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Presbyterian

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EDITORIAL

A special anniversary 4

CHRISTMAS

Good will to men 5

The western front, 1914, was the scene of one of history's most incongruous yet precious Christmases. Leslie Stuart Carter reports.

An amazing promise 8

Matthew did not misunderstand Isaiah's prophecy of Immanuel – God with us. Murray Adamthwaite visits a vexed question.

Making the most of it 10

Paul Barnett discusses the festive season with Peter Hastie.

DEVOTION

Unstinting love 12

Gardiner Spring expounds the first and greatest commandment.

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Presbyterian churches, state by state 13

NEWS

Home Front 17

Across Australia 18

World News 19

FAITH

Christianity and Culture 21

J. Gresham Machen, one of the giants of the Reformed faith, has words of wisdom on an issue every generation must revisit.

CULTURE WATCH

Book Watch: Harry Potter 24

BOOKS

Six Modern Myths 25

Let's Study 2 Corinthians 25

PRAYER 26

PARENTING

Bridging the gulf 27

Marian Andrews ponders the generation gap.

ESSAY

Spare the rod 28

In New South Wales, the sky is about to fall in, suggests Peter Barnes.



The birth of a son

My dad was one of 12 children. Six are still on planet earth. Their average age is closer to 90 than 85. One of them with a particularly mathematical mind calculated that the accumulated age was 522 years! They're fairly particular now in attending the birthday celebrations where they all meet again, reminisce and encourage each other.

Anniversaries are of special value. They're times when we remember, look again and evaluate.

Though not an annual event, the Lord Jesus gave us the Lord's Supper so that we would remember his death until he returns. Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones, when pondering the deception of the human heart, said in respect to the Lord's Supper, "We are so stupid that if our Lord did not give us a feast to remember his death, we'd even forget that!" Christians are people who remember well what our God has done in creation, in mercy, and in his Son Jesus.

Jesus did not tell us to remember his birth "until he comes", but when we turn to John's gospel, we see the overwhelming impact of that event on John. "He was with

God in the beginning ... He came to that which was his own ... the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory ... full of grace and truth." True Christians long to take as their own, this same deep sense of wonder at the coming of Messiah.

In this month's issue of *AP* we have planned to stir you to think deeply about this anniversary. How its importance transformed men who were supposed to be at war, but drew a line at Christmas ... a line that called for peace. Paul Barnett will help us to ponder again the relevance of the birth of Jesus to a virgin mother. We will look again at the Saviour's name 'Immanuel' with Murray Adamthwaite, and push back into history and sit at the feet of Gresham Machen who was so passionately committed to the Word of Truth that it led to his dismissal from the Presbyterian Church in the USA during the heady days of early 20th century liberalism. Among other writings he defended the truth of God's Word by penning *The Virgin Birth of Christ*.

It is our prayer that through December's *AP*, your celebration of the Christian anniversary will be sharpened. Sharpened in such a way that you, like Thomas, will fall before him in awe and cry again with fresh vigour, "My Lord and my God."

Into the new millennium

During this year your National Journal Committee has worked steadily to make sure the readers receive a good and helpful magazine.



We have very much appreciated the many comments, analyses and encouragement that we have received.

The committee has asked me to contact four more people who have expertise in magazine production to come on the committee, a process that is now in motion. We look to them to help us continue to do better in the production of our National Journal.

As you are aware, we have adopted a thematic approach to the magazine. We are always grateful for reader response to our subjects. We value constructive comments as to how we can improve the quality of your magazine. If you have any ideas for future issues, especially the centenary magazine, please contact us by the end of December. Contact details are on the bottom of page 3.

I take this opportunity in the final *AP* for 2000, to thank the many writers who have contributed in many different ways to the journal. We have appreciated your efforts. Also, you are aware that the journal production is very much a team effort, for we do not have a full time editor. Without these key players in each department of the journal, we would clearly not have been in a position to produce the journal. Thank you. On behalf of the editorial team we wish you a very happy Christmas ... one in which you learn to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength."

*Robert Benn,
NJC Convener and
Acting Editor in Chief*

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Peace and good will

The 1914 truce gave, amid war's bestiality, a brief example of man's humanity to man.



After 10 September 1914, when the German offensive through Belgium and into France was finally halted in the First Battle of the Marne, soldiers from Germany, Britain, France and Belgium wallowed in mutual stalemate, while the press on both sides of the English Channel stirred up increasing hatred against the enemy. Then an extraordinary truce occurred on the Western Front.

Near Laventie, France, on the morning of 23 December 1914, a British sentry reported that several unarmed Germans were cavorting atop their trench parapets, making “come over here” gestures while a juggler performed tricks with tins and stones to applause from his comrades. A British officer, summoned from his dugout, ordered his men to keep the Germans away, since the apparently friendly proposals could be a ruse to get a close-up examination of the British trenches.

Christmas Eve was marked by heavy frost, which the troops welcomed as a respite from waist-deep mud. On that day, soldiers on the left of the British trench

Leslie Stuart Carter

lines saw about a dozen Germans emerge from the morning mist bearing boxes of cigars and bottles of beer. The British allowed them to approach, and the Germans' lone English-speaking representative asked for a cessation of hostilities and for English newspapers, cigarettes and bully beef – the canned corned beef so reviled by British troops. The exchange was accompanied by handshakes over the barbed wire and by mutual yuletide greetings between the German contingent and an increasing gathering of incredulous Britons.

No further fraternisation took place until dusk, when astonished British soldiers, still buzzing about the morning encounter, saw Saxon troops placing small candlelit Christmas trees and Chinese lanterns on the parapet of their trench. The British Tommies shouted encouragement, brandishing bottles and canned food while standing in the open behind the barbed wire.

At 11 o'clock on a lovely moonlit night, a rendition of the famed Austrian carol “Stille Nacht” came from the German trenches. British cheers and applause at the carol's finale were acknowledged by bows from the equally enthusiastic performers.

To reward their Saxon and Bavarian opponents – and following a brief discussion of possible consequences – a group of officerless Tommies crawled over the snow into no man's land. They carried bully beef, chocolate and the ubiquitous plum-and-apple jam from newly arrived parcels from home, to be exchanged for cigars and schnapps. During the food trade, a rendezvous was arranged between officers of both sides in no man's land. The result was the unofficial truce that has become enshrined in the annals of war as a striking example of man's humanity to man – when antagonists found themselves stripped of cannon-fodder status and came face to face with their enemies who shared the misery and the hopelessness of the war.

The holiday spirit prevailed unabated throughout Christmas Eve, though officers from the opposite camps were apprehensive as to what their high commands would

Such a curious situation has arisen on our left. The Saxons all today have been out of their trenches and had tea with our men halfway between the trenches. Our men were rather non-plussed, as owing to the friendly relations between the two parties, they couldn't very well take them prisoner, when one of their officers and 70 men came into our trenches and have refused to return. They insist on staying.
Major Buchanan-Dunlop
1/Leicesters

make of it. Soldiers traded names and addresses with their enemies, and vows were made to write after the war. Indeed, many lasting friendships were made that would survive long after the armistice in 1918.

A Scottish soldier produced a soccer ball, and a vigorous game took place on the corrugated earth, with caps representing goal posts. Shouts in both languages permeated the stillness. "It lasted an hour – and no referee!" wrote a German soldier of the Royal Saxon Regiment. The match ended in a 3-1 Saxon victory over the Lancashire Fusiliers.

Eventually, the British troops shook hands to bid farewell to their German counterparts, overwhelmed by meeting enemies who did not at all seem like beasts who bayoneted babies and defiled women, as cartoons had depicted them back home. Despite the "over by Christmas" vows from their leaders, Tommy and Jerry alike realised that the war would be long and savage, with new, frightful weapons employed, and that the Christmas camaraderie was unlikely to be repeated. Before ducking into their respective sandbagged trenches, British and German personnel turned and waved back to those amiable benefactors whom they would soon be trying to kill again.

Christmas Eve caroling resumed that pre-yuletide night as a sudden, fierce wind carried tones of *Stille Nacht* across to the British, who responded with *The First Noel* and *O Come All Ye Faithful* to a storm of clapping and cheers of "Bravo, Tommy!" from good-natured Saxons. As a German searchlight swept the night sky, a lone Saxon soldier, holding aloft a small candlelit Christmas tree, approached the British trenches and handed his humble symbol of yuletide across the barbed wire to the dumbfounded occupants. *The Illustrated London News* of 9 January 1915, depicted the incident with the caption, "The Light of Peace in the Trenches on Christmas Eve."

From the top of the German positions, charcoal-lighted braziers pierced the darkness, prompting the British to reciprocate. "Just like Fleet Street on Christmas

Night," wrote a British corporal to his parents. "I shall never forget it!" A plaintive appeal came from the German ranks: "English soldiers! Where are your Christmas trees?"

Given the depredations that German soldiers had wrought on both their countries, the French and Belgians had minimal fraternisation in their sectors, and both allies were openly critical of British participation in the truce. The French believed that even a temporary peace would be construed as recognition of the German annexation of Alsace-Lorraine after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. On Christmas Day the French and Germans observed a civil but less-than-cordial cease-fire to bury their dead. Distrustful French and German troops stiffly shook hands and returned to the trenches. One further meeting took place in no man's land at French instigation, in which their officers suggested that firing should cease over the holiday between their two armies, but that the Germans should fire on the British.

Christmas morning in the British sector dawned in a thick frost and an uncanny stillness in sharp contrast to the previous night's revelry. Impromptu worship services were conducted above both lines of trenches in full view of each side. Combined services allowed German and British chaplains to intermingle and to lead the mixed congregation in prayer and hymn-singing. Some soldiers joined freely in jogging in no man's land to keep out the chill. An extraordinary coincidence occurred during the no man's land gather-

Dearest Mother,
I am writing this in the trenches in my "dug-out" - with a wood fire going and plenty of straw. It is rather cosy, although it is freezing cold and real Christmas weather. I think I have seen one of the most extraordinary sights today that anyone has ever seen. About 10 o'clock this morning, I was peeping over the parapet when I saw a German, waving his arms, and presently two of them got out of their trenches and came towards ours - we were just going to fire on them when we saw that they had no rifles, so one of our men got out to meet them. In about two minutes the ground between the two lines of trenches was swarming with men and officers of both sides, shaking hands and wishing each other a happy Christmas. This continued for about half an hour when most of the men were ordered back to the trenches.

2nd Lt. Dougan Chater
2/Gordon Highlanders

Dec. 30th. Still no war!
At about lunchtime, however, a message came down the line to say that the Germans had sent across to say that their General was coming along in the afternoon, so we had better keep down, as they might do a little shooting to make things look right!!! And this is war!! A few shots came over at about 3.30pm.
2nd Lt. J D Wyatt
2/Yorks

ing when one Tommy recognised his German barber from prewar London and had his picture taken on a crate while getting a short-back-and-sides haircut.

Crude hand-painted signs appeared above trench ramparts. "We not shoot, you not shoot," read a German sign. Word of these astounding Christmas scenes reached incredulous British corps commander General Sir Henry Rawlison, who noted in his diary: "A German shouted out to our men 'Look out, we have a general coming ... so we have to fire at you but we'll aim high. You do the same for us!'"

As the morning fog lifted, a British officer and two other ranks reached the German position and requested an extension of the cease-fire to bury more dead bodies, some of which had lain in no man's land for weeks. The Germans readily agreed. The working parties, heads bared in tribute, consented to bring each other's dead midway across no man's land so they could be interred with their comrades.

Hitherto dismissed by the Allies as inflexible and morose, German soldiers were the truce's main supporters from the beginning. The genial Bavarians and Saxons contrasted with hard-line Prussians. In an isolated misadventure, a soldier of the Dublin Fusiliers was killed by a stray bullet, prompting Saxons to send over an apology to the British trench: "It must have been one of those damned Prussians!" Emphasising their regrets at the fatality, the German rolled over two barrels of beer from a captured French brewery to the English line near Le Touquet and received Christmas puddings in exchange.

Troops opposed to the historic truce remained in their positions nursing their deep-rooted distrust of the enemy while their mates intermixed, taking part in what many of them feared was the last chance to exchange more food and souvenirs. Pickelhauben, the Germans' distinguishing spiked helmets, were eagerly sought by British soldiers and traded for pocketknives, esteemed by Saxons and Bavarians alike.

Christmas Day 1914 passed into history, and with it went a great deal of the rancour

with which the opposing soldiers had marched off to war, to hymns of hate and jingoism.

The troops tentatively poked their heads above trench parapets in the first light of a snowy Boxing Day, 26 December, and the British and Germans, still reluctant to resume hostilities after the holiday euphoria, milled about their trenches, indifferent to what would have been sheer suicide 36 hours before. Groups of soldiers repaired trench breastworks and fortified their posts for the inevitable resumption of hostilities. A British corporal wrote in a letter home, "I would not have swapped yesterday for being home to Christmas dinner by the old fireside!"

A few desultory shots were fired skyward from both sides. A British officer climbed onto his parapet waving a handcrafted "Merry Christmas" flag, and a German captain countered with his own sign, "Thank you!" Throughout Boxing Day the men conversed across narrow stretches of no man's land. "How did you like our beer yesterday?" a German called out in English. "It was a bit weak, but we enjoyed it," was the cheery response.

Having exhausted their repertoire of carols the previous day, the British serenaded the Germans with such familiar standards as *Tipperary* and *There's a Long, Long Trail*. Jerry, always in better voice, responded with selections from *Die Lustige Witwe (The Merry Widow)*, by former Austro-Hungarian army band member Franz Lehár.

British troops who had been home on Christmas leave were chagrined when they got back to their lines to learn of the remarkable scenes they had missed over the previous two days. "The Allemands seemed like quite decent chaps," their mates said. "Look at these cigars they gave us! They call this stuff sauerkraut!"

Elsewhere along the Western Front that by now stretched from the English Channel south to neutral Switzerland, hostile gunfire had continued over Christmas, although on a milder scale.

The Christmas truce died hard. A few troops met in no man's land on Boxing Day afternoon, removing overcoats with the express intention of trading, but prudence prevailed, since the men could not figure

out how to account for a "British warm" or a "German gray" to their respective officers.

That evening, amid a sprinkle of snow, British General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien sent an order to commanders in the truce district: "I have issued the strictest orders that on no account is intercourse to be allowed between the opposing troops. To finish this war quickly we must keep up the fighting spirit ... I am calling for particulars as to names of officers and units who took part in this Christmas gathering with a view to disciplinary action."

No evidence exists that Smith-Dorrien's threat was ever carried out. In his diary the general added, "War to the knife is the only way to carry out a campaign of this sort."



German soldiers decorate a Christmas tree

The German high command responded in a similar vein. All further fraternisation was forbidden, and deviation from the order would lead to a transfer to the Russian front, a dismal prospect. In defiance of the menacing directives, as late as 10 January 1915, at Saxon prompting, small parties of intrepid soldiers continued to meet in no man's land. Said an understanding and equally dauntless British colonel, "I don't think they [the Germans] want to start [any] more than we do as it only means ... being hit and does not affect the end of the war!"

A group of unarmed Germans, wandering between the trenches, was warned by a British gun battery officer to get inside their barbed wire. Petulantly, they refused and sat down outside their wire, watching shells blasting their trench-bound comrades.

By New Year's Eve the Christmas truce was worldwide news and featured, with photos taken by troops in no man's land, in British and German newspapers. The blue-

collar Daily Mirror editorialised: "The soldier's heart has rarely any hatred in it. He goes out to fight because that's his job. He fights for his country ... against his country's enemies. Collectively [the enemy] are to be condemned and blown to pieces. Individually, he knows they're not bad sorts!" London's austere *Daily Telegraph* war correspondent, Ashmead Bartlett, wrote, "It seems to prove that the German soldier is a good-hearted, peace-loving individual once he is outside the influence of the Prussian military machine."

The war escalated as January 1915 came to a close. British writer A.J.P Taylor called 1915 "a year of battles which have no meaning except as names on a war memorial". British troops in the truce sector were warned by commanding officers that "nothing of the kind of Christmas will be allowed this year. You are to remain possessed by the spirit of hate, answering any advances with lead". The death penalty was announced as punishment in all sections of the British line. From the German side came similar warnings: "Any attempt at fraternisation with the enemy ... is strictly forbidden; this crime will be considered as verging on high treason."

As Christmas 1915 approached, German soldiers, enthusiastic truce participants from the onset, were ecstatic to receive a directive from company commands ordering a choir assembled for caroling "powerful enough to be heard in the British trenches!" The sobering strains of *Stille Nacht* wafted across no man's land once more – and for the last time – to whistling, cheers and riotous applause from the British ranks, but with no choral response.

To some participants, the Christmas truce was merely a lark, a respite from the daily dance with death. For others, that brief armistice promised a sudden, merciful end to the war. That's all it was, however, a short-lived, unfulfilled promise.

The above article was originally published in Military History, a US magazine which is published bi-monthly, and is available in newspapers. Subscription information: Military History, PO Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235. (www.thehistorynet.com)

ap

*We are all very peaceful ...
The Germans say they want the truce
to go on till after New Year and I am
sure I have no objection. A rest from
bullets will be distinctly a change.
Lt. Col. Fisher-Rowe
1/Grenadier Guards*

*Dear Comrades,
I beg to inform you that it is now forbidden
us to go out to you, but we will remain
your comrades. If we shall be forced to fire,
we will fire too high. Please tell us if you
are English or Irishmen. Offering you
some cigars, I remain, yours truly.
(Author unknown.)
German HG 30 December 1914*

Born of a virgin

Contemporary accounts of Immanuel gain little and lose much.

“Immanuel!” We are all familiar with this title as referring to our Lord. It occurs in magazine titles, missionary society logos, or in lines of hymns (“Jesus, our Immanuel”). The name is Hebrew, from Isaiah 7:14, meaning “God with us”. However, when Isaiah first used the term, the kingdom of Judah was facing a crisis: the kings of Israel and Aram were planning to invade. The term “Immanuel” (God with us) seems here to denote simply God’s reassuring providence: in the face of the current threat “God is with us”.

Indeed, many scholars are convinced that the prophecy of Immanuel must relate to the immediate circumstances in Isaiah’s day. “Look at Isaiah 7:16”, they say: “But before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.” This can only refer to the time of king Ahaz in the eighth century BC, they say. Further, Jewish and more lately Christian scholars have urged that the prophecy is not a virgin birth at all because the word “almah” (“young woman”) is employed. Had Isaiah been thinking in those terms, they claim, he would have used the word “bethulah” (virgin).

However, there is still that troublesome quotation in Matt 1:23, which refers the prophecy to the virgin birth of Christ. Has the evangelist, in over-zealous proof-texting, merely wrenched it from its context and “massaged it” to achieve this outcome? In an effort to defend the teaching of the virgin birth in Matthew many have argued that although the prophecy is basically about the Syro-Ephraimite war in the eighth century BC there is a secondary meaning which may well refer to the Messiah. This procedure, called “double fulfilment”, is often invoked as a way of saving a Christian interpretation of the Old Testament. I must confess that for a number of reasons I have never been happy with this kind of approach. My main difficulty with it is that Christ has said quite plainly that the prophecies in the Law, the prophets, and the Psalms (ie the Old Testament) were written about him (Luke 24:44).

When we look carefully at the context of Isaiah 7, we discover a variety of subtle overtones which go well beyond the immediate events. What was the significance of Isaiah’s son She’ar-Yashub (“a remnant will return”) whom God instructed to accom-



Murray Adamthwaite

pany the prophet in this encounter with King Ahaz? Why is the prophecy addressed both to Ahaz and to “the house of David” (Isa 7:11-17), using respectively singular and plural verb forms (these do not come out in English translation)? Why is the birth, which on the contemporary view is just a normal occurrence, called a “sign”? Why is the Assyrian invasion brought into the picture (7:17), and why talk of 65 years if the scope is a mere three or four years in the future (7:8)?

In view of these signals that the prophecy may happen some time in the distant future, the “contemporary only” view is far too superficial. Let us therefore dig a little deeper.

First of all let us look at the meaning of “almah”. Does it mean “virgin”? Both “almah” and “bethulah” are used of Rebekah in Gen 24:16,43, and it’s specifically stated



Detail from Correggio, *The Nativity*

that “a man had not known her”. Again, in Prov 30:19 “almah” refers to a young unmarried maiden; in Exodus 2:8 Miriam, probably in mid-teens, is designated an “almah”, and in Song 6:8-9 the plural “alamoth” stands in contrast to the other categories who are clearly married or sexually active. In short, “almah” never refers to a married woman. Martin Luther once offered 100 gulden to anyone who could prove otherwise. No-one ever collected!

At the same time “almah” always refers to a chaste girl. Efforts have been made to make Prov 30:19 refer to an illicit sexual relationship, but the context clearly requires that we understand it as the beauty and purity of young romantic love. Hence when Isaiah announces his prophetic vision of an unmarried but chaste girl who is yet pregnant, it is a miraculous “sign” indeed!

What then of “bethulah”? Contrary to widespread belief, it does not mean “virgin”, even though it may be translated that way in our English Bibles. Consider the following:

- In Hebrew poetry “bethulah” forms a coordinate pair with the corresponding masculine word “bachur” (Deut 32:25; Amos 8:13), and the latter simply means “young man” and nothing more. By inference the feminine equivalent likely means only “young girl” (ie a teenager).
- Hebrew is a Semitic language, and that being so, it is proper to look at the corresponding word in other ancient Semitic languages. In Akkadian, the language of ancient Mesopotamia, the equivalents “batultu” (fem.) and “batulu” (masc.) likewise denote simply a young girl or man in teenage years. If one is to indicate a virgin girl a qualifying clause must be added, “who is not deflowered”. Likewise, Ugaritic (North Canaanite) has the word “btl” which from all accounts simply means “teenage girl”.
- As to the need for a qualifying clause, the same is true in Hebrew as in Akkadian. Note how in Gen 24:16 we have both “bethulah” and the clause “a man had not known her”. Why this addition if the word already means virgin? On the contrary, on the understanding proposed here the whole description reads much more simply and succinctly: Rebekah was “beautiful, young and eligible.”

To sum up, “bethulah” should be translated in each occurrence as “teenage girl”.

Therefore, Hebrew has no single word which means inherently "virgin", yet of the available vocabulary the word which best approximates to this is "almah". Hence, if Isaiah wished to express a coming virgin birth, the best word he could have used was the one he did use!

But what about the contemporary reference? Here the boundaries are clearly set by the wording of verse 16. Most of our English Bibles translate this as follows: "For before the boy will know how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken." On this rendering the two kings are those of Aram (Syria) and Israel. Since within three years of this prophecy (735 BC) the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser eliminated the Aramaean king, the coalition's threat against Judah evaporated. It all seems cut and dried: Immanuel is born when the threat first arises, and comes to maturity when it disappears.

But who then is Immanuel on this view? Here there emerges a kind of scholastic game of musical chairs: he is either the future king Hezekiah; or he is Isaiah's own son in ch 8, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (imagine being loaded with that); or he is some unknown contemporary child. When scholar A sees problems with the second and third views he opts for the first; then scholar B sees problems with one and three, and opts for the second, and so on around. Space

forbids a refutation of each of these positions, but there are insuperable difficulties with each of them. This "contemporary-only" approach has here reached an impasse.

To escape this bind a fresh translation of v 16 is offered: "For before the boy will know how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land which you (Ahaz) are tearing apart (by your unbelieving policies) will be forsaken of her two kings."

This translation is similar to that in the old King James version, with the exception of the verb rendered "tearing apart". This same verb also occurs in Isa 7:6, albeit in a different stem, where it must take the same (quite permissible) meaning. Now, on this rendering a very different understanding emerges: The land (singular!) is not Aram and Israel (which are two lands, cf 7:8-9), but the land of promise, Immanuel's land (8:8), currently disrupted under two kings, as Isaiah notes (v 17). Both people and kings will eventually go into exile and the land be forsaken: Israel within 65 years; Judah after an undefined period. Thus in the immediate perspective lies the Assyrian invasion, but beyond that time the as-yet-unspecified Babylonian exile (cf Isa 39:6-7). Because of Ahaz' unbelief, his line is doomed! However, beyond the Exile a faithful remnant will return, and from that remnant will come the divine Immanuel child. In him will be realised all the

promises to the line of David (9:7; 11:1; cf 2 Sam 7; Psalm 89). Meanwhile, Ahaz and his ilk will not inherit the blessing.

Furthermore, Isaiah's own son, who stood by silently, underscored this prophetic vision. His name said it all: "a remnant shall return". Immanuel's advent is described in terms of both his birth, and his attainment of maturity. In his prophetic vision, Isaiah sees a number of motifs pass before him: a pregnant girl, a newly-born, a toddler etc., who comes in a setting of poverty and devastation, cf 8:22-9:1. This dismal prospect will come about because at this crucial point God's representative chose his own devices rather than faith in the LORD.

On the understanding presented above there is no need for "double fulfilment". There is the single perspective of the divine person of Immanuel who comes beyond the dissolution of the Israelite theocracy and the line of David in human hands. Yet this child who inherits the throne of David is the rightful heir: he is, as Paul insists, the one "descended from David, as preached in my Gospel" (2 Tim 2:8).

Murray Adamthwaite holds a Ph D in Ancient Near-Eastern History and Languages from Melbourne University. He is currently lecturing at Sydney University and has previously served the Presbyterian Church in Frankston (Vic) and Bassendean (WA).

Bundoora Presbyterian Church

Pastor

Bundoora Presbyterian Church is a young and vital congregation in Melbourne's northern suburbs. The church was planted in March 1993 and now has a congregation of approx. 100 people including students, workers and families.

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Interested persons should contact our Interim Moderator
Rev. Wally Gear on 03 9457 5854
Email wjgear@hotmail.com
Confidentiality is assured.



AP wishes you every blessing as we celebrate the birth of Christ.

Please note that our office will be closed from Monday December 11 until Tuesday January 9, 2001.



Unto us a child is born

Paul Barnett and Peter Hastie discuss making the most of the season.

Why do we celebrate Christmas on 25 December? Do we know the exact date of Jesus' birth?

The exact date when Jesus was born is unknown. While we are on increasingly firm ground for the date of his death – early April 33 – there's no sure way of discovering the date of his birth.

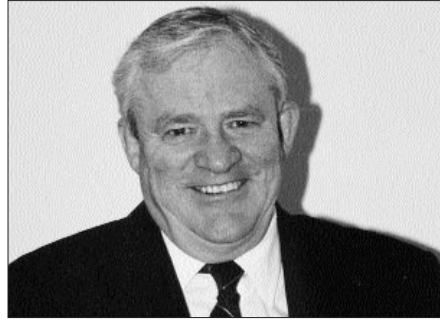
The fact that Luke tells us that shepherds were watching their flocks at night possibly argues against a date in December. At that time of the year, it would have been freezing in the high country around Jerusalem and Bethlehem. It's unlikely shepherds would have been out in that sort of weather.

From the second century on, there were debates between the Eastern and Western Churches over the right time to celebrate Easter. But to my knowledge, the date for Christmas wasn't really settled until about the fourth century. I think the first occasion was AD 336.

We need to remember that the date of Christmas was settled by a Christian emperor at a time when the church was gaining ascendancy in the Roman Empire. Paganism was a dying force. The challenge for Christians was to find a religious calendar that would be comprehensive for the whole year and include the time of Christmas and Epiphany (the appearance of Christ). It was decided to celebrate Christmas in conjunction with the festivities that marked the winter solstice – the shortest day of the year. From that point on winter began to lift and people looked forward to the coming of spring and new life. Since the period was already recognized as a well-established religious festival, Christians adopted this time of the year for Christmas. They did it to get a calendar that would be inclusive of everyone in the Empire.

If Christmas Day doesn't have a biblical basis, should we celebrate it?

Yes, I think we should. People sometimes refer to the "fallacy of origins". By this, they mean that if you can establish that there is some doubt about the origins of a particular activity, then you shouldn't engage in it. Of course, while the date of Christmas and the origin of the celebration may be unknown, I think that celebrating Christmas is a thoroughly worthwhile thing to do. Surely it's entirely appropriate



Paul Barnett

for Christians to rejoice in God becoming man for our salvation.

How should Christians celebrate Christmas? How do we claim back the day from the secular world?

In Australia, we tend to make more of Christmas than in many other parts of the world, especially the northern hemisphere where Christmas occurs in the middle of winter. Here in Australia, Christmas coincides with school holidays, end-of-year parties and other sorts of activities which makes it a festive time. So there are a lot of competing emotions. It's also been thoroughly commercialised.

But I still think that the community believes that Christmas is a special time. People treat it as an important occasion because it represents something very significant that's happened in our world.

Personally, I think the Church should maximise every opportunity that it receives as a result of the Christmas season. We ought to put our best foot forward in terms of media contact. We should make sure that church services are well-publicised. They must also be enriching experiences which make people glad that they came to a Christmas service. I think we should be leaving people with the best impression possible at Christmas time.

If Christians become too purist and ideological about the celebrations of Christmas, people simply don't come back. That's why I would urge churches to celebrate Christmas in a way that is fitting for such a significant event. We should make something of it and spread some goodwill and cheer around the place.

How should families celebrate Christmas?

That's a hard question. From one point of view, Christmas can be a very unhappy time of year. It's a reminder to us sometimes of the loss of precious family members. It can be a very hard time for widows or husbands who have lost their wives. It can also be a painful reminder to many of a broken family life. But I think that nonetheless, families, as well as churches, should make the most of it.

Most importantly, I think families should find time on Christmas Day to thank God for the gift of his Son and every other blessing which we have received from him. It's good to start the day with worship.

We also need to be sensible about the level of our festivities. We shouldn't allow costs to get out of hand. Sometimes we get ourselves into difficult financial situations because we feel that we have to buy presents for everyone. Gifts are a good idea, but they should never become a burden. Making sure that everyone receives a nice gift is the important thing, not that we get a present from every other person at the Christmas party. If each member of the family agreed to buy a present for another member on behalf of the whole family, that would be a sensible idea. It would take a lot of the stress out of shopping for so many people.

Why do Matthew and Luke present different details when they tell us about the birth of Jesus?

It's very interesting to compare Matthew and Luke. There are certainly differences in the accounts, especially in the genealogies. However, I think that the differences make it very clear that neither author was depending on the other. Both accounts are written-up versions of two different streams of Christian tradition. The differences, not only in the genealogy but in the other areas as well, point to this fact.

On the other hand, once we've recognized this, it's also important to realize the things they share in common. For instance, they both recognize the Davidic or messianic line of Jesus. Further, they are both agreed on the fact of the virgin birth. Likewise, they each mention that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. These, and many other details, show us that there is a genuine core of history under consideration. The differences simply show us that the reports are independent and have not been contrived.

We are certainly not dealing with myths and legends.

Of course, the genealogies are a problem on their own. Christians have been exercised about the differences in them from the second century onwards. Scholars have gained doctorates trying to explain them. For a start, we should be very clear that the genealogies of Jesus are different. They differ in a number of respects. They contain different names at points and run in different sequences. Matthew begins with Abraham and ends with Jesus. Luke begins with Jesus and Joseph and goes backwards to Adam.

In Jewish society, genealogies were important. Because Jews saw themselves as descendants of Abraham, family trees became an integral part of their identity. It's quite possible that over the years Jews developed certain conventions in the way in which they presented their genealogies. For example, they may not have regarded it as necessary to have given the full details of each and every generation. Perhaps Matthew followed Joseph's family tree and Luke did the same with Mary. We can't be sure. It's a possible explanation.

However, even though the genealogies of Jesus are different, they have certain things in common. They both agree that Jesus is a Jew, a descendant of Abraham. Both the genealogies regard David as a very significant figure. They are clearly Davidic genealogies. There is also the fact that both genealogies make it clear that Jesus is not the biological son of Joseph. They establish that quite differently, but they do it emphatically nonetheless.

What is the doctrine of the Virgin Birth?

The doctrine of the virgin birth asserts that Jesus of Nazareth was not born by the usual biological processes. There was no human male who figured in his conception. Instead, Jesus was born through his natural mother, Mary, as a result of direct, divine intervention. I think that what the doctrine of the virgin birth establishes is that if you didn't have it, you would still have Jesus as Messiah – but he would be a “this-worldly” Messiah. He wouldn't be the Son of God in the filial sense. Without the virgin birth, Jesus can be special and anointed. But he can't be unique.

What the virgin birth does is dramatically expand our understanding of the Messiah as the unique Son of God. He has a special relationship with God because he shares his nature. This means that when Jesus dies as the Suffering Servant of the Lord, he actually dies in the place of sinners as a perfect sacrifice. He couldn't do that if he simply came from the line of David.

David's natural descendants were all flawed.

However, the virgin birth lifts Jesus above other Davidides. It also points us to a special kind of Messiah that we all need, one who is perfect and without sin.

If we don't have a virgin birth, what are we left with?

You're left with a Jewish Messiah and Christianity becomes little more than a Jewish nationalistic cause. If Jesus does not have a divine nature, he is qualitatively no different from many of the other self-proclaimed nationalist Messiahs who died while trying to deliver Israel from her oppressors. I think that the very things that are distinctive to Christianity – like the Trinity, the divine-human nature of Christ, Christ's sacrifice for sinners, justification by faith and the resurrection – all these doctrines are part of a whole. They are dependent in some way on Jesus having a divine nature.

Can we be sure that Jesus wasn't the illegitimate son of Joseph and Mary?

We need to be very careful not to read back into the new Testament the free-wheeling sexual practices of our world. I understand that something like one in three of every first dates today ends in sexual intercourse. That would have been unheard of 50 years ago in Australia.

And in Bible times, people were even more conservative about sexual purity. Families were very protective of their women. I am reminded of how Paul betrothed the Corinthians as “a pure bride to Christ”. This shows us, I think, how highly people in the first century prized sexual purity and virginity.

All the evidence suggests that Joseph and Mary came from poor families. They were traditional, conservative Jewish folk. They were not affected by the immorality of the aristocracy, like Herod, nor were they influenced by Greek values.

Do the Gospel writers regard the Christmas story as historical fact or edifying myth?

The problem today is that the Christmas card industry and the big retailers like David Jones who put nativity scenes in their display windows give a romantic impression of Jesus' birth. There's always the subtle suggestion that the story is more myth than fact.

However, if we can get all this cultural baggage out of our minds and read the narratives as they are, the story is far from romantic. It's almost a horror story. We have a woman falling pregnant out of wedlock, the heartbreak of the betrothed man, the trying journey for Mary to Bethlehem,

the birth of Jesus in a cave or an out-house, and the killing of all the little children in the township by a paranoid king. This is hardly romantic. It's not really the material for myths. This is cold, brutal, earthy stuff. It may be that the birth narratives have been cast in a certain style, but they are nevertheless consistent with what we know of the period.

Of course, if the birth stories of Jesus have been influenced in some way by the stories about the births of Samson and Samuel, this doesn't mean that they are myth. We need to remember that there was a cultural wall between Jewish and Greco-Roman ideas. Jesus' birth narratives have no real connection with the pagan myths about the births of ancient gods and heroes. Jews had fought for centuries to keep their religion pure of all pagan intrusion. To think that the writers of the Gospels would have introduced such ideas defies all we know about their religious sensibilities.

Is Luke at odds with secular historians? Critics such as Ian Wilson claim that the birth narratives are really no different to the legend of Robin Hood, which is a mixture of truth and error.

I am not exactly sure what point Wilson is wanting to make here. I mean, Luke mentions Caesar once. He mentions Quirinius once too. Both were real people. But he tells us no story about them. Herod is the only figure that Wilson could claim has become the stuff of legend. Of course, it's true that Matthew paints Herod in fairly dramatic colours. There's no question about that. Matthew puts him in a terrible light. Herod was a phoney king who murdered and intrigued his way into the kingship. Now Matthew is not setting out to give an objective and unbiased account of Herod's reign. Nonetheless, despite the broad brush-strokes with which he paints him, his picture is entirely consistent with all we know about Herod.

We know that Herod was a brutal murderer. He killed off hundreds of people who stood between him and the throne. He eliminated the entire rival dynasty of the Macabees. He also killed his wife, Mariamne, and several of his sons. One of them he murdered only a week before he died. So Herod was a very violent man. Therefore, his command to slaughter the little boys of Bethlehem is entirely consistent with his track-record up until then.

Paul Barnett is bishop of North Sydney, and a renowned international New Testament scholar. He has published commentaries on Corinthians and books on NT history and apologetics.

Peter Hastie is issues editor of AP.

AP

Unstinting love

Love God for who he is, not who he is to you, says Gardiner Spring.

Among the most convincing signs of true religion is love to God. Love to God involves a conviction of his excellence, an inner contentment towards the revelation of his nature, and gratitude for his favours. The man who possesses this affection has reason to believe that his character differs from what it was by nature. The carnal mind is enmity against God (Rom.8:7).

Though unrenewed men may possess some true knowledge, both of the natural and moral perfections of the Deity, still they take no delight in his excellence, they feel no benevolence toward his interests. But this deep disaffection toward God is superseded in the renewed mind by holy love. As the first and great commandment is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Lu. 10:27), so the love of God is the first and highest affection of the renewed heart.

It belongs to true love always to have correct perceptions of its object. The newborn soul does not clothe the Divine Being with such attributes and only such as suit a depraved taste, and then fall down and worship him, but he loves the true character of God as it is revealed in the Scriptures; for to love a false character of God would be to hate his true character. The cause of love to God is the agency of the Holy Spirit; the foundation and motive of love to God is his intrinsic excellence. When Moses exclaimed, "Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (Ex. 15:11), he discovered an excellence and glory in the divine nature which filled his mind with esteem and inward delight.

Love to God does not differ in its nature from love to any other object. If you love your friend, unless your love be base and mercenary, it is because you see something

IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD



in the character of your friend that is amiable and lovely. "In the exercise of true love to any object there is pleasure taken in the object itself." Thus, the excellence of God is the foundation of all sincere love to him.

True love to God essentially consists in being pleased that he is just such a Being as he is. Is his wisdom unerring? His power irresistible? His purity unblemished? His goodness universal and disinterested? His justice inflexible? His grace infinite? Are his designs all eternal and immutable? These are excellencies which fill the newborn soul with pleasure and admiration. On such a Being the mind can rest as its chief happiness; and the favor of such a Being it can prefer to every other enjoyment. There is a vast difference between such an affection and that selfish and unhallowed friendship to God which terminates on our own happiness as its supreme motive and end. If a man, in his supposed love to God, has no ultimate regard except to his own happiness; if he delights in God, not for what he is, but for what he is to him; in such a sentiment there is no moral virtue. There is indeed great love of self, but no true love to God.

But where the enmity of the carnal mind

is slain, the soul is reconciled to the divine character as it is. God himself, in the fulness of his manifested glory, becomes the object of devout and delighted contemplation. In his more favoured hours, the views of a good man are in a great measure diverted from himself; as his thoughts glance toward the varied excellence of the Deity, he scarcely stops to inquire whether the Being whose character fills his mind and in comparison of whose dignity and beauty all things are atoms and vanity, will extend his mercy to him.

It is enough for him that God supremely regards his own glory. So long as God is brought into view, he feels that it were impossible for him to be miserable. His soul cleaves to God, and in the warmth of devout affection, he can often say, "Whom have I in heaven but you, and there is none on the earth that I desire besides you" (Ps. 73:25).

Here then have we one very obvious characteristic of true religion. Do you know by experience what it is to love the infinitely blessed God? You must be conscious of your love to God before you have Scriptural evidence of his love to you. Is then your heart right with God? Do you love God for what you imagine him to be or for what he is? Are you pleased with his character and do you love every part of it? Do you love his holiness as well as his grace, and his justice as well as his mercy? Do you love him merely on account of his love to you or do you love him because he is in himself lovely?

Do you then love God? If so, the question as to your own spiritual condition is at rest. If you are a friend to God, God will be an everlasting friend to you. Nothing shall separate you from his love (Rom. 8:38-39).

This is an edited extract from Dr Gardiner Spring, The Distinguishing Traits of Christian Character, 1829.

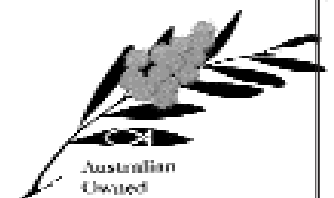
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Jamberoo: (St Stephen's) Allowrie St,

11.00am. (2nd Sun). Session Clerk:

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3.00pm. Rev Charles Kim (02) 9684 2090(C),

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Rev Tony Lang (02) 9976 2801

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94 Houston Rd, **Kingsford** 11.15am
Chinese Service, **Maroubra** 4 pm.
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Service Time: 10.30 am.
Session Clerk: Mr P Moore (02) 9958 1887.

TAMWORTH (St Stephen's)
23 Matthews St, also at **Moonbi**.
9.00am. & 6.30pm
Rev Stuart Andrews (02) 6765 8754.
Tamworth Community Presb Church,
Oxley High School Piper St Nth T'worth

10 am. Rev Keith Walker (02) 6762 5759

Manilla: Court St.
Rev. Vic Johnson (02) 6785 1627.

TAREE
Albert St. 9.00am.
Rev John Thompson (02) 6552 1082(O).

TENTERFIELD
117 Logan St.
TERRIGAL (Scots Kirk)
2 Willoughby Rd.
Rev Phillip Paul (02) 4385 2240.

WAHROONGA
Wahroonga Presbyterian Church,
Cnr. Illoura Ave. & Stuart St. 9.30am.
Rev. Murray Fraser (02) 9489 3690

WEE WAA
Mitchell St.
Mr Mark Powell (02) 6795 4259

WENTWORTH FALLS (St Andrew's)
Falls Rd. 9.00 am. Session Clerk: Mr Bernie
Tucker (02) 4757 3518

WENTWORTHVILLE
7 McKem St. **Girraween**: 15 Tungarra Rd.
Rev. David Griffin Phone: (02) 9896 3297.

WESTLAKES
Warnervale Community Hall, Warnervale Rd
S.School 8.30 am. Service 9.30 am.
Rev. Esa Hukkinen (02) 4393 5530

WEST WYALONG
Pioneer Memorial, Court St. 9.00am. &
11.00am. Also at **Barmedman, Mahda,**
Talimba & Weethalle.
Mr. Lance Jackson (02) 6972 2143.

WOLLONGONG (St Andrew's)
Cnr Kembla & Burelli Sts. 9.45am. &
6.00pm. Rev Bruce Hammonds (02) 4226
1458(H) (02) 4226 1725(O).

WOOLGOOLGA
Cnr Scarborough St. & Landrigan Close.
Rev Peter Moore (02) 6651 2301.

WOONONA
7 Gray St. Rev Peter Currie (02) 4284 4057.

WOY WOY
120 Blackwall Rd. 9.00 & 10.30 am.
Rev. Jamie Newans (02) 4342 2856

PEACE PRESBYTERIAN
Student Centre, Deception Bay State High
School 9.30am.
Pastor Bob Whiting (07) 3886 7367.

CABOOLTURE
Cottrill Rd. 10.00am. & 6.00pm.
I.M. Rev. W McKinlay (07) 3285 2104

CAIRNS
85 Sheridan St. 9.15 am. & 6.30 pm.
Rev Donald Broadwater, (07) 4036 0421(H).
Rev Russell van Delden, (07) 4054 3241 (H).
Pastor Ron Lyons. (07) 4055 1769 (H).

CALLIDE VALLEY
Biloela: Cnr. Kariboe & Melton Sts.
10.00am. & 6.00pm.
Jambin: Three Ways 8.30am.
Pastor Walter Posthuma (07) 4992 1441

CALOUNDRA
Cnr Kalinga & Ormutz Sts. 9.30am. &
7.00pm. Rev N. Thomason (07) 5493 3594

CAPALABA
74 Lyndon Rd. 8.30am & 6.00pm
Rev B Enchelmaier (07) 3824 0958

CHARLEVILLE
Galatea St. Rev Terry Sadler, (07) 4654 3188.

CHARTERSTOWERS
Blackthorn Hall, Thornburgh College,
King St. Mr. S. McDonald (07) 4787 3395

CLAYFIELD (Scots Memorial)
29 Bellevue Terrace, 9.30am.
Rev W. Savage (07) 3262 1230 (O).

CLEVELAND
Cnr Bloomfield & Ocean Sts. 10.15am &
6.00pm. Rev Brian Enchelmaier
(07) 3824 0958

COORPAROO
Emlyn St. 10.00am. & 7.00pm.
Rev Jorge Lievano (07) 3219 8012.

CREEK ROAD
PCYC Centre, 27 Narracott St., Carina
9.00 am & 5.30 pm.
Rev Peter Barson (07) 3398 3607.
Rev D. McDougall (07) 3397 5244.

DALBY
Condamine St. (cnr. Patrick St).
Rev Roland Lowther (07) 4669 7074

EUMUNDI
Memorial Drive, 10.45am. (weekly) &
6.30pm. (2nd & 4th Sunday).
Rev Desmond Morris (07) 5441 3053

GAYNDAH
Warton St. 10.00am.
Pastor Errol Shepherd (07) 4161 1916.

GLADSTONE (St Andrew's)
149 Goondoon St. 10.00am. & 7.00pm.
Rev. David Secomb (07) 4972 1058

Tannum Sands:
Cnr Pacific Drive & Ocean St. 8.00am.
I.M. Rev. J. Chandler (07) 4922 1825

GOLD COAST
Arundel: 132 Allied Drive 9.15am.
Rev Bob Carner (07) 5545 0947
Robina: Cnr University & Cottesloe Drives
10.00 am. & 6.30 pm.
Rev. Kevin Ridley (07) 5571 1416

GYMPIE
11 Crown St. 9.30am. Woolooga 11.00am.
Rev. D Cranney (07) 5482 7629(O).

HERVEY BAY (St David's)
Denmans Rd, Scarness, 9.30am. & 7.00pm.
Rev. John T Roth (07) 4124 7018.



ACACIA RIDGE
Cnr. Mortimer & Beaudesert Rds.
8.45am. & 6.00pm. Pastor Stephen Teale,
(07) 3277 0010, (07) 3344 5022 (H).

ASCOT
68 Charlton St. (Near Airport).
Rev Guido Kettmiss (07) 3216 4151.
Rev Les Hall (07) 3267 0558

BALD HILLS
58 Strathpine Rd. 8.30am. & 7.00pm.
Rev Peter Bloomfield (07) 3261 4305.

BRISBANE KOREAN
145 Ann St. 8.00am. 12.00 noon, 7.30pm.
Rev Dr M. M. Y. Kim (07) 3300 3132

BRISBANE (St Paul's)
53 St Pauls Tce. Spring Hill.
Rev A. Gardiner (07) 3831 7458(O).

BUNDABERG (Scots')
Cnr. Water & Alice Sts. 9.00am & 7.00pm.
Rev David Newman (07) 4153 2954

IPSWICH

Cnr Limestone & Gordon Sts. 8.20am.
10.00am. 6.30pm. **Coominya:** 8.00am.
Forest Hill: Church St, 9.00am.
Rev John Langbridge (07) 3294 7999.
Rev Wesley Redgen (07) 3282 9829.

ITHACA

100 Enogerra Tce, Paddington.
Service: 9.30 am. 6.30pm.
Rev. Robert Herrgott (07) 3300 6158

MACGREGOR

268 Padstow Rd. Eight Mile Plains 8.30am.
Rev Jorge Lievano (07) 3219 8012.

MACKAY

Cnr Harvey St. & Evans Ave. Mackay.
9.30am. & 7pm.

Sarina: Sarina Beach Rd. 7.30am.

Pinnacle: Red Cross Hall, 4.00pm. (1st & 3rd S'day). Rev. Jim Brown (07) 4955 3829.

MALENY

Cedar St. 9.00am.
Rev. David Grace (07) 5441 3053

MAROOCHYDORE

Okinja Rd. Alexandra Headland.
9.00am. & 7.00pm.

Rev Keith Mayers (07) 5445 9209.

MARYBOROUGH

523 Alice St. 9.00am.
Pastor John Tucker (07) 4123 5920.

MILES

Miles 80 Murilla St., 9.00am.
Dulacca Temple St., 2nd & 4th Sunday

Condamine 1st & 3rd Sunday S'time 7 am
W'time 11am Manse: (07) 4627 1180

MONTO

Bell St. 10.00am. & 7.00pm. (2nd & 4th Sunday).
Abercorn 11.45am. (1st Sunday).
Kalpowar: 7.30pm. (3rd Sunday).
Pastor Brian Hoy (07) 4166 1441.

NAMBOUR

21 Solanda St. 8.45am
Rev Des Morris (07) 5441 3053.

NORTH PINE

57 Old Dayboro Rd. Petrie. 10.00am. & 6.30pm.
Rev Neil McKinlay (07) 3285 2104

NUNDAH

14 Rode Rd. Rev Guido Kettmiss (07) 3216 4151. Rev L Hall (07) 3267 0558.

REDCLIFFE PENINSULA

WoodyPoint, Cnr. Ellen & Hawthorne Sts. 9.30am. & 6.00pm.

Scarborough: Jeays St. 8.00am.

Rev. Peter Whitney (07) 3284 2578.

ROCKHAMPTON (St Andrew's)

Cnr. Bolsover & Derby Sts. 10.00am. & 6.00pm. St John's: Parnell St. 8.30am.

Rev Charlie Kennedy (07) 4922 8241.

ROCKHAMPTON (John Knox)

Rundle St. 10.00 am. & 7.30 pm.

Rev. Jon Chandler (07) 4922 1825

ROCKHAMPTON (St Stephen's)

Burnett St. Nth Rockhampton, 8.30am.

Rev Jon Chandler (07) 4922 1825

Mt Morgan: St Enoch's, East St. 9.00am.

Rev Gilbert Jansen (07) 4938 2485.

SANDGATE

Loudon St. 9.00am. & 6.00pm.

Rev John Gilmour (07) 3261 7804.

SPRINGSURE

Charles St. 10.30am.

Emerald: High School Frazer St., 8.30am.
Rev B J Harrison Phone (07) 4984 1550.

TEWANTIN

Anglican Church, William St. 11.45am.

Rev Keith L. Mayers (07) 5445 9209.

THE GAP

1195 Waterworks Rd., 9.00am.

Rev David Niven (07) 3300 2987.

THURINGOWA -TOWNSVILLE

John Calvin, Carthew St. Kirwan.

Condon: Rev Bill Lutton (07) 4723 8022.

TOOWOOMBA NORTH (St David's)

Mary St. Also at **Geham**

TOOWOOMBA WEST

St Andrews: 57 West St. 9.00am. & 5.00pm.

Glenvale Rd: 35A Glenvale Rd. 8.00am.

Rev R. Sondergeld (07) 4633 4188.

Mr Ross Turner (07) 4634 6053

Mr Mike Stone (07) 4635 0651

Mr Wayne Harrison (07) 4634 9066

TOWNSVILLE (St Andrew's)

113 Wills St. City. 9.30am. & 6.30pm.

Rev Archie MacNicol (07) 4771 2460.

VICTORIA POINT

164 Colburn Ave. 8.30am.

Rev Brian Enchelmaier (07) 3824 0958

WYNNUM

Cnr Bay Tce & Cedar St. 9.00 am & 6.00 pm.

Rev Dr George Logan (07) 3893 1712

south australia

ADELAIDE (St Andrew's)

92-98 Archer St. North Adelaide. 10.30 am.

Session Clerk: Mr. Jim Petrie (08) 8395 6252

Largs North, Brenda Terrace. 11.00 am.

Rev R. Burns (08) 8267 1056.

ELIZABETH

106 Goodman Rd, Elizabeth South. 9.30 am

Session Clerk: Mr Bob Arstall (08) 8825 5226.

MILLICENT

Cnr Fifth & Sixth Sts. 10.30 am.

Rev Andrew Slater (08) 8733 2062.

MT BARKER

Hutchison St. 10.30 am.

Pastor Rupert Hanna (08) 8391 3151.

MT GAMBIER

Allison St. 10.00 am. 6.30 pm. Also **Allendale,**

Glenburnie, Nelson (Vic), OB Flat.

Rev R. Waterhouse Ph/Fx (08) 8723 9028

MURRAY BRIDGE

Masonic Hall 5.00pm. (1st, 3rd & 5th S'day)

Rev Wally Zurrer (08) 8296 0801.

NARACOORTE

Church St. 10.00am.

Rev Rudi Schwartz (08) 8762 1035

NORWOOD (St Giles)

79 The Parade. 9.30 am.

Session Clerk: Mr. John Clark (08) 8331 7582

PARA HILLS

174 Maxwell Rd. 10.30 am.

Session Clerk: Mr. Ian Robbie (08) 8395 1585

PENOLA

Portland St. 10.45 am. Rev. Alan Clarkson (08) 8737 2984 Also **Dergholm, Kalangadoo**

PORT AUGUSTA

Jervois St. 11.00 am.

Rev Laurie Peake (08) 8648 6777.

SEACLIFF

Kauri Pde. Seacliff. 9.30am.

Rev Wally Zurrer (08) 8296 0801.

WHYALLA

28 Ramsay St. 9.00 am.

S/ Clerk: Helen Mashford

(08) 8645 0818



DEVONPORT (St Columba's)

Edward St. **Don:** Waverley Rd.

Rev. Donald Geddes (03) 6427 8753

HOBART

(St John's) 10.00 am & 7.00 pm

188 Macquarie St. (03) 6223 7213

Rev. Robert White (03) 6278 1370

LAUNCESTON

(St Andrew's) Civic Square.

Church Office: (03) 6327 2590.

Yth. Pastor: Brett Rutherford (03) 6331 2584

I.M. Rev. Donald Geddes (03) 6427 8753

MOLE CREEK

Int. Mod. Rev. D. White (03) 6278 1370

MONTROSE

Cnr. Islington Rd. & Walker St. 10.00 am.

Rev. Steve. Warwick (03) 6272 2608.

RIVERSIDE

Eden St. Also **Glangarry & Winkleigh.**

Int. Mod. Rev. D. White (03) 6278 1370

Pastor D. L. Christie (03) 6330 2231.

ROKEBY

Presby. Community Church, Tollard Dr.

Rev. Dr. David Mitchell (03) 6223 4860.

SCOTTSDALE

George St. Bridport: Westwood St.

Mod. Rev. R. White (03) 6278 1370

STANLEY (St James)

Fletcher St. Rocky Cape, Mawbanna

Mod. Rev. D. Combridge (03) 6425 9525

ULVERSTONE (St Andrew's)

65 Main Rd. 10.00am.

Rev Daniel Combridge (03) 6425 9525.

WEST TAMAR

Auld Kirk Sidmouth.

Mod: Rev. John Britton (03) 6339 4480

victoria

ARARAT

Cnr. Campbell St. (Pyrenees H'way) and

Queen St. 10 am. Mr Norman Sharp

O. (03) 5334 3747 H. (03) 5352 4054

ASHBURTON

Junction of High St. and High Street Rd.

near Warrigal Rd. 10.15am.

Rev Peter Orchard (03) 9889 6034.

ASPENDALE

Cnr Station St. & Lyle Grv. 9.00am. &

6.00pm. Rev A. Campbell (03) 9580 0530.

AUBURN

Cnr Rathmines & Station Sts

Hawthorn East 10.00 am.

Rev S P Swinn (03) 9882 5256
BALACLAVA
 Hotham St. & Denman Ave. 10.00am.
 Rev Mike Wharton (03) 9527 3270.
BENDIGO (St John's)
 Forest St. 10.30am.
 Rev Andrew Clarke (03) 5443 6189.
BLACKBURN
 53 Gardenia St. 11.00am.
 Rev P Locke (03) 9725 6417
BUNDOORA
 Bundoora Hall, Noorong Ave. 10.00 am
 Admin: Mrs M Goodson (03) 9431 1851
BURWOOD
 (Chinese Presbyterian Church) 11.00am.
 Cnr. Greenwood & Tennyson Sts.
 Rev Dr John Elnatan (03) 9801 7645.
CAMBERWELL- Trinity
 cnr Riversdale & Waterloo Sts. 10.00am.
 Rev. Philip Mercer (03) 9836 4102
CAMPERDOWN-TERANG
 9.30 am Aug – Jan. 11 am Feb – July
Terang: 1 Warrnambool Rd.
Camperdown: Campbell & Brooke Sts.
 I.M.Rev. C Ten Broeke (03) 5562 2029
CANTERBURY
 146 Canterbury Rd. 10.30am. & 7 pm.
 Rev. Grant Lawry (03) 9836 4601.
CANTERBURY JAPANESE
 146 Canterbury Rd. 10.30 am
 Rev. Hugh Price (03) 9894 2384
CAULFIELD-ELWOOD
Caulfield: Neerim/Bambra Rds. 11.15am.
Elwood: Scott/Tennyson Sts. 9.15am &
 4.00pm. Rev Stephen Tay (03) 9505 3013.
 Assistant: Mr John Cho (03) 9571 5218
CHELTENHAM (Pioneers' Memorial)
 8 Park Rd. Cnr. Charman Rd. 9.30am.
CLIFTON HILL
 Cnr Michael & McKean Sts North Fitzroy.
 10.30 am
 Int.Mod. Rev Peter Phillips (03) 9481 4642.
CROYDON HILLS
 Good Shepherd Lutheran Primary School
 53-57 Plymouth Rd. Croydon.
 10.00am. & 6.00pm.
 I.M.Rev. John P Wilson (03) 9898 9384
DANDENONG
 51 Potter St. 10.00am.
 Rev Henri Joyeux (03) 9792 4252.
DONVALE
 Cnr. Springvale & McGowan's Rds. 9.30am
 & 6.30pm. (03) 9841 7020 (O)
 Rev Gerald Vanderwert (03) 9842 9493.
DROMANA – MORNINGTON
Dromana: St Andrew's, Gibson St. 9.00am.
Mornington (The Chapel) Cnr Strachans
 Rd. & Nepean Hwy. 11.00am.
 Rev Andrew Venn (03) 5975 9514
DROUIN
 Church St. 9am. 10.30am. 7.30pm. Sept-
 April; 7.00pm. May-Aug.
 I.M. Rev. J.C. Hood (03) 5127 1296
ELTHAM
 23 Batman Rd. 10.00 am
 Rev. Don Elliott (03) 9439 9720
ESSENDON
 Cnr Wilson & McPherson Sts.
 Moonee Ponds 9.30am. & 7.00pm.
 Rev. Paul Ridgewell (03) 9370 1281

FRANKSTON
 30 Radiata St. 10.30am. & 6.00pm.
 Rev David Kumnick (03) 9786 2976.
HAMILTON
 St Andrew's, Gray & McIntyre Sts. 10.00am.
 & 5.00pm. (last Sunday of month)
 Rev Keith Bell (03) 5572 1009
HAWTHORN
 580 Glenferrie Rd. 11.00 am. & 7.00 pm.
 Rev Dr Graham Lyman (03) 9819 5347.
KANGAROO GROUND
 265 Eltham-Yarra Glen Rd. 9.30am.
 S. Clerk: Dr R. Baldock. (03) 9437 1265
KOREAN
 16 Walnut Rd. North Balwyn.
 English language service. 11.00 am
LEONGATHA
 Cnr. Bent & Turner Sts. 10.00am.
 Session Clerk: (03) 5662 4734
MAILVERN
 161-163 Wattletree Rd. 10.30am. & 5.00 pm.
 Rev John S Woodward (03) 9509 7373.
MELTON
 Mowbray College, Centenary Ave.
 Rev Peter Owen (03) 9747 8195.
MOE – YARRAM
Moe: 34 Fowler St. 10.00am.
Yarram: Cnr. Dougherty & Montgomery
 Sts. 2.00pm. Rev Jared Hood (03) 5127 1296.
NOORAT-DARLINGTON
Noorat: Cnr Mc Kinnons Bridge &
 Glenormiston Rds. 10.30 am.
Darlington: Hall St. 8.45 am. (1st & 3rd
 Sundays) Rev. Barry Oakes (03) 5592 5220
NUMURKAH
 58 Saxton St. 11.15am. **Tallygaroopna:**
 Victoria St. 9.30am. **Cobram:** Cnr High
 and Pine Sts. (Anglican Church) 2.30pm.
 Pastor Trevor Cox (03) 5862 1621.
RESERVOIR
 81 Edwardes St. 10.00 am. & 7.00 pm.
 Rev Chris Siriweera (03) 9460 9523
RINGWOOD-HEATHMONT
 Cnr. Waterloo St. & Canterbury Rd.
 Heathmont 10.00am. & 6.30pm.
 Rev Ken Brown (03) 9870 6161.
ROCHESTER
 Cnr. Victoria St. & Echuca Rd. 11.00am. &
 7.30pm. **Timmering** 9.30 am
ST KILDA
 Cnr Alma Rd. & Barkly St. 11.00am &
 7.00pm. Rev Bob Thomas (03) 9537 1642 (O)
SHEPPARTON
 Cnr. Hayes & Leithen Sts. 9.00am. &
 7.00pm. Also **Stanhope, Kyabram.**
 Rev John Sutherland (03) 5831 6494.
SOMERVILLE
 Cnr Jones Rd. & Park Lane.
 Mr Ian Brown (03) 5977 5469
SOUTH YARRA
 621 Punt Rd. 10.00 am. & 6.30 pm.
 I.M. Rev. M. Wharton (03) 9527 3270
SORRENTO – RYE
Rye: St David's, Col'wood & Lyons Sts.
 9.30am
Sorrento: St Andrew's, Kerferd Rd. 11.00am.
 Rev. Robert Boan (03) 5984 2078.
SUNSHINE
 McKay Memorial, Anderson Rd. 10.00am.
 & 7.00pm. Rev Cor Vanderhorn (03) 9311

1661
SURREY HILLS (St Stephen's)
 Canterbury & Warrigal Rds. 10.15am. &
 7.00pm. (2nd Sun: Youth Service 7.00pm).
 I.M. Rev. Peter N Orchard (03) 9889 6034
UPPER YARRA – WARBURTON
 3471 Warburton H'way. 10.30am. & 6.00pm.
Powelltown: Main Rd. 9.15am.
 (03) 5966 2309.
WANGARATTA – REGIONAL PARISH
Wangaratta, 158 Rowan St. Yarrowonga,
 47 Orr St. Myrtleford, 78 Standish St
 Rev. Neil Harvey (03) 5721 6444
WARRNAMBOOL (St John's)
Warrnambool: Cnr Spence & Manifold Sts.
 10.00am & 7.00 pm. Sunday Night Life 5.30
South Warrnambool: McDonald St. 9.30
Woodford: Mill St. 11.00 am
 Warrnambool Office: (03) 5562 2029
 Rev Chris ten Broeke (03) 5561 5373
 Rev. Philip Burns (03) 5561 7899
WAVERLEY – KNOXFIELD
 Highvale Primary School Ashton St.
 Glen Waverley 9.30am.
 S. Clerk: Mr W. Vandenberg (03) 9878 0494.
WEST FOOTSCRAY
 141 Essex St. (Scots) 10.00 am.
 Session Clerk: Ms J Swift (03) 9687 5701
WILLIAMSTOWN (St Andrew's)
 87 Cecil St. 10.00am. & 7.00pm. (1st & 3rd.
 Sun). Rev. Bruce Riding (03) 9397 5338
WODONGA-RUTHERGLEN
 59 Mitchell St. Wodonga. **Rutherglen:**
 Community Centre, Sheridan's Bridge Rd.
 Pastor Ian Leach (02) 6024 4028.
WOORI YALLOCK
 Healesville Rd. 9.15am & 5 pm, (7pm DLS)
 Rev David Brown (03) 5964 6014.

western australia

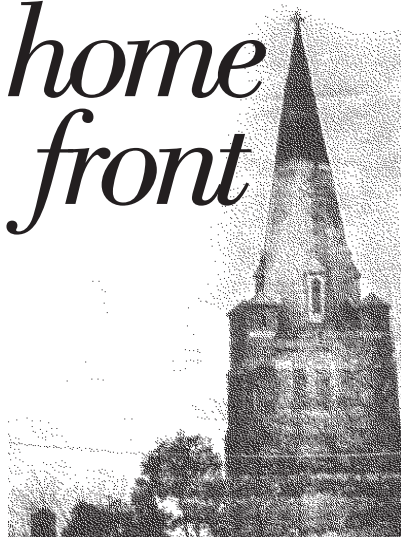
BICTON
 Harris St. & View Tce. 9.00am & 7.00pm.
 Rev Stuart Bonnington (08) 9339 3542.
FREMANTLE (Scots)
 Cnr South Tce & Parry St. 10.00 am
 Chinese Worship & Sunday School. 3.00 pm.
 Rev James Nocher (08) 9319 2208.
WHITFORDS (St Mark's)
 Anglican School, St Marks Dr Hilarys.
 9.00am. Rev Alan Perrie (08) 9447 1074



To register your church in this section of the Australian Presbyterian is an easy, low cost exercise. Facsimile the AP office on: (03) 9723 9685 or E-mail us at: austpres@bigpond.com

The Annual Fees are:
 Congregations under 50 \$45.00 plus GST
 Congregations 51 - 99 \$55.00 plus GST
 Congregations 100 or more \$65.00 plus GST

home front



News from WA

This month AP focuses on the church in Western Australia.

At the state assembly, **Rev. Keith Morris** of **Peppermint Grove** was elected as moderator of the 2001 General Assembly.

The assembly plans to establish a church office at the **St Columba's Church** building and appoint a part-time administrative assistant.



Newly elected moderator Keith Morris

WA centenary

A weekend of thanksgiving for 100 years of witness to the Lord Jesus Christ by the Presbyterian Church in Western Australia will begin on Friday 25 May 2001 with a moderator's reception at Scots Fremantle.

On Saturday 26 May a centenary thanksgiving service will be held at **St Columba's** from noon, followed by a special meeting of the assembly.

On Sunday 27 May the various moderators will minister to different congrega-

tions, and the moderator-general will preach at an evening service at **Bicton**.

The assembly is to write to the clerks of both the General Assemblies of the **Church of Scotland** and of the **Free Church of Scotland**, inviting them as the denominations which originally sent **Rev. David and Margaret Shearer** to Western Australian in 1879 to formally organise the Presbyterian Church.

Gone West

David and Doreen Hart, who had begun their patrol ministry in north-western NSW and south western Queensland are now on the **David Shearer** patrol in the mid-west area of Western Australia, an area of some 620,000 square kilometres. They have taken over from **Ray and Trudy Rutland**. **Terry Saddler** is preparing for patrol again after a serious illness, working part-time in north-western NSW.

Report from Leederville

The **Henderson Memorial Church** has been actively spreading the message of Jesus Christ in the Leederville area since 1894. The congregation has seen many ups and downs over the years. **Pastor Ross Fraser** and **Rev. Seong-Mo Byun** have been working together in the church since January 1998.

Just before they started, a large number of people decided to leave the Presbyterian Church here and form their own congregation. However two senior ladies resolved that the Presbyterian work should continue on and a home missionary was appointed by the Presbytery. There are now more than 50 adults in church most Sundays.

Rev Seong-Mo is the Presbytery of Western Australia's evangelist to overseas students who are in Perth learning English. A growing number are coming to church and afterwards have a meal, fellowship and Bible teaching in Korean and Japanese. A youth group, **Generation Unlimited**, is led



Henderson Memorial Church

by **Nathan Fraser, Katherine Cabrera** and **Katherine Morris**.

The church plans to start a second worship service and do some church planting in the **Wembley** or **North Perth** area.

Manilla takes gold

St Andrews Presbyterian Church, **Manilla, NSW**, held a great Kids' Club in the September holidays, with about 80 children from the state primary school and the local Catholic school coming each day to join in the fun. The theme was naturally "Go for Gold".

Events included their own Olympic Opening Ceremony in which **Margaret Dekkers**, a member of the congregation who had run in the Olympic torch relay came running in with the torch to light the cauldron. Each morning the kids were involved in a variety of crafts, Olympic team events and Bible stories. Each team represented a country at the Olympics and competed for medals and had their own war cries.

Thursday night saw a wonderful concert for the parents. The church hall was filled to hear the singing and see the plays and performances. The club is a great outreach, as many of the kids and families reached have no other contact with the gospel. Some members of the team will be going to **Bowral** and **Mittagong** to help the church there run a similar holiday club in January.



Manilla holiday program

Committed to caring

Braemar was founded by the Presbyterian Church in 1952 and now cares for more than 200 people in five facilities located at **East Fremantle, Bicton** and **Willagee**, which together provide a major community service. The facilities include independent living units (**East Fremantle**) where residents care for themselves; hostels (**Bicton** and **Willagee**) where residents enjoy the security of having carers avail-

able to help them, if required; and a nursing home (East Fremantle) where comprehensive support is provided.

The aim is to help residents live full and meaningful lives in a comforting and supportive environment, according to the chief executive officer of Braemar Presbyterian Homes for the Aged, **Mr Glenn Muskett**. Mr Muskett and his family worship at the **Whitfords Presbyterian Church**.



Braemar Homes

Kilnoorat appointments

Rev. Philip Mercer (Warrnambool) has accepted a call to Camberwell (Vic) and concluded his ministry at Warrnambool on 26 November. **Rev. Alan Every** will demit the Koroit-Port Fairy charge from 31st December, and **Rev. Philip Burns** is the interim moderator-designate. Mr Burns left his part-time appointment as assistant in Koroit-Port Fairy to become full-time associate at Warrnambool, along with **Rev. Chris ten Broeke** from 1 December. Meanwhile, **Rev. Barry Oakes** (Noorat) is now the interim moderator of the Camperdown/Terang charge.

Nelson camp

A very successful youth camp was held at **Nelson** (Vic) for youth of **Kilnoorat Presbytery** in October, when 11 young people from Hamilton, Portland, Koroit and Warrnambool heard studies on the topic 'Evidence for faith: If Jesus wasn't God he deserved an Oscar!' led by **Rev. Philip Burns**. Another camp is being planned for February.

An old commandment

St Andrew's at Reservoir, Victoria recently had staged a re-enactment of the Ten Commandments by the children as part of their Sunday School anniversary. This was followed by the 31st annual missionary convention during a week-long series of functions which included an egg and bacon prayer breakfast; a video night

and a convention dinner with guest speaker **Rev. Keith Black**, convener of the World Evangelism Committee.

PWA at Toukley

The **Central Coast Presbytery** group of PWA held their Rally at **St Davids Church, Toukley**, last August. **Mrs Jean Beaton** reported that 41 people attended the rally, opened by the Parish minister, **Rev. Peter Dunstan**, with speaker **Mrs Rhonda Daley**. **Mrs Catherine Halsall** of the Gillespie Library addressed a market project lunch on 30 October.

across australia



Negative "reform"

The **Anglican Synod of the Diocese of Sydney** opposes the report of the NSW Law Reform Commission Review of the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977. The church noted: "We consider that the NSWLR's proposals, if adopted, will significantly restrict the freedom of members of a religious group to practise their religion."

The proposals would mean the Church could no longer discriminate about the provision of religious services such as baptism, marriage and holy communion, or about who uses church premises. Church exemptions for appointments would be significantly narrowed.

"The NSMRC report touches sharply on religious and specifically Christian attitudes and practices," said **Rev. Dr Peter Jensen**. "There is widespread disquiet among the churches and other religions." Dr Jensen was supported by **Justice Peter Young**, who said: "Some rights are individual rights and some are group rights. Anti-discrimination laws usually support individual rights, but not group rights. We are mainly concerned with group rights; we are interested in freedom of religion."

Mark Payne, Sydney Diocesan Secretary, said: "While people still speak of 'freedom of religion', increasingly when you scratch

the surface, it becomes apparent that many actually mean 'freedom from religion'."

Mr Ray Hoekzema, president of the **NSW Council of Churches**, which also represents the Presbyterian Church, endorses the Anglican stand.

Backing for a cappella

A Russian a cappella vocal-group, **LIRA**, from St. Petersburg, is seeking sponsors. The group has two women and three men, who have trained either as opera singers or as choir conductors in St. Petersburg Conservatory. The group's large repertoire includes sacred, folk and secular Russian music, as well as romances and arias from operas by Russian composers. They aim to make Russian Church music well known in other regions. For more details, e-mail: org@lira.sp.ru Or by fax, the number is 1(253) 423 0628.

Secret Muslim missions

When it comes to the Middle East, North Africa and many other parts of the Muslim world, little is said in mission magazines. This is because a number of Islamic research agencies monitor most mission magazines and will take steps to end the mission activity.

Not long ago a Western visitor to one Arab country had the privilege of meeting a small group of secret believers, one of whom was a pastor. Somehow the visitor obtained a photograph which he later published in a magazine in the West. Before long the pastor was arrested. By the time it was learned of his arrest, he was in hospital recovering from torture at the hands of the religious police.

This is only one of several such incidents, yet God is obviously at work. More Muslims are coming to Christ today than ever before in history, according to those in the field.

Someone who works among Muslims suggested the following prayer points: Pray that we may be effective witnesses, for a close walk with Jesus and for personal holiness, for model marriages and family life, for fluency in language and understanding of local culture, for diligence in learning to communicate the Gospel meaningfully, for boldness and wisdom when witnessing, for vision and persevering faith, for unity and love in the team, for respect and acceptance in the local community, and for close national friends.

Resisting prostitution

Linda Watson spent 20 years as a prostitute and running a brothel, and now runs a prostitute rescue ministry in Perth. She was

recently invited by a South Australian member of Parliament, **Caroline Schaefer**, to speak to a group of SA Legislative Councillors about the proposed Bill to legalize prostitution in that State.

Her strong plea to these Councillors was: "Don't legalise prostitution!" She said: "I was sexually abused at the age of 12 and left school at 13. I ended up as a single mother with three kids and doing it tough. Then I got a job with a lawyer who introduced me to a madam – one of his clients. She said I would make good stock. That's how they saw us girls in the business – stock!"

The emotional damage she suffered is still with her: "More than 85% of the girls in the sex trade do drugs, they take drugs to ease the pain. They start on the alcohol and the dope, and then the dealers offer them speed and cocaine in the brothel rooms to help them get through the night."

Even though the girls earn a lot of money – many up to \$1000 a night – they don't keep it because it all goes on drugs and other things.

"When they come to my House of Hope, some of them don't even have a pair of knickers. They have earned thousands of dollars, but they have nothing. We give them a home, food and clothes, and we give them love. We started last year (1999) in early August, and we now have helped over 300 girls." She emphasized that prostitution and drugs always go together. "Legalisation would give prostitution the government stamp of approval. The psychological damage to the girls is such that they lose any sense of self-worth."

(This is an edited extract from an article in New Life magazine)

A biblical Crown

Crown Financial Ministries USA is pleased to announce the establishment of Crown Financial Ministries in Australia.

Crown Financial Ministries is an inter-denominational ministry that trains people in a small group setting to apply the financial principles from the Bible to their everyday lives. The course is designed to be led and administered by the local church.

The course teaches what the Bible says

about handling money (there are more than 2350 verses concerning money). Topics include debt, saving, spending, investing, earning an income, giving, and teaching our children how to handle money.

For more information contact Wesley Leake, Australian director on 07 33488581

Wings to the Word

Plans are well under way for **Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF)** to celebrate 50 years of operations in Papua New Guinea throughout 2001. A number of major events are planned in Sydney. MAF's theme will be "Giving Wings to the Word", and included in the celebrations will be a dinner on 10 February, an Auster to PNG 7/4/51 celebration on 7 April at Bankstown Airport, and an open day (and joy flights) on 20 October.

MAF is seeking contact with all past staff and contacts throughout the past 50 years, in preparation for these celebrations in 2001. Contact **Les Hewatt** on (02) 94842178 or by email **Phil Lamb** at plamb@2cba.org.au

Cooma 2001 cancelled

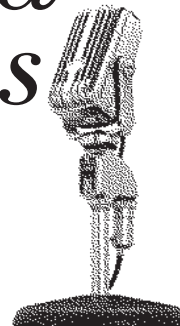
The **Australian Christian Music Seminar** held annually at Pacific Lodge at Cooma, NSW, since 1978 will not be held in January. It will return in January 2002. The organising group reaffirmed their commitment to encouraging those in creative fields to use their skills in ministry for Christ and the Church.

HCJB expansion

Heralding Christ Jesus' Blessing, a world radio-broadcasting organisation, plans to set up a quality short-wave broadcast signal in Kununnurra, Western Australia, through which they hope to reach about 60 per cent of the world's people, including India, with a very good signal.

HCJB has lodged an application for an international broadcasting licence. It seeks prayer that funding will be made available to install stage 1 – a 100kw transmitter, rotating aerial system and infrastructure.

world news



Billy Graham preaches again

After 13 weeks at a United States clinic, **Billy Graham** has led his second crusade this year in Jacksonville, Florida, from November 2 to 5. Graham challenged the crowds to trust Christ rather than putting their faith in any political leader or social policy. Crowds averaged more than 55,000 a night with an average of 2300 responding to the invitation of commitment to Christ.

Greek pastors face trial

Voice of the Martyrs reports 11 evangelical pastors face trial for operating their churches without an official "House of Prayer" licence. **Fotis Romeos** of the **Greek Evangelical Alliance** has called on the international community to protest this persecution as "not representing the convictions and spirit of the majority of Greek people".

Alpha on TV

Sir David Frost, the British talk show host, has agreed to host a presentation of the Alpha course on UK television. The 10-week series has begun filming at **Holy Trinity Brompton**, London, where it originated. The series will follow a group of 12 people through the course and see if their attitude to the Christian faith has changed as a result of the course. *Source: Alive Magazine.*

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Revival in persecution

In Sudan, despite persecution, some churches are experiencing revival. The **World Evangelical Fellowship** believes that more Muslims are becoming Christians in Sudan than anywhere else in the world. Christians are standing steadfast for their faith and winning many of their persecutors to Christ. *Source: Alive Magazine.*

A sweeter life

Life and Work magazine reports that **Barry Batchelor**, an Edinburgh chef, has gone to Ethiopia to help prostitutes make luxury chocolates and sweets. The Mission project, **Women at Risk**, aims to teach women skills to give them an alternative to prostitution.

New Turks/Thai

In Turkey few of the 65 million have ever seen a Bible, and the only version available is in an outdated language. The **Turkish Bible Society**, and the **United Bible Society** have decided the only way to overcome this is to translate the Bible again. The new translation will be available this year. *Source: Crossroad, Middle East Christian Outreach.*

New Life reports that translators with **Thailand's Bible Society** are working on a new translation of the Bible, based on the New International Version. The new translation will replace the 30-year old version still in use.

Fears for Indonesian Christians

A call for prayer has been launched on behalf of the 100,000 Christians on the Indonesian island of Ambon. The Christian community places little faith in the Indonesian military or local police to provide protection from Muslim militants. *Compass Direct* reports... "If there are no ships waiting to evacuate them, they will be forced to choose between Islam or death."

Indonesian update

Open Doors has been asked to run nationwide seminars in **Indonesia** to help local Christians stand strong in the face of persecution. Christians share their experiences. One church leader in Padang told how his church had been burnt down. There is the constant threat of the Muslim teaching, which says Christians are immoral and cruel people. **Open Doors** reports that more than 3000 people have been united together for the first time and that by God's grace good foundations have been laid to help the church move forward.

Staines murderer sentenced

An Indian court on 2 October sentenced a 13-year-old boy to 14 years of imprisonment for being part of the mob that burned Australian missionary **Graham Staines** and his two sons to death in January 1999. The trial of 14 others, including the prime suspect **Dara Singh**, is continuing.

Persecution ahead?

The Hindu fundamentalist organisation **Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)** held a three-day meeting in the Indian city of Agra to discuss the role of foreign Christian missionaries in the country. Nearly 75,000 members of the RSS were expected to attend the three-day conference in October.

Christians languish in camps

Thousands of Christians affected by religious conflicts in Kaduna in northern Nigeria are languishing in refugee camps across the state without receiving help from the government. Many have died in the camps as a result of the outbreak of disease, lack of medical attention and insufficient relief aid.

Rev. Dr. Fred Odutola, head of the **Nigerian Bible Society**, recently reported that about 875 Christians were killed and 800 churches were destroyed during the February and May religious clashes between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna.

Child soldiers rehabilitated

A new charity has been launched in Liberia to rehabilitate 20,000 children used as soldiers in the country's civil war. The **Back-to-School Project**, supported by **Jubilee Action** together with Christian partners in Liberia, aims not only to place children in school-some for the first time-but provide trauma counselling and schemes to reintegrate them into their communities. Abandoned and orphaned children will also be helped with income-generating schemes for when they leave school. One-quarter of the combatants in the civil war were children. An estimated 300,000 child soldiers are involved in conflicts worldwide.

Terrorism in Philippines

More than 250,000 refugees have fled their homes in the southern Philippines as conflict rages between the government and Islamic rebels: the worst violence seen in Asia's only predominantly Christian nation in 25 years. The **Moro Islamic**

Liberation Front, fighting for an independent Islamic state, has planted bombs which have killed and injured dozens of civilians, and used local people as human shields. Further south another rebel group, **Abu Sayyaf**, has been seizing and holding hostages since last March, including tourists and journalists. One hostage, a church leader, was killed by rebels during a rescue attempt after being singled out for torture by his captors.

Pavilion of hope

Thousands of people heard the gospel in the whale-shaped Pavilion of Hope at **World Expo 2000** in Hanover, Germany. Evangelistic films were shown in six languages and multilingual volunteers helped with prayer and counseling. The **Gideon Association** distributed or re-stocked Scripture in all hotels within a 100-kilometre radius around Hanover. According to **IDEA** news agency, more than 950,000 people, mostly under 25, visited the exhibition, which closed on 31 October.

London's Arabic bookshop

The only Arabic bookshop selling Bibles and Christian books, audio and video tapes in Arabic has now opened in the heart of the Muslim Community in the West End of London, England. The second day after the **Agape Arabic Christian Centre** opened a man put his faith in Christ. The vision is to share Jesus openly with residents and to reach out to Arabic speaking tourists. The centre includes a coffee shop supplied by an Arabic restaurant.

A merciful arrest

Police in Nepal saved the lives of Christians by arresting them and taking their van. A musical team from an Indian church recently traveled to Tikapur, Nepal, to attend a church conference in October, reports **India Missions Association**. Hours before they were scheduled to return to India, police arrested the team leader and confiscated their van. Several officers then used the van for a personal trip to a town 240 kilometres away. Robbers attacked as it traveled through a forest, expecting the van to be full of Christians. They planned to kill them and take their equipment, but police jumped out of the vehicle and shot at the robbers, forcing them to flee. When the team leader told the police chief that God used his arrest to protect the Christians, the chief agreed that the team was blessed and decided to release them. The pastor then preached to the police officers at the station and prayed with them.

Christianity and culture

These apparent opposites can and must be reconciled in faith.

One of the greatest of the problems that have agitated the Church is the problem of the relation between knowledge and piety, between culture and Christianity. This problem has appeared, first of all, in the presence of two tendencies in the Church – the scientific or academic tendency, and what may be called the practical tendency.

Some men have devoted themselves chiefly to the task of forming right conceptions as to Christianity and its foundations. To them no fact, however trivial, has appeared worthy of neglect; by them truth has been cherished for its own sake, without immediate reference to practical consequences.

Some, on the other hand, have emphasised the essential simplicity of the gospel. The world is lying in misery, we ourselves are sinners, men are perishing in sin every day. The gospel is the sole means of escape; let us preach it to the world while yet we may. So desperate is the need that we have no time to engage in vain babblings or old wives' fables. While we are discussing the exact location of the churches of Galatia, men are perishing under the curse of the law; while we are settling the date of Jesus' birth, the world is doing without its Christmas message.

The representatives of both of these tendencies regard themselves as Christians, but too often there is little brotherly feeling between them. The Christian of academic tastes accuses his brother of undue emotionalism, of shallow argumentation, of cheap methods of work. On the other hand, your practical man is ever loud in his denunciation of academic indifference to the dire needs of humanity. The scholar is represented either as a dangerous disseminator of doubt; or else as a man whose faith is a faith without works.

But if the problem appears thus in the presence of different tendencies in the Church, it becomes yet far more insistent within the consciousness of the individual. If we are thoughtful, we must see that the desire to know and the desire to be saved are widely different. The scholar must apparently assume the attitude of an impartial observer – an attitude which seems absolutely impossible to the pious Christian laying hold upon Jesus as the only Saviour from the load of sin. If these



J. Gresham Machen

two activities – on the one hand the acquisition of knowledge, and on the other the exercise and inculcation of simple faith – are both to be given a place in our lives, the question of their proper relationship cannot be ignored.

The problem is made for us the more difficult of solution because we are unprepared for it. Our whole system of school and college education is so constituted as to keep religion and culture as far apart as possible and ignore the question of the relationship between them. On five or six days in the week, we were engaged in the acquisition of knowledge. From this activity the study of religion was banished. We studied natural science without considering its bearing or lack of bearing upon natural theology or upon revelation. We studied Greek without opening the New Testament. We studied history with careful avoidance of that greatest of historical movements which was ushered in by the preaching of Jesus. In philosophy, the vital importance of the study for religion could not entirely be concealed, but it was kept as far as possible in the background.

On Sundays, on the other hand, we had religious instruction that called for little exercise of the intellect. Careful preparation for Sunday school lessons, as for lessons in mathematics, was unknown. Religion seemed to be something that had to do only with the emotions and the will, leaving the intellect to secular studies. What wonder that after such training we came to regard religion and culture as belonging to two entirely separate compartments of the soul, and their union as involving the destruction of both?

Upon entering the Seminary, we are suddenly introduced to an entirely different procedure. Religion is suddenly

removed from its seclusion; the same methods of study are applied to it as were formerly reserved for natural science and for history. The difficulty is perhaps not so much that we are brought face to face with new doubts as to the truth of Christianity. Rather is it the conflict of method, of spirit that troubles us. The scientific spirit seems to be incompatible with the old spirit of simple faith. In short, almost entirely unprepared, we are brought face to face with the problem of the relationship between knowledge and piety, or, otherwise expressed, between culture and Christianity.

This problem may be settled in one of three ways. In the first place, Christianity may be subordinated to culture. That solution really, though to some extent unconsciously, is being favoured by a very large and influential portion of the Church today. For the elimination of the supernatural in Christianity – so tremendously common today – really makes Christianity merely natural. Christianity becomes a human product, a mere part of human culture. But as such it is something entirely different from the old Christianity that was based upon a direct revelation from God. Deprived thus of its note of authority, the gospel is no gospel any longer; it is a cheque for untold millions – but without the signature at the bottom. So in subordinating Christianity to culture we have really destroyed Christianity, and what continues to bear the old name is a counterfeit.

The second solution goes to the opposite extreme. In its effort to give religion a clear field, it seeks to destroy culture. This solution is better than the first. Instead of indulging in a shallow optimism or deification of humanity, it recognises the profound evil of the world, and does not shrink from the most heroic remedy. Salvation must be the gift of an entirely new life, coming directly from God. Therefore, it is argued, the culture of this world must be a matter at least of indifference to the Christian.

Now in its extreme form this solution hardly requires refutation. If Christianity is really found to contradict that reason which is our only means of apprehending truth, then of course we must either modify or abandon Christianity. We cannot therefore be entirely independent of the

achievements of the intellect. Furthermore, we cannot without inconsistency employ the printing press, the railroad, the telegraph in the propagation of our gospel, and at the same time denounce as evil those activities of the human mind that produced these things.

In its extreme form, therefore, involving the abandonment of all intellectual activity, this second solution would be adopted by none of us. But very many pious men in the Church today are adopting this solution in essence and in spirit. They admit that the Christian must have a part in human culture. But they regard such activity as a necessary evil – a dangerous and unworthy task but necessary. Such men can never engage in the arts and sciences with anything like enthusiasm.

Such a position is really both illogical and unbiblical. God has given us certain powers of mind, and has implanted within us the ineradicable conviction that these powers were intended to be exercised. The Bible, too, contains poetry that exhibits no lack of enthusiasm, no lack of a keen appreciation of beauty. With this second solution of the problem we cannot rest content. Despite all we can do, the desire to know, and the love of beauty cannot be entirely stifled, and we cannot permanently regard these desires as evil.

A third solution, fortunately, is possible – namely consecration. Instead of destroying the arts and sciences or being indifferent to them, let us cultivate them with all the enthusiasm of the veriest humanist, but at the same time consecrate them to the service of our God. Instead of stifling the pleasures afforded by the acquisition of knowledge or by the appreciation of what is beautiful, let us accept these pleasures as the gifts of a heavenly Father. Instead of obliterating the distinction between the Kingdom and the world, or on the other hand withdrawing from the world into a sort of modernized intellectual monasticism, let us go forth joyfully enthusiastically to make the world subject to God.

Certain obvious advantages are connected with such a solution of the problem. In the first place, a logical advantage. A man can believe only what he holds to be true. We are Christians because we hold Christianity to be true. But other men hold Christianity to be false. Who is right? That question can be settled only by an examination and comparison of the reasons adduced on both sides. It is true, one of the grounds for our belief is an inward experience that we cannot share – the great experience begun by conviction of sin and conversion and continued by communion with God – an experience which other men do not possess, and upon which, therefore, we

cannot directly base an argument. But if our position is correct, we ought at least to be able to show the other man that his reasons may be inconclusive. And that involves careful study of both sides of the question.

Furthermore, the field of Christianity is the world. The Christian cannot be satisfied so long as any human activity is either opposed to Christianity or out of all connection with Christianity. Christianity must pervade not merely all nations, but also all of human thought. The Christian, therefore, cannot be indifferent to any branch of earnest human endeavour. The Church must seek to conquer not merely



Luce Library, Princeton

every man for Christ, but also the whole of man.

There are two objections to our solution of the problem. If you bring culture and Christianity thus into close union, in the first place, will not Christianity destroy culture? Must not art and science be independent in order to flourish? We answer that it all depends upon the nature of their dependence. Subjection to any external authority or even to any human authority would be fatal to art and science. But subjection to God is entirely different. Dedication of human powers to God is found, as a matter of fact, not to destroy but to heighten them. God gave those powers. He understands them well enough not bunglingly to destroy His own gifts.

In the second place, will not culture destroy Christianity? Is it not far easier to be an earnest Christian if you confine your attention to the Bible and do not risk being led astray by the thought of the world? We answer, of course it is easier. Shut yourself up in an intellectual monastery, do not disturb yourself with the thoughts of unregenerate men, and of course you will find it easier to be a Christian, just as it is easier to be a good soldier in comfortable winter quarters than it is on the field of battle. You save your own soul – but the Lord's enemies remain in possession of the field.

But by whom is this task of transforming the unwieldy, resisting mass of human thought until it becomes subservient to the gospel to be accomplished? To some extent, no doubt, by professors in theological seminaries and universities. But the ordinary minister of the gospel cannot shirk his responsibility.

No matter what his station in life, the scholar must be a regenerated man – he must yield to no one in the intensity and depth of his religious experience. We are well supplied in the world with excellent scholars who are without that qualification. They are doing useful work in detail in Biblical philology, in exegesis, in Biblical theology, and in other branches of study. But they are not accomplishing the great task, they are not assimilating modern thought to Christianity, because they are without that experience of God's power in the soul which is of the essence of Christianity. They have only one side for the comparison. Modern thought they know, but Christianity is really foreign to them.

During the past 30 years there has been a tremendous defection from the Christian Church. It is evidenced even by things that lie on the surface. For example, by the decline in church attendance and in Sabbath observance and in the number of candidates for the ministry. What is the cause of this tremendous defection? For my part, I have little hesitation in saying that it lies chiefly in the intellectual sphere. Men do not accept Christianity because they can no longer be convinced that Christianity is true. It may be useful, but is it true?

Other explanations, of course, are given. The modern defection from the Church is explained by the practical materialism of the age. Men are so much engrossed in making money that they have no time for spiritual things. That explanation has a certain range of validity. But the defection from Christianity is far broader than that. The chief obstacle to the Christian religion today lies in the sphere of the intellect.

That assertion must be guarded against two misconceptions. In the first place, I do not mean that most men reject Christianity consciously on account of intellectual difficulties. On the contrary, rejection of Christianity is due in the vast majority of cases simply to indifference. Only a few men have given the subject real attention. The vast majority of those who reject the gospel do so simply because they know nothing about it. But whence comes this indifference? It is due to the intellectual atmosphere in which men are living. The modern world is dominated by ideas which ignore the gospel. Modern culture is not

altogether opposed to the gospel. But it is out of all connection with it. It not only prevents the acceptance of Christianity. It prevents Christianity even from getting a hearing.

In the second place, I do not mean that the removal of intellectual objections will make a man a Christian. No conversion was ever wrought simply by argument. A change of heart is also necessary. And that can be wrought only by the immediate exercise of the power of God. But because intellectual labour is insufficient it does not follow, as is so often assumed, that it is unnecessary. God may, it is true, overcome all intellectual obstacles by an immediate exercise of his regenerative power. Sometimes he does. But he does so very seldom. Usually he does not bring into the Kingdom, entirely without preparation, those whose mind and fancy are completely dominated by ideas which make the acceptance of the gospel logically impossible.

Modern culture is a tremendous force. It affects all classes of society. It affects the ignorant as well as the learned. What is to be done about it? In the first place, the Church may simply withdraw from the conflict. She may simply allow the mighty stream of modern thought to flow by unheeded and do her work merely in the back-eddies of the current.

If the Church is satisfied with that alone, let her give up the scientific education of her ministry. Let her assume the truth of her message and learn simply how it may be applied in detail to modern industrial and social conditions. Let her give up the laborious study of Greek and Hebrew. Let her abandon the scientific study of history to the men of the world. In a day of increased scientific interest, let the Church go on becoming less scientific. In a day of increased specialisation, of renewed interest in philology and in history, of more rigorous scientific method, let the Church go on abandoning her Bible to her enemies. But the great current of modern culture will sooner or later engulf her puny eddy. God will save her somehow – out of the depths. But the labour of centuries will have been swept away. God grant that the Church may not resign herself to that.

Yet the culture of today cannot simply be rejected as a whole. It is not like the pagan culture of the first century. It is not wholly non-Christian. Much of it has been derived directly from the Bible. There are significant movements in it, going to waste, which might well be used for the defence of the gospel. The situation is complex. Some of modern thought must be refuted. The rest must be made subservient. But nothing in it can be ignored.

The situation is desperate. It might discourage us. But not if we are truly Christians. Not if we are living in vital communion with the risen Lord. If we are really convinced of the truth of our message, then we can proclaim it before a world of enemies; then the very difficulty of our task, the very scarcity of our allies becomes an inspiration; then we can even rejoice that God did not place us in an easy age, but in a time of doubt and perplexity and battle.

The Church is puzzled by the world's indifference. She is trying to overcome it by adapting her message to the fashions of the day. But if, instead, before the conflict, she would descend into the secret place of meditation, if by the clear light of the gospel she would seek an answer not merely to the questions of the hour but, first of all, to the eternal problems of the spiritual world, then perhaps, by God's grace, through his good Spirit, in his good time, she might issue forth once more with power, and an age of doubt might be followed by the dawn of an era of faith.

J. Gresham Machen was one of the 20th century's greatest writers and theologians, and a founding professor at Westminster Theological Seminary. This article is an edited extract from an address to Princeton Seminary at the commencement ceremony of 1912. ap



Director/Teacher

Tregear Presbyterian Preschool Kindergarten
(an activity of the Tregear Presbyterian Community Church)

Applications are invited for the above position to commence Term 1, 2001. This 40 place Preschool was established in 1973 as part of the Tregear Presbyterian Church and is located on the corner of Ellsworth Drive and Shackleton Avenue Tregear.

Essential Requirements:

Degree/Diploma Early Childhood Education
Ability to satisfy the criteria for authorised supervisor as determined by DOCS
Relevant experience working with children 3-6 years
Staff management, leadership and administrative skills
Demonstrated ability to work in partnership with families
Effective communication skills
Current Senior First Aid Certificate (or willingness to obtain)

Duties: Responsible to Preschool Management Committee for day to day management of the Preschool including co-ordination of programmes, applications for funding, staff management, administrative duties, liaison with parents and provision of quality care and education for the children enrolled at the Preschool.

Hours of duty: 8:30am to 3:30pm Mon-Fri

Salary & Conditions: as per the Teachers (Non-Government Pre-Schools) (State) Consolidated Award

Enquiries: Russell Baker Mobile 0416 034 314

Written Applications clearly addressing the above criteria should be forwarded to the **Chairperson, Tregear Presbyterian Preschool Committee, PO Box E230, Emerton NSW 2770** by Wednesday 13 December 2000. (Mark envelope "Preschool Director") Applicants will need to be sympathetic to and supportive of the Christian ethos of the Preschool. Please include the names and phone numbers of three professional referees. A reference from a Minister of Religion would also be viewed favourably. Child Protection legislation requires the successful applicant to be subject to employment screening. It is an offence under the NSW Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act 1998 for a person convicted of a serious sex offence to apply for this position.

Book Watch Harry Potter

Reviewed by Phil Campbell



The whole world is crazy about Harry. Who? Harry ... Harry Potter, teen wizard, student at Hogwarts School of Magic, and the only person in the world who can stand against the evil power of Lord Voldemort. If you haven't heard of Harry by now, you really are a muggle! Either that, or you haven't been reading the newspapers or watching the countless TV news reports that have chronicled the Harry Potter phenomenon.

Harry is the literary creation of J.K. Rowling, a British single mum. Her own story adds to the magic – struggling on a single-parent pension, Rowling apparently wrote the first Potter book at the table in a small cafe, because she couldn't afford the cost of heating at home. Now she's a multi-millionaire; each of the four books in the growing series has been an unprecedented success.

Rowling is credited with reintroducing the joy of reading to a whole generation of computer-addled kids. Apparently, video games and TV sets all over the world are gathering dust, as millions of kids queue to devour each new installment of the Harry Potter saga.

Unusually, too, adults relish the twisted Harry tales. They're full of good humour, witty observations, and imaginative twists. What's life like in a world where your neighbour attends a secret school to learn the art of potion making and wand waving, who follows the international sport of Quidditch rather than rugby, and whose life is governed by pompous public servants from the Ministry for Magic?

In short, life in a world like that is very complex ... and funny. And sometimes scary. Fourteen-year-old Harry is just a

normal kid; and yet he's a messiah figure, surrounded by great expectations. As a baby, Harry somehow survived the lashing from the wand of the evil Voldemort, which left his parents dead. Harry escaped with only a small lightning-shaped scar on his forehead – Voldemort's evil spell simply bounced off. Somehow, Harry's destiny is surely to save the world.

Naturally, the rise of the Harry Potter phenomenon has brought with it some questions. Should Christian parents refuse to allow their kids to even read the Harry books? In fact, should we form picket lines outside bookstores that stock them? (We're probably a little late – Christians in the USA have done it already.) Is Harry perhaps a Trojan Horse, introducing our kids not so much to reading, but to the evil arts of witchcraft? Or are some Christians

making a whole lot of fuss about nothing – robbing kids of a much needed dose of fantasy and fun?

Charles Colson takes the latter view, arguing in a recent review that the Potter books simply tap in to a child's desire to inhabit a world where there's something "more than meets the eye". The good news is, says Colson, that we do in fact live in a world like that – a world created by a loving Father, who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. The valid dreams and desires raised by the Harry Potter fantasy can be quenched in the reality of the gospel. It's an appealing point – and maybe one that's more productive for the gospel than simply standing in a picket line.

Cautious Christians, though, do have a case. My own kids have read all four Potter books; I've read the first three myself, but

Harry Potter & The Philosopher's Stone

by J.K. (Joanne) Rowling Publisher: Arthur A. Levine Books
Published: Sep 1999 (Paperback) / Published: Sep 1998 (Hardcover)

Excerpt:

Chapter Two : The Vanishing Glass

Nearly ten years had passed since the Dursleys had woken up to find their nephew on the front step, but Privet Drive had hardly changed at all. The sun rose on the same tidy front gardens and lit up the brass number four on the Dursleys' front door; it crept into their living room, which was almost exactly the same as it had been on the night when Mr. Dursley had seen that fateful news report about the owls. Only the photographs on the mantelpiece really showed how much time had passed. Ten years ago, there had been lots of pictures of what looked like a large pink beach ball wearing different-colored bonnets – but Dudley Dursley was no longer a baby, and now the photographs showed a large blond boy riding his first bicycle, on a carousel at the fair, playing a computer game with his father, being hugged and kissed by his mother. The room held no sign at all that another boy lived in the house, too.

Yet Harry Potter was still there, asleep at the moment, but not for long. His Aunt Petunia was awake and it was her shrill voice that made the first noise of the day.

"Up! Get up! Now!"

Harry woke with a start. His aunt rapped on the door again.

"Up!" she screeched. Harry heard her walking toward the kitchen and then the sound of the frying pan being put on the stove. He rolled onto his back and tried to

remember the dream he had been having. It had been a good one. There had been a flying motorcycle in it. He had a funny feeling he'd had the same dream before.

His aunt was back outside the door.

"Are you up yet?" she demanded.

"Nearly," said Harry.

"Well, get a move on, I want you to look after the bacon. And don't you dare let it burn, I want everything perfect on Duddy's birthday."

Harry groaned.

"What did you say?" his aunt snapped through the door.

"Nothing, nothing . . ."

Dudley's birthday – how could he have forgotten? Harry got slowly out of bed and started looking for socks. He found a pair under his bed and, after pulling a spider off one of them, put them on. Harry was used to spiders, because the cupboard under the stairs was full of them, and that was where he slept.

When he was dressed he went down the hall into the kitchen. The table was almost hidden beneath all Dudley's birthday presents. It looked as though Dudley had gotten the new computer he wanted, not to mention the second television and the racing bike. Exactly why Dudley wanted a racing bike was a mystery to Harry, as Dudley was very fat and hated exercise – unless of course it involved punching somebody. Dudley's favorite punching bag was Harry, but he couldn't often catch him. Harry didn't look it, but he was very fast.



gave up in the first half of epic-length number four. And while I don't want to ban "fantasy," I certainly want to set some limits on whether something like witchcraft is ever "okay to play around with".

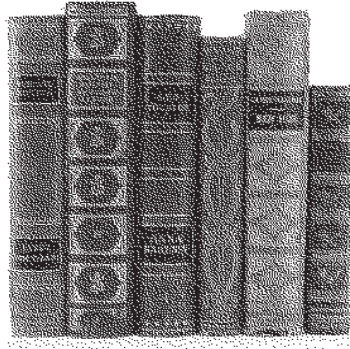
So where do you draw the line? Too far one way, and we need to bar books like *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*. So what's the difference? And how do we think it through?

I'm not sure that I have many answers. First, I don't want to crush childhood imagination – even if there are some witches and wizards involved. But on the other hand, while I'm happy with them to identify with hero Harry on some levels – he really is a very nice guy – I don't want them to confuse the fantasy of Harry with the idea of dabbling in real-life witchcraft, which is a very different thing. Can parents make those distinctions clear? I think so. But I'll certainly be watching with caution when Harry Potter hits the movie screens, and the associated toy Harry Potter Wands and Oija boards arrive on toyshop shelves.

Ultimately, this is one of those cases where we need to respect one another's right to decide – even if some Christian friends decide differently. There are strong echoes of a time in Corinth, when some Christians happily ate meat that had been sacrificed to idols, and others refused. You can read about it in 1 Corinthians 8, where Paul says, in effect, "Idols are nothing to worry about – but what you must never do is encourage a brother or sister to go against their conscience on the matter." Good advice for us?

Culture Watch editor Phil Campbell ministers at Mitchelton Presbyterian Church, and is the dad of four Harry Potter fans. ap

books



Six Modern Myths Challenging Christian Faith

Philip J. Sampson
Leicester: IVP, 2000
Reviewed by Peter Barnes

The modern age is as addicted to myths as any other, and Sampson looks at six which are directed against the Christian faith. These are:

- That Galileo upheld the Copernican view that the earth revolves around the sun against an ignorant and superstitious Church;
- That Darwin too had to confront a Church which was opposing the inevitable triumphal progress of science;
- That the Christian view that man has dominion over the creation is a licence to plunder it;
- That missionaries oppressed native cultures and destroyed them;
- That the Christian view of the body has repressed healthy sexuality; and
- That millions of innocent women were unjustly accused of being witches and perished in Christendom's 'witch-crazes'.

Mythology makes a fallen world go round, and it is good to have Sampson's correctives on these myths. In the case of Galileo, for example, it is often forgotten that Copernicus himself was a canon in the Roman Catholic Church, that Calvin seems never to have heard of him, and that even in the 17th century there was simply not enough evidence either way to decide between the Copernican and Ptolemaic systems. This is a useful work, although I would have liked rather more detail – 160 pages is a bit short to deal with the topic adequately.

Peter Barnes is AP's books editor

Let's Study 2 Corinthians

Derek Prime
Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000
Reviewed by Peter Barnes

The Let's Study series from the Banner stable is proving to be a concise and helpful set of commentaries on the Scriptures.

Each one is enhanced with a study guide at the back, for private or group use. The high standard set by the earlier books in the series has been well and truly maintained by Derek Prime. One can only trust that good use will be made of these commentaries.

Occasionally, one begs to differ. The view that "theology is grace and ethics is gratitude" (p.63) is only half-true. Ethics is gratitude, for example, in Romans 12:1-2, but in Romans 13:11-14 it has a future orientation.

Also, as attractive as the cover is – with a woman from Papua New Guinea reading the Bible to two young children – it is unfortunate that the woman is reading the Good News Bible. This is no doubt a first for Banner, but not a good one. May it be corrected in the many editions which follow!

Peter Barnes

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prayer

DECEMBER 2000

- 22 Continue to pray for the world's Muslims – well over a billion, some 20% of global population – through the fasting month of Ramadan (ends 26 December) that they may grasp the love of God for them and the saving work of Jesus.
- 23 Singleton home mission station, Hunter Valley; about 24 communicants and 3 elders; vacant, David Seaman moderator.
- 24 Western Blacktown Doonside parish, western Sydney; about 30 communicants and 3 elders; vacant, Luke Tattersall interim moderator.
- 25 Thank God for the Babe of Bethlehem, praying that many today will realise that he came to save his people from their sins.
- 26 As Ramadan ends, pray that many Muslims will learn that the true revelation of God is found in the Bible rather than the Koran.
- 27 Pray for all young (and older) people involved in running family missions, particularly at beaches, and those they seek to reach with the Gospel.
- 28 Reg and Elaine Mathews, as Reg is inducted tonight at Norwood, Adelaide, into Para Hills-Norwood charge; about 70 communicants and 8 elders.
- 29 Presbytery of Melbourne East; 14 parishes and 2 home mission stations totalling 17 congregations with 1280 communicants and adherents, 290 children and youth, 1 missionary, 2 professors, 2 school chaplains, a law agent and chairman of trustees, 2 retired ministers, 3 under jurisdiction; Kevin Childs clerk.
- 30 North Belconnen parish, Canberra (Ngunnawal and Melba); about 50 communicants and 6 elders; vacant, Keith King interim moderator.
- 31 Wilston-Newmarket-Windsor parish,

Brisbane; about 65 communicants and 6 elders; Eric and Heather Noble.

JANUARY 2001

- 1 As another year, century and millennium begin, pray that the Lord of the Church will give your parish members and leaders a new sense of his purpose for his church.
- 2 Young people who have finished a stage of education and are moving into a further stage or seeking work.
- 3 Marnoo home mission station, Victoria; about 30 communicants and 4 elders; vacant, Grant Vayne moderator.
- 4 Gregory and Rosemary Braid of Boort, Victoria, on home assignment from language survey work in South Asia and the ongoing response to their survey reports.
- 5 Maroochydore -Tewantin parish, north Brisbane; about 170 communicants and 12 elders; Keith and Nell Mayers.
- 6 Trundle-Tullamore-Tottenham parish, western NSW; about 60 communicants and 7 elders; vacant, Paul Sheely interim moderator.
- 7 Bundoora parish, Melbourne; about 25 communicants and 3 elders; vacant, Wally Gear interim moderator.
- 8 Coonabarabran parish, NW NSW – 6 congregations including Coonamble; about 85 communicants and 8 elders; Russell and Liana Vandervelden.
- 9 Balmain-Rozelle parish (1 congregation) inner Sydney; about 45 communicants and 4 elders; Ivan and Joan Ransom.
- 10 Presbytery of NSW Qld. and Vic; parishes and home mission stations.
- 11 The former Southern Downs parish Queensland (about 125 communicants and 11 elders) now divided into three home mission stations – Stanthorpe (Greg and Gaye Fraser), Clifton -Allora (Roland Sondergeld moderator) and Warwick-Yangan (Doug, Malcolm supplying).
- 12 The Presbyterian Theological Centre, Burwood Sydney – J. Davies, C. Balzer, P.Cooper, I. Smith and all other staff teaching about 25 candidates and 50 independent students; pray for those who have just finished their training and those starting this year.
- 13 Home Hill home mission station, Nth Qld; about 30 communicants and 3 elders; Keith and June Butler; Ian Johnston moderator.
- 14 Seymour-Nagambie appointment parish, Victoria; about 30 communicants and 3 elders; Geoff and Trish Spedding.
- 15 Merrylands parish, Western Sydney; about 40 communicants and 2 elders; vacant, Lewis Romney supply minister; Bob Spring interim moderator.
- 16 Robert and Leonie Betts from Warburton, Vic. WBT translation advisers in Kenya, East Africa; pray especially for three New Testaments nearing completion after 20 years or so of work.
- 17 The NSW Property Trustees (6 ministers, 6 elders) and the General Secretary.
- 18 Patrick and Jenny Fung from Sydney Chinese Presbyterian church (previously in Hong Kong) in the new role of international director of mobilisation for Overseas Missionary Fellowship, based in Singapore.
- 19 Sandy Wade-Ferrel from Epping, NSW, as she teaches English in East Asia – needing more students and new tutors.
- 20 Presbytery of North Brisbane; 5 parishes and 1 home mission station totalling 7 congregations with 525 communicants and adherents, 170 children and youth, 3 retired ministers, 1 other under jurisdiction; Gary Fintleman clerk.
- 21 Brett and Ruth Richardson from Parramatta City congregation, NSW, working in Spain with European Christian Missions in alcohol and drug rehabilitation and church planting.
- 22 Presbytery of Murrumbidgee, south western NSW; 3 parishes and 3 home mission stations totalling 9 congregations with 455 communicants and adherents, 112 children and youth, 1 ministerial candidate; David Hocking clerk.

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Bridging the gulf

Christ is the solution to the generation gap.

Old Battler Smith frowned as he listened to his children's plans to "invest in" a couple of jet skis for the family get together at Christmas.

"You know I don't like you going into debt like this," he said. Battler has never owned a credit card and only ever went into debt to pay for the family home. Though generous to his family, he lives frugally and saves money from his pension.

"Well, I think it's a good idea!" said his middle-aged daughter Babe. "We don't have enough family time. It will help us keep in touch with the kids."

"What a joke!" muttered 20-year-old Gen. "If you want to have more family time, why don't you just work less?"

Her comment was only heard and understood by her X-Gen cousins, the latch-key kids.

Meanwhile, the primary school members of the family, IT and Net were busy on the Internet finding the best deal for the new jet skis.

Rick and Kathy Hicks outline such a scenario to contrast four different generations alive today. ("Boomers, Xers and Other Strangers") Those born before 1945 were affected by the Great Depression, World War II and the introduction of the radio. Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) are identified with the introduction of television, the Cold War, the sexual revolution, the Vietnam war and space exploration. Generation X (born 1965-1976) are contemporaries of Watergate, the "me generation", AIDS, and personal computers. Then the Net Generation (born 1977-1997) saw the end of the Cold War, access to the Internet, school-yard terrorism and a booming economy.

These four groups are, in many families, divided from each other by a wide gap of misunderstanding and distrust. They are too different from each other to enjoy each other's company. Parents are ashamed of their children and children are ashamed of their parents. Dr and Mrs Hicks comment, "Any multi-generational situation is a potential clash site."

Generation gaps are a serious threat to the well-being of our society. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the overall age of our population will rise dramatically as the boomers move into retire-



Marion Andrews

ment. This will leave a smaller proportion of the population to support both boomer and battler generations. *Time* magazine (31 January 1999) warns of a revolt against "graying boomers whose primary concern is their own pensions and personal security" and who can vote indefinitely, by a "politically weak younger cohort that is being forced to bear the burden of their upkeep".

On the other hand a series of articles on "Staying Alive" in September in *The Sydney Morning Herald* noted a rising bitterness among boomers who feel caught between parents who are living longer and children who won't leave home.

The very last verse in the Old Testament says, "He (Elijah) will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse." Is this the answer to the problem of generation gaps? Does this verse promise a resolution to family conflict?

Bible commentators agree that this verse has a deeper application to the people of God through time and space. When Malachi wrote these words, the leading sin of the people was estrangement from their God. The fathers are the ancestors of the faith (C.F. Keil & F. Delitzsch). Many are listed in Hebrews 11. The children are their degenerate descendants. The hearts of the godly fathers of the faith and the ungodly sons are estranged from one another.

God's blessing, foreshadowed in this verse, lay in sending John the Baptist in the power and spirit of Elijah to turn many children of Israel to the Lord their God. In the past, as well as the present, pious ancestors turn in joyful love when they see their children walking in the truth (2 John 4). "And He will turn the heart of the children to the fathers. The children will no longer

seek to be different, more up-to-date, more liberal and broad-minded than their forbears. They will gladly follow them in their childlike faith and trust and submission to God's Word and will" (Dr Theo Taetsch).

Generation gaps are a serious blight. Just as in Malachi's day, the underlying problem is estrangement from God. There is no biblical promise we can wave round like a magic wand to heal family dislocation. There is, however, a bridge across the chasm that divides one generation from another – Jesus Christ. In Christ, multi-generational situations are opportunities for fellowship rather than potential disaster zones.

Meanwhile, back at the Smith family home, there is a move to resolve some of the conflicts.

IT runs in with a sheaf of computer print-outs.

"Here's the best jet-ski deals," he announces.

Some of the grown-ups study them.

"Look, this company offers weekly rent," says Ruth's brother, Ian. "That may be a better option."

"I guess..." says Ruth tentatively. "At least we wouldn't have to store them."

Through her energetic insensitivity, a warning light flashes in her mind. She notices the stormy tension on the face of her daughter Gen in contrast to the bright cheerfulness of her cousin Jill. Jill should have been her daughter. They are kindred spirits!

At the same time, Jill thinks, "I must have a chat with Auntie Ruth about getting on with Gen."

Old Battler senses the easing of tension in the family circle and thanks God. ap

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A rod for our own backs

A sad saga of Henny Penny and corporal discipline.

According to the fairy tale, Henny Penny ran around squawking that the sky was falling. Modern social engineers have adopted a somewhat similar tactic.

Thus it was that on 16 December 1995 the NSW government outlawed corporal discipline in all NSW schools – as if the education system was in any danger of suffering from too much discipline. Independent schools (independent of what?) are now required to repudiate corporal discipline (defined as “the application of physical force in order to punish or correct a student”) or become deregistered illegal entities. Little Johnny cannot even be sent from the room unless he is willing to cooperate.

About a year later, there was a predictable move to outlaw corporal discipline in all NSW homes, but Mr Ron Dyer (the minister heading up the misnamed Department of Community Services) assured us all that “most people make loving and nurturing parents and this government will not be telling them that they can’t discipline their child in the manner they consider to be appropriate”.

This, of course, was only a political promise, and less than four years later Mr Dyer was chairing a parliamentary committee which proposed to make illegal all corporal discipline in homes which used a stick, belt or other object, or which caused harm to a child which lasted more than a short period (that period to be determined by a member of the judiciary).

Behind both bills (the first one now being an Act) was the figure of Alan Corbett, the head of another misnomer – the Better Future for our Children Party. Mr Corbett wants to draw up legislation which outlaws all corporal discipline, even of the mildest kind, everywhere.

Many Christians have been slow to see the dangers in the modern attack on corporal discipline. It has been all too easy to caricature proponents of corporal discipline as outmoded rednecks resisting the relentless march of progress and enlightenment. This is an attack on the Bible.

It is surely clear enough that the Bible endorses the right and reasonable use of ‘the rod of correction’. This is sometimes explained away as metaphorical but Proverbs 23:13 says the child will not die from it, so presumably he or she is not



Peter Barnes

being metaphorically smacked.

The rod of correction is necessary because children are sinners who need to be curbed, not angels who need to be pandered to (Prov. 22:15). It is to be done with love (Prov. 13:24; Heb. 12:5-11), but also promptly lest the situation be exacerbated by the failure to act justly (Prov. 19:18; 29:15; Eccles. 8:11).

Make no mistake, the attack on corporal discipline is part of a general attack on the biblical understanding of sin and humanity. The NSW Board of Studies conducted an internal review of the Nambucca Valley Christian Community School on 7 November 2000. During that review, one of the two inspectors declared that Christian teachers were not allowed to quote the Christian Scriptures on corporal discipline to Christian parents because that would be tantamount to school support for corporal discipline.

This is an attack on parents’ rights. The Bible clearly gives parents the main right and responsibility to raise their own children. Even the NSW Education Reform Act of 1995 pays lip service to this notion, claiming (but then ignoring) that “the education of a child is primarily the responsibility of the child’s parents”.

Modern social engineers, however, seem to want to create another stolen generation, based not on race or negligence but on the use of the wooden spoon. They do not trust parents without degrees in child psychology. In its negotiations with the NSW government, the Nambucca Valley Christian Community School suggested a discipline policy which included the bottom line: “In serious cases, the school staff will call in parents who will have the last say regarding the discipline of their child.” This was completely unacceptable to our legislative social engineers.

The month of October 2000 saw renewed attention given in the media to the growing problem of bullying in NSW schools. There was one protracted case where about 40 students refused to go to school because of bullying at a school bus stop. Clearly a case for super social engineer.

In days gone by, the schools would have had the necessary authority to act, but not now. The government’s “solution” was threefold: call in the police (because the teachers could not do anything); put on another bus (thus sidestepping the problem, not solving it); and set up anti-bullying squads of students (if the teachers are prevented from acting, perhaps the youngsters might do their work for them). There is not a thug in NSW who would view that response as anything other than pathetic.

It is not only from the child’s point of view that our homes and schools becoming more unruly and violent. The October 2000 issue of Occupational Health News began with this sentence: “The debate over appropriate action to quell a growing incidence of violence against teachers in schools dominates teacher union conferences in most parts of the developed world.”

Too many schoolteachers are on stress leave, morale is low, and the numbers entering the teaching profession are falling despite declining entry standards and high unemployment. As corporal discipline has gone into disfavour and been legislated against, the level of violence in our society has risen.

Our social engineers would be better advised to look at the links between child abuse and abortion (the ultimate form of child abuse), child abuse and violent and/or pornographic movies (where people are treated as objects), and child abuse and the breakdown of discipline (where in frustration an adult lashes out in a destructive way).

Such an approach may receive less applause from the trend-setters, but it may prove more helpful and constructive in the long term. The alternative is that Henny Penny will keep squawking, more power will be given to him, the situation will get worse, Henny Penny squawks again, and so the cycle continues. Alas, it is not the sky which is falling, but our homes and schools.

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