

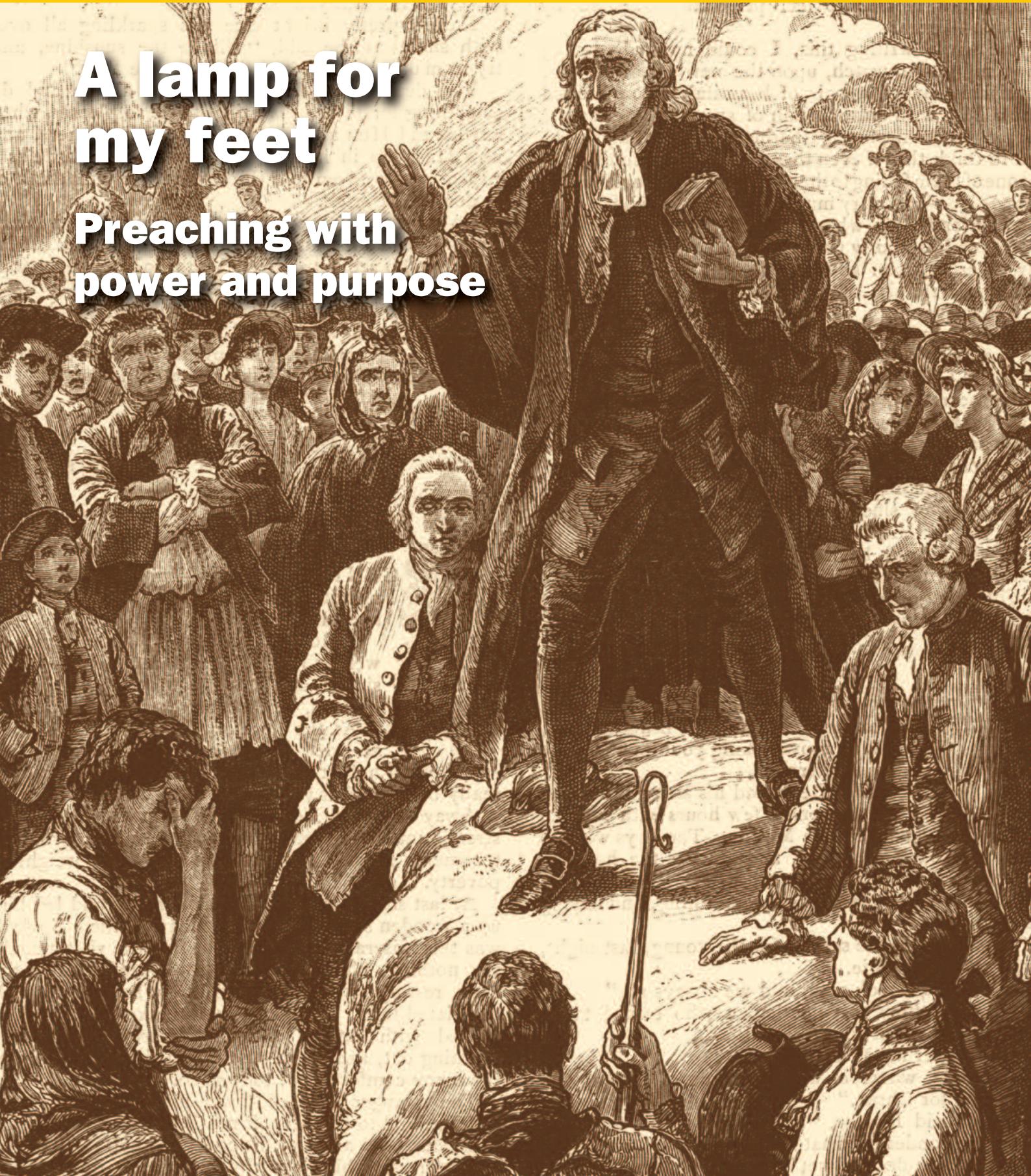
AP

Australia's reformed
evangelical periodical

AUTUMN 2015

A lamp for my feet

Preaching with
power and purpose





Most of us manage to do something unexpectedly well at least once. In Vanuatu on one occasion – and only one – I fixed a tractor at the behest of a principal who was obviously one of those “glass half-full” characters. I did not have the faintest idea what I was doing, but somehow I got the machine working. Fixing it on a regular basis, however, was beyond me, so this one effort, alas, was an unrepeatable performance.

In preaching, the most difficult task is the week-in and week-out proclamation of God’s Word in a way that is both faithful to God and captivating to the congregation. The one-off special

Editorial

occasion sermon is not sufficient. Clearly, we need to know the Word and be able to speak reasonably well, yet there is more to preaching than public speaking. Paul reminded the Thessalonian Christians that “our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1 Thess. 1:5). There is something not easily defined about powerful preaching, but it is certainly not just teaching in a loud voice.

God’s Word is described as light (Ps. 119:105), a hammer and fire (Jer. 23:29), seed and milk (1 Pet. 1:23-2:2) and honey and gold (Ps. 19:10). It is therefore meant to teach, convict, inform, nourish, and sustain us. Our hearers ought to know that it is precious to us, and not just a part of our weekly routine.

How can this come about? Martyn

Lloyd-Jones was not being unfair when he complained that “present-day preaching does not even annoy men”. Often, truth has been missing, and almost as often, passion is not there. There is to be an interaction and a mutuality between the preacher and his congregation. This cannot be counterfeited; it is something that only the presence of the Holy Spirit can bring about. Presbyters are responsible for preaching faithfully and well, but man cannot control the Holy Spirit.

In the end, preachers need to imbibe what Augustine declared to his people: “I nourish you with what nourishes me; I offer to you what I live on myself.” If that sense is present in the gathering of Christ’s people, we may hope that the Holy Spirit is at work, and will continue to be at work.

Peter Barnes



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The Presbyterian Inland Mission (PIM) is an inland and outback ministry of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. It has an expanding network of patrol ministries, is responsible for a number of Mission Churches and has a developing range of caring, philanthropic and community assistance programs.

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Preaching with purpose

Application is the missing element that helps the gospel transform lives.

Murray Capill talks to Peter Hastie

Dr Murray Capill has pastored churches in New Zealand and Australia and is the principal of the Reformed Theological College, Geelong, Victoria, where he lectures in preaching and pastoral ministry. He did postgraduate research at Westminster Theological Seminary, California, where he received a Doctor of Ministry. Murray is married to Wendy and they have five children, three married and two at home.

In addition to his first book on preaching, *Preaching with Spiritual Vigour: Lessons from the Life and Practice of Richard Baxter*, Dr Capill has recently written, *The Heart is the Target: Preaching Practical Application from Every Text* (P & R, 2014). It is an important book and one that is being recommended for those involved in preaching and teaching. Bruce Milne (*Know the Truth*, IVP) has endorsed it warmly: “I wish I had had this text in my hands when I began preaching over 50 years ago.”

Murray, what led you to write your latest book, *The Heart is the Target*?

That’s a good question. I had to ask myself, “Is there really a genuine need for yet another book on preaching?” But I decided it was valuable to write it because very few books explore in any detail how to press the truth of a biblical text into people’s minds and hearts. My concern in this book is to provide an extended treatment that will help preachers discover tools and skills for making penetrating application of biblical texts.

You can Google anything. But the gospel is about far more than facts and information. It’s about a person we must meet and listen to.

What should be the preacher’s aim when he addresses people?

Well, you’ve got to remember what a preacher is: a preacher is a herald, a proclaiming of God’s Word. So when the preacher stands in the pulpit, he stands there on behalf of God to speak God’s Words into the lives of people. The preacher is aiming to preach a message that is true to God’s Word, one that leaves people sensing that God has spoken directly to them in their situation.

To what extent is preaching about life transformation?

Well I think that’s the intended outcome of preaching, because you can’t hear God speak and not be changed by it. But the main goal is that people actually encounter God, meet with Him, form a sense of who He is and how He is meant to govern their lives. If they understand that, and the Holy Spirit impresses this awareness on their hearts, then they’re going to be changed by it. So ultimately, yes, one of the great aims of preaching is to transform lives, but transformation comes through relationship with God.

You make a distinction between lecturing and preaching. Why?

Well, lecturing is largely concerned with conveying and explaining information. All preaching includes elements of that, but it goes much further. Good preaching moves from information to explanation, and then on to proclamation and transformation. So a preacher should never be content with a message that simply explains truth and downloads information. Our concern must always be to press that truth on people’s lives so that they know what to do about it.

We need to realise that our world is full of information. You can Google anything. But the gospel is about far more than facts and information. It’s about a person we must meet and listen to. And this meeting is life-changing.

I think preachers need to have a theology of preaching that reminds them that they are speaking on behalf of God. They’re proclaiming something, not just sharing something. They’re proclaiming a message for today, not just talking about the Bible and the meaning of a text. So if we remember that we are heralds, then I think we’ll have a right approach to the task.

Today many evangelicals have realised that preaching, if it is to honour God, needs to follow the text of the Bible carefully and expound it. But is that enough?

I think it's encouraging that expository preaching is back in vogue today. It is a very positive sign. However, it's got to be true expository preaching. This means that the preacher must not only bring out what the Scripture meant to its original hearers, but what it means for us today. When expository preaching is no more than a verbalised commentary on the text, that is, exegesis out-loud, then it falls short of true expositional preaching. If that's all we are doing then we are not actually preaching.

We must do more than explain the meaning of the text; we must show how it applies to people's lives today and press this message on their consciences. If we refuse to do this, expository preaching will become dry, arid and intellectual and it will fail to transform people's lives.

So how does your latest book, *The Heart is the Target*, address some of the issues that you've been raising over the last decade in relation to modern evangelical preaching?

What I aim to do in the book is give preachers tools that will help them think

more deeply about how a biblical text applies to the people they're preaching to. It seems to me that we often give preachers lots of resources – both exegetical and theological – as well as good communication tools and devices.

However, we tend to leave the whole area of application to the preachers' intuition. If they see a great application, they have something to run with. If they don't, then they may well bolt on a very predictable, well-worn application – and there are some classic ones.

"You've got to pray more; you've got to read your Bible more; you've got to witness more; or you've got to serve more." And so we end up with these largely moralistic applications tacked on to the end of a sermon.

What I want to do in this book is open up a much richer range of possible applications that are true to the intent of Scripture, but are varied and penetrating, and will touch people's hearts.

How did you become interested in this whole area yourself?

Well, my own journey in preaching

began with reading the sermons of Martyn Lloyd-Jones when I was a teenager. I found his preaching thoroughly compelling. It was so persuasive and spiritually convicting.

Then I journeyed backwards from Lloyd-Jones to Ryle and Spurgeon, and then later I began reading Jonathan Edwards.

Eventually I found my way back to the Puritans. It was really my study of some of the Puritan writers that opened up to me these unexplored areas of application. They had real skill in penetrating the heart, pricking the conscience, stirring godly affections and moving people at the level of the will. They saw genuine and heartfelt change under their preaching. So what I am doing in my book is really just modernising ideas that have been around for centuries.

So which particular writers did you find helpful in giving you an insight into this whole issue of application – even in the 17th century?

It was particularly from Richard Baxter that I developed the model of the heart



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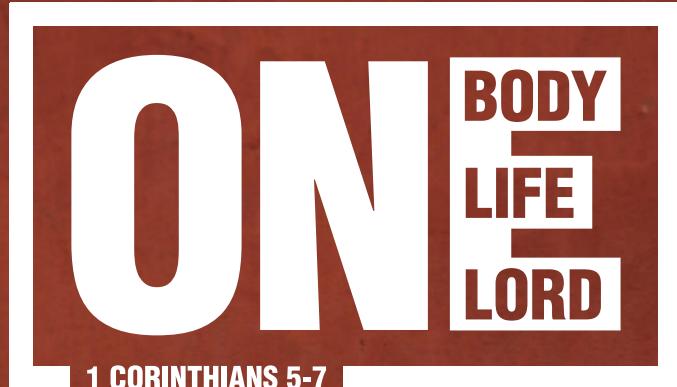
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that I work with in *The Heart is the Target*. He showed me that a person's heart consists of four main faculties.

First, there is the faculty of the mind in which we come to understand the truth. The Scriptures show us that God is able to enlighten our otherwise darkened, depraved minds.

However, the truth that enlightens us must be pressed on the second faculty, our consciences. Then truth is not just known; it's felt, and we're judged by it. God's Word convicts us of our sin.

So we see our need to change, and faculty of the will has to do with that. The will is our capacity to choose, decide and act. God's Word intends to change our decisions and actions.

But the thing is, our choices and actions won't change even if we know what is right with our mind and feel convicted of it in our conscience – our actions won't change unless our deep inner desires and passions change. That's the fourth faculty of the heart – the passions or affections.

The problem is that our sinful hearts are passionate about all the wrong things. We have ungodly affections, and we find, as Paul said, that the things we want to do we can't, and the things we don't want to do we do because we're driven by these sinful passions.

The work of the gospel is to transform our minds, awaken our consciences,

and stir in us godly passions – and that leads to a changed way of life.

Why do you think modern preachers struggle to apply the Scriptures?

I think preachers struggle with application for several reasons. The most obvious one is that it's plain hard work, and often those of us in Bible-believing churches put most of our sermon preparation time into exegesis.

So you've got to allow more time?

Definitely. In terms of sermon preparation, we need to devote about as much time to the application of a text as we devote to discovering its meaning. It requires time and serious reflection to think about human life in terms of the faculties of the heart – the mind, the conscience, the will and the passions. It's complex, so if you haven't thought deeply about people and truth, then you'll resort to the more predictable and superficial applications that we hear so often.

Do you think modern theological education needs to bear some of the responsibility for this deficiency?

Modern theological education, which is often very rich and helpful to people, can also tend to be rather academic. And theological colleges can easily teach people to have an academic approach to Scripture. You see, the

study of theology requires people to analyse the biblical text, interact with scholarly opinions and then write essays. That is the academic approach.

But a sermon is aiming at something different. It's designed to take the truth and press it winsomely on the lives of people. It's not an essay. It's not a research project. It's not chiefly a refutation of other view-points. It's a positive proclamation of gospel truth today.

So a student who reads copiously and writes lots of essays and does very detailed study of a text can easily develop an overly academic approach to the Scriptures. If we're going to preach engagingly, we have to have a different approach to the truth. We must certainly rely on the Holy Spirit to give us insight and we should use academic tools to uncover the riches of Scripture, but we must go further – we must persuade people of the truth of Scripture, apply it to their consciences, address their passions and show them how, by God's grace, they can change.

What do you think are the essential things that preachers need to know to ensure that their preaching is filled with effective and arresting application?

I think first of all a preacher has got to know what preaching is really all about. As I said before, it's about proclaiming God so that people come face-to-face with Him and are forced to deal with



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start here, go into all the world...



Him. Second, they've got to have a really good handle on biblical truth. Of course it's right that theological colleges are helping young preachers wrestle with Scripture in depth and understanding the critical theological issues.

But, and this is important, they must also know how to get inside people. They've got to know how to speak to the real issues of people's lives – their basic motivations and driving passions. And finally, I think, they've got to know how to do those things winsomely and in an engaging way.

This means that preaching is incredibly challenging work, and if we're not struggling with sermon preparation there's probably something wrong. Even Paul himself throws up his hands and says, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Preaching is a very demanding task. When we really understand what is involved we will always be on our knees in prayer and sweating week after week to make sure we preach as well as we can.

How important is it for preachers to understand idolatry?

It's vital. Idolatry is our fundamental "heart" problem, so if a preacher doesn't understand how we long to find fulfilment in things other than God, he doesn't really understand the human condition.

God created us as worshippers who are meant to find our meaning, joy and significance in Him. Worship is something that is innate and part of our very being. However, when we reject God we try to find our fulfilment in other things. And that's what idolatry is. Idolatry is when we look to anything else to give to us what only God is meant to give to us. We look to these other things to find our sense of value, identity, fulfilment and joy.

If we're looking for those things apart from God, we've created an idol. We might be looking to our work, our reputation, our entertainment, hobbies, or relationships – to provide what God alone can give us. Whenever we find ourselves doing that, we're acting as idolaters.

That's a huge issue for Christians as well as for non-Christians. Sadly, even after



Dr Murray Capill

we come to know God, we still find ourselves trying to find fulfilment and satisfaction in things other than God.

Are all Christians involved in idolatry?

Yes, unfortunately – even preachers! It's very possible to make Christian ministry itself an idol. If I find my ministry becomes the focus of my attention instead of God, and I make my preaching the one thing that gives me significance and joy, then I have become an idolater. It's possible to be a Christian preacher who gets his sense of purpose and worth from preaching rather than God. As soon as I do that, I make gospel-preaching my idol.

Or a minister can make the size and health of his church his idol – it becomes the reason for his existence. Or I can make my wife an idol. She is a wonderful, godly, and loving wife – but if I run to her for my sense of security and try to find all my happiness in her, I will be disappointed when I can no longer receive from her what I want. So anything – good or bad – can be an idol. An idol is often a good thing that's assumed a wrongful place in our lives.

What kind of changes should we expect in people's lives through effective preaching?

Well we need to be aiming for heart change. We're not just looking for superficial, surface change. When you raise children, you can raise them to have nice manners. But that's not enough. Children can be polite and well-

mannered but still have rebellious and wayward hearts. What parents really want are children whose inward attitudes match their behaviour. And it's the same with preachers. What we really want to see in people is change that begins with repentance. We want to see conviction of sin, a turning from godlessness and an earnest seeking of God's grace.

Today, I think many preachers have their sights set too low. Their sermons are really designed to pander to our desire for success rather than our need for repentance and renewal. This is one of the reasons why "how-to" sermons are so popular today. People have a great appetite for preaching that tells us how to have better marriages, higher self-esteem, improved finances and the like because we all desperately want to know how to make life better.

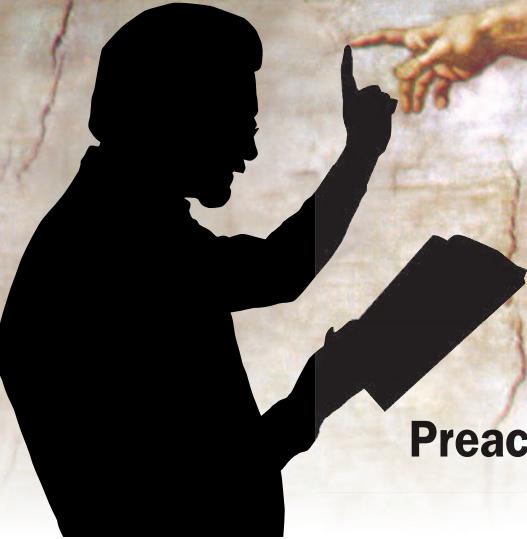
But when you deal with people at that level, you're just touching the surface of their lives. For genuine and long-lasting change to take place people's heart attitudes need to be transformed by the gospel.

Does the life of the preacher affect his capacity to apply the gospel?

Yes, it certainly does. The minister himself is the conduit through which God's message passes. And it's not just his words that convey the message; his whole life is to bear testimony to it. So when we preach to others we must first press that truth on our own hearts. We must preach to ourselves first before we presume to preach to others. And to make good applications we must know our own hearts very well. In fact, we'll discover in our own hearts many of the issues we need to be preaching to in others.

This actually means that preaching is very personal. It explains why a certain text preached by five different preachers can be the same truth, but expressed quite differently. The same truth is coming through different people, different experiences, and different filters. That's not wrong; it's exactly how preaching is meant to be.

Peter Hastie is the principal of the Presbyterian Theological College of Victoria.



So help me, God

Preaching is too important to prepare unaided.

Peter Owen

There it is again. That sinking, anxious feeling in my guts. I've had it every week over decades of preaching. Sunday's a comin'. I'm called again to preach from God's holy Word to God's holy Church.

"Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness" (James 3:1 ESV). Oh, Lord, that's so frightening. May I never forget it.

Before I even open my Bible, I begin to plead in prayer. Oh Father, please help me with this onerous task. I'm still such a sinner. Please forgive me. Yet, moment by moment I rest in the righteousness of my risen living Saviour. Thank you for Jesus. Thank you for the glorious gospel. I'm a man living under sheer grace. Thank you, for your Holy Spirit who equips me for the task. Father please quicken me by your Spirit and illuminate this week's text to me.

Every week, I need to firmly talk to myself and remind myself of why I do this work. "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching... As for you, always be sober-minded,

endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:1-2 and 5).

Peter, don't despair in your overwhelming feelings of inadequacy. The Church has set you apart for the task by the laying on of hands. You're called to preach and teach. "God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe" (1 Cor. 1:21b NIV). He's still doing that today. Be patient and fulfil your calling. Trust God that He will use your feeble efforts for His glory.

OK Lord, let's get to work. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15 ESV). Help me rightly handle your word, Lord, that your gospel may be proclaimed as you said it would. Luke 24:47. Honour your Word, Lord.

Here's my weekly sermon preparation process.

(I write lots of notes during this process.) Help me Lord.

I read the book over and over. I've printed the whole book on several pages side by side. That way I have a bird's eye perspective on the whole book and can see the flow. I also keep listening to the book being read on CD. I often hear things that I don't read.

Next, I choose the portion I'm going to preach on. It's not that easy sometimes.

Then in my word processor I do a flow diagram of that portion. I arrange it so I can see the structure and flow. This is a crucial step – it brings the text "alive". I look for questions and answers, recurring words, key clauses and phrases etc. Help me Lord.

Now, the contexts of the verses. What's the historical, geographical, literary, and theological context? Then I study the words. What's the genre? Are there any technical words? What does the grammar communicate? Help me rightly handle your word, Lord.

Having done all that, I now need to ask the portion some questions. But, what questions? Well, thankfully Scripture itself gives me the questions to ask. Paul tells us what Scripture is and what it's supposed to do for the saints. "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV).

What do each of those words literally mean?

- Teaching, *didaskalia* in Greek, is instruction in doctrine. Truth to be learned.
- Reproof, *elegchos*, is conviction of wrong.
- Correction, *epanorthosis* is restoration to right thinking and/or behaviour.
- Training in righteousness, *dikaiosune*, has two meanings. The

Don't despair in your overwhelming feelings of inadequacy. The Church has set you apart for the task by the laying on of hands. You're called to preach and teach.

first is the teaching concerning the way in which a person may be justified (declared righteous before God); teaching on the gospel. The second is teaching on God's commands and how to obey them.

Remember what the end of verse 16 says: "that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." As we preach we're maturing, edifying and equipping the saints.

So let's ask the questions.

But one other thing I must remember. The Bible teaches us about God. It's full of theology (the study of God). So, Peter, never forget to ask your portion what it's teaching us about God.

Help me, Lord.

What is the text teaching me about the Trinity; God the Father, Jesus and/or the Holy Spirit?

What is the principal doctrine in this text? (There may be several doctrines in the text. But what is the principal doctrine? It's crucial I get this right because that will give me the "main idea" of the text.)

How does this text convict me of wrong?

How does this text restore/heal/encourage me toward right thinking or behaviour?

How does this text train me in righteousness? What does it teach me

There are three things that go to the making of a preacher: supplication, meditation and tribulation. Please! Pray for your preacher.

about the gospel? What does it teach me about God's commands and how to obey them?

Now, having done all that work I study the principal doctrine in a good systematic theology textbook. Then (and only then), do I check all my thinking and conclusions with a couple of good commentaries. Help me, Lord.

I also, need to think about the text in relation to two key biblical themes: the Kingdom of God and the Covenant of Grace. Where is this text in the progress of the revelation of both?

Likewise, I must always remember that the central focus of the whole biblical story is Christ and His gospel (Luke 24:25-27, 44-45, John 5:39, 46, 2 Cor. 1:20). So, if it's an Old Testament text, I ask how the principal doctrine is fulfilled in Christ? But, whatever I'm preaching on, I try to weave the gospel into every sermon. I've got to constantly remind the saints of the difference between salvation by sheer grace and by works "religion".

Nearly there. I continue to pray and meditate on the text. Help me, Lord.

I must apply the text to my listeners. Actually, this is hardest part of the

work. Oh Lord, I really need your help with this. I need to make the text real and preach to the heart of the listeners. I need to highlight how the text speaks to their core commitments and the motivations that drive them.

Concurrently, I need to highlight how the text speaks to other world views. But application must be concrete (that is, God wants you to do something ... specifically to ... and this is how).

Then I take my notes and begin to write out my sermon. I usually write it in full and then summarise it into note form. It usually takes me 3 drafts. All up, the above process has usually taken about 12 hours of work (but much more if the text is difficult).

Well, Sunday's arrived. That anxious feeling is now palpable. Holy Spirit, please help me. Without you I can do nothing.

Martin Luther is reported to have said that there are three things that go to the making of a preacher: supplication, meditation and tribulation. I think he's right. Please! Pray for your preacher.

Rev. Peter Owen is planting a new Presbyterian church in Point Cook, Melbourne.

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A refreshing history

Robert Evans

Australia has enjoyed many revivals, which should still be our prayer.

Keen Evangelical Christians in the early 19th century resembled Evangelicals today in most ways, but there were two very notable differences. The first was that the 19th century Evangelicals had a vision of what God could do to bring times of great success back into the story of their churches. They knew that the Day of Pentecost could return, and make their work for God very successful. The second difference was that they knew how this could be obtained – in answer to united, agonising, intense, intercessory prayer.

Today, we have lost both of these things, and need urgently to recover them.

This did not mean that the 19th century people always prayed for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as they should have done, but there were times when they realised painfully their spiritual barrenness. Then they turned to God to supply the answer to their needs, and He abundantly answered their prayers.

The first revivals in Australian church history came in Tasmania and New South Wales in the years from 1835 to 1840. Wonderful works of grace

occurred in the penal colonies at Macquarie Harbour and at Port Arthur, as the Methodist chaplain worked with the convicts, then revival came in the township of Launceston. In New South Wales, the first revivals occurred in Castlereagh and Windsor, again among the Methodists. Local revivals were also seen by the Methodists during the Gold Rush in Bendigo.

News of the great 1857 Awakening in the US followed by the 1859 revival in the British Isles triggered intense prayer for revival in Australia. The years 1859 and 1860 saw revivals in many churches in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, and all the Protestant denominations saw good results.

Then followed the tour of Australia and New Zealand by the American evangelist “California” Taylor from 1864 to 1866, and again in 1870. His work was strongest among the Methodists, and his methods of evangelism moulded much of what occurred in the years following. Many local revivals occurred in this period. Also in 1864, Matthew Burnett, another evangelist, came and settled in Australia. He saw revivals in a number

of places, especially in Victoria and South Australia.

The most famous Presbyterian evangelist in this early period was the Rev. Alexander McIntyre, who came to Australia in 1853. He was an evangelistic preacher of unusual power, mainly speaking in Gaelic. At first, he found a Gaelic congregation at Ahalton, in the upper Hunter Valley. He preached also in Maclean, on the north coast, on the Manning, and the Shoalhaven, and settled finally in Geelong, where he died in 1878. When I was a minister in Maclean around 1978, the Free Kirk congregation there was still the largest of its kind in Australia, due much to McIntyre’s early work.

The 1859 revival came to the Manning River in New South Wales through the ministry of the Rev. Allan McIntyre, who arrived on the Manning from Scotland in 1854, and, after three years was called to minister there.

Allan McIntyre was described as pre-eminently a man of prayer. He knew how to call down blessings from above. “The fervour of his supplications at times was remarkable, and could not escape notice.” There were a number of hillside spots where he used to go, many times a day, to commune with the Heavenly Father. Prayer seemed to be his element. Once he called his people together to pray for rain, which

Many other instances of answered prayer impressed not only the saints but many others in the community as well.

was then sorely needed. "The congregation gathered, and after earnest supplication by himself, and others, started to wend their way home, but many, before reaching their destination, were drenched with an abundance of rain." Many other instances of answered prayer impressed not only the saints but many others in the community as well.

He had three preaching places on the Manning, at each of which he spent a whole Sunday in turn. His prayers for revival were persistent, but he seemed frustrated by no apparent answers. One Saturday he spent most of the day in a boatshed, praying before a Communion service at the lower end of his parish. He was overheard praying that, if God, in His sovereignty, did not send the Holy Spirit in power, he would take it as a sign from God that he should move to another work. However, on the next day, the church was crowded more than usual, and seemed solemnly affected. But it was the Thanksgiving Monday, also crowded, when McIntyre made his great impression. He said "the last and great day of the Feast will be a day to be remembered throughout eternity – a day when He Who is fairer than the sons of men girded His sword upon His thigh and in His majesty went forth to ride prosperously. The Spirit of Truth accompanied the word spoken in power."

It was said by some of the elders that there were not three pairs of dry eyes within the walls." It was a day of the presence of God, and a turning point from which flowed many conversions, transformed families, and a richly spiritual society and fellowship, which

The second half of the 19th century was a relatively good time for evangelism in Australia, with many Presbyterians playing a strong role.

brought blessings for generations following.

Many local revivals occurred among the Methodists in the late 19th century, especially in South Australia – so much so that Methodists came to make up 35% of the population in that state by 1920.

The second half of the 19th century was a relatively good time for evangelism in Australia, with many Presbyterians playing a strong role. Rev. Dr Alexander N. Somerville, a famous Scottish evangelist, visited Australia in 1877 – 1879. He preached in many centres around Australia with some good success, but without making evangelistic appeals, as suited the more Calvinistic trends of the times. A local Presbyterian evangelist, the Rev. John MacNeil, was widely successful in Eastern Australia in the 1880s. He died suddenly at the age of only 42.

New Zealanders enjoyed the work of a much-loved Scottish lay evangelist named Duncan Wright. He came to New Zealand at the request of the Knox Dunedin Presbyterian Church to be a visitor for their Sunday School. After some years he joined the Dunedin YMCA staff. From there his work developed slowly into preaching missions in local churches.

In 1882 a wealthy businessman offered Wright a subsidy worth 200 pounds a year providing he did evangelistic work

in the Presbyterian Churches of New Zealand, which he accepted. This work became very extensive, including Assembly-sponsored visits to the churches in Auckland. The financial arrangement lasted for five years.

Later, he spent several years in Australia, and eventually returned to be the City Missionary in Dunedin where he led children's classes with many hundreds of children.

A Presbyterian layman, Robert Robertson, worked as an evangelist for many years for the Evangelisation Society of Australasia (based in Melbourne, 1886 to 1901), before he joined a Methodist effort to evangelise in the country towns in New South Wales in 1902. Powerful revivals occurred in his meetings in the Bulli and Corrimonal areas early that year, and later in such towns as Kempsey.

1902 was the year of revivals in Victoria, with the visit of American evangelists R. A. Torrey and Charles M. Alexander. This movement became part of a world-wide revival movement through the next eight years. It was a decade when all the Australian churches grew steadily in terms of membership. Revival is something Christians ought to pray for before the throne of grace.

Rev. Robert Evans has published many works on revivals (see www.revivals.arkangles.com)

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A murderous toll

Christianity is about Rescue – including the unborn

Graham Preston

It is probably fair to say that most committed Christians believe abortion is something that we should be concerned about.

Human life is precious: it is uniquely created in God's image and Jesus gave His life for us. Therefore, since abortion is the deliberate taking of young human life, we recognise that it is not a practice that should simply be ignored. We know we ought to be concerned about it.

But how much concern should we as Christians have about abortion? What is the appropriate response to about 100,000 young human lives being deliberately ended each year in Australia?

These are very challenging questions: questions so challenging that it seems that most Christians today would prefer not to address them at all.

That is perhaps understandable. Abortion directly and immediately raises very personal, highly emotional, and deadly serious matters. Nevertheless, we must ask, is it acceptable, is it responsible, is it right, for Christians to relegate it all to the too-hard basket?

Back in 1985 when my wife, Liz, and I were theology students preparing to be involved in overseas missions, someone gave us a few leaflets on abortion written by Keith and Melody Green. Up until that time I had given little thought to what abortion was about and those leaflets were an absolutely

shocking revelation, to the extent that I couldn't even read or look at them.

But neither could I forget them. If abortion was that bad, how could I just try to ignore what was being done? Eventually I took the leaflets down again and read them, and wept. How could this be allowed to be going on? Liz and I thought we should at least do something before we headed off to work in Japan.

Well, because of health concerns, we never got to Japan. But we did do something regarding abortion and have been endeavouring to do so since. First, we imported thousands of those leaflets and distributed them through the churches in Queensland. Perhaps, we thought, most people were as poorly informed on this as we had been. If these leaflets could make such a big impact upon us then surely all that was needed was to educate people and things would surely change for the better.

But we soon found it wasn't going to be that easy. We became involved in the wider pro-life movement and organised protests, Walks, Life Chains, speakers, lobbying, educational events, anything that we could think of. In 1996 we opened a crisis pregnancy centre in Brisbane, now known as the Priceless Life Centre, to provide counsel and practical support to women and couples.

As the years went by though, things didn't seem to be getting better. When we became involved there were two

These are questions so challenging that it seems that most Christians today would prefer not to address them at all.



specialist abortion "clinics" in Queensland. Now there are perhaps 10, and the number of abortions just kept increasing. Perhaps most concerning of all, the tide of public opinion turned against us in significant ways. There is more open antagonism against those who would continue to dare to speak up and there is also more indifference generally, including it would seem amongst the Christian community, toward the plight of the unborn children.

In 1993 another friend passed on a book to me – and I have to admit that I could not read that document either. The book, *Shattering the Darkness*, written by Presbyterian minister Joseph Foreman, was completely unlike any other pro-life book I had seen. When I did eventually force myself to read it through I passed it on to Liz and then to another couple, Anne and Jim, and we were all profoundly challenged (more from the book later).

The outcome was that, over a few days in December of that year, Anne and I engaged in our first non-violent direct action against abortion, sit-ins in front of the doors of one of Australia's most notorious abortion clinics. The abortionist unsurprisingly sought a Supreme Court injunction against us but withdrew his complaint when it became evident that he could be shown in court to be operating illegally.

Sadly at that point, despite this victory of sorts, I lost my nerve. I did have my reasons/excuses – Liz was about to give birth to our fourth child, I was enrolled to go to university part-time, etc., but primarily I got scared. So, *Shattering the Darkness* went back on the shelf and stayed there for eight years.

Once again, though, I could not forget what I had read. On the completion of my course, I reread the book, became re-enthused, and decided to approach things in a more determined manner. After setting up a small group called Protect Life, the first thing we did was to send out a letter explaining our thinking – in short, can we expect anyone to take us seriously when we say that abortion takes the life of a child if we are not prepared to act as though it is true? – along with a copy of the book to about 30 Christian leaders whose opinion we respected.

We hoped to gain insights they may have had regarding our intended course of action, i.e. taking repeated non-violent direct action at the doors of the abortion “clinics”. It was a mixed result: we heard back from just two people – one who said, don’t do it, not because he thought it was wrong but because he thought it may cause too many problems for the church, while the other person, a pastor, decided to join us. We decided to press on.

Can we expect anyone to take us seriously when we say that abortion takes the life of a child if we are not prepared to act as though it is true?

In 2002 a handful of people began the actions with no idea of where things would end up. In the years since we have had more than 60 sit-ins at Brisbane’s four abortion “clinics”, been arrested, convicted, fined, and – in my case – spent a total of eight months in jail across six occasions. We have not had crowds of people join us in the sit-ins as we had hoped, but nevertheless we have not lost our convictions.

I do not have room in this article to address the many questions and concerns that usually arise in people’s minds when they hear of our actions. There are quite a number of short articles on the website www.protect-life.info which seek to answer such questions. As well, full copies of *Shattering the Darkness*, or alternatively a 22-page condensed version, are available and we are always glad to hear from people at contact@protect-life.info.

In conclusion, three quotes from *Shattering the Darkness*:

“The heart of authentic Christianity is Rescue. Not the act of sitting-in at abortion clinics, not a complex systematic theology, but the heart of utter abandonment to God on behalf of others, regardless of risk and price. It is this heart I want you to see, because it is God’s heart – His Son’s Cross.”

“When we learn to die to self, then giving ourselves to Rescue others will seem quite normal – neither heroic, nor radical, nor wrong. If reading this book does not get you arrested, that is fine, if only you understand the way of the Cross for what God has called you to do.”

“I do not believe that we will see an end to child-killing until enough people do for the children what Christ did for us – make it a personal matter of life or death to protect them.”

Graham Preston has spent eight months in jail in Queensland for seeking to protect unborn life.



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World news

Philippians top book

The Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians contained three of the top 10 Bible verses that were most bookmarked, highlighted, and shared with YouVersion's Bible app in 2014, according to an end-of-year analysis.

Paul also had the number one verse, Romans 12:2, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (NIV). But the fourth chapter of Philippians took No. 2 with verse 8, No. 3 with verse 6, and No. 6 with verse 7.

The Top 10 was Romans 12:2, Philippians 4:8, Philippians 4:6,

Jeremiah 29:11, Matthew 6:33, Philippians 4:7, Proverbs 3:5, Isaiah 41:10, Matthew 6:34 and Proverbs 3:6

These verses, and others, were shared nearly 69 million times this year. In fact, every second sees two verses shared through Twitter, Facebook, text messages, and email around the world, YouVersion said.

Philippians 4:6 was the only verse to stay on the top five from last year's list, which featured Philippians 4:13 "I can do all this through him who gives me strength" in top spot, followed by Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 6:13, and Joshua 1:9.

Christianity Today

Driscoll steps down

After nearly 20 years as lead pastor of Seattle's Mars Hill Church, Mark Driscoll has resigned. Driscoll, 44, had faced mounting criticism over church leadership and discipline within Mars Hill and how he wrote and promoted his popular books.

The decision came less than two months after Driscoll stepped down from leadership while the church investigated charges against him. In August, he had been removed from the church planting network he founded, Acts 29.

The church board did not seek his resignation, but accepted it. They concluded Driscoll had "been guilty of arrogance, responding to conflict with a

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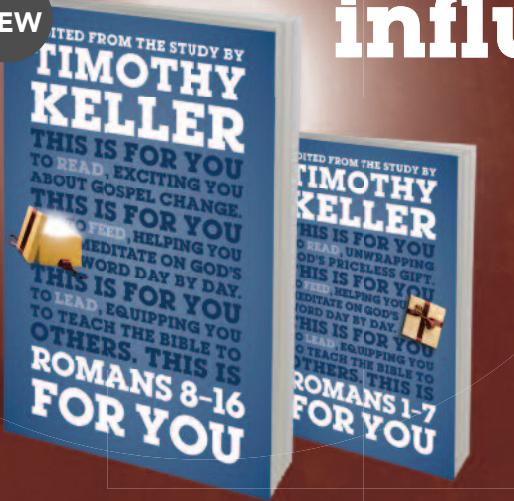
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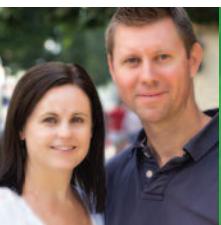
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quick temper and harsh speech, and leading the staff and elders in a domineering manner" but had "never been charged with any immorality, illegality or heresy".

Christianity Today

Four children beheaded

Four Christian children were beheaded in Iraq by militants from the Islamic State, also known as ISIS, for refusing to denounce Jesus and convert to Islam, according to the leader of the Anglican Church in Baghdad.

Canon Andrew White, known as the "Vicar of Baghdad", fled Iraq in October for Israel and recounted how brutal the country has become for Christians.

"ISIS turned up and said to the children, 'You say the words that you

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will follow Mohammed,'" White said in video posted on the Christian Broadcasting Network website. "The children, all under 15, four of them, they said, 'No, we love Yeshua [Jesus], we have always loved Yeshua.' They chopped all their heads off."

New York Post

Christians burned alive

A Christian couple was burned alive in a brick-making kiln after being accused of desecrating the Qur'an in Pakistan's Punjab province on Tuesday, police said.

Police have arrested at least 40 people in the killing of Shahzad Masih, 26, and his wife, Shama Masih, 24, on the outskirts of Kasur district, said Jawad Qamar, a district police officer.

A supervisor at the kiln where the victims also worked, allegedly accused Shama Masih of burning pages of a Qur'an outside her house on Sunday. The two were then locked in a room for two days until a mob armed with clubs brutally beat the couple before throwing them into the kiln.

UCA

Pledge to end slavery

As Pope Francis and leaders of other churches and religions signed a declaration pledging to work together to help end modern slavery in the world by 2020, he urged governments, businesses and all people of good will to join forces against this "crime against humanity".

Tens of millions of people are "in chains" because of human trafficking and forced labor, and it is leading to their "dehumanisation and humiliation," the pope said on the UN Day for the Abolition of Slavery.

The Pope and 11 leaders representing the Muslim, Jewish, Orthodox, Anglican, Buddhist and Hindu faiths have made a united commitment to help eradicate slavery worldwide.

CNS

Hopes rise for minorities

Members of several religious minority groups in Indonesia say they are



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cautiously optimistic about plans to draft a new bill to protect persecuted minorities in the predominantly Muslim country.

Minister of Religious Affairs Lukman Hakim Saifuddin says his ministry plans to draft new legislation aimed at protecting religious freedom in a country where rights groups say there has been an alarming surge in intolerance in recent years.

Lukman told reporters the bill would specifically address the issues of the closure of churches as well as attacks on mosques belonging to Shia and Ahmadiyya followers.

In Indonesia, national law offers protection to minority communities, but its implementation by local governments has been far from consistent.

UCA

Former Premier ordained

Lynn Arnold, who was Labor Premier of South Australia in 1992 and 1993, has been ordained a priest in Adelaide's St Peter's Cathedral.

Mr Arnold, 65, who will continue his

role with the "Faith in the Public Square" project at St Peter's Cathedral, said he felt the same sense of awe as when he was ordained as a deacon last year.

"My vision, or what I feel I am being called to, is to help the church articulate the call of Christ for a world where the hungry are fed, the homeless sheltered, the sick and the prisoners visited and the stranger at the gate welcomed."

Daily Telegraph

Anglican split tipped

The Archbishop of Canterbury has warned there is a "realistic" possibility that the global Anglican church may fracture, amid tensions over homosexuality.

Archbishop Justin Welby has recently visited all members of the global Anglican Communion, to attempt to address some of the growing discontent in the church. There have long been fears that there are divides between the more liberal churches and others within the Communion – particularly African churches.

Speaking to *The Times* in London after his global trip, Archbishop Welby said: "I think, realistically, we've got to say that despite all efforts there is a possibility that we will not hold together, or not hold together for a while."

Sistine in new light

High above the altar in the Vatican's Sistine Chapel, the halo around Jesus Christ's head in Michelangelo's famous frescoes shines with a brighter glow, thanks to a revolutionary new lighting system.

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A state of the art ventilation system has also been installed to protect the frescoes from humidity, enabling up to 2000 people at a time to visit one of the world's top tourist attractions, which draws over six million people a year.

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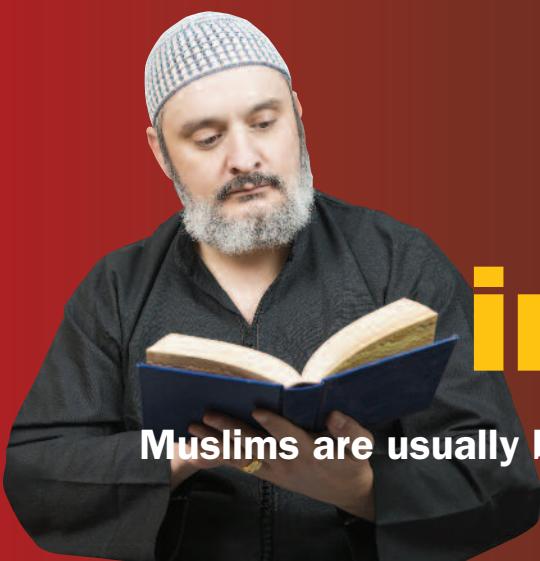
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Christians in the Qur'an

Muslims are usually better prepared for inter-religious discussion.

Samuel Green

When we read the book of Acts we see the apostles of Jesus evangelise different religious groups. There are Jews, Samaritans, magicians, followers of Zeus, Artemis, and John the Baptist, but we never read of any apostle evangelising Muslims. The reason for this is of course that Muhammad, the founder of Islam, was born around 550 years after Jesus. This may sound obvious, but the absence of Islam in the Bible has an effect on Christians. It means Christians do not learn about Islam naturally from reading the Bible – instead, it is optional.

The situation for Muslims is the exact opposite: Christianity is a major topic in the Qur'an. As a result, a Muslim who learns Islam is naturally instructed about Christianity – it is compulsory.

This means that Christians and Muslims have different degrees of “preparedness” for each other, and this is important to realise as Islam becomes an increasing part of the theological landscape in Australia.

In this article I want to consider some of the preparation Muslims receive about Christianity.

Christian beliefs: The Qur'an directly engages with many Christian beliefs and instructs Muslims to reject and refute them. These beliefs include the death of Jesus (Qur'an 4:157), the incarnation, Son of God, Trinity, and to some degree the reliability of the Bible (Q. 2:79). In fact Islam promotes itself by speaking against Christian beliefs.

The Qur'an directly addresses Christians about their beliefs and in

doing so gives Muslims words and arguments to say. “O People of the Scripture (Christians), do not go beyond the bounds of your religion. Do not say anything but the truth about God. The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, is truly God's messenger, and His word, which He cast into Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers and do not say, ‘Three’. Desist [That is] better for you. God is one God. Glory be to Him – that He should have a son” (Q. 4:171, Jones).

And: “Unbelievers are those who say, ‘God is the Messiah’ ... Unbelievers are those who say, ‘God is the third of the three’.” (Q. 5:72-73, Jones).

The author of the Qur'an consistently misrepresents Christian beliefs, for instance saying Jesus taught Jihad (9:111) or that Mary is part of the Trinity (5:116) or relying on Docetic gospels for its understanding of the death of Jesus. However, reading the Qur'an still takes you into a debate with Christians. When Islamic leaders teach the Qur'an they teach Muslims how to have this debate, and Islam has a 1400-year history of historical theology in this area.

The result of this situation is that when a Christian and Muslim talk the Christian may feel unprepared. They may not know the teachings of Islam, its history or what questions to ask. The Muslim, however, may feel quite prepared, and be well equipped with various books, leaflets, videos, Bible verses, and questions to ask. Muslims have even written two gospels for themselves, *The Gospel of Barnabas*.



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(14th century) and the *Gospel According to Islam* (1979) which they promote.

Of course not all Muslims learn their faith or are zealous, but it is still important that Christians understand this whole situation so they are not caught unprepared. Sadly some have been unprepared and found the well organised Islamic refutation of Christianity convincing.

All of this also has an effect on our evangelism as Islamic culture has been taught to reject the key elements of the gospel.

Politics: Not only does the Qur'an prepare Muslims theologically to talk with Christians, it also prepares them politically and economically. This applies both when they are a minority and hold power.

For a minority, consider: "Invite (all) to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious" (Qur'an 16:125, Yusuf Ali).

And: "(Y)ou will certainly find the nearest in friendship to those who believe (to be) those who say: We are Christians" (Qur'an 5:82, Shakir).

When Muslims hold power, the teaching is different: "Fight from among the people who have been given the Scripture (Christians and Jews) those who do not

Islam has a political agenda for Christianity and Christians need to be aware of this so that we do not behave naively.

believe in God and the Last Day and who do not forbid that which God and His messenger (Muhammad) have forbidden and who do not follow the religion of truth, until they pay tribute (jizyah) readily, having been humbled. The Jews say 'Ezra is the son of God'; and the Christians say 'The Messiah is the son of God'. That is what they say with their mouths, conforming to what was said by those who disbelieved before them. God confound them. How they are embroiled in lies! ... [It is] He (God) who has sent His messenger (Muhammad) with the guidance and the religion of truth to cause it to prevail over all (other) religion" (Q. 9:29-33, Jones).

Notice in this last verse that the call to subjugate Christians is because of what Christians believe.

Islam has a political agenda for Christianity and, again, Christians need to be aware of this so that we do not behave naively.

Romance: Islam also prepares Muslim men to engage romantically with Christian women (Qur'an 5:5) and to marry them.

In summary, the Qur'an speaks directly about Christianity on many occasions and on a variety of topics. It prepares Muslims for Christians, and as Islam grows in Australia Christians will need to respond to the theological, political and romantic challenge of Islam.

Our theological colleges need to equip the Church for this challenge. Most Australian Reformed colleges still do not include the Islamic period (7-14th centuries) in their church history or historical theology, but in today's world knowledge of this period of history is just as important as any other.

I was speaking to a recent graduate who had a conversation with an 18-year-old Muslim man. The Muslim was well prepared and the graduate said to me, "It made me realise how ill-equipped theological college left me for engaging with Islam."

The Church actually does have good resources in this area. They begin with the Early Church Father, Saint John of Damascus (c.675-749), and in the modern period a lot of good work has been done, but this needs to be included, at a basic level, in our theological education.

The Apostles of Jesus may never have evangelised Muslims but the Bible and the Holy Spirit do give us the resources we need to answer the challenge of Islam and to present the gospel to them, and as more Muslims come into Western countries this is what Christians need to do.

Samuel Green is the author of the Engaging with Islam training course, engagingwithislam.org and founder of the website www.answering-islam.org

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Degenerate Rules

Secular media is having a gay old time

Madeline Turner

On April 14, 1997, American comedian Ellen DeGeneres made history when her character “came out of the closet” on ABC’s sitcom *Ellen*. Millions of viewers tuned into the highly anticipated episode, while *Time* magazine featured the “Yep, I’m Gay” cover story of the real-life Ellen in its April issue.

The decision to “out” a lead character on mainstream television was considered groundbreaking for the time. It paved the way for programs such as *Queer as Folk*, *Queer Eye*, *Friends*, *Roseanne*, *Spin City*, *ER* and especially the widely acclaimed gaycom *Will & Grace*. Although Hollywood’s advocacy for homosexuality began decades earlier, it was not until the late 1990s that sitcoms brought greater cultural visibility to gay and lesbian characters in prime time.

Television has played an instrumental role in the push to normalise homosexuality. The sense of intimacy that it breeds with its personalities and programs, its immediacy and, more recently, 24-hour accessibility make it a powerful shaper of public opinion. Unlike the movies or theatre, television comes into the home and reaches individuals directly. It has become, for many, the key source of information about the world and is influential in creating and maintaining a common set

of values among its viewers.

In the last 15 years, television has become awash with pro-homosexual content. And Hollywood executives, producers, writers and actors have not been shy in admitting there is a strong gay agenda at work. Leading the way in advocating homosexuality as completely normal and uncontroversial is musical comedy-drama *Glee*, which has also been unashamedly bold in pushing the sexual envelope.

Popular shows such as *Grey’s Anatomy* and *Modern Family*, and countless Hollywood movies including *Brokeback Mountain* and *Milk* have been enormously influential in placing the issue of gay marriage at the forefront of public debate.

Traditional marriage has been around for more than a millennium while same-sex marriage is not even as old as the Internet, so the rate of moral and cultural change in our society is nothing short of revolutionary. Christians face an uphill battle against the powerful forces of political correctness if they are to resist conforming to a modern secular worldview of sexuality.

Unfortunately the threat of social isolation and legal defamation has led many Christians to abandon their convictions and accommodate a secular

understanding of homosexuality and same-sex marriage. After all, no one wants to be labelled an intolerant bigot!

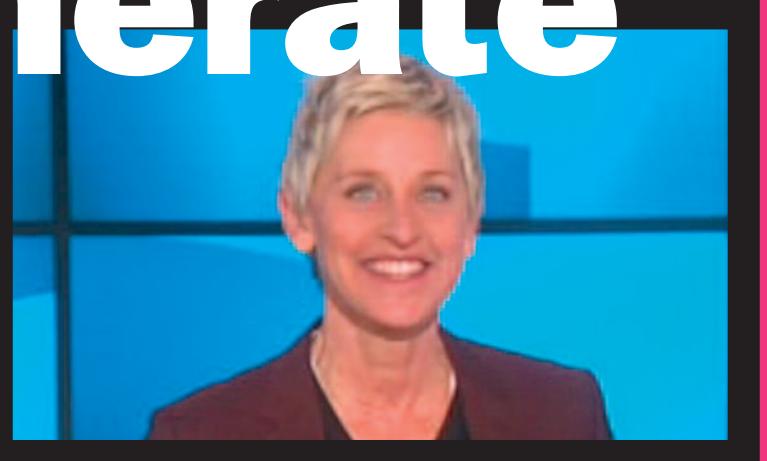
Some professing Christians question the infallibility of Scripture and its relevance in addressing sexual orientation in the 21st century. Others struggle to commend a Christian worldview of sexuality in a loving and attractive way. As society becomes more approving of homosexuality, how can we be effective Christian witnesses and make the most of our opportunity to model a counter-cultural alternative?

If Christians desire to show love to the LBGT community, then we must share the gospel of Jesus Christ with clarity and courage. We need to be clear that the gospel is good news for everyone. Not only are we sinners, but we are all sexual sinners, so we cannot come to the issue from a self-righteous position. But we should also be careful not to remove the sharp edges of the gospel in an attempt to be tolerant and inclusive. Not only is this unloving and sinful, but it denies our friends the hope of salvation and redemption from their sin.

Finally, if we are to commend the gospel to our watching world and be an effective family of believers, we must take seriously Jesus’ command to “love one another” and embody the gospel in our own lives. We may not have the most impressive bandwagon of celebrities to advocate our worldview, but we should have the most attractive and loving relationships.

Madeline Turner attends Ashfield Presbyterian Church, NSW.

Same-sex marriage is not even as old as the Internet, so the rate of change in our society is nothing short of revolutionary.



Mental block

Professorial infallibility and other modern fairy tales

Phil Burcham

With a new academic year at hand, some younger *AP* readers may shortly begin studies at university. Since many recall such years fondly and find that the skills universities cultivate are useful for a lifetime, any students called by God to serious study surely pursue a worthy goal.

Yet since the secularism in Australian universities is now quite suffocating, initial encounters can overwhelm young Christians. Stepping out from the safety of church school or family home, they can encounter unfortunate lecturers who seemingly gain pleasure from assailing their faith. Since lecturers possess obvious competence within their field of expertise, a student can easily imagine they speak authoritatively in other areas too: if they say Christianity is untenable, many listen.

As a veteran of over three decades in universities I am sceptical of an unspoken belief underlying such encounters – let's call it "the doctrine of professorial infallibility". Deeply embedded in modern societies, this outlook simply assumes that the secular worldview prevailing in today's academic world is superior to one that is informed by Scripture or Christian beliefs.

There are many problems with this view, but one seems undeniable: if I have learnt anything from my lengthy involvement in higher education, it is that academics aren't necessarily the paragons of wise rationality they project to students. To help make this point, I'll tell a brief story.

My first lecturing job was in a Medical

School which, despite its revered status, contained a striking architectural oddity. The building comprised two wings, both six storeys tall and some 25 metres apart. Each level housed a different biomedical discipline, and in the interest of scientific collaboration five elevated walkways linked each floor.

Strangely however, the walkway linking my discipline of pharmacology to the adjacent microbiologists was non-functional: no door was built in its southern end so it ended abruptly with a brick wall. This peculiar structure evoked considerable mirth; my students dubbed it "the Walkway to Nowhere."

Wondering why this costly but useless structure was erected, I sought the truth from senior colleagues. They suggested the Professor of Microbiology at the time of construction was an opinionated chap who considered his discipline the sole legitimate field of human knowledge. Judging pharmacology a worthless pseudoscience, he banned construction of a doorway.

For decades the worthless structure stood in mute but eloquent testimony to the singular obstinacy of one highly educated individual.

Scientifically, this situation was perverse: the problem of bacterial resistance is relentlessly making antibiotics ineffective, and pharmacologists and microbiologists must cooperate to ensure remaining medicines are used wisely. Just one person's folly thwarted such pressing needs.

Unfortunately, this episode was not an

isolated occurrence: scarcely a week passes in academia that doesn't provide lesser displays of hubristic silliness.

On a deeper level, the door-less walkway signified prickly realities concerning human nature that modern secularism seems shy to admit and powerless to contain. Although academics spill gallons of ink in lofty advocacy of Enlightenment rationalism, interdisciplinary cooperation and the disinterested pursuit of scientific truth, time spent in a university reveals that foolish pride and the perennial realities of human nature frequently undermine the ability to live up to such ideals.

In taking the biblical witness to human fallenness seriously, authentic Christianity begins where we actually are. Few thinkers have diagnosed the pride underlying our spiritual predicament more clearly than Calvin, who in his *Institutes* sadly notes that "the very vices that infest us we take pains to hide from others, while we flatter ourselves with the pretence that they are slight and insignificant." Meanwhile, "if there are any faults in others... we hatefully exaggerate them." Hence, "each one of us... wishes to tower above the rest." To readers who are beginning university studies soon, here's a good tip to keep in mind: if humanity could overcome its "pride problem" unassisted, Christ could have saved Himself much trouble and stayed in heaven.

Phil Burcham is a Professor in the Dept of Medicine and Pharmacology at the University of WA and PCA elder.



Books

Taking God at His Word

Kevin DeYoung,

Crossway, 2014.

Peter Barnes

Kevin DeYoung says quite simply that “this is a book unpacking what the Bible says about the Bible”. In the end it is a defence of inerrancy, which means that “the word of God always stands over us and we never stand over the word of God”. The result of DeYoung’s thinking on this subject is a compact but compelling work on the full authority, sufficiency, clarity and necessity of the Bible for the revelation of God to sinful humanity.

It is full of biblical texts, especially from Psalm 119, which are handled well. Together, they give a mounting case for the Christian wanting to know God’s will, to love it, and to respond faithfully to what it says. This is not designed to replace Warfield’s classic work, but it will greatly help to prepare another generation of believers to trust what the Bible says about its own authority. All of this in about 130 pages! It is highly recommended.

Peter Barnes is editor of AP

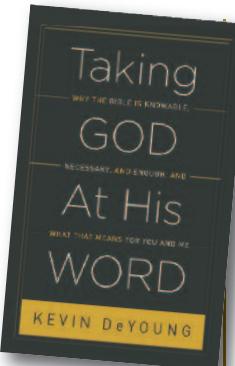
Antinomianism

Mark Jones

P&R, 2013

Mark Powell

The church fathers used to say that, like our Saviour, the gospel is often crucified between two thieves – legalism and antinomianism. That is, people tend to over emphasise one of the two



extremes. Jones obviously tackles the latter, which he rightly sees as the more prevalent over emphasis in the church today.

The book is basically a response to a popular book by Tullian Tchividjian published recently called *Jesus + Nothing = Everything* (Crossway, 2011). Some readers of AP will more than likely be familiar with it and may even view it favourably. Jones, though, thinks that Tchividjian has gone too far and in particular takes issue with his position (which he labels as “antinomian”) that “sanctification is the daily hard work of going back to our justification.” In practice this means that not only are we saved by faith alone but we live out our salvation by faith alone as well.

This is an important subject and I think Jones puts his finger on a theological issue that definitely needs to be addressed. The book is relatively short (around 130 pages) and is well written. The arrangement of the chapters are also very helpful in developing his argument. If you are willing to dig then there is gold.

However, that said, be prepared to exert some serious spiritual sweat. Jones is an expert in historical (especially Puritan) rather than biblical theology. This is both the strength and weakness of the book. It is a strength in that he shows how vigorous and often acrimonious debates among Reformed Protestants in the past have produced much clarity on the topic, and in this way provides valuable insights for us today.

But it is also a weakness in that more attention could have been given to Scripture itself rather than various doctrinal confessions and quotations from famous (and not so well known) Puritans. For instance, no mention is made of Ezekiel 36:26-27 or Jeremiah 31:33-34, which I think are essential to the discussion. Not only that, but even

New Testament passages such as Matthew 5:17-20 are treated in a cursory way.

A word of warning: the book seems to be especially directed at pastors or a theologically trained layperson. However, if you are willing to put the effort in, then it will deliver great rewards.

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

Contemporary Worship

Terry L. Johnson

Banner of Truth, 2014.

Peter Barnes

In fewer than 20 pages, Terry Johnson makes 10 criticisms of contemporary worship: its reduced biblical content; demographic favouritism towards the young; divided



communions; its altered purpose (outreach rather than the praises of God); obscured message; contempt of tradition; naïve use of popular culture; aesthetic relativism; pragmatism; and the resultant distraction from the main issues.

On the last point, Johnson writes that “Forms have been defended because forms have been attacked”. He then goes on to say, quite rightly, that “the fundamental issue facing the church is not a matter of form”.

All our experiences are limited, and this makes generalisations hazardous. Clearly, there is enough wrong for there to be concern. As Johnson says, for example, on the altered purpose of meeting together: “The serious business of eternity cannot be conducted in an environment of mirth.” The main problem on this issue seems to be that

what each side says about the other contains elements of truth, but perhaps neither side has really grasped what is wrong today. There is more than one way to grieve the Holy Spirit.

Living Sacrifice

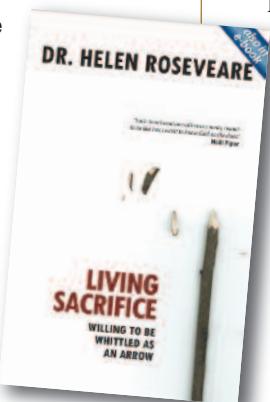
Dr Helen Roseveare

Fearn, CF 2013

Stuart Bonnington

This is a simple, profound book, a classic of missionary spirituality. A retired WEC missionary, Dr Helen Roseveare, served in the Congo/Zaire from 1953 to 1973 and endured many great testings of faith. Her story is told in *Give Me This Mountain* and *He Gave Us a Valley*. The reviewer had the privilege of hearing Dr Roseveare in person many years ago.

Christian Focus Press is to be congratulated for bringing Dr Roseveare's books back into print. *Living Sacrifice* calls the Lord's people



to a life of gratitude, expressed in simple Christ-inspired and Christ-like sacrifice. This message is in great need of being heard afresh, especially within large sections of the Church in the West.

Based around Mark 12:29-31, Dr Roseveare illustrates loving the Lord with all the heart, soul, mind and strength from her own experiences as a missionary doctor. The reader is stirred, challenged, inspired and moved to consider their own walk with the Lord. There is a printing error on page 27 where "soul" is printed instead of heart.

Stuart Bonnington is minister of Scots Kirk, Fremantle

Jesus, Justice, and Gender Roles

Kathy Keller,

Zondervan, 2012.

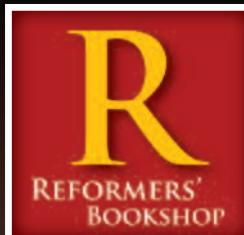
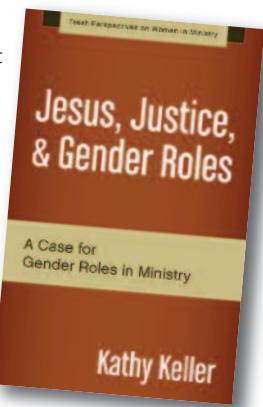
Peter Barnes

Kathy Keller (wife of Tim) records her

experience of gender roles at Redeemer Presbyterian Church: "Over the years sexuality and gender, as well as personal choices in

these areas, have been at the top of our list of topics that provoke outrage, tears, shouting, and disappointment." In fact, "one woman told me tearfully when she learned Redeemer did not ordain women as elders or pastors, 'It was like finding out that your fiancé is a child molester!'" The subject has certainly made for drama and melodrama.

Mrs Keller has written quite a helpful little book on this subject. However, on one of the key texts, 1 Timothy 2:11-12, she is unconvincing in seeing it as prohibiting authoritative teaching rather than teaching and having



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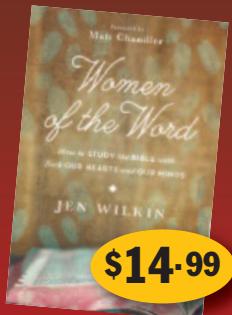
Dispatches from the Front

In this captivating travelogue, a veteran missions mobiliser leads readers to experience global Christianity, exploring the faith and lives of Christians living in some of the world's most perilous countries.



When Helping Hurts

Focusing on both North American and Majority World contexts, When Helping Hurts catalyzes the idea that sustainable change for people living in poverty comes not from the outside-in, but from the inside-out.



Women of the Word

How can we, as Christian women, keep our focus and sustain our passion when reading the Bible? Offering a clear and concise plan, this book will equip you to engage God's Word in a way that trains your mind and transforms your heart.



The Blessed and Boundless God

Read this book prayerfully, thoughtfully, and expectantly, keeping in mind Swinnock's simple conviction that "when we take the incomparable God as our God, we are incomparably blessed."

authority. She considers it as parallel in some ways to "It's good and cold outside today" or "The baby was snuggled up nice and cozy in the crib". In this she follows James Hurley's otherwise very compelling work. The Redeemer view is that "anything that an unordained man is allowed to do, a woman is also allowed to do". I suppose that depends whether Redeemer allows an unordained man to preach.

She mocks what she calls "the imaginary heresy of eternal subordination within the Trinity", and claims that no complementarian has ever espoused such a thing. This is less than accurate, as there are many



Trinitarians who think there is a functional subordination in the Trinity. This has implications for 1 Corinthians 11:3. This is useful, but not the last word on the subject - assuming there is to be one!

A Life Already Started

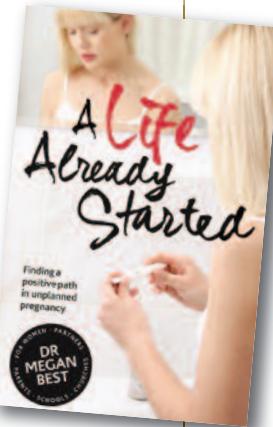
Megan Best,

fevr, 2013.

Peter Barnes

Dr Best has produced a helpful and sensitive little book on the subject of the unplanned pregnancy. She has in her sights the abortion industry which plays scant attention to reality. The more philosophical among its proponents try to distinguish between a human being and a human person, which is rather like distinguishing between the right blade and the left blade on a pair of scissors.

By five months the unborn child is capable of feeling pain, yet the industry rolls on. In 2010-2111 there were



about 90,000 abortions in Australia but only 384 adoptions, and 215 of these were from overseas. Supporting abortion is supposed to be a pro-women cause, but Dr Best notes that "emotional distress is common" – yet another inconvenient fact for the media to ignore.

When dealing with an unplanned pregnancy, there is a need to hear the voice of grace and wisdom. Dr Best writes: "At times there is a difference between the person you can trust and the person who gives wise counsel". One must, however, object to the oft-repeated claim that there is no scale down from "really bad sins" to "slight problem sins". It is a claim which is contrary to Scripture and to common sense. That aside, this is a needed work. The Christian does well to remember that when the Word became flesh (John 1:14), He became an embryo (Matt.1:18).

Many of these books are available at Reformers Bookshop, phone: (02) 9564 3555 web: reformers.org.au

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Two spheres

Spirit and nature, faith and reason: Christ is Lord of all.

How faith relates to reason and how the spiritual world relates to the physical are issues that lead to much angst and confusion these days. Back in the 17th century, in defending the Copernican view that the earth revolves around the sun and not vice versa, Galileo made the claim that “the Bible teaches us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go”. In much more recent times, Stephen Jay Gould towards the end of his life cited with approval the view that the Bible tells of the Rock of Ages, not the ages of the rocks.

There is some truth in these statements. When the Bible says that the moon is the lesser light to the sun (Gen. 1:16), it is not claiming that the moon is a source of light and operates as a smaller kind of sun. It is only speaking of how we see their respective lights – in the moon’s case, reflective light – from here on earth.

Similarly, when the book of Ecclesiastes says that the sun rises and goes down, it is not siding with Ptolemy against Copernicus, but speaking as a weather reporter does today. To us, it appears that the sun rises and sets. So the statements of Galileo and Gould seem a neat and tidy solution to the difficulty: the Bible speaks of spiritual truth, and science of physical truth.

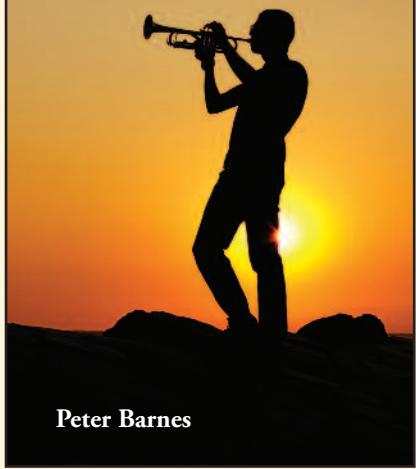
However, such a neat and tidy solution has opened the door to a worldview that is decidedly unbiblical. For example, on August 23, 1907, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of NSW, Rev. Philip Norman,

addressed the students at St Andrew’s College in Sydney University on *The Trend of Modern Thought*. He began by asserting that “we live today in a new world, which science, criticism and philosophy have created for us”. Referring to the Bible, and its spiritual aims, he stated: “If it is suitable to this end, and, wherever honestly studied and practised, attains it, then no verbal inaccuracies, no apparent or real discrepancies between it and modern science, and colouring which it may bring down to us from remote and less perfect times, can weaken its claims upon our reverence and affection, or unfit it to achieve its noble purpose.”

A radical dichotomy was created between the spiritual world and the natural world. Norman still believed in the supernatural claims of Christ, but restricted the scope of the authority of Scripture: “I can say with Kant that two things impress me: the starry heavens above me, and the moral law within me; and to both worlds I desire to be faithful. To science we owe our choicest blessings in the sphere of the material, and to Jesus Christ our choicest blessings in the sphere of the spiritual. The blessings of our commercial and industrial life we owe in large measure to science; the influences which tend to control and humanise and sweeten our lives and unite us into happy homes and happy communities, we owe to Christianity.”

It all makes it appear that Christ can rule our lives when it comes to reading the Bible and praying, but the rest of

the LAST WORD



Peter Barnes

the world – what many would call the real world – has nothing to do with Him.

The reality is that Christ is Lord of all of life, not just what we might call the spiritual and moral parts (see Col.1:15-20). God reveals Himself in history. Luke tells us that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world of the Roman Empire should be registered (Luke 2:1). The Old Testament refers to Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian kings. Nebuchadnezzar, Darius and Cyrus are figures in the Bible as well as what we would call secular history books.

For that matter, Adam is presented as a real man in a real place, just as Christ lived, died, and rose from the dead in real time and space. John North and Robert Forsyth tell of a man who had thought of the Gospels as good moral stories like *Aesop's Fables*. When he finally decided to read Matthew's Gospel, he was shattered. Matthew begins with a genealogy, a list of 42 names (Matt.1:1-17). What might seem like an unpromising way to grab any reader's attention – a genealogy – was exactly what the man needed to hear. Fairy tales and poetry books do not contain genealogies; history books do.

For convenience, we may think in terms of two spheres, but Christ is Lord of both, and the Bible portrays both accurately and truthfully. The truth is not schizophrenic; it is an harmonious whole under Him who is truth incarnate.

Peter Barnes is editor of AP