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THE MAGAZINE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

december 2005



by

grace

alone

Michael Horton • Clergy abuse • J. I. Packer

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December 2005

No. 577

AUSTRALIAN Presbyterian

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editorial

One of my lingering boyhood memories is of trying to run up the “down” escalator in the Elizabeth Street store of David Jones. “Small things amuse small minds,” as my mother used to say. Maybe. But there is a part of me that rises to a challenge, and whether it’s an escalator in a retail store or a hill that is standing in my way, the fact that it exists is enough to interest me. Sometimes it even engages my efforts.

That’s why the challenge that some Christians read into Psalm 24 is so alluring: “Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place?” Many believers have interpreted this to mean that an encounter with the Holy One is the reward for those who can reach the peak of spiritual attainment. Seeing God’s face is only for those who have purged themselves through exhaustive confession and endless strivings. “God helps those who help themselves,” as Benjamin Franklin said.

But is it possible to climb the hill of the Lord? Is that what the psalmist meant? Is he issuing a challenge to determined spiritual “wannabes” to see if they can make the grade?

Is he suggesting that we can have “clean hands and a pure heart”? If we reread the psalm carefully, it becomes clear that the psalmist is not dealing with our spiritual capacity to scale the heights; instead, he’s referring to the achievements of the “King of Glory” who alone can stand in the Most Holy Place.

The witness of Scripture is that there is only one person who can appear in God’s holy presence – Jesus Christ (Heb. 9:12, 24). It is on the basis of His sacrifice for our sins and His perfect obedience that we are made holy once for all (Heb. 10:9, 10).

This is the meaning of grace – that Christ has brought us into the Father’s presence on the basis of His performance, not ours. This notion of grace is under attack today within the evangelical church by those with a diminished notion of sin. This issue of *AP* is a reminder that our best efforts, experiences and strivings do not win a place before the Father – that is accomplished by Christ alone.

Peter Hastie *ap*

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God's gift

We must remember what's so amazing about grace.



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Michael Horton is a professor of historical theology and apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, California. He is also editor of *Modern Reformation* magazine, and the author of number of books including *A Better Way* (on worship), *Where in the World is the Church?* (on vocation), *God of Promise: Introducing Covenant Theology*, *Lord and Servant* (both on Covenant theology), *The Law of Perfect Freedom* (on the 10 commandments), *Too Good to be True: Hope in a World of Hype*, and *Putting Amazing Back Into Grace*. J.I. Packer says of the last-mentioned book: "It is a breath-taking work-out for Protestant laypeople, with a prospect of new health and strength for those who stay the course." Dr Horton speaks regularly on radio and is a minister in the United Reformed Churches in North America. He lives with his wife, Lisa, and children in Escondido, California. His website is www.whitehorseinn.org

Michael, how do Christians experience frustration in their relationship



**Michael Horton
talks to
Peter Hastie**

with God when they allow their thoughts to be shaped more by the world than by the Scriptures?

Our understanding of God ultimately affects every part of our religious experience. Let me give you an example. In the 16th century people were afraid of death because they were afraid of meeting their Maker. But today people are more afraid of death itself; they're not really scared of coming face-to-face with God. Most of them think that either God is too nice or they are so good that God wouldn't harm them. But back in the 16th century people thought very differently. During the Reformation people were certain that God was just; they weren't so sure that He was merciful, or if He was merciful, that He would be merciful to them. The situation is vastly different today. People don't believe that God is angry with them so they are not worried about how they

stand before God.

However, perhaps I should qualify what I've said by saying that I have a hunch that there is some disparity what people say in surveys and what they actually experience when they're staring death in the face. I think it's safe to say that the main reason that people are afraid of dying is that they are afraid of the process of death itself. Of course, even Christians are afraid of the physical aspects of death. There is nothing pleasant contemplating the decay of our bodies or feeling the strain of death before we actually die. There seems to be a profound fear of the process of death in our culture.

My own view is that this seems to point to something more than people being afraid of the pain of death itself. Robert J. Lifton, a pioneer in brain research, has said that the post-modern self is always trying to reinvent itself and elude capture. If he is right, this could mean that what our post-modern culture is trying to elude is a nagging sense of guilt. People aren't sure of where it comes from and they find it hard to articulate. Nevertheless this lingering sense of guilt

remains. If Lifton is correct, then we have a pioneer in psychology who is confirming what the psychiatrist Karl Menninger pointed out years ago when he wrote his book, *Whatever Became of Sin?* Essentially, Menninger said the problem of guilt never goes away; it simply remains buried in the subterranean depths of our personalities and ultimately finds expression in all kinds of personality disorders. I think this is a sort of psychological way of saying that we are alienated from the world and ourselves because we are alienated from God.

Ultimately, it means that the reason that we ought to be afraid of death is that we will meet our Maker. There is no doubt that people have a real existential fear of death; the problem is that we don't talk about it much at church and so we don't know what to call it. The Bible calls it "the sting of death". This "sting" is found in the curse that the law pronounces on us. For Christians this sting is removed, but for unbelievers the curse still remains. That's why death is such a horror. It's the just sentence for our participation in Adam's guilt and our own sins. And since there is very little preaching on the law today, I think this explains why there is a corresponding ambiguity about what it is that troubles us.

You have said that studying the book of Romans opened your eyes to the meaning of grace. How did you find security in your relationship with God?

I started to read through Paul's letter to the Romans at the suggestion of my brother. He had just discovered the doctrine of election and was beginning to make a public nuisance of himself in our family by talking about it. I wanted to read Romans myself just to make sure. I'd been a Christian a lot longer than him, and even though he was my big brother, I felt that I had to come up with the right answer for myself.

So I went to Romans hoping to disprove him. Anyway, before I even got to the doctrine of election I stumbled upon the most revolutionary insights that I had ever encountered. I had thought that I understood Christianity, but now I realised that I didn't. I was no sooner in through the front door of Romans when I came to see my sin in a way I had never understood it before. I had always thought that sin consisted of the bad things that I did, but now I realised that it was something I was. I realised that sin meant that I was spiritually rotten to the

core, no matter how good I looked on the outside. I also discovered that there was nothing I could do to find God or to gain access to His grace; instead, I discovered that there was something that God had done for me. He had found and rescued me, and that was revolutionary. I know this might sound strange coming from a person like me, but I hadn't heard the term "justification" through all my years of growing up.

What church did you belong to?

At the time I was a good Southern Baptist in California. We had heard all about Jesus dying on the cross for our sins, but I was told that I had to play my part in it too. The role of my decision was crucial; that was the one little work that I did. And, you know, there were all these so-called laws or rules of conservative or fundamentalist Protestantism that I had to keep on top of all that.

I stumbled upon the most revolutionary insights that I had ever encountered.

Like don't gamble, don't drink, don't party?

Yes, if you violated any of those taboos you probably weren't a Christian. They didn't actually say that you lost your salvation if you did those things; it was more like you weren't a Christian in the first place. I remember at the time that I had this great concern to find a gracious God.

I should also mention that I was attending an Assembly of God junior high school at the time. One of my teachers was saying things like, "if you are walking home from school and are hit by a car and die before you've had time to confess your sins, then you'll go to hell". I felt like I was in the same position as Macbeth when he went to kill Duncan before he could go to confession. I was reading Romans at the time, and remember asking my Scripture teacher, "what about this problem?" I was asking these sorts of questions so frequently at school that my teacher began to treat me as a nuisance.

The final straw for me was when I reached the doctrine of election in Romans. It really made me mad! I threw my Bible across the room and I said, "If that's the way God deals with me, then I don't want anything to do with Him! A

God who does that is not the God I want to worship." Election was just too much for me. I had found the doctrine of justification liberating, but election/predestination was just too much to handle. Thankfully, when I recovered my senses a few days later, I picked up my Bible again and Romans 9 had a distinctly new flavour about it. It was as though I had another pair of eyes. It then hit me that election is not about God forcing people out of His kingdom who want to come in. Instead, it's about God's decision to include people in His kingdom who would otherwise want to get out.

Why do people have such big problems with the doctrine of election?

I think people have problems with election because they fail to see that it is an act of absolute mercy. If we see election as anything less than the pure mercy of God in Christ, then we'll have problems with it. If we think of election as an act of pure arbitrary deity, then we are starting on the wrong foot altogether.

The real starting-point is to recognise that our election is in Christ. When you realise that your election is grounded in Christ and not yourself, it's a wonderfully liberating moment. This is why the doctrine of election is the real test as to how seriously we take grace. The doctrine of election takes all striving for salvation completely out of our hands and puts it all the way back to eternity-past in Christ. That really is an unspeakable comfort in the Christian life. My Christian experience is full of ups and downs and I find it's a great consolation to know that while I am fickle, God is not. It's wonderfully liberating to know that God is not whimsical or carried away by His feelings.

Why is it so important to understand the purpose of life if we are going to appreciate what God has done in saving us in Christ?

If God created us to glorify Him and enjoy Him for ever, then we'll only find our greatest joy in doing that. The tragedy of the Fall is not just that we don't obey God; it's that we don't enjoy Him either. Obedience and joy went together in our creation. We are made to experience our highest joy and pleasure when we live for God's glory.

Tragically, after the Fall we no longer give God glory and we try to find our joy in things that God has created instead of in God Himself. The problem is that if we don't understand the original purpose of our creation, then we won't really under-

stand what sin is. Sin is not about failing to live up to my own personal standards; nor is it failing to be all that I could be. Paul tells us that the essence of sin is that we tumble or fall away from God's original purpose; we don't even come close to it.

It's enormously important to be clear about the meaning of sin. We are living at a time when people are prepared to admit mistakes and talk about their failures.

There's no shortage of individuals who will confess that they haven't lived up to their measures for success and happiness. But people today are increasingly reluctant, even in the church, to talk about sin in reference to God. It's as though we cannot admit that sin is exceedingly sinful. But it is, especially in view of the fact that God is holy and that He also created us for fellowship with Himself. God created us upright and good so that we could respond to Him with faithfulness, obedience and delight. But we have betrayed God. We have, as Calvin said, so smeared ourselves, that only a faint impression of that original image is able to shine through. The point is this: it's hard to know if something is broken unless you know what it was supposed to do in the first place. As human beings we are broken and fallen. Our guilt doesn't stem from the fact that we haven't lived up to

our full potential; rather, it's due to the fact that we aren't fulfilling the mission for which God created us and to which He still calls us.

How important is it to understand the Fall and what happened there?

Well, again, if we don't understand our guilt with respect to God then we can't understand the gospel. And sadly, that's what's happening in the church today. We are trying to understand the gospel apart from the problem as Scripture defines it. There are all kinds of problems that people think the gospel is meant to address: bad marriages, low self-esteem, kids on drugs, managing stress, depression, cor-

The tragedy of the Fall is not just that we don't obey God; it's that we don't enjoy Him either.



ruption in politics, and immorality. These are all the kinds of things that people believe the gospel addresses. However, all of these are merely symptoms of the illness; they are not the illness itself. The real illness is that we are enemies of God apart from Christ – we are spiritually hostile.

However, the average person doesn't usually think of himself or herself as being a traitor to God or His enemy. Instead, we prefer to think that God gets on pretty well with us because we're basically good at heart. "God is OK and we're OK." Of course, we may make a mess of things at times through lousy decisions, but we just can't come at the idea that we are as wicked and evil as the Bible describes us. We are convinced that we're fundamentally good at heart.

I am sure that most people, even professing Christians, like to think that there is a little landing place in every one's soul where God can put His foot and know that He is on friendly territory. However, the biblical reality is that every inch of us in our fallen state is enemy territory. Once we get a proper understanding of sin, then we'll realise that there is no safe landing for God in the human heart. God has nowhere to put His foot in us. Unless we understand that clearly, then we will never be awed by the gravity and sheer wonder of God's grace.

What really happened at the Fall? Is it as bad as the old Anglican Prayer Book says when it calls us "miserable sinners"?

The miserable sinners line is something that could only come up in a period like the Reformation when people were steeped in the thought of the Bible. However, you can still find bits and pieces of that kind of thought in the medieval mass also, even before the Reformation. There was more talk about sin and the necessity of God's mercy in the medieval Mass than in a lot of American evangelical preaching today. That indicates how decadent a lot of popular theology is. Our Reformed forebears who wrote those words in the Anglican liturgy were simply quoting the Psalms. Sadly, evangelicals have forgotten the theology of sin that's found in there which runs completely counter to the romantic sentimentalism of our age.

What do the Psalms say?

Good question! If Paul was to answer that question today I think he would simply string a number of texts from the Psalms together, just as he did in Romans 3. It is not what goes into a man's heart that makes him unclean, but what comes out; sin is not the result of being around bad associations; nor is sin the product of my environment. The reason that sin exists in social relationships, in social structures and in all sorts of ways external to me, is because it indwells me. My own heart is the fountain of sin. All the metaphors for sin that Paul uses in Romans 3 are very powerful. He paints a picture of human depravity that is as stark as can be.

You've said that religion is used typically as a way of covering our spiritual nakedness, sowing the leaves of respectability, morality, or charity on to a garment that hides our sin. Why are human solutions to sin so hopeless?

Human solutions for sin are hopeless because they never take into full account the demands of God's character. We need to remember that God requires the same righteousness in us after the Fall as He required before the Fall. It is impossible for God to change His own moral character. He can't just let bygones be bygones. If God was simply to revoke the sanctions that He had put in place in the world, then He would be less than God. The only solution that will actually save us from judgment is if someone can be found who

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can representatively fulfil the law for us, just as Adam representatively transgressed the law. We need a stand-in, a substitute, and that's what Paul is explaining to us in Romans 5. He reminds us that Adam's guilt is imputed to us in the sense that we were really there in Adam's sinning. Similarly, he says, in a manner that is exactly parallel, Christ's righteousness is imputed to us. Adam, by his act of disobedience, corrupted the entire human race; Jesus Christ, on the other hand, by His active obedience, completely fulfilled all of the obligations of the law for us. This means that salvation cannot simply consist of the forgiveness of sins; forgiveness, by itself is insufficient.

Why is obedience so important to God?

Obedience is important to God because that's the way things are in God's world. It's as simple as that. The Psalms tell us that God delights in obedience, which is better than sacrifice. Sacrifice is important, of course, because it reminds us of what has been undone on our behalf. Obedience, on the other hand, reminds us of what has been done. Ultimately, that obedience can only be found in one person – God's own Son. And that is why God delighted in the life of Jesus Christ – His life was one of perfect obedience. The good news of the gospel is that when God looks on the perfect righteousness of Christ He is also looking upon all those who are in Christ. This is my one hope of standing before God with my own sin-stained obedience because the perfect righteousness of Christ has been imputed to me. It's the only basis on which God can delight in me. And I know that God delights in me because He tells me that I am not merely forgiven; I am also justified. I am perfectly righteous now that the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to me.

The modern world says that the problem today is stress, not guilt. How has this affected the preaching of the gospel in evangelical circles?

I have to say that I get a lot of stress from listening to a lot of evangelical preaching. The problem is that many evangelicals are self-centred in their approach to religion. Is religion a form of therapy? If you ask most people, at least in the Western world, they would probably say yes. They don't consider that Christianity consists of truth claims about the public world, things that happened 2000 years ago, for instance. Nor are peo-

ple particularly worried about whether Jesus Christ reigns at the Father's right hand and intercedes for us, or whether He will return a second time. All that is seen as irrelevant to the purpose of religion. For many modern evangelicals, the purpose of religion is to help us get to where we want to be in life.

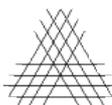
The sad thing is that if you look at the best-selling books of a vaguely religious nature – even written by evangelicals – and listen to a lot of Christian television and radio broadcasts in America, then there seems to be a sense that the real issue is not about God; it's about me. In fact, it's all about me getting what I need in order to make it through this week, how to be brilliant, how to be happy, and how to be less stressful. So much religion in America, at least, is all about the upbeat; it's victory mode all the way. Of course, the problem with this sort of religion is that it can't really face a moment of doubt, or suffering or failure.

Sometimes what the church is doing in the name of "ministry" is preparing people better for hell.

It just can't stand up to it. This is what J. B. Phillips writes about in his classic book, *Your God is Too Small*. We need to come to terms with the fact that the God who is being served up to us in many parts of the modern evangelical church can't stand up to the realities of life beyond Sunday School.

I am sure that many Christians who go off to college soon realise that there are a lot of other things that can help with stress. When Jesus has been constantly trivialised to the point of being a "pick-me-up" by their pastors, youth ministers and their parents, it's not surprising that many turn off the religious freeway and get on the road to atheism. The tragedy is that no one seems to realise what's going on at the level of trivialisation. At this point people think of it as marketing; they call it pre-evangelism. But it is utterly destructive. What many don't realise is that when we trivialise Christianity in the hope of giving it wider appeal, we are actually creating a generation of post-Christian youths.

Christians have to come to terms with the fact that stress is not our biggest problem. Ask a young woman with cancer if stress is her biggest issue. Or ask a father who has lost a son. I am sure they won't tell you that it's stress. They have other



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more serious problems. Luther once said that if you haven't suffered you can't really be a theologian. What he meant was that our answers are going to be very shallow if the sort of questions we are asking never come to terms with real human suffering. In America the vast majority of people find life relatively easy. In that sense, stress may be the worst thing that well-fed, well-paid people could ever face. However, if the church falls for this lie and doesn't tell people that they face a greater problem, namely, that they are dying and will one day meet their Maker in judgment, then the church doesn't know the meaning of the word "evangelism". In fact, what it's doing in the name of "ministry" is preparing people better for hell.

What lies at the heart of the modern failure among Christians to fully understand the meaning of grace?

Most people don't fully appreciate their spiritual plight. They think of themselves in ways that don't require the immediate intervention of God. For instance, if I am broken, then I can usually be fixed. If I'm sick, I can be healed. If I'm wounded, I can recover. Unfortunately, none of these analogies reveal the full extent of the damage that sin has done to us. For instance, the Bible says that I am "dead in sins and trespasses". I am six feet

under in a spiritual sense and I can't get up. The analogy of God throwing us a life raft and leaving it up to us as to whether we want to clamber aboard just doesn't fit with the realities of sin.

We must come to terms with what the Bible says about the effects of sin. If no one seeks after God, if we are dead in tres-

It is disturbing that so many evangelicals cannot articulate the central issue of the Reformation.

passes and sin, if the human mind is hostile to the things of the Spirit, if no one can come to the Father except He draws them, then it is impossible for us to contribute anything to our salvation. Someone once asked Luther, "are

you saying that we contribute nothing?" He said: "That's exactly what I am saying. We are in resistance." He was right.

Our sinful nature constantly resists God. But God is the one who refuses to go away. He persuades us by His gracious Spirit to embrace Jesus Christ. This is the best news of all.

I hope I have made it clear why it's so important to understand our condition in sin. If we haven't got the diagnosis right, then the treatment won't be right either.

For instance, if we think of the soul as sick rather than as dead, then we will think that we need a less radical treatment. That is why, for instance, Roman Catholic theology is all about healing. For Catholic theologians grace is all about healing the will, healing the sickness of sin. However, the Reformers realised that something much more radical was needed than medicine. Spiritual death is not something that can be overcome by participation in the sacraments. If we want to enjoy new life in Christ we must receive the gifts of regeneration and imputed righteousness. Rome believes in regeneration too, but they claim that it comes about in baptism. We know that's not so. Then after baptism they say, "it's up to you!"

Some people say election is unfair?

Yes, election is most unfair. Not one of us should be saved. I mean, really, if what I've already said about sin is anywhere close to being right the last thing that people should be demanding is fairness. This is a topic that sinners should be staying away from. The real mystery of election is that God chose me! I cannot fathom why He did.

Having said that, I'm willing to admit that there are aspects of the doctrine of election that are not easy to understand. I fully appreciate the types of struggles that people experience when they try to come to terms with loved ones who aren't saved. I'll be the first to admit that this is a matter of serious pastoral concern. However, the good news of election is that the only reason that we can hope and pray that our unsaved friends and relatives will come to saving faith is that there is a possibility that a loving and sovereign God can elect a sinner who is spiritually dead to new life in Christ. There is absolutely no reason to pray that God would open someone's heart to accept the gospel if God isn't in the business of doing that. I would have no reason to pray if I believed that God had left destiny ultimately in the hands of the one for whom I'm praying.

How is modern evangelicalism reverting back to a medieval theology of salvation?

Unfortunately, in far too many ways. If they had had bumper stickers in the Middle Ages, a popular one would have been, "God will not deny His grace to those who do what lies within them". And that was the slogan of the late medieval church. I often ask American audiences if they can think of a modern slogan that

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captures that idea. And they reply, "God helps those who help themselves". People rarely recognise what they are saying. According to one study, 87 per cent of American evangelicals surveyed said that it was a biblical idea and 66 per cent thought it was a biblical quotation. If those numbers are right, then more than 80 per cent of professing evangelicals are practising Roman Catholics in terms of their views on salvation. Evangelicals and Catholics differ on many things, of course. We hold quite different views on Mary, the saints etc. If you ask the average evangelical what his objection is to Roman Catholicism, it will almost always turn on questions of ritual and views of Mary and so forth. However, if you had asked the Reformers the same question, they would have brought up the doctrine of justification. I find it disturbing that so many evangelicals today cannot articulate the central dividing issue of the Reformation in their expression of disagreement with Roman Catholic belief.

Many evangelicals today don't see any need for the sacraments, or for getting their children baptised. Are the sacraments a means of grace, and in what sense?

Yes, the sacraments are definitely a

means of grace. One of the things that has been so enriching to me as a Reformed Christian is to realise that God has not only given us His Word and gospel promise, but He has confirmed this for us in the sacraments.

Paul calls circumcision a "sign and seal" of the righteousness that Abraham had by faith before he was circumcised. But not only Abraham was circumcised; we also see him circumcising his baby boy, Isaac. While adult converts like Abraham are justified by grace alone, through faith alone because of Christ alone, they are commanded to place the sign and seal of the righteousness that comes by faith upon their children. In Abraham's case he circumcised Isaac. I believe this establishes a precedent for believers to pass on to their children the sign and seal of the righteousness that comes through faith, which the children need to receive and embrace for themselves as they grow up.

The Lord's Supper represents a spiritual participation in Christ. Indeed Paul says, "this bread that we break is a participation in the body of Christ; the cup that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ?" Since Christ has promised never to leave us, in some mysterious way He nourishes us with His own body and

blood through the Lord's Supper. This is food for our journey of faith. It is spiritual because the Holy Spirit is the one who does it. This means that even though Christ in His body is seated at the right hand of the Father interceding for us, by the Spirit's work we feed not only on His benefits but also on Christ himself.

I think one reason why many Christians go looking for spiritual feeding in all the wrong places is that they have such an impoverished understanding of the sacraments as a means of grace. People think that real spiritual growth takes place through all these fantastic new programs with "five principles for this" and "five steps for that". What they have forgotten is the Reformation doctrine of the means of grace. Basically, our real need is for the Word and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. These are things that Christ in His wisdom appointed for our nurture. Sadly, there are many people in Presbyterian and Reformed Churches who are more aware of the latest craze for "how to be filled with the Spirit", or "how to get more out of your relationship with God", than by frequently receiving the Lord's Supper. And that is really remarkable considering our traditional, confessional convictions as they relate to the meaning of this feast. ap

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Grace first

We need God to act before we can act.

Bishop J. C. Ryle, in his book *Five Christian Leaders* tells a story from the period of the Evangelical revival in England which will resonate with many believing parents today. It's a story about the famous Anglican pastor-evangelist William Grimshaw (1708-63), who had a boy, John. John turned his back on God and lived a careless and intemperate life for most of his 30-odd years. Sadly, his father never lived to see his son's conversion.

Shortly before Grimshaw died, he pleaded with his son to yield his life to God: "John, take care with what you do. You are not yet fit to die!" Sadly, Grimshaw never saw any change in him. However, his words and example seemed to have left a deep impression in John's heart.

In the years following Grimshaw's death, John began riding the old man's horse. One day while he was riding in the town he was met by one of his father's parishioners. "I see you are riding the old parson's horse," he said. "Yes," said John; "once he carried a great saint, and now he carries a great sinner." Sometime during the three years after his father's death,



**Peter
Hastie**

John had undergone a conversion to Christ and displayed evidence of genuine, heart-felt repentance. Shortly before he died in 1766, he was heard to say, "What will my old father say when he sees that I have got to heaven?"

I am sure this story of John Grimshaw's conversion will thrill every believing parent's heart. It serves to remind us that God is often secretly at work in people who seem to be spiritually incorrigible. In ways that are mysterious and often labyrinthine, God leads errant children home. Of course, at the time, these prodigals are usually insensible to God's guiding hand. However, with the advantage of hindsight, what seemed to be an inexplicable series of circumstances turns out to be the unfolding of God's secret providence. God has indeed prepared them for that final step of faith and new life in Christ. It's what we call God's "prevenient grace" – the grace which

comes to us before our new birth and conversion. Sadly, we often fail to recognise God's hand in our own and others' lives before He brings us to Himself.

I mention the doctrine of prevenient grace because I believe that it provides considerable comfort to Christians in many different situations, but particularly to parents who are living with the grief of a child who is estranged from God. Perhaps this is an issue with which you are struggling at the moment.

One of the painful realities of Christian experience in a fallen world is that we cannot be certain that each of our children will embrace Christ. While we have good grounds in Scripture to believe that proper spiritual nurture will usually lead our children to the Lord (Prov. 22:6), we need to remember that Solomon is only giving us a general principle at this point; it's not an absolute promise. Unfortunately, many people fail to understand that the book of Proverbs contains many statements which merely express general truths or principles; they were never intended as blank cheques or absolute promises which can be relied upon with total certainty.

Scripture reminds us in several places that not every Christian parent enjoys the consolation of believing children. Abraham was disappointed by the lack of faith in Ishmael; Samuel was grieved that neither of his sons, Joel and Abijah, followed the Lord. And David was left distraught by the treachery and ingratitude of his son, Absalom. These disappointments could easily discourage us but for the fact that God reminds us that He is often at work in people's lives when they least expect it, and that His preparatory work of grace often goes unnoticed.

Let me give you an example. In Galatians 1:15 the apostle Paul says, "But when God, who set me apart from birth, and called me by His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me..." Here Paul reminds us that God shows His grace towards us even while we are unbelievers. In Paul's case, this meant that God was at work in his life even when he was a bitter opponent of the Christian church.

We don't often think of God's grace



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towards us before our conversion, but when Paul remarks that God had “set me apart from birth” he is making the point that God had been working in unseen ways in his life well before the moment when he became a Christian on the Damascus road. In fact, he claims that God’s purposes of grace were at work in his life from at least the time of his birth. God had designs of love towards him certainly before the time of his conversion.

Perhaps an illustration may help to shed some light on this truth. Earlier this year I was driving past one of the huge assembly plants for the European Airbus. It is a massive set of buildings which houses the production and assembly lines for the latest in the Airbus passenger jets. What is really fascinating is trying to understand the process by which these aircraft are produced. Do you realise how long it takes to produce a passenger jet? The lead time can take many years.

First, the aeronautical engineers have to develop the concept for a new aircraft. Next follows a long design and technical phase where each of the constituent parts of the plane is carefully drawn so that they all work together. Then suppliers and manufacturers from nations as far afield as the USA and China are requested to make the individual parts of the aircraft. These are then shipped by air, sea and road to the vast assembly plants, mainly in France. An aircraft that rolls off the production line in 2005 may have been conceived in the 1980s. It takes that long for the project to reach completion.

Similarly, when Paul says that God prepared him for His service, he tells us that the Lord was getting him ready from the moment of his birth. God’s grace was at work in his life even then. If we assume that Paul did not become a Christian until he was at least in his early 30s, this means that God was still at work in his life throughout his childhood and teenage years – even though he remained unregenerate.

How are we meant to understand this work of prevenient grace in Paul’s life? First, I think we are meant to understand it in respect of Paul’s gifts. God clearly endowed him with a number of extraordinary gifts such as the power of logic and argument. He also gave him a unique capacity for a precise and imaginative use of language that established him as a first-rate thinker and communicator in the first century world. Of all the apostles he seems to have been the most able theologian amongst them. He is pos-

sessed with an intellect that enables him to present the gospel in terms that a first century Gentile could readily understand. Now ask yourself: “Why did God do this? What was His purpose?”

The Bible tells us that just as we are motivated by special purposes, so is God. And His purpose in preparing a man like Paul with an array of intellectual and literary gifts was to convey the message of the gospel as clearly as possible to a waiting world. God wanted him to be the vehicle by which the gospel would be taken to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). No doubt God’s “setting apart” Paul from his birth meant



His purposes in preparing a man like Paul was to convey the message of the gospel as clearly as possible to a waiting world.

that the Lord determined that Tarsus would be the place where he was born and that he would grow up in a culture where he would become bi-lingual. Paul also seems to indicate that God had a direct hand in his Jewish education, and although it was not specifically Christian, it nevertheless prepared him to understand the Old Testament in a way that a traditional classical education could never have achieved.

Again, it seems that the doctrine of prevenient grace explains the temperament with which Paul was blessed. Paul was certainly not a man who did things by halves. Whenever he set his hand to a task, he undertook it with extraordinary vigour and energy. Few of the early Christians seem to have had his natural drive and zeal. So Paul’s statement that God “set me apart from birth” suggests that such factors as his education, his giftedness and his cultural experience were all specially appointed by God before the time of conversion so that he would be immediately serviceable in the ministry of the gospel. They were evidence of God’s prevenient grace.

The fact that God shows grace to us before the time of our conversions should be of great comfort to us. If you are a parent who has looked in vain for some spiritual responsiveness in your child, remember that God may have great designs for that child even though he or she is going in the wrong direction at the moment.

God’s purposes may not yet have come to fruition.

Sometimes God in His wisdom allows us to taste the bitterness of folly and sin before He calls us to Himself.

Take, for instance, the famous fourth century theologian, Augustine. He went to private school until he was 16, and then in his holidays got involved with a gang that led him into sin. This caused deep regrets for him. So did his studies in philosophy and non-Christian religion. In his famous spiritual autobiography, *Confessions*, which is an account of his spiritual odyssey, he explains in a marvellous way how God used all the experiences of his early life and adulthood to prepare him for his life’s work. Nothing was wasted, although it was not until Augustine was around 30 that he became a Christian. In his *Confessions* he refers constantly to the many different ways in which God was active in his life before his conversion.

The important thing to remember about Augustine’s life is that while some Christians felt that it was a useless waste of time in praying for him, his mother, Monica, never gave up. No matter what Augustine did – whether he embraced heresy, indulged himself in immorality, or pursued professional success with a vengeance, Monica never ceased to pray for him. Her prayers were ultimately answered when Augustine finally wrote to her, “I am filled now with a light of certainty and all shadow of doubt has disappeared.”

As a parent Monica never abandoned her son. She believed that God had a great purpose for him even though he gave little indication of spiritual response. But she persisted in prayer because she believed that God is overwhelmingly gracious and that His hand may be at work in the least likely of circumstances in our children’s lives. Such is the hope that we receive from the doctrine of God’s prevenient grace.

Peter Hastie, minister of Ashfield Presbyterian Church, is issues editor of AP.

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Love's choice

Divine election is the very summit of grace.

Grace is not a word readily found in the vocabulary of most Australians. If they connect it with religion, they will probably say that it is what some people say to thank God for their daily bread. If they do not connect it with religion, they may link it to high society or even to ballerinas who are, after all, meant to be charming and graceful. Sometimes it can be used ironically, as in Frank Hyde's description of Noel Kelly's scoring of a try in a Test match against England in the early 1960s as "as graceful as a cow on a bicycle".

In the Bible, however, grace is used to describe God's free, unmerited, and totally undeserved favour extended towards sinners in Jesus Christ His Son: "For by grace you have been saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). The sinner is justified by faith, not works of the law (Rom. 3:20, 27, 28). Paul's point is that human beings are so sinful that we cannot save ourselves. Our righteousness is insufficient before a righteous God. Faith refers to the empty hands held out by the sinner who receives Christ. He can do nothing to save himself; it is all a gift. Therefore, justification by faith is equivalent to saying that salvation is by grace, not works (Rom. 11:6; Eph. 2:8-9). However, for grace to be truly free and "gracious" – for grace to be gratis – it has to be electing grace (Rom. 9:11; 11:5).

All through Ephesians 1, Paul praises the glorious grace of the triune God (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). It is the Father who predestines a people for Himself (Eph. 1:4-5); it is the Son who sheds His blood to redeem



Peter Barnes

those people (Eph. 1:7); and it is the Spirit who seals them and guarantees their inheritance (Eph. 1:13-14).

This means that faith is not a work; it is not something that we supply in the scheme of salvation. It is not that God supplies the grace and we supply the faith, and together we are saved. We are to exercise faith, of course, but we can only exercise it if God

A Christian is one who was predestined by grace, and chosen by grace, by grace a pilgrim below, and by grace a citizen above.

gives us the power to do so. Why is this so? It is because of the radical nature of the Fall. The events of Genesis 3 do not just wound us but kill us spiritually and morally. We are born in sin (Ps. 51:5); there is madness in our hearts (Eccles. 9:3); our hearts are deceitful (Jer. 17:9); we are unable to do good (Jer. 13:23; Rom. 8:7-8); we are unable to believe Christ (John 6:44, 65; 1 Cor. 2:14); we are slaves to sin (John 8:34); our minds and hearts are darkened and hard (Eph. 4:17-19). Every part of us is affected (Rom. 3:13-18). In short, we are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1-3; Col. 2:13). Thomas Boston portrayed the natural man as "a spiritual monster".

Small wonder that we ought to sing with Josiah Conder:

*'Tis not that I did choose Thee,
For, Lord, that could not be;
This heart would still refuse Thee
Hadst Thou not chosen me.*

We can dispense with Sankey's hymn:
*Christ is knocking at my sad heart;
Shall I let Him in?*

It is true that we are commanded to repent (Acts 17:30) but it is equally true that only "as many as were appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). Left to

ourselves, we do not seek God (Rom. 3:11). In the Garden, after the Fall, it was God who sought Adam, and it was Adam who hid from God.

Christ says that He reveals the Father to whomever He chooses to reveal Him (Mt. 11:27). His disciples did not choose Him so much as He chose them (John 15:16). Many are called to saving faith in Christ, but few are chosen (Mt. 22:14). So overwhelming is this emphasis in Scripture that John Murray could write that "the denial of unconditional election strikes at the heart of the doctrine of the grace of God".

What is a Christian? Augustine described a Christian as one who "was predestined by grace, and chosen by grace, by grace a pilgrim below, and by grace a citizen above". For many, "election" sounds a harsh word, not related to the gospel whereas grace points to God's great gift in sending His Son to die for sinners. In reality, grace must be God's electing grace for it to be truly God's free gift. What this means for us is summed up in the words of a woman who once told John Newton: "The Lord must have loved me before I was born or else He would not have seen anything in me to love afterwards." That is free undeserved mercy in Christ; that is electing grace.

Dr Peter Barnes is minister of Revesby Presbyterian Church, NSW. 

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One of the saddest aspects of church history is man's natural desire to feel that he contributes something towards his eternal salvation, that God is at least a little bit impressed by his performance. The Old Testament sacrificial system had no meaning apart from grace, but man turned it into a performance and deprived it of its value (cf Isaiah 1:11). The "church" leaders of Jesus' day failed to recognise Him as the gracious Saviour because their whole theology was built on Law-keeping and works-righteousness (cf Luke 5:31-32). The 16th century Protestant Reformation had to rediscover the concept of salvation by grace alone. Israel rejected Isaiah, the Pharisees rejected Jesus, the church rejected the Reformers. Even in the evangelical church today there is a need to raise the issue of grace alone.

This is why Galatians is such an important part of Scripture for us. Paul planted a church and people came to faith in Jesus, depending on God's grace alone for their salvation. But within a few years, while Paul was taking the gospel to other places, "Judaisers" came in and convinced the Galatians that they needed to be circumcised for their salvation to be effective. For Paul, this was tantamount to denying the very gospel itself.

As we go through Galatians and see how Paul handled this situation, may we be reminded again of just how amazing God's grace is. Let us look out for anything we might be adding to grace (perhaps even our performance of faith!) and thus cancelling out its effect.

Bruce Christian ▶

DAY 1

Message from heaven

THE PASSAGE

GALATIANS 1:1-5

THE POINT Paul sometimes begins his letters with an “executive summary” so that his readers will have in condensed form the gist of what he is writing to them about. He certainly does this here for the churches in Galatia. In the letter that follows he will spell out in more detail the particular points he wants to make about his authority and message, specially about grace and freedom in Christ.

THE PARTICULARS

- Paul’s commissioning as an Apostle had its source in the Lord Jesus Christ himself; it was of divine and not human origin (1).
- Paul’s apostolic credentials were as surely established as was

- Jesus’ Messiahship through the resurrection (cf Rom. 1:4) (1).
- In spite of this claim, Paul always worked as a team player (2).
 - God’s grace and peace were always foremost among the things Paul desired for the people in the churches under his care (3).
 - God takes the initiative in our salvation which rests wholly on Christ’s substitutionary death (cf 2:21), and therefore all the glory, for all time and eternity, belongs to him alone (4-5).
 - The present age is evil, and we have to be rescued from it (4).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Should we treat Paul’s writings as inspired Scripture? Why?

DAY 2

Count-a-feat Gospel

THE PASSAGE

GALATIANS 1:6-10

THE POINT As this letter progresses we will see how committed Paul is to the Gospel of God’s grace. He views the slightest hint that our good deeds or religious rituals might contribute anything in any way towards our salvation as an absolute no-no.

THE PARTICULARS

- Paul saw the line taken by the “Judaisers” (those who said that Gentiles must be circumcised, ie become Jews, before they could become Christians) as being not just another spin on the Gospel but so different that it could no longer be called the Gospel (6f).
- The astonishing ease with which the Galatians could get sim-

ple Gospel truth wrong is a sober warning to the Church in every age to make sure that it never allows any additive to the Gospel of “grace alone” and thereby deny the Gospel completely (5).

- There will always be people at work to pervert the truth of the Gospel; but no matter how “angelic” they might seem to be (cf 2 Cor. 11:13-14) such sin is so serious that they must remain under God’s curse, for ever cut off from his people (8-9).
- Standing firm on the Gospel can make one unpopular; but the servant of Christ has only one line of allegiance (10).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Does your understanding of the Gospel add anything to grace?

DAY 3

Paul’s powerful testimony

THE PASSAGE

GALATIANS 1:11-24

THE POINT Have you ever tried to convert a fanatic-extremist from another religion opposed to Christianity? From a human perspective it is impossible. But God achieved this miracle in Paul, so the task of bringing him to a full understanding of the Gospel by direct revelation was relatively easy. Because of how it all happened, Paul was fully convinced of the absolute inerrancy of the Good News God had called him to proclaim; it could not possibly be a belief-system originating in, or contrived by, the mind of man.

THE PARTICULARS

- Paul’s Gospel isn’t the considered opinion of a Church Council or Synod; it came by direct revelation via the risen

Lord himself (11-12). [However its perfect harmony with all Scripture (OT and NT) distinguishes it from the Book of Mormon and the Koran.]

- Paul knew he’d been chosen by God’s sovereign grace from his “mother’s womb”; there was no other possible explanation for the total 180° turn-around that occurred in his life (13-16, 23).
- Paul spent more than 3 years learning directly from God (most likely re-reading his familiar Scriptures in the new-found light of Christ) before comparing notes with Jesus’ disciples. (17-22).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Is your attitude to Paul’s writings consistent with his claims?

DAY 4

Defender of the Faith

THE PASSAGE

GALATIANS 2:1-5

THE POINT The early Church at the beginning consisted almost entirely of converted Jews. It was very hard for many of them to let go of the old rituals, such as circumcision, that were fundamental to their identity before God. But Paul saw clearly that unless they dealt with this attachment head-on they could never experience the true freedom God intended for them in Christ (cf John 8:36).

THE PARTICULARS

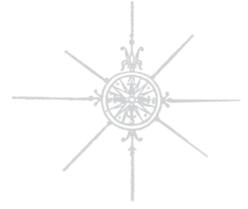
- We cannot be certain about which Jerusalem visit Paul is referring to in verse 1 (Acts 11:30 or 15:2?), but the 14 years had allowed ample time for him to establish a clear theology of how the Gospel of God’s sovereign grace applied to the

Gentiles (3).

- Here we have further evidence of the complete make-over God had done on Paul, the dyed-in-the-law Pharisee (3-6).
- Paul always saw Gospel ministry as a team effort in terms of involving both fellow-workers (1) and wider consultation (2), although he was uncompromising on certain key points (4-5).
- Paul’s particular place in God’s process of revelation made him the recipient of a special dispensation of truth; his theological insight cannot be dismissed (2, 5; cf 1 Cor. 11:23; 2 Cor. 12:1).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Are you letting any ritual(s) rob you of your freedom in Christ?



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Rev. Russell Stark (02) 9523 5875.

EAST MAITLAND

George St. 9.30am. **Beresfield:** Beresford Ave.

7.45am. **Raymond Terrace:** Irrawang St.

9.45am. Rev. J. Buchanan (02) 4933 7443.

EPPING

Bridge & Rawson Sts.

Rev David Tsai (02) 9876 1188.

FORSTER/TUNCURRY

Bruce St. Forster, 9.30am, 6.00pm.

Rev. Peter Flower (02) 6557 5047.

GLEN INNES

Heron St. 10.15am & 7.15pm.

Pastor Lance Jackson (02) 6732 5707

GOSFORD

14-16 Young St. West Gosford. 8.00am.

9.45am. 6.30 pm. Rev. M. Cropper

Office: Ph (02) 4323 2490.

GRANVILLE/MERRYLANDS

Granville: 14 Hutchinson St. 8.45am.

Merrylands & Monitor's Rd. 10.30am.

Bruce Frost, Pastor (02) 9638 4777

GRIFFITH

Opp. Collina Oval, Blumer Ave. 9.30 am.

Rev. Peter Gobbo (02) 6962 4827.

Dr L. Thorpe (02) 6962 1934

GUNNEDAH

Marquis & Barber Sts. **Boggabri:** Court

House (02) 6742 0551

HURSTVILLE

Cnr. Park Rd. & McMahan St. 9.30am &

6.30pm. Rev Kevin Murray (02) 9153 8176.

KIAMA

Terralong St. 9.00am & 7.00pm.

Pastor: Noel Creighton (02) 4233 1554

KOGARAH

Cnr Kensington & Derby Sts. 9.30am.

Mr Tim Ravenhall (02) 9798 8467.

KOREAN, SYDNEY (Young Nak)

7-9 Manson St, Telopea. 9.30am. 11.00am.

3.00pm. S.Clerk (02) 9816 3807

LEETON

Cnr. Sycamore & Cypress Sts. 10.00 am.

Rev. Richard Keith (02) 4272 9407

LISMORE (St Paul's)

188 Keen St. 9.00 am. & 7.00 pm.

MACQUARIE

Herring & Abuklea Rds, Marsfield

Rev. Rex Swavley (02) 9878 4202

MANLY (St Andrew's)

Raglan St. & Augusta Lane. 9.45am.

Quarterly (Communion) 5.30pm.

Rev. Derek Bullen (02) 9976 2801

MAROUBRA, Kingsford

8 Robey St, **Maroubra.** 9.30 am. 7.15 pm.

94 Houston Rd, **Kingsford** 11.15am

Chinese Service, **Maroubra** 4 pm.

Rev Johnnie Li (02) 9349 1312

MOREE (St Andrew's)

Cnr Albert & Auburn Sts, 10.00am.

Tel. (02) 6752 1083

MORUYA

31 Evans St. 9.00am.

Rev. David Hassan (02) 4474 2186.

MOSMAN (Scots Kirk)
Belmont Rd. (nr Military Rd), 9.00am.
Rev R J McCracken (02) 9969 6101.

NAROOMA
1 Farncombe Ave. 11.00am.
Rev. David Hassan (02) 4474 2186.

NEWCASTLE (St Andrews)
Cnr. Laman & Auckland Sts 9.15am & 7.00pm.
Office: (02) 4929 2857

NEWCASTLE EAST (St. Philip's)
48 Watt St., 10.00am.
Surfside Evangelical: 7.00pm.
Rev. John Macintyre (02) 4929 2379.

NORTH SYDNEY-GREENWICH
(St Peter's) 234 Blues Point Rd. 10.00am.
& 6.45pm. Wednesday 1.15pm.
Greenwich: (Taylor Memorial)
86A Greenwich Rd. 10.00am.
Rev. Dr Paul Logan (02) 9955 1662.
Rev. Matthew Oates (02) 9405 2235.

ORANGE (St James)
Cnr Anson St. & Matthews Ave. 10.00am.
Rev. William Stewart (02) 6362 6304

PARRAMATTA CITY
Cumberland High School,
Dunmore Ave. Carlingford.
S. Clerk: Mike Whiteman (02) 9484 1240.

PENRITH (St Andrew's)
Doonmore St. near High St, 9.00am. &
7.00pm. Rev William Morrow (02) 4721 2440.

PORT MACQUARIE (St Andrew's)
Cnr William/Munster Sts, 9.00am., 10.30am
Rev S Donnellan (02) 6582 2505

RANDWICK
Alison Rd. & Cook St. 10.00am. & 5.00pm.
Rev. Grant Thorpe (02) 9399 3183.

ROSE BAY (St Andrew's)
Cnr Dover Rd. & Carlisle St.
10.00am & 6.00pm.
Rev Bruce Christian (02) 9388 1206(O).

SOUTHERN CROSS
Park Ave. East Lismore
Rev. Stephen Cree (02) 6621 3655

SPRINGWOOD
160 Macquarie Rd. 10.30am. & 6.00pm.
Winmalee : 481 Hawkesbury Rd. 9.00am.
I.M. Rev. Dr Lindsay Ferrington
(02) 4751 1188 (O).

STRATHFIELD (St David's)
Barker Rd. & Marion St. 10.00am. & 6.30pm.
Rev Robert McKean (02) 9746 8123.

SUTHERLAND
Cnr Flora & Glencoe Sts. 9.30am & 5.30pm
Rev Andrew Clausen (02) 9521 2361

SYDNEY (Scots Church)
St Patrick's Hall, 20 Grosvenor St. (tempo-
rary). Service Time: 10.30 am.
Rev. Adrian Van Ash (02) 9817 0587.

TAMWORTH (St Stephen's)
Cnr Matthews & Crown St. 9.30am &
6.30pm. **Moonbi** 9.00am.
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. 9.30am & 6.30pm.
Rev. Andrew Satchell (02) 6785 1627.

TAREE
Albert St. 9.00am.

Rev. Paul Harris (02) 6552 1082(O).

TERRIGAL (Scots Kirk)
2 Willoughby Rd. 9.00am & 6.00pm.
Rev. Glenn Samuel (02) 4385 2240

TUROSS HEAD
277 Hector McWilliam Dr. 9.00am.
Rev. David Hassan (02) 4474 2186.

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

WAGGA WAGGA SOUTH
60-62 Coleman St. Turvey Park
9.00am & 10.30am.
Rev. Sandy McMillan (02) 6925 1228.

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

WELSH CHURCH: St Peter's, North Sydney.
2nd Sunday of the month. 3.00pm.
Rev. Dr Paul Logan (02) 9955 1662.

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

WENTWORTHVILLE (St Andrew's)
7 McKern St. 9.00am & 5.00pm.
Rev. Luke Tattersall (02) 9863 8366.

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. 11.00am.
Also at **Barmedman, Mirrool, Tallimba &
Weethalle.** Various times.
Mr. Graham French (02) 6972 2143.

WOLLONGONG (St Andrew's)
Cnr Kembla & Burelli Sts. 9.45am & 6.00pm.
Rev. John Thompson (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 & Beadesert Rds.
9.00am. & 6.00pm. Pastor Stephen Teale,
(07) 3277 0010, (07) 3711 3022 (H).

ASCOT
68 Charlton St. (Near Airport).
Nundah: 14 Rode Rd
Rev Guido Kettmiss (07) 3216 4151.
Rev Les Hall (07) 3267 0558

ATHERTON
Cnr. Alice & Jack Sts. 10.00am & 6.00pm.
I.M. Rev. John Cuff (07) 4095 3063.

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

BRISBANE KOREAN
145 Ann St. 8.00am. 12.00 noon, 7.30pm.

Rev Dr M. M. Y. Kim (07) 3300 3132

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

BUNDABERG
Cnr Water & Alice Sts. 10.00am & 7.00pm.
Rev. Wallace Brown (07) 4151 4766.

CABOOLTURE
24 Cottrill Road. 9.00am & 6.00pm.
Rev. G. Watt (07) 5494 1181

CAIRNS
85 Sheridan St. 9.30am. & 6.30pm.
Korean 11.00am. Cook Island 12 noon.
Rev. Harry Oh (07) 4051 2238

CALLIDE VALLEY
Biloela: Cnr. Kariboe & Melton Sts.
10.00am. **Jambin:** Three Ways 8.30am.
Rev. Mal Pierce (07) 4992 1441.

CHARLEVILLE/BLACKALL
78 Galatea St. 9.00am.
Pastor Alan Grant (07) 4654 3100.

CLAYFIELD (Scots Memorial)
29 Bellevue Terrace, 9.30am & 6.30pm.
Rev. Andrew Richardson 0423 160 412

COORPAROO
Emlyn St. 10.00am. & 7.00pm.
Rev. Bruce Lowe (07) 3219 0017.

CREEK ROAD
Presbyterian Ministry Centre, 1541 Creek Rd
(cnr Fursden Rd). **Carina** 9.00am & 6.30pm.
Centre: (07) 3398 4333.
Rev Peter Barson (07) 3399 3607.
Asst. Mr Jens Norved (07) 3399 6123.

DECEPTION BAY-BURPENGARY
Peace Presbyterian Church. 9.30am.
155-157 Maine Terrace, Deception Bay.
Rev. John Gilmour (07) 3203 2526.

GLADSTONE (St Andrew's)
Goondoon & Bramston Sts. 10.00am.
Benaraby: O'Connor Rd. 8.00am. **Calliope:**
Dawson H'way (Stirrat St.) 2nd Sunday
9.30am; 4th Sunday 8.00am. Rev. D. Secomb
(07) 4972 1058 (O); 4972 1057 (H).

GOLD COAST (I)
Arundel: 132 Allied Drive 9.30am & 6.30pm.
Rev. Russell van Delden (07) 5571 5676 (O).
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.
I.M. Rev. Graham Eastwell (07) 5573 1458

GOLD COAST (III)
Palm Beach/Elanora: 'The Meeting Place'
Cnr. Coolgardie & Guineas Creek Rds.
(cnr. Pines Shopping Ctre) 9.00am &
6.00pm. Rev. Alan Radloff (07) 5593 8909.

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

IPSWICH
Cnr Limestone & Gordon Sts. 9.30am,
10.00am & 6.30pm. **Forest Hill:** Church St,
9.00am. Rev. John Langbridge (07) 3294 7999.
Rev. Wesley Redgen (07) 3282 9829.
Pastor Paul Blake (07) 3281 0427.
Rev. John Kirkpatrick (07) 3281 5930.

MACGREGOR

268 Padstow Rd. Eight Mile Plains 9.00am.
Pastor Ross Wilson (07) 3272 6265

MACKAY

Cnr Harvey St. & Evans Ave. Nth Mackay.
8.30am & 7pm. **Sarina:** Sarina Beach Rd.
9.30am each Sunday; Ph. (07) 4957 2835.

MARANOA

Roma: Queen Street 9.00am.

Surat: (1st Sunday) 11.15am.

Pastor Walter Posthuma (07) 4622 1158

MONTO

Bell St. 10.00am. **Abercorn** 11.45am. (1st Sunday). **Kalpowar:** 5.30pm.

Pastor Elton Wiltshire (07) 4166 1441.

NORTH PINE

57 Old Dayboro Rd. Petrie. 9.00am &
6.30pm. Rev P. Cornford (07) 3285 2104.

REDCLIFFE PENINSULA

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

Scarborough: Jeays St. 8.00am.

Rev. Peter Whitney (07) 3284 2578.

ROBINA

Cnr Cottesloe & University Drs.

Rev. Kevin Ridley (07) 5571 1416.

ROCKHAMPTON (St Andrew's)

51 Denham St. (cnr Alma Lne) 9.00am. &
6.00pm. Rev C. Kennedy (07) 4922 8241.

ROCKHAMPTON (John Knox)

Rundle St. 10.00 am. & 7.30 pm.

Rev. Jon Chandler (07) 4922 1825 (O)
(07) 4922 1540 (A/H).

ROCKHAMPTON (St Stephen's)

Burnett St. Nth Rockhampton, 8.30am.

Rev. Jon Chandler (07) 4922 1825 (O)

(07) 4922 1540 (A/H).

Mt Morgan: St Enoch's, East St. 4.00pm.

Rev. Jon Chandler (07) 4922 1825 (O)

(07) 4922 1540 (A/H).

SANDGATE

Loudon St. 9.00am & 6.00pm.

Rev. D.K. Ashman (07) 3269 1231

SPRINGSURE

Charles St. 10.30am.

Emerald: Cnr Ruby & Egerton Sts., 8.30am.

Rev B J Harrison Phone (07) 4984 1550.

THE GAP

1195 Waterworks Rd, 9.00am.

S.Clerk. Mr E. Woodward (07) 3366 3166.

I.M. Rev. R. Herrgott (07) 3300 6158

TOOWOOMBA NORTH (St David's)

Mary St. Also at **Geham.**

TOWNSVILLE (Willows)

26 Carthew St. Kirwan 9.30am & 6.30pm

Rev. David McDougall (07) 4723 1232

TOWNSVILLE (St Andrew's)

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

Ass. Mr Kwang-Ho Song (07) 4778 3823

Rev. Rudi Schwartz (07) 4771 2460

WEST TOOWOOMBA

Cnr Greenwattle & South Sts. 8.00am,

10.00am & 6.00pm. Rev R. Sondergeld

(07) 4633 4188 (H) (07) 4633 4000 (O).

Past. Dan Boshard (07) 4614 0467.

WINDSOR

Maygar St. 8.30am.

Wilston: Macgregor St. 10.00am.

Newmarket: Wilmington St. 6.00pm.

Rev. Eric Noble (07) 3356 4124.

south australia

ADELAIDE (St Andrew's)

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

Rev. Dr G. Lyman (08) 8563 2147.

Session Clerk Mr D. Niven (08) 8381 4615.

ELIZABETH

106 Goodman Rd, Elizabeth South. 9.30am.

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

Int. Mod. Rev. John Campbell (08) 865 3045

LARGS NORTH

Brenda Terrace. 11.00am.

Pastor Norman Carter (08) 8263 9692.

MILLICENT

Cnr Fifth & Sixth Sts. 10.30 am.

I.M. Rev. Gary Ware (08) 8723 9028.

Also **Rendelsham**

MT BARKER

Hutchison St. 10.30 am.

Pastor Rupert Hanna (08) 8391 3151.

Mod. Rev. S. Slucki (08) 8296 1581.

MT GAMBIER

Allison St. 10.00 am. 5.30 pm. Also **Allendale,**

Glenburnie, Nelson (Vic), OB Flat.

Rev Gary Ware (08) 8723 9028.

NARACOOORTE

Church St. 10.00am.

Rev. Andrew Gall (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. 10.00 am.

Barry Rossiter PIM Padre (08) 8642 2059.

SEACLIFF

Kauri Pde. **Seacliff.** 9.30am.

Rev. S. Slucki (08) 8296 1581.

WHYALLA

28 Ramsay St. 10.00 am.

S/Clerk H. Mashford (08) 8645 0818.

I.Mod. Rev. J. Campbell (08) 8265 3045.

tasmania

CORNERSTONE (Hobart) 10.00am.

The Philip Smith Centre, 2 Edward St, The

Glebe. Rev. David Jones (03) 6223 4701.

CROSSROADS 6.30pm.

Underground at 86 Murray St.

H.M. Michael Lynch 0414 669 554.

DEVONPORT (St Columba's)

13 Edward St. 10.00am. **Don:** Waverley Rd.

2.00pm (1st & 3rd Sundays).

Rev. Steve Warwick (03) 6424 6066

HOBART (St John's)

10.00am & 6.00pm (7.00pm daylight saving).

188 Macquarie St. (03) 6223 7213.

Rev. Robert White (03) 6229 7657

Rev. Rod Waterhouse 0438 555 983.

LAUNCESTON (St Andrew's)

Civic Square. 10.00 am & 5.00 pm.

Church Office: (03) 6331 5412

Rev. Peter Thorneycroft 0438 315 412

MONTROSE

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

Mod. Rev. Rod Waterhouse 0438 555 983.

RIVERSIDE

Eden St. 10.45am.

Glengarry: 9.15am. Frankford H'way.

Winkleigh: 9.15am, 2nd Sunday.

Rev. Norman Shellard (03) 6327 2967

ROKEBY

Presby. Community Church, Tollard Dr.

Rev. Neil McKinlay (03) 6247 3656.

SCOTTSDALE

George St. 11.00am. **Bridport:** Westwood St.

9.00am. I.M. Rev. P. Thorneycroft,

Pastor Greg Munro (03) 6352 2527.

STANLEY (St James)

Fletcher St. 10.30am.

I.M. Rev. Steve Warwick (03) 6424 6066.

ULVERSTONE (St Andrew's)

65 Main Rd. 10.00am.

I.M. Rev. Peter Thorneycroft 0438 315 412

WEST TAMAR (Auld Kirk)

Sidmouth 10.00am and Mole Creek 2.00pm.

I.M. 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. Session Clerk (03) 9580 6161.

AUBURN

Cnr Rathmines & Station Sts Hawthorn East

10.00 am. Rev. Trevor Cox (03) 9882 5256

BAIRNSDALE

7th Day Adventist Church, 149 Nicholson

St. 10.00am. 1st of Month 5.00pm.

S/school 9.00 am. (03) 5153 1669

BALACLAVA

Hotham St. & Denman Ave. 10.00am.

I.M. Rev. Bob Thomas (03) 9537 1642.

BENDIGO (St John's)

Forest St. 10.30am. (03) 5443 6189.

BLACKBURN

53 Gardenia St. 11.00am.

Rev P Locke (03) 9725 6417

BRIMBANK

Mackellar Primary School Gymnasium

29-35 Goldsmith Ave. Delahey. 4.30pm.
Mr Andres Miranda (03) 9307 6583

BUNDOORA

Bundoora Hall, Noorong Ave.
10.00am & 6.00pm.

Admin: Mrs M. Goodson (03) 9457 4962.

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) 9882 8102

CAMPERDOWN-TERANG-GARVOC

9.30am Aug — Jan. 11am Feb — July

Terang: 1 Warrnambool Rd.

Camperdown: Campbell & Brooke Sts.

Garvoc: 2:30pm. 2nd & 4th Sunday.

Pastor Bernie Thomas (03) 5592 1041

CANTERBURY

146 Canterbury Rd. 10.30am. & 7 pm.

Rev. Grant Lawry (03) 9836 4601.

CANTERBURY JAPANESE

146 Canterbury Rd. 10.30 am

Mr Sam McGeown (03) 9894 2384.

CAULFIELD-ELWOOD

Caulfield: Neerim/Bambra Rds. 11.15am.

Elwood: Scott/Tennyson Sts. 9.15am & 4.00pm.

CHELTENHAM Pioneers' Presbyterian

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

David Palmer (03) 9583 2785. Rev. Choul

Yat; Sudanese (Nuer Language) 2.30pm.

CLIFTON HILL

Cnr Michael & McKean Sts North Fitzroy.

10.45 am. Rev. Peter Phillips (03) 9346 8044.

DANDENONG

51 Potter St. 10.00am.

Rev. John Rickard (03) 9792 4252.

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

St Andrew's, Gibson St. 9.00am.

Mornington (TheChapel) Cnr Strachans

Rd. & Nepean Hwy. 11.00am.

Rev. Dr Michael Wishart (03) 5975 9514.

DROUIN

Church St. 9am. 10.30am. 7.00pm.

Rev. Ken Brown (03) 5625 1126.

ELTHAM

23 Batman Rd. 10.00 am

Rev. Don Elliott (03) 9439 9720

ESSENDON

Cnr Wilson & McPherson Sts. 9.15am &

7.00pm. Rev. Peter Phillips (03) 9346 8044.

FRANKSTON

30 Radiata St. 10.30am. (03) 9786 2976.

GEELONG (St. Georges)

Cnr. Latrobe Tce & Rylie St.

10.00am & 7.00pm.

Rev. Graeme L. Weber (03) 5229 5493.

GEELONG WEST (Scots)

Cnr. Pakington & Waratah Sts. 10.00am.

I.M. Dr. Allan Harman (03) 5256 2134.

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. Graham Nicholson (03) 9819 5347.

HEATHMONT

Cnr. Waterloo St. & Canterbury Rd.

Heathmont 10.00am.

Rev. Andrew Venn (03) 9870 5182.

KANGAROO GROUND

265 Eltham-Yarra Glen Rd. 9.30am.

S. Clerk: Dr R.Baldock. (03) 9437 1265

LEONGATHA

Cnr. Bent & Turner Sts. 10.00am.

Session Clerk: (03) 5662 2107

MALVERN

161 Wattletree Rd. 10.30am. & 5.00 pm.

Rev. Philip Daffy (03) 9509 7373.

MELBOURNE

The Scots' Church, Cnr. Russell & Collins

Sts. 11am & 7pm. Wed. 1.00pm.

Rev. Douglas Robertson (03) 9650 9903.

MELTON

Mowbray College, Centenary Ave. 10.00am.

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

Cnr Mc Kinnons Bridge & Glenormiston Rds.

10.30am. Rev. Barry Oakes (03) 5592 5220

NORTH GEELONG-NORTH SHORE

10.00am alternate Sundays at **North**

Geelong, Cnr. Victoria St. & Balmoral Cr. &

North Shore, Cnr Seabeach Pd. & Myrtle Gv.

5.00pm each Sunday at **North Geelong**.

Rev. Allan Lendon (03) 5278 1887.

NUMURKAH

58 Saxton St. 11.15am.

Tallygaroopna: Victoria St. 9.30am.

Cobram: Cnr High and Pine Sts. (Anglican

Church) 2.30pm.

RESERVOIR

81 Edwardes St. 10.00 am. & 7.00 pm.

Rev. Ross Tucker (03) 9460 9523

ROCHESTER

Cnr Victoria St. & Echuca Rd. 11.00am &

7.30pm. 1st Sunday **Timmering** 9.30 am

Rev. A. Perona (03) 5484 1927.

ST KILDA

Cnr Alma Rd. & Barkly St. 9.30am &

7.00pm. Rev. Bob Thomas 0417 592 646.

SEAFORD

St Barnabas Anglican Church. 10.45am.

Cnr Park St & Margaret Ave.

Session Clerk (03) 9580 6161

SHEPPARTON

Cnr. Hayes & Leithen Sts. 9.00am. &

7.00pm. Also **Stanhope, Kyabram**.

Rev Kyung Ee (03) 5831 6494.

SOMERVILLE

Cnr Jones Rd. & Park Lane.

Rev. Ian Brown (03) 5977 5469.

SOUTH YARRA

621 Punt Rd. 10.30 am. & 5.30 pm.

S.Clerk: Mr J. Adlawan (03) 9808 7391.

SUNSHINE

McKay Memorial, Anderson Rd.

10.00am. & 6.00pm.

Rev Cor Vanderhorn (03) 9311 1661

SURREY HILLS (St Stephen's)

Canterbury & Warrigal Rds. 10.15am &

7.00pm. Family Services 6.00pm (2nd & 4th

Sunday). Deaf Presbyterian Church 2.00pm.

Rev. Tony Salisbury (03) 9551 3634

Rev. Chris Siriweera (03) 9833 3306.

UPPER YARRA – WARBURTON

3471 Warburton H'way. 10.00am. & 6.00pm.

Rev. Tony Archer (03) 5966 2309.

WANGARATTA – REGIONAL PARISH

Wangaratta, 158 Rowan St. 11.00am &

5.00pm (9.00am 1st Sunday)

Yarrowonga, 47 Orr St. 8.45am (11.00am 1st

Sunday). **Myrtleford**, 78 Standish St. 7.00pm

(5.00pm June, July, August).

Rev. Neil Harvey (03) 5721 6444

WARRNAMBOOL (St John's)

Warrnambool: Spence Street. 9.30am &

11.00am & 7.00 pm. **Office:** (03) 5562 2029

South Warrnambool: McDonald St. 9.30am.

Woodford: Mill St. 11.00 am.

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.

WYNDHAM

116-120 Blackforest Rd. 10.00am.

Pastor Shane Cassidy (03) 9974 2024



BASSENDEAN

14-16 Broadway. 9.30am.

Mr Ross Fraser (08) 9248 3252.

BICTON

Harris St. & View Tce. 9.00am & 7.00pm.

Rev. Andrew Robinson (08) 9339 3542

FREMANTLE (Scots)

90 South Tce. Worship & Sunday School

10.00am & 5.00pm, Wednesday 12.30pm.

Rev. Stuart Bonnington

(08) 9319 2208 Off. (08) 9336 6572

LEEDERVILLE (Henderson Memorial)

Cnr Kimberly & Ruislip Sts. 10.30am.

Rev. Seong Mo Byun (08) 9382 2325.

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The Annual Fees are:

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Congregations 51 -99 \$55.00 plus GST

Congregations 100 or more \$65.00 plus GST

DAY 5

Agreeing to differ

THE PASSAGE

GALATIANS 2:6-10

THE POINT The tension between Paul and the Church leaders in Jerusalem, James, Peter and John, is growing as Christianity penetrates into Gentile territory and struggles to emerge from its Jewish cocoon. Paul knew God had given him a specific commission to take the Gospel to the Gentiles (cf Acts 9:15), and he knew this “new wine” could not be contained in the old wineskins of Judaism, but he also saw the importance of maintaining harmony. It was a delicate task to keep the Judaisers from undermining the thrust of his message without creating an irreconcilable rift with them.

THE PARTICULARS

- The tendency to give prominence to the men in Jerusalem

who had been disciples of Jesus was understandable; but Paul had to make clear the integrity of his own message and ministry. God is neither limited nor impressed by human concepts of hierarchy.

- There are times when differences in emphasis/understanding make it wise to identify and separate distinct fields of ministry.
- When this is necessary, every effort must be made to maintain harmony and to acknowledge each other’s calling and gifts (9).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- How does Paul’s approach here help us to understand and work positively with denominational divisions in the Church today?

DAY 6

There is neither Jew nor Greek

THE PASSAGE

GALATIANS 2:11-14

THE POINT The different backgrounds of Peter and Paul help us understand what is happening between them as the early Church continues to expand. Both are Jews. Peter, the fisherman, would see his Jewishness in terms of rituals such as circumcision, food laws and Sabbath observance. His 3 years with Jesus would have enabled him to see having a right heart as more important than the rituals but would not have caused him to denounce them, or his Jewishness with them. But for Paul, the Pharisee, the rituals were not just a means of identification as God’s chosen people, their observance in every detail was the passport to heaven. Both men knew that Jesus had died for their sin (cf 1 Peter 2:24, Galatians 2:21), but for Paul

this meant totally giving up any idea that ritual observance contributed anything to salvation, whereas for Peter it was not really an issue. The crunch came in respect of Gentile evangelism. For Paul, any hint that non-Jews should adopt Jewish rituals in order to be more authentic followers of Christ contradicted the very heart of the Gospel.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- What are the implications of all this for Jewish outreach today, and for the ongoing relationship within the Church between people with a Jewish background and those with a non-Jewish background? Why do Jews find it hard to join the Church?

DAY 7

Grace plus nothing

THE PASSAGE

GALATIANS 2:15-21

THE POINT Paul now summarises his particular case against Peter (DAY 6) in more general terms, but still driving home the fundamental and dangerous/destructive error of the theology of the Judaisers.

THE PARTICULARS

- The best way to discover we can’t ever earn God’s favour by keeping his Law, which we would have to do perfectly since He is perfect (Matt. 5:48), is to try doing it – as Jewish Christians who had put their faith in Christ knew only too well (15-16).
- There was (is?) a tendency for those who have God’s Law to look down on “sinners” who don’t (cf Kipling’s “lesser breeds

without the law” in *God of our fathers*) but our total inability to keep the Law shows the error in such thinking (cf Paul’s conclusion in Rom. 3:23 after the detailed argument in 1:18-3:22).

- We are put right with God by faith, yet we still sin. This fact doesn’t mean that Christ condones sin. But it does mean that the whole “Law” thing has to go; the only way forward is to realise Christ died for me and so die with Him, and then let Him live on in me so that everything is for God alone (17-20, cf Rom. 6:1-4).
- If grace isn’t everything, then Christ died for nothing (21)!

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- What convinces you you can’t get to heaven by being good?

DAY 8

Behold the Man upon the Cross

THE PASSAGE

GALATIANS 3:1-5

THE POINT Paul is having trouble believing that the Galatians could have been so stupid as to let anyone convince them, in the light of the experience of God’s grace at work in their lives, that God was expecting them to make a contribution towards their salvation! But before we also judge them too harshly, how easily are we deceived by such thinking? Look at the broad sweep of Church history; look at many Protestants even today; look at the recent attempts to introduce a “new perspective” on the doctrines of grace rediscovered at the Reformation. Our fallen nature makes us more susceptible to “Galatian” foolishness than we realise!

THE PARTICULARS

- We only have to look at the sinless Son of God nailed to a cross of shame, suffering at the hands of sinful men, freely giving His life in our place, to reject once-for-all any thought that we could ever earn a place in heaven on the basis of our performance (1).
- Even the Holy Spirit at work in us is a gift of God’s grace (2-5).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- The OT sacrificial system was intended to be grace-based: what went wrong? Where had the Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day gone wrong? Where had the church gone wrong at the time of the Reformation? ... early last century? What is the common thread?

DAY 9

Consider Abraham...

THE PASSAGE

GALATIANS 3:6-9

THE POINT Abraham provides an excellent example in 3 ways to bear out the point Paul has been making in this letter to the Galatians. Firstly, what is said of him in Genesis 15:6 shows that God's way of dealing with sinful man, and redeeming an elect people for Himself, has always been the Covenant of Grace, even from the beginning in the OT. Secondly, the fact that Abraham had righteousness credited to His account before God on the basis of His faith (belief) alone is the very point Paul has been arguing. Thirdly, the promise given to Abraham anticipated the blessing extending beyond his natural descendants to all nations, so that even the Gentiles can be put right with God on the same faith-basis as Abraham and his

family, the Jews. Paul gives a more detailed explanation in Romans 4 of the point he is making here and it would be worth reading that whole chapter as well.

THE PARTICULARS

- God's statement to Abraham in Genesis 15:6 is recorded in the OT as an advance announcement of the Gospel of His grace (8). This, and the account of God's provision of His lamb in Genesis 22, would have been what Jesus was referring to in John 8:56.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Do you see the Old Testament as a rich source of Gospel truth?

DAY 10

He became a curse for us

THE PASSAGE

GALATIANS 3:10-14

THE POINT Having introduced Abraham into his argument, Paul now goes on to quote four other OT passages to drive his point home. If the foolish Gentiles in the Church of the Galatians are going to let the Judaisers pressure them to become Jews as a part of their embracing of the Gospel, then they might as well know what a few other bits of the Jewish Scriptures say. Let them be warned against going down this path, but also see how Jesus did, for us!

- Habakkuk 2:4 announces that escape from disaster and defeat is not by human effort but by putting one's faith in God alone (11).

- Deuteronomy 21:23 sets down the principle that when a law-breaker is subject to public execution (eg hanging) he is under God's curse. Christ's crucifixion therefore demonstrates that He took the curse for us, as our substitute – He "bought us out" of the curse that we were justly under because of our sin (cf 10).

THE PARTICULARS

- Deuteronomy 27:26 and Leviticus 18:5 make it clear that if we opt for the way of Law-keeping to gain eternal life then assessment will be based on obedience and the pass mark is 100% (10, 12).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Turn back a few pages and read 2 Corinthians 5:21. Reflect on the absolute wonder of how Jesus brings law and grace together.

DAY 11

Jesus, the Son of Abraham

THE PASSAGE

GALATIANS 3:15-20

THE POINT Paul now encourages the Judaisers (and those who, foolishly, seem to be taken in by their teaching) to look more closely at the chronology of God's dealings with the ancestors through whom they had inherited their status as His chosen people.

Seed (offspring) is a collective noun where the singular also serves as the plural so hidden in the promise concerning all Abraham's descendants is a particular promise concerning one, Jesus (16).

THE PARTICULARS

- God first made a direct covenant with Abraham in the form of a promise; 430 years later, at Sinai, He mediated a covenant with Moses in the form of the Law. But the later covenant can't undo the first because God's promise must always stand (15-18).
- Paul uses a device of grammar to make a theological point.

- The Law exposes sin, pointing to Christ's redeeming work (19).
- The Law was only meant to be a mediated bridging provision (19c, cf Acts 7:53); but in Christ, as in the promise to Abraham, the one Triune God is dealing with His chosen people directly (hence 20)! (It should be noted that Paul is making a quite different point about Christ's mediatorial work in 1 Timothy 2:5.)

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- What does verse 16 imply about the inspiration of Scripture?

DAY 12

What detention centre?

THE PASSAGE

GALATIANS 3:21-29

THE POINT A problem that makes evangelism difficult today is that most people have no conception of the truth and significance of what Paul is saying here: they don't know they're being held in sin's prison, and therefore they have no idea that there is a better, freer place out there. They need to hear about both law and grace.

- We are all held in the detention centre of sin until Jesus, our Advocate, arranges for our release into the community of God's people and we become citizens of heaven through faith in Him.

THE PARTICULARS

- There is no contradiction between Law and Promise. The Law serves the important function of proving just how necessary the Promise is. We would never have understood grace unless the Law had been given to prove our hopelessness (cf Romans 8:3).

- The outward sign of our belonging to God's people is baptism; the inner reality that establishes and confirms this relationship is being "in" Christ through faith, and being "clothed" with Him in the sense of "putting on", adopting, His life and ways (26-27).

- Belonging to Christ means we inherit all that was promised to Abraham's offspring, regardless of race, status or sex (28-29).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Should we be more confrontational about how God views sin?

DAY 13

Christ plus nothing

THE PASSAGE

GALATIANS 4:1-7

THE POINT Paul wants to drive home his main point: Christ is the focus of everything God does in His world, and now that He has appeared on the stage of history according to God's perfect plan and timing, everything else is obsolete. Whatever else was used by God in the past to prepare His elect for this event, and to lead us to Him, no longer applies; we now belong as full members in God's family, and heirs of all His promises, through faith in Christ alone.

THE PARTICULARS

- Before Christ came, God's chosen people, His elect, were still His children, the heirs of eternal life whose names had been

written in heaven from the very beginning (cf Revelation 13:8). But they were still under whatever dispensation was holding them – the Law of Moses or whatever other religious system – until Christ was revealed to set them free from such slavery (1-3).

- In His providence, at just the right time, God sent his Son among us to be one of us (except for sin), to redeem us from the bondage of the old ways, and to make us God's children and heirs (4-5).
- The new family relationship is fulfilled by the Holy Spirit's indwelling, enabling us to call God "Father" as Jesus does (6-7).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Are you living as a child of God, or as a slave to religion?

DAY 14

Beware of religion!

THE PASSAGE

GALATIANS 4:8-20

THE POINT Paul is now ready to make his urgent, passionate, personal appeal to his friends in Galatia. He can hardly believe that their attitude to their new-found faith, and to him, has had such a complete turn around. He realises that unless they take some action to address the problem they're in danger of losing the lot.

THE PARTICULARS

- There is a big difference between knowing God through a personal faith in Christ, and being a slave to a religious system (8).
- We can know God because He first knew us (9, cf 1 John 4:19).

- Paul had enjoyed a really good relationship with the Galatians as evidenced by their great care of him when he was ill among them (Had he found Galatia a good site for sore eyes?). (12-16).

- Zeal is good, but not if it is misguided and causes division (17).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Does your present life/demeanour reflect the love, joy and peace you knew when you first realised Jesus was your deliverer? Do you need to make some adjustments in the light of what you have read in Galatians to recapture some of that enthusiasm?
- What adverse effects do we see in the world today of people being in bondage to religion – Christian or otherwise (cf 10, 17)?

DAY 15

Chalk and cheese

THE PASSAGE

GALATIANS 4:21-31

THE POINT Paul's allegorising of the Hagar-Sarah story in the OT does not legitimise all such treatment of Scripture, but it does give us a Spirit-inspired insight into the spiritual significance of events surrounding these two women. (It also encourages us to search out spiritual meaning in Biblical events within limits; an over-reaction in the last few decades to excessive allegorising in previous generations has given rise to some unnecessary sterility.)

THE PARTICULARS

- The contrast between the covenant line of Isaac and the rejected line of Ishmael provides an excellent illustration by which Paul can press his point still further concerning the ten-

sion between law and grace. Like Hagar/Ishmael, the Law is about slavery, natural human effort, earthly establishments; like Sarah/Isaac, grace is about freedom, divine intervention, heavenly Zion. The sad thing for the Jewish reader of this logic is that, if he has rejected the way of grace, he identifies with the despised Ishmael!

- The destruction of the city of Jerusalem only 2 decades after the writing of Galatians, makes Paul's words strangely prophetic.
- The persecution of the Church is also prophesied here (28-29).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Why is Jewish evangelism so difficult and unproductive today?

DAY 16

No more circumlocution

THE PASSAGE

GALATIANS 5:1-12

THE POINT Paul sums up his case for "grace alone" very firmly and passionately. When we see the damage done to the Gospel over the last 2000 years by the Church allowing "works-righteousness" to creep back in in various forms we can understand why. Subtle, but equally dangerous, varieties are still disturbing us today!

THE PARTICULARS

- Paul is adamant: there is no place for the Judaisers' view point in Christ's Church; Christ came to set us free (cf John 8:36) and any hint of adding any requirement to His finished work on the cross as necessary for salvation must be opposed (1, 7-10, 12).

- Submission to any who insisted on non-Jews being circumcised if they wanted to become true Christians constituted submission to the way of the Law as the means of salvation; this in turn led to total bondage because it required 100% obedience(1-3).

- Concurrence with the Judaisers implied alienation from Christ, and thus disqualification from all the blessings of grace (4).
- Faith, hope and love ought to overshadow everything else (5-6).
- No one could seriously think Paul condoned the teaching of the Judaisers; if so why were they actively undermining him (11)?

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Have we become too tolerant of seemingly "harmless" heresies?

DAY 17

*Free to be led by the Spirit***THE PASSAGE****GALATIANS 5:13-18**

THE POINT Freedom doesn't mean licence. The danger inherent in what Paul has been advocating so far is that, in our enthusiasm to avoid being guilty of adding works to grace, we run the opposite risk of treating the Law as if it has nothing to say to us at all (anti-nomianism) or even of "sinning so that grace may increase" (Rom. 6:1). Paul addresses this problem by reminding his readers, and especially his critics, of the Holy Spirit's ministry to believers.

THE PARTICULARS

• Although Christ has set us free from the impossible demands of the Law, our old sinful nature is still pressuring us to give way to our selfish lusts and so spoil our relationship together (13-15).

• The answer to this is to accept the summary of the Law in the command about loving our neighbour (Lev. 19:18, cf Mk 12:31, Gal. 6:2). There is a vast difference between obeying the Law in order to be saved and obeying the Law because we are saved (14).

• The further answer is to submit fully to the Spirit's leading in everything; He will oppose whatever sinful desires we have for us, without it being a case of slavery to law-keeping (16-18)!

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

• What practical things do you do to make sure you are walking in step with the Spirit and not giving in to your sinful nature?

DAY 18

*The outworking of grace***THE PASSAGE****GALATIANS 5:19-26**

THE POINT Paul was very much aware of the tensions that arise in Church fellowships (cf 2 Corinthians 11:28!). He also knew that the source of these tensions is a failure to "crucify the sinful nature with its passions and desires", something that ought to be taken for granted for all who "belong to Christ Jesus" (24). What this involves should be obvious (19), but he gives us some examples. On the positive side he lists out what we should expect to see in a life dominated by the Spirit, like the fruit we expect on a tree.

THE PARTICULARS

• Paul underlines the basic difference between law and grace by referring to "works" of the flesh and "fruit" of the Spirit (19, 22).

• We all know what particular aspect(s) of our sinful nature give us the most trouble – it's a personal thing. The broad categories are: things of body/mind related to our sexuality (remembering the only proper context for sex); things of body/mind related to our spirituality (remembering the first 4 Commandments; things of body/mind affecting our interpersonal relationships (19-21).

• No rules have to be broken to bear the Spirit's fruit (22-23)!

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

• Which area(s) of your life need the most attention?

How are crucifying the sinful nature and bearing the Spirit's fruit related?

DAY 19

*Pressing forward***THE PASSAGE****GALATIANS 6:1-10**

THE POINT Paul deals briefly with a whole lot of practical pastoral issues that seem to crop up eventually in all Church fellowships. The handling of these is also a matter of distinguishing law and grace.

THE PARTICULARS

• Church discipline is necessary, but tricky; the 2 well-known pitfalls are over-harsh judgementalism, and cross-infection (1).

• As Christ's servants in fellowship, we need to be careful about workload distribution, making sure others aren't overloaded and we're doing our fair share. But this is also tricky, again with 2 pitfalls: worrying about doing more than others, and pride (2-5).

• Teaching elders ought to receive support from those taught (6).

• God knows all our motives (Psalm 139:1-4). If we try to make fun of him by pretending to be led by the Spirit while actually feeding our lusts the truth will eventually come out. Pastors can become experts in rationalising "pastoral concerns" (7-8).

• Feeling used/unappreciated? – keep your eyes on the prize (9).

• We have a responsibility to look out for anyone in need; but our first responsibility is to brothers and sisters in Christ (10).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

• Is the Church work you do for Christ, or to gain recognition?

DAY 20

*The bottom line***THE PASSAGE****GALATIANS 6:11-18**

THE POINT In the final analysis, Paul's real issue with the Galatians is the Cross. At the foot of the cross there is no boasting, no ritual, no recognition of performance; there is only grace. "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to your cross I cling". This is why human pride can't cope with the cross. Those who think they are earning a place in heaven on the basis of their performance on earth can't stand to hear preaching that is centred on the cross. They will persecute the preacher, openly or behind his back. This was Paul's experience. The close of his letter is passionate.

THE PARTICULARS

• Paul intended the matters he raised to be taken seriously (11).

• The cross is, by its nature, very divisive. Going along with the Judaisers minimised the friction with the Jews and therefore the offence of the cross; there was also kudos to be gained (12-13).

• When our only boast is the cross it is as if we were taking up our cross to follow Jesus; the world loses its pull on us (14, 17).

• Like many other things, the circumcision question is both vital and insignificant. In one sense it is the key to salvation and grace; in another, all that matters is being Christ's new creation (15).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

• Are you depending on God's grace alone for your salvation?



Across Australia

Christmas appeal

As Christmas approaches Malawi is in the midst of a serious food crisis. The President has declared a national disaster, appealing for international assistance. Twenty of 26 districts in Malawi are seriously affected by food shortages. The most vulnerable groups are those who not only have low or no food production from household gardens, but who are also chronically or deeply impoverished, and include people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

The population groups most under threat include widows, orphans and other vulnerable children, the elderly, and those with disabilities. Tired and hungry Malawi women often queue for days to get food. Through Mission Partners the Presbyterian Church of Australia is in partnership with the Central Church of Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) – Blantyre Synod, Malawi. A 50kg bag of maize, with relish and a few vegetables, altogether worth about \$A50, will feed a family of six for a month.

The Moderator-General is inviting congregations across the country to consider giving Christmas Day offerings to the "The Malawi Christmas Appeal"

Please send all donations to "Presbyterian Church of Victoria" at 156 Collins St Melbourne 3001, indicating that they are for Malawi.

Age hasn't wearied Bill

Recently Rev. John Roth (Hervey Bay, Qld) received a phone call from a Government department which went something like this: "Mr Roth, we have received an application for a Blue Card from a gentleman who says he was born in 1907 and he wants to work with children in schools. There must be some mistake." Mr Roth's reply was: "Oh, that would be Bill White and there is no mistake. He is 98 and an active serving elder in the Hervey Bay Presbyterian Church and he is fit and well". Bill now has his Blue Card and continues to do God's work.

Great News

It's wonderful to see Gospel Outreach Ministries planning Great News Australia for 2006. The strengthening of the local church in its witness for Christ is essential." So says Rev Steve Cree of Southern Cross congregation, Lismore, NSW) Great News Australia is a national evangelistic initiative scheduled for 2006 which aims to reach as many Australians as possible with the gospel during 2006. It consists of five phases: evangelism training (February-March), Easter visitation (April), evangelistic events (May-June),

evangelistic courses (June-September) and Christmas letterbox drop (December). Registration is free. For more details, contact Greg Middleton, (02) 9980 9913 or visit the website at www.greatnews.org.au

Mirwillumbah minister

On 2 November Rev. Andrew Unwin was inducted into the pastoral charge of Murwillumbah (NSW) by the Presbytery of The Northern Rivers. Rev. Peter Barber preached. The Unwins can be contacted at PO Box 243, Murwillumbah, 2484, phone (02) 6672 1088, e-mail unwin.andrew@gmail.com

Winter Wipeout

In January, Chris and Sarah James left Willows Presbyterian Church in Townsville (Qld) and moved out west to Middlemount to work as chaplains/youth workers. Because not much happens for youth in this remote town they decided to stage a Scripture Union mission, "Winter Wipeout" next June and July. But volunteers are hard to find, and the James are recruiting. For more details, phone (07) 4985 9941 or 0427 139 648.

United in opposition

Uniting Church congregations disaffected over the ordination of homosexuals

The rebirthing of a funeral company

In 1977 Wycliffe Bible Translators (Wycliffe), a bible translation and Christian mission training and support organisation set up an investment company "Word Investments Ltd" (WIL) with the purpose to generate funds for disbursement to missionaries and other various missionary projects. Over time the Board of WIL decided to research ways in which a not-for-profit business operation might be established to help subsidise these ventures. Out of this research Bethel Funerals was commenced allowing for after cost expense monies to be disbursed for the work of selected ministries and missions.

Bethel Funerals was registered as a business on November 29 1996 and officially commenced business on January 28, 1997.

On November 13, 2005 Bethel saw a new landmark achieved when it dedicated the opening of a new "all in one" premises consisting of a modern chapel, mortuary, offices, private viewing and refreshments rooms and off street parking. Bethel Funerals continues to grow significantly and Wycliffe and other mission organizations have on-going benefit from the financial support.



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An Australian Christian Alternative

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could soon form a national network giving them the collective right to reject openly gay ministers. In a bid to defuse threats of a walkout, the NSW and Queensland leaders of Australia's third-largest denomination have proposed giving the church's theological conservatives autonomy on issues of sexuality and leadership. In NSW, a working party was set up last year to negotiate with the pressure group **Reforming Alliance** but has yet to settle outstanding constitutional questions.

The moves came as the leader of the church's largest parish, **Wesley Mission**, warned that the church was in crisis in the bitter row over gay ministry. Wesley's superintendent, **Gordon Moyes**, who has retired after 27 years, blamed "radical left-wing bureaucrats" for the "spiritual warfare" on sexuality and leadership. Failed political ambition, not biblical commitment, was driving the church's agenda.

More than 6300 people have left the church and 119 congregations have split through the bitter debate about homosexuality, according to the **Evangelical Members within the Uniting Church (EMU)**.

Sydney Morning Herald

Kyabram milestones

Kyaabram Church (Vic) has recently celebrated two milestones in its life: the 20th anniversary of the recommencement of Presbyterian worship in Kyabram and the 100th anniversary of the building of **St David's** church. The building was bought

back from the Uniting Church in 1993. A thanksgiving service to God was held on 6 November, with **Victorian moderator Graeme Weber** preaching. More than 130 people attended, including the two previous ministers, **Rev. Ken Brown (Drouin)** and **Rev. John Sutherland** (retired).

WA Assembly

The Presbyterian Church of Western Australia held its 98th General Assembly at **St Columba's, Peppermint Grove**, at the end of October. It worked through the largest agenda since the reconstitution of assembly of 1985.

Resolutions adopted included setting up a **Presbyterian School Development Fund** and arranging a public meeting to consider establishing a new Presbyterian Church school; requesting the **General Purposes Committee** to organise quarterly church-wide prayer mornings in 2006; requesting the **Mission and Evangelism Committee** to carry out a survey of Perth and WA and reporting on priorities for church extension to the 2006 assembly; and organising via the **Theological and Christian Education Committee** new annual initial and refresher training and development courses for all elders and deacons.

Mathews nominated

The WA assembly nominated the **Rt. Rev. Dr Reg Mathews** of **St Giles, Norwood/Para Hills, Adelaide** as **Moderator-General** of the 2007 General

Assembly of Australia. He joins **Rt Rev. Dr Paul Logan** (nominated by NSW) and **Rt Rev. Robert Benn** (Victoria).

Bassendean's new minister

There was rejoicing right around the PCWA as the **Presbytery of WA** gathered on the 3 September at Bassendean to ordain **Ross Fraser** to the ministry of the Word and sacrament. The regular congregation and visitors filled the building. Special guests included the entire full-time faculty of **Trinity Theological College**, **Rev. Don West**, **Rev. Steve Rarig** and **Rev. Martin Foord**. **Presbyterian moderator Rev. James Nocher** (himself a past Home Missionary at Bassendean) led the service and presbytery clerk **Rev. Stuart Bonnington** preached.

The congregation farewelled long-standing member **Mrs Ena Hocking** whose funeral was held at the church on 11 October.

Bicton hosts PIM

The **Bicton Church** building was comfortably filled for a special **Presbyterian Inland Mission** service at the start of October. The Minister of Bicton and WA member of the Federal PIM Committee, **Rev. Andrew Robinson** led, and PIM convener **Rev. Robert Duncanson** attended. Those present acknowledged the labours by grace of **Henk and Henny Tiemens** of the **Fraser-McAuliffe (Pilbara-Kimberley) WA PIM Patrol** and **Bert and Penny Pierce** of the **Shearer**



Presbyterian Theological Centre – Sydney

The PTC is the theological and missionary training college of the Presbyterian Church in NSW, which offers theological and pastoral training for ministry candidates of several denominations and independent students. The Centre also offers training for youth workers, church planters, women's workers and cross-cultural missionaries.



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(Mid-West) patrol. Visitors from the **Christian Reformed Churches**, the **Free Reformed Churches** and the **Westminster Presbyterian Church**, plus others from different PCWA churches, joined the congregation.

Foreign fellowship

The congregation at **Leederville** is bursting at the seams in the afternoon as the **International Students Fellowship** gathers for worship. One reason for the growth is that the church opens for prayer each morning, Monday to Friday from 6am to 9am. **Rev. Song-Mo Byun** is applying for reception as a Minister of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

More than 200 people attended the Leederville's **Mission Festival** at the end of September. A special evangelism weekend is planned for December.

Ministry from Japan

Rev. and Mrs Horikoshi from Japan came for a week of ministry at the **Japanese Church** which included five evangelistic meetings. **Rev. Stephen** and **Sarah Young** returned in early August from Home Ministry assignment in America.

New ministries

A number of new ministry initiatives have been launched at **Scots Kirk, Fremantle**. From 13 November a new time of worship and Bible teaching has

been held at 5pm – Scots @ 5. Already this has allowed families as well as new people from the local community to attend church at night. A weekly half-hour lunch service began on 10 November.

Preaching at Whitfords

Rev. Alan Perrie has been appointed to preach at both services each Sunday for six months from December at Whitfords Presbyterian Church, to help interim moderator **Rev. Jim Nocher**. **APWM director of mission partners Bill Lutton** spoke at annual camp on 6 November.



Around the World

Jakarta in sham: Dutch

A key 1969 vote on the future of **West New Guinea** was a sham orchestrated by Jakarta, a study commissioned by the Dutch Government says. That vote – which made the province, now called Papua, part of Indonesia – has been followed by decades of military abuses.

The 740-page study, *An Act of Free Choice*, has been published after five years of research by a Dutch author, **Pieter Drooglever**. It was done at the request of the Dutch Government, the colonial ruler of Indonesia and New Guinea until 1949.

When the Netherlands gave up its colonies, West New Guinea was not included in a sovereignty agreement with Indonesia. Only in 1962 did the two countries agree to place West New Guinea under UN rule, amid strong international pressure.

The region was promised a popular vote on its sovereignty, but was transferred to Indonesian control six months later. In 1969 its status as an Indonesian province was set when, Dr Drooglever concluded, the Indonesian Government rigged a vote by 1022 inhabitants on behalf of the population of about 700,000.

UN observers were turned away from the poll, the result of which was declared to be 100 per cent in favour of joining Indonesia.

Associated Press

Christian girls beheaded

In an ongoing terror campaign against the Christians of Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, three young teenage girls have been sadistically beheaded by Muslims determined to exterminate the Christian community in this region.

Two others whose throats were slit survived. Since Christmas 1998 the Christians of Central Sulawesi have been subjected to numerous attacks, Christian villages burned down, many churches destroyed, Christian leaders, pastors and community leaders assassinated. The hidden background to all this is the funding of radical Imams, mosques, and Islamic

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boarding schools by Saudi Arabia. Although Muslims and Christians had good relations for hundreds of years, since the advent of Saudi influence in Indonesia there has been wave after wave of death and destruction.

Indonesia Watch

Charles pleads for Islam

The Prince of Wales is believed to have tried to persuade President George W. Bush of the merits of Islam during his recent tour of America because he thinks the US has been too intolerant of the religion since 11 September 2001.

Prince Charles has voiced private concerns over America's "confrontational" approach to Muslim countries and its failure to appreciate Islam's strengths. The Prince and Duchess attended a lunch and dinner with President Bush and his wife, Laura, at the White House.

Daily Telegraph (London)

Iraq accusation

The radical Iraqi Resistance group is accusing Christian Freedom International and others of attempting to "Christianise" Iraq. Muhammad Abu Nasrof the *Free Arab Voice* wrote recently

that "missionaries push Christianisation under protection of US occupation". Christian Freedom International has been sending much needed humanitarian supplies to Iraq that is in turn distributed through local churches in Baghdad. "The aid," said CFI president Jim Jacobson, "is sent to local churches in Baghdad and freely distributed to all Iraqis regardless of their religion." "It is true," said Jacobson, "we do send Arabic language Bibles, but this is because the Bibles are in great demand and requested by Iraqi Christians".

Intercessors Network

Curbs on conversions

Indonesian Muslim clerics are calling for strong measures to prevent Muslims from converting to other religions, especially Christianity. Indonesia is the world's largest Islamic nation. But the influential Indonesian Ulema Council has expressed concern that the percentage of Muslims has dropped in some parts of the country. They said Christian preachers have penetrated some provinces at "an alarming rate", according to *The Jakarta Post*.

"The phenomenon ... is most disturbing," it said. The council is expected to

adopt edicts aimed at discouraging religious conversions, including statements against mixed marriages and television shows that promote mysticism.

Australian Associated Press

Muslims support Christians

The closure of churches in Bandung and surrounding areas in Indonesia over the past two years has caused concern among people of different faiths who consider the incidents a threat to religious harmony in the country. Around 1500 people of various religions recently rallied in Jakarta to pressure the government to prove its commitment to religious freedom.

The demonstrators, who included former president Abdurrahman "Gus Dur" Wahid and former House of Representatives speaker Akbar Tandjung, also prayed together. "We are concerned about the forcible closure of Christian houses of worship, which we consider a blow to brotherhood among people of different faiths here," said one rally participant, Hendra Waskita.

In Bandung, 23 Christian houses of worship have been shut down by the Muslim hard-liners since 2003.

Intercessors Network

Dalit Christians attacked

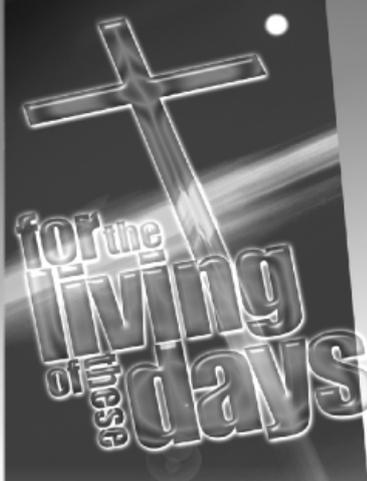
A mob of about 150 high-caste Hindus attacked Dalit Christians attending an event at Bhoomas village in Gujarat state last month. The assault, intended to punish Dalit Christians for attending a cultural festival, left five people injured. Dalits are the so-called "untouchables" of India, who occupy the lowest place on the caste ladder of Hinduism. "Seeing Dalit Christians at the program, people belonging to the Thakore caste got furious and launched a violent attack on them," said Samson Christian, joint secretary of the All India Christian Council.

Amputation violence

Religious violence sparked by a Muslim cutting off a Christian's hand in Nigeria in October left three Christians dead and at least 13 others injured. The violence destroyed 18 houses. Religious nerves in Niger state were already on edge following a September 21 attack by Muslims at the Bosso campus of the Federal University of Technology at Minna.



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On the Agenda

Liberals lose values

By Barney Zwartz

The Government has so focused on individualism that it has lost sight of community and its own roots as a political party, as its industrial relations proposals show, **Sydney Anglican Archbishop Peter Jensen** said yesterday.

"They don't take community seriously. The country is made up of a whole host of individuals," said Dr Jensen, speaking before his Boyer lectures began on Radio National on 13 November.

In the final lecture, he chides leading Liberal **Malcolm Turnbull** for claiming Australians want to be free, and not be told how to live by governments or church leaders. He says Mr Turnbull "treats choice as equivalent to freedom, as though the mere capacity for choice brings liberty" and is too optimistic about the choices people make.

He says the Liberal Party originally understood liberty as independence, self-reliance and responsibility, far from "contemporary, self-directed, self-willed individualism".

Dr Jensen told *The Age* the Liberals were misleading the community about real life. "Their spiritual stock is almost exhausted, and they need to replenish it by coming back to the source.

"The quote from Turnbull is not intended to be nasty about Turnbull. It illustrates the way in which the excessive emphasis on freedom leads to the IR reforms which don't allow for shared time with families."

Dr Jensen said the problem was not just the Government, but the culture. Churches had failed to teach adherents at an intellectual level. "Many Christians in public life have not thought through the implications of the Christian faith for their policy position," he said.

In the lecture, Dr Jensen says both main parties, but particularly the Liberals, need to reassess. Society has changed the party's nature in a way that endangers true freedom. He says Australia is constitutionally a secular nation but is not and has never been a nation of secularists, and he criticises the "contemporary blindness to the presence and impact of faith".

In the six Boyer Lectures, Dr Jensen seeks to present a portrait of Jesus that people will find attractive and encourage them to read the Gospels. "It's increasingly urgent," he told *The Age*.

"Where the baby boomers have some knowledge of Jesus, my impression is that each generation that passes has less knowledge of the Bible, the facts of Jesus's life and the things he said."

Anglicans dividing

By Julia Duin

The unmentioned word at "Hope and a Future" a gathering of 2500 conservative Episcopalians (Anglicans) in Pittsburgh, United States, is "money".

Now that some church split seems virtually assured over the 2003 consecration of openly homosexual **New Hampshire Bishop V. Gene Robinson**, the fight will be over how the Episcopal Church will divide its assets.

The **Anglican Communion Network** (ACN) has a team of six lawyers on call. The **Episcopal House of Bishops**, in turn, has a 10-member "property task force" in the works.

The ACN, a consortium of dioceses, bishops, laity and clergy representing more than 200,000 Episcopalians, organised this three-day conference at the David C. Lawrence Convention Center to rally the conservative troops.

"We've reversed Genesis," **Bishop Keith Ackerman of Quincy, Illinois**, told the crowd about the recent actions on moral issues by the Episcopal Church of the USA (ECUSA). "We've brought chaos out of order. We've created God in our own image."

Two African archbishops counseled conservatives to hold firm in their battles with the official Episcopal Church, which also threatens to split the worldwide Anglican Communion.

"We're with you all the way," **Nigerian Archbishop Peter J. Akinola** said in his speech. **Archbishop Henry Orombi of Uganda** also spoke.

Nineteen bishops from both US sides met in July in Los Angeles to discuss ways to divide assets. At stake in the dispute are millions, if not billions, of dollars in real estate, endowments, pension funds and investments involved in a denomination founded in 1789.

The Washington Times



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Clergy abuse

Some churches have a culture of bullying, with many victims.

A decade after the clergy sexual abuse scandal burst on to the front pages, few might be surprised that the churches have a problem with a culture of bullying. But this time it is abuse of clergy rather than abuse by clergy.

The Victorian Uniting Church tackled the issue at its recent synod, recognising that abuse affects not only the minister and family but the local congregation and the wider church.

Most congregational abuse is bullying and emotional abuse by powerful people in the church, but it can be physical, sexual or financial.

The problem is often hidden, but “the impact can be severe and devastating”, according to social work student Hannah Peterson, who prepared a report on the issue.

In the previous two years, 17 of the church’s 424 ministers in Victoria and Tasmania were desperate enough to use the church’s Bethel Pastoral Centre to recover from congregational abuse – a figure which might be the tip of the iceberg.

“The problem is the seriousness of the impact on them,” says Jean Leeman, who manages the Bethel centre. “It’s a small percentage of people in some of the con-



**Barney
Zwartz**

gregations that are bullies or abuse their minister in some form, but it has a really shattering impact – that’s the subtlety of abuse.”

The abusers are usually those who would be seen as pillars of the church, though they may not hold official roles.

gregations that are bullies or abuse their minister in some form, but it has a really shattering impact – that’s the subtlety of abuse.”

In the worst cases ministers leave not just the church but ministry, or congrega-

tions are unable to get another minister.

As in most forms of abuse, the issue is power. And ministers are particularly vulnerable, according to Jean Leeman, “because it’s their vocation, the whole of life almost. They are using themselves as the instrument to carry out the work”. And when a minister has to change jobs, usually the whole family has to move, though the spouse may have a job and children be settled with school and friends.

Hannah Peterson’s report says the impact on the minister can include stress and burnout, questioning one’s faith, losing confidence and friends, and feelings of rejection, shame, anger, powerlessness and insecurity. It can also cause marital and family problems, and cost family members friendships. Costs to the congregation can be a loss of spiritual passion, people leaving, relationship breakdowns between members, and reluctance to take on leadership roles.

Peterson says there tends to be a history of abuse and bullying in the congregation perpetrated by the same individuals. She says they try to undermine the minister to gain power, by spreading rumours, constant public and private criticism, writing letters to presbytery, hold-

Case study: Matthew and Ruth

It was really hard to watch Matthew – it really felt like a crucifixion. He was being abused for standing up for the church.”

Ruth recalls her family’s spell in purgatory at the hands of an abusive leader, then the congregation, as one of their most intense experiences. “It was just a horrible time. It was very hard for our children to witness.”

Matthew fell foul of a powerful figure in the church who was actually dismissed for unrelated transgressions. But some in the church blamed Matthew, whose story the congregation never heard, and within six months he was hounded out of the job.

The relationship was always difficult because the other leader was manipulative and secretive, Matthew says. “Before I’d even been inducted, the first thing he said was ‘if you don’t get rid of the organist, I will’. You’d have eyeball to eyeball conversations. He would try to bully me. I’m quiet, but no one is going to run over me. I stood my ground, and got the silent treatment instead.”

So the leader set out to undermine Matthew, and after he left his supporters continued the campaign. A particularly painful experience with an elder was the last straw. Matthew and Ruth moved on.

Matthew and Ruth feel most of the

denomination’s leadership at the time was chiefly concerned with protecting the institution. It was her complaint that began the church’s present reform.

For the first few months at their new church, they cried through all the meetings because the people were so supportive, Matthew recalls.

“It’s taken me a long time to deal with the hurt and pain. I don’t think I’ve recovered. I’ve done some hard thinking about forgiveness and reconciliation.

“Where was God in there for me? I learned a lot about the gospel. It was like a crucible, I felt I’d been refined through it.”

ing secret meetings without the minister or public meetings at which the minister is forbidden to speak.

"Because the congregation finances the minister's salary and provides the home, some members of the congregations see the minister and their property as belonging to the church. It is from here that expectations and demands stem, followed by blame if the demands are not met, and lastly punishment," she says.

Ross Kingham, who runs a similar pastoral centre in Canberra, says ministers can contribute to the problem by trying to do too much or seeing their critics as opponents of God. Many are not self-aware and most have limited training in human psychology.

He says: "The most powerful stress for clergy is not self-expectation or the congregation's expectation, but clergy perceptions of the congregation's expectations. It's what the clergy thinks is being

asked of him, and that's quite often several rungs above reality.

"If you are trying to live with this over-exacting expectation you will get brownie



As in most forms of abuse, the issue is power. And ministers are particularly vulnerable.

points, but that positive affirmation can keep coming all the way to the divorce court or heart attack, or both."

The price is savage, Kingham says, and it's the people closest who pay the most.

No one suggests the Uniting church is worse than other churches, but it is ahead of most in tackling abuse. Its synod last month resolved to educate congregations, address cultures of abuse with congregational leaders where it has happened, and research the problem further.

Peter Blackwood, the minister who looks after the church's Maroondah Presbytery, says the resolution is about the health of ministers and their families.

He says: "The policy will just be buried unless we bring it to people's attention. We need to say this and this and this behaviour is not accepted. If there's a complaint of bullying, we can say to congregations, 'what are you going to do to make sure this doesn't happen again?'"

This article is reprinted from The Age, for whom Barney Zwartz is religion editor 

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- 21 Devonport Tas. (2 cgns) 120 c&a, 5 yf, 4 e; Steve & Val Warwick.
- 22 Wollongbar NSW, 105 c&a, 35 yf, 4 e; Jason & Elizabeth Summers.
- 23 Needed rain, especially in Nth Qld.
- 24 Powerful Gospel preaching this week-end.
- 25 John 1:14,17f. Praise our Triune God.
- 26 St Andrew's Christian College, Burwood, Vic.
- 27 Gary Stephens (exit appt) Bairnsdale Vic. 35 c&a, 12 yf, 3 e.
- 28 Family Missions around Australia.
- 29 Your own Presbytery and its officers.
- 30 Bill Medley (exit appt) Frankston; 50 c&a, 20 yf, 3 e.
- 31 "Thank Him for all that is past".

January 2006

- 1 Fresh vision for this new year.
- 2 Safety, refreshment for holidaying families.
- 3 Ian Hutton (exit appt) Ararat Vic; 20 c&a, 2 yf, 3 e.
- 4 Kashmir (earthquake) – relief & reconstruction.
- 5 Greg & Rosemary Baird (Vic. & Tas.) WBT South Asia.
- 6 Gilgandra NSW (3 cgns) 205 c&a, 55 yf, 15 e; Tony & Heather Adams.
- 7 Ballarat West Vic; 65 c&a, 30 yf, 3 e; John & Lesley Stasse.
- 8 Ministerial vacancy at Springwood NSW (3 cgns) 275 c&a, 90 yf, 22 e; Mark & Janette Armstrong.
- 9 Darling Downs Prsbty Qld 36 cgns, 1750 c&a, 1 sch chpln, 4 rtd mins, 3 cand. Walter Postuma clerk.
- 10 PIM patrol NW NSW – Terry Sadler.
- 11 Ministerial vacancy at Whitfords WA 150 c&a, 75 yf (Paul Spackman), 6 e.

- 12 Lakemba Samoan NSW 45 c&a, 40 yf, 12 e; Fa'au'uga & Fa'atuai Si'itia.
- 13 Tony Johnson (exit appt) working with Bob Thomas at St Kilda-Balaclava (2 cgns) Vic. 55 c&a, 5 yf, 7 e.
- 14 Tenterfield NSW 50 c&a, 10 yf, 2 e; John Sweet.
- 15 Ricky & Kaylene Manton, APWM indigenous work, western Sydney.
- 16 Manly NSW 180 c&a, 25 yf, 23 e; Derek & Barbara Bullen.
- 17 Stephen (& Naomi) Lilley (NSW) WBT on leave from South Asia.
- 18 Parramatta City NSW 165 c&a, 55 yf, 5 e; Luke & Debra Tattersall.
- 19 Evan Prentice (exit appt) Caulfield-Elwood Vic; 55 c&a, 15 yf, 7 e.
- 20 New England Prsbty NSW 15 cgns, 770 c&a. Keith Walker clerk.
- 21 Cecily Moar, OMF prayer and Korean ministry Sydney.
- 22 Montrose Tas; 35 c&a, 10 yf, 3 e; vac.
- 23 The Redlands Qld (2 cgns) 85 c&a, 10 yf, 4 e; Gordon & Railee Jackson.
- 24 Presbyterian Youth – regional and local leadership.
- 25 Eaglehawk Vic; 55 c&a, 10 yf, 3 e; Bob & Christine Romeo.
- 26 Alan & Faye Canavan, Vic. WBT PNG.
- 27 Bell Qld (3 cgns) 60 c&a, 25 yf, 7 e; Ray Evans.
- 28 Chatswood NSW (2 cgns) 140 c&a, 40 yf, 15 e; Jeff & Carmelina Read.
- 29 Melbourne North Prsbty 11 cgns 620 c&a, 1 hosp. chpln, 1 lecturer, 4 cand. Tony Parle clerk.
- 30 Bega NSW 45 c&a, 10 yf, 7 e; vac.
- 31 Mitchelton Qld ?? c&a, 100 yf, 9 e; Phil & Louise Campbell, Maurie & Helen Cropper.

February 2006

- 1 Mount Gambier SA (6 cgns) 155 c&a, 55 yf, 11 e; Gary & Margaret Ware, Ian & Heather Touzel.
- 2 Richard & Linda Buchanan, WBT, Brisbane.
- 3 St Paul's, Townsville Qld. 55 c&a, 3 e; Greg Watt, just inducted, & Helen.
- 4 Wyndham Vic; 40 c&a, 15 yf, 1 e; Shane & Sue Cassidy.
- 5 Slacks Creek Qld; 60 c&a, 20 yf, 4 e; Kawa & Esther Elisaia, John Ng.
- 6 Protection from bird flu & terrorism.
- 7 Bob & Beverley Harvey, Brisbane-based, supervising WEC Sth Pacific and Latin American work.
- 8 West Footscray Vic; 60 c&a, 10 yf, 4 e; Richard & Shanta Jaganathan.
- 9 Sydney North Prsbty 225 cgns, 2910 c&a, 2 dnesses, 14 rtd mins, 8 other mins, 4 cand. JohnWoodward clerk.
- 10 Wagga Wagga NSW (6 cgns), 535 c&a, 145 yf, 30 e; Andrew & Ann Campbell.
- 11 Bicton WA, 110 c&a, 20 yf, 3e; Andrew & Kathleen Robinson.
- 12 Como NSW 30 c&a, 5 yf, 3 e; Richard & Dianne Lee.
- 13 Goondiwindi Qld (3 cgns), 40 c&a, 5 yf, 6 e; vac.
- 14 John & Pat Warner, SIM Somali work, Sydney.
- 15 Heathmont Vic; 30 c&a, 5 yf, 2 e; Andrew & Marilyn Venn.
- 16 Naomi Richardson, Qld, 1 year nursing in Mid East with Interserve.
- 17 The Leigh (Shelford) Vic; 30 c&a, 5 yf, 1e; David & Margaret Griffin.
- 18 Bald Hills Qld, 175 c&a, 40 yf, 10 e; Peter & Lesley Bloomfield.
- 19 Derwent Prsbty Tas; 5 cgns, 480 c&a, 1 rtd min. David Turner clerk.
- 20 Bondi NSW, 35 c&a, 10 yf, 5 e; John & Katie Graham.

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Books

Proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord

A History of the Sydney University Evangelical Union

Meredith Lake

EU Graduates Fund 2005

Reviewed by Ryan Smartt

Since 1930, the Sydney University Evangelical Union (EU) has proclaimed Jesus Christ as Lord to students at Sydney University. This history book, written by Meredith Lake, a PhD history candidate, traces the origins of EU back to the evangelical awakenings during the 18th and 19th centuries, its growth from 1930 to the present, and the theological, intellectual and political issues that have affected its development.

The book itself is made alive through the use of personal testimony. It is divided into two sections: the first records the internal developments of the EU, while also highlighting continuities throughout EU's history. The second section details the missions that EU has run, and powerfully records the way in which God has used EU at various times and in different ways to save students and establish others firmly in Christ.

Proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord is an inspiring read, and will interest not only those who have been involved with student ministry, but also those who are keen to hear and learn how God has been at work in the oldest University in Australia – and continues to be so today.

Ryan Smartt is EU President, 2004-5.

A History of Evangelicalism

David W. Bebbington

IVP, 2005

Reviewed by Stuart Bonnington

I really enjoyed reading this book. Professor Bebbington is well known for widely appreciated definition of evangelicalism (he stresses here conversion, the Cross, the Scriptures and a very active practice of the faith). He uses this template well in this current book – subtitled

The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The age of Spurgeon and Moody – as he writes of a unified evangelical movement found in Britain, the United States, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand.

He presents the reader with a masterful and profound analysis of the movement and the changing times (see chapter 4, The legacy of the Enlightenment, and chapter 5, The permeation of Romanticism, for example). I would have been very interested to have seen what Professor Bebbington would have made of the history of the Presbyterian Church in Victoria and New South Wales in his given period in this book (1850s to 1890s) but they are not much touched on here. Nevertheless, because of the similarity across the English speaking world, the Australian Christian will learn much of the reasons for the shape the faith took in the years immediately before Federation.

This book is highly recommended and will substantially advance a true understanding of the Christian faith in the western world. We await eagerly the other volumes in the series.

Stuart Bonnington is minister of Scots Kirk, Fremantle.

Counted Righteous in Christ

John Piper

Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2002.

Reviewed by Peter Barnes

In classic Westminster theology, justification means that the unrighteousness of the sinner is imputed to Christ, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believing sinner. This has been challenged in recent times, even in evangelical circles. According to Robert Gundry, “the doctrine that Christ’s righteousness is imputed to believing sinners needs to be abandoned”. He regards it as passé and unbiblical. In its place, Gundry maintains that “God’s righteousness is his salvific activity in a covenantal framework”, and that “It is our faith, not Christ’s righteousness that is accounted to us as righteousness”.

Gundry goes on to identify justification with liberation, and so, like the Church of Rome, confuses justification and sanctification. Against this approach, Piper aims some well-directed barbs. He points out that “the issue in Romans 3:24-26 is how God can pass over sins (past, present, and future), not how God

can transform sinners”. God’s righteousness is not what is pressing for salvation, but that which needs to be satisfied in order for salvation to be achieved. If Gundry’s approach is correct, Paul would not need to have asked the questions he does in Romans 6:1, 15. In Paul’s mind, legal acquittal leads to moral transformation, but the two concepts do not overlap.

In Philippians 3:8-9, righteousness is not identified with faith but “through faith”. Similarly, 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 demands that the sinner’s righteousness be found in Christ, not his faith. As Charles Hodge put it, in reference to Christ: “His being made sin is consistent with His being in Himself free from sin; and our being made righteous is consistent with our being in ourselves ungodly.” The doctrine of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness may be abandoned by Gundry, and by Tom Wright and others of the New Perspective outlook, but Piper gives a good account of why it should be retained by Bible-believing Christians.

Peter Barnes is books editor of AP

The Worship Sourcebook

Baker: 2004

Reviewed by Stuart Bonnington

The Worship Sourcebook: The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship/Faith Alive Christian Resources is basically a magnificent resource book for those who are given the great privilege and responsibility for leading Christian worship. Its origins lie within the Christian Reformed Church in the United States.

The prologue helpfully discusses the practice of Christian worship and is followed by two parts: the first covering the elements of the worship service and the second the central themes of the Christian faith. *The Worship Sourcebook* is absolutely filled with suggested scripture readings, references to the Reformation Confessions and the creeds as well as responsive readings and prayers of various kinds. Those influenced by the Continental Reformation will be more at home here than those whose background comes from the Scottish Puritan tradition but there is much in this book to assist any discerning but sympathetic reader. The book is very modestly priced and includes a CD-ROM so the resources can be used on service sheets.

Infinite worth

God's esteem is all that counts – and Christians have it.

Most people nowadays know the importance of self-image. Coaches in sport always knew it: perceiving that those who see themselves as winners do better than those who expect to lose, they saw passionate pep-talks of the “you-can-do-it” sort as vital to the success of their trainees. And they were right.

Counseling pundits confirm that in all departments of life our view of ourselves programs our behaviour, so that our ideas of what we can and can't do become self-fulfilling prophecies. How true! A bright person I know suffered 10 years of academic disaster through internalising the assurance, dumped on him in grade two, that he was no good at schoolwork. This is typical.

Embedded in our self-image is our sense of worth. Children starved of affirmation and affection at home usually take into adult life a low self-image — a sense, that is, of lacking real value, being a nobody, counting for nothing. As in some communities it is said that if you're not Dutch you're not much, so the world is full of emotional cripples, including some Dutch, who deep down feel they are “not much”, despite being, as such folk often are, brainy, competent, and by worldly standards successful.

This feeling is not a rational judgment, but an emotionally-charged attitude functioning as tinted spectacles through which one's mind gazes as it thinks about oneself in relation to others. A Snoopy cartoon I saw tried to laugh it off. (“You look dreadful.” “Well, I feel inferior.” “Don't worry, lots of people have that feeling.” “What, that they're inferior?” “No, that you're inferior.”) But those who experience inferiority feelings cannot laugh them off like that. They come to stay, and they do much harm.

Low self-image spawns inhibited and compulsive behavior of all sorts. Insecurity, instability, lack of self-respect, spinelessness, cynicism, quarrelsomeness, pushiness and bluster, isolation and withdrawal, passive or predatory relationships, even drug-dependence, and promiscuity, may result. And though a poor self-con-



J. I. Packer

cept is fairly easily diagnosed, counselors can rarely do anything to change it.

Today's jargon of self-image, self-esteem, self-worth, inferiority feelings, etc., is unknown to the Scriptures, yet they speak directly to the problem.

First, the gospel announces God's love to all of us sinners and teaches us to measure it by setting three things together: how guilty and nasty our holy Creator sees us to be; how far He went to save us, giving His Son to taste the hell we deserved in order to secure our rescue; and the reality of full forgiveness, acceptance, restoration to fellowship and clean slate, God's free gift through Christ to penitent believers. The gospel takes us lower in self-abhorrence and despair than inferiority feelings ever do, and raises us to an awestruck joy that those with a “good” self-image never reach. From this a changed view of ourselves must result.

However unloved and worthless we once felt, and however much self-hate and self-condemnation we once nursed, we must now see that by loving us enough to redeem us God gave us value, and by forgiving us completely He obligated us to forgive ourselves and made it sin for us not to. So the old way of thinking and feeling about ourselves must be driven out by a new one, which is to last for the rest of our lives.

Second, the gospel tells us that as believers we become new creatures in Christ. Born again, we enter a new kind of life. Dying to sin as God changes our hearts, we rise in and with Christ to a spirit-indwelt state marked by the discovery in ourselves of the inner inclinations of Jesus' own manhood. This miracle of

mercy gives us new identity, which our self-image must henceforth express. The new self-image is threefold.

In relation to God, we must see ourselves as inheritors. In antiquity the childless rich adopted adults to uphold the family name as recipients of the family fortune. As God's adopted children who will inherit glory, our task for time and eternity is to glorify the One who thus glorifies us.

In relation to life, we must see ourselves as travellers: not permanent residents, but pilgrims going home, here to serve but not to settle down. Secular materialism is earthbound, treating this life as all there is, but Christians must look beyond earth (wonderfully good) to heaven (infinitely better), and be ready to let anything go rather than forfeit glory.

In relation to worldly pulls, sin's promptings and Satanic prowling, we must see ourselves as fighters: soldiers of Christ who advance by battling opposition with the armor and weapons that Christ supplies.

(There is a classic book on this subject: Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*; but nobody is going to read that old stuff nowadays, are they?)

Christians who see themselves in these terms are realists who know who they are, and their new self-image programs them for right living. They are prepared for losses, crosses, changes, and conflicts; they bow low, walk tall, and fight hard all the time.

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Health Scene Australia

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