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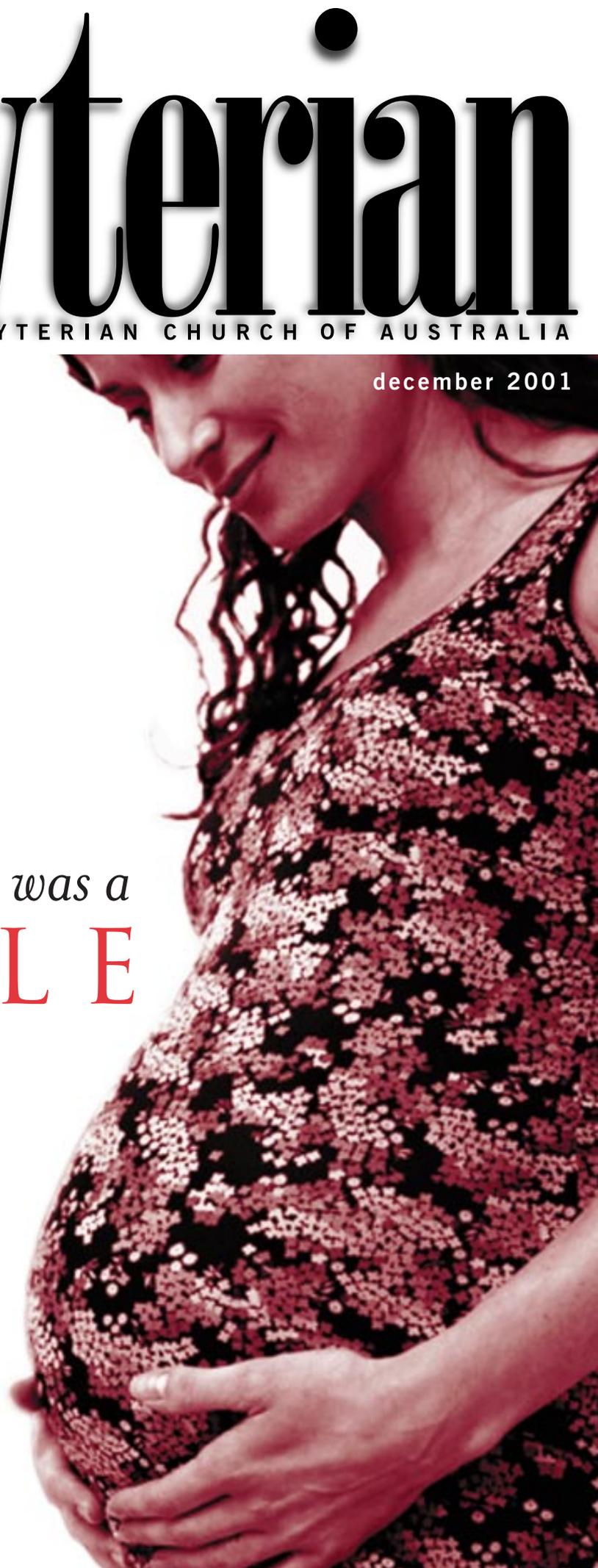
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MIRACLES

Yes and no: Norman Geisler 4
Reason to believe: Paul E. Little 8
The virgin birth: J. Kenneth Grider 9

FAMOUS CONVERSIONS

Charles Colson 11

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Every church, state by state 13

NEWS

Home Front 17
With Christ 18
Across Australia 18
World News 19

DEVOTION

Idle worship 21

WOMEN

A woman's place 22

CULTURE WATCH

The Man who Sued God: Phil Campbell 24

LETTERS 25

PRAYER 26

BOOKS

Beyond the Furthest Fences 27
Iron in Our Blood 27
Fred Nile: An Autobiography 27

ESSAY

The one-sided search: Peter Barnes 28

editorial

At the heart of the Christmas message is the staggering truth that God became man to bear our sins. This is what Karl Barth has called the "Christmas miracle". The thought that the Christian faith rests upon a miracle is a reminder to us that we worship a God who is free, unlimited and acts decisively in history. This should excite our souls. Miracles always do. God's deliverance of the Israelites inspired an outpouring of praise: "Who is like you – majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?" (Exodus 15:11). The miraculous birth of Christ also sparked an eruption of song from all who saw it.

Nevertheless, in the modern world one of the biggest obstacles to people becoming Christians is that Christianity is a supernatural religion which rests upon a number of miracles. In the mid-19th century Charles Darwin echoed the creeping mood of unbelief when he said: "The more we know of the fixed laws of nature, the more incredible do miracles become". Recently Richard Dawkins, an outspoken advocate of naturalism, has said: "The virgin birth, the Resurrection, the raising of Lazarus ... all are freely used for religious propaganda, and they are very effective with an audience of unsophisticates and children".

There is no doubt that that the modern mood is distinctly hostile to both the possibility and credibility of biblical miracles. Many people today seem to have a built-in grid which filters out the evidence and arguments that are overwhelmingly supportive of the biblical record.

If the Christmas story is to be believed – and there is no reason to doubt it – then Christians have the responsibility of defending the reality of miracles. Effective evangelism depends upon it. The radical Jesus Seminar is at least correct at this point when it asserts: "The contemporary religious controversy ... turns on whether the world-view reflected in the Bible can be carried forward into this scientific age and retained as an article of faith."

As we show in this present issue, the days are gone when scientists and philosophers can dogmatically assert that miracles are logically and scientifically impossible. The tide has turned. We have good reason to affirm: "For us men and for our salvation He came down for heaven".

Peter Hastie 

Miracles? Yes and no.

There's a time and place, and a lot of counterfeits.



Many people today are skeptical of the supernatural. Are they right to be cautious about unexplained phenomena?

There's nothing wrong with being cautious, especially if you are either rational or biblical or both. All rational people make judgements based on evidence. So we need to look at the evidence for unusual phenomena. And if you're biblical, the Bible says to beware of false prophets. It says to "test the spirits". The Bible makes it clear that there are signs you can look for in a false prophet. So, no discerning Christian should be gullible enough to assume that all that glitters is gold. Just because a phenomenon is unusual doesn't mean that it's supernatural.

TV producer Mike Willesee did a series on so-called "modern-day miracles" last year, highlighting the mysterious appearance of Jesus' stigmata on statues and female mediums. Are these phenomena miracles? Is a miracle simply an unexplained event?



Norman Geisler
talks to
Peter Hastie

No, a miracle is not an unexplained event. The term "anomaly" is a better word for such a happening. For example, we don't know why life grows on thermovents in the depths of the sea. Apparently, the temperature at these sites rises to 3000 degrees, which is too hot for life in normal conditions. Nevertheless, life develops there. So it's not a miracle; it's just something that science hasn't yet explained.

Furthermore, mediums are forbidden in the Bible. That's one of the signs of a false prophet listed in Deuteronomy 18. God prohibits sorcery, divination and the casting of spells. Whatever those signs were on the TV show, they were not miracles wrought by God.

Finally, the sorts of things that Australian television viewers saw were the same kind of things appearing in religions

that are known to be false. That's why it's dangerous for Roman Catholics, let's say, to argue that their religion is true because they have the same kind of miracles. It should be obvious that contradictory truth-claims can't both be true if you are appealing to the same kind of phenomena to justify your truth-claims. Where you have contradictory truth-claims appealing to the same data, they cancel each other out. David Hume's argument against that kind of thing in *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* should put that to rest.

So what characteristics distinguish genuine miracles?

I think that the best way to approach this is to remember that the main thing that distinguishes a miracle from other phenomena is that it bears the fingerprints of God. The starting-point is to realise that a miracle presupposes the existence of God. Our first task, then, is to identify who that God is. And the God of the Bible is what we call a theistic God – a per-

sonal, intelligent, moral, supernatural being, who transcends the universe because he created it. If you're talking about the fingerprints of that kind of God, then they are going to have to be truly supernatural because he's a supernatural being.

A truly supernatural event is something that occurs immediately; it's not gradual. If you pray and you gradually recover from your sickness, it's not really a miracle. God may have healed you, but he has done it through a natural process. He hasn't done it in a supernatural and instantaneous way. Biblical examples of miracles would be things like walking on water, turning water into wine, instantly curing paralysis, and raising somebody from the dead. Those are true miracles. But the kinds of things faith-healers do don't fit into that category at all.

Do miracles have a special purpose in God's plan?

Yes, they do. I like to say that a miracle is an act of God to confirm the Word of God to the people of God through a man of God. In other words, you have a sign and a sermon going together. Whenever you get a major message from God in the Bible, you usually have an accompanying miracle. For example, in Exodus 4:1-9 God tells Moses that he is giving him miraculous powers to demonstrate to others that he is a true prophet. He gives him a stick that becomes a snake and the power to make his arm leprous and then whole. Now these are truly miracles. Of course, the greatest miracle of all was when he struck the water of the Red Sea and it divided so that millions of people could walk across it. In each case, I don't think there was any doubt that God was acting.

Let me give you some other examples of that. In Acts 2:22 it says, "Jesus was a man ... confirmed by signs and wonders". In Hebrews 2:3,4, it says "which at first was spoken to us by our Lord and was confirmed to us by those who heard him, God bearing witness with signs and wonders and diverse gifts of the Holy Spirit." In John 3:2, Nicodemus said to Jesus, "We know you're a man come from God because nobody can do the miracles that you do unless God is with him." So, over and over in Scripture, one of the primary purposes of a miracle is to confirm a new revelation.

I believe that God's revelation is now complete, that the Bible is sufficient for faith and practice, and that we don't need any new revelation. In fact, we're not doing too well with the revelation that

we've already got. We don't need new confirmation of the Scriptures; what we need is a new application of the old truth that we already have.

So miracles have ceased because God's revelation of himself is now complete?

Yes. In fact, the New Testament indicates that. In Hebrews 2:3,4, the passage I quoted a moment ago, the writer uses the aorist (past) tense there. If we assume that he was writing before AD 70, which is highly likely, that means that the age of miracles had ceased by then. He refers to them as past events. And if you look at the Bible carefully, you notice a radical change. Compare 1 Corinthians 12:14 and Romans 12, where miraculous gifts are listed, with Paul's later epistles, Ephesians to 2 Timothy. The first are early, say AD 56, 57, and the latter say 60-67.

In the early period miracles are listed. Apparently they are being exercised at that stage. But when you get to the later period of Paul's life, no supernatural gifts are listed like that. Paul couldn't heal his own companion, Epaphroditus, in 1 Timothy 5:23. Paul prayed for his healing; but he wasn't cured. Another of Paul's trusted colleagues, Trophimus, fell ill in Miletus. But he wasn't healed either. I am sure Paul could have healed him if he'd had the power at the time. But Paul says in 1 Timothy 4:20 that he had to leave him there. So if miraculous gifts existed in that latter period, it's very strange that someone who said to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 12:12 "I've showed you the signs of an apostle" no longer has those signs.

Why are so many today reluctant to believe in miracles? Is there enough evidence to believe that they're possible?

Well there's plenty of evidence to believe that they're possible because everything that demonstrates that God exists also serves to show that miracles are possible. Let me put it like this: As soon as I have proved that it's reasonable to believe that there is a God who can act, then it logically follows that there can be acts of God. And a theistic God is definitely a God who can act.

Further, all the cumulative evidence that demonstrates that the universe had a beginning, for example, the so-called "big-bang" evidence, the anthropic principle, and all the data that supports the idea that a Creator intelligently designed the universe also proves that miracles are possi-

ble. A supernatural God is capable of supernatural acts.

Why the modern prejudice against miracles?

Probably the greatest enemy of a belief in miracles has been the philosophy of naturalism. Naturalism is a world-view that completely excludes the idea of a transcendent, supernatural God. It gained a philosophical foothold in the Western world, strangely enough, about 150 years after the Reformation. Around 1670, Benedict Spinoza, a Dutch-Jewish pantheist, wrote a book called *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*, in which he said that none of the miracles in the Bible had ever occurred. He also did higher criticism on the Bible based on his anti-supernatural assumptions. He had been expelled earlier from his synagogue for teaching that God was "extended" into the creation (pantheism), that angels were imaginary and that the soul was not immortal.

His argument against miracles went something like this:

Miracles are violations of natural laws.

Natural laws are unbreakable.

Therefore, a miracle is impossible.

Now, the fallacy of his argument is that natural laws are not unbreakable. A person who believes that natural laws are unbreakable has a "closed" Newtonian view of the universe. However, today scientists believe that the universe is open. Further, they regard natural laws as nothing more than a very high statistical average – the way the law operates 99.999% of the time. Nevertheless, they are prepared to concede that a remote possibility exists – 0.001 per cent – that something might happen contrary to it. So, on Einstein's view of the universe, which is open, miracles are possible. Of course, that means that in a theistic universe where God exists, miracles are possible.

On the basis of modern science, there is no logical reason to argue against the possibility of miracles. Believing in miracles is perfectly consistent with what we know about an open universe.

What part did David Hume play in setting people against the idea of miracles?

We don't need new confirmation of the Scriptures; what we need is a new application of the old truth that we already have.

Well, about a hundred years after Spinoza, David Hume wrote a toned-down version of his argument that went something like this:

A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature.

Firm and unalterable experience has established these laws of nature.

A wise person proportions belief to evidence.

Therefore, the proof against miracles is overwhelming.

Where does Hume go wrong here? Of course, he is correct at several points in his argument. It's true that a miracle is rare

Hume should reject naturalism on the basis of his own criteria because each of these events only happened once.



and that the laws of nature are regular. However, Hume makes the unwarranted assumption that the evidence for the regular is always greater than the evidence for the rare. This is where Hume, and every naturalist since him, gets caught in Hume's own net.

In order to establish the truth of naturalism, Hume has a big problem. He must demonstrate that he has greater evidence in favour of the following events than the alternatives: 1) that the universe was not created, 2) that life came about by spontaneous generation, and 3) that evolution across species has occurred. But ask yourself this question: how many times did any of these separate events occur? The answer is simple: they occurred once. Again, how many times have they been repeated? Again, the answer is simple: never. Hume has dug himself into a hole. How can Hume have conclusive evidence for events like spontaneous generation, macro-evolution, and the "big bang" some 15 to 20 billion years ago when they are unique events? He should reject naturalism on the basis of his own criteria because each of these events only happened once.

Why are scientists who are unwilling to recognise biblical miracles prepared to admit one-off, unexplained events such as you've mentioned?

Well, you can lead a horse to water, but

you can't always make it drink. As far as the apostle Paul is concerned, the problem is spiritual. In Romans 1:18 he tells us that it's a characteristic of fallen human beings to know the truth but to suppress it. People are always looking for other alternatives apart from God because if they don't, they realise they're in deep trouble. The God of the Bible is a judge. There is Someone with whom they have to deal. There is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun. God demands that they shape up in their lives. However, some people don't want to shape up so they are forced to deny any explanation of reality that involves God.

One of my favourite hobbies is studying quotes from famous atheists. I am intrigued as to why they rejected God. Let me give you two instances. The first is Jean Paul Sartre, the French existentialist atheist. He tells a story about himself in his autobiography, *Words*. He said, "When I was a little child I used to believe in God. I prayed. But then one day I was burning a hole in a rug with a match and God convicted me of my sin and I said, 'Anyone so unkind as to intrude into a child's play isn't worthy to be believed in.'" So he gave up believing in God. I ask you, was his problem intellectual or moral? Was it rational or volitional? On Sartre's own admission his unbelief was an act of rebellion against God. We look in vain for some reasonable objection.

Again, we face a similar problem with Friedrich Nietzsche, the famous 19th century German atheist. In his book, *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche said: "If you could prove this God of the Christians to me, I would believe him all the less." Now, what's his problem? Does he have an intellectual difficulty with Christian theism? Not really. His real problem was moral rebellion against God.

While many scientists discount the possibility of miracles, some, like Paul Davies, have recently suggested that the "big-bang" may have had a supernatural cause. Are there good grounds for believing that supernatural events are not only possible but also the result of Divine intelligence?

As a matter of fact, there's overwhelming scientific evidence that this is the case. The most important event in modern science has been the discovery of the "big-bang" theory, which shows by five lines of scientific evidence that the universe must have had a beginning. These are: 1) the expanding universe, 2) the radiation echo, 3) the second law of thermodynamics,

and 4) the general relativity theory of Einstein. In addition to these points, there is also a fifth – the big mass of energy discovered by the Hubble telescope that was predicted from the expanding universe. So, you've got five lines of evidence all pointing to a beginning of the universe.

Now if the universe began, that includes all space, all time, and all matter. Or to borrow a phrase from C.S. Lewis, "the whole show". This means that the universe came into existence from nothing some 15 or 20 billion years ago. Now we have a philosophical problem. As Julie Andrews reminds us in *The Sound of Music*, nothing comes from nothing. Now if nothing cannot produce something, and the universe came into being out of nothing, then Someone supernatural beyond the universe must have produced it.

At this point, I should also mention the firmly held philosophical view that David Hume himself believed, that you cannot have an infinite number of moments before today. Hume says it's absurd to deny it. He also claimed that he had never denied the principle of causality. But if everything that has come into being has a cause, and the universe came to be, then the universe must have had a cause. So that's very firm evidence too. So you've got six arguments – five scientific and one philosophical argument.

Now, you'd have to be a pretty rebellious, unwilling skeptic not to say that this evidence points to God. And honest people, like Paul Davies and Robert Jastrow in his book, *God and the Astronomers*, are saying that very thing – that it makes more sense to talk about the Genesis view that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Robert Jastrow has said that the evidence from astronomy was leading him to a view similar to one held by Christian theologians. What did he mean?

Jastrow wrote a book, *God and the Astronomers*, back in the mid '70s. It's still one of the best books on the subject. He ends the book with this line, "For the scientist to live by the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. They've scaled the mountain of ignorance, they pull themselves over the final rock and they're greeted by a band of theologians who've been sitting there for centuries." No doubt, upon reading Genesis 1:1, he is referring to exactly what I have just said – that there are several lines of evidence pointing to a beginning of the universe.

Obviously, it's simpler to say that the

universe had a cause and that's exactly what Genesis is saying. Jastrow realises that we have completely exhausted all natural explanations to account for the existence of the universe. That leaves us with only one alternative if all natural law came into existence at the moment of the "big-bang". And that's a supernatural force.

Every now and again we hear of inexplicable phenomena, such as spontaneous human combustion and the disappearance of ships and aircraft in the infamous Bermuda Triangle. Are they supernatural phenomena?

Well, my recommendation is that you take them with a grain of salt and look into the evidence very carefully. There's an excellent book written by an American Christian illusionist and magician, Andre Kole. It's a warning for the gullible public. He's helped David Copperfield develop some of his magic tricks like making the Statue of Liberty vanish.

In Kole's book, *Miracles or Magic?*, he addresses the issue of mysterious events. For instance, he cites the famous case of the disappearance of Flight 19 in the Bermuda Triangle and makes several points that are overlooked by most people. He refers to a university academic in Arizona, Larry Kusche, who wrote a first-rate investigative book called *The Bermuda Triangle Mystery Solved*.

In the book, Kusche notes that 15 to 20 per cent of the incidents involving the Bermuda Triangle never happened. So you can eliminate a fifth of them right there. Second, he points out that 25 to 30 per cent of the reported disappearances did not even occur within the boundaries of the Bermuda Triangle but up to 1000 miles away, but because they were unusual and inexplicable they just threw them in with the Bermuda Triangle group. Third, most disappearances did not occur on a calm clear day but in severe weather.

In the case of Flight 19, they actually reduplicated it and found out that this is what the army called a "flying gas tank" that was carrying 2000 gallons of fuel. An Air Force officer admitted that if someone had lit a cigarette in the cabin, the whole plane could have exploded. A plane once blew up like this over Greece. So there's nothing supernatural about that at all.

What about spontaneous human combustion?

I've read the stories, though I have no idea how to explain it. But I do know this: you certainly wouldn't want to call it a "miracle" in the biblical sense of the word.

Perhaps we should call it an anomaly, an unexplained event. It may have something to do with the occult. If it's a manifestation of the occult, then the Bible warns us to beware. It would then fall into the category of a false sign or wonder. But it's certainly not a miracle because no truth-claim in the name of God is being made in connection with it. Nor is it a response to a challenge for verification such as Elijah performed on Mount Carmel or Moses did in Exodus 4. So I wouldn't regard it as a miracle.

What are we to make of people like Uri Geller? People say that he can bend spoons by mental power. Does that constitute a miracle?

I don't think it does. In fact, Andre Kole deals with that in *Miracle or Magic?* too. And he verifies what I saw for myself on a TV show. Several years ago I watched Uri Geller on the old *Tonight* show with Johnny Carson. Now Carson, as you know, was once a magician himself. He had a key placed under one of several cans which were arranged on a table. Geller was supposed to tell him where the key was by just looking at the cans.

However, Geller wanted to be allowed to walk over to the table. But Carson said: "No. Just tell us where the key is from over here where you're sitting." And he failed because the trick is done by just gently touching the table and hearing the key rattle slightly in the can. And Johnny Carson, being a magician, knew that. So he was exposed on his program.

Again, he was caught out at a university on the west coast when some scientists tested his powers. One professor, who took him to the airport, found that Geller tried to fool him by putting a bent key on his key-ring and by bending some of the pens in his coat, which was on the back seat of the car next to Geller. And here's what the professor said: "Geller rarely announces his intention to bend the spoon in advance. You don't know when he's going to do it." In controlled tests, when asked to bend a specific spoon without touching it, his powers mysteriously disappear.

What about Filipino faith healers? People claim that they can perform operations and take out diseased organs without even leaving a scar.

There has never been a verified case of that. And again, Andre Kole went to the Philippines – you see, magicians are in a better position to expose these things, particularly Christian ones. Kole is a world-class magician and can do the same tricks himself. Now, if he can do the tricks himself, then it's obviously not supernatural because he doesn't claim to have supernatural power.

While Kole was in the Philippines he watched these psychic surgeons at work. He discovered that their work is based on deception of either the mind or the eye, or both. And these people are using chicken parts and other parts of animals. There is no incision made; they just press on the skin and it looks like they're making an incision. They have some kind of juice, sometimes betel juice in their hands – it makes it look a little like blood. It's all



On Sartre's own admission his unbelief was an act of rebellion against God. We look in vain for some reasonable objection.

pure tricks; there's nothing supernatural about it at all.

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Reason to believe

The miracles have adequate and reliable testimony.

Do you really believe that Jonah was swallowed by a whale? And do you seriously think that Christ actually fed 5000 persons from five loaves of bread and two fish?" So goes the trend and tone of many modern questioners. Surely, they say, these "miracle" stories in the Bible must be quaint ways of conveying spiritual truth, and they are not meant to be taken literally.

With many questions, it is more important to discern the root problem than to become involved in discussing a twig on a branch. This is especially true of questions about miracles. The questioner's problem is generally not with a particular miracle, but with a whole principle. To establish the miracle in question would not answer his question. His controversy is with the whole principle of the possibility of miracles.

One who has problems with miracles often has difficulty with the validity of predictive prophecy. These questions stem from a weak view of God. The real problem is not with miracles or prophecy, but with the whole concept of God. Once we assume the existence of God, there is really no problem with miracles.

This came to me very forcibly one day as I was talking about the deity of Christ with a Japanese professor friend. "I find it very difficult to believe," he said, "that a man could become God". Sensing his problem, I replied, "Yes, Kinichi, so do I, but I can believe that God became a man." He saw the difference in a flash, and not long afterward he became a Christian. The question, then, really is, "Does an all-powerful God, who created the universe, exist?" If so, we shall have little difficulty with miracles in which he transcends the natural law of which he is the author. It is important to keep this fundamental question in mind in discussing miracles. How we know God exists has already been discussed.

David Hume and others have defined a miracle as a violation of natural law. To take such a position, however, is practically to deify natural law, to capitalise it in such a way that whatever God there may be becomes the prisoner of natural law and, in effect, ceases to be God.

In this modern scientific age, people tend to personify science and natural law

**Paul E.
Little**

They fail to realise that these are merely the impersonal results of observation. A Christian believes in natural law, which is to say that things behave in a certain cause-and-effect way almost all the time – year after year, century after century. But in maintaining this he does not restrict God's right and power to intervene when and how he chooses. God is over, above and outside natural law, and is not bound by it. Laws do not cause anything in the sense that God causes things. They are merely descriptions of what happens.

What, in fact, is a miracle? We use the term rather loosely today. If a scared student passes an exam, he says, "It was a miracle!" Or if an old

The real problem is not with miracles or prophecy, but with the whole concept of God.

jalopy makes a successful trip from one city to another, we say, "It's a miracle the thing ran!" We use the term to mean anything that is unusual or unexpected. We do not necessarily mean

that the hand of God has been at work.

However, when we consider miracles as they are thought of in the Bible, the word is used in an entirely different sense. Here we mean an act of God breaking into, changing, or interrupting the ordinary course of things.

It is important to note, however, that miracles are not in conflict with any natural law. Rather, as J. N. Hawthorne puts it, "Miracles are unusual events caused by God. The laws of nature are generalisations about ordinary events caused by him."

People often say, "If God performed miracles then, why does he not do them now? If I saw a miracle I could believe." This question was answered in our Lord's time. A rich man who was in the torment of hell lifted up his eyes and pleaded with Abraham that someone should warn his

five brothers lest they too should come into the awful place. He was told that his brothers had the Scriptures.

And so it is today. Many have made a rationalistic presupposition which rules out the very possibility of miracles. Since they believe that miracles are impossible, no amount of evidence would ever persuade them one had taken place. There would always be an alternate naturalistic explanation for them to advance.

Miracles are not necessary for us today because we already have reliable records of those miracles which have occurred. As Ramm observes, "If miracles are capable of sensory perception, they can be made matters of testimony. If they are adequately testified to, then the recorded testimony has the same validity for evidence as the experience of beholding the event."

Every court in the world operates on the basis of reliable testimony by word of mouth or in writing. If the raising of Lazarus was actually witnessed by John and recorded faithfully by him when still in soundness of faculties and memory, for purposes of evidence it is the same as if we were there and saw it. Ramm then lists reasons we may know that the miracles have adequate and reliable testimony. We summarise:

First, many miracles were done in public. They were not performed in secret before only one or two people, who announced them to the world. There was every opportunity to investigate the miracles on the spot. It is very impressive that the opponents of Jesus never denied the fact of the miracles he performed. They either attributed them to the power of Satan or else tried to suppress the evidence, as with the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

Second, some miracles were performed before unbelievers. It is significant that the miracles claimed by cults and offbeat groups never seem to happen when the skeptic is present to observe. It was not so with Jesus.

Third, the miracles of Jesus were performed over a period of time and involved a great variety of powers. He had power over nature, as when he turned the water to wine; he had power over disease, as when he healed the lepers and the blind; he had power over demons, as was shown by his

casting them out; he had supernatural powers of knowledge, as in his knowing that Nathanael was under a fig tree; he demonstrated his power of creation when he fed 5000 people from a few loaves and fish; and he exhibited power over death itself in the raising of Lazarus and others.

Fourth, we have the testimony of the cured. As noted earlier, we have it from those, like Lazarus, whose healings could not have been psychosomatic or a result of inaccurate diagnosis.

Fifth, we cannot discount the gospel miracles because of the extravagant claim of pagan miracles. Miracles are believed in non-Christian religions because the religion is already believed, but in the biblical religion, miracles are part of the means of establishing the true religion. This distinction is of immense importance. Israel was brought into existence by a series of miracles, the Law was given surrounded by supernatural wonders, and many of the prophets were identified as God's spokesmen by their power to perform miracles. Jesus came not only preaching but performing miracles, and the apostles from time to time worked wonders.

It was the miracle authenticating the religion at every point. As C. S. Lewis wrote, "All the essentials of Hinduism would, I think, remain unimpaired if you

subtracted the miraculous, and the same is almost true of Islam, but you cannot do that with Christianity."

It is precisely the story of a great miracle. A naturalistic Christianity leaves out all that is specifically Christian.

Some attempts have been made to explain miracles on the basis of exaggerated reporting. It has been demonstrated that people are notoriously inaccurate in reporting events and impressions. It may be answered that, despite this tendency, law courts have not ceased functioning, and eyewitnesses are still considered able to provide highly useful information. And though there may be some question about such details of an accident as the time, speed of the cars, etc., the accident cannot be said not to have happened because of discrepancies in witnesses' stories.

Another erroneous idea, sometimes advanced, is that the miracle stories must be discarded because they are told by believing disciples and are therefore not objective. But the disciples were the ones on the scene who saw the miracles. The fact that they were disciples is neither here nor there. The question is, did they tell the truth? As we have seen, eyewitness testimony is the best we can get, and most of the disciples faced the test of death as the

test of their veracity.

We have seen that the question of whether miracles are possible is not scientific, but philosophical. Science can only say miracles do not occur in the ordinary course of nature. Science cannot forbid miracles because natural laws do not cause, and therefore cannot forbid, anything. They are merely descriptions of what happens. The Christian embraces the concept of natural law. "It is essential to the theistic doctrine of miracles that nature be uniform in her daily routine. If nature were utterly spontaneous, miracles would be as impossible of detection as it would be to establish a natural law."

It is "scientism", rather than science, which says miracles can not happen. The scientist, like anyone else, can only ask, "Are the records of miracles historically reliable?" Further, we have seen the miracles in the Bible are an inherent part of God's communication to us—not a mere appendage of little significance. We have seen that the whole question ultimately depends on the existence of God. Settle that question and miracles cease to be a problem.

Paul E. Little was professor of evangelism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, USA. This is an edited extract from his book Know Why You Believe (IVP 1988). ap

Virgin on the ridiculous?

In fact, the meaning of Christmas is inseparable from the virgin birth.

A Palestinian virgin hears it announced that through her the Saviour is to be born. Awed by the announcement, she says, "I am the Lord's servant; may it be to me as you have said" (Lk 1:38). Isaiah had said that the virgin would conceive and bear a son (7:14), and it was so. Matthew narrates it in detail (1:18-25); so does Luke (1:26-2:40).

Some people have always been unable to see what the late Karl Barth liked to call "the Christmas miracle". Many of them are thinking about the requirements of biology. Some think the virgin birth refers to a co-habiting of God with humankind, as in pagan Greek thought. But it was no biological event. Even if human births had

**J. Kenneth
Grider**

taken place in which fathers played no role, they have nothing to do with the sheer miracle by which Mary conceived through the Holy Spirit. This was the method of Christmas.

After I had read a paper on the virgin birth at a theological society meeting, a university professor stood to offer his peculiar defence of the doctrine. He said that female rabbits have been known to be shocked into conception, without the

male, and that Mary might well have conceived through the shock caused by the angel's announcement. This man sought to support the doctrine by denying the sheer miracle involved.

At Christmas time, across the centuries and across the world Christians have believed that a virgin woman conceived through the Holy Spirit, in an inexplicable way, and that in the normal time the eternal Son of God was born into human life.

We call this the "virgin birth". The phrase is time-honoured, and we should still use it. But "virgin conception" would better express what we mean, for the miracle was in the conception, not in the birth itself. The phrase "virgin birth", with stress

on “birth”, was used in the earliest centuries to teach the reality of Christ’s humanity as opposed to the gnostic teaching that Christ was only “poured through” the womb of Mary and therefore had a human body only “in seeming”. Scriptural support for the virgin birth as the method is really unassailable. James Orr, at the turn of the century, was convinced of the integrity of the virgin-birth narrative. So was J. Gresham Machen, a generation later. More recently, Karl Barth could say: “No one can dispute the existence of the biblical testimony to the Virgin Birth.”

Sadly, the doctrine has been challenged by such scholars as Emil Brunner, Gustaf Aulen, John Baillie, Rudolph Bultmann and Paul Tillich. Yet it has had supporters in our time from many outstanding theologians, in great part because it is so clearly taught in Scripture.

Take that beautiful passage in Luke 1:26-2:52. It’s included in a second-century harmony of the Gospels, and in all the Greek manuscripts of Luke, and in all the language versions. Those who deny the supernatural conception need to realise that all surviving manuscripts include the phrase “as was supposed” in Luke 3:23, where we read, “And Jesus



himself began to be about 30 years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph.” If the virgin birth were a pagan idea, as many critics suppose, why is Luke’s story couched in what Machen calls “the most strikingly Jewish and Palestinian narrative in the whole New Testament”.

It is also difficult to challenge Matthew’s telling of the miracle. The whole of Matthew 1:18-25 is for the express purpose of describing the miraculous character of the birth. That Joseph is included in the genealogies of Matthew (1:16) and Luke (1:27) is understandable when one considers the high view of adoptive fatherhood in the Jewish mind. It is so high, actually, that dead men could have sons in a sense. In Old Testament law, if a man died without an issue, his brother was to take the wife and rear a son for the deceased one.

The meaning of Christmas is tied up with the “method”, the virgin birth, to be sure; for if Joseph had been the actual father, the meaning would have suffered. But the meaning of this birth at Bethlehem is a subject all its own. The birth means that the Son of God pitched his tent among us men – here in this “spoilt and fallen world”.

Up until the time of Jesus, no one had really seen God. Despite all the special appearances of the “Angel of the Lord” to him, Abraham never actually saw him. A person could not see God and live, though Moses at one time was permitted to see God’s back. No man has seen God at any time, John says (1:18).

But on that first Christmas, God the

Son entered into human life; and by dwelling here, he made God the Father known. It was possible for the Son to reveal the Father to us because there never was a “time” in the Father’s life when the Son was not also existing, the Word being “in the beginning” (Jn 1:1) even as “God” was (Gen. 1:1).

The first Adam lived the human life badly. The Second Adam, Christ the Lord, “founded in God”, born at Bethlehem “of a woman” (Gal. 4:4), lived our human life perfectly. And finally, in death the Roman way, he spelled out God’s love in drops of blood, became a once-for-all sacrifice, and was raised from the dead. All this and more – much more – is part of what Christmas means.

Many in our time want to maintain the meaning of Christmas while they deny its divinely chosen method. They deny the virgin birth, yet still bow down before the Christ. Indeed, their declared intention is to do Christ honor by assaulting this miracle. But Edwin Lewis was surely right in saying that to surrender Bethlehem’s “stone of offence” precludes a high view of Christ.

Similarly, Karl Barth has warned against “parenthesising the miracle of the Nativity and wanting to cling to the mystery as such”. To him, the virgin birth is the “miracle that is a pointer to the mystery [the Incarnation]”; the virgin birth “advertises what takes place”. It is connected with the Incarnation “as sign with thing signified”. In Isaiah 7:14 both the method and the meaning of Christmas are foretold. A miraculous birth by the “virgin” (almah) would take place, and the one born would be called “Immanuel”, meaning “God with us” – which is indeed the special significance of this event that causes the world to wear a halo.

J. Kenneth Grider was formerly Professor of Theology at Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, USA. This is an edited article which previously appeared in Christianity Today. 

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Charles Colson

Charles Colson was catapulted to international attention in the early '70s when he became Special Assistant to the President of the United States. As one of President Nixon's closest advisers, Colson was implicated in the Watergate scandal in 1974 that led to the President's resignation.

Colson was widely regarded as one of the most powerful figures in Washington at the time – a fact affirmed in the famous movie All the President's Men. He was convicted of a number of offences by the Watergate prosecutor and served a seven-month prison term until his release on 31 January 1975.

Shortly before his conviction, Colson was converted to Christ. He records his account of the experience in his book Born Again. Following his release from jail, Colson founded an international ministry, Prison Fellowship, to help prisoners learn about Jesus Christ. He has also become a prolific Christian author. This is an edited extract from his book, published in 1976 by Hodder and Stoughton.



life wasn't complete. I would go to the office each day, striving all the time to make the company succeed, but there was a big hole in my life. I began to read the Scriptures, looking for answers. Something made me realise I needed a personal relationship with God."

I pressed him to explain the apparent contradiction between the emptiness inside while seeming to enjoy the affluent life. "It may be hard to understand," Tom chuckled. "But I didn't seem to have anything that mattered. All the material things in life are meaningless if a man hasn't discovered what's underneath them."

We were both silent. Tom got up.

"One night I was in New York and noticed that Billy Graham was having a Crusade in Madison Square Garden," Tom continued. "I went, hoping that I'd find some answers. What Graham said that night put it all into place for me. I saw what was missing, the personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the fact that I hadn't turned my life over to him. So I did it – that very night at the Crusade. I asked Christ to come into my life and I could sense his Spirit there with me. Then I went out for a walk. Something had happened to me and I knew it."

"That's what you mean by accepting Christ – you just ask?" I was more puzzled than ever.

"That's it, as simple as that," Tom replied. "That's the way it starts. And let me tell you, things then begin to change."

To me, Jesus had always been an historical figure, but Tom explained that you

could hardly invite him into your life if you didn't believe that he is alive today. Tom was indeed different. More alive.

Then Tom turned the conversation again to my plight. I described some of the agonies of Watergate, how unfairly I thought the press was treating me. I was being defensive and when I ran out of explanations, Tom spoke gently but firmly.

"You know that I supported Nixon in this past election, but you guys made a serious mistake. You would have won the election without any of the hanky-panky; Watergate and the dirty tricks were so unnecessary. And it was wrong, just plain wrong."

To myself I admitted that Tom was on target. And yet ...

"Tom, one thing you don't understand. In politics it's dog-eat-dog; you simply can't survive otherwise."

Even as I talked, the words sounded more and more empty to me. Tired old lines, I realised, I was describing the ways of the political world, all right, while suddenly wondering if there could be a better way.

Tom believed so, anyway. He was so gentle I couldn't resent what he said as he cut right through it all: "Chuck, I hate to say this, but you guys brought it on yourselves. If you had put your faith in God, and if your cause were just, he would have guided you..."

With any other man the notion of relying on God would have seemed to me pure Pollyanna. Yet I had to be impressed with the way this man ran his company in the equally competitive world of business. Maybe there was something to it; anyway it's tough to argue with success.

"Chuck, I don't think you will understand what I'm saying about God until you are willing to face yourself honestly and squarely. This is the first step." Tom reached to the corner table and picked up a small paperback book, *Mere Christianity*, by C. S. Lewis.

"I suggest you take this with you and read it while you are on vacation." Tom started to hand it to me, then paused. "Let me read you one chapter."

It was an unusually hot night for New England, the humidity like a heavy blanket wrapped around me. At Tom's insistence, my jacket and tie came off.

"Tell me, Chuck," he began, "are you okay?"

As the President's confidant I was still keeping my guard up. "I'm not doing too badly, I guess. All of this Watergate business, all the accusations – I suppose it's wearing me down some. But I'd rather talk about you, Tom. You've changed and I'd like to know what happened."

Tom sat back reflectively. Briefly he reviewed his past, his rapid rise to power at Raytheon: president when he was only 40. "The success came, all right, but something was missing," he mused. "I felt a terrible emptiness."

"I don't understand it," I interrupted. "I knew you in those days, Tom. You were a straight arrow, good family life, successful, everything in fact going your way."

"All that may be true, Chuck, but my

I leaned back, still on the defensive, my mind and emotions whirling.

"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. ... There is 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 ... Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind. As long as you are proud you cannot know God."

Suddenly I felt naked and unclean, my bravado defences gone. I was exposed, unprotected, for Lewis's words were describing me. As he continued, one passage in particular seemed to sum up what had happened to all of us at the White House: "For Pride is spiritual cancer: it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense."

Now, sitting there on the dimly lit porch, my self-centred past was washing over me in waves. It was painful. Agony. Desperately I tried to defend myself. What about my sacrifices for government service, the giving up of a big income, putting my stocks into a blind trust? It was pride – Lewis's "great sin" – that had propelled me through life.

Lewis's torpedo had hit me amidships. I think Phillips knew it as he stared into my eyes. That one chapter ripped through the protective armour in which I had unknowingly encased myself for 42 years.

Of course, I had not known God. *How*

could I? I had been concerned with myself. *I* had done this and that, *I* had achieved, *I* had succeeded and *I* had given God none of the credit, never once thanking him for any of his gifts to me. I had never thought of anything being "immeasurably superior" to myself, or if I had in fleeting moments thought about the infinite power of God, I had not related him to my life. In those brief moments while Tom read, I saw myself as I never had before. And the picture was ugly.

"How about it, Chuck?" Tom's question jarred me out of my trance. I knew precisely what he meant. Was I ready to "accept" Christ?

Now, sitting there on the dimly lit porch, my self-centred past was washing over me in waves. It was painful. Agony.

got a lot of intellectual hang-ups to get past." For a moment Tom looked disappointed, then he smiled. "I understand, I understand."

Tom handed me his copy of *Mere Christianity*. "Once you've read this, you might want to read the Book of John in the Bible. Would you like to pray together, Chuck?" Tom asked.

Startled, I emerged from my deep thoughts. "Sure – I guess I would."

As Tom prayed, something began to flow into me – a kind of energy. Then came a wave of emotion which nearly brought tears. It sounded as if Tom were speaking personally to God, almost as if he were sitting beside us.

When he finished, there was a long

silence. I said goodbye to Tom and his wife.

"Take care of yourself, Chuck, and let me know what you think of that book, will you?" With that, Tom put his hand on my shoulder and grinned. "I'll see you soon."

I didn't say much; I was afraid my voice would crack, but I had the strong feeling that I *would* see him soon. And I couldn't wait to read his little book.

Outside in the darkness, the iron grip I'd kept on my emotions began to relax. Tears welled up in my eyes as I groped in the darkness to start my car. Angrily I brushed them away and started the engine. "What kind of weakness is this?" I said to nobody.

The tears spilled over and suddenly I knew I had to go back into the house and pray with Tom. I turned off the motor, got out of the car. As I did, the kitchen light went out. It was too late. Why hadn't I prayed when he gave me the chance? I wanted to so badly. Now I was alone.

As I drove out of Tom's driveway, the tears were flowing uncontrollably. There were no streetlights, no moonlight. The car headlights were flooding illumination before my eyes, but I was crying so hard it was like trying to swim underwater. I pulled to the side of the road not more than a hundred yards from the entrance to Tom's driveway.

I remember hoping that Tom wouldn't hear my sobbing. With my face cupped in my hands, head leaning forward against the wheel, I forgot about pretences, about fears of being weak. And as I did, I began to experience a wonderful feeling of being released. Then came the strange sensation that water was not only running down my cheeks, but surging through my whole body as well, cleansing and cooling as it went. They were tears of relief.

And then I prayed my first real prayer. "God, I don't know how to find you, but I'm going to try! I'm not much the way I am now, but somehow I want to give myself to you." I didn't know how to say more, so I repeated over and over the words: *Take me*. I had not "accepted" Christ – I still didn't know who he was. My mind told me it was important to find that out first, to be sure that I knew what I was doing, that I meant it and would stay with it. Only, that night, something inside me was urging me to surrender. I stayed there in the car, wet-eyed, praying, thinking, for perhaps half an hour, perhaps longer, alone in the quiet of the dark night. Yet for the first time in my life I was not alone at all.

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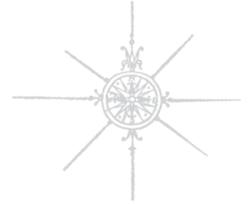
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 142 Chalmers Str., Surry Hills (temporary)
 Service Time: 10.30 am.
 Rev. Adrian Van Ash (02) 9817 0587.
TAMWORTH (St Stephen's)
 23 Matthews St, also at **Moonbi**.
 9.00am. & 6.30pm
 Rev Stuart Andrews (02) 6765 8754.
Tamworth Community Presb Church,
 Oxley High School Piper St Nth T'worth
 10 am. Rev Keith Walker (02) 6762 5759
Manilla: Court St.
 Rev. Vic Johnson (02) 6785 1627.

TAREE
 Albert St. 9.00am.
 Rev John Thompson (02) 6552 1082(O).
TENTERFIELD
 117 Logan St. (07) 6977 1642
TERRIGAL (Scots Kirk)
 2 Willoughby Rd.
 Rev Phillip Paul (02) 4385 2240.
WAHROONGA
 Wahroonga Presbyterian Church,
 Cnr. Illoura Ave. & Stuart St. 9.30am.
 Rev. Murray Fraser (02) 9489 3690
WEE WAA
 Mitchell St. Mr Mark Powell (02) 6795 4259
WENTWORTH FALLS (St Andrew's)
 Falls Rd. 9.00 am. Session Clerk: Mr Bernie
 Tucker (02) 4757 3518
WENTWORTHVILLE
 7 McKem St. **Girraween:** 15 Tungarra Rd.
 Rev. David Griffin Phone: (02) 9896 3297.
WESTLAKES
 Warnervale Community Hall, Warnervale Rd
 S.School 8.30 am. Service 9.30 am.
 Rev. Esa Hukkinen (02) 4393 5530
WEST WYALONG
 Pioneer Memorial, Court St. 9.00am. &
 11.00am. Also at **Barmedman, Mahda,**
Talimba & Weethalle.
 Mr. Lance Jackson (02) 6972 2143.
WOLLONGONG (St Andrew's)
 Cnr Kembla & Burelli Sts. 9.45am. &
 6.00pm. Rev Bruce Hammonds (02) 4226
 1458(H) (02) 4226 1725(O).
WOOLGOOLGA
 Cnr Scarborough St. & Landrigan Cl.
 9.00am. Rev. Peter Moore (02) 6651 2301.
WOONONA
 7 Gray St. Rev Peter Currie (02) 4284 4057.
WOY WOY
 120 Blackwall Rd. 9.00 & 10.30 am.
 Rev. Jamie Newans (02) 4342 2856



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).
Nundah: 14 Rode Rd
 Rev Guido Kettmiss (07) 3216 4151.
 Rev Les Hall (07) 3267 0558
BALD HILLS
 58 Strathpine Rd. 8.30am. & 7.00pm.
 Rev Peter Bloomfield (07) 3261 4305.
BRISBANE KOREAN
 145 Ann St. 8.00am. 12.00 noon, 7.30pm.
 Rev Dr M. M. Y. Kim (07) 3300 3132
BRISBANE (St Paul's)
 53 St Pauls Tce. Spring Hill.
 Rev A. Gardiner (07) 3831 7458(O).
BUNDEBERG (Scots')
 Cnr. Water & Alice Sts. 9.00am & 7.00pm.
 Rev David Newman (07) 4153 2954
CABOOLTURE
 24 Cottrill Road. 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
 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 & 6.30pm.
 Rev Brian Enchelmaier (07) 3824 0958
COORPAROO
 Emlyn St. 10.00am. & 7.00pm.
 Rev. Jorge Lievano (07) 3399 4085
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 Goonoon 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 (I)
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
GOLD COAST (II)
Mudgeeraba: Cnr Mudgeeraba Rd &
 Regency Pde. 9.00am. & 6.30 pm.
 Rev. Glenn Samuel (07) 5530 7003
Mudgeeraba Korean Congregation:
 11.30 am. Rev. Jo Kim (07) 5574 4001
Palm Beach/Elanora: 'The Meeting Place'
 Cnr. Coolgardie & Guineas Creek Rds. (cnr.
 Pines Shopping Ctre) 9.00 am.
 Rev. Donald Geddes (07) 5522 8982
GYMPIE
 11 Crown St. 9.30am. Woolooga 11.00am.
 Rev. D Cranney (07) 5482 7629(O).

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

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.
I.M. Rev. Dan Mihailovic (07) 3800 3799

MACKAY
Cnr Harvey St. & Evans Ave. Nth Mackay.
7.30am; 9.30am & 7pm.

Sarina: Sarina Beach Rd. 9.00am.
Pinnacle: Red Cross Hall, 4.00pm
(1st & 3rd Sunday).
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.

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

REDCLIFFE PENINSULA
Woody Point, 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 BJ 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.
Ass. Min. Rev. Walter Jones (07) 4778 3823

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.

NARACOOORTE
Church St. 10.00am.
Rev Rudi Schwartz (08) 8762 1035

NORWOOD (St Giles)
79 The Parade. 9.15am & 7.00pm.
Rev Dr Reg Mathews (08) 8395 7841

PARA HILLS
174 Maxwell Rd. 10.45 am.
Rev Dr Reg Mathews (08) 8395 7841

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



CROSSROADS (Hobart)
Campbell St. School 6.00 pm.
Rev David Jones (03) 6223 4701

DEVONPORT (St Columba's)
Edward St. **Don:** Waverley Rd.
I.M. Rev. Daniel Combridge (03) 6425 9525

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. 9.30 & 11.00 am. @ 7.00 pm.
(Dec/Jan 10.00 am. & 7.00 pm.)

Church Office: (03) 6331 5412
Rev. Peter Thorneycroft 0438 315 412
Yth. Pastor: Brett Rutherford (03) 6331 2584

MONTROSE
Cnr. Islington Rd. & Walker St. 10.00 am.
Rev. Steve. Warwick (03) 6272 2608.

RIVERSIDE
Eden St. Also **Glangarry & Winkleigh.**
Mod. Ps. Bryan Crawford (03) 6352 4024

ROKEBY
Presby. Community Church, Tollard Dr.
Mod. Rev Steve Warwick (03) 6272 2608

SCOTTSDALE
George St. **Bridport:** Westwood St.
Mod.Ps. Bryan Crawford (03) 6352 4024

STANLEY (St James)
Fletcher St. **Rocky Cape, Mawbanna**
Mod. Mr I Bessell (03) 6443 4299

ULVERSTONE (St Andrew's)
65 Main Rd. 10.00am.
Rev Daniel Combridge (03) 6425 9525.

WEST TAMAR
Auld Kirk, Sidmouth and Mole Creek
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

BAIRNSDALE

7th Day Adventist Church, 149 Nicholson St. 10.00 am. 1st of Month 5.00pm.
S/school 9.00 am.

Past. Laurie Leighton (03) 5153 1669

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' Presbyterian

8 Park Rd. Cnr. Charman Rd. 9.30am.

Rev. David Palmer (03) 9583 2785

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

57 Plymouth Rd. Croydon. 10.00am.

Rev. John Diacos (03) 9725 5370

DANDENONG

51 Potter St. 10.00am.

Ses. Clerk. (03) 9793 1423

DONVALE

Cnr. Springvale & McGowan's Rds. 8.30am,

10.30 am & 6.30pm. Rev Gerald Vanderwert

(03) 9842 9493. (03) 9841 7020 (O)

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.

Rev. Ken Brown (03) 5625 1126.

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.

GLEN WAVERLEY-KNOXFIELD

Highvale Primary School,

Ashton St. Glen Waverley 9.30am.

Rev. Trevor Cox (03) 9764 9141.

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.

Tallygaropna: Victoria St. 9.30am.

Cobram: Cnr High and Pine Sts. (Anglican

Church) 2.30pm.

Pastor John Rickard (03) 5862 1621.

RESERVOIR

81 Edwards 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.

Rev. Stuart Bonnington (03) 9867 4637

SORRENTO-RYE

Rye: St David's, Colwood & Lyons Sts. 9.30am.

Sorrento: St Andrew's, Kerferd Rd. 11.00am.

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. 10.00am. & 6.00pm.

Mr. Tony Archer (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.

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.

Rev. Bruce Riding (03) 9397 5338

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.

S.Clerk Mr R Kent (08) 9339 1089

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)

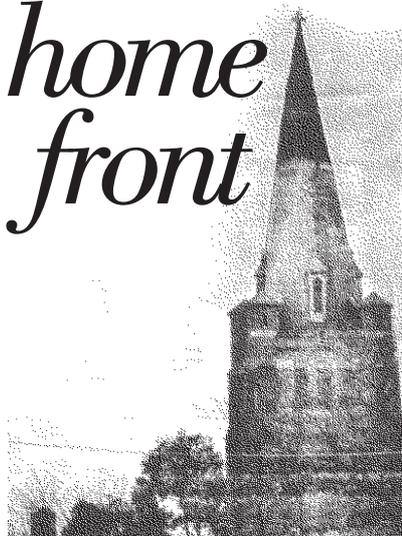
Anglican School, St Marks Dr Hilarys.

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



Appointments

Rev. John Rickard was ordained and inducted to **Numurkah Presbyterian Church** by the **Presbytery of Benalla** in Victoria on 23 November. John and **Heather** Rickard have recently begun ministering at Numurkah, serving also the congregations at **Tallygaroopna** and **Cobram**.

Rev. Chris Perona was ordained and inducted as the minister of **Rochester** by the **Presbytery of Bendigo** at a service on 2 November. Chris, his wife **Michelle**, and their four children moved to Rochester at the beginning of 2001 for Chris's exit appointment. **Rev. Prof Allan Harman** preached and interim moderator **Rev. Darren Middleton** gave the charge.

The **Presbyterian Theological College** in Box Hill, Melbourne, reports the appointments of **Bernie Thomas** to **Camperdown/Terang**, **John Brennan** to **Horsham**, and **Tony Salisbury** to the **Melbourne Deaf Christian Fellowship**. While Tony and **Anne Salisbury** are already working with the DCF, progress towards settlement may take some time. **Bernie** and **Marie Thomas** are already in contact with their new parish, as are John and **Michelle Brennan**.

SA moves

Rev. Walter Zurrer held his last service at **Seacliffe** Parish in October, and has since moved to **Cockatoo** in outer Melbourne.

In **Millicent**, **Rev. Andrew Slater** has retired from his parish and has also moved to **Victoria** (19 **Winchester Road**, **Nunawading**, 3131).

Doctor in the house

Rev. Dr John Woodward has graduated as a Doctor of Ministry from the **Fuller Theological Seminary**, Pasadena, California, USA with a thesis titled "Sunset-Victory, a practical theology of life in the latter life".

Penola celebration

A combined Presbytery Centenary Thanksgiving Service was held at **Penola** in September, attended by about 200 people. **Rt. Rev. J. Nicol**, moderator of Queensland, preached on the centrality of the church.

WA ordination

Andrew Robinson was ordained to the ministry in June at **Bicton Presbyterian Church**. **Rev. Stuart Bonnington** preached. Andrew is the appointed minister of the **Henderson Memorial Church** in West Leederville. Presbytery has agreed that Andrew can serve as an army chaplain one day a week.

Bassendean extension

The **Bassendean Presbyterian Church** in Western Australia is extending the church building. The extensions will include a hall, Sunday School rooms, office, store room, toilets and a large entry to the church. The existing church is also being remodelled to provide a larger area for Sunday services, a new crying room and a new kitchen. Also included in the project is a new drive and car park. The extensions are almost finished. The hall, to be called the **Whiteford Memorial Hall**, will be opened on Saturday 23 February.

New Toowoomba centre

West Toowoomba Presbyterian Church's new square auditorium easily held 800 people for the Saturday afternoon opening celebration on federal election day, 10 November, reports **Royce Perkins**. The modern facility is well designed to accommodate the needs of a fast-growing congregation. The church, developed on the cell group model, has three Sunday services and a diversity of outreach and nurture activities through the week. It had long outgrown the historic facilities in **West Street** where no expansion was feasible, leading to the purchase of land in the suburb of **Glenvale**. The **West Street** property was put on the



Rev. Roland Sondergeld (right) with a friend

market on a Monday and a sale contract signed the next evening.

Senior minister **Rev. Roland Sondergeld** emphasised that the building "is a thing to serve a purpose. There is only one we give glory to today - the Lord". **Dr Percy Campbell** of Brisbane's

Cornerstone Christian Family, spoke from **Luke 15**.

Kids' camp

Mission Impossible - No Way! That was the catch cry of this year's Kids weekender outback camp. The annual camp, attended by 23 children, was held at the **Beardmore Dam Youth Camp** over the weekend of 19 and 20 October.

Director **Bruce McLeod** reports that although there were lessons to be learnt from this camp, "I do not hesitate in saying that this was the best camp ever."



PIM retreat

The **Presbyterian Inland Mission** held a retreat on the bank of **Cooper Creek**, 10 kilometres east of **Windorah**, south western Queensland. Camping facilities were those the patrollers use every day when on



Tucker time at the PIM camp

patrol and all the cooking was done over a campfire or in camp ovens. **Rudi Schwartz** (a former patrol padre) led studies on the **Great Commission** and bush apologetics, while **PIM Superintendent Jack Knapp** also led sessions.

Alan Charles Stubs • 1924 – 2001

The Very Reverend Alan Charles Stubs entered his eternal home on 13 November 2001. At the memorial service at St. John's Presbyterian Church, Hobart, on 18 November he was described as "one of the greatest sons of the Presbyterian Church of Australia"; "a true leader of the people of God who lived a life of godliness and service"; "a humble man who never sought praise and honour for himself but sought only to glorify God"; "always able to encourage and stimulate".

Born in Launceston on 31 March 1924, he trained as a science teacher and taught in Queenstown, Hobart, West Tamar, Launceston and Ulverstone. At each of these places he threw his weight into the work of the Presbyterian Church. His outstanding musical capacity as a vocalist and organist were a boon to the local churches, as were his preaching and other talents.

In 1955 Alan became a candidate for the Presbyterian ministry. He was immediately appointed as Home Missionary to the Parish of Bothwell and the central Highlands in Tasmania. In 1956 he was transferred to the home mission at Burnie. After training in Melbourne, he was appointed to Scottsdale, Tasmania, where there were seven preaching places, and was immediately made moderator of three home mission stations and convener of the Home Mission Committee.

In 1963 Alan accepted a call to Hawthorn-Panorama in South Australia, where he became chairman of the Dunbar Homes for the Aged Committee, before accepting a call from St. John's, Hobart, in 1967, where he was concurrently minister of the Taroona United Church and, for a time, the Howrah United church



office he held four times).

Awarded a scholarship, Alan spent a year in Edinburgh and gained a masters degree in theology in 1975. In 1979, he moved to St Cuthbert's, Brighton, in Melbourne for six years, teaching at the theological college, convening the Home Missions Committee and serving as moderator of the PCV. In 1984 he returned to South Australia to Adelaide-Elizabeth. In 1986 he was moderator of the church in SA, and in 1988 Moderator-General of the PCA, serving another three months after his term ended in 1991.

During Alan's first term as Moderator-General he was called to Castle Hill in New South Wales where he remained until he retired in 1995. There he was a member of the Public Worship and Aids to Devotion Committee of the G.A.A., a member of the New South Wales Ecumenical Council, and a director of the Australian Hymn Book Company.

Alan retired to Blackmans Bay in Tasmania, but in 1997 he agreed to provide full time supply for the Stanley-Rocky Cape-Mawbanna Home Mission Station.

Alan was privileged to have the unstinting, loving and godly support of his wife Esther throughout his 45 years of marriage. They had seven children, Ruth, Andrew, Ann, Margaret, Cecil (died 1971), Lillian and Robert.

also. In 1971 he was elected moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania (an

Presentations and speeches were made to Laurie and Gwen Peake and Ross and Lyn Brinkman, who will shortly leave the patrol work. Those there say it was a delight to share in spiritual refreshment together as most lead a lonely life out on patrol, and this provided an opportunity to talk freely without having to be aware that conversations were on the open air waves.

Mobile missions

The Mobile Mission Workshop helped the Adelaide congregations of Para Hills and Norwood in September, with a much needed facelift to their beautiful buildings, report David and Margaret Stephens. The team then joined Norwood's 118th anniversary celebrations. Disappointingly, during their stay their Landrover was broken into and their camera and radio stolen, but they have been replaced by a gift. In October, the team worked in the Victorian town of Kyabram, including cleaning and painting the steeple, which needed a cherry-picker. That day was very windy but, after the loss of a tin of paint from the heights of the steeple, the job was completed successfully.

*across
australia*



Christmas Angels

Christmas shoppers can give a brighter future to children in developing countries at almost 50 shopping centres nationwide.

By visiting one of World Vision's Christmas Angels stands in the lead up to Christmas and donating either \$2, \$5 or \$10, shoppers can collect a decorative angel and know that their donation will provide support and assistance for some of the world's poorest children.

Mavis Isobel Dalton • 1917 – 2001

Mavis Dalton grew up in East Maitland, NSW, and became a nurse, doing her training at Kurri Kurri hospital. During the war she met and later married her husband (Joe). After Joe's discharge from the army, the Daltons moved frequently around NSW before settling in Rutherford.

A pillar of strength of Mackay Memorial Presbyterian Church,

Rutherford, Mavis was ordained an elder in 1985, and appointed elder emeritus in June this year. Her enthusiasm for the activities of the Presbyterian Women's Association was unbounded. She represented the Rutherford branch of PWA on the State Council for six years and was Hunter Presbytery representative to State Council for another three years.

A goat for Christmas

This Christmas, thousands of Australians will choose to give some of the world's most useful gifts to their friends and family. So just what is the "most useful gift"? A foot spa, silver eyelash curler, or the top-selling CD?

For **TEAR Australia**, it means providing some of the world's poorest people with the things they need the most: water, education, health care, trees, animals and lots more. TEAR's gift catalogue enables ordinary Australians to give these "really useful" things to their friends and family as Christmas presents.

Items this year include: \$5: a Vitamin A course for 10 children in Africa or Asia, helping prevent blindness. \$9: 100 tree seedlings in Tanzania, restoring a village affected by deforestation. \$35: a goat for a poor family in Uganda or India, improving their household income. \$65: a clean water supply for a poor family in Nepal.

Bible forum

The Pacific Forum of Bible Agencies took place at Kangaroo Ground, Melbourne, from 26 to 29 November. Bible Agencies Australia are The Bible League, Bible Society in Australia, Language Recordings Inc., The Pocket Testament League, Scripture Gift Mission, Scripture Union and Wycliffe Bible Translators.

R-rated computer games

Festival of Light worker **Roslyn Philips** has called for a campaign to fight the introduction of R-rated computer games, after a Brisbane newspaper article highlighted support for allowing the games to be sold to adults.

Mrs Phillips reports: "It sounds horribly likely that Australia's porn lobby, Eros Foundation, has organised a mass campaign in support of R-rated computer games with explicit sex – a deadly, effective training tool for rapists. There is still time to lobby the Office of Film and Literature Classification on this issue – but urgent action is needed."

Email: oflswitch@oflc.gov.au, fax: 02 9289 7101. For more information, phone the OFLC on 02 9289 7100 or look up their website on www.oflc.gov.au.

Black history

Saints and Patriarchs records **Keith Black's** journey from a Sunday School

boy in Wollongong to a patriarch in Africa, and the saints and sinners he met along the way, reports *Royce Perkins*.

From Presbyterian home missionary service in New South Wales, Keith first went to Africa in 1956 with the Sudan United Mission. He and Betty married at Heiban in Sudan's Nuba Mountains in 1957. They became church planters among the Moro people, living in very basic conditions. Pioneers indeed: evangelism, language learning, literacy teaching, Scripture translation and much more.

And they did it again and again – new languages to learn and translate, new customs to understand, in Chad (and they had to learn French for that) and later in Nigeria. After 22 years in Africa, Keith became SUM's (later Action Partners) executive director for Australia and New Zealand.

Within this captivating personal narrative is a lively history of God at work in sub-Saharan Africa. This truth is gloriously stranger than any fiction!

Saints and Patriarchs (\$15.95 plus \$4 postage) is available directly from Keith Black, 6 Brown Street, Lawnton Qld 4501; phone (07) 3889 0726; Email kblack@ats.com.au.

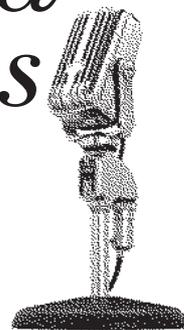
Anglican gathering

The Anglican Church in Tasmania hopes more than 2000 people will attend its gathering of church members from all over Tasmania on 27 April in Launceston's Silverdome. The theme of the meeting will be "Church with a human face", with keynote speaker English Canon Robert Warren, well

known international speaker and the author of the book *Building Missionary Congregations*.

The Bishop of Tasmania, **John Harrower** said that he had prayerfully believed for 400 people to attend the last gathering in February. "I thought I went out on a limb this year praying for 400 people and we got 1300. So why not aim for 2002 people in the year 2002!"

world
news



Hiding behind terror

Christian groups are concerned that a plan to curb the flow of foreign funds to organisations in India could threaten Christian bodies and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

In a move ostensibly aimed at cutting off financing of terrorist groups from outside sources, the Indian government plans

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to replace the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act with stringent legislation to curb foreign donations, according to recent news reports.

But Christian bodies fear that more restrictive legislation could lead to a clamp down on foreign donations to legitimate Christian and other organisations unpopular with the government.

"It is quite clear that the government is capitalising on the current scare about terrorism," said the **All India Christian Council**.

Ending African violence

Churches in Africa have launched a Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) under the auspices of the **All Africa Conference of Churches** (AACC), a pan-African religious body.

At the launching ceremony, AACC president **Most Rev. Prof. Kwesi Dickson** challenged churches in Africa to battle violence, observing that "violence has greatly encroached on families and communities in our mother Africa." He said violence had penetrated Africa through channels such as political pluralism, deprivation of resources and famine.

The Ghanaian clergyman hit out at the way Africa had accumulated arms, observ-

ing that "if arms were edible, then Africa would not be hungry."

African Church Information Service

Train a child

A new survey conducted across the United States has shown that adults who regularly attended church as children are much more likely than their unchurched peers to be involved in church-based and personal spiritual activities.

The study, conducted by the **Barna Research Group** of Ventura, California, found that roughly seven out of 10 American adults (71 per cent) had a period of time during their childhood when they regularly attended a Christian church. A majority of those who attended church as a youngster still attend regularly today (61 per cent), while a large majority of those who were not church-goers as children are still absent from churches today (78 per cent).

Moluccas murders

Four Christians and an army officer are feared dead following a brutal attack on a Christian village in the Moluccas islands of Indonesia. More than 1000 villagers were forced to run for their lives to the

surrounding jungle as militant Jihad warriors burned their homes to the ground.

The attack by Laskar Jihad happened at Waemulang, the second largest Christian village on Buru island, on 1 November. The security forces in Buru were outnumbered by the attackers who burned most of the 350 houses.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide

Graham offends Muslims

A Muslim advocacy organisation, the **Council on America-Islamic Relations**, has sent a letter to **Franklin Graham** to discuss remarks that Graham made describing Islam as evil. Nihad Awad, the council's executive director, said that he wrote to ask Graham to meet him and Muslim scholars, as a response to remarks the evangelist, son of Billy Graham, made in a TV interview.

Franklin Graham is president of **Samaritan's Purse**, a Christian relief organisation. His criticism of Islam stands out when many public figures have emphasised interreligious understanding.

Awad said he wanted to give Graham "a chance to know Islam first-hand". In his letter, he said "negative impressions of Islam are most often based on a lack of accurate and objective information".

LIGHT

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REV CHRISTOPHER CHIA
Pastor of Adam Road Presbyterian Church in Singapore. Chris studied theology at Moore College, is a research fellow of Harvest and has a masters from Oxford. He will speak on the first eleven chapters of *Genesis*.

DR BRUCE MILNE
Studied at St Andrews, London and Edinburgh universities; served with CMS in Kenya; church planted in Edinburgh, lectured at Spurgeon's College, London; and ministered in Vancouver, Canada. Currently engaged in writing and conference speaking. "Let the Light Shine" is his theme for the daily Bible Studies.

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Idle worship

Much of what passes for praise is really idolatry, suggests Marva Dawn.

In an address on the theme “declaring God’s praise”, James Nestigen reminded us of the biblical definition of praise. Based on the liturgical line “O Lord, open my lips”, and the response, “And my mouth will declare your praise”, he defined genuine praise as that which comes forth only when God opens our lips.

These lines from Psalm 51:15 emphasise the interrelation of God as both subject and object of our worship, for his presence opens our lips to proclaim his glory. We cannot respond to God as the object of our praise unless we first see him, know him, let him be God in our lives. Nestigen protested that “sometimes these days it is hard to distinguish praise from schmooze” and insisted that real praise happens when God becomes God again for us.

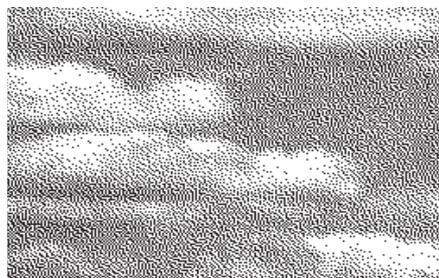
I hope churches will continually use fresh words and music to praise God, but it worries me that so many new compositions dumb down our perception, knowledge, and adoration of God. A principal cause of such dumbing down is the contemporary confusion of praise with “happiness”.

Some worship planners and participants think that to praise God is simply to sing upbeat music; consequently, many songs that are called “praise” actually describe the feelings of the believer rather than the character of God. In the extreme, a focus on good feelings distorts the truth of the gospel into a “health, wealth, and victory” therapy. We must recognise this for the idolatry it is. Centring on happiness makes us forget that the world gains redemption not through the Church’s glory but through Christ’s sacrifice and the suffering of God’s people.

Genuine praise of God depends upon truth. It is not just an attitude of appreciation or an emotion of well-being or delight; instead, it acknowledges a superlative quality or deed. Genuine praise challenges our secularity and idolatries and narcissism by concentrating not on our feelings of happiness, but on qualities in God that are truly there, not just there for me.

An emphasis on what we “get out” of a

IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD



worship service – above all, that we feel good about ourselves – displaces the theocentric praise of God with man-centred utilitarianism. Since the worship of God is an end in itself, making worship useful destroys it, because this introduces an ulterior motive for praise. And ulterior motives mean manipulation, taking charge of the relationship, thereby turning the relation between Creator and creature upside down.

Instead of trying to force happiness or making the music more upbeat, the Church best renews its praise by gaining a fresh apprehension of God. Because we have lacked new visions, we have let modern idolatries reduce God into such an anaemic irrelevance that we must entertain people instead of introducing them to God.

“Praise” that uses only “upbeat” songs can be extremely destructive to worshippers because it denies the reality of doubts concerning God, the hiddenness of God, and the feelings of abandonment by God that cloud believers going through difficult times. I have counselled numerous people whose experience of worship that focused only on happy praise left them with huge feelings of inadequacy. “Why do I feel so discouraged? I know I should praise God, but I just can’t,” they say.

That is because the worship has not dealt with their feelings of guilt, their doubts and fears, their sense of hypocrisy and sinfulness. Many question their faith

because they are not able to be as happy as their fellow believers. They can’t enter into upbeat worship if their lives are in a shambles. Instead of recognising the inadequacy of worship that teaches only one aspect of our relationship to God, they blame themselves for inadequate faith.

Closely related to such wishful optimism in worship is the problem that the lyrics of many of the new praise songs are so shallow. Constant repetition of only one attribute of God can lead to profound reflection upon it, as in the gentle choruses from Taize, but often endless repetitions are only boring failures to reveal new aspects of the infinite God or presumptuous rejections of the multiplicity of images found in the Scriptures.

To sing over and over again only that God loves us is to miss the truth of God’s wrath, the need for our repentance in light of God’s justice, and God’s mercy and truth in answer to the confusions of a broken and sinful world.

This same kind of narrowed outlook in worship also occurs if pastors’ sermons are based on only one kind of text. We miss “the whole counsel of God” if we neglect various forms of biblical literature, the multiple portraits of God. Worship requires a blend of the infinite attributes of God – focusing appropriately on God’s majesty, humility, wrath, grace, hiddenness, ambiguity, love, hate, mercy, creativity, holiness, power, suffering, immanence, transcendence, beauty, glory, and mystery.

The whole point of a sermon is to bring forth God as the subject and object of our praise. Genuine praise of God involves all our emotions and needs, not by focusing on ourselves, but by proclaiming God’s truth and God’s attributes and actions on our behalf. Only when we see God as God truly is can we know ourselves aright – and then we can respond with offerings of praise.

This is an edited extract from Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down – A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture by Marva J Dawn, (Eerdmans, 1995). 

A woman's place...

...is in the heavenly home, with equal status as co-heir.

Jessica wanted to know more about Christianity. It seemed to her that if salvation through Christ was simple enough for a child to understand, then something so obvious should not be eluding her. Things were going very well until our second meeting when I mentioned that God was our loving father. Jessica explained that her father had walked out on her and her sister when they were too young to remember him. Her mum and dad had made an agreement at the time that he would never have anything to do with his family again. Jessica, at 18, has no memory of her dad. In her view, the words *loving* and *father* in conjunction sound strange.

Sara is a strong Christian girl who stands stoically by the gospel and is highly regarded by her peers as a person of high integrity. She never misses an opportunity to talk through Christianity but her mother is anti-church, her brother ambivalent, and her father has long since departed. Sara has grown up in an environment shaped by a loving, hard-working mother and a loving, absent father. She has difficulty with passages in the Bible that call for the submission of a wife to her husband (such as 1 Peter 3) and has been told by those outside the church that "women play only a minor role in Christian things".

With more broken families and the absence of a father during the formative years of a child's development, media attention has, quite correctly, been focused on predicting, and even measuring, the effects of the absence of a consistent father figure on sons. It can sometimes be overlooked that a substantial number of young women are also growing up without a father, either through absence, animosity, or abdication.

The consequence can often be an incomplete perception of self worth in addition to an ambiguous impression of God as a loving father in heaven. The effect that a Christian father will have on his children cannot be undervalued. A father on earth with a biblical perspective is the window whereby his children can catch a glimpse of their father in heaven.

What are the answers that the Bible

Stuart Quarmby

holds for young ladies like Jessica and Sara, who have a distorted, missing, or incomplete picture of the biblical role of a father? In the absence of a father to reassure them of their importance, does God provide a message of hope for them through outlining their significance in the Bible? These are important questions to answer. There are many young ladies like Sara and Jessica who are asking them; many who equate a perceived alienation on earth with estrangement from heaven.

Genesis tells of the creation of both male and female (Gen 1:27: "male and female he created them"; Gen 2:20: woman became a suitable helper for man), as equal inheritors of the kingdom of God and yet with separate and distinct roles in the partnership. Sadly, men distorted the role of women over time, such that submission in a loving relationship to a husband who was respectful, protective and compassionate and served to set a godly example was reinterpreted to a requirement of unconditional submission.

With this mindset, it became easy to interpret revelations from God in such a way as to reinforce this prejudicial view. For example, a man who wished to test

the faithfulness of his wife could ask that she stand before the Lord (see Num. 5:16) while the woman similarly suspicious of her husband had no such recourse. Leviticus 12:1-5 records that the period a woman was ceremonially unclean after the birth of a son and the time required for purification were half that required for the birth of a daughter.

There are, however, many examples where women are revered. In Exodus 1:17-21 and 2:1-4, Hebrew women thwarted the plans of Pharaoh, and in Proverbs, wisdom is given feminine characteristics. Proverbs 31 pays due heed to the vital role of the woman as a wife and mother as well as possessing the characteristics necessary for shrewd business practice.

There are also many examples of specific individual women who were recognised as having been used by God for great purposes. In Judges 4:4, Deborah is described as a prophetess, in Judges 4:5 as a judge of Israel holding court, and in Judges 5:15 as a leader of the army. Rahab saves the lives of the Israelite spies (Josh 2:1-16). Michal provides the means for David's escape (1 Sam. 19:11-13). Hannah provides an example of a godly woman (1 Sam. 1). Ruth is remembered as a faithful and noble person (Ruth 1:16-18). Miriam, Huldah, and Esther play significant roles in God's plans and merit consequent respect in the eyes of the men of the time.

Jesus challenged the traditions that had arisen from prejudicial interpretations of the Old Testament. He did this in full knowledge that such actions would not be understood (even by his own disciples), and would most certainly not endear him to the church authorities of the day. He restored the status of women as joint inheritors of the kingdom of God, not only by what he said, but by what he did.

He walked the walk by receiving the emotional and financial support of women (eg Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Suzanna), responding to their touch (eg the woman who had been bleeding), healing them (even when they were "unclean", Mk 5), recognising their potential for listening and learning (eg Mary who sat at



the Lord's feet, Lk 10:39), not allowing women who committed the same crimes as men to be sentenced to harsher penalties (eg the woman who had been caught in adultery, Jn 8:7), travelling with them, (Lk 8:1-3), and empowering them to spread the message of the gospel (eg the woman at the well being used by God through her testimony to convert other Samaritans).

He talked the talk by answering the questions of women and teaching them, using them as the main characters in stories (the woman and the lost coin), rebuking men who chastised women for a lack of understanding (eg the woman who poured the perfume, Mk 14:9), taking time to relate the gospel to them (eg the woman at the well, Mk 14), confirming their place as co-heirs in the kingdom ("Daughters of Abraham", Lk 13:16), chiding those men who had taken to a tradition of casual divorce by elevating the union of marriage (Mt 19) and re-classifying even the lustful look as adultery – punishable by God (Mt 5:28).

Paul continued the teachings of Jesus regarding women in the church. In Galatians 3:28 for instance, Paul writes that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus". Reflecting the actions of Christ, Paul also substantiated his verbal acknowledgement of the equality of women with men through his actions towards them. From Romans (ch. 16), it is clear that Paul relied on the gifts of the women in the early church to further the gospel.

Just as the teachings of Christ provided the basis for Paul's interaction with women, it is evident that Paul's companions were also influenced – none more so than Luke, who faithfully recorded the growth of the early church in the book of Acts.

In Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira had the same knowledge of an evil deed and shared the same fate. It is recorded in verse 2 that Sapphira had full knowledge of Ananias keeping some of the money from the sale of property for his (and presumably her) personal use. When given an opportunity to admit her actions (5:7) before the Lord, she chose to compound her sin in presuming on the forbearance of God with a lie, and received the same judgment as her husband (5:10). Not only are the husband and wife mentioned equally by name but their punishment was the same. Sapphira was condemned by her own actions as an

individual rather than by implication from the actions of her husband. Even at this early stage in the church, there are implications for a personal faith, male or female, before God.

As co-heirs with men of the kingdom of God, it is not surprising in Acts 9, to see a woman named Tabitha referred to as a disciple. In this case, the woman was "always doing good and helping the poor (9:36)", no doubt showing grace to others in thankfulness for the unmerited grace of God that had been given to her.

Other examples are Rhoda in Acts 12, Lydia in Acts 14 and Damaris in Acts 17.

Damaris is the only other person named besides the important Dionysis, a member of the Areopagus, although it is clear that other men were also converted at the same time.

Lest an impression be created that women have an important yet secondary role in spreading the gospel, Luke records in chapter 18 that Paul took a married couple, Priscilla and Aquilla as travelling companions on an evangelistic mission to Ephesus as workers in the gospel. Paul (Rom.16:3-4) indicates that both were active in the early church, even risking

Sapphira was condemned by her own actions as an individual rather than by implication from the actions of her husband.



their lives for him (and the dissemination of the gospel), and they are referred to again in 2 Timothy 4:19.

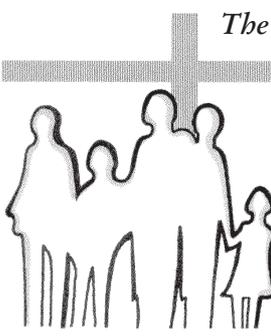
The status of women as co-heirs of the kingdom of God beside men is demonstrably present and practically reinforced in the Bible. Any perception of women as a lesser creation is the result of misunderstanding, distortion or fabrication. For young ladies like Jessica and Sara, there is comfort in the knowledge that no earthly father has ever been able to duplicate the love that our heavenly father has for every one of us. God is more than the father that we deserve – he is the father that we have. God has given men and women different responsibilities but the same status as joint heirs of his kingdom. We will never be the same but will always be equal.

Stuart Quarmby is an elder and session clerk at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Camden. He is deputy headmaster (pastoral care) at Broughton Anglican College, Menangle, NSW. 

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Movie Watch

The Man Who Sued God

Reviewed by Phil Campbell

It's not often that we Presbyterians make it into the movies. Here we are at last, in *The Man Who Sued God* – an Australian comedy that's not quite as irreverent as you might expect. The Bermagui scenery is stunning, though with Billy Connolly in the lead role, the language is coarse – one viewer described the movie as “Seachange with swear-words”. However, the biggest surprise is that in a movie that puts God in the dock, the defendant comes through looking good. Some of his advocates, however, leave a bit to be desired.

The premise is simple. Lawyer-turned-fisherman Steve Myers (Connolly) loses his trawler in a freak storm; his insurance company refuses to pay, claiming that lightning strikes and other natural phenomena are excluded under their “act of God” clause. Facing financial ruin, Steve takes the only course possible. He decides to sue God, calling his earthly representatives to account. An unlikely alliance of Anglican, Catholic, Jewish – and Presbyterian – clerics hastily convenes a meeting. “If we want to keep the money, we need to say God doesn't exist,” says one. “If we lose in this cynical age, we'll lose all credibility,” says another.

Meanwhile, Myers links with city journalist Anna Redmond (Judy Davis) – at first angling for Steve's story, then as a predictable love interest. “It's not that I

hate God, you know,” Steve says to Anna. “I just hate the way people use him as a gigantic lying mechanism.” As word spreads, there's a groundswell of support for Steve's lawsuit – countless ordinary people whose livelihoods have been destroyed by arbitrary insurance company decisions to attribute their losses to “acts of God”.

In court, the drama unfolds – the Council of Churches and Steve's insurance company are co-defendants. What level of theological expertise do you need to determine whether a disaster is “an act of God”? What theological training have your assessors undertaken? “Your insurance company has made a \$6.2 billion profit,” says Steve. “Did



Billy Connolly is *The Man Who Sued God*

you remember to thank God for that?” And then the blowtorch turns on the church. “Your wealth could pay off third world debt,” claims Steve – obviously not acquainted with the latest Presbyterian auditor's report.

Meanwhile, well-meaning Christians wave placards around the courthouse, while bushfires cast an eerie glow around the city. The air crackles with supernatural tension. And in the midst of this, comes the most surprising moment of the movie. With the church representatives clearly on

the ropes, an aged Cardinal takes the floor. “The God you want to sue is a well-spring of love, hope and faith for millions of people” – at this point there's a hush in the courtroom as well as in the theatre – “Have you felt his love at work in your heart? Maybe the sinking of your boat was actually a lesson from God to teach you something important.”

Phew! The theology of a movie like this one is confused, oscillating between pantheism and panentheism, a God who wouldn't spend his time “sitting around working out how to sink boats”, though is happy to send a white cockatoo hurtling through a courthouse window at the climax of the case... and yet the Cardinal's words slice through the movie like a knife. Bottom line in this movie? Love is the most powerful player of all – “amor omnia vincit”, love conquers all.

In the end, everyone's a winner – except the insurance company. Steve and Anna live happily ever after, and the satisfied clergy celebrate over a stiff glass of scotch. “We've got to get back to our core business,” says one. “Oh, I don't know,” says the Presbyterian moderator. “I saw a magazine article recently that said they'll soon be able to disprove God exists anyway.” Oh? Science magazine? “No ... Presbyterian Monthly.”

In short, *The Man Who Sued God* gives the insurance industry a stiff jab, the institutional church a good natured poke – and, confused theology aside – vindicates God. It's a tricky balance, but one which could open the doors to an easy-going conversation with your non-Christian friends. ap

Presbyterian Church of Australia in the state of New South Wales

Presbyterian Theological Centre – Sydney

Lecturer in Systematic Theology

The present term of the lecturer in Systematic Theology at the Presbyterian Theological Centre, Sydney, concludes on 31-12-2002. Accordingly the Theological Education Committee invites applications for appointment to this position. The position is full-time, normally for terms of six years, effective from 1-1-2003. The present incumbent does not intend to apply.

Applicants must subscribe to the doctrinal standards of the Presbyterian Church, should hold a research Master's degree or higher in Theology, and must have pastoral and teaching experience. Applicants should provide full curricula vitae and the names of three persons from whom a written report evaluating their suitability for this position (academically, educationally and pastorally) may be sought.

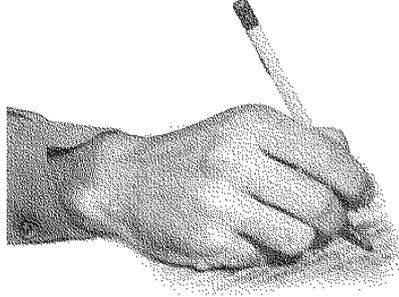
The successful applicant may be required to teach some classes in areas other than Systematic Theology.

Further details are available from the Administrator, PTC, on (02) 9744 1977.

Applications (by 31-1-2002) to:

The Principal, The Rev Dr John Davies, Presbyterian Theological Centre
77 Shaftesbury Road, Burwood, NSW 2134

letters



A definite decision

I appreciate the feedback from Charles Abel (*AP*, September) on his reading of the Westminster Confession for the 21st Century. Modern versions of confessions of faith are just like Bible translations, no one is going to agree about every change. My version is a conservative one, partly because I believe that is the way we should deal with historic documents. It is therefore not a dynamic equivalence of the original text. Yet words change in value like currency.

Decree is a good example. Young people would find that very authoritarian with overtones of determinism about it. Decision is a stronger word than Charles thinks. After all it is God's decision and it is eternal! Also, decision is a well-established term and concept in modern theology and strongly suggests commitment and unchanging purpose – exactly what the older word decree was intending to say.

I would value constructive feedback from anyone since the first edition of the publication is almost sold out and another edition is possible. My email address is djwmilne@netspace.net.au.

*Douglas Milne,
Melbourne*

Politics and abortion

It was interesting to read about the policies of our political parties (*AP*, November). However, I must express my disappointment both at the questions that you asked as well as at least one question that you neglected to ask.

Instead of asking the civil magistrate about meeting the needs of the homeless and the elderly, we should be asking *ourselves* what we are going to do about these issues. After telling the parable of the

Good Samaritan, Christ told the disciples to “go and do likewise”, not palm the responsibility off to someone else.

Surely Presbyterians should be pressuring the government on the issue of abortion. It is to our shame that this was not at the top of this list. In fact it didn't make the 14 key areas of social policy and justice. Surely the church should be defending the 2000 innocent children who are murdered every week in our land.

The time is right for Presbyterians to demand, in the name of the Ruler of nations, that the civil government does its job (i.e., defending the innocent) and we start doing ours (i.e., caring for the needy). This is not utopian – it is biblical.

*Michael A. Moynahan
Camberwell, Melbourne*

Issues editor Peter Hastie replies: Abortion comes under the State Crimes Act – it is not directly an issue in a federal election. Further, there is no party position on abortion funding at federal level, where MPs vote on conscience lines. Mr Moynahan should be asking his own local member this question.

AP chose to scrutinise the parties' policies in the belief that a vigorous democracy requires informed and involved voters.

Biblical backing for CE

Anne Wotherspoon (*AP*, November) has a problem with the use of CE (Common Era) in place of the traditional and more distinctively Christian form of defining the era (AD). The implication is that the more inclusive form is sub-Christian. While I generally still use the

AD form in “in-house” Christian discussions of history, and have even occasionally used it in correspondence, I think it will be unhelpful if we go down the track of developing or, in the face of change, of seeking to maintain distinctive forms of language or written styles, and criticising those who adopt the inclusive forms.

I experienced a similar taboo for a while in a church environment where it was unspiritual even to speak (to outsiders) of “Sunday” (a reminder of our pagan ancestry, as are all the days of the week), rather than the “Sabbath”. It made for unhelpful communication barriers with non-Christians.

I don't know if CE and BCE will catch on in general usage, but they are becoming the accepted convention when writing for an audience where the readers may include those of other faiths (as is the case with biblical scholarship). We have a model for this form of cultural accommodation: the Bible writers preferred “Israelites” for the name of God's covenant people, but their characters commonly referred to themselves as “Hebrews” when addressing outsiders.

Language and modes of writing change. Christians, to be “all things to all people”, need to speak and write in the idiom of the day, within the limits of using language “with grace, seasoned with salt”. There is no warrant in Scripture for having distinctive Christian clothing, eating Christian food, or playing Christian sports. Let's not diminish our communication by using different habits of speaking and writing from those around us.

*John Davies,
Sydney*

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prayer

DECEMBER

- 21 West Tamar special (home mission) church, northern Tasmania – The Auld Kirk, Sidmouth, and Mole Creek; about 30 communicants and adherents and 8 elders and 20 younger people; vacant – John Britton moderator.
- 22 Presbytery of Brisbane Qld, 11 parishes totalling 16 congregations with 1650 communicants and adherents, 3 ministers in special appointments, 7 retired, 2 under jurisdiction, 1 deaconess; Guido Kettness clerk.
- 23 Mordialloc parish, Melbourne; about 100 communicants and adherents, 12 elders and 12 younger people; Gary and Margaret Ware.
- 24 All involved in such medical missions as The Leprosy Mission and the Christian Blind Mission, and especially to the vast numbers affected by AIDS.
- 25 Praise God that the eternal Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us full of grace and truth; pray for powerful Gospel presentations this Christmas.
- 26 Murwillumbah parish NSW far north coast including Tyalgum ; about 200 communicants and adherents, 90 younger people; and 8 elders; Philip and Jennifer Strong.
- 27 Family missions and Christian camps being held around Australia, and holiday safety.
- 28 Camden parish south of Sydney; about 125 communicants and adherents, 25 younger people; and 10 elders; Warren and Julie Hicks.
- 29 Pray that your parish and the whole church may have a biblical vision for the coming year.
- 30 The students and staff of the Victorian Theological Hall – especially Professor Douglas Milne as principal, and Greg

- Goswell teaching Old Testament.
- 31 Wavell Heights parish, Brisbane; about 70 communicants and adherents, 13 younger people; and 5 elders; Martin and Judith Duffield.

JANUARY 2002

- 1 Elizabeth home mission station (Jean Flynn church), Adelaide; about 50 communicants and adherents, 6 younger people; and 3 elders; vacant, Reg. Mathews moderator.
- 2 Presbytery of Central coast, NSW; 5 parishes and 1 home mission station totalling 775 communicants and adherents, 6 retired ministers; Neville Wilce clerk.
- 3 Stabilisation of the nation of Afghanistan (23 million people) after the war – good government and advance for the gospel.
- 4 Woy Woy parish NSW; about 85 communicants and adherents, 20 younger people and 7 elders; Jamie and Jennifer Newans.
- 5 The work of the Bible League, including the publication of many translations produced by Wycliffe Bible Translators.
- 6 Coolah-Dunedoo home mission station NSW; about 60 communicants and adherents and 5 elders; vacant, Stuart Clements moderator.
- 7 Brett and Ruth Richardson from Parramatta City congregation, NSW; church planting in Cabra and Montilla, Spain, with European Christian Mission.
- 8 Keith King (Goulburn NSW), George and Miriam Lee, and Ruth Owen (Melbourne), Barry Porter (Weribee Vic), Wallace Brown (Kingaroy Qld), Jim Brown (Mackay Qld), Geoff Spedding (Seymour Vic.) and all ministering to prisoners and their families.

- 9 Nicole Linklater from NSW, missionary in Chad, west Africa with WEC.
- 10 Terry and Judith Sadler, Narrabri, in his part-time PIM patrol work in north western NSW.
- 11 The David Shearer PIM patrol, Western Australia: David and Doreen Hart.
- 12 Presbytery of Tasmania; 5 parishes and 6 special (home mission) parishes totalling 21 congregations with 820 communicants and adherents, 1 missionary, 3 retired ministers; Stephen Warwick clerk.
- 13 Bob (and Allison) Thomas as Victorian moderator and his ministry at St Kilda with about 35 communicants and adherents and 3 elders.
- 14 The preparations for annual congregational meetings to be held in coming weeks.
- 15 The vacant home mission station of Mt Isa, Qld; about 9 communicants and adherents and about 15 younger people.
- 16 The Presbyterian Inland Mission Committee based in Brisbane – Rt. Rev. Jack Knapp – convener.
- 17 Wangaratta regional parish, Victoria, including Myrtleford and Yarrowongs; about 80 communicants and adherents, 30 younger people and 9 elders; Neil and Barbara Harvey.
- 18 The corporate trustees of the NSW church as they deal with the challenges of the finances of the Church in that state.
- 19 Malvern parish Melbourne; about 80 communicants and adherents and 8 elders; John and Lyn Woodward.
- 20 Parramatta City congregation, Carlingford, NSW; about 170 communicants and adherents, 50 younger people and 5 elders; Luke and Debra Tattersall.

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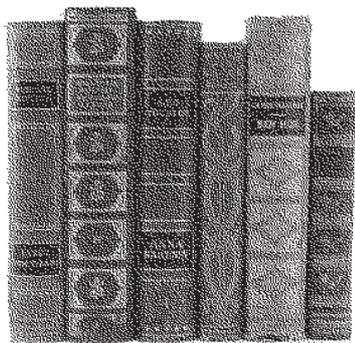
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books



Beyond the Furthest Fences

Stuart Bonnington

Commissioned by the Presbyterian Inland Mission Committee

Reviewed by Martin de Pyle

This booklet is a “short history of the Inland Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, produced in 2001 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the death of John Flynn”. Recording the development of the work and witness of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the remote and rural parts of our vast country, Bonnington has presented his material in three main sections: the pre-Flynn years, an overview of the life and work of Flynn, and the post-Flynn years.

The first section, the pre-Flynn years, gives a brief glimpse of the efforts of the first Christian ministers to take the gospel into remote areas of the country that were opened up during the 19th and early 20th centuries. This section provides good motivation for one to read further the accounts of those who selflessly gave themselves to the task of taking the gospel into the outback.

Much has been written about John Flynn (and deservedly so), therefore after only a brief introduction to this great pioneer, Bonnington goes on to describe the beginnings of the Australian Inland Mission (AIM), and the work of some of the key figures in that organisation. From here, this section progresses to a description of the establishment of the Aerial Medical Service.

The third section outlines many of the changes that faced the AIM after Flynn, the biggest being the upheaval that followed the birth of the Uniting Church of Australia in 1977. Later the Presbyterian Church of Australia regrouped its efforts in the inland, forming the Presbyterian Inland Mission (PIM).

The booklet is easy reading and inspirational. Before you make that next tour of the outback, be sure to buy a copy and see for yourself some of the places mentioned in it.

Martin de Pyle is minister of Swan Hill Presbyterian Church, Vic. For copies (\$5.50), contact: Presbyterian Resource Centre, 156 Collins St, Melbourne 3000. Phone 9655 1409.

Iron in our Blood

Mark Hutchinson

Sydney: Ferguson and CSAC Publications, 2001.

Reviewed by Peter Barnes

Like many book titles these days, this one is somewhat enigmatic. It comes not from Chancellor Bismarck but from a line by Rev. Dr Ken Gardiner, who said that Presbyterians stayed out of the Uniting Church because they had iron in their blood. The contents of the book, alas, do not always illustrate the rather more hopeful title. Anaemia is not only a physical ailment; it is a spiritual complaint common in many churches.

Nevertheless, this is a lively and informative analysis of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales. The result is not the dull and misplaced triumphalism of C. A. White's *The Challenge of the Years*, nor the much more satisfying but still rather hasty and all-too-constitutional approach of Rowland Ward's *The Bush Still Burns*. Rather, it is an engaging and often sociological treatment of the history of NSW Presbyterianism.

Mark's work points to the triumphs and the disappointments of NSW Presbyterianism down through the ages: the early struggles to survive, church-state relations, the attempts to minister to the Aborigines, the rise of biblical criticism and the hypothesis of evolution, the compromises that were made, the men and women who either quietly or vociferously held to the faith, and the difficulties of interacting with the modern world.

Naturally, there are omissions, and sketchier treatments of certain parts than one might have wished. John Flynn, for example, hardly rates a mention, and missions might have received greater prominence. But omissions and brevities are almost inevitable in such a comprehensive work as this.

The portrayal of the contest between Samuel Angus and R. J. H. McGowan

could use a bit more theology and a bit less sociology.

Dr Hutchinson's treatment of the Peter Cameron case, contrary to some criticism, shows that the issues there were clearly understood, and its lessons well digested. Furthermore, he deals most sensitively and intelligently with the present state of the Church and her prospects for the future.

This fascinating piece of work has filled a void in the history of our denomination, and hopefully it will encourage more work on the same. As Augustine heard in the garden in Milan: “Take it and read, take it and read.”

Fred Nile: An Autobiography

Fred Nile

Sydney: Strand Publishing, 2001.

Reviewed by Peter Barnes

Those who accuse Fred Nile of having led a sheltered life, and of being one who does not know how the real world functions, would do well to read his autobiography. Not many people have had a murderer-rapist confess to them, as he has.

Born in 1934, the son of a King's Cross taxi-driver and a waitress, Fred Nile has led a busy life, trying to maintain a Christian testimony in the hurly-burly of politics. He writes in a clear and engaging way, and is refreshingly blunt, for example, in his exposure of the theological unbelief that prevailed at St Andrews Hall at the University of Sydney. Also, he has many insightful things to say about the disreputable state of political life in NSW and of the media's hostility to him.

Like anybody else, Fred has his weaknesses. His view of guidance belongs more to the charismatic movement than to evangelicalism, while his support for Alan Walker is further evidence of a certain naivety. Walker hobnobbed with the Chardonnay socialist set, notably Gough Whitlam, and did at least as much harm as good. There have also been some unfortunate and harmful brawls with colleagues such as Marie Bignold and John Bradford.

For all that, this book reveals a humble Christian dedicated to serving Christ in a difficult arena. Certainly, if NSW politics had taken more note of Fred and his witness, the place would be more honest and moral now. There are many of us who are grateful for Fred's life and witness, and with good reason.

Hide and seek

The search is utterly one-sided – thank God!

We human beings tend to glamourise the search for something greater than ourselves. The novelist Albert Camus spoke for many when he declared that “the struggle towards the summit itself is enough to fill the heart of man”.

Is that so? Augustine did not find that the search itself satisfied him. As a young and unconverted man, he read Cicero, searched for wisdom, became an adherent of the dualistic Manichaean cult, and yet found himself helpless in trying to control his lusts and his intellectual pride.

At Milan he resolved to doubt everything and fluctuate between all the options, but the result was increasing misery. In fact, he was even filled with envy after seeing a drunken but cheerful beggar, and asked: “Will I never cease setting my heart on shadows and following a lie?”

The Bible makes it clear that fallen man, without the Holy Spirit, does not seek God truly. As soon as Adam fell into disobedience, it was God who had to take the initiative, and call out to him: “Where are you?” (Gen. 3:9). Ever since then, sinners have tried to hide or cover their sins rather than confess and forsake them (Prov. 28:13). We sinners are told to seek God and live (Amos 5:4, 6) and we are promised that if we do so with all our heart and soul we shall find him (Deut. 4:29). But God knows that no one seeks after him (Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Rom. 3:11).

“Seeker services” may imply a power in the natural man which he simply does not possess. Our attempts to hide from God may be more sophisticated than Adam’s in the garden, but they are every bit as real.

In the ancient world Jews sought after



Peter Barnes

a sign (1 Cor. 1:22) – fire from heaven, manna from heaven, raisings from the dead – anything which would demonstrate that God was favouring their cause. Hence the Pharisees urged a sign from Jesus, but he replied that it is an evil and adulterous generation which seeks after a sign (Mt. 12:38-39). It is true that Christ, the apostles and the prophets performed miracles, but the mind-set of wonder-mongering is not something which the Bible commends.

Greeks, on the other hand, sought after wisdom (1 Cor. 1:22). They loved philosophers and public speakers like Demosthenes and Pericles who would turn on the verbal fireworks and hold their audiences spell-bound by the power of their oratory. Before his conversion, Augustine was professor of rhetoric at Milan University, and wrote panegyrics for the emperor, but after his conversion he dismissed this kind of activity as “so much smoke and wind”. Whether Jew or Gentile, unregenerate man seeks after substitutes for God himself.

The zealous Jews sought to establish their own righteousness, and so did not

submit to the righteousness of God (Rom. 10:3). The truth is that God was found by those who did not seek him nor ask for him (Rom. 10:20). C. S. Lewis could never be accused of being a Calvinist, but he nevertheless recorded that, as an atheist who reluctantly became a Christian, he was no more searching for God than the mouse searches for the cat.

We are told to seek with the promise that we shall find (Is. 55:6; Mt. 7:7-8). God is described as the rewarder of those who diligently seek him (Heb. 11:6). However, we can only seek God if he has first put it into our hearts to seek him. It is Jesus who declares of himself, that “the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

The opening of Augustine’s *Confessions* is deservedly well-known: “You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you.” Less well-known, but equally deserving of quotation, is the ending: “Of you must we ask, in you must we seek, at you must we knock. Only thus shall we receive, thus shall we find, thus will it be opened to us.”

The unregenerate sinner seeks to hide from God – whether in flagrant sin and diversions or in signs, wisdom, his own righteousness, or the search itself. The regenerate sinner seeks and, when he finds, comes to realise that he has only done this because he has already been found. He then seeks those things which are above (Col. 3:1), all the time realising that they are already his in Christ (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

Peter Barnes is minister of Revesby Presbyterian Church, Sydney. 

As an atheist who reluctantly became a Christian, he was no more searching for God than the mouse searches for the cat.

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