 9868 1295
QLD	9 — 17 Jan 99	16 — 28	John Mansfield	(07) 3252 1114
SA	13 — 17 Jan 99	Year 8 and up	Rod Waterhouse	(08) 8723 9028
VIC	26 Dec 98 — 1 Jan 99	Year 7 and up	Martin Murany	(03) 5978 7218

If you would like more information about state run camps either to attend one or organise one contact the following people!

State	Organisation	Contact Person	Contact Number
NSW	Presbyterian Youth NSW	Gavin Boyd	(02) 9868 1295
QLD	Queensland Christian Education	John Mansfield	(07) 3252 1114
SA	Camp Site	Rod Waterhouse	(08) 8723 9028
VIC	Presbyterian Youth Victoria	Martin Murany	(03) 5978 7218

Spoil-sports?

Sport is good, but don't forget the bigger race.

The whole family went to see Jamie play in the basketball grand final. The teams were evenly matched, and with 30 seconds left, the other team was winning by one point. Then Jamie got the ball, drove it to the hoop, took a shot ... and missed. The sigh that went up from the stands was drowned out by the cheers of the opposition. Jamie hung his head as he shook hands with the other team. What would they all say? He had failed. He had let the team down. He was overcome with shame. If Jamie were your little boy, how would you respond?

Let's face it, most of us were never in the big league of athletes like Pat Rafter, Cathy Freeman or Tony Locket. Even if we were, there's no guarantee our children will be.

Sport is important for our children in educating "the whole person" and has social as well as physical benefits. All sporting activities may be pursued with a proper sense of gratitude to God as the creator and giver of all physical abilities. This means that whatever my disabilities (and we all have them) I can take part with enjoyment and delight, and teach my children to do likewise.



Marion Andrews

There is nothing wrong with shouting yourself hoarse at a swimming carnival. In fact, it can be a healthy emotional release. There is nothing wrong with feeling the tears well up as you watch your 12-year old struggle with the last 100 metres of that cross-country race.

However, this undiluted cocktail of the body and heart often produces excesses of behaviour — among athletes and spectators alike. When the athletes are children and the spectators are parents, there is a real problem when the "ugly parent" syndrome rears its ugly head.

Recently in Sydney, one primary school-aged ball team was barred from competition because of the behaviour of their parents. In Tamworth, trainee net-ball umpires were abused by parents to the point where official intervention was needed.

Parents are known to behave badly as spectators, but also to place unfair stress on their children to succeed. Leading pediatricians Dr Macaulay and Professor Beverley Raphael are concerned that some parents are pushing their children to breaking point to succeed in sport. More and more children are having sport-induced nervous breakdowns. These doctors are concerned that pushing children to do well in sport is spoiling the best years of their lives.

It is possible that the young Christian Timothy was a sportsman. Certainly he grew up in the Greek culture that worshipped sport. A fatherly Paul warned Timothy: some sport is good, but exercise in godliness is more important.

Most parents I know teach their children that "it's not winning that matters, but how you play the game". They do this in many ways, including the sort of low-key attitude that lets the disappointed child know his game wasn't the pivot of the day.

Unfortunately, some highly motivated parents are like a puppy tearing at a slipper — they just won't leave it alone. This is harmful whether the child shows promise of great sportsmanship or not. Up to a certain point children really want to please their parents. When criticism is all they hear, they eventually lose this fresh desire to please, or else push themselves to breaking point. We should give two positives for every negative if we must dissect the game.

Some children seem born for sport, some achieve sporting prowess, and some have sport thrust upon them. Sport is useful if it teaches them lessons for life — how to run the straight race of faith, how to strive towards the goal, how to win the prize, how to compete as an athlete against evil. Children are very aware of the presence of parents and friends in the stands. They want to do their very best. It is helpful to teach them that we have a great unseen cloud of spectators cheering us on, willing us to win in the arena of life — and who never misbehave!

Marion Andrews is a member of St Stephen's Presbyterian Church, Tamworth (NSW) where her husband, Stuart, is minister. She is author of Recover the Family and publishes a regular women's newsletter. ap

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Top that!

The leaderless group is a myth.

There is a popular view in Christian small groups that a designated leader is unnecessary and a positive disadvantage. In these “leaderless” groups, all members are expected to provide leadership in different ways.

There seems to be a fear that designated leadership stifles the gifts of the members, and that the responsibilities for running the group are too much for one person. It is thought that members will have a greater sense of group ownership and motivation in a leaderless group because they can shape its destiny.

These are legitimate concerns, but there are two realities to recognise at the outset.

First, there is no such thing as a group without a leader. The leaderless group is a myth. Any form of human society or grouping will generate its own leadership if none is designated. Even with a recognised leader the group will often throw up an alternative — it’s called a coup!

If there is no appointed leader someone or several will take leadership in some form, perhaps quite unobtrusively, perhaps overtly. Someone will fill the vacuum and set the directions and policies of the group. In Christian groups where we have specific Christian aims, it is negligent not to appoint suitable leaders.

Second, leaderless groups are unstable. They tend to lack consistency in direction and program, and are more likely to self-



Colin Marshall

destruct through loss of motivation and unresolved tensions.

The rise of the dictator: The opposite problem with authority has been the trend towards highly authoritarian small group leaders. We have seen them in some house churches and schismatic small groups. Often these groups start because of a strong leader with strong reactions to the status quo. The group develops intense loyalty to this leader and his vision and, in the end, his leadership is not tested by Scripture. Some of these leaders become guru figures requiring obedience to very specific demands upon members.

Leading a Bible study discussion: One of the fundamental skills in small groups leadership is leading the Bible study. There are two basic principles and at first glance, they appear to be contradictory.

Principle 1. Control: the leader’s role is a teacher not facilitator

In studying the Bible we are dealing with the truth of God’s Word. We are not just airing opinions but we are seeking to understand God’s revelation of Himself. Each part of the Bible can be rightly interpreted and our discussion should aim to clarify its meaning so we can respond to God’s Word. There are right answers and the leader has worked out where the discussion should end up. At the end of the night the group should be saying: “God has spoken to us by His Word. What should we do?” rather than “we sure had a stimulating discussion tonight”.

The leader is not just a chairman or facilitator. The goal is not just to create a non-judgmental, open environment with free-wheeling debate. The leader is a Bible teacher, responsible for the conclusions drawn by the group.

Principle 2. Freedom: control inhibits discussion.

What kills a discussion? One sure way is to create the sense that the group has to come up with the right answer. They can’t

really say what they like — they might be corrected. The process of discussion seems controlled and everyone becomes inhibited. Any actions that communicate evaluation, control, strategy or superiority reduce spontaneity and openness in discussion.

For example, these are sure-fire discussion inhibitors: saying an answer is wrong, refusing to discuss an issue, or referring to the Hebrew text.

Notice the tension between these two principles. On the one hand we want the discussion to go somewhere; on the other, we can’t afford to completely control discussion.

We have come to the basic dilemma in leading Bible study discussions. The discussion method itself is influenced by today’s popular world view, which says that no one is wrong and there is truth in what everyone thinks.

Discussions work best in this non-defensive, accepting climate where there is no particular predetermined answer and the whole exercise is open-ended.

So, how do we run energetic, stimulating discussions on the Bible, and yet steer the group to clear conclusions about what God has revealed? The skill is to achieve a balance of freedom and control.

Training Leaders: The quality of any Bible study group is determined largely by the quality of its leaders. The careful selection, training and supervision of leaders takes time and effort but pays great dividends. Someone within the church has to give priority to raising up and encouraging leaders. In most churches, this person needs to be the pastor.

There are enormous advantages to the pastor selecting and training the leaders. He should not see this work as a distraction but rather as the heart and soul of his work. By doing the selection and training himself, he ensures high “quality control” of the small groups. He will know the strengths and weaknesses of each leader. He draws into personal relationship with each leader during the training process and they catch his vision for Christ and the church.

Pastors need to grasp the strategy of equipping godly skilful teachers within the congregation. A pastor working on his own may be able to build up a congregation of 100 or even 150. Beyond that, it is difficult to have enough contact with the members for

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effective personal ministry. A team of small group pastors will add depth and quality to the work and help it expand.


There is also a broader strategy. The leaders you train will be highly sought-after lay leaders wherever they go. Your church can be a sending base for lay leaders all around the world.

How to train leaders: Ministry is not learnt in the classroom, hearing lectures on how to lead a group. Leadership is learnt on the job. It is a process of receiving instruction, observing good models, having a go at the task, getting feedback, having another go, and repeating the process.

Ministry is caught not taught — it is much more than skills. It comes out of who we are before God, what we understand of Him, how we have responded to the Lordship of Christ, how we view and treat other people, our priorities and passions. We bring to ministry all that we are, our beliefs, values, emotions, experiences and behaviour.

The best leadership training is, therefore, the apprenticeship model, where an experienced small group pastor leads a small group with one or two “apprentice leaders” under his wing. This approach to leadership training is more labour-intensive than running a 10-week course for 100 people. But it imparts a whole way of living and thinking, rather than merely training technicians. The leader reproduces himself or herself. It produces leaders who have the knowledge, skills and heart for the job.

If every small group leader sought to find one suitable person and train him or her in leadership, in a very short time we would have hordes of people capable of starting their own small groups and extending the reach of the gospel.

Colin Marshall runs the Ministry Training Scheme in Kingsford, NSW. 

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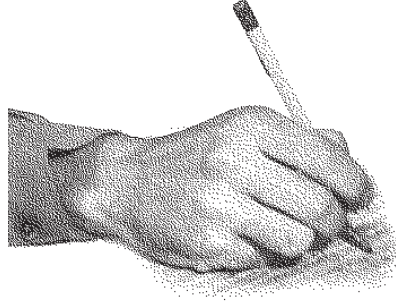
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letters



Pray for Indonesia

We are very grateful that in the July *AP* you drew the attention of your readers to pray for Indonesia. However, in the interests of accuracy, we would like to point out that it is misleading to write that the events surrounding Suharto's stepping down “was much closer to a peaceful take-over”.

The media in Australia did not comprehensively report the numbers who lost their lives, the numbers of those who were threatened, the numbers of those who were raped and so on. Indonesia is a vast archipelago, and the Australian media only reported on the situation in Jakarta and a few other regions. The stepping down of Suharto could have been far worse, but it was far from “peaceful”.

We urge your readers to pray for the ongoing situation in Indonesia. There is still much tension and uncertainty. We need to pray for God's sovereign hand and for all Christians to remain faithful. At the time of the coup in 1965 many registered to become nominal Christians because it was the expedient thing to do. Today many Christians may be tempted to cease publicly acknowledging Christ as Lord.

*Ester Aminawati
Randwick (NSW)*

Triumphant retreat

Retreats are available for the wives of ministers and home missionaries under the auspices of our church and John Mark Ministries. Last year I went to Minnamurra on the south coast of NSW for a four-day retreat with seven others. We learned to listen and be still. We shared and cared for each other. We shared in the knowledge that there would be complete confidentiality, and we loved and respected one another.

Several times during the year, those within driving distance of Sydney met together for part of a day to catch up and pray for each other. I was too far away to go to these

meetings, but other members of the retreat contacted me by phone at various times, especially when we were threatened by flood three times in the past month, and also by bushfires at the end of last year.

Perhaps this could be a great time of support and refreshment for you, as it was for me. If you are interested in joining a retreat group, or at least finding out more about one, contact any of the following people: Pauline Coulton, phone (02) 9626 0866; Margaret Osborn (02) 9587 5577; Jenny Wilson (02) 9628 8487.

*Nancy Hocking,
Narrabri (NSW)*

Fundamental mistake?

More in sorrow than in anger, I am compelled to write about the direction our beloved Presbyterian Church is taking. Paul Cooper (*AP* May) says: “The church of (his) youth was consumed with concern for others.” Others say the clergy of earlier days were wrong in their teachings. Almost all the ministers of my long years as a Presbyterian taught us faithfully to love the Lord our God with all our hearts and to love our neighbours as Scripture instructs. Now the emphasis appears to be on navel-gazing — my sins, my redemption.

Our present leaders abhor the fundamentalism of other religions, then espouse it in our own church. A number of these leaders have not always been Presbyterians but bring a narrowness of vision from other denominations. A hopeful note is the disclaimer that opinions expressed in *AP* are not necessarily those of the PCA.

Why are the new leaders so afraid of women as ministers and elders? Is it an atavistic male fear of the strengths and power of women? Many women do not fear male domination and grieve for their anxieties. Let us all share in promoting the glory of the Lord — Petros and Petra — with those truly called answering the call as their God-given talents determine. As for their interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12, perhaps they have fallen into the trap of “text out of context”. May the bitterness of the past two decades pass from us — Thy will be done. To quote Morris West (unfortunately not a Presbyterian): “Faith can be persuaded but never imposed.”

*Pamela Symons
Beaumaris, Vic*

Post-abortion grief

I am a Canberra-based published writer working on a book on post-abortion grief, which may interest some readers. The book will document women's experience of pain

and loss following an abortion. It will give these women a voice, provide a vehicle to acknowledge their feelings and demonstrate the reality of post-abortion grief. The book will be a compilation of first-person accounts. Pseudonyms can be used if preferred. For more information or to forward written accounts, please write to me at PO Box 197, Jamison, ACT 2614 or phone 0414 305 738.

Melinda Tankard Reist
Canberra, ACT

The cash crisis

Is money a problem? St Paul's message to young Timothy was "the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil". Love it or hate it, you can't ignore it.

Congregations, parishes and presbyteries are suffering stress through the lack of the stuff. While we make every effort to "render unto God the things that are God's," Caesar's claims have loomed unreasonably large.

The payment of income support in its many guises by Caesar merely redistributes an inadequacy. Although the secular world dabbles in taxation reform, their efforts do not address this inadequacy.

In a world where most work is now done by machines there is no room for providing incomes to those not required to contribute to production, distribution etc. Our youth is in crisis, as evidenced by despair and suicide. These are the people who are tomorrow's captains, yet in Bendigo, for example, more than 24 per cent are being denied the experience they will need to embrace that part.

The Christian's role in the world is one of compassion and goodness. We could, of course, double our tithes, but again we would be merely redistributing an inadequacy. We must seek diligently for an alternative to a system that tells young people, especially, that they are a burden on society.

The monetary regime must be amended to reflect God's goodness.

Ron Fischer
Talbot (Vic)

Keeping counsel

Every church should be aware of an article in the newspaper in August about the proposal to regulate or licence counselors. It says: "Health professionals have come forward with widespread concerns about the conduct of some counselors, and the lack of supervision of the industry."

The chairman of The Mental Health Foundation, Professor Graham Burrows, says: "The unsuspecting public should be aware of the qualifications, training and supervision of people who call themselves counselors."

Most churches have traditionally offered counseling of some kind. However many of those doing the counseling have no qualifications that would be recognised by our society, even though they may be doing a good job.

The time is coming when it will be a legal requirement to have valid accreditation as a counselor. We must not hide from this, but make sure that we are seeing the trend. Many colleges offer courses these days that will give the qualifications needed, it is up to each church to make sure that its counselors are becoming "qualified".

Just as we budget for, and expect, that people in our businesses will need ongoing training, we must do the same with those in our congregations who fulfil this vital service.

Let's not be like the wedding attendants who, through lack of foresight, were caught with no oil in their lamps. Let's be ready when the law changes so that we may con-

tinue to offer this vital service to the community.

Warwick Murphy
Drug-Arm Victoria
Dandenong (Vic)

Misconceptions?

Greg Fraser's article on contraception (*AP*, August) perpetuates a common thinking that IUD's are abortifacients when in fact they function as contraceptives. Since the mid 1980s there has been considerable research on the mode of action of IUDs. Those in current use are usually impregnated with copper. These have been shown to act in the following ways.

IUD's produce a marked inflammatory reaction and foreign body response in the uterus with a rise in white blood cells, prostaglandins and enzymes in both uterine and tubal fluid — these changes are thought to interfere with the transport of sperm in the genital tract and damage sperm and ova so that fertilisation is impossible. The junction of the fallopian tube and the uterus does not act as a one way valve and copper concentrations in the tubular fluid have been shown to be similar to that in the uterus. Copper is known to be spermicidal and cytotoxic.

In support of their function as a contraceptive is the failure of any studies so far to show a higher incidence of aborted embryos in IUD users than in non-users. These studies have been done in the very early few days after possible fertilisation.

Also studies show a very low rate of finding of eggs in the uterus after ovulation in IUD users thus indicating an action that is extra-uterine and thus almost certainly contraceptive in mode.

Dr Peter Davies
APWM missionary,
Galmi Hospital, Niger. ^{ap}

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All we need

Keith Morris considers some challenges to the sufficiency of Scripture.

One of the great slogans of the Reformation was *Sola Scriptura* — “Scripture alone” — affirming that Scripture is our supreme authority, in contrast to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, which holds tradition as another source of authority.

Together with the authority of the Bible is the idea that all we need to know for salvation and living the Christian life is to be found in its pages. We call this the “sufficiency of Scripture”.

The Westminster Confession of Faith expresses it like this: “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: to which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men” (1.4).

Since the Reformation, Protestant Churches have generally accepted both the supreme authority and the all-sufficiency of the Bible. But sadly this is no longer the case. Various challenges have been made to the sufficiency of Scripture, and we want to examine some of them.

Signs and wonders: The signs and wonders movement believes that it is the miraculous which will bring people to salvation. Preaching is downplayed, though seldom opposed, but the chief emphasis is on the performing of such things as “miraculous” healings. What do we say to this?

First, we affirm that Scripture teaches its own sufficiency. “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:14,15).

Second, we note that the Lord Jesus warned against this view in the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man appealed to Abraham that one risen from the dead would persuade his brothers to believe, that is, for Abraham to give a supernatural sign. Abraham’s reply is important: “He said to him: ‘If they do not

listen to Moses and the prophets they will not be convinced, even if someone rises from the dead.’” (Luke 16:31)

Guidance: Some, particularly many in the charismatic or Pentecostal movements, would suggest that we cannot expect the Bible to give detailed guidance to us, and for this we need the continuing voice of prophecy. Still others look to dreams or impressions as living means of guidance.

By contrast, the Bible makes the principles for Christian living very clear, and as we live by them God will guide us in all the details by His providence. The canon of Scripture is closed.

At the time of the Westminster Assembly some groups claimed prophetic gifts and divine revelation. Chapter 1.4, quoted above, is directed at them, and says clearly that theirs was a false claim.

The lives of some people have been damaged by a new tyranny exercised by some claiming the authority of the Holy Spirit to guide others into “suitable” careers, whom to marry, etc. This could happen because people abandoned the sufficiency of Scripture for their lives.

Worship: This is becoming one of the most confused areas of church life. Recently a friend told me that the purpose of Sunday meetings was to show people love, and that teaching from the Bible was to be done in small groups. This is how the church grows, he said. The evidence appears to be there, for he attends a large congregation.

But worship is primarily an activity in which to ascribe “worth” to God. That is, its orientation is vertical rather than horizontal. Giving people “happy” times will draw a crowd, just as a show or sports event will. But these could not be described as worship of the living God, nor their activities as even Christian. No, God has revealed to us how He is to be worshipped.

The present preoccupation with showmanship and entertainment in some circles betrays a failure to take the Word seriously. Equally, where our services are governed by traditions rather than by the Bible, we need to reconsider and change.


Faced with Roman rituals in the Church of England, the typical Presbyterian/Puritan reaction was: “Almighty God has told His Son Jesus Christ all laws necessary for Christ’s church, and Christ taught His apostles all that He heard from His Father, and all that the apostles learned from Christ necessary for Christ’s church, they and the other evangelists have written in the New Testament which is the law of the Gospel. But the evangelists and apostles have made no mention of the pope’s ceremonies, laws and traditions; therefore they are not necessary for Christ’s church, but the law of the Gospel is necessary alone.” (William Turner)

Evangelism: The Reformation spread rapidly through preaching and the use of the press to produce Bibles and tracts. As the Gospel was spread, so people were saved through faith in Christ. Do we still believe that evangelism is chiefly by prayer and the preaching of the Word of God (Acts 6.4)? Or are they right who use such things as clowns, magicians and rock groups to entertain the people into the Kingdom?

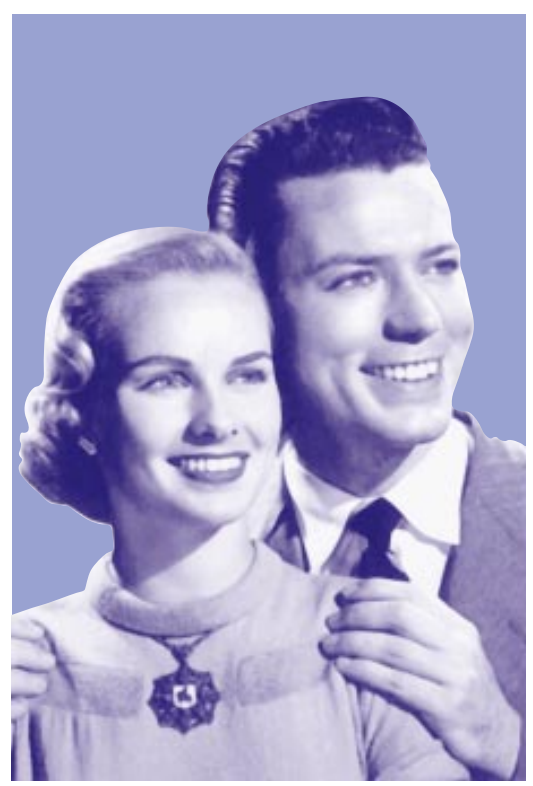
Such people often say it is just to gather a crowd in order to bring the Gospel to them, but this implies that preaching the Gospel is no longer adequate, and we must now use other methods to supplement biblical methods. But is this not a type of unbelief?

No doubt people in this mindset are horrified at the suggestion. When we become Christians we take God at His Word. Growth in the Christian life ought to confirm us in this. God’s Word is reliable, and it is sufficient for us.

However, to know it we must read it, and I wonder how many Christians actually read the Bible daily. To do so takes discipline and perseverance. Only then are its teachings brought home to us personally as the Holy Spirit teaches us. We should be asking Him to teach us. The Bible is sufficient. Let us have confidence in it, and feed our souls daily on it.

Keith Morris is minister of Peppermint Grove Presbyterian Church, Perth, WA. 

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