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A U S T R A L I A N
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Non-Christians think tolerance the supreme Christian characteristic.

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The curse of pornography

Selfishness and greed are at the core of this modern tragedy.

I clicked on my email service last week and was surprised to find several messages that bore lewd and suggestive titles – with accompanying attachments – which someone had sent me. Where they came from is anyone's guess, but I didn't wait to find out. I hit the "delete" button and consigned them to oblivion. I suspect that what was waiting for me in those attachments was the latest in state-of-the-art pornography – a series of alluring pictures intended to turn me into a compulsive browser of sex websites.

I don't think my suspicions were misplaced because a friend of mine has received the same sort of unsolicited mail from similar sources. But our experiences serve as a warning – sexually explicit material is finding its way into Christian homes through an active campaign by the sleaze industry.

Why do I raise this? Because exposing yourself to the influence of pornography can harden your heart towards God, desensitise your conscience about the way you treat others, and cause you to plunge headlong into destruction like the Gadarene swine. Am I being over-dramatic? I don't think so.

Several years ago, the NSW State Coroner held an inquiry into the Strathfield Plaza massacre. In his report, he referred to expert evidence given by the Government's leading forensic psychiatrist, Dr Rod Milton, that in his opinion there was a direct causal relationship between Wade Frankum's murderous violence and the pornographic literature and video material he had been viewing. In particular, Dr Milton singled out the book

American Psycho, which Frankum had pored over several times in the weeks leading up to the tragedy.

There was no doubt in Dr Milton's mind that pornography not only fed, but also inflamed, the wild and violent passions that erupted with volcanic force in Frankum's soul. Unfortunately, Frankum never lived to be able to confirm Dr Milton's view. He turned the gun on himself and ended his own miserable life in the Plaza carpark.

Nevertheless, confirmation of Dr Milton's assessment came from the lips of one of the world's most notorious serial killers, Ted Bundy. Bundy grew up in a deeply committed Christian home, and he had a privileged education. At the time of his many killings, he was a conscientious law student whom no one ever suspected of being guilty of such heinous crimes. Yet Bundy murdered 28 young women and girls. Why? Because, on his own testimony, pornography invited him into a pattern of self-centred sexual fantasy and violent behaviours.

For Bundy, it all began at 13. He discovered some "dirty" magazines in a dump near his home. He developed an addiction for the stuff, and in time, found that only violent images stimulated him. He progressed from soft-core pornography to getting his kicks from seeing women being tortured and murdered.

On the night before his execution in the Florida State Prison, he gave an exclusive interview to Dr James Dobson. This is what he said: "My experience with pornography that deals on a violent level with sexuality is that once you become addicted to it, you keep looking for more potent, more explicit, more graphic sorts of material. You keep craving something which is harder ... Then you reach that jumping-off point where you can begin to wonder if maybe actually doing it will give you that which is beyond just reading about it or looking at it..."

"I've lived in prison for a long time now. And I've met a lot of men who were motivated to commit violence just like me. And without exception, everyone of them was deeply involved in pornography – without question, without exception –

deeply influential and consumed by an addiction to pornography ... The FBI's own study on serial homicide shows that the most common interest among serial killers is pornography."

Here we have first-hand confirmation of the dangers of pornography. First, from a forensic psychiatrist and then from the lips of a serial killer. They simply add all their own observations as a postscript to what the Bible has been saying all along: self-centred sex and greed damns. The scripture is clear that marriage is patterned on the union of spirit, mind and body.

Sex comes into the picture as the climax of the union that has been achieved at the level of the mind and the spirit. It comes into play as a result of an already existing intimacy and unity. The tragedy of pornography is that it arouses desires for sexual gratification without any desire for intimacy, communion or companionship. It treats the other person as a "sex-object" – someone to be exploited. It is intrinsically selfish and wants to avoid the cost of being a faithful companion and a loving communicator with one's spouse. As such, it must be condemned. For the Christian, it subverts God's goal of deep union with one's husband or wife.

From the Convener

The porcelain was cold to my hand as I stepped into it, my shoe soles squeaking on the tub bottom. In it, I lay down, feeling strange to be in a tub with my clothes on. With the shotgun resting on my stomach, I positioned it with the muzzle in my mouth toward my brain. Reaching down, my thumb found the trigger and I was about to push it..." In the second of our new series on famous conversions, we offer the dramatic testimony of Howard E. Hughes, the American Senator who mentored Charles Colson.



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Net nightmare

A solitary obsession that can ruin a life



For Wes, it began at the age of nine, when he saw a copy of Playboy left out by a friend's father. He spent his teens hiding adult magazines under his mattress. By his 20s, he was a pornography addict, continually hunting for the images to feed his all-consuming fantasies.

By his early 30s, Wes was married with three children, a house in the suburbs of Washington, D.C., and a high-paying job as a fundraiser. But he had a secret life: he cruised the wrong end of town, looking for porn shops, hooked on the mix of guilt and thrill that had become the psychic equivalent of crack cocaine.

His work suffered and his sex life with his wife trailed into near nothingness: after his time with the fantasy goddesses, a real woman was too much trouble.

In 1995, just when Wes thought he had hit bottom, he discovered the Internet. Soon, he was hooked more deeply than ever before. "I already had a problem, and the Internet made it worse," he says. "I could get porn anytime I wanted. And I did."

Wes is far from alone. Sex therapists estimate that the number of Internet porn

Pornography does no harm? Ask the growing number of addicts, who spend hours feeding their habit at home and the office, often destroying their personal relationships and losing their jobs. The toll is rising, but Peter Cheney finds there is no easy solution in sight.

addicts in North America is six million – and rising constantly. Onlinesexaddict.org receives more than 1000 requests a day for help. "I don't think the average person can grasp the actual scale of the problem," says clinical psychologist Dana Putnam, who maintains the site and runs a sexuality clinic in California.

The Internet has erased cultural, geographic and legal boundaries. The days of hiding X-rated magazines on a blocked-off top shelf and checking ID at the door of a sleazy theatre are over. The Web has made a vast array of pornography available to anyone with a computer and an Internet connection.

"There's so much porn on the Web that you couldn't get through it in a lifetime, and there's more arriving all the time," Dr Putnam says.

Suddenly, employers hoping to harness the power of the Internet also have to worry about workers being tempted while on the job. According to the American Management Association, about 45 per cent of large US companies already monitor their workers' Internet use. The global market for access-control software, estimated at \$100 million last year, is expected to reach \$500 million by 2003, according to International Data Corp., a research firm.

Employers can block access to certain types of sites (in some cases, relaxing the ban during breaks and after hours), chart people's surfing history or simply arrange to have pictures taken of their employees' computer screens every 30 seconds for review.

For parents, meanwhile, on-line porn has created a security nightmare. Special software programs, such as Net Nanny and Cybersitter, make it difficult to access porn sites, but experts say nothing can

guarantee success with a computer-savvy child. What's more, filtering programs would have to be installed on every computer a child will encounter.

Pornography has always been a bigger business than most people realise, but in recent years it has undergone an unprecedented boom, largely because of the growth of satellite and cable television services, which rake in billions from X-rated programming.

But the Internet has emerged as an even better delivery vehicle. Adult content is already the Web's biggest business, with estimated annual sales of \$4 billion.

And "what you see now is just the beginning," says Dr Al Cooper, a California therapist and academic known as the Masters and Johnson of cyberspace. "There is much, much more to come." Dr Cooper cites studies showing that the number of people using the Internet increases by about 25 per cent every three months, suggesting that it really is becoming a "universal appliance" like TV.

According to Media Metrix, which tracks Internet usage, North America now has more than 100 million users, and porn sites are their favourite destinations — "sex" has become the most popular search term and adult sites get more page hits than any other single category. The most recent Media Metrix statistics show that the average home Internet user spends 64.6 minutes a month visiting sex sites and office users spend 65.7 minutes.



But those figures do not tell the full story. Web-tracking firms estimate that more than six million Web users spend at least 11 hours a week at sex sites and some spend 80 hours or more.

Obviously, Dr Cooper says, people like sex. But the Internet has given pornography an unprecedented boost because of what he calls the triple-A engine: accessibility, affordability and anonymity.

The Web offers a sexual cornucopia: sites that feature everything from celebrities in the nude to live sex shows. As well, there are chat rooms, swingers groups, porn video reviews and "girl cams" that

allow viewers to watch women in their apartments as they dress, sleep and have sex.

Dr Cooper believes that the massive interest in pornography stems from a deep conflict within Western culture, which bombards people with sexual imagery yet still approaches sex from an essentially Puritan perspective.

"We are inundated with sex as a simple answer to life's complex problems. Entire industries sell sex as a commodity, and we are constantly being sold on the idea that sex can make us happy. The average teenager sees something like 14,000 sexual images in a single year. There is an inundation of sex, followed by a long series of buts — 'but don't do this' and 'don't do this.' The buts go on and on and on. There is a tremendous, built-in conflict. We sell sex, yet we don't accept it."

Many analysts consider anonymity the most important factor of the triple-A engine. By allowing consumers to remain unseen, the Internet has removed the social inhibition that once limited the porn market.

"There are a lot of people who would never go into a porn shop or a strip joint," Dr. Putnam says. "A college professor isn't going to go to a magazine store to buy pornographic magazines — a student might see him. He'll find it a lot easier to sign on to the Internet."

That was certainly the case for Wes, the Washington fundraiser. The constant availability of on-line porn deepened his addiction by allowing him to indulge himself virtually any time he wanted. He was soon spending as much as half his time searching for porn on the Web, both at home and at the office.

It took him on a roller-coaster ride of sexual thrill, guilt and depression. "The cycle is like this: You have pain. You turn to porn. Then you feel guilty. Then you start covering up. You start isolating yourself. That produces more pain. And you turn to porn again."

By 1998, Wes was in a state of crisis. His marriage was on the rocks and his professional reputation was slipping. "Porn modifies your approach to sex," he says. "It can do it in very subtle ways that you don't even realise. Before long, you basically say to yourself: 'Why should I spend hours and hours trying to seduce my wife, who isn't interested, when I can just go to the computer and get what I want in 15 minutes?'"

Those 15 minutes sometimes come at tremendous cost. At a Web site for the



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spouses of cyberporn addicts, a woman who gave her name as Felicia described the suffering her husband's addiction had caused and how the Internet had made things even worse. "I cry after making love because I know that me and me alone will never be good enough to fulfill his sexual desires. Through the years, I have thrown away hundreds of dollars' worth of sexually oriented material. He always replaced them. Now, he has the Internet, my worst enemy. No stopping him now."

The very nature of the Internet has made exerting control more difficult than ever. Porn producers make their sites easy to find by loading them with keywords commonly used in non-sexual searches. In some cases, they have acquired innocent-sounding site names – a visit to www.whitehouse.com will yield no information about the U.S. presidency. Filtering out sexual material with screening software is difficult because of the Web's sheer scale and the ingenuity of the porn makers.

Dr Cooper believes that dealing with Internet pornography calls for strong parenting, not software Band-Aids. "The reality is that there's going to be more pornography than ever before. Parents have to remain close to their children," he says. "They have to be aware of what they're doing."

Dr Putnam says Web porn may be far more dangerous to children than conven-



tional material ever was. "We have no idea of what the effect is going to be on kids," he says. "Kids have always been able to access porn in some form. When I was 12, I found someone's father's Playboy, and I saw a naked person. I would say that was an acceptable image. But a kid today can find more than Playboy. They can find violent sex, bestiality or anything else they want."

Dr Putnam adds that exposure at an early age can produce an unwanted "imprinting" effect. "It isn't just the obviously bad pornography that should con-

cern us. Everyone knows that violent porn and kiddie porn are bad. But even seeing people have intercourse, in an impersonal way, may have an effect. And no one knows what the effect will be."

Legal experts say it is virtually impossible to turn back the tide of Internet porn.

Alan Young, an Osgoode Hall professor who has worked extensively in the area of obscenity law, says on-line sex is covered by the same legislation as other forms of porn, but is difficult to prosecute because of jurisdictional issues and the size of the Web.

"The more material there is, the harder it becomes to make a dent. The Internet has become this vast highway of porn. For law enforcement, there is an obvious practical problem – how do you deal with it all? I suppose if we were willing to write the police a cheque for \$10 billion, they might be able to do something."

For pornography addicts, the rise of Web pornography has been like gasoline thrown on a fire. Their pain is easy to see on the hundreds of Web sites devoted to the problem of on-line porn addiction.

On the Breaking Pornography Addiction site, a woman who listed herself as CRM asked others to help her understand her husband's obsession: "What causes people to seek sexual gratification in paper or electronic images? Is it guilt? Many people are raised to believe that sex is dirty, sinful, dangerous and just



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plain bad. As a result, they often cannot associate the sexual act with love or intimacy. However, the desire is still there and must be fulfilled.

“Is it fear? There is much talk about the risks of diseases and unwanted pregnancies in sex education classes. Is it that these ‘paper beauties’ demand nothing, and are simply there to fulfill needs and fantasies without expecting anything in return? What I really want to know is, why does he do it? I already know that it isn’t something wrong with me. Why does he prefer these gross caricatures of women to me?”

Many men wrote in response, trying to provide at least a partial answer.

A man who identified himself as Clive responded to CRM’s “paper beauties” theory. “I think that’s part of it. But a man who is mature spiritually and psychologically ought to choose the rewards of interaction with real people to the dubious and temporary highs of fantasy, even with the reality that relationships bring a degree of pain, hardship and difficulty.”

Tony wrote to say he was a Christian who had been in “sexual bondage from the day I was born,” and said he had found it far easier to beat alcoholism than sexual addiction. “Because of Jesus,

I control it,” he wrote. “Before Jesus, there was no choice. I did it all the time.” Tony warned CRM not to expect too much: “Dear lady, be careful about getting hopes too high. Addiction really never leaves us.”

Recovering from on-line porn addiction is a painful and difficult process, as Wes, the Washington fundraiser, has discovered. In 1998, with his marriage on the rocks and his career in jeopardy, he finally acknowledged to his wife that he had a problem and went to a therapist, who diagnosed him as a sex addict.

As part of his healing, Wes started an on-line help group called no-porn.com, where he shared his experiences with other addicts, a community that turned out to be far larger than he ever imagined. His site gets 300 to 400 visitors a day, often more.

Wes considers himself fortunate because his marriage survived his harrowing journey through porn addiction. Many don’t. “In the last month, I know of a dozen marriages that broke up,” he says. “A lot of women feel that they can’t compete with the fantasy images.”

This is an edited version of an article that first appeared in The Globe and Mail, a Canadian national newspaper. 

Tell us something of the history of your struggle with sexual fantasy.

The first time I got in contact with pornography was when I was in school. I was about 14, and a fellow brought a few *Playboy* magazines into the school yard and he gave me a couple which I took home. I looked at them for a while, then at around the age of 15 a friend of mine had a video player and we started to hire out X-rated videos. We watched them at my mate’s house fairly regularly.

But the real struggle began at the age of 18 when I started buying magazines myself. I began buying *Playboy*, which is a subtle magazine, and I looked over them for a while, but eventually I began to feel the need for something more revealing than the *Playboy* type magazines. I progressed to *Penthouse* and others where the pictures are more explicit and then I started buying videos. I was probably 19 by this time and things increased from then on and it has been a struggle ever since.

Would you say that your exposure to pornography was both progressive and addictive in character?

Yes, it is like drug addicts. When they have their first hit of heroin they don’t stop at just one, they want more and more. You just have to pass a newsagent and see a beautiful girl on the posters outside and you begin to desire her. It has become addictive and very powerful, for even when I have had girl friends I would still be looking at the magazines and movies.

When you had your first exposure to pornography at 14 did you have any idea that it was going to enslave your life in this way?

No, I just thought that it was a bit of fun. Just like going out with your mates and drinking. There seemed to be no harm in doing that so what was the problem with looking at naked women.

What do you think of pornography now?

It’s very dangerous. It affects your walk with the Lord. You start to minimise your sin by saying “If I am nice to my mother and good in other areas of my life God won’t worry about my sexual immorality,” but if you are staggering in one area then it affects your whole relationship with the Lord. When you allow sin to remain in one area of your life you lose your joy and are never satisfied.

Also these women that you see in magazines are not the women of real life. So when you decide to go out with a girl you want

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When looks can kill

“Peter” tells Jason Summers of his unending and devastating battle.

someone who looks like the girls in the movies and magazines. When you discover she is not like that, you become disappointed.

How did your fantasy life affect your relationships with real people?

Before I became a Christian I had a fantasy with certain types of women, and at my work one of the girls was just like one of my fantasies. She was married and I had a desire to sleep with her, and in fact at one stage I walked up to her and was just about to ask if she would sleep with me but at the last minute I turned away. You can see how my addiction to pornography was even changing my morals.

I used to say that I would never sleep with a married woman but when you have a sexual fantasy and the opportunity comes up, you would sleep with her regardless. It leads you to do things that you never thought you would.

How did your sexual immorality affect your spiritual growth?

I remember hearing a sermon on Romans that made me realise that sin affects your walk with the Lord. This is true. As I said before, sin steals your joy and makes you restless. It is greatly affecting my spiritual growth.

What has changed you over the past

years, both in actual behaviour and in fantasy?

When I became a Christian I stopped looking at the videos and magazines. I remember when I was breaking up the videocassettes I wanted to have just one last look, but I prayed that God would give me strength not to do that – and he did. I broke them up without looking at it.

But even though I stopped looking at the videos and magazines I still had a struggle with lust. On TV there are plenty of naked women and it is still a struggle. I then came across the Bible verse where it says if your eye causes you to sin pluck it out, so I stopped watching TV and started reading the Bible more, and felt that I was drawing closer to the Lord.

Has this addiction been fully broken or are you still struggling with pornography and lust?

No, it has not been fully broken. I have come a long way, but presently I have begun to fall back into my old habits of struggling with those magazines. ap

Our very present help

Jason Summers

Peter's story is still being written. He is presently seeking to be freed from his sin. The reality is that a number of you who are reading this article know from experience the way pornography enslaves. Maybe you, like Peter, are still battling the bondage. It has ruined marriages, destroyed friendships, and even Christian ministers have shipwrecked their ministries on the rocks of pornography.

The addictive nature of pornography and the associated lust makes it especially difficult to break free. Yet there is great hope, for through the word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit the Christian is able to break the cycle of sin.

How? Firstly we need to be confronted with God's program for sexual gratification. God intended sexual gratification to be an expression of communion and intimacy that can only be found within marriage (Gen 2:24). In 1 Corinthians 7:3-4, Paul teaches that sex is

the product or expression of this union. The person who is addicted to pornography wants the consequence of sexual gratification but does not want to achieve it in the way God designs it, namely through the intimacy of marriage.

People who are addicted to pornography aren't so much addicted to lurid material as they're addicted to self-centredness. They're committed to serving themselves, to doing whatever they can to find a convenient way for sexual gratification apart from the commitment of giving themselves in marriage to another person. This, of course, reveals that at the heart of pornography and its associated lust is selfishness.

How do we break free of this sexual selfishness? Some suggest taking cold showers, exercising, and staying busy. Unfortunately these activities fail to tame the dragon within. As we have seen, the heart problem is spiritual, and so it is to the Bible we turn. In Ephesians 4:22-24 Paul says that we are to put off

the old self, to be made new in the attitude of our minds. Not only are we to stop our selfish sexual behaviour, but we are to put on the new self, that is to start being selfless in every area of life. We are to replace one form of habitual behaviour with another.

For example, the person who is addicted to pornography must not just throw out the magazines (put off the old self) but must also begin to be selfless in every area of his life (put on the new self). If he has been a selfish employee, husband, or father, he now needs to work at being selfless. This needs to happen in every relationship he is in. True and lasting change will not come about by just stopping the bad behaviour but it must be replaced with the right behaviour.

Ephesians 4 is God's action plan for true and lasting change. With the power of the Holy Spirit and the instruction of the Word, "Peter" and all those enslaved by selfish sexual practices can experience real and lasting victory. ap

Elephantiasis

How it's coming out of the jungle into your lounge room

Combine a clever but inherently flawed species with the products of its own recent audiovisual inventions – from the photograph to the Internet – and one result, among many, is a subspecies that is secretly but unanimously addicted to pornography.

I'm really sorry I had to say that word. The word "porn" itself is from Greek, and refers to the lowest type of prostitute available. The term "pornography" means the graphic visual display of women as the cheapest kind of whores. Nowadays, the word reeks of moral outrage and disapproval, which is why you don't bring up the topic in polite society. This is also why the porn industry labels its own products with such morally acceptable terminology as "adult material," "gentlemen's clubs," and "mature entertainment" – implying that consumers of this material are somehow more sophisticated or grown-up than the rest of us.

Bald use of the terms evokes such a visceral reaction that we are unable to think clearly about the reality they name. So for the rest of this article, instead of saying "porn" or "pornography", I'm going to talk about "elephants".

The very market demand for elephants tells a large part of the story. Hollywood produces an average of 400 G to R-rated films each year, which is a little more than one a day. If you add up all the films you watched in theatres and on television and home video, you probably saw somewhere around 50 Hollywood movies last year. This is about one movie a week. By comparison, the elephant industry (whose heart is located right next to Hollywood's, geographically speaking), produces an average of 666 elephant videos every month. (We couldn't make this number up if we tried.)

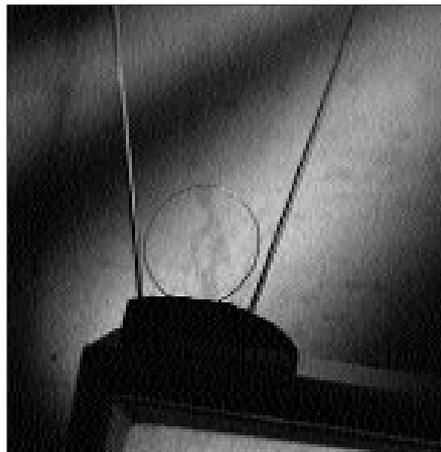
This should give you pause for several reasons, but especially if you have a daughter clamouring to go to L.A. and make it in the movies. It makes sense, after all, that the elephant industry was born right in Hollywood's backyard. Where else are you going to find a constantly fresh supply of beautiful and

Read Mercer Schuchardt

financially vulnerable young women with negligible professional skills other than acting? Acting in elephant films is pretty straightforward stuff, and even a no-talent girl can become famous simply by letting the elephants walk all over her. The irony is that, in a recent Hugh Hefner interview, the Playboy magnate actually took credit for the fact that girls can now use the elephant industry to gain entrance into Hollywood, as witness the inspiringly nihilistic careers of Pamela Anderson and Jenny McCarthy.

At any rate, how many of these elephant videos you personally watch each year is not something anyone wants to know. For sheer comparison's sake, let's assume that the market demand for non-elephant films is equal to that for elephant films. If this really is the case, then statistically speaking there's a percentage of American men out there who are watching 750 elephant films per year, or about two elephant videos every night. And it's pretty safe to say that a lot of these men have jobs outside the elephant industry. Jobs like marketing and advertising for products and services that have nothing to do with elephants.

Which is why you may, on a personal level, be done with elephants, but on the cultural level, the elephants are not done with you.



In fact, the elephants are so overbred that they're stampeding into every aspect of daily life. The "mainstreaming" of elephants into the culture is observable to the, uh, naked eye. Examples are everywhere.

So images of elephants have now imprinted themselves on the surface of our culture. But these images indicate a condition that is more serious, if harder to detect: we are now weaving the philosophy and methodology of the elephant into the actual fabric of Western life itself.

Take, for starters, the success of *Maxim* magazine. Here's a periodical that shows more flesh on its covers than *Playboy* itself. It sheathes many of its retail issues in plastic wrap (the primary signifier of "adult" material on a newsstand). It laces its covers with the word "sex" in the largest font possible as many times as possible. All of which signifies to the young and emotionally vulnerable male between 18 and 34 that there will be plenty of elephants inside. But the surprise is, there aren't any elephants inside. There are suggestions of elephants – plenty of pictures of half-dressed girls – but not anything you wouldn't expect to see on say, the nightly prime-time viewing hour.

Let's leave aside for the moment defining deviancy down and just look at what you do get instead. In *Playboy* you get naked women who, beyond their air-brushed bodies, are at least plausibly real members of the human species. They have hometowns and hobbies and dreams that go beyond posing naked. Once you open up *Maxim*, however, you get fully dressed women, or partially undressed women, who are portrayed as wishing to discuss nothing other than sex. That's part of the reason *Maxim* is the best-selling men's magazine on the market. Even *Advertising Age*, the money-is-the-only-measurement industry magazine, gave *Maxim* its magazine of the year award, despite calling the editorial content "raunchy".

Here is where it gets interesting. *Maxim* magazine started in 1997, the same year that the Internet achieved sufficient momentum to become a mass medium (on the order of television and radio). If you didn't already know, elephants are the

number one reason people go to the Internet, in terms of keyword searches and sites visited.

Maxim started peddling their particular brand of less-is-more elephants the same year that the Internet started delivering more-is-more elephants to the majority of Western male eyeballs. In a sense, *Maxim* succeeded by bridging the psychic gap between what was happening privately in the culture via the Internet, and what was acceptable in the public mindset. If everyone secretly had sex on the brain, then *Maxim* succeeded by coming along at just the right moment to justify that guilty feeling, as though to say, "We know that you know."

From *Maxim's* vantage point, the days of young boys furtively flipping through *National Geographic* to find female flesh is now a poignant moment of cultural innocence.

The elephant methodology seems to follow a pretty strict code of conscience management. If the products of the elephant industry are bad, which we all seem instinctively to know (why else would they be consumed in private?), then the elephant succeeds in getting into your home by packaging itself into morally manageable mouthfuls. Consider the attempted management of your psyche in the packaging and marketing of the following non-elephant products:

- Coors Light in the Widemouth Can: Here's an alcoholic beer (arguably bad), but it's light beer (good), so you can drink more of it, thus the Widemouth Can (bad). You'll feel good! And faster!

- Nabisco's bite-sized Mini Oreo cookies, miniature cookies that you "pour" into your hand from a giant "milk" container. These things are pure sugar and animal fat (bad), but they're so tiny (good), that you can eat more of them (bad). You've never eaten a whole one-pound package of the original full-sized Oreos at one sitting, but home alone, with a gallon of milk, you've probably eaten half a package. Let me tell you, knocking down a container of Mini Oreos is easy – never mind that it too is a half-pound package. No guilt whatsoever.

- Nabisco's SnackWell's products, any kind: Here's a brand whose name implies that its products are somehow good for you, since the word "well" is the key buzzword of the healthcare industry (wellness, wellbeing, and the like). The packaging is in bright, healthy green, implying an invigorating natural and organic product, the kind of foods that vegetarians would eat

(green is used almost exclusively to imply "health" in the food industry). So you shovel these babies into your mouth, reaping zero nutritional value and zero health benefit, thanks to the linguistic associations of words and colours. So here's a junk food (bad) that promotes itself with the signifiers of health (good) so that you'll eat more of them (bad), gain weight, and then have to eat healthy for a while to lose it (bad). Their advertising slogan takes note of the hypocrisy: "Being bad was never so good."

- Lingerie Barbie: Here's every prepubescent girl's dream doll (good), except that she's wearing nothing but pantyhose, a garter belt, and a bra (bad). This is from Mattel, the people who sued the rock band Aqua (also in 1997) for writing a song called "Barbie Girl" that Mattel claimed portrayed Barbie in "sexual and unsavoury terms".

Not all these products are available in Australia, but their counterparts are – and the advertising.

What's interesting about these examples is not so much that they exist, but that they all seem to exist by virtue of their silent recognition of an absolute moral authority. If today's mass marketers deny that the law of God is written on our hearts, then they at least seem willing to concede that it is written on the backs of our cheques. Getting us to part with those cheques has become a game of massaging our awareness of this absolute moral law into manageable and manipulable portions of perception, as evidenced above.

In other words, Satan isn't stomping around town like a roaring lion these days. Evil comes in subtly, by masquerading as good, under the radar or beyond the range of our ability to decode icons, images, and linguistic patterns, not to mention historical and cultural references.

A recent book on advertising is titled *Under the Radar: Talking to Today's Cynical Consumer*. A back-page plug for the book gleefully admits that its authors are "advertising innovators" who "have come up with more outrageously clever ways to get past consumers' detectors than anyone else in advertising today."

The consumer is you. When this happens, you are being involuntarily lobotomised for the sake of some corporation's profit. The elephant is now in the service of what I like to call the stealth economy. The thing keeps going, but nobody quite knows how. Only now, with the future in question and democracy itself seemingly up for sale, is it getting some attention.

Why does any of this matter? Because the elephant is in the room now, and everyone's pretending not to notice, hoping that if we ignore him long enough then maybe he'll just go away. And that's just the way the elephant likes it.

Read Mercer Schuchardt is the founder of Cleave, The Counter Agency and a graduate student in media ecology at New York University. This article was first published on the BreakPoint website of Prison Fellowship. ap

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Our besetting sin

Christianity is nothing to be proud of. C.S. Lewis explains.

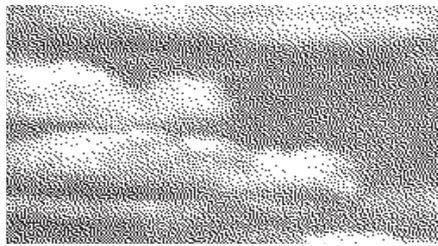
Now come to that part of Christian morals where they differ most sharply from all other morals. There is one vice of which no man in the world is free; which every one in the world loathes when he sees it in someone else; and of which hardly any people, except Christians, ever imagine that they are guilty themselves.

I have heard people admit that they are bad-tempered, or that they cannot keep their heads about girls or drink, or even that they are cowards. I do not think I have ever heard anyone who was not a Christian accuse himself of this vice. And at the same time I have very seldom met anyone, who was not a Christian, who showed the slightest mercy to it in others.

There is no fault which makes a man more unpopular, and no fault which we are more unconscious of in ourselves. And the more we have it ourselves, the more we dislike it in others.

The vice I am talking of is pride or self-conceit: and the virtue opposite to it, in Christian morals, is called humility. When I was talking about sexual morality, I warned you that the centre of Christian morals did not lie there. Well, now, we have come to the centre. According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is pride. Unchastity, anger,

IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD



greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere fleabites in comparison. It was through pride that the devil became the devil. Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind.

Does this seem to you exaggerated? If so, think it over. I pointed out a moment ago that the more pride one had, the more one disliked pride in others. In fact, if you want to find out how proud you are the easiest way is to ask yourself, "How much do I dislike it when other people snub me, or refuse to take any notice of me, or shove their oar in, or patronise me, or show off?"

The point is that each person's pride is

in competition with every one else's pride. It is because I wanted to be the big noise at the party that I am so annoyed at someone else being the big noise. Two of a trade never agree. Now what you want to get clear is that pride is *essentially* competitive – is competitive by its very nature – while the other vices are competitive only, so to speak, by accident.

Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. We say that people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better-looking than others. If every one else became equally rich, or clever, or good-looking there would be nothing to be proud about. It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition has gone, pride has gone.

That is why I say that pride is essentially competitive in a way the other vices are not. The sexual impulse may drive two men into competition if they both want the same girl. But that is only by accident; they might just as likely have wanted two different girls. But a proud man will take your girl from you, not because he wants her but just to prove to himself that he is a better man than you.

Greed may drive men into competition if there is not enough to go round; but the proud man, even when he has got more than he can possibly want, will try to get still more just to assert his power. Nearly all those evils in the world which people put down to greed or selfishness are really far more the result of pride.

The Christians are right: it is pride which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began. Other vices may sometimes bring people together: you may find good fellowship and jokes and friendliness among drunken people or unchaste people. But pride always means enmity – it is enmity. And not only enmity between man and man, but enmity to God.

This extract is taken from Mere Christianity, by C.S. Lewis, first published in 1952.

ap

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Rev Donald Smith (02) 4933 7443.

EPPING

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Rev David Tsai (02) 9876 1188.

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Rev John Thompson (02) 6552 1082.

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Jamberoo: (St Stephen's) Allowrie St,

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Rev Ray Osborn (02) 9587 5577.

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Rev. Phillip Strong (02) 6953 3579

LISMORE (St Paul's)

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MACQUARIE
 Herring & Abuklea Rds, Marsfield
 Rev. Rex Swavley (02) 9878 4202
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 May/Sept; 7.00pm Oct/April.
 Rev Tony Lang (02) 9976 2801
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 94 Houston Rd, **Kingsford** 11.15am
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 Cnr Albert & Auburn Sts, 10.00am.
 Rev. L. Fowler (02) 6752 1083
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 Rev R J McCracken (02) 9969 6101.
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 Rev David Newman (07) 4153 2954
PEACE PRESBYTERIAN
 Student Centre, Deception Bay State High
 School 9.30am.
 Pastor Bob Whiting (07) 3886 7367.
CABOOLTURE
 24 Cottrill Rd. 9.00am & 6.00pm.
 Rev. G. Watt (07) 5494 1181
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.



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. 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.

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. Des Morris (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

tasmania

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.
SCOTSDALE
 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

MALVERN

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. Enq: (03) 9728 3374.

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.
Rev. 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, Colwood & 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.

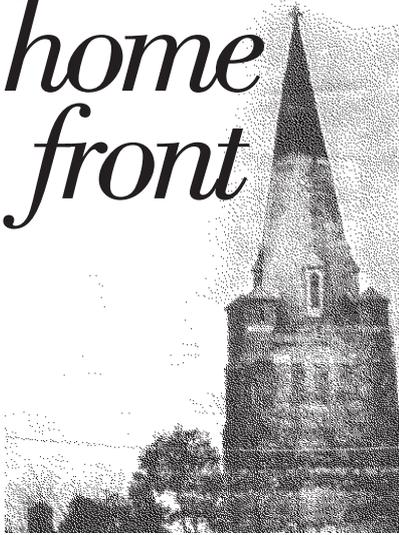
WHITFORDS (St Mark's)

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



Presbyterians honoured

Several Presbyterians received recognition in the Australia Day honours list in January.

Cole Milne Bradbury, Taralga, NSW: Order of Australia (OAM). For service to the community of Taralga through sporting, ex-service and social support groups. Mr Bradbury has been an elder in St Stephen's Presbyterian Church since 1963.

Iris Irene Gerard, Rowes Bay, Qld: OAM. For service to the community of Townsville through Meals on Wheels. Mrs Gerard has served as a member of the Women's Group at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, for 52 years and was

a founding member of St Andrew's Meals on Wheels in 1964.

Congratulations to them both and to three members who received the Lilley Australia Day Award for their many years of service to the community.

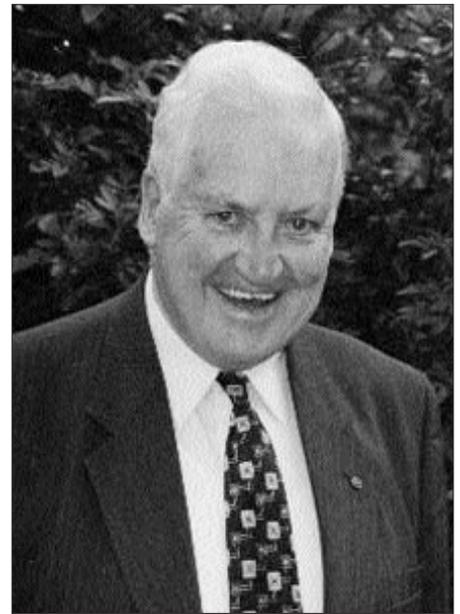
Marjorie Sands received her award for her work at St Andrews Hospital and her many years of ministry at Gateway Nundah (Qld). **Beth Dawson** received her award for her many years with St Johns' Ambulance and Australian Community Care. **Jim Wyllie**, an elder from Scots Clayfield, was another recipient.



Iris Gerard

Jubilee

Graham Gordon celebrated 50 years service as an elder at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Morwell (Vic), on 3



Graham Gordon

December. Mr Gordon comes from a long line of Presbyterian elders. His father, grandfather and great-grandfather were all elders, dating back to 1870. The occasion was marked by a presentation at the Presbytery, as well as some coverage in the LaTrobe Valley newspaper.

Appointments

On 4 February an appointment service was held for the **Rev. Trevor W. Cox** to the charge of **Waverley Knoxfield (Vic)**. **Rev. Neil Harvey** of Wangaratta preached.

Tony Archer has been appointed as

Theos coffee shops

Clinton LePage reports on the 2001 Cowes experience.

This summer was my fifth year involved in the Scripture Union Cowes (Phillip Island) Theos team and my 3rd year as a co-director. Theos are coffee shops run for young people.

Ours is based at the Cowes Anglican Church hall, decorated with black plastic over the walls and lights and parachutes over the roof. The hall has couches, chairs and tables (covered with butcher's paper, with crayons available), and the team provide live music and play CDs. We held a dance party from 12.30am to 5am on New Year's morning, largely as a form of publicity and also as a safe and alcohol-free place for people to hang out

after a big night, and had our biggest numbers ever.

As well as music we have pool and table tennis and sell cheap food and drinks, but we do have free tea, coffee and milo. Our focus is developing relationships with people, so we introduce ourselves and talk to people (but hopefully listen more than we talk). Theos isn't really an in-your face evangelism it's more about evangelising through friendship. This year's team of 16 members met heaps of people and developed relationships with quite a few of them.

Our Bible studies on Philippians, run by some of the team and ministers from

the local churches, were diverse and challenging. Our basic program includes quiet-time, Bible study, team meeting, worship and small groups in the morning. Afternoon activities include beach volleyball, cricket, swimming and just hanging around the hall. Then we open up shop from 8.30pm to 1am nightly.

Theos is really a life-changing experience which I can highly recommend to any Christian. A big part of it is just living in a community with other Christians, working and being focused on something together and really seeing God work. Many of us are already looking forward to next year's Theos.

home missionary to the Warburton Charge (Vic). Tony, an applicant for candidacy, studies at the Presbyterian Theological College, Melbourne.

Rev. Ken Brown has been appointed supply minister to the Charge of **Drouin**, Presbytery of Gippsland (Vic), for 12 months.

New elders

Peter Kooy has been ordained and inducted and **Walter Bruining** inducted as ruling elders within the session of the **Ringwood/Heathmont** Charge (Vic).

Something old, something new

We had been driving for hours, reports *Rev. Russell van Delden*. We were hot and hungry. But then the kids saw it. We slowed and turned in for a quick meal in airconditioned comfort. What they had seen, of course, was one of the world's most recognisable logos – a large yellow 'M'. Colourful, simple logos are everywhere. The Presbyterian church has had a very recognisable symbol for the last 100 years with its crest.

However, few might realise that there are in fact five versions in use, ranging from a more-rounded shape with only four stars and a burning bush to the elongated design with five stars, a cross, burning bush, rose, thistle and shamrock. But it is dated. Its intricate design and Latin wording shows that it comes from a previous century (1883, in fact). Yet for many, it still serves as a wonderful symbol of God's goodness to our church throughout its history. Should we replace it and risk hurt and division in our church? Or should we keep it and have our younger members reluctant to use it?

The General Assembly of Australia established a Logo Committee to work in conjunction with the Committee on the Centenary of the PCA to produce a modern emblem/logo which will reflect the mission of our church in Australia as we begin our second century on 24 July. We think it is best to keep our crest, and to create a modern logo to exist alongside it for those who prefer. Over the past year, we have produced a range of draft designs. The best will soon be available for inspection and comment at www.iig.com.au/logo. *Russell van Delden* is convener of the Logo Committee.



Historical register

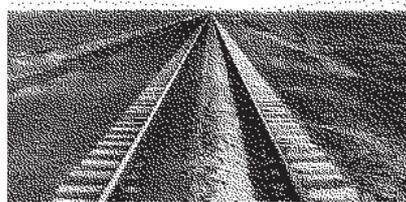
A comprehensive register of Presbyterian ministers in Australia from 1822 to 1901 is being prepared by **Dr Malcolm Prentis** of Sydney (author of *The Scots in Australia*) and **Rev. Dr Roland Ward** of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia, covering some 1000 ministers who served the various Presbyterian churches in Australia to July 1901 when the PCA was formed.

The work is well advanced. In Victoria the original minutes are being searched because previous published lists/parish histories have many errors. Overseas career details will be included, and reference to publications.

The authors request help in such areas as marriage/family details (ie number of children, specifying any of public prominence), and information about descendants who have been ministers or missionaries.

The writers hope to publish a limited edition by the time of the GAA in July. Please send any information to Rowland Ward at 358 Mountain Hwy, Wantirna 3152, fax (03) 9720 4871, or email rowlandw@optushome.com.au.

across australia



MPs in detention

Members of the Human Rights Subcommittee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade recently inspected detention facilities at the remote Curtin RAAF base in Western Australia. The visit is part of a series of inspections to assess the conditions under which detainees live. The detention centres have been the focus of considerable unrest and increasing criticism in the wider community. **Christian World Service (CWS)**, which works

closely with refugees through its refugee and displaced peoples program, commends the visit as a positive step, and has provided the MPs a list of key questions it felt the detainees should be asked. According to Carolyn Kitto, director of CWS, non-government organisations working in the area have expressed concern about the level of access to the detainees.

Annual car baptism

Thousands of Australian children will be washing cars in May to raise money for Bibles. Each year hundreds of Sunday schools around Australia take part in **The Bible League's Children's Bible Sunday**, which gives Australian children the opportunity to share the great news of the Gospel by providing Bibles for those overseas. The program begins on Sunday 6 May culminating with Children's Bible Sunday on 27 May.

Other activities include reading testimonies and stories of the everyday lives of people in wild locations, activity sheets, a colouring-in competition, and cake stalls and devonshire teas. The theme for Children's Bible Sunday this year will be Bible translation, involving the Bible League and **Wycliffe Bible Translators**.

For more information, or to receive the free resource kit for "Children's Bible Sunday" contact Greg or Karen at The Bible League on 1800 800 937 or email info@bibleleague.com. The website is www.bibleleague.com

Staines memorial

A small stone monument commemorating the deaths of missionary **Graham Staines** and his two sons, **Philip** and **Timothy**, has been erected at **Beaudesert**, Graham's home town in southern Queensland. The monument was the centrepiece of a Sunday afternoon remembrance service on 21 January, two days before the second anniversary of the trio's murder by Hindu extremists in Orissa, India.

The memorial was commissioned by the Beaudesert Shire Council. Speakers included **George Bartle**, former pastor of the Mt Tamborine Presbyterian Church, who recalled counselling Graham Staines in the late '50s after a Christian Endeavour testimony meeting "in a cow paddock near Rathdowney".

Rev. Lloyd Carter, chairman of the **Evangelical Missionary Society** in Mayurbhanj, said, "This is not only a memorial to them, but also to what they

represent – the Gospel of Christ; to sacrificial and humble service.”

Mrs Gladys Staines quoted Psalm 46: “God is our refuge and strength ... Be still and know that I am God”. She said many Hindus had written, offering condolences and saying “this is not Hinduism”.

Democratic convention

This year’s Christian Democratic Party national convention is being held from 9 to 11 March at the Southern Cross College, 40 Hector Street, Chester Hill in Sydney. The convention is open to all concerned Christians.

Jamboree 2001

More than 12,500 young Scouts gathered at Cataract Park, Sydney, to celebrate the centenary of Federation as part of the 19th Australian and 22nd Asia-Pacific Scout Jamboree held at Cataract Park, Sydney in January 2001.

This 12-day formal gathering of Scouts from all over Australia and various countries around the world is also a time of fun and fellowship, consisting of activities such as abseiling, caving, tours and many other scout type activities. Kevin Cooper, minister with out charge, of Rutherford, NSW, was chaplain to one of the eight sub-camps, ministering to 1360 Scouts aged from 11 to 15 and 56 adult leaders.

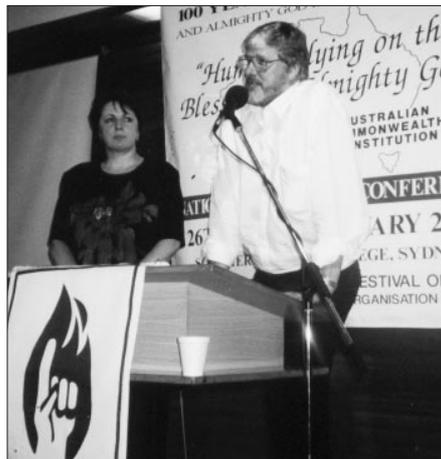
The chaplains were drawn from all denominations and it was their job to try and make the Word of God a living reality in the community of the sub camp, Kevin reports. “The duty to God is a positive part of the Scout program and it is the chaplain’s role to reinforce attitudes to God within people in an effective manner and to help the spiritual and physical well-being of everyone in the sub camp.”



Chaplain Team – Australian Jamboree 2001



Fred Nile, David Flint and Peter Barnes



Jenny and Peter Stokes (Saltshakers Melbourne) addressing the National Centenary Conference

Australia Day Conference

Professor David Flint, chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Authority, gave the keynote speech at the National Centenary Conference on the Australia Day weekend in January. Mr Barrie Unsworth, chairman of the NSW Centenary of Federation Celebration Committee, gave the closing speech.

Delegates came from NSW, Victoria and the ACT, and were sponsored by the Australian Federation of Festival of Light. Rev. Fred Nile chaired the conference, which took as its theme the opening words of the Australian Commonwealth Constitution: “Humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God.” Speakers included Rt. Rev. Charles Pass, Rev. Dr Peter Barnes, Justice Lloyd Waddy, Mr Richard Eason, Rev. David Cartledge, Dr Graham McLennan, Mr and Mrs Peter and Jenny Stokes, Mr Philip Benwell and Mr Neville Pollard.

The conference plans Christian heritage parades in October, as part of the centenary celebrations in each capital city to celebrate Australia’s Christian pioneers. Addresses are available on audio and video tape from GPO Box 141, Sydney 2001.

world news



Chinese bestseller.

The Bible has become a bestseller in China, with 25 million copies printed in the People’s Republic over the past 13 years, according to China’s state office for religious affairs. Deputy director Guo Wei, speaking at a meeting celebrating a jubilee edition in Nanjing, said the Bible ranks second only after the books of the former leader Deng Xiao Ping.

There are, however, still restrictions. Bookstores are not allowed to sell the “Book of Books”. This is why many churches set up bookstalls where Christians and Non-Christian may obtain bibles. There are also 70 official distribution centers.

According to official estimates, there are approximately 25 million Christians in state registered Protestant churches, and 3.2 million Catholics. Church experts put the figure much higher – at 40 to 60 million. Most of them belong to house churches and groups not recognized by the Chinese authorities. They sometimes suffer persecution at the local level.

Bombings in China

Voice of the Martyrs reports that in the last week of November more than 400 unregistered Christian and non-Christian places of worship in the Ou Hai district of Wenzhou were destroyed or closed down by Chinese authorities. Many places were literally blown up. Many private homes used as house churches were included in the destruction. The recent attack was said to be necessary “to maintain social stability”. In the past year over 1200 religious buildings have been shut down or destroyed in the province of Zhejiang

Attacks in Indonesia

In an orchestrated campaign of violence against Christians in Indonesia on

Christmas Eve, at least 14 people were killed and 100 injured. The violence is regarded by political commentators as an effort to destabilise President Wahid's democratic government.

"The almost simultaneous explosions outside Catholic and Protestant churches in seven cities across Indonesia were condemned by Mr Wahid, who said forces trying to oust him were fomenting violence. Newspapers reported that "most of the bombs were planted in cars parked outside targeted churches. Clergymen received others wrapped as gifts. Police defused 13 unexploded devices."

Taliban to execute converts

The supreme leader of Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia warned in January that his regime will apply the death penalty to any Muslim who converts to another faith. Omar also specified that "any non-Muslim found trying to win converts will also be killed".

Pastors Pay 'War Tax'

Colombia's violent groups are demanding money from churches and pastors in the form of "war taxes" to support their activities, *Compass* reports. Failure to comply invites kidnapping or death for the pastor or his family. Extortion has become a booming industry in Colombia, fed by public fear of these violent groups.

Indian Christians beaten

Members of a radical Hindu group beat two Christian workers for more than two

hours in January for showing a Jesus film in Jehra, a remote village on the Rajasthan-Gujarat border in western India. *Compass* reports that the Christians were seriously injured but are expected to recover.

Maluku Christians' plea

Alarmed by mounting evidence that perhaps as many as 1000 Protestant and Catholic Christians on the islands of Kesui and Teor have been forcibly converted to Islam, often involving painful circumcisions, leaders of the Maluku churches issued an emergency appeal to United Nations to prevent further coercion.

Iranian converts stranded

Mahmoud Erfani fled Iran into Turkey with his wife and three daughters 18 months ago, to escape a decade of troubles for converting from Islam to Christianity. But because they have no "proof" of persecution, the family is stranded in central Turkey and could be deported any day back to Iran, where Erfani could be tried and executed for apostasy, *Compass* reports.

Salvation Army banned

A Moscow city court rejected on 28 November the Salvation Army ministry's appeal for reregistration as a religious organisation in Russia. The court upheld a district court decision to deny reregistration, stating that the word "army" indicated that the organisation might be military and a threat to national security.

Landmark in Turkey

Fourteen months after the Istanbul Protestant Church filed for legal status as a religious foundation, Turkey's highest court granted it on December 7. The court overruled all previous appeals, allowing the establishment of the first legally recognised Turkish evangelical church. The church's pastor called it a landmark decision for the country's few thousand Turkish Protestant Christians.

In less happy news, a Syrian Orthodox parish priest in Turkey has publicly rejected charges that he "provoked hatred and religious enmity" by telling local reporters that his Christian minority community had been victims of genocide by Turks 85 years ago. Put on trial December 21 before Diyarbakir's Second State Security Court, Fr. Yusuf Akbulut could be jailed up to three years if convicted.

Christians evicted

A month after four Christians in Turkmenistan were arrested and tortured by secret police, all three of the married men and their families have been forcibly evicted and their homes confiscated by the government, *Compass* reports. The Christians were implicated in the discovery of "contraband" Christian videos that were found in their wrecked car on November 21.

Turkmenistan is described as the most repressive of the Central Asian republics. Only the Sunni Muslim Board and the Russian Orthodox church have gained official registration. Protestant Christians, and other religions and cults, have been banned, and subjected to police raids and large fines. All active foreign Christians have been expelled in the last two years.

Clinton offends communists

President Bill Clinton, who visited Vietnam late last year before handing the presidency to George W. Bush, spoke to the archbishop of Ho Chi Minh City, Jeane Baptiste Pham Minh Man, and talked of religious freedom when he addressed students at Hanoi National University. Freedom, he said, "does not threaten the stability of society." According to Religion Today, Communist leaders were not impressed by his comments or his visit with the archbishop.

General Assembly of Australia

NATIONAL DIRECTOR

AUSTRALIAN PRESBYTERIAN WORLD MISSION

The current National Director, Robert Benn, is resigning in May to take up a parish ministry.

Applications are therefore invited from suitably qualified persons for the position of National Director, to commence duties as soon as convenient after June of this year.

The successful applicant will have an enthusiastic commitment to cross cultural mission in an overseas context, and the ability to communicate this message effectively. Preferably applicants will have overseas experience in missionary service, or at least in visiting mission situations. The position requires leadership, administrative and management skills. In addition to promoting the missionary cause of the Church and the recruiting of missionary candidates, duties include liaison with State Committees of APWM and Partner Mission Societies, pastoral care of missionaries, and mission publicity.

The position is based in Sydney where the successful applicant will work in cooperation with the Executive Committee.

Potential applicants are encouraged to contact the Convener for the Terms of Appointment and further details of the role of the National Director. Applications should be submitted by 10 May to:

Dr David Pilgrim
National Convener, APWM
33 Seymour Street
Hurstville Grove NSW 2220.

Dr Pilgrim can be contacted by phone/fax on 02 9586 2372 or by email at davidpilgrim@smartchat.net.au

Harold E. Hughes

While the New Testament tells us that people come to Christ in many different ways, perhaps few are as dramatic as that of former US Senator Harold E. Hughes. In his autobiography, *The Man from Ida*, Hughes recounts how the light first dawned in his soul after years of alcoholism and troubled marriage.

Hughes, who is well-known for the crucial role that he played in disciplining Charles Colson during his time in prison for Watergate, began life as a farm boy. But he outgrew the farm. He had the personality and skills that marked him out for a career in public affairs. But his love of socialising and meeting with people made him vulnerable to what was destined to become the curse of his life: drink. He found himself caught in its clutches and couldn't break free. It almost destroyed his marriage and nearly cost him his life.

Had it not been for his encounter with Christ, Harold Hughes would have been a dead man. He had reached the end of the line. But his conversion proved to be a significant turning-point. He subsequently became an elected State Governor and finally won a spot in the US Senate as a Democrat. It was during this time that he played a leading role in the rehabilitation of Charles Colson, from arch-politician to Christian statesman.

This edited excerpt is taken from the book *The Man From Ida Grove* (Hodder and Stoughton 1975).

After falling "off the wagon" in Des Moines, I had been coming home drunk more often. At times I'd be belligerent and foul-mouthed. Though I never struck Eva, my verbal abuse made her cringe like a beaten kitten. One night both Connie and Carol were awakened by my shouting and I almost stumbled over them at the top of the stairs where they were huddled crying.

By then, I had decided that drinking was an inevitable part of my life and I no longer made claims about trying to stop. Anyone who tried to talk to me about it



Harold E. Hughes

was curtly rejected, for I would always tell them I could control it. But deep down I had begun to hate myself. I wasn't at all sure I could control my drinking. I was still haunted by the fear in Mother's eyes when I slammed the whiskey bottle down on her kitchen table. I had trouble sleeping; when I did I'd have nightmares of men dying around me in shellbursts, and I would awaken screaming and crying. And I had lost count of the jails I had been in for drinking or brawling.

A drum beat of doom seemed to fill my days and nights. I cringed at people's comments, at knowing winks, at seeing the flush in my face in the mirror, at the deepening fatigue which racked my body. Yet I was powerless to stop doing the one thing that caused it all.

Trying to escape the horrible-self-loathing, I found myself wandering about the house, a sense of blackness closing in on me. In the bedroom, I slumped on to our bed. I sat there, realising the awful hopelessness of my condition. I couldn't control my drinking; for 10 years alcohol

had controlled me. What was the point of living? I'd failed everyone who had meant anything to me; I was a disgrace to my town. I didn't go to church – that would be phony. I was a hypocrite in everything I did; I couldn't even tell the truth any more. I couldn't do anything right. Why not just end it?

The thought hung there, like the echo of a tolling bell. A cold feeling of logic overcame me. Why not? I had thought about this before but had brushed it away. Yet the more I considered the alternative, the more sense it made. Why go on doing the things I hated? The more I thought about the disorder in my life and the inability to control it, the more I wanted to end it. I was just an evil rotten drunk, a liar. And what should happen to evil men? They deserved to die.

I got up from the bed and went to the closet where I kept my rifle and shotgun. I opened the door and considered both, then reached for the shotgun. It would be the most certain. It was a single barrel Remington pump gun, 12-gauge. I slid three shells in the magazine and pumped one into the chamber. Tears streaming down my face, I lay down on the bed, rested the shotgun on my chest and put the muzzle into my mouth. The cold steel rasped my teeth and tasted of oil. Reaching down, I found I could push the trigger with my thumb. This way everything was certain: I did not want to botch it and spend the rest of my life as a vegetable.

Then I thought of the awful mess and stains this would leave in the bedroom. I remembered the men I had seen shot overseas. I was leaving Eva and the girls with enough bad memories. Getting up, I walked into the hall and into the bathroom. It could be cleaned more easily. Carefully holding the Remington, I climbed into the tub.

It was as if a malignant force was whirling me toward a frightening precipice.

It was an old-fashioned claw-footed tub. The porcelain was cold to my hand as I stepped into it, my shoe soles squeaking on the tub bottom. In it, I lay down, feel-



ing strange to be in a tub with my clothes on. With the shot gun resting on my stomach, I positioned it with the muzzle in my mouth toward my brain. Reaching down, my thumb found the trigger and I was about to push it.

A terrible sadness filled me. I knew what I was doing was wrong in God's eyes. Yet, my whole life had been wrong. And God had always been very remote. In a few years my family would get over it, I reasoned. They would have an opportunity to rebuild their lives. But if I remained here, I would never change and only hurt them more. The thought came that I should explain all this to God before pushing the trigger. Then if he could not forgive this sin, at least he would know exactly why I was committing it.

Climbing out of the tub, I knelt on the tile floor and laid my head on my arms, resting on the cool tub rim. "Oh, God," I groaned, "I'm a failure, a drunk, a liar and a cheat. I'm lost and hopeless and want to die. Forgive me for doing this." I broke into sobs, "Oh, Father, please take care of Eva and the girls. Please help them forget me ..."

I slid to the floor, convulsing in heavy sobbing. As I lay face down on the tiles, crying and trying to talk to God, my throat swelled until I couldn't utter a sound. Totally exhausted, I lay silent, drained and still. I do not know how long I lay there. But in that quiet bathroom, a strange peace gently settled over me. Something that I had never experienced before was happening, something far beyond my senseless struggles. A warm peace seemed to settle deep within me, filling the terrible emptiness, driving out the self-hate and condemnation. My sins seemed to evaporate like moisture spots under a hot, bright sun.

God was reaching down and touching me. A God who cared, a God who loved me, who was concerned for me despite my sins. Like a stricken child lost in a storm, I had suddenly stumbled into the warm arms of my Father. Joy filled me, so intense it seemed to burst my breast. Slowly I rose to my knees and looked up to him in the awe of gratitude. Kneeling on that bathroom floor, I gave him myself totally. "Whatever you ask me to do,

Father," I cried through hot tears, "I will do it."

For a long time I knelt there. Then I stood up, breathing heavily as if I had just climbed a long hill. Reaching into the tub, I picked up the shotgun. I shuddered as I thought how close I had come to using it. Taking it to our bedroom, I unloaded the shells and placed the gun back in the closet. As I closed the closet door, a faint accusatory echo sounded: "Coward . . . afraid to pull the trigger."

Doubt chilled me. Had my experience in the bathroom been another of the many illusions I had gone through before? I was so deceptive to myself and others. But something far stronger kept saying: "Stay with God, follow him, believe."

I knelt at the bed: "Father," I prayed, "I don't understand this or know why I deserve it. For you know how weak I am. But I put myself in your hands. Please give my family back to me ... and give me the strength never to run again. Father, I put myself in your hands."

For a long while I knelt there. Then I climbed into bed, rested my head on the pillow and for the first time in months slipped into a deep, peaceful sleep. Bright sunshine streaming through the window awakened me. An exuberance filled me, and then I remembered the night before. I got up and made coffee, thinking how close I had come to killing myself.

I knew that if I drank again I would put myself under the control of dark forces that would lead me to the same horrible pit. But I also knew I had someone with me, a personal being who had reached down in my desperation and comforted me. As I thought of him, again that strange joy filled me. AP

PLC
MELBOURNE

Head of Junior School

(from term 3, 2001 or as soon as possible)

The present Head of the Junior School, Mrs. Sallie Norsworthy, will retire at the end term 2, 2001 after more than twelve years of outstanding, wise and dedicated service to the College.

Since 1875, the girls at Presbyterian Ladies' College have enjoyed outstanding educational opportunities generated by challenging academic programs, enriching co-curricular activities and exceptional staff.

The school, located in 16 hectares of landscaped grounds in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, has a student population of 1,360 comprising 910 in Senior School, 380 in Junior School and 70 in the Early Learning Centre.

The College is seeking applicants with an educational philosophy consistent with the aims of a Christian independent girls' school. The role of Head of Junior School demands outstanding leadership in the total educational program, in staff development and performance, in spiritual and pastoral matters, and in communication with the College community.

It is intended that the new Head of the Junior School will take up the position at the beginning of term 3, 2001 or as soon as possible thereafter.

A role description is available from our website and by ringing the Principal's Secretary.

Written applications for positions should be forwarded by March 23 to:
Mrs. Elizabeth Ward, The Principal

PLC seeks to appoint staff who have an empathy with the Christian ethos of the College.



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TV Watch Friends

Reviewed by Luke Tattersall



So no one told you life was gonna be this way.

Your job's a joke, you're broke, you're love-life's D.O.A.

It's like you're always stuck in second gear. And it hasn't been your day, your week, your month or even your year.

But I'll be there for you – when the rain starts to fall

I'll be there for you – like I've been there before.

I'll be there for you – like you're there for me too.

So goes the theme song from the smash hit TV show *Friends*. A new season has just begun and I'm sure the viewers of this show will ensure that this show sits in the number one ratings position for another year. Ross, Monica, Rachel, Chandler, Joey and Phoebe are all back for another year as *Friends*.

My guess is that most of you have seen it at least once (and the ratings would certainly indicate that). But for those who are not regular viewers, let me fill you on the main idea of the show. The name of the show, and those lines from the theme song, really sum up what it is all about: it is about friends. It is about belonging and security. It is about having a group of people who will care for you. It is about

knowing love and acceptance among a group of friends. And there is some great humour along the way, courtesy of some clever script writing.

Now, I'll be the first to admit that there are plenty of less-than-helpful themes in the show. Many of the themes are a reflection of the age we live in – the homosexual relationship of Ross's ex-wife, the fact that most of the characters are jumping from one bed to another, Ross's divorces, to name just a few.

But let's put those aside for a moment and think about the bigger idea of "friends". That's what drives the show. The characters are friends with each other, and nothing can damage that relationship. They will always be there for each other, no matter who else comes and goes.

One thing that all the characters seem to have in common is that they come from dysfunctional homes. Ross and Monica have the most normal parents – but they are still very weird. They aren't able to be completely honest with their parents. But that seems to be OK because they have their friends.

Another message that comes through with *Friends* is that there is no "judgmentalism". No one is judged according to their job or income or even intellectual capacity. You may be a palaeontologist like Ross or an out of work actor (and not so bright) like Joey, or a waitress like Rachel. But they'll all be accepted, no matter what.

That is not to say that the friendships are perfect – far from it. But they are willing to put up with whatever idiosyncrasies the others may have – Monica's obsessive/compulsive behaviour, Phoebe's terrible songs and singing, etc. They will put up with it because they are friends.

This is by no means the first show to promote the ideals of belonging and friendship. The TV show *Cheers* in the '80s was based around the same idea. The bar in Boston was a place where you could find acceptance and understanding – a place where "everybody knows your

name – and they're always glad you came" (or so said the theme song).

I think part of the appeal of these shows is that they touch on a deep longing that all people have: a desire to belong, to be a part of a group where we will know acceptance and support. We have a desire to know there is somewhere we can go where "everyone will know your name", a place where people will be "there for you".

As Christians I think we know that this desire is not wrong. That's how God has made us. We are wired for relationships. We are made to be in relationship with other people. People need people.

In a strange way I think the characters in *Friends* and *Cheers* are looking for exactly what we should be offering as churches. They want a place to belong and be accepted. They want to be a part of a group that will support them and care for them. They want to be a part of a group where they will know love and acceptance.

It's tragic that churches often give the opposite impression. Churches are often seen as the place where you will be judged, where you will be made to feel uncomfortable when you come in, where people won't remember your name for the first six weeks that you come along.

But more than that – if people are looking for a friend – if they are looking for someone who will always be there for them – then they are really looking for Jesus, aren't they? When you read what Hebrews 2 says about Jesus it is clear that he is the perfect friend – the one who can understand and sympathise with all the things we go through – the one who is there for us. By placing our trust in him – by accepting what he has done for us on the cross – we can be forgiven and have a friend, a brother, who will be there for us ... forever.

Luke Tattersall is the pastor of Parramatta City Presbyterian Church. 

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Safe sex

The Bible's moral standards apply equally to male and female.

Mom and Dad, you can be proud of yourselves. You raised two daughters in Southern California and both of us were virgins on our wedding day!"

Tim and Beverly LaHaye rejoiced when their daughter said this on the way to her wedding. She and her sister had both, like Daniel, "resolved not to defile" themselves with the sexually permissive ways of our day. The LaHayes say to parents, "You can raise virtuous children in this permissive society."

Parents have always wanted children, and particularly daughters, to go into marriage as virgins. Queen Victoria's mother slept in the same bed as her daughter until her wedding day to protect her from the promiscuous behaviour of those around her. Even today, many fathers, not particularly moral themselves, have old-fashioned values for their daughters.

Christian parents do not differentiate between moral standards for girls and boys. The Bible is the fairest book in the world, setting the same standards for male and female. Fornication – voluntary sexual intercourse between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman – is listed with the works of the sinful flesh (Gal. 5:19). Let it not be named among you! (Eph. 5:3)

Tragically, there is a strong communal belief, promoted by Hollywood, secular education and our culture in general, that chastity is an impossible standard. People do not believe that sexual desires can be controlled, and refuse to believe that any single person remains celibate for any length of time. This is Satan's lie. Sex is a powerful force but it is a physical appetite and healthy living involves controlling all our appetites. (See Dr Rex Russell in *What the Bible Says About Healthy Living*)

Why are condoms being promoted for safe sex? Pregnancy occurs in 12 per cent of couples using condoms. "In promiscuous sex, even with condoms, the infection rate is 100 per cent with the human papilloma virus (HVP)." There is no cure for this virus, which is suspected of eventually causing cancer of the cervix and penis (Russell).



Marion Andrews

Teenagers need to know that the only way to have safe sex is to marry a faithful husband or wife.

Our society is wrong. Not every teenager is sexually active and many are deliberately choosing chaste lifestyles. In the 1980s, Australian school texts like *Maestro* promoted sexual activity among school children. To my surprise, in *Looking for Alibrandi*, set in a Roman Catholic school in Sydney in the 1990s, the main character, Josie, rejects casual sex. In contrast, her friend, Lee, admits she has been damaged by her first sexual encounter.

Lee says, "It is a loss of innocence you know. Just like everyone says it is. I think it's the only thing you have left that belongs to you and that belongs to that cocoon of childhood."

Josie says, "You think that even if I did sleep with him I wouldn't have been able to hold on to him?"

"Jose, your loss of virginity will be written in a diary and you'll probably go

to confession on its anniversary every year for the rest of your life."

How much better are the memories of a wedding day for two chaste people? How much better it is to celebrate together with gladness and a pure heart? The anniversary Lee speaks of is a lonely one, charged with guilt and regret.

In 1995, an American teenager with cerebral palsy came to Australia on a speaking tour. She spoke to young people about Jesus Christ and life, teenage sex, abortion and chastity. Gianna Jessen was the unwanted baby of a teenage mother but she survived abortion. When she was 12 years old, her adoptive mother told Gianna her birth story. Her immediate reaction was, "Well, at least I have cerebral palsy for an interesting reason."

Her long-term reaction has been to witness to the God who preserved her life and the forgiveness Jesus brings. She calls young people to reject fornication and embrace chaste lifestyles.

Tim and Beverly LaHaye, in *Against The Tide*, give two sets of questions: one for fathers to ask sons; one for mothers to ask daughters. American parents (or those who write books) tend to be more intense in conversations than we in Australia. I'm not sure how far I would have got asking my daughters these questions! However, I believe they are a good spring-board for thought and discussion.

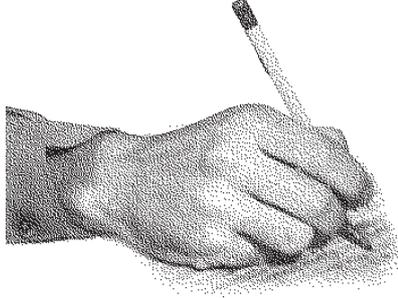
A few years ago, a 13-year-old girl wrote in her diary, "I don't understand boys. Don't they realise it is stupid to go with someone and know you are just going to drop them straight after a year or two! I don't want a boyfriend until after uni cause I'm just going to break his heart."

We need to do all in our power to protect and nourish this innocence. Humanist education, with co-ed sex classes, breaks down children's natural reserve, and breaks it down too early. For this reason, writers like James Dobson and Tim and Beverly LaHaye believe children should be educated in Christian schools or at home. And that is another story!



Scenes from *Looking For Alibrandi*

letters



Beyond the banal

As a Christian and artist (composer and poet), I read Michael Jensen's article "Sublime depravity" (*AP*, November) with interest. I can understand the anxiety of those who think that time is short. They could do worse than follow Paul's example of seeking to be all things to all men so that by all means he might save some (1 Cor 9:22). When he was writing to the Corinthians, who were arty, impressed by their Greek culture and full of their own importance, he called them "barbarians" (1 Cor 14:11-12). The pointedness of the remark is more apparent in the Greek than in some translations). When he addressed the Athenians, who were arty and impressed by their Greek culture and full of their own importance, he quoted classical Greek poetry to them (Acts 17:28). Note that this very Jewish Pharisee and theologian actually knew some classical Greek poetry.

If we believe that the intellectuals and the aesthetes of this world are people for whom Christ died (Rom 14:15), we should make more of an effort at understanding their thought processes and prejudices so that we might be intellectual to win the intellectuals and artistic to win the artistic. Our current (and mostly deserved) reputation is for aesthetic and intellectual banality. Those who believe that the time is short have a lot of delegating or catching up to do.

*Ted Grantham,
Croydon, NSW*

Suffering now or later

Peter Barnes (*AP*, January) correctly calls the forbidding of the quoting of the

Scriptures to parents of Nambucca School an attack on parents rights and the biblical understanding of sin and humanity. But it is more than that: it is an anti-Christian attempt to silence God. It follows the homosexual anti-vilification bill. NSW is quickly becoming an anti-Christian state. The next step may be to forbid the teaching of the Scriptures in any public place and to prevent proselytising.

A careless sleeping church indeed may not care. It does not proselytise anyway but those who at least go by the name of Christ should be aware that if they do not think the Word of God (Christ) worth suffering for at the hands of man, they will certainly suffer at the hands of God.

These laws come about through an ineffectual Church failing to speak authoritatively in the name of Christ and failing to suffer for righteousness' sake. No one belongs to Christ who will not suffer for him. The NSW Church needs to act decisively both in speaking out and in determining what measures it will take to protect itself from financial and perhaps physical attack. Concern should also be shown for those children who are not correctly disciplined, for what a child should learn in five minutes with the rod will take him, through many sorrows, perhaps a lifetime.

*Neil Cadman,
Norman Park, Qld*

For the children

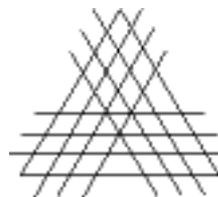
Those mourning the breakdown of Tom and Nicole's marriage may have noticed that the Cruise-Kidman divorce is going to be "civilised", for the sake of the children. However Dr Judith Wallerstein, who conducted a landmark 25-year study of children of divorce with a matched control group, found that children suffer deeply from their parents' divorce even when there are no disputes.

"Adult children of divorce are telling us loud and clear that their parents' anger at the time of the break-up is not what matters most," Wallerstein says. "Unless there was violence or abuse or unremitting high conflict, they have dim memories of what transpired during this supposedly critical period. It's the many years living in a post-divorce or remarried family that count ... It's feeling sad, lonely and angry during childhood. It's travelling on airplanes alone when you're seven to visit your parent. It's having no choice about how you spend your vacations ... It's reaching adulthood with acute anxiety. Will you ever find a faithful woman to love you? Will you find a man you can trust? Or will your relationships fail just like your parents' did?"

Staying together for the sake of the children is often considered old-fashioned. But Wallerstein is telling us it made a lot of sense.

*Roslyn Phillips
Festival of Light, Adelaide*

PRESBYTERIAN THEOLOGICAL CENTRE SYDNEY



GRADUATION CEREMONY AND COMMENCEMENT SERVICE

Wednesday 14th March 2001
At 7:30pm

To be held at
St James Presbyterian Church
Belmore Street, Burwood

The Occasional Address will be given by Dr Vic Eldridge

prayer

MARCH 2001

- 21 West Tamar parish (The Auld Kirk, Sidinouth) Tasmania; about 60 communicants, the elders and preachers; John Britton, interim moderator
- 22 Moree parish, northern NSW; 4 congregations with about 70 communicants and 10 elders; Les Fowler, inducted last year, and Shirley.
- 23 All Christian witness in Canada – 28 million people, 37% of British origin, 28% of French, 3% indigenous – 45% RC, 32% Protestant (including 215,000 Presbyterians), 12% non religious and 4% following other religions
- 24 Western Blacktown (Doonside) parish, western Sydney; about 24 communicants and 3 elders; David and Caron Balzer (exit appointment) Luke Tattersall, interim moderator
- 25 Rochester-Timmering parish, Vic.; 2 congregations with about 125 communicants and 7 elders; Chris Perona, exit appointment
- 26 Tocumwal-Finlay-Berrigan parish, NSW on the Murray; 3 congregations with about 90 communicants and 7 elders; David and Jenni Stone.
- 27 The advance of the Gospel among Chile's 15 million people – 58% RC, 28 % Protestant (mainly pentecostal) and 9 % non religious, speaking Spanish and 6 other languages.
- 28 Presbytery of Rockhampton Qld.; 6 parishes and 1 home mission station totalling 27 congregations with 745 communicants and adherents, 2 ministerial candidates, 2 retired ministers; Charles Kennedy, Clerk.
- 29 Mt Evelyn parish, Melbourne; about 65 communicants and 5 elders; Mark and Linda Crabb.
- 30 Belconnen home mission station, Canberra; about 45 communicants and 6 elders; vacant, John Baillie,

- moderator
- 31 Virginia-Banyo parish, northern Brisbane; about 50 communicants and 4 elders; Lindsay and Elizabeth Timms.

APRIL 2001

- 1 Millicent parish, in South Australia's SE; 2 congregations with about 70 communicants and 6 elders; Andrew and Jan Slater.
- 2 Kiama parish, south of Sydney, including Jamberoo; about 75 communicants and 6 elders; Noel and Fleur Creighton, exit appointment; Norman Secomb, interim moderator
- 3 Ashley & Sarah Manly from Croydon Hills Presbyterian Church, Victoria as they study Arabic in Jordan in connection with his work as a computer specialist with Middle East Christian Outreach.
- 4 Bible College students and those studying biblical and theological subjects by distance methods to enhance their Christian service.
- 5 All those involved in the spiritual dangers of the occult and those working to mediate Christ's deliverance to them.
- 6 Praise God for the spectacular growth of the church in China (a nation of 1.3 billion people) in the past half century of communist rule – from 5 to over 80 million – and pray for its need for younger trained pastors and scriptures, and steadfastness under persecution.
- 7 Robert and Beverley Harvey from Annerley, Brisbane. WEC missionaries in Brazil since 1967, now Regional Secretaries for Latin America.
- 8 Presbytery of Northern Rivers, NSW; 12 parishes totalling 30 congregations with 2200 communicants and adherents, 2 retired ministers, 1 under jurisdiction; George Ayoub, Clerk.
- 9 Essendon parish; about 50 communicants and 6 elders; Paul Ridgewell inducted last year, and Gaye.
- 10 Corowa parish; 4 congregations with about 190 communicants and 19 elders; Peter and Sharon Pallett, exit appointment; Bruce Gorton, interim moderator.
- 11 Alex and Sybil Shaw from Epping, Sydney, working with Language Recordings since 1969, the Korean recordists he has been training in Chaing Mai, Thailand; and the effective use of recordings distributed recently in a PNG "Wokabout".
- 12 Canterbury parish, Sydney; about 12 communicants and 3 elders; Cohn and Elizabeth Dubi.
- 13 A clear and powerful proclamation of the message of Christ's once for all atonement on the cross, and response in faith and love at services and Easter camps and conventions.
- 14 John and Pat Warner working among Somali people in Sydney and beyond.
- 15 A new grasp of the present and eternal consequences of the triumph of the Lord Jesus over death.
- 16 Presbyterian Inland Mission board (Jack Knapp, superintendent) and all staff including the newest Patrol Padres David Hart (WA) and Owen Oakes (NSW).
- 17 Colac parish, Victoria; about 80 communicants and 8 elders; Philip and Sharon Daffy.
- 18 Presbytery of Melbourne West, Vic; 5 parishes (including Scots Church); 2 appointment parishes and 2 home mission stations with 610 communicants and adherents, 1 student chaplain, 1 missionary; Peter Phillips, Clerk.
- 19 The Protestant church in East Timor with it's 15,000 members, 12 pastors (20 have not returned), and 75 Home Missionaries. APWM is actively involved working with the local churches, supplying personal and humanitarian aid as well as equipment.
- 20 Kogarah parish, Sydney; 2 congregations with about 50 communicants and 9 elders; Ray and Margaret Osborn

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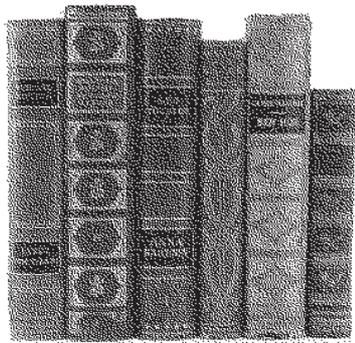
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books



A Brief History of the Presbyterians

James H. Smylie
 Kentucky: Geneva Press, 1996
Reviewed by Peter Barnes

The title of the book is actually somewhat misleading, as it concentrates on Presbyterianism in the United States. The Reformation is not dealt with particularly well, and Scotland is mainly treated as background for what took place in the New World.

The American story is treated in an overview which is helpful, albeit lacking in a number of areas. Smylie makes some doubtful assertions, as when he claims that the refusal of the American Presbyterians to revise their confessional standards in the 19th century led to the growth of the Methodists and Baptists (p.73). Certainly, on the revivals Smylie writes as an Arminian of the Finneyan stable – it is the preachers who convert their hearers.

It is not at all clear how Smylie would define Presbyterianism, as it is always evolving. Would John Knox have recognised Norman Vincent Peale, Robert McAfee Brown or Lois Stair? One hardly thinks so, but they all appear here as if they all belonged in the one ark. There is not much analysis in the work, which suffers, as so many historical works do, from a mild case of triumphalism.

A Study Commentary on Exodus Vol. 1, chapters 1-18

John Currid
 Durham: Evangelical Press, 2000
Reviewed by Peter Barnes

Calvin said that the chief excellency of an expounder was “lucid brevity”. There are a number of modern commentaries – not always German either – which seem to adopt a policy of ignoring both the adjective and the noun. Dr Currid, however, is genuinely helpful and stimulating in this treatment of the first 18 chapters of Exodus.

His theme is that Exodus is not so much a contest between Egypt and Israel as one between the gods of Egypt and the God of Israel. Dr Currid’s extensive knowledge of Egyptian mythology thus serves to illumine many a text.

Dr Currid tends to favour a later date for the exodus than this reviewer would. He also considers that the Hebrew midwives did not lie to Pharaoh in order to save the Hebrew babies, as God may have given each of the Hebrew mothers a quick and easy labour (Ex.1:18-19). The strange passage where it is usually thought that God tried to kill Moses for not circumcising Gershom is explained to

mean that God sought to kill Gershom, not Moses (Ex.4:24-26). So there is scope for debate!

A misprint on page 225 needs to be corrected – it is the 3rd, 6th and 9th plagues which arrive without warning. Overall, this is a most promising start to what should be a very worthwhile series of commentaries.

What’s Darwin Got to Do with It?

Robert C. Newman and John L. Wiester, with Janet and Jonathan Moneymaker
 Downers Grove: IVP, 2000
Reviewed by Peter Barnes

Encouraging people to read and think through issues is not an altogether easy task today, but this user-friendly cartoon-style work may help those who are willing to tackle the issue of evolution as opposed to creationism. The question of the length of days in Genesis 1 is side-stepped, but the issue of design is handled very competently and with remorseless logic. Phillip Johnson says that the result is “more fun than a barrel of Australopithecines”.

Like Queen Victoria, I was not so amused, but it is highly recommended, and will do much good to all who read it.

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An overrated virtue

Tolerance often simply reflects a lack of love.

Today one almost instinctively regards tolerance as a Christian virtue, a fruit of the Spirit's work within us. Sometimes one almost receives the impression that the Christian message is that Christ came to make us more tolerant.

Against this is the view of "Rabbi" Duncan: "The vague, cloudy men are always talking against intolerance. Why, our very calling is to be intolerant; intolerant of proved error and known sin." Obviously, some civil tolerance is necessary for a fallen world to survive. Imposing religious or political tests on people has not proved to be very successful in the past. In a democracy, we either have to allow everyone to vote or no one – although in the latter case that would be the end of the democracy! The fact that a great many people will vote for selfish reasons and without much discernment may be true, but the alternative could well be worse.

In the 16th century the man who became Pope Paul IV declared: "No man is to lower himself by showing toleration toward any sort of heretic, least of all a Calvinist!"

Within the Church too there needs to be a certain amount of tolerance. We are not to judge one another (Rom. 14:13), and the strong are to bear with (i.e. to tolerate) the scruples of the weak (Rom. 15:1). Those whom Christ has received ought to receive one other (Rom. 15:7). There is to be a true catholicity about the Church, provided the gospel is received with faith.

However, there are clearly limits to the virtue of tolerance. In 1985 a Sydney



Peter Barnes

nurse, Anita Cobby, was raped and murdered by five men who cut her throat. Are we meant to tolerate that? Of course not! Those who argue that, for example, we ought to tolerate homosexuality do not usually argue that we ought to tolerate five men cutting the throat of a defenceless woman. In other words, they are arguing not in favour of absolute toleration – nobody does – but of homosexuality.

The issue is thus not one of toleration but of what constitutes evil. Christians are told to abhor what is evil (Rom. 12:9). There are some things which we must hate exceedingly, for to love God is to hate evil (Ps. 97:10).

To love and to tolerate are not the same thing at all. We are to love all, even our enemies, but we are not to tolerate everything. The apostle Paul made it clear that there is only one gospel, which is that Christ died and rose again in the place of sinners. This and this alone is what we are to proclaim as a church (Gal. 1:6-9). To believe in Christ plus circumcision or Christ plus anything is to depart from the true gospel, and fall under the apostolic anathema.

These days a fundamentalist is anyone says that there is such a thing as truth. A person who does not believe in the fundamentals of the faith – the inerrant authority of Scripture, Christ as God and man in the one person, his death as a substitute for sinners, his literal resurrection and coming again – is simply denying the gospel, not coming up with an acceptable interpretation of it. There is but one way to the Father in heaven, and that is through His eternal Son (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5).

A.W. Tozer could be blunt: "The fashion now is to tolerate anything lest we gain the reputation of being intolerant. The tender-minded saints cannot bear to see Agag slain, so they choose rather to sacrifice the health of the Church for years to come by sparing error and evil; and this they do in the name of Christian love."

Dorothy Sayers was of the same ilk: "In the world it is called Tolerance, but in hell it is called Despair ... the sin that believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, hates nothing, find purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and remains alive because there is nothing for which it will die."

Tolerance must be married to truth if it is not to be destructive. Even then, it is better to speak as the Bible does, of speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). It looks as though Chesterton got it right when he said that "tolerance is the virtue of the man without convictions".

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

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