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December 2007

No. 599

AUSTRALIAN Presbyterian

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editorial

Christians are called to be “in the world but not of it”. Does this mean that believers are meant to be dismissive of culture? Are we simply meant to devote our lives to evangelism to the exclusion of all else? There are some Christians who adopt this approach. They believe that a Christian’s calling should be strictly understood in terms of preaching the gospel to dying sinners. “The world,” they say, “is going to hell in a handcart. Our sole task is to rescue those who are living under the shadow of eternal death.”

Usually, those who hold this view appeal to the urgency of the Great Commission and remind us of the priority of preaching the gospel to everyone. No one doubts their passion, but have they forgotten an important element within the Great Commission itself? Jesus not only urges His followers to preach the gospel, but He reminds us that one essential aspect of this task is “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Mt 28:20). Surely this includes what is arguably the first biblical command: “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves upon the ground” (Gen. 1:28)? Doesn’t this command lay upon us a cultural obligation to discover the ways in which we can unlock the rich potential of all of God’s gifts and use them in a manner which will bring Him glory?

While it is certainly true that Christianity is a religion of “cross-bearing”, it is also a faith which affirms the goodness of creation – “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof” (Psalm 24:1). All that God has made is good and is not to be rejected if it is received with thankfulness. This means that music, art and other aesthetic pursuits have a legitimate place in the Christian life. Calvin was surely right when he pointed out that the Holy Spirit is active in both creation and redemption and that we can learn from talented unbelievers “how many gifts the Lord left to human nature even after it was despoiled of its true good” (*Institutes* 2:2). Christians, of all people, should respect culture.

Peter Hastie 

THE AUSTRALIAN PRESBYTERIAN (ABN 81 498 399 755): The national magazine of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. Editorial committee: Peter Hastie (NSW) Themes Editor; Barney Zwartz (Victoria) Production; Stuart Bonnington (West Australia) News Editor; Peter Hastie (NSW), World News Editor. Graphic Design: Sandra Joynt for A&J Moody Design: www.ajmd.com.au. Advertising and subscription inquiries: Michael Timmins, PO Box 375, Kilsyth 3137; Phone: (03) 9723 9684. Subscription: \$38.50 a year inc. GST; bulk (etc) \$35.20 each inc. GST. Office: PO Box 375, Kilsyth 3137. Phone: (03) 9723 9684. Fax: (03) 9723 9685. Email: aus-pres@bigpond.net.au Printed by Adept Mail & Print Services, Boronia, Vic. Published: Monthly except January by the National Journal Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Australia; Convener Peter Hastie. Opinions expressed are those of the contributor and not necessarily those of the PCA, the editor or the committee. Acceptance of advertising does not imply endorsement. Contributions: Submitted articles are welcome. The deadline is the first of the previous month. Donations are always welcome. Print Post approved 34918100384. www.ap.presbyterian.org.au

Critical connection

Our culture helps shape us, and we should help shape it.



The Rev. Michael Horton (PhD) is a professor of historical theology and apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, California. Dr Horton did his doctoral research under Alister McGrath at Oxford University on the Puritan Thomas Goodwin. He has also done post-doctoral research at Yale University.

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Michael, many Christians today



**Michael Horton
talks to
Peter Hastie**

believe that we can only justify art, science, music or entertainment in terms of their spiritual value or evangelistic usefulness. Are the arts only valuable because they can be used in evangelism or do they exist in their own right?

Yes, I think these fields of knowledge and endeavour exist in their own right. We see this in the earliest history of the human race where culture undergoes some significant development in the line of Cain. Cain, as you know, built the city of Enoch. This happened after he murdered his brother. The Bible writer tells us that God gave him protection so that he could build the city, thereby giving it its own distinctive culture (Gen. 4:15).

In the genealogy listed in 4:18-22 we discover that some of Cain's descendants were responsible for developing the fields

of metallurgy, engineering, music and animal husbandry. All of these are significant cultural achievements. The interesting thing is that God allows these developments to occur through His common grace, even though they originated in a city renowned for its violence and wickedness. If God had dealt with Cain on the basis of strict justice by punishing him with death, then it's possible that these cultural developments may never have taken place. It seems that they occurred because of God's common grace.

But how do you answer Christians who say that these cultural developments came from the ungodly line of Cain? They point to the line of Seth, which was distinguished by its worship, and say that we ought to be devoted to church-related activities rather than general cultural pursuits?

Well, I would remind them that Christians are always citizens of two cities. God's providence often has Christians in different circumstances so that our response to situations will vary

depending on where the Lord has placed us. For instance, think of Daniel and how God used him in extraordinary ways in Babylon. God located him in the court of Nebuchadnezzar.

What interests me here is that Daniel's spiritual influence with the king is not lessened because of his secular education and training. He was a leading scholar in the Babylonian academy just as Joseph had been in Pharaoh's court. In both Daniel and Joseph we have examples of believers being faithful to the Lord and yet also being able to participate in the common culture of the nation. When Daniel refused to surrender to the culture of Babylon, he only did so in the area of religion. He refused to surrender his faith in Yahweh or compromise that faith through the cultic idolatry in which he was expected to participate. I think that Daniel is a great example for us here. Being a Christian doesn't mean that we have to renounce every aspect of popular culture and learning. It just means that if we are involved in secular education, whether the arts or sciences, we think about our new-found knowledge from a Christian viewpoint.

Obviously the examples of Joseph and Daniel are influential guides on this issue, but is there any theological justification for thinking that Christians can embrace the arts and sciences?

It's interesting that when John Calvin criticised the radical Anabaptists, who by and large rejected secular culture, he said that all of the gifts that we find in secular culture are given by the Holy Spirit. It really is a remarkable statement. When we normally think of the Holy Spirit's work, we usually confine it to the sphere of the church. Yet Calvin (and I think with good exegetical support) regarded the Spirit as being at work in creation, providence and redemption. In other words, the Holy Spirit's work in the world extends well beyond the work of salvation.

This means that when science comes upon a great discovery that alleviates a particular disease, we should send up our praises to God. We need to recognise that the Holy Spirit is active in the creation and still upholds everything through Christ's providence. Once we realise that, we are no longer required to have a Bible verse to justify every great work of art. Nor do films have to include a compulsory conversion scene to validate them in the eyes of Christians. In fact, God doesn't have to be explicitly mentioned

anywhere to make a work of art or science legitimate. For instance, while the book of Esther contains no explicit reference to God, His presence is assumed everywhere throughout it. Nor does the Song of Solomon have to be allegorised as a love story about Christ and his church. It's possible that it's just a celebration of human life. Our problem is that we want to elevate creation above creation. We automatically think that there's something that's wrong with creation; we've got to "Christianise" it in some way. Actually, the problem is in our thinking. The Bible says that the creation itself is fine; the real problem is that as a result of our sin creation has been subjected to bondage and death. So creation, as a sphere, is not sinful or evil; it's just that what is good is a perpetual victim of human sin and distortion.

And Christians are part of that too. We often think that Christians must be always right and good. Well, I've got some news for people who think like that. Have they forgotten that it was a very pious and devout Christian like Kaiser Wilhelm who developed Germany's war policy of "Deutschland uber Alles"? Again, Otto von Bismarck is another example. He went to church and was supposedly an evangelical pietist. Well, thanks for two World Wars. We'll send you the bill! Christians often have this mistaken view that if only Christians were in charge, things would be going well. Well, it's just not so. Christians can make a mess of things. There have been a lot of times when Christians were in charge and it hasn't gone well. I'm firmly with Luther on this one: I'd rather be governed by a wise Turk than a stupid Christian!

Calvin also made another interesting point. He said that God has given special gifts and insights to people. He poses the question: "Are we going to say that the investigations of the astronomers are the ravings of mad men? Are we going to say that those who invented medicine for our use aren't profitable because they're not converted? Are we going to say that those who wrote great literature are utterly devoid of anything beautiful and sound in their thinking?" Here both Calvin and

Luther offer a helpful distinction. They remind us that we need to keep in mind the difference between things earthly and heavenly.

Obviously, when it comes to heavenly things non-Christians are devoid of understanding. As Paul says, "no one seeks after God, no not even one" (Rom. 3:11). Nor do they understand the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:14). However, in things earthly they can still get a lot done. And when you're looking for a good architect for a building, you might want to make sure that you find the best architect and not just the most devout one. I remember that my dad, who was a very devout Christian, often said that he never used the Christian Yellow Pages. He said he had been burned so many times by people with a fish on their business card that the "Christian Yellow Pages" was basically a guide to people you shouldn't do business with. I know he was exaggerating, but there was enough truth in what he said to make us all have a chuckle. I think everyone understands what he was talking about.

Unfortunately, there's an idea in some Christian circles in America that it's all right to do a sloppy job for another Christian. Business often circulates among members of the church and you normally feel duty-bound to hire a plumber who says he's a Christian. Someone asked Luther, "What will happen if you throw all the monks out of the monastery and make them work for a living? How will their work be Christian?" And Luther said, "Well, maybe they can make a good shoe and sell it at a fair price!"

Here Luther gives us the foundation of a good work ethic. It's based on the theology of vocation. The problem with so many evangelicals today is that they don't feel that they are "called" to anything unless they are engaged in full-time church ministry. However, the Bible says that everyone has a calling. Our trouble in the church today is that we have gone back to a Roman Catholic understanding of vocation and calling. We think that calling or vocation only refers to full or part-time ministry in a church or para-church context. But that's completely wrong and contrary to the teaching of the reformation. I am surprised that evangelicals have bought it.

Can you give some examples of how Christians have taken their calling seriously and actually transformed the culture around them through the

way they have done their work?

Sure. There's the great epistle to Diognetus in the second century that beautifully expresses the view of the early Christians. The writer says Christians don't differ outwardly from non-Christians; they participate in many of the same functions; they stand side by side at the office (I'm paraphrasing here), and yet they have a hope that non-Christians don't share. Basically he's saying that in outward circumstances such as language, dress and appearance Christians look much the same as others, but when it comes to the things that really drive us, they couldn't be more different.

What I find so interesting in the church today is that the opposite is the case. Christians nowadays tend to be very distinctive in their style, language and dress. For example, Christians might wear certain T-shirts and use a certain language – "Brother, are you saved?" To somebody who has never been inside a church this seems strange and cultish. What does concern me is that at the very time that Christians are being identified by external factors, our churches are becoming less distinctively Christian. This means that our distinctiveness now rests in external matters rather than in our commitment to the ministry of the Word and sacrament. This is exactly the reverse of what was happening in the early church. Back then, the reason why the early Romans thought that Christians were strange was because of their faith and practice, not their lingo, dress and style.

Did the Reformers ever set out to transform their culture?

No. I think it's important to remember that was not the Reformation's aim. Christendom had already tried that at an earlier time and Calvin called it the "contrived" empire. It's a good lesson to remember if we ever feel tempted to turn our nations into Christian republics. There has only ever been one "holy" republic in the history of redemption and that was Israel. And we know what happened there. So in this "in between" time there are no Christian nations; there is no such thing as "redemptive politics". Every government set up on earth – even Nero's – is actually instituted by God.

This was one of the major contributions of the Reformers – they realised the legitimacy of secular government, of secular business and of secular art and literature. From the Reformation onwards, painters no longer had to receive their daily bread from commissions through

the church. They were now employed by merchants or, as in the case of Rembrandt, they worked for various trade guilds. The church was no longer the principal patron in Protestantism and so painters were now free to paint whatever interested them. They were no longer duty-bound to produce only "Christian art". Incidentally, this allowed artists to thrive in their secular callings and it also reduced the opportunity for churches to be adorned with idolatry.

Have they ever bothered to think that it would be OK to help their neighbour fix his roof because it was leaking?

Reformers thought it was legitimate for artists to paint pictures of people or natural scenes without introducing some religious setting in order to justify them as pieces of art. This is something that Christians need to learn again today. Christians can engage in work and service for reasons other than evangelism.

The Reformers believed that Christians demonstrate their faith best by being really good at their callings and showing that their true motive at work is to love their neighbours by serving them well. There are a lot of Christians today who think that the only reason for having non-Christian friends is so that we can lead them to Christ. Again, some Christians believe that the only reason why we should work in a non-Christian workplace is because it gives us a good opportunity to witness. Others think, "If I help my neighbour fix his roof, maybe I'll have a chance to share the gospel with him." Have they ever bothered to think that it would be OK to help their neighbour fix his roof because it was leaking? What a liberating sort of concept! This is especially so because non-Christians can smell ulterior motives a mile away. Most Christians have never realised that they might actually have more luck having conversations about the gospel if they just fixed their neighbour's roof because it needed repair. I like the line by Luther when he says, "God doesn't need your good works; your neighbour does". What a relief that is! It's so true. God doesn't

need me to do things for other people so that I can get points. It's my neighbour who needs me.

What are some of the approaches that Christians have taken towards culture throughout the history of the church?

Actually, I have written about this in my book *Where in the World is the Church?* There I outlined a number of different approaches that Christians have taken towards "culture" – that is, the "tastes" of a particular people – throughout different periods of history. I based my analysis on an earlier work, *Christ and Culture*, by Richard Niebuhr from Yale University. Niebuhr used a number of sweeping typologies to describe these approaches which make it easier for us to get our heads around the different views.

The first view that he dealt with was "Christ Against Culture". This tended to be the view of the earliest Christians because they experienced such intense persecution. It's hard to be very optimistic about your impact on the culture when you're being fed to the lions! Tertullian expressed the early church's attitude in his famous saying, "What has Jerusalem to do with Athens?" In later times the Anabaptists took this view during the Reformation when they largely retreated from any involvement with society and refused to be in the army or participate in public life. Christians who hold this view are suspicious of culture and the arts. Basically, their attitude is, "this world is going to hell, so let's go out and rescue it". It's summed up by D.L. Moody's saying: "The Lord has given me a life raft and I need to save as many as I can."

At the other end of the spectrum is the view, "The Christ of Culture". Those who take this approach tend to equate Christ with their particular culture. For them Christ simply embodies the prevailing values of their society. When Christians in America think that our nation is a Christian country they have equated Christ with western secular values. It's what I call "cultural Christianity". When church leaders in Nazi Germany pledged allegiance to Hitler and supported his nationalistic plans for the Fatherland they expressed the same view.

A third view is what Niebuhr describes as "Christ Above Culture". This view is a bit more nuanced than the previous ones as it suggests neither antagonism nor assimilation. It is the Christendom model, where the church stands over the culture and tells it what to do. It's an attempt to

synthesise Christ and culture without actually “baptizing” the culture. Niebuhr thinks that Thomas Aquinas, the medieval theologian, is the best exponent of this view.

Niebuhr’s fourth option is what he calls “Christ and Culture in Paradox”, which he describes as the Lutheran view. However, I am not convinced that it’s necessarily limited to Lutheranism. This view says that every Christian is a citizen of two cities – the City of God and the City of Man. Each of these spheres is separate and they have different purposes. Luther expressed this idea in his doctrine of the two kingdoms. On this model one cannot coerce faith, nor can one accommodate faith to secular modes of thought. However, it’s possible to live out one’s faith in the light of special revelation so that the wider culture can experience the influence of Christianity. Calvin and Augustine also expressed similar ideas.

The last view is called “Christ the Transformer of Culture”. People who hold this view are under no illusion that human culture will be completely transformed by Christian influence this side of heaven; however they do expect partial victories from time to time. Further, they believe that since God is both creator and redeemer, He not only renews souls but is interested in making everything new. This is the view of Augustine, Calvin and the Reformed tradition.

I think we can dispose of the first three views pretty easily. But how about the Christ and Culture in Paradox and Christ Transforming Culture? I think the Reformed approach includes aspects of both, but I think the Christ and Culture in Paradox expresses some important truths that we need to hold to keep a realistic view of life in the here-and-now and what we can expect in the future. We sometimes get overwhelmed with our sense of importance and forget that Jesus said that in this intervening period the wheat and the weeds grow together and will be separated only at the end when He returns. So this isn’t the period when we transform the kingdoms of this world into the kingdom of Christ. It’s the period in which we participate in the joys and sorrows of this fallen world. And in this intervening period until Christ returns, we are to participate as citizens of two cities. It’s that dual citizenship that we often forget; we want to transform one into the other.

So what do you think is the prevailing mood in modern evangelicalism?

Oh, it’s definitely “Christ Transforming Culture”. That’s certainly the view in American Revivalism. Charles Finney said that the church is a society of moral reformers and revivalism has really given us the Christian Left and the Christian Right in America. Ironically, in my judgment, both the religious Left and the religious Right go back to Charles Finney.

What essentially is wrong with those positions?

Well, I think first of all, they’re completely consistent with the theology that undergirds them. The problem is that Finney’s beliefs were heretical. He mistakenly believed that people are not inherently sinful; all we need are a few good



What troubles me are Reformed people who have this optimistic view about how they are going to transform the world into Christ’s kingdom.

rules to follow. Further, he said that Christ’s death was not a substitutionary atoning sacrifice for helpless sinners. Instead, he claimed that God forgave people based on their repentance. He even went so far as to claim that the doctrine of justification by faith alone is another gospel. He said that we have to regenerate ourselves. In every sense of the word he was a Pelagian.

What is interesting is that the former disgraced president of the National Association of Evangelicals, Ted Haggard, shared Finney’s theology. That was why I wasn’t surprised that Haggard said in an interview with *Christianity Today* that he was happy to announce that he had a weekly conference call with the President to speak on behalf of evangelicals. He said he encouraged him on the war in Iraq and urged him to spread American democracy around the world. He also said that America has a unique role in the world to bring peace, capitalism and free enterprise to the ends of the earth. You’ve got to hand it to him, haven’t you? He’s at least consistent with his theology. However, what troubles me even more are

Reformed people who have this cheery optimistic view about how they’re going to transform the government, the arts, the sciences, the entertainment industry as well as sports and education into being citadels of Christ’s kingdom. It just seems to me that if the Holy Spirit is the author of all that is true, good and beautiful in the world, even in non-Christians, then we should neither renounce culture nor attempt to transform culture into something cultic.

What implication does your understanding of this issue have for Christian schooling?

Ooh, you had to go there, didn’t you! Of course, the Christ Transforming the Culture model, especially as it is identified with Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch theologian, has played a big role in the Christian school movement, especially in the USA. I have a lot of respect for Kuyper and for Christian schools. They have played a significant role in shaping the lives of so many young people. However, I don’t believe that pastors and elders should require Christian parents to send their kids to Christian schools just because they claim to be Christian. In my opinion it’s a wisdom issue; it’s a matter of prudence.

In my experience, having been a student in both Christian schools and public schools in the same town in northern California, the Christian school I attended was more debilitating and corrosive to genuine faith than the public school. At least in the public school I knew that the teachers weren’t Christians and I had to be on my guard and know what I believed. The problem in the Christian school, which was very Arminian in its theology, was that although there was a lot of talk about the Bible, it was distorted in serious ways and this led to some tremendous problems and crises in the lives of many of us. I can’t remember many kids who went to that school who remained committed Christians once they went to the public high school.

To what extent should Christians try to engage the world intellectually? For example, is it a sign of compromise if a Christian studies philosophy?

No, it’s not. The simple fact is that some of the greatest theologians in the history of the church were trained in philosophy. Some of the greatest philosophers in the history of civilisation were

trained in theology. There hasn't always been an antagonism between philosophy and religion. For example, the current president of the American Philosophical Association is Alvin Plantinga, an evangelical Christian. He's president of the American Philosophical Association because he is an excellent philosopher.

If we follow Paul's advice to the Thessalonians to "live quietly, mind our own affairs, work with our hands so as to win the respect of outsiders, and provide for others' needs", then we have done everything we need to with respect to our vocations. This is how we serve God and our neighbours. So it's possible to serve God using your mind as a philosopher. Many Christians are doing this today in the United States. Some of them have reputations as leading thinkers.

Obviously, there will be times when Christian philosophers will find themselves in conflict with the academy. If that happens then we have to dare to be a Daniel. We have to stand up for what we believe. As Reformed Christians we believe that there is no such thing as a neutral intellectual position. All of our thinking is shaped by our ultimate presuppositions, but not all of those presuppositions have to be explicit in our work. A Christian working for a pharmaceutical lab may go to work presupposing such things as creation, fall and redemption. However, she may never publish that in a journal and may never have the opportunity to express it to her colleagues. Of course, she may get opportunities to witness to Christ at work, but that's certainly not the reason why she should think that her vocation is meaningful.

Do Christians compromise themselves when they use non-theological sources of knowledge like medicine or psychology to help themselves cope better with life and some of its more traumatic experiences?

Well, I think that we face certain dangers when we are dealing with sources of knowledge that are non-Scriptural. One of them, to which pastors are particularly prone, is to abandon their specialised knowledge that comes from Scripture and give away that domain of authority to other so-called experts. For instance, pastors too easily relinquish matters of spiritual care to experts in human psychology. For example, if one of our parishioners is receiving psychological counselling and is being told "you shouldn't feel guilty because you're not really responsible", then as pastors we should be very con-

cerned about that. I would certainly want to uphold a Scriptural view on guilt and how we should deal with it. Actually, pastors are better authorities on that question because God speaks directly on the matter.

However, when it comes to diagnosing certain disorders, especially those that fall more typically within the province of medicine, pastors must recognise their limitations. Sometimes that's difficult. Although I'm not engaged in regular counselling as a minister, pastors often tell me that this is a pressing problem for them. They want to know when to acknowledge their limitations. This area is fraught with problems, especially when pastors can be sued for giving wrong advice if someone gets hurt as a result of

It's very easy to criticise the culture of victimisation, but we also have to be careful we don't trample over people who really are victims.



it. Don't forget that if a jury of your peers can convict you of criminal negligence through offering certain advice, then there's something wrong with a theory that says there's a spiritual answer for every question. If we were only spirits and our problems were only of a spiritual nature, then we'd have no difficulty. However, we have both physical and spiritual sides to us and that makes us complex creatures. Further, sin is an equally complex phenomenon. We can sin as well as be sinned against. Sometimes that requires medical treatment; sometimes it requires revisiting the circumstances of our past that led us to becoming victims. It's very easy to criticise the culture of victimisation, but we also have to be careful that we don't trample over people who really are victims. Sometimes we're not competent to assess that.

Is it possible that someone like Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, who analysed the various stages of dying, may have something to contribute to pastoral care as people approach the end of their earthly lives?

Not necessarily. To be able to describe

the various phases of death is not the same as providing hope and comfort in the face of it. This is an area where I imagine that Christian pastors are better equipped than anyone else. Pastors may not be trained for many other eventualities, but this is one where they really do have something positive to say. I know that there is now a trend for others to challenge the involvement of pastors at events like weddings and funerals. However, I think it's important for pastors to retain their traditional functions with respect to those who are dying. I know some pastors think they're too busy to be handling lots of funerals, but if we're too busy to comfort the dying and the grieving, then we're too busy – because that's our ministry. Pastors ought to be specialists in dying. They should be more specialised in that field than any psychologist.

I am not saying that pastors have nothing to learn from secular disciplines such as psychology. However, I think it's very important for us as pastors and lay people to be thoroughly trained in these areas so that we really know how to bring people the best pastoral care available. This means that we have to be thoroughly conversant with what we believe and why we believe it. We need to be able to use our sanctified common sense and say, "this is where the psychological experts have it wrong. This therapist is transgressing into the territory that I really know something about. It's in direct conflict with the word of God". I am firmly convinced that the idea that every spiritual problem has a therapeutic answer has got to be challenged by pastors. Theology is wonderfully therapeutic if it's not turned into therapy. We need to know the difference between the two and be well trained in biblical theology and pastoral practice so that we don't fall into either a blind embrace or rejection of these other secular fields.

Paul calls us to demolish every argument and every pretension that's raised against God. What place does apologetics have in a Christian's life? How well trained should Christians be for that particular intellectual engagement? Is it a calling for all Christians?

Apologetics has a place in every Christian's life, but ministers should have a more specialised knowledge of it. Ministers are called to proclaim the gospel in a way that is distinct from the calling that every Christian has to be a witness. This means that they need special training for that vocation. It's really

amazing how many seminaries, including evangelical ones, are now doing without apologetics. There seems to be an anti-apologetic mood around at the moment. I suspect that part of it has to do with a retreat from the confidence of modernism – “I have all the answers” approach – to postmodernism’s more sceptical attitude toward people like that. Nowadays a lot of people are saying non-Christians don’t want people coming to them with a lot of arguments. They want people to come to them and show them a Christ-like life.

If you speak to someone like William Lane Craig, he will say that he meets lots of people who become Christians on the basis of rational presentation of argument. What do you say?

It’s certainly true that people have real questions that they want answered, but we need to remember that they never ask those questions from a neutral standpoint. We ask all of our questions either as believers or unbelievers. Nevertheless, there are unbelievers who are really curious, and it’s our duty, as the apostle Peter said, to be ready to have an answer for anyone who asks us about the hope that we have.

So do you have an apologetics component here at Westminster?

Absolutely! Apologetics is definitely part of the core curriculum here. However, I have noticed that a number of seminaries are changing the name from apologetics to philosophical theology. It doesn’t always reflect a paradigm shift, but I think it’s indicative of an emerging trend. It’s kind of like the shift from theology departments to religion departments. There’s a place for philosophy and even for philosophical theology in university graduate programs. But seminaries should have apologetic departments. We are meant to be training pastors and elders who can defend “the faith once delivered to the saints”. So apologetics is not just philosophical theology; it’s apologetics. We teach it with the specific aim of equipping pastors to be able to persuade and convince non-Christians of the truth of the gospel and to strengthen doubting believers in their congregations. I think we are fooling ourselves if we think that our churches are not made up of people who don’t ask a lot of questions.

It seems that many within the evangelical community are contesting biblical doctrines that once supported the Christian view of work and voca-

tion. What do you think is going to be a consequence of that?

I think the first consequence will be that many Christians will find that they get less joy from the jobs that they perform over five or six days of the week. If we don’t believe our normal jobs are as important as church-related activities, then for five or so days a week we are going to have a pretty meaningless life. If we don’t have any biblical justification for our work other than the opportunities it gives us for evangelism and “Christian ministry”, then it might become hard to get excited about our jobs, especially if a lot of our work is done alone and gives us few opportunities for witness. So with these doctrines in eclipse, Christians are going to be impoverished. Their lives are going to grow increasingly meaningless, except at the point that they’re writing cheques for missionaries. If they lose their doctrine of vocation, then their main reason for going to work will be so that they can support the church.

What happens when you lose the Reformational understanding of “calling”?

Many years ago a band called Lover Boy wrote a song, *Working for the Weekend*. That’s what’s happening today – everyone’s living for the weekend. We have lost the idea of Christian calling and the fact that we can find joy in the assignments that God has given us. Sadly, that’s often true of Christians too. I often find that Christians are not only living for the weekend, but they are totally consumed with Christian activities throughout the week as well. I remember growing up with prayer meetings, Bible studies, you know all of those things that go on mid-week in Christian circles. But today, it’s not even prayer meetings and Bible studies as much as it is men’s groups, women’s groups, children’s groups and the like. At the moment the church caters for every niche demographic. It’s all driven by the idea that we have to satisfy the felt needs of that particular demographic and where they are in their stage of life. In other words, it’s focusing on marketing rather than on what Christians need to hear.

We have lost the idea of Christian calling, and the fact that we can find joy in the assignments God has given us.

Before marketing took over the church we had Bible studies and prayer meetings for people of all ages, backgrounds, problems, ethnic histories and so forth. But now, we have an alternative culture going on so that a Christian can actually be involved in the Christian ghetto 24 hours a day listening to Christian radio, Christian music, going to Christian functions, taking the kids to Christians sports to the point where they don’t actually know a non-Christian. And no one at their work would know that they’re Christians because they don’t have any deep relationships with any of their co-workers. They’re so busy with other Christians all the time.

I think it would be great if churches really got back to Bible teaching and catechesis and word and sacrament ministry. Then we could stop all this mid-week stuff and let Christians have those six days back that you find in the Ten Commandments. If we did that, Christians could really be a part of the world and excel in their vocations. Then they would get to know their non-Christian friends, neighbours and co-workers. ap

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Maps of meaning

Culture makes the world intelligible to people.

The word “culture” can bring a variety of thoughts and feelings to mind. When I was younger, culture was something my parents tried to give me by taking me to musicals, plays, concerts, art museums and such. I am grateful now for their efforts which were not fully appreciated then.

But as I grew up I began to see that culture embraces much more than the arts. And that “Western culture” doesn’t simply mean the arts of the west, but that it refers to all of the human enterprises that come from this part of the world as it is geographically and historically defined. Culture helps define and situate us in this life not just physically but also in terms of who we are and what we are here for.

As one culture observer has said,



Kim Dale

“Cultures are maps of meaning through which the world is made intelligible.”

Culture in this wider sense refers to all that humankind produces as it pursues life in the world. It is “the work of men’s minds and hands”. As people work out their understanding of God (or not God), themselves,

We need to be aware of the wide range of stances that the church has taken towards culture.

and the world, they are producing culture.

All of the different spheres of culture reflect commitments to what is ultimately real. That diversity in human understanding of God, the self and the world, (worldview), results in a diversity of cultures. When this diversity of cultures meets in the same place, like a country, you have a multi-cultural dynamic. This is a challenge that faces many modern countries.

The Christian and the church are culturally embedded and we are continually challenged to be aware of our cultural environment and to be salt and light in the world. Christians are to pursue the great commission, the “gospel mandate”. As we disciple the nations, we should expect, encourage and work to bring about change within our culture. It is both a duty and a privilege to bring all of life under the Lordship of Christ or, in Paul’s words, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). As we do so we need to be aware of the wide range of stances that the church has taken toward culture in its attempt to come to grips with being in the world. There is something to learn from each of the approaches that Michael Horton surveyed on pages 6 and 7. We may approach the whole cultural challenge out of well thought out convictions. Or, we may react to culture in ways and for reasons that we haven’t reflected on at all. It is essential that we do our cultural thinking within a biblical landscape. It is this larger landscape that will enable us to understand our particular culture, its strengths and weaknesses, what should be kept or rejected, and how we can best work for its transformation for the glory of God and the good of humankind.

(Further resources: Christ and Culture, H. Richard Niebuhr; Contours of a World View, Arthur F. Holmes; The Calvinistic Concept of Culture, Henry R. Van Til; Christ and Culture, Klaas Schilder; Culture vs Cross Culture Bruce Winter, cd set available from QTC.)

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Lessons from Babylon U

Daniel learned to interact with a pagan culture.

Daniel 1 tells the first of six stories about how Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah navigated Babylonian culture. Their reactions to their “wise man” immersion education program hold some surprises — in some situations, they decided to conform to the culture of their captors; in others, they temporarily demurred. But God blessed them and honored their faith as they participated in a toxic culture.

Daniel must be read in light of the historical context that brought the Judean men to Babylon. The year was 605 BC, and Nebuchadnezzar had just succeeded his father, Nabopolassar, as king of the rapidly expanding empire. Babylon had recently finished off the remnants of the formerly all-powerful Assyrians, who had been collecting tribute from Judah’s kings.

Nebuchadnezzar moved his army against Judah and demanded tokens of submission, including young men from the royal family. These young men would go to the heart of the Babylonian empire and be subjected to a process that might be called “Babylonisation”. They would be trained to serve as agents of the empire either by returning home or, in the case of Daniel and his friends, by staying in Babylon and serving in the government.

Nebuchadnezzar put the captives on a course of study and a diet to make them educated and attractive for service in his kingdom. (Thin men were not considered good-looking; the art we have from this time period shows muscled warriors and pudgy wise men.)

It’s marvelous just how far Daniel and his friends were willing to go without recorded complaint or protest. Upon arrival, Nebuchadnezzar ordered that they be trained in the “language and literature of Babylon” (1:4). This seems innocuous — but take a look at what they studied. Archeological discoveries have revealed the curriculum for “wise men” in this period of time. Besides the pagan creation and flood stories, the bulk of their education (after learning the incredibly difficult Akkadian language), would have been divination texts. They studied how to tell the future by watching the stars, pouring oil into water, reading omens



Tremper Longman III

from the livers of sheep, and many other ways.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah not only did not protest; they graduated summa cum laude (1:20).

The four men also had their names changed. Again, this may seem innocent enough to us whose names often have no deep significance, but in the ancient world, names meant something. Daniel’s



What was so important about what they ate? All the obvious answers are wrong.

name was a statement of faith: “God is my judge”. Nebuchadnezzar changed his name to Beltshazzar, which in Akkadian means “the divine lady protects the king”.

It is more than likely that Daniel and his friends did not like these new names and did not refer to each other by them. They would have rather studied the Torah than the Enuma Elish, Babylon’s creation account. But the text records no protest.

However, when it came to the food that Nebuchadnezzar provided for them (“a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens,” 1:5), they would have nothing to do with it and worked out a deal where they could substitute it with a diet of vegetables and water. Why? What was so important about what they ate?

All the obvious answers are wrong. Their diet was not a matter of observing the food laws of the Old Testament (Lev. 11). For one thing, wine was kosher. Also, it appears that this new diet was a temporary measure, since Daniel 10:3 mentions that after being disturbed by a vision,

Daniel stopped eating choice food and meat and drinking wine for three weeks. The fact that the Judean men’s abstinence was temporary shows that they didn’t balk at food offered to idols. From what we know about Babylonian practice, even the vegetables would have been offered to the idols.

If ceremonial laws weren’t the pressing concern, what was? Daniel and the other young men were giving God room to work so that the success they achieved could only be attributed to him.

At the end of the course, they were pronounced the best in the class as well as the best looking. They were “healthier and better nourished than any of the other young men who ate the royal food” (1:15). The witnesses (and readers forever after) knew that this result was because of God and not the food. Daniel 2 demonstrates that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah’s wisdom, too, was a divinely given wisdom and not a result of the classes they took at “Babylon University”.

This story is not just a record of a past event; it was recorded to help God’s people in later times know they can live in a culture that is toxic to their faith and not only survive, but succeed.

The story does not provide a formula for determining what activities God’s people can participate in. Sometimes Christians will have to abstain from certain activities. Sometimes we will have to protest (though note that Daniel and the three friends’ actions were totally private). But there will also be times when Christians can participate in a pagan culture’s activities. Christians must prayerfully consider these questions and not just mindlessly play along with — or mindlessly oppose — contemporary culture.

Tremper Longman III is Robert H. Gundry Professor of Biblical Studies at Westmont College. He is the author of Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation, and most recently editor of the Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms, vol. 2: Psalms 42-89. This article is reprinted from Christianity Today, November 2007.

Value families

Economists devalue families, to Australia's great cost.

Recently, a prominent Australian economist and self-confessed atheist, Padraic McGuinness, denied that Christians could have anything useful to say on economic and social questions. "The immorality of Christian social policy" was the haughty title of his recent article for *Quadrant*, the conservative monthly magazine he edits. In it he castigated churches' economic and social policies for being "at best stupid and at worst wilfully immoral" (*Quadrant*, November).

Some of his comments were doubtless justified, especially his targeting of some well-intentioned but misguided Christian organisations or "social justice" bodies which promote unworkable and economically damaging — and, I would add, anti-Christian — doctrines such as Marxism. But McGuinness was wrong to characterise all Christian thought on social matters as pernicious in this way.

The absence of Christian values in our political and economic thinking is a major part of the crisis of modernity. Although there are countless aspects of the economy that one could discuss from a Christian perspective, in this article I shall confine myself to considering the failure of contemporary policy-makers to recognise the economic value and spiritual importance for society of that most fundamental institution: the family.

Modern free-market economics, with its emphasis on economic growth, the profit motive and individual self-betterment, often over-simplifies matters and sidesteps the fact that few, very few, people exist as solitary beings answerable to no-one but themselves. In infancy, old age and sickness most people are dependant on others, just as when they are of working-age and in good health they are often providers for others.

The great Christian statesman of two centuries ago, the Irish-born Edmund Burke, spoke of "the little platoons" of our society — institutions such as the family, church, neighbourhood, workplace or professional association. He said that "to love the little platoon we belong to in society ... is the first link in the series by which we proceed toward a love to our



**John
Ballantyne**

country and to mankind. The interest of that portion of social arrangement is a trust in the hands of all those who compose it..."

Of these little platoons that make up society, the most fundamental one by far is the family, for it is a God-ordained institution that predates both the church and state. The term "economics", it should also be remembered,

comes from the ancient Greek term *oikonomia*, meaning wise management of a household for the long-term benefit of its members. Christians, then, are on firm ground in upholding the institution of the family as vital to the good of society.

***Unfortunately,
today the
family has
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fewer friends
in politics.***

Unfortunately, today the family has fewer and fewer friends in politics. Much of left-wing ideology is captive to radical feminists who excoriate the institution of marriage as patriarchal and oppressive to women, and who devalue motherhood as a sort of drudgery for which no intelligent woman should sacrifice a paid career.

The conservative side of politics, however, has not been equal to the task of defending the family adequately in recent times. It is true that the Howard Government did a few things for the family. It passed the Marriage Amendment Act of 2004, which enshrined the legal definition of marriage as being the union of a man and a woman, thereby preventing radical judges from re-defining marriage to accommodate same-sex couples (as had happened shortly before then in Canada and the American state of Massachusetts). It made at least some improvements to the disastrous and mis-

named Family Law Act introduced in 1974 by Gough Whitlam's Attorney-General Lionel Murphy. It also adopted some electorally-popular measures such as financial benefits for families with dependent children (but unfortunately failed to index them to inflation).

Even while the Howard Government did these worthwhile things, its economic policies sometimes worked in opposition to the family. Most notorious of all in my opinion was the Coalition's response to a Western Australian referendum held on February 25, 2006 — the same day as the WA state election — in which a substantial majority of WA voters said "no" to proposals to deregulate shopping hours and to introduce seven-day trading in the Perth metropolitan area. The Howard Government's response was to impose on WA an annual fine of more than \$7.5 million for its refusal to comply with the National Competition Council's demand for full deregulation of trading hours.

Britain's famous World War II Prime Minister Winston Churchill once said: "Sunday is a divine and priceless institution, the necessary pause in the national life. It is the birthright of every British subject, our responsibility, privilege and duty to hand on to posterity."

Unfortunately, in today's Australia, as in much of the rest of the world, the supposed economic imperative of seven-day trading now takes precedence over the Christian birthright of families to one day of the week free of labour.

Some radical free-market economists see family responsibilities literally as an encumbrance on the "productive" side of the economy. When a woman leaves the paid workforce to have children, economic output is said to suffer, so everything must be done to entice her back into the paid workforce.

However, omitting from our national accounts figures the significant unpaid, or underpaid, work undertaken by a married woman in the household is a scandal, and gives people a very lopsided and incomplete picture of the economy. There is no logical reason for this. None other than Australia's internationally-renowned

economist, Colin Clark (1905-1989) — a devout Christian and father of nine children — drew attention to this oversight many years ago.

Hailed as the father of the gross national product (GNP) for his 1930s work in the pioneering of modern national accounting methods, Clark later became the first economist to attempt to estimate the value of unpaid work undertaken in the household sector. In 1958 he came to the startling conclusion that it was responsible for between a third and a half of all work done in the economy.

In 1989, Melbourne University economist Dr Duncan Ironmonger, following Colin Clark's example, attempted to put a money value on Australia's household sector. He concluded: "Collectively the household is a far larger industry than any other sector of the 'market' economy. Australian households actually produce about three times the output of Australia's entire manufacturing industry; or ten times the GDP of Australia's much publicised mining industry."

However, from a Christian point of view, there is something even more important than the mere economic contribution of household production. The family is God's ordained instrument for linking past and future generations and enabling civilised values to be passed on to the young.

A secular writer, the late Dr Alberta Siegel (1931-2001), professor of psychology at Stanford University — famous for her pioneering research on the effects of televised violence on children — once warned that civilisation depends for its survival on its ability to reproduce civilised values in the younger generation. She said: "When it comes to rearing children, every society is only 20 years from barbarism. Twenty years is all we have to accomplish the task of civilising the infants who are born into our midst each year. These savages know nothing of our language, our culture, our religion, our values, our customs or our interpersonal relations. The infant is totally ignorant about communism, fascism, democracy, civil liberties, the rights of the minority as contrasted with the prerogatives of the majority, respect, decency, honesty, customs, conventions and manners. The barbarian must be tamed if civilisation is to survive."

Today the survival and future of Christian civilisation itself is at stake. The great Anglo-American Christian poet

and cultural commentator T.S. Eliot spoke of the peril of allowing Christian civilisation to decline. Should this happen, the task of rebuilding will take centuries. He said: "If Christianity goes, the whole of our culture goes. Then you must start painfully again, and you cannot put on a new culture ready made. You must wait for the grass to grow to feed the sheep to give the wool out of which your new coat will be made. You must pass through many centuries of bar-



Australia suffers from the family lacking sufficient time to perform its indispensable civilising role.

barism. We should not live to see the new culture, nor would our great-great-grandchildren: and if we did, not one of us would be happy in it."

Australian society today suffers from the family lacking sufficient time to perform its indispensable civilising role. What with both parents usually in the paid workforce — not necessarily out of choice but out of financial compulsion — it is an increasing rarity for all members of a family to be seated together around the table for a meal. Children, instead of deriving their values from their parents, are increasingly vulnerable to the influences of today's coarse and toxic mass culture.

Much more could, and should, be done by government to recognise the importance of family and to enable it to discharge its functions better. Government should:

1) Strengthen marriage laws, discourage easy divorce and, indeed, treat marriage as a privileged institution, not to be treated as no more significant than a de facto couple shacking up together or a same-sex relationship.

2) Provide financial justice, either through tax relief or the payment of family benefits, for married couples with dependent children. This should be seen, not as a demeaning welfare payment but as legitimate compensation for the loss of a second income when a mother leaves the paid workforce to have children, and for

the considerable costs a family incurs in raising them. Genuine choice, not financial compulsion, should govern whether a mother with young children should return to the paid workforce or continue as a full-time homemaker.

3) Empower families to be able to exercise the maximum choice in how they raise and educate their children. Funding (or tax deductions) for "child care" should be paid, not to child-care institutions, but to parents who should be free to choose between raising their own children or hiring a paid stranger to do so. Funding for schools, instead of being paid by governments to schools, should be paid to families in the form of vouchers equal to the standard cost of educating a child of a given age. Parents could then spend the voucher on the school of their choice, government or independent.

Last, but not least, government should yield both to God's law and to voters and bring back the work-free Sunday.

John Ballantyne is a historian and journalist. He is editor of News Weekly and associate editor of National Observer, and is a member of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria's Church and Nation Committee. The views expressed here are his own.

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Joy unconfined

So much of the Christian life proceeds from contentment.

It is not hard to see that Paul's letter to the Church at Philippi is filled with a deep sense of Christian joy. One way or another, the notion of rejoicing comes through some 18 times in this letter. What might not be immediately obvious is the practical connection between Christian joy, and the grace of Christian contentment.

Learning the practical realities of contentment is never easy. We should hardly think otherwise when God has devoted the entirety of the 10th commandment to covetousness, and its opposite. While at one level Christian contentment can be discussed intellectually, as if it were nothing more than a "doctrine", real contentment only exists as it is evidenced in response to particular situations. Real contentment is like a smile; it must come from peace and joy flowing deep within the soul, otherwise it is false. The façade of contrived contentment is quickly seen for what it is because selfishness cannot restrain itself, except for selfish reasons!

The apostle Paul told the Philippian Church that he had learned what it was to be content, and that he had proved the reality of this grace in his own life (4:12-13). Was there plenty? He had found there was no need to seek for more. Was there less? He had found that there was no occasion to complain. No doubt there was still much room for improvement (3:12), but the liberating effect of the sanctifying work of the Spirit was clear as he looked at his own life.

But Paul had also learned that the grace of Christian contentment works itself through the whole of life and extends to areas that have little to do with one's material circumstances. Contentment is a grace that goes far beyond the things we do or do not possess.

Graham Nicholson

Consider some of the adverse situations and occasions for temptation he describes. He was in prison for no other reason than that he was a Christian apologist and cut off from the wider fellowship of the church while others remained free. It seems that he was also

At a purely material level this might simply mean deliberately enjoying a little less in order to give a little more.

under the very real threat of death. Yet in the midst of this, the reality of true Christian contentment overflowed in an unmistakable way. If God controlled the length of his days, then God would also control Paul's usefulness

in a way that he never could (1:21-27).

Somehow, in the midst of this imprisonment, sections of the professedly evangelical arm of the church had lost sight of their main calling and saw preaching the gospel as an opportunity for self-aggrandisement and payback (1:15-17)! Despite this clearly unsanctified behavior, Paul could be content that while in this case their life was a contradiction, at least their words exalting Christ were true (1:18).

The situation worsens. Evidently these preachers, or others influenced by them, had been so consumed by this blindness that they had also lost sight of the reality of pastoral needs and their duty of pastoral care. As a result Paul, himself in need of support, would forgo the refreshing companionship of one of his trusted and needed assistants, in order to redress this lack and repay the Philippian Church for their own sacrificial kindness (2:19-24).

In all this Paul was mindful of the need to provide a "do as I do, not just do as I say"

model to a congregation that, despite its missionary generosity, was itself in danger of splitting into separate supporting factions (4:1-3). In an era of confusion over the true nature of the gospel, and a plethora of false teachers, division was deadly.

The doctrinal model for this extraordinary largeness of spirit in the apostle is found in the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. Paul had learned what it was to be content by studying the way in which the Eternal Son of God so willingly put aside his legitimate rights and privileges in complete submission to His heavenly Father (2:1-11). Though inherently worthy of the highest possible honours, He was content to suffer loss *in extremis* so that the purpose of redemption might be fully pursued.

With Christmas and the New Year soon to be upon us, and all the materialistic pressures our culture unhelpfully associates with the season, the grace of Christian contentment can be stretched to the limit. According to the book of Philippians, the solution is simply to move behind all the glitter, gifts and gourmet food and consider again the awesome reality of what God has done in Christ for us and to willingly submit to all that this is to effect in our lives.

At a purely material level, this might simply mean deliberately enjoying a little less in order to give a little more. But the grace of Christian contentment surely drives us further than the giving of things. True Christian contentment with who we are in Christ brings grace to seek reconciliation and forgiveness and the strength to move forward unburdened by past failures and freed for further usefulness. It strips away the spirit of grumbling and unnecessary disputing and replaces it with love, and a generosity of spirit that confounds the watching world. It removes all petty jealousies, even in ministry, and unites all under the headship of Jesus.

After all, all this and more, is the final goal of the incarnation (2:8-11).

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*20 daily Bible studies in
Genesis 37-41*

Our culture is putting a lot of pressure on us as Christians to conform to its ways and its standards. What is more worrying is that we are caving in to this pressure and allowing it to mould our behaviour, perhaps much more than we realise. The influence of materialism, so that we gather more things around us without even our consciences discerning the presence of greed; the influence of the general moral decline that renders us insensitive to the sin of lust; the influence of prosperity that destroys our capacity for restraint and self-discipline; the influence of self-image and pride that makes it so hard to admit mistakes and say “I’m sorry” – all these things make us too much like the proverbial frog that adapts to the rising temperature of the water and eventually expires without being aware of any danger.

There was a time in Western civilisation when the church, God’s covenant people, influenced and fashioned the culture. For more than a century that has not been the case, until now we find ourselves in the situation where we are adopting the world’s ways and the world’s standards for fear that we might lose even the few people we have left. Is this too strong a judgement?

The story of Joseph is a good wake-up call to all of us – especially as we see the stand he makes under such prevailing pressures, and how this contrasts with the behaviour of his brothers. Let us pray that it is not too late to start reversing our direction by living lives, like Joseph, that “speak” out against pride and lust and greed and indulgence.

Bruce Christian ▶

DAY 1

A recipe for disaster?

THE PASSAGE

GENESIS 37:1-4

THE POINT A new chapter starts to open in the fulfilment of God's promises in the life of His covenant people. The once feisty Jacob is old and sad; his beloved Rachel is dead (35:16-18), his father Isaac is dead (35:27-29), his brother Esau from whom he hijacked the blessing has been totally terminated from the covenant line (the effect of his genealogy in chapter 36), and he is at last settled in the land promised to his grandfather, Abraham. Our attention is now drawn to the older of his two favourite sons, Joseph.

THE PARTICULARS

• Jacob's settling in Canaan was a consequence of his securing the blessing that really belonged to his twin brother Esau (1).

• Although Judah is the son of Jacob from whom will be born the Messiah, Jesus (cf Matthew 1:1ff), the focus of the remaining 14 chapters of Genesis is on Joseph, the older of Jacob's 2 youngest sons, the only children of the wife he really loved, Rachel (2).

• Joseph's unpopularity among his brothers wasn't helped by his obvious feeling of superiority, especially among the 4 sons of his father's concubines: Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher (2).

• Jacob's attitudes/actions only added fuel to the fire (3-4).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

• Does God's use of our folly to achieve His purposes excuse us?

DAY 2

In your dreams!

THE PASSAGE

GENESIS 37:5-11

THE POINT We've been told about the tension that existed between Joseph and his brothers, and some of the reasons for it. We would be excused for suspecting this is not going to be a happy family! We are now introduced to another side of Joseph – his ability to dream, and to understand what God is saying through dreams. We also see another example of his openness and willingness to share his thoughts with others when it might have been wiser to keep them to himself (cf Proverbs 11:12). Yet all this was part of the mix that God will use to carry out His sovereign will.

THE PARTICULARS

• Joseph couldn't help having the dreams, or even drawing

some conclusions as to their meaning. He clearly saw dreams as a valid way for his God to communicate with him (after all, he didn't have any written Scriptures). What he didn't have to do was tell his brothers or father about them. In the circumstances, it was not hard to work out what their reaction would be.

• Jacob was no stranger to God's amazing providence. Whereas the brothers were justifiably jealous and angry, and he disturbed, he could at least see a possibility of the dreams' fulfilment (11).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

• Can Christians be guilty of spiritual one-upmanship? Are you?

DAY 3

A father sends his beloved son

THE PASSAGE

GENESIS 37:12-20

THE POINT We will see many things in the life of Joseph that will remind us of Jesus. Today we see his determination to finish the task his father had given him; and his jealous kinsmen's plot to kill him.

THE PARTICULARS

• Jacob's decision to send Joseph on an errand to his brothers in a relatively isolated place was a simple, everyday action that would not call for prayer for divine guidance; but God can use our mundane actions and interactions to change the course of human history and thus fulfil His sovereign purposes (12-14).

• Joseph's perseverance in spite of disappointments or setbacks was evident in his character even as a young man. It will

be an asset God will use in later years – in fact, fairly soon (15-17)!

• Blessings can have their down-side! It was probably Joseph's remarkable coat that made him recognisable from a distance and therefore gave his brothers time to plot their evil scheme (18).

• The brothers should have realised that if Joseph's dreams were in fact a message from God, no scheming on their part could ever prevent them from coming true (19-20). The same can be said of the Jews' plan to kill the One who claimed to be their Messiah!

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

• Do you persevere with tasks God has given you to do for Him?

DAY 4

Man proposes, God disposes

THE PASSAGE

GENESIS 37:21-30

THE POINT Jacob's first 4 sons were born to Leah, the sister substituted for his beloved Rachel. Reuben, the oldest, had already blotted his copybook (35:22), and Judah, the fourth, is soon to do so (38:15-16). But we are all complex people, and these two are the only ones among the brothers to show some compassion to Joseph!

THE PARTICULARS

• Reuben's attempt to rescue Joseph was sincere, but lacked any courage. As the oldest he may have had some clout with the rest, but by failing to act openly and decisively he achieved nothing, only creating more remorse for himself, somewhat like Peter the disciple, or like well-meaning friends who assure us of their sup-

port privately, but don't speak up publicly (21-22, 29-30)!

• Moses doesn't tell us here, but we'll find out later (42:21) how young Joseph pleaded for mercy from his older brothers as they just sat and enjoyed their meal, and how they would have this callous act on their consciences for the next 22 years (23-25).

• Unaware of Reuben's undeclared soft-spot, Judah too looks for a loop-hole to rescue Joseph – and God graciously provides it in the descendants of Ishmael going from Midian to Egypt (26-28).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

• Read Romans 8:28 and 1 Thessalonians 5:18. Do you trust God?



Come worship with us!

If you are passing through or moving nearby, feel free to ring the Minister, Clerk or Elder.
Find us on the Web at: <http://www.presbyterian.org.au/states.htm>

northern territory

DARWIN

Casuarina Shopping Centre 9.30am.
Rev. Rob Duncanson (08) 8988 9911.

australian capital territory

CANBERRA, BELCONNEN

Cnr Gatty St. & Ross Smith Cres, Scullin.
Sunday Service 10:00 am

Elder: Mrs J. Cram (02) 6278 7379

CANBERRA, FORREST (St Andrew's)

1 State Circle (opp Parliament House).
Service Times: 9.30am. & 7.00pm.

Church Office: (02) 6295 3457

CANBERRA, TUGGERANONG

Isabella Plains: Isabella Plains Primary School,
Ellerstone Ave.

Worship Service & Sunday School 10.00am.
(02) 6292 6772

new south wales

ABBOTSFORD-FIVE DOCK

443 Great North Rd., Abbotsford. 9.30am
& 5.00pm. Rev. Moses Hahn (02) 9713 2939.

ANNANDALE-LEICHHARDT

Hunter Baillie, Johnston & Collins Sts.
10.00am, 6.30pm. 2nd & 4th Sundays.

Rev. Peter Dunstan (02) 9810 7869

ARMIDALE (St. Paul's)

Faulkner St, 9.30am. & 7.00pm.

Rev. David M. Seaman (02) 6772 3093

ASHFIELD

Liverpool Rd. & Knox St. 10.15am & 6.00pm
Rev Peter Hastie (02) 9798 6572.

BEACON HILL (St Andrew's)

244 Warringah Rd. 9.00am. & 7.00pm.

Rev. Trevor Cheetham (02) 9451 5076.

BEECROFT

Mary St., 8.45am. 10.30am. & 5.30pm.

Rev. Paul Cooper (02) 9876 2478.

BEGA — EDEN

Bega — 25 Upper St. 9.30am.

Contact: Mrs M. Cochrane (02) 6492 2949

BONDI

Cnr. Castlefield & Miller Sts.

10.00am & 7.00pm.

Rev John Graham: (02) 9130 6607.

BONNYRIGG

Western Regions Chinese Church

14-16 Bibbys Place. 9.30 am. (English) &

11.00 am. (Mandarin)

S.Clerk: Stanley Chen (02) 9753 2073

BOWRAL-MITTAGONG

Bowral: 20 Bendooley St. 10.30am.

Kid's Church: 10.30 am. 1st & 3rd Sunday

Mittagong: Cr Alice & Edwards Sts. 9.00am.

Rev. Doug McPherson: (02) 4872 4052.

BURWOOD (St. James)

46-48 Belmore St. 9.15am

Rev. David Maher (02) 9744 6542

BURWOOD CHINESE

46-48 Belmore St. 9.15am & 11.15am

(Cantonese) 10.30am & 5.00pm (English).

Church Office: (02) 9715 3889.

Rev. Dennis Law 0414 812 776.

Rev. Eugene Hor 0414 992 106.

Mr Joe Lin 0405 203 064. Miss Amy Leong
0415 777 829 (Pastoral worker)

CAMPBELLTOWN

34 Lithgow St. 8.30 am. 10.00 am. 6.30 pm.

Rev. Jim Elliot (02) 4625 1037.

CARINGBAH

393 Port Hacking Rd. South. 9.30am & 6.30pm.

Rev. Darren Middleton (02) 9540 4469.

CASTLE HILL

247 Old Northern Rd. 9.30am & 6.00pm.

Rev. John Thompson (Transition Minister)

(02) 9634 2911.

CHATSWOOD

St Andrew's, Anderson St. 9.00am & 6.30pm.

Rev. Jeff Read (02) 9419 5932 (W) 2077 (H)

CHERRYBROOK

John Purchase Public School Hall,

Purchase Road. Service: 9.30 am.

Rev. Stephen Fong (02) 9875 3684

CHINESE CHURCH

Cnr Crown & Albion Sts. Surry Hills.

English/Cantonese/Mandarin/Bilingual

Services. Office (02) 9331 4459.

Rev Ezra Tseng (02) 9500 1259(H).

COFFS HARBOUR (St Andrew's)

187 Harbour Dr. 8.00am, 9.45am & 6.30pm

at Harbourside Evangelical Church.

Rev. Jamie K. Newans (02) 6652 3183

CONCORD

Cornerstone Presbyterian Community Church

Meets Concord Public School 9.30 am.

Cnr Burwood Rd. & Stanley St. Concord

Rev. C S Tang (02) 9688 7880 (H)

COWRA

46 Macquarie St. Also Gooloogong,

Morongla. Ph (02) 6342 1467.

CRONULLA

13 Croydon St. 9.30am.

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.

8.45am, 10.30am & 7pm. (02) 9876 1188.

FORSTER/TUNCURRY

Bruce St. Forster, 9.30am, 6.00pm.

I.M. Rev. Scott Donnellan (02) 6582 2505

GLEN INNES

Heron St. 11.00am & 7.00pm.

All ages study groups 9.30am.

Pastor Lance Jackson (02) 6732 5707

GOULBURN (St Andrews)

Clifford St. 9.00am. 7.00pm (2nd & 4th

Sundays). Also **Taralga, Crookwell and**

Tuena. Rev. Chris Balzer (02) 4822 2344

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. 9.30am.

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. & McMahon St. 9.30am &

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

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.

MANLY (St Andrew's)

Raglan St. & Augusta Lane. 9.00am.

Rev. Derek Bullen (02) 9976 2801

MAROUBRA

8 Robey St, 10.00am. 7.15pm.

Chinese Service, 4pm.

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. Adrian de Graaf (02) 9969 6101.
NAROOMA
 1 Farncombe Ave. 11.00am.
 Rev. David Hassan (02) 4474 2186.
NEWCASTLE (St Andrews)
 Cnr. Laman & Auckland Sts 9.30am & 6.00pm.
 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. Robert McKean (02) 6362 6304
PARKES/FORBES/PEAK HILL
 Parkes: S. School 10.00am; Service 11.00am.
 Forbes: 9.00am. Peak Hill: 10.00am.
 1st Sunday. Rev. Craig Bland (02) 6862 2730
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.
REVESBY
 Cnr Tower St & Eastern Avenue,
 Service: 9.00am & 6.30pm.
 Rev. Dr Peter Barnes (02) 9774 5740.
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.
 Ass. Min. Mark Armstrong (02) 4751 1188
 (O). I.M. Rev. Dr Lindsay Ferrington
SUTHERLAND
 Cnr Flora & Glencoe Sts. 9.30am & 5.30pm
 Rev Andrew Clausen (02) 9521 2361
SYDNEY (Scots Church)
 44 Margaret St. Sydney. Sun: 10.30 am.
 Wed: 1.15pm. Rev. Adrian Van Ash
 (02) 9299 7490 (O) (02) 9817 0587 (H).
TAMWORTH (St Stephen's)
 Cnr Matthews & Crown St. 9.00am &
 6.30pm. **Moonbi** 9.00am.
 Rev Stuart Andrews (02) 6765 8754.
Tamworth Community Presb Church,
 St Stephens, Cnr Matthews & Crown St.
 10.30am. Rev Keith Walker (02) 6766 1802
 Rev. Phillip Chang (02) 6766 6393.

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
WENTWORTH FALLS (St Andrew's)
 Falls Rd. 9.00 am.
 Rev. Keith King (02) 4784 1255
WENTWORTHVILLE (St Andrew's)
 7 McKern St. 9.00am & 5.00pm.
 Rev. Luke Tattersall (02) 9863 8366.
WESTLAKES
 Warnervale Community Hall, Virginia Rd
 S. School 10.15am. Service 10.00am.
 Rev. Esa Hukkinen (02) 4353 0868
WEST YALONG
 Pioneer Memorial, Court St. 10.30am.
Barmedman: 1st & 3rd Sunday. 9.00am.
Mirrool: 3rd Sunday. **Tallimba:** Contact
 Minister. **Weethalle:** Last Sunday 7.00pm.
 Mr. Graham French (02) 6972 2143.
WOLLONGONG (St Andrew's)
 Cnr Kembla & Burelli Sts. 9.45am & 6.00pm.
 Rev. Granville Pillar (02) 4226 1725(O).
WOOLGOOLGA
 Cnr Scarborough St & Landrigan Cl. 9.00am.
 Rev. Jamie K. Newans (02) 6652 3183.
WOONONA
 7 Gray St. Rev Peter Currie (02) 4284 4057.
WOY WOY
 118-120 Blackwall Rd. 9.00 & 10.30 am.
 Rev. Keith Rathbone (02) 4342 2856.



ACACIA RIDGE
 Cnr. Mortimer & Beaudesert 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 (Tablelands)
 Cnr. Alice & Jack Sts. 10.00am & 6.00pm.
 Rev. Cameron Willis (07) 4091 7203.
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. 9.00am & 7.00pm.
 Rev. Wallace Brown (07) 4151 4766.
CABOOLTURE
 24 Cottrill Road. 9.00am & 6.00pm.
 Rev. Don Kennedy (07) 5498 6253
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.
CLAYFIELD (Scots Memorial)
 29 Bellevue Terrace, 9.30am & 6.30pm.
 Rev. Andrew Richardson 0423 160 412
COORPAROO
 Emlyn St. 10.00am.
 H. M. Phil Case (07) 3397 8793.
CREEK ROAD
 Presbyterian Ministry Centre. 1541 Creek Rd
 (cnr Fursden Rd). **Carina** 9.00am & 6.30pm.
 Centre: (07) 3398 4333. Rev Peter Barson
 (07) 3398 9823. Ass. Mr Jens Norved (07)
 3396 1185. Japanese Service 11.30am.
 Jack & Keiko Marshall (07) 5501 9220.
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 9.00am &
 10.45am. (07) 5571 5676. www.arundel.org.au
Robina: Cnr University & Cottesloe Drives
 10.00am & 6.30pm.
 Rev. Kevin Ridley (07) 5571 1416
GOLD COAST (II)
Mudgeeraba: Cnr Mudgeeraba Rd &
 Regency Pde. 9.00am & 6.30 pm.
 Rev. John Morrow (07) 5545 4167
GOLD COAST (III)
Christ Church: Currumbin Primary School,
 Phillip Street, Currumbin – 9.30am.
 Rev. Alan Radloff (07) 5530 5758.
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.
 Office: (07) 3281 7201, Fax: (07) 3202 2571.
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.
Rev. Walter Jones (07) 4622 1158

MAROOCHYDORE

45 Okinja Road Alexandra Headland 9.00am
& 7.00pm. Rev. Peter Barber & Church
Office (07) 5443 7073.

Rev. Keith Mayers (07) 5445 9209.

MARYBOROUGH

523 Alice Street. 9.00am (& 5.00pm first
Sunday). Rev. David Newman (07) 4123 1212

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

SHAILER PARK/CORNUBIA

99 Bromley St. **Cornubia.** 10.00am &
6.00pm. Rev. Don Geddes (07) 5522 8982.

SPRINGSURE

Charles St. 9.00am.

Emerald: Cnr Ruby & Egerton Sts., 11.00am.

Rev. B. J. Harrison (07) 4984 1550.

THE GAP

1195 Waterworks Rd, 9.00am.
Rev. Chris Perona (07) 3300 2987

TOOWOOMBA NORTH (St David's)

Mary St. Also at **Geham.**

TOOWOOMBA SOUTH (St John's)

Cnr Cranley & Geddes Sts. 9:30am, 6pm.
Rev Graeme McKay (07) 4635 4560

Murphy's Creek, Thor St 9:30am.

Westbrook, Westbrook Hall, Main St. 9am.

TOWNSVILLE (Willows)

26 Carthew St. Kirwan 9.30am & 6.30pm
Rev. David McDougall (07) 4723 1232

TOWNSVILLE (St Andrew's)

113 Wills St. City. 9.00am. & 6.30pm.
Ass. Rev. 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 4000 (H) (07) 4633 4188 (O).

WINDSOR

Maygar St. 8.30am.

Wilston: Macgregor St. 10.15am.

Newmarket: Wilmington St. 6.00pm.

victoria

ARARAT

330 Barkly St (Cnr Albert St). 10.00am.
Rev. Iain Hutton (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

159 Nicholson St. 10.00am.
1st of Month 5.00pm. S/school 9.00 am.

Rev. Gary Stephens (03) 5153 1669

BALACLAVA

106 Hotham St. & Denman Ave. 9.30am.
Rev. Tony Johnson (03) 9527 3270.

BENDIGO (St John's)

Forest St. 10.30am.
Rev. Philip Burns (03) 5443 6189.

BLACKBURN

53 Gardenia St. 11.00am.
Rev P Locke (03) 9725 6417

BRIMBANK

Sydenham Community Centre

Cnr, The Community Hub & Overton Lea
Blvd, 6.00pm each Sunday.
Rev. Peter Owen (03) 9747 8195.

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

9.30 am 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.

I.M. Rev. Dr Botrosdief (03) 9505 3013.

CHELTENHAM Pioneers' Presbyterian

8 Park Rd. Cnr. Charman Rd. 9.30am. Rev.
Choul Yat; Sudanese (Nuer Language) 2.30pm.
I.M. Rev. M. Wharton (03) 9018 9521.

CLIFTON HILL

Cnr Michael & McKean Sts North Fitzroy.
10.45 am. Rev. Peter Phillips (03) 9346 8044.

COLAC (Scots)

90-94 Armstrong Street. 10.00am.
Rev. Marvin Hagans H: (03) 5250 4360
O: (03) 5231 2398

DANDENONG

51 Potter St. 10.00am.
Rev. John Rickard (03) 9792 4252.

DONVALE

Cnr Springvale Rd & McGowan St Donvale.
8.30am, 10.30am & 6.30pm.

Rev Gerald Vanderwert (03) 9842 9493. (03)
9841 7020 (O)

DROMANA-MORNINGTON

St Andrew's, Gibson St. 9.00am.
Mornington (The Chapel) 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.

FLEMINGTON

Norwood St. 9.30am.
S. Clerk Miss R. Anstee (03) 9650 9903.

FRANKSTON

30 Radiata St. 10.30am & 6.00pm.
Rev. Bill Medley (03) 9786 2976.

GEELONG (St. Georges)

Cnr. Latrobe Tce & Ryrie St.
10.00am & 7.00pm.

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

GEELONG NORTH

Cnr Victoria St & Balmoral Cres. 10.00am.
Rev. Allan Lendon (03) 5278 1887.

S. Clerk Mr Bert Stasse (03) 5241 4097.

GEELONG WEST (Scots)

Cnr. Pakington & Waratah Sts. 10.00am.
Rev. David Assender (03) 5249 5508.

Clerk: Mr J. R. Diffen (03) 5264 8080.

HAMILTON

St Andrew's, Gray & McIntyre Sts. 10.00am.
& 5.00pm. (last Sunday of month)

Phone: (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

KOREAN MELBOURNE

16 Walnut Rd. North Balwyn. 11.00am &
3.30pm. Pastor Suk Won Kim 0438 985 738.

LEONGATHA

Cnr. Bent & Turner Sts. 10.00am.

Session Clerk: (03) 5662 2107

MALVERN

161 Wattleree 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. Miles Fagan (03) 5592 5220

NUMURKAH

58 Saxton St. 11.15am.

Tallygaropna: 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 (every 2nd Sunday).

H. Missionary – Mr S. Arbuckle.

S. Clerk – Mr J. Broad (03) 5484 1927.

ST KILDA

Cnr Alma Rd. & Barkly St. 11.00am &

7.00pm. Rev. Bob Thomas 0417 592 646.

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 &

6.00pm. Family Services 6.00pm (2nd & 4th
Sunday). Rev. Chris Siriweera (03) 9833 3306.

SURREY HILLS (St Stephen's)

Deaf Presbyterian Church

Canterbury & Warrigal Rds. 2.00pm.

Rev. Tony Salisbury (03) 9551 3634

(Mod. 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. 10.30am &

7.00pm. **Office:** (03) 5562 2029. **South**

Warrnambool: McDonald St. 9.30am.

Woodford: Mill St. 11.00 am. I.M. Rev. Neil

Benfell (03) 5562 7771

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

1363 Healesville-Koo Wee Rup Rd. 9.30am.

I.M. Rev. Tony Archer (03) 5966 2309.

WYNDHAM

116-120 Blackforest Rd. 10.00am.

Pastor Shane Cassidy (03) 9974 2024

western australia

BASSENDEN

14-16 Broadway. 9.30am.

Rev. Ross Fraser (08) 9248 3252.

BICTON

Harris St. & View Tce. 9.30am & 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.

International Service 12 noon.

Rev. Seong Mo Byun (08) 9382 2325.

south australia

ADELAIDE (St Anarew's)

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

Rev. Chris ten Broeke.

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. S. Slucki (08) 8296 1581

LARGS NORTH

Brenda Terrace. 11.00am.

Rev. Raymond Brewer (08) 8263 9692.

MILLICENT

Cnr Fifth & Sixth Sts. 10.30 am.

Rev. Alan Clarkson (08) 9739 6490.

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,**

Nelson (Vic). Rev Gary Ware (08) 8723 9028.

NARACOORTE

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. 9.30am. Rev. Alan Clarkson (08)

9739 6490. Also **Dergholm, Kalangadoo**

PORT AUGUSTA

Jervois St. 10.00 am.

Barry Rossiter (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. Dr Reg Mathews (08) 8395 7841.

tasmania

CORNERSTONE (Hobart) 10.00am.

The Philip Smith Centre, 2 Edward St, The

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

CROSSROADS 5.30pm.

“The Philip Smith Centre”, 2 Edward St, The

Glebe. 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 9.30am

& 6.00pm. Clerk David Turner (03) 6247 7971.

SCOTTSDALE

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

9.00am. 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.

Rev. Charlie Kennedy 0400 228 241.

WEST TAMAR (Auld Kirk)

Sidmouth 10.00am and Mole Creek 2.00pm.

Clerk: Steve Buckland (03) 6396 3213.

*To register your church in this section of AP
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*Facsimile the AP office on: (03) 9723 9685
or E-mail us at: aus-pres@bigpond.net.au*

The Annual Fees are:

Congregations under 50 \$45.00 plus GST

Congregations 51 -99 \$55.00 plus GST

Congregations 100 or more \$65.00 plus GST

DAY 5

His father wept for him

THE PASSAGE

GENESIS 37:31-36

THE POINT Do you remember when Jacob used clothing and a slaughtered goat to deceive his own poor aged father (27:19-40)? Now he was at the receiving end of the trickery, and he was going to feel for himself the same anguish of soul he had brought upon Isaac. He had been very aware of God's sovereign hand of blessing over all those events so long ago now; but it would be another 22 years of heartache and misery before he would see this same sovereign God's purposes for blessing in this cruel deception!

THE PARTICULARS

- Again, the special robe that Jacob had intended to mark Joseph off as his favourite son, became a source of misery (cf

Day 3) – undeniable evidence that this favourite son was now dead. Had it not been for such a distinctive item, Jacob could have lived in hope that one day Joseph might walk into the tent and greet him!

- In many ways the Joseph story anticipates Jesus. We see here his "death" for the ultimate "salvation" of his brothers, and the emotional cost of this to a father for whom he was very special.
- Moses will keep us in suspense for a whole chapter while he recounts a story to help us appreciate Joseph's character a bit more; and he intensifies this suspense by mentioning Potiphar!

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Jacob sent his son on a mission that cost him his "life": familiar?

DAY 6

The sin of the fathers...

THE PASSAGE

GENESIS 38:1-11

THE POINT The account of Judah and Tamar serves a double purpose in the outworking of God's salvation history: it gives us a backdrop of weakness and immorality against which Joseph's purity and integrity in chapter 39 will form a stark contrast; and it will be a reminder to us that God knows our sinful condition can only be cured by the provision of a Saviour ... so He is lining one up!

THE PARTICULARS

- Unlike the innocent brother he had sold for 20 shekels of silver, Judah was able to go on and enjoy a normal married life (1-5).
- Er's untimely death was probably God's judgement on both his own wickedness and the sins of his father (6-7, cf Ex. 20:5).

• Although the levirate law had not yet been formally stated (see Deuteronomy 25:5-10) its requirement was already known to God's covenant people: Onan must marry Tamar and produce a son for his dead brother Er, or bear the stigma in the community for refusing to do so. His attempt to avoid this responsibility by deception also incurred God's wrath and judgement (6-10).

- Judah again failed in his responsibility as the head of his family to ensure that God's covenant requirements were fulfilled (11).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Do fathers today take their God-given responsibility seriously?

DAY 7

Tamar and the two goats

THE PASSAGE

GENESIS 38:12-19

THE POINT There are two goats involved in this story: a young one and an old one. In the history of both the Old Testament Church and the New Testament Church, many lives, families, and ministries have been damaged because of sexual indiscretion – a failure to take seriously God's commands about adultery, or sex outside the confines of a permanent, exclusive marriage relationship.

THE PARTICULARS

- There is no evidence that Judah had any ulterior motive in his going to Timnah, other than the one stated. But Tamar would have been aware of his vulnerability as a recent widower, and was quick to take advantage of the opportunity, feeling justified

in this by her father-in-law's failure in his obligations (12-14).

- The trap worked, a good warning to us all, repeated many times over in Scripture, about the weakness of the flesh (15-16a)!
- Tamar was very shrewd; DNA had not yet been discovered, so she anticipated needing proof for a paternity case (16b-18)!
- Like us Tamar could hide her real identity behind a "mask" (19).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Judah thought he was doing something that only involved two consenting adults and therefore was not causing any harm to anyone. In what ways does God see the situation differently?

DAY 8

A kid on the way?

THE PASSAGE

GENESIS 38:20-26

THE POINT Our minds play amazing tricks on us – a reminder of their sinful condition! Once Tamar's true identity was revealed, the weird "mysteries" in the sequence of events over the previous trimester would have suddenly become so plain to Judah that he would have had difficulty believing he had been so stupid not to see it. Is this not usually the case whenever our heart runs ahead of our head and we fail to notice even the clearest warning signs? At least reading and reflecting on a portion of God's Word each day should go a long way towards protecting us from making such foolish, harmful mistakes (cf Psalm 1, Psalm 119:9-11)!

THE PARTICULARS

- Judah would have been keen to deliver the young goat he had promised, probably more as a means of retrieving his "proof-of-identity" items than as payment for the services rendered (20).
- We can imagine the immediate impact on Judah of the report, "There hasn't been any shrine-prostitute here", but the passing of three months sufficed to deaden his conscience enough for him to pronounce severe, self-righteous judgement on Tamar (24).
- Judah at least humbled himself when his sins were exposed (26).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- How many different sins does this passage warn us about?

DAY 9

Grace is unpredictable

THE PASSAGE

GENESIS 38:27-30

THE POINT God’s Plan of Salvation, centred on the blood of Christ, is like a scarlet thread running through the whole of Scripture. But God is full of surprises – this bit of the thread was woven with lust, prostitution, incest, and again the “wrong” twin without the scarlet thread! (Zerah at least rates a mention in Matthew 1:3!)

THE PARTICULARS

- What Tamar thought was one child turned out to be twins (27).
- We don’t normally react very kindly towards those who take our rightful place in the queue – in every situation, ranging from the supermarket, to the person who comes up the left lane in the traffic

when he knows as well as you do that it merges further up; from the Ticketek line, to the illegal immigrant who bypasses the proper channels. Here is yet another instance of “queue-jumping” in Genesis, and it won’t be the last (cf 48:10-20). Jacob had tried to displace Esau “legally” (cf 25:21-26), and when that failed he had to “steal” the rights of the first-born. His grandson, Perez, on the other hand, managed to succeed with the method that hadn’t worked for his grandfather – and he took his place in the genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah-King (cf Matthew 1:3). Such is the often inscrutable providence of our sovereign God.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- What does this passage teach us about the nature of grace?

DAY 10

Privilege and responsibility

THE PASSAGE

GENESIS 39:1-10

THE POINT How easy it would have been for Joseph to neglect his responsibility and abuse his privilege! How easily he could have just rationalised the situation: he is only a servant – should he not do whatever his superior asks of him? What harm could come from a little private fling between consenting adults? Who need know? It would have seemed like a perfect, no-risk, no-strings-attached opportunity for a bit of pleasure that he needn’t even feel bad about because it was “forced” upon him. But Joseph had other responsibilities/privileges because he belonged to God’s covenant people – that decided all his actions. What a contrast between Joseph and his older brother, Judah, in the last chapter, or, more sadly, his great-to-the-power-of-nine nephew, David!

THE PARTICULARS

- We can see God’s sovereign hand at work in every little detail of this story as it unfolds; it is all moving towards the fulfilment of His Master Plan in history – nothing is happening by chance.
- This does not mean the players are puppets. In fact, Joseph’s success, his rise to power, and his obedience to God’s commandments, are all the result of the exercise of his will (and won’t!).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Is your outlook on life shaped by keeping a healthy, biblical balance between God’s sovereignty and your responsibility?

DAY 11

When good people suffer

THE PASSAGE

GENESIS 39:11-20A

THE POINT In Habakkuk 1:2-4 the prophet struggles desperately with an issue that has plagued God’s Church ever since our expulsion from the Garden of Eden: How can a just God allow so much injustice to go unchecked? And as Habakkuk had to learn, the answer can only be found in the “big picture”. The distressed and confused disciples at the foot of the cross had not yet seen the empty tomb. The horrifically persecuted Church in parts of the world today can only wait for the Lord’s Return in Judgement. The story of Joseph is only one part of the jigsaw puzzle, but because we know its ending it is very encouraging for us in our little struggles with the apparent triumph of evil and ungodly men.

THE PARTICULARS

- Joseph remained entirely innocent through this ordeal; there is nothing he could have done to avoid the disastrous outcome: 2 years in prison, and probably not even any final vindication. Neither was he given an opportunity to tell his side of the story; and, as is often the case, there were no witnesses. (Be careful!)
- Innocent Joseph suffered all the guilt, shame and punishment of someone else’s wickedness – and she went free. Sound familiar?

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Have you suffered a gross injustice? Is it worse than Joseph’s? ... or Jesus’? Can you leave the matter in God’s sovereign hand?

DAY 12

To be or not to be...

THE PASSAGE

GENESIS 39:20B-23

THE POINT We can’t help being distressed for poor Joseph, but Moses now reminds us of the one single factor that makes all the difference: the LORD was with him! He attributes all his successes and his blessings to this fact (21, 23). Great men and women of God have been conscious of His presence with them, and His close, active involvement in all their circumstances (cf David in Psalm 139).

THE PARTICULARS

- Perhaps the reason Joseph could say to his brothers years later, when they feared repercussions from how they had treated him, “You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good” (50:20), was because he had experienced God’s hand at work undeniably in everything that

had happened in his life, both good and bad.

- No matter how adverse his external circumstances, Joseph’s personal situation always seemed to move towards a scenario where he was in charge, just as his earlier dreams had foretold!

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- If it was the LORD who caused the Egyptian prison warden to be so favourably disposed towards Joseph (21), so that he was trusted with great responsibility (22), what does this teach us about the importance of prayer to our relationships, welfare, and advancement in our places of work and other activities? Do you remain prayerful about every aspect of your daily life?

DAY 13

... perchance to dream...

THE PASSAGE

GENESIS 40:1-8

THE POINT God is not limited in the means at His disposal for getting people out of dungeons. For Peter He used an angel (Acts 12:6ff) and for Paul an earthquake (Acts 16:25ff). To Jeremiah He sent a friend (Jeremiah 38:7ff). For Joseph He arranged for two of Pharaoh's trusted staff to blot their copy-books to get them into the prison, then arranged for them both to have dreams that would not only contribute to Joseph's release (after 2 years delay!), but also to his being able to save his family and the whole known world.

THE PARTICULARS

- The cup-bearer and baker were important, trusted officials in Pharaoh's household, carrying significant responsibility and author-

ity. We are not told how they offended their master, only that it was serious enough for them to be put away for 2 years.

- God can reveal Himself, His plans, and His will through dreams; although, if He does, He must also provide the meaning (8). This method of revelation is rare in the Bible itself and since we now have access to the Bible, its witness to Jesus His Son, and the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, we no longer need dreams.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- What indication is there that these dreams were given by God (cf 5)? What dangers are associated with assuming dreams are a valid means of guidance today (cf 2 Corinthians 11:13-14)?

DAY 14

... what dreams may come...

THE PASSAGE

GENESIS 40:9-15

THE POINT It is clear that there is very little logical connection between the cup-bearer's dream and Joseph's interpretation of its meaning. Just as God was the source of the dream, so He was the source of its correct, and subsequently verified, message. We don't know how God did all this, especially how He led Joseph to conclude what he did (why would the 3 branches represent 3 days and not 3 weeks, months or years?), but we do know that Joseph's explanation was specific and accurate. The importance of this will be seen later when Pharaoh is prepared to stake the whole future economy of Egypt on Joseph's word about his own dream (a lot of shekels would have been wasted on silos if the 7-year famine had been a fizzer!).

And Joseph was in no doubt at all.

THE PARTICULARS

- There is no hint as to why the cup-bearer was reinstated, but it is not relevant to the point Moses is making: God's sovereign grace is unconditional. Many things in His providence (why does He save some and not all?) can seem arbitrary and unfair.
- The freed cup-bearer is Joseph's only lifeline! Will he remember him? After all, Joseph has always been the victim of injustice! The message for us is that Joseph's trust is in God, not man.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Did Joseph's request in vv 14-15 display a lack of trust in God?

DAY 15

... shuffled off this mortal coil

THE PASSAGE

GENESIS 40:16-22

THE POINT It is perhaps natural for us to think that if God answers prayer in a particular way for someone else He will do the same for us. But His providence is a very personal thing. Peter had to learn this important lesson from the Master in that life-changing post-resurrection encounter on the Galilean beach (John 21:20-23). So much harm has been done to people's spiritual lives today by the erroneous belief that if we pray in a certain way God must answer in a certain way because that's what He did for, say, Jabez (1 Chronicles 4:10)! I don't know what the future holds for me, but I know who holds the future. He has proved His love for me (Romans 8:32), so

I can trust Him fully with every detail of my life, whatever direction His providence for me might take.

THE PARTICULARS

- There is sad irony in the obviously hopeful way the chief baker said to Joseph, "I too had a dream", ignorant of what lay ahead.
- Again, it was only God who could have enabled Joseph to give the correct interpretation of the chief baker's dream (cf 8a).
- God's Plan was executed with perfect precision (20-22).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Try to get hold of the Heidelberg Catechism and reflect on Qs 26-28. (I can email you a copy: bchristian@ozemail.com.au).

DAY 16

He forgot him

THE PASSAGE

GENESIS 40:23-41:13

THE POINT Was Joseph's last hope for freedom now gone? We can easily identify with the chief cup-bearer's amnesia: he was so excited about his good fortune that he forgot about its source. (We live in a country where people are so enjoying its blessings – like a beautiful sunny Sunday at the beach – that they have no time for the Giver.) But the sovereign Lord was able to remind him, and to do it in a way that led to the next stage of His overall Plan!

geon for another 2 years. What we can be sure of is that He did have a very good purpose in it, as He did in the 25 years Abraham and Sarah had to wait for Isaac, and in whatever it is in your life at the moment for which you are crying out, "How long?", even if you never discover this side of heaven what it is.

- These weren't the only dreams Pharaoh ever had, but clearly they really worried him in a strange way; he needed answers.
- It is a universal fact that dreams don't have to make sense in the real world (like corn eating corn); it is the meaning that matters.

THE PARTICULARS

- Even from our later perspective, with so many other pieces of the jigsaw in place, it is not clear why the Lord left Joseph in the dun-

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Does God ever forget those who are His? – see Isaiah 49:15

DAY 17

Some dream!

THE PASSAGE

GENESIS 41:14-32

THE POINT The significance of Pharaoh's pair of dreams in God's Plan of Salvation is stressed, not only by the fact that God gave him the same message in 2 ways (cf 32), but by the fact that Moses gives the details of them both twice (cf the 2 accounts of Peter's vision concerning the Gospel extending to the Gentiles in Acts 10/11; and the 3 accounts of Paul's conversion in Acts 9/22/26). As a consequence of these dreams, God will: (1) fulfil the prophecy about Joseph's rise to power; (2) save the world from famine; and (3) get His chosen people into Egypt where they can multiply as promised to Abraham, and so rescue them in a way that would foreshadow Christ as the Passover Lamb, sacrificed to set men free from bondage

to sin (1 Corinthians 5:7). Moreover, as the OT repeatedly shows, the story of the Exodus will remain for ever at the heart of Israel's understanding of their God and His power to save. Some dream! Some God! Some just ignore Him!

THE PARTICULARS

- Joseph again insists that only God, not he, can interpret dreams.
- God alone controls the weather and seasons; concern for global warming is futile if we ignore what God is shouting to us by it.

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- The Bible is unique among religious books in the way it proves God's control of history, centring it all on Christ as Saviour.

DAY 18

A foreshadowing of Christ

THE PASSAGE

GENESIS 41:33-45

THE POINT Paul's succinct summary of Jesus' life in Philippians 2:5-11 has a striking resemblance to the life of Joseph. The one who is misunderstood, despised and rejected, who "dies" at the hand of his brothers, who is falsely accused after a blameless example, comes "back from the dead" and is finally raised to the highest place of honour and authority. Yet those responsible for his "death" will be kept from knowing all this for a time, although he had told them beforehand that it would happen, and when confronted with the reality of it, they did not recognise him!

THE PARTICULARS

- Was Joseph wittingly writing his own job description in verses 33-36? We don't know, although, given his earlier dreams, he could have been excused for doing so! His profound wisdom is a fine example of the truth of Solomon's adage in Proverbs 9:10.
- It was not only Joseph's ability to interpret dreams and to form a plan that landed him the job; it was his consistent godly life.
- We're left in no doubt as to the honour the ex-dungeon-dweller was given. Where was Potiphar's wife when this happened?
- The jury is still out on the meaning of Zaphenath-Paneah (45).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Did Joseph seek honour and power, or God's glory (cf Mt. 6:33)?

DAY 19

Forgetting what is behind...

THE PASSAGE

GENESIS 41:46-52

THE POINT During Joseph's time in Egypt God was not only providing food for the seven years of famine that were to come, he was also providing a family line for him, two sons whose names would loom large in the history of the nation that would later settle back in the land of Canaan after their long sojourn in Egypt.

THE PARTICULARS

- Unlike some wealthy, high-ranking people, Joseph worked hard to exercise good stewardship of the honour and responsibility God had given him. He didn't let power go to his head (46-48a).
- Joseph was wise in his decentralisation policy; the farmers would

have co-operated more enthusiastically in his program, when they saw the grain stored locally, than if removed (48b).

- Joseph, because of his trust in God and obedience to His leading, brought great blessing to many people. God kept the promise He had implied in the dreams He had given to Pharaoh, far beyond anything he might ever have imagined (49; cf Ephesians 3:20).
- Joseph named his first son Manasseh, a reminder that God now enabled him to "forget" the sadness of the past 20 years; his second he named Ephraim, anticipating future prosperity (50-52).

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- How does Joseph typify Paul's advice in Philippians 3:13-14?

DAY 20

There is grain in Egypt

THE PASSAGE

GENESIS 41:53-42:2

THE POINT The Joseph story again reaches one of its climaxes. At last the reader begins to see some purpose in the many years of injustice, emotional pain, and physical suffering that our hero has had to endure. Was there some other way God could have carried out this phase of His Plan of Redemption? We don't know. But this is the path He did take, and we can only sit in awe and wonder before Him, that He does all things well. There is grain in Egypt! In another 15 centuries men will gather at the foot of a cross on a hill outside Jerusalem. They will look up and see the wisest and most gracious and kindly of men nailed to that cross, and they too will ask, "Was there no other way God could have carried out this phase of

His Plan of Redemption?". And we will say, "We don't know". But our hearts will be filled with gratitude and love because our sin has been dealt with, our past is forgotten, and we are reunited with the Father who made us for Himself.

THE PARTICULARS

- Joseph's obedience to God's call, and response to His revealed word and will, brought salvation and blessing to many nations.
- Dejected Jacob knows only a small part of the amazingly rich blessing he will receive when his sons make the journey south!

TO PONDER ... AND TO PRAY

- Have you learnt the Bible's lesson of victory through suffering?



Across Australia

PresAID Christmas appeal

The 2007 PresAID Christmas Day Appeal will be for the benefit of three overseas causes. First is the **Mulanje Mission Hospital, Malawi**, for the establishment of a fistula treatment centre, midwifery training, palliative care and to buy hospital beds. Second is the **Presbyterian Church of Bangladesh**, to help set up four **discipleship training centres** in rural areas and support of an orphanage for boys from a tribal background. Third is the **Evangelical Reformed Church of Myanmar** for church buildings, educational aids for children, a dormitory for the church's school at **Sami**, and translation of Christian literature into local language.

PresAID convener **Bob Thomas** said "for those who are asking about tax deductibility, we haven't obtained it yet, but are investigating the possibility".

Turning to Scotch

Scotch College chaplain **Graham Bradbeer** became **Moderator of Victoria** when the annual assembly began on 8 October. The service had a strong Scotch College flavour. At the door Scotch College prefects handed out orders of service that set the standard for years to come. Inside were the **Scotch College Chamber Orchestra**, and the **Scotch College Chapel Band** joined the great organ to lead the hymns, and a Scotch College lad accompanied the **Scotch College Chamber Choir**. Mr Bradbeer preached from John 2:17.

Malawi vision

The Rev. **Colin M'Bawa**, who studied at the **Presbyterian Theological College** in Melbourne from 1999 to 2002, spoke to the assembly as part of the report by the **Australian Presbyterian World Mission**, convened by **Rev. Philip Burns**. Mr M'Bawa is a minister of the **Central Church of Africa Presbyterian Blantyre Synod**, which has a strong connection with the Victorian church. The assembly was deeply moved to hear of the great needs of this country, and of Mr M'Bawa's vision for the evangelisation of the great lands south of Malawi all the way to South Africa, and

his eloquent challenge to be part of that work by prayer or even by going!

Moderators mourned

The deaths of four ministers during the past year, three of them past moderators of the assembly, were noted by the assembly. They were **Rev. Ronald Trill**, **Rev. Colin Harrison**, **Rev. Geza (Stephen) Sasy** and **Rev. Hector Dunn**. The assembly also noted the death of **Elder Robert (Bob) Curran**, a long-serving elder of the assembly, and passed a memorial minute for **Dr Sheila Barr**, a long-serving elder of the **Scots Church Melbourne** who died in August aged 91, and whose service as a member of the **Scots' Church Properties Trust** for more than 40 years continues to bring benefits.

New appointments

The Victorian assembly decided to appoint another lecturer to the **Presbyterian Theological College** and a training officer to promote training in the whole church. The assembly unanimously appointed the **Rev. Jared Hood** as lecturer and the **Rev. Nello Barbieri** as training officer from 1 January 2008.

Students wanted

The **Theological Education Committee** noted progress made in building six home units at theological college to house students and staff, and expressed the hope that with the generous support of the whole church, the units might be able to be opened debt free. The committee asked for prayer for new workers to train at the college for the ministry, the mission field and for diaconal service.

Gospel plans

The **Christian Education and Nurture Committee** reported the innovative ways it is developing to share the gospel with the wider community and for strengthening the young folk of our Church in their love for the Lord Jesus. The **Health and Community Chaplaincy Committee** report highlighted the work being done by volunteers in hospitals and nursing homes, and asked that congregations be made aware of the urgent need for the appointment of visiting chaplains to some of Melbourne's major hospitals. It gave thanks that the **Rev. Wally Gear** has

begun full-time chaplaincy at **Kirkbrae**, the church's aged-care homes, hostel and nursing home at **Kilsyth**. Assembly gave the committee approval to renew its annual Easter appeal, with the proceeds going to the **Ministry to the Deaf** (this committee is partly responsible for the support of the **Presbyterian Deaf Congregation** at **Surrey Hills**).

New name

The **Healthy Churches Committee** at its request got a new name — **Ministry Development Committee** — which it believes more accurately conveys to the wider church its role offering training and evangelism grants to assist congregations. It also offers second ministry worker grants for growing churches, and the assembly resolved to encourage such churches to consult the committee about funding.

Principal retires

The Victorian Assembly farewelled **Dr Gordon Donaldson**, who will retire as principal of **Scotch College** this month. It celebrated a book launch, with the publication of **Dr Allan Harman's** new commentary on Daniel, with the author himself present to sign copies for those happy to buy it at a special assembly price arranged by **Mignon Goswell**, manager of **PTC Media**. The assembly also approved a job description for a **pastoral care support worker** for ministry wives.

WA centennial assembly

The 100th session of the **WA General Assembly** convened at the **Bassendean Presbyterian Church** at the end of October, initiating a number of long term ministries and streamlining the financial administration of the **PCWA** to aid further church consolidation, development and expansion.

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Trinity link

Receiving the report of the **Theological Education Committee**, the assembly resolved to continue to build relationships with **Trinity College** and further endorse Trinity as the training college for local ministry candidates. It endorsed the appointment of the **Rev. Darrell Thatcher** as the coordinator for the new **Presbyterian School of Theology** which will begin courses next year. The school will be based at the premises of the Bassendean congregation.

The assembly also endorsed the vision for a new **Presbyterian Christian School** presented by the TEC. The goal is to provide an outstanding Christ-centred education for the whole child – academically, physically and spiritually – from a biblical and Reformational perspective. The school would be sited in an area not already serviced by a Christian college. At the outset, land, classrooms, a suitable number of toilets and office space would be required.

Church plants

The WA assembly endorsed the **Mission and Evangelism Committee's Metro Wide Strategy** for establishing new Presbyterian congregations throughout the Perth metropolitan area. The committee will discuss future ministry directions with the **Peel Christian Fellowship** (meeting in suburban Mandurah). The next area for church extension work will be the greater Rockingham district, under the direction of the **Scots Church Session** with the committee.

Rutherford friends

Rowen Butler, former missionary in Nepal and Egypt, spoke at a friendship dinner at the **Rutherford** (NSW) church hall on 13 October.

About 30 people attended, including a few visitors.

Church and Nation

Western Australia will have a **Church and Nation Committee** for the first time. It will be headed by the **Rev. Ross Fraser**, with **Dr Phil Burcham** of the **University of Western Australia** and **Dr Augusto Zimmermann** of **Murdoch University** among its members.

The assembly accepted an invitation to become a member of the Bible Society of

WA, requesting the moderator to represent the PCWA on the Bible Society Council. The church's connection with the society dates back to the Rev. David Shearer in 1884.



Around the World

YouTube Islamist arrested

A man who placed an "obituary" on YouTube of one of the leading opponents of plans to build Europe's biggest mosque near the London Olympics site has been arrested. The video, "In memory of **Councillor Alan Craig**", features the leader of the **Christian People's Alliance** party, his wife and two daughters. The two-minute video has now been taken down.

Mr Craig said: "This incident now seems over. I will not be intimidated by threats of any kind as important issues about this mosque have to be addressed in an open and fair fashion. This whole episode has exposed the reality that some Muslims accustomed to using either violence, intimidation, or the threat of violence are linked to the idea of this mosque."

It is being proposed by the controversial Islamist group **Tablighi Jamaat**, whose previous adherents include Glasgow airport bomber **Kafeel Ahmed**, shoe bomber **Richard Reid** and the July 7 bombers **Mohammad Sidique Khan** and **Shehzad Tanweer**.

Christian Today

Call to downgrade Christmas

Christmas should be downgraded in favour of festivals from other religions to improve race relations, says an explosive British report. Labour's favourite think-tank says that because it would be hard to "expunge" Christmas from the national calendar, 'even-handedness' means public organisations must start giving other religions equal footing.

The leaked findings of its investigation into identity, citizenship and community cohesion also propose "birth ceremonies", at which state and parents agree to "work in partnership" to bring up children; action to "ensure access" for ethnic minorities to "largely white" countryside; an overhaul of Britain's "imperial" hon-

ours system; bishops being thrown out of the House of Lords; and an end to "sectarian" religious education.

The report is by the **Institute for Public Policy Research**, which has shaped many Labour policies. It says: "We can no longer define ourselves as a Christian nation, nor an especially religious one in any sense."

Daily Mail

Threat to bomb Christians

Islamic militants threatened to bomb a Christian family for refusing to convert to Islam as fighting between militants and government troops resumed in north-western Pakistan recently. "Become Muslim – otherwise, we are going to destroy your house with bombs," an anonymous caller told a Swat Christian family. A tiny Christian community in North West Frontier Province has reported increasing pressure to conform to Islamic law in recent months. Since July, followers of Muslim cleric **Maulana Fazlullah** have worked to enforce Islamic sharia law in much of Swat Valley, prompting clashes with government troops.

Bishop backs brothels

The **Roman Catholic bishop of Portsmouth**, England, is backing a campaign to legalise brothels.

Bishop Crispian Hollis says he does not condone prostitution but supports the controversial campaign launched by **Hampshire Women's Institute** to license brothels, reports his local newspaper in Portsmouth.

At their autumn conference more than 200 WI groups voted unanimously in favour of council-licensed brothels to protect prostitutes, and are now working towards a national campaign. Bishop Hollis told the **Portsmouth News**: "If you are going to take a pragmatic view and say prostitution happens, I think there's a need to make sure it's as well-regulated as possible for the health of people involved and for the safety of the ladies themselves.

"That's not to say I approve of prostitution in any way. I don't. But it's going to be there whatever we do."

Steeple's steep bend

The **Guinness Book of World Records** has ruled that a church steeple in Germany, not the famous leaning tower of Pisa, is the most tilted tower in the world. The 25.7-metre steeple tilts at an angle of 5.07

degrees, while the tower of Pisa tilts at just 3.97 degrees, said **Olaf Kuchenbecker**, head of Guinness's German edition. "When you lay photos of the two next to each other you can see it relatively clearly," Kuchenbecker said.

The 15th century German church tower stands in **Suurhusen**, a small village near Emden in northwestern Germany. Although its tilt angle is greater than Pisa's tower, it is less than half its height and has none of its ornate beauty.

Christian Today

Egyptian activists released

Egyptian police have released two Christian rights activists detained for three months. A host of journalists, lawyers, clergymen, family and friends gathered at the Cairo home of **Adel Fawzy Faltas** to celebrate the acquittal and release on 5 November of the Egyptian head of the **Middle East Christian Association** and an associate. Faltas, 61, and colleague **Peter Ezzat**, 25, had been held on unsubstantiated charges of insulting Islam and tarnishing Egypt's reputation abroad. Faltas had conducted an online interview with a controversial convert from Islam to Christianity only days before his arrest on 8 August.

Compass Direct

'Spies' were Christians

Christian persecution watchdog **Voice of the Martyrs (VOM)** has revealed that "foreign spies" and "native citizens working for a foreign intelligence service" in North Korea were in fact Christian believers.

At a press conference in Pyongyang in September, security service spokesman **Li Su Gil** said that the arrested persons "carried out the missions by means of diverse espionage equipment". VOM said it had managed to identify the seven males and two female believers who were arrested.

VOM spokesperson **Tod Nettleton**

said, "Following Jesus Christ is considered treason in North Korea, where the government mandates that worship is reserved for deceased dictator **Kim Il Sung** and his son, the current dictator, **Kim Jong Il**."

The Christians had started a portrait photography studio and registered their business with the government authorities. They were not involved in espionage work.

Christian Today

Muslim warns of fear

A leading Muslim in Britain has warned authorities against helping to create a climate of fear and suspicion similar to that in Nazi Germany during the 1930s.

The government's policy of emphasising the threat from al Qaeda is alienating many Muslims and undermining social cohesion, **Muhammad Abdul Bari**, head of the **Muslim Council of Britain**, said.

"The air is thick with suspicion and unease. It is not good for the Muslim community, it is not good for society." He suggested the British government and MI5 were helping create an atmosphere of exclusion with their rhetoric.

"Every society has to be really careful so the situation doesn't lead us to a time when people's minds can be poisoned as they were in the 1930s," he said in an interview with *The Daily Telegraph*. The new head of MI5, **Jonathan Evans**, said recently that militant Islamists were growing in number and were targeting children as young as 15.

Christian Today

Presbyterian ordained in RC church

A "quirky yet welcome" event took place within the **Church of Scotland Presbytery of Perth** recently when new minister **Allan Wilson** was ordained to serve the churches of **Dunbarney** and **Forgandenny**.

The ordination attracted such significant numbers that neither of the two church buildings could cope. So the local independent Roman Catholic girls' school, **Kilgraston**, offered their chapel for the service. This put Wilson in the unique position of being a Kirk minister ordained and inducted within a Roman Catholic place of worship.

Christian Today

Christian couple to be whipped

In July, an Iranian Christian couple was sentenced by the **Justice Court of Revolution** to be whipped, two years after they were accused of attending a house church. The couple was arrested on 21 September 2005, by government agents. They had gathered in a house, in a town northwest of **Tehran** for their regular prayer and devotional time.

Following the arrest in 2005, the couple was required to check in with authorities on a regular basis until the court decided their punishment. But on one occasion when the wife met with authorities, she was abused and decided not to return. After a few days, in September 2007, six agents went to their house and showed them a letter from the court saying they should execute the sentence of whipping right there in their house.

Farsi Christian News Network

Anti-gay cult to pay \$11m

The **God Hates America** cult, famous for its merciless protests at some of the most inappropriate occasions imaginable, have been ordered to pay nearly US\$11 million in damages to relatives of a US Marine, after its members cheered his death at his funeral.

Notorious for protesting funerals of troops killed in Iraq, members of **Westboro Baptist Church** in Kansas have been widely condemned in Christian circles for the offensive nature of their protests.

A federal jury determined the Church and three of its principals invaded the privacy of the dead man's family and inflicted emotional distress when they protested at his funeral last year. **Marine Lance Corporal Matthew Snyder** died in combat in Iraq in March 2006. Members of the cult said the soldier's death was God's

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punishment of America for tolerating homosexuality, though Snyder was not gay. Fred Phelps has been waging a one-man war against homosexuality for years.

Christian Today

Abusing the bottle

A church minister in Norfolk is facing a possible fine for dropping litter after he put Scriptural messages into bottles and threw them into the sea in an unusual attempt to spread the gospel to the far corners of the earth – or at least other bits of Europe.

Reports in the *Yorkshire Post* indicate that, instead of drifting across the North Sea, as **Pastor Leslie Potter** had intended, the plastic bottles floated straight back to beaches in Norfolk – inadvertently causing an environmental hazard.

In October, Pastor Potter was told that he faces a possible fine for littering the award-winning sands at Gorleston. Reporters say that angry local walkers have been obliged to pick up and recycle the “message in a bottle” remnants, which have had the effect of irritating them rather than drawing them to what mystics would call the effulgence of God’s splendour.

Ekklesia

Call to recognise genocide

The **General Assembly of the National Council of Churches USA** and development agency **Church World Service** have urged the **US House of Representatives** to pass legislation recognising the slaughter of Armenians in 1915 as a genocide.

The Armenian genocide statement said it is “unacceptable that the United States has yet to officially recognise the genocide of 1915, which in fact decimated a majority of the Armenian population then living in Asia Minor.”

The statement cited Congress, which acknowledged “this universally recognised historical fact (and) condemning this crime against humanity.” Most historians agree that the slaughter was carried out by soldiers of the then Ottoman Turk Empire.

Ekklesia

Christian hospital in Palestine

CURE International, a US-based Christian medical charity which operates

teaching hospitals throughout the developing world, has announced plans to open a \$16.5 million state-of-the-art medical training centre and hospital in **Bethlehem**, Palestine.

The facility will be the first specialty surgical care available to Palestinian children in the West Bank. “This cardiac and orthopaedic hospital fills a major need in the West Bank where medical care is severely limited,” said **Dr Scott Harrison**, an orthopaedic surgeon who founded **CURE International** 10 years ago.

Harrison is appreciative of the cooperation between Christians, Muslims and Jews who are working together to provide medical care for children in the area. “The Bethlehem hospital is unique in that it is bringing together three faith groups to build a facility of healing in a very volatile region,” said Harrison.



On the Agenda

Ethical investment

Religious organisations already have a major stake in the global economy and can now shift decisively towards using their resources for ethical purposes and to redistribute wealth to the poor, a major group of faith investors says.

“Faith organisations have the real potential to transform the global money markets, but are currently failing to ‘walk the walk’ when it comes to ethical investment”, **Joost Douma, Secretary General of the International Interfaith Investment Group (3iG)**, told a gathering of major faith fund leaders in Paris recently.

Representatives of nearly two dozen Christian, Jewish and Buddhist faith organisations, with combined assets of more than \$135 billion, will be advised to work together using shareholder activism to promote ethical, environmental and socially sustainable behaviour by companies in which they have funds invested. Meetings will be held with leading pension funds, led by **ABP** – the second largest fund in the world – to pool resources to influence multi-nationals.

If successful, the talks could link the activities and investment strategies of religious and institutional investors with assets of up to a trillion dollars, creating a

massive market for faith-consistent and other ethical investments.

Addressing the first ever major conference of 3iG, **Douma** said: “The great faiths wield enormous economic power in stock and shares. They own a substantial part of the habitable surface of the planet and administer literally millions of buildings, community facilities, welfare networks and employment projects. The assets of 3iG’s members alone are equivalent to more than the Bank of England’s entire foreign currency and gold reserves.

“Until now, faith organisations have consistently failed to use their investment power to the full. They have focused solely on what not to invest in: guns, pornography and so on. Now 3iG is asking faiths to focus on positive action, using investment to promote good activities rather than merely avoid bad ones. At the same time, 3iG is providing the skills and advice faith organisations need to become effective financial activists.”

Michiel Hardon, 3iG Board member and a representative of the **World Council of Churches**, adds: “In a world of increasing multi-national power, which often subverts or makes obsolete the powers of national government, it’s time that the world’s first multi-nationals – the major faiths – flexed their full financial muscle.”

The move is attracting the close attention of many in the financial sector with the **World Bank** directly involved in discussions. **Abbas Mirakhor, executive director of the International Monetary Fund**, also addressed the conference.

3iG is a coalition of like-minded faith organisations committed to using their funds for faith-based and socially responsible investments and promoting the similar use of the funds of their grassroots members. Its members include the Church of England, the Church of Sweden, the World Union of Progressive Judaism, the United Methodist Board of Pension and Health Benefits and the Foundation for the Preservation of Mahayana Tradition.

Ekklesia

Bid to bind church schools

A British government adviser is considering plans to stop church and other faith-based schools having the power to select pupils – something which has led to widespread accusations of discrimination against them.

According to a report in the *Sunday Mail* newspaper, **Richard Brooks**, the new senior aide to **Ed Balls, Secretary of State**

for Children, Schools and Families since June, makes the point that faith schools may be causing "segregation by social class" because of their policies.

Brooks' analysis says that powers currently enjoyed by **Church of England** and **Roman Catholic** schools to choose children based on their faith are "unfair" – a charge regularly made by critics from both religious and non-religious backgrounds.

The **Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)**, the **British Humanist Association**, the Christian think-tank **Ekklesia**, and groups within Hindu, Jewish and other communities have raised similar concerns.

But Ekklesia has been told that government advisers have been deterred from facing the issue because of the popularity of selective schools among middle class parents, and because the anti-religious rhetoric of some critics has led government wrongly to conclude that opposition is from "just a few malcontents".

In fact opinion surveys have shown widespread public support for inclusive, community education; and both parents and teachers have expressed concern about the special exemptions given to academies and faith schools.

As an alternative to the current situation regarding selection, Mr Brooks apparently wants a new fairer admissions system in which faith schools would be required to take a broad range of children based on their abilities and family income.

One of the schools that would be affected by the reforms, says the Mail, which is antagonistic to any change, would be **The London Oratory**, the elite Roman Catholic school attended by former PM Tony Blair's oldest children.

The school recently fought a High Court battle to retain its powers to interview parents of prospective pupils to assess the family's level of religious devotion before admission.

Ekklesia

Abusers seek forgiveness

A Ugandan rebel group which has committed appalling human rights abuses over the years and has been implicated in cult-like religion has said it realises it was wrong and wishes to seek forgiveness from its many victims.

The **Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)** has been criticised by human rights and church groups for years. Now, under conditions of ceasefire, its leaders say it wishes to ask people's forgiveness for crimes committed against Ugandans.

In response, **Catholic Archbishop John Baptist Odama** of the diocese of **Gulu**, in northern Uganda, says that there are "concrete hopes for peace" and restoration of justice in the region.

"The people say they are ready to forgive the rebels for the suffering inflicted. They are applying the gospel command: 'love your enemies and pray for their conversion'. The fact the LRA delegation is continuing its mission in northern Uganda is positive. After Gulu the delegation went to West Nile and then to Lira" said the archbishop.

On 10 November, as the president of the local Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, Archbishop Odama inaugurated the new **John Paul II Centre for Peace** at **Nsambya**, near the Ugandan capital Kampala.

In his address at the inauguration ceremony Archbishop Odama appealed to all Ugandans to strive for authentic conversion, to leave paths of violence and take paths to peace. Archbishop Odama prayed that those most in need would find peace, in particular the children, whom society needs but whose rights it often violates.

The activity of the centre will include networking to promote and support initiatives of peace and social justice, to meet the basic needs of the people.

Ekklesia

Olympic ban on bibles

By Michelle Vu

China is banning Bibles from the Olympic Games next year allegedly for security reasons, according to reports emerging last month.

The Bible is allegedly on a list of items – which include video cameras and cups – prohibited at the 2008 Summer Olympics. This means Christian athletes will not have access to Bibles in their Olympic village housing.

"The banning of Bibles and religious symbols by athletes in the Olympic Village by the Chinese government is evidence that it has not progressed to the level of civility that is worthy of hosting the international Olympic games," said the **Rev. Dr. Keith Roderick**, **Washington representative for Christian Solidarity International**.

The controversial move appears to come merely a month after China's top religious affairs official pledged to encourage religion during the Games.

Ye Xiaowen, director-general of the **State Administration for Religious Affairs**, had said Beijing will "make sure" the religious needs of athletes and tourists will be met.

"Here I can promise that religious services we offer will not be lower than the level of any previous Games," Ye said, according to *Reuters*.

Following the latest development, **Open Doors' media relations director Jerry Dykstra** said it was "apparent" that what the Chinese government says and does concerning religion are "two different things."

"It wants the world to believe there is growing religious freedom in China leading up to the Olympics," Dykstra said. "But the banning of Bibles and religious symbols in the Olympic village represents its two-faced approach."

Christian Today

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Wrong way

The Golden Compass points to a deeply anti-Christian message.

Distributor New Line Cinema is promoting its movie *The Golden Compass* as another *Lord of the Rings*. Their teaser trailer opened with a spinning ring turning into a compass with the legend: "In 2001 New Line Cinema opened the door to middle earth. This December they take you on another epic journey."

Unfortunately, that journey was originally scripted by an avowed atheist. The full movie preview opens with the following voice-over: "There is a world where witches rule the northern skies, where ice bears are the bravest warriors, where every human is joined with an animal spirit as close to them as their own heart. But the world is dominated by the Magisterium – which seeks to control all humanity and whose greatest threat is a golden compass and the one child destined to possess it." The author presents the animal spirits as noble creatures and the Magisterium as mean and domineering.

In reality we live in a world where people are born with a sinful nature. You don't have to train a child to be selfish and rude. They will be that way unless you train them otherwise. Human nature leads

**Ted
Baehr**

to all manner of cruelty and brutality if not kept in check by a society ruled by God's laws.

Phillip Pullman is the author of *His Dark Materials*, the book on which *The Golden Compass* is based. He is an avowed atheist. He presents the church as "The Magisterium" out to dominate

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individuals and restrain their "animal spirits". At one point in the preview, his heroine screams out to the Magisterium agent: "I'll never be yours."

Scriptwriters and filmmakers can make anyone look good or evil.

Nazi films made Hitler look like a god and his enemies look deserving of death.

Christians do not need to buy tickets to Nazi movies or *The Golden Compass*.

When Jesus spoke in the synagogue in Nazareth, He opened the Book of the Law and read, "The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Jesus came to set us free from bondage to a sinful nature. He came to release those captive to lust, greed, drunkenness, pride and the other sinful attitudes that make one man mistreat another. Jesus came to reveal the truth that sets men free.

Pullman prefers spiritual bondage. He sees lust as an exercise of freedom. He sees the Laws of God as totalitarian decrees rather than the foundation of human rights. In his writing, and in the movie based on his writing, animal spirits opposed to God will be portrayed as healthy, wise and cute.

As with *The Da Vinci Code*, the movie version of *The Golden Compass* is supposedly tamed down so as to not scare off Christian audiences, but a tame lie is still a lie. A mild attack on the truth is still an attack. America has long been known to be a Christian culture. While this can be easily disputed looking at American culture in the 21st century, it can justly be shown that the Christian influence still present is what separates America from Third World depravity and poverty.

The further we move from Christian civility the more barbarism we will face in our local communities. Human nature is not a cuddly little chipmunk cracking jokes and providing good advice. Human nature set free from the restraints of Christian society can be found in the torture chambers of North Korea, the gulags of Russia and the gas chambers of Germany.

If you are looking for a savior, you need look no farther than Jesus Christ. If you are looking for bondage, go and see *The Golden Compass*.

Movieguide, via Assist News Services.

ap



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Bull Creek

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The real Santa

St Nicholas: small stature, huge heart, great role model.

As a very young child, I never believed in Santa Claus. I didn't have a chance. Growing up in a Christian family I was told as soon as I could understand that Santa Claus – that roly-poly, white-bearded old man who rode a sleigh and delivered presents through the chimney – was make-believe. It was Jesus, I was told, not Santa, who was the reason for the season.

I never questioned my parents' reason, but I did often wonder how this mythical Santa had endured throughout the centuries as a worldwide phenomenon. How did Santa Claus come about? Who invented him? Or was he a *real* person who had undergone a radical evolution of cultural repackaging. I was eager to find out.

The popularised image of Santa Claus begins with the true story of St Nicholas.

St Nicholas is one of the most admired and well-known saints in the Greek and Latin Church. It is the image of St Nicholas more than any other that is found on Byzantine seals. In the later middle-ages nearly 400 churches were dedicated in his honour in England alone, and he is said to have been represented by Christian artists more frequently than any "saint" other than Mary.

St Nicholas is revered as the patron saint of several classes of people, especially of sailors in the East, and of children in the West. Widely celebrated in Europe is St Nicholas' feast Day, 6 December, which has kept his stories of goodness and generosity alive.

Throughout the centuries, many legends and stories have been told about the life and deeds of St Nicholas. These accounts can help us understand why he was so revered for his extraordinary character and regarded as the protector and helper of those in need. Yet despite his enduring reputation, there is little evidence about St Nicholas that can be historically verified. A number of miracles and acts of compassion and generosity are attributed to him, but it is more likely that some of these accounts have been embellished over the centuries. It is important, then, to try as best we can to separate the fact from the fiction.

Although some ancient accounts vary



Madeleine Turner

on less important detail, they agree on the important facts. The most authentic and historically corroborated stories about St Nicholas relate to his birth, his involvement in helping people out of their unfortunate situations in life, his popular election as Bishop of Myra, and his participation in the Council of Nicea.

Some of the best-known stories of his



As legend has it, Nicholas used his entire inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering.

kindness and compassion reveal his extraordinary character and his impact on so many lives. Other stories tell of his courage and acute sense of justice: saving mariners from a tempest, his intervention in favour of the unjustly jailed, as well as on behalf of three condemned innocents, and his involvement in the destruction of pagan temples. The ancient sources cited to validate this information are Michael the Archimandrite, Sinaitic and Ethiopian manuscripts, Gratianus' *Decretum*, Theodore the Lector, Andrew of Crete, Eustratios of Constantinople (583AD), *Passionarium Romanum* (650AD) and *Praxis de tributo*.

Although the exact date is not known, it is believed that Nicholas was born between 260 and 280 AD. His birthplace however can be historically grounded: Patara in the province of Lycia, Asia Minor. Nicholas grew up in a privileged home of relative affluence. His parents, both devout Christians, brought Nicholas up to fear the Lord. It is believed they died from an epidemic when Nicholas was young, leaving him a large inheritance. As legend has it, Nicholas used his entire

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inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. Sources vary on the exact age of Nicholas when his parents passed away, but for whatever reason, Nicholas moved to Myra to continue his studies and later received his ordination as a priest as a young adult.

Nicholas' first years as a priest were under the joint reign of Roman Emperors Diocletian (reigned 284 – 305 AD) and Maximian (reigned 286 – 305 AD), which provides historians with an estimation of Nicholas' age. From 303 to 311, emperors issued a proclamation authorising the systematic persecution of Christians across the empire. A number of Greek historical sources pertaining to his life agree that St Nicholas suffered for his faith, was exiled and imprisoned, but we don't know when or for how long. Within the period of 307-324, Nicholas rose to the position of Bishop of Myra and, judging from tradition, he exercised influence due to his popularity and well-deserved reputation as a kind and generous benefactor.

In 324, the Roman Empire was united under the rule of Constantine I. Under his patronage, the Christian church experienced an age of prosperity. It was at this time of relative peace that the internal conflicts of the contemporary Christian church came to the forefront. The main reason for such conflict concerned the failure of the church to agree about Jesus' deity.

Such conflict between church factions threatened to create tumult across the empire, so it was in the interest of Constantine I to address the problem by

calling the First Council of Nicea that was also known as the First Ecumenical Council in 325. It was also during this time, that the teachings of Arius in Alexandria Egypt, were gaining momentum but also faced great opposition. Such philosophy would later form the basis of Arianism.

Historians have speculated about the number that attended the council, ranging from Eusebius of Caesarea's report of 250 to Athanasius of Alexandria's 318. What is certain, according to a number of ancient sources,

The real St Nicholas must have looked more like one of Santa's little helpers.

is that St Nicholas was present at the council and noted as an opponent of Arianism. A later historian has claimed that after Arius had presented his case against Jesus' divinity to the council, St

Nicholas is reported to have hit Arius in the face out of indignation! The account gives new meaning to the words from a well-known Santa Claus song: "He knows if you've been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake!"

Such unsaintly behaviour is not something Christians are called to emulate, but it is St Nicholas' passion, fear and love for Christ and his desire to defend Jesus' deity that is truly commendable. The Council of Nicea resulted in the declara-

tion of the Nicene Creed and the formal condemnation of Arianism. St Nicholas is applauded by later Christians for keeping Myra free from Arianism and for preaching the truths of the Christian faith.

The accounts are unanimous that St Nicholas died in Myra and was buried in his cathedral. Unlike other saints who died as martyrs for the faith, St. Nicholas lived a relatively long life and died in his bed. The measurements of his crypt tell something of his appearance. In the summer of 2005, a forensic review of St Nicholas' measurements reveals that he was barely five feet tall! The real St Nicholas must have looked more like one of Santa's little helpers than the tall, roly-poly Santa we're familiar with today.

The forensic data also revealed he had a broken nose which perhaps should not surprise us as it has been noted by some historical sources that St Nicholas had used his fists to deal with matters on more than one occasion. Sources also mention that St Nicholas was not given to self-indulgence and would fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, evidence that further undermines the modern image of the obese Santa who looks more like a candidate for cardiac arrest than a picture of discipline and health.

It's been a long evolution from the fourth century Bishop S. Nicholas to the consumer-driven image of the jolly Santa Claus today. In the medieval period he was an icon of charity, but in the 21st century that is far from the case. Instead, St Nicholas has become more and more associated with a rampant commercialism and a symbol of holiday festivity. This is an unfortunate corruption of what St Nicholas' life truly displayed.

What we should remember is his enduring legacy of generosity and compassion, and his devotion to serving God and upholding the deity of Christ. St Nicholas is an example of active charity, not just giving for the sake of giving, but giving generously out of Christ's love for those in desperate need.

He is a model for Christians to follow in an ever-increasing materialistic culture. With the imminent approach of Christmas upon us, let's take a leaf out of St Nicholas' book and make Christ our chief concern in all things. After all, He is the reason for the season.

Madeleine Turner has recently completed an honours degree in history and attends Ashfield Presbyterian Church, Sydney.

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prayer

DECEMBER 2007

- 21 Devonport-Don parish T, 2 congregations with about 120 c&a (communicants and adherents), 15 yf (younger folk – Sunday School and youth) and 5 e (elders); Steve Warwick.
- 22 Evans Head charge N (NSW) 75 c&a, 60 yf and 4 e; Paul McKendrick.
- 23 The new national government and opposition, and all parliamentarians with new responsibilities.
- 24 Mordialloc charge Vic., 55 c&a and 7 e; Mike Wharton.
- 25 Powerful preaching of the good news of God's goodwill and peace.
- 26 PY Summer Camp, NSW.
- 27 Family missions around the land.
- 28 Mark & Danielle Smith exit appt Drouin charge Vic., 230 c&a, 75 yf and 16 e.
- 29 Andrew & Fleur Letcher Vic. – APWM/WBT workers.
- 30 Vacant Helensvale h m stn Q 70 c&a.
- 31 Wide Way – Sunsh Cst Psbty Qld – 6 charges, 2 home mission stns, 10 congregations – 770 c&a and 105 yf ; 5 retired min, 1 u j. John Tucker clerk.

JANUARY 2008

- 1 Dean and Sandra Carroll, exit appt Woori Yallock charge Vic. 50 c&a, 45 yf and 5 e.
- 2 Gulgong charge NSW. 100 c&a, 25 yf and 4 e; Paul Beringer.
- 3 Hui & So Young Lim exit appt Skipton-Lismore home mission station Vic. 35 c&a, 10 yf and 4 e.
- 4 Ashleigh & Sarah Vic., APWM/MECO workers, middle East.
- 5 Hervey Bay charge Qld. 140 c&a, 15 yf and 9 e; John Roth.
- 6 Bernard and Alison Merchant exit appt Grenfell charge NSW. 2 congregations, 75 c&a, 35 yf and 9 e.
- 7 John Dekker exit appt Aspendale

- charge Vic., 2 congregations, 100 c&a, 50 yf and 7 e.
- 8 Springwood charge NSW. 3 congregations, 275 c&a, 90 yf and 22 e; Keith Walker (new), Mark Armstrong.
- 9 Tracey Rempel (nee Croll) NSW – APWM/SIM worker, Zambia.
- 10 Gippsland Psbty Vic. 3 charges, 3 h m stns, 7 cgns – 530 c&a and 120 yf. 2 retrd min. Sabine Bruce clerk.
- 11 Rhonda Daley, exit appt Allowah and Wstmead hosp chaplaincy, NSW.
- 12 Andrew & Michelle Bulmer APWM / Pioneers / ECM Workers, Austria.
- 13 Max Walker NSW exit appt RAN chaplaincy.
- 14 Glen Innes h m stn NSW – 25 c&a, 25 yf and 4 e; Lance Jackson.
- 15 Vacant Ayr home mission station Qld – 70 c&a, 15 yf and 2 e.
- 16 Safety and wisdom for all holidaymakers.
- 17 Kevin and Linda Maxwell exit appt Tatura charge, Vic. – 2 congregations, 105 c&a, 14 yf and 10 e.
- 18 Port Macquarie charge NSW – 215 c&a, 45yf and 12 e; Scott Donnellan.
- 19 Christine Platt NSW – APWM/SIM worker back in Ecuador.
- 20 Illawarra Psbty NSW – 6 charges, 3 home mission stns, 16 cgns – 1360 c&a and 320 yf – 1 defence chaplain, 6 retired min – Peter Currie clerk.
- 21 Joy Hill, Vic. APWM/Pioneers worker, Bosnia.
- 22 Vacant Wee Waa charge NSW – 80 c&a, 35 yf and 6 e.
- 23 Linden & Emma Fooks exit appt Redlands (Capalaba) chg Qld – 2 cgns, 75 c&a, 15 yf and 3 e.
- 24 Peace and good government in the most troubled countries.
- 25 Vacant Kerang home mission stn Vic.
- 26 PLC Sydney (Croydon) Dr W McKeith, Jae Croshaw.
- 27 Dalby charge Qld – 2 cgns, 240 c&a, 225 yf and 13 e; Roland Lowther.
- 28 Chatswood chg NSW – 170 c&a, 75

- yf and 11 e; Jeff Read, Warren Esdale.
- 29 PIM rally Rose Bay, NSW.
- 30 Kilnoorat Psbty Vic. – 6 charges , 13 cgns, 810 c&a and 120 yf – 1 school principal, Ian Leach clerk.
- 31 Burwood Chinese charge Vic. – 80 c&a, 20 yf and 3 e; John Elnatan.

FEBRUARY 2008

- 1 Phillippa Crossan APWM/ECM Worker, Sydney.
- 2 Berry charge NSW – 75 c&a, 20 yf and 5 e; Ted Brooker.
- 3 John & Denise – NSW, APWM/Pioneers workers, SE Asia.
- 4 Wyndham (Werribee) h m stn Vic. – 40 c&a, 15 yf and 1 e; Shane Cassidy.
- 5 St Paul's chg, Brisbane Qld – 145 c&a, 30 yf and 16 e; Andrew Gardiner.
- 6 Vacant Temora charge NSW – 70 c&a, 5 yf and 7e.
- 7 Nathan & Kathy Griffith NSW exit appt APWM for Portugal.
- 8 Plans for this year in your own and all parishes.
- 9 Corowa charge NSW – 4 cgns, 210 c&a, 10 yf and 17 e; Peter Pallett.
- 10 Moree Psbty NSW – 3 chgs, 4 h m stns, 11 cgns – 680 c&a and 165 yf – 1 PIM worker. Elizabeth Styles clerk.
- 11 Vacant far SE PIM patrol WA.
- 12 Como charge NSW – 35 c&a, 5 yf and 2 e; Richard Lee.
- 13 Springsure charge Qld – 4 cgns, 55 c&a, 15 yf and 2 e; Bruce Harrison.
- 14 Charlestown charge NSW – 2 cgns, 185 c&a, 40 yf and 12 e; John Seaton.
- 15 Clinton & Kirsti Le Page exit appt Donvale charge Vic. with Gerald Vanderwert – 195 c&a, 90 yf and 16 e.
- 16 Childrens ministry in Sunday Schools and schools this year.
- 17 Cecily Moar Qld APWM/OMF Worker, Sydney.
- 18 Christians persecuted in many lands.
- 19 Bald Hills charge Qld – 175 c&a, 40 yf and 10 e; Peter Bloomfield.
- 20 Steven Chong exit appt Kogarah charge NSW – 55 c&a, 10 yf and 8e.

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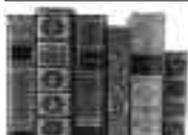
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Books

Seeing with New Eyes

David Powlison
Phillipsburg: P&R, 2003.
Reviewed by Peter Barnes

In counseling one ought to be grateful to those Christian scholars who have helped us to apply the Scriptures to any who have fallen into the black hole of self-will, misery, and confusion.

Powlison is full of genuine insight into the work of a counselor. For example, he writes that “the things people desire are delightful as blessings received from God, but terrible as rulers. They are good goods but bad gods”.

He has helpful chapters on passages of Scripture such as Psalms 131 and 10, and Luke 12:22-34. Some of his most challenging chapters deal with God’s Love as being “better than unconditional” and with human defensiveness. He is nuanced in his treatment of others. Here is a resource for changing lives. It can only do good, and fulfils its aim of providing biblical help for those who seek to work in the often barren area of Christian counseling.

Peter Barnes is books editor of AP.

People in Glass Houses An Insider’s Story of a Life In and Out of Hillsong

Tanya Levin
Black Inc., 2007.

Reviewed by Douglas Milne

The author grew up in Hillsong as her only church home, came to know its leading personalities and experienced all the ups and downs of a Pentecostal environment. Because of certain negative experiences of that culture on the way through, and her subsequent rejection of a Christian lifestyle, Levin has published this honest critique of fundamentalist Pentecostalism, using Hillsong as a case-study. Since leaving Hillsong (she has been barred from entering its precincts), Levin has embraced a secular lifestyle.

Because the author is a natural thinker and writer, her account is a valuable resource for critiquing such items as evan-

gelical fundamentalism, the Word of Faith movement, thought reform methods and prosperity theology. The book also gives some enlightening cameos on high profile Pentecostal leaders such as Oral Roberts, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland as well as Brian and Bobbie Houston of Hillsong.

There is a widespread suspicion by many outside the Pentecostal movement that its motivation and methodology are about selling the Gospel / God as a product that repays dividends to those who buy it and those who sell it. Levin supports this suspicion from their obsession with money, the lavish lifestyles of Pentecostal leaders and the mega, business budgets of Pentecostal churches internationally.

In her opinion Hillsong is a cult that practises many of the beliefs and techniques of mind-reform and mind-control movements everywhere, a thesis that she supports with an invaluable chapter describing this subject. Despite her painful experiences with Pentecostalism Levin does not come across in her writing as bitter, but rather concerned to share her story and alert others to the dangers inherent in the Pentecostal culture.

This is an important book for all evangelical and reformed churches, a timely and documented warning against coveting and adopting the theology, practices and goals of the health and wealth churches.

Douglas Milne is principal of the Presbyterian Theological College, Melbourne.

The Pattern of Sound Doctrine Systematic Theology at the Westminster Seminaries

Ed. D. Van Druenen
Presbyterian and Reformed, 2004.

Reviewed by Stuart Bonnington

This volume is published to mark the ministry of Dr Robert Strimple, who taught from Westminster in Philadelphia from 1969 and was instrumental in establishing Westminster in California from 1979. He retired in 2001 after a lifetime teaching systematic theology. Hence the contents and trajectory of *The Pattern of Sound Doctrine*, which has four parts with 13 chapters, all of which are fine studies, exemplifying the high spiritual and scholarly standards for which Westminster Theological Seminary has been known.

High points include the following: in *Historical Studies*, Edmund Clowney gives a brief but valuable note on the life

and influence of Professor John Murray, and in *Systematic Theology Among Other Disciplines*, John Frame writes on systematic theology and apologetics at the Westminster Seminaries. This chapter includes sections of John Murray’s hitherto unpublished notes of his lectures on the doctrine of God.

Following this, Dennis E. Johnson’s chapter, *On Practical Theology as Systematic Theology*, is very valuable indeed; *Particular Issues in Westminster Systematics* has W. Robert Godfrey on Westminster Seminary, the doctrine of justification, and the Reformed Confessions. This chapter contains a very important review of the controversy over the views of Norman Shepherd. *Westminster Systematic Theology and the Life of the Church* has Derke P. Bergsma writing on reflections on Westminster theology and the seminary constituency. The book ends with a bibliography of Dr Robert Strimple’s writings. This book is stimulating and excellent theological reading.

Stuart Bonnington is minister of Scot’s Kirk, Fremantle, WA.

David Man of Prayer, Man of War

Walter Chantry
Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2007.
Reviewed by Peter Barnes

Walter Chantry introduces this volume with the comment that “only the supreme providence of God and the unfathomable depths of divine grace could have conceived and forged the life of David”. In every area of David’s life, Walt seeks to bring to bear a faithful and sensitive perspective, which is helpful to modern readers.

Walt writes as one who is both a preacher and a pastor, with both teaching and application in evidence. Walt is not at all critical of David’s lack of fastidious honesty in 1 Samuel 20 and is surprisingly mild about his marriage to Abigail, with its attendant polygamy, in 1 Samuel 25. Walt also treats Jonathan kindly – rightly so, and in contrast to A. W. Pink’s otherwise incisive work on *The Life of David*.

Christians – not just pastors looking for sermons – will find Walt’s treatment of David a spiritual and stimulating guide to their study of the Word. This is a study which is true to the Scripture, and true to life. One hopes that it obtains a wide readership, for it deserves one.

Glorious grace

The world has lost sight of the wonder of the Incarnation.

In the prologue to his Gospel, the apostle John writes of the one who is both divine and human. So we read in John 1:14, “the Word became flesh and dwelt (or, literally, ‘tabernacled’) among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The words sound solemn and majestic, but what exactly is being claimed here? John, one of the 12 apostles and as such an eyewitness to Jesus’ ministry, claims that in Jesus, the Word who was God (John 1:1) became human. John was a strict Jewish monotheist. Every day he would have recited the *Shema* from Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one”. This is the God who says that He will not give His glory to another (Isa. 42:8), yet in Jesus Christ, John beheld His glory. Paul too describes Him as the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8).

When the tabernacle was set up, the glory of God descended upon it (Ex. 40:34-35). Something of heaven was seen on earth. Glory is where God is known in all His fullness. This presence of God was confirmed at the beginning of the work of the Levitical priests (Lev. 9:23-24). God consumed the penalty for sin, and made His glory known. Then when the taberna-



Peter Barnes

cle became the temple under Solomon, the ark of the covenant containing the 10 commandments (as well as some manna, incense, and Aaron’s rod that blossomed) was brought into the temple, and again the glory of the Lord made itself known,

***If this is dull,
then what,
in Heaven’s
name, is
worthy to
be called
exciting?***

DOROTHY SAYERS

and filled the temple (2 Chron. 5:11-14). Yet this was only in shadow form in the Old Testament. Something greater was coming. Even as Solomon prayed the prayer of dedication at the opening of the temple, he realised this, that God is far greater than any temple built on earth (2 Chron. 6:18; see Isa. 66:1). The Old Testament laws regarding the priests, the sacrifices and the tabernacle (temple) are all true, but they are shadows of a greater reality.

So we have a promise that God would

“tabernacle” among His people: “I will put my dwelling place (or tabernacle) among you ... I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be My people” (Lev. 26:11-12). When Israel sinned by trusting in the temple of the Lord rather than the Lord of the temple (Jer. 7:4), God removed His glory from the temple, and the city, including the temple, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. (Ezek. 10:18-19; 11:22-23).

The glory departed, but Ezekiel 40-48 prophesies that the glory would return (Ezek. 43:1-2). Indeed it did! In the New Testament we have Jesus’ clear statement that He stood among His people as one who is greater than the temple (Mt. 12:6). He referred to the temple of His body – a temple that would be raised in three days (John 2:19-21).

Christ is the tabernacle or temple living and walking and talking among His people. That is why there is no temple in heaven (Rev. 21:22). The glory of God in Christ is all over the new heaven and new earth. The Old Testament ordered that sacrifices for sins be made daily, but in Christ the one perfect sacrifice is made once for all (Heb. 7:25-10:18).

In Christ we see the glory of God, and the perfect and sufficient sacrifice for sinners. This is the claim of the incarnation, made not by Homer whose works are full of gods and goddesses interacting with human beings, but by John, the strictest of monotheists.

The Western world has lost sight of the wonder of this claim, and entrenched itself in the self-adulation associated with a media-driven view of reality. *Dancing with the Stars* is what we are meant to find relevant and exciting, and Christianity is discarded as outdated. But ponder the message of the incarnation again: God entered human history in the person of Jesus Christ in order to suffer and die that sinners might be forgiven and live. As Dorothy Sayers put it: “If this is dull, then what, in Heaven’s name, is worthy to be called exciting?”

Peter Barnes is minister of Revesby Presbyterian Church, NSW.



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