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Presbyterian

THE MAGAZINE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

november 1999



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November 1999
No. 510

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THE AUSTRALIAN PRESBYTERIAN: The national magazine of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. Acting editor-in-chief: Robert Benn. Editorial committee: Robert Benn (NSW), Stuart Bonnington (WA), Peter Hastie (NSW), Guido Kettniss (Queensland), Barney Zwartz (Victoria). Graphic Design: Sandra Joynt for A&J Moody. Advertising and subscription inquiries: Walter Bruining, 3 Durham Rd, Kilsyth 3137; Phone: (03) 9723 9684. Subscription: \$32 a year; bulk (minimum of five copies to one address) \$29 each. Overseas: \$A43. Office: 3 Durham Rd, Kilsyth 3137. Phone: (03) 9723 9684. Fax: (03) 9723 9685. Email: austpres@bigpond.com Printed: Newsprinters Pty Ltd, Melbourne Road, Shepparton 3060. Published: Monthly except January by the National Journal Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Australia; Convener Robert Benn. Opinions expressed are those of the contributor and not necessarily those of the PCA, the editor or the committee. Acceptance of advertising does not imply endorsement. Contributions: Submitted articles are welcome. The deadline is the first of the previous month. Donations are always welcome. Print Post approved 34918100384.

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The unmentionable sin

Anger is atheism in action.

One of the world's most famous paintings, da Vinci's *Last Supper*, was almost ruined by anger. Apparently the artist became infuriated with someone as he was trying to paint Jesus. He lost his temper and let loose a torrent of abuse on him. However, when he returned to the canvas to work on the face of Jesus, he found he couldn't go on. He had been so disturbed by the violence of his emotions that he was unable to focus himself for the delicate task of giving expression to Christ's love and tenderness. There was only one thing to do – he put down his tools and sought out the man. Then he asked for forgiveness. Only after his apology was accepted was Leonardo able to return to his workshop and finish painting the face of Jesus.

While Leonardo da Vinci's contribution to the world of art was enriched by renouncing his anger, many people within the church cannot see how justifying their anger has tarnished the attractiveness of their testimony. Not that all anger is wrong. Nevertheless, much of our anger is sinful, and reveals the dark underside of our souls.

No doubt this is why the New Testament is so condemning of it. Paul says, "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger." (Eph. 4: 31). Again, he warns: "You must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage and malice ... " (Col. 3: 18). James likewise agrees: "My dear brothers, take note of this: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God



Robert Benn

desires." (James 1: 19, 20)

With such strong warnings against sinful anger, it may surprise us that it still remains a widespread problem within the church. Perhaps the difficulty is that we haven't grasped that repentance involves more than a change in our beliefs; it also requires a change in our emotions, or at least, in the way we express them.

Being a Christian means more than having a correct theology; it means being like Jesus in the realm of our feelings. And this is where many Christians are finding a struggle. It is one thing to consciously change direction in life; it is another to introduce this conceptual change to the way we conduct our relationships and deal with our visceral feelings about ourselves and others. Nevertheless, it must be done if we are to truly repent of sinful anger. How?

Perhaps a good place to start is to understand why we become angry in the first place. Anger is the emotional expression of our annoyance when circumstances or people displease us. An angry person has some reason for being upset. Usually things are not going according to plan or people are not living up to our expectations (fair or otherwise).

In other words, we are impatient with the situation in which we find ourselves. Whether we realise it or not, this is ultimately a problem of faith. As Christians, we believe that God has predestined our circumstances and "works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will" (Eph. 1: 11). Further, we know that God us doing this for our "good" (Rom. 8: 28). This means that if we become impatient and angry with our circumstances, we are leaving God out of the picture. We are behaving like practical atheists.

Ask yourself this question: is it right for a Christian to be unhappy and frustrated

when unexpected things happen? When the car breaks down? When the traffic lights turn red? When the photocopier goes on the blink? Not in a world ruled by a sovereign God. One man who resented God's delays was Saul. He was angry when help didn't come on time (1 Sam. 13: 38) In his rage he rejected God's directions and took matters into his own hands. Sadly, his anger cost him his job.

While some Christians are angry with God's timing, others are resentful over the suffering they've experienced. They burn inwardly over injustices they've endured. Under these circumstances, they sometimes feel tempted to strike out in rage. Peter did this when Jesus was illegally arrested. He cut off a soldier's ear. It was a rash deed and cast a shadow over all the apostles' witness. What he needed to realise was that no one, acting in a private capacity, has authority to seek vengeance. (Romans 12: 19) That prerogative belongs to God alone. The Lord does not need vigilantes.

Probably the most hurtful form of anger in the Christian community today is the hostility that we reserve for other people. Whether it is found in families or in the wider fellowship, it is ultimately a form of impatience with God's work in the lives of others. When we make sneering remarks about the stupidity or ignorance of other believers, when we express contempt for others' gifts, temperaments or abilities, we are casting a reflection on the work of God's grace in their lives.

It is tragic when married couples become angry with one another. Whereas love overlooks a weakness, an angry person wants to expose it. It is always painful when a married partners speak disdainfully to their spouses and hurl verbal abuse at them. They may not use their fists, but the wounds they leave are just as deep. Again, the angry person needs to learn patience and commit his partner to God's grace.

Anger is the sin that no one mentions in the Church today. Nevertheless, we need to repent of it in all its various forms so that we, like Leonardo da Vinci, can reveal the love of God to others by revealing the tenderness of Christ.

Robert Benn

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Runaway children, dawdling browsers, bumping trolleys and checkout delays – it's enough to send shoppers into a rage! And according to psychologists and many experienced shoppers, it already has. "Supermarket rage" is taking hold. In Britain it is especially rampant. I read of a shopper there who died from a heart attack after a clash with another shopper over a trolley, and a man who was jailed after ramming a woman with his trolley in a dispute over a checkout!

Then there's "road rage". It seems that the tendency for normally calm and restrained adults to become overwhelmed by impatience and aggression when driving on a busy road is reaching epidemic proportions.

Not even the airways are safe. Recently a woman in her early 20s was arrested at the end of a flight from Brisbane to Singapore after punching one passenger, abusing others, swearing, and assaulting the cabin crew. A newspaper report described it as "a severe case of air rage".

The problem with expressions like "supermarket rage", "road rage" and "air rage" is that they may well give unwar-



Conrad Nixon

ranted status to what is often simply impatience and selfishness. The book of James avoids such euphemisms: "Where do all the fights and quarrels among you come from? They come from your desires for pleasure, which are constantly fighting within you. You want things, but you cannot have them, so you are ready to kill; you strongly desire things, but you cannot get them, so you quarrel and fight" (James 4:1,2).

In this generation of instant gratification, we want things and we want them now; and when things don't go our way, we become angry. At times people let us down; sometimes we might be treated unfairly; often things don't turn out quite the way we had planned. For all sorts of

reasons, we find that anger is never far from our door.

In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul wrote of the critical importance of Christian unity, and of what promotes it and what disrupts it. Not surprisingly, he had something to say about anger: "Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger; and don't give the Devil an opportunity" (Eph. 4:26,27). Clearly there is a kind of anger which is appropriate and a kind of anger which is not.

In Ephesians 5:6, Paul wrote of God's anger that will come upon those who disobey Him; Jesus was angry with those who regarded their own rules as superior to God's mercy (Mark 3:1-6); and the Psalmist was angry when he observed the blatant disregard of God's Law (Psalm 119:53, 136). I am angry when I see man's inhumanity to man so tragically displayed in the recent events in East Timor; and I am angry when I see heartache, terminal illness and death, which remind me again of how God's beautiful world has been spoilt.

In the face of all of this, tolerance and indifference are not the appropriate response. Ephesians 4:26 says "Be angry".

These things ought to drive me to pray more earnestly, "Your Kingdom come". I long for God's rule to be made complete and obvious, in a world free from injustice, pain and death; and while such things are present, I ought to strive to be an influence for good and to bring a message of hope by pointing people to the Saviour.

Yet Paul goes on to write in Ephesians 4:31, "Get rid of all bitterness, passion and anger..." There is a kind of anger which is not appropriate, and we are to rid ourselves of all such anger; the kind which goes hand in hand with hurtful words (Eph. 4:29), insults, hateful feelings (Eph. 4:31), and an unwillingness to forgive (Eph. 4:32).

Therefore Paul quickly follows his "be angry" of Ephesians 4:26 with three "buts". First, do not sin; make sure your anger is not of the kind that is accompanied or motivated by such things as pride, jealousy, malice or revenge. There is a college in New York which offers a course entitled Getting Even. The course is packed with practical ideas on getting back at a noisy neighbour, a nasty co-worker or an ex-lover, along with details of where to get legal advice if the strategy backfires! This kind of anger is guaranteed to bring hurt to ourselves and others. Therefore, "do not let the sun go down on your anger"; do not let your anger fester and lead to bitterness, resentment, the holding of a grudge.

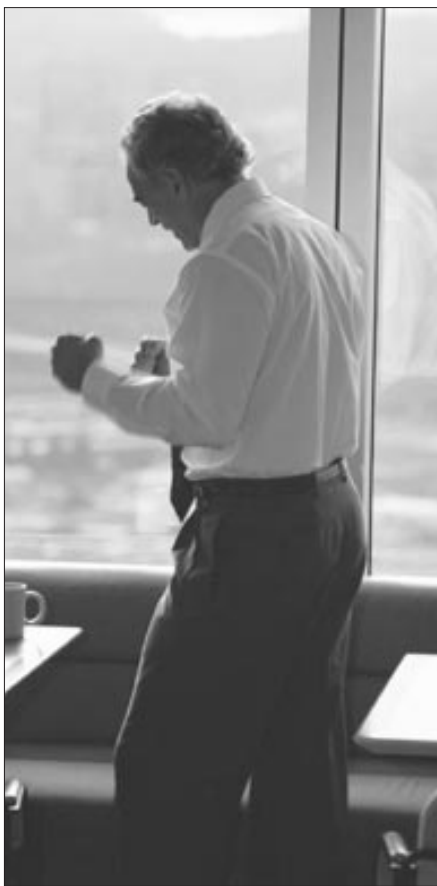
Most importantly, be willing to forgive before such bitterness can take root; and "do not give the devil an opportunity"; for when we allow anger to disrupt the unity within the Church, we are surrendering our weapons to the devil. Why does the Apostle Paul emphasise so strongly throughout his letter to the Ephesians the importance of Christian unity? Because our unity is meant to be a visual illustration to the world around us of the message we preach: the message about how God has reconciled us to himself (Eph. 2:1-10) and to one another (Eph. 2:11-22) through Christ.

Therefore, whenever the devil is able to disrupt our unity, he strikes a blow against the integrity of the message we proclaim. To put it bluntly, if we are declaring a message of love and reconciliation, yet there is amongst us anger which expresses itself in hurtful words, hateful feelings and an unwillingness to forgive, then we become guilty of preaching one thing and living another. So don't give the devil an opportunity.

Whenever we find in our hearts the kind of anger which is inappropriate, we need to deal with it. If we don't, it harms on at least three levels. At one level, to harbour anger is bad for my health. There seems to be widespread medical agreement that people

who often get angry or resentful are more likely to suffer from headaches, indigestion, insomnia, and acute tiredness, and are more likely to spend time in hospital. The Scriptures tell us: "If you stay calm, you are wise, but if you have a hot temper, you only show how stupid you are. Peace of mind makes the body healthy, but jealousy is like a cancer" (Prov. 14:29,30).

On another level, inappropriate anger and its various manifestations spoils the fellowship within the Church and sends a message which confuses and damages those looking on.



Above all, if I go on harbouring anger, I must surely offend the God who has gone to such extraordinary lengths (at great cost to himself) to bring about my forgiveness. Jesus' story about the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21-35) makes the point perfectly.

When we find ourselves struggling with anger, there are various strategies which may help. When my patience is tested by others, I remind myself that there are probably many people for whom I provide a great test of patience! I remind myself that God is exceedingly patient with me, and that he "is merciful and loving, slow to become angry and full of constant love" (Ps. 103:8). He has forgiven me, so how can I withhold forgiveness from others?

I remind myself of a passage in James (5:7ff), where my attention is drawn to the

endurance of the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord, and to the remarkable patience of Job, and to the need for prayer if we are to persevere through trials. These reminders can be of help when anger is lurking at the door.

I remind myself, too, of the need to keep things in proper perspective. I like the story of the woman who always carried with her a small piece of paper. On the paper was written a brief but significant piece of information. On those all too frequent occasions when her three hyperactive children seemed completely out of control and her patience was all but gone, the woman would take the piece of paper from her pocket, read its message, regain composure, and put the paper back in her pocket. It was a newspaper clipping about the Guinness book of Records, and it stated that the record for the most children born to one woman is sixty-nine, including sixteen pairs of twins, seven sets of triplets, and four sets of quadruplets!

We need to keep things in perspective. At times we become angry simply because we get things out of proportion, we lose sight of the bigger picture, and we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by things which, seen more clearly, will not overwhelm us. In Psalm 73, the writer describes his anger at the prosperity of the wicked, the apparent triumph of evil over good, and the seeming pointlessness of living God's way. Yet when he saw things from an eternal perspective, he recognised that those who "wear pride like a necklace and violence like a robe", and whom he had envied, are on a path to destruction. He goes on to write: "You guide me with your instruction and at the end you will receive me with honour. What else do I have in heaven but you? Since I have you, what else could I want on earth? My mind and my body may grow weak, but God is my strength; he is all I ever need" (verses 24-26).

When anger is lurking at my door, I remind myself that God is sovereign. My concerns, be they large or small, can be left with him. The things which might anger me, I must hand over to him. No matter how tumultuous things might seem to me, God is in charge. As the Psalmist put it: "So we will not be afraid, even if the earth is shaken and mountains fall into the ocean depths" (Ps 46:2). God has said: "I alone know the plans I have for you; plans to prosper you and not to harm you; plans to bring you a future full of hope." (Jeremiah 29:11). Rejoice in this Sovereign God, and anger will be kept in its place.

Conrad Nixon is chaplain at Scot's College, Sydney.

Faltering fathers

It's so easy to provoke our children to anger.

A few years ago, *The Sydney Morning Herald* carried the thrilling story of five-year-old Melanie Holley from Christchurch. She was returning home five days after a nine-hour operation at the Prince of Wales Hospital to remove a tumour from her brain and her neck, a tumour which would have been inoperable 10 years previously. The operation was so extensive and risky that her father had brought with him to the hospital two pints of his own blood in case it was needed and donated another pint before the operation. "If they needed more, I was waiting to be drained," he told the newspaper.

Most parents could identify with this aspect of parental love – my life for hers. How is it that such self-sacrifice can be replaced by painful frustration as parents see their families develop into areas ranging from small skirmishes to regular battlefields, with the lines closely drawn into "them" and "us"? "Where did we go wrong?" they cry.

A recent advertising flyer in our letter-box from a local sect advertises "three valuable seminar/workshops looking at practical parenting and successful family life" so that we can have "healthy family life in these turbulent times". They should get a fine roll-up too, for there is nothing like parenting to set yourself up for feelings of failure (if only we'd done, or not done this) and guilt (is my child like this because of me?)

Christian parents, knowing that children are a gift from God, are particularly sensitive. They are aware that they are responsible to God himself for setting up conditions in the home so that children can be brought to knowledge and love of God, and be taught to display evidence of godliness in their lives.

Some of the most telling passages in this regard in Scripture are in Ephesians 5:1-4 and Colossians 3:20-21. In the context of being imitators of God, children are required to obey their parents and to honour them. To help them do this difficult task, parents are to bring up their children so that obedience is possible. This does not mean no discipline at all, but wise and loving training so that children will not become frustrated and angry and thus be pressed into disobedience.



Leah Balzer

You fathers, again, must not goad your children to resentment, but give them instruction, and the correction which belong to a Christian upbringing (Eph. 6:4).

Fathers, do not exasperate your children for fear that they will grow disheartened (Col. 3:21).

The instruction is given to fathers, as the responsible authority figure in the family, responsible to God for his family and the way it is conducted. There is no real problem substituting "parents" for "fathers" since both mother and father are involved in discipline and training of children. It is, however, generally agreed that "the buck stops" with the father.

What sort of parental behaviour leads to anger in our children? If we are commanded not to goad them into anger, we need to be aware what sort of discipline and training – or lack of it – leads to anger, an anger so strong it can break the relationship with the parents and cause life-long unhappiness and rejection on the part of the offspring.

Abusive behaviour – whether sexual, physical or emotional – will inevitably lead to anger and low self-worth on the part of the child. It is interesting to note that in our Ephesians passage, the emphasis is on the moderation of parental authority, not the exercise of it in a vigorous, abusive way. This was written by Paul at a time when, according to Roman law, the father had complete authority over his children – even the power of life or death, especially at birth. He could sell them as slaves and punish as he liked. His power extended over the child's whole life while the father was alive.

Harshness in the exercise of parental authority is often caused by problems with the parent's own childhood upbringing; or

is a response by the father to a seeming slipping of control over his domain and the people who inhabit it.

In Christian circles, abusive behaviour can be carried out for the best of motives in ensuring obedience to God's word and church attendance. But a harsh and destructive manner is ruinous to any possible faith on the part of the child. It is always counter-productive, leading to division, pain and anger.

Other associated behaviours are inconsistent and arbitrary discipline, where the child has no idea how to "do the right thing". One day he is punished for behaviour which was acceptable yesterday. Generally, children try to please parents. To be met by inconsistent punishment or even ridicule and criticism is to be hurt at the core of one's being.

Making unreasonable demands or expecting some standard that the child (maybe because of ability, age or his very own nature) cannot possibly attain is another sure way to problem behaviour. Its first cousin is trying to squeeze a child into some pre-conceived parental mould. "We're all sportsmen in this family." "What do you mean, you're not interested in music?" The child may comply in an effort to please; but the result will be a deep anger. Have you seen a man, a father himself, still seeking to please his father? Sometimes the father is dead; but the behaviour continues. Parental approval, by its presence or absence, is a powerful instrument in cementing or breaking family ties.

Children do not relate to parents solely as individuals but as a group of siblings. How difficult it is if one of the children is the perceived or actual favourite, who is given special benefits and is allowed "to get

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away with murder” while the others are not. This causes much bitterness of soul, since it is basically unfair, and the child has no way of changing the circumstances. We see an excellent example of this in the life of Jacob in Genesis. His preferential treatment of Joseph led his other children into murder, lying and duplicity. Joseph himself became self-absorbed, proud and insensitive, requiring a long course of God’s disciplining so that he could be used for the saving of his family.

Unresolved conflict is one of the biggest sources of anger, which may simmer just below the surface of many families. All children have a strong sense of justice – what’s fair – and perceived or real injustices divide and hurt – and even worse. A recent survey in western Sydney found that conflict within the family was the second highest reason for the extremely high rate of youth suicide in the region. All conflicts should be resolved as soon as possible so that apologies can be made, action taken, and all involved can be reasonably happy that all has been equably resolved. It is not losing face to get professional help in this if necessary. There is too much at stake to allow conflict to continue.

How can we train and discipline our children in such a way that, in the end, they are our friends and God’s too, and not enemies of both?

It would be so much easier if we had a set of rules – do these and all will be well. Unfortunately, relationships depend on many fragile factors and are constantly changing. Parents can take heart that, even if they get it wrong, children tend to be forgiving provided they know parents have a genuine love for them.


Even so, even the best parenting does not guarantee godly children. Larry Crabb gives an encouraging example in his book *God of My Father*. He explores his relationship with his father and his father’s God. His brother Bill came to faith in his 30s, as the result of seeing his own children growing up and realising that he had nothing to tell them about life and God. Larry writes of the nature of the relationship between Bill and their father. He writes as if Bill is speaking.

My own parents gave me a wonderful example. First, they never gave up on me. I gave them plenty of reason to do so with the years of rebellion against their stan-

dards and a thoroughly selfish determination to get what I wanted out of life. Yet I never felt they rejected me. Their love for me outlasted the pain I caused them. They got mad at me, sometimes disgusted, but they never resented me. They never gave up.

Second, they are committed to Christ. This commitment is central, stronger even than their commitment to me. Someone was a bigger part of their life than I was, and somehow that fact enabled them to suffer me. I knew that no matter what I did, they would keep on following Christ. I didn’t have the power to get them to give up on me or to stop serving Christ.

This influenced me powerfully. I now believe that God used my parents’ refusal to back away from me to arouse my thirst for grace. And he used their unbendable commitment to Christ to persuade me that there was something bigger than me worth living for.

Leah Balzer is a member at Ashfield Presbyterian Church, a mother of three and grandmother of three. As a teacher and in parish ministry she has been involved with many families. 

All good relationships take time – time to get to know one another, time spent in shared enjoyments, time to find out what the other is really saying. It is fashionable to talk about “quality time”, which means that the parent is very busy; so he programs in a necessarily short period into his busy schedule for each child. It’s debatable whether this really works. How would you like to be an appointment in your father’s calendar? Is this not a mechanistic kind of relationship (even if better than none at all)? Does God work this way?

- A good parent leads towards some goal in his training. He wants his son to grow up to be independent, wise, acknowledging Christ in his life, be the best he can be at his job, honest. He sets boundaries and lays down training so that his decisions and actions all lead towards this goal. It might be helpful for the parent to write down what his goal is for each child and then he knows how better to guide and train.

- A good parent leads by example. He not only is faithful at teaching about God and his requirements, but he embodies them. He cannot expect his child to ‘walk the road’ when he isn’t doing so himself – children are experts at spotting hypocrisy. What a wonderful legacy for a child to see how his father copes with criticism and

Tips for positive parenting

rejection, handles financial difficulties, prays for people in need and gives generously to them. To hear his father pray for his child’s problems and his Christian growth, is to be party to the heart of God working within the family.

- A good parent hones his communication skills. He learns how to lecture less and to listen more. Sometimes he needs to listen very closely to get the hidden message his child is trying to give him, and not just the obvious ones. He works at how to give “I” messages instead of “you” ones. Compare these responses: “When you come home late and after curfew, you make me really worried for your safety as well as giving me no reason to trust you again” and “You no-good teenager, how dare you come in late. I suppose you’ve been up to no good – drugs and drink? You’re grounded for the rest of the month. If I’d done that to my father, he’d have thrashed me as well. Consider your

self lucky.” Which message do you think will lead to better communication and changed behaviour? He also works at his conflict resolution skills, so that, as much as possible, all participants are truly heard, the issues discussed and the best possible win/win outcome is agreed.

- In discipline, the good parent corrects with gentleness and love, for his child’s benefit and growth, and not for his own pride or to “make a point”. He sets boundaries, and realigns them as the child grows into independence so that the ‘umbilical cord’ is gradually cut by the parent. If he leaves it to the child to cut, there is much pain and tearing as a result.

- The good parent realises that behind him is God, watching and helping. He realises, that in the end, he is answerable to the God “who is father of all, who is over all and through all, and in all” (Eph. 3:6). The fatherhood of God becomes a model for his own behaviour.

- Since all parents are liable to err, the good parent never minds getting professional advice if he is out of his depth. This is not an admission of defeat; it arises out of genuine care for the child and the importance of the relationship.

- The good parent is his child’s chief cheer leader – always and without reserve.

Leah Balzer

Our emotional Saviour

G. Walter Hansen explains why we need to experience the emotions of Jesus.

The gospel writers paint their portraits of Jesus using a kaleidoscope of brilliant “emotional” colours. Jesus felt compassion; he was angry, indignant, and consumed with zeal; he was troubled, greatly distressed, very sorrowful, depressed, deeply moved, and grieved; he sighed; he wept and sobbed; he groaned; he was in agony; he was surprised and amazed; he rejoiced very greatly and was full of joy; he greatly desired, and he loved.

In our quest to be like Jesus we often overlook his emotions. Jesus reveals what it means to be fully human and made in the image of God. His emotions reflect the image of God without any deficiency or distortion. When we compare our own emotional lives to his, we become aware of our need for a transformation of our emotions so that we can be fully human, as he is.

Paul tells the Corinthians that as Christians gaze upon the glory of the Lord, “with unveiled faces,” we “are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory” (2 Cor. 3:18). The apostle is suggesting that looking intently on the Lord will bring about a metamorphosis into Christ’s image by the Spirit. Paul illustrated this kind of transformation in his own life when he told the Philippian Christians, “I long for you with the compassion of Christ” (Phil. 1:8). Paul embodied the emotions of Jesus.

Many theologians throughout history have argued strongly that God is not moved by emotions. This doctrine of the impassibility of God, developed by early Christian apologists such as Justin Martyr, sought to distinguish the God of the Bible from pagan gods whose passions led them into all kinds of scandalous behaviour. It is not surprising that Christians responded to the myths of Zeus’s rapes and arbitrary vengeance with an absolute statement of divine impassibility. What they meant to emphasise was that God does not have mad, shameful passions like the gods of pagan mythology.

The question “What is God really like?” is answered during an exchange between Jesus and his disciple Philip. “Show us the Father,” Philip said. Jesus responded, “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” Not only do the emotions of Jesus reflect an essential component of the image of God,

his emotions also reveal the nature of God. On the basis of our belief that the written Word and the Living Word give us a trustworthy revelation of God, we know that God is emotional.

If we are the body of Christ, created and redeemed to represent Jesus in our world, then we, like Paul, need to “gaze upon him” and learn to experience the emotions of Jesus. Then we can know him, and in knowing him know God, and know ourselves as we were created to be.

Compassion

The Gospels tell us that Jesus “felt compassion”. The Greek word for “compassion” speaks literally of a sensation in the guts, but was used to speak metaphorically of an emotional sensation, just as we speak of “heart-breaking,” “head-spinning”, or “gut-wrenching” feelings today.

For whom did Jesus feel compassion? For people in need: a leper (Mark 1:40-41), a widow by the coffin of her only son (Luke 7:13), and two blind men (Matt. 20:34). He also felt compassion when he saw crowds starving for bread (Mark 8:2). His compassion was stirred by physical and spiritual needs. His heart broke when he saw people who were distressed and downcast, like sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9:36).

Once, when I was living in the Philippines, one of my great mentors – Phil Armstrong – and I were watching small children scavenging for food on mountains of smoking garbage outside of Manila. The nauseating stench turned my stomach. When a little boy struggled to turn over a rotting dog to find something under it, Phil’s body convulsed with sobs. “O God! O God! Please, God, save these children!” Whenever I read of Jesus’ compassion for the crowds of starving people, I hear Phil’s heart-rending cry. His compassion ignited and fuelled the mission movement he led, just as Jesus’ fuelled his mission.

Jesus’ empathy flowed out from his intimacy with the Father. It was after a time of withdrawal to a lonely place by himself for prayer that Jesus saw the leper and felt compassion (Mark 1: 35-42). It was when he was in a lonely place by himself that crowds of people came to him and he felt compassion for them (Matt. 14:13-14).

In times alone with God, Jesus gained emotional receptivity and energy. Out of

these times, his vision was clear, his words were empowered, and his touch cured. He created bread, restored sight to the blind, cleansed a leper, and raised a widow’s dead son. His compassion was translated from feelings to actions. His empathy was the effective power behind them.

Anger

Compassion moved Jesus not only to heal, but also to anger. In a dramatic scene, Mark portrays Jesus “looking around with anger” at religious leaders (3:5). They were concerned only to see if Jesus would break their rules by healing a man on the Sabbath. When Jesus did, they immediately plotted to kill him. But though Jesus was angry with these religious rulers, he was also “grieved by their hardness of heart”. While the cruelty of their callousness deserved his anger, the condition of their stony hearts caused him grief.

Aristotle saw clearly that “anyone can become angry – that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way – that is not easy.” That is the challenge before us.

I look back with regret at most of my angry outbursts. But I do not regret an incident at the neighbourhood pool when I was 10 years old. Some teenagers were tormenting my brother Kenny, who had Down syndrome. I went ballistic – screaming, scratching, gouging, biting. When the lifeguard pulled me off them, he told me to say I was sorry. I refused to apologise for defending my powerless brother against the “powerful” bullies. But only now is my anger mixed with grief over those who were so stunted emotionally that they were insensitive to the needs of precious people like my brother.

Jesus felt “indignant” (Mark 10:14) when his disciples did not allow mothers to bring their children to him for his blessing. The disciples’ self-importance irritated Jesus. Jesus slapped them with stinging rebukes: “Let the children come to me; stop preventing them.” Jesus then hugged the children, blessed them, and laid his hands on them (10:16). Jesus’ feeling of annoyance with the disciples quickly gave way to an outpouring of warm affection for the children.

In another instance, crass commercialism in the temple inflamed the zealous anger of Jesus and moved him to a violent action. The words of the prophet were like fire in his bones: “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Mark 11:17, quoting Isa. 56:7). The pursuit of profits had excluded the opportunity for Gentiles to find and worship God in the court of the Gentiles, where people of different ethnic backgrounds and physically disabled people could gather to worship. But merchants had packed that area with their tables, stalls, boxes, and animals. People who had travelled a long way to find God were shut out. Though the terrified merchants running from the crack of his whip saw only the destruction of business as usual, Jesus’ anger was motivated by “zeal for your house” (John 2:17, quoting Ps. 69:9) and directed toward the positive purposes of the worship of God and the mission to all nations.

Recently in our town there was a discussion about building a shelter for hundreds of homeless women and children. A friend of mine said that selfish pursuits were blinding people to this desperate need. She was upset, as Jesus was, that needy people were not being given the opportunity to find and worship God. Her beautiful, blazing eyes hinted at how Jesus would have reacted. Just as Jesus’ zeal motivated him to cleanse a space for outsiders to worship God, so my friend’s anger energised her to build a place for the homeless to find shelter. In both cases the origin of anger was meeting the needs of others, and the aim of anger was constructive.

Our anger is often sparked by a threat to our own self-interests and usually results in bitter hostility. We need to heed Paul’s warning: “Be angry, but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil” (Eph. 4:26-27). The temple-cleansing story is too often used to justify incivility and unforgiving animosity. Paul knew of our propensity to legitimise our self-centredness, and so his words on anger are full of warning.

Anger is fire. When it burns destructively, it harms and destroys life. But the anger of Jesus kindles a flame within us that warms and restores life.

Grief

Take a moment and reread the story we call Jesus’ “triumphal entry” (Luke 19:41-44). In Roman tradition, a triumphal procession displayed a victorious general riding in a gold-covered chariot pulled by white chargers. His army marched in resplendent array behind him. Wagons loaded with spoils and slaves attested to his power. But Jesus rode on the colt of a donkey. A motley parade of peasants and children cheered

him on his way as their long-awaited king. And the emotion that best describes Jesus’ state as he rode was grief.

Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem as he rode down the Mount of Olives into the city. His words describing the impending catastrophe were hyphenated by sobs. He wept, he wailed with grief over the coming desolation of Jerusalem.

Jesus also wept at the tomb of Lazarus. Witnesses said, “See how he loved him” (John 11:36). When Jesus saw Mary weeping, “he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved” (11:33). When he stepped near to the tomb of his friend, “again he was greatly disturbed” (11:38). When the word “disturbed” was used for animal sounds, it denoted the loud, angry snorting



of horses. When used for human emotions, it emphasised the mixture of anguish and rage. Jesus wept. His groans welled up from the depths of his spirit, racked his body, shook the tombs, and echoed back from them. He raged against death, that terrible enemy that had attacked this, and every, family.

When Bill Pollard wept as he spoke at my father’s memorial service, I was amazed to see him lose his composure. I always viewed him as ServiceMaster’s chairman of the board, a strong, invincible man. Now, two years later, I don’t remember his words, but I am still deeply moved and comforted by his tears. “See how he loved him,” I reflect to myself, echoing the words of those who observed Jesus’ grief at the tomb of his friend.

Likewise, Jesus was “troubled in spirit” when he told his disciples that one of them would betray him (John 13:21). He grieved over this betrayal by his friend Judas. Jesus had lavishly given his love to Judas. He called Judas to be one of the inner circle

with the Twelve, to be close to him, and to participate in his work. He gave Judas the moneybag. He washed his feet. He gave Judas the place of honour next to him at the table. He gave him the dipped bread, a sign of love. All the time he knew that Judas would betray him. But still Jesus did not withdraw to protect himself. He gave himself to Judas without measure, and so he set himself up to suffer the pain of betrayal. When Judas led the temple troops to arrest Jesus in the garden, Jesus called him “friend”.

The Gospels portray Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane as one who is crushed by a heavy load of grief. He did not shrink from disclosing his deepest and darkest emotions to his disciples: “I am deeply grieved, even to death” (Matt. 26:38). He begged them to stay awake and keep him company, but they “slept because of sorrow”. His emotions were too heavy for them to bear. They escaped into sleep, leaving Jesus alone. “Terror-stricken and in terrible anguish” (Mark 14:33), Jesus agonized over the awful choice to endure or to escape the cross. As he wrestled in prayer, he was drenched in his own sweat “which ran like blood to the ground” (Luke 22:44).

Jesus’ familiarity with grief should give us pause. Too often we hear Americanised versions of the gospel that offer quick fixes, easy solutions, and suffering-free discipleship. We need the reminder that the man who knew God most intimately and fulfilled his will most completely was described by Isaiah as a “suffering servant”: “Surely he has borne our grief and carried our sorrows” (53:4).

Joy

While Jesus was a “Man of Sorrows”, Luke also paints a scene where Jesus “rejoiced very greatly in the Spirit” (Luke 10:21), which implies more than cracking a wry smile. The occasion for this outburst was the return of the 70 from their successful mission. They had been given spiritual authority over all the powers of the enemy and, like a crack SWAT team, had liberated hostages. There was good reason to celebrate.

But Jesus warns them, “Do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (10:20). No matter how much power they exercised in their ministry, the ultimate source of their joy was to be rooted in their heavenly community: their names were written in heaven. Ministry is temporary. Life in the divine community is permanent. Then Jesus joyfully thanked the Father for opening the hearts of the disciples to see this and to enter into the fellowship of the Father and the Son (10:21-24).

During this last year I've seen a woman slowly waste away from Lou Gehrig's disease. She delighted in her vocation as a college counsellor. But when she had to give up her work, she was sustained by her relationships with her family, her friends, and God. Many were amazed by her joyful spirit. The way she lived and died bore eloquent witness to the wisdom of finding our ultimate source of joy not in what we do but in our permanent relationships.

On the eve of his execution, Jesus told his disciples that all he had revealed to them was so that "my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11; 17:13). They should abide in his love as he always abides in the love of the Father (15:10), and they should be one as he and the Father are one (17:11). Here again joy is the mark of life within divine love relationships.

Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, was also the Man of Joy. He obeyed the will of the Father and endured the cross by focusing on the joy set before him – the joy of unshakable love relationships in the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:2, 22).

Love

Love permeated, guided, and empowered the spectrum of Jesus' emotions. He felt compassion, was angry, grieved, and rejoiced because he loved. Love is an unshakable commitment of the will. Love transcends feelings and keeps on going when feelings falter or vanish. But love also involves and expresses emotions.

Jesus loved with strong desire. He told his friends, "I have desired with great desire to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). The combination of the verb "desire" and the noun "desire" doubles the intensity in Jesus' expression of his deep longing to be with his friends.

When a wealthy young man ran up to Jesus, knelt before him, and asked how he could inherit eternal life, "Jesus looked at him and loved him" (Mark 10:21). As soon as he saw him, affection welled up in his heart for him, just as sometimes when you meet someone, you get a strong feeling that this person could be your best friend.

Much is made about the difference between friendship (philia) love and divine (agape) love, but this is overdone. The words are used interchangeably for Jesus' love. For example, the sisters of Lazarus sent a message to Jesus to tell him, "the one you love (phileo) is sick" (John 11:3). Then the gospel writer tells us, "Jesus loved (agapao) Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." The point is that Jesus loved in many different ways. All the words for love in every language of the world together are still insufficient to describe the love of Jesus.


His love led him to suffer and die. Jesus pointed to his sacrificial death as the ultimate measure of his love. "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). He asks his friends to live up to that standard of love. "This is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. . . . You are my friends if you do what I command you" (John 15:12, 14).

To live by that standard of love requires much more than emotions. It calls for total commitment to give up your life for someone else and to trust in the power of God to keep that commitment. But loving as Jesus loves also includes emotions--intense, diverse, deep emotions. His kind of love will arouse emotions of compassion, anger, grief, and joy.

Sometimes we want insurance against the heartbreaks of love. The way of Stoic "apathy" seems safer than the emotional

traumas that inevitably accompany the way of loving as Jesus loved. But hardening ourselves against the pains of love kills the capacity to love. As C. S. Lewis warns us in *The Four Loves*: "To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket – safe, dark, motionless, airless – it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable."

I am spellbound by the intensity of Jesus' emotions: not a twinge of pity, but heartbroken compassion; not a passing irritation, but terrifying anger; not a silent tear, but groans of anguish; not a weak smile, but ecstatic celebration. Jesus' emotions are like a mountain river, cascading with clear water. My emotions are more like a muddy foam or feeble trickle. Jesus invites us to come to him and drink. Whoever is thirsty and believes in him will have the river of his life flowing out from the innermost being (John 7:37-38). We are not to be merely spellbound by what we see in the emotional Jesus; we are to be unbound by his Spirit so that his life becomes our life, his emotions our emotions, to be "transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory".

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Unconditional surrender

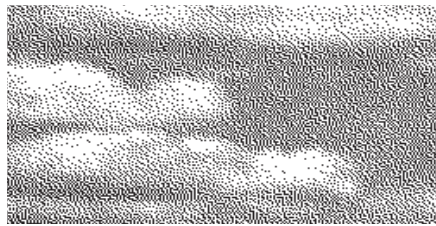
Leaders must learn obedience before they can teach it, suggests J. Robert Clinton.

A leader must learn obedience in order to influence others toward obedience. An *obedience check* is a process item through which a leader learns to recognise, understand, and obey God's voice. The leader encounters this early in his development and repeatedly throughout life. Through it God tests a leader's personal response to revealed truth. One of the classic obedience checks in Scripture is chronicled in Genesis 22:

Some time later God tested Abraham; he called to him, "Abraham!" And Abraham answered, "Yes, here I am!" "Take your son," God said, "your only son, Isaac, whom you love so much, and go to the land of Moriah. There on a mountain that I will show you, offer him as a sacrifice, to me." (Genesis 22:1-2, TEV)

This obedience check was especially difficult because of God's promises concerning Isaac. Abraham knew his future line depended on Isaac, but he was still willing to obey God. I once heard a leader say that many are called to lay something on the altar; and they do, but they take along a rubber knife. Our obedience often is not complete but has some strings attached.

IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD



Abraham took a real knife – and God honoured his obedience by sparing Isaac.

It is one thing to obey when it seems logical and necessary, but it is quite another when the obedience calls for something that doesn't make sense. Obedience doesn't always hinge on understanding. It did not make sense ethically or practically to kill Isaac, yet Abraham obeyed. Although this was an obedience check, it was also an integrity check. Would he remain loyal to God and believe in him when the pressure was on? These tests revealed that faith and loyalty to God were a part of Abraham's character. Hebrews 11:17-19 attests to this.

Abraham's complex experience shows the pattern for a successful obedience check. God requires unconditional obedience. We are to obey and He is responsible for the results.

Obedience checks occur throughout the Bible and are frequently mentioned in historical and contemporary leadership development studies. Some examples include learning about possessions and giving, learning to put God first in the choice of a mate, and learning to be willing to be used by God in ministry. Others include readiness to trust a God-given truth, to forgive, to confess error, or to right a wrong.

Watchman Nee provides us with an excellent illustration involving inner-life growth. He sensed a need to begin printing gospel tracts and then prayed for the money to distribute them. God revealed that there were hindrances to his prayer. Many in his church were criticising another believer and Watchman silently agreed with

them. When he prayed further about the money, God spoke to him about this sin. God required that he go and confess his guilt to his sister.

"Afterwards, I considered doing so, but, when coming face to face with her, I hesitated five times even though I wished to confess to her. It was because I was concerned that she, who had all along been admiring me so much, would then despise me. I said to God, "It would be all right if you ordered me to do anything else, but I am unwilling to confess to her." I still kept asking God for the printing money, but he would not listen to my reasoning and insisted on my confessing.

"The sixth time, through the grace of the Lord, I confessed to her. With tears, we both confessed our faults and then forgave each other. We were filled with joy and from then on loved each other all the more in the Lord."

Not long after this event, a postman delivered a letter that contained \$US15. The letter read, "I am fond of distributing gospel tracts. Please condescend to accept." God's expansion was clearly identified. The lessons lasted a lifetime. They were on the thought life, a forgiving spirit, hindrance to prayer, and trusting God for ministry provision. Obeying God was the first lesson, and the others hinged on it.

Acts 5:1-11 tells us about two separate obedience checks. Ananias and Sapphira sold their property, but they lacked integrity when they lied about the amount of the sale. Peter was being checked when he confronted each of them about their sin. Peter's obedience in this unpleasant task is carefully recorded by Luke so that all who read it are warned of the seriousness of obedience with integrity. God's discipline was swift and severe. After this event Peter's ministry expanded.

Leaders will be responsible for influencing specific groups of people to obey God. They will not achieve this unless they themselves know how to obey. This brings me to my second major principle in the testing pattern of the inner-life phase: *Obedience is first learned, then taught.*

This extract is taken from The Making of a Leader by J. Robert Clinton (Newpress: Colorado Springs). Reprinted with permission.

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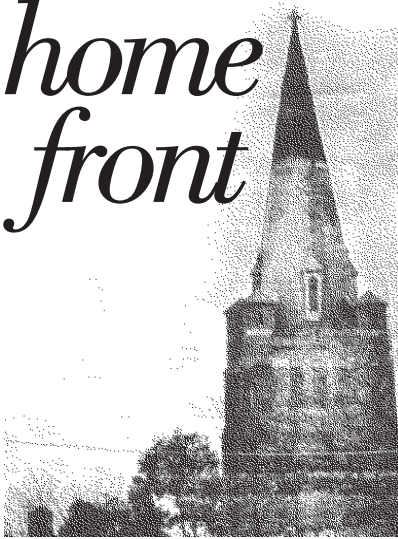
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Fractured Fellowship

The Victorian General Assembly, meeting in Melbourne last month, confirmed and clarified its opposition to the generally accepted practices of the group known as "the Fellowship", reports **John Wilson**. Although claims are now presented that the Fellowship as an entity no longer meets as it used to, the General Assembly is addressing the fruit and the outcomes of it.

Last year's assembly commissioned a book that this year was approved for wide distribution. By use of personal testimony of those formerly in the group, and with incisive explanation of the general tenets of the group's beliefs and practices, the book sets out the assembly's position against it. *Fractured Fellowship* demonstrates the assembly's position that the beliefs and practices of the fellowship are inimical to the position of the Presbyterian Church.

The problems associated with the Fellowship have been brought to the attention of the church over a number of years. The church has found it difficult and painful to deal with, mainly because the group shrouded their existence and activities with a cloak of mystery and secrecy.

Through thorough investigation of the Presbyteries involved, painstaking and prayerful consultations, and by subsequent bold action, the beliefs and practices are now open for examination. The assembly's book is a carefully considered statement of the church's voice on the matter. It serves as a warning to the wider church that even Christian activity and practice having the very best of motives can gradually depart from orthodoxy while maintaining the glow and appearance of goodness.

Arsonist destroys church

In late September, an arsonist set fire to the old **St David's Church** building at

Toukley. The building was empty and being prepared for relocation to Bethshan Mission, Wyee, for use as a fellowship hall and youth ministry. A larger building is to be built at Toukley. The fire was not immediately noticed and the building was gutted in a sad end to a church that had served the parish well since its opening in 1953.



St David's, Toukley, gutted after an arson attack.

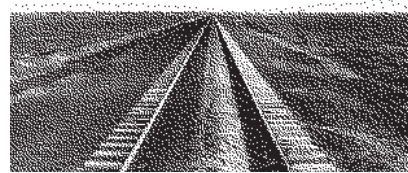
Warrnambool induction

Rev. Philip Burns has been inducted as associate minister in the charge of **Warrnambool, Presbytery of Kilnoorat**. He was previously teaching at **Talua** in Vanuatu during 1998. Philip also serves as assistant to the Koroit-Port Fairy charge.

Lexton turns 150

The **Lexton Presbyterian Church** near Ballarat celebrates the 150th anniversary of Presbyterian services in the Lexton area on 7 November. Presbyterians with a former connection with the Lexton congregation, or readers wanting further information, contact **Rev Bruce Riding**, 506 Neill St Ballarat, Phone/fax (03) 53324565.

across australia



Scots centenary centre

A large crowd gathered at the **Scots College, Sydney**, when the Governor-General, **Sir William Deane**, opened its new Centenary Centre on the Bellevue Hill campus on Tuesday 7 September. The

Centenary Centre – home for the music and languages departments plus a lecture theatre – is named to commemorate the centenary of the college in 1993, when the planning for the centre began.

More than 900 boys in the senior school and several hundred parents and friends heard **Sir William** praise the college for its distinctive heritage and its recent successes in a number of areas. **Sir William** said that he fully endorsed a holistic approach to education: "It is essential that our schools, our students and their parents pay due regard to the legitimate claims of other things. These other things include, in a school such as this, the mission of outreach to the disadvantaged which lies at the heart of the universal Christian church. They also include cultural, intellectual and other pursuits such as music, theatre, debating, growing critical awareness, social skills and concerns, sport and, hopefully, the sheer enjoyment of one's youth."

True gold

'Golden girl' **Betty Cuthbert** said recently that "winning gold at the Olympics is nothing compared with winning eternal life with the Lord Jesus Christ". Now confined to a wheel chair with multiple sclerosis, she still shows spiritual stamina. She spoke at **St Stephens Uniting Church** in Macquarie Street, Sydney, to help raise Christians' awareness of the Olympics. At 18, Betty thought she had accomplished all that life had to offer when she won three gold medals in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics – the first Australian to win three golds. But she said accepting Christ as her Saviour was the most wonderful gift she had ever received. "I love God and now I want to tell everybody, I might have gold medals but you can have the greatest gift – the Lord Jesus Christ."

Bibles for soldiers

The Australian Army asked the **Bible Society** to supply 2000 copies of Today's New Testament and Psalms. The Testaments were given to soldiers going to East Timor. The Bible Society in Portugal is sending Portuguese New Testaments for refugees in Australia, and children are given copies of activity books entitled "Jesus is Alive", and "God's Little Giants".

Some 20,000 copies of a special military Bible, produced and printed by the Bible Society in Australia, were distributed to soldiers in Zambia in October. A Presidential presentation indicates **President Chiluba's** continuing support for Christian initiatives. The Bible Society of Zambia is active in providing schools,

Professor Ray Zorn

1924-1999



Ray Zorn with his wife Edith

The death of Ray Zorn on 6 October at the age of 75 has removed a gracious servant of the Lord from his earthly pilgrimage and ministry. He was active in preaching and lecturing to the end, when a sudden stroke took him away.

Ray was of German background, and after study at Gordon College, Boston, and Westminster Theological Seminary, he ministered first in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

He and his wife Edith moved to Australasia in 1961 when he became minister of the Reformed Church in Hamilton, New Zealand. Further pastorates were in Sydney and Dandenong, before he was appointed Professor of Theology at the Reformed Theological College, Geelong, in 1976. He became Principal in 1978 and continued in this dual capacity until 1989.

After retirement Ray and Edith went back to the United States, where Ray carried a heavy lecture load at the recently founded Mid-West Seminary. Here in Australia he lectured at the Presbyterian Theological Hall, Brisbane, while Dr Lee was on leave, and at the Presbyterian Theological College, Melbourne, he taught both Theology and Church History more than once.

At the time of his death he was lecturing part-time at RTC, and he had

accepted invitations to lecture both there and at PTC, Melbourne, next year.


It was not only in the lecture room that Ray Zorn excelled. He was a fine preacher, and he willingly conducted services in Presbyterian and Reformed Church congregations. A few years ago he spoke at a graduation service at PTC on the biblical injunction "Preach the Word", and that command he himself always observed. He was a very careful biblical student, but in preaching he was careful to apply biblical truths to the hearts of his listeners.

Writing was another of his gifts. His ThM thesis was published many years ago, but the Banner of Truth issued a revised edition of it under the title *Christ Triumphant: Biblical Perspectives on His Church and Kingdom* in 1997. There is also another book from his pen yet to appear.

He had a profound understanding of Reformed theology, but that understanding was always conjoined with warmth of evangelical piety. He also wrote many helpful journal and magazine articles.

As a friend and colleague Ray Zorn was a delightful companion. He was gracious and kind, ever willing to assist others. In faculty and on committees he was clear in his thinking, considerate of the views of others, and always deeply concerned that the ultimate aim of Christian endeavour would show through in making decisions.

Edith has lost a wonderful husband and the family a fine father. We grieve with them in their loss, for the loss is also great for all of us who knew him, and especially those who worked with him or who sat under his preaching or teaching. May we follow in the footsteps of a faithful servant of Christ.

*Rev Professor Allan M Harman,
Principal, Presbyterian Theological
College, Melbourne* 

New FEBC director

Far East Broadcasting has a new director, Nigel Merrick. FEBC Christian Radio transmits the Gospel via FM and AM and short wave radio to some of the world's most restrictive areas. Every day, more than 350 hours of Christian programs are beamed to people with culturally relevant messages of Christ's life-changing power. From the Philippines, FEBC reaches much of Asia, and is working on improved antennas for Burma, China, and Indochina. Head: Anglicans' Timor protest

The Anglican Archbishop of Sydney has welcomed the US suspension of military relationship with Jakarta over the East Timor troubles. Dr Goodhew noted that the church had made known to the Indonesian Government that "we are outraged by the events that have taken place and we are demanding that peace, law and order be restored as a matter of urgency."

Picnic for God's Gang

More than 100 gang members and their supporters turned up at Sydney's Parramatta Park recently for the God's Gang annual picnic, organised by the Bible Society's youth arm. Gang members aged four to 12 came from as far as Canberra and the north and south coasts. Police patrol cars, and the "Brotherhood" bike club provided great photo opportunities, and Christian ministry of various kinds was presented to the children. The Bible Society can be contacted on (02) 9267 6862.

www.christianity

The new evangelistic web site www.christianity.net.au is attracting large numbers of hits, and various organisations are supporting the effort. The Bible Society and the Church Missionary Society provide new content, which is attracting attention in North and South America, Asia, Africa, and Europe. CMS is mounting an interactive section, "Ask a Missionary". Church workers are handing out web address cards to high schoolers, giving young people access to the gospel in privacy. The site is under Anglican management, and has eight sections, with answers to such questions as what is a Christian and does Christianity work?

Creation conventions

Formerly Creation Science, Answers in Genesis held Australia-wide conventions in recent months. At the Sydney meetings, Professor Douglas Kelly from America presented the Biblical case for special cre-

churches, and missionary organisations with the Scriptures. Major Rev. Ngwira Green, the Chief of Chaplains for the Zambian Army wrote recently: "It has been discovered and proven that for military personnel to conduct their duties with discipline, their hearts must be changed. It is the Word of God that can change the heart.

With the establishing of Chaplains in our country, many officers and soldiers have much interest in the Word of God which is not readily available in printed form". Zambia has a population of 9.2 million, and is rife with poverty, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and stands landlocked by countries dogged by political and military conflict.

ation and the accuracy and historicity of the Genesis text. Dr Kelly has been visiting Professor of Theology at the Melbourne Theological College, and in 1997 published his influential book *Creation and Change*. Speaking at Moore College in Sydney, Dr Kelly argued the case made in his book, that the six creative days of Genesis are to be understood as a normal sequence of six twenty-four hour days.

world news



Gospel flourishes in Sudan

Voice of the Martyrs reports that the Gospel is alive and well in the Sudanese capital Khartoum, in spite of a virulent anti-Christian regime and severe persecution. Bible courier 'Jonathan' reports a high-level Christian presence in the city. The government allows some churches to remain open in the central city, to prove to the world there is religious freedom in the country. In these mainly older red-brick churches, the Gospel is flourishing, and people are being reached for Christ and trained for service. More than two million displaced southern Sudanese are living in camps around Khartoum, and Christian presence is very active. Yet there are many terrible trials. All high school graduates are forced into the military for a year before being allowed to enter university. Christian students who refuse to attack their Christian brothers and sisters in the south are forced to work as 'minesweepers', walking in front of the advancing Islamic troops.

Warming Kosovan hearts

America's **Southern Baptists** have sent 30,000 blankets to Kosovo, each labelled, "Zoti ju bekoft", - "God loves you". In some towns, while the church drive for blankets was on, local churches cleaned out every blanket in town to fill the quota! They will be welcome, as the weather started turning cold in October.

Middle East growth

Middle Eastern Reformed Fellowship reports that its ministry continues to expand with new ministries in a more cities. MERF is strongly supported from Australia, especially by Presbyterian churches. New centres are to be set up in Cairo and Beirut as forward posts from the fellowship's base in Larnaca, Cyprus. The centres will ensure that the increasing number of people responding to broadcasts receive personalised spiritual nourishment and care. Egypt and Lebanon represent the dominant cultural forces in the Arab-speaking world. Egypt has a very large Reformed community and Lebanon enjoys much freedom for Gospel outreach. The two centres will make use of gifts of believers not only from Lebanon and Egypt, but also from Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Palestine and Sudan. MERF Australia is at www.merf.org or Box 64 Zillmere, Qld 4034.

True love waits

Some 1500 teenagers walked across San Francisco's 1.6-kilometre Golden Gate Bridge in whipping cold winds recently to symbolise their desire to cross the bridges of life with sexual purity. The young people carried cards with the names and commitment of another 100,000 teenagers throughout the USA who have made the "True Love Waits" commitment to remain sexually pure until marriage. The parade **Crossing Bridges with Purity** was held within the guidelines of San Francisco law, which limits demonstrations at the bridge to less than two hours. Leaders of the national movement estimate that more than a million teens have made the commitment. The movement aims to encourage young people in their Christian stand by realising they are not alone, and to send a message to policy makers that abstinence-based education is a viable option.

Gift of tongues

Trans World Radio broadcasting mission beams the gospel in 145 languages, using 13 primary broadcast centres, and satellite and local stations. TWR has joined several other international Christian broadcasters to strive toward "providing every man, woman, and child on earth the opportunity to turn on their radios and hear the Gospel of Christ and become responsible members of his church". The original goal was to achieve this by 2000, but with 91 languages still to go, the expansion of the work will continue into the new century. Local churches are encouraged to use the local radio stations to reach the least reached groups of their populations.

Presbyterians limit ecumenism

An effort to make an existing Protestant-Roman Catholic committee the top ecumenical body for Ireland has been stymied by a vote of the **Presbyterian Church in Ireland**. The plan had been approved by the other three main denominations in Northern Ireland, but was defeated 224 – 144 in the General Assembly. Opponents of the move say it was defeated because institutional identification with Roman Catholic Church would imply approval of its doctrine. In the difficult atmosphere of Ireland today, evangelicals are intent on preserving doctrinal purity. Moderates are hesitant to vote for more ecumenism when they have to return home from the assembly to face the conservatives in their flock, many of whom do not consider Roman Catholicism to be a Christian faith.

Wedgwood massacre

The Wedgwood Baptist Church in Forth Worth, Texas, where a gunman killed seven and injured seven more in September, reports that God's grace has been very evident before, during and after the shooting.

David and Maxine King report from Texas: "To enter the church, the gunman walked past our children's playground, which should have been full of kids, but for some reason preschool class was running late. No one had made it to the playground yet. He fired over 100 bullets into a crowd of over 400, but only 14 people were hit. He did not shoot the over 60 bullets he still had with him. The bottom fell off of the pipe bomb he threw, and the bomb landed without ever exploding. None of the adults who died have children. All seven victims were not just Christians, but bold Christians passionate about their faith. Since the shooting, many denominations have offered help and support. The church has received more than 10,000 emails, 5000 cards, and \$60,000 from all over the world. Pastor Al Meredith presented the gospel beautifully on *Larry King Live* when prompted by a question asked by Vice President Al Gore. Because of the live news coverage and interviews, more than 200 million people have heard the gospel because of this tragedy, the church says.

CNN broadcast the memorial service live. Amazingly, because one of the victim's families lives and works in Saudi Arabia, that country allowed the service to be broadcast there as well. In Saudi Arabia it is illegal to say the name of Jesus on the street. Because of that same CNN broadcast, 35 people in Japan gave their lives to Christ. Several schools in America report large numbers of conversions.

The church has had 70,000 hits on its web page which displays the plan of salvation in several languages. Many members at Wedgwood Baptist are healing broken relationships within the body and experiencing spiritual renewal. The church said: "Every time the gunman fired a bullet, he intended to take a life. Yet God turned that around and saved several lives for each bullet fired. The faith of those who died has been multiplied many times over."

Ambon massacres worsen

The terrible troubles for the Christians of Ambon have now made the front page news in the daily papers in Australia. Christian churches and pastors on the island have warning for months that Ambon faced potential genocide if nothing was done. Massacres continue, and it has recently been learnt that forces sent to the Island, ostensibly to keep the opponents apart, have actually been fomenting trouble, openly siding with the Muslims. Many atrocities have led some Christian leaders to say that they are the victims of a carefully orchestrated holy war by extremists, since relations between Muslim and Christian on the island have traditionally been very peaceful. The NCC Australia reports that Javanese Muslim extremists from outside Ambon are arriving in great numbers, vowing to wipe out the Christians of Ambon, because of the Muslims' extremely poor showing in the national election of June 7.

West Timor sacrifices

Christian Churches in West Timor are actively helping out among the hundreds of thousands of refugees in East Timor. Anglican, Lutheran, Baptist and Catholic and other agencies are responding to the need. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has joined with 'Action By Churches Together' to build shelters for displaced families in the border cities of Kupang and Atamba. Relief workers are trying to distribute food and basic health care. Doctors and medical workers have been hired by churches in West Timor, but

work is slow because pro-Indonesian militia groups control access to the camps. There are reports that pro-independence supporters have been identified and taken away from the camps by the militia.

Harvest in the Ukraine

The Southern Baptists report a significant turning to Christ in the Ukraine as a result of evangelistic meetings led by Ohio evangelist Don Betts. With crusades in 17 cities, Betts is reporting overflow crowds at all the venues, with converts attending six-week discipleship training afterwards, and new churches being formed from converts. The Ukrainian government endorsed the crusades, and allowed access to government owned TV channels to televise the meetings.

Persecution in Burma

The Burmese army and Buddhist clergy have forced tribal Naga Christians to recant their faith at gunpoint and convert to Buddhism. Reports from the Nagaland Baptist Church Council in neighbouring India say the military also destroyed churches, stopped services, and were using the churches as kitchens. More than 1,000 tribal people have fled across the border into India, where their kinsmen live. Evangelistic outreach from the Indian Naga churches had brought the spread of the Gospel in the area in recent years.

Chinese arrests

The number of Christian leaders in China arrested for their faith has increased in recent months, especially in Henan province. Protestant house churches and evangelistic leaders are the main targets, following an increased level of government monitoring of Christian activities.

Actor's freedom role

Actor Dean Jones, of *The Love Bug*, and *Herbie Goes to Monte Carlo*, is now playing different roles. He is rescuing persecuted

Christians and Jews around the world. He explains his role in the **Christian Rescue Committee**, which he started, as trying to move people out of danger. "We want to provide a way of escape for people who are being persecuted for their faith: Jews, Christians and others". Deeply involved with the Sudan, Jones explains that the radical Muslim regime in Khartoum is trying to gain access to oil money, and will use it to wipe out the black Christians and animists in the south of the country.

Leaders targeted in Timor

The National Council of Churches has highlighted the way church leaders have been singled out for special attention in East Timor. Both Protestants and Catholics have suffered persecution and death at the hands of militias and their supporters. NCC of Australia secretary David Gill told the ABC that all conflicts in Indonesia have a religious base, including the current one. "It's hard for Australians to understand this because we push religion a bit to the edges of life in this country, but it permeates everything in Indonesia, and it is certainly an element in what has been happening in East Timor".

Bibles for Russia

A Russian Evangelical pastor reports that Bibles and prayer have been scattered throughout the former Soviet Union in a recent effort by Russian Christians. Pastor Igor "Nikki" Nikitin, leader of the Association of Christian Churches of Russia, thanked Western Christians for their efforts in the 19 September day of prayer for Russia.

"We really appreciate your prayers. Churches all over the country, of many different denominations joined us in the prayer of the 19th of September. We received responses that people and churches were praying all over the world: Australia, USA, Korea, Europe, and many other parts of the Earth," he said.

Pastor Nikitin said that American Christians had recently brought another 50,000 Bibles into Russia. "We sent 13 containers all over the country as far as Vladivostok. The Bibles were spread through 13 major cities of our country to the villages around, and supported hundreds of evangelistic projects of the Christian Churches."

He said Bibles were needed as never before. "The people are tired of the false promises of politicians and they don't believe any more in people from different cults that have been coming to Russia. They started seeing the answer is in fulfilling the Lord's will, which is in the Bible."

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Spirit of the Age

Spooky flicks are taking the world by storm. In *Stir of Echoes*, Kevin Bacon is an ordinary guy beset by unsettling supernatural visions after being hypnotised. In a more religious vein, Patricia Arquette develops her very own Christ-like hand-wounds in *Stigmata* – a telling indicator of the close link in most peoples' minds between the religious and the just plain spooky.

And, in a remarkable career achievement, our own Blacktown-bred Toni Collette enters the big league in *The Sixth Sense*, a movie described as *Rosemary's Baby* meets *Ghost*. Co-starring Bruce Willis, the movie stayed at the top of the US box-office for five weeks.

Collette plays a struggling Philadelphian single mum, coming to terms with supernatural events surrounding her young son. According to a recent interview in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Collette claims she was "pleasantly surprised" by the "spirituality" of the screenplay. "I was very moved by it," she says. "I didn't realise it was scary." But scary it is, as psychologist Willis begins to unravel her son's mysterious "sixth sense".

Reflecting on the immense success of the movie in the USA, Toni Collette suggests it's a sign of a "spiritual thirst" – the movie fills a void left by the secularity of modern life. "America is so thirsty," she says. "It's sad the way Western culture is taking us so far away from what's innate in us all."

Maybe so. But thinking Christians should take care that we don't jump too quickly on the "spirituality" bandwagon. Sure, it's a missing element in our secular world. But "spirituality" is never an end in itself. Our real thirst can only be quenched by the one who came to give "living water" – a new life in relationship with our maker, that isn't spooky or mysterious at all.

Phil Campbell
Culture Watch Editor

Movie Watch The Sixth Sense

Reviewed by Kate Harris

Playing with the supernatural is not unique to the latest round of "scary" film offerings. From the '70s until our sophisticated late '80s, an injection of folklore and superstition did wonders with the till-then corny horror flick. *Amityville Horror* and the *Poltergeist* series exposed ancestors' sins rotting beneath the foundations of picturesque suburban homes. Wes Craven's *Nightmare on Elm Street* and his Freddy of the fingernail-knives fame gave thousands of kids sleep-phobias over a span of several years. Then there's what is still considered to be the piece de resistance in the filmic battle between Satanic forces and mankind, *The Exorcist*. The film went further than its precursor, *Rosemary's Baby*, ever could, and put a finger on the zeitgeist of the day – an errant and burgeoning popular curiosity about the occult.

Although the special effects – or lack of them – in some of those movies can make them now seem unintentionally comic, many were adept in blending the supernatural with the material world in a melting-pot of questionable humanism and blatant paganism. *The Sixth Sense*, unlike the recent flop *The Haunting*, is an intelligent and genuinely fascinating 107-minute departure from reality into a supernatural battlefield.

The film's producers knew that a good formula is just that: a formula. However, they have drawn the most powerful filmic techniques from the genre to guarantee truly disturbing viewing. For pathos, they use a highly sensitive child as their leading character. To add plausibility, they blend in an element of popular para-psychology. For maximum goosebumps, they subtly slip a warped series of tormented ghostly character-cameos through the child's waking hours. And they add a brilliantly bizarre twist at the end to blur the edges further. Clever stuff, but a frightening watch for those who are worried by the ease of crossing between real and unreal.

Bruce Willis is Dr Malcolm Crowe, an eminent child psychologist who is confronted by a past patient he didn't cure, in a traumatic start-of-film confrontation. Months later, Dr Crowe is working on another troubled little boy, Cole, who often seeks sanctuary in the local church, is prone to shaking fits and anxiety attacks, and who believes himself "cursed". Before you can say "Damien", Cole and Crowe are striking a fledgling friendship, the only hope for the little boy who claims he "sees dead people ... they walk around like real

people, cos they don't know they're dead".

While we as an audience are treated to Cole's smorgasbord of macabre haunts and horrors, Dr Crowe is dubious until some research into the past proves Cole's apparitions come from the supernatural side of the fence. Dr Crowe directs Cole to listen to and help these ghosts rather than live in fear of them. Dangerous messages: The walking dead are "real". Ghosts have a clear and pragmatic agenda in the material world. Children, with their compassionate and sensitive psyches, can be mediums, channels that help the dead accomplish their goals and therefore rest. Anyone – Christian or not – working with histrionic youngsters with a tendency to "see things" should at least be raising an eyebrow.

That the film adds to the growing credibility of psychic cures in place of traditionally received family therapies is a shame, particularly as it's been directed so beautifully. It is filmed in deep and sombre colours from stunning camera angles, discarding the fantastic effect in favour of suspenseful silences and extreme close-ups.

It's a little slow to start, but the screenwriters make the most of this time to build our identification with the very sympathetic characters. Little Cole, played by the haunting Haley Joel Osment, is a fine study in innocence under assault. Willis, who did a great 'Dad-like' job in *Mercury Rising* is utterly empathetic in his performance as Crowe (his surname is significant: watch for the ending). Australian actor Toni Collette adds a touch of warmth and earthiness to the metaphysical melange as Cole's struggling but devoted mother.

It's probably a credit to the film's craft that this reviewer suffered not a few nightmares after the fact. At best, we can perhaps extract a message that the integrity of love and family cohesion triumphs over fear and hopelessness. But given the potential harm that convincing films such as *The Sixth Sense* can have on today's deeply suggestive and superstitious pre-millennial moviegoers, that'd really be stretching it.

The verdict: A stimulating, if disconcerting, experience. But, as with anything concerning the spirit world, not one to watch indiscriminately.

Kate Harris is a Brisbane based communications consultant, and a member of Mitchelton Presbyterian Church. ap



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Doctrine of death

Countless millions have been murdered in the name of evolution.

During the recent holidays, I visited the Australian Museum in Sydney. The place was alive with people, especially school children. I was particularly interested in the section dealing with “human evolution”, which attracted hordes of curious on-lookers.

For many years now the museum has vigorously promoted the theory of evolution as fact. The curators, who have put the exhibition together, have a clear message for the viewing public: the world has made itself through evolution, and is in the process of evolving further.

As with other museums around the world, the curators have given the public no indication that there are alternative interpretations about the origins of man. Nowhere do they suggest that there are conflicting theories. People are given no opportunity to make up their own minds on the basis of the evidence. Our minds are made up for us.

One particularly interesting section of the human evolution exhibition was a display entitled The Apes. It consisted of some large sketches of a gorilla, a human, a chimpanzee, an orangutan and a gibbon ape. They were all naked male figures standing upright in that order, and side by side as in a police identification parade. The caption told me that these were the “five kinds of living ape in the world today”.

The display reinforces the idea that humans evolved from apes by pointing to alleged similarities between humans and the other apes in a number of social activities, including mating, love-making and the murder. The sign in the display case reads: “In all societies murder may be done to enhance the murderer’s social status. On one occasion the son of an ageing dominant male gorilla killed his father’s consort, a move that improved his status. Political murders of this kind are a familiar part of all human societies.”

The display teaches that the present behaviour of men and women must be understood and judged in the light of the behaviour of our alleged fellow apes. From this perspective, it is understandable and natural that some humans murder each other for political reasons, because our fellow apes, the gorillas, do the same. It is understandable and natural that “many humans” should be sexually promiscuous



Clarrie Briese

In the final of a three-part series on the inadequacies of the theory of evolution, Clarrie Briese, former Chief Magistrate of New South Wales, examines the social and legal implications of the theory’s wide acceptance.

because chimpanzees are sexually promiscuous.

I will be interested to know whether courts of the future will be required to receive evidence of this kind in mitigation of punishment for murder and other violent offences. If Darwinian evolution is true, why not?

Although I have no empirical evidence, I suspect that the Australian Museum’s exhibition will encourage school students and the wider public to look to the family of apes as possible role models. When pictures of mating chimpanzees are placed side by side with a nude human couple engaged in sexual intercourse, I imagine that viewers who believe the theory of evolution may become less sexually restrained. One can only speculate as to the amount of damage this is causing individuals and society.

Sadly, museums today have no room for anything which depicts man as distinct from the animal world. Nor do they appear willing to portray human beings as created in the image of God and then fallen, as the book of Genesis teaches.

Instead, museums around the world promote the lie of evolution that there is no downward movement in the history of mankind. Human progress is represented by a constant upward curve. We developed from “pond slime” to be part of the family of the apes, all of whom we have now surpassed even though we still have some similar behaviour traits. And these traits have

supposedly been acquired through the processes of natural selection and survival of the fittest on the way up, and not as a result of our tragic fall into sin from a state of original goodness.

According to evolutionists, the world is a cruel place created by the impersonal process of chance, not God. As the biologist Monod said in an interview in Australia in 1976: “(Natural) selection is the blindest, and most cruel way of evolving new species ... The struggle for life and elimination of the weakest is a horrible process, against which our whole modern ethic revolts ... I am surprised that a Christian would defend the whole idea that this is the process which God more or less set up in order to have evolution.”

It has to be said that the Australian Museum is completely consistent in the way it deals with the implications of what it believes to be the fact of evolution. If evolution is true, the exhibition cannot be disputed. It logically follows.

However, belief in evolution has its consequences. As the King James Bible puts it “as (man) thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). In other words, the worldview of an individual, of a nation, always affects behaviour. We see clearly from history that a worldview based on Darwinian evolution leads to policies and practices that are enormously damaging to nations and their people.

Where Darwinian evolution is accepted as fact, the first casualty for most people is the Christian faith. Darwin himself is an example of this. His original position was that of a creationist and nominal Christian. After his experiences on the Beagle, he became a theistic evolutionist and soon abandoned the Christian faith altogether. In his autobiography he testified: “I had gradually come, by this time (about 1837 just after his experience on the Beagle), to see that the Old Testament, from its manifestly fake history of the world ... was no more to be trusted than the sacred books of the Hindus, or the beliefs of any barbarian.”

Is it surprising that so many people today have rejected the Christian faith because they believe that evolution is a proven fact? They see the inherent contradiction between an evolutionary view of life

and the one presented by the Bible. Unfortunately, most people never get to see the scientific information which raises confidence in the Bible so they think the Christian faith is the stuff of fairy-tales. As a result, they opt for a worldview that is based on naturalistic evolution.

This has been noted by Christian observers. For example, the Slavic Gospel Association Magazine, Australia, reported the observations of Pastor Ton in a public address he gave in London in 1981: "I was coming from a place where the churches were being refined through suffering, yet they were packed, with hearts on fire for the Lord. I received the shock of my life when I saw churches in London almost empty ... I heard ministers saying how they pondered quitting the ministry ... discouraged and defeated ... in a losing battle. From the turn of this century when 85 per cent of the population every Sunday was in church, now only 5 per cent attended.

"I came to the conclusion that there were two factors which destroyed Christianity in Western Europe. One was the theory of evolution, and the other, liberal theology. Liberal theology is just evolution applied to the Bible and our faith."

The second casualty of evolution is the people who become its victims because evolutionary theory suggests they should be treated as inferior or expendable. One such group is the Australian aboriginal people.

On 3 March 1990, in an article entitled "Darwin's Bodysnatchers", *The Sydney Morning Herald* detailed the horrors inflicted on Australian Aborigines, particularly the Tasmanians, because of the desire to prove they were the "missing link". Over the protests of the Aboriginal people, thousands of Aboriginal bodies were shipped off to overseas museums, up to 10,000 going to British museums alone. (The eminent evolutionist Professor Stephen Gould of Harvard has confirmed that while "biological arguments for racism may have been common before 1859 ... they increased by orders of magnitude following the acceptance of evolutionary theory".)

According to the *Herald* article, this "scientific" endeavour began as far back as 1803, but received a real boost when Darwin used the Australian Aborigine as an example of a living link to the animal. Later, Darwin's leading spokesman, T. H. Huxley, superimposed an Aboriginal skull on to a Neanderthal skull to start what the newspaper called an "Australian growth industry", a "frantic attempt" to prove Darwin right.

The Bulletin (12 November 1991) disclosed that US evolutionists were also involved in the flourishing "industry" of

gathering specimens of "subhumans". Australian journalist David Monaghan wrote that some of the top names in British science were involved in the large-scale graverobbing trade, including Darwin himself. Darwin wrote asking for Tasmanian skulls when only four of the island Aborigines were left alive, provided his request would not "upset" their feelings.

Pickled Aboriginal brains were also in demand, to try to prove that they were inferior to those of whites. Good prices were offered for Aboriginal specimens and evidence exists to show that "fresh" specimens were obtained by simply going out and killing Aborigines.

Edward Ramsay, curator of the Australian Museum for 20 years from 1874, was heavily involved. He published a



museum booklet which appeared to include Aborigines under the designation of Australian animals. The booklet also advised how to exhume the bodies of Aborigines from graves and how to plug bullet wounds in freshly killed "specimens". A month after Ramsay asked for skulls of Bungee (Russell River) blacks, a science student sent him two. He told him that the two victims had been shot. They were the last of their tribe.

One particularly gruesome operator was Amale Dietrich, a German evolutionist nicknamed "the Angel of Black Death". She came to Australia asking station owners for Aborigines to be shot for specimens. She accomplished her mission.

A missionary to the Aborigines, Lancelot Threlkeld, witnessed a slaughter in NSW when mounted police killed dozens of Aboriginal men, women and

children. Forty-five heads were then boiled down and the ten best skulls were sent overseas.

What happened to the Aboriginal people is merely one example of the horrors which took place worldwide under ideologies shaped by evolutionary theory. *Time* magazine of (14 August 1995) provides a partial summary: "This century has seen countless millions killed – more than in all known wars of human history put together – in the name of ideologies that owe their inspiration and justification directly to evolution."

The Nazis used this "science falsely so-called" to justify treating other races as sub-human. Engaging in war, even genocide, could hardly be wrong so they thought, since it made their version of the fittest more likely to survive.

Communism's dialectic materialism required belief in evolution for intellectual respectability. Stalin's butchery is directly linked to his renunciation of God (and thus all notions of sin and judgment) after reading Darwin's book. Mao Zedong, responsible for the deaths of tens of millions, listed Darwin and Huxley as his two favourite authors.

Few have realised, however, the degree to which Japanese thinking leading up to and during World War II was also heavily influenced by Darwin.

Japanese thought blended the theistic with the evolutionary. They were a chosen people because the Emperor was a descendant of the sun goddess; they were a master race because they were more highly evolved. Japanese biologists produced studies decrying the apish physical features of other races (hairiness, long arms) and noting the highly evolved characteristics of the Japanese' (which included milder body odour).

We are mindful of the fact that professing Christians have also been guilty of racism and other atrocities but, as Francis Schaeffer has pointed out, these "Christians" were not then operating consistently with the biblical faith (eg Acts 17:26), even if they used perversions of scriptural teaching as justification. Not so with materialist evolutionists who, like Hitler, adopted racist policies. They acted consistently with their philosophical presuppositions. So do evolutionist academics, scientists and others today who justify policies such as euthanasia, and abortion which also have disastrous effects on human beings.

Failure by Western civilisation to return to its roots in a Christianity which is guided by God's Word rather than the faulty (and constantly changing) vision of man, can only lead to fresh horrors in the future. ap

Millennium disaster?

Be prepared – for your family's sake and the gospel's.

We've all heard, read and discussed it till Y2K has become a bit travel-weary. But if there's any truth in the millennium bug threat then it's important it be kept on the boil until 1 January.

In case you have been holidaying in outer space over the past year or two, here's a brief summary. At midnight on 31 December computers around the world will attempt to register time in the year 2000. However, because programmers many years ago only gave year-dates two numbers (99 instead of 1999), many experts believe that computers will read the year (20)00 as (19)00 instead. The result of this is unpredictable. Some believe that because of our dependence on technology, the problems will be serious enough to threaten the fabric of our society.

Computer chips have become an integral part of daily life. They are in household appliances and personal computers, as well as running massive programs such as communications, banking, government and utilities (gas, water, power) and the production and supply lines of industry and trade.

The chairman of the Australian Stock Exchange, Maurice Newman, heads up the Federal Government taskforce into Y2K. All other governments and corporations have similar groups. They have spent vast sums to rewrite their programs to avert the threat. But the bug only came to light around 1995, which meant that there was never enough time to fix an extremely complex problem. Regular updates on progress are provided, and there is a degree of optimism in Australia that we are in good shape. But when we realise the full extent problem, we can still justifiably feel very concerned. In September Telstra released a *Y2K Business Report* which said:



Rod Waterhouse

"Telstra's contingency plans, sometimes called the second line of defence, will attempt to ensure rapid restoration of critical business and service functions in the event of an unexpected Year 2000 problem."

While Telstra's diligence is reassuring, the indication that serious problems are possible is not.

The heart of the problem lies in embedded systems. They are defined in the UK Action 2000 web site: "Embedded systems contain programmed instructions running via processor chips ... (they) are programmable devices or systems which are generally used to control or monitor things like processes, machinery, environments, equipment, and communications."

Graham Inchley, the executive director of the federal taskforce, told the *Australian Financial Review* on 12 August that "the embedded chip issue had proved to be a far less significant problem than once thought. We have overcome the myth that there can be a hidden date inside a chip that no-one knows about".

This contrasts with the opinion of the US Institute for Electrical and Electronic Engineers which sent an open letter to Congress in June describing Y2K and the

embedded systems problem as "non-solvable" and as a "crisis".

It is estimated that there may be from 10 to 25 billion embedded systems in existence. It is known that some small percentage of these are date-sensitive. Of these a small but significant percentage is not year 2000 compliant. Estimates range from 0.2 per cent to more than 1 per cent. That means Y2K problems could cause 20 million to 250 million embedded systems failures.

Despite the confidence of industry and government, the embedded system problem has yet to be adequately addressed. Who should we believe? It is very hard to get at the truth. If you have Internet access, type in Y2K and do your own investigation. As well as technical data there is very useful household management information. There are also many books available.

Beware too of extreme views and selective information. For example, the US Senate recently presented its Y2K report. This is how the Washington Post reported: "With 100 days to go until the world's computers face their long-awaited moment of electronic judgment, most large U.S. corporations and government agencies say they have almost completed the painstaking and costly chore of inoculating their machines against the "millennium bug". Whereas the Senate report read: "Many organisations and industries remain unprepared."

Many projected Y2K readiness deadlines are dangerously late. Organisations with late completion dates are not leaving sufficient time to address unexpected problems. Public attention has so far focused on business being compliant. Because the political and social implications are profound, it is no surprise that governments have not been very forthcoming with the general community due to the panic factor. We could ask though if it's better to "panic" now, with time up our sleeves, than later when there are no options available, especially for the sick, elderly, and marginalised.

What will happen? There is no certain answer, though many are convinced of impending chaos and are preparing for the long-term option. Edward Yardeni is chief economist and managing director of the Deutsche Morgan Grenfell merchant bank.

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In May 1998 Yardeni increased his estimate that year 2000 problems will lead to a recession from 40 to 60 per cent. Ed Yourdon, the author of 25 books on computer programming, co-wrote the book *Time Bomb 2000* in the belief that serious problems will occur.

It is also important to realise that if many of the worst concerns do eventuate they will probably do so gradually. Some effects will be felt on 1 January but, as production and supply lines begin to fail, the impact will be more like the gradual dawning of their plight upon Noah's neighbours.

The best we can hope for is that nothing much will happen that really affects our daily lives. We will all then be able to breathe a collective sigh of relief. But there is a strong possibility that there will be some disruption. The five steps indicated in the accompanying article are relatively cheap insurance. If nothing happens, we won't have lost a great deal. It has been pointed out that we pay large sums of insurance each year despite the belief that "it will never happen to us". Yet there is a great deal of unwillingness by people to do something about an issue that nearly all agree will certainly create some problems.


The best we can pray for is that many will turn to God in their need.

Extreme views held by some religious groups are linking this event to the "Day of

the Lord" or Jesus' return. But Jesus said in Matthew 24:36 that even he did not know that date. In Luke 12:54-56 he gives some sobering warnings about interpreting the times – in the context of preparedness for his return and his own interpretation of two calamities that had befallen the people of his day. As Jesus found with the people he dealt with, one of the big stumbling blocks to action on this potential calamity will be peoples' fear of embarrassment. Pride may prevent many from an appropriate response.

For God's people it is important to be prepared, but it is equally important not to panic or do anything rash. Our trust is ultimately in God, not in a world system that is fallible. This is a time for the Church to say and do some very significant things. It may provide Christians with the opportunity to witness to their trust in God and with a door to serve their neighbour in need. What a great chance to show the peace that comes from knowing Jesus Christ to an uncertain world, and to reach out our hand to help those in distress. This could well be one of those major historical occurrences that God allows mankind in order to teach us where our trust must be. A biblical response must be first to care for our own families, and it must also reflect servanthood.

Thoughtful preparation will allow the Church to best be able to serve others and witness to the truth of the gospel. Our church has chosen not to store food but has plans to ensure that the wider church family cares for elderly or infirm members without family support. Our session distributed a pamphlet in February this year highlighting many of the issues raised here. We intend meeting for public worship as usual on Sunday 2 January, come what may. People may panic, but should God's people be like everyone else? This may offer us the privilege to have our faith tested, the way believers do in other countries all the time. "Do not fear" needs to be something we practise, not something to which we give only lip service. We are to watch and pray (and prepare), but not to worry. The real question ultimately, as in all things, is not whether we survive, but whether or not we will be found faithful to our God, who is Sovereign over all. Our hope and joy is in our Lord's promises: "Be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous hand" (Is 41:10).

Rod Waterhouse is minister of Mt Gambier Presbyterian Church, South Australia. 

Some interruption to normal business and provision of services is likely. No one knows how much. And no one knows how long it will take to fix. In the meantime households may be without water and power; food supplies may cease to be replenished and communications and fuel supplies may stop.

If this does occur, what could we do now to lessen its impact? The Scriptures speak to us here: "A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it" (Prov. 22:3).

For us, it will be prudent to:

- have an amount of cash in small notes to tide you through – up to a month should be feasible for most people.
- have some food supplies stored to last for that time.
- have an alternative form of cooking and lighting.
- have a maximum amount of fuel (of all types) on hand.
- have a reserve supply of water and medications.

These steps are suggestions only – one cannot guard against all possibilities. However, such wise planning may lessen the impact if the worst happens. If it does,

A bug in the house

the dilemma may only last a few days once the problems are identified. However, it could last for weeks, or much longer. There are claims that community panic could cause more harm than the millennium bug itself. But if households stockpile supplies now, the system can handle it much better than a panic at the end of the year. It is leaving preparations to the last minute that carries the very real danger of bank runs and food shortages.

Certainly the suggestion that we remove our savings from the electronic world of banking would be foolish – done on a sufficient scale, this would induce its own crisis. There is wisdom though in ensuring our records of pay, investment, superannuation, and social security are up-to-date.

Similarly, there are dangers in the storage of large sums of money and fuel in our homes. It would be unwise for the elderly

and vulnerable to make themselves a target for theft, and for anyone to have a stockpile of flammable fuel in any unsecured situation. It would be wise not to advertise your preparations indiscriminately. But, however much we prepare, it will not cover every contingency in the worst case scenario. Transport, communication, finance and security systems are some of the myriad of other possible affected areas. Domestic appliances include microwaves, TVs, computers, heating and cooling. But the unavailability of these luxuries would be insignificant compared with not having power, water, food or transport.

Remember, too, that if we don't have power, your freezer will not work. Don't travel at this time if you can avoid it. Being near your family, friends and church will be a great help. The airlines have responded to the public's desire to stay put over the New Year by cutting services.

Our missionaries need to be especially in our prayers at this time. In April the Department of Foreign Affairs issued a strongly worded warning over Y2K to people who will be overseas on 1 January.

Rod Waterhouse

Did Jesus rise again?

Billy Graham tells of a conversation with Konrad Adenauer, when he was the Chancellor of West Germany. While Dr Graham was preaching in Germany, Dr Adenauer invited him to his office. Coffee was served, but before Billy had taken the first sip, he was asked: "Young man, do you believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ?"

"I most certainly do," he replied.

"So do I," said Dr Adenauer. "If Jesus Christ is not risen from the dead, there is not one glimmer of hope for the human race. When I leave office, I'm going to spend the rest of my of life studying and writing about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the most important event in human history."

But is there a good reason to believe in the resurrection? Is it an historical event or was it simply a legend invented by the early Christians?

Three important points emerge from the New Testament accounts of the resurrection: first, the tomb was empty; second, Christ appeared afterwards to his followers; third, the disciples were transformed. Let us consider these points in turn.

The tomb was empty: Some claim that the empty tomb can be explained naturally. The body of Jesus may have been removed by human hands, or he may have swooned on the cross and revived in the tomb, or the women visited the wrong grave and finding it empty concluded that he had risen. These theories cannot be taken seriously.

Jesus appeared to his followers: These appearances are reported in the gospels, Acts 1:1-9 and 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. The first five occurred on the day of the resur-



Alex Stevens

rection, and the others over a period of 40 days.

The witness of 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 is of particular significance because it not only predates the gospels and Acts but 1 Corinthians itself. This epistle was written by Paul about AD 54, but the resurrection passage it enshrines was composed much earlier. It may have been part of a creed taught to new converts, and came into existence in the early years of the church, long before the first New Testament book was written. It is the earliest evidence of the resurrection.

In Deuteronomy 19:15 it is stated that "a matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses". But according to this early document, Jesus was seen by "more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time" (1 Cor. 15:6). When Paul wrote these words most of these "brothers" were still living, and could be questioned. The united testimony of such a large number of eye-witnesses is compelling evidence that Jesus rose from the dead.

The disciples were transformed: After Jesus was arrested Peter denied him, and apart from John, the others deserted him. None of them witnessed the burial, and when they assembled in Jerusalem, they met behind closed doors for fear of the Jews. Even when they heard that the tomb was empty, they refused to believe that Jesus had risen.

Yet, a few days later they were convinced that Jesus was alive, and joyfully proclaimed his victory over death.

What did the disciples gain when they gained this message? Popularity? Fame? Financial reward? No, instead, they experienced opposition, persecution, even death. Why, then, the radical change in their outlook? There is only one satisfactory explanation: they had actually seen, heard and in

some cases touched the risen Christ.

The disciples were painfully aware of the fact of their Master's death. Only another fact could make them believe that he was alive. That fact was his resurrection.

The evidence for the resurrection does not finish there.

The existence of the church: When Jesus was arrested, most of the disciples fled in terror. If he had not risen they probably would have regarded him as a great prophet, and a martyr for the truth that he proclaimed, but certainly not as the Messiah. In their despondency, his followers would have returned to their homes and gone back to their former occupations. And there would have been no church!

But something unexpected occurred. The scattered group of disciples came together, not in the spirit of dejection, but with unquenchable joy because they knew he was alive. In the very city where he had been crucified and buried a few weeks earlier, they now declared that he had risen from the dead. Not even strong persecution could dampen their enthusiasm or silence their preaching, and in one generation the movement had spread rapidly.

The church was founded on the empty tomb. But if that tomb had contained the decaying remains of Jesus Christ, the church would not have come into existence.

The appearance of the New Testament: If Jesus had not risen, it is possible that one of the disciples would have written his biography and preserved some of his sayings. However, we can be certain that the outcome would have been very different from the account of Jesus in the New Testament.

If there had been no resurrection, memories of Jesus, which had been stored in the minds of the disciples, would have gradually faded, and he would have been virtually unknown to later generations. The fact that the authors of the books of the New Testament wrote about him with such sustained enthusiasm, and referred so frequently to his resurrection, is convincing evidence that he rose from the dead.

James Denney's conclusion is decisive: "The existence of the Christian Church, the existence of the New Testament: these incomparable phenomena in human his-

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tory are left without adequate or convincing explanation if the resurrection of Jesus be denied."

Sunday worship: For centuries Jews observed the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week as their day of rest and worship. But the early Christians began to meet on the first day of the week for their distinctive worship, and the process continued to such an extent that, eventually, in Christian circles, Sunday completely superseded Saturday.

There are indications of this practice in the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 16:2 Paul gave the following instructions to the church regarding the collection for the poor of Jerusalem: "On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come."

Also, we are told in Acts 20:7 that Paul, his companions and their fellow Christians at Troas met together for the breaking of bread "on the first day of the week". Christians did not speak of their day of worship as "the Sabbath" but "the Lord's day" (Rev. 1:10).

Since Jews were tenaciously, even fanatically, attached to the Sabbath, and since the early church consisted almost entirely of Jews, only an event of extraordinary significance would have disposed them to change the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. This event had occurred. Jesus Christ had risen on the first day of the week, and each Sunday was a joyful celebration of his victory over death.

The conversion of detractors: When people who are strongly opposed to certain opinions suddenly embrace them with enthusiasm we may infer that they have received new and convincing information which has drastically altered their views. In the New Testament we read of a number of men who "at first" were opposed to Jesus Christ, but later acknowledged him as their Messiah.

James, the brother of Jesus, and other members of his family originally were unsympathetic toward his activities. On one occasion, when Jesus was addressing a large crowd, they remarked "he is out of his mind" (Mk 3:21), and John reported that his own brothers did not believe in him (7:5). But James later acknowledged Jesus as his Lord (James 1:1). He became a "pillar" of the church at Jerusalem (Gal. 2:9) and eventually its leader.

Why was this man, so critical of Jesus during his ministry, later found in the inner circle of the Christians? According to 1 Corinthians 15:7, Jesus appeared to James after his resurrection, and this revelation so changed his outlook that he became the willing slave of his brother.

If James had been unsympathetic towards the activities of his brother, Paul was actively hostile to his cause and bitterly persecuted the church. But Paul was arrested by the risen Christ, who appeared to him near Damascus. He then realised that the one whom he regarded as an impostor was the long awaited Messiah, and he committed himself totally to his service.

It would have been quite incredible for Paul to have acknowledged the lordship of Christ, and to have identified himself with the despised and persecuted Christians unless he was completely convinced that Jesus was alive. He had spoken with numbers who had seen the risen Christ (1 Cor. 15:3-7) and had observed the power of his resurrection operating in their lives.



A considerable number of the early converts to the Christian faith were priests in Jerusalem (Acts 6-7). They were members of a party fiercely opposed to Jesus Christ, and certainly not likely to believe in his resurrection. It is incredible that these priests would have accepted Jesus as their Messiah, unless they were fully persuaded that the evidence for his resurrection was valid.

The belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ: When Peter confessed at Caesarea Philippi "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt. 16:16) he also spoke for the disciples. But their hopes and dreams were shattered when Jesus was crucified.

The disciples reasoned that if Jesus had been the Messiah, surely God would have intervened and delivered him from an agonizing and shameful death. But there had been no intervention, so, reluctantly, they had accepted that Jesus was no different from other so-called messiahs of that period. They had made spectacular promises and gathered a group of people around them, but they had been killed and their followers were scattered (Acts 5:34-37).

But in the New Testament, Jesus Christ, far from being regarded as a failure, is worshipped and adored as a divine Person. The early creed "Jesus is Lord", which appears in the epistles (Rom. 10:9, 1 Cor. 12:3, Phil. 2:11) draws attention to his divinity. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, "Lord" was chosen to translate the divine name "Jehovah". Lord therefore meant much more than the exaltation of Jesus above the status of men: it combined his name with that of God.

Why was this so? Why was Jesus who died the death of a criminal later worshipped as divine? Why did Jews, strict monotheists, conjoin his name with that of God? The answer is given in Romans 1:4: "Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." This was the unique event that caused his disciples to worship him as their Lord and God.

The empty tomb, the frequent appearances of the risen Christ, and the transformation of the lives of his disciples, all witness to the certainty of the resurrection.

Moreover, without the resurrection, the emergence and continuance of the church, the production of the New Testament, Sunday worship, the conversion of detractors, and the belief that Jesus is divine are all utterly inexplicable.

From the total evidence we are able to argue cogently that, on the third day after his crucifixion, Jesus Christ rose from the grave.

Alex Stevens is a minister emeritus of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria. He holds a doctorate in New Testament studies and has just published a book on the resurrection, The Resurrection of Jesus Christ: Fact or Fiction (Melbourne: The Burning Bush Society of Victoria, No. 12, 1999).

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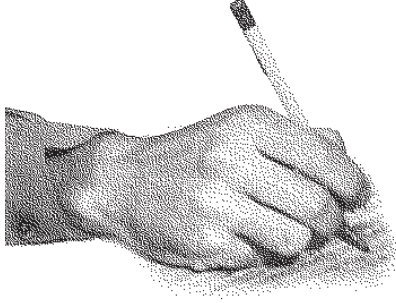


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letters



Creation: another view

Thank you for the series on evolution and Christian faith by Clarrie Briese.

I regret his Honour has been rather selective in the witnesses he has chosen. Many Bible-believing Christians who do not accept macro-evolution also do not subscribe to the 24-hour earth-day interpretation of Genesis 1, nor do they classify Genesis 1 as myth.

May I suggest Bernard Ramm's book, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Eerdmans, 1954, chap VI, Geology), as still the outstanding text on various interpretations. Another approach is explained by Robert J Dunzweiler, *A Proposed Creationist Alternative to Evolution* (Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute Research Report, 1971). Refer also to *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Gleason L Archer, Zondervan, 1982, pp 55-65) and *Genesis* (Derek Kidner, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, 1967, pp54-58). Charles E Hummel, *The Galileo Connection* (InterVarsity Press, 1986, et al), provides a more recent discussion and is

very worth reading.

You will accept that God could not explain creation using terms like superstrings and singularities to Moses (or to us, for that matter). Moreover, the purpose of Scripture is not to provide or support any scientific hypotheses. Why, for example, does the Bible use a value of 3 for pi instead of 3.1415926535 or at least 3.1 (Solomon's lake, 2 Chron 4:2)? Similar literalist approaches would take the Bible to teach a flat earth or an earth-centric solar system.

I submit that the Genesis 1 narrative was written deliberately in a manner that allows for other interpretations of the duration of creation. How could earth-days, which depend on the earth's rotation on its axis vis-a-vis the sun, be a meaningful measure of time on the first three days of creation when the sun was not yet appointed to its role? And if one insists that the Hebrew word for day can only mean a 24-hour earth day then one has to excise Genesis 1:5 from the Bible where it is also used to mean "daytime" (of variable duration but averaging 12 hours).

And Professor Barr's claim that the genealogies in Genesis provide a full chronology from the beginning of the world is either sheer ignorance or dishonesty. Compare Genesis 11 with Luke 4 (also compare 1 Chron. 3 with Matt. 1). In the Old Testament someone is referred to as a "father" or "son" of someone else when he might have been a grandfather or grandson (or more remote relative). Genealogies are not to establish full family lists (such as the Mormons have done) but to establish continuity in heritage or God's dealings (see *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives*, edited by A R Millard and D J Wiseman, InterVarsity Press, 1980, pp193f).

The Bible tells us that God created life.

Whether we have six earth-days or six billion billion earth years, life did not evolve by itself. We do not need to be afraid of evolution and see salvation in adherence to an earth-day interpretation.

Simone Wilcox (Letters, AP, August) raises an important related question. Was there death on earth before man sinned?

The Bible does not tell us that creatures were made to live for ever and ever. Instead, Genesis 3:22 indicates biological man was created a mortal being. Man ate fruit and grain, and animals ate grass and plants (Gen. 1: 29-30), i.e., plants, fruit and grain died to provide life to animals. It could be that biological death is an intrinsic part of creation (John 12:24); we are also told that an animal sperm dies before fertilising the egg). Did Adam's skin cells die and fall away? Did he have hair? Did he have fingernails? Our surface skin, visible hair, and most of our nails are dead cells.

It seems clear that the death God warns Adam about (Gen. 2: 17) is not biological death, as neither he nor Eve fell down physically dead the day they sinned. The death they died was separation from God (see Romans) for which they (and we) need a Saviour.

John Yeo
Glen Waverley, Vic

'Wicked' doctrines

My husband and I retired last September to the Central Coast. I was looking for a church to join, and to get involved with, and as I was brought up in the Presbyterian Church in Edinburgh, Scotland, I was delighted when I found a small Presbyterian Church, St David's, in Woy Woy.

That was until I took home and read a recent copy of AP and a booklet called *Questions and Answers* by, I think, John Blanchard. I was absolutely horrified that in this day and age, as we approach the year 2000 and the third millennium, that such doctrines on hell, eternal damnation, God's abiding wrath, etc, etc, are still being expounded and written about in prominent Christian publications.

I expect you believe that millions of God-fearing, good and loving Hindus, Muslims, Jews and Buddhists, are doomed to an eternity of hell-fire, just because they have not heard of Jesus, or do not choose to convert to Christianity.

How can you believe that God averted his face and turned his back on the cruel, tortured and anguished death on the cross of his beloved son? You will never convince thinking, intelligent, loving and compassionate people, thinkers, people who have travelled and experienced other cultures

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and religions at first hand, as I have, of these wicked, old-fashioned and damaging doctrines.

*Maia Russell
Tascott, NSW*

Republic debate

I had the privilege of attending the Assembly of the Queensland Presbyterian Church as a parity elder this year and by so doing was made fully aware of our expression of loyalty to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

The thought occurred to me that many others in our congregations may not be aware of this pledge of loyalty, and that it actually decided for us our position in regard to the republic referendum. Should we not be making this known to our congregations?

Further, I believe that if we take out the mention of God in the preamble we are inviting serious trouble: 1 Samuel 2:30 "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

Also the thrice-mentioned warning in Daniel 4 that God sets up the rulers we deserve should give all Christians serious reasons to be much in prayer for our nation and its leaders at this time.

I wonder what other readers think about these points.

*Phillip Storrs
Eumundi, Qld*

Speaking for Calvin

I cannot allow Peter Barnes' review of David Engelsma's *Hyper-Calvinism and the Call of the Gospel* to go unanswered. It is my opinion that his conclusions may be somewhat typical of an irrational approach to Scripture that plagues much current and recent Presbyterian and Reformed thought.

For years I accepted the view that the Bible contained inconsistencies (read: contradictions) on the issue of whether God desires the salvation of the non-elect in the gospel as it is preached. I am now of the view that these so-called inconsistencies are the result of faulty exegesis. Biblical truth is non-contradictory and logical for this is the

nature of the God who gives it. We will not understand it fully or completely in this life, but it is manifestly not inconsistent as Barnes claims. To claim Scripture contains inconsistencies is to despair of knowing anything. In any case, who is the authority that declares the inconsistency?

In the light of Barnes' review I can only encourage the reader to buy this book and examine its contents closely under the glass of Scripture in order that they do not make the same mistakes that I made years ago; that is to read a review of this same book and immediately tar Engelsma with the hyper-Calvinist (not actually defined by Barnes) brush on the say so of a less than sympathetic reviewer. Let me challenge all your readers to read Engelsma's short summary of his position on the web at www.prca.org/pamphlets/pamphlet_35 and decide the issue for themselves.

The issue is not the so-called hyper-Calvinism of Engelsma, for that he is not by Barnes' own admission, but the hypo-Calvinism (or sub-Calvinism) inherent in much modern gospel preaching.

It may surprise some readers to know that the view set forward by Engelsma (that God does not desire or will the salvation of the non-elect in the preaching of the gospel) is the Scriptural view, the view of John Calvin and the view taken by the

Westminster Confession of Faith chapters iii and v. Nowhere in Scripture is the atonement grounded in some general love of God for all men nor is it an expression of some general love of God for all men indiscriminately. Christ atoned for God's elect alone, those upon whom he set his love in eternity. The gospel commands all to believe on Christ, for some it is the power of God unto life, for others a savour of death. Many are called but few are chosen.

Although I disagree with his conclusions, I congratulate Barnes for reviewing the book in question. To me its contents are very worthy of debate.

This doctrine has a history of controversy in Reformed and Presbyterian churches and in the light of contemporary thought it would do no harm for the debate to be revisited.

*Robert K Burford
Frankston, Vic*

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NOVEMBER

- 21 West Tamar parish, Tasmania – The Auld Kirk (1845), Sidmouth; about 30 communicants, elders; vacant – Don Geddes interim moderator.
- 22 Bingara-Delungra parish (3 congregations) northern NSW; about 22 communicants and 1 elder; vacant – Peter Thornycroft interim moderator.
- 23 Elspeth Slater from Canterbury, Melbourne, SIM missionary encouraging and training pastors' wives among the Gourma people, Burkina Faso, West Africa.
- 24 Western Region Chinese parish, Bonnyrigg NSW; about 30 communicants; vacant – Craig Tucker interim moderator.
- 25 As the USA celebrates Thanksgiving, pray for the advance of genuinely Biblical Christianity among its 260 million people and integrity among its leaders.
- 26 Griffith parish, NSW Riverina; about 53 communicants and 7 elders; Peter and Anna Gobbo.
- 27 Alan and Faye Canavan from Warburton, Vic. Bwanabwana language linguists/translators (WBT), Milne Bay, PNG.
- 28 North Sydney – Greenwich parish (2 congregations); about 108 communicants and 14 elders; Paul and Margaret Logan, Alex and Isabel Clark.
- 29 Presbytery of Murrumbidgee, NSW; 3 parishes, 3 home mission stations, totalling 9 congregations with 315 communicants, 140 adherents, 150 children and youth and 35 elders; several assessor ministers, 2 candidates. Philip Strong clerk.
- 30 Pray for the devolved parliament and 5 million people of Scotland, the work

of the churches and the Highland Theological College, Dingwall.

DECEMBER

- 1 Naracoorte parish, SA; about 100 communicants and 4 elders; vacant - Rod Waterhouse interim moderator.
- 2 Alex and Sybil Shaw from Epping, NSW working with Language Recordings, and the current 3-week "Wokabout" to distribute Christian recordings in PNG.
- 3 At the Jewish feast of Hanukkah pray for God's ancient Israel to see the great light of Yeshua the Messiah (Isaiah 9:2,6).
- 4 Malcolm and Mandi Durham from Ipswich, Qld, WEC agricultural missionaries in the Middle East.
- 5 Acacia Ridge parish, southern Brisbane; about 112 communicants, and 8 elders; Stephen and Beate Teale.
- 6 Graham and Sue Single from Epping, NSW, WEC administrative, pastoral and musical ministries at Bethel Church, Madrid, Spain.
- 7 All Bible work among children and especially the Scripture Gift Mission publications for street children.
- 8 Presbytery of Geelong, Vic; 6 parishes, totalling 11 congregations with 680 communicants, 240 adherents, 215 children and youth and 60 elders; 7 retired ministers, 2 under jurisdiction. Graham Hamill clerk.
- 9 Ramadan begins: during this Islamic fasting month pray that many Muslims may come to accept God's revelation in Jesus Christ his Son.
- 10 Henty parish, southern NSW; 6 congregations including also Culcairn and Lockhart, about 310 communicants and 22 elders; Peter and Lillian Greiner

- 11 John and Joanne Oakley from Gosford, NSW as they conclude their medical ministry with Pioneers at Rumginae, PNG and settle back in Australia.
- 12 Eltham parish, northern Melbourne; about 50 communicants and 4 elders; Don and Anne Elliott.
- 13 Michael and Ulrike Safari from Burwood, NSW; involved in a new Operation Mobilisation ministry to the Muslim community in Sydney.
- 14 Cessnock parish, NSW Hunter region; about 56 communicants and 5 elders; vacant – Stephen de Plater interim moderator.
- 15 Janet Cowden from Drouin, Vic. WBT librarian and archivist in Darwin since 1972.
- 16 The effectiveness of Bible correspondence courses which bring the message of Christ where often face-to-face witness is impossible.
- 17 Ministry and Mission department of the NSW Church – Ernest Noble convener; Bruce Meller superintendent.
- 18 Presbytery of Sydney: 24 parishes, 2 home mission stations, totalling 1970 communicants, 800 adherents, 775 children and youth and 137 elders; 6 retired ministers, 9 under jurisdiction, 2 deaconesses, 4 theological lecturers, 1 missionary, 2 civil chaplains, 6 ministerial candidates. Chris Balzer clerk.
- 19 "Peace" home mission station, Deception Bay, northern Brisbane; about 60 communicants and 6 elders; Robert Whiting; James Gilmour moderator.
- 20 The safety of school children through the holidays and the effectiveness of family missions, camps and other ministries to them.

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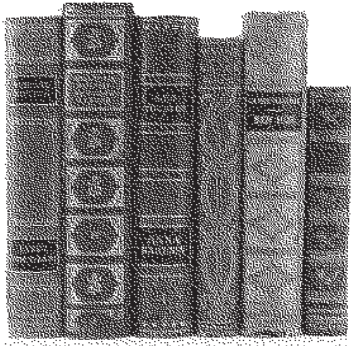
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books



Knowing Where we Stand

Peter Barnes
Durham: Evangelical Press 1998
Reviewed by Ian Smith

Peter Barnes has written a very helpful commentary on John's Epistles in the Welwyn Commentary Series. I enjoyed reading a chapter of this book each day, together with the relevant passage of Scripture. By the end of the book, I had interacted with many of the major issues of John's letters: assurance, sin, false teaching and Christian love.

One of the strengths of this commentary is its simplicity. This simplicity, however, does not come at the expense of a strong historical and theological undergirding, but is a reflection of the Johannine epistles which are renowned for their clarity and depth. As Martin Luther wrote of 1 John: "I have never read a book written in simpler words than this one, and yet the words are inexpressible".

The major theme of 1 John that Peter Barnes deals with is that of assurance. How

do Christians know that their salvation is secure? Without such knowledge there can be no joy within salvation. Peter Barnes explains how John gives three main tests so the Christian can know who is right in spiritual matters. These tests are: 1. The doctrinal test; 2. The relationship tests; 3. The obedience test.

From within this framework, readers are encouraged to allow the text of 1 John to reflect upon their life.

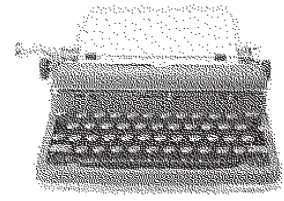
Peter raises many issues of application from both an historical and a contemporary situation. The reader is given many applications from the early church, from the Reformation and from the evangelical awakening. There is a sense in which the reader feels as though he is learning both from the text of Scripture and from the lessons of history.

One of the great strengths of this commentary is that it reads like a book rather than a commentary. It does not get bogged down in the meaning of individual words or phrases, but keeps the big picture constantly in view. In fact, the book becomes like a personal tutor who assists the reader through John's letters. This strength, however, is also the book's greatest weakness, as it does not thoroughly engage the text of John's epistles.

Knowing Where we Stand will be particularly helpful for individual and group Bible study. It is also a great aid for preaching, particularly in the areas of application and illustration. It can be given to a person from a non-English speaking background or to a personal of limited ability in reading, and they will glean from its simplicity.

The person who uses this commentary to work his way through the Johannine epistles will grow in a real sense of personal assurance. It is a rare mix of informed scholarship, simplicity and true Christian devotion.

Ian Smith is lecturer in New Testament at the Presbyterian Theological Centre, Sydney



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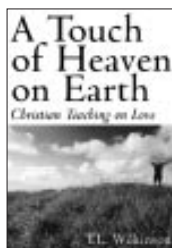
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My identity parade

On being Australian, Christian, Presbyterian and Reformed

I am an Australian and always have been. I am an indigenous Australian as truly as Australia's blacks, for whom the politically correct class want to reserve the term. I am a white Australian, though no more white than blacks are black. For simplicity we describe some as white and some as black, because it is logical to do so, and does not imply anything derogatory. It is more correct to so speak in terms of colour than ignorance, which happens when indigenous is used to refer only to some Australians.

I am a Christian Australian, but haven't always been so. Though a white indigenous Australian since birth, I only became a Christian Australian by a second birth. My first and natural birth brought me into my earthly family. My second and spiritual birth, conceived by God before the beginning of time (Eph. 1:4) brought me into my heavenly family, the people of God.

I am also a Presbyterian Australian. Though always an Australian I was neither a Christian nor a Presbyterian Australian until certain things happened. It was by God's decision (not mine) that I became a Christian. It was my decision that I became a Presbyterian, though God undoubtedly guided me to that decision.

Herein is an important distinction. Some people think that becoming a Christian is man's decision. It is not. How many have made decisions for Christ and have not been saved from their sins? Jesus said: "No man can come to me, unless the Father who has sent me draws him." What was I before I became a Christian? A sinner, like you and everyone else. All have sinned and come short of God's glory. But by the undeserved favour God has for some, many know they are forgiven sinners; they have been acquitted of their sins, and their life takes on a wholly new meaning. What was I before I became a Presbyterian Christian? I was a minister serving in another church and had done so for more than 30 years. Why then did I finally transfer to the Presbyterian church?

First, because I had become convinced that independent churches lack proper checks and balances. Our church, with its courts – session, presbytery, assembly – provides levels of accountability. Independent churches often self-destruct.

Second, because I had become con-



Dallas Clarnette

vinced that historically, of all churches, Presbyterianism preserved the most consistent witness to the historic Christian faith as defined at the Reformation. The Reformation re-discovered several lost truths.

One is the priesthood of all believers. Rome had snatched that away and put it in the hands of priests. Rome still teaches that the way to God is through the priest, Mary, and Christ and in that order. The Bible says: "Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us, through his flesh, and having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb 10:19).

A second rediscovered truth is salvation by grace through faith. Luther challenged Rome's teaching by preaching Romans 1:17, the righteous man is he who lives by faith in Christ. This annoyed Rome for two reasons. It denied Rome's teaching that the way to heaven is by our works, penances and obedience to holy Mother church, and it bothered Rome because Luther insisted that only those could be saved whom God favoured with his salvation. In other words salvation did not depend on a man's choice, but God's choice (Eph 1:4). So threats were made against Luther's life but God protected him,

A third vital truth is Sola Scriptura, which means that nothing is to be believed unless it is established on the authority of Holy Scripture. Rome had taught that the church alone could interpret the Scripture. Luther taught that the Holy Spirit is the Christian's teacher. (John 14:26, 15:7, I John 2:27). These truths are being challenged today. The Catholic church, despite many cosmetic changes has not renounced

its unbiblical doctrines. Other churches are denying the Scriptures by saying there are other ways to be saved than through faith in Christ alone. Many churches teach that salvation is man's act; he must decide to be a Christian. The New Testament teaches differently.

And today, few churches are really concerned about what the Bible says. Where the authority of the Bible is rejected, some authority has to take its place, and it is either a council of men, or some leader, but it is man, not God. Confusion follows, as we see so clearly in the turmoil in the Uniting Church over homosexuality.

The Presbyterian church has always confessed that the Westminster Confession of Faith is its subordinate standard. Every minister must adhere to it, lest he be disciplined by his church. Every elder (though this has been ignored in the past) must also know it and adhere to it, lest he also be disciplined. The confession establishes a basis upon which the faith of the church can be and is maintained.

I rejoice in belonging to a church that knows what it believes and seeks to stand true to it. Other churches may ordain women as ministers and elders; the Presbyterian church does not believe this is the teaching of Scripture despite changing community attitudes. Other churches may blur their doctrines by engaging in ecumenical activities which can compromise the truth; Presbyterians do not.

The prophet once said, "Truth has fallen in the street". Sadly, there is little concern for truth today. Pilate asked, "What is truth?" The Scriptures contain truth and they are there for all to see. In them is given the knowledge of the way to the eternal God, through his only son, Jesus Christ.

Dr Dallas Clarnette is minister of Benalla Presbyterian Church, Vic.

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