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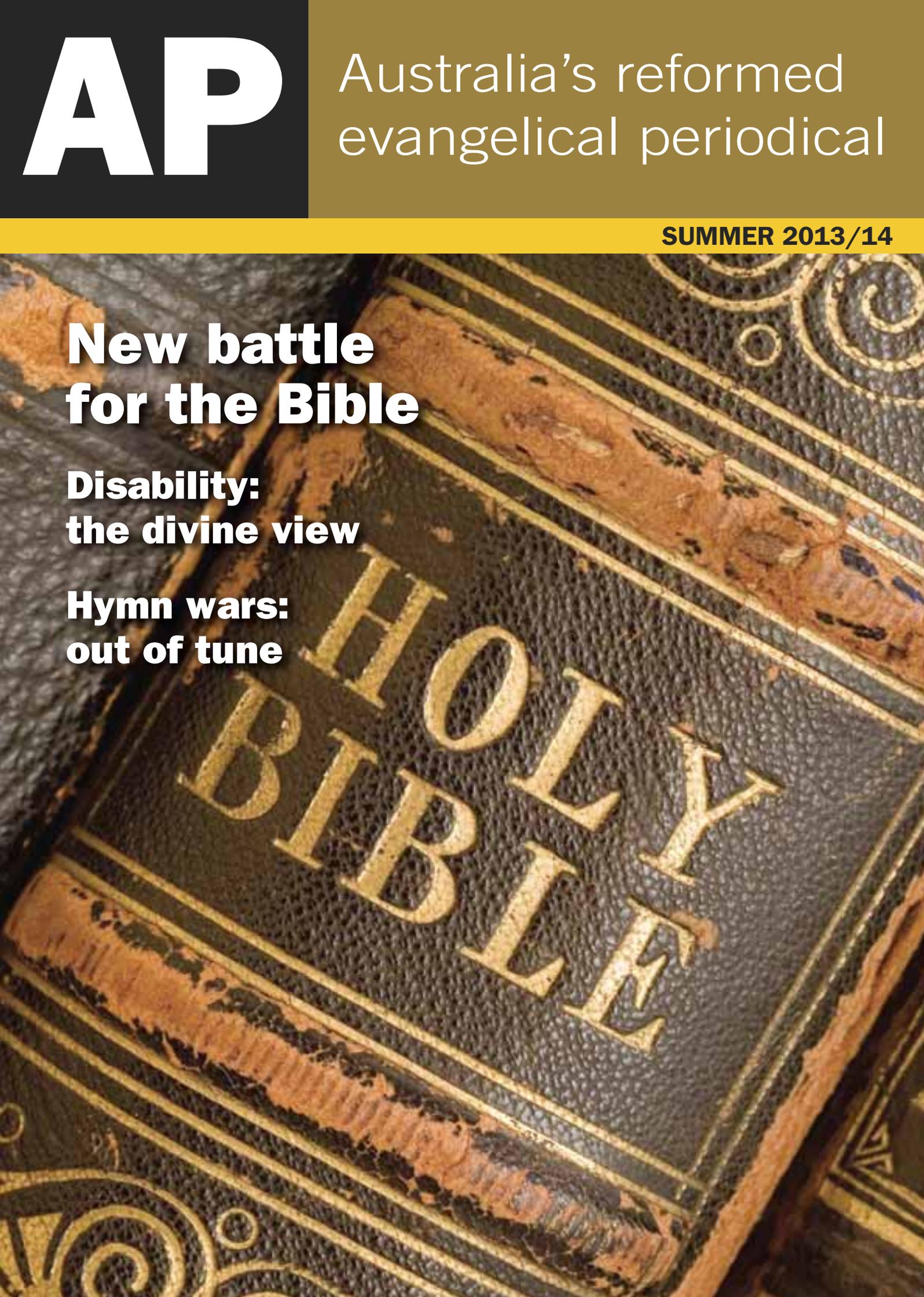
Australia's reformed
evangelical periodical

SUMMER 2013/14

New battle for the Bible

**Disability:
the divine view**

**Hymn wars:
out of tune**



**HOLY
BIBLE**



Editorial

Periodically John Shelby Spong inflicts on the world another one of his rescue missions. In 2012 he wrote *Re-Claiming the Bible for a Non-Religious World*, and it has proved to be right up there with the rest of his manifestos. His opinion is clear: “I do not think for one moment that the Bible is in any literal sense the ‘Word of God’.” In fact, he assures us that, as an Episcopal bishop, he rejects the same Christianity and Bible that the militant atheists reject. To Spong, the Bible contains a kernel of history which is “well hidden under layers of myth and

fantasy”. He wants to bring us all to “an understanding that does not hesitate to go through the Bible in order to transcend it, and thus that provides no security”. The Bible is, in Spong’s view, “a tribal story” put together by human beings trying to make sense of their existence.

Before we feel too overwhelmed with gratitude, we should stop and ask where this leads us. The irreligious might gravitate to Richard Dawkins; the religious to Bishop Spong. But the difference is only verbal. Spong is a little less strident, Dawkins is marginally more logical. John Wesley managed to be both gracious and logical when he asserted that “if there be any mistakes in the Bible, there may well be a thousand. If there be one falsehood in that book, it did not come from the God of truth”.

God is true, and because He is true, all His words are true (Ps. 119:160). God is true even if every man is a liar (Rom. 3:4). As the ageing Joshua prepared to go the way of all the earth, he remained confident that not one of all the good promises that the Lord had given Israel had failed. All had been fulfilled (Josh.23:14). If a supposed prophet spoke in the name of the Lord, and what he said did not take place, that prophet had spoken presumptuously and was not to be feared (Deut.18:22). Contrary to Spong’s claim, and that believed by many today, the Bible is not a collection of camp-fire stories, well-meaning or otherwise. It is what it claims to be – the true Word of the true God. It is precisely because we have a God who speaks that we can ignore a bishop who speculates.

Peter Barnes

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Simon Manchester: *Godliness, in Form or Power?; and Steadiness for the Long Term* Rector at St Thomas, North Sydney

Iain H. Murray: *Faith not Sight (Isaiah 49); and Why be Excited about the Puritans?* At first Banner of Truth Conference in Sydney 1979, served Hurstville Presbyterian Church 1981–84 and has prized Australian citizenship ever since.

Joel Radford: *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome* Pastor of Drummoyne Baptist Church, Sydney

Stephen Turner: *India Today* Pastor at Shore Baptist Church, Auckland

Noel Weeks: *The Book of Judges for Today* Honorary associate in Ancient History at Sydney and Macquarie Universities. Author of *Gateway to the Old Testament, Sufficiency of Scripture, etc.*

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Battle for the Bible

Christians must defend inerrancy or watch the church die.

Dr Ligon Duncan talks to Peter Hastie

J. Ligon Duncan III is the senior minister of First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi and the chancellor of Reformed Theological Seminary with campuses throughout the USA in Jackson, Orlando, Charlotte, Washington, Atlanta, Houston, and Memphis. He is a minister of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), which has more than 1500 churches and missions throughout the USA and Canada, and a membership of about 350,000.

Dr Duncan is also president of both the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals and the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood.

A Greenville, South Carolina, native, Dr Duncan is a graduate of Furman University, Covenant Theological Seminary and was awarded a PhD in Ecclesiastical History and Systematic Theology at the University of Edinburgh, New College, Scotland in 1995.

He has written many articles, edited several collections, and was a joint author and editor of *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship—A Celebration of the Legacy of James*

The Bible is inerrant because it is inspired. It comes from the God of truth, and is, therefore, consistent with His nature.

Montgomery Boice (with Phillip Graham Ryken and Derek W.H. Thomas) and is editor and contributor of *The Westminster Confession in the 21st Century*, volumes 1-3.

The interview was conducted by the Rev. Peter Hastie, principal of the Presbyterian Theological College, Victoria.

Ligon, what do we mean by the term 'inerrancy'?

The doctrine of biblical inerrancy asserts that the Bible is true in all that it affirms. This means that whatever the Bible affirms, whether it is making empirical claims about the world or spiritual statements, is true. Therefore, the authority of Scripture is not simply limited to its spiritual or redemptive-historical statements, but extends to every affirmation of Scripture so that whatever it teaches, whether in the realm of history, science or faith, is without error in the original manuscripts.

When people talk about complete inerrancy as opposed to limited inerrancy, what exactly do they mean?

Complete inerrancy refers to the truthfulness of the Bible's statements in whatever it affirms. On the other hand, those who want to restrict the Bible's reliability to its spiritual and salvific statements prefer the term, limited inerrancy. Of course, the term limited inerrancy is really a self-contradiction. The Bible is either inerrant, or it's not. The idea of *limited* inerrancy is really illogical.

Does inerrancy relate to the words of the Bible text or just its concepts?

We need to understand that the doctrine of inerrancy is a logical consequence of the plenary, verbal inspiration of the Bible. The doctrine of inspiration says that God has inspired the *words*, not merely the thoughts of the writer, and therefore inerrancy extends to those words. The very significance of the term inerrancy, if you're going to distinguish it from infallibility, is that inerrancy is something that applies to the text. I occasionally hear some evangelicals say, "I believe the Bible is inerrant as to the source". Well, of course, God is inerrant. However, what the doctrine of inerrancy affirms is that the words that God has spoken are without error.

Is there any biblical basis for the doctrine of inerrancy?

Yes, there is, and you see it especially in Jesus' treatment of the Old Testament. He believed that the Scriptures are inerrant. Jesus says things like, 'The Scripture cannot be broken' (John 10:35). He also quotes passages of Scripture and makes arguments that are dependent on the tense of the verbs in those passages (see Luke 20:37, 38).

Paul takes an identical approach to inerrancy when he says that all/every Scripture is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16). In this instance he makes an argument about the nature of every part of Scripture – that it's God-breathed, and therefore absolutely truthful and trustworthy. The logic of the inerrancy position is as follows: The

Bible is not inspired because it is inerrant; it is inerrant because it is inspired. It comes from the God of truth, and is, therefore, consistent with His nature.

So the doctrine of biblical inerrancy is predicated upon the doctrine of inspiration. Inerrancy is a doctrine that is not only explicitly stated in assertions like, “Your word is truth” (John 17:17), but it is also deduced from such doctrines as revelation and inspiration which must be interpreted in view of the fact that God is a God of truth.

Some people claim that the term “inerrancy” is actually an artificial, American invention. Do they have a point?

No, I don't think so. First, I would certainly admit that the term inerrancy became popular in America in the late 19th century in the debates over the authority of Scripture during the Warfield/Briggs controversy. However, if you look at the Oxford English dictionary and its usage of the term as well as that of the allied term, “infallibility”, you will notice that the words were regarded as synonymous from at least the 16th century. And if

anything, infallibility is an even more expansive claim than inerrancy. Theologians were making explicit claims for the infallibility of Scripture from the time of the magisterial Reformation to the Protestant orthodox period immediately *after* the Reformation, and this was three centuries before Hodge and Warfield ever came on the scene. So the idea that inerrancy is a recent American invention, or came from Princeton Theological Seminary, or is the product of 19th century rationalism, ignores 300 years of settled Reformed history and confessional commitments.

If you examine the Westminster Confession of Faith, you will find that the entire perfection of the Scriptures is explicitly predicated in the very first chapter. When we affirm the doctrine of inerrancy we are merely giving a verbal affirmation of what is already set forth in the Confession of Faith. So the idea that inerrancy is a recent American idea simply ignores historical theology.

So what is the importance of inerrancy for us as individuals and as a church?

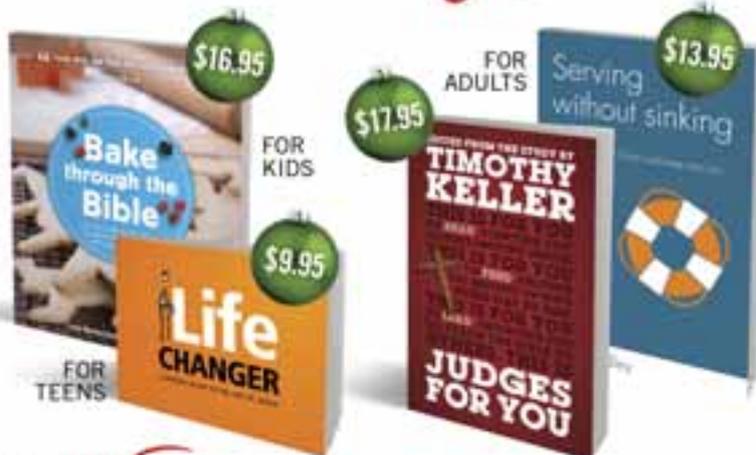
Well, the importance of the doctrine of

the inerrancy of Scripture is that it is methodologically essential to the health and ministry of the church. This is not a “slippery slope” argument; it's an empirical, historically proven fact. One of the lessons of history is that wherever a church adopts a low view of Scripture it is either in the process of dying or, is in fact, dead. Churches that are thriving spiritually are churches that believe that Scripture is absolutely trustworthy and true.

The last century of church history confirms this. Wherever churches in the Protestant world have identified with theological liberalism they have diminished in size or are dying. I can't think of a Protestant church anywhere in the world that has embraced an anti-inerrancy view that is thriving right now – they just don't exist in the English-speaking world.

There is another issue in relation to inerrancy that is of vital importance too. What many people don't realise is that behind your doctrine of Scripture is your doctrine of God. If you have a low view of God you will have a correspondingly low view of Scripture.

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Of course, the converse is true as well: a low view of Scripture will inevitably give rise to a low view of God and Christianity cannot long survive when it abandons a high view of God. So our supernaturalism and our commitment to the doctrine of God are very much tied to our fidelity to Scripture.

Some people claim that they believe in the doctrine of Scriptural infallibility but understand it to mean only that the Scriptures will infallibly lead us to faith in Christ; they do not believe that the doctrine of infallibility guarantees the truth-content of the Bible. Are they right? Does the doctrine of infallibility mean something different from inerrancy?

It depends on who is using the term. It's true that in the last 50 years there have been some evangelicals who have tried to use the term infallibility as a halfway house between a forthright affirmation of biblical inerrancy and the questions that are raised by critics with regard to Scripture. They try to use infallibility as a limiting term – in much the same way as limited inerrancy is used.

So, for them, the Bible is infallible in matters of faith and practice, but it's not *necessarily* infallible in all that it affirms. Of course, there is a problem with this kind of word-play because the word infallible was never used historically in this way in the Reformed, Protestant tradition.

The truth is that the word infallibility has been used just as comprehensively as – if not more than – the term inerrancy. Here, I think, John Frame helps us in his recent book on the doctrine of God, where he addresses those who want to use infallibility as a concept of something less than Biblical inerrancy. Frame argues, “Well, actually, if you're going to look at the words, infallibility makes an even more comprehensive claim than inerrancy”. So infallibility is a really good word as long as we don't let people play semantic games with it, and downgrade what it affirms.



Dr Ligon Duncan

Is the present challenge to inerrancy something new? Or has it been going on throughout history in the church?

First, some of the arguments used against biblical inerrancy are ancient despite the fact that they are peddled around as though they have just been discovered. Celsus, one of the earliest pagan critics of Christianity, raised some of the same alleged errors in the Bible that modern scholars do. I find it almost amusing that well-trained, liberal, critical scholars dish out arguments that are literally 1600 years old, and then present them as if they're something brand new that should make us change our doctrine of Scripture.

However, there are other kinds of arguments that are used against biblical inerrancy today that come from the period of the early to late Enlightenment. You can go back all the way to someone like Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and then work forward and you will find that many of the same assertions are made against biblical inerrancy today.

For instance, you and I live in a time when one hot button topic is the historicity of Adam and Eve. Did you realise that you can go back to Schleiermacher and then work your way through all the 19th century until you come to Barth in the 20th century and discover a consistent pattern of denying the historicity of Adam and

Eve? Today that has taken on a new emphasis, but it is not a new attack on biblical inerrancy. It comes today with the new influence of Ancient Near-Eastern and scientific DNA arguments, but arguments have been made against the historicity of Adam and Eve for over 200 years. So many of the arguments we encounter today have more than two centuries of precursors in Christian discussion. The nice thing about that is, our best theological thinkers in the evangelical world have had to work through most of the problems that we're working through now. We can actually benefit from their good work.

What have been the major crises in the church with respect to the Scripture in more recent times? And what were the issues?

Of course in the 19th century in Britain, America, and Australia, Presbyterian bodies in particular suffered significant theological divisions related to sustained attacks on a high view of Scripture. So in Scotland from the mid to late 19th century, with figures such as Samuel Davidson, William Robertson Smith and Marcus Dods, there was significant theological controversy taking place when these scholars tried to introduce German higher-critical thought into the divinity schools of Scotland.

The same thing happened in the United States, when Charles Briggs from Union Theological Seminary challenged the doctrine of inerrancy and was met by his orthodox opponent, B.B. Warfield. We see that continuing until the early 20th century when the book *The Fundamentals* was published – in part in response to the encroaching liberalism in main-line conservative Protestantism.

Then in Australia you have echoes of these things as well, because some of the teachers that came to Australia were influenced by Robertson Smith, Dods, and others, and so all of us in the English-speaking world found that we were in this same theological conversation. It resulted in controversies, and sometimes splits, in our churches. Our heritage is actually very similar.

Have there been any important lessons from the last 100 years in how we should respond to these crises?

The first lesson is that defending the doctrine of Scripture is costly and demands great courage. Let's face it: it's painful to engage in polemics especially when many of those who hold a low view of Scripture and with whom we have to disagree are incredibly nice, cultured and intelligent people. Some of them are influential, charismatic and persuasive individuals. So it is very costly for orthodox theologians to engage and condemn the views of such people. We have been despised for doing so. Nevertheless, it has been proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that it is absolutely necessary for the health and survival of the church. This is so because wherever low views of Scripture have prevailed, the church has died. And wherever those views did not prevail, the church has continued to be a faithful gospel witness. So there's a connection: you can't have a gospel without having an inerrant Scripture as the foundation. The gospel, if it's to have ultimate authority, must be based on a trustworthy foundation.

There have been evangelicals who go to the half-way house, and they say, "We'll preach the gospel, but we don't have to draw a line in the sand on Scripture; we can have a little bit of error without sinking the ship. Indeed, it's okay to have diversity in our views of whether the Bible is inerrant or not. What we've got to hang on to is the central message of the gospel and the importance of evangelism". Well, the verdict of history is in on that score: you can't maintain the gospel and the mission of the church with an untrustworthy Bible. A Bible with errors does sink the ship. Where inerrancy is denied, an authoritative Scripture is undermined, and then the gospel, and the church's mission of evangelism, is destroyed.

What is happening now in relationship to the controversy of inerrancy, especially among evangelicals? For example, there's been a division in the Evangelical Theological Society. What's going on?

You're right. There has been division in the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS). I was there when it happened. Dr Roger Nicole brought charges against Clark Pinnock and others for their failure to uphold the doctrine of Scriptural inerrancy.

It happened, interestingly, due to claims by open theists that God does not know the future with certainty (as they allege). Thus, they reasoned, it's possible that some biblical prophecy may be incorrect. However, Roger Nicole (very logically) pointed out that it is inconsistent to claim to be an inerrantist and also believe that biblical prophecy may be wrong. And he called for Pinnock's expulsion from the ETS.

There was a great division in the ETS over how to deal with this issue, and some wanted the society to have theological diversity so that it could be more of a conversation place. However, there were also others who wanted it to be faithful to its very minimal theological affirmation. All it entailed was belief in the Trinity and inerrancy, and beyond that there wasn't much more to the statement of faith that you had to sign. It's now clear that the division that appeared in the Clark Pinnock case still exists within the ETS and that there are many within the society who no longer share the conviction of its founders about the importance of biblical inerrancy.

Now, in God's kindness, this year's ETS meeting in Baltimore is devoted to the topic of biblical inerrancy. I will be giving a plenary presentation and I will be on a panel with Al Mohler, Don Carson, John Woodbridge, Greg Thornberry, and Jason Duesing. That panel will be devoted to Carl Henry and the doctrine of biblical inerrancy as well as Dr Henry's contribution to the doctrine of Scripture since the publication of his most significant work, *God, Revelation and Authority*.

Why is the traditional doctrine of inerrancy under renewed threat today?

I believe that many scholars have lost confidence in the authority and inerrancy of Scripture. This is something that usually starts in the academy and then

"Some of the arguments used against biblical inerrancy are ancient despite being peddled around as though they have just been discovered."

spreads to the churches. This has been the usual pattern over the last few centuries. The infection normally starts in universities and seminaries before it spreads further afield.

Today the traditional way of reading the text of Scripture has been challenged by scholars who want to read it through the lens of other Ancient Near-Eastern documents. The influence of this new approach has led scholars to understand the text in a different way that makes them reluctant to affirm biblical inerrancy. Other scholars have been influenced by some of the scientific claims that have arisen from the human genome project. For instance, some of those associated with BioLogos have cast doubt on the historicity of Adam based on some of the latest scientific theories that have emerged from this project. These scholars believe that modern biological science calls into question the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture. They say that it is impossible to hold the discoveries of modern science and inerrancy at the same time.

There have also been a number of books written by scholars that have challenged the morality of the God of the Old Testament and His commands to Israel, especially with regard to the occupation of Canaan and the genocide of the various Canaanite tribes. Obviously, if you believe that God acts immorally then it also becomes impossible to believe in biblical inerrancy. A less than perfect God is hardly likely to produce a book that bears the marks of perfection. So this moral argument is also eroding the traditional doctrine.

Therefore, in the light of these challenges we need a new defence of inerrancy.



God is able

Our perception of disability should follow God's.

Jason Forbes

In Australia, we are seeing the first stages of disability care reform. The needs of people with disabilities are now being given greater attention. Not only that, perceptions about the person with the disability are changing as they are given a much better say in the care they receive, and how they receive it.

So it is timely for us in the church to consider our perception of disabilities, and how we provide for people who have them as *Christians* – not just be doing what everyone else does. This means having a godly response to the issue of disability. To have a godly response, we need to know something about God's perception of disability, and how He provides for people who have disability. That means examining the Bible.

Look up the word "disability" or "disabled" in a concordance, or do a word search on a computer, and you'll find few references. (I found three in the New International Version – 2 Samuel 4:4; John 5:3; and Hebrews 12:13). Yet the Bible is aware of impairments – for example, blindness is cited in 85 verses. The Bible does not use the category of disability as we do today, and therefore does not usually address the issue of disabilities directly.

Instead, the Bible recognises disadvantaged people groups that included the poor, the sojourner, the fatherless and the widowed, along with

those who have specific impairments. Matters that relate to disability appear alongside matters that relate to social welfare and justice (Lev. 19:11-16).

One verse that does address the issue of disability directly is Exodus 4:11. In response to Moses' concerns over his inability to communicate (which may have been anything as severe as a speech impairment down to an unwillingness to speak publicly), we find God claiming sovereignty over disability, to the point where He makes people mute, deaf, seeing or blind.

The Bible is aware of impairments – for example, blindness is cited in 85 verses.

Now, we need to be sensitive to those who have acquired disability through horrific circumstances. Sometimes, disability is a result of someone's stupidity, or an innocent accident, and God is not to be held responsible for someone else's wickedness. Nonetheless, disability does not come as a surprise to God, it does not thwart God's purposes for one's life. Disability remains under God's sovereign authority, and can be used for His purposes.

In John 9:3 one man's blindness is said to be given so that the works of God could be displayed in his life. Please

note, the word is "work", not "glory"! I have heard so many sermons where this has been read as the "glory of God". The work of God is defined as to "believe in Him [Jesus] whom He [God the Father] has sent" (Jn 6:29). This work is clearly demonstrated in this man's life, along with the work of Jesus healing him (9:6-7, 15-38). This provides an excellent example of how disability can be used for God's purposes.

So, if God confers disabilities on some people, what is their place in the community? Remembering that in the Bible, disability often comes under the wider category of "disadvantaged people", in Leviticus 19:9-10 (23:22; Deut. 24:19-21) the Bible speaks of the provision that they were to enjoy. Scripture stipulated that food crops on the edge of fields, and any crops that were dropped or left behind in the process of harvesting, were to be left for disadvantaged groups.

From God's perspective, being disadvantaged was not necessarily punishment (though sometimes it is – Luke 1:20; Acts 14:9-11). Nor were people who were disadvantaged to be treated like second-class citizens. They were recognised as members of the community, and were to function as such. In this, the provision was not a hand out. It did not allow these disadvantaged groups to sit around all day and do nothing. In order to eat,

and provide for their family, they were to be involved with the surrounding community and they were to be responsible for their actions.

Our perspective on disability involves more than simply providing for immediate needs. There is a social dynamic that needs to be considered. That is, enabling people to exercise their God-given abilities, as small as they may be, to become active members within their community.

We see a similar approach in the ministry of Jesus. Through the Gospels people are reconciled not only with God, but with other people. And how people are reconciled to other people

reflects how they are reconciled to God. We see this in the way Jesus engages with people. In Matthew 20:29-34 we read how Jesus was leaving Jericho when he met two blind men. He asks, "What do you want me to do for you?" This may seem to us modern, task orientated people an odd thing to ask. It's pretty obvious what these blind men want. They want their sight restored. So why doesn't Jesus just heal them?

The answer to this is quite simple. This is possibly the first time in their lives that these two men have been treated like human beings. The culture tells a lot about the attitudes towards people with disabilities at the time. We know from a well of information that such

Living with a disability is difficult, but it need not be a disaster.

people were considered to be a blemish on the fabric of the holy society and it's little wonder that the crowd told them to "shut up". It was an embarrassing thing for a great teacher to be pestered by two blind men whose blindness proved they obviously had been rejected by God.

So notice the gravity of what is happening here. It could be the first time that someone had placed himself at the disposal of these two blind men. And it's not just anyone who involves himself with these two men. Matthew describes Jesus as the One who is faithful to God. So the One who is faithful to God is making Himself available to people who are perceived to be not faithful to God. For Jesus, it wasn't simply a matter of enabling these two blind men to see, but engaging with them personally. And this was a restoration of their humanity as well.

Living with a disability is difficult, but it need not be a disaster. From God's perspective, He is not surprised by disability, and remains sovereign over people's circumstances, no matter how challenging those circumstances. God is concerned for the welfare of people with disabilities, as with other disadvantaged groups, and wants them to be actively involved in His community. In the person of Jesus, God is concerned to see people with disabilities reconciled, not only in relation to Him, but in relation to their own humanity as they are reconciled to other people.

God's perspective on disability needs to inform our perspective on disability as we minister the gospel to all. It's a perspective that sees people with disabilities as not just "those with needs", but as people who are welcomed, the same as anyone else, to be part of God's community and engaged in it.

Jason Forbes is the disability advocate for Presbyterian Social Services, NSW.



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Biology and sex

Many myths about sexuality are widely believed in society.

David Phillips

Why is Jennifer Hawkins the face of Myer?

We *could* say: because she has a contract with Myer. True, but that is not the purpose. The *purpose*, Myer management hopes, is to bring more customers into the store.

Why is marriage between a man and a woman?

We *could* say: because that is how it is defined in the Marriage Act. But what is its *purpose*?

The *purpose* of marriage as a social institution is to encourage the best context for raising the next generation of responsible adults – the voluntary lifelong exclusive commitment of a father and mother to each other, as they raise their natural and adopted children.

Why do governments make laws about marriage?

Why do governments make laws at all? They make them for the peace and good order of society – now and into the future.

Australia's future as a nation depends on babies being conceived, born and raised to produce the next generation of responsible, productive adults.

Governments don't *define* marriage. They *recognise* marriage as the committed sexual union of a man and a woman into which children are naturally conceived and born.

Governments should honour marriage as the best context for raising the next

Of same-sex attracted 16 year-old boys, 72% were opposite-sex attracted at 22 years.

generation of responsible, productive Australians. They should protect and benefit marriage for the future good order of society.

Born that way?

The idea that homosexuals are “born that way” and that there is a “gay gene” is a modern myth, widely believed in media circles, and promoted by entertainers such as Lady Gaga. But what is the evidence?

Single genes do not cause common human behaviours. Small contributions from several genes are much more likely.

Researchers Bearman and Bruckner at Columbia and Yale Universities comment that “the extent to which same-sex and opposite-sex desires are expressed in the individual is seen to be a complex interplay of biological, social and situational factors”.

Human behaviour is complex – we are not robots. There is no single gene governing sexual preference or any other preference.

What do twin studies say about genes and sexuality?

The best insight into the relative influence on behaviour of genes and social environment – nature and nurture – comes through twin studies.

Since identical twins share the same genes, any genetically determined characteristic in one twin (such as blue eyes) will be present in the co-twin.

However, when one twin is homosexual, the co-twin is not homosexual – in 89% of cases. Thus homosexual orientation is not determined by genes.

As NZ researcher Dr Neil Whitehead says, “No one is born gay.”

Can homosexuals change?

Many do change. A study of Dutch adult males who had been same-sex attracted found half reported that those feelings disappeared later in life.

A large US study of 16, 17 and 22 year olds found:

- of same-sex attracted 16-year-old



Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore

boys, 72% were opposite-sex attracted at 22 years;

- of same-sex attracted 16-year-old girls, 55% were opposite-sex attracted at 22 years.

A New Zealand longitudinal cohort study found that:

- of same-sex attracted 21-year-old males, one third were opposite-sex attracted by 26 years;
- of same-sex attracted 21-year-old females, one half were opposite-sex attracted by 26 years.

How does sexuality develop?

A child first develops gender identity, usually:

- by age two years – identifying as a boy or a girl, and others as boys, girls, men or women;
- by age four years – understanding that boys grow up to be men and girls become women;
- by age seven years – understanding that being male or female is not affected by hair length or clothes.

Sexual identity develops during teen years. People develop same-sex attraction for many reasons – every case is different. Commonly mentioned factors include:

- confused gender identity during childhood;
- positive same-sex experience;
- negative opposite-sex experience;
- poor relationship with parents;
- dysfunctional family life;
- peer influence.

Different people are affected by different social experiences – resulting in many

different paths to same-sex attraction.

Which families are safest for kids?

A large 2010 US government study of child abuse and neglect rates in six different family types found that children raised by their two married biological parents are safer on every measure than those raised in any other family context.

Who are ‘transgenderers’?

People who are born as clearly male or clearly female, but in their mind see themselves as having the opposite sex, are often called “transgendered”. Their condition is also known as gender *dysphoria* (“unhappiness”). Gender dysphoria has been compared to anorexia, where people may be slim, but see themselves as fat and seek to lose weight.

Many transgendered people claim they were born that way – but identical twin studies show this is not the case. Of four identical male twin pairs where one was transgendered, the other twin was transgendered in only one case. Researchers concluded that genetic factors were not important.

Like many homosexuals, transgendered people have experienced a variety of situations in childhood which may have contributed to their condition. Being a younger or youngest child in a family is not uncommon. The child may receive less attention from parents or be bullied by siblings or peers. Parental psychiatric conditions may also be involved.

The famous Johns Hopkins medical centre in Baltimore, US, ceased performing “sex change” operations in 1979 after a study showed that patients, while generally happy with the surgery,

Children raised by their two married biological parents are safer on every measure than those raised in any other family context.

still suffered anxiety and other mental problems. The centre now focuses on sexual healing.

What are intersex conditions?

Over 99.9 per cent of humans are born as females (with two “X” sex chromosomes) or males (with one “X” and one “Y” sex chromosome).

Almost all homosexuals are born chromosomally male (XY) and almost all lesbians are born chromosomally female (XX).

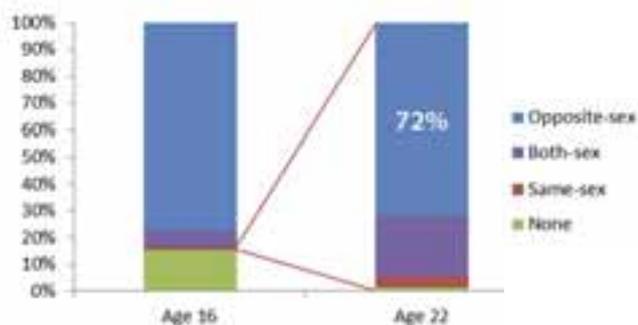
In rare cases (some one in a 1000 births) males are born with XXY sex chromosomes (Klinefelter syndrome). In about one in 2000 births, females are born with only one X chromosome (Turner syndrome).

Even more rarely (about one in 5000 births) babies are born with genitals that are either ambiguous or inconsistent with their chromosomal sex. These are called **intersex** conditions. Specialist medical advice is needed in these cases.

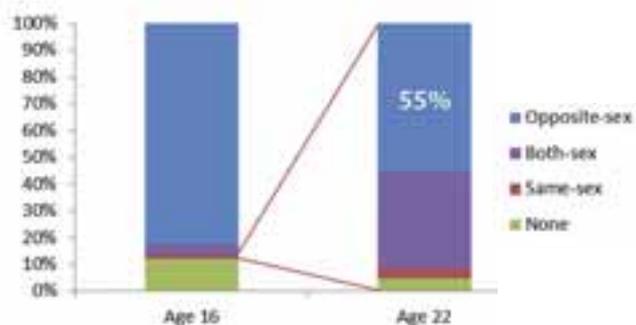
People with these rare genetic disorders are not generally homosexual or lesbian in orientation.

Dr David Phillips is national president of FamilyVoice Australia

Romantic Attraction Changes Males



Romantic Attraction Changes Females



World news

Religion 'harms economy'

Too much religion can harm a society's economy by undermining the drive for financial success, according to a new study in the journal *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

The study of almost 190,000 people from 11 religiously diverse cultures is raising eyebrows among some of England's religious leaders for suggesting Judaism and Christianity have anti-wealth norms.

Written by academics at the University of Southampton in England and the Humboldt University of Berlin, the study found that religious people in religious cultures reported better psychological adjustment when their income was low.

The study cites the Bible to show how Judaism and Christianity turn upside down the belief that the highest possible income leads to the highest possible happiness and psychological adjustment.

The academics conducted their interviews in 11 countries, Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands and Turkey.

"What the great faiths condemn is the irresponsible use of wealth, not wealth itself," said Michael Nazir-Ali, the former bishop of Rochester in the Church of England. "The worship of money is the root of all evil and not money on its own."

Religion News Service

Syrian Christians face terror

As the plight of Christians in Syria continues to plummet to new depths, Barnabas Fund international director Patrick Sookhdeo is pleading for people to write to politicians on their behalf.

"We need your help to make world leaders realise the gravity of the crisis our brothers and sisters are facing," Dr Sookhdeo says. Barnabas Fund has produced a sample letter to politicians and asks supporters to use it as a frame work to write to politicians.

"The deliberate targeting of Christians by Islamist rebels within the opposition is an "angle" that the Western media has largely ignored, while Western political leaders, especially from the US, UK and France, are actually

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backing the side that is intent on destroying the Syrian Church.”

The letter is at <http://barnabasfund.org/AU/News/News-analysis/Syria-Sample-letter-to-politicians.html>

Barnabas Fund

Bush fights AIDS

Former US President George W. Bush joined President Obama on July 2 to solemnly commemorate the 15th anniversary of Osama Bin Laden's first attack on the United States while the two American leaders were in Africa in July on separate trips. But President Bush has laid aside politics to focus on humanitarian works. He avoids partisan debate and caring too much about public approval ratings.

In 2003, President Bush implemented a five-year, \$15 billion program to combat HIV/AIDS in Africa, known as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. The Stanford School of Medicine found the AIDS death toll had fallen by 10% between 2003 and 2007 in countries using the program, which was authorised again by Congress in 2008.

“I'm very proud of the American

people for their generosity,” Bush said. “Billions have been poured into a far-away land. I wish Americans knew how many lives are saved as a result of their generosity, and some day they will.”

Christian Post

Pope's new focus

“Meek and merciful” is not the first characteristic by which most Catholics define their bishops. Nor do they necessarily find them “gentle, patient ... animated by inner poverty ... and also by outward simplicity and austerity of life”, and without ambition.

But these are qualities that candidates for bishop should have, Pope Francis has told a gathering of papal ambassadors in Rome. These men are the papal diplomatic corps who are well-connected to grassroots movements because of their ties to the local church. One of their duties, a “delicate task”, Francis told them, is talent-spotting and vetting episcopal candidates.

Some have noted that missing from Francis' list of episcopal attributes are loyalty and orthodoxy, the two criteria that dominated the nomination process

under Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

National Catholic Reporter

Young 'fact-check sermons'

Young churchgoers may be turning to YouVersion rather than their pew Bible during the Sunday sermon. Or they may be sceptically Googling what their pastor just said.

US pollsters Barna Group has released the results of “what happens when the unique spiritual characteristics and technological trends among Millennials collide?” Millennials are also known as Generation Y, people born after the early 1980s.

Barna found 70% of Christian millennials read scripture on line, 59% search for spiritual content online, and nearly 40% fact-check their minister's sermons, often while he is preaching.

Copts welcome sacking

The head of the Coptic Catholic Church has told the Fides news agency that he welcomes the overthrow of Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi. “The people of Egypt have peacefully regained their country,” said Patriarch

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Ibrahim Isaac Sidrak. “And therefore showed the world that they are civilised people, in spite of the great problems they face.”

“We cannot say that we do not have fears,” he added. “The economic situation is worrying and makes everyone more at risk of being manipulated by the sirens of propaganda. Morsi’s militant supporters feel they have lost, and this can trigger feelings of revenge. “We must convince them that there is also a place for them in the country and that no one rejects them, but they should be and behave as Egyptians, as fellow citizens of all the other Egyptians, and not aim at establishing religious despotism.”

Fides

Actor records Bible

After 25 years playing Hercule Poirot in television adaptations of Agatha Christie’s Belgian detective stories, David Suchet has spent 200 hours recording the entire Bible. Suchet recorded from Genesis to Revelation – 752,702 words – in his deep, melodic, unrushed voice.

Publisher Hodder Stoughton says it is the first time a single British actor of stature has tackled it. The recording is now in the editing stages, for a 78-hour release next Easter.

The extent of Suchet’s commitment surfaced when *In the Footsteps of St Paul*, a two-part documentary he made

for BBC1, won the premier prizes at the Sandford St Martin’s Trust religious programme awards in June. He was converted while reading the Bible in a hotel room in 1986.

Guardian

Hundreds avert abortion

Something wonderful happened in the United States recently: an unborn baby whose life was poised between abortion and adoption was saved by not one but hundreds of offers from people wanting to adopt the child. And it all happened in 24 hours, thanks to quick action by a parish priest and the use of social media.

A young couple were planning to abort their baby who had been diagnosed with Down syndrome at nearly 24 weeks, in a state that prohibits abortions beyond that point. However, they also asked an adoption agency to look for adoptive parents.

Father Vander Woude, of Gainesville, Virginia, heard about it and got someone from his parish to post an urgent appeal on Facebook. “... If a couple has not been found by today they plan to abort the baby. If you are interested in adopting this baby please contact Fr W IMMEDIATELY.”

The result amazed everyone: all day long the parish office fielded phone calls and emails from all over the US and as far afield as England, Puerto Rico and the Netherlands. There were more than 900 emails alone. A shortlist of three families has been presented to the baby’s parents.

Washington Times/Mercator Net

Muslim demands attacks

The leader of Nigeria's Islamist militant group Boko Haram has called for more attacks against schools, describing western education as a "plot against Islam", in a video released days after his fighters killed 46 students in an assault on a dorm.

In the 15-minute recording, Abubakar Shekau said schools would continue to be targeted "until our last breath".

"Teachers who teach western education? We will kill them! We will kill them in front of their students, and tell the students to henceforth study the Qur'an," he said, gesticulating energetically while dressed in military fatigues and a traditional hat.

Guardian

Archaeologists claim Cross find

Archaeologists working in Turkey believe they have found a piece of the cross on which Jesus was crucified. In excavating the ancient Balatlar Church, a seventh-century building in Sinop, Turkey, on the shores of the Black Sea, they uncovered a stone chest that contained objects that might be directly

connected with Jesus Christ.

Excavation head Professor Gülgün Köroğlu said: "We have found a holy thing in a chest. It is a piece of a cross, and we think it was [part of the cross on which Jesus was crucified]. This stone chest is very important to us. It has a history and is the most important artefact we have unearthed so far."

The stone chest has been taken to a laboratory for further testing. However, the appearance of the chest suggests that it was a repository for the relics of a holy person, according to the team, who showed reporters at the site a stone with crosses carved into it.

Many churches claim to possess relics of the "true cross" though the authenticity of the items is not accepted by scholars and scientists. John Calvin noted that if all the pieces of the true cross were collected they would make a shipload.

Huffington Post

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Out of tune

Why a debate over a hymn proves central to Christianity.

Gordon Coleman

When Mary Louise Bringle, chairwoman of the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s Committee on Congregational Song, undertook to write an article in *The Christian Century* about impending publication of a new denominational hymnbook, she can scarcely have anticipated the storm of controversy her words would provoke. But there can be no question, her article has done just that – especially her discussion of the committee's reasons for excluding the modern hymn *In Christ Alone* from the collection.

According to Bringle, the committee first favoured including the hymn, but in a slightly amended form: in place of the hymn's affirmation that "... on that cross as Jesus died / The wrath of God was satisfied", they sought permission to substitute the words "The love of God was magnified". When authors Stuart Townend and Keith Getty refused to allow the original words to be altered, the committee decided to remove the song from the list, "with deep regret over losing its otherwise poignant and powerful witness".

Why the reluctance to include this song in its original form? As Bringle explains it, the committee recognised that it "expressed one view of God's saving work that has been prevalent in Christian history" – a view still held by some within the denomination – but that their brief was to help "form the faith of coming generations". In their judgment, the idea that "the cross is primarily about God's need to assuage God's anger" may have a long and distinguished historical pedigree – but it deserves to have no future.

If the belief that Jesus died on the cross to "satisfy" the wrath of God is ancient, the lineage of those who treat God's wrath as taboo is similarly ancient. For example, in the second century AD Marcion and his followers rejected the wrathful God of Israel as a separate and lesser entity than the loving, all-forgiving God of the New Testament. According to Tertullian, the claim of these early "theological revisionists" was that "a better god has been discovered, who is neither offended nor angry nor inflicts punishment, who has no fire warming up in hell, and no outer darkness wherein there is shuddering and gnashing of teeth: he is merely kind." Or, as our own (former) Prime Minister recently expressed it, "the fundamental principle of the New Testament... is one of universal love"!

What, though, are we as Bible-believing Christians to say about this? How do the Scriptures themselves describe the character of God, and the purpose of Christ's death on the cross? First of all we need to affirm – and here we agree with both Marcion and with Mr Rudd (!) – that the God who has revealed Himself in the person and work of Christ is a God of love (Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 4:7-12), though we would also want to insist love is essential to God's character in the Old Testament as well (Ex. 34:6-7; Num. 14:18).

But we cannot escape the fact that, in the Old Testament and in the New, God is characterised both by love and by wrath – that is, a holy and righteous anger that manifests itself, not only against sin, but against sinners. The LORD God of Israel is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding

in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" – yet at one and the same time He "will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation" (Ex. 34:6-7). He is the God to whom His people cry out for mercy and rescue, even as they face the consequences of their sin (e.g. Hab. 1:12) – and yet He is the God whose eyes "are too pure to look upon evil;... [who] cannot tolerate wrong" (Hab 1:13).

"We cannot escape the fact that, in the Old Testament and in the New, God is characterised both by love and by wrath."

How, though, can God's righteous anger at sin and His steadfast love towards sinful people coexist? How can He be punish sin, and yet allow the guilty to go free? How can justice and mercy be reconciled? We find the answer in the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans. Having described humanity's plight in terms of God's righteous anger against our sin and rebellion, and of the judgment that must inevitably fall on those who remain in their sin (1:18-3:20), Paul affirms the wonderful reality that God in His mercy has provided a means for the guilty to be pardoned, for unrighteous sinners to be clothed in His righteousness (3:21-24a) – a gift of His grace, purchased for us by the redeeming

work of Christ on the cross (3:24b).

Notice, too, how Paul describes the price that was paid for our salvation: “God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of His blood—to be received by faith” (Rom. 3:25, NIV 2011). The Greek word translated “sacrifice of atonement” in the NIV, *hilastērion*, carries the basic idea of appeasement, or satisfaction – the technical term is “propitiation” – and in ancient pagan religions was used to describe the sacrifice offered by a worshipper, to avert the anger of their deity. Here, though, it is God who offers up the sacrifice, and God whose anger is set aside: God the Father presenting His own Son, the blood of the guiltless one shed for the forgiveness of sin – so that He can declare righteous all who turn to Him in repentance and faith (3:26).

There have been various attempts in

recent times to minimise the significance of this verse – to see the atoning sacrifice of Christ almost as an impersonal transaction, in which the shedding of blood serves simply to annul guilt or remove defilement. But Paul has already made it clear, not only that God’s wrath is being revealed against sin – the “ungodliness and unrighteousness of [those] who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth” (1:18) – but that His wrath is directed against us personally, and will be revealed in all its fury on the final day of judgment (2:5). But the good news of the gospel is that the God who is angry is also a God who loves – and that in love the triune God has taken the penalty for sin upon Himself, Father and Son together bearing the penalty for sin that we could not. Indeed, as the apostle John points out, “This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son

as an atoning sacrifice [a propitiation] for our sins” (1 Jn 4:10).

The great tragedy for Ms Bringle and her committee is that if the wrath of God has not been satisfied in the cross of Christ, then the love of God cannot be magnified by it – and that in downplaying the wrath of God, they’re distorting the Biblical depiction of His love. What makes God’s love so amazing is that He lavishes it upon people who by nature are objects of wrath (Eph 2:3-4); and what makes the grace and mercy of God so amazing is that it is extended to people who deserve only His judgment. If we want to “form the faith of coming generations”, we need to be prepared to tell them, without embarrassment, that in this world the wrath of God is being revealed against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of those who suppress the truth – but that in the cross where Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied – so that all who lay their sins on Him find forgiveness, justification, and life.

Gordon Coleman is the minister of Albion Park Presbyterian Church, NSW.

“If the wrath of God has not been satisfied in the cross of Christ, then the love of God cannot be magnified by it.”

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The Conviction to Lead

Al Mohler

*Minneapolis:
Bethany House,
2012.*

Peter Barnes

One deacon apparently said of his pastor: “Oh, he knows a lot but he can’t lead a two-car funeral procession.” One suspects that a course in John Maxwell’s principles would not improve the situation much. Al Mohler, has genuine runs on the board, as shown by his strong Reformed leadership as president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary since 1993. He contends that “far too much of what passes for leadership today is mere management”. Indeed, “the last thing the church needs is warmed-over business theories decorated with Christian language”. Far too much time is spent on strategies rather than convictions, which is not to deny the importance of the former.

In response to this, Mohler has delineated for us 25 principles for Christian leadership. I cringed occasionally, notably at “if you are not writing a blog, you should be”. But just as it is refreshing to read a work on discipline and find that it is not about bluff and manoeuvring, so too with a book on leadership which is not about manipulation to obtain one’s own way. This is one work on leadership that can be recommended.

Peter Barnes is editor of AP

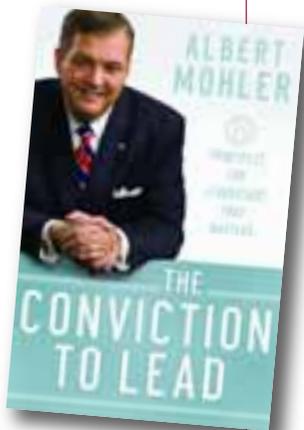
Why Cities Matter

Stephen T. Um & Justin Buzzard

Crossway, 2013

Mark Powell

This is a challenging



book for Christians to take seriously the incredible opportunity we have to glorify God’s name in the midst of today’s cities. The authors point out that whereas 300 years ago 3% of people lived in cities, today 80% of the world’s population lives in urban areas. So there is a great “urban migration” that has recently occurred in the history of the world.

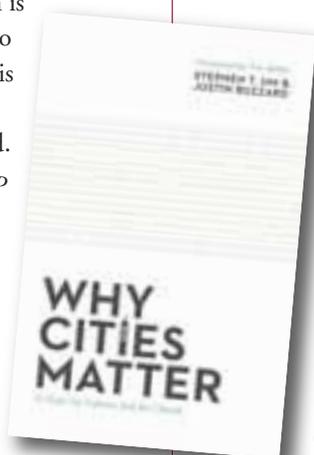
Um and Buzzard argue that traditionally evangelicals have viewed cities as being “uncomfortable, congested places filled with crime, grime and temptation”. In response, the authors suggest that cities also provide many significant opportunities for scientific, cultural and technological advancement.

There are many good insights in this book, especially from a sociological perspective. Being evangelicals though, they ground their approach in Scripture and trace the place and importance of cities throughout the Bible’s main storyline.

The only concern I have about the book is that it does downplay the ministry of those who live and minister in rural areas. The authors explicitly deny this (in an extended footnote hidden in the back of the book!) but the overall emphasis of the book is clear – cities are where the action is, therefore cities are where more Christian churches need to be.

No follower of Jesus would deny this – we want Christ’s Name to be glorified and acknowledged everywhere on earth – but there is an ever-present danger of triumphalism that can so easily creep in, especially, it seems, among those who are involved in church planting.

In the end this is a short, easy to read book that will



strengthen the resolve of those who are serving the Lord Jesus in urban areas to be encouraged to keep on building His kingdom.

Mark Powell is part of the ministerial team at Cornerstone Presbyterian Church, Strathfield, NSW

To Honour God and Strengthen His People

John Ellis

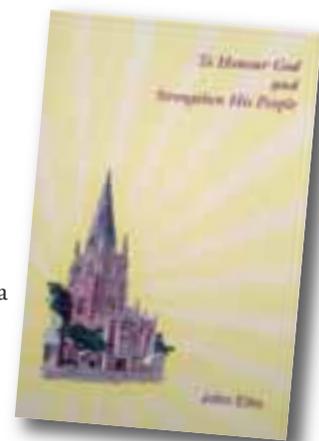
*Debra Dun:
Truth and
Grace, 2012.*

*Graham
Barnes*

John Ellis is a teacher at the Presbyterian Theological

Seminary in Dehra Dun in northern India. He has also spent many years as a pastor in Australia and as a missionary in the Philippines. He writes with the correct desire to see God glorified and congregations edified. The opening chapters of the book look at what God teaches (and commands) about how He is to be worshipped. This includes worship on the first day of the week, the use of spiritual gifts, the role of men and women, and the Lord’s Supper and baptism. He then looks at worship services down through church history, especially during the Reformation.

There is a substantial section on the “regulative principle” and its role in governing our services, including some of the difficulties in its application. One of the most helpful sections is “Some Biblical Principles of Worship”. Here he rightly states that worship must be God-centred (i.e. Trinitarian), through Christ, Spirit-enabled, controlled by the Scriptures, and it must involve the whole person. We pray this for our churches. The closing chapters of the book are largely concerned with practical aspects of our worship services.



I found the opening chapters more helpful than the closing ones. More could have been said on the role of elders and, in the section on images, of the exclusion of pictures of Jesus. Also, a later edition could include a Scriptural and topical index. These comments aside, the book is worthwhile, simple to read and easy to understand. It has many useful sections which would be beneficial for all Christians, perhaps especially for a session of elders to read together. In today's church where worship may be superficial, pragmatic, entertaining, or professional, we pray that our services will seek to honour God, edify his people, and preach His Word.

Graham Barnes is a final-year student at the Sydney Missionary and Bible College who hopes to serve in Bhutan in 2014.

**Teach Us to Pray
The Lord's Prayer and
The Gospel of Jesus**

Greg Goswell and Greg Munro (eds)

Sydney: CECPCA, 2013

Stuart Bonnington

Using contributors from across the Presbyterian Church and its three Theological training institutions, *Teach Us To Pray* gives an exposition of the Lord's Prayer, set in a general discussion of what prayer is, along with a consideration of our Lord's prayer life. Study questions are included for each chapter, there is some recommended reading and a reprint of the relevant section of Q and A, the new contemporary version of the



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Westminster Shorter Catechism.

We look forward to a companion volume on the Apostles Creed from the PCA Christian Education Committee. *Teach Us to Pray* deserves a wide readership and circulation.

Stuart Bonnington is minister of Scots Kirk, Fremantle

Saving Eutychus

Gary Millar and Phil Campbell

Kingford: Matthias Media, 2013

How to Evaluate Sermons

Joel R. Beeke

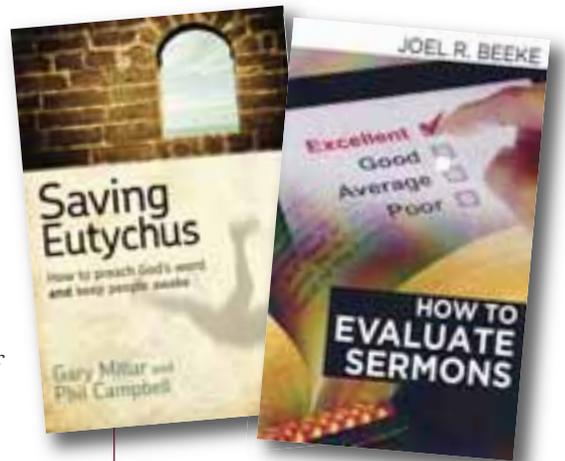
Darlington: EP Books, 2012

Stuart Bonnington

Those who have the awesome responsibility of preaching/delivering Bible talks would do well to regularly

review the ever-increasing number of books which seek to help further hone their skills. *Saving Eutychus* and *How to Evaluate Sermons* are among the best of recent additions in this area of practical theology.

Humble and heartfelt are the two words that came to mind when I read through *Saving Eutychus*, the new book on preaching by Phil Campbell and Gary Millar of the Queensland Theological College of the Presbyterian Church. Their aim is to stimulate preaching of God's Word that will be clear, captivating and life-changing. Phil and Gary have much wisdom to share. It starts with an important reminder of the significance of prayer and heart-changing expository preaching. Good sermons/Bible talks will have "a big idea" and will benefit from feedback. The book has excellent sections on clarity, and on how to preach the Old Testament using a biblical-theological approach. Perhaps in a subsequent edition, the



latter section could be condensed and produced as a summary sheet.

Given the many strengths of *Saving Eutychus*, it is surprising that there is no real focus on or discussion of the Holy Spirit's vital ministry in bringing His word through our preaching. Notwithstanding this omission, careful and prayerful reading of *Saving Eutychus* will give substantial help to preachers.

Joel Beeke is a modern day puritan in the very best sense. From the gigantic *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* to little booklets of 48 pages on *How to Evaluate Sermons*, he is always on message because he is so in tune with the Bible. Essentially an exposition of 1 Corinthians 3:5-15, *How to Evaluate Sermons* invites the preacher to run the spiritual tape-measure over their sermon/Bible talk and ask "did I preach as God's servant? Did I preach to build God's church? Did I preach Christ as the only foundation? Did I build my sermon with reformed preaching? Did I preach for the Master's reward?" There is a heavenly focus and aspect to the challenge of this little booklet that is far less common today than if we were in step with the Spirit of the Bible as much as we should be.

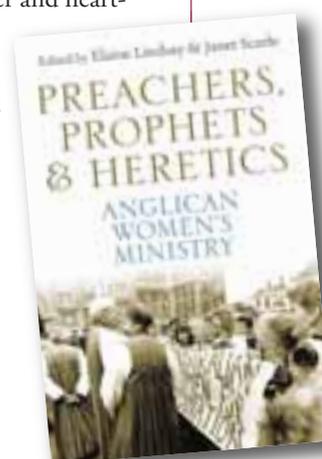
Preachers, Prophets and Heretics: Anglican Women's Ministry

Elaine Lindsay and Janet Scarfe (eds)

Sydney: UNSW Press, 2012.

Peter Barnes

On 7 March 1992 Peter Carnley, who did not



believe in the resurrection and who acted before the General Synod met, ordained 10 Anglican women as priests in Perth. To Elaine Lindsay, they “functioned as prophets”. This book is a very self-conscious defence of how the ordination of women into the Anglican priesthood came about. However, it hardly inspires confidence in the hearts of Christians.

In 1873 Martha Turner became a pastor in a Unitarian church in Melbourne, but this progressive body declined to the point where she had to resign in 1883. Others followed - in 1927, Winifred Kiek was ordained into the Congregational Church. In 1928 another Congregationalist, Maude Royden, toured Australia, and preached what she called “the famous text in which St Paul puts women in their place” by adding: “Now isn’t it a remarkable thing that an intellectual man like St Paul should talk such nonsense.” Yet she managed to receive invitations to preach in at least two Anglican churches: St Mark’s Darling Point in Sydney and St Peter’s Cathedral in Adelaide.

Frankly, this work is embarrassing.

Scripture is discarded, and the analysis is along the lines of a superior Whiggish interpretation of events coupled with some paranoid warnings about a conservative backlash. Peta Sherlock says that she was sustained by *The Vicar of Dibley*, which is hardly funny, let alone inspiring. Stuart Piggin writes with rather more perception and reality: “I wish we could rewind history and start again, and this time do it very, very differently.” One can only concur. Either that, or remove the first two nouns in the book title.

The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness

Timothy Keller

Farington: 10Publishing, 2012.

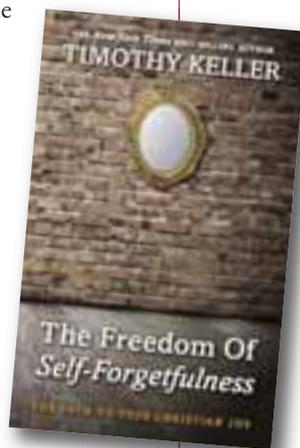
Peter Barnes

This is a simply-written punchy little work which sets out to demonstrate that the traditional view that hubris is the root cause of evil has far more going for it than the dangerous and shallow view that the problem with humanity is its sense of a

low self-esteem.

Keller’s text is 1 Corinthians 3:21-4:7, and Keller applies it in a very modern way. He cites Madonna who admitted: “Because even though I have become somebody, I still have to prove that I am somebody. My struggle has never ended and I guess it never will.” That is a recipe for damage and more damage, as it has proved in Madonna’s life.

Keller writes that “a truly gospel-humble person is not a self-hating person or a self-loving person, but ... a self-forgetful person”. As in Madonna’s case, the performance never gets the ultimate verdict, whereas, as Paul shows, for the Christian, the verdict (redemption accomplished) comes before the performance (therefore, live out the gospel). In fewer than 50 pages, Keller has given us a most incisive instrument to help bring about mental sanity.



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Reasonable limits

Reason, a great gift, nevertheless is imperfect

In the minds of many people today, faith and reason are polar opposites. Richard Dawkins, for example, maintains that “faith is an evil precisely because it requires no justification and brooks no argument”. We are meant to believe that no Christian has any reason to be a Christian; it is all a matter of blind faith. And atheists are presented to us as illustrations of Matthew Arnold’s “sweet reasonableness” - or reasonableness at least. Since Dawkins is keen that those with faith should argue, let us do just that. How does reason connect to faith?

God is the source of knowledge.

Five times we read in the wisdom literature of the Old Testament that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Job 28:28; Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 15:33). Wisdom or reason requires a foundation, and this can only be found in the One who is the source of all wisdom and knowledge – God Himself. Paul concludes his epistle to the Romans with the benediction: “to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen” (Rom. 16:27). In the absolute sense, God alone is wise because all wisdom comes from Him.

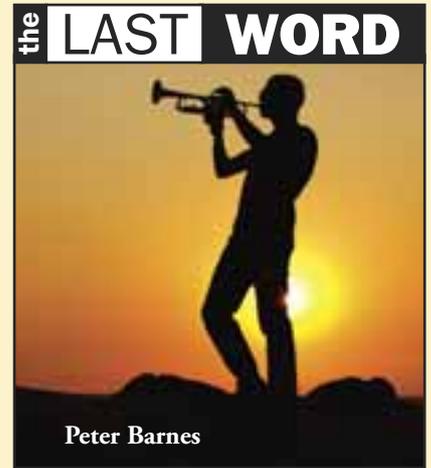
This has implications for how God deals with us. The book of Proverbs is given that we might know wisdom and instruction, and understand words of

The last stage of reason is to recognise that there is an infinity of things which surpass it – Pascal

insight (Prov. 1:2). Even as God addresses sinners in their sin, He does not invite us to bungly jump into an irrational pool of froth and forgiveness. Instead, He calls on us: “Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool” (Isa. 1:18). Faith is not separated from reason. The great commandment tells us to love God with all our mind as well as all our heart, soul, and strength (Mark 12:30).

Human reason is fallen and hence inadequate.

Yet there is something wrong with human reason as there is with everything else in this fallen world. The Preacher in Ecclesiastes applied his heart and mind to search by wisdom all that is done under heaven, yet he found the exercise to be an unhappy and vain one (Eccles. 1:12-14). Indeed, “in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow” (Eccles. 1:16). Wisdom proves to be elusive, and very deep, so who can find it out? (Eccles. 7:23-24). Wisdom is wonderful, but the worst thing we can do is to be wise in our own eyes (Prov. 3:7). Somehow God has made foolish the wisdom of the world (1 Cor. 1:20) for the foolishness of God is wiser than men (1 Cor. 1:25). Wisdom might get us to the moon, but not to heaven. We can curb malaria, but the common cold is still common. Instruction manuals abound, but things still fall apart. This explains why John Newton once wrote a letter to a friend which he entitled On the Inefficacy of Knowledge.



In his *Confessions*, Augustine declared that reason must be enlightened by another light in order to be a partaker in the truth, since it is not itself the essence of truth. Dawkins and his ilk have made an idol of reason, and idols never deliver what they seem to promise.

Faith is in harmony with reason but also beyond it.

Faith is supposed to be like *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, and believing in six impossible things before breakfast. But the great French scientist of the 17th century, Blaise Pascal, possessed a clearer and humbler mind than that of Richard Dawkins or Lawrence Krauss. Pascal’s conclusion was that “the last stage of reason is to recognise that there is an infinity of things which surpass it. Reason is but feeble if it does not go so far as to know that”. Is it in accordance with reason to believe, for example, that Jesus Christ rose from the dead? Yes, says Paul, because it was prophesied centuries before it happened, and it was witnessed by more than 500 people (1 Cor. 15:1-8). Faith thus is the only reasonable response to the claim that Jesus rose from the dead. Any other explanation contains its conclusion in its premise, and is not open to the evidence.

During the French Revolution, the cathedral of Notre-Dame was renamed the Temple of Reason. At the same time the guillotine worked overtime. It is a tragic example of a common dilemma. As the French Revolutionaries worshipped at the Temple of Reason, they ended being most unreasonable. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and, for that matter, the goal of wisdom.